INTRODUCTION: MULTICULTURALISM AND ITS CHALLENGE

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"A SPECTER is haunting Europe", to borrow a line from Karl Marx—the specter of multiculturalism. All European societies are preoccupied with this specter. Indeed, multiculturalism is a specter not only to Europe, but also to the entire earth. From Europe to the Americas, Asia, Australia-Oceania, and Africa, the rolling thunder of globalization comes along with the gusty rain of multi-cultures. The shining sun of cosmopolitanism is shadowed by the staring ghost of multiculturalism. The rosy face of global justice radiates with the purple smile of cultural persuasions.

A world of harmony and symmetry is that we dream. A world of conflict and struggle is the one in which we live and in which truths fire at each other, values cross swords, and beauties mutually kill, while those perpetual, titanic conflicts between truth and falsity, good and evil, and beauty and ugliness continue. 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). What Berlin said yesterday is true of the world we live in today. Ours is a world of diverse voices, colors, and rhymes. It is one of unity with plurality. No wonder, philosophical interests to the subject-matters of multiculturalism, pluralism, and inclusivism develop in an unprecedented speed today. It ought to be so. Philosophy lives if and only if it continues to inspire and lead. Philosophy ought to be the crown jewel of the timely spirit, as it ought to be the gold-engraved jade of the consciousness of a nation and a people.

The salient challenges of multiculturalism are comprehensive, multi-faced, formidable, substantial and lasting. Metaphysically, it presses one hard with the painful questions of self-identity, individual identity and the identity of society alike. It forces citizens, societies, nation-states, and peoples to re-conceptualize their self-understandings. Thus, for example, Jürgen Habermas sums up the challenge of Islam in Europe and one of the issues that arrest all European societies today in the question, "How should we understand ourselves as members of a post-secular society?" (Habermas, 2009, 65). The presence of the other creates a context of self-search. The other's alterity both affirms and challenges the self's identity. One is forced to ask such questions as what is an American, what is a German, what is a British, what is a French, what is a Chinese, what is a Russian, what is a Japanese, and so on. Furthermore, multiculturalism raises the question of what is the best world or what is the best possible world too. In what world we ought to live? That is the question! What America ought to be for Americans? What Germany ought to be for Germans? What China ought to be for Chinese people? Which one is better, "melting
These questions and their alike are not ones scratching where there is no itch, but ones arresting the heart!

Cognitively, the challenges of multiculturalism are constellated in such questions as what is truth, whose truth, what is the criterion of truth, how should one relate to one's own cultural tradition, and what is the role of language in human understanding. Multiculturalism challenges one to reflect, evaluate, and adjudicate conflicts of cognitive paradigms and to map one's way out of alternatives. It forces one to step out of the slum of dogmatism, solipsism, absolutism, and the like. In front of it, the shtick of the ruling cultural tradition wears thin, and the color of the orthodox paradigm fades. An examined life is not accompanied by the comfort of conformity, but by the irritation of rapture, conflict, and dissonance.

Ethically, multiculturalism calls into question the concept of the good and happy life buttressed by traditional culture, communal history, and collective experience, and enshrined in established cultural values, standards, and norms of existence. It introduces alternative approaches. It also presses one for a re-examination of one's ethical identity, affiliation, and allegiance. It confronts xenophobia in the mainstream of communal life on the one hand, and ethical solipsism on the other hand. On the one hand, the conflicts of values, ideals, centers of gravity of happiness, and cultural feelings bring one to an unfamiliar territory. On the other hand, as Emmanuel Levinas put it, the other "comes to join me. The thou is posited in front of a we"; "the welcoming of the other by the same ... is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the other." (Levinas, 1969, 213/43). Equally crucial, the presence of the other and the relation with the other constitute a constraint on one's freedom (ibid., 213). This to be, or that to be, that is still the question!

Politically, multiculturalism picks away at one's concepts and senses of justice, legitimacy, popular sovereignty, separation of church and state, cultural autonomy, cultural rights, collective political identity, government, law, and so on. It calls for a redefining of affiliation and allegiance. In such a context, new cultural affiliation and allegiance has social and political consequences: it leads to a new rationality of social political power and government on the one hand and a redistribution of social-political power and resource on the other hand.

Notwithstanding, multiculturalism is not merely a specter or ghost, but one threatening our metaphysical security, cognitive certainty, ethical clarity, and political rationality. It is a force and energy of uncertain character, unfamiliar nature, undefined substance, and unidentified essence. Moreover, it is not merely an unknown guest knocking at the door, but a strange partner who forces her way into inside the house. At the dawn of multiculturalism, new metaphysics and ontology is called, new cognitive theory is demanded, new ethics is needed, and new political philosophy is wanted.

Against such a backdrop, the mood of European societies today can be characterized as "a spirited rejection" of multiculturalism. So too are the moods of some other parts of the earth today. From the point of view of a dialectical

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1 The metaphors "melting pot" and "salad bowl" are borrowed from Craig Calhoun. See Calhoun, "Social Solidarity as a problem for cosmopolitan democracy", 285.
perspective, multiculturalism is a double-edge-sword. It liberates, but also destroys. It is akin to the Hindu God Shiva that brings not only colors, energies, and forces to the world, but also dangers, destructions and threats to the universe. It is akin to a volcano that enlightens, but also demolishes. Moreover, not all forms of multiculturalism are healthy and desirable. For example, the unity of language is always pivotal for any viable society. Radical multiculturalism leading to a destruction of the unity of language in a society is unsustainable.

All the same, nation-states, peoples, global human community, and humankind in general have benefited greatly, and will continue to benefit, from multiculturalism. Surely, to reject a particular form of multiculturalism is one thing. To reject multiculturalism per se is quite another. If it might be wrong or unwise to advocate radical multiculturalism, it might be also wrong or unwise to reject multiculturalism per se. As we learn from the traditional Chinese concept of wu ji bi fan (物极必反 when things are pushed to their limits, they always turn into their opposites), extremity produces self-destruction. When all is said and done, we still need to see the other side of multiculturalism:

1). The world of a single or hegemonic culture is not necessarily the best world. The world of a single, hegemonic culture is not necessarily better than the world of multi-cultures. By the best world is understood here as one that allows humanity to thrive and prosper to the maximum. By a better world is understood here as one that allows humanity to thrive and prosper to a greater extent. The world of a single, hegemonic culture is not necessarily the best matrix of truth, value, beauty, and ideal, at least not necessarily a better one than one of multicultures. The world of a single, hegemonic culture is not necessarily the best one or a better one for the growth and perfection of human character, substance, and capacity, at least not necessarily one better than one of multi-cultures. Here, we should draw a distinction between a world of a single, hegemonic culture and a well-ordered world with unity. The world of a single, hegemonic culture can be a well-ordered one. So can be the world of multicultural. The singularity and hegemony of a world is not a necessary condition or a sufficient condition for a well-ordered world.

2). The co-existence of multicultures can be accompanied by greater good. The co-existence of multicultures makes life more challenging. This need not be conceived as something bad. Even if it might be something uncomfortable, it might be accompanied by greater good. For example, the co-existence of multicultures in a society creates a more spacious room for human freedom and creativity in the society. The co-existence of multi-cultures also constitutes a driving force for individuals, societies, nations and peoples to expand their minds and horizons. Only if individuals, societies, nations, and peoples expand their mind and horizons can they see what the poet George Gordon Byron called “a wide realm of wild reality,” or what the philosopher Zhuangzi called “the realm of the endless and limitless,” appreciating adequately the sun above and rivers and mountains below. Multi-cultures of a society create a situation in which only the real can endure, the better can triumph, the substantial can stand, and the one with strength can move forward. This does not mean that a society governed by the Darwinian rule in which only the fit survives is
better. Instead, it means that the co-existence of multicultures can produce evils, but also can produce goods and greater goods.

3). No incompatibility exists between multiculturalism and having a traditional identity of a society. The key for us here is to see that among cultures, there should be, and there is, a leading culture that plays a leading role in defining the cultural identity of a society. It is for us to distinguish between multiculturalism and equalitarianism. To argue for multiculturalism is one thing, and to advocate equality of all cultures in defining the identity of a society is quite another. It is one thing to talk about the inclusion of cultures. It is quite another to insist that all cultures are equal in their rights and statuses to define the cultural identity of a society. Here, Mao ZeDong’s view on contradiction can shed some lights. According to Mao, in a contradiction, a distinction exists between the principal aspect and the secondary aspect of a contradiction. "The principle aspect is the one playing a leading role in the tradition. The nature of a thing is determined mainly by the principal aspect of a contradiction, the aspect that has the dominant position." (Mao, 1969, 297). The traditional cultural-political identity of a society will continue when the traditional culture of that society continues to be the principal aspect of the cultural contradiction of that society. Multiculturalism resists cultural exclusion, but does not necessarily subvert the ruling cultural tradition or dethrone the ruling traditional culture. An endorsement of multiculturalism does not entail an acceptance of what Habermas dubs "post-nation democracy", in which the demos and the ethos are separated. A multicultural constitutional democracy can be one with the shining character of a traditional or national culture.

4). We cannot eliminate the co-existing multi-cultures of a society without committing some greater evils, oppression and repression of various kinds, in particular, institutional oppression and repression. For example, one cannot eliminate Islam or other minority cultures in many European societies today without institutional oppression and repression. Noteworthy, modern enlightenment's attempt to eradicate traditions and cultures taints its triumph with disaster. The modern communist struggle to oppress cultural diversity extinguishes the fire of its promise of emancipation. Historically, religious oppressions of the so-called heresy in the various parts of the earth, in Thomas Jefferson's words, "make half the world fools, and another half hypocrites." (Jefferson, 1979, 510).

While they do not take multiculturalism itself as the direct, dispositive subject-matter, papers in this volume are concerned with multiculturalism from different angles. In terms of themes, they can be grouped into three categories.

In the first category, papers are devoted to exploring various issues of multiculturalism. In this category, V. Colapietro’s paper leads the discussion. It provides a pragmatic defense of philosophical pluralism and criticizes the alleged “the tyranny of method”. It calls for philosophers and enquirers to free themselves from the imprisonment of the propensity to institute a philosophical method as the scientific method and, therefore, to engage freely and creatively various philosophical traditions as they are. It invites us to return to philosophies and traditions as contingent, contextual, and particular. By contrast, R. Groves' paper defends the possibility and value of grand-narrative as necessary for human understanding. Meanwhile, it
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attempts also to do justice to the plurality of human history by limiting the claim and purpose of grand-narrative and walking a fine line between unity and diversity in understanding. X. W. Chen’s paper explores the concept of the religious other, indicating the metaphysical, cognitive, ethical, and political challenges of the religious other. It calls for a distinction between the religious other that is a legitimate object of religious toleration and the religious other that is not a proper object of religious toleration. B. Entl’s review essay on Habermas’ Europe: The Faltering Project informs us also Habermas’ intellectual struggle with multiculturalism in Europe.

In the second category, K. L. Shun’s, C. Y. Li’s, and W. Y. Xie’s paper, as well as the two discussion papers, exemplify the kind of cognitive challenge that multiculturalism presents as mentioned above. Shun’s paper examines how better to appreciate Chinese philosophy as a form of philosophy and which way of studying Chinese philosophy is the most fruitful. Li’s paper explores the five challenges to Confucianism today. It hammers home the idea that a tradition lives if and only if it continues to inspire. Meanwhile, Xie’s paper explores the Confucian concept of religiosity. Noteworthy, the three papers raise a twofold question here. On the one hand, for those who read Chinese philosophy as outsiders, at issue is how to map out Chinese philosophy and way of thinking that is alien. On the other hand, for the community of Chinese philosophical and intellectual enquiry, the question is how best to self-understand and self-conceptualize. For example, how best to conceptualize Chinese metaphysics as a form of metaphysics. How best to conceptualize Chinese religions as forms of religions. Relevant to this two-fold question, Liu’s discussion paper, which attempts to translate the traditional Chinese cosmology in the language of modern physics, is a reconstructing enterprise.

In the third category, tracing the footsteps of how Metropolitan Platon preached at the Court of Empress Catherine the Great (ruled 1762-96) in a and sought to reconcile Christian faith and Enlightenment ideas, E.K. Wirtschafter’s paper sheds light on what Habermas would call “the learning process” on the matter of religious toleration today. It sheds some new light to what Habermas would call the “learning process” of religious toleration today. From different angles, the paper also reveals a kind of cognitive challenge that multiculturalism will present.

I would like to conclude this introduction with this observation by Victor Hugo: “The earth hasn’t always been occupied by a single kind of civilization ... The human race as a whole has grown, developed, matured as each one of us does individually.”(Hugo, 2004, 17).

Reference


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THE TYRANNY OF METHOD: A PRAGMATIC DEFENSE OF PHILOSOPHICAL PLURALISM

Vincent M. Colapietro

Abstract: The history of philosophy is in no small measure a series of attempts to institute a fail-safe method. In response to what they take to be the scandal of disagreement (disagreement itself being judged as scandalous), a number of historically influential philosophers (e.g., Descartes, Peirce, Husserl, and Carnap) have time and again tried to craft a method for guaranteeing agreement. In light of the failure of these attempts, this tendency might be seen as remotely analogous to what is called in psychoanalytic parlance a “repetition compulsion.” In any event, historical reflections on this repeated tendency promise to be illuminating. But there is a polemical purpose animating these historical reflections. The author tries, in light of these reflections, to render plausible the suggestion that this tendency amounts to a tyranny of method and, in turn, such tyranny results in an inevitable impoverishment of philosophical thought.

THE TOPIC of my essay is best brought into focus by recalling a central figure in the history of Western philosophy. 1 This recollection is, however, far from methodologically innocent. My deliberate turn toward a pivotal moment in our intellectual history – in brief, my turn toward history – will provide the basis for my critique of what I am disposed to identify as the tyranny of method. This tyranny is not so much exercised by any particular method as by the repeated impulse to institute a philosophical method of allegedly revolutionary significance. Most often, this impulse is bound up with the hope that philosophy can transform itself into a science (an unquestionable form of certain knowledge) either by adopting the method of science itself (e.g., the efforts of C. S. Peirce to transform philosophical inquiry into something essentially akin to an experimental science) or a method unique to itself (e.g., the commitment of Edmund Husserl to reform philosophical reflection so that it could serve as an indubitable foundation for all other domains of human inquiry). This impulse seems, to me at least, to be akin to a repetition compulsion. Only by reading the history of philosophy is this repetition (even innocently conceived) evident; moreover, the possibility of this tendency being akin to a pathological (or neurotic) drive – in particular, a repetition compulsion in the Freudian sense – is also an essentially historical question. To free ourselves (insofar as this is possible) from the impulse to institute a philosophical method – or, more likely, to follow a thinker such as Kant or Hegel, Husserl or Peirce, Carnap or

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1 This paper grew out of a talk first given at Dickinson College (Carlisle, PA) and later at the Institute for American thought at IUPUI. In one of the other of these contexts, comments, questions, and criticisms voiced by Jessica Wahman, Crispen Sartwell, Nathan Houser, André De Tienne, and Cornelius de Wall have proven to be invaluable in revising this paper for publication. But an intense conversation with John Greco in Jamestown, RI, was no less instructive.
Wittgenstein, Popper or Derrida, Gadamer or Foucault, who has seemingly made a momentous contribution by devising a revolutionary method – promises to make philosophy a more humane and liberal, more expansive and relevant discourse. The enactment of such intellectual freedom – the struggle against this repetition compulsion – will involve a critical engagement with various traditions, for diverse purposes and from divergent perspectives. Such engagement has as legitimate a claim to the title of philosophy as any other, at least if the history of this discourse is taken seriously.

I may seem to be positioning myself to find under a rock only what I have myself put there. Or, to alter the metaphor, the historical pluralism to be defended at the conclusion of my presentation will appear to some to be a stowaway allowed entrance at the outset of the journey. But I am not smuggling this “cargo” on board: I am rather explicitly announcing, here and now, the identity of my companion. Part of the justification for my procedure is that there is, in my judgment, no methodologically neutral place from which to commence any inquiry (cf. Dewey MW 10). As inquirers, we are caught up in histories far more subtle and telling than we are disposed to acknowledge. The degree to which this is so inclines me to portray human inquirers as historical actors involved in dramatic conflicts (cf. MacIntyre 2006). This is however to jump ahead of the story. All that I wanted to do in issuing this warning about my own tactic is to underscore that I am about to tell a story. Eventually, I want to propose that the history of philosophy is one in which, time and again, an invidious distinction is drawn between story-tellers and truth-seekers (see, e.g., Blackburn). Surprisingly, the stories that the self-avowed truth-tellers present about themselves and their motives are so often taken at face value as the truth about these matters. But, as this suggests, the truth about our own stance toward truth – our own individual and also disciplinary stance – might not only escape “geometrical” demonstration but also require narrative validation or (more likely) re-evaluation. That is, some form of historical narration is critical for philosophical inquiry, conceived as the pursuit of truth. But, then, the story-tellers seem more often than not strongly disposed to offer narratives in which even our most secure truths are exposed as nothing but disguised fictions, in which the telling distinction between truth and fiction is explained – or narrated! – away.

**Story-Telling, Truth-Seeking, and Disciplinary Conflicts.** So, at this point, simply allow me to pick up the story where so many of us commence its narration in our teaching – with that central figure in the history of Western modernity, the author of the *Meditations* and the *Discourse on Method*. Though many contemporary philosophers are in effect in agreement with Peirce’s counsel regarding the value of opening the dusty folios of the medieval schoolmen (these dusty folios are to a regrettable degree still unmined resources), far more are (I suspect) in agreement with Hegel who in his *History of Philosophy* announces, upon turning from medieval thought to the inaugural figure of modern philosophy:

> Philosophy in its own proper soil separates itself entirely from the philosophizing theology [of the medieval epoch] … and places it on quite another side. Here, we may say, we are at home, and like a mariner after a long voyage in a tempestuous
sea, we may now hail the sight of land; with Descartes the culture of modern thought, the thought of modern Philosophy, really begins to appear, after a long and tedious journey on the way which has led so far. (Hegel, 1995, 217)

Of his own journey, René Descartes his *Discours de la Méthode* (1637) informed his readers: “I consider myself very fortunate to have found myself, from my early youth, on certain paths which led me to considerations and maxims out of which I have constructed a method which, I think, enables me gradually to increase my knowledge and to raise it little by little to the highest point which the mediocrity of my mind and the short span of my life will allow it to reach” (Descartes, 1998, 28). Method would compensate for mediocrity and, in a sense, even for finitude (above all else, the finitude of any individual’s life and also the limitations of that person’s experience). It is far from insignificant that Descartes took the institution of this method to be the inauguration of a tradition. At the risk of being a champion of the obvious, let me stress that one of the principal architects in early modernity of anti-traditionalism is, as it turns out, actually not opposed to tradition as such (at least, any tradition rooted in the reforms he sought to institute in the practices of inquiry). The tradition of anti-traditionalism, however, tends to assume an unqualified stance toward its mortal foe. Even so, Descartes himself is explicit about the importance of an intergenerational community for the work of human inquiry:

having come across a path which seems to me such that, by following it, one must inevitably find one’s goal [the truth], provided one is not prevented either by the shortness of life or the lack of experiments, I judged that there was no better remedy against these two obstacles than faithfully to communicate to the public all the little I had found and to urge good minds to try to go beyond this in contributing, each according to his inclination and his capacity, to the experiments which must be made, and communicating also to the public everything they learned; so that, the last beginning where their predecessors had left off, and thereby linking the lives and labours of many, we might all together go much further than each man could individually. (Ibid. 79).

Tradition, derived from the Latin word traditio (meaning the activity of handing on or handing down), is both an ongoing process and a cumulative result. It is the process whereby one generation hands to the next what the earlier generation has itself inherited or discovered on its own. Tradition is also the consolidated result of this ongoing process (cf. Pieper).

The Cartesian project marks, then, a seemingly radical break with past intellectual traditions and a robust hope in the grandeur of a future one. Retrospectively, Descartes was an anti-traditionalist. He deliberately broke with the traditions of learning characteristic of the schools of his time. Prospectively, he was a traditionalist in the sense that he hoped to inaugurate a tradition of discovery and invention in which individual rationality (methodically exercised) and experimental results, methodically (hence, publicly) communicated would insure the inevitable growth of human knowledge (cf. Peters on reason as a tradition). Like Francis Bacon, Descartes imagined that the indefinite prolongation of our physical existence
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was, in principle, a far from groundless fantasy. In other words, the fathers of modernity dreamed of the possibility of conquering death: These scientific visionaries at the inauguration of the modern epoch dreamt of the possible conquest of physical death, the indefinite prolongation of our earthly existence, thereby suggesting modern science might be, in its unbridled dreams of human power over natural processes, something akin to science fiction.

But let us turn back to the question of method, the dream of instituting a set of procedures by which steady progress is insured and human error all but eradicated (rather than the dream of conquering death). Early in the Discours, Descartes asserts, somewhat disingenuously, “my intention is not to teach here a method which everyone must follow if he is to conduct his reason correctly, but only to demonstrate how I have tried to conduct my own” (Ibid, 29). In his judgment, the tradition that would flow from his discovery of the path to truth, however, stands in marked contrast to the tradition enshrined in the universities, one in which the wisdom of the ancients, especially the teachings of Aristotle, are revered. “I am convinced,” he confessed, “that the most devoted of those who now follow Aristotle would think themselves happy if they had as much knowledge of nature as he had, even if it were a condition that they would never have more. They are like the ivy that does not seek to climb higher than the trees which support it, and which even often comes down again after reaching the top; for it seems to me that those people come down again, that is to say, become in some way less learned than if they abstained from study …” (Ibid, 85). In sum, the schools tend to be sites of stupefaction. The assessment of his education at one of the finest universities in Europe, offered at the outset of his Discours, is unquestionably a harsh critique of established practices. Near its center is the conviction that reverence for the ancients spells, at best, an arrest of learning and, more likely, retrogression. One must deploy one’s own reason without undue deference for traditional authorities, no matter how widely revered and institutionally sanctified these authorities are (cf. Hegel).

Another point regarding the Cartesian approach must be highlighted. A moral judgment ultimately helps to underwrite Descartes’ harsh assessment of institutional learning. The fashion of philosophizing dominating the universities “is most convenient for those who have mediocre minds.” The obscurity encouraged by this fashion enables the schoolmen “to speak about all things as boldly as if they really knew them, and to maintain everything they say against the subtlest and most skillful, without anyone being able to convince them of their error” (Ibid, 85). He forcefully adds, in effect invoking the figure of Socrates: “if they wish to talk about all things, and to acquire the reputation of being learned, they will achieve this more easily by contenting themselves with verisimilitudes, which can be found without much trouble in all kinds of matters, than by seeking the truth, which is revealed only little by little and in a few matters, and which, when other matters arise, obliges one to confess frankly one’s ignorance” (Ibid, 86). For Descartes no less than Socrates, then, the advance of inquiry is predicated on the confession of ignorance (what Peirce, as anti-Cartesian a philosopher as any we are able to identify, would call a “contrite fallibilism”). The show of learning must be exposed for what it is – vainglorious
pretension – and the substance of discovery must be attained by the only means possible – conscientious adherence to an ultimately infallible method.

Descartes distilled the essence of his method into four rules or maxims. A method is, after all, an articulation or codification of rules. In Descartes’ case, an expansive list of very specific rules is counterproductive (just as a state is, according to Descartes in his Discours, better ruled when it has only a few laws, since these laws are far more likely to be strictly observed, so too the conduct of inquiry is best undertaken under the guidance of a compact set of methodological guidelines). At the innermost center of Descartes’ methodological innovation, then, is a short list of highly general rules thought by him to be especially useful in directing the mind in its search for truth. A rough paraphrase of his four rules for directing the mind to truth might serve here as a useful reminder of the Cartesian method. The first and most (in)famous of these rules is the methodological injunction to institute procedures of universal doubt, treating as completely false what is minimally dubious. The second is to divide difficulties “inside as many parts as possible,” dealing with each one in an intensely focused manner. The third is to proceed in an orderly manner, the fourth to make enumerations so complete and summaries so inclusive as to insure that nothing has been left out. Of course, not everyone concurred. Indeed, Leibniz sneeringly responded to Descartes’ proposal by translating it to mean: “Take what you need, and do what you should, and you will get what you want.”

Giambattista Vico was another early critic of Descartes (cf. Berlin; MacIntyre; Miner). In his judgment, Descartes had done what those who have become tyrants have always been wont to do. They come to power by proclaiming the cause of freedom. But once they are assured of power, they become worse tyrants than their original oppressors” (Seconda riposte; Miner, 2002, 17). Moreover, the freedom promised turns out to be power increasingly diminished, since so much of the learning inquirers need to carry out their projects has been effectively jettisoned by Descartes (above all, the historical learning to which Vico had devoted so much of his intellectual life). So Vico suggests specifically regarding Descartes: “Young simpletons readily fall under his spell because the long labor of much reading is tiresome, and it is a great pleasure to the mind to learn so much so quickly.” The sort of wide, deep learning to which Vico had devoted his life is, thus, effectively discredited by the Cartesian valorization of the individual mind. The disparaging sense of “scholastic” (or “academic”) is, moreover, established – at least, solidified – by the Cartesian impulse to seek for objective truth by disciplined recourse to the infallible intuitions of the individual mind. In reference to Descartes at least, the turn toward the subject is not a turn away from objectivity; it is rather a turn toward the only source from which indubitable truth might be methodically derived by a series of incontestable intuitions. At least provisionally, the authority of memory no less than that of the senses is effectively discredited by Descartes’ rigorous application of universal doubt; and it is not certain whether he is able to recover fully a sufficiently reliable form of human recollection, one adequate for the task of inquiry. But his individualism is linked to his intuitionism and, in turn, his intuitionism is a form of rationalism in which the power of raison (the capacity to see the logical connections
and discern the essential features of even any imaginable object) is allowed to eclipse the seemingly more humble powers of perceiving, remembering, and imagining.

For Vico and philosophers closer to our own time, however, the role of memory cannot be gainsaid. The Cartesian argument from radical doubt itself presupposes the relative stability of the pivotal terms on which this provisionally skeptical argument depends (not least of all the stability of the meaning of the word “doubt”). The meaning of that word itself is completely dependent on the reliability of memory, the capacity of the utterer or thinker to mean by doubt at one moment what that individual meant at earlier stages in the process of doubting. That is, the logical force of the argument depends entirely on the semantic stability of the rudimentary terms used to formulate this argument (cf. Kenny). Indeed, the work of reflection (including philosophical reflection) is, in the judgment of some thinkers, intimately bound up with that of recollection, reflection always being in some measure a form of recollection (Cf. Verene). “The work of the philosopher,” Wittgenstein goes so far as to suggest, “consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose” (Wittgenstein, 1958, #127). What has been my purpose in assembling these reminders of Descartes’ aspirations and, in addition, the harsh assessment of two other important figures in Western philosophy? It is to reflect on the nature of philosophy itself.

Toward this end, it is instructive to interpret philosophical controversies, even the most intense and protracted ones, as family quarrels. The shared assumptions underlying so many significant disagreements turn out to be, more often than not, of more far-reaching and deep-cutting significance than the manifest disagreements themselves. For example, consider the dispute between British empiricism and Continental rationalism (and even Kant’s ingenious synthesis of their conflicting claims). In general, the degree to which the disputing parties adhere to overlapping positions, even common presuppositions, establishes their kinship. Indeed, disagreement seems virtually to require kinship. Since significant disagreement presupposes shared commitments, all philosophical quarrels are, at bottom, family squabbles, though the contestants might be only quite distantly related to one another. Moreover, the quarrel might reach a level of such acrimony that the impulse to disown the other becomes irresistible. The identity of the philosopher is bound up, historically and presently, with the tendency to denounce others as sophists, that is, to banish not so much the poets as our philosophical rivals from the republic of philosophy (cf. Smith). Of course, we are not banishing our philosophical rivals, since the act of banishment effectively means that those banished do not count— for us, at least— as philosophers. But the presumed authority to reject in toto a philosophical other— someone who does philosophy in such a markedly different manner from the way that we do that we cannot (or will not) recognize their contributions to philosophy, indeed, their utterances as philosophy— is at once understandable (though not necessarily indefensible) and potentially debilitating. One has only to think of the whole dismissal of Jacques Derrida by certain segments of professional philosophers, a philosopher who has read more widely deeply than many departments of philosophy. Or one has only to think of the studied ignorance of Willard van Orman Quine by other professional philosophers.
There is a dilemma here. On the one hand, intellectual conscience demands that something can be done so ineptly or so fraudulently that it fails to count as philosophy. On the other hand, “contrite fallibilism” requires us to acknowledge not only the possibility that we do not know what we are doing but also the likelihood that we might be mistaken about the value and significance of what we (often by our own admission) find baffling or even incomprehensible. Not everything or anything can count as philosophy. But, then, should it be the case that only those things which conform strictly to the patterns and paradigms of one’s own tradition or perspective deserve to be accorded the status of philosophy?

An example of just how tricky this can be should help, though not an example concerned with distinguishing philosophy from what is undeserving of this title but one focusing on an analysis of an ever timely topic. Has Harry Frankfurt in his widely read and (from an unscientific survey) deeply respected *On Bullshit* saved us from bullshit, contributed to bullshit, both, or neither? Nonsense must be identified as such and bullshit must not be allowed to pass unchallenged, but the concluding sentence of Frankfurt’s essay (albeit an essay packaged and marketed as a book) should be recalled here:

As conscious beings, we exist only in response to other things, and we cannot know ourselves at all without knowing them. Moreover, there is nothing in theory, and certainly nothing in experience, to support the extraordinary judgment that it is the truth about ourselves that it is easiest for a person to know. Facts about ourselves are not peculiarly solid and resistant to skeptical dissolution. Our natures are, indeed, elusively insubstantial—notoriously less stable and less inherent than the natures of other things. And insofar as this is the case, sincerity itself is bullshit. (Frankfurt, 2005, 66-67).

Frankfurt has set out sincerely to offer a useful analysis of what he takes to be a prevalent phenomenon in (arguably, a defining characteristic of) the contemporary scene. But he is too sincere—here as well as everywhere else, too honest—to resist noting a possible implication of his own probing analysis. On Bullshit just might be yet another example of what it attempts to expose. This is so since the identification of bullshit depends on the detection of insincerity, but such detection in our own case is far from “the easiest [thing] for a person to know.”

History is full of irony, intellectual history certainly no less than its other branches. Take the example of the actual development of analytic philosophy in the twentieth century. And let us begin by taking A. J. Ayer’s history of this development as presented in *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*. Chapter 1 is entitled “The Revolt against Hegel.” A decade after the publication of Ayer’s history, however, Robert Brandom’s *Making It Explicit* (1994) would appear. Brandom is only one of a significant number of analytically trained philosophers who take Hegel with the utmost seriousness. Indeed, while the opening decade of the twentieth century marked the revolt against Hegel, the concluding one witnessed within analytic philosophy itself the return, with a vengeance, of this alleged obscurantist. To borrow an expression crafted for another purpose, the vitality of
great philosophers exhibits itself nowhere more dramatically than in the irrepressible power of these authors to bury, time and again, their undertakers (Gilson, 306).

Some philosophers however contend that the best way to understand analytic philosophy is in terms of its methodological character. This approach to philosophy involves, they insist, nothing more (but also nothing less) than a conscientious commitment to a particular way of doing philosophy. Analytic philosophers do not necessarily share substantive conclusions (one could as easily be an anti-realist as a realist, a reductive materialist as a mind-body dualist); however, they do inevitably agree, in practice, how the business of philosophy is to be conducted. At the very least, they take their task to encompass conceptual clarification and rigorous argumentation. Obscurity masquerading as profundity is to be exposed as such – as obscurity, not profundity. As such philosophers are disposed to portray themselves, they possess the courage and candor of the child in the fairy tale who regarding the emperor’s new clothes are unembarrassed to pronounce that the monarch is in fact naked. This seems to be to be often an accurate self-portrayal. But the ease and confidence with which so many invoke this image as a self-image are, in my judgment, suspect. That is, the unqualified assurance with which they ascribe such simple courage to themselves is an invitation to raise an eyebrow.

At what price is such an overriding preoccupation with clarification and argumentation purchased? How do the commitments to clarity and probity actually operate in philosophy? Rather polemically, then, I want to suggest that the demand for clarity and the demand for evidence have been so fiercely inscribed in the philosophical psyches of some individuals (have become such defining facets of a punitive voice in the inner forum of their philosophical conscience) that other intellectual values stand little chance of staking a claim or making a difference (values such human salience or enhanced understanding about substantive matters beyond the simplest cases).

Consider two examples, the first being R. A. Sharpe’s Philosophy of Music: An Introduction, the second Akeel Bilrami’s Resentment & Self-Knowledge. In the Introduction to this informative and insightful study of music, Sharpe confesses: “as my own philosophical life nears its end I have become increasingly disenchanted with the tradition of philosophical analysis, not because few analyses have been successfully completed but because, when the concepts are interesting, they cannot be” (emphasis added). Since he is trained in this tradition, he takes pains immediately to explain what he means, to clarify the operative meaning of his pivotal expression: “philosophical analysis is the programme that attempts to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a concept like ‘knowledge’ or ‘truth’ or [most relevant to the study he is introducing] ‘work of art.’”. Sharpe is fully aware of the likely reaction to his avowed disenchantment: “For many philosophers, conceptual analysis is their raison d’être and to challenge it is to challenge something deeply lodged within their philosophical ideology” (cf. Colapietro). But he also makes explicit where he stands as a philosopher: “To reject the programme of analysis is not to object to the tradition of analytic philosophy. This book [Philosophy of Music] is in that tradition. I am interested in positions that can be stated clearly and defended by argument” (Sharpe, 2004, 7). What he goes on
to say is also worthy of our attention: “Ideally, I want to know what the world must be like if a philosophical claim is to be true. Otherwise, I do not think philosophy is an intellectual discipline and [if it is not such a discipline] there is no reason to practice it” (Ibid, 7-8). To repeat, Sharpe wants to know what the world must be like for a philosophical claim to be true.

Allow me to say that a philosopher trained in the pragmatist, phenomenological, hermeneutic, or other traditions is likely to suppose there is something odd (perhaps exceedingly odd) in Sharpe’s insistence regarding what the world must be like (“Ideally, I want to know what the world must be like if a philosophical claim is to be true”). Is not our task to determine what philosophical utterances must sound like if our experience of the world is accorded its full weight and disruptive disclosures? What form and character must philosophical claims be like if the world is what it discloses itself to be in our experience or (for those who incline in the opposite direction of the empiricist orientation) to our Reason?

In any event, part of the practical significance of Sharpe’s continuing identification with the analytic tradition is his ability to dismiss out of hand, apparently in good philosophical conscience, the work of not only Arthur Schopenhauer but also Susanne K. Langer (Ibid, 8): “This [identification] means,” he informs us, “that the ideas of some writers on music find no place here, writers such as Arthur Schopenhauer and Susanne Langer.” He tarries a moment to confess that he cannot make sense out of Schopenhauer’s claim that music is the image of the will itself, but does not deign to say another word why the work of Langer is, from an analytic perspective, so woefully deficient as to merit wholesale neglect. It is actually hard for me to imagine why an analytically trained philosopher would not find Langer, who took such exquisite care to define terms and to marshal evidence, a kindred spirit.

Very quickly, allow me to touch upon the other example. Chapter One of Bilrami’s SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND RESENTMENT opens with a confession of its own: “A philosopher … often fondly hopes, but in all likelihood vainly, that some non-philosophers might also read his book.” But, perhaps given his title, the author wants to avoid misleading the non-philosophers among his readers: Should such readers take up this book, “I must warn against disappointing two natural expectations they might have.” “First is the expectation that a book about self-knowledge will be about knowledge of something we call a ‘self.’” If this is the expectation of a reader, that individual will be disappointed. For the exclusive focus of this painstaking study is rather “our own states of mind,” narrowly considered (that is, only the more “canonical” states of mind, namely beliefs and desires, “not the entire range of intentional states”). “Second, there is bound to be the expectation that a book on the subject of self-knowledge of our intentional states of mind will focus on particularly interesting states of mind …” (Bilrami, 2006, 1). If this is the expectation of a reader, however, that individual will again be disappointed. In his defense, Akeel Bilgrami stresses, “there are often very interesting reasons for why we must sometimes spend a lot of time on the uninteresting aspects of a subject. A good deal of philosophy is defined by this mildly paradoxical method” (Ibid, 2; emphasis added). We take inherently interesting questions and, as a result of the methods deployed to address
these questions, we transform them into humanly uninteresting questions (at least, ones very few outside of philosophy have much patience with or interest in). Indeed, cultivated interest in seemingly uninteresting (at least, commonplace) phenomena seems to be integral to this and, indeed, other styles of philosophizing (cf. Peirce). This is not altogether inappropriate or unjustifiable, given the insights to be obtained from painstaking consideration of what are, properly understood, as preliminary matters. This however approaches the paradoxical, if not the absurd, when undeniable ingenuity is exhibited in defending what all sane persons would never dream of denying, of reclaiming what only the mad have lost (cf. Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*) – that there is a world, that there are minds other than my own, that you and I effectively know countless things. Puzzling about such puzzles can be illuminating, but the insights derived from our engagement with such insights should then be used to probe more deeply substantial questions possessing undeniable human salience.

So, for me at least, the question is not the one posed by Sharpe (What must the world be like if philosophical questions are to be true?). It is rather: What must philosophy be – better, what might philosophy sound like if it is a response to the interesting features of our actual world, as these features are disclosed in our encounters with the world? One presumes that it would be like the definitive intonations of such singular voices as Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Thomas, Descartes and Vico, Locke and Leibniz, Kant and Hegel, Davidson and Cavell, James and Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger, Searle and Derrida. It would also sound like Sharpe and Bilgrami. These two authors are not only ingenious and subtle; they are also insightful and, indeed, interesting. What makes them so is that they (especially Sharpe) have given themselves over to their subject matter, immersed themselves in the concrete particulars of human experience (cf. Hegel).

I quoted above Sharpe’s observation that to question the analytic approach is “to challenge something deeply lodged within … [the] philosophical ideology” (emphasis added) of individuals trained in this particular tradition. This seems to me just right, perhaps expressed more fully than he realized. One of the best characterizations of ideology with which I am familiar is the one offered by David McLellan at the conclusion of his monograph on this topic: *Ideology*

... is best viewed not as a separate system of signs and symbols that could ever be contrasted with – and eventually replaced by – another [system], e.g., science of some sort. Ideology is rather an aspect of every system of signs and symbols in so far as they are implicated in an asymmetrical distribution of power and resources. And of which system is this not the case? (McLellan, 1986, 83).

If this is true (and I take it to be so), then philosophical discourse inevitably possesses an ideological aspect. It is caught up in trivial and momentous, obvious and covert, ways in the operations of power at various levels, not least of all the disciplinary and more locally institutional levels (also the immediately interpersonal level). In a sense, the focus of my concern in this essay is the reasonable, fair, and humane exercise of power within the discourse of philosophy, how we as self-conscious

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participants in an ongoing endeavor must be not only attuned to the ideological aspects of our own discourse but also attentive to the political fallout of our distinctive modes of philosophical engagement (cf. Bernstein 1991).

In another sense, however, the focus of my concern is what I announced at the outset – method. Since my concern is with the pedagogical as well as philosophical implications of our fixation on method, it is inseparable from my concern with ideology. Philosophy has been, as much as anything else, a quest for a method whereby we would be able to resolve rationally the disagreements and conflicts that define the history of this discipline or discourse. Whether these disagreements and conflicts are internal to philosophy or whether they are symptomatic of broader and deeper cultural impasses is itself a matter of philosophical dispute (cf. Dewey LW 1, 186). On the one hand, there are those of us who devote ourselves to strictly philosophical questions that might be of no interest to anyone but philosophers or, more likely, a subset of intellectuals trained in the severe discipline of a more or less insular tradition of philosophical reflection. It is not untoward to mention in this connection those questions which would never have occurred to us had we not read this or that philosopher (“I do not think the world or the sciences would ever have suggested to me,” G. E. Moore confesses in “An Autobiography,” “any philosophical problems. What has suggested philosophical problems to me is the things which other philosophers have said about the world or the sciences”). On the other hand, there returns, time and again, the hope among some of us that there is a significant overlap between humanly significant questions and philosophically interesting ones.

