

Article

Enlightenment Toleration: Rereading Pierre Bayle's Criticism of Religious Persecution in *Commentaire philosophique*¹

Xian-zhe Hui

Abstract: This article focuses on the debate concerning the justification and scope of tolerating differing religious beliefs in the work of the Radical Enlightenment philosopher Pierre Bayle and discusses his potential contribution to deprovincialising Critical Theory. It firstly analyses Bayle's project of reciprocal toleration for reconciling the tension between moral universalism and cultural particularity in *Commentaire philosophique*. Next, it examines Bayle's critical analysis of the China Mission so as to argue that the principle of reciprocity can be applied to cultural/religious groups. Finally, it argues that Bayle develops the model of intercultural self-critique in the European Enlightenment to counteract the threat of being blinded by cultural provincialism. In offering an extensive discussion of Bayle's criticism of persecution, the article highlights the need to reveal a certain epistemic humility that is manifested in processes of testing the prejudices and value commitments in a cultural or religious group.

Keywords: Pierre Bayle, Enlightenment, Persecution, Conscience, Toleration

Introduction

At the international Symposium on "The Reception of the Frankfurt School in China" the German theorist Axel Honneth pointed out an important crisis in Critical Theory: Eurocentrism.² When the

¹ My sincere appreciation goes out to Prof. Mario Wenning of Loyola University for his comments and suggestions on the early draft of this article

² See Axel Honneth. "Opening remarks at the international symposium on the Reception of the Frankfurt School in China," in A Mei Long and Liu Senlin, eds., *Frankfurt School in China*

central figures of the Frankfurt School formulated their own theories, they only cited European – primarily German – philosophers, such as Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Weber. In other words, the historical experience as well as philosophical traditions outside of Europe were not taken into account. Despite the increasing attention given to non-European cultures in recent years, there are structural prejudices and stereotypes in the intercultural research undertaken by The Frankfurt School. As Fabian Heubel argues, when non-European cultures are involved, serious criticism of European culture fades away, giving way to contempt for others and defense of one's own position.³ Thus it can be seen that Critical Theory is characterized by not being sufficiently intercultural or global in terms of the experience of modernity and thinkers it considers to be worthy of study. This lack of the intercultural perspective is still one of the biggest challenges to Critical Theory.

As the most important theorist who anticipated core ideas of the Enlightenment Encyclopedists and the Critical Theory tradition, Pierre Bayle's theory of toleration still serves as a critical contribution to the task of deprovincializing Critical Theory. Responding to the contemporary crisis of Eurocentrism in Critical theory, this article restores Bayle's attempt to reflect the prejudice in European culture so as to show that there is an intercultural as well as a self-critical lens in one of the source figures of Enlightenment Philosophy and Critical theory.

Before further discussing Bayle's potential contribution to deprovincializing Critical Theory, it is crucial to recall Bayle's prominence as a philosopher of tolerance. Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) was a French Protestant who is best known for his *Commentaire Philosophique* (1686) and *Dictionnaire historique and critique* (1697). As a notable advocate of religious toleration Bayle's treatment of religious questions has significantly influenced many philosophers in the development of the European Enlightenment, such as Voltaire, Diderot, Feuerbach and Marx.⁴ The fundamental goal of Bayle's

(Social Science Academic Press, 2012), 1-4 and Zhu Guohua and Meng Xiangchun, "From the 'Other' to the 'Master Narrative': the Chinese Journey of the Frankfurt School," in *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 20, no. 3 (2018). On the problem of Eurocentrism in Critical Theory, please also see Tom Bailey, ed., *Deprovincializing Habermas: Global Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2014) and Amy Allen, *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Columbia University Press, 2017).

³ See Fabian Heubel, "Cross-cultural Criticism: Critical Theory's challenge from Chinese modernity," in A Mei Long and Liu Senlin, eds., *Frankfurt School in China*, 12-28.

⁴ On Bayle's influence, see Ludwig Feuerbach, *Pierre Bayle: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Menschheit*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. iv, ed. by W. Schuffenhauer (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1967); Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 137-169; Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 145-155; and Richard H. Popkin, *History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2003), 301-302.

works is to combat religious persecution, which is defined as the use of force rather than persuasion or guidance in religious dispute. According to his work, people who hold different beliefs should be tolerated and treated equally, including Protestants, Catholics and even atheists.⁵ Furthermore, by using imaginary conferences between Christian missionaries and the Chinese emperor in *Commentaire Philosophique* (CP), Bayle illustrates the principle of reciprocity, according to which different religions or groups should follow commandments with which they agree. According to Jonathan Israel's typology, Pierre Bayle may be considered a figurehead of the Radical Enlightenment, because he attempts to justify religious toleration theory on a universal rational basis rather than on certain religious assumptions.⁶ Jürgen Habermas claims that Bayle urges people to adopt the perspective of others and in this respect he can be regarded as a forerunner of Kant.⁷ Likewise, Rainer Forst argues that Bayle opens the way for a conception of toleration based on mutual respect and the justification of one's own claim. For Forst, Bayle's arguments on the limits of reason raise Bayle above Kant.⁸ From where I stand, although there is a consensus among philosophers and scholars on Bayle's significance, the importance of the intercultural perspective embodied in Bayle's work has been underappreciated. It should be noted that Bayle discusses reciprocal toleration in an intercultural context rather than just as a topic among individuals in a state or society in CP. To

⁵ Bayle proposes a decent society of atheists is possible in his work. See Pierre Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*, trans. by Robert C. Bartlett (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), 90. About Bayle's ambiguous attitude towards atheists, please refer to Alex Schulman, "The Twilight of Probability: Locke, Bayle, and the Toleration of Atheism," in *The Journal of Religion*, 89, no. 3 (2009), 329-360. Ronald Beiner, *Civil Religion: A Dialogue in the History of Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 176-189.

⁶ According to Jonathan Israel, there are two major schools of Enlightenment regarding the theme of religious toleration: Radical and Moderate Enlightenment. The moderate mainstream is exemplified by John Locke's approach, which is concerned with the freedom of individual conscience and the restricted role of the state in religious affairs. However, this approach is grounded on certain theological premises because philosophers who embrace it refuse to tolerate those who reject the divine foundations. See Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 65 while for discussion on religious toleration in the Enlightenment, see Juan Pablo Domínguez, "Introduction: Religious toleration in the Age of Enlightenment," in *History of European Ideas*, 43, no. 4 (2017), 273-287.

