

Lecture 1

The Special Character of Chinese Philosophy

Our lecture today is called “The Special Character of Chinese Philosophy” [*zhongguo zhexue de tezhi*]. Some time ago I wrote a booklet with the same title,¹ consisting of twelve one-hour lectures I delivered at the Extension School of Hong Kong University. Because it was an extension course given to people from outside the university who had an interest in furthering their education, those lectures were comparatively simple. The level of the audience, who were not necessarily students of philosophy, was relatively low. They simply wanted a little general knowledge about Chinese philosophy.

I could explain the special character of Chinese philosophy by following the method of that booklet, which gives a straightforward and simple account of the contents of Chinese philosophy. Another method, unlike the method of that booklet, is to go to a higher level of explication, one more critical and heuristic. In the language of general logic, this would be a second-order method of lecturing, whereas that booklet uses a first-order method which merely gives a direct narration of the contents of Chinese philosophy, without a critical and heuristic examination of their implications.

The second-order method of lecturing, which is of course a higher level, would presume that you already have some familiarity with the contents of the intellectual stream that is Chinese philosophy. As to exactly what the contents of Chinese philosophy are, you can go and look it up yourself if you want to get some basic knowledge. In the present series of lectures, I will adopt the second-order method of lecturing, which is to take the basic knowledge which you already have, and, by reflecting on and evaluating it, see what issues there are in the contents and whether those issues arose in the history of other philosophies. That means that we will use comparisons to delimit and evaluate those issues.

If we adopt the second-order method of lecturing, we must first solve a certain problem. For since we are talking about the special character of Chinese philosophy, it means that there is non-Chinese philosophy, such as Western philosophy or Indian

philosophy, which means that another problem immediately comes up, namely the problem of the universality and the particularity of philosophy.

Your average person will say, “Since philosophy talks about universal truth, how can there be any difference between Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy?” But in fact there is a difference. In which case, philosophy does not only have universality, it also has particularity. There are other people who will say, “Philosophy does not have universality; there is no universal, common philosophy. Speaking from the individual, there is your philosophy, my philosophy, his philosophy; speaking from the nation and the race, there is only Chinese philosophy, English philosophy, German philosophy, and no such thing as a common philosophy.” This is one way of looking at it. But if you turn it around, all philosophical truth is universal; when philosophy establishes a concept, a principle, it normally has universality. For example, consider Confucius talking about *ren* [仁 [humanity; humaneness]]. Confucius was a man of the Spring and Autumn period [722-481 BCE], he was a Chinese man, but when he talked about *ren* he was not only talking to Chinese people. Confucius was a native of Shandong, but when he talked about *ren* he was not only talking to the people of Shandong. He was talking to all men. *Ren* being something all men should have, doesn't the concept of *ren* have universality? To take another example: The system known as Western philosophy flows down from three sources, Greek, Roman, and Judaic, namely Greek science and philosophy, Roman law, and Hebraic religion. However, although they all flow down from these three sources, English philosophy is different from German philosophy, and from French philosophy as well. They are different, yet they still belong to the same system. That is why in our discussion of the special character of Chinese philosophy we have to first discuss the issue of universality and particularity and not merely speak of one aspect.

Before we formally discuss the special character of Chinese philosophy, we must first consider the question of this universality and particularity. Today we will first discuss the problem of particularity. We say that China represents a cultural system while the West represents another cultural system and India yet another cultural system. But why are there these different systems? Since we are all humans, why are cultural systems different? How do we explain the difference? If we can understand the

particularity of cultural systems, then we will be able to understand the particularity of philosophy.

