

Routledge Studies in Asian Religion and Philosophy

WHY TRADITIONAL CHINESE PHILOSOPHY STILL MATTERS

**THE RELEVANCE OF ANCIENT WISDOM
FOR THE GLOBAL AGE**

Edited by
Ming Dong Gu



Why Traditional Chinese Philosophy Still Matters

Traditional Chinese philosophy, if engaged at all, is often regarded as an object of antiquated curiosity and dismissed as unimportant in the current age of globalization.

Written by a team of internationally renowned scholars, this book, however, challenges this judgement and offers an in-depth study of pre-modern Chinese philosophy from an interdisciplinary perspective. Exploring the relevance of traditional Chinese philosophy for the global age, it takes a comparative approach, analysing ancient Chinese philosophy in its relation to Western ideas and contemporary postmodernist theories. The conversation extends over a broad spectrum of philosophical areas and themes, ranging from metaphysics, ethics, hermeneutics, political theory, religion, and aesthetics to specific philosophical schools, including Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. By engaging many time-honoured philosophical issues from a comparative perspective, this book bridges the gap between Eastern and Western thought and emphasises the need for a newly fortified global humanism and a deeper appreciation of different philosophical and religious values in an age gripped by large-scale crises.

Arguing that traditional Chinese philosophy has immediate relevance to the many challenges of modern life, this book will be useful to students and scholars of Asian Philosophy and Asian Studies in general.

Ming Dong Gu is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Texas at Dallas. His most recent publications include *Sinologism: An Alternative to Orientalism and Post-colonialism* (2013), *Translating China for Western Readers: Reflective, Critical, Practical Essays* (editor, 2015), and *Collected Essays on the Discussions and Debates of Sinologism* (co-editor, 2017).

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- 20 Science and Socio-Religious Revolution in India**
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Pankaj Jain
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Perspectives on Consciousness
Rahul Banerjee and Amita Chatterjee
- 22 Why Traditional Chinese Philosophy Still Matters**
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Why Traditional Chinese Philosophy Still Matters

The Relevance of Ancient Wisdom
for the Global Age

Edited by Ming Dong Gu

With an Afterword by J. Hillis Miller

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To J. Hillis Miller and Dennis M. Kratz

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>List of contributors</i> | ix |
| <i>Acknowledgements</i> | xiv |
| | |
| Introduction: why traditional Chinese philosophy still matters | 1 |
| MING DONG GU | |
| | |
| PART I | |
| The relevance of Confucian ethics for our time | 17 |
| | |
| 1 Confucian role ethics: a challenge to the ideology of individualism | 19 |
| ROGER T. AMES | |
| | |
| 2 A theory of truthfulness (<i>cheng</i> 诚) in classical Confucian philosophy | 38 |
| CHUNG-YING CHENG | |
| | |
| 3 Why does the <i>Book of Rites</i> still matter in contemporary China? A case study of the relevance of <i>Tian Di</i> 天地 to the age of globalization | 55 |
| XINZHONG YAO | |
| | |
| 4 Moral luck and moral responsibility: Wang Yangming on the Confucian problem of evil | 68 |
| YONG HUANG | |

PART II

Mutual empowerment of Chinese and Western thought 83

- 5 Responsive virtuosity: a classical Chinese Buddhist contribution to contemporary conversations of freedom** 85

PETER D. HERSHOCK

- 6 Translatability, strangification, and common intelligibility: taking Chinese landscape painting and philosophical texts as examples** 102

VINCENT SHEN

- 7 Confucian exegesis, hermeneutic theory, and comparative thought** 118

ON-CHO NG

- 8 Spontaneity and reflection: the Dao of somaesthetics** 133

RICHARD SHUSTERMAN

PART III

Modern illuminations of ancient wisdom 145

- 9 Chinese philosophy's hybrid identity** 147

JOHN MAKEHAM

- 10 Knowing, feeling, and active ignorance: methodological reflection on the study of Chinese philosophy** 167

CARINE DEFOORT

- 11 Why the *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of Changes) matters in an age of globalization** 184

RICHARD J. SMITH

- 12 Understanding Zen/Chan in the context of globalization: a new view on the nature of enlightenment** 203

MING DONG GU

- Afterword: comments and reflections by an “outsider”** 223

J. HILLIS MILLER

- Index* 231

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appeared in its current form. Any errors, of course, remain my sole responsibility. Finally, I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors to this volume for traveling thousands of miles to participate in the symposium and for their enthusiastic cooperation in revising their presentations for publication after the symposium. Without their participation and cooperation, the book would not have been possible in the first place. I hope the publication of their articles in this volume will make their insights and scholarship available to a larger readership and more widely known in the field of Chinese and comparative thought.

