

Thinking with/for Many Others

In Memory of Vincent Shen (1949-2018)

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Edited by

JOÃO J. VILA-CHÃ *and* HU YEPING

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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620 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, D.C. 20064

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Shen, Tsing-Song Vincent, dedicatee. | Vila-Chã, João, editor. |
Hu, Yeping, editor.

Title: *Thinking with/for many others : in memory of Vincent Shen (1949-2018)* /
edited by João J. Vila-Chã & Hu Yeping.

Description: [Washington] : The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy,
[2022] | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2021053925 | ISBN 9781565183506 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Philosophy, Comparative.

Classification: LCC B799 .T55 2022 | DDC 100--dc23/eng/20211230

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021053925>

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Way of Strangification: Thinking with Vincent Shen <i>João J. VILA-CHÃ</i>	1
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PART I. Reflections on Shen's Philosophical and Theological Thought

1. The Meaningfulness of Life <i>William A. BARBIERI</i>	19
2. Openness of Oneself toward Others: Vincent Shen's Theory of Strangification <i>Katia LENEHAN</i>	27
3. The Relational Ontological Turn in Vincent Shen's Catholic Social Philosophy <i>CHOU Ming-chuan</i>	47
4. Interreligious Dialogue and the Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism: Vincent Shen's Model of "Mutual Strangification" <i>LEE Yen-yi</i>	67
5. Vincent Shen's Many Others and Emmanuel Lévinas's Third Party <i>TENG Yuan-wei</i>	81
6. Many Others, Strangification, and Communion: Vincent Shen's View on the Confucian Remedy to the Crisis of Modernity <i>TAN Mingran</i>	101

PART II. Dialogue of Cultures and Religions

7. An Unfamiliar Hermeneutics: Interpretation for the Sake of Others
HUANG Yong 121
8. Self-Awareness of Life and Intercultural Dialogue
Peter JONKER 139
9. Divine Transcendence, Human Finitude: Dialogue and Mutual Recognition as Enacted Welcoming of “Otherness”
Philip J. ROSSI 155
10. Matteo Ricci and His Method of Cultural Accommodation
HU Yeping 165
11. Reading the Other’s Classics: The Encounter between Jesuits and Chinese Literati
Benoît VERMANDER 179
12. China, the Jesuits, and Foucault: Tacit Connections in the Transformation of Seventeenth-Century Western Europe through Educational Practices
Astrid VICAS 201
13. Prospero Intorcetta, S.J. and His Contribution to Sinology
Thierry MEYNARD 213
14. The Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Translation of the New Testament into the Bafut Language
Michael Suh NIBA 233

PART III. Socio-Political and Philosophical Considerations

15. Individualist and Communitarian Principles of Justice
William SWEET 257
16. Hebrew Justice: A Reconstruction for Today
FU Youde 271

17. Transcendent Moral Realism in Charles Taylor and Classical Confucianism <i>Andrew Tsz Wan HUNG</i>	293
18. The Metamorphoses of Memory: Rediscovering Vladimir Ghika <i>Wilhelm DANČÁ</i>	313
19. Samuel Štefan Osuský's Prophetic Wisdom: A Case Study <i>Michal VALCO</i>	333
20. Encountering Many Others in the Clinical Narratives <i>LIN Hui-ju</i>	355
 PART IV. Chinese Philosophical and Cultural Traditions	
21. Chinese Diaspora as People of Their Own Countries and Chinese Philosophy as World Philosophy <i>Li Chenyang and XIAO Hong</i>	369
22. The Human Being and the Ground of Philosophy: The East and the West <i>YU Xuanmeng</i>	385
23. Self-Awareness in Traditional Chinese Medicine <i>ZOU Shipeng</i>	403
24. Chinese Landscape (<i>Shanshui</i> 山水) and the Sacred <i>Yolaine ESCANDE</i>	413
 EPILOGUE	
Personal Recollection of Professor Vincent Shen <i>GUO Qiyong</i>	427
INDEX	439

INTRODUCTION

The Way of Strangification: Thinking with Vincen Shen

JOÃO J. VILA-CHÃ*

As one of its leading organizers and contributors over the years, Professor Vincent Shen (1949-2018) embodied, in a magnificent way, the spirit and ideals of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, an institution at service of philosophical research worldwide. Like his friend, mentor, and long-term collaborator, Professor George F. McLean (1929-2016), the founder of the Council, Professor Shen united two exceptional attributes: a vast learning in the hermeneutical understanding of cultures and texts and the willingness to penetrate the depth of transcultural understanding from the plural dimensions of the *humanum* and its many forms and expressions.

For Shen, globalization is a process of deterritorialization or border-crossing, which is happening in almost every domain of human activity: health and technology, environment and nature, politics and economy, culture and religion. However, this process is rooted in the experience of “going beyond oneself to multiple others,” to which Shen applies the neologism strangification, *waitui* 外推 in Chinese. It has implications on pragmatic, linguistic, and ontological levels, representing a strategy for dealing with differences, resolving conflicts, and promoting optimal forms of harmony. Given that strangification presupposes appropriation of language and an original generosity or hospitality to multiple others, Shen stresses the Confu-

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cian virtue of *shu* 恕 to many others. On the one hand, globalization is rather unsustainable as long as it is not based on the human desire to go beyond what we factually are, or as long as it is not connected with the human “longing for universalizability” or the human being’s inherent universalizing capability. On the other hand, globalization represents the “material implementation” of strangification or the “universalizing dynamism” that keeps challenging the human being toward self-transcendence. According to Shen, the special relevance of strangification means the act of going outside of oneself to multiple others, that is, going outside of one’s familiarity to strangeness, indeed, to many strangers. Linguistic appropriation as the experience of strangification constitutes the capacity to express one’s own ideas and values in the language and ways of understanding others, or at least in the effort of making oneself understandable to others. Strangification, therefore, presupposes the virtue of generosity, a capacity that does not limit oneself to the claim of reciprocity and to the ethical agency of golden rules within social relationships. Rather, it is by going out of oneself that one becomes capable of returning to oneself enriched with a higher degree of self-understanding and, thus, ultimately enlightened in the ways of the most authentic selfhood.

Shen was a most kind and gentle person, compassionate, attentive to others, and appreciative of all that is true and beautiful. Rooted in the best of both Asian traditions and Western thought, Shen was able to articulate his philosophical ideas with depth and simplicity. As his academic career arched across continents and he taught and formed many students and scholars, the news of his passing shocked friends all over the world. With this volume we want to honor his many achievements as interpreter of the human condition across cultures and civilizations. The volume gathers texts of scholars from different cultural backgrounds. Although they are different in scope, all intend to celebrate the life and deeds of an esteemed colleague and a respected friend.

In “The Meaningfulness of Life,” William Barbieri focuses on the last thematic suggestion made by Shen during the planning meeting of the Council in November 2017. On that occasion, strong emphasis was put on the radical importance of meaning in both the understanding and the actual configuration of human life. Human life can be broadly understood in terms of life in general, a simple individual life, the act of living as such. Barbieri explicitly elaborates how the meaningfulness of life is expressed in both axiological and hermeneutical dimensions. Meaningfulness intertwines with value and sense, for it has a double face that implies both the existential and the ethical dimension of our being-in-the-world. To live a meaningful life means to live a life that has value and is worthwhile, accountable for

something. Emphasis is put on the fact that meaningfulness remains deeply connected with understanding, an intimate part of the experience of intelligibility, which grounds the human capability of making sense in relation to things of the world. Shen's sense of meaningfulness expresses that there are structures of meaning that are vital for life. As Barbieri underlines, human expressions of meaning are always set or enacted in contexts of the past, the present, and the future, that is, in stories. The deep connection between meaning and dialogue, or, as William Desmond underscores, the centrality of aesthetic considerations and human experience in the understanding of the meaning of life cannot escape the search for authenticity in the analysis of the human condition.¹ Hence, the question of being remains inseparable from the quest for meaning and its medium, namely, language. As such, language is not just a tool or a technology. Rather, it is fundamental for understanding all technologies; indeed, human beings are conceived as linguistic animals.² In other words, all technologies constitute embodiments of specific operations of meaning. The question regarding the meaningfulness of life can then be divided into five deeply interconnected subthemes: (1) the moral life and self-cultivation of persons, (2) the ethical character of communication and community/social life, (3) human relations with nature, (4) human relations with the Ultimate Reality as foundation for each experience of meaningfulness, and (5) commonalities and dialogues among different civilizations and religions.

Katia Lenehan's "Openness of Oneself toward Others: Vincent Shen's Theory of Strangification" emphasizes anew the importance of strangification (*waitui* 外推) in Shen's philosophical project. In phenomenological terms, strangification reveals itself across many human activities since as a structure it characterizes all forms of human communication, including cultural exchanges and religious conversations. The author shows how strangification occupies a central place in Shen's philosophical thought. Specifically, the concept is a determinant factor in the promotion of mutual understanding among different scientific micro-worlds. As an ontological category, strangification in Shen's thought process becomes a notion of decisive importance in relation to religious dialogues and intercultural conversations, that is, in the understanding of the human journey toward social harmony and friendship. Shen's philosophy is deeply marked by a sense of realism, a posi-

¹ Cf. William Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic, and Otherness: An Essay on Origins*, second edition (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

² Cf. Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

tion that departs from all dualistic forms of viewing and interpreting reality. Indeed, he transforms his theory of strangification into the nuclear position of a constructive realism centered upon the existence of a deep connection between the human being and the entire reality. Shen's position goes beyond limits of traditional realism as strangification is drawn from the insight that self-cognition reveals how the human being is structurally open to the world and, thus, ontologically unable to achieve any form of self-enclosure. To be human, therefore, implies co-existing with other beings, human and non-human, for self-fulfillment invariably means going outside of oneself and toward many others. The art of being human is to engage in many tasks of properly-becoming human.

In "The Relational Ontological Turn in Vincent Shen's Catholic Social Philosophy," Chou Ming-chuan takes Vincent Shen's Catholic social philosophy as an example of how to elaborate on the importance of contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism and its relational ontological turn. The author divides Shen's philosophical thinking into three stages of development: contrastive philosophy, generous strangification, and interreligious dialogue, and introduces Shen's major philosophical writings in each stage. The paper argues that Shen's social thought is based on the meta-ontological understanding of God as love/agape and shows how notions such as strangification and many others are to be transformed into procedures of cross-cultural research oriented by both universalizability and practicability. According to the author, Shen's strangification represents an instance of effective and practical power capable of guiding human activities in the real life world. In that sense, the thought of Shen appears as the continuation of Matteo Ricci's project of entering into a deep cultural dialogue with Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, during the Ming dynasty. According to Shen, Chinese Scholasticism is the proper result of the combination of European Scholasticism and Chinese philosophy as mediated through the tenets of Chinese culture.

Lee Yen-yi focuses on "Interreligious Dialogue and the Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism: Vincent Shen's Model of 'Mutual Strangification'." As just stated, contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism is a derivation from the Chinese Neo-Scholasticism founded by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), a movement of ideas based on the translation of Aristotle's works and the related commentaries by the *Conimbricenses*,³ rapidly growing into a cor-

³ On the *Conimbricenses*, cf. Cristiano Casalini, *Aristotle in Coimbra: The Cursus Conimbricensis and the Education at the College of Arts* (Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

pus of knowledge of the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith in a Chinese context. Ricci initiated a dialogue with Chinese philosophy, especially with classical Confucianism. The project integrated ideas and concepts from both traditions, Europe and China. The contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism continues its dialogic tradition but adds new elements in accordance with the changes of times. On his part, Shen based his philosophical reflections on both the Catholic theological tradition and the Confucian vision of the goodness of human nature. On the basis of the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead, the *Book of Changes*, and the Daoist wisdom, Shen developed an authentic philosophy of contrast and a powerful theory of strangification. Bringing together his profound knowledge of Western philosophy and his direct knowledge of the Chinese traditions, Shen integrated the Confucian concept of five relationships, the Daoist idea of the myriads of things (*wanwu* 萬物), and the Buddhist concept of all sentient beings (*zhongsheng* 眾生). On that basis, he then proceeded to illustrate the limitations of the concept of the other (*autrui*, *alterité*) advanced by French thinkers such as Emmanuel Lévinas, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida.⁴ He proposed a replacement of the concept of the other with that of many others/multiple others. At the heart of Shen's philosophy of contrast and strangification is a since commitment to interreligious dialogue within the intercultural horizon opened up by contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism. In other words, the pragmatic question was for Shen the development of a model of thought capable of fostering and sustaining an authentic interreligious dialogue. Hence the centrality of the principle of mutual strangification.

In Teng Yuan-wei's "Vincent Shen's Many Others and Emmanuel Lévinas's Third Party," we have the attempt to elucidate Shen's concept of many others in contrast to Emmanuel Lévinas's notion of the *third* in the context of the contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism. The author argues that on the foundation laid by the pioneers of the Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, such as Yü Pin and Lo Kuang, Shen reevaluates its past achievements in order to face the crisis of a self-enclosed modernity and postmodernism. According to Shen, Chinese Neo-Scholasticism should not abandon the heritage of modernity, but face the new challenges and pursue the ideal of caring for people in modern times. Rather, it should surpass its past deficiencies and find new ways toward the appropriation of the spirit of interreligious dialogue. A Chinese version of modernity should be developed so as to be

⁴ Cf. Francis Guibal and Stanislas Breton, *Altérités: Jacques Derrida et Pierre-Jean Labarrière: Avec des études de Francis Guibal et Stanislas Breton* (Paris: Osiris, 1986).

able to avoid the pitfalls of Western modernity. Hence the particular interest of the way in which Shen, by means of the concept of many others, tried to overcome what he perceived to be the limitations of Lévinas's approach to the other, but most especially of the latter's notion of the *third*. In this spirit, Teng elaborates on the similarities and differences between Shen's manyothers and Lévinas's *third*. Most importantly, the contribution shows the extent to which Shen's novel notion opens up important ways for the development of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism in contemporary times.

In "Many Others, Strangification, and Communion: Vincent Shen's View on the Confucian Remedy to the Crisis of Modernity," Tan Mingran refers us to the fact that when in China Mou Zongsan (牟宗三) was developing a new understanding of democracy and science based on the proposition that our inborn knowledge of the good must be temporarily suspended, in Europe Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger were beginning to reflect on the negative effects of domination, estrangement, and nihilism brought by democracy and science. This is precisely the context in which Shen attempted to redefine the basic characteristics of modernity and concomitantly explain the reasons why Confucianism was not able to fully develop notions such as democracy and science. Yet he argues that Confucian humaneness and ideal personality, incorporating concepts such as many others, strangification, and communion, can truly become a remedy for the so-called crisis of modernity. Indeed, Tan places Shen's concept of many others in line with Gilles Deleuze's understanding of the plurality of others while noting that the former goes well beyond the antithesis of self and others. For Shen, many others implies a basic idea of openness of oneself to myriad things, including nature, spirits, God, and other people. What Shen aims primarily at is to transcend the antithesis of self and others and step out of the paradoxes of anthropocentrism. The concept of strangification, the act of going outside of oneself to the stranger, means the openness of the self to many others, an event that always presupposes the willingness to put oneself in the place of others and express oneself in others' languages and ways of thinking. Therefore, Shen's notion of strangification also contains the meaning of communion, that is, of the intuitive dimensions of life even to the point of affirming the importance of telepathy (感應) between self and others, between human beings and other creatures. In other words, it supersedes the merely rational aspects of life. After all, it is by means of this intuitive experience that the human self becomes capable of achieving consideration and respect toward others as required by the Confucian ideal of humaneness, righteousness, and ritual propriety. Confucianism, especially its value system, provides for Shen the much-needed remedy to the crisis of modernity. Only through moral cultivation and sagehood shall we

be able to answer the quest for the meaning of life and prevent the rise of nihilism associated with the progressive expansion of instrumental reason. The Confucian sense of communion softens the rigidity of democracy and transforms the scientific quest as it sees the universe as an organic unity, one in which human beings are a constitutive part. In Shen's vision, the solution to the human predicament today implies that human beings become capable of applying the organic vision of reality proper to Confucianism to the renewal of fundamental aspects of our life world such as democracy and science.

Huang Yong's "An Unfamiliar Hermeneutics: Interpretation for the Sake of Others" proposes a new type of hermeneutics, a hermeneutics for human solidarity. Huang argues in the spirit of Shen that in addition to the traditional hermeneutics developed by H.-G. Gadamer, that is, a hermeneutics of interpretation and understanding, it is necessary to develop a new one, namely a hermeneutics for the sake of others. That would be the case with a hermeneutics of human solidarity, one in which human beings are seen as they are, that is, historical beings whose ideas and ideals, preferences and desires, likes and dislikes are in a continuous process of change. Although human beings may obtain a full, complete, and correct understanding of the other, it does not mean that we can cease to make efforts to understand others better. The central concern of a hermeneutics for human solidarity is the moral appropriateness of one's actions affecting others. The effort to understand others better lies not only in the actual result of one's understanding of others, but also in the process of understanding others as what they are as such. A good hermeneutic seeks moral propriety in the relations toward others. Chinese classical philosophical wisdom does indeed support Shen's proposition of a hermeneutics for human solidarity.

In "Self-Awareness of Life and Intercultural Dialogue," Peter Jonkers emphasizes both the inner life and the socio-political life by ways of analyzing the issue from the sociological and philosophical perspectives. The author discusses how societal harmony has lost its meaning in the contemporary world and how the liberal democratic tradition responded to such a challenge. Specifically, the author takes up some prominent social and political philosophers, such as John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and Richard Rorty, to elaborate how these thinkers reacted to the crisis of societal harmony. Jonkers then proceeds to explore venues for a more dialogical understanding of self-awareness in life. This means to enable people and communities to communicate constructively about societal differences in a pluralist world. The key idea for such an approach derives from Paul Ricoeur's linguistic hospitality, that is, the ability to expropriate oneself from oneself as one appropriates the other to oneself. According to Ricoeur, the major challenge of hospitality resides in

the fact that we are beings ontologically deprived of an immediate access to ourselves, which means that it is only through others that we ultimately come to understand ourselves. Similarly, the core of Shen's thought is about understanding how only in the interaction of self and others does the awareness of self actually come to life.

Philip Rossi's "Divine Transcendence, Human Finitude: Dialogue and Mutual Recognition as Enacted Welcoming of 'Otherness'" assumes that not all forms of secularity are dismissive of transcendence, both in terms of conceptual legitimacy for philosophical or theological inquiry and with respect to the religious experience as such. Culturally, the most notable forms of secularity emerged during recent centuries in the West have been associated with the denial of transcendence in its religious inflection. The paper aligns us with a dynamic of otherness inseparable from structures of human mutuality as analyzed by Richard Niebuhr. Grounded as he is on Niebuhr's work, Rossi identifies some foundations for building the kind of human relationality and mutuality required by the experience of dialogue and language. In order to resist degradation and all forms of reductionism, language and dialogue must be fashioned upon divine otherness and promote otherness in the midst of human finitude. Niebuhr's approach to the social question is grounded in the relational character of human finitude and is responsive to the generative nature of human language and dialogue. In the end, only the reality of God can function, being the most radical form of otherness, as an operative foundation for human relationality and sociality. As elaborated by Shen, it is in hospitality, particularly in the context of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, that we understand and appropriate the grammar of solidarity and mutuality demanded by the presence of many others.

In "Matteo Ricci and His Method of Cultural Accommodation," Hu Yeping, based on Tang Yijie's analyzes of the three principles of cultural communication and integration, deals with different aspects of Matteo Ricci's interactions with Confucian literati to illustrate the possibility of dialogue and cooperation of different cultural traditions and religious faiths. The paper elucidates the significance of Ricci's implementation of the method of cultural accommodation between Christianity, Catholicism in particular, and Confucianism in the Ming Dynasty. Recognizing that there are issues and debates on Ricci's method of cultural accommodation, the author emphasizes the importance of Ricci's method of cultural accommodation. Matteo Ricci was well versed in Chinese thought and culture and had a great appreciation for Confucian ideas and the moral teachings of Confucius. During the almost three decades of his stay in China, Ricci made great efforts to link Oriental and Occidental cultures through such methods as Linking Catholicism with

Confucianism (*heru* 和儒), Concordance with Confucianism (*furu* 符儒), Complementing Confucianism (*buru* 补儒) and Transcending Confucianism (*chaoru* 超儒). Ricci not only mastered the language both in speaking and writing, wore Chinese clothes, and formed friends with the local literati and imperial officials, but also developed a deep interest, sympathy, and respect for Chinese culture, especially Chinese classics. According to Ricci, the Christian concept of love has a similar semantic potential as the Confucian concept of humanness (*ren*). He wrote *On Friendship* in Chinese, presented himself as a Confucian scholar, and did whatever he could to graft the Christian vision into the Confucian body of learning.

Benoît Vermander's "Reading the Other's Classics: The Encounter between Jesuits and Chinese Literati" looks into ways through which Chinese and Western classics were exchanged and reinterpreted in the past. The essay pays special homage to Shen's many contributions to cross-cultural hermeneutics and promotion of the Chinese tradition. In specific terms, the essay explains throughout the encounter between Chinese literati and Jesuit missionaries, from the time of Matteo Ricci till the second half of the eighteenth century, how the mutual discovery of the classics foundational for each civilization proved to be a process of discoveries, challenges, and ambiguities. In his contribution, the author organizes actors, features, and episodes of the East-West textual encounter into a narrative that particularly underlines three fields of knowledge and inquiry: sinology, comparative classics, and cross-cultural theology. All three express the importance of Shen's work as a *locus* for dialogical and cross-cultural encounters.

In "China, the Jesuits, and Foucault: Tacit Connections in the Transformation of Seventeenth-Century Western Europe through Educational Practices," Astrid Vicas offers a correlative reading between some of the positions assumed by Michel Foucault and the Chinese educational practices viewed and interpreted by the Jesuits who arrived in China in the seventeenth century, especially the Portuguese Jesuit Alvaro Semedo. According to Vicas, the cultural transformation of Western Europe in the seventeenth century was a major consequence of the understanding of Chinese educational practices proposed by European observers, among whom the Jesuit missionaries played a most important role. The letters that the Jesuits sent from China to Europe addressed audiences across the continent and provided insightful commentaries on the rich practices in shaping bodily attitudes and mental aptitudes in the Chinese educational system. Correspondingly in the twentieth century, Foucault dedicated an enormous amount of intellectual energy to the understanding of the relational power implemented through discipline and to the distinctive disciplinary practices that would generate an authentic micro-

physics of power. The author recognizes the importance of the role played by the Jesuits in China and the impact of their writings about a process of social engineering that affected Western societies at the time. Specifically, the author uncovers a structural similarity between Foucault's analysis of relational power and Semedo's observations about Chinese educational practices. For Vicas, the issue is related to cross-cultural homogenization rather than the doctrinal content itself. Hence Foucault's analysis and Semedo's observations are similar indications of a process of tacit intercultural homogenization linking China and Western Europe.

In "Prospero Intorcetta, S.J. and His Contribution to Sinology," Thierry Meynard looks into the case of Prospero Intorcetta, a Jesuit missionary born in Sicily, especially his encounter with the Confucian classics in the seventeenth century. The contribution starts by evoking the importance of the Portuguese Jesuit Inácio da Costa and his historical role as both a teacher of an entire generation of missionaries and an editor of the *Sapientia sinica* (1662), which included the translation of *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), part of *The Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), and a life of Confucius. Meynard explores a highly relevant aspect of the spiritual and intellectual process associated with the Western understanding and appropriation of the Chinese classics. He describes the first translation of the Chinese classics for Western readers as well as the internal odyssey of an extremely small group of men, lovers of China and the Chinese people, in search of ways of bringing about the encounter of two major *Weltanschauungen*: the Chinese, mostly molded in Confucianism, and the European, in many senses inseparable from the Christian understanding of the order of Being. The paper also alludes to the inspiration Intorcetta received from Zhang Juzheng and his own attempt to bring the Chinese classics in harmony with the most important of the Christian doctrines. The *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola played an important role in this context.

Michael Suh Niba's "The Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Translation of the New Testament into the Bafut Language" states another relationship with the biblical universe. As one of the translators of the New Testament into the Bafut Language in Cameroon, the author narrates the theoretical foundation drawn from the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The author delves into Gadamer's descriptive ontology and articulates how his philosophical approach to hermeneutics finds resonance in the Catholic Church's guidelines for interpreting the biblical texts. In sharing his deep agreement with Gadamer's account of interpretation, the author reports on his experience of being part of a team of translators across different Christian denominations that produced a version of the New Testament in

the Bafut language. As a cumulative experience, it witnesses how traditions, prejudices, and, obviously, the hermeneutical fusion of horizons converge into a true translative conversation. In a given society, just as the law cannot be understood in a mere historical sense, so the Good News of Jesus Christ cannot be taken as a mere historical document. In accordance with Gadamer's hermeneutical paradigm, the moment speakers of Bafut in Cameroon gather together to listen to the word of God in their own language, they experience God's Presence among His people.

William Sweet reflects on "Individualist and Communitarian Principles of Justice" to understand how people, particularly those of different cultures and traditions, can come together and work for human liberation and flourishing. This is an important issue in times such as ours, increasingly dominated by the politics of identity and difference, which overemphasizes the distinctiveness of human beings from one another even to the point of erasing basic commonalities. For Sweet, the notion of justice should be understood in the context of a diverse and socially, ethnically, culturally, and religiously pluralistic world. The author emphasizes the importance of a common regard across cultures and civilizations in terms of the value of justice, claiming that there is no single way of understanding what justice properly is in the human world. The challenge, therefore, is how to understand justice both interculturally recognized and integrated in such a way that cooperation, harmony, and solidarity across cultures and traditions are realistically possible. The paper deals with individualist and communitarian approaches to justice and emphasizes the importance of Jacques Maritain's understanding of the social issue. According to Maritain, true justice is concrete and alive, for it takes account of existential circumstances, and treats human beings as persons as they are all endowed with the same essential dignity. Sweet celebrates a notion of justice that is grounded in the recognition of human dignity and the human person as being endowed with intrinsic value.

Fu Youde's "Hebrew Justice: A Reconstruction for Today" explores the implications, on both theological and political grounds, of the meaning of justice in the Hebrew *Tanakh* and in the Bible, both of which have a twofold dimension, divine and human. Justice is not only a God-given reality but also one determined by human actions such as fairness in trade, compassion toward the needy and the stranger, etc. The author shows how holiness, comprehensiveness, and legalism are major characteristics of religious ethics and politics in the Bible. Important contributions by many Jewish thinkers toward the clarification of the Hebrew concept of justice are brought into consideration. Connotations of Hebrew justice and the evolution attached to

the concept are equally put into evidence. However, since the Hebrew Bible is not a typical philosophical work, it does not contain a system of justice, as is the case with thinkers such as Aristotle and John Rawls. Analyzing biblical terms such as *Zedek* and *Mishpat*, Fu Youde illustrates the relationship between the theory of justice and the polity depicted in the Bible. Since the human being is not inherently just and hence cannot by natural means become righteous, the biblical notion of justice provides not only just laws, rules, and principles but also a theocratic political system. Although the biblical political system in Ancient Israel corresponds to an institutionalization of the Hebrew concept of justice, the biblical theocracy is a rule of law that reflects God's justice. To act justly is to act in accordance with God's law. For the prophets of Israel, justice always depends more on deeds than on words. The civilizational impact of the Hebrew concept of justice is significant as the system of legal justice derives from it. This system not only corresponds to an earlier stage of human civilization but also provides inspiration for future generations.

In "Transcendent Moral Realism in Charles Taylor and Classical Confucianism," Andrew Tsz Wan Hung compares some positions of Charles Taylor with the moral understanding of Confucianism. The author begins with an exploration of Taylor's criticism of moral autonomy and how the idea of moral autonomy is closely linked to an ethics of authenticity. Taylor's idea of a theistic hermeneutical moral realism is explored in terms of a self-transcending moral framework. The question is how the Christian theistic tradition might provide a satisfactory moral framework for the achievement of the authentic self. In comparison, the paper looks into the Confucian Heaven-mandated morality and demonstrates how Confucian morality is based on an understanding of human nature that is Heaven-endowed. Being pre-determined by Heaven (*Tian*), according to Confucianism, human nature is not self-determined; moral self-cultivation must follow the Way of Heaven. The author thinks that although the two understandings of human-transcendent relations are different due to their different traditions, their approaches to morality have many similarities. For instance, both emphasize the centrality of self-authenticity rather than the idea of a strong moral autonomy. The moral realism of both positions appears at the service of an embodied dialogical self. The compatibility of the Christian and the Confucian moral theories is no longer an issue. Instead, they are complementary and capable of enriching each other.

Wilhelm Dancă's "The Metamorphosis of Memory: Rediscovering Vladimir Ghika" focuses on the achievement of Vladimir Ghika, especially the role of memory in his theoretical reflections. Ghika's references to the

topic are not systematic, but he makes important contributions in spiritual writings and studies of Church history and the history of the Romanian people. For Ghika, memory plays a significant role. He uses the image of the paradise of memory to explain the role and existential importance of this particular aspect of human cognition. He expresses himself in a rather strong manner toward those who attempt against the identity of persons or communities by deconstructing their memory, and even considers them memory vampires. In the paper, the author states that Ghika, in his historical, spiritual, and philosophical writings, interprets memory from a Christian personalist perspective and its role in terms of the constitution of our relationships between ourselves, others and things of the world as well as with God. For Ghika, memory is a function of love because, ultimately, there is no memory without love. According to the author, Ghika's passion for history, especially his studies of the Romanian people based on documents in the Vatican archives, is a pragmatic demonstration of his deep philosophical understanding of the importance of memory. It is within the frame of a collective memory that faith operates and re-creates cultures of shared memories.

“Samuel Štefan Osuský's Prophetic Wisdom: A Case Study” by Michal Valco looks at the case of Samuel Štefan Osuský, a bishop of the Lutheran Church in Slovakia and a former professor of theology at the Lutheran Theological School in Bratislava in the twentieth century. Osuský fathoms his inquiry as follows: What is the meaning of life? What is the purpose of humanity, or of a given nation? How much can we know? What is the relationship between faith (religion) and science (scientific inquiry)? For Osuský, religion means the collection of all divine and human expressions related to God and has two main directions, from top to bottom or from God to creation and from bottom to top or from humans to God. Osuský's legacy seems both stimulating and unsettling in a context determined by Nazi-Fascism and Bolshevism/Communism. According to the author, Osuský sees four main elements at the root of European Nazi-Fascism: The Renaissance movement with its preference for nation instead of the church; Machiavelli's *The Prince*, the first teacher of Mussolini; Hegelian idealistic philosophy; the thought of Giovanni Gentile, the official philosopher of Fascism. The crux of the problem is that the human self pretends to create reality itself. The task, therefore, is not just to distance ourselves from the dangerous idea of a sovereign self, but to find ways of achieving independence from the state and the class of aristocrats, who claim that they are endowed with the natural right to rule and ‘guide’ others in the public realm. For Osuský, the philosophy of Bolshevism is similar to Fascism because both are grounded in a

philosophy of the will, voluntarism, or in a philosophy that could not do otherwise but lead to humanitarian catastrophes.

Lin Hui-ju's "Encountering Many Others in Clinical Narratives" asserts that the rapid development of modern biomedical technology has driven the development of medical implementation and health care policies. In order to solve urgent value challenges, the clinical field requires simple ethical theories that provide guidance for clinical practice. Bioethics (or biomedical ethics) is a research field arising from the dialogue between the fields of modern health care and ethics. The author defends the role of intuitive and analytical knowledge in medical education, especially in clinical reasoning and medical ethics. Lin also stresses the importance of the humanities in medical formation, especially the role of contextuality and complexity in the formative process. According to the author, modern medicine has succumbed to the logical dilemma of a disease-centric approach; a narrative medicine is needed so as to restore the depth and the importance of the humanities in medicine. This is because the narrative method in medicine enables physicians to form a bond with patients through a deep understanding of human nature. In clinical narratives, the vulnerability and dependency of patients awaken the individual self of medical professionals who undertake the weight of ethical responsibilities. Both medical educators and medical students should understand the connections between patients and diseases and between physicians and patients with a broader perspective and understand their responsibility toward their patients. Through this approach, the original patient-centered ethical responsibilities can be realized.

In "Chinese Diaspora as People of Their Own Countries and Chinese Philosophy as World Philosophy," Li Chenyang and Xiao Hong explore issues related to the Chinese diaspora and Chinese philosophy. The authors endorse Tang Junyi's 唐君毅 call for overseas Chinese to establish themselves in their adopted lands and argue for a rather nuanced view on the identity of Chinese living abroad. The paper suggests that Chinese abroad should not live as marginalized individuals scattered outside of "homeland" China, rather they should become people legitimately established in their own respective countries. Li and Xiao advance the view that Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy should not just take place in the motherland but also in the world at large. They consider that although Chinese immigrant thinkers in the past century played a major role in promoting Chinese philosophy outside China, the importance of their role is destined to decline along with the success of Chinese philosophy becoming a world philosophy.

Yu Xuanmeng's "The Human Being and the Ground of Philosophy" brings back the debate regarding the essence of human beings. The author

compares two different philosophical traditions on issues related to human nature. According to the Aristotelian argument, the human being is both a political and a rational animal. Essence determines a thing as what it is; rationality determines the human being as human. Essence is superior to phenomenon; rationality is superior to sensation. Since essence is something innate or inherent, we take for granted that rationality belongs to the human being by birth. However, *The Analects* demonstrates that Confucian thought is ultimately about the art of becoming human. “Without recognizing the ordinance of Heaven, it is impossible to be a superior man. Without an acquaintance with the rules of propriety, it is impossible for the character to be established. Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men.” To be human while pursuing *Tao* means to learn to be human. If an inherent essence had been attributed to the human being, then it would not be necessary for us to learn how to be human. According to the author, in Chinese traditional philosophy, there is no term corresponding to the word essence. This implies that in Chinese thought, essence tends to be expressed not as a structure with concepts, but rather based on the life of virtue.

Zou Shipeng’s “Self-Awareness in Traditional Chinese Medicine” reflects on the importance of traditional Chinese medicine in the formative process of cultural self-awareness. According to the author, the distinction between traditional Chinese and Western medicine is based not merely on the theoretical and the technical but goes back to philosophy and culture in general. In order to interpret traditional Chinese medicine, one “does not have to resort to Western medical science nor to resort to modern sciences such as system theory, synergy, and complex science.” Zou argues that Chinese medicine is better understood as a humanistic discipline and, therefore, should rather be subordinated to Chinese classical studies. Chinese medicine belongs to a cultural realm composed of not just literature, history, and philosophy but also studies related to Chinese nationalities, folk cultures, traditions, and art. The study of Chinese medicine is inseparable from the wider range of Chinese cultural traditions and is closely connected to the study of Chinese philosophy and cultural values. The author uses the Chinese *Yin Yang Wu Xing* theory elaborated in the Canon of Internal Medicine as an example to show that Chinese medicine is based on the cosmological thoughts of *The Book of Changes*, Laozi, and other scholars. It introduces cosmology into the body system and reflects the Confucian concept of “the integrity of man and nature.”

In “Chinese Landscape (*Shanshui* 山水) and the Sacred,” Yolaine Escande asks: Is there a sacred dimension in the Chinese landscape tradition and in its contemporary practice? The author states that the sacred character of the

“Five Mountains” in China was associated with an imperial cult in the past. They became merely landscapes only recently after the Empire collapsed in the wake of the proclamation of the Republic in 1911. According to the author, since then, “sacred” and “landscape” seem to no longer coexist. The paper examines why landscape was considered sacred in the Chinese territory during the twentieth century, especially in accordance to with literati’s aesthetic tradition. The author scrutinizes how far the Chinese “landscape culture” can be related to some form of sacredness. On the one hand, the paper aims to show that landscape is an expression of Tao’s generosity. On the other hand, it also takes distance from the idea that the sacred nature of mountains and waters is not always the effect of transcendental beauty.

The volume ends with “Personal Recollection of Professor Vincent Shen,” a tribute by Guo Qiyong from Wuhan University, who praises the intellectual friendship between the author and Vincent Shen. Our last word, however, is to express our deep gratitude to those who made this volume in memory of Vincent Shen possible. Besides the contributors, whom we thank for their generosity and patience, we would like to emphasize the support received from Johanna Liu (Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto), Irene Wang (founder of Candor Foundation), and Astrid Vicas (Professor of Saint Leo University). Our special appreciation goes also to Thierry Sarfis (Paris) for the design of the cover.

PART I

**Reflections on Shen's Philosophical
and Theological Thought**

The Meaningfulness of Life

WILLIAM A. BARBIERI*

The “Meaningfulness of Life” was proposed by Vincent Shen (1949-2018) to mark a constellation of issues associated with the deepest drives and highest purposes of humanity. He links the term to the manner in which considerations of what is most important or of ultimate concern in life affect individuals and their relations to other human persons and groups, to nature and the universe, and to ultimate reality. If, as Aristotle held, all human beings desire to know, could it not be the case that all have an even deeper desire to live a meaningful life? A cardinal concern of this theme is with what might make the pursuit of “The Meaningfulness of Life” difficult today, as well as with how such obstacles might be addressed. The term is intended to resonate with philosophical inquiry, religious thought, and wisdom traditions of all types.

In the designation “The Meaningfulness of Life,” “life” may refer to life in general, or to an individual life, or to the act of living. For its part, “meaningfulness,” in English, conveys two quite distinct, if ultimately related, root meanings that we might describe as axiological and hermeneutical: as having to do, that is, with value and sense respectively. What does it mean to live a meaningful life? In the first place, this means to live a life that has value, that is worthwhile, that counts for something. In this existential sense, we might say that life matters, or that it has a point or purpose. Related to this is the ethical sense in which we speak of living life in a meaningful way: this refers to the aspiration to live well, to fulfill one’s proper end or telos, to contribute to a greater good, or to make a difference. If, conversely, we speak of the meaninglessness of life in this connection, we entertain the

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proposition that life in general is worthless or pointless, or that one is living aimlessly or nihilistically.

The second core meaning of “meaningfulness” has to do not so much with value as with sense and understanding. To be meaningful in this sense is to be intelligible, to make sense, to embody and convey a coherent message or set of ideas. Divining the meaning of life is a hermeneutical task: for life to have a meaning of this sort, it must evince a cohesion that can be grasped or apprehended by the mind. To refer to the meaninglessness of life in this respect would be to conclude it is incomprehensible or to confess that its internal coherence and intellectual connections to other things elude us.

A rudimentary characterization of “The Meaningfulness of Life” can identify some basic features of this conception and point out how they relate to other areas of human concern. Through “the exploration and naming of human meanings,” Charles Taylor notes, “normative patterns, ethical virtues, moral rules, the pursuit of truth, and the creation of beauty are established as ends in their own right.”¹ Identifying human meanings – that is, “meta-biological meanings” concerned with distinctively human issues such as the meaning of life² – requires us to come to terms with the fundamentally linguistic character of meaning: meaningfulness is predicated on language. In addition, meaning depends on the presence of “form” and “a plurality of components formed” (Robert Neville); on interconnections among “focal centers” and other elements (Michael Polanyi); on part-whole relations; and therefore on context. Famously, relations of meaning embody in various respects a “hermeneutical circle.”

In part, “meaningfulness” is a function of how meaning structures and informs worlds. Because the coherence embodied by meaning arises in a temporal setting, “meaningfulness” has an inextricable narrative dimension (Paul Ricoeur). Human meanings are set or enacted in contexts that connect past, present, and future: in a word, in stories. At the deepest level, these stories are the foundational myths providing the settings for our grasp of the cosmos or the world we live in. Above that level, we inhabit a *Lebenswelt*, a world of meanings that orient us in navigating life. Within this context, ethically, we rely on noetic structures that include valuations of the meanings we encounter around us, and from these we derive, individually and culturally, our worldviews.

¹ Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 336.

² *Ibid.*, 91.

The rootedness of “meaningfulness” in narrative opens up an aesthetic dimension in which literary genres and other media and art forms become engaged in explorations of life’s purpose and how to live meaningfully. This perspective highlights the role of creativity, the play of meaning, and the unpredictable discovery of dialogue in expanding possibilities for “meaningfulness.” William Desmond, in speaking of “the centrality of the aesthetic in considerations of the meaningfulness of life,” notes that “our sense of the meaning of life is very much bound up with our being as incarnate.” Indeed, humans, as embodied knowers, rely on a carnal substrate in the operations through which they perceive or formulate meanings. For some – notably, Daoists in the tradition of Laozi – the instability and limits of language prompt us to seek other corporeal or intuitive means of grasping the essential character of life and discerning how best to live.

In characterizing different perspectives on life’s meaningfulness, we do well to bear a few points in mind. Accounts of “meaningfulness” evince certain epistemological characteristics: they are filtered through experience, they are in some measure constructed or formed through templates or *gestalts*, they become “sedimented” over time. The full range of hermeneutical tools, including some sort of process of *Verstehen*, is required to gain entrée to the internalized meanings of others regarding life. And inasmuch as the language in which meanings are cast occupies a social location and mediates power (Pierre Bourdieu) – especially when it is ultimate meanings that are at stake – it thus invites political and sociological critique.

In accordance with Vincent Shen’s proposal, the topic “The Meaningfulness of Life” may be divided into five interconnected subthemes that might organize successive inquiries, dealing respectively with (1) the moral life and self-cultivation of persons, (2) the ethical character of communication and community/social life, (3) human relations with nature, (4) human relations with Ultimate Reality and the foundation of all meaningfulness, and (5) commonalities and dialogue among different civilizations and religions.

Person, Moral Life, Self-Cultivation

What makes life meaningful for individual people? One familiar set of responses has to do with the human capacity for agency and creativity; another addresses qualities of intellect, personhood, and dignity embodied in human beings. The dual senses of “meaningfulness” connected with value and sense come into play here. From the former standpoint, a meaningful life might imply self-actualization and ethical transformation, or living purposefully and productively: it is the *vita activa*. In the latter perspective, that of the

vita contemplativa, the qualities of living the examined life and finding one's place in a larger whole enter the foreground.

If "meaningfulness" denotes the quality of having a plenitude of meaning, then it can be related to the human aspiration to realize one's potential. Charles Taylor speaks of this as the quest "to be more fully human," while Robert Neville describes the quest as for "wholeness of self." And if, as Bernard Lonergan maintains, being is the core of meaning, then the quest becomes to, as it were, "be all that one can be." Just as its character can be formulated in these different ways, the quest for human flourishing can be associated with varying objectives: authenticity, freedom, liberation, enlightenment, or mystical union, to name a few. The pursuit of "meaningfulness" can be aided, furthermore, by a variety of disciplines or ways of self-cultivation emphasizing, for example, love, charity, devotionalism, compassion, and lovingkindness; or *ahimsa* and nonviolence; or selfless service and right action; or submission to the truth or a higher power; or responsibility and ritual propriety.

For human beings, life's meaningfulness is inextricable from their fleshly, material existence. For this reason, work is a principal theater of meaning, as Simone Weil and John Paul II richly illustrated. Sexuality and family life are likewise loci for "meaningfulness." The same can be said of the creation of beauty through the arts and performance. And it could be argued that the human body itself can be vested with meaning, as in the case of the *aufrechte Gang* (Ernst Bloch). The sense of living a meaningful life is a source of resilience that can provide an antidote to both physical decrepitude and moral injury. It remains an open question, meanwhile, whether humans are endowed with and well-served by an inborn desire to attain meaning – or whether desire itself obstructs them from living meaningfully, as some Buddhists might suggest.

Social Existence, Communicative Action, Common Good

Because meaning in general is essentially intersubjective and temporal in character, questions of "meaningfulness" are embedded in communicative practices, communal histories, and traditions of inquiry. Thus, in its social context, "The Meaningfulness of Life" becomes linked ethically with values of communion, solidarity, and social justice.

There are numerous modes of participating in social life that can validate our existence. The way of altruism or self-sacrifice for others is one well-established avenue to "meaningfulness." Martyrdom, as, in its essence, an act of witness to others, is a paradigmatic form of locating one's life

in an overarching pattern of meaning and value. There are other ways, too, in which people can give a point to their existence by consecrating their lives to larger groups or collective projects: the nation, social movements, religions. Political communities are a distinctive case: embracing the identity of citizen lifts us out of a “bare life” deprived of meaning and connects us to a structure that embodies large-scale common goods. Political violence exists in precarious relation to meaning in this context. It may be, as Chris Hedges puts it, that “war is a force that gives us meaning,” but the function of torture, terrorism, and concentration camps is precisely to unmake the meanings that give life its point.

The collective pursuit of knowledge and learning is a central communicative arena in which meaningful ways of life are sought today. Far from being value-free, scientific investigation is both grounded in trust in an intelligible cosmos and ordered to the higher purpose of understanding persons and their worlds; in this sense, it both presumes and produces “meaningfulness.” The structure of the unconscious, according to Jacques Lacan, also predisposes us to find meaning through seeking encounter with others. In attending to these relations, psychology joins philosophy, phenomenology, theology, ethnography, literary studies, and other disciplines in a multi-perspectival approach to investigating life’s “meaningfulness.”

Meanwhile, the historicity of meaning places us before the thorny problem of trying to come to terms with shifting historical conceptions of what is meaningful even as we recognize that the concept of “meaningfulness” itself shifts over times and cultures. To what extent is a concern with “The Meaningfulness of Life” a problematic informed by the specific conditions of late modern societies? What are the cultural conditions – e.g., emergent pluralism, a hard-won spirit of ecumenicism, or the rise of heterological consciousness (Michel de Certeau) – that give rise to a language and discourse of “meaningfulness”? A socio-historical perspective pulls into focus two additional questions regarding life’s meaning. What are the most significant inner characteristics of our secular age – the signs of the times – with respect to what we take to be meaningful? And inasmuch as the meaningful life can be identified with the good life, can the case be made that humanity is making moral progress?

Human Relations with Nature

One feature of our times is a rapidly changing relationship to the natural world, and this raises instructive questions about aesthetics, sources of moral value, technology, and ecological ethics. In regard to questions of

human meaning and purpose, shifting relations to nature in Romantic and post-Romantic poetics mark evolving perceptions of feeling and the sublime, of introspection and transcendence, and of other categories relating meaningfulness to our encounters with the empirical realm. The relation of reason, too, to nature has been called into question with the postmodern challenge to natural law. Is it still feasible to locate a ground for “meaningfulness” in a cosmogonic natural moral order, or must we recognize that it is primarily a human construct, a cultural artifact?

Another aspect of the human relation to nature involves the use of technologies to control and refashion our surroundings. If, as Taylor remarks, language is not simply a technology itself, but “is rather fundamental to all our technologies,”³ then we might further conclude that technologies embody operations of meaning. This would imply that the technological mode of interacting with and exploiting nature might be answerable to, and open to transformation through, the critique of human “meaningfulness.” Similarly, William Desmond argues that care for the environment is an existential issue concerning the nexus of aesthetic, ethical, and religious considerations surrounding “The Meaningfulness of Life.” Today, the progress of the environmental ethics (Pope Francis) and animal rights movements is advancing the notion that natural entities possess intrinsic value, and hence, “meaningfulness.” One narrative context in which this attribution makes sense is a story highlighting the createdness of the cosmos. That is one possibility; but there are others.

Human Relation to Ultimate Reality

Concern with the fulsomeness of meaning in life directs us eventually to the matter of ultimacy, confronting us with questions about the basic sources and foundations of meaningfulness. Ultimate sources of “The Meaningfulness of Life” might be powers such as God or Allah or Shiva or *Tian* or *Pacha Mama*, or realities such as emptiness or Brahman or Dharmakaya; or, alternatively, it might be held that humans alone are taken to be the ultimate arbiters of meaning and value. Ultimate meaning might be grounded, further, in principles or axioms such as the Dao, the Dharma, the Absolute Idea, or the *lex aeterna* or divine will; or – in the immanent frame of secularity – it might be rooted in existential freedom; or it might emanate, confoundingly, from nothingness.

³ Ibid., 86.

Humans engage ultimate meanings, then, in specific venues and contexts. Insofar as these are religious, “The Meaningfulness of Life” is characteristically mediated through the language of myth and the symbolic practice of ritual. Mediations of ultimacy are especially relevant to the fact of natural death and the questions that surround it regarding the afterlife: it is at the terminus of life that the question of meaningfulness comes into its sharpest focus. Something similar can be said about the problem of theodicy when it is cast as the quest, across cultures and traditions, to incorporate the realities of evil and suffering into an explanatory and rationalizing nexus of ultimate meaning. Indeed, theodicy is perhaps the quintessential challenge to that aspect of meaningfulness concerned with “making sense” of life. For the dimension of “meaningfulness” that deals with value and living a life that counts or is worthy, meanwhile, the challenge of redemption in the face of failure is a paradigmatic issue.

Cross-Cultural and Interreligious Perspective

Ongoing processes of pluralization among, and within, cultures complicate efforts to arrive at cross-cultural insights and understandings regarding “The Meaningfulness of Life.” But there remain grounds for thinking of the plurality of cultures as complementary rather than conflictual in nature with regard to the quest for meaning. The emergence of separate but roughly contemporary “Axial Age” cultures advancing new conceptions of ultimate meaning supports this proposition. Today, discussions of “integral ecology” likewise give credence to the notion that we can speak meaningfully of an ecology of cultures. If that is indeed the case, then there is much to be gained from exploring other cultures’ approaches to “meaningfulness,” building upon areas of commonality, and learning from differences.

This undertaking involves several stages related to different techniques of “meaningfulness.” An initial phase revolves around the challenge of translation, the skillful rendering of meaning across linguistic divides. A next phase builds on this process through the application of cultural hermeneutics geared toward building up deep understandings of the lifeways and worldviews of other peoples. This can lead, eventually, to a process of intercultural reasoning through which shared meanings and commitments are identified or developed with respect to “The Meaningfulness of Life.”

Taylor remarks that the “light of faith” or a concern with ultimacy augments this process by casting it as an “exchange in friendship.” For from that perspective, “the human being has a telos toward understanding, and particularly toward understanding the other, other people, other cultures.

This involves seeing the good, the value, in the other; and leads eventually to the formation of friendships, solidarities. Seen from another angle, we cannot see the full richness of other cultures if we spurn spiritual search.”

Exploring the richness of what diverse cultures have to say about life’s meaningfulness is an enterprise reflecting the core concerns of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) founded by George F. McLean as he put it in his book *Tradition, Harmony, and Transcendence* (1994):⁴

In the pressing needs of our times, only an intensification of cooperation between peoples can make available the essential and immense stores of human experience and creativity. ... [T]hat other cultures are quintessentially products of self-cultivation by other spirits as free and creative implies the need to open one’s horizons beyond one’s own self-concerns to the ambit of the freedom of others. This involves promoting the development of other free and creative centers and cultures which, precisely as such, are not in one’s own possession or under one’s control. One lives, then, no longer in terms merely of oneself or of things that one can make or manage, but in terms of an interchange between free persons and peoples of different cultures.

⁴ George F. McLean, *Tradition, Harmony, and Transcendence* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 153-154.

Openness of Oneself toward Others: Vincent Shen's Theory of Strangification

KATIA LENEHAN*

Introduction

The term “strangification,” a neologism that might appear strange in English yet is much more understandable in Chinese *waitui* 外推, means etymologically the act of going outside of oneself to multiple others, or going outside of one's familiarity to strangeness, to many strangers.¹

“Strangification,” as an act proceeding from the self toward many others, according to Vincent Shen, is a fully human event, which appears in various activities of human beings, and can therefore be applied to a variety of communications, including cultural exchanges and religious conversations.² The theory of strangification represents one of Shen's academic achievements, which he spared no effort in advocating in his later years. In my view, this theory, which originated first from constructive realism but then was elaborated on and augmented by Shen on a large scale, is based on his insight

* Fu Jen Catholic University, Taipei, Taiwan. – The Chinese version of this paper was first published in *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 46, no. 11 (2019). The research was sponsored by the Ministry of Science and Technology. Project number: MOST 108-2410-H-030-030-MY2.

¹ Vincent Shen, “Globalization and Confucianism: The Virtues of *Shu* and Generosity to Many Others,” in *Confucian Ethics in Retrospect and Prospect* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2008), 293.

² Vincent Shen, *Cross-cultural Philosophy* 跨文化哲學論 (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2014), 17.

into both Chinese and Western philosophies as well as his own experiences, and it achieves a balance between theory and practice, the compatibility of static structure and dynamic evolution, and as well the integration of Chinese and Western philosophies. The author, as one of Professor Shen's students, had the privilege of hearing on numerous occasions from lectures and meetings his elucidation of strangification theory, and thus was profoundly inspired regarding cultural exchanges and religious conversations.

We must recognize that Shen's strangification is not an idea that can be defined or explained from merely one perspective. However, due to the limited length of this paper, the author will only focus on the significance of the openness of the self toward reality, which is contained in the theory of strangification and needs to be thoroughly explicated. This paper attempts to probe into this significance in order to reveal the meaning and value of "strangification." Strangification, in my understanding, is a concept that, to the greatest extent, illustrates Shen's philosophical thinking to comprehensively and positively confront and deal with the relationship between the subject and "the Other" and to overcome the problem of closed subjectivity faced by modernity.

The Problem of Closed Subjectivity

Subjectivity is regarded as the starting point of modern philosophy. "*Cogito, ergo sum*" proposed by René Descartes (1596-1650) marks a transformation of human philosophical concern from the focus on cosmology, metaphysics, and the whole of humanity to the focus on the subject itself. In modern times, the significance and value of the development and exploration on subjectivity are most definitely indelible. And this subjectivity is so dear to human beings that it is no wonder Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) once asserted:

After Neo-Platonism and all that is associated with it is left behind, it is not until Descartes is arrived at that we really enter upon a philosophy which is, properly speaking, independent, which knows that it comes forth from reason as independent, and that self-consciousness is an essential moment in the truth. ... Here, we may say, we are at home, and like the mariner after a long voyage in a tempestuous sea, we may now hail the sight of land.³

³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy III*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Thoemmes Press, 1999), 217.

Subjectivity is home, land, and warmth for the people. Modern philosophy has crystalized the most powerful pillar for modernity, that is, subjectivity. Subjectivity lays the foundations of modernity, but, at the same time, brings difficulties to it. Emphasis on epistemology, which emerged from modern philosophy, developed into Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) phenomenology, yet the problems brought by subjectivity have never disappeared. Carlo Kwan rightly commented on Husserl's phenomenology, which clearly depicted the predicament of modernity:

When *epoché* is proposed as to suspend judgment regarding the general or naive philosophical belief in the existence of the external world, a problem arises: how can we overcome self-enclosure resulted from "solipsism?" ... Although Husserl strongly accentuated the idea of "intentionality," his insistence on suspending external existences makes his grasp of "self" still a "closed subject."⁴

The concept of "intersubjectivity" was proposed by Husserl to deal with the issues of "inter-construction" between subjects and of their "co-constructed world." Namely, the concept of intersubjectivity was proposed to illuminate the predicament caused by solipsism. But Husserl's attempt, however, was unsuccessful due to the closed nature of consciousness itself, which prevents the subject from being completely open to others. It may be more preferable in dealing with the existence of others to embrace the idea of "Dasein" suggested by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Dasein, a concept of being as a "being-with"⁵ involves others on its ontological level instead of relating to others on a cognitive level. Dasein, rather than a subject opposed to the object, is a "being-with," which always coexists with others in its ontological structure even without a concrete, actual individual presented to it. "Otherness" therefore has melted into the subject in the way one exists long before he recognizes it consciously, and thereby as it is, the subject is always open to others in so far as it is a Dasein. We shall come back to this point later.

To sum up, the establishment of subjectivity and the emphasis on the subject's rational powers have ushered in the brilliance of modernity. The issue of a closed subjectivity, however, remains unsolved. At the same time, the understanding of the subject's rationality has gradually narrowed

⁴ Carlo Kwan, *Epistemology*, vol. II (Taipei: Wunan Publishing House, 2000), 222-223.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robison (New York: SCM Press, 1962), 149-163.

down into an instrumental one (this is also one of the strong criticisms of modernity offered by postmodern theories). In facing others from different cultures of an endless diversity in our global times, one can no longer disregard the issue of “the other.” How to deal with this issue in theory and practice and properly handle the relationship between the self and others must be a top priority in our time.

Strangification or *Waitui*

From a perspective on the development of philosophical thought, the issue of going outside of oneself, or, breaking the closed self, in my view, is the link from modernity toward thought in the era of globalization. Shen once said:

In general, all kinds of thoughts that have arisen in this century are human-centered. ... However, the more people think about themselves, the more incomprehensible the human problem. I therefore believe that “strangification” is a panacea for solving human and philosophical problems. “Strangification” is constantly going outside of oneself, going toward others, toward society, toward other fields, other cultures, as well as toward nature and toward ideals or sacredness; indeed, a kind of original generosity is contained in this willingness of going outside of oneself, through which a self is able to complete itself in the process of mutual enrichment with others.⁶

In logic, the realization of strangification or *waitui* must go beyond oneself first, and then reach out to further make contact with others, as well as other disciplines and cultures in order to enrich one another. In reality, however, from the perspective on self-formation, a person’s self is never a static one. He must at the outset form himself among others under various influences of disciplines and cultures.

The idea of strangification is closely related to constructive realism. Shen clearly indicated that constructive realism is proposed in order to deal with the theoretical difficulty caused by logical positivism: logical positivism explores the meaning of judgment, the reference of experience, logic, language, etc., but does not talk about metaphysical issues alone, and excludes all discussions concerning reality and existence. However, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) found that the “language game” is not autonomous, and in fact corresponds

⁶ Vincent Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue* 對比, 外推與交談 (Taipei: Wunan Publishing House, 2002), 2-3.

to our actual life. This view makes some logical positivists change their position, with even logicians unable to escape the discussion of ontology.⁷ Constructive realism is thus to revisit the issue of reality and propose “two types of reality:” one is reality itself, and the other is the constructed reality. Constructive realism emphasizes the importance of language, since all cognitive activities need to be eventually expressed in language. Following this, different disciplines or sciences establish different terms and ways of their own narrative system (such as political science, economics or sociology, etc.) in order to access reality. Consequently, various “micro-worlds” are formed or established respectively with different languages and theories.⁸

“Micro-worlds” with different languages and theoretical systems can be accumulated into a “constructed reality.” However, it should be noted that this constructed reality is in no way reality itself. Shen aptly commented that the dichotomy proposed by constructive realism is actually somewhat similar to the Kantian dichotomy between the phenomenon and the thing itself, except that constructive realism does not investigate Kant’s transcendental ego and its correspondence with the external world.⁹ There is a key point in this context: the “constructed reality” formed by the sum of the micro-worlds, although assuming the existence of reality, is unable to be identical with reality itself. Constructive realism thereby avoids probing into reality itself and instead focuses on the communication among micro-worlds. In response to this, Shen believes that the “two types of reality” approach still deserves to be reexamined.¹⁰ But when all is said and done, still, “constructive realism insists that instead of being obsessed with reality itself, it is better to let the micro-worlds communicate with each other and learn from each other’s languages. Thus, precisely based on the assumption of two types of reality, the approach of strangification emerged for integration and communication between different micro-worlds.”¹¹

The strangification proposed by constructive realism as an approach for communication among different sciences, according to Shen’s theory concerning strangification or *waitui* (three different levels are proposed in total), merely refers to the first step of strangification – the linguistic. Linguistic strangification claims that any proposition/discourse/value found

⁷ Fritz Wallner and Vincent Shen, *Constructive Realism: Mediating China and the West* 建構實在論：中西哲學的中介 (Taipei, Taiwan Elite, 2018), 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

and supported by each discipline or each science, if it is true, is then able to be translated into a language used by another micro-world. If it cannot be translated, as a consequence, the principle or method suggested by the proposition must be problematic (or limited only to its own world) and needs to be further reviewed. On the contrary, if translatable, this means that the proposition to a certain degree must be true or at least imply a larger validity, which is able to be universalizable and be shared with other micro-worlds.

The second is pragmatic strangification. “If one discourse/value or expression/belief can be drawn out from its original social and pragmatic context and be put into other social and pragmatic contexts and is still valid, this means it is more universalizable and has larger validity than merely limited to its own context of origin.”¹² In addition to social practice, Shen enlarges the application of pragmatic strangification: the extrapolation of practice will no longer be limited to practice in a social context. Furthermore, the dialogue and exchange between various cultural worlds can also be tested by the approach of this pragmatic strangification. So to speak, the enlargement of practice from social to cultural context makes the pragmatic strangification an important approach in dealing with intercultural issues in our global age. Shen recognizes this enlargement as his contribution to constructive realism.¹³

The third is ontological strangification. It is Shen’s most profound, original, and inspiring contribution. F. Wallner believes that if one micro-world (a worldview formulated by a field/profession or a system of knowledge) is able to make its discourse/value understood by or transferred into another micro-world, these two different micro-worlds can access or communicate with each other, and this is already ontological strangification. However, Shen disagrees with Wallner’s understanding of ontological strangification. He argues that “this kind of definition is still problematic, since we cannot say that one is able to completely enter another micro-world merely by using that micro-world’s language. ... Indeed, in addition to language, different professions and research programs often have great difficulty in accessing one another. At this time, a further step is needed, that is, to experience reality itself, serving as an intermediary, to access another micro-world.”¹⁴ Shen, therefore, revises the meaning of ontological strangi-

¹² Shen, “Globalization and Confucianism: The Virtues of *Shu* and Generosity to Many Others,” 294.

¹³ Wallner and Shen, *Constructive Realism: Mediating China and the West*, 45. Shen clearly said, “This is what I have contributed to constructive realism.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

fication: “A discourse/value or expression/belief, when universalizable by a detour of experiencing Reality Itself, for example, a direct experience with Reality Itself, such as other people, Nature, or even with Ultimate Reality, would be very helpful for mutual understanding among different scientific micro-worlds.”¹⁵

To imagine, if one is entirely steeped in a certain linguistic system, it poses great difficulty for one to access with ease another linguistic system. Through the detour of experiencing reality, however, one may re-recognize or adjust oneself to capture an unfamiliar expression/discourse from another linguistic system in the process of interacting with that reality. In this way one is able to access, to a greater extent, a discourse/value/belief formulated by another micro-world outside of one’s own, habitual linguistic system. Following this, it is fair to say that ontological strangification actually facilitates linguistic strangification. With a further correlation, it can be said that the linguistic, pragmatic, and ontological approaches are, in fact, able to enhance and advance one another. When it comes to strangification, Shen always first illustrates linguistic strangification, then pragmatic, and finally ontological strangification. This is Shen’s narrative order of strangification; nevertheless, in terms of the structure proposed by his theory, according to my understanding, the ontological is supposed to be primary and fundamental. Just as Wittgenstein says: “To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life,”¹⁶ it has basically been suggested that all languages refer to reality in some way, and without somehow keeping in touch with reality, language can in no way even be conceived/imagined. If constructive realism rejects the ontological strangification proposed by Shen, it will fail to overcome the original difficulties of logical positivism, which remains in a position of being against any sort of discussion concerning reality itself. In other words, without admitting the legitimacy of ontological strangification involving reality itself, as Shen has suggested, constructive realism changes essentially nothing about logical positivism except to divide two types of reality.

The contribution of ontological strangification, as a sound methodology, consists not only in the fact that it is beneficial for intercultural conversation, but also that it promotes religious dialogue. It is absurd to expect language translation to be completely capable of reaching the abstruse core of some beliefs, especially in the field of religion. In such cases, ontological strangi-

¹⁵ Shen, “Globalization and Confucianism: The Virtues of *Shu* and Generosity to Many Others,” 294.

¹⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1969 [third edition]), §19.

fication serves as a useful approach in interreligious dialogues. The concept of “the Other,” according to Shen, “is not only limited to other persons, but also refers to nature or even the transcendent.”¹⁷ The relationship between the subject and “the Other” that Shen sees is comprehensive: human beings as “relational beings” are not only related to other persons, but are also closely related to nature and even “ultimate reality.” Concerning ontological strangification Shen thus emphasizes: “Through direct contact with reality or through a detour of revealed ultimate reality, we can proceed from a micro-world, a cultural world or a religious world into another micro-world, cultural world or religious world. Ontological strangification at this stage is especially important when there is a certain degree of religious orientation in some traditions and those in such traditions engage in interreligious dialogue.”¹⁸

Based on this view, in my opinion, Shen forms his comments on the missionary strategy of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), who came to China during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Shen believes that the flaw of his strategy lies in its failure to emphasize the experiences of ultimate reality, and without this detour of actual experiences, the opportunities for deeper religious interactions and dialogue were unfortunately missed. Shen writes,

If the Jesuits of the time [during the Ming Dynasty], in addition to the introduction of Western sciences and rationalism to complement Chinese culture, were also able to share their personal experiences and feelings of ultimate reality with the Chinese, and share their understanding of the hidden God, religious mystery, and as well introduce Christian thoughts and ideas concerning freedom and relationships ... etc., and then further invite each to experience the other’s experiences to achieve mutual understanding, perhaps, in this way, Catholicism could have had a much more in-depth communication with Daoism and Buddhism [in China].¹⁹

¹⁷ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17. In another article, Shen also said, “When we come to religious dialogue, which presupposes by its own nature ontological strangification, one’s experience with Ultimate Reality is very helpful for understanding others’ religious discourses and practices.” See Vincent Shen, “Truth and Strangification: Religious Dialogue Between Buddhism and Christianity,” in *Unity and Diversity in Religion and Culture, Exploring the Psychological and Philosophical Issues Underlying Global Conflict*, ed. Liubava Morena (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg Branch of Russian Institute for Cultural Research, 2006), 267-283.

¹⁹ Vincent Shen, *From Matteo Ricci to Martin Heidegger: Interaction between Chinese and Western Philosophies in the Cross-cultural Context* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 2014), 87.

Our discussion has briefly outlined the origin and structure of Shen's strangification theory. As has been mentioned, Shen's understanding of strangification was first related to constructive realism. However, with Shen's efforts, the theory has been extended from simple linguistic and social strangification to a cultural and religious one. Essentially speaking, Shen has surpassed the framework of constructive realism especially by virtue of the intercultural and ontological level of strangification.

In addition to Shen's expansion of strangification, what matters most, I think, is that this expansion represents a turning or a starting point in philosophical thinking: from the predicament of modernity, Shen's strangification/*waitui* leads to the active practice of philosophy in an era of globalization. *Waitui* theory²⁰ brings one into interaction with others, with nature, with cultures, and as well with ultimate reality. However, before forming relationships with others, with nature, and even with ultimate reality, one must first go outside of oneself toward others and toward strangers: this going outside of oneself is the core of *waitui* theory.

It may be asked: *why* does one need to go outside of oneself and go toward (multiple/many) others? *How* can one go outside of oneself and go toward others? This paper is focused precisely on the philosophical foundation of one's openness toward reality entailed in *waitui* theory. This foundation, in my opinion, is related to the concepts of "original generosity" and "desire" emphasized by Shen. In the following section, we will further elaborate on the openness of oneself implied in *waitui* theory and its overcoming of the issue of closed subjectivity.

Overcoming Closed Subjectivity

Concerning Realism

In order to overcome the theoretical difficulties of logical positivism, the positivists returned again to a revised realism, a compromised plan as a constructive realism. However, constructive realism, although assuming the

²⁰ The term "strangification" is used both by constructive realism and Vincent Shen. In the first part of this paper, the author uses this term to illustrate the relationship between constructive realism and Shen's theory in which the meaning of this term has been extended. However, in the following section of this paper, the author will use the term *waitui* to represent Shen's own strangification theory which has already surpassed the limits of the original strangification proposed by constructive realism.

existence of reality itself, recognizes that human beings are able to comprehend only constructed reality. As for reality itself, it is still an area that cannot be approached. This is exactly why constructive realism was unable to take the next step in carrying out ontological strangification in the sense proposed by Shen.

The proposition that reality itself is completely inaccessible, for Shen, is untenable. Based on his understanding of realism and his own experience of reality, Shen successfully departs from a dualistic view of reality suggested by constructive realism. In fact, “our experience of reality nourishes our language.”²¹ This statement shows that Shen not only believes in the existence of reality itself, but also acknowledges that we do experience it. Immanuel Kant made a clear-cut distinction between phenomena and noumena,²² but after all, this line of division is still a man-made creation. As we know, in scholastic realism, this line had never been drawn. Scholasticism understands that human beings cannot directly grasp reality in the same way as God or angels do, but this does not prevent us from accessing reality. Scholastic realism claims that knowledge begins with experience and so is the same with Kantian philosophy, however, there does exist a fundamental difference between the two.

According to scholastic realism, one cannot attain any knowledge without experience achieved by one’s senses. This does not mean that human body and senses are a burden or obstacles in acquiring knowledge, but on the contrary, the soul “is united to the body in order that it may have an existence and an operation suitable to its nature.”²³ Although Kant and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) both insist on the proposition that “knowledge begins with (sense) experience,” Aquinas takes an entirely different view from Kant toward reality itself or *noumena*. Scholastic realism claims that sense experience is not to be limited to the field of phenomena but is exactly the place where reality itself reveals itself to us. Aquinas thus emphasizes that, in the process of cognition, one should always return to the “phantasm,” which is directly retrieved from sense experience yet is still tightly linked to reality, for he firmly assumes that reality itself is first revealed or disclosed to the human being through sense experience.

²¹ Wallner and Shen, *Constructive Realism: Mediating China and the West*, 53.

²² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1961), chap. III, 257-275.

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), I, Q. 76, a. 5; Q. 89. a. 1.

The idea of revelation or disclosure of realism, in my view, is crucial because this idea shows that reality is truly *accessible*, even though its disclosure to the human being must be done through one's sense experience. But to be noted, species or ideas, abstracted from phantasms, are not the object of my understanding but that by which my intellect understands.²⁴ Although human intellect needs to understand the object through sense experience as an intermediary, the understanding is still directed at the object, namely, pointing to the reality outside of me: it is precisely the reality that is the object of cognition; otherwise, my knowledge will be merely all about cognition of ideas.

Without admitting the fact that reality itself is accessible, ontological *waitui* proposed by Shen would be untenable: the detour of experiencing Reality Itself cannot serve as a helpful intermediary to enter into foreign micro-worlds, since if the reality itself in micro-world A is inaccessible, neither is it in micro-world B and it is difficult for the two worlds to communicate with each other through their respective experiences of reality itself, not to mention understanding each other through the commonality they find. But, if we admit that this reality indeed reveals itself to us (even though the revelation is somehow limited or is in no way able to exhaust all aspects of the reality), then this disclosure has already pierced the boundary between reality itself and phenomenon. After all, the absolute dichotomy between reality and constructed reality is drawn by man. Shen thereby criticizes the view of "two types of reality:"

I do not accept F. Wallner's view on an actual binary opposition between reality itself and constructed reality. I will establish the life world as an intermediary between the two, and thus form a view on reality in which reality itself, the life world and constructed reality are intertwined and intermingled ... reality itself and constructed reality are different yet complementary.²⁵

The life world opens up the channel between the two realities. It is that field where reality itself is exposed, revealed, disclosed, or made known to us. Because of the life world, constructed reality thereby finds its foothold. If it is said that reality itself and constructed reality are different yet complementary, this is because the disclosure of reality itself in the life world is neither complete nor comprehensive. Therefore, the reality constructed between different micro-worlds is only partially expressing reality itself or

²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, Q. 85, a. 2.

²⁵ Wallner and Shen, *Constructive Realism: Mediating China and the West*, 75-76.

expressing merely some aspects of it. According to this, Shen also adds an amendment to the concept of “universality.” He writes, “The breakthrough of philosophy may point to absolute universality. However, possessing an idea of absolute universality or an intention toward it, does not mean that one has actually realized universality.”²⁶ As a consequence, what the human being is able to do is constantly in practice refine languages, concepts, interpretations, and understandings, in order to move toward universality to a greater or higher degree. In other words, we are always in the process of pursuing a higher “universalizability.”

For Shen, one cannot be self-enclosed. It is because human being, as he/she is, is perpetually open to others, to the world, and to reality that he/she earns the possibility to pursue higher truths or attain greater universalizability. Shen insists on the kind of realism in which one’s cognition always directly refers to and points to reality and objects outside of him/her and in which human being and reality are dear to each other and capable of accessing one another. The other side of reality’s accessibility is precisely the impossibility of human’s self-enclosure. Shen’s *waitui* theory is first indebted to constructive realism, but through appealing to an earlier source of realism in which lies an intimate and mutual accessible relationship between the human being and reality, it eventually goes beyond the limits of constructive realism. On this basis, Shen further proposes the life world as an intermediary to bridge reality itself and constructed reality, and advocates the concept of universalizability to replace that of absolute universality. These are all Shen’s precious insights which benefit from his inheritance of tradition and as well his own valuable innovative approach in philosophy.

Concerning One’s Openness

The intellect knows itself not by its essence, but by its act ... when Socrates or Plato perceives that he has an intellectual soul because he perceives that he understands.²⁷

It is so true that one’s understanding of himself has to be achieved by his very act of knowing objects alone. Precisely through the consciousness of this act, one is able to recognize oneself as a knowing agent. This characteristic of self-understanding/-knowledge clearly tells us the fact that there exists no moment in cognition (even including one’s cognition of oneself) that is not with the world or object.

²⁶ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 461.

²⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. 87, a. 1.

Philosophical insight on self-cognition demonstrates that the human being is always open to the world and the impossibility of self-enclosure. In other words, the human being and human cognition by nature inevitably and unescapably “coexist” with others or things. The human being is not a being in a vacuum, but a being from the outset intertwined or permeated with others or things. In this way, Husserl’s emphasis on intentionality, which resulted in his famous quotation that “consciousness is consciousness of something outside,” is simply a modern expression of the fact that one’s cognition is always open to the world. However, although Husserl’s intentionality, as persistently intending something else other than consciousness itself, confirms the inseparability between one’s consciousness and things, his methodological *epoché* leads to an estrangement of reality itself and, accordingly, one’s recognition is still circumscribed to mere phenomena.

Heidegger shifts his perspective from epistemology to ontology. He probes into being (Dasein) of the human being and being itself. His ontology from the outset recognizes the inseparability of Dasein and his/her world, and based upon this inseparability, Heidegger describes Dasein as a being-in-the-world. Just as one’s consciousness cannot be detached from things/objects, so one’s being, in so far as it is a Dasein, cannot be separated from the world; namely, it is to be one with the world in every instant it exists. Heidegger’s argument clearly shows that the inherent constitutive state of the human being is open to the world and to others.

“Being-in” is a state of Dasein’s being.²⁸ This “in” by no means signifies a physically spatial relationship such as water in the glass or the garment in the cupboard. “In,” according to Dasein’s ontological constitution as being-in-the-world, is derived from “*innan*” – “to reside,” “to dwell.” Therefore, when it comes to “I am” as a Dasein, which is being-in-the-world as its essential state, it means I “reside” or “dwell alongside” the world, as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way.²⁹ So, “Being alongside” the world is, in a sense, being absorbed in the world.

Now, we shall return to the relationship between one’s own Dasein and “Dasein of Others.” Dasein encounters the kind of being which belongs to the Dasein of Others, which is essentially different from things as readiness-to-hand or presence-at-hand. Dasein encounters Dasein of Others in the world in which they are at the same time encountered within-the-world. Therefore, “Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is Being-with Others.

²⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is *Dasein-with* [*Mitdasein*].”³⁰ Heidegger simply illustrates that Dasein always coexists with Dasein of Others in a way that is completely different from that with things. Briefly speaking, toward Dasein of Others, Dasein is a Dasein-with as its ontological constitution, and the world in which they (Dasein and Others) coexist is then a with-world. Consequently, just as Dasein is inseparable from its world, it is also inseparable from Dasein of Others.

As a Being-with, Dasein does not require one or some “subjects” to be actually or physically in its presence, since Dasein is always “with” Others: this “with” is an ontological character of Dasein. “Being-alone” thereby, for Heidegger, is merely a deficient mode of Being-with, and its very possibility is precisely the proof of Being-with. For instance, one may feel lonely even if there are some people physically in one’s presence, and this feeling of loneliness is able to occur only when Dasein is first of all a Being-with. Heidegger said, “Being-with is such that the disclosedness of Dasein-with of Others belongs to it; this means that because Dasein’s Being is Being-with, its understanding of Being already implies the understanding of Others.”³¹

Based on the concept of “Being-with,” the issue of external existence of Others, which Husserl suspends first through his *epoché* and then attempts to prove with the concept of “intersubjectivity,” now is no longer troubling, since Heidegger, from his ontological perspective, provides an unshakable position or place for Others, that is, Dasein of Others, rather than being an external entity outside of a knowing subject, anchors itself within Dasein as its constitutive state.

How is the above-mentioned shift of meaning concerning “Others” from Husserl to Heidegger related to the intention to break closed subjectivity and move toward others proposed by Shen’s *waitui* theory? Shen agrees with the fact that a kind of “otherness” has been involved in one’s own cognitive process and one’s own being; moreover, Shen expands this “otherness” to the field of ethics. Founded on the intentionality of consciousness (from Husserl) and on Dasein’s ontological character of Being-with (from Heidegger), Shen proposes the idea of “original generosity” and the “original desire toward others,” and this original generosity and desire to a great extent has led one’s epistemological and ontological openness toward Others back to its ethical origin. Shen says,

³⁰ Ibid., 155.

³¹ Ibid., 160-161.

Regardless of whether “the Other” is a metaphysical concept or whether “*waitui*” is an epistemological approach, both have necessarily presupposed the virtue of generosity. The recognition of the Other is a calling which urges us to go outside of ourselves and go out of self-enclosed subjectivity toward the other. This recognition, revealing as an act of unwilling to turn the Other into some kind of constructed entity by a closed self, refers already to our original generosity toward the other, which is prior to any sort of reciprocity or mutuality. When it comes to *waitui*, it is also required to go outside of oneself and go toward others. If one expresses his own ideas in a language that the Other can understand, and takes into account its practice in different contexts, this is already itself an act originated from a kind of generosity.³²

Shen is obviously aware that behind the co-construction/co-existence of human beings with the world (including others and things in the world) lies an ethical virtue of generosity, on the basis of which I am therefore willing to “first” step out of myself and go toward others. For others, this is a gift which asks for nothing in return; likewise, I also receive the gift from others, a gift without being asked for anything in return when others generously go outside of themselves and go toward me. This is true generosity that transcends the ethical principle of reciprocity in which a reward is always needed. “In sum, only when there is generosity will there be real interaction; also, only when there is generosity will there be real creativity.”³³ In other words, initially, there must be someone who first generously goes outside of oneself, and following this, the principle of ethical reciprocity can possibly be established. Original generosity is thus prior and, in a sense, superior to the golden rule of reciprocity in ethics. Shen’s advocacy of the virtue of generosity can be regarded as one of his most important insights. On this point of view, he echoes some contemporary philosophers and points out, “Emmanuel Lévinas believes that the most important philosophical issue is an ethical one and ethics can be called the first philosophy. And only by acknowledging the Other can there be ethics. ... Gilles Deleuze then indicates that ‘the other’ entails other possible worlds, others’ faces, and others’ words. Jacques Derrida in his later years also insists that the essence of ethics lies in the generous and unrequited ‘gift’ from the other.”³⁴ Seen from this quotation,

³² Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 298.

³³ *Ibid.*, 299.

³⁴ Vincent Shen, *Idea of University and Spirit of Strangification* 大學理念與外推精神 (Taipei: Wunan Publishing House, 2004), 68-69.

obviously, the virtue of generosity emphasized by Shen pulsates with the thought of postmodernism and contemporary ethics.

One may ask: how is it possible to generously bestow a gift without asking for any return? The concept of original desire is the key. Shen clarifies,

I use the term “desire” to describe the energy within each one of us that is directed toward many others (people and things) and ideas of an ever higher level of universalizability. ... This dynamism or desire directing toward many others in looking for higher universalizability presupposes the interconnectedness of all things and persons on the ontological level, so that we direct ourselves always toward many others for the common good and in this dynamic process lies the significance and meaningfulness of our lives.³⁵

In short, desire is the most primordial energy or dynamism, which directs us toward the significance and meaningfulness of life. As Shen puts it, “from the beginning of human consciousness, there is an undetermined dynamic energy in search of meaningfulness in human desire, which transcends any particular form of realization.”³⁶

Based on Shen’s statements concerning generosity and desire, we can conclude that original generosity finds its root and motivating power in human desire, which perpetually directs us to go outside of ourselves in search of meaningfulness and to go toward others without asking for a reward. Indeed, there is a conformity between Shen’s understanding of desire and the intentionality proposed by both Aquinas and Husserl, and an analogy can be drawn out between the two: In consciousness, one is inextricably linked to others (or things) through intentionality; also, in ontological and ethical relations, one is inextricably tied to others through desire, which is primarily and persistently directed toward others in search of meaningfulness.

It should be noted, that other than conceiving of a mere spiritual intention toward others, Shen firstly and primarily places the primordial energy of desire in the human body: “This is the original energy by which human beings can attain transcendence from immanence, not yet as an idealist process of spiritual adventure, but as an incarnated energy originated from a body-based desire that develops upward and more fully, integrating the mental and the spiritual.”³⁷ His emphasis on the body-rooted desire reminds

³⁵ Vincent Shen, “*Daxue*: The Great Learning for Universities Today,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (2018): 17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

us of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) asserts in *Phenomenology of Perception*. Shen insists on the integrity of the human being, and this makes him reject any narration which fails to put enough consideration on the body. Shen thus criticizes, although agreeing to a great extent with Paul Ricoeur's (1913-2005) hermeneutics of self (illustrated in Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*), that Ricoeur, in an urgent response to analytic philosophy, postponed the discussion on the body, which however should be fundamental and primary above all, and of course, prior to any analysis of language.³⁸

Through the concept of "desire" that always goes beyond oneself and reaches out to others, Shen once again confirms the impossibility of self-enclosure and the inherent openness of oneself by virtue of one's ontological, epistemological, and ethical constitution. Shen furthermore defines three types of desire:

Man is born, grows up, and develops in the context of multiple/many others, and is equipped by nature with the power directed toward meaningfulness and toward others. ... Concerning original willingness, French philosopher M. Blondel (1861-1949) called it "the willing will (*volonté voulante*)," which is distinguished from "the willed will (*volonté voulue*)." There is something which, in my view, is prior to the will. Under the will lies a desire already eager to meaningfulness and I call this original dynamism "the desiring desire," which is distinguished from the "desirable desire" and the "desired desire." I have conceived of three levels of desire – an additional level added to Blondel's two levels of willingness.³⁹

Shen's view on the three-tiered desires comes from his own philosophical insights. It is in the original desire (or in Shen's words, desiring desire), a desire as an initial dynamism and power always intending toward others and going beyond itself in search of meaningfulness, that one is able to bloom and flourish in an openness, through which the closedness of a subject is eventually surpassed. In summary, *waitui* theory focuses on the original generosity and desire of a person to promote the subject to go outside of itself toward others and toward reality. The philosophical insights implied in *waitui* entail connotations both from traditional and constructive realism, involve ideas from phenomenology, hermeneutics, and postmodern theories, and as well develop contemporary thinking on ethics. In *waitui* theory we have seen not only Shen's continuation of tradition but also his own innovative visions.

³⁸ Vincent Shen, *Paul Ricoeur* 呂格爾 (Taipei: Sam Min & Grand East Book, 2000), 168.

³⁹ Wallner and Shen, *Constructive Realism: Mediating China and the West*, 186-187.

Conclusion: I and Others

The core idea of *waitui* theory is to go outside of oneself and go toward others. Regarding the concept of self, Shen believes that the connotation of oneself is dynamic. He constantly emphasizes that oneself is a “self in the making.” One is a self that is living in the constant shaping of oneself.⁴⁰ However, how does one shape oneself? And in what kind of situation does one possibly realize this dynamic self-shaping process? It is precisely within, and only within, the interconnectedness among others that one is able to develop, grow, and pursue meanings, as well as achieve self-perfection and self-realization. One is always among the plural or many others.

Following this, we may furtherly ask: what makes the constant self-shaping possible when one interacts with others? So to speak, what makes me *able* to go outside of myself and *let* others interact with me in order to embody this self-shaping? Isn't this because the human being is by nature open to others, so that the interaction with others within which the self-shaping can be possibly carried out? Even if I regard others and things as something opposing me or something other than myself, isn't this because I have first recognized the coexistence and co-construction of myself with others, so that I am entitled to posit others or things as something opposite to me? What I would like to say is simply that even if I intend to be self-enclosed, it is precisely because I have been *first in openness toward others* and through this openness my self-enclosure becomes possible. Therefore, when we say that “I am among [many] others,” does this not mean that others have long entailed in or intertwined with me in the first place?

Shen lays down a philosophical foundation of openness toward others by illustrating an original desire which is always pointing to others in search of meaningfulness. This foundation is epistemological, ontological, and ethical as well. A kind of generous desire directed toward others and the world makes the human being and others destined to be coexistent and interconnected. If so, the more we are aware of this inner dynamism toward others (which is inherent within us), the more we are human; and vice versa, say, the more

⁴⁰ This paper focuses on Shen's philosophical approach in dealing with the issue of closed-subjectivity, yet this in no way means that Shen attempts to entirely eliminate the concept of subject. On the contrary, Shen believes that subjectivity is the most important legacy endowed to humankind by modern civilization. Between the Subject and the Other exists a tension of contrast. The two are distinguished from yet connected to one another, and each is unable to replace the other. See Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 14.

we are ourselves, or living out our nature, the more we are capable of staying in an openness and of reaching out to others for meaningfulness. *Waitui* theory essentially and fundamentally connects the human being with others. It thereby directly rejects any possibility for a view of closed-subjectivity, and based on an openness, one is able to step into a pluralistic yet harmonious world of mutual enrichment among many others.

Shen's *waitui* theory absorbs different philosophical thoughts and traditions, including those from Western and Chinese philosophies. Unfortunately, this paper is merely limited to illustrating some ideas from Western philosophy entailed in *waitui* theory, yet the Chinese elements are omitted, since, I think, they need to be discussed in another paper in greater detail. Now I will finish this paper by dedicating it to Professor Vincent Shen to convey my deepest respect to him as a student, a student profoundly inspired by and indebted to his writings and teachings.

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The Relational Ontological Turn in Vincent Shen's Catholic Social Philosophy

CHOU MING-CHUAN *

Introduction

Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), who arrived in Zhaoqing, Guangdong, in 1583, began his cultural interflow, dialogue, and fusion with Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, based on a remarkable knowledge of Scholasticism. The three pillars of Catholicism in the late Ming Dynasty, Xu Guang-qi (1562-1633), Yang Ting-jun (1562-1627), and Li Zhi-zao (1565-1630), along with Wang Zheng (1571-1644), a successful candidate who passed the imperial examination during the Tainqi years, were reputed to be the four sages of Chinese Scholasticism. They initiated the orthodoxy of Chinese Scholasticism and the direction of its development for the future with Giulio Aleni (1582-1649), Francesco Sambiasi (1582-1649), Didace de Pantoja (1571-1618), Mathias Hsia, and Depei.¹ Following the Jesuits's differentiating concept of the "Chinese Province," Vincent Shen (1948-2018) named this philosophical school "Chinese Scholasticism," which combines Scholasticism and Chinese philosophy as infused with Chinese culture. It is a new kind of Scholastic philosophy. As Shen states,

The development of Scholasticism is historically continuous, from Scholasticism in the Middle Ages, Neo-Scholasticism in the early modern period, to Chinese Scholasticism after the interaction

* Fu Jen Catholic University, Taipei, Taiwan.

¹ About the representative figures of the first-generation Chinese Neo-Scholastic philosophers, see Vincent Shen, *Scholastic Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy* (Beijing: Beijing Commercial Press, 2018), 341-388.

between Scholasticism and Chinese philosophy. Scholasticism is an integral part of the history of Western philosophy, the history of Chinese and Western philosophical exchange, and the history of Chinese philosophy. It is worth noting that, with more than four hundred years of history ever since Matteo Ricci's arrival in China, Chinese Scholasticism is not only a long standing philosophical school, but also the first Neo-Scholasticism that fuses Middle-Age Scholasticism with other thoughts in the history of Western philosophy and the first fused ideological system and school in Chinese philosophy.²

Fu Jen Catholic University has inherited the mission and academic direction initiated by Matteo Ricci to reconcile Chinese and Western civilizations, fuse Eastern and Western sages, and sustain the development of Chinese Scholasticism in Taiwan so as to provide solutions and practical strategies for the predicament of Chinese modernity. As Chan Tak-kwong says,

after reopening in Taiwan in 1961, Fu Jen Catholic University has taken Scholasticism as the core and foundation of Catholic academic thinking. Former Presidents, like Cardinal Yü Pin, Archbishop Lo Kuang, Father Li Chen and Prof. Li Chien-chiu, along with many at the Department of Philosophy, such as Father Augustine Wang, Father Zeng Yang-ru, Father Yuan Ting-tung, Father Qian Zhi-chun and Father Chang Chen-tung, have all produced prolific writings in this regard and built the system of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism through fusing Scholasticism and Chinese philosophy.³

In the spirit of open-minded humanism and transcendental subjectivity, philosophers of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism have bridged the gap between Scholastic philosophy and Chinese philosophy. For that matter, *Fountain of Justice* by Wu Ching-hsiung (1899-1968) reconciles Aquinas's natural law and Confucian theories of human nature; Yü Pin's "three kinds of knowing" has holistic and profound insight into education, culture and religion; Lo Kuang (1911-2004) encompasses the reconciliation of Chinese philosophy and Scholasticism in the metaphysically founded philosophy of life. Li Chen, also known as Chen-Ying Ly (1929-), through his concern about cosmology and the transcendence of human nature, points out a way to overcome the

² Ibid., 3-4.

³ Joseph Tak-Kwong Chan, "Introduction," in Katia Lenehan, *Oral History of Taiwan Scholastic Philosophy* (New Taipei City: Fu Jen Catholic University Press, 2015), iii.

predicament of the rational subject; Thaddaeus Hang (1923-2004) in his *Philosophical Anthropology* seeks the way out for Chinese philosophy with its thematic methodology and integrates the Chinese cultural tradition with the Catholic faith and Scholasticism by returning it to truth and kindness. In this regard, the contemporary philosophers of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism have developed an intrinsic and transcendental philosophical system to address the limitedness of the modern subject as well as many other philosophical issues.⁴ As Shen stresses, “Chinese Neo-Scholasticism overcomes the crisis of enclosed modern subjectivity in the spirit of both transcendence and openness to many others.”⁵

As a representative figure of the second generation of the contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, Shen sees himself as a social thinker throughout his lifetime. His theories and thoughts about Catholic Social Philosophy explore how a human subject fulfills his/her own being through his/her inherent ability, emphasize the theoretical and practical relationship between the human and being, and focus on the priority and preference of the ontological relations and the conditions of possibility for their development. In this sense, contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism has shown a turn toward relational ontology. In this paper, I will take Vincent Shen’s Catholic social philosophy as an example to justify that contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism has a relational ontological turn.

First, I will divide Shen’s philosophy into three developmental stages: contrastive philosophy, generous strangification, and religious dialogue, whereby we can infer that, through a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary methodology and open-minded philosophical thinking, Shen advocates the universalizable principle of harmonious strangification in order to move generously toward many others and develop dialectically the finite and infinite, the particular and general ontological relationship between selves and others. Second, I shall prove that contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism has turned to a relational ontology. One of Shen’s major contributions is to turn contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism toward the relational being in order to keep up with the times and come out of the box of philosophy of subjectivity. Third, I will further argue that in order to shake off the domination of instrumental rationality as well as the conditioning of one’s situation and social system, the modern self can trace back its authentic origin to the relational ontology of love. Shen’s Catholic social philosophy can be seen as grounded in the relational ontology of God’s charity (agape). He successfully

⁴ Shen, *Scholastic Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy*, 446.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 426.

translates the “generous strangification, toward many others” into an understandable cross-cultural language and subject matter and concretely develops a universalizable and practicable modern norm that can guide activities in our real living world with effective and practical power.

The Three Stages of Shen’s Development of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism

Shen claims that the cultural dialogue and fusion between Matteo Ricci and classic Confucians in the sixteenth century not only initiated the construction of a philosophical system but also pointed out the appropriate direction for the localization and indigenization of Chinese Scholasticism. However, “though coming to China to undertake the charity work of relief and salvation, Matteo Ricci was too caught up in explicating the teachings of Catholicism and supplementing Confucianism to fulfill God’s tradition of charity.”⁶ The contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, picking up from where Matteo Ricci left, takes the relational ontology as its foundation and further hybridizes the ideas of “benevolence,” “kindness” and “mercy” from Scholasticism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism to formulate the basic principles for the localization and indigenization of Catholic social philosophy. Major contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholastic scholars, such as Yü Pin, Lo Kuang, Li Chen, Thaddaeus Hang, and other Catholic scholars, made efforts to look into the problem of a Chinese modernity. The metaphysical philosophy of life founded by Lo Kuang, in particular, has long been aware of the modern subject’s predicament of self-inflation and the crisis of self-enclosure and established an intrinsic and transcendental philosophical system. Unfortunately, even after successfully integrating Western Scholasticism and Chinese philosophy, their scholarship still somewhat lacks of discourses on the changes in contemporary thinking and the global situation.⁷

What limited the development of the first-generation Chinese Scholastic philosophers, in my view, is that they were still in the ideological context of the philosophy of subjectivity. Although Lo Kuang’s metaphysical philosophy of life and Gutheinz Luis’s (1933-) relational metaphysics have already been seeking the way to liberate modern subjectivity from its crisis, their discourses on the teachings of the transcendental soteriology and theological

⁶ Vincent Shen, “Catholic Social Doctrine’s Metaphysical Foundation and its Indigenization in Chinese Context” (in Chinese), *Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 45, no. 08 (2018): 22, Special Issue: Catholic Social Philosophy, eds. Vincent Shen and Ming-Chuan Chou.

⁷ Shen, *Scholastic Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy*, 498.

trinity are removed from the exploration of the dimension of Catholic social practice, hence unable to offer concrete and effective strategies for constructing the modern self and achieving self-fulfillment. Shen, as the second generation of contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, would have supplemented and reinforced the construction of Catholic social theory.

The scholarship of Shen is wide-ranging; as he himself said, he took note of the development of Scholasticism as soon as he studied at the Department of Philosophy at Fu Jen University. At first, he intended to compare Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy in light of the transcendental aspect of metaphysics. After he studied at the University of Leuven, he extended his research to phenomenology and contemporary Western philosophy. In his later years, he committed himself to examine the fundamental concepts of Scholasticism and Chinese philosophy from the perspective of cross-cultural philosophy.⁸ Shen's construction of the contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism can be divided into three stages.

Development of Contrastive Philosophy and Methodology

The first stage (1980-1990) is the proposal and application of contrastive philosophy/contrastive methodology. In *Disenchantment of the World: Impact of Science and Technology on Culture*, Shen says that contrastive philosophy/contrastive methodology is the philosophical method conceived and developed during the writing of his doctrinal dissertation.⁹ It intends to substitute the comparative methodology and rectify the overly negation-oriented dialectics in order to balance consistency and inconsistency, discontinuity and continuity of all the elements of thinking and being. It serves as a synthetic and innovative fundamental idea and procedure to communicate, contrast, and reconcile different factors, thoughts, and cultural traditions.¹⁰ In 1981, Shen published "Method, History and Being: An Outline of Philosophy of Contrast" in *UNIVERSITAS* and proposed the three-tiered framework of contrastive philosophy – composed of methods, history, and being – to explore such topics as Chinese philosophy, Western philosophy, technology, tradition, and modernity. The article was later compiled as the first chapter of *Studies in Contemporary Philosophy East and West*. Since then, contrastive philosophy/contrastive methodology had become the major concern for Shen

⁸ *Ibid.*, 299; Lenehan, *Oral History of Taiwan Scholastic Philosophy*, 62-63.

⁹ Vincent Shen, *Disenchantment of the World: Impact of Science and Technology on Culture* (in Chinese) (Taipei: Times Publishing Company, 1984), 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

to conduct academic research and develop a theoretical framework based on which Shen provided an effective approach and method to reconcile Scholasticism and Chinese philosophy.

In *Disenchantment of the World: Impact of Science and Technology on Culture*, Shen looked into the inconsistency and consistency between technology and humanities, between Western and Chinese cultures, as well as the continuity and discontinuity between tradition and modernity through a contrastive philosophy/methodology.¹¹ In *Studies in Contemporary Philosophy East and West*, Shen applies contrastive philosophy as the fundamental framework to the connection and fusion between tradition and modernity, Chinese and Western cultures, while introducing major Western thoughts, such as contemporary linguistic philosophy, structuralism, A. Whitehead's philosophy of technology, E. Husserl's phenomenology, M. Heidegger's ontology, H.-G. Gadamer's hermeneutics, and J. Habermas's social critical theory.

In *A Philosophical Diagnosis of Modern Civilization*, Shen diagnoses modern Chinese culture by means of contrastive philosophy as a doctor in culture, makes diagnoses of the problems of science and humanities, society and ethics, education and academics in modern societies, to discover the pathological causes of the diseases of modern Chinese culture and to provide the solution to build a new moral order appropriate to the present times.

In *After Physics: The Development of Metaphysics*, Shen lays out the development of Western metaphysics through dynamic contrastive methodology, from Aristotle of ancient Greece, St. Thomas Aquinas of the Middle Ages, I. Kant and G. W. F. Hegel of the early modern period, to Whitehead and Heidegger of the contemporary time, illustrating the systematic essence of the various schools of metaphysics. He then points out their coherence and innovation, distances and commonness, and maps out the fundamental context of Western philosophy.

In *Technology, Human Values and Postmodernism*, Shen wants to reestablish the Chinese values in the contrastive context of modern science and humanistic values to contemplate the possibility of overcoming the disadvantages of modernism through postmodernism. While agreeing with postmodernism for its awareness of the difficulties of modernism, Shen emphasizes that postmodernism is only one of the cultural thoughts that accompany modernism, that is, a negative, critical, or challenging thinking activity to culture, science, and thoughts of the modern world. Although the contradictory negation and critical reflection of postmodernism can facilitate the reestablishment of Chinese values and highlight the differences and

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

oppositions between others and the self, it is impossible to rebuild the legality and legitimacy of Chinese values by means of disharmonizing, negating, and criticizing. Chinese values can only be established through harmonious and comprehensive discourse that is respectful of diversity to eliminate abnormality and distinctions. Henceforth, we can say that Shen's academic interest was gradually reoriented from modernism to postmodernism.

From the Strangification Strategy to the Field of Religious Dialogue

In the second stage (1991-2000), Shen addresses a wide range of issues from cross-disciplinary integration and cultural interflow to psychiatric therapy and proposes the strategical method and philosophical meaning of *strangification*. In 2002, Shen published *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, a comprehensive collection of the works from this stage. "Contrast," "Strangification" and "Dialogue" are the three concepts critical to Vincent Shen's academic turn. In 2005, this book was republished by Shandong Education Press under the title *An Anthology of Vincent Shen*, where he says clearly that the methodology of contrastive philosophy and strangification can be applied to religious dialogue.

"Strangification" refers to the act of moving beyond oneself toward others, toward the different. This concept is an epistemological strategy brought forth by such constructive realists as Fritz Wallner and Shen himself out of a concern with cross-disciplinary integration. Constructive realism, or the New Vienna School, is a new thought that has been formed recently in Europe in order to overcome the plight of the Vienna School. Shen was an important member of the New Vienna School. In 1994, his *Confucianism, Taoism and Constructive Realism* was published by the University of Vienna, extending the concept of strangification from a method of cross-disciplinary integration to cross-cultural interflow and interaction. This extension is one of Shen's major contributions to constructive realism.¹²

The world contains different micro-worlds composed of different disciplines and languages, different cultural worlds composed of different ways of life, values, and customs, and different religious worlds composed of different religions and their teachings, canons, etc. Although the self and the other have different micro-worlds, cultural worlds, and religious worlds, for Shen, they understand and enrich one another through language appro-

¹² Vincent Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue* (in Chinese) (Taipei: Wunan Publishing House, 2002), 63.

priation.¹³ This language appropriation, as the linguistic medium, is to learn and appropriate languages of other disciplines or cultural communities for generous strangification and self-actualization.

As Shen points out, the practical steps to apply the concept of strangification to religious dialogue are: first, to conduct the linguistic strangification, meaning that every religious tradition can have its own claims expressed in a language understandable to another religious tradition, even though it will inevitably suffer from some meaning loss during the process; second, to apply the pragmatic/practical strangification, that is, contextualizing one's faith in a society where another religion is founded; and last, to engage in the ontological strangification, which is to enter another micro-world, cultural world, or religious world through twists and turns of reality itself.¹⁴ In general, strangification is to leave the comfort zone to incessantly move beyond familiarity, open oneself to the other and recontextualize oneself. Cultures or religions, through cultural interflow or religious dialogue by way of strangification, can absorb value concepts and devotional resources of each other, enlighten the minds and comfort the hearts so as to work together to accelerate the reestablishment of human values and ethics. In this regard, the strategy of strangification can be a solution to the philosophical dilemma of modernity.¹⁵

In this stage, Shen commits himself to contrast and reconcile Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Christianity for religious dialogue is a process where different cultures and religions understand and enrich one another through mutual strangification. As he says,

Catholicism as a religion is proficient in strangification. ... The most important spirit and power that Catholicism can bestow on Chinese culture is imbuing Chinese culture with the spirit of moving toward the other, generosity and strangification, which facilitates the dynamic contrast and equilibratory development of China in rather transcendence and intrinsicity, benevolence and justice, strangification and construction rather than individual self-consciousness.¹⁶

Shen not only inherits the mission of the first-generation philosophers of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, but also pioneers new dimensions of the Chinese Neo-Scholastic theory and practice. The concepts he advocates make positive

¹³ *Ibid.*, 478-479.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 479.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 513.

responses to and critical reflections on contemporary thoughts, modernism, postmodernism, or globalism.

Shen considers “one of the major contributions of postmodernism” to be “the proposal and development of ‘the other’ in replacement of the ‘subject,’ whose concept has been formed since the early modern period; thus, one should be open to and care about the other.”¹⁷ According to Shen, “in face of the challenges of postmodernity, one should approach the I-Thou relationship from the perspective of the other through the communication theory so that we can dissolve the dangerous orientation of postmodernity going from pluralism to ultimate disintegration, and extending the contrast between tradition and modernity to the one between tradition and postmodernity.”¹⁸ Since the concept of self or subjectivity is an important legacy of modern philosophy, Shen stresses that the rational subject of modernity is neither missing nor lost but a “[self] in the making.” Such a self can only be, develop and shape itself after it returns to a relational ontology.

*Generous Strangification toward Many Others and
Cross-Cultural Philosophy*

The third stage (2000-2018) is mostly founded on the tradition of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, advocating the concepts of Chinese modernity and taking on the challenges of postmodernity, globalization, and the future. In this academic stage, Shen deals, on the one hand, with the localization of Catholic or scholastic philosophy in the context of Chinese or Taiwanese culture. On the other hand, in face of the challenges of globalization, he argues for the concept of “many others” in replacement of the concept of “the other” by J. Lacan, G. Deleuze, E. Lévinas, and J. Derrida. In real life, everyone lives and grows among many others. In Chinese culture, the Confucian concept of “five relationships,” the Taoist idea of “all creatures,” and the Buddhist saying of “all beings” are parts of “many others.” In terms of relativist difficulties of postmodernity, Shen argues that such Confucian concepts as “he who practices *shu* (ethics of reciprocity) knows how to strangify” and “putting oneself in somebody’s shoes” can be applied, through language strangification, practical strangification, and ontological strangification, to bridge different micro-worlds, cultural worlds, and religious worlds. Mutual

¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸ Jing-Jong Luh and Chin Ken Pa, *From Contrast to Strangification: In Honor of Prof. Vincent Tsing-song Shen* (New Taipei City: Taiwan Christian Literature Council, 2009), 15.

understanding and enrichment among many others can be achieved through mutual strangification¹⁹ in the process of globalization.

In this stage, Shen develops his theoretical system through a set of publications. In *Generosity to the Other: Chinese Culture, Christianity and Strangification*, he first raises these questions: Why did Catholicism, arriving in China before the heyday of the Tang Dynasty, not play a significant role in Chinese culture as Buddhism did but even disappear? Did the Jesuits remedy the deficiencies of Chinese civilization when they came in the late Ming Dynasty as they contributed significantly to the interflow of Chinese and Western cultures?²⁰ By interpreting “Cross-Lotus” in a new way, he reveals the dynamic relational ontological development implicated in the Confucian “ethics of reciprocity,” the Taoist “*Qi* pervading the universe,” and the Buddhist “dependent origination and empty nature.”

Shen stresses that the dynamic ontology developed by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism still needs to be approached in a cruciform way so that the relationships with others and nature can be developed along the horizontal axis and the relationship with the ultimate other along the vertical axis, just like the symbolic meaning of the cross-lotus, the totem of Nestorianism. Being hollow inside yet upright outside, uninterrupted by tendrils or branches but saving all beings, lotuses bloom in the shape of a cross, enabling Chinese culture to generously turn to many others and improve itself through opening up to the ultimate other.²¹ Shen contends, “in face of the challenges of the future, Christianity must place more emphasis on original generosity, altruistic benevolence and openness to others with regards to teachings, ethics, pastoral work, church organization and virtue cultivation and advance the innovation of Chinese culture through the efforts of ‘strangification’ that is both grand and exquisite, inheriting tradition and keeping up with the times.”²²

In *Essays on Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, Shen discusses the cross-cultural philosophy in the context of multiple cultures. According to him, the research of cross-cultural philosophy is meant to forge, out of the interaction between different philosophical traditions, some universalizable elements that transcend the limitations of particular cultures and, thus, make

¹⁹ Vincent Shen, ed., *In Search of Chinese Modernity: Retrospect and Prospect* (in Chinese) (Taipei: Cheng Chi University Press, 2014), xviii.

²⁰ Vincent Shen, *Generosity to the Other; Chinese Culture, Christianity and Strangification* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004), 63-64.

²¹ Shen, *Generosity to the Other; Chinese Culture, Christianity and Strangification*, 100-101.

²² *Ibid.*, 64.

different traditions mutually dialectic and enriching in the cultural interflow. Chinese modern culture should overstep its own framework, put the traditional autism behind, and move to the cultural context of many others, thereby enriching each other and searching together for universalizable normative ethical principles. In *From Matteo Ricci to Heidegger*, from the perspective of cross-cultural philosophy, Shen asks how the Jesuits introduced Aristotle's theories to China, how they brought Confucius along with Four Books and Five Classics to Western Europe, and how China and the West interacted and evolved ideologically and philosophically.²³ As Johanna Liu writes, this book is about how Chinese and Western cultures overstep their respective limitations, interact, communicate, and enrich one another in early modern thinking.²⁴ This book clearly shows Shen's affirmation that Chinese modernity and Chinese Neo-Scholastic philosophy will march into the age of globalized and cross-cultural research.

