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comparative studies in philosophy/religion and dialogue as mutual "strangification" (*Waitui* 外推)

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FROM COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION TO INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION

For me, comparative studies in philosophy and religion today should be put in the context of reaching out to meet many others in all cultural traditions and political communities, a phenomenon of border-crossing or deterritorialization characteristic of today's world process of globalization. Elsewhere I have defined 'globalization' as "a historical process of deterritorialization or border-crossing, in which human desire, human interconnectedness and universalizability are to be realized on the planet as a whole, and to be concretized in the present as global free market,

trans-national political order and cultural glocalism."[1] All people of the world are involved in the process of going beyond themselves to many others, to meet them and understand them, either ideally for dialogue in view of mutual enrichment or unfortunately for dealing with conflict in the case of oppositional confrontation.

It is in this context that comparative studies become pragmatically meaningful. I don't think, at least for myself, that there is any positive interest for doing comparison for comparison's sake. Comparative studies in philosophy, religion, social sciences and culture, etc., always presuppose and indeed involve, on the one hand, the existence of many others and the act of going outside of oneself to many others, and, on the other hand, a deeper understanding of one's true self and potentiality, and the precious values accumulated in one's own tradition.

Now, when the world is entering an era of globalization, two inter-related questions concerning the future of philosophy/religion emerge for our attention: First, how could each philosophical/religious tradition draw the best of its cultural resources for the benefit of other philosophical/ religious traditions in the world? Second, how could each philosophical/ religious tradition achieve self-understanding by regarding impartially other philosophical/religious traditions and, furthermore, by allowing philosophizing and religiosity to become indispensable for the mutual understanding of all cultural traditions in the world? Facing the challenge of these two questions, we are led to put more and more emphasis on intercultural philosophy/religion.

It is an undeniable fact that philosophy/religion was, and still is, cultur-ally bound. Western philosophy was very much related to the long cultural heritage from ancient Greek, through Roman, to medieval and modern Europe. In the non-Western world, for example, in China, we find other traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. As Martin Heidegger has well pointed out, Western philosophy has developed from a decisive choice made by the Western culture in the time of Parmenides and Plato. Even now, many works in the history of Western philosophy are still unjustifiably called "The History of Philosophy"; regrettably, this exclusiveness and arrogance arbitrarily sets aside many other possibilities.

In this context, to study intercultural philosophy/religion means not to enclose one's own vision of philosophy/religion within the limit of one's own tradition, especially that of Western philosophy/religion. This is

particularly necessary today when the type of rationality and religiosity so basic to Western civilizations is now much challenged and even collapsing. Now the world is open to other types of rationality and religiosity, or it would be better to say a more comprehensive function of human reason and human feeling.

It is well recognized that we live now in an age of multiculturalism. As I see it, the concept of "multiculturalism" should mean, of course, but not only, a request for cultural identity and a respect for cultural difference, as Charles Taylor has well argued. In the meanwhile, it has been limited to a kind of "politics of recognition."[2] For me, "multiculturalism" means, at the start, that each and every culture has its own cultural identity and that each should respect each other's cultural differences; besides, it should mean, above all, mutual enrichment by cultural differences and an unceasing search for universalizable elements embodied in various cultural traditions.[3] I understand that we can obtain this *upgraded* meaning of multiculturalism only by conducting dialogues among different cultural worlds. In this context, different ways of doing philosophy and religion in different cultural traditions could enrich our vision of the multi-layered and multi-faceted reality. Especially in this time of radical change, any philosophy/religion capable of facing this challenge has to include in itself an intercultural dimension.

PHILOSOPHY OF CONTRAST AND INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION

What is intercultural philosophy/religion? This should not be limited only to doing comparative philosophy/religion, as in the cases of comparative linguistics, which is quite often limited to the studies of resemblance and difference between two different languages. Although doing comparative philosophy/religion in this manner could lead to a kind of relativism in philosophy/religion, it could not really help the self/mutual understanding and the practice of philosophy/religion itself. A maximal vision of comparative study should lead to interaction and dialogue among different cultural, philosophical, and religious traditions.

For me, the real target of doing intercultural philosophy/religion is to put different philosophical/religious traditions into contrast, rather than

engaging in a sheer comparison. I understand "contrast" as the rhythmic and dialectical interplay between difference and complementarity, continuity and discontinuity, which leads eventually to the real mutual enrichment of different agents, individual or collective, such as different traditions of religion or philosophy.[4]

I have proposed a philosophy of contrast as an alternative to both structuralism and Hegelian dialectics. Structuralism sees only elements in opposition but not in complementarity. It also over-emphasizes synchronicity to the negligence of diachronicity, and therefore human historicity is reduced to mere structural determinism. It could be said that historical movement is essential to Hegelian dialectics, which sees dialectics as both methodology and ontology, i.e., as the historical movement of Spirit seen as the True Reality. In Hegel, however, Spirit moves by means of *Aufhebung*, which is understood in a negative way that tends finally towards the triumph of negativity and thus overlooks the positivity in dialectical movement. However, my concept of contrast rediscovers the dynamic tension of both difference and complementarity, structurality and historicity, and it integrates both negative and positive forces in the movement of history as the process of Reality's unfolding and manifestation.