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Introduction

Why traditional Chinese philosophy still matters

Ming Dong Gu

In the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan envisioned the prospect of a world contracted into a global village as technology, media, and communication would make it possible for information to be instantaneously disseminated around the globe.¹ Half a century later, his prophecy has been largely fulfilled in the present age of globalization. But, due to the famous concept “tribal-global village,” McLuhan’s idea has often been misunderstood and criticized as foreseeing the world as a unified community of peace and harmony. The fact is that nowhere did he expect the Global Village to be such an ideal community. On the contrary, in an interview with another scholar, McLuhan resolutely denied that peace and tranquility were the properties he had envisioned in the Global Village, because he predicted that the advance of communication technology would give rise to more discord, division, and disagreement with the increase of village conditions. As he succinctly puts it, “The tribal-global village is far more divisive – full of fighting – than any nationalism ever was. Village is fission, not fusion, in depth . . . The village is not the place to find ideal peace and harmony.”² Indeed, with the ending of the cold war, we have witnessed two opposite tendencies in the world. On the one hand, there is a centripetal force that drives the worldwide process of globalization which involves on an unprecedented scale the migration of people, ideas, resources, commodities, science, and technology across national borders; on the other, there is a centrifugal force which motivates nations, regions, ethnic groups, and spiritual faiths to engage in conflict, strife, and even hot war, and threatens the world with the possible coming of the so-called clash of civilizations controversially proposed by Samuel Huntington. Huntington’s view has been disputed by many thinkers and critics, but we have to admit that what he describes in his book is very much true to the present-day world. In spite of globalization, which has shrunk the geographical distance around the world, geopolitically and geoculturally, the world is in a state of fragmentation and cultural conflict rather than moving towards a global village of peace, harmony, and cultural cohesion, and in extreme cases, cultural conflicts have given rise to strife, bloodshed, war, and even ethnic cleansing.

In this postmodern age of global crises, many believe that Western universalism based on equality, freedom, individualism, democratic election, and free market capitalism is close to the best solution that will eventually resolve the world’s problems and make the world a global village of peace, harmony, and prosperity. But

2 *Ming Dong Gu*

stark reality informs us that Western universalism is far from being a panacea to cure all problems. Western universalism is only likely to resolve material problems and may be unable to solve emotional, spiritual, ethical, and cultural problems, which undergird the clash of civilizations. In a way, Western ideas of individualism, democracy, freedom of expression, and even globalization have contributed to the widening of gaps between individuals, social strata, ethnic groups, nations, and civilizations and set the stage for conflicts and confrontations among nations, ethnical groups, value systems, religious denominations, and cultural traditions. For this very reason, many believe that for Western universalism to work, it is necessary to draw spiritual resources and cultural values from non-Western traditions. This is where traditional Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, has a significant role to play in the global age.

Traditional Chinese philosophy, however, appeared during the well-known Axial Age (800–200 BCE). It originated from an intellectual movement known in Chinese history as the “Hundred Schools of Thought.” Although scholars and the general public would agree that ancient Chinese philosophy is the foundation upon which Chinese culture still subsists today, many of them, both in and out of China, seem to share one tacit agreement that ancient Chinese thought, which arose in high antiquity in an extremely secluded geographical setting, is the product of an agricultural mode of life and incompatible with the spirit of modern times and modern philosophy, especially Western intellectual thought in the postmodern age. The consensus on incommensurability is adequately reflected in the fact that ancient Chinese thought continues to be viewed as a discrete and specialized area of study pursued by specialists who exclusively focus on a period of thought or on the work of a few thinkers in almost total isolation from modern thought. In institutions of higher learning across the Western world, only a small number of universities and colleges employ scholars of Chinese philosophy, and if such a scholar is hired, he or she is most likely to feel like a square peg in a round hole there.

Thus, although many scholars in the postmodern age have jettisoned binary oppositions as a principle in their studies of intellectual thought, East or West, one of the dichotomies waiting to be removed is the divide between ancient Eastern thought and modern Western philosophy. Despite valiant efforts made by some Chinese and Western thinkers and scholars to bridge the intellectual gap between Chinese and Western thought, a tacit but strong opinion holds that traditional Chinese philosophy is an object of antiquated curiosity and incommensurate with the age of globalization. As a consequence, traditional Chinese philosophy has been viewed as an area of study that should be conducted separately from modern and postmodern Western thought. In spite of admirable efforts made by some thinkers and scholars of comparative thought, the situation remains little changed. Reacting against the separation of Chinese and Western philosophy, ancient and modern thought, we view the intellectual divide itself as incompatible with the spirit of the global age and believe that traditional Chinese thought is not only relevant to our times and lives in our efforts to reconstruct a new world order of peace, harmony, and cohesiveness, but also has much to offer for effecting the fusion of intellectual

horizons between East and West and for finding new solutions for the world's multiple crises. This is why traditional Chinese philosophy still matters today.

In an effort to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western thought and engage in thoughtful reflections on the common issues confronting the world in the post-modern age, the School of Arts and Humanities and the Confucius Institute at the University of Texas at Dallas jointly organized an international symposium, "Why Classical Chinese Philosophy Matters in the Global Age," which took place on November 19–22, 2015, in Dallas. The symposium gathered together 15 internationally renowned scholars in Chinese philosophy and comparative thought from countries and regions, including China, France, Australia, Canada, Belgium, England, the United States, and Hong Kong, to discuss the relevance of traditional Chinese philosophy for the global age and to locate ways and means to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western thought.

The symposium was organized in accordance with a guideline which emphasized three qualities: small-scale, high-level, and in-depth discussion. To organize a small-scale symposium, the organizers sent out invitations to just fewer than 20 scholars across the globe who could address the issues of how to move beyond the inherited view in the field and how to locate insights and values of traditional Chinese philosophy in areas including metaphysics, ethics, hermeneutics, political theory, and aesthetics. For high-level presentations, invitations were sent only to scholars who are internationally recognized philosophers or specialists of Chinese and comparative thought. To facilitate in-depth discussion, it adopted a format with an extended time frame, allowing each speaker to present for 30 minutes followed by a 15-minute discussion. If necessary, more time could be allocated to specific issues of interest to all the participants. To effectively cross the divide between disciplines, the symposium also invited a special participant, Professor J. Hillis Miller, Distinguished Research Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California-Irvine and a former president of the Modern Language Association. Although he is not a specialist in Chinese philosophy or thought, he has lectured as a world-renowned theorist and literary critic in China over a dozen times and shown a sustained interest in Chinese thought, literature, and culture for over 30 years. He graciously accepted our invitation and agreed to read all the papers before the symposium and offer his comments and criticism at the symposium.

