

Foreword

Of Caves and Butterflies

In Paul S. Chung's fascinating study of inter civilizational hermeneutics, we get caves and butterflies, Plato and Zhuangzi, Mencius/Mengzi and Aquinas, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, Gadamer, Ricouer, David Tracy, Edward Said, and a host of other classical and modern scholars in search of a new and refreshing global hermeneutical theory and project. It is a truly international and encompassing tour of the history of hermeneutics both in the West and East Asia. What is particularly refreshing is that this is a comparison of diverse hermeneutical traditions or as the Neo-Confucians would say, the art of reading through the multi-colored lenses of the classical and modern Western tradition in dialogue with Confucian and Daoist sources as well. All of this is done with a flair for captivating metaphors, such as the discussion of Plato's cave and Zhuangzi's butterfly that appear, disappear, and flit through the narrative of reading between and among diverse cultures.

In his discussion of the Confucian sources Chung makes the case that any Confucian hermeneutics must be a read with diverse traditions and social movements very much in mind and not an isolated scholarly endeavor. Of course Chung's subtle approach stays clear of trying to impose upon the reader a simplistic understanding of either the Asian or Western sources of hermeneutical discourses appropriate to the twenty-first Century. Chung makes a persuasive appeal to the intercultural necessity for any future global hermeneutics. In making his request Chung has strong support from the Confucian tradition. If reading is an art, and if every art is a virtue, Kongzi's advice still rings true as the First Teacher explained 'Virtue is never solitary; it always has neighbors (*Analects* 4.24)'.¹ The neighbors for today's public intellectual have become a global diverse and fecund collection of old and new neighbors.

There are so many fascinating features and insights in the text it is hard to single any one interpretive interrogation for special comment. But as someone who has worked a great deal with the great Song and post-Song revival Neo-Confucian revival of the Confucian Way, I was particularly

1 Edward Slingerland, trans., *Confucius: Analects with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2003), 37.

struck by the apt insights Chung draws from these authors. What is equally appealing and compelling is that Chung does not repeat but rather reinterprets the hallowed scholarly quarrels and genealogies of the long unfolding of the Confucian Way *Rudao* 儒道. So for instance he quotes with pleasure and profit both the great Zhu Xi (1130–1200) and the equally esteemed Wang Yangming (1472–1529). He honors Mengzi (Mencius) in the classical period while quoting Xunzi as well. Moreover, just like the Neo-Confucian masters he analyzes, Chung constantly employs the wonderful words of that Daoist master of metaphor and arresting story, Zhuangzi.

My great teacher, H.G. Creel, once said that he thought the two most artistic world philosophers were Plato and Zhuangzi. While I cheerfully confess that I do not have the skill to test Creel's theory against philosophers from South and West Asia, much less the worlds of the Americas, Africa and Oceania, I maintain that when you reach such an incandescent artistry as Plato and Zhuangzi manifest, playing a ranking game about who is better or worse makes little sense. A great Dutch portrait of people or food from the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic and a Northern Song landscape are equally peaks of human creativity — to ask which is better or truer, must less which painting is more beautiful mocks the human intellect, or as the Confucians would say, the mind-heart *xin* 心. The kind of cross- and intercultural bricolage that Chung provides us gives a taste of what a truly global philosophical hermeneutics will become in the future. Borrowing a metaphor from another of Chung's hermeneutical heroes, David Tracy, one does not have to be overly skilled in the use of analogical imagination to be convinced of Chung's plea for a new toolkit containing extended historical and cultural hermeneutical resources and skills.

There is yet another side to Paul Chung's hermeneutical project that demands mention. This is his passionate commitment to the liberative potential of hermeneutics. For Chung only a hermeneutics that operates with an attentive awareness to the marginalized and oppressed of the world merits our full attention. He calls such a socially aware project a hermeneutics of prophetic suspicion. Making use of many masters of critical suspicion Chung argues that we cannot have a really intercivilizational hermeneutics without lifting up wariness about power and social privilege that resolutely demands we ask how our discourse stands in relationship to the marginalized of the world.

Chung powerfully calls for an archeological hermeneutics based on an analogical imagination driven and sustained by a suspicion of all strong hegemonic narratives. Our imaginations and the power of analogical suspicion will make us cautious about the old but true dictum that history is written by the victors. To the victors go the power and the rewards of the struggle, and also the ability to write the history plus construct the philosophical and theological narratives that often stand behind the grand historical fables

and narratives. We need to be archeological in our suspicion and global in imagination in order to unearth hidden, forgotten, despised, and marginalized voices demanding our full respect as the cultural and social other. The overlooked and marginalized other constitutes and demands a hermeneutics of prophetic suspicion. The world has become too interconnected for any regional cultural blinders. Chung offers us a powerful hermeneutical invitation, one that invites us to fly out of the cave on the wings of a butterfly. Reading the book will give the reader an invitation and insight into how the cave and the butterfly become a powerful metaphor for global hermeneutics.

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