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“When Spirit in Utter Dismemberment Finds Itself”

Reflections on New Confucian Philosophy and the Problem of Historical Discontinuity

Abstract

In this article I inquire into the question of cultural continuity against the background of the problem of modernity through the medium of the specific case of New Confucian philosophy. I reflect on the import of the concept of “culture” from a historical point of view and investigate how the Hegelian notion of “Spirit” was employed by modern Confucian philosophers such as Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi as a conceptual strategy in the face of the structural and semantic discontinuities resulting from modernization. I single out the symbolic May Fourth Movement in order to approach Mou’s and Tang’s attitude towards historical (dis)continuity and point towards the contemporary significance of their philosophical undertaking.

Keywords

New Confucianism, modern Chinese philosophy, May Fourth, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, history, cultural self-descriptions, paradoxes in comparative philosophy

1. Modernity and the semantics of cultural continuity

On the first pages of his *Introduction to Philosophy*, the professor of philosophy and Hegel specialist Zhang Shiying makes a case for the continuing relevance of philosophical thought in the modern world. He concludes his plea with the following evocative passage:

“In today’s age of burgeoning markets and the daily increasing development of science and technology people are on the one hand focused on pursuing their own interests and striving for the possession of concrete things, while on the other hand they cannot but continue to inquire into the ultimate meaning of life and pursue some of the greatest problems of universal importance. Here we find an incredibly wealthy individual sighing over his personal sense of spiritual emptiness, as if he didn’t have a thing in the world. There we find an entrepreneur standing on the top floor of the Jin Mao Tower in Shanghai still reciting verses by the Tang dynasty poet Chen Zi’ang: *The past offers no glimpse of the ancients / The future shows no sign of those still to come / When I contemplate the infinity of the world/ I shed mournful tears in solitude*. All of this goes to show that most people living in today’s world also engage in philosophical reflection.”[1]

[1] Zhang Shiying, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (*Zhexue daolun*), Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2002, p. 2. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this article are my own.

As is clear from this passage and the context in which it figures, Zhang Shiying is making a general argument for the importance of philosophy in the modern age, an argument not particularly uncommon in a time when austerity policies are increasingly forcing the most ostensibly "useless" field in the humanities into a defensive position of self-justification. Zhang claims that philosophical reflection should not be seen as completely detached from the daily routines of people in their everyday comings and goings, but continues to have its place next to, and in a sense also inside of, the more pedestrian considerations dominating life in contemporary society. Still, one can easily imagine the passage quoted above being used in support of claims of an *essential* cultural continuity obscured by a merely *apparent* homogenization of the human life-world brought on by globalization. The idea that China and its inhabitants have not become less Chinese as a result of rapid modernization and the rise of China as an economic and geopolitical power, is very widespread and need not in itself necessarily be problematized or rejected as ideological.[2] It is obvious that globalization has not led to a cultural and social homogeneity of communities worldwide, but rather constitutes one of the main factors contributing to the proliferation of affirmations of cultural identity, affirmations which in turn become a constitutive element of the discourse on globalization. Marshall Berman rightly points out that

> "modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish."[3]

In many respects, the culturalist paradigm that often informs popular and academic literature on the "rise of China" and the emergence of a distinctly Chinese form of modernity misses this paradox and as a result has remained conceptually underdeveloped and internally conflicted. Attacks on Eurocentric, teleological views of socio-historical development often end up formally reproducing the very vices of the discourse they attack, albeit in a "Sinocentric" form.[4] The turn towards *culture* as a privileged marker of identity and a site of contestation against the hegemony of Euro-American conceptions of modernity, a turn propelled and accelerated by postcolonial and postmodern approaches, must confront the paradoxical fact that the very notion of "culture" first took shape in Western societies as a discursive reaction against the structural transformations resulting from modernization.[5] The now rather commonplace assumption that the world can be divided into a number of distinct "cultures" or "civilizations" and corresponding "worldviews"[6] became more probable not in the least because of the increasing knowledge that, to put it in the language of theology, God had hidden the unity of creation from his creatures, even if the latter were privileged by virtue of possessing "clear and distinct ideas" (Descartes). It is worth noting that a confrontation with the empirical diversity of opinions, convictions, and customs already constituted a factual background for the Cartesian methodology of doubt.[7] Explorers, colonialists, and missionaries (later followed by anthropologists and ethnologists) discovered and conquered "new worlds" and were confronted with radical differences in ways of life and thought which could not be so easily rendered the same through the performative procedure of name-giving which was assumed to accompany or even coincide with creation in the Judeo-Christian tradition ("*fiat lux et lux fuit*").[8] The concept of culture only acquired its current prominence after the forces of imperialism and colonialism had spread new "scientific" methods and semantics for dividing, comparing, classifying, and conceptually controlling the radical differences in forms of existence, life-worlds,

and ways of thinking found across the conquered globe.[9] That the *particularity* of communities and modes of existence came to be described in terms of the *universalized* concept of culture shows that the latter is a fundamentally dialectical concept. This leads to the paradox that discourse on culture always generates *unity* (of a certain community) *as well as difference* (of one community vis-à-vis another). I proceed from the assumption that the very question as to whether or not what the sociologist Niklas Luhmann called societal "self-descriptions"[10] (of which "culture" is but one example) are the specific property of a particular cultural community, and can thus be characterized as part of a reflexive unity allowing one to speak of *self*-descriptions in the first place, is already included in the broader question of modernity, a question that can accommodate and redefine the problem of cultural differences between China and the West in a historically determinate and meaningful way. In the context of his study on the changes in bodily practices marking the "birth of the modern world", the global historian C.A. Bayly introduces an instructive distinction between *homogenization* on the one hand and *standardization* or *uniformization* on the other.[11] In simple terms, which readers of Hegel will recognize as at the same time highly "speculative", homogenization and standardization/uniformization denote two different forms of identity. The movement of globalization propelled by Western imperialism and the global spread of the capitalist economy almost never resulted in a straightforward process of Westernization through which the West could freely, as Marx and Engels wrote concerning the bourgeoisie, "create a world in its own image".[12] As is still obvious today, globalization did not lead to the whole world becoming the

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For a comprehensive study on the "Confucian revival" in contemporary China on the level of everyday customs, beliefs, and practices, see Sébastien Billioud and Joël Thoraval, *Le sage et le peuple: le renouveau confucéen en Chine*, Paris: CNRS, 2014.

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Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity*, New York: Penguin Books, 1988, p. 15.

