Introduction

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The Multiple Relations between Philosophy and the Life-world
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Philosophy between the Life-world and the Sciences

Since the publication of Edmund Husserl's *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy* in 1936,[1] the term life-world has become widely used in philosophy and social sciences, indicating the socio-cultural environment in which people lead their lives.[2] For Husserl, the life-world connotes a thickly experienced context of embodied human acting and knowing that is not readily able to be surveyed, nor fully objectified, but is rather pre-reflexive, with inescapably intersubjective and intertwined character.[3] With the term life-world, Husserl wants to highlight the importance of tradition, culture, and history as the ultimate horizon of all our understanding of and practical dealings with the world. The pre-reflexive character of the life-world implies that the terms 'culture' and 'history' are not used in the sense of academic disciplines, researching into a given culture or period of time, but as part and parcel of our immediate experience of the world, prior to any conceptualization. In other words, we not only have a cultural and historical legacy that we can study, but we ourselves are deeply marked by the culture and history of which we are part. They are the horizon against which our experiences and conceptualizations of the world are shaped.

Yet at the same time, according to Husserl's idea of philosophy as a universal science, philosophy should not take the life-world simply for granted, but has to examine it critically on the basis of the

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[1] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie, Husserliana, Band VI* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954).

[2] See Carl Friedrich Gethmann, "Philosophie – zwischen Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft," *Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft. XXI. Deutscher Kongress für Philosophie. Kolloquienbeiträge* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2011), p. 3. See also: Dermot Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 180.

[3] Moran, *Husserl's Crisis,* p. 181.

principles of reason, which play a normative role for human acting and behavior. Hence, Husserl connects the concept of the life-world with a foundational philosophical project, implying that life-world is in a conceptual and functional dyad with philosophical science.

From this philosophical perspective, Husserl assesses the general situation of his time as one of crisis. With this assessment, he did not refer to the tragic personal and political events of his time, i.e. the rise of Nazism and the prospect of being expelled, as a Jewish scholar, from the University of Freiburg, but to the problematic developments of the sciences and their consequences for philosophy and humankind as a whole.[4] A first level of crisis results from the fact that the sciences have lost their awareness of being founded in the life-world. As Galileo had shown paradigmatically, natural science has lost its meaning for human life because of its mathematical approach to nature.[5] This has led to a second level of crisis, the devastating implications of the objectivism and naturalism of the sciences for the life-world. Because of this, people have become estranged from the technical outcomes of the sciences, and do not perceive anymore the latter's enlightening function, not only in theoretical, but also in practical respects. The third level concerns the crisis of European humanity, jeopardizing the whole complex of the Enlightenment, science, and humanism. This crisis does not so much concern Europe as a specific region, but rather the universality that is claimed by (Western) sciences.[6] Finally, this scientific approach of nature has also led to a crisis of philosophy, since it proved unable to withstand the objectivism and naturalism that was part and parcel of the scientific method, and failed to take into account the active role of the human subject in every process of knowing.[7]

In order to find a way out of this crisis, Husserl calls for a new kind of philosophy, which is critical of the life-world as well as of the sciences. Against this background, it comes as no surprise that he calls philosophers 'functionaries of mankind'.[8] Their task is to re-establish the foundational relationship between the life-world and the sciences, to foster the enlightening link between scientific knowledge and the

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[4] Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, pp. 3f.

[5] Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, pp. 20ff

[6] Gethmann, "Philosophie – zwischen Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft," p. 6.

[7] Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, pp. 70ff.

[8] Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*, p. 15.

convictions of the life-world, and to promote the formation of an effective, normative consensus about matters of the life-world as part of a scientific-technical culture. This means that, for Husserl, philosophy has an intermediate role to play between the life-world and the sciences. In particular, philosophy arises from the collapse of the self-evident certainties of the life-world, from the awareness that scientific knowledge is based on a number of implicit presuppositions, and from its aim to overcome the doubt that results from the previous points by giving a new, strictly philosophical foundation to human knowing and acting. Hence, philosophy should not yield to the inclination to downgrade itself to an edifying talk, uncritically confirming the (ideological) certainties of the life-world, nor to reduce itself to scientism and become a science among the other sciences.[9] Even though few people of our times agree with Husserl's idea to resolve the crisis of science and the life-world with the help of a strictly scientific philosophy,[10] the above clearly shows how important philosophy is for a correct understanding of the life-world.

