

Forum: "Chineseness" and "Europeaness" 【專題論文】

Speaking of China / Speaking of Europe  
論說中國與論說歐洲

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## Abstract

A focus on European, particularly French, commentaries about China examines the ways that Europeaness and Chineseness have been structured by attempts to define cultural identities inexorably linked to commonly shared projects: adherences to historical estate defined by universality and civilization. Interrogating Chineseness and Europeaness does not propose incommensurability between East and West, for such a difference is framed within an understanding of China and—politically and philosophically—Confucianism, as a Europeanism. This is a universal humanism that operates because it proposes not an opposition between individualism and communitarianism, but because it ties the classical to the modern (court government and export capitalism), and defines the shaping of great civilizations, here Europe (or France) and China, through common heritage.

## 摘要

本文檢視歐洲，特別是法國，自十八世紀以來對中國之評述，由之分析如何以定義文化認同方式建構歐洲性與中國性。

探討中國性與歐洲性並非主張東方與西方不可比較，因為此二者間差異實奠基於將中國與政治上及哲學上之儒家作為歐洲來理解的框架之中。此乃為普遍性人文主義作用於中，因其並不視個人主義與社群主義為對立二極，而是連結了古典與現代，並藉由人類共同的歷史界定歐洲（或法國）與中國偉大文明。

What are "Chineseness" and "Europeanness?" From 1721, Montesquieu opined, "If China has such a fantastic number of people inside its boundaries, the reason is simply a particular way of thinking; for children regard their fathers as gods, venerating them as such during their lifetime, and honouring them after death by sacrifices."<sup>1</sup> Here, Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, the famous fictional epistolary tale of The Orient (in the guise of Persian travelers) commenting on Europe, and its morals and habits, alludes to a Chinese "way of thinking." Popularly understood as a cult of ancestors, and by scholars as a function of Confucian values—this view has long shaped European, and especially French understandings of Chineseness and how Europeanness is constituted with and against it.

The legacies are apparent from the eighteenth century forward, and continue into contemporary popular and erudite studies. In France, interest in China and what Chineseness means to the European past and future is currently running high. Numerous academic forums and journals comment on current events and historical legacies, complementing long-running colloquia like the regular gatherings of Sinologie de Chantilly. Two popular history magazines, *L'Histoire* and *La Nouvelle Revue d'Histoire*, consecrated their July-August 2005 issues to "China: Two Thousand Years of Empire," and "China and the West" respectively. In both cases, they led off their interrogations with "Confucius and the Dao," and "The Chinese Miracle from Mao to Confucius." The editors of *L'Histoire* even posed the question more cogently and appropriately for our discussions here. For the editors in Paris, seeking a redefinition of Chineseness seems to lie in adding chapters to familiar narrations of imperial greatness and ancient civilization, fragmentation and collapse under European imperialism after the Opium Wars, and Republican and Communist struggles. Contemporary resurgence to economic and political global dominance provide a newer, ever-changing context, and "Chineseness" is near impossible to

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1 Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 214.

contemplate without this contemporaneity, just as "Europeaness" has become so marked by initiatives of the European Union as repository of treaties and constitutions that will define a common project.

For China, *L'Histoire* inquires, "from this incredible somersault, must one search for secrets in eternal China, the wisdom of Confucius, or a conception of the world that affirms itself as a counter-culture in the face of Western individualism? And should one be apprehensive?"<sup>2</sup> Classic notions of mystery and anxiety persist, yet also notable here are the affirmations of a certain "Chineseness" presumably rooted in an ancient Confucian China made modern, and an "affirmation" of identity self-consciously standing against Westernness (here European) and so definable only in opposition. But it is an opposition not really of otherness, but uncertain complementarity. For Chineseness, so salutary to European commentators who published works like Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1735) or Leibniz (1697), despotic for Montesquieu (1748), defended by François Quesnay (1767), has never really been an interrogation of an incomprehensible difference, but an inversion as uncertain desideratum.<sup>3</sup>

From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries much of this came through commerce: arts and crafts framed around porcelain, prints, and silks. China was a profound site of importance for the European mercantile community, providing material manifestations of aesthetic desire and commercial profit, while also illustrating possibilities for the artistic and spiritual—simplicity, frugality, adaptability. European Christian missions buttressed these projects, and from the eighteenth century they were transmuted into colonial endeavors as civilizing mission, increasingly articulated though reinscribed secular notions of civilization and enlightenment.