In his book *In Search of Chinese Modernity: Retrospect and Prospect*, Shen insists that, in order for Chinese culture to form its own modernity, it must inherit and innovate its own culture on the one hand and take on the new challenges brought forth by globalization and the post-secular society, on the other hand. Regarding Chinese modernity, Shen says,

what Chinese modernity claims is open subjectivity, a subject that can enrich one another with many others ... it shows that the subjectivity stressed by Chinese modernity is not such a subject as a 'soul' or 'cogito' but a subject in the making, a creative subject, a subject in a relationship or a subject generous to many others.²⁵

Shen's description of the subject or self in the making, whether it is a subject among many others or a self in the relational being, manifests the development of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism that turned toward the construction of Catholic social philosophy founded on the relational ontology of love.

In *Constructive Realism Mediating China and the West*, Shen continues to work on the concepts of the open subject of Chinese modernity and the self-in-the-making in the era of globalization and multiple cultures. Shen defines globalization as "a historical course that transcends boundaries. During this process, the desires, internal connectedness and universalizability of human beings are played out globally and would be embodied, now and

²³ Vincent Shen, *From Matteo Ricci to Heidegger: Interaction Philosophy East and West in an Intercultural Context* (in Chinese) (Taipei: Commercial Press, 2014), XII.

²⁴ Johanna Liu, "Introduction," in Shen, *From Matteo Ricci to Heidegger*, iii.

²⁵ Shen, ed., *In Search of Chinese Modernity: Retrospect and Prospect*, xii-xxiv.

in the near future, as the global market, the cross-country political order and the global localization of culture.”²⁶ In the process of globalization, different philosophical and religious traditions have to go beyond themselves, move toward many others, and encounter and dialogue with them. For Shen, universalizability is what Western philosophy and Chinese philosophy have in common. Although Western philosophy is concerned with theoretical universalizability and Chinese philosophy with practical universalizability, universalizability is their common goal. In this sense, it is possible to reconcile Chinese and Western philosophies and mutually complement their theories and practices. This can form a significant structural contrast between Chinese and Western philosophies,²⁷ in which mutual strangification is a strategy viable for cross-cultural philosophy.²⁸

In *Scholastic Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy* Shen sums up his inevitable mission and responsibility to develop contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholastic philosophy. He expresses explicitly that, in the context of cross-culture, we should carry on the strategy of strangification, established by Matteo Ricci and awaken the concept of “*tui* (reciprocity)” that has been neglected by original Confucians. As Chinese Neo-Scholasticism and Chinese modern culture lack the theoretical dimension of mutual strangification, they are expected to be supplemented through the egalitarian mode of friendly dialogue in order to enable Chinese and Western cultures to enrich one another. However, not much research on contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism has been done in relation to inquiries on society, politics, and law, as well as effective guidelines and strategies for the challenges of postmodernity, globalization, and the future. In this sense, Shen’s *Renovate Confucianism by Returning to its Roots* advocates at great length the practical path of moving toward many others through generous strangification and provide us with instructions and action guidelines to transcend the self-enclosure of modernity. He not only re-examines the Confucian concepts of “learning for one’s own sake” and “learning for others’ sake” as the basic Confucian attitude toward learning and behaving, but also proposes that Confucianism should deal with the challenges of postmodernity, globalization, and the future. He also explores how to have interflow with other civilizations and construct a new paradigm for Chinese modernity.

²⁶ Shen, *Generosity to the Other; Chinese Culture, Christianity and Strangification*, 91.

²⁷ Fritz Wallner and Vincent Shen, *Constructive Realism mediating China and the West* (in Chinese) (Taipei: Elites Publishing House, 2018), 123.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

The construction of new modern paradigms for world philosophy cannot be dominated unipolarly by any cultural systems, nor can the development of Chinese modernity be dominated by one system. We cannot look for familiar things in unfamiliar cultures and define them with nonsensical, shallow, and arbitrary descriptions. Rather, we should dissolve alienation, differences, and misunderstandings through mutual understanding and dialogue. In other words, all cultural systems across the world can understand each other through communication, interflow, and dialogue if they are willing to construct together paradigms for new thoughts and theories that are able to take on the social challenges of modernization and globalization.

Based on the above, the first stage of Shen's academic career can be considered the incubation period for the construction of his theoretical system, the contrastive methodology to reconcile Chinese philosophy and Scholasticism. In the second stage, Shen extends contrastive philosophy and the methodology of strangification to religious dialogue. On the one hand, he enthusiastically contrasts and reconciles Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Catholicism; on the other hand, he confirms the intrinsic and transcendental relationship between the open self of Chinese modernity and the ultimate reality (the ultimate other). In the third stage, Shen proposes action guidelines and practical strategies for Chinese modernity and Chinese Neo-Scholasticism to take on the challenges of postmodernity, globalization and post-secularization from the perspective of dynamic relational ontology. Whether it is the "subject among many others" or the "self in relational being," the emphasis on the "subject in the making" enables Chinese Neo-Scholasticism to turn toward relational ontology. However, three of Shen's academic missions are still waiting for us to carry on: first, to reconstruct and repair the concept of Chinese modernity through the method of contrastive philosophy; second, to develop the theoretical research on Chinese Neo-Scholasticism toward the construction of Catholic social philosophy; third, to apply the concepts of generous strangification and universalizability to cross-discipline, cross-culture, cross-religion and cross-medicine (strangification between Chinese and Western medicine) during the time of globalization.

Through cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary methodology and open minded philosophical thinking, Shen promotes the universalizable principle of harmonious strangification in order to generously move toward many others and dialectically develop finite and infinite, particular and general in the ontological relationship between selves and others. The most important contribution of Shen's scholarship is to turn contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism toward relational ontology. This enables Chinese Neo-Scholasticism to avoid the confines of the philosophy of subjectivity and to

move toward many others with an emphasis on the precedence and priority of the relational consciousness between selves and others. How can Chinese Neo-Scholasticism actually indigenize or localize the holy love of God, the benevolence of Confucianism, the kindness of Taoism, and the mercy of Buddhism through cultural interflow or religious dialogue? How to free Chinese modernity from the domination of instrumental rationality and the constraints of the social system? Can Chinese modernity return to the relational ontology of love, recognize the otherness of many others and the transcendent ultimate other, rediscover the origin of itself, and re-understand, re-shape, re-identify, and fulfill itself? These are issues that the indigenization of Catholic social philosophy in China should be concerned with. They are also the tasks and missions important for the revival of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism.

Shen's Catholic Social Philosophy

In the globalized post-nationalist and post-secular society, how should the Catholic Church play its role and takes its corresponding social responsibility in unfair and unjust reality of violence, hatred, exploitation, and xenophobia and discrimination? As Pope Leo XIII said, the Catholic Church should never give up her right to speak to the issues of social life. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, a compilation of all the popes's social doctrines and encyclicals, reveals the programs and goals of Catholic gospel and grace in terms of social reality. It expresses the social doctrines of the Catholic Church and explicates the relationship between human beings and society. It encourages Christians to act in society and embody the essence of Catholic social philosophy. As *Gaudium et Spes*, the document of Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, declares,

the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine, to exercise her role freely among men, and also to pass moral judgment in those matters which regard public order when the fundamental rights of a person or the salvation of souls require it. In this, she should make use of all the means – but only those – which accord with the Gospel and which correspond to the general good according to the diversity of times and circumstances.²⁹

Joseph Höffner (1906-1987) defines the aforementioned Christian social teaching of the contemporary Catholic Church “as the whole of our knowl-

²⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, 76, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

edge about the essence and order of human society and the resulting norms and tasks applicable to any given historical conditions.” It combines social philosophy (with its origin in human nature endowed with social aspirations) and social theology (with its origin in the holy and beautiful order of Christianity).³⁰

For Shen, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* is filled with the thoughts of Catholic social philosophy. As he points out, it not only announces God’s program of love for human beings but also declares that

the social ethics of Catholicism and the fundamental principle of its indigenization is generous political philosophy and benevolent social philosophy, creating reciprocity out of generosity, justice out of benevolence, and relative autonomy out of relational ontology. These similarities in fundamental metaphysical thinking are rooted in the ultimate reality and the origin of human nature, while their distinctions show the different dimensions of their respective metaphysics and theories on human nature. There are dissimilarities among similarities as well as complementary contrasts among dissimilarities, which is the most important resource for dialogue between civilizations.³¹

The social doctrines of Catholicism point out that human beings should be driven ultimately by God’s love, obey God’s commandment to love others people, and manifest this truth of love in actual social policies and actions.

Shen also argues that God’s love/charity “is the origin of all creation and generosity, which results in the reciprocity of love.”³² It is the strangification of the original generosity of God’s love/charity that develops the relational ontology of God’s love and formulates the central ideas of Catholic social philosophy. As he says:

God created the world out of his original generosity. After moving beyond himself toward all things and creating all things, God led all things to move beyond themselves toward a higher and more beautiful being, until man, more rational and self-willed, came along; accordingly, man should constantly move beyond himself generously. However, man would also choose to close himself up

³⁰ Joseph Kardinal Höffner, *Christliche Gesellschaftslehre* (Erkekenz: Altius Verlag, 2011), 22.

³¹ Shen, “Catholic Social Doctrine’s Metaphysical Foundation and its Indigenization in Chinese Context,” 22.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

and limit himself to the emphasis on autonomy or the selfish or merely self-reflective self unfortunately, not even caring about the relationship with many others. The Nativity of Jesus was exactly a generous act of moving beyond himself; he even sacrificed his life for many others, setting an everlasting model of generosity and saving people from their self-enclosed subjects. Man and all creatures should follow the example of God, constantly moving beyond themselves before returning finally to the infinitely beautiful being.³³

Moving beyond oneself out of original generosity is the strangification of God's love and the development of the relational ontology of God's love, that is, generously strangifying, moving toward many others, bringing forth the reciprocal ontological relationship between you and me or selves and others, helping people with the grace of the Holy Spirit and summoning to God in the name of God's salvation. Since "the act of strangification originates from generosity,"³⁴ generosity is ontologically and logically prior:

Generosity is prior to and results in reciprocity. For instance, A must generously move beyond himself toward B or B generously move beyond himself toward A for A and B to become reciprocal, that is, ontologically and logically, generosity is prior to reciprocity. Therefore, I argue that generosity is prior to reciprocity in terms of ontology, logic, ethics, political philosophy, economic philosophy and must be fulfilled by reciprocity. This is completely in accordance with the truth revealed by Catholicism.³⁵

Shen sees "generosity" as the metaphysical foundation for the development of Catholic social philosophy or the relational ontology of love, "strangification" as the original momentum for moving beyond oneself out of original generosity or developing the relational being of God's love "moving toward many others" as the inevitable condition for forming reciprocity between selves and others. This can induce the interflow and interaction between different cultures, develop intercultural relations and indigenize God in local cultures. Moving toward many others means not only confirming the otherness of the other but also presuming the concept of the "self in the making." Moving beyond oneself toward many others means the mutual recogni-

³³ Shen, *Scholastic Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy*, 279.

³⁴ Shen, *Generosity to the Other; Chinese Culture, Christianity and Strangification*, 9.

³⁵ Shen, "Catholic Social Doctrine's Metaphysical Foundation and its Indigenization in Chinese Context," 10.

tion between selves and others. Selves and others cannot isolate from one another. Those who suspend the relationships with others will have their self-relationships suspended as well. As Hegel (1770-1931) says in *Phenomenology of Mind*, “Self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness”³⁶ and Axel Honneth (1949-) delivers an interpretation of Hegel’s “im-Anderen-bei-sich-selbst-Sein” or “bei-sich-selbst-Sein-im-Anderen.”³⁷ Thus, others should not be considered as limits and hinderers of but rather the prerequisite of self-fulfillment and the development of the spirit of freedom.

The principles for “ethical practice” in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* or the values or principles of social justice explored by Catholic social philosophy are theoretically founded on a transcendental relational ontology. Shen’s thought on Catholic social philosophy considers the concept of relational ontology as the prior foundation to interpreting real social relationships and developing God’s social love/charity. According to Shen, the most elementary unit is neither an individual entity nor an enclosed subject, but a real and open “existential relationship” interwoven between selves and others. The relational ontology of love/charity can be seen neither as the ontological relationship between entities, as theologian Gerhard Ebeling did, nor as a claim similar to Hegel’s subjective ontological relationship. Though John D. Zizioulas’s idea of being as a communion relationship is close to the relational co-existence we emphasize, his thought is still in the context of the ontology of subjectivity. Christoph Schwöbel (1955-), a systematic theologian from Tübingen University, discusses relational ontology in *God in Relationship* (2002) and *God in Conversation* (2011) from the perspective of neither the ontology of substance nor the ontology of subjectivity. Instead, he returns to the anthropological tradition of Christianity, that is, to inquire about “being in relationship” (*Sein in Beziehung*) in terms of the Trinity, which is closer to Shen’s views. In this regard, founded on the relational ontology of love, Chinese Neo-Scholasticism achieves a paradigm shift for Catholic social philosophy by substituting the ontology of substance and the ontology of subjectivity for the relational ontology.

Inspired by the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Catholic social philosophy makes true relationship a metaphysical prerequisite for the interpretation of human nature and reveals the possibility for the unity of humankind. As Peter

³⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in Hauptwerke in sechs Bänden (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2015), 108.

³⁷ Axel Honneth, *Leiden an Unbestimmtheit* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2001), 31, 46.

Knauer says, “authentic and honest relationship is the fundamental category of relational ontology.”³⁸ As noted in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” Martin Buber in *I and Thou* rephrases: “in the beginning was the Word” to “in the beginning is Relationship,”³⁹ which means that in the beginning was the word and the development of God’s most authentic and honest ontological relationships in the universe. As the Catholic *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* reveals, “[the human person is] made in the image and likeness of God, and made visible in the universe in order to live in society.”⁴⁰ This is the revelation of God’s being itself and the development of the relational being of love. These are the central concerns of Shen’s Catholic social philosophy: generous strangification and moving toward many others.

In the context of transcendental relational ontology, people are understood as social beings. Since God made us in the communion of ontological relationship, it is inevitable for selves to be open to, interact with and integrate relationships with others. The paradigmatic mystery of the Holy Trinity reveals that “they may be one, even as we are one.”⁴¹ “For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.”⁴² One must move beyond oneself generously toward many others, since one understands oneself only in the communion relationship with others, that is, one can only understand oneself when one begins to have conversation with a “thou” in front of oneself. We realize profoundly that being really open to others is rather an intense mutual infiltration than a centrifugal dispersion; it is also a common human experience originating in love and truth. In a word, it is not until God and human beings are both in an ontological relationship that social justice can be fulfilled in the relationship of social love/charity, which in turn can be practiced in the relational being of truth. Thus, we can achieve the Catholic harmonious relationship and order, that is, “we are all limbs of one another.”

Since God created human beings in God’s own image and established its transcendental dignity, encouraging its natural-born openness to many others, human beings have the tendency to approach the ultimate other and

³⁸ Peter Knauer, S.J., “Relationale Ontologie,” in *Dios clemente y misericordioso*, coord. Javier Quezada del Río (México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2012), 19.

³⁹ Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Free Press, 1937).

⁴⁰ Gen 2:20, 23.

⁴¹ John 17:22.

⁴² *Gaudium et Spes*, 12.

feel the aspiration to transcend and upgrade the self under the assumption of transcendental and precedent ontological relationship. Every self can develop such relationships into an ontological relationship. The ontological relationship between human beings and God must be considered the precedent foundation before the real development that can be made in relational being because “charity can be in us neither naturally, nor through acquisition by the natural powers, but by the infusion of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and the Son, and the participation of Whom in us is created charity.”⁴³ When we understand the truth about ourselves, we can transcend ourselves and seek the perfection of our being. When we open ourselves to the sphere of transcendence and infinity, we can be aware of our finitude and receive the aid of infinite or transcendental powers to face our challenges. Thus we can develop a close connection with the universal order and reach for the ultimate goal or God himself. In this light, Shen’s idea of “generous strangification, toward many others” can be one of the metaphysical foundations of Catholic social philosophy as well as instructions for the social practice of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism.

Conclusion

In order for the contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism and modernity to march into the future, the Chinese Catholic Church must generously move beyond herself toward many others, tap into her own dialogic spirit to bring together the Catholic holy love, the Confucian benevolence, the Taoist kindness, and the Buddhist mercy. The contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism has turned toward Catholic social philosophy, founded on the relational ontology of love, especially strangification, localization, and contextualization of Catholicism.

For Shen, the relationship between selves and others is the togetherness of this-worldly being as the relational being in society. Others’ otherness and relational being stress the constructive ethical reality of a caring relationship and its primordially as the driving force for moral action. Based on the relational ontology of God’s love/charity, Shen translates “generous strangification, toward many others” into an understandable cross-cultural language and a subject matter and develops a universalizable and practicable modern norm that can guide activities in our life world. In this sense, the contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism is no longer an ideology exclusive to the

⁴³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 8 (Tainan City: Studium S. Pius X Press, 2018), 22; II-II:23:2.

Christian Church but rather the common wealth of all human beings. The evangelical effect of the social doctrine of the Church can reinforce the Chinese Christian communities and provide reasonable discourses and arguments that are in line with social justice through which the contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism can be enriched in the domains of social practice.

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Interreligious Dialogue and Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism: Vincent Shen’s Model of “Mutual Strangification”

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Introduction

Interreligious dialogue is one of the most significant issues regarding the interaction and communication between human civilizations in the global age. Scholars concerned with the issue have discussed it and even suggested various models for related topics, such as on the truth claim, the difference and commonality among world religions and their main ideas, doctrines, and teachings, and conditions and purposes of interreligious dialogue. In terms of the diversity of religion, British theologian and philosopher of religion John Hick (1922-2012) developed a “pluralistic hypothesis” which assumes a Real *an sich* as the center of human responses from various

* National Central University, Taipei, Taiwan. – This article is an adaptation of a Chinese version entitled “Discourse on ‘Interreligious Dialogue’ in the Perspective of Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism: An Approach Based on Professor Vincent Shen’s Model of ‘Mutual Strangification,’” which has been published and incorporated in *Toward Multiple Others: Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism and Its Future*, ed. Ming-Chuan Chou (New Taipei City: Fu Jen Catholic University Press, 2021), 239-262. In the present version, the paragraphs on Paul Knitter’s discussion on the models for interreligious dialogue of the Chinese version were removed. This version is related to my research project entitled “Theosis and Striving for Sageliness: An Alternative Approach toward the Dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity” which is supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of Taiwan under the research number: MOST 110-2410-H-008-062-MY3.

religio-cultural traditions and the prospect of a shared structure of soteriological transformation, and proposed this thesis as a framework for interreligious dialogue.¹ Liu Shu-hsien 劉述先 (1934-2016), one of the representatives of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, suggested one of the Neo-Confucian propositions, i.e., “*Li* is one but its manifestations are many (*li yi er fen shu* 理一而分殊),” for us to think about global ethics, religious pluralism, etc.² Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, a philosophical and religious outcome of the communication and integration between Chinese and Western cultures, has also proposed some projects related to the issue.

Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism originated from Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, which was founded by Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) when he missioned to China in the late Ming Dynasty. Ricci, who arrived in Zhaoqing City, Guangdong Province, in 1583, introduced (together with other Jesuit missionaries) science, philosophy, and Catholicism into China, which challenged Chinese traditional thought at that time. They also systematically translated Aristotle’s works and related commentaries by the *Conimbricenses* and communicated with Chinese philosophy, especially with classical Confucianism in order to integrate ideas, outlooks, and concepts from both sides.³ Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, represented by Cardinal Paul Yu Pin 于斌 (1901-1978), Archbishop Stanislaus Lo Kuang 羅光 (1911-2004), and Gabriel Chen-Ying Ly 李震 (1929-), follows the tradition that can be traced back not only to Ricci but also to Western thought that emerged early in the twentieth century, such as the Neo-Scholasticism of Cardinal Mercier (1851-1926), Etienne Gilson (1884-1978), Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), Joseph Marchal (1878-1944), Karl Rahner (1904-1984), and Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984). This approach presents the philosophical investigation and practice of going beyond self-enclosure toward “many others.”⁴ Vincent Shen 沈清松 (1949-2018) inherited the spirit of this approach and devoted himself to constructing and developing the philosophy of “contrast” and the theory of “strangification” (*waitui* 外推). Shen fused the theoretical and philosophical resources of Chinese and Western traditions to build his own philosophical

¹ For details of this hypothesis, see John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Response to the Transcendent*, second edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

² Shu-hsien Liu, *Global Ethic and Interreligious Dialogue* (New Taipei: New Century Publishing Co., Ltd., 2001), 21-22, 161-171.

³ Vincent Shen, *Intercultural Philosophy and Religion* (Taipei: Wunan Publishing House, 2012), 218-219; Vincent Shen, *Scholasticism and Chinese Philosophy* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2018), 341-342.

⁴ Shen, *Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 221.

system as a referential framework to think about and respond to problems and difficulties in the process of transition from modernity to postmodernity and in the context of the dynamic development of globalization.

Shen established his philosophical discourses on the basis of both the Catholic theological and the Confucian vision of the goodness of human nature. With the aid of the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead, the Confucian understanding of the *Book of Changes* and Daoist wisdom, Shen created the philosophy of contrast and committed himself to its practice.⁵ In his theory of strangification, Shen employed the insights of Greek philosophy (such as those of Aristotle), phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, post-modernism, and Confucian *shu* (恕), or “extend from oneself to other people” (*tui ji ji ren* 推己及人). He also expanded the notion of strangification in Fritz G. Wallner’s (1945-) constructive realism to suggest three steps/levels of strangification, namely linguistic, pragmatic, and ontological, and the strategy of language appropriation. Inspired by the Confucian concept of “five relationships,” the concept of “myriads of things” (*wanwu* 萬物) in Daoism, and the Buddhist concept of “all sentient beings” (*zhongsheng* 眾生), Shen reflected on the limitations of “the Other” (*autrui, l’alterité*) of French postmodernists such as Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995), Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) and proposed replacing the concept of “the Other” with that of “many others/multiple others.” Through his own philosophical system, Shen inquired and discussed the roots and manifestation of desire as the original energy, the development of emotion and feeling, the search for the meaning of life of human beings, the interpretation and reconstruction of the classics of human traditions, the communication between advanced technology and humanities, Chinese modernity, intercultural philosophy, interreligious dialogue, global ethics, and personality education in the context of globalization.⁶

With respect to interreligious dialogue, under the intercultural horizon, Shen advocated the spirit of Contemporary Chinese Neo-Scholasticism and applied his philosophy of contrast and the theory of strangification with a special focus on human desire as the original energy to suggest a model and pointed out that interreligious dialogue should be based on “mutual strangification.” The special emphasis on human desire as the original energy of “mutual strangification” is the characteristic that differs his model from those

⁵ Cf. Shen, *The Rebirth of Tradition* (Taipei: Yieh Chiang Press, 1992), chap. 7.

⁶ We can see the wide range of Shen’s concerns in the titles of his monographs, such as “The Rebirth of Tradition,” “The Idea of University and the Spirit of Strangification,” and “Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue.”

which were built by theologians and thinkers against the Christian background when tackling difficult issues on the truth claim and the comparison between and clarification of patterns, doctrines, teachings, and possible conditions for dialogue or interactions among various religious traditions.⁷ In his model, Shen stressed the “ontological interconnectedness” and “reciprocity” of human beings and the importance of both in interreligious dialogue.

In the following sections, I will review the main ideas of Shen’s philosophy of contrast, the theory of strangification, and “many others” to illustrate the philosophical foundation of his model of mutual strangification and its relevant methodology for interreligious dialogue. Then I shall discuss the characteristics and insight of Shen’s model.

Philosophical Foundation and Methodology

With changing of time, human responses to the challenges, the understandings of “interreligious dialogue,” and the ways of its practices may differ. Against the backdrop of globalization, Shen reflected on the feasibility of interreligious dialogue in light of his philosophy of contrast, his understanding of the goodness of human nature and original generosity, the theory of strangification and language appropriation, and the concept of “many others” and thus argued that “interreligious or philosophical dialogue should be based on the foundation of mutual strangification.”⁸

Shen provided his definition of “globalization” when reviewing Michael Hart and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*: “A historical process of border-crossing, in which human desire, human universalizability and ontological interconnectedness are to be realized on the planet as a whole, and to be concretized now as a global free market, transnational political order and cultural glocalism.”⁹ The process of globalization can further be displayed as the “contrast between border-crossing and its reformation,” “the dynamic contrast between approaching toward others and reaffirming subjectivity,” and

⁷ For the related discussions and reflections, see, for example, Catherine Cornille, *The Impossibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad, 2008); George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984); Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002).

⁸ Shen, *Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 29.

⁹ Shen, “A Book Review of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire*,” *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 31, no. 6 (361) (June 2004): 109-112.

the “dynamic contrast between strangification and self-reflection.”¹⁰ In this process, human desire is the anthropological and psychological foundation of globalization, universalizability is its epistemological foundation, and ontological interconnectedness is its ontological foundation.¹¹

Shen took the original goodness of human nature as the foundation of his discourse on human desire and thought that this is the commonality among the doctrines and philosophies of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Shen indicated that the Christian vision of human nature recognizes the goodness of human nature and that the theme of the doctrine of original sin is to present that the goodness of human nature can be affected by the finiteness of human beings and thereby led to self-enclosure. Confucianism believes in the transcendental goodness of human beings but also notices the tendency of its corruption and deterioration, at which point Daoism offers its criticism.¹² As for the concept of liberation and human awareness, Buddhism assumes that the inner nature of human beings is pure and good and that awareness is the realization of the inner goodness of human nature. This is the concept of “Buddha-nature” (later developed in Chinese Buddhism).¹³ According to Shen’s view, all of these can be seen as the original energy of human nature, or the original mind (*benxin* 本心), or as desiring desire.¹⁴

Shen divided human desire into three parts, namely desiring desire, desirable desire, and desired desire. The first, desiring desire, is transcendental and forms the basis of the latter two. It is the original desire, the original generosity, and the energy. Only by beginning with desiring desire can we have the energy toward the desirable good, or, differently put, desiring desire is motivated by the desirable. This is a process that can lead people to go beyond self-enclosure toward the good, on the one hand, and to self-enclosedness and selfishness, on the other hand, due to the limitation of the desired object and desired desire or in the act of enjoying that object. This energy is also the original inner energy that enables human beings to search for meaningfulness. It can be developed into various forms of meaning through different levels of universalizable forms of representations, such as non-

¹⁰ Shen, “Personality Education in the Context of Globalization: Its Horizon and Structure, Dynamism and Development,” *Journal of Education of Taipei Municipal University of Education* 59 (April 2018): 9-12.

¹¹ Shen, *Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 101.

¹² Shen, *The Rebirth of Tradition*, chap. 6.

¹³ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 490-491.

¹⁴ Shen, “Desire, Representing Process, and Translatability,” *Philosophy East and West* 69, no. 2 (April 2019): 320.

linguistic forms of body movements and gestures, linguistic forms, and written forms, but transcends all of these representations. Such energy is an unselfish desire within human nature and energy directed toward other people and other things. It is because of the desire ceaselessly going toward others that this process of interaction, communication, and meaning-making becomes more and more complex. For Shen, logically or ontologically, there should be an original generosity within human beings to go beyond themselves and toward others and, thereby, form reciprocity with others or intersubjective respect and interchange.¹⁵

As Shen argued, what corresponds to the aforementioned process is universalizability, or a dynamic process of higher and larger universalizability that continuously crosses borders, individuality, and particularity. Such universalizability can be shared among people and elevate the truth claim to a larger and higher validity. Shen once stated, “I make a distinction between ‘universality’ and ‘universalizability.’ Although ‘universality’ still can be taken as the ideal for humanity, I do not buy the absolute/static idea of ‘universality’ in this concrete and historical world, in which we have only an open-ended, gradual, expanding, and processual universalizability.”¹⁶ The inner energy with which human beings make such universalizability is the inner desire directing toward “many others.”¹⁷

In Shen’s discourse, “many others” means not only people and things but also Nature and the Transcendent. “Many others” in our daily life refers to significant others, people, and distant strangers; in Nature myriad things in the natural environment and in transcendent world God, Buddha, Allah, *Lao-tianye* (老天爺), or an unknown god.¹⁸ The directing of human desire toward many others presupposes the “ontological interconnectedness” between human beings and myriad things. That is to say, the existence of human beings and their self-realization is closely connected with other people, myriad things, and the entire cosmos, which form an interdependent network.¹⁹

¹⁵ Shen illustrated the three tiers of desire and the process from desiring desire to desirable desire and desired desire in many of his works. Here I mainly refer to Vincent Shen, “Confucian Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education in an Era of Advanced Technology,” in *Confucianism Reconsidered: Insights for American and Chinese Education in the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Xiufeng Liu and Wen Ma (New York: SUNY, 2018), 210; Shen, “Personality Education,” 18; Shen, “Desire,” 318-320.

¹⁶ Shen, “Daxue: The Great Learning for Universities Today,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 17, no. 1 (2018): 17.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Shen, *Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 213-214.

¹⁹ Shen, “Personality Education,” 26.

Shen further conceptualized the process of one going beyond oneself toward many others through “strangification.” In strangification, there is a tension of contrast that demonstrates the rhythmic and dialectical interplay between difference and complementarity and between continuity and discontinuity, wherein one makes his or her own subject. Since this process is also a dynamic process of constantly strangifying and contrasting, the subject made in this context is also a subject in the making, or a self in the making. Shen also mentioned that in the process of strangification, one should return to self-reflection in order to achieve self-awareness and avoid self-alienation.²⁰

“Strangification” originates from “contrast.” The concept of “contrast” in Shen’s philosophy of contrast denotes “the interplay between unity and difference, conformity and divergence, keeping distance and being mutually belonging that lets all the factors and elements co-exist and manifest in the same phenomenological field and be part of the same revolutionary rhythm.”²¹ Shen indicated that the theoretical foundations of his philosophy of contrast can be traced back to both Chinese and Western philosophies. In terms of Chinese philosophy, the insight of the *Book of Changes* is its main resource. The embodies a philosophy of contrast in the image of the “Great Ultimate” (*Taiji* 太極) and its opposite, dynamic and dialectical unfolding of “The rhythmic interplay of ying [yin] (陰) and yang (陽) [that] constitutes what we called the Dao (道)”²² embody a philosophy of contrast. As for its roots in Western philosophy, Plato and Aristotle’s concept of analogy, the concept of “concordia oppositorum” of Nicolas de Cusa (1401-1464), and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s (1770-1831) dialectic are included.²³

Contrast facilitates strangification.”²⁴ It is the difference and complementarity and the continuity and discontinuity among factors or elements in this process that enable them to go beyond their own limitations, toward many others, and beyond their familiarity toward strangeness, to many strangers. Shen proposed three steps of strangification:

The first of these is “linguistic *waitui* (strangification),” by which we translate one discourse/value or cultural expression/ religious belief of one’s cultural community into a language understandable by another cultural community. If it is thereby understood and is

²⁰ Shen, “*Daxue*,” 22; Shen, “Personality Education,” 11-12.

²¹ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 26.

²² Cf. Shen, *Confucianism, Taoism and Constructive Realism* (WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1994), 79. I replace “the Way (Tao 道)” with “the Dao 道.”

²³ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 28-32.

²⁴ Shen, *Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 17.

acceptable after translation, then it has universalizable validity. Otherwise, its validity is limited to its own world and self-critical reflection must be undertaken with regard to the limits of one's own discourse, value, expression, or belief. The second step is "pragmatic *waitui* (strangification)." If one discourse/value/ expression or belief can be drawn out from its original social and pragmatic context and put into other social and pragmatic contexts and remain valid, this means that it is universalizable and has a validity that is not limited to its own context of origin. If it becomes invalid after such recontextualization, which means the failure of such an act of strangification, then reflection or self-critique should be undertaken with regard to its limit, mostly due to difference in the core of life meaningfulness because of their ontological presuppositions. The third type is "ontological *waitui* (strangification)." A discourse/value/expression or belief, when it is understandable or even sharable by a detour of experiencing reality It-self, for example, a direct experience of other people, Nature, or even of the ultimate reality, it would be very helpful for giving access to others' different scientific micro-worlds (disciplines or research programs), cultural worlds, and religious worlds.²⁵

Because linguistic strangification is the most important step of this process, language appropriation is quite crucial. The appropriation of language means "learning the language of other disciplines or cultural groups and using it for going beyond oneself to realize strangification."²⁶

Based on the aforementioned thinking, Shen re-understood and reinterpreted the events of interreligious dialogue of human history and argued that mutual strangification is the foundation of interreligious dialogue. For example, Shen considered that the Buddhist method of *geyi* 格義 (analogical interpretation, matching concepts) that was used when Buddhism was introduced in China is a kind of appropriation of language and linguistic strangification. When encountering the ultimate reality, although the Buddhist concept of "dependent origination and the emptiness of nature (*yuan qi xing kong* 緣起性空)" may not correspond to the Confucian concept of "sincerity (*cheng* 誠)" and the Daoist concept of "nothingness (*wu* 無)," their experiences may be similar and, thus, be complementary to each other. This can

²⁵ Shen, "Daxue," 18. Here I quote the paragraph in length because it shows succinctly the idea of Shen's theory of strangification.

²⁶ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 21.

be seen as a form of “ontological strangification.”²⁷ From the perspective of his philosophy of contrast, Shen appealed to potential commonalities for communication among religious traditions and as the basis for interreligious dialogue. For instance, regarding the suffering of human beings, the Christian doctrine of transcendent salvation and the Buddhist teaching of inner awareness and enlightenment may be complementary to each other.²⁸ In spite of different understandings of the ultimate reality between Thomas Aquinas, who saw it as a personal being from the perspective of the natural law, and Laozi, who considered it as an impersonal being in the view of Heaven, both of them fully grasped its unconditional generosity. Both of them share the same understanding of human responsibility and commitment. In this light, it is possible for Christianity and Daoism to communicate and integrate with each other.²⁹ Shen also applied three-level strangification to his reflection on the mission of Ricci and his colleagues.³⁰ For Shen, in the framework of strangification, people are supposed to seek a universalizable ethic through interreligious dialogue (rather than a universal one).³¹

In “Methodology of Interreligious Dialogue in the Public Sphere,” Shen adopted Jürgen Habermas’s (1929-) and Charles Taylor’s (1931-) considerations and suggested three levels of interreligious dialogue in the public sphere. On the first level, dialogue is conducted among religions without the participation of anti-religious persons and nonbelievers. On the second level, dialogue is practiced among believers and atheists and focuses on public issues. On the third level, all languages, religious and non-religious, are understandable and shareable among the parties within the dialogue for discussions on non-religious public issues.³² For Shen “strangification without self-reflection, therefore without self-awareness, would result in self-alienation.”³³

²⁷ Ibid., 516-517.

²⁸ Ibid., chap. 20.

²⁹ Ibid., chap. 21.

³⁰ See Shen, *Scholasticism and Chinese Philosophy*, chap. 11; Vincent Shen, *From Matteo Ricci to Heidegger: Interaction Philosophy East and West in an Intercultural Context* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 2014).

³¹ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 469-476.

³² Shen, “Methodology of Interreligious Dialogue in the Public Sphere,” *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 44, no. 4 (515) (April 2017): 18-20.

³³ Ibid., 18. Here I adopt Shen’s own English expression in his “*Daxue*,” 22.

Characteristics and Insights

“Interreligious dialogue” presupposes the religious self and the religious other. It involves the identity of the former and the understanding of the latter as well as the co-existence and interaction between the two.³⁴ In Shen’s words, it concerns the issue surrounding the “ontological interconnectedness” between the religious self and the religious other. In *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, by quoting Goethe’s paradoxical expression of “*He who knows one language knows none*,” Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) held: “The same applies to religion. *He who knows one, knows none*.” Müller pointed out that this does not mean that Goethe thought that Homer and Shakespeare did not know their own languages. Rather, it means that “neither Homer nor Shakespeare knew what that language really was which he handled with so much power and cunning,” if the features of their own mother tongues were not highlighted by comparison with other languages. By the same token, people who live within a religious tradition will never know the features of their tradition unless they know other religious traditions.³⁵ This has well illustrated that the deep self-knowledge of the religious self relies on its understanding of the religious other and on the following “contrast” between itself and the other. Moreover, this process needs “mutual strangification” between the religious self and the religious other, which makes both parties go beyond themselves toward each other. Nevertheless, this process could be either a dialogue for both sides to understand each other and, therefore, understand their own identity more properly or a process that confuses the self-identity of both sides and thus results in self-inflation, which may be followed by conflicts with and struggles against each other.

Interreligious dialogue mainly emerges from debates on the truth claimed by different religions. If there is truth, then which or whose religious tradition can claim its ownership? If there are different religions with various claims or expressions of truth, then how can they be understood properly? Is there only one truth claim that is true? Or are different claims actually different expressions of the same truth? Even if there are different expressions of the same truth, then what is the relationship among them? Are they complementary to one another, or is there a hierarchy of these expressions? Are there many truths or different truths? Due to this complicated and

³⁴ Cf. Paul Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 1-2; Leonard Swidler, *The Age of Global Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 120-130.

³⁵ Cf. F. Max. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 2005), 12-13.

controversial situation, a number of models of interreligious dialogue have been proposed by philosophers of religion and theologians. For example, Paul Knitter (1939-) categorizes the projects suggested for interreligious dialogue into four groups: (1) The Replacement Model: “Only One True Religion,” (2) The Fulfillment Model: “The One Fulfills the Many,” (3) The Mutuality Model: “Many True Religions to Dialogue,” and (4) The Acceptance Model: “Many True Religions: So Be It.”³⁶

Shen proposed the model of mutual strangification as the foundation of interreligious dialogue. Ontologically, this model recognizes the goodness of human nature and regards it as the original energy or the desiring desire that enables people to go beyond their own self toward one another and, therefore, establish “reciprocity” of human beings that has already presupposed ontological interconnectedness.

When we consider the interaction and communication among religions in light of Shen’s framework, “interreligious dialogue” can be understood as the dialogue between the religious self and the religious other (or “many others”) in the religious sphere. With the original energy or the desiring desire, the process of each religion going beyond itself is a process of strangification. Each religion goes toward other religions, which is the process of mutual strangification. Basically, the three levels of mutual strangification of interreligious dialogue maintained by Shen have already displayed the ways of responding to difficulties that may occur during the interchange and transition among languages, concepts and doctrines, the challenges regarding the recontextualization of moral discourses and the system of values, and the issues of the various expressions of understanding and experiences of the ultimate reality.

Shen’s model may avoid difficulties caused by the narrow-minded perspective of the claims of the “only one true religion” and “the one fulfills the many” (in Knitter’s words). The dialogue opened up by Shen’s model may also overcome the implied imperialism of projects or frameworks by suggesting that many true religions share the same truth in light of an intercultural, inter-philosophical, and interreligious vision and the anthropological view of the original goodness of human nature. Acknowledgment of the original goodness of human nature may deal with the problem regarding the relativism of values, as it demonstrates the commonality of human beings. This positive inner part of human nature can serve as the ontological basis of self-reflection so as to ward off the self-alienation of religion when over-attaching to the truth claim or to the understanding and interpretation of

³⁶ For further details, see Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*.

teachings and concepts in the process of strangification. It may also remind people that all are primitively created for cultivating and supporting the original goodness of human nature.

Linguistic strangification may help people to break down the barriers caused by different languages employed by different religious groups or traditions, and the pragmatic and ontological strangifications could ease the debate on the apprehension and understanding of the ultimate reality. Thus, Shen's model may relieve the doubt that any given model is not easily alleviating the influence of any particular theological ideology.

According to Shen's model, it is because of reciprocity and ontological interconnectedness among religions that all religions engaging with inter-religious dialogue could know both themselves and other participants deeply and properly through constant contrast and mutual strangification. They are "religion in the making." In this process, a religious belief "is a way of disclosing the most sincere part of oneself, is a way of experiencing the manifestations of truth that have been inbuilt within human nature. It acknowledges the relationship between human beings and the absolute Other which needs the participation resulted from the innermost and the most sincerely spiritual energy of human beings. This is not restricted by different churches and sacred spaces."³⁷ Therefore, in religious belief, "what human beings must still be faithful to is their own relationship with the ultimate reality or the Absolute Other and the inner sincerity that is involved within this relationship."³⁸

Despite its insight that may facilitate interreligious dialogue, the concepts of the ultimate reality (or the transcendent) and "many others" of this model may need further clarification. In Shen's discourse, the ultimate reality is one of many others that exists in the transcendental realm. However, Shen did not explicitly discuss the relationship between the ultimate reality (or the Transcendent) and the world or the universe in which human beings dwell. Is the ultimate reality transcending the world or universe or identical to it? Is the world or universe contained within or just a part of the ultimate reality or the Transcendent? Could there be alternative patterns of the relationship between the ultimate reality and the human world? Since interreligious dialogue presupposes the religious self and the religious other, the concept of "many others" can be used to signify different religious traditions without focusing on the ultimate reality or the Transcendent. If my understanding is proper, then, adjusting or amending the usage of these concepts without

³⁷ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 481.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 481-482.

deviating from the spirit of Shen's model of mutual strangification would be the future task for those who are concerned with the interaction and communication among world religions and the prospect of human civilizations.

Conclusion

At the outset of this paper, I offered an overview of the background of Shen's model of mutual strangification for interreligious dialogue as well as the philosophical foundation and methodology of Shen's model. I then discussed the characteristics and insight of Shen's contribution and reflected on the relationship between the ultimate reality and the human world. The significance of concepts such as ultimate reality and many others should be further explored.

It could be his intercultural horizon that prevents Shen from restricting his model within a particular or even a narrow-minded perspective while facing other religious traditions. Shen's insight can help us rethink the critical issue of interreligious dialogue in the era of globalization. It is meaningful for those who are concerned with these important issues to continue Shen's unfinished ambition.

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Vincent Shen's Many Others and Emmanuel Lévinas's Third Party

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to elucidate Vincent Shen's concept of many others by contrasting it with Emmanuel Lévinas's notion of the third party in the context of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism. Chinese Neo-Scholasticism is the fruit of the encounter of Catholic philosophy with Chinese traditions. On the foundation laid by the pioneers of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, such as Yü Pin and Lo Kuang, Shen suggested that we should evaluate the achievement of these pioneers to learn how they overcame the crisis of self-enclosed modernity.¹ However, with the rise of postmodernism, there are new challenges to Catholic philosophy. When facing the new challenges of postmodernism, in Shen's view, we should correct instead of abandon the heritage of modernity. The task of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism is to inherit the ideal of caring for people in modern times but surpass modernity in the spirit of interreligious dialogue so as to construct a kind of Chinese modernity that can avoid the disadvantages of Western modernity.²

The concept of the other, a core idea of postmodernism, plays an important role in the philosophical task of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism. Lévinas made a significant contribution to expounding the meaning of the concept of the other and questioned the solipsistic tendency of modernity. By assimilating the critique of postmodernism to modernity, Shen proposes the concept

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¹ Vincent Shen, *Scholastic Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy* (Beijing: Beijing Commercial Press, 2018), 417-418, 446.

² *Ibid.*, 484-486, 499-501.

of many others in order to overcome the limitations of Western modernity and postmodernism. Being aware of the limitation of the concept of the other, he considers Lévinas's idea of the third party as a supplement. But what are the similarities and differences between Shen's many others and Lévinas's third party? The clarification of the issue may help us understand the significance of many others and its contribution to Chinese Neo-Scholasticism.

Basic Characteristics of Many Others

According to Shen, Chinese philosophy affirms that we can achieve sufficient harmony among many others through strangification and conversation. He used many others to replace the concept of the other put forward by Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze. For Shen, the other is only an abstract philosophical term. In our actual life, we never face the abstract other, but rather we are all born and grow up among many others. The *wu-lun* (five relationships) of Confucianism, the whole beings (*wan-wu*) of Taoism, and the all lives (*zhong-sheng*) of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism all undeniably imply many others.³ If the concept of the other is too abstract, it will not be able to relate to many others encountered in daily life; if it is opposed to the self, it will produce a tendency to value the other over the self. Chinese philosophy should not undertake philosophy that stays away from life and abandons the subject, otherwise it will fall into a kind of metaphysical speculation.

The main problem that Chinese philosophy faces is still how to learn from and transcend modernity.⁴ In order to transcend modernity and overcome the philosophy of the subject on which modernity is based, Shen notes that postmodern philosophers, such as Lévinas, use the other to overcome the shortcomings of excessive subjectivity⁵ without abandoning the achievements of modernity. How to propose a new kind of modernity, neither confined to the inherent philosophy nor falling into postmodernism's negation of the subject, became an agenda of Chinese Neo-Scholasticism.

Modernity and the philosophy of the subject are precious heritages that must be preserved. The concept of many others establishes a philosophy of the subject modified by the philosophy of the other which articulates a subject that moves toward and does not oppose the other. In this view of the subject,

³ Vincent Shen, *Essays on Intercultural Philosophy and Religion* (Taipei: Wunan Publishing House, 2012), 31-32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 353.

the relationship between the subject and the other is mutual enrichment,⁶ a dynamic mutuality through which each other walks out of self. Shen refers to this mutuality as generosity. In fact, it is generosity that makes mutuality and mutual enrichment possible.⁷ Without generosity, the term many others may be misunderstood as just affirming that all individuals in human society are in a state of pluralistic coexistence, although there is many, there is no others. Hence, there is no difference between many others and many subjects or many individuals. As a further step of postmodern reflection on modernity, many others retain the dimension of the other revealed by this reflection, while the key point remains generosity.

On the basis of generosity, Shen wants to rebuild modern subjectivity. He tries to reflect on Chinese modernity through its reconstruction in the field of cross-cultural philosophy, such as Chinese modernity can assimilate the achievements of Western modernity without falling into the excessive expansion of subjectivity or the complete abandonment of subjectivity. An important stage of this philosophical agenda is to transform the self-enclosed subject into an open subject generously dedicated to the goodness of many others.⁸ As long as the generous subject and many others can be integrated into Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, it is expected that Chinese Neo-Scholasticism will be connected to the task of reflecting on modernity and rebuilding subjectivity.

Basic Characteristics of the Third Party

The meaning of Lévinas's concept of the third party is ambiguous as its exact connotation has always been disputed by scholars. Basically, the third party is also an other, but has been endowed with a specific theoretical task. Here, I will extract from its various usages three meanings that are related to many others, namely the others, another other, and the other of the other.

The Third Party as the Others

In *Totality and Infinity*, Lévinas portrays the third party as the others. The others look at the self through the face of the other. In terms of the gaze

⁶ Vincent Shen, *From Matteo Ricci to Heidegger: Interaction Philosophy East and West in an Intercultural Context* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 2014), 5.

⁷ Shen, *Essays on Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 165.

⁸ Vincent Shen, "Introduction: Retrospect and Prospect from Western Modernity to Chinese Modernity," in *In Search of Chinese Modernity: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Vincent Shen (Taipei: Cheng Chi University Press, 2014), xxiii-xxiv.

of the third party, the self is put into social relations in which a public world is unfolded. In this context, the third party signifies the entire humanity shared by others and the human dimension present in the face of the other. This entire humanity as a command, an irreducible saying, looks at me in the eyes of the other and claims justice.⁹

The third party summons the self to care about the specific other, such as orphans, widows, and strangers. These others have always been the underprivileged social group that the Hebrew prophets called on the people of Israel to care about. The call to action reveals that the relationship between the self and the other is dynamic and presupposes an irreversible orientation from the self toward the other.¹⁰ This orientation unites all people, including the self and the other, into a fraternal community which can be characterized as *us*. In this community, on the one hand, everyone has a common source and comes from the same Father, as understood in terms of the Jewish monotheism; on the other hand, everyone has their own irreducible uniqueness.¹¹

The Third Party as Another Other

In *Otherwise than Being*, Lévinas offers another signification to the third party, that is, another other. There are two others appearing in front of the self; their respective interests force the self to shift from the original ethical relationship to the derived cognitive relationship. Through the third party, a political relationship in the name of justice is established: “The fact that the other, my neighbor, is also a third party with respect to another, who is also a neighbor, is the birth of thought, consciousness, justice and philosophy.”¹²

Thought, consciousness, justice, and philosophy all present objects in a synchronic manner; these objects can be compared and judged. Through justice, the invisible becomes visible. It is the third party, the second other, that makes the original other a visible object, and also enables the self to enter the realm of representation through comparison with the incomparable. The appearance of the third party does not cancel but regulates the ethical relationship between the self and the other.¹³

⁹ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 212-213.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 214, 280.

¹² Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1981), 128.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 158-159.

The ethical relationship between the self and the other is asymmetrical. The other brings the infinite responsibility to the self, but not *vice versa*. The relationship between the self and the third party must be based on this ethical relationship, because the third party is also an other. However, the third party forces the self to face two infinite responsibilities in order to relativize the original absolute asymmetry. In order to achieve this relativization, it is necessary to rely on justice, the sphere upon which the judgment of the state is built. The risk is here of the other being absorbed, and this puts us on a path from responsibility to problem.¹⁴

Through the third party, Lévinas wanted to talk about a political institution based on ethical relations. For him, the ethical is always superior to the political institution.¹⁵ The job of a philosopher is to face the risk that any political relationship may harm the other. The third party becomes the starting point of philosophical thinking to resolve these risks. Our thinking originates from the call of the other, but must be corrected in the domain of the third party. This brings problems to the self and makes it fall into a state of ambivalence and ambiguity, a situation of getting stuck in the thinking itself:

Philosophy is called upon to conceive ambivalence, to conceive it in several times. Even if it is called to thought by justice, it still synchronizes in the said the diachrony of the difference between the one and the other, and remains the servant of the saying that signifies the difference between the one and the other as the one for the other, as non-difference to the other. Philosophy is the wisdom of love at the service of love.¹⁶

Philosophical wisdom is always a synchronic *said*, it synchronizes diachronic ethical *saying*, so that the self and the other can be presented in the mind simultaneously, and the incomparable can be compared. However, there is a risk of reducing the other in this synchrony. The essence of philosophy is to serve the other, to engage in the service of love with the wisdom of love, to serve the *saying* with the *said*. This seemingly contradictory dilemma is precisely the situation of existence brought to the self by the third party, which appears along with the other.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 158-161.

¹⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 183.

¹⁶ Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 162.

The Third Party as the Other of the Other

The two significations of the third party mentioned above are combined when we look at the third party as the other of the other, that is, as God, or more precisely, as the trace of God. The Lévinasian concept of God always appears covered with ambiguity. In addition to being the common source of all others, God plays an important role in justice concerning the other. As Lévinas writes, it is precisely with God's help that the synchronic action of consciousness can become the root of justice. Although consciousness establishes political relations, it always refers to God.¹⁷ In the relationship between the self, the other, and the third party,

God is not involved as an alleged interlocutor: the reciprocal relationship binds me to the other man in the trace of transcendence, in *illeity*. The passing of God, of whom I can speak only by reference to this aid or this grace, is precisely the reverting of the incomparable subject into a member of society.¹⁸

God does not appear, but passes through and leaves a trace, allowing the self to enter the relationship with the third party. On the one hand, God sees everything and examines the self through the eyes of the other, so that the self and the other can be part of the same community and be considered together. On the other hand, God can never be seen and continues to be the other of the community, but cannot be reduced to the community. In other words, God makes possible self-consciousness, thinking, and synchronic operation, but God himself is the one who cannot be synchronized. Such a God is, of course, an other, but different from other types of *other*. He is the source of justice, but he himself cannot be the object of justice; he summons consciousness and thinking, but he himself is always outside of thinking and consciousness. God is the other of the other. He is the reason why each other continues to be the other. It is because this other of the other that the other will not cease to be the other through the intervention of the third party. In this light, God becomes the real reason the self encounters a dilemma in front of the other and the third party. The ambivalent situation is the question mark that God has left for the self, the trace left by God's passing in our consciousness that signifies the other.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 160-161.

¹⁸ Ibid., 158.

¹⁹ Ibid., 161-162.

Many Others and the Third Party

At first glance, the main difference between many others and the third party is that the former is used to replace the other, while the latter is not. In my opinion, the third party is still the other in essence, the reason why Lévinas proposes the third party as the solution to issues that emerge because of the other. With this approach, the function of the third party is not only to avoid the reduction of the other's alterity by the self, but also to give the third party different meanings according to different issues. In this sense, I tend to regard the various characteristics of the third party as inherent in the other. Although it is theoretically independent from the latter in terms of solving specific issues, it is generalized in the name of the third party. On the one hand, we contrast the third party with many others, and we are expounding Lévinas's concept of the other through the third party in the discourse domain developed by many others. On the other hand, we are exploring how many others, as a substitute for the other, can avoid reducing the alterity of the other.

From Shen's perspective, we should not follow postmodernism to mistakenly believe that the subject has died, but rather that kind of subject is over-expanded, resulting in no room for the other. However, the conceptual abstraction and binary opposition of "the self versus the other" may overemphasize the other and despise the subject due to the limitation of the concept of the other. In order to overcome this limitation, Shen replaces the abstract other with the concrete many others in order to think about how the subject develops a positive relationship with many others through generosity. From this point of view, one of the main issues of many others is to rebuild a more wholesome subjectivity. Indeed, Lévinas's third party implements the concreteness of the other, and yet what he wants to emphasize is the ambiguity and dilemma of the task. When the ethical relationship is implemented in life, one must face the third party and everything it signifies. The self must take the plunge into the realm of consciousness that is unfolded with the third party, and think about how to face the political dilemma. The third radicalizes the challenge of the other to the self and reveals the ambiguous situation of the self in this world. Hence, the conceptual characteristic of the third party can be that it would rather sacrifice the comfort and freedom of the subject than reduce the alterity of the other.

According to the above discussion, I want to propose a preliminary contrast: Shen's many others that is to reconstruct the subject vis-à-vis Lévinas's third party that is to save the other. Both have a cultural motivation: Lévinas wants to save the other because of the Jewish victims he never forgot; Shen

wants to develop the subject because Chinese modernity could depend on a sound understanding of subjectivity. The contrast between “many others through which the subject is reconstructed” and “the third party through which the other is preserved” can be extended into two moments. First, the subject can be justified through many others, and the subject’s signification can be explained through the contrast of the third party. Second, the other can be kept by the third party, and the other’s meaning can be clarified and expanded through the contrast of many others.

The Subject in Many Others and in the Third Party

When Shen replaces the other with many others, he also replaces the abstract binary opposition between the self and the other with the fractured and continuous contrast tension between the self and many others. In his view, the subject in contrast is still in the process of forming. The forming of the subject signifies the transformation from a selfish subject to a generous one dedicated to the goodness of many others. The subject is not only relational, but also creative, as creation remains an important driving force for the formation of the subject. Without creation, there is no subject; without generosity, there is no creation.²⁰ There is an original virtue of generosity whose originality is more radical than the metaphysical concept of the other and the epistemological strategy of extrapolation.²¹ This is similar to Lévinas’s view of ethics as first philosophy.

In Western philosophy, Shen finds resources of generosity not only in classical philosophy, such as Aristotle, but also in modern philosophy such as Descartes. For Shen, although the philosophy of Descartes is considered to be responsible for the self-enclosed modern subjectivity, it still retains the dimension of the other to a certain extent. In Chinese philosophy, Shen sees in Confucianism how generosity becomes an opportunity to transcend mutuality and achieve universal benevolence.²² Thus, Shen’s view helps us clarify the implications of generosity through the contrast between Chinese and Western philosophy.

What is more enlightening is that Shen elaborated on the ontology and cosmological dimensions of generosity through Laozi. He argued that the

²⁰ Shen, “Introduction: Retrospect and Prospect from Western Modernity to Chinese Modernity,” xxii-xxiv; Shen, *Essays on Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 354.

²¹ Vincent Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue* (Taipei: Wunan Publishing House, 2002), 298.

²² *Ibid.*, 305-307, 310, 315.

virtue of generosity is based on Tao and is the basic driving force of the process of becoming of all things. It is also the principle by which the subject can justify itself. According to Shen, Tao, as a generous and spontaneous force, generates all things, human and non-human. The *raison d'être* of humankind is to embody the generosity of Tao and return to Tao. The virtue that a sage can cultivate is to be one with Tao, to follow Tao, to reflect the generosity of Tao, to humbly make oneself a medium of Tao's passing, and to utilize Tao's abundance to live a generous life.²³

It is creation that makes the subject gradually take shape in the transformation from being-for-itself to being-for-the-other, which is based on the process of Tao's generosity to create all things. The generosity of committing the subject to the goodness of the other is also a manifestation of this creative process. What are the similarities and differences between a generous subject in Shen's sense and Lévinas's responsible subject? Let us take a look at a passage from *Totality and Infinity*:

This book will present subjectivity as welcoming the Other, as hospitality; in it the idea of infinity is consummated. Hence intentionality, where thought remains an adequation with the object, does not define consciousness at its fundamental level. All knowing qua intentionality already presupposes the idea of infinity, which is preeminently non-adequation.²⁴

There are two important points here. First, Lévinas wanted to propose a subject emerged in the welcoming of the other, which is consistent with Shen's generous subject. Second, in the hospitality of the self, the idea of infinity is considered to precede all cognitive actions. This is worthy of further investigation.

Coincidentally, Lévinas borrows from Descartes the idea of infinity to emphasize an anachronic consciousness phenomenon emerged in the relationship between the self and the other. In this sense, his hospitable subject implies the dimension of the other in Descartes's philosophy. We have the idea of infinity before we can think about the infinite, because this idea is placed in our hearts by the infinite. We think about the cause by the result, but in this thinking, we must make the cause of thinking the result of thinking. In this consciousness phenomenon, there is a subject with an internal independent time structure, that is, *cogito ergo sum*, which is originally the one that welcomes and, through this kind of welcoming, makes thought possible.

²³ Ibid., 312-313.

²⁴ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 27.

However, through an anachronic temporal structure, when the *cogito* begins to think, it regards itself as an original greeter to welcome the other. We can have the concept of the other and welcome the other because the other has welcomed us. In such hospitality, the other who is originally the cause for the welcoming appears to the self as the result of being welcomed by the self.²⁵

Shen uses the Tao vocabulary to describe a magnificent picture of the self and many others from a comprehensive perspective. On the ontological level, the self accepts the hospitality of the generous Tao first and then participates in the journey to welcome many others. Lévinas, in the phenomenological tradition, pays attention to the analysis of what takes place at the anachronic moment of consciousness, when activity is passively created and when the mind, consciousness, and *cogito* are born. Both Shen and Lévinas attach great importance to creation. The former focuses on the participation of the created subject in the process of creation, while the latter emphasizes the miracle of creation in the creation of a moral being which implies that the created subject is made to have the freedom to reject the creator and to question the freedom it has been given.²⁶

In terms of self-questioning, the *cogito* perceives that it cannot absolutely justify itself by itself. Born from an original event, it needs to put the concept of the other in the subject itself. Only after this event, which is beyond consciousness, the subject becomes the subject and realizes that it has freedom, ability, and responsibility to welcome the other. For Lévinas, the concept of the other refers to the event in which the concept itself emerges in self-consciousness. At the moment when the self can only vaguely perceive the rise of self-consciousness, a phenomenon that we call the other appears. Precisely because this is a marginal phenomenon at the boundary of consciousness that we cannot connect to any concrete things yet, the phenomenon of the other is ambiguous. While Shen's many others point to concrete things, Lévinas's other does not refer to any specific phenomenon but is the transitional phenomenon in which Tao creates and enables the subject to welcome many others with generosity. The moment when the other emerges in self-consciousness is the moment when the subject humbly realizes that it is the medium of Tao's passing. Whether it is Tao's generous creation of the subject or the subject's generous openness to many others, both are internal moments in the phenomenon of the other. As a pivot for connecting activity and passivity, these two moments are closely intertwined and make the subject appear as a medium of Tao's passing.

²⁵ Ibid., 54.

²⁶ Ibid., 89.

Just as we think about the infinite through the idea of infinity, we are always aware of the hospitality of the other through our desire to welcome the other. It is through my generosity to many others that I realize that I am the medium through which Tao passes. In other words, I perceive my passivity in my activity when I attempt to welcome many others. I perceive Tao's generosity in my own virtue. The condition of possibility for this perception continues self-questioning, especially in questioning the synchronic action of consciousness: How can I be generous when faced with so many others? Is my generosity enough for me to both welcome many others and justify myself? If there is no infinite generosity in me, if there is no continuous generous current flowing through me, how can I treat many others with endless generosity? The more we question ourselves, the closer we are to the moment when the self emerges from the infinite or Tao's generous passing.

The kind of subject generated, as Shen points out, is a subject that can devote itself to the goodness of many others and needs to cultivate the virtue of generosity. Shen borrows the term "magnanimity" from Aristotle²⁷ to describe the ideal character of the subject. In contrast, Lévinas's subject is trapped in the deep gloom of guilt and bears endless responsibility for the other, especially for the death of the other. This is like the awareness of being guilty without any fault of one's own,²⁸ something far different from Shen's original generosity. For Shen, the appearance of many others is to enhance the possibility of a generous subject to participate in the creation of goodness, whereas for Lévinas, the appearance of the third party makes the guilty subject more involved in the evils of the world, as the subject who is responsible both for the other and the third party does not know whether any evaluation, comparison, and choice made in pursuit of justice will bring harm to anyone. According to Lévinas,

The infinity of responsibility denotes not its actual immensity, but a responsibility increasing in the measure that it is assumed; duties become greater in the measure that they are accomplished. The better I accomplish my duty the fewer rights I have; the more I am just the more guilty I am.²⁹

²⁷ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 300-301.

²⁸ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Is It Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas*, ed. Jill Robbins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 52.

²⁹ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 244.

Following Dostoyevsky's words in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "Each of us is guilty before everyone for everyone, and I more than the others."³⁰

I do not think that the generous subject is in conflict with the guilty subject. If the moral characteristic of the guilty subject is that "each of us is guilty before everyone for everyone, and I more than the others," then for the generous subject it is "each of us should treat everyone generously, and I must be more generous than the others." We could even say that the *more* is an expression of generosity itself. Lévinas defines justice as the pursuit of more justice.³¹ We can say that all that is needed to achieve this *more* is the virtue of generosity. Generosity in itself means more generosity. Generosity does not guarantee Lévinasian justice, but without generosity, there is no such justice at all. In the real world, the self needs to practice justice and decide who needs generosity more, as there are always people in this world who still have not received enough generosity. Hence, being generous to these people becomes the responsibility of the self.

What Lévinas makes us realize is that the virtue of generosity does not start with a self-sufficient and innocent transcendental subject, but with a guilty subject. In the process from the generous Tao to the formation of the generous subject, there is a certain kind of debt that needs to be repaid by this subject. The virtue of generosity is the condition that the subject can begin to repay, but it cannot make the subject not feel guilty, because the more we repay, the more we are in debt. Therefore, generosity becomes a pure responsibility. The virtue of generosity must be embodied in the responsibility of generosity. In this sense, we meet the paradox of generosity: the more generous a person is, the more they feel that they owe to the other and the more responsibility they have toward the other.

The Other in Many Others and in the Third Party

Lévinas introduced consciousness and thought through the third party to protect the separation of the other and consciousness. The other must always be maintained as the one that cannot be represented by consciousness, so that it can retain its alterity. The other implies a relational event, which occurs on the boundary of consciousness, in the fissure that represents the breakthrough of the self-enclosed totality, and at the moment when passivity is connected to activity. In Lévinas's later thoughts, his philosophy of the other increasingly showed that the other is a marginal phenomenon. This means

³⁰ Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 146.

³¹ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 245; Lévinas, *Is It Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas*, 51.

that the other is always fleeting, just like a ghost, a wisp of smoke or a grain of dust, so small that it is less than a phenomenon. When the self wants to respond to the other, it is always delayed and accused of having delayed.³² This is a destined delay before the formation of the subject. The other passes through the self but never dwells in it. The self always comes too late and can only catch the trace left by the other. Once the self wants to present the other, the other always manifests itself in the form of the third party, and therefore is accepted and represented by the consciousness that is originally triggered by the other. Thus, the third party appears when the self wants to embrace the other in consciousness.

In this light, it is impossible for Lévinas to cancel the other. The prototype of the other is his Jewish fellows, who have already become smoke and dust during the Holocaust. But as a philosopher, he must express the other through his thoughts and deal with the relationship between thoughts and the other. This relationship always appears in the form of dilemma and ambivalence. He had the absolute responsibility to witness the suffering experience of the Jews through his philosophical thinking. The other summons the thought, but always refuses to be penetrated by the thought. Before the thought, the other must be darkness and obscurity instead of clarity and lucidity.

The third party is used to protect the alterity of the other when this conceptual task is reflected as a moral appeal, that is, “thou shalt not kill,” which is regarded by Lévinas as the primary moral expression.³³ The issue of the third party involves not only the possibility that the alterity of the other is reduced, but also points out the way to protect the alterity of the other. Let us follow three significations of the third party to discuss how to guard the other in contrast with many others.

The Third Party as the Others: The Universality of the Other

When the third party signifies the others, both the self and the other enter into a social relationship based on the family and then form a fraternal community, which can be called us. In this context, the form in which the alterity may be reduced is that the self and the others are forced to enter into a numerical multiplicity, a kind of totality in which each person is just a unit and does not have his/her uniqueness, although both self and other become participants in the totality as individuals. Lévinas’s solution is to propose a pluralism of the other, which is different from multiplicity. According to Lévinas, pluralism implies a radical alterity of the other, because the alterity

³² Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 88-89.

³³ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 198-199.

reveals itself in itself and is not relative to me. The condition of possibility to form this pluralism is an irreducible universal humanity. It is humanity revealed by the other that retains its alterity and requires the self to enter into an asymmetrical relation of intersubjectivity. This asymmetry in universal humanity becomes a way to save the alterity of the other, and urges the self to give priority to orphans, widows, and strangers.³⁴ If the virtue of generosity that precedes reciprocity is the driving force for the other, as mentioned above, it will be sufficient to ensure that many others cannot be reduced to many monads of society. In this sense, generosity becomes a way to exhibit universal humanity.

The Third Party as Another Other: The Strangeness of the Other

When the third party signifies another other, it involves the political relationship with the other. This relationship constitutes a situation where the self is absolutely guilty before double infinite responsibility. In this context, the threat to the other is understood as a kind of inevitable dilemma of consciousness and thought. It is impossible for us not to think, so this inescapable dilemma plunges the self into ambivalence. Even if the self recognizes itself as the guilty subject, and is committed to serving the unthinkable with thought, the loss of the other's alterity is already the inherent risk of this thinking action itself.

In my opinion, Lévinas's thought does take a considerable risk. In an interview related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Lévinas was asked about the Israeli government defending itself in the name of the Holocaust. He did not stand up to defend the Palestinians, but to speak for the Israeli government. When the interviewer questioned him: "For the Israeli, isn't the 'other' above all the Palestinian?" His response was:

My definition of the other is completely different. The other is the neighbour, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be. And in that sense, if you're for the other, you're for the neighbour. But if your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced with the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong, who is just and who is unjust. There are people who are wrong.³⁵

³⁴ Ibid., 121, 214-216.

³⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, *The Lévinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1989), 294.

Obviously, the third party who is regarded as us through kinship, as the other in my group, becomes Lévinas's personal primary concern and takes infinite responsibility. But the third party outside us, as them, as the other in the other group, is placed under the consideration of justice, and very likely such justice will eventually give way to infinite responsibility to the other in my group. For Lévinas, there is a difference between the infinite responsibility required by the other and the third party. In theory, these two responsibilities should be treated equally. Lévinas justifies his tendency to defend the Israeli government by saying that "the kin other can be the other." In this sense, the third party has become the touchstone of whether Lévinas's thoughts can transcend his Jewish roots and reach universality. If he does stop on the way to universality, then he would fail to face the strangeness of the other in the other group.

The core issue about the other is how to keep the alterity of the strange other in the realm of the third party. To solve this problem, the concept of many others may be instructive. Among the various significations of the third party, the concept of the others is the closest to Shen's many others. Through many others and the virtue of generosity, we can follow the logic of the others to implement the pursuit of universal humanity, and carefully avoid being confined to the kin other. With the expansion of my group, the scope of us is extended outward, and the strange others are gradually included in the fraternal community originally composed of the kin other. The issue here is that when many others conflict with each other, how to keep each other's alterity while pursuing justice, especially the alterity of the strange other. I think that it is not enough to stay in Lévinas's guilt subject, but to construct a more positive concept of the subject, such as Shen's generous subject. Based on the generous subject, we can imagine a generous community seeking a kind of universality that can welcome strangeness. About this kind of universality, Shen's universalizable ethics and strangification may contribute a deep insight. Reflecting on the global ethic proposed by Hans Küng for religious conversation, Shen argues that a single universal ethic does not exist and proposes a universalizable ethic. In Shen's view, the more universal an ethical tradition is, the more valuable it is. Based on a universalizable ethic, although ethical traditions are different from each other, they can communicate with each other and show their own universalizable factors. In terms of the realization of universalizable ethic, strangification can be a strategy to go out of familiarity and move toward strangeness.³⁶ With universalizable ethic and strangification as constructive principles, we may be able to both pursue universality and accept strangeness, and form a fraternal community.

³⁶ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 466-468.

*The Third Party as the Other of the Other:
The Transcendence of the Other*

What are the conditions of possibility for a fraternal community to guard the alterity of the other? This question brings us to the last signification of the third party: the other of the other or the trace of God. For Lévinas, it is the passing of God that restores the self as a member of the community. There are two implications regarding the passing of God. First, the trace of God implies that God passes through the field where the self meets the other, and sees this encounter through the eyes of the other. It is God's vision of the self and the other that enables the community to take shape. Second, God is always the other of the community. As the other of the other, the alterity of God himself cannot be reduced by the self. Therefore, the alterity of God is the ultimate guarantee of the other's alterity. Although the self uses the logic of totality to reduce the concrete other, God always resists this reduction with God's transcendence. God is the depth of the other's alterity that cannot be reduced and the ultimate source of the other's strangeness that cannot be ignored. God is the ultimate foundation of a community that is able to accept the strange other. In this sense, God is the transcendental dimension of the other.

The key is still consciousness. The risk of reducing alterity comes from the fact that the third party as another other forces the others into the realm of consciousness. But God transcends self-consciousness and turns back to consciousness of everything. "The unknowable God [who] knows everything" is the condition for guarding the alterity of the other. It is precisely because of God, whose traces can only vaguely be traced and who actually resides in the flesh of the other, that the self's thought that wants to judge everything becomes judged. The inversion of this relationship makes it impossible for the self to reduce any kind of alterity of the other, even to kill the other. God, as the protector of all the oppressed, secretly sees everything and guards everything. However, what God knows is not only a static state, but also a dynamic process. As Shen said when he discussed *scientia Dei*: "What really exists in God's cognition and obtains His sympathetic, righteous, loving and appreciative judgment is the history of individual life and the history of development of the community."³⁷ As an object of God's love and judgment in God's cognition, a generous subject and a generous community, which completely transcend consciousness, are thus able to face the risk of reducing the alterity of the other.

³⁷ Shen, *Essays on Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 283.

Conclusion

What does the aforementioned contrast between Lévinas's the other and Shen's many others mean for Chinese Neo-Scholasticism? Chinese Neo-Scholasticism is the result of the encounter between Catholic philosophy and Chinese culture. For Lévinas, the issue of the other is involved in cultural encounters. In his view, before the other becomes a cultural other, it has already been the other of a culture. The other is originally the naked face without any cultural form, and the face of the other signifies its ultimate strangeness.³⁸ The essence of culture is an assembling and arranging process through which all beings are cultivated and eventually become an illuminating totality.³⁹ In this light, all cultural actions imposed on the other are regarded as a form of reduction. If we want a culture to accept the other of another culture and a subject to respect the alterity of the other of another culture, we must create a culture that is aware of the hidden dimension of reduction that allows the other of another culture to question the cultural identity of the self. Such a culture is an *ethical culture*.⁴⁰

Lévinas's cultural discourse has important significance for a generous subject who attempts to carry out cultural strangification. Since any cultural action inherently contains violence against the other, it is necessary to be aware of the totalization and reduction that may arise in the process of strangification. When we assimilate the strangeness of the other through the expansion of our community, do we actually reduce the alterity of the other? In the process of universalization, are we truly moving toward a pluralism that preserves any alterity? Is there some kind of totalization hidden in this process? The best way to protect the alterity of the other is to leave a place in consciousness for the other who has not yet entered consciousness. Jacques Derrida pointed out that what drives Lévinas's philosophy is a kind of eschatology that does not involve any special experience but experience itself as the passage and departure toward the other. What this journey will arrive at is not any specific philosophy, but a question of designating a hollow space within our experience. This hollow space is not only understood as being open to the other, but also the opening itself.⁴¹

³⁸ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 95-96.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 185-187.

⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 83.

The view of Derrida has two meanings for our discussion. First, we should not presuppose and fixate on who the strange other is. Any answer to “who is the other” will bring specificity, and a specific philosophy based on this specificity. We cannot help but think like this. All we can do is see the other as an unsolved question and not seek any answer. Second, no matter how we answer the question about the other, the more important issue is always to reflect on what kind of subject the self should be in order to welcome the other. If possible, it would be better for us to have a strategy of strangification of our own community, namely to keep the alterity of strange other. This requires us to create a hollow space for the other within ourselves and form a community that can leave a place for any other in advance.

We may be able to imagine the virtue of generosity through this creation of space. A generous subject not only gives to the other a specific thing that one has, but also empties oneself to accept the other. Such a self-emptying subject neither falls into nothingness nor achieves nothing. There is a dialectics of activity and passivity about generosity. On the one hand, the self passively becomes an active agent because one is created as a subject with free will. On the other hand, the self actively becomes a passive one, because one freely gives up one’s freedom. As for the result of this self-emptying, it is up to God to decide. The self will not know how God evaluates him/her, but it does not matter. What is important to the self is to be humble and self-restrained, and to become a medium of Tao’s passing.

For Shen, God in Western culture and Tao in Eastern culture are different expressions of the same ultimate reality. Although these two concepts are different, there is one thing in common: God and Tao both create and cultivate all things through generosity.⁴² The generous force from God or Tao creates and accepts the self, so that the self can welcome the other, and eventually, in the appearance of the third party, the self can understand the ultimate source of hospitality. Generosity is the source of all moral norms based on subjectivity and mutuality, as Shen said: “Although generosity can overflow beyond subjectivity and mutuality, it does not negate or ignore subjectivity and mutuality. Generosity is magnanimity without losing the rules.”⁴³ Before the emergence of subjectivity and reciprocity, a consistent flow of generosity has already overflowed beyond them. In the transcendence of generosity, the individual self is born and vanishes. Although life and death of the individual come and go, the community becomes more abundant. This indicates that although the subject’s body no longer exists, its personality

⁴² Shen, *Essays on Intercultural Philosophy and Religion*, 259-260.

⁴³ Shen, *Contrast, Strangification and Dialogue*, 315.

stands upright. The subject who dedicates itself and is generous to many others, although dead and turned to dust, still lives among people who inherit the same flow of generosity.

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Many Others, Strangification, and Communion: Vincent Shen's View on the Confucian Remedy to the Crisis of Modernity

TAN MINGRAN*

While in China Mou Zongsan (牟宗三) was eagerly developing democracy and science through his proposition that the inborn knowledge of the good be suspended temporarily, Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger in Europe started reflecting and criticizing the negative effects of domination, estrangement, and nihilism brought by democracy and science, urging people to fulfill the meaning of life by concerning themselves with Dasein and experience. In order to narrow this gap toward modernity between the East and the West, Vincent Shen made an effort to redefine the characteristics of modernity and explain the reason why Confucianism did not develop the notion of democracy and science. He argued that Confucian humaneness and ideal personality could be a remedy for the crisis of modernity by incorporating the concepts of many others, strangification, and communion.

The concept of many others is a development of Gilles Deleuze's understanding of others. For Shen, Deleuze proposed "others" from the antithesis of self and others, and focused on the importance of self and self-autonomy. But the meaning of many others is to open oneself to myriad things, including nature, spirits, God, and other people.¹ Shen aimed to transcend the antithesis of self and others and step out of anthropocentrism.

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¹ Vincent Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism* 返本开新论儒学 (Guiyang: Kong Xuetang Shuju, 2017), 316.

To open oneself to many others, Shen proposed strangification, which is an act of going outside of oneself to the stranger, to many others.² It requires that one open oneself to a new world, put oneself in the place of others, and express oneself in others' languages and ways of thinking.³ Otherwise, one cannot transcend the antithesis of self and others, nor reach the unity of self and others as Zhuangzi and Cheng Hao proposed, or Zhuangzi's realm of forgetting-in-sitting 坐忘, which means that one abandons one's body and mind to unite with the Way (Dao).

Shen further proposed communion as a supplement of strangification to transcend the antithesis of self and others. According to Shen, communion refers to intuitive life, even telepathy (感应) between self and others, between human beings and other creatures. This kind of experience enables one to achieve consideration and respect toward others and act as the source of Confucian humaneness, righteousness, and ritual propriety. It takes place because all things are an organic unity and interconnect with one another. By means of the Confucian doctrine of human nature, along with reason and the principle of objectivity established by Western thought, Shen argued that the crisis of modernity in its different aspects, such as alienation and selfishness, could be overcome.⁴

Thus, Shen evaluated science, democracy, and Confucian philosophy from a comparative perspective and concluded that Confucianism could provide a remedy to the crisis of modernity. First, the Confucian value system, moral cultivation, and sagehood can justify and fulfill the meaning of human life and prevent the rise of nihilism caused by the expansion of the use of instrumental reason. Second, the Confucian sense of communion can soften the rigidity of democracy. Third, Confucian scholars regard the universe as an organic unity and an unceasing productive process in which human beings partake and assist in its production and nourishment. Analogically, human beings can also apply this organism to the renewal of the democratic and scientific system.⁵

² Vincent Shen, "After Criticism, Doubt and Negation: the Positive Value and Perspective of Postmodernism," *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 8 (2000) 沈清松, "在批判, 质疑与否定之后: 后现代的正向价值与视野," *哲学与文化* 第8期 (2000年).

³ Vincent Shen, "Personality Education in the Context of Globalization: Its Horizon and Structure, Dynamism and Development," *Journal of Education of University of Taipei* 59 (April 2018): 3-128.

⁴ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism*, 141.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

Characteristics and Defects of Modernity

Shen defined modernity from four aspects – subjectivity, representation, reason, and domination, whereby the last three derive from subjectivity. He assumed that when subjectivity goes to the extreme, it causes domination, alienation, and nihilism.

Subjectivity

Since René Descartes proposed the principle of the *Je pense, donc je suis*, subjectivity has become the foundation of all philosophical schools in the West. It manifests a respect toward individual dignity and human rights in modern life, as well a consideration of human beings as the subject of cognition, rights and values, and the ground for modern culture, including science, arts, and social and political institutions. In John Locke's understanding, the individual is the sole and true subject of all rights and duties.⁶ Respect for individual dignity and human rights not only set the West free from the serfdom controlled by the Church and the feudal lords, but also brought about worldwide waves of change that required governments to respect individuals rather than oppress them in the name of nation or group interests.

With regard to the situation of individualism, freedom, and democracy, Shen commented: "Respecting individuals is the basic principle to govern modern society, but it is easily subjected to two kinds of extremes. The first is to make a person selfish; the second is to make the popular become blind followers."⁷ Shen explained: "To enjoy freedom, a person has to make his/her own choice and take the responsibilities that attach to it. However, most people would like to shun their responsibilities through merging themselves into the unreasonable popular."⁸ In other words, people do not have independent personality and judgment, and often follow the popular trend to make their own decisions. Just as Wang Fuzhi observed, in debates, a person usually worries about his/her incompetence, and hence uses the popular view to enhance his/her confidence.⁹ When exploring what causes people to lose their own judgment, Shen ascribed it to the institutionalization of Western society. The institution of democracy ensures human rights and equality, but

⁶ Ibid., 130.

⁷ Ibid., 118.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wang Fuzhi, *The Complete Works of Chuanshan* 船山全书, vol. 11 (Changsha: Yuelu Shushe, 1996), 325.

its rigidity turns everyone into an insignificant screw in a large machine, which wipes out their sense of presence, and makes individuals lose their power to enjoy rights and values.¹⁰

Representation

Representation is another manifestation of modernity. In modern times, people see themselves as subject and the natural world as object. Through establishing various representative forms, the subject expresses itself, obtains knowledge, and controls the natural world. In fact, image, concept, and theory are all representations and the means to get to know the world and then control it. Hence, representation is the media connecting the subjective and the objective, and uses signs and forms to represent the objective world.¹¹ Karl Popper refers to signs and forms as the Third World: “When scientists attempt to explain the physical or spiritual worlds, they must use the Third World established with theory, signs and symbols.”¹² In other words, the spread of science and technology immerses human beings in the world of signs and symbols, driving them farther away from the natural world, and making the meaning of their life and existence pale.

Reason

The process of modernization is to make the world rationalized. Modern people think highly of reason and believe that with reason, human beings can explore and interact with the world and so progress to a higher level. Human beings do not need God as arbitrator; they understand themselves as masters of the world.¹³ According to Jürgen Habermas, rationalization is, above all, a process of regular control, which aims at controlling the objective world through rational principles. However, human beings are conversely controlled by the artificial world of signs and symbols.¹⁴ Immersed in this world of signs and symbols, the subject loses autonomy and enters the situation that Michel Foucault analyzed in terms of *death* in regard to both the *subject* and

¹⁰ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism*, 118.

¹¹ See Shen, “After Criticism, Doubt and Negation: The Positive Value and Perspective of Postmodernism.”

¹² Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 153-161.

¹³ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism*, 41.

¹⁴ See Shen, “After Criticism, Doubt and Negation: The Positive Value and Perspective of Postmodernism.”

the *author*. According to Jean Baudrillard, “Death...means to lose connection with reality, and no value resort to reality as reference. Losing reality as their reference, values become a kind of exchange of signs.”¹⁵ Hence, the world of signs established by reason, in turn, restrains the activity of subject, making the subject the slave of the world of signs. This is testimony of Laozi’s doctrine, “Going to the reverse is the movement of Dao or the Way,”¹⁶ an inevitable consequence of the dichotomy of subject and object.

Domination

The control of people and other things leads to the domination of reason. As human beings grasp more principles of things, they strengthen their domination over other things. When they explore and grasp principles of society and human behavior, they become capable of dominating other people and things by means of institutions and systems. Although institutions and systems aim at restraining people in power, they also block individuals’ creativity and initiatives.

Modernity and Confucian Philosophy

Vincent Shen explained why Confucianism could not have developed science and democracy, but he also intimated that the way of Confucian thinking could make up for the inadequacy of democracy and science, and would be a remedy for the crisis of modernity.

Firstly, Shen pointed out that Confucianism did not develop science because of the different value orientation. Western philosophy in the Greek tradition starts from people’s wonder about the natural world, and results in the theoretical construction of scientific knowledge. In contrast, Chinese philosophy starts from people’s concern about their fellows and environment, and develops practical wisdom to guide human behavior in the future.¹⁷ Wondering about the life and death of the myriad things, Western philosophers explore the origin of things to improve their understanding of the world. Being concerned with their welfare and environment, Chinese thinkers focus their attention on how to live well among myriads of things. Although the investigation of things has been proposed, it is often interpreted as finding or awakening the moral principle among things and events under the influence

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Laozi* 老子, 40.

¹⁷ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen’s Discourse on Confucianism*, 142.

of moral supremacy. Shen thus concluded, “This difference between wonder and concern tells us why Chinese culture could not have developed modern science under the influence of Confucianism.”¹⁸

Secondly, Shen explained why Confucian philosophy could not have developed science for three reasons. 1) First, Chinese traditional science does not strictly follow mathematical logic. Those pseudo-scientific theories in ancient China are mainly founded on intuition and speculation. They are helpful in grasping the holistic feature of human life and society, but lack methodological exactness and logic coherence.¹⁹ 2) Second, Chinese traditional science is short of well-controlled systemic experiments. Data collected from experience in ancient China, though detailed, often come from inevitable situations rather than systematically from arranged experiments. Few ancient Chinese deliberately controlled the process of their cognition.²⁰ Confucius used to demand from students the memorization of the names of birds, beasts, weeds, and trees, yet he was more concerned with the welfare of human society, rather than the principle of the physical world. For Confucius, the physical world should be managed according to human nature and the nature of things, not controlled by any technological process.²¹ The nature of things is understood as the principle that makes things fit for the use of human beings. 3) Chinese traditional science does not develop a philosophy of science to reflect on or criticize the obtained knowledge. Confucianism never constructs a system of deduction and falsification, induction and justification. The Confucian model begins with ethical practice while aiming at the ultimate reality and the achievement of a kind of spiritual unity. Its ethical practice focuses on participating in group activities to achieve the meaning of life and understand human nature. Any technology thus arising must be reshaped to fit this ethical context.²² Based on above three argumentations, Shen concluded that Chinese traditional science could not have developed into modern science.

If science is the reconstruction of the natural world by reason, democracy then is the reconstruction of human society. Science separates a natural object from the rest and then analyzes it. Democracy separates individuals from their group and respects and protects them. Science gives importance to the objective system by using experiments to control physical objects. Democ-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 149-150.

²² *Ibid.*, 151.

racy resorts to objective social institutions to control individuals. If Confucianism cannot develop science, it seems that it cannot develop democracy either. Shen enumerated the three principles of democracy: (1) All human beings are created equal, and every individual's rights and values should be respected. (2) the interaction between individuals, groups, or individual and group must be done through the medium of institutions. (3) Institutions can be changed through people's reasonable discussion and evaluation, and should not be overthrown or abandoned with force.²³ With these three principles as a reference, Shen disclosed that Confucian philosophy did not foster democracy.

Unlike modern Western society, Confucianism neglects the protection of the individual's dignity, freedom, and rights; rather, it promotes sacrificing individual interest for the welfare of the group, nation, and society and fulfilling the meaning of one's life in the realization of the peace and welfare of one's family and nation. It emphasizes the achievement of sagehood in morality, but not democracy in politics.²⁴ Confucian scholars do not establish an objective, powerful, and efficient institution. Although some of them, like Mencius, realized the necessity of laws and political institutions besides moral teachings in government, in practice, they gave preference to the expansion of the ruler's humaneness, which overshadowed the objectivity and purpose of institutional structure.²⁵ But Xunzi did not establish institutions from the pure structural and logic dimensions, hence, he needed rational structure to support the reasonableness and objectivity of the institutions he called.²⁶

If the reasonableness and objectivity of institutions are uncertain, it will be difficult for Xunzi to restrain the monarch's power efficiently. In this sense, Xunzi could not carry out his proposition that every human being is endowed with duties and obligations established by the laws. Moreover, Confucian scholars seldom criticize or reform the established institution deliberately. Confucius did not think it necessary to change the system of Zhou rituals. Mencius supported removing a tyrant, but he did not reflect on the strong and weak points of a monarchy. Xunzi proposed to abide by Dao or the Way instead of the monarch, but he still limited his remonstrance within the monarchical system and did not show any intention to reform it. Based on the above analysis, we can assume that Shen would not think that Confucian philosophy could have developed modern democracy.

²³ *Ibid.*, 130-132.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

At this point, we may add, with their concern about affection and emotion, Confucian scholars are not able to observe physical objects objectively. With their proposition for hierarchical love, they would not treat people equally. With their holistic worldview, they cannot separate one object from others. These ways of thinking prescribe that Confucian scholars cannot undertake scientific experiments or respect human rights. This, however, does not mean that Confucian scholars do not pay attention to reason. What distinguishes them from the West is that they use reason to regulate and serve emotion, and try to find the balanced point or the mean in social interactions. They consider the balance point the right mean through which one expresses joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure. Although rituals and laws of Confucianism are rationally constructed, they are at the service of affection and emotion or the coordination of human relationships.

Sima Qian recorded: “The sage established rituals in the need of human relationships.”²⁷ If the sage, or the ruler, could establish rituals or laws for the need of human relationships and desires, the consequence would be that the ruler changes or ignores laws and institutions. Nevertheless, the weak control of institutions and rituals may leave room for individuals to act at will. In China, either in the past or in the present, individuals can always change their fates with their experience and wisdom. By pleasing the ruler or grasping an opportunity, a person can always become rich or noble, without fearing the limitation of institutions or systems.

According to Shen, the emphasis on reasonable and objective institutions leads to the autonomy of institutions, turning bureaucracy and organizations into the control and shack of individuals. Individuals become immersed in the bureaucratic system and are institutionalized as a part of the huge system, and so they lose their autonomy in the search for knowledge or the exertion of power.

Confucian Remedies

Vincent Shen asserted that Confucian beautification of personality and equality in moral improvement would provide an ideal for individuals to strive for, and remedy the loss of values and nihilism. Confucian humanness and communion can soften the rigidity, objectivity, and rationality of democratic institutions, and restore the meaning of life to people.

Confucian beautification of personality refers to the potential to realize one’s virtues perfectly. In order to do so, one should have an ideal for life,

²⁷ 史记·礼书 *Historical Records, The Book of Rites*.

spread one's benefaction, accomplish achievements, and bequeath later generations a good doctrine. One's ideal should merge the meaning of individual life with one's contribution to the nation and group, and prescribe the way for the individual to perfect virtues. Therefore, one opens one's mind to others and receives their recognition; thus, one should avoid selfishness, aloofness, and nihilism that sprout from individualism.

When Shen suggested softening the rigidity of democracy with Confucian humaneness and communion, he aimed to overcome domination, alienation, and nihilism. Confucianism prefers to look at the meaning of human life and emphasizes the harmony between self and others, the human being and nature. Scholars in this tradition assert that not only human society but also the physical world is meaningful. When the Song Neo-Confucian scholar Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 was asked why he did not remove the weed in front of his windows, he replied, "The weeds share with me the same mentality."²⁸ That is, he and the weeds are both living bodies. He should love them as he loves himself.

To love other creatures as we love ourselves, we must acknowledge the legitimacy of many others, use strangification to carry out Confucian humaneness and reciprocity, and consider things from other people's standpoint. Shen found support in the Husserlean notion of intersubjectivity, which asks people to empathize with others.²⁹ He also endorsed Paul Ricoeur's thought that others are the reference of self, making self as self. To live a meaningful and ethical life, one must open oneself to and accommodate others.³⁰

Shen defines strangification as going to others. To go to others, one first has to dialogue with others. One must start from common sense and achieve a common understanding with others about the living world. Based on this common understanding, he proposes pragmatic strangification, which means transplanting thoughts and values of one culture into another context.³¹ To transplant a thought or value into another culture, one must interpret it to fit the new cultural context. This took place in the process of Buddhist meaning-match (*geyi* 格義), which understands nirvana in terms of Daoist non-action. The same happened in the May-Fourth period with the import of freedom and democracy. Freedom was taken as a weapon to fight against

²⁸ Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *The Extant Works of the Cheng Brothers* 二程遗书 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2000), 112.

²⁹ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism*, 24.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

patriarchy and destroy family unity. Some Chinese considered that individual autonomy could not be compromised, and therefore, young people even claimed not to have a family surname. Robert Neville warns:

In recent years many English-speaking philosophers (both Chinese and American) in the analytical tradition have attempted to create a comparative conversation by tying Confucian ethics to the virtue-ethics tradition favored by Alasdair MacIntyre and others. This move has had the unfortunate effect of importing into Confucianism the Western distinction between human subjectivity where value lies and the objective world that is conceived to be value-neutral. Western virtue ethics is the attempt to establish normative ethics from the side of the subject alone, as Kant did in his deontological way, without serious reference to the value of things in the ethical environment.³²

Shen must have taken into account the transformation of the imported values upon the receiver, but also the distortion of the imported values themselves.

In order to open up to others, Shen also resorted to Confucian humaneness. Humaneness is the dynamic interaction and communion between humans, humans and the natural world, and humans and Heaven. It is both the transcendental foundation of individual ethical life and the ultimate resort of universal harmony. When practicing humaneness, one's sense of propriety is called righteousness. Righteousness stands for moral judgment and a person's awakening to ethical norms and moral responsibilities. To express one's humaneness and righteousness in concrete forms and ceremonies is called rituals or ritual propriety, which refers to the rules of conduct, political and religious ceremonies, and social institutions.³³ From communion to moral responsibilities, from moral responsibilities to rules of conduct, Confucianism thus finds the method to fulfill the meaning of life in various social environments.³⁴

How to fulfill the meaning of life? Shen recommended developing science and technology under the guidance of Confucian humaneness. This does not merely ask people to imitate the natural world or passively interpret the universal phenomena, but inspires them to awaken to the meaning of life in the universe. It urges people to exert their spiritual effort and artistic

³² Vincent Shen, "Peter Kun Yu Woo's Comparative Ethics: A View in Intercultural Philosophy," *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 3 (2016).

³³ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism*, 154.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

inspiration to transform the universe and make the physical world more suitable for human life. This is called “Emulating the sage’s elegant manners, the people in the world will be transformed” in *the Book of Changes*.³⁵ From this point of view, science and technology should not be seen as instruments to dominate and control the physical and social worlds, but should be converted into a measure to harmonize the human being and nature, self and others.

In short, Vincent Shen proposed to transform science and technology with Confucian values. The progress and development of science and technology must serve the realization of human potential. The meaning of human life should be prior to the rigidity of mathematics and experiments. With this kind of human concern, science and technology can be integrated into the creative process of Confucian culture. Through a variety of interactions, the domination of modernity will be abolished and replaced with the harmony between science and human life. After exhausting one’s own nature, one will be able to understand other’s nature, and the nature or principle of all things. One will be able to participate in and assist the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and earth, rather than control the world.

Reason and Subjectivity in Chinese Culture

Shen argued that Chinese culture is a kind of reasonable learning. With its emphasis on reasonableness, it neglects the potential of reason itself. This negation of reason results in the absence of modern science in Chinese culture.³⁶ Mou Zongsan also shared a similar idea and observed,

The awareness and experience of human mind are intuition and the knowledge obtained from nature and virtue. They directly experience the self-soing state of things. That is, they intuit things-in-themselves and achieve harmonious union with them. They cannot separate themselves from things and set things as objects, and neither can they further analyze the details of things.³⁷

The awareness and experience of human intellects are equal to the inborn knowledge of the good in both Mencius and Wang Yangming’s teachings. For Mou Zongsan, Chinese culture gives preference to the intuition and communion power of the inborn knowledge of the good, but neglects the

³⁵ Ibid., 161.

³⁶ Ibid., 151.

³⁷ Mou Zongsan, *Phenomena and Thing-in-itself* (Taipei: Taiwan Xuewsheng Shuju, 1990), 121.

cognitive reason that emphasizes the antithesis of subject and object. Thus, Chinese culture could not develop science. Both Shen and Mou Zongsan considered that Chinese culture neglects the potential of cognitive reason. However, their conclusion seems unconvincing because many classical Chinese texts show that Chinese culture does not neglect cognitive reason. Hence, it does not need Mou Zongsan's "suspension of the inborn knowledge of the good" to develop science.

One conspicuous example is the system of the trigrams and hexagrams of the *Book of Changes*. This system resembles the world of signs and symbols that the West constructs with images and concepts. It aims at predicting the trend of natural and social processes and ensuring the favorite time for human activities. Although Confucius proposed to reshape the divination theory and to understand moral teachings from the hexagrams, the predictive function of interpreting images and hexagrams has continued to be prosperous and popular in Chinese society. For example, 1500 years after Confucius, a Song Confucian scholar Shao Yong predicted the cosmological trend with *yuan* (129600 years 元), *hui* (10800 years 会), *yun* (360 years 运), *shi* (30 years 世).

Direct evidence that ancient Chinese culture did not neglect cognitive reason is to be found in the Daoist criticism of analytical thinking, Xunzi's recognition of cognitive reason, and the Neo-Confucian investigation of the principle of things. Laozi and Zhuangzi believed that what Heaven produces is perfect, and people should abide by natural laws without any human deliberation. They rejected human knowledge and deliberation because they found what human beings learn and explore is always part of the universe, and they cannot have a comprehensive understanding of the world. Human knowledge is thus partial and limited, and cognitive reason lacks efficacy and credibility. In order to get a holistic understanding of the world, people should resort to intuition and communion. Laozi said, "by intuition and communion, without going outside of my door, I know the world; without seeing outside of my windows, I know the way of Heaven. The farther you leave your home, the less you know the world."³⁸ Zhuangzi proposed the fasting of mind, that is, to empty the mind without any trace of deliberation and thinking, like "In the empty room, there is bright light."³⁹

Despite Daoist criticism of cognitive reason, Xunzi proposed his cognitive doctrine according to which mind should be empty, unified, and still

³⁸ Laozi 老子, 47.

³⁹ Guo Qingfan, *Collected Commentaries on the Zhuangzi* 郭慶藩, 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1961), 150.

(*xu yi er jing* 虚一而静).⁴⁰ He purported that when grasping the Way of Heaven with human cognition, the process of heavenly endowment could be controlled and used.⁴¹ In the Song dynasty, Zhu Xi advocated the investigation of things, and believed that each thing has its own principle and that nothing could exist without principle. Zhu Xi's theory misled later generations to investigate the physical principle of things, as Mou Zongsan criticized, for instance, the young Wang Yangming's investigation of the physical principle of bamboos.

We may say that the ancient Chinese had developed cognitive reason, but they differed from the West on how to use it. For the Chinese, cognitive reason is subordinated to moral cultivation and the pursuit of the meaning of human life. As a result, the ancient Chinese did not give importance to the inventions that cognitive reason produces, but tended to see them as petty crafts. What the ancient Chinese were particularly fond of was how to locate things in the universe and society and accomplish the meaning of their lives. For example, in the Zhuangzi, the pitcher-lugging old man did know that he could produce an excellent result if he used a well sweep to irrigate his field. Yet, what he was concerned about was to maintain a pure mind, without being tainted with calculation and deliberation. Using a well sweep, his mind would have to calculate efficacy and interest, which could arouse his greed. This story shows that the ancient Chinese recognized the existence and function of cognitive reason, but did not promote it because it might arouse greed and calculation and disturb the peace of the human mind.

Pertaining to cognitive reason, we have to discuss subjectivity in Chinese culture. While the West emphasizes the opposition between subject and object and promotes the autonomy of subject, the Chinese gives preference to the connection and unity between the subject and other people and things. In Chinese culture, the subject is independent and autonomous. To realize its potential, it must interact with objects, transcend the dichotomy of subject and object, and, finally, achieve unity.

Zhuangzi asserted that each subject is unique and self-sufficient. One perfects oneself if one just acts by one's own nature. However, Zhuangzi found that people would not follow their nature after they developed desire and calculation. They often sacrifice their lives for mundane fame and gain and cannot enjoy their natural lifespan. Zhuangzi thus suggested awakening to a realm of forgetting-in-sitting through the subject's active cultivation. When Yan Hui forgot humaneness and righteousness, rites and music, he was

⁴⁰ *Xunzi* 荀子. 天论, 21.8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

exerting his subjective initiative. At the level of forgetting-in-sitting, he forgot both his own subject and external things. This is called casting off form, doing away with mind, and becoming one with the Great Thoroughfare.

Mencius advocated self-reflection, but his realm of vast, flowing vital force (浩然之氣) unites Heaven and earth and transcends the distinction between self and others. When he proposed “He who has exhausted his mind knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven,”⁴² he also aimed to go out of the self and unite with Heaven, earth, and others. *The Doctrine of the Mean* says, “after exhausting one’s own nature, one will be able to understand other people’s nature, and then the nature or principle of all things. One will be able to participate in and assist the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and earth.” As one goes out farther and accommodates more creatures, one transcends oneself, achieving what *The Book of Changes* prescribes:

The Great man will combine his virtue with that of Heaven and earth. He will combine his brightness with that of the sun and the moon. He will also share the power of ghosts and spirits to charge well-being and misfortune.⁴³

In the Song dynasty, through self-cultivation, Neo-Confucian scholars developed what Zhuangzi and Mencius had proposed, that a humane person is one with other things indistinctly.⁴⁴ This is different from the Western tradition, which emphasizes the opposite between self and others. Shen’s notion of the perfection of personality is the process of self-cultivation that accomplishes self-perfection when one combines oneself with Heaven and others. In this perfect personality, there is no longer antithesis of self and others.

The promotion of subjectivity and self-cultivation and the pursuit of sagehood in Chinese culture are identical to the Chinese people’s expectation that sages should take on world affairs as their own, forget their self-interest, and serve the people. The Chinese rulers should emulate Emperors Yao and Shun’s selflessness and act like Xu You 許由 with a simple mind. Regretfully, the ancient Chinese overemphasized the sage’s selfless contribution while neglecting how to restrain the ruler’s wrongdoings with systems and institutions. In order to restrain the ruler, people

⁴² Mencius 孟子, 7A.1.

⁴³ Chen Junmin, *Collected Collation to Lv Dalin’s Extant Works* 陳俊民, 藍田呂氏遺著輯校 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1993), 64-65.

⁴⁴ Cheng and Cheng, *The Extant Works of the Cheng Brothers* 二程遺書, 112.

only suggested that he should empty the mind and lessen desires, yet they did not consider the importance of systems and institutions. Rather, they denounced rites and intuitions as the embellishment of the Way and the beginning of disorder. Or they empowered the ruler to establish rites according to the necessity of human emotions and relationships. In a way, they provided a spacious room for the subject or ego to roam. But the political consequence of this kind of culture is that if the ruler is a true sage, people will enjoy good governance; if the ruler is a tyrant, people will have to struggle for their lives.

Shen's Understanding of Desiring Desire

Shen seemed to regard desiring desire as the foundation of communion. He considered desiring desire as the original mind: "Because desiring desire is the original power to go to other people and things, it is unselfish originally. It is the original generosity that one goes out of oneself and goes to many others, and can be called the original mind."⁴⁵ He also saw the original mind as unintentional desire: "This desiring desire has existed as an archetype in human body and unconsciousness. It is a power potentially to become conscious motive. It is a kind of unintentional desire. We hereby do not call it desire, but name it desiring desire."⁴⁶

On the one hand, Shen identified desiring desire with Wang Yangming's original mind or inborn knowledge of the good, for the inborn knowledge of the good does not have any evil originally, but might turn into evil when being tainted with external things. Likewise, "Desiring desire and its initiative are unselfish. It will become selfish when it attaches to some concrete objects and turns into desired desire." Hence, we should start from unselfish desiring desire and turn it into desirable and desired desires. Based on this original generosity, we promote humaneness, practice strangification and self-reflection, and continue refreshing ourselves in order to achieve perfect goodness in the end.⁴⁷

On the other hand, Shen identified desiring desire with desire. In our body, the original motive is formed and nourished and can be called desire on the unconscious level. On the conscious level, it can be called will or intention, which is the power to strive for the desirable things that we do

⁴⁵ See Shen, "Personality Education in the Context of Globalization: Its Horizon and Structure, Dynamism and Development."

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism*, 58.

not name as desire but rather as desiring desire.⁴⁸ For Shen, the interaction among human beings begins with the spousal love between man and woman, which leads to marriage, husband and wife.⁴⁹ Obviously, Shen here regarded sexual love as desiring desire, the foundation for communion. When commenting on Mencius's four sprouts, Shen asserted that the four sprouts are the inborn inclination to be good, which enables people to act spontaneously. For instance, if one sees a child falling into a well, one offers help immediately. In this case, people do not have any selfish or calculating thought. If we extend this original inclination for goodness, we will be able to perfect our virtues.⁵⁰

In order to prevent desiring desire from falling into selfishness, Shen set it on the transcendental level. He argued, "On the primary level lies the transcendental desiring desire. Human need and want are its manifestation in experience. Transcendence means something prior to experience and making experience possible."⁵¹ As a result, Shen imported Kantian transcendental categories into Confucianism, departed from the inborn knowledge of the good, and combined inherency and transcendence.

Shen might get some inspiration from Ronald de Sousa's research on desires and emotions when he proposed desiring desire. As de Sousa says, "If emotions are the signs of human original nature, they should be universal and objective." "The original inclination gives rise to emotion, yet it itself is not emotion."⁵² This original inclination is the survival instinct of human beings or the motive for life in Confucianism. It is unselfish and good in terms of sustaining life and can be regarded as the archetype of Shen's desiring desire. Here we can combine the original mind and desire in Shen's discourse, and identify both as survival instinct or motive for life. Survival instinct becomes sexual love in spousal life, and manifests as the unbearable mind or humaneness in Mencius. Just because survival instinct (motive for

⁴⁸ See Shen, "Personality Education in the Context of Globalization: Its Horizon and Structure, Dynamism and Development."

⁴⁹ Shen, *Retrospect and Prospect: Vincent Shen's Discourse on Confucianism*, 287.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵¹ Dennis Schilling, Wang Lvwei, Vincent Shen, Dan Zhaowei, and Lin Jianfu, "Personality Education in the Context of Globalization: Its Horizon and Structure, Dynamism and Development: Response and Discussion," *Journal of Education of University of Taipei* 59 (April 2018).

⁵² Ronald de Sousa "The Rationality of Emotion," trans. Ma Jingsong and ed. Vincent Shen, *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 10 (2005) 苏隆德, "情感的合理性," 马竞松译, 沈清松校订, 《哲学与文化》第10期 (2005年).

life) runs through all creatures, humans thus can interact and communicate with other people and things, and achieve the state that Cheng Hao called “A humane person becomes one with other things indistinctly.”

Ontologically speaking, human beings can interact and communicate with other creatures because all things are nothing but the different states of the same mass of transforming *qi* that Zhuangzi observed.⁵³ Since all things are one originally, people can extend their humaneness and emotions to other people and creatures so that they empathize with their joys and sorrows. As Zhuangzi said, the fish in the Hao River are happy; Mencius claimed that other people share the taste for and love of reason; Cheng Hao extends his humanness to all creatures in the world. Zhuangzi said,

He who knows what is that Heaven does, and knows what it is that man should do, has reached the peak. Knowing what it is that Heaven does, he lives with Heaven. Knowing what it is that man should do, he uses the knowledge of what he knows to find out the knowledge of what he does not know, and lives out the years that Heaven gives him without being cut off midway – this is the perfection of knowledge.⁵⁴

In short, Shen commented on and remedied the crisis of modernity from the perspective of Chinese classical humanism. This humanism matches postmodern scholars’ criticism of modernity. Shen showed his deep insight when he transcended Western anthropocentrism with Chinese unity of self and others, the human being and Heaven. He urged people never to forget Kant’s dictum, “Only the human being, and with him every rational creature, is an end in itself.”⁵⁵ People then can prevent themselves from becoming enslaved to science and democracy. Shen further recommended harmony and co-prosperity of human beings and other creatures. He proposed many others by asking people to empathize with the unity and communion of self and others, and to avoid selfishness and blindness generated narcissism. In the times of the Covid-19 virus pandemic, Shen’s advice becomes more important to understand the meaning of science and democracy and the harmonization of humans and other creatures. Human beings should reflect upon what they should do and not do in times of crisis.