The wisdom of contrast has its origin in Chinese philosophy, such as the *Book of Changes*, the *Laozi* and other Chinese philosophical texts. It suffices to mention that the diagram of the Great Ultimate seems to give us a concrete image of a philosophy of contrast, though apparently it represents only what I call "structural contrast." Still, we can put it into movement on the axis of time and thereby obtain an image of "dynamic contrast."

By "structural contrast" I mean that in any moment of analysis, the multiple objects appearing in our experience are constituted of interacting elements, different yet related, opposing yet complementary to each other. It is synchronic in the sense that these elements appear simultaneously so as to form a well-structured whole. Being different, however, each element enjoys a certain degree of autonomy; while being related, they are mutually interdependent.

On the other hand, by "dynamic contrast" I mean that, on the axis of time, all beings, all individual life-stories, collective histories, and cosmic processes are in a process of becoming through the continuous and discontinuous interplay of the precedent and the consequent moments. It is

diachronic in the sense that one moment follows another moment on the axis of time, to form a history, not in a discontinuous or atomic succession, but in a contrasting way of development moving continuously and discontinuously. As discontinuous, the novel moment has its proper originality, never to be reduced to any preceding moment. As continuous, it always keeps something from the preceding moment as residue or sedimentation of experience in time. This concept of dynamic contrast could explain all the processes of becoming, such as the relationship between tradition and modernity.[5]

In this sense we are different from structuralism for which the structure is anonymous, as it determines the constitution of meaning without being known consciously by the agent.[6] For us, on the contrary, a system or a structure is always the outcome of the act of structuration by a certain agent or group of actors in the process of time.

On the other hand, the process of time can also be analyzed through our vision or intellectual gaze in order to uncover its structural intelligibility. An historical action can be analyzed in terms of systematic properties and be integrated into a structural totality. This is true, for example, in communication where the system and the agent are mutually dependent and promoting one another. The contrasting interaction between structure and dynamism leads finally to the evolution process of complexification. Structural contrast puts interacting elements into a kind of organized totality, but it is only through dynamic contrast that continuity and the emergence of new possibilities can be properly understood.

The wisdom of contrast reminds us always to see the other side of the story and the tension between complementary elements essential to creativity in time. The wisdom of contrast reminds us of the contrasting situation between concepts such as agent and system, difference and complementarity, continuity and discontinuity, reason and rationality, theory and praxis, understanding and translatability, process and reality, etc.

Let us consider now the epistemological strategies we can adopt in view of a good comparative or intercultural philosophy/religion. Two consecutive strategies could be proposed here: First, the strategy of appropriation of language, which means, more concretely, speaking and learning the language that makes other cultural/philosophical/religious traditions understandable. Ever since our childhood, learning a language takes place by interacting with the generous act of those who take the initiative to

speak to us and thereby open to us a world of meaningfulness. Later, when we are grown up, we learn the languages of different disciplines, cultural practices, and linguistic communities, which open us to ever-enlarging worlds. As Wittgenstein says, different language games correspond to different life-forms; therefore, appropriation of another's language would give us access to the life-form implied in that specific language. By appropriating different languages of different cultural/philosophical/religious traditions, we could enter into different worlds and thereby enrich the construction of our own world.

Second, there is the strategy of *strangification* (or *waitui* 外推, in Chinese). By this I mean the act of going outside of oneself to go to many others, from one's familiars to one's strangers, from one's cultural/religious world to many others' cultural/religious worlds. Later, I'll discuss in more detail three types of strangification, that is, linguistic, pragmatic, and ontological strangification, and my notion of "dialogue" as mutual strangification.

CONTRAST INVITES STRANGIFICATION

Philosophies/religions from different cultural traditions may be seen as in a situation of contrast, that is, different yet complementary, which allows them to go beyond one's own side to multiple others, from one's own familiarity to strangers. We may, for example, put Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy into contrast, by saying that, first, Western philosophy uses languages based on alphabetical systems and are therefore more abstract, while Chinese philosophy uses pictograms and ideograms, which express ideas through images such as 人 (*ren*, human beings), 天 (*tian*, Heaven), 仁 (*ren*, humanness), 道 (*dao*, the Way), and 心 (*xin*, mind/ heart). Second, Chinese philosophy expresses itself by *image–idea*, different from Western philosophy, which aims at *pure ideas*; Chinese philosophy prefers metaphors and narratives, and thus is different from concepts and argumentations used by Western philosophy. We may also put them into contrast by saying that Western philosophy can be traced back to its origin in the Greek notion of *theoria*, the disinterested pursuit of truth and sheer intellectual curiosity,[7] while Chinese philosophy seems to be without such a purely theoretical interest and is more pragmatically motivated. Generally speaking, the *episteme* in Western philosophy began as

a result of the attitude of *wonder*, which led to the theoretical construction of scientific and philosophical knowledge, whereas Chinese philosophy began with the attitude of concern, which led finally to a practical wisdom for guiding human destiny.