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For two notable examples, see Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: the End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, London: Penguin Books, 2012 and Zhang Weiwei, *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State*, Hackensack: World Century Publishing Company, 2012.

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Niklas Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, Stanford (Cal.): Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 38.

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See David K. Naugle, *Worldview. The History of a Concept*, Grand Rapids (Michigan): William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002.

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See Franklin Perkins, "Wandering and/or Being at Home", in *Landscape and Traveling East and West: a Philosophical Journey*, edited by Hans-Georg Moeller and Andrew K. Whitehead, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014, pp. 24–26.

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Interesting examples can be found throughout the account of the conquest of Mexico ("originally" a name of one of the states of "New Spain") by Cortés written by the latter's fellow *conquistador* Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1492–1581), *The Conquest of New Spain*, London: Penguin Books, 1963.

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See Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis. An Introduction*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004, pp. 7–9.

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See Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Volume 2*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013, pp. 167–349.

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See C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, Malden: Blackwell, 2004, pp. 12–21.

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Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, [1848] https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm.

same in the sense of tending towards a resultative *state* of sameness with determinate and fixed characteristics (since, for example, differences in customs of dress continued to persists despite the global attraction of Western fashion), but rather in a formal *process* of becoming-the-same, often if not always regulated through the new medium of the nation-state. Bayly notes that nation-states both East and West increasingly started to impose standardized vestimentary codes and uniform rules for name-giving, without necessarily abandoning traditional ("non-Western") elements and customs. In other words, differences *between* culturally distinct (or rather, *distinguished*) societies could coexist with and were actually linked to the active eradication of differences *within* these societies themselves (for example through the creation of national languages to the detriment of local or regional "dialects"). As opposed to clear-cut *homogenization* ("Westernization"), social *uniformization* thus denotes the creation of identities on a formal level, allowing for the possibility of different results in the concrete life-worlds in question. These results are nevertheless arrived at through the same or at least highly comparable procedures of establishing uniformity. A more complete account of this process could be developed by drawing on Niklas Luhmann's crucial insight that "[t]he modernity of society lies *not in its characteristics but in its forms*".[13] Bearing in mind the historical specificity of the idea of "culture", this would imply that affirmations of cultural identity remain fundamentally caught up in what Bayly calls processes of uniformization, or in other words, that difference remains hierarchically subordinated to an identity which is not of a conceptual but of a socio-historical origin.

Clearly, there are larger issues at stake in assumptions of essential cultural continuity hidden beneath the homogenization of the world on the level of appearance. As I will indicate below, the very distinction between "essence" and "appearance" is not without philosophical presuppositions and historical determinations of its own. At the risk of unfairly overburdening the short passage from the work of Zhang Shiying which I quoted at the beginning of my article with a misplaced exegetical diligence, I would like to take it as a starting point for further reflecting on the relation between culture, tradition, and modernity in the case of modern Confucian philosophy. My impression that Zhang's text can be used in this way is reinforced by the image it presents of an accomplished businessman standing on the top floor (a clear indication of his success) of what is currently (though probably not for long) the seventh largest skyscraper in mainland China, while reciting a well-known 1300-year-old poem. By reciting these famous Tang-dynasty verses that describe a sense of historical isolation from both past and future generations, the poetically minded entrepreneur in Zhang's example is paradoxically presented as becoming enabled to connect with the past and with tradition through a sense of connectedness with a certain tradition of *disconnectedness*. Despite the historical distance between the author of the ballad "On Climbing Youzhou Tower" (*Deng Youzhou tai ge*) and the businessman on top of the 88-story "Tower of Golden Prosperity"[14] in the glitzy financial district of Shanghai reciting this poem, the textual parallelism between the two towers in Zhang's text suggests that the feeling of being cut off from the past is the same in both cases. There is an implicit assumption of a "continuity of discontinuity", manifesting itself in a shared sense of historical isolation. Both the setting and the material features of the tower may have changed, but the time permeating it would appear to be part of the same historical continuum, close to an eternal present which is forever equidistant to both past and future. Furthermore, Zhang's contrastive juxtaposition of a focus on "concrete things" and considerations of "problems of a general nature" has a clear temporal dimension: in our day-to-day activities, we function as pragmatic agents governed by a

purposive rationality in which the immediate interests of the present are most relevant and imposing. In contrast to this calculative-rational level, the meaningful dimension of life is marked by the possibility of relating to questions of a more durable and recurring nature, the "eternal" questions of a *philosophia perennis*. The underlying idea seems to be that it is the latter dimension of an eternal recurrence which constitutes a horizon of meaning, as opposed to inescapable but ultimately empty concerns about immediate usefulness. Moreover, the "eternal" would seem to have a privileged relation with the *past* and with *tradition*: it is by connecting with the past that the eternal becomes accessible and tangible as something outlasting and surpassing the constraints of the fleeting time in which it can be accessed by a particular individual. In this way, the present is saved from becoming an atomized instance condemned to remain forever confined to itself in a state of detached suspension precisely because it is part of a history and of a tradition of such a suspension.

A few comments are called for here. In a sense, change and discontinuity and the concomitant acts of adaptation and transformation are integral and constitutive parts of any tradition. As Luhmann once put it formulaically: "what is not utilized is stable and, by contrast, what is utilized is not stable."[15] A perceived necessity to ward off the possibility of oblivion might well be said to be intrinsic to historical consciousness as such. Perhaps it is even difficult to conceive of time as such without appealing to the notion of the discontinuous.[16] Anyone even remotely familiar with classical Chinese texts knows how many of them (not only philosophical works, but also for example medical treatises) start with a dramatic observation of the decline of the Way (*dao*) and of a rupture in the succession of the Way (*daotong*) that should keep the world from falling into a seemingly ever-imminent disorder. In a famous essay entitled *On the Original Way* (*Yuandao*) by the Tang-dynasty poet and scholar Han Yu (768–824), we find Han bemoaning the degeneration of the Confucian principles of personal cultivation and political governance in the following memorable manner:

> "The Zhou dynasty declined and Confucius passed away. In the period that followed, there was the burning of the books in the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.E.), Daoism in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 c.e.), and Buddhism in the Jin (265–420 C.E.), Wei (386–549), Liang (502–57), and Sui (589–617) dynasties; those who talked about the Way, Virtue, benevolence, and righteousness either followed the teachings of Yang Zhu or Mozi or accepted the doctrines of Laozi or the Buddha. Those who accepted these teachings had to reject Confucianism. They regarded the leaders of these schools as their lords and Confucius as a slave; they adhered to the new and vilified the old. Is it not sad! Those living in later ages who want to learn about the Way, Virtue, benevolence, and righteousness–from whom can they hear such things?"[17]

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Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, *Volume 1*, Stanford (Cal.): Stanford University Press, 2012, p. 95. Emphasis added.