One could talk about the history of Western philosophy by starting with Thales [fl. ca. 585 BCE]. The earliest Greek philosophers were all natural philosophers. Thales talks about the origin of the universe by starting with water. Going back further, there were those who said the beginning was fire (Heraclitus [fl.ca.500 BCE]), those who said it was atoms (Democritus [fl.ca.420 BCE]), and those who said it was the Big Four of earth, water, fire, and wind (Empedocles [fl.ca.440 BCE]). These are well-known approaches. When you talk about the history of Chinese philosophy, starting with the Three Dynasties of Xia [2205?-1766? BCE], Shang [1766?-1122? BCE], and Zhou [1122?-255 BCE], and even down to Confucius [Kong Zi, 551-479 BCE] and Mencius [Meng Zi, 371?-289? BCE], the approaches are quite different from Greece. If we want to talk about the problem of particularity, we must explain why there are these different directions. But how do we explain them? His is not an easy question to answer. This is a matter of how, not what. If we point out the approaches in the histories of various cultures, this would not be explaining but merely recording. The recording of a fact is not an interpretation. If we want to interpret, then we get into reasoning, and as soon as we talk about reasoning, we come to philosophy. If you consider the recording of a fact an interpretation, then it would be called a descriptive interpretation, a kind of interpretation that generally belongs to science. Science can also give an interpretation of this physical world. But the scientific interpretation is largely descriptive, not one of reasons, so the scientific interpretation and the philosophical interpretation are different.

For instance, science uses the atom to explain this world of phenomena, which is a descriptive interpretation. But if you ask, “Why are there atoms, why is there this physical object?” you will find that this is a question scientists do not explain. Suppose you say, “Because God created it.” But God’s creation is not necessarily an interpretation. Even if we treat it as an interpretation, it is not an interpretation found in science, for science does not ask such questions. The scientific explanation is only a descriptive interpretation, whereas the philosophical explanation explains reasons, gives a rational explanation. These two, science and philosophy, belong to different levels, and

there is a difference in their interpretations. So giving a descriptive interpretation is like giving no interpretation; all it does is describe the fact. For instance, scientists treat this world, this world of physics, as a given. If you ask, “Where does this given come from?” this would be a question that goes beyond science and will not be answered by scientists. So it is not enough for us to merely present some approaches with respect to the particularity of a philosophical or a cultural system, we must go a step further and talk about reasons. To talk about reasons would be a kind of rational interpretation transcending the sphere of science. We may call this kind of interpretation a philosophical interpretation.

Then how do we go about explaining this problem? What is an apt way of interpretation? I addressed this problem in the opening of my book The Philosophy of History [*Lishi Zhexue*]. But that is a simple way of discussing it, and too constrained.² Let me quickly refresh your minds on that. First, this particularity can only apply to the human being, not to God. God does not have particularity, God is an infinite being, who manifests Himself in various ways. He has will, and understanding and love.

But man also has will, understanding, and love. Since man has them, and God has them, then you may ask, “Why does man manifest particularity in these respects while God does not?” To which we will answer that God is an infinite being, the manifestation of whose love, will and understanding has no particularity. Only man has particularity since he is a finite being. Speaking about finite beings, this table is also a finite being, belonging to matter. So on the upper end we cannot talk about particularity with respect to God and on the lower end with respect to matter. Not just a table, but even an animal has no particularity. A table is only matter, while an animal is an animate being. Although animals are animate, they do not have expression, they do not have culture. From the standpoint of Buddhism, an animal also belongs among the sentient beings. One of the Six Modes of Sentient Beings is the animal, which according to Buddhist teaching is capable of attaining Buddhahood. But this capability to attain Buddhahood is only in theory, not in actuality. The animal must first go through transmigration before it can attain Buddhahood. It must first go through several *kalpas* [several eras of calamities], above all first be reincarnated as a human. The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* said words to this effect in speaking of a pigeon.³ That is why we say that the pigeon itself as such

cannot attain Buddhahood unless it first passes through several *kalpas* of self-cultivation and transmigration. According to Buddhism, among the Six Modes of Sentient Beings, the human can attain Buddhahood most easily. Incarnation as a human being is most precious, which is why we have the saying “The human body is hard to attain.” Don’t think that what Buddhism says is just fairy tales, because in reality it is truth, only expressed through the method of Buddhism.