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2 "Quand La Chine S'Eveillera," *L'Histoire: La Chine, 2000 Ans d'Empire*, No. 300 (July - Aug. 2005), Editorial.

3 Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France, 1640-1740*, (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971)

As D. F. Lasch put it in a venerable tome—Asia was a "revelation to preindustrial Europe."<sup>4</sup> Trade provided counter and crossed influences, and as Europe became more Asian, both Europeaness and Chineseness hung on attempts to define cultural identities inexorably linked to what seem to be commonly shared assumptions: adherences to historical estate defined by universality and civilization. In this sense, what are European and Chinese as ways to think and imagine disobey shifts in contemporary scholarship, particularly moves from "civilization" to "culture" as definitive of anthropological or historical thinking of the twentieth century, and have maintained both the problematic distinctions (civilization/ barbarism) or historical narratives (traditional/modern) (advanced/ primitive) within their very definitions.

For China, this has been a wrestling with classical heritage and literary culture, colonial and postcolonial legacies, debates over guanxi capitalism, divided legacies of Confucianism, republicanism, and communism as simultaneous systems, or, possibly, as a triadic dialectic of waiting out the historical destiny of one to the other. If "Chineseness" (as a quality of these narratives) is somehow rooted in a history inscribed through Confucianism and dynastic empire and collapse and revival, then "Europeaness" is inscribed in "standard textbook" narratives of development: ancient and classical Mediterraneans, Medieval institutions, the logic of Renaissance, Discovery, Scientific Revolution, Reformation, and Enlightenment as hallmarks of the foundations of "Modern" Europe emerging from the French and Industrial Revolutions.

As Christophe Muller-Hofstede has pointed out—the debates over these narratives from the "Chineseness" perspectives were usually between elites in Asia and

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4 Donald F. Lasch, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Vol. I, book I, *The Century of Discovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, 1965). For more contemporary scholarship, see David M. Jones, *The Image of China in Western Social and Political Thought* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Roy B. Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

an undifferentiated West (Japanese imperial designs feature large in this overcoming logic). So what is "West" as a common project constituted from multiple histories? Jurgen Habermas has proposed this question as a self-critique of Europeanness as an attempt to redefine postnationalism: what is common as a modernist project are adherences to the extension of civic principles, notably "the neutrality of authority, embodied in the separation of church and state, trust in politics rather than the capitalist market, an ethos of solidarity in the fight for social justice, high esteem for international law and the rights of the individual and support for the organizational and leading role of the state."<sup>5</sup>

Yet these are not evidence of European cultural determination, but are themselves historically located, evolving out of the confluences of an aristocratic system, religious reinterpretation and integration, and multiple political and social revolutions. The important point is the way this devolves to the meaning of common justice, rights, and protections, which is another way of saying a certain kind of rule of law that recognizes positions within a historical inheritance, yet not inherent difference. Europeaness is what is shared.

Such a perspective applied from Europe to Asia raises a compelling question: how could Europeanness and Chineseness be historically distant and culturally specific, yet not, ultimately, "different?" Interrogating Chineseness and Europeanness does not propose incommensurability between East and West, for such a difference is framed within an understanding of China and--politically and philosophically--Confucianism, as a Europeanism. This is a universal humanism that works because it proposes not an opposition between individualism and communitarianism, but because it ties the classical to the modern (court government and export capitalism),

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5 Christophe Muller-Hofstede, "'Asian Values,' Autocratic Propaganda or Useful Incitements for European Societies?" in Wen-Hsin Yeh ed., *Cross-Cultural Readings of Chineseness: Narratives, Images, and Interpretations of the 1990s* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2000); Danielle Elisseeff, *Confucius, des Mots en Action* (Gallimard: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2003); Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, "After the War: the Rebirth of Europe," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Libération*, May 31, 2003.

