

Abstracts (English)

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The Promise of Wuwei Confucianism

In recent years there is a pronounced awareness that Confucianism is a rich source of insights applicable to contemporary ethical, social, and planetary issues. Classical Confucian texts such as the *Lunyu* 論語 (or *Analects of Confucius*) and the Mengzi 孟子 (or *Mencius*) are widely interrogated for their perspectives on how to deal with anything from personal setbacks and family squabbles to community-specific conflicts and major global challenges. Taking the teachings in these texts seriously is therefore often tied to the promise of pre-conceived positive results or to assurances that such results are achievable. I argue that interpreting the Confucian proposal as solely promise giving and future-oriented is counter-productive for appreciating not only what distinguishes Confucianism from many consequentialist projects, but also what makes Confucianism a valuable resource for addressing calamitous global attitudes today. I propose *Wuwei* 無為 Confucianism as a planetary ethos that is more present- and process-oriented, capable of achieving personal and social benefits (or *li* 利) through decoupling the work towards a better self and a better world from fixations on controllable and measurable outcomes. The promise of *Wuwei* Confucianism is a shift of the planetary focus: from deliverable-based “think big” planning that precedes and outshines human efforts, to the modest, often clumsy work of “broadening of the Way” (*hong dao* 弘道) individually and collectively in the present moment.

Are plants *wuxin* 無心 and *wuming* 無命? The current philosophy of plants in dialogue with Zhuangzi and Wang Fuzhi

In the last decade, within environmental studies, a strand has emerged relating to the philosophy of plants as part of the more general discourse relating to the non-human. The plant neurophysiologist Stefano Mancuso has produced a complex reflection on the intelligence, memory and agentivity of plants that raises many philosophical questions that have the potential to revolutionise philosophical reflection as a whole. Notoriously, in Western philosophical culture, especially of Aristotelian descent, the vegetative faculty is the most basic, presiding over the sole maintenance of the living organism. Plants have neither sensory nor intellectual faculties. Within the argument about *qi* 氣, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 produces an analysis that in some ways may seem similar to the Aristotelian one. He argues that plants are *wuxin* 無心 and *wuming* 無命. On the one hand, we will try to contextualise this statement by Wang and understand its facets, and on the other hand, we will attempt a comparison with Zhuangzi's view on this specific issue that may open up for contemporary reflection.

ANGLE Stephen C.

Confucian Global Citizenship and Ecological Values

The challenges that liberal societies, with their emphases on protecting individuals' private choices and correspondingly thin sense of public values, have in motivating action toward solving global crises like climate change are well known. Less attention has been paid to the fact that despite seeming to assign intrinsic value to our environment (through doctrines like "forming one body with all things"), the Confucian tradition has so far failed — historically and today — to motivate environmental activism. This paper explores the reasons why Confucians have cared for the environment without becoming environmentalists, and then shows how a modern, progressive Confucian development of the tradition can remedy this disconnection. Modern Confucians should deny that citizenship rests on a foundational private-public dichotomy, instead seeing citizenship as encompassing all aspects of our outer behavior. The scope of citizenship both includes activities at the personal end of the personal-to-public continuum and extends beyond the formal politics of nation-states to include all manner of involvement with the world's environment. At the same time, Confucian philosophical debates offer multiple directions for a contemporary elaboration of the tradition's centering of "life-giving generativity"; the paper assesses the comparative textual grounding and philosophical plausibility of pragmatist and enactivist variations of ecological value. Finally, it addresses the question of how a Confucian vision of global, ecologically informed citizenship can contribute in a world in which shared worries about climate catastrophes coexist with plural conceptions of a good human life and a flourishing cosmos.

Re-acting, Modesty, and Gentleness: Cheng Xuanying's Proposition for Effective Government and Harmonious Coexistence

Cheng Xuanying, an important representative of early Tang dynasty Daoist twofold mystery teaching (*chongxuanxue*), integrated many Buddhist concepts into his writings without losing sight of such Daoist preoccupations as longevity, overcoming death, and bringing Great Peace to the world. His commentary to the *Daodejing* promotes a Buddhist-inspired concept of mental cultivation that focusses on elimination of the self-other (subject-object) distinction in cognitive processes, leading to a state of *wuxin* (no-mind). By applying the rules for selfcultivation to politics and government, Cheng Xuanying is able to emphasize the virtues of gentleness and modesty while showing how they will lead to the harmonious coexistence of beings and the kingdoms in which they live.

BAE Je Seong

Reinterpreting Zhu Xi's Doctrine of Gewu (格物, Investigation of Things) from the Perspective of Relational Autonomy

Zhu Xi is one of the most prominent scholars of Chinese Neo-Confucianism. This study will examine two criticisms of Zhu Xi's moral philosophy and suggest that these criticisms can be addressed by reinterpreting his ideas through the lens of relational autonomy.

The first criticism is that Zhu Xi's stance is overly authoritative and places excessive confidence in the legitimacy of external social order. This aspect makes his ethics less appealing to contemporary audiences. The second criticism is that his ethical perspective does not reflect that of a truly autonomous agent but is instead subordinate to external norms. These criticisms often arise from Zhu Xi's doctrine of *gewu* (格物), or the investigation of things. Through this doctrine, Zhu Xi argues that in order to become moral, humans must begin by learning external and objective moral knowledge and continue to engage in this learning process. This approach sets him apart from other thinkers of his time, as many Neo-Confucianists focused more on discovering the inner strength and potential needed to become moral individuals. The two criticisms of Zhu Xi, mentioned above, focus on how his emphasis on knowledge is seen as overly restrictive of human inner autonomy and natural potential. In contrast, this study explores the possibility of a different interpretation of Zhu Xi's doctrine of *gewu* by considering it from the perspective of relational autonomy.

Proponents of relational autonomy argue that while autonomy is central to human ethical and practical life, it is relational rather than absolute or purely individual. The Confucian tradition, including Neo-Confucianism, integrates both aspects—autonomy and relationality—as key elements. The central argument of this study is that Zhu Xi's doctrine of *gewu* can be reinterpreted as a way to embrace respect for otherness, acknowledge the essential need for mutual dialogue and exchange, and cultivate a sense of morality suited to such interactions.

Mencius and Decoloniality: Rightness (義) against Orientalism

It is difficult to reject that most of the values that dominate contemporary society originate from the modern Western worldview, particularly going back to the Enlightenment and the age of imperialism. As Frantz Fanon pointed out, the modern world places whiteness in a hierarchically dominant position against blackness, and as Edward Said has pointed out, this process of totalization includes the othering of everything non-Western, thereby defining the West against the Orient. For both Fanon and Said, the process is totalizing, in which one is completely subjected to, defining and imposing onto one their values, identity, and worldview, transforming one into a subject of the societal order. However, within the philosophy of Mencius, we can find elements that provide potential for resistance against such a process. In this paper, I contend that his idea of the human disposition, particularly *yi* (義), can provide a stable ground for decolonizing ourselves and the world. Because Mencius places the origin of *yi* within the human heart and not in the external world, it empowers each person to be authentic and not be defined by any external worldview or identity. Furthermore, I will show that because of the relational nature of *yi*, in which it functions as a basis for the powerless to resist domination in the unequal power relationship as exemplified in the ruler-subject relationship, *yi* can help us overcome the problems created by the modern Eurocentric worldview, including imperialism and racism. Finally, I will discuss some potential concerns and explore how those concerns may be addressed. By doing so, I will conclude that the *yi* can help us not only in decolonization but also help us imagine and strive toward building a world where we are genuinely free through its emphasis on human autonomy and dignity.

Greek and Chinese Perspectives on Communal Synchronization as a Basis for Normative Engagement

This paper explores how classical Chinese thought and Aristotelian philosophy offer a shared foundation for creating enduring frameworks of modern normative engagement through the concept of communal synchronization. In Chinese thought, the concept of 'knowing the tune', *zhiyin* (知音) of another person serves as a powerful metaphor and recurring motif for interpersonal and communal harmony in proximity. The concept of *zhiyin* is often linked to the story of Yu Boya (俞伯牙) and Zhong Ziqi (鍾子期) from the Warring States period, which is recorded in several Classical Chinese texts. This concept extends beyond personal relationships, serving as a metaphor in key Confucian and Daoist texts, where music symbolizes the spontaneous harmony essential to both relationships and governance, with the latter being reinforced by ritual, which formalizes this unity. Aristotle, on the other hand, argues that humans have a natural instinct for rhythm and melody, and that this, combined with *mimesis* or mimetic action, underpins all human creative endeavors. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle introduces the concept of political synchronization, where communal consciousness develops through consistent human interaction, laying the foundation for enduring partnerships. He identifies a shared space as being essential for fostering concord (*omonoia*), the 'primitive' form of friendship characterized by alignment in practical concerns and values. Both traditions support the idea that sharing normative space and time is critical for achieving positive mutual feelings, higher coordination and improving the quality of institutions. Can such a space be integrated into today's political frameworks? Both philosophies would argue not only that it can, but that it is absolutely necessary because norms, much like music, are a collective human endeavor that arises from gradually coordinated, bottom-up communal practices aimed at shared goals.

Conceptualizing Objects in the Daodejing

My presentation assumes a mereological perspective to conceptualize objecthood in Daoist metaphysics, as presented in the *Daodejing* (道德經). I begin with distinguishing between two types of objects that constitute the two regions of the Daoist metaphysical universe—*dao* (道) and *you* (有). Next, I demonstrate that *dao*, which is sometimes interpreted as non-existent, contrarily to being an ontological nothingness or an impossible object, is characterized by the undifferentiation that can be accommodated by mereological universalism, according to which any distinct entities can form an object made from them. Next, I will proceed to “things” (*wu* 物)—concrete entities, which constitute the metaphysical region of *you*. These entities will be analyzed in terms of their structuring. I will show that this aspect of object’s constitution can be accommodated by restricted composition, according to which what is an object is determined by composition rules (arrangements of parts). Next, I will show that operating with these two concepts of objecthood remains compliant with the fundamental Daoist characteristics, which center around ontological dependence. My final part of presentation discusses how the ontological standing of objects in *you* can be referred to their “objecthood limitations” determined by part arrangement, spatial location, and the status of being complex wholes (objects made from more than one part).

Mencius's 'True King' and the Rising American Monarchy

The current Vice President of the United States, J.D. Vance, recently commented that he was influenced by a fringe political theorist named Curtis Yarvin. For years, Yarvin published under the pen-name “Mencius Moldbug,” an explicit reference to the Chinese philosopher, Mencius. Yarvin is not a serious scholar. Rather, he is a former Silicon Valley code-writer turned political blogger. We are now, unfortunately, living in a world in which such obscure figures exercise an out-sized influence on the future of geo-politics. In this case, such influence extends to the political philosophy of the sitting Vice President of the United States.

In this paper, I will explore how “Vance’s Mencius” dabbles in ancient theories of Chinese monarchy and writes admiringly of the authoritarian rule of China’s current President, Xi Jinping. Yarvin notes in his writings that Chinese theories of “kingly rule” were based on empathy (“whatever that is,” he muses). I do not intend to go down rabbit holes with any pseudo-intellectual blogger, but rather to take this opportunity to re-clarify what “empathy” (*ren*) means in Chinese political philosophy, and to remind us how it functions in Chinese theories of monarchical rule. This will provide an opportunity to contrast Chinese “kingly virtue” with how the current Trump administration envisions its own consolidation of power—a consolidation which, like it or not, signals a turning point in the power of the American Presidency.

Daoism as Anti-Imperialism

When looking at the Daoist philosophical tradition (in particular, what has been named “Lao-Zhuang Daoism”) it is apparent that they were critical of both their Confucian and Mohist philosophical counterparts. Relatedly, the Daoists were also highly critical of certain institutions of the state and of the frequent wars of their time. This paper analyzes the Daoist philosophical texts and endeavors to show how the Daoist’s critique of their philosophical and political counterparts can be best understood as presenting us with a philosophical critique of imperialism. Although it is explicitly the Confucians and Mohists that the Daoist most often critiques, we can get the better sense of what the Daoist is critical of by looking at the imperialist project outlined and endorsed by the Legalist political thinker, Shang Yang. By juxtaposing Shang Yang’s legalism with the Daoist critique of “action”, “knowledge”, and “desire”, it will be shown that what the Daoist is critical of is how the state can be organized such that the imperial project is encouraged and perpetuated. The Confucians and Mohists can be understood as (at times) helping to enable this imperial project, but it is ultimately the Legalists that are, from the Daoist perspective, the ones most culpable in normalizing and encouraging war-like and imperial behavior. The Daoist anti-imperialist philosophy is thus one that recognizes how the institutions of the state can be organized such that the war-like, imperial project is normalized.

BERNDTSON Petri

The Immensity of the Breath as the Atmosphere of Subjectivity, Intersubjectivity and Political Community: From the Intersubjective Respiratory Community to Political Community

In this presentation, I will examine how the experience of the immensity of breath and air give us an access to the vast atmosphere where we can rethink, re-examine and re-experience the relations between subjectivity, intersubjectivity and political community as questions of respiratory philosophy. My respiratory interrogation of these relations takes place in dialogue with Gaston Bachelard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Luce Irigaray.

Following Irigaray, one could say that there is a respiratory difference between “the forgetting of breathing” and “the cultivation of breathing”. If one wishes to think within respiratory philosophy the relations between subjectivity, intersubjectivity, political community and democracy, one needs to return to all of these phenomena into the experiential atmosphere of breathing. In my presentation, the respiratory return to subjectivity is the point of departure to examine the network of subjectivity, intersubjectivity and political community. The return to the subject can take place within the atmosphere of the forgetting of breathing as is the case, for example, with René Descartes in his *Metaphysical Meditations* or Edmund Husserl in his *Cartesian Meditations*. On the other hand, Bachelard’s *Air and Dreams* and *The Poetics of Space*, Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* and Irigaray’s *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* give us a chance to rethink and re-experience the return to the subject as a phenomenon of cultivation of breathing. In *Air and Dreams*, Shelley’s joyful subject of air is understood in its essential relation to the immense and joyful aerial world. In *The Poetics of Space*, Baudelaire’s subjectivity is vast as for Baudelaire, the return to the true subjectivity is a return to the self as an immense being. The word “vast” is a word of breath. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, when the body-subject falls asleep it returns to the respiratory communication with “some immense exterior lung”. This respiratory communication creates a certain respiratory rhythm that becomes, according to Merleau-Ponty, “my very being”. In *Between East*

and West, “the quest of the Buddha” is to become “the subject as breath” who is in “continuous communication or communion” “with the breathing of the entire living universe.” In these examples from Bachelard (Shelley and Baudelaire), Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray (the

Buddha), the respiratory and aerial subjectivity is intertwined or penetrated by the immense or vast respiratory and aerial world. According to Bachelard, the communication between the immense subjects and the immense world opens for us a new phenomenology that he calls “a phenomenology of immense”.

In my presentation, I wish to examine what kind of political community could reveal itself to us, if we would understand in the context of a phenomenology of immense 1) what could it mean that the immense respiratory subjects communicate perpetually with each other and with the intersubjective common immense respiratory and aerial world and 2) how the formation of a respiratory community is a condition of possibility for the formation of any kind of political community.

BRUNOZZI Philippe

Current Debates on Economic Justice in China

In his 2011 article 分配正义：从弱势群体的观点看, Yao Dazhi 姚大志 defended an egalitarian position according to which, for inequalities to be just, they must be accepted by the least advantaged. However, Yao acknowledges that this principle cannot be applied in all circumstances. Under conditions of severe inequality, the author argues that the wealth concentration must first be limited, which may involve massive redistribution. I will first briefly outline Yao Dazhi's position and situate it within current Chinese debates on social justice. Since his position seems to meet limitarianism halfway, I will relate his position to current limitarian accounts.

The Siamization of the *Daodejing* 道德經: Reflecting on Gadamer's "Text-Tradition" Theory

Translating the *Daodejing* into any foreign language then requires interpreting the ideas in the source text. Likewise, the Thai translation of the *Daodejing* is not simply translated as a source which can be perfectly replicated into the Thai language. Rather, the Thai interpretation of the *Daodejing* is shaped through Thai pre-conceptions. This paper studies the Siamization of the *Daodejing*, considering the Thai translation of the text by Pojjana Chantarasanti. This paper finds that Chantarasanti uses Pali-Buddhist terms to translate some unfamiliar Daoist notions. The Thai interpretation then raises questions about hermeneutics because its meaning is reachable through a Thai hermeneutic which is greatly shaped by language and concepts borrowed from Pali-Buddhist-text sources. I will also contrast the Thai translation with some prominent English translations. These prominent English translations employ multiple interpretative strategies for translating the Wang Bi *DDJ*, such as providing a sinological perspective; outlining the interpretative history of the text; establishing new ways to interpret the text and treating the text as a philosophical text. This retranslation dynamic will be used to reflect on Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics by focusing on his "text-tradition" theory, proposing a view of the ways in which interpreters understand the world depending upon their pre-existing engagements. Doing this could offer us some potentially fruitful philosophical tools to think with the Thai interpretation of the *Daodejing* and about the nature of interpretation more broadly. As Gadamer proposes, a translation/interpretation is never an objective retelling of old and foreign ideas into the present, but simply a "fusion of horizons." To what extent then is the Siamization of the *Daodejing* successful in facilitating the process of such a fusion? Finally, the Siamization of the *Daodejing* enables Daoist thought to obtain new form of expression, which, in turn, manifests both creativeness and the openness of Daoist philosophy.

Xin as a Technomoral Virtue

Social media, encompassing social networking sites or services, is one of the digital technologies that has profoundly influenced and continues to affect numerous facets of our lives. It has transformed how we connect and communicate with others, as well as how we disseminate and gather various forms of information. The cherished and familiar concept of friendship has also been adapted to this medium, giving rise to the term “social media friendships (or friends),” prompting scholars to explore its implications.¹ In one of her recent works, Shannon Vallor emphasized the importance of virtues—specifically what she termed *technomoral virtues*—“to foster human capacities for flourishing with new technologies.” In this paper, I aim to contribute to the discussion of social media friendships by identifying a *technomoral* virtue that can guide users in navigating this technology. I emphasize the Confucian virtue of *xin* (信; trust, trustworthiness, integrity, fidelity, or faithfulness), which forms the foundation of friendship and is at the core of the discussion of this relationship in early Confucian texts. My overarching argument is that *xin* is an important *technomoral* virtue because it can promote ethical and responsible use of social media. In my discussion, I focus on the critical aspects of *xin*. Being critical is essential for ensuring trustworthiness, which means that one’s words and actions are consistent and aligned. It is also important when evaluating others, particularly in carefully choosing friends. These critical aspects of *xin* are relevant in the context of social media. On one hand, when we share information, express our thoughts, or present ourselves in our social media profiles, it is vital to ensure that we do not use these platforms to mislead others. On the other hand, we should carefully evaluate and choose the individuals we follow, connect with, and regard as friends in the realm of social media, recognizing that they will invariably influence us in some capacity.

