

Transcultural Dictionary of Misunderstandings

European and Chinese Horizons

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European and Chinese Horizons



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TRANSCULTURA

Collection TRANSCULTURA
edited by Alain le Pichon



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Foreword

*A superior man, in regard to what he does not know, shows a cautious reserve.
If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things.
If language be not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to
success. (...) What the superior man requires is just that in his words
there may be nothing incorrect.*

— Confucius, *Analects*, Book XIII, Chapter 3,
translated by James Legge (1815-1897)

Mutual understanding is the foundation of international relations. In the case of China, increased exchanges and interactions with Europe demonstrate a high frequency of misunderstandings, often leading to mistrust or defiance. These misunderstandings occur less among Asian partners of China, who share a larger common cultural ground, especially in East and South East Asia where the Chinese Confucian tradition and the Chinese written language were dominant for centuries.

Since 1980, Institut Transcultura has pioneered in France and in China joint studies on transcultural matters. In the course of more than 30 years, it has created a trustworthy network of scholars in Europe and in China (notably at the China Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of European Studies & Institute of Philosophy, but also at Beijing University and at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou). With the financial support of the European Union, the Institute has co-organized four "high level cultural forums" in 2010-2014 (Brussels, Paris and twice in Beijing) that delivered substantial contributions on the concept of globalization (2010), urbanization (2011), cultural heritage (2012) and sustainable development (2014).

In 2019, the proponents of this dialogue argued with reason that it is imperative to clarify the lexicon of our interactions: it has been largely

documented by the international media and think tank publications that Europeans and Chinese do not share the same meaning of apparently identical concepts or notions, such as "multilateralism", "rule of law", or "reciprocity". Moreover, China has become over these years much more assertive globally and has begun to introduce new concepts of international relations whose translation in a European language might seem innocuous, but are certainly not, like "a shared common destiny for humanity" or "win-win cooperation".

In view of the 2016 EU-China strategy, updated by the 2019 Joint Communication of the European Commission and the European External Action Service on the strategic outlook of EU-China relations, the EU Delegation in China proposed a cooperative project to elucidate the misunderstandings and to propose ways to clarify the concepts in question. The rationale is that, without a shared lexicon, it is difficult to meet our strategic objectives. By deepening an already proven transcultural dialogue among a community of European and Chinese scholars who are not satisfied by the level of distrust or defiance weighing on our long-term relationship, and by bringing clarity on some contested issues, the EU facilitates its own undertakings and promotes mutual respect. The policy impact of such an initiative aims to be commensurate with the quality of the provided results: better translations (in both ways) lead to better policymaking.

Two week-long conferences took place virtually between European and Chinese scholars in November 2021 and in April 2022, under the title "EU-China Forum on Cultural Misunderstandings". The steering committee associated Institut Transcultural (Prof. Alain Le Pichon), Leipzig University (Prof. Tinka Reichmann), and the China Academy of Social Sciences (Prof. Huang Ping and Prof. Zhao Tingyang), with the financial and organizational support of the EU Delegation in China.

This book retraces the contributions and the exchanges during the two sessions of the Forum. It constitutes a further attempt to bridge cultural prejudices by providing meaningful, scientific, and literate instruments for the benefit of mutual understanding between China and Europe on issues that weigh on the future of international relations.

*

Globalization should in principle lead us to use a common lexicon, but we often forget that meanings differ from one culture to the other.

Semantics are the study of meaning. Cross-cultural semantics deal with the question of whether key terms carry the same meaning in different civilizations. This issue of meaning across cultures is essentially both a linguistic and a philosophical matter. Lack of understanding tends more and more to become a political issue.

In 2004, Barbara Cassin (b. 1947) published in France a Dictionary of Untranslatables (dictionnaire des intraduisibles - vocabulaire européen des philosophies) listing 4000 keywords in 15 languages. The purpose was to demonstrate that differences in meaning are essential, and linguistic unification (Globish - for global English, or Esperanto - an artificial construction without any cultural roots) weakens rather than strengthens dialogue. She also warned against the danger of "ontological nationalism" by which one culture would claim to be superior to another.

During the forty years I have spent working in China or on China, Chinese officials have constantly complained that "mutual understanding" (互相理解 *huxiang lijie*) was insufficient. Without "understanding", how could there be "trust", they ask, pointing to what they consider as European "misreading" of China. During the last EU-China leaders meeting on 14 September, President Xi Jinping called on Europe to "resolve misunderstandings through dialogue".

On the European side, one would also note in general terms the paradox between the challenge that China represents today in economic and political issues, and the relative paucity of knowledge about China in secondary or tertiary education outside of specialized studies. As a French graduate in Chinese studies back in the Seventies, I can bear witness that there has been significant progress in that matter, though I concede that it is still far from being enough. A recent article in *The Economist* ("Barriers to Sinology", 28/11/2020) noted with concern that China studies are receding, not growing, in Britain, in Australia and in the US, and concluded: "for Western governments and firms, coping with China is an ever more pressing concern. To respond wisely, they need to understand what makes China tick. If there are not enough Sinologists to guide them, they will surely make mistakes."

There is thus an issue of insufficient "mutual understanding". As in trade imbalances, one should look at investment (in education), and at mobility between Europe and China (meaning students and scholars flows). Clearly, the present situation is not in favor of better understanding from

Europe, as mobility to China is unfortunately much more restricted than mobility to Europe. This in turn limits the investment potential in more China literacy in European schools: why bother, if one cannot realize his or her potential in China itself.

Rather than complaining about lack of mutual understanding, one should create the appropriate conditions for improving understanding.

We first have to recognize that China literacy is difficult for non-Asians. The history of the 20th century has been that of “westernization”; the very nature of “globalization” has been one of global trade and finance being conducted in English, the language of the dominant power, the US. Chinese students have become the number one foreign nationality on American and Australian campuses (2019 figures: 370 000 in the US, 260 000 in Australia). The international order presently speaks and works in some form of English. The internet is still massively English speaking, and even Chinese or Russian citizens flock to US-led digital platforms.

This linguistic reality has brought undisputable benefits, but it has also widened a “cultural deficit”. When China speaks in English, it uses a lexicon that is frequently not on par with its own history or culture. It uses words to which it may assign different meanings. Other countries are evidently facing this problem, but it is particularly true in China, where English literacy is much lower than in other Asian nations.

There are reasons to believe that this situation is not sustainable. The West cannot continue to expect that China will massively speak English in the course of this century. For its part, China seems to expect that the world will learn Chinese. I am struck by the importance of Mandarin teaching in the framework of the Belt and Road initiative. In 1996, more than 80 percent of Internet users were English speakers. By 2010, that percentage had dropped to 27,3 percent. In January 2020, English accounted for 25,9 % of Internet users, Chinese for 19,4 %, followed by Spanish and Arabic. So there is a large consensus to think that most English speakers will not turn to Chinese, but most Chinese speakers may not have to switch to English: this decoupling has become an inescapable reality.

In this new language order, translation or interpretation from Chinese to English and vice versa is more decisive than ever.

I have mentioned the existence of “untranslatables”, i.e. words whose translation renders a different meaning than in the original. There are many such words in English and in Chinese. Let me take a few examples to illustrate my point:

- “Rule of Law” is translated in Chinese by “rule by law” (法治 fazhi, meaning 依法为治 yi fa wei zhi); sometimes, there is also confusion between two homonyms, “legal system” (法制 fazhi) and “lawful governance” (法治 fazhi). There is, to my knowledge, no Chinese expression stating that law is above political governance, and pointing to separation of powers. Quite the contrary, the Communist Party of China denies this very concept as being harmful to the Chinese political system.
- 国情 guoqing is translated in English by “Chinese characteristics”, while I would argue that it should be rendered as “national identity”. The official Chinese translation seems to indicate that there are specific Chinese conditions of governance. This goes against the concept of universality of values, enshrined in the UN Charter: these are peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights and human dignity. These fundamental values do not differ according to political regimes or national conditions.
- “Reciprocity” is officially translated in Chinese by 对等 duideng, though I think that 互利互惠 huli huihui may be closer to the original meaning. The classical Confucian notion of 恕 shu, notably in the Xunzi 荀子, is translated in English as reciprocity, meaning do not do to others that you do not wish to be done to yourself.
- A recent expression, 平安中国 ping'an Zhongguo, has been officially translated in English by “Peaceful China”, though for Chinese “heping Zhongguo” 和平中国 (peaceful China) and “ping'an Zhongguo” 平安中国 (pacified China) are two very different expressions.
- It is like translating 宣传 xuanchuan, propaganda, by “publicity”: in English, the two notions cannot be put on the same linguistic register. This Party approved translation is, in my opinion, misleading.
- And to finish what could be a very long list, how to translate 天下 tianxia? My choice would be “universe”, but you would see awkward translations like “all-under-heaven”, that is exotic and rather meaningless in English, while in Chinese, the notion is central to governance.

My intent here is not to be critical, but to demonstrate how delicate and sometimes sensitive it is to translate without explaining the cultural background of a word. Semantics are in that regard not only useful, they are necessary to assess the gap between the original and its translation. To not make the effort leads to confusion or, worse, to misunderstanding.

No dialogue can be effective if interlocutors disagree on the very meaning of what they say to each other. As a French expression says, it would be a “dialogue de sourds”, “a dialogue of the deaf”, meaning that people talk past each other, without listening to each other.

This brings me to highlight the usefulness of differences. Chinese culture puts major emphasis on consensus rather than on differences: 以和为贵 *yi he wei gui* (harmony is most precious), or 智者求同·愚者求异 *zhi zhe qiu tong, yu zhe qiu yi* (the wise seeks what is common, the stupid seeks what is different), an antique idiom that President Xi Jinping used about Europe in 2014.

Consensus and harmony are certainly the best solution. But ignoring differences is misleading and contributes to confusion. We prefer to say in Europe that we cooperate when we can, and that we disagree when we must. Without differences, the world would not be worth living in. “Je est un autre” (I is somebody else), stated the French poet Rimbaud, pointing to the fundamental idea that subjectivity is rooted in something larger than oneself, and that no one can exist without someone else... Chinese poetry has reflected on this concept of “somewhere else” (*taxiang* 他乡), especially in Du Fu, pointing to the difference of what constitutes “home” (*guxiang* 故乡) with a fundamental “elsewhere”.

To build consensus, one has to respect the differences. Seeking differences (求异 *qiu yi*) may thus not be that “stupid”. In Chinese classical culture, as well as in European classical culture, philosophers often disagreed with each other. Neither European Enlightenment nor the Chinese Revolution would have been possible under absolute “harmony”.

In order to avoid the trap of “cultural relativism”, one has to learn to bridge the gaps of cultural differences, while respecting the essential values of cultural diversity.

In reality, we do this in our day-to-day interactions: we learn to accommodate different tastes in food, we appreciate the thrill of courting, we like to be surprised by something radically foreign to our usual environment. And by doing so, we go from one place to another, from “*guxiang*” (home) to “*taxiang*” (elsewhere). Of course, most of us will always prefer the known to the unknown, but all of us will be improved by the exposure, and the journey itself.

Between Europe and China, there is much more convergence that we would suspect, once the language barrier has been put down. Going back to the differences, wouldn’t “rule of law” find an appropriate translation in Chinese if there was a political will to do so? Wouldn’t it be

possible to understand “*guoqing*” (national identity) as being not exceptional but universal? Wouldn’t “reciprocity” be understood as a balance of outcomes rather than an equivalence of prior status? Why cannot we translate “*ping’an*” as “safe” or “tranquil” to describe not a “peaceful”, but a “pacified” China? And is it not realist to say that propaganda is propaganda and not publicity? Finally, as I suggested earlier, couldn’t we agree that “*tianxia*” is a universalist world outlook, as much as “*imperium*” was in Classical Rome? As Confucius pointed out, one needs to assign proper names, *zheng ming* 正名, because “when language is not in accordance with the truth of things, affairs cannot be carried on to success”.

In China also, there is a growing questioning about “cultural self-confidence” and “cultural friction”. In 2019, a Chinese journalist noted that “cultural friction with China is on the rise in Western societies”; and he called Chinese public opinion to “be strategic and intelligent”, by refraining from being “angry” or “willing to vent our ire” (“China should deal with cultural friction with wisdom”, *Global Times*, 17 October 2019).

*

The EU-China Forum of Cultural Misunderstandings debated key concepts that shape our respective view of the world and of our societies. These concepts have been selected for their potential of misunderstanding between Europeans and Chinese; some are even difficult to translate properly from and to Chinese.

Hermeneutics are not specific to Europe-China communication. In European culture itself, there are numerous instances of misinterpretation. But in relation to China, the challenge of understanding has been and still is a colossal endeavour. One of the most stimulating questions, stipulated in a recent book by Professor Ge Zhaoguang from Shanghai: “What is China?” (*he wei Zhongguo?*) The mere fact that this question is raised shows the scope of the work to be accomplished in order to measure the complexity and bridge the gaps of our understanding of each other.

In the historical process of China’s modernisation and its opening up to the world, Europeans do not shy away from confronting their long-standing faith in universalism to Chinese claim of singularity. China, Europeans are often told, has distinct “characteristics” (*guoqing*) and, thus, no foreign concept is applicable to China unless it is “sinified” (*hanhua*). Han culture puts emphasis on assimilation, and the Chinese

language has been a major instrument of unification of different traditions existing in the Chinese world.

I was asked recently about this difference between multilingualism, certainly the language of Europe, and monolingual cultures, which is a trait of China. The Forum brought together scholars whose work goes beyond one's immediate outreach and the illusionary comfort of one's native cultural tradition. "Unity in diversity" is the motto of the European Union. We are richer by our differences, we do not look for absolutes but for universals, and we believe that bridges are more conducive to mutual understanding than walls.

In order to achieve positive results from the dialogues we have set up, we are looking forward to in-depth exploration of semantics in order to highlight both the commonalities and the differences of our respective intellectual architecture of the world we live in. We have much to gain from such proceedings: apart from the natural curiosity of learning about each other's way to describe social constructions, contractual obligations and ethical norms, what we are most interested in is our ability, or not, to reach a common and constructive assessment of the deficiencies of our understanding. In some way, this is an exercise in humility, through which we accept the fundamental idea that concepts are not a perfect reflection of intents. In classical Chinese poetics, it is said, I quote, that "Poetry is the language of intent" (*shi yan zhi*), but critics pointed out how difficult it was to find a "soulmate" (*zhiyin*), someone who could grasp the meaning of the expressed intent; in classical Greek philosophy, Plato argued that art was an unreliable source of understanding. Either way, there is a common awareness of the imperative of communication and of the difficulty of reception. This is naturally even truer across cultural boundaries.

In a well-crafted sentence, Mr Kahn-Ackermann said: "China assimilation of Western culture is mostly a process of misunderstanding, and vice versa." Mr Pan Yue, vice-minister of the United Front Department of the CCP, and the author of a book on "Warring States and Ancient Greece", noted: "China has always sought to learn from Europe, but does not wish to become Europe."

So our starting point is the acknowledgment of both the evident gap between our cultures and of the risk of misunderstanding in our crossing attempts. The gaps and the misunderstandings themselves are sources of intellectual discoveries conducive to a better knowledge of what we say and why we say it the way we do. Duly equipped with such

knowledge, we then can proceed in a higher-level exchange to define the paths of encounter and, ultimately, of mutual understanding over the vales and hills of misunderstandings.

There have been questions on the choice of the key concepts. For instance, why would the Forum spend time on image or beauty? At a moment when our societies are facing major threats, or when trust becomes a rare commodity, what is the point of debating aesthetics? We should however agree that the issue of representation is the foundation of philosophical endeavours, and that, without an idea of beauty, there can be no idea of happiness. Yet, as all choices are, ours are arbitrary, and the list of debatable notions could be much longer and draw on other issues at play between Europe and China. What is important, in my opinion, is that these preliminary exchanges fuel the appetite for more discussion, a larger exploration of the respective mind-sets. We can do more, but we should not do less.

There is an ancient Chinese saying that is relevant to our forum: « when positions are different, it is better to say little; when understanding is different, the best is to not argue.” 位置不同，少言为贵；认知不同，不争不辩。 That is why it is important to narrow the differences, in order to say more and to open the door for a meaningful discussion, whatever the odds may be. This is what this transcultural dictionary is about.

Nicolas Chapuis
EU Ambassador to China
May 2022

Introduction

1. Roots

This Transcultural Dictionary of Misunderstandings: European and Chinese Horizons has its roots in years of effort by several scholars in Europe, China, India, Africa, and South America interested in the fundamental questions of transcultural encounters and exchange. They started working within the frame of the International Transcultural Institute, which was created by Umberto Eco and Alain le Pichon in 1988, on the occasion of the 9th centenary of the University of Bologna.

The question of cultural misunderstandings is a seminal topic that has underlain Transcultural activities since its beginnings. The main objective was initially to promote reciprocal anthropology between European and non-European researchers and thus broaden concepts and methodologies in cross-cultural studies, especially in the human sciences. In order to overcome Eurocentrism, the Transcultural approach considers the models of knowledge and the respective perception that the partners of non-European cultures have in the world. Over the years, in different activities promoted by the Transcultural research network, it has become more and more evident that diverging interpretations of a situation impede mutual learning and positive interactions, often leading to disagreements between people, countries, and leaders. Hence, Transcultural has become increasingly engaged with the question of misunderstandings, as they are not always related to a superficial lack of knowledge of the meaning of words or texts but are often the core of conflicts and problems between cultures themselves.

The exchange with Chinese scholars started as early as 1991 at Zongshan University, where the first Transcultural Euro-Chinese Forum was

1. This Transcultural Dictionary of Misunderstandings constitutes a homage to Umberto Eco († 2016), Co-founder and President of the Scientific Committee of Transcultural (1988-2016), thus fulfilling one of his most cherished wishes in realizing a project which he considered to be of major importance in our time.

held under the title: Strategy for a Reciprocal Knowledge. This was the first of a series of more than fifty seminars, conferences, and workshops which would ultimately lead to the launching of this project: a dictionary of misunderstandings. Against the background of a lack of exchange that weighed on Euro-Chinese relations at the time, such an initiative seemed extraordinary. It took all the authority of the former Secretary General of the European Commission, Emile Noël, then President of the European Institute in Florence, where Transcultura was based at that time, to convince the European Union to support the project.

At the French Embassy in China, a young Cultural Counsellor, who was rather sceptical first, but upon seeing the support that we had received from Yue Dayun from Beijing University, let himself be convinced and eventually took an active and productive part in the debates. It was there that the idea of a dictionary of misunderstandings was first discussed with Yue Dayun. A few years later in 1996, Yue Dayun organized a Transcultura seminar at Nanjing University to further discuss the topic, upon which we decided to launch the project, an ambitious undertaking as we would need sponsorships, a methodological framework, and a network. Yue Dayun introduced Transcultura members to Huang Ping and Zhao Tingyang, and there were several erratic attempts to obtain the necessary support. The aforementioned Cultural Counsellor was Nicolas Chapuis, who has supported this dictionary project as Head of Delegation of the European Union to China from 2019 to 2022.

Throughout these thirty years, Transcultura has developed an approach that aims to put key concepts of cultures into perspective and to study and discuss them in a fair and respectful academic exchange. A decisive turning point and a milestone in this development was the debate initiated at the Transcultura Congress on Mutual Knowledge held at the European Parliament in November 2001, where numerous delegations from China, India, Africa, and Iran debated and formulated the concept of a Trans-Cultural Encyclopaedia of Keywords. The aim was to gradually build up an editorial keyword basis for conceptual debate between knowledge cultures. This challenge was taken up by the Indian delegation and led to the Goa-Pondicherry-Delhi Itinerant Seminar on Cultures of Knowledge (2007) which established the methodological principle of a “third party view” in a reciprocal knowledge triangulation (India-China-Europe, in this case).

By the time of the Transcultura seminar at the University of Bologna in 1997, Umberto Eco had already been insistently advocating for the

project of a transcultural encyclopaedia of keywords. He considered it a useful tool for the coexistence of differences between cultures and for establishing reciprocal respect for these differences. He invited his public not to try to minimise these differences but to deepen their knowledge of them and achieve a state of mutual understanding. Eco's writings on language in cultural history (*The Search for the Perfect Language*, 2000) and his experiences as a translated author (*Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*, 2003) were formative contributions to Transcultura. His argument was that even if translation is considered to be impossible from a strict philosophical and semiotic point of view, translatability can be accepted if there is no expectation of finding perfect synonymy. Otherwise, neither the Septuagint nor any other translations would have any legitimate *raison d'être*.

Ten years later, in 2008 in Paris, he magisterially chaired a transcultural debate on the concept of beauty, confronting the large scale of Western acceptations of it by comparing corresponding keywords from Chinese culture with Zhao Tingyang, from Indian culture with Balveer Arora, or from West African cultures with Moussa Sow, thus proving how far they were from synonymy. This important presentation about the concept of beauty by Umberto Eco has been integrated in this dictionary.

2. History and inspirations of the dictionary project

About twenty-three centuries ago, a cultural event took place in Egypt, in the form of a meeting, colloquium, and seminar, which definitively changed and marked the history of mankind. This meeting concerned the gathering of seventy Hellenised Jewish scholars by King Ptolemy II in Alexandria. This meeting between two so profoundly different cultures, Greek and Jewish, would result in the production of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Bible, and would ultimately transform Greek thought and culture, constituting the conceptual basis of Judeo-Christian civilisation and giving Western cultures their foundation, form, and inspiration for two millennia.

History can attest to the fact that every well-developed civilization most likely had such transcultural experiences that resulted in a richer composition of cultural resources through the peaceful confrontation of different language systems and ideas. Early China, as well as Europe, have proven to be transcultural from its known beginning. The

archaeological findings of the neolith period indicate that China had learned how to utilize many resources from the Middle East, such as bronze, horse, and wheat. Wheat became so important that its depiction became the earliest pictograph representing “future”, for the wheat foretold the harvest.

Two other significant events also helped to deepen transculturality in China: The “journey to the west”, actually to India, led by a famous monk in the Tang dynasty (618- 907) had brought back the best collection of Buddhist works, while the “westernization” of China in the last two centuries resulted in China learning about the sciences and modern technologies.

3. Methodology

To pose the question of cultural misunderstanding as the first principle of the relationship and not as a slip of communication is therefore fundamental and goes far beyond the positive intentions of individual, institutional, and cultural exchanges. Cultural concepts are the basis of human behaviour, languages, and communication, and knowledge about concepts helps people to understand one another, even beyond the boundaries of their cultures, countries, or continents. Transcultura’s challenge is to put the differences found in diverging cultural concepts into perspective so that they are not only accepted or respected as such, but that they are also enriched by mutual knowledge and understanding; therefore, Transcultura has developed an approach of selecting key-concepts of cultures and studying over the years and discussing them in an equitable and respectful academic exchange. In the context of increasing interactions between the EU and China at all levels, Transcultura is choosing, on both the European and Chinese sides, key-concepts regarding the main streams of cultural exchanges which have a considerable potential for misunderstandings.

In our approach, we have encountered some of the very difficult but fundamental questions that arise in anthropology and in human sciences in general, which should be considered and can be stated in the form of the following paradoxes:

The first paradox resulted from what very quickly appeared as the horizon of reciprocal anthropology: reciprocity itself as a mode of knowledge. If reciprocity becomes a mode of knowledge, then we are

faced with new questions and great difficulties. What are the objects of this knowledge when the principle of reciprocity is based on trans-subjectivity? Man, the object of anthropology, can no longer be considered an object but a subject. Anthropological knowledge, as a transcultural and trans-subjective knowledge, is then the knowledge of subjects knowing each other. They cannot be two objects for each other; they must be two subjects.

The second paradox is one that was immediately underlined by Umberto Eco: the paradox of translation, of different concepts and references according to the different languages. Eco used to argue that there is not a single concept which can be found to be the same in two different languages in the world. This was a radical concept and begged the question: How do we answer this? How do we deal with the same question that Wittgenstein had formulated: “How would observers from cultures that do not practice any of our language games look at us?” Insofar as they would express their understanding, how can we understand them? These observers from abroad, they will use their own language games and categories of language. How do we make sure that we have access to what they mean?

In the lack of absolute synonymy between words and concepts of different languages, the only solution is to profoundly know the cultural references, accept the differences between them, and fill the gaps with metalinguistic resources in dynamic processes of dialogue and co-writing methods resulting in a “syntext”, as Zhao Tingyang proposed to name it, based on the concept of trans-subjectivity. This so-called “syntext” is meant to overcome the intersubjective conflicts and create “transcultural focal points”, which can either be meeting places or, from the anthropological point of view, symbolic foci, i.e. with a rather symbolic charge. This concept of trans-subjectivity can be found in a “trans-subjective dialogue” with the Chinese key concept “hua (化)”, translated literally as “melting-and-recasting” or more often translated as “transforming (to fit one another)” (Zhao Tingyang, 2020). In most cases it indicates a solution to intersubjective hostility in terms of mutual acceptance of cultures. Trans-subjectivity develops an “effect of reciprocal mirrors”, a metaphor describing how each culture could mirror the others and reciprocally share their knowledge.

Zhao Tingyang defines trans-subjectivity as follows: (1) a culture mirroring other cultures can be interpreted as having other cultures “being mapped into” the system of its own so that (2) other cultures can be

meaningfully interpreted by each culture as the productive increment of its own system; it therefore requires that (3) the mirror offered by a culture should have the infinite potentiality in offering inexhaustible configurations for other cultures to be mapped out in its own system; and (4) so far as we speak in terms of humanities rather than mathematics, the cultural mapping allows the existence of “reasonable misinterpretations” since a possible world within a culture cannot be mapped into any other without distortion based upon the fact that a possible world is richer and more complicated than a mathematical system; therefore (5) the cultural mapping processing would likely have a genetic recombination effect in every culture so that every culture would be re-cultured.

4. Choice of keywords

The Transcultural Dictionary of Misunderstandings is based on the observation that in two languages of the world, whatever they are, there are no two totally equivalent concepts underneath the keywords used to translate them, especially in the area of connotation. That is why many of them are considered to be non-translatable. Many authors, such as Humboldt, view the function of language as not limited simply to representing or communicating already existing ideas and concepts, but as a “formative organ of thought” and, thus, also instrumental in the production of new concepts that would not come into being without it. The differences between languages for him are not those of “sounds and signs” but ultimately of “differences of representing the world”.

In order to establish the model of trans-subjectivity, we had to first tackle the greatest hurdle, namely the establishment of reciprocal knowledge. Our approach to doing so would involve focusing on keywords, as words are everything and are responsible for how we interpret the world. Our worldview is, therefore, limited by the words that shape them, meaning that words from other cultures would enrich our own world and enlarge our horizons to see more things. The keywords were chosen according to the Chinese adage: “to control a network is to control its main relationship nodes”; therefore, we decided to choose the keywords that are most likely misunderstood with our schemata of perceptions.

Our selection of the most significant keywords took the following into consideration:

1. Less focus on special words whose significance is confined to locality and traditions, for this dictionary is not intended to introduce the strange and mystery exoticisms as discovered by the early anthropologists.
2. More focus on the special words whose significance could be universalized or which are meaningful for rational analysis and discussion.

Most Chinese words, for example, are not in use in European languages and have not found a place in European vocabularies. The translations of many Chinese words are often very strange or even misinterpret the actual meaning. On the other hand, European keywords have been translated well enough so that most of them are alive and in good use in modern Chinese, though they may still be partly misunderstood or not fully understood at all. This dictionary constitutes a meaningful effort for the reciprocal knowledge that underlies European-Chinese communication. While most Chinese words and concepts have no equivalents in European languages, if we were to stop at the non-equivalence, there would be no dialogue. Therefore, it is imperative that we establish meaningful links between Chinese and European keywords in order to facilitate dialogue between the authors.

In the game of reciprocal knowledge, the “players” or partners must gradually adjust their respective positions until they find the right measure, the right disposition, and best possible harmony in which mutual recognition is established. Then comes the time for transcultural rhetoric, the time for dialogue. This can be seen as the search for harmony in reciprocal knowledge that can pave the way to the universality of wisdom that Michel de Montaigne evoked: “There is so great a connection and relation amongst wise men, that he who dines in France, feeds his companion in Egypt; and that whoever but holds out his finger, in what part of the world soever, all the wise men upon the habitable earth feel themselves assisted by it.” (Essays of Michel de Montaigne, vol. III, 1811, p. 239)

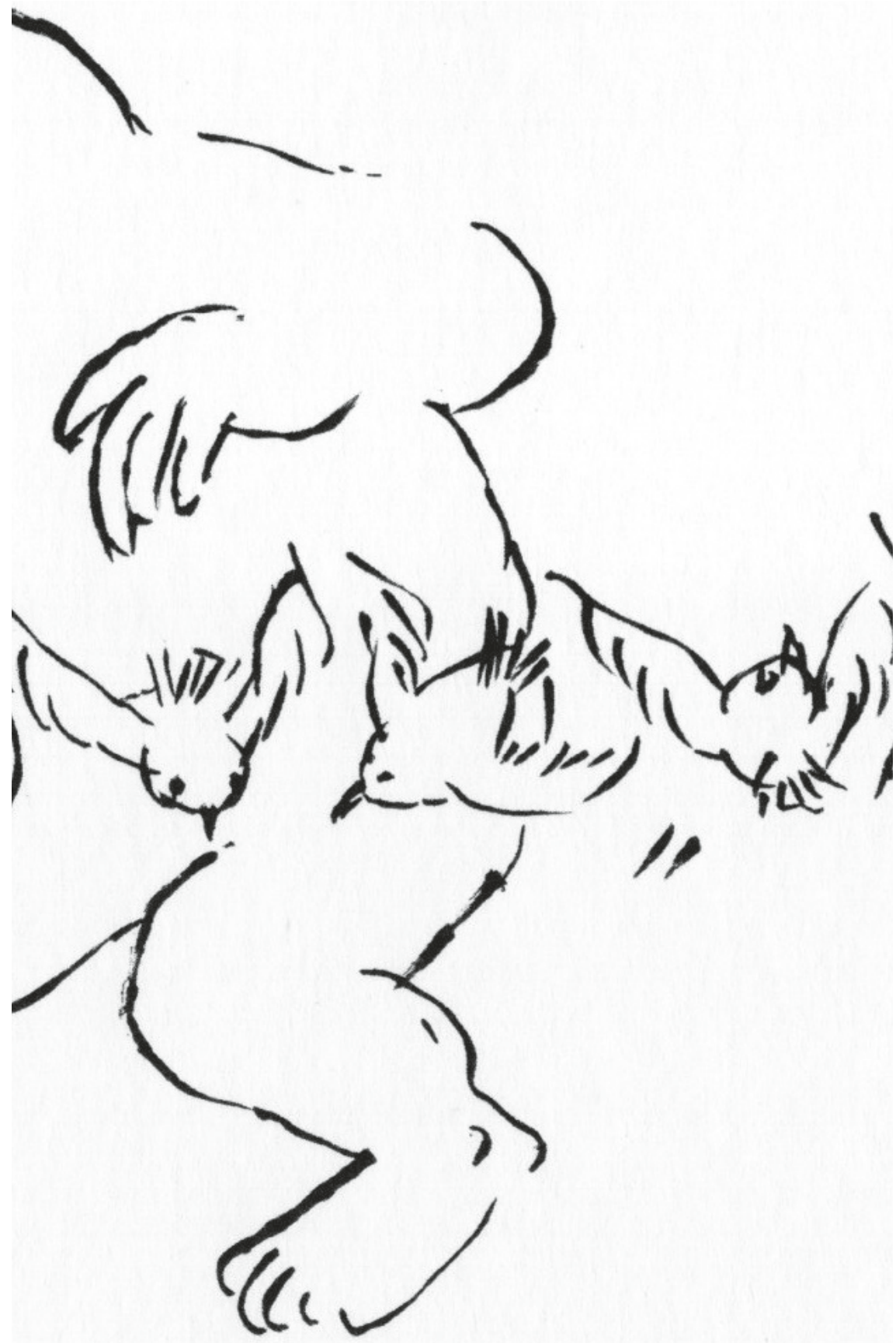
In this prism of transcultural knowledge, it is essential to establish the measure of our reciprocal vision. Two sources of inspiration, two stories, two models, both helping to reconstruct the other, both contributing to the invention of a new model.

5. Conclusion

More than ever, we need to contemplate the past and the words of the past in their diversity. This requires dialogue, mutual respect, and the resulting reflexive and metalinguistic translation based on reciprocal cultural knowledge. Understanding our past is the key to understanding our future.

Following the model of the Alexandria Colloquium and its work ordered by Ptolemy II, just as he turned to Jewish scholars of the Torah to broaden the horizon of Greek thought, we propose to turn to and draw on some of the fundamental concepts of Chinese thought and put these into perspective with corresponding Western ones in order to open up and expand the questions that a global world imposes on us.

HUANG Ping (黄平),
Alain le Pichon,
Tinka Reichmann,
ZHAO Tingyang (赵汀阳)



Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Beauty

美

Měi

LIU Chengji
Umberto Eco,
Alain le Pichon

美

Měi

Chinese perspective

LIU Chengji

In 1883, the Japanese scholar Nakae Chōmin used the term “aesthetics” to translate Eugene Veron’s *L’Esthétique*, and since then, the Spanish word for *Aesthetik* has been given a stable name in the East Asian Han-character culture. In this context, understanding “beauty” has become a new qualitative question pertaining to Chinese (or Japanese) aesthetics. The most widely relied upon historical source for the original meaning of the word “beauty” comes from Xu Shen’s *Description and Interpretation of Chinese characters (Shuowen Jiezi)* of the Eastern Han Dynasty, which states: “The character for beauty, which means *gan* (sweet), is related to the characters for “sheep” and “great”, which are mainly used for dietary needs among the six domestic animals; beauty and good are the same meaning.”

From this interpretation, it is clear that there is a consistency between traditional Chinese and Western perceptions of beauty in that both affirm the sensual quality of aesthetic activity, but there are cognitive differences in the sensory organs on which this sensuality resides. In the West, sight and hearing are considered the most superior aesthetic senses, while taste, touch, and smell are “non-aesthetic” or “inferior.” The sense of taste, in particular, is “not so finely and firmly distinguished as the ear, and the art of cooking and wine-brewing, which everyone is somewhat proficient in or attentive to, deals with materials too inexpressive to be called beauty.”¹ But this lower sense was given the original meaning of beauty in the ancient Chinese language. For example, the Japanese scholar Kasahara Chūji argues that although the Chinese word for beauty places emphasis on visual (“great”) and gustatory (“sweet”) sensations, the etymology of the word is related to the word “sheep,” as one’s perception of the fatness of sheep must ultimately be ascribed to taste and beauty. In this way, “the most primitive

1. George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty*, translated by Miao Lingzhu, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1983, p. 44.

aesthetic sense of the Chinese originated in the gustatory sensation of “sweet” after all.”²

It can be argued that sensibility, and the sense of sight and taste on which it is based, constituted the fundamental meaning of beauty as understood by the early Chinese. In terms of their sensual grasp of the world, they can be divided into two dimensions, macro, and micro. On the macro level, Chinese philosophy began with imagery or pictorial understanding of the world, referred to in the *Book of Changes* as “Observing Object and Extracting Intrinsic Image (象 Xiang).” According to the *Book of Changes*, the ancient Chinese sage, Baoxi Shi, looked up at the trajectory of the sun, moon, and stars in the sky and looked down at the patterns of the mountains and rivers on the earth, as well as the traces left by birds and animals, and eventually abstracted the eight trigrams as a simple scheme of the world. At the micro level, Chinese characters, as pictograms, were created on the principle of “Pictogram by category,” i.e., through the formal simulation of everyday objects and things, so that human experience of the world could be symbolically transmitted figuratively. Of course, in addition to perceptual intuition, Chinese philosophy also has a metaphysical dimension, as in the case of the Taoist concept of Tao, which is often compared to the Western philosophy idea of entities such as Forms. Still, in fact, Tao is not a self-existent entity. For example, Lao Zi’s statement that “All things in the world are born from being and being is born from nothing” is an apparent attempt of nihilism in the transcendental side of the Tao with the help of “nothing.” He goes on to call the presentation of the Tao “trance” and “chaos.” At most, this pushes the boundaries of human awareness to a critical point between the sensible and the insensible, and does not, on the whole, go beyond the realm of the sensual. In this context, Chinese scholars tend to refer to traditional Chinese thinking as Xiang (image) thinking. Its sensual character defines it as a kind of aesthetic thinking or epistemological aestheticisation. Against this backdrop, the world as a whole is presented from the collocation of image with image, which Western Sinologists have called correlational thinking. The resulting picture of the world is contextual or aesthetic; it is a space-time conceived and constructed on an anthropogenic scale rather than a space-time itself. This also indicates that Chinese philosophy is not so much a philosophy but an aesthetics in the general sense.

2. Kasahara Chūji, *The Beauty Consciousness of the Ancient Chinese*, translated by Yang Ruowei, Beijing: Joint Publishing 1988, p. 2.

The world is constructed and thought of sensually, reflecting the universal nature of traditional Chinese culture and philosophy. Specifically, the perception of beauty is based on human visual perception. According to the composition of Chinese characters, the ancient Chinese generally believed that the character for beauty (美) was formed by the combination of the upper part of the character for sheep (羊) and the bottom part of the character for great (大), i.e., “A great sheep is a beauty.” In recent times, with the use of modern interpretations and the discovery of new character materials such as oracle bones and Jinwen, new interpretations have been emerging. For example, Ma Xulun, in *A review and empirical evidence of the six theories of Chinese character composition in The Description and Interpretation of Chinese Characters (Shuowen Jiezi Liushu Shuzheng)*, points out that “beauty (美)” is similar to “婣” :“At the beginning of this word, the word ‘婣’ was associated with great, and with women, and the so-called ‘婣’ referred to ‘good-looking women.’” According to cultural scholar Xiao Bing, the so-called “sheep is beauty” is actually “sheep with the person are beauty,” which refers to a person dancing with a head of a sheep and is associated with the totem worship in primitive songs and dances.⁴ These interpretations are all based on a “take the words too literally” of the word “beauty,” and have the general characteristic of taking visual perception as the orientation for interpreting meaning. However, the differences in understanding around the character “beauty” between ancient and modern times are still fairly obvious. The origin of the character “beauty,” for example, is that it was associated with the sheep, roughly because, as one of the six domestic animals, it was mainly used for rituals in ancient China, and the sacredness of the rituals and the spiritual need for good fortune reinforced its aesthetic value. It is worth noting, though, that at the level of Pragmatics, traditional Chinese literature rarely contains any cases of aesthetic evaluation of sheep in terms of their “beauty” but is more concerned with the human appearance. The word beauty, as in the oldest collection of Chinese poetry, the *Book of Songs*, is all about people. This suggests that the ancient Chinese conception of beauty, even if it originated in the affirmation of the value of the sheep, still formed a cluster of aesthetic evaluations around people in its word-meaning flux. Of course, in the shift of character meanings

3. Ma Xuelun, *The Description, and Interpretation of Chinese Characters II*, Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House, 1985, p. 119.

4. Xiao Bing, From “sheep is beauty” to “sheep with the person are beauty”, *Harbin: The Northern Literary Studies.*, 1980, no. 2.

from sheep to man signaled by beauty, not all people can be called beauty. Most women or men celebrated in literature such as the *Book of Songs* and the *Zuo Zhuan* are plump, tall, and robust, which means that the “great” in the so-called “Great Sheep is Beauty” is also replaced with an aesthetic evaluation of the human being. Historically, the establishment of this criterion is associated with the material shortage or poverty that predominated in ancient times. Poverty inspired a desire for abundance and worship of physical strength, and the “great” or plump, tall, and robust body served as a sensual representation of this ideal of life.

In addition to resorting to the visual beauty of people, the enjoyment of taste was also an aesthetic experience that was highly valued in early Chinese society. For example, in the *Book of Songs*, *Deer chirping (Lu ming)*: “I have a fragrant wine for guests to feast and roam,” and in the *Fish in abundance (Yu Li)*: “A nobleman treats his guests to a wine that is not only fragrant but also plentiful.” The *Green Sparrow (Sang Hu)*: “In the curved horned mug, the wine is full and fragrant.” And so on. The Chinese character for Zhi (旨) is written as “𠄎” in the oracle bone script and “𠄎” in the *Jinwen* and is roughly the same in character form. The upper part of the character is like a spoon, and the bottom part is like a mouth to show the delicacy of the taste. In the *Book of Songs*, the word Zhi is mostly used for the feasts of the nobility, where the scene is joyful, harmonious, and full of self-restraint. This is in marked contrast to the previous period of King Zhou of the Yin Dynasty when “a pond made of wine and a forest made of meat” and “the foul smell of wine and meat was everywhere.” This indicates that following the Zhou dynasty’s decree on the control of drinking (*Jiugao*) and the Zhou duke’s establishment of rites and rituals, food for the nobility was gradually elevated from the satisfaction of general physical pleasure to an aesthetic palate and a means of emotional communication. In these poems, the word Zhi often appears simultaneously with the word Jia (嘉), which refers to not only the excellent taste and delicate fish but also the honoured guests and the lovely word. This transition illustrates the characters’ shift from “beauty” in terms of taste to “good” regarding emotional communication. Here, the physiological co-purposiveness of food and drink gradually leads to a moral co-purposiveness, i.e., from beauty to goodness.

The pleasure of sight, the enjoyment of taste, and the virtuous purposes that such joy derived from basically sum up the aesthetic orientation of

early Chinese society. In contrast, Xu Shen's Exegetical Conclusion in the *Shuowen Jiezi*, based on the ancient definition of the word "beauty," can easily be seen as persuasive in understanding the traditional Chinese idea of aesthetics. In this regard, the phrase "beauty is gan (sweet)" refers to the beauty of taste as reflected in the *Book of Songs*; the term "relates to sheep, relate to big" reflects the visual characteristic of fatness and chubbiness as the beauty of an object, and the phrase "beauty and goodness are synonymous" is a good clarification of the aesthetic value orientation of beauty leading to goodness and the unity of beauty and goodness. However, it should be noted that early Chinese literature, such as the *Book of Songs*, still lacked an internal unification between the perceptions of visual and gustatory aesthetic experiences, expressed as two separate discursive systems: "vision-beauty" and "gustation - Zhi". This led to the formation of a juxtaposition of the two aesthetics. Xu Shen's "interpretation of beauty by Gan" means that he unites the gan of gustation with the "beauty" of vision, thus making the visual and gustatory experiences, which were initially separate, one around "beauty", thus forming a concept of unity.

Hence, the early understanding of beauty in Chinese society can be described as a historical process in which the subject was constantly involved with objects and thus developed a relatively fixed idea of aesthetics. Among these, the philosophical "Observing Object and Extracting Intrinsic Image" and the daily cognitive level of "Pictogram by category", although not fully considered as aesthetic problems due to the lack of involvement of the subject's emotions, nevertheless laid a sensual foundation for aesthetics by resorting to subjective observation and image imitation. With this background, the change in character interpretation from Yin and Shang to Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn Period offers a rare clue to understanding the awakening of Chinese aesthetic consciousness and the development of aesthetic concepts. In the *Book of Songs*, the word "beauty" is specific to the aesthetics of the human body. It celebrates the plumpness and robustness of the human figure, giving a relatively fixed yardstick for aesthetic judgment at the visual level. Likewise, the character Zhi, as an acknowledgment and glorification of the taste of food, sets the standard to be fulfilled by the aesthetics of gustation. Meanwhile, both the pleasure of sight and the enjoyment of taste should lead a person to the goodness of purpose at a transcendental stage. As a result, the beauty of colour, the purpose (Zhi) of taste,

and the goodness of virtue essentially sum up the early Chinese idea of aesthetics.

In Chinese history, the pre-Qin period was the axial era of Chinese culture. The aesthetic ideas developed during this period dominated the aesthetic tradition in China for thousands of years afterward. It is to be pointed out, however, that a self-conscious discipline of aesthetics did not exist in China itself until Western aesthetics was introduced into the Chinese context. This implies that its perception of beauty could not be limited by the current choice of the word "beauty" from the Chinese character but rather exhibits infinite openness and pluralism. Traditional Chinese Confucianism, for example, is characterised by its "reverence for humanity" (*Shangwen*), which defines it as receptive to all natural and human beauty, including sensual pleasures. Still, it is also vigilant against the abuse of beauty, believing that "too much is as bad as too little." This denotes the pursuit of harmony between sensuality and rationality; beauty and goodness are their actual destination. This is what Confucianism calls "the beauty of Moderation (*Zhongyong*)", or "the beauty is in harmony." At the same time, for Confucianism, beauty must appeal to sensual forms, but sensuality is not the boundary of beauty; instead, any sensual object should shape the hints of a more profound spiritual realm and present meaning. Confucianism, for example, speaks of "Objects [that] are used to hold and express rites", emphasising that it is in seemingly unremarkable objects (rites objects) that the world order is contained. In this respect, Taoism goes even further. For example, Laozi's assertion that "All things under heaven have been born from being, and being is derived from nothing" may seem like an inability to escape from a sensual understanding of the world. Still, he also builds a pathway to infinity for one's aesthetic feelings. The infinitude and infinity of this "nothing" represent the highest goal of beauty. Therefore, while the visually constructed images, in reality, are beautiful, true beauty is the transcendence of the image, i.e., "the great image is invisible." In contrast, the five flavours (*Wuwei*) that the sense of gustation can perceive in reality, are beauty; true beauty points to tastelessness, i.e., "No taste is the best flavour." Thus, the so-called sensual beauty is always a means or medium, leading to the supra-perceptual, supra-linguistic side of the world, which Lao Zi called "the Subtle (*Miao*)." In later times, Zen Buddhism, a product of the Chinese influence in Buddhism, speaks of "being amid appearances (*Xiang*) but detaching from appearances"

and “dharma is the raft that crosses the river, but does not obsess about the dharma,” also considering all sensible and tangible appearances as a means of comprehending the emptiness of the world’s nature. In this respect, although Chinese aesthetics is based on the idea of the image (Xiang), its understanding of beauty is transcendent, using the finite object of presence to present the infinite realm of absence. Of course, this empowerment makes all the sensual things in the world eternally meaningful, making the aesthetic activity a spiritual journey that appeals to and transcends sensuality.

Beauty

European perspective

Umberto Eco, Alain le Pichon

The present document results from the recording of a debate on the various representations of beauty according to cultures. The debate focused on Umberto Eco and was organised in November 2008 by Transcultura at its headquarters located at Lycée Louis Le Grand. Umberto Eco’s presentation referred to his masterful book: *History of Beauty*. He was followed by Zhao Tingyang for Chinese culture, Balveer Arora for India, Moussa Sow for Mali and Jesus Garcia Ruiz for Latin America. This is the transcript of Umberto Eco’s intervention in French, translated into English:

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No concept of civilisation is equal to another or can be translated with the same term. If we say pauvre, “poor” in French, we do not mean the same thing in Chinese and sometimes we may translate by way of mathematical concepts, such as multiplication or subtraction. I am not sure. Not even the concept of gods which, of course, can change. Or the concept of love. Or whatever you want. We have been going on for a long time trying to make comparisons, overlapping, superimposing... That is to say, we have not been looking for identities, but for equations like that, where there are elements in common but also other elements. If I had a blackboard, I would have made two intersecting circles... For example, Zhao Tingyang, who is not here, sent half a page of what he would have said. And at a certain point, he seems to be saying something that I too would say: in ancient China as in Greece or the Middle Ages, there was no difference between the good and the beautiful. But right afterwards, Zhao gives a definition of beauty which is not Western. Indeed, in Western civilisation, we thought about the similarity between the good and the beautiful until the end of the Middle Ages, perhaps the Renaissance. After that, we stopped. The one who kept thinking about it was Victor Cousin, and that is why we gave his name to the little street next to here... So it’s very interesting to experiment

like this tonight and to confront those experiments... It's a problem that I experienced recently because I wrote a history of beauty and a history of ugliness, and I was compelled to talk about Western notions only, which gave me the impression of a certain ethnocentrism. But I tried to explain that we never know what that word means in another civilisations...



Venus of Willendorf; c. 26,000 BC (the Gravettian period); limestone with ocre coloring. Naturhistorisches Museum (Vienna, Austria). © MatthiasKabel.

Please observe this lady: obviously, when she was sculpted in a somewhat ancient era, she represented absolute beauty, evidently identified with a certain idea of fecundity, with the ability to have babies and to feed them. Obviously, very few of the gentlemen present here would go out to dinner with this lady, let alone spend the rest of the night with her... So you can see that, even within our Western culture, notions of beauty can change.



African mask with two faces. © Roman Bonnefoy.

We do not know here if an African mask of this kind, through the action which it had produced, brings about - or brought about - a sacred terror, or if it conveyed a sense of peace or hilarity. We have no way of knowing. And maybe even Africans no longer know that today either. I remember that when we were in Mali, we were taken to a museum of Malian culture. And there were two kinds of very, very realistic statues of women in classical clothing: one was very thin, very much like Naomi Campbell, and the other one was a woman of a certain frame. And the African anthropologist who was showing us around smiled at us and said: "You see, the thin one, we displayed it for you Europeans. Because to us, the beauty is the other one." But he said that with a smile! That is to say, he was already, if you will, corrupted by the contact between two cultures, he already had a vast knowledge of Western art and history. He even knew that the other one was very beautiful, and maybe in his heart he preferred the one who looked like Naomi Campbell, or the other one...



Screenshot of Rita Hayworth as Gilda in the trailer for the film Gilda. © Columbia Pictures, 1946.

But you can see how, even within the same culture, there can be disparities, differences between two conceptions of beauty. Imagine yourself between two different cultures... Furthermore, imagine someone who has just arrived and who has never visited Western culture: he could not imagine the feeling of pity, of affection, perhaps of serenity, of a wounded, scourged, bruised Christ, such as this one can create in the soul of a Christian.



Christ the Cross, de Goya, 1780.
Museo del Prado.

That person might think that on the contrary, it is a representation of something that, for us, would be a horror movie, something gory. And even when we talk about civilisations that we think we know very well, great cultures like the Indian one or the Chinese one, even if we are familiar with many images from those civilisations, we always find ourselves embarrassed when it comes to the association of our own concepts with what we see. During a trip to India, one of my interventions concerned a central concept of Indian aesthetics that is called the *raja*. And because I had read a lot about the history of *raja* aesthetics, I knew that in Western languages, it is translated into “taste”, the equivalent of *goût* in French, of *gusto* in Italian. I did a one-hour-long analysis to demonstrate that there was nothing in common between our conception of taste and the Indian conception of *raja*. I say that the same contradiction is found within our very culture. If you have ever been interested in the history of aesthetics, in the conception of beauty, you have found that one of the almost universal characteristics of beauty in all philosophies is proportion. The light, the proportion. What is beautiful is in proportion. Now, tell me if your notion of proportion corresponds to this... To this?

Here is a medieval picture of a well-proportioned man... Here is another picture of a well-proportioned man... There we step into the Renaissance and we see another conception, a mathematical and geometric conception of proportion... This is a Leonardo da Vinci – not Dan Brown’s da Vinci... And this is a German or Flemish virgin... This is an Italian spring... A Venus by Titian...

Tell me which work you think represents the model of proportion? Obviously, each of these women with different proportions represent models.

of a well-proportioned body for her age. For her age... If we had moved on to Rubens’ women, once again, there would have been the problem of choosing which one to take to dinner, one of Rubens’ women or the stone woman that we saw earlier? Because if you have to live extraordinary adventures, you might as well try everything. So considering proportion, a medieval philosopher thinks of a Gothic cathedral, whereas a Renaissance theorist thinks of a 16th century temple, the parts of which are governed by the golden ratio. The Renaissance aesthetics considered the proportions of cathedrals barbaric, precisely Gothic. The concepts of beauty and ugliness are related to historical periods and cultures. And to quote Xenophanes, in his pre-Socratic era: “If oxen and horses and lions had hands and could paint with their hands and produce works like men, horses would paint their gods as horses, oxen would paint theirs as oxen, in short, as images similar to the animals of their species. And in the Middle Ages, Jacques de Vitry, praising the beauty of the entire divine creation, admitted that the Cyclops with his one eye would probably be surprised at those who have two, just as we marvel at three-eyed creatures. We consider black Ethiopians beautiful, but they say among each other that the blackest is considered the most beautiful. And centuries later, Voltaire said: “Ask a he-toad what beauty is, supreme beauty, the *to kalon*. He will answer that it is his she-toad with her two big round eyes coming out of her little head, a wide, flat mouth, a yellow belly, a brown back. Ask a coloured person from Guinea: beauty for him is black, oily skin, sunken eyes, a flat nose. Ask the devil, he will tell you that beauty is a pair of horns, four claws and a tail.” And I wonder what the notion of beauty is for dogs... Take the one who was elected two years ago by us human beings the ugliest dog in the world: I wonder if, with a jury of female dogs, he would instead have received the title of “Mister Dog” or something like that. I said that in the past, we identified the good with the beautiful. You are in high school, so you know that for the Greeks, the height of virtue was the *kalos kagatos*: beautiful and good.

And I told you that in traditional China there was the same idea. I believe that we should not give too much importance to this identification which only means that we consider beauty to be a positive thing. Obviously, it seems that what everyone calls “beautiful”, even if it’s the she-toad for the he-toad, is something that gives pleasure: the beautiful is therefore identified with the good. And that is something very good. That is to say, the philosophical conception is so vast and general that it means nothing. At certain times, one could say that what happened in the Middle Ages with the dispute around transcendence, around being beautiful, around the soul, of the similarity between the good and the beautiful sometimes supported a moralist notion, a morality of art...

But that wasn't so important because we found a series of shortcuts. The first is that there is quite a philosophical value which is that we call "good" what we like, but also what we would like to possess. Good things are endless: shared love, honest wealth, well-prepared meals... And in all these cases, we want to have this "good", even if it is what we call "moral good", heroic acts. It is not that we would like to die a hero, but we would like to have done the same acts as a hero and preferably without dying. In any case, we would be very, very happy about that. That is, as far as being good is what stimulates our desire, our desire in the most general and purest sense of the word. Now conversely, in all philosophical definitions, not only the modern ones, but also those from Antiquity, when we speak of beauty, we refer to something that we admire regardless of the fact that we possess it. A cake in the window of a baker's is good insofar as we would like to eat it. It is beautiful insofar as even in case of very high blood sugar, which prevents us from eating cakes, we still admire it for its beautiful shape, its colors. In the Middle Ages, they said, *bonum respigit appetitum*, which concerns desire. *Vulcum respigit vim cognositim*: it is only a fact of knowledge, of detachment, and that was said a few centuries before Kant and his ideas on beauty. The second shortcut is that art can very well represent the ugly. And all philosophers said that the devil is evidently ugly. It is obvious that infernal creatures are ugly. But when they are well represented, their representations become beautiful. And so, they also become good, even if it is a representation of evil. Another shortcut is that the whole universe is beautiful, because it is the work of God, and because in the harmony of the universe, even what we consider ugly contributes to the general beauty. Thus, shadows and chiaroscuro can contribute to the beauty of a painting. So, if in a painting only the dark world is isolated, it can be seen, but looking at the whole painting, we understand that everything plays its role. So even monsters, in the harmony of the universe, though maybe horrible at first sight, are beautiful as elements of the universal concert. Finally, there is another phenomenon that shows that the close relationship between beauty and art as established by the modern era is not as obvious as one might think. In Greek civilisation as well as in medieval civilisation, and also in part of the Renaissance, art did not have so much to do with beauty. Art was a way of producing a lot of things that worked well. So there was the shipbuilder's art, the painter's art, the architect's art, paper art, the surgeon's art, and so on. Beauty, the fusion of the beauty of nature, natural beauty, the beauty of a landscape, in the modern world, is almost toppled: beauty was ushered into the domain of art with idealistic aesthetics, with the idea that there is beauty in art only, that there is no beauty in nature, that there is no such thing as the beauty of nature. I wonder

if in other civilisations this radical toppling occurred as it did in ours. It is no coincidence that it was only at some point that we began to speak of "fine arts".

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The concept of beauty, along with the concept of the image, has been at the heart of Transcultura's thinking since its creation. In 2000, at the turn of the third millennium, Transcultura had a meeting at the invitation of Professor Moussa Sow and the Institute of Human Sciences of Mali, in Timbuktu. Umberto Eco had long dreamed of this mythical place in the imaginary map of the discovery of the world. It appeared in the record of the fabulous journeys he described in his cross-cultural analyses of the travels of Marco Polo or the legendary story of Prester John.

The Timbuktu seminar on the semantics of reciprocal representations of the Other was held in the famous Library of Timbuktu, shortly before it was destroyed by Al Aqmi along with the secular tombs, remains and monuments of the city, and was a turning point in the Dictionary of Misunderstandings project and in the history of Transcultura.

Then and there we wanted, and so did Umberto Eco, to settle on the "Discourse on the method" or methodology of this Encyclopedia of key words, at the heart of Transcultura's research. It was then decided with Umberto and lexicologist Alain Rey to launch the project of the Dictionary of Misunderstandings by bringing together the partners of the project more widely in a first stage, according to a triangular configuration made of Africa, Asia, and Europe. This proposal materialised the following year with the organisation in the European Parliament of the Convention of Reciprocal Knowledge.

However, during the concluding debate of the seminar that we held in Mopti, it appeared that the question of the image was the crux of the matter and that in its theoretical scope, the project should include it, and could be formulated as an Encyclopaedia of key words, concepts, and images.

A particular session in Timbuktu was dedicated to the concept of beauty. Transcultura in China was represented by anthropologist Wang Mingming, as Zhao Tinyang had had to stay in Paris for lack of a Malian visa. Philosopher François Julien dealt with the concept of beauty in Chinese thought. Pointing out that the representation of the naked body, fundamental in Western art, was absent from Chinese art, he posed the question of the meaning of this absence, which he linked to the

philosophical question of its conceptualisation, as he thought that nudity was the essence of the concept. After the seminar, as we admired the beauty of the River Niger in Mopti, Wang Mingming observed, ironically, that following that hypothesis, it was difficult for a Chinese person to take part in a debate on beauty.

Another particularly significant moment of this meeting in Mali was our visit to the National Art Museum of Mali. The Malian curator who commented on the visit lingered for a long time in front of two female figurines which, he told us, were supposed to represent the ideal of traditional African beauty for one, and beauty according to more contemporary criteria for the other. Those are the two figurines that Umberto Eco mentions in his speech, and that we could not, unfortunately, find pictures for.

Zhao Tingyang, however, taking up the challenge contained in Wang Mingming's ironic remark, came to take part in the debate on the concept of Beauty in November 2008. He thus started, with Umberto Eco, to put things into perspective, which eventually led to the current *Dictionary of Misunderstandings* project.

The great breadth of both Umberto Eco's intervention and the Chinese perspective shows the importance of this confrontation, of this meeting. It also shows how much the question of image is at the heart of our debate and deserves to be taken into account in its future development.

美 Měi

Beauty

Final remarks

LIU Chengji, Alain le Pichon

LIU Chengji

1.

In the West, since Baumgarten referred to the Meixue as Aesthetic and regarded it as a low-level epistemology, the discipline has struggled to get a positive assessment in philosophy. Ironically, the field has been prominent in East Asia, particularly in China and Japan. While this is undoubtedly related to the inclination of Chinese or Eastern philosophical thinking towards sensuality, it also calls into question whether Western philosophy's metaphysical tradition can provide a truthful elucidation of the universe. If this elucidation is invalid, then the aesthetic is the intellectual situation that man has to embrace.

2.

The diffusion of Western academic discourse in China since the modern era has caused Chinese scholars to narrate China's modernity in Western terms and re-establish China's history. This current transformation of academic discourse has squeezed "Chinese Aesthetics" into a historical concept and made the relevant research an effort to find the chapter and verse in Chinese history according to the modern disciplinary paradigm. In this context, the question of how to remain faithful to the history of "Chinese Aesthetics" while finding a commonality of aesthetic experience cross-culturally has become a question worth pondering. At the conceptual scale, the belief in common humanity and a common sensorium can undoubtedly overcome this barrier between the East and the West. However, in practice, there is still a reasonably long journey.

Alain le Pichon

I have no doubt that Umberto Eco would have reacted positively and with great interest to Professor Liu Chengji's closing remarks. Without pretending to make him speak, I think I can testify, on the basis of the experience of thirty years of collegiality and meetings within Transcultural

and of his numerous interventions in our transscultural debates, to the fact that he would have undoubtedly agreed with, and I believe endorsed, Prof. Liu's two proposals.

I would like to remind you first of all that Umberto Eco's philosophical work is based on his great thesis on the aesthetics of Thomas Daquin. His philosophical work is therefore based on aesthetics and on the immense semantic and epistemological critical work that he carried out on the categories of the beauty in medieval thought.

I have no doubt that he would have accepted the challenge of envisaging a refoundation of philosophy taking into account alternative, even contradictory, positions to those of Western metaphysics, based on the proposals of Chinese aesthetics, he who wrote in his preface to the republication of his thesis on the aesthetics of Thomas Daquin "to identify the contradictions of the systems does not represent a defeat, but rather a victory, for those who believe in the philosophical activity as something that is continuously remade".

It is for this reason, for this openness to alternative systems of thought, to the discovery of different semantic, philosophical and epistemological categories, that we have, together, created Transcultura. The Professor's proposal could not but delight him, and the references and gustatory criteria inherent in Chinese aesthetics could not but seduce the gourmet, gastronome and passionate oenologist, attached to the good things in life, that he was...

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Body	身
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Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Body

身

Shēn

SUN Xiangchen

Didier Sicard

身

Shēn

Chinese perspective

SUN Xiangchen

The Chinese character Shen (身) refers to the whole body of a person, and scholars also pointed out that the shape of Shen is like a person being pregnant. In the Book of Songs (11th century BCE – 6th century BCE), it is said that “Tai Ren is pregnant (Shen),” and here the body refers to the pregnancy. The first Chinese dictionary Erya (3rd century BCE), also uses “body” to explain the “self” or “personal”. For these meanings, you could refer to the explanation of Ji. In Chinese Buddhism, “body” (Shen) also means “one generation” in the reincarnation. Another Chinese character related to the body is Ti (体). Ti is often used together with the word Shen in modern Chinese to mean human body; Ti means “body” and its extended meaning is “material object”. In addition, it is also used as a verb, meaning “to act, to observe, and to experience personally”. When emphasising the use of one’s own body to perceive or to experience, the word Ti is often used to gain experience through one’s personal practice.

“Body” (Shen) is an important concept in Chinese cultural tradition, no less than the concept of heart (Xin). First of all, as far as the origin of the body is concerned, Chinese cultural tradition does not regard the body as an independent individual body, but emphasises that the body is given by your parents. Confucius said: “The human body, as well as every hair and every piece of skin, are given by parents, and you should carefully protect it and not dare to even slightly hurt it. This is the beginning of the practice of filial piety.” In Chinese cultural tradition, the most important virtue is filial piety, which reflects this connection between generations. The Chinese character “filial piety” (孝) is composed of two parts, the words “old” and “son”, and the “body” precisely embodies this connection. Therefore, among the many objects which the gentleman should respect, respect for one’s own body is the most fundamental. Confucius said: “A gentleman always respects himself, but it is especially important to respect himself (Shen), because oneself (Shen) is the key to inheriting the past and linking the future, and one’s own

body is the branch and leaf of one’s parents. Can it be disrespectful? Even if the root is damaged, the root is shoveled out, the branches and leaves will die along with it.” Obviously, the body is the pivot of various relationships.

Secondly, it is emphasised that the body is made of Qi (air). Before a person is born, this Qi is accumulated in the parents, which is the innate Qi. After a person is born, this Qi is transformed into one’s own body, which is the acquired Qi. From this perspective, the understanding of the human body is linked with the creation of all things in the universe. According to Chinese traditional philosophy, all things are generated by Qi, and Qi also constitutes the human body. According to Guanzi Neiye (475 BCE – 221 BCE): “The essence of Qi exists in the heart, and people grow naturally. When it is expressed outside, the human body has a calm demeanor and bright colours. When it is hidden inside, it is an inexhaustible source. It is vast and peaceful, forming the source of Qi. If the source is not exhausted, the limbs will be strong; if the source is not blocked, the nine orifices will be accessible.” The constant source of Qi supports the life of the body. At the same time, the flow of Qi in the body can also reach the appearance of the body, so it can be diagnosed by “looking, smelling, asking, and feeling”. Traditional Chinese medicine nurses one’s health and treats disease based on Qi.

Thirdly, in the Chinese cultural tradition, the body and mind are not separated, emphasising the unity of body and mind. The body is not my property, I am my body, but there is a difference between inside and outside. The Doctrine of the Mean (3rd Century BCE) says “sincere inside, and express it outside”. Philosopher Wang Yangming (1472 – 1529) during the Ming Dynasty also emphasised the unity of body and mind. “Whatever one can perceive is his heart, such as eyes can see and ears can hear, such as hands and feet know pain, the perception of the body is just the heart.” Wang Yangming used the bodily sense of human body to explain the mind, it means that the body and mind are not separated, the mind flows freely through the limbs of the body, and the embodied knowing is the mind. Related to the unity of body and mind, the cognitive function of body is highlighted in Chinese cultural tradition. In Chinese, there are a series of characters with Ti, which is the sum of the twelve parts of the body, such as knowledge, perception, taste, and recognition, experience, etc. These are beyond the pure mind, and the way to obtain knowledge by personal experience, as embodied knowledge is not just personal feeling, but the publicity of knowledge.

Fourth, many of Confucius' manners and behaviours are recorded in *The Analects*, because in the Confucian tradition, the body is disciplined through ritual propriety (Li), and this bodily discipline is also a moral exercise. At the same time, Confucianism emphasises "setting an example by yourself", taking the body as a yardstick, and practicing a kind of "influencing others by one's deeds", thus showing Confucius' manners in speech, clothing, eating, housing, and behaviour, and the body embodies a humanistic cultivation here. For the ruler, Confucius said: "If one's behaviour is correct, things can be carried out without issuing orders; if one is not correct, even if one issues orders, the people will not obey." "Body" here refers to a kind of behaviour. Due to the characteristics of the body in the Chinese context, its cultivation has a strong moral connotation in Chinese cultural traditions. In the saying: "Cultivating the self, regulating the family, governing the state, then leading the world to peace", self-cultivation is the starting point. Because body and mind are the same, self-cultivation can improve one's moral cultivation and realm. Self-cultivation directly leads to the *Kung Fu* theory in Song and Ming Confucianism. In addition to the moral and political meaning of the body, the body also has divine meaning. Spirit (Jing 精) is the essence of Qi. Traditionally, Jing is always used to express that the human body is the essence of the spiritual energy of heaven and earth, especially in Song and Ming Confucianism, which emphasises that Benevolence is absolutely the heart between heaven and earth. "Body" is not to be free from the world, but to live freely between heaven and earth.

Fifth, Taoism's attitude towards the body is different from that of Confucianism. The first emphasises the need to "cherish your body", and then you can be safe. The Thirteenth Chapter of Lao Tzu says: What does it mean to pay attention to the body as much as to serious illness? The reason why I am in great trouble is because I have this body. If I do not have this body, what kind of serious illness will I have? Therefore, if one can take care of the world with an attitude of "cherishing one's body", the world can be entrusted to one; only if one can take care of the world with an attitude of cherishing the body can the world be entrusted to one. The second is to oppose the shackles of various rituals on the body, emphasising the naturalness of the body. The human body was originally integral, and then the body and mind were separated. When the seven orifices (sensory organ) were separated, although the hearing and seeing became clear, what was waiting was death. Zhuangzi's body should be free from various socialised disciplines and be in a state of freedom.

In Western philosophy, the understanding of the body has always been related to the soul. Since Plato's Idea world is recognised by the intellectual eye, and the sensible world is recognised by the bodily perception, so as for the problem of mind and body, the body has always been in a weak position. For Aristotle, mind and body are the relationship between form and matter. In Descartes' philosophy, thinking is the starting point. Thinking is the only essence of I, while the body belongs to the material world, which only appears until the sixth meditation, and does not belong to the essence of I. The structure of Descartes's Meditation constitutes a very prominent question of "body and mind" in modern philosophy. How do body and mind interact? Is the mind just living in the body? Descartes believed that I not only live in my body, as the shipman is to the ship, but I have a much closer relationship with the body. But in any case, such a body is always objective and passive; the relationship with the mind is the relationship between the promoter and the driven, the relationship between the active agent and the tool, and Descartes even used clocks to analogise the body.

Heidegger criticised the Cartesian concept of mind and body. He believed that cognition is not a kind of cognition that the mind stands by. Dasein first is being-in-the-world, man has an internal relationship with the world, and objects in the world are not only the objects of theoretical contemplation, also something that is at hand and ready. In the process of dealing or practicing, the concept of body emerges. Merleau-Ponty emphasised in his *Phenomenology of Perception* that we are thrown into the world as a physical being, existing and participating in all the activities around us in a physical way. Therefore, the body as the subject is of extreme importance, it is the foothold from which we intervene in the world and see the object in the world, and it is also the place where the spirit can have a certain physical and historical situation. At the same time, the world depends on our bodies to be understood. The modern Western philosophical understanding of "embodiment" echoes the Chinese cultural tradition's understanding of "body".

Body

European perspective

Didier Sicard

In the West, the body is not the image of the world. There has been no cosmology on the body since the Middle Ages, and the body has since been more the object of its incarnated reality than of its relation to the Cosmos. Leonardo da Vinci admired its architecture as the most perfect of natural representations. Its dissection, long forbidden by the Church, shed light on the mystery of its workings, considered taboo for a long time. Gradually, the body-spirit duality as described by Descartes was reduced to the singularity of the body itself. Even if this singularity became a double conception of the body, the *Körper*, where the organs sit, and the *Leib*, signifying the feeling of the body. Or another conception is that of *Zoe*, the biological body and *Bios*, the social relational body. The body is therefore far from having a homogenous conception. A body that is an organic subject is at the same time an intentional body subject, which is a source of ambivalence about the body as subject (*Leib*, *Bios*) and the body as object (*Körper*, *Zoe*). I am my body, I have a body.

The body is thus a set of organs that can be seen by the subject as “oneself as another”. Surrogate mothers embody the strictly biological objectivity of the body. Neuro-scientific research attempts to objectify the functioning of neurons and assimilate them with computers. Amongst the different parts of the body, the hand prevails over the foot. The hand is noble, the foot, trivial. The sexual dimension of the body is simultaneously exalted and exploited for commercial gains.

This anatomical, biological body is further and further transformed in the 21st century into an image body (body-building, tattoos as a sign of uniqueness and individuality), an eroticised body (the fight against ageing, cosmetic surgery), a modified body (change of secondary sexual characteristics, transsexualism), a thinned body (voluntary eating disorders), a weighed down body (Sumo, movie actors), or an exalted body, with a modified psyche (drug addiction), a body protected from the violence from others (the “me too” movement), a besieged body (rape of

women during wars), taking care of the body (jogging, tai shi), or a battered body (scarifications).

These modifications express a real cult of the body. This cult is probably at the origin of post-mortem cremations, because a corpse is no longer bearable. Only the dynamic, living body is acceptable. This is why medical autopsies have almost disappeared, except when medically or legally required. It also explains the rejection of the deformed body, even if Western societies have made considerable efforts to integrate people with disabilities.

There is a paradox here in the evolution of medicine. The body remains an object of study, but only through various scans or MRIs, through various data or biological stigmas. The clinical examination of the body has disappeared — the doctor no longer touches the body. Patients have more confidence in ultrasounds than the doctor’s hand.

This polarisation of the body has justified increased attention to its legal status, with differences in the West between the marketable body (sale of organs, surrogacy) and the untouchable body (non-marketable, but potentially available for others, through for example the voluntary donation of organs, blood or marrow).

The relationship to the embryo has gradually changed. Abortion outside Poland and Malta is allowed up to 14 weeks, slightly more in the UK. The embryo can be the object of research until its third week, but it cannot be modified to be re-implanted. This materialism of the body justifies the wearing of more and more sophisticated clothes to increase its beauty, but little by little since the dawn of the 21st century, it is the body itself, sometimes bare, which prevails over clothing, which is gradually losing its essential quality of representation, and giving way to comfort, without expensive display, looking as a uniform (blue jeans).

Finally, religion has fewer and less grip on the body, except in some cases where the dressed body testifies to religious commitment.

身 Shēn

Body

Final remarks

SUN Xiangchen, Didier Sicard

There are some fundamental differences between the two cultures. The European body has no relationship with that of its parents apart from physical similarities. The human body participates in human dignity and its respect is imperative, but European culture allows every bodily change. In traditional Chinese culture, the respect for your own body comes from the respect for your parents. Although the concepts of Qi and Li are untranslatable, they still reveal some interesting information. Because of Qi (air), the separation of body and mind is replaced by the difference between “body” as organic and material, and “body” as relative and relational. And because of Li (ritual), the self-cultivation of the body is highlighted.

The self-cultivation of the body is relevant in both cultures. Cultural changes in the body go beyond division. A young Chinese person seems to have less differences with a young European one than an old Chinese with an old European. Young people in contemporary society have an increasingly common body culture.

But there are still some fundamental differences. There are different ideas about the culture of privacy in different countries. For example, permissive nudity in Europe is almost banned in China, there is no nudity culture in Chinese history. Face recognition by cameras is largely authorised in China, while European citizens are protected by law from any video recording without informed consent.

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Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
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Contract

约

Yuē

ZHU Andong
Jean-Luc Mathon

约

Yuē

Chinese perspective

ZHU Andong

Yue (约) is a polysemy in Chinese, and more than 20 meanings are listed in the Chinese Dictionary. According to *Shuowen Jiezi*, the original meaning of Yue is rope and entanglement. Later, its meaning is extended to restraint and restriction. For example, *Zhuangzi Pianmu* reads “restraint without rope”. Later, it gradually evolved into the meaning of an agreement similar to a contract in the West, that is, the conditions agreed jointly in oral or writing form. For example, Han Dynasty Emperor Gao-di reads, “at the beginning of the year, the King Huai made an agreement with all generals that the first to enter *Guangzhong* will be the King.” It can be seen that in Chinese, the meaning of Yue evolved from object (rope) to action and state (entanglement) between people and objects, and then evolved further to the relationship (agreement) between people (or individual and organisation, organisation and organisation).

From its form, Yue can be written and unwritten. Generally speaking, written Yue is often more formal. From the perspective of different participants, Yue can be established between or among persons, between or among persons and organisations, and between or among organisations and organisations. It is conceivable that the proportion of unwritten agreements between or among persons will be higher than other cases, but it is also common between individuals and organisations and between organisations. For example, two companies agree to negotiate something at a certain time and place. If the dimension of nation-state is added, Yue can be categorised into domestic and transnational.

The content, negotiation process and implementation of a Yue is always under a certain social, cultural and institutional environment, which requires the self-discipline of participants, soft constraints of customs and social norms, and the mandatory constraints of the rule of law system. In Chinese philosophy and culture, Yue is not based on the abstract public will, independent of the existence of the people, but relies more on the cooperation between or among the participants, as

well as people’s constraints on their own morality, so as to achieve social stability and harmony. For example, Chinese Confucianism emphasises people’s conservation of self-morality and true heart, and the inspection and restraint of words and deeds, rather than focusing on facsimile theory or metaphysics and does not emphasise a super God as in the Catholic philosophy. Yan Hui once asked Confucius how to achieve “benevolence.” Confucius replied: “self-restraint and return to rites are benevolence. One day, the world belongs to benevolence. It’s up to others to be benevolent.” (*Analects of Confucius Yan Yuan*). Neo-Confucianism emphasises life *Kung Fu* and that one should always restrict and inspect oneself and follow the principle of heaven. The principle of heaven here is not an abstract concept, but more about daily use. Compared with the emphasis on contract and legal power in western political thought such as the social contract theory, the Chinese language emphasises individual cultivation, and the establishment and implementation of Yue is more based on individual moral constraints.

In addition to individual moral constraints, rites, that is, social norms, also have an important impact on the content, negotiation process and implementation of Yue. Whether in the form or content, a Yue that is not in conformity with rites should not be concluded, nor should it be implemented, and violations should not be punished, but encouraged. On the contrary, the act of establishing a Yue that is not following rites should itself be punished.

In Chinese culture, the punishment related to Yue can come from “heaven” (or God), from social norms, or from law (written or unwritten). The latter is a coercive force imposed by society or the state.

God in ancient Chinese prose is also different from the God in the West. It is more metaphorical in nature. In essence, it is a popular natural cosmology dominated by reason and Qi. Therefore, for Chinese people, it is difficult to be linked with the rights given by God, and the impersonal passivity in classical times is even more difficult to understand.

In the West, the basis of a contract is an oath, that is, a given right. Rousseau’s famous book on the social contract says: “Since everyone gives himself to the whole, he does not give himself to anyone; and since from any combination, people can get the same rights they have transferred to others, so people get the equivalent of everything they have lost and greater power to preserve what they have,” which means that as long as the protection given by the community to the individual according to the contract is stronger than that of the individual in the natural state,

the initial agreement, namely the contract, is established. Rousseau also mentioned: “Whenever people think they see that sovereignty is separate, they will make mistakes; and those powers that are considered to be all parts of sovereignty are only subordinate to sovereignty and must always be premised on the supreme will, and those powers are only the implementation of the supreme will.” “It can be seen that the general will is always just and always based on the public interest; however, it cannot be inferred that the people’s consideration will always be correct in the same way. People always want to be happy, but people can’t always see happiness clearly. People will never be corrupted, but people are often deceived, and only at this time can people seem to be willing to be happy.” “In order to find the best social rules suitable for all nationalities, we need the highest wisdom that can propagate into all human feelings without being dominated by any feelings; it has nothing to do with our human nature, but it can understand the depths of human nature; although its own happiness has nothing to do with us, it is willing to care for our happiness; finally, in the current world, in the course of time, it takes into account the long-term glory of working in this century and enjoying in the next century. It simply needs gods to make laws for mankind.” Rousseau’s understanding of rights and contracts can be seen in the above paragraphs. In Rousseau’s theory, sovereignty can neither be transferred nor separated; law is the embodiment of public will, obeying the law is obeying the people’s own will, and Rousseau especially emphasises that social contracts are “given”.

According to western thinking, in real society, the persistent tension between private orders and government regulation exists in almost every field known by law.

Therefore, we have to think about whether the “contract” based on legal power is absolutely feasible. Yue provided in ancient Chinese books are about themselves, emphasising social morality more than simple legal power and contract.

Contract

European perspective

Jean-Luc Mathon

The word “contract” comes from the legal Latin term *contractus*, meaning “convention, pact, agreement”, which is derived from *contrahere*, “to make a commitment”, and indicates the agreement of two or more objectives in order to create an obligation. It is often accompanied by an adjective or a supplement which serve to specify the nature of the contract (such as the “marriage contract” in 1672). “To knock on the contract” is a French expression which entered dictionaries in 1877.¹

Subject matter

The concept of “contract” in the broadest sense includes private contracts, public contracts, statutes, partners’ pacts, collective agreements between social partners, treaties, and international conventions.

What they all have in common is that they are the result of a negotiation, at the very least of acquiescence, expressing the consent of the parties to a common objective. Edicts, constitutional charters, and laws can also be considered contracts within the sense of a “social contract” by which the people accept rules guaranteeing their security (Jean-Jacques Rousseau was inspired by the Republic of Venice when he was secretary to the French ambassador in Venice in 1743-1744).

Contracts are understood differently in different cultural places. In each state, the contract is governed by a specific legal system with its own legal rules governing its formation and its performance.

Law functions as a language with its interlocutors believing that they are saying or writing the same thing by agreeing on supposed common definitions, when these definitions actually conceal ambiguities and misunderstandings.

1. Alain Rey, Historical dictionary of the French language, Editions Le Robert.

For Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “misunderstanding is the normal form of exchange because intentions cannot be read even in your own words.”²

In the French context

Within the purview of historical sources (1), the contract presupposes a common intention (2) having binding force (3).

1. Historical sources

The terms contract (*contractus*), convention (*conventio*), which are synonymous in European legal systems, or treaty (*tractatus*), come from Roman law.

The law of the Republic, and thereafter the law of the Roman Empire, was the fruit of a millennial doctrinal evolution. It was composed of a set of concepts such as those of the contract (consent, interpretation, object, error) and very methodically structured categories according to a logical construction inspired by Greek philosophy: private law / public law; property rights / obligations law; real / personal law; real estate / movable property; authentic writing / private writing; rule / fairness, etc.

After the disappearance of the Empire, Roman law experienced a strong decline followed by a rebirth in the 11th century with the development of the University of Bologna and the rediscovery of the full text of the codification of Emperor Justinian (*The Digest*).

The structure of this written law would be widely adopted over the centuries in the Roman-Germanic countries. A European jurist has no difficulty in carrying out research in another family of Roman law in which he finds this scientific classification.

The unity of the family of Romano-Germanic rights – resulting from the reception of the scientific system of Roman law – allowed French law to become the law of Latin countries and a widespread model in the 19th century. France is known as the (*fa guo*) in Chinese language.

2. Common intention

In usual acceptance under the name of contract, one designates not only the convention, but the act which notes it. It is generally accepted that the word “contract” is used to designate not only the convention itself,

2. “The misunderstanding” in the *Essay on the Origin of Languages* by Rousseau, Jonathan Teschner, University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, CIRLEP EA 4299.

the agreement between the parties, but also the document in which this agreement is written down. A distinction is thus made between the contract and the document which contains proof thereof: a sale is the agreement of the parties for the transfer of an object or an asset and its price, and not the writing which is drawn up on this occasion. Contracts therefore have a form and a subject-matter. For Plato the form “orders the matter” and the contract expresses the consent and the common intention of the parties.³

In continental law, some contracts are only valid under certain formal conditions (in writing, having been signed with the words “read and approved”, having been signed before a notary, etc). The French Civil Code indicates that the sale of oil or wine is only valid after having been tasted (hence the humorous expression “drunk and approved”). Common intention can be illusory if the parties have different visions of the subject-matter or the objective of the contract. What is said or written may be different from what is intended.

In French, the word “more” can mean “more” or “no more”; “At the latest” can mean “even before” or “not before”, “attributed to” can mean that the object is not of the person to whom it is attributed, but can also mean that it can be. “Provenance” can designate the place where something is made but not the material it is made of.

In the French legal tradition, misunderstanding is an obstacle to the existence of the agreement: “It is not a contract, it is a misunderstanding” as goes the expression of the eminent jurist Planiol. But everything depends on the nature of the misunderstanding. The husband who discovers the impotence of his spouse, obtains the annulment of the marriage for defect of the consent, but error on the virginity of the wife does not justify it (in countries in which manners are not governed by law).

Many divorces were born out of a misunderstanding. But many marriages too... (Tristan Bernard).

3. Binding force

Contractus means what binds, tightens. In Roman law contracts must be respected “*pacta sunt servanda*” (for Umberto Eco, in his preface written for the French edition of the dictionary of Greek and Latin sentences by Renzo Tozi, “you have to be crazy to take a proverb literally”. While true, but this is an adage here).

3. Criton, initial theory of the social contract.

To return to law, the formula of the French Civil Code (known as the Napoleonic Code) of 1804 is thus extremely strong: “The legally formed conventions take the place of law for those who made them.”

In addition: “The conventions oblige not only to what is expressed there, but also to all the consequences that equity, custom or the law give to the obligation according to its nature”.

A freely expressed commitment must be rigorously respected, and classical interpretation has always disregarded fairness, considered as a residual consequence of the obligation, the application of which presents risks of arbitrariness. For French case law, no consideration of time or fairness allows the modification of the agreement of the parties. If a validly formed contract subsequently sees its economic equilibrium disturbed, the judge may not modify its terms. For Europeans, a contract is therefore set in stone and its timely performance is a categorical presupposition.

Practical advice

1. A mutual understanding is essential when drafting contractual documents.

It is customary to initially proceed to the signing of a memorandum of understanding with no contractual force, then to a preliminary contract stipulating the fulfilment of preliminary obligations, the successive good performance of which will be the guarantee of good faith of the parties.

The memorandum of understanding is essential to present the subject-matter of the contract as clearly and precisely as possible. Grotius, in his method of interpreting treaties (in *The Law of War and The Law of Peace*) saw in the search for the primitive aim of the treaty a decisive means for the most exact understanding of the intention of the parties.

The methodology consists of setting out in the contracts / documents, as a preamble, the history of the parties' activity and relationships as a preamble and defining very precisely:

- explicit and implicit objectives,
- definition of the terms of the contract,
- provisions regarding unforeseeable circumstances,
- the timetable and the binding force.

2. Mutual realism in terms of performance

Taking into account the economic transformations that can modify the balance of any contract, the French Civil Code of 2016 introduced a notable development with the concept of the unforeseen: “If a change of circumstances, unforeseeable at the formation of the contract, makes the performance excessively expensive for a party who had not accepted to assume the risk, the latter may request a renegotiation of the contract... the judge may, at the request of a party, revise the contract or terminate it.”

Favouring the possible application of these provisions therefore supposes anticipating the three conditions laid down in the contract:

- foreseeable changes in circumstances;
- the nature of the risk that the parties intend to assume or not, when the performance of the obligation becomes excessively onerous.
- admitting a logic of initial misunderstanding resulting from cultural particularisms to establish the basis of mutual trust, such is the stake.

约

Yuē

Contract

Final remarks

Jean-Luc Mathon

The concept of Yue provided in Chinese ancient books emphasises social morality over simple legal power and contract.

It appears that Confucian values are still alive in modern China.

Therefore, the risk of distortion exists between legal contract and Confucian or neo-Confucian principles. This means that moral considerations may interfere with the binding force of the contract.

It would be most interesting to collect examples of what kind of principles or situations can justify not performing the contract and to know what compensation is conceded.

Thus, it is necessary to research a mutual understanding on that question when drafting contractual documents.

It is essential to present the subject matter of the contract as clearly as possible and defining very precisely explicit and implicit objectives and the circumstances which could justify a breach of the contract.

This supposes to anticipate foreseeable changes in circumstances as well as economic transformations that can modify the balance of any contract.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Death

死

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WU Fei

Didier Sicard

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Chinese perspective

WU Fei

As the end of life, death is a universal and natural phenomenon; but as it annihilates enjoyments and meanings attached to life, death is assigned several cultural meanings and hence is understood very differently in different cultures. The understanding of death is an important key of philosophical tradition.

In Western tradition, *The Phaedo* by Plato is the first important philosophical text on death, in which death is defined as the separation of soul and body.¹ As the soul is understood as a spiritual substance more noble than the body, such a separation is also seen as a kind of release, and that is why Socrates regards the soul as immortal and death as good to the soul. When the idea in *The Phaedo* is adopted by Christianity, the immortality of the soul is confirmed as a religious doctrine, and death is literally seen as the release of the soul. In his *City of God*, Augustine finds death quite difficult to understand, since we could only grasp the time before death (that is, living) and that after death (that is, dead), there is no dying (in death).² This dilemma is quite similar to that of the present as discussed in *The Confessions*: the future is measurable, the past is measurable too, but the present is not. When we are saying “the present,” the present is already turned into the past. Only the present, however, is, while the future is not yet, and the past is no more. The authentic being is without length and hence could not be grasped.³ Death is ungraspable because it is length-less as well. But is not death more similar to non-being rather than being? Is not being more similar to living rather than death? This apparent paradox is quite important in Western philosophy. The present is, just as God is. God is forever present, without future or past. Human beings, however, are living within the flow of time, their real being is also present, but they cannot grasp the present, and hence

1. Plato, *Phaedo*, 67d4.

2. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 13.9.

3. Augustine, *Confessiones*, X.15(18)-16(21).

cannot grasp the real being, although he could not live without being. Created from nothing by God, their true being inclines to nothingness. Death signifies their existential situation as always inclining to nonexistence. Death is significant to human beings, also because death could make them face the nihilistic truth of their life and hence quest for the true meaning of being outside this mortal life.

This level of understanding is adopted by Martin Heidegger. Life toward death is Heidegger's famous proposition. When one realises that death is the unavoidable end of one's life, that might free one from the routine of everyday life and quest for the meaning of being.⁴ Death is close to being and it is important to human beings, not because death is good, but because death reveals the nihilistic existence of human beings. In Ingmar Bergman's classic movie, *The Seventh Seal*, Death is seen as representing God Himself. He always kills people mercilessly, he is the negation of everything in life, yet he knows nothing about God. All these, however, do not turn him to the Devil, but render him as a representation of God. Similar to Death, although usually seen as loving and merciful, God is always beyond everything in this mortal life. In order to become immortal spiritually, one has to confront death face-to-face and renounce the mortal life.

Plato, Augustine, and Heidegger are three milestones in Western intellectual history about death. All three see death as an unavoidable end of the mortal life, but none sees it as a bad thing in the absolute sense. Plato regards death as the release of the soul from the mortal and corporal life because he regards soul as a spiritual substance. Augustine discloses the nihilistic meaning of death, but also (perhaps unintentionally) shows the similarity between the present and death. As a modern philosopher, however, Heidegger would not believe in the spiritual or immortal being of the soul. What he asks one to pursue via death, is no more immortality in the traditional sense, but being in a quite philosophical sense. Except for some religious people, the modern do not believe in immortality in the literal sense anymore. But the dualism between mind and body as established by Descartes is still a philosophical proposition accepted by most Western philosophers. In this intellectual context, the Kantian idea of immortality is quite significant: when we focus on spiritual life without much attention on corporal life, the death of the latter has nothing to do with our thought, hence our thinking would seem to be eternal, and

4. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 52-53.

our spiritual life would be immortal.⁵ This is a typical idea of immortality for the modern. They might sacrifice their life for some noble idea, and hence attain immortality in a spiritual sense.

In Chinese intellectual history, however, death is understood in a quite different sense. Life is understood as a kind of cycle between yin and yang. Yang is the positive and dynamic force of life, while yin is the negative and cohesive force of life. Yin and yang do not represent good and bad, or mind and body, but life comes from the alternation and combination of them. When there is too much yang, one's life is flourishing but in fever; when there is too much yin, life is in rest and close to death. Yin and yang are well used in both medical and philosophical theories. The annual cycle of four seasons, as up-and-down of yin and yang, is the basic Chinese theory of time. Spring, as the beginning of yang, is seen as the first period of life cycle: birth and youth (生); summer, as the flourishing of yang, is seen as the second period of life-cycle: growth and maturity (长); autumn, as the beginning of yin, is seen as the third period of life-cycle: fruiting and harvest (收); winter, as the fullness of yin, is seen as the fourth period of life-cycle: rest and death (藏). The four seasons could be condensed into two general periods, that of yang (spring and summer) and that of yin (autumn and winter), as well as divided into twelve months (three for each season), to twenty-four solar terms (six each season, or two each month), and so on, corresponding to detailed combinations of yin and yang in *The Book of Change*.

A quite similar analogy between life and seasonal change is found in ancient Greek mythology, but it never fully developed while the Christian idea of time and history became the mainstream. Chinese philosophy, however, theorises it as a grand theoretical system of cosmology. While some types of creatures might really be born in spring and die in winter, most lives, especially human beings, would live through quite some years. Hence the annual circle does not really signify human beings' lifespan, but symbolises the movement of yin and yang in their lives. There is a balance between yin and yang in both spring and autumn, while yang is growing in spring, but decreasing in autumn. In mid-summer, yang dominates while yin comes into being. In mid-winter, yin dominates while yang also begins. Although winter is regarded as the season of yin and rest, it also signifies the most vibrant birth of yang, since it would begin from nothing. If yin dominates but yang would not

5. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B806-807.

begin, that means death, which would happen to everyone sooner or later.

Death is nothing but a natural end of life, both corporal and spiritual. We have no reason to claim immortality in a literal sense, and hence no way to complain of our mortality. Although an important belief of Taoism is that human beings could become immortal by proper cultivation, Confucianism does not buy this idea. According to the Confucian thought, the most important thing is to live a valuable life. Si-Ma Qian, the greatest historian in China, says, "Death is either weightier than Mount Tai or lighter than a goose feather." Since death is a part of life, what makes death different is the value of life.

