Contemporary East Asia and the Confucian Revival

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Edited by

Jana S. Rošker and Nataša Visočnik

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Jana S. Rošker and Nataša Visočnik

EDITORIAL

THE CONFUCIAN REVIVAL AND "DIFFERENT MODELS OF MODERNITY"

JANA S. ROŠKER

The Confucian revival is a current East Asian phenomenon that is defined as the search for a synthesis between Western and traditional East Asian thought and is aimed at elaborating the system of ideas and values capable of resolving the social and political problems of modern globalized societies. In order to create a model of modernization that would not be confused or simply equated with "Westernization", theoreticians and ideologists who belong to this stream of thought attempted (and continue to do so) to revive "traditional Confucian" values and reconcile them with the demands of the current era (see Tu 2014).

Western modernization theories established an intellectual tradition that has explained the relation between tradition and modernity in a very specific way that has remained predominant to the present date. In spite of their diversity, they share the idea that "traditional" and "modern" societies constitute two systems of interrelated variables. In their frequent reformulations of the contrast between tradition and modernity, transition was conceived as a process that causes the first to decline and the latter to rise (Bendix 1967, 307–8). Within this framework these theories have typically operated with a "before and after" model (ibid., 309) of the society under consideration. In this model "traditional" and "modern" social structures were distinguished by two sets of dichotomous attributes, and individual societies were classified as more or less "modern" according to the degree to which they exhibited one set of attributes rather than another. Hence, in this framework, "tradition" and "modernity" are widely used as polar opposites in the linear theory of social change. However, as Gusfield (1967, 351) clearly showed, the relations between tradition and modernity do not necessarily involve conflict, exclusiveness,

or displacement. In other words, the modern does not necessarily weaken the traditional. Both, tradition and modernity, form the grounds for movements and ideologies in which bipolar oppositions are converted into aspirations. However, as Gusfield (1967, 351) pointed out, traditional forms may supply support for, as well as against, change.

Thus, the idea of change in contemporary new nations and economically growing societies in Eastern Asia has been seen as one that involves a linear movement from traditional past towards highly modernized future. An important supposition in this bipolar model of change is that the existing institutions and values that form the "content" of tradition, are impediments to changes and have thus to be understood as obstacles to modernization (ibid.).

Following these ideas, most Western modernization theories have also assumed that Confucianism would have to be abandoned if East Asia wanted to develop a dynamic modern society. Marx and other classical theorists of modernity claimed that traditional Chinese culture was impervious or even inimical to modernization. Max Weber's famous thesis that the Protestant ethic was an essential factor in the rise and spread of modernization represents a contrast to the notion that has gradually emerged over the last two decades in East Asia, and which argues that societies based upon the Confucian ethics may, in many ways, be superior to the West in achieving industrialization, affluence and modernization (Rošker 2013, 22). Weber wrote extensively on Asia, especially China and India, and in his writings he concluded that Asian cultural and philosophical or religious traditions were ill-suited to modernization (Makeham 2003, 33). In order to examine whether such a Eurocentric view of modernity is still suitable, the present book is based upon the presumption, according to which modernization represents a complex process of social transitions that include both universal and culturally conditioned elements.

By providing new insights into the culturally conditioned structure of Asian societies, the book aims to contribute to the improvement of political, economic and cultural relations between "Western" and East Asian countries. In the twenty-first century East Asian societies have changed the map of progress: the balance of economic—and even political—power is shifting from the Euro-American to the Asian region. This shift leads to numerous issues connected to the transformations of material and ideological paradigms that do not merely define the development of Asian societies, but also have a strong influence on international relations. The strategic solutions to these problems need to

consider the broader perspectives within the context of particular cultural backgrounds. They are not limited to economic and ecological issues, for they also include political and social roles of ideologies and culturally conditioned values, thus representing the axial epistemological and axiological grounds on which the most characteristic and enduring institutions of these societies rest. In Eastern Asia, Confucianism undoubtedly represents one of these foundations.

