Between Diversity and Harmony: Envisioning Confluences
多樣性和融合之間：想像合流

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Abstract

An international conference at National Taiwan University's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences invited us to reexamine "Interactions and Confluences in East Asian Thought". The Chinese theme utilized the term 融合 (i.e. assimilation or integration), rather than "confluence". "Confluence" conveys, to me, an image of streams joining and flowing together to become a river. Did the Chinese theme influence the conception of the English conference on confluence?

In any case, responding to the conference announcement, I reflected on my decades of studying interactions within Chinese traditions and between East Asian and Western cultures. After summarizing these reflections to provide a context for my viewpoint, I raise some reservations about possible implications of the focus on "confluences" as a projection of desired interactions between diverse traditions within East Asia and globally.

摘要

受臺灣大學人文社會高等研究院主辦的國際學術研討會之邀，我們對「東亞思想的互動與融合」的中文議題進行了重新審視。在我看來，中文主題裡所採用的「融合」一詞應該具有 "assimilation" 或 "integration" 的含義；而英文主題中的 "confluence" 則是「合流」之意，含有水流匯合積聚而成河流的意象。那麼英文會議之主題是否受到了中文主題「融合」的影響呢？無論如何，作為回應，我首先回顧了我幾十年來對中國傳統中以及東亞與西方文化之間思想互動的研究。這一總結回顧為我的觀點提供了背景。在此基礎之上，我對通過關注 "confluence 合流" 可能的含義來推測東亞及全球不同傳統間理想的相互交流的觀點表達了不同意見。

When invited by National Taiwan University's Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences to participate in an October 2012 international conference on "Interactions and Confluences in East Asian Thought," I was quite intrigued by the focus on the word "confluences." As someone whose entire academic career has been in the context of "interactions" between traditions of thought, I have a strong personal and academic commitment to cultural interactions; however, the word "confluences" raised some concerns, which I appreciate having an opportunity to set forth for the consideration of scholars who might utilize this imagery for characterizing their vision of a way forward in the field of cultural interactions and international communications. Before raising my specific concerns about "confluences," I would like to review some thoughts about the importance of intellectual and cultural interactions.

All of us would certainly endorse dialogue or interaction between traditions, religions and philosophies. As we enter dialogue with another tradition or way of thinking, we not only broaden our understanding of another tradition and enhance our appreciation for another way of thinking and feeling, but we also develop a more profound understanding of our own tradition and our awareness of our own "tradition," which is often actually multiple "traditions." By this I mean, we often become increasingly aware of how our own "tradition" is historically and conceptually more complex and diverse than we initially realized. Of course, our intellectual and personal benefit from such dialogue across traditions depends largely on how reflective and comparative we are in the process of the dialogue. Such dialogue should also enhance our empathy with other ways of thinking and willingness to engage in reciprocity with those with whom we initially perceived little common ground or personal connection.

A further advantage of such dialogue and interaction is that we sometimes realize that what in our own tradition, or from our own way of thinking, has been regarded as universal or natural differs from how others have seen the world or

issues comparable to our own. Looking at another tradition or worldview, it is much easier to see how culture, history and circumstances, among other factors, have influenced the outcomes of what we had tended to assume, within our own worldview, to be universally true or essentially some kind of natural law.

For instance, for almost two decades I taught a course on the cultural history of Chinese science and medicine. Almost all of the students in the course were Anglo-Americans, and a significant number were excellent students in Arizona State University's History and Philosophy of Science Program or in its Biology and Society Program, which moved from the Philosophy Department to the School of Life Sciences. A considerable number of the students in the course were planning to enter careers in the life sciences, especially as related to medical fields. While considering the possibility of offering such a course, I sat in on courses on science and medicine in Europe and North America that were taught by my renowned colleague in the history of biology, Professor Jane Maienschein (1950-). Without her advice and encouragement, I would never have had the courage to offer the course I developed. As I listened to her lectures and her skillfully led discussions, I often began reflecting on what comparable materials or issues I might cover in my projected course.

