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# HOW MEANING MOVES: TAN SITONG ON BORROWING ACROSS CULTURES

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This essay offers an attempt at a cross-cultural inquiry into cross-cultural inquiry by examining how one influential Chinese reformer, Tan Sitong (1865–1898), thought creatively about the possibilities of learning from differently situated societies. That is to say, rather than focusing on developing *either* Tan's substantive ideas *or* elaborating a methodology for how such an approach might proceed, I mine his work for the methodological lessons it offers. I hope to offer both argument and example for the possibility not only that culturally distinct ways of life can inform each other, but that such influence can include learning theoretical and practical means by which such engagement may be carried out. This exploration seems especially necessary now that political theory and philosophy increasingly recognize the value of historically marginalized thought traditions, but nevertheless continue to engage those traditions using methodologies rooted in their own concerns, such as to rectify inequalities of power or to address (mis-)representation of historically marginalized groups.[1] One result is that recent theories of cross-cultural understanding in Anglophone political theory and philosophy—from the "politics of recognition" to comparative political theory, liberal multiculturalism, cultural cosmopolitanism, and universal human rights—examine culture through the lens of culturally embedded individuals or texts, rather than as a social phenomenon constituted by learned practices. The task of cross-cultural engagement becomes defined as how to negotiate what are assumed to be fairly intractable (because localized) cultural differences, often through sympathetic understanding of the other's conceptual grammar or moral values, or the registration of singular, non-Western voices within existing Eurocentric conversations.[2]

One reason for this increasingly circumscribed practice may be the difficulty of sharing *meaning* as opposed to merely forging mutual commensurability, in which the terms of the other are rendered intelligible by translating them into familiar vocabulary. Here, "meaning" points to "the ways in which people attempt to make apparent, observable sense of their worlds—to themselves and to each other—in emotional and cognitive terms."[3] As a socially produced phenomenon sustained by community-wide practices, meanings resist identical exportation elsewhere precisely because of their diffuse and social character (a characteristic that Charles Taylor and others have labeled "intersubjectivity"[4]). Recognizing the further difficulty of transplanting meanings in a world in which Eurocentric discourses govern the articulation of cultural identities, the goal for much recent cross-cultural research is to enhance self-reflexivity about one's own values rather than to ask how or if one's foundational assumptions and disciplinary conversations can be decisively challenged, and possibly replaced, by foreign ones.

We may find an important and disruptive contrast to these recent methodological claims in debates associated with "Western Learning" *(Xixue),* a reform movement that began in mid-nineteenth-century China that urged the adoption of Western institutions to achieve "wealth and power" *(fuqiang).* I say "disruptive" because these claims offer both an instructive critique of many current theories of cross-cultural borrowing and a fairly ambitious alternative vision of how cross-cultural inquiry can proceed. Using the vocabulary of *dao* (substance, Way) and *qi* (vessel, tool), as well as the parallel and more well-known dichotomy of *ti* (substance or structuring) and *yong* (function, use), these reformers applied long-standing Chinese strands of metaphysics to examine the conditions under which meanings and social practices—rather than discrete knowledge or individual insight—can move across communities. By attempting the production of meaning along foreign lines, these Western Learning reformers questioned whether the localization of meaning entails intractable cultural difference.

I center my discussion on a theory about the relationship between *dao* and *qi* that the radical reformer Tan Sitong formulated around 1895, in support of "total Westernization" *(quanpan Xihua).* Following but ultimately contesting the dominant *ti/yong* paradigm of the more conservative Foreign Affairs School, Tan parses the problem out in this way: how, if at all, are the particular concrete manifestations of the Western world that seem so brilliantly useful—steam engines, guns, tall buildings —related to the values or principles that Western people seem to uphold? How can they come not only to be imitated by Chinese but also to have meaning for them? Tan recognized that these meanings were related but irreducible to the ideas individuals held separately in their minds, or the values enforced by state institutions. In response, he produces an original and unusually metaphysical account of how values and meaning are produced and consumed across society, as well as how they work to support more observable external phenomena such as parliamentary government, technological development, and social practices of equality.

Tan's intervention in the Western Learning debate, in my view, makes at least two important contributions to thinking about cross-cultural borrowing. First, he looks beyond the individualized understanding and partial, episodic translation that are the goals of much contemporary cross-cultural theory. He draws attention instead to how *dao*s (which I will provisionally translate as "meanings") are socially embedded and produced but also are manifest in externally observable practices and institutions *(qi)* that are in theory replicable in other communities. Second, by stressing the external aspects of meaning-production, he provides a method for re-creating cultural forms in other contexts, drawing attention to the possibility and necessity of authentic imitation of foreign ways of life. His ambitions to authenticity, however, do not affirm a cultural essence so much as they recognize the process of meaning production as driven by a necessary tension between continuity or replication on the one hand and innovation and interpretation on the other. Tan therefore provides an important corrective to contemporary accounts, which, in emphasizing culture as a construct that informs the values or choices of embedded individuals, tends to ignore the ways in which foreign meaning can be a site of intellectual discipline as well as a target of political inclusion.

*Western Learning: Moving Meaning across Space?*

Western Learning was not a coherent movement so much as a diffuse and contested reaction to conservatives in the Qing court, who believed that adoption of select European institutions in piecemeal fashion could strengthen the Qing state and Chinese society while maintaining putatively traditional Chinese social values. This latter argument was first put forward under the rubric of the *ti/yong* or "essence/function" dichotomy, a Neo-Confucian metaphysical binary with numerous analogues (root/branch, way/vessel) that came to structure theories of cross-cultural learning on both sides.[5]

The most famous and certainly most influential application of the *ti/yong* binary was advanced by Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909) in his famous 1898 essay *Exhortation to Learning* (*Quanxue pian*). In this essay, Zhang insists that the utilitarian, functional aspects *(yong)* of European and American military and technical knowledge could be combined with the essential features or substance *(ti)* of China's moral and cultural heritage while leaving them fully intact. Zhang helpfully encapsulates these features as the "three bonds and five relationships"—norms of social hierarchy that Zhang insists "have been transmitted for several thousand years without changing their meaning.[6] The means by which sages are sages, the way by which China *(Zhongguo)* is China, actually lies in these."[7] Zhang Zhidong's assessment of Chinese culture was at times both essentialist and anachronistic, but it assured many that China's current political problems could be solved without radical transformations of its value system and way of life. It offered a double emotional payoff, first by identifying a "true" essence to Chinese culture that would survive time, and second by reducing foreign capacities to "techniques." Although for Zhang these "techniques" included humanistic learning, such as history and politics, and did not merely signify Western technology,[8] they nevertheless were seen to complement rather than transform the more sublime end informed by prior understanding of Chinese cultural values.