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Incidentally, the Jin Mao (literally, "Golden Prosperity") tower is itself an architectural expression of a quest for continuity. The American architect Adrian D. Smith (the man behind the Burj Khalifa in Dubai) who was commissioned to design the building modeled it after the iconic East-Asian pagoda. See Thomas J. Campanella, *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What it Means for the World*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008, pp. 84–86.

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Niklas Luhmann, *A Systems Theory of Religion*, Stanford (Cal.): Stanford University Press, 2013, pp. 11–12.

16
See Gaston Bachelard, *L'intuition de l'instant*, Paris: Stock, 1992.

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Translation quoted from Philip J. Ivanhoe, *On Ethics and History: Essays and Letters of Zhang Xuecheng,* Stanford (Cal.): Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 134.

The twentieth century Confucian philosopher Mou Zongsan (1909–1995) enumerates roughly the same foes of Confucianism we already encountered in the above passage by Han Yu to describe the disastrous fate he considers the Confucian tradition to have suffered at the hands of Communist iconoclasm in a text from 1951 with the revealing title, "Buddha, Laozi, Shen [Buhai], Han [Feizi], and the Communist Party" (*Fo Lao Shen Han yu gongdang*).[18] From the title of Mou's essay, it would appear that the communists are nothing but a modern day version of the Buddhists, Daoists and Legalists (Shen Buhai and Han Feizi) already condemned by Han in his *Yuandao* as having caused people to deviate from the right Way. The takeover of China by revolutionary Communism and the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 would thus seem to be on a par with and of essentially the same nature as the influence exerted by these doctrines in imperial China, which Han saw as having lead to a disastrous corruption of the Confucian order, the latter being the necessary condition for a just and righteous governance of the empire. The "utilitarianist" ideas of Mozi (470–391 BCE) and the "hedonist" doctrines of Yang Zhu (440–360 BCE), which Mou Zongsan often added to his list of premodern communists on other occasions, are not explicitly mentioned or discussed in the 1951 essay. Mou's usual suspect was the China's first (Legalist-inspired) dynasty, the Qin (221–206 BCE), which according to the Confucian tradition at least ordered the "burning of the classics and the burying of Confucian scholars" (*fenshu kengru*) in order to impose its authority and suppress dissent. The association between Communism and Legalism is perhaps not so surprising seeing how Mao Zedong reputedly liked to compare himself with the first Chinese emperor, the latter having already been described by Bertrand Russell after his visit to China as "something of a Bolshevik".[19] Nowadays, the idea that there has always been a tradition of anti-traditionalism and even a radical form of iconoclasm in China has become fairly standard in contemporary Confucian discourse. However, a short look at the opening passage of Mou's text will suffice to make it clear that there are important differences between these two rhetorically unifiable discontinuities:

> "The appearance of the Communist Party in China was certainly not the result of economic problems. Even the appearance of that sinister and malicious thought of Marx in Europe was in no way the result of economic issues […] Its appearance was purely a problem of thought, a problem of culture and a problem of the spirit of our age. Other external conditions [*waibu de tiaojian*] – political and economical ones – all served as a pretext. [But] this pretext certainly cannot hide what its [true] substance is. I claim that communism is a great demon that is evidently not easy to oppose. I further claim that it is a universal heterodox school, a heresy of 'pure negation'. What is meant by 'universal' is the following: it comes forth from the darkest side of the human temperament. This aspect is in no way limited to a certain race, but is universally present in the entire human race. Therefore, its appearance constitutes a universal heterodoxy within [the whole of] humanity. What is meant by 'pure negation' is the following: all negations of human nature, individuality, the level of values, the world of the human personality and of cultural ideals are pure negations. In China, the old heterodox schools were those of Buddhism, Daoism and of [the Legalists] Shen [Buhai] and Han [Feizi]; nowadays we have the Communist Party."[20]

What is probably most striking about this text is the universalist thrust behind Mou Zongsan's rejection of what he on another occasion called the "catastrophe of ideas" (*guannian de zaihai*).[21] For him, communism is a "universal heterodoxy" that not only goes against the putative essence or "spirit" of Chinese culture (in his view, of course, Confucianism), but also runs counter to the very notion of culture as such. As is already evident from the first sentence of this passage, Mou's criticism of communism entails an uncompromising rejection of its main theoretical "heresy", namely the historical materialist

belief that it is (ultimately) the material, economic conditions of existence as a "base" which determine the "superstructure" of a society's ideas and beliefs. Mou degrades the base to the status of "external conditions" of secondary importance and goes on to ascribe a self-sufficiency and a performative capacity to the level of ideas and values comparable to that of the forces and relations of production in orthodox Marxism. Mou Zongsan shared the belief with many of his fellow Confucian philosophers that the ordeal of modern China had its origin in a profound cultural crisis, and that only cultural renewal in the form of a reinvention of the Confucian tradition could provide a way out. His emphasis on the "pure negativity" of the communist idea is developed further on in the text in order to distinguish communism from the "negating" aspects of Buddhism and Daoism, which were, Mou claims, still integrated in a broader spiritual practice and did not constitute a form of "positive destruction" affecting the totality of the subjective and objective world. He makes the important qualification that the difference between Buddhist/Daoist and communist negation is one of a relative negation functioning in a broader spiritual project of self-cultivation aimed at a laudable detachment from the world on the one hand, and an absolute, pure and senseless negation that cannot be integrated into any overarching goal on the other. In other words, detachment from individual desires and external, social constraints in Buddhist and Daoist spiritual practice did not entail a destructive negation of all "values" as was the case in communism.[22] Mou's negative attitude towards Daoism and Buddhism expressed in this rhetoric of "guilt by association" was probably mainly inspired by polemical intentions. In any case, it is clear that his primary targets were communism and the historical materialism of Karl Marx, and not the teachings of Laozi or the Buddha. In his "Refutation of the Communist *Treatise on Contradiction*" (*Pi gongchanzhuyizhe de 'Maodun lun'*) from 1952,[23] Mou Zongsan further identifies the communist revolution as a complete negation of anything outside of the inconstant flux of material constituents, which are only negatively united through their shared fate of being ephemeral and unsubstantial. He adds that such a form of negation cannot even be wielded and put to good use as a political strategy of domination, because it must necessarily end up affecting the communists themselves: "Actually", Mou writes, "the communist revolution itself is nothing but a nihilist process of destruction and self-destruction based on their complete nihilism. *Their self-preservation is really nothing but the preservation of their own self-destruction.*"[24] For Mou, the fundamental mistake of communist materialism consists in its fatal

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Reprinted in *Supplements to 'Impressions of the Times'* (*Shidai yu ganshou xubian*), vol. 24 of *The Complete Works of Mou Zongsan* (*Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji*), 32 vols., Taibei: Lianjing, 2003, pp. 1–12. Hereafter quoted as Mou, 1951.