One central thread of my course was how cultural and historical contexts helped not only to form the terms used to discuss medicine, but also to influence the ways medicine was conceived and practiced. Among other sources, I utilized Professor Paul Unschuld's (1943-) *Medicine in China, A History of Ideas* to expose students to this medical anthropology approach to the subject. Professor Unschuld is particularly successful in demonstrating the point in the case of the influence that political unification, organization and ideology in the Western Han dynasty had upon the foundations of Chinese medicine's conception of the body; for instance, he demonstrated how social-political contexts provided the terms and conceptual framework for the organs and meridians of the body. Furthermore, the rising influence of Confucian orthodoxy in political culture

impacted the development of acupuncture and the *Huang di nei jing* 黃帝內經 [*Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine*], which others had asserted had arisen centuries earlier.[1] Professor Unschuld also adroitly contrasts Western medicine and Maoist sponsorship of "Traditional Chinese Medicine" after the early 1950s. It was not difficult for my students to see this mid-twentieth century contrast between "their" biomedicine and Mao's use of TCM to champion the patient marshaling inner discipline to control the body and defend the body from invading foreign pathogens. Of course, it was easy for them to see how political culture and historical context influenced a patient's willingness to hold onto Chairman Mao's "Little Red Book" while undergoing a major operation with only acupuncture being utilized to block the pain. It was more difficult for the American students to accept Professor Unschuld's point that biomedicine from the West was also influenced by our modern Western environment and social-political ideologies. Yet, a considerable number of students did manage to set aside their assumptions about the universality and objectivity of biomedicine long enough to see and understand Professor Unschuld's point.[2]

It is particularly important for those of us from large countries or great traditions to interact with other traditions and guard against the penchant to consider our own tradition and way of thought universal and natural. Having my cultural and intellectual roots in the North America, but with much of my heart and mind in East Asia, I am aware that I and many of my acquaintances are inclined toward the assumption that "our" thought and praxis are what is natural and universal. This is not only a problem for average people in these societies, it also affects the thinking and intellectual approaches of scholars. Of course, Euro-American theories of development, etc., are particularly notorious cases in

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1 Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China: A History of Ideas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and his *Huang Di nei jing su wen: Nature, Knowledge, and Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

2 Ibid., but especially Paul Unschuld, *What is Medicine?: Western and Eastern Approaches to Healing*, translated from German by Karen Reimers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

point – clear to almost everyone, except often the advocate of a particular theory or methodology. Here, too, many, many decades of interactions between East and West has slowly, but increasingly now, produced positive awareness of this problem. My own teachers, especially Benjamin Schwartz and Ying-shih Yü, and friends, like R. Bin Wong and Francesca Bray, have made significant contributions to this process of highlighting the need and progress toward more global and objective approaches to how we think about major issues of economic and cultural development. It seems to me that some of my friends in Chinese philosophy have somewhat similar, howbeit certainly not as detrimental, problems in assuming that what is within their cultural tradition is universal and natural. For instance, in face of my efforts to show how historical situations and problems helped to shape how major Confucians thought and what their concepts meant, I have provoked some of these friends to charge me with discounting the truth of Confucianism and reducing Confucian thought to mere historical contingency.

In an effort to develop my larger point further with a sweeping characterization of Western and East Asian traditions, I will expand upon a comparison of Euro-American and Chinese ways of thinking that is grounded in a characterization I heard in my first semester in a Chinese intellectual history course with Professor Yü-sheng Lin 林毓生 (1934-) during my M.A. program at the University of Virginia. In classical Greek thought, philosophers focused on "what is" questions, such as what is truth, what is justice what is beauty? This orientation has persisted in Western cultures to the present, and is evident in the prominence of the verb "to be" in European languages, the requirement for us to define our terms in our speech and writing, as well as in the linguistic turn in contemporary philosophy. Needless to say, this orientation has contributed significantly to our academic pursuits and to our expansion of knowledge.

Classical Chinese thought developed quite differently. From a Western perspective, it is surprising that Chinese were not oriented toward "reductionism"

and rigorous definition of terms. Of course, Confucian "rectification of names" was quite different because the main purpose there was ethical and sociopolitical. For instance, Confucius (551-479 BCE) in the *Analects* provides many diverse characterizations of what it means to be a person of *ren* 仁 (usually glossed as benevolence or humaneness). However, the Master's comments provide multiple angles for perceiving aspects of *ren*, but nowhere in the *Analects* do we find a definitive definition of what arguably was his most crucial term. As Professor Lin observed, the term *ren* had been used in the *Book of Odes* to describe a 'manly' or 'macho' hunter shooting a deer.[3] Confucius transformed the term to be an ethical virtue or standard for human behavior; moreover, Confucius' transformation of the term was so complete that scholars have assumed for almost two thousand years that his usage was the original, universal meaning. The most famous definition of *ren* came only more than sixteen centuries later in the 1170s from Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), with Zhang Shi's 張栻 (1133-1180) contribution: "the virtue of the mind and the principle of love."[4] Arguably, their interest in making a more rigorous definition of *ren* arose from the need to counter the influence of Buddhism, a worldview and religious tradition that had its most ancient roots in Indo-European culture and language. In the estimation of some Euro-American scholars the weakness of definition in native Chinese traditions was a shortcoming; however, one could also say this "holistic" penchant of interrelated perspectives was a positive and fruitful aspect of Chinese thinking.