In the case of Western philosophy, Aristotle pointed out in the *Metaphysics* that the way of life in which knowledge began was constituted of leisure (*rastone*) and recreation (*diagoge*), as in the case of the Egyptian priests who invented geometry in such a way of life. Aristotle believed that, in leisure and recreation, human beings need not care about the daily necessities of life and could thereby wonder about the causes of things and go in search of knowledge for knowledge's sake. The result of wonder was theories. Aristotle wrote in the *Metaphysics*:

> For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters … therefore since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end.[8]

According to Aristotle, the philosophical meaning of "*theoria*" was determined, on the one hand, with respect to praxis, or, as Aristotle put it, "not in virtue of being able to act but of having the theory for themselves and knowing the cause."[9] On the other hand, it was determined with respect to a universal object, which was seen by Aristotle as the first characteristic of *episteme*, thus leading itself to philosophy and ending up with ontology.[10]

We now know well that the emergence of *theoria* in Greece also had its religious origin. In the beginning, *theoroi* were the representatives from other Greek cities to Athens's religious ceremonies. It was through looking at and not acting in the ceremony that they participated in religious ritual. Analogically, philosophers, emerging from *theoria*, began to look at the universe in a disinterested way instead of looking only at the altar or the stage. Western philosophy was historically grounded in this Greek heritage of *theoria*, which no longer regarded human life as determined by diverse practical interests but rather submitted itself henceforth to a universalizing and objective norm of truth. *Theoria* and philosophy, in

Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, culminated ultimately in the science of ontology, which, according to Aristotle, investigated being as being as the most general and comprehensible aspect of all beings.

By contrast, Chinese philosophy in general originated with the attitude of *concern*, which led not to universalizable theories but to *universalizable praxis*. It was because of his concern with the destiny of individual and community that a Chinese mind started to philosophize. The *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*, arguably attributable to Confucius, started to give an explanation of the beginning of the *Book of Changes* and saw its author to be in a situation of anxiety and calamity with compassionate concern. There we read:

> Was it not in the last age of *Yin* 殷 … that the study of the Changes began to flourish? On this account the explanations in the book express a feeling of anxious apprehension, and teach how peril may be turned into security, and easy carelessness is sure to meet with overthrow. The way in which these things come about is very comprehensive, and must be acknowledged in every sphere of things. If in the beginning there be a cautious apprehension as to the end, there will probably be no error or cause for blame. This is what is called the Way of Changes.[11]

This text shows that, in the eyes of its author, Philosophy of Changes, as a serious intellectual activity, began with the attitude of concern in the situation of anxiety and calamity, not at all in the situation of leisure and recreation, as Aristotle would suggest. It emerged with the concern for both personal and collective destiny. The proposition that "the way in which these things come about is very comprehensive, and must be acknowledged in every sphere of things" suggests that Chinese philosophy intends to be a practical wisdom capable of guiding a universalizable *praxis*.

Since whether or not there is universality pure and simple is still a question open to debate, we prefer to use the term "universalizability," – a common concern of which may show us a convergence between Western philosophy and Chinese philosophy. Even if Western philosophy concerns itself more with the universalizability of theories, whereas Chinese philosophy concerns itself more with practical universalizability, nevertheless,

both of them try to go beyond particular interest and to transcend the limit of particularity in view of a universalizable value. In a certain sense, both of them target the ideal of universality in which *theoria* and *praxis* might be seen as complementary. In a certain sense, *theoria* and *praxis*, though different, are complementary and constitute thereby a structural contrast between Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy.

THOUGHT, EXPERIENCE, AND THEIR UNITY

Another contrast, this time on the level of epistemic principle, puts Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy in another situation of difference and complementarity. The close relation of Western philosophy to mathematics is itself a fascinating philosophical problem. Not to mention the philosophy of ancient Greece, it suffices to say that geometry, algebra, and, more generally, to use Heidegger's term, '*mathesis universalis*' have founded the rationality of European modern science. This, in its rational aspect, is a process of theory-construction using logical-mathematically structured language to formulate human knowledge. In modern Western philosophy, rationalism since Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz has laid the rational foundation of modern European science. Their philosophy and many of their works, written according to the order of geometry, offer us the most articulated examples of *mathesis universalis* in modern Western philosophy.

Compared with this, Chinese philosophy did not use logico-mathematic structures for its theory formation. It did not ponder its own linguistic structure to the point of having elaborated a logic system for the formulation and control of scientific discourse. Mathematics, though highly developed in ancient China, was used only for describing or organizing empirical data, not for formulating theories. Lacking in logical mathematical structures, Chinese philosophy and its proto-scientific theories were mainly presented through intuition and speculative imagination. These theories might have the advantage of being able to penetrate into the totality of life, nature, and society as a whole, to give them a reasonable interpretation, but they lacked somehow the rigour of structural organization and logical formulation.[12] Even today, Chinese philosophy may still learn from Western philosophy in the more rigorously logical

formulation of its theoretical propositions, but, with its essential concern with life-meaningfulness, it would never go so far as to indulge itself in mathematic/logical formulations.

On the other hand, empirical data are also very much emphasized in both Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy. For the latter, such as in the case of classical empiricism, philosophers like Locke, Berkeley, and Hume have well justified the empirical side of Western modern science, characterized by its unrelenting quest of empirical data and well-controlled systematic experimentation. We should, however, notice that modern science works on information, not *passively given* as understood by classical empiricism, but rather *actively constructed* by theoretical and technical devices. Modern science, by elaborating on the sensible data and our perception of them, assures itself of keeping in touch with the environment, the supposed "real world," but in a very artificially and technically controlled way.

As to Chinese philosophers, they made empirical observations too, looking up to the heavenly movement and down to various things on earth. These could be very detailed but passive observations, with or without the aid of instruments, with the intent to penetrate into the true nature of all things. But it had seldom tried any systematically organized experimentation to the extent of effecting any active artificial control over the human perception of natural objects.

