

**The Anthropological Turn of German Philosophical
Orientalism and its Legacy: An Inquiry into the
Dark Side of Europe/Chinese Cross-cultural
Representations**

Jean-Yves Heurtebise

Department of French Language and Culture

Fu Jen Catholic University

Abstract

This paper aims to address the anthropological dimension of Kant's, Hegel's and Heidegger's representations of Chinese cultural achievements. By deconstructing not only the culturalist assumptions of European modern philosophers who wrote about Chinese culture but also those of contemporary Chinese thinkers' understandings of European culture, this paper also aims to address the methodologies used in comparative studies. Philosophy is intercultural when it stresses the cultural specificity of a philosopher deemed "representative"; it becomes transcultural when it resorts to philosophers who had the courage to deconstruct their own (real or perceived) cultural

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assumptions and their beliefs about their own “spiritual superiority” or “civilizational exceptionalism”.

Keywords: Orientalism, German Orientalism, Chinese Occidentalism,
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Introduction: Methodological clarifications & overview on a research framework

This paper aims to address the anthropological dimension of Kant's, Hegel's and Heidegger's representations of Chinese cultural achievements;^{1, 2, 3} their perceptions of Chinese intellectual productions should be understood inside the larger framework of European religious debates on China in the 17th century and the rise of nationalist culturalism in the middle of the 18th century. By deconstructing the culturalist assumptions of European modern philosophers about China, this paper also aims to question the methodology of comparative studies.

The question of the nature of philosophy is a cultural one. Not in

¹ Jean-Yves Heurtebise, "Hegel's Philosophy of History and its Kantian Orientalist Legacy," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 46, no. 2 (2017), pp. 175-192.

² Jean-Yves Heurtebise, "Is Heidegger an Orientalist or an Occidentalist European philosopher? Disclosing the political factor behind Heidegger's representation of Chinese thinking," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2019), pp. 523-551.

³ Jean-Yves Heurtebise, "Kant's, Hegel's and Cousin's perception of China and non-European cultures: Racialism, Historicism and Universalism, and the methodology of comparative philosophy," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2018), pp. 538-557.

the sense that the philosophical activity shall be reserved to one cultural area only (as many Western philosophers have argued in the past), i.e. not in the sense that philosophy is relative (relative to a specific geo-historico-linguistic area named “the West”) but in the sense that philosophy is relational. Western philosophers’ definition of their own philosophical activity has always been framed by their relationships to another culture: Plato defined it in opposition to the Egyptian priests; the encounter of Indian “gymnosophists” during the Hellenistic period deeply influenced both Epicurean and Stoic thinkers’; the relation to Islamist philosophers (Averroes and Avicenna) was instrumental to the development of Christian medieval philosophy. It’s now time to recognize that the European philosophical encounter with China, starting with Malebranche’s *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher on the Existence and Nature of God* written in 1707, has actually framed the development and self-definition of modern Western philosophy as we know it. Since this moment, European continental philosophy started to define itself in contradistinction to its conception of be the Chinese intellectual tradition and reflective habitus.⁴

⁴ Mark Larrimore, “Orientalism and Antivoluntarism in the History of Ethics: On Christian Wolff’s ‘Oratio de Sinarum Philosophia Practica’,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2000), pp. 189-219.

And the same is also true for contemporary Chinese philosophers: “One might indeed venture in considering just how the contours of ‘Chinese culture’ or ‘Chinese thought’ became increasingly sharper in the minds of Chinese intellectuals as they contended with definitions of what constituted genuine ‘Chinese’ values as opposed to Western (or ‘non-Chinese’) thought.”⁵ Both “Western” and “Chinese” philosophers defined the purported “civilizational specificity” of their “cultural area” by contradistinction to a “cultural other” they create to justify their views on their own cultural uniqueness and integrity.

Thus, the study of the relationships between European modern philosophers and Chinese classical sources is not peripheral; conversely, it delivers the core meaning of what philosophy is and can be. However, in inquiring into these interactions, it is essential to take into account its most problematic aspects. The relation between European philosophers and China is not only “a commerce of light” (as Perkins said about Leibniz)⁶ but also a commerce of darkness and racial/nationalist prejudices.

Indeed, the goal of our research is to inquire into the foundations

⁵ Christina Jialin Wu, “History in a Mirror: Rethinking the Chinese Past in Light of its Western Encounters,” in *Connaissions-nous la Chine?*, ed. Paul Servais (Louvain-la-Neuve: L’Harmattan, 2020), pp. 103-116. (Hereinafter referred to as “History in a Mirror”.)

⁶ Franklin Perkins, *Leibniz and China: a commerce of light* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

of Comparative Philosophy. What are the assumptions of Comparative Philosophy? Where do they come from? Why did they emerge? Nothing will be less accurate than framing comparative studies in terms of “cultural-dialogues”: “Culture” is in itself a social-historical construct and “Dialogue” is much too naive a notion to adequately frame the complex of social, political, and geopolitical forces at stake.

Before addressing Sino-Orientalism in the German modern philosophical tradition, let’s consider briefly a very classical issue. When Jacques Gernet or François Jullien contended that “Western” and “Chinese” “cultures” should be opposed as models of either Transcendence (personal & vengeful God in the West) or Immanence (natural processes in China),^{7, 8} we must understand that it’s not simply a scholarly proposition. Thus, it won’t be enough to argue that they mistakenly assimilate the Ruist strategy (consisting in embodying the power of the 天 into the practice of the 禮 – as demonstrated by Robert Eno)⁹, to an “everlasting” and “specific” “cultural feature”. It may not be even enough to quote the classical *Odes* where such Transcendent and Personal identifications of the Divine abound; far from being an

⁷ Jacques Gernet, *Chine et christianisme, action et réaction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

⁸ François Jullien, *Procès ou création: une introduction à la pensée des lettrés chinois: essai de problématique interculturelle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

⁹ Robert Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

immanent and material sky, the “Sky” (天/Tian) of classical times not only harbors feelings expressing a commitment to Justice but is endowed with the capacity to give breath to and frame the destiny of all beings: “Revere the anger of 天/Tian”¹⁰; “天/Tian, in giving birth to the multitudes of the people, to every faculty and relationship annexed its law”¹¹; “天/Tian made its determinate appointment”¹²; etc.

To deconstruct such assumptions about “Western” and “Chinese” “cultures” as models of either Transcendent or Immanent ways of thinking respectively, what is needed is to replace them in the context of the long historical debate starting with Jesuit missionaries and Enlightenment thinkers and to highlight their manifold social, political and geopolitical ramifications. Indeed, affirming that there is no transcendence in the “Chinese mindset” also is taking position on the issue of the Sinicization of Christianity in contemporary PRC. Moreover, such sayings rest on the modern anthropological assumption that the “human mind” can be analyzed through its division into

¹⁰ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, vol. 4, The She King* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970), p. 503 (same page for English translation and Chinese original): “敬天之怒”.

¹¹ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, vol. 4, The She King*, p. 539 (English translation and Chinese original): “天生烝民、有物有則”.

¹² James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, vol. 4, The She King*, p. 575 (English translation and Chinese original): “昊天有成命”.

“separate cultures” – an assumption that should be questioned from a transcendental perspective (universality of the condition of possibility of thought) or, at least, reconsidered on a contemporary cognitivist ground: “People do not think in English, Chinese or Apache; they think in the language of thought.”¹³ Moreover, contemporary post-colonial anthropology redefinition of “culture” challenged the old framework of classical “area studies”. It’s from this perspective that I will inquire into German Orientalism and its influence on contemporary sinology and Chinese thinkers.

Part One: What is “German philosophical (Sino-) Orientalism”?

In this paper, I will deal with different examples of what will be called “German Sino-Orientalism”. German Sino-Orientalism is a specific form of Sino-Orientalism which is in itself a specific form of Orientalism: the Orientalist framework of the perception of Chinese culture in non-Chinese, especially European and North-American, areas. The concept of “Orientalism” is a legacy of Edward Said’s

¹³ Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 81.

famous eponymous book. The main idea of *Orientalism* is that Western accumulation of knowledge about the Orient did not aim at knowing but rather dominating it: “Modern Orientalism has been an aspect of both imperialism and colonialism.”¹⁴

“Orientalism” is the “discursive dispositive” (to refer to a Foucauldian concept whose influence on Edward Said is acknowledged by Said himself) by which the West defined in the 19th-20th centuries its “Oriental Other” in terms of a lack of “rationality” and “self-determination” in order to justify its colonial rule. Prejudiced thoughts about the “Oriental” can be demonstrated by quoting British politicians of this time. According to Balfour: “You may look through the whole history of the Orientals in what is called, broadly speaking, the East, and you never find traces of self-government.”¹⁵ Similarly, Evelyn Baring contended: “The European is a close reasoner; [...] he is a natural logician [...]. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, is eminently wanting in symmetry.”¹⁶ These statements are orientalist in the sense that their “descriptive” content is framed by their “prescriptive” goals: depict Orientals as inferior to justify British

¹⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 123.

¹⁵ Arthur James Balfour, “Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill.” in *The Parliamentary Debates (official Report): House of Commons Fifth Series volume 17* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office publications, 1910), p. 1141.