In A Pluralistic Universe, William James asserts: “In a subject like philosophy it is really fatal to lose connexion with the open air of human nature, and to think in terms of shop-tradition only” (James, 1977, 13). “Such are the rules of the professorial game – they think and write from each other and for each other and to each other. With the exclusion of the open air all true perspective gets lost, extremes and oddities count as much as sanities, and command the same attention, and if by chance anyone writes popularly and about results only, with his mind directly focused on the subject,” that author is almost certainly going to be condemned for being “literary.”

But James is to some extent part of the problem as well as a resource for reframing our understanding of philosophy. Philosophical professionalism, like all other forms, “can go to abusive extremes. The end is after all more than the way, in most human things, and forms and methods may easily frustrate their own purpose” (Ibid, 12)

Though he originally introduced pragmatism simply and modestly in the form of a maxim, even Peirce came to characterize pragmatism as a method. In doing so, he (like James) was unwittingly revealing the extent to which the pragmatist revolt against the Cartesian position was a family quarrel. In a letter to his close friend and, in some respects, philosophical ally James, Peirce once wrote in a letter (March 9, 1877):

Much of the dispute is generated by contrasting visions of human reason, ranging from strict logical necessity to much “looser” conceptions of the appropriate or effective forms of rational resolution.
18  THE TYRANNY OF METHOD

1909): “The only thing I have ever striven to do in philosophy has been to analyze sundry concepts with exactitude; and to do this it is necessary to use terms with strict scientific precision.” He however bemoaned the way words tended to be used by philosophers, not least of all, his correspondent along with a thinker with whom James at the time had become enthralled. “But that being my only claim to consideration [to have analyzed sundry concepts with exactitude and, in that service, to have used philosophical terms with precision], and it being a deeper conviction with me that philosophy is either a science or is balderdash, and that a man who seeks to use the terms of his science without anxious care to use them with strict accuracy, it is not very grateful [gratifying] to my feelings to be classed along with a Bergson who seems to be doing his prettiest to muddle all distinctions” (Perry, 1935, 438). James’ compliment is, in short, taken by Peirce to be an insult, for reasons Peirce apparently feels that James should have realized. Lest there be any doubt about the matter, Peirce emphatically writes: “For my part, I think philosophy is, or ought to be, an exact science, and not a kaleidoscopic dream” (ibid.). In a late, important statement of his position, vis-à-vis James, Schiller, and others who have identified themselves with the movement tracing its origin to his earlier essays, Peirce insists: “pragmatism is, in itself, no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts” (CP 5.464). He comes shortly to qualify this characterization: pragmatism is “a method of ascertaining the meanings, not of all ideas, but only of what I call ‘intellectual concepts,’ that is to say, of those [concepts] upon the structure of which, arguments concerning objective facts may hinge” (CP 5.467).

In “What Pragmatism Means,” James himself introduces pragmatism, first, as a method and, only thereafter, as a theory of truth in a sense involving only a special application of the pragmatic method to a traditional philosophical question. “The pragmatic method is,” he insists, “primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that would otherwise be interminable” (James, 1907, p. 28).

Richard J. Bernstein slyly observes: “Most contemporary philosophers have been in revolt against the Cartesian framework. Descartes is frequently called the father of modern philosophy. If we are to judge by philosophy during the past hundred years, this title can best be understood in a Freudian sense. It is a common characteristic of many contemporary philosophers [as indeed it was a decisive tendency of even early modern ones] that they have sought to overthrow and dethrone the father” (Bernstein, 1971, 5).

Descartes, Kant, Peirce, Husserl, and countless other philosophers are scandalized by the sheer fact of philosophical disagreement and, in response, they propose a method by which these disagreements would be rationally resolved or, in some instances, dissolved. The impulse to institute the method by which philosophical controversies might be, once and for all, resolved is a strong one, even (especially) when it steals into the walls of the city under the cloak of anarchy (when it presents itself as anti-method or the rejection of methodism altogether).

Philosophy is indisputably a tangle of traditions in which a fixation on method has threatened to become, with the ascendancy of any single tradition, a form of tyranny. Monarchs do not have to be beheaded, regicide is not requisite, at least if

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those who are in control of the realm cede what is after all a fantastic, unsustainable claim – exclusive possession of legitimate authority. Disciplinary self-knowledge thus demands historical self-interrogation. This does not reduce philosophy to its history though the various attempts to do so (most notably, Hegel’s) can be extremely illuminating to those who reject this reduction. It does make familiarity with the history of philosophy integral to the practice of philosophy. So, I am disposed to answer Quine’s quip with Smith’s smite. Willard von Orman Quine famously quipped: people go into philosophy for one of two reasons – some are interested in the history of philosophy and some in philosophy. John E. Smith pointedly observed that every philosopher is preoccupied with the history of their discipline, although this preoccupation extends in some cases beyond the last two issues of the journals Mind or The Journal of Philosophy. What then am I practically recommending to my colleagues but above all to students here and elsewhere? An historical approach in which (among other topics) the perennial fixation on philosophical method is both historically contextualized and critically assessed. Such an approach does not beg the question of whether this or that method is superior, or the question whether the quest for a method is always an unfortunate abridgment of philosophical imagination. What such an approach does insure is that no tradition will have, in advance of inquiry, an unearned presumption in favor of its methodological superiority. Moreover, it insinuates a genuine doubt (rather than a merely paper one) that the fixation on instituting a method is as innocent or unobjectionable as it appears. While the aims of inquiry might be antecedently defined (that is, the aims of inquiry are set in advance of undertaking the task itself), the aims of query might emerge in the course of the endeavor itself. The necessity of holding open the question of the meaning of an endeavor – of refusing to presume too hastily or confidently that we have in advance of engaging in the endeavor itself an adequate understanding of its innermost character – would seem to be a necessity especially congenial to the philosophical mind. Not only philosophy but also psychoanalysis and education illustrate this point. Can we in a psychoanalytic exchange work toward deconstructing our impoverished and impoverishing certainties regarding what is normal or healthy, thereby allowing for unimagined (apart from such deconstruction, unimaginable) possibilities to seduce us? Can we make the task of education to be, in part, an effective interrogation of the defining goals of that process itself? Can we suspend even just provisionally our presumption to know what we, as philosophers, are about? Can we engage in the task of philosophizing itself without the assurance of knowing in advance of engagement whither we are going or, even more radically, what we are doing? If we cannot provisionally suspend this presumption, what does that say about us as philosophers?

For me, the operative term is, hence, tradition, not method (cf. Feyerabend). Since many of the most important philosophical traditions define themselves in terms of methodological innovations, and since I take such methodological self-understanding to be of undeniable significance, I do not suppose that it is permissible (much less wise) to ignore either the question of method or the centrality of this question as it actually took hold in the most important traditions of philosophical discourse. Even so, Husserl no less than Wittgenstein, Peirce no less than Carnap,
James no less than Gadamer, have more to teach us than method. The paths they have traveled are still ones affording us views of stunning vistas and, in all likelihood, opening onto to still undiscovered byways. Moreover, their manner of keeping records of their sojourns over the land of thought (cf. Wittgenstein) are in most instances immensely instructive still. To alter the metaphor somewhat, their cartographical innovations are even more valuable than their detailed maps of what, until their explorations, were uncharted terrain. Even so, their insights are not reducible to either their first-order methods or (as Peirce was fond of saying) their method of methods, that is, their method for devising and refining methods. They reveal as much as anything else that genius is indispensable, imagination is vital, and any method can compensate for mediocrity only to a very modest degree.

Conclusion: To return to a question posed above, what would philosophical utterances sound like if they are articulated as responses to the humanly interesting features of our actual world, as these features our disclosed in our encounters with the world (cf. Cavell)? Because of the various impulses and interests animating philosophers, they would sound quite different from the dismissive intonations of such a large segment of professional philosophers. I very much doubt that the tone of ridicule would be nearly as audible as it tends to be in our professional discourses, especially when the rhetoric of ridicule is in the service of banishment. They might sound childlike, on occasion even childish, but the harshly punitive intonations of condemnation and dismissal would likely be less audible in philosophy discourse.

The study of philosophy should reveal itself as a multifarious discourse in some of the luminous shapes it has actually assumed in our tangled histories and, in addition, this study should reveal the shapes of these histories, above all, as aids in carrying forward the work of philosophy. In this regard, philosophy is more like history and literature than science, though I do not want to draw too sharp a distinction between scientific investigations and humanistic pursuits (Isaiah Berlin). History and historiography have histories as do natural languages and the diverse literatures rooted in these diverse languages. Just as an historian who is ignorant of Herodotus and Thucydides would be suspect, so to a philosopher who had no more or less intimate acquaintance with Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and Spinoza, Locke and Hume, Kant and Hegel, Peirce and James, Wittgenstein and Quine, Heidegger and Sartre. James with his characteristic eloquence writes:

Philosophy is a queer pursuit, reckoned, as it sometimes is, to be the most sublime, and sometimes to be the most trivial, of human preoccupations. … Be it trivial or sublime, philosophy is as indestructible a human function as art is. Men always have attempted and always will attempt to make their minds dwell in a more reasonable world, just as they always have sought and always will seek to make their cities and their homes more beautiful. The thinker philosophizes as the lover loves. Even were the consequences not only useless, but hurtful, he must obey his impulse … (Perry, 1935, 378)

This impulse is, as James seems to imply here, often obsessional. It can be ennobling even if it is in its origin or operation less than inherently noble, for this impulse can
prompt us, time and again, to question our presumptions to know, in a word, our knowingness. Indeed, nothing undermines our efforts to know more effectively than our knowingness.

The impulse to excommunicate some rival whom we are unwilling even to recognize as such is bound up with the confidence of having hit upon a method by which to distinguish truth from error, meaning from nonsense, even philosophy from sophistry or balderdash or, of course, bullshit. While Descartes has contributed greatly to buttressing such confidence, Vico has (long before Nietzsche and Foucault) painstakingly constructed genealogies wherein such claims regarding method are seen in a distinctively human light. There is certainly no small irony in the fact that Vico himself (much like Peirce several centuries later) was engaged in crafting an anti-Cartesian method, but a method nonetheless. Even so, he saw in Descartes a tyrant who would free us from the burden of having to read the ancients: he described such self-avowed freedom as self-inflicted slavery.

Allow me, then, to conclude with yet another example of a contemporary philosopher whom I tend to admire for his clarity and rigor. In a review of an English translation of Martin Heidegger’s *Beiträge* (“Enquiring”) in *The New Republic*, October 30, 2000, 43–48), Simon Blackburn draws an invidious distinction between analytic and Continental philosophy. He observes:

> Analytic philosophy is sometimes contrasted unfavorably with ‘Continental’ philosophy, because of its supposed lack of political and moral weight. … What I think is true is that analytical philosophy is profoundly mistrustful of sustaining myths, including the primal story. We resist the pipes of Pan, because we care about truth. (Blackburn, 2000, 48)

He goes on to assert: “The love of truth above fog is a commitment that anybody who deserves to be called a philosopher has to make …” I recall this implicit narrative regarding contemporary philosophy principally for two reasons. First, I want to propose that this is just that—a story with a rather comically (or crudely) conceived *dramatis personae* (those who love truth versus those who love fog). Second, I want to insinuate a doubt. Can it be the case that anyone who offers such a manifestly polemical narration of contemporary philosophy (and does so without any apparent self-consciousness or sense of the possibility of ironic implication in self-obfuscating discourse) has resisted the pipes of Pan, has truly avoiding the subtle seductions of a sustaining myth? Whatever my doubts are regarding Cartesian doubt, I have no doubt about the salutary effects of a tempered skepticism. Frankfurt’s attempt to draw a categorically sharp distinction between bullshit and its opposites almost inevitably boomerang (as his concluding paragraph virtually acknowledges), suggesting that, as a historical actor implicated in a complex drama, the best he can offer are revisable and situated judgments regarding the status of another’s claims or arguments. By leveling the charge against others, he opens himself eventually to being the target of his own charge. The extent to which he can evade the charge is a matter to be ascertained by critical attention to the salient details, not by the purity of self-ascribed intentions or motives. Likewise, Blackburn’s polemical account of
contemporary philosophy inevitably exposes itself to the charge of being a sustaining myth perpetuated by a certain segment of predominantly Anglophone philosophers (cf. Magee). Certainly, the self-ascription of the purest motives to us, and the ascription of base ones to them, ought in itself to engender suspicion.

One does not need a method to guard oneself against the possibility of such self-deception. Indeed, the presumption of having in one’s possession a singularly effective method or simply having been trained in a uniquely self-critical manner (having been the beneficiary of a method or tradition in itself sufficient to protect oneself from accrediting bullshit or dancing to the pipes of Pan) – this very presumption – renders us especially prone to such self-deception.

Anti-traditionalism is, as we have already noted, itself a tradition, though one which as effectively disguised its character and status as such, especially to its own champions. The methodological dust in their eyes appears to preclude them from seeing the traditional character of their defining commitments. The more vociferous forms of philosophical denunciation, especially ones castigating others for perpetuating fog, are themselves, more often than not, instances of obfuscation. The most sincere analysis of bullshit might fail, lapsing, in some respects, into its own unsuspected insincerity. A historical approach to philosophical questions would – at least, might – help us see this. It might also alert us to the virtual inevitability of turning this approach itself into another example of the tyranny of method. There is, in the end, no place outside of the swamp of history (also the sweep of history), wherein as often as not we extricate one foot from the devouring muck only to have the other one sink deeper into the bog (cf. James 1979, 127). Despite this inescapable condition, we manage – however haltingly and imperfectly – to clarify somewhat the meaning of our terms, to construct telling arguments, to counter seemingly devastating counterexamples, to construct disclosive narratives, and to accomplish much else. Historical actors caught up in unfolding dramas are hardly ever simply unwitting dupes. While much happens behind their backs, not everything does. Indeed, their very competencies and excellences are more than anything what tends to land such actors in perplexing and perilous predicaments. In time, their successes tend to be more perilous and perplexing than their failures and frustrations. Retracing their steps – reconstructing the series of entangled actions and events by which they have been thrust into such predicaments – can prove to be a way of going on, in some case even a way of going forward. It is a path we ineluctably are invited to travel. As such, it tempts us to elevate just this way of proceeding into the method of philosophizing. However strong this compulsion, however seductive this temptation, they are best resisted – deconstructed, clarified, interrogated, re-narrated, and confronted by the resources available to us from a variety of traditions.

Given what Frankfurt argues at the conclusion of On Bullshit, it might be that it must fail, that is, a reasonable interpretation of his painstaking analysis is that protestations regarding our own sincerity our always suspect, perhaps the treatment of this topic necessarily (to some degree) an unwitting exemplification of it.
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THE PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY OF CHINESE THOUGHT

Kwong-loi Shun

Abstract: Instead of directly addressing the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy, the paper starts by considering the point of raising such a question, and proposes that the point can be captured by a different question about whether the philosophical study of Chinese thought is possible. It elaborates on what it is to engage in the philosophical study of Chinese thought, using the study of Confucian ethics in relation to contemporary Anglo-American philosophy as an example. It argues that the philosophical study of Chinese thought is indeed possible. This can be taken to imply an affirmative answer to the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy, but not in the sense that Chinese thinkers of the past engage in an activity that can be described as 'philosophy'. Instead, it means that we ourselves can engage in an intellectual activity that is akin to philosophy as it is practiced nowadays, in relation to a subject matter that engages the interest of both contemporary philosophers and past Chinese thinkers, and approaching the subject matter in a way that is guided primarily by the insights of past Chinese thinkers on the subject.

I. The Philosophical Study of Chinese Thought

A QUESTION that has occupied scholars of Chinese thought for the past several decades is whether Chinese thought can be described as “philosophy” or, put more directly, whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy. The question has been discussed in both English and Chinese language publications; in the latter case, it is framed in terms of the expression zhe xue, a by now standard translation of the English word “philosophy”. Just in the past decade, the question continues to be debated in English language publications, while in China, numerous articles have been published on the issue of the “legitimacy of Chinese philosophy”. Different positions result from different takes on the use of the word “philosophy” or its Chinese equivalent zhe xue. Some defend an affirmative and some a negative answer to the question based on their different understandings of the term; some advocate redefining the term while some even question the value of the practice of philosophy.

1 This article has previously been published in News and Views: The Journal of the International Academy for Philosophy, 3:1-2 (2011). I am grateful to its editor and to the editor of this journal for agreement to this publication arrangement.


3 See Carine Defoort, “Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy? Arguments of an Implicit Debate,” 51 (2001): 393-413, for a delineation of these different positions.
While this debate has helped highlight some distinctive features of Chinese thought, the focus on the term “philosophy” or its Chinese equivalent tends also to divert attention away from the kinds of concern that motivated the question in the first place. In this paper, I will sidestep the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy, and instead attend directly to the possible concerns that might have motivated this question. Once we have addressed these concerns, how we understand the term “philosophy” and whether we describe Chinese thought as “philosophy” loses its significance as an independent question.

There are at least three kinds of concerns that might have motivated the question. The first has to do with institutional considerations, namely, the place of Chinese thought in relation to philosophy as it has been institutionalized in the contemporary educational and professional context. We have philosophy departments in present day universities, including Chinese universities which use the equivalent Chinese term zhexue to label these departments, and we also have philosophy curricula at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as introductory courses on philosophy for the student body at large. Should Chinese thought have a presence in these departments, curricula, and courses? We also have professional organizations such as the American Philosophical Association as well as numerous journals devoted to philosophy as it is practiced nowadays. Should Chinese thought have a presence in such journals and in conferences hosted by such organizations? These questions have to do with how the study of Chinese thought fits into the institutionalized environment surrounding the contemporary practice of philosophy.

The second kind of concern has to do with intellectual considerations, and is about how the study of Chinese thought relates to the discipline of philosophy. This is related to, but not identical with, the first kind of concern. Independently of whether Chinese thought has a presence in the kind of institutionalized contexts described earlier, can the study of Chinese thought relate and contribute in some appropriate way to the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays? I have deliberately added the qualification “in some appropriate way”, as the study of many other disciplines also relate and contribute to the study of philosophy in some way, such as literature and theology. But the interest behind the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy is an interest in seeing whether there is a relation of some more intimate kind between the study of Chinese thought and the contemporary practice of philosophy. I will say more about the nature of this relation in the last section of this paper.

The third kind of concern has to do with considerations of relevance, and is about how the study of Chinese thought bears on our present day interests, concerns, and experiences. Both within an institutionalized setting, such as the way philosophy major requirements are structured, and in the field of philosophy as such, we often find, at least in the Anglo-American context, a distinction between the study of the history of philosophy and the study of philosophy as such, where the latter is conceived in terms of a study of philosophical topics of direct contemporary relevance. Partly because Chinese thought has evolved through a commentarial process, with later thinkers commenting and elaborating on ideas of earlier thinkers, the study of Chinese thought has largely taken the form of a study of historical
figures. The question then arises as to how, if at all, the study of Chinese thought relates to the present. If we work with the distinction between the history of philosophy and philosophy as such, the question can be phrased as one about whether the study of Chinese thought is of philosophical or purely historical interest. Thus, part of the concern behind the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy is about whether the study of Chinese thought can have a contemporary relevance.

The three kinds of concern just described are related. If the study of Chinese thought can be conducted in a way that relates in some appropriate way to philosophy as it is practiced nowadays and that brings out its contemporary relevance, this would make a strong case for its presence in the kind of institutionalized contexts we described earlier. Since these institutionalized contexts should ideally reflect the way we conceive of the discipline of philosophy as an intellectual pursuit, how we address the first kind of concern should depend on how we address the other two kinds of concern, especially the second. For this reason, I will not discuss the first kind of concern directly and will instead focus my attention on the other two kinds of concern.

Suppose we say that the philosophical study of Chinese thought has to do with studying Chinese thought in a way that relates in some appropriate way to philosophy as it is practiced nowadays and that brings out its contemporary relevance. The concerns that motivate the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy can then be addressed by considering the question whether the philosophical study of Chinese thought is possible, and if so, how. Addressing this question does not depend on our first addressing the question how the term “philosophy” is or should be used. Instead, it depends on whether we can come up with an account of how we may approach the study of Chinese thought, in a way that relates in some appropriate way to the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays. And this question is not about whether the Chinese thinkers whose ideas provide our objects of study themselves engaged in intellectual activities of a kind akin to the present day practice of philosophy. Instead, independently of the kind of intellectual activities they themselves engage in, the question is whether we ourselves can approach their thinking in a way that has this kind of relation to present day philosophical practices.

Before addressing this question, let us consider the term “Chinese thought” which I have used with the assumption that its use is not subject to the same kind of controversies that surround the use of the term “Chinese philosophy”. The use of the term does make some assumptions, but of a much less controversial nature. It is generally acknowledged that, in the history of China, there is a body of texts containing ideas with a certain degree of cohesion and intelligibility that make them worth studying in their own right. When speaking of the study of Chinese thought, I am referring to the study of these ideas, with the assumption that these texts do contain ideas with these characteristics. These texts, and the ideas they contain, can be approached in different ways by different disciplines, and the philosophical study of Chinese thought, characterized in the manner just described, is one of such approaches. These texts and ideas can be the object of textual studies whose focus is
on analyzing the texts with the goal of approximating the ideas that are recorded in the texts. And they can also be studied as part of intellectual history, with focus on the way the relevant ideas evolved against the social and political background as well as the intellectual climate of the relevant historical periods. Textual and historical studies both focus on the past, seeking to approximate the ideas contained in the past texts and to understand the way they evolved during the relevant historical periods. By contrast, the philosophical study of Chinese thought focuses more on the present. While taking the ideas from the past as its starting point, it approaches them in a way that links up with the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays and that draws out their contemporary relevance. To the extent that this kind of intellectual activity is rooted in the ideas of the past, the philosophical study of Chinese thought is dependent on textual and historical studies.

In moving beyond textual and historical studies to the philosophical study of Chinese thought, we need to address two kinds of potential tension between the different goals that guide such study. Seeing how these two potential tensions can be addressed will help us better understand what is involved in the philosophical study of Chinese thought. The first potential tension is that between seeking to understand the thinkers and texts of the past and the attempt to make them relevant to the present. On the one hand, though the interest in the philosophical study of Chinese thought is directed more to the present, we still want to base our study on an accurate understanding of the ideas of the past thinkers, and so would want to approximate as much as possible their ideas as recorded in the past texts. On the other hand, our interest is also in the present, and we seek to make these ideas intelligible and relevant to us in our present circumstances. But these two goals, which point in different directions, do not always sit well together. If spelt out in their fine details, the ideas of the past thinkers will inevitably contain elements that no longer appeal and might not even be fully intelligible to us. Even those elements that seem more intelligible and appealing could be, for these past thinkers, inextricably bound up with the other elements, and our abstracting the former in separation from the latter already involves a departure from the perspectives of these thinkers. Thus, it would appear that of these two tasks, that of approximating ideas in the past and that of making them relevant to the present, our taking on one might come at the expense of the other.

The second potential tension is that between trying to do justice to the distinctive features of Chinese traditions of thought and relating them to other philosophical traditions that have evolved relatively independent of Chinese traditions. In seeking to approach Chinese thought in a way that relates in some appropriate way to the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays, we will inevitably be relating our study to other philosophical traditions represented in present philosophical practices. In the process of building the linkage to these other philosophical traditions, there is the danger that we would be viewing Chinese traditions of thought through the conceptual apparatus of these other traditions, thereby distorting our understanding of the former or at least leading us to miss some of their distinctive features. On the other hand, if we stay close to Chinese traditions of thought as they are, without regard to other philosophical traditions, this might undermine our goal of relating Chinese traditions of thought to contemporary philosophical practices.
In what follows, I will describe an approach that seeks to mitigate the two kinds of tension just described. In doing so, I also hope to illustrate a way in which the philosophical study of Chinese thought might be possible. My own interest in the philosophical study of Chinese thought is in studying Confucian ethical thought in a way that links up with work in contemporary Anglo-American moral philosophy and with our own contemporary ethical concerns and experiences. To make the discussion more concrete, I will focus specifically on this kind of study in my discussion.

II. The Past and the Present

The first potential tension is between approximating the ideas of past thinkers and making these ideas intelligible and relevant to us nowadays. These two goals point in potentially opposed directions – the more we do with these past ideas to make them intelligible and relevant to the present, the further we will potentially be removed from the perspectives of the past thinkers. Thus, there is a potential risk in combining these two goals in a single project – we might be led to impose on past thinkers our own present perspectives if we do not clearly distinguish between these goals. To minimize this risk, what we can do is to separate the two goals by undertaking them in separate stages.

In my own study of Confucian thought, I have adopted this approach, and the following is a summary of the methodological approach I have presented in earlier publications. On this approach, there is a distinction between three tasks in the study of Chinese thought. First, we can engage in textual analysis, which seeks to approximate the ideas recorded in past texts and the perspectives of past thinkers whose ideas are recorded in these texts. To accomplish this goal, we work with evidence which includes linguistic, textual and historical considerations. Admittedly, the available evidence might be limited and often we cannot arrive at definitive conclusions about the past ideas we seek to approximate. Furthermore, we will inevitably be working from our contemporary perspective and in a contemporary language, and so it is not possible to completely free ourselves of the influence of the present. Nevertheless, though we inevitably view the past from a present perspective, there is still a distinction between facts about the past and our present perspective. By working with present evidence, we can make conscious efforts to minimize the influence of our present perspective on our understanding of the past, thereby enabling us to approximate these past ideas. And though the available evidence might be limited, that there is evidence of this kind at least gives us reason to expect a significant degree of convergence in the conclusions we draw about these past ideas. What textual analysis assumes is not that we can somehow transcend our present perspective in viewing the past, only that there is evidence we can work with which enables us to minimize the influence of our present perspective in the attempt to approximate the past ideas.

The task of textual analysis involves a mentality that is directed maximally to the past and minimally to the present. By contrast, the task of reconstruction involves a mentality that is directed maximally to the present and minimally to the past. In reconstruction, we take some insights from the past texts as a starting point, and build a reflective account on their basis that links up with the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays and that also relates to our present concerns and experiences. This is what constitutes the philosophical study of Chinese thought, and it depends on textual analysis for the understanding of past ideas that it takes as its starting point. Unlike textual analysis, the focus of reconstruction is on the present – we seek to build a reflective account that we, from our present perspective, regard as appealing. It also differs in that it works not with the kind of linguistic, textual and historical evidence that textual analysis works with, but with other criteria of assessment, such as whether our account meets the criteria of excellence that characterize the kind of philosophical practice (such as the Anglo-American philosophical tradition) that we are working with and whether it helps address our present day concerns and make sense of our experiences. Accordingly, there is little reason to expect the same degree of convergence in our conclusions that we would expect from textual analysis, though there is a limit to divergence in our conclusions as the insights in the relevant texts that reconstruction takes as its starting point provide some parameters within which we work.

Reconstruction takes as its starting point certain insights of early Chinese thinkers, but how do we arrive at these insights? Let us consider the study of Confucian thought in an attempt to bring out its contemporary relevance. In speaking of the insights of the Confucian thinkers, we are referring to their ideas that have significance not just for their own ethical concerns and experiences, but also for ours – it is the latter linkage that makes their ideas insights for us. Textual analysis by itself seeks only to approximate the ideas of the early thinkers, but does not assess the contemporary significance of these ideas. On the other hand, reconstruction assumes that we have already identified ideas of the Confucian thinkers that indeed have contemporary significance. Thus, neither activity is directed to identifying those past ideas that indeed have contemporary significance; to do so, we need a third kind of activity that involves our moving back and forth between the past and the present in an attempt to assess the contemporary significance of past ideas. We start with a certain idea extracted from a past text through textual analysis that initially appears relevant to our own present concerns and experiences. We think through its potential contemporary implications, and then go back to the past text to see if the way we make sense of this initial idea fits in with other ideas in the text, again extracted through textual analysis. To the extent it does, we again take up these other ideas and think through their potential contemporary implications. We continue to move back and forth between the past ideas and our own contemporary concerns and experiences in this manner and, through this process, identify those past ideas that indeed have contemporary significance. This process, which I have referred to as articulation in past writings, helps to bridge the transition from textual analysis to reconstruction. In articulation, though we try to make sense of the past texts in a way that engages our own present concerns and experiences, we seek to do so in a way that is largely
consistent with the past texts; in this way, articulation differs from reconstruction. At the same time, because of the attempt at linkage with our present concerns and experiences, the way we read the texts often go in various ways beyond the texts and might not be definitively supported by the textual evidence; in this way, articulation also differs from textual analysis. Instead of directing attention maximally to the past or to the present, articulation involves an imaginative interplay between the past and the present.

By proceeding in phases from textual analysis to articulation and then to reconstruction, we address the first potential tension by separating the goals that can potentially point in opposed directions. I have myself engaged in a multi-volume study of Confucian thought that proceeds roughly in this fashion, to ensure that the different goals do not impinge on one another. However, it is important to note that this distinction between the three tasks is not a clear cut distinction; rather, it is a distinction between three kinds of mentality that merge into each other. The difference is more a matter of degrees: the degree of linkage to the past texts decreases and the degree to which our present perspective shapes the outcome increases as we move from textual analysis to articulation and then to reconstruction. Furthermore, although I have spoken of the potential risk in combining the different goals, and have sought to minimize such risk by separating these goals, it is possible to combine the different goals in a single project without incurring such risk as long as one is sufficiently self-reflective. Indeed, it is common in the literature to find all three tasks being represented to some extent in a single project, with one’s intellectual focus shifting back and forth along the spectrum just described. This is not by itself problematic, as long as one is self-conscious about which task one is undertaking at which point in the overall project. Thus, my claim is not that the three tasks must be conducted separately; only that they can in principle be separated, that it is important to be self-conscious about which task one is undertaking at any one point, and that it is important to be able to separate them if needed. In addition, my claim is not that any scholar interested in the philosophical study of Chinese thought must undertake all three tasks. There has been excellent work in the philosophical study of Chinese thought conducted by scholars who rely on the textual scholarship of others without themselves engaging in textual analysis. My claim is not that each scholar must individually undertake all these different tasks in the philosophical study of Chinese thought, only that we collectively need to undertake all these tasks, starting with the more textual studies and eventually moving on to the more philosophical explorations.

The first two volumes are devoted to textual studies, focusing respectively on early and on later Confucian thought. The third volume discusses methodological issues related to the transition from textual studies to philosophical explorations, and the fourth volume engages in a primarily philosophical discussion of Confucian moral psychology.
III. Bridging Traditions

The second potential tension in the philosophical study of Chinese thought is that between grasping the distinctive features of Chinese traditions of thought and establishing a linkage to other, especially western, traditions. In working toward the second goal, we run the risk of losing sight of what is distinctive of Chinese traditions or even distorting our understanding of them by viewing them through the lens of western philosophical frameworks. Such risk is particularly heightened in works that seek to bridge traditions by making certain western philosophical frameworks the guiding theme, inquiring into how Chinese traditions of thought fit into such frameworks. The approach described in the previous section to some extent addresses this potential tension – by proceeding in phases from textual analysis to articulation and then to reconstruction, we can relegate the goal of understanding Chinese traditions of thought to textual analysis, which does not yet involve the linkage to other traditions. Still, when we do get to the point of establishing a linkage to western philosophical traditions, the reference to western philosophical concepts and frameworks is inevitable and does generate the potential risk just described.

Examples of the appeal to western philosophical concepts and frameworks in the attempt to bridge traditions are common in the literature. We find, for example, discussions of whether Confucian ethical thought has a conception of rights or works with a notion of self and autonomy, and whether it is a form of virtue ethics. To address the potential tension, we can approach the reference to such western philosophical concepts and frameworks in a way similar to the one adopted in this paper toward the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy. Instead of directly addressing the question formulated in this manner, which inevitably leads to a focus on the use of the term “philosophy”, what I have done is to distance myself from this terminological focus by attending not directly to this question, but to the kinds of concern that might have motivated the question in the first place. Similarly, instead of focusing on the western philosophical terms that might be invoked in our attempt to bridge traditions, such as “rights”, “self”, “autonomy”, and “virtue ethics”, what we can do is to attend directly to the kinds of concern that lie behind the use of such terms, and then consider the Confucian perspective in this connection. Often, the use of a western philosophical term is associated with a certain range of phenomena that engage the interest and attention of the philosophical tradition to which it belongs. Instead of focusing on the term as such, we can focus on the phenomena with which it is associated, and probe the Confucian perspective on such phenomena. To illustrate this approach, I will draw on an example from my recent writings, having to do with the subject of anger.\(^6\)

Let us consider a certain view on anger, resentment, and forgiveness found in recent Anglo-American philosophical discussions. On this view, anger can take two different forms, indignation and resentment, which refer respectively to anger from a

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third and from a first personal perspective. Resentment, as a first personal response to inappropriate treatment of oneself, shows that one takes one’s rights and entitlements seriously, and in that sense is protective of self-respect. Resentment leads to a breach in the relationship between the offender and oneself as the victim, and forgiveness is the foreswearing of resentment, thereby helping to restore the relationship. It is good to be forgiving, but just as a failure to respond with resentment to injuries to oneself shows a lack of self-respect, forgiving too easily also shows insufficient self-respect. Discussions of such a view highlight a range of phenomena that engage the interest and attention of certain contemporary Anglo-American philosophers, and if we can describe such phenomena in a way that does not carry substantive western philosophical presuppositions, we can then probe the Confucian perspective on the related phenomena.

Suppose we characterize anger broadly in terms of responses to situations that one regards as unacceptable or inappropriate, where such responses engage one’s emotions and often move one to act to correct the situation. So characterized, the notion anger is sufficiently broad to enable us to speak of the Confucian perspective on anger, even though the Chinese terms used to describe related phenomena have connotations and conceptual connections different from their English counterparts. Resentment, by contrast, is a special form that anger takes when one has been treated inappropriately. What is special is not that I might respond with greater emotional intensity and feel a greater urgency to act in response to the situation. Such differences have to do more with a differential response based on the different relationships I have with the victim of the treatment, whether the victim is me or someone close to me. Rather, what is special about resentment is that, aside from any differential response when the victim is myself, there is an additional thought about the attitude of the offender, to the effect that the offender is targeting me and is treating me with disrespect. As a result, I am moved to correct not just the tangible injury but also such an attitude, which has led to a breach in my relation to the offender.

Now, the Confucians do acknowledge that this kind of response is a common human response to inappropriate treatment of oneself, and there are Chinese terms close in connotations to the English term “resentment”. What is distinctive of their perspective is that they advocate a shift away from this kind of response, even though they endorse differential responses based on the different relations in which one stands to the victim. Instead of focusing on ourselves as the victims targeted by the offender, we should focus on the situation as an ethically problematic situation. And instead of focusing on countering the attitude of the offender, we should focus on the ethical quality of our responses to the situation. 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, but by

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changing the way we view the situation thereby enabling such responses to dissipate. Thus, 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.

The above is just a brief summary of a discussion of the subject that I have undertaken elsewhere, but it illustrates the approach I mentioned earlier about how to establish a linkage to western philosophical traditions without incurring the risk of losing sight of what is distinctive of Chinese traditions. Reference to western philosophical concepts and frameworks is useful as it helps draw our attention to certain phenomena that western philosophical traditions are concerned with and to their perspectives on such phenomena. This in turn helps direct our attention to the way the Confucians view related phenomena, and by setting the Confucian perspective against western perspectives, it also helps bring into focus the distinctive features of the Confucian perspective. At the same time, it is important to avoid being overly focused on the terms and concepts that are used to present the western perspective, thereby losing sight of what is distinctive of the Confucian view. To minimize such risk, we can first describe the relevant phenomena in more ordinary terms, shifting attention away from western philosophical terms and their associated presuppositions. We can then probe the Confucian perspective on the related phenomena, free from the influence of such presuppositions. On this approach, the appeal to western philosophical terms and concepts plays primarily a catalytic role, and their use is ultimately dispensable once we have grasped the substantive phenomena associated with their use.\(^8\)

IV. Concluding Remarks

We started our discussion with the often discussed question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy. To avoid being overly focused on the terminological issues surrounding the use of the word “philosophy”, I proposed to attend instead to the kinds of concerns that might have motivated the question in the first place. At least three kinds of concerns might have motivated the question: institutional considerations, intellectual considerations, and considerations of relevance. These have to do respectively with the three questions: how the study of Chinese thought fits into the way philosophy has been institutionalized in educational and professional contexts, how it links up with the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays, and how it relates to our contemporary concerns and experiences. Addressing the first question depends on addressing the other two questions, and so I have focused on the latter two questions in the way I characterized the philosophical study of Chinese thought. Namely, it is an approach to Chinese thought that relates in some appropriate way to the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays and that brings out its

\(^8\) For another example of this approach, see my discussion of how to approach the notions of self and of rights in relation to Confucian thought, in “Concept of the Person in Early Confucian Thought,” David B. Wong & Kwong-loi Shun, ed., Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy and Community (Cambridge University Press, 2004): 183-199.
The question we started with, whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy, is now replaced with the question whether the philosophical study of Chinese thought is possible.

I then introduced the example of anger to illustrate a way of conducting the philosophical study of Chinese thought, showing how we can approach the Confucian view on anger in a way that relates to the contemporary practice of philosophy and that brings out its contemporary relevance. The example, which I have dealt with in much greater detail in other publications, illustrates the more specific nature of the relation to the contemporary practice of philosophy I have in mind. Namely, the philosophical study of Chinese thought can take as its subject matter a topic that engages the interest of both a Chinese tradition of thought and the contemporary philosophical practice that we are working with, and approach it in a way that is both inspired by ideas from the Chinese tradition and guided by the criteria of excellence that characterize the contemporary philosophical practice. There can, of course, be other ways of viewing that relation, but doing so in this way establishes a linkage between the institutional considerations and the other two kinds of considerations. If Chinese thought can be studied in a manner that meets the criteria of excellence pertaining to philosophy as it is practiced nowadays, and in relation to subject matters that also engage the attention of contemporary philosophers, this would provide a strong reason for such study to have a presence in the kinds of institutionalized contexts described at the beginning of this paper.

This approach to Chinese thought faces two potential tensions, one between approximating ideas of past thinkers and making such ideas relevant to the present, and the other between grasping the distinctive features of traditional Chinese thought and establishing a linkage between Chinese and other, especially western, traditions. To resolve the first potential tension, I proposed that we start by focusing on textual studies, bracketing our own contemporary perspectives and avoiding the use of western philosophical frameworks as much as possible. Having approximated the ideas and perspectives of past Chinese thinkers through such studies, we can then shift our attention to probing the outcome of the textual studies to see which of these past ideas might have potential significance for us nowadays. Finally, having obtained a sense of which of these past ideas can potentially enrich our understanding of our own present experiences, we can then use these insights of past thinkers as a starting point to build a reflective account that meets the criteria of excellence that pertain to the contemporary philosophical practice that we are working with. By separating the goals of approximating the past ideas and of relating such ideas to the present, this approach addresses the first potential tension.

To address the second potential tension, we need to be able to bring into our discussion the concepts and frameworks from other, especially western, traditions of thought without allowing them to constrain or even distort our understanding of Chinese traditions. For this purpose, I proposed that we first determine the range of phenomena that is the focus of the use of these western philosophical concepts and frameworks, and try to describe these phenomena in ordinary terms that do not carry substantive western philosophical presuppositions. Having done so, we can then attend to such phenomena directly and examine the Chinese perspective on them,
without being vulnerable to the potentially constraining or distorting effects of the western concepts and frameworks.

Given the limited scope of this paper, I was only able to present in very brief detail an example to illustrate this approach; I have provided a more detailed discussion of the subject elsewhere, and will continue to elaborate further in forthcoming work. The point of the example is to show that the philosophical study of Chinese thought, as characterized in this paper, is a possible activity. If it is possible to engage in the philosophical study of Chinese thought, this will provide a sense in which the initial question we started with, whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy, can be answered in the affirmative. But this affirmative answer does not depend on our addressing the terminological issues surrounding the use of the term “philosophy”. Instead, it depends on our actually conducting a study that illustrates how we can study Chinese thought in a way that relates in an appropriate way to the discipline of philosophy as it is practiced nowadays, and that also links up with our own contemporary concerns and experiences.

Indeed, if we consider the possibility of a philosophical study of Chinese thought to provide an affirmative answer to the question whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy, we would understand the term “Chinese philosophy” in a way quite different from the way it is usually understood. Namely, to affirm that there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy is not to say that the Chinese thinkers of the past engaged in an activity that can be described as “philosophy”; our discussion is not directed to and so is neutral on this question. Instead, it is to say that we ourselves can engage in an intellectual activity that is akin to philosophy as it is practiced nowadays, in relation to a subject matter that engages the interest of both contemporary philosophers and past Chinese thinkers, and approaching the subject matter in a way that is guided primarily by the insights of past Chinese thinkers on the subject. That is, what we have done is to transform the question from one about whether past Chinese thinkers engage in the practice of philosophy, to one about whether we ourselves can engage in the practice of philosophy as it is understood nowadays, in a way that is clearly inspired by the insights of past Chinese thinkers. Our ability to do so would give a strong reason for Chinese philosophy, so understood, to have a presence in the institutionalized contexts, both educational and professional, surrounding the discipline of philosophy.