The so-called Confucian revival which saw the light of day at the break of the previous century and which is manifested in the philosophical stream of Modern Confucianism[1] is one of the most significant elements within the new Asian modernization ideologies (Li 1996, 544). The representatives of this stream of thought were (and still are) generally convinced that the successful development of modern East Asian societies was primarily due to the specific modernization model, known as "Confucian capitalism" (e.g. Kahn 1979; Vogel 1979). This model is characterized by a strong state leadership with a well-developed administrative structure, a hierarchical social structure with a well-developed network of social relations, and an emphasis on education. It also stresses virtues such as diligence, reliability and persistence together with cooperation, loyalty and a strong sense of affiliation with one's community or organization (ibid.).

In order to acquire a more coherent understanding of the East Asian Confucian revival, its social functions in the modernization process and its theories, the present anthology clearly refutes the idea that it represents a monolithic theoretical formation. On the contrary, the multifarious contributions in this book include a wide range of theoretical discourses based on a tradition that is already very complex and heterogeneous.

This crucial idea has been elaborated already in Bart Dessein's foreword to this publication. In this essay, the role of the "modernized" (i.e. rationalised) Confucian system of thought has been positioned into the broader context of reflections that are linked to its relation to two aspects of philosophy—wisdom and science. Within this context, the development of the East Asian traditions is placed in opposition with the development of the European philosophical and scientific traditions. The author shows how and why our interpretations of these developments are thoroughly and necessarily linked to something we have to be aware of, namely our

[1] In international Asian studies, this line of thought is often translated with a number of other names, ranging from *Neo-Confucianism* or *Contemporary* or *Modern Neo-Confucianism*, to *New Confucianism* and *Modern* or *Contemporary Confucianism*.

attitude towards the relation between ourselves and the other. He emphasises that these interpretations should be the result of a rational inquiry, argumentation and dialogue and points out that such approaches are necessarily imbued with self-doubt in the sense of a permanent questioning of the prevailing interpretations of one's tradition.

In order to provide a broader picture of the Confucian revival, the present anthology not only examines the main philosophical approaches, ideas and methods, but also explores its political, social and ideological backgrounds and its connections to the ideological foundations of East Asian modernity. The geopolitical aspect is equally important. Hence one needs to take into account the economic and historical context when analysing a socially relevant idea. The Confucian revival is no exception; therefore we need to begin our examination of this philosophical line by recognizing that the trans-nationalization of capital also led to the universalization of capitalist production, which has thus become separated from its specifically European historical origins.

The central part of this book is divided into three sections, which include chapters connected to theories, methodologies and ideologies linked to Confucian teachings, chapters that elaborate on the relations between Confucianism and the global discourses, and, last but not least, chapters dealing with the role and position of Confucianism in the contemporary People's Republic of China.

The first section, entitled *Confucian Concepts, Ideas and Ideologies*, consists of four chapters.

The first two, written by Luka Culiberg and Hans Kuehner respectively, deal with the role of Confucian paradigms within the framework of the so-called "National Studies" or "National Learning" (*guoxue* in Chinese and *kokugaku* in Japanese) in the constitutional process of nation states in China and Japan respectively. In order to evaluate their possible impact upon the prevailing contemporary policies and ideologies, they analyze the central state building elements of Confucianism and interpret them within historical Chinese and Japanese socio-political contexts.

In his essay, Luka Culiberg introduces the role of the modified Neo-Confucian axiology in the formation process of the new Japanese nation-state during the final years of the Tokugawa regime. He shows that this pre-modern Confucian discourse was a complex network of philosophical currents. However, although the new Meiji state, which was born from this transitional process, was a modern, industrial and capitalist society, which ideologically refuted traditional teachings, it actually remained inherently

Confucian. However, this type of inherent, almost "invisible" Confucianism was much more monolithic and formally orthodox than the previously predominant status-based, but also more flexible, contextual and situational system. This new, informal, yet more rigid network of values was perfectly capable of meeting the demands of Japanese modernity in which nationalism became the prevailing ideological narrative of the social reality.

The second chapter, written by Hans Kuehner, investigates the sinicized evolution of the central term of this modernized Confucianism, which is manifested in the notion of "National Studies" introduced from Japan to China at the break of the previous century—along with similar new terms denoting ideas such as "national essence", "nation" or "citizen". He investigates the so-called *guoxue* ("National Studies") movement, which was (and still is) promoted as a revival of China's intellectual heritage, focusing on the work of Zhang Taiyan (also known as Zhang Binglin, 1868–1936), who is commonly seen as one of the pioneers of this line of thought. He was an anti-Manchu activist who played an important role in the consolidation of the intellectual foundation of the modern Chinese state. In this sense, the early *guoxue* movement was a Chinese response to the crisis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Kuehner introduces the historical background and the conceptual development of this project, but points out that the *guoxue* fever which can be witnessed in present day China has not got a lot in common with Zhang's original version of this line of thought. The author shows how and why the contemporary revival of *guoxue* evolved into a comprehensive political and cultural project, while its original academic aims were pushed into the background.