We have said that God has no particularity, nor does matter. Even the animal, though a sentient being, has no culture, no expression. If it does not have expression, what particularity can it have? So this particularity refers only to humans. The human is most precious and most troublesome. The human body, being hard to acquire, is of course most precious, but at the same time it is most troublesome, most problematic. The human being penetrates in two directions. Above it can reach into the spiritual nature, yet it also has a material nature, thus penetrating both ends. That is why some of the Western philosophers discuss the human’s place in the cosmos, a problem that can easily occur to anyone. The Confucians also give primacy to the human being when they talk about the Three Materials [*san cai*, Heaven, Earth, and Man], and the Way of Three Polarities, Heaven-Earth-Man. The *Doctrine of the Mean* [*Zhong Yong*] says: “[The human being] participates in a trinity with Heaven and Earth, supporting Becoming and Nurturing [參天地，贊化育].” These are positive words, giving the good side. We say that since the human being is a finite being he manifests his understanding, his love, and his will in a finite way. How do we determine, how do we explain, why the finite is finite? According to Aristotle, the finite is finite because the human being is a composite body. What is this composite composed of? It is made up of form and matter. This form added to this matter results in the individual. All beings composed of form and matter are finite beings. Matter alone, according to Aristotle, is pure potentiality; only when form is added does it become actual. Form without matter would be pure form, which is God. That is why man is a finite being, a composite with a material element. With respect to actual people, this material element is what Kant called sensibility. Man’s sensibility is what Mencius called the organs of hearing and seeing. Didn’t Mencius say, “The organs of hearing and seeing do not think and are deceived by matter. Matter interacting with matter is merely led by it [耳目之官不思，而蔽於物，物交物，則引之而已矣].”

(*Mencius* 6B.15). This is what Mencius meant by *xiao ti* [little body]. Since man has sensibility, his will, his understanding, even his love, his spirit, is manifested within the finite. More concretely, they are manifested within the limitations, the constraints, of sensibility. This is a problem of man's life itself, and intrinsic to man. The limitation of this sensibility has necessity; it is not something that can be easily removed, something discretionary. Using Leibniz's terminology, it is metaphysical necessity. But this does not mean that sensibility is metaphysical. Zhu Zi [(1130-1200)] would say that sensibility pertains to *qi* [material force] and is physical. But physical *qi* is not discretionary nor casually removable. Not just man but the whole world is inseparable from this component, which is necessary, and if this component is removed there would be no world. So there is necessity to it and it is called metaphysical necessity. This necessity is not logical necessity. There is a difference between the two. Logical necessity is formal, not touching the actual, but merely the necessity of inference. For example, if there is such and such a premise then there is such and such a conclusion. This type of necessity is called logical necessity. But when we must recognize a form and a matter, and the existence of this matter is necessary, then this is not logical necessity but metaphysical necessity. Leibniz made the greatest contribution to this mode of thought, which people seldom talk about nowadays. Nowadays people simply talk about logical necessity. We say that since there is metaphysical necessity to the sensible limitation, man expresses his spirit, his love, will, and understanding within the confines of the finite. To manifest within confines is to manifest through a small aperture, namely, the perspective of an aperture. That is to say, it is what Zhuang Zi's "*Tianxia* [All Under Heaven]" chapter referred to as "The world is filled with people who are pleased with themselves for possessing a narrow glimpse [天下多得一察焉以自好]." A glimpse is just a crack. You examine this side, I examine that side, that's how people are. Dao is a whole, an integral. Because people are self-satisfied when they acquire a one-sided glimpse, "The art of Dao will be sundered by the world [道術將為天下列]."⁴ Zhuang Zi's "All Under Heaven" chapter put it very well indeed. That piece of writing is exquisite and melancholy. Our present era is exactly each person pleased with acquiring a narrow glimpse, just as Zhuang Zi [c.369-c.286 BCE] said, "few can encompass the beauty of heaven and earth or declare the countenance of the gods and spirits [寡能備於

天地之美，稱神明之容]." People today have no understanding of the beauty of heaven and earth because they are all technologized. Once technologized, where can there be any beauty of heaven and earth, or "declare the countenances of the gods and spirits"? How can there be any longer the countenances of the gods and spirits? People today regard all that as unscientific, as superstitious. In reality, human existence must return to the ability to "encompass the beauty of heaven and earth", and "declare the countenance of the gods and spirits" if it is to obtain true happiness. Otherwise there is no hope of happiness for humankind.

