

## Foreword

In the past, under the influence of Lin Yutang, I took it for granted that, were we to compare Christianity with Confucianism, it was more suitable to compare Jesus with Confucius, and St. Paul with Mencius. As Lin Yutang said in *The Wisdom of China*, “Jesus was followed by St. Paul, Socrates by Plato, Confucius by Mencius, and Laozi by Zhuangzi. In all four cases, the first was the real teacher and either wrote no books or wrote very little, and the second began to develop the doctrine and wrote long and profound discourses.” For me this insight of Lin Yutang was true to a great extent. That’s why I was surprised to see the manuscripts of K. K. Yeo’s book titled *Musing with Confucius and Paul*. I asked myself: Why not deal with Jesus, the founder of Christian tradition, and Confucius, the founder of Confucian tradition?

Now, the deeper I delve into K. K. Yeo’s manuscript, the more I understand the meaning of this work, which is not only an essay on comparative theology, but indeed an excellent attempt to formulate a Chinese Christian theology based on his reading of Confucius’ *Analects*, one of the founding texts of Chinese Culture, and Paul’s Galatians, arguably one of the earliest among Paul’s letters to be introduced by the Nestorians into China, as evidenced by the very rare Dunhuang Syriac manuscripts. Not only has K. K. Yeo corrected the commonly accepted mechanical comparison of Lin Yutang, he has indeed launched a dynamic comparison and mutual enrichment of Confucianism and Christianity. It’s most interesting for me that K. K. Yeo puts this Chinese Christian theology in the context of today’s world in the process of globalization full of conflict, violence, and suffering caused by the self-assertion and self-enclosure of

different genders, ethnic groups, economic interests, political powers, and religious faiths. Chinese Christian theology finds its sources in the profound Confucian *ren* (humanness) and Christian *agape*. This theological project concerns itself with the contrasting virtue and violence, freedom and bondage, and the eternal problem of who we are in a world of violence and difference, hoping for a peaceful coexistence despite so many in difference. This book has well blended conceptual analysis and logical argumentation with the use of narratives, both historical and personal, to illustrate a vision of comparative theology and Chinese Christian theology. Indeed, this is one of the most fascinating books produced in recent years on Chinese Christian theology that intrigues us with a profound understanding of Christianity and Confucianism, focusing in particular on Confucius and Paul.

To my understanding, Paul's tireless traveling after his miraculous conversion to Christ, from Damascus to Arabia, to Jerusalem, to Antioch, to Syria, to Cyprus, to Asia Minor, to North Galatia, to Macedonia, to Corinth, to Troas, to Miletus, to Rome . . . etc., for the purpose of evangelization and bringing Christ to the gentile peoples, constitutes indeed an unceasing process of strangification and relentless effort of generosity to the Multiple Other. His travel for the good of Multiple Other goes beyond the Jewish Law that keeps itself to circumcision and other nomistic services. Paul refers to the faith in Christ, the perfect union of God and Man, as the only criterion for the gentile peoples to become Christians. He always goes beyond boundaries, not only geographical but also ideological. I use the term "strangification" to denote the act by which one goes beyond the boundary of oneself to Multiple Other, beyond one's familiarity to strangeness, to foreigners and strangers. Also, I use the term "Multiple Other" to replace the concept of "the Other" used by Levinas, Derrida, and Deleuze. We humans are born into Multiple Other, which is more concrete than and ontologically prior to the Other. In Multiple Other, there could be the Other as well as the Thou and the They.

Historically speaking, Paul was at the beginning of Christianity's historically dynamic expansion to the gentile peoples. The process in which Christianity has extended from Judea to Rome and Greece, to Asia Minor, to Europe, to Africa, to East Asia and America, and finally to every corner of the world, could be seen as an unceasing process of strangification and act of generosity. This dynamism is essential to the history of Christianity that has entered into diverse civilizations and cultures in

the world, to become one of their constitutive factors and, again, to push them, each in its own way, to go out side of itself and to go beyond.

This is to say that Christianity is a religion of generosity and strangification *par excellence*. Creation of the world could be seen as God's generosity, God's originally generous act of producing creatures out of his infinitely powerful and immensely abundant creativity. The emergence of various forms of existence in the universe and their successive evolution are therefore understood as produced by this original act of generosity and successive act of transformation. In the first version of Genesis, to what He has created, God says, "it was good." The ontology of goodness is therefore the outcome of divine generosity. After creation, God lives in the universe by the laws of nature that regulate not only all creatures' movement and life but also bring them to go beyond themselves, to better perfection, to the emergence of higher forms of being. Human being, created in the image of God, should also go beyond him/herself for better perfection, even if in the meantime, because of his/her free will, he/she is also able to choose to stay in his/her self-enclosure in the imagined subjectivity, without caring about his/her relation with others, and be bound miserably to the selfish-enclosure, that is what is meant by original sin. The incarnation of Christ is an act of generosity and love, that God becomes human and takes the form of human body, even sacrifices his own life for the benefit of human beings and the whole world. Redemption should be understood in the sense of being saved from one's finite self-enclosure to be open again to Multiple Other, horizontally to other people and Nature, and vertically to God. Christ, core to the faith of all forms of Christianity, is the paradigm of strangification and generosity, so that all human beings and all beings in the universe should go outside of their finite self-enclosure and go always beyond, so as to return eventually to their infinite perfection.

