INTRODUCTION: PLURALISTIC AND MULTICULTURAL REEXAMINATIONS OF TOLERANCE/TOLERATION

John Zijiang Ding*

Tolerance, inter-cultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where people are becoming more and more closely interconnected.
—Kofi Annan, Former Secretary-General of the United Nation

This special issue of JET will discuss “Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and Tolerance/Toleration.” The highest social idea is “universal love,” however the bottom line of a realistic society is “tolerance/toleration.” “Tolerance/toleration” can be defined as a sense of openness to difference and diversity, namely, a just, inclusive, pluralistic, and objective attitude of mind or way of thinking toward different genders, races, religions, and nationalities as well as different values, rights, interests, spiritualities, and socio-political ideas. But what are the more detailed distinctions between tolerance and toleration? V. Bader answers: “Tolerance/toleration, first, can refer to (a) an articulated normative principle; (b) an individual attitude, disposition or a personal virtue; and (c) to collective practices and institutional regimes. When I mean an articulated normative principle, I call it tolerance; when I refer to attitudes, virtues, practices and institutional regimes I use the term toleration.” (Bader 2011, 18)

The concept of tolerance has become an important issue in ethical and political philosophy such as Karl Popper, John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, and many other important thinkers. So far, we may find a growing number of books and articles approaching the issues of tolerance from various angles as well as in many different nations. R. Forst classifies “toleration” into the four types: the permission conception, the coexistence conception, the respect conception, and the esteem conception. (Forst 2012) All of the four types of conceptions must be involved in inclusivism, pluralism and multiculturalism. Cultural pluralism is the view that all genders, races, nations, religions, and any socio-political units are all equally worthy. All of them should have a legitimate status of a unique and independent cultural heritage. Multiculturalism “is a body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity. Mere toleration of group differences is said to fall short of treating members of minority groups as equal citizens; recognition and positive accommodation of group differences are required through ‘group-differentiated rights,’ …”¹ Tolerance is said to be indispensable for any decent society. It has been recognized today as “crucial characteristic in pluralist, multicultural communities which are seeking to be free of oppression, violence and discrimination.” (Bergen 2012, 2)

*Dr. JOHN ZIJIANG DING, Professor, Department of Philosophy, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Email: zding@csupomona.edu.
Studies of tolerance are finally related to cultural pluralism and multiculturalism, and constantly face certain new issues and various challenges.

I

Interestingly enough, the scholars have faced the paradox of tolerance. “The tolerance paradox arises from a problem that a tolerant person might be antagonistic toward intolerance, hence intolerant of it. The tolerant individual would then be by definition intolerant of intolerance.”

Less well known is the paradox of tolerance: Unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them.—In this formulation, I do not imply, for instance, that we should always suppress the utterance of intolerant philosophies; as long as we can counter them by rational argument and keep them in check by public opinion, suppression would certainly be most unwise…. We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant. We should claim that any movement preaching intolerance places itself outside the law. And we should consider incitement to intolerance and persecution as criminal, in the same way as we should consider incitement to murder, or to kidnapping, or to the revival of the slave trade, as criminal. (Popper 1945, I. p. 360)

In J. Rawls’ regards, a just society must tolerate the intolerant, "While an intolerant sect does not itself have title to complain of intolerance, its freedom should be restricted only when the tolerant sincerely and with reason believe that their own security and that of the institutions of liberty are in danger." (Rawls 1971, 220) J. Habermas proposes a deliberative account of tolerance where the norms of tolerance— including the threshold of tolerance and the norms regulating the relationship between the tolerating and the tolerated parties—are the outcomes of deliberations among the citizens affected by the norms. “He thinks that in this way, the threshold of tolerance can be rationalized and the relationship between tolerating and tolerated will rest on the symmetrical relations of public deliberations.” (Thomassen 2006, 439) M. Walzer continued to ask "Should we tolerate the intolerant?" (Walzer 1997, 80-81) Later, the relation between homophily and intolerance is manifested "when a tolerant person is faced with the dilemma of choosing between establishing a positive relationship with a tolerant individual of a dissimilar group, or establishing a positive relationship with an intolerant group member." F. Aguiar and A. Parravano attempted to solve this problem again. They tried to model a community of individuals whose relationships are governed by the rules of so-called Heider Balance Theory, but modified to address the impact of tolerating intolerant individuals. For them, to consider tolerance toward a different group, the elements are assigned one of the two flags, A or B, and

---

2 See “Paradox of tolerance”, Wikipedia.
3 Ibid.
the elements of each group can be tolerant or intolerant. Two additional parameters, \( p \) and \( q \), respectively, characterize the propensity of elements to cooperate and the propensity of tolerants to reject intolerant attitudes. Both scholars found that 1) parameter \( q \) does not affect the degree of conflict at the micro level, but has an important influence on the degree of conflict in the whole system; 2) segregation into two cliques occurs whenever there exists intolerants in both groups; 3) when intolerants are present in only one of the groups, segregation can be avoided for appropriate combinations of parameters \( p \) and \( q \) that depend on the fraction of intolerants and the size of the groups; 4) as the size of the system increases, two balanced solutions dominate: segregation into two cliques or the isolation of intolerants; and 5) endemic partially balanced configurations are observed in large systems. (Aguiar and Parravano 2013)

In 2014, W. Brown and R. Forst have made a debate on “the power of tolerance”. Both scholars invoke the ideal of tolerance in response to conflict. They want to answer those questions: “What does it mean to answer conflict with a call for tolerance?”, “Is tolerance a way of resolving conflicts or a means of sustaining them?”, “Does it transform conflicts into productive tensions, or does it perpetuate underlying power relations?”, and “To what extent does tolerance hide its involvement with power and act as a form of depoliticization?”. They debate the uses and misuses of tolerance, an exchange that highlights the fundamental differences in their critical practice despite a number of political similarities. The two authors address the normative premises, limits, and political implications of various conceptions of tolerance. Brown offers a genealogical critique of contemporary discourses on tolerance in Western liberal societies, focusing on their inherent ties to colonialism and imperialism, and Forst reconstructs an intellectual history of tolerance that attempts to redeem its political virtue in democratic societies. They work from different perspectives and traditions, yet they each remain wary of the subjection and abnegation embodied in toleration discourses, among other issues. The result is a dialogue rich in critical and conceptual reflections on power, justice, discourse, rationality, and identity. As Brown says: “…we’re much closer together as students of tolerance than either of us are to, for example, analytical philosophers who tend to treat tolerance purely conceptual, boosters of tolerance who simply cheer it as a benign individual virtue or a benign politics in multi-religious, multicultural or conflict-driven society. This much we share. There are many ways, though, as I said, that we not only operating in different analytical registers about tolerance, but often, I think, are not even referring to the same phenomenon in our critical engagement with tolerance.” (Brown and Forst 2014, 14)

II

A popular situation is the practice of intolerance in the name of tolerance works. In today’s world, a kind of “selective tolerance” has been “selected” by many governments, authorities, and political powers. “Selective tolerance” means that a tolerance is developed or applied only to one gender, group, race, religion, nationality, and so on, but not another. Selective tolerance is not real tolerance at all.
Generally, tolerance is a positive force in the history of human development. Morally speaking, tolerance has been considered a virtue, and should be applied universally, not selectively. Tolerance denotes forbearance of different behaviors, practices and activities, but of different opinions, beliefs and standpoints that are disagreed with. B. Stetson and J. G. Conti discuss “tolerance” through Pluralism, Diversity and the Culture Wars. They note that the pursuit of truth and the pursuit of tolerance are often taken to be mutually exclusive, and it ends with truth having to give way to tolerance; and argue that true tolerance requires the pursuit of truth. For them, Christian conviction about religious truth provides the only secure basis for a tolerant society which promotes truth seeking. The two scholars criticize “selective tolerance”, as they say: “when considering the perverse misapprehension of tolerance that has settled over contemporary American culture, we must first note that it is not a stand-alone phenomenon but rather a component of the large drift of our society into selective secular relativism.” (Stetson and Conti 2005, 113) So-called selective tolerance is to use tolerance by “double standard”. For instance, “A proposed Framework National Statute for the Promotion of Tolerance was presented to members of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee (LIBE) on the 17th of September. It called for direct surveillance of supposedly intolerant behavior of individual citizens and groups by Governmental bodies. Put forward by an NGO, the ideas contained in the policy proposal would not only create double standards on the issue of tolerance but would severely limit freedom of speech and expression. It is part of a broader trend of such ideas becoming official EU policy.” (Climent 2013)

Slavoj Žižek asks: “Why are so many problems today perceived as problems of intolerance, not as problems of inequality, exploitation, injustice? Why is the proposed remedy tolerance, not emancipation, political struggle, even armed struggle?” For him, the immediate answer is “the liberal multiculturalist’s basic ideological operation: the culturalization of politics. Political differences, differences conditioned by political inequality, economic exploitation, and so on, are naturalized and neutralized into cultural differences, different ways of life, which are something given, something that cannot be overcome, but must be merely tolerated.” (Žižek 2008, 660) J. Noll, E. Poppe and M. Verkuyten attempt to explain political tolerance for Muslims from an intergroup perspective. According to them explanatory mechanisms were derived from integrated threat theory, social identity theory, and the contact and multiculturalism hypotheses. Their results, based on survey data among Dutch youth and by using structural equation modeling, revealed that endorsement of multiculturalism and perceived symbolic and safety threat were the main determinants of political tolerance. They argue that perceived safety threat was not associated with tolerance judgments among the unprejudiced participants. (Noll 2010, 46-56) F. Furedi claims that we live in an era that appears more open-minded, nonjudgemental and tolerant than in any time in human history. He reveals: “the idea of tolerance has been subject to significant conceptual confusions. Tolerance is often represented as a form of nonjudgemental acceptance of other people’s beliefs; yet, to tolerate a disagreeable opinion requires an a priori act of judgment. In a world where acceptance of difference is represented as mandatory, the classical idea of tolerance has become problematic.” (Furedi 2011, 1) For him, the very term intolerant invokes moral
condemnation, and today’s world is constantly reminded to understand the importance of respecting different cultures and diversities. Furedi argues that despite the democratization of public life and the expansion of freedom, society is dominated by a culture that not only tolerates but often encourages intolerance. In his regards, often the intolerance is directed at people who refuse to accept the conventional wisdom and who are stigmatized as “deniers”. He emphasizes that frequently intolerance comes into its own in clashes over cultural values and lifestyles.

M. Hadler thinks that societal variation in xenophobia, homophobia, and other prejudices is frequently explained by the economic background and political history of different countries. His research expands these explanations by considering the influence of world societal factors on individual attitudes. For him, the empirical analysis is based on survey data collected within the World Value Survey and European Values Study framework between 1989 and 2010; data are combined to a three-wave cross-sectional design including about 130,000 respondents from 32 countries. Hadler shows that xenophobia and homophobia are influenced by the national political history, societal affluence, and the presence of international organizations. Accordingly, global forces are of particular importance for homophobia. (Hadler 2012, 211-237) L. Tønder offers a thought-provoking theory on what tolerance means in pluralistic societies. According to him, “Long at the heart of democratic politics, questions about tolerance have resurfaced with great intensity in the past fifteen years because changes provoked by globalization and new information technologies have heighten our attention to differences within all significant domains of human experience.” (Tønder 2013, 1) He shows the limitations of the way democratic theory currently understands tolerance: either as a form of restraint or as benevolence, but always divorced from what it is that the tolerant person really senses. According to him, what is missing from current theories of tolerance is the idea of pain, or the lived experience of what it means to become tolerant. Introducing what he calls a “sensorial orientation to politics” and a “theory of active tolerance,” he argues that the act of becoming tolerant (and the reasoning it entails) depends on sensing the world in an expansive manner attentive to the new and unforeseen. Tønder queries the great philosophers such as Spinoza, Locke, Kant, Nietzsche, Mill, Merleau-Ponty, and Marcuse. He also draws upon a wide range of examples, including the 2005 controversy over the Danish cartoons of Muhammad, Sacher-Masoch’s Venus in Furs, Dave Chappelle’s comedy, and methods of torture used in the war on terror. Tønder’s examination can be considered as a thoughtful discussion of the meaning of tolerance both theoretically and philosophically.

In 2014, in his article “Confucianism and Toleration,” R. C. Neville advocates:

…toleration in Confucianism becomes an historical question. Some cultures named Confucian have been very tolerant of other religious philosophies, of diverse ethnic groups, of differing social practices concerning food, sexuality, and lifestyle issues, and other so-called Confucian cultures have been intolerant in regards such as
Some Confucian cultures have been tolerant of many variations within what counts as the Confucian culture, others have been more monolithic. The study of the history of toleration among the many branches of Confucian culture in this sense can be highly instructive, just as the history of toleration among Christian, Buddhist, or Jewish cultures is important to understand. (Neville 2014, 25)

According to Neville, there have been two common ways to focus the problems of toleration in the twenty-first century: the first is to see them as issues of in-groups relative to out-groups. Relative to the boundaries of groups, the issues of toleration are double-barreled. Some have to do with the toleration of the out-groups, of their traits, of their members, or their competitive existence. Others have to do with toleration of deviations within the in-group. The second is through narratives. Most narratives are stories of conflict, of overcoming obstacles (usually other people), of warfare, feuding, displacement, religious opposition, apostasy, betrayal, competition, domination and submission. In light of these narratives, people make judgments about what should and should not be tolerated. Many people try to make sense of their lives by reducing them to narratives. However, “Central to any Confucian approach to issues of toleration is respect for individuals. The main Confucian word for this respect is humaneness, ren. Very much of the whole Confucian cosmology is packed into this complex notion, of which only a few strands can be extracted here.” (Ibid., 33) He stresses: “Concerns for toleration cannot escape the issues of ethical judgment. Here the Confucian perspective focuses on the metaphysics of Principle, li.” (Ibid., 35)

Continuously, he points out some Confucian Morals of Tolerations: 1) bigotry in all forms should be rejected; 2) all judgments that something or someone ought not be tolerated are context dependent; 3) there should be no fixed rules for what should be tolerated and what not, because what promotes or inhibits relevant flourishing is so context dependent and the context is constantly changing; 4) sage judgment is neither following rules nor acting out of pre-determined cultivated inclinations; 5) we should never allow a complex social ritual, structuring important relations between classes of people determine by itself what should be tolerated and what not; 6) the more variety in a coherent harmony, the better. In his end of discussion, Neville concludes: “Confucianism for a pluralistic, meritocratic, highly mobile, urban culture such as obtains in Boston as well as much of the rest of the world cannot advocate the same social policies it would for a relatively homogeneous agrarian culture. This is a time for vigorous creativity in inventing rituals for making the components of a pluralistic world cohere and flourish.” (Ibid., 38) Neville has examined the issue of tolerance in his other research writings. Neville stresses: The issue of political tolerance in North Atlantic nations has until recently been associated with diverse tribal, ethnic, cultural, or religious groups under the protections of a nation-state. Distinctions between tribal, ethnic, cultural, and religious groups are notoriously difficult to define. “Tolerance is

---

an issue because, however defined, these groups make political demands on the nation-state... Whereas some obvious religious competitions within a body politic are directly concerned with the clash of religions and denominations in theologically significant matters, the broader clash of religious interests to which notions of political tolerance are relevant include tribal, ethnic, and cultural differences that have been given a religious edge.” (Neville 2008, 67)

III

“Forgiveness” is an important concept in Kwong-loi Shun’s studies of comparative philosophy. He considers a certain view on forgiveness found in recent Anglo-American philosophical discussions, and argues that though the kind of responses akin to resentment may be common human responses, the ultimate way to address them is not by changing our perspective on the offender in a way that leads to forgiveness, “…while the Confucians do talk about responses akin to resentment as common human responses, they do not discuss forgiveness as a way to address such responses.” (Shun 2012, 33) In this JET special issue, Shun continues to explore a certain way of understanding resentment and forgiveness found in contemporary philosophical discussions. For him, it understands resentment in terms of the notion of self-respect, and forgiveness in terms of the forswearing of resentment. He shows that, while there are concepts akin to those of resentment and anger in early China, there is no concept close to that of forgiveness. Accordingly, forgiveness is not idealized in Confucian thought, and an examination of why this is so helps highlight a certain ethical outlook distinctive of the Confucian tradition. Shun’s examination has the following six tasks: the first is to explore why, while there are concepts akin to resentment and anger in China and while the Confucians do recognize the phenomenon of resentment, the concept of forgiveness is not developed nor idealized in Confucian thought. The second is to discuss terms in early China that are akin to resentment and anger in China and while the Confucians do recognize the notion of resentment, the concept of forgiveness is not developed in Confucian thought. The third is to show that there are no terms akin to the notion of forgiveness after discussing a number of possibilities; and the notion of forgiveness is not developed in Confucian thought because the Confucians reject two assumptions that underlie the contemporary view. The fourth and the fifth is to consider these two assumptions and to discuss the alternative views of the Confucians. The last is to conclude with a brief discussion of the fundamental difference between the Confucian outlook and the contemporary view. Shun claims:

…we have shown that the Confucians do not idealize resentment as a response to wrongful injury to oneself, where resentment is understood as a reaction to challenges to one’s self-respect posed by the wrongful injury. The reason is that the Confucians believe that one’s self-respect is not a matter of how one is viewed by others, but a matter of one’s own ethical qualities....Their presence shows a deficiency in ourselves, and to address such reactions, the primary focus of our efforts should be to correct this deficiency in ourselves rather than to change the way we view the offender. Addressing this deficiency will result in our viewing the offender differently, but efforts devoted to the former are not efforts at forgiveness as they are not directly focused on altering the way we view the offender. Thus, just
as the Confucians do not idealize resentment as a response to wrongful injury, they also do not idealize forgiveness as a way to address such responses. (Shun, 33)

In 2013, Sune Lægaard thinks that toleration and respect are types of relations between different agents. The standard analyses of toleration and respect are attitudinal; toleration and respect require subjects to have appropriate types of attitudes towards the objects of toleration or respect. He investigates whether states can sensibly be described as tolerant or respectful in ways theoretically relevantly similar to the standard analyses. Accordingly, this is a descriptive question about the applicability of concepts rather than a normative question about whether, when and why states should be tolerant or respectful. The problem of institutional application is that institutions in general and the state in particular arguably cannot have attitudes of the required kind. This problem is distinct from, and broader than, well-known problems about whether political toleration is normatively legitimate. To make sense of political toleration or respect, Lægaard proposes that the analysis of institutional toleration and respect should not be solely agent-centered (as in attitudinal analyses) or patient-centered (as in explanations of the good of toleration or respect in terms of the effects of being tolerated or respected). The analysis should also include features about the relation itself. For him, we can describe institutions as tolerant or respectful in a sense relevantly similar to the standard analyses if we focus on the public features of the relation between institutions and citizens or groups, without ascribing attitudes in the problematic sense. He stresses: “In debates about multiculturalism, it is widely claimed that ‘toleration is not enough’ and that we need to go ‘beyond toleration’ to some form of politics of recognition in order to satisfactorily address contemporary forms of cultural diversity…” (Lægaard 2013b, 52)

In this issue, Lægaard also reveals the standard understanding of multiculturalism is that multiculturalism which is concerned with cultural diversity, to which it responds politically by granting group-differentiated rights that go beyond standard liberal rights. He argues this understanding of multiculturalism is inadequate and fails to capture many of the controversies discussed under the heading of multiculturalism in Europe. An alternative understanding of Euro-multiculturalism is offered. Euro-multiculturalism is concerned with immigrant religious minorities and consists in reinterpretations of standard liberal rights and principles to accommodate these groups. He uses the concept of toleration as a prism to view Euro-multiculturalism as a distinct approach to diversity. Two objections to the proposed understanding of Euro-multiculturalism are discussed, namely that it conflates culture and religion, and that it collapses into a standard liberal theory of religious pluralism.

Multiculturalism is about diversity and is highly politicised in the sense that the diversity in question generates much controversy and opposition. This combination makes salient the other concept in the title of the paper, namely toleration. There

---

are many discussions of toleration and multiculturalism at the general conceptual level, where it is often argued that multiculturalism as a response to diversity is necessarily something else and more than “mere” toleration, since toleration is premised on a negative attitude to and only permits the presence of difference, whereas multiculturalism welcomes, recognises and accommodates diversity....I will rather lay out my idea of Euro-multiculturalism and rely on my characterisation of it to make evident that multiculturalism in this sense can involve issues of toleration. Furthermore I will use the concept of toleration as a prism through which to view understandings of multiculturalism. The idea is that the concept of toleration picks out a number of important aspects of how one can relate to diversity and provides a framework for distinguishing between different attitudes to diversity. Viewing Euro-multiculturalism through the prism of toleration therefore provides a way of identifying and explicating the peculiar ways in which Euro-multiculturalism is a different way of relating to diversity. (Lægaard, 38)

Lægaard declares his idea of Euro-multiculturalism first of all changes the premises for the assessment of whether there indeed is a retreat from multiculturalism in Europe. Secondly, it challenges the assumption that multiculturalism and civic integrationism are somehow at odds with each other, and the introduction of the latter necessarily involves a move away from the former. And thirdly, it presents multiculturalism and civic integrationism as potentially based on the same normative foundation, namely liberal ideals.

Xunwu Chen has been interested in “social tolerance” for years. In his book *Justice, Humanity, and Social Toleration* (2008), he claims that practically, normative justice imposes a set of duties or obligations on all members of humankind and provides an ethical ground for the mental attitude of tolerance and the behavioral form of toleration. This in turn, gives rise to the state of human affairs in which people remain harmonious while maintaining disagreements and stay unified while preserving diversity. In 2012, Chen continued to explore the concept of the “religious other,” indicating the metaphysical, cognitive, ethical, and political challenges which the religious other presents. In doing so, he draws a distinction between religious other which is a legitimate object of religious toleration and religious other that is not a proper object of religious toleration. He rejects the concept that religious laws such as Sharia family laws could be, and should be, the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. He defends the Habermas-Forst dissolving of the paradox of tolerance that there can be no tolerance without intolerance but does not entertain a concept of limitless, indiscriminate religious toleration. In his view:

The existence of religious other and diversity is a distinctive color of modern time. Religious toleration implies bearing with religious other in terms of its otherness, especially its cognitive otherness. That being said, true and endurable religious toleration is not unconstrained. The Forst -paradox of tolerance, “it is wrong to reject the wrong,” should dissolve in the understanding that from the point of view of practical and ethical fairness and prudence, better to tolerate the other which one considers to be wrong in given contexts and with qualifications. The paradox that there can be no tolerance without intolerance should dissolve in an understanding that in terms of practical and ethical prudence, there should be just and prudent
toleration without unjust or imprudent intolerance and endurable toleration is always reflective, discreet, and as merited, and has its proper limit and category of objects. Religious toleration, thou burden! (Chen 2012, 81)

In this issue, Chen examines social toleration as an obligation, value, and virtue. His research first explores four popular conceptions of toleration and three courses of conceptual difficulty of toleration. He then explores the justification of toleration as an obligation, a value and a virtue. Finally, he explores social-cultural toleration as a norm of global justice. According to Chen:

...since the United Nations published Declaration of Principles of Tolerance, social toleration has become the distinctive political approach to the profound reality of diversity of our time. It has become a wisdom of our time. Social toleration is a family of practice that differs from social indifference, social indulgence, and various forms of social acceptance. It is an alternative to rejection, though its objects are what one morally disapproves and objects. The doctrine of toleration singles out a family of beliefs, practices and people which one includes but does not accept and of which one constrains one’s demand of rejection, repression, oppression, and marginalization, but also refuses indulgence. (Chen, 53)

Chen believes that in Chinese philosophy there is a rich conceptual diversity for the idea of toleration. The Chinese counterparts for the English word “toleration” include (but are not limited to) as follows: “include the variant and incompatible (兼容 jian rong),” “broadness (宽 kuan),” “broadly include (宽容 kuan rong),” “extensively include (包容 bao rong),” “accommodate (容纳 rong na),” “bear with; putting up with (容忍 rong ren),” and so on. All of these concepts are centered on the idea of “taking into; accommodate (容纳 rong).” Chen argues that the difficulty of conceptualizing social toleration comes from a variety of fronts: the first is in the absence of archetype cases of toleration; (2) the second is in no small measure to the relation between social toleration and the concept of rights; and (3) the third is in the uncertain relation between toleration and the public good. In his opinion, the concept of social toleration has at least the three merits: (1) it is applicable to most cases of social toleration; (2) it properly defines social toleration as a family of social practice bordering social rejection on the one end and social acceptance on the other end, as delineating both social indifference and social indulgence; (3) it can account for the tolerator’s rights, the tolerated’s rights, and public good; it can account for the permission conception, the co-existence conception, the respect conception, and the esteem conception but does not suffer fatal flaw of any of the four conceptions. Chen considers social toleration as a norm of justice, geared to redeem the validity claims of basic human rights, dependent upon the rule of law and the rule of reason, and goes hand in hand with democracy.

From the above mentioned, we may find that the studies of tolerance/toleration constantly face certain new issues and various challenges. Z. Saeidzadeh asks “Tolerance is often defined as the ability to accept the values and beliefs of others that poses dilemma, but how is it possible to ask people to accept all other peoples’ values
and practices when they might believe that some of those ideas and behavior are wrong?“ She addresses: “Tolerance is a controversial topic by way of being debated throughout the history as corruptive and constructive at the same time.” (Saeidzadeh 2013) Only pluralism or multiculturalism itself is not an absolute guarantee of tolerance/toleration. Any true tolerance/toleration between different cultures is only based on “highly mutual and all-inclusive understanding”, and finally on “universal love”. In some cases, pluralism is not necessary to reach tolerance. Generally, tolerance/toleration is based on diversity and disagreement. However tolerance/toleration does not denote that we must believe, follow, support or agree with some values, faiths, standpoints or systems from other cultural traditions. Actually, it means that we should respect and consider any varieties of disagreements inclusively and forgivingly. There are many debates on the relationships between pluralism, multiculturalism and tolerance. As D. Keyes says: "‘pluralism’, ‘relativism’ and ‘tolerance’ are the source of spectacular confusion today—the confusion extending from personal faith and witness to good citizenship to public policy.” His article claims that the case against the tolerance argument for religious pluralism is overwhelming; “religious pluralism is self-contradictory, and the tolerance argument for it is, by its own standard, intolerant.” One important study proposes an equal relationship between the tolerator and the tolerated. J. Sacks says that multiculturalism was intended to create a more tolerant society, one in which everyone, regardless of color, creed or culture, feels acknowledged and accepted. He also stresses that multiculturalism's message is “there is no need to integrate” and distinguishes between tolerance and multiculturalism - using the Netherlands as an example of a tolerant, rather than multicultural, society. Furthermore, he claims the current meaning of multiculturalism is part of the wider European phenomenon of moral relativism. He talks of multiculturalism as dissolving national identity, shared values and collective identity which “makes it impossible for groups to integrate because there is nothing to integrate into”. Surely, there will be more unsolved issues of tolerance/toleration waiting for us to examine and seriously consider.

References


RESENTMENT AND FORGIVENESS IN CONFUCIAN THOUGHT

Kwong-loi Shun

I

In this paper, I discuss a certain way of understanding resentment and forgiveness found in contemporary philosophical discussions. It understands resentment in terms of the notion of self-respect, and forgiveness in terms of the forswearing of resentment. I will show that, while there are concepts akin to those of resentment and anger in early China, there is no concept close to that of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not idealized in Confucian thought, and an examination of why this is so helps highlight a certain ethical outlook distinctive of the Confucian tradition.

Let us consider the nature of our response to a situation in which one party (the victim) is treated by another (the offender) in a way that we regard as inappropriate in relation to certain norms that we endorse. This can be a matter of actual tangible injury or just disrespectful treatment. When the victim is neither me myself nor someone related to me in some special way, I might still condemn the action and be moved to intervene, and might also be emotional engaged with the situation because I care about the norms that have been violated. Following usual practice, I will refer to a response of this kind as “indignation”.

If the victim is related to me in some special way, such as being a family member, there might be additional elements to my response. I might feel a special obligation to intervene in ways that go beyond what I might be obligated to do when the victim is a stranger, and my emotional engagement with the situation might take on a more intense and complex form because of my special concern for the victim. Differentiation in our responses due to the differential relations we stand to the victim is part of the human condition and is something recognized, and actually advocated, by the Confucians.

Consider now a situation in which the victim is me myself. Following the same line of thought, an enhanced sense of urgency to intervene and a more intense and complex emotional engagement with the situation might result from the more intimate relation I stand to the victim, who happens to be me myself. I am more intimately affected by the injury and am in a better position to take corrective action as well as being more motivated to so act. This difference in my response results from the differential relation I stand to the victim and, as such, does not yet constitute the response of resentment. On the view of resentment under consideration, resentment

---

1The discussion of this paper continues that in my “On Anger – An Experimental Essay in Confucian Moral Psychology.” It shifts the focus to the notions of resentment and forgiveness, and explicitly relates the Confucian position to contemporary philosophical discussions.

2This view can be found in a number of recent writings, including Murphy and Novitz.
has to do with an additional element to my response that goes beyond what is generated by this differential relation. This additional element involves my responding not just to the tangible injury that resulted, but also to the attitude of the offender toward me.