People also pursue immortality, but not in the same sense as in the West. There is a very famous discussion of immortality in *Tso-Chuan*. A popular idea of immortality is the continuity of the family, but according to intellectuals, there are three kinds of noble immortality: by virtue, by work, or by word. The most noble type of immortality is by virtue, as done by ancient sage kings; the next is by work, as achieved by many distinguished figures; the last is by word, as done by authors of great books. None of these types of immortality is endless life in the literal sense. All four understandings of immortality (including the popular one, which is accepted by many people) rely largely on history, which is the very reason why history occupies such an important role in the Chinese intellectual system. For ordinary people who could not pursue immortality in history, it is still important to harmonise and continue the family, which is immortality in a popular sense.

There is a saying among Chinese people: "The value of a person is concluded when his coffin is closed." The moment of death is also the moment of judgement, because as far as one lives, he is subject to changes. Hence the funeral is very important for Chinese people. After the death of important people, such as emperors, high officials, or important intellectuals, they should be given posthumous names (谥号) as judgements of their lives. Even powerful people such as emperors could be given negative posthumous names, such as Zhou Liwang (周厉王), Zhou Youwang (周幽王), Han Lingdi (汉灵帝), and Sui Yangdi (隋炀帝). For ordinary people, the funeral of an aged and happy person is the moment both to mourn and to celebrate, and such a funeral is called a comedy funeral (喜丧). It is the moment to mourn, because the relatives have lost a beloved one; to celebrate, because the deceased have lived a good life. On the contrary, if someone dies very young or suffers a violent death, he would be afforded a very ignoble or at least simple funeral.

Above is a brief comparison of Western and Chinese ideas about death. Besides the idea of soul, a major difference comes from the understanding of life. For Western culture, profoundly influenced by Christianity, the mortal life is seen negatively, and hence the noblest cultural pursuit is for a better being than mortal life. Death is seen both as the result of sin and a chance to be released from mortality. In Chinese culture, however, life is seen as a natural process, and its end is also natural, though unwelcomed. Life is valuable in itself, and there is no need for something else to pursue. The best person is someone who has lived the most valuable life. This does not mean, however, that nothing is more important than individual life. One could sacrifice his life for something more noble and attain immortality, but nobody could be immortal by himself. Immortality means continuity of lives in history. One is allowed to sacrifice one's life only for other people's life or lives. This is a humanistic attitude toward life and death.

Death

European perspective

Didier Sicard

Death in western countries (Phenomenologic aspect and evolution)

Death is not simply the end of life, it also implies the relation between this very end of life, and the social and cultural environment in which it occurs.

Culture still leaves its mark there. Even though major cultural differences exist, particularly in relation to rituals, the view of death remains quite similar in Western countries both in the global North and South. Even if there is a maintenance of old traditions of ceremony or incineration in Italy, Spain, Greece and some Mediterranean islands, the major difference lies in Orthodox countries where the dead body must remain exposed to the sight of the survivors for a period of a few days, whereas Christian culture limits the wake to a couple of hours before placing the corpse in the coffin or before closing the coffin. The only novelty regards the “white steps” during the tragic death of young people. The place of the family in the funeral is less important than before, except for important actors or personalities.

The relationship to the body (see the keyword “The Body”) has consequences on death. The body-soul dichotomy is replaced by the dichotomy during life, Körper-Leib or Zòe and Bios, that is to say the separation between the organs of the body on the one hand, the felt and the social body on the other hand. Death separates more the Körper and the Zòe than the Leib and the Bios, which constitute a sort of memorial for a period of time. The vision of eternity is gradually disappearing. We no longer talk about immortality (except “the Pantheon”, which welcomes the most famous people).

Therefore, the relationship one has with his or her own death is not just an intimate matter. The historian Ariès has just identified several historical periods: “the tamed death” through its collective rituals characteristic of the Middle Ages (Dante's hell, 1308 BCE); the “death of

self” in the last part of the Middle Ages – which places the dying person at the center of the death process (as illustrated in the painting of the Quattrocento), reinforcing the theme of the possible punishment or the preparation for a good death, which would lead to heaven. Then, “the death of you”, which highlights the feelings and emotions at the time of the Enlightenment. Finally, the “inverted or reverse death”, which is that of our time. The dying person is deprived of his or her death as he or she dies more and more alone. Death must be concealed, put at a distance and must not hinder the life of the living. In other words, “the death of him” along with the weakening of the life-death boundaries, an extension of the quality of life over the quality of death. The place of religions is fading except at the time of most mortem rituals. The catholic sacrament of Extreme Unction has disappeared.

In the latter part of the 20th century, a fundamental change occurred. Simultaneously, therapeutic advances substantially pushed back the time of death and society gradually excluded death from the everyday social space. The collective emergence of medical efficiency has reduced public and private rites. Dying has become a matter of medicine with the nagging question of shortening the agony or anticipating it by dying (such as with euthanasia in Benelux) or assisted suicide (in Switzerland, Spain, certain states in the United States). These medical deaths account for about 5% of end-of-life. They are encouraged by militant associations that give them significant media coverage. The concept and practice of palliative care is a form of medical support at the end life.

After death, cremation practices increase to the detriment of burials, reducing headstones and sepulchers in favor of funeral urns. Belief in the afterlife is constantly diminishing as the body-soul relationship disappears. The death of young people is increasingly experienced as one unbearable drama and emotion remains great. The death of old subjects is considered an outcome.

Finally, during the past 40 years the death penalty has disappeared in most countries. In Europe, it only remains in Belarus and Russia. It is prohibited in the Constitutions of 108 countries throughout the world. Among the 144 countries where there is no law against it, they no longer put the death penalty into practice.

死

Sǐ

Death

Final remarks

WU Fei, Didier Sicard

Wu Fei

While I understand death from a more philosophical perspective, Professor Sicard studies it from a historical and intellectual one. There is much in his essay that could balance my ideas, and I enjoy reading it very much. In modern civilisation, which is more humanistic and secular, medical euthanasia and the end of the death penalty have contributed a lot to the contemporary theory as well as practice of death in human society. There is a quite similar transformation from pre-modern time to the modern era in China. The value of familial continuity was very important in ancient China, but now it is much less so. Funerals have been greatly simplified in modern China too. There are also some voices speaking about medical euthanasia and the end of the death penalty in China as in the West, but not so strong or influential. There are still quite some debates about these issues in Chinese society due to jurisprudential and ethical reasons. It could be expected that both would be accepted much more in the near future. As many other ideas, those about death are also converging. There are still, however, some ideas that are quite particular to China, that still persist. For instance, the judgment of the dead is still important in Chinese culture. The death of the young of course brings stronger emotion, but that of the elderly is seen as a happy ending and hence treated with a calm attitude, accompanied by a sense of history.

Didier Sicard

It seems there are major differences when it comes to the concept of death between the two cultures. In European culture:

1. There is no body cosmology neither before nor after death.
2. Because there is no connotation from the ideogram as in China, a European word is always open to interpretation. The meaning comes from there and is always evolving.

3. The continuity of the family is much less important than in Chinese culture, even though it remains important to refer to grandparents and have grandchildren. There is no immortality for family even in a popular meaning. The history of family does not occupy much in the European intellectual system, although there are exceptions.
4. Funerals are more for survivors than for the deceased.
5. There is no special judgement on the dead person at the moment of his death.
6. The death of young people, or sudden death, always brings emotion, as opposed to the one of old people.
7. The number of requests for medical euthanasia or assisted suicide is growing.
8. Last but not least, the end of the death penalty is considered as a humanistic attitude.

On the contrary to what my colleague said, mortal life in Europe is absolutely not seen negatively and sacrifice is seen as the best destiny for a person.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Debt, financial

债

Zhài

YAO Yang
Jean-Luc Mathon

债

Zhài

Chinese perspective

YAO Yang

Economic ties between China and the rest of the world are the most significant among China's foreign relations. Many of China's current economic and financial institutions are modeled on their Western counterparts. As a result, the discrepancies between China and the West are relatively small in economic terms. However, subtle differences do exist in some areas and have led to different human behaviour and government policies. The understanding of financial/economic debt is one of such areas.

China has a tradition of avoiding debt. Debt is often depicted by literature works as an evil that always dooms a poor family. This is certainly related to the usury that prevails in the informal lending market. Usury rates are so high that a poor family is almost certainly not able to repay the debt and interest by the end of the borrowing term. As a result, the family has to borrow new debt to repay the old debt and thus embarks on a road to peril. Although bank finance today is made available to most people, ordinary families are still cautious to take debt. Until very recently, there were still people who took cash to buy homes. The flip side is that Chinese people save a lot. At the highest point in the recent decades, an average household saved 37% of its disposable income and it used about 40% of its savings to buy new homes.

This is changing among younger generations, though. Thanks to the prevalence of digital finance, it becomes easy for young people to borrow. Most of their borrowings are spent on trendy goods such as new mobile phones and other electronic products. It is possible that Chinese people will give up their thrift culture and embrace a consumer culture that is very much like the one prevailing in the West.

Government policy in China is still influenced by ideas formed in the planning period. Economic planning does not need finance. In the beginning of each year, the planning agencies set up production targets according to the revenue obtained last year as well as the goal of the

coming year. The central bank is the state's cashier that allots money to factories according to the production targets they have received. By the end of the year, factories pay back the money after fulfilling their production targets. As such, money in a planned economy is distinctively different from what it is in a market economy.

Debt in the West has undergone tremendous changes over the last century. During the period of gold standards, money had an intrinsic value in itself. The collapse of the gold standards and the subsequent establishment of the modern central banking system in the 1920s changed the meaning of money. It no longer bears value in itself, but is instead only a symbol of credit/debt. China created paper money in the Song dynasty and made it popular in Yuan dynasty. But paper money at that time still carried real values because it was backed by precious metals. In a modern-day market economy, the central bank can produce bank notes bearing whatever values it desires, and commercial banks can create extra money, usually in electronic forms, by issuing new debts. Money and debt are equivalent, and money creates money by way of new debts.

At this stage, debt is created to serve the real economy --- in China, this means the economic sectors that produce tangible goods and services for the society. When a company borrows from a bank, the debt thus created is expected to be matched by future economic output that is enough to cover its repayment. Many Chinese hold this as a doctrine for financial market development. The government repeatedly calls for the financial sector to serve the real economy.

The development of financial transactions, and the rise of derivatives in particular, however, has broadened the scope of debt. Consequently, more financial transactions happen among financial institutions than between companies and banks. Financial experts in the West, exemplified by those working on Wall Street, believe that speculations among financial institutions are necessary for the economy to gain full efficiency. In China, however, such speculations have been given the name "virtual economy" — the internal circulation within the financial sector. It carries an obvious negative connotation and is contrasted by the real economy. For many Chinese, it is immoral for the financial sector to make money simply by exchanging money. In the extreme case, the financial sector is regarded as a parasite to society. This negative view has an impact on the government's policy toward the financial sector and debt.

Most of China's policy makers still hold on to the classical definition of debt, i.e., debt is backed by future output in a one-to-one manner. They

are quite vigilant about the virtual economy that is believed to produce money by exchanging money. This had led to a deleveraging campaign on shadow banking in 2018. Shadow banking was created in China when banks were allowed to divert their assets to off-balance sheet activities. It played a critical role in liberalising China's interest rate regime. Interest rates were regulated for banks' balance-sheet activities, but were not for their off-balance sheet activities. However, the development of shadow banking also created many new issues. One of them was the internal circulation of money/debt within the financial sector. Banks and other financial institutions conducted complex transactions in order to circumvent government regulations, creating a large amount of extra debt. The deleveraging campaign set stringent regulations on banks and almost instantly shrank the size of shadow banking.

The classical understanding of debt also makes regulators reluctant to promote digital finance. China is one of the world's leaders in the digital economy. One of the advantages of digital finance is its low marginal costs on both sides of its business. It gets investors more cheaply than the traditional form of finance. Instead of working on a few large investors, digital finance can gather funds from a numerous number of small investors. Using its advantage of large networks and large volumes of data, digital finance has a better capacity than traditional finance to judge and control risk. However, digital finance itself has a potential risk – its network effects may amplify the participation on both ends of its business and cause a financial tsunami. Consequently, the regulators prefer a contained development path for China's digital finance.

The aversion of debt is also reflected by the government's prudence about its own debt. Government regular debts are about 40% of GDP in recent years, much lower than in most industrial countries. Since the Central Bank Law was passed in 1994, the government has never resorted to the central bank's monetary expansion for fiscal finance. In recent years, the Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) has gained popularity in the United States, mostly propelled by the Federal Reserves' flood-like monetary expansion to combat possible recession caused by COVID-19. There are resonant discussions in China. However, the majority view is to reject the MMT as a theory leading to perilous consequences. The memory of the fall of the Yuan dynasty and the Kuomintang government is still fresh in Chinese minds.

Local governments do borrow more than the central government, though. In addition to the regular government debts approved by the

central government, local governments often raise debts through local financial vehicles (LFVs) – local government-owned financial companies that can issue corporate debts on the open markets. Most debts raised by LFVs are spent on building local infrastructure. But LFV debts are commercial debts that usually have short terms. This discrepancy creates a constant stress on local public finance.

While the government does use debt to finance social spending, it is very cautious to spend debt directly on people. During the course of COVID-19, many industrial countries raised debts and distributed them to ordinary people. China also increased the level of government debt, but most of it has been spent on infrastructural building and enterprises. To most Chinese, raising debt to finance consumption is a symbol of desperation and should be avoided whenever it is possible. This conviction is reflected by government policy.

In summary, the mainstream view of debt still is that it should be issued by financial institutions to help the real economy. Government borrowings are mostly spent on building up physical capital instead of being spent on people. Most Chinese families still hold on to a shrift culture, but younger generations are embracing a new consumer culture.

Debt, financial

European perspective

Jean-Luc Mathon

From the Latin word *debitum*, meaning “what is due” and from which comes the word “debtor”, the one who owes something, a sum of money in particular, and the accounting term “debit”, which antonym is credit hence the word creditor, which is related to the Italian word “credito”.¹

In law, the debt is an obligation subject to forced collection. On a moral level, it is a duty of conscience treated with the keyword “relational debt”.

The concept of debt dates back to time immemorial. No doubt the hunter-gatherers who practiced giving and counter-gifting or exchange were familiar with the idea of obligation.

Directly or indirectly, the appearance of agriculture and the appropriation of land required collective work, “investments”, loans and gave rise to the correlative debt.

Debt is the binding expression of the right to economic, institutional, or private debt. Debt as a resource measure – must be secured.

From archaic Greece, techniques appeared to guarantee the debts contracted such as guarantees on the land or on the person (“servitude”).

Stone boundary markers called *horos* (boundaries from the word *hora*, hour) which delimited properties were also employed in mortgaged fields bearing an inscription indicating the name of the creditor and the amount of the debt.

In the Constitution of the Athenians², Aristotle relates that peasants who could not repay their debts had to cede their land to their creditors and became serfs or slaves, cultivating what no longer belonged to them.

Aristotle reports that the legislator Solon (6th century BCE), with the *Seisachteia*, that is to say “the lifting of the burden”, put an end to the civil war in Athens by the abolition of debts and the liberation of the

1. Alain Rey, Historical dictionary of the French language.

2. Aristotle, Constitution of the Athenians, chapters V, 2; XI, 2.

slave land in tearing down the boundary stones which were the sign of this servitude.³

We find this idea with Lycurgus (4th century BCE), a magistrate in charge of public finances, while Athens was in complete disorder. He instituted a Constitution, after having consulted the oracle of Delphi in the temple of Apollo “(...) distributes the tributes, rounds off the districts (...) establishes a Senate of thirty members. Consults and dissolves but the people will have the power to contradict and to decide (...)”⁴

“Distribute the tributes” (contribution) means to lighten the burden of debt; “rounded the arrondissements” means reorganising the territory; “consults and dissolves but the people will have the power to contradict and decide” is a nice definition of democracy.

In ancient Rome – which had Fides as its tutelary deity, goddess of good faith and honour, protectors of debts and contracts – the debtor was imprisoned by the creditor until his debts were reimbursed; He is forced to walk with a rope around his neck, around markets and public places.⁵ Debt is associated with fault and subsequently with sin.⁶

This being the case, we find at this time the premises of a more humane debt policy, when Caesar, like Solon, having defeated the Lusitanians militarily (the people of present-day Portugal), took care of pacifying the country: “he restored harmony in the cities and applied himself to calming the differences between creditors and debtors. He ordered that the creditor would take two-thirds of the debtor’s income each year and that the debtor would enjoy only the remaining third until his debt was fully paid. This action established his reputation.”⁷

While the distinction between private debt and commercial debt is gradually taking shape in Europe, the prison sentence for private debt is abolished in France in 1254 and the death penalty for fraudulent bankruptcy will disappear in the 17th century.

The prison sentence for commercial debt was abolished in France in 1867 and the prison sentence for public debt abolished in 2004, but it remains in the event of voluntary non-execution of tax and customs fines.

China gave Westerners a very different picture of the debt problem during the peaceful epic of Admiral Zheng He’s huge armada in the lands bordering the China Sea and the Indian Ocean in the 15th century.

3. Ibid.

4. Plutarch, Life of Lycurgus, VI, 2.

5. Jean-Marie Thiveaud, The primordial order of debt, journal of financial economics 1993.

6. J. Ellul, The Sacred, studies and research.

7. Plutarch, Life of Caesar, 12.

The objective was not to enslave countries or to covet the wealth of other peoples, but to bear witness to the grandeur and abundance of the Ming dynasty through sumptuous offerings of works of art. It is nobler to give than to receive, accepting in return only a symbolic tribute by which the subjugated state recognised that China had no need of help. Zheng He proclaimed to foreign rulers that the only thing the world could offer his country was deference, respect, and friendship.⁸

China could not bear such an imbalance in its balance of payments for long. Admiral Zheng He had no successor and the country was closed, but it is not trivial for Westerners to know that the space probe of the Chinese research program on comets in the solar system bears the name of this great explorer of the maritime silk routes.

The term “debt” does not seem to be part of traditional Chinese culture, instead using the expression “measure expenditure against income”⁹ so that China’s foreign debt has long been insignificant.

However, the 2007-2008 crisis of risky mortgage loans secured on the value of real estate (known as “subprime”), stemming from the over-indebtedness of American households, plunged the world into recession and necessitated recovery plans.

From 2007 to 2014, global debt increased by 10% per year (instead of 5.8% previously) and this trend then continued due to historically low interest rates.

Today, the biggest borrowers (states, companies, households combined) in terms of debt per GDP ratio are Japan (400%), France (290%), the United States (256%) and China (250%), followed by the United Kingdom (247%) and Italy (246%). This in no way means that they are over-indebted if the burden of the debt service is offset by the amount of exports of goods and services and the correlative foreign exchange reserve.

This is not the case for low-income countries, whose level of debt negatively impacts their investment capacities and whose populations’ interest is to obtain reductions and cancellations of debts or concessional loans granted by the international institutions (IMF, World Bank, etc). The essence of which is to include a “donation” component so that the actual reimbursement will be less than the nominal (by at least 35% according to IMF standards).

But a debt crisis threatens the most fragile countries. In 2020, the G20 put in place a “suspension of the repayment of nearly \$13 billion in

8. Daniel Boorstin, *The Discoverers*, Laffont editions, 1988.

9. Professor ZHAO Yongsheng, *Sovereign debt of advanced countries*, *Entreprendre*, 08 11 2019.

loans for 48 countries until the end of 2021”. However, according to a study published by the World Bank in November 2021, “due to the sharp rise in indebtedness during the global recession linked to the COVID-19 crisis, in 2020 the wave of debt has transformed into a Tsunami”; “the growing number of private creditors further complicates the resolution of the debt problem.”¹⁰

The financial viability of investments from developed countries in third countries is therefore not always guaranteed, far from it.

It is interesting to quote Professor Liu Huaqin, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade: “Under the innovative third-market cooperation model, Chinese companies and their peers in partner countries could jointly develop projects in a country involved in the Belt and Road Initiative,”¹¹ and thus pool investments, risks, and dispute resolution processes.

With regards to over-indebtedness of individuals, the European States, in search of common definitions,¹² organise the protection of the debtor in good faith with a multiannual clearance plan – or by pure and simple abandonment if the debtor has no assets or effective resources without any sanction other than reporting to the credit incident file (banks remain, in theory, free to grant a loan).

The key word “good faith” is also that of the lender, who guards against usury, of the banker who respects his duty to advise. The man of good faith “says what he knows or believes to be true, never what he knows or believes to be false,”¹³ he acts in conscience not to harm others.

A fundamental notion of contract law, good faith, is, along with binding force, at the heart of the *Lex Mercatoria*, a corpus of international trade customs that was formed in Europe in the Middle Ages.

This common principle of good faith can lead to admitting that a change in circumstances justifies the revision of the contract – of the loans in this case – according to the theory of lack of foresight.

Reciprocal knowledge and mutual respect, underlying the concept of good faith, such is the challenge of a world – in the grip of the most extreme violence – that we would like to be harmonious.

10. Julien Bouissou, *The World Economy*, 21 01 2021.

11. Frédéric Lemaitre, *The International World*, 17 02 2022.

12. “Towards a common definition of over-indebtedness”, *European Communities* 2008, DOI 10.2767/17534.

13. André Comte-Sponville, *Dictionary of philosophy*.

债 Zhài

Debt, financial

Final remarks

YAO Yang, Jean-Luc Mathon

Jean-Luc Mathon

Are Confucian values universal? In other words, are Chinese people similarly obliged to repay foreign people?

YAO Yang

Yes, China has a good track record for paying back foreign debts. For example, China has been a good borrower for the World Bank, not only having paid all its debts in time, but also using the debts wisely to alleviate poverty, build infrastructure, improve education, and so on. On the other hand, China has also forgiven the debts of developing countries for several time.

YAO Yang

How do people in Europe think about the ECB's recent large expansion of its liability, which ultimately has been used to finance government debts?

Jean-Luc Mathon

I suppose that you mean the PEPP (pandemic emergency purchase program) which allows, in effect, to finance European states. It was a necessity to sustain European economy. So, this indebtedness has to be reduced in the long term by economic growth in particular. But the Ukrainian crisis increases, worryingly, European union indebtedness. War is a scourge.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Debt,
human

人情

Rén Qíng

WENG Naiqun
Gerald Cipriani

人情

Rén Qíng

Chinese perspective

WENG Naiqun

The Chinese phrase of *renqing* (人情) is composed of two Chinese characters: “人” (*rén*: human being; man; person; people) and “情” (*qíng*: feeling; emotion; sentiment; affection). The Chinese character “情 *qíng*” consists of two radicals. The radical “忄” on the left side refers to “heart”, meaning heartfelt emotion and feeling. The one on the right denotes its pronunciation in this case.

In popular discourse in China, *renqing* actually has a long history. It can be found in 《礼记》 *Liji*, The book of Rites, one of the classics of Confucianism, which was edited by 戴圣 *Daisheng*, an official as well as a scholar specialising in ritual studies during the Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE – 8 CE). “What is *renqing*? Joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, desire, seven emotions, which do not necessitate learning but are innate.”¹ *Renqing* also occurred in 《史记》 *Shiji*, the first history of the Twenty-Four Histories, written by *Simaqian* 司马迁. When he examines “乐 (*Yue*, music)” in the preface of *Shiji*, he wrote: “Being moved by *renqing*, the other with different customs in afar can be appealed.”² In one of his poems, *Du Fu* (712 – 770 CE), a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, wrote the following passage: “Presenting fine rice cake to fulfill *renqing*”³

In *Liji*, there is a widely known Confucian classical statement: “In the highest antiquity they highly prize good; in the time next to this, giving and repaying (报 *bao*) was the thing attended to. And what the rules of propriety (礼 *li*) value is that reciprocity. If I give a gift and nothing comes in return, that is contrary to propriety; if the thing comes to me, and I give nothing in return, that also is contrary to propriety.”⁴

Liang Shuming (梁漱溟) argued “The ethical relationship is a kind of obligatory relationship; a man does not seem to exist for himself, but

1. “何谓人情？喜怒哀懼愛惡欲，七者，弗学而能” – from 礼记今注今译, The book of Rites.

2. “人情之所感，远俗则怀”.

3. “柜枚作人情” *Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui*, 1994. *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London. P.67.

4. (太上贵德，其次务施报。礼尚往来。往而不来，非礼也；来而不往，亦非礼也)。

as if for others.”⁵ He also noted that “The mutual relationship between the society and the individual, which puts the emphasis on the individual, is called individual-based; thus, Chinese morality focuses on the relation between one person and another person, but ignoring the relation between society and individual. (...) It means: do not fix the emphasis on any one party, but on their relationship, reciprocal exchange with each other; the emphasis is really on relationship. Morality-based one is namely relationship-based one.”

In his book entitled *Folk China*,⁶ *Fei Xiao-tong* argued “In a closed community, it is impossible not to owe each other *renqing*, and its members are most afraid of “算账” (credit clearing). Credit clearing or “清账” (debt clearing) means the termination of their relationship, thus they don’t need to keep in touch since they no longer mutually owe *renqing* to each other.”

In the first paragraph of the introduction to *The Gift*, *M. Mauss* wrote: “In Scandinavian and many other civilisations, contracts are fulfilled, and exchanges of goods are made by means of gifts. In theory, such gifts are voluntary but in fact they are given and repaid under obligation.” Based on the studies carried out by him and his colleagues on archaic forms of contract, *Mauss* argued: “They exchange courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract. Finally, although the prestation and counter-prestation take place under a voluntary guise, they are in essence strictly obligatory, and their sanction is private or open warfare. We propose to call this the system of total prestations.” He clearly pointed out that “the most important of these spiritual mechanisms is clearly the one which obligates us to return a gift for a gift received.” *Mauss*’ statement is somehow a match with one of the well-known Chinese Confucianist statements quoted above.

In the long history of China, although there have been many great changes in the political, economic, social and cultural contexts, the meaning and practice of *renqing* within secular society still retains some of its original elements based on Confucian moral and ethical relations to a certain extent, while on the other hand, they are constantly changing along with the changing Chinese history in socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. The different economic modes of production between

5. (伦理关系即表示一种义务关系；一个人似不为其自己而存在，乃仿佛互为他人而存在者)。

6. 《乡土中国 *xiangtu zhongguo*》

urban and rural areas, as well as the different social cultures between geographical areas, have led to the meaning and practice of *renqing*, as well as its historical changing processes.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the different generations of Chinese people on the mainland experienced various kinds of social movements launched by the government. Following those movements, the social interpersonal relationships have also been shaped and affected. Since the reform and opening up, the rapid development and changes in social politics and the economy, the rapid expansion and development of population mobility between urban and rural areas and between different geographical administrative regions, and the greater diversification of social division of labour and industries have resulted in a dramatic increase in the diversity of interpersonal relationships and their nature. In addition to the relationship based on relatives and fellow villagers, more have been extended to such things as the former class-mate relationship, the comrade-in-arms relationship that was formed in the same unit when joining the army, the relationship between urban intellectual youths who have been assigned to the same village, township, state-run or army farm and have experienced hardship together during the Cultural Revolution etc. These newly formed interpersonal groups tend to consider their relationships just as a "sibling" similar to *renqing*. At the same time, it also leads to the increasing phenomenon of crossover and the hierarchically organised interpersonal relationships, and results in more complexity of the codes of *renqing* relationships. However, the gift exchange between these multiple interpersonal interactions still plays an important role.

Just as the concept of "debt of gratitude" evolved throughout history and Western languages, the concept of 人情 (*renqing*) underwent transformations in the Chinese speaking world. Without falling into the excesses of any dichotomous appraisal, it is perhaps at this point that a comparison between "debt of gratitude" and *renqing* can begin to show similarities from a human perspective, for we are all under the same Heaven, as well as differences from a cultural perspective due to variations of emphases on ideas of individual right or social obligation. If understood in the sense of the mode of relationship that entails 报 and in spite of its formal similarity with the debt of gratitude, the idea and practice of *renqing* appears to follow a principle of self-interested reciprocities albeit as condition for social harmony – at least in the traditional sense and unlike the notion of 关系 (*guanxi*) that includes instrumental

reciprocities for mere mutual self-interest in a more contemporary context. The reciprocity is also what makes the notion of "gift" comprehended as a mode of payment for which a return is expected – this is central to understanding *renqing*. The "debt of gratitude" in a Western context certainly equally involves a degree of reciprocity insofar as it is a response to what could be tacitly perceived as a gift. But, unlike in the Greco-Roman world, which shares many similarities with the traditional Chinese conception of 馈赠 (*kuizeng*, gift) as far as reciprocity and the make-up of society are concerned, the Judeo-Christian tradition – which still colours much of Western cultures – tends to conceive of the gift as self-disinterested in intention, regardless of its aporiatic dimension and the practical impossibility of any notion of "pure gift" that Mauss highlighted. Disinterestedness, anonymity, and unconditionality become the paradigmatic features of an idealised conception of the gift. In the case of interpersonal relationships, the giver withdraws in the act of giving with no expectation of return as a way of valuing other fellow human beings. As a result, the receiver is never coerced to pay back the giver in the name of social cohesion. This conception of the gift therefore shifts away from the notion of *kuizeng* within the context of *renqing*. In a different way, the disinterested gift does not fully apply either to the debt of gratitude, for the latter remains a response within a dynamic of reciprocity. However, far from being explicitly formalised and expected, the return crucially rests on a principle of freedom of decision that guarantees that the pledge for social harmony does not transform into social coercion. Perhaps, then, and bearing in mind the limits imposed by cultural and historical differences when comparing and translating the two terms, what brings together semantically and practically "debt of gratitude" and *renqing* is the element of reciprocity that effects the fabric of society; what sets them apart is that the former is expressed as a free move of natural recognition of values, where the latter rests on a ritualistic enactment of a constructed model of propriety.

Over the past four decades, the mobility of urban and rural populations has changed at an unprecedented rate. In the early days of reform and opening up, the demographic data of the third national census in 1982 showed that the urban population accounted for only 20.6% of the total national population, while the Chinese economic data at the end of 2021 showed that the urban population increased to 64.72% of the total national population. The urban and rural population structure has undergone tremendous changes.

As the rural population flows out and disperses year by year, the communication and maintenance of the previous *renqing* relationships have been weakened, and the metabolism of such relationships has almost disappeared in many “hollowed-out” villages. On the contrary, the sharp increase in the urban population, the development of rural urbanisation, and the continuous expansion of the commercial and industrial economy to rural areas have all promoted the blurring of the boundaries of the rural *renqing* network and the urban *guanxi* one. These were originally established at a time of huge difference between urban and rural areas, and we are witnessing the emergence of the intertwining and integration of the two kinds of interpersonal relationships.

Debt, human

European perspective

Gerald Cipriani

In modern Western cultural and linguistic contexts, the most common understanding of the word ‘debt’ invariably refers to a material – most often financial – obligation toward someone or some entity; in other words, the duty of having to pay back for example a certain sum of money borrowed for a set period of time. The idea of “personal debt of gratitude” that echoes in part the Chinese word “人情” does not directly suggest a material, pecuniary obligation. In the context of European languages, “debt” understood as the liability to make a payment is relatively recent as it dates back to the 14th century.⁷ The word, however, has a longer history and more universal meaning. As its Latin etymology suggests (*debitum*: thing owed), a debt implies more generally owing some-thing to someone such as a parent, a friend, a teacher, a mentor, or even other entities that do not necessarily refer to a single person. For example, one would talk of being indebted to ancient Greek civilisation for its humanistic and democratic values, or to the Tang dynasty for the genius and refinement of its arts and techniques; in an Abrahamic religious context, one would invoke her or his debt towards God, thus historically paving the way for such or such code of moral values in the form of sacred texts, be they the Torah, the Bible, or the Qur’an; one may also be indebted toward society for providing one with vital needs, practical comfort, education, civil protection, or laws that guarantee responsible freedom of ideas and expression; or, in the age of Anthropocene that shows unbearable levels of pollution across the globe, one can talk about being indebted to nature in the sense of having the duty to recognise the extraordinary chance humankind has been given to live and evolve the way it does, owing to the natural milieu within which it finds itself.

7. Barnhart, Robert K., ed., *Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*, H.W. Wilson Co., 1988; Klein, Dr. Ernest, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Amsterdam: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co., 1971; Liberman, Anatoly, *Analytic Dictionary of English Etymology*, University of Minnesota Press, 2008; Weekley, Ernest, *An Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, John Murray, 1921; reprint 1967, Dover Publications.

Needless to say, these forms of gratitude do not carry the same pejorative social connotation as with material debts such as financial ones. Yet, to be indebted towards someone or something always implies various modes of reciprocity. One is clear, concrete and operational as with, of course, financial debt that must be paid back in return from an initial loan, or a criminal who is ordered by a court of justice to pay her or his debt to society in whatever form of condemnation. The other is ethical. Indeed, with the debt of gratitude one does not pay back concretely per se individuals or whatever entities. The mode of reciprocity is therein unexplicit, indirect and felt. The response translates into admiration, respect, and even in some cases beatitude.

Modern Western societies are obviously under no binding moral obligation to pay back the legacy of ancient Greece any more than modern China is to the Tang dynasty, or than believers are to God, children to parents, individuals to society, or humankind to nature. Rather, the debt amounts to a tacit ethical recognition to how much one owes to entities other than oneself. This conception is well encapsulated by, for example, T.S. Eliot when he wrote of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) that "It is a book to which we are all indebted and from which none of us can escape."⁸ To many, contemporary literature in the Western world, whether in its modernist or postmodernist version, owes much to Joyce's *Ulysses*, for it announced new literary forms of expression by defacing the past and moving towards self-reflexivity or by revisiting the same past, but "not innocently" as Umberto Eco famously pointed out in his *Postille al nome della rosa* (1983).⁹ Again, the debt to which T.S. Eliot refers can only be tacit; it is a mode of rendering that translates into a course of recognition of what subsequent writers owe to Joyce, a gratitude that by no means amounts to materially paying back a debt. A more Marxist approach would emphasise the debt that the artist, for example, owes to his or her economic, social and cultural environments, the spirit of the time, or the historical period. When George Plekhanov, in *Art and Social Life* (1912),¹⁰ contends that great artists express their time but cannot change the course of history; that the source of the work of art lies in

8. Vassiliki Kolocotroni, Jane Goldman, and Olga Taxidou, eds., *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998), 371.

9. "The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognising that the past, since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently". Umberto Eco, *Umberto*. (1984). *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*, translation by W. Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 67-68.

10. George V. Plekhanov, *Unaddressed Letters. Art and Social Life*, trans. A. Fineberg (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1957).

its socio-economic substructure; or that form is determined by content, for art is the mirror of social life, he is doing no more than highlighting the determining role of the socio-economic essence of art to which the artist is indebted. In actual fact, the debt of gratitude here is not as tacit as it seems: the only authentic form of art is allegedly the one that shows us the truth of the socio-economic conditions of life.¹¹ There lies the material debt of the artist: social realism becomes the only means by which the artist can pay back what she or he owes to society, making redundant other forms of artistic expressions or movements such as modernism or naturalism that are consequently considered to be decadent. From this angle, this ideologically oriented debt is material rather than ethical. But there also lies, on the other side of the spectrum, a conception of art whose creativity is the stuff of scandal, violence and even rupture. Exception artists, the ones written about by Philippe Sollers in his *Théorie des exceptions* (1986),¹² do not express any debt even if of gratitude in the act of creating. Quite the opposite. Their works are anything but respectful, conventional, or expected. Here, the genius artist breaks the rules of ownership and expected reciprocity. The great artists do not owe society the truth of art in its own image. Rather, they are the singular perpetrators of exemplary models at the origin of the formation of cultures, to use Kantian rhetoric.¹³ In this sense, it is society itself that owes exception artists a debt of gratitude at the very least.

In whatever case, debt as a form of ethical response towards otherness inexorably raises the question of freedom at both personal and societal levels. If a material debt is by definition a binding obligation making interpretive issues of freedom irrelevant, such is not the case with the debt of gratitude. The latter leaves it up to the beneficiary to honour it. In this sense, the debt of gratitude amounts to a non-binding sense of responsibility with regard to the "other" — not in terms of infinity understood as quality of the "face" of the other as for Emmanuel Levinas,¹⁴ but rather as something identifiable and indeed recognisable. This conception of debt of gratitude shares much in common with what Gabriel Marcel defined as "availability" (*disponibilité*), which he viewed as a necessary condition for creative formation in interpersonal relationships.¹⁵

11. "An artist can be really inspired only by what is capable of facilitating intercourse among [human beings]. The possible limits of such intercourse are not determined by the artist, but by the level of culture attained by the social entity to which [she or he] belongs." *Ibid*, Part III.

12. Philippe Sollers, *Théorie des exceptions* (Paris : Collection Folio, 1986).

13. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* [*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790], §46-50.

14. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et Infini : Essai sur l'extériorité* (La Haye : Martinus Nijhoff, 1961).

15. See Gabriel Marcel, *Homo viator. Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance* (Paris : Aubier, 1945).

The fundamental distinction between availability and submission lies in the freedom of decision to engage in such relationships. Similarly, the debt of gratitude must preserve a degree of freedom if it is not to turn into one-sided control and coercion, unavoidably leading in the worst case to corruption and blackmailing for self-interest.

Finally, the debt of gratitude portrayed as a non-binding, tacit feeling for ethical response because of the good one benefits from the other could be contrasted with what is implied in the Judeo-Christian idealised conception of the “gift”, which as Jacques Derrida qualified it “must not be bound, in its purity, not even binding, obligatory or obliging”.¹⁶ Hence the aporia of the gift, for concrete lived experience makes it impossible to eradicate all traces of expectation of return in one form or another – just to mention, for example, when one expects to be thanked by the one who receives a gift. Despite that, the debt of gratitude contains within it the same aporia Derrida identified with the gift insofar as the former is an ethical response to someone or something by way of an exchange that must remain non-binding. To address its aporia, the debt of gratitude could then be understood as a freely chosen response in the form of a reciprocal gift. What makes such a response intrinsically ethical rests precisely on its element of freedom of decision.

16. Jacques Derrida, *Donner le Temps* (Paris : Éditions Galilée) [Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 137].

人情 Rén Qíng Debt, human

Final remarks

WENG Naiqun, Gerald Cipriani

WENG Naiqun

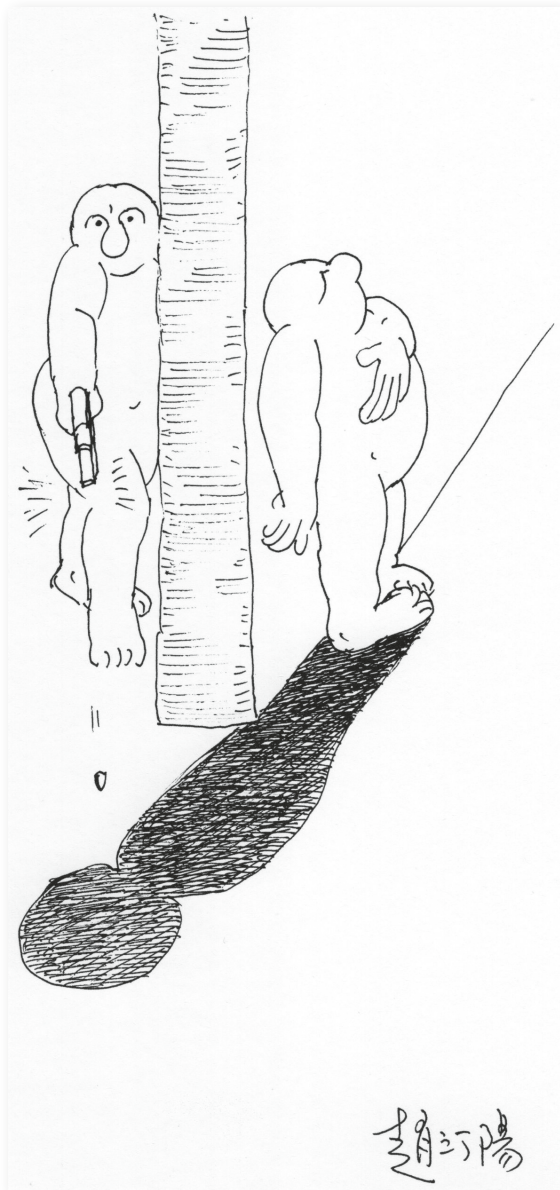
First of all, I need to explain that as an important code of Confucian ethics, *renqing* did not begin to be given the meaning of gift-giving (馈赠) and return (报) during the Qing Dynasty. Perhaps this is due to a misunderstanding caused by my overly brief discussion. In my discussion, I mentioned that there are many descriptions of gift-giving and return in the Qing dynasty’s literature, just to emphasise that the tradition of closely linking *renqing* and gift-giving has lasted for more than two thousand years. To avoid misunderstandings and to limit the word count of the text, I have removed the above related content from the final text.

In the long historical evolution of the Chinese *renqing* tradition, it is true that there has never been a notion of the Western Judeo-Christian tradition of gift-giving that the reciprocal interaction must be premised on the principle of freedom of decision. Although the concept of gift in the Judeo-Christian tradition also contains the concept of reciprocity, the receiver cannot accept it in the name of maintaining social cohesion, to be forced for making repayment. To this day, although the concept of Chinese *renqing* has undergone many changes under the impact of long historical social and cultural changes, the social pressure based on the Confucian ethics and morality of the “etiquette and exchange” obligation rule, and the closely related concept of face, continue to affect the socio-cultural rules of interpersonal communication. It is only due to the rapid intensification of population mobility, the weakening of the stability of the socio-cultural community, and the enhancement of pluralism that the impact of these social pressures on people’s social life is weakening day by day in practice.

Gerald Cipriani

Just as the concept of “debt of gratitude” evolved throughout history and Western languages the concept of 人情 (renqing) underwent transformations in the Chinese speaking world. For more than two thousand years the meaning of renqing has referred in various ways to gift-giving ethically endowed with the expectation of “return” or “re-payment” (bao 报) dictated by the rules of propriety (li 礼). Without falling into the excesses of any dichotomous appraisal, it is perhaps at this point that a comparison between “debt of gratitude” and 人情 can begin to show similarities from a human perspective for we are all under the same Heaven, as well as differences from a cultural perspective due to variations of emphases on ideas of individual right or social obligation. If understood in the sense of mode of relationship that entails 报 and in spite of its formal similarity with the debt of gratitude, the idea and practice of 人情 appears to follow a principle of self-interested reciprocities albeit as condition for social harmony – at least in the traditional sense and unlike the notion of guanxi 关系 that smacks of instrumental reciprocities for mere mutual self-interest in a more contemporary context. The reciprocity is also what makes the notion of “gift” (kuizeng 馈赠) comprehended as mode of payment for which return is expected central to understanding 人情. The debt of gratitude in a Western context certainly equally involves a degree of reciprocity insofar as it is a response to what could be tacitly perceived as a gift. But, unlike in the Greco-Roman world that shares much similarities with the traditional Chinese conception of 馈赠 as far as reciprocity and the make-up of society are concerned, the Judeo-Christian tradition – which still colours much of Western cultures – tends to conceive the gift as self-disinterested in intention and this, regardless of its aporiatic dimension and the practical impossibility of any notion of “pure gift” that Marcel Mauss famously highlighted. Disinterestedness, anonymity, and unconditionality become then the paradigmatic features of an idealized conception of the gift. In the case of interpersonal relationships, the giver withdraws in the act of giving with no expectation of return as a way of valuing other fellow human beings. As a result, the receiver is never coerced to pay back the giver in the name of social cohesion. This conception of the gift therefore shifts away from the notion of 馈赠 within the context of 人情. In a different way the disinterested gift does not fully apply either to the debt of gratitude, for the latter remains a response within a dynamic of reciprocity. However, far from being explicitly formalised and

expected, the return crucially rests on a principle of freedom of decision that guarantees that the pledge for social harmony does not transform into social coercion. Perhaps, then, and bearing in mind the limits imposed by cultural and historical differences when comparing and translating the two terms, what brings together semantically and practically “debt of gratitude” and 人情 is the element of reciprocity that effects the fabric of society; what sets them apart is that the former is expressed as a free move of natural recognition of values whereas the latter rests on a ritualistic enactment of a constructed model of propriety.



Beauty	美
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Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Dialectics

阴阳

Yīn Yáng

YAO Xinzhong

Jana S. Rošker

阴阳 Yīn Yáng

Chinese perspective

YAO Xinzhong

It would be counterproductive to render yin-yang into any concept in English or other Indo-European languages. This is partly because yin and yang are philosophical rather than purely linguistic, and partly because they represent a unique way to perceive the world that is unlikely available in western philosophies. An appropriate interpretation of them, however possible, is conditional on a comprehensive appreciation of their metaphysical, ethical, and social meanings and implications. As a matter of fact, all attempts to literally translate or to philosophically interpret them in the past ended in a failure to deliver a pair of appropriate concepts and to reach consensus among scholars, as they would either generate ambiguity in hermeneutical reconstruction of Chinese philosophy or cause new misunderstandings in cross-cultural studies.

Earlier sinologists tended to employ such general terms as “the natural forces” (e.g. James Legge), or “dualistic features” (e.g. Richard Wilhelm’s “the dark and the light”) to be the equivalents of yin and yang, or to interpret them in terms of contradictory qualities such as negative and positive, passive and active, female and male. These renderings have indeed conveyed part of the original meanings and can be supported to an extent by textual evidence. However, due to the wide range of applications in which yin and yang are employed, none of them have exhausted all the attributes of yin and yang and can be carried through consistently even within one single text. Subsequently they have to be uneasily adapted or awkwardly rephrased from time to time in order to be applicable to different contexts, where yin and yang refer to different matters or issues.

Being aware of the impossibility to translate or interpret yin and yang precisely in terms of western concepts, more and more scholars have come to use them simply as they are. Hence yin-yang or yin and yang are legitimate “words” that are listed in almost all contemporary English dictionaries and are used widely in books and articles concerning

Chinese culture or in comparative philosophy (eg. Michael Slote). Without a definitive translation, however, it does not mean that yin-yang is incomprehensible to other philosophies. To grasp the complicated contents and diverse extensions of yin-yang philosophy, we may gain some insight from the following three approaches. First, yin and yang may be conveniently categorised as primary principles that guide or frame all evolutionary and existential activities. Yin-yang philosophy does not consider the world a total chaos; instead, all the existential and evolutionary phenomena such as movement, growth, and transformation are legitimised by yin, yang, and their interaction. In so doing, however, we must keep in mind that just as laws or natural laws in western philosophy, yin-yang principles are mental categories or the constructions of the mind, created in order to derive meanings from internal and external phenomena.

Secondly, the subjective presumption of our first approach must be supplemented by substantial realism, because yin and yang are not merely categories; they are actually fundamental powers that activate and sustain all changes and all events, in the natural and human world as well as in living beings and lifeless things. In other words, yin and yang are real forces or creative powers, whose existence and function do not depend on the subject as we think we are. In an ontological sense, yin and yang are both entities and properties. However, different from Leibniz’ monads in the pre-determined harmony that are non-extended and immaterial entities, as primary and cosmic powers, yin and yang are not only material but also creative and dynamic, constructing as well as being destructive, responsible for the multiple facets and organic diversity of the world. However, unlike material powers such as energy or gravity in modern science, yin and yang are intangible and cannot be measured. We, or some of us, can feel and know the existence and moving of yin and yang, because they have a life of their own, are differentiable in genders (male and female qi 氣), and are animated and spiritualised. In this sense, “vital powers” is probably more appropriate an interpretation than “material powers”.

Thirdly, yin and yang are not only actual energies or powers but also organic processes inherent in the formation and evolution of all things and all beings. Yin and yang each and together cause a natural and organic sequence of changes, actions, or steps to take place. Unlike other kinds of processes that we often see in daily life, however, yin-yang processes are circular rather than lineal, enabling all things

and beings to come into existence and to return to their origins. While yin and yang are fully embodied in the process of changes (yinyang xiaozhang 阴阳消长), none of them should be confined to one of these changes, and none of the processes is separable from others. Hence, we have our world that is formed and vitalised in interconnected, interacted and mutually penetrated processes.

More complex and important than how to define yin and yang is how to appreciate the relationship between them. Yin and yang must be seen and may be understood only in their relations. Neither yin nor yang can exist and function alone. They are locked or are inherently “living” in relations that are characterised by interconnectedness, interdependence, and inclusivity rather than opposition, independence, and exclusivity. The former reveals the nature of what are normally branded as “polarist” relations, in contrast to the latter as “dualist”. A polaristic relation is defined as such that each of the two is both separable from the other and is related to the other. For example, as polar powers, yin and yang depend and act on each other to initiate changes and to activate events in which they participate in rather than simply oppose each other; as bi-processes, yin and yang require each other as a necessary condition to be as they are and to proceed as they go, relying on each other to start and complete a process; as co-creators, their creation comes from interaction and from mutual transformation rather than one creating or destructing the other; as two fundamentals, they are both self-determining and being determined by each other, as stillness (the embodiment of yin), for example, does not consist in a total absence of movement (that of yang), but is rather in a particular ratio (proportion) between them. In one word, this relation is fully dialectic and dynamic, clearly distinguishable from the monotheistic antagonism of God and Satan and from the Cartesian dualism of mind and body.

While it is difficult to conceptualise the relation between yin and yang, the relation may be well illustrated through familiar pairs such as tranquillity-activity, negative-positive, closing-opening, soft-hard. In terms of cosmology, the relation is manifested as heaven-earth, sun-moon, day-night, light-dark, generating (sheng 生) - nourishing (yang 養). In family, it can be seen from the pairs of male-female such as father-son, husband-wife, son-daughter etc. In old politics, it was often taken as justification of the hierarchical relations of ruler-subject, senior-junior, superior-inferior etc. In psychological and sociological terms, their relation is featured as reason-emotion, will-intuition, aggressive-yielding,

harsh-gentle, hard-soft, stern-flexible. In Chinese medicine, the yin-yang relation is applicable to all diagnoses and prescriptions, such as the five zang organs (五脏) - the five Fu organs (五腑), fever (re zheng 热症) - coldness (han zheng 寒症), superficial (xu 虚) - deep (chen 沉) pulse. In religion, they are manifested as hun (魂, “the spirit from heaven”) - po (魄, “the soul from earth”), deity (shen 神) - ghost (gui 鬼), yang jie (陽界, “the residence of gods or spirits, the human world, or the heavenly paradise”) - yin jie (陰界, “the residence of the ‘dead’, the underworld, or hell”). Religious beliefs and practices concerning the yang world and the yin world did not become popular until well after the arrival of Buddhism. However, the Book of Rites already uses yin-yang to explain human souls and sacrifices. For example, human beings are said to be produced by “powers of Heaven and earth, the interaction of yin and yang, the union of animal and intellectual souls, and the finest qi of the Five Elements” (Liyun 禮運); sacrifices are taken as a means “to seek the meaning of yin and yang” (Jiaotexing 郊特性), while rituals are traced to their origin in the Grand Unity (dayi 大一), which separated and became heaven and earth, revolved and became yin and yang, changed and became the four seasons, and distributed and became spirits and ghosts (Liyun).

Neither yin-yang themselves nor their relation should be seen as static. Rather, they are in constant interaction and mutual transformation both in time and in space. Therefore, their relation is characterised by relativity and changeability. In other words, none should be seen as exclusive and fixed, and even in the highest degree, each would contain the other within. In constant changes, one can be and indeed always is transformed into the other, as it is said in the Daode jing that “reversion is the action of Dao.” To further illustrate the constant change of yin and yang, we will take family relations as a series of examples. In the father-son relation, the father is yang while the son is yin, but when the son gets married, he as husband is yang while his wife is yin. When the wife becomes mother, she would be venerated as yang in contrast to her children as yin. Among her children, the male is yang while the female is yin, but among female siblings, the stronger is yang while the weaker, or softer, is yin. Even a weak female is not a total yin, as she also embodies a balance between yin and yang, and not the least her will is yang, while her emotion is yin. No matter who they belong to, affirmative emotions are yang, while negative feelings are yin. Further, feeling good is regarded as yang, while feeling vulnerable is yin. Changes of the balance between yin and yang as such can be endlessly extended.

Profound and complex, the yin-yang philosophy is central to Chinese culture and civilisation. However, the characters of yin and yang themselves did not come from philosophical contemplation but were derived from pictographic images concerning sun shining and shadows. According to the earliest Chinese lexicon (*Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字), yin (陰) depicts “the northern side of a mountain and the southern bank of a river” while yang (陽) refers to “the southern side of the mountain and the northern bank of the river”. In early Chinese texts, yin is used frequently to refer to the shadowy, wet, dark, cold, female sex organ or the qualities associated with it, while yang to the sunny, dry, bright, warm, male sex organ or the qualities derived from it. As far as we know, the character of yang is found in oracle bone inscriptions and the earliest writing form of yin was discovered on bronze inscriptions. While the yin-yang idea is the backbone of the divination manual and is carried throughout the text of the *Book of Changes*, the two characters are hardly used together there. Yin and yang appear separately but none of them is sufficiently philosophical, in the extant versions of the early Confucian classics, such as the *Book of Documents*, the *Book of Poetry*, the *Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*. In contrast, they are used together as a philosophical pair in the *Xunzi* (6 times) and in the *Commentaries on the Book of Changes* (8 times) to explore and explain the underlying power of cosmic transformation as well as the cause of environmental, social and moral changes. Among earlier Daoist texts, yin and yang appear only once in the extant text of *Daode jing*, but as a pair they are used in the *Zhuangzi* for as many as 23 times. The emergence of the school of Yin-yang and the Five Elements led by Zou Yan (鄒衍, 305? – 240 BCE) popularised yin-yang ideas and applied yin-yang philosophy to explain natural phenomena such as the four seasons, and social affairs such as the governmental structure. From this textual evidence we have good reasons to conjecture that yin and yang did not become dominant philosophical concepts in Chinese civilisation until the late Warring States period (479 – 221 BCE).

Yin-yang is not merely a philosophical concept that reflects on the essence and laws of all existences but is also used as a hermeneutic tool for the Chinese to make sense of their world as well as to comprehend social reality and to manage life dilemmas. Yin-yang is philosophised as the universal frame, applicable to all things and all beings, defining the Chinese view of the world and society, so it is said by Zhang Zai (张载 1022 – 1077) of the Song era (960 – 1279): “As there are forms, there are their opposites. These opposites necessarily stand in opposition to what they do.

Opposition leads to conflict, which will necessarily be reconciled and resolved.”¹ It may be said that the only thing in their relation that does not change is the interchange between them, as clearly stated by Cheng Hao (程灝 1032 – 1085): “all the myriad things have their opposites. When there is yin, there is yang. When there is good, there is evil. As yang increases, yin decreases, and as goodness is augmented, evil is diminished.”² This facilitates another perspective from the Chinese organic worldview, according to which everything, being or event is inherently composed of two elements and is driven by two powers. Not simply opposed to each other, these two powers are mutually included and mutually relied on. All existences and phenomena, either cosmological such as heavenly bodies and earthly things, biological such as mind and body or life and death, or ethical such as good and evil, are related and relative to each other. It is in the paradox of contradiction and unification between yin and yang that the world is rendered as organic and life becomes dynamic, going through endless generation and re-generation.

In pre-Qin Chinese texts yin and yang are already applied, explicitly or implicitly, to outline a so-called “natural genesis” or cosmogony through linking them with another concept, *Dao* (道), the Way. The most explicit statement concerning the relation between yin-yang and *Dao* is found in the *Commentaries to the Book of Changes* where it is said that “The reciprocal process of yin and yang is called the Way.”³ *Daode jing* places the two powers (yin and yang) in the organic regeneration of the world: “*Dao* begets one, one begets two, two beget three and three beget all things,” while the *Book of Rites* uses the harmonisation of yin and yang to explain generations of all things (*wanwu de* 万物得). By using *Dao*, one, yin-yang and harmony, early thinkers drew us a picture of how the world comes into existence and how it evolves. This picture continued to be supplemented and enriched in subsequent ages by great thinkers such as Dong Zhongshu (179? – 104? BCE), and was succinctly completed in the Song era, particularly by Zhou Dunyi (周敦颐, 1017 – 1073) who in the *Explanation of the Diagram of The Great Ultimate* (*Taijitu shuo* 太极图说) articulates that yin-yang evolves from the Great Ultimate (太極, often identified as a different expression of the Way) and that by the alternation and combination of yin and yang, the five agents (五行) arise. Integration and interaction of the Great Ultimate, yin-yang and the five

1. Wing-tsit Chan, 1963:506.

2. Wing-tsit Chan 1963:540-541.

3. de Bar & Bloom 1999:321.

agents engender and transform the myriad things. Of all things, human beings are said to be most intelligent, as their conscious interaction with the external world causes moral principles to be established, good and evil to be distinguished, and human affairs to be engaged and expanded.⁴

Being identified with Qi, however, yin and yang are somehow downgraded by Cheng Yi (程颐 1033 – 1107) as secondary elements in the metaphysical construction of the world, when they assert that “Yin and yang are qi and so are physical (xing er xia 形而下) while dao is metaphysical (xing er shang 形而上).”⁵ This downgrade of yin-yang in the system with their dissolving in Dao has further facilitated, explicitly or implicitly, the turning of the Chinese views of the world, life and value from dialectic to hieratical, from existential reciprocal to ideological authoritarian, and from open to closed, which is particularly manifested in politics, ethics and culture throughout the coming ages.

4. Wing-tsit Chan 1963:463.
5. Graham 1958:162.

Dialectics

European perspective

Jana S. Rošker

In the history of Western ideas, “dialectic” is a term used to describe a philosophical method of reasoning that involves a kind of adversarial process between opposing sides. The word goes back to ancient Greek and means “to speak across the space that separates the interlocutors,” that is, to engage in dialogue. In general, dialectics is considered an effective method for shaping thought because it makes adversarial debate fruitful. Plato created the model of the so-called classical dialectic. He presented his philosophical arguments in the form of a back-and-forth dialogue or debate, which became Plato’s way of arguing against the earlier, less sophisticated views or positions and for the later, more sophisticated ones.

Since the 18th century, another use of the word has prevailed: the study of opposites in things and concepts and of the mutual interaction of these opposites.

In Hegel, dialectics is the method of knowledge opposed to metaphysics, and at the same time the inner law of the self-movement of thought and the self-movement of history and social reality.

Such a dialectical process has often been described in a purely schematic sense, representing three stages: Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis. Although Hegel, undoubtedly one of the most important and well-known philosophers of dialectics, never mentioned or named these three stages, for these terms were used by Fichte and Schelling, modern dialectics is often described in terms of these categories. In this schematic sense, modern dialectics can be described as a discourse in which we have a thesis, as an existing idea that is opposed or contradicted by an antithesis, which points to problems and contradictions inherent in that thesis. The tension between thesis and antithesis leads to a new stage of development called synthesis. The synthesis can then constitute a new thesis.

But how does the dialectical process arrive at synthesis? The contradiction between thesis and antithesis leads to a tension in which, and through which, this contradiction is sublated. This sublation process is

a shift that leads to a solution or new understanding in the form of a synthesis.

This meaning is taken up again by Marx, who placed it on a materialist basis and developed his own theory of dialectical materialism. The concept of dialectics was further developed later in the 20th century by members of the Frankfurt School. Their most important collection of essays on the subject is entitled *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and was written by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. This work conceives the historical process of the Enlightenment as dialectical and diagnoses that instead of its supposed conclusion in modernity, it becomes the solidified basis of a new barbarism, which manifested itself in the fascism of the first half of the 20th century.

Adorno describes his understanding of knowledge about social reality as negative dialectics in the book of the same name. For Adorno, a method based on the concept of dialectics is the prerequisite for a theory that remains open to what has not yet been conceptualised: he points out that thought itself is something that leads us to the identification of concept and observed object. However, we rarely think about the fact that this identity is an illusion. This implies that when we are confronted with other concepts of the same reality, we inevitably understand them as contradicting our original conception. He formulates this in the following way:

*“Contradiction is not what Hegel’s absolute idealism inevitably had to transfigure it into: nothing Heraclitean in its essence. It is an index of the falsity of identity, of the fusion of what is understood in the concept. However, the semblance of identity is inherent in thinking itself in its pure form. To think is to identify. Nothing is open to the awareness of the illusory nature of conceptual totality than the immanent breaking through of the appearance of total identity: according to its own measure. But since this totality is constructed according to a logic whose core is the principle of the excluded third, everything that does not fit into this logic, everything that is qualitatively different, takes on the signature of contradiction”.*⁶

So Hegelian dialectics can hardly lead us to new insights.

I think this shift is of utmost importance, not only in terms of contemporary Western philosophy, but also in terms of global philosophy, which encompasses philosophy developed in other cultures and its

6. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, Frankfurt am Main 1966, p. 15.

possible contribution to our world today. We now live in a globalised world, and the crises we face are also globalised. Therefore, the philosophies of the different cultures must enter into a dialog with each other, that is, they must establish a dialectical relationship with each other, if we want to find a new, global and pluralistic knowledge, which is the only knowledge that can help us to solve today’s globalised crises.

But if we conduct our dialogues according to the scheme of traditional European dialectics, we will hardly arrive at a truly globalised knowledge. The static view of being that prevailed in ancient Greek philosophy led to the emergence and subsequent dominance of traditional European formal logic, based on the three elementary laws of identity, contradiction, and the excluded third. In my view, Hegel’s effort was to break through this static worldview and, taking Heraclitus as a starting point, to develop a theoretical model that could incorporate processual thinking, a model that took into account what he called the “fluid nature”⁷ of things. Yet despite his efforts to create a philosophy of movement and development, his dialectic remained trapped in a discourse of discrete (albeit linear proceeding) stages of development, each still static and strictly separate from the other. Their interaction still proceeds from the basic laws of formal logic, in which a conceptualisation is negated by its contradiction and necessarily leads to a synthesis. Although dialectics as such is regarded as a flow, its essential and constitutive parts, namely thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, are still fixed and invariable phases in this supposedly processual philosophy. In this formal scheme, any new antithesis to an existing thesis is its contradiction. As long as we remain trapped in such a scheme, all other ideas that do not belong to the referential framework of European philosophy are excluded as entities that contradict it.

Therefore, if we want to expand and develop European dialectics, we must focus on its concept of sublation, which I believe is the only way to establish a dialectical process of genuine mutual exchange, because it is the true engine of any productive dialectical process. This term is the most common English translation of the German Hegelian term “*Aufhebung*” which contains three seemingly contradictory notions, namely “abolish”, “preserve”, and “transcend”. The translation is a neologism that borrows its morphology from the Latin origin *sublatio*, a word that also contains all three of the above connotations. In a sublation-based

7. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1998: 5.

dialectical interaction between different philosophies or cultural traditions, they are still different, but cannot be mutually exclusive, since they are not considered as substantial, essence-bearing static entities.

Rather, in such a dynamic scheme, their mutual differences create a productive tension in which certain elements or aspects are preserved and others are eliminated. In this way, interaction as such can continually offer us new inspirations that lift our ideas to new, higher levels and provide us with new insights that can always be developed and deepened according to the changing circumstances of social development. Such insights are needed today more than ever before.

阴阳 Yin Yáng Dialectics

Final remarks

Jana S. Rošker

The concept of Yue provided in Chinese ancient books emphasises social morality over simple legal power and contract.

It appears that Confucian values are still alive in modern China.

Therefore, the risk of distortion exists between legal contract and Confucian or neo-Confucian principles. This means that moral considerations may interfere with the binding force of the contract.

It would be most interesting to collect examples of what kind of principles or situations can justify not performing the contract and to know what compensation is conceded.

Thus, it is necessary to research a mutual understanding on that question when drafting contractual documents.

It is essential to present the subject matter of the contract as clearly as possible and defining very precisely explicit and implicit objectives and the circumstances which could justify a breach of the contract.

This supposes to anticipate foreseeable changes in circumstances as well as economic transformations that can modify the balance of any contract.

First, we might ask whether the paradigm of yin and yang can also be called a dialectics. We believe that this is a matter of definition. If we assume that the dialectical model developed in the European tradition is the only possible or “correct” model of dialectics, then the categories (or forces) of yin and yang do not fit this definition. However, if we start from the original meaning of the word “dialectics”, which implies an interaction between two sides or two opposite concepts, then they are certainly a kind of dialectics, even if this “Chinese” dialectics is a different pattern and works according to a different methodology.

In our view, such an understanding is important because too often Chinese philosophy has been seen as based on a “primitive” holism in which everything is connected to everything else and nothing can be

separated from anything else. While it is certainly true that Chinese philosophy is primarily holistic, this holism is by no means a fused unity containing mutually alienated elements, nor is it a form of monism. On the contrary, it is a relational network of correlative relationships between different entities or propositions, a network that is strictly and very carefully ordered according to binary structures such as yin and yang. Thus, as was made clear in the presentation of yin and yang as a Chinese dialectical model, yin and yang (and their mutual relations and interactions) have not only an epistemological, but also an ontological and even a metaphysical dimension.

According to our understanding, the main differences between these two methods can be summarised as follows: first of all, the European (at least modern European) dialectics is based on dualisms, while the Chinese model is based on binary or so-called “polarist” categories. What they have in common, however, is the fact that both models work with two opposing concepts, ideas, or forces. Nevertheless, while the opposition of the European model is at the same time a contradiction (because the two opposing ideas are mutually exclusive), the Yinyang dialectic, which has prevailed in Chinese intellectual history, is based on the correlative mutual completion and intertwining of the two opposing sides. In what follows, we will attempt to explain these differences through a brief historical examination.

As already mentioned, the European model can be historically followed back to Ancient Greek philosophy and is in its modern forms rooted in dual representation models like Cartesian dualisms, in which oppositional notions (body and mind, matter and idea, substance and phenomena, subject and object, etc.) negate and exclude each other and are thus strictly and radically separated both formally and logically. Although in Hegel’s theory the two oppositional concepts still form a correlative unity, they are seen as static momenta within this entirety; in the ultimate instance, this unity is nothing more than the sum of its parts, which, as momenta, condition but also contradict and hence exclude each other. In such models the two oppositions are often denoted thesis and antithesis. The tension that results from the mutual negation and contradiction of both poles leads to the synthesis (which can be reached through *Aufhebung* or sublation in Hegel). This third stage is a qualitatively different and “higher” stage of development, in which parts of the previous opposition are preserved and others eliminated. In essence, the dialectical thought in this framework is conceptual (i.e. containing fixedly defined contents),

while in the Chinese yinyang model it is processional, based on categories or powers (the concrete content of which is exchangeable and replaceable, not only in the semantic but also in the axiological sense). In its earliest form, this latter model goes back to the building blocks of the oldest Chinese proto-philosophical classic, the Book of Changes (*Yi jing* 易經), where it appears as a model of “continuous change” or “continuity through change” (*tongbian* 通變). It functions by applying binary categories and the principle of correlative complementarity. The oppositions it contains are interdependent and do not negate but rather complete each other. They are oppositional dualities, but not dualistic contradictions. Hence, the model of their mutual relationship and interaction cannot be denoted as an abstract form of dualism, but rather as a process of a dynamic duality. Furthermore, each of them represents the very essence of the other and none of the two can exist without the other. In contrast to the synthesis belonging to the European model, the totality or unity of both oppositions in the Chinese yinyang paradigm is to be found in the very process of their interaction as such; hence, it does not lead to a qualitatively new and “higher” stage or form of reality, idea, or even its understanding (which is the tendency of the Hegelian model). The two opposites, either in the form of the male and female forces, or through the categories of the negative and the positive, are mutually included and intergenerated, are ultimately unified. In the process of the intensive Sinification of Marxism, this feature of the dialectical model (*duili tongyi* 對立統一), belonging to the yinyang duality, (which was typical for traditional China), was highly problematised by Maoist theoreticians. Hence, they used to call this form of dialectics “simple” or “primitive” dialectics (*pusu bianzheng fa* 樸素辯證法, *yuanshi bianzheng fa* 原始辯證法) and criticised it for its conservative nature, i.e. for its lacking of the component of progress.

Such a view, however, is one-sided and incomplete, because it overlooks the processual nature of the mutual interaction between yin and yang. This interaction as such is precisely the ever-changing and forever new synthesis of the two powers or categories. While the European model of static oppositions is based upon the principles of the European formal logic, implying its three basic laws of identity, contradiction and the excluded third, such a logic is impossible in the framework of dynamic correlativity, which is typical of the Chinese dialectical model. In a flux, A can never be identical to A, and neither can it be in contradiction to not-A, because yin and yang can never exclude each other, and their mutual interaction unceasingly produces and opens new spaces for new ideas.

In this sense, the Chinese *yinyang* dialectic is more comprehensive and can hence provide us with new insights, new ideas, and new perspectives of thinking. Although the model of modern European dialectics is important, for without formal logic there could hardly be Western-style development of rationality, science, and technology, the potential of *yinyang* for cross-cultural dialogues is stronger and much more radiant. And since we live in a globalised world where we are constantly confronted with global crises that can only be overcome through transcultural solidarity, intercultural dialogues and the exchange of knowledge and ideas, such potential is much more needed than ever before.

On the other hand, we are also fully aware of the problems and limitations that are facing *yinyang* philosophy when its being applied to contemporary times. Within a traditional framework, mutuality and inter-transformation that are central to *yinyang* cosmology and dialectics were significantly reduced through being moralised and politicised in the later part of Chinese history. Once two-way dependence was moderated or even replaced by the one-way hierarchy, symbolised in the process from “yin-yang” to “ruler-subject”, “father-son” and “husband-wife”, it would be too natural for *yinyang* philosophy to become culturally fossilised and to be politically mutated into a tool to justify authoritarian and patriarchal regimes. Therefore, to enable it to be meaningful for an increasingly globalised and multicultural world where liberty, democracy and equality are recognised as common values, it would be of necessity for us to make use of European dialectics to supplement *yinyang* philosophy, by which the original dynamics of the latter can be fully restored or regenerated, and to magnify the universalism that was inherent in *yinyang* and dialectics not only as an epistemological model applicable both to the East and the West, but also as an axiological aspiration leading to multicultural coexistence and harmonious symbiosis for all human beings.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Duty



Yi

ZHAO Tingyang
Nikolas Århem



Yì

Chinese perspective

ZHAO Tingyang

Confucianism takes it for granted that Ren is the core of morality, while Yi the code of moral practice. Yi has a meaning stronger than duty, so it might be better understood as “human duties”, which are supposed to define or explain that which a human being is meant to be, that is, a man does not mean a human being if he betrays his human duty (yi). Anyway, it is a concept open to interpretations in its practical applications. We had better discover its genetic code unchanged throughout its changing interpretations and applications.

The pictographic character of Yì (义), found on inscriptions on bones of the early Chinese civilisation, is composed of two parts, the top half the image of a sheep, and the lower half the personal pronoun for “me” or “myself”. An interpretation based upon the early Chinese dictionary (Shuo wen chieh tzu) edited by Xu Shen (58 – 148 CE) says that Yi indicates, by its image, the look of honour or dignity (the sheep marks a “good name”). It seems a vague interpretation. Modern knowledge has proved this famous early dictionary having made mistakes for lack of scientific analysis. From an anthropological point of view, considering the situation of early civilisation, I would bet that it is an image of a metaphor that one offers a sacrifice (a sheep carried on one’s head as the sacrifice to gods), so it should mean, more reasonably, the religious duties to the gods at the very beginning, and later extended to the human duties to respect the others.

Yi is usually translated as “justice” or “righteousness”, contextually good but not conceptually so good. Nevertheless, it basically means duties, which keeps up to its genetic reference to the sacrifice of oneself to gods or other persons. When religious duties transformed into morals, Yi explains the contextual understandings of justice or righteousness in moral cases, almost refers to all right things as well as right ways in moral practice. To be noted, there is no fixed rule or definite agenda for “right things or right ways”, so that the righteousness actually means

“contextual reasonableness”, that is, being flexibly reasonable and considerate towards the others, while on the other side it definitely requires self-discipline, self-abnegation or selflessness. Obviously, Yi suggests the altruist morality of being lenient to others and strict with oneself.

The following listed interpretations are the useful road signs to Yi:

1. Confucius said: “on the occasion you are capable to do something on your duty (Yi), but you dare not, so you prove a coward.”¹ Then Zi-lu, a Confucian student and a swordsman, asked Confucius if bravery is the prime virtue of a decent man, Confucius answered: “the prime virtue of a decent man is his sense of righteous duty (Yi). If a brave man has poor consciousness of righteousness, his courage may lead him to do wrong things. A common man who has no sense of righteousness could be worse, for his courage most likely leads him to commit robbery.”² Confucius emphasised the distinction between a decent and a common man, in a way as Plato did: “a decent man takes justice (Yi) seriously, whereas a common man only takes interest in self-interest.”³
2. Mo-zi (476 BCE – 390 BCE), the founder of Mohism, gives the most clarified definitions: “Yi is what is justified,”⁴ and “Yi means altruism.”⁵
3. Zi-si (483 BCE – 402 BCE), a grandson of Confucius, who was the first to define Ren and Yi as the two faces of morality: “Ren is the recognition of humanity, fundamentally the love for family, while Yi means the appropriateness of social order based upon humanity, fundamentally the advantaged positions for the persons of merits.”⁶
4. Mencius (372 BCE – 289 BCE), the second most-famous Confucian, explains the correlation of Ren and Yi: “Ren is the home of humanity, and correspondingly Yi is the right way out of humanity.”⁷ In other words, “Ren is what a human should be, and Yi is what a human should do.”⁸
5. Dong Zhongshu (179 BCE – 104 BCE), the founder of Chinese hermeneutics or classical studies, offered new interpretations, considered the most definitive: “The point of Ren is that Ren lives in the love for

1. 《论语·为政》。
 2. 《论语·阳货》。
 3. 《论语·里仁》。
 4. 《墨子·天志下》。
 5. 《墨子·经上》。
 6. 子思：《中庸》。
 7. 《孟子·离娄上》。
 8. 《孟子·告子上》。

others rather than in self-love; the point of Yi is that Yi consists of one's own duties rather than the obligations of others.”⁹ And a more lucid saying: “Ren builds the human in humanity, and Yi builds the self in self-discipline”.¹⁰

6. Zhang Zai (1020 – 1077), a distinguished Confucian, gives a political interpretation of Yi as that which accords with “the common or public good for all peoples”.¹¹ So it extends Yi from the moral to the political or social justice, often in terms of the “greater Yi” (大义), referring to the general justice, public responsibility or public good.

Either in terms of the personal virtue or social justice, the concept of Yi has been widely used in social life and popular literature. From the most popular usages and idioms, we see that Yi always relates to unselfishness, helps for no return, offering something for nothing, or sacrificing one's own interest or even life for national honour or public good. For example: “a broken promise, a betrayal of justice (Yi)” (背信弃义), “ungratefulness discards duty (Yi)” (忘恩负义), “wealth of no justification (Yi)” (不义之财) means the ill-gotten wealth, and “forsake justice (Yi) for the sake of money” (见利忘义) to describe an unreliable man, while “to sacrifice one's love for universal justice (Yi)” (大义灭亲) is used to highlight the priority of justice above anything. Yi is also interestingly used as a description for anything that helps. For example, the artificial limb is named “Yi-limb”, meaning “kindly helping limb”, false tooth is “Yi-tooth” as “kindly helping tooth”, in the same way, charity bazaar is “Yi-sell”, charity performance is “Yi-performance”, and volunteer is “Yi-worker”, etc.

There is a special application of Yi that should be more discussed, which is called the “shared breathing of Yi” (义气), indicating the “reciprocal promises”, or “reciprocal loyalty”, or “moral debt”. This interpretation of Yi is prevailing in the “society of rivers and lakes”, namely, the uncontrolled corners of a society, composed of secret societies, lower classes, swordsmen, or gangsters, as well as the grass rooted cultures and something of “Mafia” rules. Interestingly, this culture of moral debt or reciprocal loyalty also exists in higher social classes or the “elites” as an extra “unspoken rule”, in addition to laws and public regulations. As a matter of fact, this culture of circular reciprocal loyalty and moral debts functions as the basis of Chinese “communities” – considering China

9. 董仲舒:《春秋繁露·仁义法》

10. 同上。

11. 张载:《正蒙·大易》。

has a lack of communities based upon churches. It is the Yi in endless circulation that unites people and develops the trustable “social connections”, for the reason that the repeatable indicates the trustable hearts, supposed of solidarity more than the interest-based contracts. And it practically explains the reality of Chinese societies even better than the Confucian academic doctrines do. A symbol of the “shared breathing of Yi” is General Guan Gong (? – 220 CE), whose most known story is that he abandoned the good position and wealth as well as beautiful ladies offered by the most powerful warlord, to follow instead his poor and defeated sworn brother for the “heartedly brotherhood”. He was recognised as the “god of Yi”. Temples in his honour still stand everywhere. Briefly, the “shared breathing of Yi” is basically composed of promise, trust, friendship, and a moral debt of gratitude.

All interpretations of Yi have anyway a “family resemblance” (a Wittgenstein word to describe a set of meanings), especially overlapping on their core code that if no help, or no sacrifice, or no gratitude, then nothing speaks Yi, or something fails Yi. Therefore, Yi approximately means the duty of being a human. To sum up, Yi has been conceptualised into three meanings: (1) the greater justice (大义), which is the public responsibilities rather than personal merits, similar to the common sense of justice everywhere in the world; (2) reciprocal loyalty (义气), which is the interpersonal “shared breathing of Yi” instead of the public. And it might be said a culture of somewhat Chinese characteristics, although similarities are found in other cultures of less modernity; (3) human duties (人义),¹² the most important as I see it, the universal duties of being a human. It claims that human duties better define the concept of human or humanity, than human rights do. It so suggests that the “ought” explains the “is” of a human being, in other words, a man does rather than is.

“Human duties” implies a humanism based upon human duties, distanced from the modern individualism upon human rights. As far as I understand and develop it, a theory of human duties claims that (1) human duties are based upon the ontological condition that everyone is dependent on others to exist. Therefore, everyone owes human duties to the others; (2) human duties logically precede human rights, paralleling and underlying human rights, on the reason that human duties conceptually or transcendently entail human rights, but not vice versa, whereas

12. 《礼记·礼运》。

human rights imply human duties only in the sense of the material implication by means of truth-values, yet not necessarily entailing human duties by means of conceptual meanings. In other words, human duties automatically enact human rights, but not vice versa, and human duties are the necessary maintenance of the value of human rights, but not vice versa. Practically, the concept of human rights might risk encouraging the asymmetry or imbalance of more rights over less duties, which is an omen of increasing entropy, or the disorder of a society. So I would say the symmetry or the balance of human duties and human rights could make a better foundation for society.

Duty

European perspective

Nikolas Århem

The English word “duty” (moral or legal obligation, responsibility) derives from the 14th century Anglo-French word *duete*, in turn originating from the Old French *deu*, meaning “due, owed” and “proper, just”. Further back, we can trace the origin of these words to be derivatives of the Latin *debitus* (past participle of *debere*, “to owe”).

Before proceeding with our analysis of this word, let us recall that it is very hard to view Europe as the repository of a single ethnic culture in the way Han China may be regarded as such. Instead, Europe is composed of a plethora of cultures which have all been heavily influenced, if not shaped, by some fairly powerful unifying cultural forces, foremost of which are:

1. Christianity (particularly institutional Catholicism, since only a few countries took the Orthodox trajectory),
2. The influence of the Roman Empire (and through it also the Greek cultural legacy),
3. A similar path to modernity, through the Renaissance period, the scientific revolution and industrialisation.

Considering the fact that there is no single or “original” European culture, it is useful to trace the etymologies of the word duty in a couple of other European languages. While the French word *devoir* has the same Latin origin, *debitus*, the equivalent word in Swedish¹³ *plikt* (cf. German *pflicht*) has additional connotations; according to the oldest recorded usage of this word in Swedish texts, it means “[an expression of] obedience, submission, dependency” as in “*stå i plikt hos någon*” (“to stand in duty under somebody”), i.e., “to owe someone obedience” (The Swedish Academy Dictionary). Primarily, the term appears to have a military sense, i.e., it describes the military duty owed by a person, a unit, or even a province or region to an authority (ultimately, to the person of the king). However,

¹³ Swedish belongs to the Germanic language family.

plikt (duty) can refer to many other forms of duty as well, for example the duty to attend church service (*kyrko-plikt*), or various family-related or domestic duties, such as “fatherly duties” or “husbandly duties” etc. One can also be duty-bound to an oath. In all of these meanings, there is nonetheless the idea of submission to an authority or having an obligation to someone or to a binding rule, norm or contract. These meanings are mainly representative of how the word was understood in the late 16th century, a period when Swedish society was strictly religious and also highly militaristic, and when the person of the king had to be unconditionally obeyed and venerated. These examples suggest that the meaning of the word is simultaneously derived from ancient customs and from Christianity (which entered Scandinavia around 1000 CE). It is clear that already at this time, the concept of duty (*plikt*) had connotations of “something to be paid”, “something that is owed”.

Although Sweden during the Middle Ages did not have a feudal system patterned on mainland Europe’s lord-vassal system, the basic feudal principle was similar. Essentially, Europe’s feudal system was not very different from the Iron Age system which had also produced the Scandinavian Viking Period. Lords (*jarlar*) were bound to each other, and to their overlords, through bonds of duty. Likewise, farmers were bound to their lords through similar bonds, but from an inferior position. Bonds between the King and his lords were maintained through gifts and feasts. The King or lord bound men to him through generosity, and oaths and service were expected in return. Over time, the Church gradually formalised the system, and the relation between king and subject became less personalised. Towards the 15th and 16th century, across Europe, however, the knightly class (the Lords) tended to lose its position as a relevant military force, and power became instead much more concentrated in the person of the king.

Evolutionary psychologists and socio-biologists studying the evolution of morality claim that much of human morality (of which duty is a part) can be explained by so-called “kinship altruism”, a phenomenon which they have observed also among non-human animals. Simply put, they argue that the cooperative and “altruistic” behaviour observable among many animals has evolved in nature because it grants the group as a whole a higher chance of survival (for example, what is seemingly a suicidal behaviour for an individual might in fact help its kinship group toward survival). The same argument applies to the status hierarchies and the deference towards high-status individuals among non-human animals (as well as among humans).

However, many questions remain unexplained, among them, for example, the duty (customary obligation) in many human societies to treat strangers (i.e. visitors from far-away places) with respect. Indeed, the stranger-figure is mythologised in many religions as a potential god (as is the case in Scandinavian religion, where Odin is often figured as a stranger or a visitor).

We must also take into consideration the relation between the concept of duty and the concept of law, and also how duty relates to the overall concept of “morality”. Today’s dominant perspective on morality in the West does not accept the idea that morality is derived from religious truth, but nonetheless tends to view morality as a universal feature of humanity. In this regard, Western modernity not only deviates from older Western ideas of morality, but indeed from the notions held by most of mankind’s different cultures, past and present. Hammurabi, the Babylonian king who was first among men to write down a comprehensive set of laws (1755 – 1750 BCE), wrote these on behalf of a god, Shamash (Babylonian sun god and god of justice). Likewise, the laws of Christianity, Judaism and Islam were all perceived as having been directly decreed by the gods of these respective religions. It is very difficult to anchor the idea of a “universal morality” – detached from one’s particular culture and society – within a coherent scientific theory, but this idea has nevertheless progressively developed in the West since the late 19th century. Current thinkers like Francis Fukuyama and Steven Pinker, among others, have thus popularised the idea that the West holds the truth and that Western liberal culture, the U.S. in particular, represents the apex of cultural evolution and human morality.

To an anthropologist with in-depth knowledge of non-Western cultures, such a conclusion seems unscientific and hypocritical. As an example of an ancient but “liberal” moral stance we might take the Roman pagan morality which required that, whatever other gods local people might worship, they should also worship the Roman Emperor (and respect the Roman gods publicly). Some peoples could accept this idea, others could not. As we know, this dictum put both Judaism and early Christianity on a collision course with Roman pagan-imperial morality. Nonetheless, in a more general sense, there are clearly universal values that can be identified within the vast multiplicity of moralities that exist in today’s world. The love of children, for example, is universal, as is the notion that one should respect (particularly) elders and that family members have deep obligations towards each other. Curiously, it

is actually the West that in many ways deviates from such apparently universal norms (cf. World Values Survey).

I would like to finish these reflections with a riddle. The Swedish word for duty (plikt), most likely imported from German (pflicht), was probably not used in Scandinavia before the 13th century. However, the more ancient word skuld, today meaning “guilt” or “debt”, in earlier times – during the Viking Age (793 – 1066) and probably before, was the name of one of the three *norns*, the female deities that lived in a house next to the roots of the World Tree, Yggdrasil, near the well Urdar. The *norns* were the goddesses of destiny. Their names were: Urd, Verdandi and Skuld. According to scholars, Urd means “past” (or happy/unhappy fate), Verdandi means “present” and Skuld means “future” (or “debt”). What, then, was the relationship between duty and guilt in this context; what did Skuld owe to whom? A debt to the past, to Urd...?

义 Yi

Duty

Final remarks

ZHAO Tingyang, Nikolas Århem

ZHAO Tingyang

Dear professor Nikolas Århem, I agree with you that, as you say it, it is very difficult to anchor the idea of a “universal morality” within a coherent scientific theory from an anthropological point of view. It seems to me that modern philosophy argues for universal values in a wrong way. There is no universal morality or value that could be defined in and by an individual. I mean modern thinking has misemployed the basic unit to support universal morality. The fact is that no value could be determined and defined upon the unit of an individual. And value is always relational, or determined by variables of a relational function. So I think, if we choose “relations” to be the basic units, it is possible to define some universal moralities, such as duty, especially, human duties, paralleling and underlying human rights. I see that modern people want more rights than duties, and modern politics support it. I should say that the imbalance of rights over duties is dangerous, as all kinds of imbalance are dangerous in the long run.

Nikolas Århem

There are many similarities between the Chinese and “European” understanding of the word “duty” (Chinese: 义) – but also some differences. In my contribution I have emphasised the strictly hierarchic and feudal social order which characterised most European societies until fairly recently, and how this social order influenced the concept of duty from the Bronze Age and forward. By contrast, one might say that Chinese society abandoned feudalism as a political system over two millennia ago, while nonetheless preserving a hierarchic notion of family and kinship relations as well as of society and the state in general. In my brief exposé on European history, I illustrate how a warrior’s duties towards his lord during the course of several millennia (at least until the 18th century) served as the conceptual paradigm of “duty”. The warrior code of

duty had thus for millennia defined the morality of the nobility (much more so than it influenced the moral code of the common man), and only began to lose political relevance in the 18th century. Even so, in all spheres of European society until the Enlightenment, individuals were strictly assigned clearly defined roles and duties according to the particular position, class or professional group into which they were born.

Beyond the political domain, in which only the nobility had real power, the Church generally had the responsibility of ensuring that duties and moral obligations – both domestic and civic – were upheld. Discussions of morality and duty outside of the feudal and theological domains only really emerged during the Enlightenment (although they sparsely occurred already during the Classical Period), but the concept of duty never really acquired any clear and consistent meaning outside those two aforementioned domains. Today, the concept typically has a rather “mundane” and secular meaning (such as carrying out one’s work properly and diligently, or simply following legal obligations). When it comes to values, the concept of “human rights” is much more commonly used in western discourses; indeed, it could be argued that the idea of human rights has largely replaced the notions of individual and collective duties or responsibilities.

Zhao Tingyang shows us how the Chinese concept of duty, from its earliest pictographic representation to its expression in Confucian philosophy, is continuously connected to the idea of selflessness or self-sacrifice. It also appears to be intrinsically connected to, even inseparable from, the concept of justice. Duty and justice (Yi), then, means “to help while expecting nothing in return”, or “to sacrifice one’s own good for the benefit of others”.

Returning, for a moment, to the myths and epic poems of the Indo-Europeans, we see that this idea of duty as a kind of self-sacrifice is very pronounced in the actions of the great archetypical warrior heroes such as Achilles, Sigurd the Volsung and Arjuna: a characteristic of these heroes is that they always are faced with seemingly impossible choices, and that they invariably choose the “hard path” – which typically leads them to their early death. Yet the mythic poems make it very clear that precisely these “impossible choices” are what prove them to be true heroes. In their choices, they demonstrate the “true path” and their “true nature”. Curiously, the character of the Christ, although not a bellicose figure, also makes such a choice, in order to fulfil his destiny and show his true being.

Kant, in his influential theory on morality, concluded that true morality is not “utilitarian”; i.e., the righteousness of an action is not a function of how rewarding its results are. It is the motive behind an action, not its consequences, that determines its moral value. Kant’s theories have strongly influenced modern Western ideas about democracy and statehood. Yet, both I and Zhao Tingyang seem to agree that morality is culturally rooted; different cultures need to negotiate their different moral values and premises if they want to create a universal “workable framework” of morality. Zhao Tingyang makes the important observation that duty must always precede rights, since it is by following our “human duties” that we are entitled to “human rights” (the concept of rights always presupposes duties, whether explicitly or implicitly). I would add that Western discourse on human rights is often loud and self-assured without acknowledging its implicit, cultural and rather hazy notion of “human duties”. The selective application of “global justice” by the West hints at this implicit and unequal value scale, a scale biased against non-Western societies and political systems.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Empire

天下

Tiān Xià

Zhao Tingyang

Alain le Pichon

天下 Tiān Xià

Chinese perspective

ZHAO Tingyang

Political power in terms of the state has explained the concept of the political for thousands of years, yet the world remains anarchic. The political world is therefore repeating its “original situation,” not so different from the Hobbesian state of nature, full of conflict and hostilities as well as clashes of civilisations, so inconsistent with the well-organised states inside the world. We are thus in need of a new political concept that expects the world to be systematically organised and institutionally arranged.

An available concept could be found in terms of Tianxia, a Chinese concept more than 3,000 years old, literally meaning “all-under-heaven,” and philosophically defining an all-inclusive world of “no outside”¹ with “great harmony”² of all peoples or “compatibility of all nations”³. Theoretically, Tianxia consists of three worlds in superposition: the physical world, as the earth under the sky; the psychological world, as the consent or agreement among all peoples; and a political world, a conceptual universal system of-and-for the world.

The experimental Tianxia system was invented during the Zhou Dynasty, generally believed to be designed by Duke Zhou, the first premier. It is supposedly a netlike system consisting of balanced and interdependent and therefore mutually trustable states (according to the different estimations, ranging from 130 to 170 states). Tianxia was the political starting point of China, as Greek Polis was the political starting point of Europe. They have led to the divergent ways of political thinking: where the Chinese begun with “world”, and the European with “state”.

It was unusual to begin politics with “world governance” at the dawn of civilisation, mainly due to the unusual situation that had driven Zhou to invent this world governance far ahead of normal evolution. By a

1. 《春秋·公羊传·隐公元年》。
2. 《礼记·礼运》。
3. 《尚书·尧典》。

great fortune, Zhou defeated Shang, the largest nation, in 1,046 BCE. Now leading all Chinese chiefdoms, Zhou was confronted with an unprecedented problem of governance: how could he possibly rule all nations in China when some of them had much larger populations than that of Zhou? It is said there were hundreds of nations, with vast cultural diversity, in China at that time. The population of Zhou, estimated at about 70,000 people, was quite small in comparison to many others, especially to that of Shang, which had a population of one million. Therefore, Zhou had to solve the challenging problem of controlling bigger powers with a smaller one. The Duke of Zhou developed the genius idea of world governance to convince most of the chiefdoms that a shared world system would guarantee peace and security for all nations and would therefore be better than the anarchic situation in which isolated states were suffering from endless conflicts and wars.

Here is the list of selected propositions about Tianxia from the earliest texts, some older than 3,000 years, and all of them before the common era.