¹⁶ Evelyn Baring, *Modern Egypt* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), p. 146.

colonial rule. It's in this respect that Said, in a statement that shaped contemporary post-colonial studies, said: "Every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric."¹⁷

However, Said's contention seems rather problematic. To state that every European in his sayings about the Orient was racist and imperialist is exaggerated and not always accurate. Evidence of this fact can be provided by quoting what Arthur Frederick Painter said precisely in relation and contradiction to Balfour's saying:

I will limit myself to the fundamental proposition stated by Mr. Balfour that 'you may look through the whole history of the Orientals [...] and you never find traces of self-government.' While there is no leading politician of the day whose character I hold in higher respect than Mr. Balfour's, I feel bound to assert that this declaration is diametrically opposed to the evidence of historic facts.¹⁸

¹⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 204.

¹⁸ Arthur Frederick Painter, "Indian Notes: The Outcastes or Depressed Classes," *The Church Missionary Review*, vol. 61 (1910), pp. 619.

Not all European living at the same period, and originating from the same place, thought similarly about the Orient: caricaturing modern Western conceptions of the East is also a kind of prejudice, an “Occidentalist” one.

Many scholars have tried to use the concept of Orientalism to depict and analyze “Westerners’ representations” of China. One of the most representative of this “post-colonial” reading of European Sino-Orientalism is Daniel Vukovich’s *China and Orientalism* contending: “Sinology itself must be seen as part of the long history of imperialism, colonialism, and trade. Thus, this knowledge formation must be understood as a part of historical colonialism and its *mission civilisatrice*.”¹⁹ In the same vein of scholarship, Adrian Chan in *Orientalism in Sinology* asserted: “Many modern mainstream sinologists behave as their Christian missionary-pioneers did and demanded the Chinese to reject much of their own culture.”²⁰

However, what both Daniel Vukovich and Adrian Chan described as being the essence and the norm of the Western scholarly perception of China (Sino-Orientalism) is more the exception than the rule. We must ponder whether, and to what extent, what Edward Said argued

¹⁹ Daniel Vukovich, *China and Orientalism: Western Knowledge Production and the PRC* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 5.

²⁰ Adrian Chan, *Orientalism in Sinology* (Bethesda and Dublin: Academia Press, 2009), p. 35.

about the European (French and British) representations of the Oriental Arabic world still holds for European representations of the Asian Chinese world.

There are two important limitations regarding the use of the concept of “Orientalism” in Said’s meaning of the term to define modern Western representations of China as a whole. Contrarily to the European perception of the Arabic Orient, which was over-determined by the conflict between Christianity and Islam during the middle ages, the perception of China was largely positive in Europe. John Gregory rightly reminded us that: “In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries very many Westerners saw China as at least the equal of Western civilization in important respects.”²¹ Thus, it will be largely incorrect to assert with A. Chan: “Christian missionaries regarded major elements in China’s culture, from cosmogony to value systems, as inferior.”²² The most important Christian congregation in China, the Jesuits, expressed highly positive views: they will be condemned by papal authorities (1715) precisely for their attempt to accommodate Chinese thinking to Christian views and most of them saw in China an example for Europe in terms of social morality and political governance. To use

²¹ John S. Gregory, *The West and China since 1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 2.

²² Chan, *Orientalism in Sinology*, p. 18.

the term “Orientalist” to characterize European representations of China in the 17th and 18th centuries will be thus rather inappropriate.

Moreover, one of the essential reasons why Said’s concept of Orientalism fits only partially to Western perceptions of China is related to the different political background that prevailed at this time regarding European relations to China: the colonial framework doesn’t seem to apply to the Chinese case and to early Western representations of it. If it is true that negative views started to prevail in the beginning of the 19th century, the shift in the European perception of China was not due to colonialism or imperialism. This point is stressed by Chunjie Zhang:

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the dominant course of Sinophilia shifted toward Sinophobia [...] European imperial encroachment on China did not start until the 1840s with the first Opium War. In particular, Germany [...] did not [...] have imperial ambitions. In the 18th century, European trade with China was almost exclusively conducted on China’s terms.²³

²³ Chunjie Zhang, “From Sinophilia to Sinophobia: China, History, and Recognition,” *Colloquia Germanica*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2008), pp. 97-110.

Thus, not only were European perceptions of Chinese society largely positive and idealized but European representations were not framed by colonial motives before the middle of the 19th century: political interventionism in the Qing Empire by foreign forces started only two centuries after European Sinophilia and one century after the beginning of European Sinophobia.

Before inquiring into German philosophical Sino-Orientalism of the end of the 18th century (with Kant) and the beginning of the 19th century (with Hegel and Herder), it's important to stress this point. The prejudicial statements of Kant, Hegel and Herder should *not* be generalized for all Western and even all German representations of Chinese cultural production. Indeed, Leibniz in his *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois* lavishly praised China's cultural, moral and political accomplishments – not only contending that China was on a par with Europe but was even surpassing it in many ways (not really an “Orientalist” statement):²⁴

China is a great Empire, no less in area than cultivated Europe, and indeed surpasses it in population and orderly

²⁴ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois in Opera omnia. Tomus quartus, 1. continet philosophiam in genere, & opuscula Sinenses attingentia* (Genève: Frères De Tournes, 1768), p. 171.

government. Moreover, there is in China a public morality admirable in certain regards, conjoined to a philosophical doctrine, or rather a natural theology, venerable by its antiquity, established and authorized for about 3,000 years, long before the philosophy of the Greeks [...].²⁵

Christian Wolff expressed similar views, equating Confucius to the greatest religious figures whose ethics are divinely inspired and should be recommended to all:

Confucius is not the initiator but truly the restorer of Chinese wisdom! [...] The prestige of Confucius was so great at that time that 3,000 disciples came to attend his teachings, and today he is as important to the Chinese as Moses is to the Jews, Muhammad to the Turks, and Christ to us, so that we must honor him as a prophet or a teacher given to us by God.²⁶

²⁵ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Writings on China*, eds. Daniel J. Cook and Henry Rosemont (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1994), p. 77.

²⁶ Christian Wolff, *Oratio de Sinarum Philosophia Practica* (Francofurtum ad Moenum: Apud Joh. B. Andreae & Henr. Hort, 1726), pp. 19-25: “En Confucium sapientiae Sinicae non autorem, verum restauratorem! [...] Confucii autoritas tanta tarnen ipsius & olim erat, & hodiernum existit autoritas, ut, cum olim Doctoris munere fungeretur, ter mille discipuli ad dogmata ejus haurienda confluerent, nunc vero eum Sinenses eodem in pretio habeant quo Judæi Mosen, Turcae Mohammedem habent, immo quo nos Christum habemus, quatenus eum tanquam Prophetam seu Doctorem a Deo nobis datum veneramus” – our translation.

Part Two: Why did “German philosophical (Sino-) Orientalism” emerge?

Previously, I mentioned the fact that there was a shift in the Western representation of China: a shift that Kant’s, Herder’s and Hegel’s views of China both embody and were instrumental in shaping.

Such a shift “from Sinophilia to Sinophobia” or the beginning of “Sino-Orientalism” in the West received different explanations which are not mutually exclusive. One of the first reasons has been already alluded to. Institutionally, with the papal condemnation of the position of the Jesuits (1715 and 1742), promoting “Chinese wisdom” became perilous: “The enemies of Wolff’s China-speech (1721) expelled Wolff from Prussia (1723). The critics of Bilfinger’s China-book (1721) had Bilfinger fired from Tübingen in 1724. The Christian loss of the China-mission in the same year delivered a fatal blow to sinophile discourse”²⁷; “When the Society of Jesus was dissolved in the early seventies, China had practically lost all its advocates.”²⁸

Another reason, more structural, can be given to the emergence of Sino-Orientalism: in the *Order of Things (Les Mots et les Choses)*,

²⁷ Martin Schönfeld, “From Confucius to Kant: The Question of Information Transfer,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2006), pp. 67-81.

²⁸ Adrian Hsia, “The Far East as the Philosophers’ ‘Other’: Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottfried Herder,” *Revue de littérature comparée*, vol. 297 (2001), pp. 13-29.

Michel Foucault redefined History as being not the continuous development of one Idea (be it Freedom or Science or Justice) realizing itself gradually in the world (as Hegel defined it) but a succession of “paradigmatic shifts” or “epistemic changes”. For Foucault, the middle of the 18th century saw the emergence of a new kind of episteme: after the episteme of “Commentary” in the middle ages and of “Order” in the 17th century,²⁹ emerged the new episteme of “History” which frames reality through the lenses of “evolution”.³⁰ While Enlightenment intellectuals in the episteme of Order praised China for its millenary cultural tradition and (purported) everlasting political stability, thinkers in the episteme of History looked at the antiquity of China as a proof of its backwardness and primitiveness. For Herder, China, the Chinese Empire, was like an embalmed mummy decorated with hieroglyphs and wrapped in silk³¹ – a truly Orientalist statement, not only because it’s depreciative and belittling but also because it refers to Oriental (Egyptian) metaphors to encode Chinese otherness and historical

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 71: “Car le fondamental, pour l’épistémè classique, [...] c’est que les relations entre les êtres seront bien pensées sous la forme de l’ordre et de la mesure, mais avec le déséquilibre fondamental qu’on peut toujours ramener les problèmes de la mesure à ceux de l’ordre.”