and defines the shaping of great civilizations, here Europe (or France) and China, through common heritage. *La Nouvelle Histoire* adopts this strategy, focusing on appropriation and parallelism: "in so many ways, the challenges Europeans are confronted by present strong analogies with those that Confucius and his disciples faced in a very different world." The logic is thus: "Confucius and his disciples knew that the troubles of their times had causes far exceeding the mere forces of politics...to change...it is necessary to reform minds, to bring them to tradition, an eternal task, always beginning anew."<sup>6</sup>

This simultaneous evocation of reform, incessant transformation, and tradition is notable for inscribing precisely what Europeaness and Chineseness presumably share: a heritage and possibility beyond the "mere forces of politics." This is the logic of civilization, an identity in temporal and spatial extension, a continuity beyond governments and nation states. Pierre-Etienne Will states the formulation concisely: "One utilizes the term "empire" to translate the Chinese tianxia, "all that is under heaven," or in other words, the entire civilized domain—a term that preexisted the political empire itself...this idea is as ancient as Chinese literature, and the idea of the unity of the empire is essential."<sup>7</sup> In this, "civilization" is foundational of politics rather than the other way around. Projects of unity and common European identity also rest upon civilization. As the proposed Constitution for Europe indicates, "...Europe, reunited after bitter experiences, intends to continue along the path of civilization, progress and prosperity..." making clear the a priori assumption that civilization is a quality of Europeaness, and though at times shaken by political events, still provides an ineluctable destiny of future prosperity.<sup>8</sup> The "bitter experiences" resolve well to the challenges that *La Nouvelle* seeks to address by

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6 La Nouvelle Revue d'Histoire, "La Chine et l'Occident," *La Nouvelle Revue d'Histoire*, No. 19 (July - Aug., 2005).

7 Pierre Etienne Will, in "La Chine et l'Occident," *La Nouvelle Revue d'Histoire*, No. 19 (July - Aug., 2005), p. 39.

8 Council of Europe, Draft Text for the European Constitution (internet site: <http://ue.eu.int/igc/pdf/en/04/cg00/cg00087-re02.en04.pdf>)

adopting an encompassing sense of Confucian principles to both Chinese and European experience.

Europe and China are thus homologous in that they have not abandoned civilization to take on culture, yet that they are, presumably, both forged from acknowledged material, moral—and documented and chronicled—histories. European versions of Chineseness as civilization focus on court culture, sophisticated political organization, and highly developed writing and literature. Such institutions require and are reformulated through philosophical and moral precepts. The European Community is premised on historical legacies defined through principles and nation states organized around a cultural notion of civilization whose inclusiveness is institutionally defined—basic economic and human rights, and democratic principles. As the European Constitution proposes it, these "universal values" are, in fact, deeply historical: "drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law."<sup>9</sup>

It is the underpinning of "civilization" that presumably makes European and Chinese complementarity possible. As suggested above, Chineseness as a historical notion does not obey postcolonial insistences on valorizing multiplicities of "culture" over the hierarchical and imperial resonances of "civilization." These are self and other designations shared by both Chineseness and Europeaness, based upon institutional order, technical development, and moral interrogation.<sup>10</sup> In posing questions for China, French historians rhetorically ponder, "is it true they invented everything?" detailing paper, printing, gunpowder, sophisticated bureaucracy, the

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9 Council of Europe, Draft Text for the European Constitution (internet site: <http://ue.eu.int/igc/pdf/en/04/cg00/cg00087-re02.en04.pdf>)

10 William Callahan, "Institutions of Ethics? The Logic of Regionalism in Europe and East Asia," paper presented at the Conference of "Asian Studies in Europe and China" (Brussels: Asia-Link, 2004), p. 11, the html and pdf versions are available on the internet.



famous examination system, astronomy. As Pierre Picquart, the 2001 expert to the European Commission on China suggests, "just like China, Europe benefits, also, from a very old civilization forged by a rich history created in a melting pot of multiple identities. To be interested in Europe is a bit like finding authentic roots—certainly different, but identifiable and assimilable for Chinese."<sup>11</sup> Picquart even goes on to laud the Chinese as "this great Gaulois people," offering the ultimate compliment of self-reference.