⁵³ Guo Qingfan, *Collected Commentaries on the Zhuangzi* 郭慶藩, 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1961), 733.

⁵⁴ Guo, *Collected Commentaries on the Zhuangzi*, 224.

⁵⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co., 2002), 112.

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PART II

Dialogue of Cultures and Religions

An Unfamiliar Hermeneutics: Interpretation for the Sake of Others

HUANG YONG*

Introduction

In a Chinese paper published in 2017, entitled: “Learning for the Sake of Oneself and Learning for the Sake of Others: A Reexamination from a Postmodern Point of View,” Vincent Shen challenges the traditional and standard interpretation of a passage from the *Analects*: “Ancient Learners are for the sake of themselves, and present learners are for the sake of others.”¹ According to the traditional interpretation, Confucius is praising the ancient learners who are learning for the sake of themselves and criticizing the learners of his time who are learning for the sake of others. To explain why it is wrong to learn for the sake of others and why Confucius is against it, as it appears perfectly right to learn for the sake of others, Confucian scholars, historical and contemporary, have provided many ingenious explanations. The most widely accepted one is given by a neo-Confucian philosopher of the Song dynasty, Cheng Yi, according to which the ancient learner learned for the sake of cultivating their own virtues, while learners in Confucius’s time learned in order to show off their scholarship. Agreeing that to learn for the sake of oneself is to learn to cultivate one’s own virtue, Shen argues that to learn for others is to learn to be concerned about others’ well-being and, thus, these two types of learning are equally important.² In this paper, I shall argue, in the spirit of Shen, that there are two correspondingly different types

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¹ *Analects*, 14.24.

² Vincent Shen, “Learning for the Sake of Oneself and Learning for the Sake of Others: Re-examination from a Postmodern Point of View,” *The Twenty-first*

of hermeneutics: the one with which we are familiar is a hermeneutics for the sake of the interpreter oneself, and the other, that I am going to highlight, is the hermeneutics for the sake of others.

Two Types of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics has obtained such prominence in contemporary philosophy that it is not an exaggeration to say that one cannot understand contemporary philosophy without an appropriate understanding of hermeneutics. However, using Richard Rorty's distinction between self-fulfillment and human solidarity,³ contemporary hermeneutics is primarily a hermeneutics for self-creation. When interpreting a text, a tradition, a culture – in short, an “other” – the interpreter's main concern is what we can learn from the “other.” In other words, the primary or ultimate purpose of our interpretation of the “other” is not to understand the “other,” but to understand ourselves through our understanding of the “other.” For example, in his hermeneutics, although Hans-Georg Gadamer emphasizes the idea of *Bildung*, which normally means “the properly human way of developing one's natural talents and capacities,”⁴ he adopts the Hegelian interpretation of *Bildung*, that is, “to recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it” and to return “to itself from what is other.”⁵ Since the primary purpose of hermeneutics is not to understand the other but to understand oneself through an understanding of the other, Gadamer points out,

the real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history.⁶

Rorty makes this point more clearly. According to him, the main feature of Gadamer's hermeneutics is that it is “interested not so much in what is out there in the world, or in what happened in history, as in what we get out of

Century 為己之學與為人之學: 從後現代重新審視, 二十一世紀, no. 4 (2017): 67-79.

³ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, trans. Hoel C. Weinsheimer (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 294.

nature and history for our own uses.”⁷ Translating *Bildung* into edification, Rorty thinks that hermeneutic activity is edifying discourse, which is supposed “to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings.”⁸ With this, Paul Ricoeur, another master of contemporary hermeneutics, also concurs. Ricoeur does think that Gadamer’s hermeneutics takes a shortcut. In his view, an interpreter should first grasp the world unfolded, discovered, and revealed by and in front of the text. Ricoeur agrees that the ultimate purpose of hermeneutic action is not to understand the text or the world revealed by the text but “to understand oneself in front of the text.”⁹

What I would like to focus on here is a different type of hermeneutics, namely, a hermeneutics for human solidarity. When interpreting a text, a tradition, and a culture, our main concern is not self-understanding, but understanding the other, whether as an individual or a community, that may become the recipient of our actions. In other words, the purpose of our interpretation of the “other” is not merely self-understanding, self-enrichment, or self-creation; it is rather to understand the unique ideas and ideals, habits and customs, cultures and religions, likes and dislikes of the “other” who may be very different from us, in order to ensure that our action toward them be appropriate. Thus, in such a hermeneutics, the “other” that we aim to interpret and understand is not texts or symbols but the living person, who may be the author or user of such texts and symbols, as only a living person, and not texts or symbols, can become our moral patient. It is often necessary to understand texts and symbols, but it is not enough to study them indepen-

⁷ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 359.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 88, emphasis in original. In this respect, Jürgen Habermas seems to hold a different view: “In its very structure hermeneutic understanding is designed to guarantee, within cultural traditions, the possible action-orienting self-understanding of individuals and groups as well as reciprocal understanding between different individuals and groups.” See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (London: Heinemann, 1972), 176. Here he emphasizes the mutual understanding between different individuals and groups. However, Habermas does not think such mutual understanding only serves one’s self-understanding, nor does he think that it aims to understand the other as the other, as someone who may be very different from us. Rather, in Habermas’s view, such mutual understanding “makes possible the form of unconstrained consensus and the type of open intersubjectivity on which communicative action depends.” See Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, 176.

dently of the other who creates and/or uses them, because the purpose of our understanding these texts and symbols is to understand the people who create and/or use them. Hence, when understanding these texts and symbols, we should do our best to understand them as they are understood by the people we want to understand. In other words, instead of understanding the texts or symbols through our understanding of the people who create and use them, we are attempting to understand the people through their texts and symbols.

In this context, the late Harvard scholar of comparative religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, has made a very important point. In his view,

if we would comprehend these [the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Tierra del Fuegan] we must look not at their religions but at the universe, so far as possible through their eyes. It is what the Hindu is able to see, by being a Hindu, that is significant. Until we can see it too, we have not come to grips with the religious quality of his life.¹⁰

In other words, when understanding a text or a symbol, as Ricoeur says, we need to discover the world presented by the text and symbol. Unlike Ricoeur, who aims to understand ourselves through the world presented by the text, we try to understand the other living in the world presented by the text. Obviously, in order to understand the other living in this world, it is not appropriate for us to understand the world merely from our own perspective. We should do our best to see the world from the perspective of the people we try to understand. In Smith's view, every culture, religion, or civilization has its own colored glasses through which it looks at things. For this reason, in order to understand people in a different culture, religion, or civilization, it is not enough simply to look at the things they are looking at; rather, it is imperative to learn to look at the things through their colored glasses. It is in this sense that Smith perceptively denies the possibility of the so-called idol worship:

Actually, no one in the whole history of man has ever worshipped an idol. Men have worshipped God – or something – in the form of idols. That is what idols are for. Yet that is quite a different thing. “The heathen in his blindness,” sang the nineteenth-century hymn, “bows down to wood and stone.” Yet it is not the heathen here who is blind, but the observer. Even at his most restricted, the “idolator” worships not the stone that I see, but the stone that he sees.¹¹

¹⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

In Smith's view, if we only see them kneeling down to a rock, we cannot claim that we understand them. Only when we see the same thing they see in the rock they worship can we say that we see what they see.

Thus, hermeneutics for human solidarity is significantly different from contemporary hermeneutics largely defined by Gadamer. However, it should also not be confused with the modern hermeneutics the Gadamerian hermeneutics tries to transcend. Modern hermeneutic philosophers, including their rare contemporary advocates such as Emilio Betti, try to avoid the subjectivist tendencies they perceive as present in contemporary hermeneutics. In their view, the task of interpretation is to grasp either the objective meaning of a text or the original intention of its author. To some extent we can even claim that it shares the goal with contemporary hermeneutics for self-creation. The only difference is perhaps its insistence on the idea that we learn something really new only after we grasp the objective meaning of the text or the original intention of the author. Hence, no less than contemporary hermeneutics for self-creation, it is different from our hermeneutics for human solidarity. *First*, hermeneutics for human solidarity is not so much interested in the "objective" meaning of the text; it is rather interested in the understanding of the text by those with whom the interpreter has to interact, even though their understanding is incorrect or not the best one from the interpreter's point of view. What the interpreter really wants to understand is not the text, but the person who reads the text. *Second*, it is true that hermeneutics for human solidarity has some similarities to the modern hermeneutics that focuses on the original intention of the author, as both are concerned about persons and not texts. However, this is so only when the author of a given text is the one the interpreter needs to interact with. Since authors of ancient texts are no longer existent and therefore cannot be the possible recipients of the interpreter's action, hermeneutics for Human solidarity is not interested in the original intention of such authors. Even for a contemporary text whose author is around, if our immediate concern is a particular reader (or readers) of the text, hermeneutics for human solidarity is interested in this particular reader's understanding of the text and not the author's original intention, even if the former is inconsistent with the latter.

Making this distinction between hermeneutics for self-creation and hermeneutics for human solidarity, I do not intend to make any evaluation of their respective importance or my preference for one over the other. They are equally important, although for different purposes. Hermeneutics for self-creation is not something selfish, as what it concerns is the interpreter's (either an individual or a community) efforts of self-cultivation by learning from the other. Thus, while indeed quite different from hermeneutics for

human solidarity, hermeneutics for self-creation is not always in conflict with hermeneutics for human solidarity. As a matter of fact, in many cases, they are mutually supportive.¹² The proper purpose of hermeneutics for self-creation is the interpreter's self-cultivation which may also include the cultivation of the interpreter's sensibility to the pain and suffering of the other and the other's difference. Cultivation of such sensibility is precisely the goal of hermeneutics for human solidarity. As the proper purpose of hermeneutics for human solidarity is to increase our understanding of others so that our actions toward them can be more appropriate. The resultant sensibility to the uniqueness of others can also be regarded as self-cultivation, which is the goal of hermeneutics for self-creation.

My focus on hermeneutics for human solidarity is out of two main considerations. First, since contemporary hermeneutics, as well as the modern hermeneutics it attempts to transcend, is primarily a hermeneutics for self-creation, hermeneutics for human solidarity as I define it is, as a matter of fact, non-existent and so has yet to be developed. Second, while these two types of hermeneutics are indeed not incompatible, hermeneutics for self-creation does not necessarily lead us to the goal of hermeneutics for human solidarity. Rorty is perhaps wrong in thinking that we should keep self-creation and human solidarity in separate compartments, but he is certainly right that a person who becomes very interesting and creative through hermeneutics for self-creation may be insensible to the pains and sufferings of the other. That is the reason he thinks that we need to have two different types of heroes. For self-creation, we should learn from such authors as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Proust, Heidegger, and Nabokov. For human solidarity, Marx, Mill, Dewey, Habermas, and Rawls have much more to contribute.¹³

The Necessity for Hermeneutics of Human Solidarity

If modern and contemporary hermeneutics are primarily hermeneutics for self-creation, why do we need the hermeneutics for human solidarity today? Our answer is that it is a moral necessity. In this increasingly global world, what used to be members of remote clans have now become our immediate neighbors, in both actual and virtual realities. With the emergence of

¹² Here, we are moving beyond Rorty, from whom we have borrowed the distinction between self-creation and human solidarity. Rorty also thinks that these two are equally important, but for him, they are "forever incommensurable." See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xv.

¹³ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 13.

such a global village comes the increasing need for a global ethics. Traditional ethical systems were developed primarily to deal with human relationships within a particular ethnic, religious, and cultural group. In this global village, however, we are more and more interacting with people with ideals, ideas, cultures, religions, and customs very different from ours and from each other. An appropriate global ethics should thus enable us to manage such entirely new interpersonal relationships in a proper manner.

One of the common approaches to global ethics is to appeal to the so-called golden rule, which can be found in almost every major cultural and religious tradition in the world. Positively stated, it is “Do unto others what you would have them do unto you,” and negatively formulated it is “Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.” The golden rule is based on two assumptions: first, moral patients have the same or at least similar likes and dislikes as moral agents; second, a moral agent’s knowledge of him/herself as a potential moral patient of his/her own projected action can be used as the criterion to judge one’s action toward his/her actual recipients. Thus, when moral agents and moral patients indeed have the same or similar likes and dislikes, as they often do, the golden rule can play its important role in our moral life. However, when and where moral patients have likes and dislikes different from moral agents, the golden rule becomes problematic. As Alan Gewirth points out,

the agent’s wishes for himself *qua* recipient may not be in accord with his recipient’s own wishes as to how he is to be treated. ... For example, a person who likes others to quarrel with him or intrigue with him would be authorized by the golden rule to quarrel with others or involve them in network of intrigue regardless of their own wishes in the matter; a *roué* who would want some young woman to climb into his bed at night would be justified in climbing into her bed at night; a fanatical believer in the sanctity of contracts who would want others to imprison him for defaulting on his debts would be allowed to imprison persons who default on their debts to him and so forth.¹⁴

¹⁴ Alan Gewirth, “The Golden Rule Rationalized,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 3 (1980): 133. Nevertheless, Gewirth, together with many other contemporary philosophers, thinks that such serious problems of the golden rule can be avoided by some refinement or reformulation of this rule. I have argued why such contemporary attempts to save the golden rule have all failed. See Yong Huang, “A Copper Rule versus the Golden Rule: A Daoist-Confucian Proposal for Global Ethics,” *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 3 (2005): 395-402.

As an alternative to the golden rule, I have recently developed what I call (for lack of a better term) the copper rule. Positively stated, it is: “Do unto others as they would have you do unto them,” and negatively expressed, it reads: “Do not do unto others as they would not have you do unto them.”¹⁵ The crucial and also obvious distinction between the copper rule and the golden rule is that, when we decide whether our actions unto others are morally appropriate or not, the primary consideration is not what I would or would not like to be done unto if I were in their positions; rather, we need to consider what the actual persons who will receive our actions would or would not like to be thus done unto. In other words, when we make decisions about the appropriateness of our actions affecting others, what really matters morally is not the desires of us as agents or subjects, but those of others as patients or recipients of our actions. More importantly, the way to learn about the unique likes and dislikes of our moral patients is not simply to close our eyes and imagine what we would like or dislike if we were in their position; rather, it requires that we read about, observe, communicate with, and sometimes even live with them.

In developing this idea of the copper rule, I have primarily drawn on the rich resources in the Chinese Daoist and Confucian traditions. In this paper, I shall focus on the Daoist resource only.¹⁶ It is well known that Zhuangzi paid special attention to the differences of things. In “Equality of Things,” arguably the most important chapter in the *Zhuangzi*, there is a famous passage:

If a man sleeps in a damp place, he will have a pain in his loins and will dry up and die. Is that true of eels? If a man lives up in a tree, he will be frightened and tremble. Is that true of monkeys? Which of the three knows the right place to live? Men eat vegetables and flesh, and deer eat tender grass. Centipedes enjoy snakes, and owls and crows like mice. Which of the four knows the right taste? Monkey mates with the dog-headed female ape and the buck mates with the doe, and eels mate with fishes. Mao Chiang and Li Chi were considered by men to be beauties, but at the sight of them fish plunged deep down in the water, birds soared up in the air, and deer dashed away. Which of the four knows the right kind of beauty?¹⁷

¹⁵ See Huang, “A Copper Rule versus the Golden Rule: A Daoist-Confucian Proposal for Global Ethics.”

¹⁶ About the Confucian resource for Copper Rule, see Huang, “A Copper Rule versus the Golden Rule: A Daoist-Confucian Proposal for Global Ethics,” 404-406.

¹⁷ *Zhuangzi*, in Chen Guying, *Contemporary Annotations and Interpretations of Zhuangzi*, revised edition (in Chinese) (Taipei: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2002), 44.

What Zhuangzi tries to tell us here is that, when we do something affecting others, we need to pay special attention to the uniqueness of the recipients of our actions. Appropriate actions, in his view, are those that take into consideration the uniqueness of our moral patients. In contradiction to the common misunderstanding of Zhuangzi as a relativist, Zhuangzi made it clear that there is an absolute criterion about what is the best place for an eel to live, the best place for a bird to live, and the best place for a human being to live. What he emphasized is that the best place for one to live is not necessarily the best place for another to dwell.

For this reason, we should not assume that what we like or dislike is also what others like or dislike. Otherwise, there will be very bad consequences. According to Zhuangzi,

the perfectly correct way is not to violate the real character of the nature with which a thing is endowed. ... What is long should not be considered as superfluous, while what is short should not be considered as insufficient. For example, a duck's feet are short, but if we try to lengthen it, it causes pain; a crane has long legs, but if we try to cut off a portion of them, it causes grief. So we should not amputate what is naturally long or lengthen what is naturally short.¹⁸

This point of Zhuangzi is made even more vivid in the story of the Marquis of Lu raising a bird:

Of old, when a seabird alighted outside the capital of Lu, the Marquis of Lu went out to receive it, gave it wine in the temple, and had the *Jiushao* music played to amuse it, and a bullock slaughtered to feed it. But the bird was dazed and too timid to eat or drink anything. In three days it was dead. This was treating the bird as he would like to be treated, and not as a bird would like to be treated. Had he treated it as a bird would like to be treated, he would have put it to roost in a deep forest, allowed it to wander over the plain, to swim in a river or lake, to feed upon fish, to fly in formation with others.¹⁹

What Zhuangzi stressed here is the problem of the Marquis of Lu in his treatment of the seabird, for he treated "the bird as he would like to be treated." This is precisely what the golden rule would require him to do: as he liked wine, he let the bird drink the wine; as he liked the *Jiushao* music, he let

¹⁸ *Zhuangzi*, 8.1, 247.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.5; 475.

the bird “enjoy” the music; as he liked banquets, so he “entertained” the bird with the banquet. The result is the death of the bird.

The moral of this story is very similar to that of the story about Bole (the legendary first tamer of horses) taming horses. Although Bole is praised even today for being good at taming horses, Zhuangzi actually looked down upon him, for when he tamed horses,

he proceeded to singe and mark them, to clip their hair, to pare their hoofs, to halter their heads, to bridle and hobble them, and to confine them in stables and corrals. After being treated this way, two or three of ten horses died. He further proceeded to subject them to hunger and thirst, to gallop them and race them, and to make them go together in regular order. They are worried about the bondage of bit and breastplate in the front and are threatened by whip and switch. Having been treated that way, more than half of them died.²⁰

The reason that Zhuangzi, going against the common opinion about Bole, criticized him is that Bole did not treat horses according to their true nature, as they would like to be treated, which is “to tread on frost and snow with their hoofs, to withstand wind and cold with their hair, to feed on grasses and drink water, and prance with their legs.”²¹ In the sense of not treating horses according to their true nature, Bole was doing the same thing as the Marquis of Lu, who treated the seabird. The result is the same: the death of horses in Bole’s case and the death of the seabird in the case of the Marquis of Lu. It is true that there are some differences in each case. When taming horses, Bol did not treat horses as he himself would like to be treated for he himself did not want to be singed, marked, chased, made thirsty and hungry, etc. Whereas, when taking care of the seabird, the Marquis of Lu “treated for the bird as he himself like to be treated.” In other words, the Marquis of Lu followed the golden rule, but Bole did not. If we use the golden rule as the moral criterion, we may consider the action of the Marquis of Lu moral, Bole immoral. However, in Zhuangzi’s view, Bole was indeed wrong in his action toward horses, but the Marquis of the Lu was equally wrong in treating the seabird because neither considered the uniqueness of the recipients of their actions. According to Zhuangzi, the Marquis of Lu should have “treated the bird as the bird would like to be treated,” to “have put it to roost in a deep forest, allowed it to wander over the plain, to swim in a river or lake, to feed

²⁰ Ibid., 9.1; 257.

²¹ Ibid., 9.1; 257.

upon fish, to fly in formation with others.” This is exactly the meaning of the copper rule that I advocate.

To treat horses and seabirds according to their true nature and feelings requires one to take time to learn about and understand the unique likes and dislikes of horses/seabirds before one can decide what his/her appropriate actions toward them are. In this sense, Zhuangzi is against any subjectivist view. In the chapter “Equality of Things,” we are told that “if we follow our preconceived opinion as a guide, then who will not have such a guide?” For him, to have such preconceived opinion is “to go to the state of Yue today and yet arrived there yesterday.”²² What Zhuangzi refers to is the situation that happens when we try to apply the golden rule; even before we try to understand the other, we claim to have already understood the other. This is as paradoxical as to say that we go somewhere today and yet already arrived there yesterday. In order to overcome such subjective preconceptions, Zhuangzi developed the ideas of “the perfect person as selfless” (*zhi ren wu ji*),²³ “losing myself” (*wu shang wo*),²⁴ “the fasting of mind,” and “freeing the mind of pre-conception to wait [for the appearance of things].”²⁵ All these require us to get rid of our subjective standards and try to understand things in their own terms. The rationale behind this is that things are all different. As Zhuangzi describes the music of heaven (in contrast to that of earth and that of humans): “the music blows in a thousand different ways, but the sounds are all produced in their own ways. This is because they are naturally so.”²⁶

Zhuangzi liked to talk about the difference between humans and other species, saying that we cannot assume that human likes and dislikes are also the same for other species. What Zhuangzi really tried to express is that different people are also different from each other. When we treat our fellow human beings, we should always pay special attention to the uniqueness of the recipients of our actions.²⁷ How can we know the unique desires and

²² Ibid., 2.3; 57.

²³ Ibid., 2.1; 17.

²⁴ Ibid., 2.1; 38.

²⁵ Ibid., 4.1; 126.

²⁶ Ibid., 2.1; 39.

²⁷ In appearance, my copper rule, as an alternative to the golden rule, raises more questions than it solves. For example, it may be asked: If there are people who want us to help them cause harm to some other people, or want us to be their slaves, or want us to assist them to use drugs, does the copper rule require us to help them to do what they want us to do in all these situations? I have made some detailed replies to such questions in a different place. See Huang, “A Copper Rule versus the Golden Rule: A Daoist-Confucian Proposal for Global Ethics,” 410-416.

preferences, ideals and ideas, culture and religion, habits and customs of the potential recipients of our actions? This is exactly the reason that we need hermeneutics for human solidarity, whose primary concern is to understand the other.²⁸

The Possibility of a Hermeneutics for Human Solidarity

Above, I have argued that in our interaction with other people with different ideas and ideals, the most appropriate moral principle is not the golden rule of “Do (or do not do) unto others as we would (or would not) have them do unto us,” but rather the moral copper rule of “Do (or do not do) unto others as they would (or would not) have us do unto them.” To follow such a moral principle, it is imperative that we understand “others” who may become the recipients of our actions (or lack thereof). To this purpose, the predominant model of hermeneutics in contemporary philosophy, which aims at self-understanding through an understanding of the other, seems not to be working well. What is needed is a hermeneutics for human solidarity, whose primary purpose, instead of self-understanding, is the interpreter’s understanding of the other. Such a hermeneutics intends to enrich and complement the existing one.

If we have successfully argued that such a hermeneutics for human solidarity is indeed necessary, we have yet to deal with the question of its possibility. For Gadamer, understanding is essentially the fusion of the interpreter’s horizon and that of the other being interpreted. When he makes this claim, he emphasizes that he is not merely making a normative claim that

²⁸ Here I have basically focused on the work of Zhuangzi. In a recent article, Wang Qingjie provides an interpretation of Laozi’s conception of self-so (*ziran*, normal translated as “natural”) in relation to his idea of non-action (*wuwei*), which is along the same line as the Daoist view that I present here. In Wang’s view, Laozi’s self-so includes two meanings: one’s own self-so and other’s self-so. By being self-so and therefore in non-action toward others, one can allow other’s being self-so. This amounts to saying that one should not do unto others as others would not like us to do unto them. At the same time, by simply doing nothing, one cannot guarantee that the other can be self-so, as it is possible that another other interferes with the other and so the other cannot be self-so. In this case, Wang thinks that Laozi uses another sense of self-so and non-action: supporting all things in their natural state or in their being self-so (*Laozi*, 64). This amounts to saying that one should do unto others as others would have us do unto them. See Qingjie Wang, “Laozi’s Notion of Self-so: Self’s Self-so and the Other’s Self-so,” *Seeking Truth (Qiushi Xuekan)*, no. 6 (2004): 41-50.

we should or ought to understand the other in such a way; rather, he argues that he is making an objective observation of what is actually involved in our activities of understanding.²⁹ As Heidegger points out, when interpreting the other, the interpreter has always already had a fore-structure of understanding, which is unavoidably projected onto the other being understood. In other words, this fore-structure is not something we can decide to either use or not use when we try to understand the other, but a necessary condition for any activity of understanding. Without such a fore-structure, understanding is simply impossible.

We have to acknowledge the plausibility of what Gadamer says. However, we do not have to be pessimistic about the goal of hermeneutics for human solidarity. What we should keep in mind is the significant difference between hermeneutics for self-creation and hermeneutics for human solidarity. The former, which Gadamer suggests, is primarily interested in understanding classics and/or their authors who are normally not the interpreter's contemporaries. Neither classics nor their ancient authors can help us confirm whether our understanding of them is correct or not. In contrast, hermeneutics for human solidarity is concerned with understanding the people who are the potential recipients of our actions. Thus we can always check with them whether our understanding of them is correct or not, whether our understanding of their ideas and ideals, preferences and desires, likes and dislikes, etc., is indeed what they consider to be theirs. Here, Smith's distinction between observation in nature sciences and observation in human sciences (what he regards as corporate critical self-consciousness) is illuminating: "In objective knowledge, that a first observer's understanding has done justice to what is observed is testable by the experience of a second and a third observer. In corporate critical self-consciousness, that justice has been done to the matter being studied is testable by the experience of other observers but also by that of the subject or subjects."³⁰ It is in this sense that, while acknowledging the importance and difficulty of understanding the other as the other understands him/herself, Smith is able to avoid the radical claim that one cannot understand a member of a different religion unless one first converts him/herself to that religion.

It is true that Gadamer also emphasizes the importance of letting the other correct the interpreter's pre-understanding to avoid possible arbitrariness of understanding, but the goal of his hermeneutics is the interpreter's

²⁹ See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 266.

³⁰ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Toward a World Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1981), 60.

self-enrichment and what he aims at is the continuing and open-ended process of fusion of horizons. As Gadamer states, different people with different pre-understandings can have very different and yet equally justified understandings. In hermeneutics for human solidarity, an interpreter's pre-understanding horizon will not only be corrected by the horizon of the other being interpreted, but should be corrected in such a way that it will be gradually identified (not fused) with the horizon of the other being interpreted. In this process of identification, the interpreter gradually overcomes, in his/her pre-understanding horizon, what is alien to the horizon of the other. In other words, the interpreter gradually grasps the horizon of the other by overcoming his/her own horizon. Hence successful understanding is not Gadamer's end-less fusion of horizons, but the eventual conquering of the interpreter's horizon by that of the other. In this sense, different interpreters' understandings, if correct, must be identical, because the correctness of all these understandings has to be confirmed by the same other that all these interpreters try to understand, if the purpose of their understanding is to ensure that their actions toward the other be morally appropriate.

Hermeneutics for human solidarity does not acknowledge the possibility of understanding the other better than the other understands him/herself.³¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, the father of modern hermeneutics, held that an interpreter could reach a better understanding of an author than the author does him/herself. This is because we can "become aware of many things of which he [the author] himself may have been unconscious."³² Thus, "a better understanding than the author's" has become a catchword in contemporary hermeneutics. Gadamer, for example, also endorses this idea. For him, this is possible because the interpreter can know better the subject matter discussed by the author.³³ In contrast, the purpose of hermeneutics for human solidarity is not to understand the subject matter, but to understand the person who is a potential recipient of our action. In this light, a better understanding of the other than the other does him/herself becomes impossible. For example, if our purpose is to understand the *Koran*, then at least theoretically it is pos-

³¹ I would like to thank Minghui Li's question that invites me to consider this issue of "understanding better than the author." For related discussions of this issue, see Otto Friedrich Bollnow, "What Does It Mean to Understand a Writer Better than He Understand Himself," *Philosophy Today* 23 (1975): 16-18; Yong Huang, "The Father of Modern Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age: A Reinterpretation of Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics," *Philosophy Today* 44 (1996): 251-262.

³² F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 112.

³³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 192-197.

sible for us to have a better (or at least “better” as it appears to the interpreter) understanding than a Muslim. If our purpose is not to understand the *Koran*, but to understand a specific Muslim’s understanding of the *Koran* as a way of understanding the Muslim him/herself, we may not know the Muslim’s understanding of the *Koran* better than him/herself, as the Muslim knows better than anyone else how he/she understands the *Koran*. Of course, it is possible that the Muslim may be confused in his/her understanding of the *Koran* while we have a better understanding. In this case, we should try to show that the Muslim’s understanding of the *Koran* is incorrect, confusing, or inconsistent and persuade him/her to accept what we consider a better understanding. The Muslim may or may not accept our view. If not, we have to accept the fact that this is how the Muslim understands the *Koran*, even though we disagree.

To completely understand the other is a difficult, if not impossible, task. However, this cannot become our excuse for not making efforts to understand the other. As we have argued, without an appropriate understanding of the other, we cannot assure whether our actions toward or affecting them are appropriate. In this sense, to understand the other as a unique being is a moral imperative. The question that we have to answer is not whether we can, but rather whether we ought to, understand the other. It is true that we may never completely understand the other, and for this reason our actions affecting others may never be absolutely appropriate. If we give up our attempts to understand others, however, then our actions affecting them will be immoral, as this is an indication that we do not care about the unique needs and desires, ideas and ideals, likes and dislikes of those who may be affected by our actions or no action at all. Although our actions do not actually cause harm or bring benefits to others, our actions cannot be considered truly moral.

Of course, we cannot entirely separate “ought” and “can.” As Immanuel Kant has pointed out, “‘ought’ implies ‘can.’”³⁴ In other words, morality cannot require people to do things that they simply cannot do. Perhaps we can never fully understand the other. However, as long as we keep trying our best, we may have an increasingly better understanding, and thus make our actions

³⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Boston, MA-New York: Bedford & St. Martin, 1965), A548, B576. For discussion of this Kantian principle, see William Alston, *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989) and R. Feldman, “Epistemic Obligations,” in *Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. J. E. Tomberlin (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1988). For criticism of this principle, see Paul Saka, “‘Ought’ Does not Imply ‘Can’,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 37 (2000): 93-105.

affecting the other as appropriate as possible. Many times we often have to act before we fully understand the other. Nevertheless, such actions should also be regarded as a way for us to understand the other better. If we find that our actions toward others have caused unexpected harm to them, we should correct or improve our understanding so that our future actions affecting the other can become more appropriate.

The object of interpretation, the other, in hermeneutics for human solidarity, is human beings, who are historical beings and whose ideas and ideals, preferences and desires, likes and dislikes are also subject to change. Even though one day we may have obtained a full, complete, and correct understanding of the other, it does not mean that we can cease to make efforts to understand the other. Most importantly, since the central concern of hermeneutics for human solidarity is the moral appropriateness of our actions affecting others, the importance of our efforts to understand the other lies not only in its actual result, our understanding of the other, but also in our very efforts to understand the other. Our efforts to understand the other can make our actions toward the other morally appropriate, for such efforts themselves express our respect for the unique ideas and ideals, customs and religions, desires and preferences of others. To respect others, of course, we should not impose our likes or dislikes upon them, but rather care about their unique likes and dislikes.³⁵ Otherwise, as Wolterstorff argues, we are treating his/her particularity, and him/her in his/her particularity, as of no account.³⁶

Conclusion

After contrasting the two types of hermeneutics, hermeneutics for the sake of oneself and hermeneutics for the sake of others, I have focused on the latter for two main reasons. On the one hand, we are familiar with the

³⁵ Of course, to say that it is a moral imperative to understand the other and that to understand the other is one way to respect the uniqueness of the other does not mean that we should invade the privacy of the other. Also, it is possible that the other in question is unique precisely in that he/she prefers the life of a hermit and does not want to be bothered by us who try to understand him/her. However, still we will be unable to know this uniqueness of the other unless we try to understand the other. I wish to thank Gordon Kaufman for raising this question in a private conversation.

³⁶ Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Role of Religion in Decision and Discussion of Political Issues," in Robert Audi and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Conviction in Political Debate* (Lanham, MD-Boulder-New York-London: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 110.

former but still developing the latter as a novel hermeneutics. On the other hand, it is important to cultivate one's own virtue through hermeneutic practices, i.e., through the interpretation of classics, which necessarily leads one to be concerned with the well-being of others. However, hermeneutics for human solidarity emphasizes both the difference between the interpreter, the moral agent, and others and that between different others. It not only calls to pay attention to others' well-being, but also to understand the uniqueness of the well-being of each individual other, so that we will not do unto others as we would like to be done unto. As the copper rule claims, we should not do unto one particular other as a different particular other would like to be done unto but do unto a particular other as this particular other would like to be done unto. In addition to these two reasons, there is also a third reason to focus on the hermeneutics for human solidarity. As mentioned above, one of the most salient features of Shen's philosophy is precisely his attention to many others. Shen's emphasis on "many others" rather than the Other is because he wanted to highlight the differences not only between the self and the other but also among many others.

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Self-Awareness of Life and Intercultural Dialogue

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Introduction

One of the intellectual enjoyments of my deceased colleague and friend, Professor Vincent Shen, was to contribute to the exchange between Chinese and Western philosophical traditions, with a focus on the differences and commonalities between their ideas about self-awareness of life. In one of his last papers, “Learning for Self and Learning for Others: A Post-modern Reflection,”¹ Shen confronts the Western philosophy of subjectivity with Confucius’s ideas about the human person. Based on his profound knowledge of both traditions, he argues that the important contribution of Confucius’s thinking to Western philosophy lies in the latter’s insight that becoming aware of oneself is not only the result of the activity of an autonomous, self-determining subject, but also, and even primarily, involve the interaction with many significant others. In other words, the interaction between the self and other people is constitutive of a correct conception of the self. Moreover, the interaction between the self and others helps to shape this self-awareness in a more dialogical way. Shen concludes that the self and the other are not as opposed as Western philosophy of subjectivity thinks them to be. On the contrary, in order to understand these fundamental anthropological concepts correctly, we have to take into account relatedness and responsive-

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¹ Vincent Shen, “Learning for Self and Learning for Others: A Postmodern Reflection,” in *Self-Awareness of Life in the New Era*, eds. He Xirong, Peter Jonkers, and Shi Yongze (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2020), 75-93.

ness, and make a change from the concept of self as pure and absolute subjectivity to a concept of self-in-the-making, involving not just the Other, but many others. Since these ideas about the self as relational and responsive are prominent in Chinese, in particular Confucian thinking, as the close relationship between learning for self and learning for others – the title of Shen’s paper – shows, it can contribute in a meaningful way to answering the question how to become aware of one’s self in dialogue with others. As an expert in the dialogue between Western and Chinese philosophy, Shen is aware of the fact that the Confucian answers to these questions are not completely alien to the ideas of Western philosophy on this matter, since the dialogical character of the relations between the self and others is also extensively discussed in postmodern, in particular French philosophy.

This paper takes up the core idea of Shen’s paper, namely that the problems, caused by a one-sided, subjectivist idea of human beings, characteristic of modern, Western philosophy, can be solved by means of a more appropriate understanding of ourselves as relational and dialogical beings. The key term in this respect, also playing a central role in Shen’s paper, is self-awareness of life. This term is commonly used to characterize Chinese philosophy and to distinguish it from the direction that Western philosophy has taken since the beginning of modernity. Unsurprisingly, the Chinese idea of self-awareness of life stresses inner peace and societal harmony, as it explicitly recognizes the constitutive role of many others for the self. Hence, this term emphasizes the importance of inner spiritual life, and therefore pays much attention to questions about morality, value, and meaning. Furthermore, it refers not only to the order and richness of one’s own inner spiritual life, but also to that of outer social and political life.²

As a complement to Shen’s anthropological reflections on this theme, the focus of this paper is to explore a solution to the societal problems caused by the subjectivist approach to self-awareness, in particular, the loss of societal harmony. In order to do so, the next section analyzes the origins of this problem in detail from a sociological and philosophical perspective. This analysis will be followed, in the section thereafter, by a critical discussion of the responses of some prominent social and political philosophers to the loss of societal harmony. Because, in my opinion, these solutions fall short of expectations, I will explore in section four how a more dialogical understanding of self-awareness of life enables people to communicate constructively about social differences in a pluralist world. As a start of this

² Bao Wenxin, “The Transcendent Sphere and Revolutionary Morality: A Problem of Fung Yulan’s Theory of Sphere,” in *Self-Awareness of Life in a New Era*, 213.

exploration, it is helpful to draw a comparison between societal and linguistic plurality. Since linguistic plurality does, in most cases, not cause major problems and is often even welcomed as an enrichment of one's own linguistic horizon, it is intriguing to examine whether this approach can also work in the context of societal plurality. A key idea in this respect is linguistic hospitality, a term coined by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, and I will explore whether this idea can be fruitfully applied to the sphere of societal plurality.

The Loss of Societal Harmony in Contemporary Societies

As we can see in the media, many contemporary societies are going through a period of intensifying problems over all kinds of questions related to self-awareness of life. One of the most conspicuous issues is that societal harmony is fading away, and this to such an extent that different cultural, religious, or ethnic groups have almost become incapable of communicating sensibly with each other. In order to illustrate this, let me give a recent example of a societal conflict from my own country, the Netherlands. It is about the festival of Saint Nicolas or, in Dutch, *Sinterklaas*, celebrated on the fifth of December. Although it has been for centuries the country's most important children's holiday,³ unifying all people around the country, *Sinterklaas* has since a few years turned into an annual slugfest over cultural differences.

The problem is the figure of *Zwarte Piet*, an impish clown with a black face who accompanies the bearded St. Nicholas on his rounds, distributing presents and biscuits. The character is derived from seventeenth-century paintings of Moorish slaves, and many Dutch with African ancestry find it offensive. Most white Dutch fail to see the problem, and react angrily to accusations that their tradition is racist. The conflict plays out in the media, the schools, the courts and at *Sinterklaas* parades around the country. And it has fed into culture wars between Dutch liberals and anti-immigration populists. ... All of this grumpiness highlights the difficulty centrist politicians are in. They find it impossible to address their non-white constituents' complaints over racism without angering Dutch whites who do not consider themselves racist.⁴

³ See e.g., the painting from 1665 by the Dutch painter Jan Steen, *The Feast of Saint Nicholas* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

⁴ *The Economist*, December 6, 2014.

At first sight, this controversy, just like many other ones over societal cultural issues, seems like “much ado about nothing,” but upon closer inspection, it is indeed a strong indication that societal harmony is fading. Moreover, this aspect of (lack of) societal harmony does not primarily concern economic questions, such as the unequal distribution of income, but rather shows that shared values, broadly accepted ways of social interaction, etc. are fading away. What is more, this evolution is not only taking place in the Netherlands, but also in many other Western societies.

From a philosophical perspective, self-awareness of life refers to the fact that the self is constituted against a general horizon of meaning, against which people define who they are and where they belong. This shows that it is an illusion to think that we could determine our identity autonomously, since it is as much a product of socio-cultural interaction with significant others. One of the clearest examples of the social character of our self-awareness is that we express the most intimate elements of ourselves in a common language; our earliest personal memories are bound up in the lives of others – in our family, school, or city.⁵

Yet, at the same time, it is also clear that the content of this self-awareness has lost its self-evidence, stability, and its binding character as a consequence of the modern conception of the human person as an isolated subject. In modernity, people tend to conceive their identity in a rigid and exclusive way, thus fencing themselves off from meaningful others and from society at large. The result is a decrease in societal harmony in Western societies. A first explanation of this development is that there are profound rifts when it comes to the culture-specific character of the constitutive goods (e.g., different ideas about human fulfillment), and hence the moral sources that are needed to underpin the universal moral standards of modernity, like freedom and equality.⁶ As such, this rift is nothing new, but it shows that the goal of the so-called modernization of society, namely to supersede these rifts by subordinating these culture-specific moral sources to the universal ideals of liberal democracy, has not created a new, modern sense of societal harmony, quite the contrary.

A second explaining factor for the decrease in societal harmony is the fact that people show their identity in a far more individualist way than

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, “Fragile Identity: Respect for the Other and Cultural Identity,” in *Philosophy and the Return of Violence: Studies from this Widening Gyre*, eds. Nathan Eckstrand and Christopher Yates (London: Continuum, 2011), 81f.

⁶ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 495.

before. As Charles Taylor has shown, this phenomenon is a result of the culture of expressive individualism, which means that each of us has his/her own individual way of realizing his/her humanity and living that out, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or by a religious or political authority.⁷ Expressive individuals strive for intimate contact with their deeper (emotional) selves, and prefer listening to their inner voice and express it through their whole way of life, instead of following existing socio-cultural patterns. The above two factors and many others have made self-awareness of life in modern societies much more individualist, and hence also more plural and fragile than before, thus contributing to the decrease in societal harmony.

How Does Liberal Democracy Deal with Decreases in Societal Harmony?

The question that crops up from the previous section is how Western societies deal with the problematic consequences of the reductionist, in particular, individualist conception of self-awareness of life. In accordance with the philosophical nature of this paper, I will discuss the answers of three prominent political philosophers, viz. Rawls, Habermas, and Rorty. For all three, pluralism is a fundamental feature of every modern, democratic society. Yet, at the same time, Rawls and Habermas argue that a basic societal harmony can be preserved because the *agora*, in which the (individualist) members of a society debate these plural values is governed by the rules of impartial, argumentative reason. Rawls defines pluralism as “the fact that a plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious, philosophical, and moral, is the normal result of a culture of free institutions.”⁸ These comprehensive doctrines form the backbone of people’s ideas and practices on existential matters, and, hence, can be the source of societal tensions and conflicts. An essential characteristic of Rawlsian pluralism is that it is reasonable, which means that “public justification [of the core values

⁷ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 374-381; Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 30f.; Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 475.

⁸ John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” in John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, expanded edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 441; Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 61.

of these doctrines] is not simply valid reasoning, but arguments addressed to others: it proceeds correctly from premises we accept and think others could reasonably accept to conclusions we think they could also reasonably accept.”⁹ Hence, as long as pluralism is reasonable, it does not jeopardize the societal harmony that is needed in a liberal democracy. For his part, Habermas also thinks that society should move beyond a model that reduces the coexistence of different conceptions of the self and society to a pragmatic *modus vivendi*. Phrased positively, today’s societies have to become communicative, deliberative democracies, in which people “owe one another *reasons* for their political stances.”¹⁰ They have “to work out a common language beyond the mute violence of terrorists or missiles,”¹¹ so that they can communicate with each other about (among other things) essential socio-cultural values. In order to realize this ideal of a communicative and deliberative democracy, diverging ideas about socio-cultural values and practices have to be translated into the language of secular reason, since this is the only common ground in a modern, pluralist society. In other words, although modern democratic societies are by definition pluralist, implying that tensions and even conflicts over different ideas about self-awareness of life are part of the normal life of these societies, these conflicts can nevertheless (in principle) be peacefully solved because they can be discussed in the homogeneous *agora* of secular reason.¹² In other

⁹ Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” 465.

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the ‘Public Use of Reason’ by Religious and Secular Citizens,” in Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 136.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, “Faith and Knowledge,” in Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003), 103.

¹² Against this background, it is no wonder that Habermas is very critical of Kymlicka’s plea for targeted group rights, if they go beyond the usual process of granting exceptions to general laws in order to implement the equal treatment of cultures or the precautionary measures against the exclusion of groups with strong identities. In Habermas’s view, the recognition of socio-cultural differences as an inherent element of human dignity does not need a completely different politics, but can be realized within the conceptual and legal framework of political liberalism, in particular, by expanding “the concept of a legal person as bearer of subjective rights.” By contrast, the attribution of targeted group rights subverts the homogeneous universe of discourse that forms the backbone of political liberalism, which “is characterized by symmetrical relations of reciprocal recognition, including those between the members of different identity groups.” See Jürgen Habermas, “Equal Treatment of Cultures,” in Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, 292-296.

words, the reasonable character of the *agora* of liberal democracies prevents pluralism, which is a basic characteristic of these societies, from going out of control.

Just like Rawls and Habermas, Rorty also accepts pluralism as a fundamental societal reality, but he understands it in a far more radical way.¹³ In his view, all the grand religious and secular traditions, including that of the universality of reason, are contingent “final vocabularies,” which means that their truth can only be demonstrated by means of circular arguments. This implies that a notion like reasonableness can only function *within* a given vocabulary, but is unable to bridge the gap *between* one final vocabulary and another, since all these vocabularies are incommensurable. Hence, reason can no longer play its role as a neutral meta-vocabulary for overlapping consensus between different vocabularies.¹⁴ It goes without saying that Rorty’s views imply that even the minimal common ground that is needed in liberal democracies to discuss diverging ideas of self-awareness of life in a reasonable way becomes problematic.

In my view, the political liberalism of Rawls and Habermas is unable to solve the problems of today’s decrease in societal harmony, since it encloses pluralism “within the limits of (secular) reason alone.” Consequently, both authors are unaware of the risk that, when this reason is no longer accepted as a common language or interpretative framework, the translation of different self-awarenesses, which is crucial for societal harmony in a liberal democracy, fails.¹⁵ However, Rorty’s views on liberal democracies, which come down to accepting the incommensurability of different final (value-) vocabularies, do not offer a solution to the ongoing decrease in societal harmony either. Habermas rightfully criticizes Rorty on the point that political integration, including reasonable solutions to societal pluralism,

¹³ I developed Rorty’s position on this problem in more detail in Peter Jonkers, “‘A Purifying Force for Reason’. Pope Benedict on the Role of Christianity in Advanced Modernity,” in *Towards a New Catholic Church in Advanced Modernity: Transformations, Visions, Tensions* (Tilburg Theological Studies 5), eds. Staf Hellemaans and Jozef Wissink (Münster: Lit, 2012), 79-102.

¹⁴ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73.

¹⁵ Maeve Cook, “Translating Truth,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 4 (2011): 480f. In her article, Cook gives an example of the absence and presence of common interpretative frameworks (see *Idem*, 485f). Habermas himself also realizes that his purely procedural definition of the act of translation does not do justice to the semantic problem of transposing the contents of one interpretative framework into another. Cf. Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 132, footnote 37.

“is jeopardized if too many citizens fail to live up to the standards of the public use of reason.”¹⁶ According to Habermas, the current trend to give up the idea of the unity of reason is nothing but a defeatism of reason. If “the reflexive activity of mind always remained caught in the grammatical limits of various particular worlds that were linguistically constituted, reason would necessarily disintegrate kaleidoscopically into a multiplicity of incommensurable embodiments.”¹⁷ In other words, Rorty’s position strengthens and even justifies the disintegration of societal harmony.

Hospitality Promotes Societal Harmony in a Pluralist Age

In the face of the inability of the above philosophical positions to preserve societal harmony in a pluralist society, the question arises whether there are alternative ways to think about the interaction between the self and significant others. In order to explore this question and to show the complexities of answering it, I will confront the ideas of Charles Taylor on this matter with those of Paul Ricoeur. The reason for opting for these two authors is that both of them basically agree with each other as to the constitutive role of significant others for the self-awareness of life, thereby taking distance from the isolated view of the subject, which is characteristic of traditional modern Western philosophy. As argued above, this insight is also shared by Vincent Shen, although he elaborates its relevance for the current debate in a different way, in particular on the basis of Chinese philosophy.

For Taylor, a necessary condition for true societal harmony consists in viewing others as much as possible from their own perspective in order to avoid reducing them to an (inferior) copy of oneself. It goes without saying that this can only be realized by means of a dialogue, in which one has “to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different background of the formerly unfamiliar culture. [This enables us to develop] new vocabularies of comparison, by means of which

¹⁶ Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 144; Idem, “Faith and Knowledge,” 113. See also Jürgen Habermas, “Die Revitalisierung der Weltreligionen – Herausforderung für ein säkulares Verständnis der Moderne?,” in Jürgen Habermas, *Kritik der Vernunft* (Philosophische Texte, Band 5) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 387-407. I developed this further in Peter Jonkers, “Religious Insights in the Public Debate: A Tribute to Henk Vroom,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 25, no. 1 (2015): 20-22.

¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “The Unity of Reason in the Diversity of Its Voices,” in Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1992), 134f.

we can articulate these contrasts. So that if and when we ultimately find substantive support for our initial presumption, it is on the basis of an understanding of what constitutes worth that we could not possibly have had at the beginning. We have reached the judgment partly through transforming our standards.”¹⁸

Taylor suggests Gadamer’s fusion of horizons as a model of how this broadening and transformation can be brought about in order to promote societal harmony. Obviously, this is a mutual process, which, in principle, involves all individuals and communities. The question then arises of how the communication between people or communities with a different self-awareness of life or horizons of meaning takes place. According to Taylor, “the ‘horizons’ here are at first distinct, they are the way that each has of understanding the human condition in their non-identity. The ‘fusion’ comes about when one (or both) undergo a shift; the horizon is extended so as to make room for the object that before did not fit within it.”¹⁹ So, what is needed in order to promote societal harmony is the shift to a “richer language,” in which all parties involved can agree to talk undistortively about each other. The crucial factor here is that we allow ourselves to be interpellated by the other, and refrain from categorizing “difference” as an “error,” a “fault” or a “lesser, undeveloped version.” In other words, our task is to be willing to transform our initial self-awareness as a result of the interpellations and challenges by the other. Taylor recognizes that this transformation implies a painful “identity cost” and that others may confront us with disconcerting views of what human fulfillment means. This threat of identity loss explains why people may react to this challenge with an unreflected defense of their own, supposedly undistorted self-awareness, and fence themselves off as much as possible from the interpellation by others. Yet, Taylor is convinced that, eventually, his approach fosters societal harmony while avoiding that it would degenerate into a societal homogeneity, which would annihilate the irreducible otherness of the other.²⁰

I agree with Taylor that broadening our self-awareness and transforming our common standards for judging others are vital conditions for societal harmony in a pluralist society, but I am afraid that his idea of a fusion of horizons as a model to realize societal harmony is overly optimistic. Such

¹⁸ Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” 67.

¹⁹ Charles Taylor, “Understanding the Other: A Gadamerian View on Conceptual Schemes,” in Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), 30.

²⁰ Taylor, “Understanding the Other,” 36f.

a fusion is only feasible in a small and relatively homogeneous society, in which cultural differences are not too big, and in which the different “others” involved in this process know each other well, are in good faith, are familiar with each other’s sensitivities, and willing to respect them. Only then will the self feel secure enough to let her/his self-awareness be interpellated by others. If these conditions are not fulfilled, others will not challenge or interpellate the self anymore, since there are too few common reference points.

In comparison to Taylor’s suggestion that we can foster societal harmony through a fusion of cultural horizons, Ricoeur’s ideas are far more modest.²¹ In one of his later works, he examines the problems and opportunities of translation from one language into another, and expands his analysis to those of understanding others. This is a legitimate move, since the opportunities and threats are quite similar in both situations.²² Just like Taylor, Ricoeur situates the opportunities of understanding the societal other in the broadening of our horizon and the transforming of our usual standards of judgment. In contrast to Taylor, Ricoeur recognizes that a fusion of horizons is seriously hampered because of the unbridgeable gap, which separates different kinds of self-awareness of life in society. In the case of understanding the linguistic other, there are only individual languages, not a universal language that could serve as an original mother tongue for everyone; in other words, we live in a world “after Babel.” This insight holds also true for our dialogue with the socio-cultural other.

In order to make dialogue possible in a world “after Babel,” translation is crucial, since we have no immediate access to the linguistic other. This is not only true for translation in a narrow sense, but also for translation in a broad sense, i.e., when we want to understand others, since we have no immediate access to them either, although they may speak the same language as we do. In other words, in a world “after Babel,” to understand is to translate.²³ Yet, in spite of these difficulties, the opportunities of translation are much greater; translation enables us to avoid the bitter fate of self-enclosure in a monologue and solipsism. Last but not least, translation is not only necessary

²¹ I discussed Ricoeur’s ideas about cultural hospitality in more detail in Peter Jonkers, “The Boundaries of Intercultural Dialogue in a World ‘After Babel,’” *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 10, nos. 3-21 (2018): 12-18.

²² See Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006). For an excellent introduction to Ricoeur’s philosophy of translation see Richard Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Translation,” *Research in Phenomenology* 37 (2007): 147-159.

²³ Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 24.

for the understanding of the other, but also for understanding ourselves, since what is our own has to be learned just as much as what is foreign.²⁴ Therefore, also when we want to understand our own language and ourselves we have to take the detour through the language of others.

When translating, people try to salvage meaning. Therefore, this practice is a work of *remembering*: remembering a world “before Babel,” prior to the multiplicity of translations, characterized by an immediate access to an original language. In other words, translation is driven by the attempt to retrieve a pure, completely transparent language. This explains why people feel a kind of resistance when they permit foreign languages access to the symbolic world of their native language. They spontaneously experience what is strange to them as a threat to the ideal of self-sufficiency and transparency. From this perspective, all translations are necessarily poor ones, by definition, as it were. Nevertheless, there *is* translation: people have always translated, since it is a “remedy for plurality in a world of dispersion and confusion.”²⁵ Consequently, engaging in translation is not only a work of remembering, but also of *mourning* over the loss of the claim to self-sufficiency of one’s native language, over the temptation of omnipotence, over a perfect translation, which would rest on a perfect homology between our concepts and the world.

Thus, translation is always “after Babel,” meaning that it is forever compelled to acknowledge the limits of language and the heterogeneity of languages.²⁶ Every language has a different way of carving things up phonetically, based on phonological systems, conceptually, based on lexical systems, and syntactically, based on different grammars. Thus, there is no agreement at each of these levels, let alone at all of them, about what would characterize a perfect language that could legitimately claim universality. Moreover, no one can tell how these specific languages, with all their linguistic peculiarities, are or even can be derived from a presumably perfect language. Therefore, there is no universal language underlying all the specific languages, and serving as an absolute criterion of a good translation. This implies that every language is prone to mistranslation by a non-native speaker.²⁷

These insights into the fundamental heterogeneity of languages lead to the conclusion that one has to accept the loss of the perfect, universal language, and hence of the original meaning. Therefore, “we can only aim at a

²⁴ Ibid., 29.

²⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 28.

²⁶ Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 3-5, 8.

²⁷ Ibid., 15-18.

supposed equivalence, not founded on a demonstrable identity of meaning.”²⁸ This equivalence without identity calls for multiple translations and retranslations, which can be compared with each other, but also for acknowledging that there will always be something untranslatable. The words, phrases, and narratives to be translated have a priority over the translation, but they cannot serve as an objective and unambiguous criterion for a good translation, otherwise there would be no translation at all. There is only an equivalence of individual translations, none of which can claim to be identical with the original, since there is no third text that could demonstrate the identity of meaning.²⁹ The result is that “we can translate differently, without hope of filling the gap between equivalence and adequacy.”³⁰ By accepting translations of our native language, we expropriate ourselves from ourselves, i.e., we give up our longing for linguistic self-sufficiency. However, we also appropriate the other to ourselves, since he/she makes us aware of the specific expressive possibilities and idiosyncrasies that our native language offers. Similarly, we become familiar with the possibilities and idiosyncrasies of other languages. This explains why there is a desire to translate, which goes beyond constraint and utility. It enables us to prevent the bitter fate of enclosing ourselves in a monologue.

Ricoeur summarizes these opportunities with the catchword “linguistic hospitality”: it carries the double duty “to expropriate oneself from oneself as one appropriates the other to oneself.”³¹ Expropriating ourselves from ourselves implies that we give up our longing for linguistic self-sufficiency and the illusion of a perfect translation and a fusion of linguistic horizons. Translation also offers an opportunity: by appropriating the foreign language to ourselves we become aware of the specific expressive possibilities and idiosyncrasies of our native language as well as those of the foreign language. Against this background, Ricoeur’s call for linguistic hospitality highlights the opportunities of a process “where the pleasure of dwelling in the other’s language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one’s own welcoming house.”³²

To what extent can Ricoeur’s insights on linguistic translation help us in our understanding of the dialogical structure of self-awareness of life and contribute to fostering societal harmony? Does it make sense to expand the

²⁸ Ibid., 33.

²⁹ Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, 26; Idem, *On Translation*, 27.

³⁰ Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 10.

³¹ Ibid., 10; Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Translation,” 150f.

³² Ricoeur, *On Translation*, 10, 26-29.

notion “linguistic hospitality” to the societal domain? Let us develop a bit further the correspondence between linguistic translation and the understanding of the cultural other, which has been hinted at in the catchphrase “to understand is to translate.”³³ Just like learning other languages expands our linguistic horizon, so that the loss of linguistic self-sufficiency can be compensated by the awareness of the possibilities and idiosyncrasies of our own language and that of the linguistic other, so does understanding the other enrich our awareness of our own and others, thus preventing the deadlock of societal self-enclosure and promoting societal harmony. Far more fundamental than just an intellectual challenge, it is existentially vital for us to expand our societal horizon, because we discover ourselves through the other. The term hospitality aptly expresses this attitude and the value behind it. In other words, just as speaking a specific mother tongue does not prevent us from appreciating other languages, so does the fact that we understand ourselves and the world primarily from our own perspective not invalidate the relevance of familiarizing ourselves with other perspectives, both on ourselves and the world. In sum, the term “hospitality” points to the fruits of adopting a fundamentally positive attitude toward the other, and is thus a pacemaker for societal harmony.

Conclusion

Self-awareness of life has become fluid, plural, and hence fragile in our times. Because this evolution is often experienced as a threat, people tend to react against it in a defensive way, both on an individual and on a collective level. This can lead to a self-enclosed, monadic idea of the human self and an idea of human society as a completely homogeneous unity. Prominent social and political philosophers, such as Rawls, Habermas, and Rorty, have responded to these problems within the framework of liberal democracy, but their answers failed to respond to the need for societal harmony in a pluralist society. Hence, we have to rethink the societal dimension of self-awareness of life in a more dialogical way. The combined answers of Taylor and Ricoeur have shown a promising response to this question. First of all, it goes without saying that the confrontation with significant others implies that we have to give up the illusion of a homogeneous society, in which we could live without being disturbed by the intrusion of the other, who is inevitably perceived as an unwelcome stranger. Rather, acknowledging this reality enables us to recognize that others are constitutive of our societal self-aware-

³³ *Ibid.*, 24.

ness of life, because they offer alternative views of what living a human life means. In order to appreciate this other we need to broaden our horizon and take a more dialogical attitude toward the other. Realizing such a shift through a fusion of horizons, as Taylor argues, seems only possible under very specific conditions, which are typically not fulfilled in a situation of substantial pluralism. In comparison to Taylor, Ricoeur's proposal of hospitality is not only more modest, but also more promising, since it starts from accepting the reality of this heterogeneity. This makes it easier to accept that we indeed live in a world after Babel, that there will always be something in the other that eludes our understanding or even fills us with repulsion. Ricoeur also offers an important argument why it is important for us to accept the challenge of hospitality: through it, we learn not only to understand the other, but also to understand ourselves, since we do not have an immediate access to ourselves. Hence, hospitality is the pacemaker for true societal harmony, for it brings forth a creative encounter between different socio-cultural identities and makes their meanings move. It enables us to hear new resonances, the beauty of polyphony, and to make unexpected connections. In sum, cultural hospitality offers us new, surprising opportunities to understand what living a human life and living it together with others actually means.

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Divine Transcendence, Human Finitude: Dialogue and Mutual Recognition as Enacted Welcoming of “Otherness”

PHILIP J. ROSSI*

This essay serves as one element in the articulation of a philosophical anthropology that, in its account of what constitutes our humanity, offers a basis for contesting the dismissal of religion that has commonly been a feature of the cultures of secularity. A key feature of such secular dismissals is a rejection, be it explicit or implicit, of affirmations that religions have made, first, of the actuality of a unique transcendent reality and, correlatively, of the significance that such transcendence has for our humanity.¹ As this transcendent reality has been conceptually and imaginatively construed by the monotheistic religious traditions originating in the ancient Near East, it stands “over against” all particulars in the world (including humanity) and also over against the world in its totality. Such monotheistic transcendence is one that, as *religiously construed, is acknowledged in*

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¹ Of course, not all forms of belief and practice that may be classified as “religion” explicitly make claims about a transcendent reality as that has been understood and articulated in traditions of Abrahamic monotheism. A good case can be made, however, that the contemporary cultural condition of “secularity” has emerged as an (admittedly multilayered) response to a long-standing “social imaginary” for which monotheistic transcendence was a major, and indeed a necessary, focal point for understanding and meaning. In consequence, any treatment of secularity’s dismissal of claims about transcendence needs to address, at least for the sake of historical and conceptual adequacy, the monotheistic forms of those claims that provided a key element of the formative matrix from which secularity emerged.

the full and complete radicality of its otherness to all else that is.² The reality of transcendence as radically other thus functions conceptually as a core feature of what these monotheistic religious traditions affirm and recognize as the single, true “god.” In consequence, secular dismissals of religion, at least in its monotheistic forms, involve a concomitant denial of the possibility of an otherness that stands in radical difference from whatever is taken to constitute “the world” as all there is, in its parts and in its entirety. In other words, the answer that the cultures of secularity propose in response to what Charles Taylor likes to call “the Peggy Lee question” – Is that all there is? – will in all likelihood be, “Yes – this world is all there is; there is nothing other.”

There are two important points I am suggesting here. The first is that there has been a gradual historical “unmooring” of the conceptual identity and significance of the secular from its originary contrastive context of an otherness construed as a divine transcendence that stands deeply and radically over against the world. The second is that this “unmooring” has important consequences for efforts to articulate a philosophical anthropology, an understanding of the meaning and significance of the human, that will be conceptually adequate to address the secular dismissals of religion that have been consequent upon such “unmooring.” The case in support of the first point will not be put forth in this essay, in large measure because I think that it has already been made, in a variety of inflections, in the magisterial accounts of the emergence of modernity, secularity, and various modalities of unbelief that have been authored by, among others, Charles Taylor, Louis Dupré, George Steiner, Susan Neiman, and Terry Eagleton. It thus is an exploration of the second point – the consequences that follow from the accounts we may give of the human in the wake of the unmooring of the secular from its originary contrastive relation with the radical otherness of transcendence³ – that will be the main focus of this essay that is offered in honor and memory of

² Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) has usually been credited with designating as “The Axial Age” the period between roughly 800 BCE and 200 BCE that provided the historical-cultural context in which this religiously inflected construal of transcendence as “radically other” arose in a number of societies geographically separated from each other. See Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, eds., *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), for a wide-ranging set of essays about this era and its continuing impact.

³ It is important to note that the severing of this relation did not come in a single, decisive revolutionary stroke, but has instead been the outcome of a long historical process for which Charles Taylor’s trope of “disembedding” is quite apt; see Charles Taylor, “The Great Disembedding,” in *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 146-168.

Professor Vincent Shen and his distinguished scholarly work on a philosophy of intercultural harmony and reciprocity. This focus might be put in the following terms: Does secularity, insofar as it brings with it a dismissal of the radically transcendent – and thereby make the world “all there is” – render the contrastive finitude that is constitutive of the world and of the human devoid of meaning?

I will thus be arguing that one crucial consequence of the severing of this contrastive relation of human finitude to radical otherness has been a correlative destabilizing of the function and significance of transcendence as it constitutes *finitude as the worldly otherness proper to the human*. Another way to put this is that, to the extent that (monotheistic) transcendence has, under the pressure of currents of secularity, lost the radicality of its contrast as utterly other to “all that is” – including and perhaps most pointedly the human – the very finitude that makes the secular and the human “worldly” is then correspondingly evacuated of its intelligibility and meaning: Finitude may retain some meaning, and that meaning may still have a residual “bite” of incompleteness to it, but both that meaning and its “bite” have full significance *only* in the face of a robust understanding of the radical otherness in which the transcendent stands over against the finitude that is the proper otherness of the world and of the human.

In contrast to such a dismissal of religious practice, thought, and reflection, the anthropological direction I am proposing accords, instead, recognition and value both to human religious aspirations and to the discourse and practices in which those aspirations take form. At the root this recognition, I will be arguing, is a dynamic of otherness that is basic to the structure and enactment of human mutuality: Borrowing a Kantian expression, the dynamic of human mutuality has, as a fundamental condition for its possibility, the recognition of otherness as requisite for any adequate self-recognition, as well as for any adequate mutual recognition. Recognition of otherness in the dynamics of human relationality, I will be arguing, has a fundamental bearing upon possibilities for recognizing and acknowledging the radically transcendent otherness that the monotheistic religions of the Abrahamic tradition have recognized and named as a personal God.

This dynamic of relationality, in which otherness and the recognition of otherness, empowers both self-recognition and mutual recognition, has, in my estimation, been given a particularly powerful conceptual articulation in the work of the twentieth century American theologian, H. Richard Niebuhr. His work will thus provide a key point of reference for the argument this essay makes about the central bearing that human relationality and mutuality, particularly as manifest in dialogue and language, have upon the possibility

of acknowledging in a robust fashion the divine otherness that makes possible the otherness of human finitude. In other words, recognition of the otherness that provides the context for the self-recognition and the mutual recognition that constitute our human relationality constitutes a “point of entry,” though not thereby the only point of entry, in which and from which it becomes possible to recognize and acknowledge the radical otherness of a transcendent God.

Not all versions of secularity are dismissive of such transcendence, be it with respect to its conceptual legitimacy for philosophical or theological inquiry, or with respect to its construal in religious terms. Yet the most culturally notable forms of secularity that have emerged during recent centuries in the West have been those for which a denial of transcendence, particularly in its religious inflection, is taken to be deeply woven into the meaning of what it is to be “secular.” It may not be too great an exaggeration to say that, whereas what is “secular” may have originally derived its meaning and significance in view of the *distinction in which it (as “the world”) stands* to a radical otherness affirmed of the (divinely) transcendent, its meaning and significance is now principally construed quite differently. It has become *a straight-forward denial of such otherness*: The “secular,” having become “all that there is” no longer needs a transcendent (divine) “other” from which to distinguish itself and to constitute its identity and significance.

I will thus be arguing that one crucial consequence of the severing of this contrastive relation to radical otherness has been a correlative destabilizing of the function and significance of human finitude. Such destabilization bears most notably, first, upon the possibility of *acknowledging* transcendent otherness as it constitutes human relationality in the finitude that is proper to it and, second, upon the possibility of *construing that relationality* in ways adequate to the transcendent otherness constituting it. Another way to put this is that, to the extent that (monotheistic) transcendence has, under the pressure of currents of secularity, lost the radicality of its contrast as utterly other to “all that is,” including and perhaps most especially the human, the very finitude that makes the secular and the human “worldly” is then correlatively evacuated of its core contrastive meaning: Finitude has its meaning, and its meaning has its “bite,” only as it is rendered intelligible in the face of a full and robust understanding of the radical otherness of the transcendent.

Central to this argument will be an account of the dynamics of dialogue and its bearing upon the relational character of human finitude that is derived from the writings of H. Richard Niebuhr. His work provides an account of human finitude for which the mutually responsive character of human language and dialogue functions as a basic model for the dynamics of human

relationality to otherness, including the radical otherness named “God.” On Niebuhr’s account of human finitude, the relationality of otherness in which dialogue is embedded enables us to recognize such otherness as itself a constitutive feature of our mutual human finitude. He takes such recognition, moreover, to render us open to encountering otherness not just as a feature of shared human finitude; it also opens us to the horizon of the unique radicality of divine transcendence on which it is dependent and for which Niebuhr uses the trope of the “One beyond the many.”

For Niebuhr, the context of our human dialogical relationality empowers a recognition of human finitude not as mere naked contingency or as an epiphenomenal surd that is a bare, and, most likely, an unfortunate, “fact” about both our common humanity and our individual selves. The dynamics of dialogue attentive to its formative relational matrix enables us to envision our finitude in the first instance as one that thoroughly “inhabits” a context of otherness: This is the otherness encountered in the world, encountered in those with whom we dialogue, and encountered as well in the discourse and activities emergent in such engagements. But this otherness of finitude is itself constituted and framed in and by a further otherness that is radically different in kind; it is itself something “other” than merely a further iteration of the finitude in which we find ourselves thrust and to which we find ourselves immediately present.⁴ It is the radical otherness of divine transcendence, the otherness that makes finite relationality possible.

Niebuhr’s account of the dialogical relationality that constitutes the dynamics of human responsive and responsible agency draws upon the thought of those “giants” upon whose shoulders he sees his work standing, among whom may be reckoned Immanuel Kant, Charles Sanders Peirce, Josiah Royce, William James, George Herbert Mead, Martin Buber, Jonathan Edwards, and Ernst Troeltsch. Niebuhr understood their work to provide, in a variety of ways, key perspectives upon the structure and operation of moral agency as it functions in the social and historical contexts of human culture. His engagement with these perspectives results in the construction of an account of relationality for which the mutually responsive character of human language and dialogue functions as a basic model for the dynamics of moral reciprocity. In consequence, Niebuhr takes the inherently relational character of our human agency, one he identifies by denoting it as the great modern

⁴ This could be rendered in Kantian terminology as: Transcendent otherness is the condition of possibility for finite otherness, including the totality of finite otherness that constitutes the “world.”

moral “symbol” of responsibility,⁵ to call upon us to bring into being, in concert with one another, a human world of universal and inclusive moral relationality and recognition in which a full range of possibilities for human good and flourishing may be enacted. Our relationality calls upon us to engage one another, in dialogue and in deed, in the project of bringing to be for one another a world of inclusive and expansive human flourishing.

Niebuhr’s account of human agency in the context of its mutual relationality, moreover, particularly as it appropriates Buber’s categories of “I” and “Thou,” takes that agency to be embedded in an even larger dialogical context of mutual responsiveness. What Niebuhr’s appropriation of these categories makes explicit is that the dialogically responsive character of mutual recognition and exchange between an “I” and a “Thou” (a character that is operative even in the impersonal exchange of “I” and “It”) requires standing in relation to a further “otherness” i.e., to a “Third.” It is such a “Third” in which, about which, and in relation to which, the exchange of dialogical mutuality *both takes place and extends beyond itself*. In other words, this “Third” to which “I” and “Thou” stand in relation, and about which they empower one another to speak, is constituted, in the first instance, by “the world” as the larger otherness that is the framing condition of possibility for the mutuality and reciprocity of continuing dialogical exchange between an “I” and a “Thou” – or, to use terminology closer to Niebuhr’s own – between a “Self” and “Other (selves).” As will be indicated below, moreover, within the encompassing theological trajectory of Niebuhr’s work, there is yet another, more fundamental referent of the otherness that frames human relationality as it is both in and with the world. This is the referent he terms “the (transcendent) One”; this is “the One beyond the many,” that provides the ultimate “Third” for the entire dynamics of the (finite) mutual relationality of Self, Other, and World.⁶

⁵ He distinguishes this “modern” symbol from what he takes to be the “older” symbols of “maker” and “citizen”; see H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 47-54.

⁶ One could argue that Niebuhr’s triadic account of the structure of dialogical relationality addresses some vexed loci in the trajectory of modern Western philosophy. It offers, for instance, a fundamental counter to a Cartesian reading of self-enclosed human consciousness as the reflective starting point for self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. Niebuhr articulates in a theological mode a key line of “anti-foundational” critiques of the Cartesian heritage that have been voiced from a number of quarters in twentieth-century philosophy. Additionally, his account of dialogical relationality makes explicit the implicit (and thus often overlooked) social character of the “kingdom of ends,” i.e., a genuinely universal

Niebuhr's account of the triadic structure of discourse and the relational ontology of agency that is its basis provide elements for an anthropology – an articulation of what is to be human – that requires that attention be paid to its theological implications, i.e., to its bearing upon how the divine may be construed. In consequence, a major interpretive trajectory of his anthropological enterprise is that its manifestation of the finite relationality constitutive of us as human in regard to one another, also – and perhaps most importantly – manifests that, whatever else we may be or take ourselves to be, we are most certainly *not divine*. A remark that Susan Neiman makes with respect Kant is one that aptly applies to Niebuhr on this point:

Of the many distinctions Kant took wisdom and sanity to depend upon, none was deeper than the difference between God and the rest of us. Kant reminds us as often as possible of all that God can do and we cannot. Nobody in the history of philosophy was more aware of the number of ways we can forget it. He was equally conscious of the temptation to idolatry, the alternate route to confusing God with other beings.⁷

If this principle is correct, at least for our reading of Niebuhr if not also for Kant, then one function of religious discourse and practice may very well be to draw attention to our common human finitude, our shared human fragility, and the range of our human vulnerabilities. They remind us of the irrefragable fact that we are not divine, that we are not God, and of the need for us to have, at the very least, a concept of God powerful enough to hold us to account for our finitude and its fragility.

On Niebuhr's account, the givenness of otherness in which we find ourselves with one another in dialogical relationality is robustly contingent in that it arises not as a consequence of an implacably working necessity.

and fully inclusive moral community, as fundamental to Kant's understanding of the primacy of practical (moral) reason in our human efforts to render the world fully intelligible. Niebuhr also provides a discussion of the triadic structure of faith in "The Structure of Faith," in *Faith on Earth: An Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith*, ed. Richard R. Niebuhr (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 43-62. For an account of the origin and development of this triadic structure in Niebuhr's work, see Joseph S. Pagano, *The Origins and Development of the Triadic Structure of Faith in H. Richard Niebuhr: A Study of the Kantian and Pragmatic Background of Niebuhr's Thought* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005).

⁷ Susan Neiman, *Evil and Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, with a new Preface by the author (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 75.

It is a contingency in which the “self that knows itself in encounter with others, finds itself to be absolutely dependent in its existence, completely contingent, inexplicably present in its here-ness and now-ness.”⁸ This is a contingency that provides space for human freedom to encompass the givenness of those others among whom we have been placed as companions (both chosen and unchosen) in our social relationships and well as the world that constitutes the “Third” of our relationality. It is a contingency that is subject, in the end, to an abiding tensive interplay between two larger and historically longstanding patterns of interpretation that he takes as major markers of the shape of religious meaning.⁹ He terms one pattern “the mythology of death”; the other pattern forms “a history of life.”¹⁰

Without rehearsing all the details of Niebuhr’s account, he takes it to be the case that one of the central functions of what he calls “the great religions” is to challenge “a mythology of death”; according to this pattern, human existence and its dynamic of relationality are construed as only the play of a bare and pointless contingency that ends for all in the meaninglessness of utter extinction: Death is the final otherness, embracing all in an abyss of non-existence. Over against such mythology, Niebuhr sees the array of human religious expressions and practices lying along a trajectory that instead makes it possible to affirm “a history of life.”¹¹

Niebuhr characterizes the possibility of such a transformation in terms drawn from his commitment to the Christian tradition of theological discourse. It is a transition from seeing and encountering this contingency as an otherness that is implacably hostile, indeed as the face of a God who only can be enemy, to encountering it as the enlivening abundant plurality originating

⁸ Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 109. Niebuhr references his discussion here to themes that were made prominent by the existentialists with whom he was contemporary.

⁹ To use a current term of art, these patterns structure two contending “master narratives.”

¹⁰ Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 107.

¹¹ From the perspective of much more differentiated accounts of “world religions” that have emerged in the more than half century since Niebuhr wrote *The Responsible Self*, his treatment is subject to the valid criticism that it pays scant attention to the range and richness of indigenous traditions. At the same time, I would point out that some of the larger conceptual resources of his account, most notably in terms of what he takes to be to the full affirmation of all of being and all beings in and through all of their particularity, are amenable to development in ways could make for a far more robust engagement with these traditions of religious interpretation than his 1963 text, with its valorization of “the great religions,” might suggest.

in God's freely given friendship, the relationality that Christian theology has named "grace." In this transition, God the enemy becomes God the friend, and an "ethics of death" is replaced by an "ethics of life":

Redemption appears as the liberty to interpret in trust all that happens as contained within an intention and a total activity that includes death within the domain of life, that destroys only to establish anew ... we begin to understand all that happens to us and to which we react as occurring in a universal teleology of resurrection rather than a universal teleology of entombment.¹²

Framed in terms of the dynamics of intercultural harmony and reciprocity, Niebuhr's theological account of the interpretive transformation by which a mythology of death is transformed into a history of life may be further construed as a recognition of the fundamentally "gifted" character of the otherness that constitutes the context of finitude and contingency into which we humans have been placed, unasked, to dwell with one another. This recognition of such "gifted" character to our human finitude, moreover, has a practical "bite," which I take to be of import for a central moral finality that can be considered integral to the work and processes of intercultural and interreligious dialogue: Such dialogue, to the extent that it serves as an enactment of the abiding hospitality of mutual recognition, can serve as a paradigm for the practices that provide a stable basis for constructing an order of peace among the peoples of our planet.

Whatever other function an abiding commitment to dialogue among communities of differing religious and cultural discourse and practice may have regarding their own particular modalities for recognizing human finitude, it empowers our giving such recognition *an enacted practical form* for one another. It does so as a practice of a hospitality in which we welcome each other precisely in our differences and in our otherness. It is in such hospitality that we paradigmatically enact recognition of our irreducible human otherness to one another through the fundamental respect we manifest to one another as participants in shared human fragility. We are enabled to recognize the otherness of our own finitude in the recognition of the finitude of the other as it manifests the radical contingency in which we stand to one another and to the world in which we mutually dwell.

Let me put this point as a question: Might it be that the hospitality we offer each other, particularly as participants in interreligious and intercultural dialogue, enables us to learn a "grammar" of solidarity and mutuality with

¹² Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 142-143.

one another, a “grammar” that issues from, from the recognition of our shared human fragility even as we stand in difference to one another? There obviously is no single or simple response to this. But one line of response that may be particularly pertinent lies in the fact that hospitality has been important in many religious traditions and has been a starting point from which intercultural exchange arises; in its practice we learn from one another how our human status in the world is marked by mutual vulnerability to one another, particularly as we encounter one another strangers, as “other” to one another. Granted, there are circumstances in which the recognition of such vulnerability may provoke hostility, or at least a wariness, tempered, perhaps by politeness, leading us keep our distance from the stranger. On the other hand, hospitality, at least as enacted in the religiously informed practices of many cultures, is far more than a wary politeness that allows us to mark a barrier between “us” and “them” that is transgressed at peril. It is, instead, often the enacted risk of greeting another’s vulnerability out of our own, and the acceptance of that enacted risk by the one welcomed then opens up an “uncommon ground” allowing each of us to stand with one another upon a new space of respect that issues from a mutual recognition of vulnerability. Creating such spaces of respect for the mutual otherness in which we stand to one another would be a most worthy tribute to the life and the work of our friend and colleague, Vincent Shen.

Matteo Ricci and His Method of Cultural Accommodation

HU YEPING *

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) begins his book *On Friendship* with the following words:

I, Matteo, from the Far West, have sailed across the sea and entered China with respect for the learned virtue of the Son of Heaven of the Great Ming dynasty as well as for the teachings bequeathed by the ancient Kings. ... I crossed the mountains, sailed down the river, and arrived in Jinling, where I beheld the glory of the capital of the kingdom, which filled me with happiness, and I thought that it was not in vain that I had made this voyage.¹

Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary from Italy, spent almost four months at sea in order to come to China despite many such difficulties as language, food, climate, being away from family, friends and familiar environment, and more significantly risk of his own life. How could he eventually manage to settle down in Peking, the capital of the “mid-kingdom” of the Ming Dynasty, China, and even to enter the Forbidden City, the palace complex of the emperor? Why did many Confucian literati and influential officials want to form a friendship with him and like to have conversions with him? What method did Ricci employ in his endeavor to communicate from his own cultural tradition and religious faith to the people and the country that he

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¹ Matteo Ricci, *On Friendship: One Hundred Maxims for a Chinese Prince*, trans. Timothy Billings (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 87.

did not know at all upon his arrival, yet stayed till his death in the country's capital? What are the contribution and the significance of Ricci's unique way of understanding the other culture, people, and civilization? What can we learn from his method and experience in understanding, respecting, and communicating among different peoples, cultures, and civilizations in these complex and global times?

In this paper, I would like to borrow Tang Yijie's analyzes of the three principles of cultural communication and integration and the four aspects of Matteo Ricci's work with Confucian literati to illustrate the possibility of dialogue and cooperation of different cultural traditions and religious faiths and the significance of Ricci's implementation of the method of cultural accommodation between Christianity, particularly, Catholicism, and Confucianism in the Ming Dynasty. Of course, there are still a number of issues or debates on Ricci's method of cultural accommodation, particularly on the use of terminology and the understanding of rites and customs of the local culture. However, this paper will not go into these other inquiries but focus on the one mentioned above.

In his book *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture*, Tang Yijie (1927-2014), whose father, Tang Yongtong (1893-1964), was a President of Peking University in the first half of the twentieth century and a great scholar on Buddhism, argues that the issue of the introduction and integration of a foreign ideology, philosophy, religion, or culture into a local existing one is rather complicated and difficult. Many factors can be considered important in the process of determining success and failure. The formation and development of a local culture or civilization is not a matter of daily events but rather a cumulative effort of decades or centuries. Thus, as the process goes, it has been deeply rooted in its own socio-political, economic, and cultural soil, characterized by its own particularities and recorded its own history. Tang Yijie notes that according to the success of Indian Buddhism assimilated and eventually embedded into Chinese cultural tradition, there are three major principles that can be suggestive: (1) adaptation to the local cultural tradition, (2) enrichment and intensification of the local cultural tradition, and (3) advancement and real contribution to the local cultural tradition.²

According to Tang Yijie, the foreign culture should first be grafted upon the body of the local culture or one of the local cultures, and then

² Tang Yijie, *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991), chap. 9, 115-125.

gradually develop its own specification and begin to have its own influence on the local culture. Through the process of growth, both foreign and local cultures can be enriched and make valuable contributions to each other. These three principles can be applied to Matteo Ricci in his development of the method of cultural accommodation during his stay in China in the sixteenth century.

Tang Yijie thinks that Ricci knew well Chinese thought and culture, particularly those of Confucianism, and highly appreciated Confucian ideas and moral teachings. During his some twentynight years' stay in China, Ricci made every effort to "link Oriental and Occidental cultures" through such methods as "Linking Catholicism with Confucianism (*heru* 和儒)," "Concordance with Confucianism (*furu* 符儒)," "Complementing Confucianism (*buru* 补儒)" and "Transcending Confucianism (*chaoru* 超儒)."³ Joseph Sebes also points out three components in Ricci's method: "life-style with the Confucian socio-ethical system on which it was based; terminology with underlying ideas and conceptions; and rites and customs inspired by ideology."⁴

Method of Cultural Accommodation

Matteo Ricci was the first foreigner from Europe to settle down and reside in the imperial Forbidden City (1601) and had his writings included in an imperial anthology. He has become a legendary figure who courageously forged "meaningful cultural connections between Europe and China. Even as a Christian missionary ... Ricci has been admired – and also severely criticized – for his attempts to adapt or 'accommodate' Christian teachings to Chinese cultural expectations..."⁵

The method of cultural accommodation was pioneered by Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606), who belonged to the same religious community as Ricci. He came to India and Macao a few years before Ricci and was considered his mentor for the missionary work in China. After traveling and staying in Asian countries, Valignano was convinced that in order to be inte-

³ Ibid., 149.

⁴ Joseph Sebes, "A 'Bridge' between East and West: Father Matteo Ricci, S.J. His Times, His Life, and His Method of Cultural Accommodation," in *International Symposium on Chinese-Western Cultural Interchange in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Arrival of Matteo Ricci, S.J. in China*, September 11-16, 1983 (New Taipei City: Fu Jen Catholic University Press, 1983), 590.

⁵ Timothy Billings, "Introduction," in Ricci, *On Friendship*, 1-2.

grated successfully with the local culture, the outsiders should learn the local language, adapt to its customs, and respect its traditions and ways of life. "...[I]n all things compatible with dogma and evangelical morality the missionaries should become Indian in India, Chinese in China, and Japanese in Japan."⁶ This was quite innovative at the time.

With this innovation in mind, Ricci looked for new ways to implement the method of cultural accommodation. Upon his arrival in Macao, Ricci began immediately learning the Chinese language and Chinese classics. On September 10, 1583, Ricci and his colleague Michele Ruggieri (1543-1607), who had very limited knowledge of Chinese history, customs, language, etc., were wearing long robes like Chinese Buddhist monks and knelt down among other Chinese in front of the Chinese official (prefect) in Zhaoqing, China. This very act marked "the beginning of the one of the most significant periods in the history of cultural exchange between East and West."⁷

Throughout his long stay in China, Ricci not only mastered the language both in speaking and writing, wore Chinese clothes, and formed friends with the local literati and imperial officials, but had deep interest, sympathy, and respect for Chinese culture, particularly Chinese classics. He not only had a Chinese name, 利玛窦 (Li Madou), but also an honorific (hao) like other Chinese literati, 西泰 (Xitai from the far West). By these Chinese names, Ricci has been remembered by the Chinese till today.

As A. Rosso has noted, "Christianity necessarily found itself either accommodating itself to Chinese thought and life to the extent of losing its essential traits, or carrying on a struggle aimed at an evolution of the Chinese system. Ricci sought a solution in a provisional and partial accommodation."⁸ Ricci's method of cultural accommodation is to have conversations with Chinese intellectuals discussing issues in which they were interested, such as life and death, good and evil, friendship, science, etc. Through friendly conversations, Ricci suggested that there might be something worth knowing and learning from the West. He intended to build a liaison with this unknown country to the West on the basis of friendship and mutual understanding; and planned to establish "Chinese Christianity from within the empire on a basis

⁶ Fonti Ricciane, "Introduction," in *Storia dell'Introduzione del Cristianesimo in Cina*, XCIII, quotation from Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci: A Jesuit in the Ming Court* (New York-London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 27.

⁷ Fontana, *Matteo Ricci: A Jesuit in the Ming Court*, xiv.

⁸ Antonio Sisto Rosso, *Apostolic Legations to China of the Eighteenth Century* (South Pasadena, P.D. and Ione Perkins, 1948), 224.

of Chinese traditions and rules of conduct which were in conformity with Christian teaching.”⁹

Ricci tried to accommodate himself “in every way” where necessary and changed expressions in order to make them more acceptable to the Chinese. As Sebes claims, “Ricci equated the Christian concept of love with the Confucian concept of humanness (*ren*).”¹⁰ The essay *On Friendship*, written in Chinese by Ricci, was presented as a gift to the Prince of Jian An (Jian An Wang), a distant cousin of the emperor. The essay is a collection of maxims from European thinkers on the theme of friendship. It is an effort to be accommodating in the broadest sense and to establish a common ground for cross-cultural understanding, respect, and communication. The essay became very popular among the Chinese literati and “earned more credit” for Ricci and for the West: “other things do us credit for mechanical and artificial things of hands and tools; but this does us credit for literature, for wit, and for virtue.”¹¹

Adaptation to the Chinese Cultural Tradition

In early days of Ricci’s stay in China, the assimilation of Christianity to Buddhism was quite noticeable. As soon as Ricci and his colleagues came to China, they began wearing clothes like Buddhist monks. The similarities of images and status between the Madonna and Child and Guanyin in Buddhism, particularly Son-giving Guanyin, led many Chinese believers, including local officials, to kneel before the Madonna and Child. Since Ricci and his colleagues also came from the far West, India, they were considered “bearers of the newest religious teaching from India.”¹²

However, as Ricci gradually learned more about Chinese history, culture, and tradition, he began to criticize Buddhism as a form of idolatry. He tried to find a linkage of Catholicism in Confucian thought. He also learned that it was important to work with Chinese officials as they were seen “like fathers and mothers” and intellectuals who could become future officials through imperial examinations, which were mainly about Confucian teachings.

⁹ Malcolm Hay, *Failure in the Far East* (Wetteren and Belgium: de Meester Bros., 1956), 96.

¹⁰ Sebes, “A ‘Bridge’ between East and West,” 591.

¹¹ Matteo Ricci, *Opere storiche del P. Matteo Ricci*, ed. Pietro Tacchi-Venturi, 2 vols. (Macerata: Premiato Stabilimento Tipografico, Filippo Giorgetti, 1911, 1913), 248; quoted from Ricci, *On Friendship*, 3.

¹² R. Po-Chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City: Matteo Ricci 1551-1610* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 93.

Ricci and his colleagues learned Chinese “courtesies” and protocols in order to meet officials and to be situated in their new circumstances. In each place where he resided, he tried to form a friendship with local officials and influential figures, who, in turn, enabled him to learn more about Chinese society and to whom he expressed his own religious doctrines. He urged Europeans to have sympathy and be patient with the Chinese people and not lose hope in the country.

After Ricci mastered the language and the classics, he began to translate the Confucian major work Four Books 四书 (*The Doctrine of the Mean, The Great Learning, Mencius and the Analects*) into Latin and carefully studied Five Classics 五经 (*Classics of Poetry, The Book of Documents, The Book of Rites, The Book of Changes and Spring and Autumn Annals*) in order to find “material directly and genuinely related to China’s cultural heritage.”¹³ He sought conversations with Chinese intellectuals to learn knowledge of Chinese thought as much as possible. He presented himself as a “Confucian scholar” and “introduced the concepts of the Catholic religion in terms of Confucian learning.”¹⁴ Ricci believed that many terms and phrases, for instance, “the unity of God,” “the immortality of the soul,” “the glory of the blessed,” etc., in Chinese classics are “in harmony with” Catholicism.¹⁵

In his major book, *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (T’ien-chu Shih-i)*, Ricci often quoted such Chinese classics as *The Book of Songs* (Shi), *The Book of History* (Shu), *The Book of Rites* (Li), *The Book of Changes* (Yi), and *The Doctrine of the Mean* (Zhong Yong) in order to attempt to prove that “Catholicism corresponds to Confucianism and the ancient Chinese classics.”¹⁶ According to Ricci, the Chinese classics provide wisdom and advice to teach people to be virtuous. The Chinese history of more than four thousand years is a history of rich records about the people’s “good deeds” for the country and for the common good. In this sense, the Chinese classics “seem to be quite the equals of our own most distinguished philosophers.”¹⁷

¹³ Matteo Ricci, *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (T’ien-chu Shih-i)*, Translated, with Introduction and Notes by Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, S.J.: a Chinese-English edition, ed. Edward J. Malatesta, S.J. (St. Louis, MI: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985), 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶ Tang, *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture*, 150.

¹⁷ Matteo Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matteo Ricci 1583-1610*, translated from the Latin by Louis J. Gallagher, S.J., with a Foreword by Richard J. Cushing, D.D., LL.D. (New York: Random House, 1953), 93.

In order to fit Catholicism into Chinese society, Ricci revised and adapted some of the Catholic doctrines. Ricci showed his sympathy and respect for the offerings to Confucius and ancestors. Although Ricci strongly criticized the idolatry he perceived in Buddhism, he did not criticize the offerings and sacrifices to Confucius and ancestors. He was aware that Confucius was considered the “Prince of Philosophers”¹⁸ by the Chinese literati. Even the rulers paid him “the highest homage due to a mortal.”¹⁹ “The Temple of Confucius is really the cathedral of the upper lettered and exclusive class of the literati.” It is the center of learning. Yet the literati honor him only in the manner of honoring the dead who were dear to them. Confucius was never “venerated with religious rites” as a god.²⁰ Neither do they recite prayers to him, nor do they ask for favors or help from him,²¹ but rather they honor Confucius for his teaching and practice of moral virtues.

The ultimate purpose and the general intention of this sect, the literati, are public peace and order in the kingdom. They likewise look forward the economic security of the family and the virtuous training of the individual. The precepts they formulate are certainly directive to such ends and quite in conformity with the light of conscience and with Christian truth.²²

Ricci does not criticize ancestor worship, but rather gives a detailed description of common practice from the rulers to the common people. It is a way of paying respect and honor to the dead close to them, showing the love of the living to the dead. It is also a way of teaching children how to respect and support parents who are still living. Ricci argues that such a practice of ancestor worship “seems to be beyond any charge of sacrilege” and “free from any taint of superstition,” because they do not consider their ancestors to be gods.²³

Enrichment and Intensification of the Chinese Culture

In order to be accepted and understood by the Chinese people, Ricci intensifies some Catholic ideas with certain traditional Confucian thought in

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

²² *Ibid.*, 97.

²³ *Ibid.*, 96.

order to enrich and complement each other. In *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* Ricci uses “the Lord of Heaven” (Tianzhu) to refer to the Christian *Deus*, because the Chinese consider Heaven (Tian) as the highest supremacy which creates and maintains all things. As Ricci notes, the Chinese intellectuals do not believe in idol worship, nor do they have idols; what they believe in is one deity who creates, governs, and preserves all things on earth.²⁴

In Chapter 2, sections 103-108, Ricci quotes a number of the Chinese classics to argue that “the Lord of Heaven in my humble country is He who is called Shang-ti (Sovereign on High) in Chinese.”²⁵ The two terms are “different only in name.”²⁶ This can be found in many ancient Chinese writings. For instance, Ricci quotes Confucius in *The Doctrine of the Mean*: “The ceremonies of sacrifices to Heaven and Earth are meant for the service of the Sovereign on High”; hymns in *The Book of Odes*: “How beautiful are the wheat and the barley, Whose bright produce we shall receive! The bright and glorious Sovereign on High”; etc.

By employing Chinese classics, Ricci argues that the concept of the Lord of Heaven in the West already existed in Chinese antiquity. And through reading Chinese classics, Ricci finds that “by their own innate genius, they did have sufficient natural enlightenment”;²⁷ this could naturally serve as a constructive foundation for Christian teaching in China.

According to Ricci, God is already in the hearts of all human beings. If there is no God among all peoples, willingness to do good things would become groundless.²⁸

All men who do good believe that there must exist a supremely Honored One (Shang-tsun) who governs this world. If this Honored One did not exist, or if He exists but does not intervene in human affairs, would this not be to shut the gate of doing good and to open the road of doing evil?²⁹

In Chapter 4, when discussing the spiritual being, Ricci again refers to the Chinese classics about the immortality of the spiritual being. In session 185, he uses *The Spring and Autumn Annals* to illustrate how the ancient Chinese people believed the human soul to be immortal. When one dies, it

²⁴ Ibid., 94.

²⁵ Ricci, *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, 121.

²⁶ Ibid., 125.

²⁷ Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 82.

²⁸ Sangkeun Kim, *Strange Name of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 163.

²⁹ Ricci, *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, 61.

is only one's body that is destroyed, but not one's soul which will not die. Ricci also quotes *The Doctrine of the Mean* to assert that spiritual beings are the substance of all things.³⁰ In Session 206, Ricci points out that Confucius believed that spiritual beings are not constituents of matter, but rather "keep at a distance" from the categories of material things. What Ricci is attempting to do here is to show "the compatibility between original Confucian thought and Christianity."³¹

For Ricci, Catholicism and Confucianism are not against but complement each other in many ways. Through his writings, he added new components to the understanding and interpretation of Confucian thought. As Tang Yijie points out, Ricci "complements and revises" the Confucian concept on the issue of the retribution of good and evil. According to the Confucian tradition, the "retribution of good and evil" refers basically to the outcome of a personal moral cultivation, that is to say, through moral self-cultivation one could reach the purpose of the inner moral accomplishment as a kind of "inner transcendence," as Tang Yijie argues.³²

Hence, Confucianism did not discuss the concept of Heaven and Hell, but focused more on reward and punishment during one's lifetime. These rewards and punishments come not only from the loss and gain of bodily wealth and goods in this life, but especially from cultivating humanity (*ren*), which is the harmony of all right things on earth. Ricci quotes numerous Chinese classics to show that Chinese sages in antiquity used the concept of "rewards in order to induce people to do good, and punishments to make them avoid evil."³³ However, all these are gains and losses in this world.

In order to explain Christian concept of reward and punishment in the afterlife, Ricci would add to the Confucian concept of "the benefits of the world to come which are both supremely real and which hurt no one."³⁴ He says there are three correct motives to do good things or to hold a higher standard of morality: "The lowest involves doing good in order to get to Heaven and to avoid going to Hell; the second, doing good in order to repay the Lord of Heaven for His profound favors; and the highest, doing good in order to harmonize with, and to obey, the Lord of Heaven's sacred will."³⁵ But, perfection in moral conduct does not depend on going to Heaven or to

³⁰ Ibid., 185, 189.

³¹ Ibid., 50, 203.

³² Tang, *Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity and Chinese Culture*, 151.

³³ Ricci, *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, 297, 303.

³⁴ Ibid., 303.

³⁵ Ibid., 313.

Hell, but on the cultivation of humanity and righteousness, because “Heaven is nothing other than that glorious place where those of the past and present who have cultivated humanity and righteousness foregather.”³⁶ Virtue is founded on self-cultivation, and its fulfillment is in the service of the Sovereign on High or the Lord of Heaven. For instance, in the Chou dynasty this was considered its prime duty.³⁷

Here we see Ricci’s attempt to complement Confucianism with Christian morality and even to perfect Confucianism. According to Sebes, Ricci gave Christianity a Confucian dimension, “he confucianized Christianity or christianized Confucianism.”³⁸ Ricci argues that Confucian teachings are “so far from being contrary to Christian principles, that such an institution could derive great benefit from Christianity and might be developed and perfected by it.”³⁹ In the process of promoting the interaction and enrichment of the two cultural traditions, Ricci does not simply impose his own belief and dogma, rather he uses Confucius as an example to argue that instruction must be accommodated to the local people and culture. Thus, “when Confucius went to the State of Wei and saw the people there, he wanted first to enrich them and only then to instruct them.”⁴⁰

Advancement and Real Contribution to the Chinese Culture

Joseph Needham says that “Matteo Ricci was one of the most remarkable and brilliant men in history ... not only an extraordinary linguist, mastering the Chinese language to perfection, but also a scientist and mathematician of eminence.”⁴¹ Indeed, Ricci not only learned Chinese classics and discussed important issues related to philosophy, literature, religious teachings, the universe, life and death, etc., with Confucian intellectuals and officials, but also brought European science, particularly mathematics and astronomy, to China.

Ricci acknowledged that the Chinese made not only considerable progress in moral philosophy but also in astronomy and in many branches of mathematics. However, through conversations with the literati, Ricci found that despite the achievements made in ancient China, the Chinese did not

³⁶ Ibid., 317.

³⁷ Ibid., 209.

³⁸ Sebes, “A ‘Bridge’ between East and West,” 591.

³⁹ Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 98.

⁴⁰ Ricci, *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, 313.

⁴¹ Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1954), 148-149.

develop sciences as had Europe at the time; thus, he made efforts to teach astronomical and mathematical knowledge to the Chinese who were interested in the subjects. He taught the Chinese European cosmology and the Greek geometry of Euclid's *Elements*. He taught lessons about the prediction of lunar and solar eclipses, about the earth being round, which was unknown in China, and the structure of the universe. He made various astronomical instruments, as well as the first Western-style map in a Chinese version, with China positioned in the center.

He also brought clocks of European style as gifts and the skill of craftsmanship to China. He put up a mechanical clock outside of his residence. This was the first public clock of European style to appear in China.⁴² In fact, because of the clock as a gift to the Ming emperor, Ricci was released from prison in Nanking and was able to go to the Forbidden City in Peking.⁴³

The advanced knowledge in mathematics, astronomy, and mechanical technology that Ricci displayed to the Chinese enabled him to make friends with both literati and ruling officials and opened a path for his implementation of cultural interchange and interaction between East and West. Nevertheless, science and mathematics are only instruments that lead to ethics and religion. "Between lessons in cosmology and geometry, Master Ricci discoursed little by little on Christian doctrines."⁴⁴

According to James C. P. Fan, Ricci made such contributions to Chinese modernization as the art of mapping, astronomy, mathematics, the dissemination of Chinese philosophy, the influence on learning of the Western style clock, musical instruments, and paintings.⁴⁵ His amiable personality and profound knowledge attracted many influential officials, such as Li Zizhao, Yang Tianjun, Xu Guangqi, etc. After only four or five years in Peking, Ricci already had more than 200 "disciples" to follow him. "What the Chinese people particularly admire in the scientific work of Matteo Ricci in China is his humble, honest, disinterested attitude, not inspired by ulterior motives and free from bonds with any type of foreign, economic or military power."⁴⁶

⁴² Fontana, *Matteo Ricci: A Jesuit in the Ming Court*, 57.

⁴³ Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, 389.

⁴⁴ Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, 123.

⁴⁵ James C. P. Fan, "The Reverend Matteo Ricci's Contributions to the Modernization of China," in *International Symposium on the 400th Anniversary of the Arrival of Matteo Ricci*, 231-254.

⁴⁶ Pope John Paul II, "Pope's Address on the Work of Father Ricci in China," in *International Symposium on the 400th Anniversary of the Arrival of Matteo Ricci*, 6.

Conclusion

As Yang Young-ching says, “he who wants to guide the Chinese must start by understanding them. He who wants to teach the Chinese must first learn what they have already been taught. The beginning of an understanding of the problem of evangelization and the discovery of the best method of giving Christianity to China lies in a careful survey of her spiritual heritage and religious background and a discerning appraisal of its true worth and value.”⁴⁷

In fact, cultural barriers and situational limitations make cultural accommodation not an option but an imperative, not only in Ricci’s time but also in ours. The success of Ricci’s method of cultural accommodation in the sixteenth century provides us with some good lessons. It is possible to have meaningful integration and constructive interaction of different religions, cultures, and civilizations. This does not presuppose a homogenization in a universal whole, but rather relating each other on the basis of one’s own cultural identity and uniqueness, which can create a unity that is much richer, broader, and inclusive. As Pope John Paul II points out, Ricci’s experience with the Chinese people manifests that Christianity “would not bring any damage to Chinese culture, but would enrich it and perfect it ... the Christian faith does not in fact imply abandoning one’s culture, nor does it mean diminishing loyalty to one’s own country and its traditions, but rather, that the faith permitted them to offer a richer and more qualified service to their country.”⁴⁸

However, there is also a tendency for civilizations to clash in hostility, hatred, and chaos, and a possibility that cultures could constitute walls dividing us in isolation, alienation, and confrontation, like the Berlin wall in the past and the wall between Israel and Palestine at present. If we transform that danger of clash and confrontation into dialogue or cooperation, and if we break the wall to create a greater openness, we will have new and positive possibilities for families, societies, and civilizations. This grounds a hope for the future of peoples, nations, and the globe. A common humanity needs a humane approach with unique experiences and rich resources of its own cultural tradition.

In order to co-exist with each other in a complex world, we need to learn wisdom from exemplary cases past and present. Wisdom is something

⁴⁷ Yang Young-ching, *China’s Religious Heritage* (New York-Nashville, TN: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1948), 20.

⁴⁸ Pope John Paul II, “Pope’s Address on the Work of Father Ricci in China,” 5-6.

“classical,” which contains the profound meaning of “a consciousness of something enduring, of significance that cannot be lost and is independent of all the circumstances of time,” or “a kind of timeless present that is contemporaneous with every other age.”⁴⁹ In order to have a good understanding of the past, one needs to create a “fusion of horizons” between now and then, and different religions, cultures, and civilizations of many peoples. One must reflect critically upon the prejudgments and gain critical distance from the prejudices so as to be ready to be open to new encounters or new understandings of future readings and applications, because the understanding of different cultural traditions is an open-ended and progressive “hermeneutical spiral.” Wisdom can enable us to read our cultural traditions hermeneutically, rather than in a closed fundamentalist manner.

From the example of Matteo Ricci in the attempt of integrating two cultures East and West, we have learned that it is possible to co-exist peacefully among peoples who have different cultures, beliefs, and convictions; that when a foreign culture comes to reside in a new place with a different culture: (1) it should come as a guest rather than a host, and hence should follow certain rules, patterns, and traditions of the existing culture so as to prepare itself for gradual and graceful integration; (2) it should come with humility, sincerity, concern, and charitable love in order to share its own gift with the existing culture for the goal of mutual enrichment and complementarity; and (3) it should come with a spirit of discovery to find out and learn from the existing culture of its unique way of manifesting the true, the good, and the beautiful, and, in turn, to be rediscovered in its own culture and tradition, for each people and culture has its own way of living and expressing the spirit, as we all live under “Heaven” in different quarters on earth.

⁴⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 256.

Reading the Other's Classics: The Encounter between Jesuits and Chinese Literati

BENOÎT VERMANDER *

Introduction

The comparative reading of their respective classics by Jesuits and Chinese literati has decisively helped in shaping not only the relationship between China and the West, but also our global understanding of the goals and the dynamic of intercultural encounters. Reading the other's classics was an endeavor loaded with challenges that required each side to progressively elaborate new hermeneutical principles. Besides, observing how the Other was reading one's own classics was part of the interactive process through which both sides tried to apprehend their counterpart's *episteme*. As a specific field of knowledge, sinology took shape through this interpretative interplay, the unfolding of which is still rich in questions and insights when reflecting upon intercultural dialogue in contemporary settings.

This essay tries to capture the way Chinese and Western classics were exchanged and reinterpreted. It further examines how a reflexive appraisal of these attempts may enrich our contemporary endeavors at reading classics, focusing toward the end on "comparative theology" as a field still in the making. By doing so, this essay is also a modest homage to Professor Vincent Shen's contribution to cross-cultural hermeneutics, a contribution that, on the one hand, mobilizes Chinese tradition for reading anew texts anchored into the Western one and, on the other hand, offers specific insights on Chinese

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classics that originate from Professor Shen's resourceful application of contemporary Western hermeneutics.¹

An Exchange of Gifts

The history of the relationship between the Jesuits and China is part of global cultural history. It extends to geometry, astronomy, botany, painting, engraving, cartography, ethnomusicology, and even gun-making technologies.² In the sixteenth to seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, "science" and "religion" were not considered to be distinct domains of knowledge as was going to be the case in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment period. The intermingling between the two was reflected in the curriculum of studies followed by Jesuits as well as by Jesuit educational institutions. This curriculum largely determined the way Jesuits introduced Christianity in China. More generally, the exchanges triggered by their arrival resulted in cultural creativity that the "interweaving of rituals,"³ new artistic styles, and local forms of religious sociability all expressed in their own ways.⁴

¹ See notably *Scholastic Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy (Shilin zhexue yu zhongguo zhexue)* (Beijing: Beijing Commercial Press, 2018); *From Matteo Ricci to Heidegger: Interaction Philosophy East and West in an Intercultural Context (Cong Li Madou dao Heidegger: kuawenhua mailuo xia de zhongxi zhexue hudong)* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 2014).

² Among other works focusing on the scientific and technological dimensions of the global history into which to insert the narrative of the interaction between Chinese literati and Jesuits, see Benjamin Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Nicolas Standaert, ed., *Handbook of Christianity in China, vol. 1, 655-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Peter Engelfriet, *Euclid in China: The Genesis of the First Chinese Translation of Euclid's Elements Books I-VI (Jihe yuanben, Beijing, 1607) and its Reception up to 1723* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Florence Hsia, *Foreigners in a Strange Land: Jesuits and Their Scientific Missions in Late Imperial China* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2010); Catherine Jami, Peter Engelfriet, and Gregory Blue, eds., *Statecraft and Intellectual Renewal in Late Ming China. The Cross-cultural Synthesis of Xu Guangqi (1562-1633)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Huyi Wu, *Traduire la Chine au XVIII^e siècle: Les jésuites traducteurs de textes chinois et le renouvellement des connaissances européennes sur la Chine (1687-ca. 1740)* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2017).