Now, even when the victim is a stranger, I might also respond in a certain way to the attitude of the offender to the victim. My response will be different depending on whether I believe the offence to be accidental or deliberate, or whether the offence is primarily an act of self-interest or of malice. So, even when I myself am the victim, I will also be responding to the attitude of the offender in this manner, and perhaps in a more involved way simply as a matter of the differential relation I stand to the victim. The notion of resentment is supposed to describe an element in my response that goes beyond this. It is supposed to involve a certain special perspective that I take toward the offender by virtue of being the victim, a perspective that I would not have had if the victim were a stranger.

This special perspective takes the following form. I see myself as being treated with disregard or even contempt by the offender, and feel injured by this attitude in a way that goes beyond the tangible injury that has resulted from the treatment. I see myself as being the target of the offender who views me in a way that is less than what I deserve and who communicates the corresponding message through the ill-treatment. I feel insulted and treated with contempt, and I am moved to correct not just the tangible injury that has taken place, but also this attitude of the offender. My perspective is focused in a special way on the offender, whom I view as less than decent, as someone with whom I cannot enter into or maintain a positive relationship. Because resentment is focused on the offender in this special way, it has adverse implications for the relationship between me and the offender. It can also lead to additional postures I take toward the offender, such as vengeful sentiments, hatred, or malice.

On the view under consideration, my responding with resentment shows that I care about not just the norms by which the offending action is measured, but the values in my own person. Resentment is in defense of such values and so is protective of self-respect. Even though some of its offshoots, such as vengeful sentiments and hatred, might be problematic, resentment in itself is not. To respond with resentment is a good thing, since a failure to respond with resentment shows that one is lacking in self-respect.

Forgiveness keeps resentment within proper bounds, and ultimately involves the foreswearing of resentment altogether. It is primarily a change of the heart, and is compatible with my continuing to take appropriate action against the offender, such as insisting on proper compensation. It involves a fundamental change in the way I view and feel about the offender, thereby restoring the relationship I stand to him.

---

3 See, e.g., Murphy, p. 25.
4 See, e.g., Murphy, pp. 16, 18 and Novitz, p. 301.
5 See, e.g., Murphy, p. 22.
6 See, e.g., Murphy, pp. 33-34.
7 See, e.g., Murphy, pp. 16-17.
The offender is, after all, decent and someone with whom I can enter into or maintain a positive relationship. But forgiveness should take place only under the right circumstances, such as when the offender has repented, since forgiving too readily would also show that one lacks the proper degree of self-respect.⁸

There are different opinions on the origin of this view of forgiveness. Some believe that it can be traced to Bishop Butler, while others have argued that what Butler advocated is the moderation rather than the total abandoning of resentment.⁹ Some believe that this view of forgiveness is a Judaeo-Christian conception, while others have argued that it can already be found in Greco-Roman culture though forgiveness is not idealized in such a culture.¹⁰ Whatever its origin, this view of resentment and forgiveness has provided a framework within which related topics have been discussed, such as the circumstances under which forgiveness is appropriate and whether there is a desirable form of unconditional forgiveness.

What I will do in the remainder of this paper is to explore why, while there are concepts akin to resentment and anger in China and while the Confucians do recognize the phenomenon of resentment, the concept of forgiveness is not developed nor idealized in Confucian thought. In Section 2, I will discuss terms in early China that are akin to the notions of resentment and anger. In Section 3, I will show that there are no terms akin to the notion of forgiveness after discussing a number of possibilities. The notion of forgiveness is not developed in Confucian thought because the Confucians reject two assumptions that underlie the contemporary view. I consider these two assumptions in Sections 4 and 5 and discuss the alternative views of the Confucians. In Section 6, I conclude with a brief discussion of the fundamental difference between the Confucian outlook and the contemporary view.

II

The term closest to “resentment” in early China is yuan 怨, and there are other terms with connotations ranging from displeasure to anger, such as yun 愠, nu 怒, and fen 怨. In addition, corresponding to the ideas of insult and disgrace, which are often mentioned in the contemporary explication of the notion of resentment, there are terms such as wu 侮 and ru 耻. The attitude toward ru 耻 is chi 恥, a term that is also related to nu 怒. In my analysis of these terms, I draw primarily on the Chunqiu Zaozhuan, Guoyu, Lunyu and Mengzi. Where appropriate, I also supplement the analysis with reference to other early texts such as Shijing, Mozi, Xunzi, Hanfeizi, Lushichunqiu, and Liji.

---

⁸See, e.g., Murphy, p. 17 and Novitz, pp. 313-314.
⁹Murphy attributes this view to Butler (p.15), while Griswold argues that Butler views forgiveness in terms of the moderation of resentment and foreswearing of revenge, but not the foreswearing of resentment as such (pp. 20, 36).
¹⁰Novitz thinks that this is the traditional Judaeo-Christian view of forgiveness (pp. 299-304), while Griswold argues that this notion of forgiveness is already present in Greco-Roman culture though not viewed as a virtue (pp. 1-2, 8-14).
Yuan 兹 refers to the ill feeling between states (Mengzi 1A:7), which can be carried over from a former ruler to the present ruler so that one can speak of the yuan coming from the past (jiu yuan 舊怨) or the yuan of the former ruler (xian jun zhi yuan 先君之怨). The state to which such yuan is directed can also seek to ‘repair’ the situation (xiu jiu yuan 脩舊怨; xiu xian jun zhi yuan 脩先君之怨) (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B1.4, B12.1, B12.6). A state can also deliberately cause yuan between two other states as part of a political strategy, so that it can take advantage of the animosity between these two states to gain the political upper hand (Guoyu 4.44).

More typically, yuan is used in relation to an individual, in which case it is a state of the heart/mind (yuan xin 恶心) (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B10.13). Such a state can be directed against a specific party who has caused one dissatisfaction, in which case yuan is used transitively (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.15, B8.7). What causes dissatisfaction can be a variety of things, such as being made to work hard (Lunyu 4.18; Mengzi 5A:1), being distanced (Lunyu 17.25), being passed over when offices are assigned (Mengzi 2A:9, 5B:1), having someone placed above oneself inappropriately (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B8.16; Guoyu 1.24), or being denied what one has sought (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.15). Just like the ill-feeling between states, one’s yuan toward another person can persist from the past (jiu yuan 舊怨), and one can seek to ‘respond’ to what has caused one yuan (bao yuan 報怨) (Guoyu 4.39, 6.18; cf. Lunyu 5.23).

Yuan can persist over time unless addressed and can be hidden and harbored (Mengzi 5A:3). One can even hide one’s yuan while befriending the person to whom one’s yuan is directed (Lunyu 5.25). On the other hand, one’s yuan can also be outwardly manifested. One typical manifestation is in the form of complaining words (yuan yan 恶言) (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.24; Guoyu 4.39; Lunyu 14.9). There are many occurrences of yuan where it is not specified whether yuan is outwardly expressed, but even if not, yuan is still a complaining state of the heart/mind having to do with one’s not being well treated or not getting what one wants (Lunyu 12.2; Mengzi 1B.5, 1B:11, 3B:5, 7B:4).

The outward manifestations of yuan can take on a more aggressive form, such as one’s slandering the offending party (Mozi 2.2; Xunzi 2.2a). One might exploit one’s official position to punish the offending party inappropriately (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B10.5), and one’s yuan can even lead to killing when one is in a position to do so (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B8.7). Thus, yuan in its extreme form can involve profound animosity toward the offending party and very aggressive action. For this reason, yuan is also paired with terms that connote deep dislike (wu 恶) (Mozi 3.1), hatred (hen 恨) (Guoyu 1.30; Mozi 4.2) and animosity (chou 惡) (Guoyu 4.15; Mozi 3.2, 13.1).

Because yuan can lead to animosity and aggressive action, it is usually viewed negatively in early texts. It is often presented as si 私, that is, centered on oneself in an objectionable manner (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B10.5). The self-centeredness of yuan is contrasted with a kind of impartiality (gong 公) that characterizes what is proper or appropriate, a contrast put in terms of self-centered yuan (si yuan 私怨) as opposed to
impartial righteousness (gong yi 公義) (Mozi 2.1). Yuan is also described as small or insignificant (xiao 小), such small or insignificant yuan (xiao yuan 小怨) being contrasted with large and significant de (da de 大德) (Shijing no. 201; Guoyu 1.15, 7.1).

These contrasts show that yuan is viewed as focused on oneself in a way that leads to a petty-mindedness. This view of yuan is also conveyed through the contrast of yuan with other qualities that are usually well-regarded, such as kuan 宽, a kind of broad-mindedness (Xunzi 8.2b), hui 惠, benefits or favors to others (Guoyu 4.25), shi 施, giving to others (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.28), as well as with de 德, being generous and kind toward others (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B8.3; Guoyu 4.33, 6.18).

De, often translated as “virtue” or “power”, has a charismatic effect on those benefitted, the latter feeling a compulsion to respond in a positive manner.11 As such, it has a pre-emptive effect on yuan, and similar comments are made in early texts about hui 惠, benefits or favors to others – those treated with de or hui will not respond with yuan (Guoyu 1.12). Their effect can work backward – one can use hui to remove yuan that is already in place (Guoyu 4.71). This thought probably lies behind a proposal put to Confucius – to use de to respond to yuan – that Confucius rejects (Lunyu 14.34). The reverse phenomenon – to use yuan to respond to de – is also presented in the Guoyu (1.15) as something that should not happen.

Although yuan is usually directed toward specific individuals who has caused one dissatisfaction, it can also be a response to one’s dire circumstances as such, without being directed to anyone in particular (Lunyu 14.10). If directed to anything at all, then this complaining state of the heart/mind is directed to, so to speak, ‘the world’; in early texts, this is put in terms of yuan being directed to Heaven (tian 天) or to people in general (ren 人) (Lunyu 14.35; Mengzi 2B:13; Xunzi 2.8). And yuan can also be directed toward oneself, as when one regrets one’s own past behavior that one now realizes is inappropriate (Mengzi 5A:6).

This last observation highlights the point that yuan is based on some evaluative assessment going beyond the judgment that someone has brought about a situation that one would prefer otherwise. In directing yuan toward oneself, one judges now that one had acted inappropriately in the past. In directing yuan toward another person, one judges not only that the other person has brought about some situation that one prefers otherwise, but also that what has happened is in some way not proper or not justified; at least, there is a lingering question as to why this should have been done to oneself. And in directing yuan in general toward ‘the world’, not only does one prefer one’s circumstances to be different, but one also regards one’s being in such circumstances as undeserved, and questions why this should have happened to oneself.

It follows that, even when one finds oneself in a situation that one would prefer otherwise, yuan would not arise if one can understand and agree with the reason why the situation has come about. One would not yuan even if made to work hard if one

11For a discussion of the use of de in early texts, see my Mencius and Early Chinese Thought, pp. 15, 21-23.
sees that it is appropriate for one to be assigned the task (Lunyu 20.2). However little one may receive, one would not yuan if one sees that the resources are evenly and fairly distributed (Guoyu 1.14). And one would not yuan even if killed if one sees that this is done for good reason (Mengzi 7A:12, 7A:13).

To sum up, yuan refers to ill feeling between states in a political context, and to a complaining state of the heart/mind in an individual triggered by some situation that negatively affects oneself and that one finds unjustified, undeserved, or at least unclear why it should have happened to oneself (Guoyu 1.14). It can be directed at someone who is viewed as responsible for bringing about the situation, or can just be a complaining state not directed at any particular individual. It can stay in the heart/mind and persist over time unless the situation is addressed, and it can be hidden and submerged. But it can also be outwardly manifested as verbal complaints or more aggressive action against the person to whom it is directed. In its more aggressive form, it is associated with hatred and animosity. Yuan is generally presented in early texts as an undesirable state of the heart/mind; it is self-centered, narrow-minded, and often focused on things of lesser significance.

Let us now consider another term nu 怒, often translated as “anger”. Nu pertains to the heart/mind (Guoyu 5.1) and it is also triggered by situations that one prefer to be otherwise. It is contrasted with xi 喜, which is triggered by situations that one welcomes (Guoyu 4.17; Xunzi 13.5a, 14.1b, 14.2b). Nu can be triggered by situations that one views as directed against oneself, such as being slandered (Guoyu 1.3, 6.7). But it can also be triggered by situations that displeases without implying that one is being improperly treated (Mengzi 1B:9). So, nu differs from yuan in that, unlike yuan, the situations that trigger nu need not viewed by one as directed against oneself, though it can be.

As such, nu is more like yun 愠. Yun is a form of displeasure directed to any situation that one finds displeasing, without necessarily identifying who has brought about the situation (Guoyu 6.12; Lunyu 1.1, 15.2). Yun can also be directed to situations in which one finds another person’s action offensive (Guoyu 4.44, 7.5). Both nu and yun are typically not used transitively, even when they are triggered by situations that involve a responsible party. This suggests that, even in such a situation, nu and yun are directed primarily to the situation rather than to the person who has brought it about, unlike yuan which is directed specifically to the person. As for the difference between nu and yun, it appears to be primarily a matter of how strong one’s response might be. Nu by comparison to yun is a more intense reaction that can result in quite severe action.

Like yuan, nu can be hidden or stored (Mengzi 5A:3). But typically, nu is outwardly expressed and is associated with certain facial expressions (Mengzi 2B:12). It can lead to quite severe action, such as depriving someone of something (Guoyu 1.23; Xunzi 1.12b-13a), driving someone away (Guoyu 2.27), beating someone (Guoyu 4.27), acts of fighting (Guoyu 1.15, 4.96, 7.1), as well as killing (Guoyu 4.94, 8.5). Because of the intensity and severity of nu, it can strain the relationship between people, even between father and son (Mengzi 4A:18).
Nu, by contrast to another term fen 忿, is more sustained and enduring; the contrast is like that between anger and an outburst. Fen is something more of the moment (Lunyu 12.21). It is like yuan in being described as ‘small’ (xiao 小) in the sense of being directed to something of lesser significance, probably also with the connotation of a loss of proper perspective and of control over oneself (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.24, B11.6; Guoyu 1.15, 2.23). So, fen is like yuan in being generally viewed as an undesirable or inappropriate kind of response.

Nu, unlike yuan and fen, can be entirely in order, as in the case of the nu of King Wen and King Wu, acting on which resulted in peace to the Empire (Mengzi 1B:3, cf. 3B:2). Later Confucians such as Zhu Xi draw a distinction between an ethical form of anger (yi li zhi nu 義理之怒) and a physical form of anger (xie qi zhi nu 血氣之怒), the latter being impulsive responses to affronts while the former are responses to situations one regards as ethically inappropriate and awaiting correction. The former can still lead to severe action, as in the case of King Wu whose anger at a tyrant led to military action, but such action is directed at correcting what is ethically problematic rather than countering personal affronts.12

To sum up, nu is a response of the heart/mind to situations that go against one’s wishes, just as xi is a response to situations that one finds welcoming. The situations that trigger nu need not be viewed as brought about by some specific individual, though they can be; even if so, the focus of attention is on the situation rather than the person. Unlike yun which is a milder form of displeasure, nu is a more intense reaction that can lead to severe action. And unlike fen which is more of a response of the moment, usually in relation to things of lesser significance, nu is more deliberate and sustained, and can be based on a reflective assessment of a situation as ethically problematic.

Yuan and nu are often mentioned together in early texts (Mengzi 5A:3; Xunzi 9.4). One difference between the two is that yuan is usually triggered by a situation in which one regards oneself as being ill-treated or failing to get what one deserves, and it is directed at the responsible party if there is one. Nu, on the other hand, is triggered by a situation that displeases but that need not involve one’s regarding oneself as being ill-treated; even when it does, its focus is more on the situation than the offending party. And because yuan is focused on the way one fares, it can be triggered by one’s dire circumstances in general, such as extreme poverty, while nu is usually triggered by a specific situation.

Another difference is that yuan is by comparison a less intense kind of response, involving a complaining state of the heart/mind which maybe expressed in verbal complaints, though in certain contexts it can also lead to strong reactions. Nu, on the other hand, is more intense and more focused on outward action, which can be quite severe. Yuan is a more likely reaction when the offending party is in a position of power so that there is little one can do to correct the situation, other than verbal complaints that are often made in private. When one’s dissatisfaction is directed

---

12 For a discussion of the distinction between the two forms of anger, see my “On Anger – An Experimental Essay in Confucian Moral Psychology”.

Journal of East-West Thought
toward one’s ruler, for example, a more likely kind of response is yuan rather than nu (Guoyu 1.5; Xunzi 19.5b). And because yuan is often associated with an inability to take corrective action, it tends to be more inner and hidden, and can be harbored and persist over time. Nu, once expressed through corrective action, would go away and no longer persist. And because yuan is focused more on oneself and how one fares, it is typically presented as an undesirable state – it is petty-minded and focuses on matters of lesser significance. By contrast, while nu can also take on a problematic form, it can be an entirely appropriate response to an ethically problematic situation.

In contemporary philosophical discussions, resentment is also described as a response to treatment of oneself that one finds insulting and degrading. In early China, there are two terms bearing an affinity to these ideas, wu and ru, and related to ru is the term chi which refers to the attitude directed toward ru. I turn now to a consideration of these three terms.

The difference between wu and ru is that wu concerns how certain treatment of oneself measures against public standards, while ru concerns one’s view of such treatment. Wu focuses on the fact that certain treatment of oneself is inappropriate by public standards. This might take many forms, such as being stared at in the eyes, being beaten in public, or being treated in violation of certain accepted rules of conduct in a social setting (the rules of li). Wu and ru are at times mentioned together in early texts (Xunzi 14.2a), and this linkage has to do with a common phenomenon in early China. Being subject to wu, or disrespectful treatment, one would be moved to fight back to counter the treatment, and if one fails to do so, this would result in ru (Lushichunqiu 16.29b-30b).

This phenomenon appears sufficiently pervasive that it led Songzi to propose that, as a way to stop this kind of fighting, we should urge people not to regard wu as ru. This proposal is sufficiently well known to be cited in a slogan-like fashion by both Xunzi (Xunzi 16.5a) and Hanfeizi (Hanfeizi 19.9b). Though Xunzi disagrees with Songzi (Xunzi 12.11a-11b), Songzi’s proposal shows that, while wu has to do with the actual inappropriate treatment of oneself, ru has more to do with the way one views such treatment. If one views such treatment as potentially degrading oneself unless countered, then one would take countering measures. But if not, one would not be moved to so act. So, whether something is ru is a matter of one’s viewpoint as well as a matter of whether the person views such treatment as degrading oneself.

Another difference between wu and ru is that, while wu has to do with the way in which one is treated, ru has to do with the person as a whole. It is the person as a whole that is subject to ru, as reflected in the location ru shen (Lunyu 18.8). Ru is contrasted with rong, or honor (Mengzi 2A:4), and the whole of the fourth chapter of the Xunzi is devoted to a discussion of rong and ru. Thus, while wu is akin to the notion of insult, referring to disrespectful treatment; ru is akin to the notion of disgrace, referring to how the person as a whole can be degraded by such treatment. In severing the link between wu and ru, Songzi is making the point that, while a treatment might be insulting (wu) by public standards, one need not view the treatment as disgracing (ru) oneself.
That human beings dislike *ru* is described in early texts as a fundamental part of the human constitution (*Xunzi* 2.10a; *Lushichunqiu* 5.10a, 8.4b). But while one might dislike (*wu* 恶) various things such as poverty or death, one’s attitude toward *ru* takes on a special form described in terms of *chi* 恥. The terms *chi* 恥 and *ru* 辱 are often mentioned together (*Lunyu* 1.13; *Xunzi* 20.9a). *Chi* refers to one’s attitude toward a situation that one regards as beneath oneself. It may be used transitively, taking as its object that which potentially occasions *ru* (*Lunyu* 4.9, 4.22, 5.15, 5.25, 14.27; *Mengzi* 1A:5, 2A:7, 4A:7, 4B:18, 6B:14). Or it may be used intransitively to describe the way one feels in certain kinds of situation (*Lunyu* 8.13, 9.27, 14.1; *Mengzi* 5B:5).

Though *chi* is often translated as “shame” or “regard as shameful”, it is not associated with the thought of being seen or the urge to hide oneself. Instead, the imagery is that of being tainted, and it is associated with the urge to cleanse oneself of what is tainting by correcting or avenging the situation. For this reason, *chi* is closely related to anger (*nu*) at the situation, where such anger involves a strong sense of confidence in oneself rather than a sense of insecurity, and where the reaction is more a matter of outward behavior than one of harboring bitter feelings within. *Chi* can also be directed to a potentially disgraceful situation that is contemplated but has not yet materialized, in which case it is associated with a firm resolve to distance oneself from that situation through pre-emptive action.

Confucian texts emphasize the importance of people’s having *chi*, namely, having a proper sense of the appropriate objects of *chi* and a resolve to distance oneself from them (*Lunyu* 2.3, 13.20; *Mengzi* 7A:6). This emphasis on the sense of *chi* shows how the Confucians place importance on people’s being able to respond with *chi* to situations that genuinely warrants such response. The mention of *chi* in connection with the righteous anger (*nu*) of King Wu (*Mengzi* 1B:3) also shows that *chi*, if directed to the right kind of situation, is viewed positively. This explains the description of *chi* as ‘big’, that is, something of significance, in early texts (*Chunqiu Zuo zhuan* B5.28; *Guoyu* 2.23).

**III**

Having considered terms that bear an affinity to the notions of resentment and anger as well as insult and disgrace, I turn now to terms that are potentially related to the notion of forgiveness. Through an examination of such terms, I will show that we cannot find any term in early Chinese texts that is close to the contemporary notion of forgiveness.

In modern Chinese, there are several expressions standardly used as translations of the term “forgive” or “forgiving”, such as *yuan liang* 原谅, *kuan shu* 宽恕, and *kuan rong* 宽容, as well as related expressions connoting leniency such as *rao shu* 饒恕 and *she mian* 赦免. I will look into the early use of the individual characters that make up these compounds. In addition, Christoph Harbsmeier has identified other

---

13For a discussion of *chi* 恥, see my *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought*, pp. 58-63.
14Thus, *chi* occurs in the compound *xue chi* 雪恥, or cleansing oneself of *chi*, in early texts.
characters in early texts that have some affinity to the notion of forgiveness, such as you 宥, shi 釋, jie 解, fang 放 and zong 蹤, and I will also consider the use of these characters. Though Harbsmeier presents them as representing “Chinese concepts within the semantic field of forgiveness”, he is using “forgiveness” in a way different from the notion found in contemporary philosophical discussions. His conclusion that these concepts have to do primarily with public acts of not pursuing otherwise punitive or retaliatory action rather than with psychological attitudes is consistent with the main conclusion of my discussion. Using primarily the Chunqiu Zuozhuan, Guoyu, Lunyu and Mengzi as textual basis, I will consider in order the following characters: she 赦, mian 免, yuan 原, liang 諒, rao 饒, shu 恕, you 宽, rong 容, you 宥, shi 釋, jie 解, fang 放 and zong 蹤.

She 赦 refers to someone’s refraining from doing something negative to another party when he has the authority or power to do so. For example, the ruler of a state might decide to let go an official of an enemy state who has been captured in war (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B3.14; Guoyu 1.24, 2.23), or spare a subordinate who has done something that angered him despite originally planning to punish the subordinate (Guoyu 4.94). Another example is for the ghosts and spirits to refrain from causing illness to someone though they have the power to do so (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.26).

In many instances of its use, she involves one’s refraining from punishing someone for a crime, offence, or some fault punishable by established standards. For example, the object of she can be zui 罪, where zui can be literally a crime or, in the political context, an offence to another state or its ruler (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B8.13, B10.5, B10.14; Guoyu 6.4, 8.1; Lunyu 20.1). The object of she can be guo 過, or faults (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B9.28; Lunyu 13.2), as well as fa 罰 or xing 刑, terms having to do with punishment (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B10.25, B10.26, B12.3). From these observations, we see that she is primarily a behavioral term, referring to a public act of refraining from doing something negative to and letting go another party when one has the authority or power to do so.

The next term, mian 免, has the general meaning of being free from or avoiding something (Lunyu 17.21; Mengzi 1A:4). What is avoided can be death (Mengzi 1A:7, 6B:14) or some disaster (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B2.6, B4.2, B11.13; Guoyu 4.106). When used by itself without specifying that which is avoided, mian often refers to one’s avoiding some disastrous outcomes (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B1.4, B5.27; Guoyu 1.22) while bu mian 不免, or not mian, refers to one’s being unable to avoid such disastrous outcomes (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B8.15, B9.10, B9.29). In its more specific usage, mian can refer to one’s actively removing something, such as an armor (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.33, B8.16, B12.16; Guoyu 1.19, 4.69), a cap (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B12.15), or even removing someone from office (Guoyu 2.7, 4.99).

More pertinent to our purpose is the use of mian in connection with one’s avoiding punishment, or refraining from committing a crime or offence (Guoyu 4.54,
6.16; *Lunyu* 5.2). In such usages, the difference between *she* and *mian* is that *she* refers to the act of refraining from imposing punishment that has already been incurred, while *mian* refers to one’s being able to avoid committing a crime or offence, or avoid incurring punishment (*Lunyu* 2.3). When a crime or offence has already been committed or punishment already incurred, the difference between *she* and *mian* is that *she* refers to the refraining of punishment by the party with authority while *mian* refers to the avoidance of punishment by the offending party (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 3.22). But *mian* can also be used in a way close to *she*, referring to the act, by the party with authority, of sparing someone from punishment or from being killed (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* B2.13, B8.17; *Guoyu* 4.115). When so used, the difference between *she* and *mian* is that *she* emphasizes the connotation of refraining from punishing a person, while *mian* emphasizes the connotation of bringing it about that the person is relieved of the punishment.

Turning to *yuan* 原 and *liang* 諒, there is, as far as I can tell, no instance of the usage of either term in the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu*, *Lunyu* and *Mengzi* in the sense in which the compound *yuan liang* 原諒 is used in modern Chinese. The same is true of *rào* 饒, which occurs in the compound 饒恕. As for *shu* 勒, it is explained in *Lunyu* 15.24 in terms of not bestowing (*shi* 施) on others what one would not desire to be bestowed on oneself. The linkage between *shu* and *shi* 施 is also found in other contexts to describe one’s bestowing (*shi*) things on others in a way that exhibits *shu* (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* B9.23). *Shu* is usually presented as a desirable quality in early texts, presumably referring to one’s being considerate in dealing with others (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* B1.3, B1.11, B5.15, B9.24; *Mengzi* 7A:4). Thus, in early texts, *shu* refers to one’s being considerate in bestowing things on and in dealing with others, rather than referring specifically to a ‘forgiving’ attitude toward an offender.

*Shu* is used in modern Chinese in the compound *kuan shu* 寬恕 as a possible translation of “to forgive”, and *kuan* 寬 is also viewed generally as a desirable quality in early texts (*Lunyu* 3.26, 17.6). It refers to a mindset that is contrasted with being narrow-minded (*bi* 邪) and so is a matter of being broad-minded (*Mengzi* 5B:1, 7B:15). As such, it is related to *hui* 惠, being generous toward and bestowing favors on others (*Guoyu* 1.23, 3.1, 4.8, 4.102). *Kuan* is presented as a way of dealing with people in general (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* B8.9, B10.13; *Guoyu* 7.9) which will enable one to gain their allegiance (*Lunyu* 20.1).

The usage of *kuan* particularly pertinent to our purpose is when it is used in relation to the penal system (*xing* 刑) (*Guoyu* 7.9) and government policy (*zheng* 政) (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* B10.20), such usage being sometimes related to *she* 赦 and *mian* 免 (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan* B3.22). In such contexts, *kuan* has to do with being lenient and not harsh, and it differs from *she* and *mian* in that it emphasizes one’s mindset rather than public action, though such a mindset also leads to lenient action.

Although *kuan* has to do with one’s mindset and can lead to lenient action, it is unlike the notion of forgiveness in that it is not primarily a matter of the way we view an offending party. Even if we consider someone changing from being narrow-minded (*bi* 邪) to being broad-minded (*kuan* 寬) (*Mengzi* 5B:1, 7B:15), the change is
primarily one of correcting a deficiency in ourselves, and only derivatively a change in the way we view others. That is, prior to the change, even if we view someone in a negative light, this is due to our own narrow-mindedness rather than being an appropriate response to a flaw in the other party, and the change is primarily a matter of correcting this deficiency in ourselves rather than coming to view a flaw in the other party in a more favorable light.

*Kuan* is used in modern Chinese in the compound *kuan rong* 寬容 to describe one’s being broad-minded and accommodating. In early texts, aside from referring to one’s facial expression, *rong* is used in the sense of having a place for or giving a place to someone (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B9.23, B10.1, B10.7, B11.9; *Mengzi* 6B:8). When used to describe one’s dealing with others in general, it has the connotation of being encompassing and accommodating (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B9.14, B12.6; *Guoyu* 1.31; *Lunyu* 19.3). So, *rong* can refer to the mindset of being encompassing and accommodating, but even when so used, it is again not like the contemporary notion of forgiveness in that, as in the case of *kuan*, a change from not *rong* to *rong* is primarily a correction of a deficiency in oneself.