The symposium consisted of eight sessions. Each of the first seven sessions had two presentations on a related theme. The last session was devoted to commentaries by the specially invited commentator, Professor Miller. The opening session featured two papers: "Confucian Role Ethics: A Challenge to the Ideology of Individualism," by Roger T. Ames, professor of philosophy emeritus at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and editor of *Philosophy East and West*, currently Distinguished Humanities Chair Professor and Berggruen Fellow at Peking University; and "A Theory of Truthfulness (*Cheng* 诚) in Confucian Four Books," by Chung-ying Cheng, professor of Chinese philosophy at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and editor of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. The second session focused on the *Zhouyi* (Book of Changes) and Confucian Exegesis. It had two

4 Ming Dong Gu

papers: “Why the *Yijing* 易經 (Classic of Changes) Matters in an Age of Globalization,” by Richard J. Smith, George and Nancy Rupp Professor of Humanities and professor of history at Rice University; and “Reading Matters: Confucian Exegesis, Hermeneutics, and Comparative Thought,” by On-cho Ng, professor of history, Asian studies, and philosophy at Pennsylvania State University and associate editor of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*. Session 3 returned to Chinese ethical theory with two papers: “Moral Luck and Moral Responsibility: Wang Yangming on the Origin of Evil,” by Yong Huang, professor of philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and editor of *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*; and “Why Does the *Book of Rites* Still Matter in Contemporary China? A Case Study of the Relevance of *Tian Di* 天地 to the Age of Globalization,” by Xinzhong Yao, professor emeritus of ethics, King’s College, London, and currently professor of philosophy at Renmin University of China. Session 4 had two papers on Chan/Zen Buddhism: “Valuing Dramatic Virtuosity: Voicing Classical Chinese Buddhist Insights in Contemporary Conversations of Freedom,” by Peter D. Hershock, a specialist in Zen Buddhism and director of the Asian Studies Development Program at the East-West Center, USA; and “Momentary Return of the Cosmic Unconscious: A View of Zen/Chan Enlightenment,” by Ming Dong Gu, professor of Chinese and comparative literature at the University of Texas at Dallas. Session 5 shifted the focus to Daoism and aesthetics with two papers: “Spontaneity and Reflection: The Dao of Somaesthetics,” by Richard Shusterman, Dorothy F. Schmidt Eminent Scholar and professor of philosophy, Florida Atlantic University; and “Translatability, Strangification, and Common Intelligibility: Taking Chinese Landscape Painting and Philosophical Texts as Examples,” by Vincent Shen, Lee Chair Professor in Chinese Thought and Culture, the University of Toronto. Session 6 conducted reflections on the nature of Chinese philosophy with two papers: “Knowing Without Knowledge: A Way of Thinking about Chinese Philosophy,” by Carine Defoort, professor of sinology at the University of Leuven, Belgium, and editor of *Contemporary Chinese Thought*; and “Chinese Philosophy’s Hybrid Identity,” by John Makeham, professor emeritus of Chinese intellectual history, Australian National University, currently chair and director, China Studies Research Centre, La Trobe University, Australia. Session 7 explored Chinese philosophy beyond the Chinese horizon with two papers: “The Culture of the Self in Foucault and Eleventh-Century Thought: Insights into the Practice of the Self,” by Stéphane Feuillas, Maître de conférences en langues et littératures classiques chinoises, Université Paris 7-Denis Diderot; and “Enlightenment Against China: Cornelius de Pauw’s Natural History of the Chinese,” by Peter K.J. Park, associate professor of history of ideas at the University of Texas at Dallas. Each of the formal sessions was followed by an extended and in-depth discussion with questions and answers and exchange of ideas. The last session was a review of and commentary on all the presented papers by Professor Miller. He took the time to read all the papers beforehand and wrote down detailed comments on each paper. While presenting his critical comments during the last session, he also offered his own thoughts and insights on the significance of traditional Chinese thought for the postmodern age in the process of globalization. Utilizing his observations of

Chinese academia and society on his 15 lecture trips to China, he exchanged his ideas on the relevance of ancient Chinese wisdom for our time with some of the symposium presenters.

After the symposium was over, the presenters were asked to revise their presented papers in preparation for a collected volume. Except for two that were not collected due to time and schedule, all the papers were extensively revised and collected into this present volume. Altogether, there is a total of 12 essays and a commentary. After reviewing them, the editor has regrouped them into three parts, each of which has four articles and focuses on a common theme relevant to the articles in the group. The volume ends with Professor Miller's extended commentary on all the presented papers, including the two papers that were presented at the symposium but not included in this volume. His comments on individual papers are presented in this volume according to the original order for the symposium. A few scholars have responded to Professor Miller's commentary. Their responses are included at the end of their articles as "afterthoughts."

