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*SPECIAL ISSUE:  
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*Editor's Foreword*

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# Editor's Foreword

## Modern and Contemporary Taiwanese Philosophy

Jana S. ROŠKER

The topic of this special issue deals with the development of a certain stream of the Chinese philosophical tradition. Yet this philosophy did not originate in mainland China, and thus in some supposedly logical “centre” of Chinese culture, but on its alleged “periphery”, namely on the beautiful island of Taiwan. One of the incentives for our decision to compile an issue of *Asian Studies* which is devoted entirely to the philosophical developments in Taiwan was an international conference, entitled *Taiwanese Philosophy and the Preservation of the Confucian Tradition*. This interesting academic meeting was organized in October 2019 in Ljubljana by the Center for Chinese Studies at the National Central Library in Taiwan in cooperation with the East Asian Research Library (EARL) and the Department of Asian Studies at University of Ljubljana.

The main goal of this issue is to show the broader academic audience dealing with the fields of Philosophy, Chinese or East Asian studies that Taiwanese philosophers have played an important role in the development of modern Chinese philosophy, and especially in the second half of the 20th century.

In contrast to the mainland, Taiwanese philosophy of that time had almost no connection with either Marxism or any of the many streams of post-Marxist philosophy. While theorists from the People's Republic of China were mainly dealing with various forms, issues and innovations in the field of the Sinization of Marxism,<sup>1</sup> those working on Taiwan devoted themselves to the exploration and adaptation of other forms of Western modernity, especially those deriving from Kant and German classical philosophy (Elstein 2015, 90). They wanted to modernize their own (i.e. Chinese) traditions through the ideas of the European Enlightenment. While in the 1950s the Chinese conceptual tradition (in particular, Confucianism) fell into disrepair and was often prohibited, or at least severely criticized, on the mainland (see e.g. Kam 1980), Taiwanese

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1 However, the Sinization of Marxism has also been thoroughly treated in the journal *Asian Studies*. Namely, its first issue of Volume 7 (January 2019) was entirely devoted to this topic. In a narrower sense, the Sinization of Marxism has been analyzed in Tian (2019, 13–37), Rockmore (2019, 55–73), and Altinok (2019, 75–96).



philosophers were constantly striving for its preservation and development (Rošker 2015, 43ff).

However, at issue was not only the preservation of tradition; in the second half of the 20th century, several complex and coherent philosophical systems emerged in Taiwan. The creation of these discourses is proof of the great creativity and innovativeness of many Taiwanese theorists. Here, it is particularly important to highlight the Modern or New Confucianism and its most famous Taiwanese representative, Mou Zongsan.

Nevertheless, Confucianism is not the only stream of thought that was developed and subjected to innovation in post-war Taiwan; during the same period, we could witness many other forms of investigating and developing traditional Chinese thought on the island. In this regard, the Neo-Daoist currents and the Taiwanese Buddhist studies are certainly worth mentioning. Besides, modern Taiwanese philosophers have also enriched and advanced the originally Western medieval scholastic thought by establishing a specific school of the so-called Taiwanese Neo-Scholasticism, which was founded at the Fu-jen Catholic University. In the second half of the 20th century, specific schools of logical thought (including both Western and Chinese logic) also developed in several Taiwanese universities.

It is also important to highlight that even though the philosophical currents in modern and contemporary Taiwan belong to the most influential and important streams of thought in contemporary East Asian theory, they are still unrecognized as specifically Taiwanese. Moreover, the main reasons for the immense importance of Taiwanese philosophy for East Asia and the contemporary world are twofold.

First, they can be found in its contributions to the preservation of traditional Chinese, especially Confucian thought. Secondly, its development of specific innovative philosophical approaches and systems profoundly influenced the theoretical discourses in the entire East Asian region. The philosophical currents in modern Taiwan were mainly developed during the second half of 20th century, in which the philosophical theory in mainland China was, as already noted, largely limited to the Sinization of Marxist thought. Hence, for many decades, Taiwanese philosophy represented the only driving force of developing, modernizing and upgrading traditional Chinese thought and its syntheses with Western thought. As such, they soon gained a widespread popularity in most of the other East Asian societies that were traditionally influenced by classical Confucian thought, as for example Japan and South Korea.

The present issue of *Asian Studies* aims to introduce its important contributions to the wider international academic public, and to discuss and exchange knowledge



regarding their philosophical approaches, ideas and methods. Given the fact that numerous Taiwanese philosophers belong to the pinnacle of contemporary theoretic achievements in Chinese-speaking world, and because there is still an almost complete lack of awareness of this fact in European academic circles, this issue aims to clarify and present several important aspects of modern and contemporary Taiwanese philosophy, which have been summarized into three scopes of contents. The first deals with the revitalization of Confucian philosophy, while the second introduces Taiwanese philosophy from broader East Asian perspectives. The third scope is entirely devoted to one modern Taiwanese philosopher. It critically introduces Fang Dongmei (also known as Thomé Fang), who is still practically unknown in the Western world, even though his remarkable works show he was an important, original philosopher and a brilliant scholar, who might well be compared with the most famous Taiwanese theoretician, Mou Zongsan. The fourth and last scope traces the innovative Taiwanese transformations and modernizations of Chinese logic and Chinese Buddhist as well as Daoist philosophy from the beginning of the 20th century to the present.

The first scope, entitled *The Confucian Revival* includes three articles. It opens with Huang Kuan-Min's paper "Dissemination and Reterritorialization: Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and the Renovation of Contemporary Confucian Philosophy". It reveals that, as a philosophy, Confucianism returned to prominence in the second half of the 20th century, with the establishment of modern social and state institutions. The author focuses on the introduction and a critical analysis of the work of two Confucian philosophers, who were—each in his own way—significant for the establishment and development of contemporary Taiwanese philosophy, namely Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan. He describes their creativity through the lens of two concepts, dissemination and reterritorialization, that were borrowed from Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari. The second article in this scope was written by Ady Van den Stock under the title "The 'Learning of Life': On Some Motifs in Mou Zongsan's *Autobiography at Fifty*". As one can see from the title, this paper is also devoted to the work of one of the theoreticians who is at the centre of Huang Kuan-Min's article. Van den Stock's contribution treats the work of Mou, perhaps the most influential Taiwanese philosopher of the 20th century, through the lens of his own life and its relation to his philosophy, a topic that has hitherto not been investigated in the Western literature. In this context, the author concentrates upon the Confucian concept "learning of life", and then explores, on such a basis, Mou's notion of "life in itself", arguing that it is instrumental for gaining a better understanding of his philosophy. The third paper in this scope on Taiwanese Modern Confucianism is Ali Forkan's "Connecting East and West through Modern Confucian Thought: Re-reading

20th Century Taiwanese Philosophy”, which critically introduces the establishment and development of the Modern New Confucian stream of thought and its dialogues with Western philosophy.

The next scope of contents is entitled *Taiwanese Philosophy from a Broader East Asian Perspective* and comprises two articles. Marko Ogrizek's paper “Huang Chun-Chieh and Comparative Philosophy: Multiple Ways of Studying Confucian Ideas and Notions across Texts and Contexts” introduces the importance of the work of the Taiwanese theoretician Huang Chun-chieh in the field of East Asian Confucianisms. The article examines his hermeneutic and analytic methods, and shows how and why they represent a significant alternative to the more nationally motivated studies of the Confucian traditions in the 20th century. The second and last paper in this scope was written by the Korean researcher Kang Byoung Yoong under the title “Review and Prospects of Taiwanese Philosophy Scholarship in South Korea: A Historical Survey of Academic Publications from 1994 to 2018”. The paper is a result of a thorough investigation of the methods of perception, research and categorization of Taiwanese philosophy in South Korea since its beginnings to the present day. Both articles are significant with respect to the international interactions of Taiwanese philosophy, although both are mainly limited to its spread to two directly neighbouring countries, i.e. Japan and Korea. However, the awareness of its significance definitely started from its influence in the Sinitic regions of Eastern Asia, and this important fact cannot be neglected.

The third scope is devoted to Fang Dongmei (or Tomé Fang). Under the title *Fang Dongmei and the Philosophy of Creative Creativity*, it explores the significance of a philosopher who is—unfortunately and unjustifiably—still not very well known in Western academia. The scope opens with Jana S. Rošker's article “Modernizing the Philosophy of Creative Creativity: Fang Dongmei's Fusion of Holism and Individuality”. The paper represents a general introduction of his work and its crucial concepts. This paper is followed by Téa Sernelj's article entitled “Different Approaches to Chinese Aesthetics: Fang Dongmei and Xu Fuguan”. The author elaborates upon Fang Dongmei's development of Chinese aesthetics and places it into a contrastive analysis with the work of another member of the second generation of Modern New Confucianism, Xu Fuguan, who is also renowned for his theories on Chinese aesthetic thought. This scope of contents ends with a third paper which was written by Wang Keping. In this intriguing contribution, which is entitled “Thomé Fang's Pursuit of a Cultural Ideal”, the author investigates Fang's philosophical theories, which are, as Wang reveals, largely directed to the possibility of humane enculturation. Wang Keping shows why and in which way this kind of enculturation can be compared to the Greek idea of *paideia*, which

is not surprising, given the fact that Fang's thought was based upon a thorough reflection of both Western and Chinese philosophies.

The last scope of contents is dealing with *Modern Transformations in Logic, Daoist and Buddhist Philosophy* in Taiwan. It begins with Fabian Heubel's article "Within the Spinning Stillness of the Present: Reflections on Transcultural Zhuangzi-Studies in Taiwan". It introduces the significance of contemporary Daoist studies in the context of modern Taiwanese intellectual history and transcultural philosophy, focusing upon the work of the contemporary Taiwanese philosopher Yang Rubin, and particularly upon his innovative and subject-related interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*. This article is followed by Jan Vrhovski's paper "Qinghua School of Logic and the Origins of Taiwanese Studies in Modern Logic: A Note on the Early Thought of Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang". This contribution likewise introduces a hitherto very poorly investigated aspect of Taiwanese philosophy, namely the development of logical thought on the island. It concentrates upon the early thought of Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang, first showing how their ideas were originally connected to the so-called Qinghua School of (Mathematical) Logic in the late mainland Republican China, and then systematically introducing their contribution to the formation and development of studies in logic in post-1949 Taiwan. The last paper in this scope, which also concludes this special issue, is Bart Dessein's article entitled "The Heritage of Taixu: Philosophy, Taiwan, and Beyond". It deals with the Taiwanese Buddhist studies and their specific reaction to global modernization processes. Proceeding from an extensive analysis of the writings of Taixu, a great reformer of Buddhism from the early 20th century, the author shows that the modernization of Buddhism was at first seen as an undertaking that was inextricably connected to political and social reforms of the time, and has in this sense also had a great impact on the specific developments of modern Taiwanese intellectual history.

With this rich palette of different topics that are all linked to modern Taiwanese thought and reveal the multifarious richness of its ideas, this intriguing volume will doubtless show that Taiwanese philosophy can be seen as a bridge that links different discourses across time and space by illuminating and exposing various otherwise neglected traditions of Chinese philosophical thought. I also believe that it will show why this connective function and dialogical nature is precisely the greatest significance of contemporary Taiwanese philosophy, and sincerely hope that it will raise awareness of this among the wider circles of European academia. And last, but not least, my sincere wish is also that this special issue of our journal may serve, similar to Taiwanese philosophy, which is its subject matter, as a bridge connecting many different ideas, viewpoints and values.

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*PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS*

*The Confucian Revival*

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# Dissemination and Reterritorialization: Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and the Renovation of Contemporary Confucian Philosophy

*Kuan-min HUANG\**

## Abstract

Confucianism as a mode of life was brought to Taiwan as early as Chinese settlement. Regarding Confucian philosophy, however, it must be traced back to the founding of modern institutions. Even though the historical background of the Chinese diaspora after 1949 is rather complex, it seems possible to examine how it has contributed to the development of academic disciplines in Taiwan, especially with regard to Confucianism. The present paper investigates the corresponding contributions of two philosophers, Tang Junyi (1909–1978) and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995). Both are important scholars, who are indispensable for the development of contemporary intellectual history in Taiwan. In order to describe the creativity in their way of dealing with ruptures, of transforming the separation into the renovation of tradition, the author analyses their efforts in terms of geo-philosophy, through the lens of two concepts, dissemination and reterritorialization, that are borrowed from Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari.

**Keywords:** Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, Taiwanese philosophy, Confucianism, cultural identity, diaspora

## Diseminacija in reteritorializacija: Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan in preporod sodobne konfucijanske filozofije

### Izvilleček

Konfucianizem kot način življenja je prišel na Tajvan skupaj s prvimi kitajskimi priseljenci. A konfucijanstvo kot filozofija se na Tajvanu pojavi šele v času oblikovanja modernih institucij. Četudi je zgodovinsko ozadje kitajske diaspore po letu 1949 precej kompleksno, je vendarle mogoče raziskati, na kakšen način je ta diaspora prispevala k oblikovanju tajvanskih akademskih disciplin in zlasti konfucijanske filozofije. Pričujoči članek raziskuje topogledni prispevek dveh filozofov, namreč Tang Junyija (1909–1978) in Mou Zongsana (1909–1995). Oba sta pomembna teoretika, ki sta igrala osrednjo vlogo v razvoju sodobne kitajske filozofije. Za boljše razumevanje njune ustvarjalnosti in njihovih prizadevanj za premostitev kulturnih diskontinuitet ter transformiranja ločnic v

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preporod tradicije avtor njuna dela analizira skozi optiko konceptov, ki si ju je sposodil pri Jacquesu Derridaju, Gillesu Deleuzu in Felixu Guattariju, namreč konceptov diseminacije in reteritorializacije.

**Ključne besede:** Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, tajvanska filozofija, konfucijanstvo, kulturna identiteta, diaspora

## Introduction

Philosophy, pronounced in Mandarin *zhe-xue* or in Taiwanese *Têh-Ha'eh*, is evidently different from the original Greek term of *philo-sophia*. The introduction of the philosophical discipline in Asia opened a new era of cultural encounter by way of translation; but it also encouraged modern Chinese thinkers to identify their own tradition of thoughts as “philosophical”, with an effort which is no less than an invention of tradition. The philosophical discourses in the modern Chinese language entail at the same time a double translation, that is, in an interlingual manner, from Greek, Latin, Arabic, German, French, and others, sometimes *via* Japanese, into Chinese, and, in an intralingual manner, from Ancient to Modern Chinese. With its foreign origins, the term “philosophy” should be understood as enveloping a heterogeneous set of ideas in addressing Chinese thought.

To speak of Taiwanese philosophy makes things more complicated. Because the choice of the term is not limited to the sole gesture of adding the adjective “Taiwanese”, but also involves historical and geographical deviation. Historically, the island of Formosa had its own indigenous people with Austronesian lineage who stayed primitive without a modern form of civilization until relatively recently. The first contact with the modern European world was through the short Spanish and Dutch colonies in the early 17th century. Despite some Han settlements in restricted areas, the Chinese regime really began in the late 17th century, first under Ming loyalist Cheng and then under the Manchu dynasty until 1895. Japan had sent expeditioners to occupy Chinese settlements on the island in the 16th century, but only settled it as a colony as a consequence of the Sino-Japanese war. The era of Japanese colonial rule demarcates the start of the modern period in Taiwan, with the same standards applied as in other parts of the Meiji Empire. It was only after World War II that Taiwan returned to Chinese rule. The year 1949 is crucial here, as the Nationalist government was defeated in the civil war on the Mainland and retreated to its “temporary” capital of Taipei. A new identity was thus established through the coexistence of Chinese refugees from all



provinces with the earlier Chinese arrivals along with the aboriginal population. Geographically, the island with, its Peng-hu archipelago, faces Fu-Jian province at the margin of the Pacific basin, part of a chain of islands with the Philippines in the south and Okinawa, Japan in the north. During the Cold War, Taiwan was seen as a key link in this chain to prevent the expansion of communism. Situated between the ocean and the continent, the island has long been a place of exchange, between the East and West, North and South.

Due to its historical and geographical characteristics, the unique situation of Taiwan has affected philosophy on the island. As such, it would be better to see philosophy in Taiwan as a hybrid product of heterogeneous factors: the Chinese language as the dominant cultural identity, an American standard of academic activities, the Japanese influence imposing a colonial memory, as well as opening “a window to the world”, and European heritage as source of knowledge. Within this one can see ruptures and connections in the effort to integrate diverse traditions. Moreover, the resulting hybridity explains the mode of existence of this island in the contemporary world.

Confucianism as a mode of life was brought into the island as early as the first Chinese settlement. But in a philosophical context it's better traced to the establishment of modern institutions. Despite the complicated historical background, it seems possible to examine how the Chinese diaspora after 1949, as a geographical factor, has contributed to the discipline in Taiwan, especially with regard to Confucianism. Two philosophers in particular, Tang Junyi (1909–1978) and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) are significant for the contemporary history of philosophy in Taiwan. In order to describe the creativity in their way of dealing with ruptures, of transforming the separation into the renovation of tradition, I will in this work examine their efforts with regard to geophilosophy with the use of two concepts, dissemination and reterritorialization, borrowed from Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari.

## From Diaspora to Resettlement

As representatives of the second generation of contemporary Confucianism, the early years of Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan were marked by the Sino-Japanese war and then Chinese civil war. Since the victory of Chinese Communist Party in the latter pushed them to leave their homeland, their philosophical testimonies are closely related to this catastrophe. Tang retreated to Hong Kong, a British colony at that time, and founded New Asia College with the renowned historian Chien Mu 錢穆. Mou spent a decade in Taiwan after his exile from the Mainland,

and then two decades in Hong Kong as colleague of Tang before returned to Taipei in his last years.

In his preface to *Moral Idealism* (1982b), Mou writes of these ruptures as catastrophic. In contrast to his sense of impotence when dealing with the political reality, he feels more power in engaging in a philosophical diagnosis of the intellectual disease that he feels has befallen China in modern times. The big change from the Republican regime to the Communist one caused a personal trauma that required transformative self-therapy. Mou thus proposes restoring Confucianism, and recovering the lineage of the Dao 道統 that had been ruined in Communist China. By ascribing to this cultural ideal, his therapy is no less collective than it is personal.

Mou's academic reputation was established by such landmark works as *Talent and Metaphysical Principle* (1983), *Substance of Mind and Substance of Nature* (1981), *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy* (1980), and *Buddha Nature and Prajñā* (1997). Covering Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, the main problematic in Mou's works is not a search for one interpretation of the history of Chinese philosophy among many others, but a quasi-response to the problem of culture that Mou encountered in his times. The Kantian term "intellectual intuition", referring to shared, core wisdom prevalent to all three doctrines, is not only used by Mou to criticize Kant, but also to reflect his personal feelings. Mou's *Autobiography at Fifty*, written around 1956–1957, is a testimony of his suffering from the fragmentation of the individual, family, and country. He merges Kierkegaard's "sickness unto death" (Mou 2015, 202, 210, 234) and Buddhist "Samadhi of commiseration" into an existential lapse out of nothingness and then confirms his "verification" of "the clear original mind", of "the innate wisdom for enlightenment", in short, the Confucian sense of Conscience, "Heavenly mind as the substance of benevolence" 天心仁體 (ibid., 241, translation slightly modified). Mou thus searches for a reconnection to Confucian resources to repair his sense of rupture.

Tang's view seems less catastrophic. His expression, "watching the immense sky at loss, crying with the wind" in the preface to *The Spiritual Value of Chinese Culture* (1979), is already a profound lamentation. However, without being pessimistic, Tang usually uses positive terms to encourage others, like him, in despair. His response to the turmoil he and China experienced lies in the analysis of the historical and cultural problems that the country encountered. In contrast to the commonly held sense of crisis presented by Chinese intellectuals since the late 19th century (Metzger 1977, 49), Tang represents a defence of the Confucian value system. Thomas Metzger later calls this specific attitude "epistemological optimism" (Metzger 2005, 259). But Thomas Fröhlich notes that "Tang's modern

Confucianism is not naively optimistic”, but “a substantial reconciliation of all inner contradictions in modern societies” (Fröhlich 2017, 67). A typical opinion can be seen in *Reconstruction of Humanistic Spirit* (1974): the suffering due to the various political shocks that China experienced is not limited to the political field, but also embraces the consequences of the cultural shocks that came with the arrival of Western modernity. His diagnosis leads to the recognition of cultural identity, particularly derived from Confucianism. The way forward is dialectical: one should admit one’s own evil and sin (the moment of in-itself) in order to assume the other’s (the moment of for-the-other), so that the transformative sympathy for self and the other could be rendered possible (the moment of for-itself). The conflict produced from the encounter of Chinese culture with world culture is not a conflict between Good and Evil, but one between different aspects of the Good (Tang 1974, 274). Tang’s dialectics tries to conserve these various aspects of the Good to form a harmonious synthesis. The aim is to form a new cultural identity that is synthetically Chinese. The foundation of modern free and democratic states lies on the political consciousness that can manage the dialectical relations among individuals, society, and the state. In Tang’s own language, it’s the humanistic spirit that can provide the foundation of values for humanity. This is Tang’s reply to the huge rupture that China suffered during his lifetime.

To make this more explicit, I will quote two of Tang’s famous metaphors: the dispersion of flowers and fruits (*bua-guo piao-ling* 花果飄零) and self-planting of the spiritual root (*ling-gen zi-zhi* 靈根自植). As a botanical metaphor, dispersion of flowers and fruits refers to the experience of exile: out of their homeland, the people live in a foreign place without a strong sense of integrity. Tang’s metaphor can describe himself living in Hong Kong under British colonial authority as well as others in exile either in Hong Kong, America or elsewhere. Feeling alienated is a common characteristic among such people, while the process of settling in a new place is a difficult one of recovery, both physical and psychological. “Self-planting of spiritual root” sketches the attempt to draw resources from this new land to wait for new shoots of growth.<sup>1</sup> Being rooted, originally indicating the status of being at home,<sup>2</sup> now means metonymically the conservation of value. Overcoming the sense of despair and spiritual slavery, with this metaphor Tang encourages self-confidence and self-respect. Again, his dialectical reasoning deals with an issue of faith, a belief that just like in a man suffering a grave sickness there will appear in the hope for survival, or that with the heavy sense of guilt one feels there

1 The relation of the root with the flower is usually taken as that of the past with the future (see Bachelard 1948, 291).

2 A root is a commonly used metaphor to indicate one’s home, but it also involves more complicated considerations (see Wampole 2016, 21).

will appear a wish for the Ultimate Good (Tang 1975, 47). Out of the deep despair that comes when facing extreme danger, there arises a strong desire and hope for life. The experience of encountering such limitations is a trial of faith, and thus the inner motivation for the self-planting of a spiritual root comes from the dialectics of despair and hope. Tang not only keeps a religious tone similar to Mou's, but also holds that the consciousness of value as the root that enables growth is based on Confucian faith. The hope to resettle oneself in a new environment is based on the belief that humanity itself is a universal ideal. This faith in humanity is for Tang the central idea of Confucianism.

Although both these philosophers defend Confucianism, they are by no means conservative, without any new contributions to this ancient doctrine. For Mou, being fully aware of the inner resistance of Chinese culture against the challenges of modernity (in the form of scientific knowledge and political systems), gives a transformative proposition to renew Confucianism. He admits the necessity of democracy and freedom to building new political institutions, and suggests a new model of politics in relation to morals. The direct connection of self-cultivation (*nei-sheng* 內聖) and outer ruling (*wai-wang* 外王), i.e. morality and politics, stated as a traditional model in *The Great Learning*, should now retain a radical dissociation by allowing an objective intervention, such as through science and democracy. Tang admits that China's failure to develop democracy is due to cultural reasons and the actual conditions of the country. His strategy is to mediate the contradictions caused by culture shock and to attune human efforts (including the desire for power or will to power) to moral values. In presupposing the conflict between politics and morality, he proposes a comprehensive theory of culture to find a balance. In the examples of Tang and Mou, we see the transformation of personal trauma into a cultural diagnosis in order to create the possibility of revival. The rupture caused by diaspora brings out the effort to reconnect the disrupted continuity. However tragic it was, the inscription of discontinuity may provide us with some clues to new thinking in the 21st century. We are thus in a position to consider their efforts to make a connection by way of their experience of rupture. This is the reason why I attempt to reposition this heritage left by Tang and Mou in the current work.

## Dissemination and Reterritorialization

One clue is the topological usage of the words "position" and "reposition". The feeling of being "outlandish" (*unheimisch*) is attached to a certain place characterized by geographical difference. In the discourses of the two philosophers, what

is more evident is the historical interruption. There is a shift from emplacement to historicity.<sup>3</sup> By looking back to the historical moments or reconstruction, Tang and Mou draw a picture of a future China, one contrary to their contemporary reality. Through this future ideal China is treated with a tone of hope. It is a mixture of the “ought to be” and the “will be”, of ideality and normativity. Seen in this way, the present moment in history is suspended by a rupture. This present is overlapped by a more authentic moment which can lead to curing the trauma and recovering integrity in the future, all in keeping conformity with the origin. This dialectical style of discourse can explain the momentary negative status. The remedy to this tremendous rupture is to rebuild a sense of unity, unity in and through history. It is exactly here that lies a discrepancy between the topological, geographical perspective and the temporal, historical perspective.

### Potency of Difference in the Resettlement

For Tang, establishing cultural identity is key to healing the wound. All the conflicts are dialectically temporary and momentary, existing only for the present moment. In the long run, history will find a way to manage the huge rifts. The problem, for him, is to offer an image of One history with One orientation. This teleological speculation is called the “ideal of the public and the universal”. Tang uses the image of a river to assert this identity: “All the rivers in the world, wherever they are, despite the curved fold, will necessarily be guided by gravity and flow into the immense sea” (Tang 1975, 51–52). It is understandable why Tang assimilates the suffering with the rift and tries to erase the locality (“wherever they are”) and particularity. Geographical heterogeneity is thus replaced by historical identity.

But Tang himself offers another possible reading. The condition of the “self-planting of the spiritual root” is to keep one’s faith “in whatever environment”. Tang has in mind the absolute free will that is not to be conditioned by any place, any status, or any profession. The authentic man is the one who can hold self-determination and keep his own identity anywhere he goes. The expression “anywhere” is ambivalent. In one sense, it could mean that this person is detached from the present situation, as if he lived in a transcendental kingdom of freedom. In another sense, it could also mean that one should adapt oneself to the present environment. In the latter sense, the adaptation requires a realistic and particular understanding of

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3 In a Heideggerian conception of *ek-stasis*, historicity is essentially ecstatic (ek-static). The existential character of a historical being, such as the human *Dasein*, is constantly in a status of being out of place.

one's own present situation, *hic et nunc*. The topological condition for a real, existing person will not be easily cancelled. Otherwise, there is no reason to mourn for diaspora and the loss of one's own home. On the one hand, the historicity manifests the condition of cultural identity that determines how one necessarily belongs to one's cultural motherland. On the other hand, free will manifests the right and power of one to choose where to live. In the linkage of historical necessity and geographical freedom, the antinomy of freedom and necessity finds a new form. In fact, for survival to be possible, for the revival to be hoped for, there must be a place for exiles to live in.

This locus is significant for keeping the separation (between Communist China and free, Nationalist Taiwan or colonial Hong Kong, etc.), because it is the place where Tang's hope can really be preserved. The New Asia College that Tang established was the place where he spent the rest of his life working to expand his faith. This school is a new territory for the real settlement, so that the spiritual ideal can be located. Through this alternative reading, we can see that the self-planting of a spiritual root is in fact a replanting in a new territory. To exist anywhere will inevitably incur displacement. There is a condition of (re-)emplacement for thinking, for philosophizing.

### **Dissemination, Borrowing Derrida**

In the cases of Tang and Mou, we have seen that the reconstruction of historical identity attempts to overcome the experience of rupture by returning to the origin. The challenge of modernity for Chinese culture calls for a correction to respond to this challenge. Mou works out a genealogy of Confucianism to shape the authentic moral principle in order to prove the historical continuity descending from Confucius and Mencius, through Song-Ming neo-Confucianism, to contemporary New Confucianism. All the rifts lead to designating the obstacle of this continuity. Tang's picture of neo-Confucianism is different, but still very similar to Mou's. However, the real problem is that these rifts could not be absorbed into one and the same history. There exists a certain supplement to this version of a single history. It could be argued that there are not only various versions of Chinese history, but also many "Chinese" histories, all depends on how one defines the term "Chinese". The semantic cross-section of "Chinese" and "Taiwanese" leads to the same problem.

One possible way to shake the conviction that there is a continuous identity in conformity to the cultural origin is to adopt a perspective of heterogeneity and difference. My strategy is to point out the aspect of supplementary difference. In

his concept of *différance*, seen as “primordial supplementation”, Jacques Derrida evokes the “supplement of origin” (*supplément d’origine*) (Derrida 1967, 98; [1973, 88]) to criticize the theory of representation in Edmund Husserl. In the phenomenology of time, Husserl conceives every moment as a living present (*eine lebendige Gegenwart*), which is the presence of the origin as repetition. But for Derrida, this presence is never integral, since every present is open for the moment to come and also pushed into the past. There is neither full presence of the origin nor its pure repetition. The incomplete presence requires a supplement, that is, something different from the origin.

In his book *Dissemination* (1972 [1981]), Derrida evokes Nietzsche’s concept of contingency, derived from the experience of casting dice. He thus reformulates the concept of *différance*, as follows:

The present can only present itself as such by relating back to itself; it can only aver itself by severing itself, only reach itself if it breaches itself, (com)plying with itself in the angle, along a break [*brisure*] (...). Presence is never present. (ibid. 1972, 336; [1981, 302–3])

The non-identical presence shows the inner breach as fundamental reflexivity. The act of self-reference must involve a temporal duration. Derrida continues to ascribe this differing to the concept of history:

What holds for the present here also holds for “history”, “form”, the form of history, etc., along with all the significations that, in the language of metaphysics, are indissociable from the signification: “present”. (ibid. 1972, 336; [1981, 303])

Self-identity always concerns a difference that postpones the closure of the self. Historical and cultural identity leaves space to the other, to the non-original.

The difference offers another origin which splits, cuts, and breaks. Another origin will be a beginning for another new life. Derrida applies the logic of supplement to equate presence with life. The dynamics of spreading seeds or insemination are “the scission, the decision—which is both deciding and decided”, that is, “exit out of the ‘primitive’ mythical unity”. The dissemination is necessary because “Nothing is complete in itself, and it can only be completed by what it lacks” (ibid. 1972, 337; [1981, 304]). *Différance* or supplement can explain the diversification in life: no diversity, no life. The origin itself is plural. The supplement to the origin will not decide the consequent development. Ramification and blossoming will also mean diversification. To disseminate seeds, similar to casting dice, is to spread contingency.

Let's go back to Tang's metaphor of diaspora. When the seeds fall on the land, there is no voluntary decision, but rather arbitrary distribution. The dissemination is the product of contingency. It depends on the reception of the land. The diversity of the places determines the new forms of life. The botanic metaphor of life resorts to the land as receptacle. The new territory makes possible the production of a new form of life. For life to continue, it requires the contingent emergence of different new forms, instead of repeating the old ones. Thus understood, Tang's conservatism could reveal a rather different requirement for creating a new form of life in self-conservation (self-respect), without falling into the simple repetition of the old form from motherland.

### Reterritorialization: New Territory of Concepts

If it's possible to borrow the concept of dissemination to induce the positive condition of diaspora and resettlement, it's also possible to consider the creativity of valuable life as another condition of thought. With regard to the ambivalence of Tang's expression of "everywhere" (a sense of loss or sense of freedom), we have already clarified an alternative reading of his metaphor of self-conservation by introducing the topological condition. Yet the concept of place is not only instructive to notify the hidden presupposition of the origin, it confers a series of concepts, such as home, place, territory, land, and earth, in philosophizing. To adopt the idea of geophilosophy, we can see how philosophy as conceptual creation involves the territorial change. According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's work, *What is Philosophy?* (1991 [1994]), philosophical concepts emerge from the plane of immanence, which is not empirical:

it is a plane of immanence that constitutes the absolute ground of philosophy, its earth or deterritorialization, the foundation on which it creates its concepts. Both the creation of concepts and the instituting of the plane are required, like two wings or fins. (Deleuze and Guattari 1991, 44; [1994, 41])

A concept has its own claim by right (*quid juris, en droit*). The contingency of philosophical creation depends however on the land as territorial condition. Deleuze and Guattari hold that philosophical thinking by concepts "takes place in the relationship of territory and the earth" (ibid. 1991, 82; [1994, 85]). The primordial effect of geophilosophy is deterritorialization: "the earth constantly carries out a movement of deterritorialization on the spot, by which it goes beyond any territory: it is deterritorializing and deterritorialized" (ibid.). But



this movement working on the territory is never single ended. It is dynamic and constantly moving, so that the creation of the concept follows the track of this movement. At certain moments it arrives at some particular territories to “take place”, or using a Deleuzian term, to meet its plane of immanence on a certain land. The typical performance of this procedure is the Greek origin of philosophy.

Ancient Greece is the territory where the immanence of concept happens to take place. Deterritorialization accompanies reterritorialization:

Movements of deterritorialization are inseparable from territories that open onto an elsewhere; and the process of reterritorialization is inseparable from the earth, which restores territories. Territory and earth are two components with two zones of indiscernibility, deterritorialization (from territory to the earth) and reterritorialization (from earth to territory). (ibid.)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the origin of Western philosophy is contingent, due to “an encounter between the Greek milieu and the plane of immanence of thought” (Deleuze and Guattari 1991, 89; [1994, 93]). In contrast, the thinking that takes place in Chinese, Indian, Jewish and Islamic lands happens only through figures and not concepts; so Deleuze and Guattari take these thoughts as pre-philosophical. After the period of Ancient Greece, the encounter happens for a second time in modern Europe. Curiously enough, a third time will perhaps arrive in the future:

The creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist. Europeanization does not constitute a becoming but merely the history of capitalism, which prevents the becoming of subjected peoples. (ibid. 1991, 104; [1994, 108])

Again, Nietzsche’s view of contingency and becoming prevails. If this formula is consistent, the process of becoming will not stop at a certain moment or a fixed place, such as modern Europe. The continuous becoming urges the creation of concepts to take place in the lands other than Europe, so that its consequence will be liable to go beyond Eurocentrism. Even at first sight, the judgment of being pre-philosophical seems to do injustice to Chinese, Indian and other traditions. The same injustice is suffered by Spain and Italy, as they are not included in this second moment of encounter due to lacking a philosophical milieu. In fact, the process of becoming will call forth a new moment of creation:

Deterritorialization and reterritorialization meet in the double becoming. The Autochthon can hardly be distinguished from the stranger because the stranger becomes Autochthonous in the country of the other who is not, at the same time that the Autochthon becomes stranger to himself, his class, his nation, and his language (...). (Deleuze and Guattari 1991, 105; [1994, 110])

When the usage of certain concepts loses its freshness and creativity, there is a detachment from the plane of immanence. So there is a need to deterritorialize again. If the moment of strangeness falls on a certain land to project the plane again, then a new reterritorialization will occur.

This is the possibility to escape from the *cliché* about the legitimacy of Chinese (or Taiwanese) philosophy. Admittedly, there was no similar origin of philosophy in Asia as in Ancient Greece, but this does not hinder the invention of a philosophical tradition on the plane of immanence. However, I have no intention to project a new nation or new land. My aim will be only to open the space for transforming the topological significance in the botanic metaphor of diaspora and resettlement into a consideration of creative differentiation.

## Transvaluation of Conceptual Appropriation

Anyone who reads the work of Tang will admit that his metaphor aims to motivate Chinese cultural identity. The geographical condition of rupture is inscribed in Tang's philosophical argument. The ideal of correcting things is to clarify the Confucian humanistic spirit, by infusing axiological conservatism which incorporates the practical philosophy of self-respect based on free will. Tang's argumentation is in fact a mixture of Kant and Hegel, adapting the Hegelian dialectics in treating the historical coherence.

Similarly, Mou's *Philosophy of History* (1982a) obviously adapts a Hegelian framework. But in this book, while distinguishing "analytical rational spirit" (*fenjiede jinli jin-shen* 分解的盡理精神), "synthetic rational spirit" (*zonghede jinli jingshen* 綜合的盡理精神), and "synthetic energetic spirit" (*zonghede jinqi jingshen* 綜合的盡氣精神)<sup>4</sup>, he engages the Kantian distinction of analytic/synthetic and

4 Because of the lack of comparable concepts in Western philosophy, the term *qi* is very difficult to translate into English. According to Margus Ott (2019, 321), *qi* is often translated as life-breath, even though it is not limited to animate beings. Many scholars also translate it as "matter" or "material force". However, *qi* can also pertain to immaterial spheres, and it is doubtful, on the other hand, whether there are any other forces as the material ones. According to the current understanding in physics, matter and energy are equivalent, and in order to avoid the term "matter" here, which

rational/empirical. The terms, “extensional presentation” or “presentation concerning the contents” of reason, have the trace of Aristotelian logic. In Mou’s old age, the emphasis lies on absorption and transformation of Kant. A pivotal expression appears in his critique of the “metaphysics of morals” of Kant, in order to invent his own vocabulary “moral metaphysics” (Mou 1981, 136). As for the famous term “immanent transcendence”, arguably contested by Roger Ames, the aim is to state the proposition “the connection of heavenly principle with the moral nature (*tian-dao xing-ming xiang-guan-tong* 天道性命相貫通)”. Mou thus creates the term “onto-cosmology”. Mou’s final synthesis reconciles Chinese and Western philosophy through the path of Kant, reformulating a picture of the history of Chinese philosophy, as in *Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy* (1999) and *Fourteen Lectures on the Convergence of Chinese and Western Philosophy* (1996). Through his critical reading of Kant, Mou holds a Fichtean position and proposes a transvaluation of Chinese philosophy. Using intellectual intuition as the key concept to reach the Thing-in-Itself, Mou’s approach goes beyond the limit of knowledge set by Kant, for whom the metaphysical illusion is due to the dislocation of concepts of reason out of the realm of empirical knowledge. Mou’s usage of intellectual intuition is not epistemological but instead moral. This intellectual intuition, a synonym of the conscience (“innate moral knowing” *liangzhi* 良知), is seen as the foundation of moral metaphysics. But Mou’s ambition is not limited to the renaissance of Confucianism, it extends to Taoist and Buddhist philosophy. That’s why he terms his effort as a “convergence of Chinese and Western philosophy”.

The idea of convergence or reconciliation (*hui-tong* 會通) reflects the long-term effort of Asian intellectuals confronting the challenge of modernity. It presupposes a critical examination of philosophical traditions, a method borrowed from Tian-Tai and Hua-Yen Buddhism, *pan-jiao* 判教. When a variety of Buddhist schools arrived China, the monks needed to classify the different doctrines in order to organize their knowledge and orient their faith. Mou adopts the same method and applies it to evaluate philosophy in general, by putting Western and Eastern thinking on the common ground. The Buddhist concept of Mahayana perfect teaching (*yuan-jiao* 圓教) offers him a model to evaluate philosophical systems. Even more than a mere borrowing, the Confucian version of perfect teaching can solve, as Jason Clower puts it, “one of the great problems of *all* philosophy generally, namely, whether and how a perfect person is also a *happy* person” (Clower 2010, 181). Mou’s critical examination is thus analogous to deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

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would again introduce hylemorphic thinking, Ott proposes simply using “energy” and “energetic”, instead.

His deterritorialization is a way to extract the method of critical examination and ideal of perfect teaching from Buddhism. As a result of reterritorialization, the new territory is a complicated convergence of different systems of philosophy, those of Plato, Kant, Hegel, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. A critical examination of philosophical systems allows Mou to open a field of discourse. A territory for the encounter of concepts renders possible the movement of thinking, of creating new concepts.

The question “How is intellectual intuition possible?” corresponds to Mou’s critical examination in response to Kant, in the sense that Mou affirms the “authentic self” (Mou 1980, 181–83) to establish the fundamental ontology<sup>5</sup> in a Chinese way. In so doing, Mou is still conscious of the common problem in Kant and Tian-Tai Buddhism, that of existence of phenomena. In the concession to the breach between the authentic self and phenomenal self, Mou tends to play a dialectical process to include the crack into the “constitutive and benevolent heart/mind” or “authentic mind” (*ben xin ren ti zhi yi qu* 本心仁體之一曲) (cf. Billioud 2012, 205). The cursive path (*yi-qu* 一曲) means in fact a negation and implies a dialectical way of thinking. Mou uses the term “retrospective verification” (*ni jue ti zheng* 逆覺體證) to indicate the self-negation of this authentic heart. To justify the moral presentation of such a dialectical connection (Mou 1980, 201–2), Mou resorts to intellectual intuition by maintaining the possibility of its inner negation, while the well-known expression “self-negation of the conscience” (*liangzhi kan xian* 良知坎陷) sounds nonetheless more problematic. The Tian-Tai Buddhist model of perfect teaching allows him to express a “cursive paradoxical wisdom” (*quxian guijue de zhibui* 曲線詭譎的智慧)<sup>6</sup> (ibid., 322) that can dissolve the contradiction in intellectual intuition. Starting with the Kantian problem, by way of Heideggerian fundamental ontology, admitting negation and paradox through the Buddhist model, and finally arriving at a justification of intellectual intuition as a value concept, Mou thus shows a sinuous process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

In contrast with Mou’s interest in Tian-Tai Buddhism, Tang’s mode of thinking shows an affinity with Hua-yen Buddhism. Tang’s arrangement of nine horizons

5 Though the term “fundamental ontology” is borrowed from Martin Heidegger, Mou surpasses Heidegger’s determination while ignoring the ontological difference between Being (*Sein*) and being (*Seiende*). Mou’s critique states that Heidegger commits a mistake of metaphysical misplacement (Mou 1980, 355). Mou argues that “the fundamental ontology can only be founded on fundamental mind (*benxin* 本心), mind of Dao (*daoxin* 道心), or authentic mind (*zhenchangxin* 真常心)” (ibid., 347). Sébastien Billioud gives a profound discussion on the usage of fundamental ontology and extends it to a contrast between Mou Zongsan and Emmanuel Levinas (Billioud 2012, 139–60).

6 See also Mou’s expression “establishing the perfect teaching paradoxically” 詭譎地建立圓教 (Mou 1997, 895, 1008–13).

(*jing* 境) also incarnates the critical examination of doctrines. Tang's last book, *Life Existence and Horizons of Mind* (1986), represents an example of the systematic classification of doctrines. The first four horizons are set to explain the phenomenal world. The fifth concerns the abstract episteme, while the sixth deals with moral life in general (*Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*). The last three horizons arrange three major religions in a successive order: Monotheism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Putting Confucianism on the last horizon seems to be a result of the bias imposed by Tang's faith. But in addition to the reason stated by Tang to praise the Confucianism ideal of humanistic common living, the last horizon reflects Tang's search for cultural identity, which is his ultimate concern.

The intention of reorganizing the world as a value system is never a straight reductive arrangement for Tang. His cursive and complicated way lies in the request for a comprehensive understanding of the world full of heterogeneous values. Deterritorialization and reterritorialization involve a process of transvaluation that also takes place in the interreligious dialogue. The pivot mechanism of the development of horizons stems from a traditional concept for *gan-tong* 感通 (resonance, affective communication, empathy ...) functioning in three directions (vertical, horizontal, successive) (Tang 1986, vol.1: 17). Behind Tang's idealism there is a realist dimension, i.e. a topological condition, to motivate the interaction of mind and horizon. Using the Hua-yen Buddhist terms and scope, Tang transforms the meaning of mind and horizon into a modern picture of the world, including science and ethico-political activities. Admittedly, his main purpose is to motivate a dialogue among religious values, and the ascription of each religion to its own horizon reflects his intention of converging the various aspects of the Good, without jumping into the trap of religious battles or competition among values. Tang also demarcates the line between philosophy and religion by setting a limit on the infinite regression. In so doing, he deterritorializes philosophy and religion at the same time; on the one hand, philosophy needs the orientation in values proposed by religion, on the other hand, religion needs the philosophical clarification to recognize its proper domain. The teaching (*jiao* 教), in the sense of cultivation, combines philosophy and religion together, so that Tang reterritorializes these two again in the establishment of horizons.

The mind in Tang's view is similar to Mou's "constitutive and benevolent heart", coloured by idealism. The horizons are for the mind to move in and out. Whenever the mind might displace itself, there is always a topological requirement: to be in its own place, to be in the right place (*ge-dang-qi-wei* 各當其位). The place here means metaphorically a positioning of value. While enveloping the moral disposition, the mind shall reterritorialize itself in a certain horizon. Between right and wrong, higher and lower value, the mind decides in a dynamic way. The

concept projected by the mind guides this movement. This dynamic process constitutes the way in which Tang conceives the world, after his suffering of exile. Reterritorialization produces a new world, which is to be considered from a different perspective of horizon, place, space, and territory. The nine horizons can be taken as a transformation of the world through the matrix of dynamic resonance of affection. The conceptual apparatus reflects his model of resettlement (self-planting of the spiritual root), but the new root is not a miniature of Hong Kong where he spends the rest of his life, nor an imaginary projection of a future world. The mind surpasses the threshold of Tang's homeland and overarches the cultural territories so that a mixture of world picture is forged. One moment of mental act can bring forth nine horizons. The movement circulating nine horizons is enfolding and unfolding, enveloping and developing at the same moment. The physical space and distance can't limit movement of the mind while the mind realizes the constant becoming. Being attached to the emplacement, the interaction between mind and horizon (the typical function of affective communication) responds to the becoming, which means the movement of thinking. Here the concept of becoming is a key moment to connect different traditions. The horizon (*jing* 境), a term originating from Buddhism, worked through the Confucian apparatus of affectivity based on the *Book of Changes*, seems to function as the plane of immanence defined by Deleuze and Guattari. Tang's conceptual manipulation has the potential to absorb the other systems and transform them into a new comprehensive type. As a philosopher, Tang's effort in establishing a comprehensive system of value can be considered as an effect of resettlement, of reterritorialization.

Both Tang and Mou have appropriated the Buddhist model of critical examination to create new conditions of thinking. Such appropriation allows them to overcome the trauma of historical and geographical rupture. Their hope is to find a new possibility for the future. Since these conditions are topologically realized, in Hong Kong or Taiwan, their physical bodies create new connections with new lands. The places of resettlement are for them more like supplements to their homeland. But with the geographical separation (for example, due to the Taiwan Strait), there lies a zone of security to prevent these places from being absorbed, reduced, and forgotten. These unfamiliar, overseas islands reformulate a new image different from old imaginings of their home country. Their effort in interpreting traditional doctrines affects all the younger generations. For good or for bad, Tang and Mou are paradigms that are representative of a generation strongly influenced by World War II and the Chinese civil war. Immersed in Chinese traditional resources, engaging in a cross-traditional dialogue, and creating new usage of philosophical terms, all these efforts form the heritage that we receive from Tang and Mou.

## Conclusion

The trauma that Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan experienced made them search for a way to confront history and overcome historical rupture. They thus ask for an original, healthy organism of culture based on Confucian values. In such a metonymic action, the idea of a personal cure is displaced by philosophical therapy, which is a self-transformation by restoring the vital energy. Their philosophizing involves a movement of thinking. The cure is actually not a pure return to the original, but rather a reconstruction. Mou constructs a fresh new origin of Chinese metaphysics by using a Kantian term (intellectual intuition). Tang constructs a world (system of horizons) to reconcile the conflicts of modernity, of faiths, of East and West, and of nations. A new origin of Confucian humanism is also a result of construction. Instead of saying that the origin was already there, it would be better to confirm a regressive recognition. Philosophy is ascribed a metonymic function to activate an imagination of living dynamics, to metaphorically cure the living organism. In giving a new form of life, philosophy, in the hands of Tang and Mou, brings in something heterogeneous to the original organism. Not only some Western philosophers, but the whole tradition of Western philosophy is transplanted onto Chinese tradition. The recognition of origin takes place where there are different factors. Once the apparatus is triggered, the recognized origin should coexist with other origins. The die is cast, more than once, twice ... The dissemination transfers the possibilities upon various fragments of the earth. The experience of exile, seen as the effect of deterritorialization, is transformed into the motivation of the creation of concepts. Whatever their personal intentions may be, the movement of concepts becomes impersonal. Their efforts become part of the heritage of Taiwan and Hong Kong: a reterritorialization as a supplement to origin.

The experience of thought in Tang and Mou is of course precious. The recreation of cultural identity must take into consideration the existence of historical rupture and geographical rift. This experience is in fact inscribed in the history to come, in the new world under reformation. There is a shift in perspective, and the supplement to origin displaces the standpoint by integrating a new framework to embrace the becoming of the world. Deterritorialization belongs to the world event. Without knowing Deleuze and Derrida as their contemporaries, Tang and Mou lived in and through their rifts, but this does not prevent their philosophical concepts from emerging from the same plane of immanence. The experiences of diaspora and thought can join together and find a new mark in world geography. The coexistence of philosophers from different places, from different generations, shows the possibility of forming a common world to live in together. In such a

world, the locality is never an abstract point in a system of coordination, but rather a constitutive factor for the integration of all the experiences. Locality sustains the effects of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Disseminative contingences enrich the diversity of all kinds of creation, especially to contribute to philosophical creation.

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# The “Learning of Life”: On Some Motifs in Mou Zongsan’s *Autobiography at Fifty*

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## Abstract

While the twentieth-century Confucian thinker Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) has left behind one of the most thought-provoking and intensively studied bodies of philosophical writings in modern Chinese intellectual history, his own life and its relation to his philosophy (or “learning”), a theme at the centre of his *Autobiography at Fifty* from the mid-1950s, has so far remained largely unexamined. After some introductory remarks on the context and outlook of the *Autobiography*, my paper turns to the close relation between Mou’s conception of life and his approach to the “cultural life” of China as a nation. In doing so, I examine the notion of a distinctly Chinese (more precisely, Confucian) “learning of life” in his writing and explore the motif of “life in itself” running through the *Autobiography*. I argue that this motif is crucial for gaining a better understanding of Mou’s relation to his teacher Xiong Shili (1885–1968), his own father, the social conditions of his childhood in rural Shandong, as well as his overall approach to subjectivity as a space for articulating socio-political concerns.

**Keywords:** Mou Zongsan, *Autobiography at Fifty*, modern Confucianism, life, subjectivity

## »Učenje življenja«: o določenih temah v Mou Zongsanovi *Avtobiografiji pri petdesetih*

### Izvilleček

Medtem ko je konfucijanski mislec 20. stoletja Mou Zongsan za seboj pustil eno najbolj miselno provokativnih in podrobno proučevanih filozofskih del v moderni kitajski intelektualni zgodovini, ostajata njegovo življenje in odnos do njegove filozofije (oziroma »učjenja«), ki je v jedru njegove *Avtobiografije pri petdesetih* iz sredine petdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja, do zdaj razmeroma neraziskana. Po nekaj uvodnih pripombah o kontekstu in pogledih *Avtobiografije* se članek osredotoči na tesno povezavo med Mou Zongsanovim pojmovanjem življenja in njegovim pristopom h »kulturnemu življenju« Kitajcev kot naroda. Pri tem avtor članka v Mou Zongsanovi *Avtobiografiji pri petdesetih* preučuje pojem izrazito kitajskega (natančneje, konfucijanskega) »učjenja življenja« ter raziskuje motiv »življenja po sebi«. Avtor meni, da je ta motiv ključnega pomena za boljše razumevanje

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Mou Zongsanovega odnosa do učitelja Xiong Shilija (1885–1968), njegovega očeta, družbenih razmer v njegovem otroštvu v podeželskem Shandongu in njegovega celotnega pristopa do subjektivnosti kot prostora za artikulacijo družbeno-političnih zadev.

**Ključne besede:** Mou Zongsan, *Avtobiografija pri petdesetih*, moderno konfucijanstvo, življenje, subjektivnost

*From when I was young, I have felt stupefied and estranged  
by the chaotic concreteness of life.*  
我自幼就是一個於具體生活方面很木然生疏的混沌。  
(Mou 1953, 3)

## Introduction

The twentieth-century Confucian philosopher Mou Zongsan's 牟宗三 (1909–1995) *Autobiography at Fifty* (*Wushi zishu* 五十自述) ([1989] 2003), references abbreviated to *Autobiography* below) has yet to attract a significant amount of scholarly attention (notable exceptions are Huang 2017 and Peng 2019). Tucked away in the 32nd and last volume of his bookshelf-filling *Complete Works* (*Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji* 牟宗三先生全集) from 2003,<sup>1</sup> the *Autobiography* is in many ways a peculiar book, quite different from what most readers of Mou's more systematic philosophical writings are probably accustomed to. The text is made up of six chapters, each bearing an evocative title: 1) “Growing up in Non-Distinction” (*Zai hundun zhong zhangcheng* 在混沌中長成); 2) “The Development of Life as it Moves Away from Itself” (*Shengming zhi li qi ziji de fazhan* 生命之離其自己的發展); 3) “Intuitive Insight” (*Zhijue de jiewu* 直覺的解悟); 4) “Discursive Reasoning” (*Jiagou de sibian* 架構的思辨); 5) “Objective Commiseration” (*Keguan de beiqing* 客觀的悲情); and 6) “The Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī Inquires into Sickness” (*Wenshu wen ji* 文殊問疾).<sup>2</sup>

1 This volume also includes Cai Renhou's 蔡仁厚 (1930–2019) *Chronology of Mou Zongsan's Life* (*Mou Zongsan xiansheng nianpu* 牟宗三先生年譜), an invaluable biographical resource originally published in 1995.

2 The Kierkegaardian theme of “sickness unto death” plays a crucial role in the last chapter, which would merit a study in its own right. Translations of the titles of chapters 4 and 5 were adopted from Lu and Su's translation (see Mou 2015, 81, 117). The term *jiagou* 架構 (literally, “framework”) is a technical term Mou uses in his earlier work to refer both to what he considers to be a number of *a priori* structures of human reasoning as well as to the fundamental institutional and epistemic requirements for the transformation of the Confucian teachings into a new form “outer kingliness” (*waiwang* 外王) which can meet the political and cognitive challenges of modernity

These chapters were written between 1956 and 1957, when Mou was employed at Tunghai (東海) University in Taiwan, and vary considerably in length, style, and compositional structure. As such, despite being interlinked, they can to a certain extent be read as separate essays.<sup>3</sup> The opening chapter for example, which like the second was only published when the *Autobiography* first appeared as a monograph in 1989, vividly evokes Mou's youth in the countryside in Shandong 山東 province and is composed in a dense, poetic, meditative, and at times hypnotic style. By contrast, the fourth as well as large portions of the third chapter read more like a straightforward theoretical summary of his early engagement with philosophers such as Leibniz, Russell, Whitehead, and Kant, closely reflecting the content of Mou's massive *Critique of the Cognitive Mind* (*Renshixin zhi pipan* 認識心之批判)<sup>4</sup> while remaining largely devoid of the sort of personal or intimate details one may expect to find in an autobiography.

Indeed, more generally speaking, readers of Mou's *Autobiography* might end up feeling somewhat disappointed if they pick up this book in the hope of finding a nice collection of lively anecdotes or juicy details about the life of its author. To be sure, the latter are not entirely missing, and we do get some insight into the course of the modern Confucian philosopher's life events and experiences. At the start of the book, we learn of his youth growing up in rural Shandong in the county of Qixia 栖霞 on the Jidong 膠東 peninsula. The first chapter conjures up vivid images of Mou as a child lingering in the ancestral burial ground of his family and participating in the *Qingming* 清明 (Tomb Sweeping) rituals and festivities. We catch a glimpse of a young boy enjoying farm work, constructing a makeshift swing with his friends, playfully luring fish by lowering a piece of pork rib set in a basket into a stream, and hiding away in a pear grove to enjoy the beauty of nature in solitude. In later chapters, Mou describes his student days at Peking University, where he started exploring the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) and encountered revolutionary activists as well as (sometimes less than) encouraging teachers.<sup>5</sup> Mou recounts his

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(see Van den Stock 2016, 334–47). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this article are the author's.

- 3 The six chapters take up 16, 17, 19, 19, 45, and 55 pages, respectively, in the edition of the text in the *Complete Works*. The account of Mou's life offered in these chapters is not always strictly chronological, especially in the last chapter, which is by far the most sprawling of the whole book.
- 4 The two volumes of the 1949 *Critique* were published while Mou was composing the *Autobiography* (i.e. 1956–1957), which undoubtedly explains his relatively extensive retrospective engagement with this work in his memoir. A translation of Mou's original preface to the *Critique* is appended to the fourth chapter of the *Autobiography* in the English translation by Lu and Su (see Mou 2015, 112–16).
- 5 Mou audited one of Hu Shi's 胡適 (1891–1962) classes on the history of ancient Chinese thought in 1931. Hu's diaries from that time contain a note describing Mou as “very clever, but too abstruse in his thinking” (頗能想過一番, 但甚迂) (in Yu 1995, n. p.). Unsurprisingly, Mou's references to

post-graduation struggles to make ends meet while drifting from one city to the next in search of employment, and talks of his encounters (and occasional conflicts) with important figures such as Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968), Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1886–1969),<sup>6</sup> Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886–1973),<sup>7</sup> Zhang Shenfu 張申府 (1893–1986), Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988), Jin Yuelin 金岳霖 (1895–1984), Shen Youding 沈有鼎 (1909–1989),<sup>8</sup> and last but not least his “soul-mate” (*zhibi* 知己) Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978) along the way.<sup>9</sup>

As the title of the fifth chapter already indicates, Mou’s sense of “objective commiseration” (*keguan de beiqing* 客觀的悲情) is apparent from his pervasive concern over the massive social, political, historical and cultural changes in China he witnessed and lived through (for a comprehensive study, see Peng 2016). However, as Jason T. Clower observes in describing Mou’s overall philosophical outlook and approach:

Mou’s thoughts are intensely *inwardly* directed. Mou’s *Autobiography at Fifty* is extremely revealing in this regard, especially its first chapter, in which he describes himself as a child so absorbed in a solitary “self-contained inner universe” of ineffable, inchoate, consuming emotion that his father suspected his hearing might be damaged [see Li 2002, 5]. The

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Hu in the *Autobiography* as well as in later writings are overwhelming negative and often downright dismissive (see for example Clower 2014, 35–36, 80). One of the immediate reasons behind Mou’s violent dislike of Hu was undoubtedly the fact that Hu had refused to provide him with a position at Peking University after Xiong Shili had asked Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 (1893–1964) to vouch for his jobless young protégé on his behalf (see Li 2002, 34).

- 6 On Mou’s falling-out with Zhang and the “National Socialist Party of China” (*Zhongguo guojia shehui dang* 中國國家社會黨), see *Autobiography*, 85–86, 88–89. Li Shan attributes Mou’s general distrust of party politics to the fact that his paternal uncle (his father’s younger brother) was accidentally shot to death by a local Guomindang militia (a “peace preservation corps”, *bao’andui* 保安隊) in a brawl with a band of “revolutionaries” in 1928 (see Li 2002, 12). Mou himself, however, insisted that his intense hatred of the Communist Party, which far outstripped his ambiguous attitude toward the Guomindang, should not be contributed to any personal reasons or grudges, but rather stemmed from the fact that the ideology of communism had effectively “betrayed our national and cultural life” (背叛了民族生命與文化生命) (*Autobiography*, 106).
- 7 Concerning Zhang Dongsun’s (largely unacknowledged) influence on the early Mou, see Wang 2006, 72–74, 106–7; Suter 2018, 382–90. Two of Mou’s earliest publications were contributions to a compilation of critiques of dialectical materialism edited by Zhang (see Zhang [1934]).
- 8 According to Peng Guoxiang 彭國翔, Mou’s notion of a “third epoch for Confucianism” (儒學第三期), later popularized by Tu Weiming 杜維明, can be traced back to one of Shen’s texts from 1937, calling for the development of a “third epoch of culture” in China (see Peng 2007, 265).
- 9 The less well-known figure of Zhang Zunliu 張遵驪 (1916–1992), grandson of the famous late Qing official and reformer Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909), also figures prominently in the *Autobiography* as a comforting and generous presence who repeatedly went out of his way to help his jobless, itinerant, and irascible friend. (See *Autobiography*, 81–82, 86–87)

*Autobiography* is best described not as a historical narration of Mou's relations with people and events in space and time, but as a sort of auto-psychodrama. (Clower, forthcoming)

Since I will return in more detail to some of the complexities of this “inwardness” and what I take to be its dialectical relation to what Mou called “objective commiseration” further on, suffice to say for now that even in Li Shan's 李山 biography (2002) we end up learning relatively little of Mou's personal life, and much more about the intricate vagaries of his thought. To a certain extent, this reflects the rather uneventful course of the philosopher's daily comings and goings. According to Li's account, for a great part of his life Mou got up every day between five and six o'clock, immediately bent over his desk for around three hours even before eating breakfast and, apart from another meal at noon, continued working until dinnertime, a routine he observed all year round as long as he had no pressing teaching or lecturing responsibilities. Mou's only real pastimes or hobbies were playing Chinese chess, watching traditional opera, and taking walks, preferably on rainy days, since there would not be too many people in the streets then (see Li 2002, 158).

As Mou himself notes at one point in his *Autobiography* while reflecting on the “natural village life” (*xiang ju de ziran shenghuo* 鄉居的自然生活) he had to leave behind after his move to the capital as a student:

As I look back, it only makes sense for me to really speak of “life” when referring to these harmonious conditions, with children, adults, and the elderly all leading the lives proper to them. It seems to me now I only really lived during my childhood.

我回想，只有在那諧合的套裏，始可說有生活。孩子是小孩的生活，成人是成人的生活，老年是老年的生活。我現在想，我有一段少年孩童的生活。(*Autobiography*, 17)

Or consider the even more morose observation in another reminiscence dating from a couple of years before the writing of the *Autobiography*: “Up until this very day, I am still a person who hardly has any life at all” (直到現在，我還一個幾乎無生活的人) (Mou [1953], 4). To be sure, these seemingly self-deprecating statements will have to be further unpacked in what follows. In any case, the phrase “A Philosophical Life” in the subtitle added in the recent English translation of the *Autobiography* by Ming-Yueng Lu and Esther C. Su from 2015 is quite well-chosen, not in the least because it already gives us a sense of Mou Zongsan's understanding of the close relation between “life” and “learning”, a topic we will

turn to in the next section. For Mou, personal experience and emotion are anything but empirical obstacles to be cleared away for attaining rational insight. As such, he does not follow the positivist belief that philosophical reasoning requires us to “subtract the subject from truth”, with the truth counting as the “residue” or “dregs” which remains after such a procedure of subtraction (Adorno 2013, 15). As he notes in the preface to his *Autobiography*, at the time of its composition, “my thoughts and feelings were weighed down by the multitude of things I experienced around me, which also led me to gain insight into many truths” (意趣消沉，感觸良多，並此感印證許多真理) (*Autobiography*, preface, 3; translation amended from Mou 2015, xv).

### Life, “Cultural Life”, and the “Learning of Life”

Since the *Autobiography at Fifty* dates back to 1956–1957, when Mou Zongsan was between 48 and 49 years old, and would only be published under its current title when he had turned eighty, it is safe to say that the number “fifty” in the title is not to be taken too literally, but before all else has a strongly symbolic significance. It refers to a well-known passage in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語, 2.4), where Confucius describes the major stages in his life and claims to have come to “know the mandate of heaven at the age of fifty” (*wushi er zhi tianming* 五十而知天命).<sup>10</sup> Hence, the title of the *Autobiography* in itself indicates that the author attempts to situate his life in a much broader context transcending the course of his individual existence. As Huang Kuan-min 黃冠閔 has argued in detail, the *Autobiography* places Mou’s personal life within what he calls a “community of remembrance” (Huang 2017), more specifically, that of the Confucian tradition, which he considered to be the “mainstream within the mainstreams” (*zhuliu zhong zhi zhuliu* 主流中之主流) of Chinese culture (Mou [1963a], vol. 28, 4). Generally speaking, “life” (*shengming* 生命) is not a purely subjective category for Mou and does not primarily have a biological or aesthetic sense, but rather a moral and “spiritual” significance (see Mou 1955, 191; Lee 2015, 57). As such, it denotes something intrinsically bound up with a wider cultural and historical horizon of meaning.<sup>11</sup>

10 And just like the Master himself, Mou also singles out 15 as the age at which he “set his mind upon learning” (志於學), an age which for Mou coincided with leaving his hometown to go to high school (see *Autobiography*, 17).

11 “Life is always vertically positioned [in relation to something transcendent] and has multiple dimensions. If we merely pay attention to the flattened-out expanse available to scientific and technological consciousness, we effectively risk corrupting life and ending up negating ourselves as human beings. The core of Chinese culture is the learning of life, [which means] accomplishing things in the external world and pursuing cognitive ideals by starting out from awakening to authentic existence and allowing such ideals to permeate their genuine source inside of ourselves, so that



Needless to say, the “community of remembrance” invoked by Mou is very much an imaginary construct embedded in a pre-established philosophical agenda, allowing the author to recount his own life story as part and parcel of the fate of the Chinese nation as a whole.

Unsurprisingly then, in Mou’s writings we frequently come across the expression “cultural life” (*wenhua shengming* 文化生命), quite often as something that has come under attack or has been severely compromised and damaged in modern times. This rhetoric of a distorted and damaged “cultural life” became especially prominent in Mou’s writings after he left mainland China, shortly before the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949.<sup>12</sup> In one of his many memorable critiques of the “evil of the demonic path” (*modao zhi e* 魔道之惡) of Chinese communism, in a series of lectures delivered in 1988 at National Central University and National Taiwan Normal University, Mou would continue to declare:

When Tang and Wu rebelled (*geming* 革命), what they removed (*ge* 革) was [the mandate of] King Jie of the Xia dynasty and King Zhou of the Shang dynasty; with the Xinhai Revolution, the Manchus of the Qing dynasty were stripped [of their mandate]. But what was removed with the so-called “Great Cultural Revolution” (*wenhua da geming* 文化大革命)? Precisely your very life itself, it is [we] ourselves who were done away with.

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they can become ideals in the proper sense of the word. This is the whole substance and complete function of the learning of life.”

(生命總是縱貫的，立體的。專注於科技之平面橫剖面的意識總是走向腐蝕生命而成為‘人’之自我否定。中國文化的核心是生命的學問，由真實生命之覺醒，向外開出建立事業與追求知識之理想，向內滲透此等理想之真實本源，以使理想真成其為理想。此是生命學問之全體大用。) (Mou [1970], 1–2; cf. *Autobiography*, 93–94)

Jason Clower notes that “generally (Mou) uses *zongguan* (vertical) in a special sense, to mean continuity of the mundane with the transcendent, which is to say, something trans-historical” (Clower 2014, 40, note 35). In an earlier text entitled “The Singular Entity in Solitude” (*Jimo zhong zhi duti* 寂寞中之獨體), Mou still drew a conceptual distinction between the two most commonly used Chinese words for “life”, *shengming* 生命 and *shenghuo* 生活:

“Life (*shengming*) is an abstract concept derived from actual existence (*shenghuo*), whereas the latter is something concrete. Actual existence is life with the addition of all sorts of rich details, whereas life [as such] is a bare outline stripped of all superimposed trivia.”

(生命是從生活中抽出的一個抽象概念，而生活是具體的。生活是生命上加上花果枝葉，生命是剝落枝葉花果的一個光禿禿的骨幹。) (Mou [1944], 573)

For a detailed discussion of this text, see Huang 2017, 121–26.

- 12 With the exception of two short trips to Shenzhen 深圳 to visit his granddaughter (from his first marriage) when he was already in his old age, Mou would never return to the mainland again, in spite of his growing academic fame there in the 1980s (see Peng 2019, 275). For extensive treatments of Mou’s critique of communism and historical materialism, see Peng 2016, 59–116, 271–340, and Van den Stock 2016, 113–21, 152–80, 276–99.

湯武革命是革夏桀、商紂；辛亥革命是革滿清。‘文化大革命’革什麼呢？就是革你自己的生命，把自己革掉拉倒了。(Mou 2019, 24)

As this passage indicates, for Mou, a life without culture, a life detached from the “cultural life” of the Chinese nation, would merely amount to a biological and material form of existence, devoid of any normative significance. “Life” without “cultural life” leads to the sort of dehumanization and reification (*wubua* 物化) he saw as being symbolized and epitomized by communist China. Conversely, Mou believes that “culture” must always remain closely connected to human existence in all its complexity and manifoldness. In short, life and culture are dialectically related to each other as “concrete universals” (*juti de pubian* 具體的普遍) (see Shi 2019). This becomes quite clear in the following passage from the preface to Mou’s study of Wei-Jin 魏晉 philosophy, *Material Disposition and Profound Principle* (*Caixing yu xuanli* 才性與玄理) (1963b), the first in a series of monumental studies of the history of Chinese thought he started working on after the symbolic turning-point of his fiftieth birthday.<sup>13</sup> Here, Mou writes:

The development of culture consists in the purification of life and the manifestation of reason.<sup>14</sup> However, it is of the utmost importance for humanity to reveal both the positive and the negative aspects of the learning of life. [...] The learning of life can only be entered by relying on authentic existence and authentic emotions. Without these, not only would the learning of life become meaningless, but we would be unable to develop any form of learning whatsoever.

文化之發展即是生命之清澈與理性之表現。然則生命學問之消極面與積極面之深入展示固是人類之大事 [...] 生命之學問，總賴真生命與真性情以契接。無真生命與性情，不獨生命之學問無意義，即任何學問亦開發不出也。(Mou [1963b], preface, 11)<sup>15</sup>

13 As he notes in his *Autobiography* (preface, 3), “after I turned fifty, my life became focused on the pursuit and expression of learning” (五十而後，吾之生命集中於往學之表述). In a later retrospective text, Mou would recall that before the age of fifty, his thinking operated “like a wild horse” (野馬式), in a constant pursuit to “break new ground” (開荒式) (Mou [1974], 209).

14 For Mou, “philosophy” (*zhexue* 哲學) is essentially a “teaching” (*jiao* 教), which he defines at one point as “anything capable of stimulating human reason and providing the guidance human beings need to purify their existence through practical effort to the fullest extent possible” (凡足以啓發人之理性並指導人通過實踐以純潔化人之生命而至其極者) (Mou [1985a], preface, 3).

15 In terms we will further consider in the third section of this article, Mou presents the ascendancy of Daoism during the Wei-Jin period, which he saw as a bridge for the absorption of Buddhism, as a phase in which Chinese “cultural life temporarily departed from itself. [But] it is precisely by taking leave of itself that it replenished itself” (文化生命之暫時離其自己。離其自己正所以充實其自己也) (Mou [1963b], preface, 9).

This link between individual and cultural life is highly significant, not in the least for understanding what Mou called the “learning of life” (*shengming de xuewen* 生命的學問). Tellingly, Mou uses this expression to designate the Chinese philosophical tradition as a whole as well as Confucian teachings in particular. As such, the “learning of life” is as much oriented toward the meta-subject of “culture” as it is toward individual existence, with Mou presenting Chinese philosophy as being animated by a pervasive concern with “life”, in contrast to the Western focus on “nature” and “logic” (see *Autobiography*, 79; Mou [1963a], 5–6; Mou [1983], 16). In effect, Mou would eventually come to claim that since “philosophy” (*philosophia*) originally meant the “love of wisdom”, only the Chinese tradition had managed to preserve its primordial sense as a transformative “practical learning of wisdom” (*shijian de zhibuixue* 實踐的智慧學) (Mou 2019, 52).<sup>16</sup> As he consistently maintained, philosophy should not merely pursue objective “knowledge” (*zhibi* 知識), but should before all else be concerned with “illuminating the self” (*ming ji* 明己) (Mou [1952], 8). By contrast, mainstream Western philosophy had, in his view, degenerated into a sterile techno-scientific enterprise (*kejihua le* 科技化了) (see Mou 2019, 53; cf. Mou [1983], 8). As was the case with many other twentieth-century and contemporary Chinese thinkers, reinventing traditional forms of knowledge within the modern epistemic space of “philosophy” (*zhexue* 哲學) went hand in hand with an insistence on maintaining some sort of continuity between “knowledge” (*zhi* 知) and “action” (*xing* 行), even if such a continuity would need to adopt new epistemological as well as institutional forms of mediation (see below).