We have already said that man manifests the life of the spirit through an aperture, that he is subject to the limitations of sensibility. This is to speak intrinsically. This is the intrinsic limitation that is a given in man's life. We can also speak extrinsically, namely that aside from the intrinsic limitation there is also extrinsic limitation, namely the environment of the outside world. Between the two, most people only notice the external environment and neglect this intrinsic limitation. Actually the external environment is only the external condition, not the main cause. If you say that everything is determined by environment, then why is it that within the same environment you have this response and I don't? This is exactly why Marx's historical materialism doesn't make sense. How can things be decided by the environment? Environment is only an external condition (*wai yuan*). Here I feel that Toynbee's discussion about challenge and response falls to a low level. For example, the War of Resistance Against Japan [1937-1945] was a heroic era, while from the perspective of the Chinese people the emergence of the Communists was a great calamity. Great crises of this kind are challenges, but how many people can rise to such challenges? How many are there who are capable of a response? Even if there is a response, each person's response is different. So how can anything be determined? That is why we say that merely paying attention to the challenge of the external condition is not enough. Above all, you must look at the intrinsic limitation of your own nature.

It is through the dual limitations, intrinsic on the one side and extrinsic on the other, that you are able to manifest your spiritual life, manifest it through an aperture. "Manifesting through an aperture" is also a metaphysical necessity. This is where we

find all of life's hardship and pain; this is also where we find the tragic and the heroic in man's life. If man were completely without limitation, completely free, it would be most comfortable, but that would not be man, it would be a god, would be God. Well, take God. Just God Himself has no means of manifesting Himself. What is God? If He is to manifest himself He must do so by means of Jesus. Without Jesus, no one would know the content of God, for He would only be an abstract, empty concept.⁵ That is why when someone asked Jesus, "You talk about your Father every day, could you show us what your Father in Heaven looks like?" Jesus replied, "You are with me every day, have you not seen Him already?" That means that you have to pass through him to understand God, and God has to pass through him to manifest Himself. Is not God's nature completely manifested through his love, his going on the cross? That is why the limitation that we talked about at the beginning is only its negative meaning, as if that limitation prevented us from fully manifesting Dao (the Way) and Reason [*li*, also Principle]. Actually, if we turn it around, once you understand that this limitation has its metaphysical necessity, it also has a positive meaning. In other words, truth must be manifested through this limitation, without which there can be no manifestation of truth. So while this limitation limits you, it at the same time enables you to manifest truth while you are within the limitation. That is why the *lixuejia* [Neo-Confucians, also translated Rationalists, School of Reason/Principle Learning] placed great importance on this *qi* [material force], for although *qi* is physical, obstructing and limiting us, you still cannot separate yourself from it if you wish to express that Reason [*li*]. Once separated from *qi*, Reason will have no manifestation. So this component, *qi*, operates on two sides, positive and negative. Of course our body is limitation, and when you loathe it, you can of course destroy it by committing suicide. But it has its purposes, namely Dao and truth can only be manifested through this life. This is the tragedy of man; herein lie the poignant and heroic dimensions of man. Dao of necessity has to go through it to be manifested, it is an aperture. Being an aperture, it has a limitation. Dao is manifested on the aperture, yet not completely manifested, so is it not limiting? When a life is manifesting Dao, it is also limiting this Dao, what Zhuang Zi called a paradox. It is through this paradox that dialectic appears, so-called dialectical paradox. The Chinese understood this kind of dialectical paradox very well. Zhuang Zi understood it very well,

his "*Qi Wu Lun* [Equalizing Things]" chapter an example of it. Of course, the Western philosopher Hegel also understood it very well. Going a step further, not only is an individual person subject to limitations from two sides, the intrinsic and the extrinsic, but a people also. Every people consists of the combined activities of many individuals. Whenever any people expresses its spiritual life, it is manifested within these two limitations. The two types of limitations also have what we have called metaphysical necessity.

We have already said that particularity can only refer to humans. "Man has sensibility" is a necessity. "Sensibility limits us" is a necessity. And manifestation having to occur within limitations is also a necessity. This applies to individuals as well as to peoples. Once you are clear on this, then you can go a step further and ask: If all are manifested within limitations, then why is it that the Chinese people began in this way? Why did Greece begin in that way? The Hebrews and the Indians in those ways? Why is it that Greece manifested its thought through a beginning consisting of such natural philosophers like Thales? Why did it go through this aperture? Well, here there was no metaphysical necessity, and of course no logical necessity that says the Chinese people had to be this way. If there were logical necessity, metaphysical necessity here, then the Chinese people would never change, would always be as we are. If so, we would not be able to absorb Western culture, nor would Westerners be able to absorb things Chinese. So if we want to say why this culture passed through this aperture, we can only give a historical reason, not a logical reason. If there were any necessity here, this necessity would be an historical necessity. Of course students of history nowadays usually maintain that history is accidental, composed of a mish-mash of phenomena, certainly without necessity. They will be pretty decent if they can connect these phenomena together and arrive at some sort of principles. Nowadays those who talk about history don't believe that there are any fixed principles, at least not the principles of natural science. There are those who say that they are using scientific methods to discuss history, which doesn't make sense because scientific methods cannot be applied to history. What is the scientific method but the method of induction? History cannot be induced. Written data can be induced.⁶ Historians are not studying history itself but historical materials, written materials, or materials dug up from the ground. People call