Thinking this through means comparative thinking about "Chineseness" in some guises of European historical ideologies and values, and proffered truisms about East and West. A first recurring theme of such interpositions tends to be the problematic of "Asian Values" as notably articulated by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mohammed Mahatir. To this has been counterposed the "new" Confucian and group logic of moral and political organization to the Weberian and Protestant version of capitalism and individualism.

Many French colloquia have been devoted to this subject. Notable has been *Europe-Asie: Echanges, Ethiques et Marchés* as organized by Martine Raibaud and François Souty, for the ways the particular counterposition of terms deliberately elaborates the multiple resonances of exchange, moral principles, and marketplace models. They begin with a classic ploy: to link classical, dynastic, and contemporary China by finding common principle through the Confucian Analects, "visibly a source of inspiration for Asian governments at the end of the twentieth century," underscoring a virtuous man's response to nine fundamental necessities, including "...his will, sincerity, conscientiousness, concerning moral values." Dialectically, they counterpose Confucius to what might be taken as a canonical European sage of comportment and virtue: Adam Smith and his notion that "a people has such a strong sentiment of personal interest...that government is forced to bend to its

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11 Pierre Picquart, *L'Empire Chinois: Mieux comprendre le Futur no. 1 Mondial: histoire et actualité de la diaspora chinoise* (Lausanne: Favre, 2004), p. 151.

prejudices and to establish, to maintain public peace, a system conforming to popular ideas."<sup>12</sup>

The idea is to imagine the fruitful similitudes between the sages, or at best, the strategies of employment and justification which make them totems of socio-economic principle and organization. To this extent, the effect of all this is debatable at best. Confucianism was not necessarily very strong in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and is as abused as employed—many critics have asked whether Asian governments, including those in China or Taipei, make too much use of deferential virtue and collectivist justification for political restraints taken by leaders and parties. Nor has Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia been contrary to economic development—Confucian thought, while markedly powerful, seems not to be an overwhelmingly determining factor according to Raibaud and Souty. To a further extent, then, their interest is not in finding a determining definition of Asia, China, or Confucius, but to elaborate a European interrogation in terms of a "historical perspective placing an ethical vision at the center of its preoccupations...the heritage of free thought, in opposition to conformisms."<sup>13</sup>

Such appropriations, trying to read and reinterpret histories as philosophies with politics, are quite marked for European Chineseness. As Marianne Bastid-Burguière has put it, "a distinctive feature of European historical reflection as applied to China (has been) the development apart from historical studies written by sinologists, of a body of philosophical tenets and conceptions...which have been used as social theory to explain the structure of Chinese society and its historical characteristics."<sup>14</sup> This uniqueness of the philosophical employment of China has

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12 Martine Raibaud and François Souty, *Europe-Asie: Echanges, Ethiques, et Marchés, XVIIe-XXIe siècles* (Paris: Indes Savantes, 2000), p. 15; also Ming Wilson and John Coley, *Europe Studies China: Papers from an International Conference on the History of European Sinology* (London: Han-Shan Tang, 1995).

13 Raibaud and Souty, *Europe-Asie*, p. 15.

14 As cited in Stuart R. Schram ed. *Authority, Participation and Cultural Change in China: Essays by a European Study Group* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 228.

"positioned" the Middle Kingdom very particularly in European thought and carried it through different imaginaries over centuries.