In the preface to a collection of essays from 1970 entitled *The Learning of Life* (*Shengming de xuewen* 生命的學問),<sup>17</sup> Mou Zongsan makes it clear that the texts collected under this common denominator are closely related to what scholars now call his “three books on outer kingliness” (*waiwang san shu* 外王三書), namely the *Philosophy of History* (*Lishi zhexue* 歷史哲學, 1955), *Moral Idealism* (*Daode de lixiangzhuayi* 道德的理想主義, 1959), and *The Way of Politics and the Way of*

16 This is the title of a series of recently published lectures from 1988 (Mou 2019) which closely follow the content of his *Treatise on the Supreme Good* (*Yuanshan lun* 圓善論) from 1985. The term “practical learning of wisdom” is a translation of Kant’s expression *Weisheitslehre* in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, usually rendered as “doctrine of wisdom”, to which Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (1829–1913) added the adjective “practical” in his translation from 1889, a version with which Mou was certainly familiar (also see Mou [1985a], preface, 6). The addition of this adjective is interesting and revealing, since “[w]e tend to think of ‘wisdom’ as the opposite of ‘practical.’ Wisdom is about abstract, ethereal matters like ‘the way’ or ‘the good’ or ‘the truth’ or ‘the path.’ And we tend to think that wisdom is something for sages, gurus, rabbis, and scholars—for white-bearded wizards” (Schwartz and Sharpe 2010, 3). For more on the identification of Chinese (and more generally, non-Western) philosophy with “wisdom”, see Van den Stock 2018a; 2018b.

17 This book was not included in the 2003 *Complete Works* due to copyright reasons.

*Governance* (*Zhengdao yu zhidao* 政道與治道, 1961). As was the case for these three works, the “learning of life” is before all else intended to nurture the sort of “historical-cultural consciousness” (*lishi wenhua yishi* 歷史文化意識) that can pave the way toward “authentic life” (*zhenshi shengming* 真實生命) (Mou [1970], preface, 1), and not simply with individual existential problems. For Mou, the “learning of life” is a matter of “bringing oneself and things to completion” (*cheng ji cheng wu* 成己成物) (Mou [1961], 43). Highly telling in this respect is the fact that in the text which opens *The Learning of Life*, a short autobiographical essay from 1953 entitled “On Homesickness” (*Shuo ‘huaxiang’* 說‘懷鄉’), Mou describes his own bitter sense of longing for China and for his native province of Shandong as “a kind of general and abstract, one could even say objective, emotion” (一種一般的抽象的, 也可以說是客觀的情緒) (Mou [1953], 1). He argues that his deep frustration and anger over being exiled from the mainland does not primarily stem from a personal feeling of longing for home, but rather from a concern over the larger historical and cultural developments that have tragically removed China as nation from itself, from its own “cultural life”. Mou thus claims to be trying to capture what he calls an “abstract sense of longing, a longing for the essence of what makes human beings human” (抽象的懷想, 對於「人之為人」的本質之懷念) (*ibid.*, 5) in these pages.<sup>18</sup> Equally revealing is the subtitle of the text “On the Learning of Life” from 1961, after which the essays collected in the eponymous volume were named: “Chinese Thought in the Past Fifty Years” (*Lun wushi nian lai de Zhongguo sixiang* 論五十年來的中國思想). In this essay, ostensibly meant as an overview of the intellectual developments in China since the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911, it quickly becomes obvious that what Mou calls the “learning of life” is intended as a counter-concept to what he considers to be the cultural disintegration and political degradation of China under communism.

Bearing the above in mind, it is not surprising that there is a considerable overlap between the philosophical vocabulary Mou uses to describe individual moral

18 “The ideas I have developed [in the past years] are all grounded in an attempt to allow the basis for a system of thought that is able to settle human existence and establish [adequate] social institutions to emerge from the disintegration and degradation of the present age [...] This [task] involves the following three aspects: firstly, clearing the way for the fundamental spirit of democracy in order to establish a guiding course for the establishment of political life; secondly, opening up a path for the emergence of the fundamental spirit of science in order to establish an epistemological system of learning; and thirdly, clearing the way for the fundamental spirit that will allow for the transformation of moral religion [i.e. Confucianism] into a cultural institution, so as to establish a proper course for everyday existence.”

(我所發的那些思想, 完全是想從崩解墮落的時代, 湧現出足以安定人生建立制度的思想系統上的根據。[...] 這裏面含有三事: 一是疏導出民主政治的基本精神, 以建立政治生活方面的常軌。二是疏導出科學的基本精神, 以建立知識方面的學問統緒。三是疏導出道德宗教之轉為文制的基本精神, 以建立日常生活方面的常軌。)(Mou [1953], 5)

self-cultivation and the political project of establishing China as a nation-state, endeavours which are both conceptualized as involving what is known in the Confucian tradition as “fulfilling one’s nature” (*jin xing* 盡性). As Mou put it pointedly: “A people that is unable to establish a state is a nation that cannot fulfil its own nature” (一個能建國的民族，是不能盡其民族之性的民族) (Mou [1961], 38). Or as we read in the *Autobiography*:

Establishing a state is the solemn and sacred task of a people, it is the labour of a nation “fulfilling its own nature”. A nation which fails to establish the state as a political entity cannot fulfil its own nature. In the same sense, an individual who has not managed to fulfil his own nature cannot be considered to be an individual entity with a personality of his own.

建國是嚴肅而神聖的工作，是民族「盡其性」的工作。一個民族不能作到政體建國，便是未能盡其民族之性。亦如一個人之未能盡其性，便不可說是一個人格的存在。) (*Autobiography*, 80)<sup>19</sup>

“Intrinsic nature” (*xing* 性) is thus not only a realm of subjective interiority here, but also refers to the institutional and structural requirements necessary for providing the Confucian “learning of life” with a new objective foundation in modern society. This already shows that the sort of “inwardness” to which a document such as Mou’s *Autobiography* arguably gives us privileged access is not to be conceived of in purely subjective or individual terms, but rather designates a space overlapping with the contours of the political horizon of modernity.

### The Motif of “Life in Itself” in the *Autobiography*: Teacher, Father, Peasant, Child ... and Subject

One of the most interesting expressions of the deep entanglement of subjective existence with the transindividual, “abstract”, or “objective” dimension of “cultural life” discussed above can be found in Mou Zongsan’s transformative encounter with Xiong Shili in 1932, which is described in great detail in the *Autobiography*

19 Cf. *Autobiography*, 79, and Mou [1947], 975:

“If people fail to go through a self-awakening in their spiritual lives, they will not become individuals with a personality of their own. If our whole nation remains unable to experience a self-awakening in its spiritual life, it will never become an individual state.”  
(每個人在精神生活上不能有一番自我的覺醒，他便不能成一個有人格的獨體。全民族若不能在精神生活上有一番自我的覺醒，它便不能成一個國家的獨體。)

at Fifty.<sup>20</sup> When we read Mou’s account, it soon becomes clear that this meeting had a profound and even historical significance for him. He describes being jolted awake by his mentor’s (*yesbi* 業師) “lion’s roar” (*shizihou* 獅子吼) and by “the loud laughter booming out from the core of his belly” (笑聲震屋宇，直從丹田發) (*Autobiography*, 76–77, translation quoted from Mou 2015, 119), and claims that Xiong was the only one who had managed to preserve and revitalize the “teaching of humaneness of the Confucian sages” (*rusheng de renjiao* 儒聖的仁教) (Mou [1961], 44) in modern times. To be sure, this claim is not simply an expression of deep reverence for his teacher, but also effectively places Mou himself within a newly invented “transmission of the Way” (*daotong* 道統). Explicitly excluded from this lineage are the likes of Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990), the rationalist modernizer of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) who had rejected “moral knowing” (*liangzhi* 良知) as a mere “hypothesis” (*jiashu* 假設) instead of following Xiong in recognizing it as a veritable “manifestation” (*chengxian* 呈現) (see *Autobiography*, 78).<sup>21</sup> The following passage from *The Learning of Life* is worth quoting at some length in this context:

Since the start of the War of Resistance against Japan, I received personal instruction from my teacher, the way before me in the blink of an eye [目擊而道存],<sup>22</sup> and was greatly moved and inspired [by him]. Thus, when I witnessed with my own eyes how in the thirty-eighth year of the Republic [1949], the mainland fell into enemy hands and had a deep sense of my own life being ruptured and cut off, I resolved to dredge up our cultural life and open a path for the life of the nation, overturning the distortion that had reigned since the beginning of the Manchu Qing dynasty and channelling the willpower of the scholars of the late Ming period in order to unfold the learning of life.<sup>23</sup> This was the reason I wrote

20 The first part of the fifth chapter of the *Autobiography* was originally published under the title “Me and Mr. Xiong Shili” (*Wo yu Xiong Shili xiansheng* 我與熊十力先生) in the journal *Zhongguo xueren* 中國學人 (*The Chinese Scholar*) in 1970 and reprinted in *The Learning of Life* in the same year.

21 Mou also chastised Feng for “shamelessly banding together with the communists” (*Autobiography*, 79). Hence Mou’s ruthless criticism of Feng in his later works: “The existence of such a book [Feng’s *History of Chinese Philosophy*], not to mention its being universally recognized by East and West as a representative work, shows that Chinese people of this era are so lame that they are a disgrace to our ancestors and a disgrace to the whole world. It is a humiliation for all the people of China.” (Clower 2014, 38)

22 A reference to the *Tian Zifang* 田子方 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.

23 For Mou, the Chinese “learning of life” had in a sense already been radically interrupted with the end of the Ming dynasty (as a rare period of unity between “national life” and “cultural life”) and the Manchu takeover, the only notable exceptions who held this tradition alive being Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682), Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695), and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692). See Mou [1957], 73–74; Mou [1961], 41.

my *Philosophy of History, Moral Idealism, and The Way of Politics and the Way of Governance*.

自抗戰以來，親炙師門，目擊而道存，所感發者多矣。故自民國三十八年以來，目睹大陸之淪陷，深感吾人之生命已到斷潢絕港之時。乃發憤從事文化生命之疏通，以開民族生命之途徑，扭轉滿清以來之歪曲，暢通晚明諸儒之心志，以開生命之學問。此《歷史哲學》、《道德的理想主義》、《政道與治道》三書之所由作也。(Mou [1961], 44)

In the *Autobiography* itself, Xiong is praised as a veritable incarnation of the “radiant life of wisdom” (*guanghui zhi huiming* 光輝之慧命) of the Chinese tradition<sup>24</sup> and as a solitary transmitter of the Confucian creed:

in today’s day and age, only he was able to directly connect to and remain in touch with the great life that emerged with the Yellow Emperor and [the sage-kings] Yao and Shun. This “great life” consists in the unity of national life and cultural life. He buttressed the source of human existence and the universe opened up by the conceptual orientation of the cultural life of China in order to expound its principles and emotional content. His learning was immediately both existential as well as cosmological.

當今之世，唯彼一人能直通黃帝堯舜以來之大生命而不隔。此大生命是民族生命與文化生命之合一。他是直頂着華族文化生命之觀念方向所開闢的人生宇宙之本源而抒發其義理與情感。他的學問直下是人生的，同時也是宇宙的。(Autobiography, 92)<sup>25</sup>

Crucially, the direct relation between Xiong’s “radiant life of wisdom” on the one hand and the Chinese tradition as encapsulating the immediate unity of human existence with the very fabric of reality on the other is contrasted with the conceptual mediation involved in the logical and scientific orientation of Western thought.<sup>26</sup> As Mou notes, ever since Kant’s “Copernican revolution”, the kind of “existential-cosmological” knowledge embodied by Xiong has been forced to pass through the epistemological question as to “how it is possible” (*rube keneng*

24 “This radiant life is the sort of life and path Jesus referred to when he said ‘I am the life’ and ‘I am the way’ [John 14:6].” (這慧命就是耶穌所說的‘我就是生命’之生命，‘我就是道路’之道路。) (Autobiography, 80)

25 Mou would later occasionally refer to his former mentor in less than favourable terms. See for example Clower 2014, 39, 47.

26 In a commemorative article, Mou stresses that Xiong should not be mistaken for a “person of culture” (文化人), but rather as someone imbued with a superior kind of “primordial energy” (原始氣) or “savage energy” (野人氣) (Mou [1985b], 298).

如何可能). In other words, such knowledge must now seek to justify itself by means of an inquiry into the cognitive disposition of the subject (*zbuti* 主體) as a knower and adopt a properly transcendental standpoint, instead of simply appealing to “intuitive insight” (*zhijue de jiewu* 直覺的解悟) (the title of the second chapter of the *Autobiography*). In short, from the transcendental standpoint put forward in the Kantian turn toward the subject, “cosmology must be grounded in epistemology” (宇宙論必有認識論為其根據) (*Autobiography*, 92). While Mou concedes that Xiong’s thought thus risks appearing as a kind of pre-critical dogmatism, since it departs from the unity of life and the cosmos rather than reconstituting such a unity by starting out from an investigation into its conditions of the possibility, he stresses that the “true countenance” (*zhenxiang* 真相) of Xiong’s teaching lies elsewhere. In his view, it is to be looked for in how it reflects the entire Confucian tradition of Fu Xi 伏羲, Confucius, Mencius, and beyond, a tradition within which, Mou argues, the immediacy apparent in Xiong’s “cosmological-existential” outlook and the subject-oriented perspective of post-Kantian philosophy “manifested themselves simultaneously in the same instant, being neither separated from nor opposed to each other” (一下子同時呈現的, 既不隔, 亦不對立) (*Autobiography*, 92).

This train of thought obviously foreshadows Mou’s later insistence on the primordial status of intuitive knowledge of the noumenal as a non-cognitively constituted relation of the subject to its own moral essence, which should in turn to be conceived of as identical to that of the world itself. However, the unmediated status of life, as always already in some sense identical to the world, is not yet presented here as an “in itself” (*an sich*) waiting to be “sublated” (*Aufgehoben*) through reflexive awareness in a Hegelian sense, as is arguably the case in the complex logic of the “self-negation of moral knowing” (*liangzhi zhi ziwo kanxian* 良知之自我坎陷) Mou had already been tentatively developing at the time. Rather, intuition is still elevated above (mediated) “knowledge” in a somewhat more straightforward or at least more explicit manner. As such, Mou claims:

This is not a matter of groping about after things through understanding, but rather of immediate insight and experience. It might be objected that such insight and experience is subjective, but in this case, what is subjective is at the same time objective. What we are dealing with here is the source of creation and the source of value. It is a question of the foundation of human existence, and not a matter of knowledge. The primordial significance of Master Xiong’s learning is to be looked for here.

這不是知解摸索的事, 而是直下證悟感受的事。若說證悟感受是主觀的, 但在這裡, 主觀的, 亦是客觀的。這是創造之源, 價值



之源，人生根柢的事，不是知識的事，熊師學問最原始的意義還是在這一點。(Autobiography, 93)<sup>27</sup>

In order to cast some light on the elevation of the immediacy of “existence” above the conceptual mediation and reflexivity tied up with “knowledge”, it is instructive to consider Mou’s portrayal of his father, Mou Yinqing 牟蔭清 (?–1941), a stern and imposing figure looming in the background of the *Autobiography*.<sup>28</sup> Before meeting Xiong, his own father’s moral admonitions had already caused the young Mou to “wake up with a start” (*jingxing* 驚醒) and managed to deliver him from the “spirit of excessive romanticism” (*fanlan langman de jingshen* 汎濫浪漫的精神) which had temporarily drawn him toward political and revolutionary activism (see below) and the “pitch-black” (*qihei yituan* 漆黑一團) materialist worldview of Wu Zhihui 吳稚暉 (1865–1953) during his student days (see *Autobiography*, 30–31). In effect, Mou depicts his father, a simple and hard-working man who ran a resting stop for pack animals in Qixia, as someone who (very much like his teacher Xiong) embodied China’s cultural tradition, not through his “learning”, but within his very life and conduct. By contrast, Mou understands his own passage to a life of scholarship to involve a movement of “life moving away from itself” (*shengming zhi li qi ziji* 生命之離其自己) (see *Autobiography*, 17–18). Hence, the pursuit of learning and study is not so much continuous with or conducive to existence for him, but rather counts as an interruption and “diversion” (*qu* 曲) in

27 In another passage in the *Autobiography*, Mou approaches such non-cognitive immediacy in more universalist terms, as a characteristic feature of all the great “sages” of the world:

“The primordial creative spirit of humanity relied on a number of great sages: Confucius, Jesus, and Śākyamuni. These great and spirited personalities were all direct and inspired in what they sensed and mysterious as well as straightforward in their understanding, sincere and clear-cut. In their immediacy, they were identical to the way, the light, connected as they were to heavenly virtue. Within the boundlessness [of the world], they showed a ‘sense of what is real’. They had no theories, no systems, or clever conceptual artifice. The only thing they had was this ‘sense of what is real’, a profound love and compassion coming from the very depths of life. That is why Confucius talked about humaneness, Jesus talked about love, and Śākyamuni talked about compassion. These words are not specific terms for conceptual problems, nor are theoretical and discursive notions. [...] Their [numinous radiance, *lingguang* 靈光 and wisdom, *zhizhi* 智慧] open onto learning, but are not in themselves forms of learning. They open onto thinking, but are not a thing of thought. They are a source of creativity, a driving force of culture.”

(人類原始的創造的靈魂，是靠著幾個大聖人：孔子、耶穌、釋迦。這些從人格方面說的偉大靈魂都是直接的、靈感的、神秘的，簡易明白，精誠肯斷。而又直下是生命，是道路，是光，又直下是通著天德的。他們都是在蒼茫中有“實感”的。他們沒有理論，沒有系統，沒有工巧的思辨。他們所有的只是一個實感，只是從生命深處發出一個熱愛，一個悲憫：所以孔子講仁，耶穌講愛，釋迦講悲。這些字眼都不是問題中的名詞，亦不是理論思辨中的概念。[...] 它開出了學問，它本身不是學問，它開出了思辨，它本身不是思辨。它是創造的根源，文化的動力。) (*Autobiography*, 73–74)

28 On Mou’s relationship with his father, see Wang 2006, 85–95; Peng 2019, 271–74.

the natural course of life and a transition into the "non-existential" (*fei cunzai de* 非存在的) domain (*Autobiography*, 15). To such a life "moving away from itself", the portrait of Mou's father offers a clear counterweight:

It seemed to me as if the principles and lessons of Chinese culture had taken root in his very person as well as in the way he managed the household and his affairs, thereby becoming rooted in the harmonious unity of the village, farm, natural surroundings, and local customs. [As we read in the *Appended Remarks* (*Xici* 繫辭) to the *Book of Changes*:] "To be at peace with the earth is humane indeed" [安土孰乎仁], this is the phrase that comes to mind here. These principles and lessons had taken root in his "humaneness of being at peace with the earth", becoming authentic and actual in the process. And so my father's life was one in which life is at home with itself. The principles and lessons of Chinese culture had become internalized within his very life, as a life at home with itself.

我覺得中國文化中的那些義理教訓，在他身上是生了根的，由他在治家謀生的事業中生了根，在與鄉村、農業，自然地理、風俗習慣那諧和的一套融而為一中生了根。‘安土孰乎仁’是不錯。那些義理教訓都在這‘安土孰乎仁’中生根，一起隨之為真實的，存在的。因此他的生命是生命之在其自己的生命。那些義理教訓也隨他的生命之在其自己而亦內在化於他的生命中。(Autobiography, 32)

The expression "life being at home with itself" (*shengming zhi zai qi ziji* 生命之在其自己) calls to mind Mou's attempt to radically rewire Kant's transcendental distinction between appearance (*xianxiang* 現象) and thing in itself (*wu zishen* 物自身, *wu zhi zai qi ziji* 物之在其自己) in his mature ontology. As would later be the case, the domain of the "in itself" already has a normative connotation in the *Autobiography*, instead of merely occupying the position of an epistemological stopgap for the categorically unknowable.

In this context, I think it is highly significant that Mou Zongsan connects the unmediated state of what he calls "life in itself" embodied by his own father with the figure of the peasant and with a rural mode of existence. As he writes:

Genuine life in the proper sense of the word means living as one makes a living and should come down to living within life itself. Only the life of a peasant is a life within the vitality of existence, a life of existence "in itself".

真正恰當意義的生活，生活如其為生活，當該是在生命中生活。唯農民的生活是在生命中生活，是生命‘在其自己’。(Autobiography, 18)

To be sure, Mou almost immediately goes on to add that “we cannot all be farmers, and life cannot simply remain within itself, but must also take leave of itself” (世人不能只是農民，生命不能只是在其自己，也當離其自己) (ibid.), but his portrayal of peasant life as a form of “life in itself” is run through with nostalgia and a sense of bitterness over the “non-existential” direction which tends to lead “learning” further and further away from “life”.

The state of vitality of “life in itself” that Mou attributes to the figure of the peasant corresponds to what the first chapter of the *Autobiography* describes as the “chaotic non-distinction” (*hundun* 混沌) of existence in its most primordial form, still untainted by reflexive awareness. In these opening pages, Mou describes his early childhood as a phase in which subjectivity has yet to emerge and distinguish itself from the external world, and the self apprehends itself as neither the same nor really different from the world in which it is situated. In this state of being “alone yet not forlorn” (*luomo er bu luomo* 落寞而不落寞), the young Mou found himself at one with

the singing birds, the soft sands, the mulberry green, the flowing water, the white clouds racing by, all of this coalescing to form the tranquil piping of heaven.<sup>29</sup> Unknowing and unaware, I drifted into sleep, returning to a state of solitary non-distinction.

鳥之鳴，沙之軟，桑之綠，水之流，白飄來飄去，這一切都成了催眠的天籟。不知不覺睡着了，復返於寂寞的混沌。(Autobiography, 3)

What Mou is trying to capture here is what he calls the “experience of life ‘as it is in itself’” (生命之‘在其自己’之感受) (ibid., 7).<sup>30</sup> Given the historically specific and normatively charged association between rural existence and the notion of “life as it is in itself”, it is clear that the movement of “life moving away from itself”, as coinciding with the emergence of subjectivity from a state of

29 A reference to the *Qiwu lun* 齊物論 chapter of the *Zhuangzi*.

30 This motif of non-distinction between subject and object or self and world is replicated in Mou’s description of a transformative experience he went through much later in life, when upon hearing the sound of a bell from a nearby Buddhist temple in the middle of the night he suddenly became overwhelmed by a sense of compassion and empathy for all things in the cosmos, so that “there was no inside or outside, everything had merged into one and the same sadness” (無裡無外，全渾化而為一個哀怨) (*Autobiography*, 153).

non-distinction, has an underlying objective and social dimension as well. Or to invoke the Confucian philosopher’s own words quoted above: “what is subjective is at the same time objective”.

There is obviously a strong amount of romanticism and idealization at work in Mou’s image of the countryside of his youth, not unlike what we find in the writings of the important Marxist philosopher and founding member of the Chinese Communist Party Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889–1928). In a famous text from 1919 called “Youth and the Countryside” (*Qingnian yu nongcun* 青年與農村), Li contrasted life in the countryside to that of the rootless “evil spirits” (*guiyu* 鬼蜮) dwelling in the city, invoking a traditional trope to describe the countryside as the place where the Chinese revolutionary youth should “settle themselves and establish their lives” (*anshen liming* 安身立命).<sup>31</sup> Crucially however, Mou Zongsan’s glorification of the peasant as an embodiment of authentic life “in itself” is intended precisely to criticize the violent subsumption of life under abstract notions in communist ideology, something he referred to as the “catastrophe of concepts” (*guannian de zaihai* 觀念的災害) (Mou [1962]).

In an early text from 1939 entitled “Exhaustively Investigating Heaven and Humanity” (*Jiu tianren* 究天人), the fourth instalment in a series of “treatises on the times” (*shilun* 時論) originally published in Zhang Junmai’s journal *Zaisheng* 再生 (*Rebirth*), we find what would become one of Mou’s many critiques of materialism as a philosophical doctrine and worldview. Invoking the authority of Xunzi 荀子, who criticized Zhuangzi for “being blinded by heaven while remaining ignorant of humanity” (蔽于天而不知人), Mou asserts that something seemingly opposed yet structurally similar is found in the case of materialism, namely “being blinded by things while remaining ignorant of humanity” (蔽于物而不知人). Additionally, in his view, materialism involves the confusion of an abstract explanatory principle (“heaven”) with the concrete reality it purports to analyse and explain (“humanity”), that is to say, what Whitehead famously called the

31 The entire last paragraph of Li’s article reads:

“You young people! Hurry to the countryside! Start work at sunrise and rest at sundown. Plough the fields and you will eat, drill a well and you will drink. Those elders, women, and children toiling in the fields in wintertime are your closets companions, that realm of smoke from kitchen chimneys, shadows of hoes, and chickens and dogs from neighbouring towns calling to each other [see *Daodejing* 道德經, chapter 80], only here will you find a place to settle yourself and establish your life!”

(青年呵!速向農村去吧!日出而作,日入而息,耕田而食,鑿井而飲。那些終年在田野工作的父老婦孺,都是你們的同伴伴侶,那炊煙鋤影,雞犬相聞的境界,才是你們安身立命的地方呵!) (Li [1919], n.p.)

On the broader context of this article, see Gu 1995. For a comprehensive study of the figure of the peasant in the modern Chinese imagination, see Han 2005.

“fallacy of misplaced concreteness”. More specifically, Mou faults materialism for reducing the heart-mind (*xin* 心) to one contingent thing among others, instead of recognizing it as something that “is lodged in the midst of things while dominating them” (寓于物之中而為其主宰) (Mou [1939], 920).<sup>32</sup> For Mou, such a confusion between the explanatory (the “analytical”, *jiexi* 解析) and the ontological (“existential”, *cunzai* 存在) order of things is particularly pernicious when it occurs on the level of social reality, as becomes apparent in the case of historical materialism (Mou [1939], 921–22). In his own technical terminology derived from Kant, in the case of materialism, we are dealing with a “regulative principle” (*jigang yuanze* 紀綱原則) and not with an “constructive principle” (*gouzao yuanze* 構造原則) (later called “principle of realization” *shixian zhi li* 實現之理) (Mou [1939], 922).

In Mou’s view, Marx’s analyses are mired in the form of a false objectivity which analyses society as if it were completely devoid of “human elements” (*ren de chengfen* 人的成分) (Mou [1939], 923), which ironically is more or less the baseline of the critiques of capitalism found in humanist orientations of Marxist thought. While scientific objectivity may require bracketing out and eliminating subjective elements, such a procedure is uncalled for, and in a sense even immoral, when the “object” under analysis is fundamentally constituted through subjective human practice instead of the supposedly autarkic and lawful objectivity of the “material” conditions of existence. This is precisely what the title of Mou’s essay from 1939 refers to, being a truncated quote from the famous passage in the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*) in which Sima Qian 司馬遷 describes the historian’s craft as that of “exhaustively investigating the boundaries between heaven and humanity, and connecting the transformations of the past and the present” (究天人之際，通古今之變) (Mou [1939], 924). In this context, Mou takes these celebrated phrases to mean that history can only be analysed by getting to the bottom of human existence, as something ontologically prior to any analytical reduction of social practice to the “objectivity” of the material constituents of existence. This indicates that Mou’s critique of materialism has to be read not as blanket attack on a philosophical outlook, but rather as targeting the privileging of “matter” over “spirit” and the mind more strategically, that is to say, insofar as it coincides with the subordination of human autonomy to “objective” constraints and regularities of the historical materialist type (such as social classes, modes of production, and material conditions of existence). In other words, Mou’s assault on materialism takes place in the context of an assertion and defence of social freedom.

32 The term *zhuzai* 主宰 already figures prominently in the work of Xiong Shili, who in spite of his increasingly radical ontological anti-dualism, maintained a clear hierarchical relation between the mental and material.

As such, Mou seems to approach ideology as a perverted form of continuity between "life" and "learning", in which the latter threatens to swallow up the former. Generally speaking, it is important to bear in mind that among Mou's earliest writings we find very empirically oriented and socially engaged texts such as "Where is the Path to a Revival of the Countryside?" ("Fuxing nongcun de chulu he zai" 復興農村的出路何在?, 1934) and "The Economic Condition and Social Situation in Rural China" ("Zhongguo nongcun jingji jumian yu shehui xingtai" 中國農村經濟局面與社會形態, 1935),<sup>33</sup> and that he was deeply concerned with concrete socio-political problems. Hence, the subsumption of the "in itself" by the ideological machinery of conceptual mediation had a very real and disastrous correlate in social and political life for Mou, more precisely in how communist ideology had managed to contaminate the rural population in which he considered China as a nation to be rooted. As he writes concerning the revolutionaries he met during his student days in Beijing:

They had learned to live within [a set of] non-human concepts, which was something quite new and amazing to me. But they also went on to patronizingly impose their concepts on the personal existence of the peasants and allow these concepts to seep into the very root of the life of the Chinese nation, which was something wholly unprecedented.

他們會生活在非人的觀念中了，而且很新奇，這使我有點贊嘆。不僅此也。他們的觀念還光顧到鄉村的農民身上，貫注到中華民族的生命之根上，這在以前是沒有的。(Autobiography, 24)

During a summer break at the university, Mou himself had returned to his hometown with the intention of organizing the villagers into "peasant associations" (*nongmin xiehui* 農民協會) and instructing them in Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People" (*Sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義). Mou's violent opposition to the subordination of "life in itself" to ideology after having overcome his youthful "excessive romanticism" is probably the reason why the memory of this rather modest episode of political activism would never cease to fill him with a deep sense of shame.<sup>34</sup> He describes it in no uncertain terms as "the biggest mistake of my whole life" (我生命中最大的污點), and recalls that as he was lecturing to a congregation of his fellow villagers,

33 See Mou 2003, vol. 26, 741–76, 811–24.

34 Lin Chen-kuo 林鎮國 points out that the "confessional" tone of Mou's narrative is one of the aspects which set it aside from traditional Chinese autobiographical literature (see Lin 1993, 118).

all of a sudden, I felt that my own existence had become suspended in the void, cut off from everything and sapped of its strength, and it seemed to me as if the very same fate had befallen my elders, brethren, and friends, such a cruel and heartless thing I had done.

頓然覺得我自己的生命被吊在空裏，抽離而乾枯了。我也覺得父老兄弟親友的生命也吊在空裏，抽離而乾枯了，那太冷酷，太無情。(Autobiography, 27)

The “biggest mistake” of Mou’s life was thus one in which “life” is lost in the wasteland which grows from the absence of “cultural life” and the subject no longer recognizes itself as identical to “life as it is in itself”.

## Conclusion

In the above, I have admittedly only looked at a few episodes and snapshots from the much longer story of Mou Zongsan’s life, his *Autobiography*, and his complex intellectual trajectory. In doing so, I have attempted to give some insight into the fraught relation between “life” and “learning” and between the immediacy of the “in itself” and conceptual mediation in his work at large. At the very least, I hope to have cast some light on the historically determinate content of the sort of “life” and “cultural life” Mou would consistently claim to be at the centre of the Chinese tradition of philosophical thought. In my view, the motif of “life in itself” in the *Autobiography at Fifty* is highly significant, since it brings the figures of his first and only real mentor Xiong Shili and his father, as well as his concern over the countryside of his childhood, together within a strongly normatively charged imaginary space, concretely expressed as the idyllic countryside of his youth. It is here, Mou claims, that human beings can discover what a “rooted life” (*shenggen de shengming* 生根的生命) and a “life as it is in itself” (*shengming zhi zai qi ziji* 生命之在其自己) is all about (*Autobiography*, 33). The domain of the “in itself”, while not yet understood in a transcendental sense here, already adumbrates Mou’s later celebration of the non-cognitive disposition of the moral subject, which does not perceive a world of conceptually mediated distinct objects, but rather is at home in its own identity with the world as a value-imbued space. After all, “learning” as a purely rational or epistemological enterprise is not the highest ideal for Mou. The question at the centre of his own “learning of life” would rather seem to be the following: “how can we submit to this non-living life and turn back so as to allow life to return to its being ‘in itself’” (如何能順這非生活的生活扭轉之使生命再回歸於‘在其自己’呢?) (*Autobiography*, 18).

While Mou’s infamous logic of the “self-negation of moral knowing” asserts the necessity of epistemic and institutional mediation in modern society, the autobiographical and historical background of the motif of “life in itself” tells us something about his concern over not letting such mediation corrode and overrun the primordial status of immediacy. In the second chapter of *Wang Yangming’s Learning of Extending Moral Knowing* (*Wang Yangming zhi liangzhi jiao* 王陽明致良知教), a short book from 1954 where we find what is one of the earliest discussions of his notion of the “self-negation of moral knowing”,<sup>35</sup> Mou engages at length with the relation between “knowledge” (*zhi* 知) and “action” (*xing* 行) and discusses the question as to how the (non-cognitive) immediacy of “moral knowing” expressed in virtuous conduct can be reconciled with the kind of conceptual mediation deemed necessary for (scientific and logical) knowledge in modern society. In a particularly instructive passage, he writes:

Knowledge is always constituted within a form of mediation [*qu* 曲], and although this does not keep us from acting as human beings and even as sages,—and we could even say that the flaws<sup>36</sup> that come with such mediation are necessary—we still have to be able to return to the immediacy of the great Way. *We should also remember that with the mediation of knowledge, our life has already become reified. Knowledge must unfold within reification* [...] [However,] when knowledge and action

35 The text of this work had already been published in two parts in the journals *Lishi yu wenhua* 歷史與文化 (*History and Culture*) and *Lixiang lishi wenhua* 理想歷史文化 (*Ideals, History, and Culture*) as early as 1947. The third chapter was later included as an appendix to the first section of chapter 3 of “From Lu Xiangshan to Liu Jishan” (“Cong Lu Xiangshan dao Liu Jishan” 從陸象山到劉戡山) (Mou [1979]), the rest of the book being described as “disposable” (可作廢) (Mou [1979], 218). An even earlier instance of the term *kanxian* 坎陷 can be found in the article “The Yin-Yang Masters and Science” (“Yinyangjia yu kexue” 陰陽家與科學) from 1942 (see Mou [1942], 367). I thank John Makeham for bringing this to my attention. Already in this text, the notion of *kanxian* is closely concerned with the transition from “intuitive observation” (直覺之汎觀) to “rigid analysis” (死板之分解) and with how the “guiding metaphysical principle of [the Chinese] cultural tradition” (文化傳統的形上指導原則), can be (re)connected with and realized within an “immanent civilization” (形下之文明) in the modern world (see Mou [1942], 367, 352). At this point however, Mou still conceived of such an endeavour as involving a reappraisal of the non-canonical currents of ancient Chinese thought such as the School of Names (*mingjia* 名家), the teachings of Mozi 墨子, and especially (as the title indicates) the Yin-Yang school, not as direct precursors to modern science, but rather as “symbols” (符號) for a native spirit of reasoning both conductive to that of science as well as historically related to Confucianism, as the backbone (主幹) of the Chinese tradition. In this context, Mou refers to Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305–240 BCE), traditionally viewed as the founder of the Yin-Yang school, as “China’s Aristotle” (Mou [1954], 356).

36 *Quexian* 缺陷. Notice the (perhaps not entirely coincidental) proximity between this word for “lack” or “flaw” and the term *kanxian* 坎陷, a combination of two trigrams from the *Book of Changes* evoking the image of water flowing into a sinkhole.



become one, the root of my authentic existence will not become reified, and when we earnestly set out to investigate the variety of principles [in the world] and thus give shape to knowledge, although we are dealing with a mediation here, it constitutes a solidification of life, and does not really count as an instance of reification. *This is why mediation must be grounded in immediacy.*

知識實是在一曲中而成的，此雖不礙於為人為聖，或甚至此個曲折的缺陷是不可少的，然而卻亦必須會歸於大道之直。又須知此一曲，我的生活已經是物化了。知識必須在物化中行 [...] 若是知行合一，我的正生命之根并不物化，則即實實落落去研究各理而成知識，此雖一曲，而卻是生命之凝聚，不真是物化。所以曲必以直為根。(Mou [1954], 36–37, emphasis added)

The epistemic inescapability of “mediation” (*qu* 曲) in modern society thus coincides with the “diversion” (*qu* 曲) of “life moving away from itself”, which is not yet affirmed here as a dialectical necessity with the same certainty as would later be the case, but remains subordinated to the immediacy of life and of “life in itself”. Perhaps the whole paradox of Mou’s mature philosophy can already be discerned here: his thought is marked by an attempt to transform the existentially oriented Confucian “learning of life” into a form of philosophy able to serve as an unmediated source of normative guidance while at the same time making space for the institutional and epistemological mechanisms of mediation seen as requisites for successful modernization. Or in other words: an attempt to safeguard “life” against its own ineluctable movement away from itself.

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# Connecting East and West through Modern Confucian Thought: Re-reading 20th Century Taiwanese Philosophy

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## Abstract

This study is an attempt to establish that 20th century's canonized Taiwanese philosopher Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) has contributed significantly to the innovative burgeoning of modern Confucianism (or New Confucianism) with the revision of Western philosophy. This is based on the hypothesis that if ideas travel through the past to the present, and *vice versa*, and if intellectual thinking never knows any national, cultural and social boundaries, then there is an obvious intersection and communication of philosophical thoughts of East and West. This article also contemplates the fact that Western philosophies are widely known as they are widely published, read and circulated. Conversely, due to the language barriers philosophy and philosophers from the East are less widely known. Therefore, this research critically introduces and connects the early 20th century Confucian philosopher Shili Xiong (1885–1968), his disciple the contemporary Taiwanese Confucian intellectual Mou Zongsan, along with the Western philosophers Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), through ideas like moral autonomy, ethics, ontology, and *imago Dei*. In so doing, the article delineates the path to study 20th century Taiwanese philosophy, or broadly Chinese Confucian philosophy which makes a bridge between the East and the West through Modern Confucianism prevalently called New Confucianism.

**Keywords:** Mou Zongsan, Modern Confucianism, New Confucianism, Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, Herman Bavinck

## Povezovanje Vzhoda in Zahoda skozi moderno konfucijansko misel: ponovno branje tajvanske filozofije 20. stoletja

### Izvleček

Študija poskuša pokazati, da je kanonizirani tajvanski filozof 20. stoletja Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) z revizijo zahodne filozofske tradicije pomembno prispeval k inovativnemu razcvetu modernega konfucijanstva (ali novega konfucijanstva). Izhajamo iz hipoteze, da

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če ideje potujejo skozi preteklost do sedanjosti in *vice versa* in če intelektualno mišljenje ne pozna nacionalnih, kulturnih in družbenih meja, obstajata jasno stičišče in povezava med filozofsko mislijo Vzhoda in Zahoda. V članku razmišljamo tudi o dejstvu, da so zahodne filozofske smeri splošno poznane, saj so močno razširjene in brane. Po drugi strani pa zaradi jezikovnih pregrad filozofija in filozofi Vzhoda niso enako vsesplošno prepoznavni. Ta raziskava zato na kritičen način predstavi konfucijanskega filozofa zgodnjega 20. stoletja Shili Xionga (1885–1968) in njegovega učenca, sodobnega tajvanskega konfucijanskega intelektualca Mou Zongsana, ter ju poveže z zahodnimi filozofi, kot so Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) in Herman Bavinck (1854–1921), in sicer skozi ideje, kot so moralna avtonomija, etika, ontologija in *imago Dei*. Članek tako začrta pot k proučevanju tajvanske filozofije 20. stoletja oziroma, širše, kitajske konfucijanske filozofije, ki skozi moderno konfucijanstvo, v splošnem poznano kot novo konfucijanstvo, pomeni most med Vzhodom in Zahodom.

**Ključne besede:** Mou Zongsan, moderno konfucijanstvo, novo konfucijanstvo, Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, Herman Bavinck

## Introduction: Mou Zongsan as the Greatest Philosopher among Contemporary Modern Confucians

*If twentieth century China produced a philosopher of the first rank,  
it was Mou Zongsan.  
(Clower 2014, 1)*

The epigraph is taken from Jason Clower's edited and translated book, *Late Works of Mou Zongsan*<sup>1</sup>—*Selected Essays on Chinese Philosophy* (2014), where Clower discusses how Mou Zongsan's source of sagacity and the philosophical root of his thought is entrenched in Confucianism. For example, Mou implies Confucian morality with moral metaphysics. Clower also states that Mou (1909–1995) not only held a deep understanding of the philosophical legacy of the East, especially of China, but also had a strong affinity with Western intellectual traditions, including German, Anglo-American, and Greco-Roman philosophy. Although intellectuals like Jiang Qing, Li Zehou, Chan Lai and Lin Anwu criticized Mou on several points—one of which is that he revised Confucianism through the lens of Western thought instead of connecting it with the

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1 Born and educated in Shandong Province of China, and later moving to Taiwan and living there till his last breath, Mou Zongsan 牟宗 is considered a New Confucian philosopher of paramount importance in the modern era. Mou read and wrote on Western philosophers like Immanuel Kant and attempted to revise the latter's system of thought based on Confucian philosophy. See Chan 2006, 125, 126, 139.



local context, particularly with regard to mainland China—what is important that these philosophers do not hold any doubt that Mou relentlessly worked for the revitalization and restoration of Chinese intellectual thought in Taiwan and abroad (Chan 2012, 16–17; Makeham 2008, 175–76). In reality, Mou, the prolific writer and scholar of Confucian philosophy, helped Chinese intellectual traditions escape from considerable confinement and produced several volumes on the intellectual history of the region. Therefore, Mou's lifespan in the 20th century can be designated as covering an era of the revitalization and restoration of Chinese intellectual thought.

While during the course of 20th century the leaders and intellectuals of China were principally considering many varied issues, forms and reforms in the field of Sinitization, Taiwanese intellectuals like Mou Zongsan found their way to discover the need to adapt other forms of modern Western thought, particularly originating from German, Anglo-American and Greco-Roman classical philosophy (Billioud 2011; Rošker 2019). The aim was to modernize Chinese traditions and consider Confucianism's appropriateness for a modern society; for example, Confucianism as a cultural force advises ways of living that can advance capitalism and industrialization; and the method used was to apply concepts from the European enlightenment and modernity. Intellectuals like Mou thought that the revitalization and restoration of Confucianism was necessary because, in the mid-20th century, Chinese religious and philosophical traditions (including Confucianism) faced disorder and restrictions in China. For example, during the 20th century Confucianism was rarely offered as a feasible way of thinking, but rather it was condemned as to blame for China's stagnation for the last few of centuries and therefore largely rejected (Sigurðsson 2014, 22), with mostly Taiwanese philosophers pushing for its revitalization and restoration (Rošker 2019). Additionally, in the 1980s this restoration process presented assorted multifaceted, comprehensible and emerging philosophical systems that showed the exceptional inventiveness of many Taiwanese theorists, such as Mou Zongsan.

In post-war Taiwan, various ways of investigating and attempts to develop traditional Chinese thoughts have been identified with the emerging Confucian intellectuals. There is plenty of research on separate aspects of Chinese religious and philosophical traditions, but few studies examine the inherent intersections, origins, and developments that took place at a later stage, especially in the 20th century. This essay studies the thriving development, revitalization and restoration of Chinese intellectual thought in contemporary Taiwanese society, and explores the inherent connection between intellectual thoughts of the East and West through Confucian intellectual traditions. In particular, this research critically introduces and involves the early 20th century Confucian philosopher Shili

Xiong (1885–1968)<sup>2</sup> and his disciple the contemporary Taiwanese Confucian intellectual Mou Zongsan, along with the Western philosophers Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger, and Herman Bavinck, using ideas like moral autonomy, ethics, ontology, and *imago Dei*. In so doing, this research familiarizes readers with schools of thought and intellectuals from East with West who have contributed significantly to the innovative burgeoning of contemporary Chinese philosophy, and thus makes a bridge that connects dissimilar discourses across time and space by informing and revealing several otherwise neglected traditions of Confucian philosophy.

### The Revival of Modern Confucianism

In the early 20th century, an invigorated intellectual movement of Confucianism started which has spread its influence beyond the post-Mao era in contemporary China. This modern movement, which is also deeply influenced by but not identical to the Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty, has been designated as New Confucianism. Scholars like John Makeham consider New Confucianism as the neo-conservative movement of several Chinese orthodox *ru* (Confucian) traditions, with religious implications, and that this new movement promotes certain Confucian social elements (for instance, political, ecological and social harmony) as appropriate for the contemporary context in combination with Western ideas like humanism and rationalism (Makeham 2003, 25, 81). The philosophy of New Confucianism is comprised of discussions among Confucian scholars from Taiwan, Hong Kong, the USA, and mainland China, with both first- and second-generation scholars. Before we enter the discussion of how the synthesis (Mou's philosophy in synthesis with that of Western philosophers) can be materialized, this paper attempts to elaborate briefly on the issue of certain Confucian social elements, such as political, ecological and social harmony, and how they can be placed in a contemporary context in combination with Western notions of humanism and rationalism. Several papers regarding this topic have already been published in the journal *Asian Studies* (2014, vol. 2, no.1),<sup>3</sup> from which further understanding can be obtained.

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2 Xiong Shili (1885–1968) is a well-known intellectual and writer of Confucian traditions who was born in Hubei Province in China. He contributed extensively to the revitalization and restoration of Confucianism in 20th century China, and thus is a key person in contemporary Chinese intellectual history, making a path for the rejuvenation of the Confucian “Way”—*dao* (Yu 2002).

3 See “Modern Confucianism and Chinese Modernity” in *Asian Studies* (2014, vol. 2, no.1).

## Promotion of Certain Confucian Social Elements

In the issue of *Asian Studies* titled *Modern Confucianism and Chinese Modernity*, Lee Ming-huei in his Chinese foreword discusses several issues related to the developments of Confucian socio-political elements in the twentieth century. The 1950s saw a debate between the modern Confucians and liberal intellectuals, particularly from Hong Kong and Taiwan. According to Lee, the debate examined whether an ancient Chinese culture like Confucianism was still relevant for the development of modern science, technology and political organization (Lee 2014, 16). The “development of democracy from Confucianism” is a notion that Confucians from Taiwan and Hong Kong presented, and this idea not only advocates the acknowledgment of limitations with regard to the relationship between morality and politics but also reflects the understanding that China needs to update its tradition of Confucianism in order to be “a modern, technologically developed and democratic state” (ibid., 17). The point of departure for Lee is to show how Confucianism does not exclude the other, as he shows how Taiwanese intellectuals have not disregarded pluralistic approaches to democracy that depend on dissimilar cultural traditions. Keeping this view in mind, and although indirectly, these Confucian scholars contributed to the democratization of Taiwan.

Although the discussions and attempts to re-evaluate Confucianism’s suitability for a modernized Asian society took place in China and Taiwan, similar democratization processes also took place in other East Asian countries, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, and Vietnam (see Ali 2020). The Confucian scholar Geir Sigurðsson (2014), in his article “Confucianism vs. Modernity: Expired, Incompatible or Remedial?”, notes that Confucianism remains appealing as an ideology, on the basis that Confucianism was the “cultural ground of Singapore’s economic success story” (Sigurðsson 2014, 24). He suggests,

It was in Singapore that Confucianism was first suggested as a potential catalyst for modernization after Lee Kuan Yew’s government introduced Confucian ethics in the secondary curriculum in 1982. What ensued was a major philosophical, sociological and economic discussion hosted by the Institute of East Asian Philosophies (IEAP), which was established at the National University of Singapore in 1983, about Asian and notably Confucian values as an appropriate platform for social and economic modernization. (ibid., 23)

In a critical manner, Sigurðsson briefly informs us about an account of Confucianism’s suitability for a modernized society, and particularly since the 1980s in relation to China. In Singapore there has been a debate as to whether Confucian

values should be re-established due to the fears raised by other ethnic groups in the country with regard to the state being Sinicized. But despite this, the importance and relevance of Confucianism have remained intact in Singapore. Initially, Sigurðsson states how Confucianism has been considered as a stimulant for economic activity in Singapore, due to the Confucian sense of (political and social) collectivism:

By concocting a Confucian cultural foundation, the People's Action Party under Lee Kuan Yew's leadership has found a vindication for continuing its authoritarian rulership in a period of world history characterized by growing demands for stronger democratic principles. The state was attempting to "naturalise, validate, and ironically reunite (Chinese) Singaporeans with a presumed moral and philosophical code". Ong Pang Boon 王邦文, a first-generation People's Action Party politician, and an outspoken critic of the Confucian programme, warned that successive generations of monarchs had always made use of and promoted those parts of Confucianism that were advantageous to feudal rule. In this respect, it is illuminating that in the 1970s and into the mid-1980s, the Singapore leadership praised and encouraged "rugged individualism" until it suddenly began endorsing a Confucian kind of collectivism, duty, and self-sacrifice. (Sigurðsson 2014, 24)

He then moves on to discuss contemporary attempts to accommodate Confucianism in the People's Republic of China (PRC) in order to establish the fact that "Confucianism can be a healthy antidote to some of the ills produced by contemporary capitalist practice" (ibid., 26). While the importance of Confucianism's relevance to China's future has never been undermined, and Confucian values have always been considered as something essential, they re-entered the discussion more strongly in 1989 when the student protests were crushed. In the 21st century, from the grassroots to the state level, Confucianism has become a new and incessant "craze" for "national learning" (*guoxue* 国学). Public and private educational institutions in China have emphasized the continuance of Confucian philosophy, including more than three hundred Confucian Institutes operating globally where Confucianism is presented as an ideology for "China's future", or "a practical guide for everyday life". Though there are different schools of thought (such as Jiang Qing and Kang Xiaoguang) regarding the appropriate way of adopting Confucianism in order to meet modern challenges, Confucian-inspired policies are widely endorsed to create a new "harmonious society".

The basis of this harmonious society depends on factors like the sense of belonging and sharedness in a community. In his article, "Faith and Politics:

(New) Confucianism as Civil Religion”, the scholar Bart Dessein (2014) explores the relevance of Confucian values in contemporary China by re-discussing Confucianism as reflected in China’s political and religious narratives, which seek to generate the sense of belonging and sharedness in a community with a divine mission. This mission is amalgamated with issues like patriotism and nationalism. Dessein interprets these as constitutive elements of a “civil religion with Chinese Characteristics”, which provides the foundation of the Confucian state:

That the Confucian state is characterized by an intimate and reciprocal relationship between the ruling house, state power, the concept of “empire”, and the realm of the divine is well illustrated in the following declaration Emperor Yuan of the Han (r. 48–22 BCE) made at the beginning of his reign: “We make it a point to establish personally our ancestral temple because this is the ultimate power to build up our authority, eliminate the sprouts of rebellion, and make the people one”. This brings us to the broader political mission of the Chinese Confucian state. Commenting on the *Daxue*, (*The Great Learning*), the 39th chapter of the *Liji* (*Records of Ritual*), a work compiled in the Han Dynasty in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BCE, Wing-tsit Chan (1963, 84) says the following: “The importance of this little classic is far greater than its small size would suggest. It gives the Confucian educational, moral, and political programs in a nutshell, neatly summed up in the so-called ‘three items’: manifesting the clear character of man, loving the people and abiding in the highest good; and in the ‘eight steps’: the investigation of things, extension of knowledge, sincerity of the will, the rectification of the mind, cultivation of the personal life, regulation of the family, national order, and world peace.” (Sigurðsson 2014, 47)

The contemporary political and religious mission with its emphasis on patriotism and nationalism reflects this history that signifies national order and world peace. Even in the present religious, historical and political narratives, New Confucianism has been described as a constitutive component of a “civil religion with Chinese Characteristics”. In the West, for example in American society, civil religion can be employed as a tool to operate and transform perceptions about how the USA works as a Christian nation, and which can come close to seeing the USA as embodying God’s will. In the East, Confucianism plays a similar role for Chinese society. Though started in the 20th century, this development gets new shape in the 21st century. For example, on 21 April 2006, the then member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party and president of the organizational committee

of the Beijing Olympic Games, Liu Qi, declared the Olympic slogan: “One people, One Dream”. He elaborated that the ideology that China holds is to share the global community and civilization in order to build a bright future, keeping hand-in-hand with people all over the world (ibid., 57). Qi stated this ideology reflects the trust of a great nation with a history of 5,000 years long and its contemporary modernization that is committed to peaceful progress, a harmonious society and the happiness of its people. According to Dessein, Qi’s comments hold three significant claims: a) China as a nation has a history of 5,000 years; b) Chinese desire to be a part of a peaceful globalized world; and c) modernization of earlier Chinese traditions will lead to harmonious society at both the national and international levels (ibid., 57). In 2013, the Chinese government presented this idea as the “Chinese Dream”. These three claims promote two types of nationalism: cultural and political, where cultural nationalism is rooted in the long Chinese history, while political nationalism originated with the concept of modernization that started in the 20th century.

### 20th Century, Xiong Shili and the New Development of Confucianism

In the early 20th century, especially after the May Fourth Movement of 1919, Confucianism was blamed for China’s weakness and decay in the face of Western “aggression”, but a few intellectuals successfully contributed to the revitalization and restoration of Confucianism in the form of New Confucianism (Cheng and Bunnin 2002; Rošker 2009). Although mainstream Chinese philosophers considered that the redemption of China as an integrated society needed the adoption of Western science and democracy, others took the opposite position saying that the crisis in China happened because of the loss of authentic Confucian *dao* (Rošker 2009; Yu 2002). Therefore, the only way forward is not in abandoning Confucianism, but rather in the revival and restoration of the real Confucian spirit (Yu 2002, 127). Some of these thinkers used Asian philosophy to interpret Confucianism in the modern era, while others synthesized it with Western philosophies. The philosopher Shili Xiong (1885–1968) is one of the new representative voices, whose *New Doctrine*<sup>4</sup> is drawn from the Asian intellectual traditions that he considers need to be integrated into contemporary Chinese philosophy in order to better think in terms of “inborn human qualities”. He critically engages with this new approach and discusses how the revival of Confucianism is essential for China:

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4 Yu writes, “it is now almost universally held that in the *New Doctrine*, Xiong built the most creative philosophical system in contemporary Chinese Philosophy” (Yu 2002, 128).

I try to illuminate the fundamentals of benevolence and righteousness. This was accused by many of being impractical and empty. However, if there is no way to stop the prevailing of the heresy and stop its flowing, our country, and our nationality will be extinct. How could there be another way to save [China]. (Xiong in Yu 2002, 127–28)

Because of his distinct way of expressing Chinese philosophical thought in a way that had become even more relevant in contemporary times, Xiong is considered as the most innovative and creative Chinese philosopher of the modern period. According to Ng You-Kwan,

whether judged in terms of depth and comprehensiveness in content or in terms of theoretical vigour, Xiong's philosophical achievements are great and can be compared with those of Western philosophers such as Aristotle, Leibniz, Husserl, Heidegger, and Whitehead. In Chinese philosophy, his scope is on par with that of Zhu Xi (1130–1200) and Wang Fuzhi (Ng 2003, 239).

Xiong was an expert in Buddhist classics, and thus his philosophy also draws on Buddhist philosophy, particularly Yogacara Buddhism. In the first two decades of the 20th century, much importance was placed on logic and this had a great influence on the progress of academic Chinese philosophy. Similarly, the restoration of Yogacara thought by the foremost Chinese intellectuals from the late 1890s to the 1930s played a vital role in determining the currents in Chinese philosophy and modern Chinese thought. In a "Translator's Introduction", the Confucian scholar John Makeham writes:

Yogacara (*Yuqie Xingpai*, yogic practice) is one of the two most influential philosophical systems of Indian Buddhism, along with Madhyamaka. Historically, both *weishi* (nothing but consciousness) and *faxiang* (*dharma-laksana*, dharma characteristics) were used to refer to the Yogacara school in China. After the Tang Dynasty, *faxiang* was used to denote the famous pilgrim and monk Xuanzang's (602–644) Yogacara school, but soon became a mildly derogatory expression used by its opponents, mocking the Yogacaras for pursuing the "characteristics of dharmas" rather than the real nature of dharmas (*faxing*). Despite this, the Yogacaras later adopted the term, and in Japan it continues to be the official name of this school (in Japanese *Hosso*). (Makeham 2015, xii)

The background discussion on Yogacara Buddhism not only informs us about the basis of Xiong's philosophy, but also helps us to trace how Xiong's disciples

were influenced by this. For example, Mou Zongsan's intellectual traditions were also influenced by Yogacara Buddhism, where, like Yogacara, Mou also believes that objectivity is not possible without subjectivity. Moreover, Xiong claims that the classics of Eastern thought should be unified with modern Chinese thinking for more practical strength, while he also identifies the same need in Buddhism regarding "inborn human qualities". Xiong finds the brighter sides to "inborn human qualities", and he discards the Buddhist teachings of "daily decrease"—a philosophy that indicates the negative aspects of human nature and then guides us to decrease them—and states that the exercise of restraining one's dark nature is compulsory, which he connects and learns from classical Confucianism. His understanding of Confucianism claims that it not only scrutinizes the dark aspects of "inborn human qualities", but also considers how it is necessary to get used to rituals, the purpose of maintaining rituals and the achievement of *ren*, and this approach does not focus on restricting the negative sides of "inborn human qualities", but instead on adopting the "the fundamental goodness" that Mencius calls the *duan* of humans (Xiong 2015, 129). Moreover, Xiong argues that the root of the "daily decrease" is in Buddhism's metaphysical belief of an "unbridgeable" division between an utterly fixed reality, and a continuously varying and conditional phenomenal world, what Jiyuan Yu calls "separation theory"—a theory that separates the objective world from the mind, or reality from substance (Yu 2002). This utterly fixed reality (Dharma-nature or *fa-xiang*) and conditional phenomenal world (*Dharma*-Characters, or *fa-xiang*) become the centre of attraction for Confucian scholars. Because Xiong's theory of correcting the "daily decrease" relies heavily on what Jiyuan designates the "sameness thesis"—a thesis that claims the two worlds are unified or come as the same entity. Xiong claims, fundamentally, the exact reality and function are not two different things with two different natures, but one—the world of reality and function is a unity:

If they are separable, the function will differ from original reality and exist independently, and in that way, the function will have its original reality. We should not seek for some entity outside function and name it original reality. Furthermore, if original reality exists independently of function, it is a useless reality. In that case, if it is not a dead thing, it must be a dispensable thing. Thinking back and forth, I believe that original reality and function are not separable. This should be beyond doubt. (Xiong in Yu 2002, 133)

Xiong further states that function is not something we perceive other than original reality. In that case, we will need to search for another basis of function.



He considers that any function must presume a basis and hereafter needs to be distinguished from original reality, which will result in a “*regress ad infinitum*”. Moreover, his idea of this unity reflects his earlier works like *New Treatise on the Uniqueness of Consciousness*, where he claims that reality is congruent to mind:

My aim in writing this treatise is to awaken those who study the learning that is concerned with fundamental wisdom to understand that reality (*tuttva*) is not a perceptual field detached from one’s mind, nor it is a cognitive object of knowledge. This is because it is only by seeking within that there is correspondence with true realization. True realization is the self’s recognizing the self, with absolutely nothing concealed. Correspondence with true realization is called wisdom because it differs from the mundane world, which is established on the basis of discernment (*prajna*). (Xiong 2015, 21)

Therefore, for Xiong, reality is equal to mind which does not reveal itself to one’s mind, but is about universal presence. In this sense, there is a universality of mind amongst all beings, and accordingly this form of being is the reality. In this way, he indicates and emphasizes the self-mastery of one’s desires. He claims that by failing to control one’s desire of the mind, one remains a “heap of dead matter”. His argument is that one should perceive the substances of the world internally, because what is external is eventually also internal, and they are one as both mind and reality. Later we see this in Mou’s intellectualism, that was also influenced by Yogacara Buddhism, which believes that no objectivity is possible aside from subjectivity.

## Connecting East to West: Mou’s Confucian Philosophy with Western Philosophy

The founding father of the modern New Confucian school of philosophy, Shili Xiong, helped produce a few towering figures who later carried the legacy of modern Confucian thought and contributed to its flourishing. Xiong’s best-known students are Tang Junyi (1909–1978), Xu Fuguan (1903–1982) and Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), who were not only great disciples but also promoted Xiong’s philosophical ideas, helping “cultural China” to become the dominant philosophical current of Chinese philosophy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In the last few decades, there have been attempts to criticize Xiong’s philosophy using a narrow point of view, but in making Xiong a crucial link in the “transmission of the succession of the way” from the Ming Dynasty to the 20th century and

the retrospective creation of the New Confucian School, his disciples (like Mou Zongsan) “inherited, carried on, and advanced the teaching of the Humaneness of Confucian sages, and also inherited, carried on and advanced the aspirations of the Great Confucians of late Ming” (Makeham 2015, xiv). Therefore, Mou Zongsan is respected as one of the most influential second-generation philosophers whose philosophy of metaphysics eventually connects with Xiong’s. What is important about Mou is that he has built upon Xiong’s theories on “mind and reality” with regard to their more practical, socio-political aspects: claiming that universality should exist in all philosophical truth, and proposing that political and social notions of the world can be linked in the essence of goodness. For Mou, particularity exists because of the dissimilar systems that are grounded in different cultures. Yet, after a range of philosophical reasonings and interpretations, these dissimilar systems arrive at a similar philosophical truth. He understands that our physical limitations and restrictions—for example, our physical being—make these dissimilar systems and dissimilar cultures. Moreover, aspects of being that appear in the mind—for instance, forms—are still revealed and exist within this physical world. Mou advocates that we should not let these restrictions deter us from being involved with the philosophical reasoning of society, culture, science, and politics (ibid. 2015).

A historical necessity—the philosophical type of necessity that derives from the essence of the things which follow from the internal connection of social phenomenon—that follows human beings’ particularity is at the centre of Mou’s political philosophy. He suggests that dissimilar systems of dissimilar nations and their existence can be interpreted chiefly because of this historical necessity. Mou states that historical necessity occurs not only due to logical need or metaphysical requirement, but also due to the development of a spirit that he designates as “dialectical necessity”—which promotes establishing the spirit of truth through reasoned arguments. He argues that we should perceive and explain history as an entity that has historical necessity (here he means dialectical necessity) and ethical necessity—a necessity that is guided by moral obligations—which leads him to conclude that there should only be two types of judgment, moral, and historical. He asserts whether it is Chinese or Greek, the basic requirements in terms of the background of history and fundamental human characteristics are identical, and thus universality in philosophical truth occurs even behind history and politics. Mou’s understanding of historical and moral judgment is directly related to New Confucianism, where he strives to contribute to the re-evaluation of Sinology and modernization of Chinese culture and generates his ideas around the New Confucian manifesto, harmonious society and inclusive wisdom (Rošker 2016b). The new Confucian Manifesto as a phrase was first used in 1963,

following the essay “A Manifesto on Chinese Culture to the World”, (1958) by Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, Xu Fuguan, and Zhang Junmai. Eventually, this work became more important and has since been designated as the New Confucian Manifesto, even though the writers did not use this term in the article (Yu 2008). This manifesto offers a vision of Chinese culture which holds fundamental unity through all history, with Confucianism the highest expression of it. The account of Confucianism provided by the Manifesto is heavily influenced by Neo-Confucianism, especially a version of Neo-Confucianism is linked with a philosopher from the Ming Dynasty, Wang Yangming (1472–1529), in contrast to a version set out by a philosopher of Song Dynasty, Zhu Xi (1130–1200). The Confucian scholar Fang Keli claims that this manifesto has had a huge influence and should be considered “the most important event in the course of the second development phase of modern Neo-Confucianism” (Fang 1995, 24). The main argument of the manifesto is that China must learn modern science and democracy from the West, while the West should learn from the Chinese intellectual tradition, particularly from Confucianism, which is often considered as a pearl offering all-encompassing wisdom (Bresciani 2001), and which also works as the basis of a harmonious society (Rošker 2016a).

The notion of a harmonious society and Confucianism are interconnected, where the idea itself refers to the time of Confucius and the philosophy around it, which also featured in the development of New Confucianism (Fan 2010; Rošker 2016a). In the contemporary discussion, it comes back as a vital characteristic of ex-Communist Party general secretary Hu Jintao’s signature ideology of the Scientific Development Concept that flourished between 2000 and 2010, which was revised by the Hu-Wen administration during the 2005 National People’s Congress (Bell 2006; Perris 1983). The reason for this philosophy of social harmony becoming more important is the growing social inequality and injustice in mainland China due to its regulated economic growth, which has resulted in social conflict. Therefore, the philosophy of the governing body has changed in the face of economic developments to embrace an inclusive societal balance and harmony (Fan 2006). The making of a harmonious society has been set as one of the national goals for the ruling Communist Party, along with its aim of creating a moderately prosperous society. Embracing and promoting the way of a harmonious society shows that Hu Jintao surpassed the ruling philosophy of the previous leaders. During his time and near the end of his years in power, Hu attempted to spread this philosophy to give it an international dimension in order to promote international peace and cooperation, with a view to creating a harmonious world, although Hu’s successor Xi Jinping has employed it in a more careful manner (Zhong 2006). As in the governing bodies,

there are different views among the Confucian scholars on this issue. For example, Daniel A. Bell and Yan Xuetong call for the reestablishment of meritocratic Confucian institutions like the Censorate—a high-level supervisory body of ancient China, which was established during Qing Dynasty—and other bodies as a part of the New Confucian political agenda (Bell 2016; Yan 2018). On the other hand, scholars like Jana S. Rošker state that Confucianism is not something we can call a monolithic system of thought, nor a static traditional philosophy, but instead Confucianism is more a dissimilar stream of thoughts that can be employed moderately, subjectively and selectively by modern thinkers, as epitomized by their use in legitimizing the state power (Rošker 2016a; 2019). Taking the historical expansion of the notion of harmony, it is possible to see to what degree the philosophical traditions are grounded on historical conventions and to what degree they are an artefact of the modern Western philosophical and political strains of the current period. For example, Mou has taken steps to integrate the Confucian philosophical traditions and notions with Western thoughts on metaphysics, and attempted to delineate the innovative development of New Confucianism in 20th century China and the international arena of philosophical judgments concerning the Western philosophical ideas. Drawing from Jana S Rošker's *Rebirth of the Moral Self* (2016b), Dessein discusses how Mou differentiated a traditional Chinese “functional expression of reason” from a “Western constructive expression of reason”:

Having studied Western philosophy from a comparative perspective with the indigenous Confucian tradition, he differentiated what he called a traditional Chinese “functional expression of reason” (*lixingzhi yunyong biao-xian*) from a Western “constructive expression of reason” (*lixingzhi jiagou biao-xian*). For him, the “functional expression of reason” is to be equated with one’s morality, that is, to speak with Zhu Xi, the result of the way *qi* operates in function of the principle *li*. This “functional expression of reason” is practical in the sense that it is connected with actual life. Influenced by Wang Yangming’s *xinxue* thinking that “the origin of the intention is the possibility for knowledge”, he advocated that China’s traditional lack of a “constructive expression of reason”—his interpretation of Kant’s “theoretical reason”—had to be solved through finding “intellectual intuition” also in Chinese “functional reason”. The moral self in its “functional expression of reason” and the empirical self, understood as morality in the sphere of concrete performance in the world, were thus seen as parts of the same thing. (Dessein 2016, 282)

## Mou's Version of Confucianism and Kantian Philosophy

Mou Zongsan articulates and rationalizes a moral metaphysics<sup>5</sup> similar to that of his teacher Shili Xiong. Mou's intellectual ideas address the boundary of Kantian philosophy and assert the ways in which Confucianism exceeds Kantian morality, particularly in his works such *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy* (1974) and *Phenomenon and Thing-in-Itself* (1990), which show his commitment to engagement with Kant (Bresciani 2001; Bunnin 2008). While Confucianism encourages Mou to transmute the Kantian concepts of "intellectual intuition", "Thing-in-Itself" and "moral autonomy", perhaps not only because of Kant's emphasis on the limits of knowledge and Confucian way of promoting knowledge of the world, but also Kant's asymmetrical emphasis on the doctrine of the method, Mou presents his philosophy in Kantian terms and inherits these ideas in his philosophical conceptions (Billioud 2006). Why he does so is not entirely clear, but looking at Mou's comparative study of Mencius and Kant scholars like Qiong Guo consider that he employs these concepts to facilitate a dialogue between the West and East through a demonstration of the compatibility of Chinese and Western philosophies (Guo 2007, 345–46, 349). Moreover, Sébastien Billioud discusses how Kant remains a pivotal subject of philosophical departure for Mou:

Kant is a pivotal reference for Mou, who considers that his emphasis both on the limits of knowledge and on the importance of practical philosophy echoes, to some extent, the focus on "life" (*shengming*, i.e., self-cultivation and self-transformation) rather than on "nature" (*ziran*, i.e., knowledge of the world) favoured by Chinese thought. However, though this proximity is a strong argument in favour of a dialogue with Kant, it should not be overstated. The very structure of Kant's masterpieces (a "Doctrine of Elements", a "Doctrine of Method") is revealing: on the other hand, the emphasis on method is for Mou an interesting departure point for a dialogue with Chinese thought; on the other hand, the total asymmetry between the two-part (a huge doctrine of the elements, a tiny doctrine of method), especially in the critique of reason, also points, in Mou's opinion, to the weakness and deficiencies of the Kantian project. (Billioud 2011, 10)

Kant's critical philosophy has been developed, critiqued and renovated through Mou's philosophical lens. Mou attempts to connect Confucianism and Kantianism because he finds both are corroborated by the *dao* (Way), where the *dao* is a fundamental truth and these two philosophies just manifest the different aspects

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5 That discusses the link between morality and ontology indicating the moral value of objects and self.

of it (Jiadong 2005; Schmidt 2011). Mou approaches Kant critically and comparatively, and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in particular remains his centre of attraction, and one of his key criticisms involves Kant's esteem for free will as something theoretical (Chan 2006; Guo 2007). The different here with Kant is that Mou considers morality as something real, and thus moral life is not confined within the theoretical paradigm. This conjecture derives from Mou's understanding of the metaphysical necessity of the ability to develop one's moral praxis. With this, Mou shapes a moral metaphysics within the precept of subjectivism, while Kant conceives that intellectual intuition is only subject to God. However, we can also understand Mou's intellectual intuition with reference to Heidegger's "fundamental ontology"—where due to reinterpreting phenomenology, Heidegger considers that ontological examination is indeed something more prehistoric, as against the ontical examination of the positive sciences (Heidegger 2010, 3). Mou attributes intellectual intuition to human beings' ability to perceive this intuition, which is superior, as Mou explores, to Heidegger's fundamental ontology (Chan 2006). Mou departs from Heidegger only because of Kant, who believes that true metaphysics is transcendent. Mou then transforms Kant's philosophy into what is widely referred to as "Mind Confucianism", also known as New Confucianism.

### Mou and the Concept of *imago Dei*

While Kant finds the highest intellectual intuition is to be close to God, Mou anthropocentrically makes it possible to develop one's "inborn human qualities", which can also be elaborated with Neo-Calvinist Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck's (1854–1921) idea of "inborn human qualities" as the centre of *imago Dei*. As a theologian, Bavinck is quite well-known to Christian Chinese intellectuals. His books *The Philosophy of Revelation* (1909) and *Essays on Religion, Science and Society* (translated in 2008) remain quite insightful to readers (see Bavinck 1908; 2008). His vision of considering human beings as not carrying the reflection of God's highest goodness, but instead as the image of Him when both their soul and body practice righteousness, goodness and holiness, has recently been studied concerning Mou's New Confucian philosophy of "the inner benevolence and righteousness of human heart-mind (*renyi neizai yu xin*)" (Xu 2017, 301). Mou's philosophy is focused on a moral subjectivity and autonomy that designate his human-centered optimism. His interpretation concerning "inborn human qualities" is to declare the complete transcendence of humanity and the essential goodness of these qualities. Bavinck expresses the theocentric view of "inborn human qualities", promoting God as the absolute archetype, not humanity, but attempts to show the relationship between God and humankind where humanity is the *imago*

*Dei*, that can only be reinstated in Christ. The ideas of Mou and Bavinck are interconnected, because a dialogue has been created by showing a buffer zone with a clear differentiation between Bavinck's God and Kant's God (*ibid.*, 323). Moreover, the parallel understanding between the "descending heavenly decree" and the *imago Dei* displays the formulation of their dialogical relationship. The idea of *imago Dei* can not only be articulated with the form of "descending heavenly decree" in Confucianism, but this can also be enhanced and developed through the further elaboration of modern ideas on the *imago Dei*. It is important to note that Mou's idea regarding outer kingliness can further be highlighted through a discussion of Bavinck's political theology and organism, by incorporating metaphysical elements to reflect his moral metaphysics:

The kingliness is concerned with democracy and science, which is the consequence of the realization of inner sagesness through self-cultivation to save and revitalize China. Mou's outer kingliness is characterized by individualism, which particularly highlights individual moral efforts. This moral praxis will contribute to the construction of a community, in a broad sense, namely a nation. Mou adopts the pattern of individual-to-community to elaborate outer kingliness [...] His "outer kingliness" simplifies and reduces the problem of evil to political and social issues so as to deal with the cultural and political crisis in China. His failure to construe the multifaceted causes of evil leads to a politically and culturally Sinocentric outer kingliness [...] In this regard, Bavinck's organicism is an appropriate supplement to Mou's outer kingliness. Bavinck critiques the non-Christian worldview as it "lacks the concept of humanity as a single interrelated organism and could never come up with the idea of a kingdom in which both the individual and the group would develop their full identities". Bavinck here articulates an organic relationship between individual and community by the notion of the Kingdom. The Kingdom, which is the highest good, is intimately connected to every aspect of life. It includes political life. Hence, the organic relationship also involves Bavinck's Political Theology. (Xu 2017, 322)

My study emphasizes and explores the concept of *imago Dei* because the idea seems to be one of the key issues not only for the philosophical discussion of Mou and Kant, but also for other Western philosophers who critically engage with absolute goodness and the exercise of free will. The idea of *imago Dei* even seems to be of high interest to intellectuals of the 20th century and after. In the modern era as well as in contemporary times, this Latin expression *imago Dei* ("Image of God") has often been connected to the ideas of "freedom/free-will" and relationality. For

example, the 20th century Swiss philosopher Emil Brunner expresses states that the social aspects of “inborn human qualities”, as beings created in the image of God, signify being as “Subject, or freedom”; it is the way that humanity is distinguished from other creatures (Brunner 2014, 55). This discussion relates to Mou’s approach to New Confucianism, where Mou’s stresses the exercise of free will for the highest goodness. Additionally, Mou’s approach to New Confucianism can also be understood with the 20th century French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), who is known for synthesizing phenomenology with hermeneutics. Ricoeur asserts that *imago Dei* does not have any defined meaning, and the author of the *Genesis Creation Narrative* (creation myth) has surely not mastered its full treasure of meaning: “In the very essence of the individual, in terms of its quality as a subject; the image of God, we believe, is the very personal and solitary power to think and to choose; it is interiority” (Ricoeur and Gingras 1961, 37). For Ricoeur, the *imago Dei* can best be articulated through structures of experience and perfect consciousness (phenomenology), and thus can be concluded as something determined by free will (ibid., 50). Moreover, this idea of free will also has a strong place in Heidegger’s phenomenological stance, and it differs from Kant’s view regarding free will, as will be discussed below.

