

# On the Paradigm Shift of Comparative Studies of Heidegger and Chinese Philosophy

## *Abstract*

In this paper, I first address two facets that can play a role in initiating a paradigm shift in comparative studies of Heidegger and Chinese philosophy: One is the necessity of renovating methodology in studies of Chinese philosophy and comparative philosophy. The other is an adequate understanding of Heidegger's own comportment toward East-West dialogue. In this connection I briefly respond to some criticisms of my book *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event*. Then I stake out three directions of re-configuration or re-orientation entailed in such a paradigm shift. The first direction is concerned with a deconstruction of the notion of philosophy. The second direction is related to a critical and intercultural approach to Heidegger's thinking. The third direction is connected with the overcoming of the unilateral direction in comparative studies.

## *Keywords*

Heidegger, comparative philosophy, Chinese philosophy, paradigm shift, East-West dialogue.

## 1 Introduction

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) is undeniably one of the few Western philosophers who has exerted great influence upon the general direction of development of Western philosophy since the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927. His *Denkweg* has effectively initiated a mode of thinking that allegedly takes its point of departure from human finitude and stays close to human beings' being-together with things in the world. What is unique about Heidegger also consists in his multi-layered baffling connection with ancient Eastern sources and with contemporary Asian thinkers.

For almost half a century, most Chinese scholars have taken Heidegger's relation to Chinese philosophy to be a closed case, either assuming an unreserved absorption of, in particular, Daoist ideas on the part of Heidegger, or stopping at the seemingly indisputable similarities between the two. The representative scholar of such an orientation is Zhang Xianglong. His book in Chinese entitled *Heidegger's Thinking and the Chinese Dao of Heaven: The Opening and Fusion of the Ultimate Horizon*, is now considered as a classic in the Chinese academia.<sup>1</sup> It is understandable that, at a time when traditional Chinese thought was depreciated in the 1980's and 1990's, Heidegger's interest in Daoism seemed to have offered hope for some Chinese scholars who shared attachment to their own heritage. Hence, despite occasional criticisms that have been ignored, Zhang's view continues to be a major source of influence on scholars from various fields of academic studies.<sup>2</sup>

In the English/Western world, the situation is similar, but the voices of critics are relatively easier to be heard. A number of articles from *Heidegger and Asian Thought* presented Daoist or Zen themes in typically Heideggerian terms, in particular the contributions by Graham Parkes and Joan Stambaugh.<sup>3</sup> In his review of *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, John Maraldo perceives quite a number of strained and questionable comparisons, and wonders »what causes so many commentators to seek a non-Western, often Daoist or Zen, counterpart to so many seminal Heideggerian themes« (Maraldo 1990: 102).<sup>4</sup> Such enthusiasm may be related to the current situation where both philosophers doing Asian philosophy and philosophers based in Asia attempt to borrow intellectual means and vocabulary from Western philosophers for its contemporary development. It also has to do with the fact that resonances among different cultural tradi-

---

<sup>1</sup> Zhang Xianglong, *Heidegger's Thinking and the Chinese Dao of Heaven: The Opening and Fusion of the Ultimate Horizon*, Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Na Wei, *The Mutual Interpretation of Daoism and Heidegger*, Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> G. Parkes, »Thoughts on the Way: *Being and Time* via Lao-Chuang,« J. Stambaugh, »Heidegger, Taoism, and the Question of Metaphysics,« both in G. Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987, pp. 105–143, and pp. 79–92.

<sup>4</sup> J. C. Maraldo, »Review of *Heidegger and Asian Thought* – Graham Parkes,« *Philosophy East & West*, Vol. 40, 1990, pp. 100–105.

tions can be more easily found within works of a poetic bent.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the poetic façade of Heidegger's work need more subtle analysis.

In their review of *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, written in 1997, Taylor Carman and Bryan Van Norden observe that the contributors either try to avoid or simply ignore the pervasively Western orientation of Heidegger's philosophy, as well as Heidegger's evident scepticism regarding the prospect of any synthesis of Eastern and Western thought.<sup>6</sup> In this way, the difficulties involved in the comparative enterprise concerning Heidegger and Asian philosophy are under-estimated from the outset. It is a pity that comparative scholarship in connection with Heidegger has failed to take into account Carman and van Norden's criticism.

The introduction of May's work into the English world in 1996 has created a considerable impact on comparative studies of Heidegger.<sup>7</sup> Convinced of May's findings, Parkes has withdrawn his claim that studies of the independent congruence of ideas assume primacy over those concentrating on the question of direct influence. However, the influence to which he turns is unilaterally restricted to the alleged influence of Asian classics upon Heidegger's thought. It is true that, chronologically speaking, alleged authors of Asian classics cannot possibly have stood under the sway of Heidegger's imposing manner of philosophizing. However, contemporary interpretations of classic Asian texts have not been immune from Heidegger's formidable presence in the academic circle in Asia.