³ Nicolas Standaert, *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008).

⁴ In terms of the shaping of new forms of sociability, see, for instance, Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins and Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late*

As important as these phenomena were, it remains that the transmission and interpretation of canonical texts were at the center of the encounter. The Jesuit educational cursus, as drawn by the *Ratio Studiorum*, was first based on a “mapping of the classics”: Encyclopedic, the science taught in Rome was also highly organized.⁵ During the period under study (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries), the Aristotelian/scholastics corpus was progressively interpreted throughout an evolving prism provided by modern sciences and philosophy. Though biblical studies remained dominated by traditional literal and allegorical readings, the stress on classical languages had already timidly modified the way the Bible was read compared to earlier periods.⁶ The deciphering of Chinese chronologies was going to further this development.

Somehow, the way knowledge extracted from the China mission field was presented would draw “alternative mappings” allowing for the shaping of a new *episteme*. Treatises, Letters, and Relations sent from China tell their recipients about continents of thought and knowledge previously unheard of. From the late sixteenth century until well into the eighteenth century, the Jesuits going to China play the role of cartographers. To the benefit of Westerners as well as Chinese literati and decision-makers, they draw the maps of new territories to be progressively explored.⁷ Upon his entry into China, Matteo Ricci charts with Chinese literati a world map that will be enriched and corrected until the end of his life and beyond; and Ricci’s apologetic and scientific writings function as routes cut through the “Western sciences” (*xixue*), routes that his successors will detail further – for instance, Alfonso Vagnone (1568-1640) explicitly divides his argument according to Aristotelian categories and introduces China to Aristotelian ethics.⁸ Chinese characters are used to account for Christian notions, their meaning and origin

Imperial China (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

⁵ Gianni Criveller, “The Background of Matteo Ricci. The Shaping of His Intellectual and Scientific Endowment,” in *Portrait of a Jesuit: Matteo Ricci* (Macao: Macao Ricci Institute, 2010), 15-35.

⁶ Cf. Pierre Gibert, *L’invention critique de la Bible, XV^e-XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, “Bibliothèque des Histoires,” 2010).

⁷ David E. Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989); Antonella Romano, *Impressions de Chine: L’Europe et l’englobement du monde (XVI^e-XVII^e siècle)* (Paris: Fayard, 2016).

⁸ Thierry Meynard, “Aristotelian Ethics in the Land of Confucius: A Study of Vagnone’s Western Learning on Personal Cultivation,” *Antiquorum Philosophia* 7 (2013): 145-169; “The First Treatise on the Soul in China and its Sources,” *Revista Filosófica de Coimbra* 47 (2015): 1-39.

being integrated into apologies of the Faith; maps of the sky underpin not only the accuracy of astronomical predictions made by the newcomers but their knowledge of “heavenly matters” in general.

Ricci and some of his early successors were able to work in cooperation with Chinese literati, which contributed to make the presentation of the new faith in China as well as the Chinese *episteme* in the West a decisive contribution to the field of “comparative reading,” if not full-fledged “comparative theology” (see below). It is all too well-known that the Jesuit method followed in China relied for a good part on indirect evangelization: Western science and technology (astronomy, watchmaking, geometry, mapping) were introduced in China as a sort of confirmation of the truth of Christianity. Ricci had brought with him the *Treatise of the sphere of the world* (1570) of Clavius and the *Sfera del Mondo* by Piccolomini. A few years later, Clavius sent him more recent works (*Gnomonices* 1581; *Astrolabium*, 1593). What the Jesuit Alvarez Semedo (1586-1658) writes of the convert Leo Li Zhizhao testifies to the fact that this approach was indeed attractive for part of the audience it was aiming at:

Our Leo, endowed with a keen and ardent spirit was eager to learn, and such desire made him enter into conversation and familiarity with our Fathers: he could not depart from their company after he had tasted the order and the beauty of our sciences, and particularly the curious and innocent pleasures of Geography. He was dealing with the Science of God together with human sciences, marrying Heaven and Earth. He was learning conjointly the positioning of the kingdoms of the world, and the Laws of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.⁹

The encounter of Western knowledge with Chinese notions could not but generate creative intellectual endeavors. The apologetic treatise written by Ricci (*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*) skillfully refers to Confucian vocabulary and worldview – while remaining structured by Aristotelian and scholastic logic.¹⁰ Ricci also aimed to present to Europe the civilization he was discovering – but his Latin translations of Chinese classics have been lost.

⁹ Alvarez Semedo, *Histoire universelle du grand royaume de la Chine* (Paris: Kiné, 1996[1667]), 216.

¹⁰ Thierry Meynard, ed. and trans., “Introduction,” in *Matteo Ricci: Le sens réel de “Seigneur du Ciel”* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, “Bibliothèque chinoise,” 2013), IX-LXVII.

This way of proceeding triggered strong resistance and sometimes bitter debates within the Society of Jesus itself, even before further controversies divided the Chinese as well as the universal Church. After the death of Ricci, his successor as head of the mission of China, Niccolò Longobardo (1565-1655), readily listened to the objections raised by the Jesuits of the Japanese mission who had taken refuge in Macao after the start of the persecutions in the archipelago: the Chinese notions that Ricci and other Jesuits had adopted for the sake of presenting the Christian faith to a Chinese public and the theological vocabulary that resulted from their lexical choices went under attack. Ricci's assertion according to which the ancient Chinese philosophers were (pious) theists was similarly challenged. For Ricci, the introduction of Buddhist notions within the Confucian teaching during the Song Dynasty was the factor that had driven modern Chinese thinkers toward Atheism (rehabilitation of the Song thinkers would be attempted by some Jesuits of the mission at a much later period). An internal Memoir by Longobardo, which was a contribution to the raging debate and was probably written around 1623-1624, found its way outside China and was published in Paris in 1701.¹¹ Leibniz wrote his *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois* (1716) on the basis of the French translation of Longobardo's Memoir, but he reached conclusions opposite to the ones of the Sicilian Jesuit: our philosopher discerned in the writings and testimonies gathered by Longobardo a form of "natural theology" that he declared to be closer to Christianity than were Cartesian constructs.

As the ensuing Rites Controversy would show, the comparative reading of classics was also grounding a political theology. John Lagerwey has argued that the civil/religious distinction drawn by the Jesuits for defending their tolerant attitude toward state and family rituals was basically misrepresenting the very nature of the Chinese rite while contributing to the modernist approach of "Religion" in Europe. And he notes: "The Chinese elite was, in many ways, a willing participant in the Jesuit misinterpretation. The neo-Confucian elite had its own project, namely to transform Chinese society

¹¹ Niccolò Longobardo (id. Longobardi), *Traité sur quelques points de la Religion des Chinois* (Paris: Josse, 1701); Henri Bernard-Maître, "Un dossier bibliographique de la fin du XVIIème siècle sur la question des termes chinois," *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses* XXXVI (1949): 25-79; Nicolas Standaert, *Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China: His Life and Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 83sq.; Jacques Gernet, *Chine et Christianisme: Action et réaction* (Paris: Gallimard "Bibliothèque des Histoires," 1982), 45-58.

by ridding it of the rituals of shamans, Buddhists, and Daoists, and putting Confucian rituals in their place.”¹²

The caution displayed by Jesuits when it comes to the introduction of the Bible as a corpus distinct in essence from the rest of the Western canon has been often noticed. Political reasons were certainly prominent (the Bible, after all, is full of subversive narratives). However, liturgical translations progressively introduced the Bible to Chinese readers.¹³ When it comes to biblical acculturation, Giulio Aleni was probably the most influential actor. His works include liturgical fragments and oral exhortations, familiar conversations about faith and the person of Christ, recorded and edited by his literary friends.¹⁴ Notable is his initiative in 1637 to engrave an illustrated life of Christ, based on a wide selection from the *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* edited by Jerome Nadal in Antwerp in 1593. The engravings of this work represent the first known synthesis between Renaissance art and Chinese aesthetic concepts. Reading the classics is an endeavor that also entails a visual dimension, as is also shown by Philippe Couplet’s and others’ introduction of the Chinese canon to the West. Translations of major books usually came with illustrations meant to impress a specific “image” of the author who was thus entering the reader’s cultural world.

The Western knowledge of Chinese thought and classics developed at the same time the Aristotelian, scholastic, and biblical classics were introduced into China. Paradoxically, in this initial period, the introduction of China to the West may have reached a larger public than the one concerned with the diffusion of the Western canon into China. Couplet, Christian Wolfgang Herdrich, Intorcetta, and François de Rougemont published the first Latin translation of three of the Four Books in Paris in 1687. They had grounded their efforts upon the manuscript translations of their predecessors, undertaken for almost a century at that time. Their opus magnum, *Confucius*,

¹² John Lagerwey, *China, A Religious State* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 3.

¹³ Cf. Yanrong Chen, “The *Shengjing zhijie*: A Chinese Text of Commented Gospel Readings in the Encounter between Europe and China in the Seventeenth Century,” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 1, no. 1 (2014): 165-193.

¹⁴ Erik Zürcher, ed. and trans., *Kouduo richao. Li Jiubiao’s Diary of Oral Admonitions. A Late Ming Christian Journal*, 2 vols. (Sankt Augustin: Nettetal “Monumenta Serica Monograph Series LVI/1, 2,” 2007); Gianni Criveller, *Preaching Christ in Late Ming China: The Jesuits’ Presentation of Christ from Matteo Ricci to Giulio Aleni* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 1997).

sinarum philosophus, met with a resounding success throughout Europe.¹⁵ “We can say that the ethical system of the philosopher Confucius is sublime. It is at the same time simple, sensible, and derived from the best sources of natural reason. Never has human reason, without the support of Divine Revelation reached such a level and such a force,” writes Couplet in his introduction.

When it comes to Geography and History, the work of Martino Martini (1614-1661) exerted a special impact on the philosophical debate in Europe. His *De Bello Tartarico* met with a learned and avid readership. The writing and the success of the *De Bello Tartarico* show Martini’s (and his public’s) swift assessment of the far-reaching political changes happening in China, lived as a “global event.” Furthermore, Martini’s *Novus Atlas Sinensis* referenced Chinese and Jesuit sources as well as Martini’s own travels and observations; it was drawn and written in a language meant to be approved by the community of astronomers, notably by the Dutch Protestant scientist Philip Lansbergen.¹⁶ Finally, through his *Sinicae Historiae Decas Prima* (1658), Martini contributed to the shaping of a cross-disciplinary learned community: throughout this work, he recorded a series of events from Fuxi (2952 BCE) until the beginning of the Christian era, and thus played an essential role in the questioning of a literal understanding of biblical chronologies.

Crafting a New Code

A turning point in the history of the Jesuit mission in China was the arrival of five French Jesuits in 1687. They bore the title of “Mathematicians of the King” (the King being Louis XIV, patron of the expedition), but the honorific naming took a new meaning when they started to teach mathematics to (and share technological expertise with) Emperor Kangxi. Their success in curing the fever of the latter by administering quinine¹⁷ made Kangxi gift them with a plot of land inside the Palace grounds. There, the Jesuits duly constructed a church, a library, and an astronomical observatory. Within fifteen years after this first arrival, forty French Jesuits settled in China.

¹⁵ See Thierry Meynard, ed. and trans., *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus (1987): The First Translation of the Confucian Classics. Latin translation (1658-1660) of the Chinese by Prosper Intorcetta, Christian Herdrich, François Rougemont, and Philippe Couplet* (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, new series 6, 2011).

¹⁶ Romano, *Impressions de Chine*, 234-235.

¹⁷ John Witek, *Controversial Ideas in China and Europe: A Biography of Jean-François Foucquet, S.J. (1665-1741)* (Rome: Institutum Historicum S.I., 1982), 62.

Due to the specific background of the French nationals, the China Jesuit mission entered the Age of Enlightenment which also led to new approaches to the study of an evolving “canon.”

Jesuit narratives provided “evidences from China”¹⁸ that customs, religious traditions, and political systems observed in Europe were a product of history rather than being inscribed in nature, and (most importantly) that remarkable civilizational achievements could take shape and evolve on bases other than those of the Mediterranean and European civilizations. Confucianism, in particular, provided the model of a “civil religion” based on reason and as a guarantor of social order without being bound to the dogmas of the Christian religion. Descriptions of Chinese political and technological practices similarly deconstruct the codes of Western knowledge. Said otherwise, a China-generated shift in *episteme* questioned the consistency of spheres of knowledge (biblical chronology, logic, and metaphysics, the distinction between human wisdom and biblical revelation) that were previously thought unbreakable from the faith being proclaimed.

The Figurist project can be read as an exploration of the linguistic and sapiential resources proper to China in order to establish a *meta-language* transcribing the beliefs and knowledge of humankind. One of the “mathematicians of the King,” Joachim Bouvet, corresponded with Leibniz and suggested to him the connection between the binary system of arithmetic and the hexagrams of the *Yijing* (*The Classic of Mutations*).¹⁹ In the view of Bouvet, the hexagrams that are at the basis of the divination system expounded by the *Yijing* provided the model upon which to establish a kind of universal meta-language, an algebra of realities. Said otherwise, Bouvet was not limiting himself to mathematics: “Figurism” was essentially a search for correspondences between the Chinese classics and the Bible. These correspondences were partly “syntactic” (provided by a similar understanding of cosmic and meta-cosmic patterns) and partly historical: identifying “figures” akin to the ones of the biblical narrative within the corpus of Chinese classics occupied a good part of Bouvet’s endeavors. As can be expected, his superiors made obstacles to them, but Bouvet proved to be stubborn. The controversies awakened by the Figurist movement showcase the difficulties that the traditional Christian understanding of history, other religions, morality, and the

¹⁸ Isabelle Landry-Deron, *La Preuve par la Chine: La Description de J.-B. Du Halde, jésuite, 1735* (Paris: Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2002).

¹⁹ David E. Mungello, *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for Accord* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 1977).

human mind met with when encountering civilizations such as the Chinese.²⁰ In some respects, Figurism was a “prefiguration” (so to speak) of latter-day “contextual theology,” but it also illustrates the deadlock of a literal way of reading the Bible not yet dethroned by the critical advances of the seventeenth century (the eighteenth century will register surprisingly few progresses, and biblical studies will take new impetus around the beginning of the nineteenth century). As already noted, Bouvet was carried away by his enthusiasm for the *Yijing*: he had found there a “key applicable to all sciences”: theology, philosophy, and science were to be unified by the use of a common code or language, the one that the “figures” (*xiang*) of the hexagrams were patterning. These images were “the writing system used by scholars before the Flood.”²¹ Leibniz’s quest for a universal language was certainly at least partly triggered by such a claim. It is true that a propensity to engage in “linguistic alchemy” is a characteristic of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century *Zeitgeist*. The endeavor found a father figure in Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), who based part of his extrapolations on information he collected from China-based Jesuits. Concretely, the legendary figure of Fuxi (to whom Chinese mythology attributes decisive cultural inventions) was identified by some Figurists with Enoch; similarly, in the first five Chinese Emperors, a *typos* of Christ was unearthed. Figurists also detected in the *Yijing* the doctrine of the three ages of the world, and in the *Daodejing* (*The Classic of the Way and its Virtue*) *vestigia* of the Trinity.

Joseph de Prémare (1666-1736) well represents the Figurists’ hermeneutic. One of his works, a Latin manuscript with long quotations in Chinese, completed in Canton and dated 1724, was eventually published in a French translation in 1878. Its title clearly states its intent: *Remains of the main Christian dogmas, taken from the ancient Chinese books*. This quest for divine *vestigia*, typical of every enterprise of natural theology, heads back to the source:

All the *jing* [classics] come back to the *Yijing* [*Book of Mutations*] as the streams go back to their source. ... It is necessary to reduce to a common principle [“chef unique”] all the doctrines that can be contained in the *jing*. Whoever finds a way to bring all these books

²⁰ Claudia von Collani, *P. Joachim Bouvet, S.J. – Sein Leben und Sein Werk* (Sankt Augustin: Steyler Verlag, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XVII, 1985); Witek, *Controversial Ideas*.

²¹ Letter of Bouvet to Leibniz of February 28 1698, quoted in Mungello, *Leibniz and Confucianism*, 314.

back to a coherent system of doctrines will have found their true meaning. ... [At the same time,] the knowledge of the true doctrine of the *jing* is entirely lost among the Chinese.²²

Quoting various Chinese authorities who meditated over the mysteries hidden in the Chinese classics, Prémare concludes:

One can say with a very great probability that all the *jing* relate to a holy and divine personage as their only object. His virtues, his merits, the benefaction he brings, his mysteries, his holy law, his reign, his glory, even more his very works are reported in these books in a way that is obscure for the Chinese, but very clear for us who know Jesus Christ.²³

The incapacity of Chinese commentators to proceed to such identification, asserts Prémare, reminds one of the Jewish commentators who did not want to discern the scriptures' "true meaning." However, Chinese interpreters, Prémare recognizes,

are not entirely to be disdained: (1) because quite often they cling to the natural meaning of the text and assert many good things, perhaps without understanding what they say. (2) They can be of great help to criticize different authors. (3) From their very errors and their contradictions, the truth can sometimes be drawn; thus, poisons are used to compose excellent remedies.²⁴

In the course of this work and in his other manuscripts, Prémare, notwithstanding the obvious shortcomings of the objective and method he propounds, proves himself to be a keen and astute reader of the whole Chinese classical corpus as well as a distinguished grammarian. Let us note that contemporary Chinese scholars show special sensitivity to the fact that sinology, both as a

²² *Vestiges des principaux dogmes chrétiens, tirés des anciens livres chinois, avec reproduction des textes chinois, par le P. de Prémare, jésuite, ancien missionnaire en Chine: Traduits du latin, accompagnés de différents compléments et remarques par MM. A. Bonnetty et Paul Perny* (Paris: Bureau des Annales de philosophie Chrétienne, 1878), 28-30. The interpretation of Chinese narratives according to biblical *topoi* extends beyond Figurism. See the analysis of a Christ-like figure of Chinese antiquity as commented by a number of missionaries in Roman Malek, "The Christian Carrière of King Cheng-Tang" in *Miscellanea Asiatica, Mélanges en l'honneur de Françoise Aubin*, eds. Denise Aigle et al. (Sankt Augustin: Steyler Verlag, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series LXI, 2010), 719-752.

²³ Prémare, *Vestiges des principaux dogmes chrétien*, 47.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

corpus of knowledge and as a hermeneutical endeavor, was somehow born from the comparative reading of the classics endeavored with the Jesuits in dialogue and sometimes conflict with the Chinese literati. Already toward the end of the seventies of the last century, the reevaluation of the first generations of Jesuits had started to take place.²⁵ Later on, some Chinese scholars would embark on resolutely positive evaluations of Jesuit influence on China's thought development.²⁶ The hermeneutical interpretation of the encounter between Confucianism and Christianity, from the publication of Ricci's *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* onward, is a topic of particular interest,²⁷ and, more generally, the "comparative study of Classics" as rooted in such tradition is generating a growing body of literature.

Textual Encounters and Contemporary Settings

Throughout the historical sequence that (maybe in too cursory a fashion) I summarized above, different missionary strategies were put into motion.²⁸ The first one, oriented to the Chinese, was to offer an interpretation of the Chinese classics grounded in the content of the Western faith and gnoseology that were concurrently and progressively introduced to the literati, this in order to demonstrate that the second "basket" confirmed but also complemented the first and had an authoritative value when it came to the knowledge of humankind's final destiny. Matteo Ricci's apologetics belongs to this approach. A second, complementary strategy addressed itself to Europe and Christianity, acclimating the Chinese classics so as to bridge the gap

²⁵ Paola Calanca, *La Chine populaire face aux jésuites (1582-1723): Le début d'une réévaluation historique* (MA thesis, Paris, INALCO, 1988).

²⁶ Li Tiangang, "Chinese Renaissance: The Role of Early Jesuits in China," in *China and Christianity, Burdened Past, Hopeful Future*, eds. Stephen Huhalley Jr. and Xiaoxin Wu (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 117-126.

²⁷ Sun Xiangyang, *Mingmo tianzhujiao yu ruxue de jiaoliu he chongtu (Exchanges and Conflicts between Catholicism and Confucianism in Late Ming Period)* (Taipei: Wenjin Press, 1992); Liu Yunhua, *Quanshi de yuanhuan (The Hermeneutic Circle)* (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2005); Li Tiangang, *Kuawenhua de quanshi (Intercultural Hermeneutics)* (Shanghai: Xinxing Press, 2007); Yang Huilin, *China, Christianity, and the Question of Culture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

²⁸ For an analysis of missionary textual strategies, starting with a specific narrative thread, see Nicolas Standaert, *The Intercultural Weaving of Historical Texts. Chinese and European Stories about Emperor Ku and His Concubines* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

between them and the Western Creed and *episteme*. Resources found in the “natural theology” tradition helped to suggest venues of conciliation between Christianity and the Chinese world. An opposite strategy – the third of the set here discussed – was to approach the Chinese classics as being in basic opposition to Christian orthodoxy, so as to conduct the missionary enterprise in a way that would ensure terminological, dogmatic, and ritual integrity. Longobardo’s *Memoir* is an illustration of this strategy, based on a personal reading of the Chinese classics and also on “fieldwork” among literati. Its merit, when read today, is to provide us with a direct grasp on the “spiritual theology” proper to Chinese converts, Xu Guangqi notably. Unfortunately, Longobardo’s lexical scruples and scholastic turn of mind made him unable to appreciate the richness of a synthesis still in the making. Our fourth strategy is exemplified by the Figurist project, which was nurturing the dream of coming up with a meta-language through which to reconcile the varieties of idioms encoding divine Revelation. As such, Figurism was addressing itself indifferently to Chinese and Western audiences, though it was never in a position to speak meaningfully to the first.

The second, third, and fourth strategies were directed by concerns and methods that all contributed to the initial shaping of the sinological endeavor. Although it aimed at the Chinese audience, the first strategy played a decisive part: it obliged missionaries to make the study of Chinese classics the basis of their studies and their apologetics; moreover, as missionaries were observing the reactions of their Chinese audience, they were consequently shaping and reshaping their own understanding of the Chinese canon and, more largely, of the extent their faith could accommodate the surrounding culture. Taken as a whole, these reading strategies have durably influenced Western sinology as well as theological and philosophical interpretations given to the diversity of world cultures.

It remains most difficult to offer an account of the reading strategies developed by Chinese scholars.²⁹ They obviously varied according to the degree to which the Christian faith was accepted or rejected.³⁰ A wish to

²⁹ See Nicolas Standaert, “The Study of the Classics by Late Ming Christian Converts,” in *Cheng – All in Sincerity: Festschrift in Honor of Monika Ubelhör*, eds. Denise Gimpel and Melanie Hanz (Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2001), 19-40; Pan Feng-chuan, “Xing shen xiangyi, dao qiang cheng: Zai si Xu Guangqi yu kua wenhua duihua (Xu Guangqi and Intercultural Exchange),” *Daofeng (Logos and Pneuma)* 43 (2015): 209-233. See also Yu Liu, *Harmonious Disagreement: Matteo Ricci and His Closest Chinese Friends* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015).

³⁰ See especially Gernet, *Chine et Christianisme*. Some of the anti-Christian evidences Gernet presents have been put into larger context; see for instance Sangkeun

reinterpret Confucianism according to its “original” inspiration and, consequently, mixed feelings toward the Neo-Confucian synthesis (some expressions of which may have been seen as contributing to the destruction of the Empire’s moral fabric) probably contributed to fostering a kind of alliance, of complicity between some literati, who subsequently often converted, and the Jesuits. The agreement reached between these literati and the Jesuits also contributed to forging the tenets of sinology at its birth. Our understanding of the converts’ reading strategies could be furthered by analyzing the various hermeneutics put into play by the tradition of *jingxue* [study of the classics] as well as the degree to which literati were exposed to Buddhist-inspired modes of reading. The interest given to scientific and practical knowledge also influenced the reception and understanding of Christianity and the Western canon, which were, as one should stress again, only very progressively discovered.

Whatever the differences and even oppositions just noted, the cross-hermeneutic that Ricci, Longobardo, the Figurists, and converted Chinese scholars endeavored should be considered as a whole: their interactions changed somehow the position of all the interlocutors vis-à-vis the canons of both China and the West. And, beyond the diversity of theological and catechetical approaches promoted by missionaries, personal and intellectual displacements could not but challenge acquired frames of thought, relationships to founding texts, and assessments of the other’s canon. Somehow, internal disagreements needed to go full swing for these displacements to produce longlasting effects. The gradual assimilation of scriptural and scientific material brought by the missionaries would similarly transform the Chinese *episteme* expressed and transmitted by the Confucian canon and commentaries. This twofold breakthrough was not being theorized, at least not in our terms. However, it did take place. And the awareness of such a breakthrough opens up a space for new displacements.

The deadlock where Figurism found itself forbade for some time to further the inchoate attempts at “comparative theology” that the movement triggered. As a matter of fact, even today, comparative theology can be considered to be a new discipline. It entails recognizing one’s anchorage within a given religious tradition before investigating another, exploring the similarities and differences between the two, before returning to one’s tradition somehow “transformed,” bringing in questions and insights. One’s religious commitment thus needs to be clearly acknowledged, as needs to be acknowl-

Kim, *Strange Names of God: The Missionary Translation of the Divine Name and the Chinese Responses to Matteo Ricci’s ‘Shangti’ in Late Ming China, 1583-1644* (New York: Peter Lang, “Studies in Biblical Literature, 70,” 2004).

edged the context and background from which the theologian initially operates. Doing comparative theology is akin to operating dialogically, as one unceasingly circulates from one's own tradition to the one with which a privileged, transformative relationship is taking shape.³¹ Raimon Panikkar had already expressed the approach to dialogue upon which such displacement takes place:

Dialogue seeks truth by trusting the other, just as dialectics pursues truth by trusting the order of things, the value of reason and weighty arguments. Dialectics is the optimism of reason; dialogue is the optimism of the heart. Dialectics believes it can approach truth by relying on the objective consistency of ideas. Dialogue believes it can advance along the way to truth by relying on the subjective consistency of the dialogical partners. Dialogue does not seek primarily to be duo-logue, a duet of two *logoi*, which would still be dialectical; but a *dia-logos*, a piercing of the logos to attain a truth that transcends it.³²

Probably, Matteo Ricci, anchored as he was in the optimism proper to the Renaissance man, would not have distinguished between the optimism of the heart and the optimism of reason the way Panikkar endeavors to do. However, one senses in the paragraph just quoted issues and concerns similar to the ones that agitated both missionaries and Chinese literati. All the strategies that we previously identified were engaging the Christian creed into new challenges and venues; the terms of the questions that were arising were largely defined by the Confucian canon (and not the Buddhist or Taoist ones, as is more often the case nowadays when similar endeavors take place). In some respect, not only did sinology allow for these first, inchoate attempts at comparative theology, but also the questions raised by such attempts defined the way sinology started to delineate its field and methods. Somehow, a “hermeneutical triangle” was drawn by the correlative shaping of sinological knowledge, the comparative reading of classics, and preliminary attempts at doing comparative theology.

Such a hermeneutic triangle was left largely unexploited during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Its exploration, from the 1930s onward, was attempted again by some modern Chinese philoso-

³¹ Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden, MA-Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

³² Raimon Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 243.

phers through ways and means utterly different from the ones privileged by their predecessors. The Western canon that these philosophers were dealing with had largely changed, both modified and enriched by nineteenth-century philosophers. In contrast, the frontiers of the Chinese canon had remained strikingly constant. It was rather its relevancy that had become an object of debate and anguish.

Still, exceptions to the “decay of the comparative endeavor” undergone during one century and a half can be easily found, notably in the work of the great translators. Legge’s dealings with the Taoist classics is a case in point, brilliantly analyzed by Girardot:

The issue of Taoism at the end of the nineteenth century was twofold. From one perspective, it could be carefully defined, classified and tamed as a textual object or sacred book-religion by Müller and Legge’s relatively reverent and civil methods of comparison. Yet in the sense suggested by Giles’s more overtly suspicious, combative and non-comparative approach, it could be made to disappear altogether as a ‘religion’ by being reduced to other fragmented, though ostensibly more ‘objective’ and ‘natural’, philological and historical categories. ... Whereas before, as a missionary, [Legge], as the discoverer of a Chinese Sky God, had been viciously attacked by other more conservative missionaries on theological grounds, now, as a professional scholar, he was assaulted for the same findings by sinologists who were profoundly disturbed by the ambiguity and fragmentary nature of the textual evidence. ... Sinology after Leggism was mostly satisfied with what was taken as the manifest secularity and rationality of the classical Confucian canon – principles that were ironically also based largely on Legge’s translation of the classic.³³

What was indeed at stake in Legge’s attempt was its ultimate feasibility and legitimacy: could one associate into the same “hermeneutical triangle”³⁴ sinology, the study of classics, and comparative theology? The boldness of this attempt could only alienate him from the majority of the missionaries as

³³ Norman J. Girardot, “‘Finding the Way’: James Legge and the Victorian Invention of Taoism,” *Religion* 29, no. 2 (1999): 116-117.

³⁴ I have justified and developed this expression in “Sur un triangle herméneutique – Sinologie, théologie et étude comparée des classiques,” in Michel Espagne and Jin Guang-yao, eds., *Conférences chinoises de la rue d’Ulm* (Paris: Démopolis, “Quaero,” 2017), 379-422.

well as from the quasi-totality of the sinologists. Till today, it is clear that the rules, style, and limits of sinological inquiry prevailing in academia continue to confirm the principled exclusion of such attempts. However, debates around the object and methods of sinology may be progressively relaxing the principle of “non-comparison” that implicitly defines the “scientific character” of the field. For if sinology is less a “science” (as it has no method of its own) than a “robust engagement” with its “subject” (not its “object”), then a reflexive reappraisal of its origins may gain renewed relevancy:

I speak of ‘New Sinology’ as being descriptive of a ‘robust engagement with contemporary China’ and indeed with the Sinophone world in all of its complexity, be it local, regional or global. It affirms a conversation and intermingling that also emphasizes strong scholastic underpinnings in both the classical and modern Chinese language and studies, at the same time as encouraging an ecumenical attitude in relation to a rich variety of approaches and disciplines, whether they be mainly empirical or more theoretically inflected. In seeking to emphasize innovation within sinology by recourse to the word ‘new,’ it is nonetheless evident that I continue to affirm the distinctiveness of sinology as a mode of intellectual inquiry.³⁵

Such focus on the dialogical nature of sinology has implications for our topic. The archeology of sinology may reveal the continuous relevancy and fecundity of its initial stage. This can be the case only if sinology reflects on its premises and its goals. The main point lies in the fact that the locus of truth is set in histories and cultures, a setting to which only dialogue gives access. In such a setting, dialogic exchange is no longer a mechanical, “objective” process; rather, it centers around establishing relationships between “others”: exchanges imply that the very act of listening is a transformative process. It cannot be separated from the one through which truth is reached.

It so happens that, nowadays, dialogical exchanges often refer to two or several “canons,” which define the way a culture determines its setting in the world. This means that the comparative study of the classics is an integral part of the dialogic endeavor that develops among cultures. At the same time, meeting with a variety of classics is akin to being confronted with a diversity of styles. The dialogues that take place between Confucius, Zhuangzi, Jesus, the Indian Sages, Shakyamuni, Socrates, or Seneca and their disciples, their adversaries, and successive generations of readers borrow from an astonishing diversity of rhetorical expressions. The realization of the fact that

³⁵ G. R. Barmé, *On New Sinology* (2005), http://ciw.anu.edu.au/new_sinology/.

“dialogue” does not come in one shape obliges us to reconsider what it entails. Ultimately, dialogue should be approached as a *regulatory idea*, which three principles govern: (a) The variety of dialogical styles forbids us to establish one of them as a “standard.” We need to study them according to the “family resemblances” that groups together these dialogical styles and also account for their differences.³⁶ (b) Dialogical styles developed in different contexts meet and transform each other throughout time and space. (c) At the same time, as these dialogical styles meet and evolve, the modalities of their encounter are necessarily modified: the “common habitation” of the earth triggers a “dialogical meta-style” that the confluence of all dialogic styles contributes to shaping.³⁷

Conclusion

Canons are linked into an inchoate and yet continuous conversation. Obviously, the methods used for such linkage are utterly different from the ones experienced by the first sinologists: the dialogic reading of our classics has become a global conversation. Today, dialogue is continuously nurtured by narratives that sometimes divide and sometimes gather the disciples of Confucius, Laozi, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohamed.³⁸

However, these narratives also anchor the global into the local: specific dialogic endeavors foster, first and foremost, local communities. Chloë Starr opens up interesting perspectives as to the relationship between text and

³⁶ Here, I extend to “dialogue” an expression that Wittgenstein famously applied to “game” (and various forms of dialogue could be legitimately defined as constituting as many “language games”): “I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than ‘family resemblances’; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and crisscross in the same way. And I shall say: ‘games’ form a family.” See *Philosophical Investigations*, no. 67.

³⁷ See Benoît Vermander, “Scholasticism, Dialogue and Universalism,” *Universitas (Zhaxue yu wenhua)* 37, no. 11 (2010): 23-39; “Dialogue, cultures et universalité,” *Gregorianum* 96, no. 2 (2015): 303-318.

³⁸ At the same period when the encounter discussed in this contribution takes place, the meeting between Confucianism and Islamic thought within the Chinese world constitutes another fascinating case in point. See notably Sachito Murata, William C. Chittick, and Tu Weiming, *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, 2009); J. D. Frankel, *Rectifying God's Name: Liu Zhi's Confucian Translation of Monotheism and Islamic Law* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

practice in the Chinese way of reading classics and, consequently, in Chinese theological tradition:

Chinese theology, like Chinese text reading, is essentially relational: this is not the virtuoso performance of a scholastic, where the reader, or students, follows along the steps to their logical conclusion, but a more open process, where the reader, conceived as a peer, is invited to make connections from within a shared intranet of allusion. A common heritage in the Chinese classics and a reading pattern that proceeds via a series of implicit associations in the mind of the reader create a more participative and open-ended way of reading and of engaging with theology. ... Just as Christianity was being transformed into Chinese forms by local adaptation and innovation in communities and patterns of prayers built around a church or mission house, so Chinese Christian theology underwent its own process of transformation into a local textual religion.³⁹

In the example provided here, a local form of relationality progressively becomes a model for a global form of doing theology. Within the narrow space of a local community rooted in a certain way of conversing and living together, global trends are shaped and ultimately transmitted. In many respects, the encounter between Jesuits and Chinese literati was still “local.” But the way it was lived and furthered made it one of the loci through which to think anew on the way to shape global exchanges and endeavors.

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³⁹ Chloë Starr, *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 3 and 40.

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China, the Jesuits, and Foucault: Tacit Connections in the Transformation of Seventeenth-Century Western Europe through Educational Practices

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Introduction

French philosopher Michel Foucault perhaps unwittingly helps us understand the influence Chinese educational practices exercised on the development of what he thought was a characteristically modern and Western European phenomenon. In *The History of Sexuality*, he described this phenomenon as a transformation of the exercise of power from taking to shaping.¹ Shaping is understood as a relational channeling of human attitudes and activities directed to implementing socially productive outcomes.

This essay will suggest that an understanding of Chinese educational practices, as interpreted by Western observers, is a tacit element that contributed to the transformation of Western Europe in the seventeenth century. The mediators of this influence were seventeenth-century missionaries of the Society of Jesus, who, in letters addressed to Western audiences, provided insightful commentary on the rich complement of practices for shaping bodily attitudes and mental aptitudes they observed in the Chinese educational system.

The interaction between East and West was one of Professor Vincent Shen's major intellectual preoccupations. The interaction most certainly

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¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 137.

involved exchanges between Chinese and European scholars on matters of doctrinal interpretation. This paper focuses on the importance of practices. It concerns how Western observers interpreted Chinese educational practices and intimates that a far greater convergence than we realize took shape beyond differences in doctrine. But what does Foucault have to do with this?

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault provided an analysis of the factors at stake in channeling productive societal forces. His analysis of these factors and the relational conception of power that underlies them are perhaps some of the most influential parts of the Foucauldian corpus.

I will be drawing on the factors that Foucault identified in the first two sections of Part Three of *Discipline and Punish* – “Docile bodies” and “The means of correct training” – to examine records of how Jesuit missionaries interpreted Chinese educational practices in their first encounters with Chinese civilization between the late sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries. Some of the factors of relational power Foucault identified are already present in some of these writings. All of them are at work in observations on educational practices in seventeenth-century China that the Portuguese Jesuit missionary Alvaro Semedo composed by the 1630s.

Foucault and Discipline

In what are perhaps among the most insightful parts of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault proposed an analysis of the process of social shaping of individual productive forces in schools, barracks, hospitals, and workshops.² Individuals are distributed in space through enclosure, partitioning, and the coding of locations with specific functions. Enclosure, partitioning, and functional coding contribute to effecting a ranking among individuals.³ Furthermore, the process of shaping reaches into the temporal sequencing of individual actions, the coordination of gestures, and the correlation of body and tool use.⁴

Discipline also elaborates a process of assessing competency in the results achieved through the spatial and temporal marshaling of activity. Assessment relies on an analysis of skills to be imparted into discrete elements and an analytical separation of training episodes from testing. The process culminates in the ritual of the examination, which ensures a verifiable

² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 140.

³ *Ibid.*, 141-149.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 149-154.

procedure for ranking individuals and making distinctions among them in terms of aptitudes.⁵

We can summarize Foucault's proposed analysis of the techniques of power aimed at production rather than subtraction, which he grouped into three collections of factors for the purpose of exposition. The three groups of factors are the organization of space, the organization of time, and training for skills. The latter is intended to convey a contrast with a holistic, analogical mode of learning Foucault attributed to apprenticeships in guilds. These factors are summarized for ease of reference below. They are identical to the ones listed in Table 1.

A: Organization of space.⁶

1. Enclosure.
2. Partitioning.
3. Functional coding of space for dedicated activity.
4. Ranking, organization of space to display seriation.

B: Organization of time.⁷

1. Organization of time, establishment of rhythms and cycles of repetition.
2. Temporal elaboration of acts, analysis of gesture and movement (including measurement).
3. Correlation of body and gesture.
4. Body-object articulation.
5. Exhaustive use, filling in of time.

C: Training for skills – which Foucault labels “the organization of geneses.”⁸

1. Division into segments; distinction between training and practicing what one has trained for; distinction into levels of skill acquisition – beginners, non-beginners.
2. Analysis of training from simple to complex skills.
3. Examination that tests for achievement, provides consistency for all trainees, and differentiates the abilities of individuals.

⁵ Ibid., 156-160.

⁶ Ibid., 141-147.

⁷ Ibid., 149-154.

⁸ Ibid., 156-158.

Foucault described these factors as “‘discoveries’ of the eighteenth century.”⁹ Yet, as will be shown in the next section of this paper, they can be identified in Jesuit missionaries’ interpretation of what they saw in late-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth-century China.

Relational Power in Chinese Education as Seen by Jesuit Missionaries

There is no reference to studies of the Chinese educational system in Foucault’s works. In any case, there is none in *Discipline and Punish*. Yet, there is an uncanny correlation between the factors Foucault identified in disciplinary training and aspects of education that the earliest foreign missionaries to China discussed in their letters and reports in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. It was only in the nineteenth century that French scholars, such as Edouard Biot, began relying on primary Chinese sources to discuss the Chinese educational system.¹⁰ By then, scholars realized that the Chinese educational system was far more ancient than what the first Western reports could have intimated. Their earliest information was secondary and came from Jesuit missionaries.

The following survey will be limited to a sampling of Jesuit observers prior to the end of the seventeenth century. The reason for this selection is that Foucault dated the beginnings of relational power implemented through discipline to a transformation that took place in the West in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If the source of the kind of disciplinary procedures Foucault analyzed were Western European, the Jesuit missionaries of the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, who were the first to write about educational methods in China for a Western readership, would have been well-positioned to identify similarities with processes of education in the West. The fact that they did not do so is telling.

Nicolas Trigault’s *Histoire de l’expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine entreprise par les pères de la Compagnie de Jésus* (*History of the Christian Expedition to the Kingdom of China by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus*), is based on Matteo Ricci’s memoirs, and so it provides us with a very early glimpse of how Jesuit missionaries interpreted the Chinese education system, in the sense that we see what struck them as notable. What especially struck them is the organization of space devoted to the process of examina-

⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁰ Edouard Biot, *Essai sur l’instruction publique en Chine et de la corporation des lettrés, depuis les anciens temps jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Benjamin Duprat, 1845).

tion and the cellular isolation of candidates.¹¹ Trigault's rendering of Ricci's account of the exam procedure tends to focus relatively more on the nature of the questions posed in comparison with later descriptions by foreign observers. Yet we can see the preoccupation with how a functional coding of space for a dedicated activity, the examination, is connected to the way space can be enclosed and partitioned. The factors of enclosure, partitioning, and coding of space for a function, as in the cells in which examinees are confined, are tied exclusively to describing the institution of the examination for obtaining degrees. These are labeled factors A1, A2, A3, and C3 in the corresponding Foucauldian analysis of discipline (Table 1).

Yves Mathurin Tréaudet de Querbeuf's *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères* (*Edifying and Curious Letters, Written from Foreign Missions*) is a compilation of letters written by Jesuit missionaries, the earliest being from 1653. Thus, the material is later than Trigault's. The description of the process of education it contains seems to be mostly similar to what appears in Trigault.¹² Nevertheless, even though the account given is superficial, we find that it touches on enclosure, partitioning, and the coding of space for a dedicated activity, mostly in relation to the process of preparing for examinations. Querbeuf's compilation provides, however, somewhat more detail on the gradual process of training than is available in Trigault's record. Querbeuf's compilation mentions a fact that will receive greater attention from Alvaro Semedo, which is the analysis of how pupils are trained from simple to more complex skills, for instance, in becoming familiar with the most commonly used characters before moving on to classic texts.¹³ This detail shows growing attention to how Chinese educational procedures incorporated an analysis of the skills a student needed to master into simple and complex. To the factors in the Foucauldian analysis identified in Trigault, we can add the factor of analysis of training from simple to complex skills, C2 (Table 1).

¹¹ Nicolas Trigault, *Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine entreprise par les pères de la Compagnie de Jésus* (*History of the Christian Expedition to the Kingdom of China by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus*), trans. David Floris de Riquebourg-Trigault (Lille: Pierre de Rache, 1617), 29.

¹² Yves Mathurin Marie Tréaudet de Querbeuf, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères* (*Edifying and Curious Letters, Written from Foreign Missions*), vol. 24 (Paris: J. G. Merigot Le jeune, 1781), 122-135.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

It is, however, with Portuguese Jesuit missionary Alvaro Semedo's observations, in his *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China*,¹⁴ that Foucault's analysis of the factors of relational, disciplinary power displays the most remarkable concordance. Semedo's *History*, composed in the late 1630s and first published in Spanish in 1642, devotes several chapters to education in China. Because all of the factors that Foucault identified in disciplinary training can be found in Semedo's observations, they will be identified in parentheses for ease of tracking and correlation to entries in Table 1.

Indeed, in Chapter 7, Part I, Semedo identifies the stages of training in reading. From the earliest stage, pupils are introduced to easier books containing precepts of moral behavior and examples. A few months later, they learn classical texts and characters and their glosses by rote. In a third stage, they learn their master's explanation of the texts. Semedo thus brings to light the distinction of skills by level of instruction, from beginner to intermediate, to more advanced (C1).

Additional specifications are provided in how skills are practiced, notably by the positioning of the pupil's body with respect to the object that is being used in the learning process. For instance, a pupil, in learning a text by rote, is made to repeat it with his back turned to the text (B4). No respite is allowed, and the entire day is given over to studies with very few breaks (B5). Furthermore, the importance of repetition in the acquisition of a skill is emphasized. Pupils must write something every day, a practice that establishes a rhythm of repetition (B1).

Semedo attends to the process by which learning to write characters is thought out. He notes that pupils write on a thin piece of paper placed over their master's script. They learn by imitation to form characters that they can see through the opaque sheet of paper. They are then taught to produce, side by side, a line copied from their teacher's script, which they can trace through the opaque training paper, and the same line, which they write on a fresh piece of paper without tracing an underlying original. In this way, they learn to write like the teacher. This form of training presupposes a fine analysis of gesture and bodily comportment in relation to the use of paper, ink, and brush, as the writing of Chinese script has an element of gestural performance (B3, B4). The process is scaffolded in time, from the direct copying of a pattern to the reproduction of a pattern through gestural memory (B2).

¹⁴ Alvaro Semedo, *The History of that Great and Renowned Monarchy of China* (London: E. Tyler for J. Crook, 1655).

The process shows that the training was designed in such a way that it implied an analysis of skill formation into a stage of first acquisition and a stage of practice (C1).

The skill learned and practiced is tested in an examination. Semedo notes that what is assessed is the shape of the characters copied and the reading of written material. He also observes that a candidate can fail for producing misshapen characters before being allowed to progress to the oral delivery, thus that the examination is a means of creating a differentiation among the abilities of individuals (C3).

A further delineation of the scaffolding occurs in the next stages of the pupil's instruction. Students are introduced to the rules of composition after they have gained some proficiency in forming characters and some familiarity with books. Their first task is to produce an ordered composition from a disordered example. They then graduate to expanding an abbreviated example. Finally, they are given a task that they will encounter in the examination, which is to enlarge upon a given theme (C1, C2, C3).

Every three years, the best compositions written by successful students are published. Upcoming cohorts put much effort into memorizing these compositions in preparation for their own examination. This procedure ensures consistency in performance, as past examples are held up for emulation. It also allows the singular achievements of distinguished students to be recognized (C3).

Semedo returns to factors concerning the organization of time and space in discussing access to education for less advantaged students. He notes that there are schools for poorer children. Their program is much the same as for those who are better off. The program of the entire day is strictly regulated, and little time is allowed for activities other than those in which students are being schooled. The schooling period is punctuated by only three yearly holidays, amounting to, apparently, less than a month (B1, B5).

Semedo also observes that, in the case of pupils of more modest means, families pool their resources to hire a master. Instruction is conducted not in any one of the families' homes, but in a different house, which is not too distant. This, according to Semedo, is to prevent distraction. A space privileged for learning and separated from the space of everyday living is clearly distinguished (A1).

He goes on to record that students that have passed the examination and are no longer under a master form their own study groups, practice writing on a theme, and discuss their work with one another. Semedo must have noticed that this implies that students internalized the process of learning they had been taught, even if they did not pursue formal education to a higher level.

They were no longer beginners but were capable of practicing the skills they had been trained in (C1).

As is the case with other Western observers of the Chinese educational system, Semedo showed a particular fascination with the arrangements made for examinations, notably spatial and geographical patterns of organization: There are special locations and institutions where examiners and examinees meet (A1), and there is a hierarchy among these institutions, from those in smaller towns to those in the largest urban centers (A4).

Institutions in which examinations are held have a dedicated architectural plan, including a succession of inner courts reserved for a specific activity and coded for importance. Separate chambers for examinees are situated around an inner court. Each chamber is supervised by a guard. A narrow path from a tower leads to the chambers, which the examinees occupy. The tower allows oversight to be exercised over all the separate chambers occupied by examinees (A1, A2, A3, A4).

Semedo's fascination with the examination procedure continues in Chapter 8, which goes into even more detail about how examinations are conducted. In fact, of all the topics pertaining to education, it is the one to which Semedo devotes the most attention. Chapter 8 of *History* outlines the process beginning with the non-degreed student at the provincial level. Candidates must pass several exams to qualify to sit for the main examination. Even those who attain a degree by successfully passing an exam might later be deprived of their status because of improper behavior. Thus, training for learning is not separated from the exercise of authority in society. It is continually linked with it, as privilege gained through successful education can be rescinded (C3).

Having brought up how the process of education is seamlessly embedded in the exercise of power in society, Semedo's interest is drawn to some aspects of the conduct of examinations at the higher levels of performance. The theme for the essay that candidates must compose, he reports, is inscribed in large letters on tablets, which hang at the crossways that link the chambers in which each examinee is bunked together with a guard. This spatial arrangement allows all candidates to find out about the theme at the same time, without moving out of their chamber, which is not allowed for the duration of the examination (A1, A2, A3). The disposition of the chambers and their orientation and location within the larger compound give an architectural rendering of the various layers of control and surveillance involved in conducting the process of examination (A4), successful passage of which gives the examinee the privilege to acquire a role in the maintenance of the system of social control that the examination validates (C3).

Social hierarchy and organization are permanently linked to the process of education. Thus, Chinese society, by the time the Jesuit missionaries came to observe it, had already undergone the transformation that Foucault thought only began in the seventeenth century.

From what one can see in this brief survey, Foucault's factors capture very closely the salient elements contained in the reports that the earliest European observers of the Chinese education system composed. The factors for the implementation of discipline Foucault identified read as if they were tailor-made to convey what the Chinese education system was like in the eyes of the Jesuit observers. The Jesuit missionaries' interpretation of what they saw in China and the practices they brought back with them form an implicit plan for understanding the organization of labor that Foucault identified as characteristic of the seventeenth-century Western shift to a productive and relational form of power.

Conclusion

It cannot be the case that a productive and relational organization of power was something that came about in the seventeenth century. It was observed in seventeenth-century China. However, the educational system observed was already profoundly steeped in a tradition that reached at least as far back as the seventh century CE.¹⁵ It is reasonable to infer that a productive, relational conception and organization of power emerged substantially earlier than the seventeenth century and is not peculiarly Western European.

It also cannot be a matter of pure coincidence that Foucault's analysis of training practices displays such a notable congruence with the way that seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries described and interpreted educational techniques in China. Among Foucault's merits is that he has brought to our attention, directly and indirectly, some things that we no longer observe, perhaps by force of habit. What he has brought directly to our attention is that the transformation of Western societies that began in the seventeenth century was a remarkable exercise in social engineering.

What Foucault's analysis of relational power allows us to see indirectly is that this transformation did not occur in a vacuum. It took place in the context of interaction with a different civilization. We might tend to think of

¹⁵ Linda Walton, "Schools and Learning in Imperial China," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Asian History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), <http://oxfordre.com/asianhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277,727-e-204>.

the impact of interactions between China and Western Europe as minimal and, at best, a subject matter for specialists in narrow disciplines. But, for Western societies, the impact of these interactions was profound. It can be suggested that the information about the Chinese educational system that members of the Society of Jesus diffused across the European continent provided a toolkit for instituting a process of tacit social transformation. Undoubtedly, ongoing industrialization and the advent of statistical thinking played a part in the transformations that Western and Central Europe underwent. But seventeenth-century China was neither industrialized nor a source of statistical methods.

The interaction between Western Europe and China perhaps impacted Europe before it affected China. It affected Western Europe by offering a model of how to implement a large-scale system of educational training, which could then be applied to different fields. The similarity of structure between Foucault's analysis of relational power and Semedo's observations on Chinese educational practices can be attributed to a cross-cultural homogenization that began in the seventeenth century, even though cross-cultural homogenization was not noticeable at the level of explicit doctrine. Foucault's analysis and Semedo's observations are joint symptoms of a process of tacit intercultural homogenization linking China and Western Europe. That is why a twentieth-century text on ways that social control began to be exercised in seventeenth-century Western Europe can be fruitfully compared to seventeenth-century letters on Chinese education.

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Factor/Source	Trigault (Before 1620)	Semedo (1640s)	Querbeuf (1650s)
Space A1: Enclosure	X	X	X
Space A2: Partitioning	X	X	X
Space A3: Coding for dedicated activity	X	X	X
Space A4: Ranking, seriation		X	
Time B1: Rhythms, cycles of repetition		X	
Time B2: Analysis of gesture and movement		X	
Time B3: Correlation body-gesture		X	
Time B4: Articulation body-object		X	
Time B5: exhaustive use, filling in		X	
Training for skills C1: Division into segments, distinction training and practice, levels of training (beginner, non-beginner)		X	
Training for skills C2: Analysis of training from simple to complex skills		X	X
Training for skills C3: Examination that tests for achievement, consistency across trainees, identification of individual aptitudes	X	X	X

Table 1. Factors of relational power: training in Foucault, 1995 and instances in reports by Jesuit observers in China in the seventeenth century.

Prospero Intorcetta, S.J. and His Contribution to Sinology

THIERRY MEYNARD*

Introduction

The sinological contribution of the Sicilian Jesuit Prospero Intorcetta (1626-1696) concerns mostly his work on the Confucian classics, and so I shall analyze and evaluate how he dealt with the Chinese sources and what methods and interpretations he used.

I shall first analyze how he studied under the Portuguese Jesuit Inácio da Costa (1603-1666) and edited the *Sapientia sinica* (1662), which presented the translation of the *Daxue* 大學, half of the *Lunyu* 論語, and a “Life of Confucius.” In this process, Intorcetta learned from da Costa, his master in Chinese studies, many methods that he continued to apply later. Next, I shall show how he revised and improved da Costa’s “Life of Confucius,” inserted into his independent work, the *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis* (1667-1669).

Next, I shall analyze his two translations of the *Zhongyong*. The first translation falls short of the standards set in the *Sapientia sinica*, and could easily be rebuked by the opponents of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610)’s missionary approach. This forced Intorcetta to revert to the standards set in the *Sapientia sinica*, improving his previous translation by adding translations of Chinese commentaries and by proposing an interpretation from the standpoint of Ignatian spirituality. Working with a group of three other Jesuits in Guangzhou, Intorcetta was able to apply successfully the same method used in the *Sapientia sinica* to the *Daxue*, the *Zhongyong* and the *Lunyu*.

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Finally, I shall deal with the Preface of the *Sinarum philosophus*, showing that the first part of the Preface was written by Intorcetta. However, the second part answers to criticisms brought by the Jesuit Longobardo and by the Dominican Domingo Navarrete (1618-1686), who both considered Confucianism as atheistic. This second part is an apology of the missionary policy of Ricci, written by three other Jesuits in Guangzhou. One of those three, Philippe Couplet (1623-1693), finally published the *Sinarum philosophus* in Paris in 1687, acknowledging the leadership of Intorcetta in the project, placing his name first among a list of four authors.

Inácio da Costa's *Sapientia sinica* as Basis for Intorcetta's Sinological Work

A Question of Authorship

Chiara Ferrara recently produced a short but well-documented study of the life and work of Intorcetta: “Prospero Intorcetta traduce Confucio,” published in the volume edited by Giusi Tamburello, *Gesuiti siciliani del '600 nel celeste impero*.¹ Ferrara mentioned a couple of times Intorcetta as “il primo traduttore europeo di Confucio” (12 and 24). In fact, Ruggieri should be credited for being the first translator of Confucius, presenting to Philip II of Spain in 1590 his translations of the *Daxue*, *Zhongyong*, and first two chapters of the *Lunyu*.²

I would like to stress here the important role of Inácio da Costa. He had arrived in China around 1632 and was stationed in Fujian (1634), Shanxi (1638), and Shaanxi (1640). Around 1659, he went back to Fujian to teach young Jesuits the *Four Books*. At that time, da Costa had been in China for around thirty years and had clearly mastered the language, having authored a few works in Chinese. Among his students was Andrea Ferrão (1625-1661), who arrived in China in 1659. The next year, under the guidance of da Costa, Ferrão transcribed the Latin translation of the first part of the *Lunyu* next to the Chinese text.³

¹ Chiara Ferrara, “Prospero Intorcetta traduce Confucio,” *Gesuiti siciliani del '600 nel celeste impero*, a cura di Giusi Tamburello (Nardo: Besa, 2014), 11-36.

² See Thierry Meynard and Roberto Villasante, *La filosofía moral de Confucio por Michele Ruggieri, S.J. – La primera traducción de las obras de Confucio al español en 1590* (Madrid: Mensajero-Sal Terrae, 2018).

³ The *Sapientia sinica* includes a preface written by Ferrão in Fuzhou and dated October 25, 1660.

A few months later, da Costa moved to Jiangxi province, where he taught four newly arrived Jesuits: Intorcetta, the Austrian Christian Herdrich (1624-1684), and two Flemish Jesuits, de Rougemont (1624-1676) and Couplet. Those four Jesuits belonged to the same generation; the eldest, Couplet, was 37 years old, and the youngest, Intorcetta, 34. Intorcetta and Herdrich knew each other quite well because they had traveled from Portugal to China on the same boat. Couplet and de Rougemont had traveled together to China.⁴ These four Jesuits were all sent to study the Chinese language in different regions south of the Yangtze River (Jiangnan 江南). De Rougemont was sent to Hangzhou to study under the Italian Jesuit Martini.⁵ Couplet was sent to Ganzhou 贛州, Jiangxi province, to study under the Macanese brother António Fernandes Cai Anduo 蔡按鐸 (1620-1670). Intorcetta was sent to Jianchang 建昌, close to Nanchang, to study under da Costa.⁶

The *Sapientia sinica*, published in 1662 in Jianchang, includes a biography of Confucius in four pages (2 fols.), a complete translation of the *Daxue* in fourteen pages (7 fols.), and a translation of the first half of the *Lunyu* in seventy-six pages (38 fols.).⁷ The American scholar Lionel Jensen rightly stresses the importance of the *Sapientia sinica* as “the first truly bilingual Chinese-Latin translation.”⁸

As we learn from Intorcetta in his preface to the *Sapientia sinica*, Couplet, Rougemont, Herdrich, and he participated in the translation.⁹ Due to the distance that separated these four Jesuits, it is possible that they communicated by way of letters in order to work together. It is also very probable that da Costa would have gathered the four young Jesuits for some kind of translation seminar in Jiangxi. da Costa would have read the *Four*

⁴ See Joseph Dehergne, *Répertoire des Jésuites de Chine de 1552 à 1800* (Rome: IHSI, 1973).

⁵ See Noël Golvers, *François de Rougemont, S.J., Missionary in Ch'ang-shu (Chiang-nan): A Study of the Account Book (1674-1676) and the Elogium* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 19.

⁶ See Liam Matthew Brockey, *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China 1579-1724* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 123.

⁷ The two copies of the *Sapientia sinica* in the ARSI (Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus) are incomplete. See Chan, *Chinese Books*, 474-477. I obtained a digital copy of the translation of the first five *juan* of the *Lunyu*, which is preserved today in the Shanghai Municipal Library (Bibliotheca major, Zi-ka-wei, M.42-00855), from the Fondazione Intorcetta.

⁸ Lionel Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 114.

⁹ “Ad lectorem,” *Sapientia sinica* (Jianchang, 1662).

Books with them, proposing orally his translation in Latin. Then, his four students would raise some difficulties in understanding the text, and da Costa would adjust his translation accordingly. Intorcetta would keep a clean copy of the translation. Intorcetta then produced the final edition, and his name is given after that one of his teacher, da Costa, on the cover of the *Sapientia sinica*, in both Latin and Chinese.¹⁰ That information is confirmed by Intorcetta in the manuscript of the *Sinarum philosophus*, where he mentioned that he had studied with da Costa the Chinese language and that, in the third year, the *Tahio* (*Daxue*) and the *Lunyu* were translated and published, both in Latin and Chinese characters.¹¹

The original four-year plan for the Jesuits to study Chinese was approved in 1624, but it was not strictly implemented, and newly arrived Jesuits rarely completed the program. Due to the superior needs of the missionary work, Herdtrich was sent to Shanxi and Henan, Couplet to Fujian and then Nanjing, and De Rougemont to Zhejiang and then Jiangsu. Therefore, the translation team was disbanded, and Intorcetta, staying in Jiangxi, continued the translation work alone. The constitution of this team of four young Jesuits in 1660-1662 played a decisive role in the translation project, since they worked again together in Guangzhou (Canton) some eight years later. We can notice that already in 1660-1662, Intorcetta was assuming the leading role among the four young Jesuits in translating the Confucian classics.

As just said, the names of da Costa and Intorcetta are written on the cover of the *Sapientia sinica* in both Latin and Chinese. The Chinese text on the cover mentioned that Guo Najue (da Costa) and Yin Duoze (Intorcetta) “narrated together” (*shutong* 述全). However, the Latin text on the cover introduces a slight difference in the roles of da Costa and Intorcetta: “translated by Father Inácio da Costa and presented to the world by Father Prospero Intorcetta from Sicilia” (*exponente P. Ignacio a Costa Lusitano Soc. Ie. à P. Prospero Intorcetta Siculo eiusd. soc. Orbi proposita*).

¹⁰ They probably used the notes made by Ferrão one or two years earlier, because Ferrão’s contribution is posthumously acknowledged in the *Sapientia sinica*. The *Sapientia sinica* was revised by six Jesuits. In addition to the three collaborators, Couplet, De Rougemont, and Herdtrich, the revisers also included three experienced missionaries: Pietro Canevari (1596-1675), António de Gouvea (1592-1677), and Francesco Brancati (1607-1671). The work was approved by Vice-Provincial Jacques Le Faure (1613-1675).

¹¹ Manuscript of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, 6277, vol. 1, IIIr; the *folio* is crossed by Couplet.

The fact that the preface was written by Intorcetta,¹² as well as the vagueness and the inconsistency of the attributions within the *Sapientia sinica* itself, contributed to the misperception that da Costa and Intorcetta were co-authors or co-translators, or even that Intorcetta was the main author. In his *Catalogus Patrum Societatis Iesu ab anno 1581 usque ad annum 1681* (Dillingen, 1687), Couplet attributes the *Sapientia sinica* to Intorcetta alone! However, it is impossible to consider Intorcetta, who had only been in China for three years when the *Sapientia sinica* was published, as the main author and translator. In the “Preface” (*Ad lectorem*), Intorcetta himself mentions the work as a “literal translation of Father Inácio da Costa” (*litteralis expositio P. Ignatii a Costa*).¹³ Therefore, da Costa should be recognized as the primary author and translator of the *Sapientia sinica*, and Intorcetta as the editor and secondary contributor of the work. In fact, Navarrete had already in Guangzhou criticized Intorcetta for attributing to himself the co-authorship of the *Sapientia sinica*.

The Use of the Commentaries

With regard to the comments, the Chinese commentarial tradition accumulates many interpretations, and each interpreter draws from previous commentaries to compose his own commentary, resulting in a text comprised of many different, interwoven threads, much like a piece of fabric.¹⁴ The Jesuits proceeded in the same way: they worked on the classical text as the basic matrix, which became interwoven with additional threads, the two main threads being the *Sishu zhijie* 四書直解 (Colloquial commentary on the *Four Books*) by Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582) and the *Sishu jizhu* by Zhu Xi.

In the 1610s, the Jesuits already had a copy of Zhang Juzheng’s commentaries in their library in Nanjing,¹⁵ and the plan of studies of 1624 explicitly

¹² The absence of a preface by da Costa seems to indicate that Intorcetta worked alone on the final stage of the production of the book.

¹³ Intorcetta wrote another piece in the *Sapientia sinica*, just before his preface: “To the Fathers of the Extreme Orient working in the vineyard of the Lord” (*R. R. Patribus Extremi Orientis in Domini Vineae Cultoribus*).

¹⁴ For a development on the metaphor of interweaving, see Nicolas Standaert, *The Interweaving of Rituals: Funerals in the Cultural Exchange between China and Europe* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2008), 219-222.

¹⁵ See Ad. Dudink, “The Inventories of the Jesuit House at Nanking, Made Up During the Persecution of 1616-1617 (Shen Que, ‘Nan gong shu du,’ 1620),” in *Western Humanistic Culture Presented to China by Jesuit Missionaries (XVII-XVIII Centuries)*, ed. Federico Massini (Rome: Institutum historicum Societatis Iesu,

mentions using Zhang's commentaries for the training of the Jesuit missionaries coming to China.¹⁶ According to the preface of the *Sapientia sinica*, the Jesuit translations of the *Daxue* and the *Lunyu* are based on twenty different commentaries, but "mostly" (*praecipue*) on the commentary by Grand Secretary Zhang (*Colao Cham*),¹⁷ and their translation contains indeed a few references to the "Chinese commentator and Grand Secretary Zhang" (*Commentator Sinensis Cham Colao*). An exemplar of the *Sapientia sinica* preserved in the Jesuit Archives in Rome has on the cover the inscription: *Xiwen sishu zhijie* (Colloquial commentary on the *Four Books* in Western language), which is a clear reference to the title of Zhang's commentary.¹⁸

The Layout of the Chinese Texts with Their Latin Translation

A great editorial concern was how to arrange the original text and the commentaries. In the Chinese tradition, the classical text is rarely read alone, but often accompanied by a commentary. The classical text and the commentary complement each other, with a clear continuity between the two, and only the size in which the characters are written sets the two apart. Thus, readers naturally read from the original text to the commentary, and from the commentary back to the original text. When the Jesuits edited their translation of the *Four Books*, they did not follow the traditional system of Western typesetting, with marginal notes, but largely followed the Chinese tradition. This can be seen very clearly when looking at the *Sapientia sinica*, where the Latin words corresponding to the Chinese characters in the Classical text are underlined, and thus distinguished from the comments. In the *Sapientia sinica*, the Latin and Chinese texts are both written horizontally, from left to right. This is probably the first book in China with Chinese characters written

1996), 147. Jensen mentions that Ricci used the *Sishu zhijie* in translating the *Four Books* into Chinese; however, he provides no evidence in support of this. See Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism*, 85.

¹⁶ See Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 266. According to Mungello, the Western translation of the first sentence of the *Daxue* by the Portuguese Jesuit missionary Gabriel de Magalhães (1610-1677), in his *Nouvelle relation de la Chine* (1668), "appears to be a very-loose translation-paraphrase" of Zhang's commentary. See David Mungello, *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and the Origins of Sinology* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 102.

¹⁷ "Ad lectorem," *Sapientia sinica*.

¹⁸ Jap.Sin. III/3a.

horizontally and from left to right. The Jesuits used this revolutionary way of writing Chinese characters in order to match them with the Latin script.¹⁹

In brief, the *Sapientia sinica* is a fundamental work in setting up a sinological framework for the Jesuits to work with, namely: a juxtaposition of Chinese and Latin texts, a transliteration in the Roman alphabet of the Chinese characters, superscript numbers allowing the identification of a Chinese character with a Latin word, use of the Zhu Xi edition of the *Four Books*, use of Zhang Juzheng and Zhu Xi as respectively the main and secondary commentators, use of other commentaries or historical sources. In the absence of Ricci's translations, the credit for those choices should be attributed to da Costa. His name is usually forgotten in mentioning the Jesuit translations. In Paris, Couplet finally decided to attribute the *Sinarum philosophus* to their group of four young Jesuits, recognizing the leadership of Intorcetta by placing his name first. In the whole work, the name of da Costa is not even mentioned once!

*Inácio da Costa's "Life of Confucius":
Confucius as a Philosopher Expecting Christ*

In the *Sapientia Sinica*, the "Life of Confucius, Prince of the Chinese Wisdom" (*Vita Confucii principis sapientiae sinicae*) does not indicate any author, but we can assume it was written by da Costa and edited by Intorcetta, like the rest of the work. In this biography, Confucius is called a philosopher. Because the translations of the *Daxue* and the *Lunyu* in the *Sapientia sinica* make no mention of the term philosopher, we may suppose that the biography was written at a later stage. Thereafter, the term philosopher was systematically used in the *Sinarum philosophus*.

It is unclear what primary source the missionaries used in writing the biography. However, most of the information can be traced to the *Lunyu*, to the *School Sayings of Confucius* (*Kongzi jiayu*), and to the *Biography of Confucius* (*Kongzi shijia* 孔子世家) written by Sima Qian. In the four-page biography, we are told about the family background of Confucius and his birth, and then five stories are narrated, based on the *Lunyu* and Sima Qian's *Biography of Confucius*.

Inácio da Costa mentioned two other stories not traditionally found in the biographies of Confucius: his prophecy of a saint coming from the West

¹⁹ The *Dictionary of Chinese Language* (1815-1823) by the British missionary and Sinologist Robert Morrison (1782-1834) is usually thought to be the first case of horizontal Chinese script from right to left.

and the dream of Mingdi. Da Costa believed that Confucius had inherited a historical revelation and made a prophecy about the coming of Christ: “There is a Holy Man in the West” (*Xifang you shengren* 西方有聖人).²⁰ The same reference is found in the “Life of Confucius” in the *Politico-moralis* and in the *Sinarum philosophus*. Confucius may not be perfectly clear about the identity of this *shengren* he was expecting coming from the West, but da Costa suggested that this man is Jesus Christ.²¹ After Confucius, the rulers of China had waited for the prophecy to come true, but when Jesus Christ came, there was a clear misidentification. Mingdi, the emperor around the time of Jesus, dreamt about a holy hero coming from the West, as announced by Confucius, and so he dispatched ambassadors, but they lost their way and, instead of bringing back the true teaching of Jesus, they brought back the idolatry of Buddha.²²

As we shall see below, Intorcetta inherited from da Costa the idea that Confucius was a prophet of Christ, and he developed it in his translation of the *Zhongyong*.

Intorcetta’s Revision of the “Life of Confucius” in the *Politico-moralis*

Having duly established the contribution of da Costa, we can now turn to the specific contribution of Intorcetta. On the basis of the previous biography, Intorcetta inserted in the *Politico-moralis* a revised version of the “Life of Confucius.” The first characteristic of this biography is its improved precision. For example, it gives the name of the village where Confucius was born (Zouyi 陬邑), the family name of his mother (Zheng 征), and the age of his father at the time of Confucius’s birth (seventy years old). It also mentions that Confucius was born in 551 BC, a date still commonly used today.

²⁰ *Sapientia sinica*: “Solitus dicere (ut traditio Sinarum est) 西方有聖人 *Si Fam Yeü Xim Gîn* in Occidente Sanctum reperi.”

²¹ This quote comes from a chapter devoted to Confucius in the *Liezi* 列子, a Taoist writing dated 300 AD or later: “Among the people of Western regions there is a sage: he does not govern, yet there is no disorder; does not speak, yet is trusted spontaneously; does not reform, yet his influence prevails spontaneously.” See *The Book of Lieh-tzū: A Classic of Tao*, trans. A. C. Graham (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 78.

²² The apocryphal story of Mingdi introducing Buddhism was a clever invention by Chinese Buddhists and was very influential, since even an anti-Buddhist scholar like Qiu Jun 丘濬 (1418-1495) believed the story to be historically true and condemned Mingdi for all posterity as a traitor to the ancestral way.

The second characteristic concerns the social status of Confucius, who is believed to have come from an aristocratic lineage, which traces back to Diyi 帝乙, a king of the Shang dynasty. This comes in direct opposition to Sima Qian's view, according to which Confucius had humble origins. Intorcetta probably found this in the *School Sayings of Confucius*.²³ Intorcetta also mentions also that the German Jesuit Adam Schall von Bell (1592-1666) even believed that Confucius was descended from Chengtang 成汤, Yu 禹, and Huangdi 皇帝.²⁴

But what is most striking in the revision made by Intorcetta is not so much the information about Confucius himself, but his emphasis on the rituals paid to him. In Guangzhou, the missionaries discussed whether or not the rituals paid to Confucius were idolatrous. In the revised biography, Intorcetta holds that those rituals are not religious because there is no image (*imago*) of Confucius present on any tablet of Confucius. Thus, they should be considered "civic" (*civilis*). Intorcetta views paying respect to the tablet of Confucius as similar to paying respect to the living descendants of Confucius, and none of this entails any superstition. He recalls that von Bell saw a descendant of Confucius during his visit to Beijing. Also, while the Jesuits had previously talked about the "sect of the literati" (*secta literatorum*), Intorcetta associates the School of *Ru* with the name of Confucius, calling it "*schola confuciana*," which became "Confucianism" in the nineteenth century in the West.

Intorcetta warns that Christianity could be established in China only by supporting Confucianism, never by opposing it. He does not see any contradiction between Christianity and the teaching of Confucius, and he gives two supporting arguments. First, a few literati have already embraced the Christian faith. Second, if Confucius came back today, he would certainly embrace Christianity himself. There is little doubt that Intorcetta developed those arguments in the context of the debates the missionaries had in Guangzhou.

Later, while revising Intorcetta's version, Couplet continued to improve the biography by adding some elements. For example, he calculated that from the time of Confucius up to 1687, there existed sixty-eight generations of his descendants. Concerning the controversy surrounding the rituals paid in respect to Confucius, Couplet stated that the founder of the Ming Dynasty,

²³ Chapter 39 of the *Kongzi jiayu*. Some scholars consider the text as apocryphal, but other scholars maintain it is genuine. Later on, in his letter to Louis XIV, Couplet stressed the nobility of Confucius.

²⁴ Later, Couplet probably saw this lineage as not historically founded, and so he did not mention it in the *Sinarum philosophus*.

Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398, 1368-1398), did not want people to idolize Confucius. In the 1687 version, Couplet qualified the rituals paid to Confucius as “political” (*politicus*). But more importantly, Couplet added the portrait of Confucius.²⁵ Through the portrait and the choice of the title as *Confucius Sinarum philosophus*, Couplet gave a strong emphasis on the figure of Confucius.

In brief, same as da Costa, Intorcetta tends to use uncritically the Chinese historical sources, connecting for example Confucius to a royal lineage. Though Intorcetta stresses the centrality of Confucius in Chinese culture and society, yet he is correct in stating that the Chinese tradition did not regard Confucius as a god. Therefore, Intorcetta very aptly expresses the rituals paid to Confucius in the Western category of civil rituals (as opposed to religious).

Zhongyong’s Unauthoritative Translation in the Politico-moralis

Because Intorcetta edited da Costa’s *Sapientia sinica*, he was very familiar with the choices set up by da Costa, and he himself continued to implement many of them in his solo translation of the *Zhongyong*, which he published in the *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis* (Politico-moral learning of the Chinese). Some sixteen Jesuits revised the work, including some of those from the initial team of translators: Couplet, De Rougemont, and Herdrich.

This book is quite unique because the first half was printed in Guangzhou in 1667 and the second part in Goa, India, in 1669, during Intorcetta’s return trip to Europe. Intorcetta brought copies of the *Politico-moralis* with him when he went to Europe in 1671. It is unlikely that Intorcetta planned to publish the work again in Europe since he was hoping to publish a complete translation of the *Four Books*. However, a copy of the *Politico-moralis* fell into the hands of the French scholar Melchisédech Thévenot (1620-1692), who published it, but without the Chinese text.²⁶

As we just mentioned, the translations in the *Politico-moralis* share many similarities with the *Sapientia sinica*. Yet, the *Politico-moralis* is visually

²⁵ In his letter of June 2, 1672, Intorcetta mentioned the 1-folio multicolor portrait of Confucius. See Noël Golvers, “An unobserved letter of Prospero Intorcetta, S.J. to Godefridus Henschens, S.J. and the printing of the Jesuit translations of the Confucian classics (Rome-Antwerp, June 2, 1672),” in *Syntagmatia: Essays on Neo-Latin Literature in Honor of Monique Mund-Dopchie and Gilbert Tournoy*, eds. Dirk Sacré and Jan Papy (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), 694.

²⁶ Thévenot Melchisédech, *Relations de Divers Voyages Curieux*, IV (1672), 3-25.

very different from the *Sapientia sinica*. Clearly, Intorcetta did not like Chinese characters being written horizontally and, in the *Politico-moralis*, he reverted to the traditional way of writing Chinese. Though the result is not very aesthetic, Intorcetta expressed, in a letter written in Rome in 1672, his wish to use the same layout for what would become the *Sinarum philosophus*: the pages should be subdivided vertically into columns (*columna*), with the Latin text written horizontally on the one side, and the Chinese text on the other, written vertically, from right to left, printed in columns.²⁷

Also, we should notice the semantical shift in the title of the works. Da Costa understood the Confucian texts as wisdom (*sapientia*). However, Intorcetta decided to emphasize the fact that the Confucian texts form a system of knowledge similar to the one in Europe; therefore, he called the Confucian texts a learning (*scientia*).

The *Politico-moralis* departed from the standard established by the *Sapientia sinica* in a fundamental point. While the latter translated many comments, the former is truly a literal translation of the classical text, without the translation of the commentaries. Most certainly, Intorcetta consulted the comments by Zhang Juzheng and Zhu Xi to translate the classical text itself of the *Zhongyong*, but he did not translate any specific comment. Because Intorcetta was working alone, he may have assigned to himself an attainable objective, translating the classical text without the commentaries. Also, his choice of having the Chinese text presented in columns next to the Latin text in horizontal script somehow limited the amount of Latin text to be inserted.

In Guangzhou, the Dominican Domingo Fernández Navarrete voiced his dissatisfaction with the *Sapientia sinica*, and, according to him, some Jesuits did not approve either.²⁸ Though the allegations of Navarrete have to be taken carefully, we can find a letter of Jacques Le Faure in which he complained about the process of revision of the translations by Intorcetta.²⁹ Therefore, we cannot doubt that some divergence existed among the Jesuits on the interpretation and translation of the Confucian classics.

²⁷ See Golvers, "An unobserved letter of Prospero Intorcetta," 692.

²⁸ According to Navarrete, Gouvea, one of the five revisers of *Sapientia sinica*, was forced by his superiors to approve it against his will. See Domingo Navarrete, *Tratados historicos, politicos, ethicos y religiosos de la monarchia de China* (Madrid: 1676), 132-133.

²⁹ See Letter of Le Faure to Father General Paulo Oliva, dated October 26, 1668, ARSI Jap.Sin.162, 224.

Interestingly, Navarrete complained that Intorcetta had refused to show him the translation of his *Zhongyong* that he was editing at that time.³⁰ In fact, Intorcetta's translation of the *Zhongyong* is carefully done and quite good. After almost ten years in China, Intorcetta had reached a good understanding of the language and could translate classical Chinese very accurately. The refusal to show his translation to Navarrete can be explained by the fact that Intorcetta was very much aware of the weakness of his work since it does not include any translation of Chinese commentaries, contrarily to the *Sapientia sinica*. For sure, Intorcetta consulted the commentaries by Zhang Juzheng and by Zhu Xi, but his translation does not make direct reference to Chinese interpreters, and this absence of reference made his translation an easy target for opponents like Navarrete. Also the *Zhongyong* mentions the power of the spirits (*guishen*; *Zhongyong* 16) and rituals of sacrifices to Heaven and Earth (*shejiao* 社郊; *Zhongyong* 19). Without any explanation, the literal translations of Intorcetta could easily be interpreted as cautioning idolatry.

Like Zhu Xi, Intorcetta notes in the preface that the meaning of the *Zhongyong* is difficult to understand and mysterious, and he warns the reader about things going beyond the limits of natural reason, without any voucher, yet Confucius "provides the light of the truth which shines before the Sun of Christ and paves the way." The *Life of Confucius* in the *Politico-moralis* makes also an important statement about the orthodoxy of the *Zhongyong*: "Not only was Confucius preserved from Atheism, but the whole ancient epoch was also, as we show in our translation of the *Zhongyong*."³¹

In brief, the *Politico-moralis* affirms boldly the orthodoxy of the *Zhongyong* in regards to Christianity, but the translation lacks the support of Chinese commentaries and explanations which would clear any suspicion of heresy. I even wonder why Intorcetta still pursued the publication amid the controversies in Guangzhou. The book was approved for publication on July 1667, but when he left Guangzhou one year later, only half of the woodcuts had been carved. Perhaps the slow process was due to the conditions of confinement in their residence of Guangzhou, but perhaps he may have had some hesitations, fearing that the *Politico-moralis* might fall in the hands of opponents like Navarrete. Intorcetta published the second half of the *Zhongyong* in Goa, so he had then a complete set, not so much to be used in China for missionaries to learn the Chinese language and Confucian classics, but to be

³⁰ *Tratados*, 133.

³¹ *Politico-moralis*, "Ad Lectorem"; see Thierry Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosphus* (Rome: ISHI, 2011), 240.

used in India and Europe as an intermediate work paving the way for the translations of the *Four Books*, a publication which would be delayed for fifteen years.

Zhongyong's New Translation in the Sinarum philosophus

Being much aware of the limitations of the *Politico-moralis*, Intorcetta worked on a new translation. The team of four Jesuits who had originally worked on the *Sapientia sinica*, including Couplet, De Rougemont, and Herdtrich, was reassembled. In order to make the Jesuit translations more authoritative, it was decided to use systematically the same method which was used for the *Sapientia sinica*, presenting the translation of the classical text with its commentary, mostly from Zhang Juzheng. The choice of Zhang as main interpreter was dictated by questions of orthodoxy. Since the Jesuits feared the contamination of Zhu's "materialistic" and "atheistic" philosophy in his interpretation of the *Four Books*, they chose an interpreter like Zhang, who stayed at a distance from the metaphysics of the Song philosophers, but stressed a kind of religious reverence to heaven. This would make clear that the translation was not invented, but supported by an authoritative and recent Chinese interpreter.

Intorcetta himself completed his translation of the *Zhongyong* with many comments drawn from Zhang's commentary. All the mentions of temple (*templum*) were replaced by a non-religious term (*aula*). He added detailed explanations concerning the correct understanding of *guishen* 鬼神. In a report written in Rome and dated January 25, 1672, he mentioned the forthcoming publication of "the commentaries about the philosophers Confucius and Mencius, translated by myself."³² Also, in his letter of 1672, June 25, in Rome, he mentions: "my translation of the Second Book, the *Zhongyong*" (*mea ipsa Explanatio Lib(ri) 2i Chum-yum*).³³

Unfolding a Confucian Spirituality

Intorcetta's interpretation of the *Zhongyong* is based on Chinese commentaries, but also on his own intellectual tradition. I shall expound some common features of his translation-commentary with Ignatian spirituality, a tradition that invokes the figure and legacy of Ignatius of Loyola and his

³² Prospero Intorcetta, *Compendiosa narratione dello Stato della Missione Cinese, cominciando dall'Anno 1581 fino al 1669* (Rome: Tizzoni, 1672), 75-76.

³³ See Golvers, "An unobserved letter of Prospero Intorcetta," 690.

Spiritual Exercises, composed in 1522-1524, which proposes a concrete way of experiencing God's presence for the purpose of directing one's whole life.

More than any other Confucian texts, the *Zhongyong* invited the Jesuits to explore the human responses to the prompt of reason, and thus to analyze the deep emotional and psychological layers of the human mind. In fact, the first verse of the *Zhongyong* reflects this attention to the self, with the question of individual practice. It states that a *junzi* should always follow the way, even when he is alone, that is, even when he is unobserved. Zhu Xi gave to *shendu* 慎独 a more profound meaning: what matters is not so much that the *junzi* is physically alone or not, but the focus is on the mental attitude of *junzi*. This is to say, the *junzi* has to pay attention to what is unique to him, to his inner being or self, which is inscrutable to others.³⁴ Intorcetta precisely followed this Neo-Confucian line of understanding of *shendu*, and expressed it in terms of Western spirituality: "Because of this, the perfect man always pays attention to himself and watches what is not perceived by the eyes, the smallest motions of his soul (*motus animi*)."³⁵ Intorcetta continues, saying that these motions of the soul, or spirit, are so subtle that the *junzi* needs to pay attention to the "secret of his heart" (*cordis sui secretum*), to what he alone can perceive in himself.

In Zhang's commentary on the *Zhongyong*, Intorcetta could read a common feature with Ignatian spirituality, that is, the life of the inner mind as being dynamic, being agitated by different motions that need to be harmonized.

The Saint as Model of Perfection

The last part of *Zhongyong* 1 explains the end result of spiritual transformation: "Whenever the Center and Harmony have been observed, then the status of Heaven and Earth is calm, stable and peaceful, and the universal propagation and vigor of all things follow."³⁶ For the *Zhongyong*, only the Sage could make this happen. In a note following the translation of *Zhongyong* 1, Intorcetta stated that, according to the ancient Chinese, human nature is originally correct (*recta*), but later on it was corrupted and perverted (*lapsa et depravata*), and yet it is called to regain its original innocence

³⁴ See Ian Johnston and Wang Ping, *Daxue and Zhongyong* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012), 190.

³⁵ *Sinarum philosophus, Liber secundus*, 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

(*ad primaevum innocentiae statum*).³⁷ This interpretation is quite faithful to the original text and commentaries, with the idea of a double-fold condition, original and perverted. However, Intorcetta imposed over the Chinese text a historical frame in three stages (origin, fall, and salvation). In the same note, he excused Confucius for not having known that the Fall was caused by the sins of Adam and Eve, and he praised him because:

He got to know, after a long practice and meditation, that this universe, damaged by man, could not be brought back to its original integrity and order, unless a man (*ipse homo*) would first recover through a victory over himself the integrity and order which had been lost.³⁸

In other words, the renovation of humanity cannot come from outside, but has to happen through a spiritual transformation within humanity itself, through a victory over itself. This idea of a renovation happening within humanity itself is very much consonant with the Confucian focus on self-cultivation. For the *Zhongyong*, only the Saint (*shengren*) can order and renovate the whole world, but practically nobody has succeeded.³⁹ Yet, for Intorcetta, Jesus Christ did so. Because of this historical frame, there are not two existential conditions (original and perverted) like in Confucianism, but three stages (original, perverted, and redeemed). In other words, the man envisioned by Confucius is none other than the God-made-man, Jesus Christ, who saved humanity by becoming a man. The redemption through Christ does not come purely from the outside since the Chinese mind is already waiting and yearning for Christ.⁴⁰

Here, the exegesis of *Zhongyong* 27 plays a pivotal role: *dai qiren* 待其人 is rendered as “it is expected a man of supreme virtue to come.”⁴¹ In a note in italics about *Zhongyong* 27, Intorcetta comments in a very careful manner: “Other people may decide about whom the Philosopher [Confucius] is talking, and I myself do not dare to affirm that he was speaking out

³⁷ For example, note in italic in *Sinarum philosophus, Liber secundus*, 42.

³⁸ *Sinarum philosophus, Liber secundus*, 42.

³⁹ However, the text of the *Zhongyong* affirms that the emperor Shun 舜 alone had reached the highest level, and this point is difficult to accept for the Jesuits. Therefore they attempted to show that Shun could not have reached by himself that level, unless being connected somehow to God’s Revelation.

⁴⁰ Thierry Meynard, “Joining the Spiritual World of Confucianism: The Jesuit Translation of the *Zhongyong*,” *Journal of Translation Studies* 1, no. 29 (2017).

⁴¹ *Sinarum philosophus, Liber secundus*, 78.

(*profatus*) under the impulse of the same Spirit by which the Sybils had predicted (*vaticinari*) about Christ.⁴² He calls upon a cross-textual reference according to which Confucius would have said: “There is a Holy Man in the West.”⁴³ As mentioned above, da Costa had expressed the idea of Confucius as an oracle or prophet of Christ in the “Life of Confucius” of the *Sapientia sinica*. Thus, following da Costa, Intorcetta suggests that Confucius was a prophet inspired by God and had received some private revelations, allowing him to predict the coming of Christ.

A World Inhabited by Guishen or Angels

The ancient Chinese believed that *guishen* played an important role in their personal life. Though Confucius and his disciples did not stress their role very much, the belief is clearly reflected in the *Zhongyong*. Later on, from an elitist point of view, Neo-Confucianism has downplayed the popular belief in the action of the *guishen* in one’s life, and explained their influences at the level of the cosmos. The Jesuits could have also easily dismissed the popular belief in the *guishen* as a superstition, but in fact, they confirmed the role of *guishen* in the spiritual life of the person. Intorcetta identified them with the angels of the Bible and Christianity.⁴⁴

Zhongyong 16 has a long quote about *guishen*, which is attributed to Confucius, though not found in the *Lunyu*. Indeed, both Zhu Xi and Zhang Juzheng attributed a fundamental function to the *guishen* as effective forces of Heaven and Earth, such that nothing is done without them. The question of their efficiency is not an issue. The real issue is about the way the *guishen* act in the world, and whether the *guishen* are endowed with some form of intelligence. Intorcetta considers them as having a superior “intellective force” (*vis intellectiva*).⁴⁵ This superior intellectual ability is the distinctive mark of the *guishen*, making them similar to angels. Did he invent such an interpre-

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Other missionaries rejected this method of expressing key Christian notions with Chinese notions, and preferred the exclusive use of quasi-neologisms, like *Tianzhu* for God, or *Tianshen* for angels.

⁴⁵ In Scholasticism, the intellective force is *in potentia* in regard to its object, the intelligible, and can act only as the object presents itself to it as the intelligible. The Jesuits had already used this concept in the *Daxue* to translate *zhi* 知. See *Sinarum philosophus, Liber primus*, 4-5; Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, 339-340.

tation? Not really, because he indeed found in Zhang's commentary some supporting evidence.

The Latin text refers to Zhang's interpretation of *guishen* as "spirits to whom sacrifices have been established in order to worship them and obtain help."⁴⁶ When we check the Latin translation against the original Chinese text of Zhang, we find this definition of *guishen* as objects of worship indeed. Unlike Zhu, Zhang affirms the existence of a purposeful heaven; nobody can escape punishments from heaven, and in other parts of his commentaries, Zhang uses the expression of the "law of mutual interaction" between heaven and human beings (*ganying zhi li* 感應之理). This theological view was popular in the late Ming dynasty, and deeply influenced Zhang's interpretation of the classics.

In brief, Intorcetta understood *guishen* as similar to angels: both are immaterial and yet can provoke changes in the material world by influencing the human mind or soul; they are endowed with intelligence; they go back and forth between heaven and earth; and they are Shangdi 上帝 or God's messengers (this is precisely the meaning of the word angel in Greek); they reward the good and punish the wicked.

Intorcetta and the Preface of the *Sinarum philosophus*

In 1667-1668, Intorcetta wrote in Guangzhou the first part of the preface, which was slightly revised by Couplet in 1686.⁴⁷ The titles of the chapters were given by Couplet. In the first chapter, Intorcetta gave a presentation of the *Five Classics*. The *Shujing* or *Shangshu* gets the most detailed explanation, and Intorcetta considered it "the first and most important among the five *jing* since it belongs to the primary authority upon which we shall build our explanation."⁴⁸ A brief presentation of the *Four Books* follows: because the Jesuits were aiming at translating the *Four Books*, it was not necessary to say too much.

The second chapter presents an important historical event, the burning of the Confucian classics under Qinshihuang, which resulted in a corrupt transmission of the texts. Chapters three and four discuss respectively Daoism and Buddhism. Those sections were initially digressions written by Intorcetta

⁴⁶ *Sinarum philosophus, Liber secundus*, 50.

⁴⁷ As we can see in the Manuscript (page Ir), Intorcetta talked about the 60 years since the beginning of the mission in China; this is a reference to the establishment of Ricci in Beijing in 1601. Later, Couplet adjusted the number of years.

⁴⁸ Meynard, *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*, 100.

within his translation-commentary of the *Zhongyong*, but Couplet moved them inside the preface. The section on Daoism shows some basic understanding of the influence of Daoism during the Tang and Song dynasties. The section on Buddhism reveals that the missionaries had an understanding of the spread of Buddhism in India, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Japan. Following Baltasar Gago and the Japan Jesuits, Intorcetta distinguished in Buddhism a double teaching: atheism and superstition.⁴⁹

Chapter five deals with the “modern interpreters,” the *Compendium on the Five Classics* (*Wujing daquan* 五經大全) and the *Compendium on Nature and Principle* (*Xingli daquan* 性理大全). Intorcetta considered this philosophy of the principle (*li* 理) as corrupted by Buddhism and discarding the worship due to Heaven (*tian* 天). Finally, in chapters six, seven, and eight, Intorcetta gives a detailed explanation of the *Yijing*, because this classic is the basis of the philosophy of the Song philosophers. However, Intorcetta discusses the *Yijing* in positive terms, restricting himself to the traditional explanation, and without discussing some interpretations of the Song.⁵⁰

Bibliothèque When Intorcetta wrote the first part of the preface in Guangzhou, he had clearly in mind the treatise about the Chinese religion, written in 1623 by Longobardo.⁵¹ Indeed, on the manuscript of the *Sinarum philosophus* at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, there is a long passage, later deleted by Couplet, in which Intorcetta talks in the first person. He justified the use by Ricci and others of the Confucian texts (XX.r) and especially the use of the terms *Shangdi* and *Tianzhu* 天主 for God (XX.v). He also mentioned the controversy with the “Patres Praedicatorum” (Dominicans), their lack of knowledge of the Chinese language, and of sending their writings to Manila (XXI.r). Yet, Intorcetta did not directly answer the questions raised by the treatise of Longobardo. His exposition of ancient Chinese thought is meant to show indirectly that the position of Longobardo was groundless.

After the departure of Intorcetta, the three Jesuits left in Guangzhou felt the need to answer more directly to Longobardo’s treatise. The second part

⁴⁹ Baltasar Gago, *Sumario de los errores de Japão de varias seitas* (*Summary of the errors of various sects of Japan*), 1557.

⁵⁰ The explanations on the *Hetu* and *Luoshu* charts was deleted by Couplet on the manuscript.

⁵¹ This treatise was originally written in Portuguese in 1623: “Reposta breve sobre as Controversias do Xámti, Tienxin, Limhoên, e outros nomes e termos sinicos.” Archivio della Sacra Congregazione ‘de Propaganda Fide’ (Roma: SC Indie Orientali), Cina, vol. 1, fol. 145r-168v. Thierry Meynard and Daniel Canaris, eds., *A Brief Response on the Controversies over Shangdi, Tianshen and Linghuan by Niccolò Longobardo* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

of the preface of the *Sinarum philosophus* is a direct answer to Longobardo's treatise, dealing, for example, with the question of Shangdi in chapters 8 (etymology of Shangdi), 9 (persistence of the name of Shangdi), and 10 (parallel with Early Church). In fact, the basic philosophical position of Longobardo and the *Sinarum philosophus* are similar, because the final judgment on Confucianism comes from the West. The difference is that Longobardo reserves a right to the Chinese to interpret their own tradition, while the *Sinarum philosophus* holds a more pervasive right of the reason to evaluate also how the Chinese tradition is faithful or not to their ancient texts.

Conclusion

As we have shown, Prospero Intorcetta's sinological contribution needs to be understood in the lineage of his predecessors, especially his master da Costa, and his three closest collaborators. His name deserves to be associated with the first two published translations of the *Zhongyong* in a Western language. The translation in the *Politico-moralis* is very precise and accurate, but lacks the support of Chinese commentaries and the explanations which would dispel any suspicion of superstition. The opposition he encountered forced him to go deeper in the understanding of the Chinese commentaries, especially the one by Zhang Juzheng, and also in proposing an explanation compatible with Christianity. He selected one specific angle to read the text, enhancing the points of convergence between Confucian spirituality and Ignatian spirituality. This did not happen by chance; from the time of Ricci, Jesuits gave the Spiritual Exercises to the Chinese, and Intorcetta himself presented the *Spiritual Exercises* in his *Sheng Yinajue shenxing gongfu* 聖依納爵神行工夫.⁵² His own spiritual tradition enabled him to recognize and appreciate the spiritual dimension of a work like the *Zhongyong*. Intorcetta should thus be credited for inventing the Christian hermeneutics of Confucian texts.

Besides his work on the *Zhongyong*, the second contribution of Intorcetta was to carry out the collective project of translating the Confucian classics for six years, from 1666 to 1672. While working with the other three Jesuit colleagues in Guangzhou, he set up the standards to be used uniformly for the three Confucian classics, and he tried his best to have the texts published in

⁵² According to Nicolas Standaert, the text is not a direct translation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, but of a "retreatant version." See Nicolas Standaert, "Spiritual Exercises in the China mission," *Archivum historicum Societatis Iesu*, vol. LXXXI, fasc. 161 (2012): 92.

Rome. Though he did not succeed at that time, he had prepared the ground for Couplet for the final editing in Paris some fifteen years later.

Considering the standards of modern sinology, Intorcetta's work may fail the test. First, he presented only the Chinese reading of the Confucian classics that was the most congruent with Christianity, and he kept silent on other possible readings. Also, he used Chinese historical sources in an uncritical way. Despite those limitations, he was able to produce, within the constraints of his time, an outstanding contribution that had a lasting effect in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, and in China since the last decade, leading to the publication in 2021 by Elephant Press (大象出版社) of the Chinese translation of the *Confucius Sinarum philosophus*.

The Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Translation of the New Testament into the Bafut Language

MICHAEL SUH NIBA *

Introduction

Historically, the word “hermeneutics” is associated with Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods whose responsibility is to interpret and translate messages of the gods for human understanding through the priest of the Oracle of Delphi. However, it has generally been understood as the art of interpreting ancient and classical texts, especially biblical texts, in the effort to understand their foreign or hidden meaning. Common to any hermeneutic enterprise is the overcoming of alienness due to distance and differences in history, culture, education, experience, and language when human beings seek to understand truth and meaning in art, literature, history, law, and scriptures.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) undertakes a philosophical endeavor to theorize or rather describe what happens whenever we say we understand and, thus, proposes how to understand understanding itself. In his philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer equates understanding and interpretation, both of which involve and go beyond mere philology or textual interpretation to encompass all that it takes to make sense of our world. Yet, following Martin Heidegger, he sees language as the *locus entis* – the ontological grounds in, on, and through which the new being of truth, the *Wahrheitsgeschehen*, results in the conversation between text and interpreter. “This

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whole process is verbal,” he writes emphatically in *Truth and Method*.¹ How he owes his phenomenological ontology to Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein’s historicity and how he differs from an account of understanding that reduces it to historicism’s ahistorical archeology of the author’s intentions and disinterested textual analysis, which for him have characterized attempts to make hermeneutics a science after the model of the natural sciences, are long arguments.

For the purposes of this paper, we shall first lay out the main ideas of Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics and show how one Christian Church, the Catholic Church, is in agreement with the basic concepts that make up his theory. We shall then explore translation as an instance of the hermeneutic event, showing how, his critics notwithstanding, his description of what happens is true that it works, as evidenced in the experience with the translation of the New Testament into the Bafut Language.

Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics

Accounts of the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer begin with the central argument of *Truth and Method*. For Joel C. Weinsheimer, it is “...Gadamer’s objections to the notion that scientific method defines the exclusive avenue to truth.”² Warnke perceives Gadamer as aiming “...to overcome the positivistic hubris of assuming that we can develop an ‘objective knowledge’ of whatever the object of inquiry is.”³ Quoting his own early writing, that Gadamer contests the “optimistic account of modernity,” inaugurated by René Descartes and the Enlightenment philosophy, Chris Lawn locates Gadamer’s dismissal of the unrealistic claims of scientism in the German philosopher’s “re-valuing [of] the idea of tradition.”⁴ In the very opening paragraph of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer spells out clearly what the role of tradition is in his project of a general hermeneutic theory – investigating understanding as an all-pervasive phenomenon to human activity, especially in the search for knowledge and truth. As he says, “in understanding tradition not only are texts understood, but insights are acquired

¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2000²), 384.

² Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), x.

³ Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: 1987), 1.

⁴ Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2006), 1.

and truths known. But what kind of knowledge and what kind of truth?”⁵ The question is part rhetorical, part substantive. For Gadamer, there is reality, truth, and knowledge that lie outside and beyond the narrow confines that an overly quantity-defined and defining, experimental, proof-oriented scientific methodology has sought to prescribe as the norm by its appeal to procedures of verification, falsification, predictability, and repeatability.

Gadamer takes strong issue with Descartes’s and the Enlightenment’s chimeric ideals of knowledge and truth that is “objective” through proof and demonstration adapted only for the objects of natural science. As Warnke explains, “Disciplines in which the influence of talent, imagination, and perspective could not be minimized, such as literary studies and art appreciation, were no longer to be viewed as cognitive disciplines at all.”⁶ These admirable human endowments and values were considered to be “subjective intrusions” that obstructed advancement in knowledge. Against these, Gadamer argues that the *Geisteswissenschaften* – the kind of knowledge that loosely can be called the “sciences of the human spirit” – found in the broad spectrum of human activity and embedded in art, history, and literature are different. Meaning through understanding, which requires interpretive effort, is characteristic of knowing in the human sciences; explanations by appeal to causal laws are the foundation of knowledge in the natural sciences. The tradition of this distinction goes back to Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey. He, however, faults Dilthey for not recognizing that there is no escaping the historical situatedness of all knowledge. Even the natural sciences belong to a history or tradition of norms and procedures that guarantee the standards and the validation of the truths arrived at. Thus, there is no way in which the human sciences will sit an exam set for them by the natural sciences. The standard and norms of natural science tradition cannot be the supreme court of appeal in *all* matters cognitive and intellectual. Each cognitive discipline operates within its own tradition. Critiquing the attempt to universalize the scientific method and the search for objectivity is Gadamer’s first step to move away from the Enlightenment.

When Gadamer seeks to establish the validity of the truth claims of the social sciences, he paradoxically takes upon another Enlightenment concept – prejudice: “The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust.”⁷ A prejudice for the Enlightenment was constituted by the cultural and historical baggage

⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxi.

⁶ Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics*, 2.

⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 270.

that each knower brings into the knowing business. It was a distorting mirror that had to be wiped clean if one aimed at the kind of objectivity that the Cartesian scientific method demanded. This tradition gave the word both the familiar negative connotation and, consequently, bad press it has until today, by assigning “unfounded judgment” as its meaning. According to Gadamer, “there is one prejudice of the Enlightenment that defines its essence: the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power.”⁸ For him, a prejudice is a judgment that is passed before all the relevant evidence has been critically assessed.

To explain the hermeneutical significance of prejudices, he explores a concept that belongs to the history of rhetoric, philology, and hermeneutics itself: the hermeneutical circle. According to this canon of interpretation, the meaning of the part can be discovered only from the context – i.e., ultimately from the whole. The larger context, a sentence, gives each word its meaning; each sentence is meaningful within a paragraph; each paragraph within a chapter; each chapter within a book; and the book within a literary genre, language, culture, etc. Gadamer widens the role of this seemingly illogical yet hermeneutically functioning circularity. The circle is interpretively productive not only in grammatical or psychological instances, as Schleiermacher postulated. It is at work whenever there is any kind of interpretive effort or attempt to understand. It is a universal phenomenon. Because it is at work all the time – the ground and condition of the possibility of all interpretation and understanding – it is ontological; because involved here is a way of knowing consequent upon a way and kind of being, it is epistemological. What is required is the appropriate philosophical framework that descriptively accounts for how this is possible. Gadamer’s intellectual indebtedness to his German contemporary and mentor, Heidegger’s phenomenological and existential narrative of the modes of Dasein’s engagement with the world, is key to understanding how the circle works.

Hence the need to once more examine Heidegger’s description of the hermeneutical circle is important in order to make its new fundamental significance for our purposes. According to Gadamer, the hermeneutical circle

is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing, and we genuinely grasp this possibility only when we have understood that

⁸ Ibid.

our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.⁹

Gadamer points out with Heidegger that long before we begin to reason and make judgments about the world, we are always already determined by it. The *tabula rasa* theory of Cartesian doubt had already been put into question by Kant – we contribute the categories of space and time to perception, and by Husserl – the life world, constituted historically, culturally, and otherwise, is “always already there” and “pregiven.”¹⁰ We are products of Heideggerian *thrownness*, irremediably the products of our history, tradition, culture, family, nation, religion, etc. As Warnke explains Heidegger’s impact on Gadamer,

His point is that even before I begin consciously to interpret a text or grasp the meaning of an object, I have already placed it within a certain context (*Vorhabe*), approached it from a certain perspective (*Vorsicht*) and conceived of it in a certain way (*Vorgriff*). There is no neutral vantage point from which to survey the “real” meaning of a text or object; even a scientific approach to an object places it within a certain context and takes a certain attitude toward it. The meaning of any object, then, is co-determined by one’s own circumstances or “life-relations” (Dilthey) and expectations.¹¹

Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, we bring with us into the interpretive situation the weight of the historical tradition that has formed us in ways we are not even aware of. This is what Gadamer calls “effective history” (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). To understand a verse from scriptures as a Catholic, for example, I bring with me ever-present however untheumatized concepts such as the “inspired word of God.” “It grew out of the faith experience of a particular community.” “It is canonical.” If it is a verse from Genesis, I will read it against the backdrop of the creation story, of a rich history of historical and archeological research that has unearthed different traditions of Near-Eastern creation myths and cultures woven together, of an allegorical interpretation that prevents me from literally looking for hard astrophysical/historical scientific fact about the beginnings and age of the

⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 266.

¹⁰ Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics*, 181.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

universe. We are always already conditioned by the history of interpretation. We can accept the “traditional” interpretation with which we are no doubt familiar. Or we can break new ground. Whether we confirm or react to the traditional understanding, we are continuing it.

Gadamer’s hermeneutics has universalistic claims, for it aims at accounting for the totality of the human experience of being in the world. Like Heidegger, he insists that the world is not only linguistically constituted but also linguistically mediated and understood, for all “...that takes place in understanding is actually the achievement of language.”¹² The word as expressive of the world becomes the *preferred* object of interpretation. In a word, the text, what is written, is the perfect form of tradition, for it is what most perfectly fulfills the contents of what it means to hand down. A text is a word disengaged from sound, for it possesses an abstract ideality that raises it “beyond the finitude and transience that characterize other remnants of past existence,” like oral tradition, art, and historical monuments. But a text remains a fossilized piece of paper with strange symbols on it until it is made to come alive through reading and interpretation. The perfect paradigm of how interpreter and text open up to reciprocal engagement in the search for truth and how the text speaks to the interpreter and vice versa is a conversation. It is something akin to Socratic dialogue. We engage in conversation because we want to know the truth about the subject matter, the topic of the dialogue. While we are committed to contributing our understanding to the discussion, we remain open to being educated by the views of the dialogic partner. No genuine partner sets out to brow-beat the other into intellectual submission and to outshine the other into blinded ignorance and non-being. A common commitment to the subject matter, *die Sache*, unites the participants beyond a psychological concern of how and why they come to think and speak the way they do. They come away better educated with some new understanding of the matter, which they know is not the last word on the topic. They themselves or others may return to the subject, engage it, and discover ever newer insights. The being that becomes at the end of every interpretive event is always only a transitory spearhead, a new bud that someday will be pushed back into a respectable branch; still later, a group of cells on the dignified stem on the venerated, deeply rooted, ancient tree of tradition that has been linguistically encoded through culture. Gadamer characterizes the phenomenon as the “fusion of horizons.”

¹² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 378.

Translation as the Hermeneutic Object

The “fusion of horizons” is fundamental when Gadamer treats translation as a particularly informative model of the conversational nature of all hermeneutic reality. He has argued that all understanding is interpretation – whenever we are caught short by the alienness of the text, we interpret in order to understand. We do not first understand and then find the appropriate words to give what is understood expression as the interpretation of the text. The linguisticity of understanding consists in the rootedness of all three in language and makes them indivisible. To understand is always to find words to express it. Translation is a true hermeneutic event because the kind of alienation that occasions interpretation is at its extreme. At the heart of translation is mediation of meaning or truth between two foreign languages. Such meaning is necessarily contextualized and therefore given new expression by the translator in the target language.

