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- assessing how well theories emerging from particular spatial, cultural, geographical and historical contexts travel and translate into new conjunctures;
- confronting theories with their limitations or aporias through immanent critique;
- applying theories to cultural, literary, social and political phenomena in order to test them against their respective fields of concern and to generate critical feedback;
- interfacing theories from different intellectual, disciplinary and institutional settings.

Given its interdisciplinary character, *Culture, Theory and Critique* will appeal to anyone working at the interface between disciplines such as gender studies, cultural studies, critical geography, historiography, literary theory and criticism, film studies, philosophy, postcolonialism, social and political theory and visual culture.

Culture, Theory and Critique is an intercultural journal whose success depends on contributions from a variety of sources, so that debate between different perspectives can be stimulated. One of the aims of the journal is to break down theoretical hierarchies and latent intellectual hegemonies, which can be achieved only if voices from places other than Anglophone centres are heard. Every endeavour will be made for each issue of the journal to incorporate perspectives from diverse cultural, intellectual and geographical contexts.

Culture, Theory and Critique

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Introducing Intellectual History

Richard H. King

In recent years, interest in intellectual history has grown significantly. With our call for articles on or about intellectual history, *Culture, Theory and Critique* (CTC) hoped to introduce its readers to a field that is distinct from, though related to, critical, literary and cultural studies, from which most of our readership is drawn. Indeed there has been a recent upsurge of interest in intellectual history. The oldest journal in the field, *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, has just announced a new editorial board and fresh format. Most of the material published in *History and Theory* is of considerable interest to intellectual historians, while *Rethinking History* and *Modern Intellectual History*, each of which has co-editors on both sides of the Atlantic, have joined the scene in the last decade. For reasons which are not entirely clear but very much welcome, intellectual history is flourishing.

Largely German in provenance, intellectual history is most widely taught in the United States, where Louis Menand's social and cultural history of American pragmatism, *The Metaphysical Club* (2001), has sold over 200,000 copies. This remarkable reception is undoubtedly an outgrowth of the renewed academic attention to the history and culture of pragmatism, which was touched off a quarter century ago by philosopher Richard Rorty. One reason for the relative popularity of intellectual history in America is connected with the enormous influence on American intellectual and academic life of German and Central European Jewish intellectuals who fled Hitler in the 1930s. British academic life has a reputation for suspicion of abstract ideas and thus intellectual history is relatively less taught in university history departments in Britain. Nor has the ahistorical mind-set of much British philosophy done much to encourage an historical perspective on the life of the mind either. Yet, a strong tradition in British thought, which includes R. G. Collingwood and Michael Oakeshott, Isaiah Berlin and Quentin Skinner, has done pioneering work in philosophy of history, the history of political thought and the history of ideas generally (King 1983). Among its sources are both the fading tradition of British Idealism and the analytic/language philosophy of J. A. Austin and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

An elementary starting point for contemporary forms of intellectual history/the history of ideas is the assumption that to understand ideas (by which I mean to include theories, systems of thought and belief, and articulated traditions), it is necessary to place them in their context of origin, although what constitutes the appropriate context, specifically how widely

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Disciplines in Translation: From Chinese Philosophy to Chinese What?

Wiebke Denecke¹

Abstract This paper argues that not just texts, but also disciplines need new translations. Since the sixteenth century texts such as the Confucian Analects have been considered 'Chinese philosophy', an approximation that under the pressure of China's modernisation and the emergence of analytic philosophy has increasingly forced these texts, which the Chinese have traditionally considered a genre of 'Masters Literature', into a shape dictated by contemporary notions of European and American philosophy. Illustrating its case by discussing Mencius's notion of 'human nature', the paper argues that the 'Masters Texts' should be 'translated' into the new disciplinary context of a comparative intellectual history that includes non-western thought traditions and provides more fruitful models of analysing the symbiosis of intellectual concerns with rhetorical strategies. Ultimately, such a new 'translation' of Chinese 'Masters Literature' will hopefully lead western philosophers to rethink their disciplinary framework, in particular the age-old antagonism of the philosophical against the rhetorical/literary that is foreign to the Chinese tradition.

For centuries, western scholars have recognised the fundamental interest and importance of the *Analects* of Confucius and the rich tradition of texts that followed in Confucius's wake. Yet from the sixteenth century onward, the western understanding of this tradition has involved intractable problems of translation – not only in lexical terms, but also in disciplinary terms. Just what are these texts? Often they have been considered under the rubric of 'Chinese philosophy', and yet this categorisation, already problematic in the days of the early Jesuit missionaries, only became more problematic with the rise of philosophy as an academic discipline in the later nineteenth century, a discipline dominated in the twentieth century by analytic philosophy in much of the Anglophone world.