Generosity to strangers and effort of strangification are most important for today when we're facing the challenge of globalization, basically understood as a process of deterritorialization or border-crossing, to the extent of involving all humankind on the globe as a whole. This spirit of crossing borders, of going beyond oneself to Multiple Other, best exemplified by Paul's act of evangelization for the gentile peoples, is indeed very inspiring for Confucianism, the essence of Chinese culture, which has focused mostly on the ethics of reciprocity. As I see it, the message that Christianity has brought to the Confucian China, a message still urg-

ing us today, is this generosity to Multiple Other by way of strangification; in a way that makes Chinese people more balanced in the dynamic contrast of immanence and transcendence, love and justice, construction of life-meaningfulness, and further strangification.

If we look for something in Confucianism that could contribute to this process of globalization, it must be the Confucian way of life as an ethical extension based on *ren* (humanness), *cheng* (sincerity), and *shu* (altruistic empathy). Given that much discussion has been made by scholars on *ren* (humanness) and *cheng* (sincerity), I would like to feature here *shu* and its relation with *ren*. Although in the *Analects*, not much was said about *shu*, it was told by Confucius to be the expression to act upon till the end of one's life. When Zigong asked, "Is there one expression that can be acted upon till the end of one's days?" The master replied, "There is *shu* 恕: do not impose on others what you yourself do not want." Here *shu* was understood in the spirit of negative golden rule. The same negative golden rule was repeated by Confucius when answering Zhonggong's question about *ren*. We can see therefore a very close relationship between *ren* and *shu*, given the fact that they have the same definition. On the other hand, a positive golden rule was given as answer to the question about the concept of *ren*, also to Zigong: "A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes others; wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others."

In Confucianism, the tension between self and Multiple Other is to be solved in reference to golden rules, both negative and positive, based ultimately on the principle of reciprocity. In the Confucian world, where all human behaviors have to be regulated by *li*, even the act of going outside oneself to the other and the original generosity it implied have to be regulated by reciprocity. That's why the *Liji* (*Book of Rituals*) says, "What the rules of propriety values is that of reciprocity. If I give a gift and nothing comes in return, that is contrary to propriety; if the thing comes to me and I give nothing in return, that also is contrary to propriety." Confucius understands generosity also in term of reciprocity. He says, when answering to Zizhang's question about *ren*, "One who can practice five things wherever he may be is a man of humanity. . . . Earnestness, liberality, truthfulness, diligence, and generosity." As we can see among these five virtues, *kuan* (liberality) and *hui* (generosity) are related to the virtue of being generous, although all five are related to reciprocal virtues. Confucius explains, "If one is liberal, one will win the

heart of all; . . . if one is generous, one will be able to enjoy the service of others.” Note that reciprocity here is shown in people’s responses to one’s liberality and generosity.

For sure, reciprocity at the basis of the golden rule is still fundamental to ethics. But, as I see it, there should be first of all an original generosity to go outside of oneself to the Multiple Other before there could be any reciprocity. Original generosity and strangification are therefore the condition *sine qua non* of all reciprocal relationships. Before the establishment of any reciprocity, emphasized for example in Marcel Mauss’ *Essai sur le don* as the principle of sociability, there must be previously a generous act of going outside of oneself to the Multiple Other, so that there can be established accordingly a relation of reciprocity. In both classical world and modern times, golden rules are much emphasized, and reciprocity seen as the basic principle of sociability. Now in the post-modern world and in the world of globalization, we need a new principle more than that of reciprocity. This must be the original generosity of strangification.

Unselfish love and generosity to the other are indeed the true spirit of Christianity, always urging Christians and all human beings to take a generous initiative before any reciprocity. This is something that Confucianism and Daoism didn’t do in the past. The *Liji* might have synthesized the Confucian mind, all in emphasizing the reciprocity of *li*, in saying, “I have heard [in accordance with *li*] that scholars come to learn; I have not heard of [the master] go to teach.” Though the emphasis here was put on the value of truth and dignity of master, unfortunately the original generosity was quite often forgotten. This explains why Confucianism, essential to Chinese civilization, never made the effort in the past, like Christianity did from St. Paul on, to strangify itself to the West and to the whole world. Therefore, Confucian reciprocity is not yet complete. What it needs is this dynamism of strangification launched by an original generosity as revealed by Christianity and from God Himself.

In this sense, we are all grateful to K. K. Yeo for bringing Paul and Confucius together in this book in an effort to construct a Chinese Christian theology. This precious effort to make Christianity understandable to the Chinese and Confucianism to the Christians is itself an outcome of mutual strangification and intellectual generosity, as witnessed not only by his theological discourse, but also by his narrative accounts of his own life story, and those of Confucius and Paul, rendering thereby

a sense of concreteness to the theological discourse itself. For all these, I would invite all readers to savor this text about Chinese Christian theology supported by narratives related to Confucius, Paul, and the author himself.

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