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses*, p. 231: “A partir du XIX^{ème} siècle, l’Histoire va déployer dans une série temporelle les analogies qui rapprochent les unes des autres les organisations distinctes. [...] L’Histoire donne lieu aux organisations analogiques, tout comme l’Ordre ouvrait le chemin des identités et des différences successives.”

³¹ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Hildburghausen: Bibliographischen Instituts, 1871) (hereinafter referred to as *Ideen*), p. 342: “Das Reich ist eine balsamierte Mumie, mit Hieroglyphen bemalt und mit Seide umwunden.”

belatedness.

In addition to the institutional and structural reasons for the shift from Sinophilia to Sinophobia during European 18th century, there are other reasons related to more mundane realities: maritime expeditions, diplomatic incidents, and economic changes. Interestingly enough, Sino-Orientalism started in Great Britain even before the failed 1793 Macartney Mission at the court of Qianlong. Such a shift started with the narratives of English merchants expressing their contempt for China's obsolete naval fleet and weak military capabilities.³² George Anson's trip in China in 1743 was pivotal in this regard: his *Voyage round the world* (1748) "became the most influential non-missionary description of China"³³ while being also "the first full-scale attack on the rosy images of China that French Jesuits were pushing"³⁴. Non-missionary travelers adopted a new and fresh look at China that stressed aspects not really taken into account before: Jeng-Guo Chen demonstrated how the new attention was no longer given to Imperial

³² Paul A. Rule, "The Tarnishing of the Image: from Sinophilia to Sinophobia," in *La Chine entre amour et haine: actes du VIII^e colloque de sinologie de Chantilly*, ed. Michel Cartier (Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1998), pp. 89-110.

³³ Ashley Eva Millar, *A Singular Case: Debating China's Political Economy in the European Enlightenment* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's Press – MQUP, 2017), p. 52.

³⁴ Colin MacKerras, *Western Images of China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 43.

elites and Confucian scholars but to common people and especially to the condition of poor women changed radically the perception of China's image – viewed as being not a prosperous, peaceful Empire but a country ripe with conflicts and poverty.³⁵

In each specific European nation, the shift from Sinophilia to Sinophobia or the beginning of Sino-Orientalism may have a different and specific reason. While the British shift in the perception of China cultural value is related to experiences coming from direct contact with China, German Sino-Orientalism is more related to reactions to internal European affairs. More precisely, the specificity of German Sino-Orientalism is its close connection to the emergence of national consciousness in Germany embodied in claims of “German cultural specificity” as opposed to “French universalism”.

The emergence of German philosophical Sino-Orientalism is a complex phenomenon that involves and engages much more than the proverbial “Western Orientalist perception of the Chinese other”. In her encyclopedic essay on German Orientalism, Suzanne Marchand placed German Sino-Orientalism into the broader European cultural context: “After 1770, the ‘China fad’, especially in the Protestant Germanies,

³⁵ Jeng-Guo S. Chen, “Eighteenth-Century England's Chinese Taste,” *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 54, no. 4 (2013), pp. 551-558.

died a sudden death, and China's association with the Rococo, the French and the Jesuits made it an anathema for early romantic writers."³⁶ The emergence of Sino-Orientalism in Europe, especially in Germany, was concomitant with the rise of culturalist nationalism. It is through the idea of national specificity that the very notion of culture was shaped, and that "cultural difference" started to be understood: "The shift in emphasis from 'culture' as cultivation to culture as the basic assumptions and guiding aspirations of an entire collectivity – a folk, a nation – occurred under the prompting of an intensifying nationalism."³⁷ My inquiry into German Orientalism is both historical and philosophical. Historical in the sense that I propose to see German Orientalism as a pivotal factor in the European shift towards Sinophobia; philosophical in the sense that I believe that the understanding of Mind in terms of *Volkgeist* is problematic in that it indexes transcendental operations on empirical forms of life ("ethnically" or linguistically defined) which may induce a form of cultural relativism.

³⁶ Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 23.

³⁷ Eric R. Wolf, *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 29.

Part Three: Why do we need to deconstruct “German Philosophical (Sino-) Orientalism”?

German Sino-Orientalism emerged in the context of the nationalistic reaction against Enlightenment and the elaboration of the anthropological concept of *Volksgeist*, stressing the value of local cultural specificity: “In opposition to the French Enlightenment [...] Herder stressed the individual contribution of each cultural entity [...]. Each *Volk* shall be studied in its individuality.”³⁸ David Theo Goldberg rightly stressed the racial underpinnings of the Anthropology of *Volksgeist* and the theory of cultural essentialism: “Anthropology was initially concerned to catalog the otherness of cultural practices. However, [...] anthropology turned primarily to establishing the physical grounds of racial difference. Thus, general categories like ‘exotic’, ‘oriental’, and ‘East’ emerged, [...] along with epistemological subdisciplines like ‘sinology’.”³⁹

Deconstructing the romantic and essentialist concept of Culture as *Volksgeist* is necessary if one wants to overcome its pernicious

³⁸ Matti Bunzl, “Frantz Boas and the Humboldtian Tradition.” in *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic, Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, ed. George W. Stocking (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), pp. 17-78.

³⁹ David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 29-30.

influence on Comparative Cultural Studies and to cure Sinology from its Sino-Orientalism. What is problematic in Orientalism is not only the “Western” prejudices against “Asian cultures” but even more so the very idea that “Western” or “Chinese” cultures exist as definite, everlasting, opposite entities: “Both positive and negative conceptions of China shared the same reductionist presumption that China was a homogenous whole and had not changed.”⁴⁰ Deconstructing “Culture” as a national everlasting reality imbuing the minds of the people living in a specific linguistic-geographical area is necessary because such “cultural identity” is in itself a construct: “Since the very idea of (a national) identity is new, any notions of culture invoked in this regard, have to be constructions by nature.”⁴¹

Part Four: Reflection on some examples of “German philosophical (Sino-) Orientalism”

Before providing examples of Sino-Orientalism in Kant’s, Herder’s & Hegel’s writings, and exposing their diverse anthropological roots, it is necessary to answer in advance to some

⁴⁰ Ho-Fung Hung, “Orientalist Knowledge and Social Theories: China and the European Conceptions of East-West Differences from 1600 to 1900,” *Sociological Theory*, vol. 21, no. 3 (2003), pp. 254-280.

⁴¹ Allen Chun, “Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity,” *Boundary 2*, vol. 23, no. 2 (1996), pp. 111-138.

rather predictable objections. It's often said that the Eurocentric prejudices of Kant's and Hegel's Anthropology are merely individual opinions reflecting the prejudices of their time. It's often said that the Eurocentric prejudices of Kant's and Hegel's *Anthropology* appear mainly in student notes and are unrelated to their philosophical project. Both objections come from the same idealistic habit of isolating philosophical thinking from social and historical realities.

First, it cannot be contended that Kant's racial prejudices conform to the prejudices of the time and were shared by most educated Europeans of his time. Robert Bernasconi, one of the first to inquire into the racial anthropology of idealist German philosophers, pointed out that "Kant had alternative accounts of the character of Africans at his disposal."⁴² Second, it's not correct to state that Kant's & Hegel's anthropological works were only peripheral to their conceptual activity and thus should not be taken into account relatively to their philosophical accomplishments. Indeed, the reflections about Race played an essential role in Kant's anthropological works from *Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace (Determination of the concept of a human race)* to the short chapter dedicated to Race (*Der*

⁴² Robert Bernasconi, "Will the Real Kant Please Stand Up: The Challenge of Enlightenment Racism to the Study of the History of Philosophy," *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 117 (2003), pp. 13-22.

Charakter der Rasse) in the *Anthropology*. As for Hegel, the importance of his *Anthropology* cannot be underestimated: “If Hegel’s *Anthropology* had been lost, the foundation would be missing in the logical structure of Subjective Spirit, which is an important part of Hegel’s metaphysic of knowledge.”⁴³

The link between Sino-Orientalism and Racial Anthropology appears in its clearest in Immanuel Kant’s works. Not only Kant essentialized pigmentary variations between human beings to identify four radically differentiated human “races” (White, Yellow, Red and Black) unified by geographical isolation:⁴⁴

We know with certainty of no other hereditary differences of skin color than those of the whites, the yellow Indians, the Negroes, and the copper-red Americans. It is noteworthy that these characters appear to be especially suited for the division of the human species into classes, first because each of these

⁴³ Murray Greene, *Hegel on the Soul* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1972), p. IX.