Beginning as early as the 1860s, however, reformers who hoped to strengthen China militarily and financially by borrowing Western technology, such as Feng Guifen (1809–1874), began to point out that simple know-how was not sufficient to produce the desired outcome: they realized (some before Zhang introduced his dichotomy) that Western "use" cannot be detached from its metaphysical basis in a very Western *ti.* The problem for Feng, and certainly for later radical reformers around the turn of the century, was not one of knowledge but of practical capacities embodied in both people and institutions. These thinkers asked not "how can we understand those who speak and act within a different frame of cultural reference?" or even "how can we use what they know?" but "how can we 'go on' to do as they do?" That it was the latter question that preoccupied these thinkers can be seen in their widely shared belief that China could go on to exceed the West in terms of ingenuity, production, and political prosperity and stability—not by replicating Western technology but by innovating as the Westerners did.[9] Although some resolved this crisis of contrast by presuming a Chinese origin for Western ingenuity and science, most others realized that borrowing from the West required a far more dramatic and what

we may call an explicitly *cultural* leap—that is, from one way of being in the world and organizing society to another with a jarringly different set of meanings and functions.

This insight increased in sophistication as later and more radical critics of self-strengthening such as Wang Tao (1828–1897) insisted that "managing all the affairs under heaven" required no less than "total change" *(yi bian)* in Chinese institutions and ways of life.[10] Zheng Guanying (1842–1922), the editor of the volume *Shengshi weiyan* (Warnings to a prosperous age), articulated this totalizing concept as capturing the Westerners' *ti* as well as their *yong.* In his preface to this work, Zheng implies that *ti* and *yong* were not dichotomized along Chinese/Western lines as early reformers would have it, but were in fact two aspects of the same reality, and both were thus necessary targets of borrowing. The *ti* required to embody the Western technological *yong* lie in cultivating particular kinds of talent, practicing particular kinds of political procedure (specifically, parliamentary debate), and uniting "ruler and people." Anything less, in Zheng's view, is "empty talk" that would render Chinese capacities vis-à-vis the West essentially unchanged.[11]

Modern historical assessments of these *ti/yong* debates focus usually on the *relationship* between "function" and "essence," interpreting the binary either as a logical unit[12] or as a functionally separate although complementary set of desirable qualities.[13] A more interesting question might be why cross-cultural borrowing was—and, in much contemporary Chinese scholarship, continues to be—articulated using such terms.[14] What goals do such terms suggest, and do they enable a particular way of parsing or pursuing cross-cultural inquiry?

One main possibility stands out, which I will raise here and use the remainder of this essay to elaborate. Western Learning thinkers—at least those opposed to what in Chinese scholarship is identified as the "Foreign Affairs School" of Zhang Zhidong and his colleagues—in general all viewed the issue of cross-cultural borrowing as a broad social or political transformation along new lines of thought and action. Those such as Yan Fu (1854–1921), who rejected the dichotomization of *ti/yong,* continued to use it in different ways to construct an ambitious foundation for cross-cultural learning. As Yan pointed out, it was precisely because *ti* was so closely connected to *yong* that neither could be confined to one culture or another.[15] That is, rather than seeking merely to gain commensurability across difference or knowledge about foreign ways of life, they aimed to reproduce whole systems of meaning-making, social organization, and political order.

Tan Sitong offers what is probably the most systematic and thorough theorization of such acts, invoking the terms *dao* and *qi.* The binary of *dao* and *qi* maps much the same relationship between substance/form as does that of *ti* and *yong,* a point that Tan notes,[16] but the alternative phrasing allows him to connect the relationship to a complex interpretation of the *Book of Changes* advanced by Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), the Ming/Qing transition literatus (and Tan's fellow Hunanese).[17] The *dao/qi* vocabulary helps Tan to theorize a form of cross-cultural borrowing that seeks first to replicate, and then goes on to build creatively from, alternative foundations—those social, political, and intellectual constructs possessing the capacity to ground present

intelligibility and future innovation. In a later section, I discuss how and why such an "alternative foundations" approach is rarely seen as a possibility within contemporary theory, but I first explore Tan's defense of his more radical position.

*Tan Sitong's Argument for Western Learning and "Total Westernization"*

As one of the most dynamic and passionate thinkers of China's late-Qing reform generation, Tan Sitong makes for a difficult case study. Beginning as a staunch defender of Chinese ethnocentrism, Tan eventually became one of the more radical defenders of Western Learning and then eventually a theorist of universal, proto-cosmopolitan values in his magnum opus *Renxue.*[18] But in defending his transition from conservative to radical, Tan provides considerable insight into the theoretical and not merely logistical insights that underlay his new convictions.[19] In a long essay written for his friend Ouyang Zhonggu, titled "On Promoting Mathematics" *(Xing suanxue yi),* and in a letter of persuasion sent to Bei Yuanzheng, both written around 1896, Tan explains his radical position on Western Learning. He invokes the vocabulary of *dao* and *qi* to offer a somewhat ambiguous but theoretically rich framework to support his reasons for such an ambitious cultural transformation.

Tan begins both letters by trying to convince his interlocutors not only of the worth of borrowing more thoroughly from the West than earlier reformers had ever conceded, but also of the proper method for such borrowing. At several points he affirms the worth of Chinese traditional values but argues that in the present times these values can only be understood with respect to the binary of *dao* or "way" and *qi* or "vessel." Citing Wang Fuzhi's *Outer Commentary on the Book of Changes,* Tan suggests that contemporary discourse has muddled the true relationship between these two entities and as such has deprived Western Learning and "foreign affairs" *(yangwu)* of any substantive capacity to benefit Chinese society (*Quanji,* pp. 196–197).

Tan follows Wang by departing from typical Neo-Confucian readings that held *dao* 道 to be the foundation of *qi* 器, which derived from the distinction between *li* 理, general metaphysical principle or pattern, and *qi*$_2$ 氣, the material embodiments or forms of principle.[20] Much Neo-Confucian philosophy, beginning with the Cheng brothers in the early Song, held that not only was this *qi*$_2$ inferior to *li* but that it also obscured the truth it contained. In contrast, Wang reversed the relationship, holding that it was in fact "vessels" that held the "way," or, in other words, the particular and concrete that predicated the general and abstract.[21] This departure from orthodoxy imbues the *dao* with a considerable measure of creative ambiguity; *dao* basically marks the plural and dynamic outcomes of changing *qi,* resisting consistent translation into concrete terms.