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Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1922, p. 25.

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Mou, 1951, pp. 1–2.

21
The name of an article from 1962, see *Impressions of the Times* (*Shidai yu ganshou*), vol. 23 of *The Complete Works of Mou Zongsan*, pp. 27–40.

22
Mou, 1951, pp. 8–9.

23
See *Moral Idealism* (*Daode de lixiangzhuyi*), vol. 9 of *The Complete Works of Mou Zongsan*, pp. 89–117. Hereafter quoted as Mou, 1952.The reference is to Mao Zedong's Yan'an essay "On Contradiction" from 1937.

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Mou, 1952, p. 102. My italics.

disregard for the permanent element that conditions change and is outside of and immune to change: it only knows the "changing Way" (*biandao*), but cannot grasp the "constant Way" (*hengdao*).[25] Still, the crucial differences Mou discerns between Buddhist or Daoist and communist strategies of negation do not cause him to abandon the idea that Chinese communism is part of a historically continuous challenge to Confucianism, and that the discontinuity with tradition constituted by communism can be placed in a more ancient and permanent historical continuum. As I will further indicate in what follows, Mou Zongsan's arguments for a continuity which can only be described in the form of a paradox (time as a "self-preservation of destruction" or "destruction of self-preservation"), already involve the implicit acknowledgment of a series of arguably very modern ideas concerning the nature of historical time that differ considerably from traditional conceptions.

In other instances it might be more difficult to distinguish between "traditional" and "modern" assertions of discontinuity, especially when culturally transmitted expressions of a sense of rupture are invoked by present day writers to express the "same" feeling of dislocation in time. It is of course impossible to make such a distinction without stepping outside of discourse and relating a given semantics of temporal change to the socio-historical context in which it is situated and employed. By doing so, one could argue that two statements of an equally dramatic tone and stature drawing on a common cultural vocabulary can be the expressions of two significantly different forms of discontinuity. This implies that it is possible to draw a heuristically meaningful distinction between the change and discontinuity internal to any tradition on the one hand and the dynamic underlying and driving transformations effectuated in the face of modernity on the other. One would thus have to recognize a minimal difference between the state described by Hamlet's observation that "the time is out of joint", a condition which is in a sense intrinsic to any time and to time as such,[26] and the being "out of joint" of this "out-of-jointness" itself. In the case of China, it is clear that the failed attempts to reform and reconfigure the Chinese empire as "All-under-Heaven" (*tianxia*) within the coordinates of the modern nation-state (*guojia*) after the two Opium Wars – eventually leading to the abolishment of traditional institutions such as the examination system and the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 – constituted a historical break that was not so easy to incorporate into established ways of dealing with discontinuity.[27] In the Chinese context, a whole host of established concepts such as "heavenly principle" (*tianli*), "group" (*qun*), "the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge" (*gewu zhizhi*) were reinterpreted in function of, and often abandoned for, modern concepts such as "truth" (*zhenli*), "society" (*shehui*), and "science" (*kexue*).[28] The process through which the novel category of "philosophy" (*zhexue*) was used to designate and reaffirm traditional forms of knowledge and practice such as Confucianism and Buddhism by inscribing them into the universal and transhistorical category of philosophical thought was equally wrought with the tension between continuity and discontinuity.[29] However, Joseph Levenson's idea that Western influence managed to change the entire *language* of China, whereas concepts derived from the Chinese tradition only managed to "enrich" Western (artistic, conceptual) *vocabulary* does not provide a sufficiently nuanced and complex account of this transition.[30] The research carried out by Reinhart Koselleck has shown that Western European societies were as much affected by modernization as the areas of the world they sought to subjugate and control politically and economically, and that the semantics available for describing time and socio-historical change consequentially underwent dramatic changes as well.[31] The

seminal work of the Marxist theorist Moishe Postone allows one to go on to relate such semantic changes to a structural transformation in the nature of time resulting from the dynamic of capitalism as a mode of production grounded in abstract time.[32] Needless to say, this highly complex problem cannot be adequately discussed or even outlined in the space of this short article.[33] Suffice it to note here that the historical distinction between tradition and modernity offers a much broader and much more embracive perspective than essentialistic attempts to demarcate the boundaries between China and West in terms of putative cultural "characteristics" (*tese*).

2. New Confucianism, May Fourth, and the concept of Spirit

In modern Chinese intellectual history, the irreversible but complexly mediated break between tradition and modernity is symbolized the New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong*), a term often used interchangeably with the May Fourth Movement (*wusi yundong*). As a broad designation, the New Culture or May Fourth Movement refers to the intellectual reverberations of the socio-political turmoil in China in the decades leading up to and following the collapse of the empire, the disintegration of its whole institutional structure, and the founding of the Republic of China in 1912. Of course, reflections on and demands for radical social change were not simply aloof exercises in theorizing, but were fundamentally bound up with the new political projects of Chinese communism, anarchism, liberalism, and modern "conservatism". The beginning of this intellectual and political movement attacking the normative legitimacy of established practices, beliefs, customs, interpersonal relations, ideas, and institutions, is routinely marked by the launch of the journal *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*, *La Jeunesse*) in Shanghai in 1915. *New Youth* soon became a forum for intellectual debate in which some of the most famous literary and theoretical texts associated with May Fourth would appear. In one of the

25
See Mou, 1952, pp. 100–110.

26
See Jacques Derrida's musings in *Specters of Marx*, New York: Routledge, 2006.

27
See Yan Fu's (1854–1921) essay "On the Speed of World Change" (*Lun shibian zhi ji*) from 1895, reprinted in *Collected Writings of Yan Fu* (*Yan Fu ji*), edited by Hu Weixi, Shengyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1994, pp. 1–6.