⁴⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Bestimmung des Begriffs einer Menschenrace* (Berlin: Akademie-Ausgabe, 1902), p. 93: “Wir kennen mit Gewissheit nicht mehr erbliche Unterschiede der Hautfarbe, als die: der Weissen, der gelben Indianer, der Neger, und der kupferfarbig-roten Amerikaner. Merkwürdig ist: dass diese Charaktere sich erstlich darum zur Klasseneinteilung der Menschengattung vorzüglich zu schicken scheinen, weil jede dieser Klassen in Ansehung ihres Aufenthalts so ziemlich isoliert (d.i. von den übrigen abgesondert, an sich aber vereinigt) ist.”

classes is so considerably isolated with respect to its residence
(i.e. separated from the others but unified in itself).⁴⁵

But he associated phenotypic distinctions with differences in terms of spirit:⁴⁶ “So essential is the difference between these two human kinds [“White” and “Black”], and it seems to be just as great with regard to the capacities of mind as it is with respect to color.”⁴⁷ Moreover, Kant contended that only the “White Race” had the natural ability and innate capacity to achieve the teleological realization of human mind through Culture and Civilization:⁴⁸ “The white race contains all incentives and talents in itself. [...] Whenever any revolutions have occurred, they have always been brought about by the whites.”⁴⁹ As a consequence, Kant expressed derogatory views about Chinese cultural productions – Chinese are said to be ruled by fantasy, deprived of scientific

⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, eds. Gunter Zoller and Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 147.

⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (Berlin: Akademie-Ausgabe, 1902), p. 253: „So wesentlich ist der Unterschied zwischen diesen zwei Menschengeschlechtern, und er scheint eben so groß in Ansehung der Gemüthsfähigkeiten, als der Farbe nach zu sein.”

⁴⁷ Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 59.

⁴⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Entwürfe zu dem Colleg über Anthropologie aus den 70er und 80er Jahren. Handschriftlicher Nachlaß, Anthropologie* (Berlin: Akademie-Ausgabe, 1902), p. 878-879: “Weisse: Enthalten alle Triebfedern der Natur in affecten und Leidenschaften, alle Talente, alle Anlagen zur Cultur und Civilisirung und können so wohl gehorchen als herrschen [...] Von der race der Weissen, die alle revolutionen in der Welt hervorgebracht hat.”

⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Anthropology*, eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 321.

rationality:⁵⁰ “What ridiculous grotesqueries do the verbose and studied compliments of the Chinese not contain: even their paintings are grotesque and represent marvelous and unnatural shapes, the likes of which are nowhere to be found in the world.”⁵¹ Furthermore, Freedom is said to have been absent from the Chinese mindset for historical reasons:⁵² “One needs only to look at China, which on account of its situation has to fear perhaps only an unforeseen attack, but not a mighty enemy, and in which therefore all trace of freedom has been eradicated.”⁵³

In Hegel’s *Anthropology*, Sino-Orientalism and Racial Anthropology are mediated by geographical Determinism and linear Historicism. Hegel contended that “races” can be distinguished by natural-historical features expressing the various degree of their embodiment of Spirit; according to Hegel, again, only the “Caucasian race” can achieve the historical realization of Spirit:⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Kant, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, p. 252: “Welche läppische Fratzen enthalten nicht die weitschichtige und ausstudirte Complimente der Chineser.”

⁵¹ Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 59.

⁵² Immanuel Kant, *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (Berlin: Akademie-Ausgabe, 1902), p. 121: “Man sehe nur Sina an, welches seiner Lage nach wohl etwa einmal einen unvorhergesehenen Überfall, aber keinen mächtigen Feind zu fürchten hat, und in welchem daher alle Spur von Freiheit vertilgt ist.”

⁵³ Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, p. 173.

⁵⁴ Georg F. W. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse 1830. Dritter Teil. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband – 10* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970) (hereinafter referred to as *Enzyklopädie*), p. 50: “Die Neger sind als eine aus ihrer uninteressierten

Negroes, uninterested and lacking in interest, in a state of undisturbed naivety, are to be regarded as a nation of children [...] they have no feeling for the personality of man, their spirit is quite dormant, remains sunk within itself, makes no progress [...] The Mongols, on the contrary, rise above this childish naivety. What reveals itself within them as their characteristic trait is a restless mobility, which achieves no definitive result [...]. Here, man can as yet attain to no consciousness of his personality; neither among the Indians nor among the Chinese has he any worth or entitlement on account of his individuality. [...]. It is in the Caucasian race that spirit first reaches absolute unity with itself, It is here that it first enters into complete opposition to naturality, apprehends itself in its absolute independence, disengages from the dispersive vacillation between one extreme and the other, achieves self-

und interesselosen Unbefangenheit nicht heraustretende Kindernation zu fassen. [...] Die Mongolen dagegen erheben sich aus dieser kindischen Unbefangenheit [...]. Der Mensch kann hier noch nicht zum Bewußtsein seiner Persönlichkeit kommen, hat in seiner Individualität noch gar keinen Wert und keine Berechtigung, weder bei den Indern noch bei den Chinesen [...] Erst in der kaukasischen Rasse kommt der Geist zur absoluten Einheit mit sich selber; erst hier tritt der Geist in vollkommenen Gegensatz gegen die Natürlichkeit, erfaßt er sich in seiner absoluten Selbständigkeit,... gelangt zur Selbstbestimmung, zur Entwicklung seiner selbst und bringt dadurch die Weltgeschichte hervor.”

determina-tion, self-development, and so brings forth world history.⁵⁵

The main difference between Hegel and Kant in regard to Anthropology and human ethnological variations is that while for Kant the principle of differentiation is physiological, for Hegel it's geographical and environmental.⁵⁶ “The difference between the human races is still a natural difference in that it relates initially to the natural soul. As such it is connected with the geographical differences between those environments in which people are gathered together in great masses.”⁵⁷ However, this difference in the ontological basis of the anthropological difference doesn't change its essentialist and deterministic nature; the geographical-climatic variations shape the mindset of a people in an invariable and definitive way: “It can be noticed in the first instance that national difference is as unchangeable as the racial variety of men. [...] The changelessness of the climate and

⁵⁵ Georg F. W. Hegel, *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit, Vol. II: Anthropology*, ed. Michael John Petry (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 53-57.

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, p. 57: “Der Unterschied der Menschenrassen ist noch ein natürlicher, d. h. ein zunächst die Naturseele betreffender Unterschied. Als solcher steht derselbe in Zusammenhang mit den geographischen Unterschieden des Bodens.”

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, p. 47.

the general state of the countryside in which a nation has its permanent habitat, contributes to the settledness of its character.”⁵⁸ But, even more than geographical and climatic determinism what defines Hegel’s Anthropology is History thought in a teleological fashion; in this process of the gradual realization of Spirit, in this process of the gradual liberation of human mind from natural determination, the Indian and Chinese Orientals are nothing but the starting point while the protestant Germans are the final destination:⁵⁹

The Orientals have not attained the knowledge that Spirit
– Man as such – is free; and because they do not know this
they are not free. [...] The consciousness of Freedom first arose
among the Greeks, and therefore they were free; but they, and
the Romans, likewise, knew only that some are free, – not man
as such [...]. The German nations, under the influence of

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, p. 67: “der Nationalunterschied ein ebenso fester Unterschied ist wie die Rassenverschiedenheit der Menschen... Die Unveränderlichkeit des Klimas, in welchem eine Nation ihren bleibenden Wohnsitz hat, trägt zur Unveränderlichkeit des Charakters derselben bei.”

⁵⁹ Georg F. W. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte. Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 12* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 31: “Die Orientalen wissen es noch nicht, daß der Geist oder der Mensch als solcher an sich frei ist [...]. In den Griechen ist erst das Bewußtsein der Freiheit aufgegangen, und darum sind sie frei gewesen, aber sie wußten nur, daß einige frei sind, nicht der Mensch, als solcher [...]. Erst die germanischen Nationen sind im Christentume zum Bewußtsein gekommen, daß der Mensch als Mensch frei, die Freiheit des Geistes seine eigenste Natur ausmacht.”

Christianity, were the first to attain the consciousness, that man, as man, is free: that it is the freedom of Spirit which constitutes its essence.⁶⁰

Finally, I can also briefly mention the case of Herder. Herder is interesting because he demonstrates that Sino-Orientalism is not necessarily “racialist” though it’s always essentialist. On one hand, Herder criticized the concept of Race: “Herder ... carefully avoids ever calling the differentiated groups ‘races’ [...] The human collective is, for Herder, the ‘nation’ [...] He goes on to say that these four or five races do not exist on this earth.”⁶¹ On the other, Herder is no less Eurocentric than Hegel or Kant and as critical of Chinese cultural accomplishments; for him, what the Chinese have accomplished in the course of History amounts to nothing.⁶² Though Herder has been recently hailed as an inspiration for an hermeneutic and cosmopolitan reading of world history,⁶³ in our critical perspective, Herder’s “Orientalist” case demonstrates, conversely, that the conception of

⁶⁰ Georg F. W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), pp. 31-32).

⁶¹ Eric Voegelin, *The History of the Race Idea: From Ray to Carus* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), p. 71.

⁶² Herder, *Ideen*, p. 342: “Wer erstaunt nicht, wenn er in der Sinesischen Geschichte auf den Gang und die Behandlung der Geschäfte merkt, mit wie Vielem ein Nichts getan werde.”

⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie. Band 2: Vernünftige Freiheit: Spuren des Diskurses über Glauben and Wissen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019).