⁷ See Jürgen Habermas and Ciaran Cronin, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 252-253 and Giorgi Areshidze, "Taking Religion Seriously? Habermas on Religious Translation and Cooperative Learning in Post-secular Society," in *American Political Science Review*, 111, 4 (2017), 724-737.

⁸ See Rainer Forst, *Toleration in Conflict: Past and Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Rainer Forst, "Religion, Reason, and Toleration: Bayle, Kant—and Us," in Cécile Laborde u. Aurélie Bardón, ed., *Religion in Liberal Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 249-261; Rainer Forst, "Religion and Toleration from the Enlightenment to the Post-Secular Era: Bayle, Kant, and Habermas," in *Normativity and Power: Analyzing Social Orders of Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

my knowledge, Forst and Habermas perceive Baylean toleration as an attitude of persons towards each other while not clearly pointing out Bayle's perspective on the toleration of cultural/religious groups. My aim, however, is to show that mutual perspective taking among cultural/religious groups is vital to understanding Bayle's toleration theory, which continues to be significant at a global level today.

In this paper I shall argue that Bayle applies reciprocal toleration to cultural/religious groups rather than just individuals. In the first part I shall reconstruct Bayle's argument concerning religious toleration and focus on his defense of moral rationalism and erring conscience. I shall engage in analyzing Bayle's attempts to reconcile the tension between moral universalism and cultural particularity.⁹ I shall then critically examine the image of Christian missionaries and the Chinese emperor in Bayle's theory in order to show how Bayle's project of reciprocal toleration can be applied to Europeans encounters with other cultures or groups. Finally, I examine Bayle's view of how reciprocal toleration can be achieved in an intercultural context. I argue that, according to Bayle, an imagined or real reversal of perspectives, secured by conducting a conference-like discourse, contributes to becoming self-reflective of our consciences and contributes to reciprocal toleration. I conclude that Bayle's proposal to replace persecution with open engagement and dialogue with significantly different cultural/religious others contributes greatly to tolerance both during the age of early Enlightenment and in times of contemporary crisis, positioning Bayle as a central figure in the emergence of a critical form of comparative philosophy and comparative religious studies.

Bayle's project of toleration in *Commentaire Philosophique*

During the seventeenth century the repeated religious wars among different sects in Europe and the influx of non-European cultures created a severe problem.¹⁰ Meanwhile, religious persecution in Europe resurfaced,

⁹ Olivier Abel uses the phrase "veil of ignorance" to designate Bayle's description of the condition of human beings instead of referring to the hypothetical state in a Rawlsian sense. See Olivier Abel, "The Paradox of Conscience in Pierre Bayle," in *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 14, no. 1, Routledge (2012), 40-55.

¹⁰ Paul Hazard uses the term "Crisis" to describe this time, which centers on the dispute between the orthodoxy and religious liberals. He also gives a detailed description of the exchanges between Europe and other cultures including China, Arabia, Persia, et al, during this period. See Paul Hazard, A. Grafton, and J. May, *The Crisis of the European Mind: 1680-1715* (New York: New York Review Books, 2013), 3-25. Concerning the exchanges between China and Europe in the seventeenth century, see Simon Kow, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought* (London: Routledge: 2018), 57-67.

particularly in France.¹¹ The revocation of the Edict of Nantes offers a paradigmatic example of political support for religious persecution. In 1685 Louis XIV of France repealed the Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed the civil rights of French Protestants. The French Convertists, who commit themselves to converting others to Catholicism, adopted the Augustinian principle of “*compelle intrare*” (Luke 14, 23) as justification for their violence against Huguenots.¹² One example is that of the Bishop of Meaux, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet.¹³ Facing the clash of different perspectives and the resurrection of persecution, Bayle advocates holding a tolerant attitude towards diverse religious beliefs. The main purpose of Bayle’s discourse is to demonstrate that the literal sense of the words “compel them to come in” is contrary to the law of reason and “the spirit of the Gospel”. His arguments can be divided into two major stages. The first concerns the principle of reciprocity, and the other defends the right of erring conscience. In this section I shall reconstruct Bayle’s defense of tolerance in *CP*.

The rationalistic position

In the first part of *CP*, in investigating the light of reason, Bayle proposes the principle of reciprocity to oppose the literal interpretation of scripture adopted by persecutors and provide a rational basis for toleration. The metaphors “light of reason” or “light of nature” are prominent in the Enlightenment tradition and used to designate the capacity to perceive self-

¹¹ It should be noted that persecution and intolerance were not unique to the Catholic side in the counterreformation, but also characterized protestant reformers. See Pierre Bayle, “Reply of a New Convert (1689),” trans. by John Christian Laursen, in *History of European Ideas*, 43, no. 8 (2017), 857-883; Elisabeth Labrousse and Potts Denys, *Pierre Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 8; Paul Hazard et al, *The Crisis of European Mind*, 62-63; Mara van der Lugt, “The left hand of the Enlightenment: truth, error, and integrity in Bayle and Kant,” in *History of European Ideas*, 44, no. 3 (2018), 277-291; John Kilcullen, “Bayle on the Rights of Conscience,” in *Sincerity and Truth: Essays on Arnauld, Bayle, and Toleration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1-49.

¹² Bayle clarifies the question of what a Convertist is in the preliminary discourse of *CP*. Due to the situation in France, Bayle holds a negative attitude towards Convertists, because he believes that Convertists’ zealotry in propagating the truth will bring some bad consequences. Bayle reminds us to notice the similarities between Convertists and persecutors. See Pierre Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary on These Words of the Gospel, Luke 14.23, ‘Compel Them to Come In, That My House May Be Full’*, ed. by John Kilcullen and Chandran Kukathas (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 35-37 and also van der Lugt, “The left hand of the Enlightenment,” 277-291.