References


9The third volume of my four volume project, tentatively titled From Philology to Philosophy, will be devoted to illustrating the methodological approach described in this paper using anger and other related phenomena as an example.

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Abstract: Three recent thinkers, Arthur Danto, David Gress and Ricardo Duchesne, have proposed philosophies of cultural history that emphasize the importance of narrative, canon and Grand Narrative. An examination of their views will suggest that contrary to the postmodernist announcement of its death, Grand Narrative is very much alive. In this paper I propose a conception of Grand Narrative that accepts key postmodern criticisms but can still function in the ways Metanarratives traditionally function. The result is a defensible conception of Grand Narrative that is limited in its claims and purpose yet provides the organizing structure that traditional Grand Narratives have provided.

Introduction

In 1984 Francois Lyotard published his famous postmodernist manifesto, The *Postmodern Condition*. In that work he announced the end of the Grand Narrative, and since that time the postmodernist position is one that while it may not be dominant, is certainly widely held. While it is true that there is widespread skepticism that any particular Grand Narrative can function in the traditional fashion, providing an unequivocal foundation for a way of living, this has not stopped scholars from producing and defending Grand Narratives. Three individuals, David Gress, Arthur Danto and Ricardo Duchesne, go against the prevailing trend away from Grand Narrative. All three thinkers address the use of narrative, interpretive analysis and canonicity. If the canon of great works and the ideas in them have had significant effects on world history, then these works and ideas merit special consideration in education. The canon of great works is becoming ever more neglected in education, so this paper can be read as an attempt to push back against this trend.

In this paper I argue for a more subtle conception of narrative in our understanding of world history. I will argue that this review of the arguments of Collins, Danto, Gress and Duchesne suggests a new narrative approach, namely “multinarrativism.” Multinarrativism is the view that there can be more than one metanarrative and that it is a good thing that there is more than one. That there are many competing metanarratives is not controversial; what may be more controversial is the claim that they can co-exist conceptually. While a secular European metanarrative of the rise of the West based on certain early advantages is not compatible with a post-colonial argument that the rise of the West was due to the plunder of the non-West, the two narratives have produced increasingly more sophisticated versions of each other. Not only can they co-exist, the interplay of all the competing metanarratives is the best thing that could have happened. Metanarratives fail when the conversation stops. Metanarratives are organizing principles applied to a changing historical landscape. The on-going interpretation of...
the landscape is a necessary condition of living in one. Any interpretation becomes a narrative the clearer it becomes.

The most “meta” of the metanarratives is, of course, the philosophy of history. The philosophy of history, however, is in a problematic state. The early substantive or metaphysical efforts about the course or shape of history gave way to a positivistic focus by Analytic philosophy of history on epistemological issues, which, in turn fell from grace (Danto, 1995). Both the metaphysical and epistemological approaches seemed to have run aground. At the same time, the historical profession became rather more interested in the rise of the West, the core issue that interested the early substantive philosophers of history. The historical profession, however, addresses the issue empirically. Nevertheless, it is very interesting to note the return to Hegelianism in both Danto and Duchesne.

Hegel’s philosophy of history has few defenders in the history profession, but the issue at the core of his theory, the rise of the West, is now securely within the domain of professional historians, particularly economic historians, and historical sociologists, and they have produced their own interpretations of the rise of the West. Besides Hegel, the other great philosopher of the rise of the West is Max Weber, whose monumental work on comparative civilization with its analysis of the Protestant Work Ethic was the definitive explanation of the rise of the West until the more recent rejection of his views. Max Weber’s theory of history allocated a prominent role to culture and ideas in his explanation of the rise of capitalism. Most of the important arguments in recent years over the rise of the West, however, have been in economic history. The thrust of much recent work is that Weber’s theory on the basis that it has been refuted empirically. Weber’s theory has been under a withering attack from economic history for several years, but it has always had its defenders. This paper discusses the work of a recent defender of Weber, Ricardo Duchesne, who not only makes a spirited defense of Weber, but also offers his own theory, which makes ample use of narrative explanation. If we look at Duchesne’s narrativism in the light of the arguments of Danto and Gress we can construct a more sophisticated approach to Grand Narratives and the idea of the West.

I. Danto: After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History

Danto’s case is interesting because it comes from someone originally opposed to substantive philosophy of history. It was only when he turned his attention to the “end of art” thesis that he felt constrained to propose a substantive philosophy of history, at least in the area of art. The End of Art thesis might be understood as a subset of the general “End of History” thesis that is popular nowadays with the publication of Fukuyama’s book on the subject. Although Danto gets his version of the end of history from the same source, Hegel, Danto’s and Fukuyama’s “ends” are of different types. In fact, the end of history and of art are oddly incongruous. While the end of history, according to Fukuyama, is marked by an intellectual convergence with the triumph of liberal democracy and market capitalism, the end of art, according to Danto, is marked by a conceptual divergence, with no particular art styles or
movements ascendant. However, in both cases, the claim is that the historical argument is over.

Danto draws on Marx’s rather than Fukuyama’s idea of the end of history, and so remarks that “In both conditions—the end of history and the end of art—there is a state of freedom in two senses of the term. Human beings, in Marx and Engel’s picture, are free to be what they want to be, and they are free from a certain historical agony which mandates that at any given stage there is an inauthentic and an authentic mode of being, the former pointing to the future and the latter to the past. And artists, at the end of art, are similarly free to be what they want to be—are free to be anything or even to be everything, as with certain artists...who have rejected a certain ideal of purity” (Danto, 1997 45).

Danto does not say that the end of art means the production of art will stop. There will be art after the end of art just as there was art before the advent of art, as Hans Belting argues. What will not be the case is that any art style will be “mandated by history.” There will be no sense that the “next big thing” will be a logical outgrowth of our previous understanding of art. Art is now divorced from aesthetics. Art need not defend itself in terms of a metanarrative. Art movements during the era of art define what counts as art and what is ruled out of the category for being historically irrelevant. Modernist artists are always on the lookout for the “true art.” The era of art was the era of the manifesto proclaiming the next historical stage in art history. It was the era of the artistic Grand Narrative that puts the history of art into context with a postulated end point from which we are to judge true art from its faulty predecessors. In this way was the academic painting of the late nineteenth century admired for its technique but ultimately ruled out of court for not being part of the dialectic of the era of art. The academic painter Bougeureau was therefore a heretic against the advance of history, outside the “pale of history” as Danto puts it, and for that he was disqualified.

The end of art that comes with the rise of postmodernism, the view that we no longer believe in metanarratives and that they are thus inefficual, means that art must be understood independently of any metanarrative. At this point in time all styles are available for the artist’s use, but they will not have the same meaning. Any cubist work created now would not be a cubist work in a historical sense; it would be a post-art comment on that era of art. All art is now ironic.

The most striking aspect of Danto’s book is its reconsideration of the viability of substantive philosophy of history. Danto writes, “But in my first serious philosophical work, Analytical Philosophy of History, I argued that it was certain claims about the future which render what I there termed substantive philosophies of history illegitimate...Well, I must say that I am inclined today to take a more charitable view of substantive philosophies of history today than I would have done in 1965, when my book was written in the late stages of high positivism. But that is because it has seemed more and more plausible to me that there are objective historical structures—objective in the sense that, to use the example I just cited, there was no objective possibility that the works of which Motherwell’s Gauloises collages later resembled could have fit into the historical structure to which those works of Motherwell...

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belonged, and no way in which the latter could have fit into the historical structures defined by pop. (Danto, 1997 43)

This is an astonishing admission, and in my view, is the clearest indication of a sea-change in scholars’ attitude to metanarratives. The emphasis on historical structures is a welcome one, and Danto’s presentation of them is largely on the mark:

The earlier historical structure defined a closed range of possibilities from which the possibilities of the latter structure were excluded. So it is as if the former structure were replaced by the latter structure—as if a range of possibilities opened up for which there had been no room in the earlier structure, and hence, again, as if there were a kind of discontinuity between the two structures, a discontinuity sufficiently abrupt that someone living through the change from one to the other might feel that a world—in our case the art world—had come to an end and another one begun (Danto, 1997 43-44).

In his attempt to postulate an end to art Danto, reviews his conception of the history of art and then notes its similarity to Hegel’s framework for political history:

The master narrative of the history of art—in the West but by the end not in the West alone—is that there is an era of imitation, followed by an era of ideology, followed by our post-historical era in which, with qualification, anything goes…It is quite striking that this tripartite periodization corresponds, almost uncannily, to Hegel’s stupendous political narrative in which, first only one was free, then only some were free, then, finally, in his own era, everyone was free (Danto, 1997 47).

This analogy between his own theory and that of Hegel’s philosophy of history is intriguing. Does this mean that after all the positivist era did to destroy the philosophy of history we now see the return of substantive philosophy of history? It is interesting that Danto felt compelled to give this testament of support to Hegel’s most controversial work. When we get to Duchesne we will see that Hegel is a major influence on him as well. Danto’s work (at least his philosophical work) is clearly narrativist. In fact it is metanarrativist. To posit an end to history or art is clearly to operate in a narrativist framework of stories with beginnings, middles and ends, and to posit a theory of the whole history art pretty much makes it a metanarrative. However, Danto jettisons the metanarrative in our own post-art era. So Danto is a metanarrativist who claims that metanarrative no longer functions to animate, guide or legitimate art. That is not as contradictory as it sounds. Danto’s theory of art history as a whole can legitimately argue for a metanarrative while denying the applicability of metanarratives to the practice and criticism of art. Apparently living in a postmodern age that has lost faith in metanarratives does not prevent him from engaging in metanarrative.

The reason for Danto’s use of metanarrative in the postmodern era of skepticism toward metanarrative lies in why I call the “narrative imperative.” There is a deep-seated need to narrate our world, to make sense of it. Human beings organize their lives, even their selves, by constructing stories. History is the attempt to construct plausible stories describing and explaining the past. Acting in the world requires an
account of the world. Since we live in history, according to Ricouer (1990), Carr (1991) and Olafson (1979), we have no choice but to engage in narration or borrow existing narratives. Even postmodern art refers to narratives even though they are “little narratives”—narratives that situate the art, rather than full-blown metanarratives. But Danto also concedes that all the previous metanarratives are still in play and can be drawn upon by artists who wish to provide a context for their art. We now live in an “multinarrative” context according to Danto. However, Danto would deny that the metanarrative is functioning in the same way it functioned in Modernism. A metanarrative may supply “signposts” for understanding the artwork, but it cannot legitimate the artwork historically the way, say, Impressionism was legitimated historically by Modernist aesthetics because art history is complete. So although Danto argues in favor of the postmodernist understanding that art must now eschew legitimation in terms of Grand Narratives, he is still committed to an overall metanarrative to explain the history of art. But the multinarrativism of the postmodern era is not really new. Metanarratives are always sites of argument. All metanarratives are in constant argument with different interpretations of a given metanarrative, and they are also in conflict with competing metanarratives. The Christian metanarrative, for example, conflicts with the metanarrative of secular science as well as with different versions of the Christian narrative or the narratives of other religions. In fact, a narrative of the West that neglects these conflicts is a serious oversimplification of the history of the West. So while it is true that postmodernism brings with it a skepticism toward metanarratives, it also continues all the metanarrative arguments, at least in quotation marks. Thus Danto’s *End of Art* thus marks a return to metanarrative.

One further point about Danto’s metanarrative is in order. Several criticisms of Danto’s work (Carrier, 1998, and Steinbrenner, 1998, for example) have contested his metanarrative of art, particularly the primary claim that the era of art is over. In contesting Danto’s claim they are implicitly offering alternative metanarratives. These contradictory narratives have been in dialogue ever since, and it is the contest between these narratives that constitutes the multinarrative of art. The multinarrative’s claims are more limited than traditional metanarratives. The is no claim to any final truth or ultimate grounding to our interpretations or our actions. Postmodernism is correct on this point. Instead, we must choose between competing metanarratives, and even then, only provisionally. The great truth of the West is that the truth is always in abeyance. The great strength of the Western multinarrative has been its ability to keep the arguments going and to not stultify into compulsory interpretations dictated by a single master narrative.

Given the rejection of the traditional single metanarrative in art criticism, what place can there be for the canon of great works? Can a canon only function in the context of a single metanarrative? In my view, the notion of the canon is still viable even if we reject the single metanarratives that attested to the greatness of canonical works. We can still appreciate the canon as we open it to new works, even works of art in the post-art era. Modernist critiques of the canon already asked that we be more critical of the existing canon and that it be opened to works and artists previously excluded for whatever reason. This sort of critique did not require postmodernism. In
fact, we still need the canon to understand the history of art, especially the art that was made before the end of art. But we also need the canon to understand the art of the post-art era since these artworks will draw on the canon and the metanarratives of the past to situate their work. There is no view from nowhere after all. Yes, it is true that the canon and metanarratives can no longer legitimate artworks, but they are still necessary for historical understanding. We shall see that Gress and Duchesne also embrace metanarratives, so the three authors may be seen to establish at least a counter-tradition against the complete rejection of metanarrative.

II. Gress: The Idea of the West and Its Opponents

David Gress has written a book that attempts to reinterpret the “idea of the West,” an idea currently under great scrutiny in the culture wars. Rejecting the current understanding of the West, which is universalist, secular and idealist, Gress proposes a more contingent and realist definition that is less hostile to religion and the vicissitudes of power.

The key to the proper view of the West, in Gress’ view, lies in what he calls “the skeptical Enlightenment,” a liberalism that does not reject history, religion or human nature, but seeks the conditions of possibility of liberty and prosperity within those givens and not in abstract rights or visions of justice.” (Gress, 1998 xii) Gress is very clear that “Liberty grew because it served the interests of power” (Gress, 1998 1), not because of any telos of freedom or because of the inherent appeal of liberty. Gress, unlike Duchesne and Danto sees little value in the Hegelian dialectic. Gress argues that “The Grand Narrative,” which “rightly saw liberty as fundamental to the West…” also “mistakenly defined liberty as an abstract, philosophical principle, which it then traced through a series of great books and great ideas divorced from passions and politics back to classical Greece.”(Gress, 1998 1)

Gress argues that liberty is to be understood as a series of practices and institutions that evolved, not from Greece, but from the synthesis of classical, Christian, and Germanic culture that took shape from the fifth to the eighth centuries AD The Western forms of the market, the state, the church, what Gress calls “Christian ethnicity,” were not possible without this synthesis and that this synthesis is the true origin of Western identity. For Gress, “What needs explaining is not liberty as a great idea sailing alongside history from the Greeks to modernity, but liberty as the tool and by-product that ultimately overshadowed its source, establishing the local and partial rights to property, security, and influence on government that enabled economic development and led to popular sovereignty and modern liberal democracy.” (Gress, 1998 2)

According to Gress, there are three great errors of the Grand Narrative’s understanding of the West:

1. The Grand Narrative incorrectly holds to a false dichotomy of abstract ideal of liberty versus messy and immoral history.
2. The Grand Narrative incorrectly upholds Universalism: that liberty and democracy are universally valid.
3. The Grand Narrative falls prey to an “Illusion of newness”: that liberty begins with the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions. (Gress, 1998 1-2)

Gress explains that these three errors show “why the conventional Grand Narrative and its ideology of centrist liberalism were always inadequate as accounts of Western identity and its history.” (Gress, 3) Gress sees the Grand Narrative as resting on what he calls “centrist liberalism” “on a humanitarian belief in social, moral, and economic progress growing out of the use of reason to define and solve problems,” and assumes “further that no problems, whether political, personal, or ethical, were ultimately insoluble.” (Gress, 1998 3) Gress also believes that “the canon of great books was selected to ground and confirm this bland but pleasant teaching.” (Gress, 1998 3)

Oddly enough, Gress’ position puts him in strange company. Gress believes “that the chanting students, the Bernals, and the Sales were right to attack the liberal idea of the West, but for the wrong reasons. The Grand Narrative’s idea of the West fell to history because it forgot history. It was, as the critics maintained, inadequate, but not because it was exclusive, chauvinistic, or politically incorrect. It was inadequate because it defined the West as modernity and its core, liberty, as an abstract principle derived from the Greeks and transported, outside time, to its modern resurrection in the Enlightenment and its twentieth-century liberal American democracy” (Gress, 1998 7).

Instead of the march of Western Reason through history via great books, Gress presents the West as the institutional and political outcome of various critical conflicts and interactions: “of Greece with Rome, of both with Christianity, of all three with the ideal of heroic freedom imported by the Germanic settlers of the former Roman Empire” (Gress, 1998 7). Gress does not trace these interactions in the elevated atmosphere of the great books. Rather, they are played out in a highly destructive atmosphere full of passion and cruelty. Democracy, capitalism and science arise out of the Germanic and Christian synthesis, but the synthesis also yielded “holy wars, black slavery in the New World, religious inquisitions, and economic exploitation.” (Gress, 1998 7)

One of Gress’ most interesting points, but one which is left largely undeveloped is his view that “The West was not a single story, but several stories, most of which neither began with Plato nor ended with Nato.” (Gress, 1998 16). The idea of what I call “multi-narrativism” that I referred to in the section on Danto is applicable here as well. An exploration of the idea of multinarrativism would show that Gress is attacking a straw man. There simply is no single story of the West. Much of the vitality of the West arises precisely from the fact that it is a conversation linking a series of arguments and stories that can be drawn upon as circumstances require. It is a storehouse of intellectual tools embodied in story and argument. This storehouse has served us well through the passion and cruelty that Gress is at pains to emphasize.

Interestingly enough, despite Gress’ criticisms of the great books tradition, Gress’ book is an extended reinterpretation of precisely that tradition, although he does try to fill out the tradition with the story of the role of power in influencing that
tradition. Thus Gress covers exactly the same ground that is generally covered in such courses: Greece, Rome, Christianity, the Germanic invasions, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, liberalism and totalitarianism. One question that must run through the mind of any of Gress’ readers is the question of his antipathy to Greece. He points out that Greece’s liberty was not the same as modern liberty, that its religion was very different, that they had no ethic of compassion, but none of this is a surprise to anyone who teaches the Greeks in Great Books courses. In my view, Gress simply misunderstands the Grand Narrative’s treatment of Greece. No one ever said the Greeks agreed with modern liberalism. Rather, there is a narrative thread running from the Greeks to contemporary U.S. and Europe. There are innumerable differences between Greeks and moderns, but that doesn’t mean the Greeks are not the beginning of a conversation that culminates with the modern West. Gress is thus positing a straw man that is all too easily knocked down.

Gress next turns to the idea of Rome, which he finds central to the formation of the idea of the West. This is in contrast to the Grand Narrative, which supposedly relegates Roman civilization to the status of inferior copy of that of Greece. According to Gress, “Both the idea of the West and that of Europe received their first formulations in the Roman Empire” (Gress, 1998 108). Gress then traces the contributions of Christianity and Germanic civilization to the modern ideas of democracy and capitalism. Gress’ triad of Rome, Christianity and Germany form his notion of the “Old West,” which he feels has been systematically underplayed in the Grand Narrative. The rest of the book traces the mistaken replacement of the “Old West” with the “New West” first articulated by people such as Voltaire and Rousseau. Gress then traces the alterations in the idea of the West as it comes under the influence of liberalism, totalitarianism and even environmentalism. There is much more to Gress’ book, but we have sketched enough of the argument to substantiate my thesis. Gress’ book is a clear example of narrative interpretation, and thus falls easily into my category of new narrative work in the philosophy of history. In my view, however, he misunderstands the nature of the Grand Narrative. It isn’t a compilation of elements added sequentially without alteration. Instead, the Grand Narrative, or better yet, the multinarrative, is a conversation that discusses the issues that are central to the West and now, the whole world. That in turn tells us why the Grand Narrative is still useful. It keeps our students involved in the great conversation over the key issues of concern, old and new. We will see that this is the approach Duchesne makes. He traces the twisting, winding narrative through both Gress’ Old and New Wests.

Gress is seemingly unaware of the changes in the Grand Narrative since its formulation in the early part of the century, nor is he up on how the Grand Narrative is actually taught in great books and history courses. People like Marx, Fanon, and others are very critical of their forerunners in the Grand Narrative, but they have become part of the Grand Narrative themselves. Even original members of the canon such as Plato are now read as much as critics of modern society (he was, after all, a communist) as founders of a tradition. This does not mean the new voices have been co-opted; rather, it means that their voices have been added to the great conversation. Indeed, from the beginning the Grand Narrative has really been more of a chronicle of
a set of arguments than a continuing articulation of an internally consistent idea of the West. To be fair to Gress, there are some who conceive of the Grand Narrative in the way he presents it, but I would argue that this understanding was by no means universal and that it is certainly not the understanding of most people who teach Great Books and Western Civilization.

Next, it should be noted that Gress completely ignores one key aspect of the Grand Narrative: the chronicle of great works and deeds. The Grand Narrative doesn’t just tell us how we got to where we are, it tells us about those works and deeds that we have come to regard as great. In other words, Gress ignores the aesthetic dimension of the Grand Narrative and its function in the teaching of taste. Maybe this is why Gress is so puzzled by the inclusion of Greece in the idea of the West. He doesn’t trace greatness, and so Greece’s greatness is unimportant in the development of the idea of the West.

Finally, Gress makes no mention of the recent trend toward world history and a world canon. Although one might argue that this simply not his chosen subject, to do so would be to ignore a profound change in the teaching and understanding of history and the humanities. For good or ill, we are now living in a global culture. What happens in India, China, the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere matters to Westerners. The reverse is becoming increasingly true as well. This has led to the construction of a world canon and an increase in the interest in world history. It is also reflected in the development of methodological perspectives that look beyond the West, such as World Systems theory, Macrosociology and Comparative Civilization. Indeed, proponents of these views argue that any more narrow perspective is inherently flawed. To give just a few examples, think of the work of Collins (1998), Sanderson (1999), Andre Gunder Frank (1998), and Immanuel Wallerstein (2004).

Gress would respond to such an argument by saying that I am ignoring the crucial function of the Grand Narrative in providing an identity for members of Western Civilization. The Grand Narrative is not simply a story of the West, it is an affirmation of Western identity. Gress’ argument is therefore that we have misunderstood who we are. The response to this line of argument is that Western identity is not static; it is a work in progress. It is also a work of will. We decide who we are and who we will be. It is interesting that more and more we see Western scholars taking pains to avoid the provincialism of Eurocentrism and to the extent they are successful, they are becoming cosmopolitan. More and more people claim to be “citizens of the world.” The internet and communications generally are serving to pull the world together in profoundly important ways. Any philosophy of history ignores this phenomenon at the peril of irrelevance.

III. Duchesne: The Uniqueness of the West

Ricardo Duchesne makes the boldest argument for a Grand Narrative. Duchesne argues that the best explanation for the rise of the West, the broadest question in all of historical study, is a narrative one that traces threads from early Indo-Europeans to the present. The question of why the West modernized and came to dominate Eastern civilizations is one that goes back to Hegel and Weber. The argument is still going.
strong with three new entries into the debate in 2011. Niall Ferguson’s *Civilization: the West and the Rest*, Ian Morris’ *Why the West Rules...For Now* and Ricardo Duchesne’s *The Uniqueness of Western Civilization*, all address the issue of the rise of the West. Duchesne’s argument is the most significant. His treatment is by far the most comprehensive and rigorous. It is also the most ambitious. It is a powerful defense of Weber’s theory of the rise of the West. Duchesne develops the idealist side of Weber without neglecting the recent work in economic history that has been so crucial for our modern understanding of the world wide transition to modernity. Unlike most theorists of world history, he regards high culture more highly than other theorists of the rise of the West. Duchesne’s theory is what Ian Morris calls a “long-term locked-in” theory of the rise of the West, which says that eventual Western dominance was inevitable, as opposed to the “short term accidental” theories of revisionists, who argue that Western dominance reflected short term conditions in the 19th century.

Duchesne believes he can defend the “Long-term locked-in” Weberian argument, and he draws on the full breadth of it, not just the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958). Duchesne utilizes the theoretical refinements of Weber provided by Wolfgang Schluchter (1985), Steven Kahlberg (1994) and Jurgen Habermas (1984), so his Weber is an up-dated Weber. Duchesne is right to point beyond Weber’s *Protestant Work Ethic* (1958) to his comparative studies of religion generally and the significance of the theory of rationalization. Duchesne’s arguments are directed against the prevailing view that Weber’s theory is outdated, too idealist, and falsified by better economic arguments that show that China was not so far behind Western countries until quite recently.

In recent years, the debate over the rise of the West has focused on economic history, with several works devoted to showing that the Weberian account is mistaken. These authors, who we will call the “revisionists,” Andre Gunder Frank (1998), Ken Pomeranz (2000), Bin Wong (1997) and Felipe Fernandez-Armesto (1995), are just a few of the authors who found the Weberian account to be flawed. The general thrust of the arguments was that economic history trumps Weber’s cultural arguments about the rise of the West and favors a reassessment of the state of Chinese economic, cultural and political development. The revisionist argument, or at least one of them, is that China was both more economically developed and scientifically sophisticated than the West for most of history, and that colonialism, historical accident and monumentally bad decisions by the Ming and Qing imperial courts enabled the West to become strong just as China became weak.

Duchesne argues that “accident” theories of the rise of the West miss the most important factors contributing to the rise of the West. Duchesne believes that the key to understanding the rise of the West lies in the particularly active and aggressive Indo-European core of freedom-loving aristocrats whose contentiousness leads to an emphasis on personal liberty in politics and religion, and also leads to an agonistic discourse in intellectual life, which leads to the development of science and the technological breakthroughs that pushed the West materially ahead of the East over time. Duchesne gives his whole narrative a Hegelian cast by arguing that Western intellectual history can be read as a complex story of the battle for recognition.
There is a deep connection between Duchesne’s Hegelianism and his argument for an Indo-European origin of the Western ethos. Duchesne argues that Hegel’s theory of the struggle for recognition is really a story about the Western mind rather than mind generally, and so he needs to show why the West is different from the East in giving rise to the aristocratic mindset that struggles so mightily toward recognition. One might well wonder about how the Indo-European root continued to have such a salutary effect on the West long after these ethnic origins were well-diluted by contact with other cultural influences. To this question he offers a more complex Nietzschean narrative that combines the Dionysian aspect of the Indo-European (IE) mindset with the Apollonian mindset of the Greeks, the legal framework of Rome, the inwardness of Christianity, the Protestant work ethic and periodic renewals of the Indo-European aggressiveness all with a theory of rationalization. For example, to mark the connection between Indo-European aggressiveness to Greek thought, Duchesne writes, “The ultimate basis of Greek civic and cultural life was the aristocratic ethos of individualism and competitive conflict which pervaded IE culture. Ionian literature was far from the world of the berserkers but it was nonetheless just as intensely competitive.” (Duchesne, 2011) Duchesne therefore sees the Indo-European aggressiveness as the source of the agonistic nature of Greek philosophy. He follows the thread of this aggressive through the history of the main contributors of the Western mindset.

Duchesne’s overall narrative is much more compelling than his argument for the continuing influence of Indo-European mindset. It does make sense to follow a narrative line from the Indo-European origins to Greece, to Rome, to Christianity, Protestantism etc in terms of a rationalization process that contains a Hegelian dialect of recognition, but Duchesne invests too much in the Indo-European beginnings of the narrative. I agree that we can trace a narrative line of development from the ancient Greek philosophers to the present that can be understood as a Hegelian dialect of progress. And with Duchesne, I think the Western mindset gave it a clear advantage in developing capitalism. For Duchesne, the Western advantage becomes clear sooner than I would suggest, but in any case, Duchesne and I agree that the advantage of the Western mindset was ultimately that it gives rise to an experimental science that looks for universal laws and a politics of personal liberty and representative institutions. At a certain point the progressiveness of Western science and liberty was bound to make itself felt in material well-being. It was just a matter of when.

Duchesne should have embraced Gress’ synthetic and contingent model of the narrative of the West. Tracing the source of the Western ethos back to Indo-European spiritual restlessness is an extra step he need not have taken. The Western narrative was created over time and subject to historical contingency rather than the result of a locked-in essence in the nature of Western peoples or the working out of the Hegelian dialect of freedom, although the Hegelian dialectic may also be an important part of the story of the West. The brilliance of ancient Greece did not inevitably lead to modern science, liberty and capitalism, and Duchesne realizes this, but he believes he can trace the genesis of all these key elements of the West back to the Indo-European ethos. In my view, Duchesne should have simply embraced the narrative as a whole.
The greatness of the West is no less great because it came about in at least partially contingent fashion. It was the long-term gathering of the ideas and practices that came to define the West that was crucial to its success, not its origins. It is the history of the West as a whole that we should appreciate, not simply its beginnings or its engine.

Duchesne is well aware that his theory is quite idealist. On the other hand, Duchesne would be the first to agree with Gress that the idea of the West and the accompanying Grand Narrative is more complex than a working out of foundational Greek ideas. Roman law and Germanic liberty are both granted their roles in the development of the Western narrative, so Duchesne’s story is one that begins in the Greek mind, moves into the Roman mind, the Medieval Christian mind and becomes definitive for the rise of capitalism with the Protestant mind.

Duchesne situates his argument for Western uniqueness within a defense of Western culture against a multiculturalism that regards the Western canon as just one among several. The two arguments are distinct, and one can be in favor of an increased emphasis on the teaching of non-Western culture, especially Indian and Chinese, as I am, and still believe that the Western canon has unique value crucial to the education of students. The great virtue of Duchesne’s argument is its breadth. Not since Habermas has a thinker mastered so many different academic literatures. This enables him to adequately characterize the rise of the West debate in its entirety. But this is what Duchesne is able to accomplish. Duchesne’s review of the literature in economic history on the rise of the West is especially impressive. He mounts a powerful attack on the argument that China’s economy was merely a victim of temporary weakness. Duchesne shows a strong connection between the ideas of the Western mind, particularly once they manifest themselves in modern science and politics, and Western economic performance. But Duchesne also argues that Western ideas, especially the ideas of objective science, liberty and the rule of law are worthwhile defending in themselves. (Duchesne, unlike Gress, has a deep appreciation for the canon of great works). So even if these ideas had yielded an inferior economic performance, they would still be worth defending. Duchesne, however, thinks that not only are Western ideas good in themselves, they also lead to good economic and political outcomes. Duchesne thus makes an excellent case for both the role of culture in historical explanation in his explanation of the economic and political outcomes that led to the rise of the West and for the teaching of the canon. Duchesne also opens up new lines of research, which is another mark of a good argument. After seeing the Western narrative so ably presented in Hegelian fashion, one is led to consider what comparable Indian and Chinese “Hegelian-esque” narratives one could write to properly create a full-fledged historical comparison.

**Conclusion**

The three works I have discussed show that in spite of the overall dominance of materialist explanation in history, cultural explanation has its defenders. Danto, Gress and Duchesne are not afraid of cultural interpretation that involves metanarratives. Metanarratives will always have a place in the study of history, especially cultural history. It is not surprising that these works have appeared at a time of increased self-
reflection caused by the end of the cold war and of the millennium and the development of a postmodern culture which seemingly resists narrative analysis. Human beings’ quest for identity, understanding and meaning may wane at times, but it will always return, and with their return will come narratives. It is also not surprising that interpretation would show itself to be most necessary in the field of art, an area that tends to draw out its practitioners’ feelings about themselves.

If we look at these thinkers together we arrive at a new conception of the nature and role of narrative and the canon. We should be aware of the need for a world canon. It simply is not adequate to present the Western narrative in isolation from the high culture of the rest of the world. Danto’s embrace of the postmodern in art shows us that we need not commit to any single narrative even within a tradition. In fact, it shows the viability of multinarrativism, the view that we now view events through many lenses at the same time. While this may seem contradictory to the notion of a Grand Narrative, it need not be so. The Grand Narrative of the West has always consisted of several inconsistent threads. The Grand Narrative of the West is an ongoing argument with several factions. The vitality of the Grand Narrative is precisely its agonistic nature. Following Gress, we see the need to be aware of external influences on the canon. The canon is not simply a working through of the logic of ideas. Ideas are subject to all kinds of mundane influences. Duchesne teaches us that parts of the canon are absolutely crucial to understanding the West and that we devalue the canon at our peril. Duchesne also teaches us to look at the Western canon as a long and continuous—if not always self-conscious, set of arguments about the nature of the world and the good life. The value of the elements of the Western narrative is not only their individual greatness; it is their contribution to an ongoing set of arguments and stories that have proven valuable to the success of the West. The West is not just characterized by a belief in individualism, it is also characterized by the argument over the limits of individualism. Notice also that multinarrativism can handle the challenges of the modern feminist, leftist, ecological and other critiques. They are all essential elements of the Western Grand Narrative rather than its opponents. Both the Grand narrative and the Canon are viable if they are understood dialectically, as a set of competing arguments. As a “master” narrative, a single narrative that explains totalities, the history of art or the whole of history, the notion of Grand Narrative is no longer viable, but the dialectical multinarrative I have suggested may be an acceptable alternative and therefore a basis for further research and educational policy. Danto, Gress and Duchesne make a good case for Grand Narratives, and they allow us to see the way toward a new way of using Grand Narrative and the Canon.

References


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Abstract: In this essay I will discuss five major challenges faced by Confucianism in recent times. Two of these challenges have been widely acknowledged, namely those of science and democracy. I believe that Confucianism’s problem with science has been largely solved, even though more constructive work would further strengthen Confucianism in this regard. The problem of democracy is still being dealt with. I will examine three more major challenges. The third major challenge for Confucianism comes from environmentalism. Confucianism has taken note of its important message and has begun to respond to it. The fourth major challenge is the feminist challenge. Even though contemporary Confucianism accepts sexual equality, philosophically significant progress is yet to be made. The final challenge is the challenge of Confucianism’s own survival. After suffering three major assaults in the 20th century, especially the most recent assault by “the glorious cat,” Confucianism needs to find ways to renew itself into the future.

IN THIS ESSAY I will discuss five major challenges faced by Confucianism in recent times. These are not only challenges to Confucianism, but also challenges for Confucianism, in the sense that they do not only raise problems for Confucianism to tackle but also provide opportunities for Confucianism to renew itself. Two of these challenges have been widely acknowledged, namely those of science and democracy. In addition, I will call attention to three more major challenges. I believe that Confucianism’s problem with science has been largely solved, even though more constructive work would further strengthen Confucianism in this regard. The problem of democracy is still being dealt with. The third major challenge for Confucianism comes from environmentalism. Confucianism has taken note of its important message and has begun to respond to that challenge. The fourth major challenge is the feminist challenge. Even though contemporary Confucianism accepts sexual or gender equality, philosophically significant progress is yet to be made. The final challenge, the most serious of all, is the challenge of Confucianism’s own survival. Given its loss of state sponsorship, which guaranteed Confucianism’s continuation over long periods in history, Confucianism must now find new ways to continue into the future. In the following, I will first examine how contemporary Confucian scholars have handled the problem of science; then I will examine the current status of the problem of democracy and will propose a solution to it. Furthermore, I will discuss the problems of environmentalism and feminism related to the survival of Confucianism.¹

¹ There is a vast amount of literature on the subjects covered in this paper. Due to limited space, I will quote contemporary Confucian thinkers only when necessary.
In my view, the problem of science and Confucianism includes two issues. The first has to do with how Confucianism defines the nature of science and articulates its own epistemology of science. The second concerns the value assigned to science in the Confucian value framework. This involves how Confucianism assesses the value of science in its own philosophical system as well as its general attitude toward science. Confucianism has not always looked at science fair-mindedly. To be sure, Confucius was not superstitious, and he stayed away from speculating about superstitious forces (子不語怪力亂神, Analects, 7:20). But his main interest was not the empirical or technical aspects of the natural world. When a student asked him an agricultural question, his reaction was negative. (Analects, 13:4) Among early Confucian thinkers, Xunzi 荀子 (fl. 298-238 BCE) was probably the only one who had a naturalist tendency—a move that could have assigned natural science a larger role in the Confucian philosophical system. Xunzi believed that it is human nature to learn and to conjecture, and that what we learn and know is the principle or nature of things (凡以知人之性也, 可以知物之理也). However, mainstream Confucian thought has concentrated on moralistic worldviews (this is true even with Xunzi). It focuses on moral value as the core of the cosmos and centers human existence within the moral domain. Confucius explicitly defined true knowledge as knowledge about human affairs rather than the natural world (Analects, 12:22). In the Analects, one can hardly find anything on knowledge in the naturalist world. This moralistic attitude was later reflected in the neo-Confucian Zhang Zai’s (张载 1020-1078) formulation of the opposition between “moral knowledge (knowledge of virtue, dexing zhizhi 德性之知)” and “knowledge of the senses (jianwen suozhi 见闻所知).” He asserts that “moral knowledge” cannot grow out of the “knowledge of the senses (dexing suozhi, bumeng yu jianwen 德性所知不萌于见闻).”

Zhu Xi (朱熹 1130-1200) was the second major figure after Xun Zi in the Confucian tradition to attempt to elevate the status of knowledge about the natural world through his interpretation of “gewu zhizhi 格物致知,” an ancient concept found in the “Daxue” chapter of the Confucian classic Liji 礼记. Zhu selected the “Daxue” chapter, along with the chapter of the “Zhongyong,” out of the forty-nine chapters of the Liji, elevating it into one of the prominent “Four Books.” He interpreted “gewu zhizhi” to mean the investigation of the things and the expansion of knowledge. According to Zhu, things in the world have their “li,” reasonable principle, which can be known by examining them. He evidently had a holistic view of the world and saw a direct connection between empirical knowledge of the world and moral knowledge. For him, the ultimate purpose of the “gewu zhizhi” is to improve our moral knowledge. Because Zhu’s notion of “gewu” includes empirical study of the natural

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2 Xun Zi: Jiebi (解蔽).
3 Zhang Zai also believes that knowledge through the senses can contribute to acquiring moral knowledge. But Zhang seems to have kept it to the minimum.
world about us, he at least opened a door to possible scientific knowledge. Presumably, the investigation of things could lead to scientific knowledge of the empirical world.

Unfortunately, Zhu Xi’s approach was quickly reversed by another major Confucian thinker Wang Yangming (王陽明 1472-1529). Zhu was at least partially to blame for this reversal because he saw too direct of a connection between empirical knowledge of the world and moral knowledge. Also, his understanding of the investigation of things was too superficial. Wang initially tried to act on Zhu’s idea of “gewu zhizhi” and attempted to investigate the li from bamboos in his own yard. Wang failed miserably because he could not find any li through diligent observation of the bamboo. He subsequently changed course and claimed that all useful knowledge is to be found within the heart/mind; there is no need to look outside the mind. Wang’s presumption inflated to the extreme the Confucian conviction that a person’s primary mission in life is to develop one’s moral potential. It failed to assign adequate value to the pursuit of knowledge in the natural world. This traditional attitude did not help in enhancing the pursuit of science. While some Daoists’ obsession with searches for immortal substances at least helped indirectly to enhance human knowledge of the natural world; over time the traditional Confucian obsession with the classics, most notably in the form of preparation for the civil service examinations, actually degraded the pursuit of scientific knowledge.

This unflattering attitude toward scientific knowledge about the natural world has changed in recent times, especially since the “May Fourth” movement in 1919. As science started to gain more ground in Chinese society in the early 20th century, Confucian thinkers have tried to preserve the territory of traditional philosophy by separating science and philosophy into two realms. For example, as early as 1905 Liang Qichao (梁启超) writes “the boundary between dao xue (道学 Confucian moral philosophy) and science must be [kept] clear.” (Zheng, 30). During the debate between science and philosophy (“Ke-Xuan Lanzhan” 科玄论战) in the 1920s, defenders of philosophy mostly followed Liang’s approach in order to preserve room for traditional philosophy. Feng Youlan (冯友兰) declared that science itself is neither moral nor immoral. (Feng, 1993, 252) For Feng, although there are moral principles in the universe, the universe itself is not a moral one. That is to say, while there are moral principles in human society, the natural world is neither moral nor immoral. This is a major break from the Song-Ming neo-Confucians, who hold that there is the same moral principle (dao or li) throughout the entire universe. Feng’s move is significant; if the natural world is amoral, scientific research of the natural world would not need to justify itself on the basis of its immediate contribution to moral advancement. Science should be given its own independent status.