In fact we should say that, if there is need of empirical data, it is because there is need to go outside of our thought to reach the Reality over there so as to form a reliable knowledge. The search for empirical data could therefore be seen as a particular form of strangification, but, if control of our perception is indispensable, the technical manipulation of the object might not be necessary. Chinese philosophers preferred, as *Zhong Yong* (中庸, the *Doctrine of the Means*) said, to allow all things, including oneself and many others, to unfold their own nature.

Furthermore, in Western philosophy of science, there is always a conscious checking of the correspondence between theories and empirical data so as to combine them into a coherent whole and to serve human beings' purpose of explanation and prediction for the control of world events. This idea of correspondence could be found either in the tradition from classical empiricism to logical positivism, which assumes that there is truth where there is correspondence of theory to empirical data, or in

Kant's critical philosophy, for which the world of experience must enter into the a priori framework of our subjectivity in order to become known by us. The idea of correspondence is always there behind all tentative forms of verification (R. Carnap), falsification (K. Popper), or other forms of confirmation.

As to Chinese philosophy, we should say that the unity between empirical knowledge and human thinking was also much emphasized.[13] This is what Confucius affirmed when he told his disciple *Zi Gong* (子貢) that he was not merely aiming at learning many things and retaining them in memory but rather that there was a unity that bound them all together.[14] Confucius seemed to affirm, as Kant did, the complementary interaction between empirical data and thinking when he said, "To learn without thought leads to confusion. To think without learning leads to danger."[15] These words of Confucius remind us of Kant's saying that sensibility without concept is blind, whereas concept without sensibility is void. However, it is different in the sense that the mode of unity in Confucianism is achieved by ethical praxis, and, in the case of Daoism, by life praxis, both in reference to the Dao or Heaven as the Ultimate Reality. Here "*praxis*" or "practical action" was not interpreted as a kind of technical application of theories to the control of concrete natural or social phenomena. On the contrary, it was understood as an active involvement in the process of realizing what is properly human in the life of the individual and of society. As to science and technology, they are not to be ignored but must be reconsidered, transformed, and upgraded in the context of ethical praxis and life praxis.

REASONABLENESS ENCOURAGES STRANGIFICATION

The function of reason in Chinese philosophy is better characterized as *reasonableness* rather than by *rationality*. "Reason" in the Chinese sense refers always to the totality of existence and to its meaningful interpretation by human life as a whole, which in principle would encourage the act of going to the other side of reality to see holistically and therefore encourage strangification.

On its cognitive side, reasonableness concerns the dimension of meaning: meaning of literary or artistic work, life, society, culture, existence itself, etc. The model of this cognitive activity could be found in the

understanding and interpretation of a text or a work of art. This activity of understanding and interpretation could be extended to any form of relationship that human beings entertain with the dimension of the totality of existence. In the understanding of meaning, we have to refer, not only to its linguistic meanings, but also to the totality of my self and the totality of relationships that I entertain with the world. In some sense, it has to start from my self as the subject of my experience and my understanding in order to reconstruct the meaning of a text, but it refers inevitably to the level of ontology where human life is integrated into a profound relationship with the Ultimate Reality.

On its practical side, when we ask the question, what are those actions that are subject to the function of reasonableness, the answer is that all actions are concerned with personal as well as collective involvement in meaning constitution. For example, we could think of those actions concerned with the creation and appreciation of works of art, with the realization and evaluation of moral intention, and even those political actions concerned with the decision of historical orientation of a certain social group. Finally, we could consider the meaning of life and existence as an unceasing process of meaning realization in the universe.

We have to notice that the function of reasonableness that refers itself to the totality of one's self and one's relationship with the world, as exemplified by Confucianism, is still quite limited to human-centred orientation. There is still another function of reasonableness, of a more speculative character, which is concerned more with the totality of Being and Reality Itself and is not limited to human subjectivity and human meaningfulness. This is more exemplified by Daoism.

In Chinese philosophy, it is necessary to ask the question about the relation we have with Reality Itself, or the Ultimate Reality. I would say that Chinese culture is characterized by its intimacy with Reality Itself. It cherishes always some sort of communicative union with the Reality Itself or Ultimate Reality, understood as Heaven, Sincerity, Dao, Nature, Emptiness, Mind, or Life.

Confucianism's function of reason, though focusing on human beings as the centre of the cosmos, is nevertheless still open to the dynamism of nature in supposing that human beings are interconnected with and responsive to many others, such as nature and Heaven. The concept of "Heaven," which had represented a personal God in ancient China and

thereby represented an implicit Ultimate Reality, changed its meaning after the arrival of Confucianism, so as to represent now the philosophical ground of human existence and moral praxis. The focus therefore was shifted to the concern with human self-awareness and responsiveness to many others, nature and Heaven. This self-awareness and responsiveness, this interconnectedness, which Confucius expresses by the term *ren*, serves as the ontological foundation of the manifestation of Reality Itself and humans' original communicative competence. By way of sincere response, human beings can even attain the Ultimate Reality. That is why the *Doctrine of the Means* posits "sincerity" (誠, *cheng*) as its core concept, which means both metaphysically the true Reality itself and psychologically the true self. On the transcendental level, it is in union with the true Reality before its expressions evolve into empirical psychic states such as being happy, angry, sad, or joyful.

