Author-Meets-Readers: Shuchen Xiang in Conversation with Sungmoon Kim, Bryan W. Van Norden and Don J. Wyatt

This author-meets-readers discussion centers Shuchen Xiang's synopsis of her recent book Chinese Cosmopolitanism: The History and Philosophy of an Idea *(2023a), which argues against assumptions that European global colonization and racial atrocities were consequences of human nature. Sungmoon Kim, Bryan W. Van Norden and Don J. Wyatt engage with Xiang about her thesis that historical China upheld a worldview that underscored cross-cultural exchange, mutual flourishing, and growth through cultural encounter. This worldview did not drive it to colonize the world. In contrast, its European counterpart fought difference and therefore sought to conquer the world.*

Key words: Cosmopolitanism; China; James Baldwin; colonialism; Sinology; decolonialisation; east-west divide; human nature; relational self

Why "Chinese" Cosmopolitanism?*

SHUCHEN XIANG
Xidian University, China (shuchen.xiang@hotmail.com)

1 Introduction

One of the principal arguments in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism: The History and Philosophy of an Idea* (2023a) is that an accurate account of Chinese tradition helps to illustrate how Chinese philosophy is of relevance for thinking about contemporary issues related to pluralism. There is a pervasive assumption in modern academia that colonialism, genocide, racial violence and the hatred of the other are the result of universal human characteristics. Counter to such claims, *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* aims to elucidate how these practices are culturally learned behaviours. In so doing, I hope to correct the growing tendency among contemporary sinologists who apply the western discourse of race to the Chinese tradition. Employing the western discourse of race[1] to interpret the Chinese attitude towards non-Chinese is a category mistake, immensely misleading and irresponsible.

Chinese Cosmopolitanism is as much about narrating the history and philosophy of the Chinese tradition's cosmopolitanism as it is about understanding western racism. In *Civilization: The West*

* I would like to thank the editors of the journal, Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach and Amy Donahue, as well as David Haekwon Kim of the advisory board for giving me this opportunity to write about my new project. I would especially like to thank Prof. Donahue for her engaging comments that helped to improve the quality of this paper. My thanks also to Jacob Bender for reading through the first draft of this paper.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

and the Rest, Niall Ferguson famously offered the six "killer apps" that explain why western civilization became primus inter pares and dominated "the rest."[2] By the conclusion of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, I return the compliment and offer the six killer apps of western racism. My account of the nature of western racism rests on many of the insights of radical anti-racial, anti-colonial thinkers such as James Baldwin. I hope to show that many of Baldwin's psychological and philosophical insights into the phenomenon of racial ideology and behaviour are corroborated by my reconstruction of Chinese philosophy's attitude towards difference and its impact on China's historic behaviours.

First, let us explore a historical episode that undermines the kind of white supremacist mythmaking perpetuated by colonial-apologists such as Niall Ferguson.[3] The following historical episode challenges the foundational myths of Euro-modernity: the social Darwinist belief that domination is intrinsic to human nature.

2 The Great Divergence: Zheng He, Columbus and the Making of the Colonial World-Order

A still dominant (mythic) narrative that accounts for why Europe of the fifteenth century onwards successfully undertook the colonizing missions that shaped our modern world order claims that Europe was more technologically advanced than any other contemporary civilization. Underlying this myth is the assumption that "Man [w]as a predator whose natural instinct is to kill with a weapon" popularized by twentieth century anthropology but reflecting deep-seated Greco-Christian assumptions about human nature (Sussman 1999).[4] The assumption goes that inherent within human nature is the desire to decimate its competitors. Europe of the fifteenth century had the technological capacity to allow this human nature to become fully manifest. The only reason other world cultures did not historically engage in the same practices was due to their technological primitivism. In *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, I argue that it was a divergence in philosophical worldviews that contributed to why Europe undertook its colonial project and China did not. Historical China, contrary to a pervasive stereotype, had all the technological, organization and economic ability to have conquered the world. That they did not can be explained by way of the characteristics of Chinese philosophy that informed the Chinese worldview. Conversely, key characteristics of western philosophy can be understood as explaining western colonial behaviour.

This pervasive myth that Europe successfully colonized the world due to its superior technological capacity is false for numerous reasons. There are a few key features that inform this myth but, most significantly, such a myth is indebted to an inaccurate understanding of Europe's naval power in relation to the rest of the world. For about four and a half centuries, from the consolidation of the Song dynasty till the seafaring expeditions (1405–1433) of Zheng He, China had the greatest navy in the world (Gernet 1982: 326–9; Fairbank and Goldman 2006: 93).[5] Zheng He (1371–1433, an assimilated Muslim), led a fleet that set sail at the behest of the Chinese emperor to Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and East Africa, reaching Java, India, the Strait of Hormuz and the Horn of Africa. His fleet was vastly bigger and technologically more advanced than Columbus's armada, the Niña, Pinta, and Santa Maria. At the time of Zheng's voyages, the European "Age of Discovery" had not yet even begun. In 1418, eighty years before Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, Zheng He had already reached Malindi near present-day Mombasa (Kenya).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

The Chinese fleet had some one hundred ships, the largest of which measured 120 meters, with crews totalling up to twenty-eight thousand sailors and soldiers. It was an armada that was not to be surpassed until the invasion fleets of World War I. An amusing story can help to shed some light on just how stark a difference there was between China's economic and military power and that of Europe's at the inception of western colonialism. Vasco da Gama (the Portuguese navigator who opened the sea route from western Europe to the East by way of the Cape of Good Hope thus initiating the age of European colonialism) landed in East Africa in 1498. Here, he and his crew encountered a native population that wore embroidered green silk caps with fine fringes. As Louise Levathes describes, the Africans scoffed at the trinkets the Portuguese offered and were underwhelmed by their small ships. Village elders told tales of white ghosts who wore silk and had visited long ago in larger ships (Levathes 1994: 19–21).[6] China in the fifteenth century had both the technology and the organizational capacity to become "a great maritime empire builder." Had it been a part of their horizon of significance, Chinese political power could have "expand[ed] by force the territories ruled by the Chinese state." If they had wanted to, 150 years before Europeans had inaugurated their own colonial project, China "could have pre-empted the Europeans in that regard had they wished to do so" (Mote 2003: 616).[7] It is said that a village in north Somalia is still called "Zheng He Village" in memory of the historic visit. As Jinyuan Gao writes, many of these visits were of a reciprocal nature. As recorded in official Chinese history, the state of Mogadishu had sent ambassadors to China three times between 1416 and 1423. Other African states such as Brava, Juba, Malin, Behosal and Misr (i.e., Egypt) also sent their envoys more than once. The Chinese even recorded that the King of Malin visited China himself but failed to reach the capital and was buried in Fujian province. The Chinese emperor gave him a posthumous title and ordered a seasonal sacrifice to be offered to him (Gao 1984: 245).[8]

When Europe of the fifteenth century and its metaphysical worldview first encountered the "other," this led to the mass death of native populations. As David Stannard writes in *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World*, European contact with the American continent led to the decimation of 95 percent of the native Amerindian population in what can be called "the most massive act of genocide in the history of the world" (Stannard 1992: x).[9] Revising the conventional narrative that disease was the sole cause of mass deaths, Stannard shows that European designs upon the Amerindians were deliberately genocidal (Stannard 1992: xii). Despite the later white-washing myths, European settlement on the American continent necessitated "the most extensive and most violent programs of human eradication, that this world has ever seen" (Stannard 1992: 54). Due to how successfully the western world has rewritten history and made lies the truth, we need to first briefly establish what happened under European colonialism as exampled by the European occupation of the American continent. It is only once we are clear-sighted about this history that we can appreciate the provocative challenge that *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* presents.

3 European Colonialism: Genocide and The Domestication of Our Own Species

In *American Holocaust*, Stannard presents the reader with unending gyrations of nauseating violence committed by Europeans and white Americans against the native Americans. For considerations of length, we can only visit a few time-splices in the centuries-long genocide.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

In March of 1495, on his second voyage to Hispaniola, Columbus organized several hundred armoured troops, cavalry and trained attack dogs; with these, he rampaged across the countryside slaughtering natives by the thousands. The pattern set by these raids would be the model for the Spanish in the next decades of its colonization of the Americas (Stannard 1992: 69-70). A contemporary eyewitness, Bartolomé de Las Casas, records the nature of these raids:

> Once the Indians were in the woods, the next step was to form squadrons and pursue them, and whenever the Spaniards found them, they pitilessly slaughtered everyone like sheep in a corral. It was a general rule among Spaniards to be cruel; not just cruel, but extraordinarily cruel so that harsh and bitter treatment would prevent Indians from daring to think of themselves as human beings or having a minute to think at all. So they would cut an Indian's hands and leave them dangling by a shred of skin and they would send him on saying "Go now, spread the news to your chiefs." They would test their swords and their manly strength on captured Indians and place bets on the slicing off of heads or the cutting of bodies in half with one blow. They burned or hanged captured chiefs (quoted in Stannard 1992: 70).

In addition to this kind of mass-slaughter, Stannard argues that another reason for the mass deaths of the native peoples was enslavement. In the encomienda systems that Columbus instituted, the Spanish masters overworked their native slaves to such an extent that up to 90 percent died from illness, malnutrition, or exhaustion unto death (Stannard 1992: 73-4). The 10 percent that survived began to commit suicide in the face of utter hopelessness. Many refused to have children as they knew their offspring would be born into a life that is hell on earth. Las Casas records that while he was in Cuba, 7000 babies died in three months because their mothers were so malnourished that they could not nurse their babies. Some mothers drowned their babies from sheer desperation while others deliberately drank herbs that caused abortions. Las Casas writes "In this way husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk, while others had not time or energy for procreation, and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile, though so unfortunate, was depopulated" (quoted in Stannard 1992: 74).

Stannard also records the history of how the Aztec civilization was destroyed by the conquistadors.

In the city of Tenochtitlán (present-day Mexico), the Conquistador Hernán Cortés and his soldiers ambushed the Aztec leader Montezuma during a feast that was being held to honor Cortés. This surprise attack initiated a siege of Tenochtitlán. After two weeks of siege warfare, however, Cortés and his men could not overpower the Aztec soldiers and ordered a retreat. The Spanish left behind the smallpox virus, causing an epidemic that lasted for two months. During these two months, Cortés marched on, burning smaller towns in the region (Stannard 1992: 77). Once the smallpox had devastated Tenochtitlán, Cortés attacked again. First, he had ships intercept and cut off food supplies to the island capital. Next, he destroyed the great aqueduct that brought fresh water into the city. Then, Cortés laid siege. "Siege," as the historian Inga Clendinnen has observed, was for the Aztecs "the antithesis of war." Viewing it as cowardly and dishonorable, "the deliberate and systematic weakening of opposition before engagement, and the deliberate implication of noncombatants in the contest, had no part in their experience" (quoted in Stannard 1992: 78). Thus did Cortés and his soldiers lay to the ground the metropolis that only a few months earlier the Spanish had described as the most beautiful city on earth (Stannard 1992: 78). In just a single day, during the siege of the city, Cortés' army killed more than forty thousand people. The slaughter was such that as Cortés recalls, "we could no longer endure the stench of the dead bodies that had lain in those streets for many days, which was the most loathsome thing in all the world," and so

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

"we returned to our camps" (Stannard 1992: 79). As Cortés himself said, "I intended to attack and slay them all" (quoted in Stannard 1992: 79).

We can take what happened in Tenochtitlán as a representative episode of the Spanish conquest of the entire continent. The Incas suffered a similar fate to the Aztecs. Upon entering the Inca region, the conquistadors laid waste to the Incas' roads, bridges, agricultural terraces canals, and gratuitously slaughtered llamas by the thousands. As one contemporary wrote in 1539:

> The Indians are being totally destroyed and lost. […] They [beg] with a cross to be given food for the love of God. […] [The soldiers are] killing all the llamas they want for no greater need than to make tallow candles. […] The Indians are left with nothing to plant, and since they have no cattle and can never obtain any, they cannot fail to die of hunger (quoted in Stannard 1992: 88).

Beyond direct murders, it was the enslavement, disease and starvation that killed the most Incas directly (Stannard 1992: 88).

An unknown Aztec poet describes the white man's annihilation of their world:

> Broken spears lie in the roads;
> we have torn our hair in grief.
> The houses are rootless now, and their walls
> are red with blood.
>
> Worms are swarming in the streets and plazas,
> and the walls are splattered with gore.
> The water has turned red, as if it were dyed,
> and when we drink it,
> it has the taste of brine.
>
> We have pounded our hands in despair
> against the adobe walls,
> for our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead.

The Maya book of *Chilam Balam* adds "what the white lords did when they came to our land":

> They taught fear and they withered the flowers. So that their flower should live, they maimed and destroyed the flower of others […] Marauders by day, offenders by night, murderers of the world (quoted in Stannard 1992: 86).

In *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, Las Casas writes of another conquistador by the name of Pedro de Alvarado who along with his compatriots invaded, conquered and enslaved the peoples in the rest of Mexico and in what is today Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. Las Casas writes:

> By other massacres and murders besides the above, they have destroyed and devastated a kingdom more than a hundred leagues square, one of the happiest in the way of fertility and population in the world. This same tyrant wrote that it was more populous than the kingdom

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

> of Mexico; and he told the truth. He and his brothers, together with the others, have killed more than four or five million people in fifteen or sixteen years, from the year 1525 until 1540, and they continue to kill and destroy those who are still left; and so they will kill the remainder (quoted Stannard 1992: 81).

Chinese Cosmopolitanism explores the medieval worldviews that motivated European settlers to act as they did to the natives. For the moment, suffice it to say that, as the Ecuadorian American historian Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra explains, "In the eyes of the European settlers, colonization was an act of forcefully expelling demons from the land." That is, "Europeans saw colonization [. . .] as an ongoing battle against the devil," and "as an ongoing epic struggle against a stubbornly resistant Satan" (Cañizares-Esguerra 2006: 14, 5).[10]

In a reply to criticism by a British historian, Sir John Huxtable Elliott, that Stannard had indiscriminately used the terms "racism" and "genocide" in describing the European and white American destruction of the native Americans, Stannard points out that the majority of the Jewish people who perished under the Nazis did not die in the gas chambers. Since the touchstone for the issue of genocide for Prof. Elliott and most of the western audience is the Jewish Holocaust, Stannard uses it as a comparative example. As Stannard points out, if we are willing to concede that these indirect deaths in the Jewish Holocaust are part of the German genocide effort then we cannot hypocritically fail to recognize that the same applies in the so-called New World. "More Jews in Auschwitz, and probably throughout Nazi-controlled Europe, died from forced labor, starvation, disease, and other forms of what the US government today would call 'collateral damage,' than succumbed to outright murder by gassing, phenol injection, hanging, or shooting."[11]

It has to be understood that the American continent was built upon genocide and that Adolf Hitler and his regime consciously drew on white actions toward Native Americans as a model for their own project of creating Lebensraum in Eastern Europe.[12]

The epistemology of ignorance systematically obfuscates the history of what happened on the American continent. It posits that the natives conveniently (for the Europeans) died from introduced disease. It makes us otherwise clear-thinking people not question a narrative that strains common-sense: that up to 98 percent of the peoples of an entire continent can be wiped out from disease alone.[13] This epistemology of ignorance renders us gullible to the myth of what I call "Schrodinger's native American": they are simultaneously already wiped out by disease but also the subject of protracted processes of land removal[14] and as the fearsome enemies depicted in Hollywood Westerns. Under this epistemology of ignorance, the native American is both already not there but also the stubborn resistance against the white man's designs upon a virgin land.

Simultaneous with colonial destruction was the rise of the transatlantic slave trade, which, demographers estimate, may have halved Africa's population through exportation and deaths on the continent itself (Bayly 2004: 409).[15] This project that attempted to equate the peoples of an entire continent with slavery can be described as the domestication of a member of our own species. The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Rhodesia, and South Africa were all founded on the extermination, displacement, and/or herding onto reservations of the aboriginal population. By 1914, colonialism brought 85 percent of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions, and commonwealths under European rule.[16] The mythic view about the causes behind western colonialism not only obfuscates the historical reality, but it is also victim-blaming. Under this view, the only reason the third world exists is due to their own inferiority and

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

so was dominated by the superior west. This view is ultimately racist: when one pursues this kind of argument to its ultimate assumptions, the reasons given for European (technological) superiority is the superiority of the European race. In this Social Darwinist account, the tragedies wrought by European colonialism are due to human nature and the rise of western technology. It is a model, as I speak about in my book, that assumes nature is set up in a great chain of being in which nature is "red in tooth and claw" and where the stronger mercilessly dominate the weaker. *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* challenges the narrative that the path that the west underwent is the only or inevitable path of human civilization in its encounter with other human cultures.

4 Chinese Cosmopolitanism and Its Challenge to Western Racism and Colonialism

In my first monograph *A Philosophical Defense of Culture: Perspectives from Confucianism and Ernst Cassirer*, I argued that Confucianism had a cultural conception of personhood. By "cultural conception of personhood" I mean the following. The human being's nature is to create the (cultural) world in which she lives. This created world (culture) is also the only place in which she can realize her humanity or become human. Unlike other biological organisms, humans must create the environment in which they can flourish. The environment we need for our human becoming is not found; it is created. I share Clifford Geertz's cultural anthropological view that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" and that this web is culture (Geertz 1973: 5).[17] Culture is the specifically human medium (created by human beings in society with other humans) in which we can become human. Culture is both the medium and the process which realizes our humanity. Take the example of language. Although language is a human (social) creation, we could not feasibly be human without language.

In *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, I focus on this cultural understanding of the human being in relationship to the issue of racism and argue that racial attitudes are a product of cultural conditioning. I argued that it is fallacious to posit that a putative "human nature" has a one-way causal efficacy, in the mode of the philosophical concept of an essence (Xiang 2023a). On the contrary, there is no aspect of human 'nature' that is not shaped by culture. Since human behavior is radically formed through socio-cultural environment, racial ideology, racist behaviors and the racist crimes of history cannot be scapegoated onto a putatively stable human 'nature.' They are instead environmentally and culturally shaped, learned behaviours.

This cultural understanding of personhood leaves no room for the kinds of biologically deterministic arguments found in publications such as *The Bell Curve* that argued for divergent congenital intellectual endowments of different "races." In his impassioned work against such biological determinism, *The Mismeasure of Man,* Stephen Gould quoted Charles Darwin's observation, "If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin" (Gould 1996) as the epigraph to his book. Much of Gould's work was motivated by a humanistic concern for marginalized groups within his home country, the USA. If arguments about biological determinism were allowed to gain ascendancy, then there would be no incentive for federal governments to fund education programs, improve living standards or invest in the peoples who were deemed to be biologically inferior and so biologically destined for the ghetto. Indeed, as I have shown elsewhere (Xiang 2021)[18], the idea of race is by no means a world picture from a bygone era. Although few opinion-makers and researchers would openly use racial

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

vocabularies anymore, the paradigm of race still profoundly shapes the way the academy accounts for human difference. The (western) philosophical structures informing ideas about race (the nature of human becoming, the nature of human difference, the nature of human progress and the nature of human hierarchy) have not been successfully challenged and are still foundational to an international academy dominated by western philosophical assumptions.

Chinese Cosmopolitanism's account of how the Chinese tradition overwhelmingly had a cultural conception of personhood is not only filial to the historical legacy that is the Confucian understanding of human nature. It is also arguably the more humanistic option. As such, it can provide valuable intellectual resources for the modern world. It presents an admirable alternative to the overly essentializing and reductionistic account of human becoming that still dominates western academic discussions.

