

Program and book of abstracts from the conference on

Humanism, Posthumanism and Transhumanism in the East Asian Past and Present

Held at the University of Ljubljana on
May 19-21, 2023

Edited by Maja Maria Kosec



Univerza v Ljubljani
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**Program and book of abstracts from the conference on Humanism, Posthumanism
and Transhumanism in the East Asian Past and Present**

Ljubljana 2023

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Humanism, Posthumanism and Transhumanism in the East Asian Past and Present

Program and book of abstracts from the conference

Ljubljana, May 19-21, 2023

Venue:

**Main building of the University of Ljubljana
Kongresni trg 12, 1000 Ljubljana**

Lecture Hall 1 (LH 1) = Congress Hall

Lecture Hall 2 (LH 2) = Hall of the Rectors

Website:

<https://as.ff.uni-lj.si/en/humanism-posthumanism-and-transhumanism-east-asian-past-and-present>

PROGRAM

Friday, May 19, LH1	
15:30 – 16:00	Registration
16:00 – 16:40	Opening Ceremony: Welcome addresses
	Speakers: Mojca Schlamberger Brezar, Dean of the Faculty of Arts Luka Culiberg, Head of the Department of Asian Studies Selusi Ambrogio, President of the EACP Jana S. Rošker, chief organizer of the conference
16:40 – 17:00	Coffee break
17:00 – 18:00	Keynote Speech Robin R. Wang: Shades of 感通 (Gantong): Appreciating an Ambiguous, Awe-Some and Audacious World
18:00 – 18:30	Discussion
18:30	Welcome reception / Dinner Buffett

Saturday, May 20, LH1	
9:30 – 11:00	Panel 1: Where do we go from here?
	<p>Mercedes Valmisa: All Entities Have Consequences</p> <p>Ralph Weber: Can East Asian Humanisms Be Global? – Conditions of Possibility, Pitfalls, and Prospects</p> <p>Graham Parkes: From the Human to the Zhenren 真人 and Übermensch: Why Bother Going Further?</p>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Tea and Coffee Break, snacks</i>
11:30 – 13:00	Panel 2: Daoism: Feminist and Worldly Views
	<p>Fabian Heubel: The Ravine in the Laozi as Paradoxical Image for a Way of Being Human</p> <p>Li Manhua: Cultivating the Yin-Self: A Potential Resistance to Homo (Economicus)</p> <p>David Chai: Heidegger and Daoism on the Authenticity of Being in Profound Boredom</p>
13:00 – 14:30	<i>Lunch</i>
14:30 – 16:00	Panel 3: Daoist Post- and Trans-humanism
	<p>Geir Sigurdsson: Gently Flowing Beyond: On Daoist Post-Trans-Humanism</p> <p>Ivana Buljan: On non-human animals in Zhuangzi</p> <p>Tea Sernelj: The Problem of Anthropocentrism in Transhumanism: Zhuangzi and “Manimals”</p>
16:00 – 16:30	<i>Tea and Coffee Break, snacks</i>
16:30 – 18:00	Panel 4: From Self-Cultivation to Equality
	<p>Marko Ogrizek: Itō Jinsai, Ogyū Sorai and the Question of Self-Cultivation</p> <p>Maja Kosec: Humanization of Chinese Religion: From Heaven (tian 天) to Ritual (li 礼) in Xu Fuguan and Li Zehou</p> <p>Ady van den Stock: Changing the subject: Wang Hui’s reading of the <i>Qiwu lun</i> and critiques of “correlationism” in contemporary continental philosophy</p>
18:30	<i>Dinner</i>

Sunday May 21, LH1 and LH2

09:30 – 10:30	Panel 5: Comparative Perspectives 1 (LH 1) Jan Vrhovski: Russellian Scientism and Confucian Humanism: Russell, Zhang Dongsun, and the Development of the “Science and the View on Life” Controversy Lewis Gordon: An Afro-Asiatic Teleological Suspension of Philosophical Anthropology	Panel 6: Digitalization of the Human Self (LH 2) Lee Ting-mien: Digital Identity and the Rise of Cyber-Nationalism Jana S. Rošker: Dissolution of the Self: Digital Technology, Privacy and Intimacy in Europe and the Sinic region
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Tea and Coffee Break, snacks</i>	
11:00 – 12:00	Book presentation (LH 1) Xiang Shuchen: Chinese Cosmopolitanism: The History and Philosophy of an Idea Presenter: Xiang Shuchen Discussants: Lewis Gordon and Jana S. Rošker	Panel 7: Being Human and Being Non-Human (LH 2) Mieke Matthyssen: “Firm at the inside, flexible at the outside 内方外圆: A pragmatic guideline for successfully ‘be(com)ing human’ 做人 Vytis Silius: Like a Rolling Stone: Sunzi on shi 勢 and the Nonhuman Agency
12:00 – 16:00	<i>Lunch and Sightingseeing in Ljubljana</i>	
16:00 – 17:00	Panel 8: Comparative Perspectives 2 (LH 1) Katerina Gajdošova: Being Human or a Human Being? Philosophical Foundations for Human Individuality in Early Chinese and Greek Cosmologies Selusi Ambrogio: A (post)-Humanistic Meeting of Bruno, Wang Yangming and Braidotti	Panel 9: Voidness of Humanity, Voidness of the Universe (LH 2) Dawid Rogacz: Interplanetary revolutions: On Mao’s Cosmic Communism Margus Ott: Humans powered by lack of essence