On the other hand, most scholars of mainstream Heidegger studies have refrained from attaching importance to Heidegger's Asian connection. Currently, this situation is beginning to change with the development of teaching of and research into Chinese philosophy in the international academic world, and with the disclosure of Heidegger's own stance toward the issue of East-West dialogue. In this arti-

---

<sup>5</sup> Compared with comparative philosophy, comparative literature enjoys a much longer history and is well-embedded in the state of art of literary studies.

<sup>6</sup> See Carman and Van Norden, »Being-in-the-Way,« previously available at <http://faculty.vassar.edu/brannor/heidegger.html>. Unfortunately it has been removed. For more literature related to Heidegger and Asian philosophy, see <http://www.being.com/hlinks/hasia.html> (last accessed on 18 January 2016).

<sup>7</sup> R. May, *Ex Oriente Lux: Heideggers Werk unter ostasiatischem Einfluss*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989; *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*, G. Parkes (trans.), London: Routledge, 1996.

cle, I first address two facets that can play a role in initiating a paradigm shift in comparative studies of Heidegger and Chinese philosophy; then I stake out three directions of re-configuration or re-orientation entailed in such a paradigm shift.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 The Two Facets

The first facet that calls for a paradigm shift concerns Heidegger's insights regarding the necessity of renovating methodology in studies of Chinese philosophy and comparative philosophy. Heidegger realized, earlier than the emergence of the discourses of orientalism, postcolonialism, and postmodernism, the limitation of translation and interpretation of Asian classics by Western scholars. In a letter to a German scholar of Buddhism in 1955, he pointed out that »Buddhism and not less so Chinese and Japanese thought need a completely different interpretation, which is free from the eighteenth and nineteenth century images« (Heidegger 1990: 91).<sup>9</sup> One limitation of the early translators (in particular the ones available in Heidegger's times) is that they have heavily assimilated Asian ideas to Western religious conceptions. For instance, in their respective versions of the *Daodejing* (道德經), Richard Wilhelm translated *Dao* as *Sinn*, which insinuated the *logos* in *The Gospel of Saint John*; and Victor von Strauss directly rendered *Dao* as *Gott*.<sup>10</sup>

Another serious limitation is that the early interpreters have forced Asian thinking into the model of Western philosophy. Heidegger criticized several times that Wilhelm had rendered ancient Chinese texts in light of the Kantian philosophy. In a conversation of 1952, Heidegger remarks,

With our logistic-grammatical conceptual apparatus there are many words [when translating] that we cannot grasp sharply. For example when I read the translations from Chinese by Richard Wilhelm, I see that he has ap-

---

<sup>8</sup> The focus of this paper is the paradigm shift needed in comparative studies that involves Heidegger specifically. I don't address the more general issue of the methodology of interpreting classical East Asian thinking in a modern language.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in H. Hecker, »Heidegger und Schopenhauer,« in *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch*, Vol. 71, 1990. My translation.

<sup>10</sup> R. Wilhelm, *Laotse Tao Te King: Das Buch des Alten vom Sinn und Leben*, Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1911. V. von Strauss, *Lao-Tse's Tao Te King*, Leipzig: Verlag der »Asia Major,« 1874. Wilhelm was a protestant minister and missionary to China.

proached the text completely in the framework of Kantian philosophy (Heidegger 1997: 269).<sup>11</sup>

In »Basic Principles of Thinking« of 1957, Heidegger makes his point more sharply,

[t]he reference to the λόγος-character of Western thought contains for us the behest that before touching upon these foreign worlds, should we risk it, we first ask ourselves whether we at all have the ear to hear what is thought there. This question becomes all the more burning as European thinking also threatens to become planetary, in that contemporary Indians, Chinese and Japanese in many cases report their experiences to us only in our European way of thinking. Thus from there and from here everything is stirred up in a gigantic mishmash wherein it is no longer discernible whether or not the ancient Indians were English empiricists and Laozi a Kantian. Where and how is there supposed to be an awakening conversation calling each back into its own essence, if on both sides substancelessness has the final word? (Heidegger 2012: 137)<sup>12</sup>