The Problem of the Colonization of the Life-world

Social philosopher Jürgen Habermas has analyzed the crisis of the life-world in more detail by interpreting it as a result of one of the most important characteristics of modernity, viz. the rise of functional rationality. In a similar vein as Husserl, he characterizes the life-world as that which encompasses and holds us; hence, it is not theoretically present to our thinking, but rather appears as something, in which we find ourselves pre-theoretically. In other words, it is impossible to escape from the life-world, but at the same time, it is never present to us as an object. Habermas defines the life-world as the 'never transgressable' horizon of our experiences. Since it makes up the background of our experiences, the life-world is constitutive for our daily existence as personal, historically situated, corporeal, and communicatively embedded members of society.[11] A crucial aspect of

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[9] Gethmann, "Philosophie – zwischen Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft," pp. 7f.

[10] See Roman Dichler, "Über das Verhältnis von Lebenswelt und Philosophie," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung,* 57, 3 (2003), pp. 373f.

[11] Jürgen Habermas, "Von den Weltbildern zur Lebenswelt," *Lebenswelt und Wissenschaft. XXI. Deutscher Kongress für Philosophie,* p. 64. See also Idem, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Band 2* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp. 182, 188.

Habermas's idea of the life-world is that it is constituted by direct communicative interactions between equal social agents and oriented towards mutual understanding,

Because of the rise of functional rationality, the structural components of the life-world, viz. culture, society, and the individual person, become differentiated and uncoupled from one another. This explains why, in modernity, institutions of society become independent of worldviews, why interpersonal relationships become independent of social ones, and why personal identities become more reflective and less dependent upon tradition. At the same time, a similar process of differentiation takes place between the form and content of the life-world.[12]

For Habermas, the life-world is only one of the two constitutive elements of modern society, the other one being what he refers to as the 'system'. In contrast to the direct and equal communicative interactions and their orientation towards mutual understanding, which characterize the life-world, the 'system' organizes itself by way of more impersonal and strategic exchanges of money and power, within the context of the economy and the modern administrative state and judiciary.[13] In principle, Habermas welcomes these developments of the life-world and the 'system', but only insofar as they increase the effectiveness of society in a way that is advantageous to everyone, and to the extent that the life-world and the 'system' are related to each other in a balanced way.

The colonization of the life-world occurs when the relation between the life-world and the 'system' breaks down in such a way that the 'system' gets the upper hand. This development leads to an undermining of the communicative foundations of the life-world, and results in a situation, in which the system is increasingly 'colonizing' and thereby eroding the life-world. Habermas refers to the increasing involvement of the state and the economy in everyday life, as can be illustrated by the fact that more areas of life are now subject to legal regulation, or are produced, packaged and sold to individuals as commodities (e.g. the leisure industry). Technology is a third element

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[12] Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Band 2*, pp. 214f. See also: Timo Jütten, "The Colonization Thesis: Habermas on Reification," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 19, 5 (2011), p. 704.

[13] Nick Crossley, *Key Concepts in Critical Social Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), pp. 37f.

of the 'system', which colonizes the life-world in yet another way. Instead of being just a help in the cultivation of the world, technology has become independent from the life-world, but at the same time it largely determines the way in which humans live their lives.

This impingement of economic, political, and technical structures upon the life-world destroys aspects of the life-world without being able to replace them by other ones, so that, eventually, the symbolic reproduction of the life-world is jeopardized. A case in point is the colonization of indigenous cultures and other substantial traditions as a result of a Western approach to organize the state, a capitalist economics, and the introduction of various new technological commodities. Hence, it is no wonder that colonization creates its own pathologies: it not only causes anomie and alienation, but also radically undermines the equal character of communicative interaction and its orientation towards mutual understanding, thus leading to various forms of oppression. In order to counterbalance the colonization of the life-world, Habermas puts his hope on new social movements, such as feminism, ecology, the anti-globalization movement, etc.

Set-up and Subdivision of This Volume

It is against this philosophical and societal background that the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences organized a conference on the complex relation between philosophy and the life-world,[14] and this volume comprises the proceedings of this conference. According to the organizers, philosophy traditionally claimed to be universal, necessary, and hence true, as well as the supreme principle for all the other kinds of knowledge. Yet, philosophy was also closely linked to the life-world as it critically examined the latter's ideological presuppositions. By doing so, philosophy succeeded in containing many conflicts, and it came to hold a favored position among human beings. Today, however, philosophy seems to have lost its vital, critical link with the life-world; it has yielded to the inclination of becoming a science among the other sciences, and has become so speculative that it has completely lost its contact with the life-world.