Confucianism tends to see human language and knowledge as human ways of manifesting Reality Itself. This could be achieved through the rectification of names and a sincerity of purpose. In today's situation, Confucianism would look upon science and technology as capable of being integrated into the process of constructing a meaningful world. In general, the process of human intervention into the process of nature is seen by Confucianism as humankind's participation in and assistance in the creative transformation of Heaven and Earth. It concerns a kind of participative construction instead of dominative construction.

For Daoism, the Dao, as the Ultimate Reality, manifests itself in Nature, and Nature is seen as a spontaneous process not to be dominated and determined by human beings' technical intervention. Human beings themselves are considered by Daoism as part of nature, and their ontological status is much like that of plants, animals and other beings in nature, all taken to be sons of the same Mother, the Dao. Daoism teaches us how to respect the spontaneous process of nature and that human beings' knowledge should be constructed in such a way that it unfolds the spontaneous dynamism of nature.[16] According to Daoism, human beings should be aware of the limit of all kinds of human construction and, by way of deconstructing the already constructed, keep their minds always open to the spontaneous dynamism of nature. Knowledge and Life-world, necessary for human existence, should not be constructed according to the

structural constraint of human language and thought but according to the rhythmic manifestation of nature.

In general, Chinese culture cherishes the Life-world, which is partly constructed by human beings and partly unfolds itself spontaneously in the rhythm of nature. Confucianism puts its emphasis more on the human construction of a meaningful existence, while, in contrast to it, Daoism would emphasize the spontaneous unfolding of natural rhythm.

STRANGIFICATION AS WORKABLE STRATEGY OF INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY

We are now facing a multicultural situation, together with more and more conflicting differences in interests, ideologies, and worldviews. In this pluralistic world, the search for self-identity, for respect of difference, and for mutual enrichment becomes more urgent than ever. The exception is found in the domain of artistic creation, where there will be no space for compromise and consensus, and there we can accept Jean-François Lyotard's idea of a radical preference for difference in language games in view of originality and creativity. But in the public sphere, in any case, we always need more communications and more effort for consensus. In the public sphere, life could not go without communication, and policy-making could not be done well without consensus.

I accept Lyotard's view that we should respect each language game and its differences. But this does not mean that we should not try to understand each other's language and to appropriate it or to translate ours into language of or understandable to others. Otherwise, we will not really be able to appreciate the difference of the other, and our respect for this difference is deprived of a real appreciation of it. In fact, if person *P* can really say that language game *A* is in such and such aspects different from language *B*, even to the degree of being incommensurable, it means that both language games are intelligible and understandable to *P* and *P* understands them. This fact presupposes *P*'s appropriation of both languages and his act, at least implicitly, of strangification between them.

That is why Lyotard's respect for different language games remains abstract and unrealizable. In order to understand the difference of other philosophical/religious/cultural traditions, we need language

appropriation and strangification, and these do not necessarily presuppose any tentative of integration, not to say unification. Strangification presupposes language appropriation, but it does not presuppose the target of a final unification. Unwillingness to appropriate another's language and an unwillingness to strangify, however, would mean self-contentment with, or self-enclosure in one's own micro-world, cultural world, or religious world.

The concept of "strangification" could be seen as a workable strategy of communication between different agents. I have modified and extended Fritz Wallner's idea of "strangification" (*Verfremdung*, in German; first proposed to serve as an epistemological strategy for interdisciplinary research on the level of science) to levels of intercultural exchange and interreligious dialogue. "Strangification," an act of going outside oneself to multiple others, from one's familiarity to strangeness, is properly human and universal to all human activities and can therefore be applied to all kinds of communication, including cultural interaction and religious dialogue. For me, the process of dialogue should be a process of mutual strangification.

Presupposing an act of previous appropriation of language, intercultural philosophy can proceed first of all to conduct *linguistic strangification*, by which we translate the language of one's own philosophical/religious or cultural tradition into the language of (or understandable to) another tradition, to see whether it thereby becomes understandable or absurd. In the latter case, reflection and self-critique should be made of one's own tradition instead of self-defence or other more radical form of apologetics. Although there is always some untranslatable residue or hard core of meaningfulness, its commonly shareable intelligibility would be enough to prove its own universalizability. If one can only boast of the meaningfulness of one's philosophy/religion within one's own cultural tradition, as some nationalist philosophers and scholars of religion would maintain or pretend, this is only a proof of its own limit rather than of its merit.

Then comes the *pragmatic strangification*, by which we draw out one philosophical idea or cultural value/expression from its own cultural context to put it into another cultural context to see whether it is still understandable/workable there or whether it loses its ability to adapt itself in the new context and become ineffective. If it still works, this means it has

more pragmatic possibilities and is pragmatically more universalizable. Otherwise, it should check its own limit by self-reflection and self-critique.

Finally, there is *ontological strangification*, by which we attempt to travel from one micro/cultural/religious world to other micro/cultural/religious worlds in order to understand them through the detour of a direct contact with or the manifestation of Reality Itself.[17] This level of strangification is especially important when there is a religious dimension in the philosophical traditions or in religious dialogue. Without a certain engagement to an experience of Ultimate Reality, it would be superficial in conducting religious dialogue. Our experience of the Ultimate Reality, if indeed ultimate, should be universalizable and shareable, otherwise it could be only a pretext of religious exclusivism.