Chinese and western scholars alike have sought to show that the Confucian texts could be read as 'real' philosophy in the western disciplinary sense, and yet the *Analects* and their progeny rarely resemble analytical treatises,

¹I would like to thank David Damrosch, Wai-ye Li, Michael Puett, and the two anonymous referees for their generous suggestions, which have considerably improved this paper.

often seeming to fall more on the side of gnomic wisdom and even of rhetoric. To the extent that they do so, they have often come under the shadow of the invidious distinction between 'philosophy' and 'rhetoric', an imagined dualism of two unequal realms that ultimately goes back to Plato's criticism of the sophists and their reputed strengths as teachers and orators. Around Plato's time, philosophy was an anxious young discipline looking desperately for ways to establish its value against older trusted forms of knowledge, such as public speech and poetry (Nightingale 1995: 60). But Plato's agenda did not go unchallenged. Most notably, Cicero, politician, eminent orator *cum* philosopher, and the most influential schoolbook author from the Middle Ages through to the early nineteenth century, forcefully attacked what he considered Socrates' – and by extension Plato's – lamentable schism between philosophy and rhetoric:

The people who discussed, practiced, and taught the subjects and activities we are now examining bore one and the same name (because knowledge of the most important things as well as practical involvement in them was, as a whole, called 'philosophy'), but he [Socrates] robbed them of this shared title. And in his discussions he split apart the knowledge of forming wise opinions and of speaking with distinction, two things that are, in fact, tightly linked. [...] This was the source of the rupture, so to speak, between the tongue and the brain, which is quite absurd, harmful, and reprehensible, and which has resulted in our having different teachers for thinking and for speaking.²

First, Cicero cleverly concedes that philosophy *should* encompass all disciplines, but by the same token he argues that Socrates does not stand by his own conviction and 'robbed' philosophy of its general sway by separating it into rhetoric and philosophy proper. Second, Cicero laments that students currently have simply one teacher too many. Third, and most powerfully, Cicero accuses Socrates of disciplinary amputation. Severing 'tongue' from 'brain' is a crime against anatomy, against the unity of the human body as much as against the integrity of human wisdom, *sapientia*. Cicero populates his all-embracing realm of *sapientia* with Iliadic heroes, early Greek sages and politicians who revel in the 'amazing communion' of their tongues and brains. Against this backdrop of wise harmony, Cicero makes Socrates into the mischievous surgeon of divisiveness. However, it would not be Cicero if he did not turn the tables on himself and suddenly suggest that the schism induced by Socrates is not entirely disadvantageous to the Romans:

So, just as the rivers part at the watershed of the Apennines, the disciplines parted when flowing down from the common ridge of wisdom. The philosophers flowed into the Ionian Sea on the East, as it were, which is Greek and well provided with harbors, while the

orators came down into our barbarian Tyrrhenian Sea on the West, which is full of reefs and dangers, and where even Odysseus himself had lost his way. (May and Wisse 2001: 245f.)

The deplorable division is here transformed from an *anatomical* severance into a *limnological* watershed. In this new aquatic geography of the Eastern and Western seas, which – we should not forget to note – spring from the Italian Apennines and not from Greek territory, Rome seems quite content to contribute an equal share to the map. Since Cicero was instrumental in the appropriation of Greek philosophy and the creation of a Roman philosophical tradition, such a geography was understandably attractive: the disciplinary segregation along ethnic lines relieved the Romans of the anxiety they felt over the absence of a properly 'Roman' philosophy, while also guaranteeing direct access to pristine philosophical wisdom, at least in its rhetorical incarnation.

Overall Cicero makes us aware that, like texts themselves, disciplines need translation when they cross borders and that they can actually gain in the process. How do disciplines 'translate' cross-culturally? How do we confront on the disciplinary level the truism that every generation needs its own translations of old masterworks? How can we decide which translations are more fruitful than others? Can multiple translations be profitable? This essay explores these questions with the example of the discipline that goes currently under the label of 'Chinese philosophy'. It argues that the early Chinese texts that are currently treated under this label would profit from a *disciplinary retranslation* from 'Chinese philosophy' into 'comparative intellectual history'. To show the power of this seemingly nominal shift we will re-examine Mencius, who was the first to claim Confucius's lineage for himself and who is key among those currently considered early 'Chinese philosophers'.

The invention of 'Chinese Philosophy'

In contemporary China, 'Chinese Philosophy' is a well-established academic discipline practised in philosophy departments that also teach western philosophy. The disciplinary spectrum at Chinese universities is based largely on European education systems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Philosophy came to play a particularly prominent role, because at the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese overseas students studying in the West or Japan – as well as a massive influx of western books – sensitised Chinese intellectuals to the supreme status of philosophy in European cultural history. Chinese intellectuals such as Liang Qichao, Wang Guowei, and Zhang Bingling admired western philosophy, in particular logic, as the key to scientific progress, modernisation, and thus ultimately as a tool of self-defence against western imperialism. Thus, the birth of the academic discipline of philosophy in China is intimately connected to the definition of philosophy in the early twentieth century, a period when philosophy in the West had undergone a radical reduction from the master science that it had been until the eighteenth century to a secularised academic discipline trying to determine its place in the new struggle between the 'two cultures' of natural and humanistic sciences.

²Cicero. *De oratore* III.60–61. May and Wisse 2001: 241 f.

However, the concept of 'Chinese philosophy' originated earlier, namely with the Jesuit mission in China.³ Although the first Jesuit missionaries such as Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) dressed in Buddhist garb, his successor Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) recognised the importance of targeting the literati class for the purpose of Christian proselytising and consequently decided to appear in literati dress. He familiarised himself with the canon of Confucian classics and started translating the Neo-Confucian canon, Zhu Xi's Four Books, into Latin, a translation that only long after his death was published in 1687 in Paris under the suggestive title *Confucius, Sinarum Philosophus sive Scientia Sinica Latine exposita* [Confucius, the Chinese Philosopher or: Chinese Science Explained in Latin]. However, after the arrival of Dominican and Franciscan missionaries in the early 1630s, Rome began to question Jesuit practices of accommodating the Confucian ancestor worship of their Chinese converts. Ricci's followers were put on the defensive.

