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# **On the Kierkegaardian Philosophy of Culture and Its Implications in the Chinese and Japanese Context (post-1842)**

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MA

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# Abstract

This thesis aims to establish a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture to address the theoretical problems of modern East Asian philosophy of culture, particularly Chinese New Confucianism and the Kyoto School (represented by Mou Zong-San and Watsuji Tetsuro respectively) who try to formulate their cultural subjectivities for the sake of cultural modernisation. Both schools adopt Hegelian philosophy of culture and therefore inherit the problems of Hegelian dialectics which Kierkegaard criticises. While Kierkegaard himself does not develop a philosophy of culture, this thesis argues that his concepts of culture in terms of the manifestations of passions, community and contemporaneity are useful resources for the formulation of East Asian cultural selves.

Firstly, in chapter 1, I argue that there are two tasks of modern East Asian philosophers of culture: how to understand a culture (epistemic task) and how to establish a cultural self (ontological task). Secondly, in chapter 2, I argue that there are three theoretical problems in Mou's and Watsuji's Hegelian philosophies of culture, namely, the impossibility of change in cultural value, the lack of empirical method and the neglect of openness of interpretation. Thirdly, in chapter 3, I argue that Kierkegaard's definition of culture in terms of the manifestations of passions explain East Asian cultural development more consistently than Hegelian dialectics. Fourthly, in chapter 4, I establish a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture and argue that a cultural self is formulated by the concepts of community and contemporaneity where individuals express their passions according to their free wills. Finally, I argue that Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture fulfils both the ontological and epistemic tasks of East Asian philosophers and solves the theoretical problems they encounter when they adopt Hegelian dialectics.

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This dissertation was written during the difficult period of Hong Kong, including the 2019 anti-extradition law protest. Facing Chinese Communist socio-political intervention, the preservation of Hong Kong cultural subjectivity becomes my major concern since my undergraduate studies. As we shall see in this dissertation, a community preserving individual freedom, an appropriate relation with Chinese cultural heritage via contemporaneity and the manifestations of passions are three essential criteria to articulate a cultural self. By establishing a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, this dissertation shall contribute to the reconstruction of Hong Kong cultural subjectivity after the revolution.

## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed name: Andrew Ka Pok Tam

## Notes on Romanisation

The romanisation of Korean terms follows McCune–Reischauer romanisation while that of Japanese terms follows Hepburn romanisation. However, there is no unified Chinese romanisation due to political and historical reasons. While Western scholars prefer Wades-Giles or Yale systems, mainland Chinese scholars prefer Hanyu Pinyin. However, modern Chinese philosophers are commonly addressed by Gwoyeu Romatzyh (for example Mou Zongsan) while Hong Kong philosophers prefer to be addressed by Hong Kong Government Cantonese Romanisation. There is no hyphen between given names in Hong Kong Government Cantonese Romanisation while the given names are written as one word in Hanyu Pinyin. In the cases of names, this dissertation follows the common practice rather than strictly following a particular romanisation system.

For the Chinese romanisation of philosophical terms, however, this paper uses *Jyutping* instead of pinyin as the etymological discussions of Chinese philosophical terms in this dissertation are often related to the variations of Cantonese tones.

Whenever an East Asian name or term is firstly introduced, the original text will be written in the bracket, e.g. Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929). If not mention, all English translations of the Chinese texts are written by the author. Original text of Chinese Classics is footnoted so that Chinese reader may refer to the original text easily.

All English translation of Chinese text, if not specified, are translated by the author.

## List of Abbreviations

Kierkegaard's work

- CA** The Concept of Anxiety  
**CI** The Concept of Irony  
**CUP** Concluding Unscientific Postscript,  
**CA** The Corsair Affair  
**FT** Fear and Trembling  
**FSE** For Self-Examination  
**JP** Journals and Papers
- M** The Moment and Other Late Writings  
**PC** Practice in Christianity  
**PF** Philosophical Fragments  
**POV** Point of View  
**SC** Sickness unto Death  
**TA** Two Ages

Hegel's work

- PWH** Lectures on the Philosophy of World History  
**PR** Outlines of the Philosophy of Right

# **1. Introduction: Philosophy of Culture as a Philosophical Problem**

This thesis aims to evaluate East Asian philosophy of culture, in particular New Confucianism and the Kyoto School from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, which are significantly influenced by Hegel's philosophy, by using Kierkegaard's philosophy of culture.

Philosophy of culture has been drawing the attention to both Chinese and Japanese philosophers since the nineteenth century after the Opium War or the Anglo-Chinese War in 1842 and Perry's Expedition to Japan in 1853-1854, when Chinese and Japanese philosophers realised the weakness of their traditional cultures and the necessity of cultural modernisation. Chinese and Japanese philosophers gradually adopted Hegelian dialectics in order to reconstruct their cultural subjectivities against the Western cultural invasion by arguing for the supremacy of their cultural traditions. Their introduction of Hegelian dialectics, however, also introduces theoretical weaknesses in Hegel's philosophy, as we shall see in chapter 2. While Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher and the founder of existentialism, seems to have nothing to do with modern East Asian philosophy, it is appropriate to bring him into a dialogue with representative philosophers from New Confucianism and the Kyoto School in this thesis, considering the fact that Kierkegaard is a major critic of Hegel, while East Asian philosophers like Mou Zong-San, Tang Jung-Yi, Lao Sze-Kwang and Watsuji Tetsuro employ Hegelian dialectics to formulate their philosophies of culture.

Although Kierkegaard himself does not develop a philosophy of culture, as we shall see in chapter 3, he provides several resources for establishing a ‘Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture’, in particular his definition of culture in terms of the manifestations of passions and his idea of the formation of community. By bringing Kierkegaard into a dialogue with East Asian Hegelianism, this thesis critically examines the theoretical issues of East Asian Hegelian philosophies of culture and resolve these issues from a Kierkegaardian perspective.

In this introduction, firstly I explain what philosophy of culture is and why it is an important discipline in contemporary East Asian philosophy, particularly Chinese philosophy, as a response to the cultural crisis after the Opium War in 1842 when the British defeated Manchurian Qing dynasty and Western powers entered East Asia. I argue that cultural objects are value bearers, where values are assigned by human society. I also explain why Hegelianism immediately drew the attention of both Chinese and Japanese philosophers in that period. Secondly, I distinguish the philosophy of culture from cultural theories in archaeology or social science, which merely study how cultural phenomenon, behaviours and activities are manifested but do not explain why they are manifested. Philosophy of culture examines the normative values or principles by which cultural phenomenon express. Thirdly, I demonstrate the epistemic task and the ontological task of modern East Asian philosophers of culture, which this thesis aims to complete. East Asian philosophers of culture are concerned with the problem of cultural modernisation. On the one hand since the Opium war in 1842, East Asian nations have been aware of the necessity of modernisation in response to the threat from Western imperialism; on the other hand, the conservatives like New Confucianism and the Kyoto School try to preserve and reformulate their own cultural

subjectivities when modernising their cultures in order not to be assimilated by the Western culture. In doing so, East Asian philosophers need to articulate what their culture is (epistemic task) and explain how to establish a cultural subjectivity (ontological task). Finally, I will outline the content of this thesis by clarifying the philosophical arguments. As this thesis strictly works on East Asian philosophy of culture rather than East Asian history, this thesis will not discuss the details of politics, diplomacy and economy in nineteenth and twentieth-century China and Japan, or detailed biography of each philosopher, although relevant historical events will be mentioned.

## 1.1 What is Philosophy of Culture?

Philosophy of culture is a branch of philosophy which reflects on the nature of culture. However, the philosophy of culture is different from other applied philosophies like philosophy of science, philosophy of psychology or philosophy of religion. ‘Philosophy of x’ usually refers to the philosophical study of the *meaning* of x. But the question ‘what is the meaning of culture’ is different from other questions in other applied philosophies: for *all meanings and values come from culture*. To ask what is the meaning of culture is to ask what is the meaning of the source of meaning.

While philosophers disagree with each other when it comes to the definition of culture, most agree that culture is related to the manifestations of *meanings and values*, and it is a ‘human achievement’.<sup>1</sup> Culture is contrasted with nature: ‘A river is nature, a canal culture.’ As Richard Niebuhr says,

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<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard, *Christ and Culture*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1952), 47.

Culture is the work of men's minds and hands. It is that portion of man's heritage in any place or time which has been given us designedly and laboriously by other men, not what has come to us via the mediation of non-human beings or through human beings in so far as they have acted without intention of results or without control of the process. Hence it includes speech, education, tradition, myth, science, art, philosophy, government, law, rite, beliefs, inventions, technologies.<sup>2</sup>

Niebuhr points out that here the 'human achievement' does not merely include the work of contemporary human achievements, but also 'the past human achievements' which are inherited by the contemporary people. 'The world so far as it is man-made and man-intended is the world of culture.' 'These human achievements, in the third place, are all signed for an end or ends; the world of culture is a *world of values*.'<sup>3</sup> Lao Sze-Kwang further argues that the culture as a world of meanings or values is created by human's 'self-consciousness' (自覺) of values. Because humans are conscious of the existence of meanings and values, they consciously, intentionally and actively manifest, convey and interpret values and meanings in cultural livings.<sup>4</sup>

Values and meanings distinguish culture from nature; while a natural object does not manifest meanings or values, a cultural object must convey and manifest meanings and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>4</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 文化哲學演論錄 [Lectures on Philosophy of Culture], (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002), xii-xiii.



values. In other words, culture begins with an act of designation of values: *a value is given to a particular object*. As Tang Jung-Yi said,

our spiritual or cultural activities arise and are produced from our spiritual self or transcendent self. Our cultural activities vary with the realistic environment of our existence, because our spirits are regulated by the realistic environment and manifest as different cultural activities. Here we use the term regulate [規定] instead of determining [決定] because the regulated one preserves his freedom of active determination on his own activities. ... All realistic environments are merely the regulative conditions or necessary conditions of our spiritual and cultural activities, but not sufficient conditions or realising condition.<sup>5</sup>

By contrast, Chinese Communist Chen Duxiu, for example, explicitly rejects the definition of culture as the designation of values as he denies the existence of the free will. He writes: ‘culture ... is just a building on the foundation of the economy, not the foundation itself.’<sup>6</sup>

In response to Communist challenge, New Confucian philosopher Mou Zong-San defends the definition of culture as the designation of values by rejecting Chen’s Marxist material conception of history which reduces cultural values to the social-economic condition and scientism which reduces cultural values to physical conditions. Both reject the human’s freedom from and dominance over material conditions and the transcendence of values.

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<sup>5</sup> 唐君毅 [Tang Jung-Yi], 文化意識與道德理性 [Cultural Consciousness and Moral Reason], (Taipei: Student Books Ltd, 2003), 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> 陳獨秀 [Chen Duxiu], 科學與人生觀 [Science and the Perspective of Life], (Shanghai: Ah Tong Library, 1924)

The greatest harm of scientific monomorphism and intellectual monism is the denial of meanings and value. For the perspective of life, scientific monomorphism and intellectual monism only acknowledge the objects but not humans. Why should one have filial piety? Such a question cannot be asked and analysed by intelligence.’ ‘Faced with the fact that Communist party is abandoning the human relationships and eliminating the human nature, it is legitimate and necessary to restore Chinese culture which emphasises human nature, human relationships and the minds of humanity and righteousness for the sake of the awakening of human nature and reason.<sup>7</sup>

In short, cultural activities are the designations of values on objects because they are the manifestation of human’s free will, even though such manifestations are limited by the external condition.

There are two dimensions of culture as *the designation of values*: giving values to a valueless natural object and creating an artificial object with values attached. Designations of values are actively manifested by a human being; even though designations of values are limited by the external conditions, they are determined by the free will and choice of human. Ritual of the funeral, for example, is an artificial object or event. As it is written in *Classics of Rites*: ‘Because of the internal sorrow, the external appearance changes. Because of the distress in the heart, the mouth tastes no sweetness while the body feels no comfort.’<sup>8</sup> (*Classic of Rites*, 34.1) As Xunzi interprets, the ritual of the funeral is ‘the ceremonies established according to the evaluation of passions’ (稱情而立文) (*Xunzi*, 19.24) According to Xunzi, passions (情

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<sup>7</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-san], 道德的理想主義 [Moral Idealism], (Taipei: Linking Books Ltd, 2003), 329-330.

<sup>8</sup> Original text: 夫悲哀在中，故形變於外也，痛疾在心，故口不甘味，身不安美也。

cing4) are a human being's natural responses to stimulus. When passions are not regulated, there will be a social disorder. Therefore, the ultimate aim of ritual and culture is to regulate the manifestations of passion in order to maintain social harmony.<sup>9</sup> Such regulated expressions of passions are acts of designations of values, namely, the regulating principles of expression.

Even though the natural object itself contains no value, humans can always assign values and meaning to it. When meanings and values are assigned to a natural object by humans, it is no longer a natural object, but it becomes a cultural object. One may use Hilary Putnam's classic example of the traces of a crawling ant which looks like 'the caricature of Winston Churchill'<sup>10</sup> and put it in the context above. Although the ant has no intention to draw the picture of Winston Churchill and it does not even know Winston Churchill at all, we think it looks like Winston Churchill. From the perspective of the philosophy of culture (which is out of Putnam's context<sup>11</sup>), although the trace of an ant is a natural object, human beings *designate* values or meaning on it. There is no 'necessary connection' between the traces of an ant and its 'representation of Winston Churchill'<sup>12</sup>; there is merely a 'contextual, contingent, conventional connection'<sup>13</sup> between them which comes from *culture* and *language*. The sky is obviously a natural object, which has no necessary connection with the

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<sup>9</sup> According to Chen Chung-Hao, there are three functions of ritual in Xunzi's ethics: satisfaction of desires, specialisation and frugality. See 陳仲豪 [Chen Chung-Hao], 論荀子禮論的建構 [study of etiquette in Xun Zi], 世新中文研究集刊 [Shin Hsin Chinese Studies Collected Journal], no. 11, (Jul 2015): 181-218.

<sup>10</sup> Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3.

<sup>11</sup> In Putnam's article he tries to argue that 'Thought words and mental pictures do not *intrinsically* represent what they are about.' For the details of his discussion, see *ibid.* But Putnam fails to explain how a contingent connection arises between words and mental pictures—probably because he is not interested in hermeneutics and philosophy of culture. I think, however, such a connection comes from culture and language. The designation of meanings and values on objects is an essential cultural activity: because one has assigned meanings on the objects, one has the understandings of the objects. One cannot understand an object if it has no meaning and it is impossible to be uttered and expressed by any language at all.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Chinese Confucian concept of ‘heaven’ (天, Cantonese: *tin1*, Mandarin: *tien*, Korean: 천 *cheon*, Japanese: *ten*)—a metaphysical substance (which is the foundation of all beings) or an universal principle (which govern all becoming processes) etc. As Chinese linguist Wang Li indicates: ‘the ancient people thought heaven was a God with [free] will who dominates all beings.’<sup>14</sup> The ancient Chinese *designated* value and meanings on the sky or the heaven through *language*. In Bronze Inscription (金文, a form of ancient Chinese characters), the heaven is written as a human figure, which originally refers to the head of human being. Because both the head and the heaven are ‘on the top’, the same character also refers to the heaven or the sky. In Oracle Bone Script (甲骨文) the head-figure is substituted by a straight line as it is difficult to draw a circle on an oracle bone (see the figure below). The disappearance of the ‘human head’ (i.e. the circle) led to a strong emphasis of the character 天 as the sky or the heaven.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 王力 [Wang Li], 古代漢語字典 [A Dictionary of Classical Chinese], (Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Company, 2000), 178.

<sup>15</sup> For details discussion on the history of the Han Character 天, please see the Multi-Function Chinese Character Database maintained by the Chinese University of Hong Kong: <https://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Lexis/lexi-mf/oraclePiece.php?piece=%E5%A4%A7>













					
					
					
Oracle Bone Script	Bronze Inscription	Warring States	Small Seal Script	Clerical Script	Regular Script

Figure 1 Changes of the Hanzi of *tin1*<sup>16</sup>

The linguistic representation *tin1* of the natural object ‘sky’ enables the ancient Chinese to conceptualise the sky. *Language enables conceptualisation*, and the designation of meanings consists of the relations among concepts. But as language develops, designations of meanings move beyond their original meanings. Gradually the term *tin1* refers to a metaphysical substance ‘heaven’ in Classical Chinese literature. As James Legge indicates, the ‘application [of the term *tin1*] must have been first to the visible sky, but, all along the course of history, it has also been used as we use Heaven, when we intend ruling Power, whose providence embraces all.’<sup>17</sup> Legge suggests that the character *tin1* consists of two components—一 (*yat1*, one) and 大 (*dai6*, great), which ‘awakens the symbol great, the

<sup>16</sup> “天.” [Heaven] 中華語文知識庫—中華語文大辭典 [Chinese Linguistic Knowledge Database—Chinese Linguistic Dictionary]. 中華文化協會 [Chinese Culture Association], 2015.

<http://210.71.253.73/clk/search/天/0/182086?kType=&srchType=0&lastWrd=天&fouc=sou>.

<sup>17</sup> Legge, James, *The Religions of China: Confucianism and Taoism Described and Compared With Christianity*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1880), 8.

idea of the sky, which is above and over all, and to whose magnitude we can assign no limit'.<sup>18</sup> For example, in the *Book of Poetry*, it is written that 'Heaven, in giving birth to the multitudes of the people, To every faculty and relationship annexed its law. The people possess this normal nature, And they [consequently] love its normal virtue.'<sup>19</sup> Chinese philosopher Lao Sze-Kwang argues that here the heaven is a metaphysical substance which gives birth to human beings. Because 'law' (則 *zak1*) is also mentioned, *tin1* also means the universal principles governing everything<sup>20</sup>. That's why in *Yi Jing* there is the concept of the 'Heavenly way' (天道 *tin1 dou6*).

In the example of *tin1*, we may have a *linguistic-cultural formula* which explains the process of designating values and meanings on natural objects:

*Natural Object* → *Linguistic Representation* → *Conceptualisation* → *Reflection* →  
*Cultural Values*

Some features should be noticed: (1) The designation of cultural values and meanings is determined by *language*. Therefore, different languages may generate different values. (2)

The process is a *social* process, because a language is shared by a society where members have some consensus on its usage. An English speaker who does not read any Han character

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. However, Legge's interpretation only discusses the 隸書 Clerical Script, the standard writing form being used since the Han Dynasty (206 BC to 280 AD). The 'stroke' which Legge interpreted as 'the one' actually means the 'head' in Bronze Inscription and Oracle Script according to the *Multi-Function Chinese Character Database*.

<sup>19</sup> Original text: 天生烝民、有物有則。民之秉彝、好是懿德。 Translation by James Legge. In most occasions of this thesis, however, the author's own translation would be used instead either when Legge's translation departs from Lao Sze-Kwang's and New Confucian's interpretations of *the Four Books and Five Classics*, or when Legge's translation fails to show the possibilities of different interpretations of a difficult text, like the doctrine of means (中庸), great learning (大學) and *Yi Jing* (易經).

<sup>20</sup> See 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 新編中國哲學史 [History of Chinese Philosophy New Edition], (Taipei: San Min Book Publishing Ltd, 1984), 83.

cannot understand the concept of *tin1* unless he learns how to read it. (3) This process is a *historical* process. Different generations of the same society have different reflections on the same designations of values, which leads to conceptual development and possibly a cultural development. The changes in the understandings of *tin1*, for example, remarks an *anthropomorphic or humanistic turn* in ancient Chinese philosophy: because Confucius and Mencius interpret *tin1* as the universal principle rather than a personal God, the ancient Chinese Shamanist belief in *tin1* as a personal God declines from then on.<sup>21</sup> In short, culture is essentially about the manifestation, designation and interpretation of meanings and values, which is conditioned by language, history and society. Therefore, the philosophy of culture is closely related to the philosophy of language and hermeneutics, which addresses the nature of communications and understandings.

If culture is essentially related to the manifestation of values and meanings, one may ask what kind of meanings and values philosophers should look at, and which kind of meanings and values are the most essential to define a culture. Religious value or meaning is one possible answer. Religions are found in most cultures and facilitate cultural activities by manifesting values and meanings. According to Paul Tillich: 'Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself. In abbreviation: religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion.'<sup>22</sup> He continues that 'every act of man's spiritual life is carried by language' while 'language is the basic cultural creation'<sup>23</sup>. Religion comes from culture, for

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<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.* 192.

<sup>22</sup> Tillich, Paul, *Theology of Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

The form of religion is culture. This is especially obvious in the language used by religion. Every language, including that of the Bible, is the result of innumerable acts of cultural creativity. All functions of man's spiritual life are based on man's power to speak vocally or silently. Language is the expression of man's freedom from the given situation and its concrete demands. It gives him universals in whose power he can create worlds above the given world of technical civilisation and spiritual content.<sup>24</sup>

Religion as an ultimate concern (終極關懷) aims to search the 'ultimate meanings' of one's existence. Religion as ultimate concern manifests in the realm of morality, but it is not merely a moral function, as it 'manifest[s] in all creative functions of the human spirit': 'in the realm of knowledge as the passionate longing for ultimate reality' and 'in the aesthetic function of the human spirit as the infinite desire to express ultimate meaning'.<sup>25</sup> Religion as an ultimate concern even manifests in the East Asian Confucian culture where theocentric religion seems to have little role. According to Lin Hong-Hsin (林鴻信), Confucius' emphasis on the complete actualisation of human's innate moral capacity is also an ultimate concern. For Confucians, the ultimate meaning of human being is to actualise one's innate moral goodness completely.<sup>26</sup> Lin's understanding of religiousness in Confucianism agrees with Huang Chun-Chieh (黃俊傑), who argues that Confucian religiousness is manifested in 'the individual life-creating transcendental connotation' (創造個人生命的超越性內涵) which is found in the 'Confucian sacrifices to ancient saints and virtuous [古聖先賢] and the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 8

<sup>26</sup> 林鴻信 [Lim Hong-Hsin], 基督宗教與東亞儒學的對話:以信仰與道德的分際為中心, [A Dialogue between Christianity and East Asian Confucianism: Focusing on the distinction between the Faith and the Moral], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, Sep 2012), 63.



tradition of the way [道學傳統]<sup>27</sup>. In other words, all cultures manifest their own different ultimate concerns in their cultural phenomena. For East Asian Confucian cultures such as classical Chinese, Korean and Japanese cultures, their ultimate concerns are the complete actualisation of innate moral goodness. For Western Christian cultures, their ultimate concerns are the unity of God and man.

It should be noticed that East Asian cultures—namely, classical Chinese<sup>28</sup>, Korean and Japanese cultures should not be understood as isolated cultures, but as cultures closely interacting with each other. As Huang Chun-Chieh points out, the ‘Confucian value system has a deep and complete impact on the cultures and societies of East Asian countries, particularly Japan, Korea and Vietnam and therefore become the common assets of East Asian civilisation.’<sup>29</sup> Even Fukuzawa Yukichi, who aims to distinguish Japan from China and Korea, acknowledges that China and Korea’ from ancient times [have] no difference from us Japanese, these two people (Chinese and Korean) have been nurtured by Asiatic politics, religions, and traditions.’<sup>30</sup> For this reason, this thesis will apply Kierkegaard’s conception of culture to both Chinese and Japanese philosophies of culture, since they share very similar nineteenth-century modern context and philosophical traditions but address the issue of cultural modernisation in different ways.

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<sup>27</sup> 黃俊傑 [Huang Chun-Chieh], 東亞儒學史的新視野 [New Perspective on East Asian Confucianism], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, Oct 2015), 75.

<sup>28</sup> In this dissertation Chinese culture always refers to classical Chinese culture which covers the Chinese culture before 1662 the final defeat of Ming dynasty, the Han people’s empire. The Manchurian Qing dynasty (1644-1911) Chinese culture is excluded as it is influenced by Manchurian. ‘Modern Chinese culture’ is even more complicated as the cultural heritage were severely damaged during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in Communist China, although some are preserved in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

<sup>29</sup> 黃俊傑 [Huang Chun-Chieh], New Perspective on East Asian Confucianism, ix.

<sup>30</sup> Kwok, Dwight Tat Wait, ‘A Translation of Datsu-A Ron: Decoding a Prewar Japanese Nationalistic Theory’ MA diss., University of Toronto, 2009, 17. Retrieved from [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/18797/1/Kwok\\_Dwight\\_TW\\_200911\\_MA\\_thesis.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/18797/1/Kwok_Dwight_TW_200911_MA_thesis.pdf)

But Tillich's cultural analysis raises a new question: how can one identify the ultimate meanings that a culture concerns and manifests? One may argue that one can easily identify all cultural values and meanings, including the ultimate meanings, by simply observing and interpreting the *cultural phenomenon* or *cultural behaviours*. The ultimate meanings and values are to be regarded as expressions of the 'cultural spirit'. The cultural spirit designates meanings and values to customs, rituals and practices, which are merely instruments of expressions. One may observe that the ritual of the Holy Eucharist manifests the passion, death, resurrection and salvation of Christ while the Confucian rituals of ancestral worship manifest filial piety. But these interpretations are oversimplified. Different people from the same society may have very different understandings of the same cultural phenomenon, due to the differences in social classes or education levels. There must be differences in the understandings and manifestations of ultimate meanings among the members of the same society. Therefore, the philosophy of culture which studies the meaning of culture requires a hermeneutical approach which studies the interpretations of meanings. Different people have different prejudices inherited from different traditions, which construct their different horizons of the present; even though people from the same society shared similar tradition, the differences of their personal backgrounds and existential situations, e.g. family, education, friends etc., bring them different understandings of the same culture. The ultimate meaning itself may remain constant in human history, but people's understanding and manifestations of the ultimate meaning change with history.

## **1.2 Philosophy of Culture is different from Cultural Theory**

This section aims to distinguish philosophy of culture from cultural theory, particularly cultural anthropology, which has significant contributions to modern cultural studies. While this thesis works on the philosophy of culture, it is important to acknowledge the research outcomes of modern cultural anthropology and see what they can contribute to the discussions in East Asian philosophy of culture. I will firstly introduce Tylor's definition of culture in terms of capabilities, considering the fact that Tylor is the founder of modern anthropology, and explain why his definition of culture is rejected by Chinese philosopher of culture Lao Sze-Kwang, a philosopher on whom this thesis focuses. Secondly, I will critically examine Malinowski's definition of culture in terms of the institution. Using Chinese culture as for an example, I demonstrate that Malinowski's overemphasis on the political power of cultural 'authority' or 'institution' fails to indicate the bottom-to-up cultural development which can be founded in Chinese history. Thirdly, I will critically examine Mead's definition of culture in terms of behaviour. Unlike Tylor and Malinowski, who try to investigate an 'internal structure' underlying cultural values, Mead only focuses on the 'external' appearance of culture, namely: 'shared behaviour'. I argue that Mead's theory fails to acknowledge the importance of cultural values and meaning, which distinguish human's cultural activity from 'the traces of an ant' in Putnam's analogy. I shall reemphasise that cultural phenomenon are essentially values bearers. Fourthly, I discuss the contribution of Goodenough's and Wanger's cultural anthropology to our discussion, for both acknowledge the importance of manifestation of *implicit* values in a cultural phenomenon. Goodenough argues that each member of the same culture may have a very different understanding of their own culture which consists of individuals' understanding, while Wanger rejects the 'representational theory of value', that a particular cultural phenomenon must represent only a particular cultural value. Goodenough's and Wanger's

observation echoes the discussion in hermeneutical philosophy of culture in chapter 2.3, where we discuss the relation between language, understandings and culture.

Philosophy of culture reflects on the nature and the meanings (particularly the ultimate meanings) of culture, which are to be distinguished from the cultural phenomena themselves. But 'cultural theories' are different. They tend to emphasise empirical studies of the cultural phenomenon; even though some anthropologists try to investigate the meanings and values based upon the empirical observation, generally they do not acknowledge either values determine the social structure (not vice versa) or that values precede behaviours.

Some anthropologists focus more on the *external manifestation* of cultural values in terms of behaviour or customs while others emphasise more on the *internal structure* of *cultural values*. For example, Edward Burnett Tylor, the founder of modern anthropology, seems to emphasise more the internal structure, as he suggests an extensional definition of culture from the ethnographic perspective:

CULTURE or Civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Tylor, Edward Burnett, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom*. Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871), 1.

It should be noticed that Tylor investigate the ‘general principles’ by investigating human’s capabilities rather than values. Such an approach is rejected by Lao Sze-Kwang in his *Essentials of Chinese Culture* (中國文化要義新編). For Lao argues that human capabilities are not necessarily actualised as a cultural phenomenon. Some capabilities are not actualised, but it does not mean that society lacks such capabilities. ‘For example, the last two thousand years history of the Chinese nation does not develop logic or empirical science, which is a characteristic of Chinese culture. However .... In recent years, the academic performance of Chinese students in logics, mathematics and empirical science is not poorer than students from other nations.’<sup>32</sup> Tylor’s account fails to explain why some capabilities are selected to be actualised while others are not.

Similarly, Bronislaw Malinowski tried to establish an objective science of culture by investigating the underlying structures of customs by investigating the principles of the community. Malinowski argues that science is essentially ‘[c]onstant empirical verification’ which implies ‘the existence of general laws, a field for experiment or observation, and ... a control of academic discourse by practical application.’<sup>33</sup> For Malinowski, in order to study the science of culture, one must study the community, for

Culture is an integral composed of partly autonomous, partly coordinated institutions. It is integrated on a series of principles such as the community of blood through procreation; the

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<sup>32</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 中國文化要義新編 [Essentials of Chinese Culture], (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Malinowski, Bronislaw, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 11.

contiguity in space related to cooperation; the specialisation in activities; and last but not least, the use of power in political organisation.<sup>34</sup>

Malinowski's 'scientific theory of culture' has implications for cultural membership: through education, an 'individual is gradually trained in skills, taught to use language and other symbolic devices of his culture, made to enter the ever-widening set of institutions of which he will become a full member when he reaches full maturity and assumes his share of tribal citizenship.'<sup>35</sup> The institution defines and provides the training and education for potential members, particularly children who are born in that institution. According to Richard Niebuhr's interpretation of Malinowski, culture becomes an "artificial, secondary environment", inherited artefacts, technical processes, and values.'<sup>36</sup>

Malinowski's definition of culture as an institution which emphasises the role of society is popular among scholars. Will Kymlicka's definition of culture, for example, seems to be influenced by Malinowski's anthropology, even though he does not explicitly quote his writings. Kymlicka uses the term culture 'as synonymous with "a nation" or "a people"—that is, as an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history.'<sup>37</sup> Kymlicka's definition radicalises Malinowski's idea—while the latter merely claims that culture is an institution, the former declares that culture is the same as a people or a nation. Kymlicka reduces culture into a political group (nation) while Malinowski reduces culture into an

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>36</sup> Niebuhr, H. Richard, *Christ and Culture*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1952), 46.

<sup>37</sup> Kymlicka, Will, *Multicultural Citizenship*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 18.

integrated product of social and political structure. Both try to reduce culture into certain social-political entities and Kymlicka even ignores an essential difference between culture and nation or people: that *while a culture must manifest some meanings or values, a nation or a people does not*. But the social-political aspect is merely one kind of functions of culture. As Tillich points out, culture and religion have aesthetic, cognitive and moral functions. Culture is not merely an institution, and culture does not necessarily have a centralised and authoritative institution to determine its principles and values. Of course, there is always top-down education in cultural groups; children study the *Four Books and Five Classics* in private Confucian schools in classical Chinese culture. But at the same time, there is also a bottom-up cultural creation. The vast majority of the Chinese population in ancient Chinese civilisations were farmers. Unlike the serfs in Medieval Europe, farmers in ancient China were quite socially, politically and culturally powerful; it is not because of the facts that most officers come from farmers family or that several Chinese empires (like Han dynasty and Ming dynasty) were established by a farmers' revolution, but because they had access to receive education, and were actively participated in artistic creations. They were not only being cultivated by the culture, but also transform and create the culture. Firstly, since Tang dynasty (7<sup>th</sup> century), farmers have assessed to education and equal opportunity to take the imperial examination (科舉考試) to become politicians and scholars. As David Johnson states, there was high social mobility in Chinese history since the Song dynasty (960-1279) after the reforms in the imperial examination. 'Since the examination system ensured that there would be a relatively rapid circulation of families into and out of the ruling elite, the composition of the social elite was constantly shifting.' 'To Emperor Chen-Tsung [宋真宗] it was remarkable that the family of Li Tsung-o [李宗諤] had managed to remain prominent

from the beginning of Sung down to the early eleventh century—three generations.’<sup>38</sup> Since Song dynasty, most prime ministers of the Chinese empire were civil officers passing the imperial examination (except in the Mongolian Yuan dynasty).<sup>39</sup>

Thanks to the popularisation of education, some educated farmers had access to participate in cultural creation like literature, music and arts. Classical Chinese literature is always about agricultural and rural lives. Poets from the school of ‘Fields and Gardens Poetry’ (田園詩派) like Tao Yuanming (陶淵明, 365?–427) and Meng Haoran (孟浩然, 691-740) have shaped the classical Chinese poetry and even have a significant influence on Korean and Japanese classical poets like Chong Yak-Yong (丁若鏞, 1762-1836).<sup>40</sup> In particular, exiled, retired or resigned officers were the leaders of Chinese opera and poems, which has a significant contribution to Chinese cultural development. Out of the ‘Four Greatest Playwright of Yuan Dynasty’<sup>41</sup>, Guan Hanqing (關漢卿, c. 1210-1300), Bai Renfu (白仁甫, 1226-1306) and Zheng Guangzhou (鄭光祖, c. 1260-1320) had never been successfully promoted to be officers, while Ma Zhiyuan (馬致遠, c. 1250–1321) did not start writing plays until he resigned from his office. Similarly, Tang Xianzu (湯顯祖 1550-1616) wrote and publish all his opera drama scripts, including his masterpiece *The Peony Pavilion* (牡丹亭), after his resignation from the government. *The Peony Pavilion* protests against the suppression of women’s emotion, which challenges the traditional moral teaching prevailing

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<sup>38</sup> Johnson, David, ‘The Last Years of a Great Clan: The Li Family of Chao chün in Late T’ang and Early Sung’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 37, no. 1 (Jun., 1977) 101.

<sup>39</sup> There was officially no ‘prime minister’ (宰相 or 內閣首輔) in Qing dynasty (1644-1911), and occasionally the Manchurian military officers may assume the higher rank of office in the government.

<sup>40</sup> See 李家源 [Li Ga won], 韓國漢文學史 [A History of Korean Hanja Literature], trans. 趙季 [Zhao Kwei], (Phoenix Publishing, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Which was firstly suggested by literature critique He Lian-jin (何良俊 1506-1573) in his book *Collected Records of Four Friends Chamber* (四友齋叢說).



in Late Ming dynasty.<sup>42</sup> All these folk artistic creations which shaped the classical Chinese culture significantly are out of the control of the so-called ‘institution’ or ‘social-political structure’; for they come from the folk and gradually influence the entire culture. These folk writers, artists or scholars are able to *transcend* from the cultural determinations by the so-called institution or socio-political structure. Malinowski’s failure to explain the impacts of bottom-up artistic creation on cultural development and transformation is due to his ignoring individual’s ability to transcend the socio-political limitations. Such ignorance is probably due to his focus on primitive society rather than civilised cultures like classical Chinese culture. But Malinowski’s emphasis on society has made a significant point: that culture ‘is always *social*.’<sup>43</sup> As Niebuhr quotes from Malinowski: ‘The essential fact of culture, as we can observe it scientifically ... is the organisation of human beings into permanent groups.’<sup>44</sup>

Malinowski’s emphasis on the external and social structure of culture echoes with Margaret Mead’s emphasis on cultural behaviours. Mead rejects the so-called ‘Platonic or quasi-Platonic concept of culture’ which defined culture as a ‘transcendental existence of a different nature from that of the persons who manifest a given culture at a given time’. Instead, she defines

culture as primarily mental or psychological, as non[-]biological learned behaviour ultimately derivable from the nerves and brain cells of the personnel comprising a given society at a given time. This does not mean that material objects are excluded from the concept of culture, but the

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<sup>42</sup> See 華瑋 [Hua wei], 論《才子牡丹亭》之女性意識 [On The Feminist Consciousness in the Peony Pavilion], 上海戲劇學院學報 [Shanghai Drama School Journal], no. 1, (2001): 90-101.

<sup>43</sup> Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 46.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in *ibid.* Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, 43.

various activities that transform, say a lump of clay into a decorated pot, take place if, and only if, a living person has learned the requisite skills and then externalises what he has learned.<sup>45</sup>

Culture as learned behaviour, which is systematic and uniform, is acquired from the society. Anthropological study of culture investigates the system and the regularities of such learned behaviour shared by the members of a particular society:

“Culture” is the term applied to the total shared, learned behaviour of a society or a subgroup, so we may speak of “a culture,” using the term for the whole, or of an item of behaviour as “cultural,” referring this item to the whole. The model situation on which the anthropological concept of culture is based is that the total learned, shared behaviour of a functionally autonomous society that has maintained its existence through a sufficient number of generations so that each stage of the life span of an individual is included within the system. Such learned behaviour, when studied, has been found to be systematic, and this systematisation can be referred to the uniformities in the structure and the functioning of the human beings who embody the culture.<sup>46</sup>

According to Mead, there are two situations of learning cultural behaviour, namely, (1) ‘the teacher and usually the pupil are conscious and can be articulate about what is being taught’ and (2) ‘learning that is not articulate or verbalised’.<sup>47</sup> She does not show attention to the fact that if culture is determined by the free will of humans, the behaviour is merely an

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<sup>45</sup> Mead, Margaret & Metraux, R., *The Study of Culture at a Distance*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 63.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

instrument manifesting the values or meanings. She pays insufficient to the relation among free will, cultural activities and values, as discussed by Tang Jung-Yi's. Values and meanings are causes while behaviours, symbols, rituals, customs etc. are merely effects as explained above, for all cultural activities involve designations of values. The designation of meanings and values on natural objects *precedes* the cultural behaviours as the manifestations of meanings and values; because ancient Chinese people have the idea of *tin1* or the heaven as a metaphysical substance or a universal principle, they gradually develop the ritual of sacrifice to the heaven (祭天). When it comes to the examples in East Asian culture, Mead's lack of attention to the importance of linguistic representation and conceptualisation shows the limitation of her empirical approach to culture: that *empirical* approach fails to acknowledge the essential relation between culture and *values* or meanings, which includes passions and emotions.

Cultural values, however, are always implicit, as different members of the same cultural group may have a different understanding of the same cultural phenomenon, as Ward Goodenough observes:

Just as no two people have exactly the same way of speaking what they perceive as their common language, so no two members of a community have exactly the same understanding of what they perceive to be their community's way of doing things, its culture. Thus people see communities as having languages and cultures, but, in fact, these are collections of individual understandings of what the languages and cultures consist of. As long as these differences do

not get in the way of people living and working together (sometimes, indeed, they do), people ignore them and may be unaware of them.<sup>48</sup>

Here Goodenough indicates a *hermeneutical* problem in cultural studies, that different people have a different understanding of the same culture, which consists of different individuals' understandings. But Goodenough stops here and does not discuss whether it is possible for an individual to understand the others' understanding of the culture and whether a complete understanding of culture is possible; these issues are covered by philosophical hermeneutics which we are going to discuss in chapter 2.3. As we shall see, according to Gadamer, a complete understanding of culture is impossible.

Similarly, Roy Wanger emphasises the implicit nature of cultural values and rejects the 'representational theories of meaning', which assumes that each cultural phenomenon manifests a particular cultural value. Wanger suggests that cultural meanings are not constituted by the signs of conventional reference, but instead "live a constant flux of continual re-creation". He goes on to say that "the core of culture is...a coherent flow of images and analogies, that cannot be communicated directly from mind to mind, but only elicited, adumbrated, depicted."<sup>49</sup> As we shall see in chapter 2.1 and 2.2, East Asian Hegelian philosophies of culture fall into Wanger's criticism of the representational theory of meaning, for they assume that all cultural phenomena must manifest particular cultural values. They do not acknowledge the 'constant flux of continual re-creation' of cultural values and meanings and assume that there are fixed essential values which determine

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<sup>48</sup> Goodenough, Ward H., 'In Pursuit of Culture', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no. 32, (2003):6-7.

<sup>49</sup> Rapport, Nigel & Overing, Joanna, 'Culture', *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 95.

cultural development. While this thesis works on the philosophy of culture, cultural anthropology reminds us of the theoretical issues mentioned above, which philosophers of culture should avoid.

In short, culture is essentially related to the manifestations or the expressions of meanings or values, even though members of the same cultural group may disagree on which values or meanings they emphasise more. Tillich says that ‘every act of man’s spiritual life is carried by language’ while ‘language is the basic cultural creation’, but at the same time the manifestations of cultural values are also limited by language. The reason is simple: the language limits the expressions of meaning and values. As Humboldt says: ‘Just as no concept is possible without language, so also there can be no object for the mind, since it is only through the concept, of course, that anything external acquires full being for consciousness.’<sup>50</sup> One cannot explain the nature of a particular culture without mentioning the values or meanings that it manifests. Since that anthropology cannot fulfil the task of articulating cultural values, it is appropriate for us to turn to the philosophy of culture. The task of the philosophy of culture is to reveal both explicit and implicit meanings and values underlying a culture instead of reducing culture into anything else.

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<sup>50</sup> Humboldt, W.V.. *On language*, trans. Peter Heath, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 59.

## **1.3 The Epistemic and the Ontological Tasks of Modern East**

### **Asian Philosophy of Culture**

This section aims to explain the epistemic task (what is a culture, or how to understand a culture) and the ontological task (how to establish a cultural subjectivity) of Modern East Asian philosophy of culture, and explain why modern East Asian philosophers of culture generally adopt Hegelian dialectics when they try to complete these tasks. Firstly, I explain what does it mean by 'East Asia' and point out that the term 'East Asian cultural zone' is not self-explanatory. While the term 'East Asia' will be used in this thesis for the sake of readability for Western readers, one should be aware of the limitation of the concept: that East Asia is merely a geographical term named by Westerners which does not designate the features of cultures in the region. Because of the vagueness of East Asian culture, Chinese and Japanese philosophers realised the necessity of clarifying their own cultural subjectivities. Secondly, I will argue that the philosophy of culture is still an important discipline in East Asian philosophy of culture, because Chinese and Japanese cultures have been struggling with the problem of cultural modernisation since the Opium War in 1842 and Perry Expedition in 1853-1854. I will explain how these historical events inspire Chinese and Japanese philosophers to reflect on the problem of cultural modernisation, which leads to the birth of East Asian philosophy of culture. Thirdly, I will explain how certain Chinese and Japanese philosophers use Hegelian dialectics to articulate their own cultural subjectivities. However, because of their introduction of Hegelian dialectics, they encountered significant theoretical problems embedded in Hegel's philosophy, which are

explained in chapter 2, and which make it appropriate to evaluate East Asian Hegelian's philosophy of culture by introducing Kierkegaard's concept of culture, who is well known of being a critic of Hegel's speculative philosophy.

### **1.3.1 East Asia and Han Cultural Zone**

It is appropriate to compare and evaluate the discussion of cultural modernisation in both Chinese and Japanese civilisations for several reasons. Firstly, both belong to the Eastern Ocean (東洋), East Asian Cultural sphere (東亞文化圈), Sinosphere (東亞文化圈) or Han Cultural Sphere (漢文化圈) inheriting the same cultural legacy, particularly Confucianism and Buddhism. Secondly, both share similar historical context and the problem of cultural modernisation in nineteenth to the twentieth century when they encountered the Western imperialist threat. Thirdly, both adopt German philosophy, in particular Hegel's philosophy, as a theoretical framework to pursue their ontological and epistemic tasks of philosophy of culture. As Kierkegaard is widely regarded as a critic of Hegel's philosophy, particularly of Hegel's concept of the world-historical (which will be discussed in details in chapter 2) which suppresses the individual subjectivity and passions, it is appropriate to apply Kierkegaard's philosophy to examine the East Asian philosophy of culture. As we shall see, from Kierkegaardian perspective, the Kyoto School has the problem of reducing individual subjectivity into national subjectivity, thus endorsing Japanese imperialism, while New Confucianism, which strongly emphasised the individual's moral autonomy avoids such problem.

While this dissertation uses the term ‘East Asia’ for simplification, such a Western term is quite inappropriate to attribute to the Sinosphere nations. The term ‘Asia’ (Ἀσία) originally refers to the Asia Province of the Roman Empire in Western Turkey, which appeared in the New Testament several times. According to Acts chapter 19 to 20, while St Paul’s evangelisation there had been successful in the beginning when ‘all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks’ (Acts 19:10), immediately he encountered strong opposition and prosecution from the local pagans there (Acts 19:24-41). The Greek historian Herodotus (484 BC – 425 BC) was the first one to define ‘Asia’ as the continent to the west of Europe in *The Histories* Book IV, Chapters 36-41, and sees it as beginning from ‘two peninsulas’: Anatolia Peninsula and Arabia Peninsula. The Eastern part of Asia, however, is unknown to Herodotus:

So much for the parts of Asia west of the Persians. But what is beyond the Persians, and Medes, and Saspies, and Colchians, east and toward the rising sun, this is bounded on the one hand by the Red Sea, and to the north by the Caspian Sea and the Araxes river, which flows toward the sun’s rising. [2] As far as India, Asia is an inhabited land; but thereafter, all to the east is desolation, nor can anyone say what kind of land is there.<sup>51</sup>

‘East Asian’ never use the term ‘East Asia’ until the modern era. The term Asia is firstly introduced by Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci to China who, in 1602, drew the first Chinese world map, *A Map of the Myriad Countries of the World* (坤輿萬國全圖), requested by Wangli Emperor of Ming dynasty. Ricci introduces the names of six continents, including

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<sup>51</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. A. D. Godley, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920). Book IV, Chp. 40. Achieved from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0016.tlg001.perseus-eng1:4.40>



the term Asia (亞細亞). While the map was not circulated among Chinese scholars during the seventeenth century, it was copied and introduced to Japan and valued by Japanese scholars during Tongukawa period, including the Confucian philosopher and diplomat Arai Hakuseki (新井白石, 1657-1725). In Arai's famous dialogue with the Korean ambassador Jo Tae-eok (趙泰億, 1675-1728), *Brush Talk in Edo with Korean Envoys* (江關筆談, 5 November, 1711), Jo was confused when Arai mentioned that he had met Europeans (歐羅巴—here Arai refers to the Dutch merchants) coming from the Atlantic Ocean (大西洋, literally 'Great Western Ocean') as Jo had never heard of these terms and asked where these nations were. Arai was shocked and asked: 'Does your home country have the map of All Nations?' (貴邦無萬國全圖耶?), to which Jo's assistant Li Han-yang (李邦彥) said that they had only got an ancient copy that did not indicate the names of western nations (有古本而此等國多不載)<sup>52</sup>. The next day Arai generously gave his own copy of the map as a present to Jo. Due to the fact that Chinese, Korean and Japanese civilisations were using the same written language, *Hanwen* (漢文, i.e. Classical Chinese 文言文), the term Asia is gradually adopted by East Asian scholars in nineteenth century, when Wei Yuan's (魏源, 1794-1857) influential book *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* (海國圖志) in 1841 explicitly identified China, Korea and Japan as Asian nations. He quoted the Jesuit missionary Giulio Aleni (1582-1649) as indicating that Asia 'contains more than a hundred nations where China is the largest'. (所容國土，不啻百餘。其大者首推中國)

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<sup>52</sup> See 新井白石 [Arai Hakuseki] & 趙泰億 [Jo Tae-eok], 江關筆談 [Kōkan hitsudan], from 坐間筆語 [Zakan Hitsugo], ed. 源君美 [Minamoto-kun Bi], 1821. A French translation is available here: <https://journals.openedition.org/cipango/1127>





Figure 2 Matteo Ricci's A Map of the Myriad Countries of the World (坤輿萬國全圖, 1602), which was the first Chinese map indicating China as an 'Asian' (亞細亞) country. Source: Kano Collection, Tohoku University Library.



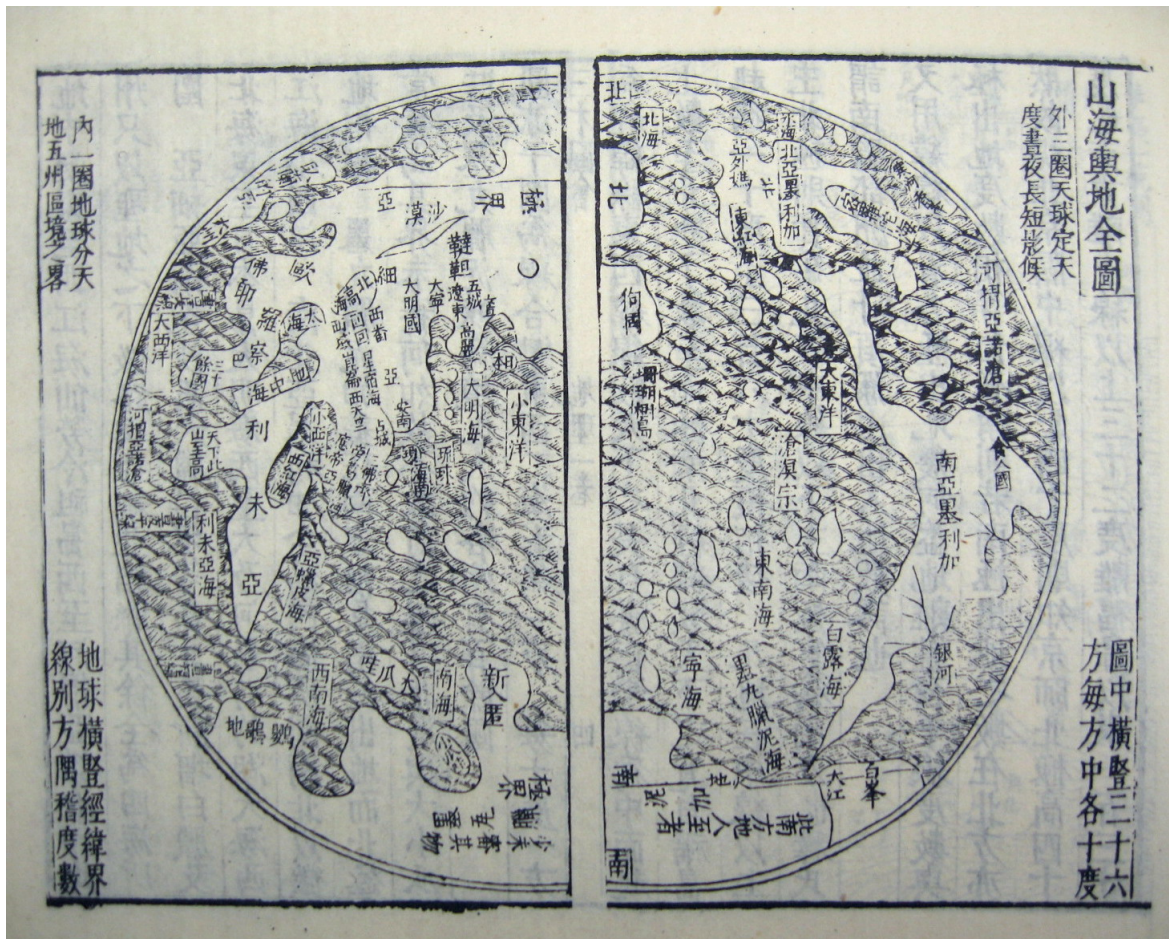


Figure 3 Complete Terrestrial Map (山海輿地全圖, 1609), Source: the Asian Library, the University of British Columbia.

Japanese speakers, however, sometimes use the term *Toyo* (東洋, Eastern Ocean) instead of East Asia in order to contrast themselves with the nations of the ‘Western Ocean’ (Atlantic Ocean). The term *Toyo* first time appeared in the *Complete Terrestrial Map* (山海輿地全圖) published in 1609 which indicated the Western Pacific Ocean as ‘little Eastern Ocean’ (小東洋). While the map book was not popular in China, it was introduced by the Japanese geographer Nagakubo Sekisui (長久保赤水 1717-1801) to Japan. But the same Hanzi of the term *Toyo* in Chinese languages usually refer to Japan alone.

In the Japanese context, the term East Asia (東アジア or 東亞) is a controversial concept due to its strong political sense from 1868 to 1945, as the historian Koyasu Nobukuni (子安宣邦, 1933-) indicates. In his famous book *On East Asia: A Critique of Modern Japanese Thought* (東亞論:日本現代思想批判), Koyasu indicates that Japanese imperialist’s introduction of the Western term East Asia during pre-war Showa period (1926-1945) aimed to weaken Chinese cultural influence. Koyasu argues that the political sense of the term East Asian was explicitly expressed in the archaeologist Kosaku Hamada’s (1881-1938) influential book *The Dawn of East Asian Civilisation* (東亞文明の黎明, 1930). Kosaku defines the geography of “East Asia” clearly as a cultural sphere which originated from China and includes China, Korea and Japan. Kosaku named this area as that of “East Asian Civilisations” instead of “Shina Civilisations”[支那文明]<sup>53</sup> or “Chinese Civilisations” [中華文明].’ “East Asian Civilisation” is a concept that substitutes “Chinese Civilisation” and ‘assumes the diversity of cultural development within the region.’<sup>54</sup> As Japanese militarism

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<sup>53</sup> Shina is Japanese translation of the Sanskrit word, meaning China, which was widely used neutrally in both China and Japan. However, in the post-war period, the term Shina was perceived as an offensive and derogatory term due to its usage during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).

<sup>54</sup> 子安宣邦 [Koyasu Nobukuni], 東亞論:日本現代思想批判 [On East Asia: A Critique of Modern Japanese Thought], trans. 趙京華 [Zhao Jinghua], (Changchun: Jilin People’s Publishing, Sep 2004), 49.

expanded its territory to Pacific islands and South East Asia, the concept of East Asia was expanded to 'Great East Asia', which 'is dominated by Japan and included the Toyo history of surrounding nations centralising Shina ... and all nations to the south of Shina Political Cultural Sphere which is outside of Shina political and economic influence but included by Indo-Arabic commerce, religions and culture.'<sup>55</sup>

However, none of these terms indicates the cultural characteristics that distinguish Chinese, Japanese and Korean civilisations from other cultures. As we shall see in chapter two, the vague term like Asia and the Oriental (in Hegel's philosophy) is confusing as they wrongly assumed that the 'East Asia': 'South Asia' and 'Western Asia' belong to the same 'cultural spirit'. Moreover, identifying the Chinese, Japanese and Korean civilisations as 'Eastern Oceanic' or 'East Asian' nations is at odds with the Confucian concept of civilisation. If one regards Chinese, Japanese and Korean civilisations as Confucian civilisations, one should be aware that the 'civilised nations' in Confucian worldview must be the *centre* of the world, not the Eastern part of the world. As it is written in the *Classics of Rites*:: 'The people from the five regions—the middle kingdom and the barbarian, each has their own characters which cannot be transformed.'<sup>56</sup> (*Classics of Rites* 5.36) The only question is which one is the middle kingdom or a civilised nation—China, Korea or Japan. While traditionally, China declares itself as the middle kingdom, the cultural dominance of China has been challenged by Japan since the Manchurian invasion of China (1644-1911).

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>56</sup> Original Text: 中國戎夷，五方之民，皆有其性也，不可推移。(《禮記》〈王制〉)

Han Cultural Sphere or Sinosphere is a more accurate term to indicate Chinese, Japanese and Korean Civilisations. The idea is suggested by Japanese historian Nishijima Sadao (西嶋定生, 1919-1998) in his article ‘The East Asian World and the Tributary System’ (東アジア世界と冊封体制)<sup>57</sup> where he indicated five cultural characteristics of the Chinese, Japanese and Korean civilisations: (1) using Hanzi (Chinese characters) and Hanwen (Classical Chinese) as written language, (2) adopting Confucianism as the official philosophy, (3) practising Han Buddhism, (4) adopting Chinese Law system (*Ritsuryō* 律令), and (5) participating in the Tributary System. (1), (2) and (3) are important assumptions in this dissertation. The Classical Chinese materials account for a significant portion of primary and secondary sources in my investigation of Chinese and Japanese philosophy of culture in this thesis. Thanks to the common written language historically shared by East Asian cultures, Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures were able to undertake transcultural dialogues.<sup>58</sup> Besides common language, Buddhism and Confucianism are also a common cultural legacy that shapes Chinese and Japanese culture and should not be ignored in the discussion of East Asian cultural modernisation. While Lu-Wang School Confucianism is reconstructed by New Confucianism with the introduction of Hegelianism and Kantianism, Zen and Pure Land Buddhism are reconstructed by the Kyoto school with the help of Hegelianism, as we shall see in the following section.

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<sup>57</sup> See 西嶋定生 [Nishijima Sadao], 東アジア世界と冊封体制 [The East Asian World and the Tributary System], 西嶋定生東アジア史論集 [Nishijima Sadao’s Collected Essays on East Asia], Vol. 3, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002).

<sup>58</sup> Several Western and East Asian scholars emphasise the role of Classical Chinese as a common language in the transcultural dialogue within East Asian cultural, for example, 藤堂明保 [Tōdō Akiyasu], 漢字とその文化圏 [Hanzi and its Cultural Sphere], (Tokyo:Mitsuo-kan, 1971); Also, Fogel, Joshua A., *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese relations in space and time*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Facilitated by Classical Chinese as a common language shared by East Asian cultures, Confucian values are spread among Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures. As Rozman indicates:

Throughout the region there is a general awareness of the common Chinese roots of much of each country's tradition and of the Confucian core in borrowings from China. ... Contemporary political realities result in seven governments, which largely represent the three sustaining national traditions: the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Korean. [...] In the first millennium A.D. the Confucian worldview, associated with the Chinese written language and principles concerning government and social relations, spread through the region; Korea and then Japan borrowed extensively from the pre-eminent civilisation of China.<sup>59</sup>

While historically speaking, modern Chinese and Japanese philosophers tend to adopt Hegelian dialectics when reconstructing their cultural subjectivities, this dissertation argues that a Kierkegaardian model of subjectivity is more appropriate than Hegelian dialectics, because the East Asian cultural sphere emphasises the expressions of *passions*, *feeling* or *emotion* rather than *reasons*. As we shall see in chapter 2.1, Hegelian dialectics explains cultural development in terms of reason. Hegel divides world history into three moments — the Oriental world, the Greek-Roman world and the Germanic world in terms of 'freedom', namely, 'rational self-determination'.<sup>60</sup> As Kim Sungmoon suggests, Confucian understanding of 'reason' (理性 *lei5 sing3*) is very different from Kantian or Utilitarian understandings:

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<sup>59</sup> Rozman, Gilbert, ed. *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and Its Modern Adaptation*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 7-8.

<sup>60</sup> Patten, Alan, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45.

Confucian reason arises from and is grounded on emotion. As *a* reason (or a host of *reasons*) emphatically aroused by our natural affective impulses, reason in Mencian sentimentalism has little (almost nothing) to do with a cognitive faculty of the mind as a deontological liberal commonly understand it.<sup>61</sup>

Kim's analysis on the Confucian concept of reason agrees with Tang Jung-Yi, who argues that the *lei5 sing3*, the Chinese characters for the term reason, do not mean deduction, induction or dialectics, but thinking or acting according to the 'principles' (如理 *jyu4 lei5*) of human nature:

by reason [I mean] nature (性 *sing3*) and the reason (理 *lei5*) in Chinese Confucian sense, namely, the essence or selfhood of our moral selves, spiritual selves or transcendent selves. Such nature and such reason direct our ways of activities. When our activities follow such nature and such reason, our minds are internally humbly satisfied (慊足 *him1 zuk1*) and consciously actualise the moral values of our own personalities, which is therefore known as morality. Once we follow such nature and such reason to act and to behave, we transcend from the visible, material and bodily world, our natural desires, instincts and psychological orientations etc.<sup>62</sup>

Kim and Tang's analysis of the Confucian concept of reason is supported by *Mencius* 6A:6 :

'If you let people follow their feelings (original nature), they will be able to do good. This is what is meant by saying that human nature is good.'<sup>63</sup>

(乃若其情，則可以為善矣，乃所謂善也) While some Confucian commentators<sup>64</sup> argue

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<sup>61</sup> Kim, Sungmoon, *Confucian Democracy in East Asia: Theory and Practice*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 141.

<sup>62</sup> 唐君毅 [Tang Jung-yi], 文化意識與道德理性 [*Cultural Consciousness and Moral Reason*], (Taipei: Student Book Taiwan, 1900), 19.

<sup>63</sup> Trans. Chan, Wing-tsit, Chan, Wing-tsit, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 54.

<sup>64</sup>, for example, Dai Zhen insists that *cing4* has nothing to do with 'emotion' but merely means 'reality'. 'Cing4 does not refer to emotion ... it is similar to the meaning of persistence and refers to reality.' (非性情之情也... 情，猶素也，實也。) See 戴震 [Dai Zhen], 孟子字義疏證 [*Commentaries and Demonstrations of Mencius Lexicography*], Vol. 2



that here the Chinese character情 *qing4* means ‘real situation’ (實情) rather than bodily emotion, they acknowledge that what is meant by the real situation, is the proper moral emotion which arises naturally from one’s moral nature. Zhuxi argues that *qing4* is an ‘act of nature’ (性之動也),<sup>65</sup> which is the manifestation of the unperceivable human nature in terms of perceivable emotion. ‘Nature is unperceivable, while emotion is perceivable’ (蓋性無形影，惟情可見)<sup>66</sup>; ‘When one observes moral good in emotion, one knows the good of human nature.’ (看得情善，則性之善可知)<sup>67</sup> Therefore, generally speaking, Confucian<sup>68</sup> acknowledges that moral nature is manifested in terms of emotion or passion rather than reason. Considering the fact that East Asian Confucianism acknowledges the manifestation of human nature in terms of passion or emotion rather than reason, this dissertation argues that Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, which defines culture in terms of the manifestations of passion, is applicable to the East Asian context.

One may argue that this dissertation overemphasises the significance of Confucian value in East Asian cultural sphere; even if both the East Asian Confucian tradition and Kierkegaard define culture in terms of the manifestation of passion, this does not imply that East Asian culture, which contains non-Confucian values, should be defined in terms of the manifestation of passion. However, in fact, historically speaking, rival of Confucianism or

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<sup>65</sup> 朱熹 [Zhuxi], ‘告子上.’ [Gao Zhi I], 四書章句集注 [Commentaries on Four Books].

<sup>66</sup> 朱熹 [Zhuxi], ‘仁義禮智等名義.’ [Names of Ren Yi Li Zhi, etc.], 朱子語類 [Zhuzi’s Sayings].

<sup>67</sup> 朱熹 [Zhuxi], ‘公孫丑下.’ [Gong Sun Chou II], 朱子語類 [Zhuzi’s Sayings].

<sup>68</sup> Zhuxi’s analysis of the term *qing4* is widely adopted by East Asian Confucian from even rival schools, e.g. Chong Yak-yong (丁若鏞, 1762-1836) from the Korean *Silhak* school indicates that ‘one should follow Zhuxi’s interpretation’ (乃若之義。當從集註), while Ito Jinsai (伊藤仁齋 1627-1705) from the Japanese *Kogaku* school argue that *qing4* refers to ‘the objects to which nature inclines’ (情者，性之所欲).

See 丁若鏞 [Chong Yak-yong], ‘告子第六’ [Gao Zhi no. 6], 與猶堂全書 [Complete Collection of Yeoyudang], Vol. 2; 伊藤仁齋 [Ito Jinsai], 孟子古義 [Ancient Meanings of Mencius], in 日本名家四書註積全書: 孟子部 [Complete Collection of Japanese Famous Commentaries on Four Books: Mencius], Vol. 1, (Tokyo: Toyo Books Press, 1923), 139.

**non-Confucian schools** in East Asia generally tend to define or at least discuss the concept of culture in terms of passion, emotion or feeling rather than reason, as we shall see in the section 2.2.

In Japanese tradition, non-Confucian schools acknowledge culture as an emotion rather than reason, which makes Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of the manifestation of passion applicable. Although Japanese *kokugaku* school (国学, also known as school of native studies) led by Motoori Norinaga (本居宣長, 1730-1801) and Kamo no Mabuchi (賀茂真淵, 1697-1769) condemns Confucian morality of distorting the natural expression of human emotion, Motoori insists that Japanese spirit is essentially emotional. When Motoori tries to reveal the original Japanese spirit from the study of *Monogatari* (物語, novel), he says:

Confucian and Buddhist teachings are teaching of dispelling doubts and bringing enlightenment which inevitably suppresses emotions strictly, regard the indulgence as "evil" and consider regulations of emotions as "good". *Monogatari* is not dogmatic books and is irrelevant to the good and evil in Confucian and Buddhist teaching. There is [merely] a distinction between "emotionable" and "unemotionable". Without the restrictions of [moral] good and evil, [*Monogatari*] regards only being emotionable as good instead of teaching readers to do evils in the name of emotions.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, even *kokugaku* thinkers reject Confucian teaching; they insist that the nature of Japanese culture is emotional, while moral reason has no role. As Mizuta Makoto indicates:

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<sup>69</sup> 本居宣長 [Motoori Norinaga], 日本物哀 [Japanese Monoaware], trans. Huang Xiangyuan, (Beijing: Gilin Publishing Co-operated & Beijing Han-read Culture, Oct 2010), 44.

Nature is transitory, like human beings, and this is a moving thought to Japanese people. It demonstrates to them how ephemeral they are. But nature is periodically renewed, whereas the dead go away forever. This also touches people's hearts. This feeling or emotion has also been called *mono no aware*, and it is a basic awareness of the Japanese mind.<sup>70</sup>

Besides *kokugaku*, the Kyoto School philosophers also tend to define culture in terms of passion or emotion, even though they do not define Japanese culture in terms of Confucian moral values. For example, Nishida Kitaro argues that Japanese culture is *emotional*. He argues that Japanese culture is not 'a moralistic culture that receives and preserves the ritualistic teachings of sage kings. Even loyalty, the loftiest moral ideal of Japan, is the expression of pure feeling.'<sup>71</sup> In short, the 'special characteristic [of Japanese culture] consisted of being an *emotional* culture. It did not look to the eternal beyond. It moved immanently from thing to thing, without transcending time.'<sup>72</sup> Japanese people do not conceive of their 'emotional culture as something that regulates [them] from without.' The 'Japanese reverence for chivalry and joy in close relationships between persons are also based on such an emotional disposition' which 'regulates us is neither Idea, nor commandment, nor the law, nor ritual.'<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Watsuji Tetsuro also argues that 'the Japanese is full of emotional vitality and sensitivity, lacking all continental phlegm.'<sup>74</sup> Hence, it is appropriate to assume that Japanese culture emphasises emotion or passion rather

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<sup>70</sup> Mizuta Makoto, 'Kobayashi's Spirit of Unselfishness and Kierkegaard's Faith', *Kierkegaard and Japanese Thought*, ed. James Giles, (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2008), 190.