1. Shang-shu (Book of Political Documents) says: the responsibility of the kings of the world is to develop “compatibility of all nations”.⁴
2. Shi-jing (The Poems) proclaims that “nowhere is outside of the all-under-heaven of the king”.⁵
3. In Gongyang’s commentaries of Tso-chuan, the first chronological history of China, it is stated that “the all-under-heaven of the king has no outside.” And it does not make sense to speak of the concept of foreign states, for they are all states inside Tianxia.⁶ A story told in Hanfeizi is most interesting to demonstrate the concept of “no outside” of Tianxia: a visitor came to the capital of Tianxia of Zhou and was asked if he was a guest. He declared he was a permanent resident. The policeman asked for his permanent address in the capital, he said none. Then the policeman accused him of lying, the visitor defended his honesty with the argument: “I have learnt from The Poems that nowhere is outside the all-under-heaven of the king, and that no one is not a subject of the king. Therefore, I am a permanent resident of Tianxia, just as the king is or you are”.⁷
4. I-ching (The Book of Changes), mentions a metaphor with profound implications. It tells of the pioneering kings “putting on their loose

4. 《尚书·尧典》。
5. 《诗经·小雅·北山》。
6. 《春秋·公羊传·隐公元年》。
7. 《韩非子·说林上》。

and relaxing garments and bringing peace to all-under-heaven”.⁸ What do the “loose and relaxing garments” represent? I think it is a metaphor of the political invention of civil rule to replace military rule, or, rule by institution to replace rule by violence.

5. Lao-zi (571BCE-? BCE) develops an epistemology for Tianxia: “to see a person as a person meant to be, to see a family as a family meant to be, to see a village as a village meant to be, to see a state as a state meant to be, and to see the all-under-heaven as a world meant to be. Why do I see everything so well? Just in this way”.⁹ Lao-zi argues an approach of seeing X in terms of a concept that matches X well, nothing more and nothing less.
6. Guan-zi (732 BCE-645 BCE) is a great political theorist who predates Lao-zi. He gave important statements on Tianxia, somewhat similar to Lao-zi’s. However his book had been edited and some words must have been added later by his disciples. It is unknown which are his own words, and which were added subsequently. Guan-zi says: “It proves not good at all to deal with a village in the way of dealing with a family, or a state in the way of a village, or the all-under-heaven in the way of a state. The truth is that we should deal with a family in the way of the family, and a village in the way of the village, and a state in the way of the state, and finally, the all-under-heaven in the way of the all-under-heaven”.¹⁰ Guan-zi also argues for a proper method corresponding to its object.
7. Lu Buwei (?-235BCE), a politician and a great scholar, says that “impartiality to everyone is the principle of the governance of Tianxia, since Tianxia is not the private property of anyone, but rather the shared wealth of all peoples in the world”. He tells a poetic story to demonstrate his cosmopolitanism: a man of the state of Jing, one of the states of Tianxia, once lost his bow. He was reluctant to get it back, saying “One man of Jing lost it, another man of Jing will find it. It is all right”. Confucius heard of this and said: “better not to mention the man of Jing. Just say a person lost it and another finds it”. Lao-zi learnt this and said: “It would be perfect not to mention any person, just say something lost and found”.¹¹

8. 《周易·系辞下》。

9. 《道德经·五十四章》。

10. 《管子·牧民》。

11. 《吕氏春秋·贵公》。

We see that Tianxia is related to all-inclusiveness, all peoples, commonwealth of the world, perpetual peace, and justice to everyone. Unfortunately, the ideal of Tianxia came to an end after its experimental effort of 800 years and finally collapsed in war, due to the defects of its institutional arrangements, especially, the lack of a “world” taxation system, which resulted in the shortage of resources to maintain the “world governance”. Obviously, a weak and impoverished central government of Tianxia was short of power to maintain the security of all nations as promised. The ambitious and powerful states broke the balanced structure of the Tianxia system, which led to war. The first emperor Qin the Great defeated all other states and established the China of Grand Unity in 221 BCE. This announced the end of the Tianxia system.

From 221 BCE to 1911 CE, the China of Grand Unity, often misunderstood as an unchanged and continuing Chinese Empire of Tianxia, was actually neither a Tianxia system nor an empire, in a similar way that the “Holy Roman Empire” was neither Roman nor an empire and not holy as supposed. It is true that post-Tianxia China had kept the concept of Tianxia in use as an exaggerated symbol of its imperial glory, as did the Holy Roman Empire, but it was not accurate. The Western perception of China as an empire boasting of an arrogant tributary system is a misunderstanding based upon misleading information or careless studies on China. The truth of the tributary system was that foreign countries paid ritual respect to the emperor who rendered, in return, the most favorable trade deals. It was unpopular amongst the Chinese financial ministers because the tributary trade had caused economic losses, except for the emperors who indulged in their vain glory. In short, the tributary system was an unprofitable policy rather than the domination over the world that the Western mind misperceived. The truly significant heritage of Tianxia for the China of Grand Unity was the invention of “one country, many systems,” which enabled China to deal with political and social cooperation with the minorities in China, and has made China a world-pattern state, rather than a nation-state.

I propose a constitutional Tianxia, considered a contemporary redefinition of Tianxia,¹² and it is open to debate. There are two triggers for my reinvention of Tianxia. The first is that my long-time trust in the Kantian peace has been challenged in our time by Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*. It exposes a more difficult problem beyond the Kantian

12. See Zhao Tingyang: *Tianxia tout sous un Môme Ciel*, Les éditions du Cerf, 2018, Paris. Or, *Alles unter dem Himmel*, Suhrkamp, 2019, Berlin.

notion of peace with respect to issues of shared values, religious beliefs, and the political regimes defining nations. The second trigger is the failure of international politics. As it stands, it is and continues to be an ineffective game that brings with it the hostile strategies of deterrence, sanction, interference, the balancing of powers, cold wars, and even war itself, all of which only serve to make the world even worse off than it was.

Tianxia implies an alternative concept of the political, by which the political is defined as the art of *changing hostility into hospitality*, instead of Carl Schmitt's recognition of an enemy, Marx' class struggle, Morgenthau's struggle for power, or Huntington's clashes of civilisations. And war proves the failure of politics rather than the continuation of politics as suggested by Carl Von Clausewitz. A constitutional Tianxia is meant to solve the global problems of world-size, such as technologies, global finance, climate change, pandemics and clashes of civilisations.

A new Tianxia expects to be established upon three constitutional concepts: (1) internalisation of the world, inclusive of all nations in a shared system, and so creating a world with no more negative externalities; (2) relational rationality, which prioritises the minimisation of mutual hostility over maximisation of self-interest; and (3) Confucian Improvement, which requires that *one can improve if, and only if, all others improve*, that is, non-exclusive improvement for everyone – thus more acceptable than Pareto's Improvement. Otherwise put, Confucian Improvement equals to Pareto's improvement for everyone or each gets a Pareto's Improvement.

Empire

European perspective

Alain le Pichon

The Western concept of “empire” is vague, as it refers to multiple and very different historical events and episodes, covering a vast polysemic field full of ambiguity that is easily amphibological. Perhaps its strength and coherence come more from its dreamlike characters: Alexander, August, Napoleon, heroes of legend transcending Western history. It is a matter of the extraordinary and the fable rather than of logic and factual actuality, despite the rigorous legal dressing of the concept stemming from Roman law. One may wonder “whether its particularly effective character is not precisely due to its ambiguous and complex nature”,¹³ making this fabulous word one of the most powerful weapons and conceptual tools in history.

The Chinese word for “empire” is conventionally translated as *Di-guo*, literally: “country governed by an emperor, or state dependent on an imperial institution, a rather late invention, referring to the Western model, and reinterpreted with reference to the context of contemporary knowledge,” (Zhao Tingyang). It therefore does not belong to the “conceptual heritage” of classical Chinese thought, while the one that Zhao Tingyang proposes for our consideration, *Tianxia* or “Everything Under the Sky”, covers a different field of meaning and historical reality that is specifically Chinese and foreign to Western culture and history, belonging to the category of “untranslatable”.

This debate on the concept of “empire” refers to a passionate context of tensions, confrontations and suspicions, found throughout history or still today in current events, leading on both sides to imaginary and speculative projections, peculiar to each culture.

The “dream of empire” extends to the whole world and the notion of universality is at the heart of this debate. The following account from Herodotus' *Stories*, with two episodes, one at the beginning and the other

13. Jean-Luc Chappey, *La notion d'empire avant l'empire*, 2003.

at the end of the volume, frames this fresco of the Greek world's confrontation with the Persian Empire, as the two poles, East and West, of a political vision of the world.

The first, in Book I, Clio, is the story of Cyrus' dream: "sleeping on the land of the Massagetae ... [he] thought he saw during his sleep the eldest son of Hystaspe (Darios) with wings on his shoulders, whose lone shaded Asia and the other Europe," announcing the advent of the empire of Darius.

The second, in Book VIII, Urania, is the speech of Themistocles to the Athenians after the defeat of the Persians at Salamis and their retreat to the East: "It is not we who have accomplished this feat, it is the gods and heroes whose jealousy did not want a single man to reign over Asia and Europe" denouncing the absolute hubris of the imperial project threatening the Greek city.

Reversing the meaning of this confrontation, Alexander created an alternative vision of the world, which was until then foreign and alienating, a Greek reality, the Hellenistic empire, with its future developments from the Roman to the Byzantine Empire.

The Romans, conquered by the culture of their captive, Greece, took up this Hellenistic model and, as in everything else, left their mark on it, combining the cult of imperial power with the perfect management and administration.

We could say that at both ends of the Eurasian continent, the European Union and China find themselves today in a situation which could be compared to that observed by Herodotus. The European Union as the heir to the Greek world, whose values it still claims as the only universal ones, facing China which, in the eyes of the Western world, takes on the potential role of the hegemonic imperial power invested with the virtue of universality and centrality inherent to the image of the Middle Kingdom.

The concept of "empire", the Roman *imperium* (command, power) is definitely marked by its warlike origins. The French term *empereur* comes from the Latin word *imperator* which belongs to the family of *imperare* (to command) or *imperium*. The word *imperator* describes a victorious general, acclaimed by his troops and thus entitled to a triumph, this title being granted by the Senate. Julius Caesar is the first Roman ruler to bear the title, followed by Augustus.

A concise definition of the *imperium* is given by Mommsen: "*Imperium* denotes the highest public power, including jurisdiction and military

command," as opposed to the exclusive power to defend, which lies with the people's tribunals, and to the subordinate power to order, which belongs to the lower magistrates.¹⁴

The *imperium* is thus an essential term in the political understanding of the Roman State, intimately linked to a city, Rome, "which was always conceived as a city, even when extended to a very vast space".¹⁵ "The *imperium populi romani* is the land on which the powers of magistrates or promagistrates are exercised. They are powers resulting from the legal horizon of the city of Rome, which extends little by little to the world".¹⁶ This *imperium* has two forms: the *imperium domi* and the *imperium militiae*, depending on where the *imperium* is exercised. The *imperium domi* has authority over the city of Rome and stops at a border marked by milestones. The *imperium militiae* of the *Imperator* is exercised beyond the limit of one mile from the city gates.

Hence, the following consistent attributes constitute the conceptual model of the empire:

- The City, the sacred space attributed by the gods to the Roman community and governed by the immutable rules of supreme political power: the *imperium domi* remains the universal model of the empire, exponentially extended to the surrounding known world.
- The City delegates the power of conquest, the *imperium militiae*, to a military chief elected by its troops, leading him to the "triumph" by which he is recognised as *imperator*.
- From Augustus onwards, the *imperator* cumulates both powers: the *imperium domi* and the *imperium militiae*, military power of absolute conquest.
- These two functions both possess a sacred character; they proceed from the gods and accomplish a divine project in which the sacred nature of the emperor is revealed.
- The encounter with Christianity brings about a profound paradigm shift, linked to monotheism and its universal outlook. Two paradigms will confront each other:
 - The first, imposed with Constantine's conversion, leading to the confusion of the religious model and the political model. The emperor is then the all-powerful representative of one God, thus justified in his project of universal domination.

14. Theodor Mommsen, *Le Droit Public Romain* [Roman Public Law], 1874.

15. Pierre Boilley, Antoine Marès, in *Monde(s)* 2012.

16. *Ibid.*

- The second, on the contrary, theorised by St. Augustine, clearly distinguishes the two models: the purely terrestrial political one, accommodating the imperfection of the things of this world within the terrestrial City. The other, of a heavenly nature, “is not of this world,” the City of God from which the first must nevertheless draw inspiration. These two paradigms will then confront each other, in the successive avatars that the concept of Empire has taken on in the West.

The model took very different forms, depending on countries, language and cultures. In Germanic cultures and lands, under the name of Reich, while claiming to be based on the Roman model, it has taken on a clearly different meaning. Carl Schmitt sees the Reich as an area susceptible to domination, not so much by a city as by a people: “as a great spatial order based on the people, carried by the people... equal to the task.”¹⁷

Inherent to the history of the formation of German identity, linked to the Holy German Empire as to that of the Orthodox world, through the Byzantine Empire, it is undoubtedly more heterogeneous than the history of France, from its Very Christian Kings to the Republic, to the point that Jacques Le Goff tells us that the empire is not a European concept¹⁸. But it profoundly inspired the French Revolution and the colonial project. Different as its forms may have been in history, one attribute remains constant, its first principle: domination by arms.

Thus, coming from Asia, from the Assyrians, introduced in Persia by the Medes, adopted by Alexander and installed in the Hellenistic world, taken up and amplified by Rome, the model of the empire has not stopped haunting the memory and the spirit of the West, defining its history and its grip on the world despite ideological references and formal appearances of its political models. It deeply animates the Western vision of the world and inspires its strategy.

The idea is constantly alive in political philosophy where, from Dante to Vico and Machiavelli, the Empire is seen as the best way to ensure peace. Dante, in his *Monarchy*, legitimises the warlike origin of imperial power. It is God who conferred on Romulus the legitimacy of power through the trial of his battle with Remus, entitling him with the mission to federate a universal empire under the *Pax Romana*, a prelude to Christian Peace.

17. Carl Schmitt, *Sur la notion de Reich en droit international*, 1939.

18. Jacques Le Goff, in *Le Renversement du Ciel*, ouvrage collectif sous la direction d'Alain le Pichon, Moussa Sow, CNRS Ed. 2006.

Over time, the concept has accommodated different forms of organisation, whether republics like Athens or later Venice, monarchies like Austria in the 19th century, or confederations like the Holy Roman Empire, to democracies such as the French democracy, the British Empire, the American democracy still in place today, or more generally the “global pyramid of authority” of the “liberal empire” described by Toni Negri.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the idea remains that the West’s mission is to extend the system and its universal values to the rest of the world. Taking over from the ideal model of Christianity, whose paradigm remains Saint Augustine’s City of God, these values now encompass those of democracy and human rights, just as they could once have been those of the Marxist revolution and popular democracy.

With China having today recovered its greatness, appearing as the second world power, the field seems open for these two deeply different conceptual models to confront each other on the scene of international political debate.

19. Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Paris, Éd. Exils, 2000.

天下 Tiān Xià

Empire

Final remarks

ZHAO Tingyang, Alain le Pichon

**The Great Seal of America and
“the Great Seal of Chinese imperial authority”**

NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM is the Latin motto suggested in 1782 by Charles Thomson, the Founding Father chosen by the Continental Congress for the final design of the Great Seal of the United States, whose official description specifies: “On the base of the pyramid the numerical letters MDCCLXXVI and underneath the following motto: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*.” Thomson explained: “the words under it signify the beginning of the new American era.”

It can be interesting to confront it to the following contemporary quotations by two other Founding Fathers. The first by Thomas Paine, writing in *Common Sense*, in January 1776: “The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind... It is not the affair of a day, a year, or an age; posterity is virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected, even to the end of time, by the present proceedings.” The other is by George Washington, in his farewell letter to the army of June 1783: “The foundations of our Empire were not laid in the dismal age of ignorance and superstition, but at a time when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined than at any previous period.”

These two quotes demonstrate how the concept of *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, which can be translated as a “New Order of Ages”, and which refers directly to the vision of the Latin poet Virgil of the Roman Augustan Empire, and through Virgil’s poem *The Sibyl’s prophecy of a Novus Ordo Seclorum*, is still present in the Western consciousness. But it shows also how it has been profoundly and definitely changed, from the Augustan vision inspired by the City of God, to the American and revolutionary promotion of an individualistic Religion of Human Rights.

A story about “the great seal of Chinese imperial authority” could be found as an implicative or a political metaphor for the fate of power. In the *Writings of Hanfeizi* (280 BC-233 BC), this story began with the miserable life of a man named Bian Heh, who knew precious stones and luckily found a huge raw jade supposed to be of top quality. Bian Heh went to the king, the expert told the king the stone was “a usual stone” and the king crippled Bian Heh’s left leg for cheating. After the death of the king, Bian Heh presented the jade to the new king and another expert told the king it was “a usual stone”, so the new king crippled Bian Heh’s right leg. This king died before long and his son, the young king, learnt the miserable story and tried to console Bian Heh. Bian Heh said he was not crying over his poor legs, instead, he was crying over the truth: that truths be misunderstood, good men be disgraced, and talents be ignored. The young king then cut and polished the stone and boasted the most precious jade never seen.

The First Emperor Qin the Great came into possession of it when he defeated all powers and established the “greatest dynasty of all generations”. The emperor made the jade a great seal of imperial order with the carved words “divine mandate of permanent rule”. The legendary stories had forged a political superstition, which suggested that one would rule for long when in possession of the jade seal. This jade seal was lost for an unknown reason in the 10th century. The later emperors created many fake seals, while never forgetting the real one. But all failed to find it again. And it has not been discovered or unearthed to this day.

According to Confucian theory, the real seal truly representing the “mandate of heaven” cannot be any entity of gold or jade. Instead, the heavens transfer its message into “the hearts of people” then in presence of the public choices of people. The famous argument for the heart of people is that it is the only truth “so evident that no one fails to see it”. It conveys that the heart never lies and does not require an interpretation, while the mind may be misled by tantalising concepts, discourses or ideologies. The universal order of *Tianxia* (all-under-heaven) is argued to rest on the seal of “the hearts of all people”.

The last two years, marked by the great impact of the Covid pandemic, have definitively produced the evidence of a global reversal of the world order, the evidence of an increasingly constraining globalisation, the evidence of global disorder, the evidence that the Western world is no longer in a position to single-handedly define the global agenda and a model of rules for globalisation.

De facto, the Western world has been accustomed, since the Augustan Roman Empire, to considering that its own vision of a universal empire should be accepted, at least legitimate in providing the universal philosophical and political references.

But times seem to have changed. We are thinking about the questions: do we need a new world order? What about the different and previous versions of this Order of the Age, in the West? What is the most adequate model to ensure it? A possible synthesis?

No answer. It suggests that the episteme of modernity, established in the Enlightenment age, has been found incapable to answer such questions.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Equality

平等

Píng Děng

CUI Zhiyuan
Thomas Gergen

平等 Píng Děng

Chinese perspective

CUI Zhiyuan

To understand the concept of “平等” (“Equality”) in China is not an easy task, since there exists no corresponding triad to the European one of liberty, equality and fraternity to locate this concept. Moreover, there are competing conceptions of equality, both in China and in Europe, both in history and in contemporary time.

In this entry, I propose that Alexis de Tocqueville’s distinction between “social equality” and “political equality” can help us to make sense of the Chinese concept of “equality” both in historical and modern times. This famous distinction can be found in Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*:

“Equality can take root in civil society without having any sway in the world of politics. A man may have the right to enjoy the same pleasures, enter the same professions, meet in the same places; in a word, to live in the same way and to seek wealth by the same means, without all men taking the same part in the government.”¹

Obviously, from the earliest dynasties of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou (about 3rd millennium BCE) to the last dynasty of the Qing (1644 – 1911), there was no political equality in the modern sense (understood as citizenship rights and equal chance of political participation through universal suffrage) to speak of. Confucius (551 – 479 BCE) and his followers believe that human beings are unequal by nature, so a hierarchical structure of politics and society is justified. However, he leaves a space for equal opportunity of education by saying “In education there should be no class distinctions.”² As Ping-ti Ho and others have shown, the imperial examination system indeed has increased social mobility of many talented people from a lower-class origin, especially since the Song Dynasty

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin, 2003), p.584.
2. This translation is due to a distinguished Chinese historian Ping-ti Ho, see his *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility, 1368-1911*, Columbia University Press, 1962, p.6.

(960 – 1279 CE).³ This is consistent with the famous Naito Hypothesis that Chinese aristocracy has permanently declined during the Tang-Song Transition,⁴ thus Chinese modernity (in the sense of “social equality”, that is, no legal barriers to hold office by birth distinctions) began with the Song Dynasty.

Another example that illustrates the usefulness of Tocqueville’s distinction between “social equality” and “political equality” is the difference of surnames in China and Europe. According to the British historian Gregory Clark,

“The problem with measuring social mobility in China using surname distributions is that the Chinese have few surnames, and these surnames have been employed for millennia. There are estimated to be only about four thousand surnames in use among Han Chinese. The hundred most common Chinese surnames are held by nearly 85 percent of the population, with the three most common Chinese surnames, Wang (王), Li (李), and Zhang (張), held by more than 270 million people (21% of the population) [...] In England and Wales, by contrast, in 2002 there were 270,000 surnames shared by five or more people. Because almost all Chinese surnames are so common, they typically carry little information on the social status of their holders.”⁵

This much higher isonymy in China does not demonstrate on its own that there is more “social equality” in China than in Europe. Since it may be the case that “the small number of surnames is related to the small number of Chinese characters in the Chinese language; Chinese surnames often consist of a single Chinese character, and only several thousand Chinese characters are commonly used.”⁶ However, more important in understanding “social equality” is the fact that many Chinese surnames have more than 4000 years of history. Today, 97 of the 100 most common surnames in China originated in the Spring and Autumn Period (476 – 221 BCE).⁷ As Gu Yanwu (1613 – 1682 CE) emphasises in his famous *Record of Daily Knowledge*, the Chinese started to use surnames for aristocracy as early as the period of the Five Emperors (2697 – 2597 BCE).⁸ After

3. David Stasavage, *The Decline and Rise of Democracy: A Global History from Antiquity to Today*, Princeton University Press, 2020, p.154.

4. Hisayuki Miyakawa, “An Outline of the Naito Hypothesis and Its Effects on Japanese Studies of China”, *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, August 1955, pp.533-552.

5. Gregory Clark, *The Son Also Rises*, Princeton University Press, 2014, p.170.

6. Liu Yan, et al, “A Study of Surnames in China through Isonymy”, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol.148, 2021, pp.341-350. This article gives the latest data in 2012 on the number of surnames in China: 7327 surnames among 1.28 billion people.

7. Yuan Yida and Zhang C, *Chinese Surnames: Community Heredity and Population Distribution*, East Normal University Press, 2002 (in Chinese).

8. Gu Yanwu, *Record of Daily Knowledge and Collected Poems and Essays: Selections*, Translated and edited by Ian Johnston, Columbia University Press, 2017, Section 23.

surname (姓) and clan name (氏) were merged into one during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE – 220 CE), most Chinese commoners have their surnames as well. In sharp contrast, England only started to use surnames after the Norman Conquest (1066). For non-aristocratic commoners, surnames came even later.⁹ It is with the use of surnames by commoners, more than with the high isonymy per se, that we can say, without too much distortion of Tocqueville's original intention, that China had some kind of "social equality" in its long history, because the aristocracy declined relatively earlier in China than in Europe.

Tocqueville's distinction between "social equality" and "political equality" can also shed some light on modern China. According to the eminent Chinese American political scientist Tang Tsou, the modern Chinese revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party reversed the sequence of development of the three elements of citizenship identified by the leading British sociologist T.H. Marshall in Europe. These three elements are civil, political, and socio-economic rights. "The formative periods of these three elements were respectively the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries"¹⁰ in Europe. In other words, civil and political rights developed first and the socio-economic rights afterwards. But the sequence in modern China is the opposite: socio-economic rights were given priority in the Chinese Communist Party-led revolution and state building after 1949, while civil and political rights are still underdeveloped, to say the least.

Tocqueville's important insight in making the distinction between "social equality" and "political equality" is that democracy is not only a political regime, but a social state of life (*l'état social démocratique*). There is a mutual spillover tendency between social equality and political equality. For example, before the outbreak of Covid-19, many Chinese passengers often sat next to taxi drivers, even if the back seat was empty. This shows a lack of social distance due to the consciousness of hierarchy. This kind of "social equality", under modern conditions, may spill over to the development of the consciousness of "political equality".

Two political developments illustrate this potential movement from social to political equality. One is that two of China's leading tech companies are setting up labour unions for their staff as the industry comes under intense political pressure to rethink how it treats its

9. P.H.Reaney, *The Origin of English Surnames*, Routledge, 1967,p.315.

10. Tang Tsou, "Marxism, the Leninist Party, the Masses and the Citizens in the Rebuilding of the Chinese State", in *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China*, edited by Stuart Schram, European Science Foundation, 1987, p.266.

workers.¹¹ Another is China's 2010 Amendment to the Electoral Law of 1979.¹² We certainly hope to see more movements toward political equality from social equality in China.

On the other hand, there seems to be a spillover movement from political equality to social equality happening in Europe today. The distinguished French political theorist Rosanvallon echoes Tocqueville's distinction of social and political equality in his 2011 book *La société des égaux* by saying: "But the "people," understood in a political sense as a collective entity that ever more powerfully imposes its will, is less and less a "social body." Political citizenship has progressed, while social citizenship has regressed."¹³ The popularity of Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the 21st Century* may be a reflection of this tendency of moving from political to social equality in today's Europe.

Let us hope Tocqueville's distinction between "social equality" and "political equality" will make China and Europe understand each other at a deeper level, and the mutual spillover effects between "social equality" and "political equality" will lead towards a better world.

11. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/09/02/tech/china-didi-jd-labor-unions-intl-hnk/index.html>

12. In the Electoral Law of 1979, the population represented by a rural delegate is four times as high as the population represented by one urban delegate. In the 2010 Amendment, equal proportion of rural and urban representation is stipulated.

13. Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals*, Harvard University Press, 2013, p.1.

Equality

European perspective

Thomas Gergen

The term “equality” belongs to the triad of liberty, equality, and social welfare that are intertwined with one another as are communication pipes. The latter component of this triad certainly echoes the sentiment known by many from the annals of history of the French Revolution, namely “brotherhood” (*fraternité*). At present, we can speak of “neighbourliness”, converting this social responsibility into “social welfare”.

1. Classification

Protection against intrusions on one’s private sphere (especially one’s life, physical integrity, personal freedoms, right of property or inheritance, see the key word “private property”) is supported by a history of liberal individualism and the notion rooted in (natural law) contractualism that certain pre-state rights are inalienable and inviolable. In addition to these guarantees, there is also equality of treatment. This principle of justice currently plays an important role in democracy, and is and must be valid, independently from all liberal and democratic tenets. We can examine universal suffrage, guaranteeing that every vote has equal value in political elections: only so can democratic decision-making occur. Article 3 of the Basic Law for the General Republic of Germany (*Grundgesetz*) elevates equality of treatment to a fundamental right. Citizens’ sense of justice functions when decisions on the equality of treatment are made and measured “with the same gauge”; ethically secured symmetry for the citizen is manifested only then, resulting in a balanced sense of justice and legal security, as merely formal equality is insufficient.

Striving for equality can ultimately lead to conflict with the free development of character and the “equality at the start of the race that quickly devolves into inequality” (*Radbruch*) if people are subjected to

unequal starting conditions, a fact which competition law conversely seeks to remedy.

2. The Guarantees of Freedom and Equality

The relation between freedom and equality requires a fine rebalancing. The constitutionalist Leibholz offers his view: “Let us not forget that the inequality of strata created by liberty causes the value of liberty to appear problematic and that it can only be the deeper meaning of progressive political and social equalisation to enable those who have become inhibited by liberty with the help of equality, [...] that those who have been disenfranchised by liberty once again attain liberty.” Justice should never be the subordinate of one principle; thus, the Constitution is to be understood as a unit.¹⁴ Furthermore, all principles must be examined at the very least and brought into harmony and concordance, therein requiring that the criteria for the limitation of freedoms and justice to be passed be created and defined, keeping in pace with the times.

Constitutional rights can be divided into guarantees of liberty and equality. The former offers a general, comprehensive guarantee of free personal development but also encompasses special types of guarantees of liberty, such as freedom of religion, of opinion, and of occupation. The general principle of equality¹⁵ and the specific guarantees of equal rights,¹⁶ and the legal prohibition of discrimination¹⁷ also comply in a similar relationship to one another.

Under the Constitution of the German Reich from 1919, the belief prevailed that a legal person generally could not be the bearer of constitutional rights:¹⁸ “The basic rights shall also apply to domestic legal persons to the extent that the nature of such rights permits.”

Those who abuse certain civil liberties, such as freedom of expression, freedom of teaching, etc., forfeit these constitutional rights:¹⁹ “A right is forfeited if the person entitled has waited a long time to exercise

14. Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*) 3, 225, 23, 98; previously: *BVerfG* 1, 14 on the basic principles of the constitution which are so fundamental, that they bind the constitutional legislator himself and, therefore, other constitutional provisions that do not have this fundamental status and/or infringe on it are void.

15. As described in Art. 3 I GG.

16. Such as Art. 3 II, 33 I, II, 38 I S. 1 GG.

17. Art. 3 III, 33 III GG.

18. As according to Art. 19 III GG.

19. As according to Art. 18 S. 1 GG.

the right (element of time), and the party liable could therefore assume to no longer carry out that which he intended to, and the present fulfilment of the right or claim with consideration of all circumstances of the individual case is no longer feasible in good faith (element of circumstance).²⁰ Human dignity or the right to equal treatment, on the other hand, are not forfeitable.²¹ While the forfeiture should take the abused right from the person, it should not be considered a punishment that is inflicted upon said person.

The same applies to the limitation of constitutional rights, especially in regard to the general relationship of power: civil servants, soldiers, detainees as well as those who find themselves in an extraordinary relationship of power, such as primary and secondary school students (see for example the current pandemic legislation), generally or temporarily have their rights curtailed; this curtailment, however, may never apply to human dignity or the basic principle of equality.

3. Equality in the Workplace and Individual Labour Law

Thoroughly scoured, this field of law reveals diverse aspects of equality, equality of treatment, and equalisation. Within supra-national law (especially European Commission law), we encounter Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (movement for workers) and Article 157 (wage equality). The intention of this legislative alignment leads to equal treatment within the EU.

According to Article 3 GG, all persons are equal before the law. It is a tenet of labour law that an employer may not arbitrarily treat comparable employees differently. This principle of equality is expressed in many legal standardisations as well as in the general principle of equal treatment within labour law. Article 3 II GG incorporates a particular structuring of the principle of equality: Men and women are thereafter equal before the law, with all genders that are biologically recognised by jurisprudence for diversity reasons incorporated later. Freedom of religion and freedom of conscience are also granted equal treatment with regards to the structuring of one concrete right of freedom: Article 4 GG protects freedom of faith, of conscience as well as religious and ideological beliefs. For freedom of religion and freedom of conscience,

20. Federal Labour Court, decision dated 01.12.2004 – 7 case no. 198/04, cited according to juris, line 32.
21. Art. 1 and 3 GG.

the Federal Constitutional Court outlines that “this term – neutrality, whether it concerns a religious belief or a nonreligious or secular ideology – particularly encompasses not only the inner freedom to believe or not believe, to recognise a belief, to refuse to prevaricate from a long-held belief, and to turn to a different belief, but also the freedom of cult-like behaviour, of advertising, of propaganda.”

In national constitutional law, positive and negative freedom of association are also treated equally: Article 9 para. 3 S. 1 GG guarantees the right to form associations to safeguard and improve working and economic conditions (freedom to form a coalition). It also guarantees the so-called freedom of association, the right of the individual to form coalitions, to join them, and to maintain membership in them. Likewise, negative freedom of association is also protected, including the right of the individual to stay away from a coalition or withdraw from one. In accordance with this right, an agreement between an employer and a labour union that requires the employer to hire only union members would be unlawful.

As constitutional rights are the primary right of defense against the state, constitutional rights such as Article 4 GG (freedom of religion and conscience), Article 5 GG (freedom of opinion), Article 6 GG, Article 1 GG, Article 12 GG, and Article 14 GG do not directly come into effect in individual employment relationships. Nonetheless, in accordance with the judgement of the Federal Constitutional Court, the constitutional rights take effect through the general clauses of the German Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) (§§ 138, 157, 242, 315, 826) and, therefore, have a direct effect on the employment relationship. While the immediate third-party effect of fundamental rights is recognised today, it was harshly criticised a few years ago as an extreme intrusion into private law (see e.g. Diederichsen); still, judicature, including judicature of private law, considers the incorporation of constitutional rights as self-evident, especially with regards to human dignity and equality. According to the general principle of equal treatment within the labour law developed by the Federal Labour Court (*Bundesarbeitsgericht*), an employer may not, without objective grounds, exclude individual employees from benefits that the employer generally affords to a group of employees, even if there is no legal obligation to do so. The establishment of groups also may not be arbitrary in this respect. This particularly includes fringe benefits such as bonuses or voluntary increase of actual remuneration in order to compensate for the cost of living.

4. Compensation in the community of heirs

Under the law, equality ultimately includes reconciliation in order to achieve equal treatment or justify unequal treatment. A look at the *societas hereditatis* can confirm this: coheirs are only the actual heirs actually entitled in the line of succession;²² therefore persons who will not inherit on the grounds of disinheritance, disclaim, debarment from succession, or renunciation of inheritance are not included.²³ Through the Succession Equality Act of 16 December 1997,²⁴ the special provisions in §§ 1934a–1934e BGB were discarded without replacement. Upon the death of the father (and vice versa for the father and his descendants upon the death of a child), illegitimate children and their descendants could also be considered legal heirs and members of a community of heirs, meaning they could sit at the heirs' table as equals before the law.

In the event of multiple heirs, the interests of the creditors of the estate, those of the individual coheirs as well as the various affairs they have between one another may be conflicting. The creditors of the estate would like to be satisfied from the undivided estate so that they are not confronted with an army of defaulters once the recoverable assets have been divided up. Coheirs either push for the assets to be divided up as quickly as possible in order to be able to dispose over the value of their allocation or to obtain the entirety of the estate for themselves, for example owing to a strong family connection; the latter aspect can also be sensible from an economic standpoint. Within the community, there is the necessity that all members participate in the management; at the same time, the community may not be impeded by the special requests of a single heir. Insofar as individual coheirs are entitled to claims against the estate or equalisation claim, their interests correspond to those of the creditors of the estate to a large extent.

It is the task of the legislator to manage the multiplicity in different constellations of interests, as this has great significance for the interpretation of legal provisions for a community of heirs — as well as for the entire system of regulations of an observed legal unity.

22. Under the meaning of § 2032 BGB.

23. § 1938, § 1953, § 2344, § 2346.

24. Federal Law Gazette 1997 I 2968.

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平等 Píng Děng

Equality

Final remarks

CUI Zhiyuan, Thomas Gergen

Thomas Gergen

Belonging to the triad of liberty, equality, and social welfare, who are intertwined with one another, the term, as far as constitutional law is concerned, becomes concrete in the treatment of persons. Equality plays an important role in democracy, as a fundamental right, and the legal prohibition of discrimination, i.e., equality in the workplace and individual Labour Law.

Men and women are equal before the law, and all genders that are biologically recognised by jurisprudence for diversity reasons were later incorporated. Freedom of religion and freedom of conscience are also granted equal treatment with regards to the structuring of one concrete right of freedom. It is a tenet of labour law that an employer may not arbitrarily treat comparable employees differently.

According to the general principle of equal treatment within the labour law developed by Federal Labor Court, an employer may not, without objective grounds, exclude individual employees from benefits that he generally affords to a group of employees, even if there is no legal obligation to do so. The establishment of groups also may not be arbitrary in this respect. By this, constitutional law-based equality takes a third-party effect in individual (private) law. Another example for this effect is visible in the community of heirs being treated on equal principles.

CUI Zhiyuan

Alexis de Tocqueville's distinction between "social equality" and "political equality" can help understand the Chinese concept of "equality" both in historical and modern times. Tocqueville makes a further point about the "spillover tendency" from social to political equality: "equality ends up infiltrating the world of politics as it does everywhere else. It would be impossible to imagine men forever unequal in one

respect, yet equal in others; they must, in the end, come to be equal in all."²⁵

The Section 2 of Article 33 of the current Chinese Constitution stipulates that "The citizens of the Peoples' of China are equal before the law." However, it wasn't until 2002 that the first constitutional case involving the "equality clause" was brought to court. It was caused by a bank's job advertisement requiring applicants to be above a certain height.²⁶ This case nicely illustrates the "spillover tendency" from social to political equality. Let's hope this process goes further.

25. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan (London: Penguin, 2003), p.66. See Jiwei Ci's *The Democracy in China: The Coming Crisis* (Harvard University Press, 2019) for a fuller account of Tocqueville's view on "spill over tendency".

26. <https://www.pkulaw.com/qikan/604dd589ba0595bcd92a9261d1d3bdb9bdfb.html>

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Eternity

永恒

Yǒng Héng

WU Fei

Tilo Weber

永恒 Yǒng Héng

Chinese perspective

WU Fei

While all existent things exist in time, philosophers and religious people invented the idea of eternity, which not only signifies a kind of long time or even timelessness, but also an ideal state of being. In Western philosophy, the idea of eternity is already found in Parmenides' description of being, which he defines as immovable, without a beginning or an end. In contrast, everything that has a beginning and an end is becoming instead of being. In Plato's philosophy, the idea of eternity is much richer. In his *Timaeus*, the invisible idea is described as eternal and immovable, while everything created by God is movable. The noblest type of movement is circular movement, because it resembles motionlessness the best. When there is movement, there is time. But time is not composed of just any kind of movement, only regular and rhythmic movement makes up time, which is still a kind of similarity of the eternal. Hence there are two possible understandings of the relationship between eternity and time. Eternity is either the deprivation of time or the totality of time. This ambivalence is especially seen in the Neoplatonic philosophy of Plotinus. For Plotinus, everything created is temporal, while all returns to the eternal.

The dialectics between eternity and temporality is quite interesting in Greek intellectual tradition. αἰών, the Greek word for eternity, originally means lifetime, age, or an era, which of course has an obvious sense of temporality. But what is time? In *The Physics*, Aristotle defines time as the measure of movement. If there is no movement, it is regarded as timeless. It is from this idea of time that the idea of timeless eternity is invented.

In addition, we cannot forget the very fact that in ancient Greek thought, history was not understood as a kind of linear progress. Different types of cyclical history were quite popular among Greek intellectuals. In this context it is much easier to understand that eternity and the circular progress of history could be seen as two sides of the very

same thing, or at least not so different from each other. While both Parmenides and Plato see authentic being as immovable and timeless, it is not understood as the creating God in the Christian sense. In *The Timaeus* by Plato, the personal gods, who are seen as the planets, are created gods who make circular movements, while the creating god is nothing but a great craftsman. While Aristotle understands the prime mover as unmoved, which would greatly influence medieval understanding of God, he denies that the world could be created from nothing, and hence the prime mover does not represent a beginning of history of all beings. Aristotle's philosophy of time is very important to later discussions of eternity, both in Neoplatonism and in Christian philosophers such as Augustine.

It is with Augustine that the lineal idea of time was established philosophically, and hence a brand-new understanding of eternity also came into being, which became a key feature in the Christian idea of God. Augustine insists on the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, that is, God creates everything from absolute nothingness. Since only God is in the authentic sense, everything else is created from nothing, and always has a tendency toward nothingness, which is why it is always changing, while God Himself is changeless. This is the sharp contrast between eternal God and temporal creatures.

What does time mean to Augustine? Following the Aristotelian tradition, Augustine also sees time as movement from future via present to past. What is new in Augustine is the emphasis he lays on the present. For Aristotle, the present is nothing but the point that divides future and past, and all three are parts of time. But for Augustine, only the present is, but the future is not yet, and the past is no more.¹ A step further, there is no future or past at all.

For Augustine, time is created by God as anything else. But as the measurement of change, whether time is something objective and independent of the soul or but a kind of inner experience, is subject to debate. But most scholars agree that time for Augustine is a kind of inner experience, or the extension of the mind.² The three dimensions of time is nothing but three aspects of the present in the soul. "The present considering the past is the memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is the expectation."³ While

1. *The Confessions*, XI. 11(13).

2. *The Confessions*, XI. 26(33).

3. *The Confessions*, XI. 24(25).

only the present is, we who are always changing experience it in different ways in the soul, and hence the ego is distorted and distracted toward different directions, which is why we are always miserable in such a temporal condition. In contrast, God is eternal in the sense that he is always present and nothing in him is transient. Augustine makes his ideas of time and eternity so radically different from his predecessors, that his eternity is never an elongation of time, nor an infinite one. The difference between eternity and time is that between the creator and creatures, between being and nonbeing, which is so great that nothing could bridge them in the authentic sense. The salvation of human beings, philosophically understood, is not to turn temporality into eternity, which is impossible, but to make the temporal being consider the eternity as constantly as possible. Regarding the past, they should not remember their mundane and trivial experience in the past, but trace to the very beginning of the world and study how God created everything. Regarding the future, they should not expect any personal or vulgar happiness in the future, but focus on the last day and the last judgment and always prepare for that, so that they could go to heaven at the very end. Regarding the present, which, though it always is, could be profane too, they should not concentrate on any routine or humane enjoyment, but contemplate the being of God that is always there. Although one is still living in a temporal way, one adheres to God and joins His eternity.

With the ideas of lineal history, *creatio ex nihilo*, inner time, Augustine radically concealed the dialectics between time and eternity and revolutionised the philosophy of time and eternity. But the dialectical relationship between time and eternity is so deeply rooted, that it still emerges from time to time, especially when we again face the problem of time and eternity in a modern world.

It is well known that Isaac Newton built the foundation of modern cosmology, a core of which is the modern understanding of time. In the Scholium to Book 1 of his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematicae*, Newton gives a definition of time: “Absolute, true, and mathematical time, in and of itself and of its own nature, without reference to anything external, flows uniformly and by another name is called duration. Relative, apparent, and common time is any sensible and external measure (precise or imprecise) of duration by means of notion; such a measure – for example, an hour, a day, a month, a year – is commonly used instead

of true time.”⁴ If Augustine is the strongest supporter of a subjective understanding of time, Newton is the strongest supporter of its objective understanding. According to Newton, time is not only absolutely objective, but also uniform and homogeneous. That is, time is always flowing at the same speed, whether we notice it or not, whether there is anything there at all to experience time. For Newton, there is no such thing as the Augustinian present. Every second is the same, otherwise there would not be mathematically calculable physics. The Newtonian theory of time is called “eternalism” by contemporary scholars, while the Augustinian theory is called “presentism”. With a different understanding of time, Newton also has a different theory of eternity. For him, time is eternally flowing in the same way and with the same speed. Hence eternity is not contrary to time as Augustine argues, but is inherent in the flow of time. In other words, eternity is the way that time exists and moves. God exists in the eternal flowing of time. Newton explicitly denies the Augustinian view to see God as a *nunc stans* without duration.⁵ Instead, the Newtonian God “is eternal and infinite [...], that is, he endures from eternity to eternity, and he is presently from infinity to infinity [...]. He endures always and is present everywhere, and by existing always and everywhere he constitutes duration and space.”⁶ Newton revives the dialectical understanding of time and eternity. Eternity is not timelessness, but the entity of time.

When classical physics is replaced by the Relativity Physics in the 20th century however, Newton’s idea of absolute time is seriously challenged. According to the Special Relativity Theory, time is never absolute, and two events happen simultaneously or independently from the reference frame. The 20th century saw a quite lively discussion on the philosophy of time, partly because of the rise of the Relativity Theory and Quantum Mechanics, partly because of other developments in philosophy, in which the idea of eternity is quite difficult to defend. Alan Padgett develops a new understanding of God’s timeless eternity, that is, God is timeless in a relative sense, not absolutely.⁷ Padgett finds it is meaningless to insist on the absolute timelessness of God in a modern world. In the time dominated by the Relativity Theory, since everything

4. Isaac Newton, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematicae*, translated by Bernard Coen and Anne Whitman, Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 1999, p408.

5. William Craig, *God, Time, and Eternity*, Springer, 2001, p 157-158.

6. *Principia*, p. 941.

7. Alan Padgett, “God and Time: Toward a New Doctrine of Divine Timeless Eternity,” *Religious Studies*, Jun., 1989, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp209-215; see also Alan Padgett, *God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1992.

is in its own time-space reference frame, in what sense can we say that God is timeless? Is He confined to a reference frame or not? Craig decides to decline the Einsteinian theory, but turns to a neo-Lorentzian interpretation and incorporates it with the General Relativity Theory. He concludes that God is temporal, and His time is cosmic time, a privileged reference frame. Everything that happens in other reference frames is now to him. In this way, while Craig saves God's eternity, he also preserves the dialectics between time and eternity.⁸ The denial of Einsteinian theory, however, is arbitrary and unsatisfied.

In Chinese philosophical tradition, however, eternity is not seen as timeless, but as a kind of eternal cycle. The seasonal cycle among spring, summer, autumn, and winter is understood as the rhythm of time. This is a kind of weak circulation theory. In a strong circulation theory of time, everything would return in the next cycle. In a weak circulation theory, however, only similar things return, but they are not exactly the same. For instance, the flowers on a tree of this spring are quite similar to those of last spring, but they are not the same. All living things on Earth experience such cycles, either once or many times. For some animals, a lifespan is no more than one year. A human being would experience many cycles. Hence eternity is understood as living through such cycles again and again. “永” originally means the flowing of water, while “恒” means a person standing in a boat. Hence the word 永恒 (“eternity”) means flowing forever like a river or always travelling in a boat. In *The Book of Change*, the diagram for eternity is “☳☵”, meaning thunder and wind. The nature for eternity is change, and a life could be long only by enduring more cycles. After Buddhism was introduced into China, Buddhist scholars often say, “everything is eternal, and one instance is not different from eternity.” Since nothing is still, everything is seen as eternal, not in the sense of timelessness, but as always changing in the world. Although the lifespan of some lives might be quite long, no individual could be immortal. Eternity is not about any single life, but the totality of lives. Because the cycles would be eternal, and while one life dies, another one would rise again, the world is always full of lives and hence eternal.

8. William Craig, *God, Time, and Eternity*, Springer-Science+Business Media, B. V., 2001.

Eternity

European perspective

Tilo Weber

Eternity and attempts to cope with the concept in terms of philosophical analysis marks the intersection of several discourses that have defined European history of thought by revolving around the following questions:

What is the nature of time?

What is the nature of God?

What is the nature of the human being?

They represent different perspectives on a notion that challenges the human mind intellectually as well as emotionally. The intellectual challenge is to try to comprehend eternity in the context of a theory of time. Emotionally, eternity is associated with existential hopes and worries that seem to be deeply entrenched in human nature and that are related to urgent questions of life and death.

Since the first two of the questions put forward above will be discussed more extensively in the second part of this article, the following two sections limit themselves to profiling and highlighting, rather than clarifying, several related issues that also seem to create unresolved puzzles for thinkers today. The third question will, then, be elaborated to some greater extent.

1. Eternity and the nature of time

While intellectual challenges concerning the nature of time are manifold, not all of them have to be tackled when the focus is on eternity. The most urgent issues, however, that have to be clarified seem to be rooted in the contrast between Plato's idealist and Aristotle's mundane concepts of time. A first question arises from the opposition between the concept of eternity as boundless duration vs. atemporality: is eternity equal to

temporal sempiternity, an endless duration of time as Aristotle suggests⁹, or is it to be conceived of as Plato's atemporal, unchanging simultaneity?¹⁰ And if it is temporal, has it always existed or did it, at some point (in time?), come into being and how?

The difference that inspires the second question is the one between immanence and transcendence: is eternity a dimension within the physical world or is it an inhabitant of the transcendent realm of the ideal as Plato and Augustine¹¹ assume?

Rather than offering answers, it is merely suggested here that these questions represent puzzles, intellectual challenges that, to date, are to some extent open and still fuel debates in European philosophy, theology, and cosmology. Against the background of this view, it is plausible to turn to a discourse, in which the issue of eternity is raised in a different, if related, intellectual context: the quest for grasping the nature of the divine, of (the Christian) god.

2. Eternity and the nature of God

Augustine, the early Church Father of the 4th and 5th century CE, in his *Confessions*, contributed greatly to the theory of time as well as to an elucidation of the relationship between time and eternity. Since more will be said on Augustine later, only the most central Augustinian ideas related to the present topic shall be highlighted here:

- Augustine's concern for time and eternity is not theoretical and about these concepts per se. Rather, it is but one aspect of his pursuit of God by trying to understand His nature as well as His relationship to human beings.
- Augustine's ontology is dualistic like Plato's. And this ontological dualism fits perfectly his inquiry in the dualism between the divine and the human. In this view, eternity is a dimension of the divine, time is an image of eternity in the realm of the human.
- Augustine, other than both Plato and Aristotle, introduces the view of "inner", "psychological", "subjective" time.¹² The issue of eternity, thus, becomes an issue relevant to the human being.

9. Aristotle. Book IV, Chapters 10–14. In: Aristotle. *Physics*, Books III and IV. Translated with Notes by Edward Hussey. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1983.

10. Plato. *Timaeus*, 37c6–d7.

11. St. Augustine. *Confessions*. Book XI.

12. St. Augustine. *Confessions*. Book XI, Chapter 28.

- Last and still important: Augustine's mode of philosophising is not conceptual analysis, *sine ira et studio*, in cold blood. His opus magnum is titled *Confessions*. This title reflects the author's personal crisis, his doubts, and existential worries.

And this leads to reflections on eternity from yet a third perspective.

3. Eternity and the nature of the human being

The intellectual impasse stated above may be one of the factors that have motivated men and women from various backgrounds to seek for alternative ways to cope with eternity. Another may lie in human nature. The idea of eternity is inevitably tied to experiences that affect human lives in deeply existential manners. As human beings, we are mortal and since sooner or later, we will be confronted with the reality of death, the question of an eternal afterlife is urgent both from the point of view of the individual and from the perspective of collective cultural or religious communities. Where reasoning is not successful in meeting existential needs, different approaches are sought.

From a religious point of view, experience can be seen as a way of – not understanding, since this is impossible from the standpoint of faith – but pursuing, getting closer to God or the divine by way of imitation, trying to transcend one's limited human existence and thus reach an ecstatic mental state that makes eternity tangible. In the midst of a community of believers, religious rites, prayers, sermons, liturgies and the like may serve this end. For a long time, critics have claimed that Western religious traditions and practices have lost (or possibly never really had) the capacity to sufficiently meet people's transcendental needs. As a reaction, they have turned to approaches beyond the European sphere, sometimes apostrophised as "Eastern", eg., Zen Buddhism or what has become known as Transcendental Meditation.¹³

A second, non-analytic approach is found in attempts to make eternity or aspects of it accessible to sensual perception. Artists of all genres have tried to do so for a long time. One may point to the sacred paintings of the so-called (European) Middle Ages, to poetic speculations of early romanticists like Friedrich Hölderlin or Novalis,¹⁴ to the architecture of

13. Melton, Gordon J., Transcendental Meditation. In: Britannica Online Encyclopedia. Accessible at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Transcendental-Meditation> (last access: May 31, 2022).

14. Novalis. *Blüthenstaub*. Fragment 16. In: Novalis. *Schriften*. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs.

Gothic cathedrals and much more to illustrate this idea. However, among the various artistic genres or modalities, music might be said to be particularly apt to deal with time and eternity. This is because music can be looked at as configured, modulated time. European musical traditions feature many cases of compositions and musical performances that not only deal with eternity, but also make eternity audible.

A felicitous example is the so-called “eternal pedal point”, a long, sustained note in the bass of numerous sacred compositions. Among many other pieces in his oeuvre, a pedal point occurs in Johann Sebastian Bach’s motet *Lobe den Herrn* (‘Praise the Lord’), where the word *Ewigkeit* (‘eternity’) is accompanied with a long, deep note.¹⁵ A more recent composition is György Ligeti’s version of the *Lux aeterna* (1966), the prayer for eternal light, in which mystical content is met by musical form. A radical approach is adopted by John Cage’s *Organ/ASLSP* (*As slow as possible*, 1987).¹⁶ Its realisation in the St. Burchardi church in Halberstadt (Germany), beyond exploring the role of silence in music, induces a transcendental experience of eternity in those who are present. Some interpreters have observed that Cage was decisively influenced by Zen Buddhism and the early Chinese *Book of Changes* (*I Ching*) as inspirational sources for his music. Here, eternity is evoked by the performance’s sheer length in time. Started on September 5, 2001, it will take 639 (!) years to its completion. The initial pause is “performed” as a period of total musical silence lasting 17 months. In later phases, except in the rare moments of tonal change (on average, there will be less than one per year in the first 70 years), the “audience”, human, time-bound listeners, will be left to monotonous experiences without perceptible beginning or end. Furthermore, it is the organ, i.e., the classical instrument of sacred music, as well as the place (a medieval church), that both support a spiritual air and the idea of transcendence.

4. Concluding thoughts from a European point of view

From a European (or “Western”) perspective, the nature of eternity appears twofold: seen as a concept, it has been “treated” as an object of

Band 2, Stuttgart 1960–1977, pp. 413–464.

15. On the relationship between pedal point and eternity in Bach’s oeuvre, cf. Martin Geck. *Johann Sebastian Bach: Life and Work*. Boston. 2006, p. 427.

16. *John-Cage-Organ-Kunst-Projekt Halberstadt. Organ/ASLSP As Slow as Possible und das Wunder der Zeit*. Halberstadt: John-Cage-Organ-Stiftung. 2010.

theoretical reasoning and scientific analysis; in this manner, philosophers and cosmologists have tried to say what eternity is. As a facet of existential human experience, eternity has been approached by way of ritual practices that aim at inducing states of transcendence in their practitioners, but also by artists, poets, musicians and others who have aimed at showing eternity. The focus in the preceding sections was on European perspectives. However, examples from various fields, including art, music and also philosophy, show that Europeans have, in some cases, long since expanded their horizons beyond the boundaries of their own intellectual continent.

永恒 Yǒng Héng Eternity

Final remarks

WU Fei, Tilo Weber

Eternity, sempiternity,¹⁷ and 永恒 (Yǒng Héng). In the European and Chinese histories of thought, these concepts respectively stand for important and related ideas. Because philosophers in both cultures seek eternity as an ideal, there is something fundamentally similar in both. But due to differences in their philosophical premises, there are also noticeable differences.

From their very inception, European ways of approaching eternity have been marked by oppositions: timelessness vs sempiternity, intellectual analysis vs existential experience, monism vs dualism, linearity vs non-linearity. And it seems as if Western discourses on eternity since have been inspired and fueled by the insoluble tension created by these oppositions.

The Chinese philosophical tradition, in contrast, does not lead into tensions of this kind. As we have seen above, the very word “永恒” and its etymology merge the realms of nature and of human beings. This seems to reflect the fundamental non-dualistic nature of Chinese thinking, which also excludes the notion of transcendence as a relevant factor. Eternity is conceptualised as temporal and, hence, “永恒” is closer in meaning to sempiternity than to (atemporal) eternity. Furthermore, time is thought of as being fundamentally linked to this world, which all beings, including human, are considered parts of. If humans are internal parts of this world rather than Archimedean subjects for which the world can be an external object, they underlie the very same processes as everything else. This implies their being temporal; and temporality, from a Chinese perspective, means circularity. While this concept is not unknown in European philosophy – think of, eg., Friedrich Nietzsche’s idea of eternal recurrence¹⁸ – the predominant notion is that of time flowing linearly from

future through present into the past. If, however, there is no opposition between the world and humans, the latter can be seen as participating in the recurrent cycles that are best exemplified by the endless sequence of the seasons. While it may be doubtful whether this thought suffices to dissolve the internal aporias of European thinking about eternity from an external standpoint, it may be considered one of the factors that recently have motivated Western intellectuals, including philosophers, artists, writers, and musicians, to turn to Buddhism, *The Book of Change*, and other Chinese and “Eastern” sources of inspiration.

The influence of European ideas of time and history in modern China, as many other Western ideas, is quite significant. It is not only very frequently seen among Chinese intellectuals, scientists, and Christian believers, but also has greatly shaped modern Chinese ideology. Hence the classic ideas of time as discussed here seem not quite familiar to most contemporary Chinese people. This has not, however, quite changed people’s understanding of eternity. Although Western understandings and terms about atemporal eternity are not strange to most people, they would not see it as their transcendental ideal. The Hegelian and Marxist ideas of history, combined with the non-dualistic understanding of Chinese thinking on time and eternity, are shaping their understanding of relevant issues.

All in all, the mutual understanding and influence between China and Europe have been and still are a very important phenomenon in human civilisation. They will continually influence our life and ideas in the future.

17. Other than in English or French, in the German language there exists only a single word, *Ewigkeit*, to signify both concepts.

18. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus spoke Zarathustra. A book for all and none*. Cambridge texts in the history

of philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2012.

Beauty 美
Body 身
Contract 约
Death 死
Debt, financial 债
Debt, human 人情
Dialectics 阴阳
Duty 义
Empire 天下
Equality 平等
Eternity 永恒
Face 面子
Family 家
Friendship 友谊
Gift 礼物
Happiness 福
Harmony 和
Heart 心
Heritage 遗产
History 历史
Humanism 仁
Image 象
Individual 己
Liberty 自由
Monotheism 神论
Nation 国
Private property 私产
Progress 进步
Relation 关系
Ritual 礼
Rule of law 法治
Society 社会
Time 时间
Writing 书写

Face

面子

Miàn Zi

WENG Naiqun
Stefano Della Torre

面子 Miàn Zi

Chinese perspective

WENG Naiqun

The Chinese phrase “面子 (mianzi)” consists of two characters “面 (mian)” and “子 (zi)”. “面 (mian)” is a variant of the ancient Chinese hieroglyph mainly referring to the front part of the head, with “脸 (lian) (face)” referring to the front part of the head. “面 (mian)” also has many derivative meanings, such as “见面 (jianmian) (meet)”, “表面 (biaomian) (the surface of an object)”, “方向 (fangxiang) (direction)” and so on. In ancient times, “子(zi)” referred to descendants, and later specifically to sons. It can also refer to the seeds of the plant or eggs of animals, etc. In the phrase of “面子 (mianzi)”, “子(zi)” is a fictitious word with no real meaning.

“面子 (mianzi) (face)” is a very important concept in interpersonal relationships in Chinese society and culture. Its meaning does not refer to a specific part or organ of the body itself, nor specific to the face itself. Rather metaphysical socio-cultural meaning it is given refers to “尊严 (zunyan) (dignity)” and “声望 (shengwang) (prestige)”. These two socio-cultural concepts can be turned into individual power and influence in practice.

Anthropologist Hsien Chin Hu’s article entitled *The Chinese Concepts of “Face”* published in *American Anthropologist*¹ states that according to anthropologists and psychologists, “the desire for “prestige” is pervasive in all human societies.” In other words, in his view, the Chinese concept of “face” is an example of a universal phenomenon.

The first chapter of the book *Chinese Characteristics*, published in 1894 by the British missionary A.H. Smith (1845 – 1932), who had lived in China for twenty-two years, described the particularly important concepts of “face” in Chinese characteristics and the corresponding behavior with dramatic performance. Although the famous modern Chinese writer Lu Xun believed that there were “errors” in Smith’s writings, he

1. N.S., 46 1944.

still gave the book a high evaluation. Two weeks before his death, he reiterated his hope in a short essay that the book would be translated into Chinese and published, so that the Chinese people could use it as a mirror for self-examination.

In *The Gifts*, when analysing elements in the ethnography of Franz Boas about the Kwakiutl and Haida Indian noblemen of the Northwest Americas, Mauss points out that they have the same concept of “face” as in Chinese mandarin or officer. In a potlatch of their noblemen, they have to show off their wealth. Among their popular stories, one tells of a great mysterious chief who had never held a potlatch that he had a “rotten face”. Mauss argues that “the expression is more apt than it is even in China; for to lose one’s face is to lose one’s spirit, which is truly the “face”, the dancing mask, the right to incarnate a spirit and wear an emblem or totem. It is the veritable persona which is at stake: it can be lost in the potlatch just as it can be lost in the game of gift-giving, in war, or through some error in ritual.”²

In his famous book entitled *My Country, My People* (吾国吾民) (1935), Lin Yutang (林语堂) discussed that “the three immutable laws of the Chinese empirical thought system, whose perpetual invariance is beyond Roman Catholic dogma and whose authority exceeds the federal constitution of the United States of America [...] Their names are: 面情 (mian-qing), 命运 (ming-yun) and 恩典 (en-dian).” Later on, several scholars believed that Lin referred to “面情 (mianqing), 命运 (mingyun) and 恩典 (endian)”³; that is “面子 (mianzi), 命运 (mingyun) and 人情 (renqing)”. They translated these three terms into English as “Face, Fate, Favour”.

In his article entitled *On Face-Work*, Erving Goffman pointed out that “in our Anglo-American society, as in some others, the phrase “to lose face” seems to mean “in wrong face”, “to be out of face”, or “to be shamefaced”. The phrase “to save one’s face” appears to refer to the process by which the person sustains an impression with others that he has not lost face. Following Chinese usage, one can say that “to give face” is to arrange for another to take a better line than he might otherwise have been able to take, the other thereby “gets face” given to him, this being one way in which he can gain face.

As an aspect of the social code of any social circle, one may expect to find an understanding as to how far a person should go to save face. Once the person takes on a self-image expressed through face, the person

2. M. Mauss, *The Gift*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York . London. p. 37-38.

3. Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People*, Jiangsu People’s Publishing House, November 2014, p.172.

will be expected to live up to it. In different ways in different societies, the person will be required to show self-respect, abjuring certain actions because they are above or beneath the person, while forcing oneself to perform others even though they cost dearly.⁴

A society concerned about *renqing* is bound to be a society that emphasises “face”. It is easy for an individual to grow up in such a society to learn that the more power a person holds, the more complex their social network; when he deals with others, the more likely it is that the other party will find it hard to refuse his requests; when he does some things on his own, he is less likely to fail. Therefore, in social life, he must not only try his best to expand his actual power, but also strive to make all kinds of “face-work” to show off identity, status, wealth, knowledge as well as interpersonal relationships, so that others dare not easily refuse requests.

Valuing face is not a mindset unique to the powerful. In Chinese society, face is not only about the privilege that an individual may enjoy, but also about the possibility of being accepted by others. Therefore, most people believe in valuing face, and “taking care of their own and others ‘faces’” has also become a conscious and unconscious creed and behaviour in personal life. A person who “pays attention to face” will not only use the above and other “face-work” to “fight for face” for himself, but also try to take care of the face of others; if he cannot take positive action to “adding face” to others, at least he must give a “perfunctory face” to the other party. If others intercede with him and he does not “give face” but instead strictly refuses, the other party may feel very “faceless” or even hold a grudge, and as soon as there is an opportunity, they will deliberately give him a “bad face” and finally make “everyone faceless”. On the other hand, if he accepts the other party’s request and does a favour for the other party, he will feel that his status is affirmed and “gain brilliance on the face”, and the other must return the favour in the future, so that “everyone has face”. In some social settings, some Chinese even use symbolic actions to gain each other’s “face”. In this sense, “face” is similar to “*renqing*”, where reciprocity is involved.

Fairbank pointed out in the fourth edition of his book *America and China* that the Chinese type of humanism included a concern for the dignity of the individual but from a social point of view. “Face” has been a social matter. Personal dignity has been derived from right conduct and the social approval it has secured. “Loss of face” came from failure to

4. Goffman, E. 1955. “On Face-Work”. *Psychiatry* 1955 (18): 213-231.

observe the rules of conduct so that others saw one at a disadvantage. Personal worth was not considered innate within each human soul, as in the West, but had to be acquired. Chinese humanism recognised that some persons had more gifts than others – human beings, though good by nature, were not equal in their capacities; there was no theory that each had an immortal soul.

On the contrary, right conduct was attuned to a hierarchical society in which some people dominated others because of their status. The centre of Confucian moral life, *ren* (仁) or “benevolent love (仁爱)”, was a distinctly un-Christian though logical doctrine which called for loving others in a graded fashion, beginning with one’s own father, family, and friends.”⁵

Numerous studies have shown that the concept of “face” is not unique to China but is in a sense universal. Obviously, the notion of “face” has some connection to “a category of human mind” explored by Mauss and his colleagues that entails that the concept of “person / *personne*” and “self / *moi*” that are mainly associated with “law” and “morality”. Mauss particularly emphasised that the above research was mainly based on ethnographic socio-historical research methods. It is through many ethnographic sources of different eras, different regions, and different social cultures that it is revealed how people shape the concepts of “person” and “self” based on different systems of laws, religions, customs, social structures, mentalities, ethics and morals. In China, where Han Chinese are the majority, this important concept related to interpersonal relations and maintaining the ethical and moral order of traditional society and the root of “face” is Confucian ethics and morality. But it is constantly evolving with the development and change of social culture. Due to the socio-cultural differences of different races, ethnic groups, and regions as well as the differences in age, gender, economic production, and industry categories under the same social culture, and the hierarchical differences in social structure relations, the connotation and practice of “face” in China are also complex and diverse. Therefore, when exploring and discussing the concept of “face”, the investigation of its time and space, that is, history and locality, is an important way to understand its essence. The concept of “face” in Chinese social culture is a kind of presentation of the concept of social “role”, “person” and “self” embedded in people’s social life in the context of Chinese social culture.

5. Fairbank, J.K.(1983) *The United States and China*, Fourth edition, revised and enlarged. Harvard University Press. p.135.

Face

European perspective

Stefano Della Torre

In the Latin language, three synonyms existed for the anterior part of the human head: *facies*, *visus* and *vultus*. The English term “face” comes from the Latin *facies*, just as the identical French word. French also has “visage”, from *visus*.

The etymology of *facies* is uncertain: some authors refer to *fax* (flame, light) and to the Greek verb *phaino* (to appear), others refer to *facere* (to make). On the other hand, *visus* comes from *videre* (to see), as a past participle: it means “what is seen”.

Therefore, the face (the visage) is meant as a part of the body, which stands out and is the first to be seen and observed.

The face encompasses many other parts, whose form, colours, and dimensions distinguish populations, families, and individuals. The description of a person is always detailed on forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks, chin. The portrait of a person is centred on the face, and before fingerprints it was the way to identify human beings as individuals.

A never-ending synecdoche interplay links the words “front” (forehead) and “face”, used to describe a topological condition (to take place in front of something or somebody), which may carry several more meanings, linked to fear or challenge, to honesty or comparison. The verbal form “to face something” signifies the direction in which the head turns, but can carry a variety of meanings, more or less related to morality or destiny. In that sense, many popular sentences refer to the face as the focus of dignity: “to lose one’s face, to risk one’s face...”.

On the other hand, “face” can become a synonym of “surface”: the face of a coin, the faces of a cube, the face of the Earth. But coming back from the world of metaphors to the world of humans, the face is where the feelings and the character of a person can be detected, as humans move their facial muscles in order to communicate, with or without complete control of such movements. Hence another never ending series of everyday language uses of the word, playing on the facial expression

as the sign of various states: health, happiness, sadness, hunger, rage... For centuries, representing feelings and emotions was a crucial issue for many famous artists, who wanted to pick up by their brush the instant of a facial expression, often ending up with a caricature.

As the expression of the face can be controlled, the problem arises that the face itself can tell the truth, that is, it can express sincere feelings and the authentic inner being of the person, or it can show what the person wants to seem like. Therefore, sometimes the word “face” takes the meaning of an apparatus to hide the reality. This happens often with a popular derivative noun, “façade” (which exists also in French), used in architecture to mean the frontal part of a building, which used to be designed with special and self-consistent decorative patterns. It is not guaranteed that the façade patterns correspond to the internal structure.

Therefore, besides countless popular uses, the most interesting point about “face” is that this word points out the place where the identity, the character and the feelings of a person can be detected, but it can be also an external representation, the staging of an identity, a character, and feelings, which are not the real ones. The inner being could be disguised by a face mask, but the face itself can become a mask. The context will clarify whether “face” is referring to authentic realities or it is used to describe a hiding device.

面子 Miàn Zi

Face

Final remarks

WENG Naiqun, Stefano Della Torre

WENG Naiqun

In China's long social and cultural history, whether from historical records or cultural relics, there have been rich "masks" and the appearance of objects with the same symbolic meaning as "masks", as well as corresponding written records. In today's social and cultural life, especially in the folk celebrations of the New Year's Festival, as well as many religious ceremonies, the presentation of "masks" is often included.

From a semiotic point of view, "mask / persona" is a "materialised" expression of "face", that is, symbolism. It is a metaphysical representation of the social role, which Mauss discusses. In this sense, "face" and "mask" intersect. The former presents "dignity" and "prestige" in social behaviour, while the latter presents social "roles" in representation. The former is alive and has subjectivity, while the latter is a solid symbol prescribed by social culture.

Due to the word limit, it is not possible to discuss the interesting relationship between "mask" and "face" in the submitted text.

Stefano Della Torre

In European languages, the word "face" has many meanings and uses, but the most interesting point is its relationship with the sphere of identity / dignity and the expression of feelings. As this expression could be sincere or not, ambiguity can arise, which can be found in the senses of the word "façade" (deriving from face). Then also the concept of "mask" can be usefully cited, as it helps very much to understand this point.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Family

家

Jiā

SUN Xiangchen

Ute Klammer

家

Jiā

Chinese perspective

SUN Xiangchen

The original meaning of the word Jia (family, 家) is “dwelling”. There are two interpretations of the form of this Chinese character. One is that it is a pig under “豕”, where the pig “豕” represents wealth, or is sacrificed to ancestors; the other explanation is that under “亥” is the character “亥” (Hai), which is a combination of the shapes of a man and a woman, in which the woman looks pregnant, and at the same time Hai represents October, which also means “giving birth to a child” in October. Either way, Jia represents a family and the place where it lives.

Family has a very important place in Chinese cultural tradition due to its metaphysical presupposition, and family is the carrier of this spirit. Different from the Western philosophical tradition that emphasises the unchangeable permanent Being, *The Book of Changes*, which is the first book of Chinese classics, emphasises: “In its capacity to produce and reproduce we call it ‘change’.” At the same time, there is no personal God in Chinese mainstream culture, and Chinese culture advocates and adapts to the natural changes of heaven and earth. Therefore, the understanding of the immortality of life and the hope for the future are all tied to the family of “eternal life”.

Under the premise of the “Production-Reproduction” of life, man and woman are no longer regarded as isolated individuals, but as being in a continuity of life, so Chinese culture emphasises that “your body and hair all are given by your parents.” As a result, a theory of “kinship affection” is developed. Because all things are born, the affection between generations is highlighted. Compared with Western culture, which attaches great importance to Eros, Philia, and Agape, Chinese cultural traditions pay more attention to “the love between parents and children”. *The Doctrine of the Mean* says that “benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving between parents and children.” “Kinship affection” is not only a universal human emotion, the most natural and simple affection, but

also the basic passion or the archetype of love in Chinese cultural tradition. The love between parents and children highlights the love between generations. So, the most important virtue in Chinese cultural tradition is filial piety, which is the basis of all other virtues. The Chinese character “filial piety” is composed of the shape of the “old man” and the “son”, and shows a strong relationship between generations. Compared with Heidegger’s “being-in-the-world”, the Chinese culture reveals the other existential dimension of “being-between-generations”. When Wang Guowei (1877 – 1927) explains the transformation between the Yin (1600 BCE – 1046 BCE) and the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BCE – 256 BCE) in his *System of Yin and Zhou*, he also emphasised that the Zhou culture, in which the Chinese cultural tradition base paid special attention to the affection of kinship and respect for elder, made this an institutional principle.

Based on kinship affection, filial piety is developed, and based on filial piety, benevolence is introduced. *The Analects of Confucius* said that “filial piety is the foundation of benevolence.” Mencius (372 BCE – 289 BCE) emphasised that kinship affection is good conscience and good ability, which does not need to be learned, and is also the heart of a child. Based on filial piety, benevolence is developed, and compared to filial piety, benevolence is a more general moral sentiment. Mencius said, “Respect my old parents, and then extend it to other elders, take care of my young children, and then extend it to other children; [...] kindness is extended to protect the whole world [...]” The importance of kinship affection is not that it includes all kinds of love, but that it is the starting point of all love. It is a basic love that can be extended to all beings.

As the smallest ethical unit, the family needs to coordinate the relationship between family members and establish norms of ethical behaviour; at the same time, parents teach children by words and deeds, and children are immersed in an environment, which is the beginning of cultivation. As a result, a very rich family education tradition has been established in Chinese culture, and a healthy personality is developed through family. Various cultures of family have also developed in the Chinese cultural tradition, such as the very complicated surname culture. Because of the most complicated kinship relationship, the kinship appellation system is very finely created. In addition, various annual celebrations express the life rhythm of one cultural tradition. Western celebrations are mostly marked by commemorating Christ, while Chinese festivals are more about family.

The core values of Chinese culture are all based on family: kinship affection, filial piety, benevolence, and universal love for the whole world; family has become the origin of the significance and value of Chinese culture, the basic prototype and motif, and it is also the basic model for the Chinese to understand the whole world. In Western languages, family and home are two concepts, but in Chinese language they are the same word; we also call our hometown *Jiaxiang*, our country *Guojia*. And we regard all human beings as family members: “the world is one family,” and “under heaven are all brothers.”

Luo Rufang (1515 – 1588), a scholar in the Ming Dynasty, grasped the core position of family in the Chinese value order very keenly, and said: “the fate of the universe is eternal, life will be produced and reproduced; for human being, you will be given by your parents, and you will give birth to your children, sons and grandsons, even great grandsons.” Therefore, the fate of the universe has been incarnated in parents, brothers, and descendants; respecting parents, elder brothers, and loving your children is essentially protecting the fate of the universe. In terms of time, it can connect the past and the present; in terms of social space, it can extend to the country and the whole world. Confucius said that benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity, and the great exercise of it is in loving between parents and children. Just using one sentence to summarise the core ideas of these two classics *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the mean*. From the creation of the universe to the continuity of life, from the self-cultivation to keeping a family, to public governance of the country, to the peace of the world; the family occupies a pivotal position in this cross-shaped order.

But family has been forgotten for a long time in modern China. During the New Culture Movement, which began in 1915, there was a great debate on the issue of individualism and familism. Family and filial piety as the core values in Chinese cultural tradition were severely attacked. Fu Sinian (1896 – 1950) wrote an article called *The Origin of All Evil*, which says that the source of all evil is China’s family; Wu Yu (1872 – 1949) wrote a famous article *The Family System is the Foundation of Despotism*, which seemed to have found the cultural foundation of Chinese despotic immediately. Many modern scholars hold similar positions. Based on the standpoint of modernity, they adopt a critical and exclusive attitude towards the family culture, forming a strong “anti-family, anti-filial piety” stance in modern Chinese culture. But in fact, they do not distinguish between the historically institutionalised expression of family and the existential structure of family.

As far as Western philosophy is concerned, there is a certain tradition of rejecting the family. In Plato’s *Republic*, in order to defend the city-state, the defender’s family life must be rejected. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ also asks his believers to regard their parents and children as enemies, otherwise they did not deserve to be believers of Christ. In modern times, once the equal and free status of individuals is established, the biggest enemy encountered is family. In the family, there is a natural hierarchy of authority, and there is also a certain natural power relations between father and son. When modern philosophy establishes the concept of individual, it must be constantly dismantling the power of family. Hobbes reinterprets the problem of family through contract. Not only is there a contract between husband and wife, but also a contractual relationship between parents and children, which is a relationship of subordination and protection. Under the influence of Hobbes, Locke and others, philosophers continued this contractual family structure.

Hegel saw the independent value of family to legal rights and morality of individuals, and family is the first moment of ethical life. Hegel recognised the other side of the independent and free individual, an emotional dependence. The dependence between husband and wife, the dependence between parents and children, Hegel criticised the understanding of family in a contractual way and opposed the simple interpretation of marriage by romantic love. He emphasised the ethical responsibility between family members and saw family as the important ethical archetype to human life. Therefore, in the level of civil society and state, he invented the concept of the second family or the universal family, in order to emphasise that society and the state have a certain welfare or ethical responsibility to the individual, which is similar to that of the family to its members.

On the issue of family, another great philosopher worth mentioning is Emmanuel Levinas, who analysed the Eros between men and women, and the existential structure between parents and children and among brothers in *Totality and Infinity*. He believes that scholars often overlook the complex structure of family because of the superficial biological feature of family relationships. Actually, it is an ontological structure unfamiliar to the West since Parmenides, it is also an important dimension for human existence. Levinas’ analysis can find an echo in the Chinese cultural tradition.

Family

European perspective

Ute Klammer

1. Introduction

The family has played a central role throughout European cultural history. But what was understood by the term “family” has varied greatly over time.

According to today’s European understanding, a family is primarily the two-generation nuclear family – i.e., father, mother, children – but even this concept is changing. More or less on an equal footing are other forms of family: single parents, patchwork families, or same-sex partnerships and “rainbow families”. At other times, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and so on were also part of the nuclear family. Different degrees of kinship of either maternal or paternal origin played a role in the definition. In Europe, an economic unit was also often understood as a family – for example, all the people who worked and lived on a farm.

Also fundamental to the understanding of family is the importance of marriage as a legal alliance between two parties. It was subject to historical change in Europe, as was the role and position of the various family members.

2. Definitions: Family and kinship

From a micro perspective, each individual family represents a social group; from a macro perspective, the family can be characterised as an institution within society. Sociological definitions of the concept of family usually refer to both aspects. Thus, according to family sociologist Nave-Herz,¹ families are characterised by:

1. 2004, p. 30.

1. their biological-social dual nature, i.e., the assumption of the reproductive and socialisation function in addition to other social functions
2. generational differentiation (e.g., grandparents / parents / children)
3. a specific relationship of cooperation and solidarity.

Historically, at least five forms of household families can be distinguished in Europe:²

1. the two-generation family or nuclear family
2. the multi-generational family or descent family (as a household in which more than two generations live together)
3. the extended family household, in which other relatives live alongside the nuclear family
4. the polynuclear or multiple family household as a household in which several nuclear families live together
5. the “whole house” as a household in which unrelated persons (such as maids, farmhands) live alongside a nuclear family.

In the 20th century, the nuclear family gained particular importance, which is why it is discussed in more detail here.

A nuclear family, elementary family or conjugal family is a family group consisting of parents and their children (one or more), typically living in one home residence. It contrasts with a single-parent family, the larger extended family, or a family with more than two parents. Nuclear families typically centre on a married couple, which may have any number of children, though with some differences in definition. Some definitions allow only biological children that are full-blood siblings and consider adopted or half and step siblings a part of the immediate family, but others allow for a stepparent and any mix of dependent children, including stepchildren and adopted children. Some sociologists and anthropologists consider the nuclear family as the most basic form of social organisation, while others consider the extended family structure to be the most common family structure in most cultures and at most times. The nuclear family became the most common form of family structure in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

In the German micro-census, the most important database of the Federal Statistical Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, “family”

2. Mitterauer 1990, p. 92f.

today includes all parent-child relationships, i.e., married couples, non-marital (mixed-sex) and same-sex partnerships as well as single parents with children within the household. In addition to biological children, stepchildren, foster children, and adopted children are also included without age limits. Thus, a family always consists of two generations: parents and children living in the household. Children who still live with their parents in the same household but who already have their own children as well as children who live with a partner in a cohabiting relationship are not counted as part of the family of origin in the micro-census but are statistically counted as a separate family or living arrangement.

In modern western societies, descent and kinship are established through both male and female ancestors. This is called cognatic descent (or: non-unilinear descent, bilinear descent). Male and female ancestors are now considered equally significant.

3. History of the family in Europe

In ancient Greece and Rome, the *oikos* (Greece) and the *familia* (Rome) included spouses, children, and slaves. The family had important responsibilities in jurisdiction, economy, and education, which were carried out by the male head of the family, who as *pater familias* had unlimited rights and power over the family members.

Among the Germanic peoples, the clan was at the forefront of family life, i.e., a social group of related people that had a head. Marriage presupposed origin from a roughly equal economic and social class. It was mainly an economic alliance, concluded for the preservation of power and the increase of the clan's property.

This basic requirement was only slowly softened by the spread of Christianity. A reorientation of moral-ethical evaluation changed the status of marriage and clan. Monogamy and fidelity were demanded of Christian spouses. Economic or status reasons as motives for marriage were considered secondary.

A marriage according to Christian understanding was not to be based on the purchase of a wife, but on the consensus of the partners. The Christian Church required that both spouses were of the same faith and that the woman entered the marriage as a virgin. It pronounced incest taboo in order to break the power of large family clans.

Polygamy (multiple marriages) was common in pre-Christian clan structures to ensure offspring and thus the existence of the clan. Among Christians, on the other hand, it was forbidden and existed only in secret in the late Middle Ages. The previously common legal equality of marital and non-marital children, or even of cohabitants, was abolished with the spread of Christian values.

The increasing division of labour between trade and crafts in the cities, and later also in the countryside, gave rise to a new type of family based on the Christian worldview, that of the "household family". It is formed by an economic unit, such as a craft business, a clothes shop or a farm. In his house, the father of the family was in charge – his word had the force of law within his household. The household family included not only blood relatives, but also servants and maids who worked for the family business. The head of the household represented the family to the outside world, he held public office and made decisions.

Women's responsibilities were directed inwards: organising the household, bringing up the children, but also helping in the family business. Medieval housewives gave birth to many children, but only a few reached adulthood. Marriages of inclination or love only came about if they fitted into the household community and contributed to its existence. Houses had a special legal status exercised by the head of the household – a house unit was not designated by a family name but by a house name, which also marked the house from the outside in many villages. This form of household family shaped all further family images in the next centuries. Essential characteristics such as the dominant role of the father, the manageable order and size of the household, the role and task of the wife, or the mutual economic dependence can be found again in the modern forms of the middle-class and working-class family.

In the German Nazi state (1933 – 1945), a very special ideological significance was attributed to the family in the service of the racial doctrine propagated by the Nazis. In order to strengthen the German people, women and men should marry as early as possible and produce many offspring. However, starting a family was not intended for the purpose of achieving private happiness, but was seen as a national duty. Only marriages in which the races did not mix were desirable. Women were not supposed to work, but to become mothers. The ideal was the peasant extended family, in which the Germanic heritage of the clan was visible. Embedded in the "blood and soil" mysticism, the National Socialist ideologists saw a natural order in the hierarchy of the sexes, in the authority of

the head of the family. The bourgeois family, which had established itself in the 19th century as a typical urban family, was too private for the Nazis and thus suspect. According to the ideology of the state, the family was to serve the rearing of children, and political and social shaping itself was to be reserved to the state and its institutions.

After the Second World War, many families in Germany were destroyed. Most women worked, but primarily because there was a lack of male labour. When this was again sufficiently available, women were again forced out of working life, also by family policy measures. The West German image of the family in the 1950s conjured up an idyll, limited to the two-generation nuclear family in its own little house. The father was the head and breadwinner, the mother brought up the children and ran the household. This model continued to shape West Germany and other continental welfare states in the decades that followed, whereas Scandinavian countries developed more individualistic forms of family life. In the socialist state of the GDR, women were fully integrated into the labour market, although men did not take over the household and family work at home.

In Germany, “marriage and family” are protected to this day by the Constitutional Law, which came into force in 1949. The following decisive statements are found in Article 6 of the Constitution:

1. Marriage and family are under the special protection of the state order.
2. The care and upbringing of children is the natural right of parents and their primary duty. The state community shall watch over their activities.
3. Children may only be separated from the family against the will of the parents on the basis of a law if the parents fail or if the children threaten to become neglected for other reasons.
4. Every mother shall be entitled to the protection and care of the community.
5. Children born out of wedlock shall be provided by legislation with the same conditions for their physical and psychological development and their position in society as are provided for children born in wedlock.

Many social benefits are still – in contrast to e.g., the Scandinavian countries – linked to the form of a life of marriage. Gender and equality research, but also family research, criticises the adherence to the

traditional image of the bourgeois nuclear family, as this results in incentives for an asymmetrical division of labour (man as the gainfully employed family breadwinner, woman as the non-earner or additional earner with predominant responsibility for household and family). There is also criticism that the law has not kept pace with the actual development of family forms. Admittedly, it is now possible for same-sex couples to marry and the number of same-sex couples with children has increased. However, single parents in particular – mostly mothers – often face particular difficulties and are among the population groups with the highest risk of poverty.

4. Recent changes in family histories and lifestyles

Since the mid-1960s, family life and living arrangements have undergone major changes in Europe. The change extends to numerous aspects and areas of family life. It is expressed both in demographic developments and in the dynamics of couple relationships and family life courses. In practically all European societies, marriage rates have declined, and divorce rates have risen in recent decades. At the same time, single life and non-marital cohabitation have increased as forms of life in many countries. In addition, the birth rate has fallen, and marriage has become less important as an institutional framework for starting a family and raising children. Finally, these changes have been accompanied by a significant increase in the age at which people marry and start a family.

However, the change in marriage and fertility behaviour as well as in family forms has by no means been uniform and proceeded at a similar pace in European countries. It was registered earliest, in the second half of the 1960s, in Northern European countries and began a few years later in Central and Western Europe. In Southern European countries, the change in birth and family dynamics began later and is still less extensive today. In the former socialist Central and Eastern European countries, significant family demographic upheavals occurred in the years following the collapse of the communist regimes.

The change in birth patterns and lifestyles is often regarded in demographic research as “Europe’s second demographic transition”³ It is understood as the consequence of a cultural upheaval that has caused a

³ Lesthaeghe 1992.

comprehensive change in marriage and birth behaviour. The thesis of the second demographic transition has had a lasting impact on research on recent changes in the family, life forms, and fertility behaviour, and today stands for the most important and influential concept in the analysis of family demographic change in Europe.⁴ However, some authors point to differences in the extent and dynamics of family change between European countries due to different cultural traditions and institutional frameworks of the countries.⁵

Today more than ever before, the family in Europe is an emotional unit based on voluntary partnership. The idea of the economic unit and dependence on a provider are subordinate. Offspring also play a different role: children are important for the emotional well-being, not to ensure the material continuity of a family. Family constellations have also changed: marriage is not a necessary basis. The number and proportion of single parents has increased significantly in recent decades. Separations are giving rise to step or patchwork families, residential and house communities – also with older members belonging to the grandparent generation. In Germany, the “strong male breadwinner model” has statistically predominantly been replaced by a “weak breadwinner model”, in which the man is still the main breadwinner of the family, but the woman works at least part-time. However, families in which the woman generates the majority of the family income are still clearly in the minority; in Germany, only about one in 10 couple families has a female family breadwinner.⁶

4. Huinink/Konietzka 2007, p. 113.

5. Kaufmann et al. 2002, among others.

6. Klammer/Klenner 2022.

家 Jiā

Family

Final remarks

SUN Xiangchen, Ute Klammer

The discussion on the topic of “family” in a comparison between Europe and China has highlighted some parallels, but also different emphases.

In both Europe and China, the family is very important in the social fabric. Families are an important and stable harbour for daily life. They are characterised by the emotional bond of their members and they are an important basis for mutual support. In China as well as in Europe, the nuclear family is an important unit for socialisation, for the upbringing of children and for the support of older family members in need of help. In this context, the upbringing of children in the family is of particular importance in China: without the Christian promise of resurrection and eternal life, which characterises European culture at least in part, children are the guarantor of continuity and immortality. Having children and thus ensuring continuity is therefore a core concern of Chinese families. This is not generally the case in Europe. In Europe, for example, in the course of the “second demographic transition”, not only has the average number of children per family declined without political directives, but the proportion of childless women/couples has also risen.

A difference between Europe and China can also be seen in the fact that European families – despite all the differences that can be observed between different European countries – tend to be more individualistic today than Chinese families. This can be seen, for example, in the area of intergenerational support and care, which plays a greater role in China than in Europe. While Chinese grandparents see it as a central task to look after their grandchildren – also to support their working daughters and sons – in Europe, children are expected to be looked after mainly within the system of public childcare. Grandparents play only a supplementary role here, especially since they often do not live in the same place as their children and grandchildren. Also, when older family members need care, they are often cared for in professional elder care

facilities. However, this is more pronounced in the Scandinavian welfare states than in the continental European welfare states.

Unlike in Europe, in China the concept of family is historically directly linked to the “house” or “home”. “Family” describes the place where the members live and the way they interact. This explains the great importance attached to home ownership in China. Thus, the high mutual commitment of family members in China is also reflected in intra-family financial transfers, which enable young couples to acquire home ownership at an early age. Such intra-family financial transfers are unusual in Europe, or at best common between parents and children. In some European countries – such as Germany – home ownership does not have the same significance as in China. Many families, especially young families, live in rented flats. “Home” in China, however, means more than the family’s place of residence – it also describes structures of a natural authority between generations, between father and son. In China, ideas of “filial piety” and “benevolence” closely associated with the “family” therefore contrast with an individualistic view of humans, which is more dominant in Europe. In the new generation, young people in China are also becoming more and more individualistic, but family, as a source of value, still provides a certain spiritual value in their life.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Friendship

友谊

Yǒu Yì

QIU Zhijie

Michael Kahn-Ackermann

友谊 Yǒu Yì

Chinese perspective

QIU Zhijie

The ancient Chinese Book of Rites says: “The Chinese character for friendship, peng (朋) is glossed as “those having the same master”. While another term for friendship, you (友) is glossed as “those with the same aspiration”. Friends get together to discuss and learn moral principles.” The dictionary *Shuowen Jiezi* (Discussing Writing and Explaining Characters) of the Eastern Han Dynasty once again emphasises that people who have the same aspiration are to be called you (friends). In other words, “friends” are defined as like-minded people. Friends are to improve morality together, “the friendship between junzi (gentlemen, noble person) is based on morality,” and “a junzi always learns and shares with friends.”

In *Zilu* of the *Analects*, Confucius says: “among his friends, earnest and urgent; among his brethren, bland.” Here the “friends” he referred to can encourage and urge each other, and mutual help mainly occurs at the level of spiritual needs. In *Ji Family* of the *Analects*, Confucius puts forward three principles for making friends: “Friendship with the upright; friendship with the sincere; and friendship with the man of much observation – these are advantageous. Friendship with the man of specious airs; friendship with the insinuatingly soft; and friendship with the glib-tongued – these are injurious.” He does not pay attention to making powerful friends who can bring material benefits, but emphasises the integrity of friends. In other words, “friends” are needed to meet high-level spiritual pursuit and promote each other in spirit. Friendship is the association of the souls, even beyond time and distance, a view that is highly idealistic.

However, in oracle bone inscriptions, the word you (friend) is two hands stretched out in the same direction. That is, when you are doing something, someone lends you a hand. In this sense, “friendship” is a kind of blessing and provides extra benefits. In other words, in the original sense of the character you, friends provide mutual assistance and

bring benefits to each other, which is more in line with the modern understanding of “friendship”: friends are helpers, sponsors, supporters and consultants, and sometimes even partners in action. That is to say, in China, there is certainly a market for the mutually beneficial altruistic view of friendship and the alliance model of friendship. This is obviously different from the friendship described in the above ancient classics.

Therefore, in China, there may be a deep division in the view of friendship between the lower class and the elite.

People of the lower class are more in line with the mutually beneficial social interaction mode described by modern sociology and economics. When seeking friendship, they take more account of benefits. Therefore, people of the lower class believe in making friends from all walks – “the more friends you have, the more ways and options you’ll have in your life.” The Righteousness of Jianghu is closer to the alliance model, people who believe in it always attach great importance to reciprocity between friends – “courtesy demands reciprocity,” “give a plum in return for a peach.” “Friends” are not only people who share common interests and common likes, but more importantly, they cooperate. They are people who can face difficulties together, help you when you are in difficulty, and even “travel across a river in the same boat” and face life and death together. Therefore, people from lower classes think that the best friend is to “send charcoal in snowy weather (provide timely help)”, not to “add flowers to the brocade (make perfection still more perfect)”.