“culture” as *Volksgeist*, as the link between ethnic features and linguistic particularities, induces a form of cultural essentialism: “All the information about the Chinese language is consistent with the fact that it has undoubtedly helped shape the character of this people in their artificial [*künstlichen*] way of thinking. Is not every national language the means by which the ideas of a [*Volk*] people are formed, preserved and transmitted?”⁶⁴ (My translation.)

Finally, how does one situate Heidegger’s philosophy and its (fragmentary) relation to Chinese thinkers in the framework of the cultural trend of German Sino-Orientalism? In many ways, Heidegger follows the romantic conception of *Volksgeist* and embraces Hegel’s sense of German cultural exceptionalism – neither for ethno-physiological reasons (like Kant) nor for geo-historical reasons (like Hegel) but (like Herder) for cultural-linguistic ones. Heidegger believes in an unbroken linguistic continuity between Sanskrit, Greek and German and in the “ontological nature” of “Indogermanische Sprache” as such. According to Heidegger, Being is what philosophy thinks and

⁶⁴ Herder, *Ideen*, 343: “Alle Nachrichten von der Sprache der Sinesen sind darüber einig, daß sie zur Gestalt dieses Volks in seiner künstlichen Denkart unsäglich viel beigetragen habe; denn ist nicht jede Landessprache das Gefäß, in welchem sich die Ideen des Volks formen, erhalten und mitteilen?”

what only European (Greek and German) philosophy can think.⁶⁵ “For along with the German language, Greek (in regard to the possibilities of thinking) is at once the most powerful and the most spiritual of languages.”⁶⁶ Thinking Being is the unique destiny, crux and privilege of the West.⁶⁷ “Is ‘Being’ a mere word and its meaning a vapor, or is it the spiritual fate of the West?”⁶⁸ In his March 1954 “conversation” with the Japanese Germanist Tezuka Tomio entitled “Between a Japanese and an Inquirer”, Heidegger stressed the irreducible and radical difference between Western and Asian minds embodied in the complete mutual otherness (and untranslatability) of their respective linguistic idioms:⁶⁹ “the nature of language remains something altogether different for the East Asian and the European peoples.”⁷⁰

Heidegger reinterprets the Asian/European dichotomy in terms of

⁶⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1919-1944. 40. Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983) (Hereinafter referred to as *Gesamtausgabe II, GA40*), p. 43: “Denn diese Sprache [Greek] ist (auf die Möglichkeiten des Denkens gesehen) neben der deutschen die mächtigste und geistigste zugleich.”

⁶⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 60.

⁶⁷ Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe II, GA40*, p. 46: “Ist das Sein ein bloßes Wort und seine Bedeutung ein Dunst, oder birgt das mit dem Wort ‚Sein‘ Genannte das geistige Schicksal des Abendlandes?”

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 40.

⁶⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976. 12. Unterwegs zur Sprache (1950-1959)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), p. 107: “Zumal für die ostasiatischen und die europäischen Völker das Sprachwesen ein durchaus anderes bleibt.”

⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 23.

his own history of Being: the beginning of philosophy in the West comes from its contradistinctions to Asiatic mythology:⁷¹ “For the great beginning of Western philosophy, too, did not come out of nothing. Rather, it became great because it had to overcome its greatest opposite, the mythical in general and the Asiatic in particular, that is, it had to bring it to the jointure of a truth of Being, and was able to do this.”⁷² Moreover, Heidegger did not believe that Asian thinking could help us to overcome the predicament of Western metaphysics and the conundrum of Western modernity; it’s only by our going back to Greek original sources that a rejuvenation of the German nation will be possible:⁷³ “It is my conviction that a reversal can be prepared itself only from the same part of the world in which the modern technical world originated, and that it cannot come about through the adoption of

⁷¹ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1919-1944*, 42. *Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit (1809)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), p. 252: “Denn auch der große Anfang der abendländischen Philosophie kam nicht aus dem Nichts, sondern er wurde groß, weil er seinen größten Gegensatz, das Mythische überhaupt und das Asiatische im besonderen, zu überwinden, d. h. in das Gefüge einer Wahrheit des Seyns zu bringen hatte und dies vermochte.”

⁷² Martin Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 146.

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe I. Abteilung: Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910-1976*, 10. *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges (1910-1976)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), p. 679: “Meine Überzeugung ist, dass nur von dem selben Weltorte aus, an dem die moderne technische Welt entstanden ist, auch eine Umkehr sich vorbereiten kann, dass sie nicht durch Übernahme von Zen Buddhismus oder anderen östlichen Welterfahrungen geschehen kann. Es bedarf zum Umdenken der Hilfe der europäischen Überlieferungen und ihre Neuaneignung.”

Zen Buddhism or other Eastern experiences of the world. Rethinking requires the help of the European tradition and a reappropriation of it.”⁷⁴

Interestingly despite his repeated claims about the radical dichotomy between “Indo-European” and “Asian” ways of thinking, Heidegger has been seen in the last 50 years as a natural companion to early Chinese philosophy in general and Daoism in particular: “Heidegger is the only Western Philosopher who not only thoroughly intellectually understands but has intuitively grasped Taoist thought”⁷⁵ ; “There appears to have been a ‘pre-established harmony’ between Heidegger’s thinking and Taoism”⁷⁶ ; “A recent Western philosopher whose ontology appears similar to Zhuang zi’s is Martin Heidegger.”⁷⁷

Indeed, Heidegger’s interest for Asian thinking, and Zen Buddhism and Daoism in particular, is today well-documented: “There is ample evidence of Heidegger’s familiarity with the Zhuangzi, although the majority of his discussions of Lao-Zhuang Daoism refer to

⁷⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1993) (hereinafter referred to as *The Heidegger Controversy*), p. 113.

⁷⁵ Chung-yuan Chang, *Tao - A New Way of Thinking: A Translation of the Tao Tê Ching with an Introduction and Commentaries* (London & Philadelphia: Singing Drago, 1975), p. 8.

⁷⁶ Graham Parkes, *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), p. 9.

⁷⁷ Chenyang Li, *The Tao Encounters the West: Explorations in Comparative Philosophy* (New York: SUNYP, 1990), p. 33.

the Daodejing and only a few directly to the Zhuangzi. Heidegger knew of Martin Buber's 1910 edition of the Zhuangzi fairly early, probably in the 1920's."⁷⁸ Petzet demonstrated that Heidegger read a German translation of the Zhuangzi as early as 1930.⁷⁹ Reinhard May also emphasized two important points to prove Heidegger's engagement with non-Western sources: "first, Heidegger's demonstrated fondness for the Daoist ideas in the Laozi and Zhuangzi, especially in the Buber edition [...]; second, the collaboration with Hsiao, requested and followed through by Heidegger, on translating the Laozi into German, and the valuable acquaintance with East Asian thought that he gleaned from the project."⁸⁰

But what truly makes Heidegger one of the most interesting cases to study German Sino-Orientalism and its anthropological underpinnings is his controversial but largely proven relationship, in the years 1933-1945, with the Nazi (National Socialist) ideological apparatus. In a 4th November 1945 letter to the Rector of Freiburg University, Heidegger reflects on his former engagement, highlighting

⁷⁸ Eric S. Nelson, *Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Early Twentieth-Century German Thought* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p. 121.

⁷⁹ Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929-1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 18.

⁸⁰ Reinhard May, *Heidegger's hidden sources East Asian influences on his work*, trans. Graham Parkes (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 9.

his disbelief in European modernity and his hopes that German National Socialism could rejuvenate the nation: “I was absolutely convinced that an autonomous alliance of intellectuals could deepen and transform ... the ‘National Socialist Movement’ and contribute to overcoming Europe’s disarray and the crisis of the Western spirit.”⁸¹ A point that Heidegger also reminds rather tactlessly to the German-Jewish philosopher Herbert Marcuse in a 1948 letter of his past dubious political inclinations: “Concerning 1933: I expected from National Socialism a spiritual renewal of life in its entirety, a reconciliation of social antagonism and a deliverance of Western Dasein...”⁸²

The connection between these two facts leads us to wonder whether it is not Heidegger’s dismay with Western modernity which leads him to both develop an interest for Chinese thinkers and to adhere to the National-Socialist project (though Heidegger did not agree with its biological and racial underpinnings and its inhumane and murderous means). To address this issue, the theoretical framework of Sino-Orientalism is not enough. What needs to be introduced is another concept of cross-cultural studies: the concept of Occidentalism, referring to Oriental and Asian biased representations, prejudices and

⁸¹ Heidegger, *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 65.

⁸² Heidegger, *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 162.

ill-generalizations about Western civilization as driven by the cold logic of pure mechanical materialism and disincarnated rationalism:

The mind of the West is often portrayed by Occidentalists [...] as a mind without a soul, efficient, like a calculator, but hopeless at doing what is humanly important. The mind of the West is capable of great economic success and of developing and promoting advanced technology, but cannot grasp the higher things in life, for it lacks spirituality and understanding of human suffering.⁸³

In this regard, if I have to briefly compare our understanding of Heidegger's relative engagement with Chinese and Japanese thinking with Lin Ma's 2008 *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event*, I will identify some common points and some important differences. I agree with Lin Ma about the fact that Heidegger's reading of Chinese philosophers did not modify his understanding of the purely Greek origin and German destination of philosophy,⁸⁴ as well as with

⁸³ Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the eyes of its enemies* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 75.