It is Mou Zongsan (牟宗三 1909-1995), however, who made the most important contribution in articulating a new Confucian stance on science. Mou’s precepts considerably expanded Confucianism to include scientific knowledge. His contribution is evidenced mostly in his theory of the nature of scientific knowledge. Mou believes that traditional Confucian culture failed to give adequate recognition to the form of knowledge of “zhi xing” (知性 “understanding”). In his Characteristics of
Chinese Culture (中国文化的特质 Zhongguo Wenhua de Tezhi) and other works, Mou argues that in order to embrace both science and democracy, the spirit of Chinese culture needs “to negate itself into” (坎陷 kan xian) the mode of zhi xing. According to Mou, the spirit of Chinese culture is a “synthetic approach to comprehending li (principle/reason)” (综合的尽理之精神 zonghe de jinli zhi jinsheng). It emphasizes comprehensiveness, holism, and thorough connection. Its li is about the moral world (or the moral aspect of the world), not the natural world (or the natural aspect of the world); it is about practice, not cognition or theory. It focuses on the world of value, rather than the world of reality (实然世界 shiran shijie, the factual world). 4 Western culture, as represented by the Greek tradition, focuses on the natural world. Its spirit, according to Mou, is that of an “analytic approach to comprehending li” (分解的尽理之精神 fenjie de jinli zhi jinsheng). It is abstract, unbalanced (or concentrated) and theoretical (conceptual). This spirit is “squared and straight” (方方正正 fangfang zhengzheng), and it defines the world through differentiation (层层限定 cengceng xianding). 5 This spirit is centered on logic, mathematics and science. It focuses on the question of “what-being” and especially values the li of being (1992, 40). Mou believes that this analytical spirit has produced science and Christianity in the West.

Drawing up on this analysis, Mou concludes that, in order to embrace science, Chinese culture needs to (through self-negation) incorporate the mode of “understanding” (zhi xing) into its culture. Whether Mou is accurate on his account of these cultures may be debatable. I believe he is nevertheless right in maintaining that Chinese culture has lacked what he calls the “analytic approach to comprehending li.” Scientific knowledge cannot grow without empirical and analytical approaches. Mou’s philosophy demonstrates a strong influence by the German idealism of the 18th and 19th centuries. German idealism generally divides epistemology into three modes, namely experience, understanding, and reason. Chinese tradition has not valued the mode of experience (experiment) and understanding (i.e., analytical method) enough to encourage these sorts of learning. Instead, it has valued, even overvalued, a synthetic comprehension of rational knowledge of the world and of human affairs.

Mou’s argument on the relationship between the mode of understanding and scientific knowledge makes good sense. In my view, he has produced a good solution to the science problem for Confucianism. However, a fully developed Confucian view of science remains to be clearly articulated. Confucianism needs not only to justify its own existence by securing adequate territories from science; it also needs to develop its own version of a philosophy of science. It needs to articulate the role of science and scientific knowledge in the human journey to moral refinement. On the one hand, Confucianism must recognize that the connection of science to the moral life is not always direct and immediate. To the contrary, for the most part, this connection is indirect and intermediate; science has to maintain its own independence. One the other hand, Confucianism must reserve its right to educate society that the most

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5 Ibid. 39.
important thing is to lead a good life. Science, as well as any other human activity, must serve this ultimate purpose.

II

In comparison with his treatment of the problem of science, Mou’s treatment of democracy is grossly inadequate. He argues that the spirit of the analytical approach to comprehending li has also produced democracy in the West. Democracy, according to Mou, relies on two conditions. Firstly, it pre-supposes external limitations and oppositions to the individual. Secondly, it pursues justice through competition between opposing social classes, and it establishes objective rules and regulations in order to protect individual rights and ensure one’s duty to others. Mou asserts that both conditions are traced back to the Western analytical approach. The first condition for democracy is to recognize external limitations; the second condition is based on an abstract, conceptual attitude toward objects. In a word, Western democracy is established on its analytical spirit or zhi xing (Mou, 1992, 42-3).

Mou’s reasoning on the connection between zhi xing and democracy is speculative and seriously flawed. The analytical mode that Mou finds in the West may enable one to recognize the reality of separate individuals besides one’s own existence; it may reveal one’s external limitations because of these individuals’ separate existence outside of oneself. But this recognition at most puts forth a question about how one should cope with other individuals. It does not provide an answer to such a question. Recognizing the reality of others’ separate existence, one could either attempt to conquer them, or to coexist with them, or to make deals with them, or something else. Democracy is one of many possible answers to the question of how one copes with individuals in society. The analytical approach to the world is typically a logical and hence a linear approach. Democracy is based on plurality instead of singularity; it requires a non-linear approach. Understanding or zhi xing is not adequate in grasping the spirit of democracy. Democracy demands reason and comprehensiveness. Therefore at most, Mou’s solution to the problem of democracy only begins the process of searching for solutions; it is not in itself a solution.

Shu-hsien Liu, a leading contemporary Confucian thinker, evidently has recognized the inadequacy of Mou’s solution to the problem of democracy. Liu has proposed a resolution by reinterpreting the neo-Confucian notion of “one principle with many manifestations” (理一分殊 liyi fenshu). He maintains that the most profound aspect of Chinese culture, including Confucianism, Buddhism or Daoism, lies within its manifestation of the value of “allowing two tracks” (两行 liang xing). “Liang xing” first appears in the Zhuangzi 庄子. Zhuangzi maintains that, from the perspective of the Dao, everything in the world is ultimately the same and can be traced back to the same source. Therefore, the right (是 shi “yes”) and the wrong (否 fou “no”) of a thing are ultimately no different. He concludes that, if one understands the Dao, one will not be obsessed with the right and the wrong of a thing, and will see beyond them letting both tracks proceed. Liu maintains that this traditional interpretation of “liang xing” overemphasizes sameness and neglects difference.
According to Liu’s new interpretation, the two tracks are the “one principle” (li yi) on the one hand and “many manifestations” (fen shu) on the other. Letting both tracks proceed reveals a good balance of these two aspects (Liu (1992), 549). That is to say we need to pursue the all-comprehensive and all-penetrating Dao, and alternatively, we need to recognize that the Dao has many manifestations, and all of them are rooted in the same foundation. The realization that the Dao has various manifestations leaves room for pluralism. Accordingly, one may argue that, for Confucianism, even though there is only one moral ideal of ren (Humanity), it can be manifested in many ways. Therefore, under the same principle, there is room for different opinions and different practices.

Plurality is indispensable to democracy. Liu recognizes the value of plurality within democracy and attempts to open space for plurality within Confucianism. His move is a major step forward from Mou Zongsan. It points in a new direction and provides a new approach to solving the problem of democracy for Confucianism.

However, there are still unanswered questions. As a value system, Confucianism has to answer questions on two levels. The first has to do with whether Confucianism recognizes the legitimacy of the existence of different opinions on an issue. The second has to do with where Confucianism itself stands on various issues of importance. Liu’s contribution is to prepare Confucianism to give a positive answer to the first question. Through the concept of “one principle with many manifestations,” Confucianism is to move away from its traditional obsession with unity (大一统 “da yi tong”) so to allow room for plurality (Liu, 1992, 259). In other words, Confucianism now recognizes the legitimacy of others making un-Confucian claims. However, as a particular value system, Confucianism has to maintain its own stance on what values are important. It has to promote certain prioritizations of values and oppose others. For example, there is a tension between loyalty to one’s country and family on the one hand, and individual autonomy and freedom on the other. Between these two, liberal democratic value systems lean toward the latter, whereas Confucianism has leaned toward the former.

Here there are two pluralistic positions that Confucianism can choose from. The first one is an internal pluralistic position. This is the position that allows various values, including opposing values, to prevail within its value system. In such a way, it not only endorses the one principle of liyi, but also endorses equally its many manifestations as well, as long as these manifestations are considered “good.” The second approach is an external pluralistic approach. On this latter approach, Confucianism endorses the principle of liyi fenshu, but discriminates between various prioritizations of values that are generally considered good, and prioritizes its own core values.

If Confucians are to follow an internal pluralist approach, they would have to emphasize both ends of some contending values. They would have to say, for instance, on the one hand, that loyalty to one’s country and family should be prioritized, and on the other, that individual autonomy and freedom should be prioritized. In reality, this approach amounts to no prioritization. This move would bring Confucianism close to the kind of materialist dialectics that has been popular in
China in the last century. This position may sound good. But it involves a self-contradiction because it endorses both the prioritization of “A” and that of “-A” at the same time. One has to ask, what does Confucianism really stand for? While some contemporary Confucian thinkers attempt to conciliate Confucianism with democracy, they have moved too far from Confucianism’s traditional base. In their attempt to make Confucianism everything (e.g., both for group loyalty and for individual liberty), they have made Confucianism a “no-thing.”

While Confucianism struggles with the first question, it also needs to take the second question seriously. It must not forget what it stands for as a particular value system. A value system disseminates moral values. Namely, it prescribes to its followers whether one should subscribe to a certain value and, if yes, how much importance or priority one should give to it with respect to other values. For example, should one subscribe to the moral value of filial piety or of loyalty or of individual freedom? If there is a tension or conflict between two moral values one subscribes to, how much weight should one give to each? Due to the tension or conflict between these values, assigning more importance to one entails giving less importance to the other or others. Valuing filial piety more entails assigning less room for individual freedom from parents, for example. When one’s duty toward the country and one’s duty toward one’s parents are in conflict, weighing one more implies weighing the other (relatively) less.

In both traditional Confucianism and liberal democracy (as value systems) one can find the value of loyalty and that of individual freedom, the value of unity and that of diversity, the value of individual “rights” and that of one’s social duties, and that of individual autonomy and that of responsible paternalism; but as value systems they configure these values differently. Confucianism assigns more importance than liberal democracy does to the values of loyalty, unity, duties to society, and responsible paternalism. Facing a conflict between these values within each pair mentioned above, Confucianism tends to stand more for the values of loyalty, unity, duty, and responsible paternalism than their counterparts, even though it does not outright reject their counterparts. On the other hand, the value system of liberal democracy tends to stand more for the values of individual freedom, diversity, individual rights, and individual autonomy than Confucianism does.

Because Confucianism and liberal democracy assign differing emphasis to their values, the two will continue to have tensions or even conflicts on some issues. A healthy modern society should have different value systems vying over their audience. The tension between Confucianism and liberal democracy will help maintain a dynamic and energetic society.  

III

6 I have called such attempts “the Mat Vendor’s fallacy.” See Li (2007).
7 For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Li (1999), 163-190.
The third major challenge to Confucianism comes from environmentalism. Environmentalism challenges various world traditions for their lack of adequate concern for the natural environment; it demands that philosophy and religion take seriously the ethical relation of human beings to the natural environment. To be sure, there are rich resources in the Confucian tradition to meet this demand; one can think of ideas regarding the balance of yin and yang, and ideas about the inseparability of humanity from the rest of the world in the Book of Changes 易經 and particularly in Song-Ming neo-Confucianism. It remains nevertheless a fact that mainstream Confucianism in practice has been largely anthropocentric, and to a large extent is at odds with contemporary environmentalism.

Take Confucius’s Analects 论语 for example. Although the Analects does not deal with the environment directly, it contains passages in regard to animals that at least indicate a lack of concern for them, such as one would also find in the Old Testament. For instance, Section 10.12 of the Analects records an instance when Confucius’ horse stall burned down. Upon returning home, Confucius asked if any people were injured. The passage specifically says that Confucius did not ask anything about the horses. This story purports to tell us how humane Confucius was toward people; after all, the horses were his property, and people’s lives were more important. Indeed, if Confucius had been eager to know if his horses (property) were damaged, he would have seemed selfish and inhumane. However, by today’s standards, one may have to say that Confucius did not show enough concern for animals. Why didn’t he ask about the horses after asking about people? In 3:17, his disciple Zi Gong wanted to spare the sacrificial sheep at the monthly ritual. Confucius, with a tone of disapproval, said that while Zi Gong loved the animal, he himself loved the ritual, implying that, for the sake of the integrity of the ritual, the sheep’s life should not be spared. A possible criticism of Confucius here could be that he did not show adequate concern for the lives or the wellbeing of animals, not to mention any concern for non-animate natural objects, even though he was clearly concerned about the quality and integrity of the sacrificial rituals.

Other classic Confucian thinkers have also held an attitude which may be interpreted as detrimental to the environment. For example, Xunzi 荀子 presented a naturalistic interpretation of Heaven (tian 天), making it a totality of all natural phenomena. He advocated that human beings should exert control over the natural environment, and put it for our use (制天命而用之 “controlling tian to serve our purposes”). Xunzi’s idea on nature predates Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in the West by nearly two thousands years. Bacon’s notion of humankind’s overpowering and manipulating nature has exerted a largely negative impact on the environment.

Let me state that we should not use today’s environmental standards to judge people of ancient times. Confucius may or may not have been guilty of these charges. However, the fact remains that the Analects provides nothing or little that can be used
to construct an environmentally friendly philosophy. Unfortunately, over the long history of Confucian influence in China, the influence of the Analects on ordinary people’s daily lives has been much greater than that of other, more philosophical, Confucian classics such as the Book of Changes, the Shang Shu, and even the Zhongyong.

Today the environment poses serious challenges to every world tradition. It can be argued, however, that in comparison with Daoism and Buddhism, the challenge to Confucianism is greater. One fundamental characteristic of Daoism is its doctrine of staying close to nature and following the flow of nature. It can be readily construed to be an environmentally friendly philosophy, regardless of its actual practice in history. One cardinal Buddhist virtue is frugality. Buddhism shares with Daoism the belief in a simple life without promoting accumulation of wealth. While thrifty is a virtue in Confucianism, Confucians also value economic success and family prosperity. This economic orientation itself is not necessarily detrimental to nature, but without adequate consideration to the environment, as has been the case in the past, Confucianism has not been a close friend to nature.

In recent years, Confucian thinkers have attempted to meet the environmental challenge. In an effort to change the anthropocentric image of Confucianism, Tu Weiming has formulated Confucianism to be anthropocosmic and argued that implicit in this Confucian outlook is human beings’ ability to relate empathetically to all modalities of being in the universe. According to Tu, “The action of chün-tzu [jun zi, the morally cultivated person], so conceived, expresses the idea of humans as co-creators of the universe. As a co-creator, the paradigmatic human is an initiator, a participant and a guardian of the universe.” (Tu, 1993, 53). Tu’s approach, if successful, may help Confucianism to meet the environmental challenge. Chung-yi Cheng, another leading Confucian scholar, has attempted to articulate an environmentally friendly philosophy. His 1986 article “On the Environmental Ethics of the Tao and the Ch’i,” is one of the earliest serious works from the perspective of Chinese philosophy in recent decades. In his 1998 article “The Trinity of Cosmology, Ecology, and Ethics in the Confucian Personhood,” based on the relational pattern of the Book of Changes, Cheng articulated a specific Confucian view of the environment. He interprets Confucianism as an “inclusive humanism” and advocates a revival of this kind of relational and processive world outlook as a response to environmental changes.

Tu’s and Cheng’s works draw on one strand of thought within Confucianism. Along this line of thinking, we can find abundant resources in Confucian classics which can be used to produce an “environment-friendly” Confucianism. One can

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8 The Analects, however, records that Confucius exercised restraint with animals. He did not use a net as he fished with a fishing line, and he did not shoot at roosting birds even though he used a corded arrow (7:26).

9 In Tucker and Berthrong (1998), 211-235.

10 In recent years many scholars inside China have done much work in this area of research. Unfortunately, little has been introduced to the West. Tucker and Berthrong (1998) is a notable achievement in the English-speaking world on the study of Confucianism and the environment.
think of such works as the *Book of Changes*, the *Shang Shu* 尚書 (especially the chapter of *Hong Fan* 洪範), and the *Zhongyong* 中庸. For example, the *Zhongyong* states that “if one can fully realize one’s own nature (characteristic tendencies), one can fully realize the natures of other things. If one can fully realize the natures of other things, one can assist the transformation and production between Heaven and Earth; if one can assist the transformation and production between Heaven and Earth, one can form a triad with Heaven and Earth (能盡人之性則能盡物之性，能盡物之性則可以贊天地之化育；可以贊天地之化育則可以與天地參矣 (Section 22, my translation)).” Passages such as this one clearly draw a holistic picture of human beings and the environment, which provides a good basis for moving forward in an environmentally friendly direction.

Today, Confucianism needs to reevaluate its own thinking and come up with a viable account of the relationship between human beings and the environment. But this is not as easy a task as one may think. For example, in certain ways, giving more weight to the natural environment entails taking something away from its traditional humanistic emphasis. Confucianism has to carefully decide how much to preserve, and how to preserve, its humanistic core.

It may be useful to consider where Confucianism stands on the environment vis-à-vis two environmental approaches developed in the West, i.e., conservationism and preservationism. Conservationists hold that only human beings have intrinsic value and the ultimate purpose of protecting the environment is to promote human welfare. Preservationists, on the other hand, hold that, in addition to its instrumental value, nature also has intrinsic value. Even though protecting the environment can benefit human beings, it is not the only reason for environmental protection (des Jardins, 1997, 39). The key difference between conservationism and preservationism is the ultimate purpose of environmental protection. Conservationists hold that the purpose is to protect the environment from human exploitation so that human beings can receive greater long-term benefit from it. The benefit that the non-human world may get from this protection is just a by-product and in addition to the human benefit. Philosophically this view can be justified on the ground of anthropocentrism. Preservationists hold that, in addition to being beneficial to human beings, protecting the environment also benefits the non-human world, which also has intrinsic value. Therefore its benefit to the non-human world is not only an extra but an intrinsic part of environmental protection. This latter view is best justified on the basis of non-anthropocentrism. Today, the preservationist view has grown into a full-fledged holistic environmental philosophy. According to this view, humans are merely a part of the entire ecological system, with no special privileges, and the right or wrong of our action affecting the environment is determined by whether the action tends to promote the overall health and integrity of the ecological system as a whole.

If Confucianism follows and develops the humanistic and anthropocentric aspect of thinking as we found in the *Analects*, it could develop into a conservationist environmental philosophy. In this way, it may share a position on the environment similar to today’s mainstream Christianity, which takes as its duty to protect the environment because it is a gift from God for the ultimate benefit of humanity.
Conversely, if Confucianism follows a non-anthropocentric strand of philosophical thinking as we find in such classics as the Book of Changes, the Shang Shu, and the Zhongyong, it may become a holistic environmental philosophy. However, a Confucian holistic environmental philosophy may not be the same as its counterpart in the West. The Confucian holism as implied in the above-mentioned works includes three key aspects: namely, Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (天地人). “Heaven” here should be understood to mean the universe beyond the earth. As humans extend our capacity to exert impact beyond the earth, this part of the triadic structure should be taken more seriously. On this Confucian triadic conception, while humans are not the center of the world, it is more than just one member in the animal kingdom. In other words, humans are not a mere member of the world community, not a mere member in equal status to other members. At the risk of being taken too literally, I would venture to say that, on this Confucian view, humans weigh about one third in this triadic universe beside Heaven and Earth. Thus, a Confucian holistic environmental philosophy may assign humanity a position in the universe that is considerably higher than is found in the holistic environmental philosophy developed in the West. A Confucian environmental philosophy may be somewhere between the typical conservationist approach and the typical preservationist approach. To be sure, such a philosophy is yet to be further developed or articulated, but I believe that its material can be found within the Confucian tradition.

If Confucianism takes the non-anthropocentric approach and develops a holistic environmental philosophy, it still has another issue to deal with. This is the issue of translating theory into actual practice. Holmes Rolston (1987) made a point by arguing the relevance of a particular worldview to its effect on the environment has not only to do with the way one thinks about nature but, more importantly, the way one acts in relation to nature. This raises an important question, because the primary prescriptive force affecting average people’s daily behavior has traditionally come from the strand of Confucianism represented by the Analects, rather than the strand represented by the Book of Changes. Therefore, even if Confucianism takes the non-anthropocentric approach and draws from such classics as the Book of Changes, it still needs to figure out a way to translate such a worldview into people’s daily practice. While this may not be an insurmountable task, one should not overlook this critical step in a Confucian environmental philosophy. Unfortunately, little attention seems to have been paid to this practical aspect. In order to develop a full-fledged Confucian environmental philosophy, Confucian thinkers have to engage in serious discussion on the issue. Any sensible, viable, and practical Confucian environmental philosophy has to be a result of extensive engagement in a social movement by Confucian thinkers.

IV

The next issue is the feminist challenge to Confucianism. It is no secret that Confucianism carries a huge historical record of sexual discrimination against women. In order for it to move forward, Confucianism has to reshape its position with
respect to women. Contemporary Confucian thinkers have been slow in engaging in feminist/gender issues, even though they usually support sexual equality between men and women. In fact, the very formulation of the first two challenges as merely a “Mr. Science” and a “Mr. Democracy” is already an indication of the lack of sensibility to feminist concerns. A strange phenomenon has persisted: on the one hand feminist scholars have raised critical issues concerning Confucianism, particularly at some conferences of Confucianism, and on the other, few major Confucian thinkers have yet to take active steps to respond to these challenges. It seems that either these thinkers have not taken feminist challenges seriously or they have not taken steps to do in-depth study and to produce new thinking in this regard to fulfill the need. This situation has to change.

One may think that the issue of sexual equality can be resolved as part of the issue of democracy. One may think that, for example, as Confucianism settles with democracy, it will automatically square well with feminism. This belief, however, is unfounded. Democracy may be helpful to the cause of feminism, but it does not automatically achieve equality between men and women. Ancient Athens was a democracy, but in that early democracy women and slaves were mere properties of male citizens. The United States has been a democracy for quite some time. Yet, equality between men and women is still an ongoing and unsettled battle. If one regards Japan as a democracy, one has to recognize that Japanese women socially fare far worse in many aspects than women in some non-democratic or less democratic societies. Democracy does not automatically promote equality between the sexes, and, for Confucianism, the issue of this feminist challenge has to be tackled side by side with that of democracy.

There is also an internal need for Confucianism to articulate its view on women. This is so not only because Confucianism has not treated women well and owes a deep historic debt to women, but also because a philosophical system like Confucianism is incomplete without a clear articulation of equality or inequality between all human beings. Such an articulation would include a number of things. It would need to address the issue of whether Confucian philosophical thinking accords with feminist philosophical thinking in a fundamental way. It would also need to address how Confucianism answers feminist concerns such as sexual equality and other important human ideals. In a 1994 article I argued that Confucian ethical thinking meshes well with at least one strand of contemporary feminist ethical thinking, namely ‘care ethics.’ (Li, 1994). There are three parallels between Confucian ethics and feminist care ethics. First, ren and care, as the highest moral ideals of each ethical system, share some commonality (e.g., tenderness toward others). Second, in contrast with Kantian and utilitarian ethics, both ren and care ethics are not as dependent on general rules. Third, based on their common notion of relational self, both ren and care ethics believe in care/love with gradations, vis-à-vis Kantian ethical universality. Based on these important similarities, one may argue that Confucian philosophy is not inherently opposed to feminist thinking; to the contrary, it has a solid base for making ethical claims consistent with those of feminist ethics and ideals.
To be sure, we should not overemphasize the similarities between Confucian ethics and feminist ethics. Any discussion of their similarities has to be done within the context of their significant differences. Whereas feminist care ethicists specifically have women in mind as they engage in their explorations, Confucian thinkers have not been adequately concerned with women’s issues. Classic Confucian thinkers virtually excluded women from the realm of philosophical exploration; contemporary Confucian thinkers have also largely avoided that subject. Nevertheless, if these similarities as identified above indeed exist, we must not underestimate their significance in today’s world moral philosophy. Joel Kupperman has argued that, in some way, feminism can be seen as a radical form of Confucianism. Both feminism and Confucianism are concerned with such philosophical issues as social roles, rituals, and the formation of or revision of self. But their attitudes toward tradition are quite different. Confucianism pretty much bases itself on tradition, whereas feminism generally opts for reforming tradition (Kupperman, 2000). These issues may be subject to debate. But we also must realize that feminism is more than care ethics. There should be no doubt that more explorations in this area will be beneficial to the cause of Confucianism.

The traditional Confucian view of the two genders has been that of their differentiation (男女有别). It is one of the Confucian “Five Constant Relationships,” namely love between parents and children, appropriateness between rulers and ministers, differentiation between husband and wife, order between the old and the young, and trust between friends. Traditionally differentiation between husband and wife has been interpreted as that of the nei 内 and wai 外, namely the functions internal and external to the household. It means that the husband is responsible for affairs outside home whereas the wife is responsible for affairs inside home. This traditional division of labor may have had justifications in ancient times. The “external” functions of Chinese peasants, who made up the vast majority of the population in ancient times, required a lot of physical strength (farming, taking merchandises to the market, etc.), and were more appropriate for men than for women. For the most part it may have made sense for men to perform these “external” duties and leave women to affairs inside home. Today, the situation has changed considerably. The distinction between internal and external is largely no longer appropriate. Confucians should abandon this distinction and look for something more appropriate.

But should Confucianism abandon differentiation between men and women altogether? It can be argued that some kind of differentiation should still be maintained. The biological fact that women give birth will not change. This fact has implications on the appropriate roles for the two sexes. Caution needs to be taken, though, not to define the differentiation between men and women to the detriment of women, as has been the case with Confucianism in the past.

The issue of sexual equality is not a purely philosophical issue. It also has to do with society at large. Confucianism is not a pure philosophy in the Socratic sense. The broad scope of Confucianism equips this tradition with the capacity to tackle the issue of sexual equality.
The greatest challenge facing Confucianism today is also the ultimate one: whether Confucianism as a living tradition can survive into the future. This may sound alarming, but the issue is real. While Confucianism on its own merit facilitates its social influence and continuity, the fact is that for long periods in history Confucianism was sponsored by the state. In the aftermath of the “hundred blossoming flowers” of the Warring States, the Han dynasty’s policy of “eliminating one hundred schools in order to establish Confucianism” made it possible for Confucianism to come to the forefront of Chinese culture. It is equally true that the second peak of Confucianism, in the name of neo-Confucianism of the Song, Yuan and Ming, was greatly enhanced by the patronage of the state. Now state sponsorship of Confucianism has become virtually nonexistent. Throughout history Confucianism has faced serious challenges to its survival. The battle with Buddhism during the Tang dynasty may have been its first serious battle for survival; Confucianism made it. We have no reason to think that it will not make it again this time. But, the challenge is real and serious. No tradition—none—can take its own survival for granted.

Confucianism has encountered three major assaults in the 20th century. The first assault was the “May Fourth Movement” attack. The second was during the Cultural Revolution. These assaults are widely known and need no further discussion here. The third assault on Confucianism has not been discussed or not even recognized. For the lack of a ready name, I call it the assault by the “glorious cat.” This attack began in the 1980s when two ideas became the dominating ideology in China. One is that “To get rich is glorious (致富光荣).” The other is “Catching mice makes good a cat.” Both ideas have been attributed to Deng Xiaoping. Although there is no conclusive evidence that Deng actually expressed the first idea in these words, there is no doubt that both ideas were key components of his philosophy. Arguably Deng Xiaoping’s philosophy is broader than these two ideas. But these two concepts are undeniably the most influential. Combining these two ideas, we have what may be called the “glorious cat” doctrine. Backed by the government, the doctrine says that the glorious goal in life is to get rich, and that one can use any means possible as long as such a goal is achieved. Such a doctrine is diametrically opposed to the Confucian belief that material wealth should be pursued only with ethical means. While the “glorious cat” doctrine may have contributed to the economic success in the past decades in China, it also undeniably contributed to the recent severe moral deterioration in China. Its assault on Confucianism is not direct and may even not have been intentional. Its consequences are nevertheless the same. While efforts to revive Confucianism have been launched repeatedly in China, mainly in the academic realm, the social environment in the wake of the onslaught by the “glorious cat” has made it particularly challenging for Confucianism to renew itself.

Challenges are often opportunities. A challenge to survival can be an opportunity for renewal. Needless to say, Confucianism’s well-being largely depends on its successful handling of the major challenges discussed above. A tradition that does not
adequately respond to new challenges cannot maintain its healthy existence. There is also an issue of the different ways for Confucianism to continue. The first way is to seek sponsorship again from the state. Post-Marxist China needs its own cultural philosophy. Confucianism is a suitable candidate. State sponsorship would be hard to get if China is to become a liberal democracy. But China may not become a liberal democracy. The Chinese government has in recent years shown only a restrained willingness to support Confucianism. It is conceivable that a moderate non-totalitarian government rallies its people under the banner of Confucianism as its national heritage and spiritual foundation. The second form for Confucianism to revive is to take the form of a religion. There has been debate about whether Confucianism is a religion because it has appeared to be a borderline case on religiosity. In recent years, some Confucian thinkers have advocated Confucianism as a religion. On its positive side, this strategy has helped Confucianism to acquire a seat on the dialogue of world religions and has given Confucianism a platform and visibility on the world stage. It is not clear, however, whether Confucianism can be (or continue to be) a religion in this increasingly secularizing world. Unlike other religions today, leading Confucians today are academic scholars rather than religious leaders or practitioners. Without specific social organization, it is difficult to see how Confucianism can be a commonly practiced religion. The third possibility is for Confucianism to continue as a public philosophy, like liberalism or utilitarianism. As a public philosophy, Confucianism exerts its influence in society through its advocates, namely scholars and public intellectuals convinced of its value and validity. This would require not only the existence of some influential Confucian thinkers to represent the tradition on the world stage, but also a large number of intellectuals of the Confucian conviction, believing in and promoting Confucianism. In history, Confucianism has existed through the advocacy of intellectuals and people of various professions, with or without state sponsorship. Now its future may also depend on committed advocates. In order to secure Confucianism as a world public philosophy, Confucian thinkers need to articulate it in languages that are resonant with both marginalized and mainstream philosophers, not only in the language of Chinese studies or cultural studies, but also in the language of analytical and comparative philosophy. The third approach as a public philosophy does not exclude the first two, nor does it depend on them. It is possible for Confucianism to utilize all three approaches.

Unlike the first four challenges, the fifth one is not a theoretical issue; it cannot be solved by theoretical explorations by Confucian thinkers. Realizing the urgency of dealing with Confucianism’s challenges, Confucian thinkers may be able to more actively engage themselves in searching for solutions to the first four challenges, and hence to better position Confucianism for the future. I believe that, in order for Confucianism to survive and prosper, it does not only need representative Confucian thinkers as its spokespersons, such as Tu Weiming and Chung-ying Cheng, but it also needs institutional enhancement. Perhaps an effective world organization of Confucianism, which is not limited to academia, would serve as a gathering point for contemporary Confucians and scholars of Confucianism to coordinate efforts and work together for their common cause of promoting this tradition. If this essay’s
assessment of the five major challenges to Confucianism is correct, Confucianism still has a long way to go to advance itself as a flourishing philosophy in the 21st century.

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RELIGIOUS OTHER AND TOLERATION: WHY THERE SHOULD BE NO RELIGIOUS LEGAL OTHER OF A MODERN DEMOCRATIC STATE?

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Abstract: This essay explores the concept of 'religious other,' indicating the metaphysical, cognitive, ethical, and political challenges that the religious other presents. In doing so, it 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. It 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. It 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.

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION is a distinctive approach to religious diversity in our time. It is a right approach. It makes the world big enough for all to live. For social justice, toleration is an important vehicle in our time and all times. As Laozi indicated, "Toleration brings about fairness."\(^1\) (Dao De Jing, 1996, 92/ch.16). For social good, religious toleration is a policy of prudence in our time and all times. In our time, as Jürgen Habermas says, "Tolerance protects a pluralistic society from being torn apart as a political community by conflicts over worldviews."\(^1\) (Habermas, 2009, 258). Philip L. Quinn thus claims, "Religious toleration is a more urgent global political issue." \(^1\) (Quinn, 2001, 59). For individual persons, “An authentic person is of great mind and profound virtue and therefore can tolerate things,” reads Zhou Yi (The Book of Change) (Zhou Yi, 1999, 25).\(^1\) Tolerance both broadens humans and makes them excellent.

That being said, the concept of religious toleration is one of the most difficult concepts in our time, and religious toleration is one of the most contentious practices in our time. The concept of religious toleration is somehow elusive too. How to define the ‘religious other’? How to define the content, scope, and basic precepts of religious toleration? How to distinguish between religious others that are legitimate objects of toleration and those which are not? How to see that X is a legitimate object of toleration in one context but not in another, or in one sense but not in another? Here, it should be emphasized that indiscrimet, unreflective, and limitless toleration is self-destructive and unsustainable. As the traditional Chinese concept of wu ji bi fan (物极必反 when things arrive at their limits, they turn into their opposites) indicates, extremity produces self-destruction. How to define the limit of religious toleration? Why some extreme approaches to religious toleration are self-subverting, self-sabotaging, and self-destructive? These and other questions pertaining to religious toleration require responsive, concerted answers.

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\(^1\) The Chinese sentence is, “君子以厚德载物 Junzi yi hou de zai wu.”
I. What is the Other That Should Be Tolerated?

What is the other? What is the other that should be tolerated? Toleration is always toleration of the other. Only what is an other can be an object of toleration. Indeed, as [Jürgen] Habermas, Thomas Scanlon, Rainer Forst and various philosophers have emphasized, only the other that one can reject with good reasons can be an object of toleration. Meanwhile, the other can be an object of toleration, of rejection, or of endorsement.

In a sense, the ancient is the other of the modern. Man is the other of woman; the sun, the other of the moon; the heaven, the other of the earth; the transcendent, the other of the immanent. By this token, a salient feature of the other is that it is an irreducible, autonomous opposite or difference. It belongs to the nature of otherness that it is irreducible and autonomous. Ontologically, the reality of the other lies in its irreducibility as a difference. Emmanuel Levinas thus observed that metaphysically, the other was the other precisely because its alterity could not be "reabsorbed into my own identity" (Levinas, 1969, 33). Cognitively, the voice of the other challenges any monopoly or unification of claims to truth, knowledge, or reason. It manifests a kind of distinctive incommensurability, incompatibility, and alterity. It represents non-consensus and dissonance. Ethically, the other is a stranger and foreigner to our sense of identity, to our way of life, just as we are strangers and foreigners to his/her identity and way of life. The other poses challenges and threatens to our identity. It presents a constraint to our way to be free, good, and happy. Politically, the other is an alterity, an anomaly to be reckoned with. It represents non-identity, non-affiliation, and non-allegiance.

The religious other should be understood in this sense. The religious other has not only an ethical dimension, but also metaphysical, cognitive, and political dimensions. Say, as the other of modernity, religions are metaphysically, cognitively, ethically, and politically irreducible, autonomous anomalies of modernity. They bring about metaphysical, cognitive, ethical, and political dissonance, and non-allegiance with modernity. They are forces constraining the modern way to be free, good, and happy. Also, when a religion is the other to another religion, it is a metaphysically, cognitively, ethically, and politically autonomous, irreducible anomaly, and opposite to the other religion. For this reason, we need be discreet and reflective in conceiving tolerable religious other to modernity. For example, religious laws cannot be, and should not be, recognized as the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic society though they can the ontological others. All the same, the right to be a religious other is the right and freedom to be an autonomous, irreducible anomaly, opposite, difference, dissident, or stranger. Such right and liberty cannot be taken for granted. At least, we should draw a distinction between civic/human rights and liberty and moral rights and liberty here.

Notwithstanding, the other can be an object of rejection, oppression, endorsement, homogenization, or toleration. The equation, "the other = the object of toleration", does not exist or does not bear up to scrutiny. John Horton indicates this
point when he identifies two kinds of things that should not be objects of toleration: “On the one hand, some things should not be tolerated, because they should not be permitted; on the other hand, some things should not be objected to, hence are not appropriate objects of toleration.” (Horton, 1996, 33). It should strike us as self-evident that racism is, and should be, an object of rejection, not an object of endorsement or toleration. Terrorism of various forms is, and should be, an object of rejection, not an object of endorsement or toleration. So are, should be, certain backward rites or practices that violate persons’ basic human rights and human dignities, even if they might be “traditional”. In short, no all others can be, should be, legitimate objects of toleration. Tolerance is a form of social practice that is intermediate between endorsement and rejection. It has its distinctive, independent class of objects.

By this token, no all religious others are legitimate objects of religious toleration. Surely, religious terrorism is not, and should not be, a proper object of religious toleration. Religious laws and practices that violate basic human rights and dignity should not be the proper objects of social and religious toleration. Here, we must distinguish among religious toleration in the ontological sense, the cognitive sense, the ethical sense, and the political sense. It is not, and should not be, the case that if religious other should be tolerated in one sense, it should necessarily be tolerated in another sense or in all senses. For example, even if we recognize ontologically, cognitively, or ethically religion X as a religious other, we should still ask, “Should laws of religion X be tolerated as the other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state?” Here, it would not be unreasonable for us to recognize religion X to be an ontological, cognitive, or ethical other on the one hand and to argue, on the other hand, against tolerating its laws as the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. In other words, the toleration of religion X as the ontological, cognitive, and ethical other does not entail elevating its laws above municipal laws or placing them alongside municipal laws. For the purpose of the present enquiry, we should press a bit the point that religious laws such as Sharia Laws should not be the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. The principle of separation of the state and church must stand in a modern democratic state. No short-cut or circulation around this principle! This can also be seen from what can be called “the overloaded argument”. It goes something like this, if Sharia Laws could be the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic society, so could other religious laws such as that of Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, or Judaism; as a result, a modern democratic state would be overloaded with legal others and therefore there could be no the rule of law in the true sense.

In a modern democratic state, the political identity of citizenship of religious members has primacy over their religious identity when it comes to the matter of laws. A democratic Sittlichkeit must be "firmly anchored in the identity of

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2Here I rephrase Thomas Scanlon’s statement that “tolerance involves an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unconstrained opposition.” See Scanlon, *The Difficulty of Tolerance*, 187.
citizens” (Forst, 2004, 321). By this token, religious laws cannot, and should not, define crimes or felonies in a modern, democratic state outside municipal laws of such a state. They cannot, and should not, exempt crimes and felonies in a modern democratic state under the name of religion. When religious laws, as institutional rules of a given religious community, are in conflict with the basic constitution and municipal laws of a modern democratic state in which such a religious community is housed, they should be overridden by the latter. In short, there must be no any religious states within a democratic state.

Here, a distinction exists between the legitimate sovereignty of religious other as itself and the legitimacy or illegitimacy of religious other as the proper object of religious toleration. The former is a necessary condition for the latter, but not a sufficient condition. For conceptual clarity, we should draw the following distinction. We can conceive P as a necessary condition for Q in the sense that if Q, then P; but P, might not Q. We can conceive P as a sufficient condition for Q in the sense that if P, then Q; but Q, might not P. We can conceive P as a both necessary and condition for Q in the sense that if P, then Q; if Q, then P. Therefore, we should appreciate that its being ‘an other’ is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for religious other to be a proper object of religious toleration. By this token, we can put the relation between otherness and toleration perspicuously in terms of follows: if T, then O; O, might not T. Here, T = toleration. O = Religious otherness.

Every religious other has a sufficient reason to exist as its own. It does not follow that every religious other has a sufficient reason to be legitimately the other of a given [other] being. Michael Walzer indicates, “Toleration makes difference possible; difference makes toleration necessary.” (Walzer, 1997, xii). It should be added here that toleration does justice to others that are legitimate objects of toleration; no all others should be tolerated and no all differences are legitimate objects of toleration. Difference is a necessary condition for toleration, but it itself is not a sufficient condition for toleration. An illegitimate other is not a proper object of toleration. An other might be the legitimate object of toleration in one sense, e.g., in the cognitive sense, but not in the other sense, e.g., the legal sense. Thus, the concept of religious other gives rise to the question of what kind of religious other we ought to tolerate, not terminate the question. It invites question of the legitimacy of toleration of what is considered to be religious other, not erases the question.

The relationship between sovereignty and legitimacy is an interesting topic in its own. Suffice it here that (1) sovereignty and legitimacy are both necessary for the object of toleration; they are also importantly connected; (2) there can be different kinds of sovereignty, e.g., the ontological, cognitive, ethical and political; having one kind of sovereignty need not mean having another kind, or general sovereignty; there can be different kinds of legitimacy, e.g., the ontological, cognitive, ethical and political; having one kind of legitimacy need not mean having another kind, or general legitimacy. With regard to (1), two kinds of error can occur. One is to take for granted something, e.g., religious laws, to be a legitimate object of toleration because of its sovereignty. Reversely, another is not to recognize the due legitimacy of something to be a proper object of toleration even though its sovereignty is recognized. With regard to (2), a common error is to argue for one kind of legitimacy,
but appeal to a different kind of sovereignty, for example, to argue for religious laws as the “legitimate” objects of legal toleration by appealing to the ontological, cognitive, and ethical sovereignty of such laws. All the same, toleration exhibits a distinctive unity and contradiction of two conflicting parties with both sovereignty and legitimacy.