Under the idea of “more friends mean more options,” the Chinese people from lower classes – that is, most Chinese people – create a differential order pattern of “friends” based on their closeness to them. They arrange a broad pedigree of friends in their life, from very indifferent and distant friends to very close friends.

From the very distant friends such as “someone you have a nodding acquaintance with” or “brothers in debauchery,” the friend relations formed by common interests, such as gambling friends, drinking friends and poetry friends, gradually develop into deep and meaningful exchanges and become close friends, bosom friends and profound friends; to long-term contacts who become old friends or even develop a friendship spanning two or more generations; then to the best friend, from “friends with complete mutual understanding” of “everything you say is right” to “bosom friends who are willing to die for one another,” “a gentleman is ready to die for his bosom friends.” At the highest level, best friends become family members. Men call each other “brothers” and

women call each other “sisters”. People establish a virtual blood relationship, that is, “becoming sworn brothers or sisters”. The so-called “become true confederates and blood brothers” refers to the exchange of the Gold and Orchid Card at the sworn ceremony. People in the rituals often pledge each other in wine in which blood has been mixed, which shows the essence of its “alliance”.

In daily life, ordinary Chinese people skillfully meander through relationships with relatives close and distant, friends close and unfamiliar. They keep in touch and interact with each other constantly, and maintain friendship that is not as deep, so as to call “the power of weak relationship” in case of need. There are many taboos and cumbersome etiquette between such relatively alienated friends, which shows that the cost of maintaining the relationship is not low.

At the same time, for the deeper community of interests, the Chinese people are very dependent on and attached to it, and also invest quite deep feelings into building their own sense of belonging and value. At the same time, the Chinese people are very dependent on, and attached to, common-interest communities, and also invest quite deep emotions to build their own sense of belonging and value. At this level of relationship, friends will be more casual with each other, they can often share private thoughts or come to your house uninvited, because they can't help thinking of you, and friends have the responsibility to understand and tolerate it.

In the deepest friendship, the Chinese at the bottom also require that the “true friendship” must be unswerving for life. They trust it very much. Once they are betrayed, they will be deeply hurt, and the whole society will agree to retaliation. Even Jianghu gangs can “carry one's heart upon one's sleeve” and “shed one's blood for his or her friends.” People regard “personal loyalty” as an important creed, and those who betray it will be severely punished. The legendary Guan Yu was forged into the patron saint of righteousness.

The creed of “a gentleman is ready to die for his bosom friends” has also been used to train and mentally kidnap assassins for suicide attacks. Sima Qian mentioned several famous historical assassins in *Legends of Assassins of the Records of the Grand Historian*, such as Yu Rang, Zhuan Zhu, Nie Zheng and Jing Ke, all of which were given favours at ordinary times, and then ordered to pay their confidants with death.

There are two most famous stories about friendship in ancient China. One is the Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Garden, sworn by Liu Bei,

Zhang Fei, and Guan Yu, which describes the model of building a mutually beneficial community. The other is the legend of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi — *High Mountain and Flowing Water*, which reflects the non-utilitarian spiritual communication respected by the elite. This kind of non-utilitarian spiritual contact is regarded as “friendship between ganoederma and orchid”. It was said in *The Tree on the Mountain of Zhuangzi*: “And the friendship between junzi is as tasteless as water, while that of xiaoren (immoral men) is sweet as sweet wine; but the tastelessness of the junzi leads on to affection, and the sweetness of xiaoren to aversion.”

Such friendship is not for solving difficulties in life, but for spiritual perfection and improvement. That is, in the mind of junzi, a beneficial friend can “help perfect one's virtue.” In the story of *High Mountain and Flowing Water*, the establishment of this predetermined spiritual community is greatly mystified. Its occurrence does not even require mutual understanding and cognition, daily interaction, and the same experience or background — the real confidant's hearts and feelings find a perfect response in a mysterious way.

The relationship formed by mutually beneficial interests is belittled as the relationship between xiaoren. Confucius said: “Junzi is broad-minded and not a partisan. Xiaoren is a partisan and not broad-minded.” This statement has gradually evolved into harsh words of “junzi unites people with morality, while xiaoren only pay attention to self-interest” or “xiaoren gathers for benefit.” “If you make friends based on benefits, once the benefits are exhausted your friendship will end; those who make friends by the standard of power and influence will lose their friendship when the power is cut off; those who make friends by affection will be hurt badly once the affection is gone; those who make friends based on a sincere heart and see living a simple life as one's ideal will not lose their friends.”

Since non-utilitarian friendship is regarded as the highest level of friendship, gradually, a belief sprung up among Chinese literati: Friends can lack daily communication like Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi, or they can be good friends who never meet at ordinary times. Friends who believe that “a bosom friend afar brings a distant land near” may still care about each other and write to each other. Du Fu said in his poem: “Though I can be regarded as a hermit in Lu county, I adore him like my own brother. After getting drunk at night, we sleep under the same quilt, and stroll about during the day hand in hand.” In today's view, it may easily be mistaken for an overly romantic same-sex relationship. The more extreme

requirement is not to miss each other, like stated in *Zhuangzi*: “When the springs are dried up, the fishes collect together on the land. Then, that they should moisten one another there by the damp about them, and keep one another wet by their slime, it would be better for them to forget one another in the rivers and lakes.”

Under the guidance of this idea, the Chinese elite literati, that is, *junzi*, have gradually gone down the path of performing solitude. Because lonely people are likely to hold more stringent standards for choosing friends, they are considered to be more noble. Therefore, in history, there have been repeated claims by people that “only plum blossom is a bosom friend” — only certain plants, such as plum blossom, orchid or bamboo, or stone, cloud or water, or the ancients, have the most profound friendship with them.

Bai Juyi, a poet of the Tang Dynasty, said: “Water, able by its nature to be serene, has been my friend; bamboo, understanding its core to be empty, is my teacher.” This poet has another poem saying: “Turning my head around, I ask the pair of rocks: “Can you keep company with an old man like myself?” Although the rocks cannot speak, they promise that we will be three friends.” Xie Fangde, a poet of the Song Dynasty, said in his poem: “People with noble moral integrity love to align with mountains and rivers.” Mi Fu, also a calligrapher in the Northern Song Dynasty, said that when he saw a stone, he straightened his hat and bowed to the stone: “I’ve wanted to see you, brother Stone, for twenty years! This stone is enough for me to worship.” Gao Xi’en, a poet of the Qing Dynasty, named his study *Youshi Zhai* (*The study of the friendly stone*). One of the most extreme cases is the Southern Song Dynasty poet Lin Hejing, who is said to take the plum blossom as his wife and a crane as his son. Therefore, for a *junzi*, the symbol of noble friendship is not the Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Garden, but the Three Friends of Winter that comprise the pine, bamboo, and plum. In this way, all the literati who claim that they are so alone that they can only associate with plants and stones have formed a public body of mutual preference.

This kind of friendship between *junzi* obviously has its sense of romance. It denies mutual benefit as the basis of friendship, and believes that friendship is the result of spiritual connection, so as to successfully exclude the relationships between colleagues, associates, and fellow townsmen which are based on common interest and background.

But people occasionally question such exaggerated views, hence the saying “most of those who stress righteousness are ordinary people

engaged in humble occupations, while knowledgeable people often do things that go against their conscience and betray their ties of camaraderie.”

Friendship

European perspective

Michael Kahn-Ackermann

A quote from the preface to a book about friendship in the age of the internet states:

Every person is unique in his or her nature and behaviour in interpersonal relationships. This individuality makes it difficult for researchers to find a uniform definition for friendship and to make a general statement about the connection between friendship and personality. Friendship is a concept that cannot be explained in simple words. Every person has his or her own understanding of the conditions that qualify someone as a friend and of what friendship means to them.

Before the understanding of friendship got lost in countless individualisms and singularities, as expressed in this section, important thinkers of Europe took the trouble to explore the essence of friendship and thus influenced our understanding of friendship until today.

Friendship (*philia*) is an important theme of Aristotelian moral theory. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* understands friendship to be the optimal form of relationship, in which the participants value each other and do good deeds for each other. The term *philia* is still translated as “friendship”, even though it is not identical to the term as it is used today. Nevertheless, it has had a great influence on the ideas of friendship of the following generations in Europe – until today.

In his philosophy of friendship, Aristotle makes a fundamental distinction between friendship between equals and between unequals. For him, real friendship is reciprocal and therefore only possible among equals.

Aristotle distinguishes three types of friendship among equals:

1. Friendship that is formed out of the motive of usefulness
 2. Friendship that arises from common desire
- Both 1. and 2. are easily dissolved and temporary since the objects of utility and pleasure change for people – they are friendships of a lower kind.

3. Friendship between virtuous people – which is friendship in the perfect sense: “For they wish each other good equally, inasmuch as they are good, and they are good in themselves. But those who wish good to their friend for his own sake are friends in the perfect sense.”

This form of friendship is permanent because it is based on the virtue of both friends. They share not only utility and pleasure but also the idea of the good with each other and find the quintessential good in each other.

This kind of friendship has a prerequisite: “Nor does the formation of such bonds of the heart require time and the habit of living together; for, according to the proverb, one cannot get to know one another unless one has first eaten the familiar bushel of salt together; nor, therefore, can one take a liking to one another and make friends until one has proved and proved oneself lovable to one another.”

This kind of friendship is therefore reserved to a few people.

In *Laelius de amicitia*, Marcus Tullius Cicero diagnoses the capacity for friendship (*amicitia*) as a fundamental criterion for distinguishing humans from animals. For him, too, *mutual virtue* is a condition for friendship. But compared to Aristotle, he understands friendship in a more practical way, without the agreement on the “idea of the good” required of “virtuous friends”. For him, “righteousness” on both sides is sufficient as a necessary basis for friendship. Righteousness, in turn, is based on virtues consisting of reliability, sincerity, firmness and nobility of mind, which mean freedom from ambition, licentiousness and presumption. “Friendship is [...] nothing else than agreement in all things divine and human, combined with benevolence, love and esteem, and man – wisdom perhaps excepted – should not have received a more beautiful gift from the immortal gods.” By wisdom, Cicero understands what Aristotle describes as *insight into the idea of the good*.

Mainly these two authors created the foundation of the European understanding of friendship. They were received by Christianity and incorporated into its general thought. Even most post-Christian thinkers also follow Aristotle and Cicero insofar as they share the view that true friendship means a relationship between two persons that has its end in itself and therefore must not be based on purposes such as utility, pleasure, trade or the like.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as a reaction to enlightenment, industrialisation and profit-oriented capitalist society, a sentiment-

based understanding of friendship took the place of virtue-based friendship in the European societies. In the ideal of romantic friendship, as in the case of romantic love, ancient sobriety is replaced by emotional exuberance to the point of sentimentality. “True friendship”, just as “true love”, is now based on the “agreement or harmony of souls” and, as a love relationship between two individuals, it often leads to the separation from society, even to rejection of society, which is perceived as empty, superficial and utility-oriented. But the antique ideal of friendship as a relationship without utilitarian and egoistic purposes is preserved.

Even the thinker Schopenhauer, who was opposed to Romanticism, adheres to this ideal. He says: “True, genuine friendship presupposes a strong, purely objective and completely uninterested participation in the weal and woe of the other, and this in turn presupposes a real identification with the friend.” But unlike his predecessors and directed against the romantic understanding of friendship, Schopenhauer doubts that the idea of true friendship can be realised in the world at all. Friendships are usually built with ulterior motives in order to gain an advantage from the other person. His sentence “Friends call themselves sincere, enemies are” has become famous.

In the 20th century, ways of looking at friendship that asked more about the social, material or psychological conditions of friendship than about its essence prevailed. The transition to a psychological approach to friendship is found in Nietzsche, who shares Schopenhauer’s pessimism on this point:

“There are friends, but error, deception about you led them to you; and silence they must have learned in order to remain friends with you; for almost always such human relationships are based on the fact that some things are never said, indeed that they are never touched: but if these little stones get rolling, friendship follows behind and breaks up.”

Let us have a look at the understanding of “friendship” in the field of politics and exercise of power.

“Friendship” in politics, regardless of the political system, has always been based on benefits and the expectation of gaining advantages. It therefore clearly belongs to the first of Aristotle’s three categories. But it is already clear in Cicero that friendship in political life is not subject to the same conditions as in private life. For Macchiavelli, one of the most influential European political thinkers of modern times, friendship for a good ruler is necessarily instrumental and subordinate to political goals;

the difference between true and benefit-driven friendship is abolished in the exercise of rule.

Another more recent feature of the political understanding of friendship is the expansion and abstraction of the concept of friendship. From ancient to modern times, it was taken for granted that friendship existed exclusively as an interpersonal relationship. The idea of “friendship” between collective groups, peoples or even states did not exist before the Enlightenment, before the emergence of nation states and mass societies. The concept of “friendship between peoples” was only coined in the 20th century by Josef Stalin, and the creation of “friendship societies” between states are also creations of Soviet socialism. In Aristotelian terms, their foundation and existence can be described as an ideological combination of the first two types of friendship: benefit for some and pleasure for the other “friends”.

The expansion and emptying of the concept of friendship in the course of the emergence of nation states and ideologically indoctrinated mass societies has now penetrated deeply into all everyday social communication, especially but by no means exclusively in “socialist countries”. It serves political as well as commercial purposes. To be called or addressed as a “friend” by complete strangers is, in the better case, an empty phrase without any real meaning; in the worst case, it is an attempt to use the emotionally charged term “friend” to assert one’s interests. The classical understanding of friendship as a relationship based on virtue, righteousness, sympathy or even just sentiment between two persons, which is founded on more than hoped-for benefits or shared interests, is no longer present in the concept of friendship used here. Not even one constituent characteristic of the concept of friendship is still necessary: reciprocity.

The fundamental reinterpretation, expansion and extensive emptying of the concept of friendship reaches its climax on the internet: on Facebook and other platforms, one is constantly asked to find new “friends” and to communicate with “friends”, i.e., with people whom one does not know personally at all and from whom one has no chance to learn more than they want to show digitally about themselves.

“Central to Facebook is the concept of friendship. This digital community on the internet is based on social contacts, which are explicitly called friends. So one can be friends with another user or have no relationship at all. It is not possible in this dual system – such as in the world outside of Facebook – to simply have more or less likeable acquaintances,

colleagues or other forms of relationships. The choice in the social network is between friendship or nothing at all.”

Here, at least, Chinese language, which still distinguishes between “网友” and “朋友”, is more honest.

Of course, “true friends” in the Aristotelian sense still exist in our societies alongside the contentless, benefit- or pleasure-oriented “friendships”, even if the values by which they are oriented and measured have changed. But the numerous “friendship guidebooks” published in both real and digital formats in Europe and China equally are more an expression of a lack than of a multitude of fulfilling “true friendships”.

友谊 Yǒu Yì Friendship

Final remarks

QIU Zhijie, Michael Kahn-Ackermann

Understanding of „friendship” by European thinkers has undergone changes through the times. The first comprehensive definition was given by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The term “*philia*” is still translated as “friendship”, even though it is not identical with the terms of „friendship” used nowadays. Nevertheless, it has had a great influence on the ideas of friendship in Europe until today.

According Aristotle real friendship is reciprocal and therefore only possible among equals. He distinguishes three different types of friendship:

1. Friendship that is formed out of the motive of usefulness.
2. Friendship that arises from common desire.
Both are friendships of a lower kind and temporary, since the objects of utility and pleasure can change easily.
3. Friendship between virtuous people: “For they wish each other good equally, inasmuch as they are good, and they are good in themselves. But those who wish good to their friend for his own sake are friends in the perfect sense.”¹

This form of friendship is permanent because it is based on the virtue of both friends. They share the idea of the good with each other and find the quintessential good in each other.

This kind of friendship has a prerequisite: “...the formation of such bonds of the heart requires time and the habit of living together; ... until one has proved and proved oneself lovable to one another.”² This kind of friendship is therefore reserved for only a few people.

Marcus Tullius Cicero in his text *Laelius de amicitia* diagnoses the capacity for friendship (*amicitia*) as a fundamental criterion for distinguishing humans from animals. For him, “righteousness” on both sides

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, Chapt.3.

2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, Chapt.3.

is a necessary basis for friendship. Righteousness, in turn, is based on virtues consisting of reliability, sincerity, firmness and nobility of mind, which mean freedom from ambition, licentiousness and presumption.

Mainly these two authors created the foundation of European thinkers understanding of friendship. They were incorporated into Christianity, and even post-Christian thinkers follow Aristotle and Cicero in many ways.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as a reaction to enlightenment, industrialization and profit oriented capitalist society a sentiment-based understanding of friendship took the place of virtue-based friendship in European societies. The ideal of “romantic friendship” is based on the “agreement or harmony of souls” and, like romantic love relationship, it often leads to the separation from society, even to rejection of society, which is perceived as empty, superficial and utility-oriented. But the antique ideal of friendship as a relationship without utilitarian and egoistic purposes is preserved.

Schopenhauer also adheres to this ideal. But unlike his predecessors he doubts that the idea of true friendship can be realised in the world at all. Friendships are usually built with ulterior motives in order to gain an advantage from the other person. His sentence “Friends call themselves sincere, enemies are” has become famous.

In the 20th century European intellectuals ways of looking at friendship asked more about the social, material or psychological conditions of friendship than about its essence. The transition to a psychological approach to friendship is found in Nietzsche, who also is sceptical towards the possibility of true friendship: “... for almost always such human relationships are based on the fact that some things are never said... (and) never touched: but if these little stones get rolling, friendship follows behind and breaks up.”³

But whatsoever changes took place in European thinkers understanding of “true friendship”, there are some common features in the definition of friendship, which until recent times never changed

- Friendship is an exclusively interpersonal, reciprocal relationship between individuals.
- Friendship is a relationship that has its end in itself and therefore must not be based on purposes such as utility, pleasure, trade or the like.

3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, Sect. VI: Man in Society.

- Friendship is based on mutual trust, sympathy and understanding.

A different understanding of „friendship“ exists in the field of politics and exercise of power. “Friendship” in politics, regardless of the political system, has always been based on benefits and the expectation of gaining advantages. Therefore in politics “friends” can easily turn into enemies. For Machiavelli, one of the most influential European political thinkers, friendship for a good ruler is necessarily instrumental and subordinate to political goals; the difference between true and benefit-driven friendship is abolished in the exercise of rule. This purely instrumental use of the term friendship in power exercise met often stern critique by European intellectuals.

A more recent phenomenon is the expansion and abstraction of the concept of friendship with the idea of “friendship” between collective groups, peoples or even states. It did not exist before the Enlightenment, before the emergence of nation states and mass societies. The concept of “friendship between peoples” was only coined in the 20th century by Josef Stalin, and the creation of “friendship societies” between states are also creations of Soviet socialism. This expansion and emptying of the concept of friendship in the course of the emergence of nation states and ideologically indoctrinized mass societies has now penetrated into everyday social communication, especially but not exclusively in “socialist countries”. To be called or addressed as a “friend” by complete strangers is either an empty phrase or an attempt to use the emotionally charged term “friend” to assert one’s interests. The classical understanding of friendship as an interpersonal and reciprocal relationship is no longer present here.

The fundamental reinterpretation, expansion and extensive emptying of the concept of friendship reaches its climax on the internet: On Facebook and other platforms, one is constantly asked to find new “friends” and to communicate with “friends”, i.e. with people whom one does not know personally at all and from whom one has no chance to learn more than they want to show digitally about themselves. “The choice in the social network is between friendship or nothing at all.”⁴

“True friends” in the Aristotelian sense still exist in European societies alongside the power-, benefit- or pleasure-oriented “friendships”, even if the values by which they are defined and measured have

4. Amanda Lenhart, Mary Madden, *Friendship, Strangers and Safety in Online Social Networks*, Pew Research Center, 2007.

changed. But the growing emptying or misuse of the terms “friendship” or “friend” in European, Chinese and other societies as well in the global Internet make these terms more and more useless to describe a fundamental human relationship.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Gift

礼物

Lǐ Wù

YANG Huilin
Michel Espagne

礼物 Lǐ Wù

Chinese perspective

YANG Huilin

The Chinese have two characters to translate “gift / present” – li礼 and wu物. Li礼 was written initially as 禮, the left part of which (示) is the same as in 祇 (“god of the earth”), and its right part 豊 takes the shape of a vessel for sacrifice. Therefore, the original meaning of 禮 is the “ritual of sacrifice to obtain blessings from gods” (*Shuowen Jiezi*). Wang Guowei, in his article *Interpretation of Rites*, offered a glyphic analysis, in which he seemed to have put the sacrificial ritual of “revering Heaven” adjacent to the service of “honoring ancestors”: “Since 豊 is a vessel containing sacrificial jade offered to gods and ancestors, the sacrificial wine used in the services is thus called 醴, and therefore, we can further infer that anything related to the sacrificial services to gods and ancestors can be generally called 禮.” The three characters (豊-醴-禮) share the same pronunciation and are originally related to the sacrifice of gods, however, after such inferring, the meaning has shifted to a “generalised” earthly ritual.

The meaning of li礼 has been further inferred or extended in Confucian classics. For example, Confucius advocates that the way of governance is to “Guide people with virtues and regulate their behavior with ritual.” He believes that the “ritual” accompanied by “virtue” not only keeps people obeying the law but also enables people to exercise self-restraint, namely, “to know shame and to behave in a proper manner” (*Analects*). As a result, there are three classics related to rituals among the “Thirteen Confucian Classics” (*Zhou Li*, *Yi Li*, and *Li Ji*). The question “Where does ritual originate?” no longer only concerns sacrifice but has become an exploration of human nature.

Following this light, we find a typical dialectical analysis of li礼 and wu物 in Xunzi’s *On Rituals*: “Men are born with desires which, if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires, men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. So contention leads to disorder. Disorder

leads to poverty. The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder; so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion things.” For Xunzi, the specific mean for this purpose is to “nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction” so that they can “sustain each other.” In simple words, to desire is natural, and rituals are not to “extinguish human desire” but to help balance one’s desire and needs.

According to Xunzi, the core of “ritual” is to make sure that “desires should not want for the things [wu物] which satisfy them, and goods [wu物] would not be exhausted by the desires.”¹ Thus “things / goods” (wu物) become the maintenance of “rituals” (li礼). The use of the two words “ritual” and “things” as a phrase appeared in the second century in an article written by Pan Xu 潘勖 (? – 215),² but the phrase at that time still referred to “ceremony / ritual” and “sacrificial goods”, different from the so-called “gift” in later times. In the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317 – 420), we can find the term “wei li 微礼” (a small gift) in a story about Minister Lu Na 陆纳 and General Huan Wen 桓温. The gift included “a bucket of wine and a plate of venison”, closely related to “goods.”³ In sum, in Chinese tradition, there has been a shift of meaning from “ritual” to “goods” in the Chinese term “gift”. “Ritual” is reflected in the “goods / gift.” Along with the gradual combination and mutual interpretation of “ritual” and “goods”, the Chinese have varied expressions of “offering gifts”.

As for the translation in modern Chinese, the everyday usage of liwu 礼物 (“gift”) does not necessarily reflect the ancient “ritual,” so “gift” or “present” is a natural translation. However, with the continuous translation and introduction of continental philosophy, we keep finding the differences in the semantics of the corresponding words, and even the “literal” Chinese translation of “gift,” “present,” and “given” is almost unable to convey their “spirit” (particular connotation). Taking this as a philosophical problem left to us by language, we may find the argument of the subject-predicate proposition, the philosophical implication of “gift” and the semantic puns of “present” and “time” are the best examples to illustrate this problem.

In *Routledge History of Philosophy*, the contrast between English and Chinese is extremely interesting. For instance, in Volume II, it reads:

1. John Knoblock, trans., *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, Vol. III (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 55.

2. “崇其庞章·备其礼物.” Pan Xu, “Ce wei gong jiu xi wen” (册魏公九锡文), in *Wenxuan*, ed. Xiao Tong, vol. 35.

3. See “Lu Na zhuan (Biography of Lu Na),” in *Jin shu (Book of Jin)*.

“Plotinus accepts Aristotle’s view that being and unity are coextensive: to be is to be one thing, to be unified, and the more ‘one’ something is, the more of a being it is.”⁴ The Chinese translators put “是者” (“what it is”) in parentheses after “being” and “一” (one) after “unified.”⁵ It is, however, still hard to understand the Chinese translation of “the more ‘one’ something is, the more of a being it is.” How can “something” be “one”? Why is it that the more one it is, the more of a being it is? How can we express in Chinese the “being” as a verb and the “being” in “a being it is”?

British sinologist Angus Charles Graham offered a clue to these questions when he compared the different metaphysical grammar of the European languages and that of Chinese. In his view, there is a grammatical difference between the two: for one, it is the “Being” or “subject-predicate proposition” originated from Indo-European languages, and for the other, it is “shi fei 是非” (being / non-being) and “you wu 有无” (have / have not) of ancient Chinese. He even cites a passage in Lan Gong-wu’s translation of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* to explain the problem. Lan’s translation was based on an English translation, but the linguistic challenges are similar.⁶

In order to explain “Being is obviously not a real predicate [...] not a concept of something which could be added to the concept of a thing,” Kant took “God is omnipotent” as an example to show that “the small word ‘is’ adds no new predicate.”⁷ Nevertheless, since Chinese does not have the capital word “Being,” the small word “is” does not make any sense. As a result, the Chinese translator used three different characters (为-在-有) to render the German *sein* and the English “Being”.

We may understand the problem related to “the small word ‘is’” in Chinese via the clarification by Ernst Tugendhat that “Being ‘is’ only as long as the two parts are joined, creating a relation between two terms where one refers to the other as the predicate and subject.”⁸ In other words, it is by duplicating “Being” (the subject) and “is” (the predicate), being as “a being it is” and being as a verb, that the Indo-European based “being” can be understood.

4. David Furley, ed., *Routledge History of Philosophy, Volume II, From Aristotle to Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1999), 366.

5. David Furley, ed., *Routledge History of Philosophy, Volume II, From Aristotle to Augustine*, trans. Feng Jun, et al. (Beijing: Renmin University of China Press, 2004), 429.

6. A. C. Graham, “‘Being’ in Western Philosophy Compared with Shih/Fei是非 and Yu/Wu有无 in Chinese Philosophy,” in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Literature* (Singapore: The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), 322–359, esp. 354–355.

7. *Ibid.*, 354.

8. Quoted in Santiago Zabala, *Being at Large: Freedom in the Age of Alternative Facts* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 50–51.

According to Graham, Chinese translators, when using three different Chinese words to translate *sein* and *Being*, are in fact “struggling to reproduce Western fallacies in a language which, whatever its defects, does not permit them to make these particular mistakes.” It tells us that “the way we think is affected, not only by the language we speak, but by the grammar we impose on it and by the languages in which the problems were originally stated.”⁹

Similarly, Heidegger announces that “his mediation is oriented by the sentence ‘Es gibt Sein, Es gibt Zeit’, which literally means: ‘It gives Being, It gives time.’ It seems to be quite straightforward for the Western scholars that “the phrase ‘Es gibt’ invites the audience to hear an offering that is not reducible to what is offering. Hence the sentence ‘It gives time’ points to an offering that keeps withdrawing itself from what is offered. Already in the word ‘present,’ there is more than the now; what is also meant by the word is a gift bestowed upon man.”¹⁰ However, for Chinese readers, it is not only necessary to understand the double entendre of “present” but also crucial to get the logic of the passive voice “the present is given,” because the emphasis is no longer on the project of the self but the receptivity of the granting.¹¹ In theory, active and passive verbs in Chinese can also be combined in one word. For instance, in the *Book of Changes*, “detain” was used in the sense of “detaining someone” as well as “detained by someone.” However, concepts related to “gift,” such as 赠-馈-贻 and so on, do not mean “being given.”¹² Just as in Chinese, the basic logic of the phrase ‘It is proper to return gift of courtesy’ (礼尚往来) lies in ‘reciprocity’ rather than ‘being given’, the ‘counter gift’, something like ‘tribute for blessings’ in folk beliefs, is also different from ‘costly grace’ in Christian sense. This may make the Chinese translation and interpretation of “gift” in the modern context particularly interesting.

Jacques Derrida’s book *The Gift to Death* may serve as a good example here. The French title of the book *Donner la mort* is playing on the double entendre of the word *donner*, whose ordinary sense means “to give,” and the idiomatic sense is “to put to death” or “to commit suicide.”

9. A. C. Graham, “‘Being’ in Western Philosophy Compared with Shih/Fei是非 and Yu/Wu有无 in Chinese Philosophy,” 356–357.

10. Jacques Taminiaux, “Philosophy of Existence 1: Heidegger,” in Richard Kearney, ed., *Routledge History of Philosophy, Volume VIII, Continental Philosophy in the 20th Century* (London: Routledge, 1994), 67–68.

11. *Ibid.*

12. See Wang Li, et al, eds., *Gu han yu chang yong zi zi dian (A Dictionary of Common Words in Ancient Chinese)* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1979), 316, 290, 147.

In other words, the word *donner* can mean both “offering” and “death,” which not only sounds completely strange to Chinese readers but also requires explanations to English readers. Therefore, the English translator states explicitly: “In the text, I have tried to follow the idea of ‘giving’ or ‘granting’ wherever possible. However, I have used ‘to put to death’ when comprehensibility demands. [...] Whenever ‘to put to death’ is used; however, the reader should also hear the sense of ‘giving.’”¹³ Associating “*donner*” or “giving” to the Chinese words for “gift” or “granting,” we may refer to another critical term of Derrida: hospitality.

Gerasimos Kakoliris listed Derrida’s series of discussions on hospitality in his article *Jacques Derrida on the Ethics of Hospitality*: “For Derrida, the logic of the concept of hospitality is governed by an absolute antinomy or *aporia* [...]. On the one hand, there is the law of unlimited hospitality. On the other hand, there are the conditional laws of hospitality... The responsible action and decision consist of the need to negotiate between these two heterogeneous requirements continuously.”¹⁴ To put it in another way, the law of unlimited hospitality or unconditional hospitality is practically impossible, and the “responsibility” we can assume is merely a “response that constitutes responsibility.” It carries the same logic of “it is given,” as in the case of “present” as “time” or the verb to be as an expression of Being.

For some Chinese readers, when reading Derrida, it is very easy and convenient for them to think of “hospitality” in terms of “tourism and hospitality” or “international affairs etiquette” because the Chinese translation of the word is “*hao ke* 好客” (“welcoming guests”) or “*dai ke zhi dao* 待客之道” (“the hospitable way to receive guests”). For others, they follow Derrida’s speculation about the story of Abraham entertaining three guests and receiving blessings (Genesis 1:1-15) and regard Abraham as the model of hospitality. It is true that Derrida starts from the biblical story, and there are several other similar uses in the Bible implicating “entertaining or receiving guests”, such as “showed us generous hospitality” (Acts 28:7); “practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13) or “showing hospitality” (1 Timothy 5:10, Titus 1:8). However, whether it is attributed to the Chinese “etiquette” or the Western Bible, it is probably far from Derrida’s intent. The possible way to understand the logical connection

13. David Wills, “Translator’s Preface,” in Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), vii.

14. Gerasimos Kakoliris “Jacques Derrida on the Ethics of Hospitality,” in Elvis Imafidon, ed., *The Ethics of Subjectivity, Perspectives since the Dawn of Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 145.

between “gift” and “given” with the help of a “donor” is to read Derrida’s interpretation of Levinas.

Emmanuel Levinas insisted on “an ethics before ontology” because it is “rooted in alterity.”¹⁵ This has helped Derrida to extend his discussion of “hospitality” and “hostage” in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*.¹⁶ According to Derrida, “hospitality” in Latin means both host and guest, and “hostage,” which means guest or outsider in Old French, is often translated in Chinese as “*renzhi* 人质” (“people held by robbers in exchange for money”). Derrida, in addition to referring back to the etymological root of the word, relates again to the syntax of “S is P”: “the subject is the host” and “the subject is hostage,” that is “the two brief and explicit definitions of the subject in the form of S is P.”¹⁷ Through the correspondence and association of hospitality and hostage, the subject-host takes on the attribute of being-hostage “in the law of the accusative.”¹⁸ This “paradoxical reverting” allows us to be “mutually” problematised within the structure of the “relationship.”

The “paradoxical reverting” of “the host as the guest” and “the subject as the object”, at least for Chinese readers, could only be understood in the mutually explanatory chain constituted by the puns of “present” and “given” as well as the “duplicity of Being.” The Chinese term “*li wu* 礼物” (“gift”), which consists of “ritual” and “goods,” cannot convey the layers of transition of the meaning. Having said that, as far as the separate genealogy of Chinese and Western thoughts is cleared up in comparison, the “contradiction” will be turned into “contrariety” and “reciprocal illumination”.¹⁹

15. Walter Brogan and James Risser, “Introduction,” in Walter Brogan & James Risser, eds., *American Continental Philosophy: A Reader* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 4.

16. Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 63.

17. *Ibid.*, 63.

18. *Ibid.*, 58.

19. Arvind Sharma, *Religious Studies and Comparative Methodology: The Case for Reciprocal Illumination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

Gift

European perspective

Michel Espagne

A gift is first of all a natural and positive disposition of a personality. We will say of a scientist that he has a gift for mathematics, of a musician that he has a gift for music. By this, we mean that an eminent quality is not considered as natural but as a gift, the most traditional presentation striving to define the inherited qualities as a “gift from heaven”. Whoever has a gift has been chosen by Heaven without any debt to social heritage. In this sense, the gift breaks with any social considerations, whereas most uses of the word situate it, on the contrary, in a social exchange. Some European languages use different words according to various sorts of gifts (for instance German, which expresses more clearly the difference between “Spende”, “Schenkung”, “Begabung”, etc).

Feudal society is based on an unequal relationship. The overlord concedes a fiefdom to his vassal servant. It is indeed a gift but the one who receives it is placed in the dependence of the overlord who can moreover take back the gift. In any case, the concession of the fiefdom implies that the vassal servant pays homage to the suzerain. The acceptance of a gift signifies the recognition of a dependence. This dependence is not exclusively specific to feudal society, but it can by extension become a political principle. The recognition of a domination of the Roman Empire ensured the suzerainty of barbarian chiefs over entities that resembled fiefdoms during the period of the great invasions. According to the common opinion of European historians, the Chinese empire made extensive use of the principle of according gifts in exchange for the recognition of political domination. Doubtless, the gift was not even directly linked to the establishment of an immediate dependence but could prepare a future suzerainty. Thus, the use of silk in Central Asia is supposed to have been part of an early Chinese diplomacy. Even before being a commodity, silk was a gift. The situation during the pandemic, with the People’s Republic of China sending masks to European regions hit by the pandemic, a donation that has generated the suspicion of a

“mask policy”, shows how much donations worry those who receive them.

The systemic link between multifaceted submissions and the acceptance of a donation often makes the donation appear as a disturbing reality. We know the famous formula of Laocoön in the *Aeneid*: “timeo Danaos et dona ferentes” [“I am afraid of the Danaans, even if she visits us with gifts”]. The gift of the Greeks brings destruction to the Trojans. The ruin of Troy comes from the acceptance of a gift of which Laocoön had perceived the dangers. One of the episodes included in the history of European art is rooted in the story of the gift of the Trojan horse. Donations can also, it is true, aim to promote peaceful relations between different societies over the long term, the best example being the giving of women in marriage. In any case, the gift is not necessarily a way of obtaining a significant advantage by exchange. On the contrary, the notion of self-sacrifice, with Christian theological roots, implies a renunciation without reciprocity, with the aim of saving mankind. The gift is then linked to the notion of sacrifice, as a reply to the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice may be observed previously, corresponds to a frequent practice in ancient Greece where it results in thanking the Gods or in attracting their benevolence by offering them a part of the harvest or of the herd. After a period of real sacrifices, the ritual became a symbolic gift with the sacrifice of Isaac, which was supposed to reconcile Abraham and his god, but did not lead to the killing of the sacrificed person, which remains in the sacrifice of Christ. This sacrifice is staged throughout the history of art. The staging often includes the donor figure appearing as a small side figure in depictions of the crucifixion in medieval paintings. The scene of the sacrifice of Christ illustrates a gift of self, but this gift could only be shown thanks to the support that the painter obtained from the donor. The system of donations in the constitution of artistic collections corresponds, like artistic patronage, to a form of extension of these medieval donations. After the death of an artist, the heirs free themselves from their inheritance rights by making a new kind of gift, the donation.

But outside of any aesthetic context, self-sacrifice as a gift can be partial and just govern social behaviours as codified as blood donations or organ donations or the donation of the body to science. At the simplest level of religious life, almsgiving belongs to religious duties and the poor box is a part of every church furniture. Since the famous book *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Ancient Societies* (1923 – 1924) by Marcel

Mauss, supplemented and commented by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Maurice Godelier, and Philippe Descola, the gift has become a central category of anthropological thought. Exchange is indeed the basis of social relations. And gift is linked to exchange. Except that the question of the automaticity of reciprocity arises with the gift. Within the Polynesian societies studied in the essay, the gift calls for a counter-gift of greater symbolic importance if possible. Or rather, the counter-gift is not mandatory, but the honour of the one who performs it depends on the value of the counter-gift, thus obeying the pressure of a spiritual force, the *hau*. A spiral of reciprocal gifts takes place in the “potlatch ceremony which adds a ritual aspect and the dimension of an almost religious ceremony to the practice of the gift. From this codified practice of giving ensues social positioning both in the Polynesian tribes and beyond. The value of each gift and counter-gift also has a subjective dimension: we also know that the establishment of social relations between colonisers and colonised was based on a practice of highly asymmetrical gifts and counter-gifts. The solidarities implied by gifts and counter-gifts express the very substance of the social and its perpetuation over time.

The introduction of money in colonial societies was often largely sufficient to irreparably destroy colonised cultures by diverting the systems of institutionalised reciprocity through the gift. In representations of Amazonian or Siberian societies, nature itself can make gifts, for example of game or fish, within the framework of an ethic of solidarity that goes beyond the limits of human societies and includes the natural world. Shamanic practices organise a system of gift and counter-gift between man and nature, the traces of which can still be perceived today in the marking of a day each year when humanity has spent more natural resources than the earth can produce in a year. In 2021 this day was 21 July. The representation of a restitution to be made to the earth guides environmental policies.

The representation of this global solidarity explains the practice of donations without counter-gifts characteristic of evergetism and forms of philanthropy. Evergetism and philanthropy are not directed towards a single person but involve the social whole and if there is no counter-gift provided by a particular person or a community we can estimate that the cohesion of the social whole replaces the counter-gift. It is especially the case when the benefactor or the philanthropist derived a strong symbolic benefit from the donations they have made. “Giving” also means flaunting one’s wealth, as on the occasion of the reconstruction of Notre

Dame Cathedral in Paris, many well-known businessmen showed what they could support. Philanthropy foundations appear in the West in the broad sense of the term as a symbolic compensation of an accumulated fortune that can be interpreted as the payment of a debt but the foundations insist in most cases on the lack of counter-gift or reciprocity other than a symbolic one.

The investigations of art historians on donors, of anthropologists on the potlatch ritual, of historians of Antiquity on evergetism or of modernist historians on philanthropy aim apparently to describe either the universality of human societies or remote ethnic groups, or past times. But there is, in all of these investigations, a strongly reflective moment and we observe actually an attempt to analyse the functioning rules of the contemporary world that the research undertaken on the gift strived to depict since Mauss. So we find the perpetuation of a life debt system through protection and social security mechanisms. Money is not only a neutral intermediary in commercial exchanges, but it also represents the result of social relations specific to a particular society. Finance includes forms of gifts and counter-gifts in the most advanced merger and acquisition operations. And we cannot exclude from the public debt of States or private companies any trace of donation since the moments of renegotiation bring to light the whole structure of underlying social ties. From theology to economics through anthropology and the organisation of scientific life, the gift system structures Western societies.

礼物 Lǐ Wù

Gift

Final remarks

YANG Huilin, Michel Espagne

YANG Huilin

Prof. Michel Espagne gives a very clear overview of the idea of ‘gift’ from a European perspective. What struck me most was the relationship between gift and counter-gift, gift as a form and function of exchange, and how the gift system structured Western society. I believe that such “dialogic ideas” should go further to have a better, deeper and mutual understanding.

Michel Espagne

The contribution of Professor Yang and my paper meet on many points, such as with the original meaning of gift as “ritual of sacrifice” or the paradoxical duplicity of different concepts (“host and guest”, “give and receive”, or even “being”). The exploration of the origins of sacrifice leads to an exploration of human nature. From shamanic roots and the idea of an exchange between nature and mankind to contemporary philosophy or anthropology, the key notion of “gift” may be an invitation to analyse society on the basis of the many dimensions of exchange. In our attempts to define “gift”, both of us underline the role of the donor.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Happiness

福

Fú

WENG Naiqun
Gerald Cipriani

福

Fú

Chinese perspective

WENG Naiqun

The Chinese character “福” consists of two radicals. The radical “示(shi)” on the left side refers to “Heaven shows a sign of good or bad luck for people through astronomical or celestial phenomena.” It can also mean the worshipping of gods. The radical on the right “畀(fu)” denotes its pronunciation in this case. “福(fu)” means “祐(you)”, though “祐(you)” means “助(zhu) (help)”. In addition, the character of “畀(fu)” is composed of three characters: “一(yi)”, “口(kou)”, “田(tian)”. As a phrase, “一口田” means “a piece of land that can be used for agricultural production”, in other words “a piece of land that can be used to support a family.” The word “福(fu)” can also be referred to “神祐(shen you)”, that is “god’s blessing”. It also means “to pray for good fortune”. The antonym of “福(fu)” is “祸(huo) (misfortune, disaster)”.

The Book of Rites, a book compiled by 戴圣(dai sheng) in the Han Dynasty, says: ““福(fu)” means “备(bei)”, meaning “百顺(baishun).” The meaning of this “福(fu)” is the same as that of “备(bei)”, that is, the host must act conscientiously and strictly in accordance with the Confucian Heavenly Principles of ethics and morality. Examples of this are loyal officers serving the monarch and filial piety to parents; both are the first thing for being “百顺(bai-shun)”. For metaphysical ghosts and gods, people should also act in accordance with the “百顺(bai-shun)”, showing awe and worshipping with reverence. For ordinary people, it is necessary to obey the monarch; for family members, it is necessary to honour the parents. Only by achieving baishun can bei be reached. And only in this way is it possible to be successful in the blessing for good fortune.

In ancient times, “福(fu)” mainly included “五福(wufu) (five ‘fu’)”: the first is “寿(shou)” meaning “longevity”; the second is “富(fu)” meaning “wealthy”; the third is “康宁(kangning)” meaning “healthy and peaceful”; the fourth is “攸好德(you hao de)” meaning “good virtue”; the fifth is “考终命(kao-zhong-ming)” meaning the elderly in the family enjoying the end of the day and longevity. Huan, Tan (c. 23 BCE – 56 CE),

a philosopher and expert on Confucian Classics during the Eastern Han Dynasty, changed kao-zhong-ming to “many descendants” in his book New Theory.

Obviously, for individuals, “福(fu) (“blessedness”; “blessing for good fortune”)” and “福气(fuqi) (“good luck” or “good fortune”)” is closely associated with “家(“house”)”. For the house-based Chinese society, “福(fu)” is the most important pursuit and purpose of people’s lives. The New Year’s Festival and all kinds of family celebrations such as weddings, a full month birthday of a new baby, the birthday celebration of an elderly family member, and the etiquette of daily social interactions, including expressing one’s congratulation, condolences and offering greetings contain the word “福(fu)” or the metaphor of “福(fu)”. Such as “祈福(qifu) (pray for happiness)”; “福气(fuqi) (good fortune)”; “福祉(fuzhi) (well-being)”; “祝福(zhufu) (blessing)”; “福利(fuli) (welfare)”; “享福(xiangfu) (enjoy a happy life)”; “鸿福(hongfu) (great luck)”; “托福(tuofu) (Thanks for bringing good fortune or good luck)”; “五福临门(wu-fu-lin-men) (the five blessings have descended upon the house)”; “多子多福(duozi-duofu) (the more son, the more good fortune)”; “福如东海(fu-ru-dong-hai) (blessedness as immense as the Eastern Sea)”; “福寿无疆(fu-shou-wu-jiang) (longevity)” etc.

In the present, if the parents, siblings, children, and grandchildren in the house are in good health, they gain various achievements and honours in their careers, such as their children and grandchildren gaining good grades at school, being admitted to college or university, getting a master’s or PhD degree, getting a promotion in their professional job, making breakthroughs in scientific research, winning medals in sports competitions, etc. In these cases, the family is considered well-off, the relationship between the members is close and harmonious, filial piety to the elderly is respected, as is love for the younger generation, and the house will be considered by others to be blessed with “福气(fuqi)”.

It can be seen that the meaning of the word “福(fu)” also changes with the change of historical context. But among them, the unchanging essence is that family members live a long and healthy life, love each other, respect the elderly and love children, and live a prosperous life. Its ideological foundation is still the ethical and moral concept of Confucianism.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, large-scale ancestor worship activities in Chinese mainland have decreased, not only in cities but also in rural areas. Especially during the Cultural Revolution, Confucianism, including its concept of ethics and morality, was

severely criticised. It turned out that various ritual activities related to the traditional “福 (fu)” character, such as ancestor worship and blessings, were seriously impacted and led to the near complete disappearance of the those ritual activities. It was not until many years after the reform and opening up that these ceremonial activities were restored in moderation in some rural areas. After the beginning of the 21st century, in some places, large-scale memorial ceremonies were held for real and legendary important historical figures such as “炎帝 (yandi) (Yan Emperor)”, “黄帝 (huangdi) (Huang Emperor)”, “孔子 Confucius” and “妈祖 (mazu)” in some cities. For example, in 2008, the State Council identified the “新郑 (xinzheng) (a Henan province county-level city) Huang Emperor Mausoleum Worshipping Ancestor Ceremony” as one of the first national intangible cultural heritage expansion projects. These kinds of ancestor worship ceremonies usually include the process of praying for the “blessedness” of the local and even national people.

The Opinions on Implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy, as the central no. 1 document in 2018 issued by the Central Government, called on “progressing rural culture, rejuvenating the new atmosphere of rural style and civilisation”, and “shaping a new style of beautiful countryside”, etc. On 21 and 22 August 2018, in his speech at the National Propaganda and Ideological Work Conference, Xi Jinping pointed out “China’s excellent traditional culture is the cultural root of the Chinese nation, and the ideological concepts, humanistic spirit, and moral norms it contains are not only the core of our Chinese thought and spirit, but also have important value in solving human problems. It is necessary to refine and display the spiritual identity of excellent traditional culture, and to extract and display the cultural essence of excellent traditional culture with contemporary value and world significance.” Since then, in the work of revitalising the rural development strategy, China has vigorously implemented the promotion of protecting and reviving the “Chinese excellent traditional culture” and its inheritance and development as an important task in the vast rural areas. In addition, in the planning to vigorously revitalise the rural economy in recent years, promoting the development of rural tourism has become an important innovative path. Taking this as an opportunity, many rural areas, especially in the southeast and southwest regions, have revived various traditional rituals, including ancestor worship activities, on the one hand, to enhance the cohesion of rural communities, and on the other hand, to enrich cultural content for rural tourism development. At the same time, these traditional ritual activities are often

commercially “packaged” and turned into “cultural goods” for marketing. Of course, it is inevitable that “alienation” will occur as a result.

Happiness

European perspective

Gerald Cipriani

Discussing “happiness” in the current distressing context of predicament that a European entity, Ukraine, is experiencing because of the aggressive invasion by one of its neighbours, Russia — looks like it can only be an abstract exercise. This, of course, applies to any context of predicament experienced throughout the world. But as the purpose of this exercise is to offer a European perspective on happiness together with the corresponding Chinese conception in order to hopefully overcome mutual misunderstanding, it is pertinent to be reminded that the meaningfulness of a concept vitally depends on the context from which it is abstracted.

In this light, we can easily see how ill-thought Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s (1949 –) infamous sayings on happiness sound: “What makes us happy is not to get what we want. But to dream about it. Happiness is for opportunists.”; “If you want to remain happy, just remain stupid. Authentic masters are never happy; happiness is a category of slaves.” Indeed, why be happy when you could be interesting? Anyone experiencing the current Russian military barbarism in Ukraine — something to be unequivocally condemned by all civilised entities and individuals — will find Žižek’s interpretation of happiness as an “unethical category” something of an incongruence that only one who does not experience predicament to the bones can afford.

Of course, opinions on the ethicality of happiness all depend on what we really mean by the concept. Happiness understood as selfish pleasurable psychological satisfaction to the detriment of others, be it the earth, animals, or human fellows, can only be ethically condemnable. However, as the history of ways of understanding happiness in the Western world shows, the concept betrays levels of complexity and nuance that would, from the outset, place it in the paradigm of humaneness more than anything else.

As with many concepts used in the West, we must look at its alleged civilisational origin, ancient Greece, to understand how conceptions of

happiness took shape in its auspicious as well as subsequently nihilistic versions.

Before Aristotle (384 – 322 BCE), the ancient philosopher of happiness *par excellence*, Democritus (460 – 370 BCE) identified a particular condition in human beings, or more exactly what he called “a case of mind” that did not necessarily originate from “favourable fate” or whatever external causes. This meant that happiness (*euthymia* – good mood) was, probably for the first time in the West, understood as a psychological state of its own.

Plato (429 – 347 BCE), in *The Republic*, brings in another dimension by connecting happiness (*eudaimonia*, lit. “dispensing in a good fashion”) with the idea of the just life and by extension the good city (*kallipolis*). The question he asks is whether the happy person is the one who lives in a city of justice, thus opening the door for ethical interpretations of the nature of happiness.

It is, however, Aristotle who set the tone for centuries of conception of happiness in the West. He clearly went beyond the mere psychological account of happiness by radically identifying it as a proper virtue, a theory he famously expounded in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Thus, although happiness for Aristotle is the “ultimate purpose of human existence” that remains “desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else”, it cannot be confused with mere pleasure. Human beings are no animals; they think rationally, and if their actions are well-performed according to such principle, then human beings can be said to enjoy the “good life”, a virtuous life of happiness.

Happiness is therefore contingent upon virtue. Although one can take some form of pleasure in barbarity, happiness according to Aristotle’s ethical conception would be inconceivable. Friendship, on the other hand, becomes an essential virtue at the source of happiness, just as other virtues such as benevolence, civic awareness, fairness, or resolve.

What is fundamental in Aristotle’s conception of happiness is that it constitutes a lifegoal that should prevail over minor and transient forms of happiness. The ethos of “instant gratification” that characterises much of current societies is therefore foreign to Aristotle’s ethics of happiness.

Education is of course one important refining way human beings can learn how to lead a good life and reach happiness. One can indeed learn how to practice the virtues and become morally good in order to reach the promised land of happiness, a form of self-cultivation achieved

by the one who thinks and acts accordingly in a balanced way, rationally. Clearly, Aristotle's conception of happiness as practice of virtue bears no relevance to the kind of pleasurable hedonistic satisfaction that is, in the present world, too often taken for happiness.

Even Epicurus (341 – 271 BCE), most well-known for his principle of hedonism did not, in actual fact, advocate experiencing happiness at all costs. In fact, quite the opposite. We certainly must avoid any form of pain (whether bodily or mental) through pleasure, but this does not imply indulging in un-necessary pleasures which would inexorably lead to a drive and desire for more pleasures. Only what is necessary should be desired, precisely to avoid generating greater desires that would ultimately become harmful to the self, others, and the community (see Letter to Menoeceus).

Now, the concept of happiness in its long journey before reaching the 21st century, acquired a Christian outlook throughout the Middle Ages, as we might expect. St Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274), for example, certainly preserved the Aristotelian conception of happiness as the ultimate goal of life through cultivation, rationality and the practice of virtues, determining thus what behaviour or action was morally right or wrong.

But Aquinas also believed that happiness as a goal in itself was concretely out of grasp for mortals, for happiness amounted to a sort of mystical fusion with the Divine. In other words, although humans must aim at happiness, they will never reach perfect happiness by themselves. Cultivation, rationality, and the practice of virtues alone fall short of guiding humans towards happiness; humans need the help of the Divine to experience happiness in the form of “beatitude” (see *Summa Theologica*).

The high / low dualistic principle at work in Aquinas' conception of happiness is certainly something that also runs throughout the Enlightenment and modernity, but unsurprisingly in different shapes. René Descartes' (1596 – 1650) conception of happiness separates between the kind of pleasure felt by the mind (*bonheur*) resulting from favourable material conditions or occurrences that are nonetheless necessary for welfare, and a higher form of happiness (*félicité*) experienced when human beings exercise their virtues and rationality to keep desires wise and balanced. Needless to say, the fact that the fortunate can enjoy material happiness does not necessarily entail that they can experience virtuous happiness. Conversely, the less fortunate may be able to experience virtuous happiness while being deprived from the means to enjoy material happiness (see Letters to Princess Elizabeth).

This distinction between the material and the virtuous, when it comes to qualify happiness, is in some way also found in the empiricism of a contemporary of Descartes, John Locke (1632 – 1704). For Locke, life is intrinsically about desiring happiness (see *The pursuit of happiness in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*), but not all desires can be equally valued. There is happiness resulting from fulfilling any desires, and there is “true happiness” that is achieved under the guidance of some kind of “intellectual perfection”. “True happiness” is what human beings should achieve by ensuring that we only desire what he calls “the true intrinsic good” of things, as opposed to what is superficially or only momentarily pleasurable.

This is where virtuous rules come into the equation. As what we find pleasurable can be subjective, our way of fulfilling our lives would simply amount to enjoying what we find pleasurable, here and now, wildly and regardless of rules. Society cannot function this way. So, Locke suggests that the morality of happiness must be determined by the fact that our actions are judged by the Divine after our death. It is in other words the Divine law that must determine which things at the source of “true happiness” are intrinsically good, and which are not.

This distinction between the material and moral dimensions of happiness so characteristic of Western thought on the matter also influenced utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832). Happiness through the lens of Utilitarianism that ascribes value to actions depending on their effects, may sound like it is only concerned with material pleasure. In fact, Bentham's idea of “greatest happiness principle” is no less than a moral ruling that determines what action leading to happiness is acceptable (see *Happiness is the greatest good in Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*). But instead of resorting to some Divine law as with Locke, the moral value of an action depends on the extent to which the greater number can enjoy happiness.

And the question of whether happiness should depend on our actions solely or on rules to follow (or on both) was further articulated by John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873). Moral actions depend on moral rules that are designed to make the greater number enjoy happiness (see *Utilitarianism*).

In whatever case, we recover again this idea of higher form of happiness contingent on its virtuous nature, whether determined by cultivation, the Divine, or the greater number and which, understood as the ultimate goal for human life, remains within a tradition of thought that originated in Plato and Aristotle.

Perhaps Slavoj Žižek was referring to the lower form of happiness in his brutal rejection of the concept. Even so, there are contexts that make such disparaging sound irresponsible, and I would, in this light, rather refer to Descartes who did not reject altogether the necessity for the lower form of happiness, the *bonheur*, for securing the welfare of human beings, which at a time of predicament and barbarism looks as virtuous as any of the higher forms of happiness previously mentioned.

福 Fú

Happiness

Final remarks

WENG Naiqun, Gerald Cipriani

WENG Naiqun

Whether in the socio-cultural contexts of the Chinese mainland or of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, including politics, economy, religion, urban and rural community organisations and family living patterns, great changes have taken place. In today's Chinese society, the decline of traditional ceremonial rituals associated with the word Fu is difficult to revive. The dispersion and mobility of the population in the original rural communities and the increased mobility of the urban family population in the residential areas have led to the disappearance of the previously stable pattern of community households. This has been a corresponding change in the expectation of "the five blessings have descended upon the house" and to enhance the harmony and cohesion of the neighborhood community through the holding of annual ceremonies related to "blessings" in the past. In this sense, the traditional meaning of the word Fu is constantly "alienated" and is mixed with more personalised content of wishes.

Gerald Cipriani

It would be of course a pointless exercise to strive to establish at all cost similarities between two clearly unrelated entities or, for that matter, two different versions of an ostensibly common concept as they transpire in their respective languages. Still, the fact that the Western word "happiness" is commonly translated in Chinese as 幸福 (xìng fú) suggests that there must be some degree of similarity, or perhaps echo, between the two terms. The compound 福 indicates that "happiness" in a Chinese linguistic context does not amount to a form of pleasure resulting from some favourable material conditions and even less to mere hedonistic satisfaction. 福 appears to belong to the paradigm of "blessing" or "fortune", which has across history consistently (but not only) referred to the family's well-being in terms of longevity, health, love, prosperity, harmony

and filial piety. The ethicality of this “unchanging essence” of Confucian origin is arguably where the Western conception of “happiness” in its virtuous dimension comes as close as can be to the Chinese idea of 福. For example, the virtues Aristotle sees at the source of happiness include friendship, benevolence, civic awareness, fairness, or resolve. Are not these elements what guarantees harmony and balance within a community of individuals, albeit not necessarily the family? Are not Aristotle’s conceptions of education and self-cultivation a means by which one can learn how to become virtuous and therefore live a “good life” (i.e., a happy life) in society akin in principle to the ethical teaching of Confucius? Moreover, is not the moral rather than material dimension of the Western notion of “happiness” as it developed from ancient Greece to modernity via the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment revealing some measure of similarity with the ethical texture of 福 in traditional Chinese cultures? In fact, and perhaps more daringly, it may even be possible to see in the “forms” of 福 such as family welfare, educational achievement, sport awards, and good health the same degree of materiality that has also contributed to conceiving “happiness” in Western cultures. This would even suggest that regardless of the traditions, ideas of happiness or 福 have always implied an apparent material / virtuous dualism that is in truth no more than a principle of interdependency – but whose polarities have varied in emphasis depending on the epoch and the location. This explains why, in spite of certain elements of correspondence, conceptions of happiness or 福 are also formally ingrained in their spatial and temporal contexts. On this account, any attempt to extract and abstract from such contexts a model to be applied universally and eternally on communities may well lead to the kind of barbarism that amounts to anything but welfare and virtue.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Harmony

和

Heh

ZHAO Tingyang
Carlo Ratti,
Marco Santambrogio

和

Heh

Chinese perspective

ZHAO Tingyang

In recent decades, the Chinese concept “Heh (和)” has been translated as “harmony”, but this is not a perfect translation. While Heh does mean harmony in a musical context, there is more to the word than that. It also means “compossibility” or “compatibility” when used as a cosmological or political concept.

Heh did in fact begin with music. In the earliest writings, at least 3,000 years old, the word Heh, found in oracle-bone or bronze inscriptions, originally referred to a musical instrument (箛) that helps to create a harmonious effect. In one classic Confucian book, Li-ji (The Interpretations of Norms and Rites), Heh is explained as “the harmonising of sounds to make music softer to the ears”,¹ as the ears are the natural testers of harmony. In another early historical work, Guo-yu (The Documents of States), a story is told of a king of Zhou who wanted to mould an extraordinarily huge bell to represent national glory. A minister advised him not to do so because the sound it would make would be too loud to bear. He said that we should consult our ears, for “ears know harmony.”² Music is often considered to be the simplest example of harmony, as described in Tso-Chuan (The First Chronological History of China): the sounds of the clear and the chaotic, the great and the small, the long and the short, the quick and the slow, the joyful and the sorrowful, the hard and the soft, the high and the low, the emerging and the fading, and the thick and the loose are meant to make harmony in all good music.³

Soon thereafter, Heh was theorised and generalised, with its new writing (和), to become a metaphysical-political concept for the compossibility of all beings. This is similar to Leibniz’ theory, so much so that I shall use his concept “compossibility”, as well as the compatibility of all political existences, which presupposes the ideal political situation. Heh

1. Li-ji: ch. Music. 《礼记·乐记》

2. Guo-yu: ch. Stories of Zhou, Part3. 《国语·周语下》。

3. Tso-chuan: 20th years of Duke Zhao. 《左传·昭公20年》。

as a metaphysical concept is first found in I-ching (The Book of Changes), the first philosophical work in China, which was interestingly interpreted by Leibniz as an esoteric binary system of mathematics. It was defined in terms of the “universal compossibility” (太和) of “all beings existing well in their own ways without being harmful to one another”.⁴ Lao-zi explains Heh as the complementary or reciprocal interwork of any two different factors in terms of Yin and Yang,⁵ viewed here as a binary composition rather than a binary opposition. Heh developed further into a political/ethical concept in the Zhou dynasty (11th century BCE to 256 BCE). In the first chapter of Shang-shu (The Book of Political Documents), “creating compatibility of all nations and all people” is claimed as the greatest political goal.⁶ It suggests an ideal world of Tianxia, a peaceful world system inclusive of all nations (see Tianxia).

An interpretation of the political effect of music is found in Li-ji. It realises the earliest politics of aesthetics. Here it is stated that four things matter for the political: norms (rites) to control the desirable, music to soften the mentality, law to punish criminals, and government to manage national affairs.⁷ It is believed that the noble men could “understand politics well with a good understanding of music”, and even “the political situation of a state could be perceived from its musical styles alone.”⁸ Confucius insisted that proper music could relieve people from their restless desires. In this sense, music is a way of doing politics. Despite this, the ethical discipline of Chinese music has the side-effect of limiting musicians’ creativity.

The philosophising of harmony has its roots in a significant debate (about 530 BCE). As recorded in Tso-Chuan, a Duke said he preferred those of the same mind as his to those who differ with him, since agreement creates harmony. His minister Yan-tzu, however, told him he had confused harmony (和) with agreement (同); where harmony means the reciprocal improvement of diversities, whereas agreement reduces open possibilities to a poor singularity. In a simpler way, he explained that the harmony of many ingredients makes a tasteful soup thanks to their complementarity. Likewise, the harmony of a diversity of thought works in politics in that the opinions opposing those of a lord’s might be necessary to change or better the lord’s mind. If a soup were made only with water and more

4. I-ching: ch. Interpretation of Qian. 《周易·彖传·乾》。

5. Lao-zi: Dao-de-jing, ch.42. 老子:《道德经·42章》。

6. Shang-shu: ch.1. 《尚书·尧典》

7. Li-ji: ch. Music. 《礼记·乐记》

8. Ibid.

water, would we find it delicious? And if music were monotonous, would we find it beautiful? Only one voice makes for poor politics.⁹

In another similar debate recorded in *Guo-yu*, harmony was further argued to be the necessary ontological condition for beings to exist and to be of any value. A historian, Shi-bo, explained to a Duke that the decline of the Zhou Dynasty was the result of later kings promoting a policy of sameness in place of harmony. He gave the following argument: harmony allows beings to flourish, whereas sameness causes beings to die. Things would become nothing if they are reduced to the same. For this reason, the great kings would marry queens from other states, select ministers from those who have differing opinions, and use different things in different cases and different ways. Monotone sounds boring, uniformity does not develop culture, a single taste is poor, and sameness does not create value.¹⁰ It is said that a “harmony of diversities is the condition that allows everything to be something rather than nothing.”¹¹

When *Heh* was developed from harmony to be a philosophical concept of compossibility or compatibility, it implied a principle of co-existence, that is, the compossibility or compatibility of all beings. It explains the Chinese metaphysics of relations which does not discuss Being. The question of Being would sound strange in a Chinese metaphysics that recognises uncertain and infinite changes instead of an eternal or absolute Being. If asked to talk about Being – there being no such concept in Chinese philosophy – I suppose Lao-zi or Confucius would say that Being is nothing but the state of changing, and there is nothing that could be a thing as such by itself since everything could only be defined in its temporal relations with other things. This means that it is the relations-in-changing, rather than a conceptual defined thing, that is reality. Based on relationism, it would be unreasonable to say, “a thing as it is”, for a thing is always a function of the changing relations of where and when it is being referred to. A “thing” is merely a linguistic invention for convenience rather than reality. Relations are thus viewed as the ontological condition for a thing to be, so much so that existence presupposes co-existence, as I have previously argued.¹² The metaphysical concept of “harmony” has been applied to political practice as well as ethical life, for it implies optimal cooperation.

9. Tso-chuan: the 20th year of Duke Zhao. 《左传·昭公20年》。

10. *Guo-yu*: Stories of Zheng. 《国语·郑语》。

11. Li-ji: ch. Music. 《礼记·乐记》。

12. Zhao Tingyang: *Ontologie de la coexistence : du cogito au facio*. In *Diogenè*, n° 228, octobre-décembre 2010.

I have tried to develop a modern explanation for harmony in terms of optimal cooperation. The cooperative strategy could be described as live-and-let-live, as Robert Axelrod strongly recommends,¹³ while harmony implies the stronger strategy of live-if-and-only-if-let-live or improved-if-and-only-if-let-improved¹⁴ (for a related discussion see Ren and Tianxia). This leads to a meta-question underlying a cooperative game, that is, harmony requires something more than fair play. In a given game of no alternative, fair play is considered to be the best expectation. But fair play could conceal the potentially serious injustice of the game itself in the case that not all players agree to play this game. People need not only fair play, but also a fair game. In this sense, harmony excludes the dominating power in politics or economics that decide the game.

A student of Confucius summarised his teaching as “harmony matters most.”¹⁵ This proposition has had the greatest influence on the Chinese mentality and its practices. For centuries, Chinese politicians and strategists recognise a “triple factor” for political success: the right time, a good position, and harmony with people. Harmony is considered the key factor. The concept of harmony has been also widely used in “worldly wisdom”. Popular sayings prove this: a harmonious family flourishes; harmony invites good fortune; and harmony makes a way, whereas disharmony makes a wall; etc. Traditional Chinese medicine is not the cure of illness but rather is expected to restore the harmonious state of a body against disease.

Generally speaking, the concept of *Heh* in terms of compossibility or compatibility means the political or economic strategies to develop a universally good institutional arrangement for a better co-existence of all peoples, while the usual understanding of *Heh* in terms of harmony advises to avoid conflict. It might be said that the Confucian harmony leads to positive wisdom that encourages reciprocity, balance, and cooperation, whereas Taoism’s perception of harmony is closer to negative wisdom that considers the priority of risk-aversion, so as to be safer and flexibly fitted to any uncertain change.

13. Robert Axelrod: *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Basic Books, New York, USA, 1985, chapter 4.

14. It is a developed and improved version of Confucian rule. Cf. Confucius: *The Analects*, chapter 6.

15. Confucius: *The Analects*, chapter 1.

Harmony

European perspective

Carlo Ratti, Marco Santambrogio

Harmony in the City: Towards A Cyber Ecology

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the word harmony refers to “a situation in which people are peaceful and agree with each other, or when things seem right or suitable together.”

In fact, beyond this relatively straightforward definition, there lies a multifaceted debate that stretches across history. In Western philosophy, the term *harmony* is not used very often per se. Yet, it still can be found playing a substantial part in the writings of both ancient and modern thinkers. This essay aims to explore the concept in relation to architecture – by seeing the built environment as a site where the two poles of natural and artificial should find ways to reinforce one another. However, a few preliminary notes should be provided to elucidate how the idea of harmony analysed here hinges upon a wider philosophical conceptualisation.

Ever since Greek and Roman times, harmony has often been discussed as the outcome of conflict. For pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles, for instance, the variety of natural phenomena, including the regular succession of the seasons during the year, are the result of two opposing forces: Love and Strife. In Roman times, Horace described the harmonic balance that arises from the contrast between the four elements in nature (air, earth, fire and water) with the expression *concordia discors* – a jarring unity.

While originally, the term *harmony* was used as part of a discussion on cosmology, it later became integral to the debate on political philosophy. Since the settlement of the European wars of religion in the 17th century, a principle has been permanently established: a plurality of opposing and irreconcilable positions can run within the same society. Such plurality does not rule out the possibility of harmonic coexistence among citizens.

Harmony in society does not mandate individuals to drop their conflicting opinions. Rather, it is achieved, to borrow the words of 20th century American philosopher John Rawls’ *Political Liberalism*, as an overlapping consensus between overall conceptions of the good (moral or religious conceptions, for example) that acknowledge a principle of reciprocity. In turn, this establishes the foundation of the constitutional principles that lead to liberal democracies, where a dynamic harmony exists between political forces fighting to gain the electoral majority.

As harmony can be understood as a dynamic, conflict-driven concept, this applies also to the realm of urbanism and architecture. The city, the ultimate man-made creation, can be seen as the site where two opposing forces clash and compete – the natural (biological) and the artificial (technical).

For centuries, western thinkers saw little room for reconciling the two forces. In 18th century Europe, two opposing beliefs coexisted. For some, like the Italian writer Giacomo Leopardi, nature is essentially hostile to man, who must fight it and eventually tame it. For others, notably the Swiss-born philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the source of all our ills is exclusively human. However, this does not equate to claiming a return to an original “state of nature”: Rousseau claimed that the inequality that plights human society must be fixed by reforming the State and the social contract that underpins its foundation.

What is common between both positions is the idea that there is very little to learn from nature. Even in the myth of the noble savage, the primitive man was constructed to only possess the ability to cast a naive and uncorrupted gaze over our civilisation, not a wisdom that is worth applying to the modern world. Similarly, the Europeans considered the indigenous populations of America, Asia, or Africa inferior because their way of living was closer to a “natural” state – and this often ended up justifying the colonial enterprises.

The attitude towards nature gradually changed over the course of the 20th century. Nature was ultimately recognised to be (almost) on equal footing as its artificial counterpart. This became the impetus for society to revise the historical imbalance and seek harmony between the two elements.

This process occurred under the pressure of numerous parallel forces. Some of them will be discussed later, such as an increasing awareness in climate change, or the emergence of digital technologies and cybernetic thinking. However, at the end of this introductory section, it is

worth quickly mentioning the role played by ethology, a discipline whose birth follows the formulation of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in the second half of the 19th century. Figures as different as Nikolaas Tinbergen, Konrad Lorenz, Karl von Frisch, or in more recent times, Edward O. Wilson or Stefano Mancuso, have studied the behaviour of animals, reviewing some rigid principles related to what amounts as forms of intelligence belonging to other living beings.

One widespread notion in the fields of contemporary design and architecture is that the natural world can suggest solutions to human problems – for instance, in the research on new construction materials. Before addressing this topic, however, it is worth taking a step back, and looking at the start of the debate on the dualism between natural and artificial.

Natural and artificial – looking for a definition

In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle drew a fundamental distinction: some things exist by nature, others due to art-technique. However, such a definition, which apparently conjures two forces that are opposite and irreconcilable, is immediately problematic. There are countless examples of things that are difficult to classify as natural or artificial. Dog breeds, plant cultivars, spider webs, paths traced by humans and animals by simply walking the same route repeatedly... All these things are both natural and artificial. This deals closely with the role of design. A table, for example, as Aristotle discussed, is artificial as it is built by humans, but it is natural due to its material (wood).

Advancing the same debate in the 20th century was the Nobel Prize-winning economist Herbert Simon. His book *The Sciences of the Artificial* (1969) aims to establish a theoretical foundation for the study of empirical phenomena that are “artificial” rather than “natural”, and it is considered of particular interest for the sake of this essay.

According to Simon, certain things are artificial because “... they are as they are only because of a system's being moulded, by goals or purposes, to the environment in which it lives” (Simon, 1969, p. xi). This is what characterises the contingent artefacts of many human endeavours – from engineering to medicine, business, architecture, and city making. Simon put forward design as a key factor for investigating the artificial.

Today, Simon's call for a design-driven rethinking of the relationship between the natural and artificial realms – indirectly pushing for

an unprecedented harmony between them – is as crucial as ever. In fact, the urgency of this task has skyrocketed in the 21st century, in parallel with both the increasing penetration of digital technologies into the physical and biological world, and a growing concern over the pace of climate change. In particular, the vision of the Anthropocene – a concept that emerged in the last two decades and which posits that the main changes to the conditions of the Earth derive from human activity – is now compelling designers to discard a previous conceptualisation of nature as an entity essentially detached from humankind.

The Anthropocene reinforces both Aristotle and Simon's insights, that the biological world is not always natural. Simon presents the example of a plowed field to illustrate how the biological world can be and is often rendered artificial – that is, moulded to a goal or purpose through a design process. In a similar fashion, but following an opposite trajectory, can the artificial world – the world of cities and buildings – become more natural? How can digital technologies facilitate this new harmony, taking the form of a double convergence, and what will happen if the natural and artificial fusion becomes widespread?

With the design practice CRA – Carlo Ratti Associati –, we have had the privilege to explore this challenge in multiple concrete projects, many of them developed alongside Italian architect Italo Rota. Here, we will explore such convergence from two points of view: from the natural to the artificial and, conversely, from the artificial to the natural.

From natural to artificial: the birth of the cyborg

Historically, the most explored side of the natural-artificial relationship has been the movement from the natural to the artificial. At the human scale, this is epitomised by the birth of the cyborg. In the 1980s, a nascent “cyborg theory” posited the cyborg condition as a new paradigm of human social-biological-technological existence. Donna Haraway articulated a social dimension of cyborg theory, connecting the concept to emerging discourses around womanhood and propelling the idea into broader public debate. Cyborgs, she wrote, are “... post-Second World War hybrid entities made of, first, ourselves and other organic creatures in our unchosen ‘high-technological’ guise as information systems, texts, and ergonomically controlled labouring, desiring, and reproducing systems. The second essential ingredient in cyborgs is machines in their guise.” In the case of the modern cyborg, the artificial component has

become a ‘dynamic’ extension of our bodies and minds. Digital technologies demand a constant and two-way cybernetic exchange in a way that our traditional (one-way) extensions, such as clothing or axes, have never done. In all these cases, we see the human body increasingly hybridised from technology, becoming less natural and more artificial.

From artificial to natural: cybernetic visions

The trajectories along which the artificial can be made natural have been less explored. Primarily, they can be framed as part of a series of experimental applications, in theory and practice, at the intersection of design and computer science. Norbert Wiener (1965), an American mathematician who published the book *Cybernetics — Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, argued that most systems, both alive and nonliving, proceed through a series of “feedback loops”, incorporating sensors and actuators to regulate and modify their conditions in response to external stimuli. In the following decades, Wiener’s vision inspired countless experiments in both architecture and management — all ambitious, even if almost always doomed for failure or downsizing.

The pervasiveness of digital technologies that came to be since the beginning of the 21st century generated a whole new scenario. Mark Weiser, a computer scientist working at PARC in California, was already describing this phenomenon with the term “ubiquitous computing” in the mid-1990s. He hoped to find a non-intrusive technology, capable of receding into the background of people’s lives and ultimately infusing any kind of object with the ability to respond in real time to changes in external conditions. This is exactly the promise of the digital revolution applied to the artificial world. The convergence of bits and atoms, sometimes labelled as Internet of Things, creates the possibility of “animating the artificial”. Sensors, actuators, and artificial intelligence are capable of infusing new life into the environment, strengthening the continuity between living and inanimate systems. In turn, this is likely to be the most radically disruptive change that has ever recast the design, construction, and operation of our built environment.

In our firsthand work with exhibitions and experiments in different countries, we have explored two possible ways to use the emerging digital tools to achieve the objective of animating the artificial — and thus bringing it closer to the natural world.

Animating the artificial: the computational way

The first way to make the artificial resemble the natural is animation through computation. At CRA, we have explored the possibility of a living architecture — one that can “sense and respond” — at many scales, from objects to pavilions to entire neighbourhoods. One of the most substantial advantages of making the built environment responsive is the possibility to tailor it to the needs of its users. For instance, consider how we regulate the temperature in buildings. We heat and cool our buildings in a standardised fashion, ignoring the presence and preferences of individuals, and wasting a staggering amount of energy on heating and illuminating empty or partially occupied buildings. Digital technologies can be used to make the built environment more responsive. We have been following heat since the Stone Age. What if we could make the heat follow us instead?

This was the idea behind Local Warming, an experiment first prototyped outside of MIT’s main building in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in which motion-tracking sensors followed individuals’ movements and used beams of collimated radiations to generate a localised climate around each one. A few years later, when redesigning the Agnelli Foundation’s Headquarters in Turin, Italy, we implemented this design for sustained, real-world usage. The employees seem to enjoy what we might call a personal “thermal bubble” which follows them around the buildings, adjusting the temperature and light to their preferences through a smartphone app. This living system is not only comfortable; it could entail significant savings for energy consumption.

These examples tell us that, just as living beings become cyborgs when technological elements are embedded into their lives, buildings and streets undergo their own transformation when they are animated. We could say that they become robots, a unit that has some sensors, some intelligence, and some actuators. In other words, it can read the world, process that information, and then respond in a purposeful way. By animating the artificial “through computation”, architecture can cloak us in a third skin — an endlessly reconfigurable space able to adapt to human needs — rather than the other way around.

Animating the artificial: the material way

There is also a second way through which we can animate the artificial. We can find new ways to bridge the traditional urban-rural divide and

affirm a novel concept of the built environment as a space where humanity can coexist with other forms of life. The outcome of such an approach would be one that can contribute to satisfying humankind's innate longing for nature – our “biophilia”, to borrow a term from Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson (1984).

As the 20th century came to an end and evidence of climate change became undeniable, environmentalism gained ground in many Western societies. Along with it, attempts to animate the artificial through nature multiplied in the design world. This, in turn, would be attained by two means: either through the literal incorporation of greeneries into architecture, or through experiments in which new organic materials served as construction elements. In the former, New York City's High Line, an aerial greenway built from a converted rail bed that opened in June 2009, was one of the first projects to capture this new ambition in urban planning.

Another way to embrace the living world is to invite it inside. CRA won the C40's Reinventing Cities competition in 2019 with VITAE, a building in south Milan featuring a 200-meter-long urban vineyard, accessible to the public through a pedestrian path moving from a brand-new green piazza up to the roof. Sometimes, the presence of nature can be facilitated by new technology, as it is the case with urban agriculture, where advances in hydroponic and aeroponic farming techniques make it easier to grow vegetables in confined spaces.

What future for architectural forms?

Whatever philosophical interpretation of the new ecology we adopt, it is clear that we can no longer afford a strict separation between the artificial and natural worlds. Designers have a critical role to play in deciding which future will come to pass: design responses that adequately balance the two realms can bring true harmony to the urban environment. On the contrary, ill-conceived attempts of integration could make them destroy each other.

In the list of disciplines that inspired his work *Sciences of the Artificial*, Simon included architecture and engineering along with painting. He wrote: “[...] Those things we call artifacts are not apart from nature. They have no dispensation to ignore or violate natural law. At the same time, they are adapted to human goals and purposes.” Could this be the starting point of our quest for a new, more harmonious architecture and urban design?

和 Heh

Harmony

Final remarks

ZHAO Tingyang,
Carlo Ratti, Marco Santambrogio

It seems no one has any good reason to refuse harmony, since harmony is apparently a good situation for everything. So a harmonious family is good, a harmonious city is good, a harmonious nation is good, and a “harmonious world” is good – it is not only an ideal claimed by Chinese philosophy, we see it also in Leibniz' philosophy that supposes God has a plan of predetermined harmony for the world. Theoretically speaking, every system is perfect if it is in harmony in terms of consistency and coherence, as perfect as an ideal system of mathematics or logic. But a skeptical question remains here, which is, the logical or theoretical harmony does not necessarily imply the realistic or ontological best situation of a world of beings. A system of “everything in order”, meaning “good”, might be the end of history, an immobile and static state with no more vitality. Is this what we want?

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Heart

Xin

SUN Xiangchen
Stefano Della Torre



Xin

Chinese perspective

SUN Xiangchen

The Chinese word Xin (心) is a very old concept, having an important meaning in Chinese philosophy. Its pictogram describes the human heart and its location in the body; but the meaning of the word “heart” (Xin) quickly evolved to be associated with “thinking”. In the Book of Songs (11th century BCE to 6th century BCE), we can find lines such as the following: “My heart is full of sorrow and cannot shut out my thoughts.” We see here that “heart” (Xin) often means the same as “thinking”. In Chinese, “heart” and “thought” are often used together. Furthermore, “heart” has a broader meaning, which has been influenced by Buddhism, and all spiritual phenomena are called “heart”; therefore, “heart” (Xin) roughly has three meanings. First, it refers to the “heart”, which is in the centre of the body, and based on this meaning, it is also extended to mean centre and core; the heart also means the power of dominance. Second, according to Mencius, the function of the heart is mainly “thinking”. So, Xin is equivalent to mind, which is related to cognition and emotion; therefore, Xin is always related to mental phenomena such as thoughts, ideas, feelings, and mood. Third, all spiritual phenomena are determined by the “heart”. “The Doctrine of heart” was developed in Chinese philosophy in the Song and Ming Dynasties (1127 – 1644), which used the “heart” (Xin) to indicate the ontological ground of the universe.

In *The Analects*, “heart” is not a concept that appears frequently. The most famous occurrence is when Confucius said, “At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing the norms.” Here, “heart” represents the power to do whatever you want. As a form of desire, “heart” is what’s inside, which is opposite to external rituals and norms. At the same time, “heart” is also the root of inner virtues, and “norms” is the external rule. The perfect stage of the superior man is, then, the unity of inside and outside, of inner freedom and external rules, showing a supreme stage of life.

In the *Mencius*, “heart” (Xin) is a very important concept. Mencius (372 BCE – 289 BCE) put forward a basic proposition: “All men have a heart which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others.” More specifically, the Four Principles are used to explain the human heart. The Four Principles are the feeling of commiseration, the feeling of shame and dislike, the feeling of modesty and complaisance, and the feeling of approving and disapproving. Here, the “heart” (Xin) is the source of all virtues. Therefore, Mencius said that “What belongs by his nature to the superior man is benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge. They are rooted in his heart, and their growth and manifestation are harmony appearing in the countenance.” Mencius also proposed the concept of the “Child’s Heart”: “The great man is the one who does not lose his child’s heart.” The “Child’s heart” is used to express the innate purity and kindness of the heart.

In Mencius’ philosophy, the “heart” is not only related to man, but also to the universe, to Heaven. He especially emphasises that “He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven.” From this, “heart” (Xin) is associated with Heaven. In Mencius’ view, by fully reflecting the Four Principles in his heart, he could understand his innate goodness and his true and inner human nature, and then he will be able to understand Heaven, or transcendence. In theory, through the heart, the superior man could understand human nature and then know Heaven; in practice, the superior man preserves one’s mental constitution, nourishes one’s nature, and then serves Heaven.

In Chinese philosophical tradition, “heart” and “knowledge” are related. Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200) said: “Knowledge is what is in my heart, principle is what is in the thing itself. To know the principles, there will be a debate between the subject and the object.” The heart is the god of man, and all kinds of principles are reflected in the heart. So, the person who has the universal principles in his heart could respond to all things. This kind of principle is not derived from the heart’s self-reflection but discovered by the method of “investigating the nature of things”. In this sense, the heart has a strong cognitive meaning. In addition, “heart” is also related to concepts such as “human nature” and “emotions”; in Zhu Xi’s doctrine, human nature is related to the principles of heaven, reflected in the heart; emotions are related to human temperament, which is the reaction when encountering things. The heart is a kind of emotional activation and lies between “human nature”

and “emotions”. All kinds of clues come from “heart”, which is why Zhu Xi said “the heart governs human nature and emotions”.

Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193), a contemporary of Zhu Xi, put forward the proposition that “the universe is my heart, and my heart is the universe”. He is called the pioneer of the Doctrine of Heart. A key issue of this doctrine is how to understand the universe starting from yourself: “Heart is a metaphysical principle.” Its ontological presupposition is that Heaven and man are one: “The great man could integrate all things between Heaven and earth as one, and it’s not done by consciousness, but by the benevolence of the heart, which is one with all things between Heaven and earth.” “Heart” is the source of all norms in the world. This is consistent with Mencius’ doctrine. They believed that the heart is so great, that if you can exhaust your heart, you can know Heaven. The meaning of “learning” also lies in this: people are often deceived by their opinions and lose their original heart, and by learning we can overcome the interference of various opinions.

Wang Yangming (1472 - 1529) inherited this idea and made his own proposition that “there is nothing outside the heart.” “Human is the heart of Heaven and earth, and the heart is the lord of Heaven and earth.” The heart is not only the spirit of man, but also the lord of Heaven and earth. Wang Yangming went on to introduce the concept of “the moral knowledge” (*liang zhi*). According to this theory, “the moral knowledge” is the feeling of right and wrong that “can be learned without learning and can be known without thinking”. It is the direction initiated by the heart, which is regarded as the *noumenon* of the heart. At the same time, “the moral knowledge is the spirit of the nature. These spirits give birth to Heaven and earth and become ghosts and kings; all are born from then on, and there is really nothing against the heart.” “The moral knowledge” is where everything comes from, and the human heart is the root of everything in the universe. A disciple asked Wang Yangming, what does it have to do with my heart when the flowers bloom and fall in the mountains? Wang Yangming replied, “when you did not look at this flower, the flower went into silence with your heart. When you looked at this flower, the colour of this flower became clear immediately. Therefore, this flower was not outside your heart.” It sounds similar to Berkeley’s proposition “to be is to be perceived.”

Since “heart” is at its foundation, moral philosophy in Chinese cultural tradition is also understood through “heart” as the core. Two concepts, “the original heart” and “the lost heart” are put forward. Human

behaviours are determined by their hearts, but people often lose their “original heart”. Therefore, if people let their heart loose, then they will lose their benevolence; if they hold onto their original heart, they will preserve their benevolence. So, in your daily life, you should “seek your lost heart,” and nourish your heart by reducing desire. “The reason why a superior man is different from ordinary people is based on his heart. A superior man will use benevolence and propriety for preserving his heart.” One’s cultivation is to remove these barriers, to restore the *noumenon* of the heart, which is the original heart of human beings. Wang Yangming further put forward the concept of “realisation of the moral knowledge”, acting in good faith, rectifying one’s heart, and improving his own morality.

The concept of “heart” is not only about individual, but also about the public. In *The Analects*, Confucius once said that “he revived states that had been extinguished, restored families whose line of succession had been broken, and called to office those who had retired into obscurity, so that throughout the kingdom, the hearts of the people turned towards him.” The concept of “the hearts of people” expresses the opinions and thoughts of the people. It seems to correspond to the concept of public disposition, a kind of public emotion and opinion, “it is impossible that anyone should become ruler of the people to whom they have not yielded the subjection of the heart.” In this sense, the heart (*Xin*) is also a concept of Chinese political philosophy.

The heart (*Xin*) in Chinese is associated with several English words: mind, heart and spirit. Different from the concept of mind, which contains the meaning of “cognition”, *Xin* is not merely pure intellect; therefore, *Xin* is closer to the English word “heart”, which has a strong emotional meaning. It is by no means pure emotion, but the emotional foundation of morality or a certain intuition, which is a way to understand reality holistically, like Pascal’s difference between geometric spirit and *esprit de finesse*. The Chinese word *Xin* contains these two meanings: geometric spirit and *esprit de finesse*. At the same time, “heart” is not only related to people, but also to the universe, to Heaven and earth. In Chinese cultural traditions, there is no strong concept of personal god. So, its transcendence dimension is mainly reflected in Heaven and earth. In this sense, the relationship between “heart” and the universe is equivalent to the position of “spirit” in Western cultural traditions. The subjective spirit is also the manifestation of the Absolute. This is very vividly embodied in Hegel’s phenomenology of spirit.

Consequently, Xin in Chinese corresponds to many concepts in Western language, such as “mind”, “heart”, and “spirit” in different contexts respectively.

Heart

European perspective

Stefano Della Torre

The concepts of “heart”, “spirit”, and “soul” are all related to the mystery of life. They have different origins, and each of them has many meanings, but they also share wide overlapping.

Starting from ancient Greeks, they had the *psykè* as a definitely nonmaterial being, whose existence could be separate from the body, and philosophers thought of it as immortal. This concept is equal to the Latin *anima* (French: *âme*, Italian: *anima*, Spanish: *alma*) and the ancient German *seula* (English: *soul*, German: *Seele*).

The etymology of *psykè* reveals the relationship with life acknowledged in something sensible, even if not visible, as the word is connected with the verb meaning “to breathe” or “to blow”: life ends with the last breath, and this movement of air becomes the sign of ending or enduring life.

Hence the idea of *thumos* as a concept which is more related to physical life, identified with the breath. This concept is equal to the Latin *spiritus* (English: *spirit*, French: *esprit*; Italian: *spirito* Spanish: *espíritu*) and to the German *Geist*.

Basically, the spirit is what makes the body alive, and the death is the end of this synergy. The overlapping among *anima* (soul) and *spiritus* (spirit) (in any European language) became more and more complete: the spirit became both a being that exists also after the end of the person’s life, and the fantastic elaboration of the concept produced the idea of a spirit as good, or bizarre and maleficent, often described as the ghost.

The link with life bridges with all breathing beings, besides humankind: “animal” has the same root as *anima*, without any ambition to immortality. The idea of an individual human being composed of a mortal part, the body, and an immortal part, the soul, was elaborated by the ancient religions and became central to the Christian vision. In popular thought, the soul is the inner being, the most authentic and private part

of a person. Psychology is the branch of medicine that works on feelings, memory and thoughts, and this shows the path of the concept.

Looking at the many meanings of these words in the dictionaries, it is possible to observe that the most popular meanings are the same for both the terms, and only few meanings are specific, sometimes producing funny “false friends”, such as *spiritoso* (Italian: something or somebody that makes people laugh) and *spirituosen* (German: alcoholic beverages, as alcohol is produced by a process of evaporation, and in the Middle Ages the vapor given off and collected during an alchemical process – as with distillation of alcohol – was called a spirit of the original material). But in general, both “spirit” and “soul” bear the sense of the nonmaterial essence, the animating principle or actuating cause of an individual life, and from this shared origin, the multiple metaphoric senses arise. Therefore, a soul or a spirit are attributed to things, places, ideas, times...: some examples can be the “spirit of the time” (German: *Zeitgeist*), “the soul of a place”, “the spirit of the movement”, “the soul of the team”, and so on.

There was another organ definitely related to life, that is the heart. The end of life can be described as a stop to the breath, but also to the heart beating. It is why European peoples developed a vast metaphoric use of “heart” in a semantic area related to life. Some of these meanings correspond with (secondary) meanings of spirit and soul: heart, spirit, soul, are all frequently used to speak of courage and bravery.

Furthermore, if the soul and the spirit symbolically came to signify the inner part of a person, the heart is physically the inner part of the body, used also in popular everyday expressions (the heart of vegetables), and therefore there is a wide area of overlapping metaphoric uses (“to comply with the spirit of the law”, “to reach the heart of a discourse”, “to portray the soul”, or “the spirit” or “the heart of a person”...).

Regardless, the most frequent and specific sense in which “heart” is used is related to the sphere of feelings. “Heart” is the international symbol of love, also by very popular logos and emoticons. This is because “heart” is used to underscore the good, which is present in actions, such as welcoming somebody (German: *Herzliche willkommen*), to deal with somebody with openness and friendship (Italian: *cordialmente*), to accept something or somebody with openness, to do something with a generous commitment, with passion. “To learn by heart” in English (*apprendre par cœur* in French) means learning a text so as to be ready to repeat it perfectly without reading: related with memory, but more with the sphere of care and focus.

Beyond the common meanings, “heart” tends to signify the richness of feelings and sense in human life, whilst “spirit” and “soul” tend to be related to nonmaterial essence, and they move towards the vision of an everlasting life, often within the sphere of religion.

心 Xīn

Heart

Final remarks

SUN Xiangchen, Stefano Della Torre

Both Xīn and “heart” are very complex concepts in Chinese and Western cultural traditions, and their uses always involve very different contexts. Strictly speaking, each word is related to a series of concepts, which together form a word-family, and Xīn or heart is the core concept in each word-family.

Generally, Xīn is used to translate “mind” and “heart” in Chinese. Xīn and “heart” have more in common. Regardless of Chinese or Western language, Xīn or “heart” is first and foremost a human organ, and both are related to the sphere of feelings and intuitions in human life, which are also associated with the basic emotions of love. In this sense, there is no problem in the mutual translation between them.