The second part of this theoretical scope is devoted to the philosophical foundations of the Confucian revival. In this context, Téa Sernelj and Jana S. Rošker focus on two particular theoretical questions in the works of two different representatives of the so-called second generation of Taiwanese Modern Confucian theoreticians, namely Xu Fuguan and Mou Zongsan. These theoreticians saw the modernization process as a kind of world rationalization. In search of a new philosophical basis, they concentrated on issues connected to ontology which they came to know within the framework of Western ideas and philosophical systems. Generally they followed the premise according to which the questions of the innermost reality of the universe, the substance of being and the Absolute represent the very questions that determine the meaning of human life. As such, these questions are essential for the establishment

of a new, modern society, as well as for the preservation of an integrated, un-alienated cultural and personal identity of individuals in China.

Within this context, Téa Sernelj examines the intellectual influence of Xu Fuguan (1902/1903–1982), an excellent essay writer, who also excelled with his broad knowledge on the development of ancient Chinese society, especially as concerns its political, spiritual, and cultural characteristics. Once she introduces the central concepts of his philosophy (*youhuan yishi*, concerned consciousness and *tiren*, bodily recognition), she focuses on their connections to his interpretation of the notion of *you* (wandering at ease) which can be found in Daoist (Zhuangzi), as well as Confucian (Kongzi) discourses. Through this analysis the author points out that Xu tried to establish a philosophical ground for a specific East Asian modernization. He ascertained that although Western modernism and postmodernism strived to liberalize the individual's spirit, traditional philosophy and its aesthetic view of life and creativity provided a far more profound and sophisticated background for such freedom. Since he saw art as one of the fundamental pillars of society, he considered such aesthetic views to be more beneficial for the establishment of a harmonious modern society than creativity which is predominantly based upon the individual's free will.

In her contribution, Jana S. Rošker critically illuminates the new dialectical model proposed by Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), an innovative theoretician and one of the most important Confucian philosophers between 1980 and the time of his death. In Modern Confucian discourses the establishment of a free and autonomous subject seemed to represent a crucial precondition for modernization. Nevertheless, as Mou believed that Chinese modernization cannot be equated with Westernization, he wanted to establish a specifically Chinese form of an autonomous subject. In order to achieve this goal he proceeded from a dialectical self-negation of the traditional Confucian concept of moral self. Through a critical analysis of this model, the author points out its inconsistencies and proposes a methodological improvement which could be achieved by incorporating the classical Chinese principle of correlativity or complementarity, which could lead to a truly dynamic model, possibly surpassing the limitations of classical European dialectics.

While the chapters in the first part are mainly linked to issues regarding the specific problems in East Asian modernization, the second part attempts to elaborate on its broader geopolitical context. Bearing in mind East Asia's important role in this world, the book also aims to expose the function of its cultural heritages for the contemporary world.

For, as Allan T. Wood (2010, 287) wrote, we are currently living in the dawn of a new world of challenges in human experience. In the past, whatever we did—good or bad, right or wrong—was confined within relatively narrow geographic limits.

> We could slaughter each other and poison our environment on a local scale without fear of global consequences. Because of the prodigious growth of our military and industrial technology, however, those days are rapidly coming to an end. Whether one talks about climate change, atmospheric pollution, nuclear proliferation, disease, crime, terrorism, biodiversity, energy and water shortages, poverty, human trafficking, or genetic manipulation, the problems we face as a human family cannot be addressed effectively within the borders of individual nations. The old atomistic, mechanistic, and analytic worldview, which portrayed the world in strictly nominalist terms as consisting of parts with few or no intrinsic connections to each other and which dominated modern life ever since the Scientific Revolution is no longer adequate. (ibid.)

Now the problems are systemic, intercultural, interdependent, interdisciplinary, and interconnected. Hence, the second part, entitled *Confucius and the World* explores the possibilities (and failures) of a "cosmopolitan" Confucianism, and its role on the global scale. This part also consists of four contributions, each of which sheds light upon a different aspect of the main topic.