¹ Elsewhere, I argued that social media friendships can be morally valuable, drawing support from early Confucian texts, particularly the concept of distant or historical friendship described in *Mengzi* 5B8.

Philosophizing with Swords and Hammers: Nanquan and Nietzsche

In the contemporary literature, Chan (禪, JP: Zen) Buddhism has been criticized for a variety of ethical shortcomings. From the well-documented support of Imperial Japan by Zen Buddhist leaders (the Japanese historical and ideological counterparts to Chan) to the claim that Chan has no independent, robust ethics of its own, criticisms of Chan ethics question not only sporadic historical misappropriation or misuse, but potentially the very foundations of Chan ethics when considered as philosophy. In this paper, I examine a Chan gōng'àn (公案, JP: koan) which, on its face, clearly exemplifies one such ethical shortcoming. Specifically, I focus on Case 14 of *The Gateless Gate* or *Wúménguān* (無門關, JP: Mumonkan), Nanquan Cuts the Cat in Two. I then provide an interpretation of the gōng'àn which a sympathizer of Linji (臨濟宗, JP: Rinzai) Chan could use to respond to such charges. To support this interpretation, I compare what I take to be the primary message of the gōng'àn with an interpretation of Nietzsche's overarching philosophical project. Through this comparison, I clarify the meaning of Nanquan Cuts the Cat in Two, provide historical precedent to this meaning, and lay out a philosophically plausible pathway towards defending it. Central to its meaning is the possibility of being deceived or ignorant of one's true nature or state of being. Furthermore, the pathway out of such ignorance, when viewed from *within* that ignorant state, may appear both rhetorically violent and lacking systematic structure.

Liang Qichao's Buddhist Interpretation of Kant's Epistemology and Its Relevance for Moral Agency

Liang Qichao (1873-1929) has been regarded as the first Chinese author to systematically introduce Kant's philosophy in the Chinese context and for a Chinese audience. His work on Kant, and particularly his epistemological remarks, have frequently been discarded as scholarly shallow and philosophically irrelevant. On the contrary, Liang Qichao's contribution is relevant not only as already foreshadowing tropes, criticisms and re-elaborations of Kant's epistemology in the Chinese context, but also as shedding a new, philosophically interesting light on the notion of thing in itself and on the possibility of opening a path for its knowability. This is done based on a re-interpretation and re-elaboration of Kantian concepts such as Copernican revolution, phenomenon, and noumenon according to Yogacara epistemology.

This re-interpretation is fundamental not only in epistemological terms, but also, and most importantly, in ethical terms: the opening of a knowability path for things in themselves, in fact, allows for the possibility of an ethics centered on the idea of true self. The idea of a true self possessing moral autonomy, and whose moral responsibility derives from freedom, resonates with Kant's concept of noumenal agent, but it allows Liang to escape the epistemological contradiction Kant runs into when assigning a causal role to the free self as moral agent.

Alienation and Chinese Philosophy: Zhuangzi and Confucius, identification and estrangement, ancient wisdom and alienating modernity

The category of alienation was among the most powerful elaborated by Critical Theory and the most influential in the 20th Century. Recently revived in a monograph by Rahel Jaeggi, who defined it as a “relation of relationless”, it represents a salient trait of modernity and a source of social pathologies, whose main symptom is, in MacIntyre's words, “feeling a stranger in a world that one himself has made”.

The present paper focuses on the debate between Zhuangzism and Confucian philosophy, showing how these schools addressed the alienating effect of social structures and linguistic constraints, particularly in relation to the problems and risks inherent to identification with social roles and conventions.

From a hermeneutic perspective, this paper aims at building a bridge between ancient Chinese philosophy and philosophy of alienation, with a double effect. On the one hand, arguing for the cross-cultural, trans-historical relevance of the category of alienation. On the other hand, showing how the timeless wisdom of ancient Chinese philosophy can help interpreting, and perhaps surviving, our alienating postmodernity.

CARLEO III Robert A.

Let's Be Rational, but Really: Liang Shuming's Theory of Reason of, for, and by the People

Liang Shuming's explication of Confucian tradition gives "reason," *lixing* 理性, a central role. As Liang tells it, Confucius's distinctive innovation was revaluing the traditional ethical order "on the basis of reason" and his key achievements include "arousing people's reason"—indeed, "the sum total of the spirit of the Chinese people is bringing this reason into play." Liang explicates this unique traditional form of reason to advocate it in modern philosophy. Yet, he has been characterized as instead proposing an "irrational" form of "intuitivism." These labels are understandable: Liang reconceptualizes "reason" as a primarily affective rather than intellectual or speculative capacity. It consists in "sensitive intuitions" which affectively move the agent and emotionally connect with others. Since reason is commonly contrasted with intuition and emotion, Liang's theory strikes some as irrational. This paper disagrees, and aims to indicate the promise of this way of deliberating what is right. It first outlines and then defends Liang's description of Confucian reason, highlighting its value as a rational approach to ethical thinking based in the Confucian virtue of humaneness as empathic care. This manner of moral adjudication has substantial strengths over the abstract and speculative approaches that dominate modern "rationalist" discourse. In seeking reason and rightness from within our particular, situated, and sensible connections to others, Liang highlights the primary importance of others' actual needs, interests, and feelings in our moral evaluation. What is really rational and right is made of, for, and by humans ourselves. As he sees it, calling on us to value people in this way was Confucius's central contribution to humanity. It redirects our decision-making toward caring for others' suffering and flourishing.

Consoling Oneself with Daoism in Times of Social-Political Uncertainty

One of the unique attributes of Daoist philosophy is its ability to console those who feel despondent about their personal circumstances. Early examples of this usage can be found in the poetic works of the Han dynasty, with Jia Yi's "Rhapsody on the Owl" being an exemplary case. Having been banished from the capital to Changsha, Jia Yi's melancholy was compounded by the arrival of an owl at his residence. To counter the ominous symbolism of the owl and the downward spiral of his fate, Jia Yi turned to Daoism and its theory of change to decouple fate from the vicissitudes of good and bad fortune. Doing so not only allowed Jia Yi to elucidate the limitless potential of following the Dao but the spiritual freedom one acquires in the process.

Decoupling Reproduction and Filial Piety: A New Reading of Mencius IV

Overpopulation, and the consequent scarce resources, have often been blamed for everything from famines and wars to environmental disasters. The traditional obligation to produce an heir to the family, in particular, clashed with the one-child policy in mainland China and resulted in significant sex disparity among newborns. In spite of the prevalence of this tradition, the only pre-Han Confucian reference that links breeding to filial piety – one of the most important Confucian virtues – is the saying ‘*bu xiao you san, wu hou wei da* 不孝有三，無後為大’, customarily translated as ‘there are three things which are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them’ (*Mencius* IV, A: 26). This reading, based on exegeses by Zhao Qi 趙岐 (died 201), is however not without dispute. Later in the book, Mencius proclaims that ‘there are five things which are pronounced in the common usage of the age to be unfilial’ (*Mencius* IV, B: 30), but none of the five has anything to do with posterity. Many attempts have been made throughout the millennia to reconcile this inconsistency, yet none, including that of Zhao, works without adding to Mencius’s word. Based on an etymological and structural reanalysis of the passages concerned, the present paper argues that Zhao’s reading is mistaken. This calls into question the ethical basis of encouraging reproduction at all costs. While the urge to maintain family lineage could have a long history, it was not an ideology supported by Confucian sages.

Relationship Roles: Norms and Particularity

One distinctive contribution Confucianism makes to ethics is the idea of relationship-roles. Relationship roles help to define what relationships should be like. They involve norms and prescribe duties and prerogatives. Norms associated with each specific relationship role are the concrete expressions of and guides to follow the particular configuration of a relationship. In this sense, relationships are not entirely particularistic, fluid, and dependent solely on the preferences of the parties involved. Norms will give structure and guides to our relationships, and help to set up expectations and draw boundaries. In this way, they contribute to the stability and the smooth operation of relationships.

On the other hand, emphasizing role may make us lose sight of the fact that the person that we relate to and interact with within a relationship is a concrete, distinct individual and not a mere role occupant. We need to recognize her individuality. The elements of norms in role-ethics may also stifle the spontaneity of a relationship and restrict the expressiveness and the individuality of the parties in living out and defining their particularistic relationships. After all, each relationship is a unique good that has immense personal meaning and values that are exclusively shared only among the participants in the relationships. And this particularistic element needs to be cherished and protected.

In my presentation, I hope to examine the conflicts between the elements of norms and particularity in relationship roles. I shall look at some Confucian texts, especially the *Analects*, *Mencius*, *Xunzi*, and *Liji* to find the answers and insights Confucianism has on this issue.

Moye 鑢鋤 and the inauspicious metal: the role of a myth in Zhuangzian environmental philosophy

This paper wishes to provide an in-depth analysis of the use of the mythical figure of the Moye 鑢鋤, a legendary sword, and of the Great Founder (daye 大冶) in the “*Dazongshi* 〈大宗師〉” chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》 anthology. Their mention in a conversation about transformation (*hua* 化) between Master Lai 子來 and Master Li 子犁 helps us to understand what a Zhuangzian environmental philosophy entails. This paper proposes three main axes that require examination: (i) the Zhuangzian stance on environmental protection, (ii) the text’s approach to teaching in the context of environmental education, and (iii) the *Zhuangzi*’s ways of coping with situations we have no control over. To do so, this paper will present the Moye passage in its context before introducing the way myths are used in the *Zhuangzi*. First, the myth-making to be found in the text pertains to the kind of “indirect” teaching it proposes, which is especially salient for the issue of environmental education. Indeed, myths are particularly suited to this task, since their ever-transforming shape matches the ever-transforming nature of the *wanwu* 萬物 (“ten-thousand things”). Second, the text emphasises that being fixated on a specific set of valuations (*e.g.*, utilitarian, economic, etc) can only lead to a less adaptable and less adept behaviour. The mention of the Moye sword gives us an insight into this critique and its link to the general operation of the *wanwu*: constant transformation. Through the use of myth and myth-making, the text’s points about fixed *shifei* 是非 or *bici* 彼此 distinctions become more poignant, but also more palatable. Through this critique, a properly Zhuangzian environmental philosophy can be articulated, and the aforementioned three axes can be developed.

CHEN Xiaojie

Limitations of Edification in Zhu Xi's thought and Obscurantism

In contemporary Europe, democratic values are increasingly undermined by a resurgent obscurantism, fueled by advancements in science, technology, and governance. Tech oligarchs promote “technology transforming human life,” often ignoring public consent, while elected governments prioritize think tanks and technocrats over popular opinion, eroding democratic legitimacy. In China, obscurantism is commonly linked to Legalism, but Confucian thought, notably Confucius’ statement, “The people may be made to follow a path of action, but they may not be made to understand it”, and Zhu Xi 朱熹’s interpretations, reveals a Confucian strain. Scholars today argue Confucius recognized public ignorance without intent to deceive, yet this distinction’s ability to deflect accusations of obscurantism is debatable. For example, Frederick II’s discussion with d’Alembert on deceiving the masses—endorsing it due to their inherent ignorance—contrasts with d’Alembert’s view that early rational education could counter superstition. Zhu Xi’s complex exegesis both mitigates and risks obscurantism. He differentiates “the common people, acting daily according to it, yet have no knowledge of it” (Books of Changes) from “not be made to understand it,” framing the latter as a reflection of the sage’s limited capacity rather than public folly. However, he cautions that enlightening the masses might awaken their utilitarian cunning, a perspective aligning with Wang Anshi 王安石’s “fooling the people” stance, which Zhu Xi critiqued. This tension is evident in Zhu Xi’s followers, like Zhen Dexiu 真德秀, who endorsed the non-Confucian *The Treatise of The Illustrious Sage on Response and Retribution* (太上感應篇) to exploit popular belief in karmic retribution for social control. Acknowledging the masses’ limited rationality while claiming exceptional insight—whether in ancient Confucianism or modern techno-utopianism—creates a slippery slope toward obscurantism. This enduring risk, evident across cultural and temporal contexts, necessitates constant vigilance to safeguard democratic and rational principles.

On Zhuangzian Forgiveness

Forgiveness is widely considered a virtue that targets reconciliation between the victim and the wrongdoer and can resolve conflict by restoring a peaceful interpersonal relationship. Although it was not thematized in ancient Chinese philosophy, this paper aims to argue for a Zhuangzian conceptualization of forgiveness for the following two reasons. First, according to the emotional account of forgiveness, forgiveness is fundamentally a matter of the victim overcoming and eliminating their resentment and hatred emotions toward the wrongdoer. Zhuangzi does have a proposal for self-control of emotions that could entail the concept of forgiveness. Second, and more importantly, in those cases where it may not be easy to distinguish the victim from the wrongdoer, as both sides claim they have been wronged, forgiveness seems not viable. Still, Zhuangzi's idea of "forgetfulness" (*wang* 忘) and "mutual forgetfulness" (*xiangwang* 相忘) could be an elevated conception of forgiveness. This paper will also focus on Zhuangzi's discussions on the agent effort, in other words, the proper process of achieving forgiveness.

CHEW Sihao

Perspectives within the Multi-layered Structure: Zhu Xi's unified theory of Li

Theme: Theory of Perception: Exploring Chinese philosophical perspectives on perception offers alternative and new insights into understanding consciousness and the nature of reality.

In this paper, I explore how Zhu Xi perceives reality using conceptual schemes of different levels of detail. Specifically, I argue that Zhu Xi navigates the world through a multi-layered structure Li, constituted by conceptual schemes of Li with different levels of details. Here, I also seek to show that a full picture of Zhu Xi's unified theory of Li requires a better appreciation of the structural unity of Li.

To illustrate the multi-layered structure of Li, I explore three motivating premises: 1) the nature of Zhu Xi's metaphysical project, 2) Different conceptual schemes of different levels of diversification, and 3) perspectivism within this multi-layered structure. I first set the grounds by going through his discussions on that which is above and below form to describe the nature of Zhu Xi's metaphysical project. Then, I show that Zhu Xi's multi-layered structure of Li takes the form of "1>2>5>myriad" which serves as a useful conceptual framework to contextualise his claims on the one and many Li. To illustrate, I apply this structure to his discussions on humaneness, where he explains the meaning of humaneness at increasing levels of detail. Lastly, I use the unified structure of Li to understand how Zhu Xi understands the complex fabric of reality. Specifically, he parses the complex reality with different levels of detail, where each level of detail is a perspective from which we view reality. By combining and contrasting these different levels of details help reach a holistic understanding of the subject matter.

Primitivists view of knowledge and the method of restoring nature

It is well noted that the primitivists in the *Zhuangzi* denounce so-called “sages” because they invent cultural products and social norms that induce people’s eagerness for knowledge and damage people’s innate nature. In primitivists’ view, knowledge as acquaintance of cultural products and social norms is not a mark of clarity but a mark of arousal. Its pervasiveness means that people are not following their nature, and that society becomes a source of stress. Based on this view, one may have an impression that primitivists only regard knowledge as something negative and condemnable. However, I argue that this is not the case. The primitivists allow a form of knowledge that is basic, limited in scope and non-reflective. In their ideal society there are some activities that are not innate and involve knowledge to a certain extent. Furthermore, if we consider a post-sage era in which there is already a plethora of cultural products and social norms and people’s nature has been already damaged, it remains a question whether nature can be restored. If it can, then the method of restoration should also be regarded as a form of knowledge. I argue that one method of restoration involves reflecting on the knowledge one acquires and its negative effect on one’s physiological and psychological health. One then knows how not to desire many things. This knowledge is reflective, therapeutic and contained within the boundary of nature. Based on these concerns, even if one accepts primitivists’ emphasis on nature, certain forms of knowledge still seem inevitable, especially in a post-sage era.

Self-hate and Self-love: Confucian Approaches and Solutions

Hatred on a global scale has deep-rooted origins that can be traced through various dimensions of human society. The sources of this animosity are not confined to contemporary issues; throughout history, humanity has struggled with manifestations of violence, intolerance, and division. Whether it be racial and gender violence, persecution based on religious beliefs, hate crimes, or the stark divisions present in political ideologies, these elements converge to foster an environment ripe for conflict. Ancient Chinese philosophers offered valuable insights into the foundations of social conflict. They suggested that, on a societal scale, hatred might stem from ineffective social systems or the insatiable desires of imperial ambitions that prioritize power over people. These frameworks illustrated that societal structures have a considerable impact on how individuals perceive and treat one another. At a more personal level, they noted that hatred often arises from self-indulgence and a failure to show compassion to others. Selfishness, in this context, can blind individuals to the suffering of those around them. An often overlooked yet crucial aspect of this discourse relates to self-hatred or a profound lack of self-love, which is subtly woven into Confucian thought. This internal struggle can manifest in various forms, such as the feeling of giving up on oneself, known in Chinese as 自暴自棄 (zì bào zì qì). In this paper, I will delve into these concepts further, exploring the different types of self-hatred and the implications they have on interpersonal relationships. More importantly, I will discuss the transformative power of restoring self-love (自愛, zì ài), which serves as a foundational step toward creating a more compassionate world. By fostering self-love, individuals can extend that sentiment to others, ultimately working towards reducing hatred and mitigating conflict in society.

Dao in Transition: Comparative Reflections on Laozi's Italian Translations in the Interwar Period

The history of Daoism in Italy is closely tied to the reception and circulation of its Classics. While Italian Christian missionaries were among the first Westerners to write about Daoism, it wasn't until the 20th century that a substantial production and dissemination of Daoist works began to take shape. The first half of the century saw the publication of six translations of the Laozi, three partial translations of the Zhuangzi, and several general works on Daoism. The growing interest in Daoism within the Italian intellectual scene can be attributed to two key developments of the 19th century. First, the establishment of sinology as an academic discipline in France, which fostered and promoted scholarly interest in Chinese culture throughout Europe. Second, the spread of international esoteric groups and occult movements, which were strongly influenced by Eastern philosophies and religions.

In this paper, I aim to introduce and compare two significant Italian translations of the Laozi produced during the interwar period, each reflecting these two influences: Evola's controversial translation, published in 1923, and Castellani's translation from 1927. These two paradigmatic examples not only illustrate how Daoism and Daoist ideas were introduced and promoted in the Italian cultural scene during the early 20th century, but also reveal the distinct contexts in which these ideas were received. Additionally, the differing approaches to the text by these translators were shaped not only by their personal backgrounds but also by their unique objectives.