My understanding of the psychology of racial ideology was, in part, informed by the writings of James Baldwin. Baldwin's existentialist insights into the nature of anti-black racism are profound and incisive. But Baldwin's humanism is equally striking:

> But people who cannot suffer can never grow up, can never discover who they are. That man who is forced each day to snatch his manhood, his identity, out of the fire of human cruelty that rages to destroy it knows, if he survives his effort, and even if he does not survive it, something about himself and human life that no school on earth—and indeed, no church—can teach (Baldwin 1998: 343).[19]

The flipside of Baldwin's suffering is an insight into human psychology unavailable to those who do not suffer. In *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin explains racial hatred of the other through the psychology of the racist himself. He wrote, "And the passion with which we loved the Lord was a measure of how deeply we feared and distrusted and, in the end, hated almost all strangers, always, and avoided and despised ourselves" (Baldwin 1998: 310). The psychology of the person so concerned with the existence of practices antithetical to their own and the concomitant desire to arbitrate and pass judgment on them according to absolutes betrays a fear of responsibility and fear of the human condition. For Baldwin, one does not espouse universals to include all human beings in an ecumenical brother/sisterhood. Instead, one does so to have authority to resentfully condemn/have power over those unlike oneself. For Baldwin, racism is a symptom of those who would rather hold onto a system of metaphysical determinism/universalism (i.e., the Lord) and so render themselves infallible. In this infallibility, the agent is absolved of responsibility for their actions.

It is infinitely more comforting to tell oneself that one's values are isomorphic with the ontological structure of reality and so one need not be responsible for creatively producing solutions. To avoid having to reassess our own infallible principles and our own actions, we turn peoples with different values from ourselves into a Manichean, racial other, whom we must destroy to preserve the comfort of our universals (and so not having to take responsibility for our actions). This suits the espouser of infallibilism quite well as the Manichean other also serves as a scapegoat to bear the side of the dualism that the western imagination does not wish to confront about itself: the fact that it is embodied, contingent and therefore not infallible and rational through and through. The more Manichean others that are destroyed, the less the espouser of infallibilism needs to confront her own actions and her despised human condition. In this way, infallibilism, hatred of the stranger (Manichean, racial other), avoiding responsibility for one's own actions, and not facing one's

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

embodied, contingent nature, are mutually implicating. It is Baldwin's humanistic account of the psychology of racism that inspired much of my own analyses in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*.[20]

The widely held consensus in the field of the critical philosophy of race follows the broadly Marxist historiographical tradition in positing that racial ideology was invented during the age of colonialism to justify, *ex post facto*, the right of European colonialism, genocide and enslavement of entire continents. The ideological framework that helped serve these purposes was the biological sciences that were inaugurated in this period. In 2004 the distinguished classicist Benjamin Isaac published *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* which challenged this widely held consensus. Isaac showed that these racial ideologies were rooted in the very foundations of western thought as opposed to "accidental" or non-essential offshoots of intellectual developments occasioned by the contingencies of history. Isaac's work can be understood as providing much empirical corroboration to Edward Said's central insight, again, against the prevailing orthodox Marxist historiography, that a racial and colonial ideology preceded its material manifestation. "To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule," he wrote, "is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by orientalism, rather than after the fact" (Said 2003: 39).[21] Colonialism was an ideology before it was a practice. The material practice of colonial conquest was shaped, if not motivated, by colonial ideology. Following *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Isaac and his coeditors published *The Origins of Racism in the West*. The governing thesis of this volume, as Isaac and his coeditors wrote, was not "that prejudice and bigotry were invented in the West," instead, it is "the specific form of rationalizing these prejudices and attempting to base them on systematic, abstract thought was developed in antiquity and taken over in early modern Europe." For this reason, "Racism, the nineteenth and twentieth-century ideology familiar to us, developed in Europe, not in China, Japan or India" (Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler 2009: 9).[22] *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* presents an account of Chinese philosophy and history that supports Isaac's and Said's thesis that racism and the ideology of colonialism are foremost a worldview rooted in the western tradition.

Another work that substantiates Isaac's thesis that racial ideology originates with the Greek tradition is *The Concept of Man in Early China* (1969).[23] In this work, the distinguished scholar of Chinese philosophy Donald Munro argued that there was a foundational divergence between the classical Greek and Chinese views of human becoming. As Munro wrote,

> The crucial difference between the Confucian and Aristotelian positions was that whereas the Confucians believed in the natural equality of all men, Aristotle believed that men were born unequal. In the Greek view, a real, continuing aristocracy of merit is hard to imagine; in time, some families or tribes will inevitably acquire the honor of being hereditarily meritorious, and others will be relegated to hereditary natural slavery. The Chinese view offers no such difficulty (Munro 1969: 15).

Building on the work of Munro and Isaac and through a comparative lens, *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* shows that the Chinese intellectual tradition has never exhibited behaviors that could be called "racist," nor does it have a comparable philosophy of race enabled by certain metaphysical assumptions about cosmic order and the nature of human becoming. To argue that racism is a worldview and culture is to argue that we have (and had) human agency to change this worldview. It is to argue that humanity's history of racism is not a necessary unfolding of predetermined constants with a theodicean telos. There is no universal history with a cosmopolitan aim in which the suffering of the "lesser races" was for some grand design. There are no biologically fixed set

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

of human traits or a static universal human nature that exonerates historical actors from facing their moral responsibility before "the human community for the highest heap of corpses in history" (Césaire 2000: 45).[24] The challenge of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is that another world was possible and still is possible.

In contrast to the orthodoxy in the critical philosophy of race that racial ideology was a specifically European invention as well as the measured consensus of a previous generation of sinologists that the Chinese tradition did not have a concept of race, it has now become de rigueur to portray the Chinese tradition as a nationalistic, racial state from its very inception. Within the last few decades, the view that the Chinese tradition was one without a notion of race and nationhood was replaced with one in which a (*supposed*) Han "race," in a proto-European version of settler-colonialism, murderously expanded its frontiers to make Lebensraum for its Han ethno-state. Whether the ancient Chinese tradition had a concept of race or not focuses the issues most integral to our current world-order. It is for this reason that it has become de rigueur for the Sinological class to embrace the idea that the Chinese tradition was just as racist, if not more so, than the western tradition. Although historically the model of the nation-state become the dominant paradigm of political organization only in the historical period after the Treaty of Westphalia in in 1648, the idea that people of common descent should rule over themselves has more ancient lineage and is reflected in Greek ideas about autochthony. An implicit argument of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is that "nationalism" is not a concept indigenous to the Chinese worldview. Nationalism is an inherently racial concept whereby a group of peoples of common descent is *ipso facto* a political unit. I do not think this describes the nature of historical China as a political entity, nor its self-identity or self-narrative. As the political scientist Yan Sun writes, in traditional China, "Confucian universalism" did not ethnicize identities. For Sun, under the "cultural universalism (*tianxia*)" of imperial China, "culture (as a way of life) was more fundamental than nationalism or race" and allowed for ethnic acculturation and both localized and hybrid identities (Sun 2020: 26).[25]

Another western concept that is wrongfully used to analyze the Chinese experience is "colonialism." As *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* shows, not all kinds of expansion and historical human migrations are the same. There needs to be a (Confucian) rectification of names when it comes to the vocabularies that we use in narrating the history of human encounters as these have been made so politically sensitive by the history of western encounter with the non-west. Language must be in accord with the truth of things as otherwise it will lead to social chaos. Whilst all human groups throughout human history have expanded, expansion alone is not a sufficient condition of "colonialism." In *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, I stress that "colonization" should not be falsely equated with the idea of territorial expansion but should be understood as enacting the ideology of racial hierarchy. Within a colony, the colonizer attempts to maintain the hierarchical and racial distinction between the colonizer and the colonized and distributes resources according to this racial distinction. This definition of colonization does not describe the kinds of expansion that occurred in Chinese history. As Albert Memmi points out, there is a difference between "colonization" and "assimilation." The latter, he maintains, is "the opposite of colonization. [Assimilation] tends to eliminate the distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized, and thereby eliminates the colonial relationship" (Memmi 2003: 194).[26] Arguably it was the latter that took place under Chinese historical expansion. *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* provides many other such rectification of names such as "race," "barbarian" and "Oikumene."

This tendency to universalize western racism is a weaponization of the "epistemology of ignorance" that the late Charles Mills wrote eloquently about. The "epistemology of ignorance" might be more

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

fittingly called the "epistemology of white supremacy." The orthodox narrative propagated by much of the Sinological class supports the arguments that western racism is universal. The implication of this is that the west bears no greater moral responsibilities for its unprecedented historic crimes against humanity than any other cultural tradition. It would also support the argument that there are no alternatives to the west as the end of history. The most egregious example of this tendency is Frank Dikötter's *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*.[27] As I have argued elsewhere (Xiang 2023b), that such scholarship, deficient in the most basic scholarly standards, was overwhelmingly feted upon its publication and continues to be cited as an authority and to receive inordinate recognition, reveals western academia's problematic attitudes towards China and the issue of racism.

Chinese Cosmopolitanism asks sinologists to be more responsible. It reminds sinologists not to become the equivalent of those scholars at the beginning of the twenty-first century who so uncritically imbibed and produced the imperial propaganda that supported American-led intervention in Iraq, and whom Edward Said called Orientalists, who "betrayed their calling as scholars" (Said 2003: xv). As I argue in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, the narrative that racism is native to the Chinese tradition is false. *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* shows that racial ideology did not exist in traditional China, nor was there a historic practice that manifests the existence of racial ideology. In this regard *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* challenges the idea that western racism is universal and that the west is at the end of history.

5 The Chinese Alternative: Cultural Cosmopolitanism

Chinese Cosmopolitanism presents readers with an alternative account of what it means to be "cosmopolitan"—an account that views difference as enriching. I do not use "cosmopolitanism" in the sense of those who coined the term, the fourth-century BCE cynics for whom a cosmopolitan was a citizen of the cosmos and thus not a citizen grounded in a particular culture and community.[28] This form of cosmopolitanism is indebted to a view of persons that assumes we are, at the most fundamental level, a-cultural beings who are not constituted by our cultures. Such persons take precedence to their culture and formative environments. Relatedly, this account of cosmopolitanism is not addressing current moral and political debates about how such "a-cultural" beings are directly owed justice (because they are "citizens of the cosmos" ungrounded to any particular socio-political context). The philosophical assumptions that underly these debates are not shared by the dominant Chinese traditions I reference. As it is currently being used in daily discourse, "cosmopolitanism" is a vacuous buzzword. It signals a superficial diversity and inclusion whereby merely decorative and thus non-offensive aspects of foreign cultures (such as their art and food) are allowed to enter the public sphere. From the Confucian perspective, this is not truly cosmopolitan as there is never any serious attempt to engage with the perspectives of others and thus challenge one's own cultural and intellectual worldview. As I attempt to illustrate in my book, the Confucian view of "cosmopolitanism" is indebted to the Chinese metaphysics of "harmony." It is a view that is similar to the works of decolonial scholars. Instead of viewing all persons as being "thin" selves and members of the cosmos, this view of cosmopolitanism conceives of a universal in a way similar to Aimé Césaire:

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

> I'm not burying myself in a narrow particularism. But neither do I want to lose myself in an emaciated universalism. There are two ways to lose oneself: walled segregation in the particular or dilution in the 'universal.' My conception of the universal is that of a universal enriched by all that is particular, a universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars (Césaire 2010: 152).

I too use "cosmopolitanism" to refer to a "universal enriched by every particular: the deepening and coexistence of all particulars." The universal is not a static, eternal ideal that is merely imprinted onto the docile matter of the particular. Rather, the universal is the result of interactive engagement between all the particulars, which are in turn constantly changing because they are interacting with and being enriched by each other.

The ideal of Chinese cosmopolitanism that I reconstruct in this book has little in common with its contemporary liberal variety. One of its closest non-Chinese parallels is the decolonized, post-racial world envisioned by decolonial thinkers of the global south. As I have shown elsewhere (Xiang 2023c),[29] the idea of a coherence without a pre-established, hierarchical order is central to the visions of a decolonized future in prominent decolonial thought. Common to the post-racial vision of Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Frantz Fanon and Achille Mbembe is that of a relational self not defined by a putative essence. The "creolization," "mestizaje" "post-racial self" of which these thinkers speak is ultimately a relational self, enriched by difference and one that sees growth in terms of sympathetically understanding other perspectives.

The growth of a "post-racial self" is a cultural work that requires an accumulated history realized by mutual exchange. This post-racial self and the kind of world order that it implies is the vision of Chinese cosmopolitanism that I have argued for. Elsewhere (Xiang 2023d),[30] I described the nature of Chinese cosmopolitanism through a philosophical concept unique to the Chinese tradition, *tong* 通. The concept of *tong* pervades Chinese thought and culture. It assumes that the world is positively connected, already a whole and that there is free flow between all entities. *Tong* encompasses the English meanings of exchange, communication, circulation, interaction and mutual influence and is a term central to Chinese medicine in which the free flow of *qi* between the different parts of the body is foundational to the health of the organism. In contrast, the concept that captures the European colonial world picture is the term Enrique Dussel coined to describe the Cartesian subject: the '*ego conquiro*,' the 'I conquer.' Under the 'I conquer,' the truth about the self comes not through exchange and mutual growth, but through the instrumentalization and domination of all that is the non-I. The 'I conquer' is based on a radical transcendence in which the self or European ego/subject is apodictically asserted and the non-I is instrumentalized as a mere means to consolidate the ego/subject. In *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, I draw on these themes and argue that central to the ideology of the colonial project is such a radical transcendence. This is related to racial ideology in that under race supremacism: it is the master race that transcends mere nature and is thereby free and rational. This transcendence means that they bear a mandate of exceptionalism to dominate the other races who are merely nature.

Central to my account of Chinese cosmopolitanism as distinguished from its liberal multiculturalist variety is the idea of synthesis. The most important feature of Chinese cosmopolitanism and one that warrants our attention is its syncretism. True cosmopolitanism requires cross-cultural exchange, mutual flourishing, and growth through cultural encounter. Much of what we think of as distinctive of "Chinese-ness" are products of synthesis: the various schools of Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism, the Chinese people itself, the list goes on. It was my argument in this book that this

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

history of synthesis was enabled by the "Chinese" worldview. It was also my argument that it was this capacity for synthesis that contributed to the longevity of China as a cultural, social and political phenomenon.

This history and philosophy of cosmopolitanism that I present has a contemporary significance. It challenges core assumptions in academic disciplines established in the aftermath of European colonialism, such as international relations and sociological and philosophical assumptions about the fundamental unsociability of human nature. It challenges ideas such as the clash of civilizations,[31] the nature of cultural progress, how the global histories of our civilizations should be written and whether the nation-state is the most viable form of political organization. *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* argues that the evidence presented by the Chinese tradition shows that there are no irreconcilable differences between cultures, that the problem of moral or cultural relativism is a question-begging, pseudo-problem and that cultures progress through interaction not through isolation. *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* also argues that the evidence presented by the Chinese tradition shows us that historically China was never a nation-state. It was instead a civilization that benefited from much cross-cultural fertilization.

6 Conclusion

Since the Jesuits first translated Chinese philosophy for Europeans, Chinese philosophy has been a radical challenge to what passed for the norm in Europe. From the 17th c. onwards, Chinese political philosophy was a mirror to Europe's feudal authoritarianism, the contrasting reflection of China as a secular state governed by officials who held office based on merit as opposed to birth perturbed and stimulated revolutionary thinkers of the Enlightenment.[32] Chinese philosophy is radical. For reasons I cannot fathom, much of academic Chinese philosophy written today trivializes what is provocative about Chinese philosophy. This could be an effect of the disciplinary decadence (to use Lewis Gordon's term) that affects all fields incorporated into the modern University system (Gordon 2006).[33] It could be because many scholars of Chinese philosophy seek to portray Chinese philosophy as an inoffensive, white-adjacent "model minority" that does not challenge the status quo. Whatever the reason, what I have tried to do through *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is to make clear the provocative challenge that Chinese philosophy and its millennia of history continues to pose. The provocation I have described is that the defining aspects of Chinese philosophy are anti-racist, syncretic and without belief in an unconditioned human nature. In these respects, the Chinese tradition is antithetical to many of the philosophical themes of Euro-modernity. What *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* shows is that we are not on a linear path to the end of history, nor have we arrived there. Instead, the ethical world is forever in the making.

Shuchen Xiang (PhD, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and King's College London, *summa cum laude*) is the Mt. Hua Professor of Philosophy at Xidian University, China. She is the author of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism: The History and Philosophy of an Idea* (Princeton University Press, 2023), which won an honorable Mention for the Asia and Asian America Section Book Award, American Sociological Association. She is also author of *A Philosophical Defense of Culture: Perspectives from Confucianism and Cassirer* (State University of New York Press, 2021), the coeditor of *The Islamic-Confucian Synthesis in China* (Lexington, 2023), the coeditor of *How China Shaped the*

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Enlightenment: A Transcultural History of Modern Thought (Routledge, forthcoming), the translator of *History of Chinese Philosophy Through Its Key Terms* (Springer, 2020), and the author of over thirty academic articles in both English and Chinese.

.

---

1 I provide two examples of how mistranslations insinuate racial discourse into the Chinese texts. Today, it is common for sinologists to translate *yidi* (夷狄) as "barbarian." However, the sinologist James Legge was translating it in the late nineteenth century as "rude tribes of the east and north" (Legge 1861: 20) or "rude, uncultivated tribes" (Legge 1861: 135). See: James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, vol. 1, Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean* (London: Trübner & Co., 1861) .
In my "Decolonizing Sinology" (Xiang 2023b), I show how Frank Dikötter translates the term "族类" as race from a 300 BCE text, the *Zuo Zhuan,* through a combination of misquotation, mistranslation and taking things out of context. His scholarly malpractice has been allowed to pass largely uncommented upon such that his egregious mistranslation of a single term from a thirty-chapter history covering a period from 722 to 468 BC, the English translation of which runs 2147 pages, is now commonly appealed to as evidence that the idea of "race" existed in pre-modern China. See: Shuchen Xiang, "Decolonising Sinology: On Sinology's Weaponization of the Discourse of Race," *Social Dynamics* 49, no. 2 (2023b): 280-98.

2 Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin, 2011).

3 Please see Pankaj Mishra's review of *Civilization: The West and the Rest* in which Mishra accuses Ferguson of having written a "white people's histories" celebrating "pith-helmeted missionaries of Western civilisation" (URL: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n21/pankaj-mishra/watch-this-man; last accessed on June 9, 2024).

4 Robert W. Sussman, "The Myth of Man the Hunter, Man the Killer and the Evolution of Human Morality," *Zygon* 34, no. 3 (1999): 453-71.

5 Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, Second Edition, trans. J. R. Foster and Charles Hartman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); John King Fairbank, and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

6 Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne*, 1405–1433 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

7 F. W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

8 Jinyuan Gao, "China and Africa: The Development of Relations over Many Centuries," *African Affair*s 83, no. 331 (1984): 241-50.

9 David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

10 Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550–1700* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

11 (URL: https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1993/10/21/american-holocaust/; last accessed on June 9, 2024).

12 Please see Carroll P. Kakel's *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and James Q. Whitman's *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law (*Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017).

13 For reference, the black plague is commonly cited as having caused the death of a third of the European population. See: K. A. Glatter and P. Finkelman, "History of the Plague: An Ancient Pandemic for the Age of COVID-19," *American Journal of Medicine* 134, no. 2 (2021): 176-181 (URL: doi: 10.1016/j.amjmed.2020.08.019; last accessed on June 9, 2024).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

14 See ed. Daniel Littlefield, Jr., and James W. Parins, *Encyclopedia of American Indian Removal*, 2 vols, (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011).

15 C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

16 The above statistics are taken from Xiang (2023a).

17 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

18 Shuchen Xiang, "The Persistence of Scientific Racism: Ernst Cassirer on the Myth of Substance," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 9, no. 1 (2021): 126-50.

19 James Baldwin, *James Baldwin: Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998).

20 Baldwin's existentialist analysis of anti-black racism is very similar to Sartre's account of the psychology of the anti-Semite (which is, in turn, very similar to Nietzsche account of *ressentiment*).

21 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

22 ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

23 Donald J. Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

24 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

25 Yan Sun, *From Empire to Nation State: Ethnic Politics in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

26 Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Earthscan Publications, 2003).

27 Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992); *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, fully revised and expanded second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

28 My definition of cosmopolitanism is taken from Xiang (2023a).

29 Shuchen Xiang, "*Tianxia* and Its Decolonial Counterparts: 'China' as Civilization, not Ethnicity," *The China Review* 23, (2023c): 165-187.

30 Shuchen Xiang, "*Qing* (情), *Gan* (感) and *Tong* (通): Decolonizing the Universal from a Chinese Perspective," Parts 1 and 2, *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 15, nos. 1–2 (2023d): 9-22.