Heidegger ascribes the causes of these limitations not to expansionist colonialism, but to the *logos*-character of Western thinking, to its »conceptual apparatus.« It is in his view the dualistic metaphysical system that has prevented Europeans from properly mastering Asian languages and understanding Asian ideas. Furthermore, due to globalization (which Heidegger called »planetarization« in the 1950s), the mode of experience and scheme of thinking of Asian intellectuals have been subjected to the sway of European conceptual systems, to such an extent that they have become insulated from their own traditions and thus are no longer in a position to present authentic accounts about them. Consequently, in a chaotic mixing up of various sources, ancient Asian thinkers have been misinterpreted along the lines of European philosophers. All this chaos was generated from the planetarization of European thinking.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> H. Hecker, »Als Buddhist im Gespräch mit Heidegger,« in W. Hartig, *Die Lehre des Buddha und Heidegger: Beiträge zum Ost-West-Dialog des Denkens im 20. Jahrhundert*, Konstanz: Universität Konstanz, 1997, pp. 268–270. My translation.

<sup>12</sup> M. Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, A. J. Mitchell (trans.), Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2012 [*Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge, Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 79, 1994, p. 145].

<sup>13</sup> Of course, today Richard Wilhelm and Victor von Strauss are not representative of scholarship on Chinese thought any more. This change is compatible with the needed paradigm shift which this paper is discussing.

In *Time and Being* of 1962, Heidegger articulates similar considerations that Asian thinking has been rendered inaccessible. He states, Being as presencing in the sense of calculable material [...] claims all the inhabitants of the earth in a uniform manner without the inhabitants of the non-European continents explicitly knowing this or even being able or wanting to know of the origin of this determination of Being (Heidegger 1972: 7).<sup>14</sup>

For Heidegger, Being as presencing is essentially interrelated with the metaphysical mode of representation of European languages. People in non-European continents are not excluded from the planetary expansion of this mode of determination of Being, even if they may not be aware of this, or have no intention to know anything about its origin. The matter is not just that Europeans have no access to Asian thought, but also that Asian people themselves, dominated by the planetary European mode of thinking, have no access to their own traditions either.

Although Heidegger's critical remarks primarily concern »Asian studies« conducted by European intellectuals, Chinese scholars can also benefit from his insights. This is different from first enshrining Heidegger's formulations or ideas and then trying to suit the feet of Chinese thinking into his shoes. Rather, the lesson Heidegger offers has to be understood at the methodological level, that is, as part of a needed paradigm shift in approaching Chinese philosophy. It is pressing time that scholars of Chinese philosophy become aware of both the explicit and implicit restrictions caused by the domination of Western ways of thinking, and cast off the practice of resorting to Western categories as the standard against which corresponding terms are to be elicited from Chinese sources. Inquiries into Chinese classics have to be carried out with reference to relevant historical contexts, and thus allow ideas and terms peculiar to these texts come forth in their own right. Only when Chinese philosophy begins to speak for itself in the international academic world can one avoid unjustifiably assimilating the general orientations and basic ideas from Chinese sources to Heidegger's *Denkweg*.

For a needed paradigm shift, we first have to become aware of the »inaccessibility« of ancient Chinese texts for *both* Western and East-

---

<sup>14</sup> M. Heidegger, »Time and Being,« in *On Time and Being*, New York: Harper and Row, 1972, pp. 1–24 [»Zeit und Sein,« in *Zur Sache des Denkens, Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 14, p. 11].

ern scholars, who have been trapped in the dualism prevalent in Western conceptual frameworks. In recent decades, some scholars who try to provide a general account of Chinese and comparative philosophy have criticized this kind of »transcendental pretence,« but comparative studies involving Heidegger and other specific comparative investigations lag behind.<sup>15</sup>

The second facet that can be conducive to a paradigm shift in comparative studies of Heidegger and Chinese philosophy is an adequate understanding of Heidegger's own comportment toward East-West dialogue. Since the publication of my monograph on this topic in 2008, there have appeared a few misrepresentations of its purport.<sup>16</sup> Some reduce my more-nuanced research to a simplistic dismissal of the influence of East Asian thinking on Heidegger's work, or to a negative appraisal of his position on East-West dialogue. However, it should be clear from reading the book that I do not in any case ignore Heidegger's connection with East Asian thinking. Rather, I have brought more such »facts« into light. Nonetheless, the point is how to ascertain and evaluate such influence.

A concrete example of this kind of criticism is Bret Davis's description of my approach, in his contribution to the *Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, as defining Heidegger as an »inveterate Eurocentrist« (Davis 2013: 459)<sup>17</sup> However, the word »Eurocentrism« with reference to Heidegger occurs only once in my book, and I have never used this word as a conclusive characterization of Heidegger's stance. The general orientation of my book is to disclose why Heidegger fails to provide a substantial account of East-West dialogue *despite* abundant evidence of his interest in Asian thinking. What is

---

<sup>15</sup> For »transcendental pretence,« see Lin Ma, and J. van Brakel, *Fundamentals of Comparative and Intercultural Philosophy*, New York: State University of New York Press, forthcoming in 2016, pp. 215–218.

