

Brian Bruya (ed.), *The Philosophical Challenge from China*, MA: The MIT Press, 2015, Pp. 393.

The philosophical challenge from China is an anthology consisting of 13 interesting essays written by scholars who are working at the interface of classic Chinese philosophy and mainstream analytic philosophy. It represents recently renewed attempt to facilitate communication between the insights of Chinese philosophical thoughts and current philosophical issues in the framework of analytic philosophy. Three distinct features of this volume make it outstanding. First, it draws inspirations from the entire history of Chinese philosophy ranging from pre-Qin thinkers to twentieth-century philosophers. Second, it encompasses such analytically meaningful areas as moral psychology, political philosophy and ethics, and metaphysics and epistemology, these being also pertaining to Chinese philosophical tradition. Third, it proposes new, controversial perspectives on current issues that constitute challenges to both western analytical tradition and Chinese tradition. These features afford this volume usefulness in multiple ways—an introduction to frontier issues in the studies of Chinese philosophy, a resource for understanding updated research in comparative philosophy, and a thought provoking text for a graduate seminar in philosophy.

Chinese scholars tend to view Chinese thought as philosophically meaningful in its own right. Anglo-American scholars in the study of Chinese philosophy, including many of them who have good command of Chinese languages, tend to visualize Chinese thought through a pair of glasses made up with analytically transformed data. The goal of *The Philosophical Challenge from China* is to foster a healthy relationship between analytic philosophy and Chinese philosophy. Specifically, it is an attempt to present a pair of newly renovated glasses that enable people to see where Chinese and analytical traditions meet and how they mutually enrich in contemporary philosophical discussions—how they can be resources for each other and how they constitute challenges to each other. The emphasis is placed on how Chinese philosophy may enrich western philosophy. In his introduction, the editor claims Chinese philosophy “would advance the current discussion” by “supporting a minority view with a pervasive new argument, contradicting a prominent position, and problematizing a position or an issue and thereby demonstrating that the issue has a significant dimension that has been neglected or that a distinction is not as clear-cut as has generally been assume” (p. xv). Brief reviews of the essays collected herein suffice to show the extent to which the editor fulfills his goal.

Three essays are arranged in the section titled ‘Moral Psychology’. Hagop Sarkissian’s “When You Think It’s