31 On this issue, please see, ed. Zongping Sha and Shuchen Xiang, *The Islamic-Confucian Synthesis in China* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2023e). This volume presents the history of how Islamic thought synthesized with Confucian thought in Chinese history.

32 See, for example, the role that Chinese sources played in Rousseau's thought in Powers (2022). Martin Powers, "Chinese Political Theory in Dialogue with Rousseau," *Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures* 6, no. 1 (2022): 123–40.

33 Lewis R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times,* London: Routledge, 2006

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Chinese Cosmopolitanism and Its Discontents

SUNGMOON KIM
City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China (sungmkim@cityu.edu.hk)

In her essay "Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism?," which contains the key argument in her book *Chinese Cosmopolitanism: The History and Philosophy of an Idea* (2023a), Shuchen Xiang explores an alternative idea of cosmopolitanism in which the world is positively connected through "cross-cultural exchange, mutual flourishing, and growth through cultural encounter" (Xiang 2024a).[1] According to Xiang, the western discourse of cosmopolitanism (and its attitude toward China) is deeply racist, because it is premised on "a pervasive assumption […] that colonialism, genocide, racial violence and the hatred of the other are the result of universal human characteristics" (Xiang 2024a). In her view, the western discourse of cosmopolitanism is founded on the belief that man is "a predator whose natural instinct is to kill with a weapon" (Xiang 2024a), and European colonialism since the fifteenth century was the ineluctable result of the corroboration between the "deep-seated Greco-Christian assumptions about human nature" (Xiang 2024a) and racism, the single greatest locomotive of western cosmopolitanism. Based on these underlying assumptions, Xiang submits two core arguments: first, that it is a categorical mistake to employ the western discourse of race to interpret Chinese people's attitude towards non-Chinese people, and, second, that there are ample resources in Chinese philosophy to generate an alternative idea and practice of cosmopolitanism to its anti-pluralist, victim-blaming, and ultimately racist western counterpart.

Based on the stark dichotomy between East and West, Xiang's argument is straightforward, and, as will be discussed, her criticism of the western account of cosmopolitanism, which she does not clearly distinguish from racism and colonialism, is poignant. Her argument, however, is too sweeping, often supported by little philosophical analysis and historical evidence. Most striking is that while her guiding ambition is to provide an alternative normative account of cosmopolitanism from a Chinese perspective, she neither examines the western philosophical argument on cosmopolitanism nor presents her alternative normative ideal through the critical reconstruction of Chinese philosophy. In the end, we are told that the alternative Chinese cosmopolitanism would be non-racist, inclusive, communicative, interactive, and harmonious, but it is unclear how Chinese philosophy can be conducive to creating an account of cosmopolitanism that is morally appealing and politically practicable, a moral vision that goes between the east and west divide and takes seriously the perspectives of the people who were once subject to a China-centred world order.

1 Colonialism or Cosmopolitanism?

There is no denying that western colonialism was violent and brutal, often resulting in mass slaughter, massive enslavement, and genocide. It may also be true that some western intellectuals, otherwise espousing cosmopolitan justice, still tacitly subscribe today to the "epistemology of ignorance" (Xiang 2024a), which "systematically obfuscates" the history of violence and brutality perpetrated by western colonizers to Africans, Asians, and the original dwellers of the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand,

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

only revealing their hypocrisy. Certainly, historical evidence amply supports Xiang's claim that white supremacy was a key motive for western colonizers to commit what is now considered crimes against humanity. The problem is that Xiang makes no distinction between the global expansion of western colonialism and the contemporary moral ideal of cosmopolitanism of the west. Strikingly, she believes that contemporary westerners invariably hold the following view:

> Under this view, the only reason the third world exists is due to their own inferiority and so was dominated by the superior west. This view is ultimately racist: when one pursues this kind of argument to its ultimate assumptions, the reasons [sic] given for European (technological) superiority is the superiority of the European race. It is a model, as I speak about in my book, that assumes nature is set up in a great chain of being in which nature is 'red in tooth and claw' and where the stronger mercilessly dominate the weaker. *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* challenges the narrative that the path that the west underwent is the only or inevitable path of human civilization in its encounter with other human cultures (Xiang 2024a).

It is a remarkable claim that the contemporary western ideal of cosmopolitanism is still grounded in the same epistemology and worldview that underscored modern western colonialism. Surprisingly, Xiang does not mention, let alone engage with, any contemporary western cosmopolitan philosopher, even though she attributes all the problems affiliated with western cosmopolitanism to the western philosophical tradition—hence, her renewed attention to Chinese philosophy as an inspiration for an alternative account of cosmopolitanism. Yet, one of the most ardent advocates of cosmopolitanism in the west makes a case for cosmopolitanism based on the European experience of the Enlightenment, when he states,

> Of course, one characteristic of European cosmopolitanism, especially since the Enlightenment, has been a receptiveness to art and literature from other places, and a wider interest in lives elsewhere. This is a reflection of what I called, in the introduction, the second strand of cosmopolitanism: the recognition that human beings are different and that we can learn from each other's differences (Appiah 2006: 4).[2]

Appiah calls his idea of cosmopolitanism a "partial cosmopolitanism," thus distinguishing it from the term's more conventional understanding that suggests "an unpleasant posture of superiority toward the putative provincial" (Appiah 2006: xiii). In a similar vein, Martha Nussbaum, another staunch champion of cosmopolitanism, explains the moral value of cosmopolitanism in educational terms: "[S]tudents in the United States, for example, […] must learn enough about the different to recognize common aims, aspirations, and values, and enough about these common ends to see how variously they are instantiated in the many cultures and their histories" (Nussbaum 1996: 9).[3] Drawing from Kant's understudied idea of hospitality in his famous article "Perpetual Peace," Seyla Benhabib captures the gist of Kantian cosmopolitanism in terms of the "right of hospitality," which "regulates the interactions of individuals who belong to different civic entities yet who encounter one another at the margins of bounded communities" (Benhabib 2004: 27).[4] This right, she argues, entails "a claim to temporary residency which cannot be refused, if such refusal would involve destruction […] of the other" (Benhabib 2004: 28). Do any of these prominent "western" champions of cosmopolitanism assume that human nature is inherently aggressive and violent, inclining the stronger to mercilessly

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

dominate the weaker? Do any of them develop their normative idea based on a certain metaphysical or philosophical notion of human nature at all?

Xiang's argument is even more difficult to understand if we turn to western political philosophers who approach cosmopolitanism from the standpoint of global distributive justice. Most notably, noting the emergence of an international society that is heavily interdependent, Charles Beitz proposes to globalize the Rawlsian original position to address the economic inequalities between rich and poor countries with a special focus on maximizing the interests of the worst-off (Beitz 1979).[5] According to Kor-Chor Tan, a cosmopolitan egalitarian, "As our economic practices take on a global scope, so too should our moral considerations and considerations of justice. Economic globalization must be followed by normative globalization, so to speak. As the marketplace becomes one without borders, so should justice be without borders" (Tan 2004: 33).[6] Joseph Carens is best known for his argument for "open borders," central to which is an elimination of the second-class citizen status that people who happened to be born in poor countries and thus have reasons to leave their home and settle in countries with more opportunities have to suffer for no fault of their own (Carens 1987).[7]

Again, none of these scholars begin with a stereotypical "western" philosophical assumption of human nature, if there is such a thing. Nor do they rationalize the global domination of the west over the rest of the world, reinforcing the belief that "[t]he (western) philosophical structures informing ideas about race (the nature of human becoming, the nature of human difference, the nature of human progress and the nature of human hierarchy) have not been challenged and are still foundational to an international academy by western philosophical assumptions" (Xiang 2024a); the parentheses are in the original). Quite the contrary, their deepest concern is how to respect the human dignity of all individual persons in the world, regardless of their ethnic, racial, ethnic, gender, and economic backgrounds. It is always possible to contest some specific arguments made by an individual philosopher driven by a cosmopolitan cause, but nothing would be more unfair than to assume that all western cosmopolitans are hypocritical racists. Moreover, it is simply not true that western cosmopolitans pay no attention to past injustices committed by western imperial powers to non-western people. For them, outcome responsibility, based on causal reasoning, is a basic requirement for remedying global injustice. Even liberal nationalists such as David Miller, who otherwise disagree with cosmopolitan egalitarianism, are strongly convinced that affluent liberal democracies in the west should bear "remedial responsibility" for global inequalities, which exacerbate global injustice, even if they are not directly responsible for them (Miller 2007).[8]

If none of the philosophical arguments for cosmopolitanism in the west are premised on assumptions of aggressive human nature, racism, and the desire for domination, how are we supposed to understand Xiang's project to advance Chinese cosmopolitanism as a normative and political alternative to western cosmopolitanism? There is a sea of differences between western cosmopolitanism as a normative political theory and the western colonialism of past centuries, which nearly all western normative political theorists roundly reject as one of the worst human crimes ever perpetrated. One cannot develop a good theory by beating the strawman.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

2 Methodological Problems

The methodological confusion is another problem that stands in the way of positively appraising Xiang's core argument. Consider the following statement, with which Xiang begins her paper:

> One of the principle arguments in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is that an accurate account of Chinese tradition helps to illustrate how Chinese philosophy is of relevance for thinking about contemporary issues related to pluralism. There is a pervasive assumption in modern academia that colonialism, genocide, racial violence and the hatred of the other are the result of universal human characteristics. Counter to such claims, *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* aims to elucidate how these practices are culturally learned behaviours (Xiang 2024a).

As discussed, there is no pervasive assumption in "modern academia" that colonialism, genocide, racial violence, and so forth are the result of universal human characteristics. As far as I know, seemingly no philosopher or social scientist in the west explains colonialism, genocide, and racial violence in terms of universal human characteristics. Many scholars in the humanities and social sciences agree that there are several factors that cause genocide and other forms of violence of massive scale, including, among other things, the collective desire for moral purity,[9] state building (resulting in the homogenization of the people),[10] religious fanaticism,[11] and racial prejudice,[12] but none of them have anything to do with human nature as such. They are all about, using Berger and Luckmann's celebrated expression, "the social construction of reality."[13] Hannah Arendt's controversial idea of the "banality of evil" adds more complexity to what a complex question is already. Her core argument is that the cause of the Holocaust cannot be attributed to some evil-minded racists; rather, it was the result of the "thoughtlessness" of terrifyingly normal people who acted without evil motives.[14]

This is not to say that Xiang must accept that atrocities like genocide and racial/ethnic violence are caused far more often by human attempts to construct social reality than some evil individuals, or that evil is banal, making it futile to try to hold specific individual agents morally (and legally) responsible. My point is that Xiang's argument is not only simplistic, attributing all human tragedies caused by western countries to their racist decisions and actions, but, furthermore, it does not carefully examine the best philosophical and social scientific studies on genocide, ethnic cleansing, and racial violence. If she disagrees with an argument that exonerates (or is likely to exonerate) specific individuals or groups from moral and political responsibility, she should be able to offer a convincing counterargument on philosophical grounds—for instance, why she thinks Arendt is wrong or whether the theory of social construction of reality does not do justice to human agency. Instead, we see in Xiang's article a series of moral indictments of "the west" for the wrongs they committed in the past. The result is an unfairly pronounced contrast between her noble ideal of Confucian cosmopolitanism, to which I will turn shortly, and the ugly reality of western colonialism.

As noted, colonialism is one thing and cosmopolitanism is another. While the former refers to a specific form of political aggression, the latter is concerned with the boundary and membership of a moral/political community. There may be good historical evidence for the claim that western colonialism was in part motivated by racism, but even if it is granted, there is little reason to believe that western colonialism was the expression of the western philosophical ideal of cosmopolitanism.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Not surprisingly, one of Xiang's core arguments is that race is not a good evaluative marker by which to make sense of China's internal identity and its relationship to non-Chinese people. The argument here is that racism has no place in the Chinese moral and cultural discourse, and, accordingly, that China has never attempted racial domination over non-Chinese people, making Chinese cosmopolitanism superior to western cosmopolitanism. I have no space to fully examine this assumption. Instead, I raise two questions.

First, if the Chinese tradition did not have a concept of race and race is not a good marker by which to evaluate the Han Chinese's self-identity and their relationship with other ethnic groups within and outside of China, what is the alternative Chinese concept to delineate the difference between the Han and non-Han people? Indeed, the Han people are not understood in terms of race in the way in which, for instance, Americans of European descent distinguish themselves from African Americans. It is commonly believed that contemporary China consists of the Han people (*hanzu* 漢族) and over fifty ethnic minorities. Many East Asians understand *zu* 族 in ethnocultural rather than racial terms. It is unclear whether Xiang is fine with calling *zu* an ethnocultural group or if she believes that there should be an entirely new concept that best makes sense of the Chinese experience of *zu* other than ethnicity-cum-culture. Yet, even if Xiang rejects the racial interpretation of *zu* and adopts an alternative concept, it remains unclear how such an alternative conceptualization of *zu* would better illuminate the way in which the Han Chinese perceived and interacted with non-Han/Chinese people. This naturally leads to my second question.

Xiang explores Chinese cosmopolitanism as an alternative to western cosmopolitanism by equating western colonialism (and other forms of violence and aggression committed by the colonial west to the rest of the world) with western cosmopolitanism as such. What is surprising is that she does not say much about how China (or the Han people) perceived and treated non-Chinese people in the past or how the Chinese philosophical tradition developed more inclusive, pluralist, and cosmopolitan solutions for the (potential) conflicts between the Han Chinese and their non-Chinese neighbors. The only story we hear from her is about Zheng He (1371-1433) and his armada that had already reached the Horn of Africa, eighty years before Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope. But Xiang's key point is neither about Zheng He's cosmopolitan engagement with various Indigenous peoples he met during his remarkable voyage nor about the philosophical underpinnings of Zheng He's non-violent encounter with strangers. Rather, she is far more interested in highlighting fifteenth-century China's "technology and the organizational capacity to become a great maritime empire builder" (Xiang 2024a), which could have expanded the Chinese territories by force, if only it had so wished. I do not know whether Xiang's conjecture has strong historical evidence, but it is hardly a philosophical argument, because it does not help us understand the ethical motive, if any, for Zheng He's voyage or its cosmopolitan significance from the perspective of Chinese philosophy. Insomuch as she introduces Zheng He's story in the context of developing an alternative normative ideal of Chinese cosmopolitanism, she should have been able to illuminate the contrast between Zheng He and people like Columbus from a philosophical perspective.

Even more surprising is that Xiang is completely silent about the *Hua* 華-*Yi* 夷 paradigm that had long undergirded Han China's hierarchical relationships with non-Chinese people in Confucian East Asia. *Hua* (or *Xia* 夏) refers to the Han Chinese people and/or their Confucian civilization, at the heart of which lie ritual order and (what the Chinese people deemed to be essential) moral relationships. *Yi*

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

was an umbrella label to describe ethnic groups or peoples who did not, geographically, belong to the Chinese realm previously controlled by the three ancient dynasties—Xia, Shang, and especially Zhou. In making the Yi people "barbarians," as the term is commonly translated, what was far more important than their geographical distance from the Chinese realm was their failure (or refusal) to take part in the Confucian civilization, which, according to the Chinese people, would make one an authentic human being.[15] It is debatable whether the Chinese people's attitude toward the Yi people was racist. But there is a plethora of historical evidence to vindicate the former's heavily discriminatory and pejorative perspectives on and treatments of the Yi people. One of the most telling examples is the Southern Song discourse of the Jurchens, the northern "barbarians" who created the Jin dynasty, as a species between humans and beasts who were "hard to change" (Tilman 1982: 263n7).[16] The ruling elites of the Ming dynasty distinguished Confucian Koreans and non-Confucian Jurchens by calling the former "obedient barbarians" (*shunyi* 順夷) and the latter "rebellious barbarians" (*niyi* 逆夷).

The problem is not limited to Xiang's failure to closely examine how the Han Chinese treated various groups of "barbarians" surrounding the Chinese realm in relation to the Chinese philosophical tradition and whether the Chinese relationships and interactions with non-Chinese people can inspire a new normative ideal of Chinese cosmopolitanism. A more serious problem is that Xiang pays no attention to how the Chinese treatment of non-Chinese people was received by the non-Chinese "barbarians" themselves. Considering that one of Xiang's major complaints about western cosmopolitanism points to the west's failure to adopt the perspectives of the people who were subject to its "cosmopolitan" (i.e., colonial) contact, it is surprising that she does not investigate the historical records produced by those whom the Chinese people had long regarded as "barbarians."

3 What Is Chinese Cosmopolitanism?

In the end, finding the daily discourse of cosmopolitanism in the west as signaling "a superficial diversity and inclusion," Xiang presents the kernel of Chinese cosmopolitanism as grounded on the relational self, guided by the Chinese concepts of harmony and *tong* 通,[17] and promoting interactive engagement" (Xiang 2024a). It is unclear, however, how these elements can be woven into a coherent whole, thereby generating an appealing normative ideal and political practice. Moreover, each element constituting the idea of Chinese cosmopolitanism is deeply ambiguous. What exactly does the relational self mean, and how is it different from the relational account of the self of the sort some feminist scholars in the west (and beyond) valorize? Is there a morally non-controversial way to say that a certain relationship or a mode of engagement is harmonious or *tong*? Who is authorized to make such a judgment? There are additional questions that are equally important. Compared to various moral ideals of cosmopolitanism advanced not only by scholars in the west but also by Chinese/Confucian scholars,[18] what is the normative appeal of Chinese cosmopolitanism and what are its distinctive characteristics?

In any event, Chinese cosmopolitanism can be morally appealing only when it can promote a mutual understanding between China and the rest of the world, including the west, and enrich the deep interdependence of all people in the world, rather than reinforcing the east-west divide. The first thing

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

to be done toward this end is to acknowledge the critical difference between the pathological history of western colonialism and the moral ideal of western cosmopolitanism and engage constructively with the best philosophical and empirical studies by "western" (and "non-western") scholars who actively promote cross-cultural dialogue and mutual learning. It is no less important for anyone championing Chinese cosmopolitanism to closely examine the Chinese people's own historical engagement with the non-Chinese people, whom they commonly identified in terms of "barbarians," and turn the latter's political experiences and moral perspectives into philosophical resources to (re)make Chinese cosmopolitanism truly communicative, relational, and respectful.

Sungmoon Kim is Chair Professor of Political Philosophy at City University of Hong Kong, where he also serves as Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and as Director of the Center for East Asian and Comparative Philosophy. Specializing in Confucian and comparative political theory, East Asian political thought, and Korean philosophy and political theory, Kim's research has appeared in journals such as *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Contemporary Political Theory*, *European Journal of Political Theory*, *History of Political Thought*, *Journal of Politics*, and *Review of Politics*, among others. Kim is the author of six books, including *Confucian Constitutionalism: Dignity, Rights, and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2023), *Theorizing Confucian Virtue Politics: The Political Philosophy of Mencius and Xunzi* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), and *Democracy After Virtue: Toward Pragmatic Confucian Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

---

1 Shuchen Xiang, "Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism? " *Journal of World Philosophies* 9, no. 1 (2024a): 157-71.

2 Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

3 Martha C. Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 2-17.

4 Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

5 Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

6 Kor-Chor Tan*, Justice Without Borders: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and Patriotism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

7 Joseph H. Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders," *Review of Politics* 49, no. 2 (1987): 251-73.

8 David Miller, *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

9 Barrington Moore, Jr., *Moral Purity and Persecution in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

10 Heather Rae, *State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

11 The *locus classicus* of this argument is found in Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

12 See, for instance, Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). Note that Smith does not understand race as a universal, generally applicable category. He discusses a specific version of racial hierarchy in the American context and shows how it was instrumental to the creation of the "white republic" in the nineteenth-century US,

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

despite the prevailing discourse of civic republicanism. In this marvelous book, Smith embarks on a soul-searching investigation of the ideal and reality of American republicanism, which renders Xiang's sweeping claim that (most) western intellectuals are hypocrites untrue.

13 Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology 171 Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966).

14 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963).

15 For the Chinese discourse of "the barbarians," see Shao-yun Yang, *The Way of the Barbarians: Redrawing Ethnic Boundaries in Tang and Song China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019).

16 Hoyt C. Tillman, *Utilitarian Confucianism: Ch'eng Liang's Challenge to Chu Hsi* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1982).