Let us consider a few other terms that Harbsmeier describes as representing “concepts within the semantic field of forgiveness”. *You* 宥 is closely related to *she* 赦 and the two are often used together (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B9.11, B9.14; *Guoyu* 7.1). *You* by itself is used in connection with *zui* 罪, a crime or offence (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B8.18, B9.28; *Guoyu* 3.5, 4.78). As we saw earlier, *she* is also often so used. In a passage in the *Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan, *she* and *you* occurs together, with *she* being used in connection with the orphaned and the widowed (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B10.14). Here, *you* has to do with relieving the weak and deprived rather than relieving someone of potential punishment. Probably, the difference between *you* and *she* is that *you* emphasizes more the disposition of the heart/mind toward bringing relief to others, whether through leniency in punishment or through assisting the weak and deprived, while *she* refers to the specific lenient act. That *you* has to do with a disposition of the heart/mind rather than specific action can be seen from the pairing of *you* with *kuan* (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B10.13) and the presentation of *you* as a matter of *kuan* (*Guoyu* 1.28). The relation between *kuan* and *you* is probably that, while *kuan* refers to a general mindset of being broad-minded, *you* refers to one aspect of *kuan*, namely, the disposition to bring relief to others. *You* differs from the contemporary notion of forgiveness in that it refers to such a disposition rather than to a change in the way one views an offender.

*Shi* 釋 is used in the sense of being without something (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B6.6). It is also used to refer to an attitude of removing something such as armor (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B9.28, B10.25), attire (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B9.14), or sword (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B12.17; *Guoyu* 7.5). It can be used to refer to the act of untying (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B5.6, B10.4), or coming to the relief of another state in wartime (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan B5.27, B5.28; *Guoyu* 4.44, 4.51). More pertinent to our purpose is its use to refer to one’s being without guilt or being found not guilty (*Guoyu* 4.10) and to one’s letting go someone who has been made a prisoner (*Chunqiu Zuo*zhuan A5.21, B5.30, B8.3, B9.26; *Guoyu* 4.9), in which case *shi* is opposed to *zhi* 执, making someone a...

*Journal of East-West Thought*
resentment and forgiveness in confucian thought

As seen from these usages, shì is a term referring primarily to an action. While mìan is also used in the sense of being without something or removing something, shì is probably more concrete in its connotations. Mìan emphasizes more the connotation of being without or making it the case that one is without something, and shì is used primarily to refer to a specific act of removing something, untying, or letting go. Neither term involves the kind of change of heart highlighted in the contemporary notion of forgiveness.

Another term jiè can be used to refer to the act of dividing up land (Guoyu 2.8), removing parts of one’s attire or armor (Guoyu 3.6), coming to the relief of some state or city in warfare (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.15), or relieving one of one’s worries (Mengzi 5A:1). In these last two usages, jiè has to do with relieving someone or some entity of some unwelcome circumstances. This takes it close to terms like shé or shì 詩 though jiè is by comparison used much less frequently, if at all, in relation to crime or offence or punishment. In any instance, jiè again has to do primarily with actions rather than a change of attitude toward an offender.

The same is true of fāng, which is used to refer to specific acts such as letting go of something (Mengzi 6A:8), exiling someone (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B3.6, A7.1, B7.1, B9.21, B9.29, B10.1, B10.3, A10.8, A12.3; Guoyu 4.39), or letting someone go (Mengzi 5A:3). Another character zōng 是 also used to refer to acts of letting someone go (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B12.26). The difference between fāng and zōng is probably that, while fāng emphasizes the act of letting someone go, zōng emphasizes what happens thereby, namely the person can now freely move about doing various things. This explains why zōng can also be used in the sense of indulging, freely doing certain things to the detriment of oneself or of others (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B10.10; Guoyu 1.13, 1.16, 2.15, 5.1, 6.15), or in the sense of letting one’s enemies freely do things to the detriment of oneself (Chunqiu Zuozhuan B5.33). Again, both fāng and zōng refer primarily to actions, unlike the contemporary notion of forgiveness.

Our examination of the early use of terms potentially related to the notion of forgiveness shows that these terms either have to do primarily with actions, or if they have to do with the heart/mind, they refer to a certain mindset (as in the case of kuan or róng) or a disposition to perform certain kinds of actions (as in the case of you). For terms that have to do with one’s mindset or disposition, a change conveyed through their use is primarily a matter of correcting some deficiency in oneself, such as a change from being narrow-minded (bì 譬) to being broad-minded (kuan 賢). This is unlike the kind of change of heart involved in the contemporary notion of forgiveness, which emphasizes a change in the way one views an offending party. Thus, none of the terms we have considered come close to the notion of forgiveness highlighted in contemporary philosophical discussions.

IV

In Section 2, we saw that there are terms in early Chinese texts akin to the contemporary notions of resentment and anger as well as the notions of insult and
disgrace. In Section 3, we saw that there is no term in early Chinese texts akin to the contemporary notion of forgiveness, understood in terms of forswearing resentment through a change in the way one views an offending party. Why is there a notion akin to resentment but not forgiveness in early China? A possible answer is that the focus of the early Chinese was on action in the public domain rather than psychological management, and that is why they have a developed vocabulary for acts of leniency but not for a change in the way one views an offender. However, in the evolvement of Confucian thought up to the Song-Ming period, there has been a growing attention to the workings of the human psychology, with extensive discussions of how to manage the inner workings of the heart/mind. Still, we do not find a developed vocabulary that is akin to the contemporary notion of forgiveness. It will take another extensive investigation to show that such vocabulary has indeed not developed by this time. But even without such an investigation, it seems fair to say that the presence of such a vocabulary is not conspicuous and that the contemporary notion of forgiveness is not idealized in Confucian thought. Why is this the case?

The answer I propose is that this is because the Confucians do not share two assumptions that underlies the contemporary view of resentment and forgiveness. The first is the view of resentment as protective of self-respect, and the second is the assumption that resentment is an ineradicable part of the human condition. I will discuss the first assumption in this section and the second in the next.

Contemporary discussions often describe resentment as a ‘reactive attitude’, a notion highlighted in P.F. Strawson’s classic paper “Freedom and Resentment”. However, the way they relate resentment to self-respect goes beyond the way Strawson characterizes the reactive attitude of resentment. In introducing the reactive attitudes, Strawson speaks “of the non-detached attitudes and reactions of people directly involved in transactions with each other; of the attitudes and reactions of offended parties and beneficiaries; of such things as gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings.” He contrasts the reactive attitudes with the objective attitude, one that we take up toward agents who are psychological abnormal or morally undeveloped, as in the case of the “deranged, neurotic, or just a child”. The objective attitude is opposed to “the attitude (or range of attitudes) of involvement or participation in a human relationship”, and it “cannot include the range of reactive feelings and attitudes which belong to involvement or participation with others in inter-personal human relations.”

Although Strawson mentions gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, and the attitudes and reactions of offended parties and beneficiaries as examples of reactive attitudes, reactive attitudes are not confined to these first personal attitudes and reactions. Our reactions toward the way others are treated are also participatory in a way opposed to the objective attitude, and Strawson himself describes indignation, or what he calls “resentment on behalf of another”, as another example of a reactive attitude. Within

---

17 Strawson, p. 4.
18 Strawson, p. 8.
19 Strawson, p. 9.
the scope of reactive attitudes, he distinguishes between the “personal reactive attitudes” and the “generalized or vicarious analogues of the personal reactive attitudes” that we have on behalf of others. This distinction parallels that between “the points of view of one whose interest was directly involved … and of others whose interest was not directly involved.”

Another point made by Strawson in relation to the reactive attitudes has to do with the attitudes and intentions of the agent toward those affected by his actions. Strawson emphasizes “the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions towards us of other human beings, and the great extent to which our personal feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, our beliefs about these attitudes and intentions.” According to him, the benefit or injury to us of others’ actions also reside in the attitudes and intentions of others. And these observations he extends to what he calls the “generalized form” of the “personal reactive attitudes”. We also demand “the manifestation of a reasonable degree of goodwill or regard, on the part of others, not simply toward oneself, but toward all those on whose behalf moral indignation may be felt.”

The phenomena that Strawson alluded to in relation to the reactive attitudes are all recognizably present in early Chinese texts. There is a rich vocabulary for what Strawson calls non-detached or participatory attitudes and reactions, and the distinction between what he calls personal reactions and reactions we have on behalf of others is also built into the language. Yuan is an example of the first kind of reactions, while nu can be used of both. The differential responses emphasized by the Confucians – e.g., my response to the injury of my parents differs from that toward the injury of someone else’s parents – assumes such a distinction. The importance of the agent’s attitudes and intentions to those affected is recognized, and there is explicit discussion of how such attitudes and intentions make a difference to the response of the affected party. For example, implicit in the notion of de (virtue, power) is the view that benefitting others out of genuine concern for them will bring about a response that would not be present if the benefitting action is intended to serve some other purpose.

Strawson’s discussion does not bring in references to one’s self-respect, and the way contemporary discussions relates resentment to self-respect goes beyond the way he introduces the reactive attitude of resentment. Such discussions present intentional wrongdoings that harm us as insults and as attempts to degrade us, through the implicit message that we do not count as persons or are in some sense down below; as such, they constitute an attack on our self-respect. Now, while acknowledging that

---

22 Strawson, p. 5.
23 Strawson, p. 15.
24 Murphy develops Strawson’s idea in this direction, saying that “not to have what Peter Strawson calls the ‘reactive attitude’ of resentment when our rights are violated is to convey – emotionally – either that we do not think we have rights or that we do not take our rights very
the attitudes and intentions of others who benefit or harm us can make a difference to our response, and even if we say that they contain messages in this sense, it does not follow that these are messages about our low standing. This might be true of public insults and degrading treatment, but not clearly true of acts of self-interest that injure us. If some acquaintance stole something of mine out of greed, I might see it as a betrayal of trust, but it does not follow that I regard him as communicating through his act a message about my lower standing. Indeed, I might even believe that he is doing this partly out of jealousy about my standing, social or otherwise.

Perhaps, the linkage between wrongful injury and self-respect stems from the following line of thought. Whatever else I, as the victim, might believe about the offender’s motive, what he does nevertheless shows a disregard for my interest and shows that he does not believe I deserve better treatment. In this sense, he shows me disrespect and his act communicates the message that I am not deserving of his respect. And it is my interpreting his action in this manner that leads me to assert myself to defend my standing, as well as to my focusing on him in a way that leads to more aggressive responses, such as hatred, malice, and vengeful sentiments.

In addition to its linkage to such aggressive responses, resentment has also been associated by some with a kind of brooding and defensive response, though others would view the notion as more neutral. Some believe that resentment involves self-doubt and shows that one has low esteem, while others believe that this is not necessarily part of resentment. Such disagreements about the use of the word “resentment” is not pertinent to the substantive issues and can be sidestepped through terminological stipulation. We may, if we wish, consciously restrict the use of the words “resent” and “resentment” to describe the response of asserting ourselves in light of wrongful treatment that we regard as challenging our standing, and relegate the additional connotations of aggressiveness, self-doubt, defensiveness, and being of a brooding nature to the words “resentful” and “resentfulness”. For convenience, I will from now on use the word “resentment” in this stipulated sense.

This move still leaves us with two substantive questions. First, is it indeed the case that all forms of wrongful treatment should ideally lead to resentment in this sense, with the victim viewing the offender as communicating a message about her standing and responding in a way that asserts her own standing? That is, is it indeed the case that failure to respond with resentment to wrongful injury shows a lack of self-respect? And second, when the victim does respond with resentment in this sense,
is it indeed the case that forgiveness is the proper way to address such responses? Might there be another way of addressing such responses that is different from forgiveness and that humans might aspire to? I will address the second question in the next section and the first in the remainder of this section.

The Confucian position is that, ideally, we should not respond to wrongful treatment of ourselves with resentment in the sense just described. This is so even if the wrongful treatment involves explicitly insulting behavior. This position is a consequence of the way the Confucians understand what is truly disgraceful.

Earlier, we considered the early Chinese notions of *wu* (insult) and *ru* (disgrace); *wu*, or insult, has to do with the fact that one has been treated inappropriately by public standards, while *ru*, or disgrace, has to do with one’s perspective on such treatment, namely, one regards such treatment as degrading oneself. A common perspective of the times is that being insulted leads to disgrace unless one fights back or counters the insulting behavior in some other way. To address the pervasive fighting that resulted from such a perspective, Songzi proposes that we should stop viewing what is insulting as a disgrace. Xunzi disagrees on the ground that whether people fight depends on what they dislike, and as long as they dislike insulting treatment, the fighting will not stop regardless of whether one views such treatment as disgraceful (*Xunzi* 12.11a-11b). Contrary to Xunzi, however, Songzi has probably made a valid point—in not regarding the insulting treatment as disgraceful, one no longer sees it as a personal affront even if one still dislikes it, and it is seeing something as a personal affront that leads to the kind of pervasive fighting that has become problematic. In any instance, Xunzi’s own position is not substantively different from Songzi’s in that he also advocates a transformation in what one regards as truly disgraceful. According to him, what we regard as disgraceful should not be tied to the way others view or treat us, but should be a matter of our own ethical conduct, which also includes the way we respond to others’ treatment of ourselves (*Xunzi* 12.12b).

This view is shared by practically all Confucian thinkers. In a number of passages in the *Lunyu*, *chi* (disgrace) is presented as being directed to one’s own qualities and actions (*Lunyu* 5.25, 8.13, 14.1, 14.27; cf. *Xunzi* 3.12a). In *Mengzi* 2A:2, Mencius distinguishes between a higher and a lower form of courage. The latter has to do with fighting in response to insulting treatment, while the former has to do with the resolve to act in accordance with what one regards as ethically appropriate. In *Mengzi* 6A:16, he also distinguishes between what is truly honorable, namely living up to the ethical, from what is honorable by ordinary standards, namely, attaining high positions in office. Thus, what is truly disgraceful has to do with one’s own ethical qualities, rather than the way one is viewed or treated by others, a view also shared by later Confucians, who idealize the form of anger that is directed to what is ethically appropriate rather than at personal affronts. For example, in his commentary on *Mengzi* 1B:3, which refers to the anger of King Wu, Zhu Xi remarks that one should not have the lower form of courage which involves anger of the latter
kind, and should not be lacking in the higher form of courage which involve anger of the former kind.²⁸

Thus, on the Confucian view, when one is wrongfully injured, the focus of one’s attention should be on the ethical quality of one’s response rather than on the how one’s standing is challenged by the offender. One may respond with anger to the ethically problematic quality of the situation, and as a matter of differential response, one may respond with greater intensity and urgency if the victim is oneself or someone close to oneself. But, ideally, there should not be an additional element of the response that is directed to the way one’s standing has been challenged because, on the Confucian view, one’s standing is a matter of one’s own ethical qualities rather than the way one is viewed or treated by others.

That the Confucians advocate such a position does not mean that they are not aware of the practical reality that humans can be subject to sentiments akin to resentment; their reference to yuan shows such an awareness. After all, the Confucian view of what is truly disgraceful is itself directed against this kind of sentiment. But they advocate a move away from this kind of sentiment to a perspective that focuses on the ethical quality of one’s response. The way to address such sentiment is to make a shift toward such a perspective, and not through forgiveness in the sense described earlier. In the next section, we will consider what the difference is between such a shift in perspective and the kind of change of heart involved in forgiveness. For now, let us consider how the Confucians would respond to two potential objections implied in the contemporary discussion.

The first is that a failure to respond with resentment shows that one does not take oneself seriously and that one lacks self-respect. On the Confucian view, not responding with resentment to wrongful injury does not mean that one does not take oneself seriously. On the contrary, one’s attention is very much on oneself, not on the way one is viewed by others, but on the way one conducts oneself in response. As for the notion of self-respect, whether the notion is applicable depends on how it is understood. The notion is often used in connection with a commitment not to fall below certain standards that define one’s ideal conception of the kind of life one leads. But these standards can be of two different kinds. They might focus on what is due to oneself, and the commitment involved is a commitment to not allow oneself to be treated in violation of such standards. Or they might concern the ethical standards that govern one’s way of life, and the commitment involved is a commitment to not fall below such standards in one’s qualities and actions.²⁹

If we are to use the notion of self-respect in characterizing the Confucian position, then the difference between the Confucian position and the contemporary view presented earlier is that the Confucians advocate our understanding self-respect in terms of the second kind of standards, while the contemporary view understands it in terms of the first. Indeed, the Confucian conception of what is truly disgraceful may

²⁸Zhu Xi Mengzi Jizhu 1.18b, Zhuzi Yulei: 239. For further elaboration on Zhu Xi’s views, see my “On Anger – An Experimental Essay in Confucian Moral Psychology”.
²⁹See my “Ethical Self-Commitment and Ethical Self-Indulgence” for further elaboration.
be viewed as a deliberate shift of focus from the first to the second kind of standards. So, if we are to use the notion of self-respect in characterizing the Confucian position, then the response to wrongful injury idealized by the Confucians does not show a lack of self-respect, but shows a different way of conceptualizing self-respect.

The second potential objection is that a failure to respond with resentment to wrongful injury shows that one does not take other human beings seriously by not paying attention to their attitude toward oneself. In its milder form, the objection is that a disregard for how others view us assumes a crude form of “atomic individualism” by ignoring the social context within which we live. In its stronger form, it sees in such a position a form of arrogance in that one views others’ opinions of oneself as of no significance.

The Confucian position is not vulnerable to such an objection. They do acknowledge that others’ opinions of oneself are of significance as it can be instrumental to one’s having a more realistic self-assessment. Confucian texts such as the Lunyu and the Mengzi comment on how one should engage in self-reflection should one be judged unfavorably by others, so as to determine whether there might be some genuine defect in oneself that has called forth such judgment. Furthermore, the Confucians do not deny that the way we are viewed by others does matter; in the Lunyu, we often find Confucius lamenting the lack of appreciation by others. The Confucian position is rather that, even though these things do matter, they pale in significance compared to our own ethical qualities. What constitute our standing are primarily our own ethical qualities, including the way we respond to wrongful injury by others. To focus on how such treatment poses challenges to our standing is to misdirect our attention away from what is of genuine significance.

V

The position just described assumes that it is possible for humans to take on a perspective from which one’s standing is a matter of one’s own ethical qualities rather than the way others view oneself. It might be objected that this is an unrealistic caricature of the human condition, and such a view is shared by several contemporary authors. For example, while acknowledging that someone “certain of the value of one’s self” might be totally indifferent to potential attacks on one’s self-esteem, Jeffrie G. Murphy notes that some weakness or vulnerability in the area of self-esteem is an ineliminable part of the human condition. Jesus might have this kind of confidence, but humans cannot. Charles I. Griswold notes that, while the sage might not react with resentment because he does not attach significance to how others regard himself, humans are non-sages and do care about how one is regarded by others.

---

30 See Murphy, p. 93.
31 See Murphy who describes such a position as the Nietzschean view (pp. 18-19).
32 For further elaboration on this point, see my “Self and Self-Cultivation in Early Confucian Thought.”
33 Murphy, pp. 93-94.
According to him, forgiveness is not idealized in Greco-Roman culture because for Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, the virtuous person is above resentment as she is invulnerable to the kind of injury to which resentment is a response. But one would not feel resentment if unjustly treated only if one is very much above common life or is insensitive for such reasons as self-deception or emotional blockage. Vladimir Jankelevitch, referring to Socrates, Jesus, and the Stoics, again describes the sage as not vulnerable to such injury and hence exempted from the efforts of forgiveness, but thinks this is not the human condition.

This is the second assumption that I alluded to namely, the view not just that humans are in actuality vulnerable to resentment, but also that they are unable to transform themselves to become invulnerable to resentment. That humans lack this ability is not at all obvious, and it is an assumption that the Confucians reject. If the sage or the virtuous person who is above resentment is held up as a moral exemplar, then it seems this is an ideal that humans should aspire to and seek to approximate. Even if resentment is part of the ordinary human condition, it is not a desirable kind of response to wrongful injury and we should strive to shift to a perspective from which we would no longer feel resentment.

In what way is this kind of change different from that involved in forgiveness? In contemporary discussions, forgiveness is presented as a change in the way one views the offender. One abandons the attitudes associated with resentment and comes to view the offender as decent after all and as someone with whom one can maintain a relationship. To undergo this change, one has to drop any presumption of one’s own importance or moral superiority, and empathetically see things from the perspective of the offender. In addition, one has to be able to sympathize with the perspective of the offender, and the whole process needs intellectual as well as affective efforts. And this forsaking of resentment should happen only on appropriate grounds which are often put in terms of the offender being separable as a person from his wrongful act and from the character trait that accounts for the act. This can come about because, for example, the offender has repented. Only then would forgiveness be compatible with one’s self-respect; to be too easy to forgive is to show that one does not take oneself seriously.

The change involved on the Confucian view is different. From the Confucian perspective, in responding with resentment to wrongful injury, one is reacting from a perspective that is problematic to start with. By regarding one’s standing as constituted by the way others view oneself, one has lost a proper sense of what is significant to one’s standing. The change one should undergo involves correcting this deficiency in oneself, and it is a change that one should undertake independently of

34 See Griswold, p. 45.
35 See Griswold, pp. 1-2, 8-14.
36 See Griswold, p. 40.
37 See Jankelevitch, pp. 6-8, 66-72.
38 See Murphy, p. 21; Hampton, pp. 84-85, 151, 157-158; Novitz, p. 306; Griswold, pp. 53-59.
39 See Novitz, pp. 308-311; Griswold, pp. 53-59; Roberts, p. 289.
40 See Murphy, pp. 23-25; Novitz, pp. 313-314; Griswold, p. 40.
any change on the part of the offender such as repentance. Such change involves one’s no longer seeing one’s standing as tied to the way one is viewed by others, and consequently abandoning the resentment that stemmed from this view of things. It does not involve one’s abandoning other kinds of response appropriate to the situation, such as indignation and taking corrective action.

Thus, the focus of the change is on correcting a deficiency in oneself, not on the offender. By downplaying the importance of the way others view oneself and by no longer seeing acts of injury as attacks on one’s self-respect, one’s initial resentment dissipates. In doing so, one also comes to see the offender in a different way, and perhaps in the same way that would have resulted from an act of forgiveness – namely, the offender is decent after all and someone with whom I can enter into or maintain a relationship. But this change is derivative from the shift of perspective that one undertakes, where the shift is focused on correcting a deficiency in oneself. The resentment that is eliminated is, so to speak, transcended, in that it results from one’s effort to correct a deficiency in oneself, rather than from a conscious and direct effort to eliminate the resentment by viewing the offender in a different light. This view does not deny the importance of the efforts at an empathetic understanding of the offender and at having compassion on and pro-attitude toward the offender. Such efforts are important not just on the part of the victim of wrongful injury, but also on the part of those who are unrelated to the victim, whether in assessing the appropriateness of their indignant anger toward the offender or in determining what corrective action might be appropriate. The Confucian view is only that, to the extent that efforts are needed to address the sentiment of resentment, the efforts should focus more on correcting one’s own perspective.

VI

To summarize, we have shown that the Confucians do not idealize resentment as a response to wrongful injury to oneself, where resentment is understood as a reaction to challenges to one’s self-respect posed by the wrongful injury. The reason is that the Confucians believe that one’s self-respect is not a matter of how one is viewed by others, but a matter of one’s own ethical qualities. Even if we do respond with resentment, these are reactions that we should ideally have done without in the first place. Their presence shows a deficiency in ourselves, and to address such reactions, the primary focus of our efforts should be to correct this deficiency in ourselves rather than to change the way we view the offender. Addressing this deficiency will result in our viewing the offender differently, but efforts devoted to the former are not efforts at forgiveness as they are not directly focused on altering the way we view the offender. Thus, just as the Confucians do not idealize resentment as a response to wrongful injury, they also do not idealize forgiveness as a way to address such responses.

The fundamental difference between the Confucian position and the contemporary view sketched at the beginning of the paper has to do with different emphases in the way they view the person. On the latter view, the emphasis is on the
idea of respect for persons, both by others and by oneself. For someone to wrongfully injure another is for the offender to show disrespect to the victim. If the victim takes herself seriously, she should assert herself to protect her self-respect thereby responding with resentment. Such resentment might take on excessive forms such as hatred and vengefulness, and as such need to be moderated. But it should stay in place in the moderated and non-excessive form to the extent that the offender maintains his posture of disrespect for the victim. It is only when the offender has altered that stance, disassociating himself from his act through such acts as repentance, that the victim should alter the way she views the offender and foreswear her resentment toward him. This is the act of forgiveness.

On the Confucian view, the emphasis is on the way a person’s qualities and actions measure against certain ethical standards. In wrongful injury, the offender has acted in a way, and presumably also demonstrated personal qualities, that fall below such standards, and such acts call for indignation, or righteous anger. Such anger can take on a more intense and complex form if one is oneself the victim, but this is a matter of differential responses due to differences in the way one relates to the victim. The focus of the victim should still be on how the offender’s action, and her own response, measure against certain ethical standards. Her focus is not on how she is viewed and treated by the offender, and so she should not respond with resentment as a way of protecting herself against the challenge from the offender. To the extent that she does so respond, she should shift to a perspective from which her focus is no longer on such challenge, as a result of which the resentment will dissipate. This change is primarily a matter of correcting a deficiency in herself, rather than a change in the way she views the offender, even though the latter change does follow from the former. In this way, the Confucians idealize a way of addressing resentment that is different from forgiveness.

Although I have presented the details of the Confucian position as an alternative to the contemporary view, I am not arguing for the merit of the former over the latter. No doubt, the difference between the two derives from fundamental cultural differences, such as differences in the way we view the human person, between which it is difficult if not impossible to adjudicate. 41 But at least, through my presentation of the Confucian position, I hope to have rendered it intelligible even to someone with a different perspective who, even if not endorsing the Confucian perspective, can at least understand its appeal to those who do endorse such a position.

References

Primary Sources

Chunqiu Zuozhuan 春秋左傳. CHANT (Chinese Ancient Texts) Database 漢達文庫.
Guoyu 國語. CHANT (Chinese Ancient Texts) Database 漢達文庫.

41 Downie also acknowledges that whether one idealizes forgiveness is a matter of moral systems and cultural outlooks that can differ (pp. 133-4).
resentment and forgiveness in confucian thought

Lunyu 论语. References are by passage numbers, following the numbering of passages in Yang Bojun 楊伯俊 Lunyu Yizhu 论语译注 2nd edition (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1980).
Mengzi 孟子. References are by passage numbers, following the numbering of passages, with book numbers 1A-7B substituted for 1-14, in Yang Bojun Mengzi Yizhu 孟子譯注 2nd edition (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1984).
Mozzi 墨子. CHANT (Chinese Ancient Texts) Database 漢達文庫.
Shijing 詩經. References are by ode numbers, following the numbering of odes in Yang Renzhi 楊任之 Shijing Jinyijinzhu 詩經今譯今注 (Tianjin Guji Chubanshe 天津古籍出版社, 1986).
Zhuzi Yulei 朱子語類 (Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1986).

Secondary Sources


Journal of East-West Thought
EURO-MULTICULTURALISM AND TOLERATION

Sune Lægaard†

I. Introduction

Multiculturalism has for several decades been an unavoidable term in discussions about social developments in modern societies. The increasing diversity of all societies is an incontrovertible fact. This has led to extensive discussions about all the issues this raises – both in terms of new possibilities and opportunities, but mainly in terms of the problems, threats, risks and challenges posed by the increased presence of people of different backgrounds side by side in the same society. While this phenomenon is not new – the idea of a completely homogenous society is most probably a fiction which very few historical societies have ever realised or even approximated – it is generally accepted that diversity has recently increased due to globalisation and migration. This has occurred in a context with increased awareness, public scrutiny and politicisation of diversity. Simultaneously, the political human rights context now rules out traditional ways of ignoring or oppressing diversity and rather provides an arena for claims of accommodation, and a normative background of ideas providing support for such claims.

The term “multiculturalism” has since the 60s and 70s risen to prominence as a label for both diversity itself and for the social and political responses to it. But due to the high degree of politicisation of all issues having to do with diversity, the word “multiculturalism” is arguably often more a category of political practice than an analytical category with a clear theoretical meaning (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000) – to some, multiculturalism is simply a label for dangerous and subversive social tendencies to be avoided and combatted at all costs, to others multiculturalism signal a stand against xenophobia and an expression of a progressive attitude. The use of the term in academic discussions therefore requires careful consideration of what the underlying concepts really are and explicit definitions of how the term is used in particular cases. But once you engage in this sort of exercise, it becomes apparent that, even in academic and theoretical contexts, there are different understandings of multiculturalism at play and that some of these are often not well captured by generally accepted and reiterated definitions of multiculturalism.

In this paper I will show this with respect to the understanding of multiculturalism in a European context. My claim will be that the underlying concept of multiculturalism in many European discussions is different from that made prominent by the classic cases, e.g. in Canada, that have functioned as paradigm cases which the most prominent theories of multiculturalism have been tailored to fit and justify. Hence my proposal that we should be aware of the existence of what I propose to call “Euro-multiculturalism”, which both denotes a) a different object of debates,

†Dr. SUNE LÆGAARD, Associate Professor in Philosophy and Science Studies, Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University.