Consequently, China missionaries had a vested interest in presenting Confucius as a secular philosopher, not as leader of a rival cult, in order to avoid confrontation with Rome. At the same time, like the sages of Egypt, Babylon or Judea in Johann Jacob Brucker's monumental eighteenth-century *Historia critica philosophiae* [Critical History of Philosophy], China's cultural heroes and great thinkers were accommodated as precursors to 'Christian philosophy', proto-Christian early exponents of a 'natural theology'.

Thus, until the late nineteenth century the existence of a 'Chinese philosophy' was not questioned, because philosophy encompassed a host of religious, moral and intellectual sensibilities, which could no doubt be mapped onto early China. The quarrel about the existence of a Chinese philosophy became prominent only around the turn of the twentieth century, by which time the concept of philosophy had radically changed in the West. The academic discipline of philosophy, in particular analytical philosophy, seemed without proper correlate in the Chinese tradition and it was precisely this lack that spurred on many Chinese intellectuals to assert the existence of 'Chinese philosophy' and, in turn, many western philosophers to dismiss it for the same reason.⁴ It is ironical that the existence of Chinese philosophy is still hotly debated now⁵, when the notion of philosophy as a guiding discipline of scientific progress, which had forced the question in all its acuteness on Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century, has itself vanished. Most of the debate over the existence of a 'Chinese philosophy' still manoeuvres in a framework that universalises the particular historical reception of an early twentieth-century notion of western philosophy in China. And the

³ For a fascinating history of the more than four hundred centuries of 'translation history' of Confucianism between West and East, see Jensen (1997).

⁴ Many western proponents of 'Chinese philosophy' harbour deep resentment against their neglect by western philosophers. See Lin *et al.* 1995:

In this way, the Eurocentric and chauvinistic character of most modern Western philosophy has been reinforced [...] The philosophical dimensions of Chinese thought, or lack thereof, should be an open-ended question, subject to discussion [...]; instead, the question has simply been begged against the Chinese. (747)

⁵ For an overview of the arguments and relevant scholarship, see Defoort 2001.

debate, unfortunately, pushes careful readings of Chinese texts into a narrow corner of self-defence, predetermining the type of evidence marshalled for a question that was only asked out of the *historical coincidence* that China's modernisation and desperate opening to western knowledge happened just around the time analytical philosophy flourished in the Anglophone world.

The dominant current translation: comparative philosophy

Scholars of various colours study the Confucian *Analects*, the *Mencius* or the *Laozi*, that is those texts, which in China since the first century BC were archived under the label of 'Masters Texts' [*zhuzi baijia*] in the imperial library. Historians, anthropologists, religious scholars, literary or intellectual historian or historians of science, and paleographers all rely on the 'Masters Texts' in their study of early China, but the group of scholars who have laid the strongest and most exclusive claim to the corpus are comparative philosophers. Put polemically, a good part of contemporary comparative philosophy is an odd mixture of Enlightenment-era Jesuit practices of cultural translation (still implicitly informing some current scholarship) with more recent postcolonial apologetics (expressed both by natives and by westerners to obviously different effect) arguing for the right of non-western traditions to become respectable members of a fictive realm of universal philosophy. Jesuits in China declared Confucius the foremost Chinese philosopher in order to avoid clashes with ecclesiastical authorities in Rome over whether Confucian ancestor worship should be considered a heretic rival cult or an acceptable cultural practice. Later, so-called 'figurists' such as Joachim Bouvet and Joseph de Prémare were especially eager to match up figures and events of Chinese high antiquity with corresponding biblical phenomena. They produced 'synoptic' tables of parallel histories to prove the long-forgotten presence of divine revelation in China. Similarly, certain comparative philosophers – now coupling 'ideas' and presumably archetypal 'themes' rather than biblical paraphernalia – call for a high degree of abstraction to ensure comparability:

[The] reason for focusing mainly on ideas is to allow us to begin at a level of abstraction high enough to allow the ideas to be compared at all. This freeing of the ideas for comparison – equivalent to the clearing away of 'noise' that makes the exact sciences possible – requires us to disregard as temporarily irrelevant the ideas' simply local or individual characteristics.⁶

We should not forget that attempts to ensure comparability follow important ethical and political imperatives; comparability serves to ensure the

⁶ Scharfstein 1998: 55. Ram Adhar Mall even seems to believe in the possibility of a *universal philosophy* when he talks about interculturality: '[I]n the field of purely formal disciplines, it stands for the internationalism of scientific and formal categories' (Mall 2000: 5). The mélange of the concept of 'interculturality' with an untrammelled conviction that the humanities should participate in their own 'scientification' stands out as a quite impossible amalgam of two *fin-de-siècle*, the most recent and the end of the nineteenth century.

compatibility of the world's thought traditions and their representation in a coalescing horizon of globalisable human values and rights. For the sake of comparability the 'Masters Texts' are captured through disembodied concepts such as 'humanism', 'skepticism', 'relativism' or 'mysticism', which are completely alien to their original context of production. True, they score on 'comparability' by creating a kind of *phantom body* of 'Chinese philosophy' dressed up for the sake of a comparative philosophy guided by western philosophical buzz-words. The anatomy of this phantom body can boast of a strong heart – namely an obvious predilection for ethics – and a strong hand – which is reflective of its high performance in political philosophy. The atrophy of the 'analytical cortex' – a lack of interest in questions of logic and epistemology in the Chinese tradition – has incited scholars to unearth buried or neglected traditions that could mend the gap and 'epistemologise' Chinese thought.⁷