17 Xiang translates it as "free-flow," understanding it as "a term central to Chinese medicine in which the free-low of *qi* between the different parts of the body is foundational to the health of organism" (p. 21). According to her, as a philosophical concept, *tong* encompasses "the English meanings of exchange, communication, circulation, interaction and mutual influence" (ibid.).

18 See, for instance, Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Confucian Cosmopolitanism," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 42, no. 1 (2014): 22-44; Sor-hoon Tan, "Nationalist *Guo*, Cosmopolitan *Tianxia*? Possibility of Word Order Based on Confucian Relational Ethics," in *Reimagining Nation and Nationalism in Multicultural East Asia*, ed. Sungmoon Kim and Hsin-Wen Lee (London: Routledge, 2018), 59-81.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Is Cosmopolitanism Another Form of Universalism? Comments on Shuchen Xiang's "Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism?"

BRYAN W. VAN NORDEN
Vassar College, USA and Wuhan University, China (brvannorden@vassar.edu)

In her provocative introduction to her forthcoming book, Shuchen Xiang (i) challenges the common narrative that Anglo-European colonialism and its accompanying genocide is the almost inevitable result of "the west's" technological superiority. She argues that (ii) the common narrative assumes a "Social Darwinist belief that domination is intrinsic to human nature" (Xiang 2024a).[1] However, such accounts are pseudo-scientific and implausible in accounting for what we find in history. In addition, (iii) the common narrative is politically problematic, because it "is ultimately racist: when one pursues this kind of argument to its ultimate assumptions, the reasons given for European (technological) superiority is the superiority of the European race" (Xiang 2024a). The real explanation for Anglo-European colonialism, Xiang suggests, is (iv) the racism that has been central to the western tradition since ancient times. In contrast, to the preceding, (v) Confucianism "had a cultural conception of personhood" (Xiang 2024a), and (vi) the Chinese tradition does not have an indigenous concept of race. I'll discuss each of these points in turn.

I find very plausible Xiang's argument that colonialism and genocide are not the inevitable consequence of technological superiority. I agree that we would only find domination an inevitable consequence of technological superiority if we make the Hobbesian assumption that "humans have a universal and constant human nature as a predator whose instinct is to kill with a weapon" (Xiang 2024a). However, as Gandhi points out in *Hind Swaraj*, most of actual history consists of humans cooperating with one another. These everyday states of cooperation are so unremarkable, though, that they do not figure in our written histories, which are essentially records of the wars and conflicts that are aberrations in human behavior (see Gandhi 2009, especially Chapter XVII: Passive Resistance).[2] Consequently, something else must explain why the temporary technological superiority of the west led to colonialist genocide.

I am very sympathetic to the preceding claims. However, one of the reasons that I look forward to reading Xiang's book is that I think she was not able to clarify, in the space of a brief article, many of the other claims that she advances in development or support of the preceding theses. For example, when she states that "the reasons given for European (technological) superiority is the superiority of the European race" (Xiang 2024a), I'm not sure whether she is making a claim about all of the explanations of European technological superiority that have been offered so far, or only some. Presumably, Xiang acknowledges that there was a period in which Europe was technologically superior to other parts of the world (at least in some respects), so she would also agree that there must be some explanations of this phenomenon that do not assume or at least support notions of European racial superiority.

The period of western technological superiority is closely connected with the rise of modern natural science. I suspect that a major factor in the development of modern natural science was that firearms were socially and intellectually transformative for European civilization in a way that they were not for Chinese civilization. These differences in the historical influence of firearms are due to accidents of history, rather than intrinsic cultural or racial superiority or inferiority. Specifically, heavily armored knights on horseback and castles were central to the power structure in Europe in the Middle Ages

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

and both had become almost invulnerable by the end of the period. (A knight was vulnerable only if he could be knocked off his horse, which was also armored, and castles generally had to be starved into submission.) However, the introduction of firearms in Europe essentially brought the feudal era to a close. Any hastily trained foot soldier with a matchlock gun could take out the most powerful knight, and canons made even the best European defensive walls obsolete. (The fall of the walled city of Constantinople to Turkish canons in 1453 is often used as a convenient endpoint for the European Middle Ages.) The end of the feudal era opened the way for capitalism and democracy. Moreover, the study of the trajectory of bullets and cannonballs revealed that Aristotle's physics was erroneous, which encouraged people to question the Church's dominance of intellectual discourse.[3] The precise measurement and mathematization of motion required to fully understand and control the projectiles fired by cannons and rifles provided a new paradigm for human knowledge that was quickly applied to a wide range of phenomena by Galileo, Newton, and later Dalton and Darwin. (On some accounts, it was cannon balls that Galileo dropped from the Tower of Pisa to falsify Aristotle's theory of natural motion.)

Gunpowder and firearms were, of course, invented in China during the Tang dynasty, reverse-engineered by the Mongols, and brought to Europe by Islamic traders. Firearms were used successfully in East-Asian warfare, but they were not fundamentally transformative on the battlefield. Heavily armored knights were not important in East-Asian warfare, and Chinese city walls were so thick that they continued to be fairly resistant to cannons as late as the early twentieth century. Consequently, due to accidents of history, firearms were not socially and intellectually disruptive in China in the way that they were in Europe, and as a result they did not cause changes that led to the rise of modern capitalism and natural science. This explanation is merely one hypothesis among many about the rise of modern natural science, but it is illustrative of what an explanation might look like that does not depend upon or reinforce notions of East Asia being intellectually backward. I wonder what Xiang's favored theory is for European technological dominance in the early modern period.

Xiang also says that she is challenging the "broadly Marxist historiographical tradition," which claims that "racial ideology was invented during the age of colonialism to justify, ex post facto, the right of European colonialism, genocide and enslavement of entire continents" (Xiang 2024a). As Xiang argues, we are increasingly aware of the extent to which pre-cursors of the modern concept of race are present, and even central, in thinkers like Aristotle. Xiang cites Isaac (2004) and Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler (2009) on this point. One might add to the list the work of McCoskey (2012), Leunissen (2017), and Jensen (2018).[4] Peter K. J. Park's work (2013) has also been revolutionary in revealing the ways in which racism led to the exclusion of East Asian, South Asian, and African philosophy from the mainstream philosophical canon.[5] However, I wonder what Xiang would say about another important aspect of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, which is that colonialism is in large part a result of capitalism. Without denying Xiang's thesis that "a racial and colonial ideology preceded its material manifestation" (Xiang 2024a), we might add that Lenin (1996) was right in thinking that the rise of capitalism was another necessary condition for the development of colonialism.[6] I would be interested in hearing what Xiang has to say about this supplemental explanation of the rise of colonialism.

Some of Xiang's philosophical claims also seem, to me, to require further clarification. She writes that the racism in the western tradition is closely allied with the philosophical errors of "metaphysical determinism/universalism/moral infallibilism (i.e., the Lord)" (Xiang 2024a). In a footnote, she adds to the list "universal/objective/absolute/infallible moral values and principles" (Xiang 2024a n9).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

However, "universal," "objective," and "infallible" mean very different things for most philosophers.[7] I think Xiang and I agree that genocide is categorically immoral, and I assume we both think that this is a universal truth. (If she does not think it is a universal truth, why does she criticize the Conquistadors? They would presumably not agree with us about their actions being wrong.) Now, are Xiang and I infallible in our belief that genocide is categorically wrong? In principle, I think I am fallible about everything, but there are certain claims (like my opposition to genocide or my belief that 2+2=4) that are so central to my "web of belief" (to borrow a phrase from Quine) that I would feel conceptually lost if I were asked to imagine giving them up.[8] Maybe we could say that such beliefs are "indispensable" to our way of life, even if we do not regard our beliefs as infallible?

Is the immorality of genocide an objective truth? Well, at the risk of sounding like a stereotypical philosophy professor, it depends upon what one means by "objective." One conception of objective morality would be (to borrow a phrase Xiang uses) "that one's values are isomorphic with the ontological structure of reality" (Xiang 2024a). You would think this if you were a Platonist like G. E. Moore or Iris Murdoch, who believed that our moral beliefs and practices (insofar as they are justified) are grounded in their correspondence to non-natural entities or properties. However, a Kantian would say that there are no objects, correspondence with which makes ethical claims true. For a Kantian, genocide is immoral because it violates a demand of practical rationality that we treat other humans as ends-in-themselves and not as mere means to our goals. You can call this "objectivity," but it is importantly different from the Platonistic variety.

Another rationale one might give for rejecting genocide is that it is contrary to human nature. Xiang argues that it is "it is fallacious to posit that a putative 'human nature' has a one-way causal efficacy, in the mode of the philosophical concept of an essence" (Xiang 2024a). I was not completely sure what Xiang means by "essence" here. She states that "Confucianism had a cultural conception of personhood," which means that "[u]nlike other biological organisms, human must create the environment in which they can flourish. The environment we need for our human becoming is not found; it is created" (Xiang 2024a). Thus phrased, it is hard to know who would disagree. The distinction between *nomos* and *physis* was central to ancient Greek philosophy, and both Plato and Aristotle were perfectly aware that humans create culture and need socialization to flourish. To illustrate her claim, Xiang observes that, "Although language is a human (social) creation, we could not feasibly be human without language" (Xiang 2024a). I agree, but (again) Xiang appears to be making a claim that is universal and (in some sense) objective. Moreover, Noam Chomsky (among others) has appealed to the universality of human language as evidence for the existence of human nature (see Chomsky and Foucault 2015).[9]

Xiang also states that her view is "filial to the historical legacy that is the Confucian understanding of human nature" (Xiang 2024a). However, while Confucians have certainly disagreed substantially about the precise details of human nature, the dominant Confucian narratives of human nature for millennia have been essentialist (in some sense of that term). Mengzi argues that "human nature is good," in the sense that all humans have innate but incipient dispositions toward virtuous emotions, motivations, and perceptions. This is the point of the famous "child-at-the-well" thought experiment (Mengzi 2A6; see Van Norden 2022).[10] Mengzi makes explicit the universality of these incipient reactions when he writes:

> […] mouths have the same preferences in flavors, ears have the same preferences in sounds, eyes have the same preferences in attractiveness. When it comes to hearts, are they alone without

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

> preferences in common? What is it that our hearts prefer in common? I say that it is order and righteousness. The sages first discovered what our hearts prefer in common. Hence, order and righteousness delight our hearts like meat delights our mouths (Mengzi 6A7, from Van Norden, 2008: 151).[11]

Mengzi's view became the orthodox interpretation among later Confucians of the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Of course, there are important differences among these thinkers over the precise implications of Mengzi's view, but all of them were essentialist in some sense. Of course, Mengzi and his later followers also recognized that, to become a fully virtuous person, our underlying good nature must either be "developed" or fully "discovered" (on this distinction, see Ivanhoe [2000].).[12] But Aristotle and Plato also had broadly developmental views of human nature (see, for example, Burnyeat [1980])[13], so this does not serve to distinguish Confucianism from classical European views. Perhaps, though, what Xiang wishes to deny is simply that human nature is absolutely fixed and unchanging, completely impervious to socialization. Certainly, some modern Anglo-European thinkers have been tempted by such an extreme view (see MacIntyre [2007], especially Chapter 5: Why the Enlightenment Project of Justifying Morality Had to Fail).[14] But it is worth noting that many ancient Anglo-European philosophers were similar to Confucians in believing both that there is a universal human nature, and that this nature requires socialization in order to fully realize its capacity (for a discussion, see Van Norden [2007]).[15]

Xiang complains that "much of academic Chinese philosophy written today trivializes what is provocative about Chinese philosophy" (Xiang 2024a). However, the only works she cites that might plausibly be described as "academic Chinese philosophy" are James Legge's nineteenth-century translation of the Analects and Donald Munro's *The Concept of Man in Early China*, which was written over fifty years ago. She makes no reference (at least in this essay) to major recent Chinese philosophers such as Chen Guying, Chen Lai, Tang Wenming, Yang Lihua, Li Zehou, or even to seminal earlier New Confucian such as Mou Zongsan or Tang Junyi. Nor does Xiang make mention of the scholars who have revolutionized the study of Chinese philosophy in the west in the last few decades, such as Lee H. Yearley (1990), Kwong-loi Shun (1997), or Philip J. Ivanhoe (2000). Consequently, I was left unsure whom she was criticizing.[16]

I have two final concerns about Xiang's project. If she is right, there is a way in which Confucian civilizations are fundamentally better morally than the civilizations that arose from the conjunction of Greco-Roman philosophy and Christianity. I am sure that Xiang would reject the inference from "Confucian civilization is morally better than Anglo-European civilization" to "Chinese are morally better than Anglo-Europeans," but I worry that if her work is widely accepted, there are many people who will draw this conclusion. Second, even if it is true that the concepts of race and racism are inventions of the Anglo-European tradition, this does not mean that there is no racism in contemporary China. I'm not suggesting that Xiang herself is ignorant of the problem of racism in contemporary China (see Tsoi, Ni, Chen, and Allen [2016] for a minor illustration of the problem).[17] But, again, I worry if her view might help rationalize nationalistic notions of contemporary Chinese cultural superiority.

My brief comments have been wide-ranging, but this reflects the provocative and intriguing nature of Xiang's ambitious project. I look forward to reading her book and learning more about the details of her position.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Bryan W. Van Norden is James Monroe Taylor Chair in Philosophy at Vassar College (USA), and Chair Professor in the School of Philosophy at Wuhan University (China). Van Norden has published ten books on Chinese and comparative philosophy, including *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* (2011), *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (2017), *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy: Han to the 20th Century* (2014, with Justin Tiwald), *Classical Chinese for Everyone: A Guide for Absolute Beginners* (2019), and most recently the third edition of *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (2023, with P.J. Ivanhoe). Van Norden's video lecture series on Chinese philosophy is freely available online, as is a Ted-Ed video on Confucius he wrote.
His books and articles have been translated into Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Estonian, Farsi, German, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Turkish.

---

1 Shuchen Xiang, "Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism? " *Journal of World Philosophies* 9, no. 1 (2024a): 157-71.

2 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *"Hind Swaraj" and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony J. Parel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

3 Aristotle never had a good explanation of projectile motion (which for him would have been primarily the motion of arrows or stones thrown from a sling), but the impetus theorists of the Middle Ages predicted that a cannonball will move in a straight line until its impetus is exhausted, after which it will fall straight down. It was soon realized, though, that projectiles move in parabolas. Chinese thinkers were no doubt aware of the same phenomenon, but there was no reason for this discovery to be disruptive of the intellectual status quo in China, in the way it was for Europeans operating against the intellectual background of the Church's endorsement of Aristotelianism.

4 Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Erik Jensen, *Barbarians in the Greek and Roman World* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2018); Mariska Leunissen, *From Natural Character to Moral Virtue in Aristotle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Denise Eileen McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and Its Legacy* (New York: Tauris, 2012).

5 Peter K. J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon, 1780-1830* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013).

6 Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, intro. Norman Lewis and James Malone, (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1996).

7 "Metaphysical determinism" is usually another name for hard determinism, a position in the free will debate. I don't think that is what Xiang wants to invoke, but I was not sure.

8 For a wide-ranging discussion of the philosophy of W. V. Quine and its relevance to socio-political issues, see Kam and Van Norden (2022). Bryan Kam, and Bryan Van Norden, "A Discussion of Quine's 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism,'" TwitterSpaces audio dialogue recorded on 13 September, 2022, archived with lecture slides on YouTube at https://youtu.be/laOUvYHgbvQ (accessed August 16, 2023).

9 Noam Chomsky, and Michel Foucault, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature* (New York: The New Press, 2015).

10 Bryan W. Van Norden, "The Child at the Well," in *Philosophy Illustrated*, ed. Helen De Cruz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 7-10.

11 trans. Bryan W. Van Norden, *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2008).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

[12] Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, Second Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000).

[13] Miles F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. O. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 69-92.

[14] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Third edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press; 2007).

[15] Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[16] Kwong-loi Shun, *Mencius and Early Chinese Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

[17] Grace Tsoi, Vincent Ni, Heather Chen, and Kerry Allen, "What's behind China's 'Racist' Whitewashing Advert?" *BBC News* (May 27, 2016), https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-36394917 (accessed September 8, 2023).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

A Response to Shuchen Xiang's "Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism?"

DON J. WYATT
Middlebury College, USA (wyatt@middlebury.edu)

Knowledgeable observers, especially those who are members of the Sinological establishment of scholars, have long recognized that China, in contrast to the west, has generally had a different approach to the reception of the "other" and thus, consequently, a different relationship to the frequently conjoined and intermeshed manifestations of colonialism and racism. Historically, this reception of the "other" can be defined by an approach that we may describe as more ecumenical, and sometimes strikingly so, and it is thought to have led to a far weaker relationship than has been manifested by the west to colonialism as well as to the racism that—when occurring within the context of what has now come to be called the Global South—invariably attends it. Even in referring to this phenomenon as *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, at least in her feature article in the *Journal of World Philosophies* to which I am responding, Shuchen Xiang reveals that, by so terming it, she does not have in mind the original sense of the concept as conceived of by the ancient Greek Cynics of the fourth century BCE, whereby "a cosmopolitan is a citizen of the world and thus not a citizen grounded in a particular culture and community" (Xiang 2024a).[1] She argues instead for a cosmopolitanism that is far more grounded and one that is based on a "post-racial self" that "is ultimately a relational self, enriched by difference and one that sees growth in terms of sympathetically understanding other perspectives" (Xiang 2024a). In other words, with *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, if it can be sustained and applied along the lines and in the manner contended, Professor Xiang has posited a mindset, outlook, and approach that would be as impactful for humane human interrelations in our times as it was for the times for which she seeks to extract evidence for it. However, before arriving at an appraisal of the viability of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* for our times, let us now turn to her interpretation of the body of accumulated evidence on which she stakes her case.

1 The Question of Colonialism: Zheng He versus Columbus

To begin to illustrate *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* as it was historically evinced, Shuchen Xiang enlists first and foremost the compelling example of the famous eunuch naval commander Zheng He. As useful as any factor, however, in accounting for the difference between Zheng He in Africa and Columbus in the New World Americas is that which is both captured in and signaled by Xiang's stated clause, in referring pointedly to the Chinese, "[h]ad it been part of their horizon of significance" (Xiang 2024a). Beyond the purpose of inspiring awe there via the grandness of their immense flotillas, whether the Chinese of the early fifteenth century had counted the eastern coastline of Africa as "part of their horizon of significance" is of course subject to debate. However, categorically inarguable is the fact that, had they ever encountered them, neither of the bleak and desolate coastlines of the Americas would have qualified for inclusion.[2] This disinterest can hardly be captured any better than by the late Asianist geographer and historian Rhoads Murphey, when he wrote,

> If they had reached Europe, they probably would have been no more impressed by it than by what they saw in Southeast Asia, India, the Persian Gulf, or Africa, nor any more than they were to be a century later by the early European arrivals in China, still to their way of thinking crude

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

> barbarians. Fifteenth-century North America would have seemed to them too primitive even to mention (Murphey 1997: 131).[3]

In other words, the disposition of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* notwithstanding, a plausible pre-emption to wanton colonialist aggression that Professor Xiang perhaps appreciates but has neither addressed nor accounted for fully enough here is largely economic. It is nothing other than the long-entrenched notion of Chinese self-sufficiency, an idea that was a functional reality in the fifteenth century, although it subsequently, within a few centuries, had become a myth. Although the repatriated Venetian Marco Polo (1254-1324) of the fourteenth century was among the earliest to attest at least implicitly to this self-sufficiency, visitors who directly experienced China in the sixteenth century were unfiltered and willing partners in the dissemination of an image of the empire as self-contained and self-fulfilled. Assuredly, one element in explaining the non-exploitive and non-extractive comportment of the Chinese of this period was surely the self-perception of a lack of any need to behave otherwise. At the very least, in Zheng He's time, if not substantially later, there was no absolute necessity within China for either consumable products or physical labor from outside, regardless of how desirable the former might have been. Indeed, as the pioneering Italian Jesuit missionary and informant Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), referring to an earlier cohort of observers was to opine,

> Generally speaking, it may be said with truth that all of these writers are correct when they say that everything which the people need for their well-being and sustenance, whether it be for food or clothing or even delicacies or superfluities, is abundantly produced within the borders of the kingdom and not imported from foreign climes (Gallagher 1942 [repr. 1953]: 10).[4]

However, in complete fairness, the principal point that Shuchen Xiang seeks to make is that the interstate posture that China has conventionally adopted, despite being fully capable of having acted otherwise, has consistently been just as non-colonialist as it has been anti-aggressive. Or, to employ her own words, "Historical China, contrary to a pervasive stereotype, had all the technological, organization and economic ability to have conquered the world" (Xiang 2024a). Here, again, at least for the early modern era that is the prime focus of consideration, this assessment is affirmatively documented by the record of Matteo Ricci, who—remarking on the dissimilarities between the Chinese and his European contemporaries—asserts,

> To begin with, it seems quite remarkable when we stop to consider it, that in a kingdom of almost limitless expanse and innumerable population, and abounding in copious supplies of every description, though they have a well-equipped army and navy that could easily conquer the neighboring nations, neither the King nor his people ever think of waging a war of aggression. They are quite content with what they have and are not ambitious of conquest. In this respect they are much different from the people of Europe, who are frequently discontent with their own governments and covetous of what others enjoy (Gallagher 1942 [repr. 1953]: 54-5).[5]

Needless to say, just as much from an early modern European perspective as when Shuchen Xiang contends in hindsight, China was regarded as an entity very capable of imposing its dominion that—contrary to western proclivities—elected not to do so.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

2 Antiracist as Well as Anticolonialist?

In her articulation of her pivotal concept, Shuchen Xiang both proffers and positions *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* as having been a sort of pre-existent antidote to the oftentimes rabid racism that underlaid and buttressed the European colonialization project. For several reasons, with not the least of which being that it involves how people thought versus what actions they either did or did not take, this proposition is more provocative, more revisionist, and more empirically challenged than the "Chinese Cosmopolitanism qua anticolonialist" premise. "Chinese Cosmopolitanism qua antiracist" is also challenged by some similarly compelling alternative paradigms, of which I will endeavor at the very end of this section to propose, if not fully explicate, just a few that have been offered by other scholars.