In fact there are many cases of successful intercultural or interreligious strangification. One of them is Buddhism's success in China. We know that Buddhism came from India to China and became one of the three basic constituents of Chinese philosophy and religion. Buddhism accomplished this by taking all the measures of linguistic, pragmatic, and ontological strangifications. As to linguistic strangification, Buddhism first of all appropriated Daoist and Confucian languages to make itself understandable to Chinese intellectuals and then proceeded to the systematic translation of its scriptures into Chinese. As to pragmatic strangification, Buddhism made an effort to re-contextualize itself in Chinese ethics (such as filial piety), politics (such as relation with political leadership), and economics (such as monastery economics). On the ontological level, with its experience of Emptiness or One Mind as Ultimate Reality, Buddhism made itself understandable to other endogenous traditions such as Confucianism and Daoism. The Buddhist experience of Emptiness and Mind, the Daoist experience of *Dao* and *wu*, and the Confucian experience of *ren* (humanness, humanity, and cosmic innerconnectedness) and *cheng* (sincerity and true reality), though quite different in themselves, still enjoy some similarity and complementarity in their experiences of the Ultimate Reality.[18]

Unfortunately, not all Buddhist strangification into China communicated the right message to Chinese people, and this was deeply related to the linguistic strangification. This is to say that linguistic strangification can affect pragmatic strangification and *vice versa*. This can be found in some Chinese translations that missed or even distorted the original

message that was potentially good for Chinese culture in the long run. For example, the translation of terms expressing ethical relationship such as "mother and father" and "wife and husband" in Indian Buddhist scriptures became "father and mother" (sometimes even modified as "paying filial piety to father and mother"), and "husband and wife." The phrase "marry one's wife" was quite often translated as "marry one's wife and concubines." As to political relations, "republican relation" was translated as "imperial relation." In the volume 2 of the *Dīrghāgama*, Sākyamuni praised the country of Vrajaᶠeople, who often held meetings to discuss righteous affairs in a republican way. However, when translated into Chinese, it reads "the Emperor and his subjects are in harmony and the superior and inferior respect each other" (君臣和順 , 上下相敬).[19] The consequence of this was that the messages of more egalitarian ethics and republican politics contained in the Indian Buddhist scriptures were turned into hierarchical and totalitarian terms in order to adapt to Chinese culture and thereby the Chinese people were unable to learn for their own long-term benefit.

The most basic of all these three is linguistic strangification, by which one translates an idea/value/expression from one cultural/religious world into language of (or understandable to) other cultural/religious world. Even if in the process of translation, we lose by necessity some meaningful content, especially in the case of poetic, aesthetic, and religious expressions, this should not be an excuse for not making any effort of strangification. We should not argue from the fact of losing meaning in translation for a radical intranslatability of different language games. We could say that there must be a minimum of translatability among different language games, so as to allow the act of strangification. The act of strangification presupposes also the will to strangify and the effort of strangification. Strangification is thus the minimum requirement in intercultural interaction.

I would say that strangification is a very useful strategy, not only for different scientific disciplines, but also for different cultures and religions. It is even more fundamental than Habermas's concept of "communicative action." In fact, Habermas's communicative action is a process of argumentation in which the proposition-for and the proposition-against, by way of *Begründung*, search for consensus in a higher proposition acceptable to both parties. Although Habermas has proposed four claims for an ideal situation of communication, including understandability, truth, sincerity,

and legitimacy, unfortunately, in the actual world of communication, it happens very often that there is either total conflict or compromise, without any real consensus. The Habermasian argumentation tends to fail if in the process of *Begründung* and in the act of searching for consensus there is not first of all any effort for strangification. In this case, there will be no real mutual understanding and no self-reflection during the process of argumentation. Therefore, the strategy of strangification could be seen as a prerequisite for any successful communication.

Religious and/or philosophical dialogue should be conceived as based on a mutual act of strangification or mutual *waitui*. In the dialogue between *A* and *B*, on the level of linguistic strangification, *A* should translate his propositions or ideas/values/belief system into the language of *B* or a language understandable to *B*. In the meanwhile, *B* should translate his propositions or ideas/values/belief system in the language of *A* or understandable to *A*. On the level of pragmatic strangification, *A* should draw his proposition(s), supposed truth(s)/cultural expression/value/religious belief out from his own social, organizational contexts and put it into the social, organizational context of *B*. In the meanwhile, *B* should draw his proposition(s), supposed truth(s)/cultural expression/value/religious belief out from his own social, organizational context and put it into the social, organizational context of *A*. On the level of ontological strangification, *A* should make an effort to enter into *B*'s micro-world, cultural world, or religious world through the detour of his experience with Reality Itself, such as a person, a social group, Nature, or the Ultimate Reality. Meanwhile, *B* should also make an effort to enter into *A*'s micro-world, cultural world, or religious world through the detour of his experience with Reality Itself.