Gadamer’s treatment of oral translation, be this simultaneous or from a prepared text, suffers the same fate of unbridgeable linguistic distance as a text, with perhaps the lone difference that the text lacks the direct physical benefit of gestures, facial expression, voice intonation, etc., which facilitate access to meaning in a conversation. The reason is obvious: all understanding is rooted in language, and without a common language, no genuine conversation and no understanding can happen between interlocutors. As Gadamer avers, “translating is like an especially laborious process of understanding, in which one views the distance between one’s own opinion and its contrary as ultimately unbridgeable.”¹³ The distance created by the language barrier means that a translated conversation is not yet properly such.

Gadamer is aware of the practical difficulties involved in translation, such as the “requirement that a translation be faithful. ... However faithful we try to be, we have to make difficult decisions.” According to Natalia A. Mikhailova, the fidelity of which Gadamer speaks involves issues of “incongruity,” “intranslatability,” the lack of “resemblance” between the original and the translation of a given text. She reverts to humor in order to better make the point:

Nevertheless, as a French saying goes, “translations are like women, homely when faithful and unfaithful when lovely,” and if we turn to poetry as the acknowledged more difficult case of translation, we might recollect Hebrew author Chaim Bialik, who considered

¹³ *Ibid.*, 386.

reading poetry in translation “like kissing your sweetheart through a handkerchief.” A less romantic but more radical metaphor (and this opinion is shared by most) is that the choice is simply between different ways of murdering the original.¹⁴

The way out of not judging, sentencing, and executing the translator for murderous treason is to explore the gap between the source text and the target text as an especially privileged locus for mediation for the production of meaning and truth. If the translator is not to restrict the endeavor to a recreation of the authorial psychological processes that may lead to the appearance of the original, not to a mere word-for-word reproduction of the same, then there is an involvement in the mediation of meaning. The translator seeks to understand “the substantive rightness” of the author, the meaning of the text, which is then transferred, transmitted to the reader. The translator, in his/her historically unique situatedness, must enter into dialogue with the author, with the intention of learning the truth by making the source/author come alive and answer the questions posed by the translator who responds to the questioning of the text. What comes from the encounter is something new, often beyond what the translator and the author intended, meant, and understood about the subject matter originally. At work is the revision of prejudiced horizons, which, when fused through the coming to a common ground of understanding, result in not just a recreated text but a new being in language. Thus, both the source text, the translator, and the target text find a common language “that allows the object to come into words” as the translator makes it possible for truth to find expression in the difference of languages.

There are challenges involved. The first is the mastery of the foreign language by the translator. Otherwise, the potential for error, ambiguity, and obscurity looms extra-large. Then there is the problem of ambiguity of meaning characteristic of language. As Beata Piechychna interprets Gadamer in this regard, “Language is such that, whatever particular meaning a word may possess, words do not have a single unchanging meaning; rather, they possess a fluctuating range of meanings.”¹⁵ The choice of a word over its synonym(s), for example, is determined by the totality of elements that make

¹⁴ Natalia A. Mikhailova, “Transforming the Language: Translation as Exile and Hermeneutic Dialogue” (MA thesis, Vanderbilt University, 2005), 3, <https://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu>.

¹⁵ Beata Piechychna, “The Act of Translation in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Hermeneutic Philosophy of Language,” *Studies in Logic, Grammar and Rhetoric* 28, no. 41 (2012): 170.

for the unique historical, cultural and emotional context of the translator and his/her text. According to Mikhailova's reference to *Wahrheit und Methode*,

... the translator must carry the meaning to be understood over into the context in which the interlocutor lives. This is not of course to say that he is at liberty to falsify the meaning intended by the speaker. Rather, the meaning must be preserved, but since it must be understood within a new language world, it must establish its validity within it in a new way. Thus every translation is already an interpretation.¹⁶

But, more fundamentally, because translation is what happens when we think; because thinking is a dialogue within and with the self, this internal dialogue between thought and speech is latent with huge undercurrents for misunderstandings:

When we speak, we are always involved in translation: do we really know what we mean to say, and are we in fact saying it? Do we succeed in communicating what we mean, without saying something more as well which we do not intend and of which we may not even be aware?¹⁷

Even if one were to give an answer in the affirmative to these questions, and we know from experience that this is impossible, there would still be an even greater difficulty.

According to Gadamer, the universal aspect of hermeneutics consists in that one cannot say everything, one cannot express everything that one has in mind and this experience is universal. The spoken discourse always lags behind what one wants or has to say, the inner word. We are always enmeshed in a never-ending process of searching for words, for what can never be entirely communicated or comprehended. It is because language never succeeds in exhausting everything that wants to be said and understood.¹⁸

Language can be as much a facilitator as it can erect frustrating, angst-potent boundaries to our understanding and expression. Gadamer characterizes this difficulty in translation as part of the universal human experience of feeling "strange, uncomfortable, and tortuous":

We are all acquainted with this, for instance, in the attempt to translate, in practical life or in literature or wherever; that is, we are

¹⁶ Mikhailova, "Transforming the Language," 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

familiar with the strange, uncomfortable, and tortuous feeling we have as long as we do not have the right word. It is the mode of the whole human experience of the world. I call this experience hermeneutical.¹⁹

The search for the right word involves the interior dialogue just mentioned as the translator seeks to understand and express what the text says. The choice of what meaning is to be transmitted is left with the translator. Paradoxically, the commitment to fidelity to the original text entails compromising, for “in the to and fro of weighing and balancing possibilities, the translator will seek the best solution – a solution that can never be more than a compromise.”²⁰ Compromises are not easily brokered; rather, they are difficult decisions to make – decisions about what features of the text are important for the translator and about the meaning of borderline cases. Such decisions mean that other features are de-emphasized even as others are highlighted:

A translator must understand that highlighting is a part of his task. Obviously he must not leave open whatever is not clear to him. He must show his colors ... he must resign himself. He must state clearly how he understands. But since he is always in a position of not really being able to express all the dimensions of his text, he must make a constant renunciation. Every translation that takes its task seriously is at once clearer and flatter than the original.²¹

Gadamer and His Readers

This paper lacks a critique of Gadamer similar to Emilio Betti and E. D. Hirsch, Jr.,²² who generally argue that the insistence on the historical situatedness of the interpreter/translator leads to subjectivism. Warnke, for example, quotes Betti to the effect that Gadamer’s theory “open[s] door and gate to subjective arbitrariness and threaten[s] to cloud or distort and, be it

¹⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem,” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 15.

²⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 388.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973).

only unconsciously, to disfigure historical truth.”²³ On his part, Hirsch argues that the sole guarantee of the objective meaning of a text is the intention of the author. When Gadamer argues for the historicity of the interpreter, he confuses the meaning of a text with its significance for the interpreter. On the other hand, Jürgen Habermas²⁴ criticizes the insertion of Gadamer’s interpreter in the tradition that he seeks to understand as an instance of the latter’s conservative defense of the *status quo*. To such left- and right-wing critiques, Gadamer’s response is that the eventfulness of meaning will always involve the uniqueness of a subject who, when he/she understands a tradition and any text for that matter, understands something new for the self. Both tradition and interpreter modify each other reciprocally.

I, personally, read Gadamer with approval. Shortly I shall outline the main reason why I think that the charges against him do not pay sufficient attention to *application* as both an intrinsic moment in the translation process and proof of the validity of Gadamer’s insights. I belong to the Catholic tradition. It is safe to say that besides pure literary interpretation, the Church prides itself as one of the few traditions with an unbroken involvement in interpretation and translation in the history of the subject. Gadamer himself makes ample use of the members of this tradition, for example, when he acknowledges the advancement of Augustine and Aquinas over the Platonic theory about how language arose, thanks to their reflections on the Incarnation.²⁵ The Pontifical Biblical Commission, in a 1993 document drawn up mainly in response to the crisis of historicism and its historical-critical method, recognized the validity of the fundamental insight of philosophical hermeneutics for the interpretation of scriptures. It is a search for meaning that is stamped by history: “...this meaning in which the human word and God’s word work together in the singularity of historical events and the eternity of the everlasting Word, which is contemporary in every age.” Gadamer is one of those whose investigations are summarized by the document. Though it is critical, especially of Rudolf Bultman’s “demythologization” project, it reads with approval the general framework of Gadamer’s hermeneutic and speaks of its “usefulness for exegesis.”²⁶ For both Gadamer and the Catholic Church,

²³ Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics*, 98.

²⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “On Hermeneutics’ Claim to Universality,” in *The Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

²⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 418ff.

²⁶ The Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, no. 31,” *Origins*, January 6, 1994, https://www.catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp3.htm.

exegesis is found in the fertile threshold where the eternal word of God and the person of today meet. Meaning is both eternal and belongs to the historical *now*. The Biblical Commission emphasizes:

It is a question of overcoming the distance between the time of the authors and first addressees of the biblical texts, and our own contemporary age, and of doing so in a way that permits a correct actualization of the Scriptural message so that the Christian life of faith may find nourishment. All exegesis of texts is thus summoned to make itself fully complete through a “hermeneutics” understood in this modern sense.²⁷

In the “Foreword to the Second Edition” of *Truth and Method*, in part answering Betti’s charges against him, Gadamer underplays the practical consequences of his investigations. He avers that he rather just seeks to preserve the integrity of all understanding, which is “what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing.”²⁸ Toward the end of the work, Gadamer quotes from one of his own letters to Betti, emphasizing that “I am describing what is the case. That it is as I describe it cannot, I think, be seriously questioned...”²⁹

Application Is Integral to Interpreting

In reality, for all his denying any intention to put the findings of his investigations to “practical ends,” what Gadamer describes is exactly what happened and happens in all translation work. Even Gadamer’s appeal to Aristotelian praxis tradition, according to Duška Dobrosavljev, makes the former’s hermeneutics project “completely situated within the horizon of praxis.”³⁰ Gadamer simply puts names and unique insights into the different facets and dimensions of what it is: a mysterious phenomenon.

Before we go on to dare relate Gadamer to the experience of translating the New Testament into the Bafut language, which constitutes the second half of this paper, a few more insights into his hermeneutic theory are necessary. He has argued that all understanding is interpretation and vice versa. He has also shown that translation is a perfect hermeneutic object,

²⁷ The Pontifical Biblical Commission, “The Interpretation.”

²⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxviii.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 512.

³⁰ Duška Dobrosavljev, “Gadamer’s Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy,” *Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology* 2, no 9 (2002): 606.

where foreignness is mediated through both understanding and interpretation into an understandable and meaningful truth. Part of his critique of ahistorical romantic hermeneutics pivots on romanticism's severing off a third element of hermeneutics (besides understanding and interpretation) – application – which had been brought on board by the pietist J. J. Rambach. The argument for application as a moment integral to the hermeneutic process has the same premises as understanding and interpretation. Understanding is never automatic. Therefore, one has to interpret in order to achieve understanding. The eventfulness of understanding is rooted in the tensive dialogue between the fixity characteristic of a text and the inescapable stamp of space and time defining the concretely situated hermeneut. Even if it is possible to treat history as works of art or literary texts, as Schleiermacher and Dilthey did, there are other texts that cannot be treated in this way. Interpretations of law and gospel are meaningful only in reference to their concrete application. A law comes alive only through the judgment of the judge that gives it validity in concrete situations, i.e., as the judges apply it according to their best insights, to the case at hand. The gospel only becomes good news for salvation when it effects a change in the life of the reader, thanks to the insights of the preacher. They exist only in interpretation through application. Law and gospel impose a normative claim on the judge and the preacher/Christian. To understand them is to apply them insofar as the moral or other claims they make bind the person who understands them. To interpret, to understand them is to apply.

A law does not exist in order to be understood historically, but to be concretized in its legal validity by being interpreted. Similarly, the gospel does not exist in order to be understood as a merely historical document, but to be taken in such a way that it exercises its saving effect. This implies that the text, whether law or gospel, if it is to be understood properly, i.e., according to the claim it makes, must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application.³¹

Translating the New Testament into the Bafut Language

Translating the New Testament into Bafut presented a perfect Gadamerian object. Regardless of belonging to one tribe and speaking one language, there were some marked differences among members of the team of translators and, by extension, the targeted congregations. The indigenes in the hill-

³¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 309.

ier parts are generally perceived to be more liberal when compared to their more conservative compatriots in the “plain” around the king’s palace. The hillier parts are also more Catholic, whereas the lowlanders are the majority Presbyterian with a significant Baptist presence. Early on, the language of a neighboring tribe, Bali, was used as the language of worship by the Presbyterian Church. Indeed the New Testament was translated into Bali early on in the process of evangelization by Protestant missionaries from Basel in Switzerland. Some Bali words like “miyaka” – “thanks” – made their way into the vocabulary of the Presbyterian worshippers and the local populace, where those of Catholic stock used *mbi’ikə*. These differences had consequences that were religious, cultural, political and sometimes resulted in tensions and even fist fights as when sports events pitched the bell-ringing, Catholic, uncultured, uplanders’ school/team against wooden-drum-beating, Presbyterian, backward, lowlander opponents. I had my fair share in these free-for-all brawls. As a soccer goalkeeper, I was stoned once for an outstanding performance.

I was not aware of any efforts to translate the New Testament into Bafut until I was asked by my superiors to do a six-week Bible translation course in the Summer Institute of Linguistics of 1985. It opened my eyes toward the existence of a Bafut Language Association and to national efforts toward literacy programs for Cameroon’s indigenous languages. I remember a Catholic teacher on the course with me wondering what these “Basel people were up to” when he observed that the teachers and lots in the coursemates were Presbyterian. In a word, there were prejudices that were linguistic, cultural, and religious that had to be reckoned with in the work of translation and/or beyond translation and, perhaps of greater crucial importance, in the reception, acceptance, and usability of the New Testament in the Bafut language. However, thanks to the broadmindedness, perspicacity, inspiration, and hard work of the Coordinator of the Project, Joseph Mfonyam, and his team of translators, the work was successfully done.

From the get-go, the support of the church leadership of the three main Christian denominations – Presbyterians, Catholics, and Baptists – was solicited and enlisted. Representation by the best possible candidates, as well as reception and use of the translation, was thus guaranteed. Through them, English-literate Bafut Christians who also had a good mastery of the Bafut language were identified. We were then given literacy skills in the Bafut Language.³² Often, passages were given out for individual work. Some

³² Teaching Bafut people to read and write the Bafut language was itself monumental. Writing is perhaps the best way of conserving a culture. It is the difference

were translated as a team. The insistence always was to work under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The personal testimony of Mfonyam,³³ principal translator, beautifully captures the spirit in which the work was done:

We worked as a team, starting our work with a group meditation and prayer for guidance, knowing that we were dealing with the word of God. As a result, as we interacted with the scriptures, seeking to understand it, in order to translate it, we were listening to God to speak to us through it, and changing us, in order that the people we were translating for would see it in our lives. It is here that the paradox of the “otherness” and the “alienness” due to historical, cultural, linguistics differences and distance from the biblical or source text, author and the original audience, is not only highlighted but is being bridged. The author, and the text far removed in time, space, cultural background, become alive here and now and impacts the translator/interpreter and the audience of today. When we translated Lk 11:24-26 one of the key translators was so moved that he literally trembled when he understood the meaning of the text.³⁴ A heart that had been cleansed, if it is not spiritually filled and nourished runs the risk of ending up in a worse state. Interacting with the text, God’s word, the translator was brought face to face with the need and urgency of teaching

between the continued existence of the culture and its extinction. That is how the translation of the Bible into English – the King James Bible – standardized the English language. The Archbishop Emeritus Anselme Titianma Sanon of Bobo Dioulasso in Burkina Faso once told me during a conference organized by the Pontifical Commission on Culture in Accra, Ghana in 2004 that but for the translation of the New Testament into his tribal language, his tribe would be extinct today. The work of SIL in collaboration with the then Cameroon Ministry of Scientific Research in the vernacular literacy programs cannot be praised enough.

³³ Joseph Mfonyam, email “no subject,” joseph_mfonyam@sil.org of February 24, 2020.

³⁴ The Bafut translation Lk 11:24-26: “Nòò yii mò àzwi yí bí a fè’è a nu nù aa, a kara a nř àdìgè yii mò kaa ñki í sì ghu tswè aa, ñlɔɔ ni mò mbə yu mĩntə ghu le; a tuu yə aa, a swoŋ mə “mò ka bù bíi gha fu a nda yíi mò mò fè’è ghu aà. ’A tí bíi ñyə mò bí yè’è mò nda ya í laa ñkù’ùnə, boŋ à ka ghèè bú bíi nř ízwi jí sàmbaa jí bí jí dàŋ jíi í bí’í ntsyàtə yí, í zì ñku’usə yí ghu tâ bo bo kuu ñkuu ntswe ghu; bæé í ku maa noò boŋ ñstswè nù wa í ka bí’í tsyàtə ajàŋ yíi à lè mbə a mbii aà.” See *NTOÒ KRISTO YÍ ÑSIGINƏ: MİKÀÀ YÍ MFII* (*The New Testament in the Bafut Language of Cameroon*) (Dallas, TX: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1999).

and discipling new converts. We therefore see how our translation project and its search for meaning and understanding of truth fit within Gadamer's theoretical frame of philosophical hermeneutics. And what is particularly relevant for our project and the understanding of the mission of Christ, is the evocation of the Incarnation and aiming at being incarnational in our interpretation, presentation and experiencing of the gospel.

Once the Bafut translators became committed, they experienced being drawn into and participating in the life world of the evangelist and epistler as recorded in the different English translations of the New Testament used. There was part-whole dialoguing between word, phrase, verse, chapter, and book. Meaning evolved, became clearer, and was, in the end, provisionally agreed on in questioning the text and allowing the text to question the translator; in the translators' listening to each other on issues about linguistic expression, culture, and religious affiliation, which were honestly put into a huge discussion cauldron, heated up and stirred by the fires of prejudices until they blended and cooled down into a crystallized common recognizable and accepted truth.

This dialogical approach that characterized the translation work itself would inform the later stages of acceptance and approval, and then the application or usage of the translated text. The approval instances/bodies, in the end, were (1) the Translation/Interchurch Committee (ICC), (2) the Consultant, (3) the church hierarchy, and (4) the local church community.

Joseph Mfonyam again captures some of the rich, multi-dimensional, and tensile dynamic that sometimes characterized the rendering of meaning into Bafut:

In seeking the best word, expression or even picture image to express the meaning and truth of the gospel, and listening to the text, giving it room to question the translators, with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the right word was agreed upon, irrespective of denominational, religious and linguistic or dialectal differences and prejudices. And so, for example, deciding on the term to be used for translating the word, "baptize" needed a lot of discussion, since different words and expressions were hitherto used, such as "take water" and "put water on the head." After a lot of discussion and seeking to understand the texts in time and space, with an eye on the geographical information, and particularly considering the accounts of the gospels, for example, Mt 3:5-9, the interpretation and applica-

tion of epistles (writers), for example Rom, 6:1-4, we agreed to use the expression, “*m̀m̀urə a ŋkì*,” which literally means, “dip/immerse in water.”

Another area of interpretation concerned non-verbal language, which can differ from culture to culture. In seeking to meaningfully translate Lk 23:48, we had to take the cultural implications into consideration. This is the part of the verse concerned:

“When they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.” (ESV).

“When they saw what had taken place, went home, striking their chests.” (CSB).

If we translated the image, “beating their breasts” literally, it would give a wrong meaning. “Beating their breasts/chests” translates in Bafut as “*ŋkwɛɛ n̄ mintī myaa*.” This means they were proud of what they had done. Another consideration is that literally translating “beating their breasts” will mean that it was the women beating their breasts, not men, since, in Bafut, men are perceived as not having breasts. In order to bring out the right meaning using a culturally relevant image, we rendered this as “*ŋwetə mbô myaa*,” and this means “crossed their arms” (under the chin, so the palms rested on the shoulders), which is a sign of mourning in the culture. So in order to explain the symbolic action, the translation added the implicit information, “*nlonŋ mə mintī myaa le nluu n̄ àjɛŋnə*” which means, “because their hearts were full with sorrow.”³⁵

Hermeneutic truth always happens this way. We only need to recognize it. That a translation exists against the odds of intrinsic untranslatability is proof that what Gadamer describes – the cognitive, philological, psychological, and moral processes involved – works and in working shows itself to be true. He describes what is. A translation is proof of the fact of translatability. Gadamer has become something of a superstar among theorists of translation, as evidenced by the use of his ideas and titles in articles by many

³⁵ Joseph Mfonyam, email “no subject,” joseph_mfonyam@sil.org of February 24, 2020. He continues: “The Bafut translation of Lk 23:48: *Bə bya b̄tsim bii mə bi le mbòò a nyə ànnù yìi mə a lem̄f̄’è aa, bi le nlò ntigə ŋkwɛɛ waa a ndùgə bo, ŋwetə mbô myaa nlonŋ mə mintī myaa le nluu n̄ àjɛŋnə aà.*” See *NTÒÒ KRISTO YÌ ÑSÌGÌNƏ*.

scholars across the world.³⁶ The New Testament in the Bafut language shows everything he describes. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

In June 2000, after years of translation work, *The New Testament in the Bafut Language* was presented to the people. I was chosen to read a text from the Gospels for the ecumenical liturgy for the occasion. For one who had for years proclaimed the gospel at every Mass, in either English or Pidgin English, something extraordinary took place. By the time I finished, I was in tears. So were most of the thousands of fellow compatriots gathered there. I heard; my people heard God speak Bafut. And it was as if God was speaking to us for the first time. As if we had never heard Him before. A God who speaks Bafut must be a Bafut God. Until God becomes one of a people, that people will never be His.

One could write a book on the import of those tears. But that would be repeating everything that Gadamer has enabled us to say. The tearing-up effect (*Wirkung*) was perhaps about what I read that day. But I cannot remember the passage I read. Most people probably did not and would not. It was perhaps more that whatever that passage said was said in Bafut. It could have been any gospel passage. Any gospel passage that day was representative of Good News. Both the message and the language that bears the message were good news. The tears were tears of joy, of being caught up as if for the first time in a new world created there and then by divine language. They were tears of re-finding, of rediscovering oneself, of welcome, of re-cognition, homecoming and reunion in one's (linguistic) home. Listening to God by a people that was naturally open to Him in a foreign language had been somewhat alienating, and it had prevented a full understanding of the Good News. Tragic cultural exile was at an end. The tears were an *Amen*, "It is so," to the truth of the moment, similar to the identification with the truth of art, especially in Greek drama. Weinsheimer comments on Gadamer's take on the Aristotelian tragedy in the following words: "Catharsis is the spectator's return to himself from ecstasis by a return to face what in truth is; and that truth is admitted, accepted, even affirmed in tragic joy."³⁷

³⁶ For instance see Brian O'Keeffe, "Reading, Writing, and Translating in Gadamer's Hermeneutic Philosophy," in *Philosophy and Practice in Translational Hermeneutics*, eds. John Stanley et al. (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2018), 15-47; Bernd Stefanink and Ioana Bălăcescu, "The Hermeneutical Approach in Translation Studies," *Cadernos de Tradução* 37, no. 3 (September 2017), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321927353>; Li Yan, "On the Translator's Subjectivity: From the Perspective of Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics," *Higher Education of Social Science* 3, no. 2 (2012): 21-26, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/2363_06393.pdf.

³⁷ Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, 116.

It was not a perfect translation. Archbishop Paul Verdzekov of blessed memory, who had taken me and other seminarians out of normal pastoral work during the summers of 1984 and 1985 to attend the Bible Translation courses and who encouraged me to be the Catholic presence at every stage of the work, presided at the dedication ceremony, assisted by the Moderators of the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches. He had urged us to do everything to complete our translation work in time in order to have the finished and published New Testament presented to the Churches in the year 2000 as a Millennial Gift both to and of Jesus Christ on His 2000th Anniversary. He said that although the translation would not be perfect, it would not matter since there would always be revisions and new editions. This was most encouraging as it gave us the impetus to work hard in order to meet the deadline. Thus the Bafut New Testament was ready and was dedicated on June 18, 2000. There will be a need for umpteen revised editions and new translations. Yet they all are and always will remain *translations*, that is, new interpretations, new comings into being, of the one and same old New Testament.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to show how fundamental insights of Gadamer's theoretical frame of philosophical hermeneutics apply in the description of the translation of the Bafut New Testament scriptures. We have been able to describe how this model functioned in the search for meaning in conversation with history, culture, and the belief and thought system of the people of Bafut, and how all along the translators had a conversation with the text in order to fully understand and interpret it meaningfully. Our search for meaning and truth was motivated by our goal to produce a good and acceptable translation that is accurate and faithful to the source text, naturally and clearly understood. It is not enough to just give people a translation that is good and understandable. Believing that the text of the scripture is the very word of God means to touch people's hearts and transform them, as the ultimate aim of translation is to see that it can be used and put into practice. This is where we see that the model of Gadamer is attractive and able to meet our goal. His philosophical hermeneutics, with the threefold part – understanding, interpretation, and application – is, therefore, the right framework for interpreting the scriptures. It enables the translator to bridge the gap between the biblical text and his/her time, permitting an effective transformation of people as their Christian faith is nourished and edified. Critiques have had issues with Gadamer because his method gives room for subjectivism, but this is an important aspect of the gospel message because God is

personal, God is love, hence there must be a uniquely personal and individual side to our understanding, interpreting, and experiencing the gospel message. The gospel only becomes good news for salvation when it effects a change in the life of the reader or the hearer. This enables the translators to make sure that their understanding and translation of the Bible text impact their lives, and that the message of the gospel should first be translated into their lives as evidence and witness of the power of the Word as a text, as a written word literally comes alive. Translation as an instance of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is always mysteriously incarnational in its trans- and super-temporality. The truth and its meaning remain afresh in every époque with its power undiminished. "And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us." "Nìghàà nya lè mbə̀j ntìgə̀ ñùmìsə̀j ... ñtìgə̀ ntswe a tìtì bi'i" (Jn 1:14). That Word lived in Palestine two thousand years ago. He spoke Aramaic. Through the translation/translator He now speaks Bafut. The Bafut people today are as privileged as John the Evangelist and the early Christian Community. They are really, yet enigmatically, a part of the "us" that John speaks of. The prayer and hope are that He also comes alive to His Bafut hearers.

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PART III

**Socio-Political
and Philosophical Considerations**

Individualist and Communitarian Principles of Justice

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Introduction

How can people, particularly those of different cultures and traditions, come together to work for human liberation and flourishing? In an era when the politics of identity and difference, which focuses on the distinctiveness of human beings from one another, seems to have supplanted the politics of universalism, which focused on what human beings have in common,² it appears that there is less and less common ground from which to begin.

Vincent Shen's work sought to answer this question by developing a theory of "strangification" (*waitui* 外推 – "the act of going outside of oneself to the other") that was rooted in a fundamental ethics of generosity – of generosity to "the other."³ Generosity, Shen argued, is foundational, and is

* St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Canada. – Earlier versions of this paper were presented at Nankai University, Tianjin, China, and at the University of Delhi, India. The author is grateful to the members of the audience at both universities for their comments and questions.

¹ See Vincent Shen, "Truth and Strangification: Religious Dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity," in *Unity and Diversity in Religion and Culture: Exploring the Psychological and Philosophical Issues Underlying Global Conflict*, ed. Liubava Morena (St. Petersburg: St Petersburg Branch of Russian Institute for Cultural Research, 2006), 267-283, at 283.

² See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 37-38.

³ See Vincent Shen, "Theory and Practice of Ethics of Generosity in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism," in *Kenosis, Chinese Spirituality and Christian Communities*, ed.

not limited to and does not assume “reciprocity, quite often presupposed in social relationship and ethical golden rules.”⁴ This theory of strangification, rooted in an ethics of generosity, offers, Shen argued, a way to promote understanding and truth across cultures and traditions.

Yet one might well ask, as one of Shen’s colleagues, Chenyang Li, did, whether an ethics of generosity is sufficient as a basis for Shen’s ultimate aim of promoting understanding and cooperation in a pluralist world. “Generosity,” Li argued, “is undoubtedly a good virtue..., but [in an era] in which equality is a fundamental ideal, then justice or humanity based on human equality may serve better as a basis ... than generosity.”⁵ Or, to be more precise, as the French academician and essayist, Sébastien Nicolas de Chamfort (1741-1794), wrote: “We must be just before we are generous, just as we have shirts before having ruffles.”⁶

Despite such criticism, there is much to an ethics of generosity, and the theme of generosity has had a role, not simply in religions, such as Christianity, but in contemporary debates.⁷ Still, one might ask, is there another value or principle that can serve as a basis for generosity and for building community in which the differences among human beings can be acknowledged?⁸ Pacē Shen, one such value, as already suggested, is justice.

When we consider the concept of justice within the context of a diverse and socially, ethnically, culturally, and religiously pluralistic world, we

Vincent Shen (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2015), 119-148; Vincent Shen, “Globalization, Christianity and Confucianism: On Strangification and Generosity to the Other,” in *Dialogues of Philosophies, Religions, and Civilizations in the Era of Globalization*, ed. Zhao Dunhua (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007), 179-198.

⁴ Shen, “Globalization, Christianity and Confucianism: On Strangification and Generosity to the Other,” 181.

⁵ Li Chenyang, “The Element of Equality in the Global Era: A Comment on the Paper of Vincent Shen,” in *Dialogues of Philosophies, Religions, and Civilizations in the Era of Globalization*, 199-202.

⁶ Sébastien Nicolas de Chamfort, *Oeuvres complètes de Chamfort*, recueillies et publ. par P. R. Auguis, vol. I, *Maximes et Pensées*, chap. 2 (Paris: Chez Chaumerot Jeune, 1824), 369: “Il faut être juste avant d’être généreux, comme on a des chemises avant d’avoir des dentelles.”

⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁸ I have argued that there may be several such principles, in William Sweet and Hendrik Hart, *Responses to the Enlightenment: An Exchange on Foundations, Faith, and Community* (Amsterdam/Leiden: Brill | Rodopi, 2011).

are struck by two things. First, that despite the many differences, we see a common regard for the value of justice. Second, that despite this common regard for justice, there is no single way of understanding what justice is. One may well ask, then, whether there is any way in which these differences can be recognized and, yet, allow for a shared understanding of justice that enables cooperation, harmony, and solidarity across cultures and traditions.

In this very short paper, I seek to do three things. First, in order to highlight the challenges to providing a cross- or intercultural account of justice today, I briefly sketch a few of the different views of justice. Second, in order to begin to address the apparent deadlock among these views, I present two broad approaches to justice – approaches that I describe as individualist and communitarian approaches. Yet these approaches, I argue, are also problematic. While each provides important insights, neither offers a clear and plausible account of justice that would or could be accepted across the globe or, even, translate across cultures. Thus, in a third moment, I draw on the French philosopher Jacques Maritain for a view of justice that reflects both the value of the human person – though in a more expansive way than in individualist accounts – and a notion of the embedded self, suggested in classical accounts (such as those of Aristotle and Bernard Bosanquet), and revived recently by those called ‘communitarians’ (such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Michael Sandel). I suggest that Maritain’s writings may allow the generation of a theory of justice that preserves basic beliefs about justice, is respectful of cultural difference, and which therefore may promote understanding and cooperation across cultures.

The Problem of Justice

Justice is undoubtedly a broad, vague, and contested notion. From the most ancient times, in both East and West, justice has been recognized as a feature that concerns relations between individuals (i.e., commutative), relations between individuals and the state or community, and one’s relation to oneself.

Aristotle, for example, distinguishes between commutative, distributive, and rectificatory justice – the latter deals with remedies for unjust distributions – though it is the second that receives the most attention, perhaps because it focuses on matters that affect society as a whole. Similarly, in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:19.20), we read: “Do your work with the welfare of others always in mind.” Indeed, in the modern period, most accounts of justice have focused on distributive justice – specifically, on the distribution of *social* benefits and burdens.

In these and many other cases, however, what is at the core of justice is – as Thomas Aquinas (following Aristotle) puts it – “rendering to others what is due”⁹ or – as John Rawls puts it – “fairness.”¹⁰ But these are very vague remarks, for one is immediately drawn to asking, How do we determine “what is due”? What is fairness?¹¹

Two Traditional Approaches

One traditional way that philosophers have approached the understanding of justice is to differentiate between justice as a substantive principle and justice as a procedural principle. A substantive principle asserts that a person acts justly when – or a state of affairs is just when – it leads to a particular material result. Among these substantive principles are the following: (a) everyone gets an equal share, e.g., access to basic (elementary) education; (b) to each according to his or her *need*, e.g., social welfare; (c) to each according to his or her *effort* or *ability* – e.g., promotions for employees; grades for students; (d) to each according to personal *merit* (virtue) – e.g., civic and ecclesiastical rewards and honors; (e) to each according to his or her *rights* – e.g., persons receiving their inheritance; (f) to each according to whether *society wants it* (market value) – e.g., compensation for professions (such as higher compensation for physicians and lawyers).

Each of these substantive principles has been offered as a way of expressing “what is due” or “what is fair.” But a moment’s reflection will indicate that none of these principles is self-evident, that they are not mutually compatible, that there are good reasons to call into question each one of them, and that each would require an appeal to a higher ethical principle for any kind of justification. In any event, no one of them has acquired a consensus in its favor. For example, basing justice on need raises the question of what, exactly, is “need.” Is it simply what would be required for survival, or is there a “decent minimum” that goes beyond this, or are we looking at

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 58, a. 1.

¹⁰ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971).

¹¹ E.g., if one asserts that justice means “like cases should be treated alike,” a) this does not say how specifically “likes” ought to be treated (for if I hate all people equally, it would seem strange to say that I am just); b) it does not say what we should be looking at in determining what “likenesses” should count; and c) it does not say *how* to determine equality and inequality (in what regard(s) the cases are “alike”), for one could, presumably, treat all members of one race or one sex alike, and differently from members of another race or sex.

what is required for human flourishing? Not only does need vary, sometimes significantly, among persons – and, so, challenges an ideal of equality – but this understanding of justice would also challenge ideals of merit or desert. And one can easily imagine similar objections to the other substantive principles.

An alternative, then, has been to opt for a procedural principle; a recent version of such an approach is provided by John Rawls (putatively inspired by Kant) – that justice is the result of a rationally-justified process.¹² Many have, however, argued that a procedural account does not pay sufficient attention to persons and to the material features of the distribution, such as merit or desert. (These critics presumably prefer a substantive principle.) There are challenges to a procedural principle as well.

How, then, are we to understand justice? Is it a matter of outcome (and, hence, a material, substantive principle) *or* of process (i.e., a procedural principle)? And which *particular* outcome or process sets the standard for “justice”? By themselves, there is no obvious way to select among them. Today, in a world in which many philosophers do not want to appeal to ethical or political foundations to resolve problems, it is difficult to see any way forward.

It may seem, then, that we are at a bit of an impasse when it comes to saying what justice is.

Another Way of Looking at Justice

A different way of looking at the issue of what justice is, is by taking into account some features of the human person – of what it is to be human – and to consider justice as reflecting either a fundamental individualistic principle or a communitarian principle. On the first approach, justice is something that must in the first instance respect and seek to preserve the value of the individual human being; this is independent of an overall account of the (social) good. I call this an individualist theory because it focuses on the person as an independent, even isolated, being, whose attributes and abilities, while certainly benefitting from living in society, have value because they are rooted in something about individuals themselves – e.g., their nature, independent of social context. Here, I have in mind the views of philosophers such as, classically, Locke and Kant and, in the contemporary period, Robert

¹² See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*.

Nozick, Tibor Machan, and, arguably, John Rawls.¹³ If one is committed to individualism, then only some of the principles noted earlier would be acceptable, because only they best reflect the basic value of the individual.

Thus, an individualist approach to justice would favor patterns of distribution, such as (a) to each according to his or her *need*; (b) to each according to his or her *effort* or *ability*; (c) to each according to personal *merit* (or *virtue*); (d) to each according to his or her *rights* or *dignity*. In each model or pattern of distribution, the individual person has a priority over others. In a way, this approach to justice may seem to be treating different individuals differently (e.g., based on one's particular needs). But this is misleading. If justice must recognize, in proper proportion, what individuals are due, at a basic level, one can say that they all are being treated the same (i.e., being given due respect as persons), even though what they may specifically receive is different.

In short, if a person is committed to individualism, the individual has a basic value. The focus then becomes which of the preceding principles best reflects that basic value.

The second option, noted above, is what might be called a communitarian approach to justice. Those associated with this view include – though some might resist such a categorization – John Stuart Mill,¹⁴ Bernard Bosanquet, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Michael Sandel. In each

¹³ One can view Rawls's procedural account (as described in *A Theory of Justice*) as another individualist account, insofar as the basis of Rawls's two principles is that they are what a rational individual would agree to as rationally maximizing his or her interests. Admittedly, in John Rawls, *The Laws of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), Rawls attempts to take account of societies operating according to other principles.

¹⁴ Though it may seem peculiar to think of utilitarianism as communitarian – particularly as Mill does have many apparently individualist features in his account – it does root justice in a social, and not a purely individual, good. For example, for Mill, justice is based on the existence of a “rule of conduct,” and that rule of conduct is itself justified by a principle of utility – the greatest happiness principle. Mill writes that justice is “a name for certain classes of moral rules, which concern the essentials of human well-being more nearly, and are therefore of more absolute obligation, than any other rules for the guidance of life...” He concludes: “Justice implies something which it is not only right to do, and wrong not to do, but which some individual person can claim from us as his moral right.” (J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill [Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society]*, vol. 10 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969], 247) – though this latter “moral right” is itself based on the principle of utility.

– and this is why they are placed together, here – we find the expression of a view that “grounds rules supporting right action in a complete conception of the good.”¹⁵

The key issue here is that we human beings are not just isolated individuals – that even our identity *as* individuals is based on society and social influences. Because of these deep relations to – this embeddedness in – the community, one’s values, beliefs, and personality are necessarily linked to one’s social context, and so one’s own good cannot be separated from the community or society. Thus, human beings have basic obligations or duties to others in their community or society – e.g., obligations of solidarity and loyalty.¹⁶

Justice on this model is a characteristic and a practice – more precisely, a virtue – defined in terms of a general, social good. Thus, taking account of how justice carries through to others, we have substantive distributive principles of justice such as: (a) everyone gets an equal share (of at least basic goods); (b) to each according to whether society wants it (e.g., as determined by a ‘free market’); (c) more broadly, to each according to the form of life or traditions of the society in which one lives. So, if one sees the human person as, basically, embedded in a social context, one may choose one of the preceding three (or more) substantive principles of justice as best reflecting the fact of the rootedness of individuals in the community and the value of the community.

These two ways of looking at justice – the individualist and the communitarian – are fruitful, because they look beyond the pattern or principle of justice to its warrant or justification. They also help us to see better the driving assumptions or presuppositions of the principles offered. In short, if one holds, as a basic value, the importance of the individual as an independent being, then one is likely drawn toward an individualist principle of justice. If one thinks that it is empirically (or philosophically) more appropriate to view the person as a basically social being, then communitarian principles will likely seem more appropriate. Yet, there have been trenchant critiques of both the individualist and communitarian approaches.

¹⁵ James Sterba, “Justice,” in *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, ed. S.G. Post, third edition (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004), 1357. See also Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Privatization of the Good,” *The Review of Politics* 52 (1990): 344-361.

¹⁶ See Michael Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009), 234.

Some Challenges

The individualist approach is, for many, plausible because it recognizes the distinctiveness and the value of each human individual. It tends to affirm that we all, therefore, have a natural liberty that must be respected, and hence asserts a primacy of liberty and individual rights. This fits with the view of individuals as sovereign over, and ultimately accountable only to, themselves. But this account of the human individual says little about *what* human beings are, *why* they have value (or ought to have value), and *why* their wishes and their consent and their inviolability are so important.

Moreover, the individualist account tends to have a rather thin and highly subjective conception of the good. Mill, for example, speaks of the basic value of each of us “pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.” And he adds that “Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.”¹⁷ Yet this tells us little or nothing of what, concretely, that good is. It tells us nothing of how one’s good bears on the good or well-being of others. Some critics seek, therefore, a fuller, richer, and more intersubjective conception of the good.

Finally, the individualist account also seems to ignore or downplay the social context and lived reality of persons. It is not clear whether, if ever, individualist principles have limits. And so it is not surprising that individualist principles do not obviously cross cultures – for they do not obviously reflect an account of the nature of the human person that one finds in other cultures, and they seem to many to be so formal as to be impracticable. Others, then, are drawn toward a communitarian approach. There is much to be said in favor of this approach, as well.

A communitarian approach seems to have a robust account of human nature, and of how human individuals engage with one another in society. As many communitarian authors have argued, individuals are not atomistic or “unencumbered” selves – i.e., selves “understood as prior to and independent of purposes and ends”¹⁸ and having, as their most important feature, their capacity to choose. This view, Michael Sandel points out, “means there is always a distinction between the values I have and the person I am.”¹⁹

¹⁷ J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, chap. 1, para. 13.

¹⁸ Michael J. Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self,” *Political Theory* 12 (1984): 81-96, at 86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

In contrast, for communitarians, individuals are situated within a community; it is the community that provides human beings with goals, purposes, and values that serve as, as Charles Taylor puts it, “authoritative horizons of life,” – and that are essential to one’s sense of identity.²⁰ With the communitarian understanding of human nature and of the community, justice, then, is something that is defined or determined within the community. This approach, however, encounters three problems.

First, it risks failing to provide sufficient recognition of the value of the person. For example, in *Spheres of Justice*, Michael Walzer notes that there are some societies “where the social meanings are integrated and hierarchical” – such as the caste system in India.²¹ Such societies could regard caste differentiation – and even discrimination – as just, because it fits with those societies’ conception of the good.

Second, this approach is challenged by the fact of contemporary pluralism and cultural and ethnic diversity. Many countries today do not have, or acknowledge, a robust common good or shared goals, purposes, and values. Rather, there are multiple communities within these countries, and each may provide different values or, at least, different rankings of values. If justice is, then, determined “within” each of these smaller communities, this may lead to different and, possibly, conflicting conceptions of justice – or, worse – in the country as a whole, so that there is no coherent conception of justice overall.

Third, because justice is seen as a practice in view of a particular conception of the good of a particular community, communitarians are unable to offer a substantive view of justice that can “cross cultures.” Thus, one is led to ask: given that there are such problems with both individualist and communitarian approaches, is there another approach to justice that acknowledges the importance of a common good, but that also has adequate respect for the individual? I want to offer one such approach, that of Jacques Maritain.

Jacques Maritain

Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) is best known as a disciple of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. In several respects, Aquinas follows Aristotle on

²⁰ Roger Lundin, *Believing Again: Doubt and Faith in a Secular Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), quoting Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 159.

²¹ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford: Robertson, 1983), 313.

issues of justice – and one might expect Maritain to do so as well. What is interesting, however, is how Maritain sought to retain Aquinas’s universalism in ethics, political philosophy, and philosophy of law while, at the same time, being attentive to history and diversity.

Maritain is perhaps best known for his influence on and defence of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and for his writings on human rights of the 1940s and 1950s, where many of his views on ethics, society, and justice first appeared. For Maritain, like Aquinas and Aristotle, justice is giving to people what they are due. But Maritain would insist that “what is due” must recognize both the nature and value of the person, and the context and the particular social conditions in which the person lives.

In a little-known series of essays, published in 1940 as *De la justice politique* [On Political Justice], Maritain distinguishes between “true” and “false” justice.²² Maritain would clearly consider individualist conceptions of justice – here, including the conception of justice offered by utilitarians²³ – as examples of “false justice.” His argument is brief. Such conceptions of justice are “abstract and geometrical, claiming to impose on all, without any regard for particular cases or the circumstances, the a priori law of a pure and simple equality. As this is practically impossible, [any such conception of justice] is condemned to hypocrisy, to the betrayal [of its words by its acts], and finally often to cover up its selfishness by the use of beautiful formulas.”²⁴

For example, if we think of justice as simply being given one’s rights, and that these rights are “absolutely unconditioned and exclusive of any limitation,”²⁵ then these rights will inevitably conflict with other rights, and will also inevitably conflict with the well-being of others and of the community as a whole. What a “liberal individualist” account of justice lacks, then, is a sense of what it means to be human being as a being fundamentally in relation to others. Specifically, for Maritain, such a view focuses “first and foremost in the power of each person to appropriate individually the goods of nature in order to do freely whatever he wants.”²⁶ Thus, justice is the mere

²² Jacques Maritain, *De la justice politique*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Jacques et Raïssa Maritain*, vol. 7 (Freiburg and Paris, 1988), 283-332. All translations of this text are mine.

²³ Mill’s utilitarianism is, in a way, individualistic, because, for example, the goodness or rightness of any particular action is ultimately based on individual pleasures and pains.

²⁴ Maritain, *De la justice politique*, 324.

²⁵ Jacques Maritain, *Modern Political Thought from Hobbes to Maritain*, ed. William Sweet (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2012), 498.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

respect of an abstract formula about one's rights, without attending to relations to others, basic duties, and social consequences. A utilitarian account, while putatively focussed on social well-being, is equally individualistic, "abstract and geometrical;"²⁷ this is in virtue of what Maritain would call its underlying "rationalism."²⁸ To begin with, it has too abstract a notion of the human person and its value. Recall Mill's remarks (paraphrasing Jeremy Bentham) that "everybody [is] to count for one, nobody for more than one,"²⁹ and "As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator."³⁰ The presumption, here, is that one can determine what is just by starting from an "a priori law of pure and simple equality."³¹ But this is practically impossible and, therefore, one is hypocritical if one wishes to take it as an axiom. Moreover, even if such an equality were possible, utilitarianism also assumes that, in order to set priorities and determine goods, human beings can engage in a kind of mathematical calculation of what people want, and then somehow aggregate these wants. And even if this process, too, were possible, utilitarians assume that such a process is morally legitimate. Liberal individualism (including utilitarianism), then, can offer only a "false justice."

Yet Maritain would also reject many communitarian views of justice, even though his understanding of the human person has some affinity with theirs. What some communitarian views state or suggest is that the liberty and rights of the individual are to be submitted "to the collective command of the social body" – as part of a social conception of the good. In a Marxist view, for example, this is "to 'free' human labor (by subordinating it to the economic community) and to gain the control of history."³² Maritain points out, however, that this subordination of liberties and rights threatens the recognition of the inherent dignity and basic freedom of human beings.

²⁷ Maritain, *De la justice politique*, 324.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, "en vertu du rationalisme."

²⁹ See Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chap. 5, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. J. M. Robson et al. (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1963-1991), vol. 10, 257. This is a paraphrase of Bentham's "every individual in the country tells for one; no individual for more than one." See Jeremy Bentham, *Rationale of Judicial Evidence, Specially Applied to English Practice*, in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. J. Bowring (Edinburgh, 1838-1843), vol. VII, 334.

³⁰ Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chap. 2, para. 18.

³¹ Maritain, *De la justice politique*, 324.

³² Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 107.

What, then, for Maritain is “true justice”? Maritain writes: “True justice, which is like the sap of creation, is concrete and alive, taking account of cases and circumstances, treating human beings as persons, all endowed with the same essential dignity amidst different qualities, not as interchangeable entities. This true justice establishes among persons (be they individual persons or collective “persons”) an equality of proportion. It admits and sanctions varieties of customs, it recognizes the diversity of historical conditions; it does not give the same rights to children as to adults, nor the same freedom and power to the mad as to the sane.”³³

Thus, we see that, for Maritain, justice has, as its foundational feature, a recognition of human dignity and the value of human persons as beings of intrinsic value. It also brings with it an explanation of what human beings are, and what ends or purposes they naturally seek – i.e., what contributes to (their) flourishing as human beings. There are, then, basic human (e.g., moral, physical, and spiritual goods) appropriate to and required by human beings as social, free, and rational. Justice must reflect this.

Yet Maritain acknowledges that this “true justice” may, rightly, look different in different places: justice must also take into consideration the historical, social, and economic context and the capacities of the persons involved. In other words, what is due to a person – and what a person is obliged to do, in acting justly – can vary in its details. Maritain also sees “true justice” as “concrete and *alive*”; that, as contexts allow new opportunities for human flourishing, then human beings can rightly acquire – or, better, can exercise – new rights. Similarly, in appropriate contexts, persons may be called to carry out new, different, or additional duties to the community. If one does not acknowledge this variability and contextuality, then one is guilty of an “abstractiveness” and an “a priorism.”

Nevertheless, despite this appreciation of context, in its broad lines, justice requires a basic minimum – a universal element – without which any claim that justice exists is inconsistent with what human beings are – namely, “persons.” True justice must reflect and respect persons. It is this underlying “personalism” that Maritain would regard as an alternative to individualism and communitarianism, though it broadly has affinities with aspects of both.

Thus, Maritain offers a “personalistic” view of justice that sees “the mark of human dignity first and foremost in the power to make [the] goods of nature serve the common conquest of intrinsically human, moral, and spiritual goods and of man’s freedom of autonomy.”³⁴

³³ Maritain, *De la justice politique*, 324.

³⁴ Maritain, *Man and the State*, 107.

Conclusion

One of the most important contributions to philosophy by Vincent Shen was his notion of strangification and its relation to an ethics of generosity. While generosity to “the other” is necessary to promote understanding across cultures and traditions, I have argued that the value of justice – specifically, the notion of “true justice,” described by Jacques Maritain – is also necessary. Like individualists and communitarians, Maritain recognizes that a conception of justice depends on basic underlying principles, e.g., an understanding of what it is to be a human being, and a concept – be it ‘thick’ or ‘thin’ – of the good. Maritain’s alternative to individualistic and communitarian principles of justice offers a robust understanding of the human person and affirms both the basic dignity of the person as well as the basic value of the common good or good of society – a society in which persons have their origins and in which they come to have their identity as developed human beings.

Given its attentiveness to context and conditions, then, Maritain’s view of “true justice” can resonate (or root itself) in different cultures and traditions while, at the same time, bridge different cultures – because of its affirmation of the dignity of the person, taking account of what the ends and purposes of human beings are, as well as what is necessary to human flourishing. Maritain’s writings, then, offer the basis for a theory of justice that is consistent with views about justice that are common to many traditions and cultures and that also recognizes and respects cultural differences. Such a theory may, I suggest, also provide a way of enabling and promoting cooperation and solidarity across cultures – an aim to which Vincent Shen was committed throughout his life.³⁵

³⁵ I am grateful to Vincent Shen for our many conversations about the notion of strangification, of which he was an exemplary practitioner, and for his friendship.

Hebrew Justice: A Reconstruction for Today

FU YOUDE*

Introduction

This paper explores the implications, as well as the theological and political grounds, of the idea of justice in *Tanakh* through textual and historical analysis. The meaning of justice in the Bible is two-fold: divine and human. The former refers to the God-given concepts that constitute the ultimate source of human justice. Human justice includes precepts like fair trade and compassion toward the needy and the stranger. These precepts are the theory, while “justification by deeds” is the practice. Further, this paper examines the links between justice and the ideas of covenant and theocracy in ancient Israel. Holiness, comprehensiveness, and legalism are major characteristics in the broadening of the understanding of religious ethics and politics in the Bible.

Modern theorists of justice – whether classical liberal thinkers such as Friedrich August von Hayek, utilitarians like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, or neo-liberal philosophers like John Rawls – rarely pay attention to the ethics of ancient Hebrew religion. Instead, they emphasize individual rights, which seem alien to the Hebrew Bible; they ignore the biblical God and His relation to justice. In contrast, Alasdair MacIntyre, well-known for his critique of neo-liberalism and Enlightenment values, revived interest in virtue ethics and showed some renewed affinity with the Bible. He was aware of biblical conceptions of divine justice and frequently mentions the Jewish

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tradition in his writings. He clearly stated the necessity of Jewish tradition as a supplement to philosophical ethics, but still did not include Hebrew notions of justice in his work.¹

Since the mid-twentieth century, Jewish philosophers like Abraham J. Heschel, Haim H. Cohen, Abraham P. Bloch, Louis E. Newman, and Lenn Goodman have debated the concept of justice. Some of them expounded on the connotations of Hebrew justice; some sketched the evolution of justice in the Bible and the later rabbinic tradition; some elaborated on various principles of biblical justice, and some tried to build a theory of justice from Judaic sources. Unfortunately, these philosophers neither described a comprehensive theoretical system of Hebrew justice nor did they analyze its essential characteristics or modern significance.² Although Michael Zank has provided a detailed explanation and analysis of justice in Jewish thought,³ he primarily emphasizes the modern era while gesturing toward pre-modern ideas of justice in ancient Near East and Mediterranean areas.⁴ In light of this, it seems that the exploration of Hebrew justice is still partial and incomplete.

The Hebrew Bible is not a typical philosophical work. However, many verses comment on justice. Rereading and reinterpreting these verses helps to define the concept of Hebrew justice and construct a comprehensive theory. I believe that Hebrew justice, as a religious theory of justice, is unique and distinct from other theories of justice, as in rationalist philosophy and poli-

¹ In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Alasdair MacIntyre explicitly argues that Christians must listen to the voice of Jews and that his narration of traditions should have included Judaic, Islamic, and other post-biblical works. He laments their absence in his work, particularly given his awareness of the significance of Judaic and Islamic tradition. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, trans. Wan Junren (Beijing: Present China Publishing House, 1996), 14-15.

² See Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Prince Press, 1962), 200-201; Haim H. Cohen, "Justice," in *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought: Original Essays on Critical Concepts, Movements, and Beliefs*, eds. Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (New York: The Free Press, 1972), 515-520; Abraham P. Bloch, *A Book of Jewish Ethical Concepts: Biblical and Post-Biblical* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1984), 57-69; Louis E. Newman, *An Introduction to Jewish Ethics* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2005), 86-94; Lenn Goodman, *On Justice: An Essay in Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), viii-x.

³ See Michael Zank, "Justice," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: The Modern Era*, eds. Martin Kavka, Zachary Braiterman, and David Novak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 704-738.

⁴ *Ibid.*

tics. It offers a contrast with and valuable supplement to the theories of justice in Western philosophy. This essay will first define justice in the Hebrew Bible through an etymological analysis of biblical terms; secondly, it will reveal the basic meaning, specific rules, and a general principle of Hebrew justice; thirdly, it will explore the relationship between the theory of justice and the polity depicted in the Bible; and lastly, it will posit the main characteristics of Hebrew justice by analyzing biblical texts and comparing them to Western theories of justice. Establishing a theory of justice that covers the Bible, rabbinic literature, and modern Jewish thought and religion is beyond the scope of this article. Therefore, I will mainly confine myself to the Hebrew Bible and extend to other Jewish and non-Jewish philosophical materials as necessary.

Zedek and Mishpat

The Hebrew language expresses the meaning of justice with two words, *zedek* (or *zedakah*, its feminine form) and *mishpat*. In the Hebrew Bible, the root *zdk* occurs 523 times, the verbal form occurs 41 times, and the noun *zedek* appears 119 times. The feminine form *zedakah*, appears 157 times, and the adjective-substantive, *zaddik*, appears 206 times.⁵ *Zedek* or *zedakah*, sometimes translated as “righteousness” and sometimes as “justice” in English, can encompass a variety of concepts, including: human blameless behavior,⁶ honesty,⁷ righteousness,⁸ human judicial justice,⁹ divine judicial justice,¹⁰ the human attribute of godliness,¹¹ righteousness as holy behavior,¹² God’s expectations for human conduct,¹³ what is reliable or truthful,¹⁴ salvation or deliverance,¹⁵ legal claims,¹⁶ general divine justice,¹⁷ the just acts of

⁵ Cf. J. J. Scullion, “Righteousness,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, ed. David Noel Freeman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 725.

⁶ Gen. 30:33.

⁷ Isa. 48:1; Jer. 4:2.

⁸ Ps. 15:1-5.

⁹ Gen. 18:19.

¹⁰ Isa. 5:16.

¹¹ 2 Sam. 22:21, 22:25.

¹² Gen. 15:6.

¹³ Deut. 33:21.

¹⁴ Isa. 45:23.

¹⁵ Isa. 46:12.

¹⁶ Jer. 51:10; 2 Sam. 19:29.

¹⁷ 1 Sam. 12:7.

men,¹⁸ godliness,¹⁹ and blamelessness.^{20, 21} From the given biblical texts, two basic dimensions of *zedek* or *zedakah* (righteousness) emerge: first, the term refers to human moral quality and behavior; second, it refers to the righteousness of legal actions. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* defines righteousness as “the fulfillment of all legal and moral obligations. Righteousness is not an abstract notion but rather consists in doing what is just and right in all relationships.”²²

Mishpat, translated into English as “just” or “justice,” appears 424 times in 406 verses across the Hebrew Bible. *Mishpat* is mostly associated with justice in legal decisions,²³ legal cases and lawsuits,²⁴ legal claims,²⁵ and justice.²⁶ Justice may here refer to life within legal limits, fair judgment in legal disputes, proper law and ordinance, legal rights and parallel measurement, a judge’s fair decision-making as well as his moral integrity.²⁷ *Mishpat* may also refer to notions of conformity.²⁸

Obviously, the meanings of *zedek* and *mishpat* are very similar in many passages. Each carries the senses of fairness and justness in law and integrity and uprightness in terms of moral behavior. Therefore, *zedek* and *mishpat* are often used interchangeably in the Hebrew Bible. For instance “...but with righteousness he will judge the needy, and with justice he will give decisions

¹⁸ Isa. 33:15.

¹⁹ Ezek. 18:24.

²⁰ Isa. 5:23.

²¹ Cf. “Tzedakah,” in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. William L. Holladay (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 303.

²² Zvi H. Szubin, “Righteousness,” in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, second edition, vol. 17 (Detroit, MI: Thomson Gale, 2009), 307.

²³ Zeph. 2:3; Isa. 58:2; Isa. 49:4; Deut. 4:8; Deut. 19:6; Job. 9:32.

²⁴ Ezek. 39:21; Ezek. 23:24; Ezek. 16:38; Isa. 40:14; Isa. 50:8.

²⁵ Isa. 8:9; Isa. 40:27.

²⁶ Isa. 1:21.

²⁷ “Mishpat,” in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 221. More importantly, by placing Hebrew justice in the ancient Near East or Eastern Mediterranean tradition, Zank clarifies the meaning of *zedek* and *mishpat* and defines the similarities and differences of the same terms in the Hebrew Bible and other Near East literatures. See Michael Zank, “Justice,” in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: The Modern Era, 707-709*; “Justice,” in *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, ed. Geoffrey Wigoder (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Publishing House, 1989), 401-402; Andrew S. Kulikovskiy, “Justice and the Bible,” presentation at the Summit Australia Conference, January 2007, 13.

²⁸ 1 King. 6:38; 1 King. 5:8; 1 King. 18:28; 2 King. 1:7; 2 King. 17:33; Judge: 13:12.

for the poor of the earth;” “The Lord loves righteousness and justice;” “Maintain justice and do what is right . . . my righteousness will soon be revealed.”²⁹ Due to their parallel meanings, some scholars argue *zedek* and *mishpat* are synonymous. As Louis E. Newman states, “Justice is part of a family of concepts that includes peace, mercy, compassion, and righteousness (*zedakah*) as well as law (*mishpat, din*). In many texts, the terms for righteousness and law are used interchangeably, and either might be equated with justice.”³⁰ Righteousness and justice are synonyms, and they can be used interchangeably.³¹

However, *zedek* and *mishpat* do have subtle differences in the Hebrew Bible. Although they both embody integrity and uprightness in morality as well as fairness and justice, in legal rights, they carry different connotations. According to *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, most biblical verses with the Hebrew word *zedek* and *zedakah* refer to holiness, integrity, love, brotherhood, and compassion in morality while most of the biblical verses with the word *mishpat* refer to legal fairness and justice along with strict obedience and clear reward and punishment.³² In his thoughtful study of *mishpat* and *zedakah*, Abraham J. Heschel notes,

It is exceedingly difficult to establish the exact difference in meaning of the biblical terms *mishpat*, justice, and *zedakah*, righteousness (which in parallelism are often used as variants). However, it seems that justice is a mode of action, righteousness is a quality of the person. . . . Justice is strict and exact, giving each person his due. Righteousness implies benevolence, kindness, generosity. Justice is a form, a state of equilibrium; righteousness has a substantive associated meaning. Justice may be legal; righteousness is associated with a burning compassion for the oppressed.³³

Divine Justice and Human Justice

Apart from the two dimensions of meaning – the moral and the legal – through interpretation of the biblical texts, we can also discern two levels of justice: divine justice and human justice.

²⁹ Isa. 11:4; Ps. 33:5; Isa. 56:1. According to Zank, the Hebrew Bible shares the moral and legal meaning of justice with other ancient Near East cultures. However, *zedek* was not deified in the Bible as in those cultures. See Zank, “Justice,” 707-708.

³⁰ Newman, *An Introduction to Jewish Ethics*, 87.

³¹ Kulikovsky, “Justice and the Bible,” 9.

³² See *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 221, 303.

³³ Heschel, *The Prophets*, 201.

Divine Justice

The Hebrew Bible is permeated with numerous passages on divine justice. We read: “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does not wrong, upright and just is he”; “For the Lord is a God of Justice”; “But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness”; “When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the Lord’s righteous will.” “The Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness.”³⁴ From these and other verses, we can conclude that God Himself is righteous and just. As the judge of the world, he always makes right judgments and performs just or righteous acts.³⁵ Moreover, as the Creator and the purveyor of human law, God is the source of righteousness.³⁶ As Haim Cohen summarizes, “Justice, the attribute of an omnipotent God, was first of all human assurance that God will not use His almighty power over His creatures without regard to right.”³⁷ God is inherently just in all actions and works, and his purpose is to establish justice in the world.³⁸

Yet, it is difficult to understand and accept some acts of God, such as natural disasters and the social reality that the wicked may prosper while the righteous suffer. *The Book of Job* illustrates that the innocent sometimes suffer, and even the prophet Jeremiah questions the unconditional justice of God:³⁹ If God is just, then why do the guilty prosper and the righteous suffer? One answer can be found in the Hebrew Bible:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seats of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the way of judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches

³⁴ Deut. 32:4; Isa. 30:18; Isa. 5:16; Deut. 33:21; Ps. 11:7.

³⁵ 1 Sam. 12:7; cf. Deut. 1:17.

³⁶ Deut. 1:17.

³⁷ Cohen, “Justice,” 515.

³⁸ Steven S. Schwarzschild, “Justice,” in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, second edition, vol. 11 (Detroit, MI: Thomson Gale, 2009), 578.

³⁹ Jeremiah asks “Yet I would speak with you about your justice. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?” (Jer. 12:1).

over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.⁴⁰

The righteous ultimately prosper and the wicked are punished and eliminated. This example allows us to reassert the existence of absolute divine justice, even if it does not offer a solution to the problem of theodicy in a strict sense. The verses in *Job* and *Jeremiah* advance the serious and insightful philosophical question of theodicy, which became a key issue in the history of philosophy and remains important in current philosophical discussions.

In the Bible, there is also a link between divine justice and mercy. For instance, the Bible stipulates that God requires to “love your neighbor as yourself,” that farmers leave the harvest in the corners of their field and fallen sheaves of grain for the poor, and that the master release his servants after seven years of work.⁴¹ As Heschel observes, “Justice dies when dehumanized. ... The logic of justice may seem impersonal, yet the concern for justice is an act of love.”⁴²

Laws of Human Justice

According to biblical Judaism, the God-given laws or instructions for the Israelites show the transcendent divine justice. The Hebrew word *torah* translates to “law” or “teaching” in English. According to the Hebrew Bible, Moses received God’s revelation on Mount Sinai and recorded it. Because the purpose of the *torah* was to teach the ancient Israelites how to live and realize a righteous character, the laws – the outcome of the divine act or revelation – must be righteous. In other words, the biblical laws manifest human justice, although its source is ultimately divine.

As the living guide for the ancient Israelites, Mosaic Law covers all aspects of Israelite life: ritual purity, morality, civil and criminal law, politics, economic activities, marriage and family, and so on. The center of gravity of the Law is to be found in the Ten Commandments.⁴³ The first four of the Ten Commandments concern the relationship between the human being and God, while the next six concern interpersonal relationships. Some of the latter commandments relate to ethics, while others relate to the law, comprehensively defined. In a word, all of the biblical laws are laws of human justice and its core is the Decalogue.

⁴⁰ Ps. 1:1-6.

⁴¹ Lev. 19:18; Lev. 23:22; Isa. 30:18.

⁴² Heschel, *The Prophets*, 201.

⁴³ Exod.20; Deut. 5.

Rules of Human Justice

All biblical laws require that justice be upheld, but some go further, stipulating appropriate functions of the judiciary, economy and trade, law, and morality. Several of these laws with generally universal significance can be considered the rules of human justice. They are as follows:

First: Impartial Trial. The Hebrew Bible states, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.”⁴⁴ Thus, justice requires impartiality toward anyone on trial so that each has his due. The Hebrew Bible also includes quite a few clauses about the so-called *lex talionis*. Among the most well-known are “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”⁴⁵ Although few take this injunction literally, the clause indicates the importance of reasonable compensation, and emphasizes the rule of justice at trial.

Second: Fair Trade. The *Tanakh* says, “Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest *ephah* and an honest *hin*.”⁴⁶ According to the Bible, commercial trade must be conducted fairly and without deceit.⁴⁷ Fair, transparent trade is the rule of doing business according to biblical Judaism.

Third: Compassion toward the Weak and Poor. Empathy for the weak and poor means treating them fairly in a court of law and watching out for their interests in the distribution of goods and services. The Hebrew Bible says, “Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits”,⁴⁸ and “Learn to do right! Seek justice, defend the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”⁴⁹ The Bible does not advocate favoring vulnerable groups or suppressing the rich at trial, but rather suggests we take into account that vulnerable groups are often treated unfairly. In addition, the Hebrew Bible mandates sympathy toward the needy. For example, it commands “to return the poor human pledge-cloak by sunset,” “not to take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy” and “pay him his wages each day by sunset”; not to “take the cloak of the widow as a pledge”,⁵⁰ to

⁴⁴ Lev. 19:15.

⁴⁵ Exod. 21:23-25.

⁴⁶ Levi. 19:35-36.

⁴⁷ Deut. 25:16.

⁴⁸ Exod. 23:6.

⁴⁹ Isa. 1:17.

⁵⁰ Deut. 24:12; Deut. 24:14-15; Lev. 19:13; 24:17.

lend compatriots money at no interest,⁵¹ and to waive their liability in the year of Jubilee.⁵²

Fourth: Kind Treatment of Strangers. The Torah requires equal treatment for migrants to Israel even though they may be “Gentiles.” As it is written, “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt.”⁵³ “Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be one, because you were aliens in Egypt.”⁵⁴

Hebrew biblical laws of justice are not limited to the four discussed above, and similar rules are likely found in other legal codes and documents of ancient Israel’s neighboring countries. Undoubtedly, though, the rules explicitly defined by the Hebrew Bible guided the Israelites’ lives in antiquity.

A Principle of Doing Justice

Unlike God, the human being is not inherently just, and thus cannot naturally become righteous. Because the human being possesses free will and can rebel against God, his/her justice is flexible – he/she can become righteous or not. According to the Bible, the righteous God gives laws to humans and commands them to obey these laws to be righteous:⁵⁵ “If we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.”⁵⁶ That is to say, righteousness is “the fulfillment of all legal and moral obligations. Righteousness is not an abstract notion, but rather consists in doing what is right and just in all relationships.”⁵⁷ When

⁵¹ Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 23:19-20.

⁵² Lev. 25:39-41; Lev. 54.

⁵³ Lev. 19:33-34.

⁵⁴ Exod. 22:21; Exod. 23:9; Deut. 10:19.

⁵⁵ From Ezekiel 20:25-26, we learn that God also gave the Israelites “statutes that were not good and laws that could not live by.” Namely, God let them become defiled “through their sacrifice of every firstborn.” Other biblical verses indicate that God approved of child sacrifice (Deut. 12:29; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:25). Cf. Ezek. 20:18-25, in the *Jewish Study Bible*, eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1078. Obviously for Ezekiel, not all of the biblical laws were good and just. However, the verses in Ezekiel can only speak to his viewpoint in his time and do not deny that the Mosaic laws as a whole were just. That is to say, even the “not good” statute aims to avoid apostasy as the verses implies.

⁵⁶ Deut. 6:25.

⁵⁷ Szubin, “Righteousness,” 307.

accounting for justice, the Hebrew Bible uses verbs like “do” and “act.” For example, “keep judgment and *do* righteousness”; “*Do* what is just and right”; and “*To act* justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”⁵⁸ All of these passages suggest that human justice is a matter of practice rather than theory. The idea that the human being will achieve justice by obeying the divine law can be summarized as “justice by deeds.” This is the general guiding principle of justice in biblical Judaism, which is of course inherited by the subsequent rabbinic literature.

Unlike “justice by deeds,” Pauline Christianity endorses “justice by faith,” which is first proposed by Paul in his *Letter to the Romans* and later inherited and further developed by St. Aurelius Augustine and Martin Luther. According to Paul, “Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it ... because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone.’”⁵⁹ Law is here deemed the “stumbling stone” of righteousness. By comparing Moses with Jesus, Paul explains the impossibility of justice by deeds and instead advocates justice by faith:

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law, ‘The man who does these things will live by them.’ But the righteousness that is by faith says ... that if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.⁶⁰

Thus it can be understood that justice by deeds and justice by faith constitutes one of the most important historical differences between Judaism and mainstream Christianity.⁶¹

Equality and Freedom

The aforementioned principles of human justice in the Hebrew Bible are based on two common values: equality and freedom. It is written in Genesis, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness. ... So God created man

⁵⁸ Ps. 106:3; Jer. 22:3; Mic. 6:8.

⁵⁹ Rom. 9:31-33.

⁶⁰ Rom. 10:5-10.

⁶¹ Pelagianism, a Christian sect that advocates justice by merit, is close to biblical Judaism, but was denounced as heretical by Augustine. Pelagius himself was excommunicated by Pope Innocent I and his views were condemned by a series of church councils. Pelagianism had little lasting impact on Christianity.

in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”⁶² From this verse we deduce that because everyone is created in God’s image – that is, everyone equally shares the image of God – they are granted equal personal dignity under God. These verses imply that human rights should be equally shared, *a priori*. Furthermore, the Bible stipulates that “You shall not murder.” If murder is committed, the corresponding law, “life for life,” applies. The Bible also grants rights to laborers, particularly the right to rest; masters, servants, and aliens alike work for six days and rest on the seventh.⁶³

The Hebrew Bible not only specifies that all humans are equal under God, but also suggests that all human beings are born with free will. According to *Genesis*, Adam and Eve sinned by violating God’s ban and eating fruit from the tree of knowledge. Some Jewish thinkers acknowledge that everyone retains the potentiality to make mistakes or commit crimes. The Eden story contains the truth of free will: the forefather of the human being sins by violating the divine prohibition, but that means the human being was endowed with freedom when created. That is, the human being could choose to obey or violate the prohibition. Adam and Eve are punished, expelled from the Garden of Eden, but that is because the human being enjoys God-given freedom and is therefore responsible for his/her conduct.⁶⁴

Many passages recognize inequality based on gender, origin, status, and wealth, yet the Bible also points to equal human equality and dignity before God. Similarly, because of the God-given right to free choice, people may choose to either follow or violate God’s commandments; by this right, those who obey are rewarded and those who do not are punished. Although equality and freedom do not necessarily belong to the law or to the principle of justice, they are intrinsically related in the Hebrew Bible. Equality and freedom function as the theoretical basis of justice in the Hebrew Bible, not just for Israelites, but for all humankind.

⁶² Gen. 1:26-27.

⁶³ Exod. 20:8-11.

⁶⁴ The American *Declaration of Independence* explicitly states that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” Thus it distinguishes itself from France’s *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizens*, in which “men are born and remain free and equal in rights.” Although both documents permeated with the modern spirit of human rights, the former articulates the relation of human rights to God in the Hebrew Bible.

Theocracy and Justice

Biblical justice does not just take the form of laws, rules, and principles; it is also displayed in the political system of theocracy. More precisely, the theocratic political system represents the institutionalization of Hebrew justice. Josephus is credited with devising the term “theocracy” (from Greek *theos*, “God,” and *krateia*, “rule”) “to denote a god-oriented government which functions by ‘placing all sovereignty and authority in the hands of God.’”⁶⁵ According to the Hebrew Bible, God chose Moses as His spokesperson. Shortly after the Exodus, Moses accepted the recommendation from his father-in-law, Jethro, and selected officials as his assistants. Later, in light of God’s instruction, Moses chose seventy elders from the tribes “as the officials among the people” to help him “carry the burden of the people.”⁶⁶ At Sinai, Moses received the commandments, and his followers agreed to obey God and accept His rule.⁶⁷ During a forty-year sojourn in the desert, as the national leader and supreme ruler, Moses ruled according to God’s will and the divine laws. God remained the supreme ruler, and Moses was a mere agent of God.⁶⁸

As Baruch Spinoza generalizes, in the theocratic system of ancient Israel, God alone held the government of the Hebrews, and it was thus rightly called the kingdom of God owing to the covenant, and God was aptly called also king of the Hebrews. Hence, the enemies of this state were the enemies of God, citizens who attempted to usurp power were guilty of treason against God’s majesty, and the laws of the state were the laws and commands of God. For this reason, civil law in this state and religion (which, as we have shown, consists solely of obedience to God) were one and the same thing. That is,

⁶⁵ Flavius Josephus, “Contra Apionem,” quoted in *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. David Lyle Jeffrey (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 760.

⁶⁶ Num. 11:16-17:24.

⁶⁷ After Moses declared the divine decrees and laws of the Covenant, the seventy Elders from the twelve tribes responded twice that “Everything the Lord has said we will do,” which shows the common will of Israel and their unconditional belief in and obedience to God and divine law (Exod. 24:3-7).

⁶⁸ Contrary to his generalization of the theocratic system depicted in the Bible, as a philosopher of natural human rights, Spinoza’s own viewpoint is that “the Israelites transferred their natural rights to God in accordance with the Covenant” and an oath with God (Exod. 34:7). See Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel, trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 213.

religious dogmas were not doctrines but rather laws and decrees. Piety was regarded as justice, and impiety was regarded as crime and injustice. Anyone who defected from this religion ceased to be a citizen and, for this reason alone, was held to be an enemy. Anyone who died for religion was deemed to have died for his country. Thus, no distinction at all was made between civil law and religion. For that reason, this state could be called a theocracy, since its citizens were bound by no law but the Law revealed by God.⁶⁹

After Moses, Israel entered into the era of the judges, which lasted for 200 years: from the Israelites' entry into the land of Canaan to the rise of their kingdom. During this era, a federal system, composed of the twelve tribes of Israel, held political power. Governmental affairs were not decided by a single judge, but by a group of elders who all held equal status and were selected from the tribes. As the priestly clan, the Levi tribe possessed the right to interpret the law without participating in governmental affairs. Although civic power was separated from the divine, members of the society believed in, obeyed, and were loyal to God as the supreme judge. During the era of judges, magistrates managed civic affairs in peacetime and led the military during wartime. Despite taking several leadership positions, similar to the prophets and commanders, judges still ruled under the order of God.

Theocracy is a rule of law that reflects God's justice. As Cohen points out, "in a theocratic system of law, doing justice must at first sight be synonymous with obeying the law: God's law must by definition be just, the incarnation of justice, or else it would not be divine."⁷⁰ Under this system, everyone must act in accordance with God's law, whether he is a clergyman, an executive power representative, or an ordinary Israelite. Divine law additionally requires fair law enforcement, despite the fact that no state can guarantee absolute impartiality in practice. Fair enforcement of law manifests in impartial judgment, fair trade, and kind treatment of the poor, immigrants, and other potentially vulnerable populations. As a principle of justice, "justice by deeds" is associated with theocracy. The various rules of human justice are also reflected in the theocratic system.

Transcendence and Holiness

When compared with other philosophical theories of justice – whether ancient Greek or modern Western – the religious concept of justice found

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 213-214.

⁷⁰ Cohen, "Justice," 517-518.

in the Bible shows its unique value and significance. Biblical justice implies transcendence and holiness. In the Bible, justice derives from God himself. It is rooted in His just actions. We learn of divine justice also through revelation, as when YHWH proclaims His attributes.⁷¹ The pursuit of justice establishes a transcendent value and ideal aim for man. God's righteous actions and mercy reveal His justice as an inherent divine attribute, something He models for us that we should strive for. The laws of justice derive from the transcendent personal God and His revelation. These include all prohibitions and affirmative precepts that prescribe relations between God and man, and between men; such statutes provide motivation to obey via reward and punishment. Divine revelation provides moral admonition and regulates daily life. God also sets a holy imperative to follow His example. Living by the law provides both the condition and the possibility of righteousness and hence a path to restoring the divine image in the human being. As legal scholar Harold J. Berman puts it, what is just is holy and what is holy is just.⁷²

Greek philosophical conceptions of justice may serve as a source of comparison. In ancient Greek mythology before the birth of philosophy, justice structured and ordered the universe. It was issued by the goddess of justice, Dike, and was governed by the supreme god, Zeus. The transcendence of justice is obvious in this arrangement. However, later philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle argued that justice originated from the city-states instead of a divine source. For Plato, justice was generally divided into state justice and personal justice. The former means that three social classes – rulers, warriors, and common people – perform their respective duties and harmoniously serve their city-state together; the latter emphasizes personal virtue.⁷³ Plato believed that people possess three kinds of virtue – wisdom, courage, and temperance – the harmonious coexistence of which comprises individual justice. Moreover, individual justice covers justice of the human soul, which means that three elements – reason, passion, and desire in the soul – function together.⁷⁴ It can be concluded that justice of the human soul is most fundamental for Plato, due to its shared source in personal and social justice. Although Plato admits God's existence, he does not believe that

⁷¹ Exod. 34.

⁷² See Harold J. Berman, *Law and Religion*, trans. Liang Zhiping (Beijing: China Politics and Law University Press, 2003).

⁷³ Plato, *Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1980), 430a-434a.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 439d-442d.

justice flows directly from God. Therefore, his theory of justice possesses no transcendence or holiness, as is the case in the Hebrew Bible.

Aristotle's theory of justice is based on the understanding of human nature and society. For him, justice has a broad and a narrow sense. In a broad sense, justice has two components. First, one obeys the law because it is just, having been formulated by just politicians who are committed to justice and possess deep philosophical knowledge. Since law implies justice, following the law is just, and breaking the law is unjust.⁷⁵ Second, justice for Aristotle implies collective altruism instead of individual virtues like courage or temperance. The narrow sense of justice in Aristotle refers to the fair distribution of the "good" like honor, money, and other entities. Its essence is the equity principle that each person obtains what he deserves. In this narrow sense, justice divides into "distributive justice" and "corrective justice." The former means that every citizen is entitled to certain rights, honor, and wealth in proportion to their efforts; the latter refers to the compensation given to a wronged party in unfair trade. Aristotle also discussed "interactive justice," "natural justice" and "legal justice,"⁷⁶ but did not, however, associate justice with the transcendent God. In his view, justice is not connected to God. It is carried out by human beings (the city-state and its citizens) when they abide by the law, cultivate virtue, and fairly distribute rights, honor, and wealth.

In modern times, political philosophers may argue about differing theories of justice, but they do agree that individual rights are the basis for preserving human rights. For those secular political philosophers, human rights are inherent to humankind and have nothing to do with God. In other words, all men are equal before the law rather than before God. Innate secular rights and justice are reflected in quite a few political documents, including the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" written during the French Revolution, and the more current "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" by the United Nations. These have significantly impacted political systems, public thought, lifestyle, and customs in some Western countries.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, vol. V, trans. D. P. Chase (London: J. M. Dent, 1930), 1129a.

⁷⁶ Jiyuan Yu, *Ethics of Aristotle* (Beijing: Renmin University Press, 2011), 122-144.

⁷⁷ In the tradition of liberal political philosophy, controversies exist on the origin of human rights. Unlike philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Voltaire, and Rousseau, who advocate the human origin of individual rights as embodied in political documents such as the *Declaration of the Man and of the Citizen* and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, other theist thinkers, like the founders of United States, upheld the divine origin of rights, as espoused in the *Declaration of Independence*. Cf. footnote 19.

Holy Hebrew justice provides a precedent for the transcendent value for human justice found in Plato, Aristotle, and modern rationalist political philosophers. As a philosophical theory, the theory of justice not only requires interpreting virtues, laws, and systems of justice, but also the exposition of the source of justice. The Hebrew Bible is one such source.

Admittedly, Plato, Aristotle, and some modern liberal philosophers have defined the source of justice from the perspective of human nature, the social contract, and social systems. However, human societies are undoubtedly limited and relative and, as such, cannot guarantee absolute fairness and justice. The justice that these non-religious rationalist philosophers have argued for, whether it is based on individuals, society, law, or virtue, could only be relative and limited. Yet, it is human nature to strive for infinity and absoluteness beyond the finite or limited. As Immanuel Kant suggests, the human being always desires to go beyond the scope of the phenomena to the realm of the transcendent God; human moral practice needs God to ensure the consistency of virtue and happiness.⁷⁸ We may infer that, likewise, the human being desires absolute justice, not relative and limited justice. Thus, on the one hand, human nature demands and desires absolute justice; on the other, however, human nature and social systems are unable to enact it. To solve such a paradox means relying on the transcendent “other,” the absolute God, who appears as a personal deity with absolute justice, detached from all worldly interests. As the Creator, He endowed the human being with equality and freedom; as the legislator, he bestowed the law on the Israelites through Moses. That is to say, the transcendent and holy God brought justice to the Israelites and, thus, to humankind. Consequently, the transcendental interpretation of the source of justice in biblical Judaism goes deeper than human-centered philosophy.

Comprehensiveness and “Miscibility”

Justice in the Hebrew Bible is comprehensive and complex. That is, given its heterogeneous content, Hebrew justice is more diverse than other theories of justice. In a certain sense, justice in the Hebrew Bible is the complex of divine justice and human justice. As mentioned previously, the Hebrew Bible derives the law and the source of justice from the righteous God and establishes the general principle “justice by deeds” from the relationship between God and man. This provides us with a theory of justice that differs

⁷⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Stockbridge, MA: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956), 129-130.

from humanism. The majority of biblical laws concern human daily life: civil and criminal law, marriage, funeral customs, and so on. In other words, most laws on human justice in the Bible are transcendent in origin, but mundane in content.

Moreover, like the Hebrew words *mishpat* and *zedek*, which indicate the dual meanings of legal justice and moral righteousness, Hebrew justice denotes the integrated unity of legal justice and moral justice. Take the Decalogue as an example. The fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy,”⁷⁹ compels humans to practice religious life; the fifth, “Honor thy father and thy mother,”⁸⁰ grants the parental right to being revered; the sixth article, “Thou shall not murder,”⁸¹ and the seventh, “Thou shall not commit adultery,”⁸² are ostensibly legal commandments; the eighth, ninth, and tenth articles can be considered moral or legal rules. Not only do the commandments in the Decalogue comprise a complex of legal justice and moral justice, but many other precepts in the Hebrew Bible combine legal and moral justice, a definitive characteristic of pre-modern cultures.

The “miscibility” or ability to sustain an admixture of different types of justice in the Hebrew Bible is also reflected in its unification of individual justice and communal justice. The fact that God created the human being in his own image and then endowed the human being with free choice (as depicted in the story of the Garden of Eden) shows human’s God-given gifts of life, equality, and freedom. It is just to guarantee these gifts for individuals. The Mosaic laws concern not only individual justice (for it is the individual Israelite who shall obey and practice them), but also communal justice insofar as the Torah was promulgated for Israel as a nation. God bestowed upon this nation a law by establishing a covenant with the Israelites, designating them as the “chosen people.” After Moses proclaimed the Law, the Israelites responded together, “Everything the Lord has said we will do,”⁸³ showing that this nation collectively agreed and accepted these God-given laws. More importantly, Mosaic laws actually demonstrated the collective concerns of the Israelite nation – some concerns are mundane and specific, while others are general and transcendent. As Harold J. Berman held, religion “is not just a set of beliefs and rituals. It demonstrates the collective concerns and ultimate meaning and purpose of human life. It is the common intuition and commit-

⁷⁹ Exod. 20:8; Deut. 5:12.

⁸⁰ Exod. 20:12; Deut. 5:16.

⁸¹ Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17.

⁸² Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18.

⁸³ Exod. 24:4.

ment to the transcendent values.”⁸⁴ Since ancient times, the Jews have never lost their communal identity; they always emphasize that individuals shall obey the law and “do justice.”

In contrast, some Western theories of justice are based on humanity rather than transcendent divinity. They emphasize upon the individual rather than the community or state. Generally, these theories of justice are based on binaries; they take an “either-or” rather than a “both-and” attitude by too heavily emphasizing humanity and the individual while ignoring or belittling divinity and community.

Rawls’s theory of justice is utilitarian and practically oriented in that it focuses on a just distribution of resources; it details which rules and institutions a nation should use to ensure citizens’ freedom and equal access to opportunities. The core issues at stake in Rawls’s work are the distribution of rights and wealth, and the realization of justice via the two principles of justice which require “a fully adequate scheme of liberties for all,” “fair equality of opportunity,” and “the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society.”⁸⁵ Classic liberal philosophers like Locke and Hayek hold similar views. Their theories also promote individual rights to prevent suppression by public authorities. Their ideas might also be termed legal justice or constitutional justice, a feature of which is to prohibit certain acts of the human being through punitive sanctions. They aim to punish criminals instead of advocating virtue; they seek to prevent bad men from doing evil instead of encouraging good people to do good. Such institutional design maximizes the fundamental rights of individuals and provides a broad space for freedom of human actions, yet it has problems that cannot be ignored. For instance, unjust and immoral phenomena are coupled with realities outside the law, like morality and economy; people are satisfied that they are not bad men and do not do evil things, while lacking personal responsibility to the larger community. The emphasis on individualism can lead to indifference toward the interests of others, particularly for vulnerable groups and the like. Therefore, constitutional justice renders an imbalance between law and virtue, individual rights and social obligations, non-violation of the law and personal responsibility.

The comprehensive theory of justice in the *Tanakh* can provide a useful reference point to more limited theories of justice, like Rawls’ or Thomas Hobbes’. According to the Hebrew Bible, God requires His people to become

⁸⁴ Berman, *Law and Religion*, 11.

⁸⁵ John Rawls, *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 60-61.

righteous by believing in God devoutly and obeying His laws. Hebrew justice includes prohibitions against negative behavior, as well as the positive reward for virtuousness, thus filling a gap in liberal theories of justice: virtue cultivation. Moreover, the Hebrew Bible takes into account both individual and communal justice. As previously described, the Hebrew Bible not only points to the fundamental rights of individuals, it also stipulates the obligations of each Israelite as part of a religious and national community, like paying tithes and making ritual sacrifice.

Pan-Legalism

The main source of justice in the biblical sense, the Mosaic Law, includes rules, obligations, precepts, statutes, regulations, and the like. Every detail in the Mosaic Torah is legally binding as part of a comprehensive whole. In other words, the Hebrew notion of justice has a pan-legal characteristic. Although morality and law often overlap in modern society, the distinction between them is generally clear. Moral principles and norms are governed by inner self-discipline, tradition, and custom. In contrast, the mandatory provisions of law stipulate things one *must* do or risk penalty. In the Hebrew Bible, all laws – moral and legal, positive and negative – are distinctly mandatory. In addition, most prohibitions stipulate corresponding criminal or civil penalties. Hebrew laws have the form of imperatives. Prohibitions are expressed by negative imperatives such as “You shall not...” while positive precepts employ positive terms, such as “You must...” or “You shall...”⁸⁶

Other examples include, “Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. ... Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death.”⁸⁷ “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.”⁸⁸ The violation of these rules is punishable by law. Other laws like “If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. ... If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife – with the wife of his neighbor – both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death”⁸⁹ seem moral rules, but are nonetheless punishable as criminal laws. Some laws related to religious duty and customs come with mandatory and punitive features. For instance, anyone

⁸⁶ Exod. 20; Deut. 5: 6-21.

⁸⁷ Exod. 21:12, Exod. 21:15.

⁸⁸ Exod. 21:1; These laws can be classified as casuistic law, which was also found in ancient Near Eastern Law Codes including the Code of Hammurabi.

⁸⁹ Lev. 20:9-10.

who does not observe the Sabbath or labors on the Sabbath shall be put to death. The book of Numbers articulates that when a man gathering firewood on the Sabbath was brought to Moses, “the Lord said to Moses, ‘The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp.’”⁹⁰ Biblical Judaism also opposes witchcraft and superstition, stipulating that anyone who practices witchcraft or conducts exorcism shall be put to death. The Hebrew Bible is fraught with large-scale ethical norms and moral imperatives, while also mixing mandatory commands and punitive laws with laws on religion, private, and social life.

From the pan-legal characteristic of justice in the Hebrew Bible, the following can be concluded. First, given its comprehensiveness and complexity, Hebrew justice speaks volumes about legal justice. From a political perspective, a theocracy belongs to the rule of law. Of course, given that God is the original legislator and the theocracy only fulfills the divine law, Hebrew justice is a legal system from antiquity. Second, the Hebrew Bible provided both a legal justice system for earlier human civilization as well as a valuable precedent for current and future generations. However, the pan-legalistic characteristics of this system also demonstrate the primitiveness found in early stages of Hebrew civilization. The law in the Jewish scriptures is imbued with strict morality and customs as well as cruel punishment. The intention of this essay is not to judge ancient Israelites, but rather to warn contemporary and civilized governments against deficiencies in their own systems of justice.

Conclusion

While attempting to reinterpret biblical texts and to compare non-Jewish traditions with Hebrew biblical justice, we have enunciated a theory of Hebrew justice starting with its basic tenets concerning morality and legality, divine and human justice, representative rules, and, finally, a general principle of human justice. All biblical principles of justice are ground on equal human dignity and free will. As a typical theory of religious and pre-modern justice, Hebrew justice emphasizes transcendence, comprehensiveness, and pan-legalism. Thus, it becomes clear that religiosity marks the essential difference between Hebrew justice and humanist justice. In the Hebrew Bible, justice is an inherently divine attribute from which all rules of human justice originate. The purpose of the Israelites was to materialize divine justice in the earthly world by fulfilling God’s laws and emulating His actions. Undoubt-

⁹⁰ Num. 15:32-36.

edly, the Hebrew model of religious justice provides a new perspective in the modern world, a contrasting reference, and a valuable supplement for secular theories of justice in general and modern, Western liberal theories of justice in particular.

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Transcendent Moral Realism in Charles Taylor and Classical Confucianism

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According to the Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor, one of the problems of modernity is soft relativism. If there exists no transcendent moral reality and morality is self-determined, ethical judgment becomes meaningless. However, if morality is not self-determined, what can determine morality? How can we know what is moral or immoral? Would moral heteronomy distort the authenticity of the self? From another viewpoint on moral theory, with the rise of the East Asian economy being credited to Confucianism, there are rising interests in Confucian studies in the academic community. Can Confucianism provide insights in the face of the culture of soft relativism?

The article aims at comparing theories of transcendent moral realism by Charles Taylor and Classical Confucianism. It includes four parts. The first part explores Taylor's criticism of moral autonomy. Taylor's criticism shows that the idea of moral autonomy is indeed inspired by the ethics of authenticity. Then I will explore Taylor's idea of theistic hermeneutical moral realism. For Taylor, our strong evaluations inevitably involve a self-transcending moral framework that incorporates a set of qualitative distinctions. By comparing the historical development of the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and theistic tradition, Taylor argues that the Christian theistic tradition can provide a better moral framework for achieving the authentic self. The third part will then explore Confucian Heaven-mandated morality. For Confucians, morality is based on human nature, which is Heaven-endowed.

* The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, P. R. China. – This article is partially supported by a grant from the College of Professional and Continuing Education, an affiliate of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

As human nature is pre-determined by Heaven (*Tian*), morality can never be self-determined. Rather, the Way of moral self-cultivation must follow the Way of Heaven-endowed human nature. Finally, I will compare Taylor's theistic hermeneutical moral realism and Confucian Heaven-mandated morality. I argue that although their understandings of human-transcendent relations are very different from each other due to their different traditions, their approach to morality has many similarities. Taylor's historical hermeneutical retrieval and Confucian bodily reflective intuition are not mutually exclusive; rather they can be mutually complementary.

Taylor's Criticism of Moral Autonomy

In *The Ethics of Authenticity*,¹ Taylor points out that one of the crucial problems of modernity is individualism, which stresses that people are no longer subjected to any sacred or hierarchical order that transcends them; they have a right to choose their own concept of the good and pattern of life. Thus, its related outcome is the culture of soft relativism, which is based on the idea of moral autonomy, that is, everyone's right to choose values should be respected; one should not challenge another's values. Indeed, many liberals consider soft relativism as the achievement of modern civilization. Some even think that such a revolution has not yet finished successfully; structures of economic and family life still have too many restrictions on our freedom. The problem is that the older hierarchical order used to give meaning to one's life and identity. Without a broader, transcendent vision, modern people focus on their individual life only. People no longer have a sense of a higher purpose. Rather they center on the self, flatten and narrow their lives, and make their lives poorer in meaning and less concerned with others or society. This further leads to two other modern problems: the primacy of instrumental reason and the loss of freedom. With the loss of a transcendent moral horizon, the social arrangement and modes of action are no longer grounded in a sacred order; they can be redesigned in order to pursue individual happiness. Human rationality has shifted its focus to calculating the most efficient means to seek happiness, rather than articulating the meaning or values of human lives. The primacy of instrumental reason is also shown in how modern society holds technology in high regard and hopes that technological advancement can solve all kinds of problems in society. Ironically, the powerful mechanism of social life has finally, in turn, restricted

¹ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 2-6, 14.

our choices. The industrial-technological society forces us to stick to instrumental reason and leaves no room for serious moral deliberation. The original aim of individual freedom cannot be truly accomplished. Rather, it has actually led to the loss of freedom in several aspects of life. The predominance of individualism also narrows people's concern for private life, and they withdraw from active participation in collective self-government, so individual citizens are left alone to face the giant bureaucratic institutions and feel powerless to change the system.

In spite of these problems, Taylor still sees something positive in the culture of soft relativism. He argues that there is moral ideal of authenticity underlying the idea of moral autonomy. According to Taylor, the ethics of authenticity is worth espousing because it allows us to live potentially a fuller mode of life. In particular, when one faces life choices, one would hardly neglect something that is identified as the fulfillment of one's potential. It also directs us toward "a more self-responsible form of life."² Ironically, we have lost sight of this original moral ideal because the prevalence of soft relativism has caused an inarticulacy of ethics. People can no longer debate and articulate the constitutive ideal and its underlying moral forces of modern society. Because of the inarticulacy of modern ethics, the contemporary culture of individualism and soft relativism have slid into a self-centered mode, and have deviated from its original ideal.

According to Taylor, the ethics of authenticity was born at the end of the eighteenth century.³ It originated from Rousseau's theory of morality as following a voice of nature within us. It starts with the notion that human beings are endowed with a moral sense, so understanding right and wrong are anchored in our moral feeling. This rejects the view that morality is a matter of calculating consequences, in particular those concerned with divine reward and punishment. Thus, our inner voice becomes important because it tells us what is right. Being in touch with my inner moral feeling comes to be something I have to attain if I want to be truly myself. The ideal of authenticity was further developed by Herder's articulation. Herder claims that each of us has a unique way of being human. Each person has their own "measure" in regard to their way of living. This idea was very new in the late eighteenth century, and before then, no one thought that the differences between humans had this kind of moral significance. After Herder, people started to acknowledge that there is a certain way of being human that is one's own way. Everyone is called upon to live one's life in their own way. This notion gave

² *Ibid.*, 74.

³ *Ibid.*, 25-29.

a new importance to being true to oneself and has entered very deeply into modern consciousness. It also greatly increases the importance of the inner self-contact by introducing the principle of originality.

Apart from turning to inwardness, Rousseau also articulated the notion of self-determining freedom. It means that one is free when one decides for oneself what concerns oneself rather than being shaped by external influences. Self-determining freedom and authenticity are two distinct issues, but they have often been confused because they have developed together with complex relations. Taylor finds that this confusion has been “one of the sources of the deviant forms of authenticity.”⁴ Furthermore, with the rise of the idea of the disengaged subject, the self as primarily an inner monological consciousness proposed by Enlightenment thinkers and the denial of a horizon of significance by individual expressivism and postmodernism also led to the shift toward self-centeredness.⁵

Taylor criticizes the idea of disengaged subjects for neglecting the concern of the body and the other and their role of constituting the self. Following phenomenologists such as M. Heidegger, M. Merleau-Ponty, and H. G. Gadamer, Taylor argues that we are primarily engaged in practices as actors in the world. Taylor also illustrates that when we reason in moral matters, we can never reason from the ground up. We are always reasoning with interlocutors. If the interlocutor has no moral demands, it would be impossible to deliberate about morality. Therefore, Taylor argues that the human being is fundamentally embodied and dialogical. As Taylor states, “We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining an identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression.”⁶ Thus, language is constitutive of our emotions, moral judgment, motivation, and self-understanding. That’s why Taylor argues that we are “self-interpreting animals.”⁷ Language only exists and is maintained in a community. We are brought up through conversations with those who are significant for us. We learn our languages of moral discernment from them. Basically, a self can only exist within what Taylor calls “a web of interlocution.”⁸ Taylor further argues that even though heroes stand against

⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁵ Ibid., 60-62.

⁶ Ibid., 32.

⁷ Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 63.

⁸ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 36.

their corrupted communities with their new language, they never leave the web; they still define themselves by conversations with others.

Given the embodied dialogical character as the general condition of human life, Taylor then argues that the ideal of authenticity understood properly should consist of two demands: (1) a moral framework that transcends human aspirations; and (2) our relationship with the community.⁹ First, the self-transcending moral framework, for Taylor, is indispensable for the ideal of authenticity. If I have something unique, for instance, I have 3,732 hairs on my head, which no one else has, this uniqueness is plain and has no significance, unless the number 3,732 is a sacred number or has certain significant meaning in society. Thus, things being valuable have to be regarded as running against a certain background understanding or moral framework. One cannot decide what are the most important things or actions simply because of one's choice. Without any pre-existent moral framework, choices would lose their significance; no one would care to make any value judgment because all choices have just the same value.

Second, as stated above, the self is inevitably constituted by the community. The culture of soft relativism endorses value neutrality and procedural justice in order to acknowledge the equal value of different ways of being. However, Taylor argues that recognizing difference also requires a shared horizon of significance. Simply the fact that people choose different ways of being does not make them equal. There must be some properties which people recognize as valuable, which override these differences. Thus, we have to develop the commonalities of values and shape the tradition within the community; and one of the crucial ways of doing this is "sharing a participatory political life."¹⁰

Taylor's Idea of Theistic Hermeneutical Moral Realism

The above discussion shows that for Taylor, our strong evaluation inevitably involves a self-transcending moral framework that combines a set of qualitative distinctions.¹¹ What we can do is find out which moral framework is the most appropriate rather than to be self-determining. For Taylor, a moral framework can never be self-determined.

While Kant's moral autonomy stresses the independence of the will from the influence of one's desires and emotions, Taylor stresses that our emotions

⁹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 36-37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 27.

actually involve our experience of situation as having a moral import. By import, he means “a way in which something can be relevant or of importance to the desires or purposes or aspirations or feelings of a subject.”¹² Certain emotions, such as guilt, shame, and pride, are impossible without our understanding of what is right or wrong. Thus, these moral imports are subject-referring. These subject-referring imports or meanings are irreducible; they can only be articulated through language. The articulation of the underlying subject-referring imports of our emotions helps us to find out what is valuable to us. Thus, for Taylor, the most appropriate method of the study of morality is the bodily hermeneutical approach.

Throughout history, there have existed different moral traditions that attempted to articulate what is morally valuable to human beings. Taylor argues that we have to study these traditions and find out the best moral framework according to the Best Account principles.¹³ The Best Account principles involve three criteria. A framework is a better one if (1) it can make better sense of inner difficulties than the rival explanation; (2) it explains not only the world, but also how the rival explanation arises; and (3) it can be conceived of as an error-reducing explanation.¹⁴

In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor provides a genealogical account of the development of Western moral theory and the formation of the modern self. Taylor’s account has shown us that the Western moral tradition was basically shaped by the dialectical development between three moral traditions: the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Christian theism. Although these three traditions have criticized each other throughout their historical development, they fail to perceive that each tradition was actually developed on the basis of the values of other traditions. For instance, while the naturalist utilitarianism of the Enlightenment criticizes Romanticism for being irrational and anti-scientific, it is blind to its drawing on the post-Romantic notion of a fulfilled and expressive life.¹⁵ Naturalists usually criticize the transcendent dimension of theistic tradition as not objectively verifiable. However, its own ethics depend on the Christian idea of benevolence with a religious foundation. It shows that naturalist utilitarianism has problems in accessing its own moral sources; it relies on a moral source that is contradictory to its own theoretical assumption. While romantic expressivism was inherited from Augustine’s

¹² Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 48.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁴ Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 43-51.

¹⁵ Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 514.

idea of inwardness, it abandoned the transcendent dimension and Augustine's idea of inner nature as the road to God. It then turned toward anthropocentrism and subjectivism and stressed that each person has to search for his/her own original way of being human. As the affirmation of the goodness of nature used to rely on the Christian doctrine of creation, such an anthropocentric and subjectivist turn, by eradicating all self-transcending moral frameworks, finally threatens us with a loss of meaning and leads to the crisis of self-affirmation. Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Nietzsche attempted to deal with the issue of self-affirmation by changing one's stance toward the world to overcome dread and despair and to recognize reality as good.¹⁶ However, their ways of changing one's stance are very different. While Kierkegaard and Dostoyevsky endorsed the theistic approach, to choose ourselves infinitely and to open ourselves to grace from God, Nietzsche denied the humanist morality and rehabilitated pre-Platonic warrior ethics in order to embrace destruction and suffering as part of the affirmation of life. Nevertheless, Taylor shows that Nietzsche's aspiration to affirm the whole of reality is actually inherited of the Judaeo-Christian idea of benevolence which he ironically opposes.¹⁷ Furthermore, in modern art and the modern pursuit of the meaning of life, we can repeatedly find the expression of our most in-depth spiritual aspirations to the transcendent. Nietzsche's negligence of human spiritual aspiration is indeed a kind of distortion of the human being. Thus, Taylor argues, Nietzsche's denial of transcendence threatens the most valuable achievement of modernity – the affirmation of humanity. Yet, Taylor finds that Nietzsche has brought us an important question about secular morality: is the aim of secular humanism higher than its moral sources can sustain?¹⁸ Regarding moral source, Taylor is sympathetic to Dostoyevsky's insight of openness to grace.¹⁹ He argues that it is only through our being loved by God that we can transform our way of perceiving the world and ourselves as good despite all the suffering and evil in us and love them. Therefore, by his historical retrieval, Taylor argues that, in comparison to secular humanism, the theistic tradition provides an incomparable moral force for human morality and an exceptional confirmation of humanity. In the following, I will explore Confucian Heaven-mandated morality, and then compare it to Taylor's transcendent moral realism.

¹⁶ Ibid., 454.

¹⁷ Ibid., 452.

¹⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, ed. J. L. Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 30.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 452.

Classical Confucian Heaven-Mandated Morality²⁰

For Classical Confucianism (hereafter “Confucianism”), morality is based on human nature, which is Heaven-mandated or Heaven-endowed (*Tianming* 天命). As stated at the beginning of the *Doctrine of the Mean*,

What Heaven (*Tian* 天) imparts (*ming* 命) to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called the Way (*Dao* 道). Cultivating the Way is called education.²¹

As human nature is pre-determined by Heaven, morality can never be self-determined. Rather, such Heaven-endowed nature of morality has three moral implications. They are moral obligation, moral content, and moral motivation of Confucianism.

First, as *ming* (命) here has a meaning of mission or appointment, all individuals have an obligation to embody moral goodness because they are provided with a “mission from Heaven” (*Tianming*). Indeed, the idea of Heaven was not first introduced by Confucians. It originated from the ancient Chinese culture of witchcraft (*wu* 巫).²² In the Shang dynasty, there was the idea of a heavenly King (*Di* 帝), worshiped as a supreme personal god. In the Western Zhou period, it became the idea of Heaven (*Tian*), also a supreme personal god, as an object of veneration. Witchcraft was the medium between Heaven and human beings. Through the practice of sorcery and divination as part of state rituals, Heaven or the heavenly King accepts the sacrifices from the human king, and the human king is granted the legitimacy of ruling the Earth. Thus, human kings are considered as acquiring the mandate of Heaven (*Tianming*). While Confucians inherited the idea of Heaven as the object of pious veneration from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, they stressed and

²⁰ My account of “Classical Confucian Heaven-Mandated Morality” is mainly based on my interpretation of Four Books: *The Analects*, *The Mencius*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, and *The Great Learning*.

²¹ All translations of *The Doctrine of the Mean* are taken from Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 97-114.

²² Cf. Ying-Shih Yu, *On Heaven-Humans Relationship: Tthe Origin of Ancient Chinese Thought* 論天人之際: 中國古代思想起源試探 (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2014), 36-42; Vincent Shen, “The Fading of Political Theology and the Rise of Creative Humanism,” in *Dao Companion to Classical Confucian Philosophy*, ed. Vincent Shen (London: Springer, 2013), 24.

further developed the humanistic moral dimension of Heaven.²³ For instance, Zisi, Confucius's grandson and the author of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and Confucius claim that human moral nature and virtues are endowed by Heaven.²⁴ The notion of the mandate of Heaven was also moralized. It is no longer understood as the political legitimization of human kings given by Heaven; rather, it is understood as a "mission" or "appointment" (*ming*, 命) given to every human being. Thus, humans are called by Heaven to act morally. They are responsible for achieving the moral demands of the mandate of Heaven.²⁵ As Mencius states:

He who has exhausted all his mental constitution (*xin*, 心) knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven. To preserve one's mental constitution, and nourish one's nature, is the way to serve Heaven. When neither a premature death nor long life causes a man any double-mindedness, but he waits in the cultivation of his personal character for whatever issue; this is the way in which he establishes his Heaven-ordained being (*ming*).

There is an appointment (*ming*) for everything. A man should receive submissively what may be correctly ascribed thereto. Therefore, he who has the true idea of what is Heaven's appointment (*ming*) will not stand beneath a precipitous wall. Death sustained in the discharge of one's duties may correctly be ascribed to the appointment (*ming*) of Heaven. Death under handcuffs and fetters cannot correctly be so ascribed.

When we get by our seeking and lose by our neglecting – in that case seeking is of use to getting, and the things sought for are those which are in ourselves. When the seeking is according to the proper course, and the getting is only as appointed [fate] (*ming*) – in that case the seeking is of no use to getting, and the things sought are without ourselves.²⁶

²³ Pei-Jung Fu, "Tian (T'ien): Heaven," in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. A. S. Cua (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1459-1460; Pei-Jung Fu, *Exploration of Theory of Tian of Confucianism* 儒道天論發微 (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2010), 105-106; Shen, "The Fading of Political Theology and the Rise of Creative Humanism," 32.