themselves specialists, claiming to understand history, but you really can't understand it. Actually, I do understand history, I just don't remember it. They are the ones who don't understand history; they only remember it. History cannot be induced using the methods of science. For example, in the Battle of Kunyang, Wang Mang [reigned 9-23 CE] had an army of a million men and furthermore had lions, tigers, and giants. And how many did Guangwu [reigned 25-58 CE] of the Han dynasty [206 BCE-221 CE] have? He only had a few thousand men! Nevertheless he defeated Wang Mang. Would you dare say that since Guangwu of the Han did such-and-such at that time, that you too could do likewise? Since he won, you could also be certain of victory? But there is no certainty here; it cannot be induced. You cannot use the scientific method here, and of course, there are no principles of cause and effect discoverable by the scientific method here. Then why did we say there is historical necessity? From the standpoint of science, this historical necessity cannot be understood. Moreover, it cannot be understood by collecting or collating materials. Materials (such as *The Twenty-five Histories*) are not history itself, but merely writings recording history, and writings are not history. The only way to discuss the necessity of history is to see history as the manifestation of the spirit. This was Hegel's method. Hegel [1770-1831] was someone who could talk about history. How did his philosophy of history look at history? Hegel saw history as the development of the spirit, the history of the manifestation of the spirit, containing a sort of rhythm, a sort of intrinsic law. It has a certain pulse, the pulse of what one calls the development of the spirit. Only by approaching the subject this way can you understand historical necessity. If you try to understand history through collation and textual criticism, then you would not be able to understand why the Ming dynasty [1368-1644] in its last year had inevitably to perish, or why the Manchus [Manqus] had inevitably to enter the Pass into China. It was because the Manchus entered the Pass and ruled China for three hundred years [Qing dynasty, 1644-1911] that you had those despicable intelligentsia of the end of the Qing period. Because you had the baseness of the intelligentsia of the end of the Qing period, you then had the shallowness of the intelligentsia of the Republic [est.1912], who were just as base but on top of baseness was added shallowness. It was that baseness plus shallowness that produced the

Communist Party [which won control of mainland China in 1949], leading to where we are today [1978]. Looking at all this from the outside, where is there any necessity?

But if you approach it from the angle of spiritual development, then it unfolded step by step. This was a rhythm in the development of the spirit, and this sort of rhythm is called historical necessity. It is neither logical necessity, nor the mechanical cause-effect laws of science. This sort of necessity is called dialectical necessity. All historical necessity is dialectical necessity. Approaching it from this point of view, you will see that the history of the three hundred years of the Manchu Qing dynasty down to the sixty years of the Republic of China [on the island of Taiwan since 1949] emerged step by step. Here we cannot suppose such and such in the manner we ordinarily do when we compose a literary essay. For example, if Kang Youwei [1858-1927] did not do such and such at that time, then such and such would have happened. Or if Sun Yat-sen [1866-1925] did not do so and so, then so and so would have happened. Here we cannot casually misuse such expressions of supposition as “if”; otherwise we would be writing Eight Legged Essays. We cannot do this when we explain history. We cannot argue history by using “if” hypotheses. Zhuang Zi said: “That which is outside the Six Points [north, south, east, west, zenith, and nadir] the sage admits to exist but does not discuss. That which is within the Six Points the sage discusses but does not debate. The records of the government of the Spring and Autumn Period and the ancestral kings the sage debates but does not contradict [六合之外，聖人存而不論。六合之內，聖人論而不議。春秋經世先王之誌，聖人議而不辯].” It appears that the words “debates but does not contradict” reveal this meaning. Suppose you were to say, if in the beginning it was so and so, wouldn’t that have been good? Such talk is irresponsible, cavalier, and shows a lack of understanding of the difficulties in history, which is why I don’t like the writings of the Eight Great Essayists of the Tang [618-907] and Song [960-1280] dynasties. Su Dongpo's literary essays on history is always saying if and supposing such and such, which is fine for writing literary essays but not really for discussing history. Composing literary essays and being a scholar are two different things. Under that environment, those kinds of talents emerged, and the emergence of those kinds of talents determined that era. There is also necessity here. So the three hundred years of the Manchu Qing down to the emergence of the Communists unfolded step by step.