Yet, a stronger drive towards comparability might ironically achieve the opposite effect – doing a favour to Eurocentric claims in the guise of 'universal parameters':

The body of world-texts provides us with the great books through which we can discover the archic variables of philosophical discourse in general. But we can establish these transcendental points of contact only by a hermeneutical theory general enough to account for the comparability of such texts. Aristotle's metaphysical causes, I submit, can be reinterpreted as such generic hermeneutical controls. (Dilworth 1989: 26)

Even if Dilworth sounds dated today, his presuppositions are still skeletons in the closet of comparative philosophers who tend to downplay the role of language, rhetoric and genre – impersonations of the parochial and accidental – for the sake of ideas, imagined as the coin of universal cultural currency. From this perspective the particularities of the foreign source language merely need to be tamed through *professional* treatment by philosophers. David Hall and Roger Ames, who were instrumental in bringing early Chinese thinkers into the international arena of comparative philosophy, blame unprofessional translation for the lack of recognition of 'Chinese philosophy':

[M]ost philosophers have not entertained the Chinese tradition as 'philosophy'. As a consequence, the major difficulty confronted by the reader in attempting to use and appreciate translations and discussions of the original sources lies not so much in the syntax as in the semantic content of core philosophical concepts. [...] This general problem of translation is exacerbated when philosophy is not translated and interpreted by trained philosophers. (Hall and Ames 1987: 41–42)

⁷ See A. C. Graham's work on the Mohist canons, and Lisa Raphals' case for the importance of 'metic,' that is practical episteme in the Chinese tradition.

Presumably, if core philosophical concepts are translated inconsistently, the universal appeal of the hypostatized philosophical essence is lost. Here, language appears as a recalcitrant obstacle to ideal and ideational transparency that can be overcome through professional training. Although the attention given to the translation process is laudable, we need models of cultural translation that go beyond easy dreams of transparency.

Translation: from comparative philosophy to comparative intellectual history

How can we move away from the matching of simple equivalences or dichotomies? A different guiding vision for the process of textual and cultural translation is needed, not the match or polar contrast, but the asymptotical approximation and constant renegotiation. This vision implies that texts and disciplines are to be *translated*, not simply 'matched' in a contest over cultural supremacy, and that they *transmogrify* in the process both with and against the direction of their translation process. Which other comparative enterprises are there, that resonate with this vision of 'translation'? Comparative studies have had quite different trajectories depending on their disciplinary environment. A critical study that would trace these differences and explain their underlying dynamics would have the great value of bringing into dialogue comparatists of various types, convictions and methods.⁸

'Comparative literature', a response among others to the increasing ethnic plurality on North American campuses since the 1970s, seems to have reached a self-inflicted preliminary deadlock within this previous paradigm. 'Comparative history', in contrast, saw a more palpable rise only in the 1990s, a prudent and defensive yielding to the pressures of globalisation discourse.⁹ 'Comparative philosophy', in turn, contrasts with both in original motivation and institutional setting. For the Far East–West dialogue, it goes back to seventeenth and eighteenth-century attempts of Jesuit missionaries to both understand and instrumentalise indigenous thought traditions for their propagation of faith. This debate has survived in secularised form in the world-ethical mission of comparative philosophy as a locus to identify and propagate human rights and ethical values based on an ecumenical inclusion of various philosophical traditions and world religions.

Although this version of comparative philosophy has as strong a mission to promote ethnic plurality as does comparative literature, it is crucial that the debate over comparative philosophy has for the most part *not* taken place within philosophy departments. The debate was conducted among area studies and religious studies faculty who might have a rather tenuous relationship to their colleagues in philosophy departments (or a suspiciously disproportionate

⁸ A delightful polemical contrasting of the comparative spirit in anthropology with the lack of it in history is Detienne (2000).

⁹ Note the negative declarations of intent in studies such as Cohen and O'Connor (2004), the scope of which is even narrowly limited to Europe. 'What are the disadvantages of comparative history? That comparison takes longer, offers more room for mistakes, may be poorly received by specialists in the field: all are ... uncontentious. However, even beyond these perils, lurk others' (xvi).

pride if they are on good terms with them). In this framework comparative philosophy bears out the root etymology of the Latin verb '*comparare*', namely 'to match, to couple for a contest'. Furthermore, the stakes are on unequal terms. Quite often, scholars of non-western traditions of thought tend to assemble under the banner of comparative philosophy to garner the attention of the Eurocentric core of philosophy departments. This constellation might explain why there had been little explicit debate about comparative issues in the field of intellectual history until the late 1990s. The two closest foster parents of intellectual history – history and philosophy – have not encouraged work in a comparative mode. History has for the most part been coy and prudent about comparison, while philosophy departments were largely aloof from the debates about comparative philosophy.