Part One is subtitled "The Relevance of Confucian Ethics for Our Time." It has four articles, which are concerned with Confucian ethics. Professor Roger T. Ames's essay, "Confucian role ethics: a challenge to the ideology of individualism," inaugurates the first part. In his essay, Ames identifies a common phenomenon in the introduction of Chinese philosophy and culture into the Western academy. That is, scholars have tended to theorize and conceptualize the Chinese tradition by appealing to familiar categories in the West. He argues that Confucian role ethics has a *sui generis* moral philosophy that endows this tradition with its own voice. Confucianism is a holistic philosophy that prioritizes relationality and constitutes a challenge to a foundational liberal individualism that has defined persons as discrete, autonomous, rational, free, and often self-interested agents. His article addresses a central question: What impact can Confucianism – a philosophy that begins from the primacy of relationality – have on world thought and culture in the global age and in the decades to follow? His provided answer is that as Confucian ethics have a relationally constituted conception of the person, emphasize roles and relations as the entry point for developing moral competence, and invoke moral imagination and growth in relations, they can inspire people in the global age to act according to human morality and be instrumental in invoking a human-centered, albeit atheistic religiousness that may complement and supplement the limitations of the Abrahamic religions and Western universalism.

The second essay of Part One is Professor Chung-ying Cheng's "A theory of truthfulness (*cheng* 诚) in classical Confucian philosophy." It also addresses the issue of ethics, but unlike Professor Ames's macrocosmic approach, it adopts a microcosmic approach to focus on one key concept in Confucianism, *cheng* (诚). The presentation seeks to answer the question: How can we adequately understand *cheng* (commonly translated as "sincerity") in Confucianism? He argues that this often presents a difficult problem because scholars usually take its surface meaning for granted but fail to grasp its underlying moral philosophy and cosmic ontology. Even when some scholars interpret the concept more broadly in relation to such concepts as "genuineness," "authenticity," and "creativity," they still fail to answer

the question of how to achieve a deep and comprehensive understanding of reality. Without deeper self-reflection on the word, he argues, one may be creating more confusion than answering the question. He suggests that we should regard the concept of *cheng* as a human understanding of reality and at the same time as a realization of human nature in reality. While interpreting *cheng* as truthfulness, he offers a close reading in terms of ontology, creative cosmology and human nature, moral intent and value, and shows how the concept should be understood as truthful knowing articulated in specific contexts of language and culture.

The third essay of Part One is Professor Xinzhong Yao's "Why does the *Book of Rites* still matter in contemporary China? A case study of the relevance of *Tian Di* 天地 to the age of globalization." One of the Confucian classics, the *Book of Rites* has generally been viewed as having few original contributions to make in formulating Confucian views on social, political, and educational matters. But Yao argues that the text presents – for the first time in Chinese and world history – a comprehensive eco-ethics and makes a pioneering effort to bring anthropocentric and ecocentric tendencies into harmonious relation that is of great value for our rethinking of human relationship with Nature in contemporary times beset with grave environment crises. He agrees that the *Book of Rites* takes an anthropocentric approach to the human-Nature relationship, but in investigating how ritual comes into existence and why it functions well in the three-in-one world (Heaven, Earth and Humans), the treatise is preoccupied with concerns which are directly relevant to ecological conservation in several significant ways: (1) Nature (Heaven and Earth) is not seen as parallel to human existence but as the root of all things and all beings and as the root of ritual; (2) Utilitarian attitudes and behaviors towards natural things and beings are regulated by various rites so that natural things/beings are not simply at human disposal; their use must be in accordance with ritual regulations and follow proper timing; (3) The institutional imposition of human desires on Nature is diluted by careful applications of regulations that leave sufficient room to the living and growing of natural beings. Based on these insights, Yao draws the conclusion that the ideas and values contained in the treatise come close to formulating an ancient eco-ethics which is badly needed for education and for the resolution of the world's environmental crisis.

The fourth essay of Part One is Professor Yong Huang's "Moral luck and moral responsibility: Wang Yangming on the Confucian problem of evil." Huang is a specialist on Wang Yangming's neo-Confucian philosophy and conducts a deep probing into Wang's key concept *liangzhi* (literally "good knowledge"). In his article, he raises this question: If Wang claims that *liangzhi* (good knowledge) is something that everyone is born with, why do people fail to do moral things and even commit evil deeds? Contrary to a common view that Wang fails to solve the neo-Confucian problem of evil, he argues that Wang in fact works out a plausible and profound solution, which has this thesis: People do evil things because their selfish desires cloud their *liangzhi*, and the selfish desires appear because of the unfavorable *xi qi* 習氣. While *xi* refers to the environment in which one was born and grows up, *qi* is the physis-psychological make-up at birth. In exploring what kind of environment one is born into and what kind of physis-psychological

make-up one is born with and why they are out of one's control, he suggests it is moral luck, a concept famously explored by Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel. But Huang does not accept their view of moral luck and seeks to revise it in terms of Wang Yangming's thought. In examining how the environment and physic-psychological make-up affect our moral behavior, Wang proposes ideas that come close to the concept of moral luck. Nevertheless, Wang's moral luck has two salient features, which distinguish his ideas from the concept proposed by the two Western thinkers and prevent it from being bogged down in an oxymoron or a paradox. Thus, Wang Yangming's *liangzhi* contains ideas that may complement and supplement the Western concept of moral luck and are relevant to constructing a valid modern ethics.

