SINO-AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY:
A RE-"CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT"

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ABSTRACT: *"Constructive-Engagement" is a meta-philosophical and meta-methodological "strategy" suggested by Chinese and comparative philosophy scholar Bo Mou for analyzing and enriching philosophical exchange. In this paper, I will use this strategy towards an end, on a scale, and with a topic not attempted before. I will use it as a "template" for redesigning a poorly developing area of cross-cultural comparison I call Sino-African reflective studies (SARS). My goal in this work-in-progress is to design a plan for reconstituting SARS as Sino-African philosophy (SAP), an inclusive yet coherent field of research and innovation unified through organizing principles. I will design the overhaul of SARS in three stages. First, by surveying SARS for its basic features including its structural flaws. Second, by remapping SARS in line with "renovation" principles drawn from its literature. Third, by blueprinting SARS in line with "construction" principles theorized from the constructive-engagement strategy (CES).*

Keywords: *African philosophy, Chinese philosophy, comparative philosophy, constructive-engagement methodology, Sino-African philosophy*

1. FROM SINO-AFRICAN REFLECTIVE STUDIES
TO SINO-AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

The relations between the African continent and China have shown unprecedented economic, political and social growth over the past three decades. Yet as the study of these interactions has intensified, the research work comparing African and Chinese philosophical, cultural and religious ideas has remained modest. I will argue that *disorganization* is a fundamental reason to date for the underwhelming performance of Sino-African reflective studies[1] (SARS), a collective term coined for works

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[1] The word 'reflective' is used here instead of my original choice, 'conceptual', in order that its use in key terms in this paper not be confused with Heideggerian interpretations. When the words 'concept' or 'conceptual' are used in this paper, they should be understood in their conventional, non-technical senses.

that populate this nominal field. If substantially reformulated, I contend that SARS would enrich Chinese-African dialogue in cross-cultural philosophy. Towards this end, I will utilize the *constructive-engagement strategy*[2] (CES) of Chinese and comparative philosophy scholar Bo Mou as part of a larger framework to survey, remap and blueprint SARS' redesign. The envisioned intellectual yield of this overhaul will be a draft for developing this proto-field into an integrated inter-tradition inquiry deserving of the name *Sino-African philosophy* (SAP) as an academic identity.[3]

The words "inquiry" and "identity" above are weighted terms in this project. They are the interconnected theoretic 'object-ives'[4] that I foresee being required to bring SAP into fruition. (Henceforth, I differentiate them as 'SAP-Inquiry' and 'SAP-Identity' or simply 'Inquiry' and 'Identity'.) However, a complete design overhaul of SARS is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I will show how one of the object-ives—Identity—can be built with a *scaffolding* of *organizing principles*. Together these organizing principles would constitute an infrastructure for SARS from which to develop the emerging field in the direction of SAP.

These organizing principles will be derived from two sources: first, via patterns observed arising within SARS, and second, via categorical resources derived from CES. I refer to the SARS-derived organizing principles as *ranges* and *genres*. I will use them to "renovate" SARS into more philosophically aligned arrangements. I refer to the CES-derived organizing principles by the same terms Mou created for them in

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[2] In light of prominent featuring of Africa and Africans in this study, it is important to avoid what would be an unfortunate confusion between 'constructive-engagement' the *strategy* and 'constructive engagement' the *policy*. The latter was a controversial initiative by the U.S. government during Ronald Reagan's presidency to end Apartheid in South Africa through incentives rather than sanctions. The international policy and the inter-tradition strategy are entirely unrelated.

[3] It is too far afield of this paper's immediate goals to enter into the debate over what 'philosophy' is or is not and of whether African or Chinese traditions "qualify" as such. I acknowledge that those questions may eventually affect some of the ways SARS/SAP is renovated-constructed. Mou's definition and signaled usage for the term 'philosophy' is minimally what I intend for SAP. As Mou states:

> …the label 'philosophy' (or its counterparts in the phonetic languages) can be, and actually is, used *referentially* (if not fully descriptively at the initial stage of using the term) to designate such a generic type of reflective inquiry: (1) philosophical inquiry can ask any fundamental questions, and can have various fundamental concerns, about the world and human beings; (2) philosophical inquiry is critical in nature in the sense that it does not *blindly* claim or accept anything and nothing is *absolutely* excluded from a philosophical inquirer's gaze; (3) philosophical inquiry establishes its conclusion *intrinsically* and *primarily through argumentation, justification, and explanation* rather than being based on faith. The foregoing three crucial features of philosophical inquiry have *thus* become the due contents of the very notion of *philosophical* inquiry as held in the (worldwide) *philosophical* community (2010, 3, fn. 2, author's emphases).

[4] According to Mou, a philosophical "…object is not necessarily some ontological object in some standard sense like a chair or a tree but an object in the following minimal metaphysical sense: what counts as such an object can be anything that could emerge as, or be objectified into, a thing under reflective examination. [For example,] [t]he object in question might be…virtue, piety, and the relation between the individual and the collective in ethical study, or anything that deserves reflective examination" (Mou 2001, 345). 'Inquiry' and 'Identity' are 'objects' in this latter non-physical sense.

his strategy. These principles are called *movement*, *orientation* and *phase*—though my usages are somewhat different. I will employ them to "construct" a more explicitly philosophical scaffolding for SARS. Each set of organizing principles represents a stage in my overall "renovative-constructive-engagement" (or "ren-construction") plan to transform the SARS proto-field into Sino-African philosophy. However, before theorizing any kind of renovation or construction, the intellectual materials in need of reworking should be identified. What follows is a preliminary survey of some of the key features of SARS.

2. SURVEYING SINO-AFRICAN REFLECTIVE STUDIES

2.1   TEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS

The basic building material of SARS is the *Sino-African reflective text*[5] (SART). SARTs are works comparing, spurring or inventing conceptual interchanges between sub-Saharan African and Sinitic (i.e., "Chinese" predominately but occasionally other Asian) thought-systems. These texts usually draw upon the respective cultural, religious and/or philosophical traditions of peoples indigenous to those regions.

It should be clarified further what is meant by 'text' in this context. Texts differ in their sources. SARTs surveyed in this study will be English-language published and unpublished academic works such as scholarly books, professional journal articles, doctoral dissertations and conference papers. Texts differ in size. Some texts are extended reflections on African and Chinese ideas while others are brief tangents found in otherwise focused works. Some take up large sections of academic books hundreds of pages long (e.g., Kruger 1995; Robinson-Morris, Jr. 2018) while others are less than a hundred words (e.g., Kamalu 1990, preface). Yet the size of a text or even its stated focus does not determine automatically a text's potential importance to SARS/SAP. For example, in an essay focusing on the state of African philosophy in Africa, the few lines written tangentially about "Oriental philosophy" by the esteemed Ghanaian African philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, are interesting (1984, 44). On the other hand, Futures Studies researchers Tim Kumpe and Kuo-Hua Chen's nineteen-page rumination (2014) on the fostering of greater "wisdom" in Africa-China relations does not consider any African or Chinese philosophical ideas or approaches.

A single published or unpublished work may contain several texts that can be distinguished through different assessments of their significance to the renovation/construction of SARS/SAP. Texts will be categorized and re-categorized as different *types* of SART depending on those assessments, as we shall see. I do not count, however, the same Sino-African reflective text more than once in the calculation of the total number of texts surveyed. Keeping this all in mind leads to a rough sum of about *sixty* SARTs**.**

One may question why I cast such a broad definitional net for SARTs. Why not "stick" just with its straightforward works of philosophy? Reasons for including texts

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[5] See footnote 1.

that might not be conventionally accepted as "philosophy texts" are underscored throughout this paper but I shall summarize my defense here: it would be imprudent to prohibit *a priori any* text exhibiting reflection on Chinese and African ideas but otherwise displaying none or few of the disciplinary credentials of being a work of professional philosophy, such as a text having been authored by an academically-trained philosopher or having been published within one of the discipline's scholarly journals.