DAI Yuanfang

Transcultural Feminism: Questioning the Paradigm of Transnational Feminism and Advocating Transcultural Feminist Solidarity

This paper criticizes the different kinds of feminism originating in the U.S. academia and circulating worldwide. It points out ways in which many transnational feminist methodologies participate in or contribute to the very things they purport to criticize even as it enacts transnational feminism as a critique. The focus of my criticism is against the backdrop of Chinese feminist philosophy that may or may not participate in the problematic internationalization or exportation of U.S.-centric feminism. The rise of transnational feminism resists neoliberal global capitalism and challenges global feminism and international feminism promoted by globalization and global capitalism. Transnational feminism is progressive compared to global feminism and international feminism, but it is also limited by its paradoxical nationalization of U.S. transnational feminism.

I use a transcultural approach while building on the transdisciplinary work of transnational feminist rhetoric. I advocate a transcultural approach to correct the shortcomings of the nationalization of transnational feminism. Although a U.S.-centric transnational perspective could institutionalize and discipline the production and dissemination of feminist knowledge, it can potentially contribute to genuine collaboration with women “elsewhere.” A transcultural approach sets a reflective distance between oppressed women and the culture in which they are located but also makes it possible for them to be sensitive to the situatedness and difference of women’s experiences. I make connections between transnational feminism and transcultural feminism, demonstrating there is a broader framework involved by reviewing the development of and debates around the internationalization of U.S.-centric feminism by scholars in the United States and its impact on Chinese feminism. I propose a transcultural approach to not only find an effective way to address women’s experiences across cultural differences but also address feminist solidarity as necessary and possible across cultural differences.

DUAN Yuxuan

Technocracy, Algorithmic Regulation, and Han Feizi's Political Philosophy

Han Fei is one of the few pre-Qin political philosophers who can provide theoretical support and reflections on the current topics of technocracy and algorithmic regulation. Technocracy advocates rational and systematized institutional solutions, and algorithmic regulation promises greater efficiency and effectiveness in governance. All of these elements find illuminating echoes in Han Fei's philosophy of governance by impartial standards, especially the concepts of "performance-title"(*xingming* 刑名) and "checking evidence." (*canyan* 参验) Since the latter emphasizes the role of data, evidence, and authenticity in the political process, we can even envision Han Fei's theory as being able to admit an artificially-intelligent "*xingming-canyan*" model. Meanwhile, the ultimate target of technocracy's defeat is the dysfunctional and corrupt bureaucracy, which is also in line with Han Fei's vision of "ruling the bureaucracy by law."(*yifazhiguan* 以法治官) Han Fei proposed a structural approach to address the defects of bureaucratic administration: having a ruler who could cooperate closely with the impartial standards and was stronger in disciplining officials than the "mediocre ruler" (*zhongzhu* 中主) to protect the "meritocrats" of the *fa* tradition and optimize the taming of bureaucrats, which is the theory of "techniques"(*shu* 术) and "authority." (*shi* 势) Despite highlighting the importance of technocrats, a technocracy needs a Han Feizian ruler who empowers the technocrats and endorses with their decisions. Such a "selfless" ruler would ideally be an "AI ruler". However, people in liberal democracies are skeptical about the drawbacks of technocracy and algorithmic regulation, such as algorithmic black boxes and digital Leviathan. That may also constitute an external critique of Han Fei's proposal, but what Han Fei reveals seems to be precisely the unavoidable nature of power relations. This suggests that we should not overlook the relevance of Han Fei's political philosophy to modern political problems.

De-Orwellizing Western Perspectives on China as one of the key Preconditions of Solving various Global Crises

There seem to dominate currently two extreme positions in discussions about China in the West. One, which also prevails in Western mainstream media, denounces China *per se*. Even China's most obvious and indisputable achievements, whether in the economy, science, sports, or social development, are questioned, marginalized, and often include some unflattering information when mentioned. The other position is associated with uncritical admiration of China, not unlike that expressed by some parts of the population in Eastern Europe, which recall, with nostalgia and often naïve idealization, the way of life prior to 1989. While respect for China is well deserved in many regards, the impression that I have gained from various discussions is that its economic achievements in particular constitute for many (also for a part of Western conservatives) an essential component of the legitimizing narrative for the CCP government. Not unproblematically, functionalist arguments such as "the system works in China because of the strong, expertise-driven authoritarian rule" are brought back into play, with debates often very quickly reduced to instances such as Chinese high-speed trains or the Shanghai skyline. Notwithstanding all the problems that exist in the "West," it is questionable whether these achievements, as the epitome of China's success story, which are often extrapolated to other areas of life, suffice to make an argument for authoritarian rule as an attractive alternative to (social-)liberal democracy while the internal dangers, conflicts, contradictions, or pathologies that accompany it are simultaneously ignored. On the other hand, however, and this is the main ambition of my talk, I do not wish to defend ahistorical, categorical, and often biased criticisms, which are habitually present also in a (significant) part of scholarly debate about China, and which makes it impossible to have a reasonable debate on global challenges.

Thus, in my talk I will at first present some metatheoretical considerations regarding the perception of China in the West and how important it is to change it, in order to

overcome various global crises. In the second and third part of my talk I will discuss the issue of social harmony and conflict resolution – focusing at first on the discussion about social justice and social state and then on the questions of global order, commenting especially on the recent works of Tongdong Bai and Zhao Tinyang.

Do some Chinese philosophers overlook the European social model on purpose?

An important objection to the most prominent defenders of various versions of a „Chinese model” – e.g. Daniel Bell, Jiang Qing, and Tongdong Bai – is that their critique of Western democracy is primarily a critique of the democratic shortcomings of the USA. Indeed, the merits of their respective views and occasional remarks regarding “European exceptionalism” notwithstanding, they fail to seriously account for the progressive aspects of the European social model, not to mention its social-integrating possibilities. In Europe, this social-progressive model of the state is not just an economic category, but also a way of life. However, the model as such is in a crisis by virtue of being exposed to a variety of threats in the ‘era of globalization’ – especially from neoliberalism – and, as a result, its future remains uncertain. Several Western authors who study Chinese philosophy see in Confucianism the potential to provide a kind of “corrective influence” on liberalism and its excessive focus on individuality. This, in turn, brings them into proximity with communitarian criticisms of liberalism – and with the theoretical and practical problems associated with it. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to further develop such a perspective. For example, with the continuing atomization prevalent in Western societies, it would be beneficial to look at some “integrating aspects” of philosophical Confucianism. This is because of an apparent historical paradox viz. that the welfare state has been heavily involved in the preparation of its own crisis by supporting the rapid development of individualization – by guaranteeing the social preconditions of freedom – which paradoxically tends to destroy the recognition for the commons and the overall framework in which freedom is actualized. Moreover, as Axel Honneth emphasizes, we are confronted with the “paradox of individualization,” in which the loosening of social bonds does not lead to freedom, but rather to disorientation. However, I argue that a fruitful discussion about the potential solutions to the crisis of (socio-liberal)democracy and social state as such, as well as various problems related to the Chinese economic success, i.e. the unprecedented increase of inequality in China, might come rather from Chino-

European than Chino-North American philosophical, political and especially cultural exchange.

Goodness Without Criteria: Wang Yangming on *Liangzhi*

In this paper, I present *liangzhi* 良知, the centerpiece of Wang Yangming 王陽明's philosophy, as goodness without criteria. For Wang, *liangzhi* is an always existing inherent reality of the heart-mind (心之本體), and it will be known by the heart-mind spontaneously (心自然會知) and must not be looked for outside of oneself (不假外求). At first glance, Wang seems surprisingly confident in the efficacy of *liangzhi*, while having surprisingly little to say about what it consists in or how it is to be achieved. In a dialogue with his student Xue Kan 薛侃, Wang is asked for a criterion to distinguish between right and wrong. Yet, instead of coming up with any principle, virtue or prudential reasoning, for Wang, the matter at hand must be decided by one's own realization (須汝心自體當). If *liangzhi* is not learned (不學), intuitive (不慮) and realized through oneself (自得), then how to address the Wittgensteinian challenge that if "whatever is going to seem right to me is right [then] that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'"? In this paper, I elucidate how the absence of any criterion in Wang's notion of *liangzhi* can be upheld as a feature instead of a bug. For Wang, we must comprehend ourselves as in touch with the good in the first place, and this comprehension cannot be arrived at by any chain of steps, by any process of knowledge acquisition or by any fulfillment of conditions.

**Ideological Subsumption and the Possibility of Comparative Philosophy:
A Methodological Reflection on the Limits of Chinese Philosophy and its
Contemporary Political Usages**

Comparative philosophy involves inquiry into the convergences and divergences among temporally, geographically, and linguistically distinct speculative traditions. While the status of “philosophy” of traditions lying outside the cultural and historical milieux of the “West” is still an object of debate in modern historiography, it is nonetheless a matter of institutional fact that said traditions have gained significant footing over the past few decades within Anglophone philosophy departments. In particular, premodern Chinese philosophy has drawn substantial attention among comparativists, partly due to its historical, linguistic, and cultural distance vis-à-vis canonical (European and Anglophone) philosophical corpora, partly due to its increasing significance in twenty-first century geopolitics.

Notwithstanding the disruptive and decentering effect that comparative—especially Western-Chinese—philosophy has proved to yield, there are methodological issues that require examination and which—to my understanding—jeopardize the very possibility of retrieving Chinese philosophical resources to “address global crises” and “reimagine solutions” to pressing social, political, and economic issues, as the present congress invites scholars to do. In this presentation, I will identify two methodological problems that are fundamentally rooted in the very question of *ideological subsumption*—that is, *whether* and to *what extent* the very study and contemporary fascination for Chinese philosophy is inscribed and indeed stems from dominant Western systems of thought—and which points towards the possibility of transcending the hegemonic political discourse (and indeed institutional matrix) of Western societies, namely, *Liberalism*. My methodological reflection will retrieve critical elements from recent developments in Marxist ideological critique and the work of Jana Rošker, Steven Angle, and François Jullien. It will ultimately claim that the contemporary usage of Chinese philosophy is still—and perhaps unavoidably—

driven by Western Liberal values. My intervention will, in this regard, invite scholars conducting research on Chinese philosophy to examine the methodological—epistemological and, to a certain degree, ontological—foundations of their research, in order to assess the possibility of addressing and conceiving meaningful responses to ongoing crises and urgent political issues.

FOUST Mathew A.

Mohism and the Extinction Crisis

Over the past 500 million years, at least five great mass extinctions have occurred. We are now living in what has been termed the “sixth extinction” (see Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*). Uniquely, the current extinction crisis has been almost entirely caused by humans. Worldwide, humans have wiped out 60 percent of all mammals, birds, insects, and reptiles since 1970. About 25 percent of all mammals and 33% of all amphibians are classified as threatened species. According to a recent landmark U.N. report, about a million species are at risk of extinction over the next few decades (“Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecological Services”).

This presentation develops a Mohist framework for addressing the current extinction crisis. This framework foregrounds the Mohists’ emphasis on not causing harm (*hai* 害) and doctrines of impartial caring (*jian ai* 兼愛) and moderation of expenditure (*jie yong* 節用).

In so doing, this project builds upon influential and recent scholarship in Mohism. For example: According to Lai, as “men of uninhibited passion, of action as well as of words,” the Mohists were “easily moved to strike (in defense of the weak).” (Whalen Lai, “The Public Good that Does the Public Good,” 1993). According to Virág, for the Mohists, “all the calamities of the world—violence, warfare, famine, misery, and poverty—could be boiled down to a structural problem in the workings of human inclinations—namely, a basic tendency toward partiality (*bie* 別)” (Curie Virág, *The Emotions in Early Chinese Philosophy*, 2017). According to Ip, the Mohists were significant nonviolent activists, comparable to the world’s renowned exponents of nonviolence (Hung-yop Ip, *Grassroots Activism of Ancient China*, 2022). Concluding remarks include suggestions of implications of this study for interpretive scholarship on the ethical and social philosophy of Mohism.

Logic in Action: Later Mohist logic in the light of cosmological texts, and its ethical implications for the 21st century

The presentation seeks to reformulate the main tenets of later Mohist logic against the background of early Chinese cosmological texts, and to explore their ethical implications. Mohist pragmatic approach to truth—rooted in ethical and societal utility—evolved into a semantic framework, wherein names gained meaning through systematic classification and usage, similar to Western logic's treatment of reference. On the other hand, in the light of proto-Daoist cosmological accounts, later Mohist logic can be seen as representing a cosmological worldview that makes a direct link between the logical ('how things are') and ethical ('how things should be') realms. By analysing the logical chapters of the Mozi and the Mohist Canons, the presentation examines how their practical orientation on correct distinctions (shi 是/fei 非) makes sense within a cosmology where establishing such primary distinction represents an act of cosmic creation. The Mohists' use of hierarchical definitions and parallel inference can thus be understood as an effort to establish coherent and replicable rules for structuring the shared world in a manner that best corresponds to the general 'cosmo-logic'. However, their emphasis on argumentation and truth as ethical correctness parallels Western philosophical concerns with propositional truth. By contrasting these approaches with modern theories of reference and meaning, this presentation contributes to understanding the intersection between early Chinese and Western logic, highlighting both the limitations and innovations of Mohist thought in global logical traditions.

GARRISON James

A *Gu* That's Not a *Gu*: The End of Art in China?

"A gu that is not a gu! A gu, indeed! A gu, indeed!" – Confucius (Analects §6.25)

When is a *Gu* not a *Gu*? Well, simply put when this ritual drinking vessel is not used in drinking rituals (perhaps because it's behind glass in a museum). A related question arises: When is music not music? Confucianism traditionally maintains that music ceases being music proper when it is lewd and creates social chaos instead of social harmony. In working out this idea, Confucian philosophy offers considerable resources for addressing a major issue in contemporary philosophy of art—indiscernibility.

Photography, mechanical reproduction, found art, and the like have all led to a crisis of "indiscernibles" in the artworld, whereby *anything* might be art, thereby ending the narrative of art's quest to define itself, per Arthur Danto's influential "end of art" thesis. However, careful consideration of cultural expression in Confucian East Asia indicates that there might be more to the story.

Consider the Confucian connection between ritual, music, and the so-called rectification of names. Within this framework, which is a major fundament of East Asian culture, there is a deep-seated prohibition on *anything* being art, such that art is continually defined through and/or against unfolding political definitions of symbolic life.

Hence, where indiscernibles might be a concern in a Confucian context, the primary issue is not the artwork, but with the ethical implications and political fallout of having a person lay claim to a title which they have not earned in practice and where the concern for rectifying names, ritual, art, and symbolic existence is about preventing negative outcomes on the ethical/political level. It will therefore be shown that the kind of "indifference" and "complete anaesthesia" of which Danto speaks is a conceptual non-starter in the context of East Asian (specifically Chinese) art.

Alternatives in Applying Chinese Insights

Concepts seem stubbornly lodged within their frameworks, dependent on a whole constellation of other concepts for their meaning. Even if a Chinese text wanted to say something of value concerning contemporary global challenges, it is unclear how any idea could escape its native paradigm to play any role within any other. Encountering the declaration by Master Lie 列子 on his ancient journey from Zheng 鄭 to Wei 衛 that “you have never died and have never lived 未嘗死未嘗生,” for example, the modern reader may sense a role for Daoism in modern conversations about life and death yet lack any clue how to overcome this barrier. This paper assesses five alternatives: selection, conversion, revolution, addition, and revision.

Although simply selecting desirable elements from Chinese philosophy and incorporating them into one’s own framework seems the most expedient option, this presents challenges in both extraction and insertion. A second alternative, converting to Daoism, is also a non-starter for most. Clearing one’s conceptual slate and freely incorporating diverse ideas into a custom-made paradigm, the third choice, would also seem implausible. The fourth option, addition, potentially holds more promise. Since humans routinely apply a variety of interpretive frameworks as required by the occasion, adding a Daoist scheme would seem feasible. Finally, it merits consideration whether concepts currently in operation can be slightly modified to better conform with foreign insights, whether Daoist, Confucian, or whatever. Such revision is certainly the most conservative choice. Drawing upon texts concerning Master Lie, this paper weighs the options.

Japanese Interpretation of the Phrase “Confucius wished to live among the nine tribes”: Reception of 17th Century Ming Loyalists who fled Japan

This paper explores the Japanese interpretation of the phrase “Confucius wished to live among the nine tribes 子欲居九夷” from *Analects* 論語. In China, the phrase is traditionally understood to mean Confucius is expressing a desire to move to a distant eastern region. However, in Japan, an alternative interpretation emerges, where it is identified as the “gentlemen’s country 君子國 (Japan)” where Confucius wished to relocate. This interpretation, dating back to the Heian period and extending through to the Edo period, reflects a form of Japanese Sinocentrism that redefines the traditional Sinocentric Hua-Yi 華夷 (civilized/barbarian) worldview.

In the seventeenth century, following the fall of the Ming dynasty to the Manchu-led Qing dynasty, some Ming loyalists, discontent with the new Manchu rule, fled to Japan. Upon arriving in Japan, these Ming loyalists engaged with Japanese Confucian scholars and encountered this phrase’s unique interpretation. This interaction prompted a reevaluation of traditional Hua-Yi ideology, particularly the question of whether the Japanese, like the Manchus, were considered “barbarians.” The Japanese interpretation posited that since Japan had long absorbed Chinese culture, was more civilized than Manchu-ruled China. This intellectual exchange provided the Ming loyalists with a theoretical justification for their migration to Japan.

This paper examines the historical interpretation of the term “Yi 夷 (barbarian)” in *Analects*, as understood in Japan, and how this interpretation was received by Ming loyalists who fled to Japan during the rise of the Qing dynasty. This study examines the Ming loyalists’ interactions with Japanese Confucian scholars, highlighting similarities and differences in their respective understandings. Furthermore, it provides broader implications for migration, cultural identity, and the impetus to seek a new homeland during times of political upheaval, demonstrating how Confucian principles may provide valuable solutions to contemporary global challenges.

Shù and Pacifism in Mengzi's Political Philosophy

In today's world, conflicts and crises are widespread. Although global peace is largely maintained, it remains fragile, and the shadow of war persists. The reasons for this situation are manifold, but one significant factor is that many political entities still hold the belief that war is an effective means to achieve political goals. As a result, military violence is often employed to pursue these aims, even at the expense of innocent civilians and, in many cases, the aggressors themselves.

Early in the Warring States period, Mengzi systematically criticised this belief. He argued that it is impossible for rulers to achieve the dominion under Heaven through warfare, as war only accelerates their downfall. In contrast, a ruler who can unify the states under Heaven must possess benevolent virtue and be capable of implementing benevolent governance. Ultimately, such a ruler gains the recognition of the people, not through violent conquest, but through the practice of virtues, thereby becoming the Son of Heaven. In this sense, Mengzi's political philosophy is a form of pacifism.