17:00 – 17:30	Concluding Remarks (LH 1)
17:30 – 19:00	<i>Dinner</i>
20:00	Cultural Program Theatre Performance “Zhuangzi and the Riddle of Human Subjectivity” Cultural and congress centre, Cankarjev dom, Prešernova cesta 10, 1000 Ljubljana

Monday, May 22

Excursion to Bled or Piran

KEYNOTE SPEECH

(ABSTRACT)

Shades of 感通 (*Gantong*): Appreciating an Ambiguous, Awe-Some and Audacious World

Gantong is the one of most cherished concepts in Chinese thought and culture. From *Yijing*'s metaphysical speculation and *Zhuangzi*'s ontological affirmation to Neo Confucian moral compass *gantong* is taken as a foundational thread in the intricate tapestry of the world and human beings. But what exactly does *gantong* mean? Or, to put this more generally, how can we ponder and grasp *gantong*? There is no one clear and apparent way to define, classify, or even translate *gantong*. Any definition, classification or translation only imparts a limitation which serves to restrict its rich meanings and the complexity of its manifestations. This talk will present possible ways to untangle *gantong*'s obscurity through an investigation of three noteworthy Chinese positions. Firstly, the difference between *ganying* 感應 (stimulus-resonance-responsiveness) and *gantong*. *Ganying* is the beginning and root of *gantong*. Nevertheless, *gantong* indicates a higher level which is not simply *responsive*—as *ganying* is—but communicates more deeply with the environment based on person's own emotional, cognitive, mental and spiritual structures. Secondly, *gantong* encounters the ontological, existential and emotional involvement of *miao* 妙 (awe) as the *Daodejing* (chapter one) attests. *Miao*, much like awe, is an emotional and conceptual opening that goes beyond one's ordinary framework and introduces them to a vastness of every existence and the perplexity of oneness. Thirdly, *gantong* prefigures an ample pattern of 環流 *huanliu* (a spiral movement) which demonstrates how boundaries are broken, but there is a constant robust returning motion, though one which is a shaded by differences.

Reflecting on *gantong* facilitates a better understanding of humans and world, and a probable way of planetary thinking. A wider range of advances technological advances, including AI, algorithms, and other recent innovations are markedly contradicted to *gantong* and even disrupt and mechanized basic forms of *ganying*. This paper argues that appreciating *gantong* can contribute not only to comprehend humanism better, but also its place in potential post-human or trans-human orientations.

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ABSTRACTS

A (post)-humanistic meeting of Bruno, Wang Yangming and Braidotti

In this speech, I will try to show similarities and differences between three philosophies that focus on the balance between humans and the world, as opposed to a human-centered perspective. In doing so, I will highlight Giordano Bruno as a representative of Renaissance pantheism, Wang Yangming as a representative of the most holistic Neoconfucianism - in the contemporary reading of Tu Weiming - and Rosi Braidotti as the most prominent philosopher of posthumanism.

I will begin by questioning the use of the term humanism by both 20th century Chinese philosophers (i.e. Tang Junyi and Tu Weiming) and posthumanists. For example, Tu's use of the term humanism is more compatible with post-humanism than with the humanism that post-humanism is contesting. Bruno is a humanist-that is, a Renaissance thinker well-versed in ancient philosophy-but he is completely anti-anthropocentric and the foremost exponent of modern pantheism. In this study, I will attempt to dispute much of the novelty of post-humanism through a reading of classical thought such as that of Bruno and Wang Yangming.

The goal of this paper is to reject the prevailing view that Chinese and Western thought are antithetical (i.e., 'others') through the lens of a comparative analysis of these three "immanent" perspectives.