Therefore the emergence of the Communists was not fortuitous, did not simply drop down from heaven or suddenly materialize like magic. From the viewpoint of historical development, there was historical necessity.

However, when we explain history we cannot only talk about historical necessity. If we only talk about historical necessity, then the words of Hegel come up: “What is actual is rational.” “Rational” here refers to the rationality compatible with dialectic, belonging to the dialectical development. It is not the rationality of logic, nor the rationality of science.

If we say that what is actual is rational, then you could say: “Then the Communists are also rational, the First Emperor [221-209 BCE] of the Qin dynasty [255-209 BCE] was also rational, for it was a necessity for them to appear in history.” Hence in discussing history, in addition to historical necessity, we must also discuss moral necessity. This being the case, when we discuss history we need two kinds of judgment, moral judgment and historical judgment.⁷ This issue also appeared in Chinese history, as in the clash between Zhu Xi [Zhu Zi, 1130-1200] and Chen Tongfu [1143-1194] in the Southern Song [1127-1280] period. Master Zhu had moral judgment only and no historical judgment, which is why he could not explain history. And what about Chen Tongfu? He seems to have had historical judgment only and no moral judgment. That is why the two men clashed. Actually Chen Tongfu’s historical judgement was not the historical judgement of dialectical development. Strictly speaking his historical judgment was just a cult of the hero. Chen Tongfu, whose fundamental spirit was that of the cult of the hero, wanted to champion the Han [226 BCE-CE 220] and Tang [618-907] dynasties, to recognize that they also had value. He said Chinese history did not stop with Yao [reigned 2356?-2255? BCE], Shun [r. 2255?-2205? BCE] and the Three Dynasties, and moreover the world was in fact not “just getting by with a leaky roof [架漏過時],” and men’s hearts were in fact not “making do with makeshift patchwork”. If we didn’t recognize the value of the Han and Tang dynasties, then wouldn’t history after the Three Dynasties be empty and futile? And if so, would that not be “getting by with a leaky roof”? Therefore he vigorously championed the Han and Tang. Here we must understand the position from which Chen Tongfu was acknowledging the Han and Tang. He was not

acknowledging them from the standpoint of the historical judgment of dialectical development but only from the cult of the hero; they were still contingent. Therefore he was in conflict with Master Zhu, and neither of them could achieve historical judgment. The argument between the two, which was a cause célèbre in the Southern Song dynasty, had a great seminal effect.

What I have just been talking about follows from my discussion of the problem of particularity. We are saying that every culture in its beginning, no matter where it originates, must emerge through an aperture. There is metaphysical necessity here. But why is it this particular aperture and not that aperture? Here there is no metaphysical necessity, nor logical necessity, but only historical necessity. Here I go one step further and say that to explain history through the development of history is not enough, for that would be committing the same mistake as Hegel. In discussing history, we have to have both moral judgment and historical judgment.

Here we will narrow culture down to the aspect of philosophy to discuss the special character of Chinese philosophy, the beginnings of Chinese philosophy. Chinese philosophy began from this aperture, namely what was expressed by such people as Yao, Shun, Yu [r.2205?-2197? BCE], Tang [r.1766?-1753? BCE], Wen [d. 1122? BCE], Wu [r.1122?-1115? BCE], and the Duke of Zhou [Zhou Kong fl.1115? BCE], all of whom were sage-kings, all philosopher-kings. No matter whether you agree or not, believe or not, that they were sage-kings, they were certainly not like those natural philosophers of Greece. Then why is it that the beginnings of Chinese philosophy were like this and not like that? Here we are only talking about historical reason. Chinese philosophy simply started this way, manifesting its spiritual life through this aperture, in the process of which various kinds of intensional truths all emerged. China did not have the Western style of philosophical tradition. The Western, Greek philosophical tradition started with natural philosophy, with philosophical tradition beginning at the same time as the scientific tradition began. Without the Western style of philosophical tradition, China also did not subsequently develop science, even though China possessed some technological knowledge. In ancient Chinese literature and histories, despite the appearance of *di* [God] and *tian* [Heaven], these did not develop, like Christianity, into religion.