What Classical Chinese thinkers focused on, instead, were two questions: how does one put into practice what one knows to be true or right; and what choices does one make when the things one knows to be good and right conflict. Along with these concerns was the conviction that one does not really know

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3 Yü-sheng Lin, "The Evolution of the Pre-Confucian Meaning of *Jen* and the Confucian Concept of Moral Autonomy," *Monumenta Serica*, 31 (1974-1975), pp. 172-204.

4 See discussion in Hoyt Tillman, *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendency* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), pp. 70-81, or the revised and expanded Chinese version *Zhu Xi de siwei shijie* 朱熹的思維世界 [*Zhu Xi's World of Thought*] (Revised and expanded edition, Taipei: Yunchen wenhua gongsi 允晨文化公司, 2008), pp. 114-131; or (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社, 2009), pp. 68-80.

something until one has put it into practice. Since to Classical Chinese thinkers what was good or virtuous was far more self-evident and clear than it was to Classical Greeks, Chinese were free to focus on praxis or practical behavior. For example, we see that in the *Analects*, Confucius focused on practical issues of behavior: how to become a good person; how to study; and how to serve in government to improve society. An example of conflicting values would be the challenge a man in the state of She presented to Confucius: the people in She were said to be so law-abiding and upright that if a father stole a sheep, a son would report him to the authorities. Responding in the *Analects* (13:18), Confucius said that the people in his state were even better: if a father stole a sheep, a son would shield and protect the father. Thus, Benjamin Schwartz (1916-1999) surmises that Confucius placed "family above polity."[5] In other words, Confucius regarded a society held together with warm bonds of kinship to be superior to a society in which behavior was determined solely by laws and institutions. The *Mencius* (7A:35) made Confucius' point even more graphic with one of his stories about Shun. When presented with the hypothetical question of what Shun would have done, as the ruler of the country, if his father had murdered someone, Mencius 孟子 (ca. 371-289 BCE) replied that the ancient sage-king Shun would have carried his father on his back to a remote corner of the world to shield his father from the authorities; moreover, Shun would not regret giving up his kingship to protect his father. This fundamental quandary regarding what we should do when we have to choose between different good alternatives (as well as between different bad alternatives) continued to be of much greater interest to Chinese over the centuries than seemingly abstract questions, like what is the good? For instance, China's foremost historical novel, the *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 [*Three Kingdoms*] portrays men and women confronted with difficult decisions over conflicting values or competing loyalties. Here however, in contrast to the *Analects* or the *Mencius*, the novel clearly

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5 Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 103-104.

presents loyalty to one's ruler as superior to filial piety to one's parent.[6] The popularity of this novel in late imperial China thus suggests one measure of the evolution of Chinese values and traditions.

One can also detect a somewhat similar evolutionary process in values in the Classical Chinese emphasis upon choosing rightly between conflicting alternatives in difficult situations in the concept of *quan* 權 or "situational weighing." As recorded in the Analects, 9:30, Confucius remarked that although many could follow his teachings regarding the constant, standard virtues, few could follow him in the difficult realm of adapting virtues and behavior in changing situations. By the Song period, there was a sharp divide between Chen Liang 陳亮 (1143-94), who saw *quan* as the application of integrity (*yi* 義) to time and circumstance, and Zhu Xi who criticized Chen for such "expediency." Zhu essentially wanted to restrict the exercise of *quan* to sages and to one-time exceptions to standard practice.[7] All this then is merely a quick example of the complexity and persistence of ethical choices as a dominant theme in Chinese thought in a way that is distinct from the mainstream in the West.

My point here is not to argue which worldview or way of thinking might possibly be superior, but to highlight differences between traditions and diversity within traditions. With such differences and diversities, there is an enhanced need for dialogue and learning from other viewpoints to broaden our horizons, become aware of what might be regarded as the strengths and weaknesses of various traditions, and supplement or balance aspects where one major tradition might be seen as somewhat wanting or inadequate.