## Philosophical Intersection between Mou and Heidegger

Mou’s critique and transformation of Kant’s ideas led him to Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). Mou found interest in Heidegger through reading his books, specifically *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1997) and the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2000), where Heidegger extensively discusses and criticizes Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (see Heidegger 1997; 2000). Mou’s explanation of Kant’s philosophy was thus deeply influenced by Heidegger’s philosophy. For example, Mou transforms his approach to explaining the first critique by Kant from an epistemological to an ontological approach (Chan 2006, 126–27). Mou’s book *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy* (1974) reflects on of Heidegger’s thoughts, where Mou considers chapters from *Being and Time*. However, Mou criticizes Heidegger’s essential ontology in terms of his moral metaphysics. Mou’s early work, *Substance of Mind and Substance of Humaneness* (see Mou 1969), is also influenced by Heidegger, and contemporary scholars like Chan believe that, based on Max Müller’s works, Mou’s declaration of the “Three Modes of Neo-Confucianism” draws from Heidegger’s “Three ontological differences” (Chan 2012). Additionally, Sébastien Billioud discusses how Mou observes Heidegger’s fundamental ontology:



Heidegger's starting point is the radical finitude of human existence, and Mou Zongsan observes that fundamental ontology is the ontological analysis of this limited essence (*ren de youxian benzhi*). Such an ontology should make it possible to disclose "the Being of *Dasein*". *Dasein* relates to man questioning his own existence which he finds problematic and which consequently raises the issue of Being, the issue of his Being when he is gobbled up by daily reality. Mou Zongsan translates the concept in several different ways: *zai nali*, *zaizheli*, *you chujing de zai* (which literally corresponds to the idea of "being in situation") *orhunran zhong chu de cunzhe zhi zai* which we could try to translate as the "Being of beings indulged in everyday life". Everyday life (*Alltäglichkeit*, *richangxing*) "from which Heidegger starts his analysis of human existence" represents the most concrete dimension of our existence. (Billioud 2006, 227)

To a certain extent, Mou Zongsan shows his agreement with Heidegger's explanation of Kant. He commences a dual-layer frame of conceiving the transcendental purpose of Kantian categories, "logical" and "ontological" layers of understanding. Mou proposes that Kant's thesis of "objectivity is subjectivity" denies the "ontical proposition" and supports the "ontological proposition", where he shows consent to the analysis of Transcendental Schematism by Heidegger, signifying the denotation of objectification which presumes a subjective horizon that makes the object appear. Mou asserts the ontology of the phenomenal world, calling it "attached ontology" (*ibid.*). Here Mou encircles Heidegger's position of the subjective character of transcendental distinction by Kant, learning it from the *Kantbuch* itself. Heidegger argues that the difference between the notion of a thing in itself and the presence of it is not objective but only subjective: "the thing in itself is not another but another aspect of the representation with regard to the same object" (Heidegger 1997, 37). In his treatise, *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy*, Mou embraces a critical approach to the "fundamental ontology" by Heidegger, showing how he fails to reflect the significance of true mind:

Heidegger's descriptions could let us think of disclosure of "true mind" (*zhen xin*) for instance when he speaks about "call of consciousness" (*ruf*, *liangxix de hubuan*), feeling of guilt (*jiuze zhi gan*), dread (*Sorge*, *jiaolu*), determined being (*Entschlossenheit*, *jueduan*) or nothingness (*Nichtigkeit*, *xuwu*). Nevertheless, all these descriptions are still "floating" and he has not been able to pave the way for a "true mind". (Mou 1974, 362)

For Mou, Heidegger's thoughts are sometimes "floating" due to his inability to identify the transcendental reality, but he emphasizes immanent metaphysics to

advance his essential ontology. For Mou, true metaphysics is “transcendental” (ibid., 32), and since the immanent metaphysics only concentrates on the problem of the connotation of phenomenal beings, it is unable to cope with Kantian transcendental notions of God, immortality, and freedom. Moreover, Mou takes Heidegger’s intellectual thoughts as something too ambitiously romantic that are incapable of maintaining an essential serenity to reach to the idea of “true mind”. Mou also finds Heidegger’s approach something “morally-neutral”, and this lack of moral awareness reflects that his (Heidegger’s) essential ontology is incapable of reaching the arena of moral metaphysics, and suggests a futile response to the subject (Liangkang 2002). Therefore, Heidegger becomes a mere “commentator” of Kant because he only stays with the Kantian thesis of the “finitude” of a human being, and cannot identify human being’s intellectual intuition, and thus his fundamental ontology results in an unsuccessful contribution to philosophy (Mou 1975).<sup>6</sup> It is important to note here that some scholars suggest that Mou’s critique of Heidegger’s essential ontology misplaces his (Heidegger’s) transcendental metaphysics, because Mou could have agreed more than he thought (Liangkang 2002). Moreover, Heidegger’s explanation of Being essentially reaches a parallel metaphysical level with Mou’s explanations of transcendental ideas of freedom, *ren* or *Dao* and God. Moreover, they share an analogous interpretation of knowledge, where Mou considers that moral learning leads to moral metaphysics and Heidegger considers that human beings can open themselves to Being in their everyday lives. What is also crucial, and Mou has not articulated, is to understand the conception of *time* between Kant and Heidegger. Heidegger’s *time* offers both essential characteristics for *being* an essential revelation of *being* where *time* remains *a priori* knowledge for Kant and it is the temporality of *Dasein*—the experience of Being that is peculiar to human beings. Therefore, to some extent, there is a fundamental nature in Heidegger’s *time* and Being, which overwhelms the regular perception of *time* in a phenomenal world. As such, Mou’s metaphysics does not depart from Heidegger’s metaphysics, but rather they intersect and meet at a common ground: the relationship between the phenomenal world and metaphysical ontology. This is the same relationship that his teacher Xiong Shili called on him to recognize in the fundamental unification of the two through intellectual intuition, the concept of which is broadly revealed in Confucian, Neo-Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist thoughts. The idea of intellectual intuition is also manifested in the Neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming through the various courses of action. For Mou, this is not something highly complex but a

6 See Marthe Chandler’s review of Li Zehou’s *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition* (Chandler 2012, 148). Chandler discusses that Wing-Cheuk Chan (2006) translates the title as *Phenomenon and Thing-in-Itself*.

form of knowledge system that can be gained through our daily performances and mannerisms, including emotions and intentions.

### Conclusion—Mou’s Vision to Attain Universal Happiness

Intending to revitalize and restore Chinese cultural, political and moral traditions (particularly Confucianism), modern-day government officials, intellectuals and thinkers promote the slogan: “Chinese learning as essence, Western learning as a tool” (*zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*) (Xu 2017). This has been well-practiced by contemporary Taiwanese philosophers who not only have worked for the revitalization of the Chinese intellectual tradition, but also promoted it all over the world by connecting it with Western philosophical traditions. Mou offers his moral metaphysics, especially good consciousness (*linagzhi*) and intellectual intuition (*zhi de zhijue*), to recognize the substance in his philosophical system, and elects to interpret his intellectual thoughts using Heideggerian and Kantian terminology to promote the essence of morality, while Confucianism, which often refers to the essence of human beings and intellectual intuition, is the force of this morality, which exists within the intellectual and transcendental mind of individuals across time and place.

Mou believes that attributing human beings with intellectual intuition given then a moral responsibility which allows individuals to enter into universal intellectual goodness, including Chinese philosophical traditions and the Western intellectual legacy. For example, this moral responsibility allows individuals to enter into Kant’s noumenon—objects or sensical event that exists independently of human sense or perception—which is completely unknowable through regular human sensation. For Mou, intellectual intuition for humans is the basis of all Chinese thought. In his book *Phenomena and Noumena*, Mou articulates that “if it’s true that human beings cannot have intellectual intuition, then the whole of Chinese philosophy must collapse completely” (Bunnin 2008, 624). This very claim is the quintessence of Mou’s philosophical expertise which, if it holds, shows that (New) Confucianism is intellectually ready for the challenges of today, and Mou’s contemporaries and successors debate its validity while maintaining the intellectual legitimacy of Chinese intellectual traditions and New Confucianism, autonomous of intellectual intuition.

What is more significant in Mou, in harmony with his concept of intellectual intuition, is his devotion to the idea of moral transformation, in which he believes that all individuals without any restrictions of culture and creed can transcend themselves and in due course become sages. Mou’s idea of moral transformation

is not only grounded in Confucianism, but is also connected to the idea of the “highest good”—*summum bonum*—which centres both the Western moral philosophical world of the Greco-Roma, Anglo-American and German intellectual legacy and the Eastern traditional philosophical principles. This is the ultimate idea or destination where there exists a connection between an individual’s pursue of happiness and the real achievement of happiness.

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*SPECIAL ISSUE:*  
*TAIWANESE PHILOSOPHY AND*  
*THE PRESERVATION OF CHINESE*  
*PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS*

*Taiwanese Philosophy from a Broader*  
*East Asian Perspective*

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# Huang Chun-Chieh and Comparative Philosophy: Multiple Ways of Studying Confucian Ideas and Notions across Texts and Contexts<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Confucianism cannot be posited as merely a philosophical tradition, but can nevertheless be said to possess key elements of a philosophy of ethics, which have time and again been able to transcend both the tradition's historical as well cultural bounds. While Huang Chun-chieh points out that it is more appropriate to speak of Confucianisms, plural, core Confucian values and notions possess the ability to move from context to context while retaining certain characteristics and changing others. The proper approach to the study of Confucianisms should therefore be interdisciplinary and in line with the new method of East Asian Confucianisms, where philosophy should also have an important part to play. Understood within the bounds of the project of Confucian philosophy (a project that can be seen as dynamic and ongoing in the global environment of the 21st century), a broader and more diverse range of expressions of Confucian thought—particularly through the methods of both East Asian Confucianisms and of comparative philosophy as an effort of a more equal and inclusive philosophical dialogue—could help throw new light on important aspects of Confucian philosophical thought. While the methods of East Asian Confucianisms and of comparative philosophy are different in their aims and scope, they also share common sensibilities.

**Keywords:** Huang Chun-chieh, East Asian Confucianisms, Comparative Philosophy, Text, Context

## Huang Chun-Chieh in primerjalna filozofija: načini proučevanja konfucijanskih idej in pojmov skozi različna besedila in kontekste

### Izvilleček

Konfucijanske tradicije ne moremo razumeti kot zgolj filozofske, lahko pa rečemo, da vsebujejo ključne elemente etične filozofije, ki jim je vedno znova uspelo preseči tako

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sojve zgodovinske kot tudi kulturne okvire. Huang Chun-chieh poudari, da bi bilo tako bolj primerno govoriti o konfucijanstvih, torej v množini, osrednje konfucijanske vrednote pa imajo sposobnost premikanja iz konteksta v kontekst ter po eni strani ohranjajo, po drugi pa spreminjajo določene značilnosti. Ustrezen pristop k študiju konfucijanstev mora biti zato interdisciplinaren in v skladu z novo metodo vzhodnoazijskih konfucijanstev, v takem projektu pa mora imeti pomembno mesto tudi filozofija. Če jih preučujemo v okviru projekta konfucijanske filozofije (projekta, ki je dinamičen in poteka v globalnem okolju 21. stoletja), lahko bolj raznoliki izrazi konfucijanske misli – še posebej z metodama vzhodnoazijskih konfucijanstev in primerjalne filozofije kot napora enakopravnjšega in inkluzivnejšega filozofskega dialoga – pomagajo na novo osvetliti pomembne vidike konfucijanske filozofske misli. Čeprav se metodi vzhodnoazijskih konfucijanstev in primerjalne filozofije razlikujeta v ciljih in obsegu, si delita določeno skupno razumevanje.

**Ključne besede:** Huang Chun-chieh, vzhodnoazijska konfucijanstva, primerjalna filozofija, besedilo, kontekst

## Introduction

The article first aims to examine the study of East Asian Confucianisms as proposed by Huang Chun-chieh. The method of East Asian Confucianisms represents an alternative to the more nationally motivated studies of the Confucian traditions in the 20th century. It also offers an alternative to the prevailing academic methods and models of the past, which were mostly based on the European and American cultural experience (see Huang 2013a) and in East Asia resulted in a kind of “fidelity studies”. Furthermore, the method also seems to offer an important way of revitalizing the field of Confucian ideas in the global context of the 21st century. The second aim of the article is to examine the relationship between the method of East Asian Confucianisms and comparative philosophy as a call for more inclusive philosophical dialogues. To show that while the goals and scope of the two may differ, there is much overlap and both gain by sharing common solutions to common problems.

Huang Chun-chieh shows how the outdated notions of the “centre *versus* periphery”, as well as the “orthodox *versus* heterodox” should be abandoned and the field of East Asian Confucianisms seen as an interconnected whole, not in some abstract sense, but as a living tradition and a concrete intellectual history. Huang Chun-chieh is aware of the problems that the notion of East Asia itself carries, but his proposal for the method of East Asian Confucianisms tackles these problems head on. Huang sets out his views on the contextual turn, a concrete

historical process in which the canonical Confucian texts are seen as the basis of a common discourse among Confucians of all East Asian countries, sharing a common Confucian consciousness; but in which such discourse is also always influenced by local historical and cultural factors. This leads to the development of a kind of intellectual historical approach, but also a kind of comparative Confucian studies field, where different local variants of Confucianism are connected by both concrete historical processes as well as by core Confucian values, such as self-cultivation and the notion of humaneness (*ren* 仁).

The comparative philosophical study should not be seen as strictly parallel to the method of East Asian Confucianisms, but in many ways, rather as its extension—as both a study of diverse ideas and an advocacy for more inclusion in the global philosophical dialogues. It should learn from the very same processes which are under study by the method of East Asian Confucianisms and understand the way in which such exchanges happened. The method of East Asian Confucianisms has great potential to bring new light to and re-evaluate the rich tapestry of Confucian ideas, as well as different developments of such ideas within the variant traditions. Comparative philosophy must be seen as a living process of the exchange of ideas and a meeting of worldviews which can illuminate invisible paradigms and bring about new paradigm shifts.

The method of East Asian Confucianisms strives to solve the many problems connected to the political and cultural identities of East Asia and offers compelling solutions in their place. In many ways, comparative philosophy also shares many of these problems—those of chauvinism, of a demand for fidelity, and of incommensurability—and so the solutions offered can be seen as compelling from the point of view of both. These two methods are shown to share many of the same sensibilities and should work hand-in-hand.

### **East Asian Confucianisms as Both a Field of Study and a Method of Humanities**

Huang Chun-chieh lays out his project of East Asian Confucianisms as both a field of study and a method of humanities, offering a new systematic way of studying the different Confucian traditions, based on the idea of “unity in diversity” (see Huang 2015), focusing on “process over results” (ibid.), and taking into account the need of scholars in the 21st century to be “thinking from East Asia” (see Huang 2013a). Huang argues that “‘East Asian Confucianisms’ is an intellectual community that is transnational and multi-lingual. It has evolved in the interaction between Confucian ‘universal values’ and the local conditions present in each

East Asian country” (Huang 2015, 7). He furthermore sets out the rationale for such a field of study:

The rationale for proposing East Asian Confucianisms as a field of study is twofold. On the one hand ‘East Asian Confucianisms’ embraces the Confucian traditions of China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. On the other hand, the varied Confucian traditions in these cultures did not form a mechanical assemblage, but rather a comprehensive, developing, systematic whole. (ibid., 11)

While the Confucian tradition may have originated in the Shandong peninsula over two millennia ago, it was originally only a “local wisdom” (ibid., 16). It then went on to develop its own set of values that had by the 17th century been transmitted across a number of East Asian countries, where they were met by differing local environments. Huang points out that notions such as the distinction between the Chinese and barbarians (*huayi zhibian* 華夷之辨), loyalty or doing one’s best (*zhong* 忠) and of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) “all strongly reflect specific features of Chinese culture and are deeply rooted and coloured by the culture’s agrarian economy, clan society, and authoritarian order” (ibid.), so “it is not surprising that as these ideas spread outside of China to Korea and Japan, tensions appeared due to the differences in regional conditions. Such tensions then caused a transformation in Confucian ideas, changing them into diverse versions of East Asian Confucianisms” (ibid.).

This process can primarily be seen in two ways. Firstly, it brought diverse interpretations and valuations to the readings of Confucian canonical texts such as the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*) and the *Mengzi* 孟子 (*Mencius*), the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (*Doctrine of the Mean*) and the *Daxue* 大學 (*Great Learning*). And secondly, many of the ideas and notions of Chinese Confucianism were themselves reinterpreted when they reached other East Asian countries like Korea and Japan. For example, Huang argues that the meanings of such core concepts as *gong* 公 (public, fair), *si* 私 (personal, private), *xin* 心 (mind-heart or heart-mind), *zhong* 忠 and *xiao* 孝 went through radical changes, and these notions attracted entirely different interpretations, for example, in Japan (ibid., 17–18). Thus “far from a uniform broadcast of Chinese Confucianism, East Asian Confucianisms exhibits a rich diversity rooted in the various local milieu and specific ethnic cultures of those regions” (ibid., 18).

Huang argues that East Asian Confucianisms as a field of study and a method represent a “unity in diversity” (ibid., 9) and notes:

The special feature, the wholeness, of East Asian Confucianisms exists in the midst of and not over and above the cultural and intellectual exchange activities among the respective East Asian countries. Consequently, they must be regarded as a sort of continuously evolving family of intellectual traditions. Although this sort of temporal and continuously evolving family has historical roots in the pre-Qin Confucian school, as soon as the downward and outward flow of Confucianism encountered different cultures and societies of other times and places, distinctive Confucian trademarks of each place were formed and set. We must appreciate that while Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) learning is very different from the humanist school of Neo-Confucianism, the difference between Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Zhu Xi learning is even greater. Therefore, research in East Asian Confucianisms cannot countenance such theoretical presuppositions as “orthodox *versus* heterodox” or “centre *versus* periphery”. (Huang 2018, 77)

Trying to answer Tsuda Sōkichi’s 津田左右吉 (1873–1961) objection to the idea of “East Asian civilization”, Huang presents the field of East Asian Confucianisms both as a kind of “reality of history” and as the “method of the humanities” (Thompson 2017, 13–14). He argues, firstly, that through the lens of the field of East Asian Confucianisms the distinctions such as the “centre *versus* periphery” and of “orthodox *versus* heterodox” can be overcome and the concept of East Asian Confucianisms itself can be set up as “a ‘method’ that illuminates concrete processes whereby the so-called peripheries form their own respective versions of Confucianism” (Huang 2015, 14). And, secondly, that through the study of interconnected historical developments of the ideas of Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese Confucianisms, East Asian Confucianisms can be shown to emerge as a *system* of thought with distinct East Asian characteristics (ibid., 12).

And yet Huang is also cognizant of the fact that the notion of East Asian Confucianisms carries with it a great historical burden.

For example, the memory of imperial Japan’s announcement of its ambition to establish a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” in 1933, now understood as Japan’s pretext for invading East Asia, causes deep, gut-wrenching pain to the peoples of East Asia, particularly in China and Korea. Consequently, down to the present, the term “East Asia” is heavily burdened with historical baggage. With the rise of China at the beginning of the twenty-first century, memories of the historical Chinese empire have begun to engage the attention of the academic world. It is a

historical fact that “East Asian Confucianisms” arose on the Shandong Peninsula some 2,500 years ago, and some scholars suspect that if China develops into a superpower in the twenty-first century then the advocacy of the values of “East Asian Confucianisms” in China would simply lead to an atavistic revival of “national” Chinese learning and culture in the twenty-first century. (Huang 2018, 81)

Huang identifies the two main problems of the notion of East Asian Confucianisms as 1) the problem of the conflict between political and cultural identity faced by Confucians in all of the East Asian countries, and 2) the problem of how the cultural subjectivity of Confucians in each East Asian country can manifest itself in shared universal values (*ibid.*, 82).

By presenting “East Asian Confucianisms” as a methodology rather than as a reality, Huang is trying to avoid its being subverted into an illicit new-imperialist discourse (*ibid.*, 81). He also tries to show that while national political identities of East Asian Confucians are harder to transcend, “from the perspective of cultural identity, Confucians in each of the East Asian countries also shared the Confucian core values of *ren* 仁 and self-cultivation. Hence, these Confucian common core values ultimately transcended national boundaries and can be regarded as values that might be shared by all of humankind” (*ibid.*). Ideas that were able to transcend national boundaries, were able to do so because they possess universal appeal.

Huang also argues that the study of East Asian Confucianisms, instead of focusing on the results, should rather focus on the process by which different Confucian subjectivities were formed.

Interpreted in this sense, Confucianism becomes a parameter for the formation of the *subjectivities* of each and every East Asian region. What is important to observe here is the *process* by which such specific subjectivity is constructed, be it in Japan or Korea, *not* the “authenticity” or “orthodox” of a specific regional Confucianism. “East Asian Confucianisms” are not something ready-cast, nor a frame of thought that exists above the concrete process of the development of Confucianisms in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan. Rather it exists only in the interactive formations among East Asian regions, including China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam. (Huang 2015, 14)

East Asian Confucianisms as a field and method of study then also arises from the way Confucianism had been studied and used to prop up national identities in the



past (see for instance Hmeljak Sangawa 2017, 154–55; Culiberg 2015, 232). The problems of its notions are exactly the ones Huang Chun-chieh aims to overcome with his new methodology.

[W]e can view the rise of the field of East Asian Confucianisms on the new stage of scholarship in the twenty-first century as a reaction to the form of Confucian studies conducted in the Chinese-language academia of the twentieth century. For example, twentieth-century Chinese New Confucian philosophers tended to view Confucianism narrowly as a segment of their national and ethnic identity, especially as bound up with the vast and far-reaching historical traumas and transformations of the early twentieth century. (Huang 2018, 79)

East Asian Confucianisms emerges as a project that aims to overcome such problems of the past by accounting for the *subjectivity* of all East Asian countries within a common Confucian world of ideas—taking into account the different developments of a common core of ideas and notions within different local environments and cultural contexts. Thus this becomes in effect the study of the *intersubjectivity* of East Asian *subjectivities*. Being well aware of both the political and cultural historical issues that burden the notion of East Asia as any kind of cultural and political entity, Huang is proposing to overcome such difficulties within the field of study of Confucian thought by overcoming exactly the historical and political notions of the “centre *versus* periphery”, historically represented, for example, by the Chinese Empire and its tributary system, built upon the difference between the Chinese and barbarians (see Huang 2013a).

On the other hand, the method of East Asian Confucianisms seems to also offer a compelling way to revitalize the studies of Confucian ideas themselves, by being both respectful of the cultural diversity of East Asian countries while also following the common philosophical threads that link the different interpretations of these ideas and notions. The development of Confucian ideas and notions within the different variant Confucian traditions is freed from the constraints of the “orthodox *versus* heterodox” debates, and reconnected into a common world of core Confucian values, seen as having transcended national boundaries and thus possessing universal appeal. As the Confucians of different East Asian countries read the same classics and reflected on them within their own historical, cultural and political environments, commented on them and discussed them among themselves, they developed a common Confucian consciousness, though they retained their political identities. The principle of “unity in diversity” proposed by Huang seems like a productive approach to the revitalization of the philosophical study of

Confucian ideas in the 21st century global environment. And finally, while Huang stresses that he certainly does not mean to argue for the creation of any sort of “reflexive Orientalism”, much less any kind of self-absorbed “national learning”, he does point out that:

[T]he necessity of advocating “East Asian Confucianisms” as a distinct field is a proactive intellectual response to the predilection of those twentieth-century East Asian academicians who have interpreted the East according to the West. In this sense, East Asian Confucianisms manifests the vital mission to revisit the Confucian core values as the mainstream of East Asian cultures that might be expanded to provide the foundation of a new Humanism for the age of globalization. (Huang 2018, 80–81)

Built upon the principle of “thinking from East Asia”, the method of East Asian Confucianisms argues for setting an alternative to the academic trends of the past—where the East had always been interpreted according to the West—and to form a method of study that takes into account the specific circumstances and experiences of East Asia (see Huang 2013a). This, again, is not to say that Huang is arguing for the creation of any kind of “reflexive Orientalism”, it is rather a stance which argues against those models and trends of the past, that brought about the “fidelity studies” relationship between Europe and East Asia, and also argues for a wider and a more inclusive idea of “universal values” than has been effectively observed in the past.

Stressing the importance of studying both the different local variants of Confucianism, but also the common core of ideas that connects them, Huang’s project aims at excavating those “universal Confucian values and ideas”—ideas that were able to transcend national boundaries and have thus proven to possess universal appeal. In understanding the processes by which these values and notions had already negotiated their places within different cultural contexts of East Asia, Huang presents a vision of bringing these same processes and values to the global stage.

East Asian Confucianisms is a unique and self-formed systematic study. It is not just a mechanical piecemeal assemblage of regional versions of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Confucianisms. Rather, as Confucians in each of these places recite and are immersed in the same classics, they aspire to become the sages in Confucian core values, transcending regional limitations. This common core of Confucianism forms a system of thought without the stigmas of centre-border and means-end discriminations. “East Asian Confucianisms” is a field of study that

rids us of the vestiges of boundaries and limitations that still remain in the present time and takes in East Asia as a whole. In our present era of globalization, we find that in various traditions of East Asian Confucianisms there exist important spiritual resources that could facilitate dialogue among world civilizations. (Huang 2015, 19)

## Texts in Contexts, Actors in History

As a method, East Asian Confucianisms stresses “process over results”. Not being interested in the image of a static and perfect version of a common East Asian culture, East Asian Confucianisms studies the historical processes by which Confucian ideas had historically negotiated their place within different cultural contexts; but it also studies the different interpretations themselves and the richness of meaning that such processes produced. It thus possesses both an aspect of intellectual history as well as an aspect of comparative studies, and has the potential to bring about both a better understanding of the historical processes of the diversification of ideas, as well as a deeper understanding of how ideas survive such processes and are enriched by them.

Confucianism is a diverse tradition, rich in both ideas and practice. When trying to pinpoint the thread that connects different variant Confucian traditions, Huang identifies two major basic principles that connect them all together—firstly, the nature of Confucianism as a practical philosophy and family ethics; and secondly, the central Confucian notion of *ren* 仁.

Confucians in all of the East Asian countries firmly believe that the foundation and starting point of Confucianism lay in a self-cultivation process that involves extending sympathy—proceeding along a continuum from self, to family, to society, to state, then on to world. East Asian Confucians all hold, in effect, that the transformation of self is the starting point of transforming the world. [...] Fundamentally, East Asian Confucian philosophies are constituted as practical philosophies of self-cultivation approaches and family ethics. (Huang 2018, 78)

The notion of the family as the central metaphor of Confucian ethics has been discussed by Rosemont and Ames<sup>2</sup>, who have also tried to convincingly argue for a new interpretation of Confucian ethics as a system of ethics *sui generis* that does

2 See for example Rosemont and Ames's introduction to their translation of *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence* (Rosemont and Ames 2009, 1–64).

not have a simple equivalent in the Western philosophical tradition (Rosemont and Ames 2016). The notion of self-cultivation also marks the Confucian tradition in a fundamental way, as it charges Confucian scholars with not simply thinking about the right way of living, but also practicing it and advocating for it. While Confucian notions may have originated from the canonical Confucian texts, they cannot remain abstract and above Confucian practices—they are always drawn to the everyday life of the practitioners.

And Confucian practice itself is as diverse as the ways that people have historically used to cultivate themselves.

The “practice” of Confucianism [...] depended on historical context. It could be a mix of various elements that we today might describe using adjectives including religious, political, literary, artistic, educational, scientific, medical, and many others. So Confucianism is/was a religion in some manifestations, a political science in others, a literary practice or medical tradition in others. Most often it was a constellation of several of those and more. The nature of that constellation differed depending on the particular historic moment and society within which Confucianism manifested. (Paramore 2016)

Still, Huang argues that East Asian Confucianisms can be seen to form a coherent world of ideas—ideas through which Confucians of different countries, who read the same ancient Classics, were setting themselves on the same path of becoming truly human (of even becoming Confucian sages). And at the centre of Confucian ethics is most certainly the notion of *ren* 仁.

The second core value shared in common by the Confucians of each East Asian country and tradition is Confucius’ teaching of *ren* 仁, rendered variously in English as “humanity”, “humaneness”, “humane heartedness”, “benevolence”, and “authoritative personhood”. (Huang 2018, 78)

Humaneness is central among those Confucian notions that had been developed across many historical eras and many different cultural contexts. As notions such as *ren* gather nuance in meaning, they also gather interpretative power and the power to open up discussions among Confucian scholars of different countries. A great example of this that Huang himself studies at length is the discourse on Zhu Xi’s interpretation of the notion of *ren* 仁, presented in his *Ren shuo* 仁說 (*Treatise on Humaneness*), which in following centuries created a greater reaction in both Korean Confucianism, as well as in Edo period 江戸 Japan (1603–1868). Through the Japanese scholars’ answers to Zhu Xi, for example, Huang observes

a common preference for practical learning over metaphysical discussions as one of the main characteristics of Japanese Confucianism.<sup>3</sup>

Another important aspect of the method of East Asian Confucianisms is not only in recognizing Confucianism as a common world of ideas, but also in recognizing the inherent open and dialogical nature of the Confucian tradition itself—that more than anything Confucianism can be seen as a shared and open discourse on the ideas and notions set out in the canonical Confucian literature and developed through the countless lives of people striving to cultivate themselves in the way of Confucius, enriching the Confucian way and passing it on. Even the very nature of the *Analects* and Confucius' pragmatic teaching can be seen to facilitate this.<sup>4</sup> Thus Confucian notions themselves necessarily invite reinterpretations, but these are such that they do not necessarily invalidate the previously established meanings.

The interplay between meaning and practice is the way of Confucian ideas and notions—and is also the way in which they are transmitted across contexts. The tension between the “universal values” of Confucianism and the local environments in which they were being reinterpreted can also be readily observed in history, as this process was not invisible or unreflected upon. It was a part of the same lively intellectual conversation, and was carried out beyond the groups of Confucians in each country. New meaning was being introduced into a new local environment, but at the same time it was being introduced in such a way that the environment could absorb and naturalize it—so this represented not only a kind of conversation, but also a kind of negotiation; and the Confucians of each country were not only scholars, but also advocates for these ideas.<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand these processes produced differences—but seen from the point of view of East Asian Confucianisms they also produced a kind of richness.

[C]onsider Confucius's *Analects*, a classic produced in China's intellectual culture. The spiritual homeland of Confucius was concerned with managing the world, and yet it also had its broad, deep, and transcendent aspirations. Confucius and his disciples were able to find [...] spirituality in the ethical relationships of daily life. After the *Analects* was transmitted east to Japan, however, Tokugawa 徳川 (1603–1868) Confucian scholars

3 For an overview of how Zhu Xi's *Treatise of Humaneness* was discussed in Japan and ways in which Japanese scholar had criticized Zhu Xi's definition of the notion, see for example Huang 2015, 113–30.

4 For a discussion on Confucius' pragmatic approach to words in the *Analects*, see Yang 2007.

5 For a study of the naturalization of Confucianism in Japan, see Wildman Nakai 1980.

discarded the intellectual world of the text's Chinese cultural context (including such concepts as Heaven, the Way, human nature, and destiny) and recontextualized it in the practical realism that typified Japanese intellectual tendencies. They thereby assimilated the *Analects* to Japanese culture, so that it became a link to the spiritual world of Japanese intellectuals for the next three centuries. Only because it underwent this process of recontextualization by Japanese scholars did the *Analects* become generally congenial to Japanese intellectuals. Additionally, because Japanese scholars had recontextualized the *Analects*, Tokugawa scholars were able to read in new meanings for the age, and thus could infuse the text with a new significance. (Huang 2013a)

The process can be seen as twofold, when considered in this positive light. Firstly, it allowed Confucianism to naturally overcome its internal cultural tensions, produced by such notions as the difference between the Chinese and barbarians or that of the "middle kingdom" (*Zhongguo* 中國). These notions are transmitted to a new local environment, where they are infused with new meaning and are, through a kind of negotiation and advocacy, developed within a new cultural context. Of course, as shown by the study of variant Confucian traditions, from the point of view of meaning this is not a one-way street of enrichment of notions—this critical process, this negotiation, both adds and subtracts certain dimensions; but seen from the point of view of the method of East Asian Confucianisms, where previous meanings are not lost, but studied in a common world of ideas, new meanings simply add both nuance and universal appeal.

As has been remarked upon, this living and rewarding process can be observed in the history of ideas itself, not simply in an abstract way.

Viewed from the perspective of the experience of cultural exchanges in East Asia (*via* the exchange of texts, ideas, and people), all exchanges take place in the contexts of society, politics, and culture. Even the languages spoken by the people involved in these exchanges have their specific linguistic contexts. For this reason, people on both sides of the cultural exchange must be viewed as performers on the stage of history, and exchanges should be viewed as historical events. When we begin from this perspective, we can enter into a better method for studying decontextualization in the history of cultural exchange in East Asia. (Huang 2013a)

But if the method of East Asian Confucianisms here comes close to what might be considered as intellectual history, it also possesses an undeniable comparative aspect, especially when the ideas and notions presented are studied for their

meaning and philosophical significance. If the different variant Confucianisms are not only to be defined by their cultural contexts, but are also taken to be philosophically or practically distinct, then the variant traditions and their developed notions are necessarily compared among themselves for such distinctions to be made apparent. And while intellectual history has traditionally been studied more within national boundaries of different East Asian countries and had been closely connected to national identities, it is this comparative approach—one which simultaneously overcomes the divide of “centre *versus* periphery”, “orthodox *versus* heterodox”, which adds new possibilities to the study of Confucian texts within contexts in more productive ways.

Last but not least, the method of East Asian Confucianisms also seems to understand that the project of the study of Confucian ideas must extend along a line: from studying the common core of Confucian ideas—Confucian canonical literature—to studying the variant traditions of Confucianism in China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam, affording them equal status inside the family of intellectual traditions and observing the historical developments of Confucian ideas within each; and finally, to studying the teachings and works of those concrete actors in history, those Confucian scholars and advocates of Confucian ideas who devoted their lives in service of studying and following the Confucian way. Only such a comprehensive study which takes into consideration both the different contexts as well as the different texts within those different contexts can yield the best results.

To respect the historical tendencies, socio-political factors and conceptual orientations, but also the intention and personal projects of those Confucian thinkers themselves, one has therefore to seek a balance between studying the texts and studying their contexts. As Huang puts it:

Cultural interactions are dynamic processes. For this reason, in researching decontextualization and reconceptualization in cultural exchanges, if we rely solely on [...] textualism, we will find ourselves “buried in words”, to resurrect the ridicule of Qing Confucians. Yet if we [only] examine the production and movement of new meanings after ideas or texts were introduced into different regions and carefully consider the factors behind the new meanings against their historical background (contextualism), we will be blind to the whole. For this reason, whenever we choose between the approaches of textualism and contextualism, we must strive to seek a dynamic balance between them in order to avoid being either illogical or impractical. (Huang 2013a, 20)

## East Asian Confucianisms and Comparative Philosophy

Among different comparative disciplines, comparative philosophy can be argued to hold a specific place. As Botz-Bornstein points out:

Among the numerous comparative disciplines practiced in academic research (e.g., comparative literature, comparative religion, or comparative linguistics), comparative philosophy has an outstanding position. In the case of comparative literature, it is not really the subject of the discipline (e.g., “literature”) that engages one in comparative activities; rather, a certain “science of literature” compares its subjects to each other. Also, in the case of comparative religion, we do not really mean that “religion” itself would become comparative but rather that a “comparative science of religion” compares different religions. The exceptional status of philosophy becomes clear here. Philosophy, by comparing different philosophies to each other, does not become a “comparative science of philosophy”, but *is* philosophy. (Botz-Bornstein 2006, 157)

But if comparative philosophy *is* philosophy, then what does “comparative” add to the normal discipline of philosophy? Should not philosophy already be also comparative by its very nature? Goto-Jones points out that the answer to such a question might in fact not be so easy: “[T]he question of the nature and dimensions of comparative philosophy is tied inextricably and deeply to the perennial of question, *what is philosophy?* Indeed, it may be the same question.” (Goto-Jones 2013, 138)

The question of *what is philosophy* is certainly beyond the scope of the present article—as is, it seems, the question of what exactly is comparative philosophy in and of itself: what, if anything, should be considered its canonical texts, what is its fundamental methodology, what is its place within the discipline of philosophy as such. But at the very least it can be argued broadly that comparative philosophy has heretofore been a specific way in which European-American philosophical traditions relate to other (non-European, non-American) traditions of thought. And while it has been asserted in this article that Confucianism should also be considered a philosophical tradition, this assertion is already one which may not necessarily be completely uncontroversial outside the field of comparative philosophy.

While Kiri Paramore argues that “any account of the existential, practical, and resolutely historical nature of [Confucian] tradition makes it more (and certainly less) than what would be defined as ‘philosophers’ doing ‘philosophy’ within the



contemporary Western context” (Paramore 2016), it can also be argued that defining philosophy only in such a narrow way actually traps it inside its specific Europe–America centric expression, and robs it of much of its universal potential and dignity. It is precisely this narrow view—of a kind of “true” or “professional” philosophy—which comparative philosophy is set against.

Huang and Tucker therefore offer a much broader reading of the notion of philosophy:

What [is here understood] by philosophy consists of [...] [the] sort of ongoing engagement in critical, self-reflective discussion of and speculative theorizing about ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, political theory, and spiritual problems, as well as aesthetics, cosmology, and ontology, with the goal being the attainment of a more profound understanding of ourselves, others, the world, and the universe at large. Confucians in East Asia have been doing this for over two millennia, since the time of Confucius. (Huang and Tucker 2014, 4)

Described in these broader terms, philosophy is freed to encompass non-European and non-American traditions, but is again faced with the problem of defining the relationships between ideas and even whole worldviews belonging to one or another of those traditions. As philosophy has historically tended to prioritize notions, values and ideas that have been developed within the European-American philosophical traditions, and in European languages, other traditions have in the global context for a long time been interpreted according to these ideas and through these languages. The task of comparative philosophy is then not only to bring philosophers of different traditions to the same table, but actually and more importantly to bring them to each other’s libraries and force them to learn to read and think anew.

As Botz-Bornstein points out, there is actually a certain inner self-contradiction to the notion of comparative philosophy:

Comparative philosophy is identified by an inner self-contradiction: on the one hand, philosophy, like literature and art, is part of a cultural experience that cannot be fully materialized because it is an intimate process. In principle, such intimate processes cannot be “compared” (there is, e.g., no “comparative art”). On the other hand, philosophy is *itself* one of those materializing disciplines that attempt to transform culture, art, religion, *et cetera* into something that can be “grasped” through concepts, ideas, and notions and—finally—be compared. (Betz-Bornstein 2006, 157–58)

Philosophy as a cultural experience and intimate process is transformed through philosophy as one of the materializing disciplines into something which can be grasped—but in its striving for universality can actually lose sight of itself as a cultural experience and intimate process. Comparative philosophy forces what is grasped to be also compared and offers specific philosophical traditions the chance to recognize other philosophical traditions as also cultural experiences and intimate processes, and in doing so to recognize itself as such as well, and to finally re-examine its own universality.

Goto-Jones remarks:

[E]ither comparative philosophy is not about philosophy at all, or it is the richest and fullest expression of the philosophical endeavor, which means that we must revisit what it means to be a professional philosopher. In this frame, contemporary comparative philosophy is a kind of suicidal endeavor, striving to make itself redundant through the transformation of philosophy *per se* into a more inclusive field. (Goto-Jones 2013, 136)

But while one can in one's mind's eye imagine a sort of fantastical and abstract meeting of ideas in a fanciful world of their own, interestingly enough, it is the method of East Asian Confucianisms and the study of Confucian traditions which offers some insight into the nature of such exchanges. What the method of East Asian Confucianisms is very cognizant of is that it was exactly the concrete exchange of texts, ideas and people that helped Confucian ideas transcend national boundaries—it was not some abstract movement, strange meeting or imagined battle of ideas. It was in the encounter of people with those ideas, people with those texts and people with others in whom these processes had in fact been played out.

Comparative philosophy presumably yearns to be able to set up a stage for such encounters, but it must also understand that the only way these exchanges happen is through the dedicated work of dedicated people, who in themselves become able to transcend their particular traditions and worldviews. And so, in the end, the project of comparative philosophy, like that of the transmission and contextual turn of Confucian notions, might yet depend less on transforming philosophy itself (which should not really need such a transformation), but rather on reforming what it actually means to be a philosopher in the 21st century. Like the Confucian scholars of old could not be the transmitters of those ideas without not only immersing themselves in them, striving to understand and to follow the way, but in many ways also becoming their advocates.<sup>6</sup>

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6 For this process in Japan, again see Wildman Nakai 1980.

And when philosophers take up this task, do not then the same problems of the intersubjectivity of various subjectivities that they might represent, addressed in some ways by the method of East Asian Confucianisms, also show themselves in the field comparative philosophy? In fact, the method of East Asian Confucianisms might be able to offer compelling solutions for both fields. Through its striving to overcome the notions of “centre *versus* periphery” and “orthodox *versus* heterodox”, the method can address the problems of chauvinism. Through the idea of focusing on the “process instead of results”, the method addresses the problem of seeing philosophical traditions as static and forever in their ideal forms. In studying the variant traditions as well as the common core of ideas, focusing on a kind of “concrete universal” (see Huang 2013a) the method of East Asian Confucianisms addresses both the universal as well as the particular.

In all these points, comparative philosophy should nurture similar sensibilities. And what this actually means is that philosophers should nurture them.

If the project of East Asian Confucianisms is also in excavating core Confucian ideas and values—ideas that have been able to survive the contextual turn and be enriched by it, that have demonstrated their universal appeal—then comparative philosophy can perhaps train philosophers for the new kind of exchange of ideas in the global context of the 21st century, by looking at those processes and learning from them. But while trying to follow the solutions to various problems offered by the method of East Asian Confucianisms, for the opening of more inclusive and harmonious dialogues, comparative philosophy should also remain a more confrontational project, both towards philosophy as such and in its task of bringing together philosophers of different traditions, for its most lasting appeal remains in the way in which it might not only be able to reveal those hidden paradigmatic differences, but also bring about new paradigmatic shifts.

Both methods should work hand-in-hand to help construct a new philosophical approach for the 21st century to both Confucianisms as well to philosophy. As Henry Rosemont puts it:

If we are reluctant to participate in the requiem mass currently being offered for philosophy, if we wish instead to seek new perspectives that might enable the discipline to become as truly all-encompassing in the future as it has mistakenly been assumed to have been in the past, we must begin to develop a more international philosophical language which incorporates the insights of all of the world-wide historical tradition of thinkers who addressed the questions of who and what we are, and why and how we should lead our all-too-human lives. (Rosemont 2016, 56–57)

## Conclusion

East Asian Confucianisms as a field and method proposed by Huang Chun-chieh, based on the principles of “unity in diversity”, “process over results” and “thinking from East Asia”, is a comprehensive project, which, though not a philosophical project *per se*, also offers a viable way of revitalizing the study of Confucian philosophical ideas across East Asian variant Confucian traditions. As it deals with the intersubjectivity of East Asian cultural subjectivities, it possesses many of the same sensibilities and offers compelling solutions to problems facing both it and the method of comparative philosophy.

Since Confucianism can be seen as both a philosophical as well as a richly practical tradition, the study of East Asian Confucianism necessarily demands an interdisciplinary approach, which can help highlight different cultural nuances. But the study of Confucian ideas itself represents both an effort in intellectual history as well as philosophy—and the effort of comparative philosophy with regard to opening up the discipline to a wider inclusivity. The study of the diverging interpretations of Confucian ideas, stemming from the varied cultural peculiarities and contexts they arose in, also highlights the ways in which Confucian ideas are transformed without losing their “universal appeal”. In studying the historical processes and historical actors within them, the method of East Asian Confucianisms illuminates the work of Confucian scholars across East Asia—not only of studying Confucian ideas, but also of practicing and advocating for them.

It is comparative philosophy which in a sense is trying to bring about such a shift in the global context. Transforming philosophy to be more inclusive actually means reforming the attitudes of philosophers, and in this comparative philosophers can also learn from those Confucian scholars who in the past had been the students of new ideas and their advocates. Comparative philosophy should study Confucian ideas both as philosophy and comparative philosophy. Moreover, as both the method of East Asian Confucianisms as well as comparative philosophy seem to be striving to open up ways of the more inclusive discussions of ideas, they should be employed together.

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# Review and Prospects of Taiwanese Philosophy Scholarship in South Korea: A Historical Survey of Academic Publications from 1994 to 2018<sup>1</sup>

Byoung Yoong KANG\*

## Abstract

This study examined how Taiwanese philosophy has been received and researched in South Korea since its start to the present day. It takes the form of a survey, classifying the articles about Taiwanese philosophy which were published in South Korea over the years from 1994 to 2018 by the theme. It selected nine philosophers whose influence was profound in Taiwanese philosophy and observed the currents in the scholarship on each philosopher. The names of the selected philosophers are: Fang Thomé H., Hu Shi, Huang Chun-chieh, Lin Yutang, Liu Shuxian (Liu Shu-hsien), Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi (Tang Chun-I), Xu Fuguan, Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih). Sixty-one related papers were summarized and reviewed, and each of them was classified by the publication date, author, language, publisher and keywords. The survey revealed the limitations in Asian philosophy scholarship with regard to Taiwanese philosophy in South Korea, in terms of both quantity and quality. The survey also suggested a possible solution to these limitations and directions for scholars in the future. The study thus serves as a foundation that can boost discussion and the balanced development of South Korean philosophy studies, as well as of Asian philosophy in general.

**Keywords:** Taiwanese philosophy, philosophy research in South Korea, history of philosophy, articles on philosophy, Chinese philosophy, modern confucians

## Prikaz in vidiki proučevanja tajvanske filozofije v Južni Koreji: zgodovinski pregled znanstvenih publikacij v letih 1994–2018

### Izvilleček

V članku sem preučil, kako tajvansko filozofijo sprejemajo in raziskujejo v Južni Koreji od samega začetka do današnjih dni. V raziskavo sem uvrstil članke o tajvanski filozofiji, ki so bili v letih 1994–2018, glede na tematiko, objavljeni v Južni Koreji. Izbral sem devet filozofov,

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ki so imeli pomemben vpliv v tajvanski filozofiji, in opazoval vplive znanstvenih študij na vsakega od njih. Ti filozofi so: Fang Thomé H., Hu Shi, Huang Chun-chieh, Lin Yutang, Liu Shuxian (Liu Shu-hsien), Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi (Tang Chun-I), Xu Fuguan in Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih). Povzel in pregledal sem 61 člankov ter jih razvrstil glede na datum objave, avtorja, jezik, založnika in ključne besede. Raziskava je pokazala, da so znanstvene študije azijske filozofije, ki vključujejo tajvansko filozofijo v Južni Koreji, pomanjkljive tako v količinskem kot tudi v kakovostnem smislu. Študija torej služi kot temeljno delo za nadaljnje razprave, s tem pa tudi za uravnotežen razvoj študija južnokorejske in azijske filozofije.

**Ključne besede:** tajvanska filozofija, filozofija v Južni Koreji, zgodovina filozofije, članki o filozofiji, kitajska filozofija, sodobni konfucianisti

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

The term *Cheolhak* (철학, 哲學), a Korean translation of the English word philosophy, was first introduced to Korea by the Japanese philosopher Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897). As a late nineteenth-century thinker, Nishi Amane was a staunch defender of modernization by embracing Western culture while abolishing the old customs of Confucianism. His definition of modernity, which privileges the Western way of reasoning as support for modern science over East Asian traditional thought, was highly influential in his time. The Euro-central approach to philosophy that Nishi Amane adopted was prevalent when Korea, a country that was then under Japanese rule, adopted and settled the word *Cheolhak* (philosophy) as a term (Lee 2016, 42–43). It might thus not be so bold to claim that philosophy scholarship in Korea was guided along a somewhat misleading path from its start. Since the term philosophy was introduced through Japan, Korea was not free from the psychological undercurrent formed by Japan. While building up national pride and its superiority over its neighbouring Asian countries, Japan at the same time carried an inferiority complex towards Western countries. As a result, the term philosophy started to have a colonial meaning from its early stage in Korea.

Accordingly, the academic trend in Korea was in favour of Western philosophy rather than Asian philosophy. In fact, the first review work in the history of Asian philosophy research in Korea was only conducted in 1993 (Yun and Sung 1993), and Asian philosophy has been constantly overlooked in South Korean scholarship. There was once an active movement led by Lee Gi-sang 이기상, who criticized his contemporaries' reliance on Western philosophy and instead encouraged domestic

2 The research for this article was funded by the Slovene National Research Agency (ARRS) in the framework of the research core funding No. P6-0243 ("Asian Languages and Cultures").



thought written in the Korean language. Despite this the attempt, the lack of such work remains an issue (Lee 1999, 25), and there is no doubt that the philosophy studies in South Korea today need a more balanced perspective of Asian and Western thought. To achieve this goal, a broader look at the subject is needed.

The present study thus takes a form of survey. The main aim of the survey is to examine the outcomes of research about Taiwanese philosophy as one of the research topics in Asian philosophy. The survey attempted a comprehensive analysis of the research outcomes in related South Korean scholarship, selecting 61 articles published in South Korean academic journals from the year 1994 to 2018. Given that South Korea broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1992, one can state that examining the research outcomes about Taiwanese philosophy from 1994 to 2018 in South Korea means that we are specifically looking at the years from the point when the two nations' relationship was formally broken. The survey made use of an Asian studies database, which was accessible *via* the institution server of the University of Ljubljana. The sample of 61 articles might not represent the complete research on the subject in South Korea, yet it can be considered as a highly representative one. The survey divided the collected information into two categories, external and internal information. The number of publications, languages, authors and institutions constitute the categories of "external information"; themes and the contents of the research papers are considered of the "internal information".

This survey is expected to contribute the two following results to scholarship: first, it can be beneficial to scholars who research the history of Asian philosophy, by reviewing the research outcomes on the subject. The work can help in both subsequent studies on Taiwanese philosophy as well as Asian philosophy in general. The survey can also help Korean scholars find a more balanced, undivided interest in their research subject. Another benefit is that it will provide academic assistance to the Taiwanese philosophy scholars in South Korea, not to mention Taiwanese philosophy scholars in Taiwan. Furthermore, these benefits will also reach out to global scholars outside Asia.

Published research papers about Taiwanese philosophy were collected in this survey. Two South Korean journal search engine platforms were used, namely the Korean academic information portal DBPIA ([www.dbpia.co.kr](http://www.dbpia.co.kr)) and Korean Database KRPIA ([www.krpia.co.kr](http://www.krpia.co.kr)). The East Asian Resource Library (EARL) at the Faculty of Social Sciences (Fakulteta za družbene vede) of the University of Ljubljana provided these two platforms. Sixty-one papers in total were accessed, all of which were published in South Korean journals between 1994 and 2018. The oldest one is a Chinese article "Confucianism and a View of the Future

World” by Liu Shuxian 劉述先 at the University of Hong Kong, published in *The Study of Confucianism*. The latest one is Jo Gyeong Ran and Jang Yun Jeong’s Korean interview about Continental Neo-Confucianism, published in *Sogang Journal of Humanities*, Issue 52. As the two studies suggest, a continuous contribution to Taiwanese intellectual history for the last two decades has been published in at least two languages, Korean and Chinese, with at least two nationalities in the list of authors included in the sample.

## Analysis of the Collected External Information

### The Number of Publications Each Year

The number of journal publications each year is as follows: one in 1994, one in 1997, one in 1999, one in 2000, two in 2001, four in 2002, one in 2003, one in 2004, five in 2005, five in 2006, three in 2007, two in 2008, six in 2009, four in 2001, five in 2012, two in 2013, seven in 2014, three in 2016, six in 2017, and one in 2018. In total, there are sixty-one articles.

To clarify the quantitative progress, one can see the change in the publication numbers every five years, as shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1: The Number of Publications every Five Years since 1994.

The late 1990s (1994–1999)	The early 00s (2000–2004)	The late 00s (2005–2009)	The early 2010s (2010–2014)	The late 2010s (2015–2018)
3	9	21	18	10
3	30		28	
61				

While only three papers were published in the late 1990s, the number soared up to thirty in the next decade. The quantitative contribution has thus been steadily on the rise since the year 2000. Choi Yoeong-seong 최영성 points to a conference, held in 1997 on the topic of “Contemporary Genealogy and Thoughts of Neo-Confucianism”, as a starting point of Taiwanese philosophy scholarship (Choi 2000, 227). Another possible factor for the rise is, in Choi’s view, the opening of various philosophy departments over the years 1990–1998, with fifteen institutions establishing a philosophy department during the period (Lee 2017, 42–43). Although the central research topic in the majority of the departments was still inclined to Western philosophy, there is no doubt that the academic scope of the discipline was expanding in this period.

Some remarkable progress was made at the time, as some universities opened a research institute for Asian philosophy as a part of their faculty, such as the Institute of Oriental Science Studies at Kongju National University (specialized in Asian philosophy) founded in April 1996; the Institute for East-West Thought at Dongguk University (specialized in Asian and Western philosophy) founded in July 1998; and the Institute of Philosophical Studies at Chung-Ang University (specialized in philosophy, Asian philosophy, Western philosophy) founded in May 1998. Such a move is distinctive and worth noting in contrast to the other South Korean university institutions being built then. While the majority of universities organized their faculties and curricula with a focus on Western philosophy, the three universities considered their unique research environment and encouraged Asian philosophy studies. It might be a little early to call this phase a boom period, yet it can be stated that there has been a persistent interest in the subject over the decades despite the dominance of Western philosophy (*ibid.*, 51). Taiwanese philosophy constitutes one of the minor yet continuously rising elements in the history of philosophy studies in South Korea.

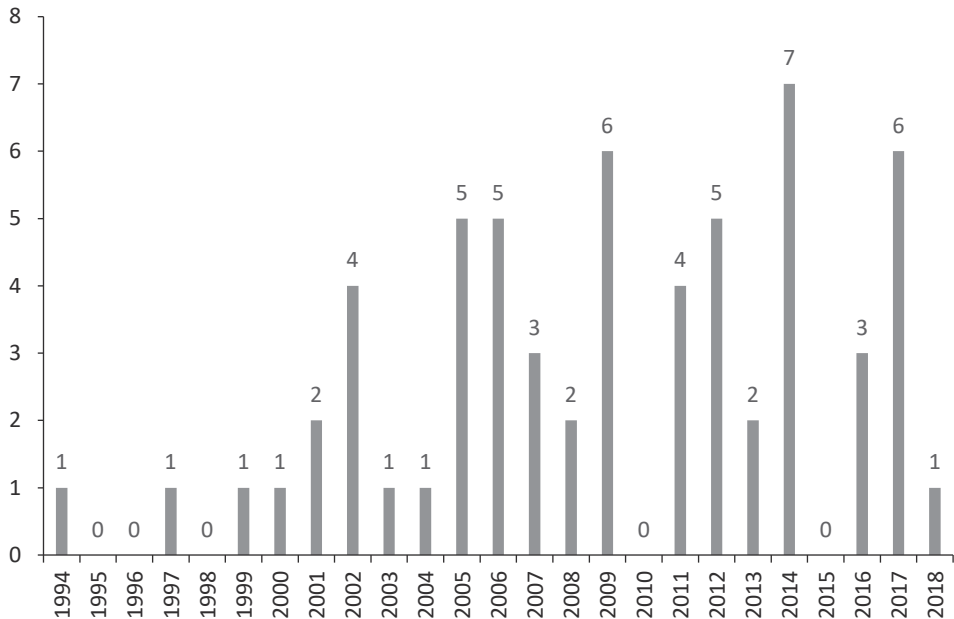


Figure 1: The Number of Publications Each Year since 1994.

## Language

The sixty-one papers were published in Korean and Chinese, 46 in Korean and 15 in Chinese. While it should be admitted that the collected data is sourced from Korean journals only, it is worth noting that there are no articles written in English. The significant lack of diversity in the research language in the Korean academic circle over the two decades poses a critical question regarding the current tendency in all disciplines that aiming for globalization.

Out of the 61 papers, 16 papers include a Chinese abstract, 21 include an English abstract, eight an abstract in Korean; one an abstract in Japanese and 11 have no abstract. The article with a Japanese abstract draws attention, since it was published in *The Journal of Japanese Thought*. The Korean Association for Japanese Thought (한국일본사상학회, 韓國日本思想學會) currently issues the journal, and the paper was written by Lee Gwang-rae in 2011, entitled “A Dialogue between Asian Philosophy and Western Philosophy (동양철학과 서양철학의 대화)”. It is included in Volume 20.

Language cannot be the absolute factor to evaluate the quality of a research paper. However, language does play a crucial role in securing a wider readership. In other words, an academic topic can thrive if it is discussed and written in a universal language due to its advantage for broader circulation. If the language allows easy access, the topic can invite the exchange of ideas across the countries. If we bear thus in mind, it is not entirely positive to witness the dominance of the Korean and Chinese languages in the collected articles. This fact reveals that the contributions may have limited the access of international scholars whose primary method of communication is English.

## Authors

Including co-authors and authors with multiple publications, out of 61 contributors, 45 were Korean and 12 were Chinese, which includes those from Taiwan, Mainland China and Hong Kong. Since the articles do not reveal the ethnic backgrounds of authors, the present survey is based on an approximation after considering their names and institutions. Two contributors published three articles during the period (1994–2018), and six published two papers. In the case of co-authored articles, most research was conducted by authors from the same institution or nation. Although the research results are made from a moderate number of records, it should be noted that Chun-chieh Huang 黃俊傑 from the National Taiwan University published three articles over the period (1994–2018).

One of Huang’s recent publications is an essay entitled “Thinking from East Asia” published in *The Critical Review* (역사비평, 歷史批評), 2014. The other two articles are about Yangmingism (양명학, 陽明學), published in 2004 and 2005. Huang’s contributions to the Korean journal are a promising sign in South Korean scholarship.

Jeong Byung Seok at Yeungnam University also wrote three articles during the period. All of them are concerned with Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, published in 2009, 2011 and 2012. It seems Jeong has maintained his interest in Mou Zongsan’s philosophy for the whole period. Apart from the small number of authors who published two papers, most of the contributors published only one.

As the survey shows, the contributors’ nationalities over the 20 years in Taiwanese philosophy scholarship revealed a lack of diversity, which causes restricted access to their work due to the issue of language, as noted above. Even if we set aside the particular locality of the publishers and consider the subject as a minority issue in philosophy scholarship, Taiwanese philosophy still calls for further development to get global recognition from scholars around the world who share the same research expertise. To discover the details of the diversity among the authors, one can refer to their affiliations, as shown in the following table.

Table 2: The List of Authors’ Institutions.

Name of the Institution	Type	Number of Published Articles	Country	Philosophy Department
Chung-Ang University (중앙대학교, 中央大學校)	University	5	South Korea	Department established
Korea University (고려대학교, 高麗大學校)	University	4	South Korea	Department established
Chungnam National University (충남대학교, 忠南大學校)	University	4	South Korea	Department established
Sogang University (서강대학교, 西江大學校)	University	4	South Korea	Department established
Chungbuk National University (충북대학교, 忠北大學校)	University	3	South Korea	Department established
Sungkyunkwan University (성균관대학교, 成均館大學校)	University	3	South Korea	Department established
Yeungnam University (영남대학교, 嶺南大學校)	University	3	South Korea	Department established
Kunsan National University (군산대학교, 群山大學校)	University	3	South Korea	Department established

Name of the Institution	Type	Number of Published Articles	Country	Philosophy Department
Yonsei University (연세대학교, 延世大學校)	University	2	South Korea	Department established
Konkuk University (건국대학교, 建國大學校)	University	2	South Korea	Department established
Korea Military Academy (육군사관학교, 陸軍士官學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department established
Hanbat National University (한밭대학교)	University	1	South Korea	Department not established
Seoul National University (서울대학교)	University	1	South Korea	Department established
Chodang University (초당대학교, 草堂大學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department not established
Gwangju National University of Education (광주교육대학교, 光州教育大學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department not established
Kangwon National University (강원대학교, 江原大學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department established
Soongsil University (승실대학교, 崇實大學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department established
Dongguk University (동국대학교, 東國大學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department established
Daegu Haany University (대구한의대학교, 大邱韓醫大 大學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department not established
Kyonggi University (경기대학교, 京畿大學校)	University	1	South Korea	Department established
Northeast Asian History Foundation (동북아역사재단, 東北亞歷史 財團)	Education Ministry, government- affiliated organisation	1	South Korea	
Korea Institute of Oriental Medicine (한국한의학연구원, 韓國韓醫學 研究院)	Ministry of Science and ICT, government- affiliated research organisation	1	South Korea	
National Taiwan University (國立臺灣大學)	University	4	Taiwan	Department established

Name of the Institution	Type	Number of Published Articles	Country	Philosophy Department
Tamkang University (淡江大學)	University	3	Taiwan	Department established
National Taiwan Normal University (國立臺灣師範大學)	University	1	Taiwan	Department not established
Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica (中央研究院中國文哲研究所)	National research institute	1	Taiwan	
Hunan University of Science and Technology (湖南科技大學)	University	2	China	Department established
Shandong University (山東大學)	University	1	China	Department established
East China Normal University (華東師範大學)	University	1	China	Department established
Sichuan Normal University (四川师范大学)	University	1	China	Department not installed
Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學)	University	1	Hong Kong	Department established
Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (立命館アジア太平洋大學)	University	1	Japan	Department not installed
Columbia University	University	1	The United States	Department established

As the list illustrates, some diversity is observed, and 33 institutions published 61 papers. In terms of nationality, South Korean institutions were where most authors are affiliated, followed by Taiwan and China. Authors affiliated with institutions in Hong Kong, Japan and America also published one paper each. The number of South Korean institutions to which the authors were affiliated was twenty. The Chung-Ang University had the most number of publications, at five, equivalent to 8% of the total. It was observed that each author wrote one article, apart from Park Seung Hyun, who published two. Researchers at the Korea University, Chungnam National University and Sogang University published four articles each. The results found even proportions of publication throughout the provinces in South Korea. To put it another way, all institutions in the entire country (except for Jeju Island) showed interest in Taiwanese philosophy. There are fifty-five philosophy departments in South Korea, and eleven related departments, which means that there are sixty-six higher education institutions that teach philosophy as a degree subject. It is estimated that 30% of them published

research papers about Taiwanese philosophy in the period studied. Some institutions where the faculty does not have any philosophy department also conducted relevant research. Some notable contributions are found. For example, authors from universities specialized in specific careers, such as the Korea Military Academy and Daegu Haany University of Oriental Medicine, also conducted research on Taiwanese philosophy. Likewise, the Northeast Asian History Foundation and the Korea Institute of Oriental Medicine also produced some related research. The breadth of affiliations suggests a positive sign that Taiwanese philosophy can develop into a substantial interdisciplinary research subject in Korea. That, however, does not mean that Taiwanese philosophy as a research subject is established globally. In order for more growth, continued interest and publications are necessary, as well as more institutions specialized in the subject.

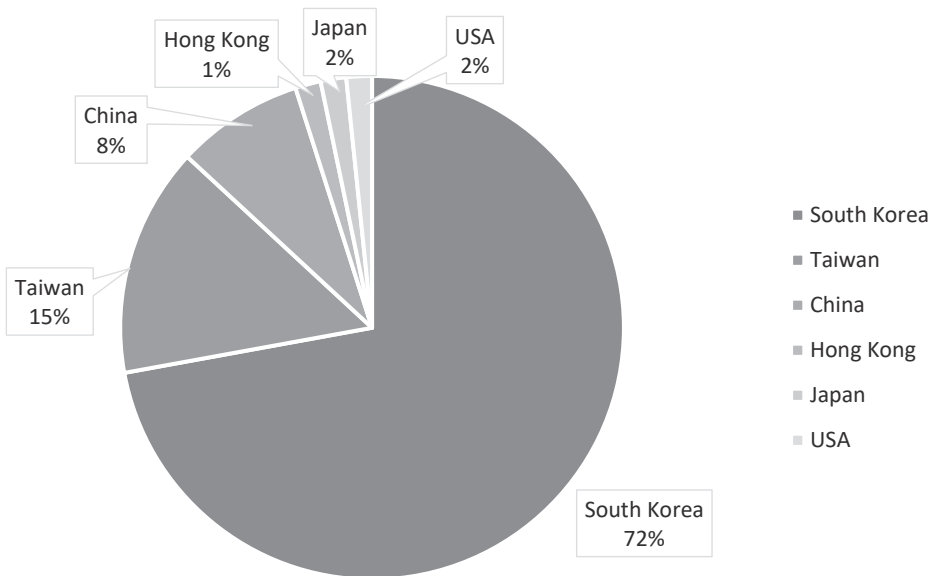


Figure 2: Countries of the Research Institutions.

## Journals and Publishers

Other information we can refer to, in addition to the contributors' language, nationality and affiliation, is the name of each journal and the publisher. With this information, one can estimate the progress that Taiwanese philosophy has made so far in South Korean scholarship. What follows is thus the names of the publishers and journals.



## University Affiliated Research Institutes and their Academic Journals:

1. The Institute of Chung-ang Philosophical Studies (중앙대학교 중앙철학연구소) / *Philosophical Investigation* (철학탐구)
2. Institute of Philosophy, Seoul National University (서울대학교 철학사상연구소) / *Chul Hak Sa Sang: Journal of Philosophical Ideas* (철학사상)
3. Gangjin Institute of Dasan Silhak Studies attached to Yonsei University (연세대학교 강진다산실학연구원) / *Tasan & Contemporary Times* (다산과현대)
4. The Institute of Humanities Research in Konkuk University (건국대학교 인문학연구원) / *The Journal of the Humanities for Unification* (통일인문학)
5. Humanities Research Institute Sogang University (서강대학교 인문과학연구소) / *Sogang Journal of Humanities* (서강인문논총)
6. Institute of Korean Cultural Studies Yeungnam University (영남대학교 민족문화연구소) / *Yeungnam Journal of Korean Culture Studies* (민족문화논총)
7. Keimyung Korean Studies Academia Koreana (계명대학교 한국학연구원) / *Acta Koreana* (한국학논집)
8. Center for Korean Studies at Inha University (인하대학교 한국학연구소) / *The Journal of Korean Studies* (한국학연구)

## China-related Research Associations and their Academic Journals:

1. The Society of Chinese Studies (중국학연구학회) / *The Journal of Chinese Studies* (중국학연구)
2. The Society for Research of Chinese Language and Literature (중국어문학연구회) / *The Journal of Chinese Language and Literature* (중국어문학논집)
3. The Korean Society of Modern Chinese Literature (한국중국현대문학학회) / *The Journal of Modern Chinese Literature* (중국현대문학)
4. The Society for Chinese Humanities in Korea (중국인문학회) / *Journal of Chinese Humanities* (중국인문과학)
5. The Chinese Language and Literature Society of Korea (한국중어중문학회) / *The Journal of Chinese Language and Literature* (중어중문학)
6. Korea Association of Chinese Language Education (한국중국어교육학회) / *The Journal of Korea Association of Chinese Language Education* (한국중국어교육학회)
7. The Society for Chinese Cultural Research (중국문화연구학회) / *The Journal of Chinese Cultural Research* (중국문화연구)

## Philosophy-related Research Associations and their Academic Journals:

1. The Society of Philosophical Studies (철학연구회) / *Journal of the Society of Philosophical Studies* (철학연구)
2. The Korean Society of Yang-Ming Studies (한국양명학회) / *Yang-Ming Studies* (양명학)

3. The Korean Society of Confucianism Studies (한국유교학회) / *The Study of Confucianism* (유교사상문화연구)
4. Bumhan Philosophical Society (범한철학회) / *Journal of Pan-Korean Philosophical Society* (범한철학)
5. The New Korean Philosophical Association (새한철학회) / *Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association* (철학논총)
6. Philculture (철학문화연구소) / *Philosophy and Reality* (철학과 현실)
7. Korean Philosophical Association (한국철학회) / *Korean Journal of Philosophy* (철학)
8. Korean Association for Japanese Thought (한국일본사상사학회) / *Journal of Japanese Thought* (일본사상)
9. Korean Society of Modern Philosophy (서양근대철학회) / *Modern Philosophy* (근대철학)
10. The Society for Humanities Studies in East Asia (동아인문학회) / *The Journal of the Society for Humanities Studies in East Asia* (동아인문학)
11. Korean Academy of Taoism and Culture (한국도교문화학회) / *Journal of the Studies of Taoism and Culture* (도교문화연구)

History-related Research Associations and their Academic Journals:

1. The Society for Asian Historical Studies (동양사학회) / *Journal of Asian Historical Studies* (동양사학연구)
2. The Institute for Korean Historical Studies (역사비평사) / *Critical Review of History* (역사비평)

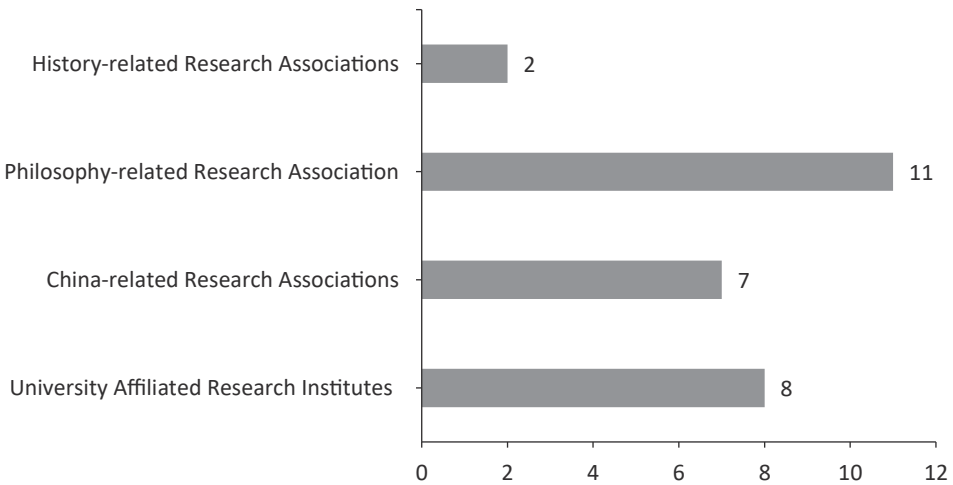


Figure 3: Characteristics of Publishers.

The 28 journals on the list have all published articles about Taiwanese philosophy, and among them eight publishers were university research institutes. Three research institutes hold philosophy as their core research subject; two hold it as one of their humanities research subjects; three are primarily concerned with Korean studies. According to the results, there was no research institute that has Taiwanese philosophy as its core research subject. Instead, institutes which hold relevant interests, such as philosophy and humanities, if not Korean studies, were observed to have been researching Taiwanese philosophy. Currently, 11 academic associations of philosophy publish journals where the subject includes Taiwanese philosophy, in order to encourage papers. Several journals, published by research associations for the Chinese language, literature, education and culture, have also dedicated pages to Taiwanese philosophy, while two associations related to history studies published articles on Taiwanese philosophy. In short, the journals that have published articles about Taiwanese philosophy can be divided into two categories. One is the category of journals about “Mun Sa Cheol (문사철, 文史哲)”, a Korean abbreviation of “literature, history and philosophy”. The other category of journals is about Chinese studies.