A clarification is in order here. The other is a legitimate, sovereign, and irreducible difference, or opposite. This does not mean that the other is negative. Otherness or alterity does not connote negativity, disvalue, or vice. Thus, yin and yang, woman and man, moon and sun, ancient and modern, long and short, and the like are the other to one another. This is distinguished from the dichotomy of good and evil, justice and injustice, compassion and cruelty, the right and the wrong, and the like, in which one party is a positive value and virtue, and another party is a disvalue and vice. The other is not a priori a disvalue and vice. Admittedly, toleration of the other implies toleration of what one considers to be wrong from one's own perspective and with one's subjective reasons. Nonetheless, toleration of the other reflects a distinctive unity and contradiction of two conflicting parties, not a form of paradox of the co-existence of the right and the wrong, the good and the evil, and the like.

II. Habermas on Religious Other

According to Habermas, "Pluralism and the struggle for religious tolerance 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, 2009, 257). Habermas aspires for an open, inclusive constitutional democracy. Toleraton of religious other is a defining feature of such a democracy.

Habermas recognizes religious other as cognitive foreigner, though he firmly believes that religious other can be brought to the table of rational communication. Thus, for example, he indicates, "religious and metaphysical worldviews of prophetic origin have the form of doctrines that can be worked up intellectually and that explain and justify an existing political order in terms of the world-order they explicate." (Habermas, 1987, 188). For him, toleration of religious other is called for where "there is no reasonable hope of a cognitive resolution of the disagreements" pertaining to religious beliefs and practices (Habermas, 2009, 257). In short, Habermas rightly indicates that religious toleration would be called when (a) there is such a religious other which one has good subjective reasons to reject and (b) at the same time, the reasons to bear with such an other triumph the reasons to reject it (Ibid., 257–258).

So far, so good. Habermas further insists that (1) tolerance differs from indifference and (2) tolerance is reciprocal. The reciprocity of tolerance and the distinction between tolerance and indifference require that conflicting parties mutually engage one another. For them to engage one another fruitfully, Habermas insists, conflicting parties must have what he dubs as a "new epistemic attitude" in the public sphere of a democratic society, understood as an open-minded attitude to follow the communicative rationality, capable of mutually "adopt[ing] each other’s
perspective" (Ibid., 254). Here, Habermas is more ambitious than merely to ask conflicting parties to listen to one another. He suggests that (1) having a "new epistemic attitude" is a necessary condition for religious other to be the object of religious toleration; and (2) operating with a new epistemic attitude, conflicting parties can be reconciled with the public use of reason and on the basis of common aspiration for truth. Thus, at the end of the day, Habermas' strategy of tolerating religious other starts with recognizing it to be the cognitive other, but situating it within the authority of cognitive modernity and modern reason.

We can compare Habermas to Lyotard here. Lyotard calls for full recognition of the cognitive sovereignty of what is conceived to be the other. Habermas would not make such a call. Richard Rorty characterizes Habermas as "a liberal who is unwilling to be an ironist" (Rorty, 1989, 61). Habermas' view on the sovereignty of religion in our time increases the stock value of Rorty's label. His equalitarian recognition of the political sovereignty of religions makes him politically liberal. His modernist recognition of the cognitive sovereignty of religions demarcates him from an ironist. An ironist would emphasize the right to cognitive sovereignty for religious other.

This leads us to the matter of religious other as the political other. Here, Habermas' concept of "constitut
ional patriotism" indicates that religious laws cannot be legitimately the legal other of municipal constitution of a modern democratic state. That being said, Habermas does not advocate a limited concept of religious other as the political other that excludes it from being the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. He should have explicitly rejected any concepts of religious laws as the legitimate, legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. He could have given a direct negative answer to such questions as whether religious laws such as Shari Laws should be placed alongside municipal laws of a modern democratic state, functioning as legal laws within or above those municipal laws. He could have been more vocal in insisting that there should be no legal other of municipal laws of a modern, democratic state. Instead, we are left alone with wondering.

Habermas indeed insists that "in a constitutional state, all enforceable legal norms must be capable of being formulated and public justified in a language intelligible to all of the citizens." (Habermas, 2008, 76). However, to be justified in a language intelligible to all citizens is one thing. To be acceptable and legitimate in a modern democratic state is quite another. Thus, for example, one can claim that Shari Laws are justified in a language intelligible to all citizens, just as any racist claims can be justified in a language intelligible to all citizens. That the reasons justifying Shari Laws are intelligible to all citizens is not the same as that these reasons are acceptable and legitimate to all citizens. Habermas aspires for "an inclusive civil society in which equal citizenship and cultural difference complement each other." (Ibid, 69). He should have insisted that such a society is possible if and only if there is no exception to the rule of law and there is no the legal other to the municipal laws of a modern democratic state, including the basic constitution of such a state.

Habermas might have missed various opportunities to address directly the issue of the legal other. In Europe: the Faltering Project, Habermas mentions that when he
wrote the essay, "What is meant by 'Post-Secular Society'? A Discussion on Islam in Europe," he was reading three pieces of news over a single weekend and one of them was: "the Archbishop of Canterbury is recommending that the British parliament adopt parts of Sharia family law for its local Muslim population." (Ibid, 65). Habermas could have taken this opportunity to address directly whether Sharia family law should be the legal law of part of the British society and whether such a designation of Sharia family law as the legal other of the family laws of the British society in general is appropriate. His ambivalence showers us with cold water. His aspiration for an open, inclusive society lets him hesitant in a crossroad.

Antoon Braeckman indicates that with regard to the role of religion in a constitutional democracy today, Habermas “focus [es] unilaterally on the moral-cognitive and epistemic aspects of religion, disregarding its continuing power of symbolic community-building.” (Braeckman, 2009, 280). Braeckman’s view is suggestive. Habermas’ worry is that the religious power of ethical integration could become unconstrained and unbridled. He proposes an epistemic constraint and advocates “constitutional patriotism”. When all is said and done, he leaves one baggage behind and unattended: the emphasis that there can be no, and ought not be, religious other as the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. This certainly leaves much to be unsettled. This is dangerous, consider the religious continuing power of legal community-building.

Habermas’ insights and illusions as described above return us back to issues about defining religious other and distinguishing religious other as a legitimate object of religious toleration from religious others as a proper object of other social practices, e.g., endorsement or rejection. We often take for granted the links between otherness and legitimacy, sovereignty and legitimacy, others and toleration. No wonder, we often founder upon the same rock at the end. We often misplace or misuse the concept of the inviolability of religious other in our practice of religious toleration. The presence of the other is a challenge. To recognize properly and respond properly the presented other is a greater challenger.

III. The Rights to be religious other

Now we should explore the right to be an autonomous, irreducible anomaly, opposite, or difference (RRO). Distinctions exist among the rights to ontological other, cognitive other, ethical other, and political other. This in turn complicates the link between RRO and religious toleration. Equally crucial, RRO as a basic human right is a right necessarily assumed under the rule of law. Its content cannot be taken for granted indiscriminately.

Here, we can conceive RRO to be a necessary ground for religious toleration if we can conceive follows: if RT, then RRO; not RRO, not RT; RRO, might not RT (C1). Here, RT = religious toleration; RRO = the right to be an autonomous, irreducible anomaly, opposite, or difference; that is, the right to be religious other. Accordingly, we can conceive RRO to be a sufficient, but not a necessary, ground for religious toleration if we can conceive follows: if RRO, then RT; RT, might not RRO; Not RRO, might RT (C2). We can conceive that RRO is a both necessary and

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sufficient ground for religious toleration if we can conceive follows: if RT, then RRO; not RRO, not RT; if RRO, then RT (C3). By this token, we can see that after all is said and done, cases still vary. In some contexts, we have C1, in other contexts, we have C2, and in further other contexts, C3.

It goes as follows. Granted that the right to be a religious other is RRO that belongs in a distinctive class of basic human rights. Where does this lead us to? It might lead us to where is not in our map in hand.

First, the content of RRO is contextually defined as much as it is from the concept of basic rights of religious freedom. To start with, religious other does not exist in itself, but exists as religious other of a particular X. X = a being, e.g., a religion, law, art, state, A, B, C, Y, and so on. In other words, even in the metaphysical sense, religious other exists as the counterpart of its opposite. The content of RRO is defined with reference to the counterpart of a religious other, that is, a given particular X. The right to be the other of B is not the right to be the other of C, or vice versa. The right to be the other of B in context W is not necessarily the same to the right to be the other of B in context W”.

Second, following the Hohfeldian Model to conceive RRO to consist of privilege, claim, power and immunity, we cannot talk indiscriminately about RRO. We cannot take for granted religious other's privilege, claim, power and immunity. For example, it is self-subverting and self-sabotaging to talk about RRO of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. According to the Hohfeldian Model, the anatomy of a right consists of: (1)privilege; a privilege is one’s entitlement to be exempted from certain general duty; (2)claim; “A claim-right can entitle its bearer to protection against harm or paternalism, or to provision in case of need, or to specific performance of some agreed-upon, compensatory, or legal or conventional specific action” (3)power; “To have a power is to have the ability within a set of rules to alter the normative situation of oneself or another” and (4)immunity; “One person has an immunity whenever another person lacks the ability within a set of rules to change her normative situation in a particular respect.”(Wener, 2005, 229-235). Conceiving in the Hohfeldian Model, the content of RRO must be defined in contexts.

Third, as Thomas Scanlon indicates: "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 nonestablishment) of religion. . . . Many different systems of rights are acceptable; none is ideal. Each is therefore constantly open to challenge and revision."(Scanlon, 2003, 198). In other words, in some contexts, RRO might be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for religious toleration. In other contexts, RRO might be a sufficient, but not a necessary condition for religious toleration. Given the problematic nature of the concept of RRO of the municipal laws of a modern democratic state, the alleged "RRO of the municipal laws of a modern democratic state" is not a necessary condition or a sufficient condition for religious toleration.

Fourth, the norm of prudence, in addition to that of social justice, can be a norm for social policies and practices and might call for religious toleration in given contexts. Religious toleration based on social prudence is not necessarily grounded in the norm of basic religious rights, and thus in RRO. This means that in some contexts,
RRO might be neither necessary nor sufficient condition for religious toleration. Forst indicates: "Intolerance is a specific form of injustice, and toleration de demand of justice." (Forst, 2004, 317). In my opinion, in some contexts, intolerance might be called from the point of view of prudence and in other contexts, toleration might be called from the point of view of prudence. Thus, Forst rightly notes, "There may be pragmatic reasons to tolerate the intolerant, at least legally, even if they cannot demand it." (Forst, 2004, 322).

Now, RRO belongs in the category of basic human rights. According to Habermas, human rights differ from moral rights. “Human rights are juridical by their very nature.” (Habermas, 1998b, 190). Basic human rights are that which citizens necessarily grant to each other if they are to extend their lives together under the rule of law (Habermas, 1998a, 118—125). They are claims arising from the rule of law and derived from laws, while moral rights are claims derived from the concept of the human being qua human being. For conceptual clarity, we might conceive here that rights are granted necessarily if and only if they are granted, but it is not the case that they might not be granted; by contrast that rights are granted contingently if and only if they might not be granted. Given that human rights are rights that are necessarily assumed under a unified system of laws, that is, a unified system of laws democratically established and enacted on in such a modern democratic state, we cannot conceive RRO to include the alleged rights to be the legal other of municipal laws of a modern democratic state. Such alleged rights would not be what citizens necessarily grant each other in order to extend their lives together under the rule of law. They cannot be derived from the concept of the rule of law but threaten to destroy the integrity of a unified system of municipal laws.

At the end of the day, there can be no, and ought not be, indiscriminate toleration of all religious others. There is no, and cannot be, indiscriminate RRO. There is no, and cannot be, RRO of the municipal laws of a modern democratic state. Justice, prudence, or good is not indiscriminate, indiscreeet, and undifferentiated.

IV. Reasonableness, New epistemic Attitude, and Toleration

A discussion of reasonableness in religious toleration is in order. At issue is whether we better distinguish between reasonableness as a quality of ethical and practical fairness and prudence and being rational as a quality of cognitive normativity in a democratic Sittlichkeit.

According to Habermas, cognitive justifiability or acceptability is a necessary condition of reasonableness. To be practically reasonable, citizens must be cognitively rational. To put it in logical term, if PR, then CR. Here, PR = practical reasonableness. CR = being cognitively rational. As he says, “secular and devout citizens can fulfill the normative expectations of the liberal role of citizens, however, only if they likewise satisfy certain cognitive conditions and ascribe to each other the corresponding epistemic attitude.” (Habermas, 2009, 119). Therefore, he insists that religious other be cognitively rational, e.g., meeting the cognitive expectation of normativity, and adopting a new attitude geared to meet the normative expectation of modernity.
Evidently, this concept of reasonableness has both insight and illusion. It has insight in the sense that a salient feature of religious toleration is reciprocity, as Habermas, Scanlon, Forst, and other philosophers indicate. Reciprocity presupposes intersubjectively cognition, or recognition of claims that are intersubjectively justified. That being said, a distinction exists between reasonableness as a quality of practical and ethical fairness and prudence, which is necessary for toleration of religious other as the ethical other or as the political other, and being rational as a quality of cognitive normativity, which might butter ethical or political toleration of religious other, but is not necessary for the latter. Taking reciprocity in ethical toleration of religious other as example. Forst rightly indicates, "Reciprocity in this context of justification means that one does not make any claim to certain rights or resources one denies to others, and that one does not project one's own reasons (values, interests, needs) onto others in argument for one's claims." (Forst, 2004, 317). Here, what is required is an attitude of practical and ethical fairness and prudence that "does not project one's own reasons (values, interests, needs) onto others in argument for one's claims", not necessarily to justifying before others that one's own projected reasons (values, interests, needs) have truths and are cognitively valid.

At the core of Habermas' concept of reasonableness is the idea of a new epistemic attitude. For religious other, the attitude consists of two elements: (1) religious members' willingness to reconcile their faith with "the independence of secular from sacred knowledge and the institutionalized monopoly of modern scientific experts"; and (2) religious members' willingness to recognize "the priority that secular reasons enjoy in the political arena."(Habermas, 2006, 14). Thus, for religious other, the burden is one of self-adoption and transformation to be rational. To be rational is to operate with the constraint of the communicative rationality. The task of religious other is as much reaping the cognitive benefit of stepping out its own solipsism as fulfilling its cognitive obligation to act as a rational citizen in the public realm of a democracy. As reciprocity, non-religious citizens should be opened to the appreciation of religious insights into and wisdoms of good life. Habermas' view here can draw criticism of two sorts, summed up in the questions "Why should practical reasonableness necessarily imply a new epistemic attitude or cognitively being rational?", "How meaningful religious other remains the cognitive other if it is obliged to have such a new epistemic attitude?", and "What is left with religious toleration if religious other were not conceived to be the legitimate cognitive other that should be the object of religious toleration?"

In light of the above, the reasonableness of all citizens, religious and non-religious alike, should be conceived to consist of a new political attitude of practical and ethical fairness and prudence, which is exhibited in recognizing and submitting to the sovereignty of municipal laws of a modern democratic state in the social-political arena of a modern, democratic state. It is associated more with what Habermas dubs as "constitutional patriotism" and more with the concept of solidarity in abiding by laws for ethical, prudential reasons. Equally crucial, the concept of reasonableness as consisting of a new political attitude of practical and ethical fairness and prudence enriches the concept of the strategic nature of human reason to be geared not only for mutual understanding, but also for mutual cooperation.
With regard to reasonableness, Bracechman summarizes Habermas’ concern as the following: “How … would religion from a discourse-theoretical perspective contribute (or alternative: be a threat) to the development of constitutional democracy and its normative principles?” (Bracechman, 2009, 281). He is not off mark by reading Habermas’ answer as follows: “Religion can only contribute to the deliberative process of opinion and will formation provided it makes its own cognitive or epistemic contribution to the ongoing argumentation. More particularly, religion’s contribution can only consist of the provision of insights or comparable cognitive content which would not otherwise gain a place within the debate, or at least not in the same way.” (Ibid).

Not surprisingly, a remedy for Habermas' insight consists of follows. First, a phenomenological return to religious other of all dimensions—metaphysical, cognitive, ethical and political. Second, a critical construction of the reasonableness of a citizen in practicing religious toleration as the practical and ethical fairness and prudence to recognize that in a given context, which sense of religious other is a proper object of toleration. Religious toleration should be practiced on the platform built by the municipal laws of a modern democratic state, as Habermas insists, and the reasonableness of a citizen, religious or non-religious alike, consists of the fair and prudential attitude to abide by municipal laws of a modern democratic state (Cf. Habermas, 2009, 258).

When all is said and done, we are returned to what Habermas dubs as “constitutional patriotism”, modified and appended with what can be called "legal patriotism". We are led to see that the reasonableness of a citizen that is called in the context of religious toleration is ethical and political. It can be buttressed by, but is not identical to, cognitively rational attitude. To be reasonable for a citizen is part of the norm of justice and part of the norm of prudence. The performing reasonableness of citizens, as well as that of practices and institutions of a democratic state, arises from being ethically and practically fair and prudent, not necessarily from being cognitively rational. As Habermas insists, there should be performing unity—procedural unity under the rule of law—for all religions and secular sections of a society. A performing unity is possible only if we reject any concepts of religious legal other of municipal laws of a modern, democratic state.

V. From Cognitive Competence to Existential Competence

Given what is said above, we can see here that having what Habermas calls "a new epistemic attitude" is a virtue and a value; abiding by municipal laws of a modern, democratic state in interaction with religious other is a norm of obligation. Practical and ethical reasonableness is buttressed by cognitive competence, but demands existential competence utmost.

Having what Habermas calls "a new epistemic attitude" is a value and advisory. Such an attitude is something we better to have, but not obliged to have in order to practice religious toleration. Such an attitude is not a norm of obligation also because it is not a claim rising from one’s basic rights of religious freedom or from the basic rights of religious freedom of other persons. It is a claim of practical good, not of
basic justice. In comparison, observing the principle of the rule of law and abiding by municipal laws of a modern, democratic state is a norm of obligation, not merely a value or a virtue. This is not merely something we better to have, but something necessary and requisite for us to practice religious toleration. It is a claim of basic justice, not merely of public good; a claim of responsibility that one necessarily bears in a human community, not merely a policy of prudence or expedience.

Religious toleration does not require that religious other must de facto have concepts of truth and good life compatible to that of citizens to whom it is religious other. Religious claims to good life, happiness, and the like can be, and should be, tolerated as long as they are allowed by municipal laws of a modern democratic state, even if they are cognitively incompatible to modernity’s cognitive expectation. Cognitive compatibility or solidarity is not a required condition for religious other to be a proper object of toleration. Instead, "we need to show tolerance only towards worldviews we consider wrong and habit we do not appreciate."(Habermas, 2008, 69). Cognitively, religious other might remain “infinitely foreign”, to borrow a phrase from Levinas (Levinas, 1969, 194).

Noteworthy, according with Habermas’ view of religious toleration, as an object of toleration, a given religious other, say, X, can be rejected by its tolerator with good epistemic reasons. As Habermas says, "Rejection is a condition necessary for all kinds of tolerant behavior. We can only exercise tolerance towards other people’s beliefs if we reject them for subjectively good reasons."

(2004, 10). Thus, religious other X, should be tolerated only under a circumstance consisting of three conditions: (1) no reasonable hope of cognitive resolution of disagreement, (2) reasons to endure X triumph reasons to reject X, and (3) by laws, X belongs in the category of objects of toleration (Habermas, 2009, 257–258). By this token, toleration of X here requires the existential competence as the minimal requirement from all conflicting parties.

A further point is this. Religious toleration is not religious endorsement. Instead, as Scanlon indicates, “Tolerance thus involves an attitude that is intermediate between wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition.” (Scanlon, 2003, 187). According to Habermas, “Tolerance toward those who think differently should not be confused with the willingness to … make compromise.” (Habermas, 2009, 261). Religious toleration lives in the tension of rival, even incompatible, claims to truth, value, meaning, and the like. “Tolerance becomes necessary … only when the parties with good reason neither seek agreement concerning controversial beliefs nor think agreement is possible.” (Ibid). Religious toleration presupposes no cognitive unity. Instead, it implies merely that all parties be advised to be dialogical, cooperative, and democratic under the rule of law. In turn, this allows that abiding by municipal laws of a modern, democratic state is a norm of obligation, while having a new epistemic attitude is a value and virtue.

A stronger claim can be made here: religious toleration is accompanied by the cognition of both a citizen’s obligation not to be a legal other and a citizen’s freedom to be a metaphysical, cognitive, and ethical other; it demands the existential competence to be metaphysically, cognitively, and ethically sovereign and autonomous but legally confirmative.
Conclusion

I would like to conclude this enquiry with these remarks. Religious other that should be tolerated is metaphysically, ontologically, cognitively, ethically, and morally irreducible and autonomous, but legally not autonomous in a modern democratic state. The legal right to be religious other does not include or imply the right to be religious legal other of the municipal laws of a modern democratic state. The concept that the rights of religious freedom arise from the rule of law excludes the concept of the legal other of the rule of law. There can be no true rule of law without integrity of the law.

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!

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RELIGIOUS ENLIGHTENMENT IN EIGHTEEN-CENTURY RUSSIA: A MODEL FOR CHANGE

Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter

Abstract: In "Religious Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Russia: A Model for Change," historian Elise Wirtschafter uses the teachings of Metropolitan of Moscow Platon (Levshin, 1737-1812) to raise questions about educational reform and technological development in the twenty-first century. Metropolitan Platon preached at the Court of Empress Catherine the Great (ruled 1762-96), and like religious enlighteners across Europe, he sought to reconcile Christian faith and Enlightenment ideas. His effort to come to terms with scientific learning, philosophical modernity, and new societal priorities provided Russia's educated classes with Christian answers to Enlightenment questions. As is evident from Platon's understanding of equality, enlightened churchmen bridged the intellectual divide between tradition and innovation in a manner that has implications for current discussions about how to reform education in the age of information technology.

AS AN HITORIAN, I know that change is inevitable—that what people believe or think necessary one day is appropriately dispensed with another day. I also know that traditions, habits, and cultures endure. My current research is devoted to traditions that have endured. I am writing a book about the Russian religious Enlightenment in the reign of Catherine the Great. You are no doubt familiar with the Enlightenment writ large—either in the form of canonical Enlightenment thinkers such as Hume, Smith, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot, or in the form of the American Revolution and the founding of our republic. Documents that we live with every day—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—are quintessential products of Enlightenment principles and practices. Probably you also are surprised that the eighteenth-century Russian Empire, a society built upon serfdom and absolutist monarchy, can be associated with Enlightenment ideas. I will spare you the esoteric historiographic debates and say only that scholars today tend to avoid the notion of a single Enlightenment. Instead, they speak of multiple Enlightenments, including the moderate mainstream and religious Enlightenments, which help to elucidate the Russian case.

Modern historians are inclined to emphasize the Enlightenment’s optimism and celebration of reason, but in so doing, they ignore the religious, or at least providential, sensibilities of many eighteenth-century thinkers. Enlightenment culture

1 This study is under contract with Northern Illinois University Press under the title Religion and Enlightenment in Catherinian Russia.

did indeed strike an optimistic note, and Enlightenment intellectuals did assume that through the proper cultivation and application of human reason moral and material progress could be achieved. But Enlightenment thinkers also understood the vulnerability of human life in the face of uncontrollable passion and harsh physical reality. They understood that while moral clarity and rational criticism might be possible, the realization of morality and reason in human affairs required constant struggle. In other words, the Enlightenment belief in the possibility of progress—the idea that the human condition could and should be ameliorated—remained tentative and muted. Despite the expectation of "human flourishing" and ongoing improvement, Enlightenment thinkers also recognized that truth and reality sometimes exceed human understanding. ³ Throughout the eighteenth century, important representatives of Enlightenment thought continued to believe in the existence of a God-given natural order, the workings of which human beings could never fully comprehend. Scholars living in a post-Holocaust, post-Hiroshima, post-Gulag age may see in Enlightenment assumptions about progress an attitude of arrogance and utopianism, yet it is clear that eighteenth-century reformism did not come close to the hubris or presumptuousness of social engineering in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The pan-European religious Enlightenment, which provides the framework for my research, grew out of efforts to find a reasonable faith, neither excessively enthusiast nor rigidly doctrinaire, that would be capable of sustaining belief in an age of ongoing scientific discoveries and new societal priorities. ⁴ The religious Enlightenment sought to reconcile the new learning of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—the natural philosophy and mechanical arts derived from Cartesian, Baconian, and Newtonian science—with established authority and religious belief. Religious enlighteners generally supported the absolutist politico-religious order of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, but they also promoted egalitarian Enlightenment ideals that to this day continue to generate social and political change. ⁵ Through the incorporation of modern knowledge into Christian teachings, religious enlighteners responded to the principles and concerns of philosophical modernity. They produced innovation in the guise of tradition and in the process connected a

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world understood with reference to God and the promise of salvation to one in which human beings look to science and their own cognitive powers for immediate solutions to earthly problems. In Russia, the teachings of religious enlighteners encouraged the Russian monarchy, church, and educated classes to come to terms with European modernity within the framework of Orthodox Christian belief. The intellectual bridge provided by enlightened churchmen helps to explain how educated Russians so readily assimilated and made their own the European cultural models that poured into Russia during the eighteenth century.

To explore the relationship between innovation and tradition I have been studying the devotional writings of Metropolitan of Moscow Platon (Levshin, 1737-1812), a prominent prelate in the reigns of Catherine the Great (ruled 1762-96), Paul I (ruled 1796-1801, and Alexander I (ruled 1801-25). Platon rose from the parish clergy of Moscow province to become a monk, bishop, and eventually metropolitan. As a student at the Kolomna Seminary and the Moscow Slavonic-Greek-Latin Academy, he received a Jesuit-style Latin education. Platon also was self-taught in Greek and French, and as Archbishop of Moscow and archimandrite of the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, Russia’s most important monastery, he supported the teaching of German, Hebrew, geography, history, and mathematics in seminaries under his authority. Among contemporaries, Platon achieved renown for his religious moderation, literary eloquence, and enlightened educational policies. In 1763 Empress Catherine the Great brought him to Court to serve as teacher of catechism to her son and heir, Tsesarevich Paul. While at Court, Platon regularly delivered sermons in the presence of royals and other powerful members of the civil elite. Thanks to a twenty-volume collection of Platon’s sermons and catechisms published during his lifetime, educated Russians outside the capitals also had access to his teachings. Without dwelling on the metropolitan’s homiletic sermons, I would like to share one example of how Platon provided traditional Christian answers to the Enlightenment concerns of the eighteenth century.

This may sound surprising, but if we study the history of Christianity, we see that in Christian thought and practice, progress always has meant more than the promise of salvation or the attainment of eternal happiness in the life to come. Ideas about God’s providence/care for the world and the oneness of his creation also require the betterment of life on earth. In the eighteenth-century context of an educated public

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6 For a theoretical statement of this dynamic, see Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Tradition,” in The Invention of Tradition, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14. The notion of philosophical modernity comes from the work of Jonathan Israel and includes: 1) recognition of mathematical-historical reason as the sole criterion of truth; 2) rejection of all supernatural agency, magic, and divine providence; 3) equality of all humankind, including racial and sexual equality; 4) belief in a secular, universalistic ethics grounded in equality and concerned with equity, justice, and charity; 5) full toleration and freedom of thought; 6) freedom of expression, political criticism, and the press; 7) acceptance of democratic republicanism as the most legitimate form of politics; and 8) personal liberty of lifestyle and sexual orientation. See Jonathan Israel, Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 866.
increasingly attuned to possibilities for self-improvement and societal reform, there
developed a natural bridge between religious teachings and the modern expectation of
earthly solutions to human problems—a bridge that is illustrated by the concept of
equality. Equality is a key Enlightenment principle that resonates in our own day.
Equality is also a principle that church intellectuals such as Platon blended into the
teachings of Orthodox Christianity. Legislative, literary, and religious sources from
eighteenth-century Russia show that among church intellectuals and Enlightenment
thinkers, equality meant moral rather than legal or socioeconomic equality. Thus
while the vast majority of educated Russians accepted social hierarchy, absolutist
monarchy, and gender inequality as natural or God-given, they also believed that all
human beings possess an equal capacity for moral development. Their understanding
of equality as the potential for moral goodness transcended social distinctions,
echoing the Christian belief in free will, the idea that every human being possesses
the freedom to choose between God and sin (what we would call the freedom to
choose between good and evil).

In a sermon from 1795 celebrating the feast day of Saint Nikon, Platon delivered
a stunning message of what today would be called gender equality. Of course, the
metropolitan did not think in modern democratic or feminist terms, but his teaching
illustrates the ongoing transformative power of Enlightenment ideas. For Platon,
Saint Nikon personified the feat of virtue and piety that the preacher equated with the
spiritual struggle and courage of Christians. According to Platon, the Christian
ascetic or zealot (podvizhnik) is a person, male or female, who seeks not human glory,
but the glory that comes from God. Saint Nikon may have been a male model of
perfect zealotry, but Platon was quick to point out that there is no difference between
men and women in the Christian feat of virtue and piety. All ascetics, male or female,
are equally brave, equally armed with spiritual powers, and equally crowned with
heavenly glory. Nor did Platon's spiritual egalitarianism end with gender. In other
sermons, the metropolitan highlighted the humble origins of the apostles in order to
show that social status and worldly success do not guarantee spiritual enlightenment.
In the sermon devoted to Saint Nikon, he likewise added that the physically deformed
or disabled person also can carry within himself a beautiful soul. Physical eyes may
not see this beauty, the preacher noted, but it is strikingly visible to God, the angels,
and all "enlightened spiritual eyes."

Repeatedly in the sermons of Metropolitan Platon the path to salvation is equated
with the feat of virtue that every Christian believer is called upon, and possesses the
capacity, to seek. Precisely because, as Orthodox Christianity teaches, every person
possesses "the freedom to choose between good and evil . . . which is one aspect of
humanity created in the image of God," there is an essential equality in the God-given
nature of human beings. This equality is then linked to the promise of salvation,

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7 Platon (Levshin), Pouchitel'nyia slova pri vysochaishem dvore E. I. V. . . . Gosudaryni
Ekateriny Alekseevny i drugikh mestakh s 1763 goda po 1778 skazyvannyia . . . . (Moscow,
1779-1806). In the complete collection of 20 volumes, the titles, publication dates, and
publishers of individual volumes vary. For the sermon discussed here, see PS, 17: 350-60 (17
November 1795).
understood as “a process of growth . . . whereby the sinner is changed into the image and likeness of God.” The basic idea is that the human being decides whether or not to open his or her heart to the Holy Spirit, which then makes possible the living of a virtuous life. What could be more powerfully egalitarian than the idea that every human being—male or female, well-born or lowly, rich or poor, beautiful or deformed—is “called to be transformed by the Holy Spirit into the image and likeness of God”? The egalitarian implications of Christian free will are striking. Understood as moral choice, Christian free will gives to equality a deep, fundamental, and all-encompassing significance that the merely social understanding of equality surely lacks. God gives the possibility of salvation to all human beings on an equal basis, and it is the freely acting person, the human being as autonomous moral subject, who decides whether or not to answer the divine call.

Given that Russian Enlightenment thought tended to bolster old regime institutions, it might seem to belong to the Counter-Enlightenment, which historians of Europe’s Radical Enlightenment see as an obstacle to the progress of egalitarian, democratic, and secular principles. According to these historians, the spread of Enlightenment ideas produced a long and bitter struggle that in some parts of the world continues to this day. The emphasis on the incompatibility of the liberal democratic Enlightenment and the conservative or moderate mainstream Enlightenment is not unfounded, but it overlooks what is arguably the most outstanding quality of Enlightenment culture—the quality, moreover, that made the democratic ideals of the Radical Enlightenment not only imaginable but also eventually attainable. This was, and remains, the capacity of Enlightenment ideas to generate reform and change without appearing to destroy established beliefs, practices, and customs. It is the capacity to strive for progress, for the improvement of society and the amelioration of the human condition, in a non-dogmatic, non-doctrinaire, and non-ideological manner—in a manner that is capable of reconciling tradition and innovation, established beliefs and new knowledge, ideals and realities. The Russian Enlightenment embodied this non-dogmatic, cosmopolitan quality. This is precisely the approach that we should take as we try to rethink education in the twenty-first century.

Russia’s religious enlighteners were serious, if not gifted, thinkers who reconciled Christian teachings about enlightenment, reason, freedom, and equality with the idea of progress as “human flourishing.” In the process, they provided a cultural bridge to European modernity that for a time allowed modernity to be understood in indigenous Russian terms. Through the filter of Orthodox religious teachings, Enlightenment

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ideas served to strengthen Russia’s established social and political order. The result was a cultural openness uniquely characteristic of the eighteenth century—an openness that would be lost in the nineteenth century (as romantic nationalism took hold) but that allowed educated Russians to experience the joy of becoming self-consciously enlightened, civilized, and European.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that the joy of becoming self-consciously enlightened and civilized—the joy of discovering that one has a mind that deserves to be developed—is the primary goal of education. It is a goal, moreover, that flows naturally from traditional Socratic methods of teaching. In a university setting, intellectual development results from the give and take of enlightened conversation with a teacher whose mind is more mature or better informed than that of the student. In my own life I benefitted personally and professionally from strong relationships with wise mentors and teachers, people who knew more than I did about life and history. I have also been teaching for close to thirty years, and I have raised three children of my own. The core lesson I have learned is that at all levels of intelligence and schooling the path to creativity begins with intellectual engagement—with the experience of living the life of the mind.

The life of the mind can be lived in any occupation or social condition. But before a person can do anything innovative or creative, he must learn that his mind is worth developing. The enduring message of the Enlightenment in all its various forms is that every human being has intellectual and moral potentialities that he or she can choose to cultivate. This is an old message, yet it remains critical to the reform of education. As in the past, education needs to be not just about getting a job or acquiring technical skills, but also about nurturing the internal intellectual resources that bring happiness in times of hardship and preserve dignity in times of oppression. In the words of Immanuel Kant, "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage... 'Have the courage to use your own reason!'" (Kant 1995, 83)  

The information technology being discussed today offers exciting opportunities for enhancing enlightened, knowledge-based communication across the globe. But in utilizing this technology, we cannot lose sight of the importance of face-to-face human contact in the learning process. Imagine educating a child without the physical presence of other human beings. Imagine also trying to master a foreign language without living in a society where that language is spoken in the streets. Human beings cannot progress, Enlightenment philosophers taught, without developing their moral sense, the sense of empathy that is stimulated by direct human interaction.  


References


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THE CONCEPT OF CHENG AND CONFUCIAN RELIGIOSITY

Wenyu Xie

Abstract: To conceptualize Confucian religiosity is to reveal the ultimate concern contained in the Confucian concept of life. Conceptually, ultimate concern connotes an understanding of the foundation of life, the ultimate goal of life, and the way to it. Based on this perspective, this paper attempts to analyze existentially the concept of cheng (诚), the central concept of the Zhongyong. I will endeavor to demonstrate that cheng expresses a religious feeling that sustains Confucianism. Conceptually, cheng is a disposition of feeling in which one is able to see the Tian-endowed nature, free from internal and external influences. Since the Tian-endowed nature is the foundation of human existence, it is the primary sustaining force for human beings. To be in touch with this force and follow its drive are then the ultimate concern for Confucians. In the Zhongyong, we can read a systematical effort to reveal the fundamental disposition of human existence in terms of cheng, from which a Confucian’s religiosity is nurtured.

THIS ESSAY considers a Confucian religiosity framed by the Zhongyong, one of four most significant Confucian books. Traditionally this book has been the focus of much interest and scholarship in the past. However, the fundamental concept in the Zhongyong, cheng (诚), though it has been exerting a tremendous influence on Confucian personality, seems not very attracted to current discussions of Confucian religiousness. Although the increasing interest in Confucian religiousness is an

1Zhu Xi (朱熹), a most influent Confucian in Song Dynasty (12th century), selected four books as the frameworks of Confucianism. The selection has been confirmed along history without serious challenge. These four books are the Analects (论语), the Mengzi (孟子), the Great Learning (大学), and the Zhongyong (中庸). The phrase Zhongyong has many translations, such as “doctrine of the mean,” “centrality and commonality,” “focusing the familiar,” etc. I do not foresee any uniform translation, and therefore in this essay would rather use its pinyin form.

2In English scholarship, Tu Weiming presents a good study on the book: Centrality and Commonality, revised edition (See Tu). Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, employing the Whiteheadian cosmology in their interpretation of the Zhongyong, offer an intriguing interpretation of the book. See Ames and Hall. Korean scholarship has been attracted to the book and sees cheng as the fundamental concept. See Ro, 75-110.


4There is an issue of Philosophy East & West (vol. 48, 1-1998), which collects three articles about Confucian religiosity or religiousness. The concept of cheng is not even mentioned in

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encouraging sign; the ignorance of the concept of cheng hinders our appreciation of it. Even worse, some discussions lead in the wrong direction. For example, Confucian religiousness is appreciated in the light of Western conceptions of religion. It is noteworthy that Wing-tsit Chan perceives well the significant role of cheng in his documenting Song’s neo-Confucianism. However, his emphasis on the concept does not stimulate much attention to the importance of Confucian religiousness in English scholarship.

The thesis of this essay is an attempt to illuminate Confucian religiosity in terms of the fundamental concept of cheng. As a religious sentiment, cheng refers to the ultimate disposition in which the Tian-endowed nature manifests itself and, once it has transformed into human consciousness, it impels human existence to move on. To be a Confucian, one must be in cheng from the beginning to the end.

I. The Issue of Human Nature

The Zhongyong begins with these words:

The heaven endowment is called the nature; following the nature is called the way; cultivating the way is called education. Without the way, no one can live on even for a moment, and therefore anything without which human beings can still live on is not the way. (1)

their discussions. Readers may receive an impression that the concept of cheng plays at least not an essential role in a Confucian religious life, if there indeed is such a life. And when Ames/Hall translate the term as creativity, they seem concerned with its cosmological sense rather than its religious implication. Cf. Ames/Hall, pp.30-35. I should mention that Ames/Hall discuss Confucian religiousness in the treatment of ritual propriety. Ibid., p.52. But the ritual issues in Confucianism are involved solely with politic and morality.


6 Even Tu Weiming’s defense for Confucian religiousness cannot escape this trap. Tu defines Confucian religiousness in these words: “We can define the Confucian way of being religious as ultimate self-transformation as a communal act and as a faithful dialogical response to the transcendent” (Tu, p.95). A western context may connote well-defined concepts of “the transcendent” and “faithful”. However, they are alien to Confucians. Particularly, “faithful” in the Confucian context refers to a good relationship between friends, and conveys no message about a relationship between the transcendent and a human being. Consequently, the expression “a faithful dialogical response to the transcendent” can be understood only in a western context. Of course, in the shadow of the Western conception of religion Tu may easily understand the concepts of transcendence and faith, and so be able to conceive its religious significance. But this is not a Confucian religiosity.

2 See the introduction to chapters 28-32 in Chan.

8 All quotations from the Zhongyong in this paper will be my translation, consulting with Chai, Chan, Legge, and Ames/Hall; and the paragraph arrangement follows Zhu Xi’s edition.
Confucius respected heaven, yet regarded it as not directly intervening in human affairs. The Zhongyong adheres to this tradition. In the Zhongyong, however, Confucius’ respect toward heaven transforms into a conception of the divine heaven and arrived at a notion that this heaven is the origin of human beings. It is noteworthy that, unlike the Hebrew scripture where divine revelation plays an essential role in the relation between God and human beings, the Zhongyong sees this world as regularly ordered by heaven. What humans need to do is simply follow this order. This understanding excludes the heaven’s interruption of orderly human life and leaves human life governed by humans alone. In agriculture, which was the primary economy in ancient China, the Chinese diligently observed the movements of the seasons and designed a very detailed agricultural calendar guiding their agricultural activities. The ‘calendar’ of human inner life is much more difficult to sketch. It appears that, to observe the progress of a human being from birth to death, one must have a way to go. As the agricultural calendar must observe the natural movements of four seasons, the human calendar must follow human nature, which has been endowed upon us by the heaven. Consequently, the ordering of human life must be based upon the knowledge of the endowed human nature.