Most French literature comments on the salutary visions of Jean-Baptiste Du Halde and the Jesuits from the early eighteenth century, and a shift at mid-century in these perceptions: as Michel Cartier puts it, "one ordinarily dates the beginning of the 1750s as the origin of the turning from sinophilia to sinophobia. This change is regularly attributed to Montesquieu, whose *L'Esprit des Loix* (1748) established for ill or will the resonant notion of Chinese "despotism" and inseparably linked commentary on China with staking political positions on good government, seeking the precarious balance of virtuous republics, honorable monarchies, and tyrannies of fear."<sup>15</sup>

The important point for our purposes is to illustrate the ways that Confucian understandings inflect interpretations and understandings of Chineseness among European commentators. If anything, significant French research tends to be anti-Confucian in its Chineseness, particularly in modern and contemporary history. The authors and editors of *La Chine au XXe siècle*, including the well-known Maire-Claire Bergère and Lucien Bianco, argue that contemporary China "perpetuates, in effect, and develops the tradition of maritime China, the China of merchants and of pirates." In this, they posit that the historical legacies of the ancient and early modern are not philosophical nor concerned with virtue and order, but popular and transformative. Their maritime--thus coastal and outward looking China--is "restive with Confucian power, for a long time held in suspicion by the imperial bureaucracy."<sup>16</sup>

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15 Michel Cartier ed., *La Chine entre amour et haine: actes du VIIIe Colloque de sinologie de Chantilly* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer: Institut Ricci, 1998).

16 Marie-Claire Bergère, *L'âge d'or de la bourgeoisie chinoise, 1911-1937* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), p. viii.

To extend this approach and give it a cultural imperative, radical commentators like Jean Jacques Gandini suggest that Confucianism is indeed a central root of Chineseness, but that its value can be understood only in dyadic dialectic to Taoism, the latter read as favoring revolutionary projects. "In effect, at the side of the traditionalist current represented by Confucianism, we find...the liberationist current represented by Taoism." Here Gandini finds historical legacies in that "the secret societies could have been considered as precursors to Chinese anarchist groups." The conclusion however, is a broader reformulation of Chineseness as a European desideratum: "anarchy is truly historically an integral part of the Chinese temperament; it is the intellectual in meditation who refuses all official charges...the vagabond escaping the control of the State. It is the other face of the Confucian state, pedagogical, centralized, authoritarian."<sup>17</sup>

The European postwar is as marked as was the European Enlightenment in a search for self-definition through ideal and cautionary models. The ambition of civilization and universal history after 1945 rested upon troubling choices of which American democratic imperial capitalism was one possibility. Communism provided another, but after 1956 in Hungary, Stalinism as the shape of that Communism was widely discredited. As intellectual historian Vincent Descombes has it, "the hopes of existentialist commitment migrated from the USSR to China, from proletarian internationalism to the nationalism of the ex-colonies."<sup>18</sup>

This "globalizing" of Chineseness has had profound impacts. The newness of this project rests in its ability to capture both the empire of civilization and the philosophical and revolutionary possibilities of being both a developing and a global power. What informs this is a tension that considering Europe and China in ex-

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17 Jean J. Gandini, *Aux sources de la révolution chinoise, les anarchistes: contribution historique de 1902 à 1927* (Lyon: Atelier de création libertaire, 1986), p. 67; Marcel Granet, *La Pensée Chinoise* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1980).

18 Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 18; François Godement ed., *Chine, Etats-Unis: entre méfiance et pragmatisme* (Paris: Institut français des relations internationales, 2001).

change neatly underscores: the thesis articulated from the late nineteenth century that the movement of the "center of gravity" of the Atlantic arena with its connection to the ancient Mediterranean to the Pacific, generally most specifically toward China and Japan. Effectively, this proposes that Eurocentrism is destined to become Asia-centrism, or perhaps even a "return" to China as the center of the world. Journalists and critics gravely ponder, "La première puissance mondiale?" (The number one world power?) *L'Histoire*, even as the anticolonial promise of revolutionary freedom remains alluring.<sup>19</sup>