²⁴ All translations of *The Analects*, *The Mencius* and *The Great Learning* are taken from James Legge's translation which can be assessed at <https://ctext.org/>. *Analects*, 7:23.

²⁵ Yu, *On Heaven-Humans Relationship*, 43.

²⁶ *Mencius*, 7A1-7A3.

According to Vincent Shen, the characteristic of Heaven of Zisi and Mencius is different from that of Confucius.²⁷ Following the Shang and Zhou dynasties, Confucius considered Heaven as a personal God, as shown in the *Classics of Poetry* and the *Book of Documents*, while focusing more on humanistic concerns. Zisi and Mencius started the process of the immanentization of Heaven. Unlike Confucius, there is no textual evidence of Zisi's and Mencius's prayer and sacrifice to the divine. They seem to render Heaven as the immanent principle of morality accessible to human subjectivity rather than a transcendent divinity. However, I would argue that although there seem to exist a few differences between Confucius's and Zisi's and Mencius's religious writings, these differences are not mutually contradictory; they are actually compatible. It is true that for Zisi and Mencius, the way to access Heaven is through sincere introspection, as discussed below. Nevertheless, such a language of inwardness does not necessarily imply the immanentization of Heaven.

For instance, according to Taylor, Augustine considers inwardness as the principal route to God.²⁸ For Augustine, the world is created by God. Created things receive their form from God and therefore exhibit a meaningful order enjoined by God's eternal law. Thus, humans are called to see and respect order. However, for Augustine, our principal route to God is not through the object domain but "in" ourselves. Through our inner soul, inward lies the road to God. It is God's grace that powers our eye to see God – the moral source. The light of God is not just "out there"; it is also an "inner" light.²⁹ By going inward, we are indeed drawn upward. The case of Augustine's theology shows that inwardness and transcendence are compatible. Zisi's and Mencius's inwardness is about the issue of religious epistemology; the transcendence of Heaven is about the metaphysical issue. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Furthermore, Mencius states, "when Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger,

²⁷ Shen, "The Fading of Political Theology and the Rise of Creative Humanism," 32; Vincent Shen, "Becoming Human, and Further: Confucian Spirituality and Education," presentation at the international conference entitled "Re-Learning to be Human for Global Times: Becoming Human and Education in the Contemporary World," Shanghai University and the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2018.

²⁸ Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 127-129.

²⁹ John 1:9.

and subjects him to extreme poverty...³⁰ This passage seems to assume the transcendent personal character of Heaven rather than simply the immanent principle of morality.³¹ Thus, I would rather assume that Zisi and Mencius have inherited the idea of Heaven from Confucius. I would also assume that the philosophy of *Four Books* is coherent. I see no convincing evidence to show that their thoughts are mutually exclusive. The differences between the *Four Books* can be understood as further development and mutually complementary rather than a deviation or contradiction.

For Mencius, the way to serve Heaven is to preserve one's mental constitution, one's mind/heart (*xin* 心), by knowing the true nature of the human being and Heaven. *Ming* (命), here, actually involves two meanings at the same time. The first meaning is mandate, mission, or appointment, as stated above. The second meaning is fate or destiny. These two meanings are intertwined in this one word – *ming* (命). They cannot be understood separately. This means that, on the one hand, internally, everyone is given a mission by Heaven. One should seek to fulfill one's mission and act morally. Such seeking is conducive to one's life because what one seeks lies within oneself.³² On the other hand, everyone's fate and encounters are not always controllable, because it is external to oneself. Combining these two meanings implies that one should accept one's fate, no matter whether it is good or bad, and submit to one's appointment or mission given by Heaven, to act morally and to fulfill one's Heaven-endowed responsibility.³³ Whoever is able to achieve this is what Confucians call "the superior man" (*junzi* 君子).

Second, as human nature is conferred by Heaven, the Way (Dao 道) of self-cultivation and the moral teaching is to follow one's Heaven-mandated human nature. As the Way is naturally inborn, human nature is the natural manifestation of the Way, and we have to understand the Way through exhausting our mind/heart.³⁴ Indeed, for Confucians, we can understand the Way by a kind of bodily reflective intuition through persistent observance of rites (*li* 禮). Thus, as Tu Weiming states, Confucian reasoning is a kind of

³⁰ *Mencius*, 6B15.

³¹ Indeed, this point was inspired by one of my conversations with Vincent Shen discussing Mencius's religiosity in one of the conferences organized by the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy years ago.

³² *Mencius*, 7A3.

³³ Shu-Hsien Liu, "The Religious Import of Confucian Philosophy: Its Traditional Outlook and Contemporary Significance," *Philosophy East and West* 21, no. 2 (1971): 162.

³⁴ *Mencius*, 7A1.

“embodied knowing” (*tizhi* 體知) and our moral knowledge is derived from a kind of bodily experience learning (*tiyan* 體驗).³⁵ Mencius argues that if we see a child falling into a well, we will naturally have a sense of commiseration.³⁶ Mencius attempts to show that we can acquire certain moral senses through our bodily moral intuition. And then, Mencius argues, everyone acquires four kinds of universal predispositions in human nature. He calls them the four germinations (*siduan* 四端). They are the sense of commiseration (*ceyin zhixin* 惻隱之心), the sense of shame (*xiuwu zhixin* 羞惡之心), a reverential attitude toward others (*cirang zhixin* 辭讓之心) and the sense of rightness and wrongness (*shifei zhixin* 是非之心). For Mencius, these four germinations are necessary and distinctive characteristics of being human; if anyone lacks one of these four germinations, s/he is not a human being. As human beings are given these four germinations, we are demanded to cultivate these dispositions through the observance of rites into four virtues: benevolence (*ren* 仁), propriety (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智).

Indeed, for Confucianism, our bodily reflective intuition and ritual practices form a kind of virtuous circle of moral self-cultivation. On the one hand, our moral intuition shows us certain basic moral predispositions in human nature, which provide the foundation for the development of rites. On the other hand, ritual observance shapes our moral sense. By ritual observance, we can further comprehend and cultivate our Heaven-endowed moral nature. As Tu Weiming, a contemporary Confucian, states, moral knowledge is a kind of bodily experiential knowledge.³⁷ While it cannot be totally separated from empirical knowledge, it is based on reflection of one’s bodily practice and experience. Thus, the aims of Confucian self-cultivation are, first, to be united and harmonized with Heaven and, second, to become “*ren-ren*,” a man who embodies benevolence/humanity (*ren*) with the manifestation of the observance of rites (*li*).

Among the virtues mentioned above, *ren* can be said to be the most essential one for Confucianism. As stated in the *Doctrine of the Mean*,³⁸

The cultivation of the person is to be done through the Way (*Dao*),
and the cultivation of the Way (*Dao*) is to be done through human-

³⁵ Tu Waiming, “On ‘Embodied Knowing’: The Implications of Moral Knowledge in the Confucian Tradition,” in *Essays from the Seminar on Confucian Ethics* “論儒家的「體知」— 德性之知的涵意,” in 儒家倫理研討會論文集, ed. S. H. Liu (Singapore: Institute of East Asia Philosophy, 1987), 98-101.

³⁶ *Mencius*, 2A6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

³⁸ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20.

ity (*ren*). Humanity (*ren*) is [the distinguishing characteristic of] man (*ren*), and the greatest application of it is in being affectionate toward relatives. Righteousness (*yi*) is the principle of setting things right and proper, and the greatest application of it is in honoring the worthy. The relative degree of affection we ought to feel for our relatives and the relative grades in the honoring of the worthy give rise to the rules of propriety (*li*).

For Confucianism, the important way of self-cultivation is to start with *ren*. *Ren* can be translated as humanity, perfect virtue, and love. These three meanings are intertwined. It means that love is the Confucian perfect virtue; it also reflects the true nature of the human being. However, for Confucianism, *ren* is different from universal, impartial love. Confucians stress that we should first love our family and start our love by “being affectionate toward relatives.” Therefore, Confucianism stresses very much the five Confucian relationships (*wulun* 五倫), which are five universal ways “governing the relationship between ruler and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brothers, and those in the intercourse between friends.”³⁹ Among these relationships, *filial piety* is considered the prime virtue of the community because our relationship with our family members is directly experienced as the most essential and intimate relation. It shows that Confucian ethics is very much based on our bodily moral intuition in our ordinary life. As Tu Weiming states,

The centrality of filial piety in Confucian ethics is predicated on the belief that human beings become aware of themselves by responding naturally to the loving care of those around them. Such a reciprocal response, laden with rich symbolic significance for the transmission and continuity of humanity, is seen by the Confucians as the way to provide a solid basis for personal growth: filial piety and brotherly love are roots (*pen*, 本) of humanity.⁴⁰

However, our love (*ren*) must come with the sense of righteousness (*yi*), setting things right and honoring the worthy; otherwise, our familial love would degenerate into a kind of nepotism. Thus, for Confucianism, our love toward others does not stop with our family members. Rather, Mencius expects that we should extend our filial and fraternal love for family members to others’ family members too. For Mencius, there are three kinds of

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Tu Waiming, *An Insight of Chung Yung* (Beijing: Renmin Publishing, 2008), 140.

love.⁴¹ They are love (*ai* 愛) toward creatures, love (*ren*) toward people, and filial love. Filial love is considered the foundation of our love toward general people and creatures. It means that if we fail to love our family members, the most intimate persons in our lives, we cannot truly love other general persons. Indeed, for Mencius, by exhausting our mind/heart (*xin*), we not only know our nature, but by knowing our nature, we can also know Heaven.⁴² By endeavoring with our mind, we extend our commiseration not only toward another person, but it also “flows abroad, above and beneath, like that of Heaven and Earth.”⁴³ As the sense of commiseration is unlimited, in principle, it can embody countless things, including an ever-expanding network of human relationships, and even Heaven and Earth, in our commiseration.

The question then is: how can we exhaust our mind/heart? For Confucianism, the most important thing for self-cultivation is the attitude of *cheng* (誠). *Cheng* leads to one’s enlightenment.⁴⁴ *Cheng* has a double meaning. It means both sincerity and authenticity. It means that if one can be sincere to one’s inner self, one can know about the authentic nature of humanity and Earth and Heaven, and then one can develop one’s own nature and the nature of others and things on the Earth. Finally, one can “assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth. If they can assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth, they can thus form a trinity with Heaven and Earth.”⁴⁵ Thus, *cheng* is indispensable for one’s self-exploration. Such self-exploration leads to a kind of self-transformation which in turn shapes one’s moral practices. Through extending our self-understanding by bodily reflective intuition, we can also understand others, a myriad of things, and Heaven. However, what can ensure that our sincere self-exploration allows us to achieve unity with Heaven? This is related to the third implication of the idea of Heaven-endowed human nature.

As human nature is good by nature which is Heaven-endowed, everyone possesses the capacity to practice moral goodness. This provided the foundation for Mencius’s doctrine of a human natural tendency toward goodness. We have to notice that both Confucius and Mencius, founders of Confucianism, were living in times of war [Confucius in Spring and Autumn period

⁴¹ *Mencius*, 7A45. Sungmoon Kim, *Confucian Democracy in East Asia: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 146-147.

⁴² *Mencius*, 7A1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7A13.

⁴⁴ *Doctrine of the Mean*, 21.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

(*Chunqiu* 春秋) (770-476 B.C.E) and Mencius in the Warring State period (*Zhanguo* 戰國)]. The country had disintegrated into different states ruled by different dukes, and states were under the continuous menace of internal political struggles and external invasions. Society was in total disarray and chaotic. Confucius used an idiom, ‘rites collapses and music spoilt’ (*libeng yuehuai* 禮崩樂壞) to describe the situation. Confucians advocated the political ideal of benevolent rule (*renzheng* 仁政) and moral self-cultivation (*xiuji* 修己) of political leaders as role models for people. However, dukes were generally concerned with benefits and political power rather than moral enhancement through their ruling. Although both Confucius and Mencius were very famous for their moral teaching and integrity at the time, none of the dukes were willing to endorse and to implement the Confucian moral-political theory. For authorities and people in general, Confucianism seemed to be too ideal and impractical.

The question then follows, is Confucius’s ideal of becoming “the superior man” (*junzi* 君子) through self-cultivation feasible? Or is Mencius’s ideal of a great man (*dazhangfu* 大丈夫) with an unperturbed mind/heart (*budongxin* 不動心),⁴⁶ unmoved by social-economic conditions and political pressure, attainable? In the face of such a situation, it seems to be hopeless to have any enhancement of morality. However, Confucians, Mencius in particular, stress that human nature tends to be good. As Mencius states, “The tendency of man’s nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downward. There are none but have this tendency to good, just as all water flows downward.”⁴⁷ Confucians affirm the idea of the natural human tendency toward goodness partly because they believe that human moral nature is endowed by Heaven, which is good by nature. And it is important to insist on the human natural tendency toward goodness for Confucianism because it provides hope and moral motivation for moral enhancement, even in the face of evil, suffering, and chaos in the human world. In the following, I will compare Confucianism and Taylor on their transcendent moral theory.

Confucianism and Taylor’s Transcendent Moral Theory

If Taylor is right that the underlying ideal of moral autonomy is the ethics of authenticity, then both Taylor and Confucianism are similar in their aim of achieving authenticity of the self, while both also reject the idea of moral autonomy. Both of them support the idea of moral realism that there

⁴⁶ *Mencius*, 6A14, 3B2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2A2.

exists such a thing as a moral reality that is independent of our beliefs and decisions about it. Indeed, in ancient China, there was no such idea of moral autonomy, and therefore there was no such discussion in classical Confucianism. Taylor's contemporary criticism of moral autonomy and argument about the embodied dialogical self can provide a modern defense of Confucianism. Furthermore, there are a few similarities between Taylor and Confucian moral theory, although they may be different in detail.

First, both Taylor and Confucianism stress the role of the body in moral epistemology; both reject disengaged reason in the exploration of morality. However, their bodily moral epistemology is quite different. Taylor stresses that we inevitably understand the self and morality through continuing dialogue with significant others. Confucians rather stress grasping our moral nature through reflective moral intuition and persistent ritual practice. Although Confucian scholars, in their teaching, seldom emphasize the importance of dialogue and debates in moral epistemology, Confucianism should welcome the role of dialogical debates in moral investigation. Indeed, in light of Taylor's dialogical argument, we should be aware of the fact that some Confucian classical texts, such as *Analects* and *Mencius*, just like the dialogues of Plato, are also written in the form of dialogue. The significance of ritual practice in moral self-cultivation, emphasized by Confucianism, is something that Taylor has seldom mentioned. Although Taylor stresses that human science should interpret the meaning of social practice, his hermeneutical approach seems to be still too detached and idealistic. Rather Confucianism stresses the participation of social rites for one's moral self-cultivation and self-transformation. If we are truly embodied, our bodily participation in rituals or social practices is indispensable for acquiring moral knowledge. Thus, Taylor's and Confucian's bodily epistemology can be mutually supplementary.

Second, both Taylor and Confucianism are also concerned with relationships within communities. Taylor stresses that our moral self-understanding is constituted by our continuing dialogue with significant others; our identities are shaped by the community we belong to. Although Confucianism has not offered a theory of communitarian self-understanding, the Confucian emphasis on the value of family shows the significance of familial community in shaping one's identity. As Van Norden states, *Analects* 1:2 shows that "children first learn to love and have compassion for others in the family."⁴⁸ For Confucianism, family members are the significant others who are consti-

⁴⁸ Bryan W. Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2011), 88.

tutive to our moral self. Furthermore, we may argue that Confucian emphasis on ritual practice has actually implied the significance of community in identity formation and moral cultivation. As community is so important to the self, it implies that we have obligations toward our community. Taylor stresses political participation in forming common values of community. For classical Confucianism, as they lived in ancient Chinese society, most people were illiterate farmers. Rational political deliberation is not common in such a society. Thus, Confucians stress that political leaders should first cultivate the self, then one can regulate their families, and then they can rightly govern the state, and, finally, the whole kingdom will therefore be made tranquil and happy. As stated in the *Great Learning* (1), "From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides. It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered." Thus, Confucianism stresses very much the integrity of political leaders. Through rigorous moral self-cultivation, a political leader can be a man of insight and become a moral exemplar for common people, and then they are capable of ruling the state well. Thus, Confucian self-cultivation is not only for the self; it is also for the sake of the community. And I think that even in modern society, the integrity of political leaders can still function as a role model in political leadership and the formation of citizenship. Thus, Confucian self-cultivation of moral character and Taylor's emphasis on participation in political deliberation can also be complementary to each other in modern society.

Third, both Taylor and Confucianism stress the transcendent dimension of morality. Although their understandings of God/Heaven are different, both emphasize the significance of the transcendent moral sources in moral motivation. However, I would like to discuss two differences between Taylor and Confucianism in respect of their transcendent moral realism.

The first difference is that, as stated before, morality is based on Heavenly-endowed human nature under Confucianism. Unlike Taylor, such a definitional statement in the *Doctrine of the Mean* is not derived from a historical comparative study. Rather, it is presented as an idea that is self-evident based on Confucians' moral intuitions. For Taylor, our understanding of morality is based on our self-interpretation. But what is the difference between intuitionism and self-interpretation? Are they simply synonymous? I think that they are different in nature, and there is a problem with intuitionism as moral perception. Moral intuitionism usually presents the moral truth as self-evident. However, in dealing with different conclusions of moral intuition, in particular relating to certain incompatible disagreements about fundamental moral truths, intuitionists seem to have no way to arbitrate the

differences. For Taylor, our moral knowledge is based on self-interpretation. It implies that there can be better or worse interpretations; it allows people to debate and argue about which interpretation among different interpretations is the best. Indeed, Taylor has suggested certain criteria in his Best Account principle for the arbitration of different interpretations. And he has also applied his Best Account principle in his historical comparative studies and argues that theistic tradition is the best interpretation of human moral nature. Although controversies remain, and Taylor's theory does not, therefore, resolve the debates about the transcendent nature of morality, his hermeneutical approach of transcendent morality does leave room and provide ways for further deliberation and articulation. Thus, we may still argue that Taylor's historical comparative hermeneutical approach can contribute to Confucianism in its studies of Heaven-mandated morality.

Basically, Classical Confucianism is humanistic in nature; its metaphysics, epistemology, and hermeneutics are simple and unsystematic.⁴⁹ Furthermore, very few contemporary Confucians appeal to history or tradition as a ground for validating Confucianism after the May Fourth Movement.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Confucianism does not reject the importance of learning from history. For instance, Confucius states, "I am not one who was born in the possession of knowledge; I am one who is fond of antiquity, and earnest in seeking it there."⁵¹ In the later years of his life, Confucius studied *Yijing* and history. He believed that "there is a historical ontology that shows the Dao in history, already made explicit in the *Yijing*."⁵² He composed the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, in which he gave his judgment on historical events; it shows us the meaningfulness of human history. Mencius also emphasizes that we can learn about morality from seeing (*jian*) personally and hearing (*wen*) from history.⁵³ There are also lots of historical studies of Confucianism and Chinese philosophy by contemporary Confucians. Actually, for Chinese academic tradition, the disciplines of philosophy, history, and literature are not separated. Thus, it is believed that Confucians would welcome Taylor's historical comparative hermeneutics in the study of Confucianism.

⁴⁹ Chung-Ying Cheng, "Recent Trends in Chinese Philosophy in China and the West," in *Contemporary Chinese Philosophy*, eds. C.Y. Cheng and N. Bunnin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 355.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 358.

⁵¹ *Analects*, 7:20.

⁵² Shen, "The Fading of Political Theology and the Rise of Creative Humanism," 47.

⁵³ *Mencius*, 7B38

The second difference is about moral motivation. For Confucianism, because our nature is Heaven-endowed, everyone is capable of being moral, and we are obligated to cultivate our moral character, not only for the sake of the self, but also for the sake of the community, and fulfill the mission given by Heaven. Thus, by moral self-cultivation, we can regulate our family and rule the state properly so that the whole world will be at peace. In contrast, Taylor seldom stresses our divine-endowed moral obligation or our God-created human nature. Rather, Taylor emphasizes that divine grace has bestowed an incomparable force on moral motivation. Based on Taylor's Catholic belief, I think that he would accept the idea of divine moral obligation and God-created human nature as part of the sources of moral motivation. However, many Confucians cannot accept the Christian idea of divine grace. For Confucianism, our Heaven-endowed human nature has guaranteed our natural tendency of goodness. As Liu Shu-hsien, a contemporary Confucian, states, "The Confucian tradition, on the contrary, has placed exclusive emphasis upon the effort by the self. It is man who has to listen to his reason, to make his own existential decision, and to subject himself to strict moral discipline, so that he can uncover the depth dimension that is inherent in himself, realize to the fullest extent his own great potentiality, and form a perfect union with the supreme Creative Power that operates in the universe."⁵⁴ The differences of moral motivation between Confucianism and Christianity are usually defined in terms of "self-power" vs. "other power" or "external power" by Confucians.

The reason for the rejection of grace or external moral power may be because the idea of divine grace seems to assume that natural human endowments are insufficient to motivate moral behavior. If this is true, human beings by themselves are impotent in morality. And then, for ancient Confucians, who lived in times of war and had no idea of Christian salvation and divine grace, it was hopeless for them to motivate any social reform and moral enhancement. Confucians reject such fatality; they argue that human nature has an innate tendency toward goodness.

According to Yao Xinzong, ancient ordinary Chinese were originally directed to the other-power in religious practices.⁵⁵ Their religions were basi-

⁵⁴ Shu-Hsien Liu, "The Religious Import of Confucian Philosophy: Its Traditional Outlook and Contemporary Significance," 169.

⁵⁵ Yao Xinzong, "'Self Power' and 'other Power' in Chinese Spirituality," *RERC Second Series Occasional Papers* 43 (Religious Experience Research Center, 2005), 2-3, 5, assessed August 27, 2019, <https://repository.uwtsd.ac.uk/456/1/RERC2-043-1.pdf>.

cally pantheism. “Among the most popular gods worshipped by the ancient Chinese, were celestial gods of wind, rain, thunder and lightning; terrestrial gods of earth, grain, river and mountain; and family deities such as ancestors spirits, or gods of doors and kitchen, who are believed to play a decisive role in the fortune and misfortune of the human world,” with one supreme god above these gods. However, there was a spiritual turn in the Spring and Autumn period, in which “communities were devastated by natural disasters and state mismanagement, which resulted in famine and political chaos, and when all traditional ways of sacrifices, prayers and pleas met with no response, their faith in the world order was fundamentally shaken.” People started to ask questions such as why these gods did not protect and bless good people. Indeed, great disasters also befell Israel in its history. However, unlike the Israelites, there were no prophets or divine revelation given to them to explain the divine goals of these disasters and sufferings. Thus, Confucius changed his focus from “sacrifice to deities” (*jishen*, 祭神) to the exploration of the human potential to reach perfection by means of wisdom and virtue.⁵⁶ And following Confucius, most Confucians afterward believed that “it was up to each individual self to become good or bad, and it was possible for each human to become a sage.”⁵⁷

However, if this is really the reason for Confucianism rejecting the idea of grace, then the contradiction between Christian belief and Confucianism is not really unresolvable. Those who believe in divine grace, like Taylor and other Christians, do not reject that human being by nature has the inner strength to exercise morality to a certain extent. However, there is a different degree of being moral. The fact that everyone occasionally has the capacity to act morally by oneself does not mean that one can always be perfectly moral and invulnerable to weakness of the will. It means that one can accept the idea of grace while also affirming the natural human capability to exercise morality. Indeed, Confucianism has a high moral demand on all of us; and thus, Nietzsche’s challenge can also apply to Confucianism. We have to ask: is the moral ideal of Confucianism higher than what general people can achieve? In the face of weakness of the will and human murkiness, I posit that divine grace does assist, rather than obstruct, human beings in achieving Confucian moral ideals and being united with Heaven. This means that both Christian theistic tradition and Confucian moral theory are compatible and can be mutually supplementary.

⁵⁶ *Analects*, 6:21; 11:12.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

The Metamorphoses of Memory: Rediscovering Vladimir Ghika

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Although I have found in Vladimir Ghika's writings several references to memory, they have never been collected and analyzed systematically. He promoted a preoccupation with memory and even wrote a history book,¹ in which he gathered historical articles and documents while manifesting a special attention to memory, as one could infer from his own thoughts published in the book *Gânduri pentru zilele ce vin*.² However, all this seems to be more of a kind of light signal sent for someone who travels through the night. They are fragments of thoughts, suggestions for a personal reflection, unfinished themes for one's meditation.

In one of his reflections, he said: "Before anything else, our ego is a storehouse."³ Undoubtedly, a storehouse filled with certain memories about those realities, exterior to our own person, which, by means of our senses, it changes into a symbol, a form, or an image, and thus it stores them within one's memory. These data that have been memorized are the result of an important and complex process that originates from our relationship with the

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¹ Vladimir Ghika (1873-1954) was a Romanian diplomat, essayist, Catholic priest, Thomist philosopher, and theologian. A member of the princely Ghika family, he died in Jilava (Bucharest), a Communist prison, in May 1954 in *odium fidei* (in hatred of the faith). He was beatified on August 31, 2013, in Bucharest. See V. I. Ghika, *Spicuri istorice [Historical Excerpts]* (Iassi: Publishing House, 1935).

² V. I. Ghika, *Gânduri pentru zilele ce vin. Convorbiri spirituale [Thoughts for the Days to Come. Spiritual Conversations]*, trans. D. Cornea, Gh. Lascu, and V. Lascu (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 1995).

³ *Ibid.*, 38.

world. According to Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), the constitutive elements of this process are the object/senses, the senses/sensitive perception, and the sensitive perception/mnemonic image.⁴ The movement of the exterior object on its way toward memory has its own setbacks, hesitations, ups and downs, as the person who experiences it perceives the object in discussion from the perspective of their own intentions and emotions. The image of the object that represents the end of this itinerary is a representation of one's *fantasy*, and yet this representation does not originate from one's imagination, but from one's relationship with the world. Consequently, the image of the exterior object that is to be stored within our memory has both intersubjective and subjective characteristics.

Things that are perceived for no more than several seconds, such as those posted on social networks, for instance, the representations on Facebook or Instagram, do not become inner mnemonic images. They take some of our time and energy, but they pass away or disappear from our interior horizon as easily as they had entered. Generally speaking, only those things on which we concentrate more and come to understand their nature can become images. These are a kind of virtual pictures, configured by our exterior senses and eventually polished by means of our intellect. They represent unique images and enter as component parts of a private personal collection. They are afterward verified and cataloged, whenever need be, by the mind that has produced them.

This personal collection of images has manifold features. The first and most important one is that it bears a strong personal status, obviously derived from the fact that the subject deliberately selects those data perceived by one's senses, takes into account emotional suggestions, covers them in images and relations significant to oneself. The personal character of this album of figurative representations within the mind of an individual is mainly given by a system of connections that binds the images together. Augustine (354-430) described this collection of images present in one's memory in the following terms:

Therefore, I will reach the plains and vast palaces of my memory, where the treasures of these innumerable images lie, as they had been brought by sensitive things. There have been stored all that we have destined for our pondering, either by increasing or by

⁴ Tommaso d'Aquino, *La sentenza sulla memoria e la reminiscenza di Aristotele* [*The Sentence about Memory e Aristotle's Reminiscence*], trans. G. Binotti e D. Roncari (Napoli: Editrice Domenica Italiana, 2007).

lessening or by modifying in one way or another those that our own senses have reached; even if something had merely been deposited there for safe keeping, that is anything that oblivion has not devoured and buried yet. Thus, whenever I am there, I ask for that which I need, and indeed some can be instantly retrieved, others take some time to surface as if they had to be dug out of unreachable depths; and others simply emerge in clusters and, while searching and asking for something different, they spring in the middle of other things as if they were to say: "Is it not us?" I nonetheless sweep them aside from my memory with the hand of my heart; this only until from amidst the clouds of my recollections there clearly appears that very thing which I need and wish it out surfaced from its depths.⁵

The second one is somehow connected to the first characteristic, namely, this collection of mnemonic images always lies at hand, under our habitual control. Thus, whenever we close our eyes, we always feel at home in the palace of our memories; we find ourselves among familiar things, ranging from the most beautiful and pleasing ones to those most grievous and frustrating. This palace of recollections is the arch of our own ego.⁶

Reading through the works of Ghika, we have noticed that he often took shelter in the fields of his memory, especially when facing hardships in connection to the history of his family, the history of the Church, or that of the Romanian people. He valued our history and frequently strove to enrich the national collection of documents at the Romanian Academy. He often employed incisive words addressed to all those who destroy historical symbols and mnemonic images, and especially to the representatives of the Bolshevik Communist government in Romania after 1947, which he labeled as "memory vampires."

Starting from these considerations the present article is organized into two parts. The first part is more theoretical and focuses on two aspects: analyzing the definition of memory in Ghika and presenting the function of memory as it is used in his historical and theological writings. The second part analyzes two metaphors: the paradise of memory and the vampires of memory.

⁵ Augustin, *Confesiuni* [*Confessions*], X, 8, 12, trans. Gh. I. Șerban (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House, 1998), 341-342.

⁶ D. Roncari, "Introduzione: L'arca della memoria" ["Introduction: The Ark of Memory"], in Tommaso d'Aquino, *La sentenza sulla memoria*, 9-11.

What Is Memory?

In 1898 Prince Vladimir Ghika went to Rome to study philosophy and theology. He enrolled at the College of St. Thomas, later known as the *Angelicum* University, of the Dominican Friars. He completed his studies with a diploma in Thomist philosophy and a doctorate thesis in theology. Thanks to the Dominican Friars he came to encounter Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), became friends, and maintained a close relationship until sometime in 1945, as we can infer from their correspondence.⁷ They often met at the Thomist Circles at Meudon, near Paris. Moreover, he had a spiritual relationship with the Dominican Friar René Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964), one of the most outstanding Thomists of the twentieth century. Starting from his formation, we dare say that the notion of *memory* such as employed by Ghika bears Thomist features, and here are some of our reasons.

Thomists share the opinion that memory is one of our interior senses (common sense, imagination, *estimative* and *cogitative*) that has a precise and limited function.⁸ Memory is in close connection to the imagination, as this has the mission of keeping and reproducing in a simple way impressions and sensible images. Moreover, memory has strong connections with the *cogitative*,⁹ which selects and brings out, that is, at the level of conscience, the images of things and the first work sketches, i.e., imaginary ones, for the act of thinking.

⁷ L. Verly, ed., “Corespondența Vladimir Ghika – Jacques Maritain” [“The Correspondence Vladimir Ghika – Jacques Maritain”], trans. I. Cojocariu, *Pro Memoria* 15-16 (2016-2017): 35-215. Ghika’s last letter addressed to J. Maritain is dated July 18, 1945. Verly, “Corespondența,” 209-215.

⁸ H.-D. Gardeil, *Initiation à la philosophie de saint Thomas d’Aquin* [Initiation into St Thomas Aquinas philosophy], vol. 2 (Paris: Cerf, 2007), 62-63.

⁹ *Estimativa* has the instinct function and from this point of view humans and animals share the same inner sense called instinct that draws them close to those things that are favorable to them, while keeping them at a distance from the ones that might harm their bodily integrity. *Cogitativa* has the role of a mediator between exterior senses that help humans comprehend concrete singular things and their own intelligence, the faculty of the abstract universe. *Cogitativa* intervenes in building imaginary schemes that can, thus, turn into the basic substance needed for the act of comprehension. *Cogitativa* has the function of adapting the superior requirements of reason to the concrete action of the sensible world. For instance, if I want to write something, *cogitativa* makes the connection between my mind and the object employed for writing (pen, pencil, etc.). Gardeil, *Initiation*, 61.

According to Aristotle, memory can be distinguished from the other interior faculties by the fact that it can represent things as being in the past. Medieval philosophers had formulated this thought by talking about the past from the perspective of the past: “*praeteritum sub ratione praeteriti.*”¹⁰ Indeed, we can say we remember a certain thing when we are able to relate its perception to the past. For instance, yesterday I met a friend. The image of this event is present in my conscience, together with its position in time and the place where the encounter occurred. Aquinas defines memory as a faculty of knowing the past: “*Memoria secundum communem usum loquentium accipitur pro notitia praeteritorum.*”¹¹ He claims that there are two types of memory: sensitive memory and intellective memory. The first type is unanimously accepted by all philosophers. The second used to be denied by some thinkers, such as Avicenna (980-1037). Against this philosopher, Aquinas argues in *Summa theologiae* that, in a general sense, memory, i.e., the power of keeping the intelligible species or images of real things, is also connected to the intellect and not only to the exterior senses.

For anything that is received within a subject is received in accordance to the nature of the receiver. Yet the intellect possesses a more stable and permanent nature than the matter of bodies. Indeed, matter keeps the forms that it receives as it accomplishes various actions using them, even when it has actually ceased to perform them. The intellect, however, receives the intelligible species in a manner more stable and permanent, either by means of senses or by means of a superior intellect. Therefore, if by memory we only understand the capacity to store intentional images, we have to admit that it is also to be found within the intellective part.¹²

Again, in *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas adds: “if we understand memory such as its object be the past as past, then memory cannot be found within the intellectual part, but only within the sensorial one, that which perceives particular things.”¹³ The meaning of this remark is clarified in the answer to the second objection in article no. 6, question no. 79 from the *Summa*:

the intellect knows the human being as it is human; however, in the case of the human being as it is human, the fact that it exists in the present, in the past or in the future is something accidental. On the other hand, from the perspective of the act, we could say that the past may also directly refer both to the intellect and to the

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 25, a. 5, ad 1.

¹¹ Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 2.

¹² Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 79, a. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*

senses. The understanding that takes place within our soul is a particular (and concrete) act, which exist in this or that time, and it exists in such a manner that we use to say about what a human being understood that it is what he understood today, yesterday or tomorrow. And this is not unfamiliar to the way of our mind, as although this understanding is a particular (and concrete) fact it is, however, an immaterial act, as we have shown above when speaking about the intellect. Therefore, in the same way as the mind is able to comprehend itself, although it is a particular intellect, it similarly comprehends its own understanding, which is a particular act that existed in the past, in the present or in the future. Consequently, the concept of memory resides within our mind as a knowing of the past, as the intellect knows that it has known something in the past of that it has previously thought something.¹⁴

Therefore memory belongs to our human mind even when it is understood as the ability of storing the past as past, especially whenever this term is not employed in connection to the memory of objects (as the objects perceived by the intellect are universal, while the past as a temporal dimension only refers to particular objects), but about the memory of intellectual acts.¹⁵ And still, how can the image of a real thing or the relations between the different images of things be connected to a certain moment of time?

We cannot assume that it is the human mind, as it only perceives things in an abstract way, i.e., it passes beyond that movement and time, which characterizes the existence of real things. The human being does not possess a pure intellectual memory. The perception of movement is sensible, and it is on this perception that the knowledge of time is based. The temporal order of perceived phenomena is encompassed within memory, which – owing to this very fact – is able to reproduce them. Whenever such a phenomenon presents itself, our memory is able to place it in time by connecting it to other phenomena.

In the case of animals, reducing the past to the present can be accomplished automatically and instinctively. However, in the case of human conscience, bringing the past into the present can be the result of an active research referred to as *recalling* or *remembering*. Psychology has borrowed

¹⁴ Ibid., a. 6, ad 2.

¹⁵ B. Mondin, “Mondin, Memoria” [“The Memory”], in B. Mondin, *Dizionario enciclopedico del pensiero di San Tommaso d’Aquino* [*Encyclopedic Dictionary of St Thomas Aquinas thought*] (Bologna: ESD, 1991), 380-381.

and integrated this definition of memory, i.e., “*ratio praeteriti*” or the power to retain the past as something belonging to the past. The only novelties brought by the more recent developments in the realm of psychology are resumed to certain conditions and modalities in which the past could be re-actualized at the level of human conscience.

The Functions of Memory

As we have stated, Ghika never wrote anything systematically about memory. Therefore, we attempt to recompose here the pattern of his conception regarding this essential faculty of the human mind by perusing his intellectual relations and writings. Thus, we are inclined to believe that among the functions of memory – storing the image of things belonging to our sensible experience, the knowledge of images, and the recognition of the past as past – Ghika mainly insists on the power of recognizing with which our memory is endowed. In this respect, he bears the influence of Maritain, a student of Henri Bergson (1851-1941), from whom Maritain detached himself several years after completing his studies¹⁶ by writing in 1907 an article in which he claimed that “memory is not our mind.”¹⁷

Maritain could not agree with Bergson as the latter failed to distinguish between the natural being on the one side, according to which things exist in themselves, and the intentional being on the other side, according to which they exist inside the human being. Thus, while speaking about things in the past, Bergson mistook the reality of inner experiences that have left permanent impressions within one’s soul, but which eventually ceased to exist (and we speak here about the natural being of past things, *in esse naturali*), for the

¹⁶ Maritain had entered into a sort of intellectual scandal of his time, being accused of excessively psychologizing the process of cognition in a similar way to what Bergson was doing. Ghika defended him by publishing in 1923 an article in which he explained that for Maritain, “this philosophy of Bergson was par excellence and essentially a philosophy pertaining to a certain stage and, therefore, more than any other meant to be nothing more than a mere stage.” Indeed, Maritain had been impressed with Bergson’s philosophy during 1904-1905 while he was completing his philosophy studies at Sorbonne and hoped to find in philosophy a solid ground of unshakable invincible truth. Nonetheless, his perspective became clearly separated from his teacher’s. V. Ghika, “Une conquête de la philosophie chrétienne: Jacques Maritain” [“A Conquest of Christian Philosophy”], *Documentation Catholique*, no. 216 (octobre 1923), 5e année, T. 10.

¹⁷ J. et R. Maritain, *Œuvres complètes* [Complete Works], vol. 1 (Paris: Editions Universitaire Fribourg Suisse/Editions Saint-Paul, 1986 [1998]), 358-360.

purely representative or immaterial existence according to which the past still subsists within the memory's act of perception (the intentional being of things from the past, *in esse immateriali*).

Nonetheless, for Maritain, the past remains within us by means of an organ to which we refer as the memorizing faculty of the intellect and according to a form that modifies the way in which a certain thing is; the status of a thing in the past bears an immanent character, which almost becomes a *locum tenens* of those things that have existed and which have been known, a reference or tendency principle, in the order of knowing that which no longer exist as such. "This is the mystery of memory," wrote Maritain, "a function of cognition and a privilege of living beings endowed with knowledge (plants do not possess any memory), which could not only be themselves, but also other beings, and likewise not only that which they are, but also that which they are no longer."¹⁸ Memory stores the past in the shape of an object that is retained in one's mind as *sign* and nothing more, therefore not as a reality of things that have been lived or experimented. If we do not bear in mind this distinction, we might repeat Bergson's mistake of mistaking the past for the recollection of the past and, by refusing to admit that memory is a special power or faculty of the human mind, still mistake the human mind for memory.

Ghika shares Maritain's perspective regarding memory and states together with him that within our memory the past – our recollection of the past – is preserved entirely, while *the interior sense* of memory is enough for being able to store this whole recollection. Memory is a living and continuous organizing of images of the past.¹⁹ Interpreting memory as an *active recognition* means that he who is able to remember can pass from *the past into the present*, i.e., from the state of potentiality, where the whole memory of the past is stored, but in a potential manner, to the state of actuality, where an element of this past, extracted from the variety of things stored there, can be brought to the surface of consciousness.

It is not the case of a purely spiritual memory that slowly becomes materialized, but of a faculty of (organic) cognition that passes from potency to act. In this operation recollections are actualized *as recollections*. In becoming an act, a movement presupposes the existence of the image or of the recollection of that particular thing. The same thing is valid for the world of animals. Their action only becomes individualized after a certain representation intervenes, an image that triggers the movement. The excitation that comes from

¹⁸ Ibid., 362.

¹⁹ Ibid., 363.

an exterior organ of sense cannot be individualized but by a cognitive act transcending them. Thus, when the act of cognition is perturbed, the lesions of the organ that prevent the actualization of a recollection not only regard the motor functions, but also reach the sensations, i.e., the capacity of perceiving any of the *interior senses*, be it memory or imagination. We do not underestimate the importance of motor function and movements, that of the habits that appear within one's mental life, but the general movement generated by habit triggers or facilitates the forming of a synthesis of images that in itself constitutes recognition. Whenever we encounter maladies concerning recognition, the cerebral lesion directly affects the memory (of concrete sensible things) or the imagination.²⁰

Here Bergson's theory regarding the connection between the perturbation of the recognition act and motor deficiencies does not hold validity. The only connection determined is that between memory and the functions of the brain, as in the case of aphasia and in that of certain perturbations of visual and auditive recognition, these do not disappear from where they used to be, but one's faculty of remembering has decreased. We also have to note that the progress of amnesia follows a pattern incompatible with the topographic development of the lesion and it would seem absurd to presuppose that there exists a certain place in the brain for each particular image, as each image of a thing is part of a number of other images, that have a place of their own in different places of the brain.

In many cases of amnesia, we do not encounter the loss or destruction of the memories, but the incapacity to reproduce them. That is why Maritain was criticizing Bergson, who claimed that in fact the brain would function as an engine, while the cerebral lesions have nothing to do with the memory of concrete and sensible things, and that memory would be inorganic and could be one and the same with the spirit or human intelligence. The memory of the sensible concrete and the imagination store the images together with their function of representation in material circumstances; they are provided by external sense, and these are organic faculties. This does not mean that images and recollections are inscribed within the nervous substance as if this were a kind of CD stored within the brain as inside a box, but only that the faculty is placed at the level of a particular organ and that the activity of this faculty is simultaneously the activity of this organ. It can only actualize by means of an organ of recollections, which informs it in an immaterial manner, and which subsists within in a habitual state. We have here an

²⁰ Ibid., 362-366.

integral relationship between an organ and a faculty or a correspondence between the cerebral state and the representation system.

Therefore, the spirit-memory or the mind-memory advocated by Bergson does not exist. That memory that stores and reproduce images is not the only type of memory possessed by the human mind. There also is an intellectual memory identifiable with the intelligence. This is what Aristotle referred to as the memory of intelligible species; it preserves the abstract knowledge that perfects the intelligible images of things, namely the acquired knowledge, in a habitual state. The intellectual memory subsists separately within one's soul, it does not have a certain organ by means of which to act. In order to enter into an activity regime, the intellectual memory needs the sensitive intelligence, as likewise intelligence needs the assistance of imagination.²¹

The Paradises of Memory

Ghika did not only speak theoretically about memory but made memory exercises concretely. He was convinced that image syntheses or those of representations of things that are stored within one's memory and which memory is able to extract in order to perfect them in knowing them constitute one's identity and self-consciousness nucleus. Therefore, he loved history as a domain, but mainly the history of the Romanian people as found in the Romanian and Vatican archives. Indeed, after completing his philosophy and theology studies in Rome under the guidance of Louis Marie Olivier Duchesne (1843-1922), the principal of the French History and Archaeology School, he proceeded to research in the Vatican archives and in those belonging to the Congregation *De propaganda fide*. He discovered here important historical data about his great-grandfather Grigore Ghika, who had accomplished the Catholic profession of faith in Vienna after passing with his troupes from the Turkish army to the Christian army during the battle of Leva in 1664. He repeated the same thing at Hotin in 1673, together with the Ruler of Moldavia, when passing from the Turkish army into the Polish one.²² This discovery encouraged him immensely to persist with the study of history, which, according to his own beliefs from that time, held many (still unraveled) proofs for advocating the good side of the Romanian people.

²¹ Ibid., 367-371.

²² F. Băltăceanu, A. Brezianu, M. Broșteanu, E. Cosmovici, and L. Verly, *Vladimir Ghika: Profesor de speranță* [*Vladimir Ghika: Professor of Hope*] (Bucharest: ARCB Publishing House, 2013), 98-99.

During his historical research he strengthened his convictions that the past connections that had been built between Rome and Romania could eventually become the fundament of better future relationships. Consequently, he recommended the study of certain deposits where data regarding our national memory was excellent in both relevance and complexity. Ghika considered these as veritable paradises of Romanian national identity. Among the most significant are the archives that are to be found in Rome. They can be divided into two categories: the archives in the Vatican and private archives. Both are “among the richest, most significant and comprehensive that could be found in connection with our country.”²³ They shed the Romanian people in a special light, more fruitful and self-confident. Indeed, the documents stored within these archives “leave the impression of a certain closeness between the Romanians and the Holy See, throughout *all times*, much greater than what is usually held by current views, where much deliberate prejudice has been involved imposed by foreigners and infidels.”²⁴ Thus, when perceiving ourselves from the perspective of the Roman archives, we could understand our own history as being

a history much wiser, independent of local trifles, more unitary, more traceable, more easily lived and prolonged in the future, more *alive*, and so much alive that it is the origin of our *only* history ..., a history with practical consequences and with implicit forces, simultaneously self-conscience and self-knowledge, that could harbor a virtue of strength and rebirth.²⁵

Undoubtedly, there also existed paradises of the memory of the Romanian people at home or in other European capital cities, but Vladimir Ghika believed that the most remarkable ones are the Vatican archives.

Their greatness and significance become even more outstanding when comparing our history as seen in Rome with the one seen from Constantinople, from Vienna, from Petersburg, or with our own historical sources. That is our *most refined* history – our noble titles in the world. I have spoken about this general interest founded on several cardinal points of a very high level: *Christian unity – culture – the country's independence from the infidels* (especially by means of crusades, leagues, holy wars).²⁶

²³ Ghika, *Spicuiuri*, 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

Besides these general motivations that justify their brightness, there also is one of a very special nature, most dear to Ghika. It is

a *filial* interest, if I might use this word. We come from Rome under all aspects: the essential ethnic element, the Christian faith, the national awaking have all come from there as pivotal factors; all the others have only been accidentally added, certain *occasions* that have enriched or lessened our being without touching it in its substance.²⁷

The private archives themselves comprise two categories. Some can be found with the religious congregations in Rome that used to have pastoral activity in the Romanian Principalities, while others were kept in the libraries of aristocratic families.

The archives of the congregations in Rome, which bear historical significance for us, are the archives of the Franciscan Friars (Conventuals, Minors, Capuchins), who used to be in charge of the Romanian missions. Especially relevant are the archives of the Minor Conventual Friars, who had been working in Moldavian Catholic villages as early as the thirteenth century. Moreover, the archives of the Dominican Friars are worth being researched, as they had been preaching the Gospel through the northern part of the country beginning with the thirteenth century. The first catholic bishops in this region, in Siret, for instance, had been Dominicans. Then, the archives of the Jesuits are rich in information about the Romanian Principalities from the end of the sixteenth century. Eventually, the archives of the Passionist Fathers contain highly important data about the modern history of Wallachia and about the contemporary history of Romania.

In order to complete this frame regarding the Roman religious archives, we should still mention two more thesauruses of historical memory. The first one represents the family archives of the past nuncios in Poland and Germany from the end of the sixteenth century up to 1920, the year in which Romania opened its diplomatic relations with the Holy See and the first apostolic nuncio, Francesco Marmaggi,²⁸ arrived in Bucharest. The second one refers to the archives of the Congregation *De propaganda fide*, where the young Ghika worked most. Compared to the Vatican archives, those of the *Propaganda* span over a shorter period of time, as this congregation had only been founded on June 22, 1622. Nonetheless, this does not diminish their historical importance. On the contrary. They possess a special quality as they represent a sort

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 13-15.

of state archives, maybe less official, and contain weighty information about our country from a missionary perspective. About missionaries, we learn that they used to exercise pedagogical and diplomatic roles, besides the pastoral one, which was their pivotal role. Thus, the missionaries were the only teachers in our country that used to teach Latin, elements of classical culture, moral lessons “purer and safer” and above all, “they were the only ones to remind us of our Roman heritage long forgotten by us.”²⁹

Other private archives are kept in various libraries belonging to aristocratic families. For those wishing to enhance their knowledge about our past as a people, these archives are equally worth being studied. Ghika was especially insisting on several ones: the Borghese Fund (containing rich unknown information about Michael the Brave), the Barberini Fund, the Chigi Fund, the Altieri Fund, and others. Some of these important collections of documents are in the Vatican Archive. Here we also find the so-called *Nunziature* records that comprise the whole correspondence of the Papal Nuncios. These had been described by Ghika as “a true piece of resistance,” as they are “rich in pieces, reports, annexes given either in the original or in copy.”³⁰ As regarding the documents in the Roman archives, Ghika warns us:

the general history of our people will not be completed, coherent, illuminated and enlivened until we assimilate the materials in Rome and the deep meaning of this material; so as to have a Romanian history worthy of the name it bears, we truly need that it completely pervades our knowledge and our conscience.³¹

Although he used to pay a tremendous attention to history, Ghika’s interest went beyond it. His plea for the incontestable importance of the Roman/Vatican archives had a transcendent purpose, i.e., to regain the unity

²⁹ Ibid., 20.

³⁰ Ibid., 10. With reference to nuncios, Ghika notes, “We did not have nuncios: they used to be only in catholic countries. Alienated from Mother Rome and from the Christian current of the universal Church, we could only remain aside even from this point of view. Still we find numerous details about our country at the nuncio offices closest to us, responsible for mediating between us and the Holy See. Those in Poland and Germany, the most usual channels of any communication between Romania and Poland, are literally filled with documents regarding us and of the greatest significance. For several periods in our history, putting together the records in these documents we could have the most comprehensive history, the clearest about our past (especially about the wars with the Turks for organizing Christian leagues).”

³¹ Ibid., 24.

of the Church. The recourse to the memory of the relations between Romania and Rome constituted for him a foundation for a better future, where Greek-Orthodox Christians could be reunited with Roman-Catholic ones or the other way around.³² Another important aspect of these years he dedicated to the historical research in Rome is that Ghika expressed his wish that an institution could be founded in Rome where the Romanian past was to be studied: “I hope no long time will pass until a special institution is founded for the sake of the scientific work that would bring out, for our own benefit, the treasure of facts forever recorded in the Roman archives.”³³ In 1920, this eventually became reality as the Romanian parliament endorsed a law promoted by N. Iorga and V. Pârvan, which stipulated the founding of Romanian academies abroad. “The Romanian School in Rome” was opened in 1922. The activity of the School in Rome was set under the patronage of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest. The only difficulty is that the historians interested in our past as recorded in the Roman archives failed to be numerous in our recent past. We hope to have more in the future.

The Vampires of Memory

Ghika’s passion for history and for the exercises of historical memory never ended. It manifested itself during the years when he, together with the other Romanians, deeply felt the political Communist Bolshevik action of erasing our historical roots. He saw with his own eyes how a world was perishing and how a new one was coming into existence by means of reforms against human nature and against civilized societies. We are speaking about the 1948-1952 years, a time when he sent his brother Dimitrie Ghika (1875-1967), exiled in Switzerland, thirty postal cards and letters. This correspondence has been kept by Dimitrie’s granddaughter and later published in 2008 in a volume entitled *To My Brother in Exile*. Here we have found several occurrences about memory that once again show how much it meant for Ghika.

First, it is about the memory collected in the so-called family albums and in the memories or recollections written by certain important Romanian personalities. Thus, in the first postal card he sent to his brother, he says that he had met again Mrs. Marga, who asked for a “shelter for her parents’

³² Băltăceanu et al, *Profesor de speranță*, 100.

³³ Ghika, *Spicuri*, 24.

collections; despite my doubts, it could be accomplished without impediments where I have already deposited our memory albums.”³⁴

In another postal card, he wrote that he learned about the tour planned by his brother at Cannes. He advised him:

Do not forget in this tour, besides going to Marseilles, to also pass through Aix where is our cousin née Iuraşcu, and where we have sheltered the things left by our other cousin, Jeanne Guillard (our great-grandmother’s portrait and the other memories) – about memories – did Raoul bring the original of the engraving which represents our grandfather’s entering Iassi...? I am glad to hear that *Mémoires d’un âne*, asked and claimed, have safely reached their destinations.³⁵

His preoccupation with the past of his family can also be understood from the frequent questions he addressed to his brother, who was planning to write his memories: “How do your *Memories* go?”³⁶ Another question was addressed to his brother-in-law Pierre de Briey: “Has Dimitrie published his *Memories*?”³⁷ “By the way, how is it with the publishing of the *Memories*?”³⁸

Second, he spoke about the collective memory cultivated and kept alive through public monuments and institutions with symbolic value. Referring to the changes operated by the regime in Bucharest during that period, he said: “We are at all levels during a revolution. You would not be able to recognize anything everything is changing every week.”³⁹ The intention to sweep everything from the collective memory is set into practice with proletarian enthusiasm: “The city has half become something *else*, there no more statues (King Charles, Ferdinand, Brătianu) entire districts demolished, constructions built hastily and with much noise. ... A terrible misery for almost everyone, accompanied by a sort of confusion.”⁴⁰ Neither did the statues in front of the churches escape demolition: “Several days ago all busts and statues in front of churches have disappeared, even the most irrelevant

³⁴ V. Ghika, *Fratelui meu din exil [To My Brother in Exile]*, volume by Anca Berlogea (Tg. Lăpuş: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2008), 28.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 50 (postal card from August 27, 1948).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 77 (letter from January 19, 1949).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 82 (postal card from April 23, 1949).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 98 (letter from January 17, 1950).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 52 (letter from October 6, 1948).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68 (letter from December 13, 1948).

ones: the statues of closed churches (Sion, Pitar Moș) are being smashed with hammers.”⁴¹

Besides the statues that had almost all disappeared, another operation was implemented in the effort to erase all memory, namely changing the names of squares and streets.⁴² A last element of uprooting was displacing the population from one side of the city to the other or to another town:

The misery and hardships, in spite of an exceptionally rich harvest, surpasses any imagination, especially for those who until yesterday still owned some things. The last chicane is to keep these people constantly moving houses from one address to another, in conditions and places worse and worse. The district in which we live has almost been emptied of the people we used to know.⁴³

Left without their personal and collective memory, people do not dare to meet each other anymore, or “they rarely meet: they are surrounded either by people denouncing them or by people who have been set free (from prisons) on the condition to provide information – this makes the atmosphere unbearable.”⁴⁴ *The Holy Fear* “has become the publicly recognized patron of the New Romania.”⁴⁵ This because everything is police and suspicion until asphyxiation.⁴⁶

The vampires of memory during that sad period for “our unhappy country”⁴⁷ accomplished their greatest evil when they attempted to nationalize the Roman Catholic Church and proceeded to destroy the Greek Catholic Church. On this matter Ghika’s correspondence with his brother is full of sadness: “As about the Greek Catholic Church, it is in full persecution – the five bishops are in prison: so, do another one thousand priests. Most churches in Transylvania have been sealed. In Bucharest Father Chinezu was arrested, but the church is still open. Generally speaking, people resist.”⁴⁸

The solidarity manifested by the Greek Orthodox faithful in these circumstances is significant: “while the government was demolishing the Greek Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox believers come to me more

⁴¹ Ibid., 96 (letter from January 17, 1950).

⁴² Ibid., 125 (letter from August 10, 1951).

⁴³ Ibid., 129 (letter from November 7, 1951).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 139 (letter from March 10, 1952).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 67 (letter from December 13, 1948).

⁴⁷ Ibid., 131 (letter from November 7, 1951).

⁴⁸ Ibid., 58 (letter from November 15, 1948).

than ever, in order to pass to the catholic faith – frequently asking to become Greek Catholics despite persecution or even because of it.”⁴⁹ The blocking of the public activity of the Catholic Church of both rites is confirmed in August 1949: “All bishops, both Roman and Greek Catholic, are now in prison; Greek Catholic priests are either imprisoned or in exile and then secretly administering the sacraments to their faithful – those congregations with no legal activity have just been suppressed.”⁵⁰

By all these measures of wiping personal and collective memory, the regime meant to control the people. Dictatorships of all types and of all times come sooner or later to do the same thing. Ghika lived the effects of this action of destroying the memory of a people. He has not labeled the representatives of the Bolshevik Communist regime as vampires of memory, but from the letters written to his brother in exile, we can understand that he speaks about them.

For Ghika, without love there is no memory. Memory is to be cultivated through loving one’s past, as it was not distorted. Unfortunately, some wish that our recent past could be covered with silence. In order to have a better future and not to repeat the same past mistakes, he urges us to “have a memory of the silences, in the same way as we have a memory of words,”⁵¹ knowing all too well that certain silences do speak, others sing, others cry, and others frighten us.⁵² As there is an exegesis of words, we should do an exegesis of silences,⁵³ for we are to be judged according to what we have done with our silences and with the silence of God.

Conclusion

There is only one instance in which Ghika accepts to forget, namely when this leaves place for the remembrance of God: “Remember God and forget yourself ... the one calls for the other.”⁵⁴ Under this aspect, God is

⁴⁹ Ibid., 76 (letter from January 19, 1949).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 84.

⁵¹ Ghika, *Gânduri*, 54. This thought inspired E. de Miribel to write a book about Ghika’s life, whose memory had been covered by an imposed silence during the Communist dictatorship in Romania. E. de Miribel, *Memoria tăcerilor: Vladimir Ghika 1873-1954* [*The Memory of Silences: Vladimir Ghika 1873-1954*], trans. S. Ciungan (Bucharest: ARCB Publishing House, 2004).

⁵² Ghika, *Gânduri*, 56.

⁵³ Ibid., 86-87.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 21.

called by Ghika “the only one who does not forget.”⁵⁵ Consequently, he who trusts in God forgets himself and thus “he sets himself in his proper place.”⁵⁶

For Ghika, the metamorphoses of memory belong to a horizon of faith. What can still remain valid for those living in a society whose dominating mentality about the world becomes more and more secularized?⁵⁷ Of what kind of memory do we speak when we have to do with people who live in a world in which history does not serve life anymore, for it has been reduced to the level of sheer information, as Nietzsche remarked?⁵⁸

The idea of collective memory (that of a family, nation, Church, etc.) passes through a crisis. Still, we ought not to despair. Each of us is the owner of a tremendous deposit of memories that are not only subjective, but also intersubjective, as these have been formed day by day in a continuous dialogue with other identities. We no longer speak about collective memory, because there are no more collective narrative systems transmitted by means of rituals and symbols of a common identity accepted by all members of secularized or post-secularized societies. In this context, there arise new histories and structures of sense based on belonging to a personal community. The images about subjective conceptual and emotional knowledge intersect themselves and become combined in numerous ways depending on the persons and groups that share in these identity dialogues.

Our hope resides in sharing our memories. This offers us a chance to renew such concepts as *near* and *far*. Those deposits of common memories could be shared by groups that are far from a physical point of view, but near with respect to their participation in “the collection of common memories.” *Near* are those who participate in a greater measure in these memories, *far* being the ones who do not take part or partake in a very low degree. In this frame, participation is facilitated by emotion. This is the very criterion employed by those who manipulate religious or ethnic identities within a world half through a general secularization with the purpose of motivating fundamentalist actions.

The solution to the identity crises in today’s world, in Romania and in Europe especially, is the memory shared as the basis of a shared culture.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁷ Roncari, “Introduzione,” 23-25.

⁵⁸ F. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* [*On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*], 1874 (Idem, *Considerații inactuale I-IV* [*Untimely Considerations I-IV*], trans. S. Dănilă, in F. Nietzsche, *Opere complete* [*Complete Works*], vol. II (Bucharest: Hestia Publishing House, 1998).

The absence of collective memories shared by all memories of a community leads to the social situation in which radical diversity dominates. In between the two situations – sharing the processes of remembering and their utter absence – there are multiple degrees and combinations of farness and nearness that compose a kind of fluid substance, polyhedral and multifunctional.

The concept of collective memory in Ghika was born in a context of faith and hermeneutics able to create by means of sharing the images of past things and events. Partaking in the collective memory within today's (post) secularized world may feed a type of sub-culture, preparing the ground for a shared culture. Faith as a horizon in which there fuse various interpretations of memories present within the collective memory opens the way toward a culture of shared memories. However, the absence of faith as respect for diversity, for those different from me, prevents or at least slows down the process of opening the value of nearness in the history of contemporary collective memories toward a communitarian sharing. Proximity remains at the disposal and goodwill of the subject, who only recognizes himself in his today's own self. The purpose of collective memory, such as understood by Vladimir Ghika, is tremendous. We cannot remain loyal to our personal or collective memory if we lack that opening toward transcendence that introduces faith or the semiosis of hermeneutics that creates shared images. In a secularized world, the challenge consists in identifying new reasons for sharing memories.

Let us not despair. The face of this world is changing, always, as humans are “as a book with moving characters.”⁵⁹ So as not to lose contact with the memory of our identity, let us share from time to time this prayer: “O, Lord, remember those whom I forget and whom I ought to remember. May this remembrance, divinely evoked in Thee, weigh more than my own forgetting.”⁶⁰

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⁵⁹ Ghika, *Gânduri*, 60.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

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Samuel Štefan Osuský's Prophetic Wisdom: A Case Study

MICHAL VALCO*

Introduction

Samuel Štefan Osuský (1888-1975) was a bishop of the Lutheran Church in Slovakia and a professor of theology at the Lutheran Theological School in Bratislava. One of the most versatile intellectuals of the Lutheran Church at the time, Osuský was known for his expertise in philosophy (including philosophy of religion), psychology, religious history, and sociology. He grew up in modest circumstances as a son of a tanner. Nevertheless, he got a good education, first at the High School in Trnava (Trnavske gymnázium) and then at the Lutheran Lyceum and the Theological Academy in Bratislava. Osuský continued his theological studies abroad, first in Erlangen, then in Jena and Leipzig, and later his philosophical studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University in Prague. He earned his doctorate in philosophy in Prague in 1922. His second doctorate was in law (from the Law Academy in Presov, Slovakia, in 1941). Osuský's whole professional life was connected with the Slovak Lutheran Theological Faculty in Bratislava, where he started teaching as an assistant professor in 1919, later becoming a tenured, full professor of philosophy. Unfortunately, it was not his old age that made him quit his beloved job but rather the Communist totalitarian machinery made him abdicate and accept an early retirement in 1950, at the age of 62.

In philosophy, Osuský's major areas of interest were Slovak and Slavic philosophy. When it came to his religious/theological outlook, Osuský could

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be characterized as a rational theist striving to build upon the foundation of his Lutheran heritage. Instead of revelation, liturgy, or the church's tradition, however, he tended to prefer metaphysical reasoning in his theological-philosophical argumentation. Neither the emerging movement of personalism nor religious existentialism found much favor in his eyes. Though Osuský could never be identified with one movement of thought or philosophical school, he often quoted "Emanuel Radl, T. G. Masaryk, Henri Bergson, Nikolaj Lossky," and others mostly from the idealist camp.¹ Along with Emanuel Radl, Tomas Garrigue Masaryk (from Czechia), and Jan Lajciak with Jan Kvacala (from Slovakia), Osuský was well aware of the bankruptcy of the humanistic ideals and positivistic, scientific optimism of liberal intellectuals prior to the era of the World Wars. He aimed his philosophical and theological criticism especially at the two great human ideologies of the twentieth century – Fascism (including its German, racial version, Nazism), and Communism (above all in its historical shape of Stalinist Bolshevism).

It is not easy to answer the question conclusively whether Osuský was more of a philosopher or a theologian. As a "rational theist," he attempted to draw from both sources of wisdom, combining them in his struggle to find satisfying insights for larger questions of meaning, such as: What is life's meaning? What is the purpose of humanity, or a given nation? How much can we know? What is the relationship between faith (religion) and science (scientific inquiry)? Osuský was convinced that a theologian locked into dogmatic propositions and/or focused merely on the church's tradition will not be competent to delve into the many diverse intellectual challenges of his era. He therefore decided to be a theologizing philosopher with intentional sensitivity to anthropology, the history of ideas, and the history of culture (above all the Slavic culture). Yet, Osuský never departs too far from theology or existentially relevant religious philosophy. When it comes to exploring the situation of humans in "boundary situations," i.e., situations of ultimate anxiety and despair but also hope and trust, religious motives seem to gain the upper hand. This is especially true with regard to the two world wars that Osuský witnessed taking their toll on humans around him as well as the larger society. Looking for a meaning behind the unspeakable suffering, Osuský resorts to pointing out the need for religious values, for faith and God – which philosophy can never provide.

Osuský's legacy is both stimulating and unsettling in an age when we seem to experience similar "signs of the times" as he did in the interwar

¹ Peter Gažík, *Samuel Štefan Osuský: Moderný filozof náboženstva* (Žilina: EDIS, 2012), 4.

period (especially the 1930s). My evaluation of his legacy is based primarily on his two crucial works in which he deals with the phenomenon of war and the two evil, human ideologies that sprang up to life in the course of the twentieth century – Fascism (including its special, racial manifestation in what Osuský calls Hitlerism) and Bolshevism (a hyper form of applied Communism). Both of these ideologies resulted in inconceivable suffering and the deaths of millions. How can we prevent our societies from lapsing back into a new “social death” resulting in the next genocide² or “re-education” labor camps? Osuský's ideas in his *War and Religion* (1916) and “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism” (1937) manifest the much-needed prophetic insight that has the potential to enlighten our own struggle against the creeping forces of totalitarianism, right and left.

Osuský's Struggle against the War

“War and Religion” is the foundational question, in Osuský's view, where other important questions meet and/or get their relentless urgency. Whether it is the question of the suffering of the innocent, or the relationship of God's Kingdom to the earthly kingdom(s), they all seem to point to the ultimate question that was asked during the “Great War” (WWI): “How could a just God allow such bloodshed?”³ Osuský voices this question, making it even more poignant: “How could such highly praised culture and humaneness have laid such utmost terror on the shoulders of man? How could the most Christian and most enlightened of nations have burned with such terrifying anger against each other, forgetting everything that is Christian, honorable, conscientious? How is it that the more noble are more prone to fall than the lesser!”⁴ While Osuský admits that being in the midst of the war frenzy renders any and all interpreters unobjective (to a considerable degree), he feels the burden to address this question and asks God to help him with this task. He does so despite expecting to add only “a few burning charcoals into the fire”⁵ of literary treasure of the nation.

² I recommend an incisive treatment of the phenomenon of genocide as a result of “social death” by the Slovenian author Bojan Žalec. See Bojan Žalec, *Genocide, Totalitarianism and Multiculturalism: Perspectives in the Light of Solidary Personalism* (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2015).

³ Samuel Š. Osuský, *Vojna a náboženstvo* (Liptovský Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1916), 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

Dealing first with the question “What is war?,” Osuský outlines several possible answers from philosophers, politicians, theologians, and, curiously, from the children in his religion classes. He mentions Augustine and his “Just war theory” and goes to discuss the various aspects of war relative to the defensive purposes of the secular state. While not rejecting war as a last resort to defend one’s country, Osuský mournfully observes (quoting Martensen) that “War is the most powerful proof of the depravity of human nature, the greatest plague of the earth. Even if a weapon be given by God, it is misused in the sinful hands of men.”⁶

Osuský then goes to the issue of religion. He has a succinct answer to the question, “What is religion?”: “Religion is the collection of all divine and human expressions relative to God. There are two directions that we find in religion. One goes from top to bottom, from God to creation; the other from the bottom up, from man to God.”⁷ These two movements are not equal, the former taking precedence over the latter both in time and potency, according to Osuský. God is always the initiator of the movement and enabler of human return to a pristine state from which humans have fallen due to sin. In the anthropological dimension, then, religion is “a collection expressions of inner piety, it is life, which comes out verbally in confessions – dogmas, and in real life in the cult and morality.”⁸ Osuský is convinced that war and religion are two incommensurable phenomena, each relating to a different sphere of action and responsibility. The former pertains to the mundane realm, natural rights, and political justice; the latter relates to one’s spiritual well-being and eternal salvation. Nevertheless, there is an intersection that, if misunderstood, can become a cause of much confusion and unfortunate action. God’s relationship to his creation includes namely his relationship to war (as something that humans, created in God’s image, are responsible for); furthermore, due to human relatedness to God and God’s creation, it is necessary to establish what ought to be human attitude to war. Osuský surveys available New Testament interpretations of war, including examples of how the NT texts treat soldiers of that time. He then continues to offer a summary of John Hus’s, Martin Luther’s, and the Lutheran Symbolic Books’ (Confessions) thoughts on this topic. Next follows an outline of the reasoning of German theologians (living shortly before or during Osuský’s time), most of whom endorse the war (WWI), comparing it to the legitimate fight of emperor Constantine the Great to conquer in the name of God (e.g.,

⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸ Ibid., 8.

Viktor Schultze, a professor from Greifswald).⁹ The next section in Osuský's book on *War and Religion* is devoted to what the Slovak Lutheran theologians think about the war. He notices that most Lutheran pastors tend to be cautious about pronouncing judgments, let alone instigating people to embrace the seemingly omnipresent war frenzy. Their statements are pastoral, prompting for alleviation of the suffering of the wounded soldiers and praying for peace. The role of the church is seen primarily in preparing for and working toward peace. Some theologians reflect on the possible reasons behind the war, arguing that God is punishing the evil of human hearts, letting human nations wage war against each other. Yet, this is not God's original plan, perhaps not even an active doing but rather a passive divine justice, allowing these things to happen as a self-induced punishment. Osuský lifts up (above all others) Martin Razuš's stance toward the war, reminding his readers of God's passivity with regard to ongoing human war efforts and the utmost illegitimacy of calling upon God's name when fighting for victory.¹⁰ Critical remarks are offered pertaining to the magazine *Straz na Sione* [The Zion Watchtower], whose articles tended to euphemize the disastrous consequences of war, lifting up instead the potential "benefits of war."¹¹ This magazine wished to portray the war as something that "God wanted," to Osuský's dismay.¹² New phone lines, post offices, the telegraph, and railroads are listed as concrete examples of "war benefits."

In the final section of his book, Osuský offers his own reflection on what he calls "God and war" (revealingly, not "Religion and War").¹³ He divides his reasoning into two complementary sections: a) the relationship of God to war and b) the relationship of man (a Christian believer) to war. When approaching God from a theological perspective, we must consider his qualities and character traits, argues Osuský. He identifies three "classes" or types of divine attributes: (1) the physical class – representing divine omnipotence, omniscience and eternity; (2) the logical class – representing justice, holiness, and wisdom; and (3) the ethical class – comprising goodness, benevolence, and faithfulness.¹⁴ Depending on which of these types of divine attributes

⁹ Osuský, *Vojna a náboženstvo*, 19. Osuský offers the example of thirteen German professors teaching at various universities in Germany of the period.

¹⁰ Osuský, *Vojna a náboženstvo*, 24-28.

¹¹ Osuský alludes here to the magazine *Straz na Sione*, vol. XXII/1 (1914) and later to vol. XXIII/3-4 (1915).

¹² Osuský, *Vojna a náboženstvo*, 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 31ff.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

one wishes to promote as foundational or decisive, one ends up either in the camp of what Osuský calls “Pagan-Mohammedans,” or the “Old Testament-Jewish” camp, or the “New Testament-Christian” camp. One may thus find biblical evidence for his approach and justify one’s views based on an imbalanced and therefore inadequate theological understanding of God. Osuský does not argue for a naïve understanding of God based solely on His attributes of goodness and/or benevolence. Instead, he is convinced that Christians should assume these “ethical” attributes of God as foundational for any human theological discourse on God and his relationship to his creation. Nevertheless, divine power and justice (“physical” and “logical” attributes) must balance out the primary emphasis on goodness, qualifying it and situating it in a proper context. “God is neither a pagan, arbitrary tyrant, demanding fear of his slaves; nor is He a deity relentless in His justice; but while being omnipotent and just, He is, above all, our good and gracious father, whom we ought to fear as his children but whom we can also love.”¹⁵ If understood properly, one must conclude that God neither sends nor wills the war. Because we live in a relatively free, fragile time, influenced largely by the imperfect decisions of human agents, forces of evil sometimes result in conflicts and wars. God allows this to happen as part of His providential care of Creation.

Osuský observes that it is not given to us humans to be able to analyze the nature and decisions of divine providence. We do not really know why a good, just, and omnipotent God does not prevent wars from happening or stop them once they have started. This question leads us, according to Osuský, all the way back to paradise, to the fall of Adam and Eve. He suspects that the value and virtue of human freedom have something to do with God’s seeming “lack of action” when it comes to stopping suffering. Divine omnipotence is ordered by His justice (including wisdom) and goodness, and even when we wish that He would act, His is a higher plan. Our role is not to judge God for what we believe is an unwarranted “absence” or a lack of action but rather to trust in His plan based on His promises and His dealings with the fallen humanity in the glorious history of salvation. Yet, the sting remains, as Osuský observes, commenting on Romans 11:33-34. We do not understand fully why some “innocent” people suffer so much apparently meaningless evil; nor do we comprehend how some are “hardened” to remain in their rebellion.¹⁶ The only possible vindication, if we may call it such, will come in the *eschaton*, at the end of times. God will act and He will bring good out

¹⁵ Ibid., 36.

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

of evil, and all of His actions will be the perfect combination of goodness, justice, and wisdom. His current passivity is an indication of our misery and our task to learn from our mistakes and to mature morally/spiritually.¹⁷

When it comes to a Christian's relationship to war, Osuský changes the tone of his reasoning from a more theological/dogmatic one to an ethical one. Humans are citizens of the earth, of specific countries defined by national principles and led by imperfect leaders. This means that there are times when nations must protect their sovereignty by going into a war. The whole question is complex and complicated, as Osuský admits. To navigate these dangerous waters, he suggests at the outset that Christians must always be able to distinguish the two planes of responsibility – (1) toward God (*coram Deo*) and (2) toward humans (*coram hominibus*) and Creation. If one must fight in a “just” (i.e., defensive) war, one does it solely as his civic responsibility, never as his religious calling (i.e., in the name of God). War is not a tool to secure salvation or find favor in God's eyes.¹⁸ It is, however, an act of Christian faith when a Christian, drafted to be a soldier, sacrifices himself in the war effort of his country. It is equally an act of faith to decide to be obedient to one's earthly government (legitimate rulers) and to fight or even kill as part of a legitimate defensive war effort. Yet, as Osuský is quick to point out, “the art of fighting should be dictated by his Christian conviction. Even if his counterpart were a political enemy, [the Christian] must always see him religiously as his neighbor. He must thus strive to render him unfit for combat in the gentlest possible way, for example by taking him captive.”¹⁹ On the other hand, those revolting against any involvement of Christians in the war are fanatics who have lost their sound judgment. In Osuský's view, such people wish to remove the consequence of human depravity while completely ignoring its roots. “Those agitating against war and not against its cause are disregarding reality, ignoring the human predicament, uselessly raving about how they [i.e., humans] should be.”²⁰ The task of Christian citizens should always be to work toward cultivating human virtues, overcoming sinful desires and the consequences of sinful actions, alleviating human suffering, and helping in the process of reconciliation among the warring parties. Neither wars nor human ideologies (e.g., socialism) will bring about world peace, according to Osuský.²¹

¹⁷ Osuský speaks of a “pedagogical aspect of war” in this respect. Osuský, *Vojna a náboženstvo*, 38.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

This last idea proved to have a prophetic value. As time progressed after the “Great War” (WWI), it became obvious that Osuský’s predictions of the imminent dangers of applied Marxism (especially in the form of Stalinist Bolshevism) and various strands of Fascism were right. Not humanly invented, totalitarian (and pseudo-religious) ideologies will usher in an age of peace and prosperity. The only worldview that Osuský hopes has this potential – at least on the European continent and only when applied competently in the realm of human civic responsibilities – is “internationalized Christianity.”²² What follows is Osuský’s struggle against what emerged as arguably the most insidious dangers to human dignity the world has seen so far – Fascism, Hitlerism, and Bolshevism. Osuský’s legacy here is an important one.

Osuský’s Struggle against Fascism and Hitlerism

Among Osuský’s many pronouncements against Fascism, especially in the form of German Hitlerism, or Nazism, one stands out as uniquely systematic and deep. Osuský made it at the meeting of Slovak Lutheran pastors in Ruzomberok on November 11, 1937. His lecture “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism” was delivered to Slovak Lutheran pastors, some of whom had been known to either openly support or be latently inclined toward the Nazi ideology.

Osuský was not alone in fighting against the tyrannical ideology of Fascism (in its varied forms) and Communism (above all, in the form of Soviet Stalinist Bolshevism). Thus on November 11, 1937, three other men stood beside him, each in his own way making a case for freedom, democracy, and genuine Christianity – all of which they saw as complementary and mutually reinforcing. They were professor of pastoral theology, Ján Jamnický (1878-1967), professor of systematic theology, Ján Beblavý (1898-1968), and pastor Juraj Struhárik (1893-1969).

All four lecturers concurred that the theology of liberal Protestantism had led in Germany to a deviation from Christ’s Gospel, as well as the original gospel emphases of the German reformer Martin Luther. This liberal Protestant theology resulted in idolatrous worship of the visible church and uncritical praise of modern human culture as manifestations of God’s will and creative power. It was through the human creative genius and racially pure fellowship of the elect that God’s glory was best manifested and, as such, should be celebrated and protected. The people of God thus ceased to be a diverse community of convicted and pardoned sinners, learning to receive

²² *Ibid.*, 50.

God's grace and reflect on His mercy and called on to proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ. The nature of the Christian Church was no longer defined primarily by the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God to the mundane reality of our tangible world. The people of God were now perceived as a racially pure community of the elect, called to fill the earth and embody the divine mandate to rule and govern those who are inferior; or, worse yet, to remove that which is deemed as "malignant," which cannot be cured. Jammický, Beblavý, Struhárik, and Osuský in unison called the gathered Lutheran pastors back to Luther's theology, emphasizing his theology of the cross over against the deviant theology arising from a racial ideology that transforms Christian faith into religious idolatry of the Arian Christianity.²³

In his lecture on the philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism, Osuský set out to analyze the sources underlying Fascism, including the racial-biological conception of Fascism of Adolf Hitler – Osuský called this version of Fascism "Hitlerism," commonly known as Nazism. Osuský did not have enough time to provide a comprehensive account. Given the historic situatedness and its immediate needs, he explored the Lutheran "flirting" with the ideas of Fascism as he observed it in history and the present.

Osuský identifies four elements, the synergy of which helped Fascism emerge as a potent ideological movement. (1) The first one is the Renaissance movement with its preference for the nation instead of the church. (2) The second one is Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532). This is, according to Osuský, "the first teacher of Mussolini and his Fascism. It is only necessary to insert the word 'Duce' in place of the word 'prince' to see this."²⁴ (3) The third one is Hegelian idealistic philosophy and, finally, (4) Giovanni Gentile (1875-), whom Osuský calls "the official philosopher of Fascism"²⁵ and who, in Osuský's view, built on Hegel's philosophy by adding a specific, voluntaristic and actualistic flavor to it.

The foundation of Gentile's metaphysics is the act of knowing in the sense of action and this, furthermore, in the sense of a creative action of the mind. ... Only this is what is alive to Gentile, what

²³ Paul R. Hinlicky, *Between Humanist Philosophy and Apocalyptic Theology: The Twentieth Century Sojourn of Samuel Štefan Osuský* (London-New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 80-81.

²⁴ Samuel Š. Osuský, "The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism," in *Before Auschwitz: What Christian Theology must Learn from the Rise of Nazism*, ed. Paul R. Hinlicky (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013), 203.

²⁵ Osuský, "The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism," 204.

exists as the ego in its act of consciousness. Reality is only thinkable to the extent that it is really thought. Thinking does not comprehend reality, as it is, but creates reality. Philosophy then is and ought to be a creator of reality.²⁶

Osuský points out that Gentile makes the philosophical mind into a creator of reality. The act of knowing as *doing*, as an act of a creative mind in the ontological sense, is the constitutive foundation for Gentile's metaphysics. It is the human self, through its intentional thinking (deliberating) about reality, which gives reality its validity; in fact, the self *creates* (in a way) reality itself. Truth is not based on the correspondence or identity of the things being known and human reason; nor is it based on the identity of sense perception and reason but rather on the identity of reason and will. To know is to think intentionally. It is to think and to desire, to will that which the self thinks about – and this means to act. What Osuský sees behind the ideology of Fascism, but also behind the ideology of Communism, which is, surprisingly, not much different from Fascism, is the modern philosophical concept of the sovereign self.²⁷

This uneasy relationship between two seemingly opposing ideologies could be observed in Mussolini's case, too, according to Osuský.

In general, it is necessary to understand his Fascism [i.e., Mussolini's] as a reaction to Communist action. Even though he was a socialist, and in his worldview, there remain certain elements of socialism, he is nonetheless consciously antidemocratic, antirationalist, antipositivist, because according to him these tendencies are the foundation of democracy, and he is an enemy of democracy. Zdeněk Smetáček calls his tendency *collective spiritualism*.²⁸ The world does not exist, it must be created by the human mind, will.²⁹

Paul Hinlicky rightly observes that the Cartesian project of the modern era that framed into antipoles the thinking subject of man and the surrounding material world engendered a Western political economy, which, despite its technological advances, failed to solve the key human problem/predicament: the sinful greed of the human heart (*concupiscentia*). Technological progress and economic well-being entail in the context of such greediness the stench of

²⁶ Ibid., 204.

²⁷ Ibid., 205-206.

²⁸ Zdeněk Smetáček, "Ideology of Italian Fascism," *Česká Mysl* 28, no. 1 (1933): 208-215.

²⁹ Osuský, "The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism," 206.

nihilism as we could so blatantly see in the death camps of the “Third Reich.” “Gentile, who was Mussolini’s ghost-writer, is thus exposed, and expositied by Osuský to lay bare the roots of Fascism in the modern doctrine of the sovereign self.”³⁰

To prop up the doctrine of the sovereign self, the Fascists needed to absolutize the immanent dimension of this world, ridding it of any vestiges of transcendence and overarching meaning. But such a “plane of immanence,” i.e., “the world freed from Providence, teachers and reasons for things,”³¹ in which nothing whatsoever is or can be transcendent, is, minimally, the philosophical reality of our times: the descent of the modern sovereign self into the dark night of postmodern nihilism.³² Osuský saw this coming, in fact, he saw it unfolding before his very eyes in Italy and Nazi Germany, and he feared that this vision of reality was creeping into Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s.

In addition to idealizing the *sovereign self*, Osuský criticized the *idealization of the state* and the *aristocrats* who allegedly had the natural right to rule and “guide” the state. Quoting the Fascist writer Julius Evola (1898-1974), Osuský writes: “The light of a sublime myth shines in us aristocrats, in beings whose visage is frightful, who breathe freely in a world freed from Providence, teachers and reasons for things, but now looking into the shadows where there is no God and where they themselves are his creators.”³³ The world “freed from Providence, teachers, and reason” is a dark, shadowy world, the reality of which should not be celebrated but rather dreaded. Yet, as Osuský revealingly observes, the new aristocrats “breathe freely” in this world, being accountable to nothing but their own conjured-up dreams and ambitious goals. What else could this be than “a definite piece of gigantism, of modern titanism,” claims Osuský. Yet, the aristocrats do not act in their name but in the name of the divinized state, an absolute example of modern collective titanism. “We said that Fascism divinizes the state and in it sees the incarnation of the mind of the nation. From all that has been said we see that the gigantist mentality of the nation takes the place of God for Fascism and that politics is religion for it.”³⁴

³⁰ Hinlicky, *Between Humanist Philosophy and Apocalyptic Theology*, 81.

³¹ Brent Adkins and Paul R. Hinlicky, *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with Deleuze: A New Cartography* (London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 203.

³² Hinlicky, *Between Humanist Philosophy and Apocalyptic Theology*, 82.

³³ Osuský, “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism,” 210. Osuský here cites Herbert Schneider, *The Making of the Fascist State* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 346.

³⁴ Osuský, “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism,” 210.

There is yet another root of Fascism, according to Osuský: *the idealization of war*, which stand on the metaphysical presupposition that war is the deepest nature of all things. This view prompts us to believe that conflict is the primary (in fact, even normative) expression of life and its vitality. If understood well, life requires both physical and mental vitality. At times it even demands acts of heroism and sacrifice. Conflicts on the individual level are not desirable in view of the needs of the totalized, divinized state, however. In place of international solidarity and class warfare advocated by the Communists, Mussolini and other Fascists call for class solidarity and national warfare. Life is full of vicious dynamics, always in motion, permeated by conflict and war. This dynamic is the most fundamental law of history and cannot be avoided (not in the long term, in any case). Therefore, “death awaits whoever does not fight. War is inevitable because in life there are antitheses-again a point of contact with Communism. Equilibrium, like equality, will never exist, neither then peace, only that, while Communists bring a Darwinist war between classes, Mussolini brings one between nations. [Mussolini] is an open imperialist, because, he says, imperialism is eternal, and laws do not change life. Whatever is living must expand.”³⁵ Obviously, each Fascist leader wishes to achieve this with his nation. Ultimately, if one follows this logic to its inevitable conclusion, the world is and will remain in a state of war of all against all.

Against such Fascist idealization and absolutization of the state, against the sovereignty of its political power, and against this kind of Nietzschean voluntaristic nihilism, Osuský invokes the terrible ethical consequences of such an approach to reality. A return to the tradition of Christian Platonism and an open, public acknowledgment of transcendent God being the only viable foundation for morality, according to Osuský, are the only bulwark against the demonic spirit of Fascism (but also Hitlerism and Bolshevism, as we read in Osuský’s texts on the subject). One might be under the impression that Osuský was overreacting. After all, Czechoslovakia was democratic in 1937. It had its Western allies, it had a democratic tradition (though only two-decades long, since 1918), and it (rather the peoples living in its geographical area) had an over one-thousand-year long history of the Christian tradition. To be sure, the situation of Czechoslovakia in the 1930s was in many respects different from the one in Mussolini’s Italy. Osuský acknowledges this. He marvels about how it might be possible for the Roman Catholic Church of that time to find a *modus vivendi* with Mussolini’s regime. More

³⁵ Ibid., 208.

importantly, however, he issues a prophetic warning against what he perceived as echoes of Mussolini's rhetoric in the slogans of the Hlinka Volk's Party. Osuský cannot hide his fear that the Catholic majority in Slovakia (the eastern part of Czechoslovakia) may be tempted to replace Christ with a new, political messiah, just as had happened in Italy. Yet he is even more surprised to see the Slovak Protestant minorities, especially his fellow Lutherans, inclined to be inclined to favor this malignant ideology. Osuský can see only two reasons behind this: either the Lutherans do not know the true nature of Fascism and do not realize the dangers of its political and social implementations, or, which is equally bad, they do not know their own identity.

In his critique of Hitlerism (i.e., German Nazism), Osuský identifies this emerging German ideology as a Neo-Darwinist synthesis of new discoveries in genetics applied to the human races and human societies. Since genes are the constitutive foundation of human traits, rather than upbringing, genetics should be seen as decisive for determining which groups of people – i.e., which races – are more noble, worthier, more advanced and, on the other hand, which races are inferior, backward, or even toxic for the rest of the human kind. Thus, according to Hitler, we should follow nature's example here and let human societies be governed by the same laws of evolution. Less evolved organisms (or, in this case, nations and races) have no rightful claim on Earth's limited resources and space. More complex genomes must not be limited by their inferior counterparts – this is the primary force of evolution, as well as of the development of human history. As Osuský sums up: "if in the struggle of natural selection the stronger triumph and if the Germans are the higher race, so the race must go to war with the less valuable races and triumph."³⁶ The Nazi ideologists have thus biologized the concept of the modern, sovereign self from Fichte, Spengler, and Nietzsche,³⁷ situating it into a continuous struggle of human races for resources, living space, and supremacy. As it is race that (allegedly) creates culture, technology as well as all scientific knowledge, all must be evaluated on racial principles. The weak must not be allowed to live at the expense of the strong. It would be

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁷ Hinlicky, *Between Humanist Philosophy and Apocalyptic Theology*, 83. Osuský holds Nietzsche more responsible than others. He observes that in the book *Thus Spake Zarathustra* Nietzsche "erected as the new ideal of the individual and of the nation the *Übermensch* with his lordly morality and the Will to Power as his chief feature over against the slavish Christian morality." Osuský, "The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism," 213.

not only “unnatural” but also “inhumane” relative to the superior, entitled race.³⁸ Judeo-Christian humanism had perverted the values in Western civilization for almost two millennia, becoming one of the principal enemies of the higher races. The Jewish race, according to Osuský’s interpretation of Hitlerism, is not only a representative of an inferior culture but rather is a destroyer of culture as such, a parasite that needs to be eliminated.

The Slavic nations do not have much better prospects. Osuský warns in his lecture that Nazi anthropology underestimates the Slavs, although without any supporting empirical evidence. After all, it is equally impossible to prove this “myth” as it is impossible to emphasize a principle of racial purity – since Europeans have been mixed so much through the past centuries. All of this leads Osuský to issue an urgent warning: if the current Nazi propaganda depicts the Slavs as inferior people who cannot enjoy full freedom, lest there be a “racial chaos,”³⁹ this same propaganda will result in ruthless acts against those who are ranked even lower than the Slavs – the Jews.

Hitlerism overlaps with Italian Fascism in many respects, thus claiming its unique place in the family of diverse Fascist movements. Like Mussolini’s Fascism, Hitlerism was extremely nationalistic, authoritarian, exclusivist, propagandistic, and expansionistic. Hitler wished to make his nation, represented and constituted by the higher German Arian race, respected, more powerful, independent, larger, and more successful. While Mussolini’s Fascism demonized Bolsheviks (on the class-political principle), Hitler’s Nazism demonized the Jews as a race (a racial principle was intentionally employed). Curiously, Hitler spoke of building democracy, a true “German democracy,” which “consists in the nation which as a whole freely chooses its Leader, who resolves to take on himself all responsibility for everything that happens. In this democracy the majority does not vote, yet the individual

³⁸ Instead of just summarizing Hitler’s ideas, Osuský quotes from *Mein Kampf* extensively to support his analysis: “The strong drive away the weak, because the life instinct always crushes the ridiculous bonds of the so-called humanity of individuals and in its place introduces the humanity of nature, which destroys and devours weakness, in order to grant a free field of play to actual strength.” Osuský, “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism,” 214; see Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Frantisek Bauer (Prague: Orbis, 1936), 49.

³⁹ Osuský summarizes the thoughts here of another famous German Nazi ideologist, Alfred Rosenberg, who in his book *The Myth of Blood of the Twentieth Century* asserts that “to acknowledge freedom today for Czechs and Poles means to be wed to racial chaos.” Osuský, “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism,” 219.

decides.⁴⁰ And this one, aristocratic, enlightened individual becomes the new “Fuehrer” of the Volk, a political Messiah who sets a new goal for human life: it is not the well-being of the state but rather of the race – entitled and destined to subjugate and rule.⁴¹ As a nation is a purely biological phenomenon, “a blood organism, the individual is only an organ of the whole without rights, but only with duties.”⁴²

Osuský's Struggle against Bolshevism

As mentioned before, we find intriguing parallels and overlaps between the extreme right ideologies of Fascism and Hitlerism (as a racial type of Fascism) and the ideologies on the extreme left – Communism, especially in its applied version of Stalinist Bolshevism. Osuský was one of the few intellectuals of his time in Czechoslovakia (and in Europe) who realized with full soberness the evil lurking behind the socially luring façade of Bolshevism. Due to a lack of space, what follows is a succinct summary and evaluation of this ideology, based on Osuský's November lecture in 1937.

Osuský starts with a philosophical summary of Communism, pointing out that the essence of this “philosophy of materialism” can be boiled down to two words: “dialectical materialism.”⁴³ Following a short outline of thinkers from the distant to a near past (beginning with Democritus) who may serve as precursors to Marx's more developed and radicalized ideas, Osuský turns to what he calls contemporary “official” dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels. Matter is the first “thesis” of this dialectics, instead of the Spirit (as we see in Hegel – which is why Lenin used to call Hegelianism ‘inverted materialism’).⁴⁴ Yet then Marx takes up Hegel's “dialectical idealism” to explain his own dialectics. Osuský sees a major tension and stumbling block for the Communists, because these two tendencies (i.e., materialism and idealism) are contradictory. One must attribute thinking property to matter in order to overcome this contradiction. Mind then becomes the antithesis to matter, as it arises out of matter, yet remains bound to it forever. The dynamic of biological evolution is ascribed to this dialectic so that at a certain stage of development, mind necessarily develops from matter as its antithesis.

⁴⁰ Osuský, “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism,” 214; Osuský cites here Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, 73.

⁴¹ Osuský, “The Philosophy of Bolshevism, Fascism, and Hitlerism,” 214.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 216.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

“Development or change ... take place dialectically, namely, with a thesis to an antithesis and thus to a synthesis, to new, mutual influencing union of antitheses.” But what is more important, this “dialectic of development, does not relate only to being in the kingdom of space, in nature, but also to being in the kingdom of mind and to history in the kingdom of time.”⁴⁵ Humans, as thinking beings, react to what is going on around them in the historical world in a subjective manner, as they are “determined by natural and historical impressions and by [their] subjective elements.”⁴⁶

In its “reaction psychology,” Bolshevism wishes to create a psychology which would be in line with the above-described view of reality (determined materialistically and dialectically). Knowledge arises from praxis and is tested in praxis for its validity. If it can be used to the benefit of the proletariat, it assumes the status of “true knowledge,” if not, then it is rejected as impractical and hence “untrue.” The Bolsheviks are only interested in “productive” (i.e., economically and politically practical, useful) scientific knowledge. “There is no absolute truth, truth is what development demands and proves itself in the praxis of the proletariat.”⁴⁷ The Bolshevistic philosophy of history draws from the reaction psychology conceptualized in this manner. From this follows that “in history the basic, motor force of history is matter, i.e., economic interest. The human being is the product of economic relations. The idea does not form relations, but relations form the idea. Everything ideological-politics, laws, morality, philosophy, religion-everything is only a reflection, reflex, superstructure of the economic.”⁴⁸ All of history can be (and, indeed, must be) seen through the prism of the struggle of economic classes, which has a progressive character, just as Darwinian evolution in the sphere of biology. This evolutionary process, however, does not progress without tensions and temporary setbacks. Nevertheless, when the situation is ripe in the industrial societies of the West, following a growing alienation of the working class from the fruits of its labor (or when the war-stricken Russian feudal society is close to collapsing), a proletarian revolution will achieve the next stage of development. “The goal is the destruction of classes, a classless society by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The individual is only an atom of the total-collective proletariat.”⁴⁹ Osuský notices

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 198-199. Osuský sees a surprising affinity of this reasoning with American Pragmatism.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

that the Russian Communists were not able to achieve a society of pure collective property but that they instead had to revert to partial ownership of property under the NEP (Lenin's New Economic Policy of 1921).

But Osuský's major criticism does not focus on the Bolshevistic economic ideas; he rather focuses on religion and ethics. He is very troubled by their new definition of morality – "Morality is what serves the proletariat. Good is what is profitable to the proletariat. Evil is what is not profitable to the proletariat. ... There are no absolute moral names, as there is no absolute truth." Christian morality may have helped exploited people for a time, but it also complicated and slowed down the inevitable social progress by delaying the coming revolution. In Russia, a new Kingdom is being built, "the kingdom of the proletariat." "Communism with the organization of the proletariat actualizes the kingdom of the proletarians and of equality." Especially troublesome, according to Osuský, is the principle according to which "everything and anything that serves this goal is good and permitted. Look! The end sanctifies the means!"⁵⁰ The collective thus swallows up the individual. Human dignity is secondary. In fact, it is only fully attributed to the collective of the proletariat. Human individual rights are tentative; they are only to be upheld if it suits the development of the collective toward a truly classless society of equals.

Furthermore, as Osuský insightfully observes, a characteristic of Bolshevism is its voluntarism: "to know the necessary is needful, so that we know what is possible and to act necessarily according to the knowledge of what is possible. Therefore the philosophy of Bolshevism can be called also the philosophy of the will, voluntarism, action, activity."⁵¹ However, such voluntaristic activism, which is willfully blind to normative moral principles and values, is bound to lead to humanitarian catastrophes. Osuský predicted this at a time when Europe was still unaware of the existence of the Russian death camps, the gulags. He could prophetically see that a blind, fanatical faith in the paradise promised to be ushered by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (liberated, allegedly, by Communist propaganda) would necessarily yield bitter fruits for countless victims.

Conclusion

Osuský offers the following summary of why the Christians must reject extreme ideologies on both sides of the spectrum: we must reject Bolshevism

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

for a religious reason because it is atheistic and materialistic; Hitlerism from a Christian perspective because it is naturalistic and thoroughly evil. We must reject the terror of Fascism in any hidden forms because of its negation of individual freedoms and the dignity of the human being. We must not receive any of these either as Christians, or Lutherans. The last sentences of Osuský's lecture carry an emphatic appeal to his listeners and, indeed, to the next generations of Christians in Czechoslovakia and beyond:

[T]he method, terror, the denial of individual freedom, we cannot accept neither as Christians nor as Lutherans, and Hitlerism we cannot accept either as Slavs. I have expressed my astonishment at how anyone from the ranks of the Lutherans could agree with Fascism, and no less astonishment do I express how anyone from the Slovak Lutherans could sympathize, preach, and write sympathetically about the philosophy of Hitlerism.⁵²

Concurring with Paul Hinlicky's recent analysis of Osuský's legacy, I wish to highlight the following three assets native to Osuský's personality as an intellectual, philosopher, and theologian: (1) Osuský's use of critical thinking, a competence he was able to enhance by studying philosophy, was remarkable in an age of massive propaganda and relatively scarce access to information; (2) the ability to draw from his own theological heritage against the background of which he managed to reveal the pseudo-religious, idolatrous character of these ideologies; (3) the resolve to act ethically when Osuský formulated his prophetic warnings against evil that had permeated the European and Slovak societies. He did not shy away from the ethical responsibility he felt as a public theologian-philosopher who valued his heritage, while staying open to critical reflection of even his own church. His voice was important in keeping the Protestant minority in Slovakia overwhelmingly against the ideology of Fascism. However, his warning against the ideology of Bolshevism was only partially heeded after WWII. The horrors of war and the geopolitical pressure coming from one of the victorious powers, the Soviet Union, influenced many Lutheran intellectuals and pastors into believing in the Communist promise of a social paradise. But Osuský's voice could not be ignored and was well respected even after WWII and the 1948 Communist revolution in Czechoslovakia. He was one of the first leading figures of the church to be officially silenced, as his license to teach at the Slovak Lutheran Theological Faculty was removed swiftly after the revolution in 1948. Osuský

⁵² *Ibid.*, 220.

was forced into early retirement and forbidden to teach or publicly speak until he died in 1975.

I propose the following observations/lessons that we can learn against the background of Osuský's struggle with totalitarianism.

(1) Faulty anthropological starting points (presuppositions) will inevitably lead to desperate solutions both on the individual as well as socio-political levels. The pervasive chaos of the greedy human heart (which Christian theology calls the state of "sinfulness") engenders injustice, insecurity, anger (among other things), but also a desire for stability and/or equality (perceived as "justice") "at any cost." The root of the unyielding tendency of human societies to ascribe blame to external "enemies" – whether these be the Jews, as we have seen in the racial variant of Fascism (the German Nazism), or the kulaks and bourgeoisie, as we have seen in the Bolshevik revolution and subsequent Communist totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe after WWII – is the frivolous denial of the common human predicament of "depravity," an inner alienation and intrinsic self-centeredness of the human self.

We see this malignant "externalization" of the root-problem in Fascism, Hitlerism, as well as Communism. "We can build a happy, prosperous, and just society if we defeat (or annihilate) the enemies of our nation (Fascism), the enemies of our race (Hitlerism), the enemies of our class (Communism)." What is worse, we may suspect the same type of externalization, though not yet with the same dire consequences, in modern Liberalism's presupposition of the blameless, neutral human self that needs only to be educated "properly" and situated into a balanced, socio-economic environment to thrive and act pro-socially/altruistically. This should then, allegedly, lead us to believe that we need to get rid of some of our outdated traditions (including the religious ones) and surrender the shaping of society to self-proclaimed, enlightened social engineers with the ability to mold human characters through their newly-engineered social structures, educational reforms, and state institutions. We seem to suffer from this irresistible tendency to project the responsibility for the existing injustice and suffering on external causes in order to divert attention from our own, wounded, imperfect, failing, selfish self.

(2) In our attempts to save our societies and the well-being that we believe we are entitled to, we then tend to idealize the state as the bearer of stability and justice (in whatever way we may perceive it). It is revealing to notice that this kind of idealization and absolutization of the state is intrinsic to ideologies on both sides of the spectrum, right and left. The chaos of the greedy human heart, unleashed with a new force in the laissez-faire capi-

talism at the turn of the centuries (nineteenth-twentieth centuries),⁵³ made it attractive for a critical mass of people to hand their fates (and many of their basic rights) over to their new leaders who began to be seen as political messiahs (Mussolini, Hitler, Lenin, Stalin and others).

A new conception of sovereignty emerged with these new leaders. Beneath its new veil, “sovereignty on the earth appears as the power to reduce human life to bare life, life that cannot be redeemed, life that is utterly banished in and by sovereignty’s very assertion of dominion in the name of Providence, of law and order.”⁵⁴ Justice as an objective reality, or even as an objective to be pursued, is no longer recognized because it is “completely subordinated to the alleged needs and interests of the Volk.”⁵⁵ As Adkins and Hinlicky provokingly argue, the regimes built upon this new conception of sovereignty are essentially “biopolitical,” having its “essence revealed in the extremities of the concentration camps of the Nazis or the Gulag of the Soviets.”⁵⁶ But what is even more disturbing is that we can trace vestiges of this kind thinking and its malignant manifestations “in the refugees of today who are turned away, since they are merely ‘human;’ just ‘bare’ life, not citizens of our city under contract with political sovereignty.”⁵⁷ Our responsibility to the human race thus collapses under our perceived responsibility to the well-being and protection of our nation/country. How much different is this from twentieth-century Fascism and Bolshevism?⁵⁸

⁵³ The chaos of the greedy heart as exemplified here includes, naturally, the unjust world order of Western imperialism and colonialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This, along with the wounded national pride and dignity of the Germans as a nation, constituted a fertile ground for the emergence of a Fuehrer who would ride on the wave of resentment and anger, making its nation commit crimes of unimaginable proportions.

⁵⁴ Adkins and Hinlicky, *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with Deleuze*, 203.

⁵⁵ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Nazism,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Nazism>.

⁵⁶ Adkins and Hinlicky, *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with Deleuze*, 203.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Besides offering a detailed analysis of Fascism, Robert Baxton asks an unsettling question: “Is Fascism over, or could it rise again?” He points out the recent developments in Europe, which cause him to be skeptical of relegating Fascism to the annals of history: “ethnic cleansing in the Balkans; the sharpening of exclusionary nationalisms in postcommunist Eastern Europe; spreading ‘skinhead’ violence against immigrants in Britain, Germany, Scandinavia, and Italy; the first participation of a neofascist party in a European government in 1994, when the Italian Alleanza Nazionale, direct descendant of the principal Italian neofascist party, the

(3) Some blame and responsibility for the horrors of the twentieth century ought to be ascribed critically to Christian liberal theology, especially the liberal Protestant theology of the nineteenth century. The so-called “Kultur-Protestantismus” seemed to have shared some anthropological pre-suppositions with the later political proponents of the totalitarian ideologies under scrutiny. I am speaking here of the belief in an inevitable human progress – scientific, technological, as well as cultural and moral – as part of a linear progress of the history of the world, driven by the forces of natural-biological as well as spiritual evolution (Geist Entwicklung). During this time, humble notions of human limitedness and depravity were replaced with romanticized notions of intrinsic human goodness and the arrogant belief in the human power to usher in a new “kingdom of god” through human culture and technology.

We in the West are, to be sure, no longer dreaming the Enlightenment’s dream of an inevitable progress of the educated, scientifically advanced humanity. Our burden is rather the insidious indifference in the matter of truth – after all, we like to think that we live in a post-truth (post-factual) reality. But is not this self-imposed indifference in the matter of truth a major feature of the Fascist and Communist ideologies? And even if this ‘similarity’ in our attitude to truth proved to be historically incidental, the similarity of possible consequences should be equally haunting and existentially unsettling.

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Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), joined the first government of Silvio Berlusconi; the entry of Jörg Haider’s Freiheitspartei (Freedom Party), with its winks of approval at Nazi veterans, into the Austrian government in February 2000; the astonishing arrival of the leader of the French far Right, Jean-Marie Le Pen, in second place in the first round of the French presidential elections in May 2002; and the meteoric rise of an anti-immigrant but nonconformist outsider, Pim Fortuyn, in the Netherlands in the same month.” Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 173.

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Encountering Many Others in Clinical Narratives

LIN HUI-JU*

Emergence of Bioethics

The rapid development of modern biomedical technology has driven the development of medical implementation and health care policies. To solve urgent value challenges, the clinical field requires simple ethical theories that provide guidance for clinical practice. Bioethics (or biomedical ethics) is a research field arising from the dialogue between the fields of modern health care and ethics. This field has an interdisciplinary nature because most researchers in this field have a background in both philosophy and medicine, and it has also attracted legal, political, and religious scholars. The principlism approach is an intuitive analysis tool proposed by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress in *The Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, aiming at guiding personnel working in environments with a high demand for time-effective decision-making skills. This approach employs the four prima facie principles¹ of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and

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¹ T. L. Beauchamp and J. F. Childress, *The Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, fifth edition, trans. L. Lee et al. (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2014), vii. The preface section of the book explains that, to meet the needs of various readers, the book structure has been modified. Specifically, Chapters 3 through 6 discuss the four-topics method, and detailed explanations and arguments on methodology and theory were added to the final two chapters. The authors believe that this edition is easier to understand for readers without an extensive background knowledge of ethics. On the basis of this point, we surmise that the discussion of biomedical ethics must

justice to guide users in performing complex ethical reasoning and incorporates the coherence theory to evaluate the principles behind conflicting values. Compared with classical ethical theories, each of which holds specific ethical values, the principlism approach seeks a compromise solution that is comprehensive and minimizes value conflicts. Accordingly, it is widely known and applied in the medical field.

The four-topics method proposed by Albert Jonsen et al. is another analytical tool familiar to clinical workers. Jonsen suggests that one should reserve judgment on the discussion of highly complex and abstract theories. He also makes an analogy between the appropriate application of ethical principles and the logical process of medical record writing (e.g., chief complaints, past and present illnesses, examinations, tests, treatments, and outcomes) to facilitate effective clinical personnel use of these principles.² In the four-topics method, medical indications, patient preferences, quality of life, and contextual features are the necessary topics when performing medical decision-making. In clinical practice, the four-topics method is commonly used with the preliminary guidance principles of principlism and the specification, balancing, and casuistry methods to process conflicts between principles. With the emergence of analytical medical ethics³ as the mainstream theory, rationality has been applied to balance conflicts between principles, and ethics acts as a tool for supporting clinical moral reasoning.