On non-human animals in Zhuangzi

This talk aims to contribute to the contemporary discussion in animal ethics from Zhuangzi's perspective. While contemporary discussions on animal ethics are often couched in humanist and posthumanist vocabulary, I argue that Zhuangzi can offer a different perspective on the value of non-human life and the human-animal relationship. Starting from the presumption that there are no firm ontic or ontological boundaries between humans, animals and other living beings, Zhuangzi develops a critique of the anthropocentric approach to animals. It is characterized by instrumentalism, egoism and intervention in the natural state of animals. Apart from the fact that anthropocentrism raises the question of human attitude towards non-human animals, it ultimately opens the question of man's attitude towards himself. Thus, instead of being anthropocentric, Zhuangzi emphasizes the cosmocentric perspective. In this talk, I want to consider the ethical and epistemological aspects arising from the cosmocentric standpoint and the relevance of Zhuangzi's view on contemporary issues related to non-human animals.

David CHAI

Heidegger and Daoism on the Authenticity of Being in Profound Boredom

Martin Heidegger's theory of boredom entails three modes: being bored by something, being bored with something, and profound boredom. This presentation focuses on the third mode, which is the most essential of the three and the only one connected to the nothingness that releases being of its own meaninglessness. Profound boredom, which is akin to carefree wandering in Daoism, declares the authenticity of being to itself, a feat that cannot be attained with technological enhancement. Whereas Heidegger limits his discourse to human being, Daoism equalizes all modes of being making it possible to experience the being of another species as one experiences one's own. Profound boredom (and carefree wandering) reveals the ungroundedness of being by removing the mechanical measuring of temporality and is thus freedom in its ultimate form. Comprising the core of profound boredom, nothingness forces us to affirm our life while questioning the need for terms such as post- and trans-humanism.

Being human or a human being? Philosophical foundations for human individuality in early Chinese and Greek cosmologies

The concept of a human being as an individual has its roots in a specific cosmological view. Since the early Chinese and early Greek thought are built on significantly different cosmologies, they also provide different explanations of the role of a human being within the broader cosmic framework. The differences regarding the view of a human being as an individual can be found in the following aspects: the problem of individuation (What makes it “one”), the problem of agency (What makes it “the source of its action”) and the problem of uniqueness and/or continuity with the rest (What makes it “irreducible”).

The presentation uses selected pre-Socratic fragments, Plato’s dialogues, and the Warring States cosmological texts (both received and excavated) to show the diverse approaches, but more importantly, to demonstrate that, contrary to certain scholars’ assumptions, both perspectives provide philosophical foundations for a human being both as individual (in-divisible) and autonomous (self-determining), although they arrive at it through different paths.

Lewis R. GORDON

An Afro-Asiatic Teleological Suspension of Philosophical Anthropology

This talk will examine, through bringing elements of Africana philosophies and Asian philosophies in conversation, the question of “the human” through a critique of substance-metaphysics, which is at the center of “Western” ontology-centrism, and its tendency toward what the speaker calls “disciplinary decadence.” A teleological suspension of disciplinary decadence offers trans-disciplinarity, which offers an understanding of transhumanism as paradoxically humanity’s teleological suspension of itself, of humanity reaching beyond itself for the sake of human reality specifically and reality in general.

The Ravine in the Laozi as Paradoxical Image for a Way of Being Human

The “ravine” (gǔ 谷) in *Lǎozǐ* 6 was already associated with the female genital and the cultivation of sexual practices in Chinese *ars erotica* in one of the earliest surviving commentaries. European translators have partly followed this interpretation, or at least mentioned it. Speaking of a “shadowy hole” (yīnkǒng 陰孔) in this context uses a term that sounds pejorative and vulgar. The hiddenness of the “shadowy character” or “female sex” (yīnxìng 陰性) seems to be negatively associated with a place of lightless darkness. While Daoist-influenced texts in particular do not subordinate the shadowy and dark to the light and bright, and indeed explicitly criticise tendencies towards such a hierarchisation, the normative order of shadow and light is part of the basic understanding of “humanity” in many ancient cultures and continues to have a largely unbroken effect into the present.

As soon as the phenomenological description of the female sexual organ as ‘concealed’ and that of the male as ‘unconcealed’ is translated into a normative order of the sexes, philosophical problems arise that have long gone unnoticed in the interpretation of the cave. Luce Irigaray’s psychoanalytically sharpened interpretation has attempted to highlight this side of the order described by Plato in a straightforward manner. Irigaray’s feminist analysis of the image of the cave is provocative. Not only because the bluntness of her interpretation critically challenges Plato’s normative order, but also because she makes clear the extent to which his metaphysical exaltation of light and vision continues to have an effect in post-metaphysical thought that no longer feels committed to the Platonic legacy, or even rejects it.