28
For an extensive study drawing on a massive amount of data detailing this complex transition, see Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng *An Investigation into Conceptual History: the Formation of Crucial Political Terms in Chinese Modernity* (*Guannianshi yanjiu: Zhongguo xiandai zhongyao zhengzhi shuyu xingcheng*), Beijing: Falü chubanshe, 2010.

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See the contributions to John Makeham (ed.), *Learning to Emulate the Wise: the Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012.

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Joseph B. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate. The Problem of Intellectual Continuity*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, pp. 156–163.

31
Reinhart Koselleck, "The Temporalization of Concepts", *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, 1, 1997, pp. 16–24.

32
Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination. A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*, Cambridge (N.Y.): Cambridge University Press, 1993.

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For a more elaborate and comprehensive account, see Christian Uhl, "What is Philosophy? On Globalizing Capitalism, the Modern Order of Knowledge, and Nishida Kitarô", forthcoming, 2015.

perhaps somewhat lesser known pieces published in this renowned periodical, the strong sense of historical discontinuity that pervaded and animated the late Qing and early Republican period is cogently expressed in a simple sentence by a certain Wang Shuqian. The sentence in question appears in an essay entitled "The Problem of the New and the Old" (*Xinjiu wenti*), published in the very first issue of *New Youth*: "There is not a single thing or matter", Wang wrote, "that does not manifest itself in the two aspects of new and old" (*wu wu wu shi bu cheng xin jiu zhi er xiang*).[34] A possible interpretation of this short but suggestive phrase would be that socio-historical change has effectively split every phenomenon subject to historical time into two non-identical and not immediately reconcilable aspects. In ontological terms, the problem of modernity forces questions concerning difference and identity to be related to discontinuity and continuity in time, a move which in effect presupposes deontologizing them. A historically sensitive analysis must leave open the possibility that "Being" is not what it used to be. Interestingly enough, Wang used the very classical concept of *xiang* to describe this temporal bifurcation distinctive of modernity: the two "images" or "aspects" of the Way (*dao*) are none other than the cosmic polarity of *yin* and *yang*, which engender the myriad things (*wanwu*) through their unceasing intermingling and interaction. Wang's phrase offers yet another example of how traditional semantics can be used to express a deeply modern experience. However, in Wang's text, the age-old polarity of *yin* and *yang* has become fundamentally *temporalized*, whereas time was but one of the possible dimensions of these two aspects of the cosmological and political order. From the rest of Wang Shuqian's text, it is all too clear that he saw this temporal split as inevitable and irreversible. His iconoclast stance expressed itself in an unconditional rejection of the old in favor of the new. Such an attitude is also exemplified by the founder of *New Youth* and pioneer of Chinese communism Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), in his "Treatise on the Destruction of Idols" (*Ouxiang pohuai lun***)** from 1918. But even Chen's essay, for all its radical and uncompromising condemnation of the "idols" of tradition, reveals that the attitude of modern Chinese intellectuals was a lot more complicated than can be captured by a simplistic opposition between iconoclasm and traditionalism. This much at least is suggested by the fact that Chen lists the modern state alongside all the great religions of the world as an idol that needs to be destroyed in order to save the Chinese nation from destruction. Conversely, a number of prominent "conservative" intellectuals affiliated with the promotion of "national essence" (*guocui*) in late Qing and early Republican China who are usually portrayed as the most staunch traditionalists and reactionaries, saw no problem in presenting "revolution as restoration".[35] From the fact that the attack on "Confucian feudalism" spearheaded by the revolutionary, anarchist, and liberal thinkers at the forefront of the movement for a new culture led to the paradoxical embrace of traditionally non-canonical schools of thought opposed to Confucian ideals such as Legalism and Mohism by iconoclast intellectuals, one can already glean something of the complexity of the relation between tradition and modernity in modern China. It also makes it easier to understand why Mou Zongsan saw Legalism and communism as basically convertible terms.

Clearly, thinkers who wanted to reaffirm the value of tradition as a "scare resource"[36] in the face of unprecedented structural changes in history and in the semantics available for comprehending these changes, were in no way foreign or immune to modernization discourses. With regard to Mou Zongsan, Sébastien Billioud has rightly observed that the Confucian philosopher, "far from being an opponent of modernity, is also an heir of the May Fourth spirit

and its values of science and democracy. In brief, he embraces modernity while attempting to articulate it within a Chinese cultural tradition that should not be thrown into the dustbin of history."[37] Indeed, Mou did not conceive of the relation between Confucianism and modernity as a problem of compatibility and "adaptation" (*shiying*) but as one of "realization" (*shixian*).[38] Mou's lifelong friend and collaborator Tang Junyi (1900–1978) too tried to present the development of science and democracy in modern China as the fulfillment of the internal requirements of Chinese culture, which he assumed to have always been affected and influenced by other cultures "purely out of its inner yearning and demands".[39] In doing so, Tang advocated the need for the Chinese tradition to "realize" science and a scientific attitude with very much the same sense of urgency as unabashed modernizers such as the liberal Hu Shi (1891–1962), one of the most pronounced advocates of "full-scale Westernization" (*quanpan xifanghua*). Tang saw this need as arising from the "disorder, irregularity and the intellectual confusion in the life of the Chinese people", necessitating a form of "scientific discipline" (*kexue zhi xunlian*).[40] The concept of "science" as a modern form of knowledge linked to a specific type of sovereignty,[41] has an important political dimension in this context; connoting order, control and regularity over and against chaos, disorder and aberrance. This dimension is still very much present in the idea of "scientific development" (*kexue fazhan*) recently put forward by the Hu Jintao administration (2003–2012) in mainland China. The notion of "anti-modern theories of modernization" (*fan xiandai de xiandaixing lilun*) coined by the intellectual historian Wang Hui[42] could be taken as a particularly apt description of what came to be known as the movement of "New Confucianism" (*xin ruxue*) and New Confucian philosophy, of which Mou and Tang are two of the most well-known and sophisticated representatives. It stands beyond doubt that the origins of New Confucianism are intricately bound up with the attack on tradition symbolized by May Fourth, but it should be stressed that the invocation and use of traditional concepts by New Confucian thinkers was not simply "conservative" or "reactionary", but was connected to an alternative "Confucian" project of modernization that often went hand in hand with a notional critique of "actually existing" modernity.

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In Chen Duxiu et. al., *Essential Texts from New Youth* (*Xin qingnian jingxuan*), Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 2012, vol. 1, p. 21.

35
See Tze-ki Hon, *Revolution as Restoration: Guocui xuebao and China's Path to Modernity, 1905–1911*, Leiden: Brill, 2013.