At present, there are 40 KCI (Korea Citation Index) journals and six KCI candidate journals in Korea that consider philosophy as a topic. While contributions made in the field of Chinese studies, literature and history can be substantial, it would be beneficial if the 46 South Korean journals about philosophy add a category of Taiwanese philosophy and accept submissions related to this subject. If the 40 KCI journals out of the 46 encourage such publications, then Taiwanese philosophy scholarship can make considerable progress, because KCI—as a citation database for scholarly journals—will boost the number of references and enhance the exposure of the research.

Table 3: The List of Journals

	Name of Journal in Korean	Name of Journal in English	Name of Association
1	인간연구 人間研究	<i>The Journal of Human Studies</i>	가톨릭대학교 인간학연구소 Institute of Anthropology, Catholic University of Korea
2	남명학연구 南冥學研究	<i>Namgyeong Research</i>	경상대학교 경남문화연구원 Gyeongsang National University Gyeongnam Cultural Research

	Name of Journal in Korean	Name of Journal in English	Name of Association
3	철학연구 哲學研究	<i>Philosophical Studies</i>	고려대학교 철학연구소 Korea University's Institute for Philosophy
4	선도문화 仙道文化	<i>Sundo Culture Studies</i>	국제뇌교육종합대학원대학교 국학연구원 University of Brain Education
5	대동철학 大東哲學	<i>Journal of the Daedong Philosophical Association</i>	대동철학회 The Daedong Philosophical Association
6	철학연구 哲學研究	<i>Philosophia: Journal of Korean Philosophical Society</i>	대한철학회 Korean Philosophical Society
7	동양철학연구 東洋哲學研究	<i>Journal of Eastern Philosophy</i>	동양철학연구회 Eastern Philosophy Research
8	범한철학 汎韓哲學	<i>Pan-Korean Philosophy</i>	범한철학회 Bumhan Philosophical Society
9	철학논총 哲學論叢	<i>Chulbak-Ronchong: Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association</i>	새한철학회 New Korean Philosophical Association
10	생명연구 生命研究	<i>Studies on Life and Culture</i>	서강대학교 생명문화연구소 Sogang University Institute Life and Culture
11	인문논총 人文論叢	<i>Seoul National University the Journal of Humanities</i>	서울대학교 인문학연구원 Institute of Humanities Seoul National University
12	철학사상 哲學思想	<i>The Journal of Philosophical Ideas</i>	서울대학교 철학사상연구 Institute of Philosophy Seoul National University
13	퇴계학논집 退溪學論集	<i>Toegye-hak-lon-jib</i>	영남퇴계학연구원 The Yeungnam Toegyechak Institute
14	인도철학 印度哲學	<i>The Journal of Indian Philosophy</i>	인도철학회 Korea Society for Indian Philosophy
15	인간. 환경. 미래 人間. 環境. 未來.	<i>Human Beings, Environment and their Future</i>	인제대학교 인간환경미래연구원 Institute of Human, Environment and Future Inje University
16	철학탐구 哲學探究	<i>Philosophical Investigation</i>	중앙대학교 중앙철학연구소 The Institute of Chung-ang Philosophical Studies Chung-ang University

	Name of Journal in Korean	Name of Journal in English	Name of Association
17	철학연구 哲學研究	<i>Journal of the Society of Philosophical Studies</i>	철학연구회 The Society of Philosophical Studies
18	유학연구 儒學研究	<i>Studies in Confucianism</i>	충남대학교 유학연구소 The Institute of Confucianism Chungnam National University
19	가톨릭철학 가톨릭哲學	<i>The Catholic Philosophy</i>	한국가톨릭철학회 The Korean Association of Catholic Philosophers
20	과학철학 科學哲學	<i>Korean Journal for the Philosophy of Science</i>	한국과학철학회 The Korean Society for the Philosophy of Science
21	논리연구 論理研究	<i>Korean Journal of Logic</i>	한국논리학회 Korean Association for Logic
22	니체연구 니체研究	<i>The Journal of Korean Nietzsche-Society</i>	한국니체학회 Korean Nietzsche-Society
23	동서철학연구 東西哲學研究	<i>Studies in Philosophy East-West</i>	한국동서철학회 Korean Society for Philosophy East-West
24	동양철학 東洋哲學	<i>The Journal of Asian Philosophy in Korea</i>	한국동양철학회 The Society for Asian Philosophical in Korea
25	미학 美學	<i>Mihak: The Korean Journal of Aesthetics</i>	한국미학회 The Korean Society of Aesthetics
26	철학적 분석 哲學的 分析	<i>Philosophical Analysis</i>	한국분석철학회 Korean Society for Analytic Philosophy
27	사회와 철학 社會와 哲學	<i>The Journal of Society and Philosophy</i>	한국사회와철학연구회 A Society for the Research of Society and Philosophy
28	양명학 陽明學	<i>Yang-Ming Studies</i>	한국양명학회 The Korean Society of Yang-Ming Studies
29	한국여성철학 韓國女性哲學	<i>Korean Feminist Philosophy</i>	한국여성철학회 Korean Association of Feminist Philosophers
30	의철학연구 醫哲學研究	<i>Philosophy of Medicine</i>	한국의철학회 Korean Association of Philosophy of Medicine

	Name of Journal in Korean	Name of Journal in English	Name of Association
31	일본사상 日本思想	<i>Journal of Japanese Thought</i>	한국일본사상사학회 Korea Association for Japanese Thought
32	중세철학 中世哲學	<i>Philosophia Medii Aevi</i>	한국중세철학회 Societas Philosophiae Mediaevalis Coreana
33	시대와 철학 時代와 哲學	<i>Epoch and Philosophy: A Journal of Philosophical Thought in Korea</i>	한국철학사상연구회 Korean Association for Studies of Philosophical Thought
34	한국철학논집 韓國哲學論集	<i>The Journal of Korean Philosophical History</i>	한국철학사연구회 The Society of Korean Philosophical History
35	철학 哲學	<i>Cheolhak: Korean Journal of Philosophy</i>	한국철학회 Korean Philosophical Association
36	칸트연구 칸트研究	<i>Kant Studien</i>	한국칸트학회 Kantgesellschaft
37	현대유럽철학연구 現代유럽哲學研究	<i>Research in Contemporary European Philosophy</i>	한국하이데거학회/한국해석학회 Heidegger-Gesellschaft in Korea
38	헤겔연구 헤겔研究	<i>Hegel-Studien (Hegel-Yeongu)</i>	한국헤겔학회 The Hegel Society of Korea
39	현상학과 현대철학 現象學과 現代哲學	<i>Phenomenology and Contemporary Philosophy</i>	한국현상학회 Korean Society for Phenomenology
40	환경철학 環境哲學	<i>Environmental Philosophy</i>	한국환경철학회 The Korean Society for the Study of Environmental Philosophy

Amongst the 40 academic journals and associations, none of them had a research group that aims to study Asian philosophy. Instead, the central topic of the groups tends to be major Western philosophers such as Nietzsche, Kant, Hegel or Heidegger. Moreover, no organization had Taiwanese philosophy or Chinese philosophy as its central topic, which instead are discussed under the broad category of Asian philosophy. Considering that the Korea Society for Indian Philosophy was founded in 1988, the time is long due for an attempt to organize a Taiwanese philosophy association for the development of the subject.

Currently, the journals about Chinese studies and philosophy accept submissions regarding Taiwanese philosophy. South Korea has 21 KCI and one KCI candidate journal on the subject. However, if the journals where Taiwanese philosophy is not a central topic keep publishing articles, the expected contributions to future academia remain in question. As mentioned above, there is no journal nor association that focuses on Chinese philosophy and intellectual thought. Language and literature are the two relevant sub-categories of interest that have led the tradition of Chinese studies in South Korea. More recently, regional studies and international relations studies have started to make contributions in this field. Nevertheless, one notable tendency should not be missed, and this is that Neo-Confucianism has steadily drawn the attention of academia.

*Oriental Studies* by Dankook University and *Philosophy, Thought, Culture* by Dongguk University are two promising journal platforms where scholars can publish articles about Taiwanese philosophy. In terms of expertise, these platforms still need improvement. Although it might be too soon to call for an association for Taiwanese philosophy, it is high time that a research group be organized with a specific focus on Chinese continental thought. With this, a regular journal publication with some expert knowledge would be the next step to achieve. With a robust infrastructure, such as associations and journals, we can expect the more active exchange of ideas and scholarly communication. This will facilitate a conversation among scholars in different regions, including Taiwan, China, Hong Kong and Japan, and further to Europe and North America.

## Analysis of the Collected Internal Information

If the analysis of external information shows an objective overview of the current situation for Taiwanese philosophy as an academic subject in South Korea, the analysis of internal information demonstrates the content of what the journal articles discuss. Like all academic subjects, there is a broad interest in Taiwanese philosophy, yet the degree of discussion is profound. This richness corresponds to the subject's long history.

The present survey examined topics which have been discussed in South Korea. A catalogue was made of the contents of the 61 articles by keywords, and the subjects of the articles were examined by the names of intellectuals discussed. Cataloguing the keywords allows one to see in which areas of Taiwanese philosophy South Korean scholars have been interested. It was judged that such cataloguing could obtain a useful material to observe the academic trends in South Korean philosophy scholarship. Listing the names of the intellectuals discussed as

a subject also allows us to see which Taiwanese philosophers have been drawing attention. The results of this survey may be beneficial to scholars who study Taiwanese philosophy.

### Keywords

The survey found 226 keywords from the articles. They include philosophical terms such as liberation (freedom), happiness, truth, and society to four-character Chinese idioms such as “the mind-heart as being empty, numinous, and unobscured” (*xuling bumei* 虛靈不昧). The most frequent keyword was Mou Zongsan. This is not surprising because he is one of the important philosophers in Taiwan (Heubel 2019, 38), and his books have been introduced to South Korea from the 2000s onward, including *Intellectual Intuition and Chinese Philosophy*, *Correspondence of Oriental and Western Philosophy*, *Asian Philosophy and Aristotle*, the *Substance of Mind and Substance of Human Nature* series, *Mou Zongsan’s Interpretation of Laozi*, and *Special Lectures on Chinese Philosophy*. Apart from Mou, the names of other influential philosophers appeared more than 30 times as keywords in the sample. The range varied from classical thinkers such as Confucius, Mencius and Laozi to contemporary thinkers such as Tang Junyi (Tang Jun-yi, 唐君毅). Moreover, the results showed the names of Western philosophers such as Hegel and Kant, and Chinese historical figures such as Mao Zedong and Lu Xun. Thirteen keywords were found containing the term “Confucian”, such as Confucian Ethics, Confucian Orthodoxy and Confucian Society. Twenty keywords contain the suffix “-ism”, as the articles were discussions about intellectual ideas. Fifteen keywords appeared more than twice, out of the total of 266 keywords, namely: May Fourth Movement, being, Hu Shi, Lin Yutang, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi (Tang Jun-yi), universality, Xu Fuguan (Hsü Fu-kuan 徐復觀), Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih 余英時), Mencius, writing in the vignette style (*Xiaopinwen* 小品文), A Treatise of the Highest Good (*Yuanshan Lun* 圓善論), freedom, Chinese Yangming School (*Zhongguo yangming xuepai* 中國陽明學派), and Immanuel Kant.

To rank these by frequency of appearance, Mou Zongsan comes the top, followed by Hu Shi, Lin Yutang (林語堂), Tang Junyi (Tang Jun-yi) and Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih). The ranks reveal the vital roles the listed philosophers and thinkers have been playing in philosophy studies, with all these names being scholars and philosophers who have led the history of Taiwanese (or Chinese) philosophy. Accordingly, they will continue to serve as significant subjects of study for the next generation.



## Biographies of the Major/Important Philosophers

The present survey selected nine influential philosophers who are considered as most seminal in Taiwanese philosophy and examined whether each was discussed in South Korea, and if so, in what way. The selected philosophers are as follows, in alphabetical order: (1) Fang Thomé H. (Fang Dongmei, 方東美), (2) Hu Shi 胡適, (3) Huang Chin-chieh 黃勤傑, (4) Lin Yutang 林語堂, (5) Liu Shuxian (Liu Shu-hsien, 劉述先), (6) Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, (7) Tang Junyi (Tang Chün-I, 唐君毅), (8) Xu Fuguan 徐復觀, and (9) Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih, 余英時).

### (1) Fang Thomé H. (Fang Dongmei 方東美)

There are two publications by Fang that have been introduced in South Korea: the 1989 translation of *The Chinese View of Life: The Philosophy of Comprehensive Harmony* (중국인의 인생철학) and the 1999 translation of *Primordial Confucianism and Taoism* (원시 유가 도가 철학). Fang is a Chinese philosopher who was born in 1899 and lived until 1977. In contrast to his reputation as a representative of the Neo-Confucian school in South Korea, Fang Dongmei never considered himself to be a Modern Confucian, given that his philosophical interests also included traditional Buddhist and Daoist thought (Rošker 2014b, 159). His official name was Fang Xun, and personal name was Dong-mei.

After graduating from the University of Nanking with a degree in philosophy, he left for the US in 1921 to earn another degree at Wisconsin University. He returned home in 1924 and taught at Wŭchāng University of Education, Southeast University, National Central University and other institutions, including National Taiwan University and Fu Jen University, after 1947.

His philosophical ideas were perfected under the social circumstances that saw both the joining and conflict of Asian and Western philosophies. Due to the turbulence of the era, the origin of Fang's ideas tends to be complicated. He adopted Nietzsche's notion of the superhuman, Bergson's notion of life and Whitehead's process philosophy, and then he revised them all. He merged Primordial Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhist Huayan to establish his own philosophical system about life. In the survey, two articles out of the 61 in total were about Fang. Ahn Jaeho's "Tao and De, The Ceaseless Creator" (생생하는 도덕) (2006) examines how Fang understands Laozi and Zhuang Zhou, while Yun Ji-won's Fang's Thomé H. "A Study on Fang Dong Mei's Philosophy Thought" (방동미철학사상연구) (2016) discusses Fang's philosophical view of the cosmos and life.

## (2) Hu Shi 胡適

Hu Shi was born in 1891 and died in 1962. He studied in the US for a degree under John Dewey, whose thought greatly influenced Hu's academic identity as a pragmatist. Hu was a leading figure during the Enlightenment period in China, until 1949, when the Communist government was founded in Mainland China. He left for the US as a refugee and later returned to Taiwan to serve as the Vice President of the Kuomintang. His influence was enormous over the field of humanities, including literature, philosophy, and folk studies, to name but a few areas. Accordingly, in the survey, studies about his ideas are often related to his political thought, as seen in three articles, with two articles on literature and one on pragmatism. The first year an article about Hu Shi was published was in 2002, and the latest was in 2017. Oh Byung-Soo's 吳炳守, 오병수 "The Formation of Hu Shi's Anti-Communist Liberalism in Cold War Era in China: The Ideologization of Chinese Liberalism (1941–1953)" (2012) is worth noting, since the author Oh's first profession is as a historian. His attempt to revisit Asia in the Cold War period with a focus on Hu Shi's ideas and life can be a valuable one.

## (3) Huang Chun-chieh 黃勤傑

Huang is one of the renowned intellectuals in Taiwan, and he published an article in a South Korean journal. Educated at Taiwan University and Washington University, he was a long-standing chief researcher at Research Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences at National Taiwan University, and is now retired. Huang is a philosopher, thinker and historian. Moreover, his reputation is high in the liberal arts, as well as in the higher education sector. He is specialized in *Mencius* and *Analects*, specifically hermeneutics. Sungkyunkwan University published a translation of his treatise *The History of Mencius' Thoughts* (孟學思想史論, 이천년 맹자를 읽다) in 2016. The university also published his other book *A History of the Interpretations of the Analects in Tokugawa Japan* (日本 論語 解釋學, 일본논어 해석학) in 2011.

In the survey, four out of the 61 papers were about either Huang's publications or publications about his philosophy. Three of the four were Huang's own work. He wrote papers about Yangmingism in 2004 and 2005. He also wrote about Orientalism in *The Critical Review of History* in 2014. A discussion about Huang's East Asian Confucianism was published by the Institute for Korean Culture in 2009.

#### (4) Lin Yutang 林語堂

Lin's is known as Im Eo Dang 임어당 in Korean. His theory has been influential since the late 1930s. His ideas started to come into attention from the 1950s onward, and he earned his fame with the well-known essay "The Importance of Living" (생활의 발견) (1991). Lin was born in 1895 and died in 1976. He studied linguistics at Harvard University and continued his academic career at the University of Jena, and then Leipzig University, Germany. Later, Lin returned to Beijing to be appointed as a professor at the University of Beijing. He lived in the US from 1935 to 1966 and moved to Taiwan in 1966. Unlike his fame as an essayist in South Korea, he is also renowned as a seminal thinker in China.

The survey found that seven papers discussed Lin. They tended to be interdisciplinary studies, such as linking Lin's ideas from in his writing with other forms of literature and philosophy.

#### (5) Liu Shuxian (Liu Shu-hsien) 劉述先

Liu is one of the 1934 school of Neo-Confucian philosophers. Born in Shanghai, China, he graduated from the National Taiwan University and went to the US for his PhD. Liu served at a researcher post at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy at the Academia Sinica, China. He died in Taiwan in 2016. In 1994, when he was working for the Chinese University of Hong Kong, he published a paper in Chinese in *The Study of Confucianism* (유교사상문화연구), entitled "Confucianism and View of Future World" (1994).

#### (6) Mou Zongsan 牟宗三

Mou is well known for his innovative ideas and leading the second generation of Neo-Confucians, and is seen as the most important Taiwanese philosopher from 1980 to the time of his death. An innovative theorist, he is the best known second-generation Modern Confucian, especially regarding his many new ideational constructions, such as the concept of immanent transcendence, or the ultimate noumenon (Rošker 2014a, 72). In line with this reputation, South Korea has paid steady attention to his philosophy, and since the 2000s attempts have been made to discuss his ideas. Apart from journal articles, there are academic dissertations about him. For example, Kim Chan-ho wrote a master's thesis on Mou's notion of the perfect good in 2018. Jung Woo Yeop (2017) earned his master's degree by

considering Mou's notion of autonomy. Mou's philosophy is attractive not only to researchers working on Asian philosophy, but also those focusing on Western philosophy. In 2017, Song Yohan, a Kant expert, published an article entitled "Mou's Criticism of Kant—How is the Distinction between Things in Themselves and Appearance Possible?". Addressing Mou's critical interpretation of the Kantian terms "*Ding an sich*" and "*Erscheinung*", Song revises Mou's argument and discusses what significance it has to read Kant through Mou. In short, Mou is an essential subject for research in Taiwan, and his ideas fascinate global scholars beyond Asia.

### (7) Tang Junyi (Tang Chun-I 唐君毅)

Tang was born in 1909 in Sichuan, China, and died in 1978. Known as one of the New Confucian (현대신유학파, 現代新儒學派), Tang was influenced by Classical Chinese philosophy, Plato and Hegel. After meeting Mou in 1940, the two became academic comrades. In 1949 Tang left Mainland China and lived in Hong Kong. His ideas were actively received in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the US. Articles about his philosophy have been published by South Korean and Taiwanese researchers in South Korean journals. The subjects vary, but include the "Anxiety of Existence" (비감의식, 悲感意識), "Philosophy of Culture" (문화철학, 文化哲學), "Interpretation of Taoism" (노장해석학, 老莊解釋學) and "Humanistic Economic Sociology" (경제사회론, 經濟社會論).

### (8) Xu Fuguan 徐復觀

Xu Fuguan is also a New Confucian (현대신유학파, 現代新儒學派). Born in China in 1902, Xu went to Japan to study. While his occupation was in the military, he encountered philosophy, which later allowed him to teach Chinese philosophy at Tunghai University from 1955. The university then had no philosophy department, and Xu taught the subject in the Chinese literature department. As Téa Sernelj notes, Xu was not only a philosopher but also as an "intellectual and historian, who made important contributions to Modern Confucian studies" (Sernelj 2014, 84). Xu extensively incorporated philosophy with related disciplines, such as literature, culture, art and politics. In South Korea, four of his works are available in the form of a monograph. His work *Chinese Art Spirit* (중국예술정신, 中國藝術精神) (1990) has been influential in Korean intellectual history. It is a study about the aesthetic spirit in China from many perspectives. Xu also practiced classical music, landscape painting and literary artist style painting by

applying philosophy of Confucius and Zhuang Zhou. The survey showed there were four papers about Xu's philosophy. Two of them were written by Korean scholars, and the other two by Chinese scholars.

### (9) Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih 余英時)

Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih) was born in Tianjin (天津), China, in 1930. He moved to Hong Kong in 1950 to study, and continued at Harvard University from 1956. He was awarded a PhD in 1961. From 1973 to 1975, he was the Vice President of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He served as a professor at Harvard University, Yale University and Princeton University. In 2006 he was awarded the Kluge Prize, an equivalent of the Nobel Prize in humanities, by the US Library of Congress. Some popular works of his are available in South Korea too, namely *Zhu Xi's Historical World* (주희의 역사세계) (2015) and *Modern Significance of Traditional Chinese Values System* (동양적 가치의 재발견) (2007). There are four articles about Yu's philosophy published in South Korea. These include "Redology", "A Comparison of Yun Yang-shih and Li Zehou", "Zhu Xi's Historical World in Yu's Interpretation" and an analysis of Yu's work *The Scholar and Chinese Culture*.

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So far, the survey presented above has examined philosophers whose ideas have been influential on contemporary Taiwanese philosophy and South Korean scholarship. Thinkers such as Fang, Thomé H., Hu Shi, Huang Chun-chieh, Lin Yutang, Liu Shuxian (Liu Shu-hsien), Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi (Tang Chun-I), Xu Fuguan and Yu Yingshi (Yu Ying-shih) are all prominent figures and should not be missed when one studies the history of Taiwanese and Chinese philosophy, not to mention philosophy in general. South Korean scholars have maintained continuous interest in them in order not to forget their profound thoughts and works. It is expected that this interest will continue to lead both the quantitative and qualitative development of relevant research.

### Conclusion

The Korean higher education system started to develop scholars of philosophy from the 1920s onwards. Ever since the first philosophy department was established at the Keijō Imperial University (京城帝國大學), the term "philosophy"

(哲學) was understood to refer to Western philosophy, which lasted until the 1960s (Choi 2000, 179). Although there have been attempts to change this, the actual progress has been slow compared to the underlying passion. For example, the first attempt to review the history of Asian philosophy scholarship in Korea was only conducted in the 1990s.

When it comes to the subject of Taiwanese philosophy, represented as Neo-Confucianism, the matter bears more urgency. Although Neo-Confucianism accounts for a significant part of Asian philosophy, there has been almost no project to review the history of the subject, nor does there exist any platform such as an association or journal that focuses on this subject in Korea. Given these facts, it is remarkable to see studies of this subject are still continuing.

This survey analysed 61 articles published between 1994 and 2018 and categorised the data into “external” information and “internal” information. External information refers to the explicit details of the research, such as the author, affiliation and publisher. Internal information refers to the topic and the content of the research.

On examining this data, it was found that research about Taiwanese philosophy has made steady progress despite the absence of dramatic quantitative developments. Since the journals are South Korean, 75% of the publications were written in Korean, and the other 25% in Chinese, since the topic was Taiwanese philosophy. Considering that there are many scholars specialized in Asian philosophy outside Asia, the survey results reveals a limitation in terms of language diversity, including a lack English, the use of which could have increased access. The authors’ nationalities show a similar limitation, as the results show the dominance South Korean and Chinese scholars, with few from elsewhere. Most of the affiliations were with universities, especially universities with either a philosophy or philosophy-related department. Over the designated period of the survey, 28 journals published articles about Taiwanese philosophy, and 29% of them had a university research institute as the publisher. Journal platforms that accept submissions about Taiwanese philosophy tend to have Chinese studies or philosophy as a suggested topic for publication. However, there is no association solely dedicated to subjects such as Taiwanese philosophy, Neo-Confucianism or Chinese philosophy. Nor is there any journal that specializes in these topics in Korea.

With the analysis of keywords and research subjects, the survey established an overview of the currents in Taiwanese philosophy scholarship. The 226 keywords were varied and the scope was extensive, covering both common and philosophical terms. The thinkers including among the keywords included Asian sages such as Confucius, Mencius and Laozi, as well as Western philosophers such as Hegel

and Kant. Taiwanese philosophy scholars chose Classical Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy as the subjects for their comparative and interdisciplinary research. Modern and contemporary thinkers of Taiwanese philosophy, including Fang Thomé H., Hu Shi, Huang Chin-Chieh, Lin Yutang, Liu Shuxian (Liu Shu-hsien), Mou Zongsan, Tang Chun-I, Xu Fuguan and Yu Ying-shih were the main subjects of the studies.

This survey offered a comprehensive analysis of the research outcomes in South Korean scholarship on the topic of Taiwanese philosophy. It was conducted in order to contribute to the historical studies of Asian philosophy in South Korea. It is expected to help Asian philosophy scholarship in South Korea to make similar progress to that seen by Western philosophy. The work will also help scholars not only in South Korea and Taiwan, but also in other regions where research on Asian philosophy is conducted. The present survey thus serves as a foundation for those who wish to conduct research in the field of the history of Taiwanese philosophy and Asian philosophy in general.

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*SPECIAL ISSUE:  
TAIWANESE PHILOSOPHY AND  
THE PRESERVATION OF CHINESE  
PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS*

*Fang Dongmei and the Philosophy of  
Creative Creativity*

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# Modernizing the Philosophy of Creative Creativity: Fang Dongmei's Fusion of Holism and Individuality<sup>1</sup>

Jana S. ROŠKER\*

## Abstract

Fang Dongmei (1899–1977) is among the most influential Chinese philosophers who lived and worked in Taiwan during the second half of the 20th century. The present article aims to clarify his view on the basic nature of the human Self. This assessment is more multifaceted than it seems at a first glimpse, for Fang's philosophy is also more complex than it seems. As a member of the so-called neo-conservative streams of thought, he criticized the Western-type modernization and aimed to revive the holistic onto-epistemology of classical Confucianism. On the other hand, he highlighted the importance of its basic paradigm which underlay the Confucian discourses from their very beginning, i.e. since the *Book of Changes*, namely the principle of creative creativity (*shengshengbuxi* 生生不息). The alleged contradiction between his advocating of holism and creativity, has been reflected in the apparent dichotomy between the social and relational essence of the Confucian Moral Self on the one side, and individual uniqueness on the other. The paper aims to show that both seeming contradictions are actually parts of the same theoretical principle defining the complementary interactions of binary oppositions.

**Keywords:** Modern Confucianism, New Confucianism, Fang Dongmei, Taiwanese philosophy, Modern Chinese philosophy, holism, individuality, Moral Self

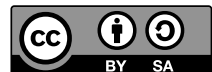
## Modernizacija filozofije ustvarjalne ustvarjalnosti: Fang Dongmeijeva združitev holizma in individualnosti

### Izvilleček

Fang Dongmei (1899–1977) sodi med najvplivnejše kitajske filozofe, ki so v drugi polovici 20. stoletja živeli in delali na Tajvanu. Ta članek obravnava njegov pogled na osnovno naravo človeškega sebstva. Ta naloga je bolj zapletena, kot se kaže na prvi pogled, tako kot

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je tudi Fangova filozofija precej bolj kompleksna, kot se zdi. Kot predstavnik t. i. neokon-servativnih idejnih tokov je Fang kritiziral modernizacijo zahodnega tipa z namenom oži-vitve holistične ontoepistemologije klasičnega konfucijanstva. Po drugi strani pa je pou-darjal pomen njegove temeljne paradigme, na kateri so konfucijanski diskurzi osnovani že od vsega začetka, torej od *Knjige premen* naprej, in ki prihaja do izraza v načelu ustvarjalne ustvarjalnosti (*shengshengbuxi* 生生不息). Domnevno protislovje med njegovo afirmaci-jo holizma in ustvarjalnosti se zrcali v navidezni dihotomiji med družbeno in relacijsko esenco konfucijanskega moralnega sebstva na eni strani ter enkratnostjo individuuma na drugi. V članku nameravam prikazati, da sta obe navidezni protislovji pravzaprav del ene-ga in istega teoretskega načela, ki opredeljuje vzajemno komplementarno interakcijo med binarnimi opozicijami.

**Ključne besede:** moderno konfucijanstvo, novo konfucijanstvo, Fang Dongmei, tajvanska filozofija, moderna kitajska filozofija, holizem, individualnost, moralno sebstvo

## Introduction: Fang's Life and Work

Fang Dongmei 方東美, who is also known to English speakers under the name Thomé H. Fang, was born into a family of intellectuals in the central Chinese province of Anhui. He was thus exposed to the Chinese classics at a very early age. After completing secondary school he attended Jinling University in Nanjing, where he was very active in the student movement. In 1919 he participated in the student demonstrations in Nanjing, which were organized in support of the May Fourth cultural reforms. In 1920, he met the American philosopher John Dewey during his lecture tour of China, an encounter which awakened a keen interest in Fang for Western philosophy. After graduating, he went to America, where after only one year he earned his MA at the University of Wisconsin, and then two years later obtained his PhD at Ohio State University. Following his return to China, he taught at different universities, including Wuchang University, South-east University in Nanjing, the Political University (*Zhengzhi daxue* 政治大學) and, briefly, Peking University. While Fang was in Nanjing, the Japanese invasion forced the university to move to Chongqing in the southwest province of Sichuan (Jiang and Yu 1995, 880). The difficult wartime conditions, uncertainty and in-security during this period led Fang to renew his interest in traditional Chinese culture and classical philosophy as a form of refuge and solace (Fang 1959, 17). In 1948 he moved to Taiwan to teach at National Taiwan University, where he remained until his retirement.

His principal works in Chinese were published in 2004 as the *Collected Works of Fang Dongmei* (*Fang Dongmei quan ji* 方東美全集), in 12 volumes (see Fang

2004a). They include many of his crucial texts, such as *Science, Philosophy and Human Life* (科學, 哲學與人生), which was first published in 1936, *A Survey of the Life Philosophies of Ancient Chinese Philosophers* (中國先哲人生哲學綱要, first published in 1937), *Three Types of Philosophical Wisdom* (哲學三慧), *The Ideal of Life and Cultural Types* (生活理想與文化類型), and several others, less well-known, but nevertheless important (see for instance Fang 2004b; 2004c; 2004d). Under the name Thomé H. Fang<sup>2</sup> he also wrote a number of books in English, including *The Chinese View of Life: The Philosophy of Comprehensive Harmony* (1980b), *Creativity in Man and Nature* (1980a) and *Chinese Philosophy: Its Spirit and Its Development* (1981).<sup>3</sup>

Fang's theoretical works are characterized by his ability to combine a thorough knowledge of Western philosophy, from the ancient to the contemporary, with traditional Chinese philosophy, especially Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist thought. His work also shows the influence of Indian philosophy. Among modern Western philosophers, Nietzsche had the greatest influence on his theoretical development (Fang 1936, 195). Several of his works are dedicated to comparing Indian and European philosophy in order to define the characteristics of traditional Chinese philosophy.

## Fang Dongmei and the Taiwanese Modern New Confucianism (Xin ruxue 新儒學)

The most influential contributions of Taiwanese philosophy to the preservation of the Chinese philosophical tradition, and also to the development of modern Chinese philosophy in a more general sense, can undoubtedly be found in the philosophical work of the second generation of the so-called Modern or New Confucian stream of thought. Most of the members of this generation were living and working in Taiwan. However, there are several different opinions regarding the question as to who can actually be counted as a representative of this stream of thought. Some scholars, for instance, want to include the historian Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990); however, if we concentrate on Modern Confucian philosophy,

2 For the sake of clarity, I will differentiate between Fang's work in Chinese and English: in the references of the present paper, all his Chinese works will be indicated with his family and his given name (Fang), whereas his English works will only include references to his first name, as commonly applied in all other references to Western sources and literature.

3 For a comprehensive and in deep study of his philosophical system, many other works written by Fang Dongmei (i.e. Thomé Fang) in Chinese should also be consulted, at least the ones stated in the bibliography of this article under Fang 1931; 1936; 1937; 1959; 1978; 1979; 1980; 1982; 1983; 1984; 1989; 1992.

than it is not very appropriate to include his work in this group. The most commonly agreed names are Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903–1982), Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978) and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995). However, beside these three scholars I believe that Fang Dongmei (1899–1977) should also be included in the second generation, even though he is sometimes associated with the first. As the teacher of some of the members of the third generation, it seems simply more appropriate to include him among the generation of thinkers immediately preceding this group.

On the other hand, Fang Dongmei never considered himself to be a Modern Confucian, given that his philosophical interests also included traditional Buddhist and Daoist thought. Regarding this question, some scholars (e.g. Li 2002, 269) claim that Fang's work stands beyond the Confucian tradition, because he did not regard Confucianism as the only legitimate philosophy and all others as heresies, as, for instance, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 did. On the contrary, Fang Dongmei argued that Laozi's Daoism was the leading and most legitimate philosophical school during ancient times. Besides, many scholars believe he saw Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism and Buddhism as mutually interacting and integrating components of a holistic cultural process, rather than as several distinct schools of thought. However, he still acknowledged the preeminent role of Confucian thought in the Chinese tradition:

In Chinese philosophy, Confucianism is the body of thought that guides people through their lives. As for Daoism, it collapsed during the corrupt period of the Han dynasty. Even though it was eventually revived, and with it the renewed striving towards ideals, in our view the real Daoists are those artists who consider the world to be useless. [...] After the Wei-Jin period, Buddhist thought spread throughout Chinese society, and compensated for certain Daoist deficiencies. The Buddhists, however, seek their own personal salvation, which has nothing to do with the world [...]. (Fang 1989, 1056)

These considerations aside, the content, concepts and methodological assumptions of Fang's own thought were to a great extent integrated into the framework of Neo-Confucian theories, which provided the "thought-base" for most of the modern Confucian discourses that appeared on the transition from the second to third millennium (Sernelj 2020, 96). However, here we encounter an additional problem with respect to Fang's classification, for he not only distanced himself from Modern Confucians, but also from their historical conceptual base, i.e. from the Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming dynasties. In his view—and regardless



of their merit in preserving the classical Confucian tradition and its holistic worldview—these philosophers (especially Zhu Xi’s school) relied too heavily on a mechanistic rationality, as exemplified in the structural logic of the *li* 理 concept (structure, structural pattern). This resulted in a deformation of the holistic tradition in philosophy, in which the binary poles of (rational) structural pattern (*li* 理) and vitality (*qi* 氣) were seen as two divergent principles, even though in their mutual, complementary interaction they were still preserving the harmonic unity of facts, values and the sphere of aesthetic experience (Thompson 2017, 13). However, due to these formal divergences, Fang Dongmei did not consider the Modern Confucians as authentic heirs of Confucianism.

In the category of Confucianism, Fang includes Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi (Fang 2004b, 155), while he thinks the Han Confucians were “lowly and unworthy of mention” and the Song Neo-Confucians were not authentic followers of Confucianism. He criticized Neo-Confucian philosophy as “hybrid” and full of latent Daoist and Chan Buddhist elements (*ibid.*, 64). In his view, Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 thought was little more than a compendium of the ideas of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, Zhang Zai 張載 and the Cheng brothers 程顥, 程頤 (*ibid.*, 66), but without being treated within a coherent system; hence, according to Fang, Zhu Xi’s philosophy was full of logical contradictions (*ibid.*).

Fang Dongmei is certainly an important and influential theorist, whose work made a significant contribution to the theoretical reflection on Chinese modernization processes and the effort to find creative solutions to the challenges posed by Western philosophy. However, as opposed to most Modern New Confucians, Fang Dongmei tried to revive the Chinese tradition based not on Neo-Confucian discourses, but primarily on classical Confucianism, enriched by the aesthetic and metaphysical concepts of classical Daoism and Sinicized Buddhism.

Here, I should point out that my own understanding of the original Chinese expression *Ru xue* (Confucianism; literally: “the teachings of the educated”) is broader than Fang’s own definitions. In my view, it has not been limited to the teachings of Confucius as a historical personage, but instead should be seen as referring to the dominant cultural discourse of the Chinese (and East Asian) tradition, and therefore as comprising a wide range of the prevailing philosophical discourses that combined to make up the history of Chinese (and East Asian) philosophy over a period of over 2,500 years. As a specific example of how these different views are applied in actual theory, we can point out that Fang always interpreted Daoism, which includes numerous critical, individualistic and free-thinking elements, within the framework of a neo-conservative ideology that represents an essential, almost paradigmatic characteristic of Modern New Confucianism.

For these reasons, I believe that Fang Dongmei can be considered a representative of Modern Confucianism, especially within the context of modern Taiwanese philosophy.

### Life as Harmonious Creation

Fang believed that Chinese classical philosophy and epistemology were not based on mathematical or proto-scientific paradigms, but on aesthetic ones (Fang 1957, 195–235). However, his ontology is closely linked to the rational structure of the universe, as found in the ancient Chinese classic, *The Book of Changes* (*Yi jing*). Fang also described the process of cosmic change (constant creative creativity of existence) as an expression of rationality, which is rooted in (and at the same time encompasses) the minutely structured system of the “logic of creation” (Fang 1936, 24–26).

In the centre of Fang’s philosophy lies the concept of life or the living (*sheng* 生). According to Fang, all schools of traditional Chinese thought emerged from cosmology, which is defined by the all-prevailing instinct for life, survival, the vital impulse that constantly creates and recreates everything that exists. For Fang, the cosmos was a “living environment” (*shengmingde huanjing* 生命的環境), permeated by “circles of rational principles and feelings” (*qingli tuan* 情理團). While the structural patterns of existence remain fundamental, feelings (*qing* 情) represent the primary source of life (*shengmingde yuantai* 生命的原態): “Life is a world of feelings, and its essence is a continuous, creative desire and impulse” (ibid., 25). For him, life is thus “a flexible, extendable power” (ibid., 163).

The universe is a living entity that cannot be reduced to mere inertial physical stuff. Based on these premises, Fang then added a third category to the dualism of matter and idea, namely that of life: “We can see that life is a novel, original phenomenon; we cannot deal with it in the same way as with matter. Its system is predicated upon an organic wholeness.” (ibid., 179)

This living universe is full of energy, and everything in it is structurally connected to the living process that penetrates the entire realm. Human thought is also rooted in this colourful, sensitive and creative palette of life itself; it is not merely a product of rationality: “Life is the root of the thought, and thoughts are symbols or signs of life” (ibid., 164). Accordingly, even science “is a symbol of the sentiments of life” (ibid., 138) and its value lies in “developing the human desire for life” (ibid., 160).

Life is thus the fundamental driving force of the universe. For this reason, Fang calls it the original (Fang 1982, 149) or ultimate substance (Fang 1984, 28) of the

universe. However, he stresses that while this ultimate substance is transcendent (*chaoyue* 超越), it is not so supremely unique as to be an absolute (*chaojue* 超絕) (ibid., 20). Fang Dongmei’s ontology thus clearly belongs to the holistic realm of what Modern Confucians called “immanent transcendence”.<sup>4</sup>

According to most interpreters, (see e.g. Li 2002, 265; Fang and Li, 895), such a view may be called a “life-ontology” (*shengming bentilun* 生命本體論). Li Chenyang also writes that this life-ontology is more than a “Gaia hypothesis”; for Fang, it is reality. In this regard, the influence of Western philosophers such as Hegel, Bergson, and Whitehead on Fang is evident.

The second central concept of Fang’s philosophy is the idea of “comprehensive harmony” (*guangda hexie* 廣大和諧), which is characteristic of the traditional Chinese understanding of the world. In this, the universe strives towards a harmonious unity of all the individual particles and entities within its system. In material terms, it is empty, or “void” and expressed only through the richness and insight of its spirit.

In Fang’s reading of the history of Chinese philosophy, he also stressed the harmonious interplay of various schools of thought, rather than their differences and conflicts. One could argue that Fang was too idealistic and romantic in his understanding of these philosophies. However, for Fang, even if harmony was not a reality, it still represented the Chinese “ideal” (Li 2002, 266).

4 Several Modern Confucians, and particularly Mou Zongsan, often noted that Confucian philosophy never established a clear demarcation line between the realms of immanence and transcendence. However, this did not imply that their philosophy was lacking transcendent elements. Therefore, Mou coined the new concept of immanent transcendence, although this soon became very controversial, for Western scholars especially reproached him for coining an oxymoron, consisting of two different and mutually incompatible notions. However, many contemporary scholars (e.g. Lee 2002, 226–27) believe that their critique was based on a misunderstanding, rooted in the claim that Mou has applied the term transcendence in the strict sense, which is obviously not true. However, it is helpful to know that traditional Chinese notions of immanent transcendence like *tian*, *dao*, *tianming* or *tiandao*, can be understood as representing both the source of values and the basis of existence (ibid., 229). Its axiological and creative connotations are thus of utmost importance in Chinese philosophy. In the history of Western philosophy, however, transcendence is generally understood either in the epistemological or the ontological sense. In the first instance, this term signifies going beyond certain cognitive abilities (or possibilities of recognition—especially those linked to experience) in order to reach the realm of an integrated or comprehensive recognition (*quanbu renzhi nengli*, ibid.). The Western critics of the notion, however, only considered the ontological connotations of the Western concept—which primarily denotes a separation and isolation from the world (or existence), while also implying the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* (*wu zhong chuangzao*) (ibid.)—and do not take into account the equally significant epistemological connotations of the term. It is important to stress that the concept of transcendence as applied in the notion of “immanent transcendence” is primarily linked to its epistemological connotations, and is by no means limited to the strict sense of the Western ontological scope.

## Holistic Link between Nature and Morals

The belief in harmony and a harmonic universe is also reflected in Fang's understanding of morality or moral philosophy. Because the cosmic tendency to establish and preserve harmony through the concept of *shengsheng* 生生 (creative creativity) is almighty and unlimited, it does not have merely ontological, but also ethical and epistemological dimensions. For him, the natural life order is tightly linked to the moral order (Fang 1979, 351). This means that Fang's philosophy has no room for a division between facts and values. The universe is enriched by goodness, which derives not only from the pragmatic postulates of human co-existence, but is *a priori* a part of its essential structure, as reflected in the sphere of pure aesthetics. Fang thus views morality as the essence of life and a concrete embodiment of the deepest human values. Human existence is not merely about survival, but presupposes the search for meaning and purpose. The aesthetic side of culture and art is the expression of human creativity (Fang 1984, 149), which is always oriented towards perfecting the deficiencies of the world into which we are thrown; Dao represents the path that leads to perfection as well as the path upon which facts and values are merged into an organically structured harmony (ibid., 158). In this way, Fang strove to unite the three ideals of epistemology, ethics and aesthetics, i.e. truth, goodness, and beauty. He was also convinced that *qing* 情 (the emotive reactions) and *li* 理 (the rational principles) cannot be separated. Although Fang's philosophy is established, as we have seen before, on his "life-ontology", it can thus also be called "value-centred-ontology", because, for him, life is the basic value of existence and both life and value are rooted in the *Dao* 道, i.e. the ultimate principle of existence. In his view, *Dao* represents the all-encompassing and all-pervading unity, which is the primary source of life, value, and their harmonious fusion.

In *Zhexue san hui* 哲學三慧 (*Three Types of Philosophical Wisdom*) Fang defined philosophy as a synthesis between the rational structure of thought (*li* 理) and emotions (*qing* 情). According to the *Book of Changes* both originate from the extreme pole (*tai ji* 太極), i.e. the onto-epistemological, indescribable and unexplainable ancient origin of all existence. Thus, *qing* 情 and *li* 理 are not merely the base of all philosophy, but also the fundament of existence as such. Fang believes that the two elements represent a binary category, for their reciprocal relation is correlative and complementary. Li Chengyang (2002, 264) states that Fang sees the mutual, reciprocal interaction between *li* 理 and *qing* 情 as a process that pervades facts as well as possibilities, and from which philosophy draws its origin, truth and mystery.

He based his interpretation of traditional Chinese philosophy on a holistic view, according to which man forms a unity with space and time. In the forefront of his interpretation we can find the traditional unity of values, which through constant creativity includes the activities of Heaven (*Tian* 天), and man. Regardless of his declaratively broad starting points, which included all the most influential discourses from ancient and classical Chinese philosophy, it was precisely this very central point through which he proved that his thoughts were grounded in the classical Mencian viewpoint of four natural origins (*si duan* 四段) of human goodness; in this way, he (regardless of his—also clearly stated—detachment from Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties) also proved that in fact he followed precisely this very tradition that formed the foundations of this pre-modern Confucian reform.

The universe is a place to live in, and not a place to escape from, because it is a realm of value. Similarly, human nature is something to rely upon, and not something to dispense with, because it has been proved to be not sinful but innocent (Fang 1980b, 99).

However, Fang detached himself from this line of thought by constantly emphasizing that the natural goodness of man is a common characteristic found in all traditional Chinese philosophers (*ibid.*, 87–115). He even tried to convince readers that Xunzi, who is considered to be Mencius' main opponent, in essence shares this opinion, the only difference being that he swapped the roles of nature and emotions:

We can find no valid reasons for the theory of evil nature. Even Hsüntze held the belief that “human nature is a natural achievement” or “human nature attains itself after the pattern of constant nature ...” The reason why Hsüntze considered human nature to be evil is that he confused it with emotion which, logically speaking, is of a lower type than original nature. The evilness of human nature is here inferred, *a posteriori*, from the evilness of emotion. Here Hsüntze commits a fallacy of the confusion of logical types. (*ibid.*, 109)

In his comparative aspect and endeavour to come up with a harmonious synthesis of his own work, Fang mainly focused on the common points of the three central schools of classical Chinese philosophy. He ascertained that they are all connected by the concept of Dao, which each treats from a slightly different aspect and in a slightly different way, but all three are basically describing the concept of holistic harmony and the tendency for perfection. As Dao is possible only in the context

of holistic worldviews, it can reflect the method of immanent transcendence as well as the unity of facts and values, absoluteness and relativity.

## Confucianism, Democracy and Science

For Fang Dongmei, the most important principle in a democratic society is tolerance. For this reason, he criticized Mencius for his harsh attacks against the Moist school, which had contributed greatly to the Chinese intellectual tradition, especially in terms of offering new insights and establishing a basic framework for the growth of science in China (Fang 1992, 437). Fang was also convinced that the principle of creativity, which is central to his theories (Fang 1980a, 36), could represent a key element for the future development of Chinese science and democracy. Furthermore, man's mission of cultural creation in the different realms of art, literature, science, religion and social institutions is being carried forward, so that any imperfections existing in Nature and Man may be brought to ideal perfection (Fang 1980b, 11). However, an important premise which preconditions such perfection is the revival of tradition, for the realization of contemporary ideals must be based upon a humanistic spirit: "Only if we work hard and never forget our ideals, will we be able to water the sere tree of life, so that it can grow new roots and put forth luxuriant foliage" (Fang 1980, 6).

Like other Modern Confucians, Fang acknowledged that the Chinese intellectual tradition had failed to lay an adequate foundation for the development of science (which he generally supported). In this context, he claimed (Fang 1980b, 19) that science has not yet gained the dominant position in Chinese culture that it should have. He explained this failure with the holistic nature of the Chinese intellectual tradition:

Regardless of the stream of thought to which its actual contents may belong, or whether it deals with man or the cosmos, Chinese philosophy is always founded upon a holistic wholeness. In Confucian terminology, this is called "the doctrine of pervasive unity", and it is common to all Chinese philosophy. (Fang 1978, 45)

For Fang, the reason was not hard to find. The Chinese can easily realize the importance of science as a form of knowledge. But in the West, several meanings have been attached to it. The Greeks, for instance, saw it as a rational explanation of the intrinsic order of things in the universe to which human beings are harmoniously related. Science in this sense we can also find in China—but science naturally means more than that (Fang 1980b, 19). And even if we could equate

the Greek conception to science as such, there would still be a problem. The Greek thinkers conceived of the things behind the forms of the specious present as existing in eternity. They explained nature only quantitatively as a mechanical process of combinations and separations. Fang Dongmei pointed out that the Chinese usually think differently. For them, nature is permeated with life and charged with value. Any process of change in nature is necessarily qualitative and creates novelties. In this framework, nature and human beings are also in a mutual relation. Thus, in terms of creating culture, nature is a help, not a hindrance (*ibid.*).

Fang ultimately concluded that the current forms of scientific development should not be pursued. Because modern science was rooted in Cartesian dualisms and viewed human beings only as mechanistic components of a society that was separated from nature, he considered it essentially dogmatic and incapable of providing the basis for real democracy. It was, in fact, an obstacle to democratic development, because

pure science arises out of the desire for knowledge; through the application of abstract laws it seeks to arrive at purely logical conclusions, and absolute justice, without taking into account their effective reality. Its line of reasoning always transcends human life. (Fang 1936, 194)

For Fang Dongmei, modern Europeans view science as the systematic study of nature, organic as well as inorganic, separate from the concrete human beings. He thus believed that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities tends to exclude humans from real nature. Science seeks pure objectivity while men, according to modern psychology and epistemology up to the mid-19th century, are essentially subjective. In such a realm of “pure objectivity”, science tries to analyse the abstract. It remains limited, however, to what is mainly quantitative and to determining what is exact. In order to reduce everything, it works with formulas of identity. In Fang’s view, humans should not be treated in this way (Fang 1980b, 19).

Hence, he believed that the Chinese tradition not only implied certain seeds that could grow and develop into a democratic system, but also possessed certain characteristics that could lead society towards a true democracy which, thanks to the organic connection between man and nature, would be much more reasonable and legitimate than Western-style democracy. This view arises out of Fang’s general conviction that Chinese philosophy could help resolve the current crisis of the prevailing Western philosophies and empirical sciences, a crisis which derived from their dualistic, rationalistic and scientific nature.

## Self and Individuality

The common Western arguments based on the belief that the Chinese notion of the Self does not possess any strong “individualistic” connotations are, for the most part, too generalizing. Besides, the Western notion of an isolated, delimited and completely independent individual is, to a great extent, also a product of the ideologies of modernization. Thus, when treating or exploring the Chinese notion of the “self-realization” of the Self, we must proceed with due caution, for whoever has been acculturated within the discourses of Western modernity automatically tends to equate this term with the self-realization of an individual existence.

David Hall and Roger Ames (1998, 25) emphasize that the notion of “individuality” has two different meanings. First, it refers to a particular, uniform, indivisible entity which can, due to a certain feature, be included in a certain class. As an element (or a member) of a certain kind or class, this “individuality” is interchangeable. This concept of individuality underlies the equality of all individuals before the law, the concept of universal human rights, equal access to opportunities, and so on. According to Hall and Ames (*ibid.*), it is precisely this understanding of the individual which also makes it possible to elaborate notions such as autonomy, equality, free will, and the like. This type of Self belongs in the domain of a one-dimensional, empirical self or, to express it in Chinese terms, in the sphere of the “external ruler” (*wai wang* 外王).

But Hall and Ames point out that the notion of the individual can also be linked to the notions of uniqueness and singularity, which do not possess any connotations of affiliation, or membership in any class. Here, equality is posited on the basis of the parity principle. According to them, it is this sense of “unique individuality” which enables us to understand the traditional Confucian notion of the Self. Fang Dongmei has advocated a very similar idea, emphasizing that the uniqueness which underpins the Confucian Self is already a value in itself:

Dao is omnipresent and unites everything in itself to an entity. Therefore, we say that the great Dao is unlimited. But, on the other hand, it also contains specific particularities. We have to accept the uniqueness of these particular entities as being true. Every particularity which has been realized bears in itself a tendency of value. Thus, its significance cannot be denied. (Fang 2004d, 259)

However, even this kind of Self which possesses a unique individuality is “unique” in a “typical Chinese” (i.e., relational) way, for it constitutes itself by means of the quality of its relations with the external world.



A person becomes recognized, distinguished, or renowned by virtue of a social or communal deference to the quality of their character. Much of the effort in understanding the traditional Confucian conception of the Self has to do with clarifying this distinction ... While the definition of the Self as irreducibly social certainly precludes autonomous individuality, it does not rule out the second, less familiar notion of uniqueness expressed in terms of roles and relationships. (ibid.)

Thus, in exploring Fang's views on the relation between the transcendent and empirical self, we must bear in mind that in the Chinese tradition to which it belongs, this relation (in contrast with the dualistic model) has always been posited *a priori* within the structures of the different social networks which form the individual identity.

The same holds true for the epistemological dimensions of the Self. In his (sometimes slightly too idealizing interpretations of Chinese culture), Fang Dongmei proceeds from the holistic worldview in which noumenon is equated with phenomenon, and in which they are both equally permeated by the sphere of values. Fang writes (1957, 60–61) that the universe is a place to live in, and not a place to escape from, because it is a realm of value. Thus, for him, humanness or the human condition (*ren xing* 人性) is something to rely upon, and not something to dispense with, because it has been proved to be not sinful, but innocent. This holds equally true for the whole universe, which is a coalescing of matter and spirit. It is, in other words, a transformed realm wherein matter and spirit tend to assume a higher form of perfection, which can be called exalted life. Universal life permeates the universe and penetrates everything that exists. In the process of continuous creation, it increases the value of what is already valuable, as well as what is quite indifferent. For Fang Dongmei, the existential aim of human life is the realization of the supreme Good, which, however, is not merely to be found in some "other world". Hence Fang stresses that from the very start we must learn what is most precious in life by actually living in the real world.

Therefore, in his system, there is no place for any kind of separation within the Self. Fang does not accept the concept of the subject and thus fails to see the line dividing its transcendent factors from its empirical ones. He remains loyal to his holistic metaphysical pragmatism:

Because human beings possess both a rational and a spiritual nature, their experience of the Divine and of human nature is direct and not inferential; it is intimate, not separate, intuitive and not analytical. This direct experience permits Chinese philosophers to posit that the ultimate

goodness of human nature is rooted in the divine nature. And while human beings can certainly lose this capacity or potential, this loss is never casual, but is due to the individual straying or deviating from the heavenly way. (Fang 1979, 270)

### The Problematic Nature of the Human Subject and the Fusion of Reason and Emotion

For Fang Dongmei, the idea of the subject is therefore something which actually distances men from their humanity. He argued that this idea was closely linked to the development of modern European science, understood as the systematic exploration of an organic and inorganic “nature” completely separated from human beings. In his work, there is a clear tendency to emphasize de-anthropomorphism (Fang 1983, 20–25). The distinction between primary and secondary qualities tends to exclude human beings from their real nature. As noted above, science pursues pure objectivity while man, in the view of modern psychology and epistemology up to the mid-19th century, is essentially subjective (Fang 1978, 223–25)

Subjectivity is thus something which is diametrically opposed to and in contradiction with pure objectivity, which science uses to analyse abstraction, record the existent based on quantitative criteria and reduce the multiple dimensions of phenomena to formulas for different identities (Fang 1979, 258–60). For Fang, this methodology was essentially the negation of men as natural beings situated within the interwoven organic structures that constitute the universe, as well as in time and space.

Although Fang Dongmei was the only member of the second generation of Modern New Confucians who had not been a student of Xiong Shili 熊十力, his work is nonetheless linked to this pioneer of the Confucian revival precisely due to a similar insight into the Self. In this context, Xiong’s view was based on the Buddhist contradictions and paradoxes revolving around the sustainable Self (the awareness of *prajna*) and the transient awareness of life and death. Similar to Xiong, Fang also tried to resolve this paradox through a complementary interaction between substance (*ti* 體) and function (*yong* 用). For him, the mind is a sort of “supervisor” that governs the operations of all human properties, capacities and faculties. It is both substance and function. As a substance, it can embrace infinite modes of “thought” that are directed at any conceivable object. Its function instead consists of the ways in which it acts spontaneously upon things (Fang 1980b, 103).

With respect to the infinity of individual human characteristics, all these innate differences seek a harmonious fusion in the unity of an infinite multiplicity within the great Dao. Once they are in Dao, they can no longer get lost in the infinite emptiness, or in the trivial solitude of separateness or some apparent form of equality or equivalence (Fang 2004c, 261).

Fang does not refer to the subject, but rather to the “subjective spirit” (*zhuti jingshen* 主體精神) which is an inseparable part of the ontologization of “life”. In his philosophy, the “objective world” (*keguan shijie* 客觀世界) is necessarily joined by means of a “continuous organic creativity of the clear spirit” (*shengming shengshengbuxide cuangzaoli* 生命生生不息的創造力) to the “subjective spirit of humanity” (*zhutide renlei jingshen* 主體的人類精神). The subjective spirit in this sphere of life first transforms itself—through objectivization—into the objective spirit, and then ontologizes itself into a transcendent spirit. Only through self-realization can the individual preserve the organic bond with all that exists and be incorporated into the process of continuous organic creativity, which forms the basis of life. Thus, Fang concludes (1981, 23–28) that between the two paths of self-abnegation and self-affirmation, the Chinese tradition stresses a third way, that of self-development and self-realization.

This process of self-development and self-realization is, of course, closely linked to the inner spiritual cultivation of individuals. We think of the individual in terms of observed actualities and idealized possibilities. From actuality to possibility, there is a complex process of self-development. According to Fang (1981, 27), this self-development can be achieved through self-(cultivation) and a full range of self-realization.

However, the awareness of the individual’s unity with all that exists which results from this process of self-realization is not metaphysical in the sense of an abstract separation from the actual reality. The concrete values of human life do not belong either to the sphere of idealized imagination, nor to a transcendental paradise, for if they did, it would deprive them of any real value, as it would not be possible to realize them in the real world. At the same time, they cannot remain enclosed within the inner world of the individual, otherwise that person would remain trapped in a subjective egocentrism which cannot benefit any human community. The only sphere in which the individual can realize and fulfil these values and in which they can transcend the narrow limits of their own personal interests is the state. For Fang, the state represents the only possible form of extended existence, which guarantees the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number of people. In order to reach this goal and to liberate ourselves from self-bondage, social constraint and enslavement, we must overcome the many difficulties that

stand in our way through effort, courage, perseverance and sagacity. Li Chenyang (2002, 278) writes, in this context Fang laid stress upon the fact that we are “real beings”, bound by the limitations and imperfections of the “real world”. This is why we continuously have to seek to remedy the numerous—internal and external—imperfections that hinder us in achieving this goal. If we do all this, we can escape from the limitations below and behold the light of day in perfect freedom and happiness (see *ibid.*).

The “real” human being is a Self, composed of reason and emotions. For Fang Dongmei, reason was rooted in the rational structure (*li* 理) of the universe which, however, is also defined by feelings (*qing* 情). His basic supposition was that both elements formed a correlative and complementary binary category that arose from the ultimate pole (*taiji* 太極). Within the onto-epistemological wholeness which is characteristic of the classical Chinese tradition, this category provides both the basis of philosophical thought and the foundation of existence as such.

In Fang’s interpretation, “*li*” is the absolute (highest) expression of objective phenomena, while “*qing*” represents the fundamental feature of subjectivity. Because his concept of “life” includes both notions, it clearly implies the sense of transcending the separation between subject and object (Fang, Keli and Li Jinquan 1989, III/894). In his *Three Kinds of Philosophical Wisdom* (哲學三慧), Fang Dongmei also unites the notions “*li* 理” and “*qing* 情” into an epistemological concept of “sensuous reason” (*qingli* 情理). In its fusion of feelings and rationality, this concept provides a fundamental and original core, or basis of comprehension, and can thus be seen as a “seed of wisdom” (*zhibhui chongzi*) (*ibid.*).

*Qingli* 情理 belongs to the original symbolic images within the system of philosophical terminology. *Qing* 情 arises in connection with *li* 理 and the existence of the latter is again dependent on the former. In their magical interaction they circulate around each other and are thus each other’s original cause. The realm of their coexistence can be recognized by intuition, but this is difficult to express or explain. (Fang 2007, 2)

Because *qingli* 情理 implies both reason and feelings, it can only be recognized through the intuitive, and not the mere rational or analytical method. This epistemological dimension of *qingli* 情理 is therefore reflected not only in the field of perception, but also in the field of interpretation, for it is a concept that cannot be expressed, since it surpasses all semantic distinctions that define the concrete reality of human life:

The *qingli* 情理 sphere is both distant and near, deep and superficial, open and concealed. There is nothing which can be seen beyond it, and the structure of its inwardness can only be defined by our hearing and vision, and the cultivation of our personality. (ibid.)

And yet human beings need both *qing* 情 and *li* 理 for their existence and life: “Human life is conditioned by *qing* 情 and human existence by *li* 理” (ibid.).

For Fang, reason as such (i.e. when separated from feelings) represents the third of six levels of personal development. This level corresponds to human mastery of the natural world and manifests itself in the culture of science. While Fang acknowledges the importance of this aspect of human development, he argues that humanity must pursue the even higher spheres of art (beauty), morality (goodness) and perfection (harmony), i.e. the spheres to which human beings cannot gain access without possessing intuitive (moral) knowledge.

## Conclusion

In their unification, this correlative complementarity of reason and emotion constitutes the innate moral configuration of human beings. In a similar way, Fang seems to resolve many other apparent contradictions between oppositional concepts that constitute his philosophical system. Just as its fundamental holism is not a static monolithic construct, but rather an arrangement of dynamic creativity, his concept of democracy is a relational and not a normative one, for it is based upon a dynamic complementarity between individuals and the state. For the same reason, which arises from the fundamental design of the Chinese philosophical framework of reference,<sup>5</sup> the concept of the individual in Fang’s system is marked by her essential, relational embeddedness into society on the one hand, but also by her radical uniqueness on the other.

A general and widely assumed presumption is that Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi were the only two theoreticians of the second generation of Modern New Confucianism that developed their own philosophical systems. This presumption might simply rest on the fact that Fang Dongmei’s work has hitherto not been much researched. A more detailed examination of his work would show that it is certainly worth studying in a more profound way. In his philosophy, Fang Dongmei

5 For a detailed explanation about the frameworks of reference and their role in individual philosophical systems, see Rošker 2015, 59–63. The referential frameworks that underlie typical or dominant philosophical discourses in China are marked by dynamic holism, binary categories, principle of complementarity and the transformation of the empirical into the transcendental.

reproduces and modernizes the main paradigms of traditional philosophical Confucianism in a very innovative way, without departing, from the main classical ideas and methods by which it was determined. Because of these characteristics, Fang Dongmei can doubtless be counted not only among the most creative representatives of the specific philosophical stream of Modern Confucianism, but also among the greatest representatives of modern Taiwanese philosophy in general.

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# Different Approaches to Chinese Aesthetics: Fang Dongmei and Xu Fuguan<sup>1</sup>

*Aesthetics without Ethics are Cosmetics.*  
Ulay (1943–2020)

Téa SERNELJ\*

## Abstract

The article introduces Fang Dongmei's and Xu Fuguan's ideas about aesthetics and examines their different methodological approaches. Fang Dongmei and Xu Fuguan are both representatives of the second generation of Modern Taiwanese Confucianism. The fundamental goal of this significant movement is to re-evaluate and re-examine the profound contents of Chinese thought in contemporary socio-political conditions through a dialogue with Western philosophy. The representatives of Modern Confucianism of the 20th century hoped that the encounter with the Western intellectual tradition would serve as a platform for modernization of Chinese culture on the one hand, and as a way to achieve the recognition of the West for the profound value of the Chinese intellectual tradition on the other. Fang Dongmei was one of the first representatives of this movement who was trained in Western and Chinese philosophy, and hence built his own philosophical theory on the encounter of both, while Xu Fuguan was one of the first who engaged in a dialogue with the West in the field of Chinese aesthetics. The present article illuminates the profound differences in their basic methods: while Fang Dongmei's elaboration upon Chinese art and aesthetics is based on philosophical and poetic approaches, Xu Fuguan's comprehension is grounded on philological, historical and cultural analyses. The author argues that such mutual differences between their ideas show their reciprocal complementarity, which in turn provides a more profound and clear understanding of the specific spirit of Chinese art.

**Keywords:** Fang Dongmei, Xu Fuguan, Chinese aesthetic, the spirit of Chinese art, Taiwanese philosophy, Modern Confucianism

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## Drugačni pristopi v obravnavi kitajske estetike: Fang Dongmei in Xu Fuguan

### Izvleček

Članek predstavi Fang Dongmeijevo in Xu Fuguanovo estetsko misel ter razišče njune različne metodološke pristope. Fang Dongmei in Xu Fuguan sta bila predstavnika druge generacije tajvanskega modernega konfucijanstva. Temeljni cilj tega pomembnega gibanja je bil na podlagi dialoga z zahodno filozofijo ponovno ovrednotiti in preučiti globoke vsebine kitajske misli v sodobnih družbeno-političnih razmerah. Predstavniki modernega konfucianizma 20. stoletja so upali, da bo srečanje z zahodno intelektualno tradicijo na eni strani služilo kot platforma za modernizacijo kitajske kulture, na drugi strani pa kot način doseganja prepoznanja vrednosti in vsebin kitajske intelektualne tradicije s strani Zahoda. Fang Dongmei je bil eden prvih predstavnikov tega gibanja, ki je bil izobražen v zahodni in kitajski filozofiji in ki je na podlagi sinteze med njima zgradil lastno filozofsko teorijo. Xu Fuguan pa je bil eden prvih, ki je vzpostavil dialog z Zahodom na področju kitajske estetike. Članek osvetli razlike v njihovih osnovnih metodah: medtem ko je Fang Dongmeijevo proučevanje kitajske umetnosti in estetike temeljilo na filozofskih in poetičnih pristopih, Xu Fuguanovo temelji na filoloških, zgodovinskih in kulturnih analizah. Članek pokaže, da se razlike med njunimi idejami dopolnjujejo, kar posledično omogoča bolj poglobljeno in jasno razumevanje posebnosti duha kitajske umetnosti.

**Ključne besede:** Fang Dongmei, Xu Fuguan, kitajska estetika, duh kitajske umetnosti, tajvanska filozofija, moderno konfucijanstvo

### Introduction

This article introduces some of the fundamental similarities and differences in the ideas about aesthetics presented by Fang Dongmei 方东美 and Xu Fuguan 徐复观, who were contemporaries and both found exile in Taiwan after 1949. Together with Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 and Tang Junyi 唐君毅 they shaped the second generation of the Modern Confucian stream of thought. In fact, Fang Dongmei did not consider himself to be a Modern Confucian, for he always emphasized that, besides being a Confucian, he is also a Daoist and a Buddhist by heart (Rošker 2014, 157). Although he strove to integrate Western, Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist philosophy into his own philosophical theory, Fang considered Confucian thought to be the most fundamental to Chinese culture and tradition. Irrespective of the question of whether he is proclaimed as Modern Confucian or not, Fang's efforts to rejuvenate and re-evaluate traditional Chinese thought in the process of modernization were in fact based on grounds that were very similar to those which gave rise to the ideas other representatives of the second generation.

Modern Confucianism is defined by a search for syntheses between Euro-American and traditional East Asian thought. It aims to develop a system of values,

ideas and concepts that could prove itself capable of resolving the social, political, and axiological problems of globalized modern societies (Rošker 2017, 46). According to Cheng Chung-ying<sup>2</sup> 成中英 (2002, 382), within such a specific orientation of the philosophical current of Modern Confucianism, Fang Dongmei, being trained in Western and Chinese philosophy, belongs to the field of so-called synthesizing philosophy, together with Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 and Jin Yuelin 金岳霖.

While Mou Zongsan followed in the footsteps of his teacher Xiong Shili 熊十力 by working in the field of moral and metaphysical philosophy, Xu Fuguan was devoted to practical and cultural philosophy. Tang Junyi, on the other hand, is considered to have combined approaches of both, Mou and Xu. Xiong, Mou and Tang advocated the importance of building an ontological or metaphysical framework in order to properly evaluate and reinterpret Chinese philosophy, while Xu Fuguan emphasized that Chinese philosophy had always been endowed with pragmatic concerns of social realities and therefore did not consider metaphysics or ontology as the fundamental priority or framework that would enable the establishment of its modernization theories. However, Xu's view of the so-called non-metaphysical nature of traditional Chinese philosophy will be discussed in more detail in the last part of the article. In the framework of the present work it is of primary importance to understand his aesthetic views, and to set them into a contrastive comparison with Fang's. Therefore, we shall first take a look at the development and the specific features of Taiwanese aesthetics.

## Aesthetics in Taiwan

Before introducing the life and work of these great Taiwanese scholars in Chinese aesthetic thought, let us shortly summarize the development of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline in Taiwan.

In this context, it is of primary importance to draw attention to the significance of Taiwan in maintaining the continuity in the study of traditional Chinese intellectual history in the second half of the 20th century, a period in which most theoreticians in mainland China were (for political and ideological reasons) forced to limit their philosophical investigations to Marxist and Maoist ideas. The academic work that was carried out in Taiwan during the second half of the twentieth century was thus of vital significance to the further development of modern Chinese philosophy.

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2 Cheng Chung-ying is a representative of the fourth generation of Modern Confucians.

Without the instrumental function of Taiwanese scholars, such research in Chinese language would have stayed suppressed for several decades, which would in turn have caused great harm to philosophical research and the modernization of Chinese philosophy in its core cultural and linguistic setting. In other words, such a continuity that was preserved, sustained and developed by Taiwanese philosophers in researching and modernizing traditional thought allowed for the establishment of numerous important research approaches, methods and paradigms that would otherwise have been forgotten and could not have been developed further in a continuously advancing process.

Aesthetic investigations were, of course, also a vital part of these developments, which has, *inter alia*, led to some special features and characteristics of the uniquely Taiwanese model of Chinese aesthetic theory, which differed in many respects from the aesthetic research developed in mainland China. However, these distinctive tendencies did not form until the second half of the twentieth century, when many Chinese philosophers fled from Maoist rule to Taiwan.

In the first half of the 20th century, aesthetics became the most influential philosophical discipline in mainland China. Starting with Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and followed by Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, who considered aesthetics as a “healthier” substitute for religion (see Liu 2000, 27; Cai 2018, 243–48) and who applied aesthetics in the curriculum of education, and following the overall trend for aesthetics which emerged in the middle of the century, Chinese philosophers such as Zong Baihua 宗白華, Zhu Guanqian 朱光潛, Cai Yi 蔡儀 and Li Zehou 李澤厚 became the most prominent leaders of the aesthetic movement. Each in his own way, they dove deeply into the study of Western aesthetics and strove to establish Chinese aesthetics as an academic discipline. They introduced traditional Chinese aesthetics on the basis of Western aesthetics, and were familiar with the development of different fields within modern Western aesthetics, such as experimental and scientific aesthetics, the aesthetics of psychology, etc.

However, according to Gong Pengcheng (2019, 3), experimental and scientific aesthetics did not gain much attention in Taiwan, and for Taiwanese scholars the psychology of art was not considered a proper method for discussing the “hierarchy” and “structure” of human psychology. Instead, the mainstream of Taiwanese aesthetics from the middle of the 20th century on was actually centred around the aesthetics of the humanities (*renwen meixue* 人文美学). Taiwanese scholars paid more attention to the relationship between beauty and human beings, and that between art and morality, and they often considered aesthetics as the result of human spiritual completion, as well as the basic method of humanistic studies (*ibid.*). And, as we shall see below, this kind of basic attitude can also be

observed in the work of both scholars discussed in this paper, in spite of their many differences.

## Fang Dongmei and His Philosophy of Life (*Shengming zhexue* 生命哲學)

Fang Dongmei (1899–1977) was born into a highly educated family in Anhui Province, as the 16th descendant of Fang Bao 方苞 (1668–1749), a founder of the Tong Cheng Movement of Chinese literature. Allegedly, Fang was able to recite the whole *Book of Poetry* already when he was three years old (Li 2002, 263). He attended the University of Nanjing at sixteen, and later studied and gained his doctoral degree in philosophy in the United States. He was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Hegel, Bergson, and Whitehead, which, according to Li Chenyang (ibid.) is also evident in his interpretation of Chinese philosophy as well as in his own philosophical theory. Fang returned to China in 1924 and taught philosophy at various universities in China. In 1949 he moved to Taiwan and taught at National Taiwan University and Fu Jen Catholic University, and frequently also in the United States as a visiting professor (ibid.).

As already noted, Fang Dongmei integrated and combined Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist and Western philosophical traditions into his own philosophical theory. Following the *Book of Changes*, Fang defined philosophy as the study of the synthesis of the emotive (*qing* 情) and rational (*li* 理) that emerged from the Ultimate Original (*taiji* 太極) and formed human existence. According to Fang, the emotive and rational are mutually determining and interdependent<sup>3</sup> (ibid. 264).

Vincent Shen (2003, 250) claims that Fang characterized Chinese philosophy as a transcendent and immanent metaphysics, composed of three constituents: comprehensive harmony, a doctrine of *Dao* and the ascending of human beings into ever higher realms of existence.