In the opening issue of the journal *Intellectual News*, which marked the foundation of the 'International Society of Intellectual History' (ISIH), Ulrich Johannes Schneider cuts intellectual history loose from its debt of dependency on the history of philosophy and locates its greatest potential in comparative explorations:

[I]ntellectual history should never match any history of any discipline, not even that of philosophy. It should be interdisciplinary and international, holistic and comparative at the same time. (*Intellectual News* 1 1996: 28)

What could a comparative intellectual history do that comparative philosophy is less predisposed to accomplish? First, if anything unites the current Byzantine plurality of the field of intellectual history, it is a basic commitment to a historical approach. This promises a higher degree of context-sensitivity, specificity, and sophistication. As long as comparative philosophers work on the premises of a 'synoptic matching' of disembodied ideas from different traditions, the ensuing comparability will worship its own reductionist image and fall short of the compared phenomena.¹⁰

Second, a comparative intellectual history works with considerably lighter historical and conceptual baggage. It can stay aloof from the age-old struggle between philosophy and rhetoric. It can perfectly exist without the ultimate drive towards universable truths and values. It would have a less hostile view of the vagaries of language. Non-western languages are no longer the tricky obstacle as described by Hall and Ames, but could feature as the *generative locus* of intellectual production. This could ultimately be liberating for the discipline

¹⁰ Donald Kelley has made this point nicely:

Both philosophers and intellectual historians take 'ideas' as their common currency, but they look at the question in wholly different ways. For philosophers [...] ideas are in some sense mental phenomena that are adequately represented and communicated in the philosopher's oral or written discourse and argument. For historians, however, ideas are in the first place social and cultural constructions, and the product of a complex process of inference, judgment, and criticism on the part of the scholar. The history of ideas has long been situated in the midst of this semantic confusion ... (Kelley 2002: 105 f)

of philosophy itself. In his *Le droit à la philosophie d'un point de vue cosmopolitique* – a call for a universal human 'right to philosophy' – Derrida sees the future of philosophy in its liberation from the languages that have produced it, such as Greek and Latin, as well as Germanic and Arabic languages (Derrida 1997: 38). It is not impossible that Derrida is particularly amenable to reflecting on the generative power of individual languages for philosophical discourse owing to his fears of the increasing threat of global Anglophonia. A future philosophy would in his eyes have to redress the imbalance of linguistic hegemony, a hegemony that, in spite of some superior translations of his works into English, threatens his own narcissistically Francophone legacy. Abstracting from such ulterior motives, Derrida makes a crucial point when urging us to situate not just comparative philosophy, but the future of philosophy *tout court*, in the generative power of non-western *languages*, rather than in a harvestable crop of *ideas* with universal appeal to be 'expropriated' from other thought traditions.

The third advantage of a comparative intellectual history is the profile of intellectual history as an inherently self-reflexive field. If understood as a historical inquiry into the human intellectual enterprise, the individuals, issues, and institutions involved, intellectual history is the meta-discipline devoted to the 'history' of 'intellectuals'. Intellectual history is closely related to the sociology of knowledge and history of education and thus quite uniquely equipped with an inbuilt mechanism of constant self-examination. In this sense it is not just a highly interdisciplinary field, but inevitably *trans-disciplinary* in that it constantly moves along with the changing self-definitions of the scholarly enterprise. Its potentially objectifying historical gaze should always be held in check by the self-conscious introspection of the practising intellectual historian who understands himself as the last link in the chain of his subject of inquiry. Thus, the prominent status for intellectual historians of the book review, which is not just a critical service to the profession but an implementation of the research mission itself.¹¹ This extraordinary ability to examine one's own genealogy, to be always forced to a historically contextualised reading of intellectual debates and a self-conscious gaze back at one's own enterprise, disposes intellectual history to be an exceptionally self-enlightened discipline. And it puts intellectual history, I would argue, in a particularly promising position to tackle more successfully than other disciplines the balance between the global and universalised and the local and particular in comparative cross-cultural studies.

Retranslating 'Chinese philosophy': modern Chinese scholars and disciplinary transplantation

After a good century of spirited institutionalisation of 'Chinese philosophy' in the East Asian and western academic landscape, the institutional success of the academic subject of 'Chinese philosophy' in the above mode of comparative philosophy has created its own *raison d'être* within the confines of history. Yet, some Chinese scholars have grown increasingly uncomfortable with the philosophical sway over the early Chinese 'Masters Texts'. They have chosen to regard them as a *literary genre* and transplant them into the discipline of

¹¹ Both Chartier (1998) and, more explicitly, LaCapra (1983) are good examples.

belles-lettres that has been institutionalised in China over the past century under western influence. Accordingly, there has been a wave of sophisticated interest in stylistic appraisals of the pre-Qin Masters since the 1980s.¹² Most of these studies trace the development of narrative framing and argumentative strategies. They see the beginning of 'Masters Literature', in short, 'scenes of instruction' in which a master is represented as instructing disciples or rulers, a form predominant in the Confucian *Analects* and the *Mencius*. The first opponents of Confucius's followers, Mozi and the later Mohist school, developed a longer expository prose format that the Confucian Xunzi (c.310–215 BC) transforms into a consciously crafted essay form with an self-assertive authorial voice. Later, anecdotes, court petitions or exempla for rhetorical practice could all become part of the 'collected works' of a master, as in the case of the Legalist Han Feizi (d. 233 BC). The rise of more systematically arranged multi-author compilations such as the *Lüshi Chunqiu* [The Spring and Autumn Annals of Mister Lü] and the *Huainanzi* [Master Huainan] rivalled the model of 'collected works' by one master and conveyed cosmological efficiency through their encyclopaedic representation of knowledge about the cosmos. Although the teleologies are sometimes too clear-cut, these studies have the great merit of interpreting the 'Masters Texts' as an internal progressive dialogue between various 'Masters Texts'.