The first two contributions were written by Jyrki Kallio and Helena Motoh; the two authors address the different applications and (mis)uses of classical Confucian thought within the framework of the new liberal ideologies that have been constructed in contemporary China in order to fill up the prevailing "vacuum of values" in this complex society and enable it to assume its role within the network of contemporary international relations. The chapters investigate the modern reshaping of various central Confucian concepts such as *he* (harmony), *ping* (peace, balance), or *tianxia* (the world, all under heaven) from different angles; they analyze their original meanings and connotations and illuminate their semantic modifications which serve the ideological demands of the contemporary era in which China attempts to fulfil its role as one of the global superpowers.

André Buenos' essay also follows the presumption of the profound difference between the previously prevailing Marxist discourse and the contemporary social reality in the PR China. In order to paradigmatically illuminate the multifarious challenges of the relations between

contemporary China and the world, the author introduces the historical development and crucial epistemological issues in the establishment and perception of Confucian studies in one of the most important Latin American countries, Brazil. He exposes several problems that are typical for the establishment of the new Sinologies in regions that have hitherto not been confronted with the urge to investigate China. As Confucius and the Confucian revival in Brazil remain reduced exclusively to the religious sphere, and the literary focus of the new Brazilian sinologists is restricted merely to the *Annalects*, they have not yet been able to create a more complete academic environment, in which it would be possible to philosophically analyze Confucianism. Similarly, there is no interest in translating other Confucian works, which indicates a serious limitation in the perspective. Due to this, the few Brazilian experts who are interested in China, generally prefer to study the current political model of "socialism with Chinese characteristics". Similar to numerous other new "China experts", Brazilian intellectuals have a strong tendency to believe that it is possible to understand China without studying its historical past, which is, according to the author, a serious mistake.

On the other hand, Nataša Visočnik's chapter investigates the relation between the Confucian thought heritage and the formation of Modern Japan. The author focuses on the period of transition between the textual and archaeological approach, at which she believes that the latter is of vital importance for the study of Japanese origins. The sense of national identity which started to appear during the Tokugawa era and that fully established itself in the Meiji period (1868–1912), was hence no longer limited to the elite. It was adopted by the leading ideologists and begun to function as the foundation stone for the modern national state. In this context, the author shows how the idea of the "family state" (*kazoku kokka*) came to life, and points out that this idea was based on the traditional concept of familism which was buttressed by Confucian ethics. In the period of modern state formation, the clan based family system that originally represented the foundation of social production and reproduction, was expanded to the nation as a whole. In this system, the imperial family was considered as the model for all Japanese families. The author concludes that in this way, the Japanese Confucian traditions of ancestor worship and the subordination of branch families to the main clan were integrated in order to achieve loyalty on a national scale.

The last part of the book deals with *Confucianism in the People's Republic of China*. This part is significant not only because Confucianism originated in China, but rather because, contrary to the predictions of its

demise and the dismissals of its relevance to contemporary China, it is evident that—at least as an ideology—it still holds high socio-political importance. With the rapid development of the liberal economic policy and the openness that accompanied it, the Confucian revival also spread in the P.R. China over the last two decades. Hence, the third group of essays is devoted to the development of the Confucian legacy and the new Confucian ideologies in contemporary China. The chapters collected in this part mainly try to shed light upon the issues dealing with the reasons and consequences of the fact that these new ideologies were necessary in order to compensate for the loss of the normative authority of the Chinese Communist party, for from the mid-1980s onwards, these ideologies were utilized in order to fill the so-called "vacuum of values", a function that had previously been entrusted to the orthodox socialist and communist value systems.