In his philosophy of comprehensive harmony, Fang emphasized the ultimate value of life, beauty, and creativity in philosophy and culture. He placed human beings into the natural world and cherished the aesthetic dimension of human existence.<sup>4</sup>

3 This position is similar to Li Zehou's understanding of the psychology of human nature in the context of his aesthetics, namely the aesthetic metaphysics, where emotion and rationality are blended, and are both transcendent and immanent, sensuous and beyond the senses (Li 2010, 220–21).

4 In this aspect, Fang complements 20th century ethical theory, which tends to neglect the aesthetic dimension (Shen 2003, 264).

Fang's philosophy is based on the concept of life or living (*sheng* 生), which is the vital force of all existence and creation. Fang interprets the concept of creative creativity (*shengsheng* 生生), which often appears in the cosmology of the *Book of Changes*,<sup>5</sup> as a concept of creative creativity that symbolizes this kind of vitality of life (Rošker 2014, 164). Shen (2003, 250) highlights two pillars of Fang's philosophical systems, namely the theory of being and the theory of human nature.

In the theory of being, Fang declares that the nature of existence is multifaceted. Its manifold all-embracing unity includes physical, biological, psychological, aesthetic, moral, religious, and unfathomable elements. They exist in a hierarchical order, starting from the physical and rising to the unfathomable. Then they descend again from the unfathomable to the physical. For Fang, human beings can develop from the basic to higher levels. On the higher levels they can pour their creative forces back to those on the lower levels and reinforce them. This movement from downward to upward represents two cosmic processes that are continuously stimulating and inspiring each other (*ibid.*, 251).

As for his theory of human nature, Fang, like other Confucians, claims that it contains an innate dynamism, which is inherently good and tends toward the fuller development of goodness. Human nature develops according to the hierarchical order of existence (*ibid.*). Fang's philosophy of organicism and comprehensive harmony represents the ontology of dynamic relations. His affirmation of creativity as the ultimate reality demonstrates in itself the interplay between humans and nature.

In his ontology of life, Fang Dongmei believes that although there is an objective (material) world which forms its actual foundation, the dynamic and creative existence of life itself tends to dissolve the merely physical world through its inherent and consistent value system that points to the meaning of life.

In this context, it is important to point out that according to Fang human existence is not merely about survival, but presupposes the search for meaning and purpose. For him, the aesthetic side of culture and art is therefore the expression of human creativity, which is always oriented toward perfecting the deficiencies of the world into which we are thrown (Rošker 2016, 80). Fang Dongmei believes that morality is the essence of life, and at the same time a concrete embodiment of deepest human values (*ibid.*). According to Rošker (2014, 165), he is therefore convinced that the cosmos is endowed with goodness, which not only stems from

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5 Throughout intellectual history, which followed the first appearance of the *Book of Changes*, the expression *shengsheng* 生生 has been subjected to a number of reinterpretations and constituted a part of a long line of commentarial tradition. However, the very principle of creativity is a fundamental focus of contemporary Chinese philosophy (Cheng 2002, 393).

the pragmatic postulates of human co-existence, but is *a priori* a part of its essential structure, as reflected in the sphere of pure aesthetics.

## Fang Dongmei's Aesthetic Thought

Creative creativity, which represents the ultimate reality of the cosmic process as a whole, that begins with the creative movement of life, constitutes a system of comprehensive harmony, and ultimately returns to the freedom of the creative force itself. This process of creative creativity starts with the aesthetic experience through which a free and creative mode of life develops (Shen 2003, 250).

Through the sense of beauty, the cosmic processes and human life can be understood as the complex synthesis of reason (*li* 理) and feeling (*qing* 情). In works of art, and particularly in poetic language, the sense of beauty is articulated through comprehensive harmony. Even though works of art are infinite in their creative intention and imaginative function, they are based on a finite material realization. The resulting aesthetic experience forms the core of Fang's philosophy of life (*ibid.*).

The beauty of the objective world (the beauty of the universe) must be based on the life of the subject in order to produce the meaning of "beauty". The inherently limited objective world as such cannot constitute any "beauty"; only the combination of the two can construct a beautiful world of life. As Fang declared:

Ancient Chinese sages saw the universe as a manifestation of universal life, in which material conditions and spiritual phenomena are fused and integrated into one, without being separated. All values and ideals of goodness and beauty can be realized with the spread of life. Our universe is a garden of morality and also the realm of artistic conception. Here, beauty and morality are united. Thereupon, life and art are also united: The full life is the expansion of power and the expression of beauty. All artistic creations depend on our desire to live and desire to act freely in order to achieve infinite possibilities. Life is art, and art is full of life.

中國先哲把宇宙看作普遍生命的表現，其中物質條件與精神現象融會貫通，至於渾然一體而無隔絕。一切至善盡美的價值理想，盡可以隨生命之流行而得著實現，我們的宇宙是道德的園地，亦是藝術的意境。美與道德，在此合一了。生命與藝術，遂也是合一的：盎然充實的生命就是力的擴張、美的表示，一切藝術創作均仗我們願所欲生，暢所欲為，以實現無窮的可能。生命正是藝術，藝術富有生命。(Fang in Gong 2019, 5)

For Fang, art expresses the merging of the inner essence of things and the inner being of man. He asserts that in this sense, art touches the heart of religion, it reaches the core of philosophy, and in its handling of technique it bears away the results of scientific inventions. The intensified aesthetic experience is a state of inspired love, in which human beings and Nature are spontaneously engaged in a miraculous form of communication (Fang 1980, 154).

Art, as the embodiment of cosmic feeling and expression of the creative impulse of life, is influenced by the cardinal belief of religion, permeated with the spirit of philosophy, and, especially in modern times, affected by scientific technology (ibid.).

In the context of his theory of comprehensive harmony or the theory of the cosmic pattern of order, Fang provides a metaphysical definition of Chinese art, arguing that it expresses the consistent harmony which is the infinite realm of Nature engulfing the supernatural, to show the miraculous potency of the Divine (ibid.).

On the other hand, Chinese aesthetics and art as such are an expression of an all pervasive flux of life that is infinite in extent. However, for Fang the whole universe is in a process of change, receiving and spending inexhaustible energy. It is *Dao* in its perpetual creative advance which causes all forms of existence to be charged with intrinsic worth. Everything is valuable inasmuch as it participates in that universal life which is immortal due to its infinite ideal of perfection and eternal continuity of creation (ibid., 155), where there is no separation between the material conditions and spiritual phenomena. Matter manifests the significance of what is spiritual, and spirit permeates the core of what is material. In the Chinese conception, the universe represents a fully comprehensive life, an all-pervading vital energy, which constantly creates and procreates (*shengsheng buxi* 生生不息). In this continuous process of creativity, human beings can perceive the great beauty of the universe, and of life within it.

The beauty of the universe is to be incarnated within life and its exuberant vitality. For Fang, the main concern of Chinese art is to express the beauty of life and its abundant vitality in rhythmic movements,<sup>6</sup> which is also the fundamental principle underlying all Chinese art.

Fang argues:

The Chinese spirit of art aims at the liberation of human souls so as to make them speak eloquently the silent poetry. It expresses a conception of the universe, a vision of its wholeness, a liberation from the struggle for

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6 Here, Fang refers to the most fundamental principle of Chinese aesthetics, namely the concept *qiyun shengdong* (氣韻生動).



existence which subordinates everything to human interest and prejudices, a going out of the spirit into the solitudes unafraid and exulting. And yet, profound as it is, as a genuine expression of the charm of life insinuated into natural objects, it has a most direct appeal to human emotion. (Fang 1980a, 162)

For Fang and for traditional Chinese aesthetics in general, the inseparability of beauty and the goodness of the universe refers to the realm of values which urges people to develop their moral personalities to attain the supreme good and, at the same time, to cultivate their artistic talents in order to realize the ideals of perfect beauty (Fang 1980b, 121). For Fang, the spirit of Chinese art and Chinese aesthetics is based on the communion of Confucian and Daoist philosophy.

Fang asserts that Laozi is the typical exemplar in whom philosophical reason and the artistic impulse fuse together most closely, since he regards the modes of creation, nourishment, growth, nurture, completion, and maturity as exhibiting the fundamental characteristics of the perpetual creativity of *Dao* and Virtue (*De* 德). They are spontaneously active, ever giving rise to novelties (ibid., 126). Hence, for him, Daoist philosophy, and in particular Laozi's conception of *Dao* as cosmic creativity, is the basis to understand Chinese art, especially painting and poetry.

Confucius and Confucians looked upon the universe and human life as the interrelated realms of great harmony saturated with pure beauty, and therefore paid much attention to the consideration of aesthetic values (ibid., 129). In this context, Fang interprets the following quote from Confucius on the relation between *Dao*, virtues and art: "To aim at *Dao*, to abide by virtues, to lean on love, and to be well versed in the fine arts." (志於道，據於德，依於仁，游於藝。) (ibid.) Only a person who has an ardent love for the wondrous beauty of fine arts can become a perfect man through apprehension of *Dao* and the cultivation of virtues (ibid.).

Fang also argued that for Confucius music and poetry were the measures of equilibrium and harmony. Music expresses the harmonious union of Heaven, Earth and human beings, while poetry is the embodiment of the cosmic spirit. The chief intention in the contemplation of beautiful things is to feel deeply the creative life in the universe, and to become inseparably one with it by way of sympathy, in order to gain access to the great Harmony (ibid., 131).

As for Zhuangzi, Fang sees him as a thinker who synthesized the philosophical insights of Laozi and Confucius, focusing upon considerations of Chinese artistic ideals and articulating the principles of comprehensive harmony. Actually, Fang Dongmei's own characterization of Chinese art as the "silent beauty" also derives from Zhuangzi:

Heaven and Earth are permeated with great beauty, but they say nothing about it; the four seasons observe the palpable laws, but they do not discuss them; all things go on in accordance with reason, but they say nothing about it. The sages strive after the beauty of the universe in order to reach the ground of all things. Thus, it is the perfect man ventures to do nothing and the great sage affects to originate nothing, for they take the creative spirit in the universe for their model.

天地有大美而不言，四時有明法而不議，萬物有成理而不說。聖人者，原天地之美而達萬物之理。是故至人無為，大聖不作，觀於天地之謂也。(Zhuangzi s.d., *Wai pian*, *Zhi bei you*: 2 in Fang 1980b, 124)

Fang poetically explains how this quotation from Zhuangzi clearly reveals the basic essence of Chinese aesthetic thought, and this is the very same essence that underlines his entire philosophy of life. The fundamental Daoist concepts, namely *Dao*, creative creativity, virtue, the great, silent beauty, and non-interference (*wuwei* 無為) constitute the very nature of his interpretation of Chinese art and aesthetics. As Fang elaborates, the general nature of Chinese art as the expression of exuberant vitality is metaphysical rather scientific, since it takes things as a whole in conformity with the principle of comprehensive harmony. In their creative works, Chinese artists reveal the integral impressions of the cosmic rhythms of life:

The Chinese artist is an integral mind or creative spirit in whom the metaphysical impulse of a philosopher, the lyrical mood of a poet, the piercing eye of a painter, the dexterous mastery of a carver, the form giving power of a musical composer, and, above all, the beatific vision of an inmost soul are melted into one synthetic whole, marshalling the quintessential reality and beauty of all-pervading life, thus producing a work of art. (ibid., 132)

According to Fang Dongmei, art reflects the essence of beauty. Therefore, the concerns of art have two directions, namely “the beauty of life” (*shengming zhi mei* 生命之美) and “vigorous vitality” (*qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動). The first is the essence of life (*shengming benti* 生命本體) and the latter, the creative vitality (*chuangzao huoli* 創造活力). Hence, the essence of beauty is revealed in the artworks. Therefore, “art is a depiction of the energetic flow of the great change” (ibid.), and hence the artworks are able to show the beauty itself. What Chinese art focuses on is not the same as the static sculpture in Greece, which expresses the isolated, individual life. Instead, it focuses on the bright and kind heart (*ren xin* 人心) filled with the flow of life. Generally speaking, the main subject of Fang’s philosophy is the essence of life. In fact, it is a philosophy of value, and beauty is

an inseparable part of his value system. So, the real meaning of its beauty is the beauty that comes out of life itself. For Fang, life itself is the essential foundation of beauty (Gong 2019, 6).

As we have seen, Fang's aesthetics are an integral part of his philosophy of life centred around the notion of creative creativity. However, the aesthetic experience of the creative creativity of the universe (or *Dao*) endowed with vigorous (and harmonious) vitality represents the essence or the spirit of Chinese art. From Fang's poetic aesthetics, one could speculate that his highest aesthetic ideal is to hear the silent poetry of cosmic life within the human life itself.

### Xu Fuguan's Pragmatic Worldview

Unlike Fang's privileged family background, Xu Fuguan (1904–1982) was born in a remote peasant village in Hubei Province. His father was a poor village school-teacher and Xu was the only one among four children who received a proper education. After college, he studied at a military academy in Japan and attended the lectures of the first Japanese Marxist Kawakami Hajime (1879–1946) at the University of Meiji.<sup>7</sup> In 1931, Xu and many other Chinese students studying in Japan protested against the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, causing him to be expelled from the academy half a year before completing his studies. In 1932, Xu started working as a colonel of the Nationalist Party (GMD) in Guangxi and later as a military instructor. In 1942, he was offered the position of an adviser to the Alliance in Yan'an (Lee 1998, 52). After six months of working in this function he returned to Chongqing and became Chiang Kai-shek's advisor, confidante and secretary. Before long, he met Xiong Shili, who became his teacher. Under his influence, he soon moved out of politics and became an academic. In 1949 Xu migrated with his family to Taiwan where he taught Chinese literature at Donghai University in Taizhong.

However, Xu did not consider himself a philosopher, but a historian and sociologist, dealing mainly with the intellectual and political history of China, as well as with literary critique and Chinese art and aesthetics. Xu addressed these problems through hermeneutics and precise philological analysis. In the field of Chinese aesthetics, his fundamental work is *The Spirit of Chinese Art* (*Zhongguo yishu jingshen* 中國藝術精神) written in 1966, in which Xu highlighted the artistic, aesthetic and spiritual value of Chinese art and culture through its comparison to Western aesthetics.

7 At that time Xu was impressed by Western ideas such as communism and socialism, which greatly influenced his socio-political views (for details see Sernelj 2019).

In facing the urgent need to modernize Chinese culture and society at the beginning of the 20th century, most of the Modern Confucians emphasized the importance of building a new ontology that could serve as the basis for the Confucian renewal. As already mentioned, Xu Fuguan was practically the only representative of the second generation of Modern Confucians to consider that metaphysics and ontology were not appropriate instruments for understanding ancient Chinese thought, and even less so for the development of its interpretation, because its pragmatic nucleus had never led to the composition of a structured and coherent metaphysical system, as had been established, for instance, by the ancient Greek philosophers (Bresciani 2001, 338).

Xu struggled to explain the precious cultural heritage of China to his contemporaries, and argued that the primary concerns of traditional Chinese culture were the practical social needs of people's daily lives. In this sense, he saw Confucianism as the main representative of Chinese cultural heritage. And since Chinese culture was preoccupied with human behaviour and the activities of daily life, it did not feel any need to develop a metaphysical system in order to expound upon its humanistic spirit (*ibid.*).

For Xu, the application of metaphysics onto Chinese thought would thus be superficial and damage its genuine humanistic nature.

Xu suggested that ancient Chinese philosophers developed the idea of ethics based on the “divine or heavenly” essence of human beings directly from the “primitive” state of religious and mythological society. He argued that we could not find anything similar to the Western metaphysical tradition in Chinese philosophy; even more, one of the basic characteristics of Chinese philosophy lies in its paradigm of immanent transcendence, which means that everything that appears in the abstract sphere, can—at least potentially—also exist on the physical level. Xu Fuguan suggested that Chinese philosophy and the corresponding heart-mind culture should be considered as a *mesophysics* rather than metaphysics—not only because of the above mentioned characteristics of Chinese philosophy, but also because of the physiological basis and the manifold implications of the heart-mind's ability to make moral and axiological judgments.

For Xu, the real Confucian thought is to be found in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) and in *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子), that are centred around ethics and moral behaviour, and not in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), which deals with the metaphysical dimension of Confucian thought. Nevertheless, in their re-evaluations and re-appropriations of Confucianism in the process of modernization, other Modern Confucians were mainly occupied with the latter. However, Xu

argued that the true accomplishments of the Chinese history of thought were to be found in ethical philosophy and aesthetics (Bresciani 2001, 340).

He emphasized that Western cultures present their ethical systems as relying on metaphysical foundations or the religious doctrine and the idea of revelation (ibid., 341). Because Chinese thought and culture are not based on such foundations, but instead concerned with earthly matters, namely with the improvement of human beings and society, it could help Modern Western cultures with their presupposed moral decline and general ethical crisis.

Xu saw the innate characteristics of Modern Western culture (e.g. technical instrumentalism, logical positivism, behaviourism as well as psychoanalysis and Modern art in general), with its so-called abolishment of traditional ethical values, as a danger and threat to humanity as a whole (Lee 1998, 309).

In this respect, Xu's engagement in the field of aesthetics, where he carried out research based on a comparative perspective of Chinese and Western aesthetics and phenomenology, reflected his general position regarding Western modernity, as outlined above.

### Xu Fuguan's Understanding of the Spirit of Chinese Art

Xu Fuguan's main motivation for writing *The Spirit of Chinese Art* 中國藝術精神 (*Zhongguo yishu jingshen*) in 1966 emerged from his response to the contemporary art arriving in Taiwan from the West. He criticized the unreflective and uncritical acquisition of Western modern and postmodern art and culture by young Taiwanese intellectuals and artists, and called for a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of their own cultural tradition. It is therefore understandable that this book contains a rather broad spectrum of Western philosophical categories, especially aesthetics and phenomenology through which Xu tried to point out that Chinese tradition, especially Zhuangzi's thought, already contained certain concepts (questions and even answers) that were occupying Western contemporary philosophy and art which were popular in Taiwan at the time (ibid.).

In this fundamental work, he argued that the aesthetic spirit of Chinese culture followed the thought of Confucius, which is manifested mostly in literature, and in Zhuangzi's philosophy, that is most vividly expressed in painting and poetry. The first half of the book deals with a comparison of Confucius' and Zhuangzi's aesthetics, and the latter's relation to Western aesthetics and phenomenology. An extensive chapter is dedicated to his presentation and thorough philological

analysis of the fundamental Chinese aesthetic concept of *qiyun shengdong* 氣韻生動. The last third of the book deals with the history of Chinese painting.

According to Xu, the axiology of Chinese aesthetics was already clearly defined in the first etymological dictionary from the first century (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字), where it is written that beauty and goodness are in fact synonyms (*mei yu shan tongyi* 美與善同意). The actuality of this innate relation is most clearly expressed in Confucius's thought. Confucius valued art highly for its contribution to human education and moral improvement. Xu Fuguan argued that Confucius paid great respect to art in general; his devotion to music in particular illustrated that virtue and art converged and reinforced each other (Lee 1998, 325). Confucius engagement in art through relaxation, moulding and contemplation of human emotions provides a deeper understanding of human nature in the context of self-cultivation (Li 2010, 77). It expresses the value of art in human life with respect to the unity of beauty and goodness which is directly connected to Confucian values. Confucius' "six arts" 六藝 *liuyi* were educational tools for self-cultivation, and as such held the function of moulding and balancing human emotions that enabled humans to discover, develop and realize their moral subjectivity as the highest realm of the human spirit, which represents the highest goal in Confucian philosophy.

However, Xu believed that the aesthetic spirit of Chinese tradition in the sense of the *art of life* is best seen in Zhuangzi's philosophy of a liberated and free human spirit, namely in the "free and easy wandering" (*xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊). He acknowledged Zhuangzi's thought as the best representative of the "Chinese aesthetic spirit", because of its unity between life and art (Ni 2002, 299).

According to Xu Fuguan, Zhuangzi's freedom of human spirit and emancipation from the secularity of human existence can be achieved in two ways. The first is to achieve the liberation of the human spirit and unity with *Dao* by the methods of *xinzhai* 心齋 (or "fasting of the human heart-mind") and *zuowang* 坐忘 (or "sitting in forgetfulness"). The second option which enables us to achieve such a liberation is, as we will see later, through artistic creativity.

In the *fasting of the human heart-mind* method, bodily and emotional desires and any kind of utilitarian purposes are dispelled, and one is able to integrate oneself with nature and discover (or grasp) its true essence. In *sitting in forgetfulness*, Zhuangzi transcended conceptual or analytical thinking, and the making of judgements and decisions that he saw as products of socialization and moral cultivation processes, overwhelmed by anxieties, worries, desires, life and death. In this way, he tried to open up a way to dissolve the boundaries between people and establish genuine interpersonal relations. Only on such basis could human beings become one with nature (or *Dao*) (Xu 1966, 66).

Xu draws attention to Zhuangzi's proposition of how to achieve a selfless (*wuji* 無己) state of mind, in which one is able to grasp the essence of human life, the universe (*Dao*) and all phenomena. In Zhuangzi's view, such a state could not be attained on the basis of cognitive knowledge, but rather on the basis of intuition or direct (pure) perception (ibid., 68). Only in this way could people master (*gongfu* 功夫) the methods of fasting of the heart-mind and sitting in forgetfulness.

However, the effort (*gongfu* 功夫) of becoming one with *Dao* is—according to Xu Fuguan—the laborious creative effort of a great artist. The main goal of this effort is not artistic production, but, much more importantly, the realization of an artistic genius. While Zhuangzi finds the unceasing unification with *Dao* in an accomplished artistic life, the artist himself or herself reveals this unity within his their artwork (Bresciani 2001, 345). Nevertheless, Zhuangzi's artistic life refers to the perfection of human life, not to the concrete artistic perfection that manifests itself in works of art.

Xu also reveals that, in fact, Zhuangzi seems to surpass the established values of the beauty, perfection, and happiness of this superficial life in order to reach up and grasp the great beauty of the universe and great happiness beyond sensory enjoyment to acquire the creative ability of the cosmic force of transformation (Xu 2002, 123), which makes the human spirit free and liberated.

Zhuangzi's *sitting in forgetfulness* is similar to Laozi's "non-knowledge" (*wuzhi* 無知) and "non-desire" (*wuyu* 無欲). It does not radically or absolutely negate desires, but just prevents them from controlling people's personalities, and hence the course of their lives. Such *forgetfulness* (of knowledge) is thus a method of eliminating axiological and conceptual knowledge, and what remains is "pure perception or consciousness" (*chun zhibue* 純知覺). Xu argued that this kind of pure perception (or consciousness) is the "aesthetic observation" (*meidi guanzhao* 美地觀照) (Xu 1966, 73).

In his view, this "aesthetic observation" is a non-analytical comprehension of things (*phenomena*) through intuition or "direct perception" (*zhibiguan de huodong* 直觀的活動). Such an approach is completely different from more pragmatic ones, which always aim to seek knowledge. It simply relies on the perception that occurs through the spontaneous activity of the sense organs, which occurs, for instance, through seeing and hearing.<sup>8</sup>

8 As Zhuangzi wrote: "Do not listen with your ears, but with your heart-mind. Do not listen with your heart-mind, but with your *qi* (vital potential). The hearing stops at ears, the heart-mind stops at symbol. *Qi* (the vital potential) is empty, and therefore able to receive things, and the accumulated emptiness is *dao*. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind."  
无聽之以耳而聽之以心，无聽之以心而聽之以氣。聽止於耳，心止於符。氣也者，虛而待物者也。唯道集虛。虛者，心齋也。(Zhuangzi s.d. *Nei pian*, *Renjian shi*: 2)

Xu Fuguan tried to compare the notion of *fasting of the heart-mind* and *sitting in forgetfulness* with certain aspects of Husserl's phenomenology. In this context, he highlighted Husserl's method of *bracketing*, or *epoché*, where we put in brackets our so-called natural attitude or our usual way of seeing reality, in order to focus on our experience of it. In this way we become able to explore our consciousness. Xu argued, according to Husserl, our consciousness is always intentional in the sense that it is actional (always doing something) and referential (it is always referring to something). In Xu's opinion, such intentionality, actionality and referentiality cannot be regarded as experiences of our consciousness, but should rather be seen as forms of transcendence. Xu Fuguan suggests (1966, 74) that in this sense Husserl's approaches can be compared to the methods proposed by Zhuangzi. Through Zhuangzi, Xu also tried to explain the essence of intuition, and to clarify how perception can provide us with insights into things. In this regard, he reveals another alleged similarity between the two philosophers, noting that for Husserl intuition means realizing the essential nature of consciousness, which represents the phenomenological approach that leads "*back to the things in themselves*" (ibid.).

Here, we could mention that Li Zehou also compared Zhuangzi's elimination of the mind and senses in the process of perception to Husserl's notion of pure consciousness. However, Li clearly stated that the difference between their respective approaches is that Husserl's pure consciousness is epistemological, while Zhuangzi's *zuowang* is an aesthetic notion (Li 2010, 81).

Xu Fuguan's interpretation of the concept of *qiyun shengdong* is also extremely important, since it reveals his thorough and very precise philological approach in presenting this fundamental aesthetic concept. Xu's analysis deals with individual concepts within *qiyun shengdong*, namely the *qi* and *yun*, *qiyun* and *shengdong*, and shows their conceptual development over time (see Sernelj 2017). He showed its multidimensional and multi-layered contents and meanings, and also elaborated upon the complex problems concerning the translation of this concept into other languages (see ibid.). As we have seen in Fang Dongmei's aesthetics, he translated it as vigorous dynamics of vitality or vivid vitality. But due to the lack of any similar concepts in English and other Western languages, Xu Fuguan strongly advised against such renderings. For him, *qiyun* is primarily understood as the fusion of the spirit of the artist with the spirit of the external world. He revealed that such a fusion is based on the ancient Chinese concept of *Tian ren heyi* 天人合一 ("unity of man and nature"). This process is not about the presentation of the external world, but rather represents the inner experience of the fusion of the individual with the world (nature, cosmos), which happens through the dynamics of *qi*. *Yun* plays a key role in this procedure, because it creates and enables a balance between



elements of the external cosmos on the one side, and those of the internal individual world on the other.

## A Comparison of Xu's and Fang's Approaches to Chinese Aesthetics

In the Modern Confucian process of reviving and re-examining Chinese thought and culture, Fang Dongmei was probably the first philosopher who was profoundly engaged in the illumination of Chinese aesthetics and art.

However, according to Sun Qi (2006, 5), most of the Modern Confucians have been dealing with questions regarding the Spirit of Chinese art. In his view, studies of Chinese aesthetics were by no means limited to Fang Dongmei. In this context, he explicitly names Tang Junyi and Xu Fuguan, but also some other scholars. He even emphasizes that the first person who really raised and demonstrated Chinese aesthetics as a concept was Tang Junyi. However, on the other hand, we cannot forget that Tang was one of the three closest disciples of Fang Dongmei. Hence, it is quite possible that Tang adopted and developed Fang's conception of this very term. But we must also take into consideration that Xu Fuguan and Tang Junyi likewise collaborated very closely, and therefore it is also very likely that Xu was indirectly influenced by Fang Dongmei's conception of Chinese aesthetics through Tang Junyi. In this regard, Sun Qi (2013, 40) draws our attention to the fact that Tang had already elaborated upon the concept of the spirit of Chinese art in the 1940s, whereas Xu Fuguan further and more thoroughly debated it in his book *The Spirit of Chinese Art*, which was first published more than 20 years later, in 1966.

There are some similarities between the two approaches. The basic resemblance is reflected in the fact that both emphasize the importance of the relation between art and human life. They both use a comparative perspective of China and the West, and both see the important role of Daoism in Chinese art. However, the main difference between Fang and Xu lies in their respective approaches to the study of Chinese aesthetics.

In Fang Dongmei's philosophical system, art is an important and necessary step on the way towards human perfection. It belongs to the highest philosophical ideals, and from the very beginning is based upon metaphysical presuppositions.

Xu Fuguan, on the other hand, has posited the Chinese experience of beauty into the framework of the human experience of life. Even though it arises from the momentous experience of life, and although it seeks to transcend material limits and reach infinity, it never leaves real life. As a part of Chinese philosophy, such

an idea of beauty never points to metaphysical ontology, as is the case in Western philosophy (Liang 2013, 135).

In his philosophy of life and human nature, which has been briefly delineated in earlier sections of this paper, Fang especially admired the Confucian ideal personality. However, it is obvious that Fang Dongmei regards Daoism as the philosophical basis of all Chinese art theory. As a result, Fang Dongmei merged Confucianism and Daoism in his aesthetics, and even endowed Daoist ideas with the Confucian ideal of moral perfection (*ibid.*). Fang Dongmei was aware of Zhuangzi's transcendence, but in his philosophical vision he directs this to theological redemption (*ibid.*): "Once I talk about Daoism, I often enter another brand-new world, such as the magical dreamland" (Fang in *ibid.*).

Indeed, in his specific exposition of Chinese aesthetics, Fang Dongmei thoroughly understood the important impact of Daoism on Chinese art: "When discussing Chinese metaphysics, when discussing the "world" or "universe", we must continue to transcend it ... in Daoism, it becomes the world of art" (Fang in *ibid.*).

Hence, Fang's elaboration of Chinese art and aesthetics is a part of his philosophy of life with its metaphysical foundation. Xu Fuguan, on the other hand, completely discarded the metaphysical dimension of Chinese thought in general, and thus his comprehension of Chinese art and aesthetics is based on more concrete methods, namely historical, cultural and philological ones.

Although both scholars saw the connection of morality and art in Confucian thought, but the pure aesthetic experience of life and the universe in Daoist ideas, Fang included both dimensions in his understanding of Chinese art without separating the impact of both in his comprehensive aesthetic system. In contrast to such supposition, Xu Fuguan posited Daoist (in particular Zhuangzi's) aesthetics in a contrastive dialogue with modern Western philosophy, especially with phenomenology. In this respect, his main goal was to reveal the relevance of Zhuangzi's conception of the liberated human spirit as the highest aesthetic ideal that was at the forefront of modern art at that time.

As already noted, Fang Dongmei was trained in Western and Chinese philosophy, whereas Xu was not a philosopher, but rather an expert in the Chinese history of ideas. When comparing traditional Chinese and modern Western discourses, he was therefore often somewhat partial and tended towards essentialist generalizations. This becomes especially clear in his exploration of Western thought, in which he ignored and excluded the very fundamental basis of Western philosophical tradition, which has its roots in ontology or metaphysics.

What Xu tried to highlight was that the very concept of pure consciousness and pure aesthetic experience that was at the centre of modern Western phenomenology already existed in Zhuangzi's aesthetic thought. In this way, he aimed to provide the younger generations of Taiwanese artists and intellectuals, who were seeking for a way to liberate the human spirit and tried to adopt modern Western methods of such liberation, with the possibility of finding similar ideas in their own, i.e. Chinese, philosophical tradition, and to embrace this idea as arising from their own cultural heritage.

Here I agree with Sun Qi (2006, 9) and Liang Yuan (2013, 136) that in this regard Xu was very successful in explaining the spirit of Chinese art, because when illuminating the basic concepts of Chinese aesthetics, he used a contemporary language. The same holds true for his amplifications of his own encounters with Western aesthetic theories and phenomenology through which he tried to re-introduce and re-interpret Zhuangzi's aesthetics in a novel way.

In my view, however, the main problem of Xu's revival of Confucian and Daoist thought lies precisely in the elimination of their metaphysical (or ontological) dimensions. Xu's rejection of this inseparable facet, which allowed him to maintain his position of the so-called exclusively pragmatic Chinese worldview, leads to certain oversimplifications in his evaluations of the two most important Chinese philosophical schools. As we have seen from Fang's and Xu's interpretation of Daoist (or Zhuangzi's) philosophy, it is more than clear that it is metaphysical, since in general it deals with a wide range of questions connected to profound questions of existence and to the fundamental nature of reality, to the relation of mind and body, cause and effect, time and space, potentialities or possibilities and actualities, ethics, art, etc. It seems that Xu's understanding of metaphysics is quite problematic, since he probably understood it as something related solely to some kind of spiritual or religious dimension.<sup>9</sup> Fang, on the other hand, emphasized the transcendence and transformative power of Chinese art and aesthetic in a very coherent and poetic manner. Although Fang appreciates the unity of morality and art in Confucian aesthetics and emphasizes the metaphysical transcendence of Daoist aesthetics, he nevertheless includes both dimensions in his comprehensive theory of Chinese aesthetics.

I would hence argue that his approach is philosophical and poetic, while Xu Fuguan's is philological and historical.

9 Since Xu did not understand any European languages and was thus forced to read all works of Western philosophy through their Chinese and Japanese translations, such an opinion might also be a result of the Chinese (and Japanese) word for metaphysics, *xing er shang xue* 形而上學, which literally means "that, which is above the forms".

## Conclusion

Fang Dongmei's and Xu Fuguan's different approaches towards Chinese art and aesthetics can most vividly be observed in the very narrative structures they use when discussing the topic. Xu proceeds from presenting Confucius' and Zhuangzi's aesthetic thought, and in turn compares the latter with Western aesthetics. In the next step, this comparison is followed by the philological analysis of the concept *qiyun shengdong*, on the basis of which Xu focuses on landscape painting with a partial excursion into Chinese poetry. His approach is very systematic, and in his exploration of Chinese art and aesthetics he uses strictly historical and philological methods.

In contrast to such approaches, Fang's philosophical and poetic narrative fuses together all integral parts of Chinese art and aesthetics in order to bring forward the poetic nature of Chinese philosophy and art. Therefore, I would speculate that Fang's narrative is intentionally poetic in order to help the reader become immersed aesthetically into the world of Chinese art. However, Xu Fuguan's systematic approach provides the reader with a precise and thorough explanation of specific terms integral to Chinese aesthetics, which is indispensable, since it offers a different, and in his own way, an even deeper insight into the poetic nature of Chinese art and aesthetics in general.

In my view, both approaches are therefore complementary and, as such, extremely valuable for a more profound and comprehensive understanding of Chinese art and aesthetics.

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# Thomé Fang's Pursuit of a Cultural Ideal

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## Abstract

Thomé Fang's philosophical ideas are largely directed to the possibility of a form of humane enculturation that is somewhat similar to the Greek idea of *paideia*. His persistent pursuit of a cultural ideal is based on the rediscovery of and reflection on the relevance of Chinese and Western heritage, and a comparison of both. As an illustration of the cultural ideal that is the focus of his concern, it is conducive to examine the pagoda allegory that implies an approach to transcultural transformation or synthesis. In practice, this involves a threefold strategy and a reconsideration of cultural origins through artistic features.

**Keywords:** Thomé Fang (Fang Dongmei), humane enculturation, *paideia*, pagoda allegory, transcultural transformation

## Thomé Fangova težnja po kulturnem idealu

### Izvleček

Thomé Fangove filozofske ideje se večinoma usmerjajo k možnosti človeške kulturalizacije, kar je nekaj podobnega kot grška ideja *paideia*. Njegova nenehna težnja po kulturnem idealu temelji na ponovnem odkrivanju in razmisleku o pomembnosti kitajske in zahodne dediščine ter na njuni primerjavi. Za ponazoritev kulturnega ideala, Fangove osrednje teme raziskovanja, je tako vredno preučiti alegorijo pagoda, ki pomeni pristop k transkulturni preobrazbi ali sintezi. V praksi to zahteva trojno strategijo in prevrednotenje kulturnih izvorov skozi umetniške vzorce.

**Ključne besede:** Thomé Fang (Fang Dongmei), človeška kulturalizacija, *paideia*, alegorija pagoda, transkulturna preobrazba

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Acknowledged as one of the leading Confucian philosophers in the 20th century, Thomé Fang (Fang Dongmei 方东美, 1899–1977) was among the first to expound and promote the cultural philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947). As a result of the legacy of the New Culture Movement across China in the early 1920s, he was preoccupied with a sense of mission to renovate Chinese cultural heritage with reference to its Western counterpart. As regards the conception of culture *per se*, he gives credit to this argument from Whitehead,

Culture is activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling [...] What we should aim at producing is men who possess both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction. Their expert knowledge will give them the ground to start from, and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy and as high as art. (Whitehead 1960, 13)

Moreover, Fang shares sympathy with Whitehead's advice to go beyond the ivory-tower mode of bookish education, and encourages college students to step into the open air, expose themselves to classical works and the arts in general, and think over more significant issues in their own right instead of bending over classroom desks and burying themselves in textbooks, being alone all day. In this case, "philosophy" and "art" are given a higher position in the cognitive and aesthetic development of humans as humans, for they lead to the enrichment of human wisdom in the intellectual and artistic domains. According to Kant, wisdom can be briefly defined as the practical use of reason that conforms perfectly with the law. Since only the slightest degree of wisdom can be poured into a man by others, he must bring it forth from himself. The precept for obtaining wisdom contains three leading maxims: 1) think for oneself, 2) think into the place of the other (in communication with human beings), and 3) always think consistently with oneself (Kant 2006, 94–95; 2000, vol. 5: 294). In my opinion, this could be the reason why both Whitehead and Fang place much stress on independent and individual thinking.

Along this line of thought, Fang proceeds to contemplate the task of thinking for oneself by virtue of transcultural transformation and creation alike. All this then leads him to pursue a new cultural ideal and philosophize it in terms of cosmopolitan harmonism. A second reflection on what he considers in this sphere reveals some hidden aspects of his theoretical hypothesis, and also evokes a call to reconsider a possible alternative to transcultural interaction and transformational synthesis by means of a threefold process strategy. Moreover, as art is the most celebrated part of each culture, Fang proposes art education as both a starting and pivotal point, based on which it is possible to explore transcultural factors in the cultural origins of the art in question.



## The Cultural Ideal in Allegorical Depiction

In most of Fang's writings the notion of a cultural ideal is a predominant concern. It can be seen as a form of humane enculturation (*ren wen hua cheng* 人文化成), which in Chinese tradition means the activity of gaining enlightenment through culture or the cultural illumination of humanity, which pertains teleologically to a process of accomplishing a fine personality. In fact, Fang deliberately links culture with education, which can be perceived in light of the ancient Greek term *paideia*, which is a kind of pedagogical operation that enables the young to grow and develop into fully formed and realized beings or citizens. Coincidentally, it involves an interwoven connection between culture and education, and therefore indicates the essential function of both culture and education according to the specific context of this term in the modern Greek language. As noticed in Fang's clarifications, culture and education seem to be two sides of the same coin, closely interrelated to the extent that they walk hand-in-hand as twins in his thinking.

As seen in his essay on "Education and Culture" (1993), for instance, Fang starts with an observation from Alfred Whitehead about the primary objective of university education, as follows: "During the school period the student has been mentally bending over his desk; at the university he should stand up and look around" (Whitehead 1960, 37). By so doing, the student will be able to apprehend that correct education is intended to facilitate real intellectual development, nourish the human virtues within, and bring into full play his natural gifts or potential talents. Consequently, the well-educated person will be capable of creating wonders in scholarship and contributing more to his nation, the world and humankind as a whole. If the university as an institution has really fulfilled this mission, it can be considered to have provided education for humankind, and accordingly the educated people will be freed from many problems in terms of pedagogical, social, psychological and other issues. But in Fang's eyes, the practice of education is nowadays often confronted with the issue of problematic man, particularly in the case of young people (Fang 1993a, 12ff). This is mostly due to the expansion of irrational desires that are liable to transform the problematic man into an irrational beast, according to the in-depth Freudian psychoanalysis. For this reason, Fang calls for the development of a higher form of psychology in order to enhance moral science and overcome the lopsided advancement of physical science. He himself draws a blueprint of the cultural ideal in anthropological terms, one that is morally based and spiritually oriented in light of humane enculturation. It consists of nine realms that are metaphorically equivalent to a nine-storied pagoda with a Gothic steeple overhead.

The pagoda allegory is hierarchical in principle, but structurally organic and interactive due to its step-by-step uplifting of the soul or the progressive cultivation of personality. In brief, it begins with the *Homo Faber* who basically acts at a natural level and lives in the sphere of physical existence. What comes next as a better substitute is the *Homo Dionysiacus*, who tends to act in a manic way and puts his life in destructive jeopardy. Therefore, he should be enculturated into the *Homo Creator*, who usually acts creatively and looks forward to a higher realm of meaning. In Fang's terminology, the *Homo Dionysiacus* is mingled with the *Homo Creator* and thus produces the *Homo Sapiens* with sound learning and wisdom. By contrast, the *Homo Faber* remains in the sphere of physical existence, the combination of *Homo Dionysiacus* with *Homo Creator* enters into the sphere of humane life, and the *Homo Sapiens* settles down in the sphere of intellectual life. At this stage, the *Homo Sapiens* emphasizes the performance of reason or rationality, by virtue of which he works to formulate varied systems of knowledge. He thus frees himself from all instinctive drive and blind deeds, and approaches the so-called truth world with rational consideration and guidance. In other words, he will base his life upon the truth world (Fang 1993b, 615; see also Fang 1970; 1972.). Relatively speaking, these three realms comprise a kind of Natural Personality (*zi ran ren* 自然人), one that is assumed to feature a healthy body, vital energy and rich knowledge, capable of building up a natural world sustained by a scientific culture of universality so often eulogized in the 20th century. Nevertheless, the natural world as such is only one-sided, owing to its being obsessed with scientific culture while neglecting philosophical culture (Fang 1993a, 615).

In order to secure a balance in this context, Fang proposes a scheme of exalting the Natural Personality into the Transcendent Personality (*xing shang ren* 形上人). Herein, the former is attributed to the Natural World of physical existence guided by social progression, whereas the latter is attributed to the Spiritual World of transcendent life based on cultural sublimation. On this point, Fang borrows a term from Ernst Cassirer, and claims that the *Homo Sapiens* needs to be cultivated into the *Homo Symbolicus*, the man as the operator of symbols who is able to discover and experience the mysteries in the artistic realm. This realm is by no means a representation of the perfect, as it lies in the expression of both the beautiful and ugly, and subjects itself to individual sentimentality as well as volition. It therefore follows that the *Homo Symbolicus* calls for a higher enculturation in order to exalt himself into the *Homo Honaestatis*, the man of fine virtue or morality who transcends the artistic realm and nurtures the ethical realm along with "sage-like characteristics" (*sheng zhe qi xiang* 圣者气象). This facilitates the becoming of a perfect man or whole being (*quan ren* 全人), who integrates the natural, artistic and moral aspects of personality into a complete whole. Being such a perfected

man, his life is fulfilled and expanded to the extent that it can accommodate and influence the entire world, and his ability is displayed as outstanding and omnipotent. When his perfection is spiritually sublimated into the Divine World, it will give rise to the *Homo Religiosus* who is regarded as the God-man, or the co-creator with the divine. As such, Fang's idea seemingly claims that the final step in being humane is to be divine. Analogously speaking, the *Homo Religiosus* is equal to the *Homo Nobilis* standing on the top of the pagoda, and often compared to the Confucian ideal of the Sagely Man, the Taoist ideal of the Perfected Man, and the Buddhist ideal of the Enlightened Buddha.

At this point the structure of the pagoda seems completed, but there is still a coping stone overhead. Above this stone stands the Gothic steeple turning upwards to the invisible height of Heaven, and signifying the infinity of the cosmic truth and the endless cultivation of the perfected personality. It leads further to the possible becoming of the *Divinity*, and the highest realm of mysteriously mysterious experience of the *Deus Absconditus*. These last two realms of spiritualization overlap to a notable degree. They are, in their essence, symbolic of the supreme power and mysterious mystery of religious divineness, which can be merely imagined and thought *a priori*. The deployment of them on this occasion is of "importance, value, and ideal beyond the actual", just like Whitehead conceives Deity to be "that factor in the universe" due to its necessary presence as such. For

it is by reference of the spatial immediacies to the ideals of Deity that the sense of worth beyond ourselves arises. The unity of a transcendent universe, and the multiplicity of realized actualities, both enter into our experience by this sense of Deity. Apart from this sense of transcendent worth, the otherness of reality would not enter into our consciousness. There must be value beyond ourselves. Otherwise, every single thing experienced would be merely a barren detail in our own solipsist mode of existence. We owe to the sense of Deity the obviousness of the many actualities of the world, and the obviousness of the unity of the world for the preservation of the values realized and for the transition to ideals beyond realized fact. (Whitehead 1956, 140)

In short, this argument claims that man cannot live by bread alone. In spite of its religious bent, it seems to me more convincing and significant than any other rhetoric or preaching of a personified God. Its emphasis on the sense of Deity will perhaps elicit an awareness of transcendent worth beyond the actual and the finite in human existence.

## A Transcultural View of the Overman

A question thus arises regarding the cultural ideal mentioned above. That is, among all the existent cultures, is there anything approximate to this ideal? To Fang's mind, there is nothing ready-made in this case, but there are desirable components available in three cultural patterns, namely the ancient Greek, modern European, and traditional Chinese. These patterns are represented in the domains of religion, philosophy and art, for it is in these that the permanent ethos and main current of each culture are embodied and sedimented from a historical point of view.

Take philosophy for example. It is derived from its investigation of the causal interactions between feeling and reason (*qing li* 情理), attempting to expose the possible origin, truth and subtlety alike of such phenomena, and leading to the development of insightful wisdom. According to Fang's observation, the Greeks would employ *nous* (reason and intellect) to illuminate *aletheia* (truth and reality), and thus develop the truth-directed wisdom; the Europeans would use practical means to meet varied occasions, and thus develop the convenience-oriented technology; and the Chinese would utilize subtle intuition to see through the secret of transformation, and thus develop the parallel-featured wisdom by employing truth-directed wisdom and operating convenience-oriented technology. Accordingly, the seed of Greek wisdom came out of naming objects in *logos* and thinking over *aletheia*; the seed of European wisdom came out of seeking power for industrial interest and increasing capacity in order to improve performance; the seed of Chinese wisdom came out of loving to assist all things grow and striving for an intuitively subtle enlightenment (Fang 1993c, 87). By contrast, Greek wisdom evolved into a culture that worships reason with a focus on the justification of *aletheia* through *nous*, the European wisdom into a capacity-worshipping culture with a focus on driving sentiment into grotesque imagination, and the Chinese wisdom into a subtlety-directed culture with a focus on returning to primordial harmony *via* poetic intuition. Hence, in more specific terms, the life of the Greeks could be characteristically represented through three types of spirit, including the Dionysian in favour of passion, the Apollonian in favour of reason, and the Olympian as a result of belittled reason and decreased passion. Among these three, the Apollonian is granted the leading role. When it comes to the life of the Europeans, it is chiefly demonstrated through three types of spirit, including the Renaissance, the Baroque, and the Rococo. The Renaissance reveals the appealing power of artistic enthusiasm, the Baroque profound reasoning *via* science, and the Rococo the ambivalence between reason and feeling. What brings these three into an integrated one is the Faustian spirit. As for the life of the Chinese people, it is

expressed together in the thoughts of Laozi, Confucius and Mozi. The thought of Laozi explicates the subtle function of the primordial *Dao* (*yuan dao* 原道), the thought of Confucius formulates the principle of reciprocal love (*ren li* 仁理), and the thought of Mozi elaborates the value of extensive love (*jian ai* 兼爱). Thus correspondingly, the formation of Greek psychology consists of a tripartite mode of three elements. These are the rational, the spirited and the appetite, among which the rational is encouraged to take the lead for the fostering of temperance, while the spirited works in support for the controlling of the appetite. Hence, an ideal personality is dependent on the harmonization of the three parts. Then, the formation of the European psychology bears some features of the double character typified by the Faustian pursuit and the Mephistophelian temptation. Even though these two dimensions remain internally contradictory, they are dynamically interactive, transformational and non-exhaustive. As for the formation of the Chinese mentality, it is composed of a triad of the Human, Heaven and Earth as three shareholders of the universe. In order to form this triad in a constructive sense, a person is expected to enculturate his soul, fulfil his nature, pursue the *Dao* of sageliness within and kingliness without (*nei sheng wai wang* 内圣外王), help all things transform and grow, and approach the state of being in Heaven-Human oneness. All this is assumed to be conducive to self-perfection along with supreme morality (Fang 1993c, 90–93).

Nevertheless, everything has two sides, and similarly, each of the three cultural paradigms has its own merits and demerits. Speaking in general terms, the Greek culture is reason-based, truth-worshipping and justice-oriented; therefore, the Greeks are able to perceive the knowledge of the minute, understand the order of the universe, appreciate the beauty of the sublime, and pursue ontologically the Being of all beings. In short, they are concerned not merely with what a thing is, but with how and why it is. They have thus embraced radical intellectualism, and gone to extremes by using knowledge as the one and only measurement to judge cosmic reality, analyse social structures and calculate human virtue. This has then brought forth the over-expansion of reason but the decline of feeling. Since reason keeps running about without being preserved and sustained by feeling, it has become divided and gradually shrunk into a withering entity. Eventually, Greek culture came to an end, its philosophy declined, and its *polis* collapsed (ibid., 94–96).

As regards the modern European culture, it is convenience-centred and for this reason it worships power, might and right. Its belief in knowledge as power is reflected in the sense of Faustian dissatisfaction. Hence, Europeans tend to be so engrossed in their endless pursuit of knowledge, seeming to be lost in it and never to return. They probe into the bottom of things, dig up the deepest depth for the

real reality, and even play a game with knowledge by mere logos or boundless imagination. This being the case, European philosophy turns out to be more analytical but less integrative, apart from being mixed up with dichotomy, scepticism and even nihilism, which will in turn cause more problems with hyper-rationalization, internal contradiction, spiritual illusion, etc. Noticeably, what is seemingly laid bare herein is an apparent tendency to manoeuvre a strategy of essentialism to this specific case. By so doing, European philosophy tends to take partial essence for true essence that is, according to the traditional Aristotelian understanding of essence, most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore, constitutive of a person or thing (Fuss 1989, 2). However, the act of applying essentialism to comparative studies most likely leads to either over-generalized or over-simplified arguments, not to speak of somewhat arbitrary and even far-fetched conclusions in certain cases. Such phenomena have occurred as an attestation of the negative effect of "Essentialism One" (Atabaki 2003, 7–8). In this regard, essentialism may be more intractable and more irrecuperable than we thought; it may be essential to our thinking while at the same time there is nothing "quintessential" about it. Yet, a risk of essence may have to be taken because to follow European philosophy is to act as if essentialism has an essence (Fuss 1989, 21). This sceptical observation turns out to be somewhat valid when applied to the practical and periodical condition of essentialism in China.

In brief, such a tendency to exercise essentialism was overriding among certain Chinese thinkers during the first half of the 20th century for three key reasons. Methodologically, essentialist explorations were widely employed rather than critically checked, for they were assumed to help the practitioners get hold of the essential determinants of heterogeneous cultures and philosophies. Ideologically, when confronted with a national crisis for survival because of humiliating defeats and invasions by foreign powers, it was the first priority of all to seek any possible alternatives to innovate China's culture, institutional system and even political governance. Hence there arose an intellectual haste to reconsider Western culture, mainly composed of Greek and modern European traditions, from the standpoint of essentialism against the socio-political background of the old China. Psychologically, essentialism was taken as a quick remedy to find out the essential symptoms and features of both endogenous and alien cultures, and also to take a command of the essence as the very gist of them for the sake of transcultural reform. By so doing, it would be possible, if not very feasible, to reconstruct a new culture with reference to the transcultural ideals, values, and positions selected. This can in fact be seen in the framework of Fang's thinking or philosophizing, and the same is true for many other Chinese thinkers living through similar experiences during the same years. As luck would have it, this framework also turns

out to be thought-provoking and influential due to its historical effectiveness under special circumstances, albeit with certain shortcomings hidden in the lack of more scientific verifications.

Now let us turn to traditional Chinese culture. In contrast to its Western counterpart it is more morality-based and humanity-oriented. To Fang's mind, it feels a strong affinity for a fair balance between reason and feeling, righteousness and profit, and at the same time it values the oneness between Heaven and the Human or the Heavenly *Dao* and the Human *Dao*. It pays more attention to the importance of such matters as human life (*sheng ming* 生命), reciprocal love (*ren ai* 仁爱), transformational and generating energy (*hua yu* 化育), a return to the primordial harmony, mean-directed harmonization (*zhong he* 中和), an analogical approach to understanding the entire category through a single example, and so on. But owing to the long tradition of the centralized social structure, Chinese scholarship culture is usually confined to bureaucratic control and the powerful few. This prevents its pragmatic wisdom from spreading far, and obstructs the successive advancement and wider application of its inventions. On certain occasions in this social setting, the truth is regulated by the so-called authority, the mind is corrupted by vanity and name-dropping, freedom is governed by the ruling class, and creative thinking is strangled by the politically imposed ideology. In order to evade this tension and retain intellectual joy, most Chinese philosophers tend to attach their ideas to artistic fantasy as well as moral cultivation for the sake of their own appreciative contemplation and preservation of the body-soul. Worse still, they usually walk on the same beaten tracks as their teachers or predecessors, and conform with the old habits and doctrines at the cost of their initiative to seek after the new and the true. Their discourse would thus be rather conventional instead of individual, implicit instead of explicit, suggestive instead of straight-forward, and even absurdly obscure to the extent that the real arguments are covered up in a mist of poetic images or hidden allusions from classical texts. All this leaves an impression that many Chinese philosophers lack the courage to explore the truth, hesitate to get to the bottom of the things concerned, and fail to examine both the beginning and the end in a more logical system (Fang 1993c, 99–103).

According to Thomé Fang, the three cultures described above are complementary to one another in at least two modes, those of redemption by self (*zi jiu* 自救) and help by other (*tazhu* 他助). In the former case, the Greeks may go ahead to clarify *aletheia* with *nous* and *logos* as they usually do, but they should not make light of human life; the Europeans may confront things with their convenience-oriented cunning, as they often do, but they should not plunge themselves into absurdity or fantasy; the Chinese may hanker after the knowledge of transformational powers

with subtle apprehension, but they should not slip into superficiality. Then, in the latter case, the Greek way of abandoning the world so rashly may help modify the European way of living in cunning and fantasy; the European way of using power for varied purposes may help modify the Chinese way of treasuring and preserving life alone to an excessive degree; in return, the Chinese way of appreciating superficially the empty or imagined state of being may help modify the Greek way of worshipping substantial appropriateness, and the European way of applying cunning in all things.

In short, Fang tries to read a new message into the Nietzschean conception of the Overman (*Übermensch*). Therein, he attempts to strip the Overman off its empty and strange transfiguration, and reconstruct it into an ideal personality by introducing a transcultural transformation. That is, he attempts to remould it by means of three rich forms of wisdom in ancient Greek, modern European and traditional Chinese cultures. In Fang's terminology, one who will be able to get over the Greek weaknesses will become an outstanding European or Chinese individual; one who will be able to overcome the European weaknesses will become a fine Chinese or Greek individual; and one who will be able to transcend the Chinese weaknesses will become an excellent Greek or European individual. That is to say, one who is able to synthesize all the virtues of the Greek, European and Chinese cultures will be likely to become the Overman of an ideal type (Fang 1993c, 105–6). All this shows a harmonious synthesis (*he he* 和合) of transcultural transformation. Ostensibly, such a synthesis is conducted in the meaningful selection of complimentary ingredients from different sources. The methodological implication it carries is deeply rooted in the mentality of Chinese thinkers. Additionally, the solution Fang proposes is good natured in that it contains a considerable relevance to cosmopolitan harmonism, a harmonism that calls for a deconstruction of cultural boundaries, since it relies on transcultural integration proper. It features a global concern along with a Chinese vision. Actually, in Fang's transcultural preoccupation, what is taken into due account is the common good for humankind as a whole. But this is not supposed to weaken his sensibility to the fact that the Chinese culture needs to be reconstructed with reference to its Greek and European counterparts so long as it is intended to advance and contribute more to both the nation and humankind alike. Only by so doing, in Fang's belief, can such a noble *telos* be fulfilled. Another thing worth noting is Fang's super-cultural ambition. It is clear that he passionately advises his fellow citizens to go beyond regional and traditional constraints, and redouble their efforts for a transcultural transformation in a creative mode. In order to spur their confidence and enthusiasm, he makes a particular reference to ancient Athens, "the school of Hellas", as a historical model. Even though it was geographically small and



limited, it became culturally large and essentially unlimited with respect to its influence (ibid., 634).<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, it occurs to me at this point that the historical model given ought to be grounded on a healthy instead of corrupt democracy because of the bitter lessons Athens had suffered. Such lessons are shown through Plato's critiques of bad politics in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. They serve to attest that any models, no matter how appealing and ideal they may be, would be apt to go to the dogs when plunged into a bad framework of *politeia* as political institution applied to any community.

### A Second Reflection and a Threefold Process

If we make a second reflection on the pagoda allegory with reference to Fang's blueprint of the human and cosmos in the ideal culture in question, we will find several points noteworthy. First and foremost, the allegory implies an ontological hypothesis. The six kinds of personality ranging from the *Homo Faber* up to the *Homo Religiosus* represent six realms of being. As is depicted in Fang's terminology, the *Homo Faber* corresponds to the sphere of physical existence (*wu zhi shi jie* 物质世界), the *Homo Dionysiacus-Creator* to the sphere of life (*sheng ming shi jie* 生命世界), the *Homo Sapiens* to the sphere of the soul or psychical realm (*xin ling shi jie* 心灵世界), the *Homo Symbolicus* to the artistic realm (*yi shu shi jie* 艺术世界), the *Homo Honestatis* to the moral realm (*dao de shi jie* 道德世界), and the *Homo Religiosus* to the religious realm (*zong jiao shi jie* 宗教世界). In comparative language, the former three spheres are within the Natural World of universality largely based on scientific culture, whereas the latter three realms are within the Spiritual World of transcendence mainly based on philosophical culture. In a separate sense, each of them suggests a state of being and a quality of life. In an integrative sense, they manifest a hierarchy of levels or alternatives among which one can choose for one's own personal development. What one can become and what life one expects to live all depends on the choices and efforts one makes.

Secondly, the *Homo Nobilis* serves as a special bridge between the human and divine. Downward it is appealing to humane enculturation while upward it is motivating the continuous sublimation of the soul from the finite to the infinite. It will then procure the spiritual pursuit of absolute freedom and independent

1 His statement is translated as follows: "We have a population of over ten million living on the Island of Taiwan. We can do what the ancient Greeks had done before in order to develop a small *polis* with a small population into a culturally great state. This being the case, we can do our best to build up a centre of spiritual culture hereupon so long as we attain a high awareness, set up a truth standard, bring forth a value ideal, and work altogether to upgrade the meaning and worth of life step by step."

personality. It can be perceived as a cosmic state of being similar to the experience of Heaven-Human oneness. Up here in a metaphorical sense, one will be well in the position to “drive on the cloud and air, ride upon the sun and moon, and roam about freely beyond the four oceans” according to Zhuangzi’s assumption (Zhuangzi 1999, 35). This may pave the path for the *Homo Nobilis* to climb up ultimately to the *Divinity* and the *Deus Absconditus* (*shen ming* 神明).

Thirdly, the blueprint involves a two-way orientation: on the one hand, it ascends to the highest realm of mysterious experience *via* the organic process of humane enculturation, and on the other, it descends to the sphere of physical existence through the generating power of infinite cosmic spirit. When engaged in this two-way activity, the mere man strives upward to mingle with the cosmic spirit, whereas the cosmic spirit comes downward to transfuse itself into the mere man. Under such circumstances, the “constitution of man” will be filled with the “constitution of divine”, and the natural being will be transformed into a religious or spiritual being. That is to say, the person will be qualified not only to act as much as the *Homo Sapiens* does, but also to act as much as the *Divinity* does. The purpose of this action is not simply to improve personal cultivation, but upgrade the value of the entire world. As an artist, for example, an individual is “in the capacity not merely of man but in the capacity of the cosmic creator”. He can create a great artwork of first rate and “come in ingress into the world as a whole”. The beauty of this artwork is just like that of a blooming flower due to its receptiveness to the mystic power of sunlight or “the universal presence of the Spirit in the natural world”. It is for this reason that man can experience and feel inwardly the sacred significance hidden mysteriously in all things around him. In addition, it somewhat justifies the qualification of the superior man who is in a Confucian sense possessed of the most complete sincerity, and also facilitates the full development of human nature and the natures of all things alike (*jin xing* 尽性). Hence, the man of this kind can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth (*hua yu* 化育), and may eventually form a triad with Heaven and Earth (*yu tian di can* 与天地参) (*Zhong yong* 1992, VI: 5). All this indicates at least an important mission of human obligation and a high position of humankind in the cosmos or universe, which leads allegedly to the ultimate realm of heaven-human oneness.

Last but not the least, Fang argues that the cosmic spirit sounds abstract, but has concrete effect when it is transfused into any living creatures or existents. It is more or less equal to the Neo-Platonist notion of the Great One as the highest *Nous* of the universe permeating into the hierarchical forms of life or states of being. It is like a giant water gate, and when it opens it flows into every field and downward to the lowest place. Its power comes from above (Fang 1993b, 632).

But in my personal observation, this is no more than a poetic depiction. For any downward flow of the Heavenly Way (*tian dao xia guan* 天道下贯) is based on a subjective assumption rather than objective justification. This is also true of Fang's claim of the two-way orientation. In practice, it is merely through the cognitive faculty and humane enculturation that the upward move through studious learning from the low to high realm (*xia xue shang da* 下学上达) is rendered possible in the case of spiritual nourishment and personal development. As for the Heavenly Way itself, it is akin to the Chinese view of the cosmic spirit, which is meant to be a kind of super-moral guiding rope to uplift the human soul from low to high. It is therefore deployed as the spiritual pillar of the human condition and the determinant force of human destiny. When the downward flow meets the upward move, human fulfilment is achieved, and the Heavenly Way (*tian dao* 天道) is transfigured into the Human Way (*ren dao* 人道).

As stated in *The Doctrine of the Mean*,

What Heaven (*tian* 天) has conferred to humans is called natural temperament (*xing* 性); all that is acting in accord with this temperament is called the Way (*dao* 道); the approach to helping one know the Way is called education (*jiao* 教). (*Zhong yong* 1992, I)<sup>2</sup>

In many cases, those who recommend the downward flow tend to find something to support their argument in this statement. Yet, when looking closely into the logical order of the four categories, including Heaven, natural temperament, the Way and teaching, we may discover that the Way (*dao* 道) as the medium is most important of all. That is why it is said “not to be left for an instant. Otherwise, it would not be the Way anymore” (*Zhong yong* 1992, I).<sup>3</sup> Then, the knowing of the Way depends on education that is intended to awaken through human culture the good conscience within the individual self. On this point, one will be able to act in accord with the Way, and follow the natural temperament as one's nature of purity and simplicity, as allegedly conferred by Heaven. The practical sequence in this process is then corresponding to what Mencius argues, i.e.,

He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven. To preserve one's mental

2 The translation is modified. Cf. *The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong yong)*, in *The Four Books* (trans. James Legge). Legge's translation follows: “What Heaven has conferred is called the nature; an accordance with this nature is called the path of duty; the regulation of this path is called instruction.”

3 The translation is modified. Cf. *The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong yong)*, in *The Four Books* (trans. James Legge). Legge's translation follows: “The path may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the path.”

constitution, and nourish one's nature, is the way to serve Heaven. When neither a premature death nor long life causes a man any double mindedness, but he waits in the cultivation of his personal character in whatever issue, this is the way in which he establishes his Heaven-ordained being. (Mencius 1992, 13: 1)

Quite naturally, "the mental constitution" is most determinant and fundamental. It is enculturated and developed to the extent that it becomes what it could be, coming to know one's nature and Heaven, and eventually able to serve Heaven and locate one's Heaven-ordained being. This explains the fact that mental constitution or mind-heart (*xin* 心) is guided and nurtured by virtue of education and enculturation, such that it goes upward to meet Heaven. As is so proved in the Confucian tradition, mind-heart also suggests a good conscience within, and knowledge (*zhi* 知) is taken as a special kind possessed by the sage. It is through mind-heart that the purity and innocence of human nature (*xing* 性) is enlightened and fulfilled; it is through knowledge that the Heavenly Way (*tian dao* 天道) and Heavenly Virtue (*tian de* 天德) are apprehended and approached; and thus it is through human good conscience (*ren xin* 人心) that the cosmic spirit (*tian xin* 天心) is established. Therefore, the so-called Heavenly Way as well as Heavenly Virtue are actually embodied in the human way and human virtue, and for this reason, the downward flow of the cosmic spirit ought to be reversed, because it is practically facilitated and exerted *via* the upward move of human good conscience involving a continuous process of personal cultivation or moral enhancement. This can also be detected in some of the writings by Qian Mu 钱穆. For instance, what he has repeatedly stressed is the argument as such: As usual in human life, one's mind-heart can communicate not only with that of other contemporaries, but also with that of the other ancients, and moreover, with that of the subsequent generations. It would be divine to enable it to communicate with Heaven and Earth. Yet, it is not every human individual who can manage it. It is the human mind-heart that can fulfil it. At this point, the mind-heart becomes divine as well as sagely in kind. In China, all the indigenous religions have no Personal God but a Supreme Lord instead, the Lord that is identified with Heaven and Ancestry. Their teachings of spirituality go so deep into the human mind-heart, and at the same time link it closely with Heaven and Ancestry. They thus ensure that human beings succeed in great enterprises without suffering unexpected losses. All this allegedly enables human beings to grow into sages with profound knowledge, knowledge that helps one interact with the heavenly mind-heart (the cosmic spirit), reach Heavenly Virtue, and obtain an insight into the integrity and sincerity that make up the essential substance of the Human Way (Qian 2006a, 2, 11; see also Qian 2006b, 4; 1985, 198).

Apart from what is mentioned above, we need to move further and reflect upon Fang's exposition of the three cultures and their leading features. In my opinion, his exposition strikes upon the key point, but turns out to be rather over-generalized and over-simplified in certain cases. His perception of the Greek paradigm, for instance, is mainly derived from a Platonic view, his notion of the modern European paradigm is chiefly inferred from an industrial and pragmatic position, and his observation on the Chinese paradigm is largely based on Confucianism. As a matter of fact, Hellenic naturalism and sophism, the continental idealism and rationalism, the American pioneering spirit and creative thinking, and the Chinese Taoism and Buddhism all account for a great deal regarding the complex features and rich formations of the three cultures concerned. If these elements are neglected or marginalized, any abstraction or summery of the three cultures in terms of their merits and demerits could hardly be called holistic in a justifiable sense. Corresponding to this line of thought, Fang's hypothetical model of the Overman is inspiring as it is, but again it is conceptually idealized and mechanized.

Apparently, the Overman of this type resembles the ideal personality in the pagoda analogy, and an outcome of transcultural transformation involving the three forms of wisdom in Greek, European and Chinese cultures. Such transformation is associated with three alternatives, termed learning (*wen* 闻), thinking (*si* 思) and practicing (*xiu* 修), which consist of a hierarchical approach to accomplishment and denote three levels of enlightenment. Likened to a river in most cases, the wisdom attained through learning would be shallow, as if it stays at its surface; the wisdom achieved through thinking would be intermediate, as if it hangs around the middle; and the wisdom accomplished through practicing would be profound, as if it enters the depths. In contrast, the wisdom nourished through learning, thinking and practicing altogether in a creative manner would be full and complete in degree, for the three methods are organically interactive and interdependent by nature. A man will obtain little if he engages in practicing without thinking and learning; he will get nowhere if he engages in thinking without learning and practicing; and he will go astray if he engages in learning without thinking and practicing (Fang 1993c, 86). This being true, the three modes should be taken into due consideration and put into actual effect in a well-balanced and consistent manner.

To my mind, the transcultural transformation in this regard is no easy enterprise at all. I therefore assume that, in addition to the combined application of the three alternatives, a threefold-process strategy is desirable at any rate. It commences with the comparative phase of transcultural cognition. In this aspect, there will be a *mélange* of self-driven motivation, observant perception, authentic experience, and modelling behaviour with a cognitive initiative and reflective conscientiousness.

What proceeds then is a transcultural comparison by identifying *via* evaluative judgment of the essential differences, similarities, advantages and disadvantages in order to frame a potentially complimentary interrelationship. More often than not, for instance, we Chinese who have been to the West tend to feel so strongly about its impressive performance of public ethics (*gong de* 公德) and high awareness of the social environment. Personally, I find this culturally complimentary to the Chinese conduct of private morality (*si de* 私德) within the family network. Subsequently, when time is ripe, it comes to the empathetic phase of transcultural transpection. At this stage, a person is quite at home not only in his native culture but also in the target culture, and even goes so far as to put himself in the mind of someone else from a heterogenic-cultural community. Thus empathetically, he is able to feel, think, speak and even act correspondingly in the same manner as the other. However, he himself is conscious of his own cultural identity and remains more adaptable on various occasions. Naturally, his actions and reactions will be emotionally reasonable or rationally sensible, and meanwhile justifiable with a moderate balance between feeling and reasoning. In other words, what appeals to the empathy or transpection is not merely determined by personal satisfaction, but also by the common good. All this endows him with more insights into the merits and demerits of both his indigenous culture and its heterogenic counterpart. He will then, with a sense of mission, push on and step forward into the creative phase of transcultural transformation. Right in this phase, he will be able to pinpoint the complimentary fundamentals from both cultures and consider a possible solution to any transcultural transformation. It goes without saying that this transformation is a selective and synthetic process, largely based on the stem of the home culture, and not a complete substitution of one with the other at all. Its accomplishment is rendered possible by means of such factors as theoretical hypothesis, gradual internalization, constructive gradation and even necessary elimination. This is by no means a business deal carried out for quick profit. Instead, it is a long and creative process of interactive experimentation. For example, the improvement of any democratic movement originating from the Western tradition is rather time- and energy-consuming with respect to its localization in culturally different regions or its transplantation in politically authoritarian soils. As evinced in the effective history of recent decades, a quick trial of radical reform is usually short-lived, and turns out to be more destructive than constructive. It is by and large owing to the hard fact as such: more haste, less speed, not to speak of the street-gang politicians who may readily abuse the public concern and embrace an ambition to launch a chaotic revolution for sensational news report, but have no efficient policy prudently designed to put it to an end peacefully and undetrimentally.

In short, the threefold process is correlative and interdependent, all working in principle to demolish the cultural boundaries, break homoculture-centrism of any kind, and promote the transformational creation *par excellence* in a cosmopolitan sense. Moreover, it bears a hidden link with Whitehead's notion of the "organic process" that is "proceeding from phase to phase, each phase being the real basis from which its successor proceeds towards the completion of the thing in question" (Whitehead 1929, 305). On this account, such completion may be conducive not only to the Whitehead's conception of Beauty as "the mutual adaptation of several factors in an occasion of experience" (Whitehead 1932, 251), but also to the creative Beauty of transcultural harmonization in favour of both the community good and the cosmopolitan good.

### Art Education as a Starting and Pivotal Point

The beautiful in art is most illustrious, expressive and representative of every culture. Like Whitehead, Fang sees to art as the relevant illumination of cultural traits and values. He therefore proposes art education as the starting and pivotal point of transcultural reflection, transformation and even creation due to its aesthetic appeal and cultural worth. The education of this kind begins with transcultural reflection based on the cultural origins involved. This factually corresponds to modern Chinese aesthetics that continues to develop along with a comparative study of aesthetic cultures. Such study focuses more on cultural patterns, social ethos, artistic spirit and aesthetic quality, among other factors. It requires vertical survey and horizontal analysis. Meanwhile, it advises the researcher to be capable of assimilating the historical and modern, reconsidering the native and the non-native, and incorporating his knowledge of literature, history and philosophy into a productive whole.

As noted in many of his works, such as the *Three Kinds of Philosophical Wisdom* (1993c), *Taste of Life and Sense of Beauty* (1993d), *Poetry and Life* (1993e), *Boundless and Harmonious Spirit of Life* (1993f), *A General Perception of Human and Nature in Chinese Culture from the Perspective of Comparative Philosophy* (1993g), and *The Artistic Spirit of Chinese People* (1993h), Fang himself persistently probes into distinctive cultural origins from a transcultural perspective, and demonstrates their respective cultural ideals and aesthetic qualities by means of comparison. He adopts a holistic standpoint and looks into three kinds of wisdom related to ancient Greece, modern Europe, and traditional China. Quite deliberately, he proceeds to demonstrate the thought-ways, lifestyles, national identities, artistic tastes and spiritual concerns of each.