<sup>71</sup> Nishida Kitarô, 'The Forms of Culture of the Classical Periods of East and West: Seen From a Metaphysical Perspective', *Sourcebook For Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents*, trans. & ed. David A. Dilworth, Waldo H. Viglielmo & Agustin Jacinto Zavala, (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 30

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. missing reference!

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Watsuji, Tesuro, *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, trans. Geoffrey Bownas, (Hokuseido Press, 1961), 135.

than reason, and therefore Kierkegaardian philosophy which emphasises passion is more applicable to Japanese culture than Hegelian philosophy which emphasises reason.

### **1.3.2 East Asian Philosophy of Culture as a Response to the Problem of**

#### **Cultural Modernisation**

While the philosophy of culture seems to disappear from modern Western philosophy, it remains as an important discipline in East Asian philosophy. In analytic philosophy: ‘culture has most frequently appeared in discussions of moral relativism, radical translation, and discussions of perceptual plasticity, though little effort has been made to seriously investigate the impact of culture on these domains.’<sup>75</sup> Culture ‘sometimes appears as a topic in the philosophy of social science, and in continental philosophy, there is a long tradition of ““Philosophical Anthropology,”“which deals with culture to some degree.’<sup>76</sup> By contrast, the philosophy of culture has been the major topic in modern East Asian philosophy. The Opium War in 1842 was a shocking turning point as the first time the ‘barbaric’ European beat the ‘civilised’ Manchurian Qing dynasty. Unlike the tragedy in 1644 when the originally ‘barbaric’ Manchurian occupied the capital city of the ‘civilised’ Han people’s Ming dynasty, European conquerors did not adopt the civilised Confucian culture. Instead, they promoted Western civilisation to the East Asian people—scientific technology, Christianity, laws, economic development etc. East Asian scholars were enlightened or challenged by the

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<sup>75</sup> Prinz, Jesse, “Culture and Cognitive Science”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/culture-cogsci/> .

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Western ideas, which led to two radical responses: anti-traditionalism, representing those who call for complete westernisation and the total denial of traditional East Asian culture, and traditionalism, those who insist on preserving the traditional East Asian values instead (although traditionalists are not necessarily against Western thoughts—Kyoto School and New Confucianism in fact are strongly influenced by German philosophy as we will see in chapter 2). From then on, westernisation and modernisation became the dominant topics among East Asian scholars. Generally speaking, East Asian philosophers are concerned with two issues: what is the *essence of a culture* and *how their own cultures should develop*.<sup>77</sup>

Since the defeat of China in the Opium War in 1842 East Asian philosophers have wanted to (1) articulate their own cultural selves or subjectivities by investigating the essential values,<sup>78</sup> (2) distinguish their own cultures from other cultures by articulating the nature and feature of their cultures (and, possibly, though not necessarily, show the strength and weakness of their own cultures), (3) proposing the proposals of cultural development (modernisation) in order to preserve their own cultural selves from western invasion. The task (1) is the most important task, which aims to establish a cultural self or a cultural subjectivity in response to the western cultural challenges. East Asian philosophy assumes that East Asian—Chinese, Hong Kongese, Taiwanese, Korean, Japanese, etc.—are culturally independent of other cultures, and should have their own cultural subjectivities. The only question is how to articulate their own cultural subjectivities in the contemporary world when the influence of traditional East Asian culture has been declining.

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<sup>77</sup> See Chapter 2.2 for detail discussion.

<sup>78</sup> Even though the anti-traditionalists try to deny the traditional values, at least they need to articulate what traditional values they dislike and what western values they prefer.

Cultural modernisation becomes a major issue to Japanese philosopher when Western military threat directly presented to Japan for the first time in the Perry Expedition (1854), which led to the end of *Sakoku* (鎖国, the isolationist foreign policy). Matthew Perry, a commander of the US navy, forced the Tokugawa government to open trade with the United States. Having forced to open trade with the United States without the Emperor's permission, the Shogun lost his credibility and authority in Japan, which gradually led to the outbreak of Boshin War (戊辰戦争, 1868-1869) and the Meiji Restoration in 1868 when a series of westernisation policies were implemented after the newly enthroned Emperor Meiji dissolved Shogunate and regained political power. As Zhou Song Lun indicates, there are two kinds of *Kaikoku-Ron* (開国論, the argument for the opening of the nation) at that time: 'passive *Kaikoku-Ron*' (被動開國論) and 'active *Kaikoku-Ron*' (主動開國論). The former is represented by the Rangaku scholars (蘭学) who 'were driven by their interests and curiosity of modern science and regarded the traditional Confucian ethics which defends the *Baku-Han Taisei* [幕藩体制] must be "ridiculous understandings" ... so they hope to abolish the *Sakoku* policy and fully adopt the Western civilisation with faithful passions.'<sup>79</sup> According to the reformer Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉, 1835-1901), after the Opium War in 1842 and the Perry Expedition in 1853-1854, Japan was under threat of western invasion from which China had been being suffered. Having worried about the Western invasion, Fukuzawa argues that

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<sup>79</sup> 周頌倫 [Zhou Song Lun], 文明「入歐」與政治「脫亞」——福澤諭吉「文明論」的邏輯構造 [“Europeanised” Civilisation and “De-Asianised” Politics—the Logical Morphism of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s “On Civilisation”], 二十一世紀雙月刊 [Twenty-First Century], no. 142, (Apr, 2014), 30.

the only duty of the Japanese at present is to preserve Japan's national polity. For to preserve national polity will be to preserve national sovereignty. And in order to preserve national sovereignty, the intellectual powers of the people must be elevated. There are many factors involved in this, but the first order of business in development of our intellectual powers lies in sweeping away blind attachment to past customs and adopting the spirit of Western civilisation. We can only enter into the world of modern science by completely doing away with blind attachment to outdated Confucian cosmological conceptions. The same holds true for human affairs. Social intercourse cannot be preserved without getting rid of the blind attachment that shackles us to outdated customs. Once this blind attachment has been stripped away we shall be able to enter the realm of vital intellectual activity. We shall have achieved success when national sovereignty and national polity are supported by and grounded in the intellectual power of the whole nation.<sup>80</sup>

According to Fukuzawa, in response to the Western threat, Japan needs to renounce its traditional culture and be westernised. Such an attitude is known as *anti-traditionalism*, which was also widely founded among Chinese scholar at that time. Chen Duxu (陳獨秀, 1879-1942), the founder of the Chinese Communist Party and a famous Chinese writer, is a remarkable example of Chinese anti-traditionalists. As the editor of the radical Chinese magazine *La Jeunesse* (新青年), in 1919 he wrote the article 'in Defence of the Charges against *La Jeunesse*' (《新青年》罪案之答辯書), he quotes that someone charges the magazine with several 'crimes': 'destroy the Confucian teaching' (破壞孔教): 'destroy the ritual laws' (破壞禮法): 'destroy the national heritage' (破壞國粹): 'destroy the chastity'

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<sup>80</sup> Fukuzawa, Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. David A Dilworth & G Cameron Hurst (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973), 28. See also the Chinese translation: 福澤諭吉：《文明論概論》，北京編譯社譯，（北京：商務印書館，1998年3月），33.

(破壞貞節): ‘destroy the old ethics [loyalty, filial piety and control]’ (破壞舊倫理[忠、孝、節]): ‘destroy old arts (Chinese opera)’ (破壞舊藝術[中國戲]): ‘destroy old religions [ghosts and deities]’ (破壞舊宗教[鬼神]): ‘destroy old literature’ (破壞舊文學) and ‘destroy old politics [privilege and rule-of-man]’ (破壞舊政治[特權人治]), all of which Chan pleads guilty, for

We commit these crimes merely because we embrace Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science. To embrace Mr. Democracy, one must turn against Confucian teaching, ritual laws, chastity, old ethics and old politics; to embrace Mr. Science, one must turn against old arts and the old religion. To embrace both Mr. Democracy and Mr. Science, one must turn against national heritage and old literature.<sup>81</sup>

Like Fukuzawa, Chen Duxiu regards traditional culture as barriers to cultural modernisation. In order to achieve cultural modernisation (by embracing democracy and science), according to Chen, the Chinese must renounce all traditional cultural heritage, including language, religion, philosophies, economy, social institutions etc. Both Fukuzawa and Chen denounced the ‘Chinese-ness’: ‘Japanese-ness’ or ‘East-Asian-ness’ which distinguish China, Japan and East Asia from the Western civilisations at that time. They assume that Chinese culture and Japanese culture are uncivilised, and modernisation means the radical denial of traditional cultures.

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<sup>81</sup> Original text: 只因為擁護那德莫克拉西 ( Democracy ) 和賽因斯 ( Science ) 兩位先生，才犯了這幾條滔天的大罪，要擁護那德先生，便不得不反對孔教、禮法、貞節、舊倫理、舊政治；要擁護那賽先生，便不得不反對舊藝術、舊宗教；要擁護德先生又要擁護賽先生，便不得不反對國粹和舊文學。



The radical denial of traditional cultures by the anti-traditionalists, however, fail to fulfil the ontological task of establishing cultural subjectivities by distinguishing their own cultures from Western culture. If China or Japan were modernised by a complete westernisation, there would be no distinction between Chinese culture and Western culture or Japanese culture and Western culture, and Chinese or Japanese culture would be assimilated to the Western civilisation. Having emphasised the ontological task of the philosophy of culture, Chinese and Japanese traditionalist philosophers renounced anti-traditionalism's hostility towards traditional cultural heritage. Instead, they try to make sense of the traditional Chinese and Japanese cultures by introducing Western philosophies and investigate whether there is any embedded potential for cultural modernisation. In doing so, several philosophers from New Confucianism and the Kyoto School turns to Hegelian dialectics, which we shall see in the following section.

### **1.3.3 How New Confucianism and the Kyoto School Adopt Hegelian**

#### **Dialectics**

This section aims to explain why several traditionalist philosophers from New Confucianism and the Kyoto School, the two major modern schools in East Asian philosophy, adopt Hegelian dialectics in their philosophies of culture, even though Hegel himself condemned East Asian cultures as uncivilised. I will firstly introduce that historical encounters between East Asian philosophers and German philosophy, when philosophers like Kuki Shūzō and Chang Junmai studied in Germany, and translated and introduced Kantian, Hegelian and

German idealist philosophy to East Asian readers, although Chinese adaptation of Western philosophy, in general, was much slower than Japanese. Secondly, I will explain why these East Asian traditionalists selectively adopt Hegelian dialectics. Unlike Hegel, who acknowledge only one universal Spirit determining the development of world-history and regarded the Germanic world as the highest stage of cultural development, Chinese and Japanese Hegelians argue that each nation has its own cultural spirit. Thirdly, I will discuss the influence of nationalism on Chinese and Japanese adaptation of Hegel's philosophy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because of nationalism, East Asian Hegelian tends to employ Hegelianism as an instrument justifying the supremacy of Chinese or Japanese culture.

Modern East Asian philosophers are strongly influenced by Hegelianism since the nineteenth and twentieth-century<sup>82</sup>, even though they disagree with Hegel by arguing that the Chinese or Japanese Spirit instead of Germanic Spirit is the highest stage of the historical development of the Absolute Spirit. Japanese philosophers adopted Hegel's philosophy much earlier than Chinese philosophers. The Japan-German cultural exchanges began in the Meiji Restoration when the government sent students to Germany to study philosophy, including Kuki Shūzō (九鬼周造), Inoue Tetsujirō (井上哲次郎) and Hajime Ōnishi (大西祝). Japanese scholars were interested in the prevailing Hegelianism and German idealism and brought them back to Japan, particularly Kuki who introduces German aesthetics to articulate the concept of *iki* in Japanese art. Thanks to the rapid development of modern higher education in the late nineteenth century Japan and the translations of philosophical

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<sup>82</sup> In this thesis, I will call these philosophers as 'East Asian Hegelian'. For this thesis only examine the problems brought by Hegelian dialectics to East Asian philosophy of culture, non-Hegelian East Asian philosophies of culture will not be discussed in detail.

writings, local philosophers like Nishida Kitaro who had never studied abroad also had access to German philosophy. Western lecturers like Raphael von Koeber introduced German philosophy to Japanese philosophers. Particularly, Koeber was greatly respected in Japan; when he died in 1923 in Japan, his students like Natsume Sōseki (夏目漱石, a famous modern Japanese novelist), Abe Jiro (阿部次郎) and Watsuji Tetsuro wrote several memorials.<sup>83</sup> The increasing political, diplomatic and military co-operation between Nazi Germany and Japan strengthened the Japan-German cultural and intellectual exchanges. Therefore, as we shall see in chapter 2, Kyoto School philosophers like Watsuji repeatedly use Hegelian terms like ‘the Spirit’: ‘self-consciousness’ and ‘the World-Historical’ in their writings. Therefore, it is appropriate to apply Kierkegaard’s criticism on Hegel’s philosophy on the twentieth century pre-WWII Japanese philosophers, who explicitly denied the independence of the individual subjectivity by endorsing a Japanese national subjectivity under the Japanese Emperor.

Japanese philosophers learnt and adopted German philosophy much earlier than Chinese philosophers due to their radically different attitude towards Western civilisation. The Manchurian Qing dynasty had no interest in learning Western philosophy. The Western Affairs Movement (洋務運動, 1861-1895) merely focused on learning the Western scientific technology under Wei Yuan’s slogan ‘to learn the barbarian’s advanced technology in order to defeat them’ (師夷之長技以制夷). The conservative Chinese scholars and officers had little interests even in learning Western scientific technology. While Fukuzawa’s Keio Gijuku (which latter becomes Keio University), a private school of Western studies, attracted

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<sup>83</sup> See Piovesana, Gino, *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought 1862-1994: A Survey*, [1963], (New York: Routledge, 1997), 50. For Chinese translation, see Jiang Rixin, 日本近代哲學思想史, (Taipei: Tong Da Book Ltd, 1989), 40.

many young Japanese reformers since its foundation in 1858, the Manchurian state-funded school of western languages, Tongwen Guan (同文館, founded in 1862 with only 10 students) did not even have enough applicants until its integration into Peking University in 1902.

The lack of translators become an obstacle to the spread of German philosophy in China. The Nineteenth-century Qing dynasty Chinese philosophers seem to have had little knowledge and interest in Western philosophy, not to mention Hegelianism. Even the pro-westernisation scholars did not study German philosophy; instead they are more interested in British and French political theories, thanks to Yan Fu's Chinese translations of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (國富論) and Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (論法的精神) which were frequently quoted by the constitutional monarchist and republic revolutionaries. While Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929) was an exception, he did not discuss Hegel's philosophy or German idealism in his writings, although he introduces Descartes and Kant to his Chinese readers. The language barrier was one of the main reasons; translators were much fewer in China than in Japan as the conservative Chinese literati discriminated against those who studied the 'barbarian' foreign languages. While Fukuzawa is a Dutch and English teacher and translator, Liang Qichao was famous of his poor English and Japanese<sup>84</sup>. In short, the nineteenth-century Chinese philosophers did not even study German philosophy, not to mention Hegel.

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<sup>84</sup> In 1899 February when Liang had fled to Japan only for half a year, he claimed that he had already mastered Japanese and read Japanese books. Later, he even wrote a textbook *Han's Learning Method of Japanese* (和文漢讀法), which was criticized by the Chinese linguist Zhou Zuoren (周作人) for misleading.

In 1901 Wang Ch'ung-hui (王寵惠), the editor of *The Nation* (國民報) and later the judge of the Supreme Court, visited Liang in Tokyo. Liang shew his newly written book, *Han's Learning Method of English* (英文漢讀法). Wang pointed out the errors of the book and Liang could not even understand a word when Wang was speaking in English. Liang threw away the book angrily.

For both stories, refer to 祝曙光 [Zhu Shuguang], 法官外交家王寵惠 [Wang Ch'ung-hui The Judge and the Diplomat], (Fuzhou: Fujian Education Publishing, May 2015); 沈國威 [Shen Guo-Wei], 黃遵憲的日語,

Throughout the nineteenth-century Chinese scholars were not eager to learn from the West; even if a few of them did, they narrowly focused on scientific technology or political theories rather than philosophy. While Japanese scholars were excited with the reports of the Japanese Embassy to Europe and the United States, the Chinese scholars paid little attention to the diplomatic journeys. On 25 February 1868, the Manchurian Qing dynasty sent the first official embassy to Europe and the United States. The government translator Chang Deyi (張德彝, 1847-1918) wrote the first diplomatic records *Amazing Narratives about Navigation* (航海述奇, 1867) and *Another Amazing Narrative* (再述奇, 1870) but drew little attention from the public. By contrast, Fukuzawa Yukichi joined the Japanese Embassy to the United States (1860) and the First Japanese Embassy to Europe (1862) and wrote two travelling dairies, *Things Western* (西洋事情, with three editions written in 1866, 1868 and 1870 respectively) and *Guide to Travel in the Western World* (西洋旅案内, 1867) which were rapidly circulated among Japanese scholars. Japanese scholars were so interested in westernisation that when Iwakura Mission was sent out by Emperor Meiji from 1871 to 1873, 107 people (of whom half were students) applied and participated in the embassy, including the Japanese philosopher Nakae Chōmin. Finally, the Manchurian Qing government's attitude to the scholars of western studies was generally discouraging. Yan Fu (嚴復), one of the earliest Chinese oversea students to the United Kingdom and a famous translator, was not valued by the government, while Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文), who also studied in London, was promoted to be the first-ever prime minister of Japan.

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梁啟超的日語 [Huang Zunxian's Japanese and Liang Qichao's Japanese], WAKUMON, 137, No.11, (2006) 137-148.

While the development of Chinese philosophy lagged behind Japanese philosophy, the twentieth-century Chinese philosophy, particularly New Confucianism, gradually adopted Hegelianism as well as Kantianism. Kantian ethics was introduced by Liang to his Chinese readers in 1900s. He Lin (賀麟 1902-1992), one of Liang's remarkable students in Tsinghua University, may be considered as the first New Confucian to introduce Hegel to the Chinese scholars. He was born in a Confucian scholar's family and obtained his Master of Philosophy in Harvard University. He came back to Beijing in 1932 as the assistant professor of Peking University and introduced German philosophy to Chinese scholars when his translation of Josiah Royce's *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (黑格爾學述) was published in 1936, shortly before the Second Sino-Japan War. He Lin had a strong background in both Confucianism and German philosophy that enabled him to integrate Spinoza's, Kant's and Hegel's philosophies so as to strengthen the Lu-Wang School Confucianism, which had a strong influence on the following New Confucian philosophers.<sup>85</sup>

Another significant figure, who is ignored by Tseng Chun-Hai's *History of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Philosophy*, is Chang Junmai (張君勱, originally known as Chang Carsun 張嘉森, 1887-1969), who was Liang Qichao's friend and an early Confucian introducing German Idealism to the Chinese readers and Yangmingism to the Western scholars. Chang had both a strong background in traditional Chinese Classics studies and Western philosophy. Early in 1902 at the age of 16 he obtained the title of Xiucai (秀才) by passing the entrance exam (鄉試) of the Imperial Examination (科舉) and then was trained by the Qing dynasty government as a translator until 1906 when the government sent him to

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<sup>85</sup> See Tseng Chun-Hai [曾春海], *History of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Philosophy*[中國近當代哲學史], (Taipei: Wunan Publishing Ltd, 2018), 164-165.

study Political Economics in Waseda University, Japan, where he met the reformist leader Liang Qichao and Chang Dongsun (張東蓀 1886-1973, a Chinese philosopher who is famous of being prosecuted by Communist China). In 1910 he graduated and returned to China, a year before the Xinhai Revolution. From 1913 to 1915, with Liang's support, Chang went to Germany to study a PhD in Political science at Friedrich Wilhelm University. In 1918 Chang went to Germany again to study under German idealist Rudolf Eucken and French intuitionist Henri Bergson until 1921 when he returned back to China as an interpreter of the German philosopher Hans Adolf Eduard Driesch. As a leading figure in the 1923 debate of Science and Metaphysics (科學與玄學的論爭), Chang is regarded as the leader of traditionalism in the 1920s when mainstream scholars were anti-traditionalist. Like He lin, Chang introduces German philosophy to justify Confucian moral values. Chang argues that moral values cannot be reduced into the socio-political condition (the 'materialist conception of history' promoted by the Communist writer Chen Duxiu) or physical conditions. In particular, he employs Kantian ethics to justify the universality of innate moral capacity claimed by Confucianism (particularly Wang Yangming). Besides philosophy, influenced by Liang, Chang is devoted to jurisprudence and constitutionalism. His participation in the social movement led to his arrest in 1926 by Kuomintang government, but he was released in 1928 and then went to teach in the University of Jena, Germany until his return to China again in 1931. Together with Chang Dongsun, Chang Junmai organised the National Socialist Party in 1932, but Chang Dongsun withdrew in 1946 when Chang Junmai endorsed the Kuomintang dominated Constitutional Convention. After the establishment of Communist China in 1949, Chang Junmai fled to India and the United States where he taught at Stanford University until his death in 1969, promoting Chinese Confucianism to a Western audience. Together with Tang Jung-Yi, Chang drafted *A*

*Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture* in 1958 and translated it into English. While Chinese scholarship tends to focus more on Tang Jung-Yi's and Mou Zong-Sang's contribution, one should acknowledge the fact that it was He Lin and Chang Junmai who facilitated the dialogue between German philosophy and Chinese Confucianism and provided the grounding of New Confucianism, which is strongly influenced by Hegel's dialectics of historical development, Kant's transcendental idealism and the concept of self-consciousness.

But neither Japanese or Chinese philosophers in the nineteenth and twentieth century are 100% Hegelian due to their own historical contexts and social, political and cultural concerns. None of them agrees with Hegel's bias against the East in his *Lectures on Philosophy of History* that the Oriental World is the lowest stage of the historical development of the Spirit—which is totally against the traditional East Asia perspective. Since ancient time, Chinese and Japanese regarded themselves as the most civilised nation and even the centre of the world, while the Westerners—including the European, who did not write Hanzi and did not practice Confucian ritual and ethics, were barbarian. The distinction between the Civilised and the Barbarian (華夷之辨) was a major philosophical and political question among East Asian philosophers. As it is written in *The Commentary of Zuo: 'The Spring and Autumn Annuals* regards the kingdom as the inner and the civilised as the outer, the civilised as the inner and the barbarian as the outer.'<sup>86</sup>. While the Opium War and the Perry's Expedition shew the military power of the West, the majority of Chinese and Japanese scholars throughout the nineteenth century were still confident with their cultures and their

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<sup>86</sup> Original text: 《春秋》內其國而外諸夏，內諸夏而外夷狄。(《春秋左傳》〈成公十五年〉)



nations; instead of pursuing a complete cultural westernisation, they tried to accommodate the western affairs which ‘fits’ their cultural favour and political needs. For example, Chinese diplomat Chang Deyi and Japanese diplomat Yanagawa Tōsei (柳川當清) strongly condemn the awfulness of western food.<sup>87</sup> Even the anti-traditionalist like Fukuzawa Yukichi does not pursue complete westernisation; for example, he rejects Christianity and argues that religion is useless for Japanese modernisation.<sup>88</sup> As we shall discuss in chapter 2, in response to Hegel’s criticism of the Oriental Spirit, Nitobe Inazo’s (新渡戸稻造, 1862-1933) famous English book *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (武士道, 1900), argues that freedom is expressed in Japanese culture in a different way. As Koyasu quotes: ‘I accept in a large measure the view advanced and defended with breadth of learning and profundity of thought by Hegel, that history is the unfolding and realization of freedom. The point I wish to make is that the whole teaching of Bushido was so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, that it was required not only of woman but of man.’<sup>89</sup> Defending Japanese culture from Hegel’s challenge was a crucial aim of Japanese nationalists in the twentieth century.

In philosophy, Chinese and Japanese employ Hegel’s philosophy as a means to articulate their cultural subjectivities and even justify their nationalist political agenda in the case of pre-WWII Japanese militarism. One must be very careful with the rationale behind the Chinese and Japanese’s selective adoption of Hegel’s philosophy when applying Kierkegaard’s criticism of Hegel on these ‘East Asian Hegelian’. For Kierkegaardians, the

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<sup>87</sup> See 黃邪 [huang xie], 一名 19 歲的同文館少年，誤打誤撞寫下華人最早的英法料理食記 [a 19-year-old young man from Tongwen guan accidentally wrote the first Chinese’s record of English and French cuisine], 3 January, 2017. Achieved from <https://gushi.tw/the-earliest-food-review-in-chinese/>

<sup>88</sup> Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, trans. David A. Dilworth & G. Cameron Hurst, (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970), 80-81.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in 子安宣邦 [Koyasu Nobukuni], 東亞論:日本現代思想批判 [On East Asia: A Critique of Modern Japanese Thought], 27. Nitobe Inazo, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc, 2005), 173-174.

problems of New Confucianism, however, are the lack of religious passions (namely, the absence of God-man relation) and the unclear relation between the individual subjectivity and the Chinese national subjectivity.

Besides Hegel's philosophy, nationalism was also (and now still is) a prevailing western ideology in the nineteenth to twentieth-century China, Japan and Korea. The military threat from Western imperialism made East Asian scholars worried about the loss of their national dignity, autonomy, subjectivity and independence. As a result, they rapidly adopted nationalism in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in order to articulate their subjectivities, as we shall see in chapter 2. Both Chinese Constitutional Monarchist Liang Qichao and Chinese Republican Revolutionary Chang Taiyan promoted Chinese nationalism from the 1890s to 1900s when both were in exile to Japan, although they disagreed with each other on the concept of 'Chinese nation'—the former insists on counting Manchurian as Chinese while the latter regards Manchurian as a foreign conqueror. Having been influenced by Liang's nationalism, Korean nationalist historian Shin Chaeho (申采浩) wrote his *Ancient History of Korea* (朝鮮上古史) in 1915 by constructing a Korean national subjectivity based upon the Korean myth of Dangun's kingdom. In the case of Korea and China, the unrest and actual Western or Japanese invasion strengthened their nationalism. 'Anti-imperialism' (反帝) was an important slogan in both Chinese Communist and Kuomintang propaganda. Korea was annexed to Japan under the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1910, Manchuria was seized by Japan in 1931 while the Second Sino-Japan War occurred from 1937 to 1945. All these military tensions stimulate Chinese nationalism and Korean nationalism, which influenced the post-war Chinese New Confucian (新儒家) when they reconstruct the Chinese cultural subjectivity in the Cold War period.

The growth of Japanese nationalism, however, is a bit different. Japan had not been actually invaded by any foreign power until its final defeat in 1945. As we shall see in chapter 2, early in nineteenth-century Japan, Japanese scholars like Fukuzawa and Yoshida Shoin pursued military aggressions towards China and Korea; Yoshida's ambition was actualised by his students Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文, who became the first-ever Prime Minister of Japan) and Yamagata Aritomo (山縣有朋, a field marshal and the Prime Minister who suggests the plan of invading Manchuria). Japan defeated Manchurian China in the First Sino-Japan War in 1895 and Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, which strengthened Japanese military power in East Asia. Since the 1919 Paris Peace Conference when Japan tried to seize the German colony of Jiaozhou Bay in China, the Chinese people began to condemn Japan as the greatest imperialist threat to China. Both Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-Sek described Japan as imperialist in their speeches during the 1930s. In order to justify their military aggression in Asia, several Japanese philosophers from the Kyoto school were requested to publish article endorsing the Japanese national polity (Kokutai 国体), including Nishida Kitaro and Tetsuro Watsuji who employed Hegel's dialectics to justify the leadership of Japanese nation in the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. I will evaluate their arguments in chapter 2 in detail.

The main problem of East Asian philosophers of culture is that they simply assume a Hegelian-Herderian definition of culture: that culture is a spiritually unified system of value. Of course, the task of the philosophy of culture is to reveal the meanings and values that a culture manifests; but these meanings and values are not fixed, for values and meanings are conveyed by language which varies with history. They presuppose that every culture has

some *fixed* and *essential values* which determines all its cultural behaviours and developments; therefore, as long as the essential values of a culture are known, one can easily determine what a culture is. While culture is the manifestation of values and meanings, whether they are fixed or variable is questionable, which will be discussed in chapter 2. Liang Shu-Ming (梁漱溟), Mou Zong-San (牟宗三), Tang Jung-Yi (唐君毅) and Lao Sze-Kwang (勞思光) articulate Chinese culture by defining the essential values of Chinese culture as Confucian moral values (while Buddhist and Taoist values are less important), while Nishida Kitarô (西田幾多郎) argues that both Chinese and Japanese cultures are the cultures of ‘non-being’. On the other hand, Japanese philosophers never agree with each other on the essence of ‘Japanese cultural spirit’. Japanese Confucians like Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠)<sup>90</sup> argues that the Japanese cultural spirit is equivalent to the Confucian teachings since Shinto and Confucianism are identical, while Motoori Norinaga (本居宣長) condemns the confusion between Shinto and Confucianism and believes that the only Shintoism is essentially a ‘Japanese mind’ (大和心)<sup>91</sup>. They all assume that there are some eternal and essential values which define what Chinese culture is and what Japanese culture is. They forget that cultural values and meanings vary with history. Different people from a different time with different horizons may have a different understanding of the same culture.

*Hermeneutically* speaking, the values and meanings of culture have a wide openness of interpretation. Hermeneutics may define culture as a *tradition* which conditions human *understanding*. Language, concepts and values from the previous generations are inherited

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<sup>90</sup> 呂玉新 [Lu Yuxin], 政體、文明、族群之辯: 德川日本思想史 [Polity: Civilization and Nationalism: Political Thoughts in Tokugawa Japan], (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2017), 223.

<sup>91</sup> See 本居宣長 [Motoori Norinaga], ‘Introduction’, 日本物哀 [Japanese Monoaware], trans. Huang Xiangyuan, (Beijing: Gilin Publishing Co-operated & Beijing Han-read Culture, Oct 2010).

by the contemporary generations and, as such, interpreted. But hermeneutics only provide an epistemic approach to the philosophy of culture, namely, what is a culture, or how to define a culture. For East Asian philosophers of culture, task (1) is not *only epistemic* but also *ontological*. They do not only want to *know* what their cultures are but also want to *reconstruct* their cultural subjectivities in the contemporary world. The task of hermeneutics, however, is merely about the study of interpretation, and therefore can only deal with the task (2). East Asian philosophers need something else in order to complete the task (1).

While most of contemporary Chinese and Japanese philosophers choose the Hegel-Herder model by establishing their own ‘cultural spirits’ (Chinese spirit and Japanese spirit), this dissertation introduces Kierkegaard’s philosophy of culture instead. The limitations of the horizon prevent interpreters from having a complete understanding of the ‘essential values’ or the ‘cultural spirit’ of a culture, as when Ogyū Sorai and Motoori Norinaga disagree with each other on whether Japanese spirit contains Confucian values. The Hegelian discussion of ‘cultural spirits’ led to endless debates on the nature of Chinese, Korean or Japanese cultural spirits simply because one can never have complete understanding of such cultural spirits which are supposed to be persistent and transcend the horizon of the present but determine the cultural development from the past to the present. Even Gadamer’s fusion of horizons<sup>92</sup> fails to appropriate the cultural spirit, for a cultural spirit does not merely exist in the past or the present.

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<sup>92</sup> See Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, (Continuum International Publishing Group), 267-298. For Gadamer’s hermeneutics see Chapter 2.3.

By speculating on the nature of cultural spirit or essential cultural values, East Asian philosophers aim to discover some ‘universal’ and ‘persistent’ (but not eternal—for culture is a historical product) principles which determine the historical development of culture and hopefully provide orientation for its future development. However, spirits are invisible; there is no empirical method to evaluate whether a value  $V_x$  is the essential value of culture. East Asian philosophers merely speculate on the values and spirits behind the cultural activities, for instance, Nishida argues that Japanese spirit is the spirit of nothingness while Lao Sze-Kwang argues that Chinese spirit is the virtues-oriented spirit (重德精神). The debates between traditionalists and anti-traditionalists regarding the preservation of traditional values in cultural modernisation cannot be solved since they have little objective ground. Chinese traditionalists and Chinese anti-traditionalists do not even agree on the essence of Chinese culture; while traditionalists think Confucian moral values are essential, anti-traditionalists may not.

In order to find a metaphysical ground to discuss the nature of culture, one must go back to the individuals who constitute a cultural group. If a cultural spirit exists as a universal structure, it must exist within the community which manifests this cultural spirit; and because all communities consist of individuals, one should look for how such a ‘universal structure’ manifests in an existing individual. The cultural subjectivity is not abstract from the community and the individuals; the cultural subjectivity must consist of individual selves. Speculative debates on the nature of the ‘cultural spirits’ forget the fact that all cultures are manifested by *existing individuals* in *communities*. If there is any universal structure or cultural spirit, it must come from the community or the individual.

Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, which this dissertation aims to reconstruct, avoids speculative debates on the nature of cultural spirits and provide a more concrete ‘bottom-up’ approach to East Asian philosophers. In order to complete the task (1), namely, reconstruct a cultural self or subjectivity, one must undertake an *existential analysis of the individuals and community*. Kierkegaard, as we shall see, defines culture as the manifestations of *passions* and interprets society as a *community* in which every single individual *exists authentically*. A cultural group is a community that is established by the relations among individuals; all individuals are passionate, therefore the cultural group as a community is also *passionate*—including *aesthetic, ethical, religious or epistemic* passions. The formation of a cultural self is the formation of a community among individuals, and cultural distinctions are defined by the ‘*orientations of passions*’ (the manifestations of which passions are more important in a community). While individuals are able to manifest any kind of passions, the community may tend to manifest some passions more than others. Such a ‘trend’ corresponds to the ‘cultural spirits’ or the ‘essential values’ that East Asian philosophers (particularly East Asian Hegelian) look for, although such a ‘trend’ is changeable. Cultural changes are changes in the emphasis on the manifestations of different passions, which depends on the individual’s wills. Cultural values and meanings become the objects of passions; aesthetic passions persuade aesthetic values, ethical passions persuade moral values, epistemic passions persuade cognitive values and religious passions persuade religious values (or ultimate concern in Tillich’s language). Cultural development is driven by the passions existing within the concrete individuals rather than an abstract and speculative ‘cultural spirit’ which ignores individuals.

## 1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This dissertation aims to reconstruct Kierkegaard's philosophy of culture so as to provide a new account of establishing cultural self and apply it in contemporary East Asian philosophy of culture. While Kierkegaard himself does not develop a philosophy of culture, his concepts of individual self, community, contemporaneity and culture as passions provide important resources to the study of the philosophy of culture.

In Chapter 2, I will summarise the contemporary discussion on the definition of culture among both modern Western and East Asian philosophers and introduce three definitions of culture: culture in terms of spirit, culture as ways of living and culture as tradition. Having been influenced by Herder and Hegel, modern German philosophers tend to define culture in terms of Spirit (*Geist*). While Herder argues that different cultures have different national spirits, Hegel argues that there is only one Absolute Spirit and all cultures are merely moments of its development: the 'Oriental' World (which is the lowest moment), the Greek-Roman World and the Germanic World. While modern Chinese and Japanese philosophers are strongly influenced by Hegelianism, they disagree with Hegel's bias against Oriental cultures. Since the medieval period, Chinese Confucian and Japanese State Shinto identify themselves as the highest civilisations in the world; therefore, the modern Chinese and Japanese philosophers try to demonstrate and that the Chinese or Japanese cultural spirits are distinguished from the Western spirits, and the Chinese or Japanese cultural spirits are more advanced. Most Chinese Confucians like Liang Shu-Ming, Mou Zong-San and Tang Jung-Yi agree that Chinese culture is dominated by Confucian philosophy which emphasises



ethics rather than epistemology and science, while Watsuji Tetsuro believes that loyalty to the Emperor is the highest cultural value of Japanese culture. However, their adaptation of Hegelian dialectics, which assumes a fixed cultural spirit or set of essential values which determine cultural development, encountered three theoretical problems: (1) *the impossibility of changes in cultural values*, (2) *the lack of empirical method to identify cultural spirit* and (3) *the neglect of openness of value interpretation*.

In order to address these problems, it is appropriate to introduce hermeneutics. Hermeneutics defines culture as *a tradition*. Humboldt argues that culture is shaped by a particular language (particularly spoken language) which transferred values from previous generations to the contemporary. While Humboldt believes that language is a living and changing organism, Dilthey insists that there must be a fixed 'objective spirit' underlying the cultural development to secure the 'realisation of life'. However, Humboldt's linguistic deterministic model fails to explain the cultures of multilingual societies while Dilthey fails to explain why cultural development is possible if it is determined by a fixed objective spirit. Gadamer's hermeneutics acknowledges cultural changes without assuming the existence of any fixed and unchanged cultural value or structure. Culture is the tradition inherited from the previous generation through language which provides the contemporary generation prejudices. Prejudices limit the horizon of understanding, so one's understanding of his own culture is limited by his own culture as a tradition. He can never completely understand his own culture; he can only appropriate his own culture through the fusions of the horizon of the present and that of the past. However, hermeneutics only fulfils the epistemic task by explaining how to understand a culture; it does not fulfil the ontological task which aims to establish a cultural subjectivity. Gadamer's hermeneutics allow for changes in cultural

values; in other words, there are no essential cultural values to distinguish culture from other cultures. Without essential distinction, a cultural subjectivity cannot be established. In order to fulfil the ontological task, one must turn to Kierkegaard's philosophy which emphasises subjectivity.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss Kierkegaard's concept of culture and try to reconstruct his philosophy of culture by discussing his concept of culture as passion in *Two Ages*. In doing so, I will analyse four kinds of passion as motivation in Kierkegaard's philosophy—*aesthetic, epistemic, ethical and religious*, and apply these passions in explaining the cultural phenomenon. Kierkegaard's definition of culture as passion is distinctive in comparison with the mainstream of philosophy of culture which defines culture as Spirit or in terms of fixed sets of values; thus, different cultures emphasise the manifestations of some passions over others, which leads to cultural differences. Every single individual is passionate and has all kinds of passions; therefore, a cultural group as a community of individuals is also passionate and should be able to manifest all kinds of passions. Cultural development is *oriented* by passions towards different values. Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture resolves three theoretical problems encountered by East Asian Hegelian: (1) *the impossibility of changes in cultural values*, (2) *the lack of an empirical method to identify cultural spirit* and (3) *the neglect of openness of value interpretation*. For changes in cultural values are allowed and explained as changes in passions, the manifestation of passions is empirically investigable and different individuals may have different understanding and interests in different value. The issue is how different individuals communicate their passions with each other within a community and establish a cultural group. This leads to the discussion of Kierkegaard's concept of community in chapter 4.

In Chapter 4, I will discuss Kierkegaard's concept of community and try to reconstruct a concept of the cultural group by linking his concept of culture. Firstly, I will discuss Kierkegaard's structure of single individual in *Sickness Unto Death*, that an individual is a relation relating itself to itself, relation relates itself to the Relation, the synthesis of relations and the spirit. Secondly, based upon the structure of the single individual, I will reconstruct the three-fold structure of Kierkegaard's concept of community (where the individual is, firstly, lower than his relations to others, then equivalent to his relations to others, and finally, higher than his relations to others) which is distinguished from that of public, nation, people or crowd. Thirdly, I will criticise Kierkegaard's concept of a community which lacks exclusive membership to distinguish itself from other communities. Fourthly, I will argue that a cultural group as a community is always coming into existence; it is impossible to say exactly when culture came into existence in the past. Finally, I will reconstruct Kierkegaard's concept of culture as passion and that of the community as relations of individuals as a systematic philosophy of culture: that cultural groups are communities where individual manifest their aesthetic, ethical, cognitive and/or religious passions. Different cultural groups have different 'trends' of emphasising the manifestations of certain passions over others. Such trends are known as 'orientations of passions'. The orientations of passions determine cultural distinctions when two cultures have different orientations of passions, although sometimes cultures sharing the same orientations may manifest the same passion in very different ways.



## 2. Contemporary Discussion of the Definition of Cultures

This chapter aims to examine the theoretical problems of modern East Asian philosophy of culture, particularly New Confucianism and the Kyoto School, who may also be designated as ‘East Asian Hegelianism’, considering the fact that they adopt Hegel’s dialectics to reformulate Chinese or Japanese cultural subjectivity and explain its cultural development, although they modify Hegel’s idea of Spirit: instead of arguing that there is one Spirit determining the world-historical development, they argue that different nations or cultures are determined by different particular national or cultural spirit. However, their introduction of Hegel’s framework, which assume the unchangeability of the Spirit or value system, leads to three major theoretical problems which can be solved in Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Kierkegaard’s philosophy of culture.

In this chapter, I will firstly introduce the etymology of the Hanzi (kanji or Chinese characters) term *man4 faa3* (文化)<sup>93</sup> for the English term culture. I argue that the sense of *man4 faa3* as cultivation and transformation according to the way of heaven, the way of earth and the way of human coincides with the Hegelian idea of Spirit, which enables New Confucian and the Kyoto School philosophers to adopt Hegelian dialectics in their philosophies of culture. Secondly, I summarise Hegel’s concept of culture as Spirit by demonstrating how he disagrees with Herder’s concept of Spirit and *Bildung* in his *Lectures*

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<sup>93</sup> The written forms of the term culture in written Chinese, Japanese and even Classical Korean which used Hanzi as writing language are the same, although its pronunciation varies with different East Asian languages, e.g. Cantonese: *man4 faa3*, Mandarin: *wénhuà*, Japanese: *bunka*, Korean: *munhwa*.

*on the Philosophy of World-History*. Thirdly, I will explain how remarkable East Asian Hegelian philosophers of culture (including Liang Shuming, Mou Zong-san, Tang Jung-yi and Tetsuro Watsuji) adopt the Hegelian idea of spirit in order to reformulate their own cultural subjectivity. Fourthly, I will argue that all these East Asian Hegelians face with three theoretical problems due to their assumption that the cultural spirit and the set of essential values (which determine a culture) do not change: (1) *the impossibility of changes in cultural values*, (2) *the lack of empirical method to identify cultural spirit* and (3) *the neglect of openness of value interpretation*. Fifthly, I will introduce Gadamer's Hermeneutics which emphasises the openness of value interpretation, allows changes in cultural values which is empirically investigable by observing how members of a cultural group manifest their understandings of cultural values in visible form (e.g. literature, art, music).

## 2.1. Culture as spirit

### 2.1.1 Etymology

We begin by examining the discussion of the definition of culture from different modern perspectives. In English, the word ‘culture’ comes from the word *culture* French, which originates from the word *cultura* (the noun form of the verb *colere*) in Latin, meaning agricultural cultivation. In *Tusculanae Disputationes*, Cicero refers the word culture to the cultivation of the mind. The corresponding Hanzi (Chinese Characters) for the term culture, 文化 (Cantonese: *man4 faa3*) also the sense of culture as cultivation. The Hanzi term *man4 faa3* in Han characters by dividing them into two independent units. According to Chinese Linguist Wang Li’s (王力, 1900-1986) *A Dictionary of Classical Chinese* (古代漢語字典), *Man4* (文) originally means the ‘crossed traces’ on the surface<sup>94</sup>, which gradually refers to the written words and the established ritual.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, *Faa3* (化) means transformation. Wang Li quotes *Doctrine of Mean* that ‘motion means change, change mean *faa3*’ (動則變, 變則化).<sup>96</sup> In short, *man4 faa3* literally means the transformation driven by language and ritual, which can also be translated as ‘cultivation’ in English.

The Hanzi term *Man4 Faa3* has a stronger political sense in the East Asian context. In Classical Chinese, the term *man4 faa3* originally refers to the cultivation of the people promoted by the imperial court according to the rituals and the virtues. For example, in

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<sup>94</sup> It is written in *Yi Jing* that ‘objects mixed together are called as *man4*’ (物相雜, 故曰文) (《周易·繫辭下》).

<sup>95</sup> 王力 [Wang Li], 古漢語字典 [A Dictionary of Classical Chinese], (Beijing: Chung Hwa Books, June 2000), 414.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 85.

Shuxi's (束晰 264-306) poem, it is written that 'Cultivation is an internal summary, Military is an external appearance.' (文化內輯，武功外悠) The combination of two characters, *man4* and *faa3*, was firstly suggested by *Yi Jing*:

The goal of Cultivation [文明] is the humanness [人文 *jan4 man4*]. When one watches the appearance of heaven, one observes the changes of seasons. When one watches the appearance of human [society], one transforms [化成 *faa4 sing4*] all [beings] under the heaven.<sup>97</sup> (*Yi Jing* 22)

Here the term *man4 faa4* is regarded as top-to-down cultivation of people according to certain normative principles. According to Kong Yingda's (孔穎達, 574-648) commentary: 'the sages watch the appearance of the heaven ... to observe the changes in four seasons. ... The sages observe the appearance of the heaven [人文 *jan4 man4*], which refers to the *Book of Odes*, *Book of Documents*, *Classics of Rites* and *Classic of Music*. When they follow these teachings appropriately, they can "transform all beings under the heaven".'<sup>98</sup> While Lan Lee-Chun and Chiou Chomg-ming indicate that the term in Classical Chinese does not refer to the English term 'culture', they acknowledge that it implies a 'humanistic normativity' 'which educates people all over the world in order to improve living quality and morality'.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Original text: 文明以止，人文也。觀乎天文，以察時變；觀乎人文，以化成天下。（《周易·賁》）

<sup>98</sup> Original text: 「觀乎天文，以察時變」者，言聖人當觀視天文，剛柔交錯，相飾成文，以察四時變化……「觀乎人文以化成天下」者，言聖人觀察人文，則《詩》、《書》、《禮》、《樂》之謂，當法此教而「化成天下」也。（孔穎達《周易正義·上經隨傳卷三》）

<sup>99</sup> 藍麗春 [Lan Lee-Chun] & 邱重銘 [Chiou Chomg-Ming], "文化"的定義、要素與特徵 [The Definition, Elements and Features of "Culture"], 國立臺中技術學院通識教育學報 [National Tai Chung Institute of Technology Journal of General Education], no. 2, (1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2008), 118.



Here *jan4 man4* (人文) is considered as a normative and guiding principle of every phenomenon in human society. According to New Confucian philosopher Tang Jang-yi: ‘the so-called “culture” in China is the transformation of *jan4 man4* under the heaven. *Man4* must depend on quality while quality must manifest *man4*. Daily life is the quality while the spiritual life is *man4*. Both are interdependent and inseparable. Therefore .... When the self-consciousness of Confucianism affirm the ritual and music cultural life, everything is operated as a means of cultivation; and thousand years of Chinese folk daily life generally agree with the meaning of ritual and music culture ... ‘<sup>100</sup> In short, according to Confucian’s interpretation, the Hanzi term *man4 faa3* assumes that culture is the cultivation of people according to certain moral principles.

*Jan4 Man4* can transform the society because it is guided by the way of human, *dou6* or *dao* (道), which determines the ends of cultural development. As it is written in *Yi Jing*,

The Yi is a book of wide comprehension and great scope, embracing everything. There are in it the way of heaven [天道], the way of [hu]man [人道], and the way of earth [地道]. It then takes (the lines representing) those three Powers, and doubles them till they amount to six. What these six lines show is simply this, - the way of the three Powers. This way is marked by changes and movements, and hence we have the imitative lines. Those lines are of different grades (in the trigrams), and hence we designate them from their component elements. These are mixed, and elegant forms arise. When such forms are not in their appropriate places, the ideas of good fortune and bad are thus produced.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> 唐君毅 [Tang Jung-Yi], 中國文化之精神價值 [The Spiritual Value of Chinese Culture], (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, Oct 2005) 179.

<sup>101</sup> Original text: 「易之為書也，廣大悉備，有天道焉，有人道焉，有地道焉。兼三材而兩之，故六

According to Tang's interpretation: 'the establishment of the way of human is manifested in the achievement of personality and the transformation of *jaan4 man4* in the world of nature. Therefore, Chinese thoughts value the heaven, the earth and the human equally. The virtue of the heaven is highness and brightness. The virtue of the earth is wideness and greatness. Both conditions the personality [or] human world which modify the world of nature in order to establish the way of the human.'<sup>102</sup> The senses of normativity and transcendence (from the *way of heaven*) embedded in the Hanzi term *man4 faa3* opens the room to the dialogue between Hegelianism and East Asian Confucianism, in particular, twentieth century Chinese New Confucianism. As we shall see, the Hegelian definition of culture as spirit assumes the dominance of cultural spirit over the cultural phenomenon, which coincides with the Confucian idea of the transformation of human society through *dou6*.<sup>103</sup> For example, Mou Zong-zan appreciates both Wang Fuzhi (王夫之 1619-1692) and Hegel as 'good philosophers of history'; the former argues that 'the history does not depart from *dou6* while *dou6* is in the history' (史不離道，道即在史), while the latter demonstrates how the Spirit

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六者，非它也，三材之道也，道有變動，故曰爻，爻有等，故曰物，物相雜，故曰文，文不當，故吉凶生焉。」(《易經·繫辭下》) Translated by Legge, James, *Sacred Books of the East*, ed. Max Muller, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), Vol. 27-28.

<sup>102</sup> 唐君毅 [Tang Jung-Yi], 中國文化之精神價值 [The Spiritual Value of Chinese Culture], 334.

<sup>103</sup> While this thesis mainly focuses the Confucian idea of *dou6* expressed in *Four Books and Five Canons* which profoundly influences modern East Asian philosophy of culture, it should be noticed that Confucian idea of *dou6* is different from the Daoist idea of *dou6*. As Mou Zong-san said in *Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy*:

'...it is appropriate to apply the words creativity and creation to Confucianism, but they cannot be applied to Daoism. At the most we can make a general statement to the effect that they can be responsible for the existence of things, that is, enable things to actualize. "Actualize" is more general; to say "created" would be too concrete. So we should not speak of a creating principle, but should rather call it a principle of actualization. Actualization can take many forms. The ... meaning of actualization is found in the Confucian account of "Heavenly Dao [*dou5*] without end" [天道不已] procreating the myriad things. That is not creating out of Nothing, but a functional creation of "Speaking in wonder of the myriad things." Both schools of teaching speak of creation, though differently, but both can explain it using the principle of actualization.' See Mou Zong-san, *Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Julie Lee Wei, Chp 5, 101. Assessed 21 May, 2019. <http://nineteenlects.com/>

governs historical development. Mou calls Wang's philosophy as 'a narrative of Dou6' (道統記) while Hegel's philosophy as 'a narrative of Spirit' (神統紀).<sup>104</sup>

However, Chinese philosophers do not articulate the Hanzi term *man4 faa3* (文化) and correlate it to the Western concept of culture until late the nineteenth century when Japanese scholars translated the English term 'culture' as 文化 (*bunka*). Initially, the nineteenth-century Japanese philosophers' usage of the term *bunka* is similar to the meaning of *man4 faa3* in Classical Chinese: that *bunka* refers to education, cultivation, or civilisation, but not culture. In Japanese philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō's (井上哲次郎, 1855-1944) *An Edited Version of Philosophical Terminology* (増補改訂 哲学字彙, 1884), Inoue translate the term culture as 修練 (Cantonese: *sau1 lin6*, Japanese: *shuren*, cultivation)<sup>105</sup> while as 種植 (Cantonese: *zung3 zik6*, Japanese: *taneue*) in his *An Edited Version of English and Chinese Dictionary* (増訂英華字典, 1899, written by Wilhelm Lobscheid in 1866).<sup>106</sup> In Inoue's *ABC Biki Japanese Dictionary* (ABC びき日本辞典, 1917), Inoue defines the Japanese kanji term *bunka* (文化) as civilisation (文明開化) rather than culture.<sup>107</sup> Because *bunka* was originally referred to cultivation, as Inoue indicates, early Meiji westernizers like Nishi Amane (西周, 1829-1879) used *bunka* (文化) as the 'abbreviation of *bunmei kaika* [文明開化], "civilization and enlightenment." In other words, it referred to the achievements which flowed from the European scientific and industrial revolutions'.<sup>108</sup> Therefore in the

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<sup>104</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-san], 生命的學問 [A Study of Life], (Taipei: Sanmin Book Ltd, 1989), 179-180.

<sup>105</sup> Ed. 井上哲次郎 [Inoue Tetsujirō], 増補改訂 哲学字彙 [An Edited Version of Philosophical Terminology], (Toyokan, 1884), 28.

<sup>106</sup> Ed. 井上哲次郎 [Inoue Tetsujirō], 増訂英華字典 [An Edited Version of English and Chinese Dictionary], (Seishi-dō shobō, 1899), 342.

<sup>107</sup> Ed. 井上哲次郎 [Inoue Tetsujirō], ABC びき日本辞典 [ABC Biki Japanese Dictionary], (Sanseido, 1917), 209.

<sup>108</sup> Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, 'The Invention and Reinvention of "Japanese Culture"', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 3, (Aug 1995): 763.

context of the nineteenth century Japan, *bunka* referred to the English term civilisation alone rather than culture.

The hanzi term *bunka* was first time referred to the English term culture rather than western civilisation when Japanese novelist Tsubouchi Shōyō (坪内逍遙, 1859-1935) published his famous thesis *The Essence of Novel* (小説神髓, 1885-1886) where he used the kanji term 文華 and 文化 (*man4 waa4* and *man4 faa3*, both pronounced as *bunka* in Japanese) interchangeably referring to the English term ‘culture’. According to Tsubouchi: ‘the art of the past has gradually disappeared—it is unlikely that even the glories of modern English [*bunka* 文華] will produce another Milton, or the elegance of Italy another Virgil.’<sup>109</sup> In his paper, *A Critique of Tamenaga Shunsui* (為永春水の批評, 1886) Tsubouchi declares that ‘our nation is a cultured nation’ (夫れ我国は文華の国なり). But it was Japanese philosopher Onishi Hajime (大西祝, 1864-1900) who defined *bunka* as culture philosophically according to Shimizu Hitoshi. Onishi introduced Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* with Arnold’s concept of culture and translated the term as 文華 *bunka* (intellectual/high culture).<sup>110</sup>

Thanks to Tsubouchi and Onishi, *bunka* as culture was gradually accepted by Japanese intellectuals in the twentieth century. However, because Suzuki fails to acknowledge the contribution of Tsubouchi and Onishi in her article ‘The Invention and Reinvention of

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<sup>109</sup> Original text: 従来の美術の次第におとろえ、英国の文華を以ても、またミルトンを出さざるべく、伊太利国の高雅なるも、たヴァージルをいださざるべし。

See Tsubouchi Shōyō, *The Essence of the Novel*, trans. Nanette Twine, Part I, Chap. 2. Accessed May 22, 2019. <https://archive.nyu.edu/html/2451/14945/shoyo.htm#chap1.2>

<sup>110</sup> 清水均 [Shimizu Hitoshi], 近代日本における「文化」概念の成立(2) —1—大西祝の意義とマシュー・アーノルド『.』の問題性 [The Generation of “Bunka” in Modern Japan (2)-1: The Significance of Hajime Onishi’s Work in Relation to Problematic Characteristics of Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*], 聖学院大学論叢 [Seigakuin University Journal] 29, no. 1, (2016): 89-103.

“Japanese Culture”, she argues that the shift of the meaning of *bunka* ‘from an emblem of westernization to a key concept in theories of Japanese uniqueness’ occurred from ‘the First World War to the early 1930s’ without discussing Tsubouchi and Onishi’s legacy.<sup>111</sup> During this period, there was a rise of *bunkashugi* (文化主義 culturalism) in Japan which is ‘linked ... to a reaction against the Meiji identification with *bunmei* [文明] (material civilization ...)’<sup>112</sup>. Suzuki identifies the Kyoto school philosophers, especially Nishida Kitaro, as key figures changing the meaning of *bunka* from civilisation to culture:

In *The Problem of Japanese Culture* ... Nishida attempted to apply his philosophical theories to defining a specifically Japanese mode of consciousness. Through an analysis of history as a creative interplay of subject and surrounding world [kankyo or “environment”], “that which is made” and “that which makes”, Nishida outlined a particular form of Japanese consciousness emerging from the relationship between Japanese people and the territorial space which they occupied: a consciousness which was profoundly “vertical” (or chronological) and in which “subjectivity” tended constantly to be dispersed into “environment.”<sup>113</sup>

Japanese translation of *bunka* as culture was introduced to Chinese intellectuals in early twentieth century when Japan was considered as a successful model of East Asian modernisation, including Liang Qichao, who had been living in Japan and studying Japanese during his exile from Manchurian Qing dynasty.<sup>114</sup> In Liang Qichao’s speech ‘What is

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<sup>111</sup> Morris-Suzuki, Tessa, ‘The Invention and Reinvention of “Japanese Culture”’, 763.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 764.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> For the significant role of Liang as a scholar introducing Japanese studies to Chinese scholarship, see 羅景文 [Luo Ching-wen], 東亞漢文化知識圈的流動與互動 [Transfers and Interactions among the Intellectual Communities of East Asian Chinese Character Culture Sphere], *Historical Inquiry* 48, (Dec 2011): 51-96.

Culture?’ (甚麼是文化 1922), Liang defines culture as ‘the karmic force of the accumulated values generated by human’s mental ability’ (人類心能所開積出來之有價值的共業也). ‘Culture [文化 *man4 faa3*] refers to the values chosen by human according to free will’, which can be divided as ‘material’ (psychological needs, for example eating) and ‘spiritual’ (‘mental ability’, including language, morality, politics, science, art, religion etc.).<sup>115</sup> Here Liang uses the Hanzi term *man4 faa3* (*bunka*) referring to culture rather than civilisation. Liang’s redefinition of the term *man4 faa3* was adopted by his contemporaries, including Chinese politician Sun Yat-sen who was honoured as the ‘Father of the Nation’ by Kuomintang. Sun’s public speech *Pan-Asianism* (大亞洲主義) in Kobe, Japan in 1924 distinguishes ‘Eastern culture’ (東洋文化) as a ‘culture of the Kingly Way’ (王道的文化) from ‘Western culture’ (西洋文化) as ‘a culture of despotic way’ (霸道的文化).<sup>116</sup> According to Wu Minnan, Liang agrees with Sun that the uniqueness of Chinese cultural subjectivity needs to be defended in response to post-World War I world politics. Liang ‘aims to discover the advantages of national [Chinese] culture in order to save the bankruptcy of Western science’, namely the social disorders resulted from World War I.<sup>117</sup> As we have seen in chapter 1, in early twentieth century both Chinese and Japanese philosophers were deeply concerned with the establishment of a Chinese or Japanese cultural subjectivity which distinguishes themselves from the Western cultures without preventing modernisation. Such ontological task of establishing a cultural self, as it has been indicated in chapter 1, dominates the discussions in modern East Asian philosophy of culture.

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<sup>115</sup> 梁啟超 [Liang Qichao], ‘甚麼是文化’ [What is Culture], 梁啟超講文化 [Liang Qichao On Culture], (Tianjin: Tianjin Classical Publishing, 2005), 134-142

<sup>116</sup> 孫中山 [Sun Yat-sen], 國父全集 [Collection of the Father of Nation], Vol. 3, 535-542.

<sup>117</sup> 吳銘能 [Wu Minnan], 梁啟超對國學的新解——兼談梁氏肯定中國文化價值的心路歷程 [Liang Qichao’s New Interpretation of the National Studies—with the appendix on the process of Liang’s affirmation of Chinese cultural Spirit], 鵝湖月刊 [Legein Monthly] 21, no. 6, (Dec 1995), 49.

As we have seen above, the metaphysical assumption behind the Hanzi term *man4 faa3* or *bunka* (文化), namely the cultivation by the Way of Human, coincides with the Hegelian idea of culture as Spirit. When twentieth century Japanese and Chinese philosophers picked up the English term culture and translated it into *man4 faa3* or *bunka* (文化) and reformulated their cultural subjectivities, they find common ground between Hegel's idea of Spirit and the Confucian idea of *dou6*. Therefore, it is appropriate to introduce Hegel's philosophy of culture in the following section before we analyse how modern East Asian philosophers adopt the Hegelian idea of culture as Spirit.

### **2.1.2 From Herder to Hegel: Culture and *Bildung***

This section summarises Hegel's idea of culture as Spirit and explains how his idea of culture and *Bildung* was influenced by Herder. I will firstly explain how Herder's concept of *Bildung* explains cultural development through language, while Hegel refers *Bildung* to the dialectics of world-history instead. Secondly, I will summarise Hegel's three moments of world-history and explain why Hegel regards 'the Oriental' world as the lowest stage of the development of the Spirit. Finally, I will introduce New Confucian philosopher Mou Zongsan's criticism of Hegel's three moments of world-history. While Mou disagrees with Hegel that there is only one Spirit guiding the development of all nations and the Oriental is the lowest moments, Mou argues that each national spirit follows the Hegelian dialectics in its historical development. As we shall see in chapter 2.2, Mou's criticism of Hegel is representative because he clearly explains why East Asian Hegelian adopts Hegelian dialectics selectively.

In the nineteenth century German philosophy, cultural development is usually explained by the concept of *Bildung*, which could be translated as ‘educating’: ‘cultivation’: ‘formation’ or ‘growing’ in English. For Kant culture means the cultivation of human capacities.<sup>118</sup> For Herder, however, linguistic capacity particularly dominates cultural development. ‘Language is always a function of the general culture’<sup>119</sup> while language ‘embodies the living manifestations of historical continuity and the personal processing of the traditions.’<sup>120</sup> As Herder says,

Education, which performs the function of transmitting social traditions, can be said to be genetic, by virtue of the manner in which the transmission takes place, and organic, by virtue of the manner in which that which is being transmitted is assimilated and applied. We may term this second genesis, which permeates man’s whole life, enlightenment, by the light it affords to his understanding, or culture, in so far it is comparable to the cultivation of the soil.<sup>121</sup>

Herder suggests that language provides the ground for the *Bildung* of culture. The process of *Bildung* is an education transmitting social tradition. Consequently, cultural formation is relative to the tradition and existing culture. Herder denies the existence of a universal cultural theory or principle which can measure how ‘good’ a culture is. ‘[A]ll humans possess culture and one cannot judge one set of cultural practices by the standards of

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<sup>118</sup> Muthu, Sankar, *Enlightenment against Empire*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2003), 175. Quoted in: Schoenmakers, Hans, *The Power of Culture: A Short History of Anthropological Theory about Culture and Power*, (Groningen: University of Groningen, 2012), 13.

<sup>119</sup> Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Essays on the Origin of Language*, [1772]. Quoted in Schoenmakers, Hans, *The Power of Culture*, 16.

<sup>120</sup> Schoenmakers, Hans, *The Power of Culture*, 16.

<sup>121</sup> Herder, Johann Gottfried, ‘Ideas for a Philosophy of History (1784-91)’. Quoted in *ibid.* 16.



another.’<sup>122</sup> Every culture has its own ‘spirit of the people’ which is the foundation of national identity.

Language determines the development of culture and forms a ‘tradition’ through the continuous succession of the ideas and knowledge from the previous generations. As Herder says,

The more it is turned against others, then the more strongly it is compressed within itself, the more it centres itself on its root, makes its ancestors’ deeds into songs, into calls to action, into eternal monuments, preserves this linguistic remembrance that much more purely and patriotically – *the further formation of language, as the dialect of the [familial] fathers, progresses that much more strongly.* That is why nature has *chosen this further formation.*

... nature has linked a new chain: tradition from people to people! “In this way arts, sciences, culture, and language have refined themselves in a great progression over the course of nations” – the finest bond of further formation that nature has chosen.<sup>123</sup>

Here Herder suggests that language provides the ground for the *Bildung* of culture. The process of *Bildung* is an education transmitting social tradition. So culture is relative to the tradition. Because every culture has a different language, every culture has a different form. Herder denies the existence of a universal cultural theory or principle which can measure how ‘good’ a culture is. ‘[A]ll humans possess culture and one cannot judge one set of

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<sup>122</sup> Schoenmakers, Hans, *The Power of Culture*, 17.

<sup>123</sup> Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Essays on the Origin of Language*, [1772], III, 160.

cultural practices by the standards of another.<sup>124</sup> Every culture has its own ‘spirit of the people’ which is the foundation of national identity.

While Hegel also uses the term *Bildung* referring to culture or cultural development, Hegel disagrees with Herder that every culture develops according to its particular national spirit which is determined by its particular language. Instead, Hegel argues that all national spirits are determined by one universal Spirit. Cultural developments of all nations are determined by the same Spirit through the dialects of World-history, for ‘[a] culture which does not yet have a history has made no real cultural progress.’<sup>125</sup> (*PWH* 13) As Hegel says,

The abstract mode of the development of the national spirit consists simply in the temporal process as perceived by the senses, which is the primary activity of the spirit; the more concrete process, however, is that of its spiritual activity. A nation makes internal advances; it develops further and is ultimately destroyed. The appropriate categories here are those of **cultural development**, [*Bildung*] over-refinement, and degeneration; ... But the word “culture” tells us nothing definite about the substantial content of the national spirit; it is a formal category, and is always construed in terms of universal properties. A cultured man is one who knows how to impress the stamp of universality upon all his actions, who has renounced his particularity, and who acts in accordance with universal principles. Culture is the form of our thinking; it owes its existence to man’s ability to control himself, and to the fact that he does not merely follow his desires and inclinations but subjects himself to a discipline. (*PWH* 56-57)

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<sup>124</sup> Schoenmakers, Hans, *The Power of Culture*, 17.

<sup>125</sup> Hegel, G.W.F, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet & Duncan Forbes, [1822, 1828], (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 13. Hereafter referred to as *PWH*.

Here Hegel defines *Bildung* or culture as a form of thinking which enables a person to follow the objective discipline when living in a society. Such discipline is provided by the *national spirit* (*Volksgeist*). ‘The national spirit is knowledge, and thought acts upon the reality of the national spirit in such a way that it knows its own work as something objective, and no longer merely as something subjective.’ (*PWH* 56-57) The activity of the ‘spirit of a nation’ ‘consists in making itself into an actual world which also has an existence in space. Its religion, ritual, ethics, customs, art, constitution, and political laws ... and it is this which makes the nation what it is.’ (*PWH* 58)

According to Hegel, the process of *Bildung* is socialisation: an individual adopts and actualises the social disciplines within society. The content of the disciplines is defined by the *national spirit*. But Hegel does not think that all national spirits are independent of each other. As Allen Speight points out, according to Hegel: ‘the moments of national spirit [only] captures a crucial phase of the development of the universal spirit as a whole.’<sup>126</sup> ‘The national spirit is a natural individual, and as such, it blossoms, grows strong, then fades away and dies. It lies in the nature of finite things that any limited spirit is ephemeral.’ (*PWH* 58) But ‘the universal spirit ... does not die; it dies only in its capacity as a national spirit.’ (*PWH* 61) ‘The principles of the national spirits in their necessary progression are themselves only moments of the one universal spirit, which ascends through them in the course of history to its consummation in all-embracing totality.’ (*PWH* 65) There are three moments in the world history (i.e. the development of the universal spirit): the Oriental<sup>127</sup> world, the Greek and

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<sup>126</sup> Speight, Allen, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 94.