The Zhongyong claims that human beings should follow their endowed nature, and it is the right way for them to live. Surprisingly, the Zhongyong seems uninterested in discussing the issue of human nature. As we know, the issue in question was a much discussed topic by the time the book was written. A well-known debate exists between the good-nature theory and the evil-nature theory, respectively represented by Mengzi (390 - 305 BCE) and Xunzi (298 - 238 BCE). In proposing the good-nature theory, Mengzi defended that good human nature is necessary for morality as well as for a good society. On the other hand, Xunzi wrote a treatise, entitled “On the Evil Human Nature”, arguing that human nature is selfish and greedy, and therefore is evil. In order to create a good society, this evil nature must be cultured and educated by the sages to become moral. The debate cannot find its place in the Zhongyong, as there is no mention of this argument.

This observation brings up the issue of dating the Zhongyong. In fact, the date of publication is still an unsolved problem. A traditional view holds that it was written before the Mengzi and the Xunzi. However, some modern linguistic studies have revealed that the Zhongyong contains versions that could not have been written before the Qin Dynasty. They then assert that the book was written later. The dating issue is not a major concern in this paper. The following analysis of the internal structure of the book supports the latter proposal. Put aside the chronological issue, I

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9 Mengzi’s position can be found in his discourse with Gaozi in the Mengzi; and Xunzi’s treatise is in the Xunzi. For detailed discussions of the subject, cf. Nivison: chapters 10 and 13.

10 For example, the following version can have been written only after the Qin Dynasty: “Now we have the same tracks for all vehicles, the same characters for all writings, and the same norms for all behaviors.” (The Zhongyong: 33) As to the chronological relationship among the Zhongyong, the Mengzi, and the Xunzi, see Qu, pp.27-30, and Tu, chapter 1. It is arguable that the Zhongyong was written in the early Han dynasty (202 BCE – 8), much later than the other two books.
would suggest that the author of the book was aware of the debate, as the notions of the debate might exist before they were addressed by Mengzi and Xunzi.

In fact, the “ignorance” of the debate seems to deliver a keen insight by the author, that is, the debate over good or evil nature was improperly addressed. Both sides of the debate had observed the inevitability of moral disagreements and conflicts. Human beings must judge and choose to live, and their judgments start with a certain perspective yet judge universally. Since moral disagreements are intractable, insisting on a certain perspective will result in endless debate but a solution.

If we look into the arguments provided by Mengzi and Xunzi, we may find that they both were worried by the same social problem, i.e., disordering of the rites and spreading of immoral behaviors. Further, they actually shared the same idealism, that is, to establish a good and moral society. The only difference between them was their different explanations of the cause of the problems as well as of the motivation to establish the good and moral society. Taking into a consideration of their commonality, their difference is not essential. Indeed, the difference will disappear when the ideal society is reached. From a progressive viewpoint, we may conclude that the debate contains no essential conflict at all.

The Zhongyong’s understanding of human nature is a progressive viewpoint. We may apply it to review the debate. Regardless of good or evil, human nature is endowed on us by birth. In his dialogues with Gaozi, who agrees with Mengzi that human nature is given by birth, Mengzi defends that human nature is born with a good tendency. On the other hand, Xunzi grants that human nature comes along with birth, but insists that they are born evil. Respectively, Mengzi explains that good nature provides a foundation upon which we are able to attain morality. And Xunzi argues that morality is necessary to cultivate and cover our evil nature so that a good society can be established. They attempt to locate the driving force that prompts us to the same ideal morality. Whatever the driving force is, it is endowed on us from the very beginning of our existence and we have no power to alter it. Whether our nature is good or evil, it is given by birth, and it is our nature (good or evil) that motivates us to establish ideal morality. Logically, if we retain the position that our nature is endowed by birth, we may then dismiss the issue of good or evil. This is indeed the Zhongyong’s treatment.

Now, if we fix our eyes on the goal of the good and moral society as well as the principle that the nature is endowed by birth, we see no conflict but the same

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11 I appeal to Kant’s categorical imperative here: a moral law must be universal. I do not say that those people involved in the debate were conscious of this categorical imperative. Yet, a moral judgment must be a categorical imperative.

12 A Song Neo-Confucian, Wang Yangming, may be the first one to perceive the significance of this treatment. In his conversation with his student, Xue Kan (Hsueh K’an), Wang makes a statement: “The state of having neither good nor evil is that of principle in tranquillity” (Chan, 677. Extended discussion may be found in 677-679). In Wang’s terminology, tranquillity is the state of cheng. In this interpretation, the issue of good and evil can be dismissed in the concept of cheng.
assumption. That is, with our endowed nature we need to improve ourselves to establish a good and moral society. As we have introduced the theme of improvement, we may call it the progressive viewpoint. The Zhongyong is in this viewpoint. With the statement that “Following the nature is called the way”, the book emphasizes on the way, which should be on track all the times from beginning to end. The progressive viewpoint admits that our present life is not perfect and our current notion of good has yet to improve. It is reasonable to infer that a reflection on the imperfect and incomplete human life can only conceptualize a partial human nature. When one insist on the completeness of a certain understanding of one’s endowed nature, which in fact are incomplete, then, one will inevitably encounter conflicts with others. If our understanding of the endowed nature is a progressive process, the concern is then shifted to that of improvement, rather than that of argument.

The book’s progressive viewpoint fosters a non-adversarial attitude. As we know, the argumentative-style in communication was prevailing among different schools in the Warring States period. This non-adversarial attitude does not demand that others adopt what is right or wrong, but simply demonstrates what we should do and how we can do it if we want to be good in a long run. The theme of the book is to explore the way to be a good human being. It begins with this assumption: the Tian-endowed nature is in our existence all the times, but our conception of it may appear differently at different stages of life. Consequently, we are not in a position to argue with others, as none of us hold a complete understanding of our endowed nature.

Based on this progressive viewpoint, the book strategically addresses these three questions: What is the concept of junzi? What is concerned in a junzi’s life? And what is junzi’s life in fulfillment? To answer these questions is to demonstrate Confucian religiosity.

II. Who is Junzi?

The first half of the text combines a variety of Confucius’s sayings with brief comments and statements. The purpose is to provide a reflection on human nature as it has been perceived in light of Confucius’s teaching. However, this lengthy discussion can divert the reader’s attention. At first glance, this part of the book offers observations about ideal social relations (political and moral), as well as the ideal personality, from Confucian perspectives. One may be led to the opinion that the book deals only with ethical and political. Further reading may reveal that some of the so-called ideal social relations obviously have become obsolete for a modern

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13 I leave this term in its pinyin form without translation and will discuss it in the following section. Some translate it as “superior person” or “exemplary person”, I do not feel satisfied with them.

14 As a comparison, I may mention Tu Wei-ming’s conceiving the book by three categories: the profound person, the fiduciary community, and the moral metaphysics. See Tu Wei-ming: introduction and chapter 1. I share Tu Wei-ming’s evaluation that the Zhongyong has an “internal structure,” rather than just a collection of aphorisms, though I perceive the internal structure differently.
reader, such as “honor high ranking ministers” and “be considerate to hired officials.” (20) Readers may then lose interest in reading and reflecting on the book. Indeed, the importance of the book has been denounced for decades in contemporary Chinese scholarship since the May Fourth Movement of 1919. This is of course a lamentable misleading.

To explore Confucian religiosity, we have to understand the concept of junzi delineated by the Zhongyong. It says: “A junzi is in zhongyong” (2:1). In Chinese, the term zhongyong combines zhong and yong. Zhong means, literally, the middle, center, or proper; yong means employment, application. When combined, it refers to a proper application or a right action. If forced to translate it into English, I prefer to “proper action”. So the title of the Zhongyong may be translated as On the Proper Action. A junzi is a person who acts properly. But according to what is it proper? It says: “Therefore, being a junzi, one cannot but cultivate himself. To cultivate himself, one cannot but serve his kin. To serve his kin, one cannot be ignorant of human beings. To know human beings, one cannot be ignorant of the Tian.” (20:7) A junzi is described as a person who cultivates himself, and this cultivation includes serving his kin, knowing humanity and the Tian. Clearly, when a junzi lives a life properly, it means to live a life according to the knowledge of the Tian-endowed nature.

A junzi is a person who is able to follow the Tian-endowed nature. To be able to follow it, one must have the knowledge of it. And to have this knowledge, one must self-cultivate. Consequently, self-cultivation is the way of junzi.

Being the way of junzi, self-cultivation imposes two issues. First, what is the foundation of self-cultivation? And secondly, what does he cultivate? To address these two issues, the book categorizes two kinds of good. Let us read the following:

When people in inferior positions do not win over the confidence of the sovereign, the government cannot be in order. There is a way to win over the confidence of the sovereign; but if they cannot be trusted by their friends, they cannot win over the confidence of the sovereign. There is a way to be trusted by their friends, but if they do not obey their parents, they cannot be trusted by their friends. There is a way to be obedient to their parents, but if they cannot be in cheng when they are alone, they cannot be obedient to their parents. There is a way to be in cheng, but without seeing the good, they are not in cheng (20:17).

We have a couple of translation issues to explain. The last sentence connects the good and cheng. Most English translations use the future tense to indicate a causal relationship between “not seeing the good” and “not in cheng.” For example, Ames/Hall translate it as: “If one does not understand efficacy [the good], one will not find creativity (cheng) in one’s person.”15 Such a translation implies that the understanding of the good is the precondition for being cheng; or that the understanding of the good is the foundation of being cheng. This is a misreading. The passage depicts an existential state in which when one is in cheng one sees the good simultaneously. Or when one sees the good, at the same time, one is in cheng. The

15 See Ames/Hall, p.104.
good is present or manifests itself in cheng, and cheng is featured in the manifestation of the good. Lacking of either of them, the other cannot exist.

Linguistically, cheng conveys a disposition or an attitude of being honest, sincere, truthful, and real with oneself. Most English translators use “sincerity” for cheng. In English, “sincerity” can be defined in the context of morality of a community. However, the Zhongyong employs the term cheng to refer to a disposition in which one is true to oneself; so it further indicates an existence in which one is immediate with one’s own nature. It can be a disposition when one is alone, having nothing to do with others. If forced to translate, “being true to oneself” may be suitable.

The quoted passage traces the foundation of a junzi’s life and reaches the good which manifests itself in cheng. Once in cheng, one directly sees the good. In other words, the good is immediately revealed when one is in cheng. As cheng is a disposition immediate with one’s nature, the manifesting good in cheng is the Tian-endowed nature, i.e., the natural good. In this thinking, the book continues: “Cheng is the way of the Tian.” (20:18) Later on, it says: “The manifestation through cheng is called the nature; to be towards cheng through manifestation is called the education.” (21) In these two sayings, cheng is connected with Tian and nature. It is inferred that which manifests (the good) in cheng is the Tian-endowed nature. This good comes from the Tian and will be in human existence from the beginning to the end.

There is another kind of good, however. Human beings judge and choose to live. According to the book, when seeing the good in cheng, one will follow it. But one cannot follow it by instincts. Rather, being a human, one has to catch it, make it an idea of good, and then use it to judge and choose. It says: “To start with cheng is the way of human existence. …When starting with cheng, one judges the good and holds on to it firmly” (20:18). This “good” occurs in the context of judgment. Compared to the good seen in cheng, the good in judgment is only a human-made idea. It is a conceptualization of the good seen in cheng, and therefore is secondary and changeable (or improvable).17

Right after proposing the idea of good, the book advises: “Of something unlearned, you have learned it yet are unable to learn it, do not quit. Of something untouched, you have questioned it yet are unable to know it, do not quit. Of something never thought of, you have thought of it yet are unable to understand it, do not quit. Of something unclear, you have clarified it yet are unable to distinguish it, do not quit. Of something not done, you have done it yet are unable to fulfill it, do

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16 Compare with Ames/Hall’s translation: “creating is the proper way of becoming human. Creating is selecting what is efficacious and holding on to it firmly.” Here Ames/Hall translate 诚之者 as creating in an understanding that the sentence implies a starting point. I agree with this interpretation.

17 The book does not mention the good too many times. Most of them refer to the good in judgment. For example, in chapter 8, it says: “Yanhui is such a person: He wants to be in zhongyong; when receiving a good, he holds to it tightly and follows it, not losing it.” In chapter 24, it says: “When something of disaster or blessing is to come, if good, one knows it in advance; and if not good, one knows it in advance. Therefore, who is in full cheng is like omniscient.” In both contexts, the good refers to the good in judgment.
not quit... Following this way, the dull will surely become bright, the weak will surely become the strong.” (20:20-21). The intent of these words is to encourage people to strive ceaselessly to improve themselves. But what they can improve is not the good seen in cheng, which was endowed by the Tian and cannot be changed; but the good in judgment, namely, the idea of good.

We see two kinds of good here, namely, the natural good (the good seen in cheng) and the idea of good (a conceptualization of the former). The distinction between these two goods is crucial to understand the concept of junzi. We may categorize two concepts as follows: According to the book, the Tian endows human beings with natures. When people are true to themselves, they are able to see their endowed natures. This is the good seen in cheng, which is the natural good, and it will not change throughout the whole life. Meanwhile, people must judge and choose to exist. When they see the good in cheng, they have to conceptualize this good and use it as the foundation for their judgments and decision-making. In this way, the natural good, which manifests itself in cheng, transforms into an idea of good, which functions as the starting point of judgment. The natural good is endowed by the Tian and exists in a human life from the beginning to the end. It is beyond human effort to change it. The idea of good, however, is conceptualization of the good seen in cheng. In such a conceptualization, it may rightly conform to the good seen in cheng; meanwhile, it may also mistake it. Once the mistake is discerned, the idea of good will change (improve) accordingly.

With this distinction between two concepts of good, we are able to define junzi. When one keeps being true to oneself, one is able to see the natural good and conceptualize it in an idea of good, based on which one judges and chooses. Since the natural good manifests itself in cheng, it is necessary for one to be in cheng at all times so that once the difference between the natural good and the idea of good occurs, one can improve the idea of good to conform to the natural good. The foundation of junzi’s self-cultivation is the good seen in cheng, and that which a junzi cultivates is his idea of good which is the conceptualization of the Tian-endowed nature. This is the process of self-cultivation. In the Confucian tradition, a junzi’s life is a life of “Improving the self by cultivating the nature.” (修身养性)

III. Cheng: Truthful to What?

In presenting two kinds of good, the book connects them with cheng. As we have discussed, cheng indicates a disposition of feeling: that of being truthful to oneself. But to be truthful to oneself is not an easy issue. For example, one may be under an external influence or control, and therefore cannot be truthful to oneself. One may also become stubborn with a certain ideology and so cannot be truthful to oneself. Since the natural good manifests itself only in cheng, to maintain an existential state of being in cheng becomes crucial for one to be a junzi.

We need some discussion about this disposition. Let us consider this paragraph:

Cheng is the way of the Tian; to start with cheng is the way of human beings. Cheng is that in which you do not need to endeavor to conform to it; nor to think to
get it; and you are on the right way as a sage. When starting with cheng, one judges the good and holds on to it firmly. (20:18)

In this paragraph, we encounter two usages of cheng, one is the way of the Tian, and the other is the way of human beings. The difference in language is very small. It is zhī (之) added to the latter. Zhī can be understood as a pronoun referring to cheng. The sentence of cheng zhī zhe (诚之者) may then be read as cheng cheng (诚诚). Grammatically, the first cheng becomes a verb. In English, I translate it as “starting with cheng”.

Let us examine the first usage. The way of the Tian does not refer to something irrelevant to human existence, since the word cheng connotes something relative to speech. In my understanding, it refers to the Tian-endowed nature. We have discussed that this nature manifests itself in cheng. To a human being, only being in cheng, can one see and then follow the Tian-endowed nature. To follow the nature is to follow the way of the Tian. In this sense, cheng is the way of the Tian.

Since the endowed nature is at the very beginning of human existence, and this nature manifests itself in cheng, it can then be inferred that all human beings start their lives with cheng. This is the way of human existence. Here, the book conceives cheng as the starting point of human existence. Being the starting point, cheng is not an ideal stage of human existence one endeavors to enter. Anything one has to make an effort to get is not the starting point. The book stresses this point and says: “you do not need to endeavor to conform to it.” Further, you do not even have to think of it to reach an understanding of cheng and then to be in cheng. Actually, if you think of it to get in cheng, your thought will be the starting point and cheng is at most an ideal stage of human existence. But in actuality, as a human being, you must be in cheng first and then think. All thoughts come out of cheng. Therefore, you do not have to “think to get it.”

It is true that people have thoughts and ideas. These thoughts can be either formulated by one’s own observation and thinking, or informed by others. However, in our actual lives, if we trace back all the way to the beginning, we will find this fact, i.e., no one starts with these thoughts and ideas. On the contrary, all thoughts and ideas come out in a later stage of life. In this consideration, once in cheng, you are following the way of the Tian, and therefore you are actually a sage.

However, human beings are different from other animals. They have to judge and choose to live. In the previous section, we have discussed that the Zhongyong has categorized two goods. The natural good seen in cheng is the Tian-endowed nature, which can be in touch only in cheng. The idea of good, on the other hand, is the good in judgment. It is a conceptual transformation of the endowed nature and functions as the foundation of judgments of good and bad. When one starts with cheng, one will have to conceptualize the good seen in cheng and hold fast to it. The conceptualized

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18 Mengzi had a similar saying: “Cheng is the way of the Tian; to think of cheng is the way of human beings.” See the Mengzi, 7:12. This statement in fact deprives cheng of its function as the starting point, as one enters cheng through thinking of it.
good is the idea of good. As the idea of good exists only in human consciousness, it guides one’s judging and choosing. This is the second usage of cheng.

Let us summarize it. When cheng is a noun, it refers to the way of the Tian, as one is able to see the endowed nature in cheng. When cheng is a verb, it refers to the way of human beings, in which people formulate their ideas of good and use them to judge and choose the good to live. The former is the foundation of human existence; and the latter is the application deriving from the foundation. Wang Yangming profoundly perceives these two usages of cheng. He says: “To put the heart in the right place is to return to the foundation; and to cultivate the self is to apply it in action.”

The distinction between the foundation and application (ti yong zhi bian) is actually involved these two usages of cheng.

We should consider this possibility in human existence. Human beings need the idea of good to judge and choose to live. Although this good is secondary, it is possible for people to take it as the foundation for the further judgment and choosing. For example, a man may judge an apple as food by its color and taste. He then considers that a thing with such a color and taste is food. Based on this idea of good, he will judge and choose things for food by their certain color and taste. He can do it without appealing to the good seen in his cheng. In his existence, the idea of good becomes the sole foundation and cheng may be seen as obsolete. In such an existence, he is following a certain idea of good and has nothing to do with the good seen in cheng. According to the book, this is not the correct way. Although there are many ways for human beings to live, however, the only right way is to follow the Tian endowed nature. Since the nature manifests itself in cheng, to live in the right way people must maintain their lives in cheng. With this possibility in mind, the subject of cheng had been extensively discussed in Confucianism in history to secure the right way.

In fact, the possibility of living by a certain idea of good is the major dilemma which human beings encounter. The book describes this type of life thusly: “Being dull yet loving to make decisions; being lowly yet loving to be arbitrary; living in today’s world, yet loving to behave like living in ancient times” (28:1). When we say someone is dull, we mean that this person is making decisions he does not know. In other words, he stubbornly relies on his idea of good to make decisions. Supposedly, we should not make decisions about things we do not know. Similarly, those who are in a lowly social status may boast that they can do whatever they want. Their boasting depends on their self-central thoughts. Since these self-central thoughts may bring damages to others, their arbitrary actions will fail eventually. And it is

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20 Chen Yun, in his article, “Revealing the Dao of Heaven through the Dao of humans: Sincerity in The Doctrine of the Mean”, attempts to discern two approaches to cheng. This attempt, though emphases too much on the metaphysical meaning of the way of the Tian, touches the issue in a similar way. See Yun Chen.
21 Cf. An. Although I cannot share with An’s conclusion that cheng lost its momentum in Chinese thought, his documenting and discussing of the term is still a reference. Also see Wenyu Xie’s review of An’s book in Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy 7 (2), 2008.
observable that, with the changing times, people may have developed different understandings of good. Yet, some people may insist on those understandings in the past and apply them in their contemporary lives. These people belong to a category of xiaoren. Although the book does not offer much discussion about the xiaoren, it definitely considers that this is a type of life we should avoid. That is, xiaoren represents a lowly life, which should be discouraged.

Further, it is impossible for one to improve his idea of good if one’s understanding of good is only that from his idea of good. In such an existence, the idea of good is the starting point of judgment. Anything conforming to the idea of good will be judged as good. Since the idea of good is treated as the sole standard of judging, it contains final authority in judgment of good and evil. In this consideration, this person has no other resources to improve his ideas of good.

As we have pointed out, the Zhongyong contains a progressive theme, the book’s intent is clear, that is, junzi’s life is to be promoted, as a junzi is improving his idea of good according to the good seen in cheng; and xiaoren’s life should be avoided. Yet, to be a junzi is to maintain one’s life in cheng. Now, how to maintain being ‘in cheng’ is the core issue for Confucianism.

IV. The Fulfillment of Cheng: The Ultimate Disposition in Confucianism

Let us follow the concept of human existence in the Zhongyong. Each human being is endowed by the Tian with a nature. Following this nature is the right way for each human being to live. This nature manifests itself only in cheng. The word cheng indicates a disposition that is truthful to one’s self. Consequently, if one is truthful to oneself, one is in cheng and is able to see the Tian-endowed nature, and then follow it. Actually, all human beings start their lives in cheng, as they grow up from their infancy in which they had yet to formulate their ideas of good respectively. When the idea of good has been established, although it is secondary, it functions as the standard of judgment. To some people, the idea of good may be seen as the only good, and they then become dependent on it. This is of course not a right way and should be avoided. Now, the right way is to follow the endowed nature manifest in cheng. It follows that we should remain in cheng all the time. When we say “being cheng all the time”, to a human existence it means the utmost cheng (zhì chéng, 至誠).

The Chinese word zhì (致) indicates something in its fulfillment. What is then cheng in its fulfillment? In chapter 26, we read these words: “The utmost cheng is ceaseless.” I would interpret this word in terms of time. That is, the fulfillment of cheng is to be in cheng all the time to the end. The book says:

Only those people in the world who are in the utmost cheng are able to fulfill their own natures. Being able to fulfill their own natures, they are able to fulfill the nature of human beings. Being able to fulfill the nature of human beings, they are able to fulfill the natures of things. Being able to fulfill the natures of things, they are able to participate in the transformation and nurturing of heaven-earth. Being able to participate in the transformation and nurturing of heaven-earth, they are able to correlate with heaven-earth (22).
In this context, the book defines utmost cheng in terms of fulfillment. It demands a junzi to be in cheng in each moment. The nature manifests itself in cheng. When one is in cheng, one is able to see and grasp the nature and follows it to realize it. Meanwhile, when one is not in cheng, one becomes blind to the nature and cannot follow it. The momentum of the nature then meets the opposite force. In human life, it is possible for one to make decisions against natural demands, which is what a xiaoren may do. This is the opposite force. However, when one is in cheng, natural demands will be effective; and when one is in cheng all the time, natural demands will be effective all the time. Being in cheng all the time is to be in utmost cheng.

The primary force in human existence is the natural demand, which demonstrates itself as a disposition of cheng. In this observation, the endowed nature in a human being exerts its power only when this person is in cheng. Although the natural demand consistently propels human existence, it may be oppressed or restrained so that it becomes idle in a state of non-function. Since the right way for a human being to live is to follow the nature, and since this can be done only when one is in cheng, the fulfillment of the natural demand requires a person to be in cheng constantly without interruption, that is, to be in utmost cheng.

Utmost cheng is a ceaseless process. Confucians call it self-cultivation, and it is an ever-improving process. In the very beginning, a human being is born without any idea of good. As such a baby simply follows the natural drive to live. At a later stage, he or she has gained the idea of good and then faces an intersection: to follow the nature or to follow the idea of good. This requires efforts. One must remain to be in cheng to follow nature, and then become a junzi. Yet, to make a choice to follow the idea of good, one may see it as the sole good in life and thereby becomes a xiaoren. As junzi’s life is to be encouraged and advocated in Confucianism, the effort to be in cheng is the key to be a junzi. Throughout history, Confucians have established a tradition of self-cultivation, in which the improvement through changing the idea of good in cheng is the main theme.

It is noteworthy that “self-cultivation” is not an isolated process. Rather, it is a social and open process. It says:

Therefore, this is the way of junzi: depending upon his own self, attesting [his thought and action] through consulting with ordinary people, proving them by comparing to what the Three Kings [had done], establishing them in conformation with heaven-earth, confirming it with ghosts and spirits to erase doubts, and making sure that they will not be contrary to what the sages [would think and do] in a hundred generations.

As we see, being in cheng is an individual issue and cannot be forced by an external push. However, it does not mean that a junzi should isolate him. Instead, he is open to the external world. In fact, an isolated self-cultivation will result in an illusion of perfection, in which one may be deluded that he has attained the fulfillment of the Tian-endowed nature. Such an illusion may lead him to become a xiaoren, seeing his idea of good as the sole good and resist to any change. A junzi depends on his own
self to cultivate, yet his thought and decision must be in communication with the outside world, including ordinary people and sages of the past and future.

V. Confucian Religiosity in Cheng

In dealing with the religiosity contained in Confucianism, scholars are often puzzled by its lack of the type of faith-system found in western-style religions. The Zhongyong has some discussions about trust and friendship. However, the issue is treated as a derived subject. The term “trust” in this treatment indicates a relation among people, and has little to do with heaven-human relationship. Trust is a character of a junzi, but it is not the essential character. It says: “Therefore, a junzi holds respect without defending; holds trust without persuading.”(33-3) Indeed, the Zhongyong never raise the issue of trust and faith as expressed in the Judaic-Christian context. Christian faith fosters a disposition to depend on God’s redemption. It demands that the believer trust in God, an outside force. An absolute trust in God is to prevail in a Christian’s life. In a contrast, although the Zhongyong sees the Tian as the provider of human nature, it never regards it as an independent force upon which our lives should rely. As we read on, the book gives no hint as to whether the Tian may come to help us, or whether we may appeal to it for help. In the Zhongyong, there is no place for faith such as we find in God-human relations in the Judaic-Christian system.

There is another treatment, that is, Confucian religiosity has been appreciated as morality. Morality prevails in human relationship. An isolated individual does not need human morality, though he or she may get involved with the morality relating to the environment. The moral sense of the Zhongyong is the most discussed subject in scholarship, and the central term of cheng is presented as moral term referring to the sincere relation among people. Such a treatment ignores completely the religious sense of cheng, and the words “sincerity” and “honesty” is seen as the proper words for understanding cheng. It is impossible to demonstrate Confucian religiosity in such a treatment.

We may analyze this treatment further. Sincerity or honesty is part of moral language. Morally, a sincere or honest person is a junzi as long as this person has an integrity regarding thoughts, speeches, and actions. By contrast, those who cheat, deceive, or betray are not sincere or honest persons. Moral characteristics can only exist and be displayed in the context of social relations. In other words, sincere persons must show their sincerity in different social and public settings. They should not deceive the public for any reason. Otherwise, they are not sincere. However, this

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22 It has become a tradition to categorize Confucianism in terms of ethics and politics in Western scholarship. Following this tradition, Tu Wei-ming defends the idea that Confucianism can be conceived in terms of ethico-religion (Tu, 96). Such an interpretation prevents readers from perceiving its pure religious claim.

23 After having compared various translations of cheng, Tu Wei-ming decides that “sincerity” may best fit the meaning of the word, though he also insists that an explanation must be accompanied (Tu, 71-73).
framework cannot fit in a true Confucian, who can be true to his own self even though he may consciously hide his actual thoughts and plans by deceiving others. His actual thoughts and plans express his understanding of the Tian-endowed nature. For example, when a junzi lives in a dirty political world, he may have no choice but to speak about what his heart does not want to speak. He may then deceive the public. Yet he is still truthful to his own self. In Confucianism, as far as he is in cheng, he will receive high praise after he finally steps out as a junzi. Even if he may not have a chance to step out, he will still be regarded as a junzi if he is in cheng ceaselessly. In Chinese literature, a description of junzi of this type is the well-known comparison of a lotus coming out of mud without being contaminated. We have a popular Confucian saying: Step forward to share the good with the world, and step back to keep the good to his own (兼善天下与独善其身). Clearly, when a junzi is at presence, we may not judge him in terms of his moral sincerity or honesty. Rather, it is the religious power of cheng that sustains his ultimate commitment in life.24

To understand Confucian religiosity in cheng, we need to look into the reliability of cheng. A Confucian’s life is driven by the endowed nature manifest in cheng. As long as he is in cheng, he is able to follow the drive. But his following contains these steps: first, he must be in cheng and see the natural good; second, he has to conceptualize it in form of the idea of good and use it to judge and choose; third, once the difference between the natural good and the idea of good occurs, he must change the idea of good accordingly; and fourth, in so doing, he must continue to be in cheng all the time. Granted that the Tian-endowed nature is the beginning of a human being, no matter what it is, to follow this nature is then demanded of all human beings from within. Cheng is a disposition truthful to this nature, and then secures a human being to follow it. From a human point of view, what he must do is choose to continue to be in cheng. There is no other way for a human being to be in touch with the endowed nature.25

It is observed that in actuality there are two ways for human beings to live, that is, the junzi’s and the xiaoren’s. Our discussion has shown that a xiaoren follows a certain idea of good. To this person, the idea of good is the sole good, and he seriously considers that he is living a good life based on it. Now, we may ask: Which way is more reliable for living a good life? An idea of good, no matter how perfect it may appear, is only an understanding of good. It is limited to a certain perspective.

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24 The good example is Liu Bei (a junzi or a superior person image) in the Period of Three Warring States. His tactic to cooperate with Cao Cao (a xiaoren or a mean person image) and to cheat the public is praised by the Confucian tradition as a good tactic, called “to survive by patiently waiting for chance” (韬晦之计). This is an influential tactic in the Confucian construction of personality.

25 Confucian religiosity has been addressed in terms of self-cultivation, as expressed by these terms: “ultimate self-transformation” (Tu Wei-ming), “inner and outer harmony” (Mary Evelyn Tucker 1998), and “the transformative process” (Rodney L. Taylor). Unfortunately, these discussions seem ignorant of the fact that the endowed nature manifest in cheng is the primary force, that is, they do not address Confucian religiosity in the light of cheng.
That is, it is reliable only in this perspective. The book considers this way as a disaster (28). It is then inferred that the junzi’s way is reliable.

Being truthful to our selves does not mean that we are already perfect, but it does indicate that we are on the right track to be good. The Zhongyong never wants to say that perfection comes to us instantly. The issue is, lacking the disposition of cheng, we are not able to perceive the endowed nature; rather, we are deceived by a certain idea of good, and then remain without change in incompleteness, such as in selfishness, short-sightedness, and arrogance. We are living a good life only when we are following the endowed nature in cheng, in which we are able to improve the idea of good accordingly. In this way and in utmost cheng, we are on the right way to perfection. This is self-cultivation. In this lineage, to persevere in cheng through self-cultivation is a religious commitment. In a word, conceptually, the disposition of cheng expresses Confucian religiosity.

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DEVELOPING NORMATIVE CONSENSUS: HOW THE “INTERNATIONAL SCENE” RESHAPES THE DEBATE OVER INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CRITICISM

Ericka Tucker

Can we ever justly critique the norms and practices of another culture? When activists or policy-makers decide that one culture’s traditional practice is harmful and needs to be eradicated, does it matter whether they are members of that culture? Given the history of imperialism, many argue that any critique of another culture’s practices must be internal. Others argue that we can appeal to a universal standard of human wellbeing to determine whether or not a particular practice is legitimate or whether it should be eradicated. In this paper, I use the FGC eradication campaigns of the 1980s to show that the internal/external divide is complicated by the interconnectedness of these debates on the international level. As the line blurs between internal and external criticism and interventions, new questions emerge about the representativeness of global institutions.

IS THERE ever a just way to critique the practices of another culture? What are the conditions of the possibility of such a critique? Are critical interventions legitimate only when they are internal to a particular culture, or as Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum contend, are there always internal streams of dissent into which external forces can tap? (Nussbaum and Sen, 1989)

To understand the practical force of the theoretical debate between internal and external criticism, I will examine the case of the FGC debates in the 1980s and 1990s. From a Western perspective, FGC is a paradigm case of an act that is clearly morally wrong. It is nearly impossible, from a Western perspective, to learn about FGC, the practice of clitorectomy, without horror. We hear of such practices and we feel the need to critique, to act, to outlaw, to save, to intervene. However, such interventions are not always effective and are often unwelcome. In an increasingly globalized world, where the practices that horrify Westerners provide fodder for sensationalist journalism and serve as convenient justifications for military or policy intervention, critiques of non-Western cultural practices are charged with cultural insensitivity at best and imperialism at worst.

In this paper I will argue that even issues which are understood as just plain wrong from an external position still need to be addressed on the basis of internal values and concepts. However, as I think the history of the FGC debate shows (and I will show below), the internal/external divide is complicated by the interconnectedness of internal and external debates on the international level. Whether criticism is internal or external is difficult to determine, and in some cases the provenance of a particular critique is impossible to identify. It may be impossible to say at this point in history that only internal criticism of cultural practices is

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1 I will use the term ‘FGC’ for the variety of practices at issue, including clitorectomy and infibulation.
permitted, since the boundary between inside and outside of a culture is crossed every
day by media, international aid and development workers, trade representatives, etc.
Finally, I will argue that whether criticism of cultural practices is justified internally
and externally is a question separable from the justice of interventions to eradicate
criticized practices. Justifiable criticism, internal and external ought to serve as the
basis of action only through a just, inclusive and democratic process. Criticism,
whether internal or external, given the difference in judgment among individuals and
groups, may never be eliminable, nor should it. Only through inclusive democratic
institutions can critiques of particular practices be justly weighed, and solutions
defined. If that process is internal to a state, then external intervention may be unjust.
However, if that process is international, external intervention may be justifiable.
Criticism of non-western practices too often has foreshadowed armed intervention.
The legacy of colonialism explains part of the resistance to Western criticism of non-
Western norms and practices.

Through examining the positions of philosophers and legal theorists in the FGC
debates I will show how the history of colonial interventions shapes the debate over
the creation of 'universal norms' such as the positive promotion of human rights and
campaigns to eradicate harmful practices. I will argue that solving the problem of
FGC does not require better universal norms, but instead necessitates inclusive and
participatory democratic structures both nationally and internationally.

FGC seems to represent a head-on collision between Western values and a
traditional practice still extant and accepted by African women in some countries. It is
nearly impossible to be a good western subject, a good feminist, etc. and not
understand something called female genital cutting or female genital mutilation as the
worst kind of abuse. (Nussbaum, 1999, 122-124) Yet it is a centuries old practice,
which, even in recent studies is understood as a necessary part of life for men and
women throughout the areas where it is practiced. (Boyle, 2003) FGC has been
important both for international interventionist policies, and as an issue for African
immigrants who import the practice to their new locations in Western countries, like
France, Britain and the United States. As Isabelle Gunning writes, “Culturally
challenging practices like female genital surgery represent crucial areas of
multicultural dialogue for feminists applying international human rights law to the
specific concerns of women.” (Gunning, 1992, 247) While FGC is viewed with
revulsion and horror in a western context, Elizabeth Heger Boyle suggests that,
“Female genital operations enjoy wide community acceptance in practicing cultures.”
(Boyle, 2003, 791) What appears to one group as a clear moral wrong is accepted as
unproblematic by its practitioners and participants. When Western feminists and
international human rights organizations sought to eradicate these practices, their
interventions were resisted.

I. FGC – A History of Failed Interventions

In this section, I will set out the debates over FGC, and I will show how strategies to
critique and eradicate the practice have evolved. FGC debates have not developed in a
vacuum. For some, eradicating FGC is a feminist political project. For others it is a
humanitarian development project. It represents to others another paternalistic, neo-colonial Western intervention, which has little to do with helping women. Western feminists and development theorists were mobilized by key texts in feminist theory and anthropology, including: Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology*, 1978; Frank Hoskens, *Female Sexual Mutilations: The Facts and Proposals for Action*, 1980; Lightfoot-Klein’s *Prisoners of Ritual: An Odyssey into Female Genital Circumcision in Africa*, 1989; and Alice Walker’s, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, 1992, followed by Pratibha Parmar and Alice Walker’s film *Warrior Marks* (1993).

The history of FGC eradication campaigns is a history of failed interventions. British colonial powers in the Sudan and the Church of Scotland in Kenya spearheaded the earliest interventions in the 1920s and 30s. In 1943 the British criminalized FGC in the Sudan. Elizabeth Heger Boyle describes the results of this criminalization in her book *Female Genital Cutting: Cultural Conflict in the Global Community*. She writes, “…as with earlier efforts in Kenya, the law once again politicized the issue and, rather than reducing the practice, led to the collective and secret circumcision of many girls in a short period.” (Boyle, 2003, 791) One early text supporting FGC as a traditional practice, and arguing that western attempts to eradicate it were part of a neo-colonial project was that of the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta in his book, *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938).

In the early years of the post-World War II international governmental institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization, state interventions on the basis of ‘cultural matters’ were discouraged. (Ibid., 40) In 1959 the WHO Yearbook claimed that the practice of FGC was outside its purview because it was of a “social and cultural rather than a medical nature.” (Ibid., 251) Boyle writes, “For decades, the belief that cultural matters were domestic matters foreclosed the international intervention to eradicate FGC.” (Ibid., 44) By the late 1970s, FGC and other cultural issues had become open to international intervention, partially due to the change in strategies and increase in power of international institutions.

Western feminists brought FGC into the international spotlight at the U.N. Decade for Women Conference held in Copenhagen in 1980. At Copenhagen, Fran Hoskens and others involved in the ‘Women’s International Network’, insisted on calling FGC ‘mutilation’. African delegates referred to the practice as ‘female circumcision’ and objected to the phrases ‘mutilation’ and ‘female genital mutilation’ as inflammatory. African delegates agreed that FGC elimination, while important, wasn’t a priority. Famine and disease made food security and clean water bigger concerns for their communities. This clash over FGC drove a wedge between Western feminists and the African delegates. (Oyewumi, 2003, 32) By discounting African feminists’ priorities, Western feminists involved in the FGC eradication campaign, eschewed solidarity with African women. Instead, they aligned themselves with top-down coercive strategies bringing to bear the power of Western-dominated international institutions on African countries. Boyle describes this strategic move on the part of Western feminists and how outsiders viewed the campaign. She writes, “Rather than resist international norms, Westerners enthusiastically embraced them – to the point of assertively challenging any hint of deviation from those norms. The manner in which the US targeted FGC reinforced the ‘superiority’ of Western values
in the global system.” (Boyle, 2003, 113) After Copenhagen, FGC became a battle over who would be able to dominate global discussions of goals for African development. African delegates boycotted the rest of the conference for its insensitivity to African perspectives. Oyeronke Oyewumi writes, “It became clear during the conferences that commemorated the decade that the ideals and norms of Western feminism were the new standards by which feminists from other parts of the world would be judged. The resistance of third world feminist delegates to these conferences underlined the inappropriateness of the assumption that identical development standards can be fashioned for all women at all times in all parts of the world.” (Okome, 2003, 89)

In 1979, the U.N. started holding hearings on FGC, but did not take up the gender critiques of patriarchy of feminist activists; instead, they took up critiques of FGC on medical grounds. In 1979 the WHO classified FGC as a “traditional practice affecting the health of women and children,” (Okome, 2003, 48) transforming it into a public health issue. Medical intervention was seen as apolitical and resistance to it irrational. Beginning in the early 1980s, Western countries began passing anti-FGC ordinances. Sweden became the first country to ban the practice in 1982, and in 1985 France began prosecuting FGC cases as child abuse. The U.S. passed anti-FGC legislation in 1996 in response to a much-publicized asylum case of a woman from Togo who was seeking political asylum on the basis of FGC.2

By the mid-1990s, the international community shifted away from a concern with national sovereignty in cultural matters, and the gender critique of FGC again came to the fore. Amnesty International identified FGC as a human rights violation and the IMF and World Bank linked development aid to FGC reform.3 Countries where FGC was practiced and which relied on international aid and support tended to choose health and social policy reform rather than criminalization to eradicate FGC.4 More powerful countries, like Egypt, which could resist international pressure, moved more slowly in their eradication campaigns. However, Egypt was not immune to all forms of international pressure. In 1994, CNN broadcast a live circumcision being performed in Egypt while the International Conference on Population and Development was being held in Cairo. Although Egypt already had laws banning FGC, the practice was widely supported and anti-FGC statutes were rarely enforced. Following the events of 1994 debates over criminalization of the practice raged as anti-Western forces took up the issue as a mark of resistance. A fatwa supporting FGC practices followed CNN’s broadcast and the Egyptian government’s perceived ‘caving’ to Western forces.5

In the intervening decades, a number of international human rights instruments have emerged as tools for feminist arguing against FGC, including: CEDAW (1980), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1980), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the 1994 Plan of Action for the Elimination of Harmful  

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Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. In 1997, the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Population Fund, unveiled a joint 10-year plan to eliminate FGC within 3 generations. One of the three ‘prongs’ of the joint plan includes “de-medicalizing” the arguments against FGC, and framing it as a human rights violation.