Drawing from her own past scholarship and basing herself on the customary Chinese bedrock of Confucianism, as classically understood and expressed, Shuchen Xiang posits that *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* itself maintained "a cultural conception of personhood," by which she means that it is the nature of every human being "to create the (cultural) world in which she lives" (Xiang 2024a). Xiang goes on to contend, "Unlike other biological organisms, humans must create the environment in which they can flourish. The environment we need for our human becoming is not found; it is created" (Xiang 2024a). Xiang, citing persuasively the eminent cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz, seems here to be intimating that *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* best facilitates this development of personhood, whereas colonialism and its invariably attendant culturally induced racism does not.

Overall, the "nurture over nature" argument proffered by Shuchen Xiang —namely, that "there is no aspect of human nature that is not shaped by culture" (Xiang 2024a)—is well taken. However, just as surely as it can be the basis for the explication of commonalities, culture has been and continues to be the common denominator for defining differences—indeed, differences of the type that is referred to above in the quotation by Rhoads Murphey, which includes the pejorative designation of at least the initial European visitors to China as "crude barbarians." To be sure, as historian Raymond Dawson observed within the context of Confucianism, "the difference between Chinese and barbarians was seen as cultural rather than racial. Among the peoples which inhabited this part of the world there were no striking racial distinctions in appearance, so it was those people who had not absorbed Chinese culture who were thought of as alien" (Dawson 1981 [repr. 1986]: 70).[6] We must also take into consideration that fact that all culturalist—meant here in the sense of nativist—thought, whereby distinctions between people are made that might fall well short of representing rabid racism, may nonetheless very well still incorporate some element of cultural imperialism. While it always in some sense impinges on personhood of the many others it subordinates, this form of imperialist thought need not at all take the form of such extremes as either genocide or enslavement, or the brutal degradation or destruction of habitat or the perniciously extractive natural resource practices that we tend to associate with the colonialist enterprise. Unquestionably, well short of unbridled xenophobia, this imperialist dimension of hyper-culturalist attitudes can manifest itself as benignly as a kind of ritualized condescension toward "otherness."

Terminologically, this traditional Chinese inclination to "barbarianize" the representatives of foreignness has been variously designated and, moreover, itself represents a venerable tradition—one that is essentially as old as Confucianism itself. Shao-yun Yang, writing in his *The Way of the Barbarians: Redrawing Ethnic Boundaries in Tang and Song China*, despite restricting himself to the period of the Neo-

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Confucian revamping of the philosophy and thereby excluding Europeans from consideration, has sought to distil this patronizing attitude down to a single term—supremacism (Yang 2019: 152).[7] However, Yang does discuss the internal situation in China under the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644-1911). As he notes, as late as the mid-eighteenth century, with it being only a century prior to the exertion of the full force of European incursions into the empire, wherein "imperial propaganda and censorship had tempered the ethnocentrism embedded in the Chinese-barbarian dichotomy and replaced it with a universalist view of 'the distinction between center and periphery' as an arbitrary man-made construct, a mere 'line drawn on the earth'" (Yang 2019: 153). Yet, if not for its extreme lateness of development alone and if only because the Manchus themselves as its formulators comprised the ethnic "other" and were eventually to be forced out of power, this universalist scheme can hardly be expected either to have wholly temporized or to have permanently stymied, not to mention redressed or reversed, the inequities and injustices of the accumulated past. Consequently, approaching the unflaggingly resilient evincing of the customary ultra-culturalist disposition from the standpoint of literature and covering the immense swath of time from the period of the formulation of the classics up until about 1850, Haun Saussy, in his *The Making of Barbarians: Chinese Literature and Multilingual Asia*, describes how the "barbarianization" of foreigners, even when without hostility, was a largely manufactured process, wherein—because empires necessarily "involve, by definition, the subordination of alien peoples," they also "demand translation." Therefrom, he succinctly concludes, "Civilizations each manufacture their own barbarians" (Saussy 2022: 136).[8] Hendrik Schulte Nordholt, in *China and the Barbarians: Resisting the Western World Order*, characterizes the Chinese supremacist mentality as indeed a source of pride but also a form of resistance against what was emerging as an interstate system, when he writes, "Until well into the nineteenth century, China considered itself to be so superior that it felt no need to compare itself with other countries" (Nordholt 2018: 177).[9]

3 Chinese Cosmopolitanism Itself as a Philosophy of Explanation

However, despite the interpretations just offered, which can be in many ways so detracting (whether we wish to call it supremacist or barbarian-manufacturing or whatever have you), we nonetheless can all agree that there is something about the Chinese paradigm that—even while culturally hegemonistic—starkly distinguishes itself from all comparable western models. Such is clearly to be observed and borne out historically by the examples that Shuchen Xiang provides. Chinese dealings with the ethnic and assuredly with the racial "other," at least in their time, were no match in either intrusiveness, invasiveness, or destructiveness with, say, the predations of the Spanish conquistadors among the Aztecs.

Shuchen Xiang's *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is unique on many levels but one of the most consequential is that it is the first to attempt to explain the comparatively non-predatory, non-colonialist disposition of the Chinese—being one that we all must, to some degree, acknowledge—on largely, if not purely, philosophical grounds. In this way, hers is an attempt to explain not merely what has heretofore happened but why it has happened. There are doubtless numerous reasons why this philosophical approach is advantageous to our understanding but, without question, among them is that—through it—Shuchen Xiang has sought to reposition Chinese philosophy itself, disabusing us from viewing it—to use her words— "as an inoffensive, white-adjacent 'model minority' that does not challenge

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

the status quo" (Xiang 2024a). This repositioning will cause all of us with interest in and engagement with the discipline never to look at it quite the same way again, which can only be for the good.

That said, Shuchen Xiang's *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is hardly impervious to certain challenges and, being so much based on what has been—that is, what has occurred and what has forged a pattern, one of the most unpredictable of these potential hurdles consists of how it will fare going into the future. Inarguably, despite its powers of explanation in the present, which may be deemed to be considerable, the explanatory viability and durability of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* are entirely dependent on the proverbial past continuing to serve as prologue to the future. This continuity is contingent on China's demonstration of the philosophy's precepts not merely as a cultural entity but also as a modern nation-state actor. To be sure, just as much as it rests on established evidentiary foundations, the functionality of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is also subject nonetheless to certain realpolitik intangibles.

To illustrate this point, we may, by way of conclusion, return essentially to where we began, with the edifying example of Zheng He's encounter with Africa. Contemporary China's investment in and its scope of interaction with Africa already surpasses a level that ever could have been imagined, envisioned, or comprehended in the early fifteenth century.[10] Today, for example, with only one or two small exceptions, China maintains bilateral trade agreements with effectively all of the fifty-plus nations constituting Africa and there is every reason to expect these ties to deepen and complexify.[11] Moreover, as David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman characterize the current dynamics,

> Bilateral relations require two interlocutors, yet China's size and resources allow it to initiate most of its interaction with African countries. China tends to determine the level of interaction, the types of activities, and the terms of agreements. African states want more international respect and acceptance of their continent as an emerging world player (Shinn and Eisenman 2012: 362).[12]

Assuming that trends and terms of engagement continue, then the natural set of questions that they pose for Chinese Cosmopolitanism is quite discernibly clear and just as behavior-dependent as they are reliant on mentality. Will China continue to subscribe to the established pattern of an anti-colonialist in its relations with the continent of Africa, as well as elsewhere? Will it continue to be so stridently antiracist? Will future Chinese continue to subscribe to and embrace the ideal that human nature is culturally conditioned by necessity just as reflexively, fervently, and fully as did their forebears? (Xiang 2024a) With respect to these questions, we find that much of the potency of argument of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* derives from the fact that it is compelling in persuading us in the affirmative.[13] Real-world realities, however, dictate that only time can and will tell us.

Don J. Wyatt is the John M. McCardell, Jr. Distinguished Professor in the Department of History at Middlebury College, Vermont (USA), where he has taught history and philosophy since 1986. During successive sabbaticals in 2004 and 2010, he was in residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey. He specializes in the intellectual history of China, with research most currently focused on the intersections between identity and violence and the nexuses between ethnicity and slavery. He is the author of *The Blacks of Premodern China* (2010) and the two *Cambridge Elements* in the Global Middle Ages series, *Slavery in East Asia* (2022) and *Song China and the World* (forthcoming). Also among his most recent publications are chapter essays in the medieval volumes of both the *Cambridge World History of Violence* and the *Cambridge World History of Slavery* as well as in *Slavery and Bonded Labor in Asia, 1250-1900*. Articles have recently appeared in the *Journal of*

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Religion and Violence and in *Mediaevalia* as well as in *Itinerario* and *China and Asia: A Journal in Historical Studies*. He is presently set editor for the volumes on ethnicity and race for Bloomsbury Publishing's new The Medieval World series. He is the past editor of the *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* as well as the former concurrent president of its Society for Song, Yuan, and Conquest Dynasties Studies. He is presently co-executive editor of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, immediate past chair of the Diversity and Equity Committee of the Association for Asian Studies, and a member of the Inclusivity and Diversity Committee of the Medieval Academy of America. He has previously served as a China Studies Mentoring Project scholarly mentor of early career award recipients under auspices of the joint Henry Luce Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies fellowships program.

---

1 Shuchen Xiang, "Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism?" *Journal of World Philosophies* 9, no. 1 (2024a): 157-71.

2 Despite the spurious claims made by the late Gavin Menzies, in such works as *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* (2002), the Chinese of the fifteenth century, whether under the lead of Zheng He or anyone else, did not discover America. Nor did they ever reach Europe. We fortunately find this conclusion reaffirmed far more often and persuasively than it is not. For example, most recently, while noting that "their contribution to early globalization cannot be disparaged or overlooked," the scholars Wu Yan and Zhongping Chen nonetheless quite aptly conclude in their meticulously thorough survey of the history of such claims, "The Chinese 'Discovery' of the Americas, Zheng He's Voyages to the Indian Ocean, and Early Globalization," that ultimately "the historical materials extant today cannot provide proof that Zheng He or other Chinese people 'discovered' the Americas before Columbus" (Wu Yan and Zhongping Chen 2023: 42). Wu Yan, and Zhongping Chen "The Chinese 'Discovery' of the Americas, Zheng He's Voyages to the Indian Ocean, and Early Globalization," *China and Asia: A Journal in Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 3-49.

3 Rhoads Murphey, *East Asia: A New History*, repr. (New York: Longman, [1996] 1997.

4 trans. Louis J. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610* repr. (New York: Random House, [1942] 1953).

5 Ricci's reference to "the King" is in fact one to the Chinese emperor. This disparity in nomenclature points to a stark dissimilarity in Chinese and early modern European political culture because, whereas from the standpoint of the former, there could be many contemporaneous kings, there could be only one emperor.

6 Raymond Dawson, *Confucius* repr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1981] 1986).

7 Shao-yun Yang, *The Way of the Barbarians: Redrawing Ethnic Boundaries in Tang and Song China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019).

8 Haun Saussy, *The Making of Barbarians: Chinese Literature and Multilingual Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

9 Hendrik Schulte Nordholt, *China and the Barbarians: Resisting the Western World Order* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2018).

10 See Robert I. Rotberg, "China's Quest for Resources, Opportunities, and Influence in Africa," in *China into Africa: Trade, Aid, and Influence*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 1-20. See also Sarah Raine, *China's African Challenges* (London: Routledge/International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009), 24-45.

11 See Don J. Wyatt, *The Blacks of Premodern China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 130.

12 David H. Shinn, and Joshua Eisenman, *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

13 Interestingly, herein, in the present essay, Shuchen Xiang explicates the Chinese term *tong* 通 which has among its multifarious meanings, "penetrating." Xiang neglects to offer us this meaning, even though her own analyses can be said to epitomize it.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism: Reply to Sungmoon Kim, Bryan Van Norden and Don J. Wyatt

SHUCHEN XIANG
Xidian University, China (shuchen.xiang@hotmail.com)

I would first like to thank Prof. Kim, Van Norden and Wyatt for taking the time to engage with my lead article and for offering their thoughts in response. I would like to thank Jacob Bender for helping me think through my reply, providing critical feedback and for reading previous drafts of this response. My thanks also to the editors Prof. Kirloskar-Steinbach and Prof. Donahue for providing their editorial guidance that helped to significantly improve the quality of this response.

1 Introduction

Although the amount of space I have is limited, my respondents all bring up important issues that I will attempt to address in this follow up response. In this clarification, I hope to show how many of the counter arguments brought up by my three respondents can be understood as examples of the "epistemology of ignorance" insofar as these counter arguments all depend on an intentionally obscured account of historical reality. The first few sections mostly address the comments that come from Prof. Wyatt and Van Norden. The final sections deal with Prof. Kim's concerns.

2 Are there "Barbarians" in Chinese Philosophy/History?

Although Prof. Wyatt takes my point that traditional China had a cultural as opposed to racial conception of self, he argues that "culture" can still be a foundation for "imperialism." Prof. Wyatt equates "culturalist" with "nativist" thought and argues that this culturalist-nativist attitude contains an "imperialist dimension" that "can manifest itself as benignly as a kind of ritualized condescension towards 'otherness'" (Wyatt 2024).[1] There are a few things I will say in response. First, culture isn't inherently nativist. As Edward Said argued in *Culture and Imperialism,* imperialism *is enabled by a certain kind of culture* (Said 1994: 8, 10).[2] This means that a culture might be chauvinistic and imperialist, but this is only one specific form of culture; not all cultures are chauvinistic and imperialistic. As I have shown in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* Chinese culture is open-ended and a hybrid product that synthesized many of the cultures (and peoples) that it came into contact with. The equation of culture with race is what makes a "culture" nativist.

Second, "barbarian" is not merely a "pejorative" term in the European context.

The concept was foundational to the first articulations of international law. Francisco de Vitoria, sixteenth-century Spanish theologian and jurist is often touted as the first father of international law. Vitoria's two most famous lectures were "De Indis Noviter Inventis"[3] ("On the Indians Recently Discovered") and "De Jure Bellis Hispanorum in Barbaros" ("On the Law of War Made by the

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Spaniards on the Barbarians"), both of which appeared in 1538-39. In "De Indis," Vitoria characterized the native Americans as barbarians[4] in order to justify the Spanish "civilizing mission" in which they govern the Americas on behalf of the natives Americans (Anghie 2004: 9).[5] The Spanish had the right to wage just war against the natives because the latter were not sovereign. They were not sovereign because they did not behave like the Spanish (the universal). As in Aristotle's theory of natural slavery, (cultural) difference is a sign of ontological deficiency and becomes an invitation for being disciplined by a master who embodies reason.[6] Similar structures can be found in the articulations of international law by Alberico Gentili, the second father of international law.

In the Greek and European cultural context, there is an important reason for why there is one term for the "barbarian" that denotes all "foreigners." "Barbarian" is an abstract concept denoting a species of immanent beings, or ontological category of semi-humans without rational agency that embody the Manichean force of evil that seeks to thwart civilization. In contrast, when the Chinese use "siyi" (the tribes of the four quarters)[7] as a shorthand to refer to the numerous tribes surrounding China, they are designating *actual peoples*. This is a very different logic to assuming an ontological category of immanent beings without rational agency who are unassimilable to civilization.

As scholars have noted, "barbarian" does not first of all denote specific persons and their ways of life. It sets up a Manichaean "other" that is antithetical to all that is "us" such that the *destruction* (or subjugation) of these "others" realizes the *sui generis*, radically autonomous, *creatio ex nihilo* nature of "our civilization" (that is, "our civilization" is then realized to be not related to anything or anybody else). "Barbarian" is thus *not a relational concept*. Although it is set up in contrast to "civilization" and the "civilized," the *destruction* of the "barbarian" takes precedence to civilization and is the more important element in the civilization-barbarism dyad. Thus, the process destroys relations in an attempt to make the "civilized" exist outside of all relationships (just like the notion of a "substance" that I analyze in my book and argue is central to understanding the ideology of race and racism). Civilization, under this view, is not a continuum and is also not caused (in the sense of being related) by anything else (See Gordon 2022: 113).[8] In sum, the western notion of the "barbarian" is not problematic simply because it sets up a contrast between "civilization" and "other people." The greater issue is that the *destruction* of the "others" (who are parsed as barbarians) realizes a totalizing and single vision of the world for those who needed to "invent" the "barbarian." The barbarian was invented on the assumption that those who bear civilization can be radically autonomous (i.e., being governed by a law (*nomos*) originating from oneself (*auto*)), can have one-way causal efficacy on the world (without themselves being affected by the world, like an unconditioned creator god or unmoved mover) *and* that this can be achieved simply by destroying some putative peoples antithetical to civilization (the "barbarian") (See Xiang 2023e: 151).[9]

3 Chinese "Supremacism"

Prof. Wyatt writes that the Song attitude to its Jurchen invaders can be characterized as "supremacism" (Wyatt 2024). As I have previously analyzed, *white* supremacism is characterized by the belief, on the part of those who self-identify as "white," that they are "substances" ("ousia"). That is, "whites" behave like substances in that they are unconditioned but have a one-way causal efficacy on the conditioned (i.e., material, immanent world). White supremacism operates according to the logic of

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

substance in which "whites" transcend the mutually conditioning relationships of nature (i.e., in the organic realm there is nothing that is unconditioned which is why all things change and are mortal; "nature" precisely *is* a network of mutually conditioning relationships). This belief that one group of people ("white") can transcend the limiting conditions of nature and have a god-like capacity to condition all "non-white" peoples (who are merely nature or "barbarian" and merely "conditioned") is the very essence of white *supremacism*.