<sup>127</sup> The Oriental is an inaccurate term. According to Hegel, the oriental refers to Chinese, Indian, Assyrian and Egyptian cultures. However, Chinese cultures have little relation to Assyrian and Egyptian cultures. Even though there were communications between China and India, their cultures are radically different. Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures are deeply influenced by Confucianism, which makes them radically different from Indian, Assyrian and Egyptian. However, Hegel classifies all of these cultures as the same category,

Roman world, and the Germanic world. The oriental spirit is the past and the beginning of the world history, therefore it is relatively uncivilised comparing with the Germanic world. As Hegel says: 'The Oriental spirit is spirit remaining immersed in nature, is this unalloyed unity immersed in nature.' (PWH 367)

While Hegel's three moments in the world history seems to discriminate against the Oriental, it is worthwhile to look at his argument and see why he looks down upon the Oriental World. According to Hegel: '*world history is the portrayal of the labour of spirit to arrive at knowledge of what it is intrinsically.*' (PWH 87) According to Hegel,

The *Oriental*s do not know that spirit, or the human being as such, is intrinsically free; because they do not know tills, they are not themselves free. They only know that one [person] is free, but for this very reason such freedom is merely arbitrariness, savagery, and dull-witted passion, or their mitigation and domestication, which itself is merely a natural happenstance or something capricious. This *one* is therefore a despot nor a free human being.

The consciousness of freedom first awoke among the *Greeks*, and accordingly they were free; but like the Romans, they knew only that *some* are free, not the human being as such. Plato and Aristotle did not know the latter. Thus not only did the Greeks have slaves, upon whom their life and the continued existence of their beautiful freedom depended; but also their freedom itself was on the one hand only a contingent, transient, incomplete flowering of limited scope, and on the other hand a harsh servitude [designated] on [some] human beings, on [their] humanity.

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which shows his ignorance of the essence of East Asian cultures.

The *Germanic* nations were the first to come to the consciousness, through Christianity, that the human being as a human is free, that the freedom of spirit constitutes humanity's truly inherent nature. This consciousness first arose in religion, in the innermost region of spirit; but to incorporate this principle into secular existence was a further task whose solution and the application would require long and arduous labour on the part of culture. For example, slavery did not immediately [cease] with the adoption of the Christian religion; still less did freedom immediately come to prevail in political states, nor did governments and political institutions become rationally organized and founded upon the principle of freedom. The *application* of this principle to the penetration and transformation of worldly conditions by the principle of freedom, is the long process that is history itself. (*PWH* 88)

In order to understand Hegel's three moments of world history, one must understand his complicated concept of freedom. In Hegel's writing, there are two senses of freedom: subjective freedom and objective freedom. The former is abstract while the latter is concrete. Subjective freedom is connected with ' "particularity" and the occurrence of subjective satisfaction in the pursuit of one's determination: "The fact that this moment of the particularity of the agent is contained and implemented in the action constitutes subjective freedom in its more concrete determination, i.e. the right of the subject to find its satisfaction in the action." (*PR* §121)' <sup>128</sup>. According to Alan Patten, freedom is 'rational self-determination'. As Patten says,

According to one of Hegel's most important formulations, the free agent is one who 'limits himself, but in this other is with himself' (*daß es in seiner Beschränkung, in diesem Anderen*

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<sup>128</sup> Patten, Alan, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 45.

*bei sich selbst sei*) (*PR* §7A). Citing Goethe's dictum that 'Whoever aspires to great things must be able to limit himself' (*PR* §13A), Hegel denies that an agent is free when he refuses to commit himself to any particular activity or relationship with others (to any 'determination'). Moreover, even when he does commit himself to some determination, it does not necessarily follow that he is free. For this to be the case, Hegel insists, the agent must be 'bei sich selbst' in the determination he chooses, a phrase that can be translated as 'with himself': 'self-sufficient': 'self-aware': 'independent', or even 'at home'.<sup>1</sup> Freedom, he sometimes says, is 'Beisichselbstsein' (*[PWH]* 55/48).<sup>129</sup>

'An agent is 'with himself' in some particular determination if and only if he is both subjectively and objectively free with respect to that determination.'<sup>130</sup> Subjective freedom is achieved when an agent 'reflects on, and is able to find some subjective satisfaction in, his actions and relationships (his 'determinations')', while objective freedom is achieved when 'his determinations are prescribed by reason'.<sup>131</sup>

However, according to Hegel, such a concept of freedom is absent from the oriental world, including China. There was little subjective freedom for ancient Chinese people. Firstly, the 'Manchu-Tatars regarded everyone as slaves of the emperor. So here there is no acknowledgement of the primary respect a human being has, that of being a free person, this abstract inwardness.' (*PWH* 235) Secondly: '[w]hen a crime is committed[,] the entire family-wife, children, parents, brothers, friends—undergo the punishments', and there were several corporal punishments, which are 'the most humiliating for the very reason that a

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 36.

human being so afflicted is supposed to be coerced with regard to his inner being.’ (*PWH* 235) ‘Individual responsibility (Imputation) for crime is not a consideration in China. The suicide who wishes to revenge himself on another with plunge that person’s entire family into ruin; so he takes his own life because by doing that he plunges into ruin the other as well as the other’s family too.’ (*PWH* 237) The Chinese did not acknowledge human beings as moral agents with dignity. Thirdly: ‘the emperor is the highest’ while ‘citizens have no recourse against the mandarins, have no inherent moral consciousness of their own.’ (*PWH* 235)

Here Hegel implies that China lacks not only subjective freedom, but also objective freedom, because citizens are not conscious of ‘reason’ and fail to live as self-determining rational agents. This view seems to have some historical support. Firstly, the Manchurians who invaded China from 1644 to 1911 regarded not only Han people (who account for the majority of the Chinese population) but also Manchurian civilians as the slaves of the emperor. Eunuchs and Manchurian officials must use the deprecatory first-person pronoun 奴才 (Cantonese: *nou4 coi4*, Mandarin: *núcai*, Manchurian: *aha*) to address themselves when they talk to the emperor. *Nou4 Coi4* literally means slaves. Officials and civilians must practise the ceremony of ‘three kneelings and nine kowtows’ (三跪九叩), which is originally only for worshipping gods rather than greeting the emperor. In the Ryukyu Kingdom (琉球王國) during the Second Sho dynasty (1469-1879), Ryukyu was the vassal state of Ming dynasty and Qing dynasty China, when the enthronement of the new king of Ryukyu must be approved by the Chinese emperor. The Ryukyu king needs to kowtow to the Chinese ambassador in the enthronement ceremony, as the ambassador represents the Chinese emperor. The rite of kowtow is also a sign of humiliation. In Qing’s invasion of Joseon in

1636 (丙子胡亂, 병자호란, Pyŏngja Horan), the Qing emperor Hong Taiji invaded Seoul the capital city and ordered Injo (仁祖 인조), the king of Joseon, to kowtow in order to humiliate him. This incident is known as Chŏngch'uk hasŏng (丁丑下城 정축하성). Because the British Ambassador George Macartney refused to kowtow to the emperor Qianglong (乾隆) in 1793, his diplomatic visit to China was unsuccessful. As a British diplomat representing the British monarch, Macartney could hardly agree to worship a foreign emperor as God and identify himself to be his *Nou4 Coi4*. Secondly, according to 'Marquis of Lu on Punishment' (呂刑) *the Book of Documents* (尚書), there were five corporal punishments in Zhou dynasty (770-256 BC). In *Tang Code* (唐律疏議), the first complete code in Chinese history written by Zhangsun Wuji's (長孫無忌 594-659) and several ministers in 652 AD even justify corporeal punishments and punishment for the entire family. The punishment of exile is applied to the entire family of the people who committed treason. Thirdly, since Qin dynasty (221-207 BC), the emperor is the absolute monarch. Officials must kneel down to present proposals or reports to the emperor in the imperial assembly (朝會) since Ming dynasty (1368-1662, referring to the *Collected Regulations of the Great Ming* Vol. 44).

Mou Zongsan (牟宗三), the leading philosopher of the New Confucian movement, agrees with Hegel's criticism of Chinese culture. In his book *Philosophy of History*, Mou quotes Hegel's *Lectures on Philosophy of World History* and agrees that only the Chinese emperor was free in ancient China. Mou argues that 'in the past, there was only a "reasonable freedom" but not a freedom of a reflecting and self-conscious subject in China.'<sup>132</sup> Because

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<sup>132</sup> Original text: 中國以前只有一「合理的自由」, 而無反省自覺之主體的自由。牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 牟宗三先生全集: 歷史哲學 [The Full Collection of Mou Zong-San: Philosophy of History], Vol. 9, (New Taipei City: Linking Publishing Co., 2003), 74.



‘traditional Confucian China lacked the individual’s consciousness of freedom, which is why the universal spirit of Confucian moral ideals could not become embodied and realized in man-made institutions that secured the subject’s freedom.’<sup>133</sup> Where Mou disagrees is that Chinese culture still contains the possibilities of individual subjectivity and freedom, even though they were not fully manifested in Chinese history. As Shi Wei-min indicates: ‘Mou Zongsan argues that the universality under the Chinese tradition is concrete ... he believes that Chinese culture contains moral and artistic individualities, while Western culture contains the individualities in terms of political institutions and sciences.’<sup>134</sup>

Hegel’s criticism of Chinese culture may also be applied to traditional Korean and Japanese culture who are historically influenced by China. Both *Kyōngguk Taejōn* (經國大典, *경국대전*, the code in Korea during Joseon Dynasty from 1485 to 1897) and *Ōmi code* (近江令, the code in Japan during Asuka period) adopt the ancient Chinese legal system (中華法系) and are influenced by *Tang Code*. Corporeal punishment and punishment for the entire family are found in Korea and Japan. Like the Chinese emperor, who was considered as the son of the heaven (天子) and therefore above all civilians, the emperor of Japan was considered as the *Arahitogami* (現人神, *living God*), for he is the descendant of the sun-goddess *Amaterasu*. Only Korea is the exception. Korea had been the vassal state of China since later Silla, but Joseon dynasty had the closest relation with the Chinese regime (Ming and Qing dynasty). The king of Joseon identified himself as the official serving the Chinese emperor and even knelt down before the Chinese emperor, who was honoured as the Son of

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<sup>133</sup> Schmidt, Stephen, ‘Mou Zong-San, Hegel, and Kant: the quest for Confucian Modernity’, *Philosophy East and West* 61, no. 2, (Apr. 2011): 281.

<sup>134</sup> 史偉民 [Shi Wei-min], ‘The Concrete Universal in Mou Zong-San’s Philosophy’, *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* [清華學報] 49, no. 1, (5 Dec, 2017):140.

Heaven. However, within the kingdom of Joseon, the king of Joseon was acting as an absolute monarch where officials were required to kowtow to the king.

In the following section, we shall see how East Asian philosophers respond to Hegel's condemnation of the Oriental Spirit. I will explain how Japanese philosophers respond to Hegelianism in the nineteenth century in general, then I will examine Chinese New Confucian Mou Zongsan's detailed responses to Hegel's criticism, so that we may know the reason why East Asian Hegelian do not completely accept Hegel's philosophy of culture even though they adopt Hegelian dialectics, as we shall see in chapter 2.2.

### 2.1.3 Kyoto School Attitudes Towards Hegel

As we have seen in chapter 1, Japanese philosophers had encountered Hegel's philosophy much earlier than Chinese philosophers. Shortly after Meiji Restoration, Continental philosophy, in particular German philosophy, became popular among Japanese scholars. As Koyasu Nobukuni indicates, early in Nitobe Inazo's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, Japanese scholars were aware of Hegel's hostility against the 'oriental world'. As Notobe wrote: 'I accept in a large measure the view advanced and defended with breadth of learning and profundity of thought by Hegel, that history is the unfolding and realization of freedom. The point I wish to make is that the whole teaching of Bushido was so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, that it was required not only of a woman but of man.'<sup>135</sup> On the one hand, Notobe agrees that the development of the World-History follows Hegel's dialectics of the Absolute Spirit. On the other hand, however, Notobe disagrees with Hegel's criticism of the Oriental culture of the lack of freedom. The freedom of Japanese people is manifested in the moral value of 'self-sacrifice' in Japanese culture.

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<sup>135</sup> Quoted in 子安宣邦 [Koyasu Nobukuni], 東亞論 [On East Asia], 27. Nitobe Inazo, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications Inc., 2005), 173-174.

Notobe considers himself as a defendant of Japanese culture against the prosecution from the West. ‘The only advantage I have over them [Lafcadio Hearn and Mrs. Hugh Fraser] is that I can assume the attitude of a personal defendant, while these distinguished writers are at best solicitors and attorneys.’<sup>136</sup> Koyasu indicates that Notobe is not only ‘speaking to the West’ and ‘calling for the awakening of samurai spiritual characters’, but also ‘reconstructing Japanese moral tradition or moral subjectivity.’<sup>137</sup> As Koyasu quotes from Notobe,

Under the regime of feudalism, which could easily degenerate into militarism it was to benevolence that we owed our deliverance from despotism of the worst kind. An utter surrender of “life and limb” on the part of the governed would have left nothing for the governing but self-will, and this has for its natural consequence the growth of that absolutism so often called “oriental despotism”, as though there were no despots of occidental history!

Let it be far from me to uphold despotism of any sort; but it is a mistake to identify feudalism with it.<sup>138</sup>

The accusation of ‘oriental despotism’ comes from Hegel’s *Lectures on Philosophy of World History*, as we have seen in section 2.1. ‘The *Oriental*s do not know that spirit, or the human

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<sup>136</sup> Nitobe, Inzao, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, 15.

<sup>137</sup> 子安宣邦 [Koyasu Nobukuni], 東亞論 [On East Asia], 25.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 26. Quoted from Nitobe Inzao, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, 63.

being as such, is intrinsically free; because they do not know till, they are not themselves free. They only know that one [person] is free, but for this very reason such freedom is merely arbitrariness, savagery, and dull-witted passion, or their mitigation and domestication, which itself is merely a natural happenstance or something capricious. This *one* is therefore a despot nor a free human being.’ (*PWH* 87) Besides the emperor, the freedom of human beings is suppressed in the Oriental.

Hegel indicates that in China ‘there is no separation of the legal aspect from the moral aspect’. (*PWH*, §143, 231) and blames *Classics of Rites*, a Confucian canon, of mixing up the legality and the morality: the former is *external* while the latter is *internal*. According to Hegel, the

legal sphere is the external concrete existence of free volition; will gives to itself its existence in an external sphere ...Legal obligations toward other private individuals, the laws of the state with respect to private rights, concern external circumstances and the kind of issues and behaviours that can indeed be based on sentiment but also arise apart from it.

(*PWH*, §144, 232) However, morality ‘is the domain of inwardness, the area of my own insight’ and ‘my own self-determination commensurate with my aims, intentions’. (*PWH*,

§144, 233) Because Chinese mix up the legal aspect and the moral aspect:

What has value only as a sentiment is supposed to have the force of law, as its object. What by nature is moral, namely what belongs to inward self-determination, is thus commanded by laws.

(PWH, §145, 234)

Individual freedom is impossible as the individual's morality is regulated by the external laws. Chinese laws were not made based upon the respect to individual freedom. The emperors did not respect the people's rights, which resulted in slavery. 'The Manchu-Tatars regarded everyone as slaves of the emperor' (PWH §147, 235) Hegel thinks Chinese civilisations lack

the free soil (*Boden*) of inwardness, the intellect that comprises a wealth of thoughts within itself, that makes all of concrete existence the object of thought. The interest of science thus lies in its own internal satisfaction, its inner life in possessing a world of thought. This grounding (*Boden*) eludes the Chinese, who pursue the sciences but not in the free interest of science. So science and culture, the compiling of information, is in the main empirical in nature, not theoretical, not a free interest of thought as such; instead the sciences essentially stand to serve the utility and benefit of the state. The state has the sciences under its control, as means,

and for that reason a purely scholarly life, or pure interest in science for its own sake, is neither encouraged nor patronized by the state. (*PWH* 152)

Here the term 'inwardness' is different from the inwardness that we shall encounter in chapter 4 on Kierkegaard's philosophy of culture. In Kierkegaard's context, inwardness is passionate. In Hegel's context here, however, inwardness refers to a free intellectuality.

While Hegel's observation that Chinese civilisation lacks science is correct, because of his lack of attention to the Confucian philosophy as a philosophy emphasising individual moral subjectivity (the mind nature theory, see chapter 6 on New Confucianism), he fails to explain the reason of the lack of democracy and science in traditional Chinese and East Asian cultures. Koyasu argues Hegel contrasts the West and the Oriental by attributing 'inwardness' to the former but 'outward-ness' to the latter and excludes the 'Oriental cultures' from the civilised world. The 'Oriental cultures' become 'heterogeneous'.<sup>139</sup>

In response to Hegel's criticism of the Oriental cultures, there are two possible approaches: either acknowledge Japanese culture as an Oriental culture and defend it from the criticism

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 34.

from the West (like Nitobe), or distinguish Japanese culture from the Oriental cultures. Fukuzawa Yukichi, for example, radically denies the traditional Japanese culture and calls for westernisation (Datsu A-Ron, departing from Asia). As Koyasu indicates, while it is unclear whether Fukuzawa has read Hegel's writings, Fukuzawa's denial of Asian identity echoes the idea of the Oriental in Hegel's philosophy. Fukuzawa wants to transform Japan into 'the new United Kingdom in East Asia' and strengthen Japanese dominance in Asia as a civilised nation. In order to succeed, Japan must 'force Asia to enter the euro-centric order of the civilised world by strength'.<sup>140</sup> While Hegel excludes the Oriental from civilisations, Fukuzawa aims to bring back Asia to the world order under the leadership of Japan.

However, the mainstream of Japanese philosophers does not follow Fukuzawa's approach, which implies the radical denial of Japanese traditional culture for the sake of westernisation. Instead, they generally follow Nitobe's approach—while they disagree with Hegel's criticism of the Japanese culture, they adopt Hegelian dialectics in order to reformulate the historical development of Japanese cultural spirit. On the one hand, they want to preserve the particularity of Japanese culture by distinguishing it from western culture; on the other

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<sup>140</sup> Koyasu, Nobukuni, *On East Asia*, 37.



hand, they want to demonstrate that Japanese culture contains certain universality. Nishida Kitaro, who adopted the form of Hegelian dialectics but rejecting its contents, argues that ‘we can distinguish the West to have considered being as the ground of reality, the East to have taken non-being or nothingness as its ground.’<sup>141</sup> When he explains Japanese culture as a culture of non-being, however, he uses Hegelian dialectics, which originally aims to explain the development of the highest Being, namely God or the Spirit. ‘Reality has the form of being and ... of non-being. Both dimensions are to be conceived as simultaneously interpenetrating—that is, as a dynamic reality that is self-determining.’<sup>142</sup> For Nishida, the dynamics of Japanese cultures are the dynamics of emotional expression. Japanese culture is a culture ‘of pure feeling’ which ‘has “the form of the formless, the sound of the soundless.”’ It is very much a symbolic culture. It is, like time, a formless unity.’<sup>143</sup> Here we see while Nishida emphasises Buddhist concept of non-being or emptiness, he employs Hegel’s concepts of reality and unity. According to Kim Ha Tai: ‘Nishida presents ... a synthesis of Zen and Hegel in what he calls “the historical reality”’,<sup>144</sup> while Martin Bastarache claims

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<sup>141</sup> Nishida, Kitarô, ‘The Forms of Culture of the Classical Periods of East and West: Seen From a Metaphysical Perspective’, *Sourcebook For Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents*, trans. & ed. David A. Dilworth, Waldo H. Viglielmo & Agustin Jacinto Zavala, (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>144</sup> Kim, Ha Tai. "The Logic of the Illogical: Zen and Hegel." *Philosophy East and West*5, no. 1 (1955): 25.

that '[f]ollowing Hegel, Nishida constructed a logic that could understand reality prior to the split between subject and object. ... Hegel's 'Spirit' and Nishida's 'place of absolute nothingness' (*mu no basho*).'<sup>145</sup>

While this dissertation cannot cover how Nishida synthesises Zen Buddhism and Hegel's philosophy, from the discussion above, using Nishida as an example, we have seen how Japanese philosophers adopt Hegelian dialectics selectively. Nishida is a representative figure because his philosophy influences several other Japanese Hegelian within the Kyoto School, remarkably Tanabe Hajime and Watsuji Tetsuro, whose philosophy of culture will be investigated in section 2.2.2.

#### **2.1.4 New Confucian Attitudes Towards Hegel**

Having understood Japanese philosopher's attitude to Hegel's philosophy of culture, now we look at Chinese philosophers, who adopted Hegelianism later than Japanese philosophers

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<sup>145</sup> Bastarache, Martin, "Nishida Kitarō and the Question of Japanese Fascism", (Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2011), 72.

(see chapter 1). While He Lin and Chang Junmai have made significant contributions to Hegelian study in Chinese academic circle, this section will only focus Mou Zongsan's evaluation of Hegel's dialectics, because he has developed a systematic East Asian Hegelian philosophy of culture. Like Japanese philosophers, as we shall see, Mou rejects the content of Hegelian dialectics by substituting the Spirit or God with national or cultural spirits. However, unlike Japanese Hegelians like Watsuji whom we shall discuss in section 2.2.2, Mou emphasises that individual moral self must participate in the manifestation of Chinese cultural spirit, which aims to manifest Confucian moral values.

In order to understand Mou's adaptation of Hegelian dialectics, one should understand how Mou's colleague, friend and New Confucian philosopher Tang Jungyi's appreciation of Hegel, because Tang has a significant influence on Mou's philosophy. According to Tang's *An Introduction to Philosophy*, the Confucian idea of the 'heavenly way' (天道) agrees with Hegel's concept of the Spirit:

Hegel's [idea of the] subjective spirit belongs to what the mind has demanded and has known, which is known as happiness and virtue [福德] by Chinese philosophers; his [idea of the] objective spirit belongs to social ethics, which is known as human relationship [人倫] and human way [人道] by Chinese philosophers; his [concept of the] Absolute Spirit refers to the

communication between the human way and the heavenly way. The Absolute Spirit begins with art, then religion, then develops in poetry and manifests in rituals and is articulated by ritual and music and ends with philosophy. [In other words,] the achievement of ritual and music through the golden sound and jade voice [金聲玉振] ends with the arrangement of wisdom. Therefore it is written that all under the heaven “go through a different journey to the same goal, with only one idea but hundreds of thoughts” [同歸而殊途，一致而百慮] and “there is only one Way.” [夫道，一而已矣]<sup>146</sup>

Here Tang Jung-yi argues that the cultural spirit refers to the ‘morality, ethics, religion, philosophy and art’ and defines the Chinese cultural spirit as a “human-oriented spirit” (重人精神). ‘The centre of Chinese moral ethics and philosophy is the indication and the maintenance of human dignity’, which is *ren* or *jan4* (仁).<sup>147</sup> Similarly, Lao Sze-Kwang defines culture as a ‘self-conscious’ spirit. Every ‘cultural spirit’ has ‘resulted from the free will or self-conscious activity’ while the ‘self-conscious demand is merely an orientation ... in other words, the cultural spirit must manifest in a phenomenon so as to actualise itself. ... A self-conscious demand is a value consciousness. ... When we talk about “cultural spirit”, we are exploring the underlying value consciousness behind a series of cultural activities;

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<sup>146</sup> 唐君毅 [Tang Jung-Yi], 哲學概論(下) [An Introduction to Philosophy II], (Taipei: Student Book Co., 1978), 647.

<sup>147</sup> Original text: 「中國之道德倫理思想與哲學思想的核心，即在指出人的尊嚴，維持人的尊嚴。」 Tang Jung-Yi, “與青年談中國文化” [A Talk on Chinese Culture for the Youth], 青年與哲學 [the Youth and Philosophy], (Taipei: San Min Book Co. Ltd, 1973), 32.

only when we understand a cultural spirit can we clearly indicate why such cultural spirit produces such cultural phenomenon.<sup>148</sup>

Both Tang and Lao emphasise on the ‘self-consciousness’ of culture: *culture is the awareness of the essential values*, for example, Confucian values of the four cardinal virtues (仁義禮智) in traditional Chinese culture. In Lao’s *Collection of Essays on Cultural Problems*, he identifies four groups of people having four distinctive spirits: Greek peninsula, Hebrew desert, Ganges river basin and Yellow river basin. Greek spirit is wisdom-oriented while Hebrew spirit is submissive to the authority (God). Western culture is simply the mixture of both<sup>149</sup>. Eastern cultures, namely ‘Ganges river/Indian spirit’ and ‘Yellow river/Chinese spirit’, are virtue-oriented. While Chinese spirit manifests moral actualisation within the interpersonal relationship and the reality, Indian spirit emphasises on ‘Nirvana’, i.e. departing from the physical limitation of the reality.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 中國文化要義新編 [Essentials of Chinese Culture], (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2009), 5-6.

<sup>149</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 文化問題論集新編 [Collections of Essays on Cultural Problems], (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2000), 47.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 54

However, Tang disagrees with Hegel's idea of 'reason'. For Tang, culture is not dominated by philosophy but by morality.<sup>151</sup> Tang's understanding of Hegel has directly influenced Mou. In Mou's essay 'On Hegel and Wang Chuanshan' (黑格爾與王船山), Mou adopts Tang's term and argues that 'Hegel talks about nation from the perspective of the value manifestation of the spirit, which is a concept of moral reason and culture.'<sup>152</sup>

Like Tang, Mou disagrees with Hegel's comment on Chinese culture that China is the beginning of history while the Germanic world is the end. According to Mou, the absence of the concept of freedom in Chinese culture does not imply that China is the historical beginning (for Hegel says that 'The dawn of spirit is in the East, in the [place of the sun's] rising' *PWH* 211) while the Germanic world is the end of the history. As Mou Zongsan says,

If Hegel's argument that China is merely the beginning while Europe is the end was true, then the existence and the future of China would be denied. [However,] each national spirit manifests and develops on its own equally. Firstly, although there are differences in progress and ways, it is unfair to argue that some cultures have no intrinsic meaning and future other than being the

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<sup>151</sup> See 唐君毅 [Tang Jung-Yi], 文化意識與道德理性 [Cultural Consciousness and Moral Reason], (Taipei: Student Book Co., 1958); Also, 蔣年豐 [Chiang Lin-fun], 戰後台灣經驗與唐君毅、牟宗三思想中的黑格爾 [The Post-War Experience of Taiwan and Hegel in the Thoughts of Tang Jung-Yi and Mou Zong-San], 光復後台灣地區發展經驗 [The Experience of Taiwan Development after Restoration], ed. 賴澤涵 [Lai Jeh-Hang] and 黃俊傑 [Huang Chun-chieh], (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1991):37-100.

<sup>152</sup> Chiang Lin-fun, 'The Post-War Experience of Taiwan and Hegel in the Thoughts of Tang Jung-Yi and Mou Zong-San', *The Experience of Taiwan Development after Restoration*, 66.

beginning [of the world history]. Hegel's world history replaces the temporal development of each nation and the entire world history with the spatial forms. Such an argument is unreasonable. Each nation develops on its own. Secondly, if world history is possible, in the beginning, all cultures must share the same principle ... and therefore cultural developments are interlinked. Thirdly, in the progress of development, some culture manifests only certain principles in a particular stage, which should not be considered as a final and fixed stage.<sup>153</sup>

Mou's first objection to Hegel, that 'each nation has its own development', is unjustified and would be rejected by Hegel who believes that there is only one spirit determining the development of all cultures. Mou assumes that each nation has its own spirit while Hegel does not. On the other hand, Mou's third opposition to Hegel is a bit odd. Mou tries to demonstrate a contradiction within Hegel's dialectics of world history. If all cultures share the same spirit and the same principle, their development should be interlinked, and therefore they should develop in the same way. If the Germanic world could be the end of world history, other cultures should also become the end of world history finally. However, cultures exist at *different moments* of the same dialectics of world history, according to Hegel. Chinese culture is not a person walking along a stair. In Hegel's philosophy, Chinese culture is only the lowest step of the stair, while Germanic culture is the highest step. Chinese culture does

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<sup>153</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 歷史哲學 [Philosophy of History], (Taipei: Linking Book Ltd, 2003),73.

not move along the stairs. It seems that Mou misinterprets Hegel's dialectics of world history and ignores Hegel's assumption that cultures are *fixed moments* of the dialectics.

Mou's second objection to Hegel is more justified. The differences between China and Europe is *essentially a geographical or spatial difference, not a temporal difference*. Hegel identifies the Oriental as the beginning of world history while the West or Europe as the end of world history. But the Oriental is not merely the past. East Asian cultures and nations still exist in the twentieth-first century. Western culture does not replace traditional cultures in South Korea and Japan, even though they are modern democratic nations.

Mou's fourth objection to Hegel is quite complicated. As mentioned before, while Mou assumes that cultures are dynamic and should be able to go through all steps of cultural development, Hegel assumes that cultures are fixed moments of the development of world history. Strictly speaking, *culture does not change or develop in world history; only the Spirit develops in world history, where cultures are merely its stages of developments*. Mou rejects Hegel's assumption and argues that cultures manifest their nature partially in different stages.

While East Asian cultural phenomena do not manifest the concept of freedom, it does not imply that East Asian cultural spirits do not contain the concept of freedom or are unable to



have the concept of freedom. As we shall see in the following section when we investigate Mou's moral metaphysics and its implication on his philosophy of culture, Mou argues that Mencius and Wang Yangming's idea of mind nature (心性) is the source of individual autonomy and freedom in Chinese culture, and the ultimate goal of Chinese culture is the complete manifestation of virtue (成德).<sup>154</sup>

Despite Mou's oppositions to Hegel's criticism of the traditional Chinese culture, he adopts Hegelian dialectics to explain Chinese cultural development, which he believes is dominated by Confucian moral values. According to Chan Nganying,

Both Hegel and Mou conceived of culture in terms of the objective realisation of a people's higher aspirations and ideals—the expression of their particular mental life and spirit. For Hegel, the human Spirit is the conduit to Truth and connected to Divine Wisdom. For Mou, the human spirit in the form of innate moral consciousness is heavenly principle clearly intuited in a state of enlightenment. The two thinkers differed in regards to the object of spirit: the human spirit according to Mou seeks to realise the moral mind through the practice of empathetic compassion; the human Spirit according to Hegel seeks to realise Freedom, especially in the form of political freedom within the State.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> For discussion, see 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], *中西哲學之會通十四講* [14 Lectures on the Integration between Chinese and Western Philosophies], (Taipei: Student Book Ltd, 1990).

<sup>155</sup> Chan Nganying Serina, *The Thought of Mou Zong-San*, (PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, November 2009), 109.

Employing Hegelian dialectics as a theoretical framework, Mou establishes his picture of Chinese cultural spirit, which is dominated by Confucianism as the ‘Orthodoxy of the Way’ (道統) directing Chinese cultural development. As Chan quotes from Mou: ‘*Rujia* [儒家] is the mainstream of Chinese culture. Chinese culture is a direction in life, and a way of life as determined by Ru thought. If the primacy of this culture- generating force [meaning *Ru* thought] cannot be maintained, then democracy, science and the rest do not really count. A modern China without Chinese culture possesses but a “colonial” status.’<sup>156</sup>

After articulating Japanese and Chinese Hegelianism’s criticism and adaptation of Hegel’s philosophy, it is appropriate to investigate East Asian Hegelianism, represented by Mou Zongsan from New Confucianism and Watsuji Tetsuro from the Kyoto School. As we shall see in the following sections, while both Mou and Watsuji generally adopt Hegelian dialectics when explaining the historical development of Chinese or Japanese cultural spirit, they modify Hegel’s idea of Spirit. While for Hegel, the Spirit is always universal, for Mou and Watsuji, each nation or culture has its own national or cultural spirit, which is defined

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156 Quoted & Trans. Chan Nganying Serina, *The Thought of Mou Zong-San*, PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, November 2009. 77. 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], *心體與性體* [Mind Substance and Nature Substance], (Taipei: Linking Book Ltd, 2003), 327.

by certain national or moral values. The major disagreement between Mou and Watsuji, as we shall see, is the role of individual subjectivity. While Watsuji adopts Buddhist teaching of no-self and denies the transcendence of individual self in the formation of culture, Mou insists that Chinese culture begins with the manifestation of moral values by an individual moral self.

## **2.2 Modern East Asian Philosophies: Culture as National Spirit or Values**

This section evaluates Mou Zongsan and Watsuji Tetsuro as examples of East Asian Hegelian who both adopts Hegelian dialectics to reformulate Chinese or Japanese cultural spirits according to their cultural values. Mou identifies Confucian moral values are the essential values defining Chinese cultural spirit, while Watsuji identifies *aidagara*, emptiness and loyalty to the emperor. As we shall see in the following discussions, while both Mou and Watsuji begins their studies of ethics from Mencius, they interpret Confucianism in very different ways; as a New Confucian, Mou follows the tradition of Lu Wang School and argue for the transcendence of the mind nature shared by every individual moral self, while Watsuji undertakes a non-metaphysical reinterpretation with the help of Buddhist concept of emptiness, denies the independence of individual moral self and emphasises *aidagara* as the ontological ground of the human society.

### **2.2.1 Mou Zongsan's Study of Virtue Completion**

This section aims to explain Mou's philosophy of culture which integrate Hegelian dialectics with the Confucian mind nature theory (心性論). Firstly, I introduce the historical

background of New Confucianism and explain how they inherit Wang Yangming's mind nature theory and reinterpret it by using Kantian ethics. Secondly, I argue that under Mou's philosophy of culture, Chinese cultural spirit is dominated by Confucian moral values which aims to achieve the 'virtue completion' (成德). Thirdly, I evaluate Mou's argument for the 'new kingliness' in Chinese cultural modernisation in response to Hegel's criticism of Chinese culture, where he tries to introduce democracy to address the theoretical weakness of Confucian political philosophy, namely, the failure to distinguish the external legality from the internal morality. While Mou tries to establish external legality in Chinese culture through democratisation, I argue that the absence of external legality is a necessary consequence of Chinese culture of which the cultural values are dominated by Confucianism.

Facing with the hostility towards traditional Chinese culture in twentieth century,<sup>157</sup> New Confucian philosophers, including Mou Zongsan, Tang Jung-yi, Hsu Fu-guan and Chang Junmai, signed *A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture* in 1958 to defend Confucianism. They argue that Chinese cultural modernisation and democratisation is consistent with Confucian teaching and condemn the anti-traditionalist's radical denial of traditional Chinese culture, particularly 'Marxist-Leninism

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<sup>157</sup> See Yu, Yih-Hsien, 'Modern Chinese Philosophy', *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed July 19, 2019. <https://www.iep.utm.edu/mod-chin/>.

[which] denies the possibility of individualized human nature except insofar as it is determined by economics.’<sup>158</sup> As they said,

The human will in the application of moral principles is unlimited in its involvement, and accordingly the fulfilment of “hsin-hsin” [mind nature] is also unlimited. ... In that sense, whoever acts conscientiously and knows nature knows also heaven; whoever regulates his emotions serves also heaven. Human nature reflects the nature of heaven; the morality of man is also that of heaven. What man does to perfect his own nature is also what gives praise to the manifold manifestations of universe.<sup>159</sup>

Here New Confucian refer to Wang Yangming’s interpretation of *Mencius* 7A:1: ‘He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature. He who knows his nature knows Heaven. To preserve one’s mind and to nourish one’s nature is the way to serve Heaven.’<sup>160</sup> For Mencius, it is natural for human beings to seek moral goodness. ‘Moral principles please our minds as beef and mutton and pork please our mouths.’<sup>161</sup> (*Mencius* 6A:7) Here Mencius suggests that there is a *natural preference for moral goodness in human nature*, which Wang calls ‘mind nature’. On one hand mind nature is a subjective preference for moral goodness; on

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<sup>158</sup> The Chinese version of the Manifesto was drafted by Tang Jung-Yi and translated into English by Chang Junmai. While Chinese version has been re-published several times, the English version is rarely circulated. Chang, Junmai, ‘A Manifesto for A Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture’, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, 475.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 464.

<sup>160</sup> Trans. Chan, Wing-tsit, ‘Mencius’, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 78.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 56.

the other hand, however, every individual share the same preference, therefore it is objective and universal. When one knows one's own mind nature, he knows the universal moral principles. Therefore, Wang argues that 'the mind is the nature while the nature is the heaven. The mind of the sage is purely the heavenly reason, so they do not need to learn.'<sup>162</sup> Mou argues that for the human nature (which is morally good) is granted by the heavenly way (天道), when one exerts one's own mind to manifest virtues from one's own human nature, one knows the moral principles.<sup>163</sup>

New Confucian argues that Chinese culture is defined by Confucianism and aims to manifest Confucian moral value, namely, the complete actualisation of the moral capacity given by the mind nature:

to fulfil the moral principles in all activities the only way is to endeavour to the utmost according to "hsin-hsin". This is what was called the "conformity of heaven and man in virtue" and this is the traditional doctrine of "hsin-hsin". If we realize that this doctrine is the core of Chinese culture, then we must not allow the misunderstanding that Chinese culture limits itself

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<sup>162</sup> 王陽明 [Wang Yangming], 悟真錄 [Wu Zhen Lu], 王陽明全集 [Collection of Wang Yangming], Vol. 3, 146.

<sup>163</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-san], 圓善論 [On the Achievement of Moral Good], (Taipei: Student Book Co, 1985), 132.

to external relations between people, with neither inner spiritual life nor religious or metaphysical sentiment.<sup>164</sup>

### **Manifestation of Mind Nature in Cultural Activities**

Mou identifies that Chinese culture is dominated by Confucianism,<sup>165</sup> therefore the manifestation of Chinese cultural spirit is that of Confucian moral values. According to New Confucian interpretation of Mencius expressed in *manifesto*, everyone has the same mind nature as the ontological ground for moral practices. Therefore, the manifestation of Chinese cultural spirit aims to manifest moral values according to everyone's mind nature; in other words, Chinese culture is rooted in individual moral self. Liao Xiaowei indicates that in Confucianism: 'the subjective cultivation of individual, namely the completion of virtues [成德], never departs from the nation and the world, so the traditional Chinese philosophy as an example of the study of life has an objective aspect. In particular, Confucianism affirms a moral religion [道德宗教] which not only concern the peace of individual's life but also the regulation of daily livings. "The perfect harmony and affectionateness of the ethics and

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<sup>164</sup> Chang, Junmai, 'A Manifesto for A Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture', *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, 464.

<sup>165</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 時代與感受 [Age and Feeling], (Taipei: Linking Book Co, 2003), 323-356.



rituals and their transcendent and universal moral spiritual substance produced by Chinese cultural life is different from the differentiation found in Western religion”.<sup>166</sup>

According to Nganying Serina Chan, Mou adopts Confucianism as the orthodox value system of Chinese culture because of his nationalist agenda inherited from his teacher Xiong Shili (熊十力, 1885-1968).<sup>167</sup> ‘Mou affirmed Xiong’s identification of the cultural spirit of China with *Ruxue* [Confucianism], understood by both of them to be the orthodox strand of Chinese thought ... [and] subscribed to Hegel’s thesis, that a people’s history is the display of their Spirit in concrete reality.’<sup>168</sup>

Confucian moral values dominates traditional Chinese culture because its idea of teaching (教) as ‘the way of daily living’ and ‘direction of spiritual life’, which includes ‘force of creativity for history and culture’ and ‘foundation of individual’s peaceful life’.<sup>169</sup> As New Confucian declare: ‘[w]ith regard to the conservation of China’s national life, the emphasis on having many offspring should not be interpreted as a mere instinct of race preservation ...

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<sup>166</sup> 廖曉煒 [Liao Xiaowei], 牟宗三·勞思光哲學比較研究 ——以儒學重建和文化哲學為中心 [Comparative Study between Mou Zong-San and Lao Sze-Kwang—with the Centre of the Reconstruction of Confucianism and Philosophy of Culture], (New Taipei City: Hwa wulan Press, Mar 2012), 23.

<sup>167</sup> Chan, Nganying Serina, ‘The Thought of Mou Zong-San’, (PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, 2009), 74.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* 69.

[instead,] this emphasis was in self-consciousness motivated by the desire to perpetuate the ancestral lineage—a motivation which had religious, moral, and political connotations as well.<sup>170</sup>

For Mou, all Chinese cultural phenomenon are the manifestations of Confucian virtues, which is rooted in individual's mind nature. Mind nature not only means the natural preference of moral goodness, but also refers to the innate moral capacity. According to Mencius, there are the 'Four Beginnings:

The feeling of commiseration [惻隱之心] is the beginning of humanity [仁]; the feeling of shame and dislike [羞惡之心] is the beginning of righteousness [義]; the feeling of deference [辭讓之心] and compliance is the beginning of propriety [禮]; and the feeling of right and wrong [是非之心] is the beginning of wisdom [智]. If anyone with these Four Beginnings in him knows how to give them the fullest extension and development, ... [w]hen they are fully developed, they will be sufficient to protect all people within the four seas (the world). If they are not developed, they will not be sufficient even to serve one's parents.<sup>171</sup> (*Mencius* 2A:6)

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<sup>170</sup> Chang, Junmai, 'A Manifesto for A Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture', *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Vol. 2, (India: Bookman Associates, 1962), 466-467.

<sup>171</sup> Trans. Chan, Wing-tsit, 'Mencius', *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 65-66.

Mencius emphasises the ‘development’ or ‘extension’ (擴而充之) of these four beginnings of four cardinal virtues. By extension, Mencius refers to the interpersonal relationship to others. Different relationships manifest different virtues: affection between father and son, righteousness between the monarch and minister, specialisation between husband and wife, order between the elderly and the young, and fidelity among friends. (*Mencius* 3A:4)

According to Mou, external regulations on rituals and social orders are the manifestation of internal virtues of individuals. ‘When Mencius talks about the morally good human nature, he refers to an internal morality and a truly free subjectivity’. Such ‘freedom is manifested in moral ritual ... which is freely determined and demanded by the free subjectivity.’<sup>172</sup>

Chinese culture, therefore, is the manifestation of individual’s mind nature. Mou said,

by culture, we mean culture as referred to in “transformation attained through human cultural forms”. Human nature, the humane way, character, value—these are the origins of “human cultural forms”. As you know, these are things thoroughly opposed by the Communist Party. By history, we mean the process that embodies the spirit of a nation-race in their group practice of actualising their ideal. As you know, this way of looking at history is thoroughly negated by the Communist Party.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 才性與玄理 [Characteristics and Metaphysics], (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 435.

<sup>173</sup> Trans. Chan, Nganying Serina, ‘The Thought of Mou Zong-San’, 84. 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 時代與感受續篇 [Feeling of the Age Second Edition], (Taipei: Linking Book Ltd, 2003), 59-60.

According to Mou, Confucian idea of ritual (禮) is the concrete expression of individual's moral feeling, which manifests individual's freedom. Mou suggests that the ritual and music system designed by the Duke of Zhou in Zhou dynasty (1046-249BC) is dominated by two moral feelings: affection (親親, which 'applies to close members of the immediate family') and honouring (尊尊, which 'belongs to the realm of government and it too has gradations')<sup>174</sup> One manifests one's affection or honouring to others in rituals not because one is forced to follow the external rules, but because one wants to manifest one's own moral feelings of affection or honouring. As Mou claims in his famous book *On Perfect Teaching* (圓善論),

the normal ethics [倫常] is based upon the moral minds of human being who legislate the same "the relative degree of affection" [親親之殺], while everyone is based upon the same spirit to manifest "the relative grades in the honouring" [尊敬之義].<sup>175</sup> How can one regard the ethical degree of affections as external property like whiteness? They belong to human moral values ... when the mind cannot realize why the *matters of values* are formed, it can never acknowledge the *righteousness* as the *inner* but the *outer*.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Mou, Zong-San, *Nineteen Lectures*, §3, 52-53. <http://nineteenlects.com/lect.php?lect=3>

<sup>175</sup> From *Doctrine of Mean* 20, 'The relative degree of affection we ought to feel for our relatives and the relative grades in the honoring of the worthy give rise to the rules of propriety.'

<sup>176</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 圓善論 [On Perfect Teaching], (Taipei: Linking Book Co., 2003), 18.

Mou elaborates the ‘inwardness’ of moral feelings in rituals in his commentary on *Mencius* 6A:4 where Gaozi and Mencius debates on whether humanity and righteousness are external regulations:

[Gaozi said,] “When I see an old man [彼長] and respect him for his age [長之], it is not that the oldness [白] is within me, just as, when something is white and I call it white [白之], I am merely observing its external appearance. I therefore say that righteousness is external.” Mencius said, “There is no difference between our considering a white horse to be white and a white man to be white. But is there no difference between acknowledging the age of an old horse and the age of an old man? And what is it that we call righteousness, the fact that a man is old or the fact that we honour his old age?”<sup>177</sup> (*Mencius* 6A:4)

Here Gaozi discusses the problem of predication in Classical Chinese. If x is white (彼白), one indicates that x is white (白之). Such statement is purely descriptive and cognitive. Here Gaozi identifies ‘respect an old man’ as identical to ‘calling a person an old man’ (長之 *zoeng2 zil*)<sup>178</sup>. For Gaozi: ‘if x is old, one respects x for his oldness’ is also a descriptive and cognitive statement. But Mencius distinguishes ‘respecting an old man’ from ‘calling a

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<sup>177</sup> Trans. Chan, Wing-tsit, ‘Mencius’, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 52.

<sup>178</sup> As Mou indicates, 長之 is ambiguous, it may mean ‘calling one as old man’ or ‘respecting one for his oldness’.

person an old man', for the former is a normative and ethical statement. According to Mou, here 'Mencius' main purpose is to indicate that humanity and righteousness in moral sense are produced from the internal'.<sup>179</sup> As Mencius said: 'We love the roast meat of Ch'in as much as we love our own. This is even so with respect to material things. Then are you going to say that our love of roast meat is also external?'<sup>180</sup> (*Mencius* 6A:4) According to Mou: 'the pleasure of the meat comes from the flavour of the taste, so it indicates how pleasure is produced internally, while the different drinks in summer and winter change seasonally'.<sup>181</sup> Mou suggests that for Mencius, mind nature is a *natural preference* for moral goodness in human nature, which can only be manifested by an individual moral self in concrete interpersonal relationship.

Knowing that how individual subjectivity manifest moral values in Chinese culture, we can now investigate how Mou explains the historical development of Chinese culture and the reason why the individual freedom embedded in Confucian ethics did not manifest in Chinese history. In Mou's *Moral Idealism*, he divides the history of Confucianism into three phrases: (1) Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi and Dong Zhongshu, from pre-Qin (2100 BC-

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<sup>179</sup> Mou Zong-San, *On Perfect Teaching*, 15.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 52.

<sup>181</sup> Mou Zong-San, *On Perfect Teaching*, 19. Here Mou's interpretation is adopted from Wang Yangming's idea of original mind (本心): 'human mind originally found pleasure in moral principles' (人心本自說理義). See 知行錄 (On Practical Teaching) I.97.

221BC) to Han dynasty (221BC-220AD), (2) Cheng-Chu school and Lu-Wang school from Song dynasty (960-1276) to Ming dynasty (1368-1644), and (3) the Republic of China (from 1911 onwards). In the third phrase, the slogan of Chinese culture is ‘Anti-communism and Nation Saving (反共救國)’.<sup>182</sup> In phrase (1), since the Emperor Wu of Han announced Confucianism as the official philosophy: ‘academic studies directed politics while politics directed economy’.<sup>183</sup> However, Confucianism during Han dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD) was limited to Chinese Classical Studies (經學). When the Han empire collapsed, Confucianism lost its support during Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties (220-589 AD) when Taoist and Buddhist metaphysics and cosmology was prevailing. Confucianism was restored by the end of Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) when Han Yu led Classical Prose Movement and emphasised Confucian practical ethics, which gave birth to Neo-Confucianism in Song (960-1279 AD) and Ming dynasties (1368-1644 AD). Such restoration of Confucianism, however, is one-sided. As Mou said: ‘Confucianism originally emphasised “inner sageliness and outer kingliness” [內王外聖], but Neo-Confucianism particularly emphasises “inner sageliness”, which means the focus on moral consciousness ... “inner sageliness” is an old term. In Modern Chinese, it means that everyone must go through moral practices in order to become

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<sup>182</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 道德的理想主義 [Moral idealism], (Taipei: Linking Book Ltd, 2003), 310.

<sup>183</sup> Mou Zong-San, *The Age and Feeling*, 326.

a sage ... [which is] to establish one's own moral character. ... However, Confucianism also has the aspect of "outer kingliness" ... on which Neo-Confucian had not put sufficient emphasis.'<sup>184</sup> Therefore, the mission of Confucianism in phrase three is to bridge inner sageliness and outer kingliness by developing 'new outer kingliness' (新外王), namely, complete manifestation of individual's moral capacity in political life. As Chan quotes, in order to bridge sageliness and outer kingliness, Mou reemphasises the significance of moral metaphysics:

The [道統 *daotong*, orthodoxy of the Way] core should be based on the learning of inner sageliness, which is the fundamental import of morality and religion. The outer-kingliness aspect [of *daotong*] relates only to the guiding and regulating of day-to-day living [outside the political realm], which is the peripheral import of morality and religion. Included in this peripheral import are rituals and music that transform the people and make up the customs.<sup>185</sup>

According to Mou, constitutional democracy is a solution to the gap between inner sageliness and outer kingliness because it provides legitimacy of the government. Mou quotes Wang Fuzhi and argues that there are three major problems in Chinese Confucian

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid. 333.

<sup>185</sup> Trans. Chan, Nganying Serina, 'The Thought of Mou Zong-San', 87. Mou Zong-San, *Moral Idealism*, 260.



politics: the justification of changes in dynasties, that of throne succession and the authority of the prime minister. While Tang of Shang and Wu of Zhou were emperors who were famous for overthrowing tyrannies, their revolutions were merely justified by their personal virtues rather than the idea of human rights as it is written in Chinese historical accounts like *Book of Documents*. Mou argues that all these problems resulted from the lack of ‘objectification’ of the monarch, the ministers and the civilians, namely, the absence of an objective political system defining everyone’s duties and rights.<sup>186</sup> As we have seen above, ritual and music systems are not objective systems; rather they are instruments of the manifestation of individual’s subjective moral feelings. Although there is an objective human nature underlying all these subjective moral feelings, such moral objectivity does not necessarily imply the objectivity of the law. From legal perspective, concealing offences are guilt regardless of the identities of the offenders.<sup>187</sup> However, from Confucian moral perspective, it is rightful for a son to conceal his father’s offences. As Confucius declares: ‘The father conceals the misconduct of the son and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this.’<sup>188</sup> (*Analects* 13:18) Similarly, when Tao Ying asks Mencius what the monarch Shun and his minister Gao Yao should do if his father Gu Sou

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<sup>186</sup> Mou Zong-San, *The Age and Feeling*, 319-320.

<sup>187</sup> For example, see *Hong Kong Laws*, chapter 221 ‘Criminal Procedure Ordinance’ section 91(1) & (2); In United Kingdom, *Criminal Law Act 1967* chapter 58, part I, section (5); and in USA, *U.S. Code* title 18, part I., chapter 37, section 792.

<sup>188</sup> Trans. Chan, Wing-tsit, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 41.

had murdered a man. Mencius answered that Shun should order Gao Yao to arrest Gu Sou but then immediately resign from his throne and flee with his father in order to conceal his offences. All these examples show that Confucian prioritises moral relationship over laws.

Hegel seems to be aware of such problem in Confucianism when he criticises Chinese civilisation of confusing internal morality and external legality. The former belongs to the ‘internal disposition of the individual ... [which] cannot be commanded, cannot be made the direct object of laws’, while the ‘legal sphere is the external concrete existence of free volition’:

In the Chinese state what is ethical is made to be the law. What has value only as a sentiment is supposed to have the force of law, as its object. What is by nature is moral, namely what belongs to inward self-determination, thus commanded by law. It is commanded by those who hold the reins of government. In introducing the laws of families, we saw several examples of this ... A government of the kind that issues such legislation takes the place of my own inner being, and by doing so the principle of subjective freedom is annulled or goes unacknowledged. (PWH 233)

Using Hegel’s distinction between internal morality and external legality, one can reformulate Mou’s argument for mission of new kingliness as follow:

- (1) The possibility of Individual Freedom is embedded in Chinese Confucianism.
  - (2) The possibility of Individual freedom is actualised if and only if there are both internal morality and external legality.
  - (3) There was no external legality in traditional Chinese culture.
- 

(4) Therefore, the possibility of individual freedom was not actualised in traditional Chinese culture.

(5) If new kingliness is established, there are both internal morality and external legality.

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(6) Therefore, if the new kingliness is established, the possibility of individual freedom is actualised.

According to Mou, the introduction of science and democracy achieves (5); because this dissertation discusses philosophy of culture rather than political philosophy, we shall not discuss whether this statement is correct. However, Mou does not explain why (3) happened in Chinese history. Mou has only demonstrated the necessary relation between mind nature and the possibility of individual freedom as we have seen in previous paragraphs; but he

does not discuss whether Chinese Confucianism necessarily or contingently implies the lack of external legality in Chinese history.

Let us assume that the lack of external legality in Chinese culture is a contingent result. For Mou, the lack of external legality results from the overemphasis on inner sageliness and the insufficiency of outer kingliness. However, kingliness is different from Hegel's idea of external legality, which refers to an objective system guaranteeing individual's rights. 'Kingliness' originally refers to the proper moral and political conduct of the monarch as it is described in the edict of 'Great Plan' from *Book of Document*. In other words, Kingliness is merely the way for a monarch as an individual moral self to manifest his/her virtues according to his/her mind nature. As Zhuxi said: 'the essential of practising the way of kingliness is merely the extension of the mind of commiseration and the practices of the policies with commiseration.'<sup>189</sup> There is no room for establishing external legality in Confucian philosophy, which only discusses how the individual manifests his mind nature in the human society. If Hegel is correct that external legality is distinguished from internal morality and Confucianism only discussed internal morality, the Confucian study of internal morality can never develop any external legality for the sake of manifesting individual

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<sup>189</sup> 朱熹 [Zhuxi], "梁惠王章句上." [Liang Wei Wang I], 四書章句集注 [Commentaries on Four Books].

freedom. In other words, the lack of external legality in Chinese culture is a necessary consequence, if Chinese culture is dominated by Confucianism as Mou suggests. In the case of 'the son conceals offences of the father' in *Analects*, we have seen that Confucianism prioritises subjective moral feelings and relationships over objective legal system.

In short, because Mou assumes that Chinese culture is determined by Confucian values, while Chinese culture aims to manifest individual's moral nature and therefore preserves individual subjectivity, such subjectivity had not been manifested in Chinese history due to the absence of external legality, which is a necessary consequence of Confucian mind nature theory. In the following section we shall investigate Watsuji's philosophy of culture, who also begins with Confucianism and Hegelian dialectics but denies individual subjectivity in cultural development.

### 2.2.2 Watsuji Tetsuro's *Climate and Culture*

This section aims to critically investigate Watsuji Tetsuro's philosophy of culture as an example of a Japanese Hegelian who modify Hegelian dialectics by arguing for the supremacy of the Japanese nation. In order to compare with Chinese Hegelians who are mainly New Confucian, I have chosen Watsuji, who is also strongly influenced by Confucian ethics, as an example. While Chinese New Confucianism reformulated Chinese cultural spirit by reconstructing the idea of Confucian spirit, Watsuji is also devoted to reconstructing Japanese national spirit with the concept of *aidagara* or mutual relationship where both Confucian and Buddhist legacies are embedded as we shall see in this section. Firstly, I summarise Watsuji's historical context and explain why he is concerned with the question of Japanese *Kokutai* or national entity. Secondly, I argue that according to Watsuji, culture is not created by individuals nor society, but by *aidagara*, which is conditioned by the climate (*fudo*). Thirdly, I explain how Watsuji reconstructed Japanese national spirit with the help of Hegelian dialectics. I argue that his definition of Japanese national spirit as the national self-consciousness of 'Yamato soul' (*Yamato-damashii* [大和魂]) and 'loyalty to the sovereign and love of country' (*chûkun aikoku* [尊君愛國]) fails to acknowledge the individual subjectivity emphasised by Chinese New Confucianism.

Watsuji was living in the period when Japanese militarism was growing rapidly. In the age of rapid westernisation after Meiji Ishin (明治維新) in 1868, Japan became a modernized nation within a short period of time. Japan defeated Manchurian Qing Empire in the first Sino-Japan War in 1895 (which was followed by the constitutional movement in China led

by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao), and the Russia Empire in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. The question moves from *defending* the Kokutai (national entity) to *expanding* the Kokutai by invading neighbouring nations in the name of defeating Western imperialism. Having invaded the Korean peninsula, Japan occupied Manchuria and established the Puppet Manchukuo (偽滿洲國) there in 1931 by restoring the throne of the abdicated Manchurian Emperor Puyi (溥儀). While the government of the Republic of China and the League of Nations condemned Japanese invasion and refused to recognise Manchukuo, neither took military action. The Republic of China and Japan did not declare war officially until the Lugou Bridge Incident in 1937, which began the Second Sino-Japanese War (Chinese: 抗日戰爭, Japanese: 日中戦争). Japan was finally defeated in 1945 when the World War II ended. Before the end of the war, however, several Japanese philosophers tried to justify Japanese military expansion in East Asia and the Pacific islands. For example, Miki Kiyoshi (三木清, 1897-1945) joined the militarist think tank Showa Kenkyukai (昭和研究会) and wrote several articles justifying Japanese military aggression in China; his idea of 'East Asian Co-operative' (東亞協同體) was even employed by the militarists as their major propaganda idea 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' (大東亞共榮圈)<sup>190</sup>. Watsuji's teacher, Nishida Kitaro, wrote the article *Fundamental Principles of a New World Order* on the request of the National Policy Research Association in order to justify the Pacific War against USA. Unsurprisingly, Watsuji compromised with the militarist regime and contributed his philosophy of 'loyalty to the sovereign and love of country' to the militarist propaganda. As we shall see in the third section, when we comes to Watsuji's reformulation of Yamato Soul, we shall see how his philosophy was limited by Japanese Militarism.

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<sup>190</sup> See 三木清 [Miki Kiyoshi], 東亞協同體論集 [On East Asian Commonwealth], (Kobushi Book Co., 2007).

Watsuji Tesuro (和辻哲郎, 1889-1960) was an influential philosopher of ethics and culture for his Hegelian climatic determinism. Like other Japanese philosophers, for example Kuki Shūzō (九鬼周造, who had been a student of Husserl and Heidegger and famous for his contribution to Japanese aesthetics, 1888-1941) and Miki Kiyoshi (三木清, who later became a Marxist philosopher and activist, 1897-1945) in his time, he studied the philosophies of Kierkegaard<sup>191</sup>, Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger in 1910s Germany and tried to apply Continental philosophy to Japanese cultures. But at the same time Watsuji had a strong background in East Asian philosophy. According to Isamu Nagami, Watsuji ‘was influenced by his father, a doctor who adhered to Confucian ethics, and taught Watsuji the meaning of loyalty and devotion through his medical practice.’<sup>192</sup> Robert E. Carter suggests that in order to understand Watsuji’s philosophy, besides Buddhism: ‘Shinto and Confucian ideas need to be recognized as important as well.’<sup>193</sup>

In 1935, Watsuji published his famous work *Fudo*, which distinguishes the world into three climatic zones: monsoon, desert and pastoral, and different cultures are formed according to their climatic conditions. Therefore Watsuji is regarded as an environmental determinist. However, according to Noe Keiichi (野家啟一, 1949-), one should interpret *Fudo* from an ethical perspective. In his article commemorating the 3.11 earthquake, Noe analyses the Japanese perspective on nature and said: ‘Watsuji suggests a relational [間柄] ethics. Simply speaking, the common ground of morality should be based upon the interpersonal

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<sup>191</sup> Masugata, Kinya, ‘A Short History of Kierkegaard’s Reception in Japan’, *Kierkegaard and Japanese Thought*, ed. Giles, James, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 31-52.

<sup>192</sup> Nagami, Isamu. ‘The Ontological Foundation in Tetsuro Watsuji’s Philosophy: kū and Human Existence’, *Philosophy East and West* 31, no. 3 (1981): 280.

<sup>193</sup> Carter, Robert E., ‘Interpretive essay: strands of influence’, *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*. trans. Seisaku Yamamoto & Robert E. Carter (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 325.



relationship.’<sup>194</sup> The Human-Nature Relationship is not merely about an individual’s subjective feeling about the nature; instead it is a common feeling shared by a group of people, as Watsuji said,

We feel the cold, or we are out in the cold. Therefore, in feeling the cold, we discover ourselves in the cold itself. This does not mean that we transfer ourselves into the cold and there discover the selves thus transferred. The instant that the cold is discovered, we are already outside the cold. Therefore, the basic essence of what is “present outside” is not a thing or object such as the cold, but we ourselves. “Existence” is the fundamental principle of the structure of ourselves, and it is on this principle that intentionality depends. That we feel the cold is an intentional experience, in which we discover ourselves in the state of “existence”, or ourselves already outside in the cold.

We feel the same cold in common. It is precisely because of this that we can use terms describing the cold in our exchange of daily greetings. The fact that the feeling of cold differs between us is possible only on the basis of our feeling the cold in common. Without this basis it would be quite impossible to recognize that any other “I” experiences the cold. Thus, it is not “I” alone but “we”, or more strictly, “I” as “we” and “we” as “I” that are outside in the cold. The structure of which “existence” is the fundamental principle is this “we”, not the mere “I”. Accordingly, “existence” is “to be out among other I’s” rather than “to be out in a thing such as the cold”. This is not an intentional relation but a “mutual relationship” of existence. Thus it is primarily “we” in this “mutual relationship” that discover ourselves in the cold.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> 野家啟一 [Noe Keiichi], 大震災與日本人的自然觀 [Severe Earthquake and the Japanese People’s Perspective on the Nature], trans. 張政遠 [Cheung Ching-yuen], 東亞視野下的日本哲學 [Japanese Philosophy under East Asian Perspective], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2014), 205-206.

<sup>195</sup> Watsuji, Tesuro, *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, trans. Geoffrey Bownas, (Hokuseido Press, 1961), 4. See also the Chinese translation: 風土 [Fudo], trans. 陳力衛 [Chen Liwei], (Beijing: Commercial

Here the feeling of coldness is not *individualistic* (“I”) but *social* (“we”), for every human being feels the same coldness under the same climatic condition. According to Nagami: ‘*Fudo* (climate) reveals itself as the place in which various modes of man’s contact with nature, man, and society, as well as man’s productive modes, are conditioned.’<sup>196</sup>

Noe quotes Yamaori Tetsuo’s (山折哲雄, 1931-) interpretation of Watsuji in order to explain the relationships between the human-nature relationship and mutual human relationships. Japan is located in the Temperate Monsoon zone which is vulnerable to Typhoons.<sup>197</sup> However, because ‘the formation of typhoon is seasonal and directional, it is predictable. We should establish an interpersonal relationship to defend ourselves from typhoons. Family is the centre of the interpersonal relationship of which the network can expand immediately to the neighbourhood and the community. Watsuji suggests that such relationship is the source of Japanese moral emotions.’<sup>198</sup> Gino K. Piovesana argues that according to Watsuji: ‘individual characteristics’ are formed not only by ‘climatic conditions’, but also by ‘family, community, and the society.’<sup>199</sup> Here the term ‘mutual relationship’, according to Gino, refers to realistic relationships between the human being and the external world.<sup>200</sup>

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Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>196</sup> Nagami, Isamu. ‘The Ontological Foundation in Tetsuro Watsuji’s Philosophy: *kū* and Human Existence’, *Philosophy East and West*, 286.

<sup>197</sup> While Hegel mentioned that there is a ‘natural aspect of the state, climate, land’, it is just an ‘immediate determinacy of nature’ of a culture. (*PWH* 82) Unlike Watsuji, Hegel suggests that the content of a culture is determined by the universal Spirit.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* 206-207.

<sup>199</sup> Piovesana, Gino K., 日本近代哲學思想史 [Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought], trans. 江日新 [Jiang Yixin], (Taipei: Grand East Book Co., 1989), 113.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

In his book *Ethics as an Anthropology* (人間の学としての倫理学, 1934), Watsuji concludes that ethics is essentially about the ‘mutual relationships’. The character 倫 *rin* from the term ethics (倫理 *rinri*) ‘implies the meaning of *nakama* [仲間, companion]’ while 理 *ri* means a ‘proper order of human relations’<sup>201</sup>, which is a traditional Confucian idea. Watsuji begins his etymological study of the term *rinri* from Confucian idea of *gorin* (五倫 five relationships): ‘parent and child, lord and vassal, husband and wife, young and old, friend and friend’ (*Mencius* 3a:4) are ‘the most important kinds of human fellowship.’<sup>202</sup> Watsuji said,

The word *rinri* [倫理] consists of two words: *rin* and *ri*. *Rin* means *nakama* [仲間], that is, “fellow”. *Nakama* signifies a body or a system of relations, which a definite group of persons has with respect to each other, and at the same time signifies individual persons as determined by this system.

... This manner is *rin* or *gorin gojo* [五倫五常] (that is, the moral rules that govern the five human relations) as transformed into noematic meaning. The term *ri* signifies “reason” and is added to the term *rin* for the purpose of expressing emphatically the aforementioned manner of action or relational pattern. Therefore, *rinri*, that is, ethics, is the order or the pattern through which the communal existence of human beings is rendered possible. In other words, ethics consists of the laws of social existence.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid. 115.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Watsuji, Tetsuro, *Watsuji Tetsurō's Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*. trans. Yamamoto, Seisaku & Carter, Robert E (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1996), 10-11.

It should be noticed that here Watsuji's understanding of the term *ri* (理 reason) is radically different from the mainline Confucianism due to his non-metaphysical approach to Confucianism. Cheng Zhu School identifies *ri* as 'heavenly reason' (天理) which is the ontological ground of all moral principles. For Zhuxi, *gorin* means orders<sup>204</sup> and are the 'ways of achievement for all under heaven' (天下之達道也).<sup>205</sup> Similarly, Cheng Yi claims that 'The sages are the ultimate goals of human relation. *Rin* is *ri*',<sup>206</sup> while *rin* are 'persistent principles without changes' (常理不易).<sup>207</sup> Similarly, Lu Wang School and the twentieth century New Confucianism acknowledges that *ri* in *rinri* means heavenly reason. Lu Jiuyuan (陸九淵, 1139-1192) claims that 'the original mind [本心] of human beings is also known as the reason which dominates the universe, by which heaven and earth follow and develop.'<sup>208</sup> (*Collection of Mr. Lu Xiangshan* 36.21) Wang Yangming even claims that 'ethics implies that treatment precedes the visible beings. When the universe is widened, there is no object linked with my mind [無一物以接於吾心].'<sup>209</sup> (*Record of Calm Mind*, IX.272) When Wang criticises Buddhist's teaching of emptiness, he said: 'those stubborn believers of emptiness as normality fails to acknowledge the heavenly reason of the mind [此心之天理] which manifest the original conscience [本然之良知], and therefore they abandon ethics.'<sup>210</sup> (*Record for Practice* II.19)

<sup>204</sup> 朱熹 [Zhuxi], "滕文公章句上." [Teng Wen Gong I], 四書章句集注 [Commentaries on Four Books].