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[14] The conference, organized by Prof. He Xirong and Prof. Shi Yongshe, both of Institute of Philosophy of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, took place on December 15-16, 2014.

However, the life-world confronts us with new problems every day, many of which cannot be answered by the positive sciences. For instance, implied in the notion of social progress is the idea of human freedom; is this the same as fulfilling our desires? If yes, what is the ultimate purpose of human life? If not, is there a reasonable limitation of desire; is it necessary and possible for human beings to restrain themselves? Such problems, which concern human destiny, cannot be resolved by the positive sciences. In a world that is ever more democratic, in which people are obliged to decide about their own future, it is urgent for everyone to have some understanding of the above questions. They concern all of us as well as our relation to the life-world.

In terms of traditional philosophy, the above problem is called the problem of human nature or human essence in its relation to the world. Although it is an ancient issue, the organizers of the conference in Shanghai wanted to examine this problem from a new perspective. As people see their lives as the result of their own choices, not satisfied with accepting life just as it comes to them, the relation between humans and the life-world has become far more dynamic and open to new opportunities and risks. To focus on the latter ones, human beings face more serious challenges than ever before, e.g., the threat caused by weapons of mass destruction and the worsening of the environment. Thus, human beings are responsible for their own crises as well as for their happiness, and it is time for them to become more aware of this. According to the organizers of the Shanghai conference, these questions constitute reasons to re-examine philosophically the relation between humans and the life-world.

To work on the above problems, this volume aims at examining the life-world from different philosophical perspectives. As shown above, Western philosophy has often proven unable to solve these problems or even to touch upon them at all. Therefore, there is an urgent need to complement it by other philosophies. Chinese philosophy can play an important role in this respect. As Zhang Zai, a Confucian of the Soon Dynasty indicated, philosophy calls people to be the heart of heaven and earth. To be sure, Chinese philosophy might not meet the definition of traditional Western philosophy, but it engages the problems of the life-world in a profound way. Furthermore, the fact that the life-world is by definition a cultural-

specific one presents an additional reason for the need to enrich this volume with insights from Chinese philosophy.

The first part of this volume offers a philosophical analysis of two different aspects of the life-world (the papers of Shen and Jonkers). Its aim is to develop further the multiple relations between humans and the life-world, thereby building on the general discussion of these relations in the first section of this Introduction. In his paper *Urban Life-world Manifesting the Dao*, Vincent Shen gives a phenomenological account of a specific aspect of the life-world, namely the fact that the infrastructure of a city structures the life-world, in the sense that the former enables people to engage in communicative interaction with multiple others and in various ways. Shen shows that the concept of the Dao is very apt to describe this interactive communication. The Dao literally means the way or law of nature and the way of that particular nature in us. Yet Dao can also mean guiding and directing, and, finally, the Way itself and the Origin of all things. The Dao is related to the movement of the human body, especially its 'de-distancing' (making distance disappear) and 'directionality' (taking a certain direction). These features highlight the specific character of the urban life-world, and become concrete realities in the streets, road signs, and even the trees of cities. In sum, the concept of the Dao is helpful to explain how we create a meaningful world by way of directing ourselves towards many others. Moreover, because we are directional, we are always in the process of de-distancing, getting closer to one another by means of making distance disappear.

According to Shen, the dynamics of the urban life-world eventually come together in the Dao, which is not only their origin, but also their ultimate end. For the Chinese mind, these patterns are revealed to human beings in the city by virtue of the presence of nature, especially through gardens and parks, which are part of people's everyday urban lives. Finally, the coming together of so many different elements, streets, bodies, languages and discourses, gardens and parks, buildings etc. in the well-structured space of the city reveals to us, although pre-conceptually, an invisible city, which can be identified with the Ultimate Reality or the Dao.