According to Fang's description, the ancient Greeks were well equipped with the faculties of intelligence that were conducive to the wisdom of reality and produced the culture of rationality. They were therefore liable to pursue and justify truth with the power of reason. Their lifestyle was characterized with three forms of spirit in connection with Dionysus, Apollo, and Olympus, symbolizing passion, reason and lack of emotion, respectively. Among them the Apollonian spirit was regarded as the main influence. The modern Europeans would dedicate themselves to seeking the beneficial momentum that led to the wisdom of convenience and nourished industrial cunning. They therefore developed the culture of worshipping might as right, thus driving emotion and feeling into the status of illusions. Their lifestyle featured three types of ethos as reflected in the Renaissance, the Baroque and the Rococo. The Renaissance was attributed to artistic enthusiasm, the Baroque to scientific enlightenment, and the Rococo to the contradiction between emotion and reason, and all three could be integrated into the Faustian spirit. The traditional Chinese would be obsessed with taking delight in a subtle understanding of nature and change. They would rely on the wisdom of reality, make use of the wisdom of convenience, and accomplish the wisdom of equality. They therefore created a culture of subtleness and naturalness, attempting mainly to control the illusory and return to the sincere.

With respect to what Fang believes, the respective features of the three cultures given above have an impact on their corresponding forms of artistic expression and aesthetic quality. In addition, he claims culture to be both a complete manifestation of the human soul and a sophisticated picture of human life, feeling and reasoning altogether. In order to understand the sense of beauty and aesthetic characteristics pertaining to a national identity, one should bear in mind the particular aspects of a national lifestyle and consider the cosmic view of an entire nation. Relatively speaking, the ancient Greeks and modern Europeans tend to approach the cosmos from a scientific perspective, whereas the traditional Chinese tend to approach it from an artistic one. Hence, there arise different tastes, judgments and expressions, which might be thematically displayed in the following table:



Table 1: The most perceivable and ostensible features of ancient Greek, modern European, traditional Chinese heritages. (Fang 1993d, 355)

Cast	Ancient Greek	Modern European	Traditional Chinese
Background	Limited cosmos	Boundless cosmos	Deserted wildness
Setting	The Pantheon in Athens	Gothic church	Ancient temples in remote mountains
Accessory scene	Sculpture of naked body	Oil painting and musical instrument	Landscape painting and flowers
Subject matter	Imitating nature and its objects	Governing nature and its objects	Following the <i>Dao</i> and being unconscious of the object and the self
Hero	Apollo	Faust	Poet
Acting	Singing eulogy	Dancing	Composing poetry
Music	The seven-stringed lyre and the harp	The violin and the piano	The bamboo flute and the inverted bell
Situation	A sunny day after rainfall	Lightning on a sunny day	The sound of a flute in the moonlight
Scene	Lifelike	Real illusion	Illusionary reality
Season	A clear autumn day	Hot summer and cold winter	Warm spring
Mood	Outward expression of simplicity and elegance	Struck by thunder, shocked and stirred up	Flower into dream and relaxation of mind

This condensed illustration does not transpose every factor into the brief table, but just offers a sketch of some of the most perceivable and ostensible features of the three heritages concerned. Nevertheless, it goes down to the fundamental roots of each so as to highlight their cultural origins for the sake of contrast. Quite interestingly, it lays bare the cardinal discrepancies and hidden resemblances between the three cultures. Take each “hero” in the table for example. “Apollo” is often viewed as a symbol of Greek mythology from which Greek art, ideal beauty and even philosophical spirit originated during the Hellenic Age. “Faust” is usually conceived of as an image of the European mentality that is aligned not only with a persistent investigation into the unknown, but also with non-stop curiosity about creating something novel. The “poet” is normally seen as a figure of spiritual freedom and rich imagination who is sensitive to the living environment and human condition; he enjoys contemplating the outer universe

and speaking for the inner world, ready to identify himself with the object while roaming through visible and invisible landscapes. As regards the “music” performance, “the lyre and the harp” are played to produce the lyrical tone and unique *harmonia* of Ionic and Doric types. “The violin and the piano” are played to demonstrate the grand style and profound theme of a symphony through *orchestra*. “The flute and the bell” are played to describe the pastoral ambiance of the poetic and the picturesque in particular. In a word, all the listed factors in each heritage are interrelated and interactive in a wider context as an outcome of historical inheritance and innovation.

Comparatively, the Greek origin of art is chiefly associated with its mythology, and tends to be mythical, pantheistic, mimetic and divinely-inspired. The traditional Chinese origin of art is deeply connected with the notion of Heaven-Human oneness, and tends to be picturesque, illusionary, intuitive and morality-based. The modern European origin of art is closely coupled with its philosophy of both empiricism and rationalism, and draws from its religious and scientific traditions, and thus tends to be profound, explorative and truth-oriented in spite of being emotionally expressive.

At this point, Fang himself looks into the interaction between the poetic state in art and the rational interest in science when examining the typical discrepancy between traditional Chinese culture and its Western counterpart. He asserts that science and art do not oppose each other, and they can reach a kind of win-win situation, if not a complementary one. Because the accomplishment of rational interest in science does not violate the fulfilment of the poetic state in art, and vice versa. Since different nations have some different characteristics in national identity and mentality, they are inclined to perceive art and science from different angles and values. All this is largely determined by their distinct worldviews and cosmic outlooks. As to the high and low evaluation of art and science, it varies from one to another as a result of different tastes and judgments on different occasions (Fang 1993d, 366). In my observation, Fang attempts to hold a balanced stance by treating art and science as equally important, for they contribute a great deal to human existence and the quality of life. Any imbalanced preferences and actions are liable to be negative rather than positive in all cases.

Additionally, Fang proceeds to re-examine and reemphasize the weaknesses of ancient Greek, modern European and traditional Chinese heritage as well as their respective strengths. He does so in light of a broader international perspective and higher transcultural awareness. In his opinion, the wisdom of the Greek type had four problematic aspects as embodied in its tendency to abandon reality, eulogize the ideal, deny the body, and favour deities. It is therefore subject to nihilism with

regard to the human world, and to fantasy with regard to human life, among others. Moreover, this was conducive to the collapse of Greek culture and the decline of its philosophy (Fang 1993c, 96).

The wisdom of the modern European type is over-engrossed in speculative debate and theorization. Accordingly, it led Europeans to become obsessed with intellectual reasoning and detailed analysis. When it comes to dealing with real facts, it tries to demonstrate so-called profundity by covering up the perceived reality, and thus create fantastic ivory-towers by spoiling the wisdom-based aspects of its own traditions. This is reflected in psychoanalysis, which gives much weight to what is assumed to be true in day-dreams and subconscious fantasies. As shown in the process of verification through deductive and inductive reasoning, modern European culture is prone to much scepticism and the like. All this ends up in a dichotomy between mind and body, and a boundary between the inward and the outward (ibid., 99).

Finally, when it comes to looking at the wisdom of Chinese type, Fang claims that it entails the understanding and attainment of the *Dao* in itself. Even though this tradition is over 4,000 years old or so, it remains opaque rather than clear. One of the reasons for this lies in the thought-ways of Chinese philosophers, which depend upon artistic imagination, moral cultivation, and personal utility for the preservation of the mind and body. More often than not, it is biased towards theories of artistic absurdities and illusions, confined to the habit of ethical malpractice, obscured in the name of in-depth reflections, and attached to self-pleasing preferences. Being self-indulged in artistic reverie, moral compassion and natural humaneness, the Chinese tradition tends to be empathetic with the scene and image, and contrives to evoke a sort of aesthetic feeling all of a sudden. This being the case, it is deprived of the virtue of perseverance shared by scientists that encounters more difficulties in getting to the bottom of things, and such that it grows less active to exercise thorough investigation and critical analysis. It is therefore slow to explore in the ultimate depth both the beginning and the end, such that it falls due to the lack of a logical thinking system (ibid., 103).

Still, Fang goes on to argue about the merits and demerits of the three kinds of wisdom by means of an essentialist approach. What he says mirrors part of what he used to know and think about the three traditions during the New Cultural Movement of the 1920s. Hence it features both overstatement and over-generalization. Nevertheless, his critical reflections are thought-provoking, as they encourage readers to think twice about the criticisms given, especially about the implied necessity of placing art and science on an equal footing for the sake of cultural innovation in terms of creative transformation. Hence, they serve to

rebalance the radical modes of self-pleasing preferences, narrow-minded bias, and pleasure-ridden superficiality, among others.

Teleologically, Fang's study of the three cultures attempts to sort out the characteristics of their typical origins in one sense, and strives to facilitate a possible transcendence through transformational creation in another. It is thus pointing to a noble motive to fulfil the mission of upgrading cultural innovation and bettering human life. According to Fang in this regard, if a reasonable stance were taken to assimilate all the virtues of valuable cultures, say to synthesize the cognitive and aesthetic wisdom of the three examined in this study, it would be able to go beyond their limits and enrich their values. Under such circumstances, it would ask for open-mindedness, honesty, sincerity, integrity, creativity and so forth. The so-called Overman in this case should be an ideal personality who would get over the defects of ancient Greeks, modern Europeans and traditional Chinese, all at the same time. He would be adept at pursuing human perfection by absorbing each of their merits and strengths (Fang 1993c, 105–6). To my mind, this assumption is obviously romantic and idealistic. It is also far from being attainable, because it usually resides in mere imagination, if not wishful thinking. Notwithstanding that, it may still shed some light on the context of cultural globalization and glocalization.

## Conclusion

In the final analysis, Thomé Fang's pursuit of the cultural ideal stays open to organic process and transcultural features apart from those related to poetic wisdom and religious expectation. In order to illustrate the hierarchical and progressive model of humane enculturation as the vital part of his cultural ideal, he applies the pagoda allegory with further explication of the distinctive worlds of human becoming and perfection. Notably, his special emphasis on the divine dimension of personal cultivation appears impressive, appealing and metaphysical in theory, but its possibility remains opaque, sceptical or questionable in practice. In this case, the intentional integration of the divine aspect with the moral orientation seems to be more hypothetical than realistic in terms of the overall background or context concerned. This is mainly due to the indigenous and persevering characteristics of Chinese cultural heritage.

For instance, the worship of the Heavenly Way (*tian dao* 天道) in China cannot be identified with the worship of God in the West. Hypothesized as the highest Mandate of Heaven, it is alleged to descend toward the Human Way (*ren dao* 人道). More often than not, the former is to be incorporated into the latter and

to be suspended otherwise. In other words, the former is no more substantial and important than the latter in a moral or practical sense. Still, when compared with the existence of God and other spirits, the morality of personal cultivation is more significant and valid than anything else. It is for this reason that Confucianism remains reluctant to talk about the “odd, puissance, turmoil and deity”.

Turning to the Christian tradition, this-world is distinguished from the other-world. God is highly worshiped, and thus believed to help those who help themselves. However, in the Chinese tradition there is no such distinction between this-world and the other-world, and between the secular and the divine, because the one-world view has been prevailing through its cultural history. People usually take it for granted that they should help and rely on themselves in the absence of God. This is largely due to the optimistic spirit of a joy-conscious culture. In practice, the joy-conscious culture makes the national mentality accustomed to take delight in painful suffering, and the optimistic spirit has enabled the Chinese to become what they are, never losing a hope even when confronted with the gravest crises and hardships. Knowing well the difficult condition of human existence sandwiched between Heaven and Earth, they have no other choice but insist on self-reliance under all circumstances. On this account, they seem to bear a larger and heavier cross than the Christians who are exposed to divine assistance and redemption.

In addition, the Chinese majority commit themselves to ancestor worship rather than the worship of God. Being a vital part of folklore, ancestor worship is characteristically quasi-religious under certain conditions. It can be employed to reinforce communal solidarity and social cohesion on the one hand, and to arouse a strong moral sense to honour the family on the other, which will facilitate the self-consciousness of personal cultivation for the sake of self-realization. In order to express and manifest piety and respect to one's ancestors, there are ancestry halls in most of the older and larger villages, instead of Christian or Catholic chapels, across the vast territory of China. All these evidences, among other factors, strike me as an inevitable and formidable hindrance to the fulfilment of Fang's intentional integration, in spite of his engaging exploration of the cultural ideal as is stated in this paper.

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*SPECIAL ISSUE:*  
*TAIWANESE PHILOSOPHY AND*  
*THE PRESERVATION OF CHINESE*  
*PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS*

*Modern Transformations in Logic,*  
*Daoist and Buddhist Philosophy*

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# Within the Spinning Stillness of the Present: Reflections on Transcultural *Zhuangzi*-Studies in Taiwan

*Fabian HEUBEL*\*

## Abstract

Taiwan is an island in East Asia on which the complex effects of hybrid modernization have been experienced particularly directly and strongly. This situation also gave rise to perspectives in the study of literature and philosophy which differ significantly from those on the Chinese mainland. Why did transcultural philosophy find good conditions for development in contemporary Taiwan? This paper addresses this question by situating the recent development of “transcultural *Zhuangzi*-studies” within a larger cultural and political constellation. It begins with very general reflections on “transcultural Taiwan” and ends with a more specific discussion of Yang Rubin’s 楊儒賓 conceptual paradigm of a “material-energetic-spiritual subject”. My aim is to give an overview of the broader cultural and political situation, in which “transcultural *Zhuangzi*-studies” appeared and developed. Moreover, the paradigm of triadic subjectivity that Yang has been developing for decades can be read as “transcultural” because it allows the communication of different, often disparate cultural sources, classical and modern, Eastern and Western. This proposal is not only philosophically but also politically significant: Taiwan’s complex path to democratization and the development of this new “paradigm of subjectivity” deeply correspond to one another.

**Keywords:** *Zhuangzi*, subjectivity, transcultural turn, hybrid modernization, Yang Rubin (Yang Rur-bin), Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, Taiwan

## Znotraj vrteče se negibnosti sedanjosti: misli o Zhuangzijevih transkulturnih študijah na Tajvanu

### Izvleček

Tajvan je otok v Vzhodni Aziji, ki je še posebej neposredno in močno izkusil zapletene učinke hibridne modernizacije. To stanje je prav tako pripomoglo k oblikovanju vrst perspektiv v literarnih in filozofskih študijah, ki se močno razlikujejo od tistih na celine. Zakaj je transkulturna filozofija našla primerne pogoje za razvoj prav na sodobnem Tajvanu?

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Članek to vprašanje naslavlja tako, da nedavni razvoj »Zhuangzijevih transkulturnih študij« postavlja v širšo kulturno in politično konstelacijo. Študija se začne s splošnim premislekom o »transkulturnem Tajvanu« in zaključí s podrobnejšo razpravo o Yang Rubinovi 楊儒賓 konceptualni paradigmi »materialno-energetsko-duhovnega subjekta«. Moj namen je podati pregled širše kulturne in politične situacije, v kateri so se prvič pojavile in razvile »Zhuangzijeve transkulturne študije«. Poleg tega je paradigmo triadne subjektivnosti, ki jo je Yang razvijal desetletja, mogoče brati kot »transkulturno«, saj dopušča prenos med različnimi, pogosto povsem drugačnimi kulturnimi viri, tako klasičnimi kot modernimi, tako vzhodnimi kot zahodnimi. Takšen predlog ni pomemben samo v filozofskem, ampak tudi političnem smislu: zapletena pot Tajvana k demokratizaciji namreč globoko sovпада z razvojem te nove »paradigme subjektivnosti«.

**Ključne besede:** *Zhuangzi*, subjektivnost, transkulturni obrat, hibridna modernizacija, Yang Rubin (Yang Rur-bin), sodobni novi konfucianizem, Tajvan

## Transcultural Taiwan<sup>1</sup>

Taiwan is an island in East Asia on which the complex effects of hybrid modernization have been experienced particularly directly and strongly. This situation also gave rise to perspectives in the study of literature and philosophy which differ significantly from those on the Chinese mainland. The defeat of China in the first Sino-Japanese War changed the historical fate of Taiwan. It also urged Chinese intellectuals to radicalize their reflections on China's modernization. Since the Hundred Days of Reform in 1898, waves of revolutionary change have caused old and new China, East and West, to engage in a dynamic of cultural communication unprecedented in Chinese history.

Transcultural research, as I understand it, has to deal, from the very beginning, with two strands of cultural development which are interconnected but, nevertheless, distinguishable from each other: one is the relation between the old and the new, between Tradition and Modernization; the other is the relation between Eastern and Western culture(s). The urgent need to respond to the challenges of Western modernity and the imperialism associated with it led studies of the West in China to intellectual experiments which focused on ways of learning from the West and on self-transformation that went well beyond the framework of comparative

1 This essay is the revised version of a paper I presented at the International Conference on "Taiwanese Philosophy and the Preservation of Confucian Tradition" at the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) on October 17–18, 2019. Parts of my discussion on Yang Rubin's "paradigm of subjectivity" were first presented at the International Workshop "Towards a New Paradigm of Subjectivity: On the Contemporary Significance of the *Zhuangzi*" on June 30–July 2, 2017 at Charles University, Prague (co-organized with Olga Lomová).

studies, which basically assumes two or more separate and intrinsically homogeneous cultural entities that remain more or less unchanging. The transcultural dynamic, which emerged in this situation of crisis and urgency, was driven by the desperate need to respond to Western powers and Japan. At the same time, this dynamic was also affected by the complicated and highly disputed relationship between different historical layers of Chinese culture(s), old and new, past and present.

Between 1895 and 1945, under Japanese rule, Taiwan entered into a new transcultural constellation, in which increasing Western influence, mainly mediated through the Japanese reception of Western knowledge (including the fields of philosophy, literature, and the fine arts) was intertwined with the tendency towards the Japanization of language, education, and an everyday culture encountering the strong historical influence of Han-culture (*han wenhua* 漢文化) introduced by immigrants from mainland China, especially since the 17th century.

Next to 1895, 1949 is the second key date in the history of contemporary Taiwan, when Taiwan and the Republic of China merged, and a historical entity appeared that is called “Republic of China (Taiwan)”. Ever since, the “Republic of China (Taiwan)” (ROC) and the “People’s Republic of China” (PRC) have been, especially culturally and politically, competing models of Chinese modernization. My discussion on transcultural philosophy in Taiwan, and about the example of “contemporary *Zhuangzi*-studies” (*dangdai Zhuangzi yanjiu* 當代莊子研究), is based on the assumption that this historical situation not only deeply influenced the ways in which “Chinese culture” is seen on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, but also the philosophical interpretation of classical Chinese texts.

This paper will focus on the work of Yang Rubin (or Yang Rur-bin 楊儒賓, b. 1956), who is one of the main proponents of contemporary *Zhuangzi*-studies in Taiwan. In order to understand some of the main philosophical ideas which motivate not only his studies of the *Zhuangzi*, but his intellectual activity in general, it seems necessary to refer to the historical conditions in post-1949 Taiwan that made those studies possible in the sense of a *historical a priori*. Yang is convinced that the critical and normative reconstruction of the cultural and political heritage of the pre-1949 Republic of China is helpful for overcoming the split between “Taiwan” and the “Republic of China” which is at the centre of the major political divide between the perspectives of either (Taiwan) independence or unification of the ROC and the PRC.

Yang’s reconstruction is critical, because it recognizes the necessity to break with the Sinocentrism that was the official ideology of the KMT-government after 1949 and, more or less, continues to have a deep impact on the way mainland China is perceived in Taiwan—the political instrumentalization of Chinese

culture in Taiwan found its main expression in the “movement for the renaissance of Chinese culture” (*Zhonghua wenhua fuxing yundong* 中華文化復興運動), directed against the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” (*wuchan jieji wenhua dageming* 無產階級文化大革命) on the mainland. Yang’s reconstruction has normative significance because it leads to a re-evaluation of the response to the challenge of modernization opened up in the early Republican period, a response that can be said to have been guided by the idea of a the communication of “old and new, China and the West” (*gujin zhongxi* 古今中西).

In this context, transcultural studies pay particular attention to the difficult communication between Taiwan’s Han-Chinese or Chinese-speaking, “sino-(grammatical) culture” (*hanzi wenhua* 漢字文化), which dominated Taiwan long before 1895, and the strong cultural influence of Republican China after 1949, which has been ensured through authoritarian rule and thereby only in heavily mutilated form. De-sinicization can therefore be seen as a highly legitimate attempt to counter this later wave of cultural sinicization deeply entangled with one-party rule. But now it is increasingly clear that it is necessary to distinguish between the legitimate dimension of de-sinicization, which aims at overcoming the dictatorial legacy of the KMT, and a de-sinicization that is motivated by a Taiwanese nationalism, which in itself shows the pathological traits of modern nationalisms that are fixed to a vision of purified cultural identity. De-sinicization understood as a necessary move beyond the authoritarian legacy of Republican China thus appears to be an imported condition for the possibility that the de-ideologization and de-centralization of Chinese culture in Taiwan can enhance further cultural and political democratization. It is also an important step on the way towards realizing the normative potential of Republican China beyond KMT-ideology. At least, such a perspective makes it possible to link the cultural and intellectual potential of Republican China before 1949 to the transcultural potential accumulated in 20th century Taiwan. It further presumes that the different nationalistic positions (Chinese nationalism *versus* Taiwanese nationalism) pose a major obstacle to the democratization of Taiwan, which can, with regard to its transcultural situation, only succeed insofar as the paradoxical coexistence of “Taiwan” and the “Republic of China” is possible. For Yang Rubin, their coexistence or even reconciliation can be regarded as a condition for the possibility that the “Republic of China (Taiwan)” remains important as a cultural and political alternative to the Communist regime in the “People’s Republic of China”.

The *normative value* (*guifanxing jiazhi* 規範性價值) of the Republic of China before 1949 can be seen in the development, however experimental, of modes of communication between old and new China, East and West. If we conceive the relation between Sun Yat-sen’s “three principles” (or “-isms”) and between the

three main political discourses of modernity related to it (conservatism, liberalism, and socialism) in terms of trans-cultural and trans-positional communication, it becomes clear that Republican scholarship was able to respond to the challenge of hybrid modernization and the transcultural constellation of contemporary China in highly creative ways that are significant well beyond the specific historical situation in which they emerged.

The *transcultural turn* (*kua wenhua zhuanxiang* 跨文化轉向) in the study of classical Chinese literature and philosophy largely inherits earlier attempts in the Republican period before 1949. This leads to criticism of the widespread and unilateral emphasis on “radical anti-traditionalism” during and after the May Fourth Movement in 1919, which has largely neglected the richness and complexity of the modes of communication between old and new and East and West that developed at the time.

Before discussing “transcultural *Zhuangzi*-studies” in Taiwan, it seems necessary to explain the specific use I make of two concepts which are important for understanding the theoretical framework in which these studies emerged: *hybrid modernization* (*hunza xiandaihua* 混雜現代化) and *transculturality*. Hybrid modernization is understood as a (hybridizing) interweaving of external and internal modernization, the former referring, in the present context, to the relationship between China and the West, and the latter to the relationship between old and new, ancient and modern China. From this perspective, it is striking that a peculiar way of modernization in China could be set in motion, owing to the fact that, even before the intrusion of imperialist powers, there had been an internal movement of self-reflection and self-transformation that made it easier to respond to and absorb impulses from the outside. In a more schematic way, *internal modernization* can thus be understood as a condition of the possibility of *external modernization*. Conversely, the cultural rupture associated with external modernization was exactly what created the conditions of possibility for reconstructing the history of this internal modernization in its continuity. This reconstruction was, in turn, exactly what provided normative criteria for the assessment of external modernization. The idea of hybrid modernization seems to me particularly effective in foregrounding the *transcultural dynamic* that decisively shaped the development of China in the 20th century. This transcultural dynamic can be expressed in a seven-character formula encapsulating, so to speak, the cultural imperative of philosophical discourse in China since the late 19th century: *tong gu jin dong (zhong) xi zhi bian* 通古今東(中)西之變, which can be loosely translated as “let old and new, East (Chinese) and West communicate through each other in their changes”.<sup>2</sup>

2 For a more detailed discussion see Heubel 2018.

This concept of *transculturality* can be further specified by reference to *comparison*. While *comparative studies* are more or less interested in the differences and similarities between cultures that presuppose the existence of ethnically or linguistically influenced cultural spaces or national cultures, of one's own and foreign culture—as in the language of Western and Eastern, European and Asian, Greek, and Chinese philosophy, for example—*transcultural studies* are interested in phenomena of the hybridization of cultures that require casting, more or less, doubt on the existence of cultural spaces or national cultures. In its extreme, the comparative dimension touches on a nationalist, ethnic-racist understanding of cultures, while the transcultural dimension tends to regard cultures in principle as the result of processes of hybridization and thus rejects any form of cultural essentialism. Often “intercultural (or cross-cultural) philosophy” is still very much restricted to its “comparative” dimension, which has led to the development of “transcultural” approaches in critical opposition to comparative and intercultural ones. This, however, has the unfortunate consequence that comparative approaches can only be perceived as deficient and regressive. Therefore, transcultural studies should not neglect the importance of “comparison” so as not to lose the possibility of addressing the question of why the assumption of cultural spaces or national cultures continues to shape the contemporary situation of philosophy to a large extent, and will probably continue to do so in the foreseeable future.<sup>3</sup>

### Transcultural Studies in the *Zhuangzi*

Between 2007 and 2019, the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy at Academia Sinica in Taiwan consistently organized a series of conferences focusing on the contemporary significance of the *Zhuangzi*.<sup>4</sup> This initiative was triggered by the observation that, since around the year 2000, French-speaking sinology showed a strong interest in the *Zhuangzi*, producing works which brought the Daoist classic into dialogue with contemporary French thought and philosophy (mainly phenomenology and post-structuralism). The discussion soon entered into a dynamic field of issues related to key notions such as “body” (*shenti* 身體), “subjectivity” (*zhutixing* 主體性), and “breath-energy” (*qi* 氣), but also to modern politics. Inspired by novel ways to relate past and present, this dynamic opened up a new space for critical reflections on Daoism and Confucianism. A major

3 I began to work with the concept of “transcultural philosophy” when I became aware of the failure of “comparative philosophy” to express the dynamic and complex relation between Michel Foucault’s and Mou Zongsan’s 牟宗三 philosophies of self-cultivation and philosophical “askesis” (Heubel 2005; 2008a; 2008b).

4 Selected results have been published in two edited volumes in Chinese (see Heubel 2017a; 2017b).



influence on these developments was the work of Swiss sinologist Jean François Billeter, whose four lectures on the *Zhuangzi* held in October and November 2000 at the Collège de France in Paris greatly inspired recent French research on this classic work (Billeter 2002).

During the first workshop at Academia Sinica, Billeter appeared to be outspokenly critical of an energetic, *Qi*-oriented interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*. He appeared to reject any use of *Qi* that goes beyond the realm of individual experience and assigns cosmological dimensions to the notion of the subject<sup>5</sup> (Billeter 2010). According to Billeter, the cosmological reading—the cornerstone, in his view, of a whole hermeneutic tradition beginning with the classical commentary by Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312)—is not only problematically esoteric, but also carries a political significance which allowed the uncritical integration of the *Zhuangzi* into the imperial order of the Confucian state. To bring to the fore the critical potential of the *Zhuangzi*, neglected already in its first critical revision by its foremost editor and commentator, thus became the declared aim of Billeter’s research.

It is no coincidence that Billeter’s approach fell on fertile ground in Taiwan. Sandwiched between a strong tendency towards cultural de-sinicization and the neglect of Chinese philosophy on the one hand, and the new enthusiasm for classical Chinese culture among many scholars in the PRC (often embossed with the arrogance and blindness of cultural nationalism) on the other, scholars in Taiwan readily feel an urgent need to rethink and overhaul the study of Chinese philosophy by embracing a new, transcultural perspective. The question of how to give research on classical Chinese texts a transcultural and critical turn, which would enable contemporary scholarship to regain analytic and diagnostic force when confronted with contemporary problems, could no longer be neglected, and therefore became the topic of scholarly debates. Billeter’s sharp-minded and often provocative perspective proved to be an important stimulus for further attempts to understand and unleash the transcultural potential of the *Zhuangzi* in Taiwan.

When the dialogue with Francophone *Zhuangzi*-studies began to lose steam, the effort to rethink the significance of the *Zhuangzi* by linking it to the cultural and political experiences of contemporary Taiwan became more conscious and concretized. Since 2009, academic conferences on the *Zhuangzi* reveal a tendency, on the one hand, to deepen the conversation with contemporary German philosophy—critical theory (of the Frankfurt School in particular) and Martin Heidegger’s thought—, and on the other to pay special attention to “paradoxical thinking”

5 「若莊子說法語：畢來德莊子研究工作坊」(“If Zhuangzi Spoke French: Workshop on Jean François Billeter’s *Zhuangzi*-studies”), November 30–December 1, 2009, Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, Taipei.

(*diaogui sixiang* 弔詭思想) and those historical interpretations which emphasize *Zhuangzi's* “theory of things” (*wu lun* 物論) or on the “equalization of things” (*qi wu* 齊物)—Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (d. 1692) and Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (d. 1936) became especially important as commentators, because *Zhuangzi* was helpful for the development of their critical or even revolutionary thought.

Taiwan's transcultural potential thus found a philosophical expression, which reveals an astonishing autonomy and freedom of thought, but also critically reflects contemporary problems in a way that may be important also outside the Chinese-speaking world insofar as the paradoxical effects of hybrid modernization in China have repercussions for the rest of the world.

### *Zhuangzi*-Studies and Contemporary Neo-Confucianism

Since the Communist takeover in 1949, cultural and intellectual developments in Taiwan have been strongly influenced by scholars and artists who fled the mainland. The philosophical school of “Contemporary Neo-Confucianism” (*dangdai xin ruxue* 當代新儒學), mainly represented by Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (d. 1995), Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (d. 1978), Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (d. 1982), Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (d. 1969), and their predecessors, like Xiong Shili 熊十力 (d. 1968) and Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (d. 1988)—who both decided to stay in the PRC after 1949—pushed towards a theoretical modernization of Confucian learning, which today is generally regarded as one of the great achievements of 20th-century Sinophone philosophy, and has been in itself a highly transcultural phenomenon. Since the 1980s, Contemporary Neo-Confucianist writings have, in turn, significantly influenced the revival of Confucianism in the PRC.<sup>6</sup>

In *1949: A Eulogy* (Yang 2015), Yang Rubin 楊儒賓, as part of the wider context of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, openly challenges the CCP's official discourse on “1949”. For him, the historical narrative of 1949 is misleading as it normally focuses on October 1, the day of the founding of the People's Republic of China, but neglects another date, which he sees as equally important for the understanding of modern China from the perspective of counter-history: December 7, when the government of the Republic of China officially retreated to Taiwan (*guofu du hai qian Tai* 國府渡海遷台) and moved the capital

6 In this essay I prefer to use the rather complicated term “Contemporary Neo-Confucianism” because I refer to a specific Confucian school which mainly developed in Taiwan and Hong Kong after 1949 and therefore is to be distinguished from the more general term of “Modern Confucianism” that includes developments in Taiwan and in the PRC. In other contexts there are, of course, good reasons for the term “Modern Confucianism” (Rošker 2016, 1).

to Taipei (Taipei) (Yang 2019). Yang emphasizes the outstanding importance of those scholar immigrants who fled from the Chinese mainland to Taiwan after 1949. Their influence has, in his view, helped to enable the cultural development in Taiwan which can only be discarded if one is willing to pay the price of cultural self-impoverishment. Critics of this position are tempted to say that this cultural influx is an external, “Chinese” influence that has only temporarily found the social and political conditions for development in Taiwan, but ultimately did not grow out of Taiwanese soil and therefore does not belong to Taiwan, but to the Chinese mainland. For Yang Rubin, this kind of Taiwanese nationalism would deprive Taiwan of the transcultural potential emerging out of the dynamics of hybrid modernization. But Yang’s perspective is not limited to the defence of the cultural impact of Republican scholarship in Taiwan after 1949. He goes well beyond the so called “movement for the renaissance of Chinese culture”, once promoted by the KMT-government in response to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and is highly critical of tendencies in the PRC to instrumentalize Chinese history and culture, once again, in the service of one-party rule. Instead, what Yang seems to take into serious consideration is a topic which has for long been crucial for contemporary Neo-Confucianism, namely, the reconstruction of Confucian learning in light of the need for democratization in Chinese politics (Heubel 2015). From Yang’s discussion, it is not difficult to recognize one of the major deficiencies of this endeavour: democracy is mostly discussed from the perspective of ideological struggle or institutional arrangements, but not from the perspective of *democratic subjectivity*. Unlike other leading figures in contemporary Neo-Confucian scholarship, Yang attempts to rethink this problem not only by drawing on Confucian sources but also on classical “Daoist” ones like the *Zhuangzi*.

Contemporary Neo-Confucianism has, in principle, recognized democracy and science as universal achievements of mankind that are not only compatible with Confucianism, but should in fact be assimilated to allow it to fulfil its historical role. However, this recognition of democracy and science entails a problem, which makes it understandable why Yang has turned to reflections on the *Zhuangzi* and the idea of a “wandering subject” (*you zhi zhuti* 遊之主體) to criticize some basic assumptions of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism. The possibility of a reconciliation between “inner holiness” (*nei sheng* 內聖), a model of subjectivity oriented towards the ideal of the holy person (*shengren* 聖人), and “new external kingliness” (*xin waiwang* 新外王), namely, democratic politics, is based on the assumption that the conception of moral subjectivity developed in the idealist “school of the heart” (*xinxue* 心學) of Song-Ming Confucianism can provide the necessary conditions to open Chinese thought up for democracy and science, although this turn from the “tradition of the way” (*daotong* 道統) to democracy and science would

not be an easy one, but would be accompanied by broken and complex ways of communication (*qutong* 曲通). The difficulties to democratize subjectivity and to open it towards a scientific spirit of criticism and experiment have been largely neglected and underestimated in contemporary Neo-Confucianism. Here, Yang's idea of a "wandering subject" or "energetic-transformative subject" (*qibua zhuti* 氣化主體) inspired by the *Zhuangzi* provides a fresh perspective which challenges not only the basic assumptions of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, but also dominant conceptions of subjectivity in the West. In Yang's reflections, therefore, important philosophical problems correspond to the ability to unfold the specific transcultural potential accumulated after 1949 in Taiwan. His way of exploring this possibility carries in itself the potential to attract attention well beyond the limits of a regional experience or a particular language.

### The Triadic Subject: An Alternative Paradigm of Subjectivity?

Yang Rubin is a prolific writer and his many books cover a wide range of topics. Instead of giving a general overview of his work, I will focus on his concept of the "subject", because this is, in my understanding, the philosophical heart of his response to the crisis of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism.

"The Wandering Subject" (*You zhi zhuti* 遊之主體) is the title of a paper Yang published in 2014. It was republished in 2016 as the third chapter of his book *Zhuangzi as Confucian* (儒門內的莊子). At first sight, the title of this book seems to be a strange provocation, because the *Zhuangzi* is generally regarded as a Daoist classic. Among Chinese commentators, however, there is a tradition that links Zhuangzi less to Laozi 老子 than to Kongzi 孔子 (Confucius) and the Confucian school. The title of Yang's book is therefore not as provocative as it initially seems. The author's aim is to revive the tradition of a Confucian interpretation of the *Zhuangzi*, elaborating on Zhuangzi's cultural and educational background, his understanding of Confucian morality and ritual, or the ambiguous, often ironic portrayals of Kongzi in some dialogues of the *Zhuangzi*. A question worthy of attention comes up here: In which sense is the figure of Zhuangzi as a Confucian a necessary as well as critical counterpart to the more or less obvious tendency of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, and Modern Confucianism in general, towards theoretical exhaustion, non-ironic dogmatization, dry moralism, and authoritarianism?

The idea of a "wandering subject" helps to understand from which perspective Yang enters into the relation between the *Zhuangzi* and the problem of subjectivity, namely, the well-known claim of Western philosophers and sinologists that

subjectivity is lacking in the Chinese philosophical tradition. This problem is still relevant, as Yang does not fail to remind the reader, with regard to the debate between Jean François Billeter and François Jullien on the contemporary significance of the *Zhuangzi* in particular and of Chinese philosophy in general (Heubel 2013). Yang recognizes that “subject” (*zbuti* 主體), as discussed in contemporary Chinese or Sinophone philosophy, is not a traditional term but a modern translation. Nevertheless, as he explains, there are related terms in classical Chinese philosophy, mainly dating back to Song dynasty Neo-Confucianism, like *benti* (本體), *xinti* (心體) or *xingti* (性體), which have been used in contemporary Chinese philosophy to interpret and assimilate the modern Western notion of the subject into modern Chinese.

Besides the “wandering subject”, Yang uses two other terms to discuss the paradigm of subjectivity in the *Zhuangzi*: *qihua zbuti* (氣化主體) and *xingqi zbuti* (形氣主體), which may be translated as “energetic-transformative subject” and “material-energetic subject”. In what follows, I will mainly focus on the former concept. Throughout his discussion, Yang contrasts his perspective with three other notions of the subject, one well known in the Chinese context, the other two popular in contemporary Western philosophy: *xinxing zbuti* (心性主體), *yishi zbuti* (意識主體) and *shenti zbuti* (身體主體), which may be translated as “spiritual subject” (a more literal preliminary translation might be: heart-disposition-subject), “conscious subject,” and “bodily subject”.

To understand the idea of a “spiritual subject”, one has to keep in mind that it has been crucial for the attempt of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism to modernize Confucian learning through the reception and transformation of Kantian philosophy and post-Kantian German idealism. Philosophers like Mou Zongsan and his followers were strongly convinced that only this paradigm of spiritual or idealist subjectivity provided Chinese modernization with the normative root it desperately needed in order to overcome the destructive consequences of a purely instrumental learning from the West—and of a Socialist modernization, which, for Mou, has no deep roots in Chinese tradition and therefore is not only perceived as lacking normative legitimation, but also as necessarily short-lived. For him, only the “spiritual subject” can constitute the metaphysical foundation for what he has called the “moral subject” (*daode zbuti* 道德主體) and, furthermore, for opening up to science and democracy without losing the necessary rootedness in Confucian learning.

This proposed fusion of the “heart-learning” (*xinxue* 心學) of Neo-Confucianism with German idealism was mainly developed after 1949 in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Within the ideological framework of the Cold War, this approach aimed

at providing a philosophical critique of Marxism in general and the rule of the Chinese Communist Party over the Chinese mainland in particular. *Qi* 氣 (in this essay translated as breath-energy or energy) and the “(breath-)energy-learning” (*qixue* 氣學) of Confucianism has been, at least since the beginning of the 20th century, linked to the materialist reconstruction of Chinese philosophy and to the reception of dialectical materialism in China—it is well known that young Mao Zedong 毛澤東 participated in a study group reading the works of Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, one of the most important proponents of *Qi*-philosophy in Ming dynasty Neo-Confucianism, who lived most of his life in a secluded village in Mao’s home province Hunan 湖南.

Throughout the 20th century, a philosophical as well as ideological struggle between idealist and materialist interpretations has deeply marked attempts toward the modernization of Confucian discourse. Within this philosophical framework, Contemporary Neo-Confucianists, especially Mou Zongsan and his followers, strongly opposed the “energetic” reconstruction of Neo-Confucian philosophy as leading to disastrous moral consequences and therefore as illegitimate. Mou doubted, in principle, the possibility of grounding “moral subjectivity” in “breath-energy”, because for him *Qi* is mainly a naturalistic or aesthetic category without normative significance. In his view, subjectivity is necessarily a normative idea linked to a moral subject grounded in “moral metaphysics”. Therefore, “energetic learning” appears as not only lacking subjectivity, but as fundamentally opposed to the possibility of moral subjectivity as such. In this sense, the idea of an energy-school of Confucianism and, moreover, an “energetic-transformative subject” is questionable in terms of its philosophical foundation, as well as in terms of its normative content. It is even perceived as morally dangerous insofar as it is related to the alleged amorality of materialist and Marxist philosophy.

It is, therefore, of major importance that Yang Rubin, who is intellectually and emotionally deeply attached to the academic context of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, not only defends the distinction between the energy-school and the heart-school, but also tries to show that the idealist insistence on a spiritual subject is not only theoretically one-dimensional but also normatively problematic. Drawing on the *Zhuangzi* and the motif of wandering or roaming (*you* 遊), Yang opens up a discussion which leads to a new understanding of a possible linkage between modern democracy and the reconstruction of classical Chinese sources.

Yang introduces his concept of the subject as a “triadic structure” (*sanyuan gou-zao* 三元構造) constituted by a material, an energetic, and a spiritual moment: “material form-breath energy-spirit=subject” (*xing-qi-shen=zhuti* 形—氣—神=

主體). This conceptual framework is not only important for Yang's reading of the *Zhuangzi*, but was already a constitutive aspect in his 1996 book on the *Confucian Concept of the Body*, especially for his interpretation of the book *Mengzi* 孟子. In this context he speaks of a "material-energetic-spiritual paradigm" (*xing-qi-shen de dianfan* 形—氣—神的典範), as I would like to tentatively translate it. For him this paradigm is connected to the wider conceptual field of "body (institutional being, form)—breath-energy—heart (will, meaning)" [*shen (ti, xing—qi—xin (zhi, yi)* 身(體、形—氣—心(志、意)]. At this conceptual level, Yang also stresses that there is "no big difference" between "heart" (*xin* 心) and "spirit" (*shen* 神) (Yang 1996, 154). This makes clear that the concept of a triadic "material-energetic-spiritual subject" forms the common background for Yang's interpretation not only of Daoist but also of Confucian texts.

This conceptual structure has at least three aspects that correspond to the idea of an alternative "paradigm of subjectivity" in the *Zhuangzi* put forward by Jean François Billeter (Billeter 2002, 115–48). The first aspect is the relation between the "conscious subject" (*yishi zhuti* 意識主體) and the "non-conscious subject" (*fei yishi zhuti* 非意識主體), which corresponds, in Yang's interpretation, to the relation between "heart (consciousness)" (*xin* 心) and "heaven" (*tian* 天) in the *Zhuangzi*. The second aspect is the importance of the "body", implied in the "material-energetic-spiritual" triad. In this context, Yang looks into the understanding of the "body" in the so called "body subject" (*shenti zhuti* 身體主體) which, in his view, is inferior to the notion of a "material-energetic-spiritual subject" connected to rich sources in Chinese philosophy. The third aspect is the link between "material form" (*xing* 形) and "thing" (*wu* 物). For Yang, one of the merits of the notion of a "material-energetic-spiritual subject" is that it can accommodate the relation between "heart (consciousness)" and "thing".

How does "self-transformation" (*zihua* 自化) in the triadic subject work? Yang employs a term from chapter 27 of the *Zhuangzi*, the "balance (equilibrium) of heaven" (*tian jun* 天均; "*Gleichgewicht des Himmels*", according to Richard Wilhelm's translation), in order to explain the transformative logic within the triadic structure of material form, breath-energy, and spirit. He notes that each of the three moments is intertwined with the other two, constituting a responsive constellation, which is more dynamic than the dualist structure of body and mind dominating the Western paradigm of subjectivity (Yang 2016, 189). It is the "system of breath-energy" (*qi de tixi* 氣的體系), which enters into dyadic subjectivity and makes it breathe in constant change, turning around in a very literal sense, since Yang also refers to the "potter's wheel" (*tao jun* 陶鈞 / 陶均), in terms of Zhuangzi's image of "resting in the middle of Heaven the Potter's Wheel" (*xiu hu tian jun* 休乎天鈞), to explain this "balance of heaven" (Ziporyn 2009, 14). The

potter's wheel turns around a "spinning centre" (*huan zhong* 環中), a moving hub or axis, thus being, at the same time, relatively stable at its centre. This is a "figure" (*yixiang* 意象) or "metaphor" (*yinyu* 隱喻), as Yang says, at the heart of his discussion of the "material-energetic-spiritual subject".

But how are we to understand the relation between the triadic subject and this paradoxical figure of standing and moving at the same time? What distinguishes this triadic subject from dyadic conceptions of subjectivity is a moment of *betweenness* which enters the relation between the material and spiritual, between body and mind, between matter and soul. In the Chinese tradition Yang refers to, this third moment is called *Qi* 氣. There is an endless discussion about how to translate *Qi* and whether it is translatable at all. In theories of cultivation, *Qi* is often related to the "breath", to exercises of breathing. This helps to understand *Qi* as a relation between the outside and inside world. Breathing is a very material experience—we see and feel ourselves breathing, most of the time breathing is merely present in unconscious subtlety, but we may suffer great pain when we have difficulties breathing. On the other hand, breath is not visible, it is associated with the very experience of life, which comes and goes beyond human control. In many languages therefore breath has been associated with the "soul" or some spiritual dimension. This twofold meaning can also be expressed, although in more abstract terms, by the word "energy". "Energy" can be material and immaterial and therefore corresponds to *Qi* and can be helpful for understanding it.

In what Yang calls the "material-energetic-spiritual subject", the "energetic" moment is placed at the centre, it is the common ground of both "material form" and "spirit". This makes sense, because in this triadic model *Qi* is intimately linked to "transformation", namely, to "energetic transformation" (*qibua* 氣化). In Yang's understanding, *Qi* can transform into "form" (*xing* 形) and become "formed/material energy" (*xingqi* 形氣), but it can also transform into "spirit" (*shen* 神) and become "spiritual energy" (*shenqi* 神氣). *Qi* is thus at the centre of the subject as a "spinning hub", it is the epitome of turning movement and pulsation, but also a comparatively stable standpoint in the midst of change. The central position of "breath-energy" is an important reason for naming this paradigm of subjectivity the "energetic-transformative subject" (*qibua zhuti* 氣化主體), although it is hard to deny that this translation is problematic and that the term makes much more sense in Chinese than in English—therefore I may add that I use the words "energy" or "energetic" in a rather vague sense: "energy" (*nengliang* 能量) is in modern Chinese often used as a synonym for *Qi* 氣 and I, pragmatically, translate this usage back into "energy" or "breath-energy", the latter being the English translation from a common translation of *Qi* into French: *souffle-énergie*.



Besides this understanding of the central position of the energetic moment within the triadic subject, Yang suggests a second, additional meaning, which is more egalitarian and dynamic, but also more difficult to understand.<sup>7</sup> This meaning obviously goes beyond a “dialectical” reading of the triadic structure and is radically “paradoxical”. Now, each of the three moments can become and be the centre: material form, breath-energy, and spirit. Paradoxical movement is a changing standpoint, the spinning stillness of a hub or of a spinning top, the relation of the three moments needs a (temporary) centre, but the “stillness” of this centre is stillness in movement—it is a “spinning stillness”. In general, every moment contains the other two, but it is the central moment that is particularly open to the other two. The central position is thus at the same time position and non-position. From the alternating centre of change emanates the dynamics of ever new transitions from one moment to the others, thus allowing the central position to be replaced and to *let* itself be replaced. The centre empties itself in order to become open for some “thing” that will replace it eventually as the new centre. We may call this the *paradoxical logic of self-transformation*. It can be understood as a creative interpretation of what is called “emptying oneself in order to wait for things” to arrive (*xu er dai wu* 虛而待物) in the famous dialogue about the “fasting of the heart” in chapter 4 of the *Zhuangzi*.

This turning or spinning movement is a paradoxical “transformation” (*hua* 化) in “non-transformation” (*bu hua* 不化) and a “non-transformation” in “transformation”. To become aware of and realize this *structure of transformation*, this *standing in change* is what Yang calls “true wandering” (*zhen you* 真遊) or “perfect wandering” (*yuan you* 圓遊) (Yang 2016, 222). It is not surprising that Yang also

7 I am convinced that this second meaning is entailed in Yang Rubin’s writings but, for now, I find it difficult to provide specific evidence. However, in a recorded conversation I had with him on April 24, 2020 at the Wistaria-Teahouse in Taipei, when I asked him whether the triadic subject can be understood in this way, he answered: “I can agree to this; there should be this aspect, and it is a very important aspect” (這個我可以接受, 而且應該要有這個方面, 而且是很重要的一個方面). At some point the founder of the teahouse, Zhou Yu 周渝, joining our conversation, touched upon the question of how the triadic framework can be applied in the context of tea-culture. Zhou mentioned that he has no difficulty speaking exclusively about “breath-energy” (*qi* 氣) in this context, but that this becomes difficult when he wants to refer specifically to “material form” (*xing* 形) and “spirit” (*shen* 神). The moment we speak about the “material” and the “spiritual” dimension of tea-culture, he pointed out, we often tend to give prominence to the “spiritual” dimension, establishing a hierarchy between the two. This, however, is equally problematic, because the “spiritual” side can never be independent from the “form” in which it is expressed, whether it is the form of this concrete tea cup or the form of the movements we make when using it. I responded by referring to my interpretation of the triadic structure of transformation as allowing for the dynamic “rotation” of the central position—responding to changing contexts, sometimes it is the “material”, sometimes it is the “energetic”, and sometimes it is the “spiritual” moment that “becomes” central and continues to “be” central for some time.

introduces terms such as “heavenly wandering” (*tian you* 天遊) or “wandering transformation” (*you hua* 遊化) to speak about a layer in the *Zhuangzi* with aesthetic as well as mythical implications. The cultivation of the ability of a subject to wander freely and creatively through the three moments of its internal structure leads to a “transformational level” of perfection (*hua jing* 化境) (ibid., 206).

From this perspective it becomes clearer how Yang tries to introduce the “theory of breath-energy” (*qi lun* 氣論) in a way that avoids a “materialist” or “naturalist” reductionism that was very influential throughout the 20th century. According to Mou Zongsan’s reconstruction of Song dynasty Neo-Confucianism, the modern, materialist interpretation of *Qi* 氣 has a precedent in the tendency to bring the meaning of *Qi* 氣 close to its homophone *qi* 器 (tool, instrument), thus supporting a “non-metaphysical” understanding of the “Way” (*dao* 道). This tendency was already criticized by Cheng Hao 程顥 (d. 1085) in his discussion of the philosopher Zhang Zai’s 張載 (d. 1077) conception of breath-energy (Mou 2003, 438–39, 459–60; Heubel 2007).

Generally speaking, for Yang, the conception of “breath-energy” can overcome this reductionist reading because it also contains a metaphysical (*xing er shang* 形而上), ontological (*bentilun* 本體論) or even transcendent (*chao yue* 超越) layer. What seems to underlie Yang’s understanding of the triadic structure of the subject is the dialectical relation between *ti* 體 (“constitutive being”)<sup>8</sup> and *yong* 用 (“use”), fundamental for Neo-Confucian philosophy. According to Yang’s proposal, breath-energy is unavoidably linked to subjectivity and can thus unfold the normative significance of “energetic Confucianism”, because breath-energy cannot be reduced to its “material” or “physical” (*xing er xia* 形而下) dimension—it internally contains a spiritual-energetic dimension (*shen qi* 神氣). Accordingly, Yang distinguishes between “*a priori* breath-energy” (*xiantian qi* 先天氣) and “*a posteriori* breath-energy” (*houtian qi* 後天氣). This distinction corresponds to the fundamental importance of “metaphysics” within Contemporary Neo-Confucianism, for which the ultimate result of a non- or post-metaphysical philosophy is some kind of amoral materialism or nihilism that has to be rejected. The difference of Yang’s perspective from “idealist” positions within Contemporary Neo-Confucianism can be traced not only in his insistence on the constitutive meaning of “breath-energy” for subjectivity, but also in his strong emphasis on the notion of “thing” (*wu* 物) and “thingification/reification” (*wuhua* 物化), which Yang has developed into a sophisticated “theory of the thing” (*wu lun* 物論). His understanding of the relation between “thing” and “transformation” clearly

8 *Wesen* in German, meaning “living being” or “entity”, which seems to be a better translation than “essence”.

refrains from a purely materialistic approach by introducing the idea of “things which transform themselves” (*wu zihua* 物自化), or “things which manifest themselves” (*wu zixian* 物自顯). Yang even claims that the “transformation of things” (*wuhua* 物化) is Zhuangzi’s version of the idea of the “thing in itself” (物自身), which is also the Chinese translation for Kant’s “*Ding an sich*” (Yang 2016, 200).

Yang emphasizes that, in the *Zhuangzi*, free wandering can never be realized without “things” to which it has to relate. This is how free wandering is connected to “ascetics” (*gongfu lun* 工夫論) in the *Zhuangzi*, to techniques of self-cultivation like “sitting in forgetfulness” (*zuo wang* 坐忘) or the “fasting of the heart (consciousness/mind)” (*xin zhai* 心齋). What he calls “heavenly wandering of the heart” (*xin zhi tianyou* 心之天遊) can only be realized through things, in which the “learning of the heart” (*xin xue* 心學) and the “learning of breath-energy” (*qi xue* 氣學) may finally be reconciled.

After a long and sophisticated discussion on the relation between “breath-energy” or “energetic transformation” (*qihua* 氣化) and subjectivity, Yang, in the end, seems to return to the metaphysical language that characterizes Contemporary Neo-Confucian theory as developed by Mou Zongsan. Critical reflections on Yang’s theory of “breath-energy” and the idea of a triadic “material-energetic-spiritual subject” often object to his unwillingness to abandon some of the basic metaphysical assumptions of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism. In reaction to this criticism Yang ironically admits that the intellectual revolution he has undertaken is “not radical enough”, or not ironic enough, we might say, since his interpretation of the relation between Confucianism and Daoism still places them in a rather conventional mutual opposition: Confucianism is non-ironic and normative, while Daoism is ironic and critical, but also fundamentally amoral. This approach seems to neglect the (self-) critical attitude and potential within Confucianism as well as the normative significance of a Daoist paradigm of subjectivity.

## Conclusion

This paper began with very general reflections on “transcultural Taiwan” and ended with a much more specific, technical discussion of Yang Rubin’s conceptual paradigm of a “material-energetic-spiritual subject”. My aim has been to give an overview of the broader cultural and political situation, in which “transcultural *Zhuangzi*-studies” appeared and developed. Moreover, the paradigm of subjectivity that Yang has been developing for decades can be read as “transcultural” because it allows communication between different, often disparate cultural sources, classical and modern, Eastern and Western. This proposal is not only

philosophically but also politically significant. One may ask to what extent Taiwan's complex and twisted process of democratization and the development of this new "paradigm of subjectivity" correspond with one another. Obviously, there may be many scholars and intellectuals in Taiwan who would deny this kind of correspondence, largely perceiving *the* Chinese tradition as overall authoritarian or even despotic, and therefore tending to identify the development of liberal democracy with the Westernization of political discourse. This understanding is also very influential in the PRC, where it often provides justification for the rejection of liberal democracy as a Western model and the favouring instead of a Chinese model of non-liberal, "socialist democracy".

Since the 1940s and 50s, Contemporary Neo-Confucianism has tried to prove that liberal democracy and classical Confucianism are not incompatible. Apart from this "negative" contribution of not directly opposing democratization, however, the positive impact of Neo-Confucianism on Taiwanese democratization in general and on democratic discourse in particular has been very limited. From a philosophical perspective, the attempt to develop a Confucian foundation for democracy in terms of a metaphysics of moral subjectivity seems to be largely outdated, or would have to be fundamentally rethought to remain significant in the future. Recent attempts towards "Civic Confucianism" (*gongmin ruxue* 公民儒學) in Taiwan, for instance, openly resist this line of thought (Teng 2015, 17).

Yang Rubin is deeply convinced that Taiwan's democracy cannot develop and thrive by solely relying on Western sources, and that, therefore, it has to take the necessary step of seriously reconstructing the *normative value* (*guifanxing jiazhi* 規範性價值) of the "Republic of China", before and after 1949. From a broader perspective, the most important normative potential embedded in the "idea of the Republic of China" (*Zhonghua Minguo de linian* 中華民國的理念) is its *transculturality*, the richness of experiences and experiments with "communicating old and new, East and West" (*tong gujin dongxi* 通古今東西). This is, of course, a huge and at times rather depressing topic, since the "Republic of China" faces the very real danger of being wiped out of history and memory, either through a movement for the independence of Taiwan or through forced unification with the Chinese mainland. Confronted with this stark reality, Yang Rubin's historical consciousness has led him to pursue, at the same time, a critical analysis of two historical narratives which he rejects: on the one hand, a narrative of Taiwanese democratization and of "Taiwan subjectivity" (*Taiwan zhuti xing* 台灣主體性), which emphasizes the struggle of liberation against the authoritarian, one-party rule by invaders from the Chinese mainland after 1949, and tends to neglect the crucial importance of the many cultural, political, and economic resources that moved across the Taiwan Strait and came to Taiwan along with the Republican

government; and on the other hand Yang sees the necessity to challenge the official narrative on Chinese modernization put forward and controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.

Obviously, this is more than an intellectual struggle against the current, and seems to be an utterly quixotic endeavour. At this point, it becomes understandable why Yang's version of Confucian learning needs the *Zhuangzi*. For Yang, Zhuangzian humour and irony is crucial for resolutely standing up against an allegedly unavoidable course of history, without ending up in dogmatism and pseudo-religious moralism, which has been the fate of other scholars of Contemporary Neo-Confucianism before him. What we may learn from Yang Rubin is the ability to combine a broad and keen consciousness of historical urgency with a thorough and meticulous reading of classical Confucian and Daoist sources. They can both help us live and work *within* the spinning stillness of the present.

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# Qinghua School of Logic and the Origins of Taiwanese Studies in Modern Logic: A Note on the Early Thought of Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang

*Jan VRHOVSKI\**

## Abstract

The article investigates the early thought of Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang, two important founding fathers of Taiwanese philosophy, who contributed significantly to its formation as an academic discipline in the two decades following 1949. The article reveals how their ideas related to modern logic originated from the so-called “Qinghua School of (Mathematical) Logic”. Herewith, the article tries to provide a platform that can be used to answer the questions of continuity and succession between the studies of modern logic as conducted at the most progressive (modernised) universities in late Republican China (especially Qinghua University) on the one side, and the formation and development of studies in logic in post-1949 Taiwan, on the other.

**Keywords:** modern logic, analytical philosophy, Taiwan, Qinghua School of Logic, Mou Zongsan, Yin Haiguang

## Šola logike Qinghua in izvori tajvanskih študij moderne logike: o zgodnji misli Mou Zongsana in Yin Haiguanga

### Izvleček

Članek preučuje zgodnjo misel Mou Zongsana in Yin Haiguanga, dveh pomembnih soustanoviteljev tajvanske filozofije, ki sta v prvih dveh desetletjih po letu 1949 znatno prispevala k njenemu oblikovanju kot akademske discipline. Članek razkriva, kako so njune ideje, povezane z moderno logiko, izvirale v tako imenovani »šoli (matematične) logike Qinghua«. Prav tako poskuša priskrbeti platformo, s pomočjo katere lahko odgovorimo na vprašanja kontinuitete in nasledstva med študijami moderne logike na najnaprednejših (moderniziranih) kitajskih univerzah v poznem republikanskem obdobju (s

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poudarkom na Univerzi Qinghua) ter snovanjem in razvojem študij moderne logike na Tajvanu po letu 1949.

**Ključne besede:** moderna logika, analitična filozofija, Tajvan, šola logike Qinghua, Mou Zongsan, Yin Haiguang

## Introduction

This text aims to illuminate and expound on one aspect of the historical link between the developments in the academic discipline of modern logic in the early Taiwanese period (1949–1950s) and the renowned “Qinghua School of (Mathematical) Logic”. We will try to show that this continuity, which hypothetically existed between the Qinghua School of Logic and the developmental trends in Taiwanese studies of modern logic had been established through important intermediaries like Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) and Yin Haiguang 殷海光 (original name Fusheng 福生, 1919–1969), who had been educated or influenced by members of the above-mentioned school, and had already during their studies in China reached a relatively high degree of mastery and erudition in the field. To confirm the existence of such a continuity, we will outline the main characteristics of the early thought of the above two scholars. An attempt will thus be made to show that both had adopted the same *notions* and *attitudes* towards *modern logic* as advocated by most notable members of the Qinghua circle of logicians.

In the first part of our discussion, we will deliver a short overview of Mou Zongsan’s early (pre-1949) contributions to the spread of ideas from modern logic (symbolic or mathematical logic), as well as to current public discussions that touched upon the nature of logic. A short summary of Mou’s logic-related activities in the pre-1949 period will then be combined with a brief examination of the early writings of Yin Haiguang, all in order to convey a general image of how the influence of Qinghua school of logic manifested itself in their early notions of modern logic.

## “Qinghua School of Mathematical Logic”:

### A Short Historical Introduction

By the late 1920s, various forms of modern Western logic had already been widely established throughout the most progressive Chinese intellectual and academic circles. During the May Fourth movement in 1919, the significance of notions



like mathematical, pragmatic and dialectical logic had been constantly increasing in public intellectual debates and Chinese academia. At the same time, each of the above-mentioned notions of logic—generally associated with contemporary advances in Western science and philosophy, underwent its own institutional and discursive development. In contrast to pragmatic and dialectical logic, whose portrayal was almost exclusively connected to the propagation of the two corresponding philosophical worldviews in China,<sup>1</sup> the notion of mathematical logic (also referred to as symbolic logic, logistic, etc.) was concurrently developed both as a philosophical notion and scientific discipline. While as a philosophical notion it was first introduced to Chinese intellectual circles as an integral part of positivist philosophy and Western scientific worldview<sup>2</sup> as propagated by Bertrand Russell, who arrived to China in late 1920, the foundation of its institutional life at Chinese academic institutes only started in the late 1920s, when, in the wake of the reorganisation of the Qinghua College into National Qinghua University, Jin Yuelin 金岳霖 and others set up the first modern department of philosophy in China. Eventually, also owing partially to the prestige attached to analytical philosophy by the most progressive Chinese philosophers, mathematical logic came to occupy an important position at the newly founded Qinghua Department of Philosophy. Thus, in the years following its official establishment in 1928, the

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- 1 In the case of former, the notion of “pragmatic logic” was introduced to broader intellectual circles after the renowned pragmatist philosopher John Dewey arrived at Peking University, in an attempt to provide the main philosophical tenets of the pragmatist philosophy of education, worldview and so on, as expounded by Dewey, with a sound methodological machinery. Naturally, one of the leading figures behind the public exposition of the so-called “pragmatist logic” was Dewey’s former student Hu Shi, who had earned his doctorate in philosophy at Columbia for a thesis entitled *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China* (1917), which saw its first publication in China in 1922. In his dissertation Hu espoused the view that in their intellectual or philosophical history the Chinese had essentially developed a pragmatic variety of logic, the most illustrative example of which had been the so-called Mohist and Neo-Mohist logic. As a consequence, Hu also believed that Gongsun Long 公孫龍, Hui Shi 惠施 and others were members of the same school of logic as initiated by Modi 墨翟.
  - 2 One of the most significant exponents of the notion of mathematical logic in early 1920s China was Zhang Shenfu 張申府 (originally called 張嵩年), who at the time also made his name as the greatest Chinese expert on Russell’s philosophy. Later, as a result of Zhang’s strong proclivity towards creating an all-encompassing, comprehensive view of reality, he devised an idea of “greater objectivity”, which would synthesize the subjectivist traditional thought on one side and the objectivist scientific outlook on the other. Throughout his remaining career as a philosopher and a political activist, Zhang repeatedly attempted to reconcile the two main contesting objectivisms of the time. While his first attempt was aimed at reconciliation of the two opposing sides in the “worldviews” debates at the beginning of the 1920s, the most notable of which was the debate on Science and the View on Life (*Kexue yu renshengguan* 科學與人生觀) from 1923, in later years, when Zhang started more ardently advocating dialectical materialism, his propensity for comprehensiveness also materialized in his attempts to reconcile dialectical materialism on one side and mathematical logic (as one of the main methods of Western science) on the other.

department selectively hired a number of philosophers, whose academic renown had in any way been associated with either analytical philosophy (at the time mostly referred to as New Realism, *xin weishi zhuyi* 新唯實主義) or modern formal logic (symbolic or mathematical logic). Consequently, by the early 1930s the elementary curriculum at the department grew to include several individual specialised and general courses on logic. At both graduate and undergraduate levels the first course devoted exclusively to mathematical logic was organised immediately following the appointment of Zhang Shenfu as a lecturer at the department. Eventually, by the time when the first generation of Qinghua-trained modern logicians concluded their studies at the department, the Qinghua School of Philosophy became also known as the “Qinghua School of Mathematical Logic” and, as a result, the academic centre of analytical philosophy in China, too. Although, with time, the original torchbearers of modern logic at the department, such as Jin Yuelin and Zhang Shenfu, had gradually left the realm of deductive logic for more general philosophical topics, the way towards China’s complete appropriation of the field was paved by the future generations of their graduates. Through their efforts, modern logic became an integral part of, at first, the science of philosophy, and later also research in mathematics and technology at Chinese scientific and academic institutes.

In the late Republican period, the Qinghua Department of Philosophy directly or indirectly trained the following logicians, who contributed significantly to the development of modern formal logic in China: Shen Youding 沈有鼎 (Yu-ting Shen, 1908–1992), Wang Xianjun 王憲鈞 (Wang Sian-jun, 1910–1993), and Wang Hao 王浩 (Hao Wang, 1921–1995), among others.<sup>3</sup> However, the Qinghua School of Modern Logic and Analytic Philosophy in its later form, especially in the late 1930s and in its wartime state, would also turn out to be the original cradle of modern logic and analytical philosophy in post-1949 Taiwan. Beside Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995), whose early interest as well as concrete engagement in studies of modern formal logic (mathematical logic) have already been more or less taken into account in the recent studies of his philosophical

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3 Shen Youding graduated in 1929 and, subsequently, continued his studies in modern formal logic at Harvard. In 1934, he returned to his *alma mater*, and remained teaching until the breakout of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937. Wang Xianjun completed his graduate studies shortly before the start of the war (1936) and in the year 1937 travelled first to Berlin and after that to Vienna, where he studied logic under the world-famous mathematician and logician Kurt Gödel. He returned to China in 1938. Finally, Wang Hao, undoubtedly the most famous Chinese logician of the 20th century, concluded his studies at the wartime Qinghua University (National Southwest Associated University) in 1945. Upon graduation, Wang continued his postgraduate education at Harvard and subsequently spent his entire career in the West.

thought,<sup>4</sup> in the late 1930s and early 1940s Qinghua University was also the training ground of another future Taiwanese philosopher who can be credited for having transmitted the knowledge and, most importantly, the sense of significance of studies in mathematical logic and analytic philosophy to the new institutions of higher education to Taiwan. There, after the final capitulation of the Republican government in 1949, the first foundation stones of what was to become Taiwanese academic philosophy were laid. This original member of Qinghua Department of Philosophy and the future pioneer of studies of modern logic in Taiwan whom we are referring to here is Yin Haiguang 殷海光 (originally called Yin Fusheng 殷福生, 1919–1969). Yin spent his formative years studying philosophy and logic under Jin Yuelin, Shen Youding and Wang Xianjun at the wartime Qinghua Department of Philosophy (Southwest Associated University). Unlike his older colleague Mou Zongsan, who despite a strong initial interest in logic did not devote his remaining career either to analytical philosophy or modern logic,<sup>5</sup> after having left Qinghua University Yin Fusheng remained as it were “loyal” to his former field of studies and his past mentor Jin Yuelin. Apart from his in new homeland in Taiwan, Yin was one among many promising young Chinese philosophers whose early academic influences and achievements—at least for the greater part of the 20th century—were beclouded and pushed into obscurity by the destructive winds of war and the change of regime in 1949 that radically redefined China, overturning both its future development as well as the image of its past.

### From Mou Zongsan to Yin Haiguang

When, in 1947, the renowned expert on Hegel’s philosophy and lecturer at both Qinghua and Peking universities, He Lin 賀麟 (1902–1992), published a retrospective analysis of the main developmental trends in Chinese philosophy in last few decades, he also indicated that since the beginning of the century China had produced some concrete results in the most advanced branch of Western logic, a field which was generally referred to as “mathematical logic”. Furthermore, he also

4 Most notable monographies, which touch on Mou’s logic-related thought include: N. Serina Chan’s *The Thought of Mou Zongsan* (2011), in its retrospective view Jason Clower’s *Late Works of Mou Zongsan* (2014), and most importantly Rafael Suter’s *Logik und Apriori zwischen Wahrnehmung und Erkenntnis: Eine Studie zum Frühwerk Mou Zongsans (1909–1995) (Logic and the Apriori between Perception and Cognition: A Study in Mou Zongsan’s Early Work (1909–1995))* (2017).

5 Irrespectively of his early studies in logic, he became most famous as the crucial representative of the second generation of the Modern Confucians (*Xin rujia* 新儒家, see for instance Lee 2014, 9; Sernelj 2014, 84–85).

gave a list of those Chinese “logicians” and philosophers who had made the greatest contributions to Chinese advances in the field. In He Lin’s opinion, these included the first Chinese expert in the field, Yu Dawei (David Yule), the famous professor and philosopher Jin Yuelin, Wan Zhuoheng 萬卓恆, the brothers Shen Youding and Shen Youqian 沈有潛, the Chinese historian of logic Wang Dianji 汪奠基, the philosopher Zhang Yinlin 張蔭麟, the Qinghua logician Wang Xianjun and the future leading name of, as it were, “socialist” mathematical logic in China, Hu Shihua 胡世華. This list did not include Zhang Shenfu, who, mainly for political reasons, had been ostracised from the echelons of Qinghua logicians in 1936. Nevertheless, already in the years before that, as a lecturer in analytic philosophy and mathematical logic at Qinghua and Peking universities, Zhang was standing out from the rest of the philosophers at the department. One feature which made him so different from the others was his passionate advocacy of dialectical materialism, and even more peculiarly, a synthesis of mathematical logic and materialist dialectics. Even though Zhang was later expelled from academic life and, after the war, also excluded from the ranks of the CPC (Communist Party of China), the fact nevertheless remains that for a decade before these developments Zhang had been the key propagator of analytic philosophy and mathematical logic among Chinese intellectuals. Besides having written about the notion of mathematical logic, Russell’s main contribution to philosophy, from as early on as 1919, Zhang was also the first lecturer at Beida and Qinghua to have organised a course devoted exclusively to mathematical logic at both universities’ departments of philosophy. Furthermore, his appointment at Qinghua Department of Philosophy led a series of modifications in the basic curriculum, which subsequently contained more courses on logic. Consequently, Zhang inspired many young scholars to focus their studies on logic and Western analytic philosophy. According to the reminiscences of many future Chinese logicians, who at that time were students of philosophy either at Peking or Qinghua universities, another such influence which essentially overshadowed Zhang’s was Jin Yuelin’s textbook *Logic* (*Luoji* 邏輯), published in 1935.

### Mou Zongsan, Mathematical Logic and the Philosophy of New Realism at Qinghua University, 1933–1940s

As a freshman at the Department of Philosophy at Peking University, in 1929, Mou Zongsan was one of the many young philosophers who were influenced by Zhang Shenfu’s lectures on mathematical logic, Russell and Wittgenstein. Thus, according to Mou’s recollections, his favourite subjects in the framework of undergraduate studies at Peking University were the philosophy of New Realism, the philosophy of Bertrand Russell and mathematical logic (Mou 1993, 41–43).

At the same time, he also became interested in the thought of the renowned English mathematician and philosopher, and the co-author of Russell's *Principia Mathematica*, Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947). Moreover, as his later writings on logic reveal, in the years following his graduation in 1933, Mou was also closely following Jin Yuelin's philosophical thought and sympathized with the ideas of other established Qinghua logicians, like Shen Youding.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst Mou was discovering other sources of inspiration in both Western and traditional Chinese philosophy, the differences between his ideas and those of his first teacher of mathematical logic and the principles of analytic philosophy, Zhang Shenfu, were steadily increasing (Chan 2011, 14). His ideas about logic approached those common among the main circle of logicians at Qinghua University. An important motivating factor behind Mou's shifting views on logic was the rise of fierce public debates on dialectical materialism, in which the proponents of Marxist dialectics and dialectical materialism, like Ye Qing 葉青 (real name Ren Zhuoxuan 任卓宣, 1896–1990), Li Da 李達 (original name Tingfang 庭芳, 1890–1966) and others, applied established Marxist critiques of formal logic—mainly Plekhanov's and later also Lenin's and others' views on formal logic—to refute the methodological basis of the contesting philosophical currents in China. As a strong opponent of Marxism, Mou eventually joined the ranks of the most outspoken defenders of a notion of logic that was advocated in Western analytical philosophy and assumed in contemporary studies in logic. In the early years (1931–1936) the Marxist attacks on the so-called “formal logic” (comprising contemporary symbolic and traditional Aristotelian logic) mainly revolved around three laws of thought. Therefore, apart from the general notion of logic, in his open defence of logic Mou mostly discussed the correct meaning of these three laws. Here it needs to be noted that the importance of these debates on logic from early 1930s derived from the fact that, as the methodological foundation of philosophy, logic was more or less understood to be the pivotal source of the objectiveness of a philosophical worldview, and hence also as one of the major battlegrounds between contesting ideologies.

With respect to the definition of logic, Mou Zongsan's writings from this period were more or less in line with the views of the representatives of New Realism in China, such as Shen Youding. In his article from 1934, entitled “Logic and Dialectical

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6 In his autobiography, Mou reminisced that during the years of study at Beida, he was greatly influenced by Zhang Shenfu's lectures on mathematical logic and Russell and Jin Yuelin's lectures on miscellaneous problems from cotemporary philosophy, with a special focus on New Realism. Furthermore, outside the university the greatest influence on Mou was Zhang Dongsun. With regard to Zhang's lectures on mathematical logic he further noted that even though they were rather simple, they were still the first example of such a specialized course on the topic at Chinese universities (Mou 1993, 43).