36
Arjun Appadurai, "The Past as a Scarce Resource", *Man*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1981, pp. 201–219.

37
Sébastien Billioud, *Thinking through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan's Moral Metaphysics*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, p. 8.

38
See *The Way of Political Authority and the Way of Governance* (*Zhengdao yu zhidao*), 1961, vol. 10 of *The Complete Works of Mou Zongsan*, p. 6.

39
The Spiritual Values of Chinese Culture (*Zhongguo wenhua zhi jingshen jiazhi*), Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, [1953] 2005, p. 2.

40
"Western Thought which Should Henceforth be Introduced into China" (*Zhongguo jinhou suo xuyao jieshao zhi xiyang sixiang*), 1934, reprinted in *Supplements to 'Chinese Humanism and the Contemporary World'* (*Zhonghua renwen yu dangjin shijie bubian*), 2 vols., Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2005, p. 549.

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See Wang Hui, *The End of the Revolution. China and the Limits of Modernity*, London and New York: Verso, 2011, p. 142.

42
See Wang Hui, "Contemporary Chinese Thought and the Question of Modernity", *Social Text*, 5, 1990, p. 14.

This is apparent from modern Confucian reinterpretations of the historical significance of the May Fourth Movement in which calls to "smash the shop of Confucius & Sons" (*dadao Kongjia dian*) resounded with an unprecedented intensity. Tang Junyi would later speak of May Fourth as the emblem of the "spiritual affliction" (*jingshen bingtong*)[43] of his own generation and the previous generation of intellectuals, an affliction which had incapacitated them to "spiritually direct themselves towards the internal and the higher".[44] Unlike for those who advocated thoroughgoing change and saw themselves as politically engaged instructors of the people who were fortunate enough to be "the first to know and the first to become enlightened",[45] for many traditionalists, the May Fourth "enlightenment" signified the unbalanced victory of what Chen Duxiu had famously called "Mister Democracy" (*De xiangsheng*) and "Mister Science" (*Sai xiansheng*) over "Miss Morality" (*De guniang*). In its antitraditional May Fourth guise, enlightenment – defined by Kant as "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity"[46] – would come to be seen as, what the contemporary Confucian scholar Tu Wei-ming calls an "*externally imposed yet self-inflicted malaise*".[47] For thinkers who wanted to uphold the Confucian tradition, the problem was not so much that "everything must submit to criticism",[48] but rather that tradition was no longer employed to directly provide the categories and criteria on which such criticism should in their view be based. The intellectual historian Zhang Hao claims that "the scope of [May Fourth] moral iconoclasm is perhaps unique in the modern world; no other historical civilization outside the West undergoing modern transformation has witnessed such a phoenix-like impulse to see its own cultural tradition so completely neglected."[49] However, what is missing in Zhang's account is a broader perspective which puts the events and the discourses surrounding May Fourth in a global context, since very similar processes can be observed all over the world at the same historical juncture.[50] One clear indication is that the semantic schemes adopted in the face of the unprecedented transformation of Chinese society were, on an abstract and formal level, not specifically Chinese at all. Even among tradition-minded thinkers, it did not always prove so difficult to interpret the generalized "cultural crisis" they saw around them as an intermediary stage in a larger historical movement, thereby already ascribing a certain necessity to this crisis as an opportunity for the "purification" of tradition paving the way for the latter's rebirth. He Lin (1902–1992), a Hegel-inspired philosopher who is credited as the first to have used the expression "New Confucianism" with reference to himself and his contemporaries,[51] sounds remarkably similar to Chen Duxiu's famous eulogy on the purifying effect of youth and novelty against the putrefaction of tradition in the first issue of *New Youth* when he writes that

> "the New Culture Movement of the May Fourth period was an important turning point for encouraging the development of Confucian thought. *On the surface,* the New Culture Movement was one big movement to "smash the Confucian shop" and to overturn Confucian thought. […] The greatest contribution of the New Culture Movement lies in its having destroyed and cleansed away the petrified elements in the details of the formal constitution of Confucianism and those traditional putrefied parts that fetter individuality."[52]

In a fascinating article from 1953, Mou Zongsan invokes the Romantic poet Hölderlin's idea of "the withdrawal of God",[53] with which he was familiar through Heidegger (through the intermediary of Tang Junyi), in an argument where the same logic of "purification" is mobilized even more dramatically:

"His withdrawal [*guiji*] is a temporary separation he establishes between himself and the human world. He wants to uphold his own purity and return to his own "pure subjectivity" [*chun zhutixing*]. Only in this way can he truly establish himself and uphold himself and avoid being washed away. […] When he returns to his own pure subjectivity, then the cruelty and ignorance of the Middle Ages and the vulgarity and trifling attitude of the modern age all become a process of self-destruction on the side of the human world. At the same time, the obstinacy of people towards God which causes them to fall into darkness and makes their life and their spirit unable to open up and change is not something in which God takes pleasure. That is why he must take a step back in order to allow the life and the mind of human beings to transform itself so that they may temper themselves in this process of transformation and so that they can find out whether they are able to become awakened and free of delusions to attain the region where they circulate and interconnect with God […] Therefore, the retreat of God is not only that through which he purifies himself, but also that by which he cleanses the human world."[54]

The distance between the ideal (God) and the real (a world from which God has retreated) is thereby reinterpreted as a constitutive property of the ideal itself, which needs this temporary withdrawal from the world (to which it must ultimately return in order to come to full, objective existence) in order to sustain its ideality as a "pure subject". It is also through this very same retreat of the ideal that the real world and the subjects in this world from which it has distanced itself are dialectically stimulated, or one could even say forced, to turn towards the ideal and strive to attain a state of interconnection with the transcendent.

It is important to bear in mind that the dialectical logic employed by Mou has lost none of its relevance in the context of the discourse surrounding the revival of Confucianism in contemporary China. As I have tried to show in more

43
See Tang Junyi, *The Development of the Chinese Humanist Spirit* (*Zhongguo renwen jingshen zhi fazhan*), 1957, vol. 6 of *The Complete Works of Tang Junyi* (*Tang Junyi quanji*), 30 vols., Taibei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1989, pp. 233–260.

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Tang, 1957, p. 239.

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Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment. Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, p. 9.

46
Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 54.

47
Tu Wei-ming, "Implications of the Rise of 'Confucian' East Asia", in *Multiple Modernities*, edited by S.N. Eisenstadt, New Brunswick/London: Transaction Publishers, 2002, p. 202. My italics.