The French version of this evolving "China question" focuses on an acknowledgement of a Chinese historical destiny to dominance, and a repositioning of Europe as the necessary fulcrum of global balance. China, as it has since the eighteenth century, (comparing Du Halde and Montesquieu, or Confucius and Adam Smith) proposes alternative models of moral sentiment tied to material advance. For the postwar, China again seems to offer its own alternate historical and ideological model. Note the editors of *La Nouvelle Revue*: "How to explain, in effect an accelerated modernization that has taken effect outside of democratic norms that Americans think are universal?"<sup>20</sup> As Marie-Claire Bergère has put it in *L'âge d'or de la bourgeoisie chinoise*, the experience of Chineseness, "invites us to disassociate elements, long time joined by dogma..." of tradition, modernity, modernization, and revolution. The point is somehow to find Europe by using China to propose alternatives to discredited or suspect Marxisms and Anglo-American market individualisms within an accepted context of legitimate political authority and high capitalism. As Picquart has put it, "the European Union also represents for the Chinese government a new pole, a stable mediator and a power bloc between, on the one hand, all-powerful America, and on the other, China and the bloc of emerging Asian nations."<sup>21</sup>

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19 *L'Histoire: La Chine, 2000 Ans d'Empire*, No. 300 (July - Aug. 2005), p. 102.

20 "La Chine et l'Occident," *La Nouvelle Revue d'Histoire*, No. 19 (July - Aug., 2005), p.31.

21 Bergère, *L'âge d'or de la bourgeoisie chinoise, 1911-1937*, p. 17; Picquart, *L'Empire Chinois*, p.

This political meditation is, however, not to be based merely on balance of power interests, but the dispersed nature of that balance, keenly aware of "Europe" as an administrative entity yet also a configuration of union as "member states." For Picquart, the boundaries of "Chineseness" are rooted in multiple European histories of migration, immigration, and boundary crossings: missionaries, students, technical advisors, economic workers, military. Jacques Gernet, likewise, thinks about "Chineseness" as having developed from and persisting as a world of multiple peoples. As such it is a parameter and interrogation of global identity—its practitioners and advocates investigate the logic of culture, history, language, and "identity" in contexts as far flung not only of Han peoples, Turks, Tibetans, Mongols, Muslims from the upper Yellow River and peoples of Southeast Asia, but also in Australia, the United States, Latin America, European countries, the Caribbean. Picquart has suggested Chineseness be understood as "the great migratory mosaic of the world."<sup>22</sup>

The basis of much thinking on Chineseness is apparently located in the strong notion that it has little to do with "within" China, and indeed only a referential attachment to any national notion of China as a state and people at all. Indeed, it is from this that the very important question is not about what it means to be "Chinese," much less to be from "China." In fact, many scholars—perhaps notably drawing on Tu Wei-Ming—have argued that Chineseness is premised upon the ways that the "overseas Chinese" or "cultural Chinese" by capital and cultural infusions through Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and other continents have been the motivating factors in restructuring inclusion into what is China.<sup>23</sup>

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151; Jean-François Dufour, *La Chine au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle: Entre promesses et défis* (Toulouse: Milan, 2003).

22 Jean Gernet, *Le Monde Chinois*, new edition (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003); Picquart, *L'Empire Chinois*, p. 151.

23 Wei-Ming Tu ed., *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). See also commentaries by Callahan, "Institutions or Ethics?"

To have Chineseness is thus distinct from "being" Chinese, it is a play upon an assertion of characteristics defined as genealogical, yet not necessarily lived practice. As Picquart puts it, "the different communities of the Chinese diaspora around the world are linked by a very strong sentiment of belonging to their culture, to their written language, more than any other country or state. Their common point of reference, in all circumstances, is forged by a common identity without territory."<sup>24</sup> The "without" territory, or the deterritorialized notion of Chineseness very much plays into both contemporary notions of diasporic and postcolonial thinking, and the "globalizing" of Chineseness noted above and repeated through many registers (trade, revolution, moral and political models) interrogated in European thinking.