Tan builds on Wang's heterodox reading to argue that "what people today call *dao,* without relying on *qi,* simply flails about in emptiness." Citing Wang, Tan explains:

"There is no *dao* without *qi.* Without a bow and arrow there is no *dao* of archery; without horses and vehicles there is no *dao* of driving. . . . The Han and Tang dynasties did not

have the *dao* of today, and there are many examples of the present time not having the *dao* of past times." He [Wang] also says, "There are many times when the *dao* can be had but it does not exist. Therefore there is no *dao* without *qi*." Ah, these are true words. If we believe these words, then *dao* must rely on *qi* before you can have practical use; it is not the case that *dao* exists in some empty objectless space. (*Quanji,* pp. 160–161)

Tan's *dao* and *qi* terminology is sometimes seen by commentators as forwarding a conservative argument, which follows earlier *ti/yong* binaries rather closely to urge the instrumental adoption of Western technology *(qi)* to assure the preservation of Chinese values *(dao)*.[22] Yet the theoretical framework of *dao* and *qi*—as well as Tan's own argument—suggests a more radical interpretation in which Chinese values and ways of life are fundamentally displaced by a Western *dao* rather than preserved by Western *qi.* As Tan remarks, "Once *qi* has changed, can *dao* alone remain unchanged? Change is precisely doing *qi,* and *qi* cannot leave *dao.* People cannot abandon *qi;* how, then, can they abandon *dao*?" (*Quanji,* p. 197).[23]

According to this logic, adopting Western technology *(qi)* will bring along with it a particular kind of *dao,* and it is not always clear that this *dao* will be that of China's ancient sages. Tan does suggest that Westerners and Chinese share the same kind of *dao*—meaning that their *qi* are somehow compatible with, if not outright identical to, already existing practices and moral outlooks of contemporary Chinese (*Quanji,* pp. 197, 200). Yet he follows up this observation with a long celebration of Western social practices, from education to marriage arrangements, female liberation and parliamentary assemblies (*Quanji,* pp. 209–216). These *qi* imply staggeringly pro-found social and political transformations, belying his insistence that any past Chinese *dao* will be preserved. He admits that the ancient law *(gu fa)* was well ordered, but it is gone, because there are no supporting institutions remaining to invoke it:

> All these statutes, institutions, and the renowned objects [of past times, including the well-field system] were, tragically, not transmitted; thus they are not things that later generations can just model out of thin air. The Duke of Zhou recorded these devices in order to establish the firm foundation of the law. But the devices cannot be revived, and their remainders [in the present] have nothing to lean on, and their distance [from our time] makes them hard to implement. Therefore, I say, without its *qi* you cannot have its *dao.* (*Quanji,* p. 201)

In this iteration of *dao/qi,* Tan makes clear his view of *dao* as a holistic web of relationships between mutually dependent *qi,* in which even "remainders" cannot serve to conjure up the integrity of past institutions: each time has its own *dao* and hence a different set of *qi* to inhabit. Only "changing laws" (or "changing ways," *bian fa*) to reflect Western modes of doing things will supply the *qi* that can allow Chinese society to flourish again (*Quanji,* p. 227)—but given the protean working of *qi,* it is unclear on what grounds such re-establishment would proceed. In a bold reversal of anxieties held by earlier conservatives such as Woren (1804–1871), who condemned Western Learning in the belief that Western ideas and objects could contaminate Chinese values, Tan complains in his treatise "Mathematics" that "we stagnantly adopt only the branches of the Westerners," that is, their guns and ships, but "leave

behind their greatest essence" (*Quanji,* p. 161). The problem for Tan is not being contaminated *enough,* not radically transforming to the degree necessary to make Western *qi* (and *dao*) work.

Here and throughout the two essays he implicitly differentiates between two distinct though related kinds of *qi*: the first kind points to the actual material objects supplied by the Westerners—military hardware and technology, ships, Western imported merchandise. The second, less clear-cut kind of *qi* points to the faculties or capacities—intellectual, social, institutional, economic—that produce these objects.[24] These latter kinds of *qi* are what Tan seems to mean when he speaks of the Westerners' "greatest essence," and seem to be encapsulated in the concept of "law" *(fa).* Throughout Tan insists that, contrary to popular opinion, Westerners and Chinese deep down possess the same "nature" *(xing).* The only problem is how each organizes society. "Is it that Westerners' natures are good while ours are bad? [No, it is that] their laws are good and their intentions impeccable, while we have no laws. If the law is good then everyone of middling quality and below can pull themselves out [of their predicaments]; if there is no law then even those above middling quality will have a hard time standing up on their own." Like Feng Guifen before him, Tan recognizes that learning how to (re-)produce Western prosperity is more important than simply attaining the material products that could help defend China against foreign incursion. For Feng, however, the reasons were strategic: only by adapting to the times and learning the Western tricks—such as physics, modern diplomacy, and institutional organization—could Westerners be driven out of Chinese territory for good.[25]

But for Tan the reasons are more metaphysical. Tan's reading of *dao* and *qi* takes the logic of Wang Fuzhi a step further to interrogate the relationships between the uses of items *(qi)* and the larger social patterns they demanded. Continuing to hold, as Wang Fuzhi did, that concrete "tools" *(ju)* or "vessels" were the key to supporting *dao,* Tan concludes from this premise that such *qi* can actually *produce* a particular *dao,* in this case one closer to the spirit of the modern West than to the ancient Chinese past. He does not, after all, suggest that the West look to China for its *dao,* even as China appropriates Western *qi;* if the two *dao*s were actually the same, as he sometimes says, this bilateral movement would be a possibility.[26]

As I read him, Tan is suggesting that the internal complexity of Western political and social institutions, ways of life, and intellectual organization can be made manageable by means of a particular form of inquiry, one that begins with the particular *(qi)* but culminates in the general *(dao).* To avoid "flailing about in emptiness," one cannot go around hoping to revive a *dao*—any *dao*—directly, because this has little meaning without being embedded in particular contexts, performances, and material objects. Tan specifies that learning foreign languages, reading foreign newspapers, and studying abroad are the first steps in this practice- and object-based borrowing, to be followed by the reform of education, the building of mines, and the developing of commerce (*Quanji,* pp. 162–163). In an annotation to Tan's text, Ouyang Zhonggu explains further that this means the "practicing of their [i.e., Western] affairs" will enable one to "complete the *qi*" appropriate to Western *dao* (*Quanji,* p. 171 n. 16).

By using *qi* to mean not only material objects but those particular systems of knowledge and practice deeply implicated in the production of meaning, Tan's use of the term bleeds into much of what was usually taken to be *dao* or *ti* (substance). To what, then, does *dao* point? Although outside East Asia *dao* is best known for the mystical aura associated with Daoist practices, the concept points toward a much larger and more general set of concepts that are not specific to any philosophical school. Often the site of contestation among schools as to whose thought best expresses the one true path, *dao* was "the word most often used to talk about the many ways of knowing, and sometimes used to talk about a higher level of knowing that subsumed all others."[27]

Similarly, Tan's *dao* is probably best understood as an essentially contested, interpretatively open concept implicated in meaning-production rather than the site of some shared self-identity. His pairing of the term with *qi* is one such instance of using *dao* as a capacious analytic category, rather than a marker of a particular philosophical allegiance. Tan follows Wang Fuzhi closely in that the proliferation of obviously different kinds of *qi* results not in a convergence but a plurality of *dao*s: the *dao* of yesterday, being supported by different *qi* that are no longer in existence, implies a different *dao* of today. This is why law changes with the times (*Quanji,* p. 200). *Dao* seems to be the architectonic value that inhabits physical objects, social arrangements, persons, and groups, making them alive and meaningful. Without the right kind of *dao,* Tan argues, imitating rituals or acts will have no purpose. To those who wish to revive the ancient laws instead of borrowing Western ones, Tan warns, "imitate them diligently, but in the end it will simply be putting on a show. . . . [T]he cow is not a cow, the horse is not a horse; you will just be going through the motions to no real effect" (*Quanji,* p. 201). There is a causal *(yin)* effect here: "Having height is caused by *(yin)* a tall hill; being low is caused by *(yin)* a marsh or river. The ancient laws are completely gone, and there is nothing to serve as their 'cause'" (*Quanji,* p. 201). Lacking a *yin*—a cause or a motivation—the ancient law lacks a *dao.*

