

Introduction

The articles in this special issue were originally presented as papers at the conference "International Conference on New Horizons on East Asian Studies in the Age of Globalization" held at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at National Taiwan University in December of 2008. The presenters included historians, cultural critics, social scientists, as well as scholars from business, economists, and psychologists. Jörn Rüsen, the first keynote speaker, is German; the second keynote speaker, Zhang Longxi teaches at the City University of Hong Kong. Other scholars at the conference are Chinese, most of whom hold academic positions in Taiwan. (Nan Lin is at Duke University.) Most of the Chinese scholars received their graduate training in the United States and regularly publish scholarship in both Chinese and English. They thus occupy positions characterized by intellectual cosmopolitanism. These essays come out of this dual location; the multiplicity of locations is underscored by the fact that the conference was held at Taida but the language of discussion was English, and that I, an American and American-trained scholar of Chinese history, have been asked to edit these articles and write this introduction. In a sense, these essays are a constructive critique of the humanities and the social sciences as currently practiced by the academy, both western and Chinese. It is a critique which has methodological and theoretical dimensions, and it is a critique which posits a plan (or, multiple plans) for action.

A reader might ask: What do these authors mean by East Asian Studies? A reader who expects essays which take as a starting point the old American concept of area studies will be surprised and perhaps confused. What these authors do is to look at the various topics that they study from the standpoint of East Asia. In studying from East Asia, they are also studying about East Asia, and providing new insights and new plans of action, which have the potential to

illuminate not just what we know about the disciplines but also what we know about East Asia. They are asking questions such as "What does the discipline of psychology (or business theory) look like from the vantage point of East Asia? And how might taking the gaze from East Asia seriously change the practice of the discipline?" A reader might further ask: What do these authors mean by globalization? Globalization in this context also has a variety of meanings; of course the essays reflect the global flow of people, ideas, products, and capital that is normally meant by globalization. But in these essays globalization takes on a particular valence—it means the globalization of the academy. And what these authors mean by the globalization of the academy is not simply the movement of people from one academic realm into another but the transformation of the ways in which academics ask questions. That there is a need for the Anglophone academy to ask new questions in light of Asian or African or Latin American experiences is not a new insight, but it is an insight that has at this juncture still been imperfectly realized. Asking these questions has the potential to change the academic enterprise in both the humanities and the social sciences, in both the Anglophone and the Sinophone worlds. The questions raised by these papers read as a collective are about connecting data and experiences from East Asia into disciplinary theoretical models. How does one do it? What are the implications of making these connections? Will working this way simply make incremental changes in social science and humanities methodologies? Or is there a potential for this work to radically re-evaluate what we mean by humanities and social sciences in the twenty-first century?

The papers are very different from one another, which made for a lively conference and which may make for challenging reading. But I would suggest that there are several themes which run through them, despite the very different disciplinary casts. At the risk of simplifying rich discourses, I would boil down the questions asked by many of the papers into a single question: "How do we theorize similarity and difference, and once we have theorized similarity and difference, what do we do next?" In other words, once areas of similarity and

difference (or universality and particularity, which are of course not the same thing as similarity and difference, but which operate along much the same axis) are conceptualized, how can we make interventions into our various disciplines so that the disciplines encompass East Asian experience? This is not a trivial issue, and it is not simply about the Euro-American academy becoming more diverse and inclusive. As Jörn Rüsen suggests in his provocative keynote, the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences were developed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European universities. One of the key aspects of that development was a universalistic framework, which implied a very specific view of universal history and world civilization. But the world has vastly changed since this original formation, as have the frameworks which form our way of looking at the world. As Rüsen writes in his essay in this volume: "What happened to the concept of universal history and its corresponding idea of world civilization? The answer to this question is short and provocative: It has fallen into pieces." The task at hand is to make productive use of these pieces.

Zhang Longxi is also concerned with the shattering of universalistic claims. His essay suggests ways in which scholars who study Asia have recognized the fallacies of universalist claims which in fact are derived from Euro-American experiences and concentrate on relativism instead. But this is not an intellectual position which satisfies Zhang. He writes: "The fact is that cultures and peoples of different nations are both different and similar, and it is misleading to overly emphasize either side of the opposites." He goes on to suggest that arguments about unity and diversity, similarity and commonality, need to be made in specific context and investigated in response to specific questions.

Young-tsu Wong is concerned with the problem of world history and the ways in which world history as practiced in the west remains Euro-centric. He is interested in the question of how the study of Chinese history might change our conceptualizations of world history, and help move it out of the "west and the rest" mold which it so often falls into in American universities. He suggests two

arenas in which Chinese history has the capacity to have a serious impact on world history—one is a careful attention to the human dimensions of suffering and the other is thorough investigation of environmental history. The example of human suffering that Wong raises is the Taiping rebellion; he suggests that by careful analysis of human response to suffering on such a massive scale, we will learn about the human response to suffering in ways that can perhaps be generalized across cultural borders. Wong also makes the argument that any environmental history must be global; and environmental history which does not take China into account is merely local history. There is an increasing amount of work being done on the history of China's environment, some of it being done by Wong himself. The responsibility for seeing to it that this work gets done lies on both sides of the Pacific. Scholars who study Chinese history need to do this work and then need to insist that the work be taken seriously by world historians. (One of the ways of insisting that the work be taken seriously by world historians is writing in ways that are accessible to non-specialists and publishing in journals, whether in English or Chinese, which are read by world historians.)