Then what has been the main issues of Chinese philosophy? The main concern of Chinese philosophy as it developed out of that aperture is man's life, what we call the study of how man lives his life. With man's life as its object, the main concern of Chinese philosophy has been how to live our lives, which is quite different from those natural philosophers of Greece, whose concern was nature and whose main topic was the natural world. As a result, this determined that Western philosophy would later have cosmology and ontology, together making up what Aristotle [c.384-322 BCE] called metaphysics. Such metaphysics was what Kant [1724-1804] later called theoretical metaphysics. This is what Greece accomplished. The Chinese, who were different, first of all emphasized *de* [virtue], the concept of virtue emerging first, emerging above all the myriad things. Using Kant's terminology, practical reason had primacy, had superiority, over theoretical reason. The ancient Chinese had a clear concept of virtue and morality, but had trouble with knowledge. Knowledge is difficult to obtain in the first place. To obtain knowledge, one needs contact with the outside world, one needs to understand the object. This is not something that rests in myself alone or can be controlled by me alone. The problem of virtue is in my hands. "If only I want to be *ren* [humane, virtuous], then I shall indeed be *ren*." This comports with commonsense, and so the ancients had first of all a clear concept of virtue. Since the problem of virtue lies in my hands alone, they emphasized simplicity in discussing the problem of virtue. That is why when later Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 [1139-93] talked about simplicity, he had good reason to do so, for he did not need much knowledge about the outside world. Having much knowledge about the outside world wasn't useful, which is why Master Zhu's knowledge-oriented approach [*daowenxue*, following the path of inquiry and study] was not practicable, it being wanting in this respect. Kant also explained this very clearly, and from this the simplicity that Lu Xiangshan talked about can be fully explained.⁸ Kant said that if you act according to the autonomy of the will, it will be easy to know what you should do, even for an ordinary person. But if you have to act according to heteronomy, then you will have to have knowledge of the world, and that will create problems. And why is that so? I have to first deliberate. After deliberation and still having no understanding I would have to consult a specialist. To consult a specialist is to require knowledge. To be determined by knowledge is to be regulated by another, and that would not be true virtue.

The Chinese person emphasized the conduct of his life above all else. His head was turned over here, and his eyes did not look outside. If you take nature as your object then you have to look outside. Even if it isn't nature, like the Hebrew religion, which has a God, you have to look outside, look upwards. The Chinese also looked at heaven, but "Heaven sees as my people sees, heaven hears as my people hears".⁹ This means they were not just looking at heaven but looking down at the people. How the people hear and see will depend on yourself, which is why you must first "*ming ming de* [illuminate luminous virtue]".¹⁰ If you want to get the support of the people, then you yourself have to first of all shoulder your responsibilities properly, and then your gaze will step by step turn inward. Christians are forever turning outward, looking upward. Needless to say, science is also forever looking outward. Even Western philosophy is habituated to looking outward, so characteristic of Western philosophy. Once this mentality is fixed, it is hard to turn it around; it becomes a habit, looking at everything this way. The present-day Chinese are bent on learning this sort of thing from the West. The ancients in Chinese philosophy emphasized the problem of how to conduct one's life, but nowadays no one places importance on that. At present people first convert the problem of conducting one's life into psychology, then from psychology into physiology, then from physiology into physics, and then into anthropology or some other science. Each person looks at the human being from a different scientific viewpoint, in the process of which the person disappears altogether. That is why all of this is pseudo-science. Given that there is no big or small in scholarship, no big or small in truth, there is nevertheless cause and effect. The order of beginning and end, cause and effect, and priority in values must be distinguished. Some things cannot be solved by science. I do not object to this level--science--but besides this level there are other levels. But there are pan-scientificists, scientific mono-levelists who fail to recognize this. We do not object to science, but we do oppose the pan-scientificists, the scientific mono-levelists who make science the only criterion.¹¹

Our lecture ends here today and will continue next time with the discussion of the problem of universality.