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6 Guanzhong Luo, *Three Kingdoms*, translated by Moss Roberts (Berkeley: University of California Press, and Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999); Roberts' Afterword highlights the priorities in this literary account.

7 See particularly, Hoyt Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism: Ch'en Liang's Challenge to Chu Hsi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asian Monograph Series, Harvard University Press), or the Chinese version, *Gongli zhuyi Rujia: Chen Liang dui Zhu Xi de tiaozhan* 功利主義儒家：陳亮對朱熹的挑戰 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社, 1997 and 2012); *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendency*, pp. 168-178, or the revised and expanded Chinese version *Zhu Xi de siwei shijie, Taipei edition*, pp. 258-274, Nanjing edition, pp. 177-178.

One weakness in almost all traditions is to envision conflicts as absolute opposites. This is particularly notable in Western traditions that typically have resorted to portraying differences as opposites, in terms of good and evil, thesis and antithesis, etc. Chinese rightfully note that Chinese traditional differences were envisioned in terms of *yin* and *yang*, i.e., interrelated and interacting poles that were interdependent. Despite the gender disparity which was articulated as *yin* female and yang male, each body had both *yin* and *yang* organs; moreover, the *yin* organs, like the heart and liver, were more honorable "palaces," whereas the *yang* organs, like stomach and intestines, were "storehouses" for processing food and disposing of waste. Furthermore, the sex organs of both male and female were classified as *yin*.[8] Both husband and wife had crucial complementary roles in the filial sacrifices to ancestors.[9] Yet, despite China's obvious difficulty avoiding harsh inequalities, such as foot binding and restricting women in the Inner Quarters of the home, the relatively interactive *yin* and *yang* paradigm for opposites did not absolutize opposites to the degree that Euro-Americans did philosophically; therefore, most follow Benjamin Schwartz in talking about "polarities" in Confucian thought, rather than absolute opposites.[10]

Indeed, this softer view of "opposites" as really "polarities" was reflected in Chen Liang's assertions about the ultimate oneness and compatibility of such traditionally polar concepts as *yi* 義 (what is upright) and *li* 利 (what is beneficial or advantageous), *gong* 公 (public-mindedness) and *si* 私 (self-regarding). Nonetheless, Zhu Xi drew from other quarters of the Confucian tradition to insist

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8   These are standard features in almost any account of Chinese medicine, such as Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China.* Of course, the landmark study in English on gendering Chinese conceptions of the body is Charlotte Furth's *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China's Medical History, 960-1665* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

9   For instance, *Zhuzi jiali* 朱子家禮; see Patricia Buckley Ebrey (trans. and annotated), *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals: A Twelfth-century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings, Funerals, and Ancestral Rites* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

10 Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Some Polarities in Confucian Thought," in David S. Nivison and Arthur F. Wright (eds.), *Confucianism in Action* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), and also Schwartz, "On the Absence of Reductionism in Chinese Thought," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 1, 1 (December, 1973), pp. 27-44, reprinted in his *China and Other Matters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 81-97.

upon absolute distinctions between these polarities and condemned Chen Liang for confusing right and wrong, promoting selfishness at the expense of ethics, etc.[11] Even though Zhu Xi's view had become mainstream by late Imperial China, some modernizers like Shibusawa Eiichi 澀澤榮一 (渋沢栄一 1840-1931), the founding father of the modern Japanese banking system during the Meiji period, echoed Chen Liang's ideas and even condemned Zhu Xi for absolutizing the differences between these polarities and thus repressing China's economic development.[12] Shibusawa advocacy of the Confucian *Analects* as the merchants' "bible" and their guide to business practices inspired such notable Taiwanese entrepreneurs as Wu Ho-su 吳火獅 (1919-1986), the founder of the Shinkong 新光 Corporation.[13] Having published on Shibusawa and his influence on Wu Ho-su, I am happy to see that Huang Chun-chieh's paper, which followed mine at the conference, explored Shibusawa's thought. Let me just draw attention to one claim made by Shibusawa: although Japanese intellectuals were influenced by Zhu Xi, the samurai component of Japanese culture enabled Japan to avoid the

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11 Hoyt Tillman, *Ch'en Liang on Public Interest and the Law* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), especially chapter 3; Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism*, chapter 4; *Confucian Discourse and Chu Hsi's Ascendency*, pp. 168-178, or the revised and expanded version of *Zhu Xi de siwei shijie*, Taipei, pp. 258-274, Nanjing, pp. 177-178.