Journal of East-West Thought
i.e. the kind of diversity that multiculturalism is about, b) a different definition of what counts as multiculturalism policy responses to this diversity, and c) a different normative background explaining what is at stake in European multiculturalism controversies. Briefly, my suggestion is that Euro-multiculturalism is a) about mainly immigrant religious minorities rather than indigenous or national minorities defined in mainly cultural or linguistic terms; b) does not for the most part consist in special group-differentiated rights or forms of recognition going beyond established liberal rights, but rather is concerned with the interpretation and application of standard liberal rights and rules to cases involving this new diversity; and c) should be understood as premised on an underlying discussion about the meaning of liberalism rather than as a debate about normative commitments fundamentally different from liberalism.

I will illustrate these points and provide some arguments for them. But most of this paper will consider some possible objections to my proposed understanding of Euro-multiculturalism, namely a) that it over-inclusive in the sense that it includes religion as a central category and thereby neglects important differences between religion and culture, and b) that it is under-inclusive in the sense that it collapses multiculturalism into standard liberal political theory and fails to explain what is distinctive about multiculturalism. Roughly my answer to these objections will be that they are premised on a specific understanding of multiculturalism that both misunderstands the internal logic of many classical forms of multiculturalism and fails to capture what goes under the name of multiculturalism in a European context.

Multiculturalism is about diversity and is highly politicised in the sense that the diversity in question generates much controversy and opposition. This combination makes salient the other concept in the title of the paper, namely toleration. There are many discussions of toleration and multiculturalism at the general conceptual level, where it is often argued that multiculturalism as a response to diversity is necessarily something else and more than “mere” toleration, since toleration is premised on a negative attitude to and only permits the presence of difference, whereas multiculturalism welcomes, recognises and accommodates diversity ([omitted]). For present purposes I will not go much into this general debate at the conceptual level. I will rather lay out my idea of Euro-multiculturalism and rely on my characterisation of it to make evident that multiculturalism in this sense can involve issues of toleration. Furthermore I will use the concept of toleration as a prism through which to view understandings of multiculturalism. The idea is that the concept of toleration picks out a number of important aspects of how one can relate to diversity and provides a framework for distinguishing between different attitudes to diversity. Viewing Euro-multiculturalism through the prism of toleration therefore provides a way of identifying and explicating the peculiar ways in which Euro-multiculturalism is a different way of relating to diversity.

The paper proceeds as follows: First I lay out the concept of toleration and explains how I will use this as a framework for assessing the specificity of Euro-multiculturalism. Then I turn to the two respects in which Euro-multiculturalism differs from other understandings of multiculturalism, namely the kind of diversity it is concerned with and the types of responses to diversity that count as multicultural.
Then I discuss the two noted objections to Euro-multiculturalism that target precisely these two aspects. In the conclusion I return to the link between toleration and multiculturalism and discuss how Euro-multiculturalism involves toleration.

II. Toleration and Multiculturalism

Toleration is routinely defined as a specific relationship between agents and patients of toleration where the following conditions hold: 1) there is some difference between the agent and the patient, e.g. in terms of religious belief, cultural practices or visible traits, 2) the agent has some sort of objection to the respects in which the patient differs from the agent, which disposes the agent to interfere with the patient in order to prohibit, suppress, exclude or eradicate what is found objectionable, 3) the agent has the power to interfere in this way, 4) the agent also has other reasons for nevertheless accepting the patient, and 5) the agent therefore does not interfere (McKinnon, 2006; Forst, 2012; Cohen, 2014).

This general concept can be cashed out in many different ways. The agent can be an individual, a group or an institution, as long as it is capable of action and of fulfilling the objection and acceptance conditions in a relevant way ([omitted]). The objection components can be understood in different ways – as affective dislike or as more reasoned disapproval (Horton, 1996), which can in turn either be based on particular conceptions of the good (ethical disapproval) or on moral grounds supposedly valid for everybody (moral disapproval) (Forst, 2012).

The link between toleration and multiculturalism initially has to do with the difference condition of toleration. Toleration requires the existence of some form of difference, and this is exactly what multiculturalism is about. But as soon as this has been stated, it is necessary to specify the understanding of multiculturalism – for what are the differences that multiculturalism is concerned with? Exactly which forms of diversity are we talking about, when we talk about multiculturalism? This is an important question in its own right, because it requires us to reflect on the understanding of multiculturalism and on what our use of the term refers to in particular cases. It might be thought that the answer is straightforward; since ‘culture’ is part of the word multiculturalism, it seems obvious that multiculturalism is about cultural differences. This is indeed (part of) many common definitions of multiculturalism. I will nevertheless argue that the answer to this question is not as straightforward as one might think, and that the answer is importantly different in contemporary European cases as compared with, say, the classic Canadian cases. The perspective provided by the concept of toleration is a good way of bringing this out, since toleration is not just about difference but about differences that are objected to.

If the types of differences involved in multiculturalism are not the same in Euro-multiculturalism as in other cases, the kind of toleration might also be different, since the kind of objection is likely to depend on the type of difference that the objection takes as its object.

So in the following I will focus on the understanding of multiculturalism in the European context and first ask what kind of difference and diversity Euro-multiculturalism is concerned with. But multiculturalism is of course not just a
descriptive claim about the fact that societies are diverse; it is also a normative claim about how societies should respond to this diversity. Toleration is one possible response to diversity, but multiculturalism has often been understood as something “beyond” mere toleration ([omitted]). So there might be a divergence between toleration and multiculturalism in terms of the types of action required in relation to difference. In this paper I will only touch on a particular corner of this debate, concerning what kinds of policy responses to diversity count as multicultural. I will again note a common understanding, namely that multiculturalism is about policies that go “beyond” toleration and ordinary liberal rights, and again I will argue that this answer is not entirely true – and that in the European context it is even further from the truth than it might be in other cases.

III. The Object of Euro-multiculturalism

A standard distinction in discussions about multiculturalism is between multiculturalism as a descriptive and a normative claim. The descriptive claim is that a given society is diverse in some sense, usually that there are groups with different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The normative claim is that this diversity should be accommodated, recognised and supported in various ways. As Koopmans (2013, 149) notes, most discussions of multiculturalism, at least in political philosophy, proceed quickly to discuss the normative sense of multiculturalism. But as Koopmans points out, the descriptive sense is quite important and should not be neglected, since the type of diversity in question is important for understanding the emergence and development of multiculturalism policies and the associated controversies. Koopmans makes this as an empirical and explanatory claim. In this paper I will argue that it also holds as a conceptual point. This is the case because multiculturalism, even in the normative sense, is about how we should respond to diversity – and the type of diversity therefore obviously makes an important difference for what the appropriate normative response is.

So what kind of diversity is multiculturalism about? The word of course suggests that multiculturalism is about culturally distinct groups. That is true to some extent, but even when it is true, it does not say much. Everything turns on the kinds of cultural differences that are taken to be relevant for multiculturalism. Roughly, it is fair to say that the classic multicultural cases in North America “culture” denotes features distinguishing groups in terms of 1) distinct language, and 2) specific territory (Meer and Modood, 2012, 179). These groups then fall in two main categories (cf. the classic typology in Kymlicka, 1995), namely a) indigenous peoples such as Inuit and American Indians, and b) national minorities like the Quebecois.

Against this standard understanding of the kind of diversity relevant to multiculturalism, Euro-multiculturalism is clearly different. Regarding the second criterion, namely the territorial nature of the groups in question, this is different in Europe. The groups in question are in general not territorially concentrated groups for the simple reason that they are due to immigration and are not indigenous. Of course, there are some indigenous peoples in Europe, such as the Sami in Northern Scandinavia, and many national minorities, such as the Catalans and Scots. But the
latter are simply not discussed under the heading of multiculturalism; these cases are rather categorised and debated under the heading of nationalism and the questions at stake do not mainly concern cultural accommodations but self-determination and secession. Perhaps apart from the case of the Sami, and that of the Roma, which is arguably sui generis, all European debates about multiculturalism concern immigrant groups which have arrived after the Second World War, first due to recruitment of labour migrants, and after the oil crisis of the early seventies as refugees and through family reunifications. Most of these immigrants and their descendants are concentrated in urban areas, but the nature of the associated political problems and claims is not territorial.

Regarding the first criterion, that of language, most immigrants are of course linguistically distinct from the majority population of the European societies in which they live. And language is sometimes used as a practical criterion to delimit the groups in question. In Denmark the official label for immigrant groups discussed under the heading of multiculturalism in relation to the educational system is for instance “bi-lingual” – but this is arguably most often merely a proxy for underlying group differentiations in terms of ethnicity or religion, which are ruled out (e.g. due to non-discrimination rules prohibiting differential treatment based on ethnicity) or provide seemingly more relevant justifications for certain policies, e.g. requirements of compulsory dispersal of children with immigrant background across different school districts to avoid too large concentrations. Some of the multiculturalist policies under discussion in Europe, such as public support for mother tongue instruction in public schools, also concern language, but these are relatively marginal cases.

The predominant focus of Euro-multiculturalism is not on questions of language, but on culture in another sense, namely as traditions, e.g. forms of dress, supposed underlying values, e.g. views about gender roles and family, and practices, e.g. of Halal butchering. And these issues are increasingly framed as a matter of religion, either directly as religiously justified claims, or indirectly as associated with groups that are identified in religious terms, mainly as Muslims. In fact, in many European countries, multiculturalism is primarily a label for debates about integration of Muslims (Triandafyllidou, Modood and Zapata-Barrero, 2006, 1; Meer and Modood, 2012, 179; Triandafyllidou, Modood and Meer, 2012, 5-8, 12). So the kind of diversity that Euro-multiculturalism is about is mainly religiously defined.

This is merely an empirical observation of what the debates and issues that are labelled multicultural in Europe are about. As such one might be sceptical about my claim that Euro-multiculturalism is about religion. This might be thought to be a case of turning a rhetorical framing at the level of categories of practice into a theoretical claim, which fails to appreciate political actors’ interests in describing issues in these terms (Werbner, 2012, 202). But according to Koopmans, the mainly religious object of Euro-multiculturalism can be empirically confirmed. He cites data to show that most immigrant claims were made by non-Christian religious groups, the majority of which by Muslims, who can furthermore be shown to be by far the most likely group to make claims for multicultural rights (Koopmans, 2013, 151). And as already noted, many scholars of multiculturalism in Europe affirm the same general view that Euro-multiculturalism is mainly about religious diversity due to immigration, and in
practice especially Muslims. But while this is a contingent empirical development, not in itself a conceptual necessity, it nevertheless becomes relevant to the concept of Euro-multiculturalism if we accept that the kind of diversity at stake is relevant to the normative responses to diversity, to which I now turn.

IV. What Counts as Multiculturalism?

Given that multiculturalism is a response to a certain kind of diversity, what does this response consist in and is Euro-multiculturalism in any way distinctive in this respect? One common understanding of multiculturalism is that a) it consists in adopting group-differentiated policies, e.g. in the form of group rights or recognition of collectives, and that b) multiculturalism therefore is different from or moves beyond standard liberal principles, which are assumed only to be concerned with individuals as equal citizens.

This standard understanding of multiculturalism (made prominent by Kymlicka, 1995) has also been invoked in a European context. Here, multiculturalism has for instance been said to denote a “communitarian form of organization of immigrant populations around a common nationality or religion (or both) and the accompanying demand for their specific voices in the public sphere” (Kastoryano, 2009, 5). It is probably true that this is indeed a widespread popular understanding of the word multiculturalism in Europe. And it is certainly this understanding that is often invoked as a justification for hostility to multiculturalism, be it from French republicans opposed to any form of communitarianism (as discussed in Laborde, 2008), or from liberals concerned with how group-differentiated policies might undermine liberal equality (e.g. Barry, 2001). Such debates proceed on the assumption that multiculturalism is a fundamental challenge to or departure from the established liberal (or republican) conception of equal citizenship (Triandafyllidou, Modood and Zapata-Barrero, 2006, 4-5).

Most avowed multiculturalists of course deny that multiculturalism is incompatible with equal citizenship – they rather argue that some form of group-differentiated rights or similar special measures going beyond the standard uniform set of individual rights and duties is necessary to actually treat all citizens equally, e.g. because members of minorities face special burdens due to the inevitable non-neutrality of even liberal states (Kymlicka, 1995; Modood, 2007). But even proponents of this normative compatibility between multiculturalism and liberalism still assume that what characterises multiculturalism as a policy response to diversity is that multiculturalism policies somehow “go beyond the protection of the basic civil and political rights guaranteed to all individuals in a liberal democratic state”, such as equal basic rights and non-discrimination measures (Banting and Kymlicka, 2013, 582; Koopmans, 2013, 151).

If one is interested in sketching the contours of Euro-multiculturalism, there are two problems with this standard understanding of what multiculturalism consists in. On the one hand, it is clear that there are very few (and, in a range of European countries, not any) European policies concerning immigrant religious minorities that really live up to this definition of multiculturalism. On the other hand it is simply not
clear that multiculturalism necessarily is about group-differentiated policies that somehow go beyond standard liberal rights and principles. To illustrate these two points, consider Banting and Kymlicka’s multiculturalism policy index, which is a prominent measure for the extent to which states have instituted multiculturalism at the policy level (Banting and Kymlicka, 2013). Even in the part of the MCP index concerned with immigrant minorities, most European states score significantly lower than the standard examples of multicultural states, Canada and Australia. This might most naturally be read as an indication that multiculturalism policies simply do not have any real foothold in Europe (apart from outliers such as Sweden or the UK).

But when one looks at the indicators that go into the construction of the MCP index, it becomes clear that the index includes a number of policies as indicators of multiculturalism that are not strictly speaking group-differentiated. Of the eight indicators for immigrant multiculturalism policies in the MCP index, the following three are not strictly speaking group-differentiated: (i) constitutional, legislative or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism, at the central and/or regional and municipal levels; (ii) the adoption of multiculturalism in school curriculum; (v) allowing of dual citizenship. Indicator (iv), “exemptions from dress codes, either by statute or by court cases”, might be group-differentiated, but need not be, since such exemptions can be justified on the basis of standard liberal rights, e.g. to religious freedom. And indicator (vi), “the funding of ethnic group organizations to support cultural activities”, might also be fulfilled due to a general rule of support for cultural associations or the like. So a country can score high on over half of the indicators for immigrant related MCPs without having adopted any group-differentiated policies in the sense usually assumed to characterise multiculturalism. Not only are most of the indicators for immigrant multiculturalism policies not group-differentiated, there is also no reason to think of them as necessary going beyond liberalism – there is for instance nothing in liberalism proscribing dual citizenship or support for cultural associations, and liberal principles might even be (and have been) used as justifications for exactly these kinds of policies.

My suggestion is that this shows that multiculturalism is not necessarily about group-differentiated policies going beyond liberalism in any strict sense and that the absence of such policies in many European states therefore is not a reason to reject the idea of Euro-multiculturalism. Since there furthermore is an extensive and highly charged debate about multiculturalism in Europe, there is to the contrary a reason to retain the idea of multiculturalism as a label for these debates. One might of course reject such a labelling as premised on a misunderstanding of what multiculturalism is about, but this would be begging the question if it appeals to a definition of multiculturalism as adoption of group-differentiated policies going beyond liberalism, since my point exactly is that this is an understanding of multiculturalism which neither fits the European case nor many of the indicators in the MCP index.

Until now I have simply argued negatively that the standard assumption about what counts as multiculturalism does not hold water, but this leaves open the exact answer to the positive question about what policy responses to religious diversity characterise Euro-multiculturalism. Here I will simply suggest, but not argue to any length, that much of what goes on under the label of multiculturalism in Europe is
really a continuous contestation over the meaning and implications of fairly standard liberal rights and principles. Since the object of Euro-multiculturalism is religious diversity due to immigration, the most prominent rights and principles at stake are core liberal rights such as freedom of religion, association and expression, and principles of non-discrimination. These are what is mainly at stake in most of the standard multiculturalism controversies in Europe, such as headscarf affairs, controversies over mosque building, funding for faith schools, halal butchering, limits on hate speech etc. None of these kinds of cases centrally involve new forms of group-differentiated rights; they rather concern the implications of already accepted and long established general rights such as freedom of religion or principles of equal treatment for new religious minorities, or they concern possible limits on such liberal rights of others, not because of the introduction of new group rights for minorities, but because the presence of new minorities raise the question whether already accepted forms of limitations of rights should carry new implications under new circumstances of religious diversity. So my suggestion is that Euro-multiculturalism, instead of being a debate about measures in some (less than clear) sense going “beyond” liberalism, is a debate about the meaning and interpretation of liberalism itself – it is not a departure from or addition to liberalism, but a rearrangement and rebalancing of concerns within liberalism.

Of course, not any way of striking the balance between the different concerns within liberal democracy can plausibly be characterised as a multicultural one; an extremely restrictive interpretation of freedom of religion that disproportionally burdens new religious minorities will for instance more naturally be seen as an anti-multiculturalist response to diversity. So my claim should be specified a bit more. First, we should distinguish between Euro-multiculturalism as a label for controversies and as a label for policy responses. In the former sense, my suggestion is that it makes good sense to characterise controversies over, e.g., mosque building and halal butchering as multiculturalism controversies, because they are concerned with the political response to diversity. But this does not mean that the controversy is over whether new minority groups should be accorded special group-differentiated rights or forms of recognition not extended to other groups. My claim is rather that the European multiculturalism controversies are over the interpretation of liberal rights and principles. This is an important point, because a common objection to accommodation of minorities is exactly that it should be resisted because it would amount to introduction of problematic forms of group-differentiated rights that are a departure from liberal equality. My characterisation of Euro-multiculturalism allows us to say that these controversies are genuinely multicultural but that this does not mean that what is at stake is group-differentiated rights.

In the latter sense, as a label for policy responses, Euro-multiculturalism denotes the ways of reinterpreting and applying standard liberal rights and principles to cases involving new religious minorities due to immigration that in fact interpret these and balance the involved concerns in ways that accommodate the minorities in question. So when it is decided that freedom of religion for Muslims actually justifies exemptions from humane slaughter regulations or for adjusting uniform requirements
in ways permitting the wearing of headscarves, then this counts as a multicultural policy response even though there is no group-differentiated right involved, but only standard liberal rights of freedom of religion. My claim is that this way of understanding Euro-multiculturalism as a policy response actually conforms to Kymlicka’s more general understanding of multiculturalism as ways of accommodating diversity (Banting and Kymlicka, 2013, 582) and that it better captures some of the indicators in the MCP index, e.g. many exemptions, which are ways of accommodating minorities that do not involve group-differentiated rights.

V. Objections

Until now I have sketched an idea of Euro-multiculturalism focused on religion rather than culture and not characterised as consisting in group-differentiated policies going beyond standard liberalism. But an obvious objection to this idea is that it simply collapses multiculturalism into standard liberal theory about religious diversity. In other words: is it multiculturalism at all if it is not concerned with culture or ethnicity, but only with religion, and if the response to religious diversity basically consists in interpreting standard liberal rights and principles in a way that to some extent accommodates religious minorities?

A first answer to this double objection is empirical, namely that these just happen to be the issues and policy responses that are debated under the heading of multiculturalism in Europe these days. One could of course say that this is then just a mistaken use of the word multiculturalism. But this first of all presupposes what is in question, namely what the “right” meaning of multiculturalism is. The question exactly is whether we should accept that multiculturalism means something partly different in a European context, and an affirmative answer to this question cannot simply be rejected by assuming a negative answer. Secondly, one point of political theory is to capture and engage with the actual political issues and debates that go on in our societies, so if these questions are debated under the heading of multiculturalism in Europe, this is at least one reason to accept this characterisation.

But these answers to the objection only go so far. While popular terminology should be considered, it should never be decisive. What we are interested in from political theory is exactly a deeper theoretical understanding of the debates and issues at stake, so if it turns out that there is no underlying theoretical rationale to be found, we should not stick with the multiculturalism characterisation. I have already given some reasons for considering the idea of Euro-multiculturalism as legitimate. Now I will directly address the two parts of the objection separately.

The first part of the objection is that multiculturalism cannot just be a label for responses to religious diversity. This objection takes the ‘culture’ in the word multiculturalism literally and resists any reduction of religion to culture or vice versa. There are two parts to this objection, namely a) that culture and religion are different kinds of social phenomena, and b) that multiculturalism is concerned with the specific problems raised by features of cultural phenomena. The upshot of such objections is that, since religion and culture are different, multiculturalism should only be understood as concerned with the latter, whereas the former rather should be dealt
with by the “constitutional domain of religious pluralism” (Werbner, 2012, 204) or “secularism” (Wievorka, 2012, 228). The question, of course, is why we should accept the assumed premises of this criticism, namely a) and b) above?

Regarding the distinction between culture and religion, some theorists simply appeal to standard definitions to establish the difference. Religion can for instance be said to necessarily involve appeals to transcendental beings, whereas culture is in some sense immanent (Werbner, 2012, 203). The difference can also be spelled further out, e.g. as consisting in the alleged fact that religion is characterised by people having certain epistemic stances (belief with a specific propositional content necessarily implying the possibility of doubt and scepticism) whereas culture rather is a conventional material practice (Werbner, 2012, 203-4), or religion might be held to be more categorical and non-negotiable for believers than culture, which is more malleable for its members (Werbner, 2012, 204).

Despite the easily recognisable form of these ways of distinguishing religion and culture, they are all problematic. The definition of religion in terms of belief in a transcendent being is for instance problematic outside the classical monotheistic religions, and the very conceptual distinction between transcendence and immanence might be held to be derived from these religions or at least to have a very different meaning within other world religions. So even at the abstract level, the invoked definitions do not seem to hold generally. Regarding the construction of the distinction on the basis of epistemic states of belief, this is also problematic as a general characterisation of religion since it fits some religions much better than others – it is arguably a version of the so-called protestantisation of religion. Finally, it simply seems empirically doubtful that religion is essentially unchanging and non-negotiable; this is at best a matter of degree, and there are innumerable examples of religion actually having changed rapidly and fundamentally – as only culture is supposed to do – and perhaps also of cultural traits persisting despite changes in the societal circumstances. So the first assumption underlying the objection, namely that culture and religion are fundamentally different, is in itself questionable.

But setting these problems aside, the real problem with the objection concerns the second assumption, namely that multiculturalism is concerned with the specific problems raised by features of cultural phenomena. Given that the distinction between religion and culture is not at all clear, the meaning of this second assumption already becomes unclear, for what are the specific features of culture that differentiates culture from religion? But rather than persisting in trying to find an answer to this question, we should step back and question the underlying assumption, namely that multiculturalism is concerned with culture as such. There is first of all no other justification for this than the fact that “culture” is part of the word “multiculturalism”. But even then, it simply does not follow that multiculturalism’s concern with culture should be explicated in terms of the essential features of culture (whatever they are, if there indeed are any). If we look at what multiculturalists have in fact been concerned with, it has been the political and societal responses to the presence of cultural diversity and the consequences of established social norms and laws for cultural minorities. Multiculturalists are not ethnographers or anthropologists interested in achieving an understanding of culture as such; multiculturalism is rather concerned...
with the *reactions* to kinds of diversity that we just have happened to call cultural. So rather than focus on the word “culture”, and assume that there must be one continuous social phenomenon at play underneath and throughout all the cases described by the word, which can be characterised by some essential features that might round a distinction between culture and religion, we should bracket these questions and look at multiculturalism from what might be called a functional perspective. Multiculturalism should not be understood as starting from an understanding of what culture is; multiculturalism should rather be understood in terms of a set of societal issues and controversies and as a set of policy responses to these.

A good example of this is offered by the way in which multiculturalism makes groups central. Rather than starting from a definition of culture and then picking out the groups relevant to multiculturalism on the basis of this definition, what multiculturalists such as Will Kymlicka (1995), Tariq Modood (2007) and Anna Elisabetta Galeotti (2002) do is to take what I call a functional perspective. This starts out, not by stipulating a definition of culture, but by pointing out that multiculturalism is concerned with minority groups. What makes a group a minority is not in itself anything intrinsic about the group, but how the surrounding society responds to the members of this group. What matters here are just as much perceptions and representations as the actual cultural traits members of a group might share. And these perceptions and representations are relevant because they have consequences for how members of the group are treated, for which barriers and burdens they face. The reason for focusing on minorities in this functional sense is basically normative, namely that multiculturalism is fundamentally a matter of equal opportunities (Kymlicka), equal citizenship (Modood) or equal respect (Galeotti). So multiculturalism starts out with a normatively grounded concern with minority groups, and the relevant groups are delineated on this basis, not on the basis of some independent definition of culture. This is true even in Kymlicka’s case, since he justifies the focus on so-called “societal cultures” in his theory on the basis that these provide the necessary “contexts of choice” for their members and are therefore crucial to equal opportunities. While outside perceptions and representations are crucial here, they of course indirectly affect how members of the groups in question can understand themselves relative to the rest of society. So “identity” becomes central to multiculturalism, both in the sense of externally ascribed identity and internally affirmed identity. But again the reason for this is not that identity matters in itself, but that it becomes relevant to the underlying normative aim of equality.

Once we see that this is the basis of much multiculturalism, and certainly of theories like those of Modood and Galeotti tailored to fit the European case, it becomes clear that religious differences can play the same role for delimitation of the relevant minority groups as cultural traits have done in other cases. Religious differences can have a similar functional role as cultural differences, and have the same consequences for outside perceptions and internal identities. And in that case there is no reason to exclude religious diversity from the area of concern to multiculturalism (Modood & Meer, 2012, 238, 240).

The extent to which religious minorities actually require accommodation in order for equality in some relevant sense to be achieved is of course an open question; the
answer to this question depends both on the exact conception of equality one endorses, and on the empirical circumstances, including the ways perceptions and representations affect the opportunities and identities of religious minorities in a given society. Some claims for accommodation on the part of religiously defined groups might be spurious or opportunistic, and others may be genuine but outweighed by more weighty normative considerations, e.g. the concern to separate politics and religion. But religious groups cannot be ruled out in advance as potential minorities in the sense relevant to multiculturalism, and their claims for accommodation have to be assessed on the basis of ideals of equality and the empirical facts just as those of other groups.

I now turn to the second objection, namely that my idea of Euro-multiculturalism collapses into standard liberal theory and fails to explain what is distinctive about multiculturalism. How is Euro-multiculturalism different from standard liberal theory of religious pluralism if it is not necessarily about implementing group-differentiated measures going beyond the rights and principles already established in standard liberal theories? The answer to the first objection given above provides the beginning of the answer to this second objection as well. As I have sketched it above, religion is a proper concern of multiculturalism because of multiculturalism’s functional approach to diversity – it is not the intrinsic type of diversity that matters, but the relational role it plays.

Liberal theory is mainly concerned with articulating ideals of justice and equal citizenship and with defending rights and rules as necessary for such ideals to be fulfilled. Liberalism accordingly is a normative view about what justice requires. One way to understand at least many versions of multiculturalism is that they do not necessarily challenge the basic normative aims of liberalism, e.g. ideals of equal opportunities, equal citizenship and equal respect, but that they add some layers of empirical circumstances between the levels of fundamental aims and derived policies. The functional understanding of minorities sketched above is such a layer; it does not add any new normative aims or principles, but shows that already accepted (or so we assume) liberal aims require specific kinds of accommodation given certain empirical circumstances. These empirical circumstances consist partly of the contingent ways in which liberal principles have historically been implemented in a given society, partly of the perceptions and representations of new minorities noted above, which together might have the consequence that established rights and rules do not adequately treat members of minorities as equal citizens. In some classic cases it has been argued that the conjunction of liberal ideals and multicultural circumstances justify the adoption of group-differentiated policies that are not part of the standard repertoire of liberalism. But these are still justified on the normative basis of liberal ideals of justice – what distinguishes multiculturalism is the addition of the empirical circumstances to the justification.

So classical multiculturalism is different from standard liberal theory, not necessarily or mainly in the normative core, but virtue of the attention to a particular type of empirical circumstances concerning minorities that affect how the normative aims can be achieved in a given context. My suggestion now simply is that the same is the case for Euro-multiculturalism. The only difference is that the policy measures...
that have been debated in relation to religious immigrant minorities in Europe are often not group-differentiated in the same way as those in the classical multiculturalism cases. The European debates about how to respond to diversity rather have proceeded within the set of standard liberal policy measures. This does not make Euro-multiculturalism collapse into standard liberal theory, for there are two differences: a) first of all, Euro-multiculturalism adds the extra empirical layer of circumstances to the normative aims of liberalism just in the same way as classical multiculturalism did, only this time the circumstances are European; b) the implications consist in adjustments and reinterpretations of how standard liberal rights such as freedom of religion and non-discrimination are understood. So Euro-multiculturalism is not simply a re-run of standard liberal theory of religious diversity, since it both adds new empirical facts to the underlying justifications and have different normative implications than liberalism have traditionally been thought to have in the societies in question.

VI. Conclusion

I have presented my idea of Euro-multiculturalism as a genuine form of multiculturalism which mere is focused on religious immigrant minorities rather than territorial cultural groups, and which concerns responses to this form of diversity that are not necessarily group-differentiated but rather consist in reinterpretations of standard liberal rights and principles as applied to new minority groups. In this concluding section I will consider a number of reasons why this understanding of Euro-multiculturalism is important and makes a difference for how we consider the controversies and issues at stake.

