Introduction

The majority of the papers in this issue come from an international conference on "The Importance of Classics Education: Contemporary Issues, Classical Insights, East and West" that was hosted by the Institute for the Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University, in October 2012. Since the papers delivered on that occasion by John Tucker ("Environmental Traumas, Neo-Confucian Humanism, and Reflections on Modernity") and myself ("Kūkai and Dōgen as Exemplars of Ecological Engagement") are already being published elsewhere, we have substituted new essays on topics not too distant from the original ones.

The conference was so well organised, and in ways that greatly enhanced what the participants gained from it, that I would like to say a brief word about the arrangements here, in the hope that more academic meetings might follow this model. It got off to a great start, with the opportunity for the participants to eat and drink together (an informal "symposium" in the original sense of the word) the evening before. This arrangement is customary in East Asia though less often observed in the Western academy, where a false and unproductive distinction between the "serious academic" and the convivial social aspects of meetings tends to prevail. With only twelve presenters, and four sessions of three papers each, there was plenty of opportunity during the refreshment breaks and the dinner afterwards for the kind of informal intellectual interaction that is usually so much more fruitful than the standard question-and-answer sessions of the larger academic conference. A final panel discussion among four of the presenters and the others was a perfect ending to the formal proceedings.

Let me allow the following essays to speak for themselves, by offering only a brief outline of the topics they treat.

Terry Pence's "Emotion, Jesus, and the Stoic Sage" stays within the Western traditions, but demonstrates the value of the comparative approach to ideas originating from traditions in adjacent geographical and cultural regions, by contrast with the East-West comparisons that predominate in the field of comparative or intercultural philosophy. By comparing the "emotional repertoires" of the Stoic sage and Jesus (both understood as moral exemplars), he delineates the common ground between them before highlighting their contrasting attitudes toward anger and pity, or compassion, as well as toward suffering, which for the former is to be avoided and for the latter to be embraced. These reflections stimulate the reader to ask what underlies such divergences from the context of common ground.

Eric Nelson's "The Question of Resentment in Nietzsche and Confucian Ethics" begins with a consideration of two other notable discussions of resentment in the Western tradition, by P. F. Strawson and Max Scheler. He argues convincingly, through an insightful reading of the Confucian *Analects* and other Ruist texts, that we find in the Confucian tradition a more robust and helpful understanding of resentment, and the necessity of coming to terms with it—in oneself as well as in others. Admirers of Nietzsche's (a)moral psychology would have appreciated a discussion of the importance of reciprocity for his project of undermining egocentrism, as exemplified in the distinctly Confucian observation: "It is true that we have good grounds for despising each one of our acquaintances […] but we have equally good grounds for turning this feeling back upon ourselves." (*Human, All Too Human*, 376)

John Tucker's contribution, "Andō Shōeki's 安藤昌益 Agrarian Utopianism: An East Asian Philosophical Contextualization," sheds much needed light on the obscure philosophy of the marvelously eccentric and—as he clearly demonstrates—greatly underrated thinker from eighteenth-century Japan. He does this in perfect consonance with the theme of the conference, by reading key passages from Shōeki's masterwork against the background of three Chinese classics—the

Zhuangzi 莊子, the *Mozi* 墨子, and the *Mencius* 孟子—that appear to have influenced him. (This is spite of Shōeki's low opinion of all his philosophical predecessors.) Interwoven with this erudite discussion are allusions to the relevance of Shōeki's agrarian utopianism for contemporary environmental issues.

In the context of the urgent gravity of current environmental concerns, my own essay, "Heidegger and Nishitani on Nature and Technology," attempts to show the continuing relevance of insights from Heidegger and the Japanese thinker Nishitani Keiji (some of which derive from classical Daoism) concerning our overuse of technology in the context of an ever more vulnerable natural world.

Finally, Jin Y. Park's contribution, "Ethics of Tension: A Buddhist-Postmodern Ethical Paradigm," draws attention to the consonances between certain forms of postmodern ethics and ideas from Huayan 華嚴, a classical school of Chinese Buddhism that originated in the seventh century. She proposes an "ethics of tension" that would constitute a more dynamic response to situations arising from a complex and ever-changing world than forms of ethics that promote universal principles and rules. Such a synoptic view, which embraces classical Buddhist ideas of nondualism and contemporary Western revisionings of ethics, is illuminating and above all timely. If we are to deal successfully with the urgent global problems that currently confront us, Western thinkers will have to stop trying to impose their supposedly universal principles on the East and the global South, and engage instead in open dialogue about particular issues in their appropriate, dynamic contexts.

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