



# Essays in Chinese Philosophy / Essays über chinesische Philosophie

## Introduction

In the last few decades the growing interest in Chinese philosophy around the world is evident, whether in numerous publications of exegetical or comparative nature, establishment of journals dedicated to the subject of Asian thought as well as university departments and chairs, scientific conferences, etc. Journals of the Croatian Philosophical Society have been joining these trends by publishing several main theme sections and a number of separate studies thematising Chinese thought.<sup>1</sup> Some questions raised at the time<sup>2</sup> have in the meantime met their answers, while other, due to their complex nature as well as changed circumstances, remain open. Regarding the institutionalisation of Chinese philosophy research in SE Europe, there has been some progress in establishing departments of sinology with courses in Chinese philosophy, although there is also much room (or need) for further development, e.g. in including topics on Chinese thought traditions in philosophy curricula at the university level, certainly in encouraging translation of key works and authors, classics, general reviews etc. Discussions on “legitimacy” of the term “Chinese philosophy” and its relation to “Western” philosophy have somewhat decreased in intensity, albeit are far from over. At the same time the questions of otherness, alterity, sameness and difference in the era of rapid multilevel globalisation have never had more attention. The importance of initiating and nourishing dialogue and mutual understanding in the emerging multipolar world is growing daily, and it is a task which certainly cannot be performed without the inclusion of philosophy and philosophical reflection, regardless of how it is understood in particular traditions.

Hence, after a quarter of a century, we dedicate this issue to a theme section with topics ranging from examination of rarely researched places in ancient Chinese philosophical texts and classics to consideration of modern 20<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese authors and contemporary issues of Chinese society. In the paper “Der Traum vom Tod: Die Wandlung der Daseinzustände im Buch *Zhuangzi*” Tania Becker investigates the understanding of death in several stories of the famous early philosophical Daoist text *Zhuangzi*. Jana Rošker deals with the question of analogical inference and relational/structural reasoning as specific features of Chinese logic from the early classic *Book of Changes* to later Confucian and Mohist contributions to the development of Chinese semantic logic. Ivana Buljan provides a contribution to research of the important politi-

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Cf. theme sections “Chinese Philosophy I–II” in *Synthesis philosophica*, Vol. 4, No. 1 & 2 (7 & 8), 1989, and “Kineska filozofija”, *Filozofska istraživanja*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (29), 1989, ed. Maja Milčinski.

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Maja Milčinski, “Chinese Philosophy I. Towards the Topic”, *Synthesis philosophica* 7, Vol. 4., No. 1 (7), 1989, pp. 161–162.

cal text *Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals* by examining the syncretism of different influences on the notion of self-regulation presented in the “Linking the State and the Body” chapter of the text. The paper “The Authentic Person as Ideal for the Late Ming Dynasty Physician” by Leslie de Vries analyses influences of Daoist inner alchemy on traditional Chinese medicine by focusing on the famous late Ming physician Zhang Jiebin’s commentary on the *Huangdi neijing*, one of the basic texts of Chinese medicine. Li Man offers in his paper a study of metaphysical and political implications of the interpretation and annotations of the classical Daoist text *Laozi (Dao de jing)* by the late Qing scholar Wei Yuan. Reflections on continuity of tradition and relation to modernity in the thought of two prominent figures of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century New Confucianism movement, Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan, is the subject of Ady van den Stock’s study. Finally, the paper by Bart Dessein and Mieke Matthyssen considers the sources and scope of changes in understanding the individual from its traditional “part–whole” conceptualisation towards the “many–one” individualistic understanding in contemporary Chinese society.

Even within these several studies the vastness and complexity of considerations, ideas, approaches, and thought traditions subsumed under the notion of Chinese philosophy becomes apparent, also indicating research potentials and emphasising the need for comprehensive study, if something such as mutual understanding is to be achieved. We hope that this selection of papers will be a contribution to the expansion of knowledge on Chinese thought, a valuable source for further research, and a possible incentive for furthering intercultural dialogue and understanding.

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