Ethical Cases in the Format of Medical Record

In addition to bioethics theories, the scope of medical ethics education encompasses medical ethics topics. To assist clinical physicians in applying bioethics knowledge in practice, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* published seventeen educational articles titled *Bioethics at the Bedside* between July 1996 and October 1998. Case studies in these articles were

occur outside the scope of moral philosophy with the aim of understanding how the medical field operates in the real-world situation to achieve meaningful dialogue.

² Albert R. Jonsen, Mark Siegler, and William J. Winslade, *Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine*, trans. H. C. Hsin et al. (Taipei: Ho-Chi Publishing Co. Ltd, 2011), vi. The author combined medical record writing with the conception of the discussion of ethics principles to facilitate the application of the four-topics method in clinical discussion.

³ F. C. Tsai, *Case Discussion in Clinical Ethics* (Taipei: Leader Book Company, 2007), 61-74. The four-topics method is commonly applied with principlism to provide a guiding principle for clinical moral reasoning.

mostly written by a clinical physician or featured a clinical physician as the lead writer in collaboration with professionals from philosophy, ethics, public health, and legal fields. For clinical personnel, papers based on case studies are more relevant and practical. After the *Bioethics at the Bedside: A Clinician's Guide*⁴ was translated and introduced in Taiwan, it quickly became a crucial teaching material for medical ethics education. The book covers common clinical ethics topics, including informed consent, surrogate decision, and confidentiality. The book establishes a typical template for teaching plan. Each chapter starts with two or three brief case studies to provide an engaging introduction, followed by analyzes from ethical, legal, policy, and empirical perspectives. The discussion is directed back to the content of case studies with a conclusion. Such a writing framework became the template for discussing clinical ethics and greatly influenced medical ethics education. Because the series of articles in the book were written by a clinical physician or featured a clinical physician as the lead writer, the book primarily targets physicians and medical workers. Accordingly, the book minimizes the use of philosophical language, wording, and arguments so as to increase the accessibility of the content as low accessibility can prevent the intended audience from further exploring and expanding their interest in medical ethics. In other words, the medical field acknowledges that the field of medical ethics should not be dominated or dictated by moral philosophy scholars. This acknowledgment enables the medical field to avoid the disconnection between theory and practice, which is praiseworthy. Clinical personnel learn clinical ethics to develop the ability to respond to clinical topics with key features. Due to the influence of the book, ethical case studies have been written in the form of medical records:

A (58) is a male patient with metastatic cancer who was hospitalised due to septicaemia. When A's physician spoke to him about a do-not-resuscitate order (DNR), A insisted on receiving cardiopulmonary resuscitation when his heart stopped.⁵

The aforementioned example is an ethical case study presented in the format of a medical record. To focus on the topic, all case-irrelevant context is omitted to prevent discussions from deviating beyond the original scope of discussion. For example, the aforementioned case study is designed to guide discussions on how clinical personnel should respond to inappropriate medi-

⁴ Peter A. Singer, *Bioethics at the Bedside*, first edition, third print, trans. F. C. Tsai (Taipei: Joint Commission of Taiwan, 2004).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

cal requests. The description does not detail the thoughts and intentions of A, and the reader is not required to rationalize the challenges. The case does not provide readers with any personal information about A, the reason A insisted on receiving cardiopulmonary resuscitation despite experiencing severe pain from terminal cancer, the type of practitioner the physician was, the physician's thoughts when discussing the topic of DNR with A, and the physician's reaction (e.g., anxiety, frustration, empathy, or apathy) to A's request.

Neglected Narratives in Clinical Ethics

In 2005, the author started serving in a medical university with a background in philosophy. Within the following decade, the author joined the medical ethics committee and the medical-legal committee of the hospital and took part in clinical ethics education and other relevant tasks. Throughout this process, the author discovered that most problems concerning medical ethics or medical law involve not only theoretical knowledge in ethics and law but also the commonly neglected field of clinical narratives. Clinical narrative is an enriching field in the humanities that warrants further development, for such development is often constrained or misguided by common theories. Additionally, the ethical thought process of professional personnel is fragmented because of interruptions caused by various guidelines. For example, in an ethnic Chinese society, individuals rarely make major medical decisions independently without consulting their family members. However, with a medical ethics norm prescribing respect for autonomy, professional clinical personnel often neglect questions (e.g., why patients propose an inappropriate request) when physician-patient conflicts occur, but jump to the part of discussing ethical principles (e.g., devising solutions that simultaneously satisfy respect for autonomy and non-maleficence principles). In this situation, ethics becomes an impractical norm. If what is practiced in the medical field does not align with what should be done from an ethical perspective, professional ethics norms will only dictate the feelings of the practitioner, resulting in a theory-practice gap. The interference of professional or academic language with an ethical lifestyle prompted the author to explore the related problems in terms of clinical narratives.

In addition to participating in medical ethics education and research, the author has engaged in medicine controversy investigation and review at medical centers. Although the laws governing medical practice are generally defined clearly, standard patients or standard cases are rare in the real-world situation. Given that every personnel, action, and subtle difference in a clinical scenario may determine its development, each case is considered a

unique story. In medical humanities, medical ethics, and even the teaching and practice of medical law, the author discovered that the most effective method for solving the problem of information complexity and conflicting opinions is to guide practitioners in “consciously returning to the narrative and reviewing the internal logic of an event.” This discovery conforms to a finding in modern medical humanities education that narrative medicine⁶ is the optimal method for promoting humane medical practices.

Seeing Others Through Narratives

According to Sir William Osler, “Medicine is a science of uncertainty and an art of probability.”⁷ In medical education, intuitive and analytical knowledge are conflicting concepts in the fields of clinical reasoning and medical ethics. Medical education is strongly influenced by the natural science paradigm, which heavily advocates empirical research and analytic reasoning. In modern medical education, humanities-related topics (e.g., medical ethics, doctor-patient communication, and medical professionalism) have been fragmented into knowledge, skills, and attitudes and taught independently. The learning conditions of the humanities, including contextuality and complexity, are not emphasized. For example, in medical ethics, considerations of the human nature, such as ethical emotions, are regarded unnecessary in the training of reasoning skills for biomedical topics. Throughout history, our understanding of and insights relating to medical ethics have been limited by medical dilemmas and medical ethics principles.

To find a balance between medical education (which focuses solely on the practical aspect of problem-solving) and medical ethics (which uses a template-based reasoning format), the author has been teaching narrative medical ethics courses in medical universities. Through teaching experience, the author discovered that the intervention of narrative medicine courses for medical intern students could enable them to compose narratives with greater depth in terms of humanity than those featured in previous ethics teaching plans. These narratives comprehensively detailed personal experiences of

⁶ Narrative medicine, which advocates the incorporation of medical practice with narrative abilities, is a novel approach that emerged in the field of global medical humanities education in the past two decades. See Rita Charon, “Narrative Medicine: A Model for Empathy, Reflection, Profession, and Trust,” *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 286, no. 15 (2001): 1897-1902.

⁷ Sir William Osler, *The Quotable Osler*, eds. Mark E. Silverman, T. J. Murray, and Charles S. Bryan (Philadelphia, PA: American College of Physicians, 2003).

medical ethics, feelings toward others, and in-depth thoughts on ethical dilemmas. They also explored ethical values shared by humanity, thereby enabling readers to resonate with the content.

The following section presents excerpts from cases found in *14 True Stories About Medical Ethics*⁸ that describe the experiences of medical intern students at different stages of their internship.

Novice

It was a warm morning. I woke up early to participate in clinical shadowing at 8 o' clock. With the blinding sunlight pouring on my face and a warm breeze blowing against my body, what experience could be more blissful than this? To work in one's favorite occupation, be baptised by medical knowledge daily, and progress toward one's goals ... nothing compares to this lifestyle for me. However, I never expected to be met with the harsh truth ... this harsh truth taught me a precious lesson. "The Unspeakable Truth" (Tai, Chao-Ting).

After our ward inspection, we returned to the nurses' station to confirm our next medical orders and tasks. Everyone then departed to attend to their work, leaving only myself, who was then a clerk not entirely sure what was going on around me, and the teacher.

Oh no, is the teacher going to scold at me? Maybe I should ask a question first to distract her, but ... what should I ask? "3A35-3" (Wang, Yu-Chi).

Changing of Identities

Medical intern students take on the most awkward role in a hospital. Despite wearing a white coat, we do not have the right or responsibility to make medical decisions. We are merely observers in the hospital who wear a coat of "learning." We endeavor in identifying our values and roles in this working environment, but we often retreat back to the safety zone of the discussion room. Even small tasks, such as making a call on behalf of our

⁸ H. J. Lin and S. Y. Wang, eds., *14 True Stories about Medical Ethics* (Kaohsiung: Kaohsiung Medical University, 2018). This book collects stories written by medical intern students during their internship phase. By providing a reading guide to the collection of case studies, the author compiled a Medical Humanities Cultivation Map based on excerpts from each story. The following headings, namely Novice, Changing of Identities, Practice, Teacher, The Suffering of Others, Emotional Connections, and The Beauty of Medicine represent the various stages of the cultivation of medical humanities.

teacher, are important tasks that allowed us to feel engaged. “Mother and Son” (Chou, Pei-Chien).

Some have described us as “roadblocks with feet.” We stood in the background watching our seniors and teachers giving orders and secretly checked with our almost-brand-new pharmacopoeias. In the wards, our only role was that of a transcriber; we jotted down all information we heard. If we were not looking up information in the discussion room, we were running to the station to seek help from less-scary-looking seniors or registered nurses. “The Five-Minute Appointment” (Hsu, Li-Wen).

Practice

It will be fine. These four words were stuck in my throat and left unsaid. I did not know if I could or should say them. The patient’s condition did not look good, therefore saying those four words might give the family members a false sense of hope. The words “It will be fine” was, at that moment, too much hope to give others. “Calm and Not Calm” (Wang, Hao-Chen).

On my way back to the discussion room, I thought of numerous ways to explain her condition to her. However, I was still unsure about how I should break the news of her terminal cervical cancer diagnosis to her. The 5-year survival rate of this cancer is less than 50%. “The Unspeakable Truth” (Tai, Chao-Ting).

Teacher

Yang hung the stethoscope over his neck and smiled; he always saved his gentleness and patience for the patients. “Hide” (Shen Chih-Tsu).

The physician paused, then said after a sigh, “This is the most problematic patient that we have in this recent period. We will do our best to help her survive until the 34th week, but I do not feel optimistic about the situation.” “Safety in Pregnancy” (Yeh, Sheng-Chieh).

On the final day before leaving the station, I could not help but ask my teacher whether she regretted choosing such a tiring career.

“Gynaecology and obstetrics have always been what I want to do,” she responded with a firm look.

“Of course, there are times that I feel tired. Times when I feel that my tasks can be performed by others, and that it does not have to be me. However, I would always think of my patients with cancer, who hope to receive surgery

immediately once they know they have cancer and do not want to delay their treatment for even one day. When I am sleeping peacefully, they may be crying or sleep deprived because of their suffering. Every time I think about this, I become more willing to burden myself with even more work. Maybe this is my calling as a doctor.” “The 5-Minute Promise” (Hsu, Li-Wen).

The Suffering of Others

The older man searched through the pockets of his baggy and grey suit trousers while wearing the golden watch on his hand. He pulled out many folded pieces of paper, some were red and some white, and flattened the paper on the table. I glanced over and saw the words “*Subsidy for Medical Travel Application Form: For Residents in Offshore Islands.*” This old man who was more than 80 years old and in the high-risk group for falls frequently traveled between Kaohsiung and Kinmen to receive treatment. I imagined him walking with his slumped back alone in the airport crowd, sitting alone waiting outside the outpatient ward and coping his illness and ageing body all by himself. “The Golden Watch” (Chen, Kang-Ying).

Shu-Hui’s father, who had been watching silently, walked slowly to the white wall beside the glass window. He wiped the tears from his aged face, then turned his back against the window and lowered his head. The father who supported and acted as the pillar for his family had concealed his weakness and emotions. But upon seeing his daughter receive emergency treatment, his vulnerable and helpless side was exposed, starkly contrasting with his toughness. “Calm and Not Calm” (Wang, Hao-Chen).

Emotional Connections

I started missing Jou-Bao the moment I left the ward. I sincerely hoped his childhood would have less obstacles and suffering, that he would be able to endure the 2 years of treatment and continue to experience the bountiful and beautiful journey of the life awaiting him.

The 10EN ward was often full of laughter, but occasionally, emergencies would occur. Children come and go. While they are stumbling through the early years of life, they are sometimes accompanied by a special friend wearing a white coat. Teachers and seniors seated at the computer frowned when they reviewed and discussed the biometrics and treatment methods of a specific patient. The patient was diagnosed with cancer, which is a despairing, cruel, and unbelievable event. However, they were children; they had unlimited possibilities. The contrast between despair and hope transformed

the white hospital building into a colorful playground. “The White Playground” (Chang, Hsin-Hui).

I brushed my bangs awkwardly, wiping the tears from my eyes with the sleeve of my white coat. I did not know if Doctor Lin acknowledged that I was barely holding back my tears. He turned to face the monitor in the ward and stood silently with his back toward me. However, I noticed his eyes were red. “Mother and Son” (Chou, Pei-Chien).

The Beauty of Medicine

Patients with terminal cancer can only reignite their hope by receiving treatment and follow-up. Through this process, the patient learns that there are many stages of treatment ahead of her. The patient completed each follow-up and remembered the care provided to her by my teacher. From this I realized that the greatness of medicine comes not from its ability to provide treatment but its ability to give hope to others. “The Five-Minute Promise” (Hsu, Li-Wen).

“The beauty of medicine lies in its imperfection.” I will always remember this quote from my cardiosurgery teacher. In our career as physicians, we constantly witness birth, death, illness, and old age. We endeavor to save all the lives we can and learn to accept the fate of those who cannot be treated. The vastness of medical knowledge is its charm as well as its limitation. “The Golden Watch” (Chen, Kang-Ying).

The narratives of medical intern students reveal that clinical ethics is not a one-dimensional, rationalized analysis process. Each student performs ethical reasoning, experiences, observes, and acts on ethics. This applies to every individual whom he/she encounters in clinical experience, including patients, family members of patients, teachers, and co-workers. When not influenced by other conditions, an individual’s narrative is dictated concurrently by intuitive and analytical knowledge. However, in an ethical scenario, the related dynamics are not limited to the temporal progress of a specific event. In practice, such dynamics constantly influence each other in a manner similar to how the jewels of Indra’s net interact.

Ethics: Visage of Many Others

From clinical reasoning to medical ethics, the author observed the profound influence of the natural science paradigm on medical education. In addition to emphasizing empirical research and analytic reasoning, the

paradigm advocates the omission of complex philosophical theories and simplification of professional knowledge into the operational guide. For control purposes, the methods and rules of medical ethics are continually being simplified, leading to the exclusion of crucial ethical elements in these practical principles.

This form of technical thinking originates from Western philosophy. Following Socrates, Western philosophy started to advocate rationality and the establishment of truth and ideal on the basis of consistency in totality. Although Martin Heidegger tried to overcome the ontotheological constitution of identity, the discussion remains limited to the dimension of understanding. Emmanuel Lévinas indicates that the trend of rationalizing concepts reduces one's shock when encountering others. Under this trend, ethics is seen as a type of surrender at the individual level to place all external beings under the rule of "the same."

Lévinas asserts that in Western philosophy the relationship between the individual and others is realized upon the discovery of the third party (i.e., feelings for which objective properties and subjective feelings cannot be distinguished).⁹ The externality of others, through the mediation of feelings or concepts, is cancelled out and incorporated into an individual's feelings. Because the concepts of truth and ideal in Western philosophy are built upon egoism, "Western philosophy is a form of egology."¹⁰

However, similar to the individuals described in the narratives of medical intern students (e.g., the father who silently wiped his tears, the old man who sought medical treatment alone, and the children coping with the threat of their diseases), ethics is never just a topic of different types. Lévinas argues that "His (the Others') very epiphany consists in soliciting us by his destitution in the faces of the Stranger, widow, and orphan"¹¹ and that the presence of others poses uncertainties.¹² From the perception of the individual, every "other" possesses alterity from the perspectives of both self and one's process. Similarly, others may also question the autonomy of an individual. Based on this viewpoint, ethics should not be understood as the start of a scenario and hence cannot be universally defined. "The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face in which his epiphany is produced and which appeals to me breaks with the world that can be common

⁹ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University, 1995), 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹² *Ibid.*, 195.

to us, whose virtualities are described in our nature and developed by our existence.”¹³

Lévinas rejects the concept of egocentrism in classical Western philosophy and ethics and places “others” as the centerpiece of ethics, thereby establishing the novel field of the phenomenology of others.¹⁴ “The face is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed.”¹⁵ In a more positive way, Vincent Shen sees the connection between oneself and many others as the “original good nature”: “The first moment of desire, the desiring desire, is unselfish, it moves beyond oneself toward the good in the other; this could be called the *benxin* 本心 of each person, or the original generosity in each person to go beyond oneself to the good in the other.”¹⁶ For Shen the “virtuous nature” emphasized by Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism is about the original good nature or *benxin*, which is “to liberate the mind and return to the original mind, or the desirable desire taking the good as its direction, or even the desiring desire with its own generosity to go outside of itself to many others.”¹⁷ In this light, the essence of ethics is realized by questioning the self-satisfied identity and responding to others. Medicine is a profession based on helping others, medical ethics must not forget its origins in ethics.

Conclusion

Traditional ethics advocates behavioral guidelines based on rationality, while modern medical ethics seeks to guide medical decision-making through simple topics and principles. However, physicians who receive medical education based on the natural science paradigm are inclined to directly adopt a problem-solving model and a disease-centric perspective.

The narratives of medical intern students show that they experienced the shock of meeting others when they encountered their patients. Such an encounter, which Lévinas refers to as the epiphany of alterity, is crucial. As described by Lévinas, others are not controlled, understood, or restricted by the individual’s rationality. The visage of others questions the autonomy of the individual; thus, the visage of others is both the origin and final form of ethics.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁴ D. Moran, *Phenomenology*, revised edition, trans. C. Y. Tsai (Taipei: Laureate Book Co., Ltd., 2005), 412.

¹⁵ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, 194.

¹⁶ Vincent Shen, “Desire, Representing Process and Translatability,” in *Philosophy East and West, Muse Project* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2017).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Modern medicine has succumbed to the logical dilemma of a disease-centric approach. By contrast, narrative medicine endeavors to restore the depth of humanities in medicine. By adopting a narrative medicine method and presenting the key details of clinical cases, physicians can form a bond with their patients through their deep understanding of human nature. This approach aligns with Lévinas's push to position responsibility toward others as the centerpiece of ethics. In clinical narratives, the vulnerability and dependency of patients awaken the individual self of medical professionals from the Cartesian contemplation. The visage of patients represents the weight of ethical responsibilities undertaken by medical professionals. Therefore, if medical educators can see the key moment of medical intern students' encounter with their patients, they will experience revelations about ethics in the provision of primary care. This then enables medical students to view the connections between patients and diseases and between physicians and patients with a broader perspective and understand their responsibility toward their patients, namely responding to patient requests. Through this approach, the original patient-centered ethical responsibilities can be realized.

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PART IV
**Chinese Philosophical
and Cultural Traditions**

Chinese Diaspora as People of Their Own Countries and Chinese Philosophy as World Philosophy

LI CHENYANG and XIAO HONG*

Sixty years ago philosopher Tang Junyi (1909-1978) published a seminal essay on the Chinese diaspora and Chinese philosophy in the world. In “The Scattering of the Chinese People” (1961), Tang lamented that, after 1949, many Chinese relocated overseas. He wrote,

This trend today as a whole indicates that the Chinese social political life, Chinese culture and the Chinese heart, have lost its force of solidarity. This is like after a huge tree fallen in a garden, its flowers and fruits became scattered with blowing winds. They had to survive in other people’s gardens, evading the burning sun under other trees. They receded to wall corners in order to absorb nutrients, [having to] share soil and water with others plants. This is nothing but a huge tragedy of the Chinese people.¹

Three years later, Tang wrote a related essay, in a more uplifting spirit. While his main concern was still how these “scattered flowers and fruits”

* Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. – This essay was inspired by Vincent Shen’s article “The Concept of Centrality in Chinese Diaspora,” *Religion Compass* 6, no. 1 (2012): 26-40. Shen drew our attention to important issues raised by Tang Junyi’s 唐君毅 work on the relationship between the Chinese diaspora and Chinese philosophy. This essay was originally published in *Chinese Studies* 2 (2013): 63-84. Minor revisions were made for this volume.

¹ Tang Junyi, *Exploring the Universe of Cultural Consciousness* 唐君毅, 《文化意识宇宙的探索》(Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 1992), 424.

could return to their homeland and re-root themselves again,² he also raised the question of how overseas Chinese can establish themselves in their adopted lands and benefit not only themselves, but also other peoples, their countries, and the entire world. For him, the highest goal is to wait for the right time when Chinese people, both in China and abroad, can rebuild the Chinese nation and the Chinese cultural world.³

Tang's essays raise important questions about the identity, purposes, and aspirations of Chinese people outside China and about the need to join forces in building and rebuilding Chinese philosophy, which is the core of the Chinese culture. In this essay, we follow Tang's lead in exploring related issues. While we largely endorse Tang's call for overseas Chinese to establish themselves in their adopted lands, we argue for a more nuanced view on the identity of Chinese living abroad; we also advance a view of future Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy that takes roots in China as well as in the world at large. In what follows, we first discuss the identity or identities of the Chinese diaspora that distance them from the common perception that they are rooted in China. We differentiate two kinds of the Chinese diaspora, those who are culturally Chinese and those who are merely genealogically Chinese. Second, we review Chinese immigrant thinkers' significant contribution to advancing Chinese philosophy on the world stage in the past century, particularly in North America. Third, we advance a view of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. In our view, although Chinese immigrant thinkers in the past century have played a major role in promoting Chinese philosophy outside of China, the importance of such a role is likely to decline along with the success of Chinese philosophy becoming a world philosophy.

From “Chinese Sojourners” to “Overseas Chinese” to “Genealogical Chinese”

The English word “Chinese” has manifold meanings. It can mean the people of China, things (such as language) related to the people of China, as well as persons of Chinese ancestry. The last category includes people living in various parts of the world outside China. Since the nineteenth century, the term “*hua-qiao*” has been used by people in China to refer to ethnic Chinese living abroad, which literally means “Chinese sojourners.” The term is accurate in describing most Chinese who went overseas to work rather than settle in the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries or even earlier. The ultimate

² Ibid., 466.

³ Ibid., 480.

goal, for most if not all of them, was to return to their motherland after making money. Chinese coolies in the nineteenth century, for example, went to America to labor in order to send money back home in support of their families, with the intention to return home eventually (regardless of the United States' anti-Chinese immigration policy). Until quite recently, a large portion of Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia still considered Fujian and Guangdong as their homelands, as evidenced in their enthusiastic support of Sun Yat-sen's revolution and many other China-related events. For many of them, sending money back to their home villages in China was a good way to retrace their roots and to maintain their ultimate connections. These people were indeed "*hua-qiao*," in the sense that they were dislocated from their homeland, temporarily stayed overseas, and would eventually return to China. For the most part, they were in the kind of situation that Tang described and deplored in his 1961 essay. It was correct for Tang to say that their ultimate goal (for most) was to return to and re-settle in their motherland. This strong desire is natural for people of agrarian society who identify themselves closely with the land, which is fixed in the same place. An apt metaphor for these Chinese is the lotus. No matter how far their flowers drift on water, they are strongly corded to their roots, which are established deeply in the same place.

Situations began to change during the twentieth century and continue to change until this day. In the second half of the twentieth century, more and more Chinese went overseas to settle in their respective countries. While many returned to China, others decided to live in their new countries for good. For those permanent settlers, the term "*hua-qiao*" is no longer accurate (even though people in China continue to label settlers overseas as such for their own purposes), for they are "settlers" rather than "sojourners." Gradually, the term "overseas Chinese" or "Chinese overseas"⁴ became the common label for all ethnic Chinese living outside of China, including both sojourners and permanent settlers. More and more permanent settlers have now been naturalized and become citizens of their new countries.

"Overseas Chinese" can be rendered in the Chinese language as either "海外中国人" (overseas people of China) or "海外华人" (Chinese people overseas). The former means Chinese nationals overseas, whereas the latter includes all overseas people of Chinese ancestry. Obviously, while all overseas people of China are overseas Chinese, the reverse is not true. Because of this reason, considering all overseas Chinese as "海外中国人 (overseas people of China)," as they are often referred to in China, is inaccurate at best

⁴ In this essay we do not differentiate between these two expressions.

and forced labeling at worst. Furthermore, the term “海外华人” (Chinese people overseas) is not fully appropriate either. The term carries a strong “China-centric” outlook, implying that these people are somewhat dislocated from their proper native land and “scattered” overseas, to borrow Tang’s expression. The term may be appropriate in denoting the first (and second) generations of Chinese who went overseas only to make a living, but it is not appropriate for subsequent generations. This is because subsequent generations of Chinese who live permanently beyond the boundaries of China may no longer take China as their homeland. They have re-centered in their new countries. The singer Zhang Mingmin (张明敏) has a song called “My Chinese Heart” (我的中国心, literally “My Heart of China”), which has been popular in China for decades. From the mouth of overseas Chinese, its lyric claims the fact that China is their “motherland” and can never be changed. While this is true of many overseas Chinese, it is not true of all of them. To force this label on all Chinese living outside China is not only inaccurate but also can be an insult to some.

Over the past half a century or so, people of Chinese origin in various parts of the world have changed considerably. Many of them, particularly the third and subsequent generations, have given up their status as “sojourners” and become permanent residents or even citizens of their adopted countries. This change of identity is not only political but also socio-psychological. For many, the issue is not merely a matter of a convenient passport, but also one of ownership of their adopted countries. Chinese Americans in California are offended when Caucasian neighbors compliment their English skills. Imagine the following brief conversation in Santa Monica, California:

“Mr. Wong, you speak very good English!”

“Yes, Mr. Giuliani, your English is also very good (as we both were born in California!)”

Complimenting someone’s English in the above context implies that the person has less of a claim to the American land. Chinese Americans no longer consider themselves as having less of a claim to the country of the United States than Italian or German Americans or those of any other origin. If Barack Obama, the son of a Kenyan, can become the president of the United States, why cannot, in principle, sons and daughters of Chinese Americans become presidents? Furthermore, if one wants to become a president of the United States, or for that matter, of any country outside China, should he or she have a heart of that country rather than the country where his or her ancestors lived? When Lee Kuan-Yew and, later,

Lee Hsien-Loong became prime ministers of Singapore, did they have a heart of China or a heart of Singapore? Which heart should they have? We can say the same about Maria Corazon Aquino (former president of the Philippines 1986-1992) and Benigno Aquino (former president of the Philippines 2010-2016), and Abhisit Vejjajiva (former prime minister of Thailand 2008-2011).⁵ For them and for a vast number of Chinese around the world, their centers are no longer China, a place their ancestors once lived and called home, but their new homelands in their adopted countries. For that reason, they are “Chinese” in the sense of “*hua-ren*” (华人, “ethnic⁶ Chinese”), not “people of China 中国人.” Moreover, they are “*hua-ren*” on their own, not “overseas.” As a Singaporean scholar once told the authors: “I am not an *overseas* Chinese (海外华人); I am a Singaporean *hua-ren* (新加坡华人).” To be described as “Chinese overseas” carries a strong dose of Sinocentrism. Both as individuals and as collectives, they should be recognized properly as “Chinese people (*hua-ren*)” as such.⁷ They are people of their own respective countries.

For Chinese people outside of China, their new identity can be positive and liberating, even though perhaps mixed with daily life struggles. Like grown-up children, they are now established on their own in their adopted countries. For them, China may have a special place in their heart as their bloodline is traced back to the land of the Dragon (in this sense, they may still have “a heart of China”). However, they are first of all citizens of their own countries, Singaporeans, Thais, Filipinos, Canadians, and Americans; they are ethnic Chinese in the secondary sense. Furthermore, they may not even be “culturally Chinese,” if by that we mean the Chinese culture largely associated with Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Blood may always be thicker than water, but Peking opera may be very foreign to them. While it may be a good thing for Chinese people to hold on to their cultural heritage wherever they move, after a few generations in their adopted lands, their offspring may have completely immersed in the culture of their adopted coun-

⁵ Some of these people may not have pure Chinese blood, but they are recognized as overseas Chinese along with people of similar backgrounds.

⁶ “Ethnic” refers to a population with either a common national or a common cultural tradition. When the term is used in contrast to “cultural,” it refers to people of a common national origin. A more accurate description of this category is “(mere) genealogical Chinese” as will be discussed next.

⁷ For discussion of related issues, see Liu Hong and Huang Jianli, *New Horizon and Directions for Study Overseas Chinese: Selected Essays by Professor Wang Gungwu* 劉宏和黃堅立, 海外華人研究的大視野與新方向: 王賡武教授論文選 (River Edge, NJ: Global Publishing Co. Inc., 2002).

tries and become culturally “non-Chinese.” Although their genealogical roots are traceable to China, they themselves, particularly being outside China for several generations, may no longer be connected to Chinese culture. They should be described appropriately as “(mere) genealogical Chinese.” Hence, Chinese people outside of China may fall into various categories. First, they are either Chinese sojourners or Chinese settlers outside China. The latter can further be divided into those who are culturally Chinese and those who are merely genealogical Chinese. Presumably, Chinese sojourners (at least for the most) have “a heart of China 中国心”; culturally Chinese settlers outside China possess “a heart of the Chinese tradition”; mere genealogical Chinese are endowed only with a Chinese look and Chinese blood genealogy.

For the vast majority of people inside China, this reality may be hard to bear at first, as if their distant relatives have become lost overseas. For the former, the “heart of China” of overseas Chinese is always a virtue and may always be appreciated and encouraged. This sentiment, however, should not be used as a primary basis in evaluating overseas Chinese, especially those of subsequent generations. There are approximately 40 million people with Chinese ancestry outside of China.⁸ After adopting their new identities, overseas Chinese may no longer possess such a “heart of China.” And there is nothing wrong with that. People inside China should not use the “heart of China” as the criterion of judgment on their relatives in other countries. Instead, people in China should be proud of the establishment and accomplishments of their fellow *hua-ren* re-rooted in various parts of the world. By all standards, Gary Locke 骆家辉 is a very successful Chinese American, but not so if we gauge him on the criterion of a “heart of China.” While he is undoubtedly Chinese in the biological sense, he is hardly culturally Chinese (not for the most part anyway). While his blood may be one hundred percent Chinese, Peking opera and the likes may not be his cup of tea at all!

Tang Junyi may have been right in deploring the scatteredness of Chinese overseas in the mid-twentieth century after Communists took over mainland China. But, for a vast number of Chinese residing overseas today, such bemoaning may be completely misplaced. An appropriate metaphor for them is not a huge tree fallen in a garden, with its flowers and fruits scattered into other gardens, as Tang put it, but dandelion seeds with flying wings that look for proper soil to enroot themselves. Whether in the same

⁸ According to Peter S. Li and Eva X. Li, there are about thirty nine million Chinese overseas in 2007, see Peter S. Li and Eva X. Li, “Changes in the Chinese Overseas Population, 1955 to 2007,” *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie* 48, no. 2 (2011): 137-152.

garden or beyond, wherever they go, they find a suitable place to settle as their own home for good.

Given this new reality, then, what are the connections between the Chinese diaspora and Chinese culture? Tu Weiming has elucidated “Chineseness” or the Chinese identity in terms of Chinese culture, or “cultural China” as a more meaningful concept in understanding Chinese civilization that extends far beyond the geographical “central kingdom.”⁹ If the geographical center of China is always fixed in the “central kingdom,” the center of cultural China is not. As a matter of fact, Tu argued that “the phenomenon of Chinese culture disintegrating at the center and later being revived from the periphery is a recurring theme in Chinese history.”¹⁰ In a seminal essay of “Cultural China: the Periphery as the Center,” Tu articulated a view of three symbolic universes of cultural China:

The first consists of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, that is, the societies populated predominantly by cultural and ethnic Chinese. The second consists of Chinese communities throughout the world, including a politically significant minority in Malaysia and a numerically negligible minority in the United States. ... The third symbolic universe consists of individuals, such as scholars, teachers, journalists, industrialists, traders, entrepreneurs, and writers, who try to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities.¹¹

Tu noted that, although people in the second “universe” are often referred to by the political authorities in Beijing and Taipei as *hua-qiao*, more recently they tend to define themselves as members of the Chinese “diaspora,” meaning those who have settled in communities far from their ancestral homeland.

The “second universe” of cultural China, however, is ambiguous. “Chinese” can be a cultural designator and/or a genealogical designator. Not all people of Chinese descent are culturally Chinese. If we use the concept of “Chinese” in a consistent manner without equivocating on its application, we must not conflate different designations under the term of “Chinese.” Just as genealogical non-Chinese in Tu’s “third universe” may belong to cultural China, genealogical Chinese in various parts of the world may not belong to

⁹ Tu Weiming, “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center,” *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005): 145-167; “Probing ‘Cultural China,’” *The Nineties* ‘文化中国’ 初探, 九十年代月刊 245 (1990): 60-61.

¹⁰ Tu, “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center,” 154.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 154-155.

the “second universe” of cultural China. Whereas some of the Chinese diaspora, such as most of those in Malaysia, undoubtedly belong to the “second universe” of cultural China, others, such as Maria Corazon Aquino, Benigno Aquino, and perhaps Gary Locke, are simply outside the entire realm of cultural China.

The diverged cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora and Tu’s insight regarding the “third universe” of cultural China demonstrate that genealogical “Chineseness” and cultural “Chineseness” do not necessarily coincide. We must bear this in mind as we discuss the Chinese diaspora and the promotion of Chinese culture and philosophy in the world.

Overseas Chinese Advancing Chinese Philosophy

A principal component of the rich Chinese culture is of course its philosophy. By “Chinese philosophy,” we mean the kind of philosophy that originated in China as represented in Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism.¹² The migration of Chinese people from China to other countries is not merely a demographic or economic phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon. When migrating from China to various parts of the world, people brought and continue to bring their culture with them. People coming out of China, with few exceptions, are also culturally Chinese. Wherever they go, Chinese cultural seeds are spread.

The spread of Chinese philosophy beyond China in a systematic way began with Western missionaries introducing Chinese thought back into their own homelands. Among them were Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), who translated the *Four Books* into Latin, and James Legge (1815-1897), whose translation of the Chinese classics *Sacred Books of the East* series into English in the late nineteenth century was the most prominent. Subsequently, Chinese thinkers followed suit and began to introduce Chinese philosophy and culture to the West. Lin Yutang’s (林語堂, 1895-1976) *My Country and My People* (1935) and *The Importance of Living* (1937) were exemplary in propagating Chinese philosophy in the form of cultural dissemination. Serious work on promoting Chinese philosophy by Chinese academic thinkers in the West was launched in the second half of the twentieth century. Prominent among these thinkers was Wing-Tsit Chan (陳榮捷, 1901-1994). Chan spent a large part of his academic life as a professor of Chinese philosophy and religion at Dartmouth College. He published numerous books and articles in both English and

¹² We leave out from discussion the possibility that an entirely new civilization may arise in the land of China.

Chinese on Chinese philosophy and religion. Among these is his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (1969) by Princeton University Press, probably hitherto the most widely used English book of Chinese philosophy and arguably the most influential work in the field of Chinese philosophy in the West. Subsequently, Chinese thinkers like Tu Weiming and Cheng Chungying have played a large role in disseminating Chinese philosophy in the English-speaking world. Eloquent and charismatic, Tu was a professor of Chinese philosophy and history at Harvard University and the director of the Harvard-Yenching Institute for many years until he became the president of Institute of Advanced Studies at Peking University in 2010. His active promotion of the “Third Epic of Confucianism” has generated a profound impact in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Cheng has been a professor of philosophy at the University Hawaii-Manoa and is the founder of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy and the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*.¹³ More Chinese thinkers joined forces in the last two decades, and vastly expanded the magnitude of promoting Chinese philosophy by Chinese thinkers residing in the West. We can name Vincent Shen (1949-2018), Kwong-Loi Shun (who had been in North America for decades until his recent move to Hong Kong), Peimin Ni, Robin Wang, Xinyan Jiang, Yong Huang, Jiyuan Yu, among many others. For several decades, Chan, Tu, Cheng, and many other Chinese thinkers living in the West have been effective spokespersons for Chinese philosophy. They grew up in China (Taiwan, Hong Kong) and were fully immersed in Chinese culture and philosophy before going overseas. Their Chinese heritage is deeply embedded both in blood and in heart. Many of these scholars see their work in Chinese philosophy not only as a profession but more importantly as a mission. Inspired by the Confucian ideal of “advancing the Dao 弘道,”¹⁴ they served, wholeheartedly, as a vehicle for advancing Chinese philosophy in the English-speaking world.¹⁵ In the past three decades, China became an economic and geopolitical power and exerted great global influence. Along with it, Chinese philosophy also drew considerable interest in the world. Increasingly overseas Chinese philosophers played

¹³ Other important figures include Antonio S. Cua (1932-2007), a Filipino Chinese in the United States, and Julia Ching (1934-2001), whose work on Chinese philosophy has exerted a noticeable influence in the West.

¹⁴ *Analects*, 15.29.

¹⁵ For more discussion of related matters, see Chenyang Li, “On the Analytic and Comparative Study of Chinese Philosophy” 北美学界对中国哲学的分析和比较研究: 论一个兴起的潮流, *Journal of Nanking University* 43, no. 2 (2006): 103-110.

an extensive role in promoting Chinese philosophy.¹⁶ In her study of the development of Chinese philosophy in the “English-Speaking World” (“ESW”), Xinyan Jiang notes that, prior to the 1990s, Chinese philosophy was rarely taught on university campuses in North America, but the situation changed significantly since the early 1990s. One of the reasons, Jiang writes, is that,

More and more Chinese who have finished their graduate studies in philosophy from universities in North America and stayed in North America to teach. These Chinese scholars make up the bulk of the membership of the Association of Chinese Philosophers in North America (ACPA, established in 1995) and the International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy (ISCWP, founded in 2002). *Tao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* (started in 2001) is associated with ACPA, and has offered a new forum for studies of Chinese philosophy in ESW.¹⁷

Jiang’s study provides a good reflection on how Chinese immigrants in North America have played a significant role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world.

Two points are due to be noted here. First, the above-mentioned philosophers are all first-generation immigrants to the West. Second, they are both ethnically and culturally Chinese. A genealogical Chinese, of course, may not understand or endorse Chinese culture and therefore may be unequipped for promoting Chinese philosophy due to lack of knowledge or willingness or both. What distinguishes these above-mentioned Chinese thinkers is not only their ethnicity but also personal cultural background and professional training. While their ethnicity may have given them additional credibility, having been born and growing up in China have given them a deep cultural background and personal commitment. Furthermore, rigorous professional training afforded them the scholarly capacity, including both the tool and the skills, to advance Chinese philosophy. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, overseas Chinese thinkers have played a key role in promoting Chinese philosophy beyond China. Without their dedication and contribution, the landscape of Chinese philosophy in the (Western) world would have been entirely different.

¹⁶ For an insightful discussion of this trend, see Vincent Shen, “The Concept of Centrality in Chinese Diaspora,” *Religion Compass* 6, no. 1 (2012): 26-40.

¹⁷ Xinyan Jiang, “The Study of Chinese Philosophy in the English Speaking World,” *Philosophy Compass* 6, no. 3 (2011): 168-179.

Chinese Philosophy as World Philosophy

In all likelihood, the important role played by overseas Chinese thinkers in promoting Chinese philosophy is to continue in the future, particularly by people who continue to move overseas from China. New immigrants are cultural ambassadors. Living their ways of life, new immigrants bring with them cultural practices from their original countries and are often viewed, willingly or unwillingly, as exemplars of their respective cultures. Their ways of life, accordingly, are often taken as the practice of their respective philosophy. Children's attitudes toward their parents in the Chinese immigrant community in the United States, for example, are often seen as exemplifying the Confucian value of filial piety. Immigrants who specialize in the philosophy of their original country naturally play the role of spokespersons for the respective philosophy. In this consideration, overseas Chinese, especially those of the first generation, can play an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world. In his 1964 article, Tang Junyi advocated that when overseas Chinese establish themselves in their adopted countries, they can and should set out to advance Chinese culture and philosophy. Tang is undoubtedly right. New Chinese immigrants who wish to contribute to the world harmony of cultures should play meaningful roles in promoting cultural exchange in their new countries. The thesis we wish to establish here, however, extends beyond Tang's. We wish to argue that, in the global age, the goal of Chinese philosophy in the world is to become a world philosophy; as such, Chinese philosophy in the world should not depend on overseas Chinese as its primary overseas promoters. Thus, our conclusion may appear paradoxical: for overseas Chinese who have been the primary promoters of Chinese philosophy in the world, their ultimate success lies in their ceasing to be primary promoters of Chinese philosophy in the world, when Chinese philosophy is no longer a regional philosophy but a world philosophy.

By "world philosophy," we mean a philosophy that is studied, researched, and promoted as a philosophy of universal significance rather than merely as that of a particular culture. Admittedly, any philosophy has its own cultural origin, and evolves in a historical context. When it acquires broad significance beyond its own cultural tradition, it is however no longer limited by its cultural bounds and has become a philosophy for the world rather than a particular country or culture. This is not to say, however, that such a philosophy is subscribed to and endorsed by everyone in the world, rather that it has secured a position to vie for an audience on the world stage as a respectable contender on equal footing with other philosophies. It is our contention that Chinese philosophy has the substance to become a world

philosophy as (ancient) Greek philosophy has. The value and significance of Greek philosophy, manifested in the teachings of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and so forth, lies in its being a philosophy with relevance to the real world in general. Similarly, when Chinese philosophy becomes a world philosophy, its primary value lies in its relevance not only to China but also to the world. In addition, as a world philosophy, the teachings of Chinese philosophy are part of education for all people, not just assigned readings for students specialized in China/Asian studies.

As Chinese philosophy progresses on its way toward becoming a world philosophy, the role of overseas Chinese scholars in promoting Chinese philosophy will gradually and inevitably abate, for a number of reasons. First, the status of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy cannot be achieved by Chinese thinkers alone, inside China or abroad. A world philosophy is a philosophy studied by people all over the world, not for its present relevance to a particular country or region, but for its significance to the world at large. As such, Chinese philosophy becoming a world philosophy is predicated on the increasing role of non-Chinese thinkers in its study and promotion. To a large extent, of course, this process has already begun. In recent decades, more and more non-Chinese thinkers have entered the force of advancing Chinese philosophy. Notably, Roger Ames's pragmatic and process interpretations of Confucianism and Robert Neville's "Boston Confucianism" have already generated a significant impact on the studying of Chinese philosophy in North America. The most productive center of doctoral students in Chinese philosophy, which has a large presence in the field of Chinese philosophy over the world, is the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Nowadays, at professional conferences of Chinese philosophy outside China, the majority of participants are non-Chinese scholars; books on Chinese philosophy in Western languages are authored by more ethnic non-Chinese than Chinese thinkers. In all likelihood, this trend will continue. Perhaps we can say that the age for overseas Chinese serving as the main force or leading force, as has been the case in the past half a century, in promoting Chinese philosophy overseas will come to an end in the foreseeable future. This is not to say overseas Chinese thinkers will no longer play a significant role in advancing Chinese philosophy outside China. They may, but only in the mix of others and with much less certainty. For the sake of Chinese philosophy, the increasing role of ethnic non-Chinese thinkers in its promotion is to be celebrated rather than deplored. It is an indication of not only the success of Chinese philosophy on the world stage but also the success of early overseas Chinese philosophers who made Chinese philosophy relevant and interesting to non-Chinese people as part of their goal from the very beginning.

The second reason is that, given what has been discussed in the first section of this essay, future offspring of first (and perhaps second) generation Chinese immigrants are not a likely force for playing an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy. As a matter of fact, they may well gradually lose their Chinese cultural heritage. While new immigrants from China may continue to campaign for Chinese philosophy overseas, they are not the majority of people of Chinese ancestry outside China in comparison with subsequent generations of earlier immigrants.

Third, the possible role for new Chinese immigrants to play in promoting Chinese philosophy outside China will largely depend on China's relevance to Chinese philosophy.

China's relevance can exist in two aspects. The first is historical; the second is cultural. Its historical relevance is secured, as that of Greece is to Greek philosophy. With Greek philosophy being a world philosophy, the significance of Athens has become mainly, if not exclusively, historical. Surely students still go to visit the Parthenon in Athens, but merely as a historical site. For them, the place is no longer sacred. A Greek scholar is not presumed with more authority in explicating or defending Greek philosophy than anyone else. In universities all over North America or Europe, those teaching Greek philosophy are mostly ethnic non-Greek. At international conferences on Greek philosophy, organizers may still invite scholars from Greece, just as they invite others from Australia, England, Japan, and the United States. A person being Greek does not possess any particular significance to doing Greek philosophy. Greek scholars are invited not because they are Greek, but because they are experts in Greek philosophy in the same way as German or English scholars are. When Chinese philosophy becomes a world philosophy, students will still go and visit Qufu in China for its historical significance. If China's relevance is to be merely historical, scholars from China will still be invited to international conferences on Chinese philosophy, but their ethnic Chinese identity may not be of particular significance. They may be invited just as scholars from Australia, England, Japan, and the United States.

Of course, China's relevance to Chinese philosophy may remain well beyond its historical significance. It can continue to be culturally relevant. This means that Chinese philosophy as we understand it continues to play a living role as the soul of the land. That, however, is not a certainty. As Thomé Fang has said well: we should not think that "because Chinese culture has a glorious history it will continue forever." Such a future still awaits "further

examination.”¹⁸ A land is culturally relevant if it possesses social resources that exemplify a particular culture or cultural force. In this sense, China today is no longer relevant to much of Mohism, even though Mohism originated there. Joseph Levenson’s trilogy on *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* raised real worries about the museumization of the Confucian heritage.¹⁹ Needless to say, if Confucianism fades away in China, a significant part of the Chinese heritage will be lost.

There is no guarantee that China will remain culturally relevant to Chinese philosophy (as we know it). Take Confucianism as an example. This rich tradition extended throughout most of the time in China’s history. In recent times, however, Confucianism has encountered major challenges. The May 4th Movement gave it a first major blow. The Cultural Revolution constituted another onslaught on the tradition. It is worth noting that this kind of attack from Western influences, whether liberalism or Marxism, has continued in various forms even to this date. In criticizing the negative aspects of Confucianism in its historical form, many contemporary Chinese thinkers wish to eradicate Confucianism altogether. Their success would be the demise of Confucianism and a large part of Chinese culture. Furthermore, in the past few decades, the impact of Western ideology obviously has placed Confucianism on another test. In conjunction with increasing Western influence is the attack by what we call “the glorious cat.” This attack began in the 1980s when two ideas became the dominating ideology in China. One is that “To get rich is glorious (致富光荣).” The other is “catching mice makes a good cat.” Both ideas have been attributed to Deng Xiaoping. Although there is no conclusive evidence that Deng actually expressed the first idea in these words, there is no doubt that both ideas were key components of his philosophy. Arguably Deng’s philosophy is broader than these two ideas. But these two are undeniably the most influential in the past decades. Combining these two ideas, we have what may be called the “glorious cat” doctrine. The doctrine says that the glorious goal in life is to get rich, and that one can use any means possible as long as such a goal is achieved. Such a doctrine is diametrically opposed to the Confucian belief that material wealth should be pursued only with ethical means.²⁰ The “glorious cat” doctrine may have

¹⁸ Thomé Fang, *The Ideal of Life and Cultural Types* 方东美, 生命理想与文化类型 (Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 1992), 602.

¹⁹ Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969).

²⁰ For more discussion of this matter, see Chenyang Li, “Material Well-being and Cultivation of Character in Confucianism,” in *Moral Cultivation and Confucian*

contributed to the economic success in the past decades in China, but also undeniably to the severe moral deterioration in the country recently. Its assault on Confucianism (and Daoism to some extent) is not direct and may not even have been intentional. Its consequences are nevertheless devastating. While efforts to revive Confucianism have been launched repeatedly, mainly in the academic realm, the social environment in the wake of the onslaught by the “glorious cat” has made it particularly challenging for Confucianism to renew itself.²¹ This, of course, does not necessarily mean that Confucianism will not be able to survive in its homeland. If Confucianism, along with other traditional philosophies, survives another challenging time, China will remain culturally relevant to Chinese philosophy in the world. With its cultural relevance intact, the significance of China to Chinese philosophy will remain more important than contemporary Athens to Greek philosophy. Besides its historical significance, China can still be the cultural center of Chinese philosophy, and overseas Chinese migrating from China will continue to play their role as cultural ambassadors in the world. Thinkers among them will continue to play an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy.

If we can summarize this essay in a nutshell, we will say the following. The number of forty million strong ethnic Chinese living outside China is likely to increase continuously; a large portion of their descendants will likely gradually lose the Chinese cultural heritage that was once dear to their forebears. Chinese immigrant thinkers have played a major role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world and in promoting Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. Their role, however, is likely to decline as Chinese philosophy gains an increased status as a world philosophy. Future Chinese thinkers who move overseas may continue to play this important role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world. The degree of the importance of their role, however, depends mainly on two factors; the continued cultural relevance of China to Chinese philosophy and the success of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. The more culturally relevant China remains to Chinese philosophy, the more likely new Chinese immigrant thinkers will play an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy. Conversely, the more successful Chinese philosophy is in becoming a world philosophy, the less likely it is for Chinese immigrant scholars to be the primary force in

Character: Engaging Joel J. Kupperman, eds. Chenyang Li and Peimin Ni (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 2014), 171-188.

²¹ For more discussion of this matter, see Chengyang Li, “Five Contemporary Challenges for Confucianism,” *Journal of East and West Thought* 1, no. 2 (2012): 53-68.

promoting Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. We hope for China's continuing cultural relevance; we hope for the success of Chinese philosophy in becoming a world philosophy.

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The Human Being and the Ground of Philosophy: The East and the West

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The theme of the twenty-fourth World Congress of Philosophy was “learning to be human.” I think it was a good theme. Each nation, whether in the East or the West, has its own brilliant persons and heroes who can lead the nation to move forward in the world. In a sense, they are guides of their people, for people learn from them how to be human. Since many new things have occurred in our time, we need to learn to be human again. First, as the process of globalization continues, people are living in a larger community. Since different civilizations encounter each other, people need to both give up and preserve some of their ways of life. The so-called “clash of civilizations” is eventually the conflict over different ways of life. The cruelty of such conflict in our times is no less than that caused by wars in previous times. In order to avoid misery for humankind, we need to think clearly about this issue. Second, in the past, the human being was defined as the opponent of nature, while, today, a dim notion of extra-territorial intelligent beings is gaining ground. Though it has not been confirmed whether there really exist extra-terrestrial intelligent beings, the allegation that we need to move to a planet in the outer-space in the future shows that the earth, being polluted, might not be suitable for the survival of human beings. No doubt, as pollution is the result of human beings’ way of life, the threat to the human being comes from the same being itself. This raises the question of whether our present way of life is the proper one. Third, there is the rise of a new challenge, that is, artificial intelligence. Although we do not know

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whether or not artificial intelligence will surpass human beings' intelligence in all aspects, it is a fact that it has forced us to change our lives in many ways. If, in the past, property and power determined the relationship among human beings, for instance, governing and being governed, how about the future? Since artificial intelligence is not something one can easily control or operate by just using one's own arms, hence, how to master artificial intelligence might have priority. The question is whether this may lead to a new conflict between superiors and inferiors.

All of the above challenges are growing in our time. In order to discuss them, we need to base ourselves on a renewed understanding of the human being. However, are we certain that we have the same understanding of what it means to be a human being? I doubt that we have. In this paper, I will show the different understandings of human beings between Chinese culture and that of the West by way of examining their different philosophy as the background of their understanding. More importantly, I will discuss the different grounds for Chinese and Western philosophies and try to show the ultimate ground for all philosophies if possible.

The Human Being in Western Philosophy

An inscription in the Delphi Temple in ancient Greece says: "know yourself." Superficially, it may mean to "learn to be human," especially in the way Socrates developed the sentence "the unexamined life is not worthy living."¹ That is to say, one would better not live unless one knows oneself. Unexpectedly, this could be an obstacle for someone to start living. Because, according to that saying, we do not begin our living before we have an understanding of our own self. However, it is not easy to have a clear understanding of the self. Especially, in our time, we have very different opinions about human beings, which contradict each other.

People can view human beings from various perspectives, such as metaphysics, theology, biology, mathematics, etc. Every time a relevant discipline develops, it causes a change in the view of human beings. For instance, when Copernicus's heliocentric theory came out, it impacted the view on the position of human beings in the universe. The theory of biological evolution, developed by Charles Darwin, brought a crisis to the idea that human beings are creatures of God. The establishment of geometry and calculus yields the idea that the human being has the same ability as God to grasp the infinite. From the perspective of quantum mechanics, human beings could be

¹ Plato, *Apology*, 38a.

measured in terms of energy level. In economics, the assumption is that human beings are those who always strive for greater efficiency and profit. If each particular science provides only a partial point of view about human beings, let us take a look at philosophy. Prevailing in the history of Western philosophy, Platonism takes it as its tenet to search for the real knowledge of the world, which later turns out to be the universal knowledge of the world in which human beings are defined as the subject of knowing. To speak rigorously, the so-called “universal knowledge” does not denote empirical knowledge but rather concerns the essence of things. Such knowledge is grasped by logically determined concepts. A famous saying by René Descartes goes like this: “I think, therefore I am,” which indicates that the knowing subject corresponds to such universal knowledge. Here, the word “thinking” does not mean “random thought,” “feeling,” or “touching,” but thinking in concepts on the basis of clear and distinct ideas, according to Descartes. Human beings could also be treated as an object. This way to observing the human being is borrowed from way of observing things to find their essence. An earlier formulation says that the human being is a political animal (Aristotle); the more popular modern definition is that the human being is a rational animal. Since the essence determines a thing as it really is, rationality determines the human being as a human being; essence is superior to phenomenon, rationality is superior to sensation. Essence is supposed to be innate or inherent, rationality is something by birth for the human being. However, there are some philosophers who do not agree with the above idea. For instance, David Hume, arguing from the perspective of empiricism, held that the “self” is a bundle of perceptions. Up until recent days, more people have considered it unfit to exclude irrationality from human beings or belittle the function of irrationality in human beings. For Sigmund Freud, human consciousness includes two levels: conscious and unconscious. Behind the apparent politeness restrained by social norms, there is the unconscious with sexuality as its core. In a similar vein, in the ancient world, Marcus Aurelius even claimed that rationality harms the nature of the human being and contracts happiness and freedom.

All the above opinions focus on rationality and its opponent irrationality. Though the term rationality is used in various senses, its basic meaning is close to that of reason which means “an ability to move from the truth of some beliefs to the truth of others.”² Things show their essence to the knowing subject who has rational thinking. In turn, human beings are being

² See Nicholas Bunnin and Jiyuan Yu, “Reason,” in *Dictionary of Western Philosophy, English-Chinese* (Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2001).

examined to find their essence. From the perspective of Western philosophy, essence is quite important for knowing an object; all the important properties are put into essence. Similarly, we find in human beings' essence all human attributes, such as liberty and equality, which arose from the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. However important the role of essence is in knowing the object, a human being does not exhaust his/her self in knowing; she/he is something other than the knowing subject and cannot be exhausted by the object of knowing. The rise of irrationalism indicates the insufficiency of the rational definition of human beings. Then, is there another way to deal with human beings? This leads us to explore another way, that of Martin Heidegger, whose theory we will introduce later in this paper.

As a matter of fact, there are many issues that we think we understand well. But if we go deep into them, we then find that we cannot have a full grasp of them. The human being is one of such problems. Each one of us is a human being. But no one knows why there is me among so many people around the world. Why am I not the other but this particular person? Why do I live in this era, not in another, born in this family, not in another? The question of human beings has always been a riddle. It is ironic to hold that you have to know yourself before you begin your life. One can only know oneself in the process of living. Life is an adventure.

The Human Being in Chinese Philosophy

In China, if one has done well in whatever profession one is and is asked to tell one's experience, she/he most probably would begin by saying that he/she is a good person, and then tell what he/she has accomplished professionally. If one has been very good in art or technique and tries to move a step further, the way is to transcend from art or technique to Dao. This is a beautiful way of being human. It tells the importance of being a good person in Chinese traditional culture. However, if one tries to find a definition of human beings in Chinese traditional culture, one would become frustrated. Unlike Western philosophy, ancient Chinese philosophers did not search for the essence of things and human beings nor developed a definition. What is certain is that, compared to Western philosophy with universal knowledge as its tenet, traditional Chinese philosophy takes as its tenet being a perfect human being. It needs a book to demonstrate the point; here, I can only discuss a few points.

The entire book of *The Confucian Analects* is about being human. The last chapter ends with the following: "Without recognizing the ordinance of Heaven, it is impossible to be a superior man. Without an acquaintance

with the rules of propriety, it is impossible for the character to be established. Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men.”³ In *The Book of Changes*, we read: “In ancient times, the sages institute the system of change in order to follow the principle of the nature and destiny.”⁴ Here, “the principle of nature and destiny” could be understood as “the principle of life” (性命之理). Entitled “changes,” *The Book of Changes* focuses on being human. It says: “He only is the sage who knows to advance and to retire, to maintain and to perish; and that without ever acting incorrectly. Yes, he only is the sage.”⁵

Up to the Soon and Ming dynasties, Confucianism evolved into the learning of sagehood (圣学). Zhou Dunyi, a Confucian scholar in the Soon dynasty, said in his book *Tong Shu*: “The sage expects to meld himself with heaven; the wise man expects to be a sage; the gentleman expects to be a wise man.” This means that to be a sage is the highest aim of human life. What does it mean to be a sage, then? A sage is not limited to pure morality, rather, to speak broadly, anyone with perfect arts or skills could be such a person. For instance, we have Wang Xizhi as the sage in calligraphy, Lu Yu in tea ceremony, and also Du Fu in poetry. They, in their own ways, all reached the status of mingling themselves with heaven and earth. They are examples of being good humans. Why should human beings take the sage as their example? What is exactly a human being? Unfortunately, there is no definition of human being in Chinese philosophy. What we can read is the origin of human beings. For instance, *The Book of Changes* says that everything originates from the interaction of two dynamic elements: Yin and Yang. The same is with human beings: “The way (*Dao*) of Qian (*Yang*) constitutes the male, while the Kun (*Ying*) constitutes the female.”⁶ Produced in this process is not only everything, but also the position of everything. “The great characteristic of heaven and earth is to be produce. The most precious thing for the sage is (a full understanding and grasp of) position. To guard the position is the human being.”⁷ The same idea is expressed in *The Doctrine of the*

³ James Legge, *Confucian Analects, the Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean* (1861), revised second edition (1893) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, reprinted by Cosimo in 2006). The Chinese text: 不知命, 无以为君子; 不知礼, 无以立也; 不知言, 无以知人也。

⁴ *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. and compiled by Wing-Tsit Chan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 269.

⁵ Legge, *Confucian Analects*. The Chinese text: 其唯圣人乎! 知进退存亡而不失其正者, 其唯圣人乎!

⁶ *The Book of Changes*, Appended Remarks 1. “乾道成男, 坤道成女。”

⁷ *Ibid.*, Appended Remarks 2. “天地之大德曰生, 圣人之大宝曰位, 何以守位曰人。”

Mean: “What heaven (tien, nature) imparts to man is called nature. To follow our nature is called Tao.”⁸ Since human nature is bestowed by heaven, to follow the way of heaven is the proper way of being human. But the question is what is the Way (*Tao*) of heaven? It seems that only by having a clear understanding of Tao can be a human being know and be who one is. Unfortunately, it has never been expressed clearly about what Tao is. Tao is not something that can be spoken out with certainty. It seems our thinking reaches a dead end. However, the secret is that thinking or language cannot give us a clear direction on how to be human. What we should do is to engage in practices and try to find new tendencies in life in order to resolve challenges faced in the course of life.

Compared to Western philosophy, the issue of the human being is not explicated so clearly or certainly in Chinese philosophy. What Chinese philosophy traces back on this issue is Tao, which, however, is something that can be made certain beforehand, for it is always in the process of revealing. Because of this, to be human while pursuing Tao means to *learn* to be human. If there was an inherent essence attributed to the human being, it would not be necessary for one to learn to be human, for one is already a human being. According to the assumption that the human being has an inherent essence, what one needs to learn is only some professional skills or abilities to make a living.

In sum, concerning the issue of learning to be human, Westerners and the Chinese have different points of view. I will not comment on which one is better but analyze the two different views profoundly. That means discussing the two philosophies which cause the different views about the human being.

Different Ways of Understanding the Human Being

The idea of a human being is to decide ways of being human, one's values and aims. Though we are all human beings, we nevertheless have different beliefs concerning how to become human, hence different values and aims in life. The question is, from where comes the idea of being a human being? The idea is based on the way we think of it. How do we think of the human being, then?

As we have shown in the above discussion, there is an important concept in Western philosophy, i.e., essence. The classification of essence and phenomena is an important feature of Western philosophy. It originates from Plato, who holds that there is, besides our perceptual world, a world of idea.

⁸ “天命之谓性，率性之谓道。”

The motivation for such classification comes from the fact that there are various things in the world, and that even things belonging to the same kind are full of differences. Perceptual knowledge is quite different, even opposite from true knowledge. Then, what is true knowledge? The question pushes Plato to think that there might be something that is the one out of many and the unmovable out of movables. He calls such things ideas. For Plato, ideas represent the true knowledge of the same kind of things. They exist in a world, our perceptible world, the world of ideas. But not long after Plato develops the theory of ideas, it is criticized by others, including his disciple Aristotle who thinks that there is no world of ideas. The so called idea is but the essence of things in our world and cannot be grasped directly by perception but by conceptual thinking. Concepts cover a broad area from the general to the universal. The general ones are from our experiences, and thus can be further enlarged as our experience goes. The concept used to express essence is supposed to cover all experiences, hence is beyond time and space. This theory has caused serious problems in the history of Western philosophy. Where do these concepts come from? Do these concepts have their realities? Etc. Though there have been disputes, one can recognize that the idea of essence has been very influential in the development of natural sciences as well as universal and necessary knowledge.

When Engels made a summary of the two kinds of philosophy, materialism and idealism, the idea of essence worked vividly, for the function of philosophy was seen as teaching people to go from phenomenon to essence. The only difference between the two doctrines is that, for materialism, though essence can only be grasped conceptually, it represents the real nature of things outside us; for idealism, the essence can only be grasped conceptually, the essence of things together with the law of nature is something of our own spirit. Both agree that if we know the essence of things, we can have clear and exact knowledge of them. It is admitted that the idea of essence especially facilitates the advance of a deductive knowledge of nature.

However, in traditional Chinese philosophy, there is no word corresponding to essence. The word 本质 is a new formulation to translate essence. Neither is there a demarcation between phenomenon and essence. Rather, when Chinese philosophers try to get a deeper understanding of things, they take the direction of knowing the very beginning of the event and use “knowing incipency.” The notion of “incipency” comes from *The Book of Changes*. In Appended Remarks PT.1 of that book, it says, “The (operations forming the) *I* are the method by which the sages search out exhaustively what is deep, and investigate the incipency (of the event).” “Only goes to deep, can one penetrate through all the tendencies under the sky, only captures incipi-

ency, can one complete all the affairs under the sky.”⁹ Zhen Xuan, a famous scholar in the Han dynasty, explained the word “depth” and “incipiency” as “To reach its source before the truth reveals, it is called depth. To sense in the moment of beginning, it is called incipiency.”¹⁰ In Appendix PT.2, it says, “The Master said: how marvelous one knows the incipiency!”¹¹ “Incipiency is the slight beginning of the movement, and the earliest indication of good or evil.”¹² According to Zhen Xuan, “Incipiency, in the moment leaving nothing and coming into being, the truth without formulation, cannot be addressed by name and seen by form yet.”¹³ Kong Yingda, another scholar in Tang dynasty, re-noted: “Incipiency means subtleness. At the very beginning, the truth has not been noted but only being subtle. If after it becomes noticeable, it cannot be called incipiency, for both conscious and the event are revealed. Neither can it be called incipiency before it initiates, for there is nothingness. Incipiency is the moment between leaving nothingness and entering into being. Therefore it is called the subtle of moving.”¹⁴ Why is incipiency so important? The reason is that all have to undergo a process from the beginning to the end; finding incipiency could help one to foresee the development of affairs. Zhang Dainian once said, “the notion of incipiency was raised and advocated by *The Book of Changes*. It is a very profound thinking. It should be recognized that incipiency is an important notion in the ancient Chinese dialectical thinking.”¹⁵ Qian Zhongshu also pointed out the importance of this notion and cited in detail the use and meaning of this word in the classics.¹⁶

To know incipiency is a basic attitude toward the world, which is grounded on the idea that the world is in the process of becoming and changing. This process has nothing to do with the classification of essence and phenomenon but generates a deep understanding of the world in which incipi-

⁹ Legge, *Confucian Analects*, 309; see also Wu Jing-Nuan, *Yi Jing* (Washington, DC: The Taoist Center, 1984), 270. “夫《易》, 圣人之所以极深而研几也。唯深也, 故能通天下之志; 唯几也, 故能成天下之务。”

¹⁰ “极未形之理则曰深, 适动微之会则曰几。”

¹¹ “知几其神乎!”

¹² “几者, 动之微, 吉凶之先见者也。”

¹³ “几者, 去无入有, 理而未形。不可以名寻, 不可以形睹者也。”

¹⁴ “几, 微也。动谓心动, 事动。初动之时, 其理未著, 唯纤微而已。若其已著之后, 心, 事显露, 不得为几; 若未动之前, 寂然顿无, 兼亦不得称几。几是离无入有, 在有无之际, 故云动之微也。”

¹⁵ Zhang Dainian, *An Outline of the Notions and Categories in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Science Press, 1989), 118.

¹⁶ Qian Zhongshu, *Limited Views* (管锥篇) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 75-77.

ency is the beginning of the process. This incipency is the beginning of both affairs and the mind. Without the incipency of the affair, the incipency of the mind would be groundless. Similarly, without the incipency of the mind, the incipency of the affair would be meaningless. Based on this point of view, traditional Chinese philosophy has greatly investigated how we can reach incipency and open human beings' life according to the unique process of the Tao, which I will further discuss later in this paper.

To search for essence and to know incipency are two different ways or intentions toward the understanding of the true meaning, hence they yield different results. According to the former, our intention is to know what the thing really is, and what the that-ness is. To use this way of thinking to understand the human being results in the view that the human being is a rational animal. By contrast, for the latter, the deepest way of thinking is to find the beginning of affairs. Therefore, the deepest search of the human being is the origin. We have the assertion, "what heaven imparts to man is called human nature."¹⁷

They are two different ways to go deep into the truth. On the one hand, the way of searching essence is synchronic, that is to say, there is no sequence between essence and phenomenon. To put it in other words, essence might have logical priority over phenomenon, but is not temporally prior to phenomenon. We might say, essence is expressed as a structure with concepts. The doctrine of essence greatly facilitates the natural sciences. It emancipates human thinking by concepts through deduction and makes scientific hypotheses. Once these hypotheses are verified, we get the truth of nature.

On the other hand, the method of incipency is diachronic. It determines the occurrence and development of affairs. It says in *The Great Remarks 1, Zhou Yi*: "The *I* was made on a principle of accordance with heaven and earth, and shows us therefore, without rent or confusion, the course (of things) in heaven and earth."¹⁸ Though the course of things is mentioned here, what is of most concern is the human affair, which is used to judge happiness and evil.

Different views of the human being are based on different ways of philosophy. Then we have a further question, why have there been different types of philosophy? On what ground does each philosophy set off?

¹⁷ *The Doctrine of the Mean* "天命之谓性," see *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy*, 98.

¹⁸ 《易》与天地准, 故能弥纶天地之道. See Legge, *Confucian Analects*.

The Ground of Traditional Western Philosophy

Thus far, we have spoken about the human being in a philosophical sense. From the perspective of Western philosophy, the human being is a rational animal, whereas from the perspective of Chinese philosophy, the nature of the human being is bestowed by heaven. Then the question is, what is the respective ground of these two philosophies? Since we have found that the different views concerning the human being are based on different philosophies, we need to go a step further and answer the question of why there exist different philosophies. To answer this question, we need to look into the ground of these different philosophies. It is a challenge. Fortunately, as we have analyzed one of the eminent features of each philosophy, essence and incipency, it might be easier for us to understand the respective ground of the two philosophies. Let us check Western philosophy first.

In terms of the view of essence, there must be an assumption that confirms the separation of the world into two realms, a phenomenal world and an essential world. Furthermore, there would be a separation of consciousness, sensation, and reason. The motivation for such a separation is guided by the intention to find the true meaning of the world. Since what we know through our senses is not certain, the anticipation of some certainty leads to the knowledge of essence. There comes the question of which one comes first, the world as an object or the intention as a subject? The quarrel about which is the first makes two camps; one that holds that the material world comes first is materialism, the other that consciousness as subject comes first. People think Hegel belongs to idealism, for they maintain that the principle of the world is expressed in the absolute spirit. Hegel did try to overcome dualism as he argued that philosophy begins neither with the subject nor with the object, because both are partial. For him, the real beginning of philosophy is being itself, which sublates the opposition between subject and object. Being is pure knowing without anything unknown and without any particular determination, as he said: "Pure knowing as concentrated into this unity has sublated all references to another and to mediation; it is without any distinction and as thus distinctionless, ceases itself to be knowledge; what is present is only simple immediacy."¹⁹

If this pure being is the beginning point of philosophy, it is nothingness. Hegel demonstrated this as follows:

¹⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 69.

Being, pure being, without any further determination. In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself. It is also not unequal relatively to an other; it has no diversity within itself nor any with a reference outward. It would not be held fast in its purity if it contained any determination or content which could be distinguished in it or by which it could be distinguished from an other. It is pure indeterminateness and emptiness. There is *nothing* to be intuited in it, if one can speak here of intuiting; or it is only this pure intuiting itself. Just as little as anything to be thought in it, or it is equally only this empty thinking. Being, the indeterminate immediate, is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than *nothing*.²⁰

In Hegel's *Science of Logic*, being or pure being is the beginning of his whole logical system. Since being "is in fact nothing," philosophy should begin with nothing. At first sight, one might be surprised because of this conclusion. How could philosophy, a ground for all sciences, begin with nothing? But to think it over again, I feel we cannot but accept the conclusion. For, if philosophy has its own assumption with positive determination as its beginning, the task is to further justify this assumption, and this is a ceaseless process. Furthermore, any determination is limitation; philosophy, being the foundation of all sciences, should have no further ground. Only set out from "being as nothing," philosophy reaches its steady ground, because it has the possibility to produce every kind of determination. This means the ground of Western philosophy is nothingness. This is not a negative but a positive conclusion. Interestingly, we can also see this in traditional Chinese philosophy.

The Ground of Chinese Philosophy

Whoever has some knowledge of Chinese philosophy would recognize nothingness as the ground of Chinese philosophy. From Laozi, it says:

All things under heaven are the products of being. Being itself is the product of nothingness (chapter 40).²¹

People are more familiar with Laozi's saying regarding Dao:

Dao gives birth to the One, the One gives birth successively to two things, two to three things, three to ten thousand (chapter 42).²²

²⁰ Ibid., 82.

²¹ Laozi, 天下万物生于有, 有生于无.

²² Laozi, 道生一, 一生二, 二生三, 三生万物. 《老子》名可名, 非常名. "无", 名地之始; "有", 名万物之母. 中文标点据陈鼓应.

But Dao is still subjected to nothingness, as Laozi says in the very beginning of the book, *Tao Te Ching*:

The Dao that can be told of is not a constant Dao; the name that can be named is not the usual name. Nothing is the origin of heaven and earth; Being is the mother of ten thousand things.²³

This point of view is pervades throughout the important classics in ancient China. As mentioned, the Chinese see the entire world as a process of production. This is the reason why people should pay attention to incipency. Incipency itself does not manifest the significant meaning, for it comes from something veiled. We have to find it before incipency reveals itself.

Some words from *The Book of Changes* also indicate nothingness as the origin of all things. It says,

Therefore in the system of change there is the Great Ultimate. It generates the Two Modes (yin and yang). The two Modes generate the Four Forms (major and minor yin and yang). The Four Forms generate the Eight Trigrams. The Eight Trigrams determine good and evil fortunes. And good and evil fortunes produce the great business (of life).²⁴

What is “the Great Ultimate”? Compared to the saying, “Dao gives birth to the One, the One gives birth successively to two things,” etc., the Great Ultimate seems to be the One. But we read from Zhou Dunyi, a neo-Confucian scholar in the Soon Dynasty, that “there is non-Ultimate that is before the Great Ultimate.”²⁵ This saying is tantamount to “being itself is the product of nothingness.”

If the above is true, then it seems the two philosophies, Western and Chinese, have the same beginning or starting point, nothingness. Why does it turn out that philosophy should begin with nothingness? A simple reason is that if philosophy is the ground of all sciences and learnings with various assumptions, philosophy itself should not have any determined assumption. Otherwise, it would become a certain kind of knowledge.

Still, we have the question, if both philosophies begin with nothingness, why does this turn out to be so different for Chinese and Western philosophies? To answer this question, we need to check the real implications of nothingness in the two philosophies.

²³ See *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy*, 139.

²⁴ *The Book of Changes*, Commentary 1, “是故易有太极，是生两仪，两仪生四象，四象生八卦，八卦定吉凶，吉凶生大业。”

²⁵ 周敦颐，《太极图说》“无极而太极。”

Different Implications of Nothingness East and West

It might look strange to search for the meaning or implication of nothingness, for nothingness just means nothing. What else could it mean? Nothingness is not absolute nothingness because absolute nothingness means not only that there is nothing, but also that there is no one to talk about it. In this sense, there could not have been discussions about nothingness. The nothingness we are discussing here is relative nothingness, which corresponds to something. In other words, nothingness, insofar as we can talk about it, is always related to something, the non-being. For instance, if we say there is no A, i.e., a nothingness corresponding to A, it leaves the possible existence of B, C, D ... undetermined.

We cannot speak about the absolute nothingness, because it is the dark abyss. What we can talk about is a relative nothingness. If philosophy wants to begin with “nothing,” this “nothing” should be the largest nothingness, which means it corresponds not to some limited beings, but to all beings. I call the nothingness corresponding to all beings the largest nothingness.

Hegel tried to get the largest nothingness. When he said philosophy begins with the category of being, and this being is tantamount to nothingness, he described being as without any determination, i.e., universal being. He noticed that there must be someone who knows being. Knows being is also a being, that, he said, included in being is the pure intuiting, that is, nothing intuited.²⁶

It seems nothingness could be larger than what is formulated by Hegel. For what nothingness means for him is the opposite to both everything as the object and the knowing as the subject.

If we compare Hegel's views with Chinese philosophy, we may find that the way to reach nothingness by the ancient Chinese philosophers is different from Hegel's. This is shown in the Confucian classic *The Doctrine of the Mean*, which says, “While there are no stirring of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, the mind may be said to be in a state of *equilibrium*.”²⁷ These words, I believe, describe the way for people to follow Dao. What would be left if one put oneself in the state without pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy? There would be no objects left corresponding to these emotions. Nothingness is always a nothing in the sense of non-being. If one removes one's pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy from the “center,” the point of equilibrium, what is left is neither one's sentiment nor any object of sentiment. In this sense,

²⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 82.

²⁷ Legge, *Confucian Analects*. The original text: “喜怒哀乐之未发, 谓之中。”

the word “equilibrium” means just a kind of nothingness. This understanding is matched with the other sentence of the text that says, to follow the Dao, one should be cautious of and even be terrified by something revealing, for the thing reveals itself secretly and incipiently. Therefore, one should be the watchful over oneself when one is alone.²⁸ Here what we have is a kind of nothingness, a relative nothingness, which could be the way to follow Dao. A basic point to view the world is that everything is in the process of production and becoming, i.e., beginning from nothingness, through incipency, to becoming, and to the end. To find incipency, one needs to empty one’s mind, that is, to enter into a state of nothingness. In this way, one can be very sensitive to the revealing of incipency.

The above analysis shows different ways to reach nothingness. For Hegel, nothingness is reached by knowing, both the knowing subject as pure intuition without anything to be intuited and the known object as the most universal being without any determination. It is this pure being that is tantamount to nothingness. In Chinese philosophy, nothingness is reached by emptying one’s mind for things to be seen and heard.

The Largest Nothingness: The Ultimate Ground of Philosophy

All sciences and doctrines have their own beginnings or their grounds, but they do not justify the ground by themselves. They leave the ground to be justified in philosophy. Then, what is the beginning or ground of philosophy? Especially when we want to have philosophy cover all sciences and doctrines, what is the beginning or the ground of philosophy? If all sciences and doctrines begin with certain assumptions, what is the assumption of philosophy?

If philosophy has its own assumption as its beginning, this assumption should be the ultimate assumption; otherwise, it could be further asked what is the ground of this or that assumption, etc. If there is an ultimate assumption, can we expect the ultimate assumption to be from philosophy?

When Hegel tried to begin philosophy with being without any determination, I think he was trying to find the ultimate assumption from philosophy. Hegel was right when he argued that any determination is a limitation, which makes being unfit to be universal being. Universal being means that it covers all particular beings without any exception, and excludes other beings. Did Hegel find the ultimate assumption when he said philosophy begins with universal being without any determination?

²⁸ *The Doctrine of the Mean*: “是故君子戒慎乎其所不睹，恐惧乎其所不闻。莫见乎隐，莫显乎微，是故君子慎独。”

Superficially, philosophy gets its ultimate assumption in Hegel. But as we go deeper, we find that Hegel's assumption is not enough, for he presupposed knowing as the beginning of philosophy, that is, a being without any determination, i.e., the object of knowing, and the intuition without any thing intuited, i.e., the subject of knowing. Thus, Hegel defined philosophy as the doctrine of universal knowledge of the world.

Not until modern times, when Dilthey put humanities as an important branch of philosophy vis a vis traditional philosophy, which considered universal knowledge of the world as its core, did traditional Western philosophy show its shortcomings. This is also one of the main causes of the crisis of traditional philosophy. However, can we find the final assumption for philosophy? We may try. When Hegel sublated all determinations to reach pure being, he reduced knowing to pure intuition, which is one form of consciousness. But consciousness does not exhaust itself in knowing; rather in it, there is also consciousness of ethics, aesthetics, sentiment, etc. If by pure intuition Hegel tried to reach to pure knowing, a kind of consciousness, why do we not reduce all kinds of consciousness to pure consciousness that has no content whatsoever if we see it as the object of consciousness? Pure consciousness is pure light in which everything gets illuminated, but pure light itself cannot be seen. What is shown by light is not pure light itself.

Do we have such pure consciousness in Chinese philosophy? Yes. In Confucianism, it is called "illustrious virtue."²⁹ The human being has "the illustrious" as his/her virtue. Because of this virtue, the human being can know not only the world as where one dwells, but also one's own status and the relationship between oneself and the environment.

This pure light, or illumination, is the largest nothingness, for it is reached by reducing any possible content of consciousness, including knowing. This way of reaching nothingness is different from that of Hegel which is deduced only from the content of knowing but leaves other possible contents of consciousness, such as aesthetics, ethics, etc.

It might be difficult for us to list all kinds of consciousness and all the corresponding contents. However, it is easier to reduce a specific kind of consciousness to pure consciousness, which could be a key step to reaching nothingness. If it goes to pure consciousness, there will be nothing left, whether it be the state of mind, the psychological object, or the object of knowing. Even one could not say "I" at this moment, whereas everything will be revealed on the ground of this largest nothingness. Such nothingness is the ground of philosophy.

²⁹ 《大学》“大学之道，在明明德。”

The Ground of Philosophy and the Human Being

This paper began with the issue of the human being, but gradually led us to the different views about the human being and then to the ground of philosophy. Here the question is, why are there different types of philosophy that lead to different views about the human being?

As demonstrated above, philosophy takes nothingness as its ground. Here, nothingness is not an absolute nothingness but the largest nothingness. An absolute nothingness is an abyss; the largest nothingness is just the opposite. In the largest nothingness, there are two elements: consciousness and the object of consciousness, which have a unique unity. On the one hand, consciousness dwells in its object; on the other hand, its objects depend on consciousness. There are three ways of reflection, 1. to reflect on consciousness; 2. to reflect on the object; 3. to reflect on the whole structure of their relationship, that is, to reflect on both consciousness and its object. Roughly speaking, Buddhist philosophy represents the first type of philosophy; Western philosophy, the second; and traditional Chinese philosophy, the third.

Western philosophy begins with the search for the truth of the world, which divides the world into two parts: a sensible and an essential. The essential world is formulated by categories, which puts consciousness into conceptual thinking. Since the essential world is superior to the sensible world, conceptual thinking is superior to sensation. The ability of conceptual thinking is called reason or rationality, which is the essence of the human being. Essence is something innate and unchangeable. It determines the nature of things. Hence, the essence of human beings determines their nature. To be a human being is to display one's essence. In this sense, learning to be a human being is not a serious problem for a human being.

For traditional Chinese philosophy, the philosophical reflection is on the entire structure and holds that everything reveals itself in the process of this structure. This means that everything is illuminated with the illustrious virtue which indicates the human being. Since we do not know beforehand what kinds of things, useful or harmful, will come out, we should be cautious and even apprehensive in waiting for incipency. Our own status and condition are co-determined by the thing or event we face. Adjusting ourselves to the thing or event is a process of learning to be human. This is also called following the Dao. During the process, what we first need to learn is to illustrate the illustrious virtue; as said in *The Great Learning*, "What the Great Learning teaches, is to illustrate the illustrious virtue."³⁰

³⁰ Ibid.

Here I do not want to comment on which view concerning the human being, namely Chinese philosophy or Western philosophy, is more advantageous, but to show their different philosophical grounds. As the ground of all sciences and doctrines, philosophy has its own ground in nothingness, not an absolute nothingness, but the largest nothingness. Compared to traditional Chinese philosophy, what traditional Western philosophy holds as its ground, nothingness, is not larger enough, for it preserves the consciousness of knowing and the object of knowing without sublation. Although all kinds of illumination in consciousness are knowing, what consciousness reveals is not limited to just knowing the object, but also revealing self-consciousness, such as sentiment, state of mind, etc. When traditional Western philosophy, as Hegel's, only looks into the essence of things, it narrowly limits knowing to conceptual thinking. Hence, philosophy loses its status as the ground of all sciences and doctrines. If philosophy still wants to be the ground of all sciences and doctrines, it has to go deeper into its own ground, the largest nothingness.

I think philosophy should be the ground of all sciences and doctrines. This is not only the task of philosophy but the destiny of the human being. I have seen the dawn of this destiny in Heidegger's philosophy.

Self-Awareness in Traditional Chinese Medicine

ZOU SHIPENG*

Cultural self-awareness is a result of cultural openness. Cultural traditions, as well as any culture that has the condition to open itself yet remains self-centered, have less to say about cultural awareness. Cultural awareness begins with the shock and stimulation of stronger foreign cultural traditions, for the latter urge the indigenous culture to look into the problematization of the value of its own. In reaction to such a *crisis*, the indigenous culture splits into cultural subjectivity and self-awareness of the nation. An actual cultural awareness can be realized through the improvement of the overall national strength, and transformed into a cultural renaissance at the practical level.

The themes of civilization are different in different eras, and the value orientation of cultural consciousness is also different. Generally speaking, the value orientation of ancient society is derived from natural phenomena, the symbol of civilization is the totem; the value orientation of the Middle Ages is the transcendent (i.e., supernatural God), the symbol of civilization is religion; the value orientation of modern society is science, the symbol of civilization is technology and industry, which have thus formed the basic pattern of modernity and constituted the context of contemporary cultural awareness. In this light, cultural self-awareness is the result of continuous accumulation, reflection, and reconstruction of cultural and value systems.

* Fudan University, Shanghai, P. R. China. – The paper is dedicated to Shen Qingsong, a rare example of a truly contemporary Chinese and Western scholar who developed many considerations regarding the fate of Chinese culture. The translation from Chinese into English was done with the assistance of Zhang Mila.

It is worth noting that with the reflection on science, technology, and industry, a post-industrial or postmodern cultural model is taking shape. The cultural significance of this model is that science and technology are no longer regarded as the only criteria for measuring the existence of a cultural tradition. Multicultural traditions and values need to be considered at a new level and recognized as the composition of modernity. At the same time, the rethinking and critique of modernity with technology as a tool constitutes the theme of philosophy and culture in the modern era.

Any cultural tradition needs to be culturally conscious and embodied in the modern transformation in order to become a positive element in modernity. Cultural self-awareness aims at creating a cultural ecology that embraces diversity. Any cultural tradition that stands today has its own value. On the one hand, for the cultural tradition that has undergone or is undergoing modernization and modern transformation, its modern qualifications obviously need to be examined by cultural self-awareness. On the other hand, those cultural traditions that have not yet been self-criticized in the process of modernization, including modern Western cultures that see themselves as the very standard of modernity, need to be culturally critiqued. The critique of Western centralism is the inner requirement of cultural self-awareness in the globalization era.

Chinese cultural traditions are not closed throughout history and have for a long time been in a strong position to communicate with different cultures. Compared with the eighteenth century European Enlightenment, the cultural tradition of the Chinese Empire is worthy of admiration. In a certain sense, the Chinese cultural tradition characterized as “premature maturity” by Liang Shuming has continuously delayed its own self-awareness. Therefore, faced with the strong impact of Western cultures, the problematization or the sense of crisis and radicalization of Chinese cultural traditions has been unprecedentedly severe. The self-disintegration of cultural traditions has led to more pains and variables. However, the cultural situation in contemporary China has changed greatly. Especially since the Reform and Opening in the 1980s, there have been unprecedented improvements in overall national strength, including the soft power of Chinese culture. The Chinese have gone through the digestion, reflection, and criticism of the Western technology-led model, strengthened the ethnic consciousness and identification of Chinese culture, overcome the passive stimulus-response model of the traditional modernization process, and actively participated in the reconstruction of global modernity culture. By means of all these, Chinese cultural traditions are realizing their cultural self-awareness in the global era.

Scientification of Traditional Chinese Medicine

The realization of the cultural self-awareness of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) implies a break with the so-called scientific paradigm. The modernization of TCM has always been based on scientification, but it is difficult to justify the theory that TCM is science. In the TCM circle, it has been considered an empirical science. This appears as a matter of expediency as there is a qualitative difference between empirical science and science in the proper sense of the word. Science has a strict boundary. First, it is based not only on experience but more so on experimentation. The difference between experience and experiment is that the former is perceived rather than expressed, while the latter should be accurately described as artificial and idealistic. Second, science is a system of knowledge and logic whose conceptual categories are substantive rather than autocorrelated and self-explanatory. Third, science is based on hypotheses and relies on certain theoretical paradigms. It can be falsified and evolved by overthrowing hypotheses and by paradigm revolutions. Based on the above three points, regarding TCM as a science due to the fact that it is based on experience is thus invalid. The experience in the TCM often has the same meaning as perceived by intuition and, thus, is indescribable. There is no ultimate substantive terminology in TCM theory, nor is there any set of conceptual deduction and theoretical structure that implements formal logic. TCM does have a structure of highly related natural-human relationships, but this set of structures does not rely on verification or falsification methods. Therefore, not only is the theory of empirical science itself invalid but treating TCM as science is also problematic.

There is no denial of the scientific nature of TCM. Any ready-made experience has its scientific aspect. What is meant here is that we cannot treat TCM directly as science because of experience. People who advocate TCM as a science have their realistic considerations. If TCM cannot be scientific, then its existence in modern times is suspicious and can, therefore, be abolished. Furthermore, if we cannot prove TCM is scientific, then it will be seen as fake science, pseudoscience, or even anti-science. In fact, for more than a hundred years, all those who have advocated the abolishment of TCM are basically under the banner that TCM is not science, which in turn has increased the demand for justifying TCM as science.

The crucial question is not to argue whether TCM is science, but that the scientific context of modernization of TCM itself is worthy of reconsideration and self-examination. As mentioned above, modernity regards science as the dominant or even the whole value in determining the legality of all

cultural values. Modernity is undoubtedly supported by science and technology. However, when modernity develops to a certain extent, its problems are also exposed. Therefore, reflection on science and technology has become the theme of contemporary culture. Outstanding thinkers such as Heidegger, Habermas, and Foucault criticize science, technology, and modernity from different aspects. At the same time, contemporary thought is moving toward more cultural diversity and new forms of communication. Accordingly, although TCM is not science, it does not mean that it cannot exist in modern society. Its existence depends fundamentally on the Chinese cultural tradition, which is the foundation of TCM. It is the comprehensive rejuvenation of Chinese cultural traditions that determines the future existence and development of TCM.

Problems with the Western Medical Paradigm

In the dialogue between Chinese and Western medicine, people are accustomed to criticizing and denying TCM from the angle of Western medicine. In fact, the Western medical science paradigm and its modernity are equally worthy of reconsideration. Since the modern medical world is still dominated by Western centralism, the critique of Western medicine should be properly understood as the premise of TCM self-awareness.

Western medicine also has its ancient experience and cultural foundation. The science it complies with has roots in ancient Greek philosophy. In modern times, especially with the formation of physiology, anatomy, pathology, chemistry, biology, surgery, etc., the development of Western medicine has entered the era of standardized technology; thus, its problems have emerged.

The first is substantiation. The substantial features of Western medicine are becoming more obvious; for instance, organs, tissues, cells, and even viruses are all entities with clear boundaries. This brings great convenience to pathological description, diagnosis, and treatment, but also problems. In general, Western medicine's understanding of the body does not exceed atomic and mechanistic biomedical models, and thus cannot grasp the complex connection of the body to the life world. First, too much attention to the entity would lead to the separation of the organic connection between the entity and the entire body organization. For example, once the liver is diagnosed with a disease, the relationship between other organs and the disease is often ignored, or at most it is considered a complication. If the organ does not belong to the same system, it will be regarded as irrelevant. Therefore, during treatment, it is difficult to avoid toxic side effects even with

the right antidote. The entire human body is not so easy to be substantialized. People often encounter a situation such as when a person's feeling clearly shows something abnormal; still the doctor cannot diagnose him/her with any disease because none of the body parts seems wrong. That is why Western medicine repels functional diseases. Why must a lesion be substantialized to a certain physical part? Another problem for Western medicine is that the relationship between physical organs is not easily grasped. Western medicine theory seems to express the relationship between the organs only with a set of functional systems, and thus ignores the relationship between the organ and the system. In fact, a physical organ and its symptoms have a mutual impact, which is not recognized by Western medicine.

The second is the trend of technicalization and the materialization of the relationship between physician and patient. The technical trend of Western medicine has become more dominant. The benefits of technicalization are that they are quantifiable, operational, and more accurate, from diagnosis to treatment and conditioning. The problem is that technicalization makes doctors see patients as animals who have problems only in an organ, or even a machine in which a part fails. In this case, the integrity of the patient's personality usually ceases to exist from the technical diagnosis and treatment process. Technicalization also makes the materialization trend of a doctor-patient relationship more problematic as the doctor's objective professional attitude often seems to have nothing to do with humanity and compassion. Both doctor and patient are over-reliant on technology. As a result, they are no longer directly facing each other but dealing with various machines. They are becoming a part of a huge machine system. The relationship between doctors and patients is not a relationship between people but objects. Technicalization has further consolidated the traditional biomedical model.

The third is a highly refined sub-discipline system and its bureaucratic tendencies. It can be seen as the result of the institutionalization and technicalization of Western medicine. First, the division of disciplines is becoming more detailed and complicated. The more advanced the hospital is, the more sub-divisions it has, which brings too much trouble for patients. The current major hospital sub-discipline is so detailed that, to be honest, people like me who have some medical knowledge are often confused. I sometimes think that, in today's high-level hospitals, if a patient does not rely on a guide, he/she would not know what to do there. There are often cases in which a patient fails to receive the proper treatment in a timely fashion due to the confusion of different disciplines. Physicians should be responsible for such mistakes. Another problem is the differentiation of treatment and prevention. The distinction between the two is indeed essential in Western medicine and

modern medical systems. However, the problem of this distinction has become more prominent. It is this distinction that makes the social system emphasize treatment and neglect prevention. A large number of people with physical and mental discomfort that has not become a disease are not protected in time. Meanwhile, more people are rushing into hospitals, especially large hospitals. Patients who are seriously ill also increase the pressure on hospital systems. Third, the organization of the hospital system and the tendency of bureaucratization are getting intense. The more hospitals are divided, the more complicated the department structure is, and the more bureaucratic the medical system tends to become. The result is that the administrative costs are getting heavier and larger, and the organizational complexity unique to the hospital as an expert system is getting higher. The problem of bureaucratic systems in hospitals is certainly not among today's topics, but these phenomena are themselves the result of increasingly technical organization.

Western medicine has brought enormous benefits to humankind since it became a dominant medical system. We have to admit that it is pure ignorance to deny the importance of Western medicine as to deny science altogether. We criticize Western medicine in the hope of reforming medical concepts, systems, and regulations. The goal of modern medical systems is to play better the role of saving lives. Accepting TCM culture with a positive attitude can help to achieve this goal, which is also the direction of the current reform and development of the medical and health care industry.

Practical Significance and Humanistic Nature of TCM

Faced with the above-mentioned problems of the Western medical science paradigm and the general trend of Chinese cultural rejuvenation, TCM presents its unique advantages in the process of constructing a social medical structure that can hold the diversity of human life as well as correspond to the construction of contemporary society.

Compared with the inherent substantiation, technicalization, and bureaucratization shown in Western medicine, the characteristics of TCM are precisely non-substantial, emphasizing life as a whole, both physical and mental life. It is a kind of humanist communication that is based on relatively simple and effective mutual trust as well as convenient and affordable medicines. The "dialectic" in TCM is based on the thinking of *Zang Xiang*.¹ Heart, liver,

¹ Zang Xiang is known as the visceral manifestation. According to the explanation in some Chinese medical classics, "Zang" refers to interior organs which are stored inside the human body. "Xiang" has three levels of explanation: (1) Real *zang*

spleen, lung, and kidney all refer to this kind of *Zang Xiang*. Although *Zang Xiang* does not have the exact same meaning as *organ*, it contains its basic meaning and shows the relationship among organs and between organs and the entire body, and the life of a person and the world. The non-substantial tendency of traditional Chinese medicine may not lead to a concrete diagnosis, which gives the impression that it is not accurate. This judgment is based on Western medicine. What is significant is that TCM pays attention to the coordinate relationship between parts and whole of a living organic body from the perspective of existentialism. It focuses on a more consolidating and sustained efficacy while valuing the preventive treatment of disease, health preservation, and the function of cultural and psychological adjustment and communication of the social community. TCM practices will not immerse themselves in complex technology, machinery, and organizational systems. As an old Chinese saying goes, “Things are supposed to be at people’s service but not the other way around” or people “should be good at making use of objects.” Although it is now very common to see both tongue diagnosis and pulse diagnosis as a systematic science, the individual experience of each TCM doctor cannot be completely technicalized. The experience emphasized by TCM is rather the cultivation and spiritual training emphasized by Chinese literati, which is more than philosophy and art. In TCM, the theory of medicine is essentially connected with ethics. “The great attribute of heaven and earth is to give and maintain life”; “A great physician should keep absolute sincerity”; similarly, a good prime minister, just like a doctor, can help save the world. These ideas are always the core of TCM. Hence, TCM never makes the medical system tedious and complicated. Its integrity is essentially opposed to the refined sub-discipline system, and its civilian position rejects bureaucratization, abuse of resources, and drugs. The relationship between TCM doctors and patients is not so much a professional doctor-patient relationship, but rather an ethical symbiosis relationship. This relationship is precisely the aim of the current reformation, which is burdened by a substantial and materialized doctor-patient relationship as well as an unbearable social and medical structure. For Chinese society, TCM bears the mission to help with the transformation from a biomedical medicine model to a social medicine model.

organs: such as skin, muscle, and bones; (2) physiological functions of the human body revealed by *zang*, *fu*-organs, meridians, *qi*, blood, essence: named breath, vessel pulse, and changes of expressions; (3) natural phenomena interconnected to human organs functions of essence, *qi* and blood, for instance, sun, moon, four seasons, and climate changing. Cf. <https://tcmwiki.com/wiki/zang-xiang-theory>.

The distinction between TCM and Western medicine is based not only on the theoretical and the technical, but also on philosophy and culture, especially the distinction between Chinese and Western philosophy and cultural traditions. In this sense, the interpretation of TCM theory does not have to resort to Western medical science nor to modern sciences such as system theory, synergy, and complex science. If the study of TCM only followed the line of Western medicine, then it would be far-fetched to understand TCM from Western medicine and its scientific paradigm. I think that Chinese medicine should belong to the humanities. Indeed, it should be subordinated to Chinese classical studies, for Chinese classical studies contain not only literature, history, and philosophy but also Chinese nationalities and folk culture traditions, and art. Hence, they should include TCM as well.

It is necessary to follow the Chinese cultural tradition to talk about TCM since TCM is essentially based on the understanding of Chinese philosophical and humanistic traditions. I am convinced that the introduction of Chinese philosophy into TCM can not only better grasp the theoretical essence of TCM, but also help understand the practical wisdom of Chinese cultural traditions. For example, the Chinese *Yin Yang Wu Xing* theory elaborated in the Canon of Internal Medicine is based on the cosmological thoughts of *Zhou Yi (The Book of Changes)* and the pre-Qin Laozi and other scholars. It introduces cosmology into the body system and reflects the Confucian concept of “the integrity of man and nature.” In the past years, some people advocated abolishing the *Yin Yang Wu Xing* theory for putting TCM directly in the theory of visceral relationship. This idea may be more in line with the medical profession, but it separates the basic theory of TCM from the principle of Chinese philosophical tradition. Another example is that people often quote a saying from *Synopsis of Prescription of the Golden Chamber*, “a disease appears in liver but we know that it is transmitted from spleen, so the actual disease happened on spleen.” This explains the corresponding treatment method based on the relationship between liver and spleen. The relationship between cosmological principles and medical practice is not one-to-one. The multiple complexities of the relationships in the *Yin Yang Wu Xing* theory do not conflict with the patterns in *Zang Xiang*. However, although people discover new diseases and symptoms based on the complex relationship between these two theories, they have not revealed the meaning of these theories since the world of disease and symptomatology was discovered. Understanding TCM dialectics should not be confined to its simple version, for TCM dialectics correlates with Chinese people’s life wisdom. This wisdom is a high-level practical wisdom, which cannot be fully covered by simple dialectics in textbooks. Other aspects, such as emotions, health

preservation, and preventive treatment of disease, are also deeply marked by the spirit of Chinese philosophy and deserve to be better understood and explored.

Although there are distinctions between Chinese and Western medicine in terms of philosophical and cultural nature, it is unnecessary to separate TCM from modern medicine. However, in order to establish the basis of the existence of TCM culture, it is important to clarify the distinction between Chinese and Western medicine. The self-awareness process of a cultural tradition is realized through its comparison with different cultural traditions. The philosophical and cultural foundations of Chinese medicine are as old as the dialogue between Chinese and Western medicine. The understanding of Western medicine and its philosophical culture, including the study of Western medicine, constitutes the premise of self-identification of TCM culture. Rejecting Western medicine is certainly not a prerequisite for the self-consciousness of Chinese medicine culture. The comparative dialogue with Western medicine shows not only the defects of TCM in modern times but also its superiority. If the cultural pattern of the global era is necessarily the communication and dialogue of different cultural traditions, the health care system of the global era, therefore, must be the dialogue and complementarity of different medical culture systems. The establishment of the contemporary Chinese medical care system must be the joint effort of both Chinese and Western medical systems.

Chinese Landscape (*Shanshui* 山水) and the Sacred

YOLAINE ESCANDE*

In China, landscape is first and foremost meant to be mountains and rivers, not in the sense of a merely geographical or physical entity, but as a cosmologic whole. Landscape hosts and produces mountains (*shan* 山) and waters (*shui* 水) which embody opposite and complementary entities in perpetual interaction: *yang* – verticality, light, force, hardness, and *yin* – horizontality, shade, softness, suppleness.

In his paper “Generosity Toward Multiple Others,” Vincent Shen explains how, in the Taoist tradition,¹ billions of things are produced by “Tao’s generosity going outside of the self, whilst beauty concerns the ontological re-union of Heaven and Earth returning to Tao.”² Here, beauty concerns landscape. This paper aims to show that, when perceived as such, landscape is an expression of Tao’s generosity, but at the same time, the sacredness of mountains and waters does not always imply their “beauty” as understood by Shen.

In today’s Chinese language, a great number of expressions refer to landscape, among which the most well-known is precisely “mountains and waters” (*shanshui*). It not only means literary and pictorial landscape, but also identifies the Chinese “*shanshui* culture” (*shanshui wenhua*), which encapsulates all activities related to landscape, such as rides in mountains, enjoying

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¹ Vincent Shen, “La générosité envers les multiples autres: Création et beauté dans la pensée taoïste,” in *Frontières de l’art, frontières de l’esthétique* eds. Yolaine Escande and Johanna Liu (Paris: Youfeng, 2008), 155-182.

² Ibid., 155, “la production des milliards de choses dans la séparation effectuée par la générosité du Dao qui va en dehors du soi, tandis que la beauté concerne la ré-union ontologique avec le Ciel et la Terre en retournant vers le Dao.”

the plum blossoming in the heart of winter, pilgrimages to famous sites, all sorts of cultural activities in nature, and even tourism.³

If the sacred is understood as opposed to the profane, then it is not possible to speak of the sacred in Chinese culture and tradition. However, if the sacred is understood as surpassing the human dimension of relationship to the invisible forces, the divinities and spirits, then, undoubtedly, the sacred can be found everywhere in China, in terms of religious practices and ancestral beliefs, which have been existing until today, under certain forms, in both popular and official religions.

The Chinese language does have a term expressing the *sacred* (*sheng* 聖), sometimes translated as *saint*. However, *sheng* is not the term to qualify the “five sacred mountains” (*wuyue* 五嶽, literally “five high peaks”). In China, landscape is not the place of an “incarnation” in the Christian sense. The sacred naming derives from the fact these “five sacred mountains” were honored by imperial cult and elicited great religious activities. In this light, the Chinese landscape can be considered a sacred space, not in the sense of a possible desecration, but of interactions with visible and invisible forces that surpass human beings.

The “five sacred mountains” became purely aestheticized *landscapes* only recently, after the opening of China to tourism, at the end of the 1970s. It seems that sacrality and landscape could not coexist. The modern expression of “sacred mountain” (*shengshan* 聖山) refers a priori to sacred mountains of the European tradition, and not to those in the Chinese territory.

Mythology and Sacrality

The veneration of mountains in China can probably be traced back to mythology. Following sources dating to the Warring States (fifth century BC) and the Han (second century BC) periods, the mountains were perceived as pillars separating, or connecting, heaven and earth. The Chinese cosmology viewed them a terrestrial realm shrouded by the celestial one so that heaven might fall onto earth if not properly sustained. It is the mountains that were in charge of this task.

In a famous myth, the goddess Nuwa “repaired the heaven” after one of the pillars was smashed by Gongong when he was fighting against Zhurong or Zhuanxu. The celestial river is then said to have spilled over onto

³ See Duan Baolin and Jiang Rong, eds., *Great Introduction to Shanshui Culture in China* (*Zhongguo shanshui wenhua daguan*) (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1995).

earth, causing flood, fire, and ferocious beasts' attacks.⁴ Nuwa had to repair the breach, but was unable to restore the previous parallelism of heaven and earth, and this is meant to explain the stars drifting to the North-West and the rivers flowing to the South-East. Due to this incident, Nuwa had to reposition heaven on the feet of a tortoise in lieu of the pillars standing at the four directions,⁵ which are the four pillars allowing the world to recover a peaceful and harmonious life. Later they were likened to the primitive sacred mountains.

Another reason for the sacrality of mountains or at least for the sanctification of certain specific mountains is the presence therein of prominent figures who practice religious Taoism, mysticism or look for immortality, which may enable people to live hundreds of years. The mountains in which they are supposed to reside are seen as access points to the celestial realm.

The five sacred mountains, effectively and physically present in the Chinese territory, along with the legendary Kunlun Mountain, are perceived as habitats of the immortals and directly connected with heaven. The Kunlun is considered the axis of heaven presiding over the five cardinal points, i.e., the four directions and the center. These mountains are thus privileged places of dwelling. The Kunlun, the Chinese equivalent to Mount Sumeru, the root of heaven and earth, shelters the Queen Mother of the West, who cultivates peaches for immortality. She is said to have appeared to several emperors and to have taught them the art of longevity. She is honored as a divine matriarch by all sections of society. Taoist temples were built up on the slopes of the sacred mountains to honor the immortals.

Mountains are also considered the result of crystallization of breath (*qi*), because of their particular telluric force from heaven. The Chinese assign mountains the ability to foster medicinal plants and mushrooms used to produce elixirs of immortality, as well as ideal places for meditation and spiritual retreats. The myth takes the shape of rituals occurring in mountains and religious buildings.

The mountain is sacred not only because of plants or other resources but because of its inner liquid torrent, as a "celestial grotto" (*dongtian* 洞天) as if it were a passage to heaven.⁶ The five mountains are sacred because of

⁴ *Book of the Prince of Huainan (Huainanzi)*, chap. 6, "Observe the Obscure" (Lanming), §13.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Franciscus Verellen, "The Beyond Within: Grotto-Heavens (*dongtian*) in Taoist Ritual and Cosmology," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8 (1995): 267. (*Mémorial Anna Seidel, Religions traditionnelles d'Asie orientale, Tome I*, 265-290.)

their relatedness to the *dongtian*,⁷ similar to many other Chinese mountains.

The mountain that shelters the water, not sea water but only freshwater, is the source of fertility, for it “gives birth to the ten thousand things.” According to the Chinese first etymological dictionary:

Mountain: ‘Proclamation’. Proclamation [of the divinities] regarding the dispersion of the breath [of the clouds providing the nurturing rain], which gives birth to the ten thousand things.⁸

In this sense, mountains and waters express their generosity exactly as Tao, by giving birth to ten thousand things or “multiple others,” in Shen’s words. This, of course, gives them a kind of sacrality.



Fig. 1 The stele of the *Map of the Five Peaks’ True Form* (*Wuyue zhenxing tu*), supposed to protect travelers like talisman, and well-known since the beginning of our era. This is a recent reproduction (182 × 100 cm) in the temple of Mount Song (the sacred peak of the Center) in the Dengfeng district, Henan province.

⁷ See the examples given by Franciscus Verellen, 269; Edouard Chavannes, *Le T’ai Chan: Essai de monographie d’un culte chinois* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), 415-424.

⁸ Xu Shen (30-124), “Explaining Simple and Analyzing Compound Characters,” in *Shuowen jiezi*, 100 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1963), 190. 宣也。宣气散，生萬物。 My translation.