The faith that, through perseverance, the Chinese will one day triumph over whichever conqueror had currently invaded and occupied China, be it Jurchens, Mongolian, or Manchus is not comparable to an ideology that claims the *right to dominate others*. Such faith is actually not foreign to *any* moral tradition. For the most part, moral theorists would all insist that a political entity should never violently dominate another. Arbitrary and unjustified physical domination of one political entity by another is *ipso facto* immoral. This difference between people arguing for the right to rule over *other people* versus people theorizing about their right to self-rule is crucial to understanding why colonialism and the physical domination of one group by another is a bad thing. Each time the Northern tribes invaded China huge swathes of the Chinese population were killed. As Patricia Ebrey notes, whereas in 1100, the population of Northern Song was around 100 million, after the Mongol invasion of China, by 1290, the registered population of China was down to 60 million; "Indiscriminate slaughter by Mongol armies undoubtedly accounts for some of this drop" (Ebrey 2010: 184).[10] One example of this slaughter can be seen in 1236, when Ogödei, Chinggis's third son, ordered the total slaughter of all one million plus residents of the city of Chengdu (Ebrey 2010: 170). We should expect a group of people to both resent this kind of violent behavior and to resist it. One cannot equate the attitude that believes that only one form of life should rule over *other people* with the attitude that a people should rule over themselves (i.e., what we would simply call "self-determination") and so have a right to resist foreign occupation.

4 Technology and Colonialism

Prof. Van Norden's response raises the issue of the connection between colonialism and technology used for warfare—such as firearms, the rise of modern capitalism and natural science—as well as the cultural changes that such technologies brought about (Van Norden 2024).[11] Although these points are interesting historical details, the reason I brought up technology in my lead article was for four main reasons that I will detail below.

The first, which Van Norden recognizes, is that when we insist that modern science and technology were *the* reason behind western colonialism, then we are also making prior metaphysical assumptions. The most problematic of these assumptions is that this kind of behavior is simply a natural offshoot of human nature. As Van Norden summarizes, it sees "domination [as] an inevitable consequence of technological superiority if we make the Hobbesian assumption" about human nature as being a "Man as a predator whose natural instinct is to kill with a weapon" (Van Norden 2024). It is problematic because such a view insists that a *tool* or means to some end is in fact the reason or cause of that end. This kind of attitude functions as apologia for western colonialism and genocide. The reason why I wrote this book was, in part, to push back against the idea that we are all simply "born racist." *Chinese*

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Cosmopolitanism attempts to explain why it was the west that pursued such colonial ends whilst China did not.

Second, in referencing the scholarly tendency to attribute European colonization of the earth to European technological superiority, I was referring to Europe's own rhetorical justification for the appropriation of native land. In particular, I had in mind the Spaniards' justification for why they were superior to the indigenous peoples of the Americas. As I write in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, "A dominant folk assumption, inherited from the Greeks, is that the capacity for *techne* (one of the virtues of the intellect) displays one's humanity, and that Europe, unlike other more primitive nations, had this technological capacity (Pagden 1982: 72–5)" (Xiang 2023a: 134). As Pagden writes, the Spanish scholastics saw the inability of the natives to exploit the earth through technology as a sign of mental deficiency (Pagden 1982: 74-5). This motif recurs throughout European intellectual-philosophical attitudes towards the Americas and was a standard justification for the expropriation of native lands. Locke's use of natural law to appropriate land in the Americas should be well known.[12] As Robert Williams Jr. writes in *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*, "Locke's discourse thus legitimated the appropriation of the American wilderness as a right, and even as an imperative, under natural law" (Williams Jr. 1990: 248). Locke's natural-law discourse was seized upon with alacrity by colonial radicals (Williams Jr. 1990: 247). In sum, *perception* of technological competence in Europeans and incompetence in non-Europeans was central to the discourse that legitimized Europeans' "right" to native lands.

Third, the main reason for bringing up the history of Zheng He seems to have been missed by Van Norden. The issue at hand does not specifically deal with the rise of European technology and science. That issue is tangential, and I do not address that topic specifically in my book (that is, I do not need to provide an account of the rise of modern European science). The reason why I bring up the historical example of Zheng He (a Muslim in, at the time, the world's most powerful naval power), was simply to illustrate that the military power *was there*, and it could have been used to physically dominate other, weaker groups of people. As I wrote, we know that colonization and genocide was what the Spanish chose to do with what little technological power their military had. Even when Europe *knew* they were technologically weak in comparison to known peer-competitors (after all, it was the rise of the Ottoman empire, and their obstruction of trade routes to the East that forced Columbus to try to find "India" by sailing west), they *still* thought in terms of world domination.[13]

Another example of Europe trying to dominate the world prior to having more sophisticated technology than their peers is the European crusades, an effort to reclaim formerly Christian Holy Land territories that Europeans considered a "holy war." The weapons they had for such an undertaking were fairly primitive: spears, swords, axes, and maces.[14] Similarly, colonization was seen as *holy war,* and all non-Europeans were minions of the devil who had to be destroyed or converted to secure Christendom and civilization (Xiang 2023a: 80-2). It happened that in their "holy war" against the native Americans, the Europeans had better weaponry, but the attitude of conquering land as part of a holy war *predated the availability of such weaponry*. Chinese naval power, contemporaneously, clearly was superior to that of the west (in both quantity and quality) which means that the "tool" that could have been used for such a colonial empire was available. However, the difference is the *ideology* did not exist.

Fourth, in appealing to the story of Zheng He, I am also countering the racist, colonial but pervasive European narrative that the west is technologically superior as well as the myth of non-western

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

technological deficiency. In *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation,* the political scientist and scholar of international relations John M. Hobson argues that "the East (which was more advanced than the West between 500 and 1800) provided a crucial role in enabling the rise of modern Western civilization" (Hobson 2004: 2).[15] As he writes, the West and East have been "fundamentally and consistently linked since 500 CE" and the rise of the West would have been "inconceivable without the contributions of the East" as they pioneered and delivered many "'resource portfolios' (e.g., technologies, institutions and ideas) to Europe" (Hobson 2004: 2-5). I appealed to the story of Zheng He as it offsets Columbus's "discovery" of the American continent which, under a Eurocentric narrative, testifies to the autonomous brilliance and innate superiority of the west.

In summary, theses that attribute European colonialism to "European technological dominance in the early modern period" (Van Norden 2024) should acknowledge both the practice of colonialism and non-violent, cross-cultural interactions between Europe and the rest of the world. Such theses overgeneralize European technological superiority and ignore how colonialism involved the cultural appropriation of knowledge from non-western countries.[16] As I show in my book, cultural progress is always the result of interaction. The message of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is that the Chinese tradition enjoyed longevity because it was willing to learn and hybridize.[17] The western, racist narrative of its own Enlightenment is thus one that denies the reality of cross-cultural interaction and learning. In Van Norden's example of firearms, what the Europeans finally "invented" was a result of Chinese, Mongolian, Muslim and finally European collaboration.

However, my interest isn't in comparing which civilization was more materially advanced; most major civilizations at some point in history can lay claim to being the most advanced, relative to their contemporaries, in some domain. There's a proverbial expression in the modern Chinese language, the earliest iteration of which seems to come from the novel *The Scholars* (儒林外史): "prosperity and decline never last; the yellow river runs east for thirty years, then west for thirty years" (三十年河东，三十年河西; my translation; the functional translation of this is "change is the only constant") (Jiao and Stone 2014: 174).[18] A similar sentiment is expressed by James Baldwin, and as I quoted, "no one holds power forever" (quoted in Xiang 2023a: 12). This leads me to my last point: we all have power at some point, and it is not in the nature of power for it to be eternal. What matters is what one chooses to do with that power. The example of Zheng He is intended to show that having overwhelming technological power does not mean that one automatically desires to use that power for violent domination or to coerce others. For *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* the best use of power is to recognize the existing potencies of others (not to coerce them by covering over them) and to ensure co-empowerment for others as this is the more efficacious way to sustain power for oneself. As *Analects* 6.30 says: the person of *ren* ("humaneness"), in wishing to establish himself, seeks to establish others, wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks to enlarge others (夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人). It is only when power is co-empowerment that it is sustainable. This leads me to explaining, once again, a central thesis of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism:* the divergent Chinese and western understanding of the relationship between morality and power.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

5 Morality and Power

There are some scholars—for example, Sungmoon Kim in his response to my lead article—that might view the methodology of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* as asymmetrical. They may accuse me (which Kim does) of presenting the "good" or "moral" aspects of Chinese history and philosophy whilst only presenting the "bad," non-ideal, and/or historically contingent aspects of western civilization.[19] Scholars that would accuse me of asymmetry fail to see how racism, as an ideology, was a *moral* ideology and can be considered a form of "moral objectivism." This is why I referenced James Baldwin in my lead article and how I use the terms universalism, moral objectivism, and infallibilism (Xiang 2024a).[20] Such a claim, on its own, does not then imply that I am necessarily against all forms of "moral objectivism." However, racism *as a kind of moral objectivism* was exactly what helped to provide the interpretive framework for Europeans as they embarked on the colonial project. In short, I am not presenting the Chinese "ideal" and comparing them to the western "non-ideal." Moralistic racist ideology *was the ideal*. Western racism certainly was not a mere "accidental" or "non-essential" part of the western philosophical tradition and history. The western ideal *was* a form of "moral objectivism" that attempts to bring about "the good" by simply destroying "objects" that are deemed to be "bad" or "evil." The enacted behavior of such moral objectivism is racial domination and racial genocide.

One way of describing this kind of moral dogma is in terms of "bad faith." Lewis Gordon, for example, has compared anti-black racism to Sartre's account of "bad faith"[21] (Gordon 1995) and Sartre's account of antisemitism (see Sartre 1963).[22] Baldwin's existentialist claims about moral objectivism follow that of Sartre and are echoed by Gordon. As I explained in my paper "Sinophobia, Imperialism, Disorder without Responsibility," the person of "bad faith" merely tries to bring about value by destroying or "removing" the "bad" aspects of existence (Xiang 2022: 54).[23] It is such a naïve belief that gives its practitioners a sense of security and infallibility insofar as they destroy the "bad" and thus safeguard the "good" without actually improving themselves. Paralleling Sartre's reading of anti-Semitism in terms of those who would rather wish morality was a given rather than to be creatively realized, Lewis Gordon reads the antiblack racist as similarly beholden to a kind of moral Manicheanism (Gordon 1995: 23). This is why bad faith, racism, moral infallibilism and a Manichean interpretation of the world in terms of good and evil complement each other.

Van Norden's response seems to suggest that people now know the "moral truth" that colonialism is bad. If this is his position, it is naïve for it does not present an accurate account of the history of western colonialism and its development into neo-colonialism. I here give two examples for why this interpretation (that it was the discovery of "moral truth" that led us to know that colonialism is "bad") is problematic: the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism and how the British slave trade ended.

The development of colonialism into neo-colonialism is described in *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*.[24] In this work, Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), a Pan-Africanist, Ghanaian revolutionary who led the Gold Coast to independence from British colonialism, and the first Prime Minister and President of Ghana, writes that in the post-war period, western powers wished to maintain their previous colonies. However,

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

> Experience soon proved that the attempts to do so would be disastrous and would only provoke colonial wars, thus dissipating the anticipated gains from the continuance of the colonial regime. […] The system of neo-colonialism was therefore instituted and in the short run it has served the developed powers admirably (Nkrumah 1970: xiii).

There is no reason to take seriously the idea that it was specifically the discovery of "moral facts" by white people that made them no longer violently oppress "non-white people" (and in reality, they never stopped. They just became more subtle about it: i.e., "neo-colonialism"). Just as the transition from colonialism to neo-colonialism wasn't because its beneficiaries suddenly discovered their conscience, the British slave trade did not end simply because its beneficiaries discovered "moral truths." As Eric Williams (1911-1981) wrote in his classic work, *Capitalism and Slavery*, it was the trade in African lives that was the foundation for British industrialization.[25] Once industrialized, the British no longer needed the slave trade and espoused abolitionism when it suited their economic purposes (Williams 2022: ix, 161). The British abolished the slave trade not because they discovered moral truths about why human trafficking is morally wrong but because it no longer served their economic interests. As Lisa Lowe has argued, the termination of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 was in part conceivable due to the rise of the Asian coolie trade as a substitute source of labor to replace Black slaves (Lowe 2015).[26] In short, there are economic reasons that can help us explain both the emergence of western racism and the attendant practices like colonialism and genocide as well as the "reasons" for why such practices are no longer viable or efficacious. There is no reason to believe that the mere knowledge of "moral facts" provides the only explanation for realizing that racism and colonialism should not be practiced.

Both Van Norden (Van Norden 2024) and Kim (Kim 2024) suggest that racism is an issue related to (individual) morality. I differ. First, racism manifests on a collective level and is institutional; it is therefore more accurate to talk about a racist *society*. Second, my arguments in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* that the Chinese tradition was not racist does not attribute this lack of racism to some greater morality on the part of the Chinese. My argument was, in part, that the Chinese understood that colonization *would not be in their own interests* as subjugating or violently colonizing others is unsustainable. Instead, the Chinese tradition understood that co-empowering and working with others is the most efficacious way to gain power and influence.

A central argument in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is that the Chinese civilization did not pursue colonialism in the European mode because they did not conceive of "colonialism" as efficacious. This point I further elaborate on in the following section. As I explained, the most representative image for the Chinese understanding of efficacy is demonstrated in *Analects* 2.1: "One who exercises government by means of his virtue [*de,* 德] is analogous to the North Star: which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it" (Xiang 2023a: 163). In the Chinese conception, virtue/morality is consequent upon an agent's ability to be efficacious and "powerful" and efficacy is, in turn, indebted to the ability co-empower others such that the agent cultivates "empathy and reciprocity" with others. Morality rests on political power which rests on the ability of political leadership to foster, in the words of Huaiyu Wang, the "cohesive power of communal attachment and collaboration" (Wang 2015: 82, 91).[27] It is this morality as efficacy and co-empowerment that is non-coercive, as in Confucius' image of the North Star; it succeeds without overtly acting in its own interests or imposing itself against the existing dispositions of others. Truly efficacious actions rest in co-empowerment and the creation of positive

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

value whereas non-virtuous/non-efficacious actions empower oneself at the expense of others and are therefore coercive.

6 Capitalism and Colonialism

The idea that truly efficacious power rests in co-empowerment and not the domination of others leads me to another question that Prof. Van Norden raised: the connection between capitalism and colonialism. As Van Norden notes, colonialism is sometimes seen as a necessary outcome of capitalism (Van Norden 2024). However, as I argue in "Sinophobia, American Imperialism, and Disorder Without Responsibility," general mercantilism, understood as "doing business" or "a rational calculus of self-interestedness and greed," does not necessarily lead to colonialism (Xiang 2022). There is something specific to the kind of mercantilism as practiced by western, colonial powers that differentiates it from other forms of mercantilism. Historically, "western" mercantilism overwhelmingly profited from destruction and mere parasitic extraction. It is this specific form of mercantilism, that is, the pursuit of economic self-interest through the destruction of existing value that arguably ties "capitalism" with "colonialism."

For example, the British (and American) opium trade in China of the nineteenth century "provided the seed corn for the economic revolution in America" and also made the grandfather of Franklin Delano Roosevelt rich (Bradley 2015: 29; Xiang 2022: 47).[28] The main drug producing regions in the world today, the "Golden Triangle," the "Golden Crescent," and the Latin American drug producing regions in South America, all had their opiate economies take off due to CIA sponsorship and during the CIA's geopolitical involvement in these regions during the cold war (McCoy 2013: 525-27; Xiang 2022: 58-9).[29] Opium was the single largest commodity traded in the nineteenth century (Bradley 2015: 17); indeed, 'the entire commercial infrastructure of European trade in Asia was built around opium' (Trocki 1999: 52)."

The background to the opium trade in nineteenth-century China was the British colonization of India. As Shashi Tharoor writes, "Britain's Industrial Revolution was built on the destruction of India's thriving manufacturing industries." It was Britain's "deconstruction" and "deindustrialization" of India that allowed for British industrialization (Tharoor 2017: 5).[30] The result of such deindustrialization can be seen from some figures: at the beginning of the eighteenth century, India's share of the global economy was 23 percent and by the time the British left, it had dropped to just over 3 percent (Tharoor 2017: 2-3). Having destroyed India's native ability to create economic value, the British used the Indian subcontinent to grow opium, with which they then used to destroy the Chinese economy. Instead of innovating something that the Qing court would want or rising to the economic competition, the British decided to loot China via state-sponsored narco-terrorism.

This structure of benefitting oneself through destroying existing value has parallels with the structure of bad faith that was introduced above. In the economic mode, people or political entities gain value through parasitically extracting mere "objects" in the world (which includes the reduction of human to mere "things" through dehumanization).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

The connection between infallibilism and the destruction of antithetical others finds its economic parallel in western mercantilism. Instead of innovating novel relationships that create real value, the British profited through destroying the existing value of its colonies and semi-colonies. It has been estimated that throughout the past two millennia, until the late nineteenth century, China's GDP was consistently around 30 percent of global GDP.[31] Along with India, these two economies were consistently the two largest in the world. As I noted in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* China's traditional economic might was not accompanied by colonialism in the European mode:

> Rather than extracting resources from the peripheries, the Chinese state has been more likely to invest in them, and so political expansion has required that the government shift resources to the peripheries, rather than move them in the opposite direction (Wong 1997: 148). As Giovanni Arrighi remarks with regard to Wong's observation, the 'logic of political economy' associated with the kind of competition that prevailed during European colonialism 'had little in common with China's practices' (Arrighi 2007: 318) (Xiang 2023a: 39).

The classical structure of colonialism and neocolonialism is to destroy or depress native manufacturing such that the colonies are merely raw material exporters to the colonial hubs (which are the centers of manufacturing). China both overcame this structure and was able to become a manufacturing hub without having colonies itself. This leads me to another point raised by Prof. Wyatt: that China did not colonize the earth because it already had everything it needed.

7 Europe Never *Needed* Its Colonies

Prof. Wyatt suggests that one of the main reasons that the Chinese tradition did not carry out colonial exploits in the European mode is economic. "Assuredly, one element in explaining the non-exploitive and non-extractive comportment of the Chinese of this period was surely the self-perception of a lack of any need to behave otherwise" (Wyatt 2024). Below, I will explain that given the geography of Europe and United States in comparison to China, if any country needed to steal from other lands as a matter of survival, it is China, and not any of the historic colonial powers or contemporary (neo)colonial powers. The argument that "China was self-sufficient" presents us with an oversimplified account of historical reality. The economic argument excusing colonial behavior does not stand scrutiny according to the facts.

Given the limits of our climates and environments, there are always more or less efficacious ways of interacting with the land. Britain's geography and climate is more than sufficient to feed its own people (especially when compared with China). It is commonly cited that 71 percent of the UK land is arable.[32] In 2021, China's arable land was 11.6 percent.[33] In 2021, India's arable land was 51.95 percent. From these purely geographic factors, there is no reason to assume that the U.K. *needed* to land-grab as a matter of survival. Today, former colonial powers such as Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and Austria are relatively large agricultural exporting nations. The Netherlands is the largest agricultural exporter in the world after the United States, with agricultural produce accounting for 10 percent of national GDP.[34] If anyone needed to land-grab as a matter of survival, it is arguably China and not Britain or any country in Europe.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Famine and hunger were constants of Chinese history, so much so the customary greeting in China is "have you eaten yet?" (*chilema,* 吃了吗); As Deng Yunte (1912–1966), writes in *The History of Famine Relief in China*:

> China has been plagued by disasters and famines like no other country. Widely known in the West as 'the Land of Famine,' China has rarely seen a year without natural disasters or famines in its 4,000-year-long history from the eighteenth century BC to the twentieth century AD (Deng 2020: 7).[35]

In *China: Land of Famine*, Walter Mallory (1892-1980), former director of the Council on Foreign Relations and Secretary of the China *International Famine Relief Commission* in 1920-1921 writes,

> The food problem is an ancient one in China: from the earliest times famines have been an ever recurring scourge. A study recently completed by the Student Agricultural Society of the University of Nanking brought to light the surprising and significant fact that between the years 108 B.C. and 1911 A.D. there were 1828 famines or nearly every year in some one of the provinces. Untold millions have died of starvation. In fact the normal death rate may be said to contain a constant famine factor (Mallory 1928: 1).[36]

We need to bear in mind that only famines of great scale go down in the history books. Hunger and starvation on a lesser, unrecorded scale was just a part of pre-modern Chinese life. The Chinese philosophical texts that we study for their philosophical insights carry signs of the normalcy of famine and hunger.[37] Although the reasons for the constancy of hunger and famine in historic China are numerous, a large contributing factor is that China's geography is not the most amenable for inhabitation. Europe, in contrast, is one of the most geographically blessed regions on earth: an amenable climate, few natural disasters and ample rainfall.