¹³ The original passage in the Bible states, “And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” On Bousset’s view see the fourth part of second volume in Hazard et al., *The Crisis of European Mind*, 182-224.

evident truth claims in the context of human concerns.¹⁴ Bayle regards the light of nature or reason as the genuine, original and infallible rule when judging essential truths in philosophical controversies, such as in the domains of mathematics and moral issues.¹⁵ Bayle states in *CP*:

Every [philosophically attentive] mind clearly conceives that this lively and distinct light which waits on us at all seasons, and in all places, and which [shows] us that the whole is greater than its part, that it is honest to be grateful to benefactors, not to do to others what we would not have done to ourselves, to keep our word, and to act by conscience. [...] That all particular doctrines, whether advanced as contained in scripture, or proposed in any other way, are false, if repugnant to the clear and distinct notions of natural light, especially if they relate to morality.¹⁶

For Bayle, the light of reason, as a criterion of moral truths, can help us to judge the incorrect interpretation of “the spirit of the Gospel”. And the literal interpretation of “compel them to come in”, as seen by Bayle, should precisely be rejected. As Bayle claims, the light of reason is mainly manifested in the moral principle of reciprocity, which stipulates that different religions or other groups should follow shared regulations or commandments. However, the literal interpretation of “compel them to come in” adopted by persecutors undermines this principle, thus making their arguments just “sophisms”.¹⁷ To be specific, the persecutors’ argument can be presented as follows:

It is God’s literal command that the true religion should force conversion by persecution;

¹⁴ It should be noted that philosophers, such as Descartes and Locke, have different views on the connotation of the natural light in European Enlightenment. See Martin Hollis, *The Light of Reason: Rationalist Philosophers of the 17th Century* (London: Fontana, 1973).

¹⁵ Bayle gives us some examples of philosophical controversy in the first chapter of *CP*, like “that the whole is greater than the part; That if from equal things we take things equal, the remainder will be equal; That it is impossible [that contradiction] should be true; or, that the accidents of a subject should subsist after the destruction of the subject.” See Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary* and John Laursen, “Skepticism against Reason in Pierre Bayle’s Theory of Toleration,” in D. Machuca, ed., *Pyrrhonism in Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 131-144.

¹⁶ Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 73-75.

¹⁷ About the detailed argument on persecutors’ side in Bayle’s theory, see *Ibid.*, 333.

Now we force those whose beliefs differ from ours to
come over to our side;

Therefore we do nothing wrong.¹⁸

Bayle points out that the persecutors' argument is premised on the assumption that their religion is the only true religion. However, this premise will not be accepted by other religions because each religion believes it is the true religion. Therefore, persecutors commit the logical fallacy "petitio principii" in their argument.¹⁹ Moreover, Bayle frequently uses "reductio ad absurdum" to refute the persecutors' argument.²⁰ According to the principle of reciprocity, if persecutors universalize their argument, they will find the contradictions in their theory and practice, and fail to achieve their goal of protecting the true religion. If one sect (A) adopted the method of persecution to compel members of other sects (B or C) to convert to A's beliefs, then other sects (B or C) would have the same right to persecute A. Thus, each religion has the right to persecute others, and perpetual struggle and violence between religions would be unavoidable. Their force may result in the dissolution of society as well as acts of hypocrisy, imposture, and outright revolt against conscience due to the incapacity of changing one's inward conviction by external constraint. The persecutors' argument would conceivably lead to the absurd results that the true religion should also be persecuted. This is the result that persecutors do not want to accept. Therefore persecution, as seen by Bayle, is criminal and counter-productive, even for propagating the "true" religion.

The Defence of Erring Conscience

In a second step, Bayle discusses the limits of reason and the unknowability of religious truths in order to provide the epistemological basis for toleration. Bayle clearly articulates the scope and limits of faith and reason. Religious truths, according to Bayle, are inaccessible to human beings and beyond the reach of rational judgment, unlike the principles of metaphysics or geometrical demonstration. Bayle notes that people live under a certain level of ignorance, which has two causes. The first is the very condition of human beings. In Bayle's view, people live in a world shaped by

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Their argument fails because they use a premise no one will believe unless they already believe the conclusion. See *Ibid.*, 580.

²⁰ "Reductio ad absurdum" is a method of reputation, which used to demonstrate a statement is false by showing that an absurd result follows from its acceptance. See *Ibid.*, 72, 211, 512, and 581.

passions and habits of childhood, the prejudices of education, etc. This immediately leads to individuals' different presuppositions in judging things and deciding their beliefs. As Frances Bacon said, people live in the cave, which brings on "the Idols of the Cave".²¹ For Bayle, it is difficult for people to overcome the influences of presuppositions in their life when seeking truth. Secondly, the meaning of religious texts is often conveyed in a metaphorical and equivocal sense. Each religion, - and denomination - therefore, has its own interpretation of scriptures. Theologians would engage in permanent debate on the equivocal doctrines of religious texts. Accordingly, it is impossible for men to know absolute religious truths which can only be known by God. The limits of reason cause people to arrive at a skeptical position in religious disputes.²²

Despite Bayle's view of religious truths' being almost impossible to access, this does not mean that he thinks people should abstain from making judgments and decisions on religious matters in their whole life. Since people, influenced by their prejudice, cannot know religious truth, how can they at least make well-informed or largely unbiased decisions in religious affairs? Bayle's - Protestant - response is that our conscience is the touchstone of moral truth. It is inevitable that our conscience would take "the appearance of truth" as "the absolute truth" when making a decision. One's conscience determines one's religious preferences, which are usually affected by education, custom, grace etc. "for a papist is as fully satisfied of the truth of his religion, a Turk of his, and a Jew of his, as we are of ours. [...] in short, man has no characteristic mark to discern the persuasion of the truth from the persuasion of a lie."²³ As Bayle argues, there's no possibility of attaining a certain knowledge of the church's infallibility, either from Scripture or from natural Light, or experience.²⁴ Hence we must admit that religious diversity does exist and might always exist. People's religious beliefs are based on a strong possibility rather than infallibility. The weakness of the human mind leads to invincible ignorance. In other words, our conscience will inevitably make errors. All one can and needs to do as a responsible religious, epistemic or moral agent is to try to limit the sources of ignorance in order thereby to increase the chances that one may approach what is true in a given domain.

²¹ Bacon said, that "The idols of the cave are those specific to individual men. For besides the errors common to human nature in general, each of us has his own private cave or den, which breaks up and falsifies the light of nature." See Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1994), 54.