*Dao,* then, is akin to "culture" in that it not only conditions but constitutes the relationships among and between these entities; it enables and renders meaningful the faculties that *qi* implies. This mutually constitutive process is not adequately described as a relationship between form and substance, between a *yong* and a *ti.* Rather it gestures toward the mutual co-appearance of each and therefore implies a relationship of dynamic adjustment and change. To Wang Fuzhi, Tan's inspiration, this relationship between what we can perhaps better translate as appearance *(qi)* and way *(dao)* documents the cyclical and ever-changing processes of all-under-Heaven. The *Changes* scholar Hellmut Wilhelm summarizes these processes as undirected dynamism, mapped but not exhausted by "images" (*xiang*—words, objects, forms).[28] Such images—Tan's *qi*—are like orienting coordinates for events and actions; they are form, but also a kind of dynamic "forming."[29]

In the case of the more radical reformers of Western Learning, replicating or borrowing *qi* acknowledges the deeply interconnected systems of meanings and practice that enable *qi* to exist at particular times and places, but without implying beforehand what "Western" *dao*(s) will look like; it allows for learning and develop-

ment to occur along Western lines, *without claiming comprehensive knowledge of any given dao. Dao* and *qi* thus enable a form of borrowing that points beyond the limits of personal comprehension or cross-cultural intelligibility to imitative projects meant to capture—and further develop in perhaps unanticipated ways—the socially distributed knowledge and practices of a cultural other.

Tan's work suggests a more complex application of the *ti/yong* and *dao/qi* dichotomies, but he shares much in common with his earlier progenitors. Zhang Zhidong's classic *ti/yong* dichotomy ("Chinese learning for *ti* [substance], Western learning for *yong* [use]") was later rejected by thinkers such as Yan Fu on the basis of its obvious ontological impossibility,[30] but it nevertheless furnishes a model for situating cultures in relation to each other that establishes an important framework for how future Western Learning in China would be conceptualized. Believing, as Zhang did, that Western *yong* (technology, medicine, methods of warfare) could be injected wholesale into Chinese *ti* (the web of social and moral values underwritten by Chinese political organization) recognizes that even "practical" cultural forms such as applied technology are not simply lodged in individual, representative persons but are embodied in institutions—whether these institutions have material presence in the form of buildings and personnel, or social presence in the form of rules, laws, or "logics." The problem Zhang seeks to address by dichotomizing *ti* and *yong* is precisely the problem Tan addresses by insisting that the two concepts are mutually related: they reflect the enormity of borrowing as an institutional, society-wide process. If Chinese substance can stand in place of Western substance to support Western utility, as Zhang believes, then the analytic (not to mention logistic) obstacles to this form of cross-cultural borrowing are drastically abated. If this is not possible, as Tan believes, then more thoroughgoing, society-wide transformations must take place and *dao* will be transformed. By building on the view that China could borrow from the West, Tan affirms both "Chinese" and "Western" *dao*s as distinct sites of thought and experience.

*Contemporary Counterarguments*

Such a theorization of exchange with this imitative goal in mind may seem both useless and unfeasible. Today few individuals, much less whole societies, are willing to displace completely their indigenous ways of thinking and practice with foreign ones. Gadamer's insight into the prejudicial process of all knowledge-formation suggests further that such wholesale imitation may not even be possible.[31] If we necessarily understand new ideas only by reference to what we already know, how can we ever completely replace our own categories with foreign ones? In contemporary political theory and philosophy, this Gadamerian logic informs at least two distinct arguments against wholesale borrowing of the kind Tan advocated. Both see the fundamental dilemma of cross-cultural learning as negotiating (rather than overcoming) these deep Gadamerian prejudices, or background assumptions, that make cross-cultural borrowing impossible or distorting, and each offers an alternative picture of how the process can proceed given these restraints.

The first argument speaks from the political difficulties of plural cultural identity, often articulated as hybridity or vernacular cosmopolitanism, negotiated politically by way of the "politics of difference." This mode of negotiating difference seeks the inclusion of ethnically inflected life experiences into political decision-making as a means of abating domination, enriching debate, and securing voice to typically marginalized individuals and groups.[32] In a world "remade by colonization" and bereft of foundationalist, Archimedean vantage points that presume to adjudicate universal value, these contextualized negotiations—whether within liberal-democratic domiciles or within the global arena writ large—have become increasingly attractive to political theorists and comparative philosophers hoping to efface legacies of Western domination.[33] To avoid the imposition of essentialism, and to capture the hybrid character of much contemporary cultural identity, many theorists in political theory and philosophy attend carefully to the particular, power-saturated circumstances within and for which cultural exchange takes place. Modeling their efforts on egalitarian dialogue, these theorists analogize cross-cultural exchange to the interaction between embedded persons who offer up categories of analysis for examination.[34]

The result is a process of contestation in which new visions of self and other emerge, a dialogic interplay "animated by both sympathy and resistance, a willingness to balance understanding and self-transgression," which leaves differences intact rather than attempting full transparency.[35] Understood in this way, comparative philosophy is an open-ended, mutually transformative process rather than a system of absolute adjudication between two or more purportedly discrete philosophical systems. Comparative philosophy takes place in a "dialogic" manner within and between particular, already situated philosophical systems (what the comparative philosopher Raimundo Panikkar generalizes as "topoi") that inevitably begins from some particular philosophy but nevertheless subjects everything to critical scrutiny.[36]

The second argument takes the difficulties of learning across cultures even more seriously, calling into question even minimal dialogic transformation. In a critique of current work in cosmopolitanism, specifically the work of Jeremy Waldron, Pratap Mehta argues that attempts to appropriate foreign cultural forms are much more difficult than cosmopolitans—and, we may add, comparative political theorists—often suppose, precisely for the reason that such forms rely on potentially incommensurable and deeply lodged background assumptions that give them meaning. Waldron claims that "we need culture, but we do not need cultural integrity," simply because the significance of cultural materials turns for each person on what are often misinterpretations of their original context. These materials are simply available for the taking, "as more or less meaningful fragments, images, snatches of stories."[37] Mehta insists, however, that this abuses the very idea of what culture is supposed to do. The existing cultural context in which foreign forms are appropriated "alters them beyond recognition and often, rather than complicating the culture that appropriates them, is made quite compatible with its governing premises."[38] He echoes theorists of incommensurability such as Alasdair MacIntyre, who connects the values of particular traditions to their specific embodiments in shared practices, histories, and institutions. According to MacIntyre, these values cannot be divorced from the particular social

order or cultural phenomena from which they emerge and still retain their intelligibility.[39]

From this perspective, those such as Jeremy Waldron who believe that individuals can freely appropriate foreign ideas and ways of life are left defending a rather untenable view of culture as independent of institutions, including shared social norms. If we define culture as "intelligent and intelligible structures of meaning," as Waldron does,[40] then culture demands a particular institutional embodiment. For the liberal political philosopher Will Kymlicka, this recognition of embodiment justifies extending special rights to minorities, to protect their shared ways of life from encroachment by the larger culture in which they are territorially embedded.[41] By seeing cultural life as so deeply embedded in a collective lifestyle that its community must enjoy political rights to assure its future existence, he—along with Mehta and MacIntyre—suggests the impossibility of a borrowed culture or cultural form versus merely a borrowed idea that exists independently of the sociopolitical constructs that produced it.