In the first chapter within this part, Mugur Zlotea explores the Confucian revival in the context of political and ideological discourses of the leading Communist party. By analyzing the current Chinese political discourse, the chapter tries to identify to what extent had the Confucian thought permeated the discourse of legitimization and how is it used by the party. It focuses on the relation between Confucianism and Marxism in the post 2012 period, i.e. after the nomination of Xi Jinping as the General Secretary of CCP's Central Committee. Through these analyses, the author identifies the new rhetoric devices that the CCP employs in an attempt to present itself to the Chinese citizens as the legitimate ruler of China. Due to the fact that the more "traditional" means of legitimization are no longer sufficient in ensuring the country's stability, the Chinese leaders had to come up with a new type of discourse that, besides the more "traditional" legitimising elements, appealed to traditional culture more than ever before. A critical approach to traditional culture and its integration into the "advanced socialist culture" is thus crucial to the existence of the Chinese Communist party. In the conclusion the author shows that even though classical Confucian concepts are still being used merely as ideological elements, which serve as propaganda tools for the party's legitimization, the so-called "Confucianization of the party" might become reality in the long run.

In the second chapter within this part, Ralph Weber critically explores the issue of the true "significance" of the Confucian revival in present-day China. He draws attention to the currently rather common tendencies of overemphasizing the political and social importance of this revival, since they can lead to severe misunderstandings of China's past and present. The

author also points out that the revival of "substantial Confucianism", i.e. Confucianism of a critical size which has a genuine impact on society and/or on the daily Chinese politics, turned out to be an imaginative instance, an invention of Confucian scholars and various ideologists. He draws attention to the fact that the so-called Confucian revival is—when liberated from its political and economic dimensions—in fact a general revival of tradition and religion as such. In addition, he shows that the nowadays predominant tendencies to misuse Chinese intellectual tradition (which can certainly not be reduced to Confucianism as such) can be politically dangerous, since they can serve as tools for achieving certain agendas linked to vested interests and utilitarian power politics.

In the final chapter, Bart Dessein argues that (against the background of faltering Marxism-Leninism) socialist and Confucian values are increasingly contending for the position of the leading genuine ideal (i.e. the "Truth") in the prevailing rhetoric of the Chinese Communist party. In his view, the gradually disappearing socialist system that was once supposed to replace Confucian values forever has now created the ideological context that allows the Chinese Communist party to promote randomly selected "useful" Confucian values which are seen as having the ability to enhance the unified cohesion of the modern Chinese nation-state. The author claims that following the decline of the previously omnipresent communist ideology and with the emergence of its ideological contest between remaining Confucian nostalgia, the widespread hopes for a fair society and the rising longing for mythological "golden times", there is now space for a deliberate (and often false) use of past symbols that are presented as illustrations of the "Chinese revival".

Despite their heterogeneous variety, the common thread that links the chapters in the anthology in front of you is the presumption that in order to understand the relation between the Confucian heritage from the past and the current Confucian revival, we need to distinguish between original or classical Confucian thought and its ideological implications. This distinction is of utmost importance, as it indicates the type of differentiations that must be made in order to acquire a proper understanding of modern contemporary Confucianism and its theories and ideologies, while, as already pointed out, refuting the idea that it represents a monolithic theoretical formation. On the contrary, it includes a wide range of theoretical discourses based on a complex and heterogeneous tradition.

The authors of the book are Western experts in East Asian studies. Hence, our task is to build bridges between East Asian and Euro-American

regions. This task is not rooted merely in the recognition of a "different theoretical model", but in the relativization of the value systems and perception structures. What does this mean? It does certainly not mean that all values are equally positive, necessary or applicable. The relativization of the value systems simply means that we distance ourselves from the notion of absolute values. Since the dominant discourses in Western philosophical theory are based on the concept of truth, the awareness that there are very few objective, universally valid values, is of utmost importance for those Western scholars who deal with Confucian thought. While the value-systems that shape modern Western societies are based upon concepts such as individualism and free will, a strong sense of familism and belonging to community prevailed (and, to a certain extent, still does) in East Asian societies. Such concepts and identification patterns represent the foundations of different value system(s), which should thus be seen as being relative.

Thus, in spite of the fact that the so-called Confucian revival has often been (mis)used for various political and ideological purposes, the present anthology attempts to follow the notion that the so-called "vacuum of values" is responsible for the alienation of modern post-capitalist societies in the global world and, on this ground, raise the question as to whether this East Asian model is capable of generating a non-individualistic version of modernity. Several analyzes, contained in particular chapters, point in this direction, thus indicating that the purported relation between modernity and individualism, which international modernization theories have always viewed as "inevitable" or "intrinsic", might, in fact, be little more than an outcome of the Western historical paradigms. Hence, the book aims to show that learning from Confucius can be more than merely a mirror that reflects the past experience to those of us who live in the present.