Contemporary China produces food for a fifth of the world's population with only 7 percent of the world's arable land.[38] Given China's geography, there was a great amount of pressure to learn how to *better use* the limited resources that the Chinese had available. As John M. Hobson writes, historically, the Chinese had far better agricultural knowledge than their European counterparts (Hobson 2004: 57). Similarly, as the historian Robert Temple writes, before the eighteenth century, western agriculture was "primitive" and "hopeless" in comparison with the advanced Chinese agriculture after fourth BCE (Temple 1999: 20).[39]

The European's lack of attunement to the land and inability to live off it can be seen in the pilgrim's experience with the native Americans. When the pilgrims first arrived in the United States, the Wampanoags taught them how to plant beans and squash in a mound with maize around it and use fish remains as fertilizer. It was this horticultural knowledge that contributed to the survival of the colony, given that in their first winter (1620), half of the population of the colony had died (Silverman 2019: 167).[40] After having learnt this horticultural knowledge, the white settlers paid the natives back through mass murder. Similarly, the indigenous peoples of the Andean region of South America were the first to domesticate the potato, which the conquistadors brought back to Europe. Scientists believe that native Americans began domesticating potatoes at the end of the ice age. In 1531, when Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro landed in what is now Peru, the indigenous peoples had developed around 3,000 types of potatoes (Dean and Porterfield 2003: 211).[41] Europeans' own inability to work

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

the ample land they already had, and their lack of interest in *creating* value (on their own land), are striking. That China never looted the world even though it, more than any of the European powers, had more empirical need to do so, brings me to another point: Prof. Van Norden and Wyatt's concern that my highlighting some positive aspects of the Chinese tradition encourages "Chinese nationalism."

8 Chinese Nationalism

In *The Haitians: A Decolonial History,* the former Haitian ambassador Jean Casimir describes how the indigenous peoples of Haiti were annihilated when, in 1492, Christopher Columbus took possession of the island (Casimir 2020: 4).[42] The island was then repopulated with African slaves through the French slave trade. The reduction of human beings to instruments of labor involved taking away all that made them human (Casimir and Mignolo 2020: 8-9). One motivation for writing *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is that western colonialism (and modern neo-colonialism) is still poorly understood by western academics. Relatedly and more troubling still is how the west has arrived at its political, economic and (purported) sense of moral superiority largely through the historical erasure of other peoples and their ways of life (See Xiang 2023b and Xiang 2023a: 11-5). China and the Chinese people too have suffered enough under western colonialism to identify with the suffering of the other colonized peoples of this world. One of the messages of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* is that the Chinese tradition has never identified with the metaphysics of domination that is ultimately rooted in a *contemptus mundi*. My philosophical and moral point is that a civilization endures inasmuch as it is able to co-operate and learn from others; this was the historic reason for Chinese culture's longevity and endurance. In *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* I borrowed the words of Aimé Césaire to describe this Chinese attitude to civilization (Xiang 2023a: 35). Cross-cultural interaction is, arguably, the norm when we do not have particular cultural and philosophical beliefs discouraging such behavior. However, Prof. Van Norden worries that those reading my work might come to the conclusion that since "Confucian civilization is morally better than Anglo-European civilization" therefore "Chinese are morally better than Anglo-Europeans," and this will fuel nationalistic notions of contemporary Chinese cultural superiority (Van Norden 2024). There are a few things I wish to say in response.

First, I am worried about a double-standard possibly at play here. Liberal societies already use their sense of moral superiority to dominate the globe. For example, the American political scientist Francis Fukuyama posits liberal society as the end of history, yet few seem to worry about American "nationalism" when he does this. Similarly, few academics are willing to acknowledge that the ideology of "American Exceptionalism" functions comparably to a metaphysics of racial supremacy (See Bender 2024, chapter 4).[43] Yet there is hand-wringing about my project helping "Chinese nationalism." In other words, solidarity with the rest of the world and a willingness to critique the behaviors of the west is as much a project that aims to undermine western (ideological and political) hegemony as it is also a project of promoting global pluralism and a multi-polar world in which many of the previously suppressed cultural traditions of the globe get to contribute to the narrative that is human civilization. The worry that my effort at solidarity with a multi-polar world and, as a part of this effort, my criticism of western colonial hegemony abets Chinese nationalism is asymmetric.

Second, as I wrote in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* "This project is as much about understanding Western racism as it is about understanding Chinese pluralism" (Xiang 2023a: 12). Through comparing the

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

Chinese and western attitudes to and historical treatment of difference, *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* showed how the moral failures of western racism and colonialism are egregiously and uniquely bad, and that the west needs to acknowledge what it has done and take responsibility for it instead of trying to attribute the cause to "human nature." Van Norden's response that the suggestion that the west take responsibility for its historic crimes against humanity somehow plays into *Chinese* nationalism seems characteristic of the kind of western deflection that *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* seeks to challenge. *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* does not champion nationalism; nationalism is antithetical to the philosophical and human project that my project argues for; the very notion of a "nation state" is one that needs to be abandoned (See Xiang 2023c).

Currently, and as a result of western "exceptionalism," civilization has been reduced to a monologue. The "correctness" of western values is taken as the norm whilst all others are viewed as mere "traditions," "mere culture," or "customs." In light of this chauvinism, I dared to suggest that *there is something* the west could learn from other philosophical traditions.

Third, there is nothing inherently problematic about the claim that some cultures are superior in some respects to others and that these cultural traditions might actually help to shape society for the better. At least at the theoretical level, this is exactly one reason why liberal society is appealing: it acknowledges that there are many different ways to live life and it suggests that we need to accept these differences and get along.

If contemporary China is to prove itself morally superior to the colonial west, then one way of doing so would be to not repeat the same patterns of behavior as their former abusers. As I wrote in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,*

> Chinese sense of cultural superiority is premised on a cultural confidence in embracing the best aspects of other cultures and thus creating the most eminent culture. Enriched through difference, cosmopolitan *huaxia* culture does not subscribe to a machismo in which superiority is proven through dominance (Xiang 2023a: 189).

If contemporary Chinese confidence and pride in their own culture amounts to placing itself atop a hierarchy from which to dominate others ("Han supremacism") then it will betray that which enabled the Chinese tradition to enjoy the success and longevity that it did. The reasons why Chinese culture was historically better than its western counterparts was because of its ability to both tolerate and embrace difference better than the historical (colonial) west.

The very idea of the nation is rooted in a particular metaphysical worldview in which the identity of a people depends on blood and descent ("Blut und Boden") (Xiang 2023c: 169-70). My own opinion is that the Chinese tradition appealed to "culture" as a means of ensuring political solidarity in contrast to the idea of common blood or to the truth of law or religion. Culturally and philosophically, the Chinese tradition was never a nation-state. Arguably, even today, it is still a "civilization state" masquerading as a nation-state. The Chinese view of cosmopolitanism I have described rests on a very different understanding of what secures longevity. However, contemporary China has adopted the vocabulary and framework of the nation-state due to the globalization of western political structures. Whilst the philosophical basis of nationalism is not one that figures prominently in the Chinese tradition, the nationalist mindset, as well as the racialized mindset that underlies it, can be learnt. It is beyond my expertise to analyze the extent to which nationalism (in the sense of racial purity and

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

autochthony) dominates sentiments in contemporary China. Whilst concerns about "Chinese nationalism" are arguably not rooted in longstanding history), my concerns about western racism certainly are. Such a point, however, seems to have been lost on Prof. Kim; I turn to this issue now.

9 Western Cosmopolitanism or Western Racism?

Kim is under the impression that I argue that "western colonialism was the expression of the western philosophical ideal of cosmopolitanism." (Kim 2024) Building on this, he then takes my methodology to be flawed as I do not "acknowledge the critical difference between the pathological history of western colonialism and the moral ideal of western cosmopolitanism" (Kim 2024). Below I outline, in simpler terms, what my book, *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* was about in order to address this miscommunication. Then I clarify why Kim's comments are misinformed.

In *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* I show how western *racial* ideology and the metaphysics that both informs and justifies it helps to explain both the egregiousness of western racism and the *actual* practice of western colonialism. *I did not argue against (contemporary) western theories of cosmopolitanism as an ideal* nor have I argued that "western cosmopolitanism is inherently racist" or that it "contributed to/justified western racism and/or colonialism" (Kim 2024). I argued against western racial hierarchy which *was* the moral ideal (as mentioned earlier). Hence, Kim's characterization of my work as arguing that "western colonialism was the expression of the western philosophical ideal of cosmopolitanism," (Kim 2024) misses the point. Western colonialism was the expression of the *western philosophical ideal of racial hierarchy*. I am not using the nonideal historical reality (the empirical history of colonialism and racial genocide) to argue against an ideal (cosmopolitanism). I am showing how the consequences of the *moral ideal* (racial hierarchy and white supremacism) provided in advance a theoretical foundation for colonial practices (of which racial violence and genocide are an integral part) and for their persistence in the contemporary world. Ironically, it is Kim who falls afoul of the very hypocrisy he charges me with: pointing to instances of conflict (the nonideal) in Chinese history as proof that the ideal is flawed (Kim 2024).

10 The Epistemology of Ignorance

One feature of the epistemology of ignorance is that it inculcates persons with racist double standards. One of these double standards is that the western tradition allows itself any excuse and any number of excuses to explain away its non-ideal practices in the name of its ideals. For non-western traditions, such as the Chinese tradition, the precondition for the defensibility of its ideals is superhuman perfection. Indeed, this asymmetry central to the epistemology of ignorance is precisely what I had criticized: the tendency to bend over backwards to defend their own tradition and employ the "hermeneutics of suspicion" on everyone else. If a person was educated in such a way that their skewed understanding of human reality could be characterized as the "epistemology of ignorance," how would such persons react to a work that was, in reality, critiquing their ignorance (which is what *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* was, in large part, about)? For starters, some typical responses that we might expect

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

include calling me biased, dogmatic, and even "Manichean" or racist myself. They also, like Kim, might insist that I am employing all sorts of "double standards" that are not intellectually sound. The problem here, is that, first and foremost, the study of racism involves revealing and elucidating many unacknowledged double standards and other "truths" about ourselves that we would rather not admit to. The irony then since those who operate under the epistemology of ignorance take racist double standards as the norm, *someone who does not operate according to such a skewed ideology is perceived by them as the one who is methodologically unsound.* As Lewis Gordon writes, "Race theorists theorize in a racist world. The degree to which that world is made evident will have an impact on the question of whether the theorist not only sees, but also admits what is seen" (Gordon 1995: ix). Racial hierarchy was (and arguably still is) the ideal. It is this ideal and *not* (western political theories of) cosmopolitanism that I challenge in my essay and in my book. The study of the history and practices of racism and racial ideology is not merely the study of a few people with "bad character" or "vice." First and foremost, racism is a function of political and socio-cultural institutions. In fact, Kim's suggestion that racism is about condemning a few "morally bad persons" ignores how these attitudes were systematically inculcated into the population (Kim 2024). The continuing effects of racism, for this reason, are still felt and reproduced even though people might insist that they do not "possess the character of a racist."

That many today are not aware that racism *is* the western ideal is due to a concerted effort on the part of western governments and institutions to whitewash their own history. Whereas prior to WWII, racial ideology was meant to "inspire confidence in what was portrayed as a unique and superior Western civilization" (Füredi 1998: 22-3), today, it is politically taboo. Füredi gives three reasons for why this shift happened. (1) Fear of reprisals from the non-west, in short, "fear of racial revenge" from the nonwhite races in the colonies (Füredi 1998: 18).[44] (2) The challenge that the Soviet alternative of racial egalitarianism provided. (3) Most importantly, the main reason for the shift towards a new anti-racist consensus was as a reaction to the Nazi Holocaust. "The accusation of racial politics with Nazi Germany had the effect of compromising racial science and ideology" (Füredi 1998: 15). That *Asians* specifically are ignorant of the above history is attributable to their model minority status in both the international context and the context of western societies (notably the USA).

The very history of the term "racism" and "racist" confirms point (3). As Lewis R. Gordon writes, these terms did not emerge until the 1930s, "in French characterization of Nazi ideology." "Before then, race-minded politicians, scholars, and scientists wrote of 'Anglo-Saxons,' 'Aryans,' and imaged "Teutons" as their ancestors. They spoke and wrote disparagingly of the 'savage' and the 'negro,' which was derived from the Portuguese word for the color black" (Gordon 2022: 57). Racism, as a term was invented for the specific purposes of characterizing the moral failures of Nazi policies towards European Jews. From this history, we can see how the western community did not feel any real conscience for its historic genocide and enslavement of peoples in its colonies (Xiang 2023a: 13-14). It is to this issue that I now turn.

11 Kantian Cosmopolitanism and Racism

Kim makes a strange claim when he states that that there is no such thing as a "stereotypical 'western' philosophical assumption of human nature" (Kim 2024). The particular conception of "human nature" that I am referencing is, arguably, rooted in a substance metaphysics and the political manifestations

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

of it can be seen beginning with Hobbes. As the political scientist Laura Zanotti writes, "The assumption that selfishness is the defining trait of human "nature" is one of the unquestioned pillars of Western schools of thought dating at least from Hobbes, straddling political realism, economic liberalism, and philosophical utilitarianism" (Zanotti 2022: 363).[45] Similar assumptions are described in Kant's works. One such can be read in "Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View." As Kant states, "'antagonism' [is] the unsociable sociability of human beings, i.e. their propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up this society" (Rorty and Schmidt 2012: 13).[46] This conception of human nature is foundational both to cosmopolitan political theory and to many western moral theories. If not for our capacity to transcend our "bad human nature," individual humans would do nothing but pursue their own selfish desires and dominate others. Kim states that I do not "acknowledge the critical difference between the pathological history of western colonialism and the moral ideal of western cosmopolitanism" (Kim 2024). What *could* Kim mean by a "pathological" history of western colonialism? He probably does not mean it in any kind of somatic sense like a "sickness." A more general sense of the word is that "pathological" behavior is either abnormal, uncontrollable, and/or unreasonable. It is not too difficult to see that Kim's attitude towards the history of western racism is influenced by fundamentally "liberal" assumptions. If colonial behavior was a mere "abnormality," then we have a substance-based apologia where the history of colonialism was a "mere accident" and plays no role in adjusting the essential character of western ideals. If this history was rooted in acts that were compulsive and "uncontrollable," Kim would seem to be appealing to a "typical western notion of human nature" as I quoted above from Kant. If he only means that this history is "unreasonable," then we have the typical equivocation of the "rational" with the "moral" whilst all else is merely accidental, conditioned, or even "bodily" (like bodily desires). Considering that Kim presents himself as being well versed in theories about western colonialism and racism, he must have encountered how western racism could be characterized as a "rational" set of practices.[47]

To Kim's question of whether "'western' champions" of cosmopolitanism that draw on Kant's "Perpetual Peace" assume that "human nature is inherently aggressive and violent, inclining the stronger to mercilessly dominate the weaker?" (Kim 2024) I say: yes, obviously. Contrary to Kim's apologism, the philosophies that cosmopolitan theories are grounded in are arguably deeply implicated in racial thinking. As Tsenay Serequeberhan writes, for Kant, Europe's violent domination of the earth and subjugation of the racial other was, "part of the design for the self-rationalization of humanity which serves as the precondition and process which leads to enlightenment" (Serequeberhan 1996: 345).[48] As Huaping Lu-Adler writes, Kant's view of humanity, i.e., that is, the white race is autonomous from the other races (because they are distinct and noncontinuous) and the related idea that the white race are the pre-destined bearers of the destiny of the human race, meant that Kant viewed the non-white races "in terms of their utility, as if sizing them up with the gaze of a potential slave master" (Lu-Adler 2023: 238).[49] Yet Kim seems to think that invoking Kant's "Perpetual Peace" somehow counters my claims. Evidently, Kim is not aware that Kant's thought *is* deeply implicated with colonialism.

To take one example, the international relations scholar Andreas Behnke has argued that "Perpetual Peace" established the ontological foundation for Western liberalism's tendency to establish peace through the eradication of difference (Behnke 2008: 513).[50] In sum, and to quote another scholar of international relations, Seán Molloy,

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

> Kant cannot be reduced to the status of occasionally useful philosophical buttress […] whose occasionally embarrassing observations on metaphysics and theology can be dismissed as unfortunate and unimportant ephemera that can safely be disregarded in our postmetaphysical, more intellectually advanced era. On the contrary, the very *centrality* of the metaphysical and theological concepts within Kant's remarkably complete theorization of the international political environment poses a challenge to those who identify as his successors, i.e., they may consider these elements of Kant's thought antiquated and irrelevant in a secular age, but with what precisely do they propose to replace these lynchpin concepts and ideas? (Molloy 2017: xi)[51]

Chinese Cosmopolitanism recognizes much of the bankruptcy of trying to resolve the problem of cosmopolitanism on Kantian foundations and has argued for alternatives (which completely bypass Kantian philosophical assumptions). Another similarly problematic figure Kim appeals to is Hannah Arendt.

12 Confronting White Apologism

Although Kim only does this in passing as if he believes he is providing his readers with a more nuanced account of the "complexity" of racism, Kim suggests that an alternative to my account of the history of racism can be derived from Arendt's concept of the banality of evil. As Kim summarizes, "the cause of the Holocaust cannot be attributed to some evil-minded racists; rather, it was the result of the 'thoughtlessness' of terrifyingly normal people who acted without evil motives" (2024). Although Kim has suggested that my own research does not adequately draw on much modern scholarship, it is useful (for other readers) to see how Kim's own comments exemplify the "epistemology of ignorance" in drawing on Arendt's work.

As many other scholars have already pointed out, Arendt's understanding of the nature of racial ideology and violence is highly questionable. This is apparent in her uninformed views on anti-Black racism in the United States. As Kathryn T. Gines has written in *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question,* Arendt's attitude to the black students who wanted to attend a previously racially segregated white school is profoundly problematic and "might be seen as a case study for the limitations of the Western philosophical tradition" (Gines 2014: xi).[52] Arendt's response to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is further evidence of her problematic attitude towards and understanding of those who suffer under the racism of colonial regimes. As Drucilla Cornell has written, Arendt's famous essay "On Violence" (1969) was principally targeted at the writings of Frantz Fanon, most notably his own essay "On Violence," the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). As Cornell writes, Arendt's condemnation of the, in her view, glorification of violence in Fanon's text misunderstands the brutal colonial context in which the text was written. Arendt did not understand that *The Wretched of the Earth* was a dispatch from the frontlines of the final year of the Algerian war and not just another volume of abstract political theory (Cornell 2023: 5).[53] It is Arendt's seeming inability to understand this colonial context that leads her to "pit Fanon's writings as some sort of antithesis to the European republican tradition, ignoring, of course, that the underside of the tiny handful of 'republican' states—if indeed they can be called that—is the brutal colonization of more than 90 percent of the planet" (Cornell 2023: 6). As Samuel Moyn summarizes: "Arendt's repudiation of decolonization in her time in *On Violence* was complete and unrelieved." This meant that she "generally pathologi[zed] non-white

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

armed struggle abroad and at home" such that her position in *On Revolution* (1963) was that "globalizing postcolonial freedom was despotic in intent or effect" (Moyn 2023: 132).[54] As Lewis Gordon bluntly puts it, Arendt's attitude towards blacks betrays her as a "stubborn racist" (Gordon 1995: 89). The point here is not simply to highlight that many people have criticized Arendt's views as racist. What scholars should recognize is a systematic tendency to either ignore, intentionally obscure, or be misinformed about the history and nature of racism and racial violence in the west. Many of the texts that they read, when viewed in a more critical light, should be understood as furthering the project of the obscuration of the history of western racism. The casualness with which Kim appeals to Arendt to counter my claims without awareness of Arendt's own implication in racism, is precisely the problem.