48
See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, London: Penguin Books, 2007, p. 7 (Axii, footnote).

49
Chang Hao, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China", in *The Limits of Change. Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, edited by Charlotte Furth, Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 281.

50
See Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire. The Revolt against the West and the Remaking of Asia*, London: Penguin Books, 2013.

51
See John Makeham,"The Retrospective Creation of New Confucianism", in *New Confucianism: a Critical Examination*, edited by John Makeham, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 25–26.

52
He Lin, *Culture and Human Life* (*Wenhua yu rensheng*), Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, [1947] 1996, p. 12. Emphasis added.

53
"On 'the Withdrawal of God'" (*Lun* '*shangdi yintui*'), 1953 in *Moral Idealism*, pp. 241–262.

54
Mou, 1953, p. 243.

detail elsewhere,[55] most arguments that are overtly aimed at (selectively) reviving traditional cultural in the context of the post-revolutionary condition on the mainland are unable to disentangle themselves from the logic of modernization that necessitated a "revival" or rather reinvention of tradition in the first place. The writings of many conservative modernizers continue to be inspired by the paradigm of culture as a "Spirit" following its own trajectory and employing the contingency of historical occurrences in order to realize itself. The concept of "Spirit" allows major historical transformations and discontinuities such as the end of the Chinese empire and the "end of the revolution"[56] following the reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping to be understood as transitional moments in a long-term process of autotelic self-transformation. Ironically enough, the distinction between the contingent status of historical "external conditions" and the transcendentally constituted internal flight plan of Spirit through history restores the very same dichotomies which are commonly rejected as "metaphysical" and "un-Chinese" in attempts to comparatively ground the specificity of Chinese thought in contrast to the Western tradition. Obviously, the residual difference between essence (cultural continuity) and appearance (the loss of tradition as a self-sufficient source of legitimacy) has to be accounted for in one way or another. The Hegelian dictum that "essence must appear"[57] was taken to heart by the first generations of New Confucian philosophers who still had no trouble invoking the name of Hegel as an ally against the historical materialism of Marx. Postmodern condemnations of Hegel as an archetypal "identity thinker", in combination with the culturalist outlook that dominates comparative philosophy, have made the alliance between the German Idealist and the movement of modern Confucianism less evident. The paradoxes that result from inscribing negativity into the heart of a supremely self-identical "Spirit" of culture surface more arrestingly in the absence of Mou Zongsan's and Tang Junyi's dialectical style of reasoning. As a result, an acute contradiction between anti-dualist philosophical presuppositions ("holism", "correlative thinking") and a reinstatement of dualism on the level of discourse about culture imposes itself. Tu Wei-ming, who is probably the most famous spokesman for the revival of Confucianism in contemporary China, is known for his universalist stance and embracive position vis-à-vis other world religions, which he tries to bring into a constructive dialog with Confucianism. However, in arguing for the value of Confucianism in the modern globalized world, the aforementioned contradiction comes to the surface in all its bareness:

"*The modern West's dichotomous world view* (spirit/matter, mind/body, physical/mental, sacred/profane, creator/creature, God/man, subject/object) *is diametrically opposed to the Chinese holistic mode of thinking* […] the Enlightenment mentality *is so radically different from any style of thought familiar to the Chinese mind that it challenges all dimensions of the Sinic world*."[58]

What is striking about this passage is that any critical force its rather commonplace rejection of purportedly typically "Western" dichotomies might have is immediately neutralized by the fact that it reinstates precisely such a binary opposition in the form of a dichotomous distinction between the "West" and the "Sinic world". Instead of grounding the dichotomies Tu rejects in a "worldview" particular to a certain culture, it would perhaps be more appropriate and meaningful to try and grasp them as symptomatic of a particular logic of historical development that has affected societies all across the globe irrespective of their cultural background. It seems to me that one of the most important functions the concept of culture as Spirit fulfills in Mou's and

Tang's thought is identifying the qualitatively unprecedented discontinuity of modernity as part of a continuous trajectory that is not outside of the inner principle of mobility of this transhistorical Subject. Yingjie Guo is certainly justified in raising the following question: "Confucians have been trying to reinterpret, reinvent or 'modernize' Confucianism in order to make it more relevant and appealing to contemporary Chinese. *The question is whether or not Confucianism can be modernized without losing its self-identity.*"[59] But obviously, the threat of a loss of self-identity can be warded off by inscribing non-identity and discontinuity into the same dynamic which allows Spirit to realize itself. This in my view is one of the primary functions of dialectical logic in the works of Tang and Mou. It is not merely a "magic trick" they use to violate common sense and obfuscate problems of a determinate historical and social origin.[60] Wang Xueqing and Liao Junyu are, I think, right to stress that the fundamental difference between Tang's idea of the moral self (*daode ziwo*) and the traditional Confucian idea of morality is that Tang proposes that the moral subject must first go through a form of what Wang and Liao call "self-disintegration" (*ziwo bengjie*).[61] It is through such a form of strategic self-negation that difference can be grasped as a modality of sameness. In Hegelian terms, immediate, unreflective self-identity must be subjected to a process of negation, after which the initial identity can be sublated (*Aufgehoben*) at a higher level by including non-identity into the identical. Zhang Yixin believes that Tang's highly selective use of Hegel becomes apparent in his intentional abandonment of the historical character of Spirit (*Geist*). According to Zhang, the moral self Tang endowed with the qualities of the Hegelian *Geist* is an atemporal entity purified of external historical determinations.[62] But she does not stop to consider the possibility that this (far from complete) purification from history is itself historically conditioned, in the sense that Tang's immunization of the moral self against historical change can be understood as being directed against a particular developmental logic

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Ady Van den Stock, "History and Historical Consciousness in Contemporary China: Political Confucianism, Spiritual Confucianism, and the Politics of Spirit", in *Interpreting China as a Regional and Global Power: Nationalism and Historical Consciousness in World Politics*, edited by Bart Dessein, London: Palgrave, 2014, pp. 44–63.

56
Wang Hui, 2011.

57
G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 437.

58
Tu Weiming "Implications of the Rise of 'Confucian' East Asia", in *Multiple Modernities*, edited by S.N. Eisenstadt, New Brunswick/London: Transaction Publishers, 2002, p. 212. Emphasis added.

59
Yingjie Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: the Search for National Identity under Reform*, London: Routledge-Curzon, 2004, p. 90. Emphasis added.