The first reason has to do with the framing of debates about multiculturalism, both in academic political philosophy and in ordinary political debates. The standard understanding of multiculturalism, which I have related my discussion to throughout the paper, is widely accepted in such debates, both by proponents and opponents of multiculturalism. This might seem like a good thing, for then people are at least agreeing on what they disagree about. One reason why my idea of Euro-multiculturalism is important is that, if my claims about the European controversies are more or less correct, then it is at least sometimes a mischaracterisation of the debates to rely on the standard understanding of multiculturalism. The standard understanding presupposes that we are discussing the extension of group-differentiated policies going beyond ordinary liberal rights and principles to culturally defined groups. If the discussion of the European cases proceed on this assumption, we not only misunderstand what is at stake, namely the adjustment and extension of ordinary liberal rights and principles to new immigrant minorities, but opponents of the kinds of reinterpretations and accommodations that this might involve also gain an unfair rhetorical advantage, for they can then reject accommodation on the basis that it would amount to the introduction of problematic forms of group-differentiated rights that not only go beyond liberalism, but is in fact a departure from liberalism.

The second reason has to do with the link to toleration. If Euro-multiculturalism is concerned with mainly religious differences and is mainly about accommodation of
religious immigrant minorities with respect to how ordinary liberal rights such as freedom of religion, association and expression and norms such as non-discrimination are understood and interpreted, then this reflects back on the objection component of toleration. If multiculturalism is not something outside liberalism but an interpretation of it, and if the groups which multiculturalism seeks to accommodate are conceived in basically liberal terms, i.e. as religious minorities, then this might have implications for what we might call the grounds for objection. As noted earlier, objections to difference might be of different kinds – some simple forms of dislike, some forms of disapproval, and these come in different forms depending on the basis for the negative assessment. The liberal interpretation of multiculturalism I propose suggests that the grounds for objection are at least sometimes liberal. While there surely are many forms of garden variety xenophobia and even racism underlying some hostility to Muslims, an important part of the objections by European majority populations to Muslim practices are based on liberal ideas about equality (e.g. of the sexes), freedom (e.g. to choose your own partner and form of love life), secularism (that religion and politics should be separated) etc. Here Euro-multiculturalism again differs from traditional multiculturalism concerned with culturally and particularly linguistically defined groups, for in such cases the grounds for objection are either entirely absent – in which case multiculturalism has nothing to do with toleration – or are simple forms of dislike of strange and foreign people who speak a different language and have a different skin colour. But if Euro-multiculturalism is not only about the reinterpretation of liberal rights and principles but also is premised on the acceptance of liberal political ideals, then it can be a genuine form of toleration, and one based on moral disapproval rather than mere affective dislike (contrary to Rainer Forst’s “respect model of toleration” (2012), which understands the objection component as an ethical conception of the good rather than a moral principle of justice).

Finally, my proposed understanding of Euro-multiculturalism also both captures part of and provides an theoretically different take on the European trends that have been conceptualised as a “retreat from multiculturalism” towards “civic integrationism”, where the latter according to Christian Joppke’s is based on a strong assertive form of liberalism (Joppke, 2004; for discussion of the retreat of multiculturalism claim, see Banting and Kymlicka, 2013). The relevance of my idea of Euro-multiculturalism to this diagnosis and the debate about it is that the claim that civic integrationism is replacing multiculturalism is premised on a strong version of the standard understanding of multiculturalism, namely that multiculturalism consists in group-differentiated policies going beyond liberalism. But if my understanding of Euro-multiculturalism is right, this is not what multiculturalism in Europe is about. So my idea of Euro-multiculturalism first of all changes the premises for the assessment of whether there indeed is a retreat from multiculturalism in Europe. Secondly, it challenges the assumption that multiculturalism and civic integrationism are somehow at odds with each other and that the introduction of the latter necessarily involves a move away from the former. And thirdly, it presents multiculturalism and civic integrationism as potentially based on the same normative foundation, namely liberal ideals.
References


TOLERATION: THE AMBIVALENT OBLIGATION, VALUE, AND VIRTUE

Xunwu Chen*

For the last two decades since the United Nations published Declaration of Principles of Tolerance, social toleration has become the distinctive political approach to the profound reality of diversity of our time. It has become a wisdom of our time. Social toleration is a family of practice that differs from social indifference, social indulgence, and various forms of social acceptance. It is an alternative to rejection, though its objects are what one morally disapproves and objects. The doctrine of toleration singles out a family of beliefs, practices and people which one includes but does not accept and of which one constrains one’s demand of rejection, repression, oppression, and marginalization, but also refuses indulgence.

Today, philosophers are engaged in heated debates on what is social toleration and how best to define the nature, scope, and requirements of social toleration. This is good. As a philosophical topic, the subject-matter of social toleration constellates the concerns of social justice, citizens’ rights, duty, obligation, public good, prudence, basic liberty, and virtue. It involves not only moral philosophy and social-political philosophy, but also, to a great extent, epistemology and metaphysics. A critical concept of social toleration may need to team up with hermeneutics and history of philosophy. A liberal view of social toleration may need to be complemented with a cosmopolitan’s view of the subject-matter. As a practical matter, toleration is an obligation, value, and virtue and is of great importance and necessity. It is what we live on and live with.

That said, as Jürgen Habermas, Bernard Williams, Thomas Scanlon, Michael Walzer, and various other philosophers indicate, social toleration is, as an obligation, a value or virtue, both necessary and difficult in our time. It is burdensome, irritating, uncomfortable, and most importantly, ambivalent. Rights and obligations are burdens. Ambivalent rights and ambivalent obligations are the burdens plus burdens. Value and virtue are attractive, and ambivalent value and virtue ambivalent attraction. In our time, diversity makes toleration indispensable in terms of social justice. It also makes toleration difficult, or even appear to be impossible in understanding and practice. The difficulty of social toleration is both conceptual and normative. Conceptually, it is to distinguish social toleration from a range of social practices which it borders, but not intersected. Normatively, it is justification of toleration as an obligation, a value, and virtue. It is also to demonstrate that social toleration is part of the spirit of our time.

*Dr. XUNWU CHEN, Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy & Classics, School of Liberal and Fine Arts, University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio, TX 78249. E-mail: xun.chen@utsa.edu.
It is said that St. Augustine famously claimed that if no one ask him, he know what is
time: if he wish to explain it to the one who ask, he know it no longer. It would not be
an exaggeration to compare the difficulty of conceptualizing social toleration for us
today with the difficulty of conceptualizing time for St. Augustine. We all may know
the definition of social toleration. Yet, if we are asked to define it, what is asked of us
immediately becomes something difficult to do. We find it to be as hard to define as
to define time. More crucially, we generally talk about toleration as if the meaning of
the concept is self-evident. But it is not. For example, if one asks: “What is the
substantial content of the concept of social toleration?” or “What are the task,
requirements, scope and limit of social toleration?” one finds oneself in an
embarrassing position not to have a ready answer.

The 1995 Declaration of Principles of Tolerance of the United Nations claims:
“Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's
cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by
knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience and belief.
Tolerance is harmony in difference.” (www.unesco.org) Needless to say here, if
we are asked what toleration in the UN Declaration is, we find ourselves in a dilemma
in which we cannot answer the question so easily. In the Declaration, respect,
acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity are not identical to respect,
acceptance and appreciation of the tolerated. Diversity is the condition and reality of
existence that both tolerator and tolerated live on, not the tolerated. The tolerated
contributes to make diversity. So does the tolerator. Thus, the ideas of respect,
acceptance, and appreciation are not the idea of toleration, though importantly related
to it. Tolerations is supposed to be a practice bordering between rejection and
acceptance of the tolerated. That said, how best to conceptualize the relation between
tolerations and acceptance is still a question. The UN Declaration also claims:
“Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all,
an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and
fundamental freedoms of others.”(ibid) Then, how best to conceptualize the
distinction between social tolerate and social indulgence?

The Stanford Cyclopedia indicates four conceptions of toleration: the permission
conception, the coexistence conception, the respect conception, and the esteem
conception. Social toleration implies social permission. This does not mean that the
permission conception of toleration is plausible. According to the permission
conception, toleration means permission of the tolerated (the weaker) which a
stronger party grants to a weaker party. By co-existence conception, toleration is that
two more or less equal parties put up with one another. Tolerations also implies co-
existence, but co-existence is also feature of other social practices such as social
indifference. Both conceptions indicate toleration as a kind of constraint on one’s
endeavor to reject others. Still, both conceptions do not account for some essential
features of toleration. The respect conception is that parties in a relation of toleration
mutually respect each other. Meanwhile, the esteem conception is that parties in a
relation of toleration mutually recognize each other as citizens. Both conceptions do
not do full justice to the fact that the tolerated may not be respectful to the tolerator. Again, here, to respect diversity is one thing. To respect the tolerated is quite another.

In a final analysis, while toleration is supposed to single out a family of practices bordering with rejection on one end and acceptance on the other end, all four conceptions above have serious deficits in this regard. Also, the permission conception, the respect conception, and the esteem conception need to do full justice to the fact that objects of toleration are what the tolerator morally disapproves and wants to reject, while the co-existence conception needs to indicate the line between toleration and indifference.

From times to times, scholars define toleration as a form of conditional acceptance. This definition suffers self-defeat. If the conception of toleration as conditional acceptance were plausible, toleration would not be an alternative to acceptance, but be a form of acceptance. But toleration as a form of practice is supposed to be an alternative not only to full hearted acceptance, but also to acceptance itself. Also, if toleration could be understood as conditional acceptance, it could also be understood as conditional rejection. If this were the case, toleration would not be a kind of practices bordering between acceptance and rejection, but a form of practice intersecting with both of them, which would in turn mean that rejection and acceptance are one. The concept that rejection and acceptance are one is logically absurd.

In Chinese philosophies, there is a rich conceptual variety for the idea of toleration. The Chinese counterparts for the English word “toleration” include but are not limited to follows: “include the variant and incompatible (兼容 jian rong), “broadness (宽 kuan), “broadly include (宽容 kuan rong), “extensively include (包容 bao rong), “accommodate (容纳 rong na), “bear with; putting up with (容忍 rong ren), and so on. All these concepts are centered on the idea of “taking into; accommodate (容 rong).”

Thus, for example, Zhuangzi said, “if one is tolerant of things, not excludes others, one arrives at the highest horizon of being (常宽容於物, 不削於人, 可谓至极).”(Zhuangzi 1996, 324) That is to say, toleration is an ideal state of existence. For Zhuangzi, to be tolerant is to have a great horizon of mind. To have a great horizon of mind is to have a great horizon of being. Zhuangzi spoke of toleration or broad inclusion (宽容 kuan rong) as being able to embrace things.

Xunzi advised us, “To one’s junior whose position is humble than oneself, one should advise him/her with the truth and essence of toleration (遇贱而少者, 则修告道宽容之义).”(Xunzi 1996, 110) He further pointed out,

An authentic person imposes standards on himself/herself, but offers trolling others. Imposing standards on oneself, one becomes paradigm of norms. Offering trolling to others, one becomes tolerant of others in order to accomplish great things in the world. Therefore, a capable authentic person tolerates incapable persons, a knowledgeable authentic person tolerates ignorant persons, a broad-minded authentic person tolerates narrow-minded person, and a focal-minded authentic person tolerates those whose minds have no focuses. This is called the art of

Journal of East-West Thought
In the above, Xunzi spoke of toleration or broad inclusion (兼容 kuan rong) as akin to “heaven and earth that embrace millions of things (天地之苞万物).”

Liu An claimed, “One’s mind should be broad enough to accommodate mass; one’s virtue should lead one to reach far (大足以容众，德足以怀远).” (Liu 1996, 328) To tolerate others is to accommodate others. To be able to accommodate others is a necessary condition for one to be able to reach far in the world. Liu An further insisted, “To Dao to rule the great cannot be small, and the system to govern the vast cannot be narrowed (治大者道不可小，地广者制不可狭).” (Ibid, 325) The small cannot rule the great. The narrow cannot rule the vast. To tolerate others is to accommodate others. To accommodate others is to be great and to be broad. All the same Liu An spoke of toleration as accommodation.

Three ideas arise from the rich conceptual variety in Chinese philosophies. First, to tolerate is to include. To be tolerant is to be broad-minded, vast-minded in order to include the different, the variant, and even the incompatible, constraining one’s tendency to reject them and acting alternatively to rejection. Second, toleration is not a passive act, but an active one. Third, tolerance is a virtue characteristic of heaven and earth, and should be one of a person. The inclusion conception in Chinese philosophies differs from all of the four conceptions of toleration above, of which we shall return in a moment. Suffice it here that toleration as inclusion with constraint is a more plausible concept of social toleration.

The difficulty of conceptualizing social toleration comes from various fronts. First, it lies in the absence of archetype cases of toleration. That is to say, in conceptualizing social toleration, we cannot find any universally accepted archetypes of social toleration that give us paradigmatic examples of the nature, scope, object, content, requirement and standard of social toleration. David Heyd points out this succinctly:

In the theory of rights, virtue, and duty, people who radically disagree about the analysis and justification of these concepts can still appeal to a commonly shared repertory of examples. But with tolerance, it seems that we can find hardly a single concrete case that would be universally agreed to be a typical object of discussion (Heyd 1996, 3).

With regard to archetypes of social toleration, Heyd observes: “Courage and habeas corpus are standard cases of virtue and rights, respectively. But would we agree on defining the attitude of restraint toward neo-Nazi groups as tolerance, or alternatively, would we describe as tolerance the way the heterosexual majority treats homosexuals?”(Ibid)

Notwithstanding, for some, exercising constraint toward political groups whose view one totally disapproves or constraint toward a group of people whose sexual life-style one totally disapproves are good examples of social toleration. But for
others, either may be a case of indifference or acceptance of other peoples who have
different views or life-style. The same can be said of religious toleration. For some,
what is called religious toleration is a good example of social toleration. Historically,
the concept of toleration became prominent in the context of talking about religious
 toleration. For others, what is called “religious toleration” is in effect of indifference
 or acceptance. The bad news is also that there is no universally accepted and
acceptable archetype case of religious toleration. For some, political toleration is
another good example of social toleration. Thus, the Chinese practice “one country,
two social system” is a good paradigm of political toleration. For other, the so-called
political toleration is in effect a form of political acceptance. The Chinese practice of
“one country, two system” is not a case of toleration, but a case of acceptance. For
some, the concept of racial toleration makes sense. For other, it is racial acceptance or
racial discrimination; there is no such a thing called “racial toleration”.

The list can be longer, but the main point is clear: there are no any universally
accepted archetype examples of social toleration which we can make reference to.
The lack of universally accepted archetypes of social toleration means a lack of
generally accepted paradigms of conceptualizing social toleration. Paradigm may not
be indispensable for conceptualization, but can be of great help or is tremendously
instrumental. With an absence of universally accepted archetypes, a united conception
of toleration becomes more and more difficult. Thus, we may all agree on practicing
religious toleration, but still be unclear as to what religious toleration really means.
For example, what is the difference between religious toleration and indifference?
What is the difference between religious toleration and acceptance? The same can be
said of political toleration. Logically, while we are used to inductive reasoning in
conceptualizing things, the lack of any universally accepted archetype cases of social
tolerations makes conceptualization of it through induction difficult, if not impossible.

Second, the difficulty of conceptualizing toleration is due in no small measure to
the relation between social toleration and the concept of rights. The relation is a
difficult one because it is indeterminate and thus instable. The instability has two
aspects. In one aspect, rights calls for acceptance, not toleration. Meanwhile,
tolerations is a matter of justice because of rights. That is to say, respect for rights is
the necessary basis for toleration, but toleration is not the necessary conclusion of
respecting for rights. The concept of rights gives the concept of toleration substantial
meaning, content, and value. What should be tolerated is that which a tolerator
morally disapproves and has rights to reject in terms of his/her rights. That said, rights
call for acceptance. Rights are entitlements, and therefore what is claimed in terms of
the rights of the tolerated is an entitlement, which is not something rejectable. What is
not rejectable is not an object of social toleration. This contradiction leads to the
difficulty to draw the border between toleration and acceptance. The concept of
tolerations as a form of conditional acceptance is an erroneous conclusion of such
difficulty.

Meanwhile, the instability of the relation between toleration and the concept of
rights is also that social toleration cannot be fully identified with any particular
systems of rights. This non-identification increases uncertainty in conceptualizing the

Journal of East-West Thought
distinction between toleration and rejection, as well as the distinction between toleration and acceptance. It puts into question not only what can be the legitimate objects of toleration, but also what is toleration in general. That is to say, the difficulty in identifying objects of social toleration leads to the difficulty in conceptualizing toleration itself.

Scanlon observes that the idea of tolerance “can be given content only through some specification of the rights of citizens as participants in formal and informal politics. But such system of rights will be conventional and indeterminate and is bound to be under frequent attack.” (Scanlon 2003, 201) Furthermore,

Although some specification of rights and limits of exemplification and advocacy is required in order to give content to the idea of tolerance and make it tenable, the idea of tolerance can never be fully identified with any particular system of such rights and limits, such as the system of rights of free speech and association, rights of privacy, and rights to free exercise (but non-establishment) of religion. . . . Many different systems of rights are acceptable; none is ideal. Each is therefore constantly open to challenge and revision (Ibid, 198).

Such a conceptual problem makes it difficult for us not only to define what the legitimate objects of social toleration are, but also what toleration itself is.

In connection with the above, there is the question whether those beliefs, practices, and life styles which one morally disapproves and rejects are entitled to be tolerated because of their holders’ rights. And how best to distinguish between social toleration and social indulgence? Here, even if under the rule of law, all citizens have rights compatible to everyone’s rights to have his/her beliefs, practices, and life styles, it does not follow that one has obligation to tolerate other citizens’ particular beliefs, practices, and life styles. Noteworthy here, a citizen’s rights to have his/her beliefs, practices, and life styles are compatible with other citizens’ rights to have their beliefs, practices, and life styles, but a citizen’s particular beliefs, practices, and life styles may not be compatible with other citizens’ particular beliefs, practices, and life styles. Indeed, in the situation calling for toleration, those tolerated beliefs, practices, and life styles are not compatible with the tolerator’s beliefs, practices, and life styles. All the same, one can conceive reasonable here that to tolerate holders of beliefs, practices, and life styles is one thing; to tolerate their beliefs, practices, and life styles is different thing.

Barbara Herman argues:

Someone who exemplifies the virtue of toleration thus need not approve of, be interested in, or willing to have much to do with the object of her toleration. It is a laissez-faire virtue. If I must tolerate the public speech of minority groups because suppression of speech is politically dangerous over the long run, I do not have to listen. If we may not prevent groups with special histories and traditions from continuing objectionable practices, we do not have to live with them among us (though we might not be able to pass restrictive zoning, we can move) (Herman 1996, 61).
Herman’s argument correctly indicates that toleration of other citizens and toleration of their beliefs, practices and life styles are two different concepts; the former does not necessarily lead to the latter; one can tolerate the former but be indifferent to the latter. And this in turn raises the conceptual question of what does it mean to tolerate other citizens? How can one tolerate other citizens without tolerating their beliefs, practices and life styles? Or reversely, how can one be indifferent to other citizens’ beliefs, practices and life styles while not being indifferent to these citizens?

David Heyd’s approach underscores the question too. Heyd conceives toleration as a kind of shift of focus from beliefs, practices, and life style to the holder of them. As Heyd says,

I call toleration a perceptual virtue, because it involves a shift of attention rather than an overall judgment. Tolerant people overcome the drive to interfere in the life of another not because they come to believe that the reasons for restraint are weightier than the reasons for disapproval, but because the attention is shifted from the object of disapproval to the humanity or the moral standing of the subject before them (Heyd 1996, 12).

This raises the question of what is tolerated in toleration. The question is also that can we separate the object of disapproval and the subject that possesses the object of disapproval. Suppose we could make such separation, in what sense we just tolerate the subject that possesses the object of disapproval, instead of accepting him/her?

For the sake of argument, we should analyze the concept of so-called toleration of intolerant values and practices. Rawls and others have tried to convince us that from the point of justice, there should be toleration of the intolerant. As I shall understand it, the concept of toleration of the intolerant needs serious qualifications. First, toleration of the intolerant is not to endorse or accept the intolerant or intoleration and therefore the concept of toleration of intoleration is not self-contradictory. Also, when the intolerant is fellow citizen, as long as s/he abides by municipal laws, even if s/he is intolerant, other fellow citizens are obliged to tolerate him/her. That said, there may be no good reasons to tolerate intolerant values and practices. Alon Harel argues, “we have reasons to respect, rather than merely tolerate, intolerant values and practices when they constitute an integral part of a comprehensive world view.” (Harel 1996, 117-118) Harel’s argument is flawed. That a certain beliefs or practices constitute an integral part of the tolerated’s comprehensive world view may not be a plausible reason to tolerate such beliefs or practices. Terrorism is an integral part of a terrorist’s comprehensive world view, yet this does not give us any reason to tolerate terrorism even if its holder is a fellow citizen. Harel’s qualification that such intolerant values and practices sustain “a minimally supportive community” is a false qualification. No intolerant values and practices sustain a minimally supportive community. Again, we must see the limit of a tolerated citizen’s rights here. That is to say, that s/he is entitled to have his/her intolerant values and practices does not mean that his/her intolerant values and practices are entitled to be tolerated. Social toleration is not social indulgence.

Journal of East-West Thought
The difficulty of conceptualizing toleration lies further in the uncertain relation between toleration and public good. Toleration is obliged by a respect for rights, but also required by the preservation and promotion of public good and welfare of a community. While specification of some public good—for example, public security—and limits of exemplification and advocacy may not be difficulty, determination of public goods and limit of exemplification and advocacy in other areas may not be easy. Moreover, in connection with what is said above, it remains a question how best to distinguish between beliefs, practices, and life styles that one not only morally disapproves, but also may be harmed or may also harm public good to a great extent, and such beliefs, practices, and life styles such as rape, murders, and terrorism that doubtlessly do harm. How best to distinguish between social toleration and social indulgence? That is the question!

Because of the relation between toleration and public good, in history, some philosophers also argued that some human members of a society should not be tolerated, though their views may be incorrect. “With [St. Thomas] Aquinas and the Protestant Reformers the grounds of intolerance are themselves a matter of faith.” (Rawls 1971, 216) Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that those who were dangerous to civil peace and order in a society should not be tolerated or otherwise so-called toleration would become social indulgence. Rousseau thought that people would find it impossible to live in peace with those whom they regarded as damned, since to love them would be to hate God who punishes them. He believed that those who regard others as damned must either torment or convert them, and therefore sects preaching this conviction cannot be trusted to preserve civil peace. Rousseau would not, then, tolerate those religions which say that outside the church there is no salvation (Ibid, 215).

John Locke advocated religious toleration. His “Letter Concerning Toleration” is still a classic in philosophical writings even today. But Locke also believed that we should not tolerate those people, beliefs, and practices that were dangerous to “public order.” (Ibid, 216) Locke also did not All the same, while the concept of public good gives meaning and value to the concept of social toleration, the concept of public good itself is indeterminate.

Perhaps, where there is crisis, there is also opportunity. In light of the above, giving social toleration is intended to be an intermediate between rejection and acceptance and to be different from indifference on the one hand, and indulgence on the other hand, we should conceptualize social toleration as a unique kind of social practice by mapping up some essence or features of social toleration that bring about such distinctions. Given social toleration borders with both rejection and acceptance on the one hand and demarcates from both social indifference and social indulgence, a plausible concept of social toleration must map up its essential components that situate it between rejection and acceptance on the one hand and demarcate it from both indifference and indulgence on the other hand. This returns us back to the inclusion conception—that is, social toleration as social inclusion with constraint.
Social toleration constrains rejection and chooses inclusion instead. That is to say, in social toleration, the tolerator exercises constraint on his/her attempt to reject the tolerated and therefore acts to include the tolerated in the common social-political life. It constrains rejection and is therefore not rejection. About constraint, The Bible says: “One believes he may eat everything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats.” (Rom. 14:2-3) Social toleration also means social inclusion, but not social acceptance. It includes and therefore is not indifference. It exercises constraint and is therefore not indulgence. To include X need not mean to accept X. To include X is to have a relation with X in a way that X is legitimate part of a common public life. To accept X is to endorse X. Thus, to include a person of different beliefs, practices, and life styles is one thing. To endorse him/her is quite another. That is to say, toleration does not reject or accept X, but actively bears with and engages X as a legitimate participant, challenger and opponent in the common communal social-political life. The qualification “actively” is important here. Social toleration is actively bearing with the tolerated, while social indifference is inactively co-exist with the co-existing.

The concept of social toleration as social inclusion with constraint is not identical or reducible to the concept of social toleration as social permission, though in social toleration, parties allow each other to be part of the common life. Permission is what a stronger party extends to a weaker party, but inclusion and constraint are what equal citizens extend to each other. Social inclusion with constraint is not a practice in which a stronger party shows compassion or kindness to a weaker party, but a practice wherein equal parties recognize each other’s legitimate rights and mutual obligations to treat each other as equal citizens. The concept of social toleration as social inclusion and constraint is compatible to the concept of toleration as coexistence, but not reducible to the latter. Indifference is a form of coexistence, but not a form of inclusion. Instead, indifference is another form of exclusion. As a form of exclusion, indifference is also not a form of constraint on exclusion and rejection. Also, inclusion with constraint carries out duty, fulfills obligation, and realizes value and virtue. But co-existence does none of these. The concept of toleration as inclusion and constraint is compatible to the concept of respect, but not identical to the latter. Tolerance involves respect for the tolerated’s legitimate rights, but not necessarily tolerated beliefs, practices or life styles. In other words, toleration is based on recognition and respect for those who are on the side of the tolerated as equal citizens having legitimate rights, but not on the recognition of the truth and value of those tolerated beliefs, practices or life styles. One can include certain beliefs, practices, and life styles because of their holders’ rights in the common communal social-political life, but not respect them—that is, still morally disapproves and rejects them. And one cannot simultaneously both morally rejects those tolerated beliefs, practices, and life styles and respect them as having truth and value. I would like to make a stronger claim: it is not a respect for the tolerator’s rights to ask him/her to respect what s/he morally disapproves and wants to reject. By the same token, the concept of toleration inclusion and constraint differ from the esteem conception of toleration.
The concept of social toleration as social inclusion with constraint does justice to the fact that toleration is a just response to the conflict between toleration’s rights and tolerated’ rights. It does not require tolerator to accept tolerated but requires tolerator to constrain his/her rejection of the tolerated. It therefore takes into account both tolerator’s rights and tolerated’s rights. It does justice to difference and diversity. It also does justice to the possible conflict between tolerated’s normal, basic rights and the interests of public good including security. It constrains the tolerated’s illegitimate claims on rights and entitlements and therefore prevents social toleration from lapsing into social indulgence.

Admittedly, the concept of social toleration as social inclusion with constraint may have its conceptual problem, but at least it addresses the kind of conceptual problems which we explore above, and plausible than the permission, co-existence, respect, and esteem conceptions of social toleration. It has at least the following merits: (1) it is applicable to most cases of social toleration; (2) it properly defines social toleration as a family of social practice borders social rejection on the one end and social acceptance on the other end and as demarcating from both social indifference and social indulgence; (3) it can account for the tolerator’s rights, the tolerated’ s rights, and public good; and it can account for the permission conception, the co-existence conception, the respect conception, and the esteem conception but does not suffer fatal flaw of any of the four conceptions.

II

What is said above leads us to the justification problem of social toleration. The question here is first of all whether social toleration is necessary because it is a duty and obligation, or because it is a value or virtue, or because of both. Evidentially, social toleration as a form of obligation requires a kind of justification that differs from justification of social toleration as a value or justification of social toleration as a virtue. Needless to say, none of them is an easy one.

Social toleration as social constraint and inclusion is necessary because, first of all, diversity is a profound color of our age. Isaiah Berlin said: "The world in which what we see as incompatible values are not in conflict is a world altogether beyond our ken; that principles which are harmonized in this other world are not the principles with which, in our daily lives, we are acquainted; if they are transformed, it is into conceptions not known to us on earth. But it is on earth that we live, and it is here that we must believe and act.” (Berlin, 1997, 13) Berlin’s view may leave much to be desired. But his central claim is valid: ours is an age of diversity. Accordingly, there can be justification of social toleration from both the principle of justice and the principle of prudence.

Walzer points out, “Toleration makes difference possible; difference makes toleration necessary.”(Walzer 1997, xii) Toward diversity, oppression can be a possible response. However, oppression of diversity normally always involves violation of rights and breaks away from justice. Meanwhile, acceptance may be a possible response too. However, objects of social toleration are that which the tolerator morally disapproves and rejects. To ask tolerator to accept what s/he morally
rejects would do great injustice and violate his/her legitimate rights. Social indifference does not fare better either. Social indifference does not do injustice and not violate others’ rights, fair to say. But it is not just either. Social indifference fails to fulfill the obligation of social justice because it does not do full justice others’ rights. Therefore, social toleration is the only just, proper approach in terms of social justice to diversity. Since social toleration is required by social justice, it is a form of obligation. It is a social obligation which citizens owe to one another.