<sup>16</sup> Lin Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event*, New York/London: Routledge, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> B. W. Davis, »Heidegger and Asian Philosophy,« in F. Raffoul and E. S. Nelson (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 459–471. His review of my book in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (Vol. 41, No. 3, 2010, pp. 327–329) presents a more balanced evaluation. For other nuanced evaluations of my book see Karin De Boer's review in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2010, pp. 468–480; David Kolb's review in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No. 1, 2009, pp. 164–167; John A. Tucker's review in *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2009, pp. 475–478.

emphasized is to read Heidegger's writings subtly and open-mindedly. Heidegger's »interest« as such in Asian thinking is not denied at all.<sup>18</sup> While failing to present my position faithfully, what Davis has to say in terms of Heidegger's connection with Asian thought is little more than such a remark: »one can hardly doubt Heidegger's interest in and respect for Asian *thinking*« (Davis 2013: 460). But what can this acknowledgement lead to? Almost all Chinese people take »interest« in »Western« sciences, but what point can be made out of this? Can this be taken as strong evidence that proves the importance of (Western) sciences, or evidence that proves that Chinese people are so smart in spotting good things? Despite the claim of Heidegger's »interest« in Asian thinking, Davis is in no way concrete about this »interest,« if only because he does not mention the about ten occasions when Heidegger cited from the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* in his writings or speeches.<sup>19</sup>

I have always considered that it is unscholarly to attach one stamp or another to Heidegger, either »transcultural« or »Eurocentric,« and then claim that the case is closed (Otherwise I would have had no »interest« in writing a whole book on this topic). Certainly, there may be moments of both strands in different periods of Heidegger's *Denkweg*. What is at issue is to properly analyze, at least be aware of, these different strands before one makes any grand claim and before one engages in any comparative study that only assimilates everything to Heidegger. Heidegger himself has actually warned of this last approach wisely and prophetically.<sup>20</sup> For him, generally speaking, the allegedly inevitable event of East-West dialogue can only be anticipated until the Western philosophical tradition gains maturity through its own self-transformation. Nevertheless, at the ontic level, East Asian sources undeniably play a role in Heidegger's search for ways out of the *Ge-stell*.

What I aimed at in my book was to do more than straightforward comparisons in the outdated fashion. My view is that only when one gains a perspicuous overview concerning Heidegger's all-too-evasive

---

<sup>18</sup> It is denied in dominant »Heidegger Studies« and by Heidegger's family who controls access to his *Nachlass*.

<sup>19</sup> Davis' contribution to the *Companion* focuses almost exclusively on showing what Zen can learn from Heidegger and vice versa (2013: 468 and *passim*).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. chapter 7 Lin Ma (2008).



attitude toward East-West dialogue can one transform comparative studies on the basis of a more solid scholarship and with the aid of a new paradigm. In this sense, what I have carried out in the book can be called a meta-comparative project.

Heidegger's denouncement of metaphysics has misled some researchers into believing that his philosophical enterprise is set radically against the Western metaphysical tradition. This belief opens avenues for the claim that Heidegger considers that Asian traditions have resources in store for the proper thinking of the question of Being and of the nature of language. This may well be an idea Heidegger sometimes entertains. However, one must notice that, in the whole of his philosophical enterprise, Heidegger has never changed his belief that the statement »philosophy is Western« is a tautology,<sup>21</sup> and that there is no such thing as Chinese or Indian philosophy (Heidegger 1968: 224).<sup>22</sup> Serious thinking can only arise from within the same lineage that is born of the first beginning. Instead of rejecting the Western tradition, Heidegger's ultimate anticipation is that Western-European metaphysics in the true sense of the word occur in the other beginning, and that Western-European *Dasein* corresponds to the call of Being and reflects on the question of Being from out of its own ground.

Some commentators are concerned that when Heidegger claims that Western philosophy is a tautology and that there is no Chinese or Indian philosophy, he is actually offering praise to Chinese and Indian thinking that remain uncontaminated by the Western metaphysical system, while he is using »philosophy« in a derogatory way. However, Heidegger does not reject philosophy despite his criticism of it. A new mode of thinking can only be initiated from within the Western philosophical heritage.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, Heidegger's position also manifested potentiality for modifications or variations, especially after the Second World War. Because of the exacerbation of the *Ge-stell*, Heidegger began to contemplate the »preliminary« thought that ancient Asian traditions, insofar as they remain uncontaminated by the dualistic conceptual system of Western metaphysics, might be of help for the

---

<sup>21</sup> M. Heidegger, *Was ist das, die Philosophie? What Is Philosophy?* (Schenectady, NY: The New College and University Press, 1956; bilingual edition), pp. 30–31.