⁸⁴ Lin Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (New York/London: Routledge, 2008), p. 157.

the fact that the overcoming of “Western metaphysics” is something that remains internal of the Western tradition and that does not seem to benefit from Asiatic sources: the project of reversal has to proceed without any genuine challenge from the Asiatic.⁸⁵ However, I will disagree with Lin Ma’s contention that the best inception for East/West dialogue can be found in Heidegger’s comments on the fundamental differences between the two cultural traditions.⁸⁶ An “acknowledgment” of radical incompatibilities will just leave us with nothing but “culturalist solipsism”. We must avoid both Orientalist cultural reappropriations and Occidentalist civilizational clashes. But the fundamental difference is that Lin Ma’s book considers neither the political factor of Heidegger’s National Socialist period nor the larger Occidentalist framework.

**From Sino-Orientalism to Sino-Occidentalism: 19th-century
German nationalist anthropology’s legacy in 20th- century
China**

The articulation between Sino-Orientalism and German

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 166.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

Occidentalism is the most peculiar feature of the German romantic/nationalistic reaction against Enlightenment.

On this regard, Heidegger is also continuing a German tradition that goes back to Friedrich Schlegel's *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* as demonstrated by Michael Dusche:

Schlegel developed resentment against several aspects of modernity: urbanization, industrialization, and commercialization, and came, finally, to resent everything French as the embodiment of this modernity [...] For Schlegel as well as other contemporary German romantics, the German claim to cultural superiority was founded in the alleged greater authenticity of German culture. They saw their language in unbroken continuity with Sanskrit whereas French... was seen as a hybrid language [...] Schlegel consequently propagated an alliance of the Orient and the North against the Occident which he identified with the West and the South of Europe.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Michael Dusche, "Friedrich Schlegel's Writings on India: Reimagining Germany as Europe's True Oriental Self," in *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. James Hodkinson, John Walker, Shaswati Mazumdar, and Johannes Feichtinger (Rochester: Camden House, 2013), pp. 31-54.

As such, one can find many similarities between Schlegel's and Heidegger's writings on linguistic "ontological difference"⁸⁸ and his subsequent reflections about "the decline of Western culture" due to technological "enframing" can be compared to Spengler's: "For Spengler, as for Heidegger, modern technology appears as an end of era phenomenon, one that manifests itself solely in the terminal stages of Western Culture. And, for both thinkers, this decline stems from humanity's loss of awareness of its fundamental relation to Life/Being."⁸⁹

It's in this context that we can understand the relation between Heidegger's political background in National Socialist Germany and some of the Occidentalism tendencies of his writings. Occidentalism tendencies that, according to us, not only shaped Heidegger's renewed interest in Chinese thinking but also framed his influence in post-modern China and his reception by contemporary sinologists.

First, Heidegger's Sino-Orientalism is in many ways an effect of his (negative) Occidentalism, of his sense of German cultural

⁸⁸ Johannes Lohmann, "M. Heidegger's Ontological Difference and Language," in *On Heidegger and Language*, ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 303-363.

⁸⁹ Gregory Morgan Swer, "Technology and the End of Western Civilisation: Spengler's and Heidegger's Histories of Life/Being," *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2019), pp. 3-12.

uniqueness that the Nazis could, according to Heidegger's own judgement, not only help to save but to promote widely – thus saving the West against itself and Being from oblivion. According to Heidegger, the decline of the West was a planetary catastrophe that only a revival of the pure, original German *Geist* can prevent to happen while, eventually, redeeming humanity as a whole:⁹⁰ “The spiritual decline of the Earth is so far advanced that the nations are in danger of losing the last bit of spiritual energy [...] Situated in the center, our Volk incurs the severest pressure. It is the Volk with the most neighbors and hence the most endangered. With all this, it is the most metaphysical of nations”⁹¹ ; “The planet is in flames. The humanity is out of joint. World historical reflection comes only from the Germans, assuming that they find and preserve ‘what is German’.”^{92, 93}

This ambivalent connection between Sino-Orientalism and

⁹⁰ Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe II, GA40*, p. 41: “Der geistige Verfall der Erde ist so weit fortgeschritten, daß die Völker die letzte geistige Kraft zu verlieren drohen [...] Wir liegen in der Zange. Unser Volk erfährt als in der Mitte stehend den schärfsten Zangendruck, das nachbarreichste Volk und so das gefährdetste Volk und in all dem das metaphysische Volk.”

⁹¹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 38-9.

⁹² Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe II. Abteilung: Vorlesungen 1919-1944. 55. Heraklit. 1. Der Anfang des abendländischen Denkens (Summer semester 1943) / 2. Logik. Heraklits Lehre vom Logos (Summer semester 1944)*, ed. M. S. Frings (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), p. 123: “Der Planet steht in Flammen. Das Wesen des Menschen ist aus den Fugen. Nur von den Deutschen kann, gesetzt, daß sie ›das Deutsche‹ finden und wahren, die weltgeschichtliche Besinnung kommen.”

⁹³ Heidegger, *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 14.

German Occidentalism is peculiar to Heidegger. Husserl evidences another kind of Sino-Orientalism not rooted on *volkish* principles of national cultural uniqueness but based on universalist ideas of freedom and rationality:⁹⁴

The spiritual shape of Europe?—what is it? [We must] exhibit the philosophical idea which is immanent in the history of Europe (spiritual Europe) or, what is the same, the teleology which is immanent in it, which makes itself known, from the standpoint of universal mankind as such, as the breakthrough and the developmental beginning of a new human epoch – the epoch of mankind which now seeks to live, and only can live, in the free shaping of existence, its historical life, through ideas of reason, through infinite tasks.⁹⁵

Husserl’s Eurocentrism is rather “classical”; it implies Orientalist

⁹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie* (Den Haag: Nijhoff Publishers, 1976) (hereinafter referred to as *Die Krisis*), p. 319: “Die geistige Gestalt Europas’ – was ist das? Die der Geschichte Europas (des geistigen Europas) immanente philosophische Idee aufzuweisen, oder, [...] der Epoche der Menschheit, die nunmehr bloß leben will und leben kann in der freien Gestaltung ihres Daseins, ihres historischen Lebens aus Ideen der Vernunft [...]”

⁹⁵ Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. Evanston D. Carr (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 274.

conceptions of Asian thinking framed by religious bigotry or mere practical concerns as opposed to the unique ability of European philosophers to think theoretically:⁹⁶

For a deeper understanding of Greek-European science (universally speaking: philosophy) in its fundamental difference from the oriental ‘philosophies’ judged equal to it, it is now necessary to consider more closely the practical-universal attitude which created these philosophies prior to European science and to clarify it as the religious-mythical attitude [...] within their own framework of meaning this world-view and world-knowledge are and remain mythical and practical, and it is a mistake, a falsification of their sense, for those raised in the scientific ways of thinking created in Greece and developed in the modern period to speak of Indian and

⁹⁶ Husserl, *Die Krisis*, pp. 329-331: “Für das tiefere Verständnis der griechisch-europäischen Wissenschaft (universal gesprochen: der Philosophie) in ihrem prinzipiellen Unterschied von den gleichbewerteten orientalischen «Philosophien» ist es nun notwendig, die praktisch-universale Einstellung, wie sie vor der europäischen Wissenschaft sich jene Philosophien schuf, näher zu betrachten und sie als religiös-mythische aufzuklären [...] in ihrem eigenen Sinnzusammenhang sind sie und bleiben sie mythisch-praktische, und es ist verkehrt, es ist eine Sinnesverfälschung, wenn man, in den von Griechenland geschaffenen und neuzeitlich fortgebildeten wissenschaftlichen Denkweisen erzogen, schon von indischer und chinesischer Philosophie und Wissenschaft (Astronomie, Mathematik) spricht, also Indien, Babylonien, China europäisch interpretiert.”

Chinese philosophy and science [...], i.e., to interpret India, Babylonia, China, in a European way.⁹⁷

The discussion about Heidegger's engagement with Chinese sources and Daoism in particular took a new turn recently after the publication of Martin Heidegger's *Country Path Conversations*. In the first conversation, "The Uniqueness of the Poet" (1943), Heidegger made specific mention to Laozi while in the third,⁹⁸ *Evening Conversation*, completed on 8 May, 1945 (the day of Germany unconditional surrender), Heidegger referred to Zhuangzi's notion of "the necessity of the unnecessary."⁹⁹ Indeed, we know that since 1942, Heidegger was reading an Italian translation of the *Tao te king* and, in 1946, he started to work on a possible German translation with Paul Shih-yi Hsiao.¹⁰⁰ The concomitance of three different political and intellectual events, i.e., Nazi Third Reich collapse, Heidegger's radical critique of technology, and Heidegger's keen interest in Chinese

⁹⁷ Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 283-285.

⁹⁸ Xianglong Zhang, "The Coming Time "Between" Being and Daoist Emptiness: An Analysis of Heidegger's Article Inquiring into the Uniqueness of the Poet via the Lao Zi," *Philosophy East & West*, vol. 59, no. 1 (2009), pp. 71-87.