Rawls indicates that the basis for toleration is “solely on a conception of justice.” (Rawls 1971, 214) That is to say, social toleration is a categorical imperative of justice, not a hypothetical imperative of practical necessities. That is to say, social toleration is a norm of obligation, not a policy of practical utility. According to Habermas, social toleration is required by “the egalitarian and universalistic standard of democratic citizenship.” (Habermas 2004, 10) Social toleration is demanded by “something that calls for equal treatment of the ‘other’ and mutual recognition of all as ‘full’ members of the political community.” (Ibid) Thus, social toleration is a norm of social obligation mandated by the idea of social justice. Our act of social toleration expresses this belief: even though there are other possible responses to the tolerated, “no way of life can demand, such as prohibiting conduct by others, simply because one disapproves of it.” (Scanlon 2003, 197) Our act of social toleration expresses this commitment: justice denies that any practical utility, expedience, or necessity can make it right for us to violate others’ rights, not to treat humanity as the end, or not to honor what we owe to each other. Justice obliges us to give due to institutions and beliefs that we disapprove of but that others have rights to hold to. Social toleration brings communal bond to citizens who disagree with each other. Citizens want this kind of communal bond with fellow citizens not because they may be practically much better off, but because they owe it to fellow citizens to have this kind of communal bond, and because they want to be just.

Noteworthy, diversity itself is not an intrinsic value. No all diversity is reasonable or rational. Correspondingly, no all diversity is worth keeping. Diversity that threatens people’s basic liberties, rights, and violate human dignity is illegitimate and should be eliminated, not tolerated. For example, evils such as terrorism are diversity, but they should be eliminated, not tolerated. Whether diversity is an instrumental value depends on contexts too. In some contexts, diversity is instrumental to a greater good. In other contexts, diversity has no value at all. Therefore, whether diversity calls for social toleration is determined by whether toleration is the call of social justice as a proper approach to diversity. In short, justice is the foundation for social toleration.

From the principle of prudence, toleration is the unifying force for a pluralistic social-political community. Confucius said, “Tolerance enables one to have the support of the mass.” (Confucius 1996, 20.1) According to Confucius, social toleration makes possible for a kind of mutually cooperative relation to exist among members (the mass) of a social-political community amid diversity. That members of a community can cooperate with each other is necessary for them to extend their lives together. That is to say, social toleration is an instrumental value. It is an instrumental
value to public good and necessary for members of a community to extend their lives together and realize their own humanity. Correspondingly, the principle of prudence mandates that social toleration is a norm of social cooperation. This amounts to saying that social toleration is a value, and its justification is its attraction.

Speaking of religious toleration, Habermas indicates, “pluralism and the struggle for religious toleration were not only driving forces behind the emergence of the democratic state, but remain important impulses for its consistent development up to the present day.” (Habermas 2008, 257) What is true of religious diversity is also true of cultural, social-political diversity. Diversity is the source of the strength of democratic communities, but also source of challenges. Diversity constitutes the inner contradiction that can drive democratic community forward or threatens to tear down democratic communities because it may be a source of unconstrained social conflicts. Toleratation allows people of conflicting beliefs, practices, and life styles not only to co-exist, but also to form a common social-political community. Therefore, Habermas points out, “Tolerance protects a pluralistic society from being torn apart as a political community by conflicts over worldviews.” (Ibid, 258)

By the same token, to the question about why there is a need for social toleration, Scanlon says, “The answer lies . . . in the relation with one’s fellow citizens that tolerance makes possible.” (Scanlon 2003, 192) He adds that “any alternative [to toleration] would put me in an antagonistic and alienated relation to my fellow citizens, friends as well as foes.” (Ibid, 201) According to Scanlon, we value social tolerance today because we want the kind of relations with our fellow citizens that only social tolerance and toleration can bring about. But what kind of social relation is that? Why do we want this relationship in the first place? To the first question, Scanlon indicates what we do not want is an alienated, antagonistic relation to our fellow citizens. That is to say, the kind of social relation which we want to have with our fellow citizens is a non-alienated, co-workable communal relation. We want such a non-alienated communal with our fellow citizens on the basis of rights, the rule of law, and the rule of reason. Such a relation itself is a form of good.

From a different direction, Williams also indicates that toleration may be an instrumental value and therefore from the point of view of the principle of prudence, it is worth practicing. As he says, toleration “does require of its citizens to a belief in a value: perhaps not so much in the value of toleration itself as in a certain more fundamental value, that of autonomy.” (Williams 1996, 23)

Toleration is a justified approach to diversity in our time further because toleration is a human virtue. Practice of toleration is an exercise of tolerance. Tolerance is a human virtue. *Yi Jing (The Book of Change)* reads, “The way of the earth follows nature. An authentic person is of great mind and profound virtue and tolerate things” (地势坤, 君子以厚德载物).” (Fang 1996, 25) In Confucianism, only persons of broad-mindedness and great horizon can be tolerant. Toleratation makes one tolerant which in turn makes one profound and broad-minded. Both profundity and broad-mindedness are great virtues of humanity. *Dao De Jing* reads: “Understanding laws makes one tolerant. Tolerance makes one fair. Fairness makes one a master. As a master, one follows the way of Heaven. Following the way of Heave, one follows
Dao (知常容, 容乃公, 公乃王, 王乃天, 天乃王).” (Laozi 1996, ch.15) That is to say, not only tolerance is a virtue that one acquires by having understanding, but also a virtue that leads to other virtues such as fairness and excellence in following the Dao. Buddhism teaches: The huge belly—that is, the great mind—can tolerate all things in the world, including things that are difficult, even impossible, to be tolerated by the world. According to Buddhism, only enlightened persons can tolerate things. Only persons of the greatest enlightenment such as Buddha can tolerate all things, including things that the world cannot tolerate. That is to say, to be tolerant is to be enlightened. Enlightenment is human virtue. The more tolerant one is, the more enlightened one is. The more enlightened one is, the more virtuous one is. Thus, the more tolerant one is, the more virtuous one is.

Notwithstanding, the force of virtue is attraction, not compulsion. Thus, to argue for social toleration in terms of virtue is to argue for social toleration from the point of view of attraction, not from the force of compulsion. That said, justification of social toleration in terms of virtue is that social toleration makes us better persons. To be is to live to become better persons. This is what virtue about. To be better person here is not merely to be more humanistic, but to become better human individuals, better citizens of a social-political community, and better members of the global human community.

The above described justification of social toleration as an obligation, a value, and a virtue, which I would like to characterize as critical justification, makes metaphysical assumption of human reality and the world we live. For example, it presupposes that diversity is part of the profound reality of the world in which we live. It metaphysically assumes that justice, obligation, rights, and human freedom all are part of the profound reality of human existence. That said, it is critical in the sense that it recognizes that its claims would be subject to criticism and revision. It claims that social toleration is a universal norm, but also recognizes such a claim is subject to further criticism and trial. It is not from a particular metaphysical theory.

III

Our discussions in the preceding chapters indicate that social toleration as inclusion with constraint embodies the spirit of our time that takes justice (both civil justice and global justice), basic human rights, the rule of law, the rule of reason, and democracy as its core values. Social toleration is a norm of justice, geared to redeem the validity claims of basic human rights, depends on the rule of law and the rule of reason, and goes hand in hand with democracy. The internal relation between social toleration and those core values of the spirit of our time mentioned above is evident from our discussion. Here, let us focus on social toleration as a norm of global justice.

Globalization brings together different nations, peoples, cultures, and traditions. The metaphor of the global village is no longer a fairy tale, but connotes a substantial reality. Indeed, the ideal of a constitutionalized global order is constitutive of the deal of our time. Globalization raises questions about balancing the aspiration of modernity and respect for local cultures and nations’ sovereignty, defense of the
integrity of modernity and cultural toleration of local diversity. It calls for global justice. In turn, global justice implicates social-cultural toleration to be a norm in global human affairs.

The first call of social-cultural toleration in the global arena is the 1945 Chapter of the United Nations. The Chapter asserts:

We the peoples of United Nations determined ... to affirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human persons, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other courses of international law can be maintained ... And for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours (www.un.org).

In the UN Chapter, tolerance is emphasized as a form of practice serving to advance the goal of the UN to bring forth global justice and global peace.

In 1981, the United Nations published its Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. The UN 1981 declaration affirms the basic spirit of the 1945 UN Chapter. It proclaims:

It is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief and to ensure that the use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations, other relevant instruments of the United Nations and the purposes and principles of the present Declaration is inadmissible.

The event of the publication of the UN Declaration is a significant act of cosmopolitanism, geared to bring about a global institutionalized order. More crucial, what is globalized is social-cultural toleration as a form of practice, as a norm of obligation, as a value, and a virtue. Again, diversity makes toleration necessary, and toleration just responds to diversity, as we discuss above. Like it is in the domestic front, social-cultural toleration in the global front is a requirement of global justice.

The publication of the declaration underscores the importance of social-cultural toleration in global human affairs. It occurred in a historical context in which inter-religion religious intolerance, as well as intolerance between religious peoples and non-religious peoples, became a major source of international conflict. In 1993, Harvard University professor Samuel P. Huntington published a thought-provoking article in the journal Foreign Affairs entitled “The Clash of Civilizations?” In it, Huntington claimed that in the 21st century, the main source of international conflict would be differences and conflicts of civilizations. Setting aside some of its controversial claims, from a different direction, Huntington’s essay leads us to see the need for cultural toleration in global human affairs today. Cultural intoleration—in particular—religious intoleration—is a major source of global conflict today. Thus, for example, as Louis P. Pojman notes, “Religion is surpassing nationalism as the foremost threat to world peace and stability.”(Pojman 2004, 965) And religious and cultural intoleration poses the greatest challenges to global justice and humanity today.
This in turn calls for cultural toleration in terms of global justice in global human affairs.

On November 16, 1995, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published its Declaration of Principles of Tolerance and designated November 16 of each year as International Tolerance Day. The declaration indicates that religious tolerance and toleration are of great importance to global justice and humanity. Its preamble states:

_Bearing in mind_ that the United Nations Charter states: “We, the peoples of the United Nations determined to . . . to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, . . . and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors”,

_Recalling_ that the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO, adopted on 16 November 1945, states that “peace, if it is not to fail, must be founded on the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” . . .

In this declaration, UNESCO points out both the fact that social-cultural toleration is the inherent spirit of the UN Charter and the importance of social-cultural toleration in global human affairs today. Cultural and national diversity is a profound reality, not some passing phenomenon of our time. Accordingly, cultural toleration as cultural constraint and inclusion embodies the timely spirit of global justice. Berlin says: “Different nations, different roots, different laws, different peoples, different communities, [and] different ideals. Each has its own way of living—what right had one to dictate to the others?”(Ibid, 33)

Global justice implicates the norms of social-cultural toleration in global human affairs today. To start with, global justice calls for respect for the national sovereignty of a people. The national sovereignty of a nation-people product the limit for other nation-peoples to interfere what are deemed to be domestic affairs. The national sovereignty of a nation or people also demands that other nation-peoples respect and honor their rights and their due in international affairs. Furthermore, global justice requires follows: (1) constraining and abstaining from rejection of other nation—peoples because their cultures and traditions are morally disapproved by others; (2) including, not isolating, nation-peoples even if we disapprove of them; (3) promoting inter-cultural understanding and communication; and (4) refusing offensive conflicts based on religion, race, or political ideologies.

In short, in terms of global justice, nation-peoples are members of an international community, they and their cultures become objects of social-cultural toleration. They should be shown forbearance and included as legitimate members of the international human community. They should be allowed to hold to their institutions and advocate their beliefs and values in words and actions, in a peaceful manner.

Meanwhile, so far as the requirements of social toleration in global human affairs are concerned, we are always at a point wherein the problem of indeterminacy is aggravated. The exact contents of the requirements of social toleration in the global
front are even less determinate than the requirements of social toleration in the domestic front. Domestically, especially in developed countries where there is the rule of law, the scope and limit of social toleration are well defined in the constitutions and relevant laws. Therefore, the requirements of social toleration are relatively determinate. But in global human affairs, the scope and limit of social-cultural toleration are not well defined in many areas. In some aspects, they are not defined at all.

Notwithstanding, one thing about social-cultural toleration around the globe is always clear: in global justice, a people’s rights and sovereignty are always recognized and honored; global justice mandates that a nation or people must be tolerant of other peoples and cultures. Global justice demands peaceful coexistence of nation-peoples, which in turn demands social-cultural toleration in the globe, as the UN Chapter and other documents indicate. It may be that ways of life of other nations and peoples are not compatible to one another, but still, global justice demands toleration of incompatible differences, not oppressing them in the shared life of international human community.

A people should defend her values and beliefs, but at the same time tolerate other’s values and traditions. Only if peoples tolerate one another can they coexist justly. Modernity and globalization are historical tasks of humankind today. Truth, righteousness, and reason will stand straight in globalization when social, political, and cultural tolerations exist in global affairs and when hegemony, colonization, totalitarianism, oppression, repression, and aggression in international affairs are rejected as unjust.

It is possible that from a certain nation’s or people’s perspective, other nations’ and peoples’ values, practices, and institutions are incompatible with modernity. Therefore, in global human affairs, social-cultural toleration exhibits crucial in that one nation-people must not impose its cultural way on other nation-peoples. Here, we should recall Zhuangzi’s view that one should not use one’s own particular standard as the universal standard to judge others. As he said

One should not take one’s finger as the standard and therefore say that others’ fingers are not fingers; instead, one should take the universal finger as the standard and see that a particular finger is not identical to the [universal] finger; one should not take a particular horse as the standard and therefore say that other [particular] horses are not horses; instead, one should take the universal horse as the standard and therefore see that a particular horse is not identical to the [universal] horse (以指喻指之非指, 不若以非指喻指之非指; 以马喻马之非马, 不若以非马喻马之非马 (Zhuangzi 1996, ch.2).

As the UN chapter and other documents indicate, to develop a new, just global order, just global laws and institutions need to be developed. New global laws will be just when they embody the aspiration of modernity and also the timely spirit of social toleration amid the historical reality of cultural, religious, and local diversity. Equally crucial, new global laws will be just when they embody the spirit of reason, which in
turn calls for social-cultural toleration, rejecting imperialism, hegemony, and colonization.

References


CHINESE METAPHYSICS AS A FRUITFUL SUBJECT OF STUDY

Chenyang Li and Franklin Perkins

Abstract: The study of Chinese philosophy in the English-speaking world has largely focused on ethical and political theories. In comparison, Chinese metaphysics—here understood primarily as theories regarding the nature, components, and operating principles of reality—has been far less researched and recognized. In this essay, we examine various meanings of “metaphysics” as it has been used in denoting a branch of philosophy and make the case that metaphysics is an important part of Chinese philosophy. We argue for the need to study Chinese metaphysics as a serious field of scholarship. We also present some most recent studies of Chinese metaphysics by leading scholars of Chinese philosophy who publish in the English-speaking world. This essay aims to show that not only that Chinese metaphysics is an appropriate and legitimate subject of scholarly research but it can also be a fruitful subfield of in the study in Chinese philosophy.

A rapid growth of interest in Chinese philosophy has accompanied the rise of China on the world stage. This interest, though, has generally focused on ethical and political theories, ranging from connections between virtue ethics and Confucianism, to applications of Daoism to environmental ethics, to debates on the implications of Confucian political thought for democracy. In comparison, Chinese metaphysics—here understood primarily as theories regarding the nature, components, and operating principles of reality—has been far less researched and recognized. In this essay, we examine various meanings of “metaphysics” as it has been used in denoting a branch of philosophy and make the case that metaphysics is an important part of Chinese philosophy. We argue for the need to study Chinese metaphysics as a serious field of scholarship. In the later part of the essay, we will present some most recent studies of Chinese metaphysics by leading scholars of Chinese philosophy who publish in the English-speaking world. The central point of this essay is that not only that Chinese metaphysics is an appropriate and legitimate subject of scholarly research but it can also be a fruitful subfield of in the study in Chinese philosophy.

I

Raising the question of studying Chinese metaphysics implies that the Chinese have metaphysics. Such a claim itself invites a host of questions. Do the Chinese really have metaphysics? If so, what is it? Is Chinese metaphysics fundamentally and qualitatively different from Western metaphysics? If there are fundamental and qualitative differences, what are these differences, and what are their implications for

*Dr. CHENYANG LI, Associate Professor of Philosophy, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, Email: CYLI@ntu.edu.sg. Dr. FRANKLIN PERKINS, Professor of Philosophy, DePaul University and former Director of DePaul’s Chinese Studies Program, Email: fperkins@depaul.edu.
the study of metaphysics? Questions such as these have been debated for decades, but there is little consensus on the answers. Much of these debates, of course, hinge on one notoriously difficult question: what is metaphysics? Although it is not so difficult to recognize whether or not a specific issue is metaphysical, it is nearly impossible to give a precise definition that corresponds to our actual uses of the term. In fact, Peter van Inwagen has suggested that in the seventeenth century, the category of metaphysics expanded to become “a repository of philosophical problems that could not be otherwise classified,” so that the category itself lacked unity (van Inwagen 2007). Thus a precise and final definition is unlikely to work and we must rather take our orientation from a loosely connected set of problems or a general domain of concerns.

If we look historically, the word “metaphysics” was originally associated with a branch of Aristotle’s philosophy. It is derived from a collective title given by his student(s) to the fourteen books by Aristotle that we currently think of as making up his Metaphysics (van Inwagen 2007). The word literally means “after the Physics,” probably indicating the place of the topics covered in these books in Aristotle’s philosophical curriculum. It suggests that one should study this part after having studied the Physics, which deals with nature. Because “meta” also means “beyond,” “metaphysics” may also be interpreted as “the science of what is beyond the physical,” but that itself is open to several interpretations. Metaphysics could be the study of what is beyond the reach of the natural sciences, or beyond the whole of nature (studying the “supernatural”), or beyond the whole changing world of appearances and perception. Aristotle himself, however, did not use the term “metaphysics.” He defines this part of the philosophy in terms of “first philosophy,” which is the science that studies “the first causes and the principles of things” or “being qua being” (Metaphysics 981b28, 1003a21; Barnes 1553, 1584). The latter has come to be called ontology, the science (logos) of being (onto) as such. In the fourteen books of the Metaphysics, Aristotle covers a wide range of subjects, including existence in general (“being”), the constitution of reality (“matter,” “form,” “universals”), individual entities (“substance”), identity (“essence,” “definition”), and change (“actuality,” “potentiality,” “material cause,” “formal cause,” “efficient cause,” “final cause”). If we use these topics from Aristotle to designate a general domain of concern or inquiry, we could call “metaphysics” the study of reality in its general form. That would include the nature of being itself, but would also encompass discussions of the kinds of beings that exist, the basic forms of causality, the sources of order and generation, and so on. In practice, the boundaries of metaphysics are sometimes vague and subject to change, and questions about the boundaries themselves can be considered to be within the domain of metaphysics.

If we use “metaphysics” in this sense, it is obvious that metaphysics is present in Chinese thought, traceable most clearly back to such texts as the Yi Jing, the Dao De Jing, and the Huai Nan Zi. Chinese philosophers have since antiquity debated about existence and non-existence in terms of “you 有” and “wu 無”; they developed a conception of the constitution of things in terms of patterns of “qi 氣” (material force); and they understood the world overwhelmingly as in a perpetual state of change (“yi
Many Chinese thinkers labeled the ultimate reality as the “dao” (the “way”) and took the fundamental operating principle of the world as the pairing forces of “yin-yang.” While there was no Chinese term corresponding precisely to the Western term “metaphysics,” the phrase commonly used to translate “metaphysics” into Chinese was taken from the *Yijing*. The *Yijing* classifies two forms of existence as “what is without (specific) forms 形而上者” and “what is with (specific) forms 形而下者” (Gao Heng 1998, 407), or literally, “what are above (shang) forms” and “what are below (xia) forms.” Being “above” something implies transcending it or not being confined by it. “What is above forms,” therefore, means what is not confined by any forms. These can also be seen as two realms of studies, with the latter roughly corresponding to the tangible physical realm and the former the “realm beyond the tangible.” Studying what is beyond the tangible or things confined by specific forms is not a matter of physics; it is metaphysical. Moreover, questions about the line between what is above and what is below forms are themselves metaphysical questions.

Ancient Chinese thinkers pondered such things as “道 dao, “氣 qi,” “太極 taiji” (the Origin) and “兩儀 liangyi” (the Two Forces) in attempting to explicate phenomena in the world. Their indigenous metaphysical views were greatly enriched by the absorption of Buddhist metaphysics, which eventually led to new forms of Confucian metaphysics as manifested in what has become known in English as “Neo-Confucianism” during the Song and Ming dynasties. Though unquestionably different, notions like “氣 qi” and “理 li” in Neo-Confucianism can be seen as counterparts of “matter” and “form” in Aristotelian metaphysics. Similar ideas on both sides are employed to account for “what is with (specific) forms” in terms of “what is without (specific) forms.”

Given that Chinese philosophers obviously discussed the nature of reality and the ways of its operation, why would anyone say that the Chinese do not have metaphysics? To understand this question, it is helpful to distinguish a general domain of concern or inquiry from the specific questions asked in any given tradition in that domain, which then must also be distinguished from the specific theories meant to answer those questions. These layers are difficult to discern without a cross-cultural view. That is, from a view restricted to one culture, it is easy to think that the questions in that tradition are the only legitimate questions. Moreover, if certain answers to the questions are dominant enough, one might take them as the only possible answers. In this way, the answers that emerge can be seen as definitive of the domain of inquiry itself. Two of the most central questions of metaphysics are, what is ultimately real, and, what is the ultimate cause for what exists? In the Western tradition, the dominant answers to both questions, at least before the 20th century, have been what is eternal and unchanging. From the start of the medieval period well into the 17th and 18th centuries, almost every European philosopher took the ultimate metaphysical foundation to be a God that transcended the world and existed outside of time and change. It is more difficult to generalize about the classical world, but the most extreme proponent of this view was Parmenides, who denied that change is even possible. He held that there is only Being and that non-being does not exist. Without
non-being. Being itself does not change. It therefore follows that becoming is impossible (Graham 2010: 215-219). While this denial of change was an exception rather than the norm, the most influential Greek philosophers did privilege the eternal in their metaphysics. This is most obvious in Plato’s philosophy, where the forms that ground reality and our understanding of it are all eternal and unchanging. Even Aristotle, who took change much more seriously, held the ultimate driving force of the universe as an “unmoved mover” (Physics 8.6; 260a15019; Barnes 434). All things are put into motion through emulation of this eternal unchanging being, which serves as the ultimate final cause for all that exists (Metaphysics XII.7 1072a25-26; Barnes 1694). With the Christianization of Western Philosophy, a perfect and eternal God took the place of this ultimate reality, a position which remained dominant into the 19th century.

If we take metaphysics as the study of the ultimate and take the ultimate as the unchanging, then it follows that metaphysics is the study of “things that do not change.” On this definition, there would be no (or little) Chinese metaphysics. Ancient Chinese viewed “what is without (specific) forms” as the dao, but the dao is not fixed. Its nature—if we can say so—is change, as expounded in the Yijing, often regarded as the primary classic of all Chinese classics. To put it another way, the only thing that does not change is change. The “constant Dao” is the constantly changing Dao. If metaphysics is understood as a study of what is unchanging, then Chinese thought did not have metaphysics; or, as Roger Ames says in a forthcoming essay, it had an ametaphysic metaphysics (Ames 2015). In other words, Chinese metaphysics generally rejects the fundamental assumption of an unchanging reality and instead takes the ultimate itself as changing.

The definition of metaphysics as the study of what is unchanging naturally leads into another common definition, that metaphysics studies what is beyond the sensible world of appearances. It is obvious that the world around us changes; we never experience anything that is truly unchanging. If the ultimate reality is unchanging, then, it must be radically different from the world that appears around us. This view leads to a transcendental realm, in terms of “forms,” “God,” or the “noumenal” in Western philosophy. This separation is clearest in Kant, who said of the sources of metaphysical cognition: “it already lies in the concept of metaphysics that they cannot be empirical . . . for the cognition is supposed to be not physical but metaphysical, i.e., lying beyond experience” (Kant 1997, 15). In this quotation, Kant takes lying beyond experience as definitive of the domain of metaphysics. Once again, if we take this definition of metaphysics, then there would be no (or little) Chinese metaphysics. Just as Chinese thinkers did not posit an unchanging ultimate reality, they generally did not take the ultimate as radically transcending the world. This contrast is pointed out nicely by the renowned 20th century Chinese philosopher Tang Junyi 唐君毅, who described the mainstream Western mind as follows,

Starting with pursuing substance beyond phenomena, the Western mind regards all phenomena as attributes of things instead of reality itself. Consequently, it always attempts to put aside phenomena in order to explore the real and unchanging substance underlying the cosmos. In contrast, the cosmos in the Chinese mind is
only a flow, a dynamism; all things in the cosmos can only be in process, beyond which there is no fixed reality as substratum. (Tang 1988, 9-10)

Chinese thinkers did make a qualitative distinction between the realm of “what is with (specific) forms” and that of “what is without (specific) forms.” A thing with a form is an instrument (\textit{qi} 器), which can be perceived and specifically described. That which is without forms cannot be perceived or specifically described. In this limited sense, there is something like a reality-appearance distinction. But there is no transcendental distinction between the two realms. The same point applies to the distinction between “\textit{li} 理” (“order,” “principle”) and “\textit{qi} 氣” (material force). Although the Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi (1130-1200) held a somewhat dualist view of the two, they are not ultimately separable, because \textit{li} resides with \textit{qi}, and without \textit{qi}, \textit{li} would have nothing to attach with (Li 1986, 3). It is perhaps in this sense that we should understand Roger Ames when he writes,

There is little evidence that early Chinese thinkers were interested in the search for and the articulation of an ontological ground for phenomena—some Being behind the beings, some One behind the many, some ideal world behind the world of change. (Ames 2011, 216)

For the ancient Chinese, change occurs at both the levels of “what is with (specific) forms” and “what is without (specific) forms.” The key contrast is not in terms of “being” versus “becoming” but rather “form” and “formless.” Furthermore, the realm of “what is without (specific) forms” is not like a “God” who is fundamentally distinct from the physical world. Instead, “what is with (specific) forms” is a manifestation of “what is without (specific) forms,” just as the \textit{qi} 氣 solidified in tangible entities is the same stuff as the \textit{qi} dispersed. These two “realms” are better seen as two conceptions of the same existence, because without “what is with (specific) forms” there is no “what is without (specific) forms.” Without believing in a transcendental realm, Chinese thinkers could not have had a “science” to study it. If metaphysics is to be defined as the “science” that studies solely what transcends appearance, then we would have to say that ancient Chinese thinkers did not have metaphysics.

In both of these cases, though, one mistakenly identifies metaphysics with particular answers to the main metaphysical questions. There are a host of problems with such an identification. Most obviously, it excludes many Western philosophers who are uncontroversially identified as doing metaphysics. While it is generally true that most Western philosophers have taken the ultimate reality and the ultimate cause of reality to be eternal and transcendent (e.g., God), it would be false to claims that all Western metaphysicians uniformly presuppose an unchanging reality as the object of their study. In the \textit{Theaetetus}, Socrates tells us “a secret” doctrine of the early Greeks:

There is no single thing or quality, but out of motion and change and admixture all things are becoming relatively to one another, which “becoming” is by us incorrectly called being, but is really becoming, for nothing ever is, but all things are becoming. (Edman 1936: 474)

\textit{Journal of East-West Thought}
Socrates affirms that this was even not a minority view:

Summon all philosophers-Protagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and the rest of them, one after another, and with the exception of Parmenides they will agree with you in this. Summon the great masters of either kind of poetry-Epicharmus, the prince of Comedy, and Homer of Tragedy; when the latter sings of “Ocean whence sprang the gods, and mother Tethys,” does he not mean that all things are the offspring of flux and motion? (Edman 1936: 474-5)

Similarly, in Book IV of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle speaks of how earlier Greek philosophers’ view of an ever changing reality affected their view of what is knowable:

Because they saw that all this world of nature is in movement and that about that which changes no true statement can be made, they said that of course, regarding which everywhere in every respect is changing, nothing could truly be affirmed. It was this belief that blossomed into the most extreme of the views above mentioned, that of the professed Heracliteans. (*Metaphysics IV, 5*)

Aristotle here refers to thinkers like Cratylus, who allegedly did not think he could say anything meaningful but only moved his finger, because things were in constant change. Cratylus criticized Heraclitus for saying that it is impossible to step twice into the same river; he went so far as to hold that one could not step into the same river even once. Denial of the existence of an unchanging reality places one in opposition to those affirming it. But either way, both are engaging in a debate within the domain of metaphysics. Jean-Paul Sartre once said: “I do not think myself any less a metaphysician in denying the existence of God than Leibniz was in affirming it” (Sartre 1949, 139). Likewise, thinkers such as Protagoras, Heraclitus, and Cratylus are legitimate subjects for books on the history of metaphysics. It should also be noted that their views did not die out in the West. While the Christianization of Western philosophy made such views nearly impossible to express, process-oriented views emerged again in the 18th and 19th centuries, as with Hegel and Nietzsche, and it is safe to say that their views and the likes became dominant among philosophers of the 20th century.