<sup>205</sup> 朱熹 [Zhuxi], "仁義禮智等名義." [Names of Ren Yi Li Zhi etc], 朱子語類 [Zhuzi's Sayings].

<sup>206</sup> 二程遺書 [Cheng's Posthumous Writings], 中國哲學書電子化計劃 [Chinese Text Project]. Chp 18.

<sup>207</sup> See 紀晏如 [Ji Yan-ru], 二程治道論的內涵及其思想史背景 [The Formation of Cheng Hao and Cheng Yis' Political Philosophy and the Intellectual Background], *Chung Ching Journal of History*, no. 19, (Dec, 2016): 53-89.

<sup>208</sup> 陸九淵 [Lu Jiuyuan], 象山先生全集：卷第三十六 - 中國哲學書電子化計劃 [Collection of Mr. Lu Xiangshan: Volume 36—Chinese Text Project].

<sup>209</sup> 王陽明 [Wang Yangming], 王陽明全集：靜心錄 - 中國哲學書電子化計劃 [Collection of Wang Yangming: Record of Calm Mind—Chinese Text Project].

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

However, Watsuji shows no interest in searching for the metaphysical foundation of *gorin* mentioned above. For Watsuji: ‘reasons’ (*ri*) are merely the normative principles governing the ‘proper’ manner *between* two persons in a particular relationship, which are not persistent, and are dependent on human relationships. Here Watsuji interprets the five relationships as ‘fellowships’ which ‘is nothing but a manner of interaction through which people have definite connections with each other. Hence, *rin* signifies *nakama* [仲間] (in general) and, at the same time, a specific form of practical interconnection among human beings. From this it follows that *rin* also means *kimari* (agreement), or *kata* (form), that is, an order among human beings. The *rin* are conceived of as ways of *ningen* [人間].’<sup>211</sup>

While *ningen* is originally a Buddhist term referring to the human world within the six realms of samsara (六道, *rokudō*), in Watsuji’s non-metaphysical context it strictly refers to the human society.<sup>212</sup> In particular, Watsuji repeatedly use the kanji *gen* or *aida* (間)<sup>213</sup> in two senses: ‘interstice’<sup>214</sup> or ‘between’.<sup>215</sup> *Gen* as interstice implies space and spatiality, while *gen* as between implies ‘betweenness’—*between two persons*. Therefore, *ningen* as human society is not only a place where human lives but also a network of relationships among human beings. As Pauline Couteau argues, a ‘full “human being” is inseparable from both his individual and communal dimensions and, indeed, can only be said to truly exist by virtue of these relations. ... the study of reciprocal human existence turns out to be ethics itself ...

<sup>211</sup> Watsuji, Tetsuro, *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*. trans. Yamamoto, Seisaku & Carter, Robert E (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>212</sup> 廖欽彬 [Liao, Qin-bin], 日本倫理觀與儒家傳統 [Japanese Ethics and Confucian Tradition], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2017), 185.

<sup>213</sup> See 王力 [Wang, Li]. 古代漢語字典 [Dictionary of Classic Chinese] (Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Co, 2000), 1564.

<sup>214</sup> For example, ‘There are the *interstices* of the joints’ (彼節者有間) (*Zhuangzi* I.3.2)

<sup>215</sup> For example, ‘Suppose the case of a state of ten thousand chariots; let it be straitened *between* other large states’ (千乘之國，攝乎大國之間) (*Analects* 11.26).

[which] was to analyse the meaning of *world* to include the *betweenness* [*aidagara*] of persons (the public) [世間 *seken*].<sup>216</sup>

Watsuji uses the concept of *aidagara* (often translated as mutual relationship or betweenness) to explain the formation of *ningen* as human society. However, *aidagara* should not be understood as the unity of two pre-existing entities, namely, an individual self and others. For, according to Watsuji, the existence of *aidagara* precedes those of individual self and others. Both individual self and others arise from *aidagara*. According to Higaki, *aidagara* is ‘the “relationship” between You and I’, and the ‘place of this kind of “relationship” can be said to refer to a pure “place-ness” in which the self and the other are undifferentiated.’<sup>217</sup> In other words, *Aidagara* is the place from which individual self-consciousness arise.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, Carter suggests that ‘*aidagara* ... implies spatial distance separating thing and thing (*aida*), indicating *both* that we *can* come to meet in the between *and* that we are at a distance from one another. ... *Aida* indicates that betweenness is spatial, whatever else it might be, and so we exist within a definite space, a spatial *basho* or “place”.<sup>219</sup> Conteau also suggests that ‘Watsuji uses the word *kūkan* 空間 (space) when referring specifically to the place of “betweenness,” echoing Nishida’s use of *basho* ... *kūkan* designates the space of self-awakening, not in a metaphysical but in a practical, everyday sense’.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Couteau, Pauline, ‘Watsuji Tetsurō’s Ethics of Milieu’, *Frontiers in Japanese Philosophy*, Vol.1. Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture, 279.

<sup>217</sup> Higaki, Tatsuya, ‘Tetsurō Watsuji’s Theory of Betweenness, with a Focus on the Two-Person Community’, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, no. 41, (2016): 457.

<sup>218</sup> Here Higaki suggests that Watsuji’s concept of space is influenced by Nishida Kitarō’s concept of *basho* (場所), which is regarded as the ontological ground of an individual’s ‘pure consciousness’. See Kitarō, Nishida. "Basho." *Place and Dialectic Two Essays by Nishida Kitaro*, (2012), 49-102; Cheung, Ching Yuen, ‘Philosophy of Life: Henri Bergson and Nishida Kitaro’, *Mécanique Et Mystique Sur Le Quatrième Chapitre Des Deux Sources De La Morale Et De La Religion De Bergson*. ed. Abiko, Shin, Hisashi Fujita, and Yasuhiko Sugimura, (Hildesheim: Olms, Georg, 2018), 223-242.

<sup>219</sup> Carter, Robert E. ‘Interpretive essay: strands of influence’, *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, 338.

<sup>220</sup> Couteau, Pauline, ‘Watsuji Tetsurō’s Ethics of Milieu’, *Frontiers in Japanese Philosophy*, ed. James Heisig, (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, 2006), 282.

As the place from which an individual's self-consciousness arises, *Aidagara* is conditioned by the external situation, particularly climate, as Watsuji suggests in *Fudo*. '*Fudo* (climate) reveals itself as the place in which various modes of man's contact with nature, man, and society, as well as man's productive modes, are conditioned.'<sup>221</sup> The interactions between climate and human society shape human's ways of living, which limits an individual's mindset and ways of living also. Therefore, in '*aidagara* man cannot be regarded as an individual nor as a mere social entity, but as the inevitably relational being who is related to man, nature, and the society to which he belongs.'<sup>222</sup>

Although individuals arise from *ningen*, while *ningen* arises from *aidagara* which arises from climatic conditions, such process of arising is not determined by a fixed and persistent 'heavenly reason' suggested by Cheng Zhu School or Lu Wang School, because from the beginning Watsuji denounces any metaphysical assumption. The process of arising is dynamic, which is explained by Buddhist concept of *kū* or emptiness. According to *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* written by Nāgārjuna, *kū* refers to things 'originating dependently'. 'Since there is no *dharma* whatever originating independently, no *dharma* whatever exists which is not empty.'<sup>223</sup> Everything, including the individual's self, originates dependently. According to Buddhist theory of Twelve Nidānas, an individual's self-consciousness consists of six classes: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness (*Samyutta Nikaya* 12.2), which

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<sup>221</sup> Nagami, Isamu. 'The Ontological Foundation in Tetsuro Watsuji's Philosophy: *kū* and Human Existence', *Philosophy East and West*, 286.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. 284.

<sup>223</sup> Lafleur, William R. "Buddhist Emptiness in the Ethics and Aesthetics of Watsuji Tetsurō." *Religious Studies* 14, no. 2 (1978): 244.

arises from sensation. Therefore, Watsuji adopts the Buddhist teaching of *muga* (無我, no-self) and identifies *aidagara* as *kū*.<sup>224</sup> Watsuji said: ‘no matter which aspect of consciousness we may lay hold of, none can be said to be essentially independent. The independent consciousness of *I* is acquired only when isolated from any connection at all with other consciousness.’<sup>225</sup> ‘[A]bsolute wholeness is absolute negation and absolute emptiness. ... every community of human beings, that is, the whole in human beings, can become manifest only to the extent that emptiness is realized among individual human beings.’<sup>226</sup>

As we have seen in previous section, Watsuji not only denies the existence of an independent individual self from *aidagara* as compounded of mutual relationships but also argues that the existence of *aidagara* precedes those of the self and others. *Aidagara* is not a Being; rather, it is *kū* or emptiness which makes changes possible. In other words, Watsuji rejects the Kantian argument for a transcendental individual self, as he said in *Fudo*:

Transcendence itself must have assumed some historical significance, as being the temporal structure of such relationships. It is not something in the individual consciousness but the relationships themselves that constantly reach into the future. Time in individual consciousness is a mere abstraction on the basis of the history of the relationships. Transcendence also “stand outside” (ex-sistere) climatically. In other words, man discovers himself in climate. From the standpoint of the individual, this becomes consciousness of the body, but in the context of the more concrete ground of human life, it reveals itself in the ways of creating communities, and

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<sup>224</sup> Nagami, Isamu. ‘The Ontological Foundation in Tetsuro Watsuji’s Philosophy: *kū* and Human Existence’, *Philosophy East and West*, 291.

<sup>225</sup> Watsuji, Tetsuro, Watsuji Tetsurō’s *Rinrigaku*, 80.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.* 99.



thus in the ways of constructing speech, the methods of production, the styles of building, and so on. Transcendence, as the structure of human life, must include all these entities.<sup>227</sup>

As a Hegelian, Watsuji believes transcendence cannot be achieved by an individual but must be by a culture, a race or a people. For Watsuji indicates that: '[b]y "man" I mean not the individual (anthropos, homo, homme etc.), but man both in this individual sense and at the same time man in society, the combination or the association of man. This duality is the essential nature of man. So neither anthropology, which treats man the individual, nor sociology, which takes up the other aspect, can grasp the real or full substance of man.'<sup>228</sup>

Both anthropology and sociology are one-sided. Because a 'man' is both an individual and a society, the transcendence of man does not imply a transcendence of an individual from the society. Here transcendence does not mean the freedom from external determinations (Kierkegaard's sense); rather it merely means the consciousness or knowledge of such determinations. Therefore Watsuji's concept of the transcendence of man merely means that the individual has the 'consciousness of his body' while the society manifests the 'ways of creating communities'.<sup>229</sup>

Following Hegel, Watsuji further condemns the individual's perspective of the history of the world as one-sided. While an individual man dies, the society to which he belongs continues to exist; and the changes of life and death institutes the historical development of the world:

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<sup>227</sup> Watsuji, Tesuro, *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, 12.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

Men die; their world changes; but through this unending death and change, man lives and his world continues. It continues incessantly through ending incessantly. In the individual's eyes, it is a case of an "existence for death", but from the standpoint of society it is an "existence for life". Thus human existence is both individual and social. But it is not only history that is the structure and, at that, a part quite inseparable from history. For it is from the union of climate with history that the latter gets its flesh and bones. In terms of the contrast between spirit and matter, history can never be merely spiritual self-development. For it is only when, as self-active being, the spirit objectivises itself, in other words, only when it includes such self-active physical principle that it becomes history, as self-development. The "self-active physical principle", as we might term it, is climate. The human duality, of the finite and the infinite, is most plainly revealed as the historical and climatic structure.<sup>230</sup>

Here Watsuji emphasises not only history but also climate, from which the individual's consciousness of body and the society's awareness of the social structure arise. Watsuji's emphasis on climatic condition differentiates his philosophy from Hegel's. While Hegel believes that the world-history is dominated by the necessary development of the Absolute Spirit (which is a Being), Watsuji argues that each nation follows the dependent origination of *aidagara* (which is *kū*) between persons and persons and between human society and climate. When defining a particular culture, according to Watsuji, one must not only look at its essential values but also its physical limitations, namely the climatic conditions, which

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid. 9-10.

affect the expression of cultural phenomenon. ‘Spirit expresses itself in matter’ which is a ‘natural-climatic subject that continuously actualizes itself in objective forms.’<sup>231</sup> As we have seen in previous section, climatic conditions are merely dependent conditions limiting but not determining the origination of human society and culture; in other words, the origination of Japanese culture is a contingent rather than necessary interaction with history and climate. If Japan were in a tropical desert or polar climate, Japanese culture would be possibly very different. Customs, architectures, rituals and cuisines would be changed accordingly.

Considering Watsuji’s emphasis on *aidagara* as mutual relationship, which is inspired by Mencius’ teaching of five relationship, it is easy for us to understand why he endorsed the absolute obedience to the Emperor, the suppression of individual autonomy and became a supporter to Japanese militarism. According to Mencius, five different virtues are manifested in five relationships: affection between father and son, righteousness between monarch and ministers, specialisation between husband and wife, order between elderly and young and fidelity among friends. In other words, for Mencius, family affection is prioritised over righteousness, and loyalty has no role in five relationship. In fact when it comes to the concept of loyalty (忠 *zungi*), Mencius refers to the loyalty to the moral principles rather

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<sup>231</sup> Watsuji, Tetsuro, ‘The Japanese Spirit’, trans. A Jacinto Zavala & D. Dilworth, *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents*, ed. David A. Dilworth, Valdo H. Viglielmo & Agustin Jacinto Zavala, (Greenwood Press, 1998) 234-239.

than the monarch. As he said: ‘to teach others what is good is called as loyalty’. (教人以善謂之忠) (*Mencius* 3A:4) While loyalty to monarch is mentioned by Confucius, it comes along with the duty of the monarch, as Confucius said ‘the monarch should employ his ministers according to the principle of propriety while the ministers should serve the monarch with loyalty.’ (君使臣以禮，臣事君以忠) (*Analects* 3:19) It is *Doctrine of Mean* where the relationship between monarch and ministers is prioritised over that between father and son (*Doctrine of Means* 20). In fact, the one-sided loyalty to the monarch is a Legalist teaching rather than Confucian, as Han Feizi explicitly prioritises ‘serving the monarch’ over ‘severing the parents’, denies the legitimacy of any revolution against the monarch and even condemn the ancient sage-kings Yao, Shun, Tong and Wu who were famous of overthrowing tyranny.<sup>232</sup>

However, Watsuji’s understanding of ‘loyalty to the emperor’ is different from Chinese Confucianism’s. Watsuji does not mention the duty of the emperor but merely emphasises the duty of the people, namely, the absolute loyalty to the emperor. Watsuji’s one-sided emphasis on loyalty rather than propriety is possibly because of the influence from Japanese Confucianism during the Tokugawa Shogunate. As Chang Kun-Chiang suggests:

‘a samurai has no autonomy over his own body, he must depend upon his lord or higher lords and be completely reduced into the national entity of “the normal ethics of loyalty” [忠的倫常] at the end.’<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> See *Han Feizi* 51.2. It is interesting to investigate whether Watsuji and Japanese Confucian had actually studied and adopted Legalist rather than Confucian teaching on loyalty to the emperor.

<sup>233</sup> 張崑將 [Chang Kun-Chiang], *國體與身體之間：朝鮮與德川的「禮」、「法」比較* [Between the National Entity and the Body: a Comparison between Li and Fa in Joseon and Tokugawa], *日本倫理與儒家傳統* [Japanese Ethics and Confucian Tradition], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2017), 61.

Watsuji defines the Japanese Spirit as a *national self-consciousness* of Japanese values, which are based on absolute loyalty to the emperor, and he explains it according to the historical development of Japanese culture. In his article of *Nihon seishin* (日本精神, *the Japanese Spirit*) in 1934, Watsuji argues that *Nationalism that emphasises the value of national self-consciousness* can sometimes be *progressive*. It ‘was nationalism that destroyed the feudal system and constructed the modern state.’ The tradition of Japanese culture or Japanese spirit and even nationalism can be employed by either conservative or progressive political movements in different periods. Watsuji argues that there are three phases of the development of Japanese spirit in modern history. The first phase is the late Tokugawa period when Native Studies (*Kokugaku* 国学) proclaimed the slogans of “Yamato heart” (*Yamato-gokoro* [大和心]) and “revere the Emperor and expel the barbarians” (*sonô jôî* [尊皇攘夷])’ which appeared as the expressions of Japanese national self-consciousness. The second phase is the Meiji era ‘centring on the Sino-Japanese [1894-1895] and Russo-Japanese [1904-1905] Wars’. When Japan was being modernised, the slogans of Japanese national self-consciousness were “Yamato soul” (*Yamato-damashii* [大和魂]) and “loyalty to the sovereign and love of country”<sup>234</sup> (*chûkun aikoku* [尊君愛國]<sup>235</sup> )’. The third ‘phase of nationalistic sentiment’ in Japan was ‘ensued upon the two Manchurian Incidents [1931 and 1933] and the pressure of the League of Nations’ when Japanese supported the Qing Royal Family to establish a government in Manchuria, which

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<sup>234</sup> Watsuji, Tesuro, ‘The Japanese Spirit’, trans. A Jacinto Zavala & D. Dilworth, *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents*, ed. David A. Dilworth, Valdo H. Viglielmo & Agustin Jacinto Zavala, (Greenwood Press, 1998). 235-236.

<sup>235</sup> The idea of *sonô jôî* comes from the Faa’ist politician Guanzhong in Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and was recorded and appreciated in Confucian historical record *Gongyang Zhuan*. Guanzhong asked the Duke Huan of Qi to strengthen his military power in the name of revering the authority of King Xiang of Zhou. As a result Duke Huan of Qi became the strongest duke.

was seen as illegal by the Republic of China and the League of Nations. In this period the slogan was simply ‘Japanese spirit’ (日本精神 *Nihon seishin*) which directly resulted from the slogan of *chūkun aikoku*.

According to Watsuji, the manifestation of Japanese spirit as *Yamato-damashii* and *chūkun aikoku* are the ‘objective manifestations life-expressive of the Japanese people’ when they follow the principles of ‘loyalty to the sovereign and love of our country’ or ‘sacrificing one’s life for “imperial country” (*kunkoku*)’.<sup>236</sup> Here loyalty is the highest moral value for the Japanese people. Although such manifestations must be carried out by individual action: ‘action is essentially accomplished within the sphere of human relations.’<sup>237</sup> Only social actions are considered as the ‘manifestations of the Japanese spirit’. Secretive actions undertaken by individuals ‘do not yet take on significance as a life-expression of the Japanese people. Therefore, it is not yet a manifestation of the Japanese spirit. However, once it has been made manifest, it becomes a social action that becomes enveloped in public indignation’ and ‘enters into a public domain’.<sup>238</sup>

It should be noticed that according to Watsuji, Japanese national spirit does not arise from Japanese philosophy, but arises from *aidagara* of Japanese people. He argues that we should look at the social actions among Japanese which are the ‘objective manifestations life-expressive of the Japanese people’<sup>239</sup>. Here Watsuji refers to his discussion of the ‘Japanese spirit’ in *Fudo*:

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid. 241-242.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 242.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. 243.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. 242.

... the Japanese spirit is restricted to [focusing on] the active subject that expresses itself through its manifestations as Japanese culture. Such an active subject that creates Japanese culture is truly nothing other than the Japanese people or Japanese race as active subject. ‘

‘Spirit expresses itself in matter ... If it is correct to call spirit this kind of natural-climatic subject that continuously actualizes itself in objective forms—in other words, which itself is certainly not an object and yet causes us to grasp it only through what is objective—then it is hardly inappropriate to call a race of people an active subject in the sense of a living whole. For here the choice of the word “spirit” especially fits the case of expressing subjectivity, as just articulated. In this manner I endorse the standpoint that understands the concept of the Japanese spirit in the sense of the Japanese race as a totality as an active subject.’<sup>240</sup>

One must be careful with the term “race”. Here Watsuji considers race merely as a means of expressing the absolute and the cultural spirit. The Japanese race as ‘matter’ is the objectification of the Japanese Spirit. The Japanese Spirit as an ‘active subject’ expresses itself in the ‘physical body’. The ‘Japanese spirit is nothing other than the absolute spirit in the particular form of Japan.’ Therefore: ‘the problem of the Japanese spirit involves the problem of absolute spirit and at the same time the problem of its particular Japanese form.’ ‘The forms of racial particularity are not merely accidental, arbitrarily supplemental modalities of spirit. Rather, one finds the most essential determinations of human existence where the absolute spirit manifests itself through the forms of racial particularity. The

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid. 244.

significance of a world-historical mission that a particular race bears must be clarified only from here.’<sup>241</sup>

It should be noticed that Watsuji does not mean that the Japanese Spirit is equivalent to the Absolute Spirit in Hegel’s sense, which dominates the development of the world-history. Rather, he argues that ‘the Japanese Spirit is nothing other than the absolute spirit in the particular form of Japan’<sup>242</sup>. The Absolute Spirit is ‘absolutely void of a particular identity’ and can only manifests or objectifies itself

through the forms of racial particularity ... Just as there has been no God as an object of religious faith that has not been the God of a particular religion, so too there has never been a living whole as active subject that has not been a particular racial subject—and there never can be, either.<sup>243</sup>

The racial particularities are formed by ‘natural climatic’ conditions, which refers to Watsuji’s environmental determinism expressed in *Fudo* mentioned in previous section. As Watsuji claims,

In terms of the contrast between spirit and matter, history can never be merely spiritual self-development. For it is only when, as self-active being, the spirit objectivises itself, in other words, only when it includes such self-active physical principle that it becomes history, as self-development. The “self-active physical principle”, as we might term it, is climate. The human

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid. 245

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. 246.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. 245-246.



duality, of the finite and the infinite, is most plainly revealed as the historical and climatic structure.<sup>244</sup>

Here Watsuji criticises Hegel for abstracting the concept of spirit from climate, for Hegel only indicates the historicity of the Spirit. While Hegel mentions climate in the formation of culture, it has lesser influence comparing with the Spirit. ‘that climate is a wholly abstract and general element in relation to the shape taken by spirit ... the natural aspect, climate, does not account for the individual.’ (*PWH* 92) Japanese spirit also arises from the *aidagara* among human society, history and climate. The loyalty to the emperor as the highest moral value of the Japanese National Spirit also arises from *aidagara*.

Because of Watsuji’s reduction of individual self into *aidagara*, individual subjectivity vanishes in his philosophy of culture. ‘Japanese people’ as the national subject, instead of an individual Japanese, is the concrete subject of Japanese culture. Hence Watsuji argues for the sacrifice of the individual self for the sake of the entire ‘Japanese people’ and the manifestation of the Japanese spirit. Loyalty to the Emperor, who is an external other to the individual self, is the highest moral value. Every Japanese individual should sacrifice himself for the Emperor; in other words, Watsuji suggests a denial of individual subjectivity and autonomy. In his article *The Way of The Japanese Subject* written in 1944, Watsuji quoted the Captain Hiraide (平出 英夫) who said ‘having the military spirit is the resolve “to die joyfully on behalf of the Emperor”.’ Watsuji interprets Hiraide’s speech by arguing that ‘whether one lives or dies is not really the issue: for the task that one has undertaken is

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<sup>244</sup> Watsuji, Tesuro, *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, trans. Geoffrey Bownas, (Hokuseido Press, 1961), 9-10.

incomparably more important than such a thing as one's own life.'<sup>245</sup> 'When a military man concentrates on the attainment of this important task, then any attachment on his part to his own dying remains in a condition of egoistic self-consideration. He must destroy that kind of "self" and become entirely one with his task.'<sup>246</sup>

Watsuji's reduction of individual self into *aidagara* and *kū* means the denial of individual subjectivity<sup>247</sup>, which is criticised by Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture. In Chapter 4, when we discuss the significance of individual self in the formation of a cultural group as a community, we shall see that there are three moments in the dialectics of community: '(1) the individuals who relate to each other in the relation are individually inferior to the relation.' '(2) the individuals who relate to each other in the relation are individually equal in relation to the relation' and '(3) the individuals who relate themselves to each other in the relation are individually superior to the relation.' (JP 4, 4110) Watsuji's idea of mutual relationship only reaches the level two of Kierkegaard's dialectics of the community where individual equals to his relationships to others and failed to transcend himself from such relationships. An individualistic God-man relation seems to be impossible in Watsuji's philosophy. The lack of transcendence implies the lack of individual's autonomy, because in this situation an individual is determined by his interpersonal relations. He does not dare to manifest himself; he follows the wills of his friends and relatives. For Kierkegaard, in order to preserve

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<sup>245</sup> Watsuji, Tesuro, 'The Way of the Japanese Subject', *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy*, 279.

<sup>246</sup> It should be noticed that even after the WWII Watsuji insisted that the Emperor represents the unity of Japanese people and was strongly against the abolishment of Japanese monarchy. See 朱坤容 [Zhu kun-rong], 文化傳統意義下的戰後日本天皇制論爭 [Controversy over the Traditional Significance of the Mikado System in Post-war Japan: Watsuji Tetsuro's Perspective], *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 1, (2012):161-181.

<sup>247</sup> For the problem of the denial of individual self in Watsuji's ethics, see my recent conference paper: Tam, Andrew Ka Pok, 'A Confucian Investigation of Watsuji Tetsuro's Mutual Relationship Ethics', (paper presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of European Network of Japanese Philosophy, Nazan University, Nagoya, Japan, 28 Aug-1 Sep 2019) 33.

individual freedom, an individual self must establish a God-relationship so that he may transcend his relations to others, for God is the transcendent being. Such a God-man relation, however, is missing from Watsuji's philosophy in *Fudo*.

Having summarised East Asian Hegelian philosophy of culture represented by Chinese New Confucianism and the Kyoto School, we shall critically evaluate three theoretical problems in the following section. While East Asian Hegelianism modifies the definition of the 'spirit' and argue for the supremacy of their own national spirit defined by East Asian cultural values (mind nature theory in case of Chinese New Confucianism and the loyalty to the emperor in case of Watsuji, whose philosophy is influenced by Confucianism and Buddhism), they generally adopt Hegelian dialectics to explain the historical development of their cultural spirits—which means they inevitably inherit theoretical problems found in Hegel's philosophy of culture.

## 2.3. Culture as Tradition

### 2.3.1 Three Problems of the Fixed 'Cultural Values'

This section aims to evaluate the problem of East Asian philosophers' adoption of the Hegelian idea of culture as spirit where they assume that there are persistent and dominant essential cultural values determining the development of cultural spirit. Having critically assessed three problems arise from such an assumption, we shall see how hermeneutics which defines culture as tradition avoid these problems by preserving the openness of interpreting cultural values. However, as we shall see, because hermeneutics only fulfils the epistemic task (understanding a culture) mentioned in the introduction rather than the ontological task (establishing cultural subjectivity).

As discussed above, East Asian Hegelianism defines cultures as manifestations of spirits or values. However, their adoptions of a Hegelian framework lead to three theoretical problems:

(1) *The Impossibility of changes in cultural values.* If cultural values which determine cultural development are persistent, changes in cultural values are impossible.

Traditional Chinese culture would always be dominated by the same Confucian moral

values throughout history, and it is impossible for traditional Chinese culture to adopt new cultures.

(2) *The lack of an empirical method to identify cultural spirit.* East Asian Hegelian only study Confucian and Shinto texts in order to articulate the essential values of Chinese or Japanese cultures without empirically verifying how Chinese or Japanese people actually understood and manifested these essential values, and how the Chinese or Japanese cultural developments are determined by these essential values alone.

(3) *The neglect of openness of value interpretation.* Hermeneutically speaking, cultural values are not fixed; there is always an openness of interpretations. Even within the same culture, different people with different background may have a different horizon of understandings, which lead to their different understanding of essential values of the same culture.

It should be noticed that all these problems listed above are not only particular to East Asian Hegelian but actually go back to Hegel's own dialectic, which gives East Asian Hegelians a deterministic picture of cultural development. If a cultural spirit or a set of essential values which determines cultural changes are fixed, then changes in cultural spirit or essential values are impossible. The so-called cultural changes are merely different stages of manifestation of the same cultural spirit. In the historical and cultural context in East Asia, such deterministic picture fails to explain the developments of Chinese or Japanese cultures.

If all essential cultural values are fixed, all cultural changes would not involve any actual changes in cultural values. As David Bholat observes: ‘when Hegel writes about “logical necessity”[,], he seems to be arguing that “new” beliefs have their origins in our early ones, even if, later on, through the eyes of the convert, these new ideals appear wholly unconnected to the old.’<sup>248</sup> One may reformulate the impossibility of changes in cultural values as follow: if a culture adopts a new value as its essential value and abandon its original essential value, such culture cease to exist; instead, it becomes a new culture.

If cultural changes are determined by fixed essential values, cultural modernisation must not change these essential values. In other words, New Confucians who believes that Chinese culture is determined by Confucian moral values must also believe that it contains the seeds of modernity. In this sense, modernisation is not a cultural transformation; it is merely the actualisation of the potentiality of modernity... Therefore, in *Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology* (1958), New Confucian argues that traditional Chinese culture has already contained the potentiality of democracy and science. They claims:

... China should have as yet failed to do so does not mean that her political development does not tend towards democracy, or that there is not the germ of democracy in the culture. ... The germ of democracy clearly was in both the Confucian and the Taoist schools of thought, which equally asserted that the ruler should always reign “through non-action” or “by virtue” ...

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<sup>248</sup> Bholat, David, ‘Hegel, unhappy consciousness and endogenous cultural change’, *Anthropological Theory* 12, no. 3, (2012): 234.

[which declared] the conception that the nation belonged not to one man but to the people of the nation and that government aims at the good of the people.<sup>249</sup>

Because cultural modernisation must not involve the denial of old essential values and the creation of new essential values, cultural modernisation under New Confucianism seems to be limited. While New Confucian philosophers acknowledge the importance of science, they seem to reject the possibility of introducing the ‘scientific spirit of the West that originated in the Greek dictum of “‘knowledge for the sake of knowledge’”’. Instead, they suggest that ‘the intellect’s mission must be developed, otherwise the people’s moral self cannot get the benefit from their intellect. ... It is precisely [the] harmony between morality and intellect that is the supreme function of man.’<sup>250</sup> Therefore New Confucianism does not go beyond the traditional Chinese emphasis on ‘practical knowledge and skills’. New Confucianism only focuses on the ‘practical use’ of science in moral practices, for example, medicine. It does not embrace the Greek spirit of ‘knowledge for the sake of knowledge’.<sup>251</sup>

The definition of culture as fixed values, which is adopted by New Confucianism, is attributed as ‘cultural essentialism’ by Fabian Heubel’s<sup>252</sup> influential article ‘Transcultural Critique and Philosophical Reflections on Chinese Modernity’ (跨文化批判與中國現代性之哲學反思). Heubel criticises New Confucian philosophers of being ‘cultural essentialist’

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<sup>249</sup> Trans. Zhang, Jungmai, ‘A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology’, *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, 471-472.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.* 470.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Heubel’s call for transcultural philosophy is followed by Lam Wing-keung and Cheng Ching-yuen who expand the approach to the study of Japanese philosophy. See ed. 蔡振豐 [Tsai Chen-feng], 林永強 [Lam Wing Keung] & 張政遠 [Cheng Ching Yuen], *東亞傳統與現代哲學中的自我與個人 [The Self and Individual in East Asian Tradition and Modern Philosophy]*, (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, Sep 2016).

for their attempts ‘to reconstruct the “essence of Chinese culture” philosophically’.<sup>253</sup> Heubel argues ‘philosophy must attempt to face with the problem of modernity (according to the author’s definition, interculturality focuses the comparison between the self and others while transculturality begins with the contemporary common problem among the dynamic interactions of culture hybrid) with the intercultural and transcultural approach.’<sup>254</sup> According to Heubel: ‘the ideology of modernity in cultural essentialism and nationalism always distinguish the self from the others and therefore fail to address the fact of cultural diversity and hybridity.’<sup>255</sup> Heubel even rejects the term ‘Chinese philosophy’ (中國哲學), because its emphasis on ‘Chinese-ness’ has a danger of cultural essentialism. He prefers the term ‘Chinese Language Philosophy’ or Hanyu Philosophy (漢語哲學) instead.<sup>256</sup> ‘In other words, if philosophy begins with the fact of the contemporary world (but not the “origin” of the philosophy), the “philosophy” written in the Chinese language exists ... [However,] if traditional Chinese thoughts are considered as “wisdom” rather than “philosophy” and are regarded as “external” instead of “internal world”, they are excluded from modernity.’<sup>257</sup>

However, Heubel’s attempt to eliminate the cultural differences between the Chinese and the West seems to deny the ontological task emphasised by both East Asian philosophers of culture and this thesis, namely, to establish a cultural subjectivity by distinguishing it from other cultures. Heubel seems to argue against New Confucianism’s distinction between the

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<sup>253</sup> Heubel, Fabian, 跨文化批判與中國現代性之哲學反思[Transcultural Critique and Philosophical Reflections on Chinese Modernity], 文化研究 [A Journal of Cultural Studies], no. 8, (Spring 2009): 135.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. 130.

<sup>255</sup> Heubel, Fabian, 跨文化批判與當代漢語哲學：晚期福柯研究的方法論反思 [Transcultural Critique and Contemporary Philosophy in Chinese: Methodological Reflections on the Late Foucault], 揭諦 [Boundless Treasure], no. 13, (June, 2007): 47.

<sup>256</sup> Heubel’s criticism of New Confucian like Mou is also applicable to Watsuji, who also assumes the existence of a ‘fixed’ value defining the Japanese Spirit. Although Watsuji illustrates three stages of the historical development of Japanese spirit with three different slogans—sonô jôi, chûkun aikoku and Japanese spirit, all are related to the essential value of loyalty to the Emperor.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. 44.



self and the other; however, Chinese cultural subjectivity would cease to exist if there were no essential cultural distinction. As this thesis aims to establish a Kierkegaardian account of cultural self (namely, the ontological task, as it is mentioned in chapter 1), Heubel's transcultural approach can hardly be applied here. Moreover, as we shall see in chapter 3.2, even there is no essential value determining a culture, a culture is not just a mixture of universal values; instead, *different cultures have different passions or interests in particular values and manifest such passion in particular ways.*

Another major attack on the Hegelian definition of culture as a spirit is the lack of an empirical method to verify whether a set of essential values determine the development of a particular culture. While Hegelian dialectics aims to explain how history develops, Karl Popper criticises the dialectics of being purely speculative, namely, not empirical. Popper refers to Kant when criticises Hegelian dialectics: 'Kant, in his Critique of Pure Reason ... whenever it ventures into a field in which it cannot possibly be checked by\* experience, is liable to get involved in contradictions or antinomies ... In other words, when leaving the field of experience, our speculation can have no scientific status, since to every argument there must be an equally valid counter-argument.' 'Kant's "dialectics", the attack upon metaphysics, was converted into Hegelian dialectics', the main tool of metaphysics.<sup>258</sup> In Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Popper blames Hegel's speculative idea of world-history of being unscientific and fail to explain how history as an empirical phenomenon with the empirical method. For Popper, a true science of history must be empirically falsifiable.

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<sup>258</sup> Popper, Karl, *The Open Society and its Enemies: The High Tide of Prophecy, Hegel, Marx and the Aftermath*, (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1947), Vol. 2, 36.

The methodological difficulty of Hegelian dialectics was also indicated by Albert Levi. According to Levi: ‘Hegel’s scheme for the unfolding of culture is explicitly stated in the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* [Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Science] as the three stages of subjective mind, objective mind and absolute mind (or spirit),<sup>259</sup> which parallels Hegel’s *Lectures on Philosophy of World-History* where the world-historical is divided into three moments. However, for Levi, Hegel’s philosophy of culture does not begin with the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Science*, but starts from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. According to Levi,

the *Phenomenology of Spirit* constitutes a *system* of human cultural experience, but a system, as we have seen, dualistically conceived out of logical and temporal elements. On the one hand the scale of forms is a logically and a structurally ordered whole; on the other hand its elements manifest themselves as the experience of conscious individuals in time—they are historical phenomena and therefore together constitute a determinate historical tradition.<sup>260</sup>

Because Hegel fails to reconcile the tensions between the logical and the temporal elements, Hegelian dialectics can hardly explain how the speculative Spirit dominates and direct temporal changes:

The Hegelian conception of the *Zeitgeist* and of the internal unity and congruence of a culture has given a certain impetus to the writing of cultural history, but one which has brought a host

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Levi, Albert William, ‘Hegel’s Phenomenology as a Philosophy of Culture’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 4, (October 1984): 453.

of methodological difficulties in its wake. For if the historiography of the spirit is our philosophic task, how must we comfortably proceed? And if the revelation of the *Zeitgeist* in the multiplicity of its cultural forms is the vocation of the historian, how shall he protect himself against delusion and error in his quest? These questions led to a host of new philosophic problems as the nineteenth century drew to a close--particularly the problem of the definition and elucidation of the *Geisteswissenschaften*--the sciences of man and of culture, and it is to these problems that the search for the roots of the philosophy of culture, would then profitably turn.<sup>261</sup>

Here is a deeper metaphysical problem underlying Levi's criticism of Hegel: that the Hegelian dialectic as a speculative system follows the principle of necessity, while historical events as empirical phenomenon follow the principle of contingency, which agrees with Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel: 'Everything that becomes historical is contingent, inasmuch as precisely by coming into existence, by becoming historical, it has its element of contingency, inasmuch as contingency is precisely the one factor in all coming into existence.' (*CUP* I.98) Kierkegaard's discussion on the distinction between necessity and contingency will be discussed in chapter 4.4 when we discuss Kierkegaard's idea of becoming as coming into existence, which provides a Kierkegaardian explanation of cultural development.

When Mou adopts Hegelian dialectics, he lacks empirical method demonstrating that his description of the contents of Chinese culture is true. Mou begins his philosophy of culture from Confucian moral metaphysics and assumes that Chinese culture is dominated by

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid. 470.

Confucian values. Such an assumption, however, is challengeable because Taoism also has a major impact on Chinese culture, history and politics, as we shall see in chapter 3.2.

Thanks to his de-metaphysical approach and emphasis on the climatic condition, it seems that Watsuji's philosophy of culture avoids the problem of the lack of empirical method. Watsuji begins his investigation of the essential value of Japanese culture from the idea of *aidagara* and sees how Japanese people establish a mutual relationship with one another. However, there is still little empirical evidence supporting his conclusion that loyalty to the emperor is the highest moral value in Japanese culture. Loyalty to the emperor is not always the highest value in Japanese history. During the Nanboku-chō period (南北朝, 1336-1392), for example, the emperor was merely a puppet of the Muromachi shogunate. Ashikaga Takauji (足利尊氏, 1305-1358) expelled the Emperor Go-Daigo (後醍醐天皇, 1288-1339) from Kyoto and enthroned the Emperor Kōmyō (光明天皇, 1322-1380). Emperor Go-Daigo fled to Yoshino and re-establish his government. If loyalty to the emperor were always the highest value of Japanese culture, Ashikaga would not have attempted to overthrow the emperor.

Even if one agrees that there is a cultural spirit or a set of fixed essential values determining cultural development, it is doubtful how people can understand and interpret such spirit or set of values which is purely speculative and not empirically verifiable, and manifest them in cultural development. If no Chinese knew about the Confucian spirit proclaimed by New Confucians, it is doubtful how Chinese could manifest the Confucian spirit in Chinese history. For example, Chan criticises Mou of 'hegemonic positioning of *Ruxue* [Confucianism] as the spiritual and orthodox representation of ... Chinese philosophy-cum-

culture' while Buddhism and Daoism are downgraded as 'heterodoxies'.<sup>262</sup> As a result, when explaining Chinese history, Mou appeals to the Hegelian dialectical development of the Confucian spirit. 'When the development of Chinese cultural life reached the Northern Song period, it was time for the promulgation of the *Ru* learning of inner sageliness. This was the inevitable and natural outcome of the working of history.'<sup>263</sup> Mou only acknowledges the Confucian scholar's understanding of Chinese culture and fail to acknowledge the peasants' understandings which may actually be more influenced by Chinese Folk religion.

Confucians may defend their position by arguing that the manifestations of cultural values do not presuppose people's understanding of these cultural values. According to Xunzi, even if the people misunderstand the rituals, as long as the rituals are instituted by the sage and regulated by the officials who know the cultural values behind, values can still be manifested properly:

The sacrificial rites are the refined expression of remembrance and longing ... They are the fullest manifestation of ritual, proper regulation, good form, and proper appearance. If one is not a sage, then one will not be able to understand them. The sage clearly understands them. The well-bred man and the superior man [君子] are at ease in carrying them out. The officials take them as things to be preserved. The common people take them as their set customs. The [superior man] regards them as the way to be a proper human being. The common people regard them as serving the ghosts.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Chan, Nganying Serina, 'The Thought of Mou Zong-San', 80.

<sup>263</sup> Trans. *ibid.* 81. 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 心體與性體 [*Mind Substance and Nature Substance*], 321.

<sup>264</sup> Original text: 「祭者、志意思慕之情也。忠信愛敬之至矣，禮節文貌之盛矣，苟非聖人，莫之能

Based upon the quotation above, Hsu Ming-chu (許明珠) and Mou Zhongjian (牟鐘鑿) suggest the theory of 'religion as cultural decoration' (宗教文飾論). According to Hsu, Xunzi is an atheist who denies the existence of gods, spirits and ghosts but insists on preserving the religious rituals in order to maintain moral conducts and political governance.<sup>265</sup> Common people's superstitious fear of karma prevents them from being vicious and immoral. Here Xunzi's attitude towards religion is different from Kant's. In Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, the postulates 'of immortality, of freedom considered positively (as the causality of a being insofar as it belongs to the intelligible world), and of the existence of God' (*CPrR*, 132) are 'theoretical proposition[s], though one not demonstrable as such, insofar as it is attached inseparably to an a priori unconditionally valid practical law.' (*CPrR*, 122) Kant suggests that human beings must think moral practice brings happiness, yet happiness is not guaranteed by the moral practice itself, and therefore one must postulate God's existence. Xunzi, however, does not think moral actions requires the assumption of God's existence. Rather, he argues that, even if the common people ignore the moral values but emphasise religious values of the rituals, their misinterpretations do not prevent them from manifesting moral values.<sup>266</sup>

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知也。聖人明知之，士君子安行之，官人以為守，百姓以成俗；其在君子以為人道也，其在百姓以為鬼事也。」(《荀子·禮論》) Trans. Eric L Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 213-214.

However, I do not take Hutton's translation of the term 君子 *gwan1 zi2* as "gentleman". Instead, I agree with Chan Wing-tsit that 君子 should be translated as superior man, as it is always contrasted with the inferior man 小人 in Confucian context. See the chapters on Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi in Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 14-48, 49-83 & 115-135.

<sup>265</sup> 許明珠 [Hsu Ming-chu], 從宗教文飾觀評議荀子禮論 [To Comment and Analyse Xunzi's Li Theory by Xunzi's Atheistic Argument], 當代儒學研究 [Contemporary Confucian Studies], no.7, (Dec 2009): 114.

<sup>266</sup> Recent studies suggest that Xunzi's philosophy of religion seems to be similar to Hobbes'. See Eric Schwitzgebel, 'Human Nature and Moral Education in Mencius, Xunzi, Hobbes, and Rousseau', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (Apr. 2007): 147-168.

However, Xunzi's defence has two problems. Firstly, he assumes that cultural values are merely determined by the sage for the sake of moral cultivation and governance. Secondly, he assumes that the literati's moral interpretations of rituals are correct while the common people's religious interpretations are incorrect. The first assumption is widely challenged by contemporary Chinese philosophers. According to Lu Xin, there was a long process of 'rationalisation' or ritual reforms in ancient China when religious values were rejected and moral values were inserted. During Zhou dynasty (1046-249 BC), the Duke of Zhou (周公) reformed the rituals while Confucius appreciated the moral values embedded in them. Such a process is known as a reform 'from witch to historian' (由巫而史).<sup>267</sup> Nor is the second assumption justified. Both the upper class and the lower class of the Chinese society participated in Chinese cultural development. As Chang Fong-long indicates: 'to study Chinese culture, one should not only focus on the intellectual culture of the upper class, but also the commoner's culture of the lower class, for they are interacting with and inter-influencing each other.'<sup>268</sup>

Xunzi fails to acknowledge the fact that cultures usually have a wide range of values which open to alternative interpretations or understandings. Considering the significant diversity of cultural values within the East Asian cultural sphere, it is important to acknowledge the openness of interpretation of East Asian cultural values rather than narrowing the interpretation to a Confucian perspective, considering the significant manifestations of Buddhist, Taoist, Shinto and Shamanist values in East Asian history. It is appropriate to look

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<sup>267</sup> For details, see 呂欣 [Lu xin], 理性化的回溯:從孔子到巫史傳統 [Tracing Back the Rationalisation Process: From Confucius to the Witch-Historian Tradition], 鵝湖月刊 [Legein Monthly] 44, no. 8, (Feb 2019): 57-62.

<sup>268</sup> 張豐隆 [Chang Fong-long], 淺說道教與中國民間信仰 [A Brief Discussion on Daoist Religion and Chinese Folk Religion], 歷史教育 [Historical Education], no. 8, (Dec, 2001):142.

at Korean culture as an example demonstrating the significance of openness. Korean culture is historically strongly influenced by Korean Confucianism and Chinese culture. However, the moral passion endorsed by Confucianism does not suppress the manifestation of religious passions in contemporary South Korea. According to official statistics, in 2015, over 44% of Koreans have some with religious belief, where Catholicism accounts for 18%, Protestantism for 45% and Buddhism for 35%.<sup>269</sup> According to Lee Song-Chong, Korean Neo-Confucians are not merely 'virtue-oriented'. 'In contrast to Confucius' attempt to eliminate personal devotion and attachment to Heaven, Korean Neo-Confucian practices were mixed with the shamanistic belief that treated Heaven as anthropomorphic God. Understanding Heaven as God, who actively responds to human situations, was not difficult for the Korean religious mind.'<sup>270</sup> Similarly, Colin Lewis argues that 'shamanism provided the common people with a spirit-based system by which they could supplicate the supernatural powers in accordance with their own cultural heritage, thus bridging the divine-human gap in a way that could positively benefit their daily lives.'<sup>271</sup> Here Lee and Lewis preserve the openness when interpreting the cultural values of Korean culture. Both acknowledge not only Confucian moral values but also Korean Shamanistic beliefs are essential cultural values which drive Korean cultural development.

One may defend the definition of Chinese culture in terms of Confucian spirit by arguing that the assumption of a fixed set of cultural values does not eliminate the openness of interpretation. While the values are fixed, they are implicit, which allows philosophers from

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<sup>269</sup> See <http://www.korea.net/AboutKorea/Korean-Life/Religion> achieved on 24 April, 2019.

<sup>270</sup> Lee, Song-Chong, 'Revisiting the Confucian Norms in Korean Church Growth', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1, no. 13, (September 2011): 88.

<sup>271</sup> Lewis, Colin, *The Soul of Korean Christianity: How the Shamans, Buddha, and Confucius Paved the Way for Jesus in the Land of the Morning Calm*, (Thesis, Seattle Pacific University, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014), 9.



different horizons to have different understandings of the same values. Confucian scholars believed that Chinese culture is dominated by Confucian moral values, but their interpretations of ‘Confucian moral values’ vary with history. For example, during the Han Dynasty (221BC-220 AD), the Confucian interpretation of moral values was ‘cosmology-centred’.<sup>272</sup> According to Mou Zongsan, it is possible to have new interpretations of Confucian canons which are open to a new tradition. ‘Zhu Zi [朱子 1130-1200] was also a Confucian, but the Zhu Zi tradition is not equivalent to the Confucius tradition. Zhu Zi and Cheng Yichuan [程伊川 1033-1108] were philosophers in the Confucian tradition who opened up a fresh path leading to another tradition.’<sup>273</sup> While Wang Yang-ming’s ‘mind-nature theory’ is adopted by New Confucian as the Confucian moral value determining Chinese culture, Mou Zongsan acknowledges the ‘nature reason study’ (性理學) proclaimed by Cheng-Zhu School as an alternative understanding of Confucian moral values and Chinese culture. Therefore, even if Chinese culture were determined by a fixed set of Confucian moral values, the interpretations of these values would still vary with history. In other words, Confucian moral values are concealed within history. While different philosophers using the same term ‘Confucian moral values’ to define Chinese culture, they are using the term with very different designations—cosmology, mind nature theory or nature reason study. However, such so-called openness is limited. It still fails to acknowledge non-Confucian values, especially Buddhist and Taoist values which seem to have significant influences in East Asian cultural development. The defence above also fails to address why different Confucians may have a different interpretation of the same Confucian moral values and whether any external element involves—Buddhist, Taoist etc.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> See Mou, Zong-San, *Nineteen Lectures*, Chp. 4, 67.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.* Chp. 3, 47.

<sup>274</sup> Even though Neo-Confucianism, including Cheng-Zhu school and Lu-Wang school were famous of

Having summarised the problems of East Asian Hegelian philosophy of culture, it is appropriate to introduce Gadamer's hermeneutics, which emphasises the openness of interpretation, as a solution resolving three theoretical difficulties discussed above. In order to understand Gadamer's concept of prejudice, horizon and tradition which addresses the issue of cultural development, one should first investigate the relationship between language and understanding, which goes back to Humboldt's philosophy of language.

### **2.3.2 Humboldt: Culture as the Cultivation of the Mind Through Language**

This section aims to introduce a hermeneutical definition of culture, namely culture as tradition. Unlike the anthropological definition of culture, which merely defines culture in terms of ways of living and denies the significance of values, hermeneutics argues that culture involves a changing set of values. The development of culture (*Bildung*) is not driven by the spirit (in the Hegelian sense). Instead, it is driven by the language of a community. The succession of a language from previous generations conveys not only grammar and vocabularies but also values and worldviews to the contemporary generations of the community. In order to understand the relation between language and culture, it is appropriate to look at Herder's and Humboldt's discussion of the relation between language and culture before looking at contemporary hermeneutics.

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criticising Buddhism, the key term 'original mind' (本心) which both schools used extensively, actually comes from Zen Buddhism. See Cheng Hsueh-Li, 'Confucianism and Zen (Ch'an): Philosophy of Education', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, no. 12, (1985): 197-215.

While Herder defines culture as the development of the spirit, he argues that cultural development (*Bildung*) is determined by language. As Herder said: ‘*the further formation of language, as the dialect of the [familial] fathers, progresses that much more strongly. That is why nature has chosen this further formation*’ and ‘nature has linked a new chain: *tradition from people to people.*’<sup>275</sup> Unlike Hegel, Herder rejects the existence of a universal principle determining the development of all cultures. ‘[A]ll humans possess culture and one cannot judge one set of cultural practices by the standards of another.’<sup>276</sup> For Herder, culture is *rational* or at least related to the *understanding* as it is determined by language. It is the total experience of people. It is a conceptual framework. Without culture, one has no understanding of anything, for culture is determined by language and both language and culture shape one’s ways of thinking. Herder’s emphasis on language agrees with W.V. Humboldt, who suggests that ‘the whole mode of perceiving things subjectively necessarily passes over into cultivation and the use of language.’<sup>277</sup>

Humboldt agrees with Herder and suggests a dynamic interaction between culture and language. According to James W. Underhill, there are two inseparable objectives in Humboldt’s philosophy of language: (1) ‘to consider the way the language system shapes the thought of a culture’ and (2) ‘to consider the contribution made to the development of that culture by exceptional individuals who were capable of invigorating the vibrant living

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<sup>275</sup> Herder, Johann Gottfried, *Essays on the Origin of Language*, [1772], III, 160.

<sup>276</sup> Schoenmakers, Hans, *The Power of Culture*, 17.

<sup>277</sup> Humboldt, W.V., *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language Structure and its Influence on the Mental Development of Mankind*, trans. Peter Heath, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998),

impulse of speech as a mode for conception and expression.’<sup>278</sup> This section will focus on the first objective, which is directly related to the research aim of this project.

Language is not a fixed system but a living and changing organism according to Humboldt. Language is ‘an enduring thing, and at every moment a *transitory* one.’ As he said: ‘In itself it is no product (*Ergon*) but an activity (*Energeia*). Its true definition can therefore only be a genetic one. For it is the ever-repeated *mental labour* of making the *articulated* sound capable of expressing *thought*. In a direct and strict sense, this is the definition of *speech* on any occasion’.<sup>279</sup> Language is not only an activity of the human mind, but also an ‘interactivity’ as Underhill indicates: ‘Speech is doubly interactive since it entails not only subjects interacting with each other: it also implies an interaction between the mind and the concepts of the world which language furnishes the mind with.’<sup>280</sup>

The cultivation or the development of culture, i.e. *Bildung*, is driven by language as an on-going interaction between the mind and the concepts of the world. Such *Bildung* involves three interactive forces: ‘the cultivation of one’s self, the cultivation of the mind of humanity, and the cultivation of one’s language’<sup>281</sup>. The forms of these forces were provided by language which is the ‘organ of thought’<sup>282</sup>. The cultivation of the mind of humanity involves not only the members of the contemporary community, but also the members of the previous generations. For ‘[l]anguage as the cultivation of the mind or spirit’ is ‘the active building

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<sup>278</sup> Underhill, James W., *Humboldt, Worldview and Language*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 17.

<sup>279</sup> Humboldt, W.V., *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language Structure and its Influence on the Mental Development of Mankind*, trans. Peter Heath, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 49.

<sup>280</sup> Underhill, James W., *Humboldt, Worldview and Language*, 65.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.* 65.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.* 66.

of concepts by individual minds which would fix these concepts by the act of speaking with others, and leave them embedded in the memory of men in speech handed down to subsequent generations.<sup>283</sup> When a person is born in a family, he learns his native language from his parents. In other words, he inherits the language from his previous generations. He inherits not only the grammar and the vocabularies but also the world-view (*Weltansicht*) which 'is the capacity which language bestows upon us to form the concepts with which we think and which we need in order to communicate.'<sup>284</sup> In short, culture or *Bildung* as 'the cultivation of the mind through language and thought' is essential to a 'society's (or rather a nation's) development.'<sup>285</sup>

One should not misinterpret Humboldt's philosophy of language as a linguistic determinism in which language determines an individual's thoughts or the development of the culture. Instead, Humboldt argues that individuals establish their own unique worldviews with the help of language:

the whole mode of *perceiving* things *subjectively* necessarily passes over into cultivation and the use of language. For the *word* arises from this very perceiving; it is a copy, not of the object itself, but of the image thereof produced in consciousness. Since all objective perception is inevitably tinged with *subjectivity*, we may consider every individual, even apart from language, as a unique aspect of the world-view.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. 59, Quoted in Underhill, James W., *Humboldt, Worldview and Language*, 85.

Similarly, Culture as *Bildung* does not determine an individual's thought either. Culture, language and an individual's mind are interacting with each other without determining one another. The worldview is a product of the interaction between the subjective mind and the objective perception of language. Worldviews vary amongst individual members within the same culture due to the differences in subjective perception. Individual freedom is preserved in Humboldt's philosophy of language; an individual may oppose the culture which has shaped his worldview and the prevailing worldviews shared by other members of the same culture. For example, Li Zhi (李贄 1527-1602) was born in a Chinese Muslim family in the Ming dynasty when Confucianism was the main philosophy, and he only spoke Hokkien Chinese. But his cultural and linguistic limitations did not prevent him from being a strong critic of Islam and Confucianism. Even without an obvious impact from a foreign language or culture, an individual is still able to turn against his own culture and prevailing worldviews in his society, for the subjective perceptions of the objective language and cultural values are determined by individual's free will.

When an individual learns a foreign language, he expands his horizon and worldviews. He is able to compare the values and ideas from different cultures with his subjective perceptions. Therefore, translations and transcultural dialogues often lead to social reforms and even revolutions in modern East Asia. For example, Robert Morrison (1782-1834), the first Protestant missionary to China, introduced the concept of 'law' from the English language to Chinese languages by translating the term as '法律' (*faat3 leot6*) in *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language* in 1815.<sup>287</sup> From then on the Western concept of 'law' is introduced

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<sup>287</sup> Morrison, Robert, *A Dictionary to the Chinese Language*, (Macao: East India Company's Press, 1815), 249.

to East Asia. Translations of the western terms into Chinese overcome language barriers. Without Morrison's translation of the term 'law' into Chinese languages, it would have been impossible for the Chinese languages native speaker to understand the concept of law unless they learnt English. Once the term 'law' is translated from English to Chinese languages, the vocabulary in the Chinese language is enriched, which expands the Chinese language's native speakers' horizon. New worldviews were brainstormed in nineteenth-century East Asia when the moderates like Liang Qichao called for Constitutional Monarchy and the radicals like Sun Yat-sen called for a republic.

Humboldt's emphasis on language implies an obvious problem: if culture is the cultivation of the mind through language, it is impossible for a culture to have more than one language or a language through which several different cultures develop. For the latter situation, Humboldt may argue that language itself does not determine the cultivation of culture. The same language is spoken in different societies in a different way, which needs different understandings of the world.

But Humboldt's philosophy of language can hardly explain the former case where one culture speaks several spoken languages. Different spoken languages imply different ways of interactions 'between the mind and the concepts of the world which language furnishes the mind with'. Such a problem is quite politically sensitive and controversial in China, where language rights are always related to separatism. It is debatable whether Chinese is a single language. Western linguists such as Enfield argue that the Chinese language is a language family (known as Sinitic languages) while Chinese linguists like Wang Li (1900-1986) argues that Chinese is a language consisting of several 'dialects'. The problem is that

these ‘dialects’, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu (Shanghainese), Minnanese, Hakka, Xiang and Gan, are incommunicable with each other. The differences between Mandarin (a language with only four tones) and Cantonese (a language with nine tones) are as obvious as those between English and German. If Humboldt’s philosophy of culture, which emphasises speech rather than the writing, is true, then Chinese culture does not exist. Mandarin should have its own Mandarin culture while Cantonese should have its own Cantonese culture. Hong Kong Localists who argue for the cultural distinction between Hong Kong and China based upon the linguistic distinction between Cantonese and Mandarin may support Humboldt’s emphasis on spoken language. However, if a Chinese nationalist tries to maintain the unity of one Chinese culture, he must either argue that the Chinese language is merely one language consisting of several incommunicable ‘dialects’ or simply reject Humboldt’s philosophy of language by rejecting the inter-relation between language and culture.

While the impacts of language on the cultivation of a culture should not be ignored, Humboldt seems to overemphasise the importance of spoken language or speech. As a linguist, Humboldt studied Classical Chinese but he did not appreciate Chinese characters or Hanzi. In his speech in 1824, Humboldt argued that ‘the phonogram languages follow the essential requirement of language[, namely,] merely serve the phoneme, while Hanzi and other Ideogram languages “introduce the external images ... and destroy the essential subjectivity of language”’.<sup>288</sup> Humboldt’s assumption of the phone as the essence of language is accused of being Eurocentric and phonocentrist by Chinese linguists like Lin

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<sup>288</sup> 王玉玲 [Wang Yuling], 威廉·馮·洪堡特的漢語研究及其影響 [Wilhelm von Humboldt’s Chinese Research and Its Influence], 漢學研究通訊 [E-Newsletter for Research in Chinese Studies] 36, no. 2, (May 2017): 27.



Yuan-tse.<sup>289</sup> Kwang Tze-Wan defends Chinese language by arguing that while the development of Chinese language does not follow the phonic elements: '[i]nstead of relying on externally precipitated sound forms, Chinese grammar has developed in such a way that the intellectual power tends to take direct control over the sentence.'<sup>290</sup>

In East Asia, the *Bildung* of cultures of Chinese civilizations, Joseon (Korea) and Japan are expressed by their common *written language*, i.e. Classical Chinese. It is the Written Language that unites them as the East Asian Cultural Sphere. Li Suping indicates that 'Hanzi is the carrier structure of Confucianism.'<sup>291</sup> As Li quotes from Leon Van der Meersch: 'Chinese characters are not writing process but are the terms themselves ... every character assigns certain object without borrowing spoken language again.'<sup>292</sup> Therefore, Li indicates that 'as a carrier of Confucianism, Hanzi enters Korean peninsula early before the Three Kingdoms period [57 to 668 AD]. Ancient Korean had only spoken languages but no written language, therefore the introduction of Hanzi has a significant contribution to the history of Korean culture.'<sup>293</sup> Even though when Hangeul was invented during 1419-1450, its morphism 'was deeply influenced by the Confucianism embedded in Hanzi.' According to the *Samples and Significance Edition of Hunminjeongeum* (訓民正音解例本製字解, 1446), the morphism of Hangeul follows the 'way of the heaven and earth, which is ying-yang and

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<sup>289</sup> See 林遠澤 [Lin Yuan-tse], 從洪堡特語言哲學傳統論在漢語中的漢字思維 [On the Mode of Thinking Engendered from the Chinese Script in Its Relation to the Chinese Language: Humboldt's Quest and Subsequent Developments] 漢學研究 [E-Newsletter for Research in Chinese Studies] 33, no. 4 (Jun 2015), 7-47.

<sup>290</sup> Kwan, Tze-wan, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* Vol. 29, No. 2 (JUNE 2001), 169-24

<sup>291</sup> 李甦平 [Li Suping], 以韓國三國時代儒學詮釋東亞文化圈 [An Interpretation of East Asian Cultural Sphere from the Perspective of Three Kingdoms of Korea], ed. 高士明 [Gao Shiming], 東亞文明圈的形成與發展：儒家思想篇 [The Formation and Development of East Asian Cultural Sphere—On Confucianism], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, Dec 2008), 115..

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.* 117.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.* 118

five elements [cosmology].<sup>294</sup> It is Hanzi which facilitated the development of Korean culture. Similarly, historian Koyasu Nobukuni (子安宣邦) argues that without Hanzi: ‘Japanese language cannot exist.’ ‘As a written language, Hanzi can accommodate different national language, and therefore is adopted by ancient Japanese.’<sup>295</sup> With the help of Classical Chinese as a common language in the past, Confucianism, Buddhism and Ritsuryō (律令制, criminal and administrative codes legal system) are spread among East Asian countries. Classical Chinese also facilitated the Chinese Tributary System, where countries use Classical Chinese as the standard diplomatic language. In short, for East Asian cultures, it is the ideograms of Hanzi rather than the phonetic elements of Chinese languages, Japanese or Korean, to shape their thoughts. One should avoid Humboldt’s phonocentrism when studying the relation between East Asian languages and cultures.

To sum up, there are several factors besides the spoken language which interact with the cultivation of the culture and that of the individual’s mind. Culture should not only be the cultivation of an individual’s mind through spoken language. Also, language itself fails to explain the cultural distinctions. Humboldt’s philosophy of language seems to deny the possibility of a multilingual culture. However, regardless of theoretical limitations, Humboldt’s philosophy of language is still meaningful to contemporary cultural theories. Humboldt articulates the relations among culture, language and the individual’s mind. The inheritance of the native language from the previous generations implies the inheritance of values, meanings and worldviews from the history, which leads us to Gadamer’s concepts of prejudices, horizons and traditions in modern hermeneutics.

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>295</sup> 子安宣邦 [Koyasu Nobukuni], 東亞論：日本現代思想批判 [On East Asia: a Critique of Contemporary Japanese Thought], (Changchun: Jilin People’s Publishing, Sep 2004), 293.

### 2.3.3. Hermeneutical Issues in Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Gadamer

This section aims to investigate Gadamer's concepts of the horizon, prejudice and tradition and how these concepts may provide an alternative definition of culture to East Asian philosophers. I will firstly explain Gadamer's concept of the history of effect (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and explains the significance of consciousness of the hermeneutical situation, with reference to the influence of Schleiermacher, Humboldt and Dilthey. Secondly, I will explain how Gadamer's definition of culture as tradition resolves the three theoretical problems encountered by East Asian Hegelian, and how Gadamer's hermeneutics can address the major issues in East Asian philosophy of culture. Finally, I will point out that Gadamer's hermeneutics can only fulfil the 'epistemic task' (to understand what is a culture) but does not fulfil the 'ontological task' (to establish a cultural subjectivity). Considering the deficiency of Gadamer's hermeneutics, we shall move to Kierkegaard's philosophy of culture in the next chapter, which can establish a cultural self.

Hermeneutics becomes relevant to the philosophy of culture because it is a discipline studying what is understanding, while culture constructs an individual's worldviews which conditions his/her understandings. As Jeff Malpas says,

Traditionally, hermeneutics is taken to have its origins in problems of biblical exegesis and in the development of a theoretical framework to govern and direct such exegetical practice. In the hands of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century theorists, writers such as Chladenius

and Meier, Ast and Schleiermacher, hermeneutics was developed into a more encompassing theory of textual interpretation in general—a set of rules that provide the basis for good interpretive practise no matter what the subject matter.<sup>296</sup>

Schleiermacher is one of the earliest philosophers who defines hermeneutics as the study of understanding in general rather than the interpretation of a particular text.

Hermeneutics as the art of understanding does not yet exist in a general manner, there are instead only several forms of specific hermeneutics. ... [T]he art of understanding, ...only depend on the general principles.<sup>297</sup>

Schleiermacher is aware of the influence of language on understandings, writing that ‘General hermeneutics ... belongs together both with criticism and with grammar.’<sup>298</sup> For the

elements of language, formal and material, have the same value for complete understanding. The former express the connections. If one learns the material elements from the lexicon, one learns the formal elements by the grammar, in particular the syntax. The same is valid of these formal elements (particles) as of the material ones, namely that each of them is a unity, but even this is not to be recognised via opposition, but rather in the form of gradual transition. Only in

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<sup>296</sup> Malpas, Jeff, ‘Hans-Georg Gadamer’, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 17 September, 2018. Accessed 30 May, 2019. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/>

<sup>297</sup> Schleiermacher, Frederick, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, trans. & ed. Andrew Browie, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

grammar one is more reliant on the etymological process because here the forms are presented in determinate relationships.<sup>299</sup>

While Schleiermacher has not yet applied his general hermeneutics to the philosophy of culture, Dilthey expands the applications of hermeneutics to the practical life. For Dilthey, the object of understanding is not limited to the written text or spoken speech; it also covers the practical life:

Understanding first arises in the interests of practical life. Here, people interact with one another. They must make themselves understandable to each other. One must know what the other is up to. In this way the elementary forms of understanding first appear. They are like letters of the alphabet, whose systematic combination makes higher forms of understanding possible. I consider the interpretation of a simple expression of life to be such an elementary form of understanding.<sup>300</sup>

When a person tries to interpret a 'simple expression' of other's life, he is trying to understand the other's expression which contains meaning. Supposing that he is interpreting the act of another member from the same culture. Naturally, he appeals to such culture which provides meanings and values for interpretation. A shared common context between the observer and the performer make understanding possible; however, such a common context is not limited to spoken language. According to Dilthey,

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>300</sup> Dilthey, Wilhelm, *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding*, trans. R.M. Zaner & K.L. Helges, (Martinus Nijhoff the Hague, 1977), 125.

Before he learns to speak, the child is already completely immersed in the medium of common contexts. And he learns to understand gestures and facial expressions, motions and exclamations, words and sentences only because they confront him as being always the same, and as always bearing the same relation to that which they signify and express. In this way, the individual becomes oriented in the world of objective spirit.