⁹⁹ Jaap Van Brakel, "Heidegger on Zhuangzi and Uselessness: Illustrating Preconditions of Comparative Philosophy," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 41, no. 3-4 (2014), pp. 387-406.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, "Heidegger and Our Translation of the Tao Te Ching," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), pp. 93-103.

thinkers in the years 1944 and 1945, lead some scholars to hypothesize a causal link between Heidegger's philosophical/political "change" and its intellectual appreciation of Daoism.^{101, 102}

Without discussing this thought-provoking hypothesis, I will simply stress that in this dialogue Heidegger seems also to reassert his national-culturalist belief in Germany as being the heart of Western civilization and the beacon of the historical embodiment of "Spirit": "the Germans as the central heart of the Occident fail in the face of their historically destined assignment and become the victim of *foreign ideas*."¹⁰³ For a dialogue that is supposed to reconnect the East with the West through Daoist references, the notion that German failure was due to the influence of "foreign ideas", one of them being "nationalism" could seem doubly awkward: first, because the notion of nationalism is largely a concept invented by German romantic poets and idealist philosophers (like Fichte); second, because it seems to deny Germany responsibility and put the blame on undefined "foreign forces" – a common trope of both *völkisch* and Occidentalist discourses. However,

¹⁰¹ Fabian Heubel, "Kritik als Übung. Über negative Dialektik als Weg ästhetischer Kultivierung," *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2015), pp. 63-82.

¹⁰² 夏可君：《一個等待與無用的民族——莊子與海德格爾的第二次轉向》（北京：北京大學出版社，2017）。

¹⁰³ Martin Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, trans. Bret W. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 160.

this fact may not be a contradiction to but rather one of the rationales for Heidegger's appeal to contemporary Western sinologist and Chinese post-modern intellectuals which may be partially based on Heidegger's Occidentalism.

According to my own research framework, Comparative Cultural Studies should be understood in a historical perspective. The reception of Western and German philosophy in China cannot be separated from its anthropological legacy. While studies about Kant and Zongsan Mou (牟宗三), or Hegel and Zehou Li (李澤厚) expose their relations as “a commerce of light” (to refer to Perkins' characterization of Leibniz's exchange with Chinese sources), I would like to point out something more like “a commerce of dark”. Indeed, nothing could have been more appealing in China for late Qing and early Republican intellectuals than the Occidental side of German idealism. Heidegger's critique of the technological apparatus could find deep echoes in the Chinese legacy of Occidentalism. Framing “Westerners” as Barbarians (夷) endowed with technical prowess (技) was a common trope of Chinese culturalist discourses:

At the dawn of the emergence of the Chinese Republic in 1911, the Confucian intellectual Gu Hongming (1827-1928)

cautioned against the radical Chinese scholars who were seeking to transform China through Westernisation. In Gu's opinion, Chinese civilisation, whose essence was "spiritual", was innately superior to the "material" culture of the West.¹⁰⁴

The denunciation of Western "materialism" was emblematic of the Chinese need in these troubled times to reaffirm itself as uniquely gifted with a "spiritual" civilization that could help to solve the problems of the world at large – one could also quote Shuming Liang's (梁漱溟) writings and ideas as another example: Western philosophy necessarily tends towards materialism. "Besides, the materialistic mode of thinking is produced only in the [...]. Conversely, materialism never emerged nor flourished in the East"¹⁰⁵ (our translation); "Easternization was a post-World War I concept attributed to Liang Shuming [...] It denoted an historic, messianic movement to save the West from moral deficiencies and crass materialism, providing an anti-dote to the perceived ills of Western society."¹⁰⁶

Interestingly in both cases, the reference to a higher *Geist* is

¹⁰⁴ Wu, "History in a Mirror," pp. 103-116.

¹⁰⁵ 梁漱溟：《東西文化及其哲學》（台北：台灣商務，2003），頁 99：「西方的哲學形勢固必為唯物論的傾向，然而唯物的思想唯西洋產生之 [...] 在東方唯物論固不見盛」。

¹⁰⁶ Edmund S. K. Fung, *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 73.

closely linked to an anthropological perception of the other. Indeed, European racial anthropology left an important mark in Chinese intellectual discourses about their own cultural/national specificity:

With the rising interest in Western learning, the various forms of anthropology were also introduced to China [...] For the reformers and revolutionaries in China the relevant aspect of Western racial theory was the notion of Western superiority. This was the source of their awareness of a “racial crisis” (*zhongzu weiji*), which they attempted to use to “awaken” (*huanxing*) Chinese nationalism in order to protect (or create) the integrity of the nation-state. The earliest texts about racial division established the idea of a “yellow race”, which was narrowed down to a conception of a specifically “Chinese race” by late-imperial scholars.¹⁰⁷

Kant’s, Hegel’s and Blumenbach’s anthropological classifications and reading of cultural specificities will find staunch supporters in the Chinese proponents of the “Self-Strengthening Movement” (*zhiqiang*

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Barth, “The Propagation of Racial Thought in Nineteenth-Century China,” in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia Vol. II: Interactions, Nationalism, Gender and Lineage*, eds. Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel (Brill: London, 2015), pp. 149-150.

yundong) such as Ji Yu Xu (徐繼畬) and Yuan Wei (魏源) as well as in the most important Chinese intellectuals of that time: Fu Yan (嚴復) and Qichao Liang (梁啟超). In Liang's writings, it's asserted that history is the struggle between (five different) races¹⁰⁸ – a struggle fought mainly by the “White” and “Yellow” ones (the others don't really matter)¹⁰⁹ and that the Yellow race only will ultimately win.¹¹⁰

This anthropological racial framework is the basis of Liang's nationalist appeal to Chinese patriotism:

In his famous 1899 article “On Patriotism” (愛國論), Liang reiterated the term “400 million tongbao (siblings)”, to emphasize that the 400 million people should come to realize that they belong to a collective entity [...]. The continuous existence of this collective entity is in great danger now, unless each member of this collective entity comes to embrace

¹⁰⁸ 梁啟超：〈新史學〉，收入《中國歷史研究法》（台北：里仁書局，1984），頁 16-17：「歷史者何？敘人種之發達與其競爭而已…然今所通行，則五種之說，所謂黃色種、白色種、棕色種、黑色種、紅色種是也。」

¹⁰⁹ 梁啟超：〈論中國國民之品格〉，收入《梁啟超全集》，第二冊（北京：北京出版社，1999），頁 100：「凡黑色，紅色，棕色之種人，皆視白人相去懸絕，惟黃之與白殆不甚遠，故白人所能為之事，黃人無不能者。」

¹¹⁰ 梁啟超：《梁啟超全集》，第二冊（北京：北京出版社，1999），頁 1079：「然我中國人種，固世界最膨脹有力之人種也。英法諸人，非驚為不能壓抑之民族，即詫為馳突世界之人種，甚者且謂他日東力西漸，侵略歐洲，…。」

patriotic feelings toward it and therefore willingly make great efforts and sacrifices to rescue it.¹¹¹

Chinese racialist patriotism is even clearer in Zou Rong's writings: "We should altogether protect it forever. Whenever foreign and inferior races [有異種賤族] want to invade our Zhongguo, taking away the rights belonging to our noble Han race, we should all unite to fight to the death to expel them in order to take back our rights."¹¹² The resonance with Fichte's *Discourse on the German nation* is striking.¹¹³ "it is only by means of the common characteristic of being German that we can avert the downfall of our nation which is threatened by its fusion with foreign peoples, and win back again an individuality that is self-supporting and quite incapable of any dependence upon others."¹¹⁴

There are many reasons for these connections between 19th century

¹¹¹ Jui-Sung Yang (楊瑞松), "To Nationalize the Past. The Discourse of '5,000-Year-Long' National History in Modern China," in *Connaissances-nous la Chine?*, ed. Paul Servais (Louvain-la-Neuve: L'Harmattan, 2020), pp. 149-166.

¹¹² 鄒容：〈革命軍〉，收入《革命的火種：鄒容、陳天華選集》（台北：文景，2012），頁 22。

¹¹³ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Rede auf die deutsche Nation* (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1859), pp. 3-4: "und dass es lediglich der gemeinsame Grundzug der Deutschheit ist, wodurch wir den Untergang unsrer Nation im Zusammenfließen derselben mit dem Auslande abwehren, und worin wir ein auf ihm selber ruhendes und aller Abhängigkeit durchaus unfähiges Selbst wiederum gewinnen können. Es wird, so wie wir dieses letztere einsehen werden, zugleich der scheinbare Widerspruch dieser Behauptung mit anderweitigen Pflichten und für heilig gehaltenen Angelegenheiten, den vielleicht dermalen mancher fürchtet, vollkommen verschwinden."

¹¹⁴ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1922), p. 5.