This paper explores the pacifism in Mengzi's theory of benevolent governance and investigates its value in today's world. It argues that "shù 恕" (reciprocity) is the logical foundation of Mengzi's pacifism. The paper is structured into four sections: The first section outlines the historical context of Mengzi's political philosophy and highlights the uniqueness of his claim of benevolent governance in that context. The second section reconstructs and evaluates Mengzi's arguments on anti-war. The third section analyses Mengzi's theory of benevolent governance from the perspectives of legitimacy, effectiveness, and feasibility and reveals the pacifism within. The fourth section examines the foundational role of "shù" in Mengzi's arguments and critically reflects on the value of pacifism based on "shù" in today's world.

**What can trees do for us? Daoist tree-cultivation and the planetary:
lessons from early Chinese philosophy and poetry**

Largely missing from the textual tradition prior to the eleventh century, in China the tree-grower becomes a figure of importance only from the Song onwards. A notable forerunner, however, may be found in the Tang essayist Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 (773–819 CE) allegorical biographical sketch of the tree-grower Guo Tuotuo 郭橐駝 ('Guo the Camel Back'). Signalling the Zhuangzian trope of physical deformities as signs of inner virtue and wisdom, the tree grower's art of cultivating trees becomes an allegory for the arts of governance. The human desire for control of the more-than-human world must yield to the natural rhythms of things. The tree-grower in the *Zhuangzi* appears as a figure who knows what it might mean to be properly alive and free. This association echoes down the tradition as later literati such as Ji Kang, Cao Zhi, Xie An, Xie Lingyun and Tao Qian all incorporate trees into their dynamic representations of landscape, inflecting their understanding of the good life with Daoist equivalencies between cultivating natural entities and cultivating the self. Set against the values of utility, service and violent subjugation of the natural world, these representations of encounters with trees, I suggest, transcend the values of Confucian orthodoxy to question the limits of the political in human life. If the discourse of tree cultivation presents a millennia-long elite conversation about value and meaning-making beyond the dictates of society, what might these depictions teach us as creatures of modernity? How might an arboreal lens reanimate our latent longing for more natural forms of self-cultivation?

HE Jinli

**From *Gewu* 格物(Investigate Things) to *Ping Tianxia* 平天下
(Harmonizing and Pacifying the World)—Examining Confucian aesthetic
experience through the *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning)**

This paper aims to explore some of the characteristics of Confucian aesthetic experience through examining the *Daxue* concept *gewu*.

The author will first discuss the unique characteristics of Confucian aesthetic experience: 1. Concrete ordinary life experience itself is promoted and valued. The unique characteristic of this type of aesthetics experience is its *ethical-value-based* nature--searching meaning in ordinary and trivial daily life overshadows the typical expectation of visual or taste based aesthetic experience. 2. Strong sense of history. The Confucian aesthetic experience always intertwines individual, community, national, international and universe aspects. The focus of this type of aesthetic experience frequently circles around questions such as how collective consciousness shapes individual (aesthetic) existence and memory and how individual memory in turn contributes to collective existence and history, and how aesthetic expression conveys (or rejects) historical, geographical, (inter-) cultural and (inter-) national narratives. The aesthetic ideal is demonstrated in its subtle multifaceted reflective nature. 3. The angle of totality. The angle of totality of the Confucian aesthetic experience embodies in its strong sense of intervening in reality, targeting on current geographical, social-political, ethical and cultural issues and problems.

The author then will explore how these unique characteristics of the Confucian aesthetic experience are demonstrated in the Confucian world-making project in the *Great Learning*. One of the arguments the author develops is that the concept of *yi* 義 (appropriateness) as a distinctive component of Confucian aesthetic experience is in the center of understanding the meaning and content of *gewu*(格物).

Breath-change and Democratization: Daoist Reflections

This paper supposes that the democratization of subjectivity is pivotal for reflections on democracy. The reason for this is that subjectivity is in itself, within its very structure and dynamics, political. I try to explore the democratization of subjectivity by relating the askesis of heart-fasting (xīn zhāi de gōngfū/心齋的工夫), alluded to in chapter four of the Zhuāngzǐ, to the Daoist emphasis on “self-transformation” or “self-change” (zìhuà/自化). The motif of self-change can be helpful in rethinking democracy from the perspective of an inner cultivation (nèixiū/內修) that connects subjectivity and breath-change (qìhuà/氣化) within the concept of a breath-changing subject (qìhuà zhǔtǐ/氣化主體) or transformative subjectivity. My reflections connect the Daoist understanding of inner cultivation as democratization of the human self-relation to an outer cultivation (wàixiū/外修) that I preliminarily would like to call autometamorphic democracy (自化民主). I will try to explain the relation between transformative subjectivity and autometamorphic democracy by connecting it to two important concept in modern Chinese political philosophy, “inner holiness” and “outer kingliness” (nèishèng wàiwáng/內聖外王).

Inner holiness and outer kingliness mentioned in chapter 33 of the Zhuāngzǐ have long become important terms for rethinking the relation between subjectivity and politics. In the context of contemporary Neo-Confucianism, it is common to think about the relation between the “heart-character-subject” (xīnxìng zhǔtǐ/心性主體) or “moral subject” (dàodé zhǔtǐ/道德主體) which is regarded as “inner holiness” and democratic politics which are thought in terms of a “new outer kingliness” (xīn wàiwáng/新外王). However, the question that arises from this discussion is whether contemporary Neo-Confucianism has succeeded in democratizing “subjectivity” (the so called “inner holiness”). The discussion is complex, but the point of this paper is to assume that the answer to this question is largely negative. On this basis, I want to pose the following question: What kind of “subjectivity” or “new inner holiness” (xīn nèishèng/新內聖) corresponds to a vision of “democracy” or “new outer kingliness” that goes beyond

the political imagination of contemporary Neo-Confucian philosophy that has been largely limited by naively accepting a rather conventional modern Western discourse on democracy? My discussion takes “self-change” as starting point to rethink the democratization of “subjectivity” (inner holiness). In contrast to contemporary Neo-Confucian scholars, I don’t take the “heart” (xīn/心) as philosophical bridge to connect subjectivity and politics, but “breath” (qì/氣) and its changes (qìhuà/氣化).

HEUBEL Fabian

EN-EACP Introduction

The Educational Network of the European Association for Chinese Philosophy (EN-EACP) is a platform dedicated to the study and teaching of Chinese philosophy, with a special focus on Europe and the Chinese-speaking world. Founded in 2014, the European Association for Chinese Philosophy (EACP) is developing this "educational network" to facilitate access to Chinese philosophy for European students and to deepen the exchange between European scholars with experience in teaching Chinese philosophy. This panel will address the experiences and perspectives of European scholars in teaching Chinese philosophy. In particular, it aims to discuss proposals for curricula related to different areas of Chinese philosophy, as well as for summer schools and graduate courses, which the EN-EACP will help to organize and promote.

Weighty Words Feigning Truth: The Diverse Images of Sages and the Fictional Genealogies and Histories in the Zhuangzi

The Zhuangzi points out three modes of language employed by Zhuangzi: goblet words (卮言), weighty words (重言), and lodged words (寓言). Among these, weighty words are described as "being treated as truth." However, weighty words, as a form of discourse that appeals to authority and historicity, may appear to convey truth but are, in fact, clever and extravagant "pretended serious words." This mode of writing serves as a key, deliberate rhetorical strategy in the Zhuangzi, reflecting the Zhuangzian approach to the dialectical relationship between rhetoric (the role of language itself), the Dao, thought, and truth.

This paper investigates two key aspects: first, the diverse and multifaceted representations of sages such as Confucius, Laozi, the Yellow Emperor, Yao, and Shun in both the Inner and Miscellaneous Chapters of the Zhuangzi; second, the reconstruction of genealogies of ancient emperors and masters, as well as the fabrication of historical events through "utmost virtue (de)" and the Dao. Finally, from the perspective of the genealogies of "hearing the Dao" and "the doubt of beginning", the process of "hearing the Dao" emerges from a non-historical interpretation of history that transcends textual and verbal expression, leading to the doubt of a beginning that is not having a beginning.

The writing of weighty words fundamentally opposes the authority and normative traditions of Confucian moral order, critiquing and deconstructing the narrative power of sage-kings in the Confucian historical tradition, while simultaneously reflecting intellectual dialogue between Confucianism and the Huang-Lao thought. Weighty words are often intertwined with lodged words (yuyan), and are, in essence, a form of goblet words (zhiyan), fluidly unfolding across multiple perspectives, representing a unique philosophical language of transformation that belongs to the realm of thought which does not present itself directly one-sidedly.

HUANG Yijia

Reimagining Social Order through Xunzi's Moralistic 亂 *luan* - 治 *zhi* Dichotomy

The influential secular-liberal view of political order is that peace is maintained through amoral legal restraints. The Classical Confucian thinker Xunzi understood that order (治 *zhi*) partially depended on legal institutions but deemed this insufficient. For Xunzi, social order requires both the correction of chaotic (亂 *luan*) human nature through legal institutions of law and punishments (刑罰 *xingfa*) and social institutions of rituals and duties (禮義 *liyi*). Out of the two, Xunzi thinks moral cultivation is more important than laws and argues that social order lives and dies on the moral behaviour of its participants. Institutional decay has become a global problem, and impersonal laws seem unable to reverse this decay. Political vitriol spills into political violence in nations with highly sophisticated laws and robust liberal-democratic institutions. This gives us reasons to take Xunzi's claim seriously, how much does an individual participant's moral behaviour contribute to the decay of order? Contrary to the common belief that institutional checks and balances make political order indifferent to individual virtues, could bad moral behaviour cause political chaos? To be clear, I am not proposing Xunzi's arguments as the straightforward answer as a 'moralistic order' is not necessarily benevolent. Civic duties may include unwanted moralistic regulation, leading to an oppressive community with no regard for freedoms. Nevertheless, a comparative study of Xunzi's 'order' may reveal that amoral laws are insufficient for social order and provide cursory solutions to our problems today. For instance, we may question the Liberal idea that institutions are truly 'safety nets' that prevent the worst chaos from occurring and compel us to reflect deeply on the effects of individual moral behaviour on political communities.

JACOBY Marcin

The situation in Poland

Polish HEIs run almost twenty different BA and MA programmes in Chinese Studies across the country. Over the last twenty years the number of such programmes has gradually increased but the focus has shifted from traditional Linguistic, Literature, Philosophy and History Studies to curricula based in Cultural Studies, and centered around contemporary issues. Preserving robust, traditional Sinology curricula at least for a small number of students is vital for future research. Introducing Chinese Philosophy courses also in other curricula, such as Philosophy, History, Art History and others, is necessary for future, less European-centered education. The challenge is how to navigate these needs in times of decreasing numbers of students and ever-more vocational-centered education.

The Relational Self and Parental Love

In recent decades, blaming parents for adult children's problems and even cutting off parents have not only become more common than a few decades ago in the U.S. but also have started in China where filial piety has been regarded as a core virtue for over two thousand years. The parent-blaming culture is partially based on an extremely individualistic understanding of the self and an absolute separation between the child's well-being and parent's happiness. Many devoted parents are blamed for regarding their children as their extension and taking the success of their children as part of their own happiness and therefore accused of being selfish and even narcissistic. This way of thinking has been taught by some popular psychology and promoted by many psychological therapists in the U.S. However, if one understands the self as relational as Confucians do and sees parental love as something that intrinsically connects parents' deep affection for their children and parents' great self-fulfillment from children's well-being, one will realize that parents' satisfaction from children's success doesn't have to be the result of selfishness but a natural by-product of parental love. Certainly, children's happiness that parents perceive doesn't always match up with what children believe about their happiness. When loving parents are mistaken about what makes their children happy and over interfere with their children's decision-making, they can actually cause great pain to their children. However, this doesn't mean that the motivation of these parents in parenting is totally selfish without parental love but only shows that parental love doesn't necessarily bring happiness to children and parents need to respect their children and listen to their children more. This paper will argue about the consistency between unselfish motivation and self-satisfaction in parental love in terms of the relational self and reveal the misconception of parental love in contemporary parent-blame culture based on popular psychology.

JUNG Jongmo

The ethics of communication: Ito Jinsai and Ruan Yuan's interpretations of *kejifuli*

My presentation explores the possibility of interpreting the concept of *kejifuli*, found in Confucius' *Analects*, from a contemporary perspective. Specifically, it analyzes how East Asian scholars' interpretation of the term "*kejifuli*" shifted during the 17th–19th centuries, aligning with scholarly perspectives during the Song–Ming dynasties. They criticized the metaphysical and essentialist aspects of Neo-Confucianism, instead emphasizing human relationships, thereby opening up new horizons for Confucian studies. Further, it explores the significance of this shift in meaning from the perspective of interpersonal communication—i.e., our relationship with the *others*. To achieve this, the present study analyzes scholarly perspectives on benevolence and the interpretation of *kejifuli* by two scholars: Ito Jinsai (伊藤仁齋, from the Edo period in Japan) and Ruan Yuan (阮元, from the Qing dynasty in China). Although these two scholars are separated by time and space, they held similar views regarding their interpretation of benevolence and *kejifuli*. Specifically, both understood Confucius' concept of benevolence (仁) as pertaining to human relationships and emphasizing mutuality—a view they incorporated into their interpretations of *kejifuli*. In my view, their interpretations imply an understanding of ethics based on otherness and plurality, with an orientation towards the possibility and inevitability of communication and interconnection among moral agents or personalities.

My presentation corresponds to the entire theme of the conference, "Addressing Global Crises and Reimagining Solutions through Chinese Philosophy," and it will be a timely discussion in that it secures the meaning of Chinese philosophy in modern society.

Global Conflicts and Malicious Comments: Would Confucius AI Help?

The rise of malicious comments and hate speech in digital spaces has not only worsened personal and societal conflicts but has also contributed to global tensions. This presentation explores the potential of Confucius AI as a conceptual solution to mitigate such conflicts. Rather than pursuing the actual development of an AI system, this project uses Confucius AI as an imaginative framework to explore how Chinese philosophy, specifically Confucian ethics, might address global challenges in the digital age. Confucius AI, rooted in Confucian principles, is envisioned as a system that transforms negative discourse into constructive and respectful dialogue through an ethical moderation process.

The core approach of Confucius AI is based on the Confucian principles of ren (仁) (benevolence) and li (禮) (propriety), which emphasize respect for others and harmonious social relationships. This conceptual AI intervenes in online conversations by identifying harmful language and adjusting it to meet these ethical standards. The presentation focuses on whether this intervention can reduce hostility in digital interactions and foster a culture of mutual respect in an increasingly interconnected world.

In addition, the presentation examines the imagined effectiveness and limitations of Confucius AI, including the broader implications for reducing global conflicts. Potential ethical issues are also explored, such as the risk of overreach and censorship, and the challenge of applying Confucian values universally while respecting cultural diversity. Ultimately, this presentation aims to offer a philosophical reflection on how Confucian ethics might contribute to resolving global conflicts exacerbated by digital communication.

KIM Seonhee

Can a Sage Feel Hatred? The Problem of Anger and Morality in Neo-Confucianism

Can a morally virtuous person feel anger and hatred towards others? Can someone who harbours hatred and anger, which are traditionally considered negative traits, be considered a sage? According to the Book of Documents (Shujing), King Shun expressed great anger at the Four Evildoers (sixiang) who were terrorising the people, and had them executed. Later, Neo-Confucian scholars discussed Shun's anger within the framework of the theory of the Four Beginnings and the Seven Emotions, seeking to justify these moral emotions not only ethically but also metaphysically. The theory of the Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions is a key theme in Neo-Confucianism in Joseon Korea, aiming to explain emotions from a moral perspective and to clarify how emotions underpin moral practice.

This presentation will explore how the paradox of a sage's anger and hatred is justified in Confucian thought and propose a Confucian explanation of righteous anger. I delve into the possibility of a philosophical elucidation of righteous anger by exploring the relationship between the negative emotion of anger and morality. Specifically, it will examine the following questions: Can righteous anger be justified in a neo-Confucian context? What are the definition and limits of righteous anger? How does the question of anger and morality in Confucianism differ from debates on anger in Western ethics and political theory, and what alternative perspectives might Confucian thought offer?

KING R.A.H.

Remarks on Confucian role ethics as viable contemporary ethics

Confucian roles ethics appear to have excellent credentials for solving the crises of estrangement and alienation among individuals in contemporary societies. For offering roles as a fundamental orientation for lifelong conduct may be thought to minimize both of these pitfalls. Roger Ames has argued in several works (esp. 2011, 2021) that ancient Confucian role ethics is a viable system of ethics for humans living now. After a brief interpretation of Ames' thesis, concentrating a) on the concept of person and b) on the concept of role, I argue that in his theory "person" is the bearer of roles and question how his use of "person" relates to the ancient legal and moral use of the term. As to "role", a functional reading of this current term is attractive, whereas ancient roles are most obviously ritual. While it may be argued that rites in ancient China were functional, thus making roles encoded and acted out in them also functional, this is disputable. Furthermore, roles are plural and therefore supervenes on one another: No one is only mother, but also citizen; yet being a mother may supervene on being a citizen: both roles combine in the one person. This is the foundation for role conflict. While Ames concentrates on roles in the family, other areas of roles (the state, professions) must be considered within the highly differentiated societies we live in, and it is questionable how they can be grounded or justified using the family. I close with methodological reflections on the use of ancient materials in relation to current crises, referring to the climate crisis and the widespread academic use of early Chinese texts for solutions (Suzuki, Torres 2025).

From Anxiety to Pleasure: Xu Fuguan and Li Zehou

By juxtaposing Li Zehou's concept of the *culture of joy* (*legan wenhua* 乐感文化) with Xu Fuguan's notion of *concerned consciousness* (*youhuan yishi* 忧患意识), this presentation elucidates the central themes underlying their respective theories on the origins of Chinese culture. The nuanced complexity of their concepts warrants careful consideration. This study contends that Li's concept of the *culture of joy* ought not to be dismissed as superficial; rather, it constitutes a profoundly layered construct. Contrary to prevailing interpretations, I argue that the *culture of joy* is better understood as an extension of the concept of *concerned consciousness*, rather than its opposition. Through the framework of Martin Heidegger's fundamental ontology, this presentation demonstrates how Li's *culture of joy* is fundamentally rooted in the essence of *concerned consciousness* and how it synthesizes elements from both Chinese and Western intellectual traditions.

KWEK Dorothy

Sense and sensibility in the Zhuangzi

The difficulty of deriving positive normative propositions from the *Zhuangzi* often has it characterized as engaging in a variety of scepticism. This paper grapples with the difficulty of pinning down *what* the *Zhuangzi* is trying to say by exploring *how* the *Zhuangzi* says – or refuses to say – things. I examine the literary and aesthetic dimensions of the text, which tend to be given short shrift in contemporary philosophical readings, through a cross-cultural comparison of the expectations surrounding the experience and work of ‘art.’ The paper explores the possibility that over and above the instruction of any precept or principle, the *Zhuangzi* seeks to induce certain ethico-political *sensibilities*, and that the evasiveness of the text is inseparable from the kinds of sensibilities it seeks to elicit.