The second paper of the first part of this volume, *A Revaluation of Wisdom as a Way to Reconnect Philosophy with the Life-world* by Peter Jonkers, discusses the reasons why philosophy has lost its contact with

the life-world since the beginning of modernity, and under which conditions this relation can be restored. His starting-point is the mismatch between the pre-reflective character of the life-world and the claim of modern philosophy that scientific rationality could solve all moral and existential questions of humankind and thus serve as the only true wisdom. According to this paradigm, the ultimate goal and, hence, the highest wisdom is that all human behavior should be reoriented on a scientific basis and that the life-world should be redesigned accordingly. However, due to the inherent objectivism and reductionism of scientific rationality, this ambitious project resulted in philosophy's estrangement from the life-world, in particular from the latter's cultural and historical nature. Hence, in order to interpret the life-world more appropriately, we need a broader, more encompassing kind of rationality than the scientific one.

In the next section of his contribution, Jonkers examines whether philosophy can reconnect with the life-world by redefining the former as a reasonable quest for practical wisdom. Following French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, he defines the essence of practical wisdom as giving an existential judgment in the context of the life-world. Such a judgment holds at bay the ruinous alternatives of focusing only on the universality of moral principles, as well as on the historical contexts of the life-world. Only through a moral judgment in the context of the life-world can practical wisdom reach its final goal, namely to assist people in their search for a truthful orientation of their lives. Practical wisdom starts from a critical, philosophical examination of the general principles which are meant to orient human lives, and makes, from there, the transition to the contingency of the life-world. In order to realize this transition, deliberation is essential, which means that the connection of philosophy and the life-world is inevitably a fragile one.

The set-up of the second part of this volume is inspired by Jürgen Habermas's analysis and critique of the colonization of the life-world. The five essays that make up this part criticize the colonizing impact of the societal systems of politics (the papers of Sweet and Wamala), economics (the papers of Alam and Qin Li), and science (the paper of Chitoiu) upon the life-world.

In his paper, *Personhood and Property*, William Sweet criticizes a first aspect of the colonization of the life-world by politics and legislation,

namely the trend to define the human person as a being who has property, or owns oneself. He starts by analyzing an ambivalence about the value of the human body, its necessity, and even what it is. On the one hand, for some, the body is an impediment to the mind or the self, while, on the other hand, many also admit that one cannot be a self without a body. This ambivalence is not a purely metaphysical issue, but plays an important role in a number of contemporary ethical discussions that concern the human body (euthanasia, abortion, prostitution etc.). In many cases like these, the bottom-line of the argument is that someone can do as she wants with her body, because she has a basic right to it or, phrased differently, considers her body to be her property.

Although, on the face of it, this argument seems to express a basic moral fact that needs no further justification, Sweet argues that it rests on a number of assumptions that are anything but self-evident. First, our relations to our bodies are far more intimate and immediate than our relations to property, which is acquired through some kind of transfer or exchange. Second, one cannot alienate one's body absolutely, since this undermines one's status as an autonomous being. Thirdly, defining one's relation to one's body in terms of ownership also undermines the fundamental integrity of the person as an embodied and social being. Yet, these arguments against self-ownership do not mean that *others* can do whatever they wish with us. Rather than ownership, Sweet proposes the notion of stewardship as more fruitful to define our relations to our bodies.

In his paper on *Ethical Discourse in the Age of Human Rights,* Edward Wamala discusses the colonization of the life-world by international politics and diplomacy, in particular the burden that a Western interpretation of human rights lays on African societies. He discusses the condemnation of the Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill by defenders of the (human) rights of lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual people (LGTB). Although the Ugandan parliament had passed the bill, it was condemned internationally in very strong terms, resulting in the shelving of the bill.

Wamala argues that many third world countries support the protection of minorities, but have good reasons not to include LGTBs in these protective laws. If LGTBs would be granted specific rights, this jeopardizes the ethical discourse about substantial issues. In other words, if a society has no moral anchor anymore and fails to express

reprobation at a behavior deemed fundamentally inappropriate, this is almost tantamount to the 'moral death' of that society.

This leads to the paradoxical conclusion that, in a number of situations, the promotion of human rights contracts the space for ethical discourse in and among communities. When this happens, the risk of human rights abuses and violations increases. These abuses and violations occur when the rights in question have never been fully accepted at a fundamental level. Hence, human rights cannot be imposed on a society from outside, but have to be the result of a consensus within that society. Another aspect of this question is to find the right balance between individual rights and duties towards society. Wamala's conclusion is that the tendency to proclaim ever more human rights risks stifling the ethical debate about fundamental values in a specific socio-cultural environment and the efforts to reach a world-wide consensus.