Irrespective of their inherent differences, the essays collected in this book clearly show that we can establish true dialogues and create a common, truly interconnected, yet pluralistic world only by accepting the fact that all of us dwell in different cultural universes.

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FOREWORD

CONFUCIANIZED RATIONALITY: SOME REFLECTIONS ON EAST ASIA, WISDOM, AND SCIENCE[1]

BART DESSEIN

Introduction

With the intriguing question "Is it a historic accident that humanity has reached its present state, characterized on the one hand by powers that were up to this moment unexpected, and on the other hand menaced by the very consequences of these powers?", Johannes Bronkhorst (2001, 35) touched upon the famous period of the "*Achsenzeit*"—as coined by Karl Jaspers in 1949, and on the question of the origin of the Western philosophical and scientific tradition. The "historic accident" he referred to, addresses the following questions: (1) What are the necessary conditions for a rational inquiry to develop? (2) Is rational inquiry a necessary condition for mental activity to be called "philosophy"? (3) Has rational inquiry created modern sciences charged with—at this moment—still unexpected possibilities? (4) Will this same rational inquiry be the instrument that will rationalize—that is, philosophize—the consequences of the age of global science—itself the result of this rational inquiry, so as to enable contemporary man to define himself in the very tradition that created the feeling of "*Unbehagen*" to start with, and that he may be trying to overcome? In the continuation, some reflections on these issues are made. In doing so, the development of the East Asian traditions will be

[1] This paper is a modified version of my keynote speech "Engaging China and the World", delivered at the inaugural session of the establishment of the European Association for Chinese Philosophy, Ljubljana, October 3, 2014.

contrasted with the development of the European philosophical and scientific traditions.

The Origin of Traditions of Rational Inquiry

The early Greek Pyrrhonists, founded in the first century BCE, are known for their refusal to give judgments about anything that lies beyond direct perception. In their opinion such judgments could neither be affirmed nor denied, and therefore judgment was to be suspended. Any judgment on the non-evident would be merely a misuse of language in an attempt to represent in words what cannot be represented (see Kuzminski 2008, 134). In *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, George Berkeley, the eighteenth century Anglo-Irish Bishop of Cloyne, maintained that "*esse*" was equal to "*percipi*" (Berkeley 1964, 42). With this, he denied the difference between reality (*esse*) and appearance (*percipi*), a claim that renders all statements as regards what could be beyond the realm of appearance futile. These two examples may suffice to illustrate that the development of a tradition of rational inquiry is not self-evident. For a tradition of rational inquiry to develop, thinkers have to accept the legitimacy of questions and critique, even if these are directed against the convictions that are sanctioned by intuition, tradition, or revealed truth. Rather than accepting and supporting the "revealed truth"—a typical "theological attitude"—rational inquiry is aimed at "*revealing* the truth" (see Bronkhorst 2001, 34). Such "rational investigation" is an instrument of human activity in the search of wisdom (*sophia*). Of course, belonging to a tradition of rational investigation does not make people cleverer. It is—it has to be stressed—merely a difference in "attitude", a different way of dealing with the world.

Because rational inquiry goes beyond intuition, tradition, or revealed truth, the "systems of rational thinking" have the possibility to cross the borders of the biotope in which they developed. This is important with respect to the following: when philosophy is characterized by rational inquiry, and when rational inquiry is the prerequisite for the development of a scientific tradition, philosophy becomes a scientific discipline. The question how many philosophical traditions developed in the history of mankind as a "rational inquiry" is therefore also the question how many scientific traditions developed—in regards to our contemporary *Unbehagen*. Scholarly opinion differs on this question (see Dessein 2001, 97). Frits Staal (1993, 16) differentiated between three scientific traditions: the West-Eurasian tradition which includes the European and Islamic