Part Two works on a theme conveyed by the subtitle, "Mutual empowerment of Chinese and Western thought." It contains four essays which cover a diverse range of topics, including hermeneutics and Confucian exegesis, Buddhism, and the concept of freedom, Daoism and Somaesthetics, and the philosophy of language and Chinese art. As the subtitle indicates, it explores how Chinese and Western thought can interpenetrate, illuminate, complement, and empower each other. The first essay is Peter Hershock's "Responsive virtuosity: a classical Chinese Buddhist contribution to contemporary conversations of freedom." The modern concept of freedom is definitely a Western idea closely aligned with liberal individualism. But the idea is not alien to Chinese and Eastern traditions. Hershock argues that despite being invoked globally in practically limitless ranges of contexts, the meaning and proper scope of "freedom" remain contested and are open to discussion and debate. His article attempts to give contemporary voice to an Eastern conception of freedom to be found in Chinese Buddhism. He bases his method of conceptual inquiry on the premise that concepts do not have generic origins, but rather emerge specifically, as values-expressing patterns of sentient conduct and concern that reflexively shape and are shaped by their natural, historical and cultural contexts. As a result of this understanding, he views concepts as evolving in constellation with one another and proposes a way to understand the concept of freedom not in analytic isolation, but rather, through the ways in which it relates to other concepts in practical embodied focus. His article has two parts. The first part addresses how his proposed understanding of concepts clarifies what is involved in learning from temporally and culturally distant traditions of thought and practice. Drawing resources from Huayan, Tiantai, and Chan Buddhism, he puts forward a conception of freedom that contrasts markedly with the modern Western (and now global) constellation of freedom predicated on autonomy, independence, choice, and control. It is a karmic conception of freedom that shifts emphasis from choosing to improvising, from control to contribution, and from being free to relating freely. Following this conceptualization, he explores how the conception of freedom inspired by Chinese Buddhism may open new ways of promoting freedom and justice beyond the liberal or communitarian limits and limitations.

The second article of Part Two is Professor Vincent Shen's "Translatability, strangification, and common intelligibility: taking Chinese landscape painting and philosophical texts as examples." It opens with an argument against Jean-François

Lyotard's concept of language game and Thomas Kuhn's concept of incommensurability. In Shen's opinion, Lyotard's theory entails an idea of incommensurability that does not favor any internal economy of translatability and communicability. If we take a strong position of nontranslatability among language games, it would prevent the appreciation of their uniqueness and the difference between different language games. Similarly, Kuhn's concept of incommensurability between paradigms implies a mutual exclusion of each paradigm, to the neglect of the fact that being able to discern their incommensurability presupposes one's appropriation of the common intelligibility of both paradigms. In contrast to their emphasis on incommensurability, Shen argues for a minimum degree of common intelligibility, translatability, and communicability among different language games and realms of communication. And to redress the neglected aspect in their views, he proposes the method of strangification as a strategy to address discourses and communications with contrasting nature and difference. According to him, "strangification (*Verfremdung*) can be understood as an act of going beyond oneself to reach others, or better, many others, from one's familiarity to strangeness, to the stranger in order to make oneself more easily understandable and acceptable." Strangification exists on three levels: linguistic, pragmatic, and ontological. It has similar reverberations with the Chinese term, *waitui* 外推. Using Chinese landscape and philosophical texts about landscape as his analytical data, he demonstrates that *lei*, a category in Chinese tradition which works on common intelligibility or similitude, offers a basis for the translatability between image (landscape painting) and text (philosophical treatises on landscape painting) and may serve as a principle of interpretation in traditional Chinese poetry and art in general. The article concludes that though nowadays, under the impact of postmodernism, differences, originality, and uniqueness are privileged over similarity and conformity, leading Jean François Lyotard to posit a multiplicity of language games, whose internal logic is that of conflict and even fighting. Yet, among all different language games, the contrasting situation is not a hindrance but a necessary condition for acts of strangification, by which we translate our ideas, cultural expressions, and belief system into language and discourse that is understandable to others.

The third essay of Part Two is Professor On-cho Ng's "Confucian exegesis, hermeneutic theory, and comparative thought." It starts with a criticism of parochialism in East-West philosophical studies, and a reaffirmation of the universal nature of hermeneutics on the fact that regardless of where, when, and what we read, we are all governed by the hermeneutic axiom of our existence, and our thoughts produce interpretations that are relative to the contingent contexts of particular historical forces and factors, including the interpreters' prejudices. He observes that although Platonic and Confucian thoughts were distinct historico-cultural products, they are mutually complementary rather than exclusive. Taking the Chinese tradition of commentaries on the classics as his object of critical inquiry, he argues that the traditional Confucian exegetical effort of explicating the traditional texts should not be content with merely reading in its historical and philological ways. Instead, it should be conducted as a hermeneutic act that takes exegesis as an inquiry into conditions of human existence, thereby raising

methodological and epistemological questions of the nature and import of the very act of reading. In spite of cultural differences and gaps between Chinese and Western hermeneutic traditions, Chinese hermeneutics contains various specific cultural histories, the ancestral versions of which may be found in the Western and Chinese philosophical traditions. By focusing on the major ideas and practices in the Chinese exegetical tradition involving exegetical practices by Confucius, Mencius, Xun Zi, Zhu Xi, and *Yijing* hermeneutics in relation to the Western hermeneutic tradition pioneered by the Greek masters like Plato and Aristotle and modern masters like Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, and others, his article explores the conceptual nexus of Chinese exegesis and Western hermeneutics and examines a gamut of conceptual issues including their commensurability, commonality, and concordance on the one hand, and divergence, difference, and dissonance on the other. Through an exercise of exegetic analysis, his article highlights the import and purport of the act of reading in varying cultural contexts, and sheds light on the imperative of reading-cum-understanding as an englobing universal human pursuit, especially as a quest for and the apprehension of the lessons and truths that seem to inhere in the oldest and most precious of our cultural capital: the classics of the East and West. His cross-cultural exegetic exercise underscores the importance of comparative readings and calls for a new Chinese theory of reading that promotes the dissemination of the Chinese classics in a global world.