A second aspect of the colonization of the life-world regards the impact of the economy on societies around the globe. In his paper on *Human Desire and International Global Capitalism: Challenges and Opportunities,* Edward Alam argues for the need to curb the wild tide of international global capitalism by *structurally* channeling human desire via early childhood education in the family towards 'the good life for all people'. In order to do so, he draws upon the work of René Girard on human desire and imitation. In contrast to animal instincts, the characteristic of human desire is that it has no essential or ultimate goal, but has to borrow these desires and their goals from role models by means of imitation. This can lead to a situation in which we not only want to imitate these role models, but actually become what the model is, thus creating an intense mimetic rivalry, as Girard calls it. This mimetic rivalry between individuals can easily spill over to society, eventually leading to violent chaos if it is not constrained. An important consequence of this process, which has become predominant in our times, is the reduction of freedom to mere individualistic liberties and *rights.* Freedom thus becomes the life/death force in international global capitalism, which poses a threat not only to the ecosystem and the economy, but also to the human being itself. In order to avoid this fateful outcome, Alam deems it essential to channel human desire towards what is good, true, and beautiful. This has to be done via early childhood education in the

family, giving priority to human relationships based on virtues, thereby assuming that they are knowable and definable and more or less recognized across cultures in each and every era. These virtues do not stand alone, but are related to the fundamental values of the good, the true, and the beautiful.

The second paper on economic colonization, Qin Li's *The Theory of Consumption 'Need' of Chinese Traditional Culture and Its Enlightenment*, criticizes the consequences of the affluent society on people's consumption psychology. Although consumption demand is the starting point of all economic activities, their excessive expansion not only diverts people from the ultimate purpose of consumption, namely to satisfy human wants, but also leads to the deterioration of the ecological environment and the spiritual, and to a value crisis. In his paper, Qin Li discusses a number of examples in Chinese culture, in particular from Han Feizi, of the expansion of human needs, and relates them to Maslow's theory of the hierarchy and infinity of human needs. So, from the perspective of the modern culture of consumption, ancient thinking about consumption, contained in traditional Chinese culture, can give us some useful ideas and inspiration. It is the advancing of social practice that determines and pushes the demand to higher levels. Almost all the traditional Chinese sages take a negative attitude toward unlimited consuming desire, which makes people physically and mentally confused and prone to indulge in the pursuit of material enjoyment, so that "Nothing can be blamed on the desire."

Yet, industrial civilization stimulates and encourages people to consume more. Especially in the consumer society, consumption behavior is regarded as the main form of self-expression and social identity, so that consumption has become the symbol of what people are. In sum, the basic need of survival is transformed into "desire by the desire." Therefore, we should completely change the traditional consumption concept and establish a new kind of sustainable green consumption ethic to meet the legitimate needs of people, curbing the false and excessive needs. The criterion to decide whether or not the desire for consumption is reasonable for people's self-development, is whether it ultimately improves people's ability and strength.

A final aspect of the colonization of the life-world is a direct consequence of the dominance of science and technology in our daily

lives. Dan Chitoiu's paper on *Philosophy as Life Inquiry and Existential Attitude* argues that contemporary science has reduced the original broad meaning of the term 'inquiry' to an experimental one. Eastern (Christian and Islamic) philosophies have succeeded in overcoming this reduction because of their experiential character. Chitoiu examines this thesis by taking spiritual experience as his subject of inquiry. Spiritual experience is creative, is able to found values and, hence, gives rise to a cultural tradition.

In order to get a clearer view of spiritual experience and its association with the ideal of human betterment, Chitoiu analyses the early Christian tradition, in particular its interpretation by neo-patristics scholars. This tradition focuses on the fact that the rationality of the world has multiple 'virtualities'. Man uses this rationality of the world in order to make progress in his communion with God and his fellows, as well as to have access to higher meanings and purposes of nature. Moreover, only in the human being do the indefinite virtualities of nature gain meaning. This results in an alternative model of rationality, viz. one that implies a plasticity of existence, as well as an alternative model of experience, which can be called interpersonal.

These alternative models lead to the idea of philosophy as an existential inquiry. According to this view, ultimate knowledge (and knowledge of any kind) involves the whole man and not just his intellect, and the act of knowledge has the shape of a relationship. This becomes manifest in man's vision of God: to have a vision of God becomes possible because God unites with man, sharing the knowledge that He has of himself. No worthy conception of God can be attained through the intellect alone, as true knowledge of God comes from God, leads to God, and conforms to God the one who acquires it. Obviously, this broad idea of experience breaks open the rather reductionist view of experience as experimental, which characterizes the sciences.