Logic” (*Luoji yu bianzheng luoji* 邏輯與辯證邏輯), Mou advocated a monistic notion of pure logic: as one objective, absolute, formal and normative logic. Among three contemporary philosophical outlooks on logic (Russell’s logicism, Hilbert’s formalism and Brouwer’s intuitionism) discussed in the article, Mou expressed his greatest admiration for mathematical logic and logicism, because of which he also furnished his discussion with a detailed introduction to some major concepts from the *Principia Mathematica*. While pure logic as manifested in the cutting-edge logical systems known at the time, like example mathematical logic, was deemed by Mou as the only example of logic as such, Mou’s refutation of “dialectical logic” drew from an assertion that, from its beginnings on, dialectics could only be described as a methodology or in most extreme case a “special logic” (*teshu luoji* 特殊邏輯) or “applied logic” (*yingyong luoji* 應用邏輯), as opposed to pure or general logic.

Mou’s main point of criticism against the Marxist notion of dialectical logic was stated in the third and last part of his article from 1934. The focal argument revolved around the Marxist understanding of the three basic laws of logic. As in all previous points made by Mou, in this argument against dialectical logic he also assumed a position which was in accordance with the views prevalent amongst Qinghua followers of New Realism. What Mou thus emphasized was that the main flaw of the so-called dialectical logic resided in its misinterpretation of identity, especially when it came to propositions and concepts. This flaw was also evident in the way it defined the laws of identity and contradiction.<sup>7</sup> With respect to the real meaning of these laws, Mou pointed out that logical laws are all based on the aprioristic nature of the human intellect, and can neither be proved nor disproved. In this sense, Mou was a proponent of the idea of pure logic, which assumes that logical propositions do not necessarily have a positive link to reality (the non-positive proposition). In light of his adherence to the Qinghua School of Logic, in the 1930s’ debates on logic Mou finally also took the standpoint that “alternative” logics, such as dialectical logic, could neither be a form of logic nor methodologies, but “theories” focusing on analysing facts.<sup>8</sup>

7 Mou’s reasoning probably evolved from earlier writings by the members of the Qinghua circle, like Jin Yuelin’s “Identity, Equality and Experience” (*Tong, deng yu jingyan* 同、等與經驗) from 1927. His treatment of the notion of contradiction was further aligned with the approach taken by both Jin and Zhang Shenfu in their articles “On Self-Contradiction” from 1927. How passionately Mou followed his teacher Zhang Shenfu’s thought on logic becomes evident from his writings from the early 1930s, in which he echoes Zhang’s strong emphasis on the use of Russell’s theory of types, as well as the adoption of Wittgenstein’s language-philosophical notion of tautology when dealing with contradictions—this was also indicated in Zhang’s article from 1927. A good example thereof is Mou’s article “Contradiction and Theory of Types” from 1933.

8 A similar point was emphasized by Jin in his discussion with Zhang Dongsun in the late 1930s, early 1940s. In 1939, Zhang published a relatively lengthy text in the *Yanjing xuebao* entitled “Different Types of Logic and Culture—Discussed Together with Chinese Neo-Confucianism”, in

In the same 1930s debates Mou also stood out as one of the main proponents of the mathematical variety of formal logic associated with Bertrand Russell—the other was Shen Youding.<sup>9</sup> His special position rested on the fact that, from 1932 on, Mou had also published a series of articles on modern logic, which were in great part also based on concepts and theories from what was known as mathematical logic.<sup>10</sup> In following both Jin Yuelin and Zhang Shenfu, Mou took an interest in the theory of mathematical logic as outlined in Russell's and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*. Apart from that, his views were also influenced by Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and logic, one of the leading Chinese exponents of which was also his former professor, Zhang Shenfu.<sup>11</sup> His reproduction and interpretation of mathematical logic and analytic philosophy was, however, paralleled and subsequently also superseded by his strong interest in the philosophy of mind on the one hand, and traditional Chinese philosophical thought on the other. It could be claimed that a strong propensity towards resolving philosophical issues using the methods applied in German classical philosophy (with Kant, Hegel, etc.), epistemology, traditional Chinese cosmology (*Yijing* 易經, *The Book of Changes*) and Neo-Confucianism ultimately dissuaded Mou from becoming a logician, and led him in the direction towards shaping his future identity as a “Confucianist” philosopher.

Nonetheless, Mou's relation with logic did not end with his early meditations on mathematical logic, but persisted long after his focus had shifted to other philosophical questions, which constituted the heart of his later philosophy. A great deal of his early excursions into the realm of modern logic and analytic philosophy were summarized in his first major work on logic, *Logical Paradigms* (*Luoji dianfan* 邏輯典範), which was first published with the Commercial Press in 1941. Although the book basically represents an exhaustive overview of certain

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which he developed his idea of culture-based systems of logic, claiming that his views were in accord with Jin's exposition on different systems of logic in his earlier writings. Jin's elaborate answer to Zhang's apparent misunderstanding of the theory of systems of logic, as outlined in the former's 1935 book *Logic*, was published no earlier than in 1941. In the article entitled “On Different Types of Logic” (*Lun butong de luoji* 論不同的邏輯) Jin pointed out that Zhang did not correctly understand the difference between logic and science of logic. While logic as such is essentially universal and unitary, there may be many different sciences of logic.

- 9 This was also noted by the “opposite” side. In 1939, Li Da, who at the time took over the role of the leading discussant on the Marxist side of the debate, described Mou Zongsan as the main representative of the school of “mathematical logicians” (Li 1939, 112).
- 10 See also Chan's *The Thought of Mou Zongsan* (2011, 17). For an extensive analysis of Mou's early logic-related ideas see: Rafael Suter's *Logik und Apriori zwischen Wahrnehmung und Erkenntnis: Eine Studie zum Frühwerk Mou Zongsans (1909–1995)* (2017).
- 11 Zhang not only lectured on Wittgenstein but also created and published the first Chinese translation of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1927).

aspects of logic from the philosophical perspective (epistemology, Kantian notion of pure reason, and so on), and can also be seen as simply a textbook exercise in the philosophy of logic, in its final section Mou made one decisive step forward. In an attempt to inter-bridge mathematical logic and epistemology (pure mind), Mou combined the knowledge gained in his past encounters with Russell's philosophy and mathematical logic (especially *Principia Mathematica*) with his new understanding in the domain of *a priori* and the notion of pure reason (*chunli* 純理). By probing into the epistemological shadowlands of logic, Mou threaded further away from the purely technical realms of modern logic. Herewith, Mou also managed to circumvent some pivotal and demanding theoretical problems in contemporary logic, like many-valued calculi, details of formalist axiomatization, the theorems of Gödel, and so on. Still, generally speaking, in the above-mentioned section on "Mathematics, Logic and Pure Reason" Mou introduced and expounded on a number of highly technical concepts from *Principia Mathematica* and other concepts related to mathematical logic, including the axiom of infinity from Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory, Cantor's theory of transfinite numbers, and more.<sup>12</sup> In parts related to the mathematical logic of the *Principia*, Mou reconstructed and explained concrete excerpts from Russell's monumental book. Furthermore, Mou also made great effort to demonstrate that mathematics, to which in contemporary science logic was shown to be inextricably linked, was founded on pure reason and inherently contained both a logical and an intuitive basis. In accordance with the epistemic philosophical views Mou chose to espouse, he was consequently also highly sceptical about the so-called "axiomatisms" (*gongli zhuyi* 公理主義) of Hilbert's school of formalism, which after Gödel's ground-breaking discoveries in the 1930s had slowly lost their former appeal among Western logicians. This was also in line with Mou's tendency towards intuitionism.<sup>13</sup>

The *Logical Paradigms* were not the final product of Mou's early work in logic. After his retreat to Taiwan Mou did not completely sever his contact with the science of logic, but continued teaching it at the reorganised National Taiwan

12 In his autobiography Mou indicated that at the time his interest in logic revolved around the *Principia Mathematica*. His intense study of the book eventually led him to write his *Logical Paradigms*. Mou also mentioned that, while he exerted great efforts to master the *Principia*, one of his blind spots was the symbolic logic of C. I. Lewis, especially the concept of strict implication (Mou 1993, 67–68). In the early 1930s, Lewis' theory of logic was the main focus of Jin Yuelin. In these years, Jin's focus slowly shifted towards the Harvard School of Logic and in turn also the notion of induction in logic.

13 In addition to this, the book *Logical Paradigms* contains a series of relatively unique attempts to subject the foundations of modern logic to an epistemological evaluation, and at the same time illustrates Mou's deep understanding of some particular aspects of modern logic. Therefore, the work most definitely deserves a more thorough examination in an individual study.



Normal University. In 1955, following his appointment as a member of the Academic Review Committee at the Taiwanese Ministry of Education, Mou published his second, upgraded textbook on logic entitled *Lize xue* 理則學 (*Studies in Logic*) (Chan 2011, 18). As Mou later reminisced, in this later book his understanding of logic was superseded only with regard to certain concepts from C. I. Lewis' theory of logic (Mou 1993, 68). Nevertheless, the most important point here for us is that even in a time when his mind was occupied with other dimensions of philosophy, at least in the initial period, Mou retained his contact with logic as taught in the framework of the so-called "Qinghua School of Logic" from late 1920s and through the early 1930s.<sup>14</sup> In this way, the fact that in his Taiwanese period Mou still lectured about "mathematical logic" together with elements of New Realism could be seen as a continuation of the very same notion of logic in Taiwan, while Mou could be considered as one of the key figures who helped set down the foundations of the Taiwanese academic discipline of logic, linking the future development of logic in Taiwan with the past trends associated with the study of logic at Beida and Qinghua universities in the 1930s and 40s.

The renowned logician and political philosopher Yin Haiguang was another key intellectual who also contributed significantly to the transmission of the so-called Qinghua School of Logic to the newly forming Taiwanese institutes of higher education. This was important, as after the final victory of the Communists in 1949 the Qinghua School of Logic succumbed to the winds of ideological change and was soon condemned as a form of Western idealism in the early 1950s.

### Yin Haiguang: On the Making of the Future Taiwanese Expert on Logic

Yin Haiguang, whose original given name was Fusheng 福生, was exactly ten years younger than Mou. Like Mou, Yin's interest in logic emerged early on in his educational path. However, in contrast to Mou over time his interest in logic was not replaced by any other theories or problems related to philosophy. Moreover, from the beginning Yin's deep affinity for researching logic was established in connection to the "more technical" aspects of logic, and to a lesser degree to the philosophy of logic. It is more than possible that this was a direct consequence of emergence of an entirely new outlook on modern logic, which was imported to Qinghua by the younger generation of its graduates, who, as newly made experts in the field, returned from their postgraduate studies in the West (Europe and the US) with new ideas and energy. This influx of fresh trends in the field caused the center of attention in the studies of logic at the department to shift from Russell's

14 Strong interest in C. I. Lewis, for instance, was typical for Jin Yuelin's studies in the early 1930s etc.

*Principia*, Lewis' symbolic logic, New Realism, and so on, to topics like many-valued logics, Gödel's Incompleteness Theorems and the like. Apart from the wartime Qinghua University, with the return of Hu Shihua to his homeland in early 1940s and the series of advances in the field made by a circle of mathematicians from Wuhan University, a more technical variety of mathematical logic started to form at Peking and Wuhan universities. Those young professors who revitalized research in logic at Qinghua were Shen Youding and Wang Xianjun. According to biographical accounts, Yin was influenced by both (Qi 2013, 29; Yang 2009, 1).

However, Yin Haiguang's academic interest for logic was born in the early 1930s, when as a young student at the secondary school in Wuchang (武昌中學) Yin first read the (at the time relatively popular and commonly used) textbook *The ABC of Logic* (*Lunlixue ABC 論理學ABC*) by Zhu Zhaocui 朱兆萃.<sup>15</sup> Two years after *The ABC of Logic* was first published as a part of the popular ABC series, Yin found his new source of inspiration in the incomparably more advanced *Logic* by Jin Yuelin (1935), in which, in contrast to the earlier textbook, Yin made his first extensive contact with the mathematical logic of the *Principia Mathematica* (Yang 2009, 1–2). Under the influence of Jin's 1935 textbook, at the age of 15 Yin delved into the realm of mathematical logic for the first time.

After he graduated from secondary school in Wuchang, Yin enrolled into the comparatively progressive Wuhan University. Here, Yin was soon given the chance to undertake new research in the field.<sup>16</sup> Not much later, the profound impression Jin's book left on Yin's young mind materialized in his first contribution to advancing Western logic in China. Already one year after Jin's *Logic* had first been

15 The textbook was published in the *ABC* basic textbooks series by the Shijie shuju 世界書局, which aimed at providing a series of essential/introductory readers for senior secondary schools. Basically, as a result of the first major Republican educational reform in the late 1920s, logic was prescribed as an obligatory course at senior secondary level schools. In a subsequent wave of reforms, the urge for creating new, updated teaching materials for reformed secondary as well as university-level education was stressed, which greatly spurred the generation of new-style textbooks and handbooks on Western science. Zhu Zhaocui contributed two textbooks for the *ABC* series: *The ABC of Logic* (1933) and *The ABC of Educational Psychology* (*Jiaoyu xinlixue ABC 教育心理學ABC*) (1931).

16 The biographical accounts and accounts of reminiscences of Yin's early acquaintances betray some inconsistencies with regard to Yin's early years at Wuhan University. Some authors in their biographical accounts even completely disregard the period between secondary school and 1938. A significant discussion of the fact that Yin was first at Wuhan can be found in Li 2013, 41–45. If Yin indeed was at Wuhan University sometime between 1935 and 1937, he would have had the chance to study modern logic in the framework of Wan Zhuoheng's 萬卓恆 (1902–1948) regular courses on logic (elementary and advanced). Wan, who graduated from the Qinghua Department of Philosophy and completed his graduate studies at Harvard, was a professor at the Department of Philosophy at Wuhan between 1931–1948. Under the influence of the trends at his *alma mater*, in 1932 Wan organized the first course in logic at Wuhan University, which included mathematical logic and was based on the *Principia Mathematica* (see e.g. Xiangren 2017, 26; Guoli Wuhan daxue 1934, 26, 33).

published, Yin produced a long essay entitled “What Exactly are Logic And Science of Logic?” (*Luoji yu luojixue jiujiing shi shenme* 邏輯與邏輯學究竟是什麼) (1936), in which he presented a general definition of logic based on his reading of Jin’s textbook as well as the contemporary American textbook *The Fundamentals of Logic* (written by Frank Miler Chapman and Paul Henle and published in 1933). Although the core of Yin’s understanding of the nature of logic as outlined in his article from 1936 was to some extent based on Chapman’s and Henle’s attempt to lay down definite boundaries between Aristotelian syllogistic logic or traditional formal logic and the earliest forms of modern formal logic, i.e. mathematical or symbolic logic, his understanding of the latter, as demonstrated in the article, was undoubtedly also derived from his encounters with Jin’s 1935 textbook,<sup>17</sup> as was his perception of the notion of logic. Thus, already in 1936, and similarly to Mou Zongsan, Yin maintained an idea of “pure logic”, which he distilled from these books. One immediate result of his reading of Chapman’s and Henle’s *Fundamentals*, and just a few months before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937, was that Yin published his Chinese translation of this textbook.<sup>18</sup>

In 1938, Yin’s ambition to study logic under China’s leading experts in the field had finally started to be realized, as he was admitted to the wartime provisional National Southwest Associated University in Kunming (Guoli xinan lianhe daxue 國立西南聯合大學, henceforth referred to as Lianda 聯大). At the wartime Lianda, the departments of philosophy of Qinghua, Peking and Nankai universities were conjoined into one single Department of Philosophy and Psychology. As a freshman at the Department of Philosophy the young Yin was able to attend lectures delivered by Jin Yuelin, with whom Yin eventually also established a closer relationship. Jin, who also served as Yin’s mentor, later advised him to attend advanced classes on modern logic taught by the young experts Shen Youding and Wang Xianjun. Beside logic Yin also attended a number of selective courses on Western analytic philosophy, while he allegedly disliked subjects like Hegel’s philosophy (Yang 2009, 1). Yin completed his undergraduate studies in philosophy in 1942, upon which he continued his studies at the Qinghua Graduate School in Philosophy, studying logic under the supervision of Jin Yuelin.

Yin published a revised version of his 1939 article on the nature of logic in his second year at Lianda. This time the essay was entitled “The Fundamental

17 Chapman’s and Henle’s textbook was divided into three parts: classical logic, contemporary symbolic logic (i.e. mathematical logic) and scientific method. In the second part the authors outlined the most important results in mathematical logic, revolving mainly around the calculi of propositions and classes from Russell’s *Principia*, including the fundamental concepts of its system.

18 Yin’s translation was published under the Chinese title *Luoji jiben* 邏輯基本 by the Zhengzhong publishing house (*Zhengzhong shuju* 正中書局).

Characteristics of the Science of Logic” (*Luoji xue de jiben xingzhi* 邏輯學底基本性質).

Apart from a few hints distilled from various narratives from the time, we are not familiar with Yin’s experience in wartime Qinghua. Regardless of that, what we do know is that both Jin Yuelin’s and Yin Haiguang’s reminiscences confirm the fact that gradually a profound teacher-student relationship had developed between them. While Yin’s focus had apparently been on the *Principia Mathematica*, during his graduate studies he also devoted some effort to learning about current advances in the philosophy of logic. Regarding his intense studies of Russell’s work, Jin Yuelin reminisced that, in the years when Yin was studying under him, his understanding of the *Principia* had developed to the degree that he could enlighten his mentor about some “theoretical problems” which occurred in the former’s textbook *Logic* from 1935, especially those related to the part devoted to “systems of logic”, while at the same time he was also able to provide systematic corrections to those problems (Liu 1994, 393). Apart from that, it seems that Yin had also worked together with other Qinghua logicians, such as Wang Xianjun, in cooperation with whom he prepared the first Chinese translation of Rudolf Carnap’s *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (first published by the Commercial Press in 1946). Above all, Yin’s erudition in logic came to expression in his short book *Talks on the Science of Logic* (*Luoji xue jianghua* 邏輯學講話) from 1943,<sup>19</sup> in which, although it was intended for the “layman”, Yin set out to explain some important concepts from formal logic, which he tried to put down in simple terms. In his *Talks*, where the essentials of logic were illustrated with an abundance of practical examples from everyday dialogues, Yin adopted a more “philosophical” approach. In other words: he attempted to bring down the pure notion of logic to its ontological foundations and describe it in connection with, for example, the principle of causality, and so on. In addition, in a fairly modern manner (following Russell) Yin also aimed at introducing to his “common” reader the concepts of class, (logical) relation, proposition, paradox, type, variable, etc. and thus in a rather abrupt manner led the layman deeper into the more technical domains of logical algebra, propositional calculus and so on. While on this logical journey, which Yin prepared for the reader, one almost unknowingly and constantly crosses between the domains of traditional and modern formal logic, thus encountering the essentials of logical reasoning, while in the final stage of the journey Yin directed the reader’s attention to the question of the notion and nature of logic.

Akin to his previous meditations on logic (1935), as well as indicating his future orientation towards logic, in his *Talks on Science of Logic* Yin adopted a notion

19 The book was reprinted three year later, in 1946.

of logic which was consistent with the views espoused by the Qinghua circle of logicians, the so-called notion of pure logic. Thus, even a superficial analysis of his writings from his early period reveals a direct continuity with his major propaedeutic work on logic from the Taiwanese period, most notably his two earliest publications that more or less inaugurated the publishing of books on logic in Taiwan: the textbook *What Exactly is Logic?* (*Luoji jiuqing shi shenme?* 邏輯究竟是什麼?) from 1953, which conspicuously echoed his first article on logic from 1935, and a revised university textbook from 1957, *A New Introduction to Logic* (*Luoji xin yin* 邏輯新引). The notion of logic espoused in these writings can in general be seen as extremely devoid of any epistemologically or ontologically positive aspects. In the same manner as, for example, Shen Youding, Yin also recognized that as an aprioristic notion logic possessed concrete boundaries, which separated its essence from thought as such. Similarly, logic also cannot be considered as synonymous with the scientific method, dialectics, metaphysics, general science of inference, etc.<sup>20</sup> And in accordance with that, logic was seen as possessing its inner nature, epitomized within the characteristics of formality, universality and consistency. Again, as already mentioned before, this view was typical for how the Qinghua adherents of New Realism viewed logic (see Hu 2002, 137–40).

In 1944, his final year at the university, Yin published an article “A Survey of Contemporary Mathematical Philosophy” (*Xiandai suanli zhhexue gaiguan* 現代算理哲學概觀), which outlined a retrospective of the main currents in the contemporary philosophy of mathematics (mainly formalism and intuitionism). This was Yin’s last publication on logic before those he released in Taiwan. In the same year, Yin also finally severed his ties with Qinghua, for in midst of the intensive political campaign to recruit new soldiers from the ranks of university students Yin ultimately decided to leave the institution (Yang 2009, 2). Even one year later, when the war with the Japanese was over and he was allowed to return home, he did not decide to finish his studies at Qinghua. Instead, he devoted his energy to political causes and started writing articles which incited national awareness and criticized Marxism. As an intellectual with strong ties with the Kuomintang (KMT) he became the editor and the leading pen of the official KMT newspaper the *Central Daily News* (*Zhongyang ribao* 中央日報), and later (in Taiwan) also an editor of the nationalist periodical *The Nation* (*Minzu bao* 民族報) (ibid.). After the victory of the Communists in 1949, and because of his open association with the Nationalist government, Yin was forced to retreat to Taiwan together with the remaining members of the KMT.

20 For a more detailed exposition of Yin’s notion of logic, see Xia 2008.

In the two decades following his relocation to Taiwan, he worked a professor at the National Taiwan University (NTU), where he was able to greatly influence the development of studies of logic in Taiwan (see Dai 2012). At NTU, Yin not only educated the majority of future Taiwanese experts in logic (ibid., 133–34), but, even more importantly, also set down the foundations of the discipline in Taiwan, and consequently also significantly influenced the future image as well as the developmental trajectory of logic on the island. In contrast with Mou Zongsan, in his role as a professor at NTU Yin focused almost exclusively on modern logic and its complementary philosophical theories, as taught in the Qinghua circle. Thus, beside symbolic logic, he further lectured on logical positivism, the philosophy of language, Russell’s philosophy, and the philosophy of logic and science, among other subjects. Thus, Yin continued the tradition he became deeply immersed in during his studies at the wartime Qinghua University, which included not only a specific notion of logic, but also promulgated a certain philosophical apparatus supporting its espoused logical science, based predominantly on the mathematical logic of the *Principia* and to a lesser extent on more recent developments in the field. By the virtue of propagating the above-mentioned notion of science of logic, first through textbooks on logic published in Taiwan, Yin succeeded in embedding the former Qinghua image of the discipline into the underlying tissue of Taiwanese academia, which at the time was still in the process of being formed (see Wang 2010; Dai 2012).

### Conclusion: The Question of Continuity and Succession

As we have tried to show in the foregoing analysis, both the figures of our interest, Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang, shared a deep and on-going connection with the Qinghua School of Logic and could consequently, each in his own regard, be considered as descendants of this school. In addition, along with a marked affinity for topics in mathematical (also symbolic) logic, which in the early 1930s revolved mainly around Russell and his *Principia Mathematica*, their pertinence to the Qinghua School of Logic was also manifested in their preference for a certain philosophical foundation accompanying and critically defining the inherently technical apparatus of logic. In that way, in their early years, they both espoused a notion of “pure logic”, which at the time was advocated by the most important members of the Qinghua circle, such as Jin Yuelin and Shen Youding, who were also important influences in the academic developmental path of both men. As a consequence, due to the respective roles both these scholars had in formation and establishment of Taiwanese academic philosophy, it can be conjectured that, especially through the specialist Yin Haiguang, a certain degree of continuity existed

between the manner in which the science of logic as a philosophical discipline was treated in the early Taiwanese period (1950s and 1960s) on the one side, and the ideas of the Qinghua School on the other. Since, in his Taiwanese years, Mou gradually turned away from his previous interests in logic, his role in this process consisted mainly in disseminating the focal notion of logic through his early pedagogical work in Taiwan. In this context, we might also assume that Mou's strong association with the Qinghua School of Logic did not simply cease to exist in the year 1949, in the eyes of both his students as well as his colleagues. Thus, even though in his later years Mou followed a completely different philosophical path, in the crucial few years following 1949 he was still known as a former "member" of the Qinghua circle, as well as a formerly prolific writer on the topic of modern logic. In these years, which were vital for the formation of Taiwanese studies of logic, Mou was undoubtedly one of the island's leading experts in modern logic as expounded in the framework of the Qinghua School.<sup>21</sup>

Through the above-mentioned connections, Qinghua-type philosophical outlooks on logic retained a central role in later Taiwanese studies in logic—especially those of New Realism, the Vienna School, and so on, while in mainland China the change of regime and ideology in 1949 helped to speed the trend of the "mathematization" of modern (mathematical) logic, and initiated its ultimate conversion into a purely technical discipline in the framework of new socialist science. Even though this trend had actually originated from the internal developments in the field, and in China had already started to take shape in the 1930s, when a group of mathematicians started researching set theory and Hilbertian ideas regarding axiomatization of mathematics, it could be argued that the revolution of 1949 forcefully ended a line of development which can be identified in the Qinghua School of Logic, while drastically affecting the development of the idea and discipline of modern logic in future Chinese science.

The fact that the regime change of 1949 also marked the moment in history when the Qinghua School of Logic suddenly ceased to exist—at least in the public or official academic sphere—brings us to another important question: Could the

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21 We do not assume, however, that Mou invested great effort to disseminate this notion of logic, or that he deliberately propagated it. What we have in mind is rather the idea that the notion of logic, which Mou adopted in his early years, appeared to him as a natural and self-evident definition of logic as such, and not as a particular notion of logic associated exclusively with the Qinghua School of Logic. In this sense, even when Mou eventually departed *from logic* or even if he were to negate logic as such, in so doing he was still maintaining the same notion of logic. This is also the reason why we understood the transition from Qinghua to Taiwanese studies of logic to have occurred mainly by means of continuation of the Qinghua School's *notion* of logic. Moreover, a notion of logic is not only a matter of its (as it were) *inner* definitions, but more so a matter of complexly interwoven epistemological concepts, ontology, philosophical views on science and nature, and so on.

early period of Taiwanese academic discipline of logic be considered a direct successor of Qinghua School of Logic? In other words: Did important agents of the Qinghua School, like Yin Haiguang, continue the work of their former mentors at Qinghua? Or could the shape of academic research in logic in the early Taiwanese period be considered a result of mere natural development, which had its source in the current developments in the international research in mathematical logic? Of course, this question is immensely complex and would most certainly require another, incomparably more extensive comparative study, in which more light would be shed on the content of concrete results, curricular changes, and the scope of philosophical influence of early Taiwanese studies in modern logic. However, in the current text we can claim with much certainty that while the theoretical consistency (continuity) between the “schools” is more or less clear, in light of the drastic shift in Chinese studies of modern logic from the 1950s on, the emerging Taiwanese logic was very much in line with the former Qinghua tradition.<sup>22</sup> While, naturally, the most important driving force behind this transmission or alignment with the Qinghua School in Taiwan were intermediaries like Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang, who in their years of academic training in China were not only strongly influenced by the members of Qinghua School, but at the same time also contributed significantly to the philosophical and scholarly research into modern logic in China. While at the heart of this transitory period, what connected Taiwanese logic with Qinghua was not loyalty to schools or teachers, but a specific, modern notion of logic, that was believed to be objective, universal and, most of all, useful.

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<sup>22</sup> We do not claim that the Qinghua School of Logic represented the only source for logic as an academic discipline in Taiwan, but that it is most likely the earliest and most natural source.



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# The Heritage of Taixu: Philosophy, Taiwan, and Beyond

Bart DESSEIN\*

## Abstract

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to the way the Chinese intellectual world tried to formulate an answer to the challenge posed by European modernity, as well as to the way European political thinking (nationalism, socialism, communism, anarchism) impacted traditional Chinese political thinking. In contrast, very little attention has been devoted to the way these same political philosophies also influenced the Chinese Buddhist answer to European modernity. This article discusses the ways in which the 'reform of Buddhism' proposed by the famous Venerable Taixu (1889–1947) was shaped by both the political and military events that determined the history of China in the first half of the twentieth century, and by his genuine determination to modernize Buddhism.

**Keywords:** Taixu, *Sanmin zhuyi*, socialism, anarchism, cross-strait relations

## Taixujeva dediščina: filozofija, Tajvan in onkraj

### Izvleček

V stroki so veliko pozornosti posvečali načinu, s katerim je želel kitajski intelektualni svet zasnovati svoj odgovor na izzive evropske modernosti, ter načinu, kako je evropska politična misel (nacionalizem, socializem, komunizem, anarhizem) vplivala na tradicionalno kitajsko politično misel. V nasprotju s tem pa so zelo malo pozornosti posvetili temu, kako so te iste politične filozofije vplivale na odgovor kitajskega budizma na izziv evropske modernosti. Članek obravnava način, kako so na »reformo budizma«, ki jo je predlagal slavni Častitljivi Taixu (1889–1947), vplivali tako politični in vojaški dogodki, ki so zaznamovali zgodovino Kitajske v prvi polovici 20. stoletja, kakor tudi njegova pristna odločenost modernizirati budizem.

**Ključne besede:** Taixu, *Sanmin zhuyi*, socializem, anarhizem, čezožinski odnosi

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## Introduction

That China's confrontation with European economic and military supremacy in the nineteenth century invoked a period of self-criticism among Chinese intellectuals is well documented. While some groups advocated a radical Confucianism that would go back to the times prior to the unification of China under the Qin 秦—a movement that, in this respect, explicitly referred to the return to the Classics that had characterized Europe's Age of Enlightenment, other intellectuals advocated the complete overthrow of the Confucian system, and still others had a more pragmatic attitude (Hon 2014).<sup>1</sup> Giving expression to the latter, Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), one of the most important intellectuals of that period, summarized the problem of his time in the following words:

The problem is: How can China adjust herself so that she may feel at home in that modern western civilization which has become the civilization of the world? The problem suggests three possible ways or solutions. China may refuse to recognize this new civilization and resist its invasion; she may accept the new culture wholeheartedly; or, she may adopt its desirable elements and reject what she considers to be non-essential or objectionable. The first attitude is resistance; the second, wholesale acceptance; and the third, selective adoption. (Hu in Walker [1956] 1967, 138)

Less attention has been paid to how not only the secular world redefined itself in the post-Opium War (1839–1842), post-Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864), and post-World War I global order, but how Buddhism also for the first time saw itself confronted with the need to adjust itself to the contemporary world (Jiang 1992, 4). Buddhism had to: 1) find an answer to anti-Buddhist feelings that came along with the idea of modernity and secularization; 2) present an alternative to the Christian challenge, a faith to which some of the new intellectuals converted, and the introduction of which had, in China, degraded traditional beliefs and faiths to the domain of superstition (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 62; Bourdieu 1971, 304–5, 308–9); and 3) overcome what it perceived as a spiritual decline within its own ranks (Pittman 2001, 1–2, 34–40). It is this challenge to Buddhism—a challenge that echoes the statement by Hu Shi quoted above—that the following pages are devoted to. The focus will more precisely be on the person of the Venerable Taixu 太虛 (1889–1947), whose proposals for a reform of Buddhism oscillated between (revolutionary) socialism and nationalism, and

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1 Nineteenth-century Japan also witnessed the activities of such oppositional groups (see Nakajima 2018).

whose ideas, notwithstanding the fact that he himself declared his reform of Buddhism to have been a failure,<sup>2</sup> have had a lasting impact on Buddhism, both in mainland China and Taiwan.

## Historical Background

Taixu 太虛 (1889–1947; original name Lü Peilin 呂沛林) was born in the village of Chang'an 長安 in Haining 海寧 county of northern Zhejiang 浙江 province. After his father died when he was only eight months old and his mother remarried, he was taken care of by his maternal grandmother. A devout Buddhist, she made sure that Lü Peilin not only received a decent classical education, but also took him along to Buddhist temples and made sure that he read Buddhist texts and visited Buddhist monasteries. In this way, he became familiar with the fundamentals of Chan 禪, Tiantai 天臺, Huayan 華嚴 and Faxiang 法相 Buddhist thinking and practice.<sup>3</sup> After the death of his mother and facing health problems of his own, at the age of fourteen he decided to renounce lay life and join the Xiao jiuhua Temple (*Xiao jiuhua si* 小九華寺) in Suzhou 蘇州.<sup>4</sup>

In the spring of 1908, when Taixu (as he was now called) was eighteen years old, the reformist monk Huashan 華山, who hailed from Wenzhou 溫州 in Zhejiang province and who had gained fame through his knowledge of the Buddhist monastic code, came to the Xifang Temple (*Xifang si* 西方寺) in Jiangsu 江蘇 province, where Taixu was then residing (Taixu 2005m). According to Don A. Pittman (2001, 67), Huashan was impressed with Taixu, and he “[t]old him about those working for revolutionary political and social changes within China,

2 See Taixu 2005j, where he states that “My failure is admittedly partly due to the profoundness of the obstruction by opposing forces, but it is also due to my own weakness and, overall, because I have overstressed theory and neglected practice. The initiative may have been skilful, but [I was] incompetent [in my] command. Therefore, [my] command was of no avail in practice.”

(我的失敗，固然也由於反對方面障礙力的深廣，而本身的弱點，大抵因為我理論有餘而實行不足，啟導雖巧而統率無能，故遇到實行便統率不住了。)

3 See Taixu 2005k, where he states that “I started to be conscious of things when I was five years old. [...] My earliest memory and image are a lamp in coloured glass in front of a niche for Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara).”

(我從五歲有知識起 [...] 我最早的意識和想像，是庵內觀音龕前的琉璃燈。) Also see Deng 2000, 23.

4 See Taixu 2005l, where Taixu recalls his arrival at Xiao jiuhua Temple in Suzhou with the following words: “It vividly came to my mind how I, in the Autumn of the year I was nine years old, went to Jiuhua Mountain (Jiuhua shan 九華山) with my grandmother, and entered the temple to burn incense. Why would I not renounce lay life in this very temple?”

(猛然想起九歲那年的秋天，隨外婆朝九華山，曾經入寺燒香，遂思何不就在此寺拜求一師父出家。) Also see Deng 2000, 22; Pittman 2001, 65.

asserting that the monastic order itself must modernize and promote educational reform”.<sup>5</sup>

In his autobiography, Taixu mentions that he was at first uncertain about Huashan’s ideas and about the way such a modernization process could possibly be realized. As he wrote:

When I first heard his (i.e. Venerable Huashan’s) words, I did not approve of them [...] I also was of the opinion that what he said could never be in line with the [level of the] scientific thinking of China.

我乍聞其說，甚不以為然，[...] 我亦覺其所言多為向來的中國學術思想不曾詳者。(Taixu 2005m).

However, as he also states, he became convinced of Huashan’s ideas after reading works such as Kang Youwei’s 康有為 (1858–1927) *Datong shu* 大同書 (*The Book of the Great Community*), Liang Qichao’s 梁啟超 (1873–1929) *Xinmin shuo* 新民說 (*On New People*), Zhang Taiyan’s 章太炎 (1868–1936) *Gao fo dixi shu* 告佛弟子書 (*Letter to Followers of the Buddha*), Yan Fu’s 嚴復 (1894–1921) *Tianyan lun* 天演論 (*On Evolution*), and Tan Sitong’s 譚嗣同 (1865–1898) *Renxue* 仁學 (*An Exposition on Benevolence*)—books that had all been recommended to him by Huashan (Taixu 2005m; Pittman 2001, 67–68).

Soon after having made his acquaintance with Venerable Huashan, Taixu also met Venerable Qiyun 棲雲, a monk who had studied in Japan where he had joined the ‘Revolutionary League’ (*Tongmeng hui* 同盟會) founded by Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 (1866–1925) in 1905 (Yu 2005, 84). An iconoclastic spirit, Qiyun was intent on overthrowing the Qing government. Through Qiyun’s influence, Taixu further read Zhang Taiyan’s *Min bao* 民報 (*People’s Journal*) and Liang Qichao’s *Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報 (*New People’s Review*), and learned about Zou Rong’s 鄒容 (1885–1905) *Geming jun* 革命軍 (*Revolutionary Army*), a patriotic novel that was infused with ideas of Republicanism and social Darwinist racial theories, and which had been published in Shanghai in 1903 (Taixu 2005m). It was, however, the political program of Sun Zhongshan, known as the “Three People’s Principles” (*San min zhuyi* 三民主義), that particularly intrigued Taixu.<sup>6</sup>

In his autobiography he states:

5 According to Yinshun (1973, 33), Huashan was actually the first person to start modernizing the Saṅgha.

6 The “Three People’s Principles” are 1) nationalism (removing the Qing); 2) power of the people (introducing Western-style democracy in three phases: military dictatorship; guided democracy; full democracy with a “trias politica”); 3) wellbeing of the people (social-economic program).

At first, it was not my standpoint that I could save the world with the Buddhist doctrine. I was only of the opinion that after a political revolution in China, Chinese Buddhism would have to go through a revolution as well.

但我初不稍移我以佛法救世的立場，只覺中國政治革命後，中國的佛教亦須經過革命而已。(Taixu 2005m)

It thus appears that Taixu may have become convinced of the necessity and possibility of broad political and social reforms, but that he postponed the modernization of Buddhism to a separate and later moment. Don A. Pittman (2001, 67–68) describes Taixu’s mindset as follows:

[c]ommitted to both political reform for the nation and religious reform for the Buddhist community, he formalized a special alliance of friendship with Huashan and began to consider how in practical terms a “new Buddhism” could be created in China to parallel the creation of a new nation.

It may therefore not come as a surprise that Taixu’s ideas on the reform of Buddhism were intricately connected with the political events that determined the end of Imperial China and the founding of the Republic. Indeed, in the revolutionary atmosphere that preceded the declaration of the Republic of China in 1912, Taixu had not only cultivated close relationships with members of the “Tongmeng hui”, but also with important socialists, anarchists, and revolutionaries in the southern province of Guangdong 廣東. With them, he engaged in reading and studying the works of Karl Marx (1818–1883), and those of revolutionary authors such as Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), Mihail Bakunin (1814–1876), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), and Kōtoku Shūsui (1871–1911) (Taixu 2005m). Having become familiar with the political doctrines of anarchism, socialism, democracy, and constitutional monarchy, he met the revolutionary monk Zongyang 宗仰 (1861–1930?) in Shanghai in 1911. Zongyang was a close associate and supporter of Sun Zhongshan. It was also while in Shanghai that he learned about the Military Revolt of Wuchang (*Wuchang Qiyi* 武昌起義) of 10 October 1911, which resulted in the fall of the Qing dynasty and the installation of Sun Zhongshan as provisional President of the Republic of China (Pitman 2001, 72–73).

In what follows, it will be shown how Taixu’s acquaintance with socialism and nationalism, as well as his knowledge of the fact that some monks had actually organized monastic troops—so-called *seng jun* 僧軍—to support and participate in

the military overthrow of the Manchus at the time of the 1911 revolution (Taixu 2005n), encouraged Taixu's political thinking to oscillate between (revolutionary) socialism and Sun Zhongshan's form of nationalism.<sup>7</sup>

## The Early Republic and the Advancement of Buddhism as a Universal Religion

After Sun Zhongshan had been inaugurated as provisional President of the Republic of China, Taixu travelled to Nanjing 南京. Loyal to his "commitment to both political reform for the nation and religious reform for the Buddhist community", and answering Venerable Huashan's appeal to reform monastic education, Taixu managed to transform the Jinshan Monastery (*Jinshan si* 金山寺) in the vicinity of Nanjing, a traditionally conservative monastic institution, into a modern school for monks and the headquarters of the Association for the Advancement of Buddhism (*Fojiao xiejin hui* 佛教協進會) with the support of members of the Socialist Party (Taixu 2005n; Pittman 2001, 74–77). The short rule of Sun Zhongshan also saw the establishment of the Chinese General Buddhist Association (*Zhonghua Fojiao zonghui* 中華佛教總會) in Shanghai in April 1912. The charter of this newly established association, with which the earlier established Association for the Advancement of Buddhism merged, was approved by Sun Zhongshan in his role as provisional President of the Republic. The Association's stipulation that it "would not sanction activities beyond the religious sphere proper to Buddhism" (Wei-huan 1939, 153; Dongchu 1974, 1, 102) indicates that Taixu apparently saw political and social reforms on the one hand, and religious reform on the other, as two separate endeavours.

The replacement of Sun Zhongshan by Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916) as President of the Republic of China in 1912 had an important impact on Taixu's political thinking. "Democracy" and "science"—Chen Duxiu's 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) famous Mr. Science (賽先生 *Sai xiansheng*) and Mr. Democracy 德先生 (*De xiansheng*)—became important elements of the revolutionary movement. This explains why the journal *Xin Qingnian* 新青年 (*New Youth*) that had been founded in September 1915 in Shanghai under the editorship of Chen Duxiu and that had inaugurated China's New Culture Movement (*Xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動), developed from being "a vehicle for radical intellectuals anxious to counteract what they saw as retrogressive forces in politics and culture which were growing stronger as the experiment in republicanism faltered under the presidency of Yuan

7 See Pittman 2001, 72–73. As Welch (1968, 157) states, Taixu is "probably the closest thing to a 'political monk' during the Republican era" imaginable.



Shih-k'ai", to being a journal in which anarchists "developed the reform utopian vision to stress revolutionary struggle to destroy social inequality and Confucian ritualism as the means to personal happiness and social utopia" (Furth 2002, 87). Against this background, the successful experience of the Russian Revolution was another great source of inspiration. Communist ideas thus spread among Chinese youth in general, and communism was increasingly advocated as an alternative approach for the erstwhile Confucian society (Jiang 1992, 6).

Another historical fact that is important to understand the development of Taixu's thinking and the reform of Buddhism he proposed is the obvious failure of the Republic in the 1919 Versailles Treaty, leading to the famous May Fourth Movement (*Wu si yundong* 五四運動). With respect to the Versailles Treaty, *Xin Qingnian* had welcomed the fourteen points President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) had formulated in a speech to the American Congress on 8 January 1918. These were set out to end World War I and were seen as a sign of the advance of Western democracy and science, and that the Allied victory in World War I put an end to the imperialist encroachments on Chinese territory. It was expected that the Versailles Treaty would at least return the German possessions in Shandong 山東 province to China. However, the Allied forces did not feel obliged to follow Wilson's "fourteen points", and many of them were not realized. As is well known, the German possessions were not returned to China, but transferred to Japan (Furth 2002, 92–93). Assessing the impact of World War I, Benjamin A. Elman (2006, 225) states that, "a turning point had been reached, and the dark side of what New Culture enthusiasts called 'Mr. Science' had been exposed. Behind it lay the colossal ruins produced by Western materialism".

In their assessment of the impact of World War I on the New Culture Movement, John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman (1992, 267) state:

The creativity of the New Culture Movement is fully visible only in its historical context. The great World War of 1914–1918 disclosed the barbaric potentialities of Europe's arrogant civilization. The empires of Austria-Hungary, of the Russian tsars, and finally Germany all collapsed. Woodrow Wilson proclaimed great principles of self-determination for all peoples and open diplomacy among them. Ideas of several kinds of socialism, of the emancipation of women, and the rights of labour versus capitalists swept around the globe and flooded into Republican China. China's scholar-elite, still a tiny top crust of their ancient society, instinctively took on the task of understanding and evaluating this revolutionary outside world at the same time that it struggled to reevaluate China's inherited culture.

To the same degree that Chen Duxiu had enthusiastically called for the entry of “Mr. Science” and “Mr. Democracy” in China, the First World War also showed the negative side of capitalist modernity. As pointed out by Taixu’s disciple Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005), Taixu felt devastated by the outbreak of the war, and in 1914 went into three years of solitary meditation (*biguan* 閉關) on Putuo Mountain (*Putuo shan* 普陀山), a period during which he read the works of Zhang Taiyan and Yan Fu, both of whom were interested in Buddhism and the works of whom he was already familiar with through his earlier contacts with Venerable Huashan. According to Yinshun, it was during these years of solitary meditation that Taixu “blended socialism with Buddhist teachings” (Yinshun 1973, 76). This development is likely to have been fostered by the thinking of Venerable Huashan and Venerable Shanhui. Recalling this period of solitary meditation and his writings of that time, Taixu notes that:

Inwardly, these treatises of mine were rooted in the Chinese Buddhist religion, system, and history; but outwardly, they conformed to the guidelines of the democratic citizens of that time. [...] It is a pity that the homeland transition from the imperial system to warlordism as well as the victory of the Russian Revolution and the establishment of communism and its confrontation with fascism occurred only later. [This explains why] these treatises lack an economic and political foundation.

我此論，內根中國佛教教宗、教制、教史的推演，外適當時民主國民的機宜 [...] 惜其後國內因帝制變成軍閥分爭，國際因俄國革命勝利成共產與法西斯的對峙；此論致失經濟、政治的基礎。(Taixu 2005o)

In the journal *Haichao Yin* 海潮音 (*Sound of the Sea Tide*), Taixu also advocated combining Buddhism with socialism. This journal, a monthly publication aimed at the exploration of models for the organization and education of “new monks” (*xin seng* 新僧), was established by Taixu after the May Fourth Movement, supposedly after he had heard “the sound of the sea tide”, i.e., the Buddha’s voice (Pittman 2001, 61, 93). The journal was the successor to *Jueshe Congkan* 覺社叢刊 (*Collection of the Association for Awakening*), the periodical of the Association for Awakening (*Jueshe* 覺社) that Taixu had published together with Zhang Taiyan (Dessein 2000, 1233; Taixu 2005p). The journal’s ideological position is evident from articles such as “*Nongchan gongchan*” 農禪工禪 (Peasant’s Chan, Worker’s Chan), “*Fuwu shehui*” 服務社會 (Serving Society), “*Zishi qi li*” 自食其力 (Support Oneself by One’s Own Labour), and “*Heshang xia shan*” 和尚下山 (Monks Descending from the Mountain). In his text “*Seng zizhi shuo*”

僧自治說 (Explanation of Self-governance of Monks) of 1921, Taixu proposes that “under a voluntarily communism” Buddhist disciples must see agricultural work, labour, medicine, education and the arts as all for the cause of becoming a Buddha, and that one can be a police officer, lawyer, official, servant or merchant in what he called *quanmin zhuoyi* 全民主義 (peaceful civilianism) (Jiang 1992, 6). This position was echoed in his appeal to monastic and lay communities to “reorganize and reorient themselves for the radical demands of the *bodhisattva* path in the modern world”, as well as in his call “for an engagement with, rather than a withdrawal from, the issues of the socio-political world”, whereby he saw “compassionate social service both as a necessary result of and as a means to an experience of complete enlightenment” (Pittman 2001, 60). This demand for social engagement met with resistance from those monks who feared that social engagement would contradict their religious vows and threatened to obstruct their religious goals (Dessein 2000, 1233). Taixu, however, counters this objection by claiming that: “The political perspectives of anarchism and Buddhism are very close; beginning from the stage of democratic socialism we can make gradual progress towards anarchism” (無政府主義與佛教為鄰近，而可由民主社會主義以漸階進) (Yinshun 1973, 64).<sup>8</sup>

Socialism was thus seen as a step towards anarchism—the latter arguably being a political goal with at least some resemblances to the Buddhist attitude towards politics. Socialism and Buddhism, so Taixu contended, “similarly advocate human equality and social welfare, and he was impressed with the principle that people ought to contribute to society according to their abilities and receive according to their needs” (Pittman 2001, 182).

Although Taixu had advocated a blend of Buddhism with socialism, the devastation of World War I, the further history of the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution, and the apparent shortcomings of Western culture in general, made him averse to politics, and revalue religion. In a lecture he delivered in Xiamen

8 Likewise, when Taixu organized the first ‘East Asian Buddhist Conference’ in Tokyo in 1925, Venerable Shanhui 善慧 (1881–1945), a monk who was born in Taiwan but who had been ordained on the mainland and who had, upon his return to Taiwan, established a temple near Keelung 基隆 (see Welch 1968, 160–73), delivered a talk in which he claimed that the monastic system corresponded to the Marxist idea of a classless society, but did not have to resort to violence. Buddhism, so he claimed, could therefore help bring about world peace and egalitarianism (see Sengcan 1981, 2). For more information on the conference itself, see Welch 1968, 56, 166–67. It should be remembered here that 1925 was also the year in which Sun Zhongshan died and communist elements were removed from the Guomindang. 1925 also was the year in which Liu Shaoqi 劉少奇 established the All-China Workers Association (*Zhonghua quanguo zonggonghui* 中華全國總工會), the year of strike in Shandong and of the student protests in Shanghai against Japan, in which 11 students were killed and several tens were wounded in the so-called “atrocious of Wusa”. All these events fostered the communist movement (see Jiang 1992, 22).

夏門, Fujian 福建 province, in 1930, he reflected on the possibility of religion playing a role in the contemporary world in the following words:

Contemporary people have come to regard religion as a relic of the past and as unsuited for the civilized world of today. [...] As far as I observe the countries in the West [however], the foundation of their social cohesion is nothing but the power of religion. [...] The Communist Party [of Russia] only believes in its communism. It discards religion in name, but adopts the reality of religion. When it appeals to communism to unify the thinking of the people, this is in order to accomplish the feature of their Communist Party rule. The intention of the Socialist Party is the same. Therefore, when the Socialist Party and the Communist Party call to overthrow religion, this merely is [an expression of] their wish to destroy the old-style religion and to establish a new religion. None of the contemporary movements can do without religion. This is even true for extreme anarchism. [...] In reality, mankind is social [...]. Therefore, individualist anarchism is a dead end, it leads nowhere. Mankind cannot live together without the formative power of mutual social cohesion even for one single day. In other words, mankind cannot be without the uniting force of religion for even one single day.

現在的人們，完全把宗教看做過去的東西，不適宜於今日文明的世界。 [...] 依我所觀察到的西洋各國，其社會團結的基礎，完全是宗教的力量； [...] 共產黨是信其唯一的共產主義，去宗教的名而取宗教的實，依共產主義為號召以集中人民的思想，以完成其共產黨治的形式。社會黨的意義，也是這樣。故社會黨、共產黨所喊出打倒宗教的聲浪，這不過是要打破舊式的宗教，建立新的宗教罷了。現在各種運動中，真能無須宗教，算是極端的無政府主義 [...] 其實、人類這樣東西，究竟是社會性的， [...] 故個人勿政府主義是一條斷港，行不通的東西。倘是人類共同存在一天的話，那末、社會彼此團結集中的制量力，一日不可無，也一日不會消失。換言之，就是團結的宗教中心力，一日不可無，也一日不會消失的。(Taixu 2005g)

The gist of this 1930 lecture had in fact already been expressed in a lecture Taixu had held in Taiwan in October 1917, and in which he proposed Buddhism as an alternative to Christianity (which was associated with the West):

Buddhism is representative of East Asian civilization. At this point, Christianity, that is representative of contemporary Western civilization, has already lost its religious power in Europe and in America. Europeans

and Americans have thus lost their basis for a secure life and for the fulfilment of their destiny. This is the reason why the great World War is now taking place. We should proclaim our East Asian good word of peace and universally spread Buddhism throughout the world in order to change their murderous perversions and in order to save all beings from great disaster.

『佛教為東洋文明之代表。今代表西洋文明之耶教，已失其宗教功用於歐美；歐美人皆失其安身立命之地，故發生今日之大戰局。吾輩當發揚我東洋之和平德音，使佛教普及世界，以易彼之殺伐戾氣，救脫眾生同業相傾之浩劫』。(Yinshun 1973, 92)

On another occasion, Taixu expresses the “universal” possibilities of Buddhism as follows:

We have to spread the Buddhist doctrine to mankind now. Regardless of whether it concerns England, Russia, Germany, France, Japan, or America, we have to propagate the Buddhist doctrine, to create a Buddhist doctrine that is social and universal, and to enable mankind to experience its advantage. The Buddhist doctrine therefore is not devoid of the masses of the people or an independent science. All politicians, lawyers, educators, scientists, philosophers, authors, farmers, workers and merchants all need to study it. It is not necessary to leave lay life to study Buddha.

現在則須將佛法普及於人類，不論英、俄、法、日、美、均須有佛法的宣傳，成為社會化與大同化的一種佛法，方能使全人類感受其益。故佛法不是離人群而獨立的學術，舉凡政治家、教育家、科學家、哲學家、文學家、農、工、商等等各種人物，均須研究，不必出家然後謂之學佛。(Taixu 2005i<sup>9</sup>)

### “*Rencheng*” Buddhism, “*rensheng*” Buddhism, “*renjian*” Buddhism, and the Creation of “Buddhist Academies” (*Foxue yuan*)

In 1916, while in solitary retreat at Putuo shan, and a year before he delivered his speech on the possible role of Buddhism as “universal” religion, Taixu coined the term “*rencheng Fojiao*” (人乘佛教): the Buddhism of the “vehicle of ordinary

9 This is an undated document. However, as in the *Taixu dashi quanshu* 太虛大師全書 (*The Complete Works of the Venerable Master Taixu*) ([1956] 2005), it is inserted in between a document dated in the winter of 1928 and a document dated in the fifth month of 1929, we may assume that this text was written in late 1928 or early 1929.

people” (Taixu 2005e). In 1928, focusing on the aspects of 1) transformation of the self and the world, 2) transcending local culture, and 3) harmony with science, he introduced the term “*rensheng Fojiao*” (人生佛教), “Buddhism for the living”.<sup>10</sup> As noted by Hong Jinlian (1995, 137 ff.) the concept “*rensheng Fojiao*” thus comprises elements of Western humanism and scientific optimism, as well as original Buddhist values. According to Taixu, it was Yogācāra Buddhism in particular that had the potential to enhance the modernist programmes of his contemporaries (Pacey 2014, 149).<sup>11</sup> A modern, humanistic, and scientific “Buddhism for the living” had to divert its attention away from death and the afterlife towards the present world of the living; “Buddhism for the living” had to use the teachings of the Buddha to take care of practical issues and help people make progress and improve the world in which they lived (Taixu 2005e; Long 2000, 59).

This worldly orientation of Taixu’s reform movement—it may be remarked here that Confucianism is also directed towards the world—explains the introduction of the concept of “*renjian Fojiao*” (人間佛教), “humanistic Buddhism” or “Buddhism for the human society”, a term he first used in 1933 (Taixu 2005h). As Taixu states:

[The term] “*renjian Fojiao*” expresses that one in no way has to instruct people to leave mankind and become a spirit, or that it would be a Buddhism in which everyone should go forth and become a monk in a temple, on a mountain, or in a forest. [The term] expresses that one should improve society with the Buddhist principles and make sure that mankind makes progress. It is a Buddhism that improves the world. [...] In order to establish “*renjian Fojiao*”, it is therefore necessary to start from the thinking of the common people. [...] When ordinary people believe that *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* are like spirits, this is a very big mistake!

人間佛教，是表明並非教人離開人類去做神做鬼，或皆出家到寺院山林里去做和尚的佛教，乃是以佛教的道理來改良社會，使人類進步，把世界改善的佛教 [...] 建設人間佛教，要先從普通一般人的思想中建設起來 [...] 普通人信佛菩薩，以為是同鬼神一樣的，這是大錯誤的! (Taixu 2005h)<sup>12</sup>

10 See Taixu 2005e. Pittman (2001, 169) states that “*rensheng Fojiao*” “was a theme that Taixu first began to explore in a 1928 lecture in Shanghai, and [...] was one that he continued to detail until his final lecture on the subject in Zhenjiang in August 1946”. For Taixu’s 1928 lecture, see Taixu 2005b; 2005c.

11 On the “modern” and “scientific” aspect of Yogācāra, also see Li 2003, 22–24, 48.

12 This statement of Taixu’s is reminiscent of the famous saying in *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*) XI, 11: “The Master said: ‘When it is not yet possible to serve the people, how then can you serve spirits’ [...]”

Venerable Yinshun 印順 describes this endeavour of Taixu's as follows:

Taixu had a great resolve to save the world through Buddhism, and he [...] could no longer restrain himself. Turning away from the kind of religious path that seeks to transcend the human realm in order to enter the Absolute, he instead chose to distance himself from the Absolute in order to confront the world of mankind.

大師以佛學救世之宏願 [...] 而不復能自遏，一轉先之超俗入真而為迴真向俗。(Yinshun 1973, 33–34)<sup>13</sup>

For Taixu, this modern form of Buddhism—a superstition-free Buddhism that had to turn the here-and-now into a “pure land”—needed “new monks”, a conviction based on which he also criticized the actual situation of the monastic order and the Buddhist ritual practices as they had come to be since the Ming dynasty (Birnbbaum 2003, 129; Pittman 2001, 175).<sup>14</sup>

It was with the aim to create “new monks” that Taixu proposed the construction of so-called “Buddhist Academies” (*Foxue yuan* 佛學院) that would have to offer a curriculum that emphasized the study of *Yogācāra* and *Madhyamaka* texts. These highly logical texts had been neglected in China for some centuries, but were especially appreciated by European academics at that time. This refocusing on the logical tradition of Buddhism—away from the prevailing ritual form—may also

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‘When you do not yet know life, how then can you know death.’ (未能事人，焉能事鬼[...] 未知生，焉知死。) It can also be recalled here that Taixu studied Confucian texts in his childhood, and that he also studied them during his three years of solitary meditation (*biguan*) from 1914 to 1917. (See Ritzinger 2001, 5)

13 Also see Jiang 1992, 13; Pittman 2001, 68.

14 Taixu formulated this challenge as follows: “At present, the Buddhist doctrine is able to establish itself in the world; the only question is whether the Buddhist community is able to maintain itself in the world.” (現在佛法是可以存立在世界上的，惟僧眾能夠保存在世界上與否，商成問題。) (See Taixu 2005d) Zhang Taiyan (1868–1936) and Su Mansu (1884–1918) had also pointed out that “The cause for the corruption of Chinese Buddhists lay not in outer reasons, but in the Buddhists themselves. [...] Although there are many rules and regulations for monks to observe in the temples, the monks are actually lax in discipline. [...] Many monks are not engaged in meditation in accordance with the regulations, but are enjoying a cosy and banal life. They do not preach scriptures, but devote themselves to ceremonies for the dead. When they are entrusted with the cause of *dharmā*, they are only interested in money. The monks have conflicts over property among themselves. They indulge in the offerings from the believers. What they offer as their service just leads to the decline of Buddhism. In fact, they are generally looked down upon. Some fawn upon rich and powerful persons. They claim that they have to rely on good emperors in order to protect the *dharmā*, but they are actually bent on their own interests. [...] They deserve to suffer the government policy of confiscating their property for education.” (See Deng 1994, 146; Bingenheimer 2004, 77–78, 120–25)

be partly explained by the fact that Taixu studied works on Western logic while in solitary retreat from 1914 to 1917 (Ritzinger 2001, 5). For Taixu, such studies had to be complemented with charitable action—very similar to the work Christian missionaries were doing in China (Birnbaum 2003, 130). The first of such “Buddhist Academies” was the famous “Wuchang Buddhist Academy” (*Wuchang Foxueyuan* 武昌佛學院), established in 1922. One of the first disciples in Wuchang was Zhang Zongdai 張宗戴, a native of Sichuan 四川 province who had studied law, literature, philosophy, and Buddhism in the Pingmin 平民 University of Beijing 北京, and had, in 1921, gone to Russia to investigate socialism. Back in China, Zhang Zongdai actively participated in the patriotic student movement and, in Wuchang, founded the journal *Xin Fobua xunkan* 新佛化旬刊 (*New Buddhist Weekly*) that soon changed its name to *Fobua xin qingnian* 佛化新青年 (*Buddhistic New Youth*), a title that is reminiscent of the already mentioned *Xin Qingnian* founded by Chen Duxiu. In the journal *Xin Seng* 新僧 (*New Monks*), the “Wuchang Buddhist Academy” criticized the conservatives within the Buddhist community (Jiang 1992, 17). In this sense, the position of the journal *Xin seng* parallels the creation of a *xin min* 新民 (new people) by the revolutionaries (Pittman 2001, 62).

## Taixu and the Nationalist Party

Taixu’s attempt to engage Buddhist teachings with the modern world brought politics back on his agenda. In a lecture he delivered for the Buddhist association of Siming 思明 district, Xiamen, in the second month of 1933, he thus states that:

Without the state, it would not only be impossible to resist intruders, but people’s lives would be insecure and without peace. It would be impossible to pay respect to our parents or society. We must therefore take patriotism as our presupposition when paying respect to the country! Let us, Chinese fellow citizens, heroic soldiers and fervent heroes, consistently endeavour to build up a glorious nation in China that is currently encircled and attacked by enemies!

若無國家,不但外患無法抵禦, 國內人民的生命也沒有保障, 生活也沒有安寧, 要報父母、社會恩亦無從報起。所以, 我們更要報答國家恩, 大家要以愛國心為前提! 在今日眾敵圍攻的中國, 我們中國的國民, 英勇的將士, 慷慨的豪傑, 應在眾敵環攻之時, 一致奮起建設光榮的國家吧! (Taixu 2005a)<sup>15</sup>

15 Also see Long 2000, 60.



Taixu's disillusionment with the political developments in the wider world brought his political focus back to China and Confucian values, as is evident from his focus on "humaneness" (*ren* 仁) in a statement he made during a lecture he gave to the commercial association of Hankou 漢口, Hubei 湖北 province, in the tenth month of the same year, 1933:

Following other countries is not the method! Some people are of the opinion that China should enter the road of Russia. However, like other nations, Russia also still is in the peril of the "you die and I live" [logic]. Moreover, in no way should China use contemporary Europe's method of opposing European and American capitalism with socialism. China has no capitalism and therefore neither needs socialism. *A fortiori* Russia, that although it claims to have socialism is [actually] developing towards a new imperialism. The road pursued by Lenin and the road of the Soviet Union are not the roads for China. Should China then continue to follow the road of disasters and human calamities? No! As every country has ventured on a road that leads nowhere, it is necessary to change direction. [...] China can open an exit for their roads that lead nowhere. But what is this road? [...] It is changing to the fundamental spirit of Chinese culture, of overcoming oneself and honouring humaneness (*ren*).

故單是跟隨他國走，究不是般法！而另有一些人，以為中國須走入俄國走的路上去，然俄國也尚在各國你死我活中拼命；且中國並不能有此般法，以進代歐洲之有社會主義，即因反對歐美的資本主義而起。中國無有資本主義，亦即不需要社會主義；況俄羅斯雖云社會主義，仍是變相的新帝國主義。列強的路與蘇俄的路，既然都不是中國的出路，然則中國長隨天災人禍等下去麼？不是！因各國走到走不通時，必須改變方向。[...] 中國可為他們走不通之中而開辟一條出路來。然這一條出路是什麼呢？[...] 改變成中國文化根本精神的克己崇仁。(Taixu 2005h)<sup>16</sup>

Taixu's political stance materialized in practical terms in his close ties with Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石 (1887–1975) and his membership of the Nationalist Party (Guo 1997, 3–4). It is, in this respect, interesting to note with Don A. Pittman that

16 Also see Pittman (2001, 182–83), who states that Taixu struggled with the question "whether, within the context of his 'Buddhism for human life', the most effective strategies for ultimate transformation ought to be designed narrowly, for the individual citizen, or more broadly, to include the socio-political structures in which all persons found themselves". For Taixu's idea that "Confucianism's emphasis on 'right conduct' and 'adjusting to circumstances' had paved the way for the introduction of Buddhism to China", see Callahan 1952, 166.

Taixu presented his ‘Buddhism for the human society’ as a complement to and perfection of Sun Zhongshan’s form of nationalism. [...] On occasion, Taixu even referred to his own efforts in terminology that paralleled Sun’s *San min zhuyi*, advocating a “Three-principled Buddhism” (*San fo zhuyi* 三佛主義) that entailed an ideal Saṅgha of Dharma teachers (*fo-seng zhuyi* 佛僧主義), an ideal lay Buddhist order of active *bodhisattvas* (*fohua zhuyi* 佛化主義), and a national culture infused with the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism and reaching out to the entire world (*foguo zhuyi* 佛國主義). (Pittman 2001, 168; see also Taixu 2005g)

The parallel between Sun Zhongshan’s “*San min zhuyi*” and the “Three-principled Buddhism” was even expressed in terms of “Buddhism being the ultimate goal of Sanminism and Sanminism being Buddhism put into practice” (Pittman 2001, 184).<sup>17</sup> As Taixu states:

We depend on Mr. [Sun] Zhongshan’s “power of the people” (*minquan zhuyi*) to establish China, and we simultaneously have to make sure that there is a belief that suits the universe and that is the essence that unites the power of the people. When I observe all religions, it is Buddhism that is best suited [for this aim]. When the masses of the people will have this new universal belief, the power of their faith in [Sun Zhongshan’s] “power of the people” will increase because the spirit of these politics and this religion are fully the same.

我們依中山先生的民權主義建設中國，同時，要使對於宇宙有合宜的信仰，作民力集中的重心。將各宗教觀察起來，還是佛教為合宜；民眾有了這新的宇宙信仰，其對於民權信仰的力量，必有加無已；因為、這政治與宗教的精神，完全是相一致。(Taixu 2005g; see also Pacey 2014, 161–62)<sup>18</sup>

17 Taixu’s orientation towards the Nationalist Party had actually already become established in the mid-1920s, when he began to distance himself from the Communist Party. This may have been the result of his struggle with the role of social conflict in communism.

18 This may explain Taixu’s view, proclaimed in 1947, that there was no need for Buddhists to form their own political party. As he claims: “Once again, Buddhist adherents can be found within the Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*), the China Youth Party (*Qingnian dang*), the China Democratic Socialist Party (*Minzhu shehui dang*), and the Democratic League (*Minzhu tongmeng*). Even in the Communist Party (*Gongchandang*), there are [Buddhist adherents]. There are even more [Buddhist adherents] among [people] without party affiliation. When a Buddhist Party would be formed, they would all have their original standpoints [that align with] some political party or [standpoints which] do not belong to a political party, and it would be impossible to ask them to convert [themselves] into a Buddhist Party. When, alternatively, a Buddhist Party would be established separately, it would deviate from each of them individually. Also among my friends who study Buddhism and

Related to the above, Taixu further acknowledged the two basic principles of “essence” (*ti* 體) and “function” (*yong* 用) in Buddhism. With “essence” he referred to the Buddhist truth as such, and with “function” to the application of Buddhism to meet the needs of human beings (Taixu 2005b; Pittman 2001, 174).

The nationalist inclination of Taixu and his programme for the reform of Buddhism are not unrelated to the Japanese presence in Taiwan. Ruling over the island after the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895 and the 1895 Peace Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Japanese saw cultivating good contacts with the Chinese Buddhists as a means of preparing the ground for their eventual takeover of the rest of China. The most important leaders of Buddhism in the Japanese period of ruling Taiwan were united in a Buddhist association that was aligned with Japanese Caodong 曹洞 Buddhism, a school that maintained a close connection between Taiwan and Japan. This school was also active in the mainland Buddhist world and had contacts with Taixu, whose first visit to Taiwan in 1917 had been on their invitation (Jones 1999, 41). It was especially the so-called “Tainan Xilai Hermitage Incident” (*Xilai an shijian* 西來庵事件) of 1915, a widespread anti-Japanese conspiracy that had revealed the importance of good contacts in the Buddhist world and led to the establishment of some important Buddhist associations, such as the Patriotic Buddhist Association, the Buddhist Youth Association, the Taiwan Friends of the Buddhist Way, and the South Seas Buddhist Association (*ibid.*, 66–75).

Notwithstanding the fact that Taixu had for the first time experienced the Japanese Buddhist activities and curricula while in Taiwan (when he established the famous Wuchang Buddhist Academy, in 1922, this academy’s curriculum was inspired by the Japanese model (Jiang 1992, 22)<sup>19</sup>), the Japanese presence had also incited a growing nationalism and left-wing ideas. An important movement in this respect was the Taiwan Culture Society (*Taiwan wenhua xiehui* 臺灣文化協會), a group of young Chinese intellectuals who, during the period of Japanese rule, had studied in Japan (*ibid.*, 24). Among the founding members of this society were the leftist

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[Buddhist] adherents, there are people who [belong to] different political parties and some who do not [belong to a party]. To this have to be added their connections with philosophical culture and charitable tasks, such as setting up cultural education. Every single religious person or non-religious person has many friendly relations. When I would be leading a Buddhist Party, then previously existing relations in all possible domains would be reversed and reduced. That is why Buddhism should not establish a political party.” (復次、佛教信徒是國民黨、青年黨、民主社會黨、民主同盟都有的，甚至共產黨也不是沒有，而無黨無派的人則更多。要是組了佛教黨，他們各有某黨派或無黨派的原來立場，既不能請他們改入佛教黨，而佛教黨已另成一黨，便與他們各別疏隔了。我的學佛朋友及信徒，也是各黨派無黨派的人都有，加以哲學文藝及興般文化教育慈善等之事業的關係，連各宗教或無宗教的人也多交誼。我領導了佛教黨，則原有的各方面關聯，也反減縮，所以佛教不要組黨也。) (see Taixu 2005f)

19 Sheng (2001, 317) in this respect remarks that Buddhism in Japan was confronted with Western sciences earlier, and as such had an important function for Taixu as a model in this context.

Jiang Weishui 蔣渭水 (1890–1931), a Taiwanese physician and activist who was one of the most important figures in the Taiwanese resistance movement against Japanese rule on the island, as well as Lin Xiantang 林獻堂 (1881–1956), who headed the “Petition Movement for the Establishment of a Taiwanese Parliament” (*Taiwan yihui shezhi qingyuan yundong* 臺灣議會設置請願運動). This “Petition” was aimed at securing Taiwanese political representation under Japanese rule. Both Jiang Weishei and Lin Xiantang were members of the Taiwanese People’s Party (*Taiwan minzhong dang* 臺灣民眾黨), whose ideology was the “Three People’s Principles”.<sup>20</sup> Another member of this society was Lin Qiuwu 林秋梧 (1903–1934), who had entered the society in 1921. After a period studying in Taiwan, he went to the mainland where he studied philosophy in Xiamen University (*ibid.*, 22). He returned to Taiwan, but between 1927 and 1930 he studied Caodong Buddhism in Japan (*ibid.*, 31). With Taiwanese intellectuals such as Jiang Weishui and Lin Xiantang, who tried to find a way in which to politically define Taiwan under Japanese rule, and the growing popularity of Sun Zhongshan’s “Three People’s Principles”, Lin Qiuwu opposed the unification of Taiwanese and Japanese temples. This can further be explained by the fact that many monks in Taiwan had come to the island as soldiers in the Nationalist army. Their recruitment had begun in 1936, a period in which Taixu worked closely with Lin Sen 林森 (1868–1943), the chairman of the Nationalist Party.<sup>21</sup> Taking Japanese modernity as example, Lin Qiuwu also advocated a modernization of Buddhism. Dissatisfied with the superstition and corruption in contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism, he states:

Those who develop the *bodhisattva* ideal are the vanguards of social change. Their fundamental aim is to create a paradise on earth, a Western land here and now, to let mankind (expanded to all living creatures) be free from suffering and let them only receive happiness. The world of ultimate happiness mentioned by the Buddha is precisely a description of this happy society.

修菩薩行的，便是社會改革的前衛份子。他們的根本目標，在於建設地上的天堂、此土的西方，使一切人類（再而及於一切生物）無有眾苦，但受諸樂。佛所謂極樂世界，就是描寫著這個快活的社會。（Lin in Jiang 1992, 27）

20 On Jiang Weishui, see Huang 2006; on Lin Xiantang, see Huang 2004.

21 Taixu had convinced the National Assembly to exempt monastic recruits from doing any work that would force them to break their precepts. As an alternative, he proposed that monks would be trained as battlefield medics, to do sanitary work, to be employed in the disposal of bodies, and to perform other compassionate jobs (see Dongchu 1974, 2, 468–69; Welch 1968, 45). However, by the 1940s the government was hard-pressed and apparently no longer willing to grant such concessions; all army personnel had to be prepared to do any kind of work (see Jones 1999, 105–6).