In Western contexts, the idea of a non-material being bringing life to the body is expressed by the concepts of “spirit” and “soul”, which have several meanings in common among them and some also with “heart”, but with a strong theological connotation. Since there is no Chinese concept of transcendence in the Western sense, Xīn plays a role in connecting with the universe or heaven in Chinese philosophy.

So Xīn and spirit have certain transcendent dimensions in their respective cultures. But in modern Chinese, in order to highlight the particularity of spirit in Western sense, people generally do not use Xīn to translate spirit; instead they create modern Chinese *Jingshen* (精神) or *shuling* (属灵) to translate “spirit”. The former refers to individual or collective spirit in its secular sense, while the latter refers to gods or the Holy Spirit.

In Chinese, Xīn is also not used to translate soul, which refers to a non-material substance. In the Chinese cultural tradition, there is no concept which refers to substance, but there is a distinction between body-shape and breath. Modern Chinese created *Linghun* (灵魂) to translate the concept of soul, where *Hun* (魂) emphasises the existence of something while the body is dead, so the meaning of *Hun* is closer to soul.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Heritage

遗产

Yí Chǎn

WANG Qi

Aleida Assmann

Chinese perspective

WANG Qi

China became the State Party of The World Heritage Convention on 12 December 1985, and started to nominate properties to be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List in the following year. From then on, Yí Chǎn (遗产) in contemporary context has gradually become synonymous with “cultural heritage”, “cultural property” and “cultural capital”. Heritage research and conservation is becoming a professional field. By the end of 2021, 56 properties were inscribed on the World Heritage List, including 38 cultural, 14 natural, and 4 mixed. As time goes by, people’s interest in heritage has increased substantially.

The conception of heritage is closely connected with the progress of archaeology, especially public archaeology in China. With the rapid process of urbanisation and modernisation, China has definitely felt the urgency of conservation of culture and nature, like most countries in the world. In recent years, China also sees the threat to cultural diversity from globalisation. Currently, Chinese scholarship of heritage can be classified into two categories: tangible and intangible heritage. It is the professionals who study the tangible heritage such as archaeological sites, monuments, etc. And intangible heritage like living traditions – festivals and ceremonies – are preserved and practiced by Chinese people, while traditional or folk arts and crafts are taken care of by folk artists and craftsmen.

However, long before heritage became a professional field, a distinct awareness of heritage was identified in classical metrical poetry. In ancient times, Chinese men of letters tended to trust and cherish the past. Consequently, themes like nostalgia for the hometown, height ascending, and mood like being sentimental about the rhythm of the seasons or petals carried away by a stream are repeated and stereotyped. This tendency can even be traced in contemporary popular songs. Meanwhile, it cannot be overlooked that the repetition of image and mood is effective in shaping and handing down the intangible, spiritual heritage. In this

respect, short metrical poetry is highly credited, because it is flexible for the poet to sketch the scenery or express his or her instant mood and feelings. For the reader, metrical poetry is easy to chant and recite. Moreover, the subject is missing in most cases, and no specific person or event appears in the text but often in the title (there are exceptions as always, eg., Li Bai (701 – 762) once wrote “I wish to ride the wind to be home”, and “Not as deep as Wang Lun’s friendship”). Therefore, it is quite convenient for readers to be sympathetic to poet’s sensation. Chinese men of letters take “reading eagerly and travelling extensively” as an ideal way of living. Therefore, a considerable amount of poetry rendering natural beauty has been composed. Some masterpieces have been chanted for so many years that the poems and the sceneries are eventually combined as one, and the poetry even becomes an inseparable part of the nature. Mountain Tai, situated in eastern China, is only 1500 meters in height, but it is prestigious among other mountains, partly because Mencius records the story that when Confucius was on the peak of the Mountain, he exclaimed that the world seemed smaller. The episode makes Mountain Tai a hot-spot for men of letters, including Du Fu (712 – 770), “China’s greatest Tang poet” according to a BBC documentary. Du Fu directly borrowed from the two founders of Confucianism and composed his Mountain Tai poem as follows: “Someday I must climb up to its summit / Looking down, see how small all the other mountains are.”

If the popularity of Mountain Tai could be traced back to Confucius’ ascending the mountain, Du Fu’s masterpiece, as well as the sacrificial ceremony to heaven held by emperors; then the story of Han Shan Temple in Suzhou would owe to one Tang poem: *Mooring by Maple Bridge at Night* (枫桥夜泊) by Zhang Ji (张继, ca. 715-779), whose fame cannot be compared with Du Fu in the least. The poem sounds as follows:

Crows cried at the moonlit, frosty night,
Facing riverside maple and fisherman’s lantern,
In gloom I slept.
Outside Suzhou City, from Han Shan Temple,
Midnight bells reached the boat of wanderers.

The poem was composed in the turbulent period of the Late Tang Dynasty, but it doesn’t mention a word about the historical background. On the contrary, the poem renders the wanderers’ loneliness and anxiety in a simple and straightforward way. At the end of the poem, the poet consoles all the lonely souls with quiet and peaceful Buddhist temple

bells. It is this exquisite poem that makes Han Shan Temple prominent among many other Buddhist temples of the lower range of Yangtze River. Through history, Han Shan Temple repeatedly unfolds a drama of destruction and rebirth, and expressions like “crows cried in the moonlight”, “riverside maple and fisherman’s lantern”, as well as “midnight bells” have been inscribed on the heart of Chinese men of letters. For them, Han Shan Temple is almost a place of pilgrimage, where they hand-copy the poem in different styles of calligraphy and compose their own poems to salute Zhang Ji. Today Han Shan Temple has been covered with thick layers of cultural memories including a historical Buddhist temple, master Tang’s poem, poem stone carvings, and the Zen-mood bells. Since 1979, listening to the temple bells on New Year’s Eve has become a ceremony, although the Tang bell has long been lost and replaced, and the Buddhist claim of agony-relieving bells has intertwined with New Year celebrations. Interestingly enough, Jiang Cun Bridge” outside the temple is now considered “Maple Bridge”, though it is impossible to identify the exact location of the latter. Ultimately, Han Shan Temple and the Tang poem, tangible property and intangible property become as one; the “thing” (物) and the “event” (事) together constitute the “reality” of the Temple. And this “reality” is more of an idea, a fantasy, or feelings than existence. In one word, Han Shan Temple has been transformed into a symbol of Zen-mood, a timeless sign of Chinese mentality and affection, as well as the heritage which can be handed down.

To a certain extent, the conception of “reality” embodied in Han Shan Temple shares much similarity with the philosophy of Ernest Cassirer. When dealing with “things”, especially with historical “things”, Chinese people are in fact not dealing with “things” themselves, but rather with cultural memories about “things”, with language, poetry, myth and ceremony, etc. In other words, “things” in Chinese eyes are never simply material, but more cultural and historical. The Sun and the Moon appear frequently in classical poetry. For the former, ancient poets tend to describe its rhythmic movement, for instance, the concise lines “Sun up, work / Sun down, rest”, which are cited by Ezra Pound word for word in his *Canto XLIX*. In other cases, the poet either renders the sunrise in flaming color as Bai Juyi (772 – 846) does in his *Dreaming of the South*: “At sunrise riverside flowers are redder than fire / In spring river water is as blue as sapphire”; or the sunset solemnly as does Wang Wei (701 – 761): “In desert the only smoke rises straight up / Over river the Sun sinks round.” In contrast, phases of the Moon are closely connected with

sorrow and joy, parting and reunion, as the famous poet and essayist Su Dongpo (1037 – 1101) of the Song Dynasty chants in his Mid-autumn night lyrics: “Men have sorrow and joy, they part and meet / The moon waxes or wanes / Things have never been perfect.” Probably owing to that reason, poetry about the Moon often bears a touch of chill and loneliness, like Wang Wei’s picturesque “Moonbeams shine among pine trees / Spring water runs on rocks”, or Li Bai’s “Raise my cup to invite the Moon / Moonlight with my Shadow make us three”. Symbolising perfection and family reunion, the Full Moon can best make wanderers feel homesick. In that respect, both Li Bai and Du Fu leave to posterity well-known lines such as “Eyes raised, I see the moon so bright / Head bent, in homesickness I’m drowned”, and “Dew turns into frost since tonight / The Moon at hometown is brighter.” Meanwhile, Zhang Jiuling’s “The Moonlight shines over the sea/ People all under the heaven share this moment” somehow goes beyond the homesickness for hometown and project the sensation of a broader space. Suppose one day in the future, people might be indifferent to the legend “Chang’e flying to the Moon”, but the Moon as a symbol of homesickness and reunion would remain the same, since all these masterpieces have immersed in the “reality” of the Moon.

So far it can be concluded that language and poetry are two valid means to form the intangible heritage. Consequentially, it seems that Chinese people do not care too much about the accuracy of “things” or “events”, at least not in the extreme way. The justifiability of the “name” (名) is more important than the accuracy of the “thing” (实), since according to Confucius, when the “name” is not justifiable, what is said cannot be correct. Thus “things” do not have to be consistent with “names”, especially when people are musing over the remote past. When Su Dongpo was relegated to Huang Zhou in the current Hu Bei Province, he visited Chi Bi Ji (赤鼻矶) in 1082 CE, a spot considered by the locals as the place where the Battle of Red Cliff (赤壁, pronounced as Chi Bi) took place in 208 CE. In fact, the Battle took place at Pu Qi (蒲圻), south of the Yangtze River, which was renamed Red Cliff in 1998. It was in the wrong spot that Su Dongpo composed his masterpiece lyrics “Musing over the Past at Red Cliff”. From the lyrics it is clear the poet knew which was which, because after the grand opening lines “Eastward flows the Yangtze River / Man of the day in the remote past / Gone with huge waves”, he continued writing that “West of the ancient fortress / People say / It is Red Cliff where General Zhou won his fame”. Commentators have pointed out that Su Dongpo was conscious that he was not on the accurate battleground,

but he chose to “follow the local recognition”. No matter where he was, the poet did not hesitate to fantasise how gracefully General Zhou won his victory over powerful Cao in “laughing and jesting”. What’s more, the poet expressed his sentiment over the past glory in the lines “Visiting the old place in mind / How laughably sentimental I was / I have my hair turned grey earlier”. This episode demonstrates that the “name” is higher than the “thing”.

The mentality can still be spotted today in reconstruction of famous landmarks once appeared in classical poetry. Repairing ancient landmarks will be under strict supervision and required to “do the needlework”, but reconstructing is another story. First built in ca. 223 CE, Yellow Crane Tower has gained its fame mostly because of Li Bai’s masterpiece *Seeing Meng Haoran off at Yellow Crane Tower*. The last two lines “His sail is lost in boundless azure sky / Where I see but the Yangtze River flowing to the horizon” somewhat fix the grand view seeing from the peak of the Tower. According to historical records, the tower had been destroyed and reconstructed more than 30 times, and the latest took place in 1884. A hundred years later, the tower was rebuilt on a higher ground 1000 meters away from the original spot (which had been taken when Wu Han Yangtze River Bridge was built in 1957). Now 51.4 meters in height, the new 5-storeyed Yellow Crane Tower has reinforced concrete structure, and is ca. 20 meters higher than the former one. It looks more majestic and can offer a panoramic view. Tourists come and go, but nobody cares it is not the same Yellow Crane Tower which inspired Li Bai. Another example is the reconstruction of Xun Yang Tower, located in Jiu Jiang of Jiangxi Province. Its popularity probably comes from the opening lines of *Song of a Pipa Player* by Bai Juyi, the famous Late Tang poet: “I abode my friend goodbye one night by Xun Yang River / Maple leaves and rushes rustled in autumn wind”; and definitely from the stories of Chinese classic *All Men are Brothers* (水浒传, to use Pearl S. Buck’s translation), where two prominent heroes Song Jiang and Li Kui performed unforgettable deeds at the Tower. The designer of the reconstruction project consulted the illustrated versions of *All Men are Brothers* as well as the famous Song painting *Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival* (清明上河图), and decided to make it in the Song style. The new Tower even has mural paintings delineating stories of *All Men are Brothers*. In this case, fiction is taken as history without distinction.

To summarise, for the Chinese, tangible heritage is not simply visible “things”, but encompasses cultural memories stemming from and

connected with Chinese language and poetry. To a certain degree, to visit tangible heritage is to revisit the images and atmosphere of classical poetry, and to re-collect the poet’s mind and mood. Gradually, the Chinese mentality and feelings are formed and fixed as intangible heritage for people whose mother tongue is Chinese. And this kind of intangible heritage will be handed down forever.

Heritage

European perspective

Aleida Assmann

The recent return of heritage as a topic and concern

The term “heritage” was absent during the Cold War. This was a consequence of the ideologies of capitalism and communism that prevailed at the time. Neither ideology valued the past and expected everything from a glorious future. I call it “the time regime of modernity”. When it eroded in the 1980s, the effect was described in a famous essay by Fukuyama as “the end of history”, a statement that has often been repeated and refuted since. The Fall of the Iron Curtain was certainly not the end of history. On the contrary, it was the return of history and “the beginning of memory”. Until then, memory had been part of individual psychology. In order to gain a more inclusive idea of its relevance and possibilities, it had to be reconceptualised as a new relevant concept for cultural studies. Our own concept of “cultural memory” was an attempt to launch a broader and more interdisciplinary approach to the concepts of tradition and transmission in the 1980s and 90s. It was also the time when the term “heritage” became a field of scholarship and academic research and “heritage” appeared as a new denomination of university chairs in the academe. The term was controversial from the start because it developed in two directions with different approaches and goals: an affirmative one and a critical one, the first supporting a right-wing and conservative, the latter a leftist and progressive orientation. Terms like “memory” and “heritage” were fiercely attacked by leftists who saw the dangers and pitfalls of nationalist rhetoric and exclusionary identity politics. An effect of this controversy was that some of the University departments changed their names to “critical heritage studies”.

The rise of the concept of “heritage” as a new kind of historical knowledge

Let me start with an important semantic distinction. We must not conflate the terms “tradition” and “heritage”. The term “tradition” is applied to the longer or shorter history of cultural texts and discourses in the realm of religion and philosophy, music, art or literature. It dates back to antiquity and is used retrospectively for any age and culture. Heritage differs from tradition in that the concept has a clear origin in history and dates back to the period of enlightenment and the French Revolution. I want to argue in my presentation that heritage is part and parcel of a new form of historical knowledge that started around 1800 with the French Revolution.

This new form of knowledge emerged in a paradoxical co-evolution of destruction and preservation. The French Revolution destroyed the validity and authority of various cultural institutions such as monarchy, aristocracy and the church. But this violent break with central norms did not lead to a full-fledged iconoclasm that destroyed all material remains. On the contrary, it also led to valuing materials that no longer carried any normative force. This new type of affirmation can be termed “historical value”. There is one author in particular who created and enshrined this new value. I am referring to Abbé Gregoire who shaped the concept and invented a new term that helped to lay the foundation to the new concept of heritage. His term is “vandalism”. It can be defined as the destruction of any one’s material culture with the intention to erase knowledge about the past. Abbé Gregoire is the inventor of the protection of cultural heritage. He is not the protector of traditions which were violently broken and shattered by the French Revolution, but he was the advocate and protector of the material remains of what had been discontinued, discarded and de-valorised during the Revolution. He was one of those who ushered in a brand-new project: the preservation of the past as a universalist project of historical knowledge. What had lost its relevance for the present and future should not disappear, he argued, but find a new home in archives and museums where it could be studied henceforth by professional historians. Abbé Gregoire therefore should be considered the patron of the humanities or historical *Geisteswissenschaften* which preserve, value, and interpret the remains of the past, irrespective of their value for a changing present. His name is virtually unknown in the humanities because the historical studies are slow to acknowledge and study their own history.

It is interesting to note that in Abbé Gregoire's mental universe, there is no marked difference between the frame of the nation and that of mankind. He helped to establish norms and rules for preserving material remnants and dealing with the cultural past that transcends the interests of the individual nations. He opened a universal perspective to extend this idea to mankind as a responsible agent of the preservation of material history.

The Western concept of heritage developed in different directions:

- in the arts, which generated a distinct Romantic imagination of the past
- in politics, where heritage became a mobilising project in the context of nation-building
- in universities and museums, as an academic project that eventually led to the institution of the UNESCO.

The arts and the romantic imagination of the past

In the European history of cultural heritage, academic research and the visual arts went hand in hand. This conjunction is embodied in a new type of scholar who arose in the period of the Enlightenment in the middle of the 18th century. This new type of scholar combined a strong interest in the texts of classical Antiquity with a Romantic passion for the sublime quality of picturesque ruins. One of them was Robert Wood, who travelled to historical sites of the ancient Mediterranean world, delighted to experience viscerally the *genius loci*, the spirit of a historic place. He was accompanied by an artist who painted his vision of the ruins on the site. Reproducing and circulating such images stimulated a new visual imagination that broke out of the confined universe of texts and libraries, and discovered historic places in geographical space as repositories of palpable material traces. The Romantic fascination with ruins was fuelled by the idea that what was far away in time could be rediscovered and accessed here and now in space. This veneration of Antiquity created a new aesthetic canon that included also local and vernacular elements and was propelled by both scholarship and measures for public education such as museum presentations. It soon spilled over and reached a growing public through popular novels, local commissions, exhibitions, historical courses, and excursions.

The cult of antiquities, the value of heritage and the high esteem for extinct cultures became incorporated into modern Western civilisation as a newly formed complex of aesthetics, art and historical consciousness that acquired attraction as a new secular religion. Libraries, theatres, and museums became the modern temples of this religion, archaeologists, art historians and literary scholars became its priests, and the touristic sites of historic relicts and ruins became the sacred places of modern pilgrimages.

The rise of the concept of “national heritage”

The concept of “cultural heritage” gained political traction in the European nation-building process throughout the long 19th century. The idea that individual nations had a history and heritage became extremely powerful after the French Revolution. One nation after another copied this model and created its respective institutions, including a specialised field of academic research relating to one's own history, museums where this history and art is exhibited, archives in which its relevant documents are preserved, specific text books and artworks are circulated in society, and commemoration dates on which the community confirms, shapes and celebrates its collective self-image in performative events and rituals.

In civil and democratic nations, these particularist developments were not automatically abused as a political tool for hatred, warfare, and aggression but compatible with a universal vision that the preservation of national heritage in general was a sign of civilised governance. National heritage, in other words, could also be seen in the framework of a common world heritage, owned, valued, and protected by “mankind”. Thus, patriotism and internationalism were linked in the creation and promotion of this new concept, in which the respect for history and the past became a new universal religion, promoting, as it was hoped, “peace and goodwill among the nations”. This slogan had been coined for the Great World Exhibition of 1851 and was repeated for the preservation of national cultural heritage.

The new historical consciousness and the secular interest in heritage is reflected in the growth of national ideologies. In this context, the concept of heritage became a growing occupation, involving official administrative efforts from above as well as civic movements from below engaging in art, landscape, local traditions, and folklore. But the concept

of heritage is broad and remains complex. It ranges from modern endeavours valuing “authenticity” and guarding the monuments of the past, to simple retro-fictions and popular mythical fantasies that can be exploited in the media, in consumerist capitalism and in politics.

The future of heritage as a transnational concern

Only “barbarians and slaves”, Grégoire had written, “hate the sciences and destroy the monuments of art. Free men love them and conserve them.”¹ The act of vandalism was understood as a lapse from the newly shared and internationally ratified principle of the sanctity of cultural heritage. Violent seizures of monuments and works of art had been condemned as “crimes against humanity” as early as 1800.² To consciously act against these standards meant a serious breach in the “common bond of civilised nations” (*Kulturstaaten*). The concept of heritage was not only built on values and sentiments, but also on an evolving process of international legislation. In parallel with rules protecting civilians and wounded soldiers in times of war (The Geneva Conventions), rules were drafted for safeguarding cultural property in armed conflict (The Hague Conventions). New atrocities were answered after the Second World War by further statutes involving new legal measures, values, and standards. Notwithstanding these legal efforts and standards, the period of European history known as the “Scramble for Africa” was marked by brutal forms of colonisation including invasion, annexation, warfare, enslavement, and the looting of indigenous art. These dark years of a “New Imperialism” between 1881 and 1914 have returned with a vengeance in the present and are currently a shameful and difficult legacy to be worked through.

There are various challenges currently facing Western heritage culture:

- indifference and neglect within a culture of radical modernisation
- erosion through pollution and climate change
- exposure to the violence of wars, accidents, and terrorism.

We have sadly learned in two World Wars – and are experiencing it again today in the Russian war levelled against Ukraine – how difficult it is to delimit war through humanitarian laws. Ukrainian museums have

1. Swenson, 34.
2. Swenson, 39.

been destroyed that preserve Ukrainian cultural heritage. After 100 days of war, President Zelensky reported that more than 100 churches had been damaged. He demanded that Russia, as a “terror state”, be excluded from the UNESCO and added: “The UNESCO is no place for barbarians.”

What European nations are defining as “civil”, military leaders like Putin prefer to define as “degenerate”. In a book on the *Dynamic of Destruction*, Alan Kramer has already shown how difficult it is to qualify acts of violence in a common and transcultural language. He himself replaced the word “barbaric violence” by “modern violence in the context of radicalised industrial warfare”. And he also pointed to the relativity of the labels “barbaric” and “civil” by adding that not all nations aspire to be civil. In other words: This might not (yet?) be a standard with a universal appeal.

It is therefore of vital importance for historians to enter the stage, to discuss these episodes and tell these stories. It is also high time for cultural historians to join them and translate our basic concepts from one language and culture into another. Every translation is a transformation, marking similarities and differences, which can lead to an uncovering of varying ideas, values, and cultural practices. A pressing question for the future is whether there will be a possibility to elevate the term heritage into a concept that allows to deal with such issues on a global level from different cultural perspectives. This could be an important step to establish mutual respect and, on this foundation, to create shared projects to value and safeguard cultures and practices around the world, be they material or immaterial, tangible or intangible.

Final remarks

WANG Qi, Aleida Assmann

WANG Qi

In the Chinese context, heritage is something positive and related to the past. As a field of scholarship, it turns out to be both historical knowledge and living traditions. Comparing with the conception-orientated, continuity-seeking historical narratives, heritage can be seen as “a new kind of historical knowledge”, as Aleida Assmann says. In this sense, heritage can possibly be a supplement to official historical writings, thereby offering a diversity of views of the past.

The European conception of “national heritage” is a 19th century product and has accomplished its mission, so to speak. However, the political connotations of the conception should not be exaggerated in the globalised 21st century. Heritage is, first thing first, indigenous and naturally belongs to a certain group of people. Therefore, it is urgent to change the mindset of “national heritage” to “heritage of all mankind”. Heritage of all over the world should be treated as cultural memories of mankind and further as part of human history.

Aleida Assmann

1. Similarities

Culture was once defined by Erich Auerbach as a “clearly formulable and recognised community of thought and feeling”. To me, this quotation captures admirably the definition of culture so beautifully described and illustrated in Wang Qi’s text on Yi Chan – Cultural Heritage. Under the English term ‘heritage’ she describes what I think has a perfect equivalent in the German formula *kulturelle Bildung*, as summed up in Auerbach’s definition. *Bildung* in this sense is not just a set of texts and works that are singled out for general reception but includes the embodied interaction between classical texts and reading responses across

time and space. It is a form of living within a tradition, which requires the ability to generate thoughts and feelings within a transgenerational community of readers. This community is not held together by political ideologies or other prescribed reading requirements but by a shared estimation and reception of classical texts. It is an open access community that ideally has not external limits or requirements other than the willingness to share great art in a form in which thinking matches feeling. When Auerbach wrote his definition, German *Bildung* was already a thing of the past. He created this concept as a nostalgic vision. The German Jewish community, to which he had belonged, and which had been the strongest supporter of *Bildung* in Germany until the beginning of the Nazi rule in 1933, was in the process of being excluded, deported and exterminated. Auerbach managed to survive; he had been saved by an invitation to Turkey coming from Kemal Atatürk who offered Jewish professors positions at his universities. Auerbach’s nostalgia therefore had a double motivation: he had just lost his own cultural milieu, which was being destroyed by the Nazis, and he witnessed Atatürk’s secular modernity as a “fanatically anti-traditional nationalism” stripped of all elements of culture and tradition.

Wang Qi’s description of Chinese heritage is also steeped in nostalgia. As in Auerbach’s vision of *Bildung*, she points to a similar awareness that “with the rapid process of urbanisation and modernisation, China has definitely felt the urgency of conservation and culture,” and, in recent years, “also sees the threat to cultural diversity from globalisation”.

Like Auerbach’s *Bildung*, Wang Qi’s concept of heritage can be described as a secular form of religion. It is built on Classical poetry that offers a spiritual home and allows for a form of membership across centuries. This membership requires thought and feeling. It is not made of up specialists and scholars but of impassioned readers. This concept of heritage is clearly set off from ideas of heritage as collective property, economic capital and a tool for identity politics in that its value lies in an affect that cannot be bought but has to be generated by the members / readers themselves.

Wang Qi beautifully describes the way in which this sensuous experience of classical texts is created: not only by reading, but by moving in space, by visiting landmarks that are described in immortal verses. It is a sensuous form of experience to be bodily present at famous places where the memorised verses come to life again. They allow the readers a deeper and more personal entry into the tradition by sharing the visual

ingredients of light and landscape. The general tone and feeling of these experiences is veneration and delight, but also the gratification to be part of a larger community that exists across centuries. Both Bildung and Yi Chan depend on immersion and resonance. This form of heritage is transmitted and kept alive in personal and embodied responses within a milieu of collective resonance. It is acquired by growing into, by doing and sharing, by learning and interacting. Membership in this cultural community is built on this desire to share, to remember, to reflect, to feel.

There is a second association which I would like to introduce to deepen the sense of familiarity between Eastern and Western concepts of heritage. The landmarks praised in classical Chinese poetry can refer to constructed sites such as temples, bridges and towers or scenic sites such as mountain peaks. While mountains in China were venerated as outstanding and perhaps even holy places made immortal by poetry, they were evaded and forbidden in Western Europe until the end of the Middle Ages. There was a clear taboo not to adopt the superior position of God, man as God's creature had no right to overlook the world in a superior gesture of hubris and self-empowerment. Wang Qi refers to Mountain Tai which she describes as an iconic hot spot climbed by Mencius, Confucius, and Du Fu, one quoting the other, thus making the site memorable by poems referring to each other. A Western analogy could be the Italian poet Petrarch who climbed Mont Ventoux with his brother in 1336. He wrote a short account of the event in which he tells us that on the top of the mountain he reached for a book in his pocket and opened it at random. These were the Confessions of St. Augustin, and the sentence he read was: "Men marvel at the height of mountains and rivers and the ocean and the stars, but they don't look inward to take care of themselves." While Chinese men of wisdom and of letters celebrate prestigious places with poems that are continuously remembered and repeated, Petrarch made his climbing immortal by writing a very subjective story about it.

In Chinese poetry, visible sites merge with invisible poetry. In this way, concrete sites and buildings are transformed into nature and imaginary landscapes, emphasising natural beauties or the setting sun and moonlight as universal images. History and time are thus transformed into nature and eternity, individual experience morphs into universal states of feeling. Wang Qi mentions the modernist poet Ezra Pound who drew great inspiration from Chinese written characters and poetic traditions. He imitated the Japanese haiku, a genre of ultra-short poetry that

presents a sudden transformation of the gaze from one field of vision to another. He was also fascinated by the iconic structure of Chinese writing and drew inspiration from the Chinese written character as a medium for poetry. With this transcultural background he revolutionised modern Western poetry by creating a new kind of sensuous image that captures a moment that is fraught with time, place and emotion, using it as the central building block of poetic language and vision.

2. Differences

When comparing Western and Chinese approaches to the concept of heritage, we can find substantial affinities and similarities, but also considerable differences. An important point is that the Chinese approach to heritage is characterised by a will to de-historicise cultural memory. "Chinese people do not care too much about the accuracy of things or events." Whether the more remote or more recent past is involved, there is no effort to be precise. On the contrary, historical precision would diminish and perhaps destroy the imaginative effect of the poetic spirit and the sense of enchantment inherent in the experience of cultural heritage.

The Western approach to heritage also involves a poetic spirit and an element of enchantment. But this quality can go together with a strong historical spirit. The visual and archaeological turn, for instance, as illustrated by the Romantic discovery of ancient ruins in the age of Enlightenment, is a clear shift towards the imagination. But here the enchantment is connected not to timeless continuity, but to historical recovery and academic reconstruction.

The Chinese concept of heritage privileges timelessness, continuity, and natural beauty. The Western concept of heritage markedly differs from this in that it is saturated with history. Here the clock is always ticking, registering historical change as well as ruptures and periods of disappearance due to revolutions, innovation, and internal or external violence. While the Chinese concept of heritage functions in a solid framework of tradition and stable transmission, the Western concept of heritage evolves in a temporal framework that involves ruptures, revolutions, risk, and the experience of loss. The concept of cultural memory includes both operations of remembering and forgetting, of preserving and destroying. In addition, the Western concept of heritage is open to

pride and shame, affirming positively valued traditions and including negative legacies that are repressed, return and demand further attention. For this reason, the Western concept of heritage is complex, precarious, and ambivalent. But above all, it is self-reflexive, registering not only the process of preserving and transmission, but also that of negating and destroying by ignorance, negligence, and violence.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

History

历史

Lì Shǐ

ZHAO Tingyang

François Hartog

历史 Li Shǐ

Chinese perspective

ZHAO Tingyang

A Word for Events and/or Records

The original meaning of the Chinese word for history (史 史) was “event and/or record”. In the earliest writing, it was, to be exact, the same one character used in two ways, or as two words of same pronunciation: event (事 Shi), and record (史 Shi). This homonym makes a metaphor that indicates events and records are essentially equal. Or it suggests that deeds matter, whilst records of deeds matter as well. Or it otherwise tells the truth of history that events only exist in records, since history is what we see rather than what is. My first question is this: is there a history of equal significance to all of us?

If asking for one best example of intercultural misunderstanding, I would bet on history. One may cogitate a universal concept of history of all people or of the whole world, yet a history *de facto* always tells the stories and experiences of a nation or a civilisation, the narrative that makes the images of a nation or a civilisation, somewhat similar to an autobiography. Few take much interest in the histories of others, only perhaps specialised scholars, and no one would understand the histories of other nations as accepted by others themselves, again the similar case that we do not trust anyone’s autobiography so much. There are few “common senses” or consensus in the matter of history.

It is nothing to do with the epistemological problem about the truths of history, instead, it relates to the matter of cultural or political recognition. Actually, there are less truths in history than expected, so that the epistemology of truth does not explain much of historical care. As the matter of fact, even in the name of investigating the truth of the past, history is made more of the stories that tell our fate and spirit, or the interpretation of the making and becoming of a nation/civilisation, which is what I call the historicity of a history. Therefore, the concepts of history differ, since histories have culturally different variables, which

depend on what events or deeds are recognised as the things that really matter. I admit that my understanding of history is rather conservative, far from the modern concept in terms of progress or the contemporary perspective of global history or world history. But the point is, the world does not exist so far.

A History-based Civilisation

The historian Zhang Xuecheng (1738 – 1801) fostered his general interpretation of Chinese civilisation, which claims that “the Six Great Classics are essentially histories,”¹ and well accepted as the best decipherment of the code of Chinese thinking. The “Six Great Classics” consist of I Ching, the Book of Documents, the Poems, the Norms and Rites, the Music, and the Springs-Autumns (the earlier name for any historical work),² all before the 4th century BCE and some up to 12th century BCE, have laid the foundation for the Chinese spirit or established the Chinese mindset, like the Bible for the Western mind. In terms of modern taxonomy, I Ching discusses philosophy, the Book of Documents is about political ideas, the Poems are no doubt the poems, the Norms and Rites is concerning ethical or social rules, the Music studies music and songs (this book was lost), and the Springs-Autumns is the first chronological history (from 722 BCE to 481 BCE). Zhang Xuecheng otherwise sees the “essence” or the code of all of them as histories, with a discovery that “Chinese theoretical arguments never go beyond historical events.”³ It means history explains theories, and not vice versa. And it is a good picture of the Chinese mind, which argues by practical evidence more than logical truths *a priori*.

To follow his idea, I would claim that Chinese civilisation is based upon history, structurally different from the many that are based upon religions, or the Greek civilisation upon philosophy, or the Roman one upon laws, or the modern Western civilisation upon individualism. But it seems to me that the Jewish civilisation might be unique, based upon the unity of history and religion.

1. 章学诚：《文史通义》，卷一，易教上。上海古籍出版社，2008年版，p.1.

2. The earliest Chinese calendar had been divided into only two seasons, spring and autumn, so that spring-autumn became the general name for historical works.

3. 章学诚：《文史通义》，卷一，易教上。上海古籍出版社，2008年版，p.1.

Why History Was Made the Basis of Chinese Civilisation

This question relates to a cultural reform in very early China, approximately 4,500 years ago, an event of “cutting off the communication between men and heaven”.⁴ Once upon a time, the early Chinese were so fascinated by magic divinations that a large population loved to do shamanism more than work, and created a religious disorder with too many kinds of shamanisms. The king was disappointed and determined to rebuild the social order and the religious authority. He enacted a law to stop all the improper or wrong communications between men and heaven, then the divination had been limited to the king’s privilege and interpreted by the king’s authority. Modern historians estimate this event as an action that destroyed the social condition and spontaneity for shamanism to evolve into a genuine religion. This event led China to secularisation in its very early days.

Afterwards, the royal divination went to professionalisation, with details studied and experiences recorded. Almost 90% of the early writings carved on bones or shells are found in the archive of divinations. Historical consciousness was sneaking in minds through the “historical” archive of divinations. Nevertheless, the early kings and people had thought divinations could tell the future until the change of humanism.

The final success of humanism over divination came around the 11th century BCE, when the respected king Zhou (? – 1043 BCE) defeated the powerful king Shang who sincerely performed divinations and sacrifices to the heaven often. King Zhou saw the explicit fact that Shang had failed to receive the patronage of the heaven in return, even though he did the best divinations and sacrifices. Shang’s failure evidently proved the failure of magic divinations, so it inspired Zhou to fabricate a theory of humanism that claims that heaven is essentially ethical and appreciates virtues more than sacrifices. The theory of virtues assigned to King Zhou his reputation as a king of virtues. And it argues that deeds matter more than beliefs, dedication more than prediction, and the “will of Heaven” is no more than the approval of the “hearts of people” (民心), which tells the truth of the real “conditional situation”(形势). Therefore, historical experiences or “lessons” in politics, economy and governance have since been considered more as teachings and being practically more helpful. This explains that the humanism of the Zhou Dynasty should

4. 《尚书·吕刑》；《国语·楚语下》。

have fundamentally cut off the path to religion and introduced history into the spotlight. And it was the “shift from shamanism to history”, as contemporary philosopher Li Zehou calls it. Most amusing is that the royal experts for divinations naturally became the earliest historians, yet this role exchange is not so surprising, since the divination experts as well as the early historians were the only scholars of the time. And most significantly, divination tells the inevitable future, therefore assigning meaning to the past, whereas history recognises the past, therefore assigning meaning to the uncertain future.

To be sure, divinations symbolically remained for a long time but lost their relevance.

What Events Count as Great Changes?

In the philosophy of a history-based civilisation, deeds matter more than words, experiences say more than theories, the past leads to the future, or philosophically, *facio* transcends *cogito*, while *facio* includes *cogito* as it should do. A basic reason is “no change, no history” and it is *facio* that makes changes. It is no surprise that *I Ching* (the Book of Changes), the primary of the six classics, develops the philosophy of changes, and it must be the first philosophy of history in the world, considering it dates back to at least the 12th century BCE. According to Zhang Xuecheng, it might be one of the earliest books of history as well, for it records the “greatest” events that makes history.

Now the third question is this: what kind of events could count as the great changes? The Chinese philosophy of history examines events with the historical coordinates of reference made of two sets of concepts, the “creations” (*zuo* 作) and “narratives” (*shu* 述); the “old days” (*gu* 古) and “nowadays” (*jin* 今).⁵ Time means the passage of change, while history means significant changes – examined due to creations – not referring to God’s deeds, but rather the groundbreaking human actions that establish new orders of things or inventing new things to reshape the forms of life. Several of the oldest texts, such as *I Ching* and *The Making*,⁶ write a list of great inventions before the 12th century BCE, including agricultural tools, wheels, netting, boats, cloth-making, weapons, houses, calendars, etc, as well as writing systems and political-social systems or regimes – not a word about religion, which indicates that the Chinese concept of history

5. Also see the interpretations in the article on Time.

6. 《周易·系辞下》；《世本·作篇》。

inclines to a sort of pragmatism, even not mentioning the water engineering that is considered a key support in developing the Chinese collective society – this is strange and surprising, hard to explain. May it be possible that the early historians ignored the importance of the technology of water engineering? Unknown. Anyway, it is believed that only the “great inventions” that lead to great changes are worthy of being “narrated”.

In Confucian times (551 BCE – 479 BCE), China was going through a fundamental turn, from the “golden ages of three dynasties” (Xia, Shang and Zhou) that had lasted more than 1,300 years, to a Hobbesian world of battles. Confucius was conscious of the undeclared deep changes, the lurking but serious changes in political, social and even civilisational concepts and systems, which had never happened before. Confucius recognised these changes as the “collapse of norms and orders” (礼崩乐坏). Most of the changes were small, but suggested serious and far-reaching consequences.

There was also a change in the quest to redefine the concept of history. History had been used as the records of the constructive or “positive” events that established great order or developed wonderful technologies until Confucian times, which saw the introduction of destructive events betraying the good Way (Dao) of Heaven and destroying the decent order resting on the human Way in accord with the Way of Heaven, practically remaking the history with a sort of anti-history. Confucius took the new experience seriously, and he developed an ethical concept of history. That is, the historical narrative should be edited to be a proper one with ethical interpretation for the purpose of good. Confucius himself took action to edit the first chronicles titled “Springs-autumns”. The narrative of events with ethical interpretations has remained the most popular format of historical writing in China even today.

Sima Qian’s Theory

Sima Qian (145 BCE – ? BCE) established his reputation as the most famous and influential Chinese historian with his imposing work *The History* (史记), developed a new style of historical writing, an “inclusive history” about all significant events, important figures and great ideas until his times. It is the inimitable work of a genius with “shifting” focuses in the narrative, changing from the objective contextual description of events to the subjective dramatic depiction of characters and their behaviours. He tried to speak the history, rather than speak any ideology.

Sima Qian was conscious of his ambition to write a comprehensive grand history. He said that “I have collected all accessible records and stories, carefully studied what people pursued and how, investigating the reasons and inevitable causes for successes and failures, ups and downs, and so finished a work of 130 chapters. And I have developed my theory of history to analyse how man actively responds to heaven, and figure out the passages and traces of historical transitions.”⁷ He examined the far-reaching effects of critical moments, aware of the mystery that history goes on with the unexplainable correlation in paces of change: “by the invisible force of heaven, the world would most likely witness some small changes every thirty years, and a greater change in every century, and a greatest change in every five hundred years. Three greatest changes would make a period, then three periods make a long duration, which is found the utmost accessible distance for historical sight.”⁸ I guess Braudel would be pleased to learn this somewhat foretold his great theory on long duration from such a distance in space and time.

If Hume is right, then history does not tell the future. I am afraid Hume is not quite right, for it is evident that the fundamental problems of the human world are recursive from its beginning to the present. Maybe a better saying could be that history tells what will recursively happen in the future but cannot tell what will not happen.

7. 《汉书·卷62·司马迁传》。

8. 司马迁：《史记·卷27·天官书》。

History

European perspective

François Hartog

History in the West: the First Choices

In order to sketch a comparative frame, I shall focus this short presentation on what I call the very first choices in matters of history and historical writing. In Western culture, Greece has often been presented as the land of many beginnings. Was not Herodotus dubbed the “father of history”? Even if we all know that history and its writing did not begin in Greece, but further to the East, and much earlier.⁹

In Egypt, where continuity is so crucial, the royal lists go back to the end of the fourth millennium BCE. The Egyptians started by inscribing pictograms on wooden and ivory tablets; then, later, their compilations on papyrus were at the origins of the first annals. The annals kept the records of the prominent deeds of the kings (or at least of what was viewed as important to record at that time). But perhaps the most striking feature of Egyptian civilisation is its autochtony (to use a Greek notion). As far as they looked back toward the past, the Egyptians didn't see anybody but themselves and the gods. And, as is well known, their monuments have something unique : instead of expressing an interest in the past, they exhibit a desire for eternity, but a material one or a petrified one, which contrasts sharply with the Greek epic and its celebration of an “immortal glory”.¹⁰

In Mesopotamia, at the end of the third millennium BCE, the monarchy of Akkade was the first to unite the country under its authority and to enlist scribes to write its history, thereby legitimising its power in the present. This historiography was a royal history (only kings made history), a monumental one (making itself visible especially through

9. François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus, The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, translated by J. Lloyd, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988. *Evidence de l'histoire, Ce que voient les historiens*, Paris, 2005, p. 21-42.

10. Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis, Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich, 1997, p. 169-174.

enormous inscriptions) and an exclusive one (held in the hands of a caste of intellectuals, masters of writing).¹¹

To the East also, the sacred books of the ancient Hebrews were always fundamentally considered as history. However, although the Bible is all the way through inhabited by the demands of remembrance, it never displays any curiosity for the past as such. The principle danger would be to forget the ancestors' experiences and no longer believe in their truth. Israel “receives the order to become a dynasty of priest and a holy nation: nowhere is it suggested that it would become a nation of historians”.¹²

What place can we then assign the Greeks? These people who have never been visited by Revelation and who did not know the imperatives or duty of remembrance. Housed in their narrow settlements on the border of the Orient, are they not actually “latecomers” who managed to pass themselves off as “firstcomers”? It must be said that they, themselves, never claimed to be first in historiography: Herodotus never proclaimed himself the first inventor of history.

They were indeed latecomers. Since they only discovered or rediscovered writing relatively recently (during the 8th century BCE) by adopting the Syro-Phenician alphabet. And it would take them another three centuries or so before they would begin to write their first histories. But the Greek world knew neither the text as revelation nor writing as a preserve for a caste of specialists (as was still the case in the Mycenaean kingdoms).

Epistemologically, the Greeks always privileged seeing (over hearing) as the mode of knowledge. To see, to see by oneself and to know were one and the same thing. Ontologically, their presence in the world made no question for them: it was self-evident. To be present, to be there, to see and to know all go together for the Greeks.¹³

Divination and History

Let's go back, for a moment, to Mesopotamia at the end of the second millennium. Without pausing over the first model of monumental and royal historiography whose methods are as incontestable as they are simple, I would like to focus briefly on an exchange which seems to have linked

11. Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Chroniques mésopotamiennes*, Paris, 1993.

12. Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, University of Washington Press, 1982.

13. Rémi Brague, *Aristote et la question du monde*, Paris, 1988, p. 28; J. Strauss Clay, *The Wrath of Athena, Gods and Men in the Odyssey*, Princeton, 1983 p. 12, 13.

divination and history. There, divination played an important role in decision-making. How did the soothsayers work? They accumulated and classified oracles, made lists, compiled cases and created real libraries.¹⁴ The soothsayer was guided by an ideal of exhaustivity (to collect all the examples), and he was always looking for precedents. The way he works is comparable to the way a judge works. In other words, divination, before being a science of the future, is first of all a science of the past.

A series of oracles were found at Mari (a great palace in Syria), dating from the beginning of the second millennium, which modern researchers dubbed “historical oracles”. Why historical? Instead of employing the canonical modality – “If the liver of the animal (sacrificed, a sheep) is thus, it is a sign that the king will take (in the future) the town in such a way” – the oracle says “If the liver of the animal is thus, it is a sign that the king has taken (already) the town in such a way (a very precise one).” This passage from the future to the perfect tense is truly surprising, even more so since the events to which they refer are thought (by the moderns) to have actually taken place. That is why some assyriologists have wanted to see in such oracles the very beginnings of Mesopotamian historiography: first divination, then history (if you leave out the first half of the oracle dealing with the liver).¹⁵ Some sinologists held the same view in regard to Chinese historiography (from divination to historiography).¹⁶

The only point that I retain here is that both disciplines, divination and historiography, seem to have shared or inhabited (peacefully enough) the same intellectual space. Surely, they could be and were practiced by the same intellectuals. For the Mesopotamian king, he came in search of assistance and the oracle helped him make a decision. For the specialist consulted, the scribe, to take note of an “historical” oracle, to transcribe it and to study it, meant to add a new oracular configuration to his lists and, thereby, increase his stock of precedents.

We could extend this investigation to ancient Rome through an examination of the famous *Annales maximi*, which are all the more famous for having disappeared. Each year the *pontifex maximus* was supposed to write a “chronicle” (*tabula*) that he hung on the front of his house. Cicero interprets this transcription as the very beginning, albeit clumsy and

14. Jean Bottero, “Symptômes, signes, écriture” in J.-P. Vernant éd., *Divination et Rationalité*, Paris, 1974, p. 70-86.

15. Glassner, *op. cit.* p. 26-28.

16. Léon Vandermeersch, “L’imaginaire divinatoire dans l’histoire en Chine”, in M. Detienne éd., *Transcrire les mythologies*, Paris, 1994, p. 103-113.

unrefined, of Roman historiography. In a re-examination of this vexed question, it was suggested that this document, delivered at the end of each year, must have functioned as a kind of report on the state of the relations between the city and its gods.¹⁷ It was left to the *pontifex maximus* to compile it in his capacity to “retain on his *tabula* the memory of events”. He played the role of a master of time. What events? What is an event? Victories, defeats, calamities, omens: they were collected and registered, not for themselves, but as signs that allowed for the keeping of records of piety. Particularly important in this regard were the omens: first, one has to decide whether something (strange, extraordinary) is or is not an omen, and if the answer is yes, then what will be the appropriate answer (how to “expiate” it). To do the job, the *pontifex* too needs archives and has to look for precedent.

This compilation could rightly be called an “official” history or a “religious” history of Rome. But it is worth noticing that the temporality at work here is a civic or political one. The report has to be written every year for the new consuls, addressing the following questions: where do we stand with the gods? Have we done what was necessary? What should we do? The *pontifex* is, as I said, a man of the archives guided by research into precedent (most particularly concerning omens) but his main concern is with the present. Each year he furnishes the new consuls with a report on the City’s religious situation.

Very different were the first choices of the Greek city. Divination was certainly present, and collections of oracles did exist. But what was historiography for the Greeks, and later would become “history” for the moderns in the West, took a different path. This historiography presupposed the epic. Herodotus wished to rival Homer and what he became, ultimately, was Herodotus.

The Epic as Generative Matrix

In Greece, all begins with the epic. With it, through it, the Trojan War, which for ten years pitted the Achaeans against the Trojans, became the “axial” event situated at the edge of history. At first it was only a Greek event, then a Roman one, and finally a Western one. Today, the Trojan war is disputed and even denied, but it was for centuries a shared point

17. John Scheid, “Le temps de la cité et l’histoire des prêtres”, in *Transcrire les mythologies*, Paris, 1994, p. 149-158.

of reference.¹⁸ Thucydides saw it as the first enterprise of any scope undertaken “together” by the Greeks. In fact, it is what constituted them as “Greeks”. Retrospectively, the Persian Wars (5th century BCE) transformed the Trojans into Barbarians (an unknown denomination by Homer) and the Achean expedition in a first and decisive victory over Asia. Five centuries later, Virgil will rediscover for the Romans the very beginning of their history in the ashes of Troy and in the exile of Aeneas. And, nineteen centuries later, G.W.F. Hegel will still celebrate the Trojan War as the victory of Europe over what he called “the Asiatic principle”.

Odysseus’ journey is now nearly finished. His companions are dead, he is treated as a guest of honour at the court of the Phaeacians. During the feast given by their king, Odysseus asks the bard Demodocus to sing the famous episode of the Wooden horse.¹⁹ In this scene in which the hero is placed in front of the bard who sings of his own adventure, Hannah Arendt saw the beginning, poetically speaking at least, of the category of history. “What had been sheer occurrences now became history,” she wrote.²⁰ Indeed, we witness the first telling of the event (which constitutes it as such): the first making of history. With this peculiarity: the very presence of Odysseus proves that “it” really took place. This is an unprecedented configuration, or even an anomaly, since in the epic, the truth of the bard’s words depended completely and only on the authority of the Muse — both inspiration and guarantor. Going even further, Hannah Arendt saw this scene as paradigmatic for history and poetry because “the reconciliation with reality, catharsis (purification), which according to Aristotle was the essence of tragedy, and, according to Hegel, was the ultimate purpose of history, came about through the tears of remembrance”.²¹

“Tell me, O Muse, of the man of many devices...” was the inaugural pact of the epic. The Muse, daughter of Memory and source of inspiration, was the guarantor of the poet’s song. With the first history, the realm of the oral world is over. Prose has replaced verse; writing dominates; the Muse has disappeared. In its place, a new world and a new narrative economy emerge: “What Herodotus the Halicarnassian has learned by inquiry is set forth (the exposition of his *historiê*...)” In the service of no particular power, with his very first words he begins to define and claim

18. See, for example, Moses I. Finley, “Lost: the Trojan War”, *Aspects of Antiquity*, Penguin Books, 1972, p. 31-42.

19. Homer, *Odyssey*, 8, 487-520.

20. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, New York, the Viking Press, 1954, p. 45.

21. Arendt, *Ibid.*, p. 45.

the narrative form which begins with the use of his own name. He is the author of his account (*logos*) and it is this account that establishes his authority. The paradox lies in the fact that, at the same time, this newly claimed authority has yet to be fully constructed. Such a narrative strategy, characteristic of this moment in Greek intellectual history, marks a break with the eastern historiographers. If the Greeks were inventors of anything, they invented the historian rather than the history. Such a mode of self-affirmation and writing was far from a purely historiographical phenomenon. To the contrary they are markers, or even the signature of this period of intellectual history (6th-5th century B.C.E.) which witnessed the rise of “egotism” among artists, philosophers, doctors.²²

This new form of discourse and this singular figure did not emerge from a vacuum. Herodotus undertook for the Persian wars what Homer had done for the Trojan war. To write history means to begin with a conflict and tell the story of a great war on both sides and by fixing the “origins”. In contrast to the Bible, which tells a continuous story from the beginning of time, the first Greek historians fixed a point of departure and limited themselves to recounting a specific set of events.²³

Like the bard, the historian deals with memory, oblivion, and death. The bard of old was a master of glory (*kleos*), a dispenser of immortal encomia to the heroes who died gloriously in war. Herodotus sought only to ensure that the traces of the deeds of men, the monuments that they produced, would not disappear, would not cease to be recounted and celebrated. If the historian refers continually to the epic, he makes more modest claims than the bard.²⁴ It is as if he knew that the ancient promise of immortality could never again be uttered except as a negative: as a promise to delay oblivion. Similarly, where the bard’s area of expertise covered “the deeds of heroes and gods”, the historian limits himself to the “deeds of man”, in a time which is itself defined as “the time of man”. He adds one principle of selection: to choose that which is great and elicit astonishment. Thus, he gives himself a means of measuring difference in events and of ordering multiplicity in the world.

The emblematic word, *historia*, little by little took hold (although Thucydides, for his part, took pains never to use it). It is an abstract word, formed from the verb *historein*, to inquire. To inquire, in all the meaning of the word, to go and see by oneself. It expresses more a state of

22. Geoffrey Lloyd, *The Revolution of Wisdom*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987.

23. Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, Berkeley, 1990, p. 18 sq.

24. Herodotus, *Histories*, I, 1.

mind and an approach than a specific field. It is a word belonging to that moment of the Greek intellectual history. *Historia* is derived from *histôr*, which is related to *idein*, to see, and *oida*, I know. Thus, the *histôr* is present in the epic where he appears several times, but not as an eyewitness, only as an arbiter, or better yet a guarantor in a context of quarrel: he has never seen for himself what is at stake.

Herodotus is neither bard nor even *histôr*: he *historei*, investigates. He does not possess the natural authority of the *histôr*, nor does he benefit from the divine vision of the bard. He has only *historia*, a certain form of inquiry which is the first step in his historiographical practice. Produced as a substitute, *historia* operates in a way analogous to the omniscient vision of the Muse, who knows because her divine nature allowed her “to be present everywhere.” The historian, acting on no authority but his own, intends from now on to “go forward with his account, and speak of small and great cities alike. For many states that were once great have now become small.”²⁵

If the inquiry (thus defined) both evokes the wisdom of the bard and breaks with it, Herodotus also appeals to a second register of knowledge (that we have already met), the divinatory one. Herodotus *historei* but he also *sêmeinei*. He investigates and he shows, reveals, signifies. *Sêmeinei* is used for someone who sees what others do not or could not see, and makes his report. The verb specifically designates oracular knowledge. Since the epic, the seer, who knows the present, future and also the past, is portrayed as a man of knowledge.²⁶ Epimenides of Crete, a famous soothsayer, was reputed to have applied his divination skills not to what ought to be, but to what, having already happened, still remained obscure. Divination, here too, is a science of the past. We are also reminded of Heraclitus’ formula, according to which the oracle neither speaks nor hides, but “means” (*sêmeinei*).²⁷

In the prologue, precisely at the very moment when Herodotus speaks for the first time saying “I”, he “signifies” (*sêmeinei*). Drawing on his own personal knowledge, he reveals, designates who first took offensive action against the Greeks, Croesus, the king of Lydia. The first to subjugate the Greeks, Croesus is designated as “responsible”, or “guilty” (*aitios*). Through this investigation and designation, Herodotus is certainly not a seer, but he arrogates to himself a type of oracular authority.

25. Herodotus, *Histories*, 1, 5.

26. Marcel Detienne, *Apollon le couteau à la main*, Paris, 1998, p. 138 sq.

27. Heraclitus, *Fragments* 93.

So, even if it is in a very different way from what we saw before in Mesopotamia, divination and history with Herodotus still have something in common.

The two verbs *historein*, *sêmeinei* are two crossroad verbs where ancient and contemporary knowledge come together and intertwine, as attested in a unique way by the work of Herodotus himself. They are two intellectual tools by which to “see clearly,” further, beyond the visible, in space or time; they characterise and shape the intellectual style of the first historian. Neither bard nor soothsayer but in between, he became Herodotus: a father of history. After him, a long series of new choices were made, leading finally to the formation of a new time, the modern one, and a new concept of history: History, with capital H, History as an all-encompassing process, which has been, until recently, the major belief of the Western world.

历史 Lì Shǐ History

Final remarks

ZHAO Tingyang, François Hartog

ZHAO Tingyang

I do not believe a religious conceptual scheme of history, since history cannot be reduced to a value or a function of religion. Yet I am also puzzled with the Chinese quantum-like concept of history in terms of changes, which puts all meaning or significance into uncertainty. History should speak for itself. So I develop an “ontological” concept of history that defines the significance of history with “ontological events” that have created forms of being on kairos, such as the invention of languages, farming, wheels, logic, mathematics, sciences, political systems, nations, industry, the internet, etc. I would appreciate your comment or criticism. And my question for you is this: do you have any expectation about the next regime of historicity most likely to come after the presentism of today?

François Hartog

After the presentist regime of historicity, which proves to be untenable, it is no longer a question of articulating the three "old" categories of past, present and future, but of succeeding in holding together heterogeneous and incommensurable temporalities (there are on the one hand the temporalities of the world, discordant and conflicting, and on the other those linked to the Earth System). The bourgeois garden of forking paths is even more disorientating! Existential challenge, not only for the West.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Humanism

Rén

ZHAO Tingyang
Dominique Lambert

仁

Rén

Chinese perspective

ZHAO Tingyang

The concept of Ren makes up the foundation of Confucianism and is a core value of Chinese civilisation. It is, however, less interesting to the Western mind, partly due to the Hegelian misunderstanding of it. Confucian theory has often been introduced as life lessons from grandmother with little philosophical importance. Ren is usually translated as benevolence, virtue, goodness, or humaneness. Such translations of Ren are somewhat related to its meaning but fail to illustrate its deeper philosophical sense.

Matteo Ricci, an early Christian missionary in China, was surprised to notice that Confucianism shared some similarities with Christian morality, despite the fact that Confucianism is not a religion. He successfully converted many Chinese scholars by arguing that the perfect morality of Christianity is better than any imperfect secularised morality. His beautiful translation of Ren is love, which gets to something of Ren, still a love that is so close to God's love that it fails to reveal an alternative Confucian non-religious pursuit.

The translation of Ren is a problem, but it helps if we examine the structure of the pictograph. It depicts an image of the unity or agreement of two persons and structurally implies that which is between and of any two persons, literally meaning "of-any-two-persons" and logically implying everyone. What could possibly be the moral link "between and of any two persons"? We would expect it to be the optimal interrelationship of any two persons, which suggests reciprocity, communion, empathy, and respect for one another, as well as harmony, justice, and love. The problem of Ren is its comprehensiveness, similar to the concepts of goodness, freedom or equality. Many philosophical concepts tend to include too many propositions, making them all the more difficult to clearly define. Roughly speaking, Ren has a range of values in its meanings from mutual respect as the minimum to reciprocal love as the maximum.

We might try to recognise the key meaning of Ren by a list of its usages as Wittgenstein recommends. The theory of Ren is always attributed to Confucius, but the word Ren predates Confucianism, albeit with less prevalence. The following is a list of some earlier usages of Ren before the time of Confucius:

1. "Respecting everyone as a guest you may meet, taking each responsibility seriously as divine service, this is the way of Ren".¹
2. "Being considerate towards all people, moderating excessive justice, rectifying the distortion of justice; the accomplishment of all three things together could almost reach Ren".²
3. "Dealing with all matters impartially, this is the virtue of Ren".³
4. "Love of kinship means Ren, and devotion to your state also means Ren".⁴

This list displays the various roots of Ren. It is believed that family or kinship is the main source of Ren which then extends to more virtues, some of them less relevant than others. Justice or devotion to a state relates more to politics rather than morality. There are many stories detailing Confucius' students frequently asking him what Ren exactly is which indicate the lack of a normative definition of Ren in Confucius' time. Nonetheless, Confucius developed innovative answers.

Since the time of Confucius (551 BCE – 479 BCE), thousands of interpretations of Ren have been given by Confucian scholars over the course of 2,000 years. The following is a list of ten interpretations, selected for their popularity, sensibility, and theoretical significance or philosophical capacity. Some are given by Confucius himself, others by famous Confucian scholars.

1. The best general definition of Ren by Confucius himself, recognised as a Confucian Principle, is that "Ren means that, to be established and to let others be established, to be successful and to let others be successful."⁵
2. The second definition, also frequently quoted, includes a proposition similar to the Golden Rule in the Bible: "Do not do to others what you do not wish done to yourself. You should conduct yourself so that you are free from any guilt of having done wrong to your

1. 《左传·僖公33年》。
2. 《左传·襄公7年》。
3. 《左传·昭公20年》。
4. 《国语·晋语》。
5. 《论语·雍也》。

State or shame for your family.”⁶

3. Confucius explains the source of Ren as “filial respect for one’s parents and brotherhood is the root of Ren”.⁷
4. Confucius once gave a most simple interpretation of Ren as “loving others”.⁸
5. However, Confucius is not implying that one should love everyone: “Only a person of the virtue of Ren knows how he should love decent persons and hate those who are evil.”⁹
6. Confucius explains Ren as the foundation of civilisation: “If human beings lose the virtue of Ren, do norms and rites mean anything? If human beings lose the virtue of Ren, does music mean anything?”¹⁰
7. Zi-si (483 BCE – 402 BCE), a grandson of Confucius, further develops the concept of Ren as “Ren is the recognition of humanity, fundamentally the love for family, while Yi means the appropriateness of social order based upon humanity, fundamentally the good positions for the persons of merits.”¹¹ He was the first to define Ren and Yi as two sides of morality.
8. Mencius (372 BCE – 289 BCE), the second most-famous Confucian, later connected the definitions of Ren and Yi: “Ren is the home of humanity, and correspondingly Yi is the right way out of humanity.”¹² In other words, “Ren is what a human should be, and Yi is what a human should do.”¹³
9. Dong Zhongshu (179 BCE – 104 BCE), the founder of Chinese hermeneutics or classical studies, offered several new interpretations: “The point of Ren is that Ren lives in the love for others rather than in self-love; the point of Yi is that Yi consists of one’s own obligations rather than the obligations of others”.¹⁴
10. A beautiful saying, also by Dong Zhongshu: “Ren makes up the human in humanity, and Yi makes up the self in self-discipline.”¹⁵

To summarise these definitions, Ren defines the best interrelationship of any two persons, that is, the interrelationship that can be universally

6. 《论语·颜渊》。
7. 《论语·学而》。
8. 《论语·颜渊》。
9. 《论语·里人》。
10. 《论语·八佾》。
11. 子思：《中庸》。
12. 《孟子·离娄上》。
13. 《孟子·告子上》。
14. 董仲舒：《春秋繁露·仁义法》。
15. 同上。

applied to everyone. Ren has universal consensus and lacks dissent. It is equal to or even better than the moral Golden Rule, as according to the Confucian Principle “be established and let others be established, be successful and let others be successful”, implying social justice and perpetual peace. The best example is love.

The concept of Ren holds relationism as the groundwork to Chinese thought and civilisation, especially with regards to the ethical definition of “human”. Confucianism has often been regarded as the Chinese version of humanism by Western scholars or modern Chinese scholars. It might be better understood as relationism since Confucius never claims natural rights or individual rights based upon the equality of every individual. Confucius would find more common ground with Plato than with Kant.

Ren defines the concept of “human” with morality. This means that the natural or biological life of a person is not sufficient proof of humanness. A person is recognised as a human being only when he has become a person of morality, rising above his nature. Otherwise, he remains an undifferentiated being in nature. Therefore, the concept of human is not a finished concept of being as such, but rather an open concept of becoming-to-be. The concept of “human” is a question to be answered by deeds in a lifetime, rather than a transcendental answer to the questions of life. In brief, a human does rather than is. Or it could be said, if I may, to be a human is to be a value of variables in the range of Ren, which consists of the relations of reciprocal goodness.

Relationism argues that no one exists independently of others. Therefore, it is not true that one is. Everyone exists in relation to something rather than is in concept. We are defined by our relations to others, and thus, a person proves himself to be a human of humanity as a result of his relations with others. If the human interrelationship is found to be full of evil and conflicts, civilisations and even human beings would perish. Therefore, the only reasonable choice left for the survival of civilisation or humanity is to develop and maintain good human interrelationships with each other, overall benefitting everyone. That seems to be the most promising expectation for universal consent.

Confucius bets on a moral-based civilisation, wherein morality underlies political order. As Confucius argues, if hearts lose Ren, we can no longer trust them, and consequently everything, including law, words, and government, will become unreliable. Interestingly, a political philosopher of Legalism, Han-Fei (280 BCE – 233 BCE) had a famous or notorious

theory — depending on your take of it — contrary to the Confucian conception of the world. Han-Fei denies the priority of morality over politics and argues that only two things, punishment and reward, actually work in any society because everyone pursues self-interests above morality. It is a modern take, although Han-Fei also had a beautiful take on morality. He tells a story of “stupid” Confucianism: a warrior of the Lu state, where Confucius lived, had been found to have abandoned battle three times. Confucius asked him why he was such a coward, and he explained with Confucian theory that he would not fight to death because his elderly father depended on him. Confucius then recommended him for a higher position based on his filial merits. A disastrous consequence came about when many others began following suit.¹⁶ The Lu state was soon thereafter conquered. Han-Fei’s theory is somewhat reminiscent of Chinese Hobbesian thought.

Whose theory is better? It depends on the situation. Han-Fei explains the game of competition (war) while Confucius focuses on the game of cooperation (peace). The death of a kingdom is one thing, and the death of civilisation is another.

16. 《韩非子·五蠹》。

Humanism

European perspective

Dominique Lambert

What is humanism? showing humanity? In French, this term of humanity designates both the set of humans, taken collectively, but also what characterises the human as opposed to what would not be.

And we can consider this opposition in two different ways:

1. On the one hand, the character of humanity allows the distinction between Man and animal or between Man and machine. Man being taken here as a generic term. It is then a question of humanity, understood as the nature of Man, his essence, what defines him.
2. On the other hand, this character could identify behaviours of Man that are consistent with his nature. Inhumanity then refers to actions or behaviors that are contradictory to this nature.

If we understand humanity in the first sense,¹⁷ we are led to define what makes the human being a human. Traditionally this brings us to the notion of “(human) person”. There is therefore in the Western tradition a reference to a metaphysical foundation (foundation and universality).

The term person in Greek (“πρόσωπον”) refers to the mask used by actors in the theater. It therefore refers to the role played by the human being or his status. But the translation of this term also means “face”, which is interesting for us, and we will come back to it (when referring to the Hebrew etymology). It is by the face of the other that perhaps the deepest character of his humanity is recognised.

The Latin translation of “person”, *persona*, was used in Law to designate the fundamental legal distinction that exists between humans and things (*de personis et de rebus*: “about persons and about things”).

According to Aristotle, the (human) person is an “individual substance of a rational nature”.

17. For example, John Locke in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, II, c.27, §9, Oxford, Peter H. Niddich, 1975, p. 335: “We must consider what Person stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which is inseparable from thinking, as it seems to me essential to it”.

Humanity is therefore defined first by a substance (“ὑπόστασις”, *sub-stantia*, “which stands under”) that is to say a subject (“ὑποκείμενον”, *sub-jectum*, *substrate*, “matter that receives form”). The essence of this subject (its “οὐσία”) is first of all not to be divisible (to remain undivided), it is one reality, an inseparable, individual unity, which has meaning first in itself. Its essence (what makes the person a person) is also defined by the fact that the human person is of a rational nature. This does not mean that the human person is defined by the exercise of intellectual capacities, but that, by his birth (nature comes from *natus* and *nasci*, “born”), he belongs to a species endowed with rationality (even if some representatives of this species do not exercise it for various reasons, for example pathological ones). There is room for debate here, and this would have important consequences for respect for the human being, for his humanity. Indeed, some philosophical currents have wanted to define humans by their capacities (humanity disappearing with the loss of these), or the ability to exercise them, then distinguishing the human being from the human person (the subject having the capacity to exercise rationality for example). In such a conception, human beings can lose their nature as a human person, lose something of their humanity, while in the classical conception: “he who is born human”, by the fact that he is born of humans, permanently retains his humanity from birth to death. One understands the possible impact of the difference between these conceptions on the definition of so-called “Human Rights” (absolute in classical conception or relative in conceptions that distinguish human beings and human persons). In any case, we see that the emphasis is placed, in this Aristotelian definition of the human person, on an individual (and not on the collective) and on the reference to cognitive abilities (which are supposed to differentiate the human from the animal: *homo est animal rationale*).

But for Aristotle again, and the Western tradition that will follow him, another way of defining humanity, the proper character of Man, is to refer to the human soul.¹⁸ What makes the human human here is linked to a principle, to the soul (“ψυχή”), that is to say to “the first act of an organised body that has life in power”. All the living are alive because of their soul (the term, *anima*, in Latin, refers to what animates, what gives movement, *motus*). Humans have a specifically human soul, an intellectual soul (distinct from the sensitive soul of animals or vegetative of

18. Cfr Saint Thomas d'Aquin, *L'âme humaine* (traduction et notes par François-Xavier Putallaz), Paris, Cerf, 2018.

plants). Humanity thus refers here to a (meta-empirical) source, a “depth” that gives the human being its unity and its own character as a living animal of a rational nature.

A modern (Cartesian) tradition will distinguish the soul from the body and the *res cogitans* from the *res extensa*, making humanity a reality torn between spirit and matter, but the Aristotelian conception of the human person cannot be identified with this type of dualism.

On the other hand, it is interesting to emphasise here that the idea of the human person during a long sequence of Western thought is linked to a transcendence of the human in relation to matter and in relation to the animal. The human is a being made of matter (as shown by its etymology: *homo* refers to *humus*, the earth; the Greek “χθων”, “χαμαί”, “χωμα” (“the earth that we stir”) comes from Sanskrit *ksam*. In Hebrew, “אדמה”, the soil (where Adam comes from), but which cannot be reduced to matter. As Blaise Pascal says: “Man passes man infinitely”, Man is open to a depth (an order) that exceeds him (and that gives meaning to the human).

Humanism has undergone a double evolution in the history of Western thought. On the one hand, an accentuation of the individual aspect: the humanism of the Enlightenment appears as a self-determination of man by man. The human becomes the source of humanism. And, in the contemporary period, the thoughts that define the human no longer do so in relation to metaphysical nature (an essence) but from existence (Sartre).

We have described, so far, a notion of humanity, centered on the individual. But there is also, in Western philosophy, a definition of the human referring to a more collective, more relational dimension, which may or may not be metaphysically founded. Traditionally, it is not the relationship with the other that founds humanity, but the human nature that founds relational capacity.

From the perspective of a Chardin Teilhard, humanity cannot be conceived as a sum of isolated individuals. The so-called “noosphere” (a term he coined in his discussions with Edouard Le Roy) is that environment in which humans interact, intensify their relationships, form a bloc but in which the person is never annihilated.¹⁹ The “human sense” is that sense of the convergence of humans towards each other. What would not

19. Cfr Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon* (a new edition and translation of *Le Phénomène Humain* by Sarah Appleton-Weber; foreword by Brian Swimme), Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 1999.

move in this direction regresses in humanity.²⁰ This is also in line with Bergson's idea in *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*:²¹ "closed societies" and "closed morals" are dead-end paths to human evolution. In Teilhard, we have an original thought that defines the human and humanism by a conception that articulates individuality, personality, and relationship. And his own way of thinking about this is "amortisation": the growth of love between humans. Love being defined by Teilhard as a relationship that unifies more and more by deepening differences. The individual and the relationship are intimately linked. In a perspective that is for him resolutely theological: "God creates by uniting" (*Deus creat uniendo*).

In the perspective of Emmanuel Levinas, there is something of the human and his transcendence that is perceived in his face (in Biblical Hebrew: "פְּנֵי" word in the plural, which means "presence", but also "the person"). It is this "face" that calls me to responsibility and invites me to be human, by respecting it and not recovering it in my closed system (in a totality).²² Here it is Ethics (of respect for others) that underpins Metaphysics and not the contrary! Humanity therefore has two facets, one individual and the other relational. But the ancient Western tradition (Antiquity or the Middle-Ages) derives the relational facet from the metaphysical nature of the individual, while the modern and contemporary traditions would tend to abandon human nature (or deny its existence) to find the human character in the relationship.

We now come to humanity understood in the second sense (2).

In Greek philosophy, that of Aristotle, the character of humanity (humanism) is revealed in the fact of acting in accordance with the (metaphysical) nature of Man and this nature is linked to reason.

But what makes humans and their humanity? We must question not only the Greco-Roman tradition but also the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In the Christian tradition, the archetype of the human being is Christ, who is said to be "meek and humble of heart". It is a poverty of heart, a stripping of oneself that makes "humanity par excellence". It is the gift of the self to the other that is, in this context, the sign of humanity. It is the gift of the self out of love (*caritas*, "ἀγάπη") that signs humanity. In the "parable of the Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:25-37), one invites us to "be one's

20. Cfr Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, « Quelques réflexions sur les droits de l'Homme » in *L'Avenir de l'Homme*, Oeuvres de Teilhard de Chardin 5, Paris Seuil, 1959, pp. 247-249.

21. Paris, Alcan, 1932.

22. Cfr E. Levinas, *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, La Haye, Martinus Nijhoff, 1961.

neighbour" and we see that showing humanity is to make oneself actively available to the other. The one who became (he wasn't before!) man's neighbour is "He who has shown mercy ("ἔλεος") towards him" (36-37).

The Bible already says that "the Lord is tender and pity, slow to anger and full of love (*multum misericors*)" (Ps 102:8). The term "love" is that of mercy, which in the Hebrew context means the fact of being touched in one's bowels by the misery of the other. Compassion, pity, and mercy are linked in Hebrew (רַחַם *raham*, *rahamim*) The norm of humanity here is clearly not on the side of cognitive ability but of love.

Curiously perhaps, I will also refer here to Darwin, who in his famous book *The Descent of Man*, defines the noblest part of Man as his ability to care for the sick, the poor. We are therefore fully human, in this sense, when we let ourselves be touched by the suffering of the other and because we give a place to the suffering, fragile other. This idea has been highlighted by the geologist, professor at the Collège de France in Paris, Xavier Le Pichon in his book, *Aux racines de l'homme. De la mort à l'amour* (*At the roots of Human Being. From Death to Love*).²³ According to him, to welcome weak, disabled, suffering persons is a way to become human and to enhance humanity.

23. Paris, Presses de la Renaissance, 1997.



Humanism

Final remarks

ZHAO Tingyang, Dominique Lambert

ZHAO Tingyang

Dear professor Dominique Lambert, I appreciate your interpretation of western humanisms so much. Let me further discuss a metaphysical divergence between a bilateral or relational humanism based upon Ren and the individual humanism based upon absolute humanity. With “absolute humanity” I refer to the European definitions of human, either in terms of Aristotelian rationality or Kantian free will of autonomy. The absolute humanism supposes the essence of humanity in individual human beings, no matter whether defined in born nature or active subjectivity. By the way, Sartre’s theory is not included, for it seems more likely nonsensical that existence is before essence. It is logically invalid. A self-conscious existence should have its subjectivity to choose an essence, therefore its subjectivity must have been in it as an essence *a priori*.

It seems to me that absolute humanism could be good, if it does not suggest an imperative ethics, such as that of human rights. Hume is right in that *ought* cannot be deduced from *is*. So I think that the Aristotelian concept of humanity in terms of rationality is more convincing than the modern one in terms of subjectivity, since rationality is biologically convincing, whereas the egoist subjectivity should be considered a suspended claim of *ought*, which cannot be deduced from *is*. Alternatively, bilateral or relational humanism in terms of Ren does not promise an essence *a priori* of a human. It argues that humanity is being developed, or cultivated, through the inter-subjectivity or reciprocal relationship with others, so much to be a form of trans-subjectivity, so that it is found a functional value of the intersubjective variables that nurture humanity.

Dominique Lambert

Dear Professor ZHAO Tingyang, thank you very much for your deep analysis of the uses and interpretations of the term Ren in the Chinese tradition. It was for me very interesting and enlightening. In the

Western World, today, one could find three main philosophical trends concerning the definition of “humanity”.

The first one is inherited from Antiquity and the Middle-Ages defining a human being, as an individual, a person, starting from a metaphysical foundation (essence or nature). This conception is what you call “absolute humanism”. In this conception, the relationship between human beings is not a fundamental element of the definition of humanity and it is only derived from the metaphysical foundation. The nature of the human being allows her or him to initiate interpersonal relationships. Idealism, giving up an ontological position, preserves nevertheless an individual conception of humanity. In these traditions (realist and idealist) the definition of humanity has ethical implications (what human “is” implies what human has “to do”) These individual and “subject-centered” positions are indeed diverging from the Chinese tradition of Ren.

The second one is inherited from Nominalism and, later, from Empiricism (John Locke for example), and is defining humanity from human “performances” (such as cognition) leading progressively to a distinction between human person and human being. This position is rather similar to the one that defines humanity starting from a biological description (for example defining humanity from the brain’s cognitive abilities as a source of rational activities). Here, the definition of a human being has no immediate ethical dimensions (biology provides empirical descriptions and not ethical norms).

The third one is more recent in the European culture and would be relational: a human person is constituted by intersubjective relationships. You can consider here a position rooting an ontological definition of humanity in an ethical position (I am thinking of Emmanuel Levinas). But you could refer also to various kinds of more recent structuralist positions or relational ontology. The latter seems to be very similar to the Chinese interpretation of Ren. The dialogue with the Chinese tradition is fruitful precisely because it emphasises the importance of the relational definition of humanity, long-forgotten in some Occidental traditions. Love, fraternity, and friendship are at the core of what we would like to call “humane relationships”, humanity and humanism. But several issues remain, and will allow us to continue this interesting dialogue: can we neglect or suppress completely (without logical or philosophical problems) the question of an ontological foundation of the relationship? Can we really disconnect the moral aspects of a human relationship from a deeper definition of human (in order to avoid the

complete arbitrariness of ethics)? Could one maybe say that the relationship (whose best instantiation is love) is the deep nature of humanity? All these questions could be tackled and discussed maybe in the context of another EU-China Forum.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Image

象

Xiàng

SUN Xiangchen

Alain le Pichon

象

Xiàng

Chinese perspective

SUN Xiangchen

The Chinese character Xiang (象) has a long history. It is a pictograph, and its original and direct meaning is an elephant. Shuowen (120 CE), an ancient classic dictionary, says: “Elephant, the long nose and long tusks, the big beast in South China, gives birth once every three years, elephant ears, ivory, and four feet.” But the main meaning of Xiang has changed to be one different from its original meaning, ultimately becoming “image”, which is an extended meaning of Xiang. In Western traditions, “image” should be related to vision, but actually, this word has nothing to do with vision. Another Chinese character, Xing (形), related to Xiang (image) describes a more specific and more object-oriented image. Chinese characters are so-called pictographs, and pictograms are one of the basic ways of conformation of Chinese characters. Shuowen explains: “pictograms express specific objects in the form of paintings, to make words, and draw different forms according to different objects. For example, the sun and the moon are pictographs.”

Compared with the Western word “image”, this term Xiang is rather special. It does not refer to a specific direct image, but a generalised image to some extent, like a sketch. Regarding the word Xiang, there is a vivid description by Han Feizi (280 BCE – 233 BCE): “People rarely see a live elephant, just the remains of a dead elephant, and then imagine it according to such an image. Therefore, for ordinary people, the imagination of the elephant is called “image”. Although the Dao cannot be seen or heard now, the sage takes the power to reveal its shape. Therefore, they say: for Dao, a form without a shape, an image without an object.” One can imagine the real elephant and think of the real thing through this generalised image; from this, Han Feizi deduces that although people cannot see the Dao, through the efforts of the sages, they can still use this kind of image to understand the Dao of all things. Laozi (6th century BCE) also said: “Dao itself has no image” because any kind of description is negation, which needs to be implied through a sketch image. Dao is

characterised by its change; Zhang Xuecheng (1738 – 1801), a scholar in the Qing Dynasty, also explained the relationship between image and change: “Change is the paradigm of Heaven and earth, the sages made the Changes in order to provide a paradigm of Heaven and earth, and so it shows how one can fill in and pull together Dao of Heaven and Earth. When everything goes from static to motion. Their images have already been revealed, although the essence of Dao cannot be seen for a glimpse, and what people see vaguely when they are searching for Dao are all their images.”

The classic that embodies this characteristic of Dao in the Chinese cultural tradition is *The Book of Changes*. Xiang is the most important concept to explain *The Book of Changes*: “This is why the Changes as such consist of images. The term image means the making of semblances.” *The Book of Changes* uses Xiang to symbolise the changes of all things. The eight basic trigrams make up all the sixty-four hexagrams of *The Book of Changes*, which represent heaven, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountains, and lakes. Different images represent different trigrams. Each hexagram is a combination of two different trigrams, which means two different images. The complex relationship between them is ever-changing. The ancient sages were especially concerned about the changing world. They “looked upward and observed the image in heaven and looked downward and observed the models that the earth provided.” And then they chose the appropriate hexagram to symbolise specific things: “The sages had the means to perceive the mysteries of the world, and drawing comparison to them with analogous things, make images out of those things that seemed appropriate. This is why these are called image.” Every hexagram is combined of two different trigrams and also means two different images. They are used to symbolise the image of all things and deduce the Dao of their changes, so as to understand the reason for the changes of all things, and to know the fortune and misfortune of affairs. Because Xiang was originally related to divination, in Zuo Zhuan’s *Xi Gong Fifteen Years* (4th century BCE), “turtle shells can show some images; and yarrow can provide different numbers.” Du Yu (222 – 285) explained: “Divination by turtle shell is informed by image, divination by yarrow is informed by numbers. Images and numbers are generated from this, and then divination is carried out according to these prompts, and divination is mainly used to know fortune and misfortune.” The cracked pattern on the turtle’s shell is the original image, which can tell people things good or bad. Western philosophy originated

from one's wonder and went from mythology to philosophy. The Book of Changes originated from anxiety and calamity, and from divination to philosophy.

In the Chinese cultural tradition, the way of thinking based on Xiang is not only reflected in the philosophy of Changes, according to Zhang Xuecheng "the way of thinking based on Xiang covers a very wide range, not just The Book of Changes, the six classical arts are all compatible with the way of Xiang; It is the essence of Dao that will be revealed but there is still nothing obvious yet." Therefore, Xiang is a universal way of thinking, which is reflected in various classical writings. The characteristics of Xiang are to show the state that will be revealed and not revealed yet. They are divided into "images formed naturally by heaven and earth" and "images constructed by the human mind" and are "about the natural images formed by heaven and earth, such as the Qian hexagram, which says the things relative to the sky are completely included. The image constructed by the human mind, such as the Kui hexagram, which says there are ghosts in the cart, or such as the Zhong-fu hexagram, which says that the sound of the cock crowing spreads into the sky, there is nothing that the mind cannot think of, cannot imagine. Originally the mind is empty and functional, man is bound between heaven and earth, and cannot but be affected by the ebb and flow of Yin and Yang; the image constructed by the human mind is the result of the influence of emotional changes. In the end, the image imagined by the human mind also comes from the image formed naturally by the heaven and the earth." People use Xiang to express various things, whether natural or human. Here, Xiang is neither a substantive concept, nor an object of representation, but rather a Xiang to symbolise and analogise natural and human phenomena. Xiang presupposes the metaphysical framework of eternal change, so it is a non-ready-made image, a dynamic image, a process image, and a changing image.

Xiang is also closely related to the view of language in Chinese cultural tradition. The Book of Changes says, "The Master said writing does not exhaust words, and words do not exhaust ideas. If this is so, does this mean that the ideas of the sages cannot be discerned? The Master said: the sage established image in order to express their ideas exhaustively, they established the hexagrams in order to treat exhaustively the true innate tendency of things and their countertendencies to spuriousness. They attached phrases to the hexagrams in order to exhaust what they had to say. They let change occur and achieve free flow in order to exhaust

the potential of the benefit involved." According to this view, there is a layer of image between words and ideas, and the image is established to help words to express their meaning better. Wang Bi (226 – 249) gave an explanation for this: "Images are the means to express ideas. Words are the means to explain the images. To yield up ideas completely, there is nothing better than the images, and to yield up the meaning of the images, there is nothing better than words. The words are generated by the images, thus one can ponder the words and so observe what the images are. The images are generated by ideas, thus one can ponder the images and so observe what the ideas are. The ideas are yielded up completely by the images, and the images are made explicit by the words. Thus, since the words are the means to explain the images, once one gets the images, he forgets the words, and, since the images are the means to allow us to concentrate on the ideas, once one gets the ideas, he forgets the images. Similarly, the rabbit snare exists for the sake of the rabbit; once one gets the rabbit, he forgets the snare. And the fish trap exists for the sake of fish; once one gets the fish, he forgets the trap." The image is to help one understand ideas and play an intermediary role in this process. The relationship between words and ideas is not a direct correspondence, but a relationship such as a metaphor or analogy. Therefore, the image as an intermediary becomes very important in Chinese cultural tradition, which is very different from the Western view of language.

Xiang is also closely related to Chinese artistic tradition, with many concepts of art being related to Xiang. The characteristics of Chinese art emphasise the fluidity and mutual transformation of Xiang. In poetry, human emotions need to be expressed through the images created by language. The biggest feature of the image is that it is not so objectified but creates intermittent and changing pictures. Chinese characters are created by pictographs. Calligraphy is also an expression of affection by significant form, which are the endlessly changing images. Sun Guoting (646 – 691) explained it so: "When the Yang air is strong, the calligraphy expresses a kind of relaxation, and when the Yin air is strong, the calligraphy expresses something miserable. It is the embodiment of the state of mood of heaven and earth." Chinese painting also likes to use the image of smoke and clouds to show the landscape, free from the shackles of clear objects, the presence and absence of things, and implies a process and change, which is the characteristic of Xiang.

Chinese-style Xiang has no corresponding concept in Western philosophy at all. Western philosophy expresses another kind of image. In

Plato's philosophy, when he put forward idea and eidos, which are also kinds of images, there is the essence behind specific sensible things, which can only be seen by the intellectual eye, so that it should be a clear and distinct object intellectually. This idea was later developed into the concept of "form" in Aristotle's philosophy. The characteristic of this kind of image is substantive, objective, and is not processive or changeable.

In some sense, the Chinese-style Xiang is similar to that in Christianity. God is invisible; all that can be seen is a certain trace of God. Of course, man has the image of God, but different theologians have different views on what this image is. The Chinese-style image is related to Dao; Dao is invisible, and one who seeks Dao vaguely sees its images.

In empiricist philosophy, image is the philosophical concept directly received by the senses. There are simple ideas, and there are also "complex ideas" synthesised by various simple ideas. This is the starting point of empiricist philosophy. For empiricism, abstract ideas may result in a kind of paradox, which George Berkeley has analysed in depth. The Chinese-style Xiang is neither this direct perceptive idea nor an abstract idea, but the idea in a sketched sense.

Image

European perspective

Alain le Pichon

The term *image* is defined as a representation or reproduction of something. It could be said that it is a visible reality that shows another one. The word in English as in French comes from the Latin "imago", which originally referred to a kind of mask which was made from beeswax and moulded onto the face of a dead person in order to preserve the features, as a kind of portrait. Eventually it would be used to produce a cast.

In Ancient Rome, this wax portrait of the ancestor was placed in the atrium and carried to the funeral. The right to such images was reserved for noble persons, allowing them to establish and preserve their lineage. Etymologically, the image is therefore the portrait of a dead person.

Many accounts by ancient philosophers and historians emphasise the emotional character often present in the invention of the image, such as this famous account by the Latin historian Pliny the Younger: "The potter Butades of Sicyone was the first to discover the art of modelling portraits in clay; this was in Corinth and he owed his invention to his daughter, who was in love with a young man. When he went to a foreign country, she would draw a line around the shadow of his face cast on the wall by the light of a lantern; her father would apply the clay to the sketch, make a relief of it, which he would put to harden in the fire with the rest of his pottery, after drying."

The concept of image in European cultures at its roots is thus semantically marked by these emotional, ritual, and funerary origins. This preeminence of the human face is as if our European ancestors in the Western history of the image had taken as theirs this sentence of Lichtenberg: "The most fascinating surface of the earth is, for us, the human face."

But it is no less deeply and philosophically marked by a dark tutelary image, at least for Europeans trained in the human sciences: that of Plato's cave. One could say that the European imagination in its perception of this key concept of image was born in a cave and remains forever

marked by this original, profound, and obsessive focal image of Plato's allegory showing men chained and immobilised in a cave. "They turn their backs to the entrance and see no objects but the shadows of objects cast against the wall. They think they see the truth, but they only see an appearance of it." With this in mind, of all the key concepts we are supposed to address in this first issue of the Dictionary of Misunderstandings, image is probably one of the most important¹ but also one of the most difficult, if not impossible, to deal with.

It is partly so difficult because the European point of view particularly highlights one of the main methodological limitations of our purpose: for practical and realistic reasons, we were obliged to restrict this exercise to the sole use of the English language on the Western side, and, consequently, to draw up the list of key words in English only. In the game of choosing the main keyword in English to be retained, that corresponds to a specific main concept in European cultures, the English word image, with its classical Latin etymological references, was in this case the "least worst", so to speak.

But, at the same time, by choosing the word image, we have moved away from a magisterial keyword in the German language corresponding more or less to the classical generic concept "Urform" of the image, with its English, but etymologically Latin, realisation in the word image. The corresponding German keyword is "Bild" with its philosophical semantic development from "Bildung", both of which represent a major current in the European cultural field.

Moreover, the same problem arises initially between the Latin language and the relatively narrow and limited semantic charge of the word imago and the large field offered by Greek language. We have therefore tried to compensate this weakness by considering successively the Greek items: "eidos", "eidolon", and "eikon" versus the Latin "imago", as well as the English and French Image versus German Bild and its very rich philosophical trend.²

The chosen keywords, image in English and Xiang in Chinese, can probably be considered in both Chinese and Western cultures a fundamental milestone, an "Urform", an original form in the history of the

1. Our Chinese colleagues do not have this problem since they benefit from the semantic universality of characters.

2. I would like to say that, as a good method, we should have included in our process and in our debate an internal debate with and between the different European language authors and let the authors express themselves in their mother tongue thanks to a comprehensive translation system as is also being done between European and Chinese authors, also taking into account the nuances, differences, and possible consequent misunderstandings (in this case between the English and German words).

respective "mentality" constitutive of the historical construction of the architecture of thought and language on both sides.³

On the Chinese side, the keyword or key-character, as Professor Sun Xianchen explains in his article, seems to be at the very origin of the history of Chinese writing: the history of this character contains and illustrates the generic process of the invention of writing.

On the European side, the concept of the image appears, especially as described in Plato's famous allegory of the cave, as a fundamental element at the origin of Western philosophical reflection, and a decisive tool for two main characteristics in the construction of Western thought, namely the principle of transcendence and the principle of critical and scientific knowledge.

The elaboration of a corrected model, starting from image as an uncertain representation of reality, makes it possible to apply, and at the same time demonstrate, the principle of critical verification (or falsification) to the different representations of reality through the exercise and construction of a theory (theorein). In Greek "theorein" means to contemplate. It is through the contemplation of the image of reality, the eidolon, that the mind can reach its critical conclusion, even if it is the shadow that carries the illusion and the error including the emotional and poetic energy it gives off, and gradually reconstruct the model of reality and discriminate between different representations, eventually more closely approaching the eidos.

This is where, according to Plato, the essential difference between the two categories of images comes in:

- The eidolon, the image-simulacrum as provided by the mirror and offering such a resemblance as to seduce the gaze and distract it from the truth, will be condemned.
- Only the eikon, the copy-image, sufficiently dissimilar to its model to guarantee its difference, will be accepted and will have a key function in dialectical philosophy.

Above these two categories, and at the top of this hierarchy, is the eidos, the pure form, the empire of ideas, whose formal claimed character

3. This keyword of image in terms of the objectives of our project plays an important role insofar as we consider that the Dictionary of Misunderstandings must take into account the "iconic turn" (that we will consider in the second part of this paper) and must be extended not only to keywords and key concepts but also to key images and include, within the iconic field, something like Ady Warburg's Atlas Mnemosyne project. This would also imply extending and applying the principle of a search for "focal icons" (i.e., an anthropological analysis of "iconic focal points" according to Zhao Tingyang's understanding of "focal points"), in rituals and in cultures to the iconic field as anthropologists such as William Turner have done in their fieldwork (William Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*).

in spite of its invisible and immaterial principle reveals its ambiguous relationship to the world of images. The notion of “*eidos*”, rendered as “form” in English, is one of the fundamental concepts used by Greek philosophers in their analysis of reality. In the common language of the time, the word designated the figure, the external aspect of a body or the air of a person, perceptible by sight. But from Democritus and Plato onwards, it was used to designate an invisible reality, graspable only by thought, which constitutes the true being of things: corporeal (that of atoms) in Democritus, incorporeal (that of the ideas) in Plato. Aristotle took up this term in its Platonic sense of immaterial principle by integrating it into his ontology of substance composed of matter and form under the title of formal cause. For Aristotle, there is no clear separation between matter and thought, and the images, *phantasmata*, constitute objects of perception and provide the raw material for the development of concepts. Imagination is the mirror of the soul that brings the inner world into the intimacy of the living.

Let us now return to that original scene of the Western imagination and of the philosophy of the image: Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*. Where does the light come from? To this question posed by Athens, Jerusalem gave a radical and decisive answer, which can be summarised in two propositions from Genesis:

1. “God said let there be light and there was light”, the primordial light is a direct emanation of the Divine.
2. “God created man in his own image”.