The fourth article of Part Two is Professor Richard Shusterman's "Spontaneity and reflection: the dao of somaesthetics." It addresses one of the longstanding debates in philosophical inquiry that is concerned with the relations of thought and action. Basically, there are two views. One view, upheld by many philosophers who, by profession or inclination, are paradigmatically reflective persons, advocates that our choice of actions should be guided by deliberative thought or practical reasoning. The other view is also upheld by many philosophers, who argue that in performing the action itself, which is a matter of bodily movement, we should stop our thinking so that the performative doing can run more smoothly without interference from the mind. They believe that spontaneity is a prerequisite for skillful success in somatic performance, whereas deliberate reflection poses a hindrance. Shusterman's article attempts to re-examine the relations between thought and action from a comparative perspective, drawing ideas and materials from both Chinese and Western traditions. It first briefly reviews the topic under discussion in contemporary Western philosophy with a focus on the work of William James and Merleau-Ponty. And then it shifts to the Chinese tradition by examining some classic texts from the Daoist philosophy. Although Daoism is generally viewed as advocating unreflective, natural spontaneity (*ziran* 自然), the article examines relevant passages from the writings of Zhuangzi, Liezi, and other Daoist texts in relation to medicine, meditation, and sexology, and challenges the widely accepted view of unthinking spontaneity in Daoism. He argues that Daoist thinking may be understood to support a view he has proposed in his work on somaesthetics, which emphasizes a kind of integrated balance and phasing of reflective and nonreflective action.

Part Three contains four essays grouped on the subtitle: “Modern illuminations of ancient wisdom.” They work on the theme of how Eastern and Western philosophies can mutually illuminate each other and help us understand some important but thorny issues in the comparative study of thought. The first article is Professor John Makeham’s “Chinese philosophy’s hybrid identity.” It briefly reviews the impact of Buddhism upon the development of indigenous Chinese traditions of religion, philosophy, art, and literature, especially Neo-Confucian philosophy, to pave the way for what may be viewed as an “archaeology” of Neo-Confucian thinking in the Foucauldian sense of the word. As Neo-Confucian thinkers increasingly began to look back at the traditional Confucian tradition they (unwittingly) saw their traditional texts through a Buddhist lens. Makeham’s essay is an exercise in conceptual archaeology with a focus on the relationship between a central pair of concepts in Zhu Xi’s metaphysics: *li* 理 and *qi* 氣. He argues that the conceptual structure underpinning Zhu’s account of the relationship between *li* and *qi* is homologous with a range of conceptual pairs found in Sinitic Buddhist writings from China’s medieval times to Zhu Xi’s time. The early predecessor of this homologous structure is an unusually fecund hybrid that synthesizes elements of indigenous Chinese thought, which predates the introduction of Buddhist thought into China and materials drawn from Indian Buddhist thought. Later developments in Chinese philosophy have constantly drawn on these constructs for inspiration and renewal, although these constructs became so naturalized that their Indian “genetic markers” became effaced (but not erased) over time. The essay identifies a key conceptual structure common to the writings of the twelfth-century Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi and to the *Awakening of Faith*, a sixth-century Sinitic Buddhist text. This shared conceptual structure is a homology, which descends from a common ancestor. This common ancestor is traced to developments in Southern Chinese Buddhist circles during the latter half of the fifth century. This ancestor itself is a hybrid, a product of the fecund engagement of Buddhist constructs derived from both the Indian and Chinese traditions. Its Sinicized aspect is the *ti-yong* polarity; its Indianized aspect is the appropriation of the *ti-yong* polarity into a vehicle to express the idea of immanent transcendence. In the *Awakening of Faith*, the genetic signature of this ancestor figured prominently in the Sinitic Buddhist philosophy in medieval times, and was subsequently re-inscribed by Zhu Xi to become a jewel in the Neo-Confucian metaphysical crown. While problematizing the identity of “Chinese” philosophy, the essay draws the conclusion that key elements of Chinese philosophy have long been hybrid in their intellectual constitution, a quality that will enable Chinese philosophy to thrive in modern and postmodern times.

The second essay of Part Three is Professor Carine Defoort’s “Knowing, feeling, and active ignorance: methodological reflection on the study of Chinese philosophy.” It works on a similar theme. It wrestles with the thorny issue of how to approach traditional Chinese texts that have come down to us through layers of interpretation. The most recent and very influential layer is that of academic philosophy, introduced from the West. As new terms, concepts, assumptions, questions, and expectations are introduced for interpreting traditional philosophical

texts, it becomes worthwhile to occasionally put this frame on hold, describe it, and thereby temporarily liberate early masters from its current dominance. Defoort suggests that the crisis in the contemporary study of ancient Chinese philosophy is to some extent due to the fact that scholars in Chinese philosophy departments have worked too hard to fit traditional Chinese thought into the procrustean bed of Western philosophy and have often overlooked the foremost philosophical demand of questioning the assumptions of their own enterprise. She argues that an active cultivation of “un-knowing” or “fasting of the mind” in terms of Hannah Arendt’s definition of “thinking” may provide visions and insights for resolving the crisis. This suggestion has both positive and negative impacts. Negatively, what we take for granted as necessary conceptual terms in philosophy departments was nonexistent or only emerging in China’s antiquity. Positively, this cultivated un-knowing facilitates novel re-conceptualization of Chinese philosophy as a discipline. Un-knowing may thereby suspend dominant assumptions in the field and open up new routes to philosophical inquiry, thus providing visions and strategies for modernizing traditional Chinese philosophy.