With reference to the images of the “ravine” (gǔ 谷 in *Lǎozǐ*) and the “cave” (in Plato), this paper discusses the question whether it is possible to speak of two *paradigms of subjectivity* that can be related, when the philosophies of *Lǎozǐ* and Plato enter into a movement of mutual critique and transformation.

Humanization of Chinese Religion: From Heaven (tian 天) to Ritual (li 礼) in Xu Fuguan and Li Zehou

According to Xu Fuguan, one of the merits of the early Zhou dynasty was to bring Chinese culture into the realm of ideas, establishing a humanistic spirit of Chinese morality. Thus, according to Xu and other Modern Confucians, the breakthrough that Karl Jaspers understands as a “breakthrough to transcendence” was actually a “breakthrough to the humanities” in China.

I will compare Xu’s views on the first beginnings of the spirit of humanism and its connection to the concept of *concerned consciousness* (*youhuan yishi* 忧患意识) in China with Li Zehou’s analysis of the developments of the Chinese shamanistic-historical tradition during the same period - the time between the Shang and Zhou dynasties. During this period, China slowly moved away from religion and turned to the field of humanism and ethics. In my presentation, I will shed light upon the two interpretations of the historical development of the concepts of Heaven (*tian* 天) and the Decree of Heaven (*tianming* 天命), as well as Fate (*ming* 命) and Heavenly Dao (*tiandao* 天道). I will contrastively analyze the theories of both scholars and show the importance they both attached to the concept of rituality (*li* 礼), which finally played a crucial role in shaping Confucian moral humanism.

Digital Identity and the Rise of Cyber-Nationalism

Many studies have been published on young Chinese nationalists in cyberspace, who are also known as “little pinks” (*xiao fen hong* 小粉紅). Most of the studies are descriptive: they adopt the methodology of internet ethnography recording the related cyber activities and the traits of the participants. A few of them are explanatory. These explanatory studies try to answer the question of why this phenomenon would have emerged. The popular theory holds that the phenomenon reflects the national pride stemming from the economic success of China and/or that the generation born after the 90s and 00s have had greater exposure to nationalistic propaganda and education. Not intending to challenge the popular theory, this article offers a complementary explanation for the phenomenon by focusing on the aspect of digital identity. It argues that the mode of identity shaping on the internet plays no less important role than state propaganda in attributing to the rise of cyber-nationalism.

Fundamental Difference between Virtuous Humans and Virtuous AI Systems

The rapid advancement of AI technology has increasingly blurred the boundaries between humanity and the non-human world. Traditionally, only human beings are held to possess moral virtues; now AI machines can also be morally virtuous. This tendency poses a critical challenge to the very notion of humanism, as the viability of humanism requires us to understand fundamental differences between humanity and the non-human world. In this paper I attempt to articulate one important difference between human virtues and AI machine virtues.

The first part of this paper outlines general issues of AI ethics to set the context for my argument. In the second part, I define and reconstruct two kinds of virtues, specific virtues and comprehensive virtue, from Confucian and Aristotelian perspectives. In the third part, I argue that, the most fundamental difference between virtuous AI systems and virtuous human beings lies in that, whereas the purposes of AI systems are specific, their virtues are also specific in accordance with their designed purposes, however, no matter what specific roles human beings play in life, which call for specific virtues, human beings also aim at achieving the virtuous life, which requires comprehensive virtue.

Cultivating the Yin-Self: A Potential Resistance to *Homo Oeconomicus*

Recent scholarship on Neo-Daoism or *xuanxue* 玄學 considers nourishing life (*yangsheng* 養生) as a new form of biopolitics. For Jullien, careful accumulation of the refined (*jing* 精) and subtle (*wei* 微) vital force (*qi* 氣) through one's bodily and spiritual cultivation contributes to the generation of an effective economy of vital capital that prioritizes repose and refinement of life over consumption and productivity. For Heubel, on the other hand, the maximization of such an economy lies precisely in cultivating the *yin* 陰-potency compared to the *yang* 陽 vital capital. In the personal dimension, the female instead of the male undergoes a process of subjectivation. In the socio-political dimension, nourishing life implies a different art of regulating life and death than that in a neoliberal economy. However, in what sense is a self that is not managed, commodified, or marketized as a life-enterprise automatically practicing resistance to becoming an economic human whose existence consists in the calculation of cost and benefit? In other words, how do the personal and the socio-political dimensions of the biopolitics of nourishing life connect to one another? In this paper, I will integrate Wang's philosophy of *yin* 陰 and *rou* 柔 into the discussion of biopolitics and demonstrate that nourishing life contributes to a socio-political transformation process that relies on the hidden, implicit, and imperceptible propensity of the *yin*-potency.