12 Tian Hao 田浩 [Hoyt Tillman], "Ruxue lunli he jingshi sixiang: tantao Chen Liang, Chen Huanzhang and Shibusawa Eiichi de guandian" 儒學倫理和經世思想──探討陳亮、陳煥章與澀澤榮一的觀點 (Confucian Ethics and Statecraft Thought: An Inquiry into the Ideas of Chen Liang, Chen Huanzhang and Shibusawa Eiichi), in Tian Hao (ed.), *Lishi yu wenhua de zhuisuo: Yu Yingshi jiaoshou bazhi zhushou lunwenji* 文化與歷史的追索: 余英時教授八秩壽慶論文集 [*Historical and Cultural Explorations: Essays Honoring the 80th Birthday of Professor Ying-shih Yü*], (Taipei: Linking [Lianjing] 聯經, 2009), pp. 107-133. My similar English essay is: "Distant Echoes of Chen Liang's Statecraft Thought? Chen Huan-chang and Shibusawa Eiichi on Confucian Ethics and Economics," *Studies in Chinese History*, 18 (2008), pp. 1-26. See also: Shibusawa Eiichi, *Rongo to soroban* 論語と算盤 [*The Analects and the Abacus*] (Reprint, Tokyo: Kokusho kankokai 国書刊行會, 1985). *The Autobiography of Shibusawa Eiichi: From Peasant to Entrepreneur*, translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Teruko Craig (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1994).

13 Chin-shing Huang 黃進興, *Banshijide fendou: Wu Huoshi xiansheng koshu zhuanji* 半世紀的奮鬥：吳火獅先生口述傳記 [*Half-century of Struggle: Mr. Wu Huoshi's Orally Transmitted Biography*] (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua gongsi 允晨文化公司, 1990), pp. 282, 293; translated by Tillman as *Business as a Vocation* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Legal Studies Program and Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 227, 236, and my comments on pp. 255-256.

extremes of Zhu Xi's condemnations of profit and selfishness; thus, Japan's economic development was less restricted than late Imperial China's.

Kawahashi Seishu, my closest friend in Japan, has made a somewhat parallel comment several times to me over the years about Japanese culture. Seishu observed that it was only in the wake of the significant decline of Confucian influence after the Meiji Restoration that the Tokugawa balance between Confucianism and Zen was broken and that the Zen dominated samurai tradition and a militarized version of Shinto became extremely aggressive in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, as most evident in Japan's aggression in Asia. He suggested that it was necessary for the poles or extremes of Japanese society and culture to be in tension with, or to balance, one another to avoid such extremes. One thing that adds weight to Seishu's comments is that he is the Abbot of Reiganji Temple and supervises the priests at several branch Zen temples in the vicinity of Toyota City near Nagoya. Indeed, his convictions on this matter were also expressed in his declaration that he would offer Buddhist prayers and memorial services for deceased WWII Japanese soldiers only if the family would accept inclusion of prayers for victims of the war abroad. His positive embrace of balancing tensions and dialogue between traditions was also expressed in his marriage to Noriko, a Roman Catholic with a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Princeton University. Noriko would not only become a professor of religion at Nagoya Institute of Technology, but also of course the "temple wife," aiding the Abbot in his work with the Zen members of the temple. Thus, Seishu brought his lesson about the benefits of counterbalancing traditions into the sphere into own home and temple.

Now to address the word confluence, the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (www.merriam-webster.com) defines "confluence": "a coming or flowing together, meeting, or gathering at one point"; and "the flowing together of two or more streams, the place of meeting of two streams, or the combined stream formed by conjunction." This dictionary's first synonym for confluence is

"convergence": "the act of converging and especially moving toward union or uniformity"; and "the merging of distinct technologies, industries, or devices into a unified whole." The second synonym is "conjunction": "the act or an instance of conjoining"; "occurrence together in time or space"; "the apparent meeting or passing of two or more celestial bodies in the same degree of the zodiac," or "a configuration in which two celestial bodies have their least apparent separation"; and "a complex sentence in logic true if and only if each of its components is true." The remaining synonyms are convergency and meeting. All these words are far more positive and preferable for most situations than the singular antonym, "divergence."