Based on these two arguments about the embedded nature of cultural constructs, Tan Sitong's intuition about the necessity for framing culture by way of institutions or "*qi*" seems to work against him: Mehta, Kymlicka, and those influenced by Gadamer all argue in different ways that it is precisely because cultural forms have some form of institutional embodiment that their appropriation, assimilation, or comprehension by others is so problematic as to be unlikely. Dallmayr and Panikkar, in particular, argue that a fusion of horizons or affiliative associations mediated by dialogic interaction is the most radical outcome that is cognitively possible for such irreducibly situated human beings.

But Tan's work and the intuitions of his fellow Western Learning thinkers help to steer a path between the view that cultural forms are either independent of social organization and institutions, on the one hand, or are so dependent on such institutions that they cannot be meaningfully borrowed, on the other. Where Waldron rejects or fails to consider a definition of culture as institutionally reliant, and comparative political theorists read culture as accessible only partially through dialogic interaction with embedded individuals, Tan insists that culture—constituted by complex and dynamic *dao*s whose true scope is essentially unknowable to any one human—necessarily is grasped and embodied only in *qi* (material objects, institutions, texts, and so on). But he does not follow Kymlicka or Mehta to conclude that this institutional embodiment implies a view of culture confined to those who are born into it, or Gadamer to conclude that at best a "fusion of horizons" will be forged to create a kind of third cultural space or understanding irreducible to the original two. Rather, the very replicability of *qi* enables the portability of culture—not in Waldron's cosmopolitan sense, which "ignores the dependence of these practices on incommensurable background presuppositions" and assumes we can hybridize easily and quickly by adopting superficial markers of cultural distinction,[42] but in a much deeper, more practical sense, which wrestles with the difficulties of *social* and not just individual transformation.

In contrast to incommensurability theorists such as MacIntyre, whose solution to the problem of incommensurability involves familiarizing erstwhile outsiders with

the canonical languages of particular traditions,[43] Tan broaches the need for institutional re-creation of foreign traditions on native soil, and not just an individual's initiation into existing discourses. Although these transformations will likely be beset by issues of translation and commensurability best handled in a "conversational" or dialogic way, to leave the issue of borrowing there would be to ignore the very real need to frame (and borrow) cultural forms in a set of institutions that can support a broad range of personal interests, needs, talents, and certainly interpretations.

Specifically, Tan's *dao/qi* analysis suggests that meanings, or *dao*s, have important institutional components that are produced by, yet at the same time enable, particular kinds of knowledge and understanding. Meaning- (or *dao*-) making is keyed not to ethnic background or idiosyncrasy so much as specific, but replicable, learning processes that take shape in particular areas and at particular times. As such, it cannot be captured in a dialogic encounter and requires a far more ambitious account of authenticity, namely of how particular cultural forms can be faithfully reproduced within foreign communities.

*Authenticity*

Authenticity may not be the most felicitous English term for Tan's attempt, but it captures the range of meaning (and the urgency) indicated by Tan's (and his colleagues') use of words like "imitate" *(xiaofa)* and "take as model" *(fa, mofang)*. In contrast to more conservative defenders of Chinese cultural identity such as Zhang Zhidong, Tan and other reformers wanted China to adopt institutions, such as parliamentary government, that were not creative interpretations of those institutions but *were* themselves those institutions—that is, they had to mean to Chinese what they meant to Westerners. This authorized a broadly transformative process that in Tan's view could and should displace native Chinese values, whatever those were supposed to be, with ones that either produced or constituted Western *dao*s.

For the most part, such questions of "authentic" replication have been bracketed as irrelevant to the power relations that are *really* mediating cross-cultural exchange,[44] or discredited as fundamentally misguided efforts that reduce the complexities of an entire culture to a singular essentialized identity.[45] However, authenticity is itself ambiguous, and its persistent association with notions of cultural purity or absolutized identity does not exhaust its potential implications for cross-cultural exchange. In his study of authenticity and culture, Charles Linholm points out that "there are two overlapping modes for characterizing any entity as authentic: genealogical and historical *(origin)* and identity or correspondence *(content)*. . . . [T]hese two forms of authenticity are not always compatible."[46] Although cultural-identity politics often turn on rubrics that emphasize one or the other, we can instead discern the tension animating both. In emphasizing conformity to some external standard or logic, both definitions of authenticity turn analysis away from subjectively experienced or interpreted experience toward the ways in which communities of individuals govern, produce, and contest meaning.

Authenticity becomes such a recurring element of Tan's analysis precisely because he and his reformist colleagues believe that "learning from the West" must

extend beyond the individuals participating in it to produce non-subjectivist, community-generated systems of meaning. They recognize that meanings by definition are not created ex novo by individuals, nor are they contained definitively within any particular exchanges. Rather, they are produced and consumed over time and by large numbers of people, making faithfulness or correlation with some standard of interpretation or deployment a constituent part of the learning or borrowing process. Tan's analysis thus suggests how authenticity can help us articulate a set of new and, I believe, productive dilemmas for cultural exchange that extend beyond simply essentialist identity: namely, *which* criteria and standards hold for cultural production, where and by whom are they mediated, and how must whole communities change to apply them? These dilemmas demand not so much a definitive response as an account of how meanings—semiotic systems generated from but irreducible to the plurality of discrete individual exchanges that comprise them—can be transported across communities.

Note the way these two definitions of "authentic" from the *Oxford English Dictionary* in some ways contradict each other:

> 4. Original, first-hand, prototypical; as opposed to *copied. Obs.*

> 5. Real, actual, 'genuine.' (Opposed to *imaginary, pretended.*) *arch.*[47]

The first definition claims that in order for something to be authentic or genuine, it must be chosen or felt spontaneously and thus be "first-hand," not having any prior origin or motive (a genuine feeling of regret, an authentic religious experience). This is how the term is used in much contemporary discourse, a tendency some attribute to the power and influence of Protestant Christianity and its emphasis on sincere individual choice in securing religious belief.[48] The second definition, however, deems something authentic in the sense of "genuine" if it accords with some external standard or quality, like an authentic diamond, "the genuine article," or "the real thing." In fact, the latter two phrases have been appropriated—correctly, it is worth noting—by a range of companies selling mass-produced goods (blue jeans, carbonated beverages) that are identical to each other but presumably meaningfully distinct in some way from otherwise very similar products. It is only by being part of a group or series of items recognizable as that thing that something can be considered to be "really" that thing. How else would we know to call it—and even more to the point, upon inspection *confirm* it—as such? Authenticity and genuineness imply an account of origins, but they do not require that something *be* an origin in itself; it need simply be something that has sprung from or is closely connected to some valued origin.