For Lin Qiuwu, there were six points on which Buddhism had to be reformed: 1) superstition and belief in ghosts had to be exchanged for reason; 2) monks were to have a broad education and value social principles; 3) all too rigid rules had to be abolished; 4) in the civil realm, female emancipation and gender equality had to be promoted; 5) it would have to be forbidden for monks to be sycophants; and 6) the unity of Taiwanese Buddhism had to be enforced (Jiang 1992, 278).<sup>22</sup> With respect to the latter, he compiled a three volume work entitled *Taiwan Fojiao de tongyi fang'an* 臺灣佛教的統一方案 (*Program for the Unification of Taiwanese Buddhism*). The first volume of this series was on “The Unity of Monks”, the second “The Unity of Monks and Lay Buddhists”, and the third the “Unity of all Buddhists on the Island” (*ibid.*, 33). Having analysed the work of Lin Qiuwu, Jiang (1992, 33–34) states:

When I analyse the scriptures of Lin Qiuwu, it is however to be seen that there are a lot of references to “President Sun [Zhongshan]’s Three People’s Principles” and to the Guomintang ideologue Dai Jitao. It is probably while he was studying at Xiamen University that he came into contact with the Guomintang or their publications. Another possibility would be that this influence came from the first generation of people such as Jiang Weishui and Lin Xiantang of the “Culture Society”.

但是，我分析林秋梧的文章，發現他多次引用“孫總理”的“三民主義”言論，和國民黨理論家戴季陶的話。可見他有可能在廈門大學就讀時，接觸了國民黨或其刊物；另一可能來源，就是蔣渭水、林獻堂“文化協會”前背的影響。<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned above, Taixu was also, at that moment, combining Buddhism with Sun’s “Three People’s Principles” in his speeches and writings on the mainland.

## The Legacy of Taixu

In 1936, the “Buddhist Association of the Republic of China” (BAROC) was established. Article 5 of the 1936 charter of the Association put it directly under

22 For Lin Qiuwu’s view on gender equality, see Li 1991, 179, and Jones 2000, 83.

23 Dai Jitao (1891–1949) was a journalist and early Guomintang member. When Yuan Shikai replaced Sun Zongshan as President of the Republic he went to Tokyo, where he joined the Chinese Revolutionary Party in 1914. Soon after Sun Zhongshan’s death in 1925, he published a book in which he claimed that Sun’s ideology was fundamentally derived from Confucianism, not from Western philosophical and political thinking. This then became the dominant interpretation of Sun Zhongshan’s legacy within the Guomintang. Dai Jitao served as the first head of the Examination Yuan (*Kaoshi yuan* 考試院) of the Republic of China from 1928 to 1948. On Dai Jitao, see Lu 2004, 144–68.

the oversight of the Ministry of the Interior, and it was this Ministry, along with the Ministry of Social Affairs, that gave Taixu the mandate to reorganize the BAROC in 1945 (Welch 1968, 46, 140–41).

However, after the death of Taixu in 1947, and after the take-over of power in mainland China by the Communist Party, the struggle in Taiwanese Buddhism between the reformers and traditionalists continued (Jones 1999, 110). With many monks who had been educated in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and in the city of Shanghai, i.e., areas in which Buddhism was the most active and vibrant, the reform faction was victorious at first (*ibid.*, 111; Welch 1967, 246–52). One of these reformist monks is the already repeatedly quoted Venerable Yinshun. In his *Jingtu xin lun* 淨土新論 (*New Treatise on Pure Land*), a text he wrote on the basis of a few lectures he had given in the winter of 1951 in Hong Kong, he criticized the Pure Land practice to take Buddha-recitation as the sole form of practice for all people, even for those with the intelligence and leisure to undertake true *bodhisattva* practice. Yinshun judged this as a degradation of Buddhism (Yinshun 1985, 20; Jones 1999, 131; Bingenheimer 2004, 77–78, 120–25).

Yinshun's proposal—a secularization of Buddhism that went further than that proposed by Taixu—elicited a campaign against him, launched by traditionalists, mainly represented by Baisheng 白聖 (1904–1989). Yinshun's books were burnt in the city of Taizhong 臺中 (Yang 1991, 23), and some within the BAROC even used their influence within the government to have certain Nationalist Party officials issue a statement that Yinshun's writings were infected with communist ideas (Jones 1999, 132). The final outcome of the controversy was that Venerable Baisheng succeeded in giving the traditionalists back the control of the BAROC. In 1960, not long after this controversy, Baisheng was elected as president of the organization and traditionalists have remained in control of the BAROC ever since.

After the controversy died down and tempers had cooled, however, Yinshun, along with other members of the reform faction, were able to gain acceptance of some of Taixu's ideas about a modern reformulation of Buddhist ideals. With Yinshun as an example, a younger generation of Buddhists further developed “*renjian fojiao*” in Taiwan: Hsing Yun 星雲 (1927–) of Foguang Shan 佛光山, Sheng Yen 聖嚴 (1930–2009) of Fagu Shan 法鼓山, Wei Chueh 惟覺 (1928–2016) of Chungtai Shan 中臺山, and Cheng Yen 證嚴 (1937–) of the Tzu Chi 慈濟 movement.<sup>24</sup>

24 As religious institutions, Foguangshan and Ciji aim to reach a larger audience than the Taiwanese polity. Ciji, in particular, harbours the hope of developing “great love” across the Taiwan Strait. The fact that it appears “untainted” by collaboration with the KMT or the DPP must serve it very well (see Laliberté 2006, 77).

This social engagement of Taiwanese Buddhism came to stand in surprising contrast to Taiwanese Buddhist political conservatism (Jiang 1992).

## Taiwanese Buddhism and Democratization

An important outcome of the political developments in the mainland was that many perceived Taiwan as the “repository of Chinese traditions”. Many conservative monks in this respect appreciated the politically conservative climate that characterized the first decades of Guomindang 國民黨 rule as a guarantee for the safeguarding of the Buddhist faith (Jiang 1992, 251–320). Many monks on the mainland also perceived Taiwan as the repository of Chinese traditions. This made them very cautious towards any attitude of modernization or secularization that might appear in Taiwan (Laliberté 2006, 63).

The political evolution in Taiwan of the last few decades—the lifting of martial law in 1987 and the first free elections in 1992—has shown that the Guomindang’s conservative leanings were not necessarily incompatible with democracy. Rather than the Guomindang itself, it appears that it was instead many Buddhist leaders for whom democracy appeared to be problematic (*ibid.*, 69). This is evident from the critique that was voiced by the leaders of the BAROC in 1982 against the lifting of martial law, and the possibility of forming political parties. This attitude can be explained by the fact that the BAROC benefited considerably from the corporatist structure imposed by the Guomindang, making the establishment of any other Buddhist institution outside of the BAROC’s authority illegal (Jones 1999, 179–80). A decline in the power of the Guomindang was thus perceived as raising the risk of the BAROC losing power as well. This also helps to explain why BAROC leaders asked for more control by the central government over religious affairs, in the hope of strengthening their weakening position within the Buddhist community. This attitude of maintaining their role as custodians of the faith stands in sharp contrast to the view that prevailed in the times of Taixu (Laliberté 2006, 61–62). The Buddhist organizations in contemporary Taiwan can, in the words of André Laliberté (*ibid.*, 55), therefore best be described as:

[i]ndifferent to politics, in general, and to the process of democratization, in particular. Buddhist leaders have avoided opposing the government since the Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang, or KMT) established its control over Taiwan in 1945 and they have maintained that attitude toward the Democratic Progressive Party (Minjindang, or DPP) government.

This political conservatism of Taiwanese Buddhism also helps to explain why, in the People's Republic of China, mainland Buddhism has come to be portrayed as the politically more democratic form, and why Taixu (Taixu's "socialist period" can be referred to here) has been compared to none other than Martin Luther (see Deng 2000, 22–33). This explains why those Buddhists in Taiwan who have joined other actors in the consolidation of democracy since the beginning of political reforms in the mid-1980s are looking for closer relations with their mainland brethren. "*Renjian Fojiao*" has thus developed to be more than just a religious bond between the mainland and Taiwan, and has also been given a political meaning.

The fear that cross-strait violence might have devastating effects for Buddhism in Taiwan explains why Taiwanese Buddhist organizations have never openly supported Taiwanese independence, but instead align with those political forces that favour the *status quo* in cross-strait relations. Harking back in history, it can even be claimed that Taiwanese Buddhist leaders align with Sun Zhongshan, for whom "national freedom" was more important than "individual freedom" (see Svensson 1995, 7).

## Conclusion

An analysis of the writings of Taixu, the great reformer of Buddhism, shows that his proposals for a modernized Buddhism are intricately connected with the political and military events in China and the world at large. The modernization of Buddhism that was at first seen as an undertaking that had to come after the political and social reform of China was gradually fused with socialist, communist, and anarchist ideas. Whereas the development of Russia after the revolution and the devastation of World War I brought about a disillusionment with modernity, Japanese aggression in China caused a reappraisal of religious values and of Chinese identity. Taixu thus developed to be an advocate of Sun Zhongshan's "Three People's Principles", which he saw as complementary with his concept of a "Three-principled Buddhism". His alignment with Chinese nationalism inevitably had ramifications in the period after the Communist Party had assumed power in mainland China. It may be the cynicism of history that the fundamental rupture in the Chinese Buddhist community between traditionalists on the one hand, and reformers on the other—a break that was caused by Taixu's initiatives—has, under the peculiar political developments in mainland China and Taiwan, led to a state of affairs in which, in the People's Republic of China, mainland Buddhism is seen as the more progressive form. For both reformers and traditionalists



alike, however, Buddhism is regarded as an element that may be conducive to national unity.

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*OTHER TOPICS*

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# Women on the Threshold in the First Chapter of Liu Xiang's *Lienü Zhuan*: The Gendered Concepts of *Nei* 内/*Wai* 外 and the Way of Women (*Fu Dao* 婦道)

Sabrina ARDIZZONI\*

## Abstract

Enquiring into the first chapter of Liu Xiang's *Lienü Zhuan* 列女傳, this paper points out the consolidation of the spatial distinction of *nei/wai* and the ethical construction of *womanhood* in the Former Han period. In this analysis we will underline the “in-between” position of women depicted by the author and consider their position as based on a metaphorical—but sometimes even physical—threshold. It highlights six categories in Liu Xiang's work that help us understand a traditional vision of woman that is reviving in modern times. Even today, the Way of Women (*fu dao* 婦道) is one of the principles on which social harmony is based; breaching the Way of Woman leads to disruptive consequences both within the family and outside, within society.

**Keywords:** Womanhood, Confucian ethics, *Lienü Zhuan*, Liu Xiang

## Ženske na pragu v prvem poglavju Liu Xiangove knjige *Lienü Zhuan*: spolno opredeljeni koncepti *nei* 内/*wai* 外 in pot žensk (*Fu Dao* 婦道)

### Izvilleček

Avtorica na osnovi preučevanja prvega poglavja Liu Xiangove knjige *Lienü Zhuan* 列女傳 (*Biografije zgodnih žensk*) obravnava konsolidacijo prostorskega razlikovanja med *nei* in *wai* ter etično konstrukcijo ženskosti v obdobju dinastije Zahodni Han. Poudari položaj žensk »v in med« ter ga obravnava na osnovi metaforičnega – včasih celo fizičnega – praga. Članek nadalje osvetli šest kategorij v Liu Xiangovi knjigi. Te pripomorejo k razumevanju tradicionalnega pogleda na ženske, ki se ponovno oživlja v sodobnem času. Tudi danes je namreč pot ženske *fu dao* 婦道 eno osnovnih načel, na katerem temelji družbena harmonija, kršitev te poti pa vodi k motečim posledicam tako v družini kot v širši družbi.

**Ključne besede:** ženskost, konfucijanska etika, *Lienü Zhuan*, Liu Xiang

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## Introduction

This paper focuses on ethical differences between men and women in the specific textual tradition of Liu Xiang's *Lienü Zhuan* 列女傳. The theory underlining the study is that the social ethical discourse built on the concept of “moral personhood”, starting from at least the Western Han *Xi Han* 西漢 dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE), is based on a principle of inequality.

More specifically, the social construct of *womanhood*, based on total subordination to men, is embodied in the Confucian prescription of the *san cong si de* 三從四德—Three Obediences and Four Virtues—and in the idealized figure of daughter, wife and mother, belonging not only to Confucian scholarly tradition, but to a complex cultural heritage deriving from a stratified tradition disseminated through different channels and coming from multiple directions. As stated by Elizabeth Croll (1995, 2): “In China the rhetoric of both equality and inequality were derived from a set of well-known texts, which were reiterated time and again. ... text was translated into the oral *via* folk adage, homily and story.”

The Han 漢 (202 BCE–220 CE) re-collection and re-interpretation of pre-Han traditions on woman as a social construct pursued an ideal and subjugated *womanhood*, centred mainly on the Confucian *literati* school. Within this tradition, the emphasis on intra-familial roles, the social position “inside” the household and performative chores, are the frameworks that shape the idealized ethical *wifehood* and *motherhood* (Evans 2002) that have been transmitted throughout the centuries, until the modern era. It is commonly stated that classical texts, from the Han dynasty onwards, emphasized the social role of woman as a wife and a mother. Women, as mothers and wives, had the function of educating children, both for material and moral life, and guiding their husbands in their social roles. Even in modern times, the maintenance of social harmony is based on this Way of Women (*fu dao* 婦道), and breaching it has disruptive consequences both within the family and outside, within society (Lieberman 1998; Ebrey 2002; Barlow 2004; Rosenlee 2006; Hershatter 2007).

Following these statements, in this paper we enquire into the classical texts in order to answer the following questions:

1. Has the gendered social *womanhood* always been represented as that of a “subordinate subject”, or are there examples of women occupying more active roles, more prominent positions in Chinese society?
2. Is it plausible to point out an “in-between” position of women construct in classical texts?
3. Can Liu Xiang's *Lienü Zhuan* be considered a key text in the shaping of the “woman on the threshold”?

## Method

The main texts we are examining, beside Liu Xiang's 刘向 (79–8 BCE) *Exemplary Women's Biography* (*Lienü Zhuan* 列女傳),<sup>1</sup> are classical and ideological sources which the historian drew from for the compilation of this work. The 104 women Liu Xiang described in the book come from mythological sources, historical accounts, popular traditions, and philosophical concepts that at that time were moving towards a crystallization of the idea of a gendered *ren* 人 as a social construct grounded on an ethical base.<sup>2</sup>

In order to analyse the social pattern of ideal *womanhood* we focused on six main topics that are embodied by the different women depicted by Liu Xiang:

1. The gendered concepts of *nei* 内 and *wai* 外: women on the threshold
2. The mother: “my kin” *vs.* “your kin”
3. The relation with in-laws and the role of peacekeeping within the family and outside
4. Daily life: warp and loom as a symbol of morality in the narrative of women
5. Daily life: pregnancy and foetal education
6. Daily life: death and mourning

## The Author and the Work

The *Lienü Zhuan* 列女傳<sup>3</sup> written by Liu Xiang 刘向 is the first literary collection of biographies especially focused on women. Liu Xiang was the *literatus* who in 26 BCE had been appointed by Emperor Han Cheng Di to work on the recovery of the books lost in Qin Shihuangdi's burning of books in 213 BCE. The *LNZ* initiated the *lienü* 列女 (“exemplary women”) historical tradition as a part of the official dynastic history; it stated the necessity of recording the “Biographies

1 Henceforth *LNZ*. Kinney (2014) provides an integral English translation of Liu Xiang's *Lienü Zhuan*. An Italian complete translation by Carmen Coduti was released in 2008 by ISIAO—Collana “Il Nuovo Ramusio”. A comprehensive bio-bibliography of Liu Xiang was published by Riccardo Fracasso in 2008.

2 In pre-modern China, women do not have a position prior to or beyond familial relations. They are conceived within the hierarchical kinship/social ritualized dimension. To borrow Angela Zito's and Tani Barlow's words, “The *fu* exists within the kin world of reciprocal inequality” (Zito and Barlow 1991, 260).

3 Quotations from the original text come from <https://ctext.org/lie-nv-zhuan/zh>. Therefore, page numbers are not provided, but the line numbers are reported. Integral original versions, with images of original editions and source texts of the *LNZ* as well as of *Zuozhuan*, and others mentioned here, are hosted in Kinney's website *Traditions of Exemplary Women*. <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/xwomen/intro.html>. Accessed November 8, 2019.

of Women” sections in the dynastic histories, from the *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書, of which it was a part, to the *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書, to the Historical Annals until the Republican Period. According to Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) in the *Han Shu*, the main aim of Liu Xiang’s book was that of instructing the Emperor (Mou 2004, 9–10).

The original text, known as *Gu Lienü Zhuan* 古列女傳, is divided into seven books, each one (except the first, the first chapter of which is missing) reporting fifteen cases of women standing as examples of virtuous or evil conduct. An additional 8th chapter is included in the extended version known as *Xu Lienü Zhuan* 續列女傳. All of these collect 104 biographies of women of different social statuses, from peasants to imperial wives, dating from the mythological emperors to the Spring and Autumn Period (770–5 BCE).

The first six books depict positive virtuous models, whereas the last reports examples of evil and parasitic women who can harm the family and the state. Together they provide the earliest categories of Confucian moral values with regard to women:

1. 母儀傳 *Muyi* (Maternal Rectitude)
2. 賢明傳 *Xianming* (Enlightenment and Intelligence)
3. 仁智傳 *Renzhi* (Benevolence and Wisdom)
4. 貞順傳 *Zhenshun* (Purity and Deference)
5. 節義傳 *Jieyi* (Chastity and Righteousness)
6. 辯通傳 *Biantong* (Skill in Argumentation)
7. 孽嬖傳 *Niebi* (Evil and Parasitic)

The earliest introduction and annotated version of the *Gu Lienü Zhuan* was written by the hand of Ban Zhao 班昭 (45–117 CE), the first known female historian, who, together with her brother Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) and father Ban Biao 班彪 (3–54 CE), wrote the official dynastic history of the Former Han, the *Han Shu* 漢書. She is also the author of the first book of instructions for women, the *Nüjie* 女戒.<sup>4</sup>

According to Chen Dongyuan ([1937] 1988, 45), we may consider the *LNZ*, together with Ban Zhao’s *Nüjie*, the oldest books on the ethical foundations for women. He considers Liu Xiang and Ban Zhao’s theorization on women as an internal construction of *Lifa* 禮法, the Confucian system.

4 Original version in Chen, Wang, and Zhang 1992, 4–18.

The ideological aim of the text was that of constructing the social categories of gendered moral personhood.

## The First Book: Maternal Models

In the Chinese classical ethical system, the woman subject is defined inside a kinship relation. Rosanlee (2006, 5) suggests that “the process of ritualization within the kinship system coincides with the process of genderization”. And moreover: “Familial, kinship roles are the focus point in the discussion of gender” (ibid., 47).

This is the reason why the starting point of our analysis is the description of “maternal models”. The first book of the *LNZ*, “Maternal models” (*Muyi* 母儀), contains fourteen accounts of women who are taken as positive examples of a “virtuous mother”.

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|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. 有虞二妃 <i>Youyu erfei</i>       | The two wives of Youyu.                 |
| 2. 棄母姜嫄 <i>Qi mu Jiang Yuan</i>  | Jiang Yuan, mother of Qi.               |
| 3. 契母簡狄 <i>Xie mu Jian di</i>    | Jian Di, mother of Xie.                 |
| 4. 啟母塗山 <i>Qi mu Tushan</i>      | Tushan, mother of Qi.                   |
| 5. 湯妃有嬖 <i>Tang fei Youshen</i>  | Youshen, wife of Tang.                  |
| 6. 周室三母 <i>Zhoushi san mu</i>    | The three mothers of the House of Zhou. |
| 7. 衛姑定姜 <i>Wei gu Ding Jiang</i> | Ding Jiang, the Lady of Wei.            |
| 8. 齊女傅母 <i>Qi nü bomu</i>        | The tutor of the woman of Qi.           |
| 9. 魯季敬姜 <i>Lu Ji Jing Jiang</i>  | Jing Jiang, of the Ji lineage of Lu.    |
| 10. 楚子發母 <i>Chu Zifa mu</i>      | The mother of Zifa of Chu.              |
| 11. 鄒孟軻母 <i>Zou Mengke mu</i>    | The mother of Mengke of Zou.            |
| 12. 魯之母師 <i>Lu zhi mu shi</i>    | The mother instructor of Lu.            |
| 13. 魏芒慈母 <i>Wei Mang zi mu</i>   | The benevolent mother of Mang of Wei.   |
| 14. 齊田稷母 <i>Qi Tianji mu</i>     | The mother of Tianji of Qi.             |

Among these women there are mothers of deities (Jiang Yuan 姜嫄, Jian Di 簡狄, and Tushan 塗山) coming from the mythological tradition, empresses, concubines and common people, such as Mencius’s mother (*Zou Mengke mu* 鄒孟軻母).

In the following section we will highlight the six conceptual categories we identify in the fourteen accounts.

## The Categories

We will analyse how Liu Xiang is shaping a new genderized *womanhood*, in line with the traditional discourse on women, while keeping an open door to women on the threshold.

### (1) Women beyond the *nei* and the Importance of the Threshold

In the 12th chapter of *Liji* 禮記, *Neize* 內則 (NZ), the separation of *nei/wai* (inside/outside) is stated in the following terms:

Men stay on the outside, women on the inside.

男子居外，女子居內。(NZ, 57)

Likewise, the spatial separation of the sexes is thus defined:

At seven, boys and girls do not sit at the same table, do not eat together.

七年，男女不同席，不共食。(NZ, 77)

In the accounts in the first chapter of Liu Xiang's work, the concept *nei* appears 19 times in reference to women; this indicates how the *nei/wai* dichotomy becomes fundamental to Liu Xiang's ethical discourse.

The first occurrence we observe here is that in the episode of Jing Jiang, of the Ji lineage of Lu (No. 9 *Lu Ji Jing Jiang* 魯季敬姜). She instructs us on the difference between *nei* 內, the "inside", translated here as "the inner quarters", and the *wai* 外 the "outside", or the "public life".

Jing Jiang is talking to Kangzi, a Minister of Lu, related to her by marriage (she was his paternal great-aunt). It is worth noting that during this dialogue she is standing inside and he outside the door, thus the threshold becomes a border that neither one is allowed to cross:

"Haven't you ever heard these words? The Son of Heaven and his noble men administrate public affairs at court; from high rank officials to low rank officials, they all administrate their duties in the outer chambers, and

the domestic affairs in the inner chambers. Beyond the inner chambers, women decide their own works. Superiors and inferiors are all alike (in this respect). The outer court is where you carry on the duties assigned by the ruler, the inner court is where you manage the affairs of the Ji lineage, I wouldn't dare say anything about either of them." When Kangzi arrived, she opened the door, and told him these words, neither one trespassing the threshold.

子不聞耶？天子及諸侯合民事於內朝，自卿大夫以下合官職於外朝，合家事於內朝，寢門之內，婦人治其職焉。上下同之。夫外朝子將業君之官職焉，內朝子將庀季氏之政焉，皆非吾所敢言也。康子嘗至敬姜，闔門而與之言，皆不踰闕。(LNZ 1,9,13)

Jing Jiang draws the line between the two realms: she states the rules of *fu dao* 婦道 (the Way of Women) talking from inside beyond the threshold, acting as a link between the two worlds. This threshold makes her step in and out, and in fact represents her knowledge.

Jing Jiang is wife, mother, mother-in-law, and counsellor of generals, and she also marks the line of the threshold: she is an active subject with a positive influence in society, bringing about change for the better.

In the episode of the Three Mothers of the House of Zhou (No. 6 *Zhoushi san mu* 周室三母), speaking about Tai Si, mother of Wen, the author tells us that:

King Wen rules the *wai*, the outside; the Mother of Wen (Tai Si) rules the *nei*, the inside.

文王治外，文母治內。(LNZ 1,6,5)

This is a very sharp statement. Liu Xiang had just specified that she knew the "Way of Women", thus stating an inherent relation between *nei/wai* separation and the *fu dao*:

Entering the country, Tai Si took good care of Tai Jiang and Tai Ren,<sup>5</sup> from dawn to dusk engaged in diligent work, to pursue the right Way of Women.

及入，太姒思媚大姜、太任，旦夕勤勞，以進婦道。(ibid.)

5 The other two mothers in the court are described as follows: Tai Jiang was the mother of Wang Ji, she was able to guide, and was good at moral teachings; Tai Ren was Wang Ji's wife and King Wen's mother, and she was good at the pre-natal education of the children. Tai Si was King Wen's wife the mother of King Wu, and she was called "cultured mother".

Mencius' mother (No. 11) also traces a very strong line on *nei/wai* boundaries:

The mother of Mencius said: "A woman's *li* is to cook five cereals, to make wine with fermented rice, to take good care of her husband's parents, to weave clothes and garments. Thus, she has to regulate the inner chambers, but she doesn't have to think about the outside."

孟母曰：「夫婦人之禮，精五飯，審酒漿，養舅姑，縫衣裳而已矣。故有閨內之脩，而無境外之志。(LNZ 1,11,8)

In the final sentence, we read:

The nobleman says that the mother of Mencius knows the "Way of Women" (*fu dao*).

君子謂孟母知婦道。(ibid.)

The physical separation between the realms of *nei* and *wai* is the first rule in the construction of the *fu dao* 婦道.

It is in the *Zuozhuan* (ZZ)<sup>6</sup> that we find the distinction between *nan/nü* as coincident with the spatial collocation in the *wai/nei*: women belong to the "inside" (*nei* 內), that is the domestic area of competence, clearly mapped with material references.

Here is the example of the ladies Mi and Jiang, the wives of Wen, Earl of Zheng in the *Zuozhuan*:

In the morning of *bingzi*, the ladies Mi and Jiang, the wives of Wen, Earl of Zheng, went to congratulate the Viscount of Chu at the marsh of Ke, when the Viscount made the bandmaster Jin display to them the captives and the ears of the slain. The noble man says that this is contrary to *li*. A woman, when escorting or meeting a visitor, *does not go beyond the gate*; when seeing her brothers, *she does not cross the threshold*. The business of war does not involve women.

丙子晨，鄭文夫人芊氏，姜氏，勞楚子於柯澤，楚子使師縉示之俘馘，君子曰，非禮也。婦人送迎不出門，見兄弟不踰闕。戎事不邇女器。(ZZ, Duke Xi, Year 22)

6 The *Zuozhuan* is a collection of narratives in the form of a commentary to the stories in the Spring and Autumn Annals *Chungiu* 春秋. It was written in the fourth century BCE and, like the *Shijing*, is considered the earliest literary appearance of woman as a social construct (Mair 2001, 196; Rosenlee 2006, 97). "The general purpose of the *Zuozhuan* is to demonstrate the normative patterns of human conduct on a grand historical canvas." (See also Goldin in Wang 2003, 73)



A very important step in the construction of the ethics of *womanhood* is represented by the work of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BCE). He, as revitalizer of Confucianism from a holistic perspective, categorized the five relations of the social hierarchy (*wulun* 無倫) as father-son, ruler-minister, husband-wife, big brother-little brother, and friend-friend. In the cosmic order that corresponds to the natural interaction between Heaven (*Tian* 天) and Mankind (*Ren* 人), every subject has its own proper space. Dong Zhongshu thought that the forces of *Yin* and *Yang* regulated the relation between genders, and thus assigned *Yin*/woman, to the inside—*nei* 內—and *Yang*/man, to the outside—*wai* 外.

While putting women in the *nei*, and men in the *wai*, the *LNZ* gives life to an intermediate position: that of the woman located “on the threshold”; women that, thanks to their knowledge, can advise, change, and have an active role in their realm, thus directly or indirectly influencing the outside. Standing on the threshold, good mothers and wives act as sage counsellors for their sons or husbands, no matter their age or rank. The mother of Zifa of Chu (No 10.: *Chu Zifa mu* 楚子發母) scolded her son, a general, for being too proud and selfish in directing his soldiers:

Today, you, my son, are the general; while troops and officers share raw cereal to eat, from morning to dawn you keep meat and high quality cereals all for yourself, how can it be? ... My son is not my son, I won't let him in my house!

今子為將，士卒并分菽粒而食之，子獨朝夕芻豢黍粱，何也？……子非吾子也，無入吾門。(LNZ 1,10,2)

Order is restored only after the son has begged for his mother's forgiveness.

Zifa asked for mother's forgiveness, so she let him in.

子發於是謝其母，然後內之。(LNZ 1,10,3)

In the final statement, the comment says:

The nobleman says that Zifa's mother is good indeed at teaching.

君子謂子發母能以教誨。(ibid.)

The moral lesson, here, seems to address mankind as a whole, the ethical *ren*, and not only the woman or her son. In reality, she is also a “woman on the threshold”, standing on a position between *nei* and *wai*.

In another case, the mother of Tian Ji of Qi (No. 14 *Qi Tianji mu* 齊田稷母) gave her son a powerful lesson. Tian Ji was prime minister in Qi, but he was corrupt.

When his mother asked him, he admitted that he had accepted money from lower functionaries. Hearing this, she got very angry and reprimanded him:

... For an official to serve the king is as for a son to serve the father. He uses all his strength, all his capacity to show his loyalty and faithfulness to the king, without deceiving; he follows orders at the cost of his own life; he is incorruptible and just—this will avoid any calamity. Now you have acted against these rules, you departed from loyalty. For an official to serve the king without loyalty is like a son who is not filial towards his father. Treasures obtained from disloyalty, I do not want! A son who is not filial, I do not want! Son, go away!

...夫為人臣而事其君，猶為人子而事其父也。盡力竭能，忠信不欺，務在效忠，必死奉命，廉潔公正，故遂而無患。今子反是，遠忠矣。夫為人臣不忠，是為人子不孝也。不義之財，非吾有也。不孝之子，非吾子也。子起。(LNZ 1,14,1)

Also in this case order is restored after the son asks for forgiveness. The moral lesson is a general ethical prescription. In the moral vision of Liu Xiang, the link between the sage mother and her son is that of guidance on one side, and obedience on the other. Women, as mothers, have the possibility of acting as “active agents”, playing a fundamental role in spreading messages of wisdom, stepping out of an ideal “threshold” that draws the lines of an ethically based society.

## (2) The Adoptive Mother: “My Kin” vs. “Your Kin”

As stated before, in the Chinese classical ethical system the female subject is defined inside a familial/kinship relation. Nevertheless, in *LNZ*, in two cases, maternal virtue is also extended to adopted children. We are dealing here with “The benevolent mother of Mang of Wei” (No. 13 *Wei Mang ci mu* 魏芒慈母) and “The tutor matron of the woman of Qi” (No. 8 *Qi nü fumu* 齊女傅母).

The benevolent mother of Mang of Wei carefully watched not only over her own three sons but also over her husband’s deceased first wife’s three sons. These are the words that Liu Xiang puts in her mouth:

As a second mother, I am like a mother; being a mother and not being able to love others’ children, would this be kindness? To care only for your own children and be biased against others, how could I take my place in this world? Even if our love is not mutual, how could I ever forget righteousness?

繼母如母，為人母而不能愛其子，可謂慈乎！親其親而偏其假，可謂義乎！不慈且無義，何以立於世！彼雖不愛，妾安可以忘義乎！（*LNZ* 1,13,2）

We can see here a direct link to the fact that, given that a woman's personal success in her career and moral rectitude mirrors her own virtue as an exemplary mother, it is not natural birth that gives her the possibility to express her virtue, but the social action of educating children. In the future development of morality and women, fertility becomes more important, and infertility is increasingly considered unacceptable. In the *LNZ*, however, in the mother-son relation, the educational aspect is more important than the biological one.

### (3) The Relation with In-Laws and the Role of Peacekeeping within the Family and Outside

These mothers are dedicated both to their sons and daughters, and to their in-laws. Ding Jiang, a Lady of Wei (No. 7 *Wei gu Ding Jiang* 衛姑定姜) is one of them. When Ding Jiang's son died without children, after making sure that the daughter-in-law had completed the three-year ritual mourning period, Ding Jiang sent her back to her home. The story tells the sorrow of the departure of the two ladies, and the final sentence is as follows:

The nobleman says: Ding Jiang was a loving mother-in-law; she went beyond (her duty) and attained great kindness.

君子謂定姜為慈姑過而之厚。（*LNZ* 1,7,1）

This story is particularly important if we consider that in the Ming-Qing period not only was a widow's marriage banned, but a widow's chastity and her physical sacrifice, sometimes even leading to death, were highly praised and considered a honour for the whole community.<sup>7</sup>

Bearing womanly virtue, they bring harmony and peace in the house. Of Yousheng Consort of Tang (No. 5 *Tang fei Youshen* 湯妃有嬖) it is written:

<sup>7</sup> The first appearance of the celebration of widows' chastity is in the *Hou Tang shu* 後唐書. In the *LNZ* of the Ming dynasty there are 233 examples of women committing suicide after their husband's death. According to Lee Yao (1983, 80) the total number of widows committing suicide during the Ming dynasty was 8,688, and 27,141 women were said to have mutilated themselves after their husband's deaths. See also in Sun 1988.

When Youshen became the wife of Tang, she gathered together and led the wives of all ranks, in women's chambers there was order, none of them was jealous towards another; this is how she helped the king's success. The nobleman says that the consort was enlightened and brought about order.

有嬖之妃湯也，統領九嬪，後宮有序，咸無妒媚逆理之人，卒致王功。君子謂妃明而有序。(LNZ 1,5,2)

#### (4) Daily Life: Warp and Loom as a Symbol of Morality in the Narrative of Women

Everyday life for women was divided between devotion to their houses' males and their only allowed activities: weaving and cooking. Powerful statements on the division of labour between men and women are already to be found in the *Shijing* 詩經, but it is only with Liu Xiang that the loom embodies the woman's world of significance in a gendered society.

The division of labour was normative: men took care of ploughing, women worked on the loom. As Hinsch (2003, 599) states: "Women's matters (*Nüshi* 女事) or women's work (*Nügong* 女工) referred only to cloth making while normative men's work consisted of growing grain". This form of economic organization yielded a successful society, and from very early on the loom assumed a metaphorical meaning.

The teaching from the *Daya* section of the *Shijing* quoted in the story of Jing Jiang says:

The *Shijing* says: "A wife is not involved in public affairs, she confines herself to her spinning and weaving."<sup>8</sup>

《詩》曰：“婦無公事，休其蠶織”。

8 The original poem in the *Shijing* is:

鞠人伎忒、譖始竟背。豈曰不極、伊胡為慝。如賈三倍、君子是識。婦無公事、休其蠶織。

Legge (1871, 561–62) translates this as follows: "They beat men down, hurtful, deceitful. Their slanders in the beginning may be falsified in the end, But they do not say [that their words were] very wrong; [They say], What evil was there in them? As if in the three times cent per cent of traffic, a superior man should have any knowledge of it; so a woman who has nothing to do with public affairs, Leaves her silk-worms and weaving." This translation is not at all clear, as stated also by as Allen (1891, 445–46): "The last four lines of this stanza are most incomprehensible." He suggests: "Does not the wise man know that a woman has nothing to do with public affairs? Shall she leave her silk-worms and weaving?" It has been transmitted in Chinese tradition as a statement on *nan nü zhi bie* 男女之別 (man-woman separation) in terms of labor division.

Liu Xiang goes on:

It means that a woman's occupation is spinning and weaving. If she does not pursue this occupation, she is not practicing *li*.

言婦人以織績為公事者也。休之非禮也。(LNZ 1,9,8)

The equivalence between loom-work for women and *li* 禮 “ritual” is a strong definition of feminine “moral personhood”.

Both Mencius's mother and Jing Jiang use the loom as a metaphor of their moral teaching:

When Wenbo served as Minister in Lu, Jing Jiang told him, “I will tell you how the essentials of ruling a country can be found in [the art of weaving]: everything depends upon the warp! The ‘temple’ is the means by which the crooked is made straight. It must be strong. The temple can therefore be thought of as the general. The reed is the means by which one makes uniform what is irregular and brings into line the unruly. Therefore the reed can be thought of as the director. The ‘hairpin’ is the means by which one organizes the coarse and dense fibres [that have become entangled]. The hairpin can therefore be thought of as the capital grandee. That which can maintain connection without losing control of [the threads] moving inward and those moving outward is the batten. The batten can be thought of as the great envoy. That which pushes and goes out and which pulls and comes back is the heddles. The heddles can be thought of as the commander of the populace within the passes. That which manages [the threads] in numbers great and small is the warp-spacing reed. The warp-spacing reed can be thought of as the clerk of the capital. That which fulfils a key role, travels a long way, is exact, upright, and firm is the cloth-beam. The cloth-beam can be thought of as the prime minister. That which unrolls without limit is the warp-beam. The warp-beam can be thought of as the Three Excellencies.” Wenbo bowed twice and received her teaching.<sup>9</sup>

文伯相魯。敬姜謂之曰：「吾語汝，治國之要，盡在經矣。夫幅者，所以正曲枉也，不可不彊，故幅可以為將。畫者，所以均不均、服不服也，故畫可以為正。物者，所以治蕪與莫也，故物可以為都大夫。持交而不失，出入不絕者，捫也。捫可以為大行人

<sup>9</sup> Translation in Kinney 2014, 13. Given the technicality and complexity of this passage, I retain here Kinney's translation.

也。推而往，引而來者，綜也。綜可以為關內之師。主多少之數者，均也。均可以為內史。服重任，行遠道，正直而固者，軸也。軸可以為相。舒而無窮者，摘也。摘可以為三公。」文伯再拜受教。(LNZ 1,9,5)

And there's more. The Mother of Meng Ke of Zou (No.11 *Zou Mengke mu* 鄒孟軻母) uses the popular story of cutting the thread of her loom to show her son the importance of continuity and endurance in the activity one is devoted to.

When Mencius was still young, still pursuing his studies, he came back home. His mother was weaving the loom. She asked: "How is your instruction?" He answered: "As it was before." So, Mrs. Meng cut the thread with a knife. The son was startled and asked her the reason of this act. She said: "The interruption of your studies is like me cutting my own loom work. The nobleman acquires his status through studying, asks questions to broaden his knowledge. This is why we came to live in this quiet place, to stay away from bad influences. But now, this happens, so you won't be able to stay away from humble positions, and it will not be easy to keep calamities away. It is like a woman who is weaving or cooking, but halfway abandons her job. How can a woman weave garments for her husband and sons, or be sure they have enough food? If women abandon their position and men abandon their moral education, if they don't become thieves, they might become slaves!

孟子之少也，既學而歸，孟母方績，問曰：“學何所至矣？”孟子曰：“自若也。”孟母以刀斷其織。孟子懼而問其故，孟母曰：“子之廢學，若吾斷斯織也。夫君子學以立名，問則廣知，是以居則安寧，動則遠害。今而廢之，是不免於廝役，而無以離於禍患也。何以異於織績而食，中道廢而不為，寧能衣其夫子，而長不乏糧食哉！女則廢其所食，男則墮於脩德，不為竊盜，則為虜役矣。”(LNZ 1,11,3)

The loom is, therefore, not only the main occupation in the ideal woman's daily life, but also a means of communication, in which an alphabet of significance is housed.

### (5) Daily Life: Pregnancy and Foetal Education

The gender role of woman as educator is prior to the birth event. The book talks about "foetal instruction", *tai jiao* 胎教. This means that a wise woman knows

how to instruct her son when he is still in her womb, and only this knowledge will ensure a virtuous progeny.

The story of Tai Si in “The three mothers of the house of Zhou”, gives women directions for pregnancy:

In ancient times, a pregnant woman with child would not lie on her side as she slept; neither would she sit sideways or stand on one foot. She would not eat food with odd flavours; if the food was cut awry, she would not eat it; if the mat was not placed straight, she would not sit on it. She did not let her eyes gaze on odd sights or let her ears listen to depraved sounds. At night she ordered blind musicians to chant the Odes. She spoke only of proper things. In this way she gave birth to children of correct physical form who excelled others in talent and virtue. Thus, during pregnancy, one must always be cautious about [external] feelings. If one is stimulated by good feelings, then [the child] will be good. If one is stimulated by evil feelings, then [the child] will be evil.

古者婦人妊子，寢不側，坐不邊，立不蹕，不食邪味，割不正不食，席不正不坐，目不視於邪色，耳不聽於淫聲。夜則令瞽誦詩，道正事。如此，則生子形容端正，才德必過人矣。故妊子之時，必慎所感。感於善則善，感於惡則惡。(LNZ 1,6,4)

Besides practical advice on pregnancy, the book also contains two accounts of supernatural pregnancies. Two exemplary women gave birth to two mythical sons:<sup>10</sup> Jiang Yuan gave birth to Hou Ji<sup>11</sup> (No. 2 *Qi mu Jiang Yuan* 棄母姜嫄), and Jian Di became the mother of Xie (No. 3 *Xie mu Jian Di* 契母簡狄). The first one became pregnant after she stepped on a giant’s footprint. When she became aware of her pregnancy, because her belly was swollen, she tried to get rid of the baby:

The mother of Ji, Jiang Yuan, was the daughter of the Marquis of Tai. In Yao’s time, while walking, she came upon a giant’s footprint; being curious, she placed her foot in it, and when she returned she found out she was pregnant. She began to grow larger and often felt nausea, so she called in priests who could help her get rid of the baby through divination and sacrifice. In the end the baby was born. Thinking that it was of evil omen, she abandoned the baby boy on a narrow path, but cows and goats did not trample on it. Then she brought it to a forest, but woodcutters

10 This case is mentioned here, not for its moral value, but to highlight the incursion from a legendary world into the pragmatic historical world, a feature that will survive in subsequent literary tradition.

11 Hou Ji is the god of agriculture and the founder of Zhou people (see Birrel 1993, 54–56).

picked him up and sheltered him in a straw bedding. So she took him back, and put him on ice, but birds shielded him with their wings.

棄母姜嫄者，邠侯之女也。當堯之時，行見巨人跡，好而履之，歸而有娠，浸以益大，心怪惡之，卜筮禳祀，以求無子，終生子。以為不祥而棄之隘巷，牛羊避而不踐。乃送之平林之中，後伐平林者咸薦之覆之。乃取置寒冰之上，飛鳥偪翼之。(LNZ 1,2,1)

The birth of Ji is not only a magical one, as it also tells the story of an unwelcome baby and the numerous efforts the “virtuous” mother makes in order to get rid of him.

Jian Di, mother of Xie, became pregnant by accidentally swallowing an egg while she was taking a bath:<sup>12</sup>

In Yao’s times, she went with her sisters to bathe in the waters of the Xuanqiu. A black bird flew overhead and released an egg that she was holding with her claws. It was multi-coloured and very beautiful. Jian Di and her sisters vied to gather it, Jian Di picked it up and put it in her mouth. By mistake, she swallowed it, subsequently giving birth to Xie.

當堯之時，與其妹娣浴於玄丘之水。有玄鳥銜卵，過而墜之。五色甚好，簡狄與其妹娣競往取之。簡狄得而含之，誤而吞之，遂生契焉。(LNZ 1,3,1)

The rational pruning of traditional tales that characterized the historical approach of Sima Qian in the past, and of Liu Xiang in this historiographic phase, does not keep the author from accepting supernatural events and reporting them as historical facts. The urgency of the moral message is stronger than that of rational evidence.

## (6) Daily Life: Death and Mourning

We already mentioned Ding Jiang 定姜. When her son died, just after marriage, without children, she allowed her beloved daughter-in-law to go back to her family. But, before that, she wanted to be sure that she had observed the three-year mourning period. In the same chapter she was very concerned after her husband’s death because Kan, the son of one of her husband’s concubines, took his father’s throne, but did not excel in mourning etiquette.

<sup>12</sup> Mentioned by Birrel 1993, 256.



After she had finished weeping, Ding Jiang, upon seeing that Kan wasn't sorrowful and did not make the ritual offerings of food and drink, sighed and said: "This man will be the ruin of the state, and before that even of virtuous people. And Heaven will smite the country with great calamities! ..."

定姜既哭而息，見獻公之不哀也，不內食飲，嘆曰：「是將敗衛國，必先害善人，天禍衛國也！...」(LNZ 1,7,3)

This story is recorded to praise Ding Jiang, but the moral aim of leading the king to practice proper mourning rituals is clear: the construction of the "moral personhood" in this book is aimed at women and men alike. Women's social/ritual construction is instrumental to the education of men. This recalls the tradition of the *Zuozhuan*.

The already mentioned Jing Jiang, wife of the Count of Mu, mother of the Count of Wen, is another bearer of a message of mourning etiquette. Jing Jiang is the woman of whom Confucius says: "She knows the difference between men and women" (仲尼謂敬姜別於男女之禮矣). The chapter on her is mainly related to her mourning her husband first, and only afterwards her son.

The Count of Mu first died, Jing Jiang observed the ritual.

穆伯先死，敬姜守養。(ibid.)

When the Count of Wen died, Jing Jiang admonished his concubines: "I heard that for a man who loves the inside (*nei* 內), women are willing to die, and for a man who loves the outside (*wai* 外), his officials are willing to die. Today my son died prematurely, I don't want to hear that he favoured the inner quarters, that would humiliate his women. So I invite you, in the mourning you should not become emaciated, not ruin yourself in shed tears, not beat your breasts, not release your sorrow, but wear reduced mourning clothing, not increased, follow the *li*, and be tranquil; this is the right way to remember my son.

文伯卒，敬姜戒其妾曰：「吾聞之，『好內，女死之；好外，士死之。』今吾子夭死，吾惡其以好內聞也，二三婦之辱。共祀先祀者，請毋瘠色，毋揮涕，毋陷膺，毋憂容，有降服，毋加服，從禮而靜，是昭吾子。(LNZ 1,7,11)

When Jing Jiang was in mourning, in the morning she wept for the Count of Mu, her husband, in the evening she wept for the count of Wen, her son.

敬姜之處喪也，朝哭穆伯，暮哭文伯。(LNZ 1,7,12)

The actions related to the mourning of one's male family members are highly ritualized: the expressions of sorrow for the death of the beloved are replaced by social signs, like clothing and a tranquil attitude.

## Conclusions and Further Implications

In this paper we analysed the main patterns of ethical "womanhood" within the narrative tradition included in the first book of Liu Xiang's *LNZ*.

By way of conclusion, and answering the introductory questions, we can state that the tradition of defining ethical rules through examples of virtuous women is confirmed by Liu Xiang. He, in the process of adopting a more rigid pattern of defining the social being, inherits the historical tradition of the *wen* from the *Shijing* (that he places within his own text) to the philosophical texts of the *Chun-qiu* schools; from historical texts, such as *Zuozhuan* and the *Shiji*, he derives the moral aim of the narration through *exempla*; but, keeping in mind the priority of the moral aim, in pruning the contents of tradition he deliberately fails to mark a distinct line between "real" facts and "legendary" narratives. Moreover, he acquires new concepts from Dong Zhongshu, mixing *Tian* 天 and *Ren* 仁 in *Li* 禮.

Nevertheless, the pre-Han textual tradition showed more differentiation in the *exempla* of women. The *LNZ*, in building a theoretical/ethical framework on moral personhood, highlights a proactive role of women in the family and society.

Among the categories originally introduced, the physical separation between men and women may be considered the most important one. In the *LNZ* it is very well articulated, and marks the different fields of action of the two subjects in the new gendered society. In fact, Liu Xiang allows some women to stay on the threshold: the boundaries seem to be still flexible and not rigidly prescriptive.

The women that he values as models for the construction of the social ethical system he is building are not entirely subjugated, but have specific areas of action, given by their being part of a relational net within the family, attentive disciples of *li*, and, most of all, educable and educated. We can see them as women on the threshold, materially and virtually standing on a border line, between the *nei* and the *wai*.

This notwithstanding, the apparently contradictory framework depicted by him leaves room for future speculations towards a more reclusive and subjugated position of women within the more and more oppressive family rules that crystallize after Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), and even more in Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) 12th century.

In line with general studies on Chinese traditional ethics (Ule, 2019; Vervoorn, 2004, among others), our analysis confirms that even though the narration on womanhood in Chinese ethics includes some *exempla* about extraordinary women professing their subjectivity outside the family and clan borders, the main trend, from the *LNZ* on, was that of shaping an increasingly subjugated model of social agent. Liu Xiang's discourse appears to crystallize this trend on women's ethics. In his work, a semantic shift occurs in the category of *fu dao*, or *fu li*, originally addressing the marriage status or the marriage performance. It seems to coincide with the knowledge and wisdom these women show. A wisdom that allows them to speak aloud, even though only from their quarters, the inner chambers, thus positioning them on the threshold. But, the questions are: where does this wisdom come from, and how does one acquire it? The answers are not specified.

One woman tried to answer this question, Ban Zhao (49–120 CE). She was the first author (a woman *literata*) who made a philological study of *LNZ*; in her introduction to the didactic text *Nüjie* 女诫, she wrote:

But what now anguishes me is that my daughters can be proper persons, that they won't make mistakes due to the fact that they have not received a gradual education, and they have never heard about the rites of women! ...

但伤诸女方当适人，而不渐训诲，不闻妇礼，惧失容它门，取耻宗族。吾今疾在沈滞，性命无常，念汝曹如此，每用惆怅。间作《女诫》七章，愿诸女各写一通，庶有补益，裨助汝身。去矣，其勩勉之！

In the first chapter, Ban Zhao takes the metaphor of the loom, not only to say that weaving is the main productive activity of a virtuous woman, but also to express the way an infant girl learns her position in the family:

In ancient times, three days after her birth,  
the girl slept under the bed and played with the loom weighs.<sup>13</sup>

古者生女三日，卧之床下，弄之瓦砖

Her work was namely that of trying to empower women through knowledge, the knowledge of *fu li* and *fu dao* that had been praised several times in the *LNZ*; furthermore, it helped define women's social role and give them an increasingly definite position.

13 This comes from the *Shijing* (*Xiaoya*): "When a daughter is born, she will be made to sleep on the floor, she will be swaddled, she will get a loom-spool to play with."

Ban Zhao herself was a “woman on the threshold”, giving the right instructions to other women so that they could fit properly in a system that was leading towards ever more tragic experiences. As we know, especially in the Ming-Qing Period, the boundaries around women’s bodies became tighter and tighter; further philosophical interpretation of the *wen* became more and more detrimental to defining women’s social position, impacting greatly on their everyday lives.<sup>14</sup> At the end of the Ming dynasty the saying *Nüzi wu cai bian shi de* 女子無才便是德, “A woman with no talent is a virtuous one”, was so widespread that the entire education discourse seemed to lose all value.<sup>15</sup>

The impact of Liu Xiang’s work was thus a keypoint in the construction of morals with regard to women, an important building block in Chinese ethical discourse.

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14 We will just mention here the invalidating custom of foot binding, on which much research has been carried out, both from a historical and an anthropological perspective. See Dorothy Ko (2001; 2005) among others.

15 Nevertheless, this saying, very popular also in our days, was spreading in a time when many talented women had begun to appear on the public scene, especially at the end of the Qing period.

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## *DISCUSSION*

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# Chinese Philosophy, “Postcomparative” Approaches and Transcultural Studies: A Reply to Vytis Silius

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In the previous issue of *Asian Studies* (May 2020), Vytis Silius published a paper entitled *Diversifying Academic Philosophy: The Post-Comparative Turn and Transculturalism*, in which he dealt with some basic, significant and hitherto still unsolved questions regarding the so-called “post-comparative shift” in Chinese and intercultural philosophy (see Silius 2020). The paper is well written, topical and very relevant. In spite (or all the more because) of the fact that it contains some controversial issues, it represents an important contribution to the present debates in the field. In this light, I would like to challenge the author (and his readers) by addressing the following issues, with which I aim to expose some of the minor problems contained in the paper on the one hand, but also propose some further general considerations of the delineated problems, on the other.

In the first part of the paper, the author provides a very thorough and coherent critique of the Eurocentric and Orientalist nature of Western philosophy, especially regarding its current institutionalisation and historical consolidation. He explains why he does not think that the various discriminatory tendencies and attitudes within the Western academic institutions against the inclusion of non-Western discourses are racist, but rather a result of “inertia”. I am not sure what might actually be the qualitative difference between “stubborn racism” and “inertia”, which is usually defined as a tendency to do nothing or to remain unchanged. First of all, racism is not something limited to a “stubborn” (and, hence, voluntary) maintenance. It is an inherent, almost essential part of the very discourse of Western philosophy, which relies on the reality of the concept of “race” as a “substance”, that is, among other, characterized by determinism, hypostatization, and reification, and rooted in a paradigm in which the being precedes the becoming (Xiang 2019, 2). And secondly, inertia is a tendency to do nothing about a current state of affairs; it is a mechanistic, non-reflective and uncritical attitude, which lacks any kind of autonomy, and is conservative

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by its very nature. In this sense, inertia (of racism) is by no means better than a "stubborn racism" would be, for they both can, in principle, contribute equally to the continuation of racism, which is still present in academic institutions. I guess that what Vytis Silius tried to say in this respect was that the present situation is not a consequence of ideologically manifest and consciously implemented discrimination, but rather a result of the non-reflective and unconscious preservation of racism. However, a latent (and unconscious) racism might be even more dangerous (and more persistent) than a conscious one, for (almost) no educated person would nowadays still openly advocate racism. Hence, these latent forms of racism (which manifest themselves in what the author calls "inertia") are, in fact, even more harmful precisely because they are difficult to grasp, to point out, and hence to fight against. This difference between manifest and latent racism is structurally linked to Said's notions of the relation between latent and manifest Orientalism (see Said 1979, 206ff).

Already in the abstract, the author exposes a rather bold supposition, according to which "universal knowledge, i.e. a knowledge which transcends cultural particularities" belongs to the elementary tasks (or tenets) of philosophy. This supposition belongs to the fundamental, however little questioned or proven basis of Silius' argumentation; in other words, it belongs to the central common threads of the entire paper. In my view, this assumption is rather problematic, since the question of the possible existence (let alone the function) of "universal knowledge" has never really been clarified. It is of course true that, as the author points out, "one of widely held agreements is that all types of philosophy strive for a universal type of knowledge" (Silius 2020, 261). It certainly holds true that in their work most philosophers and scholars of philosophy aim to generate universally valid insights. However, these are not necessarily "universal types of knowledge", since they do not pertain to one single, all-embracing universal knowledge, but rather to forms and types of knowledge which can be constructed and created within particular disciplines, methodologies or paradigms. Can we really think of knowledge (or philosophy) completely separated from the particular discrete culture in which it was created?<sup>1</sup> Is this, on the other hand, truly something we should wish for?

Later on in this paper, Vytis Silius tries to relativize such a notion of universalism by complementing (or additionally explaining) it with Rein Raud's idea, according to which philosophy seeks "to clarify the nature of things on the most abstract

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1 Besides, in this regard we can also not forget the element of subjectivity. Philosophy is always the product of human beings. And, can we really think—even in pure theory—of an isolated, universal human being, without her embeddedness in a concrete language, discrete experiences, histories, narratives and biographies?

level” (Raud 2006, 621). Particularly due to the fact that we are dealing here with Chinese philosophy, it is even easier to see the problematic nature of such a claim. As we all know, Chinese philosophical traditions are rooted in the paradigm of immanent transcendence<sup>2</sup> or the so-called one-world-view. Due to the dynamic paradigms in which they were developed, they do not establish fixed and static boundaries between the concrete (empirical) and the abstract (rational) notions. This implies that not only the general idea of universality, but even its somewhat relativized form of “clarifying the nature of things on the most abstract level” would necessarily exclude traditional Chinese philosophy from such a notion of universal or general philosophy.

Hence, if we could agree with this definition, we would necessarily be forced to exclude most of the Chinese philosophical traditions from a “universal philosophy”, except for its rare parts that could be interpreted through the lens of “clarifying its objects on the most abstract level”.

It seems as though Vytis Silius is somehow aware of the inadequacy of pure universalism, for he is repeatedly trying to mitigate the notion. However, in spite of all such attempts to relativize the idea of the “universal thrust”, the problem itself still remains open: the very concept of universal knowledge is, even when based upon some (not sufficiently clarified) modes of relativity, still an abstraction that is very much alien precisely to immanent traditions like the Chinese one. Hence, such a “striving for universality” is, in itself, an essentially Western idea. It is an idea that is alien and in contradiction with the basic paradigms defining Chinese philosophies, for it can only be established in the framework of a philosophy of transcendence, which is, above all, trapped into a static and unchangeable framework of eternal validity. In this respect, we should definitely ask ourselves whether by advocating a seemingly “democratic” idea of a universal philosophy, one is not reproducing the same old patterns of discrimination that have enabled or led to the exclusion of all non-Western forms of thought from the “sacred realm” of philosophy?

Nevertheless, it is certainly true that the structure of the relation between universality and particularity belongs to the core issues which lie at the very grounds

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2 From the viewpoint of Western philosophies, this notion is controversial and problematic in itself, since in the referential frameworks that prevailed in the Euro-American intellectual traditions, transcendence and immanence exclude one another. However, in the dynamic methodological framework of traditional Chinese philosophies, this is not necessarily the case. Nevertheless, in order to avoid possible misunderstandings, it might be better to choose another, less controversial term to express this idea. Here, we could point to the concept of the one-world-view, or rather describe it as a model that is similar to the pantheistic form of transcendence in immanence.

of the current search for genuine intercultural philosophical inquiry.<sup>3</sup> Precisely because of this reason, we should even more eagerly strive to liberate it from the realm of standardized universalism. In this context, Silius attempts to propose a different understanding of philosophy, namely as "knowledge that incorporates contingencies into the bigger picture". This is a proposition which obviously argues for the implementation of deductive approaches, and has hence to be seen in connection with Silius' advocating the more intensive inclusion of empirical sciences into contemporary "postcomparative" transcultural methods of intercultural philosophical work, an issue that will be shortly elaborated upon later in this text.

In my view, our treating of the relation between universalism and particularism should not remain limited to induction and deduction, respectively, even though the two methods are (much too often) seen as the two allegedly only possible, and hence exclusive, forms of structuring this relation. In this respect, we need to seek a form that would allow for an easier and smoother inclusion of traditional Chinese philosophy (as one of the contingent discourses) into the relation between contingencies and the "bigger picture". I believe that regarding intercultural (and especially transcultural) philosophy, the relation between universality and particularity should be based upon the principle of dynamic complementarity.

Let me exemplify this issue by an analogy with the inseparable connection between language and thought: although the ability or the potential to create language and thus linguistic communication is universal, each individual language and the grammatical structures by which it is defined are culturally conditioned. *Langue* and *parole* do not refer to the same linguistic entity. The same holds true for philosophy as a general system of thought which opens and develops "questions of deep human concern while proving the ideas they contain with rational arguments" (Defoort 2001, 403) on the one hand, and Chinese philosophy as a specific "type or genre" (ibid.) of philosophy with a specific, unique methodology<sup>4</sup> on the other. As with all philosophies, it is a form of human thought. In other words, like all other philosophies, Chinese philosophy has also arisen from the essential human need to philosophize. This need or this feature of human

3 Even the so-called "post-comparative turn", (provided, of course, that we can truly denote Hans Georg Moeller's critical analysis of the current state of intercultural philosophy as a post-comparative "turn"), an idea that is highly praised by the author, in fact chiefly proposes nothing else than precisely a restructuring of the very relation between universality and particularity.

4 Thus the expression "Chinese philosophy" does not refer to a geographic dimension of this universal term, but is rather an expression of the cultural conditionality which defines a certain form of philosophizing, or of a certain system of philosophical thought with a typical paradigmatic structure.

thought and sentiment is something universal, precisely the same as the human ability to generate language.

I think we all agree that the exclusive establishment of a universal, overall valid language would not only kill off all other manifold ways of understanding, expressing and interpreting reality, but also reduce the latter to only one, monolithic linguistic construction of the world. In a similar manner, a construction of “universal philosophic truths” would (in spite of its comfortable and comforting nature) likewise impoverish our manifold, innumerable ways of understanding reality.

But just as there can be no *langue* without *parole* (and *vice versa*), because they are interdependent and continuously enrich and complete one another, the relation between general and particular philosophies should also be seen as complementary and co-relative, similar to the Chinese binary category of *ben* 本 and *mo* 末.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, trying to squeeze the two oppositional notions into a relation that is evaluated exclusively by induction or deduction is rather inadequate. If we operate with induction, i.e. if we conclude from (well-known) particularities to the existence of an universality, our analysis will necessarily result in a conclusion which determines the predominant position of a certain particular philosophical approach. In other words: we universalize a certain kind of particular approach, which then automatically serves as the only valid reference point for evaluating all existing particularities. All traditional Eurocentric prejudices regarding the value (and the very existence) of all non-European philosophies were constructed in this way.

Vytis Silius is well aware of such problematic biases and attempts to correct them by proposing a deductive mode of universal and particular philosophical systems. He suggests avoiding the weakness of the alleged universalism described above, which, in reality, is nothing but a “Eurocentric hegemony posing as universalism” (Silius 2020, 262), by surpassing the existing isolation of philosophy from the empirical sciences, which currently prevails in universities. He criticizes the fact that at Western academic institutions philosophy is being taught as a discourse in which the empirical data is not respected enough, for it is often subordinated to the neat systemic “grand picture” of “pure” philosophy. However, in my view, such subordination is not necessarily a flaw. Firstly, empirical data is (as Silius himself

5 For those readers who are not familiar with Chinese philosophy or Sinology, let me explain the basic nature of this traditional Chinese binary category: in short, the term *ben* refers to the elementary, common root (the universal threat) of any entity, whereas *mo* denotes the manifold specific, discrete branches (particularities) arising from it. Unlike the Hegelian model, in which the root of a plant is in contradiction with its stem, which negates it, the characteristic nature of this binary-oppositional pair is complementary, since the root (*ben*) without branches (*mo*) is dead, while the latter can neither exist without the former.

rightly recognizes) not always objectively reliable, just as the notion of objectivity itself is questionable. The problem would occur in cases when they would be ignored or even falsified by pure speculations, as is for instance the case with some dogmatic and monotheistic theologies. It is, to be sure, not too good if the "grand picture" of rational speculation is in open contradiction with the collected data. However, it is equally questionable whether it would be reasonable to take empirical data as a basis of the rational model.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this is a question that needs to be clarified in the future development of global philosophy or philosophy "as such". Its overall complexity includes the general question about the relation between empirical and rational methodologies, and hence it demands a wide and interdisciplinary debate.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is a bit too early, in my view, to criticize the "subordination" of the empirical data to philosophy. Philosophy is speculative by nature, and the elimination of its rationality (or its complete dependence on empirical data) would imply the end of philosophy as an academic discipline, for it would, in fact, become redundant. But on the other hand, it is quite clear that empirical and philosophical sciences have to cooperate in order to obtain relevant new knowledge that could really have some significance for the contemporary world. However, the empirical sciences mostly do not take into account philosophical insights, and if they do, then they always treat these as elements that are subordinated to their own paradigmatic network. And I think by doing so, they are acting sensibly and in their own right, as it is equally right for philosophy to subordinate to its own rational work the results of empirical investigations. When criticizing traditional philosophy in this respect, Silius also claims that "the respect for data is much more binding in other academic disciplines of the humanities and social sciences" (*ibid.*, 263). Here, we must ask ourselves which humanities exactly he has in mind, notwithstanding the fact that social sciences are, to a great extent (maybe with the only exception of the sociology of culture), empirical by nature anyway. In this context, he also mentions that "psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists are more confined by empirical data" (*ibid.*, 262), which is of course true. However, we have to point out that all these disciplines are, to a great extent, likewise empirical sciences. Two rather explanatory examples of academic, highly theoretical disciplines, which truly belong to humanities, are, for instance, literary and aesthetic theories. Do such disciplines, for instance, have to accept hard-core empirical data in order to be seen as sciences in the sense of

6 The vast majority of the sub-disciplines of mathematics, which is, in its essence, also a rational science, are likewise completely separated from the empirical data; however, nobody finds it necessary to question such a basic framework of mathematics.

7 A very interesting and promising starting point for such debates could be provided, for instance, by applying in this context Li Zehou's notion of "transforming empirical into the transcendental" (Rošker 2020, 182).

*Wissenschaft?* All these questions relate to the problem of the relation (or proportion) between subjectivity and objectivity and to our basic understanding of humanities as such, as well as their true significance and value. This does not imply, however, that philosophy as a discipline could not (or should not) enter a fruitful interrelation with empirical sciences: albeit it is, as mentioned above, a speculative science at its very heart, philosophy as such is also not a monolithic construction, and it is most important that it includes fields such as experimental and cognitive philosophy. But in this context I would also like to relativize Silius' belief that the biggest incentive for diversification of academic philosophy will not come from the discovery or creation of theoretical grounds, but rather from the intensified practice of actual philosophizing. Perhaps both, the theoretical grounds and the practical philosophizing, are equally important and have to function in a mutually complementary fashion.

Nevertheless, the article is most significant precisely because it raises questions linked to intercultural or transcultural philosophy in the context of its academic institutionalization. The author addresses this problem from several different, albeit interconnected, aspects. This is important, for in spite of many critiques and discussions led by scholars and students working in the respective field of research, and even by the wider public, it has still not been satisfactorily resolved. Hence, the last thing I intend to do with my questioning of certain aspects of his presumptions is to diminish the significance and value of Silius' analysis. On the contrary, even those parts in which I cannot agree with his opinion are still highly inspirational and therefore valuable.

Among others, this also applies to the supposition, which lies in the core of his critique of the current situation in academic philosophy, and with which I cannot completely agree. Vytis Silius claims that "at the contemporary university the dominant mode of teaching philosophy at undergraduate and graduate levels takes history of philosophy as the main framework of teaching philosophy" (Silius 2020, 260). This does not apply to my own university and nor to several other universities I collaborate with. Philosophy is mainly taught through its sub-disciplines and topics. Hence, I think we have to strongly relativize this assumption. To my knowledge, the history of philosophy is just one topic among many others, even though I think it is also an important ideational background, which helps the students to rationally structure their knowledge on particular contents and currents, concepts and categories. Hence, I think (and I am sure that Vytis Silius would agree with me on this point) that the history of philosophy as such should also be "globalized". As the author himself acknowledges, the ideational history is an introductory step in the process of acquiring philosophical knowledge. This must not necessarily change. What has to change,

though, is the scope and very structure of this historical discourse. It has to be cleansed of its racist foundations, deconstructed and re-structured by re-including the Asian, Indian and Arabic pioneers of written philosophy, and by weaving into its fabric other, hitherto unknown thinkers. Therefore, I also cannot agree with Silius' presumption that the reason for the Orientalist and Eurocentric nature of traditional comparative philosophy as a field of academic research lies in its reliance on the history of philosophy as the main mode of teaching and researching. Besides, I am convinced that for philosophy its history is equally important, as it is for the integral distinctiveness of every human being, and every society. History, of course, is history only because it has to function in and serve the societies it is written for and the people who live in them. Therefore, as Vytis Silius claims, "historical and cultural contextualization, which can be adequately achieved only through a rigid study of the history of ideas ... has to be complemented by actual reconstruction, reinvention, and reformulation of the inherited philosophical classifications and technical philosophical terminologies" (Silius 2020, 267). However, with regard to the non-European philosophies there is also another important foundation which has to be mastered, for it is indispensable for their proper and coherent understanding, namely their underlying methodologies which include frameworks of reference or paradigmatic networks (Rošker 2015, 56–62) that have to be learned in order to allow an adequate understanding.

In Silius's view, another important reason for the prejudices linked to Chinese philosophy as an academic discipline lies in the colonial tradition of Sinologists, who were the first transmitters of Chinese thought to the Western world. In his view, most of these scholars did not identify themselves as philosophers, and therefore, such research "did not have the 'universalistic thrust' characteristic and indispensable for philosophy, and it did not attempt to challenge and change Eurocentric orientation of academic philosophy" (Silius 2020, 265). I think that we ought to be careful when evaluating the contributions of such pioneers of intercultural mediation. Even though for many of them this accusation holds true, we cannot overgeneralize these aspects, for in spite of their non-reflective nature and the lack of any proper methodology, numerous Sinologists have made great contributions not only by translating and introducing Chinese philosophy to Western audiences, but also by providing the first innovative analyses and interpretations of the crucial works.<sup>8</sup> Their emphasis on language and linguistic structures does not always necessarily imply the neglecting of philosophical questions. On the contrary, it was often more than valuable for

8 Alfred Forke and Wolfgang Bauer, for instance, have contributed many valuable insights into the genuine nature of Chinese philosophy, even though they were Sinologists.



obtaining a thorough and more autochthonous understanding of specific concepts, categories and specific paradigms that cannot be found in Western (nor the alleged “universal”) philosophy.

Because I don’t want this reply to become longer than the article to which it refers, I will abstain from discussing the numerous interesting methodological questions raised by Vytis Silius with regard to (intercultural) comparative philosophy. His study provides a brilliant analysis and coherent critique of the traditional comparative methods in intercultural philosophy, summarizing all alternative approaches (such as the philosophy of fusion, or post-comparative philosophy<sup>9</sup>) under the umbrella term “postcomparative philosophy”. Such a philosophy should, in his view, surpass the narrow boundaries of the “correct exposition” of philosophical views and positions we already know of. It could thus overcome the limitations of “seemingly static and historically settled philosophical cultures, traditions, thinkers, texts, and concepts” (Silius 2020, 270). It could furthermore offer us new ways of using ideas and views from all over the world as inspirations for our own philosophizing, and allow us to solve “hitherto unsolved problems possibly raising issues never raised before anywhere” (Chakrabarti and Weber 2016, 22). Irrespective of the fact that by constructing the term “postcomparative” Silius has made a somewhat unlucky choice<sup>10</sup>, his ideas developed under this title are very significant and more than worthy of our exhaustive consideration.

In this context, his elaborations on the future possibilities of transcultural philosophy are especially valuable. Silius exposes the importance of transcultural studies, and elaborates in detail on its future possibilities. Even though he also laments that, unfortunately, “the term transcultural (transculturality) is virtually absent from philosophical—including comparative philosophy—discourse” (Silius 2020, 273), this is not entirely true. Transcultural philosophy is a long-standing discourse, though one with continuously changing and developing paradigms. Transcultural philosophy has been an important field of philosophical investigation for at least half a century, starting with Eduardo Valera’s construction of its methodological bases (Valera 1972a; 1972b), and developing further more or less continuously in the decades since (see for instance Fredericks 1988; Nielsen 1995; Siegel 1999;

9 See Chakrabarti and Weber 2016, and Moeller 2018.

10 Similar to the original term “post-comparative”, its modification into the single compound “post-comparative” is likewise problematic. These terms say nothing except that we are dealing here with something which comes after the era of the domination of comparative methods. It does not say anything about the concrete ways of these new methods, nor about the reasons for the elimination of comparative approaches. Besides, such terms are problematic because of the open and all-encompassing relativization of reality and the methods of its interpretation. In this sense, they are similar to the term post-modernist.

Wang 2002; 2020; Rošker 2005; Hashi 2007; 2016; Obert 2011; Heubel 2011; 2019; Lee 2013; Pajin 2015; Bartosch 2017; Dai 2020 and many others).

Last, but not least, I would like to point to the highly interesting fact that transcultural studies proceed from a framework of reference which is very similar to the one defining traditional Chinese philosophy. This means that Chinese philosophy can provide much more solid bases for transcultural philosophizing than its Western counterpart. This is not surprising, for—similar to transcultural philosophy, classical Chinese philosophical discourses are also rooted in a dynamic relational onto-epistemology, which does not operate with essential concepts that lead to the notion of “being”. If we therefore aim to apply the basic paradigms of transcultural studies to Chinese-Western intercultural philosophy, we might achieve better (and more “objective”) results if we start from the Chinese, instead of the Western model, because dynamic representations can integrate the static ones, but not *vice versa*. Only in this way can philosophizing across borders, languages and horizons be intensified and gradually reach the point of a Kuhnian paradigmatic shift. This brings us back to another consideration, which is above all linked to the question of existing power relations in the contemporary world.

It is not enough to simply state that a new transcultural philosophy is necessary. In order to work towards the best possible interaction and syntheses among diverse philosophical traditions, insights and approaches, we need to ask ourselves about the reasons that are lurking behind such endeavors. In other words: diversification of different philosophical approaches and methodologies is not only unavoidable due to the increasingly intensive existing *practices* of contemporary active philosophers (Silius 2020, 277). These practices—as all practices—are chiefly a result of the present state of the present global situation. What is more important is the purpose, or the final cause of these practices, the origin of which lies in the fact that the global economy, global politics, and the network of corresponding modes of communications (including academic ones) necessitate new approaches for explaining reality. A diversified approach is not only the most “democratic” one, but also the one that allows us to gain genuinely new insights and further develop existing theoretical paradigms. However, what needs to be considered in this respect is also the question of whether these new (and doubtless more “democratic”) trends are not—*inter alia*—also linked to the fact that today global economic and political power is being transferred from the Euro-American to the East Asian region. Let us hope that the so-called “New Type of Great Power Relations” that has been established in the framework of such developments will allow us to create a more equal, less violent and less biased paradigm of intercultural philosophical dialogues. In my view, this is precisely the main agenda of our future work, and also the main message of Vytis Silius’ article. I sincerely hope that this remarkable

paper will represent the beginning of new, topical and important debates on the theme, and one of the first steps on the long and winding road leading towards a new *Politeia* of transcultural philosophies.

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