Yet the Chinese studies that seek to translate 'Chinese philosophy' into belles-lettres do not go far enough. First, the majority of them show surprisingly little revisionist momentum: they do not fundamentally question that the authors of 'Masters Texts' are treated as philosophers. Instead, they consider themselves literary scholars who take 'Chinese philosophy' out for a rhetorical stroll, for a break from the true treasurers of the tradition – namely academic departments of 'Chinese philosophy'. The second shortcoming of these studies is their predilection for descriptive typologies. They content themselves with listing examples for certain rhetorical tropes.

The goal of my study is to go beyond the mere archiving of strategies. On the level of single 'Masters Texts', I am seeking answers to questions such as: how are certain rhetorical tropes such as tautologies, metaphors, or paradoxes related to the intellectual enterprise of certain 'Master Texts'? How do narratological tropes such as the author function, narrative authority, or the dialogue form change throughout the history of the genre? How will our vision of the 'Masters Texts' in particular, and Early China in general, change if we read the corpus 'immanently', that is as an embedded inner dialogue, instead of searching for tokens of comparability that are bite-sized for comparative philosophy? These types of question seek to capture the symbiosis of rhetorical strategies with intellectual claims and they do not retreat into the safe haven of mere 'literary' pretensions.

An immanent historicist approach

To read the 'Masters Texts' as either 'early Chinese philosophy' or as 'early Chinese literature' means to force them into a disciplinary spectrum that has

only recently developed in China according to patterns that are particular to the reception of western culture in China. The natural defence reflex against such anachronistic approaches is of course to turn them on their head and instead ask how and why the text corpus was first labelled in the Chinese tradition.

As mentioned above, the first label for texts by pre-Qin thinkers (pre-221 BC) – China's 'axial age' to use Karl Jaspers's terminology – was simply 'Masters Texts.' This label was coined by Han Dynasty [206 BC–220 AD] bibliographers who divided them into various schools such as 'Confucians', 'Mohists', 'Taoists', 'YinYang specialists', 'Legalists' and 'Logicians'. 'Masters Texts' became one of the four headings of traditional Chinese bibliography: 'Classics', 'Masters', 'Histories' and 'Literary Collections'. We should keep in mind that Liu Xiang, who was ordered to produce a catalogue of the Han imperial library, faced practical problems of archiving, of easily storing and finding documents – then still predominantly in the cumbersome format of rolls of bamboo slips. Therefore, schools such as the 'Miscellaneous Masters' [zajia] which are often understood as a specific intellectual formation with an eclectic or 'syncretist' outlook, may simply describe a category for books that did not fit anywhere else in the library – oversize folios in the parlance of our time. Scholars are increasingly aware that traditional Chinese divisions of 'Masters Texts' into particular schools say more about Han librarians than about the authors of the texts. (Smith 2003; Csikszentmihályi and Nylan 2003) This is congenial to recent classicist scholarship that reconsiders the beginnings of philosophical traditions in Greece in going *beyond* Platonic and Aristotelian constructs of 'pre-Socratic philosophy' and placing these early figures in a broad matrix of other 'masters of truth' – in Detienne's words – such as diviners, poets, or cultic leaders. (Detienne 1996)

Unfortunately, most of our contextual evidence about the identity and pursuits of the Masters comes from Han times, so that we are trapped again in anachronistic visions that postdate the genesis of the texts sometimes by several centuries. Thus, the strictest immanentist historicist approach has to rely on the texts themselves in reconstructing their context. Yet, the ultimate circularity of this most purist framework is not its worst vice. Rather, it is both utopian and intellectually totalitarian to attempt to unthink all later 'contaminations' such as the penetration of earlier Confucianism by Buddhism culminating in the Neo-Confucian movement in the Song Dynasty or the reception of the western disciplinary spectrum in the past century.

Rereading the *Mencius*

My argument is that we will read the Masters Texts in a radically different fashion if we explore them through the modern transdisciplinary practice of a comparative intellectual history. If we do so, we can fulfil Cicero's ambition to reunite rhetoric and philosophy in an old-new 'science of wisdom'. Let us take *Mencius* as a case in point.

Mencius (c.372–289) was born almost two hundred years after Confucius and was later graced with the title 'Second Sage' in the wake of the Master. *Mencius* is famous for his vision of paternal governance, involving royal duties as well as royal privileges; he went so far as to argue in favour of

¹² Especially commanding is Zhang Cangshou 1996.

regicide of unworthy rulers. Second, Mencius was instrumental in bringing the notion of 'human nature' [*xing*] to the centre stage of discussion. His optimism about the inherently benevolent potential of humans met with fierce resistance from his fellow Confucian, Xunzi, who composed a chapter bluntly entitled 'Human nature is evil'. Third, Mencius makes his argument for the inherent benevolence of human nature by analogy with natural substances such as wood and water. Thus, the book ascribed to him, the *Mencius*, is famous for its masterful use of analogy.