The claim that metaphysics exclusively studies the transcendental realm also is a generalization with many exceptions. Even though regarding his “first philosophy” as “the most divine science” that studies the cause of all things (*Metaphysics* Book 1, 983a 6-10; Barnes 1555), Aristotle evidently covers this-worldly objects in his metaphysics. For the most part, the “four causes” are not transcendental in character. Contra Plato, Aristotle places them in the same realm as ordinary objects. Bricks are the material cause of a house; parents are the efficient cause of a child. Moving forward in the tradition, no one would deny that Spinoza was a metaphysician, but his whole philosophy was directed toward a rejection of transcendence. For Spinoza, God and Nature are one and the same. He establishes this by insisting that God as a substance possesses infinite attributes and that no two substances can share an
attribute. It follows that the existence of that infinite substance precludes the existence of any other substance. Therefore, Nature or God is an indivisible, uncaused, substantial whole. All is in it. All is immanent. The same can be said for Hegel and for many 20th century philosophers. Hegel’s infinite Geist, or cosmic spirit, realizes itself by unfolding from lower to higher developmental stages in the forms of the finite through dialectical processes. The Geist is not transcendent to the finite. It posits itself through the finite. If metaphysics must affirm the transcendent, Hegel would not have qualified as a metaphysician. Few, if any, would deny Hegel as a metaphysician, however.

If Western thinkers with a view of the world characterized as becoming rather than being, or who base their views on immanence rather than transcendence, are considered to be doing metaphysics, one cannot say that the Chinese lack metaphysics just because their worldview is predominantly one of change and immanence. In sum, under the category of “metaphysics,” Western philosophers have studied both being and becoming, both immanence and transcendence. What they share in common is not their answers to questions under the umbrella of “metaphysics,” but that they all attempt to address issues with regard to the nature, components, and operating principles of reality. It is in this sense we can claim that Chinese thinkers have engaged in the study of metaphysics and that “Chinese metaphysics” can be used as a shorthand to designate a host of theories and ideas developed by Chinese philosophers in their attempt to address pertinent questions.

Some contemporary thinkers do not deny that the Chinese have metaphysics. They insist, however, that Chinese metaphysics is fundamentally different from Western metaphysics. One common view is that metaphysics in the two traditions emerges from profoundly distinct orientations. For example, some have argued that Western metaphysics is “metaphysics of nature,” as it pursues truth in the transcendent realm, whereas Chinese metaphysics is “metaphysics of ethics,” in the pursuit of the good life (e.g., Yu and Xu 2009). This view echoes a famous claim by A. C. Graham, that the while Western philosophers have primarily searched for being or truth, the central question of Chinese philosophy has been, what is the proper way? (Graham 1989, 222) There is a grain of truth to this contrast. Ancient Greek philosophy began with a strong curiosity about the nature of reality, seen in such thinkers as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Pythagoras. The majority of ancient Chinese thinkers, in comparison, focused on socio-ethical issues. They ventured into metaphysics because of these ethical concerns. As Chris Fraser argues in a forthcoming essay, the Mohists were concerned with tian 天 (heaven), but primarily as a guide for action. This orientation set the direction for later metaphysical debates (Fraser 2015). Mencius apparently developed his thought about xing 性 (human nature or characteristic tendencies) or tiandao 天道 (Heavenly Way) for the sake of his theory of inborn virtues, which itself was developed through concerns about self-cultivation. This contrast between Chinese and Western philosophies, however, should not be exaggerated. This characterization is modeled on the division between fact and value. The “fact versus value” divide did not become an issue in the West
until David Hume problematized their association. Aristotle, we should remember, used the “facts” about the proper human function as the basis for his argument for the ethical goal of *eudemonia*; one of the “four causes” investigated in the *Metaphysics* is the final cause, which determines the proper function of humanity and its virtuosity. Furthermore, an important branch of Kant’s philosophy is “moral metaphysics,” on the basis of the notion of a rational will. The rational will for Kant is a free will, which is a key concept of modern metaphysics. Meanwhile, as Jiyuan Yu argues in a forthcoming essay, the development of Chinese metaphysics makes it hard to believe that Chinese philosophers were not also motivated by a desire to better understand reality (Yu 2015). Thus, it is more accurate to say that the difference between Chinese and Western metaphysics is a matter of degrees and of emphases rather than a radical, qualitative distinction in kind. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that in the Chinese tradition, the metaphysical and the moral are always intertwined, as the status of values, the nature of the self, and conceptions of order all have metaphysical implications, if not foundations. In the Chinese tradition, for example, *wuwei* 無為, the Daoist guiding principle for the virtuous life, is at the same time a metaphysical conception of reality. *Xing* 性, a key idea in Mencius’s moral philosophy also defines the nature of human existence. *Dao*, a core notion in both Confucianism and Daoism, is at once ethical and metaphysical. *Yin* and *yang* are metaphysical forces as well as social/moral principles. The same holds true for the conceptions of *he* 和 (harmony), *li* 理 (coherence or reasonable order), and *tian* 天 (heaven). In view of this connection, studying Chinese ethical theories without examining their metaphysical presuppositions risks misrepresenting these moral perspectives. With the advancement of the study and deepening research of Chinese philosophy in our age, confining our study to Chinese political, social and ethical theories is no longer acceptable. The aim of studying Chinese metaphysics is not to isolate metaphysical views from other aspects of philosophy, but rather to focus on the metaphysical aspect of the philosophical continuum while showing how metaphysical conceptions connect to other areas of concern.

Even if we allow that metaphysics was pursued in both the West and in China, one might still claim that the issues they considered and the theories they produced have no commonality. After all, there are almost no key metaphysical terms in Chinese that translate easily into English, and vice versa. In that case, the overlap between Chinese metaphysics and Western metaphysics would be merely nominal, not substantial. Admittedly, some differences must be acknowledged. Given that the dominant metaphysical views in China differed significantly from those that dominated Europe, the two traditions naturally came to focus on different problems. For example, the relationship between free will and natural causality was never an issue in Chinese philosophy, nor was the division between mind and body. Since most Chinese philosophers rejected teleology and design, one of their central concerns was spontaneity (*ziran* 自然) and how beings and order can emerge of themselves. Given that Chinese philosophers usually held a less anthropocentric view of nature than their European counterparts, they were centrally concerned with how human values and social structures relate to the patterns of nature. These issues have been less central in...
Western Philosophy, at least before the 20th century. At the same time, the two traditions do share many common concerns, such as the origin and constitution of the world we experience. Placing metaphysical questions in a comparative context helps us to broaden the formulation of our questions. It not only enables us to find new insights into the standard questions of Western metaphysics, but also helps us to see how those questions might be more provincial than they initially appear to be. For example, while Chinese philosophers did not discuss free will, they were concerned with the relationship between human motivation and the forces of nature, conceived primarily as the relationship between human xing (nature, characteristic tendencies) and tian (heaven). Chinese philosophers did not discuss the nature of substance, but they did discuss individuation (see Perkins 2015). While we should not deny the differences between metaphysical thoughts in the Chinese and Western traditions, both traditions have contributed to the discipline of metaphysics and should be studied as such. For these reasons and others, Chinese metaphysics deserves careful and in-depth study no less than Western metaphysics.

Finally, the above generalizations also should not obscure the diversity within Chinese philosophy or the wide range of metaphysical positions that have appeared. Chinese philosophy developed over time, expressing internal forces, changes in political and economic contexts, and interactions with other cultures, most of all the absorption of Buddhism from India. In any given period, there were opposing schools and heated metaphysical disputes. Careful study of Chinese metaphysics should heed all these nuances.

II

If Chinese metaphysics is a worthy subject of serious scholarship, how should it be studied? What are some good examples for such study? In the rest of this essay, we would like to introduce to readers some recent studies at the frontier of Chinese metaphysics by leading scholars in the English-speaking world. These essays in an anthology published by Cambridge University Press cover all major periods of Chinese philosophy, from pre-Qin to the 20th century, all major schools, from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, to Neo-Confucianism and New Confucianism, and many of the key thinkers and texts in Chinese philosophy. While they convey the diversity of Chinese philosophy, they are linked by a persistent set of metaphysical concerns: How does the multiplicity and diversity of the world link to a common source or basis? What is the basic element of the cosmos? What is the relationship between emptiness or voidness and our concrete experience of the world? How is harmony related on the levels of society, nature, and the cosmos? How are values grounded in the world? Moreover, while Chinese philosophy took on radically different forms over time, many terms continued to be used while being reinterpreted to serve in new ways. Thus concepts like dao (path or way), qi (vital energy), he (harmony), and li (coherence or reasonable order) provide another link between the essays and different time periods discussed. Taken together, they also address broader questions: What metaphysical questions emerge within a worldview that emphasizes interconnection, immanence and change? Are there alternative ways of
doing metaphysics in the Chinese tradition? How do we make sense of them in the light of contemporary philosophical discourse? What is the relationship between metaphysics and other subjects in philosophy?

This book begins with two essays by Robin R. Wang and JeeLoo Liu, respectively, analyzing two of the most important concepts in Chinese philosophy: *yinyang* and *qi*. Wang’s essay concentrates on the importance of *yinyang*. She makes a distinction between the kind of metaphysics which divides reality into two separate realms and metaphysical thinking. In the Chinese context *yinyang* thinking is metaphysical thinking. It rests on a vision of reality as a single self-generating, self-differentiating and self-organizing whole. She starts with an analysis of the classical Chinese phrase most often used to translate “metaphysics,” *xinger shang xue* 形而上學 (“the study of what is without forms”), which is contrasted with the phrase *xinger xia* 形而下 (“what is with forms”). Wang argues, the notion of *xing* 形 (physical forms, things) in these phrases mediates between what might be called the worlds of physics and metaphysics; the realm of forms (*xing*) should be considered as a *yinyang* field of reality containing both what is within (below) and without (above) it. She then articulates six specific forms of the *yinyang* relationship, analyzing the multiplicity of *yinyang* descriptions. Finally, Wang explores the metaphor of *huaniu* 環流 (circular flowing) as a way to show how the complexity of *yinyang* interactions leads to a ceaseless process of generation and emergence (Wang 2015).

Qi, like *yinyang*, is another core notion in Chinese metaphysics that has been developed as a conception of the fundamental component of reality. In the next chapter, JeeLoo Liu identifies a naturalistic conception of *qi* as the consistent theme across a range of philosophical texts and argues that Chinese *qi* metaphysics is a form of humanistic naturalism distinct from scientific naturalism. According to her interpretation, in the view of Chinese humanistic naturalism, the world consists of nothing but entities of the natural world, with human beings as part of it. Natural entities are accessible to the cognitive capacities of human beings, and statements about the existence and nature of natural entities are truth-apt. Liu traces the main issues in *qi* cosmology throughout the history of Chinese philosophy, beginning with texts such as the *Yijing*, the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Huainanzi*, moving into the theories of Neo-Confucians such as Zhang Zai and Wang Fuzhi, and concluding in the 20th century, with Xiong Shili’s efforts to reconcile *qi* with modern science. An important feature of Liu’s essay is that it situates the discussion of *qi* in the contemporary discourse on metaphysics, making ancient ideas relevant to our times. By analyzing related issues in naturalistic terms, Liu demystifies the notion of *qi* and renders Chinese cosmology a plausible alternative in contemporary philosophical discourse (Liu 2015).

Metaphysics studies forms of existence, and one of its key concerns is with the nature of individual entities. How did Chinese philosophers understand individual entities? How does *qi* manifest itself as entities in the world? Franklin Perkins examines the problem of individuation and, along with it, some of the most fundamental metaphysical issues. Perkins shows that while Chinese philosophers gave ontological priority to interconnected processes and change, holding a type of “process metaphysics,” they did not deny the existence of individual things. His essay...
examines approaches to individuation in various philosophies from the Warring States period, concentrating on the concept of *wu* 物, thing. Perkins investigates various accounts of the status and origins of “things” in early Chinese philosophy and concludes by discussing the ways in which individuation is conditioned by the shared view that the ultimate origin of things is not itself a thing (Perkins 2015). Thus, Perkins’ essay bridges from the concept of *qi* as discussed by JeeLoo Liu in the preceding chapter to people’s encounters with the world in daily life.

Mohism was a major school of thought during the classic period in China, yet there has been little study of its metaphysical views. In Chapter Four, Chris Fraser explores the understanding of reality that emerges from Mohist doctrines concerning *tian* 天 (heaven, nature), the *san fa* 三法 (“Three Models”), and *ming* 命 (fate). For the Mohists, reality follows fixed, recognizable patterns, and is reliably knowable through sense perception, inference, and historical precedent. Ethical norms are a human-independent feature of reality. The Mohist *dao* thus purports to be the *dao* of reality itself, grounded in reliable knowledge of the world. The question that guides the Mohists’ attitude toward reality is not about its fundamental structure but its *dao*—what regular patterns it follows and what course it takes. Fraser also discusses the philosophical significance of these metaphysical views, the problems they raise, and how they set the agenda for philosophical discourse in early China. Fraser’s study shows that the Mohist conception of reality and the theoretical orientation of Mohist metaphysics significantly influenced the general direction of early Chinese philosophical discourse. Features of Mohist thought that became shared premises of pre-Buddhist metaphysics include their formal focus on *dao*, their explanation of reality by appeal to patterns, relations, and regularities rather than abstract forms or structural constitution, their confidence in the reality of the natural world as known through perception, and their view that *dao* is grounded in nature (Fraser 2015).

Roger T. Ames in Chapter Five addresses directly the question of “metaphysics” in a Chinese context by exploring a “metaphysical” reading of the early Confucian classic the *Zhongyong* (中庸 The Way of Centrality). He begins by examining some of the general presuppositions of early Chinese philosophy, concentrating on the senses in which we can and cannot speak of classical Chinese “metaphysics.” In particular, Ames explains why Chinese philosophers had little interest in the nature of being as such, while they concentrated instead on questions like “how can human beings collaborate most effectively with the heavens and the earth to produce a flourishing world?” Ames then turns to the *Zhongyong* as a concrete example and as a response to Mohist views of heaven. The *Zhongyong* presents human beings as having a reflexive and integral relationship within the creative cosmic process. The immanent, inchoate, and thus underdetermined penumbra of the emerging cosmic order provides the opening and the opportunity for cultivated human “becomings” to collaborate symbiotically with the heavens and the earth to be co-creators in achieving a flourishing world (Ames 2015).

The philosophies of Laozi and Heraclitus are paradigmatic examples of dynamic views of reality. Although they are often brought up in the same breath, their similarities and differences are still in need of further examination. In Chapter Six,
Jiyuan Yu presents a meticulous comparison of Laozi and Heraclitus. He proposes that Heraclitus and Laozi each discover a new way of perceiving and thinking about reality, and that the picture of *logos* and the picture of *dao* are surprisingly similar. For both, the world is one but is characterized by a dynamism constituted in tensions between opposites and transformations among them. Based on his findings through this comparison, Yu challenges two influential claims about Chinese metaphysics. One is that Chinese philosophers do not pursue a reality behind the veil of appearances, and the other is that Chinese philosophers were not concerned with the truth about reality but only with the way to live well. Yu’s study gives evidence that there are Chinese philosophers such as Laozi who inquire into something like a reality behind appearances, and that Chinese philosophers such as Laozi are concerned with the truth about reality as well as with the way to live well (Yu 2015).

Michael Puett in Chapter Seven takes readers to a rather unlikely place for metaphysics, the *Liji* (*Records of Rites*). *Li* (ritual) is a key concept in Confucian philosophy. It has been, however, studied almost exclusively as a subject of ethical and political-social philosophy. Puett shows that the *Liji* presents a sophisticated and powerful set of theories concerning ritual and how it affects reality. The “Liyun” chapter of the text makes it clear that ritual was created by humans, and that the construction of proper order is a human project of transforming and organizing the world through ritual. These theories are also, however, rooted within a complex set of metaphysical claims. Puett analyzes these metaphysical arguments to discuss why they are so important for the theories of ritual found within the text, and to explore the philosophical implications of attempts to develop a ritual-based vision of reality. Puett argues that the author(s) of the “Liyun” did not take harmony as a pre-existing characteristic of the world to which human beings should conform. On the contrary, harmony must be constructed by human beings through domesticating and managing the basic forces of the natural world (Puett 2015).

The introduction of Buddhism from India brought a new set of metaphysical issues and concepts that were gradually adapted into Chinese philosophy, making a significant contribution to metaphysical theories in China. In Chapter Eight, Hans-Rudolf Kantor presents us with various concepts of reality in Chinese Buddhism as they merge with issues of epistemology. Kantor shows that Chinese Buddhists developed diverse ways to interpret ontological indeterminacy, the inseparability of truth and falseness, and the existential relevance of falseness. He introduces and compares the various constructivist views of reality developed in the traditions of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, bringing together Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, *tathāgatagarbha*, Tiantai, and Huayan texts. According to these constructivist models, truth and falsehood are mutually constitutive and inter-referential. On the level of epistemology, our insight into truth requires and includes the experience of falsehood. On the level of metaphysics, falsehood itself is a significant feature of reality, constituting a dimension of our world. The epistemological and metaphysical senses of the inseparability of truth and falsehood coincide because the world and the way we exist in it are dependent upon our epistemic stance (Kantor 2015).
Alfred North Whitehead is one of the Western philosophers best known for advocating an ontology of becoming rather than being. It is not surprising, therefore, that his philosophy possesses an affinity with some Chinese counterparts. In Chapter Nine, Vincent Shen compares Whitehead’s ontological principle and the concept of event with the philosophy of Huayan Buddhism. Shen shows that the ontology of dynamic relationships so much cherished in Chinese philosophy is in fact quite close to Whitehead’s ontology of event. For Whitehead, universal relatedness determines that all events are directed towards many other events for their meaning. Within Huayan Buddhism’s doctrine of Ten Mysterious Gates (shì xuàn mén 十玄門), Whitehead’s view is similar to the way the “Gate of Relying on Shi (actualities, events, phenomena)” is used to explain dharma and produce understanding, but there is also an important contrast. While Huayan tends to reduce the “many others” and their comprehensive harmony to the “one mind,” Whitehead argues that every actual entity tends towards others through its own dynamic energy. Every actual entity receives objectifications from others and objectifies itself upon others. Shen goes on to offer some critical reflections out of this comparison, in search of a positive development of the ontology of event and dynamic relations (Shen 2015).

In an innovative move, Brook Ziporyn in Chapter Ten examines and interprets Zhang Zai’s metaphysics of polar relations in terms of “harmony as substance.” Zhang Zai, one of the founding figures of “Neo-Confucianism,” is well-known for his “Western Inscription,” but his “Eastern Inscription” has not received much attention. In this “Eastern Inscription,” Zhang puts forth a metaphysical view which reinterprets the heterodox notion of “Voidness” so as to make it a justification of the cardinal importance of human relationships. As Ziporyn shows, Zhang accomplishes this by defining the nature of material force (qi) as a joining of polar opposites (yin and yang, qian 乾 and kun 坤, etc.), and hence as a necessary alternation and “Great Harmony” between condensed and dispersed material force. This polarity is manifested in the individual condensed forms as their mutual stimulation and response (感 guan), i.e., their relationships with one another. This metaphysical view legitimizes the alternation of life and death and the cardinal importance of human relationships, both of which were repudiated by Buddhists. The resulting view is a kind of “monism,” but a monism which takes “harmony” as its ultimate category. That is, “harmony” is Zhang’s answer to the question, “what are all things?” Ziporyn’s chapter provides a concrete and powerful example of the kind of Chinese qi-based metaphysics (as articulated by JeeLoo Liu) based on polarity (as articulated by Robin R. Wang). Along with the previous two chapters by Kantor and Shen, Ziporyn’s discussion also sets the stage as we move to the next chapter on the metaphysics of Zhu Xi, the most influential Confucian thinker of the last millennium (Ziporyn 2015).

The Song philosopher Zhu Xi’s “learning of the way” (dào xué 道學) became the imperial orthodox ideology and has continued to influence Confucian philosophers to the present. In his chapter, John Berthrong begins by examining the broader question of how the term “metaphysics” can be applied in a Chinese context, and then turns to address structural issues in Zhu’s mature metaphysics. Berthrong argues that Zhu’s metaphysics provides an architectonic vision of a kalogenic axiological cosmology,
that is, a cosmology which expresses a fundamental concern for moral and aesthetic (kalogenic) values. This cosmology also embraces an intersubjective sense of ethical self-cultivation and conduct: we are never alone in the world but always embedded in the cosmos and connected ethically with our fellow human beings. Developing a lexicography of Zhu’s metaphysics, Berthrong provides an outline of many of the key philosophical terms embedded in Zhu’s philosophy. In this chapter, readers find a superb example of how in Chinese philosophy metaphysics and axiology are constructed to support each other within one coherent philosophical system (Berthrong 2015).

Xiong Shili was one of the most important Chinese philosophers of the twentieth century. Xiong integrated concepts, problems, and themes from traditional Chinese philosophy with elements emblematic of Sinitic Buddhist philosophy to articulate an ambitious philosophical syncretism. The analysis in the last chapter of the anthology, by John Makeham, focuses on one of Xiong’s major philosophical works, New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness. The first part of Makeham’s analysis introduces Xiong’s radical monism and his related critique of Yogācāra philosophy as a kind of ontological dualism. Xiong’s critiques are grounded in the Mahayana doctrine of conditioned origination (yuanqi 緣起) and the doctrine that the phenomenal world is not ontologically distinct from undifferentiated absolute reality (dharmakāya). In the second part, Makeham adduces a range of evidence drawn from the New Treatise to show that the Huayan Buddhist doctrine of nature origination (xingqi 性起) played a central role in the entirety of Xiong’s constructive philosophy. Makeham concludes that unlike the Madhyamaka from which Xiong draws inspiration, Xiong effectively posits Fundamental Reality/Suchness/inherent nature/the Absolute as an underlying “locus” on which phenomenal/conventional reality is ontologically grounded, just as the sea supports the waves yet is not different from the waves (Makeham 2015).

In sum, these essays cover all major periods and schools of Chinese philosophy, revealing their diversity, common concerns, and lines of development. The authors not only present the metaphysical theories of these various thinkers and texts, but also make original contributions to the development of Chinese metaphysics itself. As such, their studies present cutting-edge research in Chinese metaphysics and serve as a powerful testimony for the existence of Chinese metaphysics and the legitimacy of studying it. It is our hope that these expert contributors have provided a hallmark work in the study of Chinese metaphysics that will serve as a valuable reference point for the study of Chinese philosophy in the years to come. Most of all, we hope that they will serve as a starting point and inspiration for a more expansive conception of metaphysics, one that is able to address and incorporate the wealth of metaphysical questions and insights develop by cultures around the world. Indeed, the existence and the legitimacy of Chinese metaphysics is no longer a question. The real question in front of us is how to better study it and how to make such a study more fruitful. Let us move forward.¹

¹The authors would like to thank Alan Chan for his helpful comments on an early version of this essay.

Journal of East-West Thought
References


*Journal of East-West Thought*
Abstract: In the language convention equation for a long time the government plays a major role in Chinese. Since 1949, when the Peoples Republic of China was founded, Chinese used on mainland China has been much influenced, if not prescribed, by official government decrees, government official media and government supported literary publications. This has held true until very recently when Internet use became prevalent. This study of newly coined Chinese proverbs demonstrates that nowadays the tide of authority is being reversed and even the language used by the government’s official media is being influenced by the populace or in other words by the people the media tries to influence.

I

Language is a convention (Saussure 1959, 10), and the components or players in this convention can be the vernacular, the scholarly writings and teachings, professional language associations, language regulating bodies, celebrities as well as the government media and decrees, though not necessarily by that order. In the name of language purity there are about 127 language regulating academies or agencies in the world pertaining to 107 major languages.1 For Mandarin Chinese alone there are four agencies respectively; in mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. Each of the four agencies are part of their respective governments. For mainland China and Taiwan the language regulating agencies are part of their ministries of Education. In Singapore the agency was established by the government as an independent entity. In Malaysia the agency is part of the Ministry of Information.2

In mainland China, since 1951, the government has been taking language purity seriously. As soon as the new republic was founded its official organ, the People’s Daily, published an editorial entitled “Maintain the language purity and health by using our mother tongue correctly.” (Editorial Board 1951). This editorial lambasted various language phenomena including multiplication of jargons, ungrammatical

2See Wikipedia under The State Language and Letters Committee, National Languages Committee, Promote Mandarin’s Council and Chinese Language Standardization Council of Malaysia.
structures, foreign words and outdated classic Chinese expressions. Its political overtone aside, considering when it was published, the editorial seemed seriously interested in guiding the country’s media toward using modern Chinese with the standards made and promoted by language professionals such as Lü Shuxiang (吕叔湘) and Zhu Dexi (朱德熙). We say the country’s media because in those days they were the main source which influenced people’s speech and writing, and the media included publications in all forms, newspapers, magazines, broadcasting, film and stage performances. A special committee, The Language Reform Committee (predecessor of the National Language and Letters Committee) was charged with making language rules for schools and the media. It was this very committee which was responsible for pushing for a simplified version of Chinese and for instituting a Romanized sound scheme which were later embraced by Singapore and Malaysia, but not by Taiwan and Hong Kong. This editorial, it was believed, was a signal that the government had every intention to guide how Chinese should be written and spoken in mainland China. In a country with thousands of local dialects and thousands of years of literary tradition some kind of standardization seemed very much needed. Therefore these attempts on the part of the government were embraced by all. As a result the editorial was often cited by government officials and educators to promote the regulation and standardization of Chinese. For the next twenty years or so, especially after 1958 when the Language Reform Committee promulgated the Pin Yin Sound System, this committee was relatively dormant until 1977. It was here it picked up speed again by announcing a second group of Chinese characters as candidates for simplification. The attempt met with strong resistance. The reason why this regulating agency was less active during the years between the early 1950s all the way to the late 1970s is partly because during that period of time the government was in complete control of its media and publications in all forms. Except for a very brief period during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when various political factions printed their own newsletters, it was an understatement to say that “the whole country thinks in one mind and speaks in one voice.” For almost 10 years people’s eyes were only allowed to view and read Mao’s selected works and similar books by

---

3For instance it quoted profusely from Josef Stalin and Mao.
4Those two linguists were cited in the editorial as experts who would provide guidance. Lü was Director of the Institute of Linguistics and Zhu was a professor of Chinese at Peking University.
5The simplified Chinese is referred to as 简化字 [simplified Chinese characters]. The sound system is referred to as the 拼音 or Pin Yin system.
6See Wikipedia [http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%B1%89%E8%AF%AD%E6%8B%BC%E9%9F%B3](http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%B1%89%E8%AF%AD%E6%8B%BC%E9%9F%B3) Accessed on September 12, 2014.
7During the Cultural Revolution for about a year or so in 1967 and 1968 the Red Guard organizations invariably printed their newsletters, which were generally mimeographed and did not have a large circulation.
8A popular slogan during the Cultural Revolution which urges the whole country to think and talk according to the official line.
Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. Another exception was selected works by writer Lu Xun, who sympathized with the communists before their victory. On the stage only eight performances were approved to run, which included two ballets, an orchestral combination and five Peking opera productions. These plus a few warring movies against Japan and the Nationalists constituted the “entertainment” of the day. Needless to say everyday speech and writings in those 10 years were rife with expressions from them, and from works of those revolutionary leaders, especially Mao.

II

Four–character proverbs are a special feature in many East Asian languages, such as in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. These proverbs generally carry certain philosophical overtones and originate from historical references or stories. In Chinese these proverbs generally are gleaned from classic Chinese writings and traditional literary works. They are used very often in everyday writings and speech. When used appropriately these proverbs can convey the message succinctly, often with a scholarly flair and therefore are admired as good writing components. From 1949 to 1979 the new additions to the proverbial repertoire are invariably from Mao’s works or poetry, articles from the People’s Daily and dialogs or arias from those eight official theatrical productions. So far there is, however, no listing of such additions available. It needs to be pointed out that a whole generation is influenced by this strict control on the language and speech. For quite a while, even long after the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution, students who grew up during that time found it hard not to fall into using jargon, cliches or verbiages popular during that time. Even Bei Dao, who arguably led the new cultural movement to steer away from the Cultural Revolution style of language, was not immune. For instance in his essay “My Gambling Stories” (Bei Dao, 1998), when describing people in a Vegas casino he unwittingly used a phrase from a Mao’s work, which goes “…we come from all walks of life for the same common revolutionary goal.” (Mao, 1966). It is safe to assume that in the language convention from 1949 to 1979 in mainland China the government played a dominate role in influencing the speech and writing of Chinese.

III

The next three decades (1979 to present) are regarded as the Reform Era as China opened its doors to the outside world. Though slow at first, this outside world, especially Western media, publications and entertainment, soon began to influence the Chinese language. After the Internet, the World Wide Web in particular, was introduced into China in 1992, the online population in China rapidly developed. In 1992 there were only 250 online users. In three years the number of users increased by 60 times (Wang, 2002). Today the number of online users is simply mindboggling. According to Lu Wei (2014), Director of China’s Office of Internet Information, at

---

9See http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%88%90%E8%AF%AD. Accessed September 12, 2014.
the time of writing of this article there are 600 million online computer users and 1.3 billion cell phone users in China. Now if we look at the various components in the convention, namely, the vernacular, the scholarly writings and teachings, the professional language associations, language regulating bodies, celebrities and the government media and decrees, we will find that there has occurred a paradigm shift. The vernacular, everyday speech on the street, which tended to be extremely local because of a total lack of exposure or demonstration in the past, is exerting considerable influence on Chinese, official or otherwise, because the definition of media is blurring. These days practically every cell phone user or every online user is potentially a publisher of some kind, whether he or she writes a blog, a webchat post, a tweet, a text message or comments on a webpage. When there are so many actual or potential “published” authors, and when there are so many actual or potential media outlets, language is bound to be influenced, big time as pointed out by M. L. ElBekraoui (2014):

Without a doubt, the Internet is the medium with more significant impact on language usage as well as change than the telegraph, telephone, radio, cinema, and TV all combined. In terms of depth and proportions, this new medium can be equated to the advent of Gutenberg’s printing machine in 1436 and to some extent to the Norman invasion in England of 1066. The Internet’s revolution has changed the world, collapsed its distances, and given new powers to individuals, peoples, and nations. This revolution has given a voice to many and offered platforms for new genres to evolve, affecting everything that is societal including language.