The third part of this volume examines various ways to rectify the colonization of the life-world. The contributions of Golubiewski, Qi Zhao, Yu Xuanmeng, He Xirong, and Singh explore various Western and Eastern philosophical and religious traditions, such as Thomism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism, asking whether these traditions present viable ways to retrieve the life-world. In his paper

Art as the Source of Natural and Moral Goodness in Aquinas, Wojciech Golubiewski explores a view of the life-world that precedes its colonization by politics, the economy, and science through an analysis of Aquinas's account of the divine art as a source of the inherent goodness of the life-world. For Aquinas, the inherent harmony, beauty and goodness of all things of nature reveal a kind of practical wisdom, which opens a way to human virtuous life by imitation of nature's unfathomable generous source. Golubiewski starts his investigation with an analysis of Aquinas's metaphysical notion of the good as common to all things of nature. In this context, 'generosity' might explain the ultimate motives of natural generation and of the other laws of nature. These motives manifest a kind of universal practical wisdom, thereby not only referring to the principles of action that are common to different things of nature, but also to the voluntary mode of action proper to human nature. Hence, generosity is one of the basic laws of nature that belong to this universal practical wisdom. According to Golubiewski, this idea of the generosity of nature might open interesting perspectives for a dialogue with Daoism.

In his exploration of the inherent goodness in (the natural movement of) material things, Golubiewski focuses on Aquinas's understanding of art as an imitation of nature in the broad sense, thus including human actions. This understanding of art implies that it is derived from an intangible and invisible divine source, thus making this kind of art very different from human-made artifacts. Divine art constitutes things in their natures, by which they attain their natural goodness, as best in themselves and congruous in their virtuous operations. Considered under the aspect of generosity, morally virtuous actions are in harmony with the divine art's generosity of the good discovered in the natural changes of things.

In her paper, *The Universal Love and the Sustainability of Human Beings: a Comparative Study of Confucianism and Thomism*, Qi Zhao discusses how the ideas of two pre-modern thinkers, Thomas Aquinas and Confucius, can contribute to restore the life-world, in particular when it comes to the formation of moral virtues, such as the love for other beings, human as well as non-living things. For Thomas Aquinas, human beings are born in relationship with God and other human and non-human beings, but this relationship has been tainted because of the Fall. Only through real love or charity, which is a divine virtue, are humans able to recover this relationship. Hence, the highest

moral fruit is not that humans have a sound reason that persuades them to act morally, but that their whole being is morally good, as is exemplified by the virtue of charity. Charity is love in its real and most complete sense and includes love for persons as well as love of non-personal goods.

In comparison to Aquinas, Confucius himself was not interested in an ontological explanation of human beings, but the Confucian tradition has a clear view on the position of humans in the world, namely as related to heaven and earth. Confucianism considers *ren* (loving others) as the highest and universal moral virtue. *Ren* is also the foundation of Confucian ethics, because it enables humans to form good character or concrete virtues. All Confucian virtues can be reflected in acts, but most of all, they are inclinations or habits that make a person good.

A special question for Aquinas as well as for Confucius is the love for strangers. Aquinas thinks that only with God's grace, in particular through piety, are humans able to love everyone, including strangers, sinners and enemies. Qi Zhao argues that Confucius also advocates strongly the love of strangers, in particular by *shu*, the virtue of putting oneself in the other's position.

In his paper on the *Self-awareness of Life*, Yu Xuanmeng argues that philosophy can be defined as the self-awareness of life. This definition implies a critique of philosophy's one-sided focus on knowledge, which has marked its whole history. Self-awareness includes knowledge, but is much broader. Yu Xuanmeng demonstrates the one-sidedness of conceptual thinking throughout the history of philosophy, in particular in the debate between Plato and Aristotle about the knowledge of the universal, the opposition between rationalism and empiricism in modern philosophy, and phenomenology's suspension of the existence of the external world. From this perspective, Heidegger's thinking shows an important shift in western philosophy, since it changes the theme and the framework of philosophy, making a turn from the focus on knowledge to the phenomenon of life. Thus, in Yu Xuanmeng's view, Heidegger paves the way for changing the definition of philosophy and focusing it on the self-awareness of life, a question that eventually comes down to the question of the meaning of life.