Consider these definitions of "genuine" from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (which explicitly identify the word with "authenticity"):

> 3. Really proceeding from its reputed source or author; not spurious; = AUTHENTIC.[49]

> 4. a. Having the character or origin represented; real, true, not counterfeit, unfeigned, unadulterated. *(the) genuine article.*[50]

By these definitions, it is only through faithful reproduction and transmission that something can come to be called authentic. Firsthand creation or individualized

flourishes would imply heterodoxy, a bastard lineage—in other words, something spurious and profoundly *inauthentic.* Charles Taylor indicates some of this sense when he points out that "authentic" commitments need not, and in fact cannot, be rooted only in subjective, personal value; rather, their significance must be independent of us and our desires as a precondition of their making sense.[51] These same concerns drove the scholars of the Han Learning movement of the late Qing dynasty, which sought to establish authentic lineages for Confucian texts that they believed had been corrupted by forgeries. Ironically, in their quest for a genuine or true source of Confucianism unclouded by generations of (particular) textual mediation, they mimicked the very people whose influence they sought to eradicate: the *daoxue* Neo-Confucianists, who believed that internal self-ordering and reflection rather than excessive reliance on texts would reveal the true principle *(li)* obscured beneath layers of material existence $(qi_2)$. Both were rejecting (different) forms of textual convention to reveal a more authentic Confucian learning, in which authenticity was constituted not by an act of spontaneous and original creativity but by the faithful replication of what the ancients *really* meant. For the scholars of Han Learning, this meant establishing an authentic lineage of transmission from the ancients to the present; for the Neo-Confucian *daoxue* advocates, this demanded conformity to an externally verifiable principle *(li).*

On this basis, we can recognize that authenticity need not mean a shameless or empty rip-off of some putatively discrete practice, nor need it presume exhaustive knowledge of the subject of imitation. For many thinkers of Han Learning, such as Tan's associate Kang Youwei, authenticating texts was a means of advancing quite radical interpretations to reclaim a heritage they believed had been lost amidst the subjectivist emphasis of Neo-Confucian *lixue.*[52] For others, such as Gu Yanwu, the search for authenticity encouraged a critical engagement with the past so radical that it threatened to demolish the very classical learning it was marshaled to support.[53] Regardless of to what extent such authentication aimed to change widely accepted standards of what constituted the "real" Confucian *dao,* it nevertheless demanded intelligible standards external to the act of appropriation itself: what constitutes authenticity, and who will accept the evidence supporting such a claim? What kinds of communities can be configured or built to sustain this new family of standards, and how can these standards come to be meaningful for them?

One of the counterintuitive results of this analysis is that authenticity, far from tying the self ineradicably to its own cultural origins, actually offers a way for communities to replicate foreign ways of life by pointing to the external practices and standards, rather than the inscrutable interpretations of individuals, that sustain meaning and intelligibility. This is why, for Tan, authenticity is linked to *qi,* which generates but does not definitively determine the standards of intelligibility that would make particular Western forms both work and make sense within a foreign community. The process begins with the (re-)creation of externally observable practices and institutions, and from there calls into being a collective rather than merely an individual sense of how a given institution functions as the thing it actually, really, is supposed by its diverse participants to be. Authentic *qi* and innovative *dao* both mark and give life to the tension between original creation and faithful replication at the

heart of all learning, cross-cultural learning in particular. Read in this way, the imitation of Western *"qi"* can be seen not as mindless copying but as a profound insight into the collectively sustained nature of political institutions, values, and practices. Like the antiquity of late Imperial *kaozheng* scholars, the cultural subjects of such imitations do not present themselves to borrowers as "finished products." Rather, they have to be "rediscovered and reconstructed."[54]

I would like to suggest that aspiring to such (chastened) authenticity is a necessary part of any attempt to extend foundational principles to meet new challenges, to learn or be converted to a new way of thinking that implies a series of interconnected and embedded networks of meaning, rather than discrete concepts somehow held to be intelligible in isolation from each other and from the logical, social, and intellectual matrices that embody their meaning. Whatever one's views on the futility or necessity of authenticity in cross-cultural exchange, it is clear that such issues persistently return—it seems that the (self-conscious, at least) point of the exercise is not to reinforce what is known or even to syncretize fragmented and half-understood cultural forms but to learn something new and complete that is radically transformative.

A notion of authenticity is necessary, moreover, if we are to avoid confounding the comparison of individual expressions or worldviews with the comparison of "cultures." In an attempt to avoid essentialism, theorists of the mutual-intelligibility approach leave open the question of whether the difference being crossed or the forms being borrowed are "cultural" or merely idiosyncratic. By reducing comparative philosophy and theory to an exchange between situated interlocutors, whether actual (as in difference politics) or reconstructed (from canonical texts and other media), these approaches all model cross-cultural influence or exchange as a performance by individuals. The negotiation of cultural difference acts either to interrogate self-identity (the goals of hybridity or cosmopolitan discourse) or to gain intelligibility of foreign ways of life as a means to greater mutual understanding. For those hoping to craft a viable political theory from cross-cultural exchange, the issue is commensurability and its goal or resolution is mutual understanding, often in the form of a hermeneutical intervention from a self-conscious vantage point.[55] Individuals are primary targets *and* participants in this form of interaction: it is through individual acts of comprehension, psychological adjustment, commitment, and expression that mutual intelligibility is made possible. The possibility of grounding analysis in an alternative set of theoretically self-sufficient categories, which potentially offer an internal diversity of interpretations and resources, is never broached because the analysis remains centered on the trope or actual performance of interpersonal communication (in the case of dialogic and translation models) or self-awareness of one's position or cultural constitution (as with hybridity and cosmopolitanism). However much each individual may share his knowledge with others, the performance of cross-cultural thinking remains irreducibly individual; it is not a matter of social transformation, shared practices, or institution-building.

Many Western Learning thinkers, in contrast, hoped to set into motion culturally distinct institutions and ways of life that are, by definition, socially distributed and performed rather than personally accessible. This difference in goal produces a dif-

ference in method, revealing to what extent the mutual-intelligibility approach fails to address both the institutionalized and interconnected multiplicity of social life and cultural meaning as well as the need to address and engage *communities* rather than individuals in the search for cross-cultural knowledge. Applying such a view of learning to cross-cultural borrowing, as Tan does, dynamizes across space rather than simply across time an anthropological or social-science view of cultural practices. Borrowing a "culture" or one of its forms, then, must somehow preserve this play between shared symbols, on the one hand, and creative deployment of or critical resistance to them, on the other.

Tan's elaboration of the mutually constitutive *qi/dao* relationship offers one means through which we can begin to move cultural practices across spaces (and not merely through time). By showing that they are learned—that is, learn*able*—practices that both produce *and* inform a loosely coherent semiotic system, Tan maintains the tension between tradition and innovation that marks all cultural production. The problem this introduces, of course, is that by adopting a semiotic system that endows actions and institutions with meaning, such learning points to society rather than the individual as the site of transformation. The mere understanding of how given systems work by one individual is of no direct use.