"Europeanness" regarded through spatial rather than philosophical and civilizational lenses is also--if problematically homologous--to Chineseness. We can imagine that "Chineseness" is an attempt to wrest away cultural and historical essence and legitimacy from a location and ideal "China" and invest it rather in multiple communities and actors connected through a notion of diaspora, immigration, or globalism. Europeanness is likewise dispersed, yet even more of conundrum: a perpetually redefined set of principles, beliefs, prejudices, and desiderata for which no particular territory exists. "Europe" itself, in function of its founding myth of the rapt of Europa and the bull (a tale of seduction, possession, and progeny), suggests an organic, familial background as an institutional principle, yet as contemporary articulations over the European Constitution so correctly suggest, even the geography of Europe is remarkably malleable as territory. Questions of how to define "the West," (often confused with Europe or European, or Eurocentric) deal problemati-

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24 Picquart, *L'Empire Chinois*, p. 77; also Ien Ang, "Migrations of Chineseness: Ethnicity in the Postmodern World", in David Bennett ed. *Cultural Studies: Pluralism and Theory. Melbourne University Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 2 (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1993); Ian Buruma, *Bad Elements: Chinese Rebels from Los Angeles to Beijing* (New York: Random House, 2001); see review by Jonathan Tepperman, "In Search of Chineseness," *Newsweek*, Nov. 19, 2001; Agnes M. L. Meerwald, "Chineseness at the Crossroads," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (2001); Pierre Picquart, "Géopolitique Migratoire des Chinois de France et d'Europe," *Mouvements*, No. 26 (April, 2001); Arthur Waldron, "The Chineseness of Taiwan," *Policy Review*, No. 102 (Aug.-Sep., 2000).

cally with the role of the Iberian Peninsula, the British Isles, the so-denominated and set apart Eastern Europe and Central Europe, notwithstanding the logic by which Russia encompasses Asia and the East, while the geographic situation of Turkey, the Balkans, and the "Middle East" remain distinct less by geography than by history and culture.

European is a collective affiliation of principles, but not an identity principle in culture or language. As China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and diasporic communities negotiate and at times bluster and threaten common definitions or identifications of "Chineseness" so Europeans have, in effect, surrendered the cultural specificity of "Europes" and resolved those experiences to a set of principles and administrative parameters. Primary is adherence to a set of core values, and these values-- civil and religious distinctions, governmental sovereignty built upon assent of voting majorities and public dispute, are purportedly "Western" in their "universality." Presumed common economic standards, rights records, and institutional and legal protections are defined by statutes indicating that states might make "application" to Europe.<sup>25</sup>

How far will the "Confucian" or "Chinese" similitudes extend in finding common cause? One could fictitiously ponder, what if China—or another "Asian" country (the Turkey conundrum also seems apt here) could apply to become part of "Europe?" Such speculative resolution of East and West, Asia and Orient, reminds much of where we began with Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, which after all, were an extended commentary on the estate of European civilization, morals, and follies through the critical literary lens of an outsider—an "Oriental"—expressing wonder, admiration, dismay, and contempt for Europeaness.

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25 Callahan, "Institutions or Ethics?," pp. 3-4; Dirk Jacobs and Robert Maier, "European Identity: Construct, Fact, and Fiction," in Marja Gastelaars and Arie de Ruijter eds., *A United Europe: the quest for a multifaceted identity* (Maastricht: Shaker, 1998); Yves Salese, *Propositions pour une autre Europe. Construire Babel* (Paris: Editions du Felin, 1997).



It seems doubly appropriate to conclude with Montesquieu, since his later *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) captured in its very literal formulation but the institutional common principles that evoke the ideal sense of what Europeaness might be, and because he so famously set one of the templates for European thinking on Chineseness as a cultural, geographical, and political construct. From Book I, section 6, Chineseness and Europeaness are transcultural identifications, drawn from ideal comparison, desirous of common principle in prosperity and wisdom, universality and civilization. The problem is not the essence, but the boundaries and complementarities: always best understood not in how one constitutes oneself but in relative guise: "The ancient emperors of China were not conquerors. The first thing they did to aggrandize themselves was what gave the highest proof of their wisdom. They raised from beneath the waters two of the finest provinces of the empire; these owe their existence to the labour of man. And it is the inexpressible fertility of these two provinces which has given Europe such ideas of the felicity of that vast country."<sup>26</sup> Despite the notion of "despotism," also admiration and, as was his intention, the possibilities of Europe, Europa herself. ♦

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26 Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), book 8, chapter 21.

♦ Responsible editor: Pei-Shi Lin (林沛熙).

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