The third essay of Part Three is Professor Richard J. Smith’s “Why the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes) matters in an age of globalization.” Although *Yijing* is perhaps the most well-known of Chinese classics in the world, its immense authority in premodern China is seldom fully appreciated by scholars East or West. For example, the question of the *Yijing*’s place in the history of Chinese science is a vexed one. Scholars like Joseph Needham and Peng-Yoke Ho have argued that the *Changes* inhibited the development of Chinese science (by which they mean a Western model of historical development). But Smith argues that to blame the *Yijing* for China’s so-called failure to follow a “Western” scientific path gets at only part of the story. While he sees little value in the so-called scientific characteristics of the *Changes* and views various efforts made by many Chinese and a considerable number of Western scholars to link the *Yijing* to modern mathematics, biology, and medicine as nothing more than fanciful exercises in correlative thinking, he strongly believes that the *Yijing* matters in our age of globalization, because, as he ardently argues, the cultural significance of the *Changes* extended into virtually every area of traditional Chinese life and has spread to Eastern Asian countries and other parts of the world. As a specialist in the *Yijing*, he argues that it is relevant to our age of postmodernism and globalization for several reasons. First, it has been the number one Classic for well over 2,000 years, and it continues to play a significant role in contemporary Chinese ways of life, from highly intellectual areas of philosophy, aesthetics, and art to business management and fortune-telling. This fact alone deserves our serious consideration. Second, its intellectual use and value has extended beyond China to most parts of the world. As a result, there are few places on earth where some version of it cannot be found. There is every reason to say that it has been globalized for more than a millennium. Third, the *Yijing* still has something important to say to us. It will benefit us to find its modern values in answering such questions: How and why did it become a “global” property? What light does its process of “globalization” shed on the process of present-day, world-wide globalization? This article makes efforts to locate answers to those questions

and examine how the ancient Chinese classic has influenced world culture in the past, and how it will continue to influence our life for generations to come.

The fourth article of Part Three and the last of the volume is Ming Dong Gu's "Understanding zen/chan in the context of globalization: a new view on the nature of enlightenment." It addresses a subject which has been a hot topic in East-West intellectual history and comparative thought. Zen/Chan used to be a Far Eastern philosophy-cum-religion, but it has evolved into a global cultural phenomenon in the age of globalization. Thanks to the arduous promotion by its practitioners, scholars, and eminent thinkers, in whose ranks are found renowned names like Carl Jung, Aldous Huxley, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Meister Eckhart, Allan Watts, Gary Snyder, Jacques Lacan, and Roland Barthes, we have good reasons to say that Chan is a global form of philosophy, religion, and life rolled into one. Despite this, Zen enlightenment, however, remains an ineffable Oriental mysticism, a view shared by D.T. Suzuki, Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, and other thinkers. This article challenges the accepted consensus. By conducting an in-depth probing into the historical, psychological, linguistic, and intersubjective dimensions of Chan experience from a comparative perspective, this article proposes a hitherto unexpressed view that attempts to offer a rational understanding of Chan enlightenment and its nature. It argues that Chan enlightenment is a prenatal, preverbal physio-psychological existence, which grows out of a fetal subject's perception of the womb. Although this primordial mode of perception is unconscious, it is cosmic in nature, because for the fetal subject, the womb is the whole world with which it feels to be at one. This unconscious oneness can be said to be "cosmic unconscious." Once born, no one can return to the prenatal mental state, but through personal cultivation and Chan practice, one can experience a fleeting moment of the cosmic unconscious. In the final analysis, the essence of Chan enlightenment is a momentary return of the cosmic unconscious. It is therefore not a great wisdom which enables one to have a profound understanding of the self and the world, but a non-wisdom induced by a return to the prenatal, preverbal being of life. This new understanding should provide spiritual inspiration for acquiring mental peace and tranquility in a global age fraught with anxiety, unrest, and hostility.

The volume ends with Professor Miller's comments on all the papers. Acknowledging the fact that he is not a trained philosopher or a scholar of Chinese thought, or even someone who knows the Chinese language, he professes to comment on the papers for the symposium from the viewpoint of an outsider and centers his commentary on a series of questions: Why should he, as a Westerner, be interested in learning about Chinese philosophy? What good is it for him to do so? Does he have any chance to understand Confucianism without knowing Chinese and to have adequate understanding of the Confucian way of thinking and feeling? And if he were to "convert" to Confucianism, how would he act as a bona fide Confucian in the United States where the situation is radically different from that of Confucius or Mencius, and when a digitalized culture has brought a series of radical changes to the world? His whole commentary is guided by these general, albeit important, questions concerned with the value of intercultural knowledge in an age of globalization. As a profound thinker and erudite scholar, he makes good

use of his sharp mind to turn the disadvantage of being an outsider into a vantage point from which to observe traditional Chinese philosophy in general and to understand the papers presented at the symposium in particular. He comes up with sagacious insights obtained from reading those papers and expresses a deep appreciation of the meaning and value of the ancient wisdom from a disinterested and cross-disciplinary perspective. His thoughtful comments should aid non-specialist Western readers in understanding and appreciating the value of this volume.