Transcribed by Po-cheng Chen 陳博政

¹ The volume is Mou Zongsan., *Zhongguo zhexue de tezhi* [*The Special Character of Chinese Philosophy*] (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1974). It is reprinted in vol.28 of Mou Zongsan, *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji* [*Complete Works of Mou Zongsan*], 33 vols. (Taipei: Lianjing, 2003).

² Mou Zongsan., *Lishi Zhexue* [*Philosophy of History*] (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1974), pp.1-4. In Mou., *Complete Works*, vol.9. Also see *Lishi Zhexue*, Appendix, pp. 29-30 ; and “On Culture and Chinese Culture”, part 2, in Mou Zongsan, *Daode de Lixiang Zhuyi* [*Moral Idealism*], in Mou Zongsan, *Complete Works*, vol. 9.

³ *Da zh-du-lun* [*Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-sāstra*],, *juan* 11: "...Buddha said to Sariputra: 'This pigeon, beyond the limits known by the disciples and *pratekya*/Solitary Buddhas, had moreover a pigeon-body during *kalpas* as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, finding release after the completion of his penance. Then after undergoing the five destinies of transmigration, he was finally able to become a human, and after 500 generations was able to acquire intelligence. At this time there was a Buddha who converted incalculable numbers of sentient beings, after which he entered final nirvana, bequeathing dharma to the world. That human became an *upāsaka* [Buddhist layman], observing the five commandments. After hearing a *bhikṣu* [religious mendicant] praise the virtue and good works of Buddha, he conceived a desire to attain Buddhahood. Then after passing through the three great *asamkheya* [innumerable] *kalpas* and completing the six *pāramitās* [six means to nirvana] and ten stages, he was able to become Buddha and save incalculable numbers of sentient beings, after which he entered final nirvana."

⁴ "All Under Heaven [*Tianxia*]" chapter of *Zhuang Zi* says: "...Then there was great disorder under heaven and the worthies and the sages no longer illuminated it. The Way and virtue were no longer unified and, for the most part, all under heaven narcissistically held to one aspect of them. This may be compared to the ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. They all have that which they illumine, but they are not interchangeable. Likewise, the various expects of the hundred schools all have their strong points and those moments when they are useful. Nevertheless, they are neither comprehensive nor inclusive but scholars whose views are partial. When they judge the beauty of heaven and earth, analyze the principles of the myriad things, examine the wholeness of the ancients, few can encompass the beauty of heaven and earth or declare the countenances of the spirits bright. For this reason, the Way of internal sagehood and external kingship has become obscure and unilluminated, constrained and unexpressed. But all men under heaven, because of their individual desires in these matters, devise their own theories. How sad that the hundred schools go along their own ways without turning back so that they will of necessity never join together! The students of later generations have unfortunately not seen the simplicity of heaven and earth. The techniques of the Way as they were so greatly embodied by the men of antiquity are being sundered by all under heaven." Translation by Victor H. Mair, in Victor H. Mair, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist*

Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu [Zhuang Zi], (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), page 335.

⁵ See Mou, *Zhuguo Zhexue de Tezhi [The Special Character of Chinese Philosophy]*, Lecture 7, in Mou, *Complete Works*, vol. 28.

⁶ See Mou Zongshan, *Lishi Zhexue [Philosophy of History]*, third edition, Preface, in *Complete Works*, vol. 9.

⁷ For Mou Tsung-san's discussion of the critique of morality and critique of history, see Mou Zongsan, *Zhengdao yu Zhidao [The Dao of Polity and the Dao of Governance]*, chapter 10, in *Complete Works*, vol. 10. Also see Mou, *Lishi Zhexue [Philosophy of History]*, third edition, Preface, in *Complete Works*, vol. 9; and the chapter "Fan Cunzai Ji Heli" [What is Actual is Rational] in his *Shengming de Xuewen [The Science of Living]*(Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1970).

⁸ See Mou Zongshan, *Cong Lu Xiangshan dao Liu Jishan [From Lu Xiang Xiangshan to Liu Jishan]* (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1979), pp.8-9. Also in *Complete Works*, vol. 8.

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See *Da Xue [The Great Learning]*, "The Classical Text"1: "The Way [Dao] of the Great Learning lies in illuminating luminous virtue, in renewing the people, in resting in the highest moral conduct."