“The Course can not keep away from things”: Zhuangzi open the gate of literature descriptions and ethics of difference

Zhuangzi consciously undergoes a plan to deconstruct the giant Totality-Metaphysics; nevertheless, what he conceives would unnecessarily stride toward the termination of Metaphysics, which on the other hand propels the ultimately superior Course to integrate once again into subtle and various physical beings that call for more exquisite observation as well as sharp feelings.

Though Metaphysics temporarily collapses in regard to “Worseness”, a means of deconstruction and restoration, visible creatures and beings, like ant (insect), panic grass (plant), earthenware tile (mineral) and excrement (human wastes), entirely extricate individual auras. The so-called “The Course can not keep away from things” righteously illustrates transformative manifestations upon the diversity of beings, “One finger embrace the whole world, One horse embrace the all beings” while the logics of Metaphysics falls apart.

From now on, the metaphysical embodiment of “The Course identify with all beings” lies in: Humans constantly are touched by marvelous things to reckon transcendental humanity of “Inspiring from things” whether they are capable of observing the subtle existence of beings and even in the encounter of fragile creatures. With the “Things-Addicted” and “Subtle-Observed” interpretation, we may realize the reason why in Zhuangzi interwoven with various subtle existence of living beings, inferior objects as well as disgraceful and worthless things.

Abundant in peculiarity of triviality, inferiority, The Zhuangzi also reflects a vivid feeling of willingness to perceive the essence of existence among different things in addition to specific and exquisite observations on humans and nature.

Confronted with those paradoxical conditions, we sometimes feel vulnerable but touched perpetually by their vitality; therefore, we may exhibit adorable affection and pay tribute toward universally changeable beings.

Therefore, Zhuangzi open the gate to the differences of ethics and the literature descriptions to all beings. Literature descriptions can insight into the subtleness of

trivial things to develop writings on “Things”, which approves differential and marvelous congruity of nature through specific and exquisite observations. Hence, Zhuangzi eventually manifests in numerous “expressing ways” that contain floating words, citations from weighty ancient authorities, and fables, so that literature becomes an instrumental approach to “The Way that can be told is not an unvarying way.” To this matter, the more Zhuangzi utters, the more Zhuangzi composes. And then, Zhuangzi’s loving capacity become more and more until endless.

Fasting of the Heart, Mirror Poetry, Cure for the State

The first dialogue in chapter four of the *Zhuangzi* / *Chuangtzu* (4/1-34) is best remembered for its notion of “heart/mind-fasting,” which the master-character “Zhongni (Confucius)” introduced to the pupil-character “Yan Hui,” who had revealed the plan to bring cure to a catastrophically governed state. This paper explicates how Yan Hui, as a result of the “fasting,” would be better equipped for the dangers and challenges that Zhongni associated with this political intervention, including the challenge of transforming (*huà*) the willful ruler. It contributes mainly in four ways. First, it makes a more compelling interpretive case that, although Zhongni supposed the result of heart/mind-fasting to be an “empty (*xū*)” mode of agency in which Yan Hui would act while not fishing for the world’s tallying with his heart/mind or for opportunities to apply his own models, he did not want this pupil to cease caring about the people or abort his attempt of political intervention. Second, it surveys the scholarship for an interpretation to reconcile Zhongni’s two expectations, concluding on a version of mirror-like virtuoso responsiveness from which Yan Hui, *despite* his values and projects, would act while not fishing for the world’s tallying with his heart/mind or for opportunities to apply his own models. Third, it points out two puzzles about this reconciliation: When he responded to his situation with utterances, how would these verbal responses make sense to himself, if he did not appear to himself to be seeking any particular outcome or an opportunity to implement models? And why could being empty or mirror-like in this sense make him better at *transforming others* (e.g. a willful or jealous ruler)? Fourth, through some imaginative storytelling, it suggests a solution to the two puzzles, which is modeled after a *poet’s* intelligence that spontaneously reflects the salient aspects of reality.

Artificial Intelligence: Ethical Insights from Confucianism

The prevalence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) technologies is a rapidly developing global crisis. GenAIs are increasingly relied on in professional and educational contexts—including for ethical, legal, and political decision-making. I argue against the use of AI tools in ethical decision-making and education by drawing on insights from Classical Confucian theories of moral psychology and development. Classical Confucians emphasized that social roles and rituals (*li* 禮) importantly constitute the moral self; that moral decision-making and obligations depend on the demands of our relationships to particular others and our broader society; and that the virtuous moral agent has properly cultivated emotional and affective attitudes. Rituals help practitioners develop the proper affective attitudes and to display them in socially recognized, contextually responsive ways (*Analects* 2.3, 3.4, 8.2, 9.3, 17.21, 19.14). Rituals shape or express natural features of human nature such as our inclination to grieve loved ones or respect our parents; at the same time, they are responsive to changing contexts and circumstances. Moreover, this means of moral cultivation requires the guidance, education, examples, or correction of others. GenAI tools lack the ability to morally reason as a member of a community, to embody and practice rituals that help shape our character and affect, or to respond to and cultivate ethically salient emotions. These technologies therefore cannot develop or replace the sage's ethical wisdom, character, and morally appropriate emotional responses, nor can they appreciate the nuance and interconnectedness of ethical demands and decisions. Classical Confucian understandings of roles, relationality, and moral psychology offer a fruitful ethical framework for evaluating the efficacy and ethicality of emerging GenAI technologies. From this Confucian perspective we must be wary of overreliance on these tools at the expense of developing our moral characters as situationally embedded, embodied, relational, and emotional agents.

Xunzi's Shendu (慎獨)

My presentation does not aim to thoroughly explore the concept of 'shendu(慎獨)' in early Confucianism. It, rather, takes notice of the fact that 'shendu' appear in the Xunzi. In fact, 'shendu' has long been known as the 'shendu' of the *Great Learning* or the *Doctrine of the Mean*. It seems natural that 'shendu' has attracted such a keen attention in the Confucian tradition, given the fact that 'shendu' appears in the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, both of which are so-called "the Four Books." Interestingly, while we cannot find 'shendu' in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*, it is found in the *Xunzi*. Furthermore, if the *Wuxing*(五行) is regarded as the work of so-called "Si-Meng(史孟)" genealogy, the *Xunzi* is awkwardly positioned together with the works considered close to Mencius' ideas via the concept of *shendu*.

In order to understand Xunzi's concept of *shendu*, I will first explore whether the concept of *shendu* in pre-Qin Confucianism is limited to the meaning of 'careful when alone.' Examining 'shendu' in the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Wuxing* and the *Xunzi* respectively, we find that *shendu* may be a concept related to the "truth of inner self". If *shendu* can be understood as a concept centered on inner authenticity, it becomes more curious about what it means in the case of Xunzi. This is because 'inner integrity' is often regarded as being characteristic of Mencius's thought whereas Xunzi is understood to represent the opposite. I will suggest my own interpretation of *shendu* in Xunzi's philosophy in the conclusion.

LEE Lilith W.

Meeting the Coloniser's Gaze: 19th Century Straits Chinese Visions of Philosophy in Crises

The Straits Settlements, where Mainland and Maritime Southeast Asia overlapped, was of significant political and economic interest for both *fin-de-siècle* Imperial Britain and China. The intelligentsia of the British colony's Straits Chinese majority sought to establish themselves as both British *and* Chinese, attempting to hybridise the respective intellectual traditions of both empires in their development of an Anglo-Chinese consciousness at imperial peripheries. In this paper, I present the hybridisations effected by two such Straits Chinese philosophers as being of significant interest for those of us concerned with the possibility of a 'planetary,' 'global,' 'cosmopolitan,' or 'post-comparative' philosophy, given the legacies of coloniality in world philosophies today.

I reconstruct the critiques of philosophy at the turn of the 20th century by the only two non-European members of the Straits Philosophical Society in Singapore: Dr LIM Boon Keng and TAN Teck Soon. They drew heavily on Chinese philosophy and history to ameliorate the image of the Chinese 'race' in the eyes of their fellow Society members, but both philosophers also saw philosophy as a whole in crisis: not only as expressed in European colonial projects, but also in the decline of the Qing imperium. In response, LIM and TAN developed alternative visions of a new *Straits Chinese* philosophy for the world, problematising the otherwise self-frustrating global aspirations of 'Western' and Chinese philosophical traditions. I situate LIM and TAN's Confucian and Daoist approach to the crises of philosophy within their sweeping engagements with ideas in Scottish Medicine, Late-Qing Confucianism, Rabindranath Tagore, British Idealists, and South Asian Buddhism—thereby illuminating their divergent conceptions of the possibility of a philosophy for the world.

The Implication of Care in the Political Thinking of Zhuangzi

This paper will use the care ethics as a framework to analyze the dimension of "care" within the political thought of the Zhuangzi. According to Zhuangzi, the root cause of chaos in the world lies in the various schools of thought clinging to their perspectives, which leads to mutual exclusion and a lack of communication, much like "耳目鼻口，皆有所明，不能相通." In other words, only through "Tong 通" can the world move toward harmony. In the Zhuangzi's "Qiwulun" chapter, it is stated that "道通為一." This "Yi —" can be seen as a concept of community, yet it allows for the coexistence of diversity. How to achieve "Tong" as "Yi" is the essence of Zhuangzi's notion of care.

The care ethics emphasizes that normative ethics upholds "justice" as the highest value, but "care" must be prioritized before justice can truly be realized. Therefore, care should be the core of ethical thinking. From Zhuangzi's perspective, care is to be achieved through the method of "Tong." When translated into contemporary political language, this "Yi" should be interpreted as "publicness." However, this publicness cannot be established through the imposition of norms but must unfold with the critical power that resists reduction and discipline, symbolized by the metaphor of "Chaos 渾沌." This critical force in Zhuangzi's political thought must be recognized and preserved. Only by safeguarding this force can politics, in its public form, preserve differences, thereby achieving true "Tong" and "Harmony 和" without falling into the violence of uniformity.

Zhuangzi uses the concept of "Xiang Wang 相忘" as the best embodiment of the value of publicness. Paradoxically, through mutual forgetting and each finding comfort in their own ways, life can be lived in accordance with its natural course. This represents the profound expression of Zhuangzi's politics of care.

The Difference Between *Gewu* 格物 and *Gyeokmul* 格物 —— Neo-Confucian View on “Investigation of Things” in China and Korea

In Confucian Classic *Great Learning*, the first step of the *Eight Steps*, the term 格物 (*gewu* in Chinese, *gyeokmul* in Korean) was established as an epistemological theory of Confucian thought by the Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi, who interpreted it as "approaching to things and investigating their principles" (即物窮理, *jiwuqiongli*). Zhu Xi's interpretation of 格物, which emphasized the investigation of objects, had the potential to be understood as a scientific methodology. Consequently, 格物 gained attention in modern East Asian intellectual history as a translation for concepts such as "philosophy" or "science."

In the intellectual history of China, Zhu Xi's view on 格物 was seen as something to be overcome. Zhu Xi's theoretical approach to 格物 faced criticism from Confucian thinkers like Wang Yangming and Qing Dynasty evidential scholars. On the other hand, in the Korean Confucian tradition, which fully embraced Zhu Xi's thought, his concept of *gewu* was regarded not so much as something to be overcome but rather as a rich source of intellectual resources. This was because the process of translating the Chinese term 格物 into Korean revealed various possibilities for interpretation. The diverse interpretations of the term were freely developed both within and beyond the scope of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism.

LI Yitian

Philosophy in Action: Rethinking the Role of the State Apparatus in Social Welfare in Southern Song Local Administration

The paper argues that a group of intellectuals in Southern Song China (1127-1276), rejecting both the totalitarian and the laissez-faire economic philosophies, devised a middle-path model that relied on local officials to implement active yet moderate fiscal management measures to promote social welfare. This search for new models was driven by the gap between ideals and reality: the old Confucian ideal of a benevolent government contrasted with the reality of a revenue-hunger fiscal state; the newly emerged non-government initiatives promoted by the Neo-Confucian movement struggled to fight local corruption. Drawing on their first-hand experiences in local administration about famine relief, land reclamation projects, and revenue collection, the various intellectuals came to agree on the significance of a responsible local government in balancing the interests of different parties. The new model was constructed around three levels of argumentation. First, through their reinterpretations of the Classics, the intellectuals established that such fiscal management techniques as government price controls had canonical foundations. Second, they engaged with more nuanced analyses of risks and benefits, moving beyond moralistic arguments. They demonstrated, for instance, that tax reduction was not always conducive to peasant welfare. Lastly, some of the intellectuals in the movement took the further step to investigate the historical development of government institutions for practical wisdom, which developed into an alternative curriculum of Confucian learning that prioritized practical governance to ethical principles. My study aims to provide a new understanding of the ever-evolving Confucian statecraft beyond the binary of state control versus moral cultivation. I hope that not only the intellectual model itself but also the way in which a philosophy renovated itself to encompass social changes will shed light on our modern crises, which also demand adaptable and non-binary thinking.

Resisting Technology Addiction through Mencian Ethics

As AI has rapidly advanced in recent years, it is crucial to also consider the profound impact of the attention economy, which, unlike AI, is already exerting long-lasting effects on the global population. In the attention economy, technology companies derive their primary profits not from direct content consumption but from advertising revenue generated by capturing users' attention. This relentless pursuit of attention has led to widespread issues of addiction to social media, pornography, and video games across the world, along with related secondary problems. Unlike substance addiction, technology addiction cannot be resolved through complete abstention, as modern life and work are deeply intertwined with digital technologies. Moreover, this problem cannot be addressed by individual willpower alone, as advanced technologies and design techniques—rooted in cutting-edge psychology and neuroscience—are deliberately crafted to exploit human psychology and foster addictive behaviours. To address this issue, we must move away from both rugged individualism and oppressive patriarchy. Mencian ethics, particularly his principle of “don't forget, don't force 勿忘勿助,” offers a valuable model. According to this approach, we should focus on collectively creating environments that foster healthy digital habits, rather than placing the burden solely on individuals or resorting to forceful behaviour modification. One fundamental environment is the family. A healthy family environment benefits not only teenagers but also adults, who are particularly susceptible to social media addiction. This environment must be nurtured by all family members. Beyond the family, we must also work to cultivate a healthy digital culture in society at large. This includes, above all, imposing restrictions on irresponsible, addictive design practices by technology companies and providing education on the healthy use of digital technologies. By applying “don't forget, don't force,” we can collectively create environments that better equip people around the world to resist technology addiction.

Pitfall of Appropriate Personal Style ---- Why Zigong Fails to Foster Trust in Others

A distinctive aspect of Confucius's virtue ethics is his emphasis not only on ensuring that the right actions are done but also on how they are done. The manner or the way to do things often referred to as 'styles'. Joel Kupperman (2002) and Amy Olberding (2007, 2009) argue that cultivating an appropriate style is morally significant in Confucian ethics. Ideally, an appropriate style can foster trust in our interactions with others, leading to mutual acknowledgment and creating a harmony community. However, as Olberding notes, there are instances when even well-cultivated and refined styles can inadvertently generate distrust. This point is more effectively illustrated by Zigong's case. Zigong demonstrates a polished style in his words and demeanor. But he often falls short in providing tailored responses to others. As a result, Zigong struggles to foster trust and even generate distrust.

My focus is on the problem: why does an apparently well-cultivated style fail to foster trust? The existing literature offers two primary explanations. The first view is a cynical one, positing that Zigong's intentions are selfish, suggesting that his practice of rituals serves only his own purposes. In contrast, Amy Olberding (2009) offers a more generous interpretation, arguing that Zigong is genuinely motivated to cultivate virtue but overly focuses on strict adherence to ritual forms. I argue that that Zigong's failure arises from the way his manner reveals weaknesses in his character, reflecting his disposition of self-complacency. Specifically, I argue that developing a personal style should serve an intrapersonal function, namely honing our virtuous expressions and promoting empathy. This intrapersonal function is closely linked to interpersonal functions, like building trust. Thus, Zigong not only directs his efforts in the wrong direction but also lacks the motivation to develop his characters.

The Ethical Reflection on the Paradox of Practice in the Zhuangzi

The so-called paradox of practice refers to the situation or result that is contrary to the value direction in the course of value or moral practice or action. The formation of an opposite result implies that value or moral practice itself contains or connects elements that violate the direction of values. This results in a situation where value or moral practice has both positive and negative implications; in other words, practice is both virtuous and sinful at the same time. For example, actions stemming from good motives or purposes may lead to negative or evil outcomes, causing the action to have both good and evil aspects. In Zhuangzi's ethical reflections, the phenomenon of the paradox of practice is mentioned multiple times, and special attention is given to reflecting on this phenomenon.

For *Zhuangzi*, the most difficult-to-detect or self-awared yet highly influential evil or negative outcome of behavior often arises from a context of goodness or positivity. *Zhuangzi* believes that within a good or kind context, whether stemming from good intentions or from a belief that one is performing good or appropriate actions, the actor is prone to overlooking or being unaware of the factors within that could potentially lead to evil. In *Zhuangzi's* view, this aspect of evil is especially important because, on one hand, when we try to prevent evil, we tend to focus on exploring the possible causes of evil from the perspective of evil itself—such as negative emotions, desires, bad motives, ignorance, prejudice, etc.—and attempt to eliminate these factors. However, this focus can easily cause us to neglect the factors and links within a kind or good context that could lead to the formation of evil. Once the evil within a kind or good context is overlooked, evil continues to proliferate. Moreover, people always wish to affirm good intentions or expect themselves to be in a kind or good context. But if the evil hidden within that context goes unnoticed or unacknowledged, then as the passion and expectation of practicing good increase, so too does the evil that grows alongside it. Thus, one may fall into the paradox of the more one practices good, the more evil is formed. This article will delve into *Zhuangzi's* reflection on the paradox of practice and how he proposes a fundamental solution to it.