<sup>22</sup> M. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Lin Ma (2008: 51–56).

enactment of the other beginning. In addition to the more familiar story about his collaborated translation of a few chapters from the *Daodejing* in the Summer of 1946 and his citations from it, in 1960 Heidegger inquired about the Sanskrit words that could correspond to his terminology of unconcealment, forgetfulness, Being, and beings, and in the 1950's he asked about the Japanese words for »art« and »language.«

Heidegger may have assimilated a few expressions and verses from Asian intellectual sources into his writings. On a positive note, he could be called, with proper qualifications, a transcultural thinker. Proceeding from a Davidsonian principle of charity, it could be said that he has initiated a Heideggerian style of reading Asian classics and of interpreting Asian ideas in analogy with his approach to Greek philosophers. However, Heidegger's interest in Asian texts is often limited to his motivation of finding support for his own preconceived ideas. Despite his contact with Asian sources, he has never considered modifying his central beliefs in light of the fundamental insights from other traditions, for example, the idea that the human being is only one thing among the ten thousand things (*wanwu* 萬物), and thus there exists no unsurpassable gap between it and other things. Because of the unilateral character of his queries made from the European perspective, requesting certain items of information about Asian languages neither conflict with nor detract from the central thrust of Heidegger's thinking.<sup>24</sup> The prerequisite for a fruitful confrontation with East Asian »thinking« is an authentic dialogue with Greek philosophers whereby European thinking could achieve its self-transformation.

Hence, the second facet inducing the need for a paradigm shift concerns the complexities of assessing Heidegger's attitude toward the necessity and possibility of East-West dialogue. In another recent co-authored article, we further explored the intricacies of Heidegger's reflection on technology and the *Ge-stell* by focusing on a new term:

---

<sup>24</sup> Other authors express similar views in saying that what Heidegger sees, in particular in chapter 11 of the *Daodejing*, is a shadow of his reflection on *Seyn*. His idea is an imposition upon Laozi's thinking. What Heidegger considers is the Germanized Laozi and Zhuangzi. Their analysis of Heidegger's reading of chapter 11 bear affinities with my earlier article »Deciphering Heidegger's Connection with the *Daodejing*,« *Asian Philosophy*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2006, pp. 149–171. See Jin Xiping and Liqiang, »Heidegger Studies in China,« *World Philosophy*, 2009, No. 4. pp. 8–31.

*Gestellnis*, which figures in Heidegger's writings in the 1970's.<sup>25</sup> *Gestellnis* is the essence of the *Ge-stell*. It shows a way toward the fore-garden of *Eignis* (a term Heidegger uses in the last decade of his life). In opposing the *Ge-stell* mode of comportment toward beings, Heidegger glimpses at the promise of the other thinking (*das andere Denken*), which seems to be useless from the perspective of traditional metaphysical thinking. We reveal that, in characterizing this mode of thinking, Heidegger resorts to Zhuangzi's parables of the useless tree.

One way of stepping out of the *Ge-stell* is to make central the comportment toward beings as embodied in non-metaphysical art. In charting this course, Heidegger again turns toward ancient Asian traditions (insofar as they remain un-contaminated by current planetary-interstellar world conditions), which for him epitomize dissolution of the dichotomy of appearance and essence. From Heidegger's standpoint, before the Western tradition gains maturity through its own self-transformation, the allegedly inevitable event of East-West dialogue can only be anticipated. However, at the ontic level East Asian sources have undeniably played a role in his search for ways out of the *Ge-stell*.

### 3 The Three Directions of the Paradigm Shift

From the perspectives outlined above, the needed paradigm shift of comparative studies of Heidegger and Chinese philosophy involves re-configuration in terms of three directions or orientations.<sup>26</sup> These three directions are open for discussion; they are disputable or perhaps not complete. The phrase »paradigm shift« may focus on »theory/interpretation,« »method,« »practice.« My proposal is primarily methodological, and yet at the same time it also calls for new interpretations of both Heidegger's thinking and different strands of Chinese philosophy.

First, because of the expansion of Western thinking, modern academic systems have been unavoidably entrenched in a dualistic fra-

<sup>25</sup> Lin Ma and J. van Brakel, »Out of the *Ge-stell*? The Role of the East in Heidegger's *Das andere Denken*,« *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 64, No. 3, 2014, pp. 527–562.