scientific traditions, with the Greek tradition that is indebted to the Egyptians, Babylonians, Hittites and Phoenicians (see also Needham 1974, 55), the Indian tradition, and the Chinese tradition. Of these three traditions, according to Staal (1989, 308), the Indian and the Greek tradition are characterized by the accentuation of formal logic, a characteristic that would not apply to the Chinese tradition. Taking cultural (philosophical) borrowings in genuine developments into account, some scholars claimed that Greek philosophy is indebted to Indian philosophy (see Garbe 1987, 36–39; Conger 1952, 103, 105, 107, 109–11). Richard Garbe (1987, 39–46), ascribes a definite Indian influence on Pythagoras (sixth century BCE), an influence that came through Persia.[2] Jean Przyluski (1932, 286) laid emphasis on the Iranian borrowings in both the Greek *and* the Indian tradition. This would thus reduce the number of traditions of rational inquiry to merely the Indo-Iranian-Greek tradition. As we will discuss in the continuation, the Indian—i.e. Buddhist—tradition has been of major importance also for China and, by consequence, for the entire East Asia (see Zürcher 1972; Ch'en 1973; Frankenhauser 1996; Harbsmeier 1998).

In a discussion on the origins of philosophical traditions, Christoph Harbsmeier (1998, 261) argued that rationality and argumentation "arise when a thinker seriously contemplates the pervasiveness of the possibility that he may be wrong, that he needs reasons and arguments to support the validity of his views". This makes the question as regards the rise of "philosophy" a contextual one: when were the circumstances such that the "philosophers" were confronted with the possible fallibility of (their) traditional concepts, and / or with the need to convince others of the correctness of their views.[3] In this respect Jana Rošker (2008, 2–3) has drawn attention to the striking similarity between the following statements by Socrates, Laozi and Zhuangzi: While Socrates stated: "I neither know nor think that I know",[4] hereby acknowledging, as he states, "the total depth of his ignorance while at the same time denying *a priori* the possibility of attaining any kind of 'real' recognition", Laozi, in chapter 71, stated:

> 知不知上
> To know that you do not know is the best (*Ershi'er zi* 1988, 8b).

[2] For Persia see also Conger (1952, 124).
[3] For the study of "context" see Scharfstein (1989).
[4] The Apology of Socrates in Plato (2001, 7).

while Zhuangzi was of the opinion that:

> 知止其所不知至矣
> One who knows to stop at where he does not know has attained perfection (*Ershi'er zi* 1988, 18b).

It thus appears that Western and Chinese thinkers of the so-called *Achsenzeit* were concerned with questions related to the theory of knowledge. "Similar" conducive conditions for the development of "rational inquiry" are therefore likely to have existed in both the Western and Chinese cultural spheres[5] (see also Dessein 2001, 98–103).

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) defined "*Sophia*" as "*theoria*". The concept of "theoretical knowledge" was hereby opposed to "practical knowledge", i.e., knowledge relating to human (social) behaviour. Aristotle favoured theoretical knowledge, for theoretical knowledge is the most useful type of knowledge for practical aims, as this kind of knowledge requires an absolute abstraction of the practical aim (see Bowra 1958, 86). Greek "*Sophia*" thus finds its aim "in" the world. In Platonean (428–348 BCE) and Aristotelian philosophy, wisdom deals with the practical lives of humans in society[6] (see Dessein 2001, 101–2). While discussing the Greek case, Geoffrey Lloyd (1979, 255) remarked that one may presume that in situations in which citizens can openly debate the way in which the state is to be governed, there are less inhibitions—at least within some circles of society—to defy the rooted assumptions and beliefs about natural phenomena, gods or the origin or order of things, and he continues that Greek antiquity was not only characterized by exceptional intellectual developments, but also by a unique political situation and that—it is important to note—*these two appear to be connected*[7] (Lloyd 1979, 258).

China witnessed major political developments at the beginning of the sixth century BCE. Without wanting to overstress the "institutional" aspect of the so-called Jixia (lit. near the Ji [Gate of the Capital of the Qi state]) Academy, founded by Duke Huan, ruler of the feudal state of Qi, in approximately 360 BCE,[8] it is important to note that Duke Huan is known

[5] On the notion of "similarity" see Scharfstein (1978, 28 ff).
[6] This contradicts Mou Zongsan's (1963, 15) claim that Greek philosophy started as a concern for nature and not with the arrangement of human life.
[7] The emphasis is mine (B.D.).
[8] Lloyd and Sivin (2002, 30–35) remarked that modern philosophy historians have wishfully invented a Jixia Academy that would resemble a meeting place for intellectuals, comparable to a contemporary research center. However, they claim

for having invited a variety of scholars—Confucian, Daoist and other—to his court to advise him on political matters. Similar as in ancient Greece, in China the circumstances that were essential for the development of a tradition of rational inquiry—i.e. free discussion that is not inhibited by all sorts of questions, even in domains that might infringe on other sources of authority—appear to have been present.