Many academics in the West believe that the influence on language brought upon largely by the Internet is negative. They argue, in the case of English, online writings tend to be sloppy and result in bad spelling, bad grammar and bad phrases (Campbell, 2007). On this front their Chinese counterparts seem to have a more balanced view. While some scholars worry about the lack of a standard with regard to the language used online, others are interested in the many new language phenomena as a result (Wu, 2010). The Chinese government, however, is not amused. On April 11, 2014, the People's Daily published an article entitled “Stop the Foreign Word Flood!” In it author Hongliang Dong (2014) condemns the phenomenon as a result of the Internet when, in his view, language borrowings of all kinds flood the media, publications and indeed everyday speech. He points out there is a law which prohibits such wanton usage. Other similar official articles made special mentions of the 1951 People’s Daily’s editorial calling for language purity (Anonymous 2014). In other words the government wants to maintain its dominate role on how language is used. The number of foreign words or newly invented words must have reached an alarming stage to trigger such a vehement response from the government. In addition we have observed yet another phenomenon, which is even more significant culturally – the multiplication of new proverbs in recent years purely due to the Internet.

10The law he refers to is called 《中华人民共和国国家通用语言法》 [The Uniform National Language Law], which was passed by the Ninth People’s Congress on January 1, 2001.
As we mentioned before, proverbs are a time-honored language tradition in Chinese. In general, a proverb is defined by OED as “A short, traditional, and pithy saying; a concise sentence, typically metaphorical or alliterative in form, stating a general truth or piece of advice; an adage or maxim.” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014). In English, for instance, historical, biblical, mythological or philosophical references are often manifested by proverbs containing the phrases: “Noah’s Ark, Achilles’ Heels, Magna Charta, and Golden Fleece.” Similarly Chinese is rife with proverbs also carrying such historical and literary references (Smith, 1902). From The Three Kingdoms, a novel written during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), there are at least a dozen or so proverbs. Examples include 说曹操曹操到 (Speaking of the devil here he comes), 桃园结义 (Become sworn brothers), 败走麦城 (Meeting one’s Waterloo), 既生瑜何生亮? (If the heaven decides to let me born why give me him as a competitor?), 周瑜打黄盖，愿打愿挨 （A drama staged to deceive the audience），司马昭之心，路人皆知 （An well-known intention). Almost 400 years have passed since The Three Kingdoms was written. Though we don’t have much idea about when those proverbs or sayings were first used it is relatively safe to assume they are at the least a few hundred years old. In other words it takes some time for a proverb to become established or recognized in the vernacular. That belief, however, is now about to change. On August 15 2013 Zhao Meidi (2013), a library information specialist at Eastern China Normal University wrote a blog, which has a following of 1,108 readers, among whom 547 identify themselves as her fans. In her blog she listed what she believed to be the established online proverbs which she had collected and provided the definition for each one complete with its background information. The blog initially listed 22 new proverbs, and in the addendum she added three more explaining these three were suggested by readers of her blog. In the opinion of the authors of this article her list is the most comprehensive so far.

The 25 new proverbs collected and annotated by Zhao Meidi are listed as follows:

1. 十动然拒 (Shi Dong Ran Ju) – Get rejected by a girl though the girl says that she is touched by the show of love. The story behind this proverb is that a student by the name of Wang Wenjin from China Central University of Science and Technology sent a love letter, which took him 212 days to write and contained 16,000 words, to the girl of his heart. The girl, though touched by the act, rejected the student.

2. 正龙拍虎 (Zheng Long Pai Hu) – Using a fake picture or evidence for personal gains. In this proverb a person’s name is used. This is person is Zhou Zhenglong, a villager in An Kang area, Shaanxi Province. On October 12, 2007 Zhou put a few pictures of South China Tigers on the Internet. Many online users questioned the authenticity of those pictures, including a zoologist. But the local government officials sided with Zhou in the hope that the existence of those tigers would increase the value of the area as a tourist attraction. Later when mountains of evident presented themselves Zhou admitted cheating. The proverb now is used to satirize someone would do anything for personal gain.
3. 不明觉厉 (Bu Ming Jue Li) – Although I’m clueless about what you are saying you sound impressive.
4. 累觉不爱 (Lei Jue Bu Ai) – Too tired to love anymore.
5. 月球挖坑 或 欧阳挖坑(Yue Qiu Wa Keng or Ou Yang Wa Keng) – Making conclusive remarks without checking the facts. The background of this proverb is that when the Chinese Air Space Administration issued its first picture of a moon supposedly shot by its Chang’e 1 Satellite, the public questioned whether it was a copy of the old picture issued by the Americans. The spokesperson from the Chinese Air Space Administration pointed at the two holes on the surface of the moon and explained that in the American picture there was only one hole, and therefore this was a different picture. However readers later pointed out the picture actually had only one hole but appeared to have two because it was not lined up correctly. So the proverb literally says going to the extent of digging holes on the moon in order to justify a false claim.
6. 谁死鹿手 (Shui Si Lu Shou) – Who is going to be killed by the powdered milk? This proverb is derived from an incident in 2007 when milk powder products produced by the Three Deer Group were found having exceeded the limit of certain chemical additives and proved harmful to people, especially to children. The proverb plays on the word “deer” which appears in a well-established proverb “鹿死谁手” (Who is going to kill the deer), and the new proverb becomes “who is going to be killed by the deer,” referring to the Three Deer Group, which produced the contaminated milk power.
7. 兆山羡鬼 (Zhao Shan Xian Gui) – A callous or heartless person or act. The background of this proverb is that Wang Zhaoshan, vice president of Shan Dong Writers’ Association, wrote a poem ostensibly to commemorate the victims of the Wen Chuan Earthquake. But in the poem he says something to the effect that the victims should feel lucky because there is so much love expressed after their death. His poem met with general uproar of anger and was often ridiculed for being insensitive.
8. 火钳刘明 或 删前刘明 (Huo Qian Liu Ming or Shan Qian Liu Ming) – Becoming recognized before one’s blog becomes a “hot” blog or becoming recognized before one’s blog is deleted by the web management.
9. 男默女泪 (Nan Mo N Ü Lei) – This is a situation when guys become silent and girls are shedding tears.
10. 喜大普奔 (Xi Da Pu Ben) – An extremely jubilate occasion. This proverb uses the first character of four Chinese proverbs which all mean extremely happy.
11. 细思恐极 (Xi Si Kong Ji) – The more one thinks about the situation the more one feels scared.
12. 社病我药 (She Bing Wo Yao) – The society is sick but how come I get to take the medication?
13. 人艰不拆 (Ren Jian Bu Chai) – Since the hardship is all around I will keep my mouth shut from speaking the truth.
14. 说闯觉余 (Shuo Nao Jue Yu) – Feeling left out.
15. 啊痛悟蜡 (A Tong Wu La) – Feeling really sad. This is from the lyrics in a song sung by Hong Kong singer Deng Ziqi, which goes Ah what a sad realization that I have come to!

16. 地命海心 (Di Ming Hai Xin) – A situation when a person in a lowly position tries to worry about managing the country. In this proverb two particular references are made. One is the recycled edible oil, which is generally regarded as dirty or substandard for human consumption, and the other is Zhong Nai Hai where the leaders of the country work and reside. A literary rendition of this proverb is this is a situation when a person in a very low position, who can only afford dirty edible oil at home, starts to worry the future of the country just like the state leaders who live in Zhong Nai Hai.

17. 体亏屁思 (Ti Kui Pi Si) – A situation which makes one think hard when there is a defect in the system the ordinary and innocent people have to pay for the mistake.

18. 酱德大学 (Du Da Da Xue) – A picture taken with extremely high quality cameras.

19. 秋雨含泪 (Qiu Yu Han Lei) – Crocodile tears or someone whose expression of emotions is regarded as less than sincere. In this proverb a well-known writer is mentioned. This writer is Yu Qiuyu, known for his sentimental essays. The background is during the Wen Chuan Earthquake in 2012 when many school buildings collapsed, and the people, especially parents of the children who were crushed by the fallen buildings, were lashing out at the government for failing to keep contractors honest in building the schools. Yu Qiuyu pleaded with those parents to put themselves in the shoes of the government and therefore was derided by the general public.

20. 聚打酱油 (Ju Da Jiang You) – I don’t care. It has nothing to do with me and I’m just passing by. In this proverb soy sauce is mentioned to indicate that the speaker is on his/her way to do something insignificant. For example people might say something like – I’m on my way to get some soy sauce for dinner and haven’t seen anything nor do I intend to make any comments on anything.

21. 黔驴三撑 (Qian LÜ San Cheng) – Doing whatever is necessary, including making up stories, to support an official position. Qian (黔) is the symbol for the Gui Zhou Province. Qian LÜ or the donkey from the Gui Zhou Province is part of an older proverb – 黔驴技穷 (The Donkey from Gui Zhou is at the end of its wits). In that story the donkey is introduced to an area where no other animals have ever seen him before. At first the donkey stands aloof from everyone and pretends to be powerful. Soon other animals realize that the donkey doesn’t have much to show when challenged. The new proverb is based on an incident in 2008 when the spokesperson from the Public Security Bureau (police) in Gui Zhou Province Government made up a story which involved someone doing pushups when a woman committed suicide by jumping into the river.

22. 猪涂口红 (Zhu Tu Kou Hong) – Putting lipstick on a pig, and it is still a pig. This proverb is derived from an American expression, made more famous when it was used during Barack Obama and Republican nominee John McCain’s debate during the United States Presidential Election of 2008.
23. 十气然应 (Shi Qi Ran Ying) – Accepting a marriage proposal after a demonstration of pretended anger. It is based on a story when a freshman at China Central University of Science and Technology in a fancy car proposes to a girl of his love with a million RMB check, the girl looks insulted at first and then accepts the proposal.

24. 飞蝗芜湖 (Fei Huang Wu Hu) – The message contains no pornographic content. Please don’t delete it. This proverb purposefully uses typos or homophones, a prevalent phenomenon in online communication in China.

25. 博超兽资 (Bo Chao Shou Zi) – The stipend for doctoral students is higher than the salaries of their professors. This proverb also contains intentional typos.

It needs to be pointed out that other people have also written blogs on new proverbs. Some even have longer lists. However, after some comparison, we decided to use Ms. Zhao’s list, because of her excellent annotations and her blog pops up first in a Google search.

According to the OED’s definition a proverb is “a [A] short, traditional, and pithy saying; a concise sentence, typically metaphorical or alliterative in form, stating a general truth or piece of advice; an adage or maxim.” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014). The definition of a proverb by Han Dian, the Chinese Online Dictionary, particularly stresses that generally “a proverb comes from classics or historical stories.” (Han Dian, 2014). If we examine the new proverbs as collected and annotated by Ms. Zhao only a few or less than half seem to fit both definitions.

If the government is bent on curbing unauthorized language use such as the flooding of foreign words and the multiplication of new proverbs, language professionals do not seem to be overly concerned. Chen Weizhan, Professor of Chinese at the Sun Yat-Sen University, was quoted as saying: “Such proverbs won’t last.” He further indicates that China is a civilization of five thousand years. The formation of new words take time. The new proverbs cited have emerged as a result of curiosity on the part of online users. They generally do not contain much logic and many people do not understand them. These new proverbs have no place in regular publications. Chen was not worried in the least. When asked if children would be affected, he argued, that the school textbooks are regulated by the government according to well established standards and unauthorized content cannot make it there.

Hao Mingjian, a noted linguist, regards those new proverbs as a kind of toy. He does not believe that new proverbs are able to damage the Chinese language. He said, “no matter how popular these new proverbs are online today they will pass. The young people may use them, just as in a game.” Are those proverbs indeed, as suggested by experts, a flash in the pan, and are they here today, gone tomorrow, without any real following? To test this assumption on September 19, 2014 we went to www.people.cn.com, the official website of the People’s Daily, China’s

---

government official newspaper and put the 25 new proverbs in the search box. The results are astounding. The following list demonstrates how many times each of the new proverbs appears on this official government site:

1. 十动然拒 (Shi Dong Ran Jue) 578
2. 正龙拍虎 (Zheng Long Pai Hu) 302
3. 不明觉厉 (Bu Ming Jue Li) 1341
4. 累觉不爱 (Lei Jue Bu Ai) 1006
5. 月球挖坑 (Yue Qiu Wa Keng) 10
6. 谁死鹿手 (Shui Si Lu Shou) 6
7. 兆山羡鬼 (Zhao Shan Xian Gui) 22
8. 火钳刘明 (Huo Qian Liu Ming) 49
9. 男默女泪 (Nan Mo NÜ Lei) 142
10. 喜大普奔 (Xi Da Pu Ben) 1708
11. 细思恐极 (Xi Si Kong Ji) 191
12. 社病我药 (She Bing Wo Yao) 3
13. 人艰不拆 (Ren Jian Bu Chai) 1191
14. 说闹觉余 (Shuo Nao Jue Yu) 53
15. 啊痛悟蜡 (A Tong Wu La) 25
16. 地命海心 (Di Ming Hai Xin) 12
17. 体亏屁思 (Ti Kui Pi Si) 3
18. 毒德大学 (Du De Da Xue) 0
19. 秋雨含泪 (Qiu Yu Hai Lei) 39
20. 聚打酱油 (Ju Da Jiang You) 6
21. 黔驴三撑 (Qian LÜ San Cheng) 9
22. 猪涂口红 (Zhu Tu Kou Hong) 9
23. 十气然应 (Shi Qi Ran Ying) 6
24. 飞蝗芜湖 (Fei Huang Wu Hu) 0
25. 博超兽资 (Bo Chao Shou Zi) 0

Out of the 25 proverbs only three are never used. However, four are used more than a thousand times, and four are used more than a hundred times, all by the official government website. This is a clear indication that in the digital age our language convention is witnessing a paradigm shift, which is, the vernacular or everyday speech is exerting a much bigger role in forming new language phenomenon.

References


Lu, Wei. 2014. “Lu Wei on the Management of Internet: Good Cars Need Good Brakes.”


Zhao, Meidi. 2014. “How Many Online Proverbs Do You Know?” Her personal blog.
BOOK REVIEWS


There has been a paradigm turn toward embodiment and environmentalization in cognitive science since the middle of 1980s. Of currently fashionable approaches to cognitive studies, especially of those that are claimed to have evolved new paradigms for cognitive science, the model of enacted cognition is widely utilized, most radical, and least understood. It is one of the four E-models of cognition—the other three being embodied cognition, embedded cognition, and extended cognition—and it is such a model that without which the other E-models would be incomplete or inapplicable. However, it has been partially interpreted or misunderstood, and this is so even among proponents of E-models. *Enaction: Toward a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science*, which is a collection of fifteen research articles, is an attempt to offer a systematical response to these problems. It is primarily based on an International CNRS Summer School organized by the Association pour la Recherche Cognitive (ARCo), held in 2006 in Ile d’Oléron, France.

The idea of enacted cognition, which is sometime vaguely dubbed “embodied action,” finds its origins in John Dewey’s and J. J. Gibson’s works. Enaction was first articulated as a model for understanding cognition by F. J. Varela, J. Thompson, and E. Rosch in their 1991 book *The Embodied Mind*. Then it has been developed as a radical alternative to dominating model of cognitive science which is characteristically formalistic and representational. At a talk at the University of Sussex in 2009, Andy Clark described the future of cognitive science and philosophy of mind as research activities under the name of enactivism. Standing in sharp contrast to classic commitment to the idea that genuine cognition only takes place between sensory input and motor output, the enactivist proposes that an organism enacts its environmental conditions for living and that this enaction constitutes its perception and thereby grounds its cognition. However, this doesn’t mean that the model of enacted cognition falls short of an account of higher-level cognition. A half number of the essays collected in this volume are devoted to account of higher-level cognition, covering such topics as consciousness, socially shared abstract concepts, mathematics and cognition, language, the human brain and its relation to lived experience, emotion, etc.

The goal of this volume is to show how enaction is a new paradigm and framework for the next generation of cognitive science. It begins with an essay that makes a methodological point that enacted cognition makes sense from the viewpoints of evolutionary development of species (phylogeny) and development of individual organisms (ontogeny). It is followed by an essay dedicated to the core ideas and essential characteristics of enaction. The remaining essays engage in specific topics on cognition and cognitive science, and these essays make points which are intellectually stimulating, theoretically controversial, or thought-provoking. Here are some examples of these points. Metabolism and locomotion contain already
the germ of reflexive consciousness. Accidental actions set up an autonomous dynamic. The model of enaction recovers the intimate unity of mind and body which Descartes himself recognized as being the core of emotions. Spatial concepts are in our correlative capacity to think in movement. The distally perceived object is nothing else than the experience of body motion. Language is a medium for the expression of bodily metaphors. Brain activity involved in cognition is a subset of autonomous and interactive brain-body systems. Cognitive activity takes place in the interface where organism and world meet. All of these points seem converged on the idea that cognition is not the property of an organism alone, let alone the property of brain alone, but rather the property of a synergistic organism-environment system. Thus, if “mental” representations, symbol manipulations, even information processing are characteristics of the mind, then they are secondary.

The reader may be intrigued to read that this volume distinguishes enactivists from Gibsonians. One of the salient characteristics that mark the originality and specificity of enaction as a paradigm is the emphasis on the balance between first-person experience and third-person scientific methods. It is claimed that this feature distinguishes the perspective of enaction from Gibsonian ecological psychology. This claim, however, may be debatable. Gibson’s 1979 work Ecological Approach to Visual Perception Gibson makes it clear that the perceiving act is an act of picking up information and it is a continuous process of keeping-in-touch with the world--i.e., it is a process of information transformation, rather than a process of the transformation of mental representations. On the one hand, the act of picking up information is neither a mental act nor a bodily act, but what Gibson calls a psychomatic act of a living observer. On the other hand, the act of picking up information is an intentional activity. An organism’s perceiving acts involve awareness of objects of the things that populate its environment in such a way that none of its contents are independent of that of which the organism is aware. In addition, the act of picking up information involves the co-perceiving of the self. Thus, the intentionality of psychological contact is not to be explained by physical contact alone nor is it explained by cognitive operations alone. It is explained by informational relations. The reader may find that philosophically, enactivists are in much more agreement with Gibson than they claim to be or that the balance between first-person experience and third-person scientific methods is equally well explained by Gibsonian ecological psychology.

Like any immature theory, the enactivist theory of cognition suffers from conceptual ambiguity. A careful reader will see a variety of notions of enacted cognition exhibited in the articles collected in this volume exhibit, which means that the authors may have quite different understanding of the notion of enaction. Nevertheless, there are some common characteristics underlying their commitment to the notion of enacted cognition. It may be helpful for the reader to have a brief preview of those characteristics. What does it mean to say that cognition is enacted? The key idea is that an organism enacts its environmental conditions for living, a part of which is the idea that the organism enacts its cognitive field for cognizing. Specifically, this idea includes the following aspects. (1) A cognitive agent creatively activates a cognitive field rather than merely reacting to a world; (2) a cognitive agent
constructively contributes to making a cognitive field meaningful to her rather than merely representing it; (3) the synergistic, dynamic, and interactive relationship between the enacting agent and the enacted cognitive field, gives rise to a system of invariants that afford cognitive acts; (4) the cognitive field (environment) and the body acting in the field in turn constrain what is enacted and how it is enacted; and (5) as experiencing is essentially enacting, experiences are thus embodied. It seems to me the philosophical significances implied in these ideas are profound. The enactivist concentrates her zeal on the maneuver to reunify the conceptual dualities of mind and body, cognitive experience and bodily experience, theory and practice, and subject and object. Dualism is a tenacious tradition. The enactivist reform, if it is to be successful, has a long way to go.

Dr. ZHAOLU LU, Professor of Philosophy, Tiffin University. Email: luz@tiffin.edu.
A Thorough Understanding of Literary Geography 《文学地理学会通》，by Yang Yi, China Social Sciences Press, January, 2013.

Yang Yi’s book, entitled A Thorough Understanding of Literary Geography, published (in Chinese) by China Social Sciences Press in January, 2013, is an important recent contribution to the field of literary geography research revealing his pioneering and creative insights. What is fresh in our memory is the profound ideological proposition of “remapping Chinese literature” raised by Yang in 2001. He said, “I have been harboring a dream to make a fairly complete map of Chinese culture or literature of the past thousands of years. This project will be based upon the in-depth and systematic study of the Han literature and literatures of all minorities in China. The integrity and diversity of the rich and profound Chinese national literature will be directly depicted, and the trait, nature, element, source of Chinese national literature will be pleasantly exposed as well.” Over the past decade, he delved into the basic issues of literary geography from the perspectives of essence, connotations and methods revealed in thesis publications, in some major mainland Chinese journals, and through public speaking in Cambridge, Harvard and the University of Macau. At the same time he meticulously scanned and analyzed literary geography in various academic domains – a multicultural approach to the regional history of Han people and minorities; 400 years’ “Dissemination of Oriental Learning” since the Italian Matteo Ricci; East Asian culture as affected by the reciprocal influence between China, Korea and Japan; typical case samples of ideologists and litterateurs from Confucius, Lao Zi, Chuang Zi, Qu Yuan 2,500 years ago to Li Bai and Du Fu in the Tang Dynasty right up until Lu Xun and Shen Cong-wen in modern times. Yang’s originality rewrote academic history and literary history in many spheres, so his book——published as one of the collected works of Academicians of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences——seems likely to hold its place among the most significant works of Chinese scholarship in this field. I will examine Yang’s originality and style from three angles.

1. Well-grounded Spirit of Independence and Innovation

Although his works run to over ten million words, the desire for innovation of Yang grows with time. He usually establishes his creative ideas on rich and solid historical materials, connecting ancient with modern times, China with foreign countries, literature with the other humanities. Yang’s book presents a three-dimensional research method which concerns the traditional Chinese idea of cosmic structure consisting of “heaven, earth and man.” The dimensional interaction of “man” and “earth,” “geography” in this case, should be be considered in terms of the relationships between Heaven and Earth, and the Heaven and Man Heaven-Earth dimension and the Heaven-Man dimension, “to seek a return to a meaningful function of literature in our lives in the coupling of the three dimensions”, “the elements of humanity and literature should be interacted, complemented and interpreted with those of geography so as to get the spiritual fruits in contact with human activity.” (p. 5) Speaking in this way, he reminds us that geography – the earth dimension – of literature’s occurrence and existence should not be segregated, we have to study the
geographical intervention in literature from the perspective of the whole universe with three dimensions and the large-scale changes in human culture, grasping the key points of the relationship between literature and life from broad connections as well. Yang is not a scholar of rash judgments without sufficient materials and conclusive evidence. He once made a statement, which has been accepted by the vast majority of readers, “The primary principle of literary geography is to connect literature with ‘Di Qi’ (this Chinese idiom refers to the masses, common people).” This term dates back to the Confucian classic *Rites of Zhou* 2,000 years ago, annotated by Zheng Xuan in the Han Dynasty. By using it, he connects literary geography with the ontology of “Qi” in classical Chinese philosophy. By awakening ancient materials with penetrating consideration, Yang excels in making the characters alive and active.

With “integration” and “comparison” in hand, Yang makes previously unseen connections between culture and literature. He compares Li Bai and Du Fu, finding in Li Bai the success of the Yangtze River and Northern Barbarian civilizations, while Du Fu represents that of the Yellow River civilization and ancient scholarly culture. He studied Matteo Ricci, classifying the culture he brought into the Hebrew and Greek systems, exploring the process of its compilation in *Siku Quanshu* in the Qing Dynasty 100 years later. By studying the different classifications of his works in the *Siku Quanshu*, by studying the cultural attitude of Mao Qi-ling through the comparison of different descriptions in *Biographic Sketches of Emperor Shenzong in History of Ming* and *Stories of Foreign Countries*, Yang introduces the thinking of Matteo Ricci into the cultural amalgamation between western culture and traditional Chinese culture represented by *Siku Quanshu*. He ultimately presents us with a highly creative thesis: *400 Years’ Dissemination of Oriental Learning*.

2. Decoding the Hidden Meaning of Materials Through a Multi-Discipline Integration.

Yang states in his book that “literary geography is in itself an integration. Apart from the integration of its own four areas – regional types, cultural stratum, ethnic groups and cultural flows, it also interacts with disciplines as literature, geography, ethnology, nationality, customs, history and archeology” (p.38). The integration and interaction of multi-disciplines generates innumerable proliferative effects, it alters traditional modes of research, brings about new academic branches and cultivates new academic growing points. One question Yang addresses is, “who is Zhuang Zi?” For the past 2,000 years this paradoxical question has presented many enigmas. Yang examined *The Historical Records* and finds that Zhuang Zi is not recognized as Song nationality because of his birthplace, instead, nearly 40% of the content is about the story of Zhuang Zi rejecting the nomination by the King of Chu. Examining in detail the evidence of narrative texts and structures, combining with the material bits of surnames in Tang and Song periods (seventh to thirteenth centuries), Yang constructs the evidence chain for “Zhuang Zi being a distant descendant of King Zhuang of Chu.” Throughout he references narrations in *The Historical Records* and documents of the pre-Qin period. Then Professor Yi extracts dozens of cases from *Zhuang Zi* – his Chu dialect, the mention of Chu’s beliefs and his Chu-style funeral – to verify that the book is actually a reflection of Zhuang’s nostalgia for the Chu Kingdom. Consequently, from this interdisciplinary approach, Yang draws the compelling
Conclusion that Zhuang Zi is a distant descendant of King Zhuang of Chu, and the Zhuang Zi family were exiled to the Song kingdom due to the political crisis in Chu.

Selecting materials judiciously from the vast amount available is the embodiment of Yang's original, incisive and sophisticated academic insights. He highlights how ancient books reflect the vestiges of ancient lives, harboring the cultural code of many real lives. Faced with even a piece of ordinary material, he can go precisely right to the most valuable core points. The following case is a typical example of perceptiveness and understanding. In the sixth chapter of Lao Zi, the character 牝 appeared twice, if examined from etymological perspective, the original glyph of the character is 匕, symbolizing the shape of the female genitalia, just like another Chinese character 牡, the part 丰 indicating the shape of the male genitalia. All these pieces of evidence, together with other similar chapters concerning female reproduction in Lao Zi, confirm that the birthplace of Lao Zi is in the remote area of matriarchy in the Chu Kingdom, and the memory of his childhood is even reflected in his social ideology of “small country and population”. By this perspicacious insight, Yang arouses the vitality beneath the dead materials and makes them talk.

3. Joining the Ancient and Modern Academic Utterances and Freshness of Writing Style

Awakening dead materials is further enhanced by the vitality of language. Yang’s book is enriched with many new utterances of this vitality which seldom appear in research on classical Chinese topics, and he is skilled at achieving a seamless joining of ancient and modern utterances. His argumentation and diction effectively embody the harmonious integration of such utterances, which proves Yang a master in handling and exploiting academic utterances. Yang makes constant efforts in the exploitation and improvement of academic expression by attaching great importance to this basic element of academic research. His writing turns many abstract concepts into fresh and lively scenes which are true to life. For example, he uses the analogy of “jigsaw puzzle effect” for the regional type of the four spheres in literary geography; “onion-head-peeling effect” for the analysis of cultural dimensions; “tree effect” for division of ethnic groups; and “road effect” for spatial mobility. When he explains the phrase “Yang Yuhuan was plump while Zhao Feiyan was skinny”(this Chinese idiom means two beautiful women are attractive in their own ways), he reveals that the love for the skinny Queen Zhao Feiyan of Emperor Cheng of the Han Dynasty was the northward-proceeding of Chu style, while the love for the plump imperial noble consort Yang Yuhuan of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty was the southward-proceeding of Northern Barbarian style. He accomplishes this insight by scrutinizing the historical record and examining silk painting in ancient books, prose and poems. The elements of the colorful regional ethnic cultures contributing to the national culture are in-homogeneous, which is the so-called “tangram effect”: the more different ways of combining the “tangram”, the more complicated changes of the cultural tone and aesthetic trend. The long-term extension of these circumstances is integrated into the scope and depth of Chinese culture. Yang is definitely skilled in this explanation, which features freshness, vividness and humorousness, to remove the baldness, obscurity and remoteness that the argumentation of abstract concepts...
and theories may result from, and inspire readers’ boundless imagination and thirst for knowledge.

In the postscript of the book, Yang states “the academic study of humanities is meant to explore cultural life. The life analysis of cultural classics is a challenge to researchers, and a demonstration of their abilities as well. Such a study, dull as it seems, may become a pleasure of enjoying a banquet of wisdom when one is able to adopt life analysis for his research.” Indeed, Yang’s major book, which took him over ten years to complete, is proof of the bumper harvest he reaps with pleasure, and we readers feel treated to a lavish banquet cooked with unusual wisdom and brilliant thoughts.

Dr. YING WANG, Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Email: ying_ying924@sina.com.