I understand that my colleagues at this conference think of convergence of traditions as flowing parallel to one another, distinct but in communication; however, there are grounds for concern. First, the definition from Merriam-Webster suggests a flowing and merging together toward unity and uniformity or a unified whole in the same time and space with the least apparent separation; moreover, the formerly distinct factors are true if and only if each all of the components of the whole unity are true. The image that comes to my mind regarding confluence is the famous imagery in South Asian traditions of the individuality of one drop of water converging in the vast sea of Brahma or Nirvana. Second, the sense of "assimilation" or integration is enhanced by the fact that the Chinese theme for the conference utilized the term "*ronghe*" 融合 (i.e., assimilation or integration), rather than "confluence." One wonders if the Chinese theme influenced the conception of the English conference theme. If the Chinese term colored anyone's thinking about confluences, it would appear to enhance the aspect of confluence that evoked my concern and the present essay. Confluence by itself conveys, to me, an image of streams joining and flowing together to become a river. With the notion of "*ronghe*" from the Chinese theme, the connotation of "a river" is further augmented to become "one integrated river" of assimilation.

As such, confluence has inherent danger of losing individuality and grounding in one's own tradition, and is therefore similar to several other conceptual motifs whose usage has proven to be problematic. For instance, the current theme of "harmony" 諧和 (*xiehe*) in China is of course a significant advance over earlier slogans of continuous revolution and struggle; nevertheless, "harmony" underscores an inherent centralized push toward unity and conformity. As such, "harmony" privileges the mainstream and the center as the norm often at the expense of individual expression, diversity, the minority and the periphery. Thus, although harmony is desirable, it can be stifling and even repressive. Dean Huang Chun-chieh 黃俊傑 (1946-) in a paper delivered at a Zhu Xi conference in July 2010 in Taiwan drew attention to a more positive alternative from Buddhism: "principle is one; its manifestations manifold" 理一分殊 (*li yi fen shu*). Song Confucians adopted this concept to develop their own speculative philosophy or metaphysics of principle. Yet, in Professor Huang's presentation, he noted that this traditional formulation still privileges unity (*yi*) to such an extent that it, too, is potentially controlling and repressive of minorities or those from peripheral areas. Concerns for harmony or unity easily harden into a bulwark against diversity, which is regarded as inducing disharmony and division. Thus, both conceptions could also be manipulated to become an instrument for control and domination by one dominant group over others. I recall his observation regarding how few Asians were in top positions in so-called international corporations, for European and North American White males largely dominate. Of course, we are all – at one time or situation or another – on the periphery or in a minority; thus, even those at the center and in the majority should have some interests in protecting the marginalized.[14]

This problem with images of confluence, harmony and unity set by the mainstream or central culture is of course a global problem. For instance, the

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14 The same or very similar power-point slides for Huang Chun-chieh's lecture may be found on his personal webpage: 朱子「理一分殊」──黃俊傑個人網站 at huang.cc.ntu.edu.tw/class-HI/08.ppt. Accessed April 13, 2014.

United States of America has long prided itself in being a confluent "melting pot" for immigrants from around the world. Of course, even this image is a constructed narrative that glosses over the preferential status of European immigrants from selected countries, the exclusion of Chinese in the 1880s, etc. Still, this construction provided an ideal that justified the progressive expansion or liberalization of immigration policy to the point that injustices against Asian immigration were eventually addressed. More to the point of my theme here is another unfortunate consequence of the "melting pot" ideal: the obsession with becoming "American" largely meant conforming to White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture that was regarded as the mainstream into which others were to blend. Thus, many members of minorities lost their native languages, cultures and customs. Using a different imagery, the "melting pot" policy at its best only encouraged a "Chop Suey" blend in which individual ingredients lost their distinct flavor. Only gradually since the 1960 has greater diversity and pluralism emerged as the waves of immigrants from Asia, Latin America and elsewhere have had a substantial impact on American culture and policy. This diversity, in contrast to Chop Suey, could be represented by "food courts" where one can chose whatever cuisine one wants for a convenient meal. Yet, diversity even in America is threatened by fundamentalist cultural backlash from those who feel threatened by the perceived lack of harmony and unity.

In summary, finding the most apt language and imagery to articulate ideal models for interaction between traditions has been very difficult. Actual policy and social practice has, needless to say, proven to be even more problematic. Although a long-range view encompassing the past and the future provides grounds for optimism about progress, the present continues to be fraught with setbacks and obstacles; therefore, our struggle for optimal articulation and realization continues.♦

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