<sup>26</sup> These suggested directions of re-configuration may be applicable to comparative philosophy in general.

mework. Hence a complete renovation of the method of understanding and interpreting Chinese philosophy is called for. Some scholars suggest that because this situation is caused by employing (Western) philosophy to interpret Chinese thinking, we should turn away from philosophy toward other disciplines, such as cultural studies and anthropology, which seem to be more compatible with Chinese thinking.<sup>27</sup> However, these non-philosophy disciplines are also tainted by the dualistic Western framework; therefore, they cannot provide an essential change.

For the time being, the dualistic framework and the »transcendental pretence« of Western metaphysics cannot be avoided completely, neither by Sinologists, nor by Chinese philosophers, nor by Heidegger, nor by Derrida. However, it can be deconstructed, as Heidegger aimed for. Moreover, we have to keep in mind that the connotation and extension of philosophy always keeps on transforming itself. Sophisticated and abstract discourses are not the exclusive property of Western philosophy. We need to excavate and develop ideas of Chinese classical texts in connection with both the historical realities wherein these ideas were embedded *and* their relevance to the contemporary world. This stance has already been taken by quite a few »generalists« among comparativists (although they may not live up to their own expectations). However, for the bulk and certainly the popular variants of comparative philosophy, the situation has remained unchanged, including concrete inquiries of Chinese philosophy in comparison with Heidegger.

Second, there is necessity of reading and analyzing Heidegger's work in relation to not only his multi-faceted stance on East-West dialogue, but also to the state of art of Heidegger studies which continue to reveal new aspects of his thinking with recent publication of his works.<sup>28</sup> For example, in another co-authored article, with reference to a range of sources from recently published volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe* written from about 1940 until 1976, we trace and elucidate Heidegger's radical re-thinking on the reversed relation be-

---

<sup>27</sup> Such a view can be found in Chenyang Li, »Comparative Philosophy and Cultural Patterns,« Keynote speech delivered at the 47th Annual Conference of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Up to one hundred volumes of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe* have appeared in the past forty years; the end is in sight.

tween science and technology.<sup>29</sup> We show that such claims as »modern science is application of the essence of technology« are essentially grounded in Heidegger's idea that science and technology have a »common origin« in the history of Being, and thus share the same comportment toward being, that is, calculability, orderability, predictability. In addition, we also argue that, although different ontic epochs can be distinguished in the evolvment of science and/or technology, for Heidegger there is only one unique ontological Epoch of modernity that encompasses various ontic epochs. Therefore, such suggestions as we have now gone from an »epoch of objectivity« to an »epoch of orderability [*Bestellbarkeit*]« cannot be considered to be an ontological shift.

We need to re-discover Heidegger as a thinker who is always on the way and who has his own *Holzwege*, instead of resorting to a stereotypical picture of him, as was the case with most literature of comparative inquiries in the past decades. Generally speaking, we can distinguish between three approaches to studies of Western philosophy. The first approach is to faithfully interpret the work of Western philosophers along the line of their own thinking. The second approach is to critically analyze and engage with the ideas of Western philosophers. The third approach is to further develop a certain theme or to provide an alternative solution to a certain issue on the basis of a mastery of the first two approaches. The last approach to Western philosophy should be used for comparative inquiries. This is to be achieved in combination with the next direction.

The third direction of re-configuration concerns the overcoming of the unilateral direction in comparative studies. It has been common that one starts from Heidegger's key terms and thoughts, tries to identify locutions and ideas in the writings of Chinese thinkers that seem to echo the former, and then either interprets the latter in accordance with Heidegger's surface discourse, or draws on superficial resemblances of the latter as a sort of elaboration or corroboration of Heidegger's theses. This is valuable in introducing Chinese thought into contemporary reflections and discourses. Nonetheless, it is high time that we reverse such a direction, or, to put it in other words, we should now transcend the stages of looking for resonances or »struc-

---

<sup>29</sup> Lin Ma and J. van Brakel, »Heidegger's Thinking on the Same of Science and Technology,« *Continental Philosophical Review*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 2014, pp. 19–43.

tural« affinities and stake out »substantial« disparities between Heidegger and Chinese philosophy.

A good example that illustrates such a reversal is David Chai's recent article in *Review of Metaphysics*.<sup>30</sup> Although in a footnote he quibbles that my book *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue* does not present a direct comparative study, the reversal of the direction of comparative studies my book tries to point to is reflected in the general orientation of his article. Chai first distinguishes the different sense of clearing between Heidegger and Daoism, and then attempts to conduct a critique of Heidegger from the perspective of philosophical Daoism. According to him, clearing for Heidegger is the site where truth is revealed; but clearing for Daoism is the self-embrace of nothingness. Heidegger failed to fully grasp the cosmological significance of the nothingness of the clearing.