That Kim appeals to liberal orthodoxy and its token intellectuals to counter my argument reminds me of an episode described by Enrique Dussel. In *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*, Dussel recounts the first Franciscan missionaries to Mexico in 1524. "Since all Europe accepted as unreflectively valid the doctrine eventually recorded in the Catechism of Trent, the Franciscans were unable to present it with any veneer of rationality to those other cultures" (Dussel 1995: 52).[55] Unlike the native Incans whom they were trying to evangelize, the Spanish missionaries, since they never had to assess their dogma from a meta-perspective, could not offer a convincing argument for the truth of their God. As recorded by José de Acosta (1540-1600), the Spanish missionaries were unable to endure the sophisticated metaphilosophical "*prolixity of argumentation*" that the native Incans offered in response to Spanish dogma. Frustrated, but unable to offer their own metaphilosophical response for why their God is the true God, the Spanish responded by jumping from their seats and attacking the natives, grabbing their gold and silver jewels and precious stones (quoted in Dussel 1995: 53). Like the Spanish missionaries, Kim is unable to offer a convincing account of his ideals beyond a repetition of its core catechisms.

13 Conclusion: Has Chinese Cosmopolitanism Proven Itself?

Prof. Wyatt writes that only time will tell whether the arguments of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* will be proven. In concluding this response, I will show that contemporary China has already proven that, unlike the western nations, one can industrialize without colonial relations or the enslavement of others. This means that, in conjunction with the realities of Chinese history described in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* the arguments of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* have already been proven. Naturally, no one can predict the future, but Chinese history is a testament to the arguments I have made.

The western colonial countries industrialized and became rich off the backs of the colonized nations, those that Frantz Fanon called, "the wretched of the earth," and the people to whom I dedicated *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*. As Frantz Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth:*

> This European opulence is literally scandalous, for it has been founded on slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the subsoil of that underdeveloped world. The well-being and the progress of Europe have been built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races. We have decided not to overlook this any longer (Fanon 1963: 96).[56]

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

In Britain alone, the accumulation of wealth through the transatlantic slave trade meant that, "by the middle of the eighteenth century there was hardly any British town of any size that was not in some way connected to the transatlantic slave trade or colonial rule" (Williams 2022: 48). Likewise, scholars highlighted how opium trafficking to China paid for Britain's empire in the nineteenth century (Trocki 1999).[57] Such examples of how the first world became rich off the exploitation of the third world are too numerous to detail in full.

Lest we think that colonial exploitation is behind us, we should note that today, as during the past centuries of colonialism, wealth continues to be drained from the African continent for the enrichment of the west. In *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism,* Kwame Nukrumah writes,

> Africa is a paradox which illustrates and highlights neo-colonialism. Her earth is rich, yet the products that come from above and below her soil continue to enrich, not Africans predominantly, but groups and individuals who operate to Africa's impoverishment (Nkrumah 1970: 1).

One example of neocolonialism in action is the American orchestration of the overthrow of the nationalist and pan-Africanist Patrice Lumumba in 1960 and his replacement with the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Seko is an example of "the rulers of neo-colonial States" who are mere puppets for "Their neo-colonialist masters" (Nkrumah 1970: xv). This assassination laid the foundation for the decades of internal strife, dictatorship, and economic decline that characterizes postcolonial Congo. The destabilization of the Congo was amenable to western colonial interests. The Congo is one of the most resource-rich areas in the world. If the Congo had sovereignty over its own national resources, western exploitation of that region would be impossible or at least severely inconvenienced. The exportation of wealth from the Congo and the Congo's lack of sovereignty over its own resources continues to this day. To Prof. Wyatt's concerns about contemporary Africa-China relations and Chinese activity in Africa (Wyatt 2024), allow me to quote a speech that W. E. B. Dubois, as part of his trip to China, gave in 1959 to over 1000 faculty members and students of Peking University. As the historian Gao Yunxiang writes,

> In his epic speech, Du Bois proclaimed Chinese and African dignity and unity in the face of Western racism, colonialism, and capitalism. […] Du Bois declared that the 'ownership' of 'my own soul' led him to dare 'advise' Africa to follow China's leadership and recognize its understanding of the color line. 'China after long centuries has arisen to her feet and leapt forward. Africa, Arise, and stand straight, speak and think! Turn from the West and your slavery and your humiliation for the last 500 years and face the rising sun. Behold a people, the most populous nation on this ancient earth which […] aims to 'make men holy; to make men free.' […] China is flesh of your flesh and blood of your blood.' He urged China in turn to recognize that it is 'colored and knows [to] what a colored skin in this modern world subjects its owner.' Du Bois answered his own concern by noting that 'China knows more, much more than this; she knows what to do about it.' He concluded the speech pleading that Africa and China 'stand together in this new world and let the old world perish in its greed or be born again in new hope and promise. […]' (Gao 2021: 11).[58]

China is today the largest economy in the world measured in purchasing power parity terms. In 2024, and according to the IMF, China's share of global GDP is 19.05 percent.[59] These numbers mean that

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

China industrialized and became a modern industrial economy without global colonialism or the enslavement of other peoples, two activities that, as we have noted, were essential to the primitive accumulation that enabled the rise of the modern west. This is an achievement of which the Chinese people can rightfully be proud, that indeed humanity can (and should be) be proud. It shows that another world was and always is possible. China's trajectory of prosperity without global domination casts a negative light on the west's historic and continuing behavior, hence its unhinged attempts to demonize China, but like Frantz Fanon, "We have decided not to overlook this any longer."

Related to Wyatt's hesitation about whether the arguments of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* stand as well as the heart of the disagreement between Kim and myself can be summarized in Kim's concluding statement that "Chinese cosmopolitanism can be morally appealing only when it can promote a mutual understanding between China and the rest of the world, including the west, […] rather than reinforcing the east-west divide." I disagree. Chinese cosmopolitanism is morally appealing when it has shown that one can progress through co-empowerment as opposed to a genocidal colonialism and the racist subjugation and exploitation of those deemed to be other. The west, as I argued in *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* was invented by those who those who believed themselves to be exclusive and superior to the vast majority of humankind. Geographically, the west does not exist; it is just a western peninsula of the continent of Asia. The very division between "east" and "west" was an invention by the self-identified west to divide humanity between the minority few who are the master race and those who are supposed to serve it. In the words of Édouard Glissant, the west is a construct and ongoing project, and those invested in such a construct are "anxiously determined to cling to their conception of a world in which they dominate and control rather than 'a world in which one is, quite simply, one agrees to be, with and among others'" (Glissant 2010: 128).[60] *Chinese Cosmopolitanism does not* need the approval of the west (as I have defined it) for its arguments to stand. The very existence of the west—as an entity that thinks it can have a one-way causal relationship with the rest of the world—is deleterious to true human community. I do not care for the opinions of those who have committed the most egregious crime of human history and who refuse to face up to this history and who still cling onto the idea that they represent the end of history. I do, however, wish to dialogue with the rest of the human community who, like me, wish to see a humanity as a project forever in the making between equal interlocutors. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth,* "The black Goncourts and the yellow Nobels are finished; the days of colonized laureates are over" (Sartre 1963: 10).

Although it is reasonable to present possible counter-arguments and alternative explanations for why China did not pursue the colonial project, there's only so much of this we can do before it becomes a strategic evasion of a more straight-forward answer. Relatedly, there's only so much that's appropriate before such counter-arguments become apologia for the egregiousness of the west's own historic conduct and an irrational hermeneutics of suspicion on non-western historical traditions. As has been presented, if China and India had the economies they historically had, and this was not accompanied by the same levels of parasitic violence on the rest of the world—then at the very least, the arguments for why colonization was a necessary part of human progress do not stand: neither China nor India needed to loot the earth for their own enrichment.

Allow me to bring attention to Prof. Wyatt's keenness in pointing out that the Chinese did not precede Columbus in "discovering" the American continent (Wyatt 2024). Wyatt seems to have missed the larger point. With regard to the issue at hand—a comparison of western and Chinese attitudes towards difference—it's inconsequential whether the Chinese knew of the existence of the American continent

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

or made contact with it. As I have detailed, the Chinese already knew of the existence of Africa and this knowledge did not entail, as it did in the western case, the enslavement of its peoples and an invention of a racial category of enslaveable people—"negro."[61] This equivalence between "negro" and slavery was so well established by the second half of the fifteenth century such that "Negro" was synonymous with "slave" across the Iberian Peninsula (Sweet 2003: 7). The transatlantic slave trade officially began in 1441 when two Portuguese sailed to what is today Mauritania in West Africa and kidnapped natives.[62] The *first encounter* between Portuguese and the natives they met was a relationship of enslavement. That is, simultaneous with their first explorations of West Africa was the enslavement of natives and the transatlantic slave trade. When the Chinese stepped onto the African continent, this was not the kind of relationship that emerged. We can use the contrast between western and Chinese behaviors in Africa to exemplify their differing attitudes to difference. By extension, therefore, even if the Chinese *did* step onto the American continent, their attitude to difference would have precluded them from behaving in the manner of Europeans (with their "medieval" worldviews).

Through the course of researching for *Chinese Cosmopolitanism* and in responding to my commentators, I have read a great deal of inanity from otherwise intelligent and insightful people. It seems that the general level of academic competence drops precipitously when China is the subject of discussion. My experiences have led me to the following conclusion: Sinologists and China-watchers who subconsciously deal with white guilt about what their ancestors did such that they currently enjoy the fruits of this extraordinary privilege project much onto China as a way to deal with their subconscious guilt. I hazard that the peoples of the global south (i.e., the majority of the world) see very clearly what is happening here.

For those who still have queries about *Chinese Cosmopolitanism,* I would recommend that they first read the book, and carefully, as most likely the answers to their questions are already present in the work itself.

Shuchen Xiang (PhD, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and King's College London, *summa cum laude*) is the Mt. Hua Professor of Philosophy at Xidian University, China. She is the author of *Chinese Cosmopolitanism: The History and Philosophy of an Idea* (Princeton University Press, 2023), which won an honorable Mention for the Asia and Asian America Section Book Award, American Sociological Association. She is also author of *A Philosophical Defense of Culture: Perspectives from Confucianism and Cassirer* (State University of New York Press, 2021), the coeditor of *The Islamic-Confucian Synthesis in China* (Lexington, 2023), the coeditor of *How China Shaped the Enlightenment: A Transcultural History of Modern Thought* (Routledge, forthcoming), the translator of *History of Chinese Philosophy Through Its Key Terms* (Springer, 2020), and the author of over thirty academic articles in both English and Chinese.

---

1 Don J. Wyatt, "A Response to Shuchen Xiang's 'Why "Chinese" Cosmopolitanism?, *Journal of World Philosophies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 186-92.

2 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994).

3 Vitoria's "On the Indies" (*De Indis*) is "one of the earliest attempts to transform the Roman law of nations into something that later generations would recognise as international law" (Pagden 2015: 47). See, Anthony Pagden, *The Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

4 As Anthony Pagden writes, for Vitoria, the Amerindian is, "some variety of fully grown child whose rational faculties are complete but still potential rather than actual. Indians have to be trained to perceive what other men perceive without effort, to accept what other men regard as axiomatic without prior reflection. […] They were not free agents, they had, as Vitoria observed, no access to the natural law, and they shared the same social status as the slave. […] [H]e [the Amerindian] must, for his own benefit, remain in just tutelage under the king of Spain, his status now slave-like, but not a slave" (Pagden 1982: 104). See: Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

5 Anthony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

6 Vitoria wasn't the first to articulate such a conception of the relationship between Europe and the native Americans on the basis of the Aristotelian paradigm of the "barbarian." Arguably, the precedent to what Vitoria is saying (which is essentially Aristotle's theory of natural slavery) with respect to the native Americans appeared in 1493. In 1493, the residing Pope, Pope Alexander VI granted to the Spanish crown the right to conquer and enslave the inhabitants of the Antilles. It was unclear, however, whether the Pope's bulls of donation granting sovereignty of the new world to the Spanish crown, was in fact legitimate. The natives were neither *de iure* subject to Christian rule as their land never historically belonged to the Roman empire and were thus residing in a former imperial land which came within *dominium* of the Christian church, nor were they *de facto* subjects because they were the subjects of a Christian prince. Neither the (Christian) emperor nor the Christian church could thus make an undisputed claim to temporal jurisdiction over them. At this critical juncture in the debate which saw the juridical legitimacy of conquest challenged, a Scottish theologian called John Mair (Johannes Major) (1467-1550) provided the solution needed by the Spanish. The main weight of the argument rested on its use of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery because it transformed the onus from justifying the legitimacy of the (juridical rights of) the colonisers and inflected it onto the nature of the native Americans themselves. Those being dominated – the *natural* slaves – are also the "barbarians" – the foreigners:

> "These people [the inhabitants of the Antilles] live like beasts on either side of the equator […] wherefore the first person to conquer them, justly rules over them because they are natural slaves. As the Philosopher [Aristotle] says in […] the *Politics*, it is clear that some men are by nature slaves, others by nature free; and in some men it is determined that there is such a thing [i.e., a disposition to slavery] and that they should benefit from it. And it is just that one man should be a slave and another free, and it is fitting that one man should rule and another obey, for the quality of the leadership is also inherent in the natural master. On this account […] this is the reason why the Greeks should be masters over the barbarians because, by nature, the barbarians and slaves are the same" (quoted in Pagden 1982: 38-39).

7 As the sociologist Byung Ho Lee writes, "these terms [Yi, Di, Rong, Man, Fan, Lu, and Hu] are basically generic words meaning 'aliens,' and were employed indiscriminately in Chinese texts to indicate foreign peoples and their polities. Their usage was generally meant to be objectively descriptive" (Lee 2011: 205). Byung-Ho Lee, *Forging the Imperial Nation: Imperialism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Boundaries in China's* Longue Durée (University of Michigan, 2011; URL: https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/89783; last accessed on June 11, 2024).

8 Lewis R. Gordon, *Fear of Black Consciousness* (London: Penguin, 2022).

9 Shuchen Xiang, "Why the Chinese Tradition had no Concept of Barbarian: The Mercurial Nature of Human and The Non-Human in Chinese Metaphysics," *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2023e): 149-173.

10 Patricia Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

11 Bryan W. Van Norden, "Is Cosmopolitanism Another Form of Universalism? Comments on Shuchen Xiang's 'Why "Chinese" Cosmopolitanism?" *Journal of World Philosophies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 180-85.

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

12 As Locke himself states, "*As much land* as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his Property. He by his labour does, as it were, inclose it from the common" ('quoted in Williams Jr. 1990: 247-8). Robert A. Williams, Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourse of Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

13 See my point about the Treaty of Tordesilla (Xiang 2023a: 129).

14 Mark Cartwright, "The Armies of the Crusades," (URL: https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1281/the-armies-of-the-crusades/: last accessed on June 12, 2024).

15 John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004).

16 I use the term "cultural appropriation" to denote using the knowledge and practices of other cultures without acknowledgement of their authors, and indeed the erasure of their authors. I celebrate cross-cultural borrowing as long as we acknowledge our indebtedness to each other.

17 Please see the forthcoming edited volume by Martin Powers and myself entitled: *How China Shaped the Enlightenment: A Transcultural History of Modern Thought.* The central message of the volume is that the European Enlightenment was an intercultural, cosmopolitan event in which cultural exchange led to revolutionary changes in thought and social-political practice. We hope to show that intercultural exchange is both common and normal.

18 Liwei Jiao, and Benjamin M. Stone, *500 Common Chinese Proverbs and Colloquial Expressions: An Annotated Frequency Dictionary* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

19 Sungmoon Kim, "Chinese Cosmopolitanism and Its Discontents," *Journal of World Philosophies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 172-79.

20 Shuchen Xiang, "Why 'Chinese' Cosmopolitanism?" *Journal of World Philosophies* 9, no. 1 (2024a): 193-215.

21 Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* (New York: Humanity Books, 1995).

22 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface," *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 7-31.

23 Shuchen Xiang, "Sinophobia, Imperialism, Disorder without Responsibility"," *Sartre Studies International* 28, no. 2 (2022): 42-66.

24 Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Panaf, 1971).

25 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Penguin, 2022).

26 Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

27 Huaiyu Wang, "A Genealogical Study of De: Poetical Correspondence of Sky, Earth, and Humankind in the Early Chinese Virtuous Rule of Benefaction," *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 1 (2015): 81–124.

28 James Bradley, *The China Mirage: The Hidden History of American Disaster in Asia* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2015).

29 Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013).

30 Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (London: Penguin, 2017).

31 https://infogram.com/share-of-world-gdp-throughout-history-1gjk92e6yjwqm16

32 "How Much Farmland is There in the UK?" (URL: https://www.whatthesciencesays.org/how-much-farmland-is-there-in-the-uk/, last accessed on June 12, 2024).

33 https://tradingeconomics.com/china/arable-land-percent-of-land-area-wb-data.html (URL: last accessed on June 12, 2024).

34 https://www.government.nl/topics/agriculture/agriculture-and-horticulture (URL: last accessed on June 12, 2024).

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

35 Yunte Deng, *The History of Famine Relief in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

36 Walter H. Mallory, *China: Land of Famine* (NY: American Geographical Society, 1928).

37 In *Mencius* 1A7 Mencius advises the King Xuan of Qi to institute benevolent governance. Part of this benevolent rule includes regulating the people's livelihood so that there is material sufficiency (制民之产) and Mencius defines what his standard for such a materially sufficient good life is: "in good years people have sufficient food and in bad years, they escape starvation." It is telling that for Mencius, a *good* year is one in which people have enough to eat. A stellar performance from the King is if, during a year of bad harvest, nobody dies. From this we can see that death from famines was the norm.

38 Genevieve Donnellon-May, "Why Food Security is a Top Priority for China," (URL: https://asiasociety.org/australia/why-food-security-top-priority-china: last accessed on June 12, 2024).

39 Robert Temple, *The Genius of China* (London: Prion Books, 1999).

40 David J. Silverman, *This Land Is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

41 Emory Dean Keoke Kay Marie Porterfield, *Encyclopedia of American Indian Contributions to the World: 15,000 Years of Inventions and Innovations* (New York: Facts on File 2002).

42 Jean Casimir, and Walter Mignolo, *The Haitians: A Decolonial History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2020).

43 Jacob Bender, *Those Who Act Ruin It: A Daoist Account of Moral Attunement* (Albany: SUNY, 2024).

44 Frank Füredi, *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

45 Laura Zanotti, "The Moral Failure of the Quest for Certainty," in *Quantum International Relations: A Human Science for World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian, and Alexander Wendt (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

46 Amélie Rorty, and James Schmidt, *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

47 By this I refer to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and the idea that "racism essentially is a form of rationalization and systematization of the irrational" (Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler 2009: 4). ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds. *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

48 Tsenay Serequeberhan, "Eurocentrism in Philosophy: The Case of Immanuel Kant," *The Philosophical Forum* 27, no. 4 (1996).

49 Huaping Lu-Adler, *Kant Race and Racism: Views from Somewhere* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2023).

50 Andreas Behnke, "Eternal Peace' as the Graveyard of the Political: A Critique of Kant's Zum Ewigen Frieden," *Millennium* 36 no. 3, (2008): 513-31.

51 Seán Molloy, *Kant's International Relations: The Political Theology of Perpetual Peace* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

52 Kathryn T. Gines, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

53 Drucilla Cornell, *Today's Struggles, Tomorrow's Revolutions: Afro-Caribbean Liberatory Thought* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2023).

54 Samuel Moyn, *Liberalism Against Itself: Cold War Intellectuals and the Making of Our Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023).

55 Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11

56 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

57 Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade, 1750–1950* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

58 Yunxiang Gao, *Arise Africa, Roar China: Black and Chinese Citizens of the World in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

59 (URL: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/PPPSH@WEO/EU/CHN/USA; last accessed on June 12, 2024).

60 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

61 "Negro," is derived from the Portuguese word for the color black. Scholars have noted that in sixteenth-century Portuguese, the term "prêto" described dark skin color while "negro" represented a race of people. This race was most "often associated with black Africans, and certainly, all black Africans were considered members of this inferior, enslaveable race" (Sweet 2003: 7). James Sweet, "Spanish and Portuguese Influences on Racial Slavery in British North America, 1492-1619," Paper presented at the proceedings of the Fifth Annual Gilder, Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University, New Haven Connecticut, November 7-8, 2003.

62 (URL: https://www.njstatelib.org/research_library/new_jersey_resources/highlights/african_american_history_curriculum/unit_2_rise_of_afro-americans/; last accessed on June 12, 2024).

Journal of World Philosophies 9 (Summer 2024): 157-216

e-ISSN: 2474-1795 • http://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp• doi: 10.2979/jourworlphil.9.1.11