60
Yiu-ming Fung, "Three Dogmas of New Confucianism: A Perspective of Analytic Philosophy," in *Two Roads to Wisdom? Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Traditions*, edited by Bo Mou, Chicago: Open Court, 2001, pp. 245–266.

61
Wang Xueqing and Liao Junyu, "On Tang Junyi's Cultural Philosophy of 'Diversity in Oneness' – Basing Oneself on Virtue to Fully Develop a Humanistic World" (*Lun Tang Junyi 'yiben duoyuan de wenhua zhexue – yi dexing wei zhongxin er quanfu kaizhan de renwen shijie*), *Daye daxue tongshi jiaoyu xuebao*, 1, 2008, p. 43.

62
Zhang Yixin, "Tang Junyi's Theory of the Mind Permeating the Nine Horizons" (*Tang Junyi de xin tong jiujing lun*), in *A History of Chinese Confucianism – the Modern Age* (*Zhongguo ruxue shi, xiandai juan*), edited by Hu Jun, Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011, p. 443.

of history in which the tradition he wanted to uphold and safeguard had become to a great extent institutionally effaced and had to be incorporated into the modern coordinates of knowledge in order to survive. In this regard, it is all very well to stress that the concept of a Spirit which is "not only substance, but also subject",[63] is incompatible with or even contradictory to traditional forms of Chinese thought, which indeed generally never showed a proclivity for such metaphysical distinctions. However, one cannot thereby bypass the question as to why philosophers such as Tang and Mou, despite their unceasing efforts to philosophically combat and transcend categorical ontological and epistemological bifurcations, were unwilling to abandon the idea of a substantial Spirit (and a clear distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal) for what David Hall and Roger Ames take to be the "radical immanence" characteristic of Chinese (Confucian) thought.[64] Perhaps one could say that what is philosophically most disagreeable about their work is at the same time what is historically most interesting. As Fabian Heubel points out, insisting on the pervasiveness of complete immanence is often linked to the idea that Chinese thought is characterized by a sense of passive conformity and a lack of critical distance from the world.[65] The themes of Spirit and transcendence in both Tang's and Mou's work can in my view be interpreted as a space for critical reflection on the historical condition in which comparatively established cultural generalizations, such as the one based on the distinction between transcendence and immanence, are established. In any case, as I tried to indicate, the metaphysics of Spirit is apparently perfectly able to endure a rhetorical dismissal of metaphysical distinctions, which can be reinstated in the very act of dismissing them as alien to Spirit. As Hegel already knew, the latter "contains a *becoming-other*", its life not being one which "shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather […] endures it and maintains itself in it", so that it "wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself".[66]

Ady Van den Stock

"Kada duh u krajnjoj razjedinjenosti pronađe sebe"

Razmišljanja o filozofiji novog konfucijanizma i problemu povijesnog diskontinuiteta

Sažetak

U radu se razmatra pitanje kulturnog kontinuiteta u kontekstu problema moderniteta kroz medij posebnog slučaja filozofije novog konfucijanizma. Iz historijske perspektive ispituje se uvoz pojma 'kultura' te istražuje kako su moderni konfucijanistički filozofi poput Mou Zongsana i Tang Junyija koristili hegelijanski pojam duha kao konceptualnu strategiju suočavajući se sa strukturnim i semantičkim diskontinuitetima koji su nastali modernizacijom. Pri tomu se posebna pažnja posvećuje simboličkom Pokretu četvrtog svibnja kako bi se približilo Mouovim i Tangovim stavovima o povijesnom (dis)kontinuitetu te uputilo na suvremeni značaj njihova filozofskog pothvata.

Ključne riječi

novi konfucijanizam, moderna kineska filozofija, Pokret četvrtog svibnja, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, povijest, kulturne samodeskripcije, paradoksi u komparativnoj filozofiji

Ady Van den Stock

„Wenn der Geist in vollkommener Zersplitterung sich selbst findet"

Reflexionen über die neue konfuzianische Philosophie und das Problem der historischen Diskontinuität

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel stelle ich Untersuchungen an über die Frage der kulturellen Kontinuität vor dem Hintergrund des Problems der Modernität durch das Medium des spezifischen Falls des neuen Konfuzianismus. Vom historischen Standpunkt aus befasse mich ich mit der Bedeutung des Begriffs „Kultur" und untersuche, wie moderne konfuzianische Philosophen wie Mou Zongsan und Tang Junyi die hegelianische Notion des „Geistes" als konzeptuelle Strategie angewendet haben, und zwar im Lichte der aus der Modernisierung resultierenden strukturellen und semantischen Diskontinuitäten. Dabei würde ich die symbolische Bewegung des vierten Mai herausheben, um an Mous und Tangs Einstellung zur historischen (Dis)kontinuität heranzugehen sowie auf die zeitgenössische Bedeutung ihres philosophischen Unternehmens hinzudeuten.

Schlüsselwörter

neuer Konfuzianismus, moderne chinesische Philosophie, Bewegung des vierten Mai, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, Geschichte, kulturelle Selbstbeschreibung, Widersprüche in der vergleichenden Philosophie

Ady Van den Stock

« Quand l'esprit se retrouve dans son extrême désunification »

Réflexions sur la philosophie du nouveau confucianisme et du problème de la discontinuité historique

Résumé

Cet article analyse l'idée de continuité dans le contexte du problème de la modernité à travers le cas particulier de la philosophie du nouveau confucianisme. Il interroge l'introduction du concept de « culture » d'un point de vue historique et analyse la manière dont les philosophes confucianistes modernes comme Mou Zongsan et Tang ont utilisé le concept Hegelien d'esprit en tant que concept stratégique, se confrontant avec les discontinuités structurelles et sémantiques qui sont survenues avec la modernisation. De plus, une attention particulière est consacrée au mouvement du 4-mai dans le but de se rapprocher des positions de Mou et de Tang sur la (dis)continuité historique et d'initier à la signification contemporaine de leurs entreprises philosophiques.

Mots-clés

nouveau confucianisme, philosophie moderne chinoise, 4-mai, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, histoire, auto-descriptions culturelles, paradoxes dans la philosophie comparative

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G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 10.

64
David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking through Confucius*, Albany (N.Y.): State University of New York Press, 1987. p. 12.

65
See Fabian Heubel, "Immanente Transzendenz im Spannungsfeld von europäische Sinologie, kritische Theorie und zeitgenössischem Konfuzianismus"*, polylog*, 26, 2011, p. 91.

66
Hegel, 1977, p. 19.