1. Critiques of Feminist FGC Intervention

To make their case against FGC, Western feminists presented African women as victims of their culture, and argued that external interventions were necessary to eradicate this harmful practice. However, this was a picture that African women did not recognize. Oyeronke Oyewumi, one of the African feminists critical of FGC interventions, argues that Western feminists need to recognize African women as having power within their cultures. FGC practitioners are most often women, and the practice marks individual women as full adult members of their communities. Eradicating a practice so embedded in the context and meaning of the lives of individuals and their communities is no simple matter. By treating African women as pawns in a patriarchal system, or victims of torture, Western feminists disempowered and marginalized the very women they are trying to help.

2. Sensationalism and Backlash

Western feminists were unwilling to recognize that the African women gained much of their power from their cultural location, and that any increase in power would have to be negotiated partially in the terms of that culture. Legal theorists Isabelle Gunning and Kristin Savell argue that feminists in the FGC campaign were insensitive to culture, and seemingly unconcerned about coordinating their eradication efforts with those internal to the communities, which practiced FGC. Feminists sensationalized the practices for media attention and to gain political support, alienating themselves and the campaign from African women in practicing countries. The “arrogance” and “perceived disrespect” of western feminists for African women, “impedes dialogue and effectiveness.” (Gunning, 1992, 230) Instead of coordinating with local groups, whose positions on FGC were more nuanced and included compromise measures, FGC campaigners continued to be absolutist, and seemed unable to mould their strategies and rhetoric to become effective in the communities where FGC was practiced. Gunning writes, “Because of the multicultural nature of the human rights system and the sensitivities of the issue, how the problem is presented and discussed increases in importance.” (Gunning, 1992, 233) It seemed as if western feminists did not want to ‘dilute’ their message by making it relevant to the local context, and acceptable to local people. By failing to do so, they risked irrelevance, and made their continued interventions and invocations of international intervention seem more like coercion than political persuasion.

By misunderstanding and then sensationalizing the issue of FGC without being sensitive to the backlash that this caused within African women’s communities, Western feminists in the FGC project alienated African women in a single-minded
II. Learning from Failed Interventions

What can we learn from the mistakes made by feminist interventions in the FGC debates? Martha Nussbaum and Isabelle Gunning take up this question but propose quite different solutions. Legal theorist Isabelle Gunning focuses on the importance of culture, and proposes that Western feminists need to understand African women’s cultural and political context as well as their own to create a self-reflexive transnational feminist movement. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum agrees that understanding cultural context and self-reflexivity are important steps in a feminist intervention; however, she argues that there is still a place for universal theorizing.

1. The Capabilities Approach

Martha Nussbaum argues that without universal norms, external interventions and critiques are unjustified, and so she focuses her work on developing a universal normative political theory. Nussbaum’s version of the ‘Capabilities Approach’ sets out central human capabilities that every nation should protect. These capabilities include:

1. Life
2. Bodily health
3. Bodily integrity
4. Senses, imagination, thought
5. Emotions
6. Practical reason
7. Affiliation
8. Other species
9. Play
10. Control over one’s environment (Nussbaum, 1999, 41-2)

Providing a ‘universal’ model of human flourishing, Nussbaum argues, is a necessary first step to identifying harmful norms and practices. Nussbaum recognizes that identifying a harmful practice and intervening in another’s culture or country to eradicate a practice are two quite different enterprises.

One of the major critiques of FGC interventions was the failure of Western feminists to understand and work within the contexts of African communities that practice FGC. In Women and Human Development, Nussbaum argues that interventions on behalf of women in other cultural contexts must be careful, and must be sensitive to the context and the self-understanding of those women. She argues...
that, “we need to ask whether the framework we propose, if a single universal one, is sufficiently flexible to enable us to do justice to the human variety we find.” (Nussbaum, 2000, 40) She counsels Western feminists to be sensitive to cultural context, particularly in the case of what she calls ‘challenging cultural practices’. She writes (of the Indian context), “If Western feminists speak of Indian issues such as sati or dowry deaths, they will do so productively only if they understand the issues fully in their historical and cultural contexts.” (Ibid) Further, she offers the following general advice about contextual specificity and feminist theorizing: “In general, any productive feminism must be attentive to the issues that people really face and to the actual history of these issues, which is likely to be complex.” (Ibid., 41)

In “Internal Criticism and the Indian Rationalist Tradition”, Nussbaum argues that the best strategies for inter-cultural criticism appeal to internal critiques of the culture which use internally-culturally shared norms and principles upon which to base their critique. Accordingly, to properly evaluate a culture, with an eye to criticism and change, one must take an internal critical position. (Nussbaum and Sen, 1989) Criticism, she argues, must be internal, using resources taken from within that tradition’s history and human experience. Indeed, only by appeal to commonly understood internal exemplars and ideals can one be effective in generating any kind of critical change. Nussbaum shows how internal criticism is more effective in changing social norms, and that any external criticism can rely on, learn from, and use critical elements in the culture itself to promote change. One can criticize from an external position, but in order to do so and be effective, one must ‘learn the language’ so to speak. Legitimate and effective external criticism and interventions require immersion in the culture in order to understand what the people of that culture value and what their practices mean in context. Nussbaum’s understanding of context and culture makes important use of the fact that cultures are not univocal, that there are strands of resistance within them which seem to appeal to the same goals and norms as those of the capabilities paradigm. With regard to how the capabilities are measured with respect to certain policy decisions, Nussbaum writes, “We cannot really see the meaning of an incident or a law without setting it in its context and history.” (Nussbaum, 2000, 9) Context provides the basis for judging whether something violates a capability or enhances a capability.

Nussbaum begins her theorizing from the problem of women’s situation in the developing world. Human development reports show that no country, according to measures of education, life expectancy or wealth, treats its women citizens as well as men citizens. (Ibid., 2) In developing countries this disparity is worse because gender is correlated with poverty. (Ibid., 3) She characterizes this situation as an “acute failure of human capabilities.” (Ibid., 3) Nussbaum believes this situation unjust, and sets out to come up with a theory of justice that will take seriously the unjust conditions of a large percentage of women in the world.

A primary component of her program is the need to take each individual seriously as an end, not just a means to the ends of others. Justice for women, Nussbaum argues, cannot be achieved through justice for communities or families. The long history of women’s needs and interests being subordinated to those of the family or community means that the wellbeing of the group may come at the expense
of the wellbeing of individual women. Nussbaum espouses political liberalism, a view that takes individuals as the basic units of justice. She argues that, despite its critics, liberalism offers “a form of universalism that is sensitive to pluralism and cultural difference; in this way it enables us to answer the most powerful objections to cross-cultural universals.” (Ibid., 8) Nussbaum’s articulation of human capabilities is meant to identify the core set of human capabilities that need to be protected, regardless of particular cultural norms. Because these capabilities are fundamental, they can be accepted or are already supported by a wide range of cultures. As already widely supported, Nussbaum proposes that they can be the basis of a cross-cultural normative standard, which can be differently realized in terms of functioning in different cultural contexts. Nussbaum writes:

My proposal is frankly universalist and ‘essentialist’. That is, it asks us to focus on what is common to all, rather than on differences (although, as we shall see, it does not neglect these), and to see some capabilities and functions as more central, more at the core of human life than others. Its primary opponents on the contemporary scene will be ‘anti-essentialists’ of many types, thinkers who urge us to begin not with sameness but with difference—both between women and men and across groups of women—and to seek norms defined relatively to a local context and locally held beliefs. (Ibid., 63)

Nussbaum argues that attention to context is important, but that what is essential is the development of universal standards by which we can judge cultural practices to ensure that every individual is able to live a decent human life.

In *Sex and Social Justice* Nussbaum argues that liberal feminists have a moral responsibility not just to critique but to intervene in the struggle for women’s justice worldwide. Failure of a government to protect these capabilities would open up possibilities for external intervention. In “Judging Other Cultures” Nussbaum steps into the FGC debate, arguing that since FGC blocks central universal human capacities, it is a legitimate target for external international intervention. Nussbaum argues that since FGC violates a major capability, ‘Bodily Integrity’, it is a practice that should be banned. She defines ‘bodily integrity’ as, “Being able to move freely from place to place; being able to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.” (Nussbaum, 1999, 41) Given the health risks involved in FGC, it could also be critiqued and banned as a violation of the capabilities protecting ‘life’ and ‘bodily health’. Despite her recognition of the importance of contextual negotiation of cultural change, Nussbaum judges FGC to be so harmful that the value of cooperation with practicing countries is nullified. In the case of FGC, universal norms, the capabilities trump the value of internal criticism. Nussbaum’s argument that ‘universal’ norms must exist in some form in every culture seems to provide a conveniently thin edge of the wedge justifying full-scale international interventions.

2. We Don’t Need Another Universal: the Dialectic of Universal and Particular in FGC Campaigns
One of the major critiques of western feminist intervention in the FGC debate was that they set themselves up as the universal and the standard, and judged African women and African cultures as ‘particular’ in relation to this universal. Isabelle Gunning, in her article “Arrogant Perception, World-Traveling, and Multicultural Feminism,” argues that Western feminists’ disavowal of the of the particularity of their culture is a common problem in such situations of cultural clash, where the Western theorist not only has the weight of history and power behind her theory, but also the ability to disavow this history and how the power was gained, thus speaking as a representative of the universal. Critics of the feminist FGC intervention do not argue that only internal critique is necessary or justified, since African feminists in particular, seem to have an understanding that the internal politics of their cultures are bound up with international norms and institutions and with histories of colonialism in such a way that the internal and external have always been interrelated. Rather, they suggest that external interventions should be cognizant of the internal cultural and political circumstances, and of the status of the external interveners’ cultural context and its relation to the internal cultural context into which they are intervening. This understanding of cultural context on both sides is important so that the intervention can be effective, so that it might improve the lives of women instead of making them more difficult by causing backlash.

While it appears at first that Nussbaum takes cultural context into consideration, a closer look reveals that while she takes the other person’s culture into consideration, she does not reflect on her own position as tied to a particular culture with a history. She believes that she can come up with universal norms from within her own cultural tradition which can be used to trump other cultural traditions and practices. In ignoring the context of her own culture and the history of setting up its values as universal, can we understand Nussbaum as engaging in ethnocentric theoretical practice? First, we should take a detour into the consideration of ‘positionality’, and what culture has to do with what one says, and how what one says is heard by others.

3. Positionality: The Role of Culture

While Nussbaum takes cultural relativist arguments and arguments from cultural imperialism seriously, she does not take into account the powerful role of culture and ‘internal’ political contexts in determining whether an argument is a good one, whether it can be politically effective or even heard in a particular context. In short, she does not attend sufficiently to the question of how context determines what a political argument or position means. What does it mean to be inside a culture, a member of a society, or part of a tradition, or a history? At the very least it means being part of a tradition of interpretation. To wit, being a member of a culture means coming to understand the world in terms of one’s culture. One is a part of a history, and this history shapes how one understands what events mean, and what institutions mean. This cultural understanding does not have to be univocal; the strands of interpretation that are available within a culture may be rich. However, the arguments between different groups within a country themselves have a history. The meaning, efficacy, and weight of a set of reasons or justifications must deal with this historical,
political, cultural context. Where one is located, the political and cultural context in which one lives and wages political battles, influences the kinds of things one can argue for and the kinds of reasons that one appeals to in order to justify one’s position. This is the case both for Nussbaum, who appeals to the tradition of liberal theory and to the history of justifications for some kinds of policies which focus on individual, as well as for Muslim feminists who appeal to the Koran or to sharia law to justify their positions and reform policy.

Nussbaum understands that cultures are different, and so argues that the capabilities that she champions may be multiply realizable. However, recognizing this important point about cultural difference should allow her to see that different types of theorizing and argument from a different set of premises may be necessary in different cultural, historical, political settings. Cultural specificity, and different histories may make people from different cultures see things in different ways, argue on the basis of different historical evidence, and view certain kinds of theorizing and justification as illegitimate. In this line of thinking there is a general argument that what counts as a reason depends on the context in which one is arguing, but I wish to make no claims about cultural relativism or rationality. Political arguments tend to draw from evidence which is historically and affectively motivating, as well rationally justified. The process of reasoning may well be universal, but what count as reasons vary from context to context. To be effective and legitimate, critics must take their historical, political, and cultural context into consideration.

Following Uma Narayan, it seems that keeping a scorecard tallying which argument comes from within a culture, to which comes from without is not only unwise, it may be impossible. (Narayan, 1997) Identifying which ideas are internal, and which ideas are external may not be that important, but determining which ideas are politically effective does require understanding the internal context of a culture/state/region. Further, understanding the external relations of that state, and how the internal debate plays on the international level (external) is important, given the power of the international political scene on the developments in particularly post-colonial nations. Marxist rhetoric, while powerful internally to many post-colonial nations, may get one in trouble with the international community, and thus may have no small economic or military consequences.

Perhaps the difference between creating norms and identifying cultural universals is just a difference in language – but it is a difference of language and practice that matters at the international level, where worries about western hegemony persist, and the language of universals developed from a western tradition are viewed with skepticism. However, if a genuine multicultural dialogue is necessary to create global consensus on norms, then perhaps not only the language of international normative political theorizing must change, but there must be change at the level of international institutions, in terms of the degree of participation of those countries which are affected by them. Recommendations should include not just suggestions for how to argue in an international context, but recommendations for how the international structures should be changed in order to allow these recommendations to take hold.

If we are to create legally binding norms in international forums, then the legitimacy of those norms depends on the degree of representation and involvement
of those affected by these decisions. Since African women and the countries they inhabit are generally underrepresented in such global forums, the legitimacy of decisions is questionable. By excluding African women from democratic participation in the decisions that affect their lives, global feminist or human rights interventions further disempower the women their campaigns seek to help. Democratic reform of international institutions and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, particularly women, should be a focus for feminist activism insofar as such representation affects the legitimacy of internationally supported feminist reforms.

4. FGC, External Intervention and the International System

External interventions in the case of FGC raise both strategic and legitimacy questions. The strategic questions focus on what kinds of appeals will be effective in particular contexts. The legitimacy question – what kinds of appeals are legitimate, in a particular context, and simpliciter. Clearly, the two elements of the intervention question – the strategic and the legitimacy question are important for Nussbaum. But when we look at questions of how to eradicate a particular practice as part of a global political strategy, it then becomes clear that in particular circumstances, the strategic and legitimacy questions intertwine. However, when we are talking about international intervention, a global political movement, or global forces which intersect internal or local debates in a variety of ways, appeals to ‘local’ or internal standards are not as precise as they may seem. Arguments that only internal criticism of cultural practices is justified are undermined by the fluidity of the boundaries between the national and the international, the historical interconnection through colonialism and global trade, and the international connection through existing and emerging international institutions. Powerful Western countries often dominate international institutions, like the U.N. Although the U.N. may have little coercive power against stronger nations, its language of human rights and its regime of conventions and treaties form a normative language to which both internal and external critics of traditional practices appeal.

The U.N. is an international body where social, political, and economic norms are created through the creation of international conventions which member states sign. Thus, any state that is a member of the U.N. has not only its internal cultural background and internal political scene but also its connection to the international context. The level of power of the international norms at the national level depends on historical, economic, and political factors. Economically, if one is currently receiving aid from an international institution, the pressure to conform to international norms will be stronger, although internal resistance to such conformity may also be high. In terms of political situation, if one’s country has been invaded by another more powerful state with greater representation and power at the international level, support for international norms may waver. Historically, if one’s state is a former colony of one of the major powers, then one’s system may have been modeled on that of the former colonial power. This may lead to deeper connections with the norms of that power, or greater resistance to international bodies whose norms have been substantially created by that former colonial power. Often, cultural, economic and
political ties between former colonies and their former imperial power are complex, contentious and sometimes extremely powerful.

For most countries, their internal political scene is in some ways formed (either in conformity, or in resistance) to international norms, and thus there may be an element of what is generally understood to be ‘external’ operating at the level of the ‘internal’ political scene. The existence of this external in the internal undermines arguments that only internal criticism is valid, since external norms filter through to the national or internal level already. This is not to say that there is a strong consensus at the international level, or that all countries involved support developments on the international level.

The ‘international scene’ is not a party of equals. Not all members of the international community of nations are equal. Poor nations are expected to and often economically coerced into accepted treaties, conventions and protocols to which they have been allowed to make little contribution. More powerful nations have a greater voice in international institutions and rarely act as disinterested parties. The very instruments of international consensus, treaties, conventions, and protocols are subject to self-interested interpretation by powerful countries. Powerful countries can ignore norms by which poorer countries are bound. Since the apparatus of international governance is dominated by more powerful states, it is no wonder its conventions and normative regime are viewed skeptically by poor countries.

Although the existence of this international regime of rights blurs the line between internal and external criticism of traditional practices, providing ground for internal and external interventions, the imbalance in power with respect to those who develop the norms (which are then used as conditions for intervention) and those who must accept the norms to be part of the international community (thus making the external grounds of criticism justifiably available internally) undermines the legitimacy of these international norms, such that they can still be understood as ‘external’ even to those countries who might sign on to an international treaty. The coercion, based on an imbalance of power at the international level, undermines the legitimacy of international norms. Those with the power to intervene and to shape international consensus have the power to impress upon others their ways of life, their values, and their traditions. How can trust be built in such interactions? How can the international community and development efforts be seen as something other than a tool of the West in general or of the U.S. in particular? What has caused the varieties of backlash against western imposed values, constitutional commitments, etc? Both Gunning and Kristin Savell have proposed reforming the international normative consensus building process on the model of a multi-cultural dialogue, creating ground on which inter-cultural understanding can lead to development of shared international norms. (Savell, 1997, 781) Building democratic institutions at the level of the global builds trust, provides legitimacy for intercultural critique and sets the stage for transnational cooperation that goes beyond the dichotomy of internal and external criticism.
5. The International Public Sphere

We do not yet have a robust participatory international public sphere where the peoples of the world can come together and decide the future of their shared world. At present, a portion of the world’s political elites come together, with differential power, and trade papers and sign non-binding conventions. The international arena, itself a product of Western history and a kind of universal-political theorizing, is still dominated by rich Western countries, for the most part. The U.S. tends not to sign on to important and popular conventions (CEDAW being a glaring example), and so undermines the power and effectiveness of this international forum. Greater cooperation of all the world’s countries, especially the richest and most powerful, and reformed processes by which greater participation of non-elites within these countries have greater access and input in the process are needed for this potential arena for normative consensus building to be just and effective.

If we were able to answer this call to reform international institutions, to make them more democratic, to view the work of the international forums in terms of a multicultural dialogue aiming at developing normative consensus, then we would go a long way toward answering the critiques of those who charge Western interventions with ethnocentrism, imperialism, etc., in the international sphere, by opening this sphere up to a broader range of the world’s population, and making them more genuinely representative bodies, and less as mouthpieces for Western hegemony. There is an entirely separate question about the political will to make this democratization of the U.N. happen, and this is something that is not outside of the issues in this paper, but in fact goes to the heart of what is problematic about Western normative political theorizing in a universalist vein. If our values, expressed through normative political theories like Nussbaum’s, were really able to compete with those of other cultures on an equal footing, then perhaps other capabilities would come to the fore. Calling a theory ‘universal’ does not make it so. So, perhaps we should stop calling the theories which arise out of our particular tradition ‘universal’, and argue that members of other cultures should adopt them on bases that might be acceptable to them. By doing so we can create consensus rather than whitewash genuine differences under the banner of universality.

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**TIAN REN HE YI (天人合一): AN ONTOLOGY FOR THE QUANTUM WORLD**

Chuang Liu

Abstract: The project aims at finding out whether there is a way among the historical ideas of Chinese philosophy through which we can understand the relationship between a quantum system and its observer that appears puzzling, or even paradoxical, in the simple physicalist ontology which contemporary physicists (and scientists in general) take for granted. If successful, the effort may revitalize a fundamental conception between nature and human in traditional Chinese philosophy – Tian Ren He Yi (the unity of heaven and men) – by showing how it contributes to a better understanding of, if not solving, profound metaphysical problem in quantum theory – the measurement problem. More specifically, the project aims at finding out whether we can use the doctrine of Tian Ren He Yi (天人合一) to rehabilitate one of the most neglected but brilliant interpretations of quantum theory, the Wigner Interpretation, which makes consciousness the realm in which definite values of physical observables obtain.

I. The Problematic in the Interpretations of Quantum Theory

THERE SHOULD be little doubt that the quantum mechanical description of reality is fundamental and approximately true, by which I mean all physical systems are quantum systems which obey laws whose principal features are given by quantum theory (I include all branches of physics which are based on quantum theory, such as quantum field and superstring). By ‘approximately true’ I simply mean it is not at all likely that any future and improved theories of physics will turn out to be fundamentally non-quantum mechanical. If there was still hope before the EPR

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1 *Editor's note:* At the 2009 APA Eastern Division meeting in New York City, Professor Neville delivered a talk calling for innovative approaches to advance the philosophical engagement of Chinese philosophy, with the emphasis on “addressing contemporary first-order problems.” Dr. JeeLoo Liu, the president of the Association of Chinese Philosophers in America (ACPA), was inspired by his talk, and brought the idea to organize special sessions on these new projects at the 2010 APA Eastern meeting. Dr. Hyung Choi, Director of Mathematical & Physical Sciences at the John Templeton Foundation, learned about this idea and was highly supportive of it. He secured a grant for the ACPA to further develop this “new projects” program. Part of the outcomes of this program was the production of six white papers that lay out future research directions for scholars interested in Chinese philosophy. Five of these papers are particularly focused on Chinese cosmology or Chinese metaphysics, as one of the aims of the John Templeton Foundation was to define the interface between science and metaphysics. Our hope is that these white papers will spark more interests in Chinese metaphysics and make Chinese metaphysics more relevant to the scientific worldview of our times. We will continue to publish the rest of these papers in our next issue for more future discussions.
experiments that either classical realism or locality may be recovered in the future, such hope is all but dashed by now (cf. Wheeler & Zureck 1983).

Given the above, we also recognize that which is completely described by quantum theory may not be all there is in reality. In other words, quantum theory is very unlikely to be complete (or better still, it may in principle be limited). Einstein raised this prospect in his paper with Podolsky and Rose (i.e. the EPR paradox, cf. Bell 1987) by arguing thus: any measurement experiments, including quantum measurements, must be processes of obtaining pre-existing values of the measured quantities; and yet if quantum theory is correct, what is possible for a quantum measurement to acquire cannot be what the system possesses before the measurement. Thus, quantum theory as a physical theory is intrinsically incomplete (or limited). Von Neumann’s study of quantum measurement reveals this problem in a different way (cf. van Neumann’s classic paper in Wheeler & Zureck 1983). Two distinct processes must take place in any measurement of a quantum system (which one must remember includes every physical system in reality); one is the quantum mechanical evolution and interactions among all systems (the measured as well as the measuring plus the environment) which obey the ‘Schrödinger equation.’ The second is the infamous ‘collapse of the wave pockets,’ by which, and only by which, a quantum measurement is completed and a definite value of the measured observable obtained. The collapse sounds like a physical process, and yet it is neither accounted for by quantum theory nor suggested by anything remotely promising. This is the reason we cannot attribute the measured value (obtained after the collapse) to the observable in any form before the measurement (hence the EPR paradox).

A further twist deepens the mystery of quantum theory. It is well known that while the wave packet, which obeys the Schrödinger equation, does not tell us which value an observable has at a certain time; it does provide an accurate probability distribution of all of its possible values. If that were the only obstacle, there should be no mystery or paradox to speak of in quantum theory; the situation would have been entirely similar to classical statistical mechanics, in which definite values of the observables in question are not known or predictable, but their probabilistic distributions are. Quantum probabilities, as it was soon discovered, are nothing like the probabilities in statistical mechanics. While classical probabilities are compatible with the assumption that measured observables possess definite values (but we are ignorant of them before measurements), quantum probabilities are emphatically not! This is why, when John Bell made this assumption together with the assumption that no signal can be transmitted faster than the speed of light (i.e. special relativity holds), he derived results contrary to the ones derivable from quantum theory; and all experiments verified the quantum mechanical results (cf. Bell 1987).

Attempts to close the gap or complete the theory in one form or another – some of which were only realized as such attempts years later – began almost as soon as quantum theory took shape. What is later known as the Copenhagen Interpretation, the brain child of Niels Bohr and his ‘disciples’ which includes Heisenberg, Born et

\[ I \text{ used quotation marks to indicate that the phrase does not refer to the actual equation but acts as a tag for whatever quantum mechanical law that governs the change of quantum states.} \]
al., imposes a de facto division between classical, i.e. macroscopic, systems and quantum, i.e. microscopic, systems such that measuring devices only belong to the former. Philosophical problems abound for this interpretation, despite its practical virtue which contributed to its adoption by most working physicists. The mystery of quantum systems remains but at least it remains where it should be located, at the boundary of observability. Philosophically minded physicists, as well as philosophers who are fascinated by the mystery of quantum theory, made further attempts to expel the mystery or resolve the paradox. There emerges a vast category of interpretations which can be called ‘hidden-variable’ interpretations (cf. Wheeler & Zureck 1987). The motivation for such interpretations is simple if not a bit naïve: if a quantum system does not possess before measurement a definite value for the measured observable, it must have some other, hidden so to speak, variables which do have definite values. These variables are hidden because they are by default unobservable (otherwise according to quantum theory they cannot have definite values before measurements) and therefore can never be discovered by any experimental means. They are postulated solely for the sake of recovering certain features, such as determinism and locality, without which the paradox persists. The virtue of such interpretations is that they appear to be the most sensible extensions of classical physics and completely take out the mystery or paradox of QM. The downside is that they seem to be utterly ad hoc. The one rule that these interpretations must obey is that they have to be empirically equivalent to quantum theory, producing no experimentally testable predictions that disagree with the quantum mechanical predictions, or whatever predictions they produce that disagree with quantum theory must be in principle unobservable.

Eugene Wigner, a Nobel laureate in physics, proposed a bold interpretation of quantum theory which takes ‘observation’ in a quantum measurement literally, namely, the definite value of the measured observable becomes definite only when it is registered in the consciousness of the observer. In other words, it is the consciousness which collapses the wave packet and completes the measurement. Since quantum theory tells us no interactions of quantum systems can – in terms of physical possibility – collapse a superposition (superposed wave packets), as a consequence of the von Neumann account of quantum measurement; something else must be involved, something non-physical. There is really nothing else present in a measurement, unless one believes in ghosts and gods, which is not physical. In this sense, the interpretation is simple, natural, and very bold3.

One can, on the other hand, hardly fail to realize that it would be a tall challenge to defend such an interpretation. How exactly does consciousness cause a collapse of the wave packet? What kind of causation are we talking about? How should we understand consciousness in this account? The registration in consciousness of a measured result that ends a measurement: what is the nature of it? If consciousness is beyond the realm of physics, what is it and how can we account for it? Is it plausible

at all to embrace such a dualism? Is not the ontological cost too high? Besides, even if we can answer all these questions, how can we deal with the individuation problem of consciousness? Whose or which consciousness is responsible for the collapse of the wave packet in a measurement if more than one person made the observation at the same time? The definite result obtained by the observation: does it belong to the measured system or is it merely a mental item in the observer’s consciousness? In other words, can the measurement of results be objective? If it only belongs to the observer, how can it be relevant to the way in which the measured system behaves afterwards? Since its proposal these and other complexities have prevented people from taking Wigner’s interpretation seriously.

II. Tian Ren He Yi (the Unity of Heaven and Man)

The belief that heaven or nature and men are connected by a profound unity (henceforth TRHY) is neither recent nor only found in traditional Chinese philosophy. Yet as a dearly cherished and richly developed doctrine widely held for many centuries, TRHY has been uniquely Chinese. One of the few fundamental beliefs held in common among the otherwise radically different philosophical and religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, is this belief that despite all appearances to the contrary, the ‘heaven,’ which is really nature in its uncorrupted form, and the ‘men,’ which is the consummation of nature, are profoundly united in principle; as such they are essentially one and the same. Here ‘essentially one’ or ‘of one essence’ is the key notion; somewhat similar to the case of personal identity over

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4 This question may appear to be more difficult than it actually is. There is a long tradition in the history of philosophy dealing with the question of whether the observed results belong to the objects themselves or to the observers. Among the more prominent figures we have Locke and his theory of secondary qualities; and if we go to Kant, the question is even more seriously treated in his philosophy. Therefore, Locke has no problem giving a theory of how powers inherent in objects themselves may evolve in time in such a way that the observed results about secondary qualities form coherent experiences. The one peculiarity about the quantum measurement situation is that we now have one theory, the quantum theory, for the unobserved system (the evolution of wave packets) and another theory for the observed system (the evolution of a classical system), whereas neither Locke nor Kant would even consider a theory for either the powers or the Ding-an-sich.

5 There are still two other interpretations I have not mentioned; one is the many world or many mind interpretation, and the other is the decoherence theory. The former seems too fanciful to me, and we now realize the latter by itself is not a complete interpretation. There is indeed a process of decoherence in a quantum measurement, but a complete decoherence only happens at the ideal limit of infinite number of degrees of freedom. While one may argue that most measuring devices and their environments do approximate such sizes, there are many measurement settings in which, apart from the presence of a conscious mind, only a very limited number of degrees of freedom exist. Yet measurable results are obtained. So, decoherence is not necessarily a condition for quantum measurement.
A brief summary of this doctrine in traditional Chinese philosophy proceeds as follows. In Confucianism, the doctrine derives from the conviction that the foundation of morality lies in the principles which govern the movement of heavenly bodies. The contrasts between the spaciousness and longevity of heaven with the short and narrow lives of men, the gentleness and regularity of the movement of heavenly bodies with the aggressiveness and inconstancy of human desires, the majestic music of heavenly sounds with the mean noise of human gatherings—all seem to point to the inevitable conclusion that the ideal of morality derives from the principles of heaven, which is also the principle of men. It is only through the contemplation of the true nature of men, which is nothing but Nature (or the principle of heaven) may we discover moral principles, and only by following such principles in our actions may we bring forth the kingdom that men truly deserve. In Zen Buddhism, the ideal state of emptiness, a state of the soul that is uncontaminated by human desires and social conventions, is precisely a state which is closest to the heaven, which is nearly empty and which contains the true principles for everything. The doctrine of TRHY serves both as the ideal and the justification for the Buddhist way of life. And finally and most importantly, in Daoism, which might be said to hold the ‘patent’ of TRHY, we find many key concepts which originate from the doctrine.

Why should people practice ‘wu wei (non-action),’ and why is it that only by wu wei can one achieve ‘wu bu wei (nothing is left unaccomplished)?’ It is precisely because nature and men are one and the same. Man’s desires and the actions which allow him to satisfy them force him away from nature and therefore make him deviate from his own nature. Wu wei is not really doing nothing but following the true nature of man, which is one with nature, and therefore everything gets done (wu bu wei). Small states without much wealth also fit man’s nature, because only in such states can he be one with nature, which is what he should be in the first place. TRHY also appears in such classics as Zhou Yi and Huang Di Nei Jin, from the latter stems the glorious tradition of Chinese medicine. In cosmology, man is represented by the earth in contrast to the heaven, and the unity of the heaven and the earth is the central theme of the cosmological part of Huang Di Nei Jin. Being at the center, the earth mirrors heaven which surrounds it. In this sense it is a microcosmic instantiation of the same principles or patterns (i.e. Li) of heaven. This is their macrocosmic instantiation; two different instantiations which have radically different appearances but share (or obey) the same Li, the evidence of which can be found everywhere in heaven or on earth with discerning eyes. In Chinese medicine, the working of the human body is also in accordance with the Li of heaven and earth, which we might as

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6 Just as one does not have to be an essentialist to believe in the possibility of personal identity over time (despite great physical and psychological changes); neither does one have to be an essentialist to believe in the identity of heaven and a human.

7 The references I primarily used for this proposal are Fung Yu-Lan 1988, Chan 1963, and Needham 1956.
well call Nature. Again, with a sense of relativism that one finds in widespread uses in Daoism, the human body is now the microcosm - and heaven and earth are the macrocosm; the idea of principle versus instantiation applies once again between Man and Nature.

What is the ‘Li,’ which is often translated as ‘principles’ or ‘laws’? Controversies aside, we may follow Needhem by taking ‘Li’ to refer to the most fundamental patterns of the distribution of the Ying, the Yang and the Five Elements among different substances of Nature. If so, this doctrine of TRHY can be understood as shared patterns of distribution among radically different token configurations of the Ying/Yang and the Five Elements, such as heavenly bodies, earthly creatures, and human beings. While TRHY had never been seriously challenged in history, it reached its pinnacle in a unification of different schools in Zhu Xi’s Dao Xue (or Li Xue). In his theory, Zhu finally made it clear that Li represents abstract patterns or laws (the Platonic forms, if you will) and Chi represent the universal substance (energy, if you will) in which particulars are formed via the unification of the Li and the Chi. ‘Unification’ here should really be understood as ‘instantiation’ or ‘actualization’ in our current (mostly Aristotelian) philosophical parlance. And TRHY became in Zhu Xi the belief that the Li is the same for Heaven and Man.

III. TRHY and Wigner’s Interpretation of QM

Whether or not we can find anything useful in the doctrine of TRHY, as briefly sketched above, which could be used to rehabilitate and therefore defend Wigner’s interpretation of quantum theory, will depend, inter alia, on whether or not we can answer the kind of questions raised towards the end of Section 1 with the help of TRHY. One of course should not expect that the answers can be directly read off the available content of the doctrine; and one perhaps should also not expect that the sort of answers we can give ‘with the help of TRHY’ are exactly those that philosophers of quantum theory have already found lacking for Wigner’s interpretation. What must be done in this endeavor includes:

1. A search for a perspective or an interpretation of TRHY, or a part of it, so that its faithfulness can withstand the scrutiny of experts in Chinese philosophy, on the one hand, and on the other, it provides a reorientation of the problematic interpretation of QM such that defensible answers can be given.

2. A robust defense of the selected perspective, if found, must be given in contemporary (analytic) philosophy, so it cannot be simply dismissed as being

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8 I avoided using ‘human bodies’ because it gives the impression that we exclude psychical or mental aspects in this context, which is entirely misleading. No mind-body distinction, which we inherit from the Cartesian tradition, should be applied here. If TRHY applies to Man and Nature, ‘Man’ stands for the whole human being, not just its physical aspects.

9 In the earlier part of this summary, I may have unconsciously used the same language to expound the doctrine of TRHY. Strictly speaking it was only after Zhu Xi, this way of talking about the doctrine became available. Above I am guilty of anachronism.
irrelevant or indefensible. For example, if the perspective is a dualist one, a defensible version of dualism must be given. One cannot simply shelter it by branding it a Chinese sort of dualism thereby leaving it undefended.

3. Any reorientation must appear plausible in the context of contemporary physics. We would judge it a failure if it creates major ruptures in the fabric of quantum theory. The process of reorientation must not result in new or reconstructed theories.

With this proviso in mind, let us see how the questions can be approached. Everything in this section is tentative, of course, for much research and thinking have to take place before a definite answer to the ultimate question, which partly entitled this project, namely, “a new ontology for the quantum world?” can be given.

The first set of questions, which seem to block Wigner’s interpretation, are really about the nature of causality in the process in which consciousness collapses wave packets. A dilemma primarily derived from the perennial mind-body problem seems to arise here. If the mind which carries consciousness is nothing over and above the physical, the collapse of wave packets that ultimately terminates a quantum measurement can never happen (i.e. superposition all the way as long as what is involved is exclusively physical or that which obeys the ‘Schrödinger law’). But if the mind is something beyond the physical, how is a causal interaction between it and the measured system, which is supposed to collapse the wave packets, possible? What kind of causality occurs in the latter case?

If we want to go with Wigner’s interpretation, the first option, treating the mind as equally physical, is not open to us. So the question becomes whether we can come up with a plausible notion of causation which applies to processes between the mental and the physical as dualist elements. The mind which collapses the wave packets (which are physical) must be conceived as either a different substance – for substance dualism – or a totally distinct sort of property – for property dualism. For a plausible notion of causal interaction, substance dualism has considerable more difficulty than property dualism. Evenso it is still a big challenge even for the latter. The main problem for a causal theory of property dualism is the tension between a genuinely dualist metaphysic and a plausible model of causal interaction. The more plausible the latter - the more likely property dualism degenerates into some sort of physicalism, which is obviously monistic.

Joseph Needham rejected the way in which Li in the neo-Confucian school is interpreted as ‘laws or principles of nature’ or as ‘Plato’s form’ (cf. Needham 1956, ch. 16). The closest notion he found in the western thought was ‘patterns’ or actual patterns because as we mentioned earlier, Zhu Xi, the most prominent neo-Confucian, related the notion of Li to such things as the veins in jade. The doctrine of TRHY when understood as the unity of Nature and Man would see the fundamental ‘patterns’ of Nature and of Man as the same. Here the notion of Man certainly includes his mental aspect. Even though the mental and the physical are so radically different that it is more sensible to see them under a dualistic light, and yet because of TRHY, the difference is rather superficial or only in appearance. In Zhu Xi’s terms, it is the difference of Chi but not of Li since causal principles are about Li not about
Chi. Hence, I do see a way of articulating a sensible metaphysical account for the kind of causal interactions which constitute the collapse of the wave packets.

To get things started, we can already conceive of the collapse of the wave packets by and in consciousness as a special causal process which does not involve energy transfer. On the one hand, this is consistent with the existing understanding that the collapse of the wave packets is a process of actualizing a probability or propensity, which naturally does not require any transfer of energy. On the other hand, it is also consistent with TRHY in neo-Confucianism such that the transaction between the mind and the quantum system is not really a process taking place between ‘two things.’ Since ordinary causal processes are among actualized objects or events, those causal processes we are dealing with here are already outside the domain of ordinary physical causation which is necessarily accompanied with energy transfer of some sort.

The distinction between event causation and agent causation is already a well-established concept in contemporary philosophy, and agent causation carries the sort of controversial dualism we mentioned above on its back. If TRHY can relieve the tension in dualism, then agent causation in this new light may just gain a new lease on life.

With this approach to a solution of the questions concerning causality, we can begin to deal with the next set of questions, which ask about the nature of measurement observation. What is an observation (in the sense of epistemology) if not a combined act of our body and mind which results in a cognitive registration of some effect in the world? If so, the result of an observation is first and foremost an epistemic state, a state of knowledge, which represents the corresponding state in the world under proper observational conditions. How can an observation determine if the result was not there in the first place, created by a chain of physical causation? How can the representing be counted as the represented? Is not this a categorical mistake? Many regard Wigner’s interpretation a non-starter simply because of these sorts of difficulties.

Here I think the doctrine of TRHY, when properly updated, can help us to make great strides in removing such difficulties. In updating the doctrine we notice it has been used as a great equalizer of all the distinctions and separations which common sense inculcate in us. One of the most recalcitrant differences is the mind-body division, which implies inter alia - the fundamental difference between epistemic states and natural/physical states. Therefore, if we follow the spirit of TRHY, we would not, and should not, dogmatically adhere to the division between the state of knowledge and the state of nature, nor between the representing and the represented. The observational results are no mere reflection of what is there in the world, already determined before the observation. They are rather a part of reality comprising both the physical and the mental. Moreover, because the Li is in everything and it is one and the same between Nature and Man, what is observed, though primarily mental, is also part of reality, and therefore part of a measured system. Much careful work needs to be done before this can be fully rendered into a coherent view, but the direction is clearly marked and quite promising as it is.
The next question is how high the metaphysical cost is to espouse such a dualist view of reality? One person’s cost may be another person’s profit, and the kind of dualism sketched above is by no means the kind of divisive dualism that has been deemed too costly in contemporary western metaphysics. Part of the attraction in using TRHY to rehabilitate Wigner’s interpretation is it may provide a more sensible version of mind-body dualism from which the interpretation can no longer be easily dismissed. Therefore I expect the doctrine of TRHY will allow us to remake Wigner’s interpretation into one of the most viable interpretation of QM.