"Firm at the inside, flexible at the outside 内方外圆: A pragmatic guideline for successfully 'be(com)ing human' 做人"

The term *zuoren* 做人, "be(com)ing human" is ubiquitous in philosophical, official and popular discourses in Chinese communities, and even in common parlance (Yan 2017). Contemporary Chinese dictionaries describe *zuoren* as "to conduct oneself; to behave, meaning the way one gets along with others" and "to be an honest and unselfish person". This description clearly shows its moral, interrelational dimension, emphasizing social tact, integrity, and selflessness. In this paper, I zoom in on one of the guidelines for successfully "be(come) human" strongly rooted in the three, or rather four, teachings (Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and Legalism): to be firm at the inside, and flexible at the outside (*nei fang wai yuan* 内方外圆). The phrase knows many variations, all referring to being "round", accommodating and easy-going in interpersonal relationships, while being "square", clear and determined in one's inner life and intentions. Based on explanations from Chinese (indigenous) social psychology, selfimprovement books, and common people's experiences, this paper explores how the dialectics of this age-old wisdom in its various, often modernized interpretations still functions as a useful advice in various domains of everyday life. Examples of both historic and contemporary figures serve as illustrations of how good and bad practices of its wisdom are envisaged.

Itō Jinsai, Ogyū Sorai and the Question of Self-Cultivation

Among the elements most highly valued in all the East Asian Confucianisms, the idea of self-cultivation – of working towards perfecting or in certain ways even transcending one’s given humanness – is among those that stand in the foreground, demonstrating that it holds a broad humanistic appeal. Yet it seems that it is sometimes still hard to pin down and to give it a concrete place in modern academic discussions on Confucianism – because in practice it might also be one of the trickiest ideas to transplant into the kind of modern life we are now living. I would like to explore certain important nuances of the concept of self-cultivation as pertaining to the notions of the Way, humanness, learning, rites, superior persons etc. I would also like to differentiate my exploration from others on the same subject by grounding it in certain Neo-Confucian discussions of self-cultivation techniques and self-cultivation aims – namely, I would like to explore said notions in the works of the Edo period Japanese Neo-Confucian scholars, Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai. Their views, culturally removed from the time and place of Confucianism’s origin, are inherently engaged with the suggested universal appeal of the Confucian idea of self-cultivation and at the same time provide an interesting philosophically contrastive pairing.

Humans powered by lack of essence

Humans are without essence, or their essence is to be without a fixed essence, or their essence is vanishing, receding, or their essence is for its essence to withdraw. It is because humans relate to other things, beings, environments in so diverse and also innovative ways that all of its “own being” is channeled into those diverse interactions with others (including other human beings, of course). Hence, posthumanism as the lack of human essence or the demise of human essential superiority, is inherently related to transhumanism as an “enhancement of the human condition”, since such enhancement made humans what they are in the first place – of this we have the visible trace in ancient artefacts (starting from stone tools), but this was certainly paralleled in a complexification of human relations.

Such ideas – lack of essence, need of general concern from the part of humans towards other beings, their adaptive and quick response to changing environment – are common in the Chinese tradition (our nature is “empty”, and therefore we are extremely responsive to the environment), but they are not lacking also in the Western tradition: take, for instance, Pico della Mirandola’s *De hominis dignitate*: “Nec certam sedem, nec propriam faciem, nec munus ullum peculiare tibi dedimus, o Adam.”

Of technology and human relations, both important aspects in human prolixity, the first is emphasized in the Western tradition to this day, and the second is more prominent in the Chinese tradition.

Graham PARKES

From the Human to the *Zhenren* 真人 and *Übermensch*: Why Bother Going Further?

When Confucius was asked how to serve gods and spirits, he replied famously: ‘You are not even able to serve your fellow humans, so how could you serve the spirits?’ And when asked about death, he replied: ‘You do not even understand life, so how could you understand death?’ (*Analects* 11.12)

When asked about ‘augmented reality’, I tend to reply (from a lower level than the Master): ‘Shouldn’t we try to get a grip on the basic version — Reality v. 1.0 — first?’ And when asked about going beyond humanism, I think: ‘Great idea: because if we don’t transcend our anthropocentrism soon, we’ll end up finishing off the human race.’