An important consequence for the process of understanding results from this. The expression of life which the individual apprehends is ordinarily not taken by him to be something isolated, but is rather, as it were, saturated [*erfüllt*] with a knowledge of that which is held in common and with a relationship, given in this expression, to something inner.<sup>301</sup>

In other words, if an individual observer understands an individual performer's expression of life, they must share knowledge 'held in common and with a relationship' between the meanings and the expressions. It should be noticed that Dilthey still believes in the correspondence between the 'inner' values or meaning and the 'outer' cultural expression, behaviour or phenomenon.

However, like Hegel, Dilthey still believes in the existence of a fixed 'objective spirit' which determine the common context shared by the members of a culture. As Dilthey says:

[the] insertion of the particular expression of life into something held in common is facilitated by the fact that objective spirit contains an articulated order within itself. It encompasses particular homogeneous systems [*Zusammenhänge*] such as law or religion, and these have fixed and regular structures [...] ... [A]ccording to the relationship between the expression of life

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

and the spiritual meaning [*Geistigen*] which exists within this common context [*Gemeinsamkeit*], the spiritual meaning which belongs to the expression of life is simultaneously brought to completion with its insertion into a common context [*Gemeinsames*].<sup>302</sup>

Dilthey's assumption of the existence of a fixed objective spirit which determines the common context facilitating the expressions of life lead us back to the theoretical problems encountered by East Asian Hegelianism, namely, the impossibility of cultural changes, the lack of empirical method and the neglect of the openness of interpretation, as we have seen in section 2.3.1.

Unlike Schleiermacher and Dilthey, Gadamer 'develops a philosophical hermeneutics that provides an account of the proper ground for understanding, while nevertheless rejecting the attempt, whether in relation to the *Geisteswissenschaften* or elsewhere, to found understanding on any method or set of rules.'<sup>303</sup> Gadamer's hermeneutics is influenced by Heidegger's lectures *The Hermeneutics of Facticity* where Heidegger regards general hermeneutics

'as that which allows the self-disclosure of the structure of understanding as such ... All understanding that is directed at the grasp of some particular subject matter is thus based in a prior 'ontological' understanding—a prior hermeneutical situatedness. On this basis,

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>303</sup> Malpas, Jeff, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/gadamer/>

hermeneutics can be understood as the attempt to ‘make explicit’ the structure of such situatedness.<sup>304</sup>

Gadamer’s task, therefore, is to articulate the conditions which make understanding possible. In order to articulate the structure of situatedness, Gadamer investigates how history affects human’s understanding. Gadamer realises that there is ‘a relationship that constitutes both the reality of history and the reality of historical understanding’, known as ‘history of effect’ (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). ‘Understanding is, essentially, a historically effected event’.<sup>305</sup> One is thrown into a particular existential situation where there is a history. Such a background constructs but limits one’s worldview. Language, for example, is a significant historical factor which constructs human’s understanding. Hanzi (漢字 Chinese Characters) traces back to sixth millennium century BC, said to be invented by Changjie (倉頡), which was adopted as the written language by Korean (known as 한자 *hanja*) and is still used by Chinese languages (Cantonese and Mandarin etc.) and Japanese speakers. In particular Cantonese preserves significant Old Chinese and Old Baiyue languages heritages. According to Li Jing Zhong (李敬忠), the majority of modern Cantonese lexicon comes from Classical Chinese, while the grammar and phonetics are similar to Baiyue languages.<sup>306</sup> For example, the word *hai6* (係, to be) is commonly found in Classical Chinese literature like *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*<sup>307</sup> and *Dream of the Red Chamber*.<sup>308</sup> When a Cantonese speaker is

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, (Continuum International Publishing Group), 299.

<sup>306</sup> 李敬忠 [Li Jing Zhong], 粵語中的百越語成分問題 [The Question of Baiyue Components of Cantonese], 學術論壇 (雙月刊) [*Scholaric Forum (bimonthly)*], no.5 (1991): 65-72.

<sup>307</sup> e.g. Chapter 27 when Han Fu (韓福) stopped Guan Yu from passing the checkpoint, he said, ‘if you do not have a pass, you are [係 *hai6*] fleeing.’. Original text: 「若無文憑，即係逃竄。」(《三國演義·第二十七回》)

<sup>308</sup> e.g. Chapter 1, ‘Jia Yuquan is [係 *hai6*] from Huzhou and is [是 *si6*] also born of a family of literati and officers.’ Original text: 「賈雨村原係湖州人氏，也是詩書仕宦之族。」(《紅樓夢·第一回》) Notice



aware of these linguistic heritages found in daily Cantonese conversation, he/she is conscious of the history of effect. He/she has a ‘consciousness of being affected by history (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*)’, i.e. ‘consciousness of the hermeneutical situation.’<sup>309</sup>

Gadamer defines the hermeneutical situation ‘by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision’.<sup>310</sup> In a hermeneutical situation there is always a pre-given history that limits our understanding, known as prejudice. But prejudice ‘does not necessarily mean a false judgement’. Instead, it ‘means a judgement that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined.’<sup>311</sup> The prejudices are given by the ‘tradition’ (which is ‘the ground of ... validity’<sup>312</sup>) succeeding from the previous generation. Therefore: ‘Every finite present has its limitations’ not only from the Spatio-temporal dimension but also from the prejudices given by the ‘pre-history’. Prejudices construct the horizon, which is ‘a range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth.’ ‘“To have horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it’.<sup>313</sup> Malpas explains the term ‘horizon’ further as a ‘larger context of meaning in which any particular meaningful presentation is situated’.<sup>314</sup> However,

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that *hai6* and *si6* are used interchangeably here, although the latter is rarely used in Cantonese but mainly in Mandarin.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid. 301.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid. 273.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. 282.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. 301.

<sup>314</sup> Malpas, Jeff, ‘Hans-Georg Gadamer’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/gadamer/>

unlike Hegel or Dilthey, Gadamer argues that the horizon of the present is not a 'fixed set of opinions' while the otherness of the past is not 'foregrounded from it as from a fixed ground'.<sup>315</sup> The horizon 'changes for a person who is moving. Thus, the horizon of the past, out of which all human lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion. The surrounding horizon is not set in motion by historical consciousness' but is 'aware of itself' 'in this motion'.<sup>316</sup>

But how can one understand the tradition, considering the fact that one is limited by the horizon of the present? Dilthey thinks one may return back to the 'lived experience' (*Erlebnis*) of the people in the past through a process of projection or transposition 'in which the totality of psychic life is effective in the understanding —re-creation or re-experiencing [Nachbilden oder Nacherleben]. Understanding per se [an sich] is an inverse operation to the course of development itself.'<sup>317</sup> However, Gadamer rejects Dilthey's transposition because no one can totally transcend from his own horizon of the present to the horizon of the past and re-experience the lived experience of the past. Horizon is the conditions of understanding; denying one's own horizon is simply ceasing the possibility of understanding. 'Transposing ourselves' by 'disregarding ourselves' is the cancellation of understanding. One should be 'aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person— by putting *ourselves* in his position' through 'rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other'.<sup>318</sup> For Gadamer, such a higher universality is the commonality among horizons of different ages. Gadamer agrees with

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<sup>315</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, 305.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.* 303.

<sup>317</sup> Dilthey, Wilhelm, 'The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Expressions of Life', *Descriptive Psychology and Historical Understanding*, trans. Richard M. Zaner and Kenneth L Heiges, (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977) 132.

<sup>318</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, 305.

Humboldt that language is an important instrument of cultural development, for '*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting.*' 'and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter's own language.'<sup>319</sup>

Because all horizons receive something from their previous generations, a fusion of horizons makes possible a historical understanding of the past:

If the "historical" question emerges by itself, this means that it no longer arises as a question. It results from the cessation of understanding—a detour in which we get stuck. Part of real understanding, however, is that we regain the concepts of a historical past in such a way that they also include our own comprehension of them. Above I called this "the fusion of horizons".<sup>320</sup>

In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.*<sup>321</sup>

When we try to know ourselves, we must know our own prejudices and the tradition that constructs the horizon that surrounds us in the present. But '*to be historically means that*

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid. 390.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. 367.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid. 305.

*knowledge of oneself can never be complete.* All self-knowledge arises from what is historically pre-given, what with Hegel we call “substance”, because it underlies all subjective intentions and actions, and hence both prescribes and limits every possibility for understanding any tradition whatsoever in its historical alterity.’<sup>322</sup> In short, the incompleteness of self-knowledge results from the fact that we are limited by the horizon of the present; as time passes, our horizons move and therefore expand, which open to the possibility of having new understandings.

As we have seen in section 2.3.1, there are three theoretical problems in East Asian Hegelian philosophy of culture, namely, (1) *the impossibility of changes in cultural values*, (2) *the lack of an empirical method to identify cultural spirit* and (3) *the neglect of openness of value interpretation*. This section explains how Gadamer’s hermeneutics resolves these problems.

The solution to the problem (3) is straightforward, considering the fact that openness is explicitly emphasised by Gadamer hermeneutics due to the incompleteness of self-knowledge. A member of a cultural group can never completely understand his/her own culture, which limits his/her understandings through the history of effect. As a result, Gadamer rejects the idea of ‘objective historical study’ or ‘unprejudiced scholarship’ of history, which assumes that one may understand the history itself without being limited by the history of effect:

At the beginning of all historical hermeneutics, then, the abstract antithesis between tradition and historical research, between history and the knowledge of it, must be discarded. The effect

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid. 301.

(Wirkung) of a living tradition and the effect of historical study must constitute a unity of effect, the analysis of which would reveal only a texture of reciprocal effect.<sup>323</sup>

In other words, one's understanding of one's own culture is always limited by the history of effect. As time passes, the history of effect changes, which results in changes in the understanding of cultural values. New Confucian philosopher's 'reinterpretation' of Confucian values by introducing Kantian terms like moral autonomy, subjectivity and moral self had resulted from the history of effect in the twentieth century when Kantian ethics was introduced to Chinese philosophers.<sup>324</sup> Neo-Confucian philosophers in Song dynasty (960-1276 AD) like Zhuxi who has no access to Continental philosophy do not share New Confucian's horizon, therefore they do not use similar terms reinterpreting Confucian values.

Because complete self-knowledge is impossible, it is impossible to claim that New Confucianism's understanding of Chinese culture is a complete understanding of Chinese culture. New Confucianism's understanding of Chinese culture is limited by their 'world', where they adopt appropriate philosophical tools to reinterpret Classical Confucian canons.

As a horizon phenomenon "world" is essentially related to subjectivity, and this relation also means that it "exists in transiency." The life-world exists in a constant movement of relative validity.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid. 284

<sup>324</sup> See Rošker, Jana S, *The Rebirth of the Moral Self: The Second Generation of Modern Confucians and Their Modernization Discourses*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016).

<sup>325</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 239.

Here Gadamer refers to Dilthey's concept of life-world and argues that there is no Hegelian dialectical structure which determines the world, which is a historical product, while history is never comprehensible by finite human beings who are limited by their existential situations:

[The] ontology of the world would still remain something quite different from what the natural sciences ... [for] the life-world means ... the whole in which we live as historical creatures. And here we cannot avoid the consequence that, given the historicity of experience implied in it, the idea of a universe of possible historical life-worlds simply does not make sense. The infiniteness of the past, and above all the openness of the historical future, is incompatible with the idea of a historical universe.<sup>326</sup>

Gadamer's hermeneutics allows the openness of interpretation of cultural values because he denies the existence of a fixed set of cultural values or a cultural spirit which determines cultural development. One's understanding of one's own culture is not determined by an *a priori* universal structure, but by subjective '[e]xperience [which] is always actually present only in the individual observation ... [and] is not known in a previous universality. Here lies the fundamental openness of experience to new experience ... [which] is essentially dependent on constant confirmation and necessarily becomes a different kind of experience where there is no confirmation (*ubi reperitur instantia contradictoria*)<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid. 239.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid. 346.

Gadamer's rejection of the existence of a transcendent cultural spirit which determines cultural development also resolves the problem (1): *the impossibility of changes in cultural values*. According to Gadamer, *cultural values changes are driven by the changes in the horizon of understandings of values*, which changes constantly in history as a result of the fusions of horizons. Japanese Confucian reinterpretation of Japanese Shinto (神道), for example, resulted from the expansion of the horizon. 'In the late sixteenth century, when Confucianism began to differentiate itself from Buddhism ... Confucians pointed toward the use of the term "Shinto" in the *Classic of Changes* ... popularly attributed to the Zhou Dynasty (1045–256 BCE).<sup>18</sup> There, *shendao* seems to describe the activities of celestial deities.'<sup>328</sup> Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠, 1666-1728), an important philosopher of the Kogaku school (古学派), argues that 'only the Shinto of our country [teaches about] sacrifice to the ancestors to honour the heaven and the unity of the heaven and the ancestors. Everything is done in the names of ghosts and Gods. The same phenomenon has already been seen before recorded history. The way [i.e. Shinto] is the ancient way of the Yu and the Three<sup>329</sup> Ages.'<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Josephson, Jason Ananda, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 99.

<sup>329</sup> Here three ages refer to the reign of three ancient Chinese leaders: Yao, Shun and Yu.

<sup>330</sup> Original text: 唯我國神道者，祭祖考以配天，天與祖考為一。諸事均以鬼神之命而行，文字未傳之前如是也，其亦是唐虞三代古道也。 Quoted in Lu Yuxin, 政體、文明、族群之辯: 德川日本思想史 [Polity: Civilization and Nationalism: Political Thoughts in Tokugawa Japan], (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2017), 223.

Ogyū's remarkable student Dazai Shundai (太宰春台, 1680-1747) also argues that Japanese Shinto actually came from ancient China, for he discovered that Hanzi term 神道 (Shinto) appeared in *Yi Jing*: 'Having observed the heavenly spiritual way [Shinto] and the faultlessness of the four seasons, the saints establish instructions according to this spiritual way and all under the heaven are submitted to them.'<sup>331</sup> Dazai's suggests that the word Shinto in *Yi Jing* is equivalent to Japanese Shinto. Following Dazai, Japanese 'Confucian thinkers argued that ritual has the power to transform a person's character, to alter one's motives, desires, and basic attitudes.'<sup>332</sup> If Ogyu and Dazai had never read *Yi Jing*, they would not have been able to interpret Shinto as the Confucian way of virtuous governance. Because Japanese Confucianism's horizon of understandings expanded as they study *Yi Jing* deeply, they are able to link Shinto to Confucian teaching and attribute Confucian moral values to Shinto rituals.

However, because of the openness of interpretation, one need not hold to the *Kogaku* reinterpretation of Japanese Shinto as the 'standard' definition of Shinto. The *Kogaku* Confucian reinterpretation of Shinto was rejected by the *Kokugaku* School (国学 Native

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<sup>331</sup> Original text: 「觀天之神道，而四時不忒，聖人以神道設教，而天下服矣。」（《周易》〈觀〉）

<sup>332</sup> Josephson, Jason Ananda, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, 121.



Study) thinkers including Motoori Norinaga (本居宣長 1730-1801), who was originally a Chinese medical doctor and a student studying Confucianism under the *Kogaku* Confucian philosopher Hori Keizan (堀景山, 1688-1757). Motoori's strategy of rejecting Confucian reinterpretation of Shinto is also an appropriate example demonstrating how values changes can be rejected by people having different horizons inheriting different tradition. Motoori denies the authority of *Yijing* in interpreting Shinto, as he thinks *Yi Jing* is mere 'a tool created and used by Chinese sages to deceive the people.'<sup>333</sup> He adds: 'The *yinyang wuxing* [陰陽五行] theory in Shina 支那 [China] was not the way founded by the deities in the beginning [of creation]. The [Chinese] sages used their wits, believing that the theory could be used to explain everything. However, we should know that their knowledge was limited and they were no match for the way of the deities.'<sup>334</sup> Instead, Motoori studies the mythology recorded by *Kojiki* (古事記 712) and *Nihon shoki* (日本書紀 720) in order to establish *Fukko Shinto* (復古神道, restored ancient Shinto). While Ogyu and Dazai from Confucian tradition interpret the moral values of Shinto according to *Yi Jing*, Motoori from Kokugaku tradition emphasises the religious values of Shinto according to *Kojiki* and *Nihon*

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<sup>333</sup> Ng, Wai-ming, 'The Shintoization of the *Yijing* in Hirata Atsutane's *Kokugaku*', *Sino-Japanese Studies*, no. 19 (2012): 34.

<sup>334</sup> Quoted in *ibid.* Motoori Norinaga, Kuzuka 葛花 (*Pueraria lobata*), in *Dai-Nippon shisō zenshū kankōkai* 大日本思想全集刊行會, ed., *Dai-Nippon shisō zenshū 9* 大日本思想全集第九卷 (Tokyo: Dai Nippon shisō zenshū kankōkai, 1933), Part 2, 166.

*shoki*. Both were creating 'new values' by interpreting the same term Shinto, as they were undertaking fusion of their horizon of the present (Shinto during Tokugawa period) and that of the past (either ancient Chinese canons like *Yi Jing* or Japanese canons like *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*).

As we can see from the example above, changes in the horizon of understanding are related to the use of language. If *Yi Jing*, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* were not written in Hanzi (kanji), and the Japanese did not adopt Hanzi as written language, the debate between Japanese Confucian and Kokugaku would not happen. Such debate which involves the creation of new values, is facilitated by the language. As Gadamer says,

... language is the cause of this intellectual power of persistence, but only that the immediacy of our worldview and view of ourselves, in which we persist, is preserved and altered within language because we finite beings always come from afar and stretch into the distance. In language, the reality beyond every individual consciousness becomes visible.

... the verbal event reflects not only what persists but what changes in things. From the way that words change, we can discover the way that customs and values change.<sup>335</sup>

Gadamer's emphasis on language brings us the solution to the problem (2), namely, *the lack of an empirical method to identify cultural spirit*. Unlike East Asian Hegelians, Gadamer does not believe in the existence of a fixed national spirit which determines the cultural

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<sup>335</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 446.

development. Cultural development is driven by the language, which, according to Gadamer, is the 'experience of the world'. Gadamer praises Humboldt for 'showing that a *language-view is a worldview*.' 'Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all.'<sup>336</sup>

However, while Gadamer demonstrates the impossibility of having an objective understanding of an unchangeable cultural spirit which determines cultural development, it does not necessarily mean that such a cultural spirit does not exist. Gadamer has only demonstrated that human beings' understanding, which is facilitated and limited by language is incapable of apprehending an unchangeable cultural spirit. It is possible that there is a cultural spirit determining cultural development which cannot be articulated by any language and that this unknown cultural spirit, determines cultural development. Such a the cultural spirit functions like a mystical power or God driving cultural and historical development. But even if one believes in the existence of such cultural spirit, one still cannot demonstrate that the cultural development of culture is driven by the essential values. New Confucian cannot claim that the Chinese cultural spirit is dominated by Confucian values and that Chinese cultural phenomenon are the manifestations of Confucian values, because the Chinese cultural spirit they describe is an absolutely concealed, unknown and indescribable object.

In order to avoid such an appeal to ignorance, Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy of culture needs to be understood in as a weaker version: instead of denying the existence of a cultural spirit, the hermeneutist should merely suspend the discussion on the existence of

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid. 440.

cultural spirit (as in Husserl's *epoché*), for human's understanding can never go beyond its horizons of understanding. Here we can find a clear Kantian legacy in Gadamer's hermeneutics. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant critically investigates the limits of reason. 'He also demonstrates that it is equally possible to prove some judgments about "world wholes" as it is to prove their opposites, such as the claims that space must be unbounded and that it must be bounded.'<sup>337</sup> (Known as 'antinomies') In the case of hermeneutics, one can also have antinomies on matters beyond the limits of horizons. One example is the nature of Shinto. Japanese Confucian interprets Shinto according to *Yi Jing* while the Kokugaku school interprets according to *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Two explanations from two different horizons are inconsistent<sup>338</sup> with each other but both are valid, for both horizons are equally hermeneutically true. The original nature of Shinto is a *thing-in-itself*, which 'we know not this thing as it is in itself, but only know its appearances, viz., the way in which our senses are affected by this unknown something.' (*Prolegomena*, §32)

The nature of cultural spirit is concealed and therefore unknown. Only the appearances of the cultural spirit, namely, cultural phenomenon, are known through the horizons of understanding. Therefore, instead of questioning the existence of the cultural spirit, Gadamer said:

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<sup>337</sup> Williams, Garrath, 'Kant's Account of Reason', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. November 01, 2017. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-reason/>

<sup>338</sup> However, considering the possible links among Chinese Confucianism, Taoism and *Nihon shoki*, two interpretations are not necessarily contradicted with each other. In his famous work, the *Thoughts and Religions of Kanji Cultural Sphere: Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism*, Japanese sinologist Fukui Fumimasa argues that there is significant Chinese heritage embedded in ancient Shinto. See 福井文雅 [Fukui Fumimasa], 漢字文化圏の思想と宗教 儒教、仏教、道教 [Thoughts and Religions of Kanji Cultural Sphere: Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism], (Tokyo: Goyo Shobo, 1998).

For Dilthey there is no question that it exists and that what corresponds to this ideal is historical consciousness, not speculative philosophy. It sees all the phenomena of the human, historical world only as objects by means of which the spirit knows itself more fully. Understanding them as objectifications of spirit, it translates them back “into the mental life whence they came”. . . . Historical consciousness expands to universality, for it sees all the data of history as manifestations of the life from which they stem: “Here life is understood by life.” Hence, for historical consciousness the whole of tradition becomes the self-encounter of the human mind. Historical consciousness appropriates what seemed specially reserved to art, religion, and philosophy. *It is not in the speculative knowledge of the concept, but in historical consciousness that spirit’s knowledge of itself is consummated.* Historical consciousness discerns historical spirit in all things. Even philosophy is to be regarded only as an expression of life.<sup>339</sup>

As we can see above, Gadamer’s hermeneutics overcome the theoretical difficulties encountered by East Asian Hegelianism—(1) *the impossibility of changes in cultural values*, (2) *the lack of empirical method to identify cultural spirit* and (3) *the neglect of openness of value interpretation*—by suspending the discussions on the existence and the nature of a fixed cultural spirit. But hermeneutics does not reduce philosophy of culture to an empirical science of culture, as if it were anthropology or sociology. Rather, the hermeneutical philosophy of culture examines how the understandings of culture are formed. Changes in cultural values are interpreted as changes in the designations of values on the cultural phenomenon, which is determined by the changes in horizons. Also, the fusions of horizons allow openness of interpretation.

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<sup>339</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 224.

However, because Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy of culture only focuses the epistemic task, namely, how to understand a culture, it fails to address the ontological task, namely, how to establish a cultural subjectivity, which is the main aim of both East Asian philosophers of culture and this thesis. Gadamer suspends the existence of a cultural spirit, which is employed by East Asian Hegelian when reformulating cultural subjectivity. The Hegelian assumption of a fixed set of essential cultural values provides an explicit ontological ground for establishing a cultural subjectivity. New Confucianism argues that Chinese cultural spirit is dominated by the Confucian spirit (which aims to manifest moral values), so they have a clear account distinguishing 'Chinese-ness' from 'non-Chinese-ness'. However, the hermeneutical philosophy of culture implies that it is impossible to have an unchanged 'Chinese-ness' to distinguish Chinese culture from other culture. During the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD), Buddhist values had a strong influence on Chinese people's horizons of understanding while Confucian values did so during Song dynasty (960-1279 AD). There is no essence defining Chinese culture, for cultural changes with changes in horizons.

The absence of unchanged and essential cultural values defining a culture leads to Wittgenstein's problem of family resemblance, which refers to 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.'<sup>340</sup> It argues that a series of overlapping similarities among different sets cannot be considered as a common feature to all things. Imagine there are four sets: {C<sub>1</sub>}, {C<sub>2</sub>}, {C<sub>3</sub>} and {C<sub>4</sub>}, each of which contains elements listed below:

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<sup>340</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1986), §66, 32.

$$\{C_1\} = \{P_1, P_2, P_3\}$$

$$\{C_2\} = \{P_2, P_3, P_4\}$$

$$\{C_3\} = \{P_3, P_4, P_5\}$$

$$\{C_4\} = \{P_4, P_5, P_6\}$$

While  $\{C_1\}$  is similar to  $\{C_2\}$ ,  $\{C_2\}$  is similar to  $\{C_3\}$  and  $\{C_3\}$  is similar to  $\{C_4\}$ ,  $\{C_1\}$  is not similar to  $\{C_4\}$ , for both share no common features at all. Now let  $\{C_1\}$ ,  $\{C_2\}$ ,  $\{C_3\}$  and  $\{C_4\}$  are four continuous stages of the same culture  $C_n$  ( $n$  is a natural number) over a certain period of time, from  $t_1$  to  $t_4$ ; and the elements  $P_1, P_2, P_3 \dots P_n$  ( $n$  is a natural number) are cultural values at different stages. The problem is: at  $t_4$  when the culture develops into the stage of  $C_4$ , it contains no values similar to  $C_1$ , yet both  $C_1$  and  $C_4$  are considered as the same culture. For East Asian Hegelianism, the problem of family resemblance in cultural values is impossible, because essential cultural values remain constant. For New Confucians, the Chinese spirit is always dominated by moral values. However, for the hermeneutist who allows changes in cultural values, however, acceptance of family resemblance is inevitable. Family resemblance implies the absence of essence to define a culture and distinguish it from other cultures, which prevents the establishment of cultural subjectivity.

Hermeneutists may defend their position by arguing that the historical process of changes in cultural values can still define a culture. Chinese history defines Chinese culture, while Japanese history defines Japanese culture. Both experience different effects of history and fusions of horizons, so both are different cultures coming from a different tradition. However, the boundaries of traditions and horizons are unclear, considering the fact that there are several overlapping elements in both Chinese and Japanese history (for example, both used

Hanzi as the official written language for a long period of time), which impacted their horizons of understanding respectively.

Another defence against the problem of family resemblance may be: while cultural values change, the structure underlying these changes remain constant. Such a structure could be considered as the essence of defining culture. When a culture changes from  $C_1$  to  $C_4$ , the hermeneutical structure of understanding—tradition, prejudice and horizons, as we have seen above, remains constant. But such hermeneutical structure fails to distinguish cultures from one another, for it is a universal framework of understanding shared by all human beings. The form of understanding is universal, while its contents are particular.

Because of the failure of hermeneutics in fulfilling the ontological task of the philosophy of culture, the hermeneutical approach is rejected by Lao Sze-Kwang.<sup>341</sup> Lao acknowledges that the cultural spirit is a problematic assumption which assumes ‘the value manifestation of the spiritual substance in this world is our cultural process.’<sup>342</sup> However, Lao insists on adopting the Hegelian framework and rejecting hermeneutics for two reasons: firstly: ‘Hegel tells us that the Absolute Spirit shall manifest completely at the end of historical development.’<sup>343</sup> The direction of cultural development is determinate and explicit. Secondly, under Hegel’s framework, one can easily define a culture simply by articulating its essential values, e.g. Chinese culture is dominated by the Confucian spirit (which values

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<sup>341</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 文化哲學演講錄 [Lecture on Philosophy of Culture], (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2002), 27.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.



moral manifestation) while Western culture is dominated by Greek spirit (which emphasise cognitive activities).

Of course, you may reject Hegel's theory fundamentally, but there is little difficulty internal to the theory. While Gadamer ... , never tell us a predictable goal, Hegel tells us that the Absolute Spirit shall manifest completely at the end of historical development. Gadamer does not tell us explicitly how our history should be oriented. He only tells us how our history exists and operates. Therefore, there are so many things debatable within Gadamer's theory. In terms of stability, Gadamer's theory is outweighed by Hegel's. On the other hand, the risk of Gadamer's theory is lower than Hegel's, for there is a strong dogmatic sense in Hegel's theory. We can see how aggressive Hegel is, for he thinks all truths are grasped by him. By contrast, Gadamer does not mean to claim so. He only provides an alternative perspective on culture ...<sup>344</sup>

For Lao, Gadamer's hermeneutics only fail to provide a clear direction of how culture *should* develop. Hegelian dialectics, however, explains the *orientation* of cultural development. For example, according to Lao, Chinese culture is 'virtue-oriented' because it is dominated by Confucian spirit, while Western culture is 'wisdom-oriented' because it is dominated by Greek spirit.<sup>345</sup> In the following chapter, we shall discuss Kierkegaard's definition of culture in terms of manifestations of values, which may explain the direction or orientation of cultural development and fulfil the ontological task of East Asian philosophy of culture.

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<sup>344</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 文化哲學演講錄 [Lecture on Philosophy of Culture], 27.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Culture as passion in Two Ages

This chapter aims to reconstruct Kierkegaard's unique definition of culture as passion in *Two Ages*. In 3.1, I will explain Kierkegaard's concept of passion as motivation and argue that it can be *aesthetic, epistemic, ethical or religious*. So, while culture is passionate, it is not necessarily religious; a passionate and cultured Dane is not necessarily a passionate and faithful Christian. In 3.2, I will develop Kierkegaard's concept of culture as passion into a new philosophy of culture: that all cultures manifest aesthetic, epistemic, ethical and religious passions, and one can distinguish and compare cultures from one another by analysing *how they orientate*.<sup>346</sup> I will argue that the Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of passion manifestation overcomes the problems faced by the Hegelian definition of culture as spirit, for the Kierkegaardian definition does not assume the unchangeability of 'essential values' the manifestation of passions can be empirically investigated through the study of art, literature, music and ritual, and the openness of interpreting cultural values (which is emphasised by hermeneutics) is preserved.

While a culture can emphasise one or other manifestation of aesthetic, epistemic, ethical or religious passions, all cultures include all these passions. For every single individual is passionate and *can manifest all kinds of passions*, although the community may value the manifestations of certain passions over others. In short, according to a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, one should (1) acknowledge that every culture is *capable* of

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<sup>346</sup> Although here the term 'orientations' (導向) comes from Lao Sze-Kwang's theory of 'three selves', Lao believes that the cultural spirit orientate the cultural development, while I argue that passion orientate the cultural development in this chapter. Passion by definition is motivation, which motivates one to pursue a certain goal, so it is appropriate to say that passion orientates or directs one to a certain goal.

manifesting all kinds passions, (2) investigate how all passions are *actually* manifested empirically, and (3) what values or goal does the passion of the members of the society *orientate* to.

### 3.1 Kierkegaard's Concept of Passion as Motivation

In this section, I am going to analyse Kierkegaard's concept of passions—aesthetic or immediate, cognitive or epistemic, ethical or moral, and religious or existential passions in order to understand the meaning of passion in Kierkegaard's context before we move to its application to the philosophy of culture. I will firstly explain Kierkegaard's idea of passion in general and then analyse each kind of passion. As this thesis requires to make sense of the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture in East Asian contexts, examples or relevant discussions in the East Asian tradition will be frequently referred to.

One must carefully understand the concept of passion (Danish: *Lidenskab*) or pathos (πάθος)<sup>347</sup> in Kierkegaard's context.<sup>348</sup> While passion and emotion are sometimes used interchangeably in Kierkegaard's writings, it is inaccurate to say that *pathos* is identical to emotion (感情). Roberts argues that the Danish word '*Følelse*' for emotion in Kierkegaard's

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<sup>347</sup> The Chinese translation of the term passion or pathos is difficult. The common translation 熱情 *jit6 cing4* is too narrow as 熱情 merely refers to the excitement. However, the term passion for Kierkegaard covers all kinds of emotions and motivations. A better translation is 情 *cing4* which will be discussed in this chapter.

<sup>348</sup> Robert C. Roberts argues that '*Pathos* and *Lidenskab* [passion in Danish] seem to differ, in the *Postscript*, in the weighting of their senses: Whereas *Lidenskab* as interest or concern seems to predominate, *Pathos* as emotion seems to predominate.' However, in *Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* quoted below, Roberts argues that *Lidenskab* has at least four meanings which also includes both interest and emotion. Because this section focuses on the meaning of passion as *motivation*, one should focus more on the sense of *Lidenskab* as interest rather than emotion, for one is motivated to do something one is interested in.

writing has several meanings: (1) ‘a physical sensation (SUD 31...),’ (2) ‘a sort of intuitive awareness or judgment,’ (3) ‘sense—for example, a sense of duty, a sense of one’s own lowliness (CD 56...),’ and (4) ‘“emotion” or “feeling” (where “emotion” and “feeling” are more or less interchangeable)’. *Følelse* refers to the ‘awareness’ of states of mind only (which resonates with the Motoori’s concept of *mononoaware*, as shown in the following sections). ‘Sometimes “*Følelse*” is used to commend emotion as morally and spiritually important, as “*Lidenskab*” and “*Pathos*” typically are used (see CUP 350 ... CD 69...), but more often it occurs in passages where Kierkegaard is voicing criticisms and suspicions of emotions (or, rather, their simulacra)—pointing out that these can be morally and spiritually superficial and/or deceptive.’<sup>349</sup> Roberts seems to suggest that emotion is only *one kind of passion*, but it is not identical to passion. As Roberts quote from *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard argues that emotions can sometimes be deceiving. ‘When feeling [*Følelsen*] becomes fantastic in this way, the self becomes only more and more volatilized and finally comes to be a kind of abstract sentimentality [*Følsomhed*] that inhumanly belongs to no human being but inhumanly combines sentimentally [*følsomt*], as it were, with some abstract fate ... the person whose feeling [*Følelse*] has become fantastic is in a way infinitized, but not in such a manner that he becomes more and more himself, for he loses himself more and more. (SUD 31)’<sup>350</sup>

Kierkegaard’s implicit distinction between emotion and passion may come from Kant’s distinction between affects and emotion, considering the significant impact of Kantian<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Roberts, Robert C., ‘Existence, emotion, and virtue: Classical Themes in Kierkegaard’, ed. Hannay, Alastair & Marino, Gordon, *Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 199-200

<sup>350</sup> Quoted in Roberts, Robert C., *Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, 200.

<sup>351</sup> Relations between Kant and Kierkegaard has been well studied by several scholars. For their ideas of moral good, see Pattison, George, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard*, (Montreal&Kingston: McGill-Queen’s

philosophy on Kierkegaard's philosophy. As Ronald M. Green states: 'Kant is a major presence in some of Kierkegaard's most important pseudonymous books, including *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Postscript*.'<sup>352</sup> According to Kant, while effects are 'preceding reflection', passion is 'sensible desires':

*Affects* and *passions* are essentially different from each other. *Affects* belong to *feeling* insofar as, preceding reflection, it makes this impossible or more difficult. Hence an effect is called *precipitate* or *rash* (*animus praeceps*), and reason says, through the concept of virtue, that one should *get hold of oneself*. ... A *passion* is a sensible *desire* that has become a lasting inclination (e.g., *hatred*, as opposed to anger). The calm with which one gives oneself up to it permits reflection and allows the mind to form principles upon it and so, if inclination lights upon something contrary to the law, to brood upon it, to get it rooted deeply, and so to take up what is evil (as something premeditated) into its maxim. (*Metaphysics of Morals* 6:407-8)<sup>353</sup>

It should be noticed that both Kant and Kierkegaard agree that passion is not necessarily evil. For Kant, it is evil only when inclination inclines to 'something contrary to the law'. As we shall see in the following discussions, for Kierkegaard, passion is not necessarily preceding reflection. Ethical passion, for example, comes along with reflection.

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University Press, 2005) Chp. 3, 90-132. For their concept of freedom, see Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling and Kierkegaard*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>352</sup> Ronald M. Green, 'A Debt both Obscure and Enormous', *Kierkegaard and His German Contemporaries: Philosophy*, ed. John Stewart, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 179.

See also, Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt*, ()

<sup>353</sup> Kant, Immanuel, *Texts in German Philosophy: The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 208.

Because Kierkegaard's notion of pathos covers not only the negative sense but also the positive sense (for example, faith as a religious passion, which will be discussed later), Kierkegaard's idea of pathos (πάθη) is different from that of the Bible where it is always negative. In the New Testament, it is written that 'For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions [πάθη]. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural' (Romans 1:26); 'Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion [πάθος], evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry).' (Colossians 3:5) and 'not with lustful passion [πάθος], like the Gentiles who do not know God'. (1 Thessalonians 4:5) In Greek philosophy, which was still prevailing in the first century when the New Testament was written, pathos is not used in a positive sense either. Aristotle seems to regard pathos as an emotion which deceives people when making judgement: 'The orator persuades by means of his hearers, when they are roused to emotion [πάθος] by his speech; for the judgements we deliver are not the same when we are influenced by joy or sorrow, love or hate; and it is to this alone that, as we have said, the present-day writers of treatises endeavour to devote their attention.' (Arist. Rh. 1356a) Such appeal to emotion works 'for the mind of the hearer is designated upon under the impression that the speaker is speaking the truth, because, in such circumstances, his feelings are the same, so that he thinks (even if it is not the case as the speaker puts it) that things are as he represents them; and the hearer always sympathizes with one who speaks emotionally, even though he really says nothing.' (Arist. Rh. 1408a) This echoes the famous Chinese literature principle of 'moved by emotion and convinced by reason' (動之以情，說之以理).

For Kierkegaard, passion or pathos is not merely about lust or natural inclination; Passion can be defined as *motivation*, which can be good or bad, right or wrong, and ethical or

aesthetic. Some denominations and theologians also acknowledge Kierkegaard's perspective that passions are morally neutral. The Roman Catholic catechism, for example, believes that

in themselves passions are neither good nor evil. They are morally qualified only to the extent that they effectively engage reason and will. Passions are said to be voluntary, "either because they are commanded by the will or because the will does not place obstacles in their way." It belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions be governed by reason.<sup>354</sup>

This reflects the teaching of St Thomas Aquinas that 'if we give the name of passions to all the movements of the sensitive appetite, then it belongs to the perfection of man's good that his passions be moderated by reason.'<sup>355</sup>

While Aquinas believes that reason can moderate passions, David Hume disagrees and argues that reason can only be the 'slave of passions'. 'According to Hume, intentional actions are the immediate product of passions, in particular the direct passions, including the instincts.' 'The motivating passions, in their turn, are produced in mind by specific causes'.<sup>356</sup> Hume 'claims to prove that "reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will," and that reason alone "can never oppose passion in the direction of the will" (*TA* 413)'<sup>357</sup> Rachel Cohon clarifies that Hume means that 'reasons *alone* cannot move us to action; the impulse to act itself must come from passion.'<sup>358</sup> Hume further declares that because reasoning only discovers 'relations of ideas' while 'vice and virtue' or 'moral good

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<sup>354</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), §1767.

<sup>355</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, (Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 1920), Vol. I-II, 24.3

<sup>356</sup> Cohon, Rachel, 'Hume's Moral Philosophy', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/hume-moral/>

<sup>357</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*

or evil' 'are not identical with any of the four philosophical relations (resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, or proportions in quantity and number)', so moral judgement cannot be demonstrated by reasoning alone. Moreover, reason alone brings no *motivation* to take any moral action, while passion is the only motivation of all actions. Therefore, moral judgements and actions are grounded on passions rather than a reason<sup>359</sup>. If Hume's argument were true, however, moral judgement would be little different from the judgment of taste or aesthetic judgement. Unlike Kierkegaard, Hume does not distinguish the passions motivating moral judgement from the passions motivating judgement of taste. Kant distinguishes moral judgement from aesthetic judgement by arguing that moral judgement is facilitated by practical reasons, for moral judgement involves universal moral principles while aesthetic judgement does not. 'The concept of good and evil must not be determined before the moral law (for which, as it would seem, this concept would have to be made the basis) but only (as was done here) after it and by means of it'.<sup>360</sup>

Like Hume, passion in Kierkegaard's context *essentially* means *motivations; all actions are motivated by passions*. Kierkegaard disagrees with Hume's argument, which does not ground moral goodness and evil on the subjective passion instead of God. According to Kierkegaard, the real 'conceptual distinction between good and evil is ultimately dependent not on social norms but on God.'<sup>361</sup> Kierkegaard believes that the distinction between good

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<sup>359</sup> For discussions in details see Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Practical Philosophy*, trans. Gregor, Mary, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5:63. Quoted in Johnson, Robert, & Cureton, Adam, 'Kant's Moral Philosophy', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/kant-moral/>>.

<sup>361</sup> McDonald, William, 'Søren Kierkegaard', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/kierkegaard/>



and evil depends on God, for it is written in the Deuteronomy 6:18: ‘do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord’.

However, Kierkegaard agrees with Hume that passion is the motivations of all actions. Without passion, one can hardly be self-motivated to act. However, excess passions can cause psychological tensions to a person. ‘All passion is like sailing: the wind must be sufficiently forceful to stretch the sail with one *uno tenore* [continuous gust], there must not be too much flapping of the sails and tacking before reaching deep water, there must not be too many preliminaries and prior consultations. It is a matter of passion getting the power and dominion to take complete control of the unprepared.’ (TA 43)

Kierkegaard is conscious of the differences between judgement and actions driven by different passions. Unlike Kant, Kierkegaard rejects the distinctions based upon principles involved in judgement (that moral judgement involves universal moral laws while aesthetic judgment does not); instead, Kierkegaard distinguishes passions according to the objects *to which passions incline*. One may divide the concept of passions into *three categories*:

- Aesthetic passion: immediate emotions or feeling
- Ethical or moral passion: empathy or compassion<sup>362</sup>
- Religious or existential passion: subjectivity, inwardness and faith

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<sup>362</sup> In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* Kierkegaard uses the term ‘Religious-Ethical’ instead of distinguishing ethical passion from religious passion. For further discussions, please refer to the section on Confucian moral values.

As George Pattison says: ‘Kierkegaard distinguished three fundamental modes in which people exist, which he called the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. Sometimes he referred to these as different “life-views”, sometimes as “stages” of human existence.’<sup>363</sup> Pattison’s interpretation is supported by Kierkegaard’s writing in the *Stages on Life’s Way*: ‘There are three existence-spheres: the esthetic, the ethical, the religious. The metaphysical is abstraction, and there is no human being who exists metaphysically. The metaphysical, the ontological, is [er], but it does not exist [er ikke til], for when it exists it does so in the esthetic, in the ethical, in the religious, and when it is, it is the abstraction from or a *prius* [something prior] to the esthetic, the ethical, the religious.’ (SLW 468) Therefore, here I also distinguish Kierkegaard’s concepts of cultures according to Kierkegaard’s life-views, although I will suggest that besides aesthetic, ethical and religious, epistemic sphere ought to be added.

### 3.1.1 Aesthetic Passion: Immediate and Unreflected Passion

Aesthetic passion is sometimes known as ‘the passion of immediacy’ or ‘immediate passion’<sup>364</sup> Because it is a passion arising from an ‘unreflected states of experience’.<sup>365</sup> John W. Elrod suggests that the passion of immediacy is

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<sup>363</sup> Pattison, George, ‘Søren Kierkegaard: A Theater Critic of the Heiberg School, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (Winter, 1983): 2.

<sup>364</sup> Whether aesthetic passion is immediate depends on whether it involves *reflection*. However, some aesthetic passion may involve reflections (for example, a seducer plans to seduce someone) and therefore not immediate.

<sup>365</sup> However, not all aesthetic passions are immediate, for some aesthetic passions are produced from reflection. Kuki Shuzo’s aesthetic idea of ‘iki’ (粹), for example, explicitly involves reflections on heterosexual urge: from coquetry (媚態 *bitai*), integrity (意気地 *ikiji*) to giving up (諦める *akirame*). See Kuki Shuzo, *Reflection on Japanese Taste: The Structure of Iki*, (Power Publication, 31 Dec 1997).

an essential presupposition of the action of self-understanding. The action of self-understanding requires both an object and a form. If self-knowledge is genuine to be acquired, the form of understanding must be commensurate with this object. If the object of understanding is the individual in his particularity, then there must correspond to it a form of understanding that actually allows for the expression of this particularity.<sup>366</sup>

According to Elrod, the passion as ‘an essential presupposition of the act of self-understanding’ is not only ‘the form of the initial act, but it is also its content.’<sup>367</sup> The content refers to the ‘individual’s subjective particularity’, while the form refers to its ‘initial expression’.<sup>368</sup> According to Elrod, passion aims to express oneself. Passion is an ‘energy that unquestionably is a definite something and does not deceptively change under the influence of conjectural criticism concerning what the age really wants.’ (TA 66) Here Elrod elaborates passion as ‘energy is the expression of the individual’s particularity in the form of an interest in or an enthusiasm for an object that is the externalization of this subjective particularity.’<sup>369</sup> Elrod concludes: ‘If in passion the individual first becomes aware of himself as a particular being, this awareness cannot be anything more than an immediate knowledge. An interest in or an enthusiasm for an objective externalization of oneself, the “alter ego” is as yet only an immediate mode of self-knowledge.’<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> John W. Elrod, ‘Passion, Reflection and Particularity’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Two Ages*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 11.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

However, I disagree with Elrod's argument for the presupposition of 'self-knowledge' in the passion of immediacy. By definition, knowledge is the product of reflection. Immediacy, however, is an unreflected experience. While the passion of immediacy may produce self-knowledge (when one reflects on the immediate passion), it *does not presuppose* self-knowledge. It merely presupposes the existence of a particular individual self who is self-interested but does not necessarily have any 'self-knowledge' which involves reflection. Although an individual at the aesthetic stage manifesting immediate passion may be self-conscious of his interest, such self-consciousness does not involve any reflection and should not be indicated as self-knowledge or self-understanding.

Unlike ethical passion, aesthetic passion 'is not mediated by ethical concepts or ethical decision'<sup>371</sup>, as Lee Barrett indicates:

In *Two Ages* this passionate concern is exhibited primarily by Claudine and Marianne ... both instances the passion is a matter of "immediacy". The exact ways in which their passion deserves this description must be determined. At the very least, "immediacy" suggests that the object of love is "given" to the subject. Both of them fall in love; neither of them decides to love. Their passions are not the fruit of their own free-determination. In this respect they are just as much determined by natural necessity as was Don Juan.<sup>372</sup>

Claudine in *Two Ages* does not have any reflection on her passionate action. Her 'decision is stamped by the impetus of a passion, but this again supports her. Her πληροφορία εις πάθος

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<sup>371</sup> Lee Barrett, 'Kierkegaard's *Two Ages*: An Immediate Stage on the Way to the Religious Life', *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, 60.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

[fullness of pathos] makes her fall, but it also strengthens her again.’ (TA 66) As Kierkegaard said in *Two Ages*:

The age of revolution is essentially passionate; therefore it has not nullified the principle of contradiction and can become either good or evil, and whichever way is chosen, the impetus of passion is such that the trace of an action marking its progress or its taking a wrong direction must be perceptible. It is obliged to make a decision, but this again is the saving factor, for decision is the little magic word that existence respects. (TA 66)

Barrett argues that the ‘the inwardness of Claudine and Marianne is “immediate” in that it is not a function of any decision to actualize an ideal form of life presented to them by reflection, be it aesthetic, ethical or religious.’<sup>373</sup> Their aesthetic passions of love are immediate. ‘The self that is the object of concern here is not any ideally possible self, but is the self of immediate actuality. These individuals are not interested in any possible ways of life that are not immediately present to them. Rather, their concern is to preserve the selves that they already are, to preserve that quality of love that they find in themselves.’<sup>374</sup>

In *Either/Or* Part I, there are three stages of aesthetic stage represented by three different Mozart’s operas: (1) the Page in *Figaro*, (2) Papageno in *The Magic Flute* and (3) *Don Giovanni*. In the first stage, desire ‘which in this stage is present only in a presentiment of itself, is devoid of motion, devoid of unrest, only gently rocked by an unaccountable inner emotion.’ (EO I, 76) Wanda Berry indicates that the Page in *Figaro*, according to

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid. 61

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

Kierkegaard, refers to the ‘awakening of the consciousness’. ‘In this first stage of the erotic, desire is not fully conscious and its object is not yet fully separated from itself.’<sup>375</sup> A toddler is conscious of his desire, but he/she does not know that the objects of desire are necessary for desire satisfaction. As Freud claims: ‘To start with, the child certainly makes no distinction between the breast and his own body; when the breast has to be separated from his body and shifted to the ‘outside,’ because he so often finds it absent, it carries with it, now that it is an “object”, part of the original narcissistic cathexis.’<sup>376</sup>

In the second stage, ‘consciousness, having become more separated as “desire from its object” is interpreted as “seeking that which it can desire”; that is, it seeks its concrete object.’<sup>377</sup> In the story, gradually Papageno ‘discovers that which he desires, it is a female figuration of himself: Papagena.’<sup>378</sup> As Kierkegaard claims: ‘In Papageno, desire aims at discoveries. This urge to discover is the pulsation in it, its liveliness. It does not find the proper object of this exploration, but it discovers the multiplicity in seeking therein the object that it wants to discover.’ (*EO I*, 80) The difference between the Page’s unaccountable inner emotion and Papageno’s discovery of the desired objects can be explained by Buddhist theory of Dependent Origination (十二因緣) Craving (愛) is different from Clinging (取). Craving is a mere desire of pleasure, but clinging is a secondary desire to possess the objects which bring pleasures.<sup>379</sup> The Page only craves but does not cling to the object of his passion while Papageno does so cling when he discovers the desired objects.

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<sup>375</sup> Wanda Warren Berry, ‘The Heterosexual Imagination and Aesthetic Existence in Kierkegaard’s Either/Or Part One’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or Part I*, ed. Robert L. Perkins, (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995), 220.

<sup>376</sup> Adler, Alfred, *The Individual Psychology of Adler, Alfred*, ed. Heinz L. Ansbacher & Rowena R. Ansbacher, (New York: Basic Book Inc, 1964), 40.

<sup>377</sup> Berry, Wanda Warren, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or Part I*, 220.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.* 221.

<sup>379</sup> See 《俱舍論記》9.

In the third stage, however, Don Giovanni acknowledges ‘a complete separation between consciousness and its object, since in it desire is absolutely oriented toward particular objects, but in sequential, rather than categorical, multiplicity. Whereas Papageno seeks the particular as the woman for him (“the particular in the category of multiplicity” (EO, 1:85), Don Giovanni desires particular women, one after another.’<sup>380</sup> As Kierkegaard said: ‘Don Juan ... is a downright seducer. His love is sensuous, not psychical, and, according to its concept, sensuous love is not faithful but totally faithless; it loves not one but all—that is, it seduces all.’ (EO I, 94) According to Céline Léon, the ‘subjectivity of Don Juan, the “sensuous erotic genius”, is still thoroughly immediate, absorbed by the natural impulse by which he is possessed.’<sup>381</sup> Don Juan does not undertake any reflection in the sense that he only reacts according to natural impulses. ‘Don Juan can conquer, but he cannot possess, cannot have his object, and he readily sets it aside as soon as natural impulse arises again in him.’<sup>382</sup> As Léon quotes, Don Juan is ‘continually finishing and continually ... begin all over again, for his life is the sum of *repellerende* moments that have no coherence, and his life as the moment is the sum of moments and as the sum of moments is the moment ... [He thus] hover[s] ... between being an individual and a force of nature.’<sup>383</sup> (EO I, 96) In order to express such unreflective nature of Don Juan, Kierkegaard argues that music is much better than language, as music ‘is over as soon as the sound has stopped and comes into existence again only when it sounds once again’<sup>384</sup> (EO I, 102) which show the discontinuity of impulses.

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid. 221.

<sup>381</sup> Céline Léon, ‘The No Woman’s Land of Kierkegaardian Seduction’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Either/Or Part I*, 255.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid. 256.

<sup>383</sup> Quoted in *ibid.* 257.

<sup>384</sup> Quoted *ibid.*

### 3.1.2 Epistemic or Cognitive Passion: Motivation to Know

Besides aesthetic passion, there is also *epistemic or cognitive passion* which is the motivation of gaining knowledge. Although epistemic passion is not explicitly acknowledged in *Two Ages*, if all actions are motivated by a certain kind of passion, there must be an epistemic passion motivating cognitive activities. In Plato's *Symposium*: 'Socrates awakens in Alcibiades a romantic desire as well as a desire for knowledge, and Alcibiades thus envisions entering into both romantic and educational relationship with Socrates, as custom prescribed between an older and a younger man in his ancient Greece.'<sup>385</sup> Such a relationship is also acknowledged by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Irony* where Kierkegaard said that 'the love-relation that has come about between Socrates and Alcibiades was an intellectual relation'. (CI 48) Besides, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard identifies Socratic ignorance as 'an expression of the objective uncertainty' and even as 'Socratic inwardness', i.e. passion (CUP I.205). However, according to Kierkegaard, Socratic ignorance is misrepresented by Plato:

Viewed Socratically, the eternal essential truth is not at all paradoxical in itself, but only by being related to an existing person. This is expressed in another Socratic thesis: that all-knowing is a recollecting. This thesis is an intimation of the beginning of speculative thought, but for that very reason Socrates did not pursue it; essentially, it became Platonic. This is where the

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<sup>385</sup> Carlsson, Ulrika, 'Love as a Problem of Knowledge in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* and Plato's *Symposium*', *Inquiry* 53, no. 1 (2010): 48.



road swings off, and Socrates essentially emphasizes existing, whereas Plato, forgetting this, loses himself in speculative thought. Socrates' infinite merit is precisely that of being an *existing* thinker, not a speculative thinker who forgets what it means to exist. (CUP I.205)

'Socratic ignorance is an expression of the objective uncertainty; the inwardness of the existing person is truth.' (CUP I.205) However, Socratic ignorance as epistemic passion ceases when Plato introduces the 'speculative thought'. 'This is where the road swings off, and Socrates essentially emphasizes existing, whereas Plato, forgetting this, loses himself in speculative thought. Socrates' infinite merit is precisely that of being an existing thinker, not a speculative thinker who forgets what it means to exist.' (CUP I.209)

Objective uncertainty means that there is no objective reference, evidence or theory for one to follow when one is making a choice. When one is conscious of one's ignorance of knowledge, e.g. the origin of the universe, one *wants* to know the epistemic truth. *What to study* for *what to know* is undetermined. There is no scientific law which necessarily forces one to study geography rather than astronomy. Interests of studying is a matter of subjective choice, which is driven by the epistemic passion alone. However, once a person begins the cognitive or epistemic activity and follows objective theories and scientific laws, such objective uncertainty ceases to exist. On the other hand, when one studies a subject not for the sake of studying (e.g. finance), but for the sake of job application (e.g. want to work as a banker earning money), both epistemic passion and the objective uncertainty disappear, for studying is merely a means for the ends of earning money.

The problem of Platonic speculation is that it forgets the original epistemic passion which motivates the pursuit of knowledge as an act related to the individual subject. Epistemic passion is subjective, but speculation is objective where the individual subjectivity is lost. The astronomical research on the black hole is an objective investigation where the subjectivities of astronomers seem to be insignificant; but from Kierkegaard's 'Socratic view', the subjectivities of astronomers are significant, because their subjective epistemic passions motivate them to overcome the ignorance and pursue the truth. In other words, passion and subjectivity are inter-related.

### **3.1.3 Ethical or Moral Passion: Self-Positing and the Possibility of**

#### **Choosing Wrong in the Ethical Choice**

Considering the similarity between epistemic passion and ethical passion, it is appropriate to introduce ethical passion after introducing the epistemic passion. Both cognitive and moral judgments involve universal principles. Scientific research follows scientific laws while moral judgement follows moral laws. However, it should be noticed that moral choices are not determined by the universal moral principles; instead, it is the ethical passion, which motivates a person to make an ethical choice and favours an option for the moral good under the universal moral principles. In other words, *the ethical choice is determined by ethical passion*. In the epistemic judgement, by contrast, options are not determined by the

preference of epistemic passion. Instead, it follows the reasoning according to certain objective theories or references, for example, the experiments.<sup>386</sup>

The difference between epistemic passion and moral passion is that subjectivity in the former is much weaker than the latter. Epistemic passion only motivates astronomers to conduct their research but does not participate in the epistemic judgement. However, using Mencius' analogy, when a person see a child falling into a well, he will have the mind of commiseration (惻隱之心). For Mencius, such *moral passion* not only *motivates* but also *participates* in moral judgement. Such a mind of commiseration is *essentially passionate*. It is a feeling of distress, namely, unwillingness to see other to suffer. Confucian moral principles come from such moral passion. Again, Mencius says: 'from a proper feeling, it is constituted for the practice of moral good. It is what is called moral good.'<sup>387</sup> (*Mencius* 11.6) Here Tang Jung-Yi indicates that commiseration (惻隱 or 惻怛) as moral passion presupposes the distinction between good and evil. 'The components of the Chinese character 惻 [*caak1*] include the characters 心 [i.e. 心, *sam1*, mind] and 則 [*zak1*, rule, otherwise], which means the turn of the mind, namely, the dislike of evil. The component of the Chinese character 怛 [*daat3*] includes 旦 [*daan3*, dawn], which means the brightness of the mind, namely, the love of goodness.'<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> However, how scientists make epistemic choices of the most 'reasonable' theory is still debatable in the philosophy of science. Rudolf Carnap argues that scientific laws must be empirically verifiable. Karl Popper argues that scientific laws must be empirically falsifiable. Thomas Kuhn, however, suggests his famous and controversial theory of paradigm shift instead. See Rudolf Carnap, 'Testability and Meaning', *Philosophy of Science*, no. 3, (1936): 419–71 & no.4, (1937): 1–40. Also, Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London: Routledge, 1959); Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>387</sup> Original text: 乃若其情，則可以為善矣，乃所謂善也。◁《孟子》〈告子上〉◁

<sup>388</sup> Tang Jung-Yi, 生命存在與心靈境界 [Existence of Life and Sphere of Mind], (Taipei: Students Book Ltd, 2006), Vol. 2, 494.

In Confucianism, ethical passion has already included the moral principles which provide the moral subject ‘moral options’ to choose.<sup>389</sup> Liu Zhongzhou (劉宗周 1578-1645) even radically declares that ‘moral principles are instituted by the mind [of moral passion].’<sup>390</sup> Because of commiseration, a person *subjectively decides* to save the child from danger. Here are two options: to save the child (which is favoured by the commiseration) and not to save the child (which is not favoured by the commiseration). Because commiseration as a moral passion inclines to the former option, the moral subject is motivated to the former rather than the latter. Based upon Liu’s interpretation, Mou Zong-san declares: ‘We may also say that *ren* is *li* [reason, Principle, Universal Truth], *ren* is *Dao* [the Way].’<sup>391</sup> ‘The mind of humanity is the heavenly mind. The virtue of humanity is the heavenly way.’<sup>392</sup> Therefore, New Confucian philosophers believe that ethical passion implies moral *universality*. As Kant said,<sup>393</sup> ‘any action is *right* if it can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with universal law.’<sup>394</sup> When a person has a moral motivation to save a child falling into a well, his motivation is ‘universal’ in the sense that he would save *anyone* who is in danger *unconditionally*. As Mencius said that, such moral motivation is not caused by the intentions to ‘gain the favour of the child’s parents’ or ‘seek the praise of neighbours and friends’, or by ‘a dislike to have a bad name if not doing so’

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<sup>389</sup> However, whether Tang’s interpretation of Mencius’ concept of humanity is appropriate is debatable. Siu Chun-sing argues that Tang’s interpretation quoted above is a new meaning created by Tang. See 蕭振聲 [Siu Chung-sing], ‘Tang Junyi on Benevolence, Dutifulness, Ritual, and Wisdom’, 中正漢學研究 [Chung Ching Chinese Studies] 31, no. 1, (June 2018): 79-114.

<sup>390</sup> Lee Ming-huei [李明輝], ‘Liu Zongzhou’s Criticism against Zhu Xi’s Theory of Li and Qi’ [劉戡山對朱子理氣論的批判], *Chinese Studies* 19, no. 2, (2001): 29.

<sup>391</sup> Mou Zong-San, *Nineteen Lectures*, trans. Julie Lee Wei, Chp 4, 74.

<sup>392</sup> Mou Zong-San, 心體與性體 [The Mind-Substance and the Nature-Substance], (Linking Book Ltd, 2003), Vol. 5, 562.

<sup>393</sup> New Confucianism introduces Kantian ethics to reformulate Confucian ethics, so it is appropriate to quote Kant when explaining Tang Jung-Yi’s idea of moral reason.

<sup>394</sup> Kant, Immanuel, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 56. C §231.

(*Mencius* 3.6)<sup>395396</sup> This is the reason why Wang Yangming says: ‘conscience [itself] is the heavenly reason’.<sup>397</sup>

Therefore, moral laws should not be regarded as objective theories providing any objective certainty. In a cognitive activity like mathematics, the Pythagorean theorem is an objective theory which implies objective certainty. The subjective feeling of the cognitive self does not matter. Moral laws, however, do not provide such objective certainty. Mencius regards the feeling of commiseration as a moral law, but such moral law does not guarantee any moral judgement that a person *must* follow. When one sees a child falling into a well, either one saves the child or does not save the child; one’s moral choice, however, is not directly determined by the moral law. It is one’s *subjective feeling* of commiseration which motivates one in such a particular situation to decide to save the child. In other words, there is an objective uncertainty in moral judgement driven by ethical passion.

When there is no objective theory or reference for judgement, only the *passion of the infinite can make decision subjective*. Because there is no objective theory to follow, it is appropriate to identify ethical passion as one kind of passion of the infinite. According to Kierkegaard,

... the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity is truth. From the objective point of view, there is no infinite decision, and thus it is objectively correct that the

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<sup>395</sup> Original text: 今人乍見孺子將入於井，皆有怵惕惻隱之心。非所以內交於孺子之父母也，非所以要譽於鄉黨朋友也，非惡其聲而然也。（《孟子》〈公孫丑上〉）

<sup>396</sup> Mencius’s famous analogy of the child falling into a well is very important in New Confucian philosophy, as it manifests the universality and unconditionality of Confucian concept of the four beginnings of goodness (四善端), which echoes with the principles of universality and unconditionality in Kantian ethics.

<sup>397</sup> Original text: 良知即是天理（《王陽明全集》〈靜心錄〉73）

distinction between good and evil is cancelled, along with the principle of contradiction, and thereby also the infinite distinction between truth and falsehood. Only in subjectivity is there decision, whereas wanting to become objective is untruth. The passion of the infinite, not its content, is the deciding factor, for its content is precisely itself. In this way the subjective “how” and subjectivity are the truth. (*CUP 432*)<sup>398</sup>

The passion of the infinite is different from the passion of immediacy. Aesthetic passion as immediate passion does not bother with the problem of subjective decision, because immediate passion does not involve any reflection; it is *pre*-reflective. However, the passion of the infinite is *post*-reflective. When a person reflects and realises the absence of objective reference or theory for his/her judgement or decision, he/she chooses according to his/her passion of the infinite. When there is *no objective reference* or theory to follow, the passion of the infinite alone provides the *fundamental motivation to choose and to act*. Kierkegaard says,

In the moment of the decision of passion, where the road swings off from objective knowledge, it looks as if the infinite decision were thereby finished. However, at the same moment, the existing person is in the temporal realm, and the subjective “how” is transformed into a striving that is motivated and repeatedly refreshed by the decisive passion of the infinite, but it is nevertheless a striving. (*CUP 433*)

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<sup>398</sup> Come, Arnold B., *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 99-100.

It should be noticed that objective uncertainty is not unique to moral passion. As we shall see, objective uncertainty is an essential feature of religious passion. In some case, objective uncertainty may also be founded in cognitive judgment when it involves moral judgement driven by ethical passion rather than epistemic passion. Theoretically speaking, when a historian investigates the reason why the Manchurian Qing dynasty defeated the Ming Dynasty, the last dynasty of the Han Chinese people, he/she should follow objective historical evidence and accounts. In practice, however, his/her subjective moral passions affect his/her epistemic judgements. As an official historian appointed by the Manchurian emperor Yongzheng, Zhang Tingyu (張廷玉) manifested his loyalty to Qing dynasty and avoided indicating the betrayal of Manchurian tribes against Ming dynasty in *History of Ming* (明史). Philosopher Wang Fuzhi (王夫之), who refused to surrender to Qing dynasty and remained loyal to the departed last Ming Emperor Yongli, expressed his anti-Manchurian attitudes in his historical account *Accounts on Yongli* (永曆實錄). As historian Ch'ian Mou indicates, Wang and 'inheritance' of Ming dynasty (明朝遺民) regarded Manchurian as a conqueror. 'The strict queue policy, which forced Chinese literati to surrender their culture [to Manchurian], led to the resistance in the South.'<sup>399</sup> Zhang's and Wang's radical different political stands originated from the expressions of their different ethical passions of loyalty to the different emperor, and there is an objective uncertainty in loyalty. There is no objective theory arguing whether the literati should be loyal to Ming or Qing emperors; it is an individual choice driven by ethical passion. As a result, the objective study of the history of Ming dynasty becomes subjective.

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<sup>399</sup> Ch'ian Mou, 國史大綱 [The Outline of National History], (Commercial Press, 1996), chp. 44.1.

By contrast, an ethical judgement may lose its objective uncertainty and become passionless when the judgements are grounded not on an individual's ethical passions but on objective moral laws. For Mencius, all moral actions are driven by the feeling of commiseration which is a subjective moral passion, as he said 'all men have the mind of not bearing to see others to suffer.' (人皆有不忍人之心). Wang Yangming elaborates that moral action is the actions which 'the mind allows' (心又忍得) according to subjective moral feeling. Similarly, Mou Zong-San emphasises that moral passion is the mind which actively undertakes moral actions. 'When Confucius used the mind's being at ease or not to point to *ren*, it meant that men should have "awareness" [*jue*, feeling] here, for being at ease or not is an awareness of the mind. Once the ability of *ren*-awareness is gone, *li* [禮, ritual] and *Dao* will also disappear. That is why *ren* is not only *li* and *Dao*, it is also mind.'<sup>400</sup>

The problem of ethical passion, according to Sullivan Shannon's interpretation, is its 'twofold demand that conflicts with itself': on one hand, ethical 'passion is responsible for the creation of the unified, continuous self that distinguishes ethical existence from aesthetic existence [which is discontinuous, as we have seen in Don Giovanni] as presented in *Either/Or* and that enables a person to progress to the highest (religious) sphere of existence.'<sup>401</sup> On the other hand: 'ethical passion is also that by which a person comes to discover that her choice is wrong and thus should be abandoned'.<sup>402</sup> While

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<sup>400</sup> Mou Zong-San, *Nineteen Lectures*, trans. Julie Lee Wei, Chp. 4, 75.