German idealism and 20th century Chinese Occidentalism. Both German and Chinese perceive themselves as occupying the geographical middle: *Mitteleuropa*, 中國. Both emerged in the aftermaths of a war of occupation by foreign forces: occupation of Germany by French Napoleonic armies, of China by “Western powers”. Both are linked to narratives of past humiliations and desire to rejuvenate a nation through national/culturalist politics: German romantic anthropology emerged in the context of the rediscovery of ethnic literature (with the Grimm brothers) while Chinese Occidentalism emerged with the rise of the *Guoxue* with, again, Liang Qichao: “When Chinese intellectuals such as Liang Qichao introduced the concept of *guoxue* their key motivations was to nurture national citizens by protecting the “national essence” *guocui* (國粹).”¹¹⁵

Moreover, since this historical moment of delusion did not vanish but, conversely, was carefully cultivated in PRC contemporary society,¹¹⁶ many Chinese post-modern intellectuals’ attempts to deconstruct “Western hegemony”¹¹⁷ share some similarities with

¹¹⁵ John Makeham, “The Revival of Guoxue. Historical Antecedents and Contemporary Aspirations,” *Chinese Perspectives*, vol. 85 (2011), pp. 14-21.

¹¹⁶ Zheng Wang (汪鋒), *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

¹¹⁷ 張寬：〈薩伊德的「東方主義」與西方的漢學研究〉，《瞭望》1995年第27期，頁

Heidegger's Occidentalist agenda.¹¹⁸ However, referring to Heidegger's critique of Western technology, Derrida's rebuttal of logocentrism or any other Western post-modern thinker deconstructing his own cultural limitations is problematic when it doesn't help at exploring one's own "civilizational narratives" but simply reinforces our nationalist tendencies at denouncing the limitations of the culture of the other (I translate below the paper published in Chinese):

While the 'Third World' critique of China tries to steer clear of the official discourse of nationalism, it nevertheless avoids any critical analysis of it. Moreover, the very fact that this criticism designates as antagonist only the outside world and omits any reference to the national level accommodates very well the nationalist discourse of the state whose interests it basically serves.¹¹⁹

36-37。

¹¹⁸ Florent Villard, "L'Orientalisme, La Chine et les Études chinoises: Usages critiques et dévoiements nationalistes de la pensée d'Edward Saïd," in *Orientalismes/Occidentalismes: À propos de l'œuvre d'Edward Saïd*, eds. Laurent Dartigues and Makram Abbès (Paris: Hermann, 2018), pp. 79-104.

¹¹⁹ 徐賁：〈「第三世界批評」在當今中國的處境〉，《二十一世紀》第 27 期（1995），頁 17：「雖然中國第三世界批評努力與官方民族主義話語保持距離，但它卻始終小心翼翼地避開對後者的分析批判。而且，正是由於它的『對抗性』批評只有『國際性』，而沒有『國內性』，它不僅能和官方民族主義話語相安共處，而且〔…〕順應了後者的利益。」

In this regard, what I said about Western modern philosophy in the introduction can be also said about Chinese contemporary philosophy: both define their purported “civilizational specificity” of their “cultural area” by contrasting with a “cultural other” they create to justify their individual views of their own culture – and thus at the end produced an always already hybridized philosophy:

Building on this observation, one might indeed venture in considering just how the contours of “Chinese culture” or “Chinese thought” became increasingly sharper in the minds of Chinese intellectuals as they contended with definitions of what constituted genuine “Chinese” values as opposed to Western (or “non-Chinese”) thought. [...] This evolution in Chinese thought – i.e., the weight of Westernisation and the subsequent difficulty of extrapolating “native” Chinese cultural elements – accelerated in diverging ways throughout much of the twentieth century. Indeed, as the literary scholar Lydia H. Liu has noted, “to draw a clear line between the indigenous Chinese and the exogenous Western in the late twentieth century is almost an

epistemological impossibility”.¹²⁰

The conundrum of transcultural philosophy will not be resolved by trading eurocentric Orientalism with sinocentric Occidentalism. If philosophy is intercultural when it stresses the cultural specificity of a philosophical work deemed “representative”; it becomes transcultural only when it resorts to philosophers who had the courage to deconstruct their own (real or perceived) cultural assumptions. Comparative philosophy is intercultural when it compares philosophers with regard to their respective “cultural specificity”; it becomes transcultural when it goes from cultural representativeness to “mind expressionism” and compares thinkers whose distant, dialectic and eristic relations to their own “culture” share similarities. It is in this regard that we need to evaluate Hegel’s, Herder’s or Heidegger’s potential contribution or actual hindrance to the constitution of transcultural studies. In our understanding both Hegel’s Orientalism and Heidegger’s Occidentalism should be deconstructed: Heidegger’s critique of Western metaphysics could be helpful if it were not rooted on German ontological exceptionalism; by comparison, Nietzsche’s anti-Platonism

¹²⁰ Wu, “History in a Mirror,” pp. 103-116.

would be a better companion to neither “universalist” nor cultural-chauvinist but truly multi-versal philosophy.

Nietzsche’s following statement can be useful for such a task:

I can imagine thinkers of the future in whom the perpetual agitation of Europe and America will be combined with Asiatic contemplation, the heritage of hundreds of generations: such a combination will lead to the solution of the enigma of the world. Meanwhile, free contemplative minds have their mission: they abolish all the barriers that present obstacles to an interpretation of man: religions, States, monarchical instincts, illusions of wealth and poverty, prejudices of hygiene and of races.¹²¹

In this statement, one can identify two steps: in the last sentence, the first step of the necessary deconstruction of cultural and anthropological prejudices (explored by this paper); in the first

¹²¹ Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches: Nachgelassene Fragmente, 1876 Bis Winter 1877-78* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967), p. 402: “Ich imaginire zukünftige Denker, in denen sich die europäisch-amerikanische Rastlosigkeit mit der hundertfach vererbten asiatischen Beschaulichkeit verbindet: eine solche Combination bringt das Welträthsel zur Lösung. Einstweilen haben die betrachtenden Freigeister ihre Mission: sie heben alle die Schranken hinweg, welche einer Verschmelzung der Menschen im Wege stehen: Religionen Staaten monarchische Instinkte Reichthums- und Armutsillusionen, Gesundheits- und Rassenvorurtheile – usw.”

sentence, the consecutive step of articulating different answers, whatever their various cultural background (“Western” or “Asian”), to address common problems. Why does Hegel’s or Herder’s historicist and culturalist philosophy seem to be less promising than Nietzsche’s anti-Platonic philosophy for the task of renewing comparative philosophy? Precisely because Nietzsche’s anti-Platonism deconstructs one of the metaphysical bases of Western thinking, one that seems the most difficult to articulate in Chinese philosophical terms. Moreover, Nietzsche’s questioning of the pure Apollonian origin of Greek culture, and his excavating of its Dionysian and Asiatic foundations is of paramount importance: no renewing of comparative philosophy without acknowledging both the original hybridity of Western culture (as Martin Bernal rightly stressed)¹²² as well as the distance that separates us from the Greeks – as Marcel Détiene rightly pointed out: “We are different from the Ancients ... even today we have to say it again and show it with supporting evidence: we are not Greeks.”¹²³

Conversely, it’s not coincidental that Jürgen Habermas’ recent *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie* rooting world history in Hegelian

¹²² Martin Bernal, *Black Athena writes back: Martin Bernal responds to his critics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 244.

¹²³ Marcel Détiene, *Comparer l’incomparable* (Paris : Seuil, 2009), p. 135.

and Herderian premises turned “what promised to be a world history, [...] into yet another Eurocentric story about the invention of European subjective and political freedom.”¹²⁴ As for Heidegger, I believe that Karin de Boer in her book review of Lin Ma’s *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue* is right when she contends: “if the later Heidegger, challenged by a Japanese or Chinese interlocutor, would have admitted that there is no such thing as a unified history of being, originating in the early Greeks, then he would no longer have been the philosopher he had come to be.”¹²⁵ However instead of seeing in it a reason to challenge Lin Ma’s requirements for cultural dialogue, I will see it as a reason to challenge Heidegger’s philosophical agenda and “history of Being”.

The hard truth is that it may be difficult to find proper conceptual resources for genuine cross-cultural encounters in either Eurocentric or Sinocentric philosophers. I believe that is only by de-Greekisizing the West and de-Sinicizing China that a fruitful and creative East/West encounter is still possible and meaningful in contemporary times.

¹²⁴ Eduardo Mendieta, “Jürgen Habermas, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*,” *Critical Research on Religion*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2020), pp. 196-203.

¹²⁵ Karin de Boer, “*Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event*, by Lin Ma,” *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 18, no 3 (2010), pp. 468-471.

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德國哲學中的東方主義人類學轉向及其遺產
——歐洲與中國之間的跨文化再現之幽暗面

何重誼

輔仁大學法國語文學系

摘要

本篇研究意在處理康德、黑格爾及海德格從人類學層面對中華文化成果之再現。透過解構歐洲現代哲學家對中國文化，及當代中國思想家對歐洲文化所抱有的文化主義假設，本篇論文亦針對比較研究的方法論提出質疑。當哲學家將他認為具有代表性的文化特殊性突顯出來時，哲學是跨文化（intercultural）的；而當哲學家勇於解構自身真實具有、或被認為具有的文化假設，以及他對自身「精神優越」或「文明特殊主義」的信念時，哲學則走向跨文化（transcultural）。

關鍵詞：東方主義、德國東方主義、中國西方主義、跨文化哲學

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