The immediate reason to resist using such conventional disciplinary parameters for a text's inclusion within SARS is that it makes little sense to determine *beforehand* what intellectual materials will be needed to (re)create this proto-field. However, the desiderata for this renovation-construction project may be anticipated through analysis and theorization. This is my defense for making—initially—the definition of 'text' quite broad and the acceptance of source material quite liberal; it is to enable the capture of any idea from any source within SARS "literature" that may have the potential to aid in SAP's construction. Yet the irony is not lost on me that in my quest to make SARS more "philosophical" by making it more recognizable, acceptable and useful to comparative philosophers will require drawing, in good measure, on disciplines *other* than philosophy.

Having discussed the parameters of my notion of SART, I will resume outlining the remaining disciplinary, topical, and cultural-tradition characteristics of the SARS literature.

2.2   DISCIPLINARY AND TOPICAL CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to the textual issue, another underlying reason why labeling SARS more simply as a 'philosophy' is complicated is because the proto-field is actually made up of several different disciplines. Noted in the survey were the disciplines of education, religious studies, international relations, business management, intercultural communication, media studies, art history/performance studies, and, of course, philosophy. Observed through Western categories of philosophy, Sino-African reflective scholars can be said to conduct their research mainly within the areas of ethics, ontology and metaphysics. The more commonly investigated ideas are "harmony", "personhood" and "community". The more commonly investigated aspects of those notions are "personal agency", "filial piety", "ancestor reverence" and "*guanxi*" (關係).

2.3   TRADITIONS: AFRICAN

SARS scholars investigate several African and Chinese traditions for similarities and differences. Pertaining to Africa, those traditions are "African thought" and the Akan,

Ibgo, Nguni,[6] San and Yoruba traditions. Pertaining to China, they are "East Asian thought" and the Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist traditions.

African thought in SARS is a broad term encompassing secular and sacred ideas said to be long-held and still significant to many black Africans. 'African thought' is produced either through a synthesis of many purportedly African cultural traits by the SARS scholar (e.g., Igbafen 2014) or by adopting existing anthropological/ folklorist/ linguistic researches positing similar traditional worldviews among different, often geographically distant, African peoples. John Mbiti's *African Religion and Philosophy* (1969), E.A. Ruch and K.C. Anyawnu's *African Philosophy* (1981) and Chukwunyere Kamalu's *Foundations of African Thought* (1990) are prime examples of such "ethnophilosophies" used in SARS. After surveying the literature, I detected at least seven generic designations for African traditional thought used in SARS. Most African reflections were referred to as "sub-Saharan thought", "African thought", "African traditions", "African philosophy" or less frequently as "African religion", "African culture", "African values" or "African ethics".

Several African religious/philosophical traditions are specified in SARS. The better recognized by name arguably are the Akan, Igbo, Nguni, San and Yoruba traditions. The *Akan tradition* was originated by traditional sages[7] in Ghana. Philosopher Kwame Gyeke identifies them generally as *onyansafo*.[8] Akan reflective thought was enriched substantially by modern academic philosophers such as Gyeke, William Abraham, Kwasi Wiredu and K. Anthony Appiah. The *Igbo tradition* was created by traditional sages in Nigeria. Igbo philosophy has been advanced by religious studies/philosophy scholars such as Emmanuel Edeh, Pantaleon Iroegbu and Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony. The *San tradition* was originated by the traditional sages of a non-Bantu people living in Southern Africa (mainly Botswana, Namibia and South Africa). The respective ethnographic investigations by Lorna Marshall, David J. Lewis-Williams and D. G. Pearce, and Mathias Georg Guenther on San cosmology and religion have substantially advanced knowledge on those topics. The *Yoruba tradition* was formulated originally by Nigerian and Beninese traditional sages. Philosopher Barry Hallen described the Yoruba sage as an individual clearly surpassing "the sort of analysis one would expect from the ordinary 'man of the

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[6] Nguni are southern African peoples who speak Bantu languages. This group includes Ndebele, Swazi, Xhosa and Zulu peoples living predominantly in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

[7] By 'sage', I mean primarily 'philosophic sage', as the term was defined in African philosophy by the late Kenyan philosopher Henry Odera Oruka. According to Oruda, a philosophic sage is a man or woman

> of traditional African culture, capable of the critical, second-order type of thinking about the various problems of human life and nature; persons, that is, who subject beliefs that are traditionally taken for granted to independent rational reexamination and who are inclined to accept or reject such beliefs on the authority of reason rather than on the basis of a communal or religious consensus (Masolo 2016, with quotation from Oruda 1990, 5-6).

[8] See Gyeke 1995, 62-3 for description of the intellectual traits and social practice an Akan *onyansofo* pursues that make this sage a "philosophic" one. I will assume philosophic sages in the San, Yoruba, Igbo and Nguni traditions function similarly to the Akan "version" albeit with some cultural differences.

street'…because of his exceptional training and knowledge as an *onisegun…*" (2006, 20, my emphasis). Among the tradition's better known philosophers are Segun Gbadegesin, the late J. Olubi Sodipo and Hallen.

A number of Sino-African comparisons involving these traditions exist. There is J.S. Kruger's (1995) comparisons between concepts created by San thinkers and ideas from Buddhism and Daoism/*yin-yang* (陰陽) thought. Kruger also made a brief speculation involving Bantu Sotho–Tswana religious beliefs and Buddhism (1995, 255). John I. Unah has revealed certain similarities between Yoruba, Daoist and Confucian thought. There are likenesses between *omoluabi*, the "ideal man" concept in Yoruba thought, and the Confucian notion of sage, he contends (2014, 117). Unah has also ventured that the "concept of Tao" (*Dao* 道) in Chinese philosophy and the notion of "vital force" in African philosophy perform roughly "similar roles" (2014, 118). Kweku Ampiah (2014) relates Confucian notions of filial piety and ancestor worship to those from Ghana's Akan culture. Molefi Kete Asante and Rosemary Chai (2013) compare the Akan concept for 'destiny', known as *nkrabea*, to the approximation in Chinese Buddhism known as *yuanfen* (緣分). Onukwube Anedo (2012) juxtaposes "harmony frameworks" centered around the Chinese (Confucian) notion of *he* (和) and Igbo concept of *udo*. However, no other African tradition identified by a culture-specific tradition name has been compared more with Chinese thought than the Nguni philosophy of Ubuntu.

Ubuntu philosophy originated from now anonymous Nguni sages. Its discussion in writing extends back to the mid-nineteenth century (Gade 2011). Its seminal discussion as a philosophy, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism*, was written in 1980 by Zimbabweans Stanlake Samkange and Tommie Marie Samkange. Ubuntu philosophy developed substantially during the 1990s within the context of South Africa's transition from a racist Apartheid state to a multi-cultural democracy (Gade 2011). A list of some of the philosophy's key theoreticians from that time and since would include South African theologians Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Augustine Shutte and philosophers Mogobe Ramose, Leonhard Praeg and the American Thaddeus Metz.

2.4 TRADITIONS: SINITIC

East Asian thought is my term to encompass "Eastern philosophy" and "Oriental philosophy", the main generalizations in SARS for the region's traditions. (Such overly broad terms are not used as often with Sinitic traditions as they are with African traditions.) Several Sinitic religious/philosophical traditions are specified in SARS. The better recognized by name are Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.