However, Chinese thinkers from the "One Hundred Philosophical Schools" period differed from their Greek counterparts in the moral values with which their quest was laden.[9] Although the political circumstances in Warring States China may have been similar to those in ancient Greece, the Chinese "attitude" was different. No matter how different in their approach to the contemporary situation the different Chinese "philosophies" that developed in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE were, they also shared the characteristic that they were oriented towards the past, rather than towards the future: Chinese "philosophers" primarily aimed to reconstruct a glorified historical period, predating the political and social turmoil of their time (Bauer 2006, 37). This determination explains why it was the sagely origin rather than the authority of demonstration that determined the statement's authority (see Lloyd and Sivin 2002, 193). Various scholars have repeatedly claimed that the unification of the empire in the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) and the victory of Confucianism in the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) had a devastating impact on the development of "rational inquiry" as defined here (see Lloyd and Sivin 2002, 27). In the Confucian Han dynasty, the development of philosophy in different directions that existed as a result of the numerous feudal states, each with their own ruler and his particular need for advice, came to a halt. Scholarship became highly institutionalized and bureaucratized, and the philosophical profession was organized in "schools" (*jia* 家) of thought.

Belonging to a "school of thought" is essentially a matter of transmitting knowledge. On this, the third century BCE *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Spring and Autumn of the Lü Clan*) informs us as follows:

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that the only evidence that could lead one to perceive that the Jixia Academy was such a center, is the title "Senior Grand Master", a honorary title with no institutional status attached to it. For the interpretation of the Jixia Academy as a center of learning: see Makeham (1994). See also Sivin (1995, Chapter 4); Lee (2000, 44–46).

[9] For more on this see Lloyd and Sivin (2002, 2). On the Chinese concept "school" see further.

> 凡學必務進業心則無營疾諷誦 (…) 觀驩愉問書意順耳目不逆志退思慮求所謂
> In studying, one has to progress, so that there is no blindness in the mind. Recite (the texts) carefully. (...) Observe whether (the teacher) is happy, and (if so) ask him the meaning of the texts. Make your ears and eyes obedient, and do not contradict his intention. Retreat from him, and think about what he has said. (*Ershi'er zi* 1988, 640a)

That (1) transmitting knowledge was seen as a recitation of texts, and (2) was aimed at accepting the teacher's interpretation by the disciple, is, of course, in line with the just mentioned authority attributed to the words of the wise sages of antiquity (see Lloyd and Sivin 2002, 46). In China, books developed as texts accepted by and commented upon by a particular "school" in accordance with that school's interpretation of the words of old sages[10] (see Lloyd and Sivin 2002, 73) and membership in the "school", were the prerequisites to gaining knowledge and understanding this interpretation. Angus Graham (1989, 75) summarized this historical development as follows:

> In China rationality develops with the controversies of the schools, and dwindles as they fade after 200 BCE (…) During the fourth century BCE we meet for the first time thinkers who are fascinated by the mechanics of argumentation, delight in paradoxes, astonish their audiences by "making the inadmissible admissible". When during the Han the philosophers were classed in the Six Schools these, and others with more practical interests in naming came to be known retrospectively as the School of Names. Earlier they were known simply as pien che "those who argue out", sometimes translated "Dialecticians". Confucians, Taoists and Legalists alike scorn them for wasting their time on abstractions such as "the similar and the different", "the hard and white", "the limitless" and "the dimensionless".

Chinese philosophy is thus not characterized as a "search for truth", (Bauer 2006, 17) as the truth of the words from antiquity stands beyond any doubt. Instead, Chinese philosophy is aimed at engaging with the world, the good order of which is dictated by the past, and consists in

[10] Cheng (1997, 318, note 4): "As regards the notion of 'school' in Chinese antiquity", Nathan Sivin (1992, 27) remarks that, "contrary to the Greek notion of schools that are formed of orators and polemicists in a public place, the notion rather corresponds to bibliographic categories than it corresponds to groups of people. In China, schools mutually differed with respect to which corpus of written texts they preserved and transmitted in a line of transmission that highly resembled an affiliation (whence the word *jia* which means 'clan')".