Transforming Normative Models of Perception: Insights from Late Ming to Early Qing Chinese Philosophy

This paper investigates the potentials and mechanisms for transforming the normative model of perception and cognition—defined by the subject-object dichotomy and three-dimensional spatiality—as reflected in late Ming to early Qing Chinese philosophical sources. By exploring alternative cognitive models presented in these texts, I aim to elucidate the understandings of consciousness and approaches to the nature of reality developed during this period, which reflect an epistemic transformation. These perspectives offer reimagined modes of thinking that can contribute to addressing current global challenges. The study begins by examining the prevailing perception paradigm, which posits a mind-independent world of discrete objects in three-dimensional space, directly perceivable by a fixed subject. This object-centered, spatially based cognitive model is critiqued in the sources, where its inherent contradictions are exposed, and mechanisms for its transformation are developed. Through analysis of the works of Wang Fuzhi (王夫之), Fang Yizhi (方以智), and Hanshan Deqing (憨山德清), the paper identifies a trend among thinkers of this era to transition from object-centered cognition to alternative models that transcend spatial constraints and the subject-object dichotomy. These models challenge core assumptions of substance ontology and the subject-object paradigm, more aligning with what we now would call process-oriented or relational ontologies. By exploring these transformative potentials and mechanisms of epistemic shifts, the paper provides insights into alternative approaches to reality and experience. The results are not only useful for comparative investigations in the history of knowledge and theories of mind—addressing questions of universals versus culturally conditioned traits in how people perceive, conceptualize, and represent their understanding of the world—but also relevant for addressing the ethical and cognitive challenges of the present. By expanding the field of possibilities regarding how we can think and approach the world, these insights contribute to reimagining solutions to crises.

MICHAEL Thomas

If the Dao is a Thing, What Kind of Thing is it and What Does it Do? A Brief Inquiry into Yan Zun's Laozi Zhigui

(part of Roundtable 2: Exploring the Daoist philosophy of Yan Zun and the Laozi Zhigui)

In the Laozi Zhigui, Yan Zun wrote: 夫道之為物, “The Dao is a thing.” However, we might ask, What kind of thing is the Dao and what does it do? Yan Zun, together with many of those who have studied the Daoist Dao, say that the Dao is formless and shapeless, and many even have gone on to say that that Dao is a no-thing, prompting some modern scholars to argue that the Dao is just an empty word. Often, the Dao is recognized as the ultimate source of the world and the cause of its continuance, but few have actually discussed what it is that the Dao actually does. In this presentation, I look at the many passages of the Laozi zhigui that specify many different sorts of actions that the Dao performs in the empirical world, and it turns out that the Dao those actions are seminal to the on-going processes of the world: the Dao is not simply an ultimate source and it is much more than a vague flow that somehow blows throughout the world. This paper also looks at the ways in which Yan Zun says that by following these actions of the Dao in the here and now, we can trace them backwards in such a way as to come into the recognition of the cosmic Dao in our very life, which is not only an important mark of the Daoist Sage, but also explains the natural philosophy by which the world continues to function in its phenomenal fullness.

Can the Confucian Relational Conception of the Self Provide an Alternative to Excessive Individualism?

It has become commonplace to regard excessive individualism in the modern West as a major enabling factor regarding current and pressing global crises, such as social capital decline, inequality and climate change. In this paper, I will argue that constructively examining the relational idea of the self that is found in Classical Confucianism can aid in the task of imagining solutions to excessive individualism. Firstly, I will use Gauthier (1977), Taylor (1989) and Rošker (2021) to argue that individualism assumes the place of a pre-reflective default in modern Western referential frameworks. This means that, despite the fact the West has many who argue against individualism (such as the communitarians) and many practices that could be seen as relational (such as weekly church services) individualism remains an ideology Westerners continually return to in their thoughts and actions to enough of an extent that it contributes towards global crises. Secondly, I will explore how the Confucian relational conception of self could provide an alternative to individualist models. To illuminate the Confucian idea of the relational self I will analyse in depth the debate between commentators regarding its precise nature. For example, there are those who believe the Confucian relational conception of the self begins with a biological organism that grows into a relational self through socialisation, for example, Wong (2013), and those who want to define the Confucian relational self as beginning *in media res* from birth, such as Ames (2018, 2021) and Rosemont (2015, 2018). I argue that under all interpretations, we are defined by our social roles and dependent on others, a greater appreciation of which could stymie excessive individualism and hence contribute to resolving many current global crises.

MOYA Gloria Luque

The Role of Ordinary People: Confucian Contributions to Environmental Issues

Today we live in a time dominated by serious environmental risks such as population, industrialization, urbanization, technological manipulation or military intervention, that threaten not only the life of the planet, but also of part of its population. In this context, people feel that they can do little to solve the serious problems and trust that the solution lies exclusively with global organizations and committed governments. However, we cannot leave the power and responsibility for solving these issues to international institutions. By contrast, it is necessary to promote alternatives from the different areas that address the problems of each region and create solutions that contribute to the development of a harmonic relationship between the different parts of the planet.

This presentation aims to rethink the way ordinary people can contribute to addressing current environmental issues through Confucianism. Confucian humanism does not seek universal principles or theories, but a way of action that promotes a harmonious existence; and this kind of approach is not restricted to a limited group of people, but it is promoted among all population. First, I consider the importance of the creativity in Confucian humanism. According to this school of thought, human beings are continually realizing oneself as a person, and this kind of realization is fundamentally creative. Second, I explore the contributions of this creative approach to Confucianism through a reinterpretation of the notion of junzi. Therefore, I will argue that Confucianism deserves further attention because it offers new ways of rethinking our role as citizen of Earth and the duty that every human being is called upon to fulfill.

O'NEILL Rory

Interdependent Independence: Navigating Context Collapse through “Being Circumspect towards the Self” (*shen du* 慎獨)

This article presents the notion of “being circumspect towards the self” (*shen du* 慎獨), drawn from the *Daxue* 大學 and the *Zhongyong* 中庸, as an ethical guide to internet use. There has long been interest in the relationship between Confucianism and technological development, from the Jesuit missionaries of the 16th and 17th centuries through Max Weber and Joseph Needham in the 20th century. Since the beginning of the 21st century, some scholars have argued that the Confucian relational self is incompatible with the values prevalent in social media interactions, particularly given the collapsed contexts and invisible audiences that accompany these platforms. This article contends that instead of viewing Confucianism and technology as essentially opposed, a pluralistic and pragmatic approach is more fitting with Confucianism as a lived philosophical tradition. To this end, “being circumspect towards the self” provides a framework for moral cultivation that can guide navigation of social situations where anonymity and the ambiguity between solitude and company are at play. It does so while remaining consistent with the Confucian notion of the self as relationally constituted. Beyond discussions of social media, *shen du* also provides a lens for considering ethical approaches to generative AI, where interactions occur with an invisible and context-deprived mass of contributors to an AI bot. “Being circumspect towards the self” offers a means to remain morally and socially aware even when we lose sight of distinct social contexts.

OTT Margus

Complex adaptive systems and topics from the Chinese Philosophy

This talk tries to bridge the complex adaptive systems (CAD) and Chinese philosophy. From the first I take such notions and models as dynamism, heterogeneity, non-linearity, feedback, emergence, path dependency, phase space, phase portrait. From the second, such concepts as articulations (理), above-the-forms (形而上), subtle (微、妙), spiritual (神), incipient (幾、發), energy (氣), actualized juxtaposing forms (形). CAD-s would gain intuitive grasp and the Chinese concepts additional modern relevance.

PANG-WHITE Ann A.

Public Responsibility and Human Rights Issues: Learning from Confucian Classics

In this paper, I will explore the difference between the Confucian and the Western liberal approach to rights. The liberal approach to human rights emphasizes the right to non-interference by other individuals and the State. In contrast, the Confucian approach to human rights focuses on the State's public responsibility to care for the populace and to ensure that all citizens have "a secure livelihood" (in modern vocabulary, "a right to sustenance") and "a secure mind" ("a right to development") (see, for example, the *Mengzi* 1A:7 and 3A:3). These two divergent approaches to human rights explain their conflicting viewpoints on: (a) what human rights imply, (b) what these rights require, and (c) what the boundary of the State's involvement is.

To further understand the Confucian approach, I will explore what the Confucian virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁) is, its implication on government, and what a humane government should look like. Key concepts such as *renzheng* 仁政, *weimin fumu* 為民父母, *minweigui shejicizhi* 民為貴社稷次之, and *datong* 大同, will be examined. I will rely on the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Great Learning*, and the Liyun chapter from the *Book of Rites* as my textual resources. Considering the limitation of liberalism widely perceived by the public and the scholarly circle, I present a modern interpretation of Confucian classics followed by a reflection on what we can learn from Confucian classics and political philosophy in today's market-driven global economy

How Is Hate Justified: Various Perspectives from Ancient China

The various thinkers who emerged in ancient East Asia—commonly known as the Hundred Schools of Thought (百家諸子)—justified hate in different ways. Confucianism, represented by Confucius, expressed hatred toward political violence, while Xunzi, who clearly recognized that language makes humans political beings, pinpointed hatred toward deceitful political rhetoric.

Confucianism held that the hierarchy between civilization and barbarism, and between humans and non-human beings, must be clear. It believed that political violence could be mitigated and ultimately eliminated through the benevolent welfare dispensed by the sage-king, from the lowest forms of life, such as animals and plants, to inanimate objects.

In contrast, Daoism defined the civilization pursued by Confucianism as an artificial construct created by humans. It argued that hatred of artificiality could be resolved through an integrated order of the natural world and human existence (Non-action and Naturalness, 無為自然). Legalism viewed the Confucian notion of the sage-king's benevolent welfare as fictitious and asserted that reliance should be placed entirely on the function of the law itself, not on humans. This position was founded on a hatred of instinctively selfish human beings. Mohism identified human actions that create inequality and undervalue labor as objects of hatred.

Each of these thinkers perceived hate differently—whether toward 'force' (Confucianism), 'artificiality' (Daoism), 'humans' (Legalism), or 'inequality' (Mohism). Therefore, this paper seeks to reveal how the political philosophies of these ancient thinkers developed while justifying such varying forms of hatred.

PERKINS Franklin

Early Chinese Approaches to Diversity and Disagreement

In this talk, I will discuss how early Chinese philosophers reflected on diversity and disagreement. I will argue that successfully understanding and dealing with disagreement requires us to, in Hegel's terms, move beyond the "abstract opposition between Truth and Error." When early Chinese philosophers began to reflect on philosophical diversity, they explained these disagreements not through the opposition between truth and error but rather in terms of partiality and completeness. That is, each philosophy gets something right, but also leaves something out. Variations of this approach appear in the "Jiebi" chapter of the *Xunzi*, the "Tianxia chapter" of the *Zhuangzi*, the "Essentials of the Six Schools" chapter of the *Shiji*, and in various parts of the *Huainanzi*. I will provide a survey of these approaches, considering two primary questions: is this diversity seen as a problem or an advantage, and, can this diversity be overcome? The *Xunzi* and the *Shiji* both believe that one school (Confucianism or Daoism, respectively) combines the strengths of all the others, so that the others are no longer needed on their own. The "Tianxia" chapter of the *Zhuangzi* claims that the ancients had a comprehensive philosophy but that it has now been lost, leaving only various partial approaches. The last part of the talk will concentrate on the views found in the *Huainanzi*, which contains the most positive view of diversity. In the conclusion, I will assess of the value and weaknesses of the *Huainanzi's* approach for the relationship between different cultures and philosophies in the contemporary world.

Confucian Dignity and Work-conditionality

Work-conditionality is the governmental practice of making receipt of a welfare resource contingent on performing work-related activity. For example, assistance with access to healthcare is work-conditional if it is provided only to those who are actively working or seeking employment. While Confucian ideas historically have been invoked by state institutions to defend a variety of work-conditional policies, to my knowledge, there is no extant scholarship that systematically develops a conception of what forms of work-conditionality are morally justifiable from a Confucian perspective. This paper offers a preliminary attempt at doing so.

I draw on the Confucian conception of human dignity to develop a Confucian-inspired account of the ethics of work-conditionality. The account has two central claims. First, work conditionality is morally justifiable—and sometimes morally ought to be implemented—only if it facilitates developing a society that enables its citizens to effectively pursue moral virtuosity, because human dignity is grounded in our potential to develop moral virtues. Consequently, it is morally impermissible to impose work-conditionality upon individuals whose work opportunities are limited to vice-instilling ones. Second, even when work-conditionality is morally justifiable, it must always (resources permitting) be paired with a system of unconditional universal entitlements that reflect Confucian optimism about the potential for moral virtuosity being shared across all of humanity. These universal entitlements would protect people from experiencing the forms of precarity that are most likely to encourage unvirtuous lifestyles. Thus, in a Confucian welfare system, work-conditionality would only ever be implemented for kinds of welfare assistance that elevate people above the level of security from descent into morally benighted lifestyles provided by unconditional welfare programs.

To illustrate the ecumenical attractiveness of the account, I also argue that it is congenial to both camps in the contemporary debate between Confucian democrats and Confucian meritocrats.

Filial Enhancement? Confucian Stance on the Ethical Limits of Genome Modification

Without a biologically restricted notion of human nature and arguments against “playing God,” Confucianism is open for the benefits of genetic enhancement [Nuyen 2007]. Moreover, it seems to be free from material-origin essentialism that stands behind “person affecting” and “identity affecting” interventions in individual lives [cf. Żuradzki, Dranseika 2022]. Hence, Confucianism has a relatively open attitude towards using prenatal testing and preimplantation genetic diagnosis as a means to select “healthier” babies, allowing for certain moral ambiguity [Zhao 2021: 81]. However, Fan Ruiping [2010] states that genetic modifications are admissible as long as they contribute to the Confucian values of moral development and fidelity to ancestors. A Confucian would not object to upgrading her child’s IQ; she should oppose, however, as Fan states, genome modification of children’s hair or skin colour as a disrespect toward the ancestors, particularly when the new colour of skin or hair is seen as more beautiful than their gift. Other Confucians [Li, Zhang 2019: 8] believe Fan’s restriction goes too far, as these modifications do not harm the family’s integrity and their good. It may be added that while the *Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* declares that the body (“every hair and bit of skin”) received from the parents must not be injured, it does not say it cannot be modified if that improves their gift. Following these concerns, the paper further explores the possible bioethical limits of the Confucian stance on genome modification and enhancement.

Classic Chinese Philosophical Insights into Large Language Models

This paper, "Classic Chinese Philosophical Insights into Large Language Models," investigates how Early Confucian philosophy, particularly the principle of the Rectification of Names, can enhance the development and ethical management of Large Language Models (LLMs). The paper argues that these ancient philosophical insights can provide valuable frameworks for addressing the semantic, ethical, and operational challenges faced by modern AI systems.

Large Language Models (LLMs) represent a significant leap in Artificial Intelligence, capable of understanding and generating human-like text through advanced neural network architectures. Despite their potential, LLMs are fraught with challenges related to accuracy, bias, ethical concerns, and interpretability. This paper suggests that Confucian philosophy, especially the Rectification of Names, offers a valuable perspective for addressing these issues. The Rectification of Names posits that societal harmony depends on the precise use of names and roles, ensuring that individuals' actions align with their titles and responsibilities.

LLMs, like GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer), are built on transformer architectures that leverage attention mechanisms to process and generate coherent text. These models undergo extensive pre-training on diverse datasets, followed by fine-tuning for specific tasks, enabling them to perform a wide range of applications from chatbots to content creation. However, they require significant computational resources and energy, limiting accessibility and raising concerns about their environmental impact.

Despite their capabilities, LLMs face notable challenges. They often struggle with semantic ambiguities, such as polysemy, where words have multiple meanings based on context. Additionally, LLMs can perpetuate biases present in their training data, leading to unfair or harmful outputs. Their complex neural networks operate as black boxes, making it difficult to understand their decision-making processes. Furthermore, LLMs need to adapt continuously to the evolving nature of language and societal changes.

The Rectification of Names (正名 zhèngmíng) is a cornerstone of Confucian philosophy, emphasizing the importance of precise language use to maintain social harmony. Confucius asserted that societal stability hinges on the correct use of names, ensuring that titles accurately reflect the roles and responsibilities of individuals. This alignment fosters clear communication and trust within society, as roles and actions are consistent with their names.

Confucian philosophy posits that names do more than identify; they prescribe behavior and define relationships within the social hierarchy. Misalignment between names and roles leads to confusion, ethical misconduct, and social disorder. Education is vital in this context, teaching individuals about their roles and moral responsibilities to ensure societal harmony. The dynamic nature of language requires continuous adaptation and education to maintain the alignment of names with societal roles.

The Confucian concept of the Rectification of Names has intriguing parallels with the challenges faced by LLMs. One key aspect is semantic alignment and model accuracy. Just as the Rectification of Names emphasizes the alignment of roles and responsibilities, LLMs must accurately align words with their meanings and contexts. Misalignment can lead to misinterpretation and ineffective communication, similar to the societal chaos described by Confucius when roles and titles are misaligned.

Ethical implications and bias are also significant concerns. In Confucian terms, ensuring that titles and roles are correctly assigned involves moral correctness. Similarly, LLMs must generate text ethically, addressing biases in their training data to avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Developers must implement safeguards and refine training data to ensure ethical outputs, aligning with the ethical guidelines governing AI development.

Interpretability and transparency are further areas where the Rectification of Names provides insight. The concept involves clarity and transparency about roles and duties, paralleling the need for interpretability in LLMs. Understanding how these models generate outputs enhances trust and accountability. Efforts to make AI decisions interpretable align with the broader goal of rectifying names by clarifying the role each part of the model plays in generating output.

Responsibility and accountability are crucial principles in Confucian philosophy, translating into the responsibility of developers and operators to ensure AI systems are used responsibly. This involves adhering to ethical AI practices and continuously monitoring and updating systems to prevent misuse and ensure adherence to intended purposes.

Moreover, the dynamic nature of language and its evolving context require continuous learning and adaptation for LLMs. Regular updates and fine-tuning help LLMs stay current with linguistic and societal shifts, maintaining their effectiveness and reliability.

Further research areas include deepening semantic alignment to refine LLMs' contextual understanding, developing ethical frameworks to mitigate biases, and enhancing interpretability to improve trust and reliability in AI applications. By integrating Confucian principles, the paper proposes a framework for the responsible and beneficial use of LLMs, fostering more harmonious and ethical interactions between AI and society.

Wang Yangming's Concept of the Unity of all Things and Support for the Environment

There is a profound cosmological theme in Yangming's philosophy: That all things are united. The theme is accompanied by his claim that humans can experience this state by maximizing their intuitive evaluating. In becoming aware of their unity with other life forms, even non-life forms, humans can better understand the benefits and harm experienced by them. This strengthens their motivation and capacity to support the environment.

Chen Lisheng describes four major ways by which humans participate in the unity of all things in Yangming's thinking: 1) through the common material force (氣) that permeates the universe; 2) humans attribute significance to other things; 3) humans embody ancestral relationships; and 4) humans have the responsibility to govern human affairs. Yangming's perspective leads one to look beyond human benefit to consider the welfare of the greater ecosystem. A person's fulfilment of their moral nature, which includes realizing their concern for the environment, is a process of realizing their unity with all things. It also leads to realization that humans are integrally and necessarily linked to the material world, and so too is the significance or justification of their existence. For these reasons, humans should support the environment.

SELLMANN James D.