Comparisons between *Confucianism* and African traditions draw from the pre-Qin dynasty "classical" thinkers of the Chinese philosophy. Confucius, and to a lesser extent, Mencius, are referred to via *the Analects (Lun-Yu* 論語) and *the Mencius* (*Meng-Zi* 孟子). Xun Zi, the third great Confucian thinker of this period, is rarely mentioned (see Du Toit 2015 for an exception). As for *Daoism*, SARS research

assimilates notions from pre-Qin dynasty "classical Taoism" (Kruger 1995, 300). The *Dao-De-Jing* (道德經) is referenced or alluded to in most comparisons. Emphasis is on the metaphysics presented in this text, namely, the "Taoist yin-yang" (Kruger 1995, 286; Kamalu 1990, preface). Unah (1996) does not compare Daoist and African concepts directly but may be the first to place Daoism (and Confucianism) and African philosophy similarly within a shared problematic, namely, the "trouble" Western philosophy has had with recognizing either African or Chinese reflective systems as "philosophy". Unah (2011) does initiate an African-Daoism comparison, focusing on the "authenticity, choice and purpose" of the self. Unah followed up a few years later with a meta-ethical comparison of those traditions (2014). A more advanced exploration of subjectivity (and epistemology) is pursued by Wu, et al. (2018). Unah (2011) is perhaps the first scholar whose comparisons went beyond the *Dao-De-Jing* to employ also Daoist ideas articulated by Yang Zhu (楊朱) and Zhuang Zi (莊子), respectively.

As for *Buddhism*, use of China's Hua-Yan school (*Hua-Yan-Zong* 華嚴宗), a *Tang* dynasty (唐朝) development of Indian Mahayana thought, is mentioned or alluded to by Michel Clasquin (1999) and Kruger (1995, 1999). There have been brief correspondences hypothesized about certain Tibetan Buddhist and South African legends and myths by Wratten (1995) and Loue (1999). There are "pan-Buddhist" conceptual matters evident in Bhikkhu Kaboggoza Buddharakkhita's (2006) account of tensions between his Theravada doctrine, ritual and iconography and that of Kenyan and Ugandan traditional thought (and evangelical Christianity). (I include these latter cases of non-Chinese Buddhism because they each might provide perspectives within the "range" of my renovation project, as I will explain below.)

More surveying of Sino-African reflective studies is required before further delineations of SARS can be made. However, sufficient detail has been presented that certain impediments to SAP's emergence can be highlighted.

3. PROBLEMS WITH SINO-AFRICAN REFLECTIVE STUDIES

Thousands of scholarly books, reports and articles have been written on Sino-African relations. Yet virtually absent, even from some of the more subject-inclusive Sino-African literature surveys written over the last decade (e.g., Li 2005 and 2016; Simbao 2012; Monson and Rupp 2013; Monson 2016), are works reflecting on Chinese and African philosophical concepts. It could be surmised from this virtual absence that SARS has made little topical or theoretical impact on Sino-African relations studies. I suspect that the impression made to date by SARS upon comparative philosophy has also been faint. One could blame SARS' recent emergence for it having had so little impact as yet on those research fields. This is to an extent, true, but one could do better analytically than simply chalking up the field's feebleness to its immaturity. It can be shown there are *external* and *internal* factors sapping SARS' potential. I will bracket consideration of external factors for they are largely out of philosophers' hands to change. Philosophers have a better chance of

mitigating the internal reasons for SARS' relative lethargy. What are those internal reasons?

3.1 SARS: "MULTIPLE DISCIPLINARY", BUT NOT "INTER-DISCIPLINARY"

SARS researches are scattered across several disciplines. Based on ongoing research, about 22 per cent of the nearly sixty SARTs identified so far are written by religious studies scholars. Close to another 22 per cent are authored by international relations specialists. About 24 per cent—nearly a full quarter—come from other non-philosophy disciplines ranging from Business Management to Futures Studies. Philosophy is the largest single contributor at close to 30 per cent but at least seven other disciplines constitute the proto-field with two together constituting roughly 44 per cent of it. Being a vessel molded by multiple disciplines is a defining trait of SARS.

While there are strengths to be harnessed to SAP from SARS' diversity, possessing multiple disciplines that share 'Sino-Africa' as an area of concern but are barely aligned otherwise is detrimental to the maturation of SARS in the following related ways:

(1) Little referencing of reflective scholarship generated within one discipline occurs in another discipline. Therefore, not much intellectual correspondence has occurred between SARS' disciplines. There are very few joint publications between SARS African and Chinese thought scholars. Articles such as Bell and Metz (2011), Asante and Chai (2013) and Wu, et al. (2018) are rare exceptions. Yet the development of existing lines of research and the creation of new ones should be informed significantly by what is happening intellectually *throughout* SARS, not just by what is occurring within a scholar's favored section of it.[9] Otherwise, little in the manner of a terminological *lingua franca* will emerge among its authors.

(2) No one discipline has been established as SARS' intellectual "hub." More tellingly for SAP, philosophy scholarship in SARS has yet to clearly harness the proto-field's different disciplinary strengths to a philosophical agenda. What exists instead is a hodge-podge of conceptualizations and approaches. Hence, while SARS can be aptly seen as a formation of various disciplines, it cannot be rightly called an *inter*-disciplinary one.

3.2 SARS: "TRADITIONS-PAIRED", BUT NOT "TRADITIONS-BRIDGING"

Nor, ironically, can SARS be called a fully inter-*tradition* endeavor. Sino-African reflective scholars who work on one type of Sino-African tradition-pairing do not often mention studies carried out on a different type of Sino-African tradition-pairing

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[9] One of the achievements of the constructive-engagement movement, according to Mou, is that it "has become a collective enterprise involving systematic efforts instead of individual scholars' personal projects" (Mou 2009c, 573). SARS should become a systematic enterprise as well—hence, the efforts at Renovation-Construction.

that may be germane. For example, it is quite common to find that scholars working on, say, Confucianism and Ubuntu, have not related their research to comparative investigations on, say, Daoism and Ubuntu, for possible relevance. Unah (2014) is a rare counter example, albeit one that is at the very start of such explorations. In short, SARS is puzzlingly both traditions-bridging yet traditions-bound.

SARS exists as a paradox. Multiple disciplines and many traditions constitute it, yet these same disciplines and traditions frequently operate in practical isolation from each other. I argue these internal impediments to SARS' development radiate from a fundamental problem: *poor organization*.

With SARS' scholarship so disconnected, the synergy needed to spur new engagements or deepen investigations of its more commonly examined concepts has not manifested. For example, many SARTs are what philosopher Robert E. Allinson might classify as being conducted in a "positive comparativist" manner (Allinson 2001, 272). What generally occurs in SARS are "searches for likenesses and unlikenesses between the two traditions…[but] normally there is no active expropriation of issues, concerns, or methods found originally in the other tradition and consequent alteration of methods in…[the first] tradition" (*ibid*.). This speaks to a failure to "internalize" the reflections of the other side typically by either the "Sino" or the "Afri" interlocutor. Perhaps this explains some part of the reason why even philosophy-SARS have not garnered the level of interest one might expect in African, Chinese or comparative philosophies at a time when interest in Sino-African studies appears to be burgeoning.

Undoubtedly this proto-field will continue to grow through an incremental build-up of hit-or-miss publications. The real question is, therefore, whether that progression will actually *advance* the field's quality impressively or whether a ponderous increase in the number of texts on more or less predictable topics is likely to galvanize Sino-African reflection. What is at stake for SARS, in CES terms, is whether the emerging field can in the near future begin to make unique and significant contributions to "the development of philosophy and of society" (Mou 2016, 265). It is hard to imagine SARS generating that kind of intellectual or "political" relevance unaided. It is hard to imagine SAP germinating from the presently scattered, uneven efforts of SARS without the intervention of some form of intellectual scaffolding.

The next logical step is, therefore, to design such a scaffolding. Constructive-engagement provides a strategy that can be adapted to build such a framework.

4. STRATEGY, TEMPLATE, SCAFFOLD
FOR SINO-AFRICAN REFLECTIVE STUDIES

4.1 STRATEGY

Mou defines his 'constructive-engagement strategy for comparative philosophy' (which I abbreviate also as "CES") thusly:

The constructive engagement strategy as one general strategic methodology in doing philosophy comparatively, briefly speaking, is this: to inquire into how, by way of reflective criticism (including self-criticism) and argumentation, distinct approaches from different philosophical traditions (whether distinguished culturally or by styles and orientations) can learn from each other and jointly contribute to the contemporary development of philosophy (and thus the development of contemporary society) on a range of philosophical issues or topics, which can be jointly concerned and approached through appropriate philosophical interpretation and/or from a broader philosophical vantage point (Mou 2015a, 1-2).