In 2012–2013, Jaap van Brakel and I organized a set of papers under the heading »Re-Discovering Heidegger and Chinese Philosophy« on the initiative of a journal and with the agreement that we write an introduction of 2,000 words. However, it turned out to be an occasion for me to be subject to unexpected abuse and insult by a special »editor« of the journal. If I were not a *woman* affiliated to a Chinese academic institution, things might have gone rather differently. My painful and humiliating experience from working on this special issue discloses the still prevalent and taking-for-granted inequality between scholars based in the West and scholars based in China. It indicates that the academic world also urgently needs a »paradigm shift.« I was also shocked by the fact that publication ethics does not seem to have a place in such situation. No matter what has happened and will happen, I shall adhere to my commitment to academic work, and I hope that my continuous work will contribute to achieving the paradigm shift.

All the papers we organized for the special issue demonstrate elements of the above-mentioned three new directions.<sup>31</sup> First, most of them approach their topics on the basis of a solid study of original sources from not only Daoism and Buddhism, but also from Confucianism, with which Heidegger has rarely been brought into compar-

---

<sup>30</sup> D. Chai, »Nothingness and the Clearing: Heidegger, Daoism and the Quest for Primal Clarity,« *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 67, No. 3, 2014, pp. 583–601.

<sup>31</sup> See the reference in »Note and Acknowledgement« at the end.

ison. Second, a few authors have attended to Heidegger's position regarding the precondition for an East-West dialogue in their comparative explorations. Third, most authors manifest nuanced and bilateral ways of bringing together Heidegger's ideas and alternatives provided by Chinese philosophy. Although in some papers Heidegger still comes forth first, the examinations of his texts have been informed by an understanding and appreciation of the Chinese *Dao*.

My own contribution addresses the intricacies of Heidegger's existential notion of *Mitsein* (Being-with), and expounds a different way of understanding the relevant subject matter in light of a re-interpretation of Zhuangzi's fish story.<sup>32</sup> I show that Heidegger's account of *Mitsein* is ultimately situated within the limit of an encompassing set of Dasein's structural components. What is more problematic is his prior conception of the connection between Dasein and others as disengaged with one other. Hence, the »with« of Heidegger's Being-with seems to be hollow. As an alternative, I explicate a Zhuangzian idea of what I call *Mitzutun*, literally meaning doing something with (others). I argue that »with« of the Zhuangzian *Mitzutun* is lived out by human beings and non-human beings in the variegated forms of life.

Apart from my own participation in this set of papers, I have made further explorations that aim at a paradigm shift in comparative inquiries of Heidegger and Chinese philosophy. My latest article explores some aspects of Heidegger's thematization on the essential being of artwork and confronts it with alternative modes of thinking as implicated in the *Zhuangzi* and inherited and elaborated by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101).<sup>33</sup> The Daoist tradition takes a living being as the prototype of a thing (*wu* 物), which has its peculiar heavenly rhythms (*tianli* 天理), and does not set up a stringent stratification among things. Hence, it does not consider artwork apart from concrete activities in which the artist attends and attunes to the heavenly rhythms of things. Heidegger selects equipment (*Zeug*) as the prototype of a thing, and conceives the being of a thing in terms of readiness-to-hand. With Heidegger, an artwork as a »no-thing« has to stand aloof

---

<sup>32</sup> I was ordered to remove references to Roger T. Ames and Liu Xiaogan's work from my paper by the editors of the journal who charge them of »involving in plagiarism.«

<sup>33</sup> Lin Ma, »Thinking with Zhuangzi and Su Shi against Heidegger on Artwork,« *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 65, No. 3, 2015, pp. 809–845. Su Shi has saved and enhanced the beauty of the West Lake.

from the mundane life so as to serve as the site, or non-site, where the truth of things is unconcealed. This is epitomized by the Greek temple, which alone gives meaning to all its constituents and surroundings. Through an innovative description of the West Lake and a new interpretation of *yitian hetian* (以天合天), I show that in the Daoist tradition the idea of artwork is open to multiple interpenetrating determinations. There is never just *an* artwork, but *a stream of* artwork(s) resonating with and enhancing one another.