Let us show with the debate over 'human nature' how a new reading of the *Mencius* emerges once we have translated ourselves away from a purely philosophical framework and have set the work in its intellectual context. Several fine studies have placed Mencius very perceptively within the context of contemporary debates. A. C. Graham has shown how Mencius appropriated the concept of 'human nature' itself from his predecessor, Yang Zhu, and how it fits in with other protagonists of the debate (Graham 1989: 111–32). For Graham, Mencius's assertion of the inherent benevolence of mankind is a strategy to deal with a metaphysical crisis triggered by a perceived disjunction between Heaven and human morality. Chad Hansen sees Mencius's stance as a cheap reply to Mozi, who had forcefully called for the need of universal standards against the situationalist morality of Confucians. According to Hansen, Mencius just avoided Mozi's challenge by grounding morality on the equally shaky basis of something innate endowed by Heaven. Hansen's resentment against Mencius verges on of the offensive: 'Paradoxically, Mencius's philosophical ineptitude may be the secret to his eventual cultural dominance' (Hansen 1992: 154). Not just Mencius's philosophical ineptitude – as Hansen dubs it – is questionable. More importantly, it is not clear why Mencius would want to abide by Hansen's standards of being a philosopher. In his spirited attack on Mencius's bias, Hansen is caught in his own hegemonic claims to 'philosophicality'.

This is where a conceptually less fraught approach proves fruitful. Mark Lewis has recently made us aware how crucial it is to study the *enunciatory strategies* of the 'Masters Texts', the significance of their development from the representation of a 'scene of instruction', as we see it in the Confucian *Analects* (Lewis 1999: 53–97). Robert Eno keenly remarks on the discursive structure of the *Mencius*, a book that, like the *Analects*, consists of barely connected 'scenes of instructions':

My intention here is to explore certain features of the *disorderliness* of ethical discourse in the *Mencius*. [...] basic goal of Mencian ethical discourse seems to be to provide for members of Mencius's tradition clear insight into the character of ethical authority, as conveyed through exemplary figures essential to the teaching lineage – most importantly, Mencius himself.¹³

¹³ Eno (2002: 189). Zhang Cangshou unfortunately does not explore Mencius's discursive structure but discusses its more properly 'literary' features such as its colloquial simplicity, its trenchant brevity in argument, its inquisitive unveiling of opponents' self-contradictions etc. (Zhang 1996: 25–40).

I suggest combining Eno's insight of Mencius's concern with lineage with a further question: considering that the *Mencius* is the first of our preserved texts to devote so much attention to the discussion of 'human nature', why was Mencius so very passionate about this debate? What function does it have within a broader spectrum of issues featuring in the *Mencius*? I would argue that Mencius's attraction to the concept of 'human nature' is closely related to his role as the first self-styled exegete of Confucius's personal legacy. This creation of *temporal depth* in a Confucian lineage – which Mencius creates not least in order to insert himself into it – resonates with Mencius's role as a 'master of depth' on other levels, such as the hermeneutical, the psychological, the physical and the rhetorical.

Mencius is arguably the first one to exploit the disjunction between 'surface wording' versus 'deeper meaning'; in short he advocates a notion of *textual depth*. Correcting his disciple Xianqiu Meng in his interpretation of a poem from the *Book of Poetry*, Mencius states:

Thus in explaining a poem, one should not let the word flourish harm the expression, nor let the expression harm the intended meaning.¹⁴

More prominently, Mencius is the master of *psychological depth*. At the centre of his vision of human existence and moral governance is the notion of the 'heart-mind' [*xin*], which the *Analects* only mention in passing, but which Mencius makes into the most fundamental organ of moral judgement. Not only does he revolutionise moral anatomy, but he practises it by creeping into the heart-minds of his interlocutors:

The King said [to Mencius], 'The *Book of Documents* says, 'The heart is another man's, But I have surmised it.' This describes you perfectly. Although the deed was mine, when I looked into myself I failed to understand my own heart. You described it for me and your words struck a chord in me. (*Mencius* 1A/7. Lau 55–56)

It is crucial that later ages have ascribed the *Mencius* to Mencius himself and, second, that by Mencius's times the dialogue form was by no means the only available enunciatory strategy of the 'Masters Texts' tradition. To the contrary, Mozi had introduced the expository essay form to the genre and Mencius's choice of the dialogue form, an almost 'neoclassical' return to the form of the earlier *Analects*, must have been a calculated choice on his part. That Mencius chose that format might have been precisely because the dialogue form could most favourably present Mencius as the master over the poems of earlier ages and over the hearts of his interlocutors.

This goes along with Mencius's concept of *physical depth*. Although the visible surface bars access to the interiority of the mind, an observer as masterful as Mencius could still penetrate it:

¹⁴ *Mencius* 5A/4. For the standard translation, see Lau 1978: 142

How can a man conceal his true character if you listen to his words and observe the pupils of his eyes? (*Mencius* 4A/15. Lau: 124)

Mencius's skilful argumentation by analogy can be considered as the creation of depth on a rhetorical level.

Human nature is good just as water seeks low ground. There is no man who is not good; there is no water that does not flow downwards. Now in the case of water, by splashing it one can make it shoot up higher than one's forehead, and by forcing it one can make it stay on a hill. How can that be the nature of water? (*Mencius* 6A/2. Lau: 160)

In inverse direction to 'reading' and 'understanding' a person's mind by going beyond the outer surface through the pupils of the eyes, the good orator 'inscribes' a new surface, creating an illustrating analogy to make himself understood.