<sup>401</sup> Shannon, Sullivan, 'Fractured passion in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*', *Philosophy Today* 41, no. 1, (Spring 1997): 87

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*



ethical passion creates the resoluteness of the ethical self and the concomitant task of continually renewing one's commitment through the repetition of one's choice, it at the same time creates the possibility of abandoning one's choice through its power to reveal the rightness or wrongness of choice. Ethical passion simultaneously provides for both the need for continuity and the possibility of the disruption of that continuity, a dual provision that reveals the fractured composition of ethical passion.<sup>403</sup>

Ethical passion enables a person to make an ethical choice, where a person becomes a moral self, and prepare the self to enter the religious stage where God-man relation is established. 'Since the [ethical] choice has been made with all the inwardness of his personality, his inner being is purified and he himself is brought into an immediate relationship with the eternal power that omnipresently pervades all existence [*Tilværelse*]. The person who chooses only esthetically never reaches this transfiguration, this higher dedication. Despite all its passion, the rhythm in his soul is only a *spiritus lenis* [weak aspiration].' (*EO II*, 167) Chinese Confucian generally agree that ethical passion creates a moral subjectivity with a transcendent relationship to the heaven (天 *tin3*)<sup>404</sup>, although heaven is not a Christian God.<sup>405</sup> As Mencius said: 'He who exerts his mind [盡其心者] to the utmost knows his nature [知其性]. He who knows his nature knows Heaven [知天]. To preserve one's mind and to nourish one's nature is the way to serve Heaven. Not to allow any double-mindedness

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> According to Lin, Hong-Hsin, the Confucian idea of the unity of heaven and man came from a religious spirit of honouring the heaven, but gradually transformed as a humanistic spirit. See 林鴻信 [Lin Hong-Hsin], 基督宗教與東亞儒學的對話：以信仰與道德的分際為中心 [The Dialogue between Christianity and East Asian Confucianism: with Focus on the Distinction between Faith and Morality], (Taipei: Taipei University Press, September 2012), 22.

<sup>405</sup> While Connell argues that Confucius and Kierkegaard disagree with each other in the religious dimension of ethical selfhood, he does not investigate the history of the idea of 'heaven' in Chinese Confucian tradition, from Mencius to twentieth century New Confucianism. See Connell, George B., 'Kierkegaard and Confucius: The Religious Dimensions of Ethical Selfhood', *Dao*, no.8, (2009):133-149.

regardless of longevity or brevity of life, but to cultivate one's person and wait for [destiny [命] ...] is the way to fulfil one's destiny' (Mencius 7a:1)<sup>406</sup> Mind nature 'is identified with the heavenly reason and mind, so that man's very existence is contingent upon "Hsin-Hsin" [mind nature] through the immanence of the reason and mind of heaven.'<sup>407</sup> Tang Jung-Yi argues that here Mencius and Wang establish an 'internal transcendence' through the individual's moral actualisation, which is different from the 'external transcendence' found in Christian God-man relation. 'When human beings sincerely follow the natural expressions of our human nature, we can exhaust their minds, know our natures, manifests our passions, and communicate emotionally with the nature and others, where we can know the heaven from knowing the [human] nature.'<sup>408</sup>

However, though differently from Confucianism, Kierkegaard is aware of the same problem: that 'the passion of ethical choice will also enable the chooser to discover if she has chosen the wrong thing. "Even though a person chose the wrong thing, he nevertheless, by virtue of the energy with which he chose, will discover that he chose the wrong thing" (E/O II:167).'<sup>409</sup> Ethical passion enables a person to choose wrong and knows that he/she has chosen the wrong thing and even 'demands that one abandon that choice'.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Translated by Chan, Wing-tsit, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), 78.

The quotation above is the ground of the 'mind nature theory' (心性論) proclaimed by Yangmingism and New Confucianism. As Wang Yangming claims, 'Nature is the original character of the mind ... Heaven is the source of nature. To exhaust one's mind means to exhaust one's nature.' (性是心之體，天是性之原，盡心即是盡性。) Trans. Henke, Frederick Goodrich, *The Philosophy of Wang Yangming*, (London & Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, 1916), 58.

<sup>407</sup> Trans. Chang, Junmai, 'A Manifesto for a Re-appraisal of Sinology and Reconstruction of Chinese Culture', *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Vol. 2, (Bookman Associates, 1962), 466.

<sup>408</sup> 唐君毅 [Tang Jung-Yi], 中國文化之精神價值 [the value of Chinese Cultural Spirit], (Taipei: Cheng Chung Bookstore, 1977), 330.

<sup>409</sup> Shannon, Sullivan, 'Fractured passion in Kierkegaard's Either/Or', *Philosophy Today*, 88.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

In order to understand the inevitability of the possibility of choosing wrong, it is appropriate to clarify the concept of 'ethical choice' in Kierkegaard's language. The ethical choice is different from aesthetic choice and epistemic choice as it requires positing an ethical self to choose and positing the possibilities of doing good or evil. The epistemic choice is objective, for epistemic options provided by the reason or experiment following certain objective theory. A scientist 'discovers' rather than 'invents' a scientific law.<sup>411</sup> While the aesthetic choice is subjective, it also depends on the desired external objects. While Don Juan was self-conscious of his desires of women, he made choices according to women that they encountered. 'The esthetic choice is either altogether immediate, and thus no choice, or it loses itself in a great multiplicity. For example, when a young girl follows her heart's choice, this choice, however beautiful it is otherwise, is no choice in the stricter sense, because it is altogether immediate.' (*EO* II 167) Here the young girl makes a choice immediately without reflection and positing a self to make an aesthetic choice; she merely follows her natural inclination and lust to act.

By contrast, an ethical choice is not immediate; such choice must involve moral reflection and *commitments* to moral laws. '[When] it was a matter of choosing, for even if there is only one situation in which these words have absolute meaning—namely, every time truth, justice, and sanctity appear one side and lust and natural inclinations, dark passions and perdition on the other side' (*EO* II 157), there is an *ethical choice* which enables a person to 'choose absolutely', i.e. *choose to posit a moral self to choose ethically*. Therefore, ethical

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<sup>411</sup> Although in science, it is debatable as instrumentalist may argue that scientific laws are merely artificially invented as a way of making sense of the natural world. See Bas van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

choice 'is not so much a matter of choosing between willing good or willing evil as of choosing to will, but that in turn posits good and evil.' (*EO II* 169) As Kierkegaard said,

When I choose absolutely, I choose despair, and in despair, I choose the absolute, for I am myself the absolute; I posit the absolute, and I myself am the absolute. But in other words, with exactly the same meaning I may say: I choose the absolute that chooses me; I posit the absolute that posits me for if I do not keep in mind that this second expression is just as absolute, then my category of choosing is untrue, because it is precisely the identity of both. (*EO II*, 213)

In order to make such an ethical choice, one must posit a moral self who can commit itself to the moral laws so that it may choose morally. In other words, in an ethical choice, *a person chooses to be him- or herself*. In other words, in aesthetic passion, one does *not choose to be oneself*, for aesthetic passion does not require positing oneself to choose. Here is the paradox of 'choosing absolutely': only the self (say *Positing Self 1*) can posit a self (say *Posited Self 1*) to choose, but the *Positing Self 1* can only be posited by a *Positing Self 2*). If the *Positing Self 1* is posited by another *Positing Self 2*, and the *Positing Self 2* is posited by another *Positing Self 3*, there will be an infinite regress. However, if the *Positing Self 1* is posited by itself, there will be a paradox: *if x is posited, x did not exist before being posited*. The self-positing self, however, has already been existing before it posits itself. To solve the paradox, Kierkegaard declares that in fact, the self has not yet existed until the self chooses to posit itself:

He chooses himself—not in the finite sense, for then this "self" would indeed be something finite that would fall among all the other finite things—but in the absolute sense, and yet he

does choose himself and not someone else. This self that he chooses in this way is infinitely concrete, for it is he himself, and yet it is absolutely different from his former self, for he has chosen it absolutely. This self has not existed before, because it came into existence through the choice, and yet it has existed, for it was indeed “himself.” (EO II, 215)

...for I choose absolutely, and I choose absolutely precisely by having chosen not to choose this or that. I choose the absolute, and what is the absolute? It is myself in my eternal validity. Something other than myself I can never choose as the absolute, for if I choose something else, I choose it as something finite and consequently do not choose absolutely. (EO II, 214)

An aesthetic self who chooses some finite objects (which satisfy the desires of the self) is a finite self. However, the ethical choice does not choose something finite. For universal moral laws are eternally valid and cannot be finite. Ethical choice can only be chosen by an infinite self. So when one chooses absolutely, one chooses to be an infinite self. ‘Not until I absolutely choose myself do I absolutely infinitize myself, because I myself am the absolute, because only I myself can choose absolutely; and this absolute choice of myself is my freedom, and only when I have absolutely chosen myself have I posited an absolute difference: namely, the difference between good and evil.’ (EO II, 224)

However, in order to have an ethical choice, the ethical self must have the possibility of choosing evil, which means the possibility of having sin. Such a possibility cannot be eliminated; if it were eliminated by the ethical self, ethical choice ceases to exist. As Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime (who was strongly influenced by Kierkegaard)<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> For Tanabe’s philosophy, see Takeshi, Morisato, *Faith and Reason in Continental and Japanese Philosophy: Reading Tanabe Hajime and William Desmond*, (London: Bloomsbury Philosophy, 2019).

indicates: ‘human sin and evil are not accidental phenomena; nor do they signify merely the evil acts of individual persons. They constitute rather a negative determination of our being itself that lies at the foundation of human existence in general’.<sup>413</sup> ‘An “existence” whose principle is freedom cannot by itself eliminate the sort of latent evil we see produced by an innate tendency toward arrogance, the evil most accurately termed “original sin”.’<sup>414</sup> While Tanabe rejects ‘the Pauline transformation of Christ into a redeemer’,<sup>415</sup> he agrees with Kierkegaard that there is an ‘inevitable force of sin embedded’ in faith.<sup>416</sup>

The self-awareness of being able to choose wrongly leads to the emergence of *a sense of guilt*<sup>417</sup> for Confucian philosophers do not emphasise the possibility of choosing wrongly; they generally only emphasise the possibility of choosing good.<sup>418</sup> ‘[E]thics demands perfection; anything else implies that one fails completely, that one is infinitely guilty.’<sup>419</sup> Kierkegaard’s reflection on the problem of guilt arising from ethical passion leads him to go further and investigate religious passion. As Fremstedal quotes from Kierkegaard,

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<sup>413</sup> Tanabe, Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, trans. James W Heisig, (Nagoya: Chisokudo, 2016), 75.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Heisig, James W., ‘Tanabe Hajime’s God’, *Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture Bulletin* 38, (2014): 37.

<sup>416</sup> Takayanagi, Shunichi, ‘Tanabe Hajime’s Metanoetic Philosophy and Aesthetics’, *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 32, no. 2-4, (2009): 205.

<sup>417</sup> The idea of guilt is not valued in ancient Confucianism. The *Doctrine of Means* said that ‘the superior man examines his own heart and sees that there is nothing wrong there [内省不疚, also translated as not feeling guilt], and that he is not dissatisfied with himself [無惡於志].’ (*Doctrine of Means*, 33) In Neo-Confucianism, Zhuxi defines 疚 *gau3* as moral illness and argues that the superior man has no guilt in his heart [無愧於心].

<sup>418</sup> For example, Wang Yangming said that ‘The love of father and son, elder brother and younger brother, is the point at which the purpose of man’s mind to develop begins. Just as in the tree the buds shoot forth, thus from this love toward the people and love of things trunk, branches, and leaves develop.’ (父子兄弟之愛，便是人心生意發端處，如木之抽芽。) trans. Frederick Henke, *Philosophy Wang Yang Ming*, 107.

<sup>419</sup> Fremstedal, Roe, ‘Original Sin and Radical Evil: Kierkegaard and Kant’, *Kantian Review* 17, no.2 (June 2012): 200.

[O]ne cannot *simultaneously* become good and evil ... Ethics immediately confronts him [the individual] with its requirement, whether he now deigns (*vil behage*) to become, and then he becomes – either good or evil ... that all human beings are good and evil is of no concern at all to ethics, which ... denounces every explanation ... that deceitfully wants to explain becoming with being, whereby the absolute decision of becoming is essentially revoked ... (CUP I.420)

According to Fremstedal's interpretation: 'Instead of being good or evil in himself, man becomes good or evil by virtue of performing this choice. This means that evil consists in an active opposition to the good rather than merely some lack of good.'<sup>420</sup> Without the possibility of choosing evil, the ethical choice is impossible. The ethical self, therefore, must be a self of either good or evil, rather than the self of pure moral goodness. The ethical self's will to be a morally good self is impossible, which leads to despair.

The idea of guilt and sin, however, is missing in Chinese Confucianism, which prevents Chinese Confucianism from leaping forward from ethical passion to religious passion. While 'Confucius has a deep sense of the difficulty of a life committed to the Way, he never experiences the radical incapacity and guilt central to Climacus' account.' As Connell observes: 'the central article of faith in Confucian spirituality, the conviction that keeps Confucius going when he meets frustration after frustration, is that humans genuinely possess an aptitude for moral development.'<sup>421</sup> As Mou Zong-san states in *Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy* (中國哲學的特質): 'if one can leap from the abyss of nothingness, as Kierkegaard said, one is converting to God ... therefore the consciousness of fear is a

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<sup>420</sup> Ibid. 201.

<sup>421</sup> Connell, George B., 'Kierkegaard and Confucius: The Religious Dimensions of Ethical Selfhood', *Dao* 8, (2009): 145.

typical consciousness of conversion in religious consciousness. Conversion assimilates one's own subjectivity, which means the complete denial of one's own existence, i.e. self-negation, and then ... commend one's existence on a transcendent existent in the faith—who is God.' 'But in Chinese thoughts, heavenly command [天命] and heavenly way [天道] are the ... human subjectivity. So, in "honouring" [of the heaven], our subjectivities are not commended to God. We do not undertake self-denial. We undertake self-affirmation.'<sup>422</sup> However, Lin Hong-Hsin suggests that Mou has misinterpreted Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and *Concept of Anxiety*, for one's fear of guilt and sin is a 'negative awareness' which encourages the 'positive affirmation of life'.<sup>423</sup> Because of the emerging of sense of guilt and sinfulness in ethical passion, one requires faith as religious passion which not only denies oneself but also affirms oneself in the God-man Relation, as we shall see in the following discussion on religious passion.

### 3.1.4 Religious Passion: Existential Pathos and Dialectical Pathos

As we have seen in previous sections, the feeling of guilt arising from the ethical passion leads to the emergence of religiousness (A and B) and religious passion. As we shall see, religiousness A, which is the 'religiousness of [existential] pathos' (*CUP* I.387), and religiousness B, which is the 'religiousness of the dialectical' (*CUP* I.561), both emerge from the structure of ethical choice. While 'Religiousness A is not the specifically Christian

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<sup>422</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-san], 中國哲學的特質 [Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy] (Taipei: Linking Books, 2003), Vol.28, 15-16.

<sup>423</sup> 林鴻信 [Lin Hong-hsin], 基督宗教與東亞儒學的對話 [The Dialogue between Christianity and East Asian Confucianism], 31.



religiousness,' (*CUP* I.555), religiousness B characterise Christianity due to its emphasis on sin, repentance and self-denial.<sup>424</sup> I will first summarise the distinction between religiousness A and religiousness B, then argue that they manifest two kinds of religious passions: the passion of self-interest in one's own eternal happiness (existential pathos), and the passion of self-denial due to guilt (dialectical pathos).<sup>425</sup>

At the beginning of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard asks the question 'where the hypothetical question about eternal happiness is first raised'. He realised it could not arise from the objective truth but subjective truth 'by one who has an infinite personal interest in the outcome.'<sup>426</sup> So existential pathos is a subjective passion which is interested in one's own eternal happiness. Here Kierkegaard suggests his first formulation of the Christian religion: 'Christianity is spirit; spirit is inwardness; inwardness is subjectivity; subjectivity is essentially passion, and at its maximum an infinite, personally interested passion for one's eternal happiness.' (*CUP* I.33) Such passion is latter known as existential pathos or religiousness A, which, according to Roberts, is an 'emotion and is based in passion as interest or concern when [Climacus] says, "a person's passion [*Lidenskab*] culminates in the pathos-filled relation [*pathetiske Forhold*] to an eternal happiness.'" [*CUP*, I.385]<sup>427</sup> As Kierkegaard says,

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<sup>424</sup> Religiousness B is different from Religiousness A because it is dialectical. It is dialectical because it involves the paradox of self-denial. While guilt is also found in religiousness A, in religiousness B guilt and repentance urges one to deny itself in front of God.

<sup>425</sup> Here I adopt Robert C. Roberts' distinction between existential pathos and dialectical pathos when distinguishing religiousness A and B. See Roberts, Robert C., 'Dialectical Emotions and the Virtue of Faith', *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 73-94.

<sup>426</sup> Burgess, Andrew J., 'The Bilateral Symmetry of Kierkegaard's Postscript', *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 337.

<sup>427</sup> Roberts, Robert C., 'Dialectical Emotions and the Virtue of Faith', *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 82.

In relation to an eternal happiness as the absolute good, pathos does not mean words but that this idea transforms the whole existence of the existing person. Esthetic pathos expresses itself in words and can in its truth signify that the individual abandons himself in order to lose himself in the idea, whereas existential pathos results from the transforming relation of the idea to the individual's existence. If the absolute  $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  does not absolutely transform the individual's existence by relating to it, the individual does not relate himself with existential pathos but with esthetic pathos ... (CUP I.387)

The main differences between esthetic pathos (aesthetic passion) and existential pathos (religious passion) are the different levels of reflection on the relation between ideality and actuality. 'The poet can have an ideality compared with which actuality is but a weak reflection; for the poet, actuality is merely an occasion that prompts him to abandon actuality in order to seek the ideality of possibility. Poetic pathos, therefore, is essentially fantasy.' (CUP I.388) A poet does not necessarily actualise his ideality in actuality. As Roberts indicates: 'it is .. characteristic of the poet's attitude that he becomes diverted from the issues of this own existence which are expressed in his work, to the work itself as a product.'<sup>428</sup>

For Kierkegaard: 'Poetic pathos ... is essentially fantasy.' (CUP I.388) It is dangerous to confuse poetic pathos with existential pathos, which must relate ideality to the actuality. 'For an existing person, eternal happiness relates itself essentially to existing, to the ideality of actuality, and consequently the pathos must correspond to it.' (CUP I.388) Such existing

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid. 83. One can find lots of examples among Classical Chinese poets who depart themselves from the actuality to pure ideality. Li Shangyin (李商隱 813-858) is famous of his abstract, romantic and cryptic writing styles which makes the interpretation of his poems extremely difficult. especially his series of 'no title poems' (無題) and *The Adorned Zither* (錦瑟). See 葉嘉瑩 [Ye Jiaying], 迦凌論詩叢稿 [Jia Ling Series of Poem Critics], (Beijing: Beijing Publisher, April 2008), 157.

person aims to actualise the eternal happiness in actuality. For Kierkegaard: ‘if one wants ethically to establish a poetic relation to actuality, this is a misunderstanding and a retrogression. The point here as everywhere is to keep the specific spheres separated from one another, to respect the qualitative dialectic ... With regard to the religious, the point is that this has passed through the ethical.’ (*CUP* I.389) Kierkegaard repeatedly emphasises the distinctions among different existential spheres and passions. He does not disparage poetic pathos, but condemn those who confused poetic and existential pathos. ‘A religious poet ... is in an awkward position. ... such a person wants to relate himself to the religious by way of imagination, but just by doing that he ends up relating himself esthetically to something esthetic.’ (*CUP*, I.389) Unsurprisingly, Kierkegaard attacks Danish hymnwriters Grundtvig as ‘a hearty yodeller or a bellowing blacksmith.’<sup>429</sup> For Kierkegaard, Grundtvig is a religious poet who fails to acknowledge the sorrow in religious passion as we shall see in the dialectical passion. Grundtvig’s ‘tremendous and joyful song of praise’ shows that he is ‘without understanding of “the true tone of a hymn”, which in Kierkegaard’s opinion should give expression to the intimate suffering of the individual as he in quiet sorrow becomes reconciled to God. “Grundtvig is, was, and continues to be a noise-maker who will be unpleasant to me even in eternity”.’<sup>430</sup>

In order to actualise the eternal happiness, one must resign from earthly cares and concentrate on \ eternal happiness alone which is the highest telos of one’s life. As Louise Keeley suggests, here ‘the individual ... adopt[s] an absolute relation to the absolute telos and a relative relation to all finite ends. This corollary—the assignment of relative

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<sup>429</sup> Holm, Anders, *The Essential N.F.S. Grundtvig*, trans. Edward Broadbridge, (Filo, 2019), 131.

<sup>430</sup> Høirup, Henning, ‘Grundtvig and Kierkegaard: Their Views of the Church’, *Theology Today* 12, no. 3, (Oct, 1955): 335.

significance to relative ends—entails resignation: the relativity of these subordinate ends “consists in the fact that they are subject to renunciation just in so far as they may conflict with the demand of the highest good.” Because the pathos of resignation is existential rather than merely aesthetic, it must transform the individual’s existence’.<sup>431</sup> Transformation here, therefore, means the transformation of one’s ends from aesthetic to religious.

There are three stages in existential pathos: (1) awareness of eternal happiness is the absolute telos of this life’ in *CUP* I.387-431, (2) in *CUP* I.431-525: ‘suffering due to the fact that the commitment of the first stage is frustrated ... due to the weakness of this flesh and his ever-new backsliding into giving relative ends the place in his life that only the absolute telos should occupy.’ and (3) in *CUP* I.525-555 ‘the aspect of a global, irremediable, and ever-increasing guilt.’<sup>432</sup>

It should be noticed that religiousness A is not uniquely a Christian religiousness. ‘A person existing religiously can express his relation to an eternal happiness<sup>433</sup> (immortality, eternal life) outside Christianity ... because it has only universal human nature as its presupposition’, while ‘the religiousness [B] with the dialectical in second place cannot have been prior to itself, and after having come it cannot be said to be able to have been where it has not been’. (*CUP* I.559) According to Lee C. Barret: ‘[a]lthough subjectivity in the sense of passionate concern for the quality of one’s own life is a necessary condition for Christian pathos, it is

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<sup>431</sup> Keeley, Louise Carroll, ‘Spiritual Trial in the Thought of Kierkegaard’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 307-308.

<sup>432</sup> Roberts, Robert C, ‘Dialectical Emotions and the Virtue of Faith’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 84-85.

<sup>433</sup> Unfortunately, neither Connell, Lin or Huang Chun-Chieh has investigated whether Chinese Confucianism contains Religiousness A as they do not relate the discussion of religiousness in Confucianism to the distinction between religiousness A and B. Whether religiousness A is acknowledge by Chinese Confucianism depends on whether Confucian regards the eternal happiness as the highest telos.

not a sufficient condition. Subjectivity is “untrue” in the sense that a description of the “how” alone does not exhaustively specify the “what” of Christian faith.<sup>434</sup> The passionate interest in one’s own eternal happiness can be founded in other religions. Chinese Buddhist’s idea of nirvana as the departure from the karmic cycle can also be regarded as a parallel<sup>435</sup> concept of eternal happiness in East Asian tradition.<sup>436</sup>

Religiousness A by definition cannot answer what Christian faith is, but only how Christian faith manifests. ‘*Objectively the emphasis is on what is said; subjectively the emphasis is on how it is said.* ... Ethically-religiously, the emphasis is again on: how. However, this is not to be understood as manner, modulation of voice, oral delivery, etc., but it is to be understood as the relation of the existing person, in his very existence, to what is said. Objectively, the question is only about categories of thought; subjectively, about inwardness.’ (CUP I.202)

Inwardness is just a form of religious faith but not the content of religious faith. However, Kierkegaard cannot appeal to objectivity when defining the contents of Christianity, e.g. the bible, the creed, liturgy, catechism etc., or else he commits Hegel’s problem of ‘forgetting the existence’ or the essential nature of Christian faith as inwardness. As Barrett indicates, the ‘external focus would militate against the concern for the shape of one’s own life, and the concomitant risk of committing oneself to the actualization of a possibility. In essential knowing, any alleged direct relation with the “what” must be broken in order to stimulate

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<sup>434</sup> Barret, Lee C., ‘Subjectivity Is (Un)Truth: Climacus’ Dialectically Sharpened Pathos’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 300.

<sup>435</sup>. For example, Karl Barth indicates that the Japanese Pure Land Buddhism is ‘the most adequate and comprehensive and illuminating heathen parallel to Christianity’. See Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics*, (London & New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), Vol. 1, Part 2, 340

<sup>436</sup> Such a principle is summarised as ‘departure from suffering, achievement of happiness’ (離苦得樂) in Chinese Buddhism. See 聖嚴法師 [Master Sheng-yen]. "用佛法如何讓生命離苦得樂 (聖嚴法師-大法鼓 0718) [How to Depart from Suffering and Achieve Happiness in Life by Using Buddhist Dharma]." YouTube. November 01, 2011. Accessed May 16, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wl-bDqH7480>

self-activity.’<sup>437</sup> In other words, neither subjectivity nor objectivity can define Christian faith. ‘From the objective point of view, there is no infinite decision, and thus it is objectively correct that the distinction between good and evil is cancelled, along with the principle of contradiction, and thereby also the infinite distinction between truth and falsehood.’ (*CUP*, I.203) Due to the lack of objective content defining Christianity in religiousness A, there is an *objective uncertainty*. ‘Subjectivity is untruth’ in this sense (*CUP* I.207).

In order to answer what is Christianity without appealing to the objectivity, Kierkegaard develops the idea of religiousness B as dialectical pathos. The problem of ‘subjectivity as untruth’ echoes the feeling of guilt which arises from the ethical passion when one is aware of the problem of self-positing and the irresistible *possibility of choosing wrong*.

Religiousness B contains three components according to Kierkegaard: (1) the consciousness of sin (*CUP* I.583-584), (2) the possibility of offence (*CUP* I.585) and (3) the pain of sympathy (*CUP* I.585-586). ‘The consciousness of sin ... is a change of the subject himself, which shows that outside the individual there must be the power that makes clear to him that he has become a person other than he was by coming into existence, that he has become a sinner. This power is the god in time.’ (*CUP* I.584) While guilt in ethical passion stimulates the awareness of the religious passion, Fremstedal distinguishes sin from guilt. ‘Sin includes more than moral evil, since it undermines man’s relation to God ... Kierkegaard’s theory, sin is disobedience against God, and only in relation to the Christian God can one speak of

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<sup>437</sup> Barret, Lee C., ‘Subjectivity Is (Un)Truth: Climacus’ Dialectically Sharpened Pathos’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 298.

sin proper ... Whereas evil is the opposite of good, sin is the opposite of faith, not the opposite of virtue.<sup>438</sup>

While Christ as God and saviour offers individuals the possibility of salvation from sin, faith in Christ also implies the *possibility of offence*. 'Faith [in Christianity]... is always a relationship with Jesus of Nazareth.'<sup>439</sup> Faith has both positive ('happy', such as 'joy, gratitude, and hope, contrition, trust') and negative senses ('anger, dismay, repugnance, contempt, disappointment, resentment, fear, shame, embarrassment').<sup>440</sup> 'Both offence and faith ... are sets of ways of noticing real features of Jesus Christ, and noticing them with one's heart, noticing them ""existentially"".'<sup>441</sup> While the apostles actualised the possibility of loving Jesus, the Pharisees actualised the possibility of hating Jesus. The 'Pharisees were offended' (PC 86). As Kierkegaard says in *Practice in Christianity*:

Would that we might see you as you are and were and will be until your second coming in glory, as the sign of offence and the object of faith, the lowly man, yet the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, ... you had to repeat, "Blessed is the one who is not offended at me." Would that we might see you in this way and that we then might not be offended at you! (PC 9-10)

Jesus Christ, as the object of faith, must preserve the possibility of offence as 'a condition for faith. For in protecting that possibility, they are protecting the identity of Jesus Christ as the object of faith.'<sup>442</sup> Jesus Christ as the Son of God is a paradox: 'the reality of both his

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<sup>438</sup> Fremstedal, Roe, 'Original Sin and Radical Evil', *Kantian Review*, 214.

<sup>439</sup> Roberts, Robert C, 'Dialectical Emotions and the Virtue of Faith', *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 86.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.* 88.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.* 88.

lowly condition and his claim to be God and the contrast between these'<sup>443</sup> are so paradoxical that could be considered as blasphemy in the Jewish community. For example when Jews tried to stone Jesus, they said: 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God.' (John 10:33) When Jews demanded the crucifixion of Christ, they claimed: 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.' (John 19:7) But the apostle chooses to embrace Jesus Christ despite his paradoxical nature. When encountering Jesus, Nathanael the apostle proclaimed: 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' (John 1:49), Martha also declared: 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.' (John 11:27), and St Peter the apostle confessed: 'You are the Messiah,[a] the Son of the living God.' (Matthew 16:16) Acknowledging Christ as the Son of God instead of finding him offensive is the essential manifestation of Christian faith.

Finally, in religiousness B one must suffer from the pain of sympathy—'sympathize and cannot sympathize with every human being qua human being, but essentially only with Christians.' (CUP I.585) Christ demands his disciples to love everyone, including their enemies, which is against the human nature. Universal love or neighbour love taught by Jesus Christ, therefore, requires *self-denial*.

Human nature inclines to have preferential love, which is essentially selfish; but God requires man to have universal love, which is against one's own preference and therefore selfless. Preferential love like friendship and erotic love 'prefers' only particular objects or

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid. 88.



persons which satisfy an individual self. While preferential love is the middle term in erotic love and friendship, God is the middle term in the neighbour love: ‘In erotic love and friendship, preferential love is the middle term; in love for the neighbour, God is the middle term. Love God above all else; then you also love the neighbor and in the neighbor every human being. ... *Love for the neighbor is therefore the eternal equality in loving*, but the eternal equality is the opposite of preference.’ (WL 57-58) In chapter 3.2 we shall see how Kierkegaard brings the religious passion back to the level of moral practice when we investigate the idea of universal love and preferential love in details.

In short, all individuals are capable of manifesting aesthetic, epistemic, ethical and religious passions. It should be noticed that Kierkegaard does not renounce aesthetic passion and only appreciates religious passion. Ethical passion, as we have seen, motivates ethical reflection from which religious passion arises. The four passions are equally important and are manifested in different existential spheres which should not be confused.<sup>444</sup>

## **3.2 Reconstruction of a Kierkegaardian Philosophy of Culture**

### **3.2.1 How Culture as Passion Solve Three Problems of ‘Fixed Cultural**

#### **Values’**

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<sup>444</sup> For the problem of confusion of sphere, see Schönbaumsfeld, Genia, *A Confusion of the Spheres: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

As we have seen in chapter 2.2, East Asian philosophy of culture generally adopts the Hegelian account of culture (*Bildung*) as Spirit (*Geist*). New Confucian philosopher Liang Shu-Ming argues that Chinese culture emphasises ‘philosophy of life’, Western culture emphasise ‘epistemology’, while Indian culture emphasises ‘religion’.<sup>445</sup> Similarly, Lao Sze-Kwang distinguishes cultures according to the values they prioritise: both Chinese and Indian cultures are ‘virtue-oriented’ (although the latter emphasises the virtue in terms of nirvana while the former emphasises the virtue in terms of complete actualisation of innate moral capacity) while Western culture is ‘wisdom-oriented’.<sup>446</sup> Liang’s idea that moral values are essential values of Chinese culture is developed by Tang Jung-Yi (as we shall see in this section) and Lao Sze-Kwang. Similarly, the Kyoto School philosopher Nishida Kitaro provides his metaphysical account to articulate the essential value of Japanese culture: that Japanese culture is the culture of *nothingness*. Both Liang and Nishida argue that cultural phenomenon is the manifestations of particular essential values.

The East Asian Hegelian philosophers’ theories, however, are speculative in Kierkegaard’s sense. Nishida studies Japanese Shinto mythology and Buddhist religion to formulate the metaphysical concept of nothingness<sup>447</sup>, while Liang studies Confucian philosophy in order to formulate the idea of virtues. Neither Liang and Nishida investigated how Chinese or

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<sup>445</sup> 梁漱溟 [Liang Shu Ming], 東西文化及其哲學 [Eastern and Western Cultures and Philosophies], (Beijing: Commercial Press, 1999), 76.

<sup>446</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze-Kwang], 文化問題論集新編 [Collections of Essays on Cultural Problems], (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2000), 47.

<sup>447</sup> Nishida, Kitarô, ‘The Forms of Culture of the Classical Periods of East and West: Seen From a Metaphysical Perspective’, *Sourcebook For Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents*, trans. & ed. David A. Dilworth, Waldo H. Viglielmo & Agustin Jacinto Zavala, (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 21.

Japanese people actually understand and manifest the so-called essential cultural values.

There are several theoretical problems as a result, as we have seen in chapter 2.2:

(1) *The Impossibility of changes in cultural values.* If cultural values which determine cultural development are persistent, changes in cultural values are impossible. Traditional Chinese culture would always be dominated by the same Confucian moral values throughout history, and it is impossible for traditional Chinese culture to adopt new cultures.

(2) *The lack of an empirical method to identify cultural spirit.* Liang and Nishida only study Confucian and Shinto texts to articulate the essential values of Chinese or Japanese cultures. However, they did not demonstrate how Chinese or Japanese people actually understood and manifested these essential values.

(3) *The neglect of openness of value interpretation.* Hermeneutically speaking, cultural values are not fixed; there is always an openness of interpretations. Even within the same culture, different people with a diverse background may have a different horizon of understandings, which lead to their different understanding of essential values of the same culture.

Problem (1) is solved in line with the definition of culture in terms of the manifestation of passion, since culture is not on this view determined by a particular fixed set of values.

Culture changes are determined by the changes in passions of the individual members of society. When a cultural group has a stronger interest in certain values, the culture emphasises the manifestation of particular passions. In other words, when the passions of

society change, cultural values change. *Changes in the passions of the members of society drive cultural changes.*

As we have discussed in chapter 2.2, Heubel criticises the New Confucian picture of Chinese culture determined by Confucian moral values as cultural essentialism. He argues that ‘the ideology of modernity in cultural essentialism and nationalism always distinguish the self from the others and therefore fail to address the fact of cultural diversity and hybridity.’<sup>448</sup> However, Heubel’s denial of the distinction between the self and the others contradicts with the aim of this thesis of establishing an account for a cultural self. Without self-other distinction, one can hardly formulate a cultural subjectivity.<sup>449</sup>

It is appropriate to introduce a Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of passions here, which preserves cultural subjectivity without assuming the existence of fixed essential values. Passion begins with an individual’s motivations and interests which assume self-satisfaction and subjectivity. Different individuals have different interests. Similarly, different cultural groups, which consist of individuals, have different passions. Unlike essential values, passions are changeable. When a moral self is conscious of the limit of ethical passion, religious passion comes to him/her.

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<sup>448</sup> Heubel, Fabian, 跨文化批判與當代漢語哲學：晚期福柯研究的方法論反思 [Transcultural Critique and Contemporary Philosophy in Chinese: Methodological Reflections on the Late Foucault], 揭諦 [Boundless Treasure], no. 13, (June, 2007): 47.

<sup>449</sup> Heubel does not elaborate on the meaning of hybrid. In Cheng Ching Yuen’s lecture on Philosophy of Culture taught at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2013, Cheng explained Heubel’s idea of a hybrid with the metaphor of soft drink. Different brands of the soft drink have different formula mixing sugar, water and carbon dioxide in different proportion. Likewise, cultural differences are merely the differences in ‘mixture of values’. Culture A may have a 50% value x while culture B may have just 20%. But I was dissatisfied with Cheng’s analogy for he failed to explain *how* different values are *mixed*. In coca-cola, there is a formula of the mixture of components. Although such formula is changeable, it remains constant until the firm decides to change the product design. Likewise, in culture, there should also be a formula which remains constant. Cheng and Heubel, however, fail to find such formula of culture.

Considering the diversity of the members of a cultural group, different individuals from different backgrounds may emphasise the manifestations of different passions. Therefore, it is possible that different passions are manifested within the same culture at the same time. As Chang Fong-long indicates: ‘to study Chinese culture, one should not only focus on the intellectual culture of the upper class, but also the commoner’s culture of the lower class, for they are interacting with and inter-influencing each other.’<sup>450</sup> The conflicts amongst the passions manifested within the same culture are evidenced in Chinese history, as in tensions between Confucianism and Daoism in the Han dynasty already indicate: Although Confucianism was instituted as the official philosophy during the Han dynasty (206BC-220AD), Taoist religion emerged during the same period and was influential among peasants, which led to the Yellow Turban Rebellion (184 AD) While Confucian historians like Yuan Yi (元儼, 487-520)<sup>451</sup> and Sima Guang (司馬光, 1019-1086)<sup>452</sup> condemn the Yellow Turban Rebellion, they acknowledge that such revolution is caused by religions. The case of Taoism during Han dynasty demonstrates that both religious passion and moral passions can manifest at the same time within the same culture; while the intellectuals prioritised moral passion, the peasants prioritised religious passion, and both passions were expressed parallelly within Chinese tradition.

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<sup>450</sup> 張豐隆 [Chang Fong-long], 淺說道教與中國民間信仰 [A Brief Discussion on Daoist Religion and Chinese Folk Religion], 歷史教育 [Historical Education], no. 8, (Dec, 2001):142.

<sup>451</sup> In his report to the emperor, Yuan writes, ‘I understand that the law severely punishes incitation while the ritual firmly prohibits cults for the sake of glory and orthodoxy and the cessation of wickedness and evil. In the past, during the end of the Han dynasty [2nd century], there was a man [called] Zhang Jue who used such technique [of superstition] to delude his contemporaries ... which led to the disaster of Yellow Turban ...’ Original text: 臣聞律深惑眾之科，禮絕妖淫之禁，皆所以大明居正，防遏姦邪。昔在漢末，有張角者，亦以此術，熒惑當時。論其所行，與今不異。遂能詿誘生人，致黃巾之禍。天下塗炭數十年間，角之由也。(《北史》19.7)

<sup>452</sup> Sima Guang wrote in his historical account *Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance*, ‘Zhang Jue of county Julu worshiped Hunangdi and Laozi and taught people wicked magic which is known as Tai Pin Dao.’ Original text: 巨鹿張角奉事黃、老，以妖術教授，號「太平道」。(《資治通鑑·光和六年》)

However, this might suggest that the Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of the manifestation of passion is in danger of dividing culture into numerous cultures according to the passions of different social groups: a Confucian Chinese culture for the upper-class intellectual while a Taoist Chinese culture for the lower class peasant. This is a difficult challenge to Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture. For the unity of culture is a question of social philosophy—how people from different social class and background and relate to the same cultural group through institution or hierarchy. We shall address this challenge again in chapter 4.1 and 4.2 when we discuss Kierkegaard’s concept of community.

The problem (2) (the lack of empirical evidence) is also solved as a Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of passion manifestation which does not involve any speculation. There is no assumption of fixed essential values which determines cultural development. Although cultural values exist, they are merely objects to be chosen by the passions of the individual members of the cultural group. It does not matter what values in Japanese culture are from Chinese culture. What matters is how Japanese people emphasise their particular passions for particular values and how these passions are manifested.

The ways of manifestations can be investigated empirically by studying cultural products like literature, art, music, rituals etc. According to Motoori Norinaga (本居宣長 1730-1801), *Monogatari* (物語, Japanese novels) express how aesthetic passion (*mononoaware* 物の哀れ) is manifested in Japanese culture: ‘*Monogatari* [Japanese novels] are not dogmatic books and are irrelevant to the good and evil in Confucian and Buddhist teaching [which comes from China]. There is a distinction between “emotionable” [sympathy for someone else’s

feeling] and “emotionless”. Without the restrictions of [moral] good and evil, [Monogatari] regards only empathy as good instead of teaching readers to do evil things in the name of emotions.’<sup>453</sup>

Because a Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of the manifestations of passion does not assume any particular understanding of cultural value, it also avoids the problem (3) (the neglect of the openness of value interpretation). As we have seen in chapter 2.3, different values are linked by tradition and are inherited by the members of the society. Tradition, however, is not a ‘hybrid’ of values as Heubel suggests. The values are organised and prioritised by the passion of the members of the society. *Prioritised* values orient cultural development. Here prioritisation of passions are not determined by climatic factors (as Watsuji argues), Spirit (in Hegel’s sense), or value system (as Lao and Liang argue), but are *determined by the free will* of individuals of the society which is *indeterminate*. Therefore, it is not Greek Spirit and Hebrew Spirit determine the development of Western culture, or Confucian Spirit determines the development of Chinese culture, as Lao suggests. Rather, it is the epistemic passion and the religious passion which are prioritised by Westerners orientate the Western cultural development, while the ethical passion which was prioritised by Chinese orientates the Chinese cultural development.

The decline of Western Christianity could also be interpreted as the decline of religious passion in Europe. When people do not prioritise the manifestation of religious passion and

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<sup>453</sup> Original text: 儒佛之道是解惑覺悟之道，當中不免要對人情加以嚴厲抑制，於是就將按人情恣意而為者視為「惡」；而對人情加以控制約束者，則視為「善」。物語不屬於這樣的教誡之書，與儒佛之道中的善惡觀也無甚關聯。而在善惡的問題上，有「通人情」與「不通人情」之分。Motoori Norinaga, ‘Introduction’, 日本物哀 [Japanese Mononoaware], trans. Huang Xiangyuan, (Beijing: Gilin Publishing Co-operated & Beijing Han-read Culture, Oct 2010), 44.

have lost interests in Christian religious values, Christianity declines. As the novelist Sara Maitland indicates, in the 1960s: '[t]here are many women from all denominations who have left, women who once cared passionately and have now withdrawn.'<sup>454</sup> According to Pew Research Centre, in 'the United Kingdom, for example, there are roughly three times as many non-practising Christians (55%) as there are church-attending Christians (18%) defined this way.'<sup>455</sup> By contrast, South Korean Christianity experiences rapid growth in the post-war period, from only 8% in the 1950s to 29% in 2010s.<sup>456</sup> It is more appropriate to explain the decline and the rise of Christianity worldwide according to people's religious passions, namely, to what extent are they interested in Christian faith, rather than according to the speculative discussion on the development of Spirit.

The difficulty for Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of passion manifestation is: how the changes in an individual's passions lead to changes in those of the society as a whole? The Hegelian idea of Spirit is the 'Spirit of the People', which by definition represent the entire society; but Kierkegaardian concept of passion originally refers to the individual's passions instead of those of the society. So one must investigate the relation between the individual self and the community, which will be discussed in chapter 4.1 and 4.2 when we articulate the relations between individual and community.

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<sup>454</sup> Maitland, Sara, *A Map of the New Country: Women and Christianity* (London, 1983), 141–2. Quoted from Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*, (Oxford University Press, 2007), 179.

<sup>455</sup> 'Being Christian in Western Europe.' *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project*. 15 February, 2019. Accessed 15 May, 2019. <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/being-christian-in-western-europe/>

<sup>456</sup> Connor, Phillip, '6 Facts about Christianity in South Korea'. Pew Research Center. 12 August, 2014. Accessed 15 May, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/08/12/6-facts-about-christianity-in-south-korea/>



### 3.2.2 Concluding Remarks: Four Orientations of Culture: Aesthetic,

#### Epistemic, Ethical and Religious

As discussed above, the introduction of Kierkegaardian idea of aesthetic, epistemic, ethical and religious passions overcome the difficulties with which East Asian Hegelian philosophers face. It is *not one particular value or one spirit that determines the cultural development*; instead, it is the *passions for certain values which drive the cultural development*. Every individual is capable of manifesting aesthetic, epistemic, ethical and religious passions, and all cultural group are a community consisting of individuals; therefore, a culture *can manifest and prioritise any passion*; there is no fixed ‘spirit’ or value system to determine its development.

Because there are four kinds of passions—*aesthetic, epistemic, ethical and religious*, there are also four *orientations* of culture, respectively. One can distinguish cultures from one another by analysing their orientations: whether the culture emphasises more on the manifestation of aesthetic, epistemic, ethical or religious passion. Theoretically, if all these passions are innate to every single individual, every culture (which is formed by single individuals) should pursue the satisfaction of all these passions, although some passions may be considered as more important over others.

A Kierkegaardian definition of passion avoids the East Asian Hegelian assumption of the existence of essential values. Passions orientate the cultural development by prioritising

certain values (aesthetic, epistemic, ethical and passion) in particular ways. Cultural changes are reduced into changes in passions. The manifestations of passions can be empirically investigated in history. The openness of culture is also preserved—members of a cultural group can prioritise the manifestation of any value from their culture according to their own understanding of that value.

A difficult question for the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is how individuals can form a cultural group and prioritise certain manifestation of passions. In chapter 4, we shall discuss Kierkegaard's idea of the individual self and explain how individuals form a community as a cultural group and interact with other members. Then I will explain how a cultural group inherit tradition, prejudices and horizons from the previous generations through the idea of contemporaneity which is shared by Kierkegaard and Gadamer.

## 4. From Individual to Community: Kierkegaard's Concept of Community and Gadamer's Concept of Tradition

In the previous chapter, we have discussed Kierkegaard's definition of culture in terms of the manifestation of passions, which explains how culture develops according to the will and motivation of individuals. The passions of people *orientate* cultural development and *determine* cultural values. Unlike cultural values, the manifestation of four kinds of passions—*aesthetic, epistemic, moral and religious*—is empirically verifiable. The changes in passions explain changes in cultural values. However, a culture cannot be manifested by a single individual. In a cultural group, the community, instead of a single individual, is the subject. It is the community which manifests passions, emphasises on particular values and orientates the cultural development. In order to formulate a cultural subjectivity, one must explain how individuals form a community as a cultural self to emphasise the manifestations of certain passions and cultural values.

This chapter aims to reconstruct a Kierkegaardian concept of cultural self by articulating its *spatiotemporal* structure, namely, how single individuals form a community to create a place for the manifestation of passions (space), and how such community orientate its cultural development in history (time). In chapter 3, we have discussed Kierkegaard's emphasis on the irreducibility of an individual's subjectivity, and how cultural development is driven by an individual's passions. In other words, in order to formulate a Kierkegaardian cultural self, one must explain how individual selves become a cultural self and develop in history. While

East Asian Hegelianism, as we have seen in chapter 2, introduces the concept of cultural spirit to establish a cultural subjectivity, they face with the problems of the impossibility of changes in cultural values, the lack of empirical method and the neglect of the openness. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to consider whether Kierkegaard's concepts of community and contemporaneity can formulate a cultural self as manifesting passions.

In 4.1, I argue that, according to Kierkegaard, there are three orders of an individual self divided by threefold relations, which are related to three moments of his dialectics of community. I argue that Kierkegaardian community is formed by an individual's authentic relationship with others and therefore individual self is preserved in a community.

In 4.2, I argue that Kierkegaard's concept of contemporaneity explains the historical continuity of culture. The previous generation and the contemporary generation are linked by contemporaneity so that they can share the same tradition (in Gadamer's sense). Cultural development, therefore, involves the fusion of horizons of the present and the past. Here Gadamer's hermeneutics and Kierkegaard's existentialism is integrated into a new theoretical model. When the contemporary generation wishes to change cultural values, they must respond to the cultural values they inherited from the previous generation.

In 4.3, I defend my project of Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture from the criticism that Kierkegaard rejects cultural distinctions, which are a necessary condition for articulating a cultural subjectivity. In response, I argue that Kierkegaard does not deny cultural distinction. Instead, he only rejects culture as a distinction between the cultured and the uncultured (e.g., in *Works of Love* and *For Self-Examination*) on the grounds that it prevents the manifestation

of neighbour love. Cultural differences are not necessarily against the practice of neighbour love. While a Chinese acknowledges the cultural differences between Chinese culture and Japanese culture, he/she may still love Japanese people.

#### **4.1. The Spatiality of Cultural Self: Community**

This section aims to explain how an individual self establishes a community and at the same time preserves his/her own subjectivity in Kierkegaard's philosophy. Firstly, I argue that Kierkegaard divides three orders of the individual self in terms of *self-relations*: the self as a synthesis of the physical and the psychical, the self as an ensemble of relations, and the self as spirit (with a God-man relation). The paradoxical nature of human being as a synthesis of the physical and the psychical implies despair of self-actualisation unless an individual self can reconcile the tension between finitude and infinitude and between necessity and possibility in a God-man relation. Secondly, I argue that these three orders of relationship correspond to Kierkegaard's three moments of the dialectics of the community, namely, an individual is lower than his relations with others, an individual is equal to his relations with others, and an individual is higher than his relations with others. When one is merely a self as synthesis, one only has *natural* relations with oneself (i.e. mind and body) and others (kinship). When one is conscious of one's ability to choose, one chooses to establish a relation relating oneself to oneself and a relation relating oneself to that relation. As the free will is manifested, at this stage one can establish authentic interpersonal relationship according to one's free will, e.g. friendship and erotic love. When one realises one needs God to overcome one's despair, one establishes a God-man relation, which enables one to transcend from one's relations with others. Thirdly, I argue that Kierkegaard's individual self

is not isolated from external influences as Adorno claims.<sup>457</sup> For in Kierkegaard's dialectics of community, one manifests oneself in one's relations with others. What Kierkegaard emphasises is that the free will of an individual self is independent from external influences. Finally, I compare Kierkegaard's dialectics of community with Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. I argue that Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* is a public which suppresses individual subjectivity, while individual subjectivity is preserved in Kierkegaard's concept of community.

#### 4.1.1 Three Orders of Individual Self

In order to understand how to relate individuals to each other in a community and establish a cultural self, it is appropriate to look at the universal structure of the individual self which makes the inter-personal relations possible. In *Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard defines the individual self in terms of 'relation' (*forhold*) or 'relating itself to itself' (*at forholde sig til sig selv*). As Kierkegaard said,

A human being is a spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self.

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<sup>457</sup> See Adorno, Theodor W., 'On Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love', *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, 8 (1939-40): 413-29.

In the relation between two, the relation is the third as negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation; thus under the qualification of the psychological the relation between the psychological and the physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self. (*SUD* 13)

Here self-consciousness, which can make a free choice, enables an individual to have a relation relating itself to itself and a relation relating itself to that relation. According to George Pattison, here Kierkegaard argues that ‘the self only exists in a radical sense by choosing itself’, while ‘the very nature of “choice” precluded absolute self-creation: the self that chooses itself chooses itself as something given to it.’ In other words, there must be free will to choose. The self chooses to be itself according to its own will and establish a relation to its body (the physical) and its mind (the psychological). The ‘relationship that freely brings about a synthesis between the polarities of its being also brings its self into existence, “is yet again a relationship, relating itself to what has established the entire relationship” (15 73 / *SUD* 13)’.<sup>458</sup> Similarly, Scott O’Leary claims that in Kierkegaard’s philosophy: ‘Consciousness implies choice, and thus the self is freedom: “the more conscious, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will ... A person who has no will at all is not a self.”’<sup>459</sup>

According to Kierkegaard, the physical implies finitude and necessity while the psychological implies infinitude and possibility. The physical or the body is finite because it is limited by

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<sup>458</sup> Pattison, George, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard*, (Montreal&Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 62.

<sup>459</sup> O’Leary, Scott M. “Sin, Despair, and the Other: The Works of Soren Kierkegaard.” *Elements* 1, no. 1 (2005), 38-39.

physical necessity within a particular time and space with a particular horizon. The psychological, however, is infinite because it is not limited by physical necessity in time and space. A person cannot fly but he can imagine that he can fly as his imagination is infinite. So a person is both physical and psychological, finite and infinite, possible and necessary; the individual existence is paradoxical. However, the synthesis of both physical and psychological is not yet a self. The synthesis (which is the first-order relation, according to John J. Davenport) is merely a 'negative unity' according to Kierkegaard, for the physical negates the psychological while the psychological negates the physical and they are not really 'united' as one entity. Self as spirit is 'not simply a static ontological dependence' of the physical and the psychological: 'but a dynamic attitude towards that divine basis that varies in connection with variation in spirit's relation to the poles of "soma" [i.e. the physical or the body] and "psyche"'.<sup>460</sup> Davenport argues that the synthesis of the psychological and the physical is merely the *first-order* relation according to Kierkegaard, while the self as the relation relating the physical and the psychological to the synthesis is the *second-order* relation.<sup>461</sup>

One must be careful with the concept of the *self as spirit*. A spirit *transcends* from the distinction between the physical and the psychological. According to Davenport, the spirit is 'a *reflexive structure* that transcends the first-order relation of hylomorphic or animal unity between these poles'<sup>462</sup> and a '*striving will*' in 'a distinctively *self-motivational* sense: it is a capacity for *determined resolve* that unites the agent's energies'. It 'is an ability or power to move between possibility and necessity'. Therefore, the self is freedom<sup>463</sup>. The self can

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<sup>460</sup> Davenport, John J., 'Selfhood and "Spirit"', *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, ed. John Lippitt & George Pattison. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Jan 2013), 235.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid. 237.



‘will’ or ‘choose’ to *be or not to be oneself*. “Will” in this sense is a “*nisus formativus*” (SKS 3:198/EO II 206) or formative “striving” (SKS 8:160/UDVS 49) involving effort’. The ‘volitional’ will here is different from the ‘basic appetites and inclinations’ ‘that arise passively from our animal nature and contingent situations’<sup>464</sup>. Self as spirit ‘involves the realization that human existence is grounded in an eternal *telos*’, i.e. purpose<sup>465</sup>. Similarly, John D. Glenn argues that the ‘self is not a simple sum of the factors that compose its synthesis; its direction is not to be determined by mere analysis the “vectors” of its component aspects. Everything about the self is subject to an independent variable—namely, the stance which the self takes *towards* it.’<sup>466</sup> In other words, the *motivation of self-actualisation* is embedded in Kierkegaard’s concept of the self. However, if an established self wills to be oneself, at the same time the self must deny his established self to become oneself, so one must will not to be oneself.<sup>467</sup> So the self wills not to be oneself and will to be oneself at the same time. The failure of reconciling such a paradox leads to despair, as Kierkegaard said,

The human self is such a derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another. This is why there can be two forms of despair in the strict sense. If a human self had itself established itself, then there could be only one form:

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid. 240

<sup>465</sup> Hannay, Alastair, ‘Spirit and the Idea of the Self as a Reflexive Relation’. *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 27.

<sup>466</sup> Glenn, John D., ‘The Definition of the Self and the Structure of Kierkegaard’s Work’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Sickness Unto Death*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 11.

<sup>467</sup> Considering the different senses of the term the ‘self’, Glenn calls the ‘Self as Synthesis’ as the ‘Psychological-Aesthetic Dimension of Selfhood’ while the ‘Self as Self-Relating’ as the ‘Ethical Dimension of Selfhood’. However, introducing difficult terms like ‘psychological’ does not help to clarify the concept of the self in this chapter, so I have skipped them.

not to will to be oneself, to will to do away with oneself, but there could not be the form: in despair to will to be oneself. (*SUD* 13-14 XI 128)

Here ‘another’ does not mean another person. ‘Another’ means the self one *wills* to become. For example, for a child who wants to become a teacher, his dream of the imagined self as a teacher is ‘another self’ which he wills to become.

Building on this analysis, there are four types of despair, according to Kierkegaard:

- (1) Infinitude’s despair (lack of finitude): a person wills to be an imagined self and escape from the established self with finitude, therefore does not will to be oneself.
- (2) Finitude’s despair (lack of infinitude): a person does not will to be an imagined self (or even dare not to imagine) but only wills to remain as the established self in finitude.
- (3) Possibility’s despair (lack of necessity): a person only imagines the infinite possibility without necessity and therefore fails to actualise his potential.
- (4) Necessity’s despair (lack of possibility): a person does not recognise the infinite possibility he has and remains himself in the necessity, and therefore fails to actualise his potential.

Simply speaking, despair is caused by the *failure of self-actualisation*. A person who ‘depends upon what imagination he has’ without recognising his finitude falls into the fantastic, which is known as ‘infinitude’s despair: lack of finitude’ (*SUD* 30-31). According to Glenn: “‘Infinitude’s despair’ is a state in which the self becomes lost in vaporous

sentimentality, in sheer proliferation of objective knowledge, or in fantastic projects—when by means of the “infinetizing” capacity of imagination the self is “volatilized” (SUD, 31) in its feeling, knowledge, or will.<sup>468</sup> The despair of possibility is similar to the infinitude’s despair. Both are in the fantastic mode of mere imagination. However, possibility’s despair is more directly linked to the issue of self-actualisation. For, according to Kierkegaard: ‘actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity.’ A ‘self becomes lost in possibility’ because he lacks ‘the power to obey, to submit to the necessity in one’s life, to what may be called as one’s limitations’. (SUD 36) Without such awareness of one’s limitation, one does not really know oneself. On the other hand, a person who lacks ‘primitivity’ is in finitude’s despair, i.e. lack of infinitude. Such a person is limited by his finitude and gives up self-actualisation, for he ‘finds it too hazardous to be himself and far easier and safer to be like the others, to become a copy, a number, a mass man.’ (SUD 34) Such ‘a person forgets himself, forgets his name divinely understood, does not dare to believe in himself, finds it too hazardous to be himself and far easier and safer to be like the others, to become a copy, a number, a mass man’. (SUD 33-34 XI147) Kierkegaard’s criticism of the despair of finitude or necessity covers two points: (1) the problem of a *bandwagon effect* (i.e. merely following the crowd) and (2) the problem of fearing to dream or imagine. Criticism (2) echoes with Stephen Chow Sing-chi (周星馳)’s famous quotation in his film *Shaolin Soccer* (少林足球): ‘If we do not have any dream in life, we will look like a salted fish’<sup>469</sup>. Giving up the imagination and therefore self-actualisation is against the nature of the self as spirit. Simply speaking, a person who does not dare to dream fails to be a human being. Criticism (1), however, is a bit

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>469</sup> Chow, Stephen Sing-chi. *Shaolin Football*. Directed by Stephen Chow. Hong Kong: Universal Entertainment, 2001. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRaNbsmCKUI> or <http://www.acfun.cn/v/ac2060870>

different. It relates to Kierkegaard's on-going criticism of the crowd in his philosophy, which is found in *The Point of View*:

[T]he crowd is untruth, the untruth of wanting to exert influence by means of the crowd, the numerical, of wanting to make the numerical the authority for what truth is.' (*POV*, 125)

'By truth I always understand eternal truth. But politics, etc. has nothing to do with eternal truth.'<sup>470</sup> (*POV*, 109-110)

The crowd is always considered as a threat to the authenticity of an individual self in Kierkegaard's philosophy. The attack on the crowd in *POV*, however, is slightly different from that in *SUD*. In *POV*, Kierkegaard criticises the 'numerical' (i.e. the majority) since 'the authority for what truth is' distorts the concept of truth as eternal truth. However, in *SUD*, Kierkegaard criticises that the crowd as the barrier to self-actualisation. Imagine a child in a primary school who dreams of being a musician, but his parents, teachers and even classmates laugh at his 'unrealistic dream', because being a musician cannot earn much money. Society functions as a 'crowd' in Kierkegaard's sense, oppressing his self-actualisation and denying his own *telos* by designating the prevailing *telos*: that you must study hard, get a degree, and get a job with a high salary and buy a mansion. If this child fails to resist the pressure from the society and therefore gives up his dream of being a musician, he must also give up self-actualisation, and submit to the authority of the numerical majority that urges him to be successful and wealthy. In Kierkegaard's terminology, such a child suffers from the despair of finitude or necessity. He fails to reconcile the contradiction between his dream of being a musician and the reality that he is

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<sup>470</sup> Quoted by Backhouse, Stephen, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 189.

not a musician. He chooses to give up his dream, so he denies his possibility and infinitude, which constitute the self. Therefore, he denies himself.

One may argue that if one chooses to follow the crowd and therefore wills to be ‘a successful and rich man’, and if, luckily, in the end, one succeeds, one would not be despair. Such a person simply wants to be exactly like the others. In response, Kierkegaard argues that ‘wanting to be exactly like the others’ is dishonest toward the others:

*To want to be exactly like the Others* might seem to be a kind of loyalty to the others and naturally is hailed and acclaimed as such in the world—but of course it is the very opposite; for just as every man, from a spiritual point of view, is usually a rogue and the generation is a generation of rogues, so also human language is first and foremost a thieves’ slang which hypocritically always twists everything the wrong way.

No, wanting to be exactly like the others is cowardly and comfortable dishonesty toward the others.

That is why the race is punished by having these millions who, in the long run, mutually understand that the whole thing is not to be trusted because the one is always just exactly like the others. This explains their anxiety and perplexity and suspiciousness when life pinches a bit. (*JP* 3 2978, XI A387)

The word dishonesty may be explained in these terms: while a person wants to be exactly like the others, he is actually not and will never be the others. He is dishonest in the sense that he pretends to be someone else. Wanting to be exactly like the others must fail, for the self identity is not exchangeable or transferable. One wills to be exactly someone else

without recognising the finitude or the necessity that one can only be himself alone. Self-actualisation to be exactly like the others is impossible, which leads to despair.

It is very difficult for a person to find a balance between the finitude and infinitude or the necessity and the possibility. If the child in the analogy mentioned above chooses to resist the prevailing *telos*, rejects the authority of the numerical and chooses not to become a 'successful and rich man' as his parents, teachers, classmates and even the whole society expects, he may become a radical who rejects every limitation by the finitude and the necessity. Because the traditional education system only favours those who study the 'mainstream subjects', this child may choose to give up studying. Due to his poor academic results, he fails to actualise his dreams in reality because he fails to reconcile the radical difference between his dream and the society.

One may argue that suicide is an option to overcome the tension between finitude and infinitude. However, Kierkegaard does not accept suicide as a solution to despair. The will of self-actualisation is the will to be oneself, but the will of suicide is the will not to be oneself. Instead, he suggests that in order to overcome despair eventually, the self must have faith in God and authentically establish God-man relation so as to use the power of God to achieve self-actualisation. For: 'with God everything is possible' (St Matthew 19:26), as Kierkegaard emphasises in *SUD* 38 to 39 (XI 151 to XI 152). By defining the failure of will to be oneself as a deficient God-relation, Glenn argues that the restoration of God-man relation restores the 'health' of the self from despair:

This definition is fundamental for the concrete exploration of selfhood throughout the whole work. The “sickness unto death”—which Kierkegaard identifies as *despair*, and also later as *sin*—is a malady affecting all the dimensions of the self. It is a failure to *will* to be the self one truly is—in other words, a deficient self-relation—which also involves an imbalance among the components of the self as synthesis and a deficient God-relation. The *health* of the self—which he eventually identifies as *faith*—is an affirmation by the self of itself as synthesis is in right relation, and the self is appropriately related to its divine foundation. It is a state in which “in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests transparently in the power that established it”. (*SUD*, 14)<sup>471</sup>

God is the foundation of the self because God is the creator of everything. God creates not only the infinitude and the possibility (i.e. the physical), but also the finitude and the necessity (i.e. the physical). While the self as relating itself to itself may relate the physical and the psychical to the synthesis of both, it fails to reconcile the radical differences among them unless, as volitional spirit, it establishes a God-man relation by faith. With God everything is possible. For the power of God brings the *real* actuality (which is the unity of the possibility and the necessity), in God-man relation, there is hope for self-actualisation.

To sum up, the self as spirit enables the self to have a third-order relation to God. While Davenport acknowledges the importance of ‘dynamic attitude towards’ God, his diagram

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<sup>471</sup> Glenn, John D., ‘The Definition of the Self and the Structure of Kierkegaard’s Work’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 5.

fails to recognise the God-self (i.e. God-man) relation as a third-order relation in the structure of the self.

*The God-man relation is embedded in the structure of the self.* A person who is not conscious of the God-man relation is not fully conscious of his own self as spirit. As George Pattison says: ‘being one’s self, being dependent on God, being who one is, here, and now, and freely choosing to be oneself as here, and now, absolutely dependent on God are all aspects of one unitary human reality’<sup>472</sup>. Once a person is absolutely dependent on God, he knows the reality of the self—not only a self with the first order and second-order relations but also a third-order relation to God. God-man relation enables the self as a spirit to reconcile the poles in the synthesis and to achieve real self-actualisation. Without God, the self has no hope of self-actualisation and may suffer from the despair of either finitude or infinitude.

#### **4.1.2 The Three Moments of Community**

Besides the issue of self-actualisation, there is also a strong link between Kierkegaard’s concept of the self and his concept of community. Both are ‘relational’—the former is the relation relating itself to itself and relation relating itself to others, and the latter is the relation between the self and others. Kierkegaard refers to Karl Bayer’s ‘*Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft*’ [“The Concept of the Moral Community”] which contains three moments:

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<sup>472</sup> Pattison, George, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 120.



- (a) *Beziehung* (Connection): natural relation among human beings
- (b) *Bezug* (Relation): ‘unifying principle which directs all of the members of the community toward the same ultimate end.’
- (c) *Einheit* (unity): ‘the moral-spiritual community grounded in the free acts of its members.’<sup>473</sup>

Kierkegaard explains Bayer’s account of the community as follows:

The Dialectic of Community [*menighedens*] or Society [*samfundet*] is as follows:

(1) the individuals who relate to each other in the relation are individually inferior to the relation.

Just as the separate members of the body are inferior to the body; the particular heavenly bodies in the solar system.

(2) the individuals who relate to each other in the relation are individually equal in relation to the relation.

Just as in earthly love each one is a separate entity, but the need for the relationship is the same for both.

(3) the individuals who relate themselves to each other in the relation are individually superior to the relation.

As in the highest form of religion. The individual is primarily related to God and then to the community [*menighedens*], but this primary relation is the highest, yet he does not neglect the second.

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid. 108.

See also *Concluding Postscript*, p. 327 [1.428]---that the task is not to move from the individual to the race but from the individual through the race to reach the individual. See an article by Dr. Bayer, “Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft” (in Fichte’s journal, 1844, XIII, p. 80). His tripartition is: *Beziehung, Bezug, Einheit* [connection, relation, unity]. (See pp. 80 and 81.) (*JP* 4, 4110)

In the first moment, the self is in a natural relation with others. A self is born in a particular family, with particular natural and unauthentic relations to others, e.g. parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, and teachers and classmates at school, which determine his identity (e.g. surname), and therefore he is lower than the relations to others. In the second moment, however, the self can establish authentic communal relations to others, e.g. friends and lovers. Such relations to others and the self are inter-dependent: the self relies on these relations for self-recognition while these relations depend on the will of the self to exist. If a person decides to break up with his lover, his love-relationship with his lover ceases to exist. So the self is equal in relation to the relation. In the third moment, the self is higher than the relations to others because his self identity is no more dependent on the relations to others. Instead, the self can transcend from the relations to others through the dependence on God. The individual self ‘is primarily related to God and then to the community.’ (*JP* 4, 4410). The similarity between the structure of the self and the structure of the community is shown in the table below:

	Individual Self	Community
Third-order	God-man relation	God-man relation

		an individual is higher than the relations to others
Second-order	The self	Authentic relation between the self and others an individual is equal in relation to others
First-order	A synthesis between the physical and the psychical	Natural relation between the self and others an individual is lower in relation to others

*Table 1 Three Levels of Individual Self and Community*

The natural relation between the individual self and the others reflects the finitude and the necessity of *the physical*. Every individual is a bodily existent. A person is born at a particular time and space. He is thrown into a particular existential situation. Just as the earth is a member of the solar system, a person is a member of society. A person cannot choose in which family he/she was born. In Gadamer's words, once a person is thrown into a particular existential situation, a tradition inherited from the previous generations is given to him. Receiving prejudices from the tradition is the pre-condition of understanding the world. His existential background (historical, cultural, socio-economic etc.) forms his horizon. The dimension of natural relations is part of the facticity of existence, which is inauthentic. One cannot choose his birthplace, his parents, his native language, his historicity, his cultural

background etc. If there were only natural relations to others in the community, Kierkegaard's account of the community would be deterministic.