This is to say that comparison, communication, and dialogue will never be conducted within one's self-enclosure. On the contrary, it starts with a mutual act of going outside of one's self-enclosure to the other, what I call "a process of mutual *waitui*." I go outside of myself to you and you go outside of yourself to me, so as to form a dialogue leading to mutual enrichment. When we conduct mutual *waitui*, we make our own scientific/cultural/religious/life-world understandable to each other by translating our languages into the language of each other or understandable to each other, by putting it into another's pragmatic context or by going through the detour of Reality Itself or the other's life-world. This process of mutual *waitui* is to be conducted not only in everyday life, in scientific research,

and in cultural and religious life, but also in economic and political life, where different political parties, interest groups, governments, and people should always commit themselves to a process of communication leading to mutual enrichment rather than to conflict or war.

Strangification and dialogue in the form of mutual *waitui* are more fundamental than the communicative action understood by Habermas as argumentation. For me, Habermasian argumentation presupposes a previous effort of strangification in expressing one's proposal(s) in another's language or in a language understandable to others, without which there will be no real mutual understanding and no self-reflection in the process of argumentation. Habermas's four ideal claims for understandability, truth, sincerity, and legitimacy just cannot work in the real world without previous mutual *waitui*. I would think I am sincere, but you would think I am a hypocrite; I would think that I am telling the truth, but you may consider that just absurd; and, since a commonly acceptable norm does not yet exist, or that the law necessary for legitimacy is still an issue under debate, there is no accepted legitimacy, so to speak.

THE FOUNDATION OF STRANGIFICATION IN CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

Philosophically speaking, the strategy of strangification has its condition of possibility in human communicative competence. In Chinese philosophy, Confucianism would propose *ren* (仁) as the original communicative competence, the ontological condition of possibility that renders feasible and legitimate the act of strangification as well as communication and self-reflection. From this original communicative competence, Confucianism proposes the concept of *shu* (恕), which could be seen as an act of empathy and strangification, a better strategy for fruitful communication than Habermas's argumentation. Confucianism, in positing the existence of a *sensitive responsiveness* as a condition of the possibility of strangification, has elevated strangification to the ontological level.

Based on the sensitive responsiveness of *ren*, Confucianism affirms the existence of an innate knowledge (良知, *liangzhi*) and the dimension of tacit consensus, which could serve as the pre-linguistic foundation for further argumentative consensus. If deprived of all these, during the process

of argumentation, Habermas's suggestion of four ideal claims would not be able to work in actual political debates, even to the point of leading towards total conflict, because of the difference in political languages and in interpreting concepts such as truth, sincerity, and legitimacy. There will be no real mutual understanding and no self-reflection during the process of argumentation, if we do not communicate our position in considering the others and in speaking the other's language or in a language understandable to the other.

In Confucianism, the concept of *shu* represents this ability to go to multiple others and to communicate with others through language understandable to him/her/them. Especially under the post-modern condition, when any difference in race, gender, age, class, or belief system could create total conflict, any part in confrontation, difference, or opposition with another part should communicate with the other part in a spirit of *shu*.

On the other hand, from the Daoist point of view, strangification does not only presuppose the appropriation of and translation into the language of other traditions. It is also necessary to render oneself present to the Reality Itself. In Laozi's word, "Having grasped the Mother (Reality Itself), you can thereby know the sons (micro-worlds). Having known the sons, you should return again to the Mother."[20] Daoism posits an ontological detour through Reality Itself as the condition *sine qua non* for the act of strangification into other worlds (micro/cultural/religious worlds).

In terms of Laozi, we grasp the Reality Itself by the process of "retracing regard" (觀, *guan*), an act of intuition into the essence of things by letting things be as they are. A holistic knowledge is seen therefore by Daoism as a back and forth process between the act of interacting with manifested worlds (sons) and the act of returning to Reality Itself (the Mother). The act of returning to Reality Itself and communicating with it is therefore considered by Daoism as nourishing our strangification with other worlds. This act of ontological detour through Reality Itself bestows an ontological dimension to strangification. Ontological strangification in this sense is especially important for religious dialogue, when the relation with the Ultimate Reality is most essential to religious experiences.

For Chinese philosophy, it is always preferable to encourage the act of strangification and dialogue to maximize harmony in one's relation with many others. I use the term "many others" (or multiple others) to replace the post-modern concept of the "Other" proposed by Lacan, Levinas,

Derrida, and Deleuze. For me the "Other" is a mere abstraction. In no moment of our life are we facing purely and simplythe "Other." We are all born into the many others and we grow up among many others. The Confucian concept of *wulun* (五倫, five relationships), the Daoist concept of *wanwu* (萬物, myriad things), and the Chinese Buddhist concept of *zhongsheng* (眾生, all sentient beings) all imply an undeniable idea of many others. It is better for our life of sanity that we keep in our mind the existence of many others and our relation with multiple others.

CONCLUSION

As I see it, now that we are in the beginning years of the twenty-first century, philosophy is also facing the challenge of globalization. We should not limit ourselves to a single type of national philosophy or to a philosophical tradition. Although philosophizing is a common interest of many cultural traditions in the world, it is still too early to boast of a world philosophy, and philosophy still exists in plural forms. In today's situation, philosophers are commonly facing three major interrelated issues:

First, the swift and enormous development of science and technology will soon become the leading factors of human historicity and cultural development. In fact, this is the real power leading to a world of globalization. How to deepen the development of science and technology through philosophical reflection and how to elaborate ethical reflection to make science and technology more human will be very important issues in the future of human civilization. This will not be achieved by any single philosophical tradition whatsoever and, by virtue of the complex nature of the problem, invites the effort of intercultural philosophy.