Confucian depth ecology as a response to climate change

Aside from a few passages addressing animals or the environment, Confucian philosophy appears to lack an environmental ethics perspective. LI Zhehou's (李澤厚) contemporary work in Confucian philosophy continues this lacuna by limiting his understanding of community to the human realm. Using the common liberal humanism that limits moral actions to the interpersonal human realm misses the importance of inclusive moralities such as animal rights and environmental ethics. I propose that if we return to the original shared common cultural roots of Confucian and Daoist philosophy that a Confucian understanding of the natural world can embrace the non-human environment within the scope of Confucian morality. Extricating and elucidating ideas from the *Yijing*, the *Shijing*, Xunzi, Dong Zhongshu, Wang Chong, and later scholars, the concept of the mutual resonance and response (*ganying* 感應) between the natural world and humans developed into the unity of heaven and humanity (*tianren heyi* 天人合一). An inclusive Confucian depth ecology opens new ways of thinking that can be deployed to envision deeper dimensions for understanding the self's inner life, its connections to the outer life of the self-other relationship, and its extension to kin relationship with the environment. This paper explores how these old and new ways of thinking can change our behavior and change our moral interactions with others including the environment and thereby enhancing freedom as an achievement concept derived from graceful moral action.

Transhumanism and Ziran: Daoist philosophy of holistic universe in action – Daniel Lee's *Manimals* and Xu Bing's forest project

Presentation examines the theme of transhumanism and the integration of human beings with nature in philosophical and artistic representations of Chinese culture. The problem of the relationship between humans and other living beings and nature has been treated extensively in the Chinese philosophical tradition. Confucius, for example, already spoke of the need for a humane treatment of animals. However, the complexity of this issue was discussed in depth in Daoist philosophy, especially in the work of Zhuangzi. In the first part of my presentation, therefore, I will deal with the problem of anthropocentrism as treated in Zhuangzi's philosophical parables on the subject of the relationship between humans and animals. In the second part of the presentation, I will present the idea of transhumanism and the problem of anthropocentrism and environmental degradation in the works of two artists: Daniel Lee and Xu Bing. Lee's works titled *Manimals* directly addresses the problem of anthropocentrism by creating new creatures, that represent a physical fusion of humans and animals. These new creatures, however, evoke a deeper epistemological and axiological reflection on the understanding of the relationship between humans and animals. Xu Bing's *Forest Project* on the other hand, embodies the Daoist philosophical principle of 一生二, 二生三, 三生萬物 ("one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, three gives birth to all things") and reflects the interconnectedness and generative nature of life, resonating deeply with the project's focus on reforestation and ecological balance. Through the act of planting trees inspired by artistic calligraphy, the project illustrates how small, thoughtful actions can proliferate into broader ecological restoration, mirroring the Daoist idea of how life unfolds and multiplies from simplicity to complexity. By integrating this philosophy, Xu Bing not only emphasizes the harmony between human creativity and nature but also inspires a holistic approach to addressing environmental crises, highlighting humanity's role within the vast, interdependent web of life.

When English Trees Hide a Chinese forest: Teaching Chinese Philosophy in Lithuania Through English

Lithuanian, as a small language with a still only emerging tradition of Asian studies, faces unique challenges in teaching and researching Chinese philosophy. Since Lithuania's independence over 35 years ago, efforts to establish a robust academic foundation in Asian studies have gradually emerged, but significant obstacles remain. Among these is the lack of direct translations of Chinese philosophical classics into Lithuanian, which also means that there is a lack of an agreed-upon vocabulary for Chinese philosophical terminology. Consequently, educators rely heavily on English translations to teach Chinese philosophy, a practice that introduces its own complexities and interpretative biases.

The talk will analyze several problematic aspects of this dynamic, including the limitations of existing English translations, the difficulty of adapting philosophical concepts into a linguistic framework unfamiliar with Chinese thought, and the broader challenges for cross-cultural philosophical discourse in Lithuania.

SMALL Sharon Y.

Reexamining the Notion of De Through the Excavated Laozi Editions and the Han dynasty Interpretation of Yan Zun's Laozi Zhigui

While this panel focuses on Yan Zun and his Han dynasty commentary of which the seven *juan* of commentary on the *Dejing* are those that survived history, I ask to reconsider Han silk and bamboo editions and Han commentaries, through a reexamination of De and its meanings and implications from Guodian Laozi editions which do not demarcate dao and de as separate categories. The Guodian editions further intertwine contents from both “jings,” and serve as three coherent and complete manuscripts organized thematically. The current transmitted editions are based on the Han dynasty textual culture, archeological findings from the period show that the *Laozi* either begins with a *Daojing* or a *Dejing* (or a *Shangjing* and a *Xiajing*), depending on the source of influence and their ideological textual purpose. I ask to trace the development of the meaning of De within the *Laozi* tradition beginning with the study of the notion in pre-Qin textual remains of the *Laozi* and the fuller manuscripts dating to the Western Han. To conclude and enlarge the discussion, I ask to return to the panel's focus on Yan Zun and ask to reexamine Yan Zun's interpretation of *Dao* and *De* in its practical and ethical applications.

Daoist Philosophical Practice for a Better Life

The aim of this paper is to examine how Daoist philosophical practice can contribute to overall well-being. It centers around the hypothesis that life in general would be better when Daoist philosophy is practiced. The paper examines aspects of Daoist philosophy suitable for philosophical practice, focusing on ideas from the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, such as the concepts of the natural flow of things (*ziran*), non-action (*wuwei*), the inevitability of events, and the views on disputation and argument. The ideas of *ziran* and *wuwei* suggest that we can try to adjust the flow of events in ways we hope they will develop without, as it were, interfering too much, because if we do, we might disrupt them and come to the opposite outcome of what we hoped for. Accepting the idea of the inevitability of events helps us deal with burdens about the outcomes of events that we did not expect or hope to happen. The Daoist view on disputation and argument teaches us that it is hardly unlikely that we may tell who is right and who is wrong in daily conversations, thus inferring that arguments and debates are often futile. At the end, the paper discusses the idea of inner peace, which is crucial when implementing the above said Daoist concepts in philosophical practice. The paper concludes that Daoist philosophy may help individuals reach a better understanding of themselves and their role and position in society and the world. Hence, applying Daoism in philosophical practice may offer a significant contribution to helping individuals develop personal wisdom in dealing with burdens and hardships in everyday life, as well as overcoming societal or mental crises. This inherited improvement on individual level is believed to ultimately contribute not just to a better life but overall well-being as well.

Ecstasy of Breath(s): From Subjectivity to Community

The air is full of meaning. But there is a lacuna in every breath we take – the rhythm of inspiration and expiration is invisibly and almost imperceptibly broken and a pause is induced. A pause in the breathing rhythm, almost like a cessation/caesura, erupting from within the immanence and subjectivity of life. A possibility of an interval of love but also of stopping, or even terminating of breathing. A possibility of evil. Every breathe we take is enveloped both by the grace and danger of this moment – *a death*. In this talk, we will meditate on the ontological logic of this invisible caesura, marking a secret reminder – *remembrance of the departed and liminal breaths* within the life of community, *a democracy*. Our aim will be to show that with this breathturn, philosophy could argue for the possibility for another genealogy of future democracy in a new respiratory sense and against the violent modes and machinations of breathless power within politics. In order to be alive, one must breathe incessantly; but to live ethically, one needs to adjust her/his respiratory rhythm of the ethics of life and reserve of breath. This talk will therefore inquire into the ecstasy of breath as a possibility of transformed subjectivity within the future peaceful culture of democracy.

TAN Christine

Epistemic Resistance in the Zhuangzi

This work calls into question the idea that Daoism, more specifically the Zhuangzi, is a philosophy of non-resistance. More precisely, I use the epistemological ideas found in the Zhuangzi to make the argument for what I call epistemic resistance.

In order to make this argument, I point to a tradition of legitimating epistemic norms in Confucian philosophy which the Zhuangzi often criticizes, that is, the veneration of past sages and moral exemplars, as well as their sayings. I then point to the problems Zhuangzi raises regarding such a culture of legitimation, which is that epistemological systems are always contingent, and sometimes even manipulated by dominant power structures. Finally, I use stories from the Zhuangzi, traditionally referred to as “skill” or “knack” stories, arguing that they are political in nature, to propose an alternative which I call “epistemic resistance.” Here, I argue for the value of *undermining* existing epistemological frameworks that reproduce itself as a step towards making way for appropriate responses according to appropriate needs.

Intercultural Convergence of Value Judgement: A Confucian Perspective

Near the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the world witnesses intensified conflicts and crises. Human beings around the world more than ever insist on their own respective version of value judgement and yet there seems to be little hope of reaching consensus between different cultures, communities, or groups. Finding objective foundation for universal value judgement seems to be an insurmountable task. But what options do we have other than resorting to relative value judgement and the likely consequent conflicts? This paper attempts a Confucian solution to intercultural value conflicts. Through a reconstruction of some key ideas of early Confucianism, this paper argues that intercultural coexistence and cooperation can be based on the very idea of harmonious community without relying on realistic value foundation. The paper first articulates the Confucian idea of community (qun 群) and argues that a global community is a practical necessity of human beings of the twenty-first century and community building should not be limited to within a nation state. The paper then suggests that a global community building effort should be based on the idea of harmony of diversity (he 和) and guided by virtues of intercultural communication such as civility (wen 文), respect (jing 敬), ritual propriety (li 禮), and common concern for all (gong 公). This paper argues that intercultural consensus is possible with the common goal of harmonious communal living, and there is no need for agreement in thick conceptions of values.

Shuwu's Tragedy: Rethinking Mencius' Arguments on "Right of Rebellion"

Justin Tiwald's reinterpretation of Mencius' "right of rebellion" as a moral framework critical of tyrannical forms of rule instead of an "open mechanism" for bottom-up revolts has been agreed upon and supported by a range of scholars' recent reflections; however, this new perspective still awaits further clarifications and proof of evidence due to the scarcity of empirical examples in pre-Qin history. This article studies a unique case named "Shuwu's Tragedy" from *Zuozhuan* and *Gongyangzhuan* with a rich corpus of Neo-Confucian commentaries and debates on a minister's right to denounce the monarch for brutality. Shuwu was a virtuous prince of the state of Wey who temporarily assumed the monarchical duties of his fleeing elder brother, Duke Cheng of Wey, and he successfully resolved a military conflict with the state of Jin in 632 BCE. However, Duke Cheng murdered Shuwu when Shuwu planned to return the throne to him. Wey's minister, Yuan Xuan, thus escaped from Wey and accused Duke Cheng in front of the hegemon, Duke Wen of Jin, which eventually triggered further bloody killings and chaos in Wey's court and family. After reviewing the Neo-Confucian commentaries, this article argues that Shuwu's case strongly supports Tiwald's new thesis on Mencius' "right of rebellion"; furthermore, it discusses an ultimate question in Mencius' political ethics: which takes priority, chastening the tyrant or restoring order?

Civilizational Difference, the Nation State, and Common Humanity: Revisiting Carsun Zhang's Theory of Tianxia

When discussing the concept of “*Tianxia*” (天下), Zhao Tingyang (趙汀陽) has become a central figure. However, an important yet often overlooked aspect of contemporary “*Tianxia*” discourse is that the leading New Confucians in Taiwan and Hong Kong also place significant emphasis on the idea of world-ness. In this essay, I argue that “*Tianxia*” in the political theory of Carsun Zhang (張君勱), for example, can help illuminate the Confucian tradition of advocating for “peacefulness under Heaven” (*tianxia taiping* 天下太平) and “universal harmony in the world” (*shijie datong* 世界大同) in relation to the critical political issues confronting modern China. More specifically, I aim to make four main points. First, Zhang’s theory of *Tianxia* can be seen as a proposal for a modern form of “Confucian cosmopolitanism,” asserting that all human beings, regardless of their social or political affiliations, are members of a common community. Second, as a result, Zhang’s Confucian cosmopolitanism emphasizes an appreciation and acknowledgment of common humanity, which “translates ethically into an idea of shared or common moral duties toward others by virtue of this shared humanity.” Third, Zhang’s appeal to the “common heart-mind” (*xin zhi suo tong* 心之所同) as the core of Confucian cosmopolitanism parallels, to a significant degree, Kantian respect for human dignity, personal moral worth, and equal moral status. Finally, it is largely through a Kantian-inspired reinterpretation of Confucianism that Zhang redefines the civilizational spirit of China in response to Western imperialism and reshapes the traditional political framework of “family-state-*Tianxia*.” Consequently, his political theory seeks to mediate the tensions between patriotism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism through universal human nature.

TURNER Kevin J.

Toward a Confucian Theory of Social Reconstruction

This paper argues for a Confucian theory of social reconstruction. It draws on the philosophies of John Dewey, Michel Foucault, critical theory and the philosophy of technology to establish an interpretive framework for understanding social conditions as underdetermined articulations of technological arrangements. Confucian philosophy maintains our socio-political conditions are products of indeterminate arrangements of ritual technology and that the primary concern is the maintenance and reform of these ritual arrangements to keep them consistent with contemporary values and necessities. This paper addresses the issue of technology in Confucian thought, showing how reality is a dynamic whole that integrates history, technology, and culture characterized by ritual. This ritual reality has consequences for the Confucian self as constitutive through ritual roles and relations because it is these, and therefore each “self,” that embody the ritual reality. An analysis of the self, body, and subjectivity shows that the Confucian self is a social product that emerges through its involvement in ritually defined contexts. Through self-discipline, these ritual contexts are incorporated into one’s person whereby self and other become existentially intertwined and mutually reproductive. This entails that self-discipline must be extended to the cultivation of the ritual relations that constitute one’s person and thereby lead to the reformulation, renegotiation, and reconstruction of various articulations of ritual technologies and the reality they embody. This process of self-discipline becoming focused on the ritual conditions of society implies the coincidence of “learning” (*xue* 學) and “teaching” (*jiao* 教) since it is through the self as locus of ritual productivity that the ritual reality is transformed and transmitted in a progressive manner.

Keeping the Tally: Daoist magics and the cultivation of anti-imperial subjectivities

As read through the traditional lens of the Lao-Zhuang philosophical tradition, Daoism has rightfully been read as presenting some form of anti-imperial - if not outright anti-statist - political philosophy. And while we find this articulation of the texts convincing, there seems to be a friction between the theory of Daoism as excavated from the texts and the historical, lived reality of Daoist practitioners. If we commit ourselves to the idea that anti-imperialist positions are any combination of presupposed by, argued for, or implicit in, the ideological “core” of Daoism, then we must also wrestle with Daoism’s sustained interaction with Chinese empire(s), which often redounded to the Daoists’ benefit. Furthermore, the question must be addressed in a way that neither dismisses later Daoists ideology and practice as inauthentic or mistaken, nor that appeals to the hackneyed, colonial distinction between 家 *jia* and 教 *jiao*.

Through a survey of major Daoist soteriological technologies, this paper will argue that later Daoist practice retains the anti-imperialist spirit, even under Imperial patronage. We will examine how three esoteric technologies - 符籙 *fulu*, 外丹 *waidan*, and 內丹 *neidan* - each aim at manipulating or producing power that lie wholly beyond the capacity of Imperial machinations to affect, thereby presenting avenues for practitioners to cultivate, within themselves, the very sense of unfettered freedom that serves as the hallmark of traditional Lao-Zhuang Daoism.

A Speech that Follows Things Ways of Speaking in the Zhuangzi 莊子 and the Question of Chinese Philosophy

Among ancient Chinese philosophical texts, the Zhuangzi 莊子 is characterised by a unique, playful, and whimsical use of language. Its peculiar ways of speaking indubitably serve the Zhuangzi's profound philosophical insights. Scholars have argued that the Zhuangzi's use of language both manifest and pertain to some of its core ideas. Some have argued that the Zhuangzi's idiom goes together with its claim about the fluidity and transformative nature of all reality (Dirk Meyer, Stéphane Feuillas). Others stressed its effort to establish a language that respond to such fluidity (Wim De Reu, Chiu Waiwai). Still others have emphasised the transformative power of the Zhuangzi's mode of communication (Lee H. Yarle, Youru Wang). Expanding on this scholarship, this paper further investigates the Zhuangzi's philosophy of language. First, I shall focus on theoretical statements that relate the Zhuangzi's views on language to a radical ontology of change. The Zhuangzi indeed asserts that there is no reality, whether material or immaterial, that is ever unchanging. Consequently, any discourse that aims at saying something about reality must be as fluid and changing than reality itself. Second, I shall suggest that the Zhuangzi's deliberate and self-reflexive creation of a particular literary style is unique among ancient Chinese texts. In that regard, the Zhuangzi can be regarded as an unprecedented attempt to establish, theorize, and practice a distinctive kind of discourse. On this basis, it may be possible to draw a comparison between the Zhuangzi and the way ancient Greek philosophers, especially Plato, undertook to redefine the meaning of the word "philosophia" in order to name what was then a new intellectual practice.

Practicing what Laozi Preaches: The Refined Philosophy and Harmonious Rhetoric of the *Wenzi*

The *Laozi* presents us with a way of living in harmony with our natural and social environment. The text also offers categorical assurances that “weapons are ill-omened instruments” and “wherever armies encamped, thorns and thistles will grow.” Providing vivid imagery of the horrors of war, statements such as these do not inspire thoughtful discussion of military conflict. The *Wenzi*, although agreeing with Laozi’s quietist philosophy, offers a more refined stance and a more inclusive rhetoric when it comes to matters of conflict and warfare. Within the text we find a comprehensive system of values in which humaneness, rightness, and other concepts have their place but when facing the complexities of the world and getting along with others, nothing is more important than living in harmony with our environment.

Reading Descola's on human and non-human interactions through a Confucian lens

In recent years, Philippe Descola has questioned the modern understanding of nature, particularly as framed by Descartes' philosophy, which he argues has contributed to fostering a "mentality of plundering the planet." Descola's critique emerges from his anthropological work, specifically his study of the Achuar, who perceive plants and animals as beings with whom analogical communication is possible, rather than as mere objects "to be used" or "to be analyzed." Building on these observations, Descola developed a systematic framework categorizing various ways human civilizations relate to nature.

Among the critiques directed at Descola's work, one questions his interpretation of the Western tradition (after all, Kant was still capable of experiencing "the starry sky above his head"), while another points out a lack of engagement with Chinese philosophical traditions. In Confucianism, for instance, humans and animals share a common existence within the universe. This perspective stems from the concept of the "Unity of Heaven and Earth" as presented in the *Zhongyong* (中庸), which positions humans as living entities among others, called to cooperate with both Heaven and Earth. Other Confucian texts, such as the *Mencius* (孟子), emphasize a fundamental continuity between humanity and animals, though with variations in degree. The commentarial tradition surrounding *Mencius* encourages what Pierre Hadot describes as "the Orphic path towards nature"—an approach that engages the senses, allowing perceptions of nature to foster a larger sense of responsibility.