In yet another forthcoming paper, I compare Mou Zongsan's notion of the self-reversal of moral reason with Heidegger's idea of the other beginning of the Western philosophical tradition.<sup>34</sup> I reveal that both Mou Zongsan and Heidegger attach importance to providing theoretical justification and guidance for the self-renewal of their respective traditions. In doing so, they both attempt to coordinate the tension between modern science/technology and traditions. Regarding the issue of intercultural communication and integration, they seem to hold quite different positions. Mou Zongsan appears to have no doubt about learning from the West, while Heidegger insists that a dialogue with the East can only become possible after the West achieves its self-transformation. My view is that Mou Zongsan's notion of self-reversal shows more signs of a Kantian dualism with regard to Chinese and Western traditions, while Heidegger has explored more deeply the problematics of modernity by reflecting on the sources of technology.

In addition to publications in English, I have contributed several articles in Chinese on the basis of the materials from *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue*, including discussions of Heidegger's citations from the *Daodejing* on seven occasions, an exploration of his connection with Daoism with a focus on his references to the Chinese *Dao*, and a balanced and convincing account so far as possible of Heidegger's reflection on Asian languages.<sup>35</sup> It seems that a number of Chi-

---

<sup>34</sup> Lin Ma, »Mou Zongsan's Self-Reversal and Heidegger's Other Beginning,« *Philosophy East and West* (forthcoming).

<sup>35</sup> See Lin Ma »Sages do not Travel? Heidegger's Appropriation of the *Daodejing*,« *Philosophers* (Beijing: People's Press, Vol. 3), 2009; »A New Interpretation of Heidegger's Connection with Daoist Thinking,« *Journal of Yunnan University* (Social Sciences Edition; Kunming) Vol. 8, No. 6, 2009, pp. 32–39; »An Inquiry of Heidegger's Relation to Asian Languages,« *World Philosophy* (Beijing), No. 4, 2008, pp. 48–60.



nese scholars have accepted my view and argument, which finds reflection in their papers.<sup>36</sup>

My criticisms and confrontation with Heidegger does not mean that he has nothing to offer us. Heidegger is right in starting with the ontic and the phenomenal world. The problem is that he has taken certain (Western) ontic elements as absolutely bound up with the ontological, and in this way has excluded the ontological significance of other ontic elements. On the other hand, some Chinese authorities, as Mou Zongsan did, seem to be still conducting their thinking under the spell of the *Ge-stell* in resorting to ideas of transcendence borrowed from the West and using them as the fundamental characterizations of Chinese thought. With them, philosophy seems to be generated from the height of a theistic infinity and in this way easily lends itself to the self-promotion and even self-deification of human beings in the image of the absolute God as the supreme moral judge and final arbitrator of the world.

The paradigm shift of comparative studies of Heidegger and Chinese philosophy goes abreast with the paradigm shift of the style of doing philosophy in the direction of honestly starting with the human finitude and attending to the heavenly rhythm of the ten thousand things. I hope that the paradigm shift as suggested by the two facets and in terms of the three directions will find more sympathetic readers. I would like to invite critics to join in the dialogue with me.

*Note and Acknowledgement:* This paper is an expansion of my introduction to the special issue Jaap van Brakel and I organized, which at the very end of 2015 finally became accessible to the readers in a journal. The original title was »Introduction: Re-Discovering Heidegger and Chinese Philosophy,« which I submitted in June 2014. It had passed the stages of copyright transference and proof-reading. However, it was simply omitted from the special issue because I had removed one sentence in which I was supposed to sing praises to a special »editor« from the acknowledgement (the acknowledgement which was not written by myself, but was imposed by the journal's editors).

Van Brakel and I had also organized double blind reviews of these papers, and Jaap had in addition read all of them and offered

---

<sup>36</sup> See for example, Peng Fuchun »Heidegger and Laozi on *Dao*,« *Jiangnan Luntan*, No. 2, 2013, pp. 42–49.

suggestions for revisions for each paper. In September 2013, we submitted eight papers to this journal together with the review reports and Jaap's comments. We regret that Chenyang Li withdrew his paper entitled »A Heideggerian interpretation of *cheng*« out of losing confidence in working with the journal editors. As a result, seven papers and my introduction were left at their disposal. Most ironically, while we had been very much worried that one or two papers may be rejected, it turned out that, the trouble that special »editor« had made was primarily directed at preventing, by non-academic means, that *I* (in my very identity) cannot have my introduction to the issue published.

I'm grateful in particular for the patient and encouraging messages from Monika Kirloskar, who also agrees that the academic world needs a paradigm shift (without knowing anything about the complicated story of this introduction). Monika's messages have been an invaluable help to me in bringing this text to light in its full-fledged version and letting my voice be heard in the academic world.

–Lin Ma, School of Philosophy,  
Renmin University of China