However, Kierkegaard does not think that the natural relations to others or facticity determine an individual self. The self as a spirit is *free*—he has a *free will to choose*. Through imagination, he may project an intention or a task and go for it. In the case of interpersonal relations, the self as spirit can will to establish authentic relations to others rather than merely having natural relations. Authentic relations to others in the second moment of the community, according to Kierkegaard, are driven by love. Everyone is a 'separate entity' and shares the same need of relationship. Love results from the will of the self as spirit: a person wills to be a self with a good relationship with another, e.g. friends and lovers. He can also will to be a self with a good relationship with the others who already have a natural relationship with him, e.g. parents, colleagues, classmates, teachers.

However, if there is no God-man relation in a community, such authentic relations to others may, in the end, prevent the self-actualisation of an individual and therefore result in despair. The interdependence between the individual and his relations to others remains constant and he cannot transcend these inter-personal relations. If an individual fails to transcend the relations to others, it is doubtful whether he is able to achieve self-actualisation. For example, if a child wills to be a musician but most of his friends laugh at him, and he relies on his friendship with them for self-recognition, he may give up his dream and fail to achieve self-actualisation at the end. However, the God-man relation outweighs the relations to others, and the power of God enables an individual to express his individuality in reality instead of suppressing himself in order to follow the crowd. However, the God-man relation does not

deny the relations to others. If God is the foundation of the self as spirit, God is also the ground of the community, which *consists of individual selves*. Although there are numerous individual selves, there is only one God. Everyone can establish a relation to God and actualise themselves in the same community. While self-actualisation is an individual decision, actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity. Therefore, in the task of self-actualisation an individual self cannot ignore the limitations by the society (i.e. the others). If an individual self ignores the finitude of his existence as a member of a community, he suffers from the infinitude's despair - like Don Quixote, who imagined himself as a knight and ignored others' criticisms. God reconciles the infinitude and the finitude, and therefore reconciles the self and the others.

Self-actualisation is an individual decision, but the practice of self-actualisation involves relations to others as long as one is actualising oneself in a community. Although academics work alone for most of the time, one must at least receive education and research funding supports from the society in order to become an academic. Therefore, one must establish relations to others (lecturers, supervisors, classmates, colleagues, funders, etc.) in order to achieve self-actualisation. While some artists, writers or musician do not value appreciation by the audience, if they wish to actualise themselves in society, they cannot abandon their relations to others. If they do, then their paradoxical attitude is what Kierkegaard calls 'absolutely aristocratic pride'. Initially, the artists who have such absolutely aristocratic pride may declare that 'the glories of the world is no concern of [theirs]'. However, when they really receive some 'honours and distinctions, the admiration of [their] contemporaries', they 'would discern that for it to have any meaning you would actually have to be so remarkably endowed that it was really true; even in that case your mind would regard the

highest degree of intellectual endowment as transitory.’ (EO II 203) Therefore, Kierkegaard said to them:

‘you crave nothing, wish [*ønske*] for nothing, because the only thing you could wish for would be a divining rod [*Ønskeqvist*, wishing twig] that could provide you with everything, and you would then use it for cleaning out your pipe. So you are finished with life “and do not need to make a will, for you will leave nothing behind you.” (EO II 203)

Without the acknowledgement of others, an artist would leave no heritage after death as no one acknowledges the values of his/her works.

To sum up, Kierkegaard’s account of selfhood is the foundation of his account of the community. Natural relations to others are parts of the finitude of the self, while authentic relations to others result from the will of the self. However, in order to overcome despair and achieve self-actualisation, an individual self must establish a God-relationship so as to reconcile the differences between finitude and infinitude and overcome the pressure from the others. The relations with others are not denied. Instead, the God-man relation reconciles the conflicts between the individual self and his relations to others. His relations with others are no more barriers to his self-actualisation. Through God, the individual self is higher than the relations to others in the sense that he transcends from the influences of others without isolating himself from the community.

#### **4.1.3 The Transcendence of the Individual Self over Relations With**

## Others

While Kierkegaard has been criticised by several philosophers as an extreme individualist who denies the influence of the external world on the individual self, this section aims to defend Kierkegaard by arguing that Kierkegaard's concept of self is not isolated from the community. Theodore Adorno, for example, argued that 'Kierkegaard is insatiable in condemning the world, worldliness, and its limited worldly aims.'<sup>474</sup> Kierkegaard's neighbour love, according to Adorno, is merely a 'pure inwardness', but the neighbour being loved must be an object instead of the subject. 'What can loving one's neighbour mean, if one can neither help him nor interfere with a setting of the world which makes such help impossible?'<sup>475</sup> Adorno concludes that the 'Objectless inwardness strictly excludes objective history; history relentlessly drags into the enclaves of isolated inwardness.'<sup>476</sup> Similarly, Herbert Marcuse said that 'Kierkegaard's individualism turns into the most emphatic absolutism.'<sup>477</sup> Martin Buber also condemns Kierkegaard's idea of relating the individual 'solely and essentially to God. Buber claims: "This relation is an exclusive one, the exclusive one, and this means, according to Kierkegaard, that it is the excluding relation, excluding all others..."<sup>478</sup> Communists like Georg Lukács inevitably strongly condemn Kierkegaard's individualism which ignores the historical materialist conditions determining

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<sup>474</sup> Quoted in Ferreira, M. Jamie, 'Love's Labour—Action', *Love's Grateful Striving*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 67. Adorno, Theodor W., 'On Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love', *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, 8 (1939-40): 413-29.

<sup>475</sup> Quoted in Ferreira, M. Jamie, *Love's Grateful Striving*, 67. Adorno, Theodor W., 'On Kierkegaard's Doctrine of Love', *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, 413-29.

<sup>476</sup> Quoted in Backhouse, Stephen, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 146. Theodor Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. & ed. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), Vol. 61, 33.

<sup>477</sup> Marcuse, Herbert, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1941), 264.

<sup>478</sup> Buber, Martin, 'The Question to the Single One', *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: MacMillan, 1948), 50-51.

individuals. Georg Lukács criticised Kierkegaard ‘for failing to articulate any concept of utopia and for focusing instead on private ‘faith’ as a potential solution to the endemic problems of modernity, such as alienation and reification.’<sup>479</sup>

However, all these criticisms result from the misinterpretation of Kierkegaard’s attack on the crowd. Kierkegaard is against any collectivism which thinks that collective benefits outweigh the individual’s benefits. However, Kierkegaard’s concept of an individual is not that of an isolated person. An individual as an existing person must exist in a situation with social interaction with each other, but the individual’s freedom is not determined by such social interaction. Kierkegaard’s concept of the individual self is never an isolated self, as he said in the *Journals and Papers*:

Being an individual is a higher form of existence than “Let a few of us get together in a group”.

This is the view particularly of Christianity, and from the Christian point of view it holds true particularly of greatness that if there is no individual in a given generation capable of it, then it will not occur in that generation, for through togetherness it is an impossibility. (*JP* 4, 4186, X A529)

In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard argues that only the individual, instead of the crowd or the public, can establish a relationship with God. ‘Climacus emphasizes the ethical task that can only be discovered “by the individual’s becoming immersed in himself and in his relationship with God” (CUP, 144)’<sup>480</sup> In the *Journals and Papers*, Kierkegaard

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479 Price, Zachary, ‘On Young Lukács on Kierkegaard: Hermeneutics Utopianism and the Problem of Alienation’, Vol. 25 No. 6 *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, (Nov, 1999), 67-82.

480 Backhouse, Stephen, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 150.



urges Christians even to deny the world, which seems to be anti-social and overly individualistic, so why does Kierkegaard still need the concept of community in his philosophy? The quotation below provides an answer.

Each one individually—accepting Christianity, consequently by becoming a believer, that is, by accepting, yes, by staking his life on the absurd—has said farewell to the world, has broken with the world. The society of those who have voluntarily placed themselves outside society in the usual sense of the world is all the more intimate precisely because each one individually feels isolated in “the world”. But just as the company of criminals must carefully watch out that no one comes into the society which is branded as they are, so also in the society of Christians: they must watch out that no one comes into this society except the one whose mark is that he is polemical to the utmost toward society in the usual sense. This means that the Christian congregation is a society consisting of qualitative individuals and that the intimacy of the society is also conditioned by this polemical stance against the great human society. (*JP* 4, 4175, X A478)

One must always consider Kierkegaard as a *Christian* philosopher. It is not surprising for a Christian philosopher to call for the denial of the world or the earthly cares. However, it does not imply that Kierkegaard is anti-social. He acknowledges the concept of Christian society or community in the quotation above. However, Christian society is very different from secular society. One must have a ‘mark’ as a member. Every member of the Christian society is a qualitative individual with a close personal relationship with each other. All members of the Christian society share a similar opposition to the secular society. However, is such Christian society necessary for a Christian? Can an individual merely establish a relationship

with God without joining any community? The answer seems to be negative, according to Kierkegaard:

There is alleviation, on the other hand, in making use of sociality. It is not good for man to be alone, it is said, and therefore woman was given to him for community. But it is true that being alone, literally alone with God, is almost unendurable for a man, is too frightfully strenuous—therefore man needs community. God and man are separated by an infinite qualitative difference; when the relationship becomes too strenuous, the category of community must come between as a middle term—also with regard to the many little worries which certainly can torment a man but which I dare say would almost be the height of foolishness to take a God in prayer. (*JP 2*, 1377, IX A315)

God said that it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). As a result, God creates Eve, the first woman as a companion of Adam, the first man. There is an infinite ‘qualitative difference’ between God and man (e.g. man is sinful but God is sinless, man is finite but God is infinite, etc.) which make the establishment of a God-man relationship very difficult. Consequently, the community becomes a middle term between God and man. The ‘real meaning of religious sociality is to be found—that is, when the ideality of the God-relationship has become too strong for an individual’: ‘he must now have another person to discuss it with’. (*JP 2*, 1377, IX A315) Although Christian faith is essentially passionate and subjective and is about the relationship between a single individual and God, in the religious life, an individual needs support from the community, namely, a Christian fellowship.

In short, Kierkegaard does not suggest that the existence of an individual is isolated from external and social influence. Although Kierkegaard acknowledges the sociality of an individual's existence, he insists that an individual can transcend his/her relations with others when he/she establishes a God-man relation. It is God, rather than the community, creates an individual self. An individual self does not arise from a community; instead, the community arises from an individual self through Kierkegaard's dialectics of the community.<sup>481</sup> In the following section, we shall see how Kierkegaard emphasises the preservation of individual subjectivity in the community in his criticism of the public or the numerical.

#### **4.1.4 Kierkegaard's Emphasis on Individual Subjectivity and his**

##### **Criticism of the "Public"**

While Kierkegaard acknowledges the sociality of the individual, he distinguishes the community from the 'public' and argues that individual self is denied in the latter:

In the "public" and the like the single individual is nothing; there is no individual; the numerical is the constituting form and the law for the coming into existence [*Tilblivelse*] of a *generatio aequivoca*; detached from the "public" the single individual is nothing, and in the public he is, more basically understood, really nothing at all. In community [*Menighed*] the single individual

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<sup>481</sup> In conclusion, we shall discuss the disagreement between Watsuji and Kierkegaard. While Watsuji claims that an individual self and the society arises from *aidagara*, Kierkegaard claims that a community is established by an individual self which is created by God.

[*den Enkelte*] is; the single individual is dialectically decisive as the presupposition for forming community, and in community the single individual is qualitatively something essential and can at any moment become higher than “community,” specifically, as soon as “the others” fall away from the idea. The cohesiveness of community comes from each one’s being a single individual, and then the idea; the connectedness of a public or rather its disconnectedness consists of the numerical character of everything. Every single individual in the community guarantees the community; the public is a chimera. In a community the single individual is a microcosm who qualitatively reproduces the cosmos; here, in a good sense, it holds true that *unum noris, omnes*. In public, there is no single individual and the whole is nothing; here it is impossible to say *unum noris, omnes*, for here there is no one. “Community” is certainly more than a sum, but yet it is truly a sum of ones; the public is nonsense--a sum of negative ones, of ones who are not ones, who become ones through the sum instead of the sum becoming a sum of the ones.

(JP 3, 2952 X A390)

The table below summaries the differences between the public and the community, according to Kierkegaard:

The Public	The Community
No individual	There is a single individual
the numerical is the constituting form and the law for the coming into existence	The individual is dialectically decisive as the presupposition for a community

*Table 2 The Public vs the Community*

The concept of community presupposes the existence of individual and the individual is 'decisive' in forming the community, while in a public, there is no individual but only the numerical. However, Kierkegaard provides no demonstration here. Therefore we have to ask, firstly, why is the individual 'dialectically decisive as the presupposition for forming community'? Secondly, why is the numerical 'the constituting form and the law for the coming into existence'? In order to answer the first question, we should take a look at Kierkegaard's articulation of the concept of community in the *Journal and Papers*:

The meaning of the words that the woman was given to the man for community is not, I dare say, that the relationship to the woman as such was in itself community; it probably refers to the family relationship, offspring, and in this elemental sense it is said that the woman is community along with her.

What is the idea "community"? It is not the association of several people of the same age; it is rather a unity which shows various ages in the most intimate interrelation. Thus: the grandparents, man and wife, children of various ages—this is really community.

This is "community" and a beautiful unity, too. Each age has its own eccentric possibility—therefore the different ages provide a corrective for each other. For example, how beneficial the child-adult corrective is, restraining a person from becoming pure spirit or from becoming too serious etc. (*JP* 4, 4161, X 1A369)

Community is not the association of people of the same age, but a 'unity' of people of various ages. Such a community is linked by relationship. Here Kierkegaard emphasises that the relationship in question is not merely between a woman and the community itself, but also

the ‘family relationship’ and ‘offspring’, Kierkegaard acknowledges the sociality of the individual. A person grows up in a family as a child. The Family itself is a small community as it is trans-generational: with grandparents, parents and children (brothers or sisters). In a large family one may also have several uncles, aunts, cousins, niece and/or nephews. Children are strongly influenced by parents, and parents are much older than the children, which means they have very different values, beliefs or opinions comparing with the friends of the children. In a community, an individual establishes many different relationships with different people of different ages. At the same time, the individual receives the influences from the previous generation through language and culture (or in Gadamer’s hermeneutics, tradition).

Sometimes a person ‘corrects’ the other’s thoughts and sometimes my thoughts are corrected by the others through communication and dialogue. Kierkegaard does not agree with determinism. He does not think that parents’ personalities determine their children’s. As George Pattison mentions, whether Kierkegaard himself is doomed to unhappiness because of his family background is a major issue in some of his writings.<sup>482</sup> In his journal entry JJ147, Kierkegaard writes that ‘I could perhaps reproduce the tragedy of my childhood: the terrifying, secret explanation of the religious that was granted me in a fearful presentiment which my imagination hammered into shape—my offense at the religious—in a novella entitled “The Mysterious Family.” (SKS18/KJN2 JJ:147) It seems that Kierkegaard’s unhappy childhood leads to his radical philosophy and religious faith. However, if one interprets Kierkegaard’s life in the perspective of Kierkegaard’s philosophy, one should

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<sup>482</sup> Pattison, George, *Kierkegaard and the Quest for Unambiguous Life: Between Romanticism and Modernism: Selected Essays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50.

never argue that he is determined by the tragedy of his childhood and his father's influence. For everyone has free will. While Kierkegaard is *shaped* or influenced by his father, which brings him a 'fearful presentiment' about his 'offence at the religious', Kierkegaard still has the free will to choose to reject such presentiment. Psychologist Alfred Adler's comment on people who blame their parents for their misfortune echoes with Kierkegaard's viewpoint:

There is the man who constantly makes a certain mistake. If you succeed in convincing him of his mistake, his reactions will be varied. He may conclude that, it was high time to avoid this mistake. This is a very rare conclusion. More probably he will object that he has been making this mistake so long that he is now no longer able to rid himself of the habit. Or he will blame his parents, or his education, for his mistake; he may complain that he has never had anyone ever cared for him, or that he was very much, or that he was brutally treated, and excuse his error with an alibi. Whatever excuse he makes, he betrays one thing, and that is that he wishes to be excused of further responsibility. In this manner he has an apparent justification and avoids all criticism of himself. He himself is never to blame. The reason he has never accomplished what he desired to do is always someone else's fault. What such individuals overlook is the fact that they themselves have made very few efforts to obviate their mistakes. They are far more anxious to remain in error, blaming their bad education with a certain fervour, for their faults. This is an effective alibi so long as they wish to have it so. The many possible interpretations of an experience and the possibility of drawing various conclusions from any single one, enables us to understand why a person does not change his behaviour pattern, but turns and twists and distorts his experiences until they fit it. *The hardest thing for human beings to do is to know themselves and to change themselves.*<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> Adler, Alfred, *Understanding Human Nature*, trans. Walter Beran Wolfe, (New York: Garden City

In a similar spirit, Kierkegaard does not think that socialisation determines an individual's way of thinking. Instead, he suggests that there is an equal interaction between the individual self and the others in a community. Kierkegaard's description of the community as corrective is a very modern idea which resonates with Alfred Adler's individual psychology. According to Adler: 'our whole communal life were impossible unless one individual could influence another. This mutual influence becomes markedly accentuated in some cases', e.g. parent and children. Children affect the parent at the same time. 'Under the influence of the social feeling there exists a certain degree of willingness to be influenced by one's environment.' Adler adds that 'it is impossible to have a lasting influence upon an individual whom one is harming; one can influence another individual best when he is in the mood in which he feels his own rights guaranteed.'<sup>484</sup> Mutual respect is vital as the mutual influence is determined by free will. If a child resists being influenced by his parents, he will not be influenced by the parents in the way they want. To sum up, Kierkegaard defines community as a group with personal relationships. Therefore, an individual must exist in a community. Here an individual is 'higher' than the community in the sense that the individual defines the personal relationships with others and therefore constructs a community. Ontologically speaking, individual as existing being precedes the community. However, ethically speaking it is impossible, for Kierkegaard regards the individual as a social being. An individual must exist in a community when he was born in an existential situation with family relationships, language, culture and society.

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Publishing Company Inc, 1927), 10-11.

484 Adler, Alfred, 'The World We Live In', *Understanding Human Nature*, trans. Walter Beran Wolfe, (New York: Garden City Publishing Company Inc., 1927), 62-63.



We must be cautious about the notion of family relationships and community. Kierkegaard does not think we can *reduce* individuals to the family relationship or the community, nor does he think that the family relationship or the community determines an individual's ways of thinking. Kierkegaard's concept of family is very different from Hegel's, and we may even consider Kierkegaard's attack on the public as a condemnation of Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit* (discussed in the previous chapter).

From the discussion above, it is clear that the community and the public are distinguished by the concept of human relationships. 'Human relationships are not grounded on the numerical or the public, but Kierkegaard distinguishes between the concept of the public and the concept of community. The single individual is a fundamental component of the community who stands against mere numerical strength and pseudo-unity.'<sup>485</sup> But why can't the numerical establish any human relationship? This leads us to the answer to the question why is the numerical 'the constituting form and the law for the coming into existence'? In *Two Ages*, Kierkegaard explains:

For levelling really to take place, a phantom must first be raised, the spirit of levelling, a monstrous abstraction, an all-encompassing something that is nothing, a mirage—and this phantom is *the public*. Only in a passionless but reflective age can this phantom develop with the aid of the press, when the press itself becomes a phantom. There is no such thing as a public

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485 Tilley, J. Michael, "Interpersonal Relationship and Community in Kierkegaard's Thought", 52.

in spirited, passionate, tumultuous times, even when people want to actualise the idea of the barren desert, destroying and demoralising everything.

The public is a concept that simply could not have appeared in antiquity, because the people were obliged to come forward *en masse in corpore* [as a whole] in the situation of action, were obliged to bear the responsibility for what was done by individuals in their midst, while in turn the individual was obliged to be present in person as the one specifically involved and had to submit to the summary court for approval or disapproval. Only when there is no strong communal life to give a substance to the concretion will the press create this abstraction “the public”, made up of unsubstantial individuals who are never united or never can be united in the simultaneity of any situation or organisation and yet are claimed to be a whole. (TA 90-91)

The public is a synonym of terms like people, nation, society etc. All these terms refer to a group of people as a whole. The concept of the public resulted from levelling or reflection simply because we cannot perceive the public at all. The public as a whole is an abstract concept. One cannot see a ‘public’ or a ‘people’ on the street. What one can see is only many particular and distinct individuals as an existing being. Kierkegaard believes that *every human being exists as an individual*. A community also resulted from abstraction to a certain extent, but the ground of community, i.e. a personal relationship, is concrete, as one can have actual experience of relationships. However, the concept of the public does not involve any relationship. It merely considers a group of people as a whole. There are maybe some structures ‘unifying’ the people as a whole, but these structures have nothing to do with inter-personal relationship. In a public, the individual is suppressed as an insignificant individual and is just one person among the numerous members of the group. Compared to the public

as a whole, one person is insignificant. His action must be approved or disapproved by the 'summary court' of public opinion. But when there is no strong communal life this public is a result of abstraction or levelling. If there is communal life, different individuals are united and every individual would be respected and has a mutual influence on one another. Without any personal relationship, the public can only be established by the 'numerical':

The numerical (which as numbers increase more and more has become the law of human existence [*Tilværelsens*]) also has the demoralizing effect that the sight of these thousands and thousands prompts men to live merely comparatively, all human existence dissolves in the nonsense of comparison, the mud of numbers, which then is even prettied up to look like something under the name of history and politics, where the whole point (the mark of spiritlessness) is always that what counts is a large number of participants, that numbers confer significance, almost as if the idea were like a teller in a bank, who ponders numbers. (*JP* 3, 2999, XI A167)

The numerical simply means that the majority decides the actions of the public. The existence of a single individual is 'dissolved in the nonsense of comparison' or 'the mud of numbers'. In the demographic statistic, a single individual becomes merely a data in the database. A personal relationship is irrelevant. In the election or referendum, every vote is homogeneous. The majority of opinion decides the results. The numerical implies a quantification of the human being. It is spiritless because the individual's passion cannot be expressed in the numerical. The 'large number of participants' are merely recognised as a

large number, and the characteristics or personalities of every participant become irrelevant.

In the *Point of View*, as quoted by Backhouse, Kierkegaard even said,

[T]he crowd is untruth, the untruth of wanting to exert influence by means of the crowd, the numerical, of wanting to make the numerical the authority for what truth is. ‘ (POV, XIII 612)

‘By truth I always understand eternal truth. But politics, etc. has nothing to do with eternal truth.’<sup>486</sup> (POV, XIII 596)

Kierkegaard condemns the crowd (which we may consider as a synonym of the public) as it makes the ‘numerical the authority for what truth is’. The majority decides what the public or the crowd as a whole should do. However, Kierkegaard thinks the numerical is an untruth. Here truth merely refers to eternal truth, i.e. religious truth. ‘the problem arises when the crowd thinks that the fact of its size and its agreement is what makes the opinion true. The issue is thus one of authority, rather than an expectation that every single person ought to strike out on his or her own.’<sup>487</sup> We do not have to interpret Kierkegaard as an anti-Democratic here because he is only concerned about religion instead of politics. Kierkegaard thinks that it is ‘politics’ as such and not just democracy that has nothing to do with the eternal truth. For the nature of politics is to deal with the matters of the public or the crowd while eternal truth is always about a single individual. ‘In Christ Christianity is the single individual [*den Enkelte*]; here is the one and only single individual. ‘ (JP 2, 2056, XI A189) Kierkegaard worries that the political thought of the numerical as the authority may make an opinion true just because most people think so. For example: ‘in a small town the presence

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486 Backhouse, Stephen, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 189.

487 Ibid.

of a single prostitute would be a matter considerable debate and scandal, whereas a thousand prostitutes in Paris might be virtually unnoticed.’<sup>488</sup>

Now we have reconstructed Kierkegaard’s criticism of the public. The public is a group of people as a whole in which the numerical is the authority. The public does not exist actually. Instead, it is just an abstract concept resulting from levelling. In reality, every human being exists as a single individual. The numerical does not care about the personal relationship. The numerical follows the idea that the majority wins. The numerical is untruth as the truthfulness of the eternal truth cannot be distorted by the opinion poll of the crowd. Even if 90% of the population do not believe in the Christian God, it does not imply that Christian God does not exist. In the following section, I argue that Hegel’s concept of *Sittlichkeit* falls under Kierkegaard’s criticism of the public and argue that Kierkegaard’s concept of the community is a better candidate to be the ‘space’ of the cultural self.

#### **4.1.5 Kierkegaard’s Dialectics of the Community vs Hegel’s *Sittlichkeit***

This section aims to argue that Hegel’s concept of *Sittlichkeit* or ethical life is susceptible to Kierkegaard’s criticism of the public, since *Sittlichkeit* defines ethical obligations as the obedience to social norms, which leads to the problem of social conformism and the denial of moral autonomy. While Lao Sze-Kwang regards Hegel’s concept of *Sittlichkeit* as a way to formulate cultural subjectivity, this section argues that a cultural subjectivity as *Sittlichkeit* fails to acknowledge the individual freedom emphasised by Kierkegaard. Without moral

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<sup>488</sup> Pattison, George, “Poor Paris!”: *Kierkegaard’s Critique of the Spectacular City*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 37.

autonomy, the individual cannot transcend from the limitation of the society and therefore individual freedom is suppressed.

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Culture*, Lao adopts Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* as a way to formulate cultural subjectivity in his 'Hegelian model'. According to Lao's interpretation, the 'Hegelian model explains cultural activity merely according to the ability of self-consciousness. Cultural activities are merely the manifestations of values, which are the external manifestations of a subject.'<sup>489</sup> Therefore Lao argues that Hegel's *Philosophy of Rights* expresses the essence of the Hegelian philosophy of culture.

According to Hegel, *Sittlichkeit* 'is the Idea of freedom in that, on the one hand, it is the living good—the good endowed in self-consciousness with knowing and willing and actualized by self-conscious action—while, on the other hand, self-consciousness has in the ethical realm its foundation in and for itself and its motivating end', i.e. 'the concept of freedom *developed into the existing world and the nature of self-consciousness.*' (*PR* §142) However, the meaning of freedom here has nothing to do with individual freedom. According to Stephen Houlgate, the 'ethical will' 'holds freedom and the good to be embodied in the laws and institutions that constitute 'ethical life' (*PR* §§ 142, 144). From the ethical point of view, therefore, we are free only when we are law-abiding participants in the institutions of civil society and the state (as well as members of a loving family).'<sup>490</sup>

Similarly, Frederick Beiser suggests that Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* 'determines all aspects of

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<sup>489</sup> 勞思光 [Lao Sze Kwang], 文化哲學演講錄 [Lectures on Philosophy of Culture], (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2012), 12.

<sup>490</sup> Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M.Knox, ed. Stephen Houlgate, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), xxvi.

human conduct' or 'the whole way of living and acting of a person or people'<sup>491</sup>. It is a rational structure that reduces individuals into the laws governing the development of spirit in a society:

It is the fact that the ethical order is the system of these specific determinations of the Idea which constitutes its rationality. Hence the ethical order is freedom or the will in and for itself as what is objective, a circle of necessity whose moments are the ethical powers which govern the life of individuals. To these powers individuals are related as accidents to substance, and it is in individuals that these powers are represented, have the shape of appearance, and become actualized. (*PR* §145)

The ethical power is objective instead of subjective. It is different from personal inclination or motivation (and passion in Kierkegaard's sense). For it is rational and it governs the life of all individuals. In modern scientific language, we may consider ethical power as limited by psychological, physiochemical, biological or physiological laws. According to Hegel, there are three moments of *Sittlichkeit*:

(a) Family: 'as the immediate substantiality of spirit, is specifically characterized by love, which is spirit's feeling of its own unity. Hence in a family, one's disposition is to have self-consciousness of one's individuality within this unity as the essentiality that has being in and for itself, with the result that one is in it not as an independent person but as a member.' (*PR* §158)

(b) Civil Society: 'the concrete person, who as a particular person is his own end, is, as

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<sup>491</sup> Beiser, Frederick, *Hegel*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 270.

a totality of needs and a mixture of caprice and natural necessity, one principle of civil society.’ (PR §182)<sup>492</sup>

(c) The State: the Political System

Hegel’s understanding of the family is very different from Kierkegaard’s. According to Kierkegaard, there is a mutual and equal influence between a single individual and his family relationship. Ultimately, the single individual has a higher existence than his relation to others. However, in the dialectic of *Sittlichkeit*, the individual is in the end, subordinate to his relations to others. In the first moment, an individual and his relation to others are still valued equally, for there is still mutual influence. ‘I find myself in another person, that I count for something in the other, while the other in turn comes to count for something in me.’ (PR §158)<sup>493</sup> The relations to others within the family is maintained by love. In the family, there is ‘a form of sociality mediated by a quasi-natural inter-subjective recognition rooted in sentiment and feeling—love (PR: §§ 158–60)’<sup>494</sup>. There are three moments in the family:

- (a) marriage, the form assumed by the concept of the family in its immediate phase;
- (b) family property and assets (the external existence of the concept) and attention to these;
- (c) the education of children and the dissolution of the family. (PR §160)

In the second moment of the civil society, again, there are three moments:

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> Redding, Paul, “Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2015 Edition), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/hegel/>>



- (a) the substantial or immediate [or agricultural] estate;
- (b) the reflecting or formal [or business] estate; and finally,
- (c) the universal estate [the estate of civil servants]. (Hegel PR §202)<sup>495</sup>

As Paul Redding explains, when ‘the estates of civil society group their members according to their common interests, and as the deputies elected from the estates to the legislative bodies give voice to those interests within the deliberative processes of legislation, the outcome of this process might give expression to the general interest.’<sup>496</sup> In the moment of civil society, individuals are reduced into society as a whole. Personal interests are reduced to common or general interests, which can be satisfied by the laws of society. In the final moment of the State, according to Hegel,

The right of individuals to be subjectively determined as free is fulfilled when they belong to an actual ethical order, because their certainty of their freedom finds its truth in such an objective order, and it is in an ethical order that they are actually in possession of their own essence or their own inner universality (see §147).

When a father inquired about the best method of educating his son in ethical conduct, a Pythagorean replied: ‘Make him a citizen of a state with good laws.’\* (The phrase has also been attributed to others [e.g. Socrates].) (PR §153)

Moreover, there are three moments of the state:

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> Redding, Paul “Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel”, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/hegel/> >

- (a) the power to determine and establish the universal—the *legislative* power;
- (b) the subsumption of individual cases and the spheres of particularity under the universal—the *executive* power;
- (c) Subjectivity, as the will with the power of ultimate decision— the crown [or princely power]. In the crown, the different powers are bound into an individual unity which is thus at once the apex and beginning of the whole, i.e. of a *constitutional monarchy*. (PR §273)

Here Hegel expresses his idea of ‘ethical conduct’: *ethical conduct is equivalent to legal obedience*. Here the law means the laws of the state instead of natural laws or the law of nature or Confucian’s concept of innate moral principles, for Hegel endorses the advice to ‘make [a person] a citizen of a state with good laws’. ‘Each particular action should, therefore, be undertaken with the flourishing of the state in mind; the direction of ethics is exhausted in further realizations of a *Sittlichkeit* defined by the good of the State.’<sup>497</sup> However, the state law itself is not always morally good.<sup>498</sup> The Anti-Secession Law in China, for example, is an instrument to oppress separatism and freedom of speech of minorities in China, especially Tibetan and Uyghurs.<sup>499</sup> Hegel’s idea of ethical conduct as obeying law echoes with the ancient Chinese philosopher Han Fei, who argues that

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<sup>497</sup> Millay, Thomas Joseph. ‘Concrete and Otherworldly: Reading Kierkegaard’s Works of Love alongside Hegel’s Philosophy of Right.’ *Modern Theology* 34, no. 1 (April 2017):23–41.

<sup>498</sup> The legitimacy of the state law has been a debating issue in Hong Kong, especially during the 2019 anti-government protest when protestors regarded the 2019 extradition law amendment which allows transferring suspects from Hong Kong to China as a violation of Hong Kong autonomy and jurisdiction independence. See “Hong Kong-China Extradition Plans Explained.” BBC News. BBC, August 22, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-47810723>

<sup>499</sup> See Zenz, Adrian. “‘Thoroughly Reforming Them Towards a Healthy Heart Attitude’ - Chinas Political Re-Education Campaign in Xinjiang.” *Central Asian Survey*, July 2018. <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/4j6rq>

in the state of the enlightened sovereign there is no literature written on bamboo slips, but the law is the only teaching; there are no quoted sayings of the early kings, but the magistrates are the only instructors.<sup>500</sup>

Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit* is exposed to Kierkegaard's criticism of the public because *Sittlichkeit* assumes ethical conduct as determined by social norms. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard criticises the idea that 'if the ethical—that is, social morality—is the highest', (*FT* 55) then Abraham, who tried to sacrifice his son Isaac to God, would not be praised as the father of faith since his religious act of sacrificing his son should be regarded as murder under social norm. Stern argues that because 'Abraham did not act to achieve any social good, and thus did not act in accordance with the duties that might legitimately be designated upon him within the framework of *Sittlichkeit*, means that he can appeal to no such conception of moral value to legitimate his actions.'<sup>501</sup> Connell suggests that for Kierkegaard, if 'ethics is equated with prevailing social norms, ethical selfhood is reduced to conformism.'<sup>502</sup> Kierkegaard rejects Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* because he regards *Sittlichkeit* as a threat to moral autonomy.<sup>503</sup>

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500 Original text: 「故明主之國，無書簡之文，以法為教；無先王之語，以吏為師。」  
Han Fei, 韓非子 *Han Feizi* [the Mater Han Fei], trans. W.K. Liao, (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1939), Book XIX, Chp. XLIX. Reprint, Anne Kinney, (University of Virginia The Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, 2003) URL =

<http://www2.iath.virginia.edu:8080/exist/cocoon/xwomen/texts/hanfei/tpage/tocc/bilingual>

<sup>501</sup> Stern, Robert. *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 183

<sup>502</sup> Connell, George B. "Kierkegaard and Confucius: The Religious Dimensions of Ethical Selfhood." *Dao* 8, no. 2 (2009): 136.

<sup>503</sup> For Kierkegaard's reception of Kantian concept of moral autonomy, see Stern, Robert. *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

As we have seen above, Kierkegaard's concept of community is a better candidate for the formulation of cultural subjectivity than Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit* since, in a community, the individual's freedom is preserved. In chapter 3, we have seen how Kierkegaard defines culture in terms of the manifestations of passions, which are manifested by *single individuals*. Therefore, in order to manifest passion, a cultural self must preserve individual freedom. Individuals can freely manifest the passions they emphasised according to their free wills, which are not limited by the social norms. Instead, social norms, rituals and cultural activities are merely the manifestations of the individuals' free wills.

## **4.2. The Temporality of the Cultural Self: Contemporaneity**

This section aims to explain the temporal structure of a Kierkegaardian concept of cultural self by employing Kierkegaard's concept of contemporaneity, which provides an ontological ground for the historical successions of cultural tradition. Firstly, I argue that Kierkegaard's concept of contemporaneity provides the ontological ground for Gadamer's fusions of horizons of the past and the present, as in contemporaneity, the present meets the past. Secondly, I argue that there is no necessity in cultural development according to Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, as the past, the present and the future are all *coming into existence*.

### **4.2.1 Contemporaneity and Gadamer's Fusions of Horizons**

As mentioned previously, Kierkegaard's concept of a community, in which the individual has a higher existence in his relations to other, is also a unity of people from various ages, who "provide a corrective for each other". (JP 4, 4161) While Kierkegaard does not develop his own hermeneutics based upon his concept of community, the idea of "corrective for each other" is very similar to the concept of fusion of horizon in Gadamer's hermeneutics. Therefore, it seems plausible to attempt to develop a new concept of a cultural group combining Kierkegaard's concept of a community with Gadamer's concept of tradition, prejudices, and horizons. It is appropriate for us to discuss to what extent Kierkegaard's existentialism is consistent with Gadamer's hermeneutics.

Kierkegaard's influence on Gadamer's philosophy has been discussed among some contemporary commentators. Rebecca Skaggs argues that Gadamer goes further by applying the concept of contemporaneity as 'the experience of a past event (as brought to presence in a text) as present'.<sup>504</sup> Patrick Stokes suggests that in *Truth and Method* Gadamer redevelops 'Kierkegaardian contemporaneity in a new philosophical ... context'.<sup>505</sup> Interestingly, Stokes argues that both Gadamer and Kierkegaard are using the same term 'contemporaneity' 'on the cognitive, experiential level' rather than 'ethical' level.<sup>506</sup> As Stokes says,

Gadamer ... tell[s] us that contemporaneity is "a formulation of the believer's task of so totally combining one's own presence and the redeeming act of Christ, that the latter is experienced as something present (not as something in the past) and is taken seriously as such". This appeal to

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<sup>504</sup> Skaggs, Rebecca, 'Kierkegaard's Hermeneutics', *The Heythrop Journal*, 55, no. 5, (September 2014): 822.

<sup>505</sup> Stokes, Patrick, ' "See For Your Self": Contemporaneity, Autopsy and Presence in Kierkegaard's Moral-Religious Psychology', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 18, no. 2, (2010): 298.

<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.* 299.

“experience-as” takes us beyond the metaphorical and elevates contemporaneity to the same status, on the phenomenal level, as direct experience. (Bonhoeffer, too, insists that the “presence” of Christ is not merely metaphorical, though here presence is taken to refer more to the presence of Jesus in the body of the church than to any imaginatively mediated experience).<sup>507</sup>

Simply speaking, according to Stokes, the nature of contemporaneity is an *experience*. Stokes goes further by establishing a ‘Kierkegaardian phenomenological psychology’. He quotes *Philosophical Fragments* where Kierkegaard emphasises ‘the visual aspects of the experience of contemporaneity’.<sup>508</sup> In *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard says: ‘there is not and cannot be any question of a follower at second hand, for the believer (and only he, after all, is a follower) continually has the *autopsy* of faith [*Troens Autopsi*]; he does not see with the eyes of others and sees only the same as every believer sees – with the eyes of faith.’ (PF 97)

However, this quotation is not strong evidence for a phenomenological interpretation of Kierkegaard’s contemporaneity. Kierkegaard has clearly distinguished ‘the eyes of faith’ from ‘the eyes of others’. The ‘vision’ of faith, therefore, is different from the vision of the phenomena surrounding us. Phenomena, however, refer to ‘the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first-person point of view.’<sup>509</sup> Phenomenology, therefore, suspends (epoché) the ontological question. Phenomenology of a religious experience only investigate *how* God

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<sup>507</sup> Ibid. 305.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid. 301.

<sup>509</sup> Smith, David Woodruff, ‘Phenomenology’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, (Summer 2018 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>

as an object is intended; whether God exists or not is irrelevant. However, contemporaneity in Kierkegaard's sense is necessarily ontological instead of merely phenomenal; when a person is contemporary with Christ, he/she has established an authentic relationship with Christ, and the existence of Christ *matters*, as we shall see in the following discussion. Contemporaneity, therefore, must be on the transcendent level instead of a phenomenal level.

It is appropriate to look at the usage of contemporaneity in Kierkegaard's own texts. Contemporaneity (*Samtidighed*) is an essential concept in both *Philosophical Fragments* and *Practice in Christianity*. According to Leo Stan, the Danish term for contemporaneity, *Samtidighed*, is related to the Old Norse word, *samtíða* (same time), which 'essentially denote[s] the chronological simultaneity or co-presence of events, persons, or objects' and both terms 'refer to the present moment'<sup>510</sup>. According to Stan, contemporaneity is 'undergirded by the postulation of an absolute soteriological equality or equivalence between Christ's first disciples and every subsequent follower.'<sup>511</sup> St Paul is a good example. He was not living with Christ, nor did he witness the death and resurrection of Christ. He even said besides St Peter: 'I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother' (Galatians 1:19). However, St Paul was still able to be contemporary with Christ when he had the experience on the journey to Damascus, when 'he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"' (Acts 9:3-4) St Paul's contemporaneity with Christ is not presented as a merely phenomenal experience. If it were a phenomenal experience, St Paul, as a temporal being would not be able to see Christ as an

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<sup>510</sup> Stan, Leo, 'Contemporaneity', *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources: Kierkegaard's Concepts Tome II: Classicism to Enthusiasm*, ed. Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald & Jon Stewart, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2014), Vol. 15, (London: Routledge, 2016), 61.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid* 65.

eternal being. Contemporaneity is possible when an existing temporal individual is at the same time with God the eternal being.

Gadamer himself is interested in Kierkegaard's concept of contemporaneity rather than that of community, and his focus on hermeneutics and aesthetics is very different from Kierkegaard's focus on religious faith. According to Kierkegaard,

Contemporaneity or non-contemporaneity makes no essential difference; a historical point of departure (and this it is also for the contemporary, the historical, that the God [*Guden*] exists [*er til*]—that is, exists by having come into the sphere of actuality [*bleven til*]), for an eternal decision is and remains a leap. (*JP* 2534)

In Kierkegaard's context, contemporaneity always means being with God or Christ, who is an *eternal* being. For example in *Practice in Christianity*, Kierkegaard said,

... [Christ's] presence here on earth never becomes a thing of the past, thus does not become more and more distant—that is, if faith is at all to be found upon the earth; if not, well, then in that very instant it is a long time since he lived. But as long as there is a believer, this person, in order to have become that, must have been as a believer must be just as contemporary with Christ's presence as his contemporaries were. This contemporaneity is the condition of faith ... it is faith. (*PC* 9)

A 'person who *believes* [in Christ] must become contemporary with him in his abasement.' (*PC* 34) Because contemporaneity with Christ is a personal relationship between an



individual and God, it is subjective. In contemporaneity, the ‘qualification that is lacking—which is the qualification of truth (as inwardness) and of all religiousness is—**for you**. The past is not actuality—for me. Only the contemporary is actuality for me. That with which you are living simultaneously is actuality—for you.’ (PC 64) Simply speaking, Christ is not merely a historical being. He is God and exists eternally. To be contemporary with Christ is to be contemporary with an eternal God at *present*.

As Vasiliki Tsakiri points out, there are two kinds of contemporaneity in Kierkegaard’s context: ‘*immediate contemporaneity*’ and ‘*genuine contemporaneity*’. Immediate contemporaneity simply means existing with Christ at the same time in the same historical period, namely Palestine in the first century. However, if immediate contemporaneity ‘lack[s] the earnest relation with God-man, [it] could be synonymous with non-contemporaneity’:<sup>512</sup>

But what does it mean to say that one can be contemporary without, however, being contemporary, consequently that one can be contemporary and yet, although using this advantage (in the sense of immediacy), be a non-contemporary – what else does this mean except that one simply cannot be immediately contemporary with a teacher and event of that sort, so that the real contemporary is not that by virtue of immediate contemporaneity but by virtue of something else. (PF 67)

Genuine contemporaneity is closely related to the concept of *Øieblikket*, which literally means the glance of eye.<sup>513</sup> Whereas contemporaneity is when a temporal individual exists

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<sup>512</sup> Tsakiri, Vasiliki, *Kierkegaard: Anxiety, Repetition and Contemporaneity*, ed. Gary Banham, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 154.

<sup>513</sup> The relation between contemporaneity and *Øieblikket* is well discussed in Backhouse, Stephen,

at the same time with God as an eternal being, *Øieblikket* is the moment where temporality meets eternity. Considering the complexity of *Øieblikket*, it is appropriate to understand Kierkegaard's philosophy of time before analysing the actual meaning of *Øieblikket*.

Kierkegaard holds that man 'is a synthesis of psyche and body' united by the spirit and 'a *synthesis of the temporal and the eternal*' united by the moment (CA 85). However, what is temporality? A physical definition of time would probably be an 'infinite succession' of numbers shown on the clock. However, such a definition leads to a paradox:

If time is correctly defined as an infinite succession, it most likely is also defined as the present, the past and the future. This distinction, however, is incorrect if it is considered to be implicit in time itself, because the distinction appears only through the relation of time to eternity and through the reflection of eternity in time. If in the infinite succession of time a foothold could be found, i.e., a present, which was the dividing point [between the past and the future], the division would be quite correct. However, precisely because every moment, as well as the sum of the moments, is a process (a passing by), no moment is a present, and accordingly there is in time neither present, nor past, nor future. (CA 85)

The nature of time as '*passing by*' leads to the paradox above. Consider the following example. Let there be two events: Event A: the signing of Sino-British Joint Declaration on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1984 and Event B: the Handover of Hong Kong in 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997. 19<sup>th</sup> December 1984 is *eternally* earlier than 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997. However, Event A or the Event B is

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*Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 93-109.

*not eternally the past, the present or the future.* On the 1st December 1984, both the Event A and B were the future. On the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1984, Event A was the present while Event B was the future. On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1997, Event A was the past while Event B was the present. Today on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017, both Event A and Event B are the past. There is a paradox: the sequence of the occurrences of events remained constant, but their temporal nature change.<sup>514</sup>

Kierkegaard realises that if time is defined as ‘the succession that passes by’, the present ‘is not a concept of time’, for we *eternally* exist not in the past or the future but the present alone. ‘[N]o matter how quickly it may disappear, the present is posited, and being posited it again appears in the categories: the past and the future.’ (CA 86) The eternal ‘is the present in terms of an annulled succession’ (CA 86). *Øieblikket* is a ‘figurative expression’ of the moment when the eternal and the present are equivalent (CA 87). *Øieblikket* itself is not the present; instead, it is the ‘intermediary between the past and the future’.

According to Stephen N. Dunning, the Danish word *Øieblikket* means ‘the blink of the eye’ and usually translated as ‘moment’<sup>515</sup>, while Backhouse translated the term as a ‘glance of the eye’ or ‘the moment of vision’.<sup>516</sup> As Dunning said,

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<sup>514</sup> Kierkegaard’s argument above is very similar to McTaggart’s famous paper *The Unreality of Time* in 1908, where he pointed out the contradiction between the unchangeable sequence of events and the changeable status of being the past, the present and the future. However, unlike McTaggart, Kierkegaard does not deny the reality of time. Instead, he introduces the concept of *Øieblikket* to heal the contradiction between eternity and temporality.

See McTaggart, John Ellis ‘The Unreality of Time’, *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, 17 (1908): 456-473.

<sup>515</sup> Dunning, Stephen N., ‘Kierkegaard’s Systematic Analysis of Anxiety’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Concept of Anxiety*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1985), Vol. 8, 19. Quoted in Backhouse, Stephen, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 93.

<sup>516</sup> Backhouse, Stephen, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 93.

Temporality is posited on the basis of the Moment, and history begins with it. In short, although the Moment occurs in the blink of an eye, it brings about a qualitative change within the temporal sequence. ... if the Moment is the limitation of time by eternity, then temporality is seen as a relation to that time-stopping eternity, not simply to infinite succession. Furthermore, the Moment when eternity breaks into time is not relative to the totality of time; on the contrary, the eternal relativizes time itself and thereby determines the condition of temporality. The distinction of past, present, and future now takes on real significance, for they are each understood in relation to the eternal-in-time, the Moment, rather than in a “simple continuity”.<sup>517</sup>

Dunning’s interpretation has strong textual evidence from Kierkegaard’s *Concept of Anxiety*, where he argued that ‘the moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time.’ (CA 89) To sum up, *Øieblikket* unites the eternal and the present, and then posits the past and the future, in which temporality consists. *Time* is different from *Temporality*. Time is the infinite succession of passing by while temporality comprises both past and future.

*Contemporaneity is possible in Øieblikket when the eternal meets the present.* According to Backhouse, while ‘Øieblikket refers to both a temporal/historical relation and also to an orientation or way of being’, contemporaneity is ‘the means by which humans must relate to God in Christ’.<sup>518</sup>

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517 Dunning, Stephen N. ‘Kierkegaard’s Systematic Analysis of Anxiety’, *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Concept of Anxiety*, 20.

518 Backhouse, Stephen *Kierkegaard’s Critique on Christian Nationalism*, xiii.

An essential criterion of contemporaneity is *acknowledgement* (Danish: *Anerkendelse*; German: *Anerkennung*; also translated as recognition). Acknowledgement is different from knowledge. To know something is to know something knowable in a subject-object epistemic relation. However, we cannot know God the Unknown one. To acknowledge what God truly is is to recognise God as God and to recognise the God-man relation with faith:

It speaks about giving him only a cup of water—but *because* he is a follower, a prophet, thus fully and totally in acknowledgement of him for what he truly is. What Christ is pointing to is: acknowledgement of the follower, the prophet, and in contemporaneity. Whether the acknowledgement is expressed by giving him a glass of cold water or by giving him a kingdom is utterly unimportant; it depends on contemporaneity's acknowledging "because". So it is not as the money-minded pastors for the sake of the pastoral dollar fool people into thinking that, since ten rix-dollars is more than a glass of cold water, it makes the one who gives ten rix-dollars to a prophet, a follower—but not *because* he is a prophet, a follower—far more perfect than the one who gives him a glass of cold water *because* he is a prophet, a follower. No, that the gift is *because*, consequently expressing that one acknowledges the man for what he truly is, that is what it depends upon. (*Moment* 288)

To 'do something *in contemporaneity* for the witness to the truth.' (*JP* 4961). To witness to the truth has both religious and ethical meaning: religiously, one acknowledges God and follows God, and ethically one practices the love of God to others. Once one acknowledges God, one decides to follow God and is therefore contemporary with God.

Interestingly, while Kierkegaard distinguishes acknowledgement from knowledge in the quotation above, he does not explain the concept of acknowledgement in detail, and it seems that there is little discussion on this matter among the commentators on Kierkegaard's texts. However, Risto Saarinen has discussed the concept of acknowledgement among other modern philosophers. The English word acknowledgement comes from Latin *agnosco*, which regularly appears in the works by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. While Saarinen does not explore Kierkegaard's concept of acknowledgement, he has provided us with a brief history of the word acknowledgement. According to Saarinen, for Hobbes the word 'acknowledgement' 'means personal acknowledgement and that this attitude can also coexist with such faith that does not entail the proof of knowledge',<sup>519</sup> while Locke argues that 'religious acknowledgement entails submission to proper political authority'.<sup>520</sup> While both deny the rationality of the act of acknowledgement, it is unclear that their usage of the word acknowledgement has any influence on Kierkegaard's philosophy.

Considering Kierkegaard's strong emphasis on Christian faith, we should look at the Nicene Creed where the word 'acknowledge' is used. In Nicene Creed (of the First Council of Constantinople), it is written that 'I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins' (1662 *Book of Common Prayer*), although the Order of Mass in Roman Catholic Church<sup>521</sup> and the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom in Eastern Orthodox Church uses the word 'confess'.<sup>522</sup> The Danish term used in the Nicene Creed is 'bekende', which means 'confess'.

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519 Saarinen, Risto, 'The Modern Era', *Recognition and Religion: A Historical and Systematic Study*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3. URL = <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198791966.001.0001/acprof-9780198791966-chapter-3?print=pdf>

520 Ibid. 5.

521 *The Order of Mass: New English Translation*, (London: Incorporated Catholic Truth Society, 2011), 20.

<sup>522</sup> The Chinese languages translations with which the author is more familiar are quite different from the English translations. While *ὁμολογος* is translated as either confess or acknowledge in English, it is

The original Greek word used in the Nicene Creed for ‘acknowledge’ is ὁμολογος (the Nicene Creed in Latin uses the word *confiteor*, which means confess), which is from the word ὁμοῦ (one) and λογος (reason or discourse)<sup>523</sup>. There are three meanings: (1) ‘agreeing’, (2) ‘confessing guilt’ and (3) admitting.<sup>524</sup> In the New Testament, ὁμολογος is always used as the (2) and (3) meaning, e.g. Jn. 1:20 where St John the Baptist ‘confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ‘ and 1 Jn 1:9 where St John the Evangelist said ‘[i]f we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ But the meaning of ὁμολογος should be the (3) meaning of ‘admit’, which is also widely found in the bible, e.g. Rom. 10:9: ‘if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’ and 1 St John 4:3 ‘every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God’.<sup>525</sup>

Both (2) and (3), unlike (1), are irrelevant to reasoning. It is simply an act of affirming by an individual’s *free will*. Therefore, having considered both the theological and philosophical tradition, it is reasonable to assume that the word ‘acknowledgement’ in Kierkegaard’s sense refers to an act of admitting the existence of God not by reason, but by free will alone. In other words, confession and free will are essential to contemporaneity.

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translated as either 承認 or 認 ( *sing4 jing6* or *jing6*, acknowledge), 認為 (*jing6 wai4*, think, in 普天頌讚 *Hymns of Universal Praise*; this version is used in the Hong Kong Council of Church of Christ in China) or 信 (*seon3*, believe in, used in the 1959 Chinese *Book of Common Prayer* by Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui). Only 承認 (*sing4 jing6*, acknowledge) is an appropriate translation of ὁμολογος.

<sup>523</sup> 和合本 Chinese Union Version of the Bible (1919) translated the word λογος as 道 *dao* or *dou6* (the way) which is adopted by most Chinese Protestant. Translating λογος as *dao* (in either Confucian or Taoist senses) assumes the commensurability between Christianity and Chinese Philosophy, which possibly is influenced by James Legge.

<sup>524</sup> See ed. Gregory Crane et al. *Perseus Digital Library Greek Word Study Tool*, (Tufts University, 1987). [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=o\(mo\)/logos#Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=o\(mo\)/logos-contents](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=o(mo)/logos#Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=o(mo)/logos-contents)

<sup>525</sup> *Biblehub*. (2017) <http://biblehub.com/greek/3670.htm>

Contemporaneity is not merely a religious experience that is alien to the society, however. There is a social and ethical aspect of contemporaneity as was mentioned in chapter 4.2 where Kierkegaard's quotation of Karl Bayer's '*Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft*' ["The Concept of the Moral Community"]<sup>526</sup> was discussed. There we saw that there are three moments in the dialectic of community: '(1) the individuals who relate to each other in the relation are individually inferior to the relation': '(2) the individuals who relate to each other in the relation are individually equal in relation to the relation', and '(3) the individuals who relate themselves to each other in the relation are individually superior to the relation' (*JP* 4, 4410). The community takes part in the second moment when an individual establishes authentic relations with others. According to Kierkegaard, the community is necessary for establishing an authentic God-man relation. Without relations to others in a community, one can never establish a God-man relation: 'God and man are separated by an infinite qualitative difference; when the relationship becomes too strenuous, the category of community must come between as a middle term ...' (*JP* 2, 1377)

Christ had been living in a *community*. He was living with his disciples and had been visiting people from different social classes: the rich and the poor, the religious and the sinners, and the educated and the uneducated. Christ met individuals in a social context and commanded his disciples to love each other (Jn.13:34-35, 15:12,17). Therefore, even when an individual has established a relation to God, which means establishing a higher existence than that of his relations with others, he never gives up his relations to others. Instead, he must love the others as Christ has loved them:

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<sup>526</sup> Tilley, J. Michael, "Interpersonal Relationship and Community in Kierkegaard's Thought", 105.



Christ is a suffering humanity, even though, more sharply defined, he is suffering humanity precisely because his fear of God.

Here is the criterion. Men say: If we had been contemporary with Christ, then etc. Christ answers, as he will answer on the day of judgement: Have you not been contemporary with the sick, the poor, the despised, the suffering, and the like, and done nothing for them, which would have been considerably easier than doing works of love toward me when I lived, I, who exposed to danger anyone who dared to listen to me or acknowledge me. (*JP* 2430)

As we have seen above, while Kierkegaard's contemporaneity has a strong religious sense, it contains ethical implication for the relations to others. One cannot witness to God if one is merely an isolated individual without relations to others. In order to be contemporary with God, one must have relations to others before having relation to God in a community according to Kierkegaard's dialectics of community. Therefore, we may apply Kierkegaard's concept of contemporaneity in non-religious fields, although Kierkegaard himself is more interested in its religious application.

Differently from Kierkegaard, Gadamer argues that contemporaneity 'belongs to the being of the work of art': 'constitutes the essence of "being present" ' which 'means that in its presentation this particular thing that presents itself to us achieves full presence, however, remote its origin may be.' Therefore,

... contemporaneity is not a mode of givenness in consciousness, but a task for consciousness and an achievement that is demanded of it. It consists in holding on to the thing in such a way

that it becomes “contemporaneous”, which is to say, however, that all mediation is superseded in total presence.

This concept of contemporaneity, we know, stems from Kierkegaard, who gave it a particular theological stamp. For Kierkegaard, “contemporaneity” does not mean “existing at the same time”. Rather, it names the task that confronts the believer: to bring together two moments that are not concurrent, namely one’s own present and the redeeming act of Christ, and yet so totally to mediate them that the latter is experienced and taken seriously as present (and not as something in a distant past). The simultaneity of aesthetic consciousness, by contrast, is just the opposite of this and indeed is based on covering up and concealing the task set by contemporaneity.<sup>527</sup>

Gadamer makes clear that he uses the word ‘contemporaneity’ in an aesthetic sense which is different from Kierkegaard’s theological sense. In Kierkegaard’s philosophy, the object of contemporaneity is Christ. To have a relation to God, an individual must be contemporary with Christ. However, in Gadamer’s hermeneutics, the object of contemporaneity is the work of art. While Gadamer’s usage of the term is different from Kierkegaard’s, I still think such an implication is appropriate. George Pattison has discussed the aesthetic application of Kierkegaard’s concept of contemporaneity, which

... is not a matter of historical accuracy – a comment which, if we apply it to painting (as he himself did not), has a direct bearing on the way we understand Manet’s Jesus. Contemporaneity is a matter of taking a decisive stand on the understanding of truth one has

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<sup>527</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, (Continuum International Publishing Group), 123-124.

been able to attain, even – especially – when it provokes rejection (as Kierkegaard believes it surely will). Let us recall once more that Manet’s *Jesus* was painted precisely in the wake of the massive rejection of the *Dead Christ with Angels*. By his very choice of topic and by his refusal to compromise his work stylistically, Manet made a work that turned back on his persecutors the challenge of contemporaneity in Kierkegaard’s sense.<sup>528</sup>

According to George Pattison, here ‘“contemporaneity” is not ... a truth for all times and all places’, but ‘is something ... achievable only under the sign of repetition’, i.e. ‘it is not a fact or a truth timelessly awaiting appropriation, but a work to be undertaken and brought to good effect’.<sup>529</sup> Both aesthetic interpretation and religious faith is a subjective and passionate appropriation of something unknown to an individual, which involves the act of *choice*. In these terms, to say ‘I love reading manga’ is equivalent to say ‘I love God’. I am ‘*feeling*’ instead of ‘*knowing*’ manga. However, we may criticise Gadamer for abusing the term contemporaneity. In Kierkegaard’s context, contemporaneity is always related to what can be described as eternal (God, love etc.) Although contemporaneity with God has ethical implications as well as a purely religious meaning, it is doubtful whether an artwork can be something *eternal*. An artwork as a material object is a temporal existent, but when we interpret an artwork we look at the aesthetic values it bears. If contemporaneity with an artwork is to exist at the same time as its aesthetic value, one may question whether such aesthetic value is eternal. Kant has an ambiguous answer to the eternality of aesthetic value. On the one hand, Kant insists that the judgement of taste is subjective; on the other hand, he

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<sup>528</sup> Pattison, George, *Kierkegaard, Religion and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 196.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*

thinks the judgement of taste has made a universal claim to the 'beautiful'. It is unclear whether the aesthetic value is eternal.<sup>530</sup>

Gadamer insists on using the term contemporaneity instead of simultaneity, for the latter merely means the apprehension of 'several objects of aesthetic consciousness' at the same time, i.e. merely a *perception*. Contemporaneity, however, has an ontological meaning that the object shows itself to us at present. For Kierkegaard, Christ reveals himself to us while for Gadamer the work of art shows itself to us. When it comes to contemporaneity, Gadamer particularly emphasises the role of 'distance' between the work of art and the interpreter, which possibly echoes Kierkegaard's depiction of God as the unknown:

The spectator is set at an absolute distance, a distance that precludes practical or goal-oriented participation. But this distance is aesthetic distance in a true sense, for it signifies the distance necessary for seeing, and thus makes possible a genuine and comprehensive participation in what is presented before us.<sup>531</sup>

Distance from the work of Art is necessary for perception and interpretation. You cannot see a word if your eyes are too close to the book. There must be a spatiotemporal distance between the interpreter and the work of Art even it is over *there* at this moment. Moreover, the picture is not drawn at present when you are seeing; it has already been drawn in the past. There is a temporal distance between the creation of the artwork and the interpretation of it.

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<sup>530</sup> Slater, Barry Hartley, 'Aesthetics', *International Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aestheti> However, since the issue as to the 'eternal' character of works of art is irrelevant to this thesis, I shall not pursue it further.

<sup>531</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, 123.

Gadamer's concept of aesthetic interpretation with Kierkegaard's influence leads us to his theory of fusion of horizons.

Let us now return to the relation between the fusion of horizons and contemporaneity. According to Gadamer, the fusion between the horizons of the present and the past is enabled by language. We keep a distance from the past, but we can still interpret the artwork or the text and even the worldview of the people in the past as long as the past is 'experienced and taken seriously as present' through contemporaneity. Contemporaneity with the past is possible when we share a similar language with the people in the past and undertake fusion of horizon.

However, Gadamer does not explain why people in the past may share a similar language with their descendants at present. Unlike Kant, Gadamer is not interested in the transcendental structure of individual consciousness. Nor is Gadamer interested in the universal 'human intellectuality' (in Humboldt's wording) where languages come from. Yet Gadamer's exclusive emphasis on the universality of the use of language does not explain how the fusion of horizon can be possible. Consider Searle's Chinese Room Argument where a non-Chinese speaker locked in a room answers the question correctly in Chinese by following the instruction. Searle argues that in this case 'the programme enables the person in the room to pass the Turing Test for understanding Chinese but he does not understand a word of Chinese.'<sup>532</sup> In hermeneutics, we may say that this non-Chinese speaker fails to have a fusion of horizons with the Chinese speaker outside the room who writes the questions

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<sup>532</sup> Searle, John, 'Chinese Room Argument', *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences*, ed. Robert A. Wilson & Frank C. Keil, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 115.

in Chinese. However, the non-Chinese speaker '*knows*' the meanings of Chinese words by looking at the instruction. However, he does not really understand Chinese because he fails to understand the system and the worldview behind the language. Merely knowing the meanings of words is not understanding a language. To understand a language, one must understand the tradition behind it, which involves the understanding of *thoughts*, for language results from the mind as an expression of thought, while thought comes from consciousness. Therefore, even though an AI computer knows the meanings of all Cantonese words and all the rules of Cantonese grammar, it does not really understand Cantonese. It does not share any thought from the tradition behind the Cantonese language because it lacks a *human consciousness where the thought comes from*. If there is no universal psychological structure of the individual mind, the people in the past and the people in the present cannot share the similar thoughts and therefore similar languages that make the fusion of horizons possible.

Kierkegaard's concept of community and contemporaneity, however, tries to articulate the psychology of individual consciousness. Community is a unity of people from different ages where everyone is the corrective of one another. While Gadamer uses language as an instrument for the fusion of horizons, Kierkegaard uses love to establish interpersonal relations, where the power of love is from God. Kierkegaard's approach has little aesthetic or linguistic concern and does not explain further how people in a community can understand each other, particularly people from previous generations or even from the more distant past.

## 4.2.2 Historical and Cultural Development as Coming into Existence

Knowing how the present meets the past in the moment of contemporaneity, we should now discuss the Kierkegaardian concept of cultural development in history. As we have seen above, common language enables the dialogue between the past and the present. Creation of new cultural values also results from the fusion of horizons of the past and the present. When one realises the limitations of the cultural values one has inherited from one's tradition, one creates new values and may emphasise the manifestation of different passions.

As we have seen in chapter 3, changes in cultural values are driven by the changes in the emphasis on the manifestations of passions—either the community emphasises different passions or manifest the same passion in a different way. These changes are not driven by the Hegelian cultural spirit but by the *free wills* of the individual members of the community. In other words, cultural development is driven by free wills instead of any historical law of necessity suggested by Hegel. Therefore, this section argues that according to Kierkegaard, history and cultural development are always *coming into existence* and follow the law of possibility rather than necessity.

Kierkegaard rejects the Hegelian concept of the world-historical which assumes historical development as the necessary development of the Spirit. Georgios Patios argues that Kierkegaard makes the epistemological thesis that 'historical knowledge cannot be of the same precision as knowledge of the laws of nature' and the ontological thesis that 'there is

no necessity in history, hence no general and necessary laws.’<sup>533</sup> He lists three presuppositions in Kierkegaard’s philosophy of history, namely (a) ‘Necessity and existence are incompatible spheres’, (b) ‘everything that comes into existence ... has a free cause’ and (c) ‘Even if we can detect natural laws in actuality and hence some kind of “necessity”, this does not refute the above, for if we were to follow events back to the beginning of the causal chain, we could discover freely acting causes alone.’<sup>534</sup> As Patios discovered, there are two kinds of beings in *Philosophical Fragments* namely: ‘factual being’ and ‘ideal being’. As Kierkegaard says,

... here is a distinction between factual being and ideal being ... With regard to factual being, to speak of more or less being is meaningless. ... Factual being is indifferent to the differentiation of all essence-determinants, and everything that exists participates without petty jealousy in being and participates just as much. It is quite true that ideally the situation is different. *But as soon as I speak ideally about being, I am speaking no longer about being but about essence.* The necessary has the highest ideality; therefore it is. But this being is its essence, whereby it expressly cannot become dialectical in the determinants of factual being, because it is; and neither can it be said to have more or less being in relation to something else. (*PF* 127)

According to Kierkegaard, factual being is equivalent to existence while ideal being is equivalent to an essence. Existence is distinguished from essence. ‘“Factual being” is not an essence but a given fact within the spatiotemporal conditions of our universe.’<sup>535</sup> Being

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<sup>533</sup> Quoted in Patios, Georgios, ‘Kierkegaard’s Concept of History’, *Prolegomena*, 13, (1) (2014): 86. The reason for my reconstruction of Patios’ analysis is that his reconstructions are not precise syllogisms.

<sup>534</sup> Patios, Georgios, ‘Kierkegaard’s Concept of History’, *Prolegomena*, 13, (1) (2014): 91.

<sup>535</sup> Quoted in *Ibid*, 89.



in the narrow sense refers to factual being or existence, which is different from essence. If essence is different from being in the narrow sense, then changes in essence are radically different from changes in beings. As Kierkegaard says,

How is that changed which comes into existence [*blive til*], or what is the change (κίνησις) of coming into existence [*Tilblivelse*]? All other change (ἀλλοίωσις) presupposes the existence of that in which change is taking place, even though the change is that of ceasing to be in existence [*at være til*]. (*PF* 178, IV 236)<sup>536</sup>

Here Kierkegaard refers to two Greek words: κίνησις (kinesis, which means motion) and ἀλλοίωσις (alloiosis, which means change or alteration). ἀλλοίωσις refers to the changes in essence, attributes or properties, which *presuppose the unchanged existence of something*. The concept of ἀλλοίωσις could be reconstructed as the formula as follow:

Principle of Changes in Properties: A substance  $S_n$  has the property  $P_x$  at the time  $T_x$  and *then* the property  $P_y$  at the time  $T_y$  if and only if the same substance  $S_n$  exist at both  $T_x$  and  $T_y$  (where  $n$  is a positive integer).