²² In Forst's view, Bayle was the better Kantian because he notices the finitude of reason regarding questions of religion. See Forst, "Religion, Reason, and Toleration," 249-261 while for Bayle's view on faith and reason see Simon Kow, "Enlightenment Universalism? Bayle and Montesquieu on China," in *The European Legacy*, 19, no. 3 (2014), 347-358.

²³ Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 262.

²⁴ See *Ibid.*, 264.

Given the invincible ignorance and error of human beings, Bayle proposes an exact identity between the rights of an erroneous conscience attended with sincerity and an orthodox conscience. According to Bayle, one should follow the dictates of one's own conscience, even if the dictate of conscience is erroneous in the eyes of God or others. As God considers people's will to obey their conscience, false persuasion should also oblige people. As long as their errors derive from sincere obedience to the dictates of their conscience, they should be tolerated. According to Bayle, the greatest sin is to do something against one's own conscience instead of obeying the dictates of one's erroneous conscience. As Mara van der Lugt argues, Bayle's defense of erring conscience illustrates an important transformation in Enlightenment that consist in prioritizing sincerity over objective religious truth.²⁵ The things that offend God are persecution and hypocrisy rather than the presence of religious plurality and sincerity.

The paradoxical relationship between reason and conscience

The rationalists of the Enlightenment, like the Encyclopedists, highlight the role of reason in replacing God's claim to absolute truth /knowledge and the light of reason becomes the touchstone of moral truth claims. Thus, rationalists advocate the discovery of a universal morality of humanity. Beyond the general rationalist position, Bayle identifies the other polarity of the human condition: it is difficult for people to escape presuppositions in making decisions. Bayle does not disregard the individual conscience: on the contrary, he hopes that people can retain a sense of their own particularity. Therefore, he aims to keep a place for the subjective conscience. In Bayle's view, the inner feelings that differ from rational knowledge help us to make decisions in practical affairs and avoid the pitfalls of radical skepticism.

Bayle claims that people have universal moral obligations when adhering to their conscience. Moral obligations require that we should put aside prejudice and follow moral law. Our consciences, however, are

²⁵ We can also see this transformation in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's play *Nathan der Weise*. Here there are three rings but we do not know which one is real. Hannah Arendt comments that "truth gets lost in the Enlightenment -indeed no one wants it anymore." Bayle plays an essential role in this process, because he emphasizes the role of sincerity in religious affairs. See van der Lugt, "The left hand of the Enlightenment," 277-291. Concerning Arendt's view, see Hannah Arendt, "The Enlightenment and the Jewish Question," in *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron Feldman (New York, 2007), 4. About the transformation, also see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 260; Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 137-169; Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 1-52.

influenced by education, region, custom and other factors, leading to a great deal of prejudice and ignorance. The most extreme example is the persecutor with a good conscience. If conscience tells us that we should persecute others, should we obey it? While persecuting others violates our universal moral obligation, Bayle's defense of the erring conscience implies that we are obliged to persecute others if our conscience so dictates. The defense of erring conscience in religious affairs leads to a paradox in Bayle's theory, "the aporia of the conscientious persecutor".²⁶ Bayle's colleague Pierre Jurieu argues that Bayle provides a justification for violence by defending the right of erring conscience.²⁷ Likewise, the modern scholar Gianluca Mori asserts that Bayle fails to provide moral justification for toleration, because a morally bad action can be excusable, given Bayle's claims on the sanctity of the conscience and the persistence of invincible ignorance discussed above.²⁸

Actually, Bayle notes the possible challenge to his theory and admits that this problem is the most perplexing difficulty in his theory.²⁹ Therefore he appeals to inexcusable error to resolve the aporia in the supplement part of *CP*. On the one hand, he admits that our conscience will invincibly err due to the limitation of reason in the domain of doctrinal controversy, for instance, the Incarnation, Eucharist, and Trinity. As these "speculative truths" are impossible to be discovered by the light of reason, people must rely on the judgement of their consciences to make decisions on relevant questions, while

²⁶ The term "aporia" is used by Jean-Luc Solère. See Jean-Luc Solère, "The Coherence of Bayle's Theory," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 54, no. 1 (2016), 21–46. The problem of the conscientious persecutor in Bayle's work has been discussed by many scholars. See Gianluca Mori, "Pierre Bayle, the Rights of the Conscience, the Remedy of Toleration," in *Ratio Juris*, 10, no.1 (March 1997), 45–60; Olivier Abel, "The Paradox of Conscience in Pierre Bayle," in *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 14, no. 1, (2012), 40–55; John Kilcullen, "Bayle on the Rights of Conscience," in *Sincerity and Truth: Essays on Arnauld, Bayle, and Toleration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1–49; Oscar Kenshur, *Dilemmas of Enlightenment: Studies in the Rhetoric and Logic of Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 78–112.

²⁷ Pierre Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme* (Rotterdam: Reiner Leers, 1683), II: 279.

²⁸ Gianluca Mori believes that unforgivable error and bad consequences are insufficient to explain why the defence of erring conscience cannot justify persecution. Mori points out that if our errors derive from education or invincible ignorance, which would never be culpable, then the core question here is whether persecution is invincible ignorance? In my opinion, it seems that Mori just focuses on the invincible side and the influences of education on children, but he ignores the situation of adulthood in Bayle's theory. Therefore, Mori misinterprets Bayle in viewing his defence of erring conscience as an ethics of conscience associated with intolerance and religious fanaticism. I think Kristen Irwin, Robert Sparling and Jean-Luc Solère have already provided the strongest argument to refute the challenge from Jurieu and Mori. See Mori "Pierre Bayle, the Rights of the Conscience, the Remedy of Toleration," 45–60; Solère, "The Coherence of Bayle's Theory," 21–46; Robert Sparling, "Religious Belief and Community Identity in Pierre Bayle's Defense of Religious Toleration," in *Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 5 (2014), 33–65; Kristen Irwin, "Bayle on the (Ir)rationality of Religious Belief," in *Philosophy Compass*, 8, no. 6 (2013), 560–569.

²⁹ Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 242, 228, and 512.

their consciences are influenced by education, custom, passions, etc. That is, the inability of people to overcome their own prejudice leads to inevitable misjudgment in the domain of “speculative truths”. Thus, such an error should be excused and free from being moral condemnation.