Following the way opened by Plato, Plotin, then Augustin, built a strong epistemology of the image based on the main idea of the generative link of filiation from God to man. Augustin says that “there is no image if it is not generated (*exprimitur*) from something”, and stresses the three characteristics of resemblance, image, and equality, the three of them being fulfilled by the Christ in the Trinity.

This philosophy of image, centred on the image of man as the image of God, which has inspired the entire West and shaped our European cultures through the Medieval era, can be illustrated by the essential biblical concept-image of the Primordial Man: Adam Kadmon, as it appears in *Kabbalah*.

In *Kabbalah*, Adam Kadmon is an immense human form composed of the hypostases (manifestations) emanating from the divine light and representing the creation of Man and of the Universe, “in the image

and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26). This form, which encompasses the entire universe from the image of man to the image of God, has its roots in the description of the “Beloved” in the Song of Songs (Song 5:10-16) Qomah 1.

For the Christian, the figure of Christ is the living image and the real and perfect manifestation of the Primordial Man which definitely re-included man and human nature in their divine filiation. Originally, in Jewish history as well as in Christian and Islamic history, this ambiguity of the nature of man, as a consequence, had to address the contention of images, icones, leading to the historical crisis of the religious, cultural, and political iconoclasm in the Byzantine Empire.

In the medieval times, this Christian culture of the image led to a new decisive chapter in the European perception and philosophy of the image in its German acceptation: *Bild*. In Germany, this was the result of the movement of the Rhenan Mystics. Eckhart bases his doctrine of *bilde* (lat. *ymago*) on his understanding of “image-being” as a perfect assimilation (“*ymago est similis*”) and a living relationship between the image (*Abbild*) and that of which the image (*Urbild*) is of. Eckhart’s doctrine is characterised by his dynamic understanding of the image: “*Ymago proprie est emanatio simplex, formalis, transfusiva totius essentiae purae nuda*” [The image is in itself a simple, typical, and extended emanation of the whole pure and naked essence], as a source of inner boiling.

Kant, in turn, took up this dynamic view of the imaginary process. In his *Transcendental Deduction of the Critique of Pure Reason*, he writes: “*Die Einbildungskraft soll [...] das Mannigfaltige der Anschauung in ein Bild bringen*” [The imagination must form one picture of the diverse provided by intuition]. The “one picture” (*Bild*) giving the diverse the form of a universe – *kosmos* [κόσμος] rather than *khaos* [χάος]. The image, *Bild*, is then a specific and unique image, a figurative synthesis (*figürlich*) because it is unified by the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), understood as a unifying and synthesising force.

If imagination (gr. *phantasia*, ger. *Phantasie*) is classically defined as reproductive imagination in the Aristotelian tradition, Kant, for his part, distinguishes between a reproductive imagination, which is a matter for psychology, and a productive imagination, which is a matter for transcendental philosophy, an *exhibitio derivativa* and an *exhibitio originaria*. *Reproduktiv*, the imagination is still called *zurückrufend*, or (re)evocative in German; *produktiv*, it is still called *dichtend*, *poïétique*, or creative.

Fichte, taking up this Kantian reading of the transcendental imagination, will make the Rhenish vision, in its creativity and mysticality, undergo a major evolution by positing “the image as such” as a “free product of the Self”. The image is not a reflection of the thing, but a projection (Reflex) of the Ego producing itself in image in the course of its free activity. In other words, the only original that the image can claim is the Ego.

A new and even more radical turn was taken with the phenomenological approach. Following Husserl, the Heideggerian reading of Kant puts forward the idea of an essential finitude of the human being, “king of finitude” (Hölderlin, Hymn to Freedom). Whereas German idealism put forward the unconditionality of the Ego of transcendental apperception as *Selbstbewußtsein* or “self-consciousness”, Heidegger insists on the essential part that belongs, in all knowledge, to sensibility, understood not as passivity but as receptivity.

Heidegger observes (*Kantbuch*, § 19): “The term *Bild* is to be taken here really at the source, as when we say, faced with a landscape: ‘What a beautiful view (*Bild*) (*Anblick*)!’, or again, in the presence of a dull assembly: ‘What a sad sight (*Bild*) (*Anblick*)!’ In contrast to the Fichtean *Bild*, the *Bild* here is not forged by the force of the imagination. “We say of a landscape that it is a view (picture), species [*Anblick (Bild)*], species], as if it were looking at us [*gleich als blicke sie uns an*].” The *Bild* is here “de-subjectivised”.

In this too rapid and reductive history of the image in the West, from the original symbolic focus of Plato’s cave to the philosophical developments around the Germanic *Bild*, two constants appear: that of the search for and identification of the source of energy at the origin of the image – whether attributed to God, to man as the image of God, then to man alone, to the ego “desacralized” or if you like, on the contrary, “divinized” by the Enlightenment – and that of an eminent and dominant form in the universe of the image, the image of man, and even more so, his face.

For a long time, dominant Judeo-Christian monotheistic thought, meeting and relaying Platonic idealism, imposed the model of a generic relationship of man to God, of man in the image of God, of man-image of God, within creation. The Byzantine art of the icon, overcoming the quarrel over images that it gave rise to at the heart of medieval art and then, continuing through the Italian Primitives, until the Renaissance consecrates this celebration of the human face, image of God, bearer and witness of divine energy.

The industrial revolution, accompanying and following the philosophical revolution of the Enlightenment, thus favoured the prevalence of the Kantian alternative of the “reproductive imagination”, as opposed to the “productive” and creative imagination by triggering the industrial and mechanical reproduction of the image, soon thereafter followed by digital reproduction. Thus, the “iconic turn” was established in the contemporary history of Western thought, following the “linguistic turn”, as an interrogation and “deconstruction” of the sign and the image in language itself.

Along with Wittgenstein, Walter Benjamin’s thought is at the centre of this problematic. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, he underlines and deplores the loss of “aura” caused by this “iconic turn”. Beyond this Marxist analysis, in which he seeks to find compensation for this loss of aura and meaning in a revolutionary inspiration of a mystical nature, it is another text, this one of profoundly metaphysical and mystical inspiration, that will perhaps allow us to end this journey with a questioning of the ontological nature of the image.

In his essay *On Painting, or Sign and Mark*, he asks about the graphic line “determined by opposition to the surface”, then about painting and the act of painting, and finally about the stain. According to Benjamin, if the graphic line, the drawing, originating as we have seen from the prehistoric depths, from the primordial original act of fixing the trace of a silhouette or a human profile, is intrinsically linked to the person, to man, it is thus possible to distinguish and identify the surface representing the universe in which he is inscribed in opposition to and distinction from his existence as a person, the stain, the one in the painting and therefore “seems to present a more temporal significance, excluding any personal aspect”. Observing that in pictorial art, the painting operating as a stain covers the entire surface, it then only takes on its meaning because of a “higher power in the medium of the stain...” “This power is the word” which, invisible as such and manifesting itself only in the composition, establishes itself in the medium of pictorial language. “The painted image bears the name of its composition.”

Thus, it is the very nature of the image, in its components, the graphic line and the “stain”, which in itself raises the question of man’s metaphysical relationship to the world. But some images are charged with a greater semantic energy; we could call them focal images. Each culture constructs a complex hierarchy of its main “focal images” that are supposed to carry and demonstrate its own vision of the world.

象 Xiàng

Image

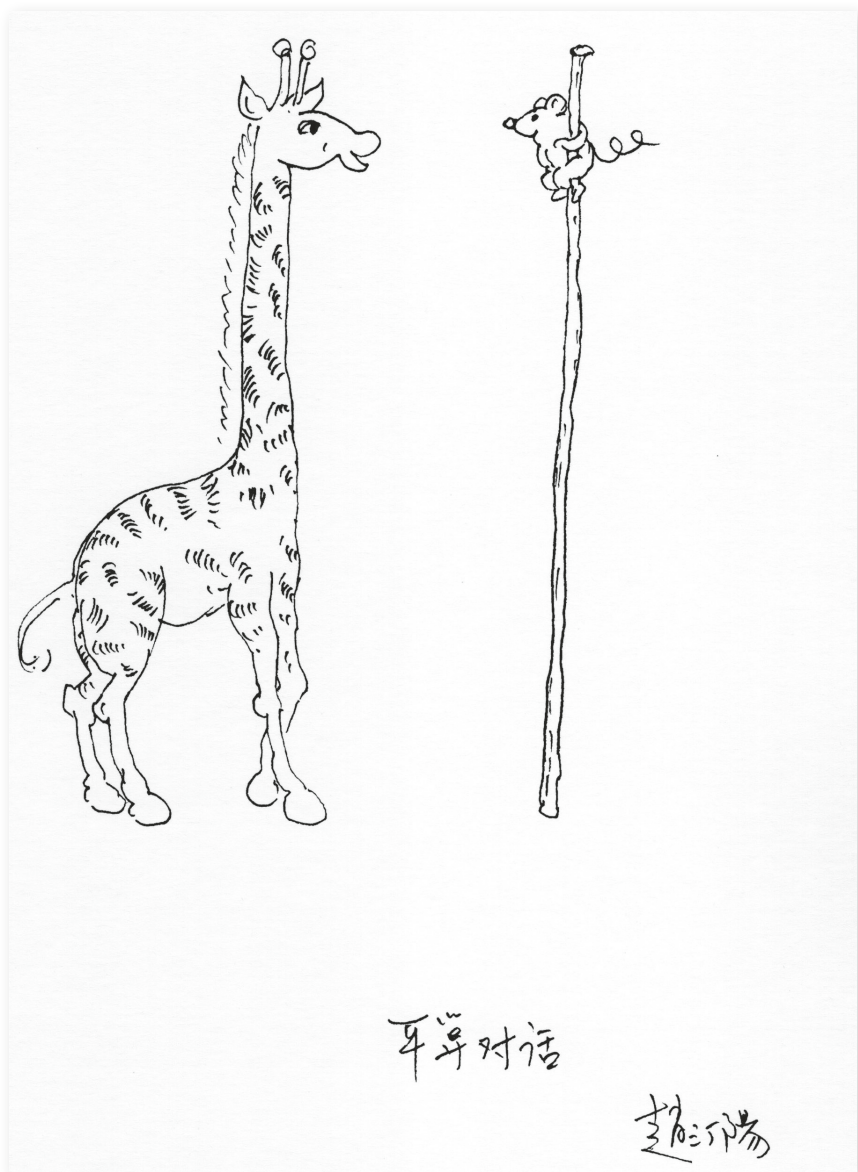
Final remarks

Alain le Pichon

Through Professor SUN Xiangchen's very clear presentation, we can perceive how the two concepts represented by the Chinese word Xiang and the English word image, which seem to be respectively fundamental in both cultures, are distant and different.

I am particularly interested in the following observation: "In some sense, the Chinese-style "Xiang" (image) is similar to that in Christianity. God is invisible, all that can be seen is a certain trace of God... The Chinese-style image is related to Dao, Dao is invisible, and one who seek Dao vaguely see its images."

I wonder if this might not be a "focal point", where we could meet, in the sense that we could perhaps agree, on both sides, that "the great image is invisible", insofar as there is still in our modern Western cultures a consistent belief and knowledge of God... I would add, since one of the fundamental beliefs and ideas of Christian culture is that man is in the image of God, in a generic bond, what about any bond, and possibly the generic bond between the Dao and man?



- | | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Beauty | 美 |
| Body | 身 |
| Contract | 约 |
| Death | 死 |
| Debt, financial | 债 |
| Debt, human | 人情 |
| Dialectics | 阴阳 |
| Duty | 义 |
| Empire | 天下 |
| Equality | 平等 |
| Eternity | 永恒 |
| Face | 面子 |
| Family | 家 |
| Friendship | 友谊 |
| Gift | 礼物 |
| Happiness | 福 |
| Harmony | 和 |
| Heart | 心 |
| Heritage | 遗产 |
| History | 历史 |
| Humanism | 仁 |
| Image | 象 |
| Individual | 己 |
| Liberty | 自由 |
| Monotheism | 神论 |
| Nation | 国 |
| Private property | 私产 |
| Progress | 进步 |
| Relation | 关系 |
| Ritual | 礼 |
| Rule of law | 法治 |
| Society | 社会 |
| Time | 时间 |
| Writing | 书写 |

Individual

己

Ji

SUN Xiangchen
Michel Espagne

己

Ji

Chinese perspective

SUN Xiangchen

Ji (己) is a very old Chinese character. It first appeared in the oracle bone inscriptions. The meaning of this word in its word formation is not very clear; it appears in the *Shang Shu* (the earliest history book in Chinese history, dating from the 10th century BCE), where it refers to one's self, mainly indicating the first-person pronouns. In Chinese philosophy, Ji plays an important role, and a series of important concepts are related to it. Because the fundamental framework of Chinese philosophy is not a Platonic dual world (the world of ideas and the sensible world). The focus of Chinese philosophy is not on the Idea, or the Form; it emphasises that there is only one world, "the Dao is not far away from man," and the Dao starts from this side, from yourself. So Ji becomes very important in Chinese philosophy. However, the word Ji is completely different from the "individual" in the Western sense, and it seems closer to "self", which means "your own pleasure, action, or personality". In the Chinese cultural tradition, there is no strong sense of the "individual". When Yan Fu (1854 – 1921) translated Mill's *On Liberty*, he used Ji to translate "individual", and stressed that the individual liberty is dependent on the boundary of liberty of others. In Western language, "individual" is opposite to the "whole", the "universal", and "society"; and in Chinese, Ji is mainly opposite to "men", that is, "other people" or "public".

First of all, Ji in Chinese refers to "oneself", and its extended meaning refers to "one's own interests, opinions". The *Shang Shu* has a set phrase "to give up one's opinion and follow that of others," that is, to lay down one's own interests or propositions and be obedient to the interests or opinions of others or of the public. Furthermore, in Chinese idiom, there is "to deny oneself for public", which is a kind of moral principle, and Ji is opposite to "public", and should be overcome for the public. In the *Analects*, there is a saying that "To subdue one's self and return to propriety is perfect virtue." Here, Ji also represents one's own interests or one's own opinions, and only by overcoming them can propriety be

restored. This is what benevolence means. Why do we need to overcome our desires? In the view of Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200), "if a person has his own body, it will be burdened by his desires." Of course, natural desires have their legitimacy, but too much desire will slip into selfishness; and "the selfishness of human desire", as opposed to "the public of heaven", needs to be controlled or even abandoned. Here Ji has a stronger negative connotation.

Secondly, Ji does not always have negative meaning, and it also expresses the true-self. Thus, a superior man should pursue his own true-self. Confucius said, "what the superior man seeks is in himself, while what the small man seeks is in others." "Seeking in himself" means that a superior man is true to himself, relies on himself, and perfects his own personality. This is also in line with the Confucian tradition of "sage within and king without". He who appeals to the opinions of the public submits to everyone's opinions, loses his autonomy, and is called a "village worthy" by Confucians, a type of person Confucians have denounced. Wang Yangming (1472 – 1529) made a special distinction between "true-self" and "bodily self". "True-self" embodies the noumenon of the heart and achieves its essence.

Thirdly, through Ji, Chinese philosophy also emphasises the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the self. Confucius asked, "is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?" and the answer is to rely on yourself. Whether a person is benevolent or not depends on oneself and one's own wishes, and this understanding embodies the autonomy of "self". At the same time, it is said in *The Doctrine of the Mean* that "he rectifies himself and seeks for nothing from others;" to complete various tasks by correcting oneself, "so that he has no dissatisfactions. He does not murmur against Heaven, nor grumble against men." In this way, we rely on our own self-sufficiency, not resenting the heavens. Mencius compared the pursuit of benevolence to archery: "The man who would be benevolent is like the archer. The archer adjusts himself and then shoots. If he misses, he does not murmur against those who surpass him. He simply turns around and seeks the cause of his failure in himself." First straighten yourself, and then shoot arrows. If you shot an arrow, but didn't hit the target, you must correct your own mistakes and deficiencies by reflecting on yourself. Your self is the true yardstick.

Fourth, Ji is a starting point for moral behaviour. An important concept in Confucianism is "extending one's kindness". Mencius said, the expanding of a ruler's kindness will suffice for the care and protection

of all in the world, and if he does not expand it, he will not be able to protect his wife and children. The concept of “extending one’s kindness” is even considered to be the fundamental difference between humans and animals. On this basis, a golden rule of morality has been developed: “Not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself.” Underlying this is a methodology of Chinese philosophy, “extending one’s own feelings to others”, that is, not starting from the Idea, from the Form, but from one’s self. Confucianism always emphasises that “the Dao is not far away from man.” Here Ji is a starting point, to understand others by knowing oneself, and to establish norms for the behaviour of others by your own behaviour. In *The Doctrine of the Mean*, it is said that “When one cultivates to the utmost the principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the Dao. What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others.” Here, doing something according to your own heart is called “loyalty”, and doing something by considering the feelings of others is called “reciprocity”. In this sense, Ji is a standard for understanding the world. Ji has the ability to judge what is universally desirable. Don’t apply what you don’t want to others. Ji is a path towards universalisation. The procedure is based on the universalising what you don’t want, a mechanism of reciprocity between oneself and others, and this is the basis of moral judgment, a Confucian method.

Fifth, Confucianism emphasises the “cultivation of self”, which means “cultivating one’s moral character”. Confucian philosophy regards morality as a process of self-cultivation, and the important thing is to keep “cultivating oneself”. Zi Lu, one of Confucius’ disciples, asked how to become a superior man. Confucius said: “The cultivation of himself in reverential carefulness.” “And is this all?” said Zi Lu. “He cultivates himself so as to give rest to others.” “And is this all?” again asked Zi Lu. Finally, Confucius said, “He cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people. He cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people - even Yao and Shun were still falling short of this.” In the Chinese philosophical tradition, morality is not a choice of free will, but a process of self-cultivation. The improvement of morality starts with the cultivation of oneself, improving continuously, and eventually reaching the perfect realm of oneself. “Cultivating oneself” is a process of moral improvement, a process of self-improvement, and at the same time, it is also a foundation for other actions. “Give rest to others” is a political goal, that is, to make people peaceful; if there is an example of effective imitation, then it can calm people.

Finally, in the process of “cultivating oneself”, “learning” plays an important role. Confucianism emphasises “learning for oneself”, and learning is also a process of “cultivating oneself”. In the *Analects*, Confucius said, “In ancient times, men learned with a view to their own improvement. Nowadays, men learn with a view to the approbation of others.” In other words, the ancient superior men learned for their own cultivation, for improving themselves and for perfecting themselves; and “modern” man’s learning was “only to make him to be able to talk”, to show off in front of others, or to “be pleasing to others”, thus forgetting that the ultimate goal of “learning” is “self-cultivating”.

The emergence of “individuals” in Western philosophy has its own logic. In Aristotle’s *Categories*, “individual” is opposed to “universal”, “individual” is the first substance, the foundation of all things, and what it opposes is the Platonic Idea. As far as Christianity is concerned, “individual” embodies equality before God. “Individuals” are very different from any role they play in a society. They are separated from any social customs and show their universal characteristics. In Protestantism, “individuals” exhibit new, internal, self-confirming characteristics. In Hegel’s terminology, “individuality” is a notion that combines universality with particularity. It is not a simple “individuality”, and it is a kind of actuality, which contains differences in itself. Hegel even thinks that Jesus is the embodiment of this “individuality”. In modern society, individuals represent equal, independent, and free subjects. In political philosophy, the individual is the subject of rights; and in morality, the individual is the subject of autonomy.

Mill’s *On Liberty* establishes the rights of the individual at the political level, and he talks about the rights of thought/speech, and the liberty of behaviour and their boundaries. Yan Fu was not familiar with the concepts related to individualism when he translated *On Liberty*. Although there are two Chinese characters referring to “freedom”, there is no specific concept of individual freedom in Chinese. Therefore, when Yan Fu translated this book into Chinese, it was titled as *The Boundary Between the Right of Publics and the Self*. The Ji here follows its traditional meaning in Chinese philosophy and, at the same time, refers to the individual; while the “Public” refers to others and society.

Individual

European perspective

Michel Espagne

In ancient Roman times, the term *individuum* translated the Greek word *atomon* (Cicero) and referred to the indivisible elements of matter. Subsequently, *individuum* means exactly the opposite of *atomon*. It is no longer a question of the indivisible element of matter but of the indivisible personality. Two forms of indivisibility face each other: that which concerns matter and that which concerns consciousness. Since the Enlightenment, or even since Descartes, the word “individual” names the human being as a subject that cannot be divided. It refers therefore to the unity of consciousness, to the human person, who exists because he thinks and thinks of himself. The individual is the subject of all actions. He is called to dominate a natural world transformed into an object. Certainly, this definition of the subject goes against what happens in different anthropological contexts where nature can also be a type of subject. But there is no doubt that the separation between the subject as individual and the nature-object remains dominant in the Western context. In the history of European philosophy, since the Enlightenment, there has been a call to assert the individual against the constraints of religion, the state or traditional social hierarchies. In Leibniz’ philosophy, monads have a reflective awareness of their perceptions, and the human universe boils down to a juxtaposition of monads.

The individual is then considered as a principle of creativity. On its freedom to act rest the benefits of civilisation. Kantian philosophy, by limiting the ambitions of reason, makes individual understanding one of the limits of possible knowledge. It is the individual who creates the world and this tendency is found among the Kantian philosophers up to neo-kantism, which gives a central place to representations by the individual.

By producing everything from its own resource, the Fichtean subject, an extreme form of individuality, gives history a revolutionary dimension of the future to be constructed. Indeed, if the subject produces

reality, it does not consider it as a given phenomenon but as a reality susceptible of improvement. Fichte inspired the political turn of the Hegelians.

Humboldt was one of the heralds of this individual freedom, which in the first half of the 19th century would become political liberalism. Each individual must have his specificity, his own talents – in a word, his individuality. The full development of individual freedom results from education, *Bildung*. As founder of the Berlin University, Humboldt considered that education must shape individuality. But *Bildung* aimed only to actualise what exists in the depths of the individual consciousness. The individual as a notion is less present in Hegel’s philosophy, but we must still observe that the idea of alienation is defined as a loss of the essential freedom of the individual.

While the notion of the individual often refers to a desire for freedom, it rarely refers to a principle of equality. The equality in the masses that John Stuart Mill, in the early days of liberalism and in his essay *On liberty*, viewed with certain suspicion, is a threat to the individual. Of course, individuals who identify with a democratic political system admit a principle of subsidiarity which allows them to be represented by other individuals, but this relative dispossession is already a danger. Rights of men as defined by Thomas Paine (1791) concern mainly free individuals and not so intensively the social group and in no way the social class to which they belong.

The freedom of the individual leads to a form of political exacerbation with the anarchism of Stirner or Bakunin which, in the middle of the 19th century, called into question any form of social constraint limiting the individual. *The Unique and Its Property* (1844), widely criticised by Marx in the *German Ideology*, is a long indictment against what limits the display of individual freedom. Phenomenology takes up the tradition of the uniqueness of the individual in his perception of the world and his relationship to it.

From the point of view of economics, the Condorcet paradox, later enunciated by Kenneth Arrow in the form of an impossibility theorem, testifies to the inability of the individualistic priority to objectify a legitimate collective choice. Doubt is thus cast on any procedure for aggregating individual preferences.

A certain contradiction arises, however, between political and economic liberalism. On the level of political life, the individual seems unable to adapt to any comparison with his peers. From an economic point

of view, on the opposite, individuals seem interchangeable so that they could, in most cases, be represented by a single and paradigmatic agent. Individuals are agents, actors, interchangeable entities whose action is deployed according to the expected usefulness, to the pleasures and the pains, quickly transformed into monetary costs and benefits. The individuals of economic liberalism should in no case be confused with national, family, religious groups, and never with social classes. They have no history and are not defined in relation to any group membership. Economic agents are nevertheless interchangeable only in the abstract scheme of neoclassical economics. They actually have a financial, cultural heritage, social habits which precisely define a large part of their individuality.

The presupposition of an equivalence of individual economic actors and their common search for maximising their utility (often confused with the consumption of market goods) remains an essential theoretical reference to the idea of general market equilibrium, and to the heart of liberalism and it still survives today. However, it is internally refuted by the recent economists (Sonnenschein, Mantel and Debreu) who demonstrate the absence of uniqueness as well as of stability in such a general equilibrium, in other words the absence of an invisible hand.

Thus, the individual is defined only by his relationship with the social. This relationship takes extreme forms in certain linguistic systems, such as Vietnamese for example, where the subject's expression is replaced by the indication of the place occupied by the speaker in a social system (little brother, big sister, elder, younger, etc.) In general, the individual marks on the one hand his difference from the society that surrounds him, he does not agree with the idea to be simply an element. On the other hand, he is indistinguishable from this social context insofar as he is the speaker of a language, marked by a history, determined by aesthetic categories and possibly religious beliefs or the recognition of a certain number of political laws. Language is a particularly effective revealer of the limits of the notion of individuality. This is probably one of the reasons for the tension between Kant and his pupil Herder, the tension between philosophy and anthropology.

Individuality is highly claimed by a subject who expresses his originality and the distance that separates him from society as from objectified nature. On the other hand, the words he uses to assert himself as an individual subject, as an embodied particularity, are the same words as those used by the whole group to which he is attached.

If we are interested in the history of the humanities, sociology is a science of the collective. In Durkheim's thought, suicide is not an individual's crisis but a phenomenon that must be analysed collectively. In contrast, psychology emphasises the individual psyche. However, the full explanation of psychic facts involves re-integrating data that goes beyond the individual. The initiator of empirical psychology, Wilhelm Wundt in Germany came up with the idea of a peoples' psychology, confirming the complexity of the game between individual and collective. The individual is supported by a collective spirit in which he participates. The most individual positions are in fact determined by the masses they pretend to put aside.

The question of individuality in history is an important problem in historiography, which sometimes tends to emphasise the action of isolated personalities, heroes and mostly prefers to emphasise communities as engines of history.

All the debates around nationality, the right of asylum and migrants, clearly show that individuals are not equal, that they are assigned significantly different rights and duties. The question of national identities, defined since the end of the 19th century by identity documents, passports, residence permits and the right to cross borders or not, highlights the inequality of individuals, their state of dependence.

The individual is therefore at the same time an irreducible singularity and a direct expression of the historical collective in which he is inserted. Depending on the perspective or the moment, we will insist on his autonomy, his particularity or on the fact that he merges with the carrier group. In this, there are no radical differences between the description, for example, of the animal world which evokes the individual and the species as two points of reference in the continuity of the living, and the description of the human world. The relationship of the individual to the species recalls the relationship of the individual to society. When the social individual is stripped of his individuality, he can sometimes become a source of danger. It is therefore often by the term individual that we characterise the perpetrator of a crime or an illegal act, referred to in a simple status as an undifferentiated member of a mass. Between autonomy and determination by the groups into which he fits, the individual could be defined as an asymptotic curve, never completely free and never completely submitted.

己

Jǐ

Individual

Final remarks

SUN Xiangchen, Michel Espagne

Ji and “Individual” have different meanings and different backgrounds and it is impossible to reduce a philosophy observing a period starting when man became a part of the world until the history of the opposition between subjectivity and the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, both the concepts of Ji or “Self” and “individual” are deeply rooted in traditions of the “Axial age”. Traces of the self may be discovered as well in the fragments of Heraclitus as in Confucius’ *Analects*.

Philosophising is a process of abstract thought, but the concepts are still influenced by cultural traditions in their evolution. For example, the Western concept of the individual is deeply affected by Christianity, especially the Lutheran concept of the “inner man”. The inner man’s faith in God will support the “individual” to be independent from the collective power. The doctrine of heart in Chinese history also gives Ji greater moral self-confidence. But Christianity is a belief for everyone, and the Song-Ming Dynasty tradition of “The doctrine of heart” is a kind of cultivation of the superior man.

Of course, there are still many similarities between “individual” and Ji. “Individual” and Ji are key concepts for any attempt to define a morality. “To deny oneself for public” as a kind of moral principle may be easily translated in the main western principles of morality.

In both traditions, the difficult connection of the individual or the Self and the collective approach of society is a permanent concern and a permanent challenge. No society can be founded without going beyond the borders of individuality or Self.

The Chinese notion of cultivating oneself is a key concept of Confucianism but may be also recognised in German idealism (*Bildung*). But the individual in a Western context has to dominate the natural world. It is clearly different from the one-world philosophy. In Kantian and in Fichtean philosophy the individual is even supposed to create the world.

The translation of Mill’s *On Liberty* by Yan Fu is an interesting attempt to adapt liberty to Chinese philosophical expectations. It demonstrates perhaps the possibility of an interweaving of two traditions. If classical Chinese key concepts may be used in translation of Western philosophy, they are at the same time able to develop into global tools of understanding.

Yan Fu’s translation gave the Chinese an initial understanding of the idea of the individual and individual rights in the modern world. After that, in modern Chinese language, the word *Geti* (个体) was created to translate “individual”, to show the difference from classical Chinese, and this concept is integrated into more Western contexts. Yan Fu’s translation and his explanation are also the beginning of the Chinese Enlightenment.

Friedrich Wolff, as a follower of Leibniz, published in 1726 a small book on Confucianism and Chinese philosophy, which is often considered a contribution to the German Enlightenment. The education of the individual is presented as a path towards virtue and morality. Wolff fostered an unexpected importation of Chinese thinking at the beginning of German philosophy.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Liberty

自由

Zì Yóu

BAI Gang
Erik Guignard

自由 Zì Yóu

Chinese perspective

BAI Gang

The concept of freedom in modern western languages (“free” in English, *libéral* in French, “frei” in German) originates from the ancient Greek *ἐλεύθερος* and Latin *liber*, which denote a state of not being enslaved or restrained (the opposite concept is *δούλος* in ancient Greek, *servus* in Latin, “slave”). Its original meaning is “belonging to the people, belonging to the tribe” (see the Old High German word *liut*, plural *liuti*, the Old English word *lēod*, plural *lēode* “people”, the Old Church Slavonic word *ljudi*, Russian *ljudi* (plural) “men, people”, the Lithuanian word *liáudis* “lower people”, which can be further traced back to the Proto-Indo-European *leudh-* “grow up, come out”), distinguishing the subject from slaves and foreign people. Thus, the concept of freedom in the western context since ancient Greek times always stands in opposition to the state of enslavement and is pointed to liberation from slavery. Its core sense is highly political.

The word *Ziyou* (自由) in modern Chinese stems from the translation of the concept of freedom in western languages. In a traditional Chinese context, such a concept has no exact correspondence, and its connotation is somewhat closer to *Xiaoyao* (逍遥). The word *Xiaoyao* appears in the name of *Xiaoyaoyou* (逍遥游), the first piece of *Zhuangzi* (庄子), and has no exact correspondence in western languages, either. Therefore, there are quite different translations of *Xiaoyaoyou* in various English versions of *Zhuangzi*, such as “Engagement in untroubled easy” (James Legge), “Free and easy wandering” (Burton Watson), “Going rambling without a destination” (A. C. Graham), “Happy Excursion” (Feng Youlan). Among them the translation of “free and easy” by Watson attempts to interpret the word *Xiaoyao* through the concept of freedom. Although freedom and *Xiaoyao* share the characteristic of “not being confined by external objects”, there are essential differences between them.

Freedom is the opposite of the state of being enslaved, oppressed, and restricted, a diametrically opposed state of such beings. In this

sense, it takes the existence of enslavement, oppression, and restriction as its premise, and sets their subversion as the ideal state. Therefore, the concept of freedom not only points to a special state of being, but also contains the will to ask the outside world to accept, accommodate and conform to such a state of being. This type of requirement relating to external acceptance, accommodation, and conformation of self will, present inevitably a logic of antagonism; that is, when the outside world does not meet this will, there will be contradictions, conflict and even fierce confrontation.

The essence of *Xiaoyao* is independence (无所待), that is, beyond all opposites, while every being in opposition depends on its opponent. In *Xiaoyaoyou*, it is said that *Lieh-tzu* (列子) could ride upon the wind, but he still had to depend upon something. Only those who ignore and transcend the distinction between things can be really independent and reach the state of *Xiaoyao*. So, the perfect man has no self; the spiritual man has no achievement; the true sage has no name. Due to independence, there is neither a specific ideal state to be set, nor a desire to realise this ideal. No matter what the state of the external environment or the external object is, those who achieve *Xiaoyao* can adjust their own physical-mental mode, action mode and even existence mode to follow the evolution of the outside world. They are simultaneously not limited by the outside world’s evolution and can keep their independence regardless of time, place, or situation. Therefore, *Xiaoyao* does not depend on any external conditions but is the highest level of mind cultivation (in other words, the very ability of awareness and adjustment of body and mind). In this sense, *Xiaoyao*, which keeps harmony with all possible evolutions of the outside world, is fundamentally different from freedom, which is always with a strong will to transform the world (active freedom) or not to be influenced by the outside world (passive freedom).

Since modern times, the concept of “freedom” has been widely spread and adopted in China. During the historical process of China being forced into the global capitalist system as a result of foreign invasions, the concept of “freedom”, standing in contrast to “enslavement-oppression” and containing the political pursuit of being independent through the transformation of the world, while also combined deeply with the common will to eliminate the humiliation and oppression imposed by foreign powers, has inspired a strong resonance among Chinese people. In modern revolutionary narratives, freedom and independence often occur together, which constitute the basis of national

identity and imagination centring on ending both internal and external oppressions through revolution and achieving independence in the world. Individual freedom is considered to be fundamentally consistent with national freedom. Both individuals and nations should fight for the realisation of freedom. Mao Zedong's verse "All creatures strive for freedom under frosty skies" (Qinyuanchun · Changsha) is a case in point, reflecting this Zeitgeist.

Since the end of the 1970s, the once-consistent relationship between individual freedom and national freedom has been questioned and denied by the narrative of neo-liberalism. According to the logic of neo-liberalism, the state is not the embodiment of freedom, but an obstacle to the realisation of freedom, or a so-called "necessary evil". Real freedom exists in a "free market economy", presented as unlimited self-reproduction of capital free from all constraints. In response to the neo-liberalist view that "free market" is the core of freedom, Isaiah Berlin's concept of "negative freedom", that is, freedom to keep oneself free from outside interference, has become a prominent topic in China's academic circles. Both "free market" and "negative freedom" contain the idea of limiting the government's power to interfere in personal and social economic affairs as much as possible. This view of freedom led by neo-liberalism essentially reflects the demand of capital, especially financial capital, for unrestricted free allocation and free flow. It is a typical ideology reflecting the logic of capital in the era of globalisation.

Just like the concepts of "freedom" and Xiaoyao share similar characteristics at first glance, neo-liberalism in China often uses Taoist thought as kindred spirit by aligning itself with traditional Chinese intellectual thought. For example, the teaching sentences in Chapter 57 of Tao Te Ching (道德经) state that: "I change nothing, and the people transform themselves; I stay still, and the people adjust themselves; I do nothing, and the people enrich themselves; I want nothing, and the people simplify themselves", are interpreted as a precursor of Hayek's "spontaneous order", and the Taoist concept of Wuwei (无为), which literally means "nothing to do", is interpreted as laissez-faire in the sense of economic liberalism.

Just as "freedom" and Xiaoyao are different in essence, there is a fundamental difference between liberalist laissez-faire and Taoist Wuwei.

The premise of laissez-faire is the validity of capital logic, which presupposes that the free flow of capital will automatically lead to

optimisation of resource allocation and improvement of social welfare, thus pointing to unlimited self-reproduction of capital and unlimited expansion of human desire.

The essence of Wuwei, contrary to the continuous growth of human knowledge and desire (so-called "devoting himself to learning by daily increment"), lies in "devoting himself to the Tao by daily loss", that is, to cast off the obsession with all external conditions, and through the process of "loss upon loss", to reach the state of "nothing to do" (Wuwei). Wuwei doesn't mean unable to do, as lifeless as a dead tree or rock, neither does it mean rigidly adhering to all external conditions, or all the physical-mental models, action models and existence models dealing with external conditions. Therefore, Wuwei is everywhere accessible and free from all rigid patterns, so as to realise the state of "nothing to do, meanwhile nothing not done" (Chapter 48 of Tao Te Ching).

From the Taoist point of view, the unlimited self-reproduction of capital, which adheres rigidly to external conditions, is just the opposite of Wuwei. Similarly, unlimited expansion of human desire just blocks access to the realisation of the essential connections between body-mind and all beings. Just as Zhuangzi once said: "Deep in their passions and desires, shallow in the spring of nature". It is evident from the above that neither Xiaoyao should be understood as freedom, nor Wuwei as laissez-faire.

Liberty

European perspective

Erik Guignard

The concept of liberty or freedom, seemingly simple, is, in fact, very complex due to the size of its field and its variability according to eras, individuals, and civilisations. It is, after centuries of philosophical contributions and ideas, inherently polysemic which makes translations tricky, ambiguous, and often misleading.

The concept applies to individuals, for example, to the inner freedom of somebody independent from external factors, as a mark of serenity and wisdom, (similar to the Chinese concept of *xiaoyao*, see professor Gang Bai) or a more selfish notion (*Ziyou* 自由, see Fan Yu translations since the 1900s): “I do, I say, what I want,” or even “I am free to live, or even to die, as I please.” It can also be applied to members of a community that enacts its own rules and conventions, or to subjects or citizens of a state when devising rights or spaces of freedom within a legal or customary framework.

Except in its spiritual conception of withdrawal from the human world, as illustrated by Robinson Crusoe, no freedom may actually be conceived without relationships, with a large variety of limits or constraints. It might therefore be useful to recall the emergence of the concept and to propose several glances that will allow to illuminate its contours, as do the crossings of lines in maritime navigation.

Freedom, an age-old concept

A first look, that of E. Benveniste,¹ proposes an analysis from its variations within the Indo-European languages, which allows to glance into the prehistory of the Indo-European region of the Indus and the Urals, from Gibraltar to the Hebrides. While these languages do not have a

1. Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Les éditions de Minuit, 1969.

common designation for the concept of “freedom,” the “free / slave” opposition is common to all Indo-European peoples.

In Ancient Greece, the free man, *eleutheros*, defined himself in opposition to the *doûlos*, or slave man. Ancient Rome distinguished between the *liberi* and the *serui*, India between the *arya* and the *dasa* (slaves and foreigners).

On the other hand, Benveniste emphasises the proximity, which varies according to language, between the verbs “to increase, grow” and a community “people, personae” and “liberty” with the root *Leudh-* (grow) and the German *Leute*, people.

- In Latin, liberty refers to *liber*, “child” and thus to intergenerational family relations giving protection against obedience.
- In French, according to Heinz Wismann, “the etymological meaning of liberty is related to the relationship of the *pater familias* to his sons: one is free insofar as the father protects him.” In the background, the guiding idea is of a reciprocal counterpart of authority, so that freedom is neither exclusive, nor opposed to respect for patriarchal authority.
- In Germanic, the kinship between *frei*, being free, and *Freund* (friend) evokes a freedom linked to the belonging to a community, existing since the sacrifices, according to Roman sources, to *Liber*, the God of fertility alongside his consort.² Heinz Wismann added that “the German term *Freiheit* comes from the bond of friendship established between brothers who, in the event of war, chained themselves together and thus rushed against the Roman legions: freedom or death!” – as the present republican motto of Greece reminds us. This perspective is neither unusual nor new.
- Confucius, when the Duke of She declares “the righteousness of his clan is such that, if a father steals a sheep, his son will testify against him,” responds: “In my clan, righteousness is different, the father conceals his son, and the son conceals his father: this is where righteousness resides.”³

Witness to a hunting community, Levi-Strauss recounts: “Among the Nambikwara, the acceptance of the chief’s authority is closely linked to

2. *Liber*, an ancient Italic rustic god, presided, with his *paredra*, or consort, the goddess *Libera*, over the release of the male and female components of the new generation. The exact origin of his name is uncertain but could be translated into abundance or fertility. *Liber* was later assimilated to the god *Bacchus* or *Dionysus*. mythologica.fr/rome/liber.htm

3. Translation proposed by Jérôme Blutel.

the realistic, rational choice of substituting individual security against collective security”; the chief’s authority is effective as long it is accepted by all and inscribed in a relationship of reciprocity.

To sum up, in these contexts, a community of free people is not a mere collection of isolated individuals – this would mean a gathering of slaves or foreigners –⁴ and freedom should not be understood in the sense of a universal human right to unconstrained action, prevailing over social rights or duties. Instead it means, first of all, the capacity to develop harmoniously one’s possibilities within a more or less extended group (family or village), within a lineage, inclusive of the respect for legitimate authority and fraternity between free men.

Freedom, a medieval concept

In the Middle Ages, the concept of freedom was inscribed in societies that built States under the guise of Kingdoms or Empires, which fought to assert their pre-eminence and consolidate their territories, while religious freedom became, with the emergence of Protestantism, a major source of protest⁵ and extremely violent conflict. Attempts at peace proliferated, of which here are two examples.

In the Germanic Holy Roman Empire, a tradition developed around international treaties (Augsburg Compromise in 1555, treaty of Westphalia in 1648, ...) to establish a freedom of religion in return for the “right of princes” to impose their religion on their subjects and the “right of subjects”, *jus emigrandi*, to emigrate abroad among co-religionists. This was articulated around the principle *cujus regio, ejus religio*, a compromise between the affirmation of state unity and that of religious freedom.

In France, the Edict of Nantes was the birth, in 1598, of the freedom of conscience; it established a coexistence between the two religions, Catholic and Protestant, under the authority of the King. This was an original but brief attempt as in 1625, the Cardinal de Richelieu wrote that “as long as the Huguenot party remains, the king will not be absolute.” The Edict was therefore revoked in 1685, including the right of emigration

4. In Athens, only free persons could be “citizens”; only men whose two parents were “citizens” could be free, which Aristotle could not claim.

5. Prof. Pena Ruiz recalls in particular the *librorum prohibitorum*, which is the list of prohibited books promulgated by the Council of Trent in 1564 and “put on the index”. Their authors include Dante, Abélard, Descartes, Calvin, Diderot, Bayle, Bacon, Érasme, Galilée, La Fontaine, Lamartine, Kant, Montaigne, Malebranche, Montesquieu, Pascal, Spinoza, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, and, of course, Voltaire.

that had been sealed by international treaties. Religion must then remain a strictly private matter, *devotio privata*, all assemblies being forbidden.

Freedom, a fundamental right?

The Age of Enlightenment coincided with the loss of confidence of the people in the ability of their governments and state religions to ensure security, well-being, and equity. New dimensions of individual “freedom” gradually appeared, not without episodes of extreme violence and fratricidal conflicts. Here is an example, with the French sequence:

- In 1787, the King recognised the civil status of Protestants.
- In 1789, the Republic voted the “Human and Citizen Rights,” a declaration of the free determination of peoples and individuals who are born “free” and “equal in rights”. Freedom was asserted as a personal right alongside property, security, and resistance to oppression: “No one should be troubled for their opinions, even religious ones, as long as their demonstrations do not disturb the public order...” (Article X) “...except to answer for the abuse of this freedom in cases determined by the law” (Article XI)
- In 1791, the Constituent Assembly recognised freedom of worship: “The Congress will not pass any law giving preference to a religion or prohibiting free worship, restricting freedom of expression, freedom of the press or the right of citizens to assemble peacefully.”
- In 1802, during the Concordat, there was no longer a state religion, even if the Catholic religion remained, as the overwhelming majority, under the authority of the Pope. Church life was regulated but without the recognition of a central authority (synod) for Protestants.
- In 1881, printing and bookstores are free: any periodical can be published, without prior authorisation and without a deposit of a bond (only on pre-declaration).
- In 1905, *laïcité* (the neutrality, separation, and secularism of the public sphere) appears, and is the legal instrument to ensure the freedom to believe or not to believe, to practice and change religions: “render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar... and to God what belongs to God.”⁶

6. This was already proposed by Pope Gelasius I in the 3rd century. Nowadays, out of 195 states, only 41 still refer to a state religion (23 of which are Christian, 28 Muslim).

After World War II, more civil and political rights and freedoms are internationally recognised as fundamental.

This new, highly political, meaning of “freedom”, after being stated in England, spread in France and the United States;⁷ it is behind the meaning of the French motto, “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” and that of the Statue of Liberty gifted for the 100th celebration of the United States’ independence as a symbol of “Liberty enlightening the world” a celebration of the freedom of all nations.

Neoliberalism, the latest economic theory in favour of free trade, proposed in the 1970s the disappearance of state regulations, charged with impeding on the expansion of trade and the happiness of nations.

What, then, about a translation into Chinese of the concept of “freedom,” in a context that identifies the individual as the main political subject?

Jérôme Blutel quotes professor Zhao Tingyang: “Since the May 4 Movement of 1919, critics have regarded Chinese culture as opposed to the freedom and rights of the individual. (...) The reality is that because it does not take the individual as the political unit, the problem of individual freedom does not arise.” Hence, there is a risk of misunderstanding any attempt of translation.

*

Is the present concept of “freedom” at the dawn of a new perspective? Perhaps, but with the avoidance of two pitfalls: the rise in number of court cases and the growing power of minorities.

- The trade-off between the selfishness of individuals (consumers), growing through the prevalence of fundamental freedoms over collective responsibilities, and the need to ensure a peaceful cohabitation of communities with antagonistic values, leads to judicial inflation and hyperactivity, which empower the interpretative power of (unelected) judges and courts at the expense of legislators.
- The power of the majority is the new power to be readjusted for the benefit of the power of minorities (victims’ associations, trade unions, LGBTQIA+ lobbies and media) with the same effect of overburdening the courts.

7. It is now inscribed in the Constitutions of 22 countries (generally in English or Spanish, two in Latin, one in Swahili, two in Arabic).

Professor Pena Ruiz offers a balanced vision between individual freedoms and collective rights: “I believe that freedom without conditions is absurd. I even reject the idea that freedom should be without norms.”

Without questioning the importance of individual fundamental freedoms, democracies will have to not only protect, but also set limits on individual freedom, at least “those of the common welfare.”

*

May I conclude with Stephan Zweig, as quoted by professor Michel Terestchenko: “I begin to realise that real sympathy has nothing in common with an electric current that you can turn on and off at will, and that caring about the fate of others takes away some of your freedom.”

自由 Zì Yóu Liberty

Final remarks

BAI Gang, Erik Guignard

The multi-dimensional concept of “freedom” has a rich history and ancient roots.

First and foremost, since Antiquity, it has been related to the collective freedom of a community, whether village, ethnic or national. It has an outright negative value towards slavery in all its forms and, more recently, towards forced labour and colonialism.

The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 specified an international principle according to which each country would have exclusive sovereignty over its territory. At the same time, in order to avoid internal conflicts and despite the opinion of Pope Gelasius, who already in the 3rd century wanted a strict separation of church and state, the principle of *cujus regio, ejus religio*, to each country its own religion, was established. With the emergence of Protestantism, the concept of “freedom” was again enriched, not without violent conflict, with a value that would henceforth be essential, that of individual freedom of conscience and religion and, therefore, of recognition of a national community that could be diverse in its faith and respected in its different components. In the 18th century, with the Enlightenment, freedom of opinion, enterprise and trade were added. Thus, article 11 of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 states: “The free communication of thought and opinion is one of the most precious rights of Man: every Citizen may therefore speak, write, and print freely, except for the abuse of this freedom in the cases determined by the Law.” The freedom of enterprise stems from article 4, which stipulates that “freedom consists in being able to do everything that does not harm others.”

Since the end of the Second World War, these freedoms have remained at the heart of the concept of “freedom”, even as new proposals have emerged: in the economic field with the development of Anglo-Saxon neo-liberal doctrines aimed at constraining state intervention, with *laissez-faire* being proposed as the best way of ensuring an “optimal”

distribution of the wealth desired by individual-consumers, which is contested by the proponents of illiberalism who, on the contrary, wish to strengthen the authority of nation-states and elected majorities; in the social field, with the rise of demands from minorities, and, last, in the legal field, with the inflation of Human Rights, complaints and courts.

Whatever the case, two fundamental rights remain at the heart of the concept of “freedom”: that of freedom guaranteed collectively by communities of citizens, and that of individual freedoms guaranteed, eventually legally, in its fundamental components, those of freedom of expression and belief.

In the ancient traditions of China and India, there are some concepts similar to “freedom” in the Western sense, but with subtle differences, such as *Xiaoyao* in Chinese and *īśvara* in Sanskrit which are more related to the individual mind and the realm of spiritual cultivation.

Since ancient Greek times, the concept of “freedom” has always been associated with a special education, which enables the virtue and mental state matching with freedom. This education, or the ideals of Greek Culture, was called *paideia* by the Greeks. In our era, the thinking and discussion of the concept of “freedom” still need the corresponding *paideia*, which should no longer be just a paradigm derived from any single tradition, but rooted in the depths of various civilisations.

Beauty 美
Body 身
Contract 约
Death 死
Debt, financial 债
Debt, human 人情
Dialectics 阴阳
Duty 义
Empire 天下
Equality 平等
Eternity 永恒
Face 面子
Family 家
Friendship 友谊
Gift 礼物
Happiness 福
Harmony 和
Heart 心
Heritage 遗产
History 历史
Humanism 仁
Image 象
Individual 己
Liberty 自由
Monotheism 神论
Nation 国
Private property 私产
Progress 进步
Relation 关系
Ritual 礼
Rule of law 法治
Society 社会
Time 时间
Writing 书写

Mono- theism

神论

Yī Shén Lùn

WU Fei

Jan Assmann

神论

Yī Shén Lùn

Chinese perspective

WU Fei

Monotheism, the religious system that worships only one God, usually refers to Judaism, Christianity, and Islamism. Whether these religions are monotheistic in the strict sense, however, is still debatable. Since the Christian God is trinitarian, it is sometimes seen not as monotheistic literally, especially by Islamism. In addition, as Catholics worship the Virgin Mary and other saints, it is also questionable whether Catholicism is really monotheistic.¹ Though often criticising Christianity as polytheistic, Islamism is neither spared from such a critique, since there is also saints worship in it.

What makes monotheism distinctive, however, is not only the number of objects it worships, but also the way it understands the world, life, and ultimate value, as well as its deep influence on modern civilisations. Seen from the world history of religions, polytheism is quite natural to primitive cultures, and hence often developed independently in different cultures, as in ancient Greece, North Europe, and American Indian tribes. Monotheism and dualism, however, are quite special. Especially when combined with profound philosophical thinking, these two types of religion could be quite influential with the development of civilisations. In religious history, monotheism and dualism frequently interact with each other and are even intrinsic to each other.

As the origin and archetype of monotheism, there is still some polytheistic and dualistic elements in ancient Judaism. The polytheistic element might be remains from ancient Near East culture, and we would not denounce its monotheistic quality as far as one God is the main object of worship. The dualistic element, however, is quite another issue. Since a major feature of monotheism is that the only God is regarded as the creator of the world, if there is a powerful enemy of God in the world, there would be serious problems, even though this enemy would finally

1. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1956, p138.

be subdued by God. The serpent in Eden, the pagan gods, and even Satan in *The Book of Job*, all need some explanation. The arbitrary and irascible style of God in the Jewish Bible, too, seems to be incompatible with the idea of an all-good Creator.

Both dualism and monotheism have their philosophical origins in ancient Greece. In *The Republic*, Plato argues that God is the cause of good things, and bad things have their cause in something else.² The contrast between human being's soul and body in Plato's philosophy is well-known and seen in many of his dialogues. In *The Timaeus*, the good Maker of the cosmos creates it according to the eternal idea, and hence makes it orderly and beautiful.³ Not everything in the world, however, is created by the Maker, and there is something necessary that even the Maker could not dispel, but could only discipline as best He could. This picture of creation already contains the primal form of not only dualism, but also *creatio ex nihilo*, a core proposition of philosophical monotheism.

Although Aristotle criticises *The Timaeus* for its apparent argument of creation from nothing, his own theology has more features of philosophical monotheism. Aristotle develops a theory of prime mover in both his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. This prime mover, unmoved himself, is the cause of every other moving thing. He is unaffected and unalterable, and his activity is eternal, best, and most pleasant. He always contemplates on himself. There are some debates about whether there is only one prime mover or more. If more than one, a prime mover is the cause of a series of moved things. If one, it is the only God that causes everything in the world. When the Aristotelian philosophy is adopted by Christianity, the prime mover is understood as the only God that creates or causes everything in the world.

The first monotheistic philosophy in a proper sense is Neoplatonism, as exemplified in *The Enneads* of Plotinus, which integrates Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies into a systematical theory. According to this theory, there are three divine principles: the One, the Intellectual-Principle, and the Soul. From the Soul comes individual souls, and then different kinds of beings all the way downward, until matter is generated. At the time of Plotinus, Gnosticism was already very active. Plotinus is vehemently against the Gnostic idea that the created cosmos is evil. This does not mean, however, that Plotinus entirely renounces the evil of body or matter. On the contrary, he regards evil as originating

2. Plato, *The Republic*, 379b1-c7.

3. Plato, *Timaeus*, 29e1-31a1.

from matter, what he denies is that souls could be evil only because united with bodies. Although Plotinus insists that everything is created by the One, and matter is nothing other than this world, he does not entirely dispel a potential dualism in the created cosmos. He suggests that the mistake of the Gnostics might be a misreading of Plato's complaint that the body, as the inferior, might be a hindrance to the soul. This indicates that Plotinus himself is aware that Plato is the philosophical origin of dualism. While he himself tries to build a monotheistic theory, he could not be saved from a hidden trend toward dualism due to the same reason.

In the making of Christianity, Neoplatonic philosophy played a very essential role. Augustine, was largely influenced by Neoplatonism, as dualistic Manichaeism used to be his own religion and then became his major target of critique after his conversion, tried to make Christianity as monotheistic as he possibly could. Different from the Neoplatonists, Augustine does not see matter or body as evil by themselves. Insisting on the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, Augustine emphasises that everything, both spiritual and corporal, is created by the all-good God, and hence could not be bad. While matter is imperfect being and close to nonbeing, it is not nothingness after all, and hence Augustine could not see it as evil as Plotinus does. According to Augustine, evil cannot be in any sense. It is the privation of being and goodness. In the case of intellectual beings like angels and human beings, evil is a bad use of free will. Hence evil is never a problem with the body, but a mistake in the soul. Only psychic beings could become evil. The fallen angels become evil because they are proud. Following their suit, the first human beings fall because they do not obey God's commandment. God in Augustine is an all-good creator and a just judge, and there could not be any being outside of God's creation and determination. There are conflicts between good and evil, as embodied by the wars between the city of God and the city of earth, but God is not one side in such conflicts, since they happen between angels and devils. Both of them are creatures of God, and their nature is good. The devils become bad due to their own free will. Powerful as Satan is, he is not a counterpart to God. Augustine's monotheism is the strictest philosophical monotheism ever seen.

Even such a monotheism, however, could not be entirely disconnected from dualism. Augustine seems to have wisely covered the dualism between good and evil under all-good God, but such a cover is not perfect either. First of all, although Augustine insists on the goodness of corporal beings, he could not always be consistent with himself. Quite

frequently, he still renders the body as bad and responsible for evil things. The very division between the two cities betrays quite a dualistic sense. Although the split of the two cities begins with the division of the two groups of angels, God is still the head of the city of God. The very picture of world history has a profound dualistic tone. Different from Plotinus, the Augustinian philosophy of history is a kind of lineal history based on Christian teachings, which has a beginning and an end. It is true that Augustine quite successfully makes God the only creator of everything. With the issue of the last days, however, Augustine could not make all-good God the only being when history ends. He insists that hell could not disappear, and the devil and bad people would suffer eternal death there. He could not accept Origen's *apokatastasis* or universal salvation, which argues that all human beings, whether good or bad, would finally be saved and happily stay in heaven. If bad people will be finally saved, God might not be a just judge; but if history does not end in good as it begins, evil angels and people would remain evil eternally. Is not such an end a dualistic one?

As Augustine is the founder of Christian philosophy in its true sense, this profound tension between monotheism and dualism is intrinsic in Christianity throughout its history. Many important theoretical debates originate from this tension, like that between divine determination and free will, between theodicy and predestination, and so on. This brings us deeper into the philosophical nature of monotheism and its relationship with dualism.

Philosophically, monotheism features the all-good God and an optimistic cosmos. As both the creator and determiner of everything, God must be good. Since God is good, he also must be a good generator and a just judge. But a good judge must judge between good and bad. If he makes the judgement indifferent and the evil unpunished, the cosmos again will become meaningless and hopeless. Regarding the origin of evil and its end, dualism is made to be more powerful. On the one hand, there is always some dualistic remains in monotheistic systems; on the other hand, dualism also usually yields to a higher place of all-good God. While both religion and philosophy are supposed to connect morality with cosmology, such a dilemma is quite understandable. The mutual dependence of monotheism and dualism is already apparent in Plato's philosophy. Entirely pure monotheism or dualism never exist in history.

According to Eric Voegelin, modernism is a kind of revival of Gnosticism. Although quite a few modern intellectuals claim themselves to be

monotheists, under the so-called monotheistic cover, we can often find deep dualistic elements. Protestants especially show some dualistic features, although the dualism is inherent in God himself. The theoretical system that is closest to monotheism might be Leibniz' theodicy. Similar to Neoplatonists, Leibniz tries his best to make God the only creator of everything as well as an all-good judge. With such a moralistic and optimistic world view, Leibniz took great efforts to unite Christianity again. Modern people were unsatisfied with such a theory not because of its internal flaws, but because it offers more order than cartridge. They need more cartridge to destroy the mundane order. Dualism could give them more reasons to revolutionise. That is why strict monotheism is not so popular in the modern world.

Monotheism

European perspective

Jan Assmann

The term "monotheism" first appeared in 1663 in Lord Herbert of Cherbury's book *De religione gentilium* (*On the Religion of the Heathens*). It refers to the concept of a primitive religion that was common to all humankind and worshipped nature as the only deity. According to Lord Herbert, the opposite, "polytheism", the worship of many different gods, developed only later among the peoples until, at a third stage, a new monotheistic religion was introduced in Israel, that was not based on nature but on revelation.

In the 20th century, the concept of "monotheism" developed in two different directions. On the one hand, it was understood as the exclusive specificity of the "Abrahamic religions", i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, a distinction was made between an "exclusive" and an "inclusive" monotheism. One is based on the motto "No other gods!", the other on the motto "All gods are one." Forms of "inclusive monotheism" can be found all over the world, eg. in the Egyptian, Neo-Babylonian, Hindu and Hellenistic (Stoic) religions. Only the "Abrahamic" religions know exclusive monotheism. In both traditions, God is praised as the "One and Only" - because other gods are forbidden, because there are no other gods, or because all gods merge into the One. Therefore, the concept of monotheism, which is based on the opposition of unity and multiplicity, is inadequate.

The decisive factor for exclusive monotheism is the connection between monotheism and covenant. This connection seems to exist only in the Hebrew Bible and the religions dependent on it. It appears there in two founding narratives. One refers to Abraham and the covenant between God and man, the other to Moses and the covenant between God and the people. Both are torn out of their accustomed living conditions, Abraham from Mesopotamia, Moses and the children of Israel from Egypt, and called into the covenant.

The central concept of this new religion is “faithfulness” or “faith”, *emunah* in Hebrew, *pistis* in Greek, *fides* in Latin: faithfulness to the covenant and to the One with whom it was made, faith in the promise associated with this covenant: the “Promised Land”, the “Paradise”, and “Redemption”. The covenant between God and humanity founds the new religion of faith and the new history that God and the people of faith have in common, the “history of salvation” that runs towards the goal of redemption and in which all deeds have consequences. Monotheism in the Jewish, Christian or Islamic contexts thus means more than the conviction that there is only one and not many gods. It means that this One God has revealed Himself to us in order to make a covenant with us that demands from us faithfulness and trust.

The concept of faithfulness includes the existence of other gods with whom man or the people could be unfaithful to God. So, this is not a strict monotheism that denies the existence of other gods. However, this is also found in the Bible, namely where it is not about God as the liberator from Egyptian bondage, but about the creator of heaven and earth, eg. in the book of Genesis and chapters 40ff of the book of Isaiah. Here it is not faith and faithfulness that matter but insight, knowledge, and wisdom. In the biblical monotheism, both directions combine faithfulness to the One who saved us and shows the way to salvation, and knowledge of the One who created heaven and earth and holds everything in his hands.

The covenant religion creates a counter-world in which God is king in opposition to the normal world in which the princes of this world rule. Christianity has enormously sharpened this difference between the “kingdom of God” and the “world” (*civitas divina* vs. *civitas terrena* in Augustine). Between the invisible, extra-worldly God, who in an act of revelation establishes in this world his covenant with a chosen group, and this world in which this group lives and which is familiar to them, an abyss opens up which can only be bridged by faith. Therefore, the new religion based on covenant and revelation combines with a system of rules that govern life in the new world of the covenant.

This form of monotheism draws a line between before and after. People have lived before in a world from which they must now move out in order to enter the new world of God’s covenant. Therefore, this religion is always “secondary” in the sense that it presupposes an older religion, which it must persecute and eradicate. The new takes the place of the old.

From the very beginning, the idea of revelation relates to the medium of Scripture in order to record forever God’s revealed commandments

and rules of life. In the course of time, the most sacred texts are gathered into a canon and set apart as inviolable from the rest of Scripture. In a changing world, however, commentary is needed in order to ensure the timeless validity of the canonical texts. Thus, commentary works such as Mishnah and Talmud in Judaism, the works of the Church Fathers in Christianity and the Hadith in Islam come into being. Simultaneously with the canonisation of tradition, an orthodoxy develops in the monotheistic religions that excludes deviating interpretations and teachings as heresy. This led to persecutions of heretics, especially in Christianity and Islam. Within these religions, which are based on Scripture and revelation, different directions and sects emerge, which at times, like Catholicism and Protestantism in Christianity or Shia and Sunna in Islam, can lead to serious, violent conflicts.

At the same time, the encounter with Greek, especially (Neo)Platonic, philosophy resulted in a proximity of monotheism and metaphysics. This proximity blurred the boundary to inclusive monotheism, the distinction between the One Creator of heaven and earth and the One from whom everything arose, the One who is everything, who does not confront the world as a creator from outside, as subject and object, but incorporates it as an origin within himself. Examples of this closeness are, for example, Lactanz, who relates the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus to the God of Christian monotheism, Nikolaus von Kues, who more than 1000 years later reinforces and extends the same lines, and Spinoza, who systematically dissolves the boundary between God and the world and thus between monotheism and pantheism. This also includes the doctrine of *prisca theologia*, widespread in the 15th and 16th centuries, according to which the true religion was already represented by Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus, who lived long before Moses.

The three “Abrahamic” religions have rarely coexisted peacefully despite the commonality of their origin. Christianity is not recognised as pure monotheism by the other religions because of its doctrine of the Sonship of Jesus Christ and its renunciation of the prohibition of images. Islam criticises Judaism for the overly human emotionality of God in the biblical writings. Christianity criticises Judaism for not recognising the Messiahship of Jesus Christ and Islam for its fundamentalist understanding of the Scriptures. The problem of the three coexisting monotheisms, which all refer to a revelation of their God given only to them, led to the literary and factual institution of religious debates since the late 8th century, at which sometimes a representative of “paganism” was invited

in addition to those of the three monotheistic religions. From this tradition also stem the ring parable known from Lessing's Nathan the Wise, in which the three religions are compared to three rings that nobody can tell apart, and the pearl parable, which compares the true religion to a pearl that someone throws into a house at night and which only proves to be such, i.e., the true religion, at daybreak.

The term "monotheism", thus, refers to religions that, apart from worshiping only one god, distinguish strictly between God and world, creator and creation, and imply the idea of a covenant of God and those who believe in him.

神论 Yī Shén Lùn Monotheism

Final remarks

WU Fei, Jan Assmann

Jan Assmann

Both papers relate to Western monotheism. Therefore, there is much consent. We differ only in our understanding of dualism. Prof. Wu takes dualism – the eternal fight between Good and Evil – as the opposite of monotheism, which is, of course, correct. The Abrahamic religions do not recognise Satan, i.e. Evil, on equal rank with God, but on a clearly subordinate level.

However, there is another kind of dualism that in my view is intrinsic to Abrahamic monotheism, especially in its Christian form. This is the antagonism between the "kingdom of God" and the secular world, which tends to be seen as the sphere of the devil.

In my view, the proper opposite of monotheism is cosmotheism, the worship of the world, the powers experienced as active and dominant in it. This corresponds roughly to Lord Herbert's universal religion of "Nature", for which he coined the term "monotheism". Biblical monotheism, by contrast, consists in the strict separation of God and World. The earliest example of monotheism in the recorded history of mankind, the exclusive cult of the sun that the Egyptian king Akhenaten installed in place of the traditional polytheistic religion, still is a form of cosmotheism, because its god, the sun, is a concrete phenomenon belonging to this world, visible to all mankind and needing no covenant with a chosen people. In the same way, one might also argue that heaven, which is worshipped in China as the highest god, is an immanent, inner worldly power lacking the properties of abscondity and transcendence that are specific of the God of Western monotheism. On the other hand, parallels have been recognised in the West for over 200 years between the "Tao" of Laotse and the "One" (tò hén) in the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition. But there, however, the ideas of covenant and faith are missing.

WU Fei

According to Prof. Assmann, “monotheism”, the most influential term in religious studies, was not invented until 1663. That means that what we see as monotheistic religions do not see themselves as monotheistic. That does not mean, however, that monotheism was invented by the modern, but it explains the phenomenon that the so-called monotheistic religions sometimes do not seem to be so monotheistic. There is inclusive monotheism and exclusive monotheism. Usually, we use the term monotheism to refer to Abrahamic religions. They are special because of the emphasis on covenant and on faithfulness. After being combined with the Greek tradition of metaphysics, monotheism is also often entangled with dualism, and both have contributed a lot to the intellectual ideas of modern time. Before the introduction of Abrahamic religions into China, there was nothing similar to exclusive monotheism in Chinese history. There was, however, some idea about the highest God in heaven, both in theory and in religious practice. The metaphysical and religious significance is quite different from the Abrahamic religions.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
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Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
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Time	时间
Writing	书写

Nation

Guó

HUANG Ping,
LAU Kin-chi
Matthias Middell

国

Guó

Chinese perspective

HUANG Ping, LAU Kin-chi

In modern Chinese, since 1949, Guo (国, 國) signifies more a combination of “nation”, “state”, “country”, “land”, and its people, than any one of these terms individually.

The concept of Guo (originally 或 or 域, later 國) can be traced back to ancient times, as early as the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BCE – 256 BCE). Later, it would come to be called either Guo when the territory was smaller, or Bang (邦) when it was larger; in both cases it means more than just “territory” or “land” as it also includes ways of ruling the land. That is why the character was constructed as a full wall protected by weapons.

During the Zhou Dynasty and the long period afterwards, including the Warring States Period (475 BCE – 221 BCE), which was not only well-known for war after war among Guos (states) but also for the Hundred Schools of Thought, such as Chuang-Tzu after Lao-Tzu and Mencius after Confucius, Guo primarily referred to the state and its people and territory.

For centuries, Chinese Guo encompassed a social unit, where political order and territory security were far more important than ethnic and cultural origins, although Guos were much smaller and united mostly by families and kinship in early times. As a result, most Guos were identified by the names of dominant families rather than places. It showed the significance of who they were over where they were. The social bonds of family and kinship were the real resources for people who either lived in their territories or temporarily left, sometimes for a long time or even for the rest of, and beyond, their lives. This identity had so much to do with one’s Guo that next generations would be seen, and self-identified, as members of their original Guo. This is largely true even today. As a result, Guo is usually linked closely with Jia (家, family), Min (民, People), and also Tu (土, land), becoming one concept as Guojia (国家, referring to nation, state, or country), Guomin (国民, people of the nation), Guotu (国土, national territory). The very reason for this seemingly natural connection

of Guo with family, people, and territory is that, since the early period of Chinese history, Guo has been the place as well as the home for members of families or relatives and neighbours, who belong to a larger territory, either a village, a town, a city, or another Guo, which today is more a nation, a state, a country, and a homeland under one or another way of governing. The larger the population and territory, the more connections between people and Guo.

In modern Chinese, the most frequently used term is Guojia (国家), which is very close to the English nation-state, though literally it means Nation-as-one-family. Within it, all members belong to one great extended family, or in Confucius’ words, “all are brothers within the Sea”. This is a way of connecting members of a family with their nation and even the Sea. That is, members are from Jia (家), then Guo (国), and finally Tianxia (天下).

The logic can usually be seen from another way round: without the Tianxia first, there cannot be the Guojia, and without Guojia, there will be neither Jia nor their members. As for the concept of “Nation” (民族), the term was first translated into Chinese in the late 19th century. One example of the concept of Minzu (民族) appeared in 1899 in a paper by Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873 – 1929), one of the most influential thinkers and political figures in modern Chinese history. Liang’s early understanding of a nation was more about the differences between the West and the East as a whole; he used the term to emphasise the importance of difference and even competition between Europeans and Asians, such as national competition, Eastern nations, and national changes.

The Chinese translation of Nation is actually taken from Japanese, which borrowed and combined two Chinese characters Min (民) and Zu (族) into one, trying to match the meaning of Nation in Western languages. Many such keywords in the late 19th century were Chinese translations via Japan in subjects of Humanities and Social Sciences, and some are still used as the Japanese combination even nowadays. Min in Chinese literally means “people” or “ordinary people”, while Zu means members of a kinship or an ethnicity.

Dr Sun Yatsen, in his Three Principles of the People, wrote that the formation of a nation was driven by lineage, lifestyle, language, beliefs, customs, as well as places, territory, and land.

It was Mao who had more intellectual influences on Contemporary China with such terms as Renmin (人民, the People), Guojia (国家, the Nation), and Zhengquan (政权, the State). Since the 1930s onwards, these

terms were among the keywords used by Mao in his writings: people should/would be nucleated into a new Chinese nation with its own sovereignty and territorial integrity. A China that could finally be a nation as Dr. Sun Yat-Sen dreamed, a China that is “an equal member of the nation-state system in the World”.

The Chinese interpretations of *Guo*, which in many cases mix up the meaning of nation with country, people, state, and government, show both historic and cultural understandings of *Guo* as well as the social and political necessity for organising and mobilising such a huge population with a long history of cultural diversity. The logic of seeing *Guo* as the “great self (大我)” or Grand Unification and prioritising it over the “individual self (小我)” also results from the size and complexity of *Guo*. In reality, a reversed approach works better, especially in the daily life of ordinary people, which later became the origin of Mao’s approach to people and state.

One of the keys to understanding the Chinese *Guo* is a philosophical approach as well as a structural framework of unity with complexity and harmony with diversity (多元一体, 和而不同).

As a modernising country, nation-building and state-building have been under way since the late Qing period; the progress of both is paralleled as the two sides of one coin. This has been especially true since 1949 when the People’s Republic of China was established. On the one hand, it was meant to integrate different ethnic groups into the Chinese nation – a result of influence by the Soviet Union in the 1950s. These ethnic groups were even wrongly named as different nations. On the other hand, it was meant to introduce or improve some modern institutions on a national level, such as education, public health, social welfare as well as diplomacy, defence...

For sociologists, and to a certain extent for economists as well, *Guojia* (国家) can mean both nation and state; for political scientists and those in international relations, it refers more to the state and could even refer to government. Behind a nation as a whole, there are at least three key elements necessary for its existence: a sense of identity, which gives its members a foundation for belonging to the country; a sense of security, which provides its members with the feeling of returning home; and a sense of solidarity, which supports the unity of members whenever there is danger from the outside or a challenge from within.

It can be argued that Chinese *Guo* is not just a term with a long history, but more importantly a term with a complexity that neither the

term “nation” nor the term “state” can appropriately fit as a translation. In many cases, *Guo* designates the people, or people’s country, from individual members to extended families to where they belong, either a territory, a country, or a state, a nation, or even *Tianxia*. In this type of relational network, it is difficult to differentiate them from one another. Rather, the term is to be understood as an everlasting linkage from individuals through families, communities, country, to the whole of society, nation, and *Tianxia*, in which it will be almost impossible to identify which part is prior to others.

Nation

European perspective

Matthias Middell

The very fact that there are differences in the English and French versions of this word indicates already that it is difficult to construct a unified understanding for all of Europe and then contrast this with an equally homogeneous Chinese understanding of a term that has raised so many disputes in the intellectual history of Europe and the world.

With regards to the “nation”, in large parts of Europe the idea has long prevailed that it has long historical roots that go back far before the modern era. The nation had its origins in a common language, which was the expression of dense kinship relations and corresponding demarcation from other groups, and in a common culture and history based on this. This version of the understanding of the nation historically places the origin of nation-building before the process of territorialisation and the formation of modern statehood. Often, it is associated with references to the language of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, when students enrolled and organised themselves in European universities along divisions into nations.

This dramatically changed probably around 1983, when three important books by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawm / Terence Ranger appeared, all arguing along the same lines: for these authors, the nation was an “imagined community” (Anderson) invented only in the second half of the 19th century (Hobsbawm and Ranger) and, consequently, must be seen primarily as a construction rather than a reality preceding community-building (Gellner). In this version, then, the nation came into being relatively insistently, or was just invented, although the reference to “invention” did not at all mean that this process was not effective and considered by many to be a reality. In this version, territorialisation and the process of modern state formation begins well before the invention of the nation, the construct of the nation is a reaction to crises of these processes caused by global connections and competition.

The connection between nation and territorialisation is thus central, but precisely not unambiguous; it is judged quite differently, and this has consequences for the understanding of nation and nation-state. By territorialisation we understand a process of the formation of administrative structures of modern statehood (which is not based solely on kinship relations), the building of infrastructures of transport and communication, and the formation of a clearly drawn border (more and more recognisable as a line on contemporary maps), which takes the place of large transition zones (frontiers) between the settlement areas. This delimitation of a territory by a clearly linear, i.e. unambiguous, demarcation had as a prerequisite the clarification of overlapping legal relationships both in the realm of land ownership and feudal jurisdiction and at the same time drove them forward. Land ownership and the feudal legal authorities that confirmed it became less and less divergent in the course of the 15th to the 18th centuries, but were brought to extensive congruence within the framework of a territory – even if this process was far from complete by the end of the 18th century as Charles Maier (2016) has shown in his summary of the process even for France, one of the most advanced societies in this regard. This protracted, sometimes violent, and very often law-breaking process, however, followed the normative notion of a homogeneous territory, which, according to the research of Stuart Elden (2013), had been formulated since the early 17th century and was becoming more and more widespread: a clearly delimited territory with a well-defined population that organised its internal communication and internal mobility by means of territorialisation and was controlled by an authority. This control was extended and expressed in the increase of the tax burden that the population (or the non-privileged parts of it) paid to the state for the further advancement of territorialisation, the reduction of violence and lawlessness within, and for protection against external enemies. This state is also called territorial or military-fiscal state. In legal terms, it was generally an empire (of greater or lesser size) characterised by dynastic rule legitimised by the divine right and allowing only limited participation by small segments of the population (the privileged).

It was not until the French Revolution that this concept was fundamentally changed, with the sovereignty of the people replacing dynastic legitimacy in 1789. The people, from whom all power was to emanate and who now intervened in the affairs of government, were early called a nation, after the representatives of the third estate in the *États Généraux*

invited the representatives of the privileged estates to a joint meeting as an *Assemblée nationale* and strongly opposed the king.

At the beginning, however, this nation had no clear territorial connotation; rather, the French Republic appointed honorary citizens from (almost) all over the world because they had rendered outstanding services to freedom. In the wars of 1792 – 1815, however, an identification of state and nation increasingly prevailed over the cosmopolitan idea of a single universal nation made up of apostles of liberty.

In most histories, the Revolution of 1789 appears as the founding moment of modern European nation-building, subsequently imitated elsewhere. What dominates in this narrative is a democratic understanding of the nation that brings together citizenship and statehood. The Constitution constitutes the nation; all those who have the right to participate according to its standards belong to the nation. As an alternative to this democratic understanding of the nation, the idea of a cultural nation developed, especially in German-speaking Central Europe, in which the nation is not created by the Constitution, but exists as a community on the basis of blood relationship and ties to the soil long before the unified state is created, as happened with the German Empire in 1871. On this basis, the idea that the nation-state was the only valid unit for social self-organisation took hold around 1900. All other processes of spatialisation were subordinated to this idea and self-observations of societies were organised accordingly. Statistics were collected for nation-states, institutions such as national libraries, theatres, operas, museums, or academies reinforced the impression that the nation was the natural framework of all social action and the nation-state the natural amphora for the nation. This methodological nationalism underlies most of the humanities and social sciences since the emergence of the many disciplines around the turn from the 19th to the 20th century. The knowledge order that these disciplines represent is not the result of an observation and analysis of the nation or the nation-state at all but contributed massively to its invention. All other spatial formats were subordinated to the national: the local and regional appeared as part of the nation, all external relations were conceptualised as inter-national relations. We are still trapped today in this methodological nationalism, reminiscent of the famous saying according to which someone “whose only tool is a hammer sees a nail in every problem.” This has defined much of the 20th century, in which attempts at liberation from external oppression and any desire for democratic conditions were understood as

nation-building worldwide. The frustration when, after several decades, there is still no success in terms of welfare, participation and stability usually leads to conflicts between different concepts of nation-building (from centralist to federal), but not to a doubt about the concept of the nation-state.

However, several complications arise here, which this overly simple but nevertheless extremely popular story from “empire to nation-state” leaves out. The result of the revolutionary period between 1780 and 1830 was by no means the emergence of nation-states in which all citizens were equal, but rather a new type of combination of empire and nation-state: more or less democratic in the metropolis, but discriminating against the inhabitants of the colonies, whether they were the inhabitants of Ireland or Haiti. In the results of this condensation moment of global interaction that encompassed the Atlantic, as well as the Indian and Pacific Oceans, a new spatial format emerged, namely the nation-state with imperial extensions. This spatial format proved itself over the next century and a half at least, if not two centuries, as an appropriate form of response to the global condition. Great Britain, France, the United States, Russia, Spain, Portugal, but also Japan followed this path, which is largely absent from European consciousness. While the history of nation and nation-state in Europe is discussed as a model for nation-building outside Europe, the most powerful states have *de facto* constituted themselves as imperial nations or indeed as nation-states with an imperial extension and only very slowly decolonised.

This has been discussed in recent historiography not only with regard to relations between metropolises and colonies, but also with regard to relations between the capital or center on the one hand and the provinces on the other. Some time ago, the French historian Pierre Serna characterised what has often been described as the integration of the nation-state as an imperial over-forming of the provinces, which were to be deprived of their autonomy and cultural distinctiveness. This idea underlies many political movements for cultural autonomy or even political secession – from Scotland to Catalonia.

As postcolonial critiques of imperialism multiply, this critical attitude toward the unitarian state, which presents itself as a nation-state and thus obscures its historical fault lines, is likely to intensify. There are therefore different prognoses for the nation-state. Some consider it to be the anchor of sovereignty and democracy, because only within its framework can social cohesion and democratic participation be brought into

balance. Others consider it to be an expiring model, because it is coming under fire from two different sides as a result of the growing number of transnational interdependencies and criticism of its repressive character toward growing minorities and particularistic identities. For the moment, however, this dispute stands undecided, for neither have the doomsayers come true, nor do we live in a world of nation-states sealed off from one another. But it seems very likely that its importance will be at least heavily relativised to other spatial formats such as transnational and transregional chains and networks, the growing importance of cities and regions, and supranational alliances as well as the new regionalism which is in fact becoming the major pillar of global governance these days.



Guó

Nation

Final remarks

HUANG Ping, LAU Kin-chi
Matthias Middell

Terms such as nation, and nation-state, have had their different origins of course in European as well as in Chinese histories, and their meaning has changed – though they have always been so different that they can and should not simply be translated from one another – over time at different occasions and as results of intellectual exchanges between China and Europe. The result is a creative appropriation of meaning that was given to the terms in the respective context. What comes with nation, and nation-state, in all these contexts is the expectation of a certain homogenisation and a success in overcoming the (ethnic, cultural, regional etc.) diversity typical of the imperial past. We have learned over the past decades that this expectation has been partially fulfilled with the transformation of imperial subjects into citizens of nation-states, or members of a country in the Chinese context, but diversity has not faded away. On the contrary, we see remains of diversity that refer to times before the official foundation of nation-states re-emerging again and again – either as remains of colonial contexts or of previous efforts to integrate communities into an imperial setting.

One may ask if the current challenge for us is perhaps not so much to describe again and again the ambition and expectation in the homogenising capacity that came up with the idea of the nation, and the practice of the nation-state, but to look at the many ways that have already been experienced historically to manage diversity under the condition of an interwoven constellation of nationalisation and an increasing impact of transnational ties and global entanglements.

Beauty 美
Body 身
Contract 约
Death 死
Debt, financial 债
Debt, human 人情
Dialectics 阴阳
Duty 义
Empire 天下
Equality 平等
Eternity 永恒
Face 面子
Family 家
Friendship 友谊
Gift 礼物
Happiness 福
Harmony 和
Heart 心
Heritage 遗产
History 历史
Humanism 仁
Image 象
Individual 己
Liberty 自由
Monotheism 神论
Nation 国
Private property 私产
Progress 进步
Relation 关系
Ritual 礼
Rule of law 法治
Society 社会
Time 时间
Writing 书写

Private property

私产

Sī Chǎn

ZHU Andong
Thomas Gergen

私产

Sī Chǎn

Chinese perspective

ZHU Andong

Basic meaning

In ancient Chinese, the left part of 私 means “rice seedling”, and the right part means “own self”. The original meaning is “rice seedling owned by a person”. Later, its meaning was extended to “privately owned lands” or “family member” or “clothes”. It can also be used as an adjective to mean “private, own” as opposed to “public”.

As for 产 (產), it originally means the growth of plants and trees. For example, Xu Shen’s *Shuowen Jiezi* believes that the word takes “生” as the shape side, and “彦” omits “彡” as the sound side. The ancient character of “生” looks like the sprouting of plants and trees drilling out of the ground. The growth of plants and trees leads to the meaning of fertility and production. Yan Zhitui’s *Yan Family Instructions · running the family*: “the livestock of vegetables and fruits are produced in the garden.” It can also be interpreted as a natural product, such as Zhou Li · *Chunguan · Da Bo*: “taking natural property as Yin virtue, preventing it with middle courtesy; taking real estate as Yang virtue, preventing it with harmony and joy.” Zheng Xuan explained: “Natural animals are the genus of six animals; real plants are the genus of nine valleys.” Finally, it means land, houses and property owned by people. For example, the biography of Guo Dan in the Later Han Dynasty: “Dan came out of Dianzhou county and became a high-level official, but his family has no heritage and his children are in poverty.”

Therefore, private property generally refers to land, houses, property, etc., owned by individuals.

Private property, family property and public property

Generally, people think that public property is the opposite of private property. Abstractly speaking, this is not a problem in itself, but in history

and reality, the situation is much more complex, and there are some intermediate states between them. In ancient Chinese society before the late Qing Dynasty, family was the basic socio-economic unit, and “property” was shared, used and enjoyed by family members. The labour, income and livelihood of family members are arranged by the family. Compared with public property, family property is exclusive and private to other ordinary people outside the family; but for family members, it can be considered public. In the family, there are restrictions on family members’ ownership of private property, as is recorded in the *Book of rites · qulishi*: “When parents are still alive, people should have private wealth”; it is said in the *Book of rites · Fangji* that “when parents are still alive, people dare not distribute their property”; Sima Guang even pointed out in the book of *Sushui Jiayi* that “anyone who is a son of man is not allowed to accumulate private wealth. Salaries and land and house income belong to his parents. When they use them, they can ask for them. They dare not take private leave and dare not share them privately.” However, in fact, private property is bound to exist. For example, the property obtained from an official’s salary or from the army, becoming an adoptive son or a son-in-law from his adoptive father’s or father-in-law’s family can no longer be included in the property distribution of the original family; the property obtained without relying on family property or resources, such as the income from going out to do business alone or gifts; the wife’s dowry, including dowry property and land, etc. These properties are private properties in the modern sense. It is worth noting that a considerable part of these private properties are converted from the properties of other families, and these private properties will become the properties of the new family when their owners become independent families.

In the worldview of the ancient Chinese, people can accept that “产” (“property”) belongs to the 天子 (“son of heaven”). Because “产” (“property”) essentially belongs to heaven and earth, it comes from heaven and earth, and man is only a temporary manager. As the representative of heaven’s will on earth, the son of heaven can naturally own all “property” under the kingdom under this concept. Although many dynasties separated the property of the emperor or the emperor’s family from the national treasury, in fact, the emperor could use the money of the national treasury for the needs of his family and give it as a reward to the royal family members, other officials and people. Therefore, it is said that 家天下 (“family is the world”). However, even in ancient China, the state’s “property”, to a certain extent, still has the nature of public ownership,

because it was used in public interest, such as public infrastructure such as canals, water conservancy and post roads, grain reserves for disaster prevention and famine, and so on.

Therefore, public property, family property and private property can be converted to each other.

Private property protection and Dynasty replacement

In ancient China, there were policies similar to western private property protection, which protected the state, family and private “property” to a certain extent according to relevant laws and regulations.

It is worth noting that in ancient times, due to the low level of productivity and limited material production, if the polarisation between the rich and the poor was too large, it would easily lead to social unrest and even Dynasty change. Therefore, on the basis of frugality, all Chinese dynasties advocated the equalisation of the rich and the poor. Therefore, on the one hand, those that can reduce the polarisation between the rich and the poor should be protected and encouraged as much as possible. For example, the sparse discussion of the laws of the Tang Dynasty once stated: “Those whose grandparents and parents are alive, but they themselves have different places to live and private property, should be put into prison for three years.” This is because the existence of a large family is conducive to ensuring that there will be no obvious differentiation within the family members. On the other hand, the state power is to crack down on the super rich and powerful. It has long been the policy of various dynasties in China to crack down on large private property and protect small private property, including emphasising agriculture and restraining commerce, salt and iron official business, etc.

However, there was a cycle in each dynasty. At the beginning of the dynasty, the emperor and officials at all levels often experienced long-term political and military experience, had strong ability, and were able to make great efforts to govern. These policies were still well implemented. However, with the passage of time, on the one hand, the bureaucratic system was still cautious, on the other hand, the commodity currency relationship gradually broke away from all kinds of constraints and began to change the erosion of the bureaucratic system, eventually leading to the continuous concentration of private property (especially land) of small private owners into the hands of large private owners, and more

and more farmers lost their land. Once they encounter the impact of natural disasters, they may arouse farmers’ uprising and even Dynasty change.

In English, the concept of “private property” comes from the Old French *propriété*, which comes from the Latin *proprietas*. It has the meaning of “nature and characteristics” in Aristotle’s philosophy, but it is more connected with private rights and legal rights, which refers to the legal status of the property owner and the specific things belonging to someone. Therefore, unlike the original meaning of “life” in ancient Chinese, the birth of the western concept of property was inseparable from the emphasis on personal rights and interests.

While considering the protection of private property, we must also realise that the threat to private property is often not the state, but other private property. Especially in today’s era, many countries’ “property” (or “wealth”) distribution gap has widened to a dangerous level, and we need to think more deeply about public and private property.

Private property

European perspective

Thomas Gergen

The key term is composed of the two terms “property” and “private”. “Property” is generally understood to mean a “thing” or an immaterial “good” that is able to be possessed. Looked at from a historical, social, cultural, and especially from a juridical lens, property is a bundle of rights and entitlements, as well as a category that symbolises the relationships and behaviours between persons and corporate actors. It is also understood to be a legal model for the attribution of things to persons: natural and legal persons like companies. The influence of the Roman and common law (*ius commune*) *res personae actiones* system is easily seen here. Persons can be individualised, attribution makes them unique.

1. Property in common and private law

In terms of lawmaking, property is the result of a public (and compulsive) exercise of power, whereby regulations are made that help to define what can be owned and the rights of disposal that accompany ownership, including limiting third-party rights (see “real right” or “property rights”). Furthermore, property and the rights to said property protect the interests of specific groups and, to such an extent, act as a code for the political and cultural order that arise from certain value preferences and rights to act, meaning the determination of who and what will be recognised, protected, and excluded (*droit exclusif*, see also § 823 German Civil Code or § 1382 Code civil). The constitutionally guaranteed property (together with and of the same significance as the right of inheritance) laid out in Art. 14 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany (*Grundgesetz*) affects the rights of citizens and provides them with the basic right so that they may even defend this right against government intervention and, with help of the “third-party effects of fundamental rights” (“*Drittwirkung der Grundrechte*”), maintain a strong legal position

with regards to private law. Through the right to control (§ 903 German Civil Code) and the concept of “having” or “guarding” (possession as actual ownership, *corpore et animo*), property embodies generally positive and outward-looking characteristics: hard work, competence, skill, and the ability to rise from rags to riches. In the course of cultural developments and legal history, selected groups were deliberately isolated and disenfranchised: slaves, those born into colonies, servants, domestic help and workers, members of certain religious minorities as well as (especially married) women, all of whom were not given the right to own property, nor allowed to manage the matters related thereto in the form of legal transactions. This helped to safeguard a patriarchal society.

2. The history of property: the genesis of property

The entirety of history can be structured around the history of property, from the days of antiquity to Ancient Rome, where there were conflicts between those with better titles of ownership and those with worse, between those with a higher legitimation of property and those with less, between the rights of the Lord’s estate (*dominium directum*) and those of the vassal’s (*dominium utile*) in a fiefdom as well as between immovable property and chattels. Moreover, there were differences between how property is understood in the city versus in the countryside, the Roman stance of indivisible tangible property and the dominating practice of shared property as well as shared property rights, and between corporate and individual property. Under “property” or “quasi-property”, the rights to persons, the [right to trial] and *banalité* are subsumed; positions to this effect can be found in legal sources such as in the historic legal texts of the *Weistümer*, in village laws, and later in state laws. These encompass in their entirety the right of property concerning the right of inheritance, the line of succession following a death, and the transfer of family property.

Thus, the history of property spans from Ancient Rome to the dissolution of the manorial system, the creation of agricultural reforms, the emancipation of peasants, the secularisation of society, and the introduction of economic and personal freedom (freedom of movement) all the way up to the implementation of modern constitutions in the 19th and 20th centuries. Therewith, liberalism protested against the entrenched system of property distribution. These texts, however, do very little to

discuss the history of intellectual property which has developed from being considered a privilege of the early Modern period to a deeply embedded field of law, one that once again finds itself in danger in the digital age.

3. Accomplishments in European law

Private law has fundamentally treated domestic and foreign proprietors equally. Limitations to this tenet have emerged from two directions: foreign real estate and intellectual property. National interest to protect domestic economy from competition and “foreign infiltration”, military demands and retorsion measures required by the law of war, and finally racially perpetuated ideological beliefs were the sources of unfair treatment that international laws (bi- as well as plurilateral treaties) and supranational organisations such as the EU helped to balance out through such measures as the prohibition of discrimination against domestic and foreign persons, reciprocity clauses, and a focus on place of residence (instead of nationality or nationalities). Due to the EU-wide law of succession (EU-Erbrechts-VO) dated August 2015, which is *loi uniforme* and can, therefore, take effect across EU countries, the last habitual residence of the deceased as point of reference and an end to a division between movable and immovable property became more clearly defined, resulting in the consideration of the entire inheritance in the form of universal succession, including the sum of various property rights with their respective liabilities. With the departure from citizenship law as an anchoring point, the European law helps property to be seen as a universal human right once more.

4. Differentiation criteria

As an institution under private law, property provides information on the person (who may be the proprietor), on the relationship of said person to other subjects of private law (and thereby exclusion of other interested parties), and on the manner of allocation pertinent to the good and its characteristics (the content of the legal position, the scope and extent of the right of control and the right of defence, exploitation rights, and other entitlements).