Having come to the definition of CES, I am now equipped to recast the object-ive of this paper more explicitly in its terms.

4.2   TEMPLATE

Sino-African philosophy is intended to be an inter-disciplinary yet coherent form of inquiry and innovation in the service of philosophical comparison and dialogue. SAP is the "broader philosophical vantage point," the *raison d'etre* for the ren-construction of SARS. SAP, however, in this yet-to-be-created meta-level sense, is complicated (it is "two-dimensional" being both Identity and Inquiry) to fully render, even schematically, at this time.

This is why I have chosen to focus on just one of its meta-objects, 'Identity.' I have positioned Identity to be a more "relatable" substitute for SAP writ large because it is arguably an easier first step toward understanding SAP than Inquiry. SAP-Identity is intended to function as a more proximate, more conceivable yet rather broad meta-philosophical vantage point. In theory, it performs this function by, on the one hand, positioning a scholar "close enough" to a single object-ive as to be able to gauge critically whether the prospect of ren-construction is reasonably feasible for Identity and hence possibly so as well for SAP. Yet, on the other hand, Identity still being on the scale of a meta-philosophical object—with a large, prescriptive goal, at that—may keep a scholar at a "far enough" cognitive distance so that Identity takes on some of the characteristics of an intellectual ideal, and, like SAP, could inspire scholars already inclined to develop Sino-African relations, to do so through an inter-culturally resonant philosophy.

I contend that CES could buttress these intellectual and attitudinal components of Identity in the following ways: (1) CES engenders a productive "open attitude" toward doing inter-cultural philosophy. CES, as Mou states, "looks at…how [through] cross-tradition engagement in philosophy…we can learn from each other and jointly contribute to the common goal of contemporary development of philosophy and the development of contemporary society…" (Mou 2015b, 58). (2) CES is rigorous. It proceeds "through criticism and self-criticism and philosophical argumentation… instead of taking a passive and less philosophically-interesting 'mere-tolerance' attitude" (Mou 2015b, 58). (3) CES is practical. It provides a latticework for philosophical dialogue. As Mou explains, CES "gives a working meta-methodological framework for evaluation and constructive engagement: [wherein] the

relevant resources can be used for the sake of effective evaluation and thus can be tested for their explanatory force" (Mou 2015b, 59). (4) CES welcomes diverse interlocutors. Its potential to facilitate discourse between Chinese philosophy and other non-Western traditions was indicated by Mou. He wrote particularly of its capacity to function as a "methodological template" for Chinese-African exchanges (2009b, 599).

4.3   SCAFFOLD

At the meta-philosophical level of ren-construction, what should be considered is the coordination of organizing principles more so than the comparison of a tradition's or discipline's concepts. As a template, one could predict that organizing principles formulated from CES would have this capacity to coordinate.

But what of SARS? Though an emerging field, does it nonetheless possess (re)organizing principles or the rudiments of ones? This is an important question for we should avoid overwriting potentially useful renovation principles with what could be stronger principles from construction since constructive-engagement is a well-developed strategy. To bar against the creation of a disjointed ren-construction, I will first demonstrate the importance of organizing principles distilled from patterns observed among SARTs. Theorization of CES's capacity to organize will follow.

5. RENOVATION:
REMAPPING SINO-AFRICAN REFLECTIVE STUDIES

5.1   RENOVATION OF SARS BY "RANGE" PRINCIPLE

One SARS renovation should be the organization of SARTs by *range*. 'Ranges' are different clusterings of SARTs according to how similar some are to each other in sophistication, insight and/or rigor. Ranges are also established according to how similar SARTs are in those qualities to SARTs authored by some of the proto-field's philosophers. The latter stipulation does not mean that philosophers have authored all the best texts in the field. Yet since my project *is* a philosophical one and because a good number of the better quality SARTs *are* by philosophers, it makes sense to use those texts to orient the initial organization of Sino-African reflective texts. Grouping texts into ranges is a preliminary means of considering the potential relevance of any text within SARS to SAP without consideration of the text's disciplinary origin.

Examining approximately sixty SARTs generated the following range categories: *prompter, primary, proximate, provocative* and *peripheral.*

(1) *Prompter range texts* encourage Sino-African reflective engagements but do not actually conduct such investigations. An example of a Prompter text would be Wiredu's two sentences advising African philosophers to adopt the following attitude toward "Far Eastern thought": "With regard to the varieties of Oriental philosophy the need at present is to study them in the first place. To restrict ourselves to Western

philosophy, even if we approach it critically, would in itself betray a colonial mentality" (1984, 44). About 25 per cent of SARTs are Prompter texts.

(2) *Primary range texts* are typically the strongest straightforward examples of inter-tradition comparison. Primary range texts together constitute what could be described as the topical and methodological "baseline" of SARS. Theirs are the concepts targeted and approaches pursued most often. A good number were written by philosophers and religious studies scholars.

Of the philosophers, a co-authored article by two of them, Daniel A. Bell and Thaddeus Metz (2011), is perhaps the best known in the field with a number of Metz's individual articles (2014, 2017a, 2017b) extending its themes. While Unah's book chapter including Confucianism (1996) did not compare the Chinese tradition with any African one, his somewhat related 2014 journal article did, doubling the ante with the inclusion of Daoism and by raising a thought-provoking methodological distinction between "comparison" and "dialogue". It is possible to see Metz's review "from an African perspective" (2016) of Chenyang Li's book on Confucian harmony (2014), which was then followed-up by an extended reply from Li (2016), as an exchange that enriched SARS. It was also implicitly, to my mind, a response to Unah's call (2014) for more actual dialogue to take place between tradition representatives. Ampiah's (2014) attempt to decenter the uniqueness of Confucian values through his comparison of them to values held in Akan culture is a challenge that should be answered.

Of the religious studies scholars, Kruger's book (1995) relating the thought-system of traditional San hunter-gathers with Buddhism (and Christianity) is eclectic but ground-breaking. Michel Clasquin, Kruger's former doctoral student, wrote an intriguing dissertation with a chapter comparing Buddhism to "African thought" and Ubuntu (1999). About 27 per cent of texts are Primary texts.

(3) *Proximate range texts* are less successful attempts or ones somewhat excludable due to technicalities. For example, Chris O. Akpan's (2011) comparison of the thought of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, with traditional African views on causality is a fine starting point. However, Gautama's "Indian" Buddhism would have to be related to the (much) later ruminations on the topic by Chinese innovators of Buddhist thought such as Du Shun (杜順) to count unreservedly as a *Sino*-African reflective text. About 8 per cent of texts are Proximate texts.

(4) *Provocative range texts* employ ideas and/or approaches that are at present quite atypical within Sino-African reflective studies but are nonetheless intriguing and have the potential to open up the field in new exciting directions. They would likely instigate significant readjustment of the ideas/frames/traditions utilized in Primary range texts. For example, David Robinson-Morris' book (2018) relating Ubuntu and Buddhism to education topics is heavily infused with postmodern theory, perspectives rarely employed in Sino-African reflective scholarship. About 13 per cent of texts are Provocative texts.

(5) *Peripheral range texts* are often reflective studies that are noticeably imbalanced. Such texts typically consider ideas from one tradition and barely any or none from the other tradition allegedly engaged. An example of such is a volume

edited by international relations scholar Stephen Chan (2013) on the ethics of China's involvement with Africa. Both the preface and first chapter by Chan are valuable additions of Confucian ideas to SARS, as are a number of reflections by the book's other contributors. However, little time is spent discussing African philosophical perspectives on morality. About 27 per cent of texts are Peripheral texts.