We find some helpful ways of going beyond our self-centred humanism in Daoist accounts of the *zhenren*, or ‘real human’, as well as in Nietzsche’s discussions of the *Übermensch*. My question after considering those is: ‘Are we missing anything now? What more do we gain by going *post* or *trans*?’

Interplanetary revolutions: On Mao's cosmic communism

Mao's concept of permanent revolution (*buduan geming*), combined with his faith in the historical primacy of will and the accelerating role of culture, resulted in dialectical and communist accelerationism, which is particularly evident in his later writings and speeches. Later Mao predicted that even after successful communist political revolution humankind will go through a series (a loop, in fact) of cultural and technological revolutions. Due to that, as Mao openly claimed in *A Critique of Soviet Economics*, “the human race can transform into something more advanced than humankind,” and its history could be continued on the cosmic scale (within the communist era). The paper explores this little-known aspect of Maoist thought and compares it with the recent forms of “cosmic communism.” It also attempts to trace the possible sources of Mao's communist accelerationism: from Daoism to Kang Youwei.

Dissolution of the Self: Digital Technology, Privacy and Intimacy in Europe and the Sinic region

The initial question here is whether there are indeed differences in the perception of digital technology and digital control between Euro-American and Sinic space. This question is related not only to the different socio-political systems in the regions under study, but also to the general attitude of the people living there towards technologies as such and, in particular, towards digital technology and its possibilities of overcoming human life, including the possibilities of controlling the individual and society.

Despite all the major local differences between autocratic and democratic societies in East Asia, which can be observed in the use of digital technology, it is nevertheless obvious that the general attitude towards digital objects in the whole Sinic cultural and linguistic area differs considerably from that in the West. Among other issues, these differences are also related to different traditional notions of intimacy and privacy.

In this presentation, I will try to illuminate the development and the social functions of the concepts of intimacy, privacy, and publicity from a transcultural perspective and through the lens of the close and complex connection between semantic and social structures in modern Europe on the one hand, and Confucian traditions on the other. This can help us shed light to the question in what ways does the human Self respond within different linguistic and symbolic orders to new, hitherto unknown challenges of the information age.

The problem of anthropocentrism in transhumanism: Zhuangzi and "Manimals"

Critics argue that transhumanist goals and technologies, if pursued without regard for the welfare of other species and the planet, could perpetuate or exacerbate existing environmental problems and lead to further exploitation of nonhuman beings. Thus, some proponents of transhumanism strive for a more responsible and ethical approach that considers the interdependence of humans with other species and the environment. In such endeavours, it should be taken into account that the relationship between humans and other species and nature is a complex issue that has been discussed in various cultural traditions. In my presentation, I will thus examine the theme of transhumanism and the integration of human beings with nature in philosophical and artistic representations of Chinese culture.

The problem of the relationship between humans and other living beings and nature has been treated extensively in the Chinese philosophical tradition. Confucius, for example, already spoke of the need for a humane treatment of animals. However, the complexity of this issue was discussed in depth in Daoist philosophy, especially in the work of Zhuangzi. In the first part of my presentation, therefore, I will deal with the problem of anthropocentrism as treated in Zhuangzi's philosophical parables on the subject of the relationship between humans and animals.

In the second part of the presentation, I will present the idea of transhumanism and the problem of anthropocentrism in the works of the Taiwanese artist Daniel Lee. In his works, the artist directly addresses and "solves" the problem of anthropocentrism by creating new creatures, i.e. Manimals, that represent a physical fusion of man and animal. These new creatures, however, evoke a deeper epistemological and axiological reflection on the understanding of the relationship between humans and animals.

Gently Flowing Beyond: On Daoist Post-Trans-Humanism

Confucianism and other schools of thought in pre-Qin China could be seen as being transhumanist through its utilization of science, technology, and other such “instrumentally rational” means to extend the apparently limited abilities of humanity. Daoist philosophy, however, endeavours to go one step further and offer what may be called post-trans-humanism. This is due to its formidable ambition of seeking to change the “nature” of humanity itself through practice, meditation, diet, and other ways, so that humanity will effectively become post-human, i.e. by presiding over capacities that significantly exceed those that are generally believed to characterize human limitations. What are these capacities, how do Daoist philosophers envisage their acquisition, and can their endeavour be seen as realistic in any way? In seeking to answer these questions, this paper will limit itself to the discussion of two such capacities, that is to say, on the one hand, the overcoming of logical reflection leading to the attainment of a “sublated” kind of “instinct”, and on the other, the much desired ability to live forever.