An overview of the 12 articles and one commentary informs us that the volume has a remarkable scope which embraces a wide array of topics across the East-West divide, ranging from general philosophical areas like metaphysics, ethics, hermeneutics, political theory, aesthetics, and poetics to specific philosophical schools like Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, the *Book of Changes*, and other schools of thought in the Chinese tradition. It is a volume which adopts comparative, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural approaches to Chinese philosophy. In addition to its broad scope, the volume shows a remarkable depth with an admirable amount of creative thinking and fresh interpretations. First, it displays a global humanism that emphasizes our common humanity and destiny. Arguing from a variety of perspectives, all the articles reaffirm the necessity of cross-cultural understanding for peace, harmony, and tolerance, and advocate sympathetic and in-depth appreciation of different philosophical and religious traditions in our present age gripped by large-scale crises. What is refreshing in all the articles is that they advance a heterogeneous array of new ideas, views, and approaches in the interpretation of the time-honored philosophical issues: Roger Ames's challenge to the ideology of individualism; Chung-ying Cheng's new reading of the Confucian concept *cheng* (sincerity); Xinzhong Yao's formulation of a Confucian eco-ethics; Yong Huang's reinterpretation of Wang Yangming's key concept of *liangzhi* (good conscience) in terms of moral luck; Peter Hershock's Buddhist re-conception of freedom; John Makeham's "archaeology" of the roots of Neo-Confucian thinking; Carine Defoort's rethinking of the nature and condition of Chinese philosophy as a field; On-cho Ng's re-conception of reading-cum-understanding as an englobing universal human pursuit; Vincent Shen's proposition of strangification as the conceptual basis for cross-disciplinary translatability; Richard Shusterman's articulation of a Taoist version of somaesthetics; Richard J. Smith's highlight of the relevance of the *Yijing* for the global age; and Ming Dong Gu's new interpretation of the nature of Zen enlightenment. These new ideas, views, and approaches should inspire novel visions and strategies for the efforts to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western philosophy and provide food for thought for resolving the miscellaneous crises confronted by us in the age of globalization.

It is observed that the general trend in modern philosophy after Kant has moved in the direction of ethics. The present volume confirms the ethical turn in philosophical inquiries on the global scale. This can be seen not just in the articles in the first part; ethical emphasis is also prominent in most other articles. Some thinkers have suggested that one of the main reasons why the world in the age of globalization is not moving towards a global village of peace, harmony, and cultural unity is because a new world order has yet to find a cohesive spirit that

can serve as the spiritual glue that would bind together people of different cultural backgrounds. Despite their enormous diversity, all the people in the world may be drastically reduced to two polar groups in different situations, namely, self and other. And in spite of their great varieties, all the conflicts in the world may be reduced to a fundamental core conflict between self and other, which covers a wide range from a fight between two individuals in a dispute in the smallest scale to a gigantic military confrontation between two conglomerates of nations in the cold war. Even in situations remotely related to hostility, say, in the relations between friends, relatives, colleagues, and family members, the gap between individuals becomes widened by globalization and liberal individualism. Most articles in this volume either directly or indirectly address the issue of ethics in human life. They suggest that a viable new world order should be constructed not solely on a material foundation of geo-cultural politics, economics, and cultural traditions, or solely on western universalism predicated on individualism and liberalism, but on the spiritual foundation of ethics. To adequately tackle the problems accompanying globalization, those articles shift their attention from the social and cultural dimension of ideologies to the moral and ethical dimension of people's minds and provide visions, insights, and even practical strategies to construct a modern ethics for the global age. Confucian ethics, most articles suggest, stress personal cultivation rather than individual freedom, and has much to offset the limitations of individualism. The value of Confucianism in modern times is multifaceted, but this volume shows that what is most valuable in the global age are its practical ways of overcoming personal, social, and civilizational differences and conflicts through what one may call Confucian Universalism in contradistinction to Western Universalism. In this sense, this volume has confirmed a vision articulated over 40 years ago by Arnold J. Toynbee, who viewed the "Confucian Weltanschauung" as "humanism" which may function as the unifying spirit of all peoples in the world, who, as he forewarned, might engage in a suicidal destruction if disparate cultures, traditions, and civilizations fail to merge into one world in the age of advanced technologies.³

This volume has another distinctive feature: It speaks eloquently of the complementary value of philosophical traditions East and West. It shows through its analysis of a diverse array of thinkers, thoughts, and ideas that different philosophical traditions can complement and mutually empower each other in areas as diverse as ontology, epistemology, hermeneutics, ethics, religion, aesthetics, and art. The meaningful comparisons, the mutual illumination of ideas from Chinese and Western traditions, and the visions and insights obtained from comparative studies provide evidence of successes in intellectual empowerment through reciprocal enrichment and mutual enhancement that strengthen diverse intellectual traditions in the East-West encounter. In his comparative study of Eastern and Western philosophy, the British philosopher Whitehead once made an astute observation on how mutual intellectual empowerment can take place: "If you want to understand Confucius, read John Dewey. And if you want to understand John Dewey, read Confucius."⁴ All the articles in this volume testify to the value and validity of his remark. The whole volume implicitly says: "If you want to understand Western

philosophy, read Chinese philosophy. And if you want to understand Chinese philosophy, read Western philosophy.” As a way to summarize the value and insights of this volume, we may conclude with these words: Traditional Chinese philosophy still matters in the age of globalization and is meaningfully relevant to our postmodern life.

Notes

- 1 The term “global village” first appeared in McLuhan’s *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962), and this idea was further expounded in his *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964).
- 2 Gerald Emanuel Stearn, ed., *McLuhan: Hot & Cool: A Symposium With a Rebuttal by McLuhan* (New York: Dial Press, 1967), 280.
- 3 Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, *Choose Life: A Dialogue*, ed. Richard L. Cage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 249–51.
- 4 Alfred North Whitehead, *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead*, ed. Lucien Price (New York: Mentor Books, 1954), 145.