The other reason for the sacrality of the five mountains is related to both geographical and worshiping functions. As the pillars of the geographical and physical space, these mountains indicate the limits of the territory to the four cardinal points. As divinities of the five directions: North, South, East, West, and Center, they guard the empire's territorial space (Fig. 1). As tutelary divinities of the five directions, they mark, "fix" (*zhen* 鎮), protect and control the sacred space.

The Five Sacred Mountains

The five sacred mountains were identified several centuries before the unification of China by the First Emperor in 221 BC. The *Book of Documents*, dating to the fifth century BC, mentions that the mythical and civilizing sovereign Shun (allegedly from 2255 to 2206 BC) would have made an inspection tour of the four mountains to define his territory and offered a sacrifice to each of the divinities of these mountains.⁹ This ritual enabled the emperor to be recognized by heaven to receive the "celestial mandate" (*tianming*) for a legitimate and harmonious reign. Here is the definition of *yue*, "sacred mountain," in the same etymological dictionary:

"*Yue* 嶽: to the East, [Mount] Tai [Taishan]; to the South, the Huo; to the West, the Hua; to the North, the Heng; in the center, the Taishi, a place where sovereigns go to perform their inspection tour. In terms of 'mountain' 山, *yue* 嶽 is phonetic. In the ancient writing, *Yue* 岳 has the highest appearance, as if [it bore] five horns."¹⁰

The comment in Xu Shen's (30-124) etymological dictionary for the entry "high mountain" (*yue*), commonly translated as the "sacred peak," by Duan Yucai (1735-1815) in the Qing Dynasty, is interesting because it reveals that the same mountain could bear several names and that the understanding of sacred mountains has evolved through history. The geographical displacement of two of the sacred mountains in Chinese history indicates the evolution of the Chinese territory and its expansion to the South and North-West. These displacements and all the related official rituals are inscribed either on steles, like on Taishan, or on cliffs and rocks.

⁹ See the *Book of Documents*, chap. 2, "Norms of Shun" (Shundian).

¹⁰ Xu Shen, *Shuowen Jiezi*, 190. 東, 岱; 南, 霍; 西, 華; 北, 恆; 中, 泰室. 王者之所以巡狩所至. 从山嶽聲. 五角切岳古文象高形. My translation.

The political and religious meanings of these mountains, as symbolical and territorial landmarks, are undeniable, evidencing their sacrality.¹¹ Although the “five sacred peaks” are not amongst the highest mountains in China,¹² each of them visibly rises above a plain, which makes them remarkable.

The tradition of climbing up the sacred mountains to honor them, either to acquire merits in the Buddhist sense or approach immortality in the Taoist sense, has perpetuated until today through what the Chinese call “pilgrimage,” *chaoshan jingxiang*, which literally means “facing the mountain, presenting incense respectfully.” This implies that one walks up to the mountain and presents one’s respects as one would do before the sovereign. Incense burning refers to communication with the divinities.

Today, like in the imperial time, the official sacred does not first originate from recognized, institutionalised, popular practices but from decisions made by the highest authorities of the state. That is why they are written and carved on stones. Joël Thoraval and Sébastien Billioud recall in *The Sage and the People* that, since 2006, several “state cults” have been established and named “sacrificial rites.”¹³ Like in the past, these ceremonies bear a political and religious meaning; today, they also have economic and touristic objectives. For instance, at the foot of Mount Tai, the most well-known and visited sacred mountain, in the Tiankuang Hall (the Palace of Celestial Wishes) of the Tai Temple (the ancient toponym of Mount Tai) in the town

¹¹ There are several remarkable studies on the religious aspect of the Chinese sacred peaks, such as Edouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai chan: Essai de monographie d'un culte chinois* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910); James Robson, “The Polymorphous Space of the Southern Marchmount [Nanyue]. An Introduction to Nanyue’s Religious History and Preliminary Notes on Buddhist-Taoist Interactions,” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 8 (1995): 221-264. On Taoism and the sacred mountains, see Vincent Goossaert, “Hengshan,” “Huashan,” “Songshan,” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London: Routledge, 2008), 481-482, 516-517, 917-918.

¹² The Taishan is 1545 m high, Mount Hua, 2155 m high, Mount Song, 1512 m, Mount Heng in Shanxi 2016 m, and in Hunan, 1300 m.

¹³ Sébastien Billioud and Joël Thoraval, *The Sage and the People: The Confucian Revival in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). [*Le Sage et le peuple. Le renouveau confucéen en Chine* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2014), 254-256]; see also Geremie R. Barmé and Sang Ye, “Research Notes: National Commemorative Ceremonies,” *China Heritage Quarterly* 20 (Dec. 2009), http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/scholarship.php?searchterm=020_intro_national_ceremonies.inc&issue=020.

of Tai'an, ritual ceremonies are practiced yearly for worshiping the divinity of Mount Tai. These ceremonies are similar to the ones the Qing emperors presided over centuries ago.

However, these mountains now serve two purposes: folklore for tourists, mainly Chinese, and they accredit the Chinese spatial and temporal identity. Access to the summit of most mountains is now facilitated by means of cable cars, and shops are to be found along the paths.

In the past, the pilgrimage consisted in climbing thousands of stairs leading to the "heaven's gate," and in offering incense at altars and temples, to pray the divinities, to obtain merits, to beg for prosperity and long life for oneself and those close to one, or simply to keep misfortunes at bay.¹⁴ The enjoyment of the natural landscape was secondary to the efforts of the pilgrimage. Today, the reverse is true, even if the religious pursuit has endured.

The Sacred and the Landscape

According to Marcel Granet, the sacrality of mountains, in general, is given by the seasonal feasts practiced in certain places.¹⁵ Granet considers that the ancient seigniorial cult of mountains and rivers upholds seasonal harmony through seasonal feasts based on the power of mountains and rivers. These seasonal feasts do not take place on the top of mountains or along the bank of rivers, but in a land conjoining both mountains and rivers with remarkable forests. These feasts mark the regular course of the seasons, as well as good relationships with the natural forces.

A great number of Taoist temples and Buddhist monasteries were erected on the slopes of Chinese mountains, on sites offering exceptional landscapes, sometimes precisely because of their quality.

Today, a good relationship with the natural forces is notably expressed with the opening of protected ecological zones for the sake of cultural, worship, or religious practices and for touristic expansion. The underlying reason is an ideological and political appropriation of a territory that until then was considered unreachable or hard to control. These zones, situated in the mountains, are today qualified as "sacred" (*sheng*) in the modern

¹⁴ See Susan Naquin and Yü Chün-Fang, *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Marcel Granet, *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* (1919) (Paris: Albin Michel, 1982), 130, 192-193, 199.

(Western) sense;¹⁶ sacrality is, in this case, exploited by politics and arises from actual local practices.

During the 1990s, a study of the five sacred mountains by the China Taoist Association (*Zhongguo daojiao xiehui*), with the help of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) – a British foundation linked to NATO's ecologic development program, showed that the environment was particularly well protected for biodiversity in the zones around Taoist monks' dwellings.¹⁷

This can be explained probably because Taoist philosophy, especially in the *Classic of the Great Peace (Taiping jing)*, advocates values that are not founded on material goods but on the diversity of nature.¹⁸ As the Taoist declaration on ecology asserts:

For a country, real prosperity means to ensure that ten thousand things are all equal and complete. If half of living beings in nature suffer, it is then the beginning of decline of the state.¹⁹

對一個國家來說,能使萬物齊備,才是真正的富國;如果自然界萬物中有一半受到傷害,就是國運衰敗之兆。

Although the Taoist philosophy of Laozi and Zhuangzi does promote an “absence of action” (*wuwei*) in politics and “taking nature as a model”²⁰ without acting on nature in concrete activities, the Chinese have largely contributed to damaging nature. The Confucian philosopher Mencius (ca. 380-289 BC) lamented the systematic deforestation of mountains by his contemporaries.²¹ The northern part of China that used to be covered with woods became, since Mencius's time, quite arid. In fact, the only forested

¹⁶ This is the recent use of a vocabulary translated from English into Chinese. See for instance He Xiaoxin, “Qinling Sacred Mountain Ecology Project: Creating the Taibaishan Tiejia Ecological Taoist Temple and Ecological Training Center,” *Zhongguo Qingling shengshan shengtai huanjing baohu xiangmu: Chuangjian Qinling Taibaishan Tiejia shengtai daoguan*, *Alliance of Religions and Conservation* (2006): 3-7, <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Xiaoxin2.pdf>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* The *Taiping jing* refers to texts that are collected in the Taoist Canon (*Daozang*), considered as an excellent source on the primitive Taoist beliefs and religion, and on the end of Eastern Han society.

¹⁹ He Xiaoxin, “Qinling Sacred Mountain Ecology Project: Creating the Taibaishan Tiejia Ecological Taoist Temple and Ecological Training Center,” 1.

²⁰ *Laozi*, chap. 25.

²¹ *Mencius*, VI.A.8.

places are situated around Taoist temples that preserve biodiversity in contrast with places further away.²² Taoist monks' living style in temples may explain this specificity, because their everyday life is founded on the philosophical texts of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, especially on the around four points. The first point is the belief that "Heaven and Earth [having] been produced together with me; the ten thousand things and me are only one" (「天地與我並生,萬物與我為一」齊物論);²³ this means that harming nature equates to harming oneself. The second point is related to not seeking to compete with the world, which is a prerequisite to becoming a "real human" (*zhenren*), an accomplished human being, in harmony and united with oneself and with the world. The third point consists in protecting life, which is tantamount to protecting oneself. The fourth point revolves around the necessity of "nurturing life in oneself" 養生²⁴ in order to reach immortality.²⁵ These four points also correspond to Laozi's three principles, i.e., affection (*ci*), frugality (*jian*), and absence of endeavoring (*bugan*).²⁶

The first Taoist temple dedicated to ecology education was built in 2006-2007 in the ruins of an important Taoist temple that had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), along the slope of Mount Taibai in the Qinling range in Shaanxi province. Since 2003, a protected zone has been established for the local fauna (especially the giant pandas) and flora:

²² Following the survey made by Fan Guangchun of Shaanxi Academy of Social Sciences, several temples in Northern China contribute to the protection of the environment, such as the temples of the White Cloud (Baiyun), of the Black Dragon (Heilong), and of Woyun in Shaanxi, of Kongtong and Wufeng in Gansu, of Tiewa in Xinjiang, of Tulou in Qinghai, of Helan in Ningxia (see pages 5-8 of the "Illustrated Presentation from concrete cases of protection of environment by Taoist religion in the Northwest" (*Xibei daojiao shengtai baohu shili zhanshi*), Taoist and Conservation Workshop, Equilibrium and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), 2006, <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Fan%20060825%20-%20chinese.pdf>).

²³ *Zhuangzi*, chap. 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 19.

²⁵ "Illustrated Presentation from concrete cases of protection of environment by Taoist religion in the Northwest," 3.

²⁶ *Laozi*, chap. 67. "I have three treasures I hold and preserve. The first one is affection; the second, frugality; the third, not endeavoring to become the first in the Empire. Affection allows to be brave. Frugality allows to be generous. Not endeavoring to become the first in the Empire allows to display one's talent and to develop it." 我有三寶,持而保之,一曰慈,二曰儉,三曰不敢為天下先。慈故能勇,儉故能廣,不敢為天下先,故能成器長。My translation.

its official name is Shaanxi Mount Taibai National Natural Reserve (*Shaanxi Taibaishan guojia ji ziran baohuqu*).²⁷ This protected zone in the Qinling range is located a few hundred kilometers South of one of the most densely populated areas in China, that is, the Wei valley, a tributary to the Yellow River, and the urban region of Xi'an. As a natural frontier between Northern and Southern China, this range is not a sacred mountain honored by the emperors, but a zone explicitly protected by the authorities for environmental and patrimonial reasons. In order to have more efficient protection, Taoism has been mobilized for its bio-diversity in its religious and philosophical principles. In this sense, the authority qualifies this mountain as “sacred” (*sheng*).

The temple Tiejia (*Tiejia shengtai daoguan*) combines the functions of Taoism and ecology education directed to both local residents and tourists. This temple, now renowned, has been visited for hundreds of years (Fig. 2). Since its opening, the temple has been coordinating actions with other Taoist temples in the Qinling range.



Fig. 2 Wang Meng (1308-1385), *Mount Taibai (Taibaishan tu)*, ink and colors on paper, 27 × 238 cm, detail of the horizontal scroll, Shenyang, the Liaoning Provincial Museum (<http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/resources/Painting/WangMeng/mount-taibai.jpg> and http://www.yac8.com/news/14310_3.html).

Taoism and Buddhism recognize several famous mountains as “sacred” for the spiritual quality of the temples and monasteries they host. Each of the two religions highlights “four famous great mountains” (*sida mingshan* 四大名山). For Taoism, Mounts Wudang (Hubei), Longhu (Jiangxi), Qiyun (Anhui), and Qingcheng (Sichuan) are places of pilgrimages. Buddhism

²⁷ Nigel Dudley, Lisa Higgins-Zogib, and Stephanie Mansourian, “Beyond Belief, Linking Faiths and Protected Areas to Support Biodiversity Conservation,” A Research Report by Wildlife Conservation Society (WWF), *Equilibrium and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)* (2005): 99-101, <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/beyondbelief.pdf>.

appreciates places such as Mounts Wutai (Shanxi), Emei (Sichuan), Jiuhua (Anhui), and Putuo (Zhejiang). Undoubtedly, the landscapes of these mountains are admirable and appreciated as such. Yet what pilgrims bring to the fore is pilgrimage *per se*, the quest for austerity and going beyond one's limits, for obtaining protection for one's family, for realizing the value of ritual wandering to the rhythm of the universe.

Landscape and Tourism

However, not all the major, most admirable mountains are sacred. For instance, the famous Yellow Mountains (Huangshan) in Anhui Province are not viewed as sacred but as most extraordinary for their ever-changing landscapes, offering renewed and furtive views. The name derives from the Yellow Emperor, who allegedly found the elixir of immortality there. The Yellow Mountains also shelter a great quantity of medicinal plants, like Mount Emei, a sacred mountain of Buddhism in Sichuan Province. Like other famous mountains, the Yellow Mountains were first described, sung, and honored by poets and painters,²⁸ for instance, the writer and traveler Xu Xiake (Xu Hongzu, 1587-1641) in the Ming Dynasty:

Upon returning from the five sacred peaks, I do not look at the mountains anymore; upon returning from the Yellow Mountains, I do not look at the sacred peaks anymore! (*wuyue guilai bukan shan, Huangshan guilai bukan yue*).²⁹ 五嶽歸來不看山，黃山歸來不看嶽。

Xu Xiake and many other literati, both in the past and at present, consider the Yellow Mountains and other famous mounts from an aesthetic point of view (Fig. 3). Today, these mountains mainly attract tourists and hikers, and have nothing to do with pilgrimages.

In fact, it is because of their extraordinary and elusive landscapes that photographers, painters, tourists, and hikers decide to explore these mountains. For the same reason, the famous Guilin sugarloaf mountains in Guangxi Province are considered “the most beautiful mountains and waters under heaven” (*Guilin shanshui jia tianxia*) along with other “famous sites” (*mingsheng* 名勝), celebrated by literati for centuries.

²⁸ See for instance Xu Xiake, *Travel Diaries (Xu Xiake Youji)* (Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 2002), 3 vols., vol. 1, 101-108.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.



Fig. 3 Shitao (1642-1707), one of the album leaves of the *Eight Marvels of the Yellow Mountains* (*Huangshan basheng tu*), Kyoto, Sen-oku Hakuko kan (History Museum of Sen-oku).

Some of these “famous sites” were considered during the Maoist period as places that needed to be appropriated by socialist thought. After 1978, China began to open up, and the Chinese government reconsidered and reintegrated these famous sites into a vast scheme for devising its national identity by means of tourism.³⁰ In parallel, the state favored the publication of literati’s excursion accounts (*youji*) or tourist diaries (*youlanji*) and refashioned them as “tourism literature” (*liuyou wenxue*).³¹ Poems and citations taken from literati’s writings are often carved on rocks and cliffs of the landscapes visited and quoted and reframed as advertising slogans by tour operators and tourist guides. If any sacred dimension had endured in the past, it was wiped out entirely and secularised for the benefit of commerce or ideological propaganda.

In conclusion, we can identify several types of sacrality in the Chinese landscape, linked with mountains and rivers of the “*shanshui* culture,” deriving from Tao’s generosity. The first type of sacrality arises from the connection between the emperor and heaven and earth. However, if the sacrality is actualized, and if the presence of mountains and waters is immediately visible, the landscape is not the core element. On the one hand, the

³⁰ See Pál Nyíri, *Scenic Spots: Chinese Tourism, the State, and Cultural Authority* (Seattle, WA-London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 3-15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 7-15.

rites to heaven and earth did exist more than ten centuries before the notion of landscape appeared in China around the third to fourth centuries; on the other hand, poets and painters did not sing or describe the mountains and waters of Taishan. Thus, sacrality and landscape were not entangled notions at that time.

The second type of sacrality is driven by the abundant natural resources that fuelled the Taoist quest for immortality, and the Buddhist quality of the retreat, far from worldliness. This is the kind of sacrality existing in the “four famous mountains” of Taoism and Buddhism.

The third type of sacrality seems to be more diffuse and profane, a sort of reverence or respect toward historical figures, living or deceased. Due to the temporary or long-term presence of such great figures on various sites scattered across the Chinese territory, these places have been transformed into pilgrimage hotspots for literati. The landscape is then clearly aestheticized by the literati who bestow on it poetical, literary, pictorial, historical value, whereas the general population has a more mystical approach toward it, especially when a well-known figure is worshipped.

Nevertheless, sacrality and landscape can be superimposed with different layers on the same sacred site. For instance, on Mount Tai, while the popular religion is more interested in the natural forces and their effects, the official religion establishes an imperial ritual because of its aesthetic and historical value, as well as the majesty of the landscape (Fig. 4). Yet the literati visiting the site admire calligraphies and steles celebrating the ritual established by the First Emperor. Indeed, sacrality and landscape address different persons in different times and offer different meanings.



Fig. 4 Taishan, inscriptions on cliffs

EPILOGUE

Personal Recollection of Professor Vincent Shen

GUO QIYONG*

When I met with Professor Vincent Shen while attending the twenty-fourth World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing in August 2018, I had never thought that it would become our last meeting. Shen visited Wuhan University (WHU) seven times: two conferences organized by the International Society for Chinese Philosophy (ISCP) and a set of conferences on interreligious dialogue especially among Confucianism, Christianity, and Buddhism. During his visits, he paid a visit to Master Jinghui of Chan (Zen) Buddhism at the Temple of the Four Founders in Huangmei and paid tribute to Xiong Shili's tomb in Huanggang. In his later years, Shen's two manuscripts, *To Renovate Confucianism by Returning to its Roots* and *To Secure Life and Fortune for the People: From Entity to Mysticism*, were published by the Guiyang Confucius Institute. These two books are of great value and significance, because from them we can learn about his insights on Confucianism, comparative religion, and interreligious dialogue, especially his theory of strangification and the ultimate generosity with many others. Shen was Confucian, for Confucianism constituted the foundation of his life. He was a man who practiced benevolence, kindness and loyalty all his life. He was a Confucian Christian.

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Vincent Shen passed away in Toronto, Canada on November 14, 2018. I was shocked when I heard the news on the internet. After I received the confirmation from friends, I was deeply grieved. Heaven took the philosopher's soul! I wrote a letter of condolence to his wife, Liu Gianmei (professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto) that day via Pan Xiaohui (professor of philosophy at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan) to convey my deepest laments and condolences.

Last Meeting

In August 2018, during the twenty-fourth World Congress of Philosophy jointly hosted by the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) and Peking University in Beijing, I met with the gentle Mr. Shen and had a great conversation with him. On August 13, at the Lakeview hotel where we were waiting for passenger vehicles to go to the opening ceremony at the Great Hall of the People, Wu Genyou and I met Shen, who also stayed at the same hotel. Shen and I were both very happy to meet each other as old friends. As usual, I called him Mr. Shen and he called me brother Qiyong (sometimes I would also address him as "brother Vincent"). We sat together and chatted for more than two hours. We talked about our families, our wives and children, and especially about our upcoming retirement. I was two years older than Shen, and we were both retiring soon. Shen said that after his retirement, he and his wife would return to Taipei. He said that they bought a new apartment equipped with elevators in Yonghe District in Taipei where the natural and cultural environment is very good. We also talked about our collections of books. Shen had a large collection of books, both in Chinese and other languages. He planned to keep some of them in Canada and some in Taipei. Some books would be kept for his own use, while most books would be donated to several institutional libraries. We also talked about our health. Shen said that he suffered from heart disease and diabetes, and felt that his legs were getting weaker in recent years. I invited him to visit WHU once more to deliver lectures. He said that he had lost his energy, but planned to visit WHU to attend the meeting on religious dialogue in July next year. I was looking forward to his visit.

The theme of the World Congress of Philosophy was "Learning to Be Human." On August 14, at the National Convention Center, I presented my paper "On the Wisdom of Chinese Philosophy" in the session of "Contemporary Philosophies in China." Shen came to this section and raised questions concerning the comparison between Chinese and Western philosophical wisdom, to which I responded. I also invited Shen to give a concluding

comment to express his own ideas. Shen spoke for about ten minutes about his reflection on “the other.” When it was over, we left the venue, conversing and wishing each other good luck as we waved goodbye. Who would have thought that this would be our last meeting!

On the next day, I returned to Wuhan to deal with some issues at home, while Shen remained in Beijing until the end of the congress on August 20 before he went to Shandong University to give lectures on August 21. A few days later, I was informed by Yao Xinzhong and some of my students that Shen was quite busy during the congress. Due to the absence of some scholars, a few temporary adjustments were made to the agenda, and Shen hosted and commented on several sessions in addition to an added special session of his own.

Visits to Wuhan University

My friendship with Shen originated from the International Society for Chinese Philosophy (ISCP), which was founded in 1975 in the United States by Chung-ying Cheng (professor of philosophy at the University of Hawaii at Manoa). Shen and I often met at conferences held around the world by ISCP. Shen had held the post of President and Vice-President, and was the Executive Director from 2001 to 2011, during which he presided over ISCP with Li Chenyang (professor of philosophy at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore) and Jiang Xinyan (professor of philosophy at the University of Redlands, Redlands, CA), who later became Vice-Directors. The trio’s greatest contribution to ISCP was that they had institutionalized, standardized, systematized, and professionalized its operations. I also had participated in ISCP. I was its Vice-President from 2004 to 2005, President from 2006 to 2008, and Vice-Executive Director and Deputy Director in China from 2008 to 2016. The ISCP President, as the host of its biennial General Assemblies, is responsible for organizing and presiding over conferences. Its Vice-President is a transitional post to hold as a candidate before he/she becomes the President, whereas the chief and Vice-Executive Directors are in charge of ISCP’s permanent bodies. I had invited Shen to give lectures and to attend academic conferences at WHU on several occasions, to which he wholeheartedly agreed. These moments are still fresh in my memory, as if they took place just yesterday.

Shen first came to WHU on May 6-11, 2002, when I was Dean of the School of Humanities and Head of the Department of Philosophy. On May 6, the beginning of the summer, I went to the airport with Jing Yu to welcome Shen, who arrived at noon. On the evening of the next day, Zhu Zhifang and I

banqueted Shen with our fellow colleagues at the Department of Philosophy. We gave him the first issue of our newly published journal, the *Wuda Philosophical Review*, as a present. On the afternoon of May 8, I hosted Shen's lecture on "The Idea of Zhu Zi and 'the Other'." A small ceremony was held after the lecture in which WHU invited Shen to be a visiting professor. Vice-President Wu Junpei issued a certificate to Shen. I introduced Shen, who then gave his tribute. In the evening, Vice-President Wu hosted a dinner for Shen. On the afternoon of May 9, I hosted a symposium for Shen for the teachers of our School. In the evening, Shen's second lecture was delivered, "Reflections on Modernity and Postmodernism." His third lecture was given on the evening of May 10, entitled "The Ethics of Generosity in Chinese and Western Philosophy." In the evening, Wu Gengyou and I accompanied Shen for a night snack. On the morning of May 11, I went to the Luoia Shanzhuang Hotel to say goodbye to Shen. During his visit, we discussed the possibility of establishing academic exchanges between our School and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, and the prospect of convening the ISCP Conference at WHU in the future.

Shen was a man of letters and great learning. He asked me about the new progress in the research of the Guodian Chu slips and the Shanghai Museum bamboo slips and showed vigorous interest in the studies of newly unearthed bamboo and silk materials. After he returned to his place, I mailed him the first volume of *Shanghai Museum Bamboo Slips*, edited by Ma Chengyuan and published by the Shanghai Classics Publishing House in 2001.

I was the Dean of the School of Philosophy from 2003 to 2007. On the morning of February 7, 2003, I received a transpacific phone call from Shen to discuss two issues. One was concerning the exchange contract between our two Schools for visiting professors, post-doctoral fellows, and postgraduate students with the mutual recognition of credits. The second touched upon the proposed ISCP conference to be held at WHU. Shen said that the 2003 and 2005 conferences had been agreed upon to be held in Sweden and Australia, respectively, and WHU's earliest chance would be in 2007. The conference held in Sweden in August 2003 officially confirmed that the 2007 conference would be held at WHU. From then on, I maintained frequent contact with Shen concerning the preparation of this conference. Apart from email exchanges, we also consulted on the issue while we attended conferences at the Chinese Culture University in Taipei in May 2006 and at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in December 2006.

On June 25-27, 2007, Shen came to WHU for the second time to attend the Fifteenth International Conference on Chinese Philosophy on "Dialogue between Chinese Philosophy and Global Civilization in the Twenty-first

Century.” As the ISCP President, the chairman of the conference and the convener of the preparatory committee, I worked with the ISCP Executive Director Shen to prepare and preside over the conference. More than 220 scholars from fourteen countries and regions, including mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, attended the conference. The conference had three plenary sessions and forty-eight symposia. More than 200 people presented their papers.

Shen was very attentive to details. He revised the English version of the conference invitation himself. On the afternoon of June 24, I visited Shen at the Luojia Shanzhuang Hotel and discussed some final details of the conference with him. At the opening ceremony on June 25, he and I both delivered speeches. He then presided over the first report session of the morning. On the evening of June 26, Shen chaired the ISCP committee meeting as a working meeting. At the meeting, he gave me a certificate and thanked me for my contribution to ISCP with a small wooden plaque. He made a speech, and I gave my tribute. Shen also talked with Li Chenyang and Jiang Xinyan, respectively, about the ISCP’s work and exchanged views on two future conferences.

On the morning of June 27, Shen presented his paper, “Process Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy: Comparisons between Whitehead’s Process Ontology and Huan Buddhism’s Concept of Shi,” at the session of “Dialogue Between Civilizations and Studies in Philosophy of Religion.” In the afternoon, he presented another paper “Thinking about Mental Health and Spiritual Understanding: The Philosophical Basis of Psychotherapy for Science and Art.” Both papers were presented in English and outlined in Chinese. In the evening, I hosted a lecture with Shen, Chung-Ying Cheng, Lin Anwu, and Gao Ruiquan. The lecture was open to students. The conversation was very vigorous and did not end until 10:30 in the evening.

Three years later, on June 25-27, 2010, Shen visited WHU for the third time to attend the International Symposium on “The Development of Chinese Philosophy: Retrospect and Prospect in the Past 30 Years,” a small-sized seminar of ISCP. Usually, ISCP only holds biennial conferences. Shen discussed with me his wish to have a small-sized seminar between two large biennial conferences, and the WHU seminar became the first of its kind. This tradition has been kept since then. For example, the symposium on “Harmony and Justice,” held at the Shaanxi Normal University on August 9-10, 2015, was such an ISCP seminar.

Shen and his wife Liu Qianmei came together to attend the 2010 seminar held at WHU. At the opening ceremony on the morning of June 25, Shen and Vice-President of WHU Xie Hongxing unveiled the plaque for the School

of Chinese classics. During the morning seminar, Shen, Chung-ying Cheng, and Anthony Yeung delivered three keynote addresses. Shen selected the expatriate Chinese as the object of investigation. He argued that in today's era of globalization and multiculturalism, expatriate Chinese should not only perform "self-planting of spiritual roots" to re-establish their spiritual foundations in a new cultural context, but also achieve "harmonious strangification" which is an important way for civilizations to turn from conflict to harmony. Strangification must be based on "primordial generosity." The "strangification" spirit embodied in the teaching of Chinese philosophy by many Chinese scholars abroad is a manifesto of a new Confucian spirit.

In the summer of the subsequent years (2011, 2012, 2015, and 2016), Shen came to WHU to attend a set of conferences co-organized by the Department of Religion and the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. The themes of the conferences focused mainly on dialogue and communication among cultures and religions, especially among Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. At each conference, Shen presented his paper: "Some Thoughts on Classical Confucianism, Christian Scriptures and Greek Philosophy," "The Foundation of Modernity and the Overcoming its Predicament: New Chinese Scholastic Philosophy and Contemporary New Confucianism,"

"Contemplation on the Mutual Strangification Strategy Initiated by Matteo Ricci's coming to China: Early Jesuits and Chinese Church Members," "On the Translation of Christian Classics by Nestorianism: A Comparison with Successful Models of Buddhism Translation."

Philosophical Works

At my suggestion, the WHU Press published Shen's opus *Technology, Humanities and Cultural Development* in April 2014. Shen asked me to write a preface. I finished the preface in January 2013, pointing out that Shen was a well-known contemporary philosopher who was sagacious and prolific as well as active in international academia, promoting dialogue between civilizations and interdisciplinary integration. The focus of this book is on contemporary technology, ecology, humanistic traditions, and their interrelationships. Its realistic concern is conspicuously the human welfare brought by technology as well as the destruction of the natural system and the humanistic tradition by the negative effect of the overdevelopment of technology. Shen was well-versed in both Chinese and Western learning. With profound knowledge and analytic methods of theoretical logic, he skilfully applied the classical and modern philosophy of various Chinese and Western schools to the systematic

elaboration of the following contents: technology, and humanities, information technology, culture and humanistic spirit, contemporary technological ideological trend and humanistic criticism of technology, ethics and morality in the era of technology, influence and prospect of technology on art, religion and faith in the era of technology, interaction between technology and culture in China and the West, technological development and environmental ethics, the ethical thinking on biological technology, the prospect of Chinese culture and Chinese philosophy. The book is divided into three parts, discussing definitions, connotations, and influences of both technology and humanities, the interaction between China and the West, and technology ethics and cultural prospects. In general, it concentrates on Shen's reflection on contemporary scientific and technological civilization, which is extremely meaningful. It is a rare and excellent theoretical work. It has a strong sense of reality, and is very readable.

In recent years, the e-correspondence between Shen and myself had become more frequent, mainly related to the publication of his anthology. In 2015, the Confucius Publishing House in Guizhou was planning to publish *The Library of Confucius Academy*, for which I was editor-in-chief. *The Library* was planning to publish six or seven volumes annually. Each scholar selects his/her own papers to be compiled in one volume. Shen was a consultant to the Academic Committee of Confucius Academy. I asked him to compile a collection of his academic essays. Shen used *To Renovate Confucianism by Returning to its Roots* (Fanben Kaixin Lun Ruxue 返本开新论儒学) as the title of his book. I was quite excited after reading his manuscript and promoted its publication with all my efforts. I was really grateful that Shen made this series richer with his profound philosophical work. However, due to the difference between traditional Chinese characters and simplified Chinese characters as well as styles of expressing, editing and publishing between the Mainland and Hong Kong, it took more time to edit, proofread, and produce his manuscript. During the process of editing, and proofreading, a considerable amount of emails were communicated among him, the responsible editors of his manuscript at the publishing house, and myself. Shen carefully edited his manuscript and made a detailed cataloge of three parts and six chapters in each of them. It was published officially by the Confucius Publishing House in October 2017.

The anthology collects eighteen of Shen's essays in three parts. The first part is about how Confucianism faces modernization, globalization, and other challenges in the future and how important it is to promote Chinese culture's advantages in order to establish the modernity of China. In terms of cultural and spiritual resources, Shen argues that we should not be exclu-

sive to foreignness. Rather, with Christianity, we should help each other and communicate with each other on the way of looking for truth. We must deal with such basic problems of modernity as modern life, democratic politics, development of technology, cultivation of citizens' virtues. We should re-evaluate moral ethics and the hierarchy of values and give them new interpretations. Regarding Confucianism, we should study its development, inner origins, philosophical ideas, poetry, art, and literature. The book also discusses *Confucian Poetics* and how Confucius develops creative humanism on the basis of the Six Classics, and compares the *Book of Changes* with Whitehead's philosophy. The way that Zhu Zi appreciates and accepts the influence of many others helps Shen develop his own philosophical system, that is, the notion of "many others" as the origin of the formation of philosophy. In relation to modern Western paradigms, Shen proposes a new paradigm based on Chinese philosophy. Although Shen criticizes Confucianism, his criticism is more rational and constructive.

In the essay "Learning for Self and Learning for Others: Re-examine the Postmodern," Shen points out that although Confucianism affirms the individuality of all things, all things are still closely related to one another. Human nature must be understood as a whole that is composed of and motivated by its relevance and autonomy. It is necessary to avoid the partiality of any theory on human nature. According to Shen, the core virtue *ren* (仁) is a conscious inner connection between the individual and many others; another core virtue *shu* (恕) means the extension of altruism. The one who bears *shu* in mind is good at strangification and knows better the relationship between learning for self and learning for others in the process of virtue formation.

In the article "Confucianism and Democracy," Shen explores Confucianism's emphasis on the rational and objective system, arguing that classical Confucianism and the principle of modern democracy can enhance and complement each other. In "Drawing the Distinction between Righteousness and Utility: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Confucian Theory of Value Hierarchy," Shen discusses the meaning of "righteousness" by dividing it into "the righteousness of virtue" and "the righteousness of obligation." The superiority of the former is the essence of Confucian ethics, which far surpasses the Western ethics in which the latter has been the priority since Kant. For Shen, the superiority of the righteousness of virtue, in theory, has a positive criticism of "modern personality theories" and "social justice theories," which have paid too much attention to the normative meaning. Practically, they have an awakening effect on contemporary society, which emphasizes the rule of law, especially the norms of existing laws but ignores the cultivation of morality and thus pushes citizens to the virtuelless.

Shen indicates in “The Intercommunication of Confucianism and Christianity” that, from the perspective of pragmatism and phenomenology, both Christianity and Confucianism draw on the common resources for their own spiritual life in the contemporary world or modernity to help humankind live a life of humanity and dignity, rebuild the world of modern life, go through the “dark age” of scientism and nihilism. Confucianism and Christianity can retain their differences while enhancing, learning from, and cooperating with each other.

In the context of “many others,” Shen proposes such concepts and propositions as “strangification,” “self-reflection,” “primordial generosity,” “mutual strangification,” and “mutual enrichment.” For Shen, “strangification” is the act of transcending oneself and moving toward “many others,” or to be out of oneself and toward the primordial generosity of others. Strangification must work with self-reflection. Communication is a kind of mutual strangification, for it can avoid conflicts and attain “mutual enrichment.” Shen’s ideas of “generosity,” “others,” and “strangification” have a strong affinity with Confucianism. Shen interprets Confucianism with many new insights in a creative way, which can inspire new thinking.

After the book was published, Shen handed to the Confucius Publishing House another manuscript, *To Secure Life and Fortune for the People: From Entity to Mysticism*. This book comprises thirteen chapters in three parts. In the context of high-tech globalization and the communication between Chinese and Western civilizations, Shen reinterprets Zhang Zai’s saying, “To Secure Life and Fortune for the People,” by arguing how people should seek and fulfill the meaning of life and what mission of philosophers should have: to define the meaning of life for people.

As Shen points out, to define the meaning of life one must start from one’s own life of flesh and soul to the life of social and cultural groups and then to the mystic, ultimate, true destiny. These three levels of human life are connected with one another but at different levels, namely, from individuals to groups and to the God’s will. It can be described as studying from the ordinary to the profound. One must go step by step, from low to high, from the bottom to the top, and take advantage of resources from the top to infuse them downward so that both sides can enhance each other.

The first part is about the meaning of individual life. In Chinese philosophy, body as organism and body as lived cannot be separated from each other, which is rather different from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, which only focuses on the body as lived rather than as organism. The author values the discussion about the development of brain, emotions, and affection. By applying the Hypostasis Theory of Edmund Husserl, the

founder of phenomenology, the author affirms that hypostasis is the manifestation of human nature, dignity, and value, the foundation of the meaning of human life. By reconsidering the hermeneutics of contemporary French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, the author argues that the relation between the self and multiple others is an issue that cannot be avoided in one's life, hence it is necessary to develop a more reasonable hermeneutical view. The author also discusses affections and practical wisdom and the relation between morality, reason, and religion.

The second part deals with the life of groups and its meaning. The essence of the life of groups is, first, to develop the ethical foundation of benevolence and righteousness based on human personalities, to form the ethical norms, to shape moral virtues, and to build an ethical lifestyle in the face of the current development of high technologies. Second, the motivation of meaning can be traced back to the desire of meaning in the body and to the communication of society. If the life of groups is to be meaningful, it is necessary to find an ideal worthy of common devotion – humanistic beliefs and religious beliefs. Shen's guiding concept, "maximal harmony," means that in each state of conflict or equilibrium, people seek the maximal possible harmony that can be obtained in the situation. The concept is also discussed in the context of the three-dimensional relation of human and nature, human and human, human and transcendence.

The third part is about destiny, the ultimate meaning of life, which cannot be separated from the life of oneself and the life of groups. We must go back to the life of individuals to observe the relationship of their religious beliefs from the perspective of developmental psychology and the growth of individual life. We should conduct comparative religious studies, especially on Buddhism and Christianity, as the two major religions in the world focus on the concepts of enlightenment and salvation. While Buddhism is concerned with enlightenment, Christianity pays more attention to salvation. Nevertheless, they all yearn for the ultimate truth and will not make the meaning of life lost and the exploration of spirits failed. Philosophy and religion in Chinese traditions share many resemblances – both value the body and prefer the expression of metaphors and dialogues. However, the understanding of philosophical and religious natures is rather different. From the perspective of comparative religious studies and the characteristics of the contemporary world, Shen analyzes the communication between Chinese spirituality and Christian mysticism, especially on two seemingly contrasting qualities – the generous grace and passive submission, which actually interact with one another. The author argues that the common focus of both Chinese philosophy and Christianity is in unison with the ultimate substance, for both show the same ultimate concern.

Shen was a great philosopher with exceptional enthusiasm, devotion, generosity, as well as an open mind. His religious conviction was Catholicism, and mine is Confucianism. But this difference did not prevent us from becoming close friends, respecting, trusting, communicating with, and learning from each other. In the two manuscripts of his later years mentioned above, his views on Confucianism, religious comparison, religious dialogues are quite profound and deserve our deep analysis and discussion.

In academic studies, Shen was very diligent and had achieved Mencius's "To start and end well" and "To always take a more advanced course of study," Zhu Xi's "To think and analyze in depth" and "To stay tranquil and calm," Zeng Guofan's "To be ambitious, to be erudite, to be persistent" and "To be ambitious so unwilling to be the inferior, to be erudite so aware that knowledge has no limits. To not be satisfied by minor achievements. If there is a will, there is a way." Shen did in-depth research on significant cultural and religious traditions of all humankind through personal experiences.

He was a man of sincerity and respect in his personality, his manner, and his learning. He was tender but determined, gentle and elegant, humble and affectionate. His knowledge of Confucianism was profound as he read and thought about paradigms of Confucianism in the pre-Qin, Song, and Ming dynasties thoroughly and made creative interpretations of them. He not only interpreted the concepts of benevolence, love, loyalty, and forgiveness profoundly but also practiced them very well. "The one wishing to be established oneself, also seeks establish others. The one wishing to be enlarged oneself, also seeks to enlarge others." "Do not impose on others what one does not desire oneself."

Shen did his best to be benevolent and kind. I have highlighted many of his details above, from which we can see how Shen's way of dealing with things and people was very much in accordance with Confucianism. Shen's virtues and erudition are truly admirable. He was extraordinarily versed in both Chinese and Western studies, from the ancient to the contemporary. For over twenty years, he had been an inspiring giant in ISCP and its relevant academic activities. His passing was a great loss to the international circle of philosophy, especially to the international circle of Chinese philosophy.

INDEX

A

Abrahamic tradition, 157.
Absolute Other, 78.
ADKINS, Brent, 343, 352, 353.
Aesthetics, 3, 16, 21, 23, 24, 184, 223, 399, 423, 425.
AIGLE, Denise, 188, 198.47
ALENI, Giulio, 47, 184, 197.
Alienation, 59, 73, 75, 77, 102, 103, 109, 176, 239, 348, 351.
ALSTON, William, 135, 137.
Ambiguity, 85, 86, 87, 193, 240.
Analects, 10, 15, 121, 170, 300, 301, 308, 377, 388, 389, 392, 393, 397.
ANSCOMBE, G. E. M., 33, 46, 200.
Anthropocentrism, 101, 117, 299.
Anthropology, 155, 156, 161, 334, 346.
Anti-foundational, 160.
Application, 25, 32, 51, 180, 243, 245, 248, 249, 251, 305, 356, 375.
Appropriateness, 7, 128, 136.
AQUINAS, Thomas, 36, 38, 42, 45, 48, 52, 65, 66, 75, 243, 260, 265, 266, 314, 316, 317, 318, 332.
Arbitrariness, 133, 242.
ARISTOTLE, 4, 12, 19, 52, 57, 68, 73, 88, 91, 259, 260, 265, 266, 284, 285, 286, 291, 292, 314, 317, 322, 332, 380, 387, 391.
Aspirations, 19, 22, 61, 65, 157, 297, 298, 299, 370.
Atheism, 183, 224, 230.
AUDI, Robert, 136, 138.

AUGUSTINE, Saint, 48, 243, 280, 298, 302, 314, 331, 336.
AURELIUS, Marcus. 280, 387.
Authenticity, 3, 12, 22, 293, 295-297, 306, 307.
AVICENNA, 317.
Axial Age, 25, 156.

B

Bafut Language Association, 246.
Bafut, 233, 234, 244-252.
BĂLĂCESCU, Ioana, 250, 253.
BĂLTĂCEANU, Francisca, 322, 326, 331.
BAOLIN, Duan, 414.
BARBIERI, William A., 2, 19.
BARMÉ, Gérémie R., 194, 196, 418.
BAUDELAIRE, 126.
BAUDRILLARD, Jean, 104.
BAUER, Frantisek, 346, 354.
BEAUCHAMP, Tom L., 355, 366.
BEBLAVÝ, Jan, 340, 341.
Being-in-the-world, 2, 39.
Being-with, 29, 39, 40.
BELLAH, Robert N., 156.
Benevolence, 50, 54, 56, 60, 61, 65, 88, 275, 298, 304, 337, 427, 436, 437.
BENTHAM, Jeremy, 267, 271.
Benxin, 71, 365.
BERGO, Bettina, 85, 99.
BERGSON, Henri, 319, 320, 321, 322, 334.
Berlin, 176, 279, 291.
BERLOGEA, Anca, 327, 332.

- BERMAN, Harold J., 284, 287, 288, 291.
 BERNARD-MAÎTRE, Henri, 183, 196.
 BETTI, Emilio, 125, 242, 244.
 BIALIK, Chaim, 239.
 Bible, 11, 181, 184, 186, 197, 228, 243, 246, 247, 251-253, 271-282, 284-292.
 Biblical justice, 272, 284.
 Biblical laws, 277-279, 287.
 Biblical texts, 10, 233, 244, 273-275, 290.
Bildung, 122, 123.
 BILLIQUOD, Sébastien, 418.
 Bioethics, 14, 263, 355-357, 366.
 BIOT, Edouard, 204, 210.
 BLOCH, Abraham P., 22, 272, 291.
 BLONDEL, Maurice, 43.
 BOLLNOW, Otto Friedrich, 134, 137.
 Bolshevism, 315, 326, 329.
 Bolshevism, 13, 334, 335, 340-350, 352, 354.
Book of Changes, 5, 15, 69, 73, 110, 112, 114, 170, 389, 391, 396, 410, 434.
Book of Documents, 170, 302, 417.
Book of History, 170.
Book of Odes, 172.
Book of Rites, 108, 170.
Book of Songs, 170.
 Border-crossing, 1, 70.
 BOSANQUET, Bernard, 259, 262.
 Boston Confucianism, 380.
 BOUVET, Joachim, 186, 187, 197.
 Brahman, 24.
 BRAITERMAN, Zachary, 272, 292.
 BRETON, Stanislas, 5.
 BRETTLER, Marc Zvi, 279, 291.
 BREZIANU, Andrei, 322, 331.
 BROCKEY, Liam Matthew, 215, 218.
 BROȘTEANU, Monica, 322, 331.
 BRYAN, Charles S., 308, 359, 366.
 BUBER, Martin, 64, 66, 159, 160.
 BUDDHA, 71, 72, 195, 220.
 Buddhism, 34, 45, 50, 54, 56, 59, 60, 71, 74, 82, 166, 169, 170, 171, 173, 220, 229, 230, 257, 365, 373, 376, 422, 423, 425, 427, 431, 432, 436.
 Buddhist, 5, 55, 56, 65, 69, 74, 109, 124, 168, 169, 183, 191, 192, 220, 400, 418, 419, 425.
 BULTMAN, Rudolf, 243.
 BUNNIN, Nicholas, 310, 387.
- C**
- CAI ANDUO, António Fernandes, 215.
 CALANCA, Paola, 189, 196.
 CANARIS, Daniel, 230.
 CANEVARI, Pietro, 216.
 Cartesian, 160, 183, 236, 237, 342, 366.
 CASALINI, Cristiano, 4.
 Catholic Church, 10, 60, 65, 145, 153, 234, 243, 328, 344.
 Catholic Social Doctrine, 50, 61, 62, 66.
 Catholicism, 8, 34, 47, 50, 54, 56, 59, 61, 62, 65, 68, 166, 167, 169-171, 173, 189, 199, 436.
 Ceremonies, 110, 172, 418.
 CERTEAU, Michel de, 23.
 CHAMFORT, Sébastien Nicolas de, 258.
 CHAN, Tak-kwong, 48.
 CHAN, Wing-Tsit, 300, 376, 389.
 CHANG, Chen-tung, 48.
 Charity, 22, 49, 50, 61, 63-65.
 CHASE, D. P., 285, 291.
 CHAVANNES, Edouard, 416, 418.
 CHEN, Guying, 128, 138.
 CHEN, Junmin, 114.
 CHEN, Yanrong, 184.
 CHENG, Hao, 102, 109, 116, 117.
 CHENG, Yi, 109, 118, 121.
 Chinese Americans, 372.
 Chinese cultural traditions, 15, 404, 406, 410.
 Chinese diaspora, 14, 369, 370, 375, 376, 378, 384.
 Chinese educational system, 9, 201, 204, 208, 210.
 Chinese immigrants, 370, 371, 378, 379, 381, 383.
 Chinese landscape, 15, 413.
 Chinese literati, 9, 168, 169, 171, 179-182, 189, 192, 196, 409.
 Chinese medicine, 15, 409, 410, 411.
 Chinese Neo-Scholasticism, 4, 5, 49, 59, 60, 68, 81.

- Chinese overseas, 371, 373, 374.
 Chinese philosophy, 4, 5, 15, 47, 48, 50, 51, 58, 59, 68, 73, 82, 88, 105, 140, 146, 175, 310, 369, 370, 376-381, 382, 383, 388-391, 393-395, 397-401, 410, 432-437.
 Chinese Scholasticism, 47.
 Chineseness, 375, 376.
 CHITTICK, William, 195, 198.
 CHOU, Ming-chuan, 4, 47, 50, 66.
 Christian denominations, 10, 246.
 Christian personalist, 13.
 Christian social teaching, 60.
 Christianity, 8, 34, 45, 54, 56, 58, 61-63, 66, 67, 71, 75, 145, 153, 166, 168-170, 173, 174, 176, 180, 182-184, 189, 191, 196-200, 221, 224, 228, 231, 232, 257, 258, 280, 311, 340, 341, 427, 432-434, 436.
 CHUNGAN, S., 329, 332.
 Civil law, 282.
 Civilization, 9, 12, 44, 56, 124, 166, 182, 202, 209, 290, 294, 346, 375, 376, 403, 433.
 Civilizations, 2, 3, 11, 21, 48, 58, 61, 67, 79, 166, 176, 177, 186, 187, 385, 432, 435.
Classic of the Great Peace, 420.
Classic of Poetry, 170, 302.
 CLAVIUS, 182.
 Clinical ethics, 357, 358, 363.
 CLOONEY, Francis X., 192, 196.
 Cognitive reason, 111-113.
 COHEN, Haim H., 272, 276, 283, 291.
 COJOCARIU, I., 316.
 COLLANI, Claudia von, 187, 197.
 Collective memory, 13, 327, 330, 331.
 Commandments, 277, 281, 282, 287.
 Commitment, 5, 75, 162, 163, 191, 238, 242, 288, 378.
 Common good, 42, 170, 265, 269.
 Common ground, 144, 145, 169, 240, 257.
 Commonality, 25, 37, 67, 71, 77.
 Communication, 3, 8, 21, 31, 34, 55, 59, 67, 69, 72, 75, 77, 79, 147, 166, 169, 325, 359, 406, 408, 411, 418, 432, 435, 436.
 Communicative, 22, 23, 123, 144.
 Communism, 13, 334, 335, 340, 344, 347, 349, 351.
 Communists, 313, 315, 326, 329, 333, 342, 344, 349-351, 353, 374.
 Communitarian, 11, 257, 259, 261-265, 267, 269, 308, 331.
 Compassion, 11, 22, 271, 275, 308, 407.
 Confucian ethics, 110, 305, 434.
 Confucian morality, 12.
 Confucian value, 102, 379.
 Confucian, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 27, 45, 48, 55, 58, 65, 68, 69, 72, 74, 80, 101, 102, 105-112, 114, 121, 127, 128, 131, 137, 140, 165-167, 169-171, 173, 174, 182, 183, 185, 191-193, 195, 197-199, 213, 216, 222-227, 229-232, 293, 299, 300, 302-308, 311, 312, 377, 379, 382, 384, 388, 389, 392, 393, 396, 397, 410, 418, 420, 427, 432, 434.
 Confucianism, 4-6, 8, 10, 12, 27, 32, 33, 45, 47, 50, 53, 54, 56, 58-60, 67, 68, 71-73, 80, 82, 88, 101, 102, 104-110, 115, 116, 118, 166, 167, 170, 173, 174, 186, 187, 189, 191, 195, 198, 199, 214, 215, 218, 221, 227, 228, 231, 258, 293, 300, 304-312, 365, 373, 376, 377, 380, 382-384, 389, 399, 427, 432, 433-437.
 CONFUCIUS, 8, 10, 57, 106, 107, 112, 121, 139, 171-174, 181, 184, 185, 194, 195, 198, 213-215, 219-222, 224, 225, 227-229, 232, 301-303, 306, 310, 312, 427, 433-435.
 Conscience, 171, 316-318, 323, 325.
 Consciousness, 23, 28, 29, 38-40, 42, 54, 60, 63, 84, 86, 87, 89-92, 94, 96, 97, 133, 160, 177, 296, 320, 322, 342, 387, 394, 399, 400, 403, 404, 411.
 Consistency, 51, 52, 186, 192, 203, 207, 211, 286, 364.
 CONSTANTINE, Emperor, 336.
 Constitutional justice, 288.
 Constructive realism, 31.
 Contextuality, 14, 268, 359.
 Contextualization, 65.
 Contingency, 159, 162, 163.
 Continuity, 51, 52, 73, 218, 305.
 Contrastive philosophy, 4, 49, 51-53, 59.
 COOK, Maeve, 145, 152.

- COPERNICUS, 386.
 Copper rule, 127, 128, 131, 132, 137.
 CORNEA, D. 313, 332.
 CORNILLE, Catherine, 70, 80.
 Corrective justice, 285.
 Cosmology, 15, 28, 48, 175, 410, 414.
 COSMOVICI, Emanuel, 322, 331.
 COSTA, Inácio da, 10, 213-217, 219, 220, 222, 228, 231.
 COUPLET, Philippe, 184, 185, 198, 214-217, 219, 221, 222, 225, 229, 230, 232.
 Covenant, 271, 282, 287.
 CRIVELLER, Gianni, 181, 184, 197.
 Cross-cultural philosophy, 51, 56, 58, 83.
 CUA, Antonio S., 301, 377.
 Cultivation, 3, 6, 12, 21, 22, 26, 56, 102, 113, 114, 125, 173, 174, 227, 289, 294, 301, 303-309, 311, 360, 409, 433, 434.
 Cultural accommodation, 8, 166-168, 176.
 Cultural Revolution, 382, 421.
 Culture, 1, 4, 8, 15, 16, 34, 47, 48, 52, 54-59, 97, 98, 103, 105, 109, 111-114, 122-124, 132, 141-143, 146, 159, 166-169, 174, 176, 177, 190, 194, 222, 233, 236-238, 246, 248, 249, 251, 293-295, 297, 300, 323, 325, 330, 331, 334, 335, 340, 345, 353, 369, 370, 373, 375, 376, 378, 379, 381, 382, 386, 388, 403, 404, 406, 408, 410, 411, 413, 414, 424, 432, 433.
 CUSA, Nicolas de, 73.
 CUSHING, Richard J., 170.
 Czechoslovakia, 343, 344, 347, 350.
- D**
- DAN, Zhaowei, 118.
 DANCĂ, Wilhelm, 12, 313.
 DĀNILĂ, S., 330.
 Dao, 24, 42, 45, 72, 80, 102, 105, 107, 300, 303, 304, 310, 377, 388, 389, 395, 396, 397, 400, 413.
 Daoism, 34, 69, 71, 75, 166, 170, 173, 229, 365, 373, 376, 383.
 Daoist, 5, 69, 74, 109, 112, 127, 128, 131, 132, 137.
 DARWIN, Charles, 386.
 Darwinian, 348.
 Darwinist, 344, 345.
 Dasein, 29, 39, 40, 101, 234, 236.
 Daxue, 10, 42, 45, 72, 73, 74, 75, 80, 213-216, 218, 219, 226, 228, 414.
 Decalogue, 277, 287.
 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 285.
 DEHERGNE, Joseph, 215.
 DELEUZE, Gilles, 5, 6, 41, 55, 69, 82, 101, 343, 352, 353.
 Deliberation, 112, 113, 295, 309, 310.
 Democracy, 6, 101-103, 105-107, 109, 117, 142-144, 145, 151, 306, 340, 342, 346, 434.
 DENG, Xiaoping, 382.
 DERRIDA, Jacques, 5, 41, 55, 69, 82, 97, 98, 99.
 DESCARTES, René, 28, 88, 89, 103, 234, 235, 387.
 Desirable desire, 43, 71, 72, 365.
 Desiring desire, 43, 71, 72, 77, 115, 116, 365.
 DESMOND, William, 3, 21, 24.
 Devotionalism, 22.
 DEWEY, John, 126.
 Dharma, 24.
 Dialectic, 57, 73, 347, 408.
 Dialogue, 4, 7, 8, 30, 34, 38, 41, 44, 45, 53, 66-71, 73-80, 88, 91, 95, 98, 99, 139, 146, 148, 153, 155, 192, 195, 199, 240, 252, 257, 430, 431.
 DILTHEY, Wilhelm, 235, 237, 245, 399.
 Disciplinary power, 206.
 Disciplinary training, 204, 206.
 Discipline, 9, 15, 32, 59, 191, 204, 205, 209, 235, 289, 311, 386, 407, 409.
 Discontinuity, 51, 52, 73.
 Disorder, 115, 220.
 Distributive justice, 259, 285.
 Divine justice, 271, 273, 275, 284, 286, 290, 337.
 Divine law, 283.
 Divinities, 414, 416-419.
 Divinity, 288, 302, 419.

- DOBROSAVLJEV, Duška, 244, 252.
Doctrine of the Mean, 114, 170, 172, 173,
 300, 301, 304, 309, 389, 390, 393, 397,
 398, 450, 453.
- DOSTOYEVSKY, Fyodor, 92, 299.
- DUAN, Yucui, 417.
- DUDLEY, Nigel, 422.
- DUPRÉ, Louis, 156.
- E**
- EBELING, Gerhard, 63.
- ECKSTRAND, Nathan, 142, 153.
- Ecological ethics, 23.
- Ecology, 25, 404, 420-422, 432.
- EDWARDS, Jonathan, 159.
- Egoism, 364.
- ELMAN, Benjamin, 180, 197.
- Emotions, 69, 107, 116, 117, 296, 297, 330,
 314, 359, 362, 397, 410, 435.
- Empathy, 358.
- ENGELFRIET, Catherine Peter, 180, 197, 199.
- Enlightenment, 22, 75, 172, 180, 186, 234,
 235, 258, 271, 293, 296, 298, 306, 353,
 404, 436.
- Episteme, 179, 181, 182, 186, 190, 191.
- Epistemological, 21, 40, 41, 43, 44, 53, 71,
 88, 236.
- Epistemology, 29, 39, 302, 308, 310.
- Epoché, 29, 39, 40.
- Equality, 103, 108, 142, 258, 260, 261, 266-
 268, 280, 281, 286-288, 344, 349, 351, 388.
- Equilibrium, 275, 344, 397, 421, 422, 436.
- ESCANDE, Yolaine, 15, 413.
- Eternity, 243, 337.
- Ethnic Chinese, 358, 370, 371, 373, 375, 381,
 383.
- Ethnic cleansing, 352.
- Ethnography, 23.
- Evangelization, 176, 182, 246.
- Eventfulness, 243, 245.
- Evil, 25, 115, 168, 172, 173, 288, 299, 307,
 328, 335, 337, 338, 347, 350, 392, 393, 396.
- EVOLA, Julius, 343.
- Examination, 47, 121, 138, 202, 205, 207,
 208, 382, 405.
- Existentialism, 334, 409.
- Experience, 1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 21, 26, 30, 32, 34,
 36, 37, 64, 74, 93, 97, 101, 102, 106, 108,
 111, 116, 133, 149, 166, 176, 233, 234,
 237, 238, 241, 242, 244, 298, 304, 319,
 334, 359, 360, 362, 363, 366, 388, 391,
 405, 406, 409.
- Expressivism, 296, 298.
- EZEKIEL, 279.
- F**
- Fairness, 11, 260, 274, 275, 286.
- Faithful, 78, 227, 231, 239, 251, 276, 328.
- Faithfulness, 337.
- Faithless, 276.
- Familiarity, 2, 27, 54, 73, 95, 182, 207.
- Family, 22, 93, 107, 109, 142, 165, 171, 183,
 195, 219, 220, 237, 275, 277, 294, 305,
 308, 311-313, 315, 324, 326, 327, 330,
 346, 358, 361-363, 388, 423.
- FANG, Thomé, 381, 382, 384.
- Fascism, 13, 334, 335, 340-347, 350-352,
 354.
- FAURE, Jacques, 216, 223.
- FELDMAN, R., 135, 137.
- FERRÃO, Andrea, 214, 216.
- FERRARA, Chiara, 214.
- Fertility, 416.
- Fidelity, 239, 242.
- Figurism, 186, 188, 190, 191.
- Filial piety, 305, 324, 379.
- Five Classics*, 57, 170, 229, 230.
- Five relationships, 5, 55, 69, 82.
- Flourishing, 11, 22, 160, 257, 261, 268, 269.
- FONTANA, Michela, 168, 175.
- Forbidden City, 165, 167, 169, 175.
- Forgetting-in-sitting, 102, 113.
- FOUCAULT, Michel, 23, 121, 219-221, 224,
 227-229, 430.
- Four Books*, 57, 118, 170, 184, 214, 216-219,
 222, 225, 229, 300, 303, 376.
- FRANKEL, J. D., 195, 197.

- Freedom, 22, 24, 26, 34, 60, 63, 87, 90, 98, 103, 107, 109, 142, 162, 267, 268, 280, 281, 286-288, 294, 296, 338, 340, 346, 350, 387.
- FREEMAN, David Noel, 273, 292.
- French Revolution, 285, 388.
- Friendship, 3, 25, 163, 165, 168-170, 269, 429.
- FU, Pei-Jung, 301.
- FU, Youde, 11, 271.
- Fusion of horizons, 11, 134, 147, 148, 152, 177, 238, 239.
- G**
- GADAMER, Hans-Georg, 7, 10, 52, 122, 125, 132-134, 137, 147, 177, 233-245, 248-253, 296.
- GAGO, Baltasar, 230.
- GALLAGHER, Louis J., 170.
- GARDEIL, Henri-Dominique, 316, 332.
- GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, René, 316.
- GAŽÍK, Peter, 334, 353.
- Generosity, 1, 16, 27, 30, 32, 33, 35, 40-43, 45, 54, 56, 58, 61, 62, 66, 70, 71, 75, 83, 87-89, 90-92, 94, 95, 98, 115, 257, 258, 269, 275, 365, 413, 416, 424, 427, 430, 432, 435, 436.
- GENTILE, Giovanni, 13, 341-343.
- GERNET, Jacques, 183, 190, 197.
- GEWIRTH, Alan, 127, 137.
- GHIKA, Dimitrie, 326, 327.
- GHIKA, Vladimir, 12, 313, 315, 316, 319, 320, 322-332.
- GIBERT, Pierre, 181, 197.
- GILSON, Etienne, 68.
- GIMPEL, Denise, 190, 199.
- GIRARDOT, Norman J., 193, 197.
- Global ethics, 68, 69, 127, 128, 131, 137.
- Globalism, 55.
- Globalization, 1, 27, 30, 32, 33, 35, 45, 55, 57-59, 69-71, 79, 80, 102, 115, 118, 258, 385, 404, 431, 433, 435.
- God-given, 11, 271, 277, 281, 287.
- GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang von, 76.
- Golden Rule, 41, 127-132, 137.
- GOLVERS, Noël, 215, 222, 223, 225.
- GOODMAN, Lenn, 272, 291.
- Goodness, 5, 69, 70, 71, 77, 83, 88, 89, 91, 115, 116, 266, 299, 300, 306, 307, 311, 337, 338, 353.
- Gospel of John*, 64.
- GOUVEA, António de, 216.
- Governance, 115.
- Grace, 60, 62, 86, 163, 299, 302, 311, 312, 341, 436.
- GRAHAM, A. C., 220.
- GRANET, Marcel, 419.
- Great Learning*, 10, 42, 45, 72, 80, 170, 300, 301, 309, 389, 400.
- Great Ultimate, 73, 396.
- Greek philosophy, 69, 380, 381, 383, 406.
- GUA, Najue, 216.
- GUIBAL, Francis, 5.
- Guishen*, 224, 225, 228, 229.
- GUO, Qingfan, 112, 117.
- GUO, Qiyong, 427.
- H**
- HABERMAS, Jürgen, 7, 52, 75, 104, 123, 126, 137, 143-146, 151-153, 243, 252, 406.
- HAIDER, Jörg, 353.
- HANZ, Melanie, 190, 199.
- Happiness, 165, 262, 267, 286, 294, 387, 393.
- Harmony, 1, 3, 7, 10, 11, 82, 109-111, 117, 140-143, 145-148, 150, 151, 157, 163, 170, 173, 259, 379, 419, 421, 432, 436.
- HARSHAV, Barbara, 97, 99.
- HART, Hendrik, 70, 258.
- HAYEK, Friedrich August von, 271, 288.
- HE, Xiaoxin, 420.
- Health care, 14, 355, 408, 411.
- Heart of China, 373, 374.
- Heaven-endowed, 12, 293, 300, 303, 304, 306, 311.
- Heaven-mandated, 12, 293, 299, 303, 310.
- Heaven, 12, 15, 75, 110-112, 114, 115, 117, 165, 170, 172-174, 177, 182, 189, 224, 226, 228, 230, 293, 299-304, 306, 307, 309, 310-312, 388, 413, 421, 427.

- Hebrew Bible, 12, 273, 278, 279, 281, 286, 289, 290.
 Hebrew justice, 11, 272, 282, 286, 287, 289, 290.
 Hebrew, 11, 84, 239, 271-282, 285-291.
 HEDGES, Chris, 23.
 HEGEL, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 28, 45, 52, 63, 66, 73, 265, 341, 347, 394, 395, 397-399, 401.
 HEIDEGGER, Martin, 6, 29, 34, 39, 40, 45, 46, 52, 57, 66, 75, 80, 83, 99, 101, 126, 133, 180, 199, 233, 236-238, 296, 364, 388, 401, 406.
 HELLEMANS, Staf, 145, 153.
 HENSCHENS, Godefridus, 222.
 HERDER, Johann Gottfried, 295.
 HERDRICH, Christian Wolfgang, 184, 185, 198, 215, 216, 222, 225.
 Hermeneutical, 1, 2, 11, 12, 19-21, 177, 179, 189, 192, 193, 235, 236, 242, 293, 298, 308, 310, 436.
 Hermeneutics, 7, 9, 10, 25, 43, 52, 69, 121-123, 125, 126, 132-134, 136-138, 148, 150, 153, 179, 189, 191, 192, 231, 233-238, 241-244, 245, 248, 250-253, 310, 331, 435.
 Heroism, 344.
 HESCHEL, Abraham J., 272, 275, 277, 291.
 HICK, John, 67, 68, 80.
 Hierarchical, 107, 265, 294.
 HIGGINS-ZOGIB, Lisa, 422.
 HINLICKY, Paul R., 341-343, 345, 350, 352-354.
 HIRSCH, E. D., 242, 252.
Historical Records, 108.
 Historicity, 23, 234.
 HITLER, Adolf, 341, 345-347, 352, 354.
 Hitlerism, 335, 340-347, 350, 351, 354.
 HOBBS, Thomas, 266, 285, 288.
 HÖFFNER, Joseph, 60, 61, 66.
 Holiness, 11, 275, 284, 285, 337.
 HOLLADAY, William L., 274, 291.
 Holocaust, 93, 94.
 Holy Spirit, 62, 65, 247, 248.
 HOMER, 76.
 Homogenization, 10, 176, 210.
 HONNETH, Axel, 63, 66.
 Hospitality, 1, 7, 8, 89, 90, 91, 98, 141, 148, 150-152, 163.
 HSIA, Mathias, 47, 169, 175, 180, 197.
 HU, Kuo-chen, 170.
 HU, Yeping, 8, 165.
Hua-qiao, 370, 371, 375.
Hua-ren, 373.
 HUANG, Jianli, 7, 128, 131, 137, 373, 384.
 HUANG, Yong, 7, 121, 127, 134, 377.
 Human condition, 2, 3, 147.
 Human dignity, 11, 144, 268, 290, 340.
 Human finitude, 8, 157-159, 161, 163.
 Human fragility, 163, 164.
 Human justice, 271, 275, 277, 278, 280, 283, 286, 290.
 Human nature, 5, 12, 14, 15, 48, 61, 63, 69-72, 77, 78, 102, 106, 226, 264, 285, 286, 293, 300, 303, 304, 306, 307, 309, 311, 326, 336, 359, 366, 390, 393, 434, 435.
 Human rights, 103, 108, 266, 281, 282, 285.
 Human solidarity, 7, 125, 126, 133, 134, 136, 137.
 Humaneness, 6, 101, 102, 107-110, 113, 115-117, 335.
 Humanism, 48, 117, 287, 299, 346, 434.
 Humanity, 13, 19, 23, 28, 72, 84, 94, 95, 143, 155, 159, 173, 174, 176, 227, 258, 288, 299, 304-306, 334, 338, 346, 353, 359, 407, 434.
 Humanness, 9, 117, 169.
 HUME, David, 387.
 HUNG, Andrew Tsz Wan, 12, 293
 HUSSERL, Edmund, 29, 39, 40, 42, 52, 237, 435.
- I**
- I-Thou relationship, 55.
 Idealism, 347, 391, 394.
 Ideologies, 334, 335, 339, 340, 342, 347, 349, 350, 351, 353.
 Ideology, 65, 78, 166, 167, 340-342, 345, 347, 350, 382.
 Ignatian spirituality, 213, 225, 226, 231.

- images, 112, 169, 187, 314-322, 330, 331.
 Imaginary, 155, 316.
 Imagination, 235, 314, 316, 321, 322, 328.
 Immigrant, 14, 353, 370, 379, 383.
 Immortality, 170, 172, 415, 418, 421, 423, 425.
 Imperialism, 77, 344, 352.
 Inborn knowledge, 111, 115.
 Inconsistency, 51, 52, 217.
 Individual rights, 264, 271, 285, 288, 349.
 Individualism, 103, 109, 143, 262, 267, 268, 288, 294, 295.
 Individualist, 11, 142, 143, 257, 259, 261-266.
 Infinity, 65, 89, 91, 286.
 Inseparability, 39.
 Inspiration, 10, 12, 110, 116, 191, 246, 247.
 Institutionalization, 12, 103, 282, 407.
 Instrumental reason, 7, 102, 294.
 Intelligence, 228, 229, 316, 321, 322, 385.
 Intention, 38, 40, 42, 107, 115, 125, 163, 171, 240, 243, 244, 290, 327, 371, 393, 394.
 Intentionality, 29, 39, 40, 42, 89.
 Interactive justice, 285.
 Interconnectedness, 42, 44, 70, 72, 76-78.
 Intercultural dialogue, 8, 163, 179.
 Interpretation, 7, 10, 63, 69, 74, 77, 121-123, 125, 132, 136, 137, 162, 173, 181, 188, 189, 202, 204, 209, 213, 223, 225, 227, 229, 233, 236-239, 241, 243-245, 248, 249, 251, 275, 286, 300, 309, 346, 410.
 Interreligious dialogue, 4, 5, 34, 67, 69, 70, 74, 75, 77-79, 81, 163, 427.
 Intersubjectivity, 29, 40, 94, 123.
 INTORCETTA, Prospero, 10, 184, 185, 198, 213-217, 219-232.
 Intranslatability, 239.
 Intuition, 106, 111, 112, 287, 294, 303-306, 308, 309, 398, 399, 405.
 Israel, 12, 84, 176, 271, 279, 280, 282, 283, 287, 292, 312.
- J**
- JAMI, Catherine, 180, 197.
 JAMNICKÝ, Ján, 340, 341.
 JASPERS, Karl, 156.
- JEFFREY, David Lyle, 282, 291.
 JENSEN, Lionel, 215, 218.
 JEREMIAH, 276, 277.
 Jesuit missionaries, 9, 68, 202, 204, 205, 209, 218.
 Jesuit missionary, 10, 165, 202, 206, 218.
 Jesuits, 9, 34, 47, 56, 57, 179, 180, 181, 183-185, 187, 189, 191, 196, 197, 200, 201, 213-219, 221-223, 225-231, 324, 432.
 JESUS, 11, 62, 182, 188, 194, 195, 220, 227, 251, 280, 341.
 Jewish thinkers, 281.
 Jewish, 11, 84, 87, 93, 95, 188, 271-275, 279, 281, 290-292, 338, 346.
 JIANG, Rong, 414.
 JIANG, Xinyan, 377, 378, 384.
 JIN, Guangyao, 193, 200.
 JOAS, Hans, 156.
 JOHN PAUL II, 22, 175, 176.
 JOHNSTON, Ian, 226.
 JONKERS, Peter, 7, 139, 145, 146, 148, 152, 153.
 JONSEN, Albert, 356, 366.
 JOSEPHUS, Flavius, 282, 291.
 Judaeo-Christian, 299.
 Judaism, 274, 277, 278, 280, 286, 290, 291.
 Judgment, 29, 30, 60, 85, 96, 103, 110, 147, 148, 231, 236, 245, 274, 276, 280, 283, 293, 296, 297, 310, 339, 356, 374, 409.
Junzi, 226, 303, 307.
 Just war theory, 336.
 Justice, 11, 22, 48, 54, 61, 63, 64, 66, 84, 85, 86, 91, 92, 95, 133, 145, 257-263, 265-269, 271-290, 297, 336-338, 351, 452, 356, 431, 434.
 Justness, 274.
- K**
- KANT, Immanuel, 31, 36, 45, 52, 110, 117, 118, 135, 137, 159, 161, 237, 261, 286, 291, 297, 434.
 KAVKA, Martin, 272, 292.
 KEARNEY, Richard, 148, 150, 153.
 KIERKEGAARD, Søren, 126, 299.

- KIM, Sangkeun, 172, 191, 197.
 KIM, Sungmoon, 306.
 Kindness, 49, 50, 60, 65, 275, 427.
 KIRCHER, Athanasius, 187.
 KNAUER, Peter, 64, 66.
 KNITTER, Paul, 67, 70, 76, 77, 80.
 Knowledge, 5, 6, 9, 14, 23, 32, 36-38, 47, 61, 76, 101, 104-106, 108, 111, 112, 115-117, 127, 133, 139, 160, 168, 170, 175, 179, 180-182, 184, 186, 188, 189, 191, 192, 223, 230, 234, 235, 281, 285, 304, 308, 310, 318, 319, 320, 322, 323, 325, 330, 345, 348, 349, 355, 356, 358-360, 363, 378, 387, 388, 391, 394-396, 399, 405, 407, 432, 437.
Koran, 134, 135.
 KUANG, Lo, 5, 48, 50, 68, 81.
 KULIKOVSKY, Andrew S., 274, 275, 291.
 KÜNG, Hans, 95.
 Kunlun Mountain, 415.
 KVACALA, Jan, 334.
 KWAN, Carlo, 29, 45.
- L**
- LACAN, Jacques, 23, 55, 82.
 LAGERWEY, John, 183, 184, 197.
 LAJCIAK, Jan, 334.
 LANCASHIRE, Douglas, 170.
 LANDRY-DERON, Isabelle, 186, 197.
 Landscape, 15, 378, 413, 414, 419, 424, 425.
 Language appropriation, 54, 69, 70, 74.
 Language, 1, 3, 8-10, 20, 21, 23-25, 30, 32, 33, 36, 41, 43, 50, 53-55, 65, 69, 70, 73, 74, 76, 142, 144, 145, 147-151, 157-159, 165, 168, 170, 174, 185, 186, 190, 194, 195, 214-216, 218, 224, 230, 231, 233, 236, 238-241, 243-246, 249, 250, 273, 296, 298, 302, 357, 358, 370, 371, 390, 413, 414.
 LANSBERGEN, Philip, 185.
Laozi, 15, 21, 75, 88, 105, 112, 132, 137, 138, 195, 395, 396, 410, 420, 421.
 LASCU, Gh., 313, 332.
 LASCU, V., 313, 332.
- LAWN, Chris, 234, 252.
 Learning, 1, 9, 23, 25, 58, 74, 111, 121, 125, 140, 151, 168, 170, 171, 175, 182, 203, 206-208, 222, 223, 240, 304, 310, 340, 359, 360, 385, 389, 390, 400, 430, 432, 434, 435, 437.
 LEE, Yen-Yi, 4, 67, 79.
 Legal justice, 12, 285, 287, 288, 290.
 Legalism, 11, 271, 290.
 Legality, 53, 290, 405.
 LEGGE, James, 159, 175, 193, 197, 247, 263, 301, 355, 376, 389, 392, 393, 397, 418.
 LEIBNIZ, Gottfried Wilhelm, 183, 186, 187, 197, 198.
 LENEHAN, Katia, 3, 27, 48, 51, 66.
 LEVENSON, Joseph, 382, 384.
 LÉVINAS, Emmanuel, 5, 6, 41, 55, 69, 81-97, 99, 364-366.
 LI, Chen, 48, 50.
 LI, Chenyang, 14, 68, 229, 230, 258, 303-305, 369, 377, 382-384, 429, 431, 438.
 LI, Chien-chiu, 48.
 LI, Eva X., 374, 384.
 LI, Peter S., 374.
 LI, Tiangang, 189.
 LIANG, Shuming, 404.
 Liberal democracies, 145.
 Liberal Protestant theology, 340, 353.
 Liberalism, 143, 144, 145, 153, 271, 351, 382.
 Liberation, 11, 22, 71, 257.
 Liberty, 163, 241, 264, 267, 388.
Liezi, 220.
 LIN, Hui-ju, 14, 355.
 LIN, Jianfu, 118.
 LIN, Yutang, 376, 384.
 LINDBECK, George, 70, 80.
 LINGE, David E., 242, 252.
 LINGIS, Alphonso, 84, 97, 99, 364.
 Linguistic hospitality, 150.
 Linguistic, 1, 3, 7, 20, 25, 31, 33, 35, 52, 54, 69, 72-74, 141, 148-150, 186, 239, 246, 248, 250, 375.
 LIU, Gianmei, 428.
 LIU, Johanna, 57, 413.
 LIU, Shu-hsien, 68, 303, 311.

- LIU, Yunhua, 189.
 Localization, 50, 55, 58, 65.
 LOCKE, Gary, 103, 261, 285, 288, 374, 376.
 LOCKE, John, 163.
Logos, 64, 190.
 LONERGAN, Bernard, 22, 68.
 LONGOBARDO, Niccolò, 183, 190, 191, 198, 214, 230.
 Lord of Heaven, 172, 173.
 LOSSKY, Nikolaj, 334.
 Love, 4, 9, 13, 22, 49, 57, 60-65, 85, 96, 107, 109, 116, 117, 16, 171, 177, 252, 275, 277, 280, 299, 305, 308, 329, 338, 437.
 Lovingkindness, 22.
 LUH, Jing-Jong, 55.
 LUNDIN, Roger, 265.
Lunyū, 10, 213-216, 218, 219, 228.
 LUTHER, Martin, 280, 336, 340.
 Lutheran Church, 13, 333.
- M**
- MACHIAVELLI, Niccolò, 13, 341.
 MACINTYRE, Alasdair, 259, 262, 263, 271, 272, 291.
 Magnanimity, 91, 98.
 MALATESTA, Edward J., 170.
 MALEK, Roman, 188, 198.
 MANSOURIAN, Stephanie, 422.
 Many others, 2, 4-6, 8, 14, 27, 32, 33, 42-45, 49, 55-59, 62, 64, 65, 68-70, 72, 73, 77-79, 81-83, 87, 88, 90-93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 102, 109, 115, 117, 137, 140, 143, 355, 363, 365, 377, 427, 434, 435.
 MARITAIN, Jacques, 11, 68, 259, 265-269, 316, 319-321, 332, 438.
 MARTINI, Martino, 185, 198, 215.
 MARX, Karl, 126, 347.
 Marxism, 340, 382.
 MASARYK, Tomas Garrigue, 334.
 MASSINI, Federico, 217.
 Materialism, 347, 391, 394.
 Mathematics, 111, 174, 175, 185, 186, 386.
 May Fourth Movement, 310.
 MCLEAN, George F., 1, 26, 165.
 MEAD, George Herbert, 159.
 Meaningfulness, 2, 3, 19-26, 42-44, 71, 74, 310.
 Meaninglessness, 19, 20, 162.
 Medical education, 14, 355, 359, 363, 365.
 Medical ethics, 14, 356, 358, 359, 363, 365.
 Medicine, 14, 15, 59, 355, 358, 359, 363, 366, 406-408, 410, 411.
 MELCHISÉDECH, Thévenot, 222.
 Memory, 12, 156, 206, 251, 313-324, 326-331, 429.
 MENCIVS, 107, 111, 114, 116, 117, 170, 225, 300-303, 305, 306, 307, 308, 310, 420, 437.
 MENDES-FLOHR, Paul, 272, 291.
 MENEGON, Eugenio, 180, 198.
 MERCIER, Cardinal, 68.
 Mercy, 50, 60, 65, 275, 277, 280, 284, 341.
 MERLEAU-PONTY, Maurice, 43, 296, 435.
 Meta-cosmic, 186.
 Metamorphoses, 313.
 Metaphors, 315, 436.
 Metaphysical, 30, 41, 50, 61-63, 65, 82, 88, 302, 334, 344.
 Metaphysics, 28, 50-52, 61, 186, 225, 310, 341, 342, 386.
 Methodology, 33, 49, 51-53, 59, 70, 79, 235, 355.
 MEYNARD, Thierry, 10, 181, 182, 185, 198, 199, 213, 214, 224, 227-230.
 MFONYAM, Joseph, 246, 247, 248, 249.
 Micro-worlds, 3, 31-34, 37, 53-55, 74.
 MIKHAILOVA, Natalia A., 239, 240, 241, 252.
 MILL, John S., 126, 262, 264, 266, 267, 271.
 Ming Dynasty, 8, 34, 47, 56, 68, 165, 166, 221, 423.
Ming, 300, 301, 303.
 MIRIBEL, Elisabeth de, 329, 332.
Mishpat, 12, 273, 274, 291.
 Mnemonic, 314, 315.
 Modernism, 42, 52, 55, 81.
 Modernity, 5, 6, 28-30, 35, 48, 50-52, 54, 55, 57-60, 65, 66, 69, 81-83, 88, 99, 101, 102-105, 111, 117, 140, 142, 145, 153, 156, 234, 293, 294, 299, 403-406, 432-434.

- Modernization, 59, 104, 142, 175, 404, 405, 433.
 Mohism, 382.
 MONDIN, Baptista, 318.
 Monotheism, 84, 155, 195, 197.
 Monotheistic, 155, 157, 158.
 Moral autonomy, 12, 293, 294, 295, 297, 307.
 Morality, 12, 107, 135, 140, 168, 173, 174, 186, 275, 277, 278, 288-290, 293, 295, 296, 298-300, 302, 303, 307-312, 336, 344, 345, 348, 349, 389, 432, 434, 436.
 MORAN, D., 365, 366.
 MORRISON, Robert, 219.
 Mosaic laws, 279, 287.
 MOSES, 277, 280, 282, 283, 286, 287, 290.
 Motherland, 14, 371, 372.
 MOU, Zongsan, 6, 101, 111, 113.
 Mount Sinai, 277.
 Mount Tai, 418, 425.
 Mountains, 16, 165, 413, 414-420, 422-425.
 MUELLER-VOLLMER, Kurt, 243, 252.
 MÜLLER, Friedrich Max, 76, 80, 193.
 Multiculturalism, 143, 153, 257, 335, 354.
 MUNGELLO, David E., 181, 186, 187, 198, 218.
 MURATA, Sachito, 195, 198.
 MURRAY, T. J., 359, 366.
 MUSSOLINI, Benito, 13, 341-344, 346, 352.
 Mutual recognition, 63, 157, 160, 163, 164, 430.
 Mutual strangification, 5, 56, 58, 69, 70, 77, 435.
 Mutuality, 8, 41, 83, 88, 98, 157, 160, 163.
 Myriads of things, 5, 6, 69, 72, 101, 105.
 Mythology, 162, 163, 187, 284, 414.
- N**
- NABOKOV, Vladimir, 126.
 NADAL, Jerome, 184.
 NAQUIN, Susan, 419.
 Natural justice, 285.
 Natural law, 24, 48, 75.
 Natural science, 235, 359, 363, 365.
 Naturalist, 298.
 NAVARRETE, Domingo Fernández, 214, 217, 223, 224.
 Nazi ideology, 340.
 Nazism, 334, 340, 341, 345, 346, 351, 352, 354.
 NEEDHAM, Joseph, 174.
 NEGRI, Antonio, 70, 79.
 NEIMAN, Susan, 156, 161.
 Neo-Platonism, 28.
 Neo-Scholasticism, 4, 5, 47-51, 54, 55, 57-59, 63, 65, 67-69, 79, 81-83, 97.
 Nestorianism, 56, 432.
 NEVILLE, Robert, 20, 22, 109, 380.
 New Testament, 10, 233, 234, 244-248, 250-252, 336, 338.
 NEWMAN, Louis E., 272, 275, 291.
 NI, Peimin, 377, 383, 384.
 NIBA, Michael Suh, 10, 233.
 NIEBUHR, Richard, 8, 157-163.
 NIETZSCHE, Friedrich, 126, 299, 312, 330, 345.
 Nihilism, 6, 101, 102, 103, 108, 109, 343, 344, 435.
 Non-action, 109, 132.
 Non-being, 238, 397.
 Non-Ultimate, 396.
 Nonviolence, 22.
 NORDEN, Bryan W. Van, 308.
 Nothingness, 24, 74, 98, 392, 394-401.
 Noumena, 36.
 NOVAK, David, 272, 292.
 NUSSBAUM, Martha C., 258.
 NYÍRI, Pál, 424.
- O**
- O'KEEFE, Brian, 250, 252.
 Obedience, 275, 282.
 Objectivity, 102, 107, 108, 235.
 Obligations, 107, 263, 274, 279, 288, 289, 309.
 OLSER, William, 359.
 Omnipotence, 149, 337, 338.
 Omniscience, 337.
 Ontological relationship, 49, 59, 62-65.
 Ontological strangification, 32-34, 54, 55, 75.
 Ontological Turn, 4, 47.

- Ontological, 1, 3, 4, 29, 32-37, 39, 40, 42-44, 49, 54-56, 59, 62-65, 69, 70, 72, 74-78, 90, 233, 236, 342, 413.
 Openness, 6, 28, 35, 40, 43, 44, 49, 56, 64, 90, 176, 299, 403.
 Optimism, 192, 334.
 Ordinance, 15, 274, 388.
 Organism, 102, 347, 435.
 Original desire, 40, 42, 43, 44, 71.
 Original generosity, 40-42, 61, 62, 72, 91.
 Original inclination, 116.
 Original mind, 71, 115, 116, 365.
 Original text, 218, 227, 242, 397.
 OSLER, William, 359, 366.
 OSUSKY, Samuel Štefan, 13, 333-351, 353, 354.
 Otherness, 3, 8, 29, 40, 60, 62, 65, 147, 156-164, 247.
 Overseas Chinese, 14, 370, 371, 373, 374, 377-380, 383.
- P**
- PA, Chin Ken, 55.
 PAGANO, Joseph S., 161.
 Pan-legal, 289, 290.
 PANIKKAR, Raimon, 192, 198.
 PANTOJA, Didace de, 47.
 PAPY, Jan, 222.
 Passion, 13, 284, 326.
 Patient-centered, 14, 366.
 PAXTON, Robert O., 353, 354.
 Peace, 107, 113, 140, 163, 171, 275, 311, 337, 339, 340, 344.
 Pedagogical, 325, 339.
 PEIRCE, Charles Sanders, 159.
 Perception, 91, 237, 309, 314, 317, 318, 320, 342, 364, 370, 391.
 Persecution, 328, 329.
 Personalism, 268, 334, 335, 354.
 Personality, 6, 69, 98, 101, 103, 108, 114, 175, 263, 350, 407, 434, 437.
 Personhood, 21.
 Perspectives, 135, 137, 335, 354.
 Phantasms, 37.
 Phenomenology, 23, 29, 43, 51, 52, 69, 365, 434, 435.
 Physician, 357, 358, 361, 407, 409.
 PICCOLOMINI, 182.
 PIECHYCHNA, Beata, 240, 253.
 Pilgrimage, 418, 419, 423, 425.
 PLATO, 38, 73, 284, 286, 291, 308, 380, 386, 390.
 Platonism, 344, 387.
 Pluralism, 23, 55, 68, 93, 97, 143, 145, 152, 265.
Politico-moralis, 220, 222, 224, 225, 231.
 Pontifical Biblical Commission, 243, 244, 253.
 POPE BENEDICT, 145, 153.
 POPE FRANCIS, 24.
 POPE PAUL VI, 60.
 POPPER, Karl, 104, 118.
 Postcommunist, 352.
 Postmodernism, 5, 52, 55, 69, 81, 82, 87, 102, 104, 118, 296.
 Postmodernity, 55, 59, 69.
 Practical strangification, 54, 55.
 Pragmatism, 348.
 PREGADIO, Fabrizio, 418.
 PRÉMARE, Joseph de, 187, 188, 198.
 Presbyterian, 246, 251.
 Principlism, 355, 356.
 Proletarian, 327, 348.
 Proletariat, 348, 349.
 Prophetic, 335, 340, 345, 350.
 Propriety, 6, 7, 15, 22, 102, 304, 305, 389.
 Protestant missionaries, 246.
 PROUST, Merceel, 126.
 Public health, 357.
 Public Sphere, 75, 79, 144-146, 152.
 Public Square, 136, 138.
 Punishment, 173, 275, 284, 290, 295, 337.
- Q**
- QIAN, Zhi-chun, 48.
 QIAN, Zhongshu, 392.
 QUERBEUF, Yves Mathurin Marie Tréaudet de, 205, 210, 211.

R

- RADL, Emanuel, 334.
 RAHNER, Karl, 68.
 RAMBACH, J. J., 245.
 Rationality, 15, 30, 49, 60, 108, 193, 294, 356, 364, 365, 387, 400.
 RAWLS, John, 7, 12, 126, 143-145, 151, 153, 260-262, 271, 288, 292.
 RAZUS, Martin, 337.
 Realism, 3, 12, 27, 30-33, 35-38, 43, 46, 53, 57, 58, 66, 69, 73, 80, 293, 297, 299, 307, 309.
 Reciprocity, 2, 41, 55, 56, 58, 61, 62, 70, 72, 77, 78, 94, 98, 109, 157, 159, 160, 258.
 Recognition, 11, 39, 41, 109, 112, 144, 157, 159, 160, 163, 164, 235, 265, 267, 268, 319, 320, 321.
 Recollections, 315, 320, 321, 326.
 Relational being, 49, 57, 59, 62, 64, 65.
 Relational ontology, 49, 50, 55, 57, 59, 61-65, 161.
 Relational power, 9, 202, 204, 209, 210, 211
 Relationality, 8, 157-163, 196.
 Relativism, 77, 293, 294, 295, 297.
 Religion, 1, 13, 33, 48, 54, 59, 67, 76-78, 124, 132, 133, 155, 156, 166, 170, 175, 180, 186, 193, 196, 198, 230, 237, 271, 273, 282, 287, 290, 333, 334, 336, 343, 348, 349, 376, 403, 420, 421, 425, 427, 432, 436.
 Religious dialogue, 33, 34, 49, 53, 54, 59, 60, 428.
 Religious dogmas, 283.
 Remembering, 149, 318, 321, 331.
Ren, 9, 69, 131, 169, 173, 304, 305, 373, 374, 434.
 Renaissance, 13, 184, 189, 192, 197, 341, 403.
 Representation, 84, 103, 104, 314, 320, 321.
 Responsibility, 14, 22, 58, 60, 75, 85, 90-95, 160, 233, 288, 303, 336, 339, 346, 350-353, 360, 366.
 Revelation, 37, 64, 186, 220, 277, 284, 312, 334.
 RICCI, Matteo, 4, 8, 9, 34, 46-48, 50, 57, 58, 66, 68, 75, 80, 83, 99, 165-177, 180-184, 189-192, 197-199, 204, 213, 214, 218, 219, 229-231, 376, 432.
 RICOEUR, Paul, 7, 20, 43, 46, 109, 123, 124, 138, 141, 142, 146, 148-151, 153, 435.
 Righteousness, 6, 102, 110, 113, 174, 273-276, 279, 280, 284, 287, 305, 434, 436.
 RIQUEBOURG-TRIGAULT, David Floris de, 205.
 Ritual, 6, 22, 25, 102, 110, 190, 202, 277, 289, 304, 308, 309, 417, 419, 423, 425.
 Rivers, 413, 415, 419, 424.
 ROBSON, James, 267, 418.
 Romania, 313, 315, 323-326, 328-330.
 ROMANO, Antonella. 181, 185, 199.
 Romanticism, 293, 298.
 RONCARI, D., 314, 315, 330, 332.
 RORTY, Richard, 7, 122, 123, 126, 138, 143, 145, 151, 153.
 ROSSI, Philip J., 8, 155.
 ROSSO, Antonio Sisto, 168.
 ROUGEMONT, François de, 184, 215.
 ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques, 285, 295, 296.
 ROYCE, Josiah, 159.
 RUGGIERI, Michele, 168, 214.
 Rule of law, 12, 283, 290, 434.

S

- Sabbath, 287, 290.
 Sacred mountain, 414, 417, 418, 422, 423.
 Sacred, 15, 78, 173, 193, 222, 294, 297, 376, 381, 413-420, 422, 423, 424, 425.
 Sacredness, 16, 30, 413.
 Sage, 89, 108, 110, 114, 220, 312, 389.
 Sagehood, 6, 102, 107, 114, 389.
 SAKA, Paul, 135, 138.
 Salvation, 50, 60, 62, 75, 227, 245, 252, 273, 311, 336, 338, 339, 436.
 SANDEL, Michael, 259, 262-264.
Sapientia sinica, 10, 213-220, 222-225, 228.
 SARTRE, Jean-Paul, 6, 101.
 SCHALL, Adam von Bell, 221.
 SCHILLING, Dennis, 118.
 SCHLEIERMACHER, Friedrich, 134, 137, 138, 235, 236, 245.
 SCHNEIDER, Herbert, 343, 354.

- Scholastic realism, 36.
 Scholasticism, 4, 5, 36, 47-52, 58, 59, 65-68, 75, 79-83, 97, 195, 199, 228.
School Sayings of Confucius, 221.
 SCHWARZSCHILD, Steven S., 276, 292.
 SCHWÖBEL, Christoph, 63.
Scientia, 96, 213, 222, 223.
 SCULLION, J. J., 273, 292.
 SEBES, Joseph, 167, 169, 174.
 Secularity, 8, 24, 155-158, 193.
 Self-actualization, 21, 54.
 Self-affirmation, 299.
 Self-awareness, 7, 15, 73, 75, 139-143, 145-148, 150, 151, 403-406, 411.
 Self-consciousness, 63, 90, 96, 133, 401.
 Self-creation, 122, 123, 125, 126, 133.
 Self-cultivation, 114, 126, 173, 174, 304, 308, 309.
 Self-enclosure, 4, 29, 38, 39, 43, 44, 50, 58, 68, 71, 148, 151.
 Self-fulfillment, 4, 51, 63, 122.
 Self-in-the-making, 57, 140.
 Self-perfection, 44, 114.
 Self-realization, 44, 72.
 Self-recognition, 157.
 Self-reflection, 71, 73, 75, 77, 115, 435.
 Self-understanding, 2, 38, 123, 132, 296, 306, 308.
 Selfishness, 71, 102, 109, 116, 117, 266.
 Selflessness, 114.
 SEMEDO, Alvarez, 9, 182, 199, 202, 205-208, 210, 211.
 SENECA, 194.
 Sensibility, 126.
 Sentient beings, 5, 69.
 ŠERBAN, Gh. I., 315, 331.
 SHAKESPEARE, William, 76.
 Shakyamuni, 194.
Shangdi, 229, 230, 231.
Shanshui, 15, 413, 414, 423, 424.
 SHEN, Vincent, 1-9, 17, 19, 21, 27, 28, 30-38, 40-47, 49, 50, 51, 52-83, 87-91, 95-99, 101-111, 114-118, 121, 137-140, 146, 153, 157, 164, 179, 199, 201, 217, 257, 258, 269, 300-303, 310, 361, 365, 366, 369, 377, 378, 384, 403, 413, 416, 417, 427, 437.
Shendu, 226.
 SHOREY, Paul, 284, 291.
Shu, 2, 55, 68, 69, 215, 217, 434.
 SHUN, Kwong-Loi, 377.
 SIEGLER, Mark, 356, 366.
 Signs, 23, 104, 112, 116, 334.
 SILVERMAN, Mark E., 359, 366.
 SILVERTHORNE, Michael, 282, 292.
 SIMA, Qian, 108, 219, 221.
Sinarum philosophus, 214, 216, 219-223, 225-232.
 Sincerity, 74, 78, 177, 306, 409, 437.
 SINGER, Peter A., 357, 366.
 Sinologists, 193, 194, 195.
 Sinology, 9, 10, 179, 181, 188, 190-194, 196, 213, 218, 232.
 Situatedness, 235, 240, 242, 341.
 Slavic philosophy, 333.
 Slavs, 346, 350.
 Slovak, 333, 337, 340, 345, 350.
 SMETÁČEK, Zdenek, 342, 354.
 SMITH, Norman Kemp, 36, 45, 97, 99, 124, 125.
 SMITH, Wilfred Cantwell, 133, 133, 135, 137, 138.
 Social control, 208, 210.
 Social strangification, 35.
 Socialism, 339.
 Socialist, 342, 424.
 Society of Jesus, 183, 201, 204, 205, 210, 215.
 SOCRATES, 38, 194, 364, 380, 386.
 Solidarity, 7, 8, 11, 22, 122, 123, 125, 126, 132-134, 136, 137, 163, 259, 263, 269, 328, 344, 369.
 Solipsism, 29, 148.
 SOUSA, Ronald de, 116, 118.
 Sovereign on High, 172, 174.
 SPINOZA, Baruch, 282, 285, 292.
Spiritual Exercises, 10, 226, 231.
 Spiritualism, 342.
Spring and Autumn Annals, 170, 172, 310.
 Stalinist, 334, 340, 347.
 STANDAERT, Nicolas, 180, 183, 189, 190, 199, 217, 231.
 STANLEY, John, 250, 253.
 STARR, Chloë, 195, 196, 199.

- STEFANINK, Bernd, 250, 253.
 STEINER, George, 156.
 STERBA, James, 263.
 Strangeness, 2, 27, 73, 95-97, 123.
 Strangers, 2, 27, 35, 72, 73, 84, 94, 164.
 Strangification, 1, 3-6, 27, 28, 30, 36, 49, 53-56, 58, 59, 61, 62, 64, 65, 68-71, 73-79, 82, 95, 97, 98, 101, 102, 109, 115, 257, 269, 427, 432, 434, 435.
 Structuralism, 52, 69.
 STRUHÁRIK, Juraj, 340, 341.
 Subjectivism, 242, 251, 299.
 Subjectivist, 125, 131, 140, 299.
 Subjectivity, 28, 29, 35, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48-50, 55, 57, 59, 63, 70, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89, 98, 103, 109, 110, 111, 113, 114, 139, 250, 253, 302, 403.
 Suffering, 25, 75, 93, 126, 264, 299, 302, 307, 334, 335, 337-339, 351, 360-362.
Summa theologiae, 260, 317.
 SUN, Xiangyang, 189.
 SUN, Yat-sen, 213, 371.
 Superstition, 171, 221, 228, 230, 231, 290.
 SWEET, William, 11, 257, 258, 266.
 Symbols, 104, 112, 123, 124, 160, 238, 313, 315, 330, 403.
 Systematic theology, 340.
 SZUBIN, Zvi H., 274, 279, 292.
- T**
- TACCHI-VENTURI, Pietro, 169.
Taiji, 73.
 TAN, Mingran, 6, 101.
Tanakh, 11, 271, 278, 288.
 TANG, Junyi, 14, 369, 374, 379, 384.
 TANG, Yijie, 8, 166, 167, 173.
 Tao, 15, 16, 89-92, 98, 220, 378, 390, 393, 396, 413, 416, 424.
 Taoism, 50, 53, 54, 56, 59, 60, 73, 80, 82, 193, 197, 415, 418, 422, 425.
 Taoist, 55, 56, 65, 192, 193, 220, 392, 413, 415, 418, 419, 420-422, 425.
 TAYLOR, Charles, 3, 4, 12, 20, 22, 24, 25, 75, 142, 143, 146-148, 151, 153, 156, 257, 259, 262, 265, 293-299, 302, 307-312.
 Technologies, 3, 24, 180, 436.
 Technology, 1, 3, 14, 23, 24, 51, 52, 69, 104, 106, 110, 111, 175, 182, 294, 345, 353, 355, 403, 404, 406, 407, 409, 432, 433.
 Teleology, 163.
 Telepathy, 6, 102.
 Temperance, 284, 285.
 Ten Commandments, 277.
 TENG, Yuan-wei, 5, 81.
 Theocracy, 12, 271, 282, 283, 290.
 Theodicy, 25, 277.
 Theology, 9, 13, 23, 61, 163, 179, 182, 183, 187, 190-193, 196, 302, 316, 322, 333, 334, 340, 351, 353, 386.
 Third party, 81-87, 91-96, 98, 364.
 THORAVAL, Joël, 418.
 Thrownness, 237.
Tian, 12, 24, 172, 230, 294, 300, 301.
Tianming, 300.
Tianzhu, 172, 228, 230.
 Titanism, 343.
 TOMBERLIN, J. E., 135, 137.
Torah, 277, 279, 287, 289.
 Totalitarian, 333, 340, 351, 353.
 Totalitarianism, 335, 351, 354.
 Totality, 92, 93, 96, 97, 122, 155, 159, 194, 238, 240, 364.
 Totalization, 97.
 Tourism, 414, 424.
 Tradicional Chinese Medicine, 15, 403, 405, 406, 408, 410, 411.
 Transcendence, 8, 24, 26, 42, 48, 54, 65, 86, 96, 98, 116, 155-159, 173, 283, 284, 290, 299, 302, 331, 343, 436.
 Transcendent, 12, 34, 60, 72, 75, 78, 155, 157, 158, 277, 284-288, 293, 294, 298, 302, 303, 307, 309, 310, 325, 343, 344, 364, 403.
 Transformation, 9, 21, 24, 28, 68, 88, 89, 110, 147, 162, 163, 196, 201, 204, 209, 226, 227, 251, 306, 308, 404, 409.
 Translatability, 71, 80, 365, 366.
 Translation, 4, 10, 25, 33, 74, 145, 148, 149, 150, 183-185, 187, 193, 198, 213-218, 220, 222-226, 229-232, 234, 239, 241-244, 246-251, 271, 301, 376, 403, 416, 417, 421.

- TRIGAULT, Nicolas, 204, 205, 210, 211.
 TROELTSCH, Ernst, 159.
Truth and Method, 122, 133, 134, 137, 177, 233-235, 237, 238, 242-245, 252, 253.
 Truth, 20, 22, 28, 49, 61, 62, 64, 65, 67, 70, 72, 76-78, 145, 171, 182, 188, 192, 194, 224, 233-235, 238-240, 243, 245, 248-251, 258, 281, 309, 319, 348, 349, 353, 360, 364, 387, 392, 393, 400, 433, 436.
 TSAI, F. C., 356, 357, 366.
 TU, Weiming, 195, 198, 303-305, 375, 377, 384.
Tzedakah, 275.
- U**
- Ultimate reality, 3, 19, 21, 24, 33-35, 59, 61, 74, 77-79, 98, 106.
 Unity, 7, 63, 73, 102, 106, 109, 113, 117, 146, 151, 170, 176, 287, 306, 323, 325, 394, 400.
 Universal language, 148, 149, 187.
 Universality, 38, 72, 95, 145, 149.
 Universalizability, 2, 4, 38, 42, 57, 59, 70, 72.
 Universalizable, 32, 33, 49, 56, 59, 65, 71, 74, 75, 95.
 Universalization, 97.
 Untranslatable, 150.
 Utilitarianism, 262, 266, 267, 298.
- V**
- VAGNONE, Alfonso, 181, 198.
 VALCO, Michal, 13, 333.
 Validity, 32, 72, 74, 235, 241, 243, 245, 321, 342, 348.
 VERDZEKOV, Paul, 251.
 VERELLEN, Franciscus, 415, 416.
 VERLY, Luc, 316, 322, 331.
 VERMANDER, Benoît, 9, 179, 195, 199.
 VICAS, Astrid, 9, 201.
 VILA-CHĀ, João J., 1.
 VILLASANTE, Roberto, 214.
 Violence, 23, 60, 97, 144, 352.
 Vocabularies, 145, 146.
 Vocabulary, 90, 145, 182, 183, 246, 420.
 VOLK, Hlinka, 345, 347, 352.
 VOLTAIRE, 285.
 Voluntarism, 14, 349.
 Vulnerability, 14, 164, 366.
- W**
- Waitui*, 1, 3, 27, 30, 31, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43-45, 68, 73, 257.
 WALLNER, Fritz, 31, 32, 36, 37, 43, 46, 53, 58, 66, 69.
 WALTON, Linda, 209, 211.
 WALZER, Michael, 265.
 WANG, Fuzhi, 103.
 WANG, Lvwei, 118.
 WANG, Ping, 226.
 WANG, Yangming, 111, 113, 115.
 WANG, Zheng, 47.
 WARNKE, Georgia, 234, 235, 237, 242, 243, 253.
 Weakness, 224, 312, 346, 362.
 WEINSHEIMER, Hoel C., 122, 137, 233, 234, 250, 252, 253.
 Well-being, 114, 121, 137, 262, 264, 266, 336, 342, 347, 351, 352.
 Western medicine, 59, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411.
 WHITEHEAD, A. N., 5, 52, 69, 431, 434.
 Wholeness, 22.
 WIGODER, Geoffrey, 274, 291.
 WINSLADE, William J., 356, 366.
 Wisdom, 5, 7, 13, 19, 69, 85, 105, 108, 161, 170, 176, 186, 219, 223, 284, 304, 312, 333, 334, 337, 338, 410, 428, 436.
 WISSINK, Jozef, 145, 153.
 WITEK, John, 185, 187, 200.
 WITTGENSTEIN, Ludwig, 31, 33, 46, 195, 200.
 WOLTERSTORFF, Nicholas, 136, 138.
 World philosophy, 14, 59, 370, 379-381, 383.
 Worshiping, 417, 419.
 WU, Huyi, 180.
 WU, Jing-Nuan, 392.
Wulun, 305.

X

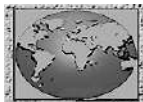
- XIAO, Hong, 14, 369.
 XU, Guang-qi, 47, 175, 180, 190, 197.
 XU, Xiake, 423.
Xunzi, 107, 112.

Y

- YANG, Huilin, 189.
 YANG, Ting-jun, 47.
 YANG, Young-ching, 176.
 Yellow Mountains, 423, 424.
Yijing, 186, 187, 230, 310.
 YO, Ying-Shih, 300.
 YÜ, Chün-Fang, 419.
 YU, Jiyuan, 285, 377, 387.
 YÜ, Pin, 5, 48, 50, 81.
 YU, Xuanmeng, 14, 385.
 YUAN, Ting-tung, 48.

Z

- ŽALEC, Bojan, 335, 354.
 ZANK, Michael, 272, 274, 275, 292.
Zedakah, 273, 275.
Zedek, 273, 274, 275, 287.
 ZENG, Yang-ru, 48.
 ZHANG, Dainian, 392.
 ZHANG, Juzheng, 10, 217, 219, 223-225, 228, 231.
 ZHAO, Dunhua, 258.
 ZHEN, Xuan, 392.
Zhongyong, 213, 214, 220, 222-228, 230, 231.
 ZHOU, Dunyi, 109, 389, 396.
 ZHU, Xi, 113, 217, 219, 223, 224, 226, 228, 437.
 ZHU, Yuanzhang, 222.
Zhuangzi, 102, 112-114, 117, 118, 128-132, 138, 194, 420.
 ZIZIOULAS, John D., 63.
 ZOU, Shipeng, 15, 403.
 ZÜRCHER, Erik, 184, 200.



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