On the other hand, Bayle argues that everyone can access moral truths by consulting their reason. For Bayle, since the natural light is so strongly opposed to persecution, the error of persecutors, therefore, differs from an invincible error, because their error could have been avoided by consulting the light of reason. When people reach a certain age, they should consult reason in order to duly weigh and thoroughly meditate on the dictates of their conscience to avoid committing inexcusable errors in moral domains. Both neglect of information and yielding to passions are antithetical to the clear notions of reason, equity, and humanity. Thus, such error or ignorance is inexcusable.³⁰

In light of what we have discussed, while Bayle respects subjective conscience and different religious traditions, he still adheres to the core rationalist position that people of differing belief are capable of reaching a rational consensus on moral matters. Bayle argues that people should reflect on their prejudices, making them better informed through their own efforts and to avoid the inexcusable error of persecution. Doctrinal controversy in religions, as elaborated by Bayle, is handled by our consciences, while moral questions can be answered by rational knowledge. Thus, Bayle’s project of reciprocal toleration is grounded on rational acceptance of subjective conscience.³¹

Sincerity or Hypocrisy: Bayle’s Critique of the China Mission

Bayle turns to a global perspective and examines the inexcusable error among religious/cultural groups in the fifth chapter of the first part, C P. This point can clearly be seen in his account of the China Mission. Bayle takes the example of Christian missionaries and the Chinese to explain the problem of religious persecution and the principle of reciprocity in early Sino-

³⁰ “That if there be errors, as without doubt there are, to which we ourselves are accessory, through an inexcusable neglect of information, and too great a complaisance for criminal passions. The error of those who are persuaded of the literal sense of the words, ‘compel them to come in’, is obviously [of] this kind: so necessary is it to tread underfoot a thousand ideas of reason, and equity, and humanity, which present daily before our eyes, [that we can] ever persuade ourselves that God has enjoined such a kind of violence.” Please see Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 513 and Solère, “The Coherence of Bayle’s Theory,” 21–46.

³¹ See Sparling, “Religious Belief and Community Identity in Pierre Bayle’s Defense of Religious Toleration,” 33–65. For the relationship between faith and reason in Bayle’s theory, see Forst, “Religion, Reason, and Toleration,” 249–261 and Forst, “Religion and Toleration from the Enlightenment to the Post-Secular Era.”

European encounters. Christian missionaries, as elaborated by Bayle, are guided by the inexcusable ignorance and blind passions in their own religion. This makes them potential persecutors whose zeal in propagating the truth will lead them to use persecution to convert Chinese when the time comes. Thus, Bayle criticizes the Christian missionaries from both political and moral perspectives. In order to better illustrate this point, I shall employ an essential but often neglected thought experiment in *CP*.

The Imaginary Conference

In chapter five of the first part, *C P*, Bayle conducts an imaginary conference in which he stages a hypothetical discussion between Chinese ministers and Christian missionaries. Here the emperor of China wants to examine the nature of the new religion that will be preached in his dominion, in order to preserve the public peace of his nation. The emperor is presented as a representative of reason and tolerance, willing to hear the missionaries' views. He can propose arguments against the missionaries' problematic claims. Although the emperor holds an erroneous belief in the eyes of the missionaries, he is capable of judgment according to the law of reason and justice.

Christian missionaries, according to Bayle, would act as meek and the humble subjects in the initial phase of their mission. They pursue a cunning strategy of partial accommodation in order to gain influence and then, once strong enough, pursue their true goals by force if necessary. When the time comes, they will seek to "convert" the Chinese through persecution, including military, deprivation of property and imposing constraints on freedom. Bayle lists all the dangerous consequences which result from the missionaries and their strategy. Accordingly, Bayle arrives at the conclusion that the intolerant missionaries cannot be tolerated by a tolerant emperor. The Chinese emperor should, Bayle stipulates, expel these missionaries from his dominions in order to protect the public peace and perform his moral obligation. After describing the interview, Bayle says that "this Sincerity, which I suppose in the missionaries, is but a Chimera;"³² Bayle also makes a general comment on humanity and Christianity: "Let's rather say that mankind very rarely [acts] according to its principles. Christians have happened [as if accidentally] not to act by theirs; and they [have] exercised violence, at the same time [as] they preached meekness."³³

This thought experiment reveals Bayle's true feelings towards the China Mission. He is obviously critical of the China mission that was

³² Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 95.

³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

primarily conducted by Jesuit missionaries. Despite his appreciation of the efforts of some missionaries, including Matteo Ricci, Adam Schall and Ferdinand Verbiest, Bayle maintains a negative attitude toward Jesuit missionaries, which is reflected in various sections of his works.³⁴ This attitude arises partly because Bayle in the Rites Controversy expresses his mistrust of Jesuit missionaries' view that Christianity is compatible with Confucian rites and teaching.³⁵ The more important reason for Bayle's criticism is that Christian missionaries try to impose their beliefs on people in the East and the Americas.

Christian missionaries vs The Chinese emperor

In Bayle's elaboration missionaries attempt to convert the Chinese by force and violence rather than persuasion and preaching, and this is clearly a form of persecution. The discussion of this imaginary conference firstly leads to a sure conclusion that Christian missionaries should be punished by secular authority for their actions that harm, have bad consequences that cannot be excused by political law. Persecution and intolerance, rather than pluralistic religion, are the main factors that disturb social order, according to Bayle. Therefore, the Chinese emperor is justified, on grounds of public peace, in expelling missionaries from his dominions.

Missionaries, as potential persecutors in Bayle's view, should also be morally condemned for their inexcusable errors. Bayle asserts that, on the one hand, missionaries, relying on a mindset of cultural superiority to force people to disregard their own conscience, will promote hypocrisy on the persecuted side and endless violence against moral principles. On the other hand, missionaries themselves are also hypocritical, because they practice violence while preaching meekness. Bayle regards missionaries as hypocrites, due to the discrepancy between the declared dictates of their conscience and their actual conduct. To better understand Bayle's depiction of missionaries, we need to clarify the motives of the missionaries' behavior.

On Bayle's observation persecutors are driven by two main motives. The first is to preach the true religion. People are easily affected by ignorance and prejudice in their religions, nations, and communities. For instance, some

³⁴ See Pierre Bayle, *Bayle: Political Writings*, ed. by Sally L. Jenkinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 128-135; Charlotte Stanley and John Christian Laursen, "Pierre Bayle's The Condition of Wholly Catholic France Under the Reign of Louis the Great (1686)," in *History of European Ideas*, 40, no. 3 (2014), 351; and Kow, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought*, 49-50.