The most important theme of traditional Chinese philosophy is, similarly, the self-awareness of life, as the book of *Yi Jing* and its

interpretation by Confucius shows. Confucius sees this book as focusing on human affairs. He used it to show various human situations and discussed how a wise man can catch the right moment.

In Neo-Confucianism, the focus on philosophy as the self-awareness of life became even stronger, as it called its teaching the doctrine of being a sage. Here the human being is not the object of knowing, but knowing itself, the way of existence of every one of us.

In sum, the self-awareness of life helps us to understand and overcome the colonization of the life-world, which threatens today's society, as is manifest in the damage to the (natural as well as social) environment and the conflicts among people. In this sense, to be self-aware means to keep in mind both oneself and the world.

In her paper *On the Non-Theoretical Characteristics of Chinese Traditional Philosophy from the "Zhong Dao" (The Mean Way)*, He Xirong focuses on the thinking mode of mean thought in Chinese traditional philosophy, and tries to show its non-theoretical or non-principled nature. Because of this the mean way can connect more easily with the life world than (idealist) Western philosophy, which is far more theoretical and principled. Moreover, this connection values that different ways of thinking are always deeply rooted in national culture and history. By taking this approach, Chinese traditional philosophy can contribute to finding a solution to the awkward situation that many Chinese people are facing, namely to have lost contact with their life-world, since they find themselves as being neither Chinese nor Western or being Chinese and Western at the same time.

In order to show how this approach is able to reestablish the link of Chinese traditional philosophy with the Chinese life-world He Xirong explores Zhongdao (the mean way), which is an important element in this mode of thinking. It focuses on integrity, blur, and conflict, thus highlighting its fundamental difference with the binary, antithetical mode of thinking, which predominates in mainstream Western philosophy. The Chinese traditional mode of thinking takes the world as a living entity, and human being as the smaller living entity, which should live properly in the world. Human's proper existence is changeable and relatively balanced, but because of the changes of environments and the emergence of new demands of people, this balance is regularly broken. This leads to the need of a

self-awareness of life, whose purpose it is to enhance people's living quality and cultivate a perfect personality.

The mode of thinking, characterized as Zhongdao, has three important dimensions. The first one is avoiding extremes and at the same time not doing one thing and neglecting another. The second one is righteousness, meaning that one takes a proper method to attain the best result, thereby taking into account the proper time and the circumstances. This method is able to solve the problem of the relation between principle and change. Finally, the third dimension of Zhongdao is unity of oppositeness and interdependency. This dimension is aimed at relating all things in the world with each other in harmony.

The Zhongdao mode of thinking is not only a method, but also a value of life and practical wisdom, as well as a spiritual realm, capable of maintaining stability and balance in an open environment. Applied to contemporary Chinese society, this mode of thinking cultivates the Chinese people's way of doing things and their ability to find a balance between traditional cultural values and the impact of modern science upon the lives of people, in particular scientism. This balance is an exemplar of how (Chinese traditional) philosophy is able to connect with today's life-world.

The last paper of the third part of this book is by Lalan Prasad Singh. He discusses the problem of *Philosophy and the Life-world from a Zen Buddhist Perspective* by focusing on the great intellectual and spiritual renaissance of the sixth century B.C., a period that saw the emergence of Indian Buddhism, Chinese Daoism and Confucianism, and Greek pre-Socratic philosophy. Singh examines the history of the complex relations between Indian Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, and Confucianism and Daoism. He shows that in order to create cohesion and harmony in society, Zen Buddhism with its lofty philosophy and technique of meditation can integrate the fragmented life of man, which is necessary to build a better and just society. Zen goes beyond the conceptual teaching of philosophy. It emphasizes integrating the part with the whole and man with humanity. According to Zen Buddhism, the life-world consists of the whole truth.

The last paper of this volume is not related to its general theme. Bo Meinertsen discusses the intriguing philosophical question of our knowledge about the contingent future. His paper, entitled *A Note on*

Aristotle and Beliefs about the Future, falls into two main parts. In the first part, he considers the question of whether Aristotle believes that there can be true statements about what will happen in the future. Meinertsen first clarifies this question, which involves consideration of some logical and metaphysical notions in Aristotle. He then argues that the answer to the question is 'No' (with a qualification). In the second part, he argues that Aristotle's view is correct. He does so 'indirectly', by way of presenting and refuting three prominent objections to the view.

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