Now, Mencius's exploration of varieties of depth led to an increased anxiety over possible shifts – tectonic diastrophisms – between the 'inner' and the 'outer', the core and the surface. I consider this a powerful motivation for his strong and unprecedented claim that human nature follows an inherently good potential. The goodness of human nature serves to *stabilise* the relation between the inner and the outer by connecting them firmly through a dynamics of benevolent latency that safeguards proper outer manifestations.¹⁵ In short, the trope of 'depth' symbiotically informs what is considered one of the central intellectual issues in *Mencius*, the innate goodness of human nature.

Outlook

So how and to what purpose should we translate 'Chinese Philosophy'? Speaking for the 'Masters Texts', I do think that the framework of a comparative intellectual history affords a more productive disciplinary environment than the loaded stratosphere of philosophy. There is real promise in the considerably lighter and more diverse conceptual baggage of a young interdisciplinary field, with its greater nimbleness responding to the unsettling potential of foreign traditions instead of over-domesticating or exoticising them through ingrained disciplinary responses. Most importantly, the self-reflexive bent of intellectual history forces its practitioners constantly to look back at themselves as intellectuals writing intellectual history at a particular point in time, a process that replicates the complicated process of cross-cultural negotiations: we partake in them as half-blind participants and instruments of historical change, while groping for clairvoyance constantly threatened by our own entanglement.

¹⁵ This anxiety surfaces also in what Michael Puett has described as *Mencius's* resistance to vocabulary of active constructing that would threaten the organic unfolding from the inner to the outer. See Puett (2001: 58).

The central issue is not so much to ensure the comparability and correct 'translation' of foreign traditions, as to continue accounting for the process of negotiation with them. We are at a point when western scholarship of pre-modern East Asia is growing increasingly sophisticated and specialised, not least due to the increasing coalescence of Chinese and western scholarly horizons through Asian-American or overseas Chinese scholars working in between both worlds. In this process of maturation of the field it is easy for westerners to forget or bracket the complicated process of negotiation, especially when driven by the desire to produce more 'authentic' scholarship that can boast of handling the sources and cultural archives as well as the presumed natives do. As much as a more detailed understanding of Chinese intellectual history is desirable, we should not forget that, as western scholars of China, we are not only asked to represent China to a western audience. More importantly, we are asked to represent ourselves for ourselves through a detour via China. Cicero, as a Roman orator with philosophical proclivities, could more easily dream of a 'wise' union of rhetoric with philosophy in the ideal rhetor:

[I]f we are looking for the one thing that surpasses all others, the palm must go to the learned orator. If they allow that he is also a philosopher, then the quarrel is over. If, however, they keep the two distinct, they will be inferior in that all their knowledge is present in the perfect orator, while the knowledge of the philosophers does not automatically imply eloquence. And although they scorn it, yet it is inevitably true that eloquence somehow sets a capstone upon their art. (*De oratore* III.143; May and Wisse: 266)

That the 'quarrel' would be 'over' and philosophy would happily accept being a necessary but not sufficient condition for becoming an ideal orator seems wishful thinking in Cicero's times. Cicero puts this ambition into Crassus's mouth with the sliver of irony that still tries to convince through hearty brashness. However, there are moments in history when you can gain healthy distance from certain quarrels with outside help. This would be the moment when we would not just ask 'From Chinese philosophy to Chinese what?', but find it propitious, at least heuristically, to ask the world 'From philosophy to what?'

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Theodor W. Adorno and Octavio Paz: Two Visions of Modernity

Oliver Kozlarek

Abstract 2003 was the hundredth anniversary of Theodor W. Adorno's birth. In Germany – and elsewhere – there was clearly a desire to show that critical theory was still alive. Although this article affirms the return to one of the classics of critical theory, it criticises the hagiographic ways in which this was done. If one of the most important challenges facing 'global modernity' is our ability to connect to the 'concrete other', Adorno's critical theory is insufficient, and needs to be complemented by other intellectual articulations. This article proposes a comparison between Octavio Paz and Adorno. Both men located their intellectual commitment in a critique of modernity. But, so runs the argument here, Paz knew much better than Adorno that a critique of modernity needs to take into account the multiplicity of modern cultures.

2003 was the year in which the hundredth anniversary of Adorno's birth was celebrated. In Germany – and elsewhere – the will to make sure that critical theory was still alive was apparent. However, was the ambition expressed by a flood of publications really proof for the 'actuality' of Adorno's thinking? Reading some of the many articles and books published in the 'Adorno-year', it was difficult to avoid the suspicion that what really motivated the euphoria over the work of this highly uncommon thinker was not so much the assurance that Adorno's ideas are still valid, but, on the contrary, a certain nostalgia for a time which is no longer ours. Again and again, Adorno was described as an icon of an era which was long over: 'a last genius' for example, as the title of Detlev Claussen's book on Adorno clearly states (Claussen 2004). For Lorenz Jäger, it seems to be beyond doubt that Adorno's biography is linked to a modernity which started with the year of his birth, 1903, but which was definitely over by 1969, the year of his death (Jäger 2003).

Nostalgia for a time in which it might have been easier to be a critical, non-conformist or 'negative' intellectual is probably a legitimate motivation to return to Adorno. It allows us a glimpse into a time when the life and the work of an intellectual was in many ways unique. However, it does not tell us whether Adorno's work still has any social, political, cultural or academic relevance today. Therefore, it is important to return to Adorno's writings in a more critical way. This is what Martin Seel proposes when he wrote recently: 'It would be time to free Adorno's philosophy from the dogma and trauma of