³⁵ On Bayle's position in the Rites Controversy, see Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la Formation de l'Esprit Philosophique en France* (Paris, 1932; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1971) while on the Rites Controversy, see Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

people have been taught that persecution is morally justified in parents' and tutors' preaching the true religion. Consequently, they believe that persecution is the right thing to do and is dictated by their conscience. With such belief, they will persecute others once they have the opportunity. These persecutors merely follow biased doctrine without consulting their reason. However, as previously stated, when a person reaches the age of reason and liberty, he/she does not use reason to investigate his/her conscience. Rather, the person neglects or is indifferent to observation of the law of nature, which is definitively an inexcusable error in Bayle's opinion, given its original avoidability.³⁶ Secondly, people may also be motivated by criminal passions, indiscreet zeal, temporal advantage (earthly glory), etc. This leads them to disregard the declared dictates of their conscience and persecute others. One of the best examples, as seen by Bayle, is the court of France, including the Bishops of France, the Jesuits, and monks. Bayle asserts that the court of France has been infatuated with the spirit of persecution. People who approve of persecution in France are just flatters, mercenaries, parasites, etc.³⁷ For Bayle, these people fail to consult their reason and conscience. They are exclusively concerned with personal advantage.

As for Christian missionaries, Bayle points out that their desire for temporal power and imperial expansion make them disregard their conscience and the light of reason.³⁸ Therefore they are hypocrites. Bayle elaborates that missionaries preaching the Gospel while guided by the Machiavellian spirit and blind passion. He even uses terms such as "Ruffian", "Cheat", "Cruelty", "murderous" and "tyrannical insolence" to describe the missionaries. As a result, missionaries are depicted in a ridiculous and diabolical role in Bayle's discourse:

³⁶ A good example of such a persecutor is Adolf Eichmann, who, according to Hannah Arendt's interpretation, acted like a machine during the Nazi era when he no longer reflected his conscience and did not think about moral standards. An ignorant persecutor is also a thoughtless persecutor. The sin of ignorant persecutors was an inexcusable error for Bayle, a "banality of evil" in Hannah Arendt's controversial interpretation. See Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003) and *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

³⁷ About Bayle's comments on the court of France, see Pierre Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 185 and Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*, 193-195, 293.

³⁸ On this point, Kow comments that "Like Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Protestant reformers, Bayle saw the popes as temporal princes who interfered with the affairs of legitimate sovereigns, as discussed in the Dictionnaire articles on 'Grégoire Ier' and 'Grégoire VII'. The early papacy saw Gregory I seek to direct the minds of sovereign princes in such a way as to further both the temporal and spiritual interests of the church. Their assumed right of punishing dissenting rulers as rebels indicated that the pope 'would have more power than the most despotic princes ever exercised'." See Kow, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought*, 50.

Ridiculous, as being founded by an author, who on [the] one hand requires all men to be humble, meek, patient, dispassionate, ready to forgive [injury]; and on the other hand, bids them drub, imprison, banish, whip, hang, give up as a prey to soldiers, all those who won't follow him. And diabolical; because, besides its direct [repugnancy] to the lights of reason, he must see that it [authorises] all [kinds] of crime, when committed for its own advantage; allows no other rule of just and unjust, but its own loss and gain; and tends to change the whole world into a dreadful scene of violence and bloodshed.³⁹

The Chinese emperor, in contrast to the missionaries, is portrayed as a tolerant, rational and moral exemplar. In Bayle's view the Chinese emperor is capable of understanding the law of justice and performing the "indispensable duties of humanity". This tolerant emperor shows full respect and patience to the missionaries in holding discussion and conference with them. According to Simon Kow, Bayle is impressed by travelers' accounts that the Chinese emperor is tolerant of the Jesuits and treats them humanely. Actually, Bayle even blames the Chinese emperor for being too tolerant to notice the danger lurking behind the Jesuits' mission.

And there is no doubt that the same laws of humanity oblige an honorable man to inform the emperor of China what has just happened in France, so that he can take his measures to receive suitably the missionaries whom the king has just sent into that country on the footsteps of some great mathematicians. One is conscience-bound to warn that emperor that those people, who begin by asking merely to be tolerated, have as their real goal to become the masters and then compel everybody with a knife to their throats to be [baptized] without heed of any oath, edict, or treaty made for the safekeeping of the old religion.⁴⁰

In Bayle's view, missionaries expect the Chinese emperor to implement a policy of tolerance that they do not accept. It is obvious that missionaries' actions violate the rules of reciprocity. Hence the intolerant missionaries should not be tolerated by the Chinese. Bayle argues that the

³⁹ See Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 98.

⁴⁰ Stanley and Laursen, "Pierre Bayle's The Condition of Wholly Catholic France Under the Reign of Louis the Great (1686)," 351.

Chinese should follow their consciences and adhere to what they sincerely believe in religious issues, rather than being manipulated by missionaries. Aside from China, Bayle also takes Japan as an example.⁴¹ Christian missionaries condemn the Japanese government for persecuting Jesuits and Christian converts when, at the same time, they conduct the bloody slaughter of the indigenous people of the East and the Americas. Bayle points out that if persecution were permitted to Christianity, then Japan's persecution of Christianity could also be justified. By using the example of China and Japan, Bayle illustrates the principle of reciprocity among cultures or groups and demonstrates that the results of persecution are absurd and morally reprehensible.

In criticizing Christian missionaries Bayle makes the point that their mindset of cultural superiority causes them to be blinded by prejudice and ignorance, and the ignorance of universal moral obligations thereby renders their errors inexcusable. Bayle argues that all parties were equal in intercultural exchange, which obliges them to fulfil duties based on the universal rational morality. He also claims that, without violating moral laws, everyone should follow their own conscience in making decisions, and every culture or group should be respected. There is no right for any individual, group or culture to persecute others who hold different convictions. Accordingly, the project of reciprocal toleration, in Bayle's elaboration, is applicable not only to individuals within a state or society but also to Europeans' encounters with other cultural or religious groups.