For example, the colour changes of a leaf from green to red presupposes the unchanged existence of such leaf: there is a leaf  $L$  which was green at the time  $T_g$  but then red at the time  $T_r$ . However, κίνησις refers to the changes in being or existence, namely, from ‘not existing’ to ‘existing’, or ‘coming into existence’.

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<sup>536</sup> Quoted in Patios, Georgios, ‘Kierkegaard’s Concept of History’, 89.

The principle of changes in properties which presupposes the unchangeableness of being is not applicable to 'coming into existence' which involves the changes in beings by definition.

As Kierkegaard says,

If, in coming into existence, a plan is intrinsically changed, then it is not this plan that comes into existence; but if it comes [IV 237] into existence unchanged, what, then, is the change of coming into existence? This change, then, is not in essence [*Væsen*] but in being [*Væren*] and is from not existing to existing. But this non-being that is abandoned by that which comes into existence must also exist, for otherwise "that which comes into existence would not remain unchanged in the coming into existence" unless it had not been at all, whereby once again and for another reason the change of coming into existence would be absolutely different from any other change, because it would be no change at all, for every change has always presupposed a something. But such a being that nevertheless is a non-being is possibility, and a being that is being is indeed actual being or actuality, and the change of coming into existence is the transition from possibility to actuality. (*PF* 179-180, IV 237)

Coming into existence is the change of being from not existing to existing. In other words, the coming into existence is the transition from non-being to being. But what is non-being?

According to Paul Tillich,

The mystery of nonbeing demands a dialectical approach. The genius of the Greek language has provided a possibility of distinguishing the dialectical concept of nonbeing from the nondialectical by calling the first one *on* and the second *ouk on*. *Ouk on* is the "nothing" which has no relation at all to being; *on* is the "nothing" which has a dialectical relation to being.

The Platonic school identified me on with that which does not yet have being but which can become being if it is united with essences or ideas. The mystery of nonbeing was not, however, removed, for in spite of its “nothingness” nonbeing was credited with having the power of resisting a complete union with the ideas. The me-antic matter of Platonism represents the dualistic element which underlies all paganism and which is the ultimate ground of the tragic interpretation of life.<sup>537</sup>

*Oukon* (ουκουν) is the absolute nothingness while Me-on (μηον) is the absence of being. The former is similar to the original nothingness (無 mou4)<sup>538</sup> in Daoist philosophy. However, Kierkegaard refers to non-being in the latter sense (Me-on) in order to explain the change. While Laozi says that beings sprang from the absolute non-being (*Laozi* 49), Kierkegaard adopts an Aristotelian model to explain the concept of coming into existence: that the coming into existence is a ‘transition from possibility to actuality’. Non-being, therefore, is a potential which has yet to be actualised. It is not yet there but it may be there under certain conditions. The non-being is a possibility while the being is an actuality. Before the invention of the aeroplane, an aeroplane was a non-being. It is *logically possible* to exist but had not yet existed. It may ‘exist’ as an imagined concept as an ideal being but not a factual being for it did not exist in time and space. However, when the first aeroplane was

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<sup>537</sup> Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Part I, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 188.

<sup>538</sup> By non-being Kierkegaard only refers to the absence of being, not an absolute or original nothingness in Daoist sense. While such distinction in English is not so obvious, in Cantonese the distinction is clear and distinct. In Cantonese, non-being is 冇 mou5 (ascending) while nothingness is 無 mou4 (lower). Mou5 simply means absence. For example, 我有錢 (I have no money) only means that I only have no money now, while 無 mou4 refers to the absolute nothingness in *Laozi*, for example, 無為 (mou4 wai4). For further discussion on East Asian etymology, one may read Cheung Ching Yuen, 西田幾多郎—跨文化視野下的日本哲學 [Nishida Kitaro—Japanese Philosophy under a Transcultural Perspective], (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, Mar 2017), 179-180.

invented, it came into existence. It is now a factual being existing within the spatiotemporal dimension.

While changes involve the transition from non-being to being, according to Kierkegaard, necessity prohibits such transition and therefore prohibits changes. ‘Necessity stands all by itself. Nothing whatever comes into existence by way of necessity, no more than necessity comes into existence or anything in coming into existence becomes necessary.’ (*PF* 181, IV 238) For

Coming into existence is a change, but since the necessary is always related to itself and is related to itself in the same way, it cannot be changed at all. All coming into existence is a suffering [*Liden*], and the necessary cannot suffer, cannot suffer the suffering of actuality—namely, that the possible (not merely the possible that is excluded but even the possibility that is accepted) turns out to be nothing the moment it becomes actual, for possibility is annihilated by actuality. Precisely by coming into existence, everything that comes into existence demonstrates that it is not necessary, for the only thing that cannot come into existence is the necessary, because the necessary is. (*PF* 179-180, IV 237)

Here Kierkegaard takes necessity as referring to the logical necessity which ‘always related to itself and is related to itself in the same way’. For example, the fact the angles in a triangle add up to 180 degrees is logically necessarily true. The existence of the triangle sum conjecture constantly remains as an ideal being. In other words, the triangle sum conjecture is eternally true and existing as an ideal being, but not a factual being, for it is timeless and spaceless. The triangle sum conjecture does not come into existence; it exists eternally as a

concept. However, a triangle-shaped pyramid is different; it was built at certain time in a certain place and it had come into existence from not being to being, or from possibility to actuality. In short, necessity prohibits changes in being. *X does not necessarily exist if X has come into existence from not being to being.*

According to Kierkegaard, a 'freely acting cause' allows the transition from non-being to being. As he said,

The change of coming into existence is actuality; the transition takes place in freedom. ... All coming into existence occurs in freedom, not by way of necessity. Nothing coming into existence comes into existence by way of a ground, but everything by way of a cause. Every cause ends in a freely acting cause. The intervening causes are misleading in that the coming into existence appears to be necessary; the truth about them is that they, as having themselves come into existence, definitively point back to a freely acting cause. As soon as coming into existence is definitively reflected upon, even an inference from natural law is not evidence of the necessity of any coming into existence. So also with manifestations of freedom, as soon as one refuses to be deceived by its manifestations but reflects on its coming into existence. (*PF* 182-183)

Here Kierkegaard argues that: changes occur either in necessity or freedom, but changes are impossible in necessity. Therefore, changes can only occur in freedom with a freely acting cause. Because the past involves change, it cannot be bound by necessity. As Kierkegaard said,

The past is not necessary, inasmuch as it came into existence; it did not become necessary by coming into existence (a contradiction), and it becomes even less necessary through any apprehension of it. (Distance in time prompts a mental illusion just as distance in space prompts a sensory illusion. The contemporary does not see the necessity of that which comes into existence, but when centuries lie between the coming into existence and the viewer—then he sees the necessity, just as the person who at a distance sees something square as round.) If the past were to become necessary through the apprehension, then the past would gain what the apprehension lost, since it would apprehend something else, which is a poor apprehension. If what is apprehended is changed in the apprehension, then the apprehension is changed into a misunderstanding. Knowledge of the present does not confer necessity upon it; foreknowledge of the future does not confer necessity upon it (*Boethius*); knowledge of the past does not confer necessity upon it—for all apprehension, like all knowing, has nothing from which to give. (*PF* 189-190, IV 243)<sup>539</sup>

The past event inevitably involves changes because it cannot be in the past eternally. It must have first been a future event at time  $t_1$ , then *became* a present event at time  $t_2$  and finally becomes a past event at time  $t_3$ .

While an event comes into existence at once, culture *is always coming into existence*, for a culture inevitably experience different historical events in its cultural development. Culture is not eternal; it changes from not being to being, as cultural development is driven by the numerous manifestations of the numerous freely acting causes, namely, free wills of individuals from the past to the present age. The ongoing coming into existence of culture

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<sup>539</sup> Quoted in Patios, 'Kierkegaard's Concept of History', *Prolegomena*, 97.

leads ones back to Gadamer's concept of culture as *Bildung*. '[T]he result of *Bildung* is not achieved in the manner of a technical construction, but grows out of an inner process of formation and cultivation, and therefore constantly remains in a state of continual *Bildung*'<sup>540</sup> which 'suggests an extensive historical context.'<sup>541</sup> Every moment is the coming into existence of a culture. Cultural values, meanings and practices come into existence and cease to exist, but the culture is still coming into existence. There is no 'birthdate' for a culture, for a living culture is constantly changing and developing.

As we have seen above, in a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, cultural development is driven by the free wills of the individual members of a community and therefore does not follow any law of necessity. *A culture is always coming into existence*. A culture exists temporally and continuously in history thanks to contemporaneity which enables fusions of horizons between the past and the present, while such fusions of horizons facilitate cultural development by creating new cultural values.

### **4.3 The Problem of and the Solution to the Impossibility of**

#### **Cultural Distinction**

This section covers a major criticism of the project of formulating a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, namely, the impossibility of cultural distinction. For in *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard rejects the concept of culture as distinction and argues for an inclusive

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<sup>540</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 10.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.* 51.

membership of community. In other words, everyone can be a member of a community. However, if everyone could be a member of a cultural group as a community, there would be no exclusive membership; one could be a member of both Chinese and Japanese cultures at the same time. Without exclusive membership, it is impossible to draw boundaries distinguishing the members of different cultural groups. If the cultural communities are not distinguished from each other, cultural distinction is impossible; one can hardly distinguish a Chinese cultural self from a Japanese cultural self. In order to formulate a cultural self, one must articulate cultural distinctions by preserving an exclusive cultural membership—that one must fulfil certain criteria in order to become a member of a cultural group. In order to address the theoretical weakness of Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, namely, the impossibility of cultural distinction, this section tries to argue for an exclusive membership of cultural group based upon the research outcomes in previous sections, namely, contemporaneity, the dialectics of community and the manifestations of passions.

### **4.3.1 Kierkegaard's Criticism of the Distinction between the Cultured and the Uncultured**

While this chapter tries to employ Kierkegaard's concept of community in the formulation of a cultural self, Kierkegaard argues that there should be no exclusive membership in a community. According to Backhouse, Kierkegaard often discusses the concept of community in the context of the Christian church and argues that the 'individuals involved in this relationship' 'agree with each other all the same' regarding Christian faith. Such



‘agreement has socio-political ramifications, producing a network of people whose sociality resembles a neighbourhood in which shared cultural cues are of minor importance compared to more pressing realities for the everyday life of the people.’<sup>542</sup> An individual’s relations with others establish a community. When an individual establishes relations to others based upon universal love or neighbour love rather than preferential love, an individual can establish relations to *anyone*. As a result, *everyone* can be a member of such a community. As long as an individual encounters a person and recognises such a person as an object of neighbour love and therefore establishes a relation to him, such a person can enter the individual’s community. To love someone with neighbour love is to love him as yourself. As Tilley explains,

The word neighbour, Kierkegaard says, is derived from the term “nearest” [*Nærmeste*]. Nearness is not described in terms of physical proximity because that would cast love as merely a form of preferential love. Nearness, for Kierkegaard, is understood in terms of ethical or spiritual proximity. The neighbour “is nearer to you than anyone else.” Kierkegaard understands this claim to mean that the neighbour is ethically just as near as one is to oneself. The concept neighbour is the redoubling of one’s own self; “‘the neighbour’ is what thinkers call ‘the other,’ that by which the selfishness in self-love is to be tested.” The concept of the neighbour recast self-love [*selvkjerlighed*] in terms of others such that a person’s concerns and love for oneself are directed toward others as well as oneself.<sup>543</sup>

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542 Backhouse, Stephen, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 220-221.

543 Tilley, J. Michael, ‘Interpersonal Relations and Community in Kierkegaard Thought’, *University of Kentucky Doctoral Dissertations*, 137.

Here 'the neighbour means all people.' The 'self-love toward the neighbour, the object of one's love is directed to all those who are encountered. The "next one" that one meets or encounters is the object of neighbourly love'.<sup>544</sup> Kierkegaard even argues that the concept of culture as the distinction is against Christian teaching of neighbour love in both *For Self-Examination* and *Work of Love*:

O human culture, how are you really any different from what you most detest—lack of culture, the coarseness of the masses? You differ in that you do the same as they do, but you observe good form, do not do it with unwashed hands—O human culture! (*FSE* 64)

However, it should be noticed that Kierkegaard does not here refer to culture in terms of the manifestation of passion, but the 'mass culture' which distinguish people into different 'crowds'—social-economic class, nation, ethnic group, etc. In particular, Kierkegaard criticises the concept of culture between the 'cultured' and the 'uncultured' in terms of education or civilisation:

Are you, my listener, perhaps what is called a cultured person? Well, I, too, am cultured. However, if you think that you will come closer to this highest with the help of "culture", you make a great mistake. At this very point the error is rooted, for we all desire culture, and culture is incessantly talking about the highest. Indeed, no bird that has learned only one single word cries out this word more unceasingly, and no crow its own name more unceasingly, than culture is always crying out *the highest*. But the essentially Christian is by no means culture's *highest*, and the essentially Christian disciplines precisely by the repulsion of offence. This you will

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<sup>544</sup> Ibid. 138.

immediately see here very easily. Indeed, has your culture or in your opinion has anyone's zeal for becoming cultured taught him to love the neighbour? Alas, have not this culture and the zeal with which it is coveted rather developed a new kind of distinction, the distinction between the cultured and the uncultured? Just pay attention to what is said among the cultured about erotic love and friendship, what similarity in culture the friend must have, and how cultured the girl must be, and cultured in a particular way.' (*WL IX61*)

'Think of the most cultured person, one of whom we all admiringly say, "He is so cultured!" Then think of Christianity, which says to him, "You shall love the neighbour!" Of course, a certain social courtesy, a politeness toward all people, a friendly condescension toward inferiors, a boldly confident attitude before the mighty, a beautifully controlled freedom of spirit, yes, this is culture—do you believe that it is also loving the neighbour? (*WL, 60*)

Kierkegaard only rejects the concept of culture as a distinction between the cultured and the uncultured, which he sees as being against the Christian teaching of neighbour love. However, such a criticism of culture should not be applied to the concept of culture in terms of the manifestations of passions which has nothing to do with the distinction between the cultured and uncultured. As we have seen in chapter 3, according to Kierkegaard, everyone is passionate and can manifest aesthetic, epistemic, moral and religious passions according to his/her free will. Here cultural distinctions still exist as the different ways of manifestations of passion or the different emphasis on different passions. For example, classical Chinese culture emphasises moral passion, while ancient Greek culture emphasises epistemic passion. While both classical Chinese culture and Korean culture acknowledge the Confucian moral passion, Korean Confucianism rejected the mind nature theory of Lu Wang School during Joseon dynasty. All these cultural distinctions in terms of passions, however,

do not reduce an individual member into a mere element of mass culture or prevent the expression of neighbour love, as long as different cultures respect the different interests of each other. As historian Wei Zheng (魏徵 580-643) indicates: ‘there are different ways of living between a wide valley and large riverside, and the people born there have different customs, interests and languages. The sages teach [them] according to the practical situation to achieve their wills and understand their customs.’<sup>545</sup> Therefore Wei Zheng urges the emperor not to conquer Korea and Japan or force them to change their cultures but to teach them Confucian moral philosophy.

### 4.3.2 Exclusive Membership Provided by Tradition

There is no contradiction between having an exclusive membership and manifesting neighbour love. Even in a church, as Kierkegaard indicates, there is still a sense of exclusive membership—in order to join the Christian community, one must share the same Christian faith. Likewise, in order to become a member of a cultural group, one must share the same *belief*.

In chapter 2.2, we saw how Mou and Watsuji articulated certain Chinese values or Japanese values and regarded them as essential beliefs shared by all members of their cultural group; however, as we have discussed, cultural values are changeable. Before Confucius, there were no Confucian moral values articulated. However, Chinese New Confucian still regarded the

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<sup>545</sup> Original text: 廣穀大川異制，人生其間異俗，嗜欲不同，言語不通，聖人因時設教，所以達其志而通其俗也。（《隋書·卷八十一》）

sage-kings before Confucius (like emperors Yao, Shun and Yu) as founders of the same Chinese culture, because they all follow the same 'root tradition of Dao'.<sup>546</sup>

The concepts of passions and contemporaneity can formulate exclusive membership according to the Kierkegaardian definition of culture in terms of the manifestations of passions. As we have seen in chapter 3, cultural differences are either different ways of manifesting passions or different emphases on different passions, although every human being can manifest any of the four passions according to his/her free will. In 4.1 and 4.2, we have seen how the manifestations of passions are shared by individuals in a community sharing the same tradition (enabled by contemporaneity, where the present meets the past). In other words, an individual can be a member of a culture if and only if he/she participates in the contemporaneity of such culture so that he/she may manifest similar passions in similar ways. Take Chinese culture as an example. If one agrees with Mou that Chinese culture emphasises the expression of Confucian moral passion in Chinese history, an individual can be a 'Chinese' if and only if he/she was involved in the fusions of horizons of the past and present within Chinese history and chooses to manifest moral passions in a similar way, namely, following Confucian rituals. However, if he/she chooses not to manifest moral passion or even does not know Chinese history (i.e. no contemporaneity with the previous Chinese generations), he/she cannot be a member of Chinese culture. Kinship, race and social-economic status do not determine cultural membership. While education and language are relevant as they affect one's reception of a culture, it is one's own choice which determines one's cultural membership. Even if a peasant has no access to any cultural value

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<sup>546</sup> Mou, Zongsan, *Nineteen Lectures*, §3, 47.

due to the lack of education, as a passionate human being with free will, he/she still has the ability to choose his/her cultural membership.

To conclude, while Kierkegaard does not develop a philosophy of culture, his concepts of passions, community and contemporaneity are useful resources for one who wish to formulate a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture addressing the issues of contemporary East Asian cultural modernisation. Cultural differences in terms of manifestations of passions should not be regarded as barriers to manifest neighbour love. East Asian philosophers could therefore benefit from using the Kierkegaardian concept of community since it preserves individual freedom better than the Hegelian concept of *Sittlichkeit* when formulating cultural subjectivities.

## **5. Conclusion: What a Kierkegaardian Philosophy of Culture Can Contribute to East Asian Philosophies of Culture**

In conclusion, I shall now argue that a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture avoids East Asian Hegelianism's theoretical weakness and fulfils its tasks of rebuilding cultural subjectivity. Firstly, I argue that in the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, there are three criteria by which to evaluate the appropriateness of a philosophy of culture (chapters 3 and 4). Secondly, I argue that this Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture can fulfil the East Asian philosophers' ontological and epistemic task mentioned in chapter 1. Thirdly, I argue that a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture can overcome the theoretical problems of an East Asian philosophy of culture that adopts Hegelian dialectics, as discussed in chapter 2.

### **5.1 Three Kierkegaardian Criteria of a Philosophy of Culture**

#### **5.1.1 Individual Subjectivity within a Community**

Kierkegaard is well known for emphasising individual subjectivity and rejects the idea of the collective, the people of the crowd. As he wrote in the *Points of View*: '[T]he crowd is an untruth, the untruth of wanting to exert influence by means of the crowd, the numerical, of wanting to make the numerical the authority for what truth is.' (*POV* 125) Therefore, if cultural subjectivity is possible, it must not be a collective subjectivity which suppresses the

individual's freedom and authenticity. It can only be a community which allows every single individual to manifest their wills.

In chapter 4.1, we discussed Kierkegaard's three levels of the individual self and tried to relate it to the three moments of the community discussed in chapter 4.2. According to Kierkegaard in *Sickness Unto Death*, there are three levels of individual self: (1) the self as the synthesis of the psychical and the physical, i.e. the self is merely a unity of mind and body, (2) self as the relation relating itself to itself, i.e. the self is self-conscious of its existence, and (3) self as spirit, i.e. the self establishes a God-man relation which enables it to transcend its finitude. (*SUD* 13). New Confucianism and Chinese philosophers tend to stop at the second level when they discuss the problem of subjectivity (cultural, moral etc.) as they merely define the subjectivity as the self-consciousness of value, for example, Lao Tze Kwang's 'consciousness of value' (價值意識) and Mou Zongsan's and Tang Jun-Yi's 'moral self-consciousness' (道德自覺). Being self-conscious, however, is not enough to overcome despair and achieve individual freedom, according to Kierkegaard. The paradoxical nature of the individual's existence as the synthesis of finitude and infinitude and of necessity and possibility prevents an individual from complete self-actualisation: either he suffers from the despair of 'not willing to be one's self' because he thinks he cannot overcome his limitation (finitude and necessity), or he suffers from the despair of 'willing to be one's self' because he forgets his limitations and was deceived by his fantasy or imagination. Only the God-man relationship saves an individual from such despairs because with God everything is possible (Matthew 19:26) (*SUD* 38).



These three levels of the individual self can explain three moments of the community, namely, (1) an individual is lower than his relations to others, (2) an individual is equal in his relations to others and (3) an individual is higher than his relations to others. In the first moment, when an individual self is just a synthesis of the psychical and the physical, he is not self-conscious of his existence. His relations to others are merely given 'natural relations': relations to his parents, brothers and sisters etc. But when the individual self is conscious of his existence, he authentically establishes his relations to others, e.g. establishing a friendship. However, at this stage, his subjectivity will be limited by the authentic interpersonal relationships. To achieve complete authenticity, he must be able to transcend these interpersonal relationships by establishing a God-man relation.

In a Kierkegaardian perspective, therefore, a 'proper' cultural group or cultural subjectivity should achieve all these three moments of the community to preserve every individual member's authenticity. Such a cultural group must include all three moments of the community and every single individual member should achieve the third moment to preserve his authenticity. However, in practice, it is difficult for every individual member to achieve a God-man relation, for someone may choose not to manifest his or her religious passions.

Furthermore, Kierkegaard does not explain how one can establish a Kierkegaardian community and go through all three moments of the community. Kierkegaard's concept of community is only suggested in the *Journal and Papers* and has yet to be developed into a sophisticated social philosophy. By contrast, Chinese Confucians frequently discuss how to establish an ideal society in which every individual preserves his moral subjectivity and fully manifests his innate moral capacity. Mencius' idea of Five Relationships (五倫) suggests

that different individuals *in different interpersonal relations should manifest different moral values*, which is supported by most of the East Asian Confucians, including the Neo-Confucians (Cheng-Yi, Zhuxi, Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming), the Korean Silhak Confucians (in particular Chong Yak-yong) and the Chinese New Confucians, especially Mou Zong-San, whose work we have discussed in chapter 2. Mou emphasises that the ‘outer kingliness’ begins with the ‘inner sageliness’ and the task for modern Confucianism is to bridge both, namely, to extend the individual’s moral nature to social and political life through constitutional democracy.<sup>547</sup> While this research only focusses on Kierkegaard’s philosophy of culture, the comparative study between the Confucian and Kierkegaardian idea of community may contribute to the establishment of a new Kierkegaardian Social Philosophy.

While individual subjectivity is preserved in Mou’s mind-nature theory and study of virtue-completion, as we have seen in chapter 2, Watsuji is dissatisfied with criterion (1), namely, the preservation of individuality in cultural subjectivity, for he denies the individual moral self and reduces individual subjectivity into Japanese national subjectivity. Watsuji’s idea of *aidagara* grounds interpersonal relationship on the Buddhist concept of emptiness rather than an individual’s moral nature. As Watsuji said: ‘no matter which aspect of consciousness we may lay hold of, none can be said to be essentially independent. The independent consciousness of *I* is acquired only when isolated from any connection at all with other consciousness.’<sup>548</sup> For Watsuji, who is influenced by the Buddhist concept of emptiness, everything exists co-dependently. By contrast, Kierkegaard and Mou insist that the existence

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<sup>547</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], *道德的理想主義* [Moral idealism], (Taipei: Linking Book Ltd, 2003), 333.

<sup>548</sup> Watsuji, Tetsuro, *Watsuji Tetsurō’s Rinrigaku*, 80.

of an independent individual precedes mutual relationships. Mou argues that the five relationships are the extensions of the mind-nature of the individual moral self, while Kierkegaard emphasises that interpersonal relationships are authentically established by individual selves according to their free will. In the third moment of the dialectics of community, according to Kierkegaard, the individual self becomes higher in his relations to others when he establishes a God-man relation. Such transcendence, however, is not acknowledged by Watsuji.<sup>549</sup>

While both New Confucians and Kierkegaardians agree with the priority of individual subjectivity over mutual relationships or society, they understand the transcendence of individual subjectivity in a quite different way. For Mou, such transcendence is achieved when a moral self authentically manifests moral passion. However, as we have seen in chapter 3, Kierkegaard argues that the moral self is self-defeating. Moral passion assumes a moral self who can choose right or wrong. In other words, the moral self has the possibility of choosing wrong. To eliminate the possibility of choosing wrong, one must deny the moral self (self-denial); however, without the moral self, one cannot actualise the possibility of choosing right. Confucianism fails to acknowledge the inevitability of the possibility of choosing wrong and rejects the idea of self-denial, for Mou said, unlike Christianity: ‘we do not undertake self-denial. We undertake self-affirmation.’<sup>550</sup> By contrast, Kierkegaard argues for self-denial through the religious passion of repentance. Through repentance, one

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<sup>549</sup> For Mou, however, the situation is more complicated. On one hand, he insists that there is transcendence in Confucian heaven-man relation. On the other hand, however, he rejects Christian idea of transcendence as God-man relation which, according to Mou, involves self-negation, while Confucian heaven-man relation involves solely self-affirmation.

See 牟宗三先生全集: 心體與性體 [Complete Collection of Mr. Mou Zongsan: Mind Substance and Nature Substance], Vol. 5-7, (New Taipei City: Linking Publishing Co., 2003).

<sup>550</sup> 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-san], 中國哲學的特質 [Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy] (Taipei: Linking Books, 2003), Vol.28, 15.

acknowledges one's nature as a sinner. As a sinner, one is selfish and only loves someone whom one prefers to love. However, Jesus's teaching of universal love requires one to love everyone, which is against human nature. 'Erotic love and friendship are preferential love [*Forkjerlighed*] and the passion of preferential love; Christian love [*Kjerlighed*] is self-denial love, for which this shall vouches.' (WL 52) Therefore, one must deny one's moral self (self-denial) and establish a religious self through a God-man relationship in which one overcomes the possibility of choosing wrong or human selfishness with the help of God and practices universal love.

In short, in terms of self-denial and self-affirmation, one can distinguish Mou, Watsuji, and Kierkegaard as follows: Mou only acknowledges self-affirmation as he believes in the transcendence of the mind nature of the individual from instincts, while Watsuji only acknowledges self-denial as he believes that everything, including the self, exists co-dependently according to the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. While Mou seems to be closer to Kierkegaard's standpoint as he acknowledges the priority of individual subjectivity over human society, he fails to acknowledge the need for self-denial on the part of the religious self.

### **5.1.2 Contemporaneity: Acknowledgement of the relation between the Past and the Present**

As discussed in chapters 2 and 4, there must be an origin of culture and there must be a history of every culture. In hermeneutics, the contemporary culture receives the influence of the previous generations through the 'tradition'. As Gadamer said,

In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.*<sup>551</sup>

Gadamer's emphasis on the influence of the past on the present age echoes with East Asian philosophers. Miki Kiyoshi, one of Nishida Kitaro's students, for example, wrote the article 'On Tradition' in 1942 arguing that tradition is 'that which belonging to that present, still enters human expression and is still being transmitted for its remembrance'. Tradition is 'something from the past [that] is being transmitted' and 'through its being apprehended by an active subject it is being transformed into something humanly present.'<sup>552</sup>

As we have seen in Chapter 4.3 and 4.4, contemporaneity is an important concept in Kierkegaard's philosophy which links the present age with the past age; it brings two moments into one moment. As Gadamer said,

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<sup>551</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, 305.

<sup>552</sup> Miki, Kiyoshi, 'On Tradition', *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy*, 315.

... contemporaneity is not a mode of givenness in consciousness, but a task for consciousness and an achievement that is demanded of it. It consists in holding on to the thing in such a way that it becomes “contemporaneous”, which is to say, however, that all mediation is superseded in total presence.

This concept of contemporaneity, we know, stems from Kierkegaard, who gave it a particular theological stamp. For Kierkegaard, “contemporaneity” does not mean “existing at the same time”. Rather, it names the task that confronts the believer: to bring together two moments that are not concurrent, namely one’s own present and the redeeming act of Christ, and yet so totally to meditate them that the latter is experienced and taken seriously as present (and not as something in a distant past). The simultaneity of aesthetic consciousness, by contrast, is just the opposite of this and indeed is based on covering up and concealing the task set by contemporaneity.<sup>553</sup>

While Gadamer’s borrows the term ‘contemporaneity’ to address the aesthetic experience of bringing the author’s moment and the reader’s moments together, Kierkegaard’s sense of contemporaneity is strictly theological: it brings eternity and temporality together through the presence of Christ. According to George Pattison: ‘Kierkegaard’s call for contemporaneity is ... precisely a way of saying that the individual’s relation to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ must have a basis other than the mere fact of participation in the life of the Church.’<sup>554</sup> However, contemporaneity can also be extended to a social sense: that the member of the present generation is contemporary with the previous generation through a shared *tradition*. As Kierkegaard states, community ‘is not the

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<sup>553</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, 123-124.

<sup>554</sup> Pattison, George, *Kierkegaard and the Theology of the Nineteenth Century: The Paradox and the ‘Point of Contact’*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 197.

association of several people of the same age; it is rather a unity which shows various ages in the most intimate interrelation.’ (*JP* 4, 4161, XA369) Although Kierkegaard does not explain clearly how the people of the present age can establish relations with the previous generations, his concept of contemporaneity can help to explain such relations.

In Confucian tradition, the concept of ‘spiritual presence’ (神在) which emphasises on the authentic relation between contemporary individuals and the departed sages may be considered as a parallel concept of Kierkegaard’s contemporaneity.<sup>555</sup> But the spiritual presence is not limited to deity; it may also refer to the ancestors’ souls. Confucius said: ‘sacrifice [to the ancestors] as if [they] were present; sacrifice to the spirits as if they were present.’ (祭如在，祭神如神在 *Analects* 3.12) He Yan (何晏) and Xing Bing (邢昺) argues that both sacrifices manifest the same level of ‘honouring’ (恭敬), while Cheng-Yi distinguishes the sacrifice to ancestors from the sacrifice to the spirits; the former manifest filial piety to the ancestors while the latter manifests honouring to a deity. (祭先主於孝，祭神主於敬) Zhuxi comments that here Confucius emphasises the sincerity of practising sacrifice. (*Collected Commentaries on the Four Books: Analects* 3.12) In short, the Confucian idea of the spiritual presence of the ancestor emphasises on the moral manifestation of filial piety or honouring, as we have seen in chapter 2.2 when discussing Mou’s explanation of Confucian moral feeling, which satisfies the criterion (2). Like Kierkegaard, Confucians acknowledges the significance of establishing authentic relationships with the sages from the previous generations. The Kierkegaardian concept of contemporaneity may help to clarify the Confucian concept of spiritual presence.

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<sup>555</sup> Yang Ru-Bin argues that the Confucian concept of ‘spiritual presence’ implies religiousness. See 楊儒賓 [Yang Ru-Bin], 異議的意義: 近世東亞的反理學思潮 [The Meaning of Opposition: The Trend of Anti-Neo-Confucianism in Modern East Asia], (Taipei: Taiwan University Press, 2012).

Similarly, Watsuji also satisfies the criterion (2) due to his emphasis on *aidagara*. *Aidagara* is not only climatic but also historical. It is the mutual relationship among all individuals, both from the present age and from the previous generations. When one is born in human society, one is influenced by its historical situation. Both Mou and Watsuji are aware of the issue of contemporaneity, and therefore they satisfy criterion (2).

### **5.1.3 Four Passions and Four Selves: Aesthetic, Cognitive, Moral, and Religious**

As we have seen in chapter 3.1, Kierkegaard defines culture in terms of passion, which ‘provides the fundamental motivation to choose and to act.’ ‘Without passion one can hardly be self-motivated to act. But excess passions can cause psychological tensions to a person. “All passion is like sailing: the wind must be sufficiently forceful to stretch the sail with one *uno tenore* [continuous gust], there must not be too much flapping of the sails and tacking before reaching deep water, there must not be too many preliminaries and prior consultations. It is a matter of passion getting the power and dominion to take complete control of the unprepared.” (TA 43)<sup>556</sup>

Passion *orientates* an individual to do something. There are four orientations: *aesthetic*, *cognitive (or epistemic)*, *moral (or ethical)*, and *religious*. Aesthetic passion refers to the

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<sup>556</sup> See chapter 3.1.



immediate passion, natural inclination, craving or desires etc. which may be ‘deceiving’ sometimes as Robert C. Roberts indicates:

When feeling [*Følelsen*] becomes fantastic in this way, the self becomes only more and more volatilized and finally comes to be a kind of abstract sentimentality [*Følsomhed*] that inhumanly belongs to no human being but inhumanly combines sentimentally [*følsomt*], as it were, with some abstract fate ... the person whose feeling [*Følelse*] has become fantastic is in a way infinitized, but not in such a manner that he becomes more and more himself, for he loses himself more and more. (SUD 31; SV1 XI 144)<sup>557</sup>

In East Asian tradition, as we have seen in chapter 2, both New Confucianism (represented by Mou) and the Kyoto School (represented by Watsuji) acknowledge that culture is passionate because they identify certain feelings as essential cultural values. Mou identifies the Confucian idea of an individual’s mind-nature as the essential value of Chinese culture, while the expression of mind-nature is moral feeling, for example, the feeling of commiseration. Similarly, Watsuji identifies Japanese culture as a culture of pure feeling, which arises from the moment of *aidagara*.

However, while both acknowledge culture as the manifestation of passions, they tend to limit culture to the expression of particular passions. Mou only acknowledges moral passion as the essential value determining Chinese culture, while Watsuji argues that loyalty to the Emperor is the highest value determining Japanese cultural spirit.

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<sup>557</sup> Quoted in Roberts, Robert C., *Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, 200.

Moral passion refers to the moral feeling which motivates moral actions. Differently from Kant and Aquinas, Kierkegaard argues that all moral judgments are dominated not by moral reasons but by passions. Thomas Aquinas argues that ‘if we give the name of passions to all the movements of the sensitive appetite, then it belongs to the perfection of man’s good that his passions be moderated by reason’ (*Summa Theologica* I-II 24.3), while Kant argues that ‘any action is *right* if it can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law.’<sup>558</sup> Kierkegaard, however, argues that moral passion is more essential than the moral reason or the universal law in moral judgement. As Kierkegaard says in *Two Ages*,

Morality is character, character is something engraved (χαρᾶσθαι), but the sea has no character, nor does sand, nor abstract common sense, either, for character is inwardness. As energy, immorality is also character. But it is existential equivocation when the qualitative disjunction of the qualities is impaired by a gnawing reflection. An uprising motivated by passion is elemental; a disintegration motivated by equivocation is a quiet but busy sorites going on day and night. (*TA* 78)

Kierkegaard emphasises that moral decision is essentially motivated by moral passion; the will is passionate, not rational. Kierkegaard’s understanding of moral passion agrees with both pre-Qin Confucianism and New Confucianism. Mencius argues that ‘from a proper feeling, it is constituted for the practice of moral good. It is what is called as moral good’<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> Kant, Immanuel, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 55. C §231.

<sup>559</sup> Original text: 乃若其情，則可以為善矣，乃所謂善也。（《孟子》〈告子上〉）

(*Mencius* 11.6), while Tang Jung-Yi argues that ‘every cultural activity and cultural consciousness is produced from our reason and is manifested by ourselves. Therefore, every cultural activity manifests a value of oneself or moral values.’<sup>560</sup> Tang insists that the ‘moral self-consciousness includes all cultural consciousness’,<sup>561</sup> for ‘moral activity is the internality of all cultural activities’.<sup>562</sup> Tang argues that all cultural activities contain moral values even though the actors may not be self-conscious of these underlying moral values, because all cultural activities aim to pursue certain ‘goodness’ (善). ‘The achievement of the balance of powers in the politics’ and the ‘economic growth’ is the pursuit of justice or righteousness (義).<sup>563</sup> ‘The achievement of the value of the beauty’ is the pursue of freedom of expression and appreciation.<sup>564</sup> ‘The achievement of truth value is the wisdom of our intelligence’ and wisdom is one of the ‘virtue’ (德) in Confucian ethics.<sup>565</sup> ‘Religious values’ are ‘the intentions to relieve [解脫] from the secular world’ which ‘help us to forget ourselves and more easy to honour others and be polite to others.’<sup>566</sup> In other words, religion is an instrument of moral practice.

However, moral passion is only one kind of cultural manifestation; it is unfair of Tang to reduce all other cultural activities which manifest other passions into the instrument of manifesting moral values. From Kierkegaard’s perspective, religious values are independent of moral values. Being religious does not necessarily mean being moral. In *Fear and*

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<sup>560</sup> Original text: 「每一文化活動、文化意識，皆依吾人之理性而生，由吾人之自我發出。故每一文化活動均表現出一對自我自身之價值或道德價值。」 Tang Jun-Yi, 文化意識與道德理性 [Cultural Consciousness and Moral Reason], 20.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid. 515.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid. 581.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. 581.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid. 580.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid. 582.

*Trembling*, Kierkegaard argues that Abraham's sacrifice of his son for God is a 'teleological suspension of the ethical', which shows that religious values and passions are independent of the moral/ethical values and passions. 'As the single individual, he became higher than the universal' (*FT* 66), as he as a *particular* person in this *particular* situation suspends the universal moral law that 'thou shalt not kill'. Tang fails to acknowledge the independence of religious values and passions which implies the narrowness of his philosophy of culture from Kierkegaardian perspective as he fails to acknowledge the independence of four passions: aesthetic, moral, cognitive and religious.

As discussed above, religious passion is distinguished from moral passion. The latter is a passionate commitment to a universal moral law, while the former is not. Religious passion refers to 'an infinite, personally interested passion for one's eternal happiness', (*CUP* VII 21) Religious passion is also distinguished from the aesthetic passion, which is self-interested, for the religious passion requires the denial of the self, as we have seen in chapter 3.1 and 3.2.

One should not ignore the existence of *epistemic passion* which motivates a human being to pursue knowledge, although such passion is not explicitly discussed in Kierkegaard's writing. However, if all actions are motivated by certain passions, the pursuit of knowledge must also be motivated by a particular kind of passion. In Plato's *Symposium*: 'Socrates awakens in Alcibiades a romantic desire as well as a desire for knowledge, and Alcibiades thus envisions entering into both romantic and educational relationship with Socrates, as custom prescribed between an older and a younger man in his ancient Greece.'<sup>567</sup> Such a relationship is also

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<sup>567</sup> Carlsson, Ulrika, 'Love as a Problem of Knowledge in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* and Plato's *Symposium*',

acknowledged by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Irony* where Kierkegaard said that ‘the love-relation that has come about between Socrates and Alcibiades was an intellectual relation’. (CI 48) Besides, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard identifies Socratic ignorance as ‘an expression of the objective uncertainty’ and even as ‘Socratic inwardness’, i.e. passion (CUP VII172). What makes Socrates different from Plato, according to Kierkegaard, is that the latter forgets the fact that the person who pursues knowledge is a passionate ‘existing thinker’ instead of a ‘speculative thinker’ (CUP VII 172).

Because every individual is passionate, every individual can manifest all these four passions—aesthetic, epistemic, moral and religious. Culture is manifested by a community which consists of individuals. Therefore, culture can manifest all these four passions. However, in practice, different cultures may tend to emphasise the manifestations of particular passions. Such emphasis is known as the *orientation* as described in chapter 3.1.

## **5.2 How Kierkegaardian Philosophy of Culture Addresses the**

### **Problems of East Asian Philosophy of Culture**

This section argues that Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture solves three theoretical problems found in East Asian Hegelianism, namely, the impossibility of changes in essential values, the lack of empirical method, and the neglect of the openness of interpretation.

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*Inquiry* 53, no. 1 (2010): 48.

Kierkegaard acknowledges the possibility of changes in cultural values, as we have seen in the previous section. In a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, changes in cultural values are reduced to the changes in the preference or prioritisation and the manifestations of passions. As we have seen in chapter 2.3: ‘Korean Neo-Confucian practices were mixed with the shamanistic belief that treated Heaven as anthropomorphic God’.<sup>568</sup> While modern Korean Christian and ancient Korean Shamanist believe in different religions with different religious rituals (and therefore, different ways of manifestation), they both emphasise religious passion. By contrast, Chinese modernisation may involve changes in the prioritisation of passion. Chen Duxiu and Chinese Communists who call for the radical denial of traditional Chinese culture favour a change in the prioritisation of passion: Chen prioritises cognitive passion by emphasising science and democracy and Marxism-Leninism over Confucian moral passion. For this reason, as we have seen in chapter 2.2, Mou argues that Chinese Communist has already destroyed Chinese culture in mainland China.<sup>569</sup>

A Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is empirical because the manifestation of passion, which Kierkegaardian investigates, can be verified empirically. If one claims that Chinese culture is oriented by moral passion, one may verify such statement by observing whether such passion is manifested and prioritised by the Chinese community. Literature, music and art are the empirical manifestations of passions. As we have seen in chapter 1, influenced by Confucianism, classical Chinese literature often manifests moral passion. In Japanese

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<sup>568</sup> Lee, Song-Chong, ‘Revisiting the Confucian Norms in Korean Church Growth’, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1, no. 13, (September 2011): 88.

<sup>569</sup> Trans. Chan, Nganying Serina, ‘The Thought of Mou Zong-San’, 84. 牟宗三 [Mou Zong-San], 時代與感受續篇 [Feeling of the Age Second Edition], (Taipei: Linking Book Ltd, 2003), 59-60.

literature, having devoted to the study of *Monogatari*, Motoori Norinaga investigated how aesthetic passion is prioritised in Japanese culture.<sup>570</sup>

Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture also allows the openness of interpretation. In chapter 4, we have seen that Kierkegaard's concept of contemporaneity provides ontological ground for the fusion of horizons of the present and the past, as in contemporaneity individuals establish relationships not only to other members of the present generation but also to those of the previous generations. While Wang Yangming was a Chinese philosopher living in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, as a Chinese philosopher living in the twentieth century, Mou is still able to communicate with Wang because both share the same written language—Classical Chinese. For this reason, Mou reinterprets Wang's mind nature theory and redefine Chinese cultural spirit as we have seen in chapter 2.2.

However, unlike Mou, because Kierkegaardian does not believe in the existence of fixed essential values which determine the cultural development, there is a wide openness of interpretation of the cultural values to which the passions of the individual members of a society are oriented. For example, the ghost festival is a major Chinese folk religion festival preserved in Hong Kong. However, people have quite different understanding of the festival; while Daoist and Buddhist emphasise the rituals of comforting and saving the hungry ghosts (which involves not only religious passion but also moral passion, namely, showing mercy to the ghosts<sup>571</sup>), Cantonese Opera performance and markets transform the festival into a day

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<sup>570</sup> See Motoori Norinaga, 日本物哀 [Japanese Mononoaware], trans. Huang Xiangyuan, (Beijing: Gilin Publishing Co-operated & Beijing Han-read Culture, Oct 2010).

<sup>571</sup> According to the *Ullambana Sutra* (佛說盂蘭盆經) the festival originated from the story when Maudgalyayana tried to save his mother who had become a hungry ghost.

of entertainment for the public.<sup>572</sup> In recent year, Hong Kong netizen even makes satirical songs for the ghost festival for fun.<sup>573</sup> The secular Hong Kongese acknowledge the festival as the manifestation of aesthetic passion instead of moral or religious passions.

In short, because a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture investigates the manifestation of passions, it allows changes in cultural values, employs the empirical method, and acknowledges the openness of interpretation. Knowing how a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture address three theoretical problems of East Asian Hegelianism, the following section will discuss how a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture fulfils the ontological and epistemic tasks of East Asian philosophers and demonstrates that Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is an alternative methodology to Hegelian dialectics for East Asian philosophers.

### **5.3 How a Kierkegaardian Philosophy of Culture Can Fulfil the Task of East Asian Philosophy of Culture**

This section argues that a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture constructed by this dissertation fulfils both the epistemic and ontological tasks of modern East Asian philosophers and therefore demonstrates that a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is applicable in the East Asian context.

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<sup>572</sup> See 周樹佳 [Chow, Shu Kai], 鬼月鉤沉-中元、盂蘭、餓鬼節 [Investigation of Ghost Month - Zhong Yuan, Ullambana and Hungry Ghost Festivals, (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Books, 2015).

<sup>573</sup> Hau, Sam. "盂蘭錦繡.mp4." YouTube. August 23, 2013. Accessed August 15, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQcUqv9MorI>.



As we have seen in chapter 1, there are two tasks for modern East Asian philosophers: an *epistemic* task (what is a culture, or how to understand a culture) and an *ontological* task (how to establish a cultural subjectivity). They do not only want to *know* what their cultures are but also want to *reconstruct* their cultural subjectivities in the contemporary world. In other words, for modern East Asian philosophers, the question of ‘what is culture’ is inevitably related to the question of cultural modernisation. Twentieth-century New Confucianism is concerned with the preservation of Chinese cultural subjectivity in response to the challenges from the West and from anti-traditionalism (particularly Chinese Communism), while the Kyoto School is concerned with the preservation (and even military expansion) of Japanese national subjectivity from Meiji Restoration to the end of World War II. As a result, both introduced Hegelian dialectics to articulate the contents of Chinese or Japanese cultural spirit.

East Asian Hegelianism, as represented by Mou and Watsuji, believes that there are certain fixed and essential cultural values defining what Chinese or Japanese culture is. Because the essential values are fixed, they do not vary with history. Instead, they determine how Chinese or Japanese culture develops in history. According to Mou, Confucianism is the ‘orthodoxy’ of Chinese culture<sup>574</sup> and Chinese history is divided into three stages according to three phases of the development of Chinese Confucianism. Similarly, Watsuji claims that the Japanese spirit is determined by the loyalty to the Emperor and believes that Japanese historical development is determined by the Buddhist concept of emptiness. The assumption of essential cultural values, however, lacks empirical evidence and ignores the openness of

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<sup>574</sup> Chan, Nganying Serina, ‘The Thought of Mou Zong-San’, (PhD Thesis, University of Adelaide, 2009), 77.

interpretation, as we have seen in chapter 2. Therefore Heubel criticises New Confucianism for being ‘cultural essentialist’ and argues against the existence of any ‘essence of Chinese culture’.<sup>575</sup>

While hermeneutics explains how culture is formed in history, hermeneutics is not adopted by East Asian Hegelianism as it fails to establish a stable cultural subjectivity. Gadamer’s hermeneutics allows all cultural values to be changed, which led to the problem of family resemblance,<sup>576</sup> as we have seen in chapter 2.3: without assuming the existence of certain persistent and fixed essential values, a culture C1 at time t1 may share no common value with a culture C2 at time t2 and it would be impossible to identify both C1 and C2 as different stages of the same culture.

By contrast, the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture fulfils both the epistemic task and the ontological task. Criterion (3) fulfils the epistemic task of East Asian philosophers. Instead of defining the essential values of a culture, a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture investigates which kinds of value a cultural group is most interested in (orientation or preference). Therefore, the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture investigates the manifestation of passions of a cultural group. As we have seen in chapter 2, New Confucians such as Mou claim that Confucianism is the orthodoxy of Chinese culture, whereas Kierkegaardians would say that Chinese culture prioritises moral passion, although it does not mean that the manifestations of other passions (aesthetic, cognitive and religious) are

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<sup>575</sup> Heubel, Fabian, 跨文化批判與當代漢語哲學：晚期福柯研究的方法論反思 [Transcultural Critique and Contemporary Philosophy in Chinese: Methodological Reflections on the Late Foucault], 揭諦 [Boundless Treasure], no. 13, (June, 2007): 47.

<sup>576</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Gem Anscombe (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1986), §66, 32.

alien to Chinese culture. Chinese folk religion also exists within Chinese culture as manifesting religious passions. Here, a Kierkegaardian view does not assume the existence of a set of fixed values determining cultural development. Cultural values vary with the passions of the whole community.

A Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture also fulfils the ontological task. Differently from Watsuji, Kierkegaard prioritises individual subjectivity over collective subjectivity and argues that community is formed by individual selves, as we have seen in chapter 4 when discussing the dialectics of community. The passions of individuals are manifested in a community in which individuals establish authentic relationships with each other. Such a community is the ontological ground of cultural subjectivity. Kierkegaard's concept of community in chapter 4, however, is different from Watsuji's concept of *aidagara* in chapter 2. For the latter argues that the existence of *aidagara* precedes that of the individual while the former disagrees. Watsuji reduces individual subjectivity into human society, while Kierkegaard argues for the transcendence of individual from the community. Moreover, the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture does not use the Hegelian concept of 'cultural spirit' to construct a cultural subjectivity. In Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, when one says 'Chinese culture', one refers to a Chinese community where individual members prioritise certain passions (e.g. moral passion) over others (e.g. cognitive passion).

Knowing how a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture fulfils the epistemic and ontological tasks, we can now discuss whether Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture encounters the problem of family resemblance that we encountered in chapter 2.3 when discussing the hermeneutical definition of culture as tradition. How can one identify two stages of cultural

development as the same culture if they not only prioritise different passions but also suppress the manifestations of other passions?

One should notice that culture is also a *becoming* which involves *coming into existence* as we have seen in chapter 4. Culture is not an eternal being; it exists temporally. In other words, a culture may 'die'. A cultural subjectivity is formed by a community in which individuals authentically establish relationships with each other according to their free wills. While all individuals are capable of manifesting aesthetic, cognitive, moral and religious passions, they may prioritise certain passions over others. The prioritisation of particular passions of a community *orientates* how culture develops. In other words, there are two cases when a culture ceases to exist, namely, the disappearance of a community and the absence of contemporaneity. The former is straightforward—when a community is destroyed by natural disasters or humanitarian crisis, its culture dies. The latter, however, is more complicated. In hermeneutics, the present generation is always influenced by the previous generation through tradition facilitated by language. So even if the present generation prioritises a passion which was not prioritised or even noticed by the previous generation, there must be a traceable transition of prioritisation of passion. For example, in chapter 1, as we have seen, in the nineteenth-century both Chinese and Japanese scholar realised that they lacked cognitive passion and needed technological advances to improve their national defences, so they called for modernisation. Even anti-traditionalists like Chen Duxiu came from Chinese tradition. If he had not studied Chinese culture and did not realise the lack of science and democracy in Chinese history, he would not have called for the radical denial of traditional Chinese culture. But when contemporaneity with the previous generation disappears, the present generation is unable to reflect and criticise its own culture, which is a product of

both the past and the present. Therefore, a radical denial of the past also implies the death of a culture.

In fact, the family resemblance is not a problem in the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, for it is impossible that two stages of the same culture share no common passions at all in a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, although they may prioritise different passions. If a cultural stage C2 ignores the passion P1 prioritised by C1, C2 and C1 do not belong to the same culture C, as there is no contemporaneity between C1 and C2 which facilitates a transition; if there were, C2 would not ignore P1. In this case, one may conclude that C has already died in C2, as when Mou claims that Chinese culture has already disappeared in Communist China when moral passion is ignored.

Changes in languages may also lead to the death of a culture when the present generation can no longer understand the previous generation. Qian Xuantong's programme of Latinising Chinese language, if it had succeeded, would have prevented the fusion of horizons between the present and the past, for they would no longer share a common language. While historically *hanmun* (Classical Chinese) consisting of *Hanja* (Chinese characters) was the official written language in South Korea, the abandonment of primary school teaching of Hanja in 1971 means that the present generation of South Korean has a very low hanja literacy rate, which prevents them from reading Korean historical documents and understanding traditional Korean culture. According to R.A. Brown's research: 'when one class of 70 students' was 'asked to write such well-known *hanmun* proverbs as *kojinkamne* [苦盡甘來] and *daegimonsong* [大智若愚]', 90 percent wrote both proverbs in *hangul* only, 10 percent wrote them in both *hangul* and *Hanja* (and 80 per cent of those who wrote the

*hangul* first, followed by the *Hanja* in parentheses); none wrote *Hanja* alone.’<sup>577</sup> Therefore, according to a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture, a cultural subjectivity is vulnerable to changes in languages and political movements which may interrupt or even terminate contemporaneity or fusions of horizons.

As we have seen above, because Kierkegaard acknowledges changes in essential cultural values, a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture rejects traditionalism, which distinguishes the Kierkegaardian viewpoint from that of the New Confucian and Kyoto School philosophers discussed in chapter 1 and 2. However, because of the concept of contemporaneity, the Kierkegaardian viewpoint also disagrees with anti-traditionalists who neglect contemporaneity. Without contemporaneity, there would be no fusion of horizons between the past and the present.

From the discussion above, it is appropriate to conclude that a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is applicable to the Korean context because it addresses the current problem of language discontinuity in South Korea, which weakens the historicity of contemporary Korean culture. By emphasising the concept of contemporaneity, the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture acknowledges the importance of the fusion of horizons of the present and the past, which is facilitated by a common language.

A Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is also applicable to Japanese context because of its emphasis on individual subjectivity, which has been disregarded by modern Japanese

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<sup>577</sup> Brown, R.A. ‘Chinese Character Education in Japan and South Korea.’ *Language & Communication* 10, no. 4 (1990): 307.

Hegelians, particularly Watsuji, as we have seen in chapter 2. By articulating the concept of community, the Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture restores individual subjectivity in Japanese tradition without falling into the trap of 'individualism' condemned by Watsuji

Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is also applicable to the Chinese context because it provides a more inclusive framework to orientate cultural developments by investigating the manifestations of different passions. While the New Chinese Confucianism emphasises moral passions in cultural development, the movement disregards that religious passion also plays a role in Chinese cultural development as we have seen in chapter 2. To evaluate the nature of a culture, one should investigate how it manifests aesthetic, moral, cognitive and religious passions and why some passions were emphasised in the past but are now neglected.

To conclude, in comparison with Hegelian dialectics, a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture is a much better methodology for East Asian philosophers. Like Hegelian dialectics, a Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture fulfils both the ontological and epistemic tasks of an East Asian philosophy of culture; but unlike East Asian Hegelianism, it avoids the problems of the impossibility of changes in cultural values, the lack of empirical method, and the neglect of openness of interpretation. A Kierkegaardian philosophy of culture provides three criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of cultural theories: individual subjectivity within a community, contemporaneity, and the four passions. In particular, the Kierkegaardian emphasis on the manifestations of passion is more consistent with both Chinese and Japanese philosophical traditions that emphasise passion over reason when it comes to culture. As we have seen in chapter 2, Watsuji describes Japanese culture as a culture of feeling while Mou indicates the essential value of Chinese culture as the moral feelings expressed by

individuals. The conclusion of this thesis is therefore that the New Confucian and the Kyoto School philosophers would benefit from adopting a Kierkegaardian approach to the philosophy of culture to preserve their cultural subjectivities in the modern era. How that might work out, however, would be a task for future research.



## Notes on the Appendix

Appendix I indicates the geographical area of Han Cultural Sphere (漢文化圈) as Western readers may be unfamiliar with the term. Han Cultural Sphere refers to the ‘East Asian’ civilisations, namely Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Ryukyu civilisations.

As the bibliography of Classical Chinese texts are dated by the name of dynasties rather than the Western calendar years, a table of East Asian Dynasties is provided in appendix II.

# Appendix I: Map of East Asia or Han Cultural Sphere

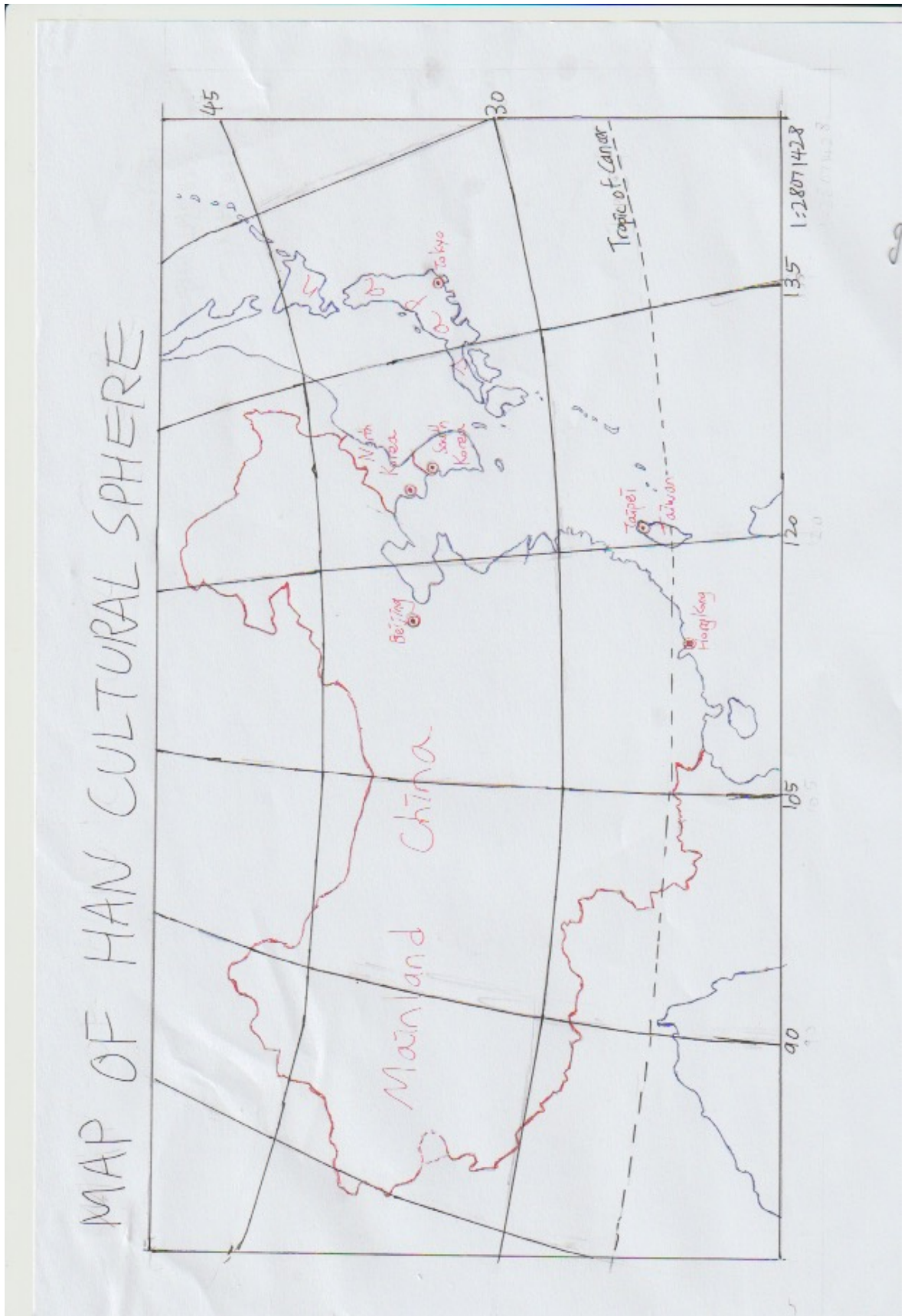


Figure 4 Map of Han Cultural Sphere

# Appendix II: Table of East Asian Dynasties

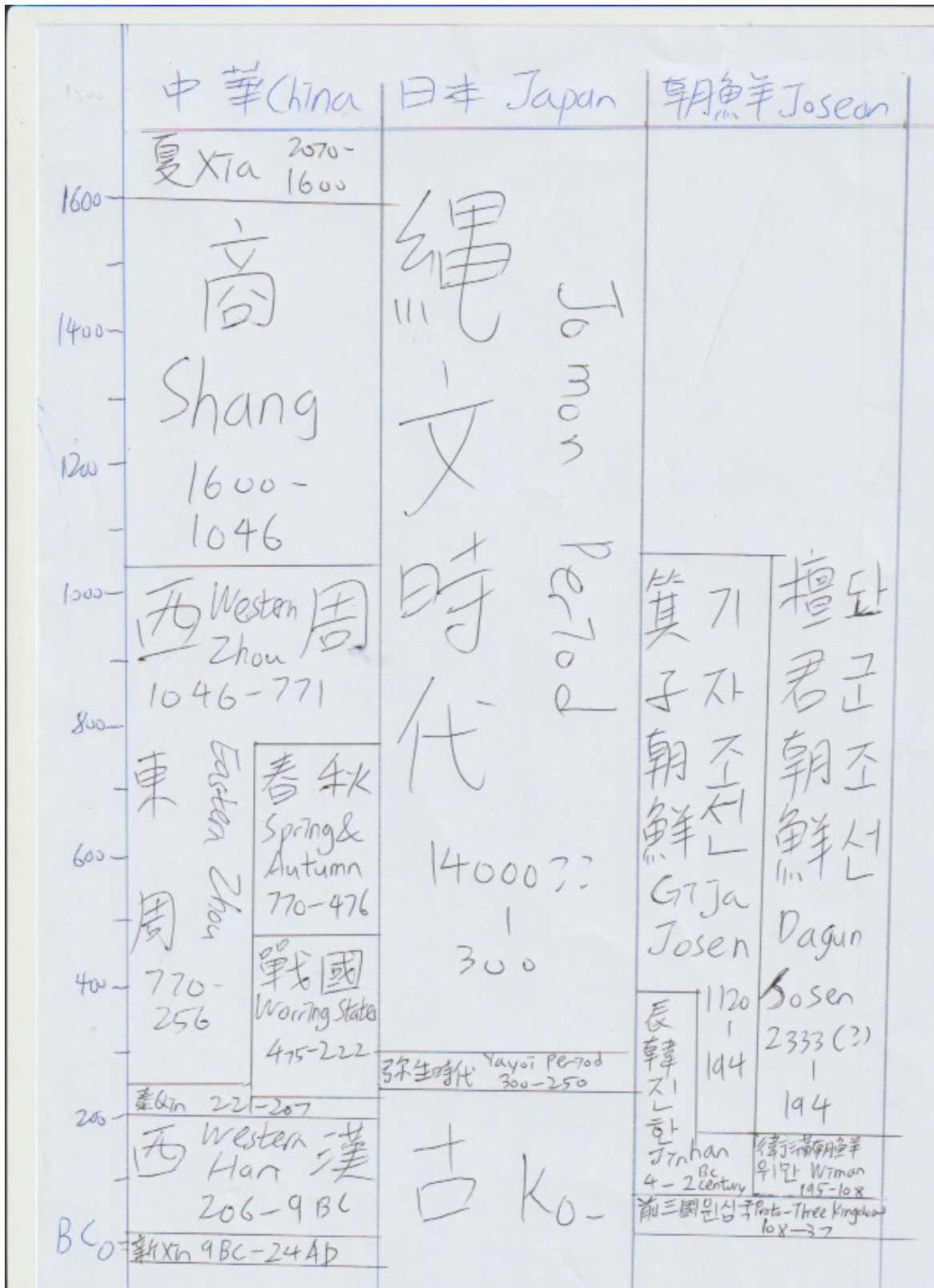


Figure 5 Timeline of East Asian Dynasties 1



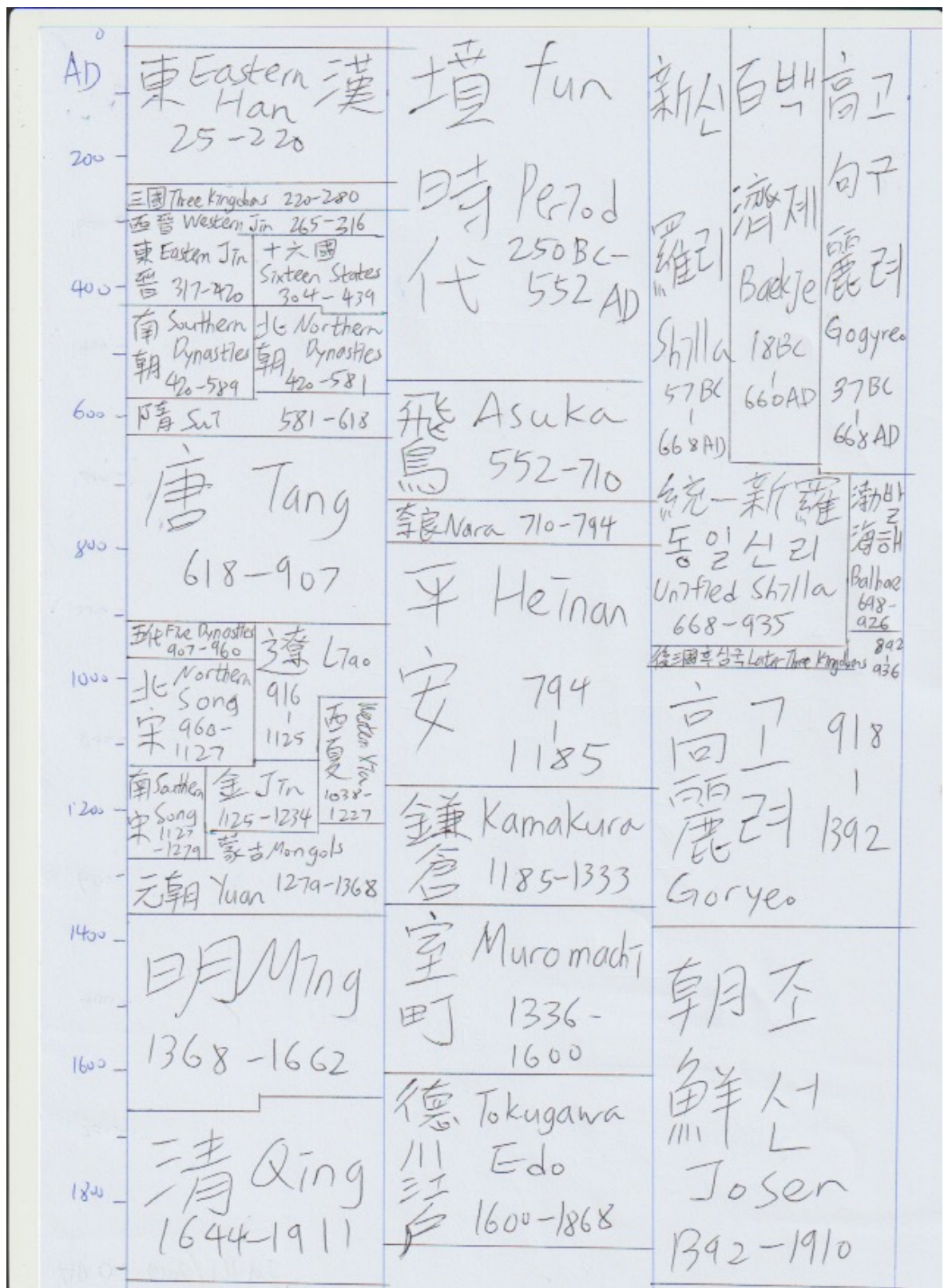


Figure 6 Timeline of East Asian Dynasties 2

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