Peter Häberle developed seven differentiation criteria to this effect (Häberle: 90-92):

- Personal proximity of the property and identity: personal use and “smaller” forms of property have a higher degree of protection than “larger” forms of property, such as commercial enterprises and real estate, with the degree of protection being influenced by the extent to which the respective property provides its owner a sense of personhood and identity.
- Personal effort and value of work: the greater one’s own contributions and effort are, the higher the degree of protection.
- Social process and social solidarity: the more the property is used by those who are not the proprietor, the higher the degree of protection is, and vice versa.
- Scientific process and economic interests: what obligations as well as economic and business protections are sensible for large and small forms of property? What are the legal solutions that best meet economic interests?
- Cultural process and cultural identity: intellectual and physical property (historical and natural monuments, cultural goods, intellectual works) are determined to belong to the public domain (*domaine public*, with a requirement of availability and communitisation) or are bound, with regards to disposal over and use of the property, insofar as this is deemed to be indispensable for the common cultural identity.
- Political process and power: under certain conditions, property is viewed as a form of political freedom of protection, and the rights to a property can be restricted through abuses of power. In this context, doctrine discusses the justification of taxes on property, concerning real estate or inheritance taxes.
- Newly arising shortages and curtailments: Unlimited property today can become limited property tomorrow as the result of times of emergency, war, and crises (environmental or pandemic crisis). The recent example of the infringements on property rights as a result of the pandemic laws cannot be ignored: infringements on property rights and other rights relating to assets (occupational and commercial freedom).

These seven points provide a comprehensive heuristic model for historical and comparative analyses.

5. Real rights

Real rights accompany property and belong to the group of subjective rights when examined from a classical standpoint (*droits réels*). The rights that make up subjective rights are *droits de la personnalité* or right of personality, *droit réel* or *ius in re* according to Roman Law, and legal status or *droit personnel*, *ius ad rem*, *ius in personam*.

Droit réels are therefore *droits subjectifs* with direct regard to a “thing” without the need for a third-party arbitrator. The French Code civil, like the German Civil Code, allows for classical forms of property (*propriété*) and possession (*possession*) as well as limited real rights such as usufruct (*usufruit*), gages (*gage*), and mortgage (the civil code on land charge, which is an accessory of the requirement that allows for it, does not exist in the Code civil!).

The *droits réels* grant its holder (titular) two rights that other subject rights do not currently protect: the *droit de suite*, allowing the holder to demand the relinquishment of a “thing”, and the preferential right (*droit de préférence*) bestowing the right to demand the satisfaction of claims before other creditors.

The *droit de suite* (*Folgerecht* in the German IP) is a familiar concept from intellectual property, also appearing somewhat in copyright law, that creates a balance between the latter and tangible property.

6. The intellectual property upheaval – immaterial assets

A radical change is taking place in the perception of *droits intellectuels*, which are certainly considered to be *droits subjectifs*, thus earning them their own category; nevertheless, it is apparent within the term “intellectual property” itself that although it is considered a real right (property), it cannot be considered a typical real right due to its invisibility and intangibility (*intangibilité*).

The European wording for “intellectual property” can be more closely examined through the comparison of German and French law. Whereas France has had its *Code de propriété intellectuelle* (with *propriété littéraire et artistique* and *propriété industrielle*), something of this nature was never and likely never will be adopted by Germany. German states did appropriate French legislation with varying degrees of urgency during the 19th century; the terminology was hesitantly accepted and

replaced with German expressions, yet these laws were not well received as both nations have contrasting perceptions. In France, intellectual and industrial accomplishments were considered private goods worthy of protection since the implementation of the revolutionary laws. In contrast, recognition of intellectual achievements occurred at a much slower pace in Germany: originally, author’s rights only protected printed literary works; the fine arts were included later, and eventually, non-printed works of art were also protected, including protection from forgery. In the music world, not only were the notes themselves protected from plagiarism, musicians also sought protections that prevented unauthorised performances of their musical works. The protection of industrial accomplishments were a cause for concern to German lawmakers in the former German Confederation. Inventions were qualified as generally worthy of protection relatively quickly. A patent protection had a greater validity when it was connected to a disclosure requirement should the invention be considered a necessary instrument for the Industrial Revolution. Inventions would only later find a wider recognition as primarily private-use items with an understanding that this stance was in fact compatible with the interests of the public and the state. This recognition came about after the Vienna Patent Law Congress of 1873 once the debate on the purpose and use of patent protection had died down, a debate that did not garner as much attention in France. The French perspective is essentially all forms of intellectual property are also private property. The acquisition of rights (property allocation) occurs through the individual act of the rights owner or through the creation or use of a trademark. Formalities, in contrast to Germany, have only a regulatory nature. As a result of the importance of privileges in the former German Confederation and former Reich, industrial property rights became an administrative matter (see patent office, trademark office) through register laws and the accompanying compliance inspections. An attribution of intellectual property rights would require the inventor to submit an application to a competent authority.

Although the term *geistiges Eigentum*, literally “intellectual property”, is still widely used, jurisprudence speaks of *Immaterialgüterrecht*, literally “immaterial goods right”. The difference in wording allows for a better representation of the tangible as well as intangible nature of the law, including concepts such as monetisation (*volet matériel*), the juridification of real rights (*droits patrimoniaux*), and the protection of intellectual content (*volet moral*) (see moral rights).

Intellectual property is property for a limited time and distinguishes itself thereby from classical physical (tangible) property. Unlike other laws for the protection of industrial property, author's rights for intellectual property first come into force once the work has been created and not upon acceptance into a register. On the other side, the duration of these rights differs vastly: author's rights, 70 years after the death of the creator or issuer; patent rights, 20 years; trademark rights, 10 years, though extendable unlike inventor's rights. Intellectual property is therefore a special form of classical private property and thus better characterised as "Immaterialgüterrecht".

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Final remarks

ZHU Andong, Thomas Gergen

As far as European law is concerned, the key term is composed of the two terms “property” and “private”. “Property” is generally understood to mean a “thing” or an immaterial “good” that is able to be possessed. Looked at from a historical, social, cultural, and especially from a juridical lens, property is a bundle of rights and entitlements, as well as a category that symbolizes the relationships and behaviors between persons and corporate actors. It is also understood to be a legal model for the attribution of things to persons: natural and legal persons like companies. Persons can be individualized, attribution of property makes them unique.

Furthermore, property and the rights to said property protect the interests of specific groups and, to such an extent, act as a code for the political and cultural order that arise from certain value preferences and rights to act, meaning the determination of who and what will be recognized, protected, and excluded. Property embodies generally positive and outward-looking characteristics: hard work, competence, skill, and the ability to rise from rags to riches.

As an institution under private law, property provides information on the person (who can/may be the proprietor), on the relationship of said person to other subjects of private law (and thereby exclusion of other interested parties), and on the manner of allocation pertinent to the good and its characteristics (the content of the legal position, the scope and extent of the right of control and the right of defence, exploitation rights, and other entitlements).

With the departure from citizenship law as an anchoring point, the European law helps property to be seen as a universal human right once more. Moreover, the right of property concerns the right of inheritance, the line of succession following a death, and the transfer of family property.

A radical change is taking place in the perception of *droits intellectuels*, which are certainly considered to be *droits subjectifs*, thus earning

them their own category; nevertheless, it is apparent within the term “intellectual property” itself that although it is considered a real right (property), it cannot be considered to be a typical real right due to its invisibility and intangibility. Intellectual property is property for a limited time and distinguishes itself thereby from classical physical (tangible) property. Unlike other laws for the protection of industrial property, author’s rights for intellectual property first come into force once the work has been created and not upon acceptance into a register. On the other side, the duration of these rights differs vastly: author’s rights, 70 years after the death of the creator/issuer; patent rights, 20 years; trademark rights, 10 years, though extendable unlike inventor’s rights. Intellectual property is therefore a special form of classical private property.

Beauty 美
Body 身
Contract 约
Death 死
Debt, financial 债
Debt, human 人情
Dialectics 阴阳
Duty 义
Empire 天下
Equality 平等
Eternity 永恒
Face 面子
Family 家
Friendship 友谊
Gift 礼物
Happiness 福
Harmony 和
Heart 心
Heritage 遗产
History 历史
Humanism 仁
Image 象
Individual 己
Liberty 自由
Monotheism 神论
Nation 国
Private property 私产
Progress 进步
Relation 关系
Ritual 礼
Rule of law 法治
Society 社会
Time 时间
Writing 书写

Progress

进步

Jìn Bù

HUANG Ping,

LAU Kin-chi

Michael Kahn-Ackermann

进步 Jìn Bù

Chinese perspective

HUANG Ping, LAU Kin-chi

Many terms in vernacular Chinese existed in classical Chinese, yet they have taken on a qualitatively different meaning in the modern context as a result of the meeting of East and West. The term “progress” can be said to have its current accepted equivalence in “进步” (jìnbù) in Chinese; however, there are major differences between its usage in classical Chinese compared to its usage since the latter part of the 19th century.

In its original form and meaning, the character “進” (jìn) has been found as early as in the Oracle bone script (甲骨文) during the Shang Dynasty 商朝 (1600 – 1046 BCE). It is composed of two parts, “隹” and “止”. “隹” looks like a short-tailed bird, and “止” denotes the shape of a foot. One interpretation is that as “footprints of a bird”, it means “steps forward”, as a bird is unable to walk backwards, and its footprints clearly point ahead. Another interpretation is that “追逐進” denotes chasing after humans, animals and birds, respectively. The similar meaning of “to advance” was stated in the first lexical work of Chinese characters, *Shuowen Jiezi* (25 – 220 CE).



As terms are often best understood by their juxtaposition with other terms, the pair for “forward” and “backward” is “進-退”. “退”, according to the Oracle bone script, is composed of two parts: “皀” and “女”. “皀” is a food vessel, and “女” is a foot turned backward, the reverse of “止”. The character “退” denotes departure or withdrawal after taking food.



Thus, while “进” (“moves forward”) contrasts with “退” (“moves backward”), the latter is not necessarily derogative. While the two terms denote physical movements, and especially in tactics of war, “advancing” would certainly be preferable to “retreating”. The *Daodejing*, written by Laozi (老子) during the Warring States period (475 – 221 BCE), states that “the Dao, when brightest seen, seems light to lack; who progress in it makes, seems drawing back”.¹ The word “progress” is contrasted to “drawing back”. It is similarly presented by Deng Xi (545 – 501 BCE), the founder of the Chinese “school of logic” in his famous idiom: “Not forward-moving, one stays behind; not being happy, one is worried; not taking gains, one loses; this is normality in worldly matters.” Zhu Xi (1130 – 1200 CE), in his *Rationalism*, popularised the saying: “One who does not advance, lags behind.”

The term “进步” acquired a meaning much different from the sense of “progression” when China encountered Western aggression. Near the end of the 19th century when reformists in China proposed Meiji-style reforms, “progress” was inscribed on Chinese society by the modernity of the West. Despite the slogan “Chinese essence and Western utility”, modeling on and catching up with the West was the primary pursuit.

Translators played a vital role in promoting such ideas. Notably, Yan Fu exerted immense intellectual influence in the introduction of Western thought to China. In 1897, he translated and published *Evolution and Ethics and other Essays*, written by the English biologist Thomas Huxley (1825 – 1895). Huxley shared more commonalities than differences with Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882), who authored *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859). Darwin later replaced “natural selection” with the phrase “survival of the fittest”. When Yan Fu translated Huxley, the terms “progress” and “evolution” were interchangeable. As for the term “evolution”, Yan Fu sometimes rendered it as “cosmic process”. When the term “progress” took on the meaning of “evolution” in the context of “survival of the fittest”, it imposed a linearity in the perception of social development, with Western

1. *The Tao Te Ching*, translated by James Legge, 1891.

civilisation and science unequivocally occupying a place of superiority as a higher stage of social evolution.

When Liang Qichao, who advocated constitutionalism for the Qing Dynasty, theorised his proposal for *The Future of New China* (1902), he was explicit about Social Darwinism: “The principle of survival of the fittest compels compliance with the trend of the times in order to survive.” Liang’s article *On Progress* collected in *New People* (1902 – 1906) juxtaposed “striving for progress” with “surviving collapse and extinction”.

This linkage between “progress” and “evolution” continued with prominent intellectuals after the 1911 revolution. Chen Duxiu (1879 – 1942), editor-in-chief of *New Youth*, in his manifesto *Call To the Youth* (1915) urged young people to be “progressive rather than conservative”. He favoured French evolutionist philosopher H. Bergson (1859 – 1941), and he would refer to Bergson by saying that “a progressive rather than conservative life is like sailing against the current; if you do not advance, you will fall back. This is an axiom in China. From the fundamental law of the universe, there is no reason to conserve the status quo, as the evolution of all things is constant... In terms of the evolution of human affairs, the nation that remains unchanged from the past degenerates day by day, while the people who seek progress with innovation are flourishing. The fate of survival or collapse can be anticipated.”

While Liang’s evolutionary ideas came from Huxley, Chen’s came from Bergson. “Progress” is counterposed to “conservatism”. Closely associated with the idea of “evolution”, “progress” is linked to perceptions that propound different stages of social evolution and revolution (abrupt changes not excluded), such as from feudalism to capitalism, then socialism, and eventually communism. Interestingly, with the Russian Revolution of 1917, the most “advanced” model of progress was perceived by some as shifting from U.K. and France to the U.S.S.R. Chen and Li Dazhao were co-founders of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1918, Li published the article *The triumph of the common people* in *New Youth*, exalting that the creation of the new era, though encountering difficulties, represented a progressive and irreversible trend. In his article *The Victory of Bolshevism* published in the same issue, Li quoted what Frederic Harrison said: “Latent in Bolshevism is a great social evolution, similar to the revolution of 1789...” and Li was convinced that “with the mass movements of the world, the remnants of history, such as emperors, aristocrats, warlords, bureaucrats, militarism, capitalism, and all that block the progress of this new movement, will be destroyed with the force of thunderbolts.”

Regardless of whether it would be the bourgeoisie or the proletariat that took power, the economic substance of such “progress” was still conceived primarily as development of productive forces and industrialisation supported by advancing science and technology. Within Chinese Marxist thinking, Karl Marx’s optimism about socialism was growing out of capitalist potential.

After WWII, the concept of “progress” became inextricably tied to the concept of “development”, with Harry Truman’s inaugural speech as U.S. president in 1949 defining a new era of “development”. Not only is “development” postulated as the unilinear way of social evolution, “underdevelopment” is also denigrated as backward and shameful; however, this mindset denies social and cultural diversities of different traditions and induces a rejection of one’s own past. Critique about this kind of developmentalism has been well presented, for example, in *The Development Dictionary and Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*.²

For China, the concept of “progress” has by and large been similarly bound with that of “development”, conceived mostly in terms of scientific advancement, economic growth, and military strength. In practice, China has struggled with the predicaments and consequences of the development trap.³ By the early 21st century, China’s “progress” had come under attack by the West, led by the USA in the unfolding of a New Cold War, as an answer to China going beyond its assigned, subordinate positions in the global capitalist division of labour. China’s “progress”, instead of receiving compliments, is presented as a threat to the world order and must therefore be contained. At the same time, the crises of global capitalism have been worsening, with financial bubbles, climate collapse, food insecurity, energy crunch, pollution, pandemics, and ever-growing social polarisation. It is no longer absurd to think that humanity could be heading rapidly towards collapse and even extinction. The formulation of “progress” with its web of meanings is falling apart and failing.

In much the same way that Bolshevism was hailed in the early 20th century as representing a more advanced phase of humanity, a century later, concepts such as “ecological civilisation” and “common prosperity” have been postulated in China. This new orientation goes beyond

2. <https://shifter-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/wolfgang-sachs-the-development-dictionary-n-a-guide-to-knowledge-as-power-2nd-ed-2010-1.pdf> and https://www.academia.edu/39692614/Pluriverse_A_Post-Development_Dictionary_AUF_2019...NEW_BOOK_edited_by_Ashish_Kothari_Ariel_Salleh_Arturo_Escobar_Federico_Demaria_and_Alberto_Acosta...Download_full_ebook_for_free_PDF...License_Creative_Commons

3. Wen Tiejun, *Ten Crises: The Political Economy of China’s Development (1949–2020)*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.

the concept of “progress”. Though a century-old wedlock between “progress” and “evolution”, science, development, and modernity cannot be readily disentangled conceptually. In reality, China has many rich and diverse traditions that have been “conserved”. Thus, by scrutinising the historical context in which the pursuit of “progress” has been embedded, by revisiting local and indigenous experiences that have been labelled as “backward” and “regressive” but have persisted, an embodiment of values and meanings, including dignity, happiness, contentment and self-sufficiency, in the very concept of “progress”, can be reached, rejecting its linear and artificial attributes. Certainly, “progress” cannot be survival of/for the fittest. It must go beyond “survival” and signify processes of transformation in which the will for spiritual as well as physical betterment constitutes the driving force for change.

Progress

European perspective

Michael Kahn-Ackermann

It is hard to talk about a European perspective on the concept of “progress”. The reason is simple: “progress” as a concept of philosophy of history is a purely European concept, there is no comparable concept in other cultures. As far as I understand, there is no word to translate “progress” into Classic Chinese, the word used in modern Chinese “进步” didn’t exist earlier than the late Qing dynasty and was brought into Chinese from the Japanese translation of the “western” concept, also unknown in Japan, of “progress”. What makes the case of “progress” even more special is the fact that it is a very young concept also in the European context, with no conceptual parallel in the European past. Even the term of “progress” as a term of philosophy of history and political philosophy did not exist before the period of the Enlightenment, i.e. the later part of the 18th century.

It replaced the redemption idea of Christianity that was predominant in Europe, according to which the future of mankind and the end of history are determined and brought about by divine intervention in the form of a judgment, without mankind directly contributing to it through its own activity. Introduced to China about a hundred years later, it replaced the cyclic understanding of the process of history, as a change of dynasties according to their moral decline respective to merit. The understanding of the process of history as a cycle prevailed also in the pre-Christian Greek and Roman Antiquity.

Nevertheless, the idea of progress, especially of “human progress” or “progress of mankind” was probably the most successful ideological product of all the post-Enlightenment ideologies of the European 19th century, as nationalism, Marxism, anarchism, capitalist liberalism, racism, social Darwinism, to name only the most influential. More explicitly, the idea of progress became the common base of all these ideologies, no matter how they differ in other respect. The ideological concept of “progress” has no identifiable father or fathers, there is no founding text of the idea

of progress. Great thinkers and scientists such as Kant, Hegel, Marx and Darwin have contributed to the development of the concept, but they did not invent it. It was the rapid development of scientific knowledge, the rapid increase in new technologies, and the onset of industrialisation that created the conditions for the idea of a general and unstoppable “progress of mankind”. It was Western imperialism, which understood itself as the “bearer of progress”, which spread the concept in all its ideological variants (including anti-imperialist ideologies such as Marxism, Anarchism and Nationalism) all over the world. Globally the idea of “human progress” became the dominant interpretation of historical processes and the most important legitimisation of the exercise of power.

There were, and are, fundamentally different views on whether or not “progress” is heading toward an inevitable and definable goal, what this goal might look like, and by what means its achievement can be accelerated, slowed down, or even stopped. In nationalism, progress aims to form a unitary state based on the same language, history, culture, or “race” with inviolable sovereignty; Marxism seeks global communism transcending borders and overcoming poverty and human alienation; anarchism, the absolute liberation of the individual from the constraints of domination; racism, the purity of a “race” conceived as superior to other ethnic groups. Meanwhile, capitalist liberalism knows no defined goal of “human progress”; “progress” exists in the endless growth of productive forces and material prosperity without an ultimate end goal.

In the 20th century, being the representative and bearer of “progress” became the central legitimisation strategy of liberal capitalism and Marxist socialism. Different conceptions of the nature and the goal of “progress” became essential elements of a global system competition, carrying the idea of “progress” into non-European cultures, which originally had no understanding of history driven by “progress of mankind”.

The historical-philosophical idea that the history of mankind is to be read as a “history of progress” has become so entrenched in the minds of most people of the global modern age that it has almost taken as self-evident. The idea of “progress” permeates all areas of social activity, from science and technology to law, economics, politics, medicine, and the social system. Almost every partial innovation in these areas is now considered, or at least justified, as part of the general progress of mankind.

The specific dimensions of progress are dominated today by economic progress, as the case may be economic progress driven by scientific progress, which has replaced the original concept of “civilisational

progress”. In the conceptual pair of “development” and “underdevelopment”, the division of the world into developing and developed states, the concepts of “development” and “progress” merged with each other. Fundamentally, “development” is now understood worldwide as “progress”. It is not accidental that the modern conceptualisations of “progress” and “development” emerged at about the same time and same place.

Since the middle of the 20th century, the idea of human progress is increasingly facing a credibility crisis. The experiences of imperialist exploitation and oppression, of two world wars and the crimes against humanity committed by National Socialism and Stalinism, which have shaken the idea of “civilisational progress”, have played a part in this. However, new insights have emerged, especially in the “developed world”, that call into question the very core of the idea of progress, namely the unconditional belief in the blessings of scientific-technological and economic progress. Since the report of the Club of Rome, we have become increasingly aware that regardless of the political and ideological constitution of a society, the essential instruments of implementing the idea of progress have fatal consequences: the material resources available to us for their realisation are limited, and the way they are exploited and used can have catastrophic consequences. The progress of medicine has helped a significant portion of the population in achieving better health and a longer life; yet this has also led to an increase in the world population that turns this gain into a potential threat. The climate crisis is another stage in the decay of the idea of progress. The idea of “human progress” has become fragile, despite the fact that many representatives of ruling elites and economic interests cling to it.

进步 Jìn Bù Progress

Final remarks

HUANG Ping, LAU Kin-chi,
Michael Kahn-Ackermann

The three authors of the two essays on “progress” are in general agreement in the critique of how “progress” (of mankind) as a concept of philosophy of history is conceived as “necessary”, “endless” and “unstoppable”. Its close association with “development” in an era privileging science and technology is similar in Europe and in China. The authors agree that there needs to be further investigation into how the concept of “progress” has become the base of most ideologies rooted in European thinking of the 19th century and spread over the whole world since, even though the idea of progress was existent neither in European nor in Chinese traditional thinking. Of interest would be investigating how progress-based ideologies, e.g. social Darwinism and nationalism, become so prominent in different cultures in the world. It is also recognised that after the two World Wars in Europe, and with the current predicaments facing mankind, there have been more accepted critiques of “progress” and along with this, critique of progress-based ideologies.

The two essays may have differences on the question of how to go beyond such an idea/ideology of progress in this fundamentally critical investigation.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Relation

关系

Guān Xi

YANG Huilin
Erik Guignard

关系 Guān Xi

Chinese perspective

YANG Huilin

The Chinese characters for “relation” are *guanxi* 关系. This term is often used in daily life. Since ancient Chinese usually had more strict criteria for words included in lexicons or dictionaries, major traditional lexicons seldom took this term in. In modern Chinese, however, this term goes to another extreme, and its meanings seem to be all-embracing and more literary, such as “the interaction, connection or relation of things”, or “relationship of people or things” or “bearing and impact”.¹ Thus, Chinese phrases related to “correlation”, “relatedness”, and “relevance” are categorised as synonyms and co-constitute the general meaning of “relation” in Chinese.

On the other hand, some more “mundane” usages of “relation” implied subtle meanings that are hard to convey in words. For example, the phrase “have a relation with” originally contained a broader meaning, but for a long time, it is almost exclusively referred to as “have sex with or have an affair with somebody”. The term “*guan xi* 关系” (relation) after the verb “*fa sheng* 发生” is stereotypically paired with “illicit sexual relation”, and few people would question why we do not use the phrase “legitimate sexual relation”.

Another example is the so-called “public relation”, a buzzword in the tide of the market economy in the 1980s with a root in common parlance and slang. This created many “verb-object structure” idioms based on some vulgar words, such as “seek the relationship for one’s own benefit”, “exploit connections to get a profit”, and “engage in a relationship as snobbery”. There are complimentary phrases describing the degree of “relation”, for instance if the relation is “solid enough”, “hard enough”, “strong enough”, “wild enough (much enough)”, “arbitrary enough”, etc. As a result, the Chinese word for “relation” is not easy to be translated into Western languages and sometimes has to use the phonetic

1. “*guan xi*,” c.v., in *Xinhua Dictionary (Chinese-English)* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2021), 225.

translation *guanxi*. A highly acclaimed TV drama series, Chinese-style Relationship, may best explain the complexity of the meaning of the Chinese “relation” *guanxi* 关系.²

Nevertheless, if we trace the etymological root of the Chinese characters for “relation,” the term is not necessarily so derogatory. The first character, “*guan* 关,” originally was written as 關, which took the shape of a bolt used to lock the door and later meant “strategic pass” (隘口) and “critical juncture” (枢纽).³ After the Tang Dynasty, the character was expanded to mean “get involved.” The other character, “*xi* 系,” is composed of the upper part 爪 (“claw” or “hand”) and the lower part 丝 (“silk”), which graphically displays how “to link the silk with a hand”, attaching the word meaning of “be related to”.⁴ The earliest case to use the two characters as a phrase could be found in *He lin yu lu* 鹤林玉露, a collection of literary anecdotes by LUO Dajing (1196 – 1242). For example, in the story about ZHANG Liang’s assassination of Emperor Qin: “This assassination encouraged many heroes to rebel, which was greatly related to ZHANG Liang’s action.” We can easily find sentences such as “The death of ZHUGE Kongming has a great impact on many things”. “This must be carried out because it is related to morality.” The use of “relation” as a noun is derived accordingly.⁵

Three sources have greatly influenced the transmutation of Chinese phrases and words: the translation of Buddhist scriptures during the Han and Tang dynasties (202 BCE – 907 CE); the “Europeanisation” of the Chinese language as a result of the spread of Western learning in late Ming dynasty (1582 – 1644); and “Chinese terms reproduced in Japan” in the 19th century. Nevertheless, we cannot find similar sources for “relation”. I would rather say that the “relation” itself is mutually located in the relation between the East and the West. Only a two-way interpretation can identify the trajectory of ideas from the traces of the linguistic and cultural encounter and activate the possible connections contained therein.

In this light, if we reflect on the West philosophy from a Chinese perspective, we may vaguely find a long chain of thought containing critical terms related to “relation”: the ontological “*Beziehung*” for Martin Buber,⁶

2. <https://tv.cctv.com/2017/03/28/VIDEVoTQvIQN5nsbbQlgtU170328.shtml?spm=>

3. See LI Xueqin, et al. ed., *Zi Yuan (Chinese Etymology)*, Vol. II (Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House, 2012), 1058.

4. *Ibid.*, 1143.

5. LUO Dajing, *He lin yu lu*. See <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=548729&remap=gb>.

6. Jonathan R. Herman, I and Tao: *Martin Buber’s Encounter with Chuang Tzu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 227, footnote 12.

“the method of correlation” for Paul Tillich⁷ and “a fertilising effect” for T. S. Eliot, “the very relation itself” for Martin Heidegger,⁸ “la correlation” for Emmanuel Levinas,⁹ “the merely relational mediation” for Alain Badiou,¹⁰ and “Ying-Yang dialogue in place of God” for Julia Kristeva.¹¹ What is particularly noteworthy is that this “chain” has been deeply inter-textualised with Chinese thought.

Take Martin Buber as an example. Buber has a frequently quoted saying: “I become through my relation to the Thou; as I become I, I say Thou.”¹² James Brown interprets this saying as “a correlative action towards its own being.” He believes “the famous saying is even more pregnant in the original German.”¹³ Brown points out that thirteen years before *I and Thou* was published, based on three English translations (Giles, James Legge, and F. H. Balfour), Buber translated some discourses and fables from *Zhuangzi* into German.¹⁴ Since Buber does not know Chinese, “virtually every line of Buber’s translation can be traced to one of these sources,” and “he occasionally (and very significantly) paraphrases loosely, combines sources, and splices editorial comments from the various translators directly into the text.”¹⁵ However, when translating a very critical sentence in the chapter “Autumn River”,¹⁶ Buber does not follow anyone of them but chooses a German word according to his own understanding. This Chinese phrase “gong fen 功分” is rendered “function” by Giles, “efficacy” by Frederic H. Balfour, and “services they render” by James Legge. Only Buber, who does not know Chinese, thought that the key to “convertible and yet necessary terms” is “in relation to each other” or to “east and west”, so he chooses without hesitation the German word *Beziehung*. In this light, it is understandable why Heidegger’s *Identity and Difference* “does not inquire into the components of the relation, but

7. John P. Newport, Paul Tillich (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 47.

8. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, translated and with an introduction by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 7-8.

9. Walter Brogan and James Risser, “Introduction,” in *American Continental Philosophy: A Reader*, eds. Walter Brogan & James Risser (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 4.

10. Peter Hallward, Badiou: *A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 250.

11. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 70.

12. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd edition, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 11.

13. James Brown, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Buber and Barth: *Subject and Object in Modern theology* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 104, 107.

14. Martin Buber, trans., *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-Tse* (Leipzig: Insel-verlag, 1910).

15. *Ibid.*, 4.

16. 《庄子·秋水》：知东西相反而不能相无，则功分定矣。(If we know that east and west are convertible and yet necessary terms in relation to each other, then such functions may be determined.) See Jonathan R. Herman, *I and Tao: Martin Buber’s Encounter with Chuang Tzu*, 227, footnote12.

into the relation as a relation”, why he “asks about the very relation itself”,¹⁷ and why he thinks that it is from “difference” to “relation” that the traditional metaphysics of “the structure of both ontology and theology”¹⁸ can be overcome.

Julia Kristeva has a similar discussion in her work *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*,¹⁹ in which she categorises traditional Chinese philosophy and Michael Bakhtin’s “polyphonic novels” into two kinds of “poetic discourses”, respectively representing the East and the West. Kristeva argues that the fundamental features of both are “the effort [...] to break out the framework of casually determined identical substances”, so “analogy and relation” will replace “identity and substance”.²⁰ In her view, this is “dialogism and ambivalence” and “the only linguistic practice to escape the prohibition”.²¹ In her discussion, Kristeva briefly mentioned a “Chinese philosopher ZHANG Dongsun” and it is evident that she had thoroughly read ZHANG’s article “Thought, Language and Culture”.

ZHANG’s article was originally published in *Sociologia*,²² and in June of the same year, the newly founded English journal *The Yenching Journal of Social Studies* published the English version, translated by the editor-in-chief of the journal LI An-che. The name of the article was changed to “A Chinese Philosopher’s Theory of Knowledge”.²³ About 18 years later, in 1956, Haridas T. Muzumdar, an Indian-American scholar at Cornell College, published an article with the same title, offering a new translation as well as an interpretation of ZHANG Dongsun’s article.²⁴

ZHANG’s main argument is to differentiate the Western “identity logic” from Chinese “correlation logic”. He argues that the former comes along with a “subject-predicate proposition”, and the latter is in fact, the “antithetical grammar and syntax”, a term re-proposed by Chinese scholars in recent years.²⁵ Muzumdar thus outlines three characteristics

17. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, 7-8.

18. *Ibid.*, 15.

19. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 64-91.

20. *Ibid.*, 85-86.

21. *Ibid.*, 85-86.

22. ZHANG Dongsun, “Si xiang, yu yang yu wen hua (Thought, Language and Culture),” in *Sociologia*, Volume 10 (1938).

23. Chang Tung-sun, “A Chinese Philosopher’s Theory of Knowledge,” *The Yenching Journal of Social Studies*, Vol. 1, No.2 (1939).

24. Haridas T. Muzumdar, “A Chinese Philosopher’s Theory of Knowledge,” *The Midwest Sociologist*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Dec., 1956): 12-17.

25. SHEN Jiakuan, *Chao yue zhu wei jie gou: dui yan yu fa he dui yang e shi* (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2019).

of Chinese thought: correlation logic, non-exclusive classification, and analogical definition,²⁶ which is precisely what Kristeva calls “poetic discourse”. Kristeva leaves a special note for this paragraph: “Modern physics and ancient Chinese thought [...] are equally anti-Aristotelian, anti-monological and dialogical.”²⁷ This is what she called “Yin-Yang dialogue... in place of God”.²⁸

The British sinologist Angus Charles Graham has a book entitled *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, in which he also discusses the “logic of correlation” in terms of Yin-Yang.²⁹ It is interesting that the “correlation” is not exclusively a Chinese logic derived from Yin-Yang but can be traced as a paralleled clue in Western philosophy, which is probably the traditional thesis of “two natures in one person” or “hypostatic union”.

“Two natures in one person” or “hypostatic union” still attracts many efforts even today within the Christian faith circles. However, I think it has become more and more of a philosophical understanding since Martin Buber. For example, Kathryn Tanner, a theologian at Yale University, states that “humans come to be in the image of God” actually implies “coming to be oneself in relation to what one is not,” i.e., “all creatures are formed in relation to what they are not”.³⁰ If Buber’s saying is really “even more pregnant in the original German”, I am afraid the “potentiality” contained in “Beziehung”, “ambivalence”, and “correlative thinking” will be much more decadent with the Chinese reference to “east and west are convertible but necessary terms in relation to each other”.

Moving on in the framework of theological hermeneutics, Tanner derives “apophatic accounts” that make the sacred “a mere non-semantic place-holder” in order to keep a “purely regulative, rather than constitutive or immanent” boundary of the understanding. Compared with “the merely relational mediation” or “the only linguistic practice to escape from the prohibition” mentioned above, we may recognise that theologians can be as subversive as philosophers.

In sum, it should be a meaningful practice, if not the only one, to reposition the term “relation” or *guanxi* 关系 in Chinese or European

languages, to re-activate the potential dialogue between Chinese thought and the continental philosophy, to rediscover the antithetical structure in comparison with “la correlation”, and to extend our dialogue in the risk of possible “misunderstanding”.

26. Haridas T. Muzumdar, “A Chinese Philosopher’s Theory of Knowledge,” 16.

27. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, 91, footnote 20.

28. *Ibid.*, 70.

29. A. C. Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986).

30. *Ibid.*

Relation

European perspective

Erik Guignard

If the concept of relationship appears to be a fundamental concept used in a very general way to describe or account for relationships between any two entities, it seems difficult to find a general definition. On the other hand, it is possible to clarify its contours in specific contexts. The example chosen here is, with Confucius for whom “the person and the relationship come first”, that of human relations: it is indeed, in this context, that misunderstandings may arise because of the frequent use of the word relation in everyday life. Elsewhere, “rational” (scientific) contexts are, a priori, more susceptible to disagreements than to misunderstandings.³¹

Human relationships

Both interpersonal and social human relationships are established from the birth of each individual in a family, embedded in relationships of kinship and alliance, and then continue through personal and social relationships within a complex social fabric.

The simplest situation is dyadic: x (a person, a group...) has a relationship R (business, family, work...) or is (an acquaintance, a friend...), with y . But it easily becomes triadic with the intervention of a third party (mediator) xRy/z and beyond in a more or less extended network $xRyRzR...$

To enter into a more precise description, two other concepts can be closely associated with a human relationship:

- The first, which underlines its character, is that of “link” since, paraphrasing Confucius, “there is no humanity except in the social

31. Relationships between concepts (metonymy), between a Whole (symbolic) and parts (synecdoche), between mathematical or physical equivalences (between matter and energy, through the mediation of light, ...) nor relationships between proven facts (historical or contingent). As well the verb “to relate”, which tells a story, recalling significant events that carry a “truth” for the foundation of an identity.

link” and that, by their multiplicity and abundance, links are constitutive of the life of communities, whether they are positive (solidarity, friendship, equality, sharing), negative (violence, subordination, dependence, predation), neutral or ambivalent (competition, authority, hierarchy), and this according to values that are rarely universal, as communities often prefer to favour what distinguishes them rather than what brings them together.

- The second, which is part of everyday life, is that of “exchange” made of gifts, words, or symbols between people of the same community. Etymologically, the Latin word *communis* suggests, at the root of the word, what is shared (*com*, with) and what is both a gift and an obligation, *munus* marking an implicit reciprocity of exchanges within a community and raising, at the same time, a question: “to whom do we give, from whom we receive...?” A relationship unites what is separate and separates what is united but is defined just as much by the actors.

However, the answer is not univocal because the conceptions of the person have never stopped changing according to societies and times.

F. Tönnies (1855 – 1935) proposed to distinguish a “communal” vision (*Gemeinschaft*) concerning small, not very mobile populations, with a defined corpus of beliefs and an identification through a specific vision of parental relations and cooperation, as opposed to a “societal” vision (*Gesellschaft*) where the individual as a person is not integrated in such a strict manner with his relatives. The matrimonial prohibitions and the rigour of reciprocity are then blurred in favour of other values where exchanges are increasingly regulated by law.

Exchanges in a “community” vision (*Gemeinschaft*)

From this standpoint, it is relevant to look at the concept of the person, starting with a significant example. Among the Sereers of Senegal, the person is conceived as the intersection of several relationships: that of flesh and bone, which comes from the mother and her matrilineage; that of blood, through the father and his matrilineage (at least among the Saafen); but also that of seniority – the elder-cadet relationship –; and finally, that of friendship, that of the “nose-friends”, which each person inherits and which follows the order of seniority. In addition, each

person receives his or her “smell”, *kili*, carried by the reincarnable soul, *coona*, of an ancestor of his or her cognatic kin, who thus provides soul and protection until weaning.

Each one, except for twins for whom an additional marker must be found, thus becomes unique, determined by these crossings, like those of the height lines that sailors traced to determine their position according to that of the stars far from terrestrial markers. And life then proceeds from the simultaneous and distinct existence of all these relationships, and thus of these names that make the bearer a unique being, integrated into a community that functions mainly according to principles of reciprocity and continuity between generations.

We can distinguish two archetypal figures of exchange characterising relations between people, both of which differ from authority relations,³² communal sharing and commercial exchange (or any dyadic exchange without involvement of third parties). These are the *agonistic exchange*, of struggle, rivalry and even destruction (*potlach*) and the *triangular exchange*, that of Seneca (*Allegory of the Three Graces*) and of Marcel Mauss (*Essay on the Gift*, 1923), which inscribes the exchange in a ceremonial network: *give, receive, return*. The “gift” (and counter-gift) is a mutually obliging process which, with its symbolic dimension, ensure a permanent regeneration of the social bond.

Ceremonial gifts are those which, after a more or less extensive process, return to the initial donor. These are specific gifts where relationships are more important than individuals; neither commercial nor inalienable, they ensure mutual recognition of status and mark the reciprocal belonging to the same network which may go beyond the borders of a group. These are exchanges involving several partners and a deferred reciprocity: A gives to B who gives to C who gives directly to A or to B to give back to A and the return, without being equivalent, confirms the reciprocity of the exchanges because giving back is not cancelling the relationship but presages its renewal.

These reciprocities are at the basis of *triangular relationships*: those of matrimonial alliances when a woman cannot marry without the agreement of her brother³³ at the expense of a deferred reciprocity, or, when, as among the *Udalen Tuaregs*, relations between lineages are

32. A. Kojève proposes four basic types of authority relationships: that of the master over the servant or slave, that of the military leader or teacher over the pupil, that of the judge over the petitioners, and that of the father or parents over the child.

33. The exchange can be deported inside the lineage to preserve its unity: among the *Bedik*, for example, two brothers must exchange their daughters before marrying them off to a relation of their wife.

scrupulously carried out in the ternary mode of generalised exchange; but also, within filiations in classificatory kinships³⁴ where parents are classified as a group and not individually, the child belonging to the paternal or maternal group as much as to its progenitors. Finally, they are found in relationships mediated by a third party or a sacrificer, for example among the Hindus, where the gifts received by the Brahmins are returned by the gods themselves or the ancestors’ spirits...

The ternary symbolism of family relationships is even found in divine relationships, in the Greek mythology, between Kronos and Zeus replaced by a swaddled stone; in the Hebrew world, between God and Isaac replaced by a sheep, a precursor of a revolution in the relational triangle.

Exchanges in a societal vision (*Gesellschaft*)

It was in Christianity that the “nuclear family” appeared, composed of a father (husband), a mother (wife) and their children (in principle biological) and always ritually established by a public or sacred word, replacing the “kinship atom” highlighted by Lévi-Strauss. Baptism embodies this transformation where the individual can then exist as a self, creature and “son” of God. It was in the 18th century that Europe consolidated the status of “free” citizens, less dependent on their group, with considerable consequences: people will be more likely to think in terms of competition and equality than in terms of reciprocity, bonding, and fairness; it is no longer compulsory to return what one had received; a gift can even be negatively perceived as a debt or a mark of inferiority.

This is what A. de Tocqueville observed: “Individualism is a reflective sentiment which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows in such a way that, after having created a small society for his own use, he willingly abandons the large society to itself.” Neo-liberal economics further emphasise individual responsibility in any enterprise even for the constitution of common goods, with some pleasant nuances: “At the head of a new enterprise, you see, in France, the government; in England, a great lord, [...] in the United States, an association.”

This individualism is clearly correlated with an idealisation of economic growth and a required acceptance of growing social inequality

34. The mother’s “sister” is a “mother” and the father’s “brother” is a “father” (*patruus*) (elder or younger), generally in opposition to maternal uncles (*avunculus*); the “cousin” is an elder or younger “brother”.

against egalitarian values. It also mirrors the weakening of reciprocal triangular relationships, religious beliefs and family networks.

The Chinese translation of “relationship” as *Guanxi* (关系网) would confirm this evolution at least within professional networks among which preferential treatment between partners can be established with reciprocal exchanges as soon as an opportunity arises. However, specificities of the relation inside a European company should be underlined: building an extended network would, for example, be a more key objective than making a personal “career” and it would be unethical for the network to benefit individuals at the expense of the group or the community.

The professional network would, in a sense, fill the void left by the decline of the traditional large family networks in favour of the urban nuclear family.

*

In the Latin *homo*, as in man in English and *Mensch* in German, *mental* in French, we find the Indo-European root *men*, which is also related to the Hebrew *humus*, the earth.

If Man is thus considered to be endowed with an earthly and mental nature, he belongs to a specific culture where the “person” is woven by perennial, reciprocal relationships or remains free in the choice of his relations within a minimum of external constraints whether required by law or agreed ethics and morals.

关系 Guān Xì Relation

Final remarks

YANG Huilin, Erik Guignard

YANG Huilin

Prof. Erik Guignard’s explanation blends perfectly with his mapping of “relation” in the link and exchange made of gifts, the relation to “give, receive and return”, the relation positive, negative, neutral and ambivalent, or the relation as a deferred reciprocity, etc., which would greatly reactivate Confucius’ interpretation of “do unto others as you would have them done unto you”, James Legge’s translation in the term of “reciprocity”, and Van Rompuy’s definition of “reciprocity” as “the most important notion in the framework of strategic partnership”.

Erik Guignard

According to Pr Yang Huilin, going back to its origin, the word “*Guanxi*” is derived from the word “*Guan*” which is originally a bolt for a door, and is later derived from the word “strategic pass” and the word “*Xi, tie*” is “claw” on top and “silk” on the bottom, which means “to link the silk with the hands”. The original meaning is “to relate to”.

Even if the present Chinese word for “relationship” is not easy to translate and so that the phonetic translation *Guanxi* has to be sometimes used. The original meaning seems however to be not too far from the main meaning of “relationship” in the present European context when used in a very general way to describe or account for interactions between any two entities but, primarily, for human, individual and social, relations.

Looking at the West from a Chinese perspective, Prof. Yang Huilin see a chain of thought that has been in place for over a hundred years: the “relationship” (*Beziehung*), which Martin Buber called “ontology” to a method of “correlation”³⁵ (Tillich, Levinas, Bataille...) and mediation

35. A correlation proposes or states a logical relation (whether scientifically proved or assumption under current test or not) between things, facts, events or concepts: A is to B as C is to D ... or a causal relationship when Darwin suggest that the loss of vigor of herds of cows is linked to the presence of cats (via the relational chain between cats, field mice, wasps, rape).

(Badiou), meeting Zhang Dongsun's idea to distinguish between the Western logic of "identity" in opposition to a Chinese logic of "correlation".

But, he also shrewdly points out that Buber proposes to use "Beziehung" in a meaningful way: it does not inquire into the "components" of the relation, but into the relation as a relation.

Buber, in my opinion, meets here the mathematician Hilbert who, in 1899, renews the concepts of Euclidean geometry whose axioms designate five fundamental relational concepts³⁶ which are:

- either, in ancient logic, dependent or secondary to the terms they unite (for instance: "X is the friend of Y" unites two logical terms united by the predicate of the relation).
- Or, according to a new logic, independent or primary to the terms (persons, objects, facts, events or concepts, etc.) they unite. Thus, relationships can now be combined between themselves into complex networks, beyond simple dyadic relationships.
- This logic may be relevant for correlations, for instance yin-yang complementary thinking; it is also at the root of the ceremonial networks of gifts highlighted by Marcel Mauss, of Claude Lévi-Strauss's "generalized" cycles, and of deferred or non-deferred reciprocal exchange whether dual or triangular (antithetic or mediated, ...).

Among the multitude of definitions of "relation-guanxi", may I underline as a concluding remark, that the human relationships have their own specificities by the importance of the ethics that run through them and requires to distinguish the relations centered on a personal ego-pragmatism (cost/benefice...) from the relations governed by a community ethics (family and friendship relations...). In China, the distinction between family and non-family relations dates back to ancient China when Confucius prescribed a governance framework of five cardinal relations known as wu lun (五伦): emperor-official, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend, prototypes for extra-familial relations. In Europe, the family relationships are still deeply rooted by two millennia of Christianity, mixed by two hundred years of republicanism...

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Ritual

礼

Lǐ

CHEN Bisheng
Nikolas Århem

³⁶. Membership, order, congruence, parallelism, and continuity.

礼

Lǐ

Chinese perspective

CHEN Bisheng

“Rite” is the core concept of Chinese culture. In Chinese history, except the Qin dynasty and the Han Dynasty, almost all dynasties had made ceremonies (rites). Hence, ancient China was known as the “state of ceremonies”. Nonetheless, the understanding of the concept of “rites” is very complicated since the concept of “ceremonies” has multiple characteristics.

It is generally accepted that the historical origin of “The Rites” is the primitive religious ceremony. This understanding has been confirmed in ancient Chinese literature. In the *Book of Rites*, there is an article called *History of Rites*, claiming that the beginning of ceremony is food: “Originally, the rites began with eating and drinking. Ancient people at that time had not invented pottery. They washed millet and teared pork, then baked them on the hot stone. Besides, they excavated the ground in the form of deep water holes and scooped the water from it with two hands as to drink wine. They also made an earthen drum with clay to beat as reverence to the spirits and ghosts.” This was the original “rite”. In essence, rite is the activity to serve gods and obtain blessings.

However, the connotation of rites has been expanding with the development of history. In the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods of China, “rite” had become a core concept, which can be understood from several aspects.

First of all, “rite” means “the general rules conforming to nature”. Rites played the role of “rule” in its broadest sense. Everything has its own internalised rules, which were represented by “rite”. In heaven there is a cycle of four seasons and on earth there is high and low terrain. These rules are all manifestations of “rite”. As we listen to music, it moves people as its tunes are in accordance with the rhythm of people’s hearts.

In Chinese civilisation, “rite” as the general norm, is the difference between human and beast. An article called *Elements of Rites* in the *Book of Rites* says “a parrot can learn to speak, but it is still a bird. A chimpanzee

can learn to speak, but it is still a beast. Now if a man is without good behaviour, though he can speak, does he have not a beast’s mind? Birds and beasts are without rites, so the father and son may have a common wife. When the sages came to the world and worked out the rule of rite, they educated people by using it and made people know the difference between beasts and themselves.” In this sense, the relationship between people is not biological, but ethical. “Rite” is the core content to ensure ethics. For this reason, Chinese people tend to take the distinction between people and birds as an example to evaluate the breakthrough of basic moral bottom line. Chinese idioms such as “be worse than a beast” and “even a vicious tiger will not eat its cubs,” and so on, can prove it.

From an anthropological perspective, modern people may take it for granted that primitive religious rituals can all be understood as “rites”. It can’t be denied that when religious rituals are performed, there are specific rituals to express people’s devotion to gods and ghosts and people can feel devotion. Nonetheless, Chinese “rites” are not merely religious rites, but also the rites in line with nature. For instance, the emperor’s worship of heaven and earth with devotion is viewed as “rite”; however, wizards and sorcerers casting spells before the altar is not.

Secondly, “rite” is a series of specific ritual norms, whose main function is to settle human emotions and feelings. Among them, the first category is the ritual performed at some important moments in the course of one’s life. In ancient Chinese classics, *The Book of Rites* recorded the coronation ceremony, wedding, funeral, worship, drinking ceremony and other specific rituals, and included the ways of combining people on different occasions. Throughout one’s life, being an adult, getting married, the death of family members, all mean a new stage of life. At these moments, people need specific rituals to express and settle their feelings and emotions through the ceremony of coronation, marriage, funeral, memorial, so that the emotions can be expressed and settled.

The second category is the confirmation of human relations. In Chinese civilisation, human relations are the most important way to combine people. In ancient China, there were five cardinal relationships between father and son, husband and wife, brothers, ruler and subject, and between friends. Among them, relationships between father and son, husband and wife, and brothers are family relationships, while relationships between ruler and subject and between friends are political and social relationships beyond the family. Among the five cardinal relationships, relationships between father and son, ruler and subject, in terms

of establishing a family and country, are tied with morality. The father's morality is "kindness" and the son's morality is "filial piety". If the father is kind and the son shows filial piety, the family will be well-organised. The king's morality is "righteousness", the minister's morality is "loyalty" to the king, and running a country and bringing peace to the whole nation. Whether it is father and son, emperor and minister, husband and wife, brother or friend, the establishment of these human relations mainly depends on "rites".

From the point of view of "rites", morality is not only the impulse and consideration of human heart, but also should be carried out in specific rituals. Rituals that embody morality are called "rite". According to *Elements of Rites in the Book of Rites*, morality can only be realised in rites, and all relations can only be established in the norms of rites. "Morality, benevolence and righteousness cannot be performed without the rites. The instruction of the people to put customs in order cannot be perfect without the rites. Dispute and argument cannot be discriminated without the rites. The sovereign and ministers, or the father and the son, or the elder brother and the younger brother cannot determine their status without the rites. The relation between teachers and pupils while learning cannot be close to each other without the rites. Ranks, armies, and laws will lose their dignified power without the rites. The offering of sacrifices to the spirits cannot show sincerity and gravity without the rites." Therefore, a man of virtue and nobility should be respectful, restrained, self-contained, and yielding to understand the significance of rites. Enlightenment must be achieved by relying on rites. The relationship between monarch and minister, father and son, husband and wife must be reflected in rites. Courtly, military action must be dignified. Worship to gods and ancestors must be carried out in rites to reflect devotion and piety. In a word, ceremony, as a code of conduct, is the concrete manifestation of the implementation of human ethics.

For instance, in terms of ethic between father and son, *The Classic of Filial Piety* says: "In terms of the son's filial service to his parents, in the daily household, the son should try his best to be respectful to his parents. In the food and drink life, the son should maintain a happy mood to serve. When the parents are ill, the son must take care of them with anxiety. When his parents die, the son must try his best to grieve and sacrifice with solemnity." This described the performance of filial piety of the son in different stages of serving his parents, which means the inner feelings of the son must be presented by behaviour in accordance with

propriety. Among them, "sacrifice" is considered the most important rite because it is a ritual to communicate with deceased ancestors. In sacrificial rites, ritual places and utensils are essential. In the article *Elements of Rites in the Book of Rites*, it says, "when a noble family was about to build a house, an ancestral temple should be built first. When a high minister is about to manage his own clan, he should make sacrificial vessels at first."

Again, "rite" is the generic term of the system of national laws and regulations, that is, the "system of rites and music".

Xunzi, the Confucian master of the Warring States period, revealed the political significance of "rite", which was the most typical. Xunzi held that rite is the foundation of the country and society. In the *Theory on Rites*, he explained the origin of rites: "What is the origin of rites? I answer that human beings are born with desire. If you can't get what you want, you seek for it. If there is no tolerance or boundary, humans will argue; strife means chaos, chaos means poverty. The former king hated chaos, so the system of propriety and justice was created to raise people's desire, to meet people's demand. In this way, desire cannot just depend on material wealth, and material wealth will not be subject to desire. This is the origin of rite." Xunzi presupposed a society similar to Hobbes' "state of nature". In such a condition, people have a variety of desires, but the desire can never be exhausted. So, when this desire expands over a certain standard, people cannot avoid conflict with others. The more conflicts and disputes over material things arises, the more chaos ensues, and the state and society might collapse. In this case, in order to maintain the normal state of the state and society, the ancient sages set rules and boundaries. Hence, we got "rite". In this sense, etiquette establishes the basic boundaries between people in the political field and enables human society to exist as a community.

In ritual classics, the *Rites of Zhou* emphasises the political significance of rites most. This book is said to be the record of rites and music set up by the Duke of Zhou. According to the great Confucian scholars Liu Xin and Zheng Xuan of the Han Dynasty, the *Rites of Zhou* was produced by the Duke of Zhou in the early years of the Zhou Dynasty. The Zhou Dynasty was able to keep the world peaceful for hundreds of years just by carrying out the *Rites of Zhou*. The *Rites of Zhou* described not only the rules of etiquette, but also the rules and regulations that shaped the whole nation. There are six officers, namely, heaven officer, earth officer, spring officer, summer officer, autumn officer, and winter officer, in the *Rites of Zhou*. Each officer had administered sixty men and there are three

hundred and sixty official positions altogether. Zheng Xuan, a master of rites at the end of the Han Dynasty, believed that The Rites of Zhou were the “Rites Classics” while the Book of Rite was only the specific norms of rites classics. Zheng Xuan’s study of rites had a decisive influence on later generations. The concept of “rite” not only refers to norm, but also refers to a system of national laws and regulations.

In Rites of Zhou a sacrifice officer, the Great Zongbo, was responsible for the running of various rituals. Rites charged by the Great Zongbo included the sacrifice to the god of heaven, the sun, the moon and the stars, the state, the king’s ancestors, also the ceremonies held when the emperor paid hunting visits to the states and when the dukes worshiped their emperor. The rites above were related to a series of relations relevant to the formation and operation of a country: the relationship between the emperor and heaven, the emperor and dukes, the dukes, the war and punishment, and so on. In Chinese history, since the Han Dynasty, emperors of all dynasties would proclaim ritual and music systems of this dynasty, which always took the record of the Great Zongbo in the Rites of Zhou as a reference.

Among all these national systems, the heaven worship held in the Southern Suburb was the most important ceremony. According to ancient records, the Duke of Zhou began to worship the heaven in the Southern Suburb. Later dynasties confirmed their political legitimacy by the same ceremony. According to traditional Chinese thought, every dynasty arose because of the “mandate of heaven”. However, after the Han Dynasty, the emperor started to have a “ceremonial status”, that is, “the son of heaven”. Only as a son of heaven could he gain the legitimacy to rule the world. As the son of heaven, the emperor must make sacrifices to heaven on a fixed day every year. Only the “Son of Heaven” had the right to worship heaven. In Chinese history, the worship ceremony held in Southern Suburbs is related to the understanding of “heaven”. There have been many debates on heaven. Is it the boundless existence above humans’ heads? Or is it the heaven of the will? Or is it a personal God who can directly produce sons? Different understandings of heaven become the core issues of cosmology in different dynasties.

The political nature of “rite” was regarded as autocratic in ancient China. It can’t be denied that in some periods of Chinese history, the strictly hierarchical structure of “rite” had led to the idea of “the emperor wants the minister to die, the minister must die.” However, that was not the case in terms of the origin of rites. Chinese civilisation underlines

the continuity of nature and culture, which is especially evident in rites. In History of Rites of the Book of Rites, “rite” was described to be “the way of heaven and human feelings and common customs”. Ancient Chinese people understood “nature” mainly in two aspects: first, regarding heaven and earth as the existence of nature, and understanding human beings and history from the rhythm of heaven and earth, such as four seasons, Yin and Yang, five elements; second, regarding human nature as a product of nature. In this case, the natural emotions of human beings could be settled in rites. For example, filial piety is considered as a naturally formed ethic. A man with the quality of filial piety is believed to be loyal to his sovereign when he becomes an official. The natural colour of “rite” is very strong. In ancient China, it is said that each sage king “had made rites and music”. It means that the sage king is causing the rites and music to arise according to the internal rules of nature. Therefore, rites and music, which are culture, are not the result of the creation of any sage king, but naturally formed. It can be seen that Chinese civilisation underlines the continuity of nature and culture.

In summary, “rite” in Chinese civilisation is not only the basic rule of human life, but also a specific etiquette norm. It can even present the whole system of national laws and regulations. The intention of “rite” is appropriate behaviour, while the extension of concept is much broader. From the perspective of comparison of Chinese and Western civilisations, the understanding of “rites” in Chinese tradition is one of the fundamental differences.

Ritual

European perspective

Nikolas Århem

In modern secular societies, permeated by a dominant naturalistic ontology or worldview, the term “ritual” evokes a symbolic form of behaviour or communication, particularly directed towards gods or divinities. In these societies, rituals mark out a separate and sacred domain of reality, one that is divorced from the “really real”, the material world ruled by the laws of nature and physics. In this secular and modern world, gods and spirits are fictions of imagination, playing a secondary role and leading an unobtrusive life in society; rituals are thus regarded as symbolic and expressive acts with no “real” effects on the world – at least not in the sense intended by the believers that perform them. If ritual has any effect, it is assumed, it is personal and emotional, subjective, and inter-subjective.

In animist societies (such as the swidden farmers in the Amazon rainforest or the Montagnard peoples of Laos and Vietnam), by contrast, where almost every element and phenomenon in “nature” is regarded as alive and with soul and sentiments like yourself, and also powers beyond and superior to your own – in these societies, gods and spirits are the rulers of reality, lords of life and death, governors of all the living – including humans. In such a reality – one in which millions of people live today –, to make a living involves not only mastering the everyday practicalities of life, of hunting and fishing, of cultivating your fields and collecting edible seeds and fruits in the forest; you must also master the “language” of the spirits, know how to communicate and socialise with animals and plants, the spirit lords of the forest and the mountains in order to obtain what you need for your living.

This communication and social interaction with gods and spirits, “we” – “modern”, literate, and secular people – usually call ritual or magic or liturgy. To the people who live in the animate world inhabited by spirits, however, rituals are simply part of the everyday work of making a living; it forms part of what we would call economy, or politics, or

social intercourse. It is, as it were, just another aspect of practical know-how or common sociality.

Hence, in “non-modern” societies, and among “non-modern people” (that is, people assuming a reality ruled by gods and spirits – even if living in an urban modern-day setting), there is often no distinct word for what we “moderns” call ritual –; they might instead simply call it “work”. Like manufacturing an object or carrying out any type of labour, a spiritual activity such as a “ritual” is simply an instrumental activity necessary in order to make a living. The same term may be used for arranging a wedding, building a house or carrying out an animal sacrifice.

This, for example, is true in large parts of Africa where witchcraft and sorcery beliefs are widespread and many educated urban people habitually consult a *féticheur* (healer) for help in achieving success in life or business, or to ward off the evil powers of sorcerers. Here, then, what the *féticheur* does is simply referred to as “work” (*faire un travail*).

Etymology

According to Chen Bisheng, the Chinese concept of “ritual” has many meanings depending on the specific context in which it is used – and, accordingly, expressed by several words (notably *li* and *yi*) – but all seem to refer to sets of specific procedures, ethical norms, laws, and etiquette. Very generally, the concept can be translated as correct conduct or protocol – whether in close human relationships or referring to religious acts as offerings and sacrifices to the gods. But the concept also carries the meaning of rules, regulations, and order, referring to the laws of the state and the order of society, nature, and the cosmos at large. All of these meanings seem to be implicit in the ancient Chinese character *yi* (ritual, rite). This fact makes an interesting connection to Western cultural history by shedding light on the etymology of the word “ritual” in the ancient Mediterranean world – particularly associating it with the concept and institution of sacrifice.

Thus, the English word ritual is derived from the Latin noun *rituum*, which seems to have been introduced rather late into English (mid-16th century) and at about the same time into virtually all Central and Northern European Germanic languages. Even though the word enters these non-Latin languages only a few hundred years ago – primarily to denote the correct way to carry out the church service – it is not clear

which words it might have replaced. Thus, we do not know what, for example, the equivalent term might have been among the early Anglo-Saxons or early Germans. In Scandinavian religious terminology, the word *blot* appears to have referred to the practice of blood sacrifice. In many Slavic languages, the word *obryad* is used to denote ritual – and also seems to be related to the concept of sacrifice or offering (but also signifying “order” or “protocol”), suggesting a linguistic connection between the terms for ritual and sacrifice. These (and other related) words are all linked to the Latin *oblatus* – “to offer”.

Anthropologists tend to associate the concept of ritual with the “sacred”. On this account, ritual refers to a “sacred procedure” or performance – but it is worth noting that the Latin (ancient Roman) meaning of the term seems very close to the Chinese meaning: the “proper way”, or the “customary way” of doing something (implying the correct protocol to follow in important matters and situations; see Chen Bisheng). The Latin word is also related to the Sanskrit concepts of *Rta*, (“order, rule, truth, the principle of natural order”) and *artavan* (“he who is morally accomplished”).

The old Germanic religious ideas and practices provide an entry point into the pre-Christian meanings of ritual. Christianity arrived in the Germanic tribes via the expansion of the Roman Empire. The earliest forms of Germanic (and indeed Celtic) religion are known through archaeological findings, such as deposited ritual objects – usually found in lakes and marshes. These depositions trace back all the way to the Neolithic age. Hence, the Roman historian Tacitus speaks of the goddess Nerthus being worshipped “on an island in a lake”. In several bogs, wood figures have been found with strongly emphasised sexual features (suggesting that the worshipping around lakes was connected with notions of fertility). Large public offerings seemed to have taken place in centralised locations, and human sacrifice was common.

What makes it difficult for us to reconstruct the exact nature of European pre-Christian religious life outside the literary civilisations of ancient Rome and Greece is the fact that the Christianisation of these lands took place with a focus precisely on the destruction of the native rituals and the places of worship, or an almost immediate appropriation of these places and practices for Christian worship. (Indeed, the wood from destroyed sacred groves or trees of the pagan tribes were often used to build the new Christian churches, cf the sacred oak cut down by Saint Boniface when the saint was forcefully trying to convert the

Saxons to Christianity.) Once the cult places were destroyed or appropriated, non-Christian worship disappeared almost instantaneously.

However, one of the greatest strengths of the early Christian missionaries was precisely the fact that they had little qualms in readily absorbing extant rituals amongst many different nations, and even of maintaining the sacrality of their sacred places by replacing their pagan mythic content with Christian notions and narratives. Certain sacred wells and springs, which had been worshipped continuously perhaps since the Neolithic times, continued to be worshipped, now with a story of a Christian saint attached to them. The pagan world-tree became the Christmas tree and the maypole, now associated with Christian holy periods (notably Easter and Christmas). By giving old rituals a new, Christian content, the missionaries facilitated the conversion precisely because ritual practices were generally considered more important to the lay people than the religious ideas associated with them.

Animal rituals and pre-linguistic communication

The classical philologist Walter Burkert traces ritual all the way back to non-human animals. Just like other theoretical speculations about the origin of rituals, his conjectures cannot be proven or disproven, but are certainly thought-provoking. He observes that the Greek *herms*, statue-steles with erect phalluses, and the practice of placing them at the borders of the city states, or to mark the place where a victorious battle against invaders took place, connect the *herms* to the fact that certain primates are known to station sentries at the borders of their territory, similarly with erect penises. He also compares the Greek ritual practice of offering of libations – the pouring of a liquid to a god on the ground to mark out the sacred space – with the habit of many primates and other mammals to mark their territory by urinating.

Now, there is no doubt that there are tangible similarities between human rituals and animal rituals (the term is used by ethologists and biologists) such as the spectacular courtship rituals of certain birds and mammals. The difference, of course, is that the former are cultural and the latter largely instinctive. These observations raise the further issue about proto-human and pre-linguistic communication – what Gregory Bateson called iconic communication by means of images and metaphors. As distinct from linguistic discourse, Bateson maintained that

iconic communication is carried on beyond the discursive consciousness. Archaic human rituals could be examples of such iconic communication.

Apart from these speculations, it is clear that rituals have very ancient roots in human cultures. Religious scholars have debated about the relationship between myth and ritual in the formation and evolution of religion. Does myth precede rituals, or is it the other way around? A fair position on this issue is that rituals are very ancient and probably precede mythic narratives. However, over time they have come to be mutually supportive; myth adds meaning to ritual, while ritual makes myth explicit and tangible. This mutuality between myth and ritual goes a long way in explaining their endurance in the history of humanity. Together they give people and cultures a measure of continuity and coherence in an everchanging and sometimes incomprehensible world.

礼 Lǐ

Ritual

Final remarks

CHEN Bisheng, Nikolas Århem

“Ritual”, as understood in modern Western anthropological and religious scholarship, has two rather distinct meanings; on the one hand, it refers to religious rituals which are concerned with the sacred, actions involving communication and interaction with gods or spirits. On the other hand, the concept is also used in a secular sense as referring to formalised and standardised expressive actions which have no necessary practical effect – rather in the sense of the Western idea of etiquette, acts devoid of religious or sacred meaning (see Chen Bisheng’s contribution for the distinct Chinese notion of this term).

However, anthropological scholarship suggests that premodern, animistic societies have an entirely different understanding; what anthropologist and religious scholars call ritual is to them a practical and instrumental activity comparable to the notion of work – i.e., an activity necessary to achieve practical and material ends in an experiential world where gods and spirits are part of the “natural order of things” and where nature is perceived as animate and alive. On this account, ritual is a variety of social interaction with gods, spirits, and the souls of the dead and the beings of animate nature.

The word ritual derives from the Latin noun *rituum*, which entered English language in the 16th century, and referred primarily to the correct way of carrying out Church service. Philological studies suggest that the English and Latin terms replaced earlier equivalent terms referring to the practices of ceremonial offerings and blood sacrifices, thus suggesting a linguistic connection between the terms for ritual and for sacrifice. It is worth noting that the Latin (ancient Roman) meaning of the term is close to the ancient Chinese meaning of the corresponding term – i.e., the “proper way” or “customary way” of doing things – implying “correct protocol” (see Chen Bisheng’s contribution).

Apart from the religious and secular meanings of the concept of ritual in Western tradition, there exists a different but related concept of

ritual, which is used in the zoological and ethological sciences (dealing with animal behavior); this natural-science notion of ritual refers to an instinctive communicative behaviour of animals, notably mammals and birds. This concept lends an evolutionary function to the concept: on this account, ritual behaviour is held to give an evolutionary advantage to certain species in the “struggle for survival”. Such animal rituals include courtship rituals of certain birds and animals.

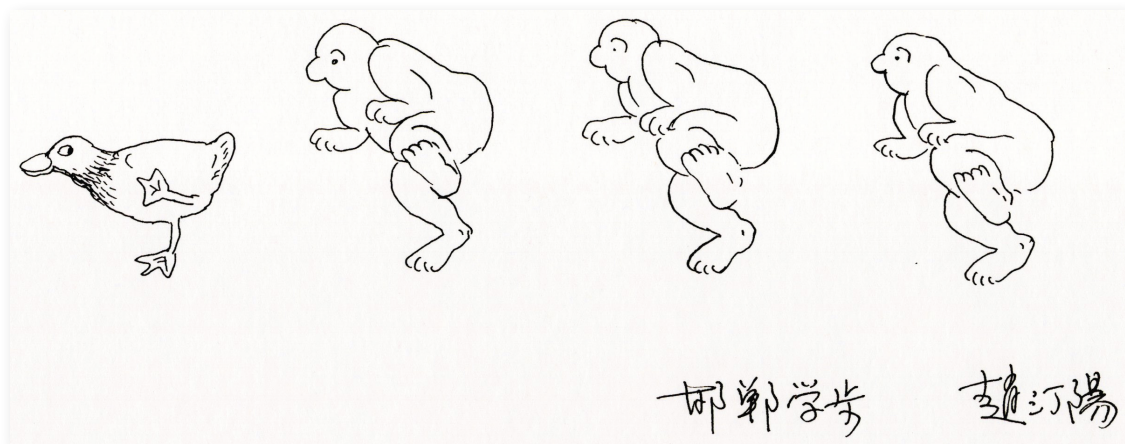
In a comparative perspective, it is interesting to note that the ancient Confucian concept of ritual as “rules” and “ethically correct behaviour” is used in China to express the contrast between human beings and beasts in the same way as Western tradition opposes culture to nature (the notion of culture is used in Western thought to express the dichotomy between humanity and nature). In other words, where the Chinese use the notion of ritual to distinguish humanity from nature, Western tradition use the concept of culture to express the same dichotomy.

A further Confucian idea mentioned by Cheng Bisheng is that teaching and instructing people the correct rules of behaviour is not enough to install in them “the right path”; instruction needs to be accompanied by rites. In other words, correct behaviour must be accompanied by the solemn and pious disposition induced through ritual. In Western anthropological thinking, this idea corresponds closely to the notion that ritual invests action with meaning; it makes correct or normative behaviour deeply meaningful.

As a final comment on the difference between Chinese and Western civilisation, Chen Bisheng notes that while modern Western thinking makes a fundamental distinction between nature and culture, Chinese traditional thought emphasises the continuity between nature and culture, where culture, as it were, is epitomised by ritual as exemplary human behaviour. But ritual as culture is not understood to be opposed to nature; rather, ritual is “close to the way of heaven” and thus follows “the inner rules of nature”. When Chen Bisheng remarks that the “music and ritual” of the sage kings was not of their own making but sprang from their inner nature, he means to say that music and ritual as cultural expressions are in tune with the divine music of heaven and the inner workings of nature. That is to say, while to Western thought ritual is culture as opposed to nature, in Chinese tradition ritual is culture in harmony with the order of nature and the cosmos.

Short synopsis of Chen Bisheng’s contribution on “ritual”

“Ritual” is a key word in Chinese culture. It embodies the expectation of a good life according to the precepts of the ancient Chinese. Therefore, “ritual” forms a series of theories on how to live (an ideal) political and social life. “Ritual” in Chinese culture is not only the basic rule of human life but also a specific etiquette and norm to be followed. It can even be seen as representing the whole system of (ideal) national laws and regulations. In other words, the intention of “ritual” is appropriate behaviour, while the extension of the concept is much broader. “Ritual” is not set in stone, it keeps changing with the times. In this sense, a study on “ritual” by modern Chinese people means not only tracing the past, but also looking forward toward the future.



Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Rule of law

法治

Fǎ Zhì

PAN Wei

Hans-Peter Freymann

法治

Fǎ Zhì

Chinese perspective

PAN Wei

“Rule of law” in Chinese (法治, fǎzhì) does not exactly mean the same as in English.

This short article explains the nuances with three parts: different definitions of law, different relations to ethics, and the term’s different political applications.

Chinese understanding of “Law (/fa)”

In traditional Europe, the term “law” has the connotation “divine” and/or “natural.” Whereas the Chinese character “法, fa” means rules or regulative methods to solve current problems. It often combines with another character to form a phrase “办法, banfa”, which means method or approach. In short, “fa” is neither divine nor natural, but a pragmatic solution, albeit regulating.

In the modern West, people’s representatives make the Law and laws, which replaces the righteousness of the God or natural law with the rights of the common people. However, the Chinese continue to believe that the governing body should make and enforce laws. Due to the tradition of blurred and unstable social cleavages, the Chinese government is supposed to be “neutral” among social strata, not representative to any of them. Class struggle has become an infamous concept particularly after the “Cultural Revolution”. Social solidarity has been a popular and mainstream social value. The target of social criticism focuses on government instead of laws, about whether the government is neutral and fair or selfish and corrupt.

Moreover, as a “method” in China, the law is not a critical concept in politics as in the West. The Chinese tend to understand it as the commercial contract that one must observe in a commercial society. Other than the commercial area, laws would be more or less a matter of

convenience. Therefore, the authority of laws is subject to the severity of law enforcement.

Chinese understanding of law and ethics

Law in the West was the root of ethics or major moral principles. Being rather religious, monotheist in particular, might have given rise to that. Thus, being a moral person is to abide by law, by the laws of the Bible. Therefore, law enforcement is easier than in China and much less important than law-making.

China became secular very early, no later than Confucius time of two and half millenniums ago. The Chinese ethics derive mainly from family ethics, defining the order of the family. Extending the family order to the political order makes the government’s moral construct. Therefore, “nation” in Chinese is “国家, guojia”, which literally means “a family country” or “a country of families.”

Confucianism displays principles of family ethics. Nevertheless, family ethics is incompatible with civil and criminal laws. Thus, its counterpart “legalist school” (法家, fajia) was born at the same time, and dominated through the “Warring States” period (475 – 221 BCE) and until about the start of the Current Era. The confrontation and compromise of the two schools of thoughts have continued until this day. The contradictions in the modern version are seen in that the Chinese Communist leaders talk about “rule by law” one day, and “rule by moral principles” the other day.

The incongruity between the law and Chinese ethics appears alien to the West. On the one hand, it explains the importance of law-making in the contemporary West, and that of law enforcement in China. On the other hand, however, it relates to the need of a Supreme Court, or a Constitutional Court, to settle the contradictions between man-made law and “natural law.”

For the Chinese, family ethics are permanent, while laws are changeable and pragmatic approaches for solving problems. For the West, ethics and the Law are the same thing, because all man-made laws need to follow the Law. Therefore, people in the West have a tradition of respecting the authority of law, while the Chinese tend to follow laws at convenience unless it is harshly enforced. A “good” Chinese citizen might not be strictly a law-abiding one, but one very loyal to family ethics.

Chinese understanding of “rule of law”

In the West, “rule of law” means the utmost importance of law above any person. It is in fact a denial to personal rule, and a support to the principle of “all men are created equal.”

The Chinese sage Mencius (385 – 289 BCE) had a famous saying: “Acts of kindness are not enough to govern, and laws do not practice themselves.” Law cannot rule by itself; persons make and enforce the law. Therefore, the Chinese understanding to this day has been that the governance everywhere is “rule by law” instead of “rule of law.” It is more appropriate in the time of people’s law-making power, or of democracy, so to speak.

The Chinese legislature, the single chamber “People’s Congress”, makes the law. The executive branches propose most of the legal bills, as in Korea and Japan. However, the legislature requires two preconditions to pass the bills: widely consulting stakeholders and referring to similar laws in the US, Japan, and European nations. Representatives will not vote for or against the bill until a consensus is obtained. The formal Congressional meetings for vote in public is mainly to show national solidarity, which is often misunderstood outside China as a “rubber stamp.”

The dominance of the Chinese Communist Party in the legislature is obvious. This raises doubts about the “rule of the Party” or “rule by law”.

In fact, the Chinese laws are as “normal” and “professional” as anywhere; and the Party mainly concerns political direction, namely, the solidarity and progress of the nation.

The Chinese legal language is as difficult and vague as that in the U.S. National laws, which are more principles than details, allowing some malleability for local law enforcement according to local conditions. That appears to be “federalism with Chinese characteristics.”

What is the relationship between the Party and the law? The avowed governing principle of China is an “organic whole” of three parts, which is taught by constitution-teaching textbooks of all school levels. The three parts include the Party’s leadership, the people as the master of the country and rule by law. Considering the pervasiveness of the market mechanism and of small and medium enterprises, the three-part “organic whole” appears comparable to “liberal democracy” or “social democracy”, despite the palpable emphasis on the unity of the gigantic nation. The Chinese are quite familiar with the Western emphasis on the

political rights of individuals and of socially stratified interest groups, but not necessarily eager to buy it.

Law in China is not as important in politics as in the West. However, the governing principle does not mean to allow the Party above the law, nor does it reject equality among the people.

Summary

1. The law in China is neither divine nor natural, hence much less authoritative than in the West.
2. While family ethics are permanent, laws are pragmatic and inconstant solutions to maintain order.
3. Practically in China, law enforcement is much more critical than law making, hence the lesser importance of legislature compared to the executive branch.
4. Rule by law is as “normal” as rule of law albeit the apparent emphasis on the political unity of a huge nation.

Rule of law

European perspective

Hans-Peter Freymann

Hardly any other political idea has gained greater global recognition nor has spread so far in recent decades as the rule of law. The concept was supported by a worldwide campaign that was initiated in the early 1990s by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to create uniform conditions for successful economic development, and practically no country today has not adopted the rule of law. However, this success is only superficial for in fact, there is no agreement on what is meant by the rule of law. Rather, as a prime example for a “profoundly contested concept”,¹ there are numerous and sometimes substantially different meanings associated with the term, so that ultimately every political system can claim to enforce the rule of law, even if its respective forms are highly diverse.

Why is this so? Historically, the rule of law has been a central instrument for limiting sovereignty with the aim of preventing abuse of government power or even tyranny. By binding sovereignty to the law – both in the sense of laws passed by the ruler(s) themselves and in the sense of a higher-ranking law (e.g., natural law, customary law, divine law) that is removed from sovereignty and whose observance is guaranteed by an independent judiciary – the exclusion of arbitrariness and other negative excesses of the state’s exercise of power, which experience has shown can arise from human weakness, should be ideally ensured. The rule of law thus represents the antithesis of the “rule of man”, or as Aristotle puts it: “It is more proper that law should govern than any one of the citizens.”²

In contrast, a “thin”, formalistic approach to the rule of law prevails in academic discourse, especially in the opinion of Anglo-American

commentators. This goes beyond the extreme position, which ultimately associates the rule of law with the demand that all action of sovereignty must be carried out by law (“rule by law”) by linking additional requirements to legislation; however, substantial standards, such as whether a law is just or whether it must respect fundamental rights, are left out.

What distinguishes this approach? The starting point here is a control of behaviour made possible by the law, or as Joseph Raz, a leading contemporary theorist, puts it: “If the law is to be obeyed, it must be capable of guiding the behaviour of its subjects.”³ Derived from this, a law must be legally certain in the broadest sense, i.e., its preconditions and legal consequences must be foreseeable in that it is formulated clearly, free of contradictions, and sufficiently definite; it must be publicly accessible to everyone, have a reasonably lasting effect, be forward-looking, and it must not demand the impossible, i.e., it must be capable of being fulfilled. Furthermore, a law must be universally valid, i.e., it must apply equally to everyone, including the holders of state power, or as A. V. Dicey states: “No man is above the law.”⁴ In order for law to be more than mere appeal, it also requires a regulatory mechanism that allows its enforcement. In particular, this includes the granting of procedural rights that guarantee everyone easy access to an open and fair trial without bias, as well as the establishment of barriers in the exercise of discretion by (public) authorities, each of which are eligible for review and are enforced by an independent judiciary.

Such a retreat to formal criteria of legality ultimately leads to what generally constitutes normsetting and norm-following, i.e., norm-theoretical considerations, or as Benjamin N. Cardozo rightly describes: “In the end there is nothing distinctive about the formal rule of law as a separate ideal. It is about legal rules.”⁵ An approach “gutted” in this way detracts from the original goal of the rule of law. Because no demands are made on the content of the legal rules, the question of whether a law is good or bad is left out, as is the consideration of whether higher-ranking law is able to restrict the legislator. Restrictions are imposed on sovereignty only to the extent that it is obliged to act by generally applicable, verifiable rules. Protection against state arbitrariness is limited

1. Representative of many: Faundez/Janse/Muller/Peerenboom, *Hague Journal on the rule of Law*, 2009, p. 1 f.

2. In: *A Treatise on Government*, Book III, Chapter XVI, 1287a, published e.g. <http://www.literaturepage.com/read/treatiseongovernment-104.html>, accessed 14/9/2021.

3. In: *The Rule of Law and its Virtue*, published in *The authority of law: essays on law and morality*; 1979 p. 212, 214, online e.g. http://fs2.american.edu/dfagel/www/Philosophers/Raz/Rule%20of%20Law%20and%20its%20Virtue_%20%20Joseph%20Raz.pdf, accessed 14.9.2021.

4. *Introduction to the Law of Constitution* (1885), p. 114, online at, e.g., <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rule-of-law/#Dice>, accessed 9/14/2021.

5. As Brian Z. Tamanaha in *On the rule of Law, History, Politics, Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 97 with further references.

to the fact that (arbitrary) *ad hoc* measures are further excluded and political changes of will are integrated into a formal legislative procedure. Nevertheless, this concept has the advantage that, in view of its cultural and political neutrality, it can be adapted to many forms of state and is consequently also suitable for those that do not share Western notions of individual freedom and the guarantee of immutable fundamental human rights. In this way, a minimum level of legal certainty can be implemented in large parts of the world, which is essential for the functioning of cross-border trade and economic development based on it.⁶

According to European understanding, however, such a formal concept of the rule of law is insufficient. Even an extension of formal legality, which Jürgen Habermas advocated for by demanding democratic legitimation of the legislator, does not do justice to this; a democratic formation of will promises majority approval for a law, but this alone is not suitable to prevent “bad” regulations; therefore, in addition to the formal and democratic requirements, an additional substantive anchoring is needed, such as the one inherent in the “thicker”, substantive theoretical approaches to the rule of law. This concerns first and foremost the safeguarding of one of the most important achievements of liberal societies: the guarantee of individual rights (of freedom). The Council of Europe formulates this approach, now predominant in Europe, as follows: “The rule of law [...] is one of the three fundamental principles [...] together with pluralist democracy and respect for the human rights; these three principles are closely interconnected: preserving and promoting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law is nowadays even seen as a single objective [...] there can be [...] no rule of law without democracy and respect for human rights [...].”⁷ The rule of law, in the sense of the formal rule of law, thus forms an inseparable *triumvir* together with a democratic community and the guarantee of individual rights.

With this link to democracy on the one hand, and respect for individual human rights on the other, the self-understanding of the rule of law expands. It also serves to guarantee fundamental procedural rights or “judicial human rights” such as the right of access to justice, the right to be heard, the criminal law principles of *non bis in idem*, and the presumption of innocence, or the right to a fair trial,⁸ among other rights.

6. On the correlation between rule of law and economic development, e.g.

7. The Council of Europe and the Rule of Law - An overview, CM (2008) 170 v. 21.11.2008 - <http://www.coe.int/cm>, p. 4 f.

8. For example, Frithjof Ehm, *The Rule of Law, Concept, Guiding Principle and Framework*, CDL-UDT (2010)012.

Within the framework of European integration and cooperation – as it has become manifest in the European Union and the Council of Europe together with the European Court of Human Rights, which became responsible for the interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights in the period after the Second World War – there is an increasing merging of the Anglo-Saxon rule of law, which is traditionally more oriented towards process and form, a continental European understanding, which, following the German *Rechtsstaat* or the French *État de Droit*, integrates the protection of (basic) fundamental rights in this respect.⁹ The European Court of Human Rights in particular tends to link the protection of human rights with the rule of law: “A state based on the rule of law has the duty to employ the necessary measures to uphold the law on its territory and to ensure the security of all as well as the enjoyment of human rights.”¹⁰ The term “human rights” generally stands for pre-positive law, i.e., law which is not subject to (simple) legislation, either because it is laid down in a Constitution or because of traditionally developed common law. Since higher-ranking law becomes the standard and at the same time the limit of state action, such a law can only be effective when it does not contradict this higher-ranking law.

Understood in this way, the rule of law is based on three central pillars from a European perspective: in addition to the formal requirements of legality (principle of legality) and due process mentioned above, the third pillar in the form of the “independent and impartial judiciary” plays a central role in determining the permissible content of the law and the enforcement of the law. It is incumbent upon the determination of the proportionality (“reasonableness”) of positive law to higher-ranking law, meaning that it must both interpret the content of existing laws and determine the limits of high-ranking law. This gives the judge *de facto* the last word in determining the legal boundaries. At the same time, there is an unmistakable danger that political guidelines will be determined by the judiciary, who are also human and therefore fallible (“rule by men”), instead of sovereignty. It is therefore essential to establish the judiciary in as objective a manner as possible. For this, it is essential to let it work independently of any (political) influence (independence of the judiciary), which cannot be achieved without the independence of the judiciary in the concert of the individual state powers (separation

9. The Council of Europe and the Rule of Law - An overview, CM (2008) 170 v. 21.11.2008 - <http://www.coe.int/cm>, p. 76 n. 31 f., 33.

10. Lelièvre, 8.11.2007, § 104.

of powers), and which also requires the personal independence of the individual judges within the judiciary. On the other hand, the impartiality and objectivity of judicial decisions must be ensured by appropriate barriers to access, a high, traditionally anchored professional ethic, and a reasonable system of instances.

Even if the implementation of the rule of law in Europe is by no means uniform and there are differences between common law and the law of continental Europe in particular, primarily constitutional, legal systems, the common history of the European peoples and the consistently accepted central idea of limiting state arbitrariness through the equality of all before the law reveal a more far-reaching common understanding of the rule of law even beyond pronouncements at transnational and international level. Even the supposed difference between common law and the rule of law proves, on closer examination, to be less clear than is generally assumed¹¹ for here as there, pre-constitutional law is presumed to be the standard, not only of jurisprudence but also of political action. Where a Constitution – unlike in Germany, France, Italy, etc. – is lacking, common law, understood as customary and judicial law, provides the appropriate standard. This also applies to the English parliament, which, unlike its continental European counterparts, is legally unbound due to the lack of a Constitutional Court, but which, due to its overriding social importance, is de facto bound by common law to such an extent that fundamental deviations seem certain to result in fundamental criticism and early voting out.¹²

This in turn presupposes that a functioning democratic system is in place to guarantee a form of “checks and balances”. If, on the other hand, there is no control of sovereignty by means of free, protected elections and/or by means of an independent court system,¹³ this differently-oriented concept of the rule of law – as already described above – remains rudimentary. In my understanding, this also and especially applies to communitarian forms of society in which, as in China, the orientation towards the welfare of the people occupies the highest authority.¹⁴

11. For example, MacCormick, *The Rule of Law and the Rule of Law*, *Juristenzeitung* 1984, p. 65 et seq.

12. Cf. MacCormick, *The Rule of Law and the Rule of Law*, *Law Journal* 1984, p. 65, 67 fn. 8.

13. On judicial independence in China, see for example the essays in Peerenboom (Ed.), *Judicial Independence in China*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

14. On this, for example, Li, *China and the Rule of Law*, in *American Affairs*, Fall 2019, Vol. III No. 3, online at: <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2019/08/china-and-the-rule-of-law/>, accessed 14.9.2021; Heuser, *What “Rule of Law”? The Traditional Chinese Concept of Good Governance and Challenges of the 21st Century*, *ZaöRV* 2004, 723; also: Seppänen, *Ideological Conflict and the Rule of Law in Contemporary China - Useful Paradoxes*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

This should not be misunderstood: even in so-called liberal societies, the rule of law offers no guarantee that state arbitrariness can be permanently prevented. The current discussion about the influence of the media, including so-called social media, on large parts of the population shows that the danger of the pluralistic formation of will – and thus also for the existence of seemingly unchangeable rights – has taken on new dimensions;¹⁵ nevertheless, the European interlocking of the rule of law with its foundations of a democratic polity and basic human rights makes the formation of state arbitrariness at the very least more difficult to a reassuring degree.

15. For example Lewandowsky et al., *Technology and Democracy: Understanding the influence of online technologies on political behaviour and decision-making*. Publications Office of the European Union 2020, online at <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/49b629ee-1805-11eb-b57e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>, accessed on 14.9.2021; cf., also: Schirch (Ed.), *Social Media Impacts on Conflict and Democracy - The Tectonic Shift*, Routledge 2021.

法治 Fǎ Zhì

Rule of law

Final remarks

PAN Wei, Hans-Peter Freymann

In summary, the rule of law from a European perspective is a decisive part of a control of sovereignty in order to ensure compliance with human rights in a system of checks and balances, specifically by means of free, protected elections and by means of an independent court system.

From the Western perspective, democracy and the rule of law are inseparable. In this context, it should not play a decisive role whether the underlying concept of democracy is more liberal (e.g., USA, Great Britain) or more oriented towards emphasising the social responsibility of the state (e.g., Germany, France).

If one asks why the rule of law has such a strong position in Europe, there are certainly various reasons. The millennia-long influence of a monotheistic religion with fundamental values is just as much a part of it as the emphasis on the individual in an economic system that places the individual in the foreground. The decisive factor, however, is the historically grown willingness to guarantee and defend human rights. This requires a special regulatory mechanism, which was finally found in the present form of the constitutional state, that is committed to the rule of law.

The particular emphasis on social regulations, to restrict the free wills of rulers and masses alike, appears to me a widespread practice of all political civilisations in the past and present. The differences lie only in two things: how authoritative the regulations are; and who or what are responsible for creating and revising the regulations to fit in social evolutions.

In China, with regard to social regulation, problem-solving pragmatism has been more crucial than the philosophical ideas of justice, either for an individual or for a group. The Chinese utilitarian attitude derives from the long history of small-scale and independent family farming, and from the lack of a monotheistic religion. In modern time, although China's law making involves people's representatives from all

social strata and ethnic groups, the emphasis is on borrowing laws from advanced nations to join the Western world and still on enforcing laws according to particular conditions. A more remarkable difference lies in that the law-making body is less authoritative than the executive bodies, so as to maintain the political unity of a nation of 1.4 billion people with an area equivalent to an entire Europe. The actual practice of the Chinese legal system operates like the Common Law system rather than the Continental Law system; while its basis, rather than the democracy of partisan politics, is a top-down Confucian governing group at all levels. While that might be considered draconian in the West, it nevertheless still functions so far.

By the way, personally from a Chinese perspective, I see the historic and European emphasis on "law and order" differs from today's Western emphasis on "democracy-based rule of law", which may partially explain the difference between the "rule of law" in Europe and "rule of lawyers" in the United States.

Beauty 美
Body 身
Contract 约
Death 死
Debt, financial 债
Debt, human 人情
Dialectics 阴阳
Duty 义
Empire 天下
Equality 平等
Eternity 永恒
Face 面子
Family 家
Friendship 友谊
Gift 礼物
Happiness 福
Harmony 和
Heart 心
Heritage 遗产
History 历史
Humanism 仁
Image 象
Individual 己
Liberty 自由
Monotheism 神论
Nation 国
Private property 私产
Progress 进步
Relation 关系
Ritual 礼
Rule of law 法治
Society 社会
Time 时间
Writing 书写

Society

社会

Shè Huì

LAU Kin-chi,
HUANG Ping
Matthias Middell

社会 Shè Huì

Chinese perspective

LAU Kin-chi, HUANG Ping

“社会” has come to be rendered as the equivalent of “society” in modern Chinese usage, but the meaning of the term in traditional Chinese has to do with religious rituals – what binds and coheres communities. In the oracle bone script, 社 is 𠂇, signifying land, or a ritual to pay respects to the god of land. This is more clearly stated in Jin scripture: 𠂇. Later it came to denote a neighbourhood unit of 25 families.

In the oracle bone script, hui (会) is 會, the upper part resembles a lid, and the lower part resembles a vessel containing objects. As Shuowen Jiezi says, it means assembling and combining.

A similar term is she ji (社稷), where ji (稷) is 穡, meaning grains, and denoting a peasant working on the farmland. Interestingly, she ji originally denotes the gods of the earth and of the grains, and as rituals honouring these gods were conducted by the establishment, the term came to denote the establishment itself. Mencius' quote is well known: placing precedence of the people over the establishment, and over the Lord or Emperor. The establishment comes in between the people (the ruled) and the lords (the rulers). Later, she ji even came to denote the state, the institutional form keeping social bonds and social order.