Intellectual Humility: The Model of Intercultural Self-Critique

At this point there is still an important issue to be addressed. It is a fact that people are prone to ignorance and prejudice which causes them to disregard the universal morality of humanity, leading to violence. Therefore, the crucial question is what can be done to avoid inexcusable error in religious and moral issues. How can believers or groups avoid being blinded by their cultural prejudice? What can we do to achieve reciprocal toleration and discuss religious truth claims in an intercultural and interreligious context such as that of the early Sino-European encounter?

As Bayle argues in *Commentaire philosophique* and *Dictionnaire historique and critique*, errors are ubiquitous due to the human condition. For Bayle, the invincible ignorance provides the basis of religious toleration, so people should follow their conscience in making decisions in religious controversy. However, people may also be led into inexcusable error if their

⁴¹ See *Ibid.*; Bayle, *Political Writings*, 128-135; and Kow, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought*.

actions are carried out on the mere assumption of being moral, without consulting reason as well as deliberating with others. In that case a plea of invincible ignorance will be invalid, as they failed to do everything they could to consult beforehand. Bayle asserts that, due to the ubiquity of error, we should maintain humility and diligence in seeking truth. According to Bayle, it is important for each group or culture to liberate itself or at least attempt to make explicit and critically reflect on its prejudices, so he points out the significance of self-critique in the encounter between cultures or groups. Consulting the light of reason and debating with different cultural/religious others, as seen by Bayle, are equally important to self-critique.

For one thing, as Bayle's analysis points out, for the ability of reason to enlighten human beings to perceive truth, especially moral truth claims, it is essential to consult their reason when dealing with the information they receive in daily life so that they can distinguish truth from error.

since every man living, be he ever so ignorant, has it in his power to give one sense or other to what he reads or hears, and to perceive that such a sense is the true; and here's what renders it truth to him. It's enough if he sincerely and honestly [consults] the lights which God has afforded him; and if, following its discoveries, he embraces that persuasion which to him seems most reasonable, and most conformable to the will of God.⁴²

The meaning of religious texts, as an example in Bayle's analysis, should be critically examined. Bayle criticizes religious dogmatism by reminding believers to be skeptical of the popular meaning and the literal sense of scripture. According to Bayle, if persecutors who believe the literal sense of "compel them to come in" consulted the tradition of Christianity, they would find the principle of persecution was not held by the early church fathers.⁴³ Clearly there are opposing views about persecution in Christianity. In this case people should ask themselves what they sincerely believe in and reflect the dictates of their conscience to make sure their inward conviction is well justified, rather than execute a command like a machine without reflecting on religious affairs. Although the light of reason, as a criterion of moral truths, does not necessarily provide a positive interpretation of scriptures, but it can help us to judge the incorrect interpretation.⁴⁴ Therefore self-examination through the light of reason, Bayle asserts, is an essential step

⁴² Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 264.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 121.; Bayle, *Political Writings*, 131.

⁴⁴ See Kenshur, *Dilemmas of Enlightenment: Studies in the Rhetoric and Logic of Ideology*, 78-112.

for individuals and cultural/religious groups to avoid making inexcusable errors.

For another, Bayle does not restrict examination to the internal realm but extends it to an intercultural sphere. Changing perspectives, as elaborated by Bayle, is imperative for a culture or religion to overcome error and ignorance in resolving complex moral and religious controversies. To be specific, taking others' perspectives by conducting a conference-like discourse among people from different cultures is of great significance in completing the internal task of critically reflecting on one's beliefs and thereby reaching considered judgments. Bayle does not merely discuss conflicts between Catholics and Protestants but also focuses on a clash of cultural perspectives between China and Europe. Thus, his claim of mutual perspective-taking engages in reflection and exchange on both an intracultural and intercultural level.

Bayle is obviously aware that different perspectives or beliefs coexist due to the finitude of reason, so he points out the importance of maintaining humility for an individual, a group, or a culture. And one sign of such humility is the willingness actively to listen to and openly engage with significantly different cultural/religious others. Communication with the cultural other, as seen by Bayle, enables us to see the blind spot of our own culture. It is requisite to hear different religions' or cultures' views so that we can be better informed of our own convictions and discover truths afterward. One could argue that Bayle has thus indirectly given rise to the field of a constructive as well as a critical form of comparative religious study. For Bayle, discussion and debate will help resolve the disagreement in religious and philosophical controversy, even if mutual understanding can never be taken for granted. Therefore, Bayle always discusses the importance of listening, persuasion, instruction, critique, and dialogical conference in his works:

That every man living, having experienced his own proneness to error, and that he sees, or [fancy] he sees, as age comes on, the falsehood of a thousand things which had passed on him for true, ought to be always disposed to hearken to those who offered him instruction, even in matters of religion. I don't except Christians out of this rule. [...] It would not be amiss to hear them out, not only as this might be a means of delivering them from the errors we should certainly think them in, but also because it is not impossible that we should benefit by their knowledge. It's plain their obligation must be founded on a principle obliging

universally, to wit, a duty in all of embracing all occasions of enlarging their knowledge, by examining those reasons which may be offered against their own, or for the opinions of others.⁴⁵

Historically, debate and discussion have played an important role in Christianity. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were many denominations and schools of thought among Christians who engaged in these, such as the debates between Bossuet and Claude.⁴⁶ Likewise, Bayle places a high value on debate and conference. Bayle's project of reciprocal toleration is aimed to replace religious persecution with conference-like debate. In fact Bayle views an imagined or real reversal of perspectives/roles, secured by conducting a conference-like discourse, as a technique for critically examining presumptions in one's own culture. The process of shifting perspectives in religious and philosophical disputes includes arguing from others' perspectives and being ready to criticize the perspective of one's own culture.

The image and knowledge of China during the seventeenth century provides a chance for missionaries in European contexts to reflect on their beliefs by way of performing an imagined or real shift in perspective and trying to see the Christian mission from the perspective of the Chinese. This is clearly revealed by two imagined conferences in *CP*. In Bayle's depiction the first, between European missionaries and the Chinese government, suggests that if persecutors were to engage in discussion with people of differing beliefs, they would find their own arguments grounded in rotten foundations. In the second supposed conference Bayle even regards Chinese philosophers as judges competent to decide the controversies among different sects of Christianity, which aims at explaining that the missionaries' work is futile when Christians cannot even have a clear answer to the controversies of religious doctrine in their own religion. For Bayle, it is problematic that missionaries expect others to do what they are unable to do. Bayle's comments also apply to the situation regarding the encounter between Japanese and European missionaries. Chinese and Japanese, as the intercultural others, help missionaries to reflect their own biases. If European

⁴⁵ Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 93.