Second, the more and more frequent and intimate interactions between different cultural traditions is putting us inevitably in a world of multiculturalism. How are we to enrich ourselves and promote others by means of cultural interactions in which we share the best part of our own, while being aware of our own limitations in contrast to others? This task will become even more urgent in the future. In this sense I think that intercultural philosophy is a key to the future of philosophy.

Third, as we have seen, the philosophy of the twentieth century was too much human-centred. Just think of phenomenology, existentialism,

structuralism, critical theory, neo-Marxism, hermeneutics, post-modernism, and modern Neo-Confucianism; all of these philosophical tendencies were all human-centred. However, as we observe, the difficulties of humankind became unsolvable in the bottleneck jammed with all these human-centred ways of thinking. Fortunately, the ecological movement and new discoveries in astronomical physics leads us to a greater concern with Nature, and the religious renaissance in the end of the last century leads us also to a concern with the transcendent or the absolute other and also with inter-religious dialogue. In this new era, we will have to redefine human experience in the context of nature and inter-religious dialogue.

We hope, and we should say, that the domination of the philosophical forum by Western philosophical/religious discourses should from now on cede its way, with self-critique and self-understanding, to the wisdom of concordant contrast, paying more respect to both difference and complementarity and leading to the optimal harmony among many philosophical/religious traditions. In this context, traditional comparative philosophy/religion should move on to intercultural philosophy/religion. In the multicultural context, now and in the future, the search for self-identity, reciprocal respect, and mutual enrichment could be reached through a new vision and practice of intercultural philosophy/religion. For this, Chinese philosophy/religion will have a lot to say. I am not saying that Chinese philosophy/religion will be another dominant trend in the future but rather that Chinese philosophy/religion could contribute to a more balanced intercultural philosophy/religion better for all philosophical/religious traditions and cultural interactions. With the vision and method of contrast, mutual strangification, and dialogue, we will be able to deal with the problems of the impact of science and technology on all cultures, the situation of multiculturalism, and the redefinition of human experience in both the cosmic and inter-religious context, which are the major challenges of twenty-first century intercultural philosophy/religion.

Notes

1   Vincent Shen, "A Book Review of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 478 pages + xvii," *Universitas: Monthly Review of Philosophy and Culture* 361, Taipei (June 2004): 109–12.

2   Charles Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism*, edited by A. Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25–36.

3   Vincent Shen, "From Politics of Recognition to Politics of Mutual Enrichment," *The Ricci Bulletin*(Taipei Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies) 5 (February 2002): 113–25.

4   I have worked out a philosophy of contrast in my works, especially in my *Essays in Contemporary Philosophy East and West* (Taipei: Liming Publishing, 1985).

5   Vincent Shen, *Essays in Contemporary Philosophy East and West*, 7–8, 24–27.

6   For my critique of structuralism, see ibid., 257–90.

7   Vincent Shen, *Disenchantment of the World* (Taipei: China Times, 1984), 31–37.

8   Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982b 12–22, trans. W.D. Ross, in Introduction to Aristotle, edited by Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 261–62.

9   Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 981b 6–7, ibid., 258.

10 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982a 20–982b 10, ibid., 260–61.

11 *The Text of Yi Ching*. Chinese original with English translation by Z.D. Sung, (Taipei: Wenhua Books, 1973), 334. The English translation of this book is actually that of James Legge with some modifications and additions.

12 As Joseph Needham has suggested, "Mathematics was essential, up to a certain point, for the planning and control of the hydraulic engineering works, but those professing it were likely to remain inferior officials." Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 30. For me, this social and political reason given by Needham partly explains the unimportance of mathematics in Confucianism. A more internal rationale of it might be that mathematics was considered to be a technique of calculation and an instrument of organizing empirical data, not as an objective structure of reality and discourse.

13 Concerning Confucianism, B. Schwartz is right when he says, "To Confucius knowledge does begin with the empirical cumulative knowledge of masses of particulars, … then includes the ability to link these particulars first to one's own experiences and ultimately with the underlying unity that binds this thought together." Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1985), 89.

14 Confucius, *Analects* (*Lun Yu*, 論語), XV-3.

15 Confucius, *Analects* (*Lun Yu*), II-15, my translation.

16 Vincent Shen, "Annäerung an das taoistiche Verständnis von Wissenschaft. Die Epistemologie des Lao Tses und Tschuang Tses," in F. Wallner and J. Schimmer, ed., *Grenzziehungen zum Konstruktiven Realismus* (Vienna: WUV-Univ. Verl.,1993), S188ff.

17 Fritz Wallner understands "ontological strangification" on the level of interdisciplinary research and takes it to mean the movement by which we transfer from one micro-world in one discipline to another micro-world. For me, the fact that we can move from the micro-world of one discipline or research program to another is still limited to the ontic level. It is only when this transfer happens through the detour by Reality Itself that there is ontological strangification.

18 Cf. Vincent Shen, "Appropriating the Other and Transforming Consciousness into Wisdom: Some Philosophical Reflections on Chinese Buddhism," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* (December 2003): 43–62.

19 *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, ed. J. Takakusu and K. Watanabe (Tokyo: Taisho Issaikyo Kankokai, 1924–32): I:12.

20 Laozi, *Daodejing*, chap. 52. in *Laozi Sizhong* [Four Versions of Laozi] (Taipei: Da An Publishing, 1999), 45.