This presentation will first introduce Descola's framework of four ontologies, before taking a Confucian detour in harmony with Pierre Hadot's understanding of philosophy as a transformative experience, which includes what Hadot refers to as an "oceanic experience".

WANG Kun

The Positive Absence and Kun Way-making -- A Feminist Criticism in Neo-Confucian Ethics

There is an positive absence (*kongque* 空闕) in the gendered construction of the virtues of *qian* 乾 and *kun* 坤 relegated to men and women, corresponding to *tian* 天 and the earth, in Neo-Confucian ethical theory, represented by Zhu Xi's cultivation of the virtues. The positive absence exists as a place of nothingness between *kun* way-making (*kundao* 坤道) and *qian* way-making (*qiandao* 乾道). In *kun* way-making, the virtue of *kun* (*kunde* 坤德) constituted by the optimal appropriateness (*yi* 義) and wisdom (*zhi* 智) are oriented towards investigating events (*gewu* 格物) and knowing principles (*zhizhi* 致知); both the virtues of *kun* and *qian* are to be symbolized in *qian* way-making, while the symbolization is renegotiated in *kun* way-making. Between the two types of way-making, the place of nothingness is usually represented as a "lack" in a female subject. However, both virtues are founded on the spontaneity of her calculation (*quan* 權) in the place of nothingness or a positive absence. It is in a possibility to renegotiate both the virtues of *kun* and *qian* in a woman's experience of the positive absence that a potential feminist criticism to the dichotomous construction in Neo-Confucian ethics can be revealed.

WANG Tianyu

On Zhu Xi's "Before Arousal" and Its Corresponding Self-Cultivation Theories

In the discussion about the human mind by Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi (朱熹), the special concept of "before arousal and after arousal" (*weifā yīfā* 未发已发) plays a crucial role. "Before arousal" (*weifā* 未发) refers to a unique psychological stage where no specific thoughts, emotions or any other contents are aroused within the mind, yet perception itself remains awake, and the essence of innate virtue (*Mingde* 明德) also latently exists. Under such special conditions where both wakefulness and "quietness and inactivity" (*jiran budong* 寂然不动) exist together, Zhu Xi developed a self-cultivation theory centered on "the nurture through the maintaining of seriousness" (*zhujing hanyang* 主敬涵养). Steps such as constant alertness (*chang xingxing* 常惺惺), restraint (*shoulian* 收敛), and caution (*jinwei* 谨畏) aim to keep learners in a state where thoughts and emotions remain well untriggered while perception remains undimmed. Thus, the "middle" (*zhong* 中) is reached during the "before arousal" phase, which allows learners to further achieve "harmony" (*he* 和) when interacting with external things during the "after arousal" phase. Zhu Xi's reflections on the "before arousal" phase and its corresponding self-cultivation theories typically represent a meticulous observation of the mind and perception in Chinese philosophy. Such reflections always have the purpose to help learners gain a better understanding of their own mental mechanisms, thus enabling them to better purify the mind and elevate their spiritual realm.

Between Harmony and Equality: On the Quest of the Divine and Ultimate Concerns in Life as Inherent in the Twelve-tone Temperament in Ancient Chinese Music

The mathematical structure behind ancient Chinese Music held a divine pursuit in Zhou dynasty and was regarded as a harbinger of the cosmic order. In the “Zhouyu xia” 周語下 section of the *Guoyu* 國語, it is documented that King Jing of Zhou 周景王 (r. 544–520 BCE) had ordered the casting of a set of large bronze bells in the pitch of *wuyi* 無射, leading to opposition from royal officials grounded in the musical principles of *he* 和 “harmony” and *ping* 平 “equality.” The court musician Lingzhou Jiu 伶州鳩 advocated the belief that “music emanates from harmony, and harmony springs from equality.” Here, “harmony” signifies the perfect balance between the five (or seven) tones and the sounds of eight categories of musical instrument 八音 perceptible to human ears, while “equality” denotes the relatively but not absolutely equal temperament ratio and balanced structure of the twelve-tone scale used in ancient China called *shi'er lü* 十二律. While staying true to his duties as a court official, Lingzhou Jiu recognized harmony as the central notion behind the twelve-tone temperament originally generated by the so-called *sanfen sunyi* 三分損益 method, and saw harmoniousness as an expression of Heaven. This takes the 3:2 ratio between the musical pitches as sacred law that defies changes no matter how the king wills it. He believed that only by adhering to the twelve-tone that one could reap the practical benefits of music, such as the universal care of individual differences, cultivation of the body and heart-mind, changing of the social mores for the better, enhancement of human well-being, and ultimately elevating human beings to the level of Heaven. While the notions of harmony and equality in music also appear in the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of odes), Lingzhou Jiu’s discourse on chromatic scale elucidates how these two principles permeate the intangible numerical law and audible musical sounds, transitioning from cosmic order to the mystic regime of the soul, and ultimately converging back to the quest of the divine and infinite.

Incomplete Humanism: A Confucian Alternative to The Liberal-Capitalist Subject

This paper argues that the liberal-capitalist account of human nature presents us with an “incomplete” form of humanism in that it assumes that the unrestrained pursuit of human desires automatically coheres into harmonious, larger whole or telos. Under these assumptions, human beings on an individual level and as a species, as a matter of theodicy, already coherently relate to the human collective and to nature as a whole. From both the Confucian and Daoist perspectives these assumptions fundamentally mischaracterize the nature of the human. Human nature and its concomitant desires are socio-cultural and therefore, not subject to the limiting conditions of nature. This means that unlike the rest of biological life, human nature and desire are not predetermined, merely reflexive, constant, or universal. Human desires are not automatically in a sustainable equilibrium with its environment both social and physical. Both Confucianism and Daoism recognize the agential role that humans have in shaping their desires and “natures.” These Chinese philosophers present us with a more *complete humanism*.

Contrary to the previous Christian tradition that saw such unrestrained pursuit of one’s desires as a recipe for social chaos, the modern discourse of desire posits that there is a theodicean structure to the world (an “invisible hand”) such that, like the laws of physics or biology, this structure will ensure metaphysical harmony. The reason why the liberal-capitalist conception of the human being represents an incomplete transition to humanism is that it did not recognize that human beings, unlike the rest of the natural world, are not constituted by their biology alone. Both Confucianism and Daoism assumed the socio-cultural nature of the human and constructed their philosophical projects on the basis of this assumption.

Crisis and History: On the Emergence of Modern Historical Time in Liang Qichao's Philosophy of History

As a influential scholar in modern Chinese intellectual history, Liang Qichao was specifically renowned in his academic achievements in History and Philosophy. His series of famous works, such as *New Historiography* (*Xin shixue* 新史學) and *Introduction to Chinese History* (*Zhongguoshi xulun* 中國史叙論) has sparked a revolution in Chinese Historiography not only because it was an academic reaction towards the systematic crisis which the Chinese Empire confronted in the late 19th century, but more importantly, it also provided a new reflexion upon the Philosophy of History, which was exemplified in Liang's advocacy of reforming the historical view in modern Chinese Historiography. Therefore, this paper seeks to explore the philosophical foundations underlying Liang Qichao's concept of *New Historiography*, offering a comprehensive analysis of how his work redefined historical time within the context of modern Chinese thought. In doing so, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on the intersection of historiography and philosophy in early modern China. Drawing upon the theories of "historical time" as articulated by scholars such as Reinhart Koselleck and David Carr, we first aim to elucidate several core theoretical constructs that are crucial for understanding the shift in historical paradigms during this period. By applying these conceptual frameworks, this paper investigates the ways in which the political crises of the late Qing Dynasty—marked by both internal decay and external pressures—catalyzed changes in the narrative structures and epistemological foundations of Chinese historical writing. Subsequently, this analysis will delve into Liang's texts to provide a philosophical explanation on the importance of his innovation on historical time in modern Chinese history of Philosophy based on a transcultural and interdisciplinary perspective.

YANG Huayanni

How Not to Be a Daoist Dogmatist: Reflections on Language in the *Guan Yin Zi*

The *Guan Yin Zi* (關尹子) is a Tang dynasty apocryphal text found in the Daoist Canon *Daozang*. It fuses Daoist thought with Buddhist philosophy, resulting in nine chapters of aphorisms, whose terse insights and unusual charm have provoked multiple commentaries spanning Song and Ming dynasties. No English translation of the text is available at the moment, and very little attention has been given to it.

This paper is an effort to bring the *Guan Yin Zi* into the horizon of a wider scholarly community. In 9.20, it warns all students of the Dao: “When encountering subtle and exquisite sayings, or mysterious and wonderful deeds, be careful not to seize them with eagerness or adhere to them as truths. Once you do, it becomes the direst disease possible, with no medicine to cure.” Contrary to the majority of Daoist texts that espouse the Dao, habitually quoting from the *Daodejing* as uncontested wisdom, the *Guan Yin Zi* maintains a rare sobriety with all verbal formulations and ancient teachings. I shall trace out the text’s attitude toward language with a close analysis of chapter nine, observing the Daoist absorption of Buddhist imageries and its critique of attachment. Yet the Buddhist approach is also transformed when expressed in the Chinese language. This paper offers new points of reference on the early interaction between Daoism and Buddhism.

***Daoli* 道理 and *Logos*: Towards a Plurality of Truths**

The Western concept of “*logos*” is commonly translated into Chinese as “*Dao* 道”. While they overlap in many aspects, “*logos*” carries a sense of rationality that “*Dao*” lacks. A more fitting translation for “*logos*” might be “*daoli* 道理”. The *Dao* is inherently ineffable, whereas *daoli* is expected to be articulated, as suggested by the Chinese phrase “*jiang daoli* 講道理” (to articulate a *daoli*). In contrast to the cold and rigid rationality conveyed by the concept of *logos*, *daoli* aligns more closely with what Li Zehou 李澤厚 describes as “pragmatic reason” (*shiyong lixing* 實用理性), which is embedded in a network of relationships. Although both *Dao* and *logos* point to the transcendental Oneness, this notion is ultimately a linguistic construct. Thus, in interpreting Confucius’ doctrine of “*yi yi guan zhi* 一以貫之” (literally meaning “to keep the Oneness throughout”), I do not place emphasis on the “Oneness” but rather on the “throughout”. This suggests a process of transitioning from one *daoli* to another, ultimately establishing the connectedness among various *daolis*. An effective articulation of *daoli* necessitates a balanced separation between “*Dao*” and “*li*”. An excessive emphasis on “*Dao*” at the expense of “*li*” can undermine the foundation for communicating *daoli*, resulting in what is pejoratively referred to in Chinese as “*jiang da daoli* 講大道理” (empty sermonizing). When “*Dao*” overshadows “*li*”, it leads to “*Dao*-centrism”, which is essentially a variant of “*logos*-centrism”. Therefore, when communicating a *daoli*, it is advisable to avoid adopting a top-down approach that proceeds from the superior metaphysical ground of the *Dao*.

The *Zhuangzi*, Anarchy, and the Political Ethics of Failure

Previous approaches to Daoism and anarchism tend to underscore nonacting rulers or non-coercive rule. In this paper, I propose a different approach. In rereading the *Zhuangzi* and anarchy, I argue that while absence of coercive ruler is important, the *Zhuangzi*'s anarchist thinking does not necessitate the state and rulership. Instead, it embraces the interior dispositions of all things in living, acting, and transforming one another in defying the moralist-instrumentalist political hierarchy. Acting out of *ziran* (self-so, self-ordering), these dispositions give rise to horizontal inclinations and orientations beyond anthropocentrism that oppose the hierarchy of human politics. By foregrounding localities of evasion, noncompliance, nonparticipation, and disruption, they configure and reconfigure relations that fail to sustain the hierarchical operation of power. Of particular interest is the way in which such political failure is revealed as a form of freedom-in—characterized by the capacity to navigate freely within complex power relations (*xiaoyao*) as opposed to standing completely outside of it. The result is an embedded autonomy that does not break free from the extant power structure but is instead situated in the liminal relations from within. Such self-rule is part and parcel of the anarchy in the *Zhuangzi*. Conceived as freedom-in rather than freedom-from or freedom-to, the Zhuangzian anarchy contains elements of (re)orienting toward—political, aesthetic, ethical, bodily, and spiritual—that provide myriad possibilities for making relations anew. In unaccomplishing and unachieving—failing to accomplish and achieve linguistically, morally, aesthetically, and politically—one avoids being seized and totalized by following their intrinsic dispositions to grow and thrive in a world of interconnections. What the *Zhuangzi*'s anarchism amounts to, I argue, is a politics of proximity that understands anarchism as involving (re)creating postures and moods of intimacy whereby one finds herself at home.

ZHANG Lili

Zhouyi and Feminism: Margaret Pearson's Interpretation of the Book of Changes

The *Zhouyi* has attracted widespread attention from feminist scholars in contemporary times. This paper attempts to examine a feminist interpretation of the *Zhouyi* produced by Margaret Pearson, an American sinologist who published *The Original I Ching: An Authentic Translation of the Book of Changes*. She argues that the formation process of the *Zhouyi* should have been influenced by the matriarchal culture in the pre-qin era, and hence this book should not be translated without feminist perspectives. To elaborate, the first section will present three main points of Pearson's theory of the *Book of Changes*: (1) she treats *Zhouyi* as a "lived book" that maintains its effectiveness and usefulness in any situation and believes that this principle ought to be applicable to women; (2) she displays a different scenario of interpreting and translating the *Zhouyi* with traits of "worship yin" and takes the hexagram Gou 姤 as a typical example to show women's greatness; and (3) she proposes a "context dependence" principle in translation to get rid of the androcentrism annotative tradition. Then, the second section explores the background and reasons for Pearson's *new* interpretation. She notices that most previous sinologists have taken a male-centered narrative approach when translating the *Zhouyi*, where *Junzi* 君子 is translated as a disputed sexist term of "gentleman or superior man" and women face some degrading situations. For instance, the virtue of "straight" (*zhi* 直) means great when it encounters men but means "lascivious" when meets women. Such sexist translations are obstacles for people to perceive the real meaning of the *Book of Changes*, as Pearson has argued the existence of matriarchal elements in this book. Thus, the third section will take *yin-yang* relation as a vivid example to support her argument. Through carefully examining different versions of the *Book of Changes* and other relevant canons in the pre-qin era, I agree with Pearson's theory that the original *Book of Changes* should have fragments or metaphors that worship women or yin. Thus, the hidden fluid *yin-yang* relation is uncovered by Pearson, and hence her interpretation of the *Zhouyi* will bring herself

and the book into the construction of postmodern feminism. The conclusion section carries out Pearson's contributions to the contemporary research on the *Zhouyi*, as well as some of her misunderstandings of this book.

ZHANG Lingxiao

Addressing Anthropocene Environmental Crises through Chinese Philosophy: Nonhuman, Dark Ecology, and Sustainable Development

In light of the escalating global environmental crises, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, it is imperative to reimagine sustainability frameworks that transcend anthropocentric paradigms. This paper contends that Chinese philosophical traditions, notably Daoism and Confucianism, offer profound insights for addressing the challenges of the Anthropocene by emphasizing the intrinsic interconnectedness between humanity and the natural world. The Daoist thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi advocates for an ontological harmony between humans and non-human entities, proposing a vision of nature as an interdependent whole. Meanwhile, Confucian philosophers like Mengzi (Mencius) underscore the ethical responsibility humans bear toward nature, grounded in moral cultivation and the concept of ren (仁), or humaneness. Drawing on these classical philosophical frameworks, the paper engages with Timothy Morton's concept of "dark ecology," which critiques the limitations of anthropocentric environmentalism by promoting an awareness of ecological entanglements, and Donna Haraway's multispecies ethics, which calls for an inclusive approach to human and non-human relationships. By synthesizing these contemporary ecological perspectives with Chinese philosophical principles, this paper advocates for a relational, non-anthropocentric model of environmental ethics that can serve as a foundation for global sustainability policies. This interdisciplinary approach not only highlights the relevance of Chinese philosophy in reframing human-nature relations but also underscores its potential to contribute novel theoretical foundations for tackling the environmental crises of the Anthropocene. The paper demonstrates that Chinese thought, with its emphasis on balance, ethical responsibility, and relationality, offers vital pathways toward sustainable development and environmental resilience.

Philosophy of Perceptual Consciousness in Su Shi and the Cheng Brothers

How does perception occur? Does perceptual consciousness have a location? Northern Song dynasty thinker Su Shi (蘇軾) adopts the Buddhist model of codependent origination to understand audial experience. This model is different from modern science. Visual experience, for example, is regarded by scientists as a process in which an external stimulus impacts the retina of the eyes that triggers nerve impulses and pass to the brain which forms an image. On the contrary, Cheng Hao (程顥, 1032-1085) and Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107) maintain that the activation of perception is not from the external (感非自外). Cheng Hao thinks that perceptual consciousness has no location. In his "Letter on Calming Nature," he famously claims that nature does not have "inner" and "outer" (性無內外). In this article, I interpret this "nature" as perceptual consciousness and explain that it does not lie in the objects, the sense organs, or the brain. We should not confound the "location" of perceptual consciousness itself with the locations of its causal factors. This observation reminds us of Leibniz's "mill argument," namely, if perception could occur in the composite or in the machine as huge as a mill, when we enter the mill, we can only find one part pushing another, but we cannot find anything like a "perception."

Human nature, ritual and ‘proportional allocation’ – Investigating Xunzi’s social project and its contemporary relevance

This paper re-examines the long-disregarded social project based on a very different basic premise from the one at the bottom of the dominant exposition of Confucian thought. It takes on three main facets of Xunzi’s thought: *xing*, *li*, and *fen* as the framework for establishing a sustainable, harmonious society. First, it demonstrates how Xunzi’s theory of human nature is a necessary starting point for a working social project. Second, it investigates the ritualised social etiquette (*li*) and its role as a set of tools for creating the psycho-moral environment, allowing the application of a social model based on the ‘proportional allocation’ of goods (*fen*). This paper’s focal point is to scrutinise the notion of *fen*, which emphasises the necessity of a ‘proportional’ allocation of goods based on the social position of the recipient and the necessity of the situation and utility. It is argued that as much as Xunzi’s project recognises social hierarchy, it is not a blind apology for social inequality and steams out of a rational assessment of the socio-biological reality of humankind. Despite what his critics claim, regulatory measures in Xunzi’s project are not a display of distrust in humanity but result from recognising human psycho-moral reality and the significance of human agency in the society-building process. As such, Xunzi’s vision provides a comprehensive recipe for creating a sustainable, harmonious society. In the final section, this paper will attempt to elaborate on the relevance of Xunzi’s approach in the context of a ‘globally harmonious society’.