5.2   ORGANIZATIONAL MERITS OF RANGES

Using range as an organizing principle advances SARS toward SAP's Identity in at least two ways. First, it gives the myriad SARTs a shared trajectory toward SAP. It preserves the intellectual diversity of SARS while channeling its ideas in common direction. Ranges achieve this by providing SARTs with categorical alternatives to discipline-based identities that could be meaningful to the philosophical renovation project. The range-organizing principle frees up ideas for assessment vis-à-vis the creation of SAP. The realization of SAP is, however, some ways off.

This brings us to the second way, closer to the existing material, that organization by range establishes a shared progression: by channeling the insights of non-philosophy SARTs toward "philosophical SARTs." Philosophical SARTs tend to be among the more rigorous in their reflection on concepts cross-culturally. These texts are not necessarily authored by philosophers. However, it does appear that philosophers authored the majority of Primary texts (about 9 out of 16 or 56 per cent) and the lowest number of Peripheral texts (about 1 out of 16 or 6.25 per cent). With philosophical SARTs authored by philosophers and non-philosophers represented strongly within the Primary range, this type of text becomes not just the kind that would be most familiar to comparative philosophers but also becomes the preferred vehicle to conduct SARTs toward SAP. Having overcome the limits of "discipline" within SARS, the next step is to overcome "tradition" itself.

5.3   RENOVATION OF SARS BY "GENRE" PRINCIPLE

Interest in the unusual topic of African and Chinese philosophical comparison is not piqued, I think, by the prospect of examining "texts" or "disciplines." It is stimulated by curiosity—and incredulity, frankly—toward the proposition that Chinese and African *traditions* could have conceptualized similarly any of their respective long-held, wide-spread cultural, religious and/or philosophical ideas. That in certain important philosophical ways, Chinese and African *traditions* are more alike on certain philosophical principles than either is, generally, to Western philosophy.[10]

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[10] For example, according to Metz:

> There is a kernel of truth in the claim that Western thought about international justice, development theory and related topics . . . is characteristically individualist. By this it is meant that Euro-American-Australasian global ethical reflection typically locates basic moral value in properties intrinsic to a person or an animal. In contrast, ethical thought that is salient amongst sub-Saharan peoples and those in countries such as China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea is relational (Metz 2014, 146).

It is reasonable, then, to expect that "tradition" would be an important notion in SARS. "Tradition" is like "discipline" in that both are matrixes for Chinese and African concepts. Both are potentially large elements of SARS to be reworked for SAP. However, traditions are far more salient categories than "disciplines". Within SARS they are a ubiquitous, a salient feature of nearly every study, whereas one is usually required to suss out the disciplinary orientation of a text. There is little doubt that in meta-philosophical terms, "tradition" could serve as a chief organizing principle for SARS. If so, the question of which African and/or Chinese tradition(s) should be employed toward this end becomes pressing. There are several macro- and sub-traditions listed in SARS, as we saw, that could be potential competitors.

More from the African "side" could be mentioned. Discussed in some of the published works from which SARTs are drawn, there are "traditional" cosmological, ontological and ethical ideas created by the now unknown sages of various sub-Saharan ethnic groups. Such groups are the Dinka and Shilluck of South Sudan, the Etsako and Owan of Nigeria, the Dogon of Mali, the Bambara of Republic of Guinea, the Fon of Benin, and the Diola of Senegal (see Kamalu 1990; Igbafen 2014). Added to the dozen or more other African or Asian cultural, religious or philosophical traditions mentioned in SARS, it is clear that attempting to constellate roughly sixty SARTs around twenty-odd traditions would be unproductive. How then should 'tradition' as an organizing principle be operationalized?

I propose organizing by tradition through *genres*. I define 'genre' as a cluster of several similarly paired Sino-African comparisons that is named after a specific African or Chinese culture, religion or tradition. Genres should include Chinese (and occasionally non-Chinese but Asian) traditions and African traditions that are directly compared. This standard immediately sets aside Dinka, Shilluck, Etsako, Owan, Dogon, Bamara, Fon and Diola discussions for none are directly compared to Chinese traditions in the texts surveyed (though I advocate such engagements with these and other "discrete" African traditions). The next question is this: Of the remaining traditions, should African or Chinese tradition-names take precedence?

5.4 AFRICAN OR CHINESE GENRES?

I recommend at this time the use of names from Chinese traditions to label and differentiate genres. If SARTs are grouped under specific Chinese/Asian traditions, at least three major traditions are identifiable as having engagements with African traditions (with one divisible into five "sub-traditions"). They are Confucianism (with roughly twenty cross-cultural contacts); Daoism (with about five); and Buddhism (with around fifteen: one Theravada, one Indian Madhyamaka, one Indian Yogacara, three Tibetan, and about eleven Chinese). The remaining fifteen or so SARTs would fit under generalized-tradition categories such as "Chinese philosophy", "East Asian values", et cetera. If SARTs are grouped under specific African traditions, at least five major traditions are identifiable. They are Ubuntu (with roughly fifteen engagements); Akan (two); Yoruba (two); Igbo (one); and San (one). Many of the

remaining thirty or so SARTs would fit under generalized-tradition categories such as "African/sub-Saharan thought", "African philosophy", et cetera.

The ramifications of these figures for genre-labeling are these: If African tradition-specific names were used to organize SARTs into genres that contain the same type of cross-cultural pairings, Ubuntu would be the only specific African tradition that could demonstrate substantial contact with all three major Chinese/Asian traditions. While an "Ubuntu SARS"-genre would encompass contacts with all three major Chinese traditions, this genre could only organize SARTs "by Ubuntu" leaving all other tradition-specific African contacts with Chinese philosophies by the wayside. What field, but especially a new one, could afford to leave nearly 32 per cent (about seven out of approximately twenty-two tradition-specifics) of its more refined materials unused? Moreover, why reduce the already small spectrum of African cultural diversity in SARS by elevating Ubuntu to genre-status? Much inclusivity and many ideas would be lost if Ubuntu is used as the sole tradition organizing principle.

The only other African tradition-category having substantial contact with Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism would be a general one, "sub-Saharan/African thought" (with about eleven instances). Technically, this option would be excluded prima facie because "sub-Saharan/African thought" is not culture/religion/philosophy-specific. For the sake of thoroughness, however, I will consider this option.

If we attempt to organize SARTs by labeling a genre with such a big-name generalization, that African genre would have negligible organizing power. This is because virtually every instance of cross-cultural conceptual contact in SARS could be included under that African rubric. An organizing principle should be able to differentiate as it consolidates. Such mega-categories could nevertheless serve adequately as preliminary frames for orienting the reader within relatively unfamiliar comparative engagements (e.g., "This paper will compare 'African thought' to 'Chinese thought'.") Still, it is more difficult to see how genres named after large cultural abstractions would help renovate the field.

However, if the three major Chinese specific-traditions are used to name genres, virtually all instances of Sino-African contact would be included. Moreover, those contacts could be arranged so that paired African and Chinese traditions sharing the same Chinese tradition could naturally be grouped together. In short, employing genres named after major Chinese traditions as organizing principles is attractive for it grants SARS both scope and specificity. On the other hand, using Ubuntu, the only tradition-specific African tradition capable of competing as a genre as an organizing principle, would grant us specificity but insufficient scope.

5.5 ORGANIZATIONAL MERITS OF GENRES

Having argued that using Chinese tradition-names within SARS as genre-labels is at this time more advantageous than to do so with African tradition-names, what would be the anticipated effect on the development of SAP-Identity? Two come to mind.

First, the creation of genres would organize SARS works into *easily recognizable*

sub-sets such as "Buddhist SARS", "Confucian SARS" and "Daoist SARS". This development can help SARS become more accessible to both philosophers and non-philosophers by presenting them with firm and familiar handholds on this new field.