Like a Rolling Stone: Sunzi on *shi* 勢 and the Nonhuman Agency

In *Sunzi Bingfa* 孫子兵法 the *shi* 勢 of the expert commander is likened to a rolling stone rushing down the eight thousand feet high mountain slope (Ch.5). In its conventional translations from both Classical and contemporary spoken Chinese the term *shi* 勢 is rendered as *potentiality*, *strategic advantage*, or — even more straightforwardly — as *power*, *force*, or *tendency*. This shows a clear connection of the term with action or potentiality for it. How does that image play into our existent or potential concepts of human, transhuman, or posthuman actors and agencies? What will interest me most here is the interrelation between concepts of unintentional agency, domination, and control (or, rather, the lack thereof).

These issues will be discussed in the context of the concept of *milieu* as found in the contemporary philosophical discussions on individuation, subjectivity, agency, and the critical reformulations of personhood in the fundamentally relational terminology (Georges Canguilhem, Gilbert Simondon).

All Entities Have Consequences

In this talk I present an overview of my new book on agency (which is work in progress!). *Adapting* (OUP, 2021) reconstructed a Chinese philosophy of effective relational action designed to deal with the collective constitution of agency and the entangled character of all life forms. My new book project is an in-depth analysis of what I'm calling the "co-action paradigm"—the Classical Chinese notion of agency—which was only schematically outlined in *Adapting*. In this study on the metaphysics of agency, I use Classical Chinese texts and praxes in dialogue with contemporary Anglo-European philosophy (e.g. Latour, Harman, Bennett, DeLanda) to demonstrate that (1) there's no such a thing as an individual action: all actions are collective and distributive; and (2) nonhumans, including those without intentionality and subjectivity, also have the capacity to act. Objects, landscapes, situations, ideologies, bacteria, and political positions are crucial participants in (constitutive of) human agency, while they also act upon humans and upon each other without human intervention. With these metaphysical explorations, I hope to trigger reflections that help us (1) rethink our notion of agency (what's an action, what does it mean to have the capacity to act, how do we perform actions) and (2) illuminate the practical implications of acknowledging that *all entities have consequences* for developing more effective philosophies of action.

Changing the subject: Wang Hui's reading of the *Qiwu lun* and critiques of "correlationism" in contemporary continental philosophy

The daunting *Qiwu lun* 齊物論 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 has a long history in the Chinese commentarial tradition (see Harbsmeier 1992 and Chen 2004), extending all the way from Guo Xiang's 郭象 (2nd-3rd century) authoritative edition to the famous revolutionary and thinker Zhang Taiyan's 章太炎 (1869-1936) Yogācāra-inspired reading of this text in his bewilderingly complex *Qiwu lunshi* 齊物論釋 from 1910 (see Murthy 2011 and 2014, Ma 2017) and beyond (for example the later Mou Zongsan's 牟宗三 (1909-1995) interpretation elaborated in a littleknown lecture series from 1987, see Mou 2019).

More recently, the influential contemporary Chinese intellectual Wang Hui 汪暉 (b. 1959) has built on Zhang Taiyan's politically charged approach to the notion of "making things equal" (*qi wu* 齊物) in outlining what he considers to be a radically novel conception of equality, one in which difference is in some sense a precondition for - or even identical to - equality rather than standing in its way and requiring a prior process of (social) uniformization (see Wang 2012 and 2016). Crucially, Wang Hui grounds his (far from transparent) notion of "the equality of all things" in the non-anthropocentric ontological vision he believes Zhang Taiyan has managed to extract from the second of the "Inner Chapters" of the *Zhuangzi*: in outlining what he calls the "equality of all things" (*qiwu pingdeng* 齊物平等), Wang explicitly tries to move beyond a vision of reality which privileges the human being as the default subject (in both an epistemological and political sense of the term) and attaches a whole series of normative consequences to the idea of "making things equal"/"seeing things as equal", ranging from the issues related to environmental ethics and distributive justice to the problem ethnic identity in the People's Republic and antagonistic interstate relations in the current "developmentalist" geopolitical order of global capitalism.