In contemporary Chinese usage, she hui (社会) has become generally accepted as the equivalent of “society” and “the social”, with extended usage of she hui xue (社会学) for “sociology”, and she hui zhu yi (社会主义) for “socialism”. This term is borrowed from Japanese coinage of “society” by 社会 by Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835 – 1901) during the Meiji Restoration period. Yan Fu (1854 – 1921), a Chinese translator introducing western concepts to China, offered qun (群) as rendition of “society”, appropriating the concept of qun xue (群学) basically from Xunzi (310 – 238 BCE). However, Yan Fu's rendition was not popularised. Qun (群), in oracle bone script, was presented as 𠂇, meaning commanding a herd of sheep to gather together, denoting coming together under certain command and control. In Xunzi's qun xue (群学) Study of Groups or Study of

the Social, human nature is seen as essentially “bad” and selfish, hence the need, when people come together, to be restrained by personal, social and religious codes, hence the elaboration of the necessity for Confucian values and practices of benevolence (仁, ren, literally Two Persons, meaning more than one person) and yi (义, righteousness), leading to li (礼, rites and propriety), which would form the foundation of qun (群, groups, or society). “Now how about the way of the former kings and the ordering influence of ren and yi, and how these make for communal life, mutual support, mutual adornment, and mutual security?”¹ Thus, it is a philosophy of personal conduct and inter-personal relationships. Worth noting is that the relationships extend from those between humans to those between humans and Nature, reflecting a cosmo-vision including the human world under heaven. Xunzi's synthesis of Confucian ideas was largely adopted by successive dynasties.

Thus, qun xue (群学) offers not only a delineation of the social realm, referring to the assemblage of people in groups by kinship or territory, but also offers codes for proper conduct and social mores for communities and society to sustain in good order, highlighting the need for restraint in personal desire and selfishness, as well as restraint in human exploitation of Nature.

Going back to Xunzi, his idea of social regulation and balance is to realise community life and harmonious unity (群居和一之道) through different sectors accepting their assigned roles and positions. This is indeed a gist of Confucianism, for everyone, assigned their division of labour and position in the social hierarchy, to faithfully fulfil their duties. Hence the social order is maintained by moral obligations as well as laws and regulations. This was practiced in the context of an agrarian society primarily with the peasants producing food and with the merchant class dominating social exchange and trade. In this exposition, qun (群) does not make explicit differentiation between the social, the political, the ethical, or the economic, whereas the modern usage of the term she hui (社会) “the social” exists in distinction from the political, the economic, or the cultural.

With the term qun, “society” is denoted with small peasant families living on the land in communities. Qun is inclusive of the rulers and the ruled. With the term she hui taken from its European denotations and connotations based on capitalist values of individualism and personal

1. “On Honour and Disgrace”, in Xunzi: The Complete Text, translated and with an introduction by Eric L. Hutton, Princeton University Press, 2014, pp. 23–31.

good rather than common good, it is also used in contradistinction from the “state”, hence terms such as “civil society” (公民社会) or “popular society” (民间社会) in the context of modern forms of governance, though the two terms in Chinese are greatly different.

Another foreign word related to “society” in Chinese is “community”, which was only translated by sociologists in the classroom in the 1940s on an *ad hoc* basis, although it soon became a term used to describe communities smaller than the larger society, such as team, group, village, township, district, which apparently were more related to geographical size than to cultural intimacy, whereas in fact Chinese society as a whole has always been a concept with both geographical and cultural significance, and even related to “nation” or “state” (See “nation” by Huang Ping and Lau Kin Chi). In other words, in vernacular expressions, very often nation is society, and society is nation. One could even say that China is both society and nation.

In addition, communities in China are more often those social groups and locations where people live and work in their daily lives, and a person can live and work and interact in many communities at the same time, same as in other societies or in European societies. The difference is that Chinese societies or communities have not had as many formal “contracts” for a long time but are based more on “tacit” or implicit agreements, and also taken-for-granted basic accepted norms such as “village customs and rites” to be followed.

Therefore, in Chinese society, one should not only deal with the relationship with others, but also with the relationship between the “little self” (*xiao wo*) and the “great self” (*da wo*). In the original sense, one who is not social cannot be human; and one who is not human cannot be social. In this sense, not only are people, as in European or other societies, social beings who are always in some kind of social relationship and cannot live apart from the herd, but also, if someone tries to be a maverick, he or she is largely regarded as an “eccentric”, which is the very reason why “socialism” is so fundamental in China, and why “socialism” (in both term and practice), originally from Europe, has instead become the basic social system and public discourse in China.

It would be interesting to pursue the meaning of “socialism” as a historical stage more advanced than “capitalism”. The Chinese term *she hui zhu yi* (社会主义) counterposes the social as against the capital *zi ben zhu yi* (资本主义). Could socialism have been rendered other than *she hui zhu yi*, by not simply adding -ism to “social”? If socialism is a political,

social, and economic philosophy encompassing a range of economic and social systems characterised by social ownership of the means of production, as opposed to private ownership, then would not the Chinese term *qun* (群) better encompass all dimensions of society’s workings?

Society

European perspective

Matthias Middell

The concept of society is as central as it is ambiguous in the European context. This has to do with its various functions for narratives of the historical development of different European countries, but also with an intense interweaving of the intellectual processes in different countries not using the concept of society at that particular moment with the same intentions and for the same purposes. “Society” has become a constitutive concept in sociology, in which many academic systems since the beginning of the 20th century (but with roots going much further back) have focused introspection on the interactions between inhabitants and the resulting (in)equalities in participation opportunities and resource endowments. The concept of society is at the same time central to a whole range of dominant ideologies, such as liberalism, which assumes that society is largely self-governing, or Marxism and socialism, which distinguish societies on the basis of their level of development and their subdivision (into classes, groups, and strata). In the various streams of conservative thinking, on the other hand, society has long been overshadowed by state-executed and religiously or otherwise legitimised authority, but it has also grown in importance during the 20th century.

Even before its career as a central term meaning politically defined communities, it served to describe, on the one hand, a group of dependent employees (as in German, where the term is derived from *Gesellschaft*) who articulated their interests to the master and the guild, and, on the other hand, economic entities that were jointly owned or controlled by at least two people. In this context, the term went back to the 12th century French *société* (meaning “company”), which in turn was derived from the Latin *societas*, referring to *socius* (“comrade, friend, ally”). A plurality of partners has thus been just as constitutive for the understanding of society as the contractual arrangement of their relations with each other and with third parties.

In the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, and thus in close connection with the process of territorialisation that was beginning at that time, the term increasingly acquired a territorial connotation and meant the totality of individuals who lived on a territory and under the authority of a certain ruler. In part, the term was thereby delimited from the privileged (clergy, aristocracy) and meant only the Third Estate, but in part it included the entire population. This intensified during the Enlightenment with the observation of foreign cultures or societies, about whose social stratification little was known. The Scottish author Adam Smith emphasised the mutual usefulness of individuals for each other as the basis for the formation of societies, which in turn went beyond the affective ties of family or clan. Society here acquired the connotation of the purposeful association of individuals in pursuit of common goals (imagined by Smith as merchants selling and buying to and from each other). For many philosophers and anthropologists of the time, the formation of societies became the distinguishing feature of humans from animals, which also lived in groups but emphasised kinship relations and common defense against enemies, while human societies were characterised by a functional division of labour and thus by mutual utility out of difference. This distinction from the animal world suggested at the same time that societies differ in their level of development, which is expressed in the complexity of their relationships and the differentiation of their division of labor, from which, in turn, degrees of difference in the position of the individual members in a society derive.

In the 18th century, the profiling of the term vis-à-vis concepts such as “privileged” and “subjects” served to establish a historical narrative of the social contract (as popularised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau), by which members of society would have joined together, i.e., voluntarily limited their individuality to achieve common goals. From this basic assumption developed the idea of sovereignty of the people, which in different variants anchored the source of legitimate power in society or its representatives. During the 19th century, the translation of the English “society” and French *société* into German and numerous other languages spurred the adoption of historical experience in contexts that were sometimes different from English liberalism and French experience with revolution.

The French politician Antoine Barnave had already fitted the term into the *caesura* thinking of the Revolution, thus establishing a tradition that understood society as a state of emancipation from the absolutism of the *Ancien Régime* and linked it to the concept of modernity. This

was combined with the concept of “civil society” or “bourgeois society”, which also contrasted society with the absolutist princely state, but at the same time was open to the distinction (so important in liberalism) of any kind of executive exercise of power by the state.

In Karl Marx’s theories, society appeared as, in the broadest sense, any association of individuals for the organisation of production and consumption, whereby he distinguished historical variants of society according to the underlying property relations: the original primitive society characterised by common property, the societies of the Asian mode of production, feudalism and capitalism, characterised by a differently shaped mixture of private property and concentration of power, and the communist society, again characterised by common property, in which, however, abundance prevailed due to the achieved high level of productivity. At the same time, Marx directed attention to the relationship between nature and society and looked critically at the transformation of nature into resources for societies (the famous and now so critically seen process of “resourcification”).

In the course of the later 19th century, the concept of “society” underwent further differentiations: the relationship between state and society was determined differently in British liberalism and France’s Third Republic to the Prussian-German monarchy with its focus on efficient bureaucracy imagined as working purposefully for the profit of society, while at the same time the question of the social opening of the concept of society across the different milieus of the bourgeoisie (economic middle classes, intellectuals, aristocratic land-owners, rising petty bourgeoisie) was intensively discussed. A third dimension of differentiation revolved around the question of an affective community, which Ferdinand Tönnies (1887), for example, distinguished in his famous book *Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft* from a formation of societies that was solely guided by interests. Max Weber, for his part, founded a theory of socialisation, which he also understood as the formation of a rational community of purpose. Georg Simmel, in turn, introduced the concept of social differentiation, taking into account the observation that society was increasingly becoming a stage for fierce disputes between milieus and interest groups, instead of standing against the *Ancien Régime* as a unified bloc, as in the tradition of the late 18th century. The aristocratic understanding of high society was partly transferred for example by German bourgeoisie into an identification of its own social formation and its habitus with *die Gesellschaft*, while at the same time efforts were underway, especially

by socialists or social democrats and intellectuals associated with them, to open up the concept of society to include the hitherto marginalised and to revive the original idea of a comprehensive unity of all those living in a territory.

These efforts were continued after World War II with the idea of a middle-class society, particularly prominent in West Germany and meaning that class division had already faded away or was just about to be overcome so that “society” became the promise of social ascension and meant a broad offer for inclusion into an ever more generous welfare state. Evidently, this inclusion came at the price of exclusion for those not qualifying as members of this specific society.

This equation of society with the population in a given territory, which was additionally charged by the notion of the “nation”, with which society was identical culturally and by virtue of its historical origins, endured for a long time, but already at the beginning of the 20th century it raised the question of what status the inhabitants of colonies should have in the society of the metropolis. Strategies of assimilation and integration attempted to form a bridge that would organise selective acceptance into society. Through methodological nationalism, which tied notions of society to the nation-state but generally did not open them up to the majority of inhabitants of imperial spaces and colonies, the originally inclusive concept of society increasingly became an instrument of discrimination and exclusion.

This has recently (roughly since the 1990s) been answered by various authors emphasising the character of societies as immigration societies, while other authors have stressed diasporas and transnational communities as equally legitimate forms of society formation. Fierce disputes have erupted over this, especially with representatives of right-wing populism, who wish to reserve the concept of society for members of their own nation.

Overall, society is a more than dazzling term that has penetrated deep into everyday language but has taken on quite a few different meanings in the process.

社会 Shè Huì Society

Final remarks

LAU Kin-chi, HUANG Ping
Matthias Middell

LAU Kin-chi, HUANG Ping

Professor Middell pointed out that the concept of “society” is central as well as ambiguous in the European context, and gave an excellent review of the evolution of the concept over four centuries. Similarly, in the Chinese context, the term needs to be situated in specific historical and political junctures. Its denotations and connotations can only be fully grasped by contextualisation in the people-to-people relations and people-to-nature relations over the centuries.

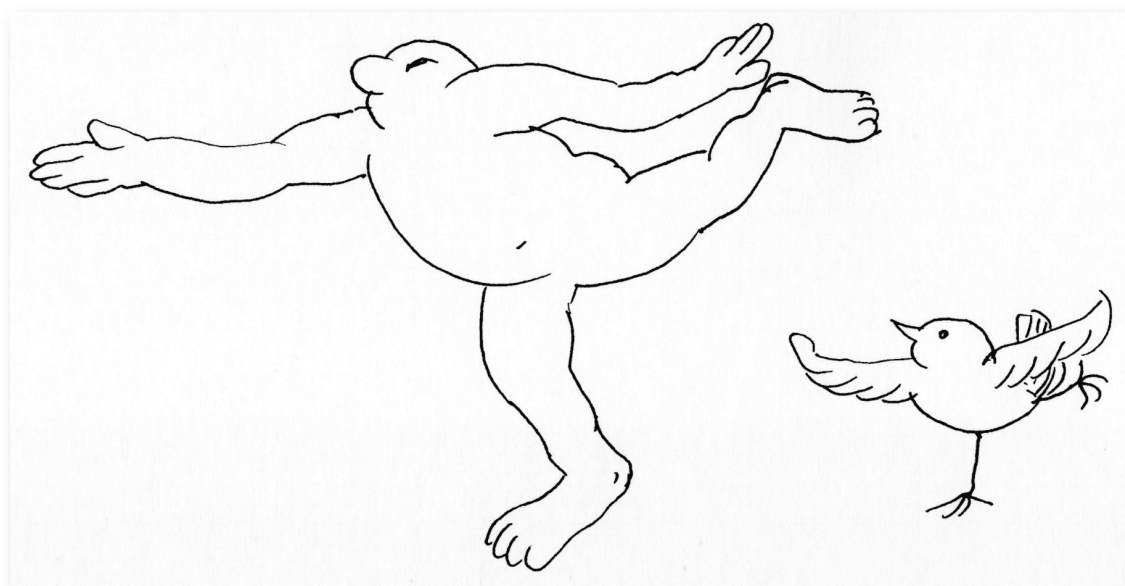
The richness of the concept in China is in excess of the term she hui as an equivalent to the European term “society”, or as juxtaposed in contradistinction to the economic or political dimensions in modern times. By referring to the encompassing features of the term in pre-Modern China, we hope to highlight the ethical customs and mores in social and cultural relationships. Revisiting the inclusiveness and sense of identification as part of a territorially and culturally defined “society” (she hui, grouping all members as one larger community) would help show its distinction from modern individualism and atomisation under the logic of modern capitalism and globalisation, and would help salvage its philosophical tenets in guiding social division of labour and living together in harmony.

In response to the presentation by Professor Middell, we would like to highlight two points. First, “society” is not just a question of social relationships or of governance, but also a relationship between humans and Nature, and the increasing exploitation of Nature in modernity deserves our attention, as Professor Middell quoted from Marx, warning us of anthropocentrism. This is an aspect of Marx to which attention is not often drawn to, but deserves our scrutiny given the current climate collapse, global warming, and nuclear power plant catastrophes like Fukushima

that we witnessed. Second, while society may be used to stress unity and inclusion, it can be a form of assimilation and homogenisation in colonialist projects, and it may also be counterposed to differentiation and division, which Prof Middell also highlighted. Hence, “society”, which is apparently a term to denote sameness, being “us” in the same community or nation-state, may as well be used for othering, to marginalise, subordinate or discriminate against particular groups.

Matthias Middell

Again, we agreed (as already for the term nation) on many aspects of the analysis of a term as broad as society. This reflects on the one hand that we ground our observations in the knowledge of theoretical traditions that are not only European or Chinese but very much transnationally interrelated and interwoven. On the other hand, we became aware that we discuss in our “societies” similar challenges to which we are confronted simultaneously, be it the human-nature relation accentuated by the many effects of climate change or be it the question of openness or closure of societies towards foreigners, strangers, or migrants coming from other places but contributing productively to the very concrete performance of our societies. The aim of the conference was perhaps the discovery of differences, but the conclusion can also be that our concepts of the world and the positioning of our societies in this world are mutually co-constitutive, since we learn from each other, and are present in the concepts used at the other end of the Eurasian landmass.



Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Time

时间

Shí Jiān

ZHAO Tingyang
François Hartog

时间 Shí Jiān

Chinese perspective

ZHAO Tingyang

Time encompasses two faces: changes as they are experienced, and the unperceivable, irreversible passing or flowing through these changes. Time is considered the oldest and most mysterious problem in metaphysics and is still open to interpretations, despite modern physics since Einstein disapproving of the metaphysical concept of time. In the Paris debate in 1922, Einstein told Henri Bergson, who claims time is the Duration in mind, that “philosophical time” does not exist at all and is nothing but a mistake. Given that the “scientific time” is the real one or almost the true understanding of time, the point is that we do not see that time, and we need “our time” in organising or arranging our duration. “Our time” or the human time remains a philosophical or cultural problem.

Many Chinese words concerning time have been found in early inscriptions on bones including words like spring, autumn, day, month, and year – marking natural changes – as well as gone, coming, the old days, and nowadays – marking historical changes. Even the general concept of temporality, time, makes an appearance along with the metaphysical or cosmological concept of time, the infinite duration, found later on.

The character for time (“时”), composed of “being fixed” and “date”, initially referred to the four special dates of the spring and autumn equinox and the summer and winter solstices. Later, it would come to refer to the four seasons of the modern era. Guan-zi (732 – 645 BCE) gave the earliest definition of time: time is that of the chronological order.¹ Mo-zi (476 – 390 BCE) philosophically interpreted time as an “infinite duration”.² And Chuang-tzu (369 – 286 BCE) defined time more metaphysically as “the infinite duration of neither beginning nor ending”.³ The most popular definition of time is ascribed to Huainan-tzu (179 – 122 BCE): the

1. 《管子·山权数》。
2. 《墨子·经上》。
3. 《庄子·杂篇》。

infinite totality of all past and all possible futures.⁴ All these intuition-al interpretations have something more or less in common with Plato’s understanding of time in terms of the “image of eternity” in form of infinite sequential *chronos*.

The eternity of time expresses itself as infinity, so that many love to liken the concept of infinite time to the image of ever-running water, but this comparison is often vague and puzzling. Confucius had a famous thought by the river: gone forever in this way!⁵ The question is, what is gone forever? If time is already gone just as it arrives, every present occasion should be filled with the same amount of time and, therefore, time is never lost; instead, events are “lost” when they are over. Similarly, there is the famous metaphor of a river by Heraclitus, found in Plato’s *Cratylus*: “Heraclitus is supposed to say that all things are in motion and nothing is at rest; he compares this to the stream of a river and says that you cannot enter the same water twice.”⁶ What is gone are the events rather than time.

A calendar describing the year, month, and day speaks external time, while consciousness of the past, present, and future explains internal time. It is believed that markers of external time, i.e., the physical time, are useful for recalling events, yet do not suffice as an explanation for the truth of time. Unfortunately, intuition of the past or future is only a self-explanation for consciousness; therefore, it also fails to see time itself. The past or future does not exist in reality but rather as subjective projections of consciousness. Augustine, who could not answer the question of time, was aware of time as a process pertaining to *cogito*. Kant defines time as the inner form of consciousness, and Husserl further argues that *ego cogito cogitatum qua cogitatum* in the internal time of consciousness. Briefly explained, it can be said that the consciousness of time is a condition *a priori* of self-consciousness. Consciousness of internal time, however, is not enough as it is in default of the truth of time. We still seek “true time” that can explain the existence or the situation of everything and the world.

Chinese philosophy also examines the ego but without taking into consideration pure internal time. Chinese philosophy instead takes more interest in “historical time”, or in historicity more than temporality, that is, time as it exposes itself through significant changes rather than

4. 《淮南子·齐俗训》。
5. 《论语·子罕》。
6. Plato: *Cratylus*, 402a.

through a meaningless passing or flowing. Time itself is almost incomprehensible, yet the changes in time act as comprehensible signifiers of time or, rather, the values of the humanised “functions” of time because the meaning of life explains the value of time. Therefore, history makes time meaningful, and the meaningful changes make the time a question of life. For humans, the passing of time beyond us does not pose a problem in need of a solution, but changes do as they make our histories and futures into ones of suffering or surviving, declining or thriving. Time is a state of being void of meaning if it does not speak historicity and futurity. In short, time is a physical matter if questioned as it is, but a philosophical question if it relates to historical significance. The oldest Chinese book, I-Ching, develops a philosophy of changes which views the meaning of time as historicity of life. It states: To foresee the future by spirit, to capture the past by knowledge... the opening or closing of an event is a change; endless changing from the past to the future is continuity...⁷ this book of changes claims to contain the methodology of investigating the origin and the finale of events.⁸

In ancient Chinese, “the gone” (“昔”) was used to indicate big changes that happened in the past and should be kept in mind, while “the coming” (“来”) presented the expectation of possible changes in the future. Both indicated the beginning of a historical consciousness. As a pictograph carved on bones, the gone is written as 𠄎, a composition of huge water and days, a reminder of a disastrous flood, thus making it a symbol of the past. The coming is written as 来, a pictography of wheat which served as a metaphor for the harvest in due season, thereby a symbol of the future in prospect. Obviously this concept of future means more than just physical time. Different from the dawn or dusk that will come in spite of our decisions or effort, crop farming suggests a human claim of a due future, but only if the weather is nice and cooperative. Wheat metaphorises that expected yet uncertain future.

The metaphors of the gone and the coming were based upon the experiences of natural changes. They remained the naive consciousness of historicity in the prehistoric period. There are two other concepts of historical tenses completely based upon the significance of human deeds – the old day (“古”) and the nowadays (“今”) – which illustrate historicity overstepping temporality. The pictography of these two concepts is even more graphic and expressive. The old day had its original pictograph

7. 《周易·系辞上》。

8. 《周易·系辞下》。

as 𠄎. The top part is a device for measuring time and land and indicates “everywhere” while the bottom part is a mouth that speaks, and is therefore a metaphor for old stories collected from all places worth being told or formerly established and respected traditions. The earliest pictography for the nowadays was 𠄎 which depicted the king’s bell for enacting a new law, saying “from now on”. This suggests a new start in history or a new beginning of time. In other words, it indicates the use of contemporary kairos to build a new future with a new form of life or regime, one that has richer implications than the present. Generally speaking, it is contemporariness that implies a possible future, more than the presentness of a consciousness fixed on this present. Historical tenses do not include the concept of future, since future does not yet exist but a variable of contemporariness of nowadays. According to historicity in terms of the old day and the nowadays, if a society has never been structurally changed by contemporary inventions or reformation, it remains in the historicity of the old day even if it is going on in the actual present tense. If a tradition has been active and strong throughout all changes up to the present day, its thencontemporariness is living in the nowcontemporariness; therefore, in the tenses of historicity, a very long natural duration could have a short history, or, on the contrary, a short natural duration might boast of a very long history.

The historical tenses in terms of old day and nowadays seem to have something in common with the “regimes of historicity” defined by Francois Hartog.⁹ The concept of historical tenses comments on perspective change when interpreting change. It was a historical turn from “happening” to “becoming” that focused on historical moments of critical turning or beginning, which was also the bases for reloading or revival of traditions. The events of “becoming” include technological or scientific innovations, revolutions, the establishment of a political regime, a nation, or a religion, reformation of forms of life, and philosophical change. The great moments of becoming are times of creating or choosing the future. Metaphysically speaking, “making history” has something akin to God’s creation of the world which serves to address the origin or the beginning event and to which the answer is the philosophy of time: the selection of a possible time for a possible world. Making history reveals the secrets of creation of time and world, however, it comes across as quite trivial when compared to God’s Genesis.

9. Francois Hartog: Régimes d’historicité: présentisme et expérience du temps. Éditions du Seuil, 2003.

Since historical tenses are identified with civilisational creations, Chinese philosophy takes “creating” or “originating” (“作”) as the key concept for interpreting historical time. The earliest pictography of creating (“作”) was 𠄎. Its prototype was most likely a most impressive invention that had led to a new life. Two best speculations based upon its shape: (1) paleographer Xu Zhongshu guessed it was “the shape of collar”,¹⁰ a symbol of a piece of clothing that was apparently a great invention for early civilisation. (2) Alternatively, another palaeographer, Zeng Xiantong, proposes that it is more likely an agrarian tool for farming, perhaps a plough.¹¹ I support a tool for farming with a philosophical argument. Agriculture was no doubt the greatest invention for early civilisations as human survival and development depends on it. Farming “creates” the future of crops; therefore, an agrarian tool would be the best symbol to represent “making a future”. Ontologically, the exact meaning of “creating” or “originating” is to make a future for a new world or new life. It transforms natural temporality into human historicity, bringing things from their physical time into historical time so that it could be said that it remakes the order of time. In I-Ching, we find the earliest historical overview of the inventions in Chinese early civilization, among which are political regimes, writing, fishing and hunting nets, farming tools, markets, boats, uses for horses and cows, weapons, methods for housebuilding, etc.¹² Modern archaeology has also identified that some of these inventions, such as uses for horses and some weapons, were actually learnt from the Middle East.

Vastly different from the trichotomy of past-present-future of our natural consciousness of time, the dichotomy of old days-nowadays defines the historical order of time where the future is not included since it is not-yet. The past poses an epistemological question, but the future poses an ontological question beyond knowledge, asking what is becoming instead of what there is. It is creating that results in the uncertain moments, the ups and downs of the constant flow of time. Herein, the meaning of time is historicity. Chinese metaphysics takes less interest in the pure lack of historicity, instead making its way ahead to the philosophy of history.

In his fiction *The Garden of Forking Paths*, in which the subject is the forking time, Borges fabricates a labyrinth designed by an ancient

Chinese architect who did not believe in linear time but rather believed in “an infinite series of times, an ever-spreading network of diverging, converging and parallel times. This web of time embraces every possibility.” In my opinion, Borges best understands the Chinese metaphysics of time.

10. 徐中舒主编：《甲骨文字典》，成都：四川辞书出版社，2014年版，888页。

11. 曾宪通：“作字探源——兼谈未字的流变”。《古文字研究》，第19辑，1992年，第408-421页。

12. 《周易·系辞下》。

Time

European perspective

François Hartog

Time in the West

Even though time is the most elusive thing in the world, human groups, wherever and whoever they may be, have never stopped trying to find ways to understand it, or even to domesticate it. Saint Augustine's (354 – 430 CE) meditation, so often quoted, has remained famous, to the point that it has ended up taking the place of a reflection on time, that is to say, of dispensing with it: "What indeed is time? Who would know how to give an explanation with ease and brevity? Who could formulate it in words, seize it even by thought? And yet what is there that we evoke by speaking and that is more familiar and more known than time? [...] What is time? If no one asks me the question, I know; if someone asks the question and I want to explain, I don't know anymore." How to say more simply the constitutive aporia of time? Aporia in the literal sense: no path leads to it. A very frequent way of trying to grasp it has been to oppose a perishable time, that of mortal men, to a time that does not age, even eternal, that of superior, immortal, divine beings. Religions, mythologies, and cosmologies were built on this gap.

Thus, in Greece, there was a mythology that made Chronos a primordial deity placed at the origin of the cosmos. This was the case in the Orphic theogonies. The time thus sacralised is a time "which does not age", imperishable and immortal. As a principle of unity and permanence, it appears as the radical negation of human time, which, on the contrary, is always unstable: it erases, causes oblivion and leads to death. For Anaximander, a pre-Socratic philosopher from Miletus in the 6th century BCE, Chronos is not deified, but there is an "order of time" that has to do with justice. "The things that are", he writes, going from generation to destruction "according to necessity", "do each other justice and repair their injustices according to the order of time". Time is not the same as justice, but it is, if not an agent, at least what allows justice to manifest

itself, making it possible for an injustice to be repaired. Here we can grasp the first beginning of a cyclical time that judges. This supposed relationship between time and justice will contribute to make possible, many centuries later, the conception of History as a world court. Even if between Anaximander and Hegel there is the whole Christian apparatus of time culminating in the Last Judgment.

Moreover, in Greece still, Chronos is the place of a confusion or the occasion of a revealing misunderstanding. There is, on the one hand, Chronos, the time, whose etymology is unknown, and, on the other hand, Kronos, who is a mythical character. Son of Ouranos and Gaia, Kronos is famous for having castrated his father Ouranos (at the express request of his mother). Having thus gained power, he married Rhea, and from then on took great care to devour his children as they were born to avoid being, in turn, dethroned by one of them. We know the rest of the story. Zeus finally makes him undergo the same fate he had reserved for his own father and thus becomes the master of gods and men. We are in the register of the myths of sovereignty which have nothing to do with time or only negatively, since swallowing one's children is the best way to interrupt it. Nevertheless, a contamination between Kronos and Chronos took place, and Chronos, the ordinary time, will be durably perceived as the one who devours or reaps, under the features of Saturn devouring his children or of the Old Man Time armed with his scythe.

The Greeks made another division of great consequence because it was more oriented towards action. Indeed, they split time into *chronos* and *kairos*: the first is ordinary time, that of the seasons, that which passes and is measured; the second is that of the unexpected, of the opportunity to be seized, of the favorable moment and of the decisive instant. Knowing how to mobilise the *chronos-kairos* couple wisely is the guarantee of a successful action. Between *kairos* and *chronos*, there is a difference, not ontological, but of quality. To take a common image, *kairos* is the opening of a window of opportunity that may last only an instant and is not perceptible by everyone. Otherwise, Napoleon would not have won the battle of Austerlitz! To this first couple, the Greeks added a second one, of more limited scope, the one formed by *kairos* and *krisis*, to which Hippocratic medicine in particular resorted. In the first sense, *krisis* means judgment. Applying the concept of *krisis* to an illness, it means designating the moment when its course changes, tilting towards the better or the worse. It is up to the physician to know how to identify "the critical days" and, at the same time, the favorable moment

for his intervention. There is a semantic proximity between *kairos* and *krisis*.

Now these three concepts passed from the Greek world to the world of the Bible the day it was translated into Greek. The Bible was, as we know, the matrix of the three revealed religions, the three “religions of the Book”, also called “Abrahamic religions”. It is clear that without the Jewish prophets and Apocalypses, there would have been no New Testament or Christian times. Nor would there have been an Islamic time and a Quran without all these books and without the different Jewish, Christian and polytheistic communities living in 7th century Arabia.

To stick to the Christian time alone, the writers of the New Testament took up the three concepts for their own purposes. Not without modifying them. If *chronos* remains ordinary time, *krisis* is given a much stronger meaning, by naming the Last Judgment or the Day of the Lord, also designated as *kairos*. In Jewish apocalypses, the Judgment that will divide the righteous from the reprobate forever is preceded by the violent days of the apocalypse. The first Christians, a small Jewish apocalyptic sect, took up this scheme, while profoundly transforming it, since the Messiah had (already) come. *Chronos* does not change, nor does *krisis* – the final sequence is indeed the apocalypse, the Judgment, and the end of time –, but *kairos* becomes the central concept. *Kairos* designates, in fact, the moment of the Incarnation. Christ is *kairos* and even the *Kairos*. He is the unique Event that comes to cut into *chronos* time a radically new time. Time becomes Christocentric and will be increasingly so until it makes Christ the pivot of world time. The result of this operation is that *chronos* is now squeezed between the two boundaries of the Incarnation and the approaching Judgment. Between the two, there is only a present without real history. For if all is not yet complete, all is already accomplished. It is necessary to be converted and to be awake, ready for the imminence of the end. With this new arrangement of the three concepts, a Christian regime of historicity takes shape that can be defined as an apocalyptic presentism. The Incarnation opens the time of the end, that, according to Saint Augustine, of the old age of the world, awaiting the end of time and of this world. But only God knows the hour of this end, feared and desired. So much so that all speculation must be proscribed. And yet, there has never ceased to be speculation, which the Church has never ceased to condemn and severely repress.

In the midst of the great diversity of times and calendars in use in different human communities, the first gesture to find one’s bearings

was to establish synchronicities: such a battle was fought at the same time as another, such a sovereign is contemporary with another, etc. This was the task of the first Greek chronographers and historians. Thus, by finalising the list of the Olympic victors, they established a shared instrument of measurement of time, where each city could insert itself. It was panhellenic, and the property of nobody. The Christians had to make more. With them, the issue was not only synchronisms, but synchronisation. For them, Christ occupies the place of the great synchroniser of all times: past and future. Since with the Incarnation a radically new time began, which had the vocation of informing all the others, wherever and whoever they may be. And this time must last until the day of the Last Judgment, which will come just after the torments of the Apocalypse. These are the two limits set for the history of the world.

Between the 2nd and 10th centuries, this new time gradually conquered the Roman West, the kingdoms that succeeded it, and the European space before, from the 16th century onwards, it colonised the rest of the world. By bringing Christ, the missionaries, Catholic as well as Protestant, are indeed Christophores, but they are also Chronophores: they bring the true time, in its truth. By Christian time, one must indeed understand a daily discipline, punctuated by prayers and offices, and a calendar (first of all liturgical), but also a universal chronology and a theology of history. To convert the world is to work for the end of time.

In this brief genealogy of Western time, we must make room for a far-reaching technical invention: the mechanical clock in the 14th century. It is not natural to want to know the time with precision. But it is a fact that during the 15th century, cities and monasteries equipped themselves with clocks. For Marc Bloch, the progress in the measurement of time constitutes a true cultural revolution. Is this the passage from “Church time” to “merchant time”, as Jacques Le Goff thought? Not necessarily, because the Church did not refuse this time cut up and counted day and night by the beater of the clock. In China, for example, the mechanical clock aroused some curiosity, but, despite the efforts of Matteo Ricci (17th century), it was considered a “complicated oddity”. “Their clocks are not worth our clepsydras,” says a Chinese pamphlet of the 17th century. Being “so difficult to make and so easily deranged, are they not a waste?” Back then, the hour was not important for the organisation of work, and even less so the minute.

The rest of the story is about the ways in which *chronos*, escaping little by little from its two guardians, *kairos* and *krisis*, took its autonomy,

and, with modern time, extended its empire over the Western world and beyond. I retain here only two features. If *chronos* escapes them, *kairos* and *krisis* do not disappear for all that, but pass, so to speak, under the control and at the service of *chronos*. In fact, moderns have used them to think about temporal ruptures, starting with revolutions, and they have developed a whole analysis of the crisis that is still relevant today. Moreover, towards the end of the 18th century, modern time definitively left the straitjacket of biblical chronology. The traditional six thousand years were no longer tenable: the Earth's past had to be counted in millions of years and the future opened up to prospects of indefinite progress. Such a lengthening of time could only weaken the two milestones of the Incarnation and the Judgment, which, while preserving their theological significance, lost their place in a *chronos* time that they had long governed. But for all those who were a little "enlightened", they left history to enter into fable. From then on, the modern regime of historicity could take off. In France, in 1793, the revolutionaries aimed to create a new time and a new calendar, purely republican. It was, as we know, a failure. Calendars resist.

The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were decades of intense debate about time: *Chronos* sought to extend his empire. Thus, in 1884, the Washington, D.C. Conference led to the decision to take the Greenwich meridian as the reference meridian for the establishment of universal time (GMT) and the division of the globe into twenty-four time zones. In this long-prepared operation, slow to take hold and having aroused resistance, the leading roles were played by the United States, Canada and England. Isolated, the French could only finally abandon "their" Paris meridian. The Greenwich meridian became the "synchroniser". From then on, each nation could establish its own time: to each his own time and a common time for all. Theoretically, any meridian could have been used as a reference, but it happened that the Greenwich meridian was chosen, the one that passes through the heart of the then dominant imperial power. In other words, this universal mean time was a fundamentally Western and even Anglo-American time, even if its promotion was done in the name of its "usefulness" and its "modern" character.

In the same years, a lot of work was done on a reform of the calendars. Numerous projects were born, in Europe, in the United States and elsewhere. In the 1920s, the young League of Nations took up the subject. They wanted to move towards a standardisation of calendars, which

would take the form of a "World Calendar". It would accompany and facilitate trade and the ongoing globalisation; it could also be an instrument for world peace. Outside the Western world, a part of the elites was in favour of such an evolution. Mahatma Gandhi supported this reform, just as he wished for "a uniform coinage for all countries and a supplementary language – like Esperanto, for example – for all peoples". But in the end, the reform was not carried out, unlike the one of time. Why not? Because with the calendars, we are not only, or not primarily, in chronological time, but in a mixture of chronological time and religious time. In fact, we saw the religious authorities rise to the occasion to oppose it: the Vatican even refused to discuss it. The three religions of the Book made a common front. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays would become "nomadic" days. Faced with this opposition, the different governments gave up. Hitler came to power, war was not far off: there was no more talk of it. And capitalism, as we have seen since, was able to adapt.

As imperious and imperial as it was, *Chronos* did not escape crises and more or less severe questioning in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries: on several occasions, the future wavered, but it did not sink, even managing to revive itself after two World Wars, at least until the future lost its driving force and proved to be the bearer of threats – and presentism came to give a name (for a moment) to the new experiences of time.

时间 Shí Jiān

Time

Final remarks

ZHAO Tingyang, François Hartog

Zhao Tingyang

As supposed, time is a metaphysical concept explaining the being of everything, at least a necessary epistemological scheme, say, a Kantian form a priori, for understanding the being of everything. Now it is said that time could be properly explained by physics, that is, the concept of time has been found a physical dimension instead of a metaphysical one, and became “relative”, and it seems no more synchronised. My question is, how could we understand the being of all relative time-spaces without resorting to the metaphysical concept of universal time? I mean that mind cannot resist a metaphysical concept of time, even if time does not exist or is not similar to the metaphysical image.

François Hartog

Seeking to grasp the salient features of the Chinese approach to time, Zhao Tingyang insists on its fundamentally “historical” dimension: the importance of the concept of “change” (time is apprehended through “the significant changes”) and the use of the key concept of “creating”, with which one makes room for the future, transforming temporality into historicity.

In comparison, I have indicated the salient features of Western time, that is to say of this time deeply shaped by the Christian regime of historicity and the interplay of the three concepts of *chronos*, *kairos*, *krisis*. We are moving into a completely different mental universe. Today, global warming has brought back to the West the threat of the end of world time. This does not make much sense to a Chinese or an Indian. Schemes borrowed from the apocalypse are reactivated. Presentism, multiplied by the immediacy of our digital clicks, is challenged by a future perceived as increasingly threatening.

Beauty	美
Body	身
Contract	约
Death	死
Debt, financial	债
Debt, human	人情
Dialectics	阴阳
Duty	义
Empire	天下
Equality	平等
Eternity	永恒
Face	面子
Family	家
Friendship	友谊
Gift	礼物
Happiness	福
Harmony	和
Heart	心
Heritage	遗产
History	历史
Humanism	仁
Image	象
Individual	己
Liberty	自由
Monotheism	神论
Nation	国
Private property	私产
Progress	进步
Relation	关系
Ritual	礼
Rule of law	法治
Society	社会
Time	时间
Writing	书写

Writing

书写

Shū Xiě

QIU Zhijie
Roland Marti

书写 Shū Xiě

Chinese perspective

QIU Zhijie

The writing of characters has sacred significance in China

Legend has it that when Cangjie, an ancient sage, observed the footprints of birds and beasts and invented Chinese Characters, the heavens and the earth shook. In the ancient text *Huai Nan Zi*, it is said that “In ancient times, when Cangjie invented writing, Heaven rained down millet and ghosts wailed at night.” People in the Han Dynasty explained that gods rained down millet because they believe once people mastered the written language, they would attend to the trivialities and neglect the fundamentals, and their minds become complex, treacherous and profit-seeking, therefore abandoning agriculture. In anticipation of people suffering from hunger, the gods rained down millet in advance. The ghosts were worried that humans would attack them with written words, so they cried. Cangjie, who invented the characters, is said to have four eyes and is also considered to be the first historian. Among the Chinese people, the cultural hero who invented the characters is regarded as a divine being. In particular, temples dedicated to Cangjie once spread all over the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, and there has also been a rich and long tradition of offering sacrifices to Cangjie.

In the rather chaotic Chinese mythological system, certain gods are related to the written language, such as Wenchang Dijun (Emperor of Flourishing Literature), Wenquxing (Star of Examination) and Wenchangxing (Star of Flourishing Literature). The folk image of Wenchang Dijun is that of a literati. The two boys who attend to him in his studies, one holds a pen and the other holds a notebook. There is usually an incense burner at the gate of Wenchang Dijun Temple. According to folklore, any paper written with words is sacred and cannot be discarded at will. It must be taken to a Wenchang Dijun Temple for incineration, the so-called “esteeming and cherishing paper with written words”. The burned paper ashes should also be properly preserved and regularly

scattered into the rivers and seas. This kind of paper incinerator became the Pagoda of Cherishing Characters. This tradition began at the latest in the Song Dynasty, a Dynasty attaching great importance to the imperial examination system, and it even spread to Ryukyu. People also regularly held Cherishing the Characters Gatherings, printed and published the Law on Word Cherishing, and local governments sometimes gathered paper with words for organised incineration.

The origin of Chinese characters has this sense of sanctity, so adoration of characters can easily play a role in religious activities

In Taoism, there are talismans that mainly rely on writing to suppress evil forces, as well as the use of peach wood or jade seals engraved with specific spells. Since the Eastern Han Dynasty, Taoism used a kind of repeated nine-fold seal script to write secret religious documents, which is called the “cloud seal script.” The “overlapping seal script” used on the official seal during the Song-Jin period stemmed from the “cloud seal script” of Taoism. Buddhists also used copying scriptures as a way of mind cultivation, some monks even use blood to copy scriptures. In both China and Japan, the tradition of “one character one stone” emerged, that is, to write a Chinese character on each small stone. Some people even copy the entire *Shurangama Sutra* with 80,000 characters on 80,000 small stones and tuck them away in stone pagodas for worship. In Japan, *yakuyoke* and *yakubarai* (warding off evil) belong to the exorcism ceremony of Shintoism and Buddhism respectively. The Shutei Mandala written in frenzied calligraphy of the School of Nichiren has many similarities with the talisman tradition of Taoism.

Among Chinese folk, the tradition of auspicious characters emerged due to the worship of characters. Auspicious sayings and character drawings composed of phrases such as “ten thousand taels of gold,” “let riches and treasures come into the house,” and “earning large quantities of gold each day” appear in large numbers in architectural carvings, folk papercuts and other artistic forms. And in divination, Literomancy (fortune-telling by analysing the component parts of a Chinese character written to predict someone’s future) has become a unique practice.

From archaeological data, the earliest findings similar to characters can be seen at present is the Jiahu symbols (16 distinct markings on prehistoric artifacts found in Jiahu, a Neolithic Peiligang culture site

found in Henan, China, dated to around 8,000 years ago) engraved on oracle bones. These characters are already very similar to the oracle bone inscriptions unearthed in Yin Ruins, both engraved with sharp tools and the basic stroke structures such as horizontal, vertical, horizontal turning, similar to those of modern Chinese characters. At this time, there are already character components and composite characters, and these components are also the basis of the modern Wubi input method. What's more important is that the Jiahu symbols are based on principle matters, and there are many such characters in oracle bone scripts.

This involves a widespread misunderstanding of Chinese characters, that is, Chinese characters are often regarded as a kind of pictogram. In fact, the *Book of Han* clearly divides Chinese characters into "Six Writings (six categories)" — pictographs, simple ideograms, compound ideograms, phono-semantic compounds, derivative cognates, and phonic loan characters. China's first dictionary, *Shuowen Jiezi* (*Discussing Writing and Explaining Characters*), written by Xu Shen in the Eastern Han Dynasty, also follows this categorisation. Among them, pictographs and simple ideograms are the basic rules of character invention, and compound ideograms and phono-semantic compounds are the basic rules of combination to create more characters. The most commonly used characters in modern Chinese are phono-semantic compound characters.

As a language with clearly distinguished syllables, each of which corresponds to a morpheme, the Chinese language has an important feature — Chinese characters can be combined in stacks, creating more characters with character components. And most single characters can be used as independent vocabularies or combined into multi-charactered vocabularies, which brings some important characteristics to the rules and forms of classical poetic composition. And due to the Square-Block structure, Chinese characters can be written from left to right, from right to left and from top to bottom, which brings the possibility of couplets and other writing forms.

Since their birth, Chinese characters have been closely related to writing materials. Thus, they are inevitably closely related to artistic style, generating a unique artistic tradition of calligraphy — starting from the oracle bone inscriptions carved with a knife more than 3,000 years ago, to the characters cast on bronze wares in the Axial Age (Chinese bronze inscriptions). After Qin Shi Huang unified China, he also unified the characters that were different but still interoperable among the various vassal states of the Zhou Dynasty, and organised them into

the standard "small seal script." But at the same time, Silk Manuscript written on textiles began to explore new script styles.

This era is accompanied by the emergence of writing with a flexible brush. Legend has it that Meng Tian, a general of the Qin Dynasty, invented the ink brush. However, complete sets of ink brushes and pen holders have been unearthed in Chu tomb No. 15, Middle Warring States Period, Zuogongshan, Changsha, and Chu tomb No. 2, Baoshan, Jingmen City, Hubei Province. Writing with a flexible brush brought great changes in artistic style, especially on the slightly curved bamboo slips, which emphasises the characteristics of *bozhe* (downward stroke slanting left and right). And calligraphy users of the bottom class affected the formal inscriptions on tablets in turn. The evolution process of Chinese characters from "small seal script" to "official script" is generally called the "transformation to official script." Since then, the more roundish Chinese characters became more squarish, which was a feature completely preserved in the later regular script. The maturity of ink brush production and the popularity of papermaking made it possible to write swiftly and lightly with the flexible brush, which gave birth to the emergence of cursive and semi-cursive script. Calligraphy art developed rapidly from the Eastern Jin Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty. In the Tang Dynasty, calligraphy artists had a strong creative consciousness. In the glorious age of the Tang Dynasty, there were great calligraphy masters with great personality, and the history of calligraphy was in the making. The regular script of the Tang Dynasty basically laid the foundation of modern Chinese characters. To achieve a high level of calligraphy skill is regarded as the most important fundamental ability for a literati artist in China, which was also regarded as an element in the selection of officials in the imperial examination system.

Deriving from calligraphy, characters are widely used in various circumstances: there is the tradition of using characters on barrel tiles, plaques and couplets of buildings; the use of characters in letter packaging gave birth to the invention of seals and seal paste; the characters were engraved on stone tablets, therefore the rubbing technique was developed. Characters were also carved on the cliffs of scenic spots, becoming cliff inscriptions. People put up Spring Festival couplets during the Chinese New Year, which is also a cultural activity derived from calligraphy.

In ancient China, calligraphy was practiced by emperors, officials from high range to low range, rural teachers and doctor. Even to this day,

calligraphy is still an art of high status in China, when rules of etiquette apply, such as writing invitations, characters written with a flexible brush are generally considered more polite than printed. Today, China's most famous universities and official publications mostly use Mao Zedong's calligraphy font for their titles, and many goods and merchandises still use calligraphy in their trademarks.

With phonetic symbols, people who can speak only need to learn a certain number of letters to record the language, therefore, to write. In contrast, the pronunciation of Chinese characters is relatively separated from the scripts, which had an important impact. The construction rules of Chinese characters led to many components constituting characters, and there are hundreds of commonly used partial radicals alone. Stemming from a single character, the vocabulary range is huge, and there are tens of thousands of commonly used words. It is precisely because of this complexity of Chinese characters that the learning cycle of the Chinese writing system is prolonged. There were many illiterate people in China's history. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the government paid a great price to eliminate illiteracy. Generally speaking, it is easier for foreigners to learn spoken Chinese, but it is much more difficult to learn reading and writing.

Secondly, due to the large number of characters in Chinese language, although movable type printing first appeared in China in the Song Dynasty, the amount of movable type required by Chinese characters is large, which makes the cost of movable type printing higher than that of block printing, and movable type printing was not popularised on a large scale. The popularity of books brought by Gutenberg movable type printing did not appear in China. Large number of ancient books still relied on block printing with full page engraving. Block printing reached a very high level and a great economic scale in the Song and Ming Dynasties. The Song typeface and Ming typeface of today's Chinese character printed fonts stem from this era.

Although the cumbersome system of characters brings the cost of learning speed and popularisation, it also has its advantages: because the characters do not change with pronunciation, the Chinese character system has become a stable and common written language for the diverse and rapidly changing dialect users in the vast land. Some researchers believe that in addition to the unique climate and river trend China has, Chinese characters, as a common written language, plays a role of social adhesive. So, China, which is similar in size to Europe, did not split

into many nation states that use different languages. The use of Chinese characters spread to Japan, North Korea, Vietnam and other countries, forming an East Asian Chinese character cultural sphere.

Secondly, due to the long-term stability of Chinese characters, especially the close similarity between the Chinese characters after the clerical script and today's Chinese characters, young students who graduated from high school in China and students who have a certain knowledge of Classical Chinese grammar can easily read the inscriptions of the Han Dynasty and most ancient classics, which also brings long-term stability of cultural traditions.

Today, there are several thousands of commonly used Chinese characters. The *Jiyun*, a Chinese rime dictionary published during the Song Dynasty, has more than 50,000 character entries. The widely influential *Kangxi Dictionary* contains about 47,000 characters. Since the popularisation of modern scientific knowledge, people have created many new Chinese characters, such as many chemical elements in the periodic table of elements.

However, Chinese characters have suffered several serious challenges in the 20th century. The New Culture Movement around 1918 advocated the use of written vernacular Chinese and the abolition of classical Chinese, which already happened in a large number of novels in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This movement was a great success. But then, the radical anti-traditionalists put forward the slogan of "Abolishing Chinese characters." Their reason was that the writing of Chinese characters was too slow to adapt to modern life. As a result, people put forward various plans for the Latinisation of Chinese characters.

In 1935, the government of the Republic of China introduced a version of the table of first batch of simplified characters, which was discontinued the following year. In 1956, the People's Republic of China government issued *The Chinese Character Simplification Scheme*, and in May 1964, the General Table of Simplified Chinese Characters was approved. Simplified Chinese character tables are used in Chinese mainland, Singapore and Malaysia today. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, people use traditional Chinese characters that are different from each other. After World War II, Japan also simplified a number of Chinese characters used in the Japanese language.

One of the important reasons for the negation of Chinese characters in the middle of the 20th century is that the huge font library of Chinese characters is not compatible with modern typewriters. Due to the

invention and development of Chinese character laser phototypesetting system and Chinese character input method in personal computers in 1980, today's Chinese characters have many input modes such as character pattern, voice and handwriting. The barrier between Chinese characters and modern information technology has disappeared.

In addition to the original Song typeface, the Chinese character font also draws inspiration from the Western typeface and develops a variety of styles, such as the East Asian Gothic typeface, Arial typeface and so on. At present, due to the large number of Chinese characters, the design cost of Chinese computer fonts is still higher than that of phonetic writing. However, artificial intelligence technology is being used to generate Chinese character fonts. In recent years, a large number of traditional calligraphy fonts have entered the computer font library.

Since the middle of the 20th century, the vertical composition of characters in books and newspapers has been replaced by horizontal composition essentially. Interestingly, most Chinese calligraphers still insist on the vertical writing system rather than from right to left, although they have to practice the difficult method of writing with a raised wrist for this.

Writing

European perspective

Roland Marti

In an elementary definition of writing could be: "Writing is the rendering of language by secondary means." Usually it is the rendering of spoken language, i.e., a sequence of auditory signs, by written signs.

2. Writing as it developed in Europe came from the East, true to the old saying *Ex oriente lux* ("The light comes from the East"). The development of writing before it was adapted in Europe points to the Middle East as the region of origin. The reason for the development of writing was, to quote another saying *verba volant, scripta manent* ("The spoken word is volatile, the written word permanent.") With the increased complexity of the social structure of humanity, it became increasingly important to make language more permanent. The main areas where this need for permanence was felt earlier than elsewhere were administration, commerce, and religion.

3. If writing is the permanent form of language, it must render linguistic units as the spoken language does. Since language is multi-layered writing systems, one of the levels to be rendered by visual signs must be chosen. They can be (from large to small) the word (logography), the syllable (syllabography), or the sound (phonography). Phonography is monogenetic (all phonographic writing systems essentially have one common origin) in contradistinction to logography, which evolved independently in various areas of the world.¹ Phonography developed out of logography through the application of the acrophonic principle: a sign that originally stood for a word was reduced to represent the first sound of the word.² Semitic phonography originally only had signs for consonants. Passed on by the Phoenicians, this writing system reached Greece, where vowels

1. E.g. Chinese writing, Egyptian hieroglyphs, Mayan glyphs.

2. Thus the Semitic sign for 'house', *bayt- (perhaps taken from hieroglyphic) came to represent the initial sound b only etc.

were also rendered by signs, thus creating a full-fledged phonographic writing system: the Greek alphabet. And this form of phonographic writing, rendering vowels and consonants, would become the only one used in Europe.³ In the past there were several phonographic writing systems in Europe,⁴ but by now they are reduced to three: Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic.⁵

4. Phonographic writing, as the European writing system par excellence, has several undeniable advantages: it has a very restricted number of signs (usually not more than forty for a given language), the signs are usually clearly distinguishable and comparatively easy to write (or draw), and there should be a clear correspondence between sounds (phonemes) and signs (letters). Unfortunately, the latter, even though it is always quoted as the main advantage of phonographic writing, is usually not adhered to systematically. The main reason for this is the fact that the spoken language is subject to permanent change, whereas the written language, since its main task is to conserve, tends to be conservative. The change of a writing system (usually referred to as orthographic reform), is an arduous task and more often than not, doomed to fail.⁶ The result of this is that spoken language develops further, whereas written language conserves a previous stage, developing what is known as “historical orthography”. And thus, one of the main advantages of phonographic writing was eventually lost: when seeing a sequence of signs the reader often did not know how to pronounce it (unless he had learned the particular pronunciation of the word), and when hearing a word the listener did not know how to write it (unless he had learned it).⁷ Another problem of phonographic writing is the very fact that it is monogenetic. Since

3. The only exceptions are writing systems for migrant or religious groups, such as Hebrew (for Yiddish or Ladino) and Arabic/Ottoman Persian (for Bosnian or Belarusian). Another exception is the secondary writing system known as stenography, which essentially relies on the syllabographic principle.

4. E.g. Runic, Gothic, and Glagolitic.

5. All phonographic systems allow for elements of other systems. Thus, logography is used in all three of them for numbers (1-9).

6. Cf. the unsuccessful attempts to reform English orthography, the failed recent attempt of a minimal reform of French orthography and, most recently, the completely botched reform of German orthography.

7. Take, e.g., English *gaol* or *read* and [θru:]. The situation is similar in French. The difference lies in the fact that in French this affects only one direction: if you know the basic rules of French orthography and orthoepy you will almost always know how to pronounce a written word properly. But when you hear a word you will often not be able to write it properly unless you know Old French or Latin: when you hear [o:] this may be written as *eau*, *eaux*, *au*, *aux*, *oh*, depending on the context. English is even worse: when you see a word you do not necessarily know how to pronounce it, but neither do you know how to write a word you hear unless you have learnt the orthography of this particular word (remember G.B. Shaw's alternative spelling for fish: *ghoti*). In a sense, thus, English is to a certain extent almost logographic.

the unit to be rendered by phonographic writing is the sound, it would be desirable to have one and only one written sign (letter or grapheme) for one and only one sound (phoneme). But the Greek sound system was rather different from that of Semitic, so some Semitic letters were superfluous (eg., several signs for velar stops) and for some Greek sounds there were no letters (eg., the vowels). All the alphabets in use in Europe now for various languages had to be adapted, either by changing the meaning of letters,⁸ by eliminating⁹ or modifying them¹⁰ or by inventing new letters.¹¹ Another solution was to use letter combinations to represent single sounds (phonemes).¹² In the last case, however, the original idea of “one sound = one letter” was diluted. There were attempts to remedy this situation, particularly in languages using the Latin alphabet. New letters were rarely added (eg., in Icelandic <þ>). Instead, diacritic signs were preferred (earliest example: <G>), typically put over, under or in letters: <á> <ç> <Ł>.

Thus Europe, using only phonographic writing systems, theoretically had the advantage of using a relatively simple system that was easy to learn, with few signs to render spoken language, but this advantage was partly lost due to internal factors (the dynamism of spoken language vs the static nature of written language) and due to the monogenetic nature of phonographic writing.

5. Writing in Europe, just as in the Middle East, was originally a profession, carried out by specially trained masons (in the case of inscriptions) or by scribes. It was often entrusted to slaves. Representatives of the elite could perhaps read, but they would generally not write (they preferred to dictate). This changed to some extent when writing essentially became the task of the (Christian) church or of church-trained personnel, particularly in the Middle Ages. In this period, writing could acquire a numinous aura. But the Reformation and to a lesser extent the Counter-Reformation changed this in Western and Central Europe since both emphasised the ability of each individual to read the Holy Scripture and

8. Thus Greek α for /a/ originally represented a glottal stop /ʔ/ in Semitic.

9. Semitic qoppa was only used as the number 90 in Greek since it was superfluous (there was already κ to represent the only voiceless velar stop).

10. Latin G was created on the basis of C by adding a (diacritic) hook in order to distinguish voiced and unvoiced velar stops. (The old tradition of using only C was conserved in the abbreviation C. for Gaius.)

11. Cyrillic could originally be described as a Greek alphabet (24 letters) with added letters (14) for specific Slavic sounds, but it soon developed into a separate writing system.

12. Cf. <μω> for /b/ in Modern Greek, <sz> or <sch> for /ʃ/ in Polish or German, <ci> for /tʃ/ in Italian (*ciaramella* /tʃa-/ vs. *caramella* /ka-/), <пя> for /pja/ in Russian.

eventually all kinds of texts, with writing being a natural sequel to reading. Thus, a new secularisation of writing set in, enhanced by printing and mandatory public education with the emphasis on reading and writing.¹³ Writing thus became even more of a technical skill with no particular aura around it.

6. There was (and to some extent still is) one exception: Cyrillic. The Cyrillic alphabet¹⁴ (in contradistinction to Greek and Latin) was introduced in the Christian era (9th century) by (as tradition erroneously held) a Christian saint, St. Cyril, and the creation was considered to have been inspired by God. Thus, the orthodox Slavs held Cyrillic writing in high esteem. Even today, 24 May (which is 11 May according to the Julian calendar, the memorial day of the brothers Constantine-Cyril and Methodius), is an official holiday in Bulgaria as the “day of Bulgarian learning and culture and of Slavonic writing”. And the importance of Cyrillic was even carried over into the European Union: when Bulgaria entered the European Union in 2005, a unilateral “Declaration by the Republic of Bulgaria on the Use of the Cyrillic Alphabet in the European Union” was added, thus underlining the importance it attributed to the Cyrillic alphabet.¹⁵

7. A consequence of the utilitary nature of writing in Europe is the fact that writing was much less considered an art than elsewhere. Calligraphy existed in Europe as well, but it played a minor role in comparison to writing in China or in regions using Arabic script.

13. And, of course, arithmetics (the three Rs).

14. Actually a misnomer since (Constantine-)Cyril created the Glagolitic alphabet that went out of use rather quickly in the Orthodox world (it survived in Croatia).

15. It said, *inter alia*, “... the Cyrillic alphabet will become one of the three alphabets officially used in the European Union. This substantial part of the cultural heritage of Europe represents a particular Bulgarian contribution to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Union.” To my knowledge Greece made no such declaration regarding the Greek alphabet when entering the European Communities in 1981.

书写 Shū Xiě

Writing

Final remarks

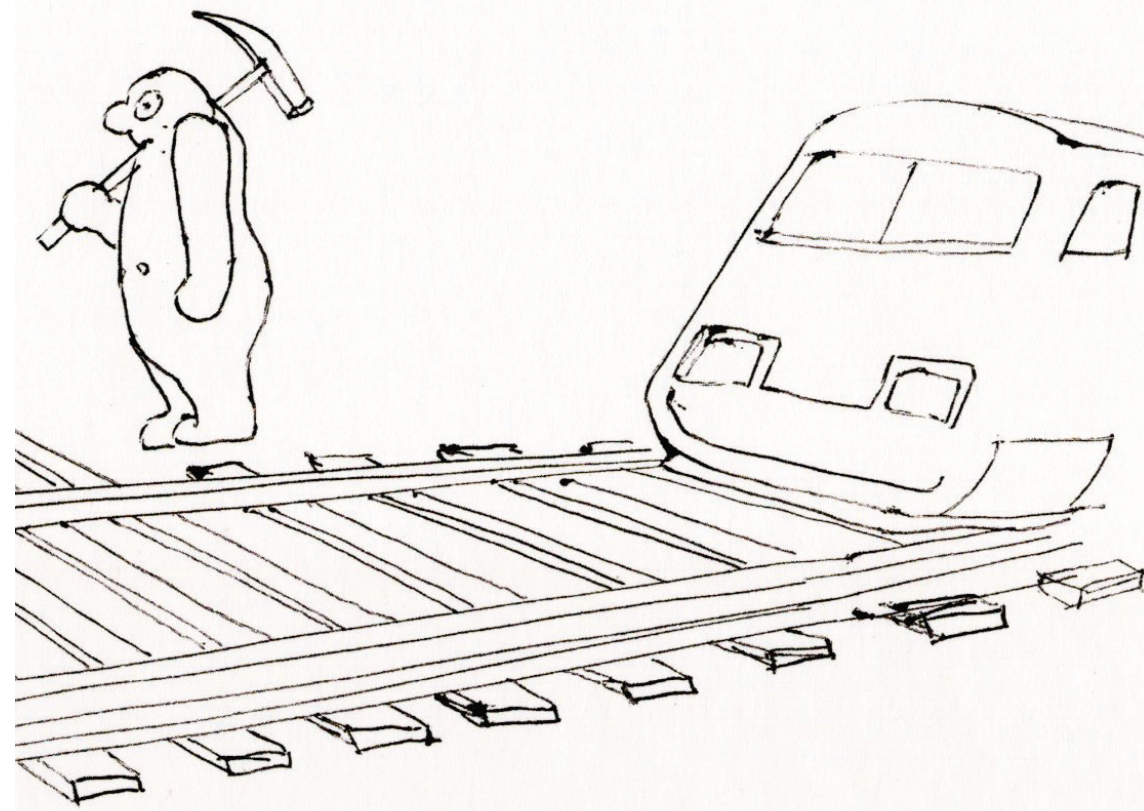
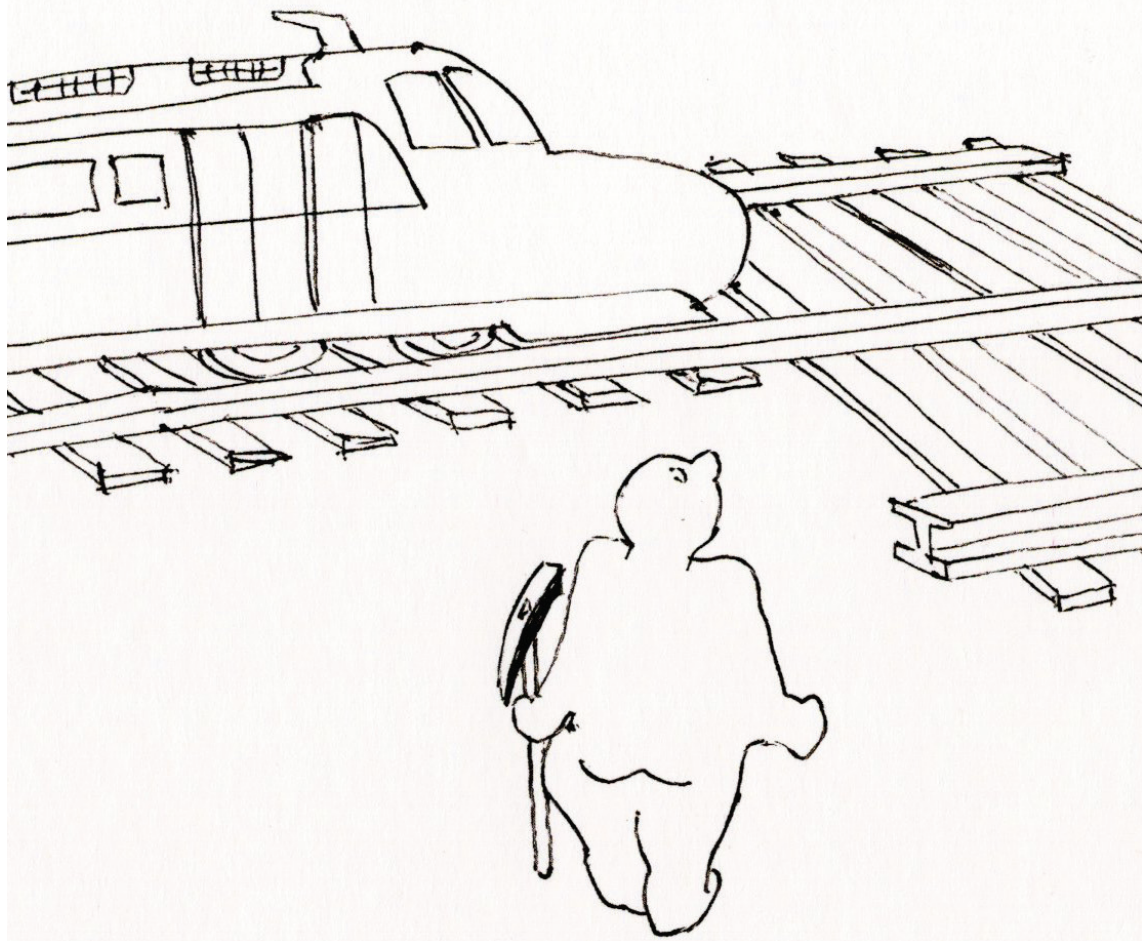
QIU Zhijie, Roland Marti

The presentation of the European and the Chinese attitude towards writing made it clear that whereas in the Chinese conception writing is both an art and a tool and historically has sacred significance, for Europeans it is essentially a tool with only marginal artistic and even less sacred additional meaning. The different structure of the respective writing systems (essentially phonographic in Europe with a very limited inventory of signs, but basically logographic in China with a great number of signs) has a considerable influence on the process of learning: whereas pupils in Europe are supposed to master writing in elementary school, it takes much longer in China and might even be considered to be a life-long process. Thus writing is more central and more pervasive in Chinese culture than it is in Europe. The differences are also quite clear in the attitude towards calligraphy: it is an art highly esteemed in China but rather marginal in Europe. (A partial exception is the Cyrillic script in Europe that retains a certain symbolic value for supposedly having been created by heavenly inspiration, and consequently proper handwriting is more important in cultures using Cyrillic.)

In the Chinese cultural understanding the history of writing and of the individual signs is important, and the etymology of concepts is often based on the original meaning of the respective sign. European cultures see letters only as mere representatives of sounds (even though historical orthographies as in French or English obscure the direct relationship between letters and sounds) and are thus not interested in the history of individual letters.

Typical for writing in a Chinese-European context is also a clear asymmetry. The users of the Chinese writing system almost inevitably acquire some knowledge of the dominant European writing system, viz. the Latin alphabet, and can at least decipher a text written in it. Europeans, on the other hand, generally know very little about Chinese writing and are unable to read texts written in it.

To sum up: the concept of writing does not lend itself to serious misunderstandings in a European-Chinese context. The situation is better described as one of different attitudes towards writing itself.



② 对接轨：如多是接上了

Contributors

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Nicolas Chapuis (1957-) is the EU Ambassador to China since September 2018. Educated in Chinese and Mongol studies, he is a French diplomat whose career has seen him posted 6 times in China, as well as assignments in Singapore and London. He served as French Ambassador to Mongolia (2003-2005) and to Canada (2015-2017). His published works include a study on Chinese classical poetics and a commentated translation of the Chinese Tang Dynasty Poet Du Fu.

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Keyword: 平等 / Equality

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Keyword: 美 / Beauty

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Eco (1932-2016) founded in 1988 with Alain le Pichon the International Institute Transcultural, of which he was member of the Scientific Council. He was the holder of the Chair of Semiotics and Director of the Graduate School of Humanities at the University of Bologna, where he has been Professor Emeritus since 2008, and he strongly endorsed Transcultural project of a dictionary of misunderstandings, actively contributing in the methodology and chairing the scientific committee.

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Professor Hartog is a French historian. He is professor emeritus at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Administrator of Ecole Normale Supérieure and a Member of the Scientific Council of Transculturata (President for Europe area). One of the best European historians, François Hartog is an

Alumnus of the École normale supérieure, he holds the chair of ancient and modern historiography at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) and is a member of the Louis Gernet Center for Comparative Research on Ancient Societies and an associate member of the Center for Historical Research (CRH). In 1997, he was one of the 60 founding members of the Association des Historiens.

His work closely combines the intellectual history of Ancient Greece, historiography and the study of historical forms of temporalisation (his most recent work). He has made a major contribution to the formation and diffusion of the concept of the "regime of historicity", which he defines as "the modes of articulation of the three categories of the past, present and future, speaking in terms of categories, not of the content given to each of the categories, but of the categories themselves, and of the way in which their articulations have varied according to place and time". According to Professor Hartog, this regime of historicity is currently marked by presentism, which privileges memory (traces left in the present by successive pasts) over history (reconstruction and distancing of these pasts). His books have been translated and published in China.

HUANG Ping

Steering Committee Member

Keywords: 国 / Nation, 进步 / Progress, 社会 / Society

Professor HUANG is a leading member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and a member of the Steering Committee of the "EU-China Forum on Cultural Misunderstandings". He studied Sociology at the London School of Economics where he also received his Ph.D. degree. He has been a researcher at CASS for 30 years, including at the Institute of Sociology, as well as the institutes of European and American studies. Since 2019 he is the executive president of the Chinese Institute of Hong Kong.

Michael Kahn-Ackermann

Keywords: 友谊 / Friendship, 进步 / Progress

Mr. Kahn Ackermann studied Sinology in Germany and was the founding director of the Goethe-Institute in Beijing. He currently works as a consultant and translator in Berlin. Among other works, he has translated Zhao Ting-Yang's book on "TianXia", which was published by one of the leading German publishers. In 1979 he published a book about the intercultural communication challenges he faced living in China. His special interests are theory and practice of intercultural exchange, China's contemporary culture and art, especially

contemporary Chinese ink-art, where he has curated several exhibitions in China and abroad. He proposed the idea of the “benefit of misunderstanding”, at a seminar on contemporary Chinese literature in 1986. Between the two types of misunderstanding - the stereotypical and the creative - he says the latter is not detrimental. “China’s assimilation of Western culture is mostly a process of misunderstanding, and vice versa.”

Ute Klammer

Keyword: 家 / Family

Ute Klammer is Professor of Sociology and Executive Director of the Institute for Work, Skills and Training (IAQ) at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany. Since 2021, she is also director of the German Institute for Interdisciplinary Social Policy Research (DIFIS), a joint institute of the Universities of Duisburg-Essen and Bremen. From 2008 to 2015 she was vice rector of Diversity Management and International Affairs at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Ute Klammer graduated at Cologne University, Germany, in philosophy and literature (1990) as well as in economics (1991) and holds a PhD in economics of Frankfurt University, Germany (1995). She has received the Matthöfer science award for her PhD-thesis on old age security in Italy and was awarded with the First Class Federal Cross of Merit for her achievements in the field of scientific policy advice. Ute Klammer’s main fields of interest and research are: social policy (pension systems, health care systems, family policy), labour market research, European and comparative social policy research as well as gender and diversity research. Her list of publications contains more than 100 titles on different aspects of social security and social protection. She chaired the German family ministry’s first expert commission on gender equality (2008 - 2012) and was a member of the German government’s council for sustainable development (RNE) as well as several other expert commissions. Since January 2022 she is chair of the Social Advisory Council (Sozialbeirat), the oldest advisory body to the legislative bodies and the Federal Government in Germany.

Dominique Lambert

Keyword: 仁 / Humanism

Dominique Lambert was born in 1960. He got a PhD in Physics and a PhD in Philosophy at the Université Catholique de Louvain. He is Full Professor at the University of Namur, Belgium (Logic, Epistemology, Philosophy of Nature, Philosophy of Mathematics). He is also visiting professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Université Catholique de Louvain. He is a Member of the Classe des sciences of the Académie Royale de Belgique, (Belgian Royal Academy)

and Member of the International Academy for Philosophy of Sciences. His research areas are: Ethics of Robotics, Philosophy of Science, History of Science (He wrote the first biography of Georges Lemaître, the “Father” of Big Bang Theory: *The Atom of the Universe. The Life and Work of Georges Lemaître* (Preface by P. J. E. Peebles), Kracow, Copernicus Center Press, 2015), Science and Faith studies (he is working in particular on the works of Teilhard de Chardin, and particularly on a new edition of his famous book: *Le Phénomène Humain*). He is an active member of a research group in physics in Namur University, working on “weak measurements” in Quantum Mechanics.

LAU Kin-chi

Keywords: 国 / Nation, 进步 / Progress, 社会 / Society

Professor LAU Kin-chi is Coordinator, Programme on Cultures of Sustainability, Centre for Cultural Research and Development, as well as Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Cultural Studies, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, China. She has taught in Lingnan University for 35 years. She is one of the Founding Members of Global University for Sustainability and Board Member of PeaceWomen Across the Globe

Alain Le Pichon

Steering Committee Member

Keywords: 天下 / Empire, 象 / Image

Alain le Pichon is a French anthropologist, born in 1942, first president (1987-2020) and co-founder with Umberto Eco, of the International Institute Transcultural, until 2020. After 12 years of field research on the prophetic function in nomadic West African societies, he launched, with the support of the French Ministry of Research, a field research program in anthropology: *Ethnologie de la France par les chercheurs du Tiers Monde 1982-1985*. He taught anthropology at the University of Paris I Sorbonne and as a visiting professor and fellow at the European University Institute of Florence, Louvain La Neuve, Nancy, Beijing Normal University. In 1989, at the invitation of Umberto Eco, he launched a second program of reciprocal anthropology at the University of Bologna, *Sguardi venuti da lontano*, in which Chinese researchers from Zongshan University participated. With the support of the EU, under the scientific chairmanship of Umberto Eco, he developed this international academic network and think tank, gradually involving researchers from African (Mali Institut des Sciences Humaines) and Indian (Nehru University) universities, launching international research programs, based on transcultural methodologies. He is the scientific initiator of the *Transcultural Encyclopedia of Key Words* and

Concepts, launching with Zhao Tingyang, in 2012, the editorial project of the Dictionary of Misunderstandings (Ed. Cent Mille Milliards, Paris).

LIU Chengji

Keyword: 美 / Beauty

LIU Chengji, Doctor of Philosophy, is currently professor and doctoral supervisor at the School of Philosophy of Beijing Normal University, Distinguished Professor of the Yangtze-Scholar programme of the Ministry of Education, vice president of the Chinese Aesthetics Society, director of the Chinese Aesthetics Professional Committee, and president of the Beijing Aesthetics Society. He is the author of 15 works, including History of Artistic Concepts in the Pre-Qin and Han Dynasties (volumes 1 and 2), Metaphysical Immortality: An Examination of Body Aesthetics in the Han Dynasty. He published nearly 200 papers in Chinese Social Sciences and Philosophical Research. His works have won the China Excellent Book Publications Award, the first, second and third prizes of the Outstanding Achievements in Scientific Research of Higher Education Institutions offered by the Ministry of Education, and the first and second prizes of the Beijing Municipal Outstanding Achievements in Philosophy and Social Sciences. His research interests include Chinese aesthetics and art history.

Roland Marti

Keyword: 书写 / Writing

Born 1953 in Geneva (Switzerland), Roland Marti studied Slavonic, German and oriental philology in Basel (Switzerland) and Moscow. He earned a Ph.D. from Basel University in 1980. He taught at Basel University as assistant professor (and later intermittently as guest professor from 2000–2016) and at the University of Bamberg (Germany) as associate professor. He has been chair of Slavonic philology at Saarland University (Saarbrücken, Germany) since 1989 as full professor and head of the department until retirement in 2019. He was dean of the Faculty of Philosophy 1998–2000, 2012–2014, and 2016–2018. He is responsible for the co-operation of Saarland University with East European universities and teaches regularly at the INALCO (Université Sorbonne Paris Cité). Professor Marti received an honorary diploma of the Bulgarian Academy of Science and the honorary medal of the University of Sofia on a blue ribbon (2003), an honorary degree (Dr. h.c.) of the same university (2012), and the Order of SS. Cyril and Methodius (first class) of the Republic Bulgaria (2013).

His areas of research include historical linguistics, OCS and Church Slavonic language and literature, Slavonic palaeography, minority languages,

Sorbian language and literature. He has published five monographs, numerous articles and reviews and edited several books.

Jean-Luc Mathon

Keywords: 约 / Contract, 债 / Financial Debt

Mr. Mathon graduated with a master's degree in Intellectual Property Law and is a holder of the Paris Law School Diploma and two Paris bar association certificates in Economics and Business Law. He is specialised in collective insolvency proceedings as a controller, international trading proceedings, authentication of artworks and author's rights. He is a member of the French/Chinese Association for Economic Rights (AFCDE), representing the Paris Bar Association at the Euro-Chinese Forum in Canton «China new economic prospects» (1996), and a member of the Paris Bar Association Delegation at the Shanghai 1997 International Exhibition. He has been the lawyer for Transcultural International Institute since 1995 and Treasurer for the Euro-Chinese Entrepreneurs Club (1998–2002). He organised the partnership between Transcultural and MAD Paris (Musée des Arts Décoratifs) during the Louvre Forum in 2012 and was the legal and commercial manager for «Euro-Chinese Arts de Vivre» Company between 2013 and 2017. He has been an administrator for Transcultural International Institute since 2016 and co-author, with Alain Le Pichon, of the Transcultural Scientific and Cultural Museum Project in 2017. He writes protocols of understanding, preliminary contracts and contracts in the field of Cultural Engineering: Paris Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Venise Museums, Shanghai Yang Yang Culture (Shanghai Tower). He gives lectures on the Right to one's Image, on the Moral Rights and responsibility of Authors of Catalogues Raisonnés, and on the sales original works of art.

Matthias Middell

Keywords: 国 / Nation, 社会 / Society

Professor Middell, professor of cultural history at Leipzig University, earned his PhD in 1989 with a study on French counter-revolution at the end of the 18th century. His habilitation (2002) dealt with World History writing during the 20th century. He is director of both the Global and European Studies Institute and the Graduate School Global and Area Studies at Leipzig University. As spokesperson of the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB 1199) he coordinates interdisciplinary work on processes of respatialisation under the global condition and integrates research units dealing with individual world regions in a larger research programme devoted to the analysis of projects of globalisation. In 2007 he was the Fulbright Distinguished Professor in Transnational

History at Duke University and in 2011 a Fellow of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study. Since 2015 is a member of the Board of the Comité International des Sciences Historiques. Since 1991 he serves as editor of the Comparative Journal of Global History.

His main research interests include global and transregional histories with emphasis on spatial configurations, the history of revolutions and the history of intercultural transfers as well as the history of historiography in the 19th and 20th century.

PAN Wei

Keyword: 法治 / Rule of law

Professor Pan Wei has been a professor for comparative politics and China studies at Peking University as well as a researcher at a researcher at CASS and UC Berkeley in the United States. One of his numerous publications is Rule of law and democratic superstition -- China's modernization and world order in the eyes of a legalist, which was published by Hkss Press.

QIU Zhijie

Keywords: 友谊 / Friendship, 书写 / Writing

Professor Qiu was born in 1969 in Zhangzhou, Fujian Province. P.R. China. In 1992 he graduated from the printmaking department of the China Academy of Art, in Hangzhou. He is Dean and Professor of The School of Experimental Art, Central Academy of Arts, Beijing as well as Professor at the school of inter-medial art of the China Academy of Art. He is a mentor of MA and PhD students.

As artist, Qiu Zhijie is known for his calligraphy and ink paintings, photography, videos, installations and performances. He tries to link the Chinese literati tradition and contemporary media, as well as the self-cultivation and social participation, which he calls "Total Art". His major solo shows include: Unicorn and Dragon (2013), Querini Stampalia Foundation (2013), Blue Print in WDW art centre, Rotterdam (2012); Twilight of the Idols, Haus of World Culture, Berlin (2009); Breaking Through the Ice, Ullens Contemporary Art Center, Beijing (2009); A Suicidology of The Nanjing Yangzi River Bridge 1, Ataraxic of Zhuang Zi, Shanghai Zenda Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai (2008). Group exhibitions include: San Polo Biennial (2014); Goteburg Biennale (2013), 53th Venice Biennial, Chinese Pavillion 2009; A Question of Evidence, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (2008); The Real Things: Contemporary Chinese Art, Tate Liverpool, UK (2007); 6th Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2006); Triennale of Contemporary Art, Yokohama, Japan (2005); Technology

of Visible: 5th Shanghai Biennial, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai (2005); Tower of Babel, Mainz City Museum, Germany (2003); 25th San Polo Biennial (2002) and others.

As art writer, Qiu published several books include: the image and post modernism (2002); Give Me a Mask (2003); The Limit of the Freedom, (2003); The photography after Photography (2004); On Total Art (2012) and others. His catalogues of works include: Breaking through the Ice (2009); The Shape of Time (2007); Archaeology of Memory (2006) and others. He was the curator of the first Video art exhibition in China 1996, and a series of young generation Chinese artists exhibitions named "Post- sense Sensibility" during 1999-2005. In 2012 he was the chief curator of 9th Shanghai Biennale "Reactivation". In 2017 he curated the Chinese Pavilion of Venice Biennale. In recent years he has worked to promote science-tech and art. In 2007, Qiu Zhijie founded the CAFA Science and Art Season, and the EAST (Education-Arts-Science-Technology) International Conference.

Carlo Ratti

Keyword: 和 / Harmony

An architect and engineer by training, Professor Ratti teaches at MIT, where he directs the Senseable City Lab. He is a founding partner of the international design and innovation office Carlo Ratti Associati. He graduated from the Politecnico di Torino and the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées in Paris, later earning his MPhil and PhD at the University of Cambridge, UK. In the last decade, Professor Ratti has given talks around the world on the theme of Smart Cities, while his work has been exhibited in international venues including the Venice Biennale, New York's MoMA, London's Science Museum and Barcelona's Design Museum. Two of his projects - the Digital Water Pavilion and the Copenhagen Wheel - were hailed by Time Magazine as "Best Inventions of the Year". He has been included in Blueprint Magazine's "25 People who will Change the World of Design" and in Wired Magazine's "Smart List: 50 people who will change the world." He was curator for the Future Food District at Expo Milano 2015, and is currently serving as co-chair of the World Economic Forum Global Council on the Future of Cities and Urbanization.

Tinka Reichmann

Steering Committee Member

Tinka Reichmann is Professor for Translation Studies at the Institute for Applied Linguistics and Translatology at Leipzig University, Germany. Her work focuses on translation and interpretation studies, specialized

communication, rhetoric and terminology as well as legal translation and interpretation. She is member in different professional associations and editorial boards and also co-editor of the journal “Lebende Sprachen” (<https://www.degruyter.com/journal/key/les/html>). Professor Reichmann is the president of the International Transcultural Institute in Paris (<http://transculturala.org/>).

Jana Rošker

Keyword: 阴阳 / Dialectics

Jana S. Rošker studied Sinology and obtained her PhD degree at the Vienna University in Austria. She is the first Slovene Sinologist, co-founder and long-standing Head of the Department of Asian studies at the University in Ljubljana (Slovenia). She is head of the National Research Programme Asian Languages and Cultures and director of several national and international research projects. Her main academic interests include traditional and modern Chinese philosophy and theory of knowledge, methodology of transcultural research, classical Chinese logic, and Modern New Confucianism. In these research areas, she has hitherto published over 20 books and over hundred articles and book chapters. Prof. Rošker is chief editor of the academic journal *Asian Studies* and the founder, first president and honorary member of the European Association of Chinese Philosophy (EACP). Currently, she is also vice-president of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy (ISCP). For her didactic and research work, she was awarded with several prestigious awards, as for instance the National Slovene Research Agency prize for extraordinary scientific achievements, the Golden Plaque of the University of Ljubljana, the National Žiga Zois prize for research work of national significance, and the French-Taiwanese Cultural Foundation Award.

Didier Sicard

Keywords: 身 / Body, 死 / Death

Didier Sicard is professor emeritus of the Université de Paris. He became professor for internal medicine in 1974 and served at the Medical School of Laos from 1974 to 1978. From 1988 to 1992 he was president of blood transfusion at the National Consultative Commission and from 1984 to 1990 President of the SIDA Centre in Paris. From 1992 to 2005 he served as the Chairman of the internal medicine department in Hôpital Cochin Paris and from 1999 to 2008 as the President of the National Ethical Consultative Committee. Professor Sicard is the author of several books, including *Hippocrate et le Scanner* (1981), *L'Approche Clinique* (1985) and *L'Alibi éthique* (1999).

SUN Xiangchen

Keywords: 身 / Body, 家 / Family, 心 / heart, 象 / Image, 己 / Individual

Sun Xiangchen is professor and the dean of the School of Philosophy at Fudan University in Shanghai. He is the Vice-President of the Chinese Society for the History of Foreign Philosophy and a board member of the World Sinology Conference. He taught Chinese philosophy at the Philosophy Department of the Free University of Berlin, Germany and published books on the concept of “family”.

WANG Qi

Keyword: 遗产 / Heritage

WANG Qi received her Ph.D. from the Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1996. In 1999–2001, she stayed at Søren Kierkegaard Research Center at Copenhagen University as a post-doctoral fellow. Currently she is a Research Professor at the Institute of Philosophy at CASS, and Vice-President of the Chinese Society for the History of Foreign Philosophy. She is the author of two books: *Unto the Abyss of Despair: A Study of Kierkegaard's Aesthetic Sphere of Existence* (China Social Sciences Press, Beijing: 2000), and *Life and Faith: A Study of Christian Philosophy in Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Writings* (Phoenix Publishing & Media Group, Nanking: 2010), as well as other articles on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Christian philosophy. She is also the secretary of editorial board and translator of a 10-volume Kierkegaard Anthology (2005–2020).

Tilo Weber

Keyword: 永恒 / Eternity

Tilo Weber is a linguist and Germanist with research interests in the areas of cognitive linguistics, language use, intercultural communication, and multilingualism. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and has since been teaching at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, University of Nairobi where he chaired the Department of German Studies, and Technical University of Liberec (Czech Republic). Since 2012, he has been one of the co-facilitators of Transferwissenschaften (“transfer sciences”), a transdisciplinary forum striving at bringing together actors from various societal domains to explore issues related to knowledge communication. Most recently, his work has focused on potentials and challenges in implementing multilingualism in communication across borders and in scientific discourse.

WENG Naiqun

Keywords: 人情 / Debt, Human, 面子 / Face, 福 / Happiness

Before retirement in 2010, Weng Naiqun was a professor in the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. He received his MA & Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Rochester in 1987 and 1993, respectively. His doctoral dissertation is about the house society, symbolism and practice of gender among the Na Ze, an ethnic group in the border area between Sichuan and Yunnan in Southwest China. His anthropological research covered various topics including the Nan-Kun (南昆) railway construction and its social-culture impact to the ethnic minority villages along the line, the reconstruction of the rural health care system and HIV/AIDS prevention in Yunnan Province, socio-cultural construction of rural education in Southwest China and the reproduction of ethnic socio-culture in the contexts of tourism and globalisation, among others.

WU Fei

Keywords: 死 / Death, 永恒 / Eternity, 一神论 / Monotheism

Wu Fei is a professor of philosophy and religious studies at the Department of Philosophy, Peking University. He is also the chair of the Nomology Centre of Peking University. His major interests include Christian Philosophy, Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy, and Anthropology. He has published 9 books, including *Sacred Word above the Wheat: faith and life in a Chinese Catholic Village* (Hong Kong: Logos and Pneuma, 2001), *Suicide and Justice: A Chinese Perspective* (Routledge, 2010) and *Soul Order and World History: Augustine and the End of Western Classical World* (Three Joint, 2019). He is the translator of the Chinese edition of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. Dr Wu obtained his bachelorship in Sociology in 1996, and a M.A in Philosophy in 1999, both at Peking University. He got his Ph.D in anthropology at Harvard in 2005 under the supervision of Arthur Kleinman, with a dissertation on suicide on China, which was later published as *Suicide and Justice*.

YANG Huilin

Keywords: 礼物 / Gift, 关系 / Relation

Professor Yang Huilin was born in Beijing in 1954. He is Dahua Chair Professor at Renmin University of China, vice-chair of the University Academic Committee, vice president of China Religious Society as well as vice president of International Comparative Literature (ACLA / ICLA). Among his numerous books and articles, his recent works in Chinese include *Theological Hermeneutics* (revised edition, 2018), *Searching for the Meaning* (2013 and 2018), *At the*

Boundary of Literature and Theology (2012). The collections of his papers in English include *Christianity in China: The Work of Yang Huilin* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) and *China, Christianity and Questions of Culture* (Baylor University Press, 2014), which was awarded Christianity Today's 2015 Book Awards in the United States. The *Journal for the Study of Christian Culture* he founded and edited has been biannually published since 1999. He was listed as the separate chapter "Yang Huilin: An Academic Search for Meaning" in the book *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* by Chloe Starr (Yale University Press, 2016).

YAO Xinzhong

Keyword: 阴阳 / Dialectics

Yao Xinzhong is an outstanding scholar, distinguished professor and doctoral supervisor at Renmin University of China, researcher at the Ethics and Moral Construction Centre of the key research base of humanities and social sciences of the Ministry of Education, as well as the deputy editor in chief of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* and the executive director of the World Ethics Centre of Peking University. He once served as a professor at the University of Wales, head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies (1997-2002), senior fellow at the Ramsey Centre of Oxford University (2004-2007), Professor at King's College, University of London, Dean of China Research Institute (2008-2013), and Dean of the school of philosophy at Renmin University of China (2013-2017). He was selected as a lecture professor of the Yangtze Scholar Program of the Ministry of Education (2012), awarded as an advanced worker in colleges and universities in Beijing (1988) and won the first prize of the Beijing Higher Education Teaching Achievement Award (2017) and the second prize of the national teaching achievement award of the Ministry of Education (2018). His main research fields include ethics, comparative philosophy, religion and Confucianism. He has published nearly 100 academic papers in international and domestic journals such as *Philosophical Research*, *Philosophy East and West*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* and *Asian Philosophy*, and published more than 20 academic monographs and books in Chinese and English with the publishing house of Renmin University, China Social Sciences Press, Cambridge University Press and Routledge Press, including *Research on the Methodology of Contemporary Chinese Philosophy Innovation* (2019), *Reconceptualizing Confucian Philosophy in the 21st century* (2017), *Confucian Studies: Critical Concepts in Asian Philosophy* (2010), *Wisdom in Early Confucian and Israeli Traditions* (2006), *Introduction to Conservatism* (2000), *Confucianism and Christianity* (1996), *On Moral Activities* (1990), and others.

YAO Yang

Keyword: 债 / Financial Debt

Yang Yao is a Liberal Arts Chair Professor at the China Centre for Economic Research (CCER) and the National School of Development (NSD), Peking University. He currently serves as the director of CCER, the dean of NSD, the executive dean of the ISSCAD, and the editor of CCER's house journal *China Economic Quarterly*. He serves as the chairman of China Economic Annual Meetings and chairman of the Foundation of Modern Economics. He is a member of China Economist 50 Forum. His research interests include economic transition and development in China. He has published more than hundred research papers in international and domestic journals. He published or edited books on institutional economics, political economy and economic development in China. He is also a prolific writer for magazines and newspapers, including the *Financial Times* and the *Project Syndicate*. Dr. Yao was awarded the 2008 and 2014 Sun Yefang Award in Economic Science, the 2008 and 2010 Pu Shan Award in International Economics and the 2008 Zhang Peigang Award in Development Economics and was named the Best Teacher by the PKU Student Union in 2006 and the Best Advisor by the PKU Graduate Students Union in 2017. Dr Yao obtained a BS in geography in 1986 and an MS in economics in 1989, both from Peking University, and a PhD in development economics from the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1996.

ZHAO Tingyang

Steering Committee Member

Keywords: 义 / Duty, 天下 / Empire, 和 / Harmony, 历史 / History, 仁 / Humanism, 进步 / Progress, 时间 / Time

Professor Zhao TingYang is a leading member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). He is an academician and professor with major research areas including political philosophy, metaphysics and moral philosophy. He works on theories such as the Tianxia system (all-under-heaven system), the ontology of coexistence, and a theory of credit human rights.

ZHU Andong

Keywords: 约 / Contract, 私产 / Private Property

Professor Zhu Andong is Associate Professor at the School of Marxism of Tsinghua University. He has done research on political economy for more than 25 years and has taught the subject for more than 15 years.

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