## The Path Forward

Tan has by no means resolved all the dilemmas of cross-cultural borrowing, but he has set them on a productive new track. Specifically, he refutes presumptions of the intractability (if not the intelligibility) of cultural difference amidst a world bereft of objective points of adjudication. While many current comparative theorists and philosophers seek to counter false universalism by tying claims to particular, negotiated contexts, the unfortunate result is that cultural differences—whether or not seen to be derived from and reducible to ethnic differences—are rendered if not unintelligible then unusable to "outsiders." According to this view, only mutual intelligibility or a hybrid, emerging universal discourse (not conversion or the development of the "other's" categories from the inside) is possible. Roxanne Euben, for example, explicitly justifies the task of comparative political theory on the basis of shared concerns that inform but do not *supplant* Western discourses: "non-Western perspectives may provide new (new to the West, that is) answers to our old questions"[56]—apparently leaving the capacity for posing questions firmly within already-developed Western modes of inquiry.[57]

"Authenticity" begins to refute these assumptions by pointing to the external, replicable practices, objects, and instruments, or *qi,* that draw upon and/or constitute a constellation of shifting and hermeneutically open society-wide values, commitments, and characteristics *(dao),* suggesting in turn dilemmas that are more complex than those that attend translation, cross-cultural dialogue, or idiosyncratic perceptions of self and other. For one, reading cross-cultural exchange as the acquisition of *dao*s by the implementation of *qi* suggests that our goal can be to gain facility in wholly new modes of inquiry rather than simply to acquire substantive ideas. Scholars of

particular *dao*s affirm the theoretical integrity of those *dao*s by actually fostering their internal development—"going on" as they do—rather than simply documenting the traditions or philosophies existing within a given context or territory. Although this model sets no limit on who can meaningfully pursue such developments, it does require aggressive reproduction of what are perceived to be foundational premises, as well as the institutions that ground particular communities of inquiry. The model thus accounts for the possibility that cultural foundations—as conceptions that both interpret and are interpreted—may exceed their expression in any particular text or set of texts, may furnish alternative counter-discourses and internal critique, and may draw from hitherto unseen culturally embedded but not essentialized logics that can be further developed to form a new research program in a variety of cultural contexts.

In some ways Tan's model resembles Alasdair MacIntyre's argument about how we gain access to erstwhile foreign ways of thought. For MacIntyre, learning a foreign *dao* would involve learning a "second first language" that involves deep acquaintance with not only bodies of theory but also "the cultural and historical contexts in and through which they originally derived their intelligibility as part of a sequence constituting that kind of tradition of inquiry which is the bearer of a developing theory."[58] But where MacIntyre presumes a tight and nearly insurmountable connection between distinct life forms (or cultures) and distinct bodies of theory,[59] Tan underscores the sometimes uneven ascription of "cultural" difference to various life experiences that may or may not have direct relationships to the intellectual concerns under scrutiny, or even to culturally situated ways of thinking at all. With careful cultivation of certain *qi,* Tan claims, large parcels of Western "thinking" can be faithfully reproduced and developed in future ways by Chinese scholars, but he does not prescribe in advance, or ever, the *dao* that such *qi* ultimately brings forth.

The great strength of Tan's idea is that he gives us entry points into what is ultimately a complex entity subject to interpretation and only limited human comprehension. *Dao* in this view is not a circumscribed, graspable object, like the idea of "culture" one may glean from a tourist guidebook, but this does not mean it is tractable only through interactions with, or the articulated self-identity of, situated individuals. As an interlocked series of interactions and knowledge produced by countless individuals, these *dao*s are multilayered and rich. Reproducing their premises does produce something meaningful, even if necessarily partial. Tan's notion of a radically open-ended *dao* enables a form of borrowing focused less on identifying distinct ideas that can be contributions to already existing discourses than it is on inaugurating new fields of inquiry, as well as new ways of life in a community of like-minded others.

Notes

1 – I discuss this argument in more detail below, but see Leigh Jenco, "'What Does Heaven Ever Say?' A Methods-Centered Approach to Cross-Cultural Engagement," *American Political Science Review* 101 (4) (November 2007): 741–755, for further elaboration of how concerns about equality inform the methodology of much contemporary cross-cultural theory.

2 – There are, of course, notable exceptions, such as Stephen C. Angle, *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). I leave more detailed argument for later in the essay.

3 – Lisa Wedeen, "Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 96 (4) (2002): 717.

4 – Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers,* 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 36.

5 – Wang Xianming, in fact, points out that *dao/qi* and related formulations (such as *ben/zhi* [root/branch]) preceded the relatively late (ca. 1895) development of *ti/yong* as constitutive of Western Learning discourse. See Wang Xianming, "Zhong ti xi yong: Jindai xinxue de wenhua moshi," in *Jindai xinxue: Zhongguo chuantong xueshu wenhua de shanbian yu chonggou* (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2000), p. 252.

6 – Tze-ki Hon has recently argued that Zhang's stance was not starkly conservative so much as it urged cooperation between extremists on both sides to promote "a critical evaluation of [China's] traditional institutions as well as a global vision." See Hon, "Zhang Zhidong's Proposal for Reform: A New Reading of the Quanxue pian," in Peter Zarrow and Rebecca Karl, eds., *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), p. 88. It remains the case, however, that Zhang interprets the study of Western Learning as properly subsequent to, and informed by, foundational Chinese learning (p. 90).

7 – Zhang Zhidong, "Quanxue Pian," in *Zhang Zhidong quanxue pian,* ed. Luo Bingliang (Beijing: Hua Xia Chubanshe, 2002), p. 34.

8 – Hon, "Zhang Zhidong's Proposal for Reform," p. 82.

9 – Feng Guifen, "Cai Xi xueyi," in *Jiao bin lu kang yi* (Taibei: Wenhai Chubanshe, 1971), p. 152.

10 – Wang Tao, *Tao Yuan wen lu wai bian,* ed. Zhang Dainian, Zhongguo qimeng sixiang wenku (Shenyang: Liaoning Renmin Chubanshe, 1994), pp. 22–23.

11 – Zheng Guanying, *Shengshi weiyan,* 2 vols., Zhongguo shixue congshu (Taibei: Taian Xuesheng Shuju, 1965), pp. 26–27.

12 – John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), p. 217; Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958).

13 – Luke S. K. Kwong, "The T'i-Yung Dichotomy and the Search for Talent in Late Ch'ing China," *Modern Asian Studies* 27 (2) (1993).

14 – Today the term "Western Learning" inscribes a broad range of debates centered on the meaning and desirability of Westernization in Chinese academic and social life, articulated largely by reference to this earlier discussion and its categories of *ti/yong.* See, for example, Fang Chaohui, *"Zhongxue" yu "Xixue": Chong xin jie du xian dai Zhongguo xueshu shi* (Baoding: Hebei Daxue Chubanshe, 2002).