⁴⁶ "The Catholic Jacques-Bé'nigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, published a record of his conference with Jean Claude, a prominent Protestant theologian, held before a noble lady who was considering which denomination she should belong to; in reply, Claude published his *Re'ponse au livre de M. de Meaux intitule': Confé'rence avec M. Claude* [Answer to a book by M. de Meaux entitled *Debate with M. Claude*], 1683." See "Appendixes" in Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, 582. See Hazard et al., *The Crisis of the European Mind*, 206-217.

missionaries could change their perspective, as pointed out by Bayle, they would find the ignorance and prejudice present in their religion/culture.

It would be very entertaining to read an account of the West written by an inhabitant of Japan or China who had lived many years in the great cities of Europe. They would indeed pay us back in our own coin. Missionaries returning from the Indies publish accounts of the deceptions and frauds they have observed in the worship of these idolatrous nations. They laugh at them, but they should worry lest they are reminded of the saying 'quid rides? mutato nomine de te fabula narratur' ['Why do you laugh? Just change the name and the same tale can be told about you'] and of the deserved reproaches and reprisals to which they are exposed when they ignore their own faults but reveal in the most minute detail the vices of others.⁴⁷

European missionaries believe in their own superiority over other religions or cultures, Bayle claims, which leads them to disrespect the individual conscience and vain attempts to impose their views on people of different cultures. Such intolerant attitudes of missionaries have led to persecution that violates universal moral duties. By contrast, Bayle appreciates the tolerant attitude of the Chinese ministers and philosophers in dealing with intercultural and interreligious issues. It is the Chinese emperor who exemplifies a tolerant sovereign whose attention is both on universal morality of humanity and subjective conscience.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in the entry on "Spinoza" in *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, Bayle refutes some negative attitudes towards Chinese culture by reevaluating the learning of *foe kiao* (Buddhism), *Vu Guei Kiao* (Daoism), and Confucianism.⁴⁹ Through the study of Chinese culture, he underlines the view that atheists can be moral while religious believers can commit immoral acts due to being misled by

⁴⁷ Bayle, *Political Writings*, 131.

⁴⁸ See Kow, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought*, 67-73.

⁴⁹ About Bayle's discussion on China, please refer to Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*, 90 and Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*, ed. by Richard H. Popkin, and Brush Craig (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1991), 288-338. Scholars also notice the image of China in Bayle's theory. See Kow, *China in Early Enlightenment Political Thought*, 57-67 and "Enlightenment Universalism?," 347-358. Yu Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden: Chinese Gardening Ideas and a New English Aesthetic Ideal* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 136-160.

superstition and fanaticism.⁵⁰ Clearly, Bayle explains the need to engage in self-critique by shifting perspectives when facing the tensions arising from clashing cultural perspectives.

Following Bayle's observations, it is crucial that we admit our weaknesses and be open to discussion, dispute, and critique in pursuing truth. As Adam Sutcliffe argues, the radicalism of Bayle lies in his adamant stance in favor of debate and discussion, denouncing all constraints on exchanges, as well as any illusory harmony between different viewpoints or beliefs.⁵¹ It is essential to consult the light of reason and engage in intellectual exchange with the cultural other in order to critically examine prejudice and ignorance in one's own culture. Consequently, the model of intercultural self-critique appears in Bayle's toleration theory and significantly influences the Enlightenment age in Europe and beyond.⁵² As interest in cultural pluralism has grown, Bayle's advocacy of mutual perspective-taking and self-critique has become increasingly important to modern thinkers.

Concluding Note

This essay presents Bayle's attempt to apply the project of reciprocal toleration to cultural/religious groups so as to reconcile tensions between moral universalism and cultural particularity. Bayle's theory enlightens us in that if we are seeking a universal morality while ignoring people's real living conditions, then we will produce unattractive and unrealistic theories, but if we do not reflect on the prejudice of a particular culture or religion, then it will reach the other extreme, bringing violence and persecution. Our consciences, according to Bayle, are prone to error due to ignorance and prejudice in our cultures or groups. In order to meet the danger of fanaticism that is sometimes associated with an ethics of conscience, Bayle points out the significance of self-critique when facing the tension caused by different modes of understanding in an interreligious or intercultural context. An imagined or real shift in perspective can effectively help us reflect the prejudice in cultural/religious groups, and this point is well illustrated with Bayle's focus on other cultural traditions, such as those of China, Japan, and Siam.

⁵⁰ The Chinese, according to Bayle, are well-behaved atheists. It should be noted, however, that there are a variety of indigenous religious beliefs in China.

⁵¹ Adam Sutcliffe, "Spinoza, Bayle, and the Enlightenment Politics of Philosophical Certainty," in *History of European Ideas*, 34, no. 1 (2008), 66-76.

⁵² For example, Habermas argues that religious citizen should try to make their viewpoints accessible to those who do not share their faith and prepared to learn from others in post-secular society. See Habermas and Cronin, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*.

Bayle reflects on Europe through using non-European culture as a mirror, not to demonstrate the cultural superiority of the West over the East, but rather to highlight the equal status of both, showing the possibility of self-critique of European civilization. Moreover, Bayle has given a positive plan that we should be open to debate and discussion on the basis of mutual respect between European and other cultures. Debate and discussion among cultures can help us better understand other cultures while reflecting on prejudice in our own culture and identifying possible blind spots. Bayle's discourse provides valuable insight on responding to the crisis of Eurocentrism in Critical theory. The East is described by Bayle in a highly positive and constructive manner, which is different from what Edward Said describes in *Orientalism* as stigmatized in Western intellectual history. Bayle's model of intercultural self-critique invites assessment of underlying prejudice in Europe through exploring non-European cultures and experiences, which inspires us to go beyond the ideological framework of Eurocentrism or Orientalism. This contributes greatly to the task of deprovincializing Critical Theory.

*Philosophy and Religious Studies Programme
University of Macau
Macau SAR, China*

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