This new TRHY informed dualist view of the quantum world allows us to consider further issues such as the individuation of consciousness or the objectivity of quantum measurement results, etc. The final form of such solutions will depend on the final form of the dualist view. Since these are the toughest perennial problems in the metaphysics of any tradition or kind, which have never received satisfactory answers no matter what dualist worldview one adopts, we should not have too high an expectation for their solutions.\(^1\)

Reference


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\(^1\)This is probably one of the chief motivations of contemporary philosophers to enlist with the monists or the physicalists.
FEATURES OF CHINESE COSMOLOGY

Weimin Sun

Abstract: This paper outlines some key features of Chinese cosmology and discusses its significance on contemporary philosophical issues. Contrary to popular approaches to comparative philosophy, I aim to offer a holistic picture of Chinese cosmology by examining its own concerns and its internal dynamics. In particular, I have traced the development of Chinese cosmology from the Shang dynasty to the Song dynasty. Due to the general nature of this study, many details need to be expanded in the future.

IN HIS 2010 PAPER “New Projects in Chinese Philosophy,” Robert Neville outlines eight new projects in which Chinese philosophy can be used as resources for “addressing contemporary first-order problems” (p. 46).1 The fourth and the fifth projects concern cosmogony and philosophical cosmology. This paper is inspired by Neville’s paper and aims to address some issues raised in the above two projects. This does not imply that I agree with Neville on how these issues are classified or how they should be tackled. I do think these issues are important, and I agree with Neville that a good understanding of Chinese cosmology and cosmology is not just valuable for understanding Chinese culture, but also for resolving many contemporary challenges we face today, whether in Chinese culture or other cultures.

The purpose of this paper is to identify some unique features of Chinese cosmogony and cosmology, and to outline some directions for future research on these issues. As a result, many details will be omitted. Hopefully, we’ll see a comprehensive and systematic explication of Chinese cosmogony and cosmology in the near future.

I. Neville’s Projects

Neville’s fourth project of cosmogony is concerned with “the arising of cosmos.” (ibid., p. 49) This question goes beyond the big bang theory of contemporary physics and asks how the creation of the universe is philosophically possible. Neville outlines three possible solutions. The first one claims the universe is created by a transcendent God who is not part of the universe; the second one says the universe arises from a primordial being that contains all actuality. The third one, which Neville endorses and has defended in length in his 1992/1968 book God the Creator, claims the universe is created out of nothing, ex nihilo. Neville claims that this is also the dominate theme in Chinese cosmogony, and finds support from both the Daoist

1 Neville’s paper was based on his presentation he gave at APA Eastern Division meeting on December 2009. He has been thinking and writing on these topics for quite a few years. In particular, many of his ideas on cosmogony and cosmology can be found in his 1982 book “The Tao and the Daimon” and 1992/1968 book “God the Creator.”
school (the primacy of non-being in Daodejing) and Neo-Confucians (Zhou Dunyi’s notion of Wujì).

Neville’s fifth project is about philosophical cosmology. Neville asks: “How should we understand nature philosophically, given what science is showing us in the fruitful reductionistic ways of science?” (ibid., p. 50) Neville’s worry here is that modern science assumes that nature lacks any intrinsic value, and the great successes of science seem to threaten the values of human beings and human society. Neville reasons, “Without it [philosophical cosmology], we cannot understand the sciences of nature which, by themselves, tend to tell us that nature is without intrinsic value. Without it, we cannot understand nature as constitutive of human life and society and are likely to continue to overvalue human history and its conflicts relative to the depths of nature within us.” Further, without philosophical cosmology, we cannot understand “the roles of human habitation within the evolution of cosmic nature,” “the meaning of human life in any larger perspective than the projections of human ambitions”, and “the true implication of human ambitions outside the ken of human interests.” Again, Neville sees Chinese philosophy containing a rich source of theories and strategies which can help to resolve these issues.

It is worth noting that Neville’s projects are formulated in the framework of process theology. With the cosmogony project, his analyses are framed within his own theory of creation (see Neville 1992/1968 and 1982 for more details). In philosophical cosmology, the concerns and motivations take root from religious perspectives. Though in comparative philosophy it is unavoidable to use a different conceptual framework to interpret another one, we must be aware of the potential distortions of such interpretations, especially when we try to force a fit between the two systems. Such distortions can come from the translations of concepts and propositions, but equally important, these interpretations may misplace the focus of the original system and may lose sight of the whole picture. In order to have a deep understanding of Chinese cosmology and cosmogony, we should understand the concerns and motivations from the Chinese perspective itself. For example, the issue of creation is one of primary concerns for Western theology, yet in Chinese thought its role is more diminished. Also, though I appreciate Neville’s efforts to introduce Chinese philosophy to contemporary dialogues, I think first we need to get Chinese cosmology right. Otherwise we may get some fragmentary insights but fail to see the meaning of the system. In this paper, I will confine my efforts mostly to explications of Chinese cosmogony and cosmology; then I will return to one of Neville’s questions in the end. Also, since cosmology and cosmogony are never clearly distinguished in Chinese philosophy, for the sake of convenience, I will use the term cosmology to cover both theories for the remainder of this paper.

II. Literature review

Many writers have noticed the uniqueness of Chinese cosmology, and have tried to characterize it in different terms. Chinese cosmology is said to be “organismic” (Needham, Mote), “non-transcendental” (Hall and Ames), and “non-dualistic” (Hall and Ames, and many others). These discussions contribute greatly to a better
understanding of Chinese cosmology, yet they are also troubled by overgeneralizations and vague descriptions.

The notion of an organismic cosmos is proposed as a contrast to the teleological cosmos of Aristotelian cosmology. However, the notion is never clearly defined, and it is not clear how an organismic cosmos is different from a teleological cosmos. A common analogy, biological organism, is often used to characterize organismic cosmos; yet biological organisms are teleological in the Aristotelian sense. More importantly, biological organism is not even the best analogy for understanding the Chinese cosmos. As Munro pointed out (reported by Schwartz 1985: 52), family is a better analogy to apply to the natural and human order of Chinese cosmology than that of biological organism, since the Chinese understanding of natural and social order has a clear hierarchical structure which a family also has. It might even be the case that the later conception of cosmos was modeled after the family structure.

David Hall and Roger Ames, in their provocative book *Thinking Through Confucius*, outlines two unique features in Chinese cosmology: an immanental cosmos (instead of a transcendental one), and conceptual polarity (instead of conceptual duality). These features in Confucian philosophy are further articulated with the resources in process philosophy. Hall and Ames’s approach offers great insights into the study of Chinese philosophy and has a significant impact on later discussions. However, as it stands, the notions of transcendence and immanence need to be further clarified before we can properly apply them to Chinese cosmology. As Hall and Ames are well aware, there are different interpretations of transcendence in western thought. Their choice of understanding transcendence in terms of explanatory irreducibility is an interesting one, yet when so understood, it is not clear that Confucian cosmology (and other Chinese theories of cosmology) can qualify as non-transcendental. Even if we admit that there is a clear contrast between Chinese cosmology and its Western counterpart, it is not clear that the immanence/transcendence distinction captures that contrast. Also, the forced fit of Confucian philosophy into process philosophy does not offer a fair picture of Confucian philosophy. Hall and Ames’s method of “cross-cultural anachronism” may offer great insights to contemporary philosophy, yet this cannot justify distorted interpretations which violate the integrity of original texts.

Hall and Ames’s notion of conceptual polarity encapsulates nicely the interactive and dependent nature of things such as yin and yang, Heaven and earth, father and son, and husband and wife. It needs to be noted that such polarity is mostly concerned with attributes and relations rather than with substances. So this is slightly different from the dualist debate (e.g. mind/body) in the history of Western philosophy, which is primarily concerned with substances. It is not that the existence of father (as an individual) is dependent on the existence of son (which seems absurd), but that the attribute of being a father (especially, being a good father) is dependent on that of being a son. In other words a good father is a person who takes care of their sons and teaches them good values. More importantly, these polar pairs are interactive and complementary, and the relation between them is not a subject/object one. Yin and yang are complementary to each other, can penetrate into each other and are both indispensable. The relation is similar with those between father and son, Heaven and
earth, and husband and wife. Hall and Ames understand polarity as a symmetrical relation: “Such polarity requires that concepts which are significantly elated are in fact symmetrically related, each requiring the other for adequate articulation” (1987: 17). In their discussion of organism analogy, they claim: “Where ‘organism’ might be applied to the Confucian cosmos, an important distinction is that there is no element or aspect that in the strictest sense transcends the rest. Every element in the world is relative to every other; all elements are correlative” (1987: 18).

Though their observations on conceptual polarity are penetrating, Hall and Ames fail to recognize that conceptual pairs may not be of equal status. It is clear from the history of Chinese philosophy, yang can play the dominate role, while yin plays a complementary role. The asymmetry is more clear in the relationship between father and son and between husband and wife. Also, the notion of conceptual polarity needs to be further articulated, and claims like “there is no contradiction in saying that each particular is both self-determined and determined by every other particular” don’t help. (ibid.) Another thing to notice is not all relations in Chinese philosophy can be understood in terms of polar relations. Even in Chinese philosophy, the relation between truth (shi) and falsity (fei) is as clearly cut as any dualistic relation can be. Hall and Ames, along with other philosophers, claim that in Chinese philosophy there is no conceptual dualism of mind/body, fact/value, knowledge/opinion, or reality/appearance; yet a more detailed study of these concepts often indicates that this is not the case. Chinese often make such distinctions, and even if such distinctions are not made explicitly, it does not imply that Chinese do not have such distinctions. Clearly the exact nature and function of polarity relation in Chinese cosmology are complicated issues that need to be further investigated, and any oversimplified generalizations will not do justice to the complex and diverse landscape of Chinese cosmology.

### III. Features of Chinese Cosmology

We need to approach Chinese cosmology from a holistic perspective. In ancient societies, cosmological theories were not just created for satisfying human curiosity; instead, such theories were created to explain a variety of phenomena, both natural and social, which were important in human life. Such theories could only be conceived by those who were educated and had to be sponsored by the ruling class in order to propagate. So it is no surprise to see that such theories addressed the concerns related to the ruling class. Yet many issues are of universal nature, and they can be found in many different civilizations. For example, the following questions seem to be fundamental in any cosmological theory: 1) what is the place of man in the universe? 2) What is the origin of the universe and of the man inside it? 3) The world is in constant flux, yet the changes are often orderly. So what are orders of change, and who/what is responsible for such orders?

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2 For a helpful review on these issues, see Geaney [2000].
In Chinese cosmology, these questions were not clearly separated. These questions are fundamental to human beings of all time. Human beings do not live alone in the world. There are many other things, such as the sun and the moon, animals and plants, rivers and mountains. More important, all early civilizations believed that there were spirits and gods who existed along with human beings. Though they were rarely observable, such beings were believed to be more powerful than human beings and were often invoked to explain the phenomena which early people could not control or understand. It is important to understand the nature of these entities (both natural and spiritual) and the relationship between these entities and human beings. All these inquiries fall into the scope of the first question. Similarly, the world is constantly changing, and it is important to know whether there is any orderly pattern for such changes, and if so, what those patterns may be. Both kinds of questions are of great pragmatic value. With such knowledge, one could have great predictive power and could better control what happens in the future at both the individual and the societal level. Chinese cosmology was primarily concerned with these two kinds of inquiries. The questions about the origin of universe and man were also of great theoretical interests, yet not all schools were concerned with such inquiries. This seems to indicate the practical mind-set of early Chinese philosophers, though theoretical inquiries became necessary when complex systems started to emerge.

It is necessary to distinguish philosophical cosmology from mythological stories. The latter are often based on metaphors or analogies and address some concrete concerns. Different myths or stories often have little internal connections and are often in conflict with each other. Philosophical cosmology is more systematic and coherent and is used to address more serious or abstract matters. The focus of this paper is only on philosophical cosmology. In the following I will identify some key stages in the development of Chinese cosmology beginning with the Shang dynasty though the Song dynasty.

Ancestor worship in China traces back to Neolithic Age, and according to Benjamin Schwartz, it has exerted a profound influence on the direction of early Chinese culture (1985: 37). From the earliest literary records in China, oracle bone inscriptions, it is clear that ancestor worship was prevalent in Shang period. It seems natural to assume that dead family members continue to live in a spiritual form and can interact with living human beings and influence human affairs. As it is common in primitive cultures, Shang people and perhaps earlier Chinese people postulated many spiritual entities, such as gods of sun, moon, river and mountains. Yet the centrality of ancestor worship seems to be a uniquely Chinese feature. This seems to indicate the preeminent role of family (including extended family or a clan) in early societies. The family seems to be the basic unit of early Chinese societies. Later, Confucius and his followers built their social and moral philosophy based on the

3 Though there are plenty of mythological stories about the origin of the universe and people, many writers have noticed that Chinese did not have a comprehensive picture of cosmogony until later in Han dynasty, and even then, the picture is superficial compared with the Western ones.
family affiliation. Since then it has shaped the basic structure of Chinese social and political systems.

Gradually, the notion of High Lord emerged in Shang period. High Lord was not just a family ancestor, but was understood as the god of all people, who wielded the power of creation and destruction. Schwartz conjectures that the High Lord might initially be the tutelary god of the Shang tribe, and became universalized when the Shang tribe gained more power to rule over others. Extant records are consistent with the theory that the High Lord might be the founding fathers of the Shang tribe, though later myths often reversed the logical order, claiming the founding fathers were sons of the High Lord by some mysterious interaction (such as eating the bird’s egg or stepping on the big footprint which caused pregnancy).

In the Zhou dynasty, the notion of High Lord went through dramatic changes. In Chinese history, Zhou was initially a subject of Shang kings, who rebelled against the ruthless dictatorship of the last Shang king. Eventually, Zhou won the decisive battle and established Zhou dynasty. However, Zhou endorsed the same High Lord as the Shang people. So in order to justify their political uprising, the Duke of Zhou invented the notion of the mandate of Heaven: “it was not that our small state dared to aspire to the mandate of Yin [the Shang dynasty] but that Heaven was not with Yin. It would not strengthen its misrule. It helped us. What are we who dared to seek the royal throne? Shang-ti [High Lord] was not for them.” So the god was the same for all the peoples (Zhou people preferred to use the word “Heaven” instead of “High Lord” to refer to this god). The god had no personal favor for one group of people or the other. So the High Lord did not belong to the Shang tribe only and did not prefer the Shang tribe over any other tribe. The peoples’ or a state’s fate was not determined by sacrificial offerings -- Zhou people could find no fault in Shang’s sacrificing. Instead, Heaven transcended sacrificial offerings or personal preference and maintained an objective standard towards human affairs. This does not imply Heaven, perceived by early Zhou people, was a natural entity without any personal traits. Heaven still had wills, emotions and made decisions and acted on them. The Shang state was rejected by Heaven, therefore Heaven assisted Zhou in conquering Shang. In the Book of Songs, Heaven was often given human or personal attributes. Even Confucius in the later Zhou period talked about Heaven with personal characteristics. But it is clear that early in Zhou dynasty, Heaven became an independent and impartial judge of human affairs. We should not underestimate this dramatic change from Shang’s god of High Lord to Zhou’s god of Heaven. Heaven became a god which transcended tribe affiliation. It established an objective and independent set of order which every society needed to follow in order to avoid Heaven’s disfavor and ensuing ruin.

The notion of Heaven went through further changes in later Zhou period. In the early Zhou dynasty, Heaven was conceived to be a personal god. In later Zhou dynasty and afterward, Heaven became less and less personal, and in its extreme it could be interpreted as a constant order of cosmos, governing both nature and human

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4 Quoted from Schwartz, 1985: 47.
society. Both the Daoists and Confucians emphasized the notion of Way (Dao). Heaven, when it was not taken to mean the Way, played a much less important role in later cosmological thoughts. This was already obvious in Confucius, and more so in later philosophers of the Warrior States period. It will be a valuable project to trace the changes in the meaning of Heaven from the Shang dynasty to the Han dynasty and explore the social and political contexts for such changes.

Such naturalization of Heaven continued in the Yin-Yang theory of Zou Yan (邹衍), which had a tremendous influence on later Chinese cosmology. Zou Yan combined the Yin-Yang theory with the Five Elements theory to provide a comprehensive correlative system to explain a variety of natural and social phenomena. For example, Zou Yan applied Five Elements theory to explain the cyclical rise and fall of dynasties. During the period of the Yellow Emperor, the material qi of earth ruled. Earth is followed by Wood, and the ensuing dynasty of Xia was represented by Wood. Similarly the rise and fall of other dynasties also followed the generative order of five elements. Though such explanatory attempts seem outlandish to modern eyes, they are purely natural explanations which do not involve anything supernatural. Instead, the central idea is that there is a correlation between heavenly affairs and social affairs, and human beings need to follow the natural order in order to do well. This belief in the unity of Heaven and Man became the dominant theme in Chinese cosmology. According to historical records, Zou Yan was well respected by the rulers who clearly liked to utilize his knowledge to their advantage.

In Dong Zhongshu’s theory during the early Han dynasty, the correlative theory was further developed and pushed to its extreme. First, many detailed correlations were now postulated. For example, the body of man was believed to resemble the shape of Heaven: “His hair resembles the stars and constellations. His ears and eyes, quick in their senses, resemble the sun and the moon. The breathing of his nostrils and mouth resembles the wind. … The agreement of heaven and earth and the correspondence between yin and yang are ever found complete in the human body. The body is like heaven. “…the body’s lesser joints correspond to the number of days in a year, and the twelve larger joints correspond to the number of months.”

Most of these wide-ranging correlations were quite arbitrary and could not be verified. Second, Dong believed that things of the same kind could activate each other, and in particular there were interactions between heavenly affairs and human affairs. “For example, when a horse neighs, it is horses that will respond, [and when an ox lows, it is oxen that will respond]. Similarly, when an emperor or a king is about to rise, auspicious omens will first appear, and when he is about to perish, unlucky omens will first appear. Therefore things of the same kind call for each other.” (Chan, 1963, p283)

Even though Dong’s theory was very popular at the time, it was later resisted by quite a few other thinkers. Not only were there many objections to the arbitrary correlations postulated by Dong, there were also criticisms against the theory of

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5 Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals, from Chan [1963], pp. 281-2. Also see Henderson [1984] for more details about correlative thinking.
interaction. For example, Wang Chong argued that Heaven had its own natural way and ran its own course. It would not show bad omens to warn people and would not show auspices to praise people. Even if interaction is possible, human beings in heaven and earth are like fleas in clothing and ants in their holes, which hardly ever have any impact on their hosts.

Wang Chong's ideas were close to the Daoist’ view of nature, and such ideas were further articulated by the Neo-Daoists in the Wei-Jin period. Wang Bi explicitly introduced the ideas in *Dao-De-Jing* to interpret Confucian classics (esp. the *Book of Changes*). The world is governed by the Way, and man just needs to follow the way. “The Sage understands Nature perfectly and knows clearly the conditions of all things. Therefore he goes along with them but takes no unnatural action.” (*Ibid.*, p. 322) Wang Bi also discussed the origin and the development of the universe and thousands of things inside it (cosmogony per se), and it had a significant impact on Neo-Confucian schools in Song dynasty.

Philosophical cosmology was a central part of neo-Confucian philosophy. Again the notion of heaven and its relation to man occupied center stage within Neo-Confucian cosmology. While the transformation of the notion of Heaven in the Zhou period was due to the need of political justification, the Neo-Confucian articulation of Heaven was mostly driven by philosophical concerns. Confucian moral theories had to be defended against Buddhist and Daoist challenges, and such arguments were often grounded in a particular cosmological framework. So many Neo-Confucians, such as Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, and Zhu Xi paid serious attention to philosophical cosmology. In his commentary on the *Diagram of Taiji*, Zhou Dunyi outlined a Confucian cosmology that not only grounded Confucian ethics but also provided an explanatory framework for natural phenomena. *Taiji*, which comes from *wuji*, generates *yang* when it moves and *ying* when it rests. From *yin* and *yang* Five Elements emerge, and together they generate all the things in the world and are responsible for unlimited transformations. In their creation, human beings are endowed with the best from the Heaven, and so they are the most capable in the world and are morally good in nature. Such a cosmological picture became the foundation for neo-Confucian philosophy. Zhang Zai articulated the transformations of things with his theory of *Qi*, yet he also emphasized the generating and sustaining function of Heaven in such transformations. In Zhang Zai’s theory, Heaven has its own mind which gives Him perceptions and feelings. Zhu Xi offered the most systematic and sophisticated theory of philosophical cosmology in Chinese philosophy. His dualist theory of *Li* (Principle) and *Qi* was used to explain all the difficult issues encountered in Confucian moral and political theory as well as in studies of nature. Here the original vague notion of Heaven was replaced by several distinct concepts, and no traces of personal characteristics could be found at all. Again, it should be a deeply beneficial and productive project to explore neo-Confucian cosmology and the role it plays in Confucian philosophy.

The traditional idea that Heaven and man are a united whole (*tian-ren-he-yi*) was preserved and emphasized in Neo-Confucian philosophy. The ideal relation (which is also the initial and the default relation) between Heaven and man is that of harmony. In particular, natural things and man have the same origin, as they are both created by
Heaven. Man is endowed with the best quality, and that is why man is the best among them all. Man shares the same essence with Heaven, and this explains why man is good in nature and so establishes a solid foundation for Confucian moral claims.  

The third question mentioned at the beginning of this section is clearly one of the central concerns of Chinese philosophers. Chinese were extremely conscious of rapid changes around them, and tried hard to understand the patterns and the causes of change. This was the case with the Book of Changes (Yijing) which became a Confucian classic, and remained to be the central concern of the Daoist philosophers (such as Laozi and Zhuangzi). There are many interesting topics concerning the Chinese concept of change, and a great deal of research has been done. Here I would like to point to one interesting feature: the lack of progressive view of change in Chinese cosmology. Starting with Confucius, the dominate trend was to look to the past for the ideal person (sage) or a moral society. The world often did not get better with time, but rather deviated from the previous ideal and actually got worse. So Chinese philosophers did not believe that there was an intrinsic progress toward an ideal with the advancement of time. Sometimes a cyclical theory of dynastic change was introduced, but again it was not a progressive one. The legalists tried to justify their political reformation by setting up a progressive model of social development, as Shang Yang claims: “In the highest antiquity people loved their relatives and were fond of what was their own; in middle antiquity, they honoured talent and talked of moral virtue, and, in later days, they prized honour and respected office.” Yet they can hardly find any support for such claims, and the abysmal failure of Qin dynasty doomed the fate of legalism. Future studies on this aspect of Chinese cosmology are also of great significance.

IV. Future of Chinese Cosmology

Neville asks a very important question: given the scientific picture of the world we have today, how do we make sense of Chinese cosmology? Even though we can get a clear picture of what Chinese cosmology is, is it still relevant today? Can it make positive contributions to the issues we face today? Neville’s question is not about contributions in terms of cultural anthropology or sociology. Certainly a better understanding of Chinese cosmology can help us understand Chinese culture and Chinese people. Hopefully we can better deal with many important social issues both domestic and international. Yet such benefits are not the direct contributions of Chinese cosmology. Even though a better understanding of radical religious systems

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6 Such an idea seems to be common to all Confucians. Even though Xun Zi had a different understanding of human nature, he was in no way like a modern scientific philosopher who treats nature like an object. Heaven, for Xun Zi, is still the foundation for morality, though more so at the institutional level than at the individual level. See Machle (1993) for a detailed discussion on Xun Zi’s understanding of Heaven and nature.

7 Some early studies can be found from the papers edited by Rosemont (1976). A recent paper by Wonsuk Chang is also interesting.

8 Chapter 7 of Book of Lord Shang, quoted from Rubin (1976: 97).
can help us better deal with people who believe in them, this does not necessarily imply that such a theory is correct. Neville’s question is whether Chinese cosmology itself has any value, and whether it can make any direct contributions to contemporary issues.

I believe Chinese cosmology does have some intrinsic value in today’s world. First, we need to make a distinction between science and scientism. Science involves any empirical studies of nature which produce knowledge we can use. Our ability to predict and control what happens has become more and more powerful with the advancement of science. Yet the empirical sciences themselves lack any value judgment. Science tells us what is the case or what can be done, but does not tell us what we should do. Scientism goes beyond the empirical sciences and enters into the realm of values, often with unjustified assumptions. For example, it claims the study of science is the only valid interpretation of the world, and any meaningful life must be based on the scientific picture. Here the meaning of life is clearly a value issue. Further, scientism often projects the progressive nature of scientific development into the human world, and claims that human society should move in a progressive way, though the meaning of such progress is often not articulated. Again it involves a value judgment about how society should develop. Such value judgments are more controversial and need to be kept separate from scientific claims. Second, we need to make a similar distinction in cosmology. Cosmology also has two components: an empirical component which overlaps with sciences, and a value component which belongs to philosophy but not to the sciences. If we keep science and scientism separate, we find that the philosophical reflections of cosmology need not be in conflict with sciences.

Chinese cosmology can be well integrated into the modern sciences. First, the empirical component of Chinese cosmology is more consistent with modern sciences. In the Western world, the tension between religion and science (especially Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection) is very high, since claims about God’s existence and attributes are not supported by modern science. In Chinese cosmology (Confucian cosmology in particular) there is no such tension. Second, in Western theology value claims are tightly tied to empirical claims about God’s existence and attributes, so modern science poses an immediate threat to its value judgment. Yet in Chinese cosmology, many of its value claims are consistent with modern science. For example, the claim of the unified nature of man and Heaven is consistent with Darwin’s theory of evolution, which views man as a product of natural selection. The harmonious relation between man and Heaven meshes with the theory of adaptation very well. Even the prominent role of man in nature seems to be justified in Sterelny’s recent book which extols man’s unique ability to change/impact the whole environment (Sterelny, 2003).

Chinese cosmology can also contribute more to the realm of values in a way consistent with modern science. For example, in Chinese cosmology nature is valuable in itself, and man is an integral part of nature rather than beyond or outside of nature. Such an understanding of nature can be very helpful to our long-term survival on earth. Similarly, the Chinese understanding of change offers an important alternative to the progressive picture which modern science assumes. The movements
can be in a cyclical pattern rather than a linear one. Also changes are often necessitated by nature itself. As a result there is no need for human beings to interfere with the nature constantly. If the system is in a natural balance, there is nothing that human beings have to change. As a Daoist would advocate, doing nothing is often the best thing to do.

A common complaint against Chinese cosmology is that it fails to make the distinction between value and fact, since it identifies moral value with the value of nature. Yet the identification of moral value and the value of nature does not entail that there is no distinction of value and fact. It only says that nature has the same value as man. The history of Chinese philosophy has plenty of examples where facts are distinguished from values; so this is really a non issue.

A profound concern is that Confucian cosmology seems to be committed to deriving moral values from the values in nature, which seems to be the case in Zhu Xi’s philosophy. Yet there are no good reasons to brush this approach away immediately, and it might be a promising project if interpreted properly. Also, this is not the only way which Confucian cosmology offers. In Wang Yangming’s philosophical system moral values are given a primary status. So there is no reason why Chinese cosmology cannot provide a great perspective on today’s issues. More research needs to be done in this arena. There have been many illuminating studies on Confucian ethics recently, and I hope more attention can be devoted to these fundamental questions in Chinese cosmology.

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BOOK REVIEWS


THIS BOOK CONSISTS of three distinctive parts: I. Portrait; II. Europe, the Faltering Project; III. On Reason in the Public Sphere. The Europe project, as well as the project for a constitutionalized world society project, might be faltering, but Habermas' intellectual experiment and endeavor is not. His critical approach to the faltering Europe project reveals him as both a critical thinker and staunch defender of the project.

The book has an unusual structure. Part I of the book - under the rubric "Portraits" - consists of Habermas' account of his intellectual interactions with three illustrious philosophers of our time: Richard Rorty, Jacques Derrida, and Ronald Dworkin. These accounts give us a titillating glimpse of Habermas, a staunch defender of the 'Europe project' which he conceives to be faltering today. Rorty came close to be the other mirror of Habermas as a philosopher, a writer, and a cosmopolitan European. In Habermas' eyes, as a philosopher, Rorty was sophisticated (p.13). As a writer, Rorty "came closest to the spirit of poetry" among those "philosophers rare who can write flawless scholarly prose" (p.14). As a leftist and cosmopolitan patriot, Rorty was "an old-fashioned sort of left intellectual, who believes in education and social reform." (p.14).

In comparison, the postmodernist Derrida is the intellectual foe of Habermas. No wonder, the account of Derrida becomes a narrative of the intellectual differences between Derrida and Habermas in how to answer the ethical question, "How one ought to live one's life?" For Habermas, the focal question is: "At what point exactly does Derrida's thought part ways with that of Heidegger?" Habermas does not forgive Derrida's anti-normative approach to the ethical life. Also, in Habermas' eyes, Derrida tends to "answer the basic ethical question from the perspective of a self-reflective relation of the ego towards an other, who expresses himself in the voice of a second person." (p.34).

In Habermas' eyes, Dworkin "is a maverick both among legal scholars and among philosophers." (p.37). Dworkin thus becomes the mediation for Habermas to introduce the question, "Can the law be construed as a morally neutral set of norms?" (p.39). Both Dworkin and Habermas understand that law and justice are not identical. But both are interested in the question, "May the judge in the robbers completely ignore the internal relation between law and justice?" (p.38). Dworkin thus becomes Habermas' voice of criticism of legal positivism in the legal theories of H.L.A.Hart and that of others. Noteworthy, Habermas is the author of Between Fact and Norm, a philosophical treatise of law. Of course, Habermas' view on law and justice, which he reveals in his account of Dworkin, will be an important ingredient of his defense of the Europe project.

Part III of the book under the rubric "On reason in the public sphere" deals with three issues: the constitutionalization of international law and its legitimacy problem,
quality press as the backbone of the political public sphere, and the epistemic dimension of democracy. According to Habermas, the last issue is particularly close to his heart (p.vii). It is about "structuring influence that a normative theory of the public sphere can have on the design of empirical research." (ibid). For Habermas, "normative theorizing and empirical research go hand in hand in Aristotle's Politics. Today, political theories in the social contract tradition express an abstract 'ought' which clashes with sobering facts in our increasingly complex societies." (p.138).

For Habermas, separating normative theorizing and empirical research, two traditions of present democracy, are flawed. The liberal tradition focuses on "the legal institutionalization of human rights, and in particular of the negative rights." (p.141). The republican tradition focuses renewing the concepts of citizenship and collective solidarity. The liberal concept does not see that democracy has a normative dimension. The republican tradition has an incorrect concept of the normative dimension, and has to appeal to nationalism in the end (p.142). Habermas offers the deliberate model as the alternative to both the liberal model and the republican model. "The deliberate model is more concerned with the reasonableness of discourses and negotiations than with the fair aggregation of the motives and success-oriented individuals or with the authentic character of the common will of a nation." (p.144). In it, "the procedures and communicative presuppositions of the formation of democratic opinion and will serve as the most important sluices for the discursive rationalization of the decisions of the government and of the administration." (ibid). The strength of the deliberate model lies in its emphasis on the truth-tracking potential of political deliberation and on the epistemic dimension of modern democracy.

The second part of the book, which has the same title as the book "Europe, the Falttering Project", is not a case study, but a philosophical reflection of the challenges and tasks facing European unification. It focuses on three issues: the role of intellectual in the European cause, the issue of Islam in Europe, and a policy of graduated European integration.

As Habermas sees it, Islam presents a challenge of full range to the Europe Project. To start with, the rapid, astonishing development of Islam in Europe raises again the normative issue of how European citizens should understand themselves. All European societies face this question, "How should we understand ourselves as members of a post-secular society, and what must we expect from one another if we want to ensure that social relations in firmly entrenched nation-states remain civil in spite of the growth of cultural and religious pluralism?" (p.65). The presence of Islam in Europe calls for re-examination of the concept of basic religious rights. It also presses hard the issue of religious toleration: What are the nature, content, requirement, scope, limits, and dangers of religious toleration? It inflames the cultural struggle between radical multiculturalism and militant secularism to define Europe. In such a context, Habermas is "primarily concerned with the image of an inclusive civil society in which equal citizenship and cultural difference complement each other." (p.69).

If one expects Habermas to provide a silver-bullet for the urgent problem and great challenge that Islam brings to the Europe project, one will be disappointed. When all is said and done, it is not clear what the solution to the problem is. For
example, how should one respond to the proposal that some parts of the Sharia family law should be adopted for local Muslim populations in some areas in Europe? How should Europe be faithful to the principle of separation of church and state? Habermas does indicate that with regard to the challenge of Islam, religious toleration is going to be a pacemaker of the Europe project. That being said, it is not clear what Europe should do beyond the idea of having respect for basic religious freedom. Habermas puts a lot of eggs into the basket of wish that all European citizens, religious or secular alike, can be united with a new epistemic attitude, the willingness to search for truth as the common ground. However, the European reality might well dash such a wish. The essence of the issue of Islam for Europeans can be summed up in the question, "How should Europe respond to the movement to define Europe culturally in terms of Islam?" The principle of religious toleration is part of the spirit of our time. Yet, religious toleration itself can be a double-edged sword.

With regard to the Europe project itself, Habermas acknowledges that it is faltering. In spite of this, he advocates a policy of graduated European integration. On this point, Habermas’ approach is more one of a sociologist and public intellectual than a philosopher. When all is said and done, Habermas still does not directly face such crucial questions: What is the European identity? How to define European identity amid a diversity of European cultures and challenges of non-European cultures? What to do with multiculturalism? Here, we find no easy exit. Habermas clearly believes that intellectuals including philosophers have a prominent role to play in the European cause. He believes that intellectuals will contribute more as public intellectuals to the cause, not as part of the academic elite. Perhaps, Habermas should have used the Europe cause as the pretext to define what public intellectuals ought to be, e.g., their responsibility, their task, and the like.

In sum, Europe: the Faltering Project is a thought-provoking and insightful read. Habermas’ elucidation of details serve to illuminate and reveal the depth of his insights.

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About four decades ago Gibsonians, a significant minority among psychologists, advocated the idea that perception would be better explained by the dynamic, interactive, and synergistic relationship between the organism and its environment. At the same time the idea of viewing perceptual experience as embodied emerged in the study of western philosophy. These small streams have now become a strong current in the intellectual pursuit of truths about the mind, especially in the areas of developmental and perceptual psychology, situated robotics, and cognitive neuroscience. The initial ideas have developed into new models for the study of the mind. In fact, they have grown so strong in cognitive science that they seem to suggest a new science of the mind and there comes the title of Rowlands’ book under review. In its current status in cognitive studies this new science is rather a set of new ways of thinking about the mind. These new conceptualizations include: the embodied mind—the idea that the mind may be partly constituted by extra-neural processes of the body; the embedded mind—the idea that the mind is evolved to function in a situated environment; the enacted mind—the idea that the mind is involved in the organism’s interaction with the environment; and the extended mind—the idea that the mind may be partly constituted by the processes of the organism’s environment.

The New Science of the Mind, however, is not a science book. It may not even be a book about the mind if you think of the mind as a substratum which is different from but underlies mental processes, properties, events and states. This book treats the mind in the Humean way, that is, it treats the mind as nothing more than an aggregate of mental processes. It is an attempt to articulate the conceptual foundation of a non-Cartesian cognitive science through a systematic treatment of the ‘4e model’—the mind being embodied, enacted, embedded, and extended. The non-Cartesian conception of the mind rejects the assumption underlying Cartesian cognitive science that mental processes—perceiving, remembering, thinking, reasoning, and so on—must exclusively occur inside the head of the organism. Instead it advances the hypothesis that those processes, structures, properties, events, and states of affairs which exist outside the brain may partly constitute mental processes. However, the non-Cartesian conception of the mind, which Rowlands calls the amalgamated mind, excludes the notions of the enacted mind and the embedded mind. The notion of the embedded mind is excluded because it makes no claim about the composition of mental processes; hence it does not entail the idea of extending mental processes beyond the boundary of the brain. The enactive account is excluded because at best it yields an embodied and/or embedded account of the mind. Thus, the amalgamated mind is the conjunction of the embodied mind and the extended mind.

How can extra-neural processes be cognitive? Rowlands’ first strategy is to specify a set of sufficient conditions for a process to count as cognitive. A process is cognitive if (1) it manipulates and transforms information for its subject, (2) it has the
proper function of making information available to its subject, (3) it produces a representational state in its subject, and (4) it belongs to its subject. Focusing on the notion of the extended mind, Rowlands explains how some environmental processes may satisfy these conditions. In the case of visual perception, the optic array is an environmental structure; by encountering and manipulating the structure the perceiving organism exploits, transforms, and makes available to itself invariant information contained in the structure, and typically, this process culminates in a visual experience in the organism. Thus, the process of visual perception does not start at the retina; but rather it begins with the much earlier environmental operations of transforming ambient information contained in the light array. In the case of cognition, for example, with the process of remembering, the subject may accomplish a memory task through the actions of manipulating such environmental objects as notebooks, pictures, and maps; in certain circumstances those actions are forms of information processing, making information available to the subject and producing beliefs in the subject; hence they count as cognitive processes.

The idea here is not that these environmental processes per se, which are commonly understood as the causal mechanisms or material bases responsible for perception and cognition, count as cognitive. The idea is rather that these information manipulating processes located in the organism’s environment count as cognitive only if they function in tandem with information transforming processes—typically, representational ones—internal to the head of the organism. The essential component of the four sufficient conditions for cognitive process is that each of these conditions makes essential/direct reference to the subject. The information processing is for the subject; the information is made available to the subject, the representation of what the information is about is produced in the subject, and all of the above belong to the subject.

Why must cognitive processes be owned by a subject? How can these processes be extended beyond the brain and into the world? Rowlands’ second strategy is to account for intentionality in terms of revelation or disclosure. Cognitive processes are owned by a subject, and many of them are extended beyond the brain and into the world because they are intentional, and they are intentional because they are revealing or disclosing processes. To say that my experience or my belief is directed at an environmental object is to say that the object is revealed as falling under some viewpoints of mine. The processes that produce the experience or belief are therefore revealing processes. Revealing is a dual-mode process. What my experience is like is that of which I am or I can be aware; and hence it is the empirical mode of revealing. On the other hand, the set of causal processes in virtue of which I am aware of the experience’s object, the set of conditions that make the experience possible, is that of which I am not and cannot be aware; and hence, it is the transcendental mode of revealing. Intentionality, Rowlands says, is that in virtue of which one type of intentional object (an object simpliciter) is revealed as possessing another type of intentional object (an aspect or empirical mode of presentation).

The empirical-transcendental mode distinction can be understood as a content-vehicle distinction. The content of my experience of an object is logically sufficient for the object to be revealed to me under some aspects. The vehicle of that content
reveals the object to me by providing a causally sufficient condition for me to have the experience with that content. The thesis of the amalgamated mind as the conjunction of an embodied mind and an extended mind is a thesis about the vehicles, not about the content. Obviously, those causal processes which constitute the vehicle of cognition are not necessarily located in the brain; in fact, most of them are not. Therefore, it seems natural to envision that the mind, which is traditionally conceived as internal, can be in principle extended beyond the brain and into the world. In fact, we can even extend the model of the amalgamated mind to a more dynamic one. We can conceive that the mind or the aggregate of perceptual and cognitive processes is so elastic that it is constantly expanding and contracting alternately. It may expand, as in the case of perceiving, beyond the brain and beyond the body; and it may shrink, as in the case of self-reflecting, into the brain.

It seems that the dual-mode account of intentionality gives a dualistic characterization of the mind. The vehicle is causal but the content is phenomenal. The empirical revelation of the world supervenes on the transcendental revelation of the world; and the latter culminates in the former by producing a phenomenal and representational property in the brain. These points taken together suggest a property-dualism. The theory of the amalgamated mind is consistent with and supportive of J.J. Gibson’s direct realism of perception, Hilary Putnam’s natural realism of cognition, and the reliability theory of knowledge. Since revelation runs through its causal processes from the intentional object of an experience to phenomenal representation of that object, hence the relevant intentional acts travels through the causal processes out to the world. Are we, then, in genuine cognitive contact with a world? The transcendental revelation may be well extended beyond the brain and into the world; but as long as it culminates in a phenomenal revelation, the explanatory gap between what the world seems to me (e.g., it seems to me a green bird) and what the world is (e.g., it is actually a white bird under green lighting) remains.

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