15 – Yan Fu, "Yu 'Waijiao bao' zhuren lun jiaoyu shu," in *Yan Fu xuanji,* ed. Zhou Zhenfu (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 2004), p. 146.

16 – Tan Sitong, *Tan Sitong quanji,* ed. Cai Shangsi and Fang Xing, 1st ed., 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981), p. 197. Hereafter, all references to this work will be cited as *Quanji* followed by the page number.

17 – According to Steven Platt, Tan believed that the true teachings of Confucius and Mencius were preserved in the work of Wang Fuzhi and fellow Hunanese scholars alone. Tan saw it as his responsibility to perpetuate the "blood" of his ancestor Wang by emphasizing practical learning that "served real conditions" (Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007], p. 72).

18 – I make no claims here about how and to what extent the essays under scrutiny here fit in with Tan's more well-known *Renxue,* written later and after Tan became convinced of the supremacy of Buddhism as a source of religious guidance. There are significant continuities, however, specifically the emphasis on material forces or objects (in *Renxue,* "ether" or *yitai*) as constituent embodiments of moral and social values, and the affirmation of "names" *(ming)* as power-saturated, socially constructed labels rather than indicators of an independently existing reality; see *Renxue,* 1st ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1958), pt. 1, chaps. 1, 5, 8. (For more on Tan's status as a materialist, see Li Zehou, "Lun Tan Sitong de zhexue sixiang he shehui zhengzhi guandian," in *Kang Youwei Tan Sitong sixiang yanjiu* [Shanghai: Renmin Chubanshe, 1958], sec. 2.) One explanation for Tan's return to Chinese rather than explicitly Western frameworks may be his discovery, alluded to in his earlier works such as *Si pian* (On thinking) (*Quanji,* pp. 122–152), that China already possessed much of what he formerly took to be novel Western inventions *(qi).* In this case, he does not contradict his *dao/qi* theory so much as change his evaluation of how much Western *qi* China needed to borrow in order to produce Western *dao.*

19 – In a letter to his friend Tang Fuchen, Tan noted that around the time of his thirtieth birthday, his thought underwent "an enormous transformation" (*Quanji,* pp. 259–260).

20 – Note that the *qi* of *dao/qi* and the *qi* of *li/qi* are different characters and meanings, despite their identical romanization. I will indicate the latter as *qi*₂.

21 – Zhang Dainian, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy,* trans. Edmund Ryden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 224–225; Chen Dianyun, "Wang Fuzhi lun 'dao' he 'qi'," in *Wang Fuzhi bianzheng fa sixiang yinlun,* ed. Xiao Shafu (Wuhan: Hubei Renmin Chubanshe, 1984), pp. 162–163.

22 – Luke K. S. Kwong, *T'an Ssu-T'ung, 1865–1898: Life and Thought of a Reformer* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 110; Tu-ki Min, *National Polity and Local Power: The Transformation of Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 80–85.

23 – In the *Si pian*, section 2, *Quanji,* p. 123, Tan connects *qi* as the unique key to both "fundamentals" *(ben)* and *dao.*

24 – Compare this to Wang Fuzhi's claim that "knowledge" *(zhi)* and "faculty" *(neng)* are the two "uses" *(yong)* that complete *ti* (Wang Fuzhi, *Zhou yi wai zhuan* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1977 [1655]), p. 157).

25 – Feng, "Cai Xi xueyi."

26 – This philosophical implication was identified and more fully questioned by others, including Bi Fucheng, as Wang Xianming notes, in Wang, "Zhong ti xi yong: Jindai xinxue de wenhua moshi," pp. 253–254.

27 – Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Readings in Han Chinese Thought* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), p. 65.

28 – Hellmut Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), pp. 32–33. In the *Renxue,* Tan affirms that the changes as interpreted by Wang Fuzhi speak only of visibility, not of absolute notions of existence (which Tan presumes are inscrutable and/or nonexistent in the Buddhist sense). See Tan, *Renxue,* pt. 1, sec. 12.

29 – Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man in the Book of Changes,* p. 34.

30 – Yan, "Yu 'Waijiao bao' zhuren lun jiaoyu shu."

31 – Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Continuum, 1989).

32 – Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Fred Dallmayr, "Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory," *Perspectives on Politics* 4 (2) (2004).

33 – Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism: A Work of Comparative Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 13.

34 – For example, Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror;* Fred R. Dallmayr, *Beyond Oriental-ism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Stephen C. Angle, *Human Rights and Chinese Thought: A Cross-Cultural Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Daniel A. Bell, *East Meets West: Human Rights and Democracy in East Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

35 – Fred Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions: Paths in the Global Village* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), p. 7.

36 – Raimundo Panikkar, "What Is Comparative Philosophy Comparing?" in *Inter-preting across Boundaries,* ed. Gerald Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 127–129. For a more thorough critique of the dialogic model, specifically the Eurocentrism of its own categories, see Leigh Jenco, "'What Does Heaven Ever Say?'"

37 – Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative," *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 25, no. 751 (1992): 785.

38 – Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason," *Political Theory* 28 (5) (2000): 630.

39 – Alasdair C. MacIntyre, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation be-tween Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues," in *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives,* ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991), pp. 114–115; MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rational-ity?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 327.

40 – Jeremy Waldron, "What Is Cosmopolitan?" *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2) (2000): 242.

41 – Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

42 – Mehta, "Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason," p. 620.

43 – MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* pp. 374–375, 382–383, 394–395.

44 – For example, Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity—China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

45 – For example, Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism: Thinking Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1997), chap. 4.

46 – Charles Lindholm, *Culture and Authenticity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), p. 2.

47 – *Oxford English Dictionary* online edition, q.v. "authentic."

48 – Adam B. Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 9.

49 – The relevant definition provided by the *OED* for "authentic" reads: "Really proceeding from its reputed source or author; of undisputed origin, genuine (Opposed to *counterfeit, forged, apocryphal*)."

50 – *Oxford English Dictionary* online edition, q.v. "genuine."

51 – Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 82 et passim.

52 – Kang Youwei, *Kongzi gai zhi kao* (Taibei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1968).

53 – Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China,* 2nd rev. ed. (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian Pacific Monograph Series, 2001), pp. 32–34.

54 – Ibid., p. 35.

55 – Such interventions do not always take the explicit form of dialogue, though they often effectively imitate it in such matters as the selection and exegesis of texts for study. See Gadamer, who points out the similarity between reading a text and reaching an understanding in a conversation: "Just as each interlocutor is trying to reach agreement on some subject with his partner, so also the interpreter is trying to understand what the text is saying" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* p. 370).

56 – Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror,* p. 11.

57 – Euben notes further that in a world dominated by Western hegemony and colonialism, "questions we take to be ours have ceased to be so exclusively . . . because they have come to frame the sensibilities of non-Westerners as well" (ibid., p. 10).

58 – MacIntyre, "Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues," pp. 114–115.

59 – For example, in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre often construes traditions as constituted by a shared core of essential beliefs grounded in all-encompassing ways of life (pp. 355–356), which he later specifies as distinctly unchosen ("Incommensurability," p. 116).