An example of the specificity of investigation suggested by Zhang Longxi can be seen in the article by Bor-shiuan Cheng, Yi-cheng Lin, and Li-fang Chou. Their article begins by narrating intense debates in the field of organizational theory about insider versus outsider perspectives, and the ways in which models derived from North American experience still remain dominant. They write that "the most important reason [for the dominance of western models] is the lack of methodological guidance about how to develop a Chinese theory of organizational behavior." They put forward a theory of paternalistic leadership as a case study as to how what they call indigenous organizational behavior can be studied. Thus, in this article, as in other articles in this volume, the question is not whether or not the East Asian (or Chinese) experience provides different perspectives which would be of use to disciplinary development, but rather how to conceptualize, articulate and investigate that difference.

Kwang-kuo Hwang, in talking about indigenous psychology, notes the problem of proliferation of ideas of difference when he writes: "If every culture has to develop its own psychology, how many indigenous psychologies should there be? How many psychologies would have to be developed for Africa? What is the optimal number of indigenous psychologies? What is the meaning of an indigenous psychology developed in a specific culture to people in other cultures?" He answers the question by endorsing an argument made by P. M. Greenfield that psychology must uncover "deep structures of culture." He posits what he calls Confucian relationalism as one such deep structure of culture.

Nan Lin's work is instructive here. Nan Lin writes about two theories of exchange; transactional and relational. Although he is careful to point out that both forms of exchange exist (or have the capacity to exist) in all societies, he suggests that relational exchange may be more prominent in Asian, particularly Chinese, societies than it is in the west, for a series of specific historical reasons. He writes: "I propose that the dominance of a rationality as an ideology reflects the stylized accounting of a society for its survival using its own historical experiences as data. The theorized accounting becomes "truth" as it becomes embedded in its institutions (Lin, 2001a)." He suggests that as long as there is a calculation of profit or loss in the context of an exchange, that exchange may be termed rational, and there is no reason to assume that such calculations which center on relationships are any less rational than those which surround more economic transactional exchanges. In the course of a carefully argued exposition, he writes of his frustration with his discipline:

This essay to an extent reflects the roots of the "Eastern discontent" in theoretical contributions to the normative practices of science and the historical development of sociological theories during the 19th and 20th centuries in Western Europe and North America. Since scientific communities are expected to transcend national or societal boundaries,

and theories are attempts at universal principles, scholars in the East are constrained in the number of options available to them in order to receive acceptance and recognition in the global scientific community dominated by practitioners from the West. Discrepancies of evidence from other societies are often questioned for their "generalizability" or explained by way of contingencies.

Having made a brief excursion through these interesting papers, I'd like to return to the opening plea of Jörn Rüsen in the keynote address of the conference, that we take our common humanity as a basis for proceeding, and his advocacy of fine arts as a way of evoking and invoking that common humanity. Rüsen is not an easy sentimentalist: the common humanity must be uncovered through strong analysis and hard work. In some ways, the papers in this volume are all engaged in the question of finding these commonalities.

I'd like to conclude with one of my favorite metaphors. It comes from the early Qing dynasty literary critic Jin Shengtān, who was a creative and strong reader of texts. Despite the difference in temporal location, I think it's apt. So let's let Jin instruct us about how to read texts that are difficult and different. He is writing about how to read Du Fu, a poet who lived nearly a millennium before he did. He writes:

I have heard since I was a child that a person who gathers coral from the sea must first believe that coral can be found in that sea. He then sinks an iron net into the water. After several years, new branches of coral gradually grow through its meshes. The coral-gatherer will then assemble many other people, who will exert their strength and retrieve the net from the water; and thus the coral is lifted up completely. The first two lines in a Tang regulated verse are exactly like this. Whenever you meet a topic, no matter whether it is smaller or larger, it is similar to

the sea. You should first look carefully at it and think how it should start--- this is similar to a firm belief in the fact that the sea ought to have coral in it. Therefore you use your vast and deep thoughts as a net, you go directly into the topic and hover there with unfettered feelings, which is similar to sinking the net in the sea for many years. Once you obtain its principle, then you hurry to write it down, which is similar to gathering people and striving with effort to retrieve the net from the sea. After you have written it down and have cast it to the other people around you, none of those people who read it will fail to show great surprise at its greatness; and this is similar to the brilliance that occurs when the coral is pulled from the sea.

弟自幼聞海上采珊瑚者，其先必深信此海當有珊瑚，則預沉鐵網其下，凡若干年，以俟珊瑚新枝漸長過網，而後乃令集眾盡力，舉網出海，而珊瑚遂畢舉也。唐律詩一二，正猶是矣。凡遇一題，不論小大，其猶海也，先熟睹之，如何當有起句，其猶深信海之有珊瑚處也。因而以博大精深之思為網，直入題中盡意躊躕，其猶沉海若干年也，既得其理，然後奮筆書之，其猶集眾盡力舉網出海也。¹


Several points are relevant here. Finding meaning, finding commonality is like finding coral-if one does not believe that there is coral (or meaning or commonality), then one will certainly not find it. But the simple belief that coral is there does not make it appear; the seeker patiently exerts effort and creates the framework in which the coral can grow. It is not simply a matter of finding the coral, it is a matter of locating the conditions under which coral can grow, and then making it grow. Hoisting the coral from the sea with the iron nets is a

¹ *Jin Shengtan quanji*, 44:4. Cited and discussed in Hao Ji, "Influenception: Jin Shengtan's interpretations of Du Fu's poems," MA Thesis, University of Minnesota, 2008. My translation is slightly modified from Hao Ji's.

collective effort—one must assemble a team of seekers/scholars with whom to collaborate.

One does not know what Jin Shengtian would have said about seeking coral in an age of global warming, but surely in these conditions, the need to believe that the task is possible and the urgency of working together to find a solution are even more important.

I commend these articles to you.



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Guest Editor

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