Departing from this rather complicated and unwieldy case, my paper will try to relate Wang Hui/Zhang Taiyan/Zhuangzi's notion of the "equality of all things" to the critique of "correlationism" voiced by philosophers in the contemporary continental tradition such as Quentin Meillassoux and Graham Harman, the term "correlationism" referring to the idea that post-Kantian philosophy

has generally tended to make all discourse on being - to “things as they always already are anyway”, to “the world without us” (Weisman 2007) - contingent on our particular mode of *access* to being, that is to say, to the correlation between being itself and being as it is given to us humans as knowing subjects with a particular cognitive /linguistic/ affective/existential/historical/cultural... constitution and attunement. As is the case with Wang Hui, critics of “correlationism”, some of whom refer to themselves as “speculative realists”, tend to imbue their turn away from what Meillassoux has acerbically termed Kant’s “Ptolemean counterrevolution” (placing human beings at the center of the world) with considerable normative and political significance. In simple terms, despite their radically non- or even anti-anthropocentric outlook, “speculative realism” too places an enormous burden on ontology as a point of departure for achieving positive social change and, in some case, human emancipation. In doing so, however, the exact historical and social preconditions for what at times risks amounting to a fetishization of the “non-human” have remained largely unexamined (see Fowles 2016). In outlining and commenting on this paradox, my paper will 1) redefine and defend “correlationism” from the perspective of social systems theory, 2) try to suggest that Zhang Taiyan’s Buddhist-inspired reading of the *Qiwu lun* offer us another possibility of seeing the world, that is to say, as “not being any particular way” at all, or to phrase it more technical terms, as ontologically indeterminate and 3) argue that there is no need for the world to be any particular way (that is to say, for ontology) in order to make a convincing argument for any of the normative/ political goals thinkers such as Wang Hui and the critics of correlationism set themselves.

Russellian Scientism and Confucian Humanism: Russell, Zhang Dongsun, and the Development of the "Science and the View on Life" Controversy

It is generally accepted that one of the key formative phases of Chinese intellectual modernization took place in what can roughly be described as the middle-Republican period. Following a widescale rapid "scientization" of Chinese intellectual discourse of the 1910s, the shifting tides of social and political circumstances, and the constantly incoming news of the crises in the West, started gradually giving rise to a "new" main current in Chinese intellectual world. One of the representative early precursors or public expressions of this new current was the "Science and the View on Life" debate, which developed around the year 1923. In the course of this debate, which gradually grew to become a wider intellectual current, important intellectual foundations were laid, on which the "Confucian humanism" was ultimately reborn and, on the same grounds eventually fused together with elements of Western scientism. In my contribution, I shall return to the very roots of the "Science and the View on Life" controversy. More particularly, I shall try to cast more light on the role of Zhang Dongsun's early encounters with Russellian worldview, and its possible influences and role in the gradual formation of the science versus the view on life dilemma.

Ralph WEBER

Can East Asian Humanisms Be Global? – Conditions of Possibility, Pitfalls, and Prospects

In this paper, I investigate the tensions of looking for Asian models of humanism, posthumanism, and transhumanism in an effort of saving humanism from an obnoxious form of Eurocentrism. Can the move towards the “post” and “trans” overcome the problematic comparative setting in this discussion between traditional (European?) and East Asian models of humanism? How does a post-comparative approach to discussing global perspectives mobilize the “post”-prefix? Does cultural conditionality capture the only condition of possibility in the endeavor to square positionality with globality? What pitfalls await such an endeavor and what prospects motivate it? I argue that the rise of the digital world and apparently with it of increasingly hybrid if not purely digital selves requires philosophies that transcend the framework of making the traditional useful for the present and orient themselves more reflectively along the sociological and political conditions of possibility, particularly of East Asian realities, that is, if humanism is to be saved.

XIANG Shuchen

Chinese Cosmopolitanism: The History and Philosophy of an Idea

Historically, the Western encounter with difference has been catastrophic: the extermination and displacement of aboriginal populations, the transatlantic slave trade, and colonialism. China, however, took a different historical path. In *Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, I argue that the Chinese cultural tradition was, from its formative beginnings and throughout its imperial history, a cosmopolitan melting pot that synthesized the different cultures that came into its orbit. Unlike the West, which cast its collisions with different cultures in Manichean terms of the ontologically irreconcilable difference between civilization and barbarism, China was a dynamic identity created out of difference. The reasons for this, I argue, are philosophical: Chinese philosophy has the conceptual resources for providing alternative ways to understand pluralism.

I explain that “Chinese” identity is not what the West understands as a racial identity; it is not a group of people related by common descent or heredity but rather a hybrid of coalescing cultures. To use the Western discourse of race to frame the Chinese view of non-Chinese, I argue, is a category error. I show that China was both internally cosmopolitan, embracing distinct peoples into a common identity, and externally cosmopolitan, having knowledge of faraway lands without an ideological need to subjugate them. Contrasting the Chinese understanding of efficacy—described as “harmony”—with the Western understanding of order, I argue that the Chinese sought to gain influence over others by having them spontaneously accept the virtue of one’s position. These ideas from Chinese philosophy, I contend, offer a new way to understand today’s multipolar world and can make a valuable contribution to contemporary discussions in the critical philosophy of race.

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