Second, genres would facilitate the *comparison of compared traditions.* The problem of scholars writing on one Sino-African tradition-pair seldom drawing on scholarship written about a different tradition-pair could be diminished by using genres. Hypothetically, grouping SARTs by Chinese-labeled genres would prompt researchers to ask why it seems that most comparisons of, say, *Confucianism* and Ubuntu are carried out by *philosophers,* while most comparisons of *Buddhism* and Ubuntu seem to be conducted by *religious studies scholars* even though all three traditions have been perceived as both religions and philosophies in SARS. Is this just a fluke or is there something deeper going on intellectually, institutionally, even (inter)nationally? Organizing SARS into tradition-based genres would enable one to generate questions that before would probably not have been posed. This could in turn better chances for inter-tradition and intra-tradition comparison/dialogue. That organizing by range and genre principles would increase interaction among SARS' disciplines and traditions is a fair expectation. Range and genre could together lead to advancements being made faster and at greater analytical depth throughout the field.

In the next section, I extend the "renovation" of SARS toward the "construction" of SAP. By mobilizing the movements, orientations and phases of CES as organizing principles, I attempt to further assimilate SARS' multiple disciplinary elements philosophically and to traject what is useful toward the realization of SAP-Identity. In CES terminology, I will engage in a constructive "treatment of a series of issues, themes and topics of philosophical significance, which can be jointly concerned through appropriate philosophical interpretation and/or from a broader philosophical vantage point" (Mou 2010, 3).

6. CONSTRUCTION:
BLUEPRINTING SINO-AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

6.1 CONSTRUCTION OF SARS BY "MOVEMENT" PRINCIPLE

SARS is a loose, multiple discipline formation. The development of a clearer academic identity for it requires, in part, a stronger association between SARS and at least one of its constitutive disciplines. Since the present renovation-construction project prioritizes the redesign of SARS into a form of *philosophy*, a particular "theme" in need of constructive "treatment" is that of possible associations between SARS and intellectual movements within the discipline of philosophy. Examining African philosophy and Chinese philosophy movements for such associations is commonsensical given the prominence of each tradition in SARS. However, some plausible associations, whether factual or theoretical, also should be made between SARS' non-philosophy disciplines and those African and Chinese philosophy movements. This is because the cross-cultural philosophy under construction, SAP, is envisioned to be an inter-disciplinary one.

6.2 ASSOCIATING SARS WITH A "MODERN" CHINESE PHILOSOPHY MOVEMENT

As a movement, the cultural tradition-identity of Mou's constructive-engagement strategy is relevant to SARS becoming SAP. CES' primary "concern" has been to expand and refine exchanges between *Chinese* and Western philosophy. However, constructive-engagement has also welcomed correspondence between Chinese and non-western traditions as part of its overall "movement toward world philosophy…" (Mou 2009c, 37). African philosophy has been hailed specifically to become one of its discussants.

At least two concrete examples of this association with the movement occurred at the early part of this decade. In 2013, there was a colloquium on Confucianism and African philosophy funded by a Confucius Institute, organized by Chinese and African philosophy scholars, and held at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Angle 2013). This event appears to have been an expanded follow-up to a 2010 colloquium on Confucianism and Ubuntu also supported by the same Confucius Institute, but held at Rhodes University in South Africa (Prinsloo and Charvat 2010; Angle 2013).

I can also attest to associations between the movement and SARS from direct experience. Bai Tongdong, a respected Chinese political philosophy scholar, was a participant in the 2013 colloquium. Two years later, he became my advisor when I was accepted into his MA program in Chinese philosophy at Shanghai's Fudan University with a professed interest in Sino-African interchange. Since that time, I have presented papers on Sino-African philosophy at conferences organized by major Chinese/comparative philosophy associations. Judging from the feedback I received, my work was not "merely tolerated". It was welcomed but critiqued. I recount these admittedly anecdotal experiences because I believe they do indicate a genuine willingness by some Chinese philosophers to engage African philosophy.

6.3 ASSOCIATING SARS WITH A "NEW' AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY MOVEMENT

Associations could also be made between SARS and intellectual movements within African philosophy. Perhaps more than with any other trend in that system, parallels could be drawn between SARS and the *conversational philosophy* of Nigerian philosopher Johnathan O. Chimakonam. While African philosophy for most of the twentieth century has been in many ways an internationally directed enterprise, it simultaneously has struggled to escape the legacy of "conceptual colonization" by the West, to use Kwasi Wiredu's well known coinage.[11] The struggle to break this

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[11] 'Conceptual colonization' refers to the "historical superimposition of foreign categories of thought on African thought systems through colonialism" (Wiredu 1996, 136). To struggle against this phenomenon, Wirdeu advocates a critical interrogation of such categories but also the appropriation of potentially useful ideas (i.e., "conceptual decolonization").

unwarranted intellectual grip on African religion and philosophy has concurrently been a quest to establish a vital modern identity for African philosophy, as Kenyan philosopher D.A. Masolo has shown (1994). However, this struggle and quest have had the unfortunate consequence of miring a good deal of African philosophical debate in what African-American/Native American philosopher Jennifer Lisa Vest condemned as "perverse dialogues" (2009) which regularly stymied efforts to forge enriching correspondences.

Conversational philosophy is a definitive break with this pattern. Chimakonam's vision for it invites

> …active engagement between individual African philosophers in the creation of critical narratives either by engaging the elements of tradition or straight-forwardly by producing new thoughts or by engaging other individual thinkers. It thrives on incessant questioning geared toward the production of new concepts, opening up new vistas and sustaining the conversation" (Chimakonam 2017).

It is this "opening of new vistas", of entering rigorous but mutually respectful dialogues, predominantly but not exclusively, with Western philosophy that defines in part this "New Era" (Chimakonam 2017) in African philosophy. Relevant to the SAP-Identity construction project are that these developments parallel some of what has been occurring within Sino-African reflective studies. SARS dovetails somewhat with Chimakonam's explicit formulation of a comparative philosophy approach, his "Global Expansion of Thought" (2015). 'GET', as he abbreviates it, is a systematic attempt to position African philosophy "among the world's philosophical traditions and to find new conversations…comparative and intercultural engagements…on issues of mutual concern" (2015, 462).

Yet despite their similar philosophical inclinations, the conversational movement and the constructive-engagement movement seem virtually unaware of each other. They do share features in common, however. First, they are contemporaneous movements with both having originated around the turn of the twenty-first century. Second, both perhaps have found some inspiration in the remarkable economic growth China and several African countries have experienced over the last quarter century. From these trends, a rise in confidence that their traditions would *have* to be heard and perhaps heeded more may have arisen. Third, both movements seek critical yet civil, creative but accountable dialogue with traditions beyond their own regions.

6.4 ASSOCIATING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (IR) AND IR-SARS TO MOVEMENTS

Having discussed some of the actual and potential associations there could be between philosophy-SARS and African and Chinese philosophy movements, what is left is to theorize associations between non-philosophy SARS and African and Chinese movements. I will attempt to do so with a particular non-philosophy field: International Relations (IR).

With at least seven non-philosophy disciplines constituting the proto-field, advancing SARS through philosophy foremost is bound to attract some interest in the theories, approaches and perhaps the movements that have equipped scholars of Chinese and African philosophy to take the initiative. International Relations, which is deeply involved in Sino-African studies and makes up about a quarter of SARTs, seems increasing ready for such association.

Chris Alden, a key figure in the development of Sino-African studies from an IR perspective, has criticized "the absence of [a theoretical] center of gravity" (2013, 1) within the subject. Alongside IR, five other disciplines structure Sino-African relations studies thereby resulting in it being "informed by…[the] ontologies and epistemological concerns…of each of these approaches" (2013, 1). Stephen Chan illustrates the problem thusly:

> …Western views of China in Africa are often constructed by Sinologists who are not Africanists, or Africanists who are not Sinologists, or by Africanists and Sinologists who are not expert in international relations…or international relations scholars who know nothing about either China or Africa (Chan 2013b, 7).

Consequently, there are "fundamental divergences as to the purposes of academic work" (Alden 2013, 2-3). Alden points to the need for an "investigative backbone… [to] develop meaningful conversations across disciplines about…China-Africa" (2013, 3).

There could be greater associations made between IR-SARS and CES and GET, the latter two conceivably being represented by some philosophy SARTs, in spirit, if not to the letter. The basis of this assertion is that both IR and these movements share a "burgeoning interest in the China-Africa relationship…precisely due to its function as the key metaphor for…transformative globalization experience in the twenty-first century" (Alden 2013, 2).

Ghanaian IR scholar Seth N. Asumah situates this "metaphor" within what Mou might call a particular kind of "development of society", namely, "African development". Asumah contends that "[in] this era of globalization and *Sino-Africanization*, there is an urgency to reexamine the decolonization discourse and its concomitant questions, issues, and prospects for the African continent in relation to the process of development and modernization" (Asumah 2011, xi, my emphasis). Asumah then goes on to locate the metaphor more precisely within a set of reflective and material coordinates related to the "development of philosophy": "With the emergence of ethnophilosophy, the intensity and scope of decolonization discourse, the effects of globalization, and *Chinanization*, the task of interrogating the African self and the European other has become more complex…" (Asumah 2011, xii, my emphasis).

That Asumah, the political scientist, pens this analysis and agenda in the foreword of a *philosopher*'s book, that of Nigerian Sanya Osha, is significant given the seeming disconnect between philosophy-SARS and Sino-African International Relations studies. Yet he sees a crucial role for philosophy to perform: as a generator

of reflections that "sharpen…discursive approaches to provide agency for rapid changes in what is the cerebral and practical due to international interactions" (Asumah 2011, xvii). And so too did Kumpe and Chen (2014) see a role for a more philosophical outlook. These scholars questioned the "wisdom" of building a "long-term strategic partnership" for African development upon "asymmetrical" relations with China—but then proceed to elide both Chinese and African philosophies on the matter. And like Asumah so did, Chan and Patrick Mazimhaka, the latter a former Deputy in the African Union organization who is a contributor to Chan's book. They both call for greater "African agency" in international dealings—but only Chan entertains the matter philosophically and then only through a Confucian frame.

However, if Sino-African IR scholars became more familiar with the "contemporary trend toward world philosophy" (Mou 2009b) in the Chinese tradition and the "striving toward the universal space where intercultural engagement…is unveiled" (Chimakonam 2015, 463) in the African tradition, perhaps other IR scholars would see in those movements something of what drives their own field. They would observe, as American philosopher David Wong did of comparative philosophy more generally, that "trends of philosophy are often reflections or distillations of…shifting balances of power between different regions of the world" (2014). That between the Charybdis of structuralist development theory and the Scylla of multiple discipline "rainbow eclecticism" Alden marginally prefers (2013, 3), a philosophy-led SARS developed further as SAP may represent a forward-thinking alternative.

That third option not only could benefit Sino-African IR theoretically but could also give SAP an academic partner with better access to and, I dare say, more credibility with policymakers and non-governmental actors. In other words, in CES terms, a stronger association between IR and the aforementioned Chinese and African movements could help SARS/SAP realize perhaps its most difficult goal to achieve: "the development of contemporary society."

The points above can be summarized as follows: (1) particular African and Chinese philosophical movements are intellectual kin to philosophy-SARTs in the sense that those SARTs reflective characteristics and cosmopolitan inclinations align with those movements; (2) non-philosophical SARS (such as those often produced by IR scholars) can be related to African and Chinese movements (and hence philosophical SARS indirectly) via a prescriptive meta-philosophical vantage point, SAP-Identity, which is broader than the category of discipline or tradition.

Admittedly, more work needs to be done to further associate SARS to African and Chinese philosophy movements. But the argument made here should be sufficient to make the proposition that associations do exist, or, that they are plausible to achieve. SARS, hitherto unclaimed by either tradition, can attest to having some kinds of intellectual kinship to both through a movement organizing principle. In the next section, I move on to the constructive organizing principle, "orientation".

7. CONSTRUCTION OF SARS BY "ORIENTATION" PRINCIPLE

Considered from the "broader vantage point" of SAP-Identity, what is SARS' "philosophical orientation"? There are three possibilities available in CES. One is a *historical and descriptive orientation* which seeks to "accurately describe relevant historical facts and pursue what thinkers actually thought, what resources they used, and what *appears* to be similar and different" (Mou 2009b, 586, author's emphasis). Another is the *reflective-interpretation orientation* which enriches "our understanding of a thinker's ideas and their due implications of philosophical significance via… conceptual and explanatory resources, whether those resources were actually used by the thinker herself" (Mou 2009b, 587). Finally, there is the *philosophical-issue-engagement orientation* geared "to see how…both sides under comparative examination could…contribute to…philosophical issues or topics, rather than…providing a historical or descriptive account of each or…interpreting some ideas historically developed in a certain tradition…" (Mou 2009b, 589).

Having surveyed SARS literature, I share the following observations: (1) While some texts include a smattering of history, very few SART authors displayed sustained interest in the histories of concepts, thinkers or traditions under their review (Wratten 1995 is perhaps the most notable exception). Therefore, SARS is not at present historical-description oriented; (2) While authors usually described the concepts they compared, a pronounced application theory or interpretive techniques was not typically used to enrich the reader's comprehension of a discussed thinker's ideas. Therefore, SARS is not presently reflective-interpretation oriented; (3) The majority of cross-cultural engagements fit the following profile: "Typically, addressing a jointly concerned issue of philosophy, substantial ideas historically developed in distinct philosophical traditions are directly compared in order to understand how they could jointly and complementarily contribute to this issue in philosophically interesting ways" (Mou 2010, 17). Therefore, most SARTs currently are *philosophical-issue concerned*. That SARS is predominantly philosophical-issue oriented is "fortunate". This is because the next potential organizing principle from CES, *phase*, is especially intended to analyze "the characteristic features of a reflective project with *this* as its primary orientation…" (Mou 2009a, 8, my emphasis). Phases have dual meta-implications for SARS/SAP-Identity, as I will demonstrate.

8. CONSTRUCTION OF SARS BY "PHASE" PRINCIPLE

8.1 PHASES

"Phases of engagement" are Mou's delineation of three stages of philosophical-issue constructive-engagement that could occur in inter-tradition comparison. The three stages are

The pre-engagement phase, in which certain ideas from distinct accounts or from different traditions that are *relevant* to the common concern under examination and thus to the purpose of the project are focused on and identified; [t]he engagement phase, in which those ideas *internally* engage with each other in view of that common concern and the purpose to be served; and [t]he post-engagement phase, in which those distinct ideas from different sources are now absorbed or assimilated into a new approach to the common concern under examination (Mou 2010, 17, author's emphases).

Mou indexes to each phase one of three criticisms typically leveled against philosophical-issue oriented comparative philosophy:

The three alleged "sins" [are]…. The "sin" of over-simplification regarding a certain idea identified from a certain…tradition…[is] associated with reflective efforts in the pre-engagement phase; the "sin" of over-use of external resources regarding elaborating a certain idea from a certain…tradition…[is] associated with…the engagement phase; and the "sin" of blurring assimilation…[is] associated with…the post-engagement phase (Mou 2010, 17).

Mou refutes each of these allegations in turn. Debunking the so-called "sin of over-simplification," he counters

In the pre-engagement phase, it might be not only legitimate but also adequate or even necessary to provide simplification and abstraction of some ideas in one…tradition through a perspective…most relevant…to the joint concern addressed…without involving those irrelevant elements in the…tradition from which such a perspective comes, though the latter might be relevant to figuring out the point of those ideas (Mou 2010, 18).

To do away with the so-called "sin of over-use", Mou writes:

In the engagement phase…From each party's point of view, the other party is something external without; but, from a broader philosophical vantage point and in view of the jointly concerned issue, the distinct views may be complementary within. In this context, the term 'external' would miss the point in regard to the purpose here…in view of the issue, all those perspectives become internal in the sense that they would be complementary and indispensable to a comprehensive understanding and treatment of the current philosophical issue (Mou 2010, 18).

Finally, making short-work of the so-called "sin of blurring assimilation," Mou writes:

In the post-engagement phase, some sort of assimilation typically . . . would adjust, blur and absorb different perspectives into one new approach as a whole. This would be what is really expected in this kind of reflective engagement in studies of comparative philosophy, instead of a sin (Mou 2010, 18).

8.2 PROTO-ENGAGEMENTS AND NON-ENGAGEMENTS

I agree with Mou's description and defense of phases, but as one could imagine, actual cases of philosophical-issue inter-tradition comparison could necessitate alterations in this framework. In particular, the ren-construction of SARS into SAP requires changes in some ways we think about phases.

One difficulty in utilizing phases for SAP's development is a categorical one. Many SARTs would not be admissible under any of Mou's three phases. Yet it would be imprudent to discard SARS texts that may not fit appropriately within existing phases. Those conceptual or methodological materials might serve as desiderata for SAP's build-up. Therefore, from an ongoing analysis of the literature, I conceived of two supplements to Mou's original set: *Proto-engagements* and *Non-engagements.*

Texts belonging to the *proto-engagement phase* contain ideas that are intellectually promising, regardless of their disciplinary origins, for the construction of SAP but require further philosophical digestion before use. (One could draw parallels between some of the efforts likely required for that processing and "the conceptual and explanatory" efforts associated with the reflective-interpretation orientation.) Sino-African texts that cannot meet even this charitable standard after being metabolized philosophically by movement, orientation and Mou's original phases are designated as *non-engagements.*

Using the definitions and sins of each phase as basic assessment parameters for assigning surveyed texts to different phases of engagement, I have come to the following tentative conclusions: (1) no SARS text appears to qualify as a Post-Engagement; (2) no SARS text appears to qualify as a "Primary" Engagement; (3) about 50 per cent of SARS texts qualify as Pre-Engagements; (4) about 20 per cent of SARS texts qualify as Proto-Engagements; (5) about 30 per cent of SARS texts qualify as Non-Engagements.

8.3 ORGANIZATIONAL MERITS OF PHASES

What are the benefits of using phase "discriminations" to categorize SARS texts? Phases help advance Identity through the introduction of Inquiry. A text can be assigned a *rank* indicating its level of meta-*methodological* development alongside its tradition-named genre, such as "Confucian Pre-engagement SARS", "Daoist Primary engagement SARS" or "Buddhist Post-engagement SARS". Phase-categorization provides a more exact sense of the "location" of a study within the emerging proto-field (as SARS is forming and as it is being reformed into something closer to SAP, as I will discuss). Phases also indicate where studies at a particular level of development are "clustering." Hence, organizing by phase informs one quickly and precisely *where,* categorically speaking, more work should be directed and *what* kind of work should be conducted.

For example, since no SART examined seems to have reached the Post-Engagement level, is it fair to conclude that no SART engenders a substantially new approach to their topic matter? Based on the definition of this phase, then "yes." But

what of Provocative range texts? Why have they been "phased out"? I doubt SAP can arise from SARS until the latter moves beyond its present mainly positive comparativist demonstrations of conceptual parallels and divergences. There would have to be a fair increase in the creation of new inter-tradition "Sino-African" ideas and approaches for SARS to advance convincingly toward SAP. I believe that even a modest record of doing so is key to the ren-construction of a strong identity for SARS in comparative philosophy.

Regardless of the reason for the phase-out, there is a larger meta-point to consider. The "friction" here between range and phase is an example of a creative tension between meta-perspectives (in this case, renovation and construction) that could spur some who reflect on Sino-African materials to "look deeper" than they would if they employed conventional non-meta-level comparisons. For example, while the absence of Post-texts might be chalked up to the newness of the field, it is more difficult to explain the absence of texts in the less demanding "primary" Engagement category. I would speculate that a meta-philosophical or meta-methodological threshold has not yet been reached—that of "internalization", to use Mou's term above. It is possible to fathom such is the problem, for this explanation resonates with the characterization I offered above for why deeper investigations of jointly concerned concepts have lagged—again, Allinson's positive comparativism.

Allinson analogizes positive comparativism to a "stream" or mode of engaging in cross-cultural comparative philosophy (2001, 280). It is too soon to tell definitively if the connection I have hypothesized between Allinson's stream and Mou's phase is the actual or full reason for the lack of progression beyond pre-engagement, even for philosophy-SARS. But it should prompt one to ask what might a text wherein concepts are "internally engaged" toward their "jointly-concerned issue" through "appropriate philosophical interpretation" look like. SARS scholars may wish to spend more conscious effort introducing "broader philosophical vantage points" for such concerns if they wish advance their works in an arguably necessary direction towards Primary engagements, and ultimately, Post-engagements.

That most SARS texts are Pre-Engagements is noteworthy, as well. First, this phase's possession of roughly half the number of SARTs reinforces the thesis that these texts can be reasonably understood as philosophical efforts irrespective of origin. Second, each Chinese tradition-labeled genre is decently represented in this category. As Pre-Engagements, texts within a certain range and traditions in all genres occupy, for the first time, the same meta-*philosophical* category (i.e., phase). Yet this phase is also meta-*methodologically* useful for the analysis of texts. Located at the intersection of both Identity and Inquiry object-ives, I would suppose that at least some Pre-engagement SARS reflections may together constitute a unique liminal area within ren-construction wherein the work on Identity begins to shift towards the work on Inquiry. With phases, reflections on Sino-African joint concerns are still organized toward SAP but have been largely *dis*-organized from the strictures of discipline and tradition which have diminished SARS in both incisiveness and inventiveness.

9. SINO-AFRICAN PHILOSOPHIZED REFLECTION

Having shown that non-philosophy-derived SARS can "through the appropriate philosophical interpretation and/or from a broader philosophical vantage point" be treated virtually as philosophical engagements (of varying quality), I propose granting SARS an intermediate status between its current multiple discipline state and SAP. This provisional identity I will call *Sino-African philosophized reflection* (SAPR).

The achievement of SAPR status signals that the progressive repositioning and reframing of Sino-African philosophy-SARS and non-philosophy SARS reflections through the organizing principles of range, genre, movement, orientation and phase have been undertaken and have been reasonably successful. These reflections, which would still vary by topical focus, analytical technique, originality, depth and even "politics" (for what may count as a "development of society" is not a value-neutral decision or standard), can nonetheless be said to be sufficiently primed for further advancement toward SAP through appropriate Inquiry organizing principles (which will not be discussed at this time). SAPR represents a transitional state that could enable researchers to constructively engage concepts and approaches found in SARS without undue pre-judgement. SAPR would therefore facilitate the extraction of ideas *despite* their disciplinary identities or tradition-pairings. As these reflections undergo additional investigation and/or enhancement during the construction of SAP-Inquiry via CES, this template/scaffolding could be used to elevate those reflections beyond their current provisional acceptance as SAPRs. With additional appropriate construction, those SAPRs would in sum become Sino-African philosophy itself.

10. CONCLUSION

With the appropriate interventions, disorganization need not continue to undercut SARS' potential to achieve more incisive reflections on China's and Africa's bedrock traditions and emerging forms of thought. This is why the Renovation-Construction of SARS for SAP is explicitly a prescriptive endeavor. This is why Ren-Construction could not be limited to merely addressing what this author believes is the philosophically less interesting question of what SARS "is". While that descriptive task was necessary to familiarize the reader about this inchoate field of inter-tradition study, this paper is guided by the more energizing meta-philosophical questions of what SARS *should* become, of what methods *ought* to be employed towards that development, and the question of why the intended end-product—SAP—*should* be sought.[12] I have considered these questions from the vantage point of SAP's Identity. What remains to be designed at another time is Sino-African philosophy's dimension of Inquiry.

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[12] My phrasing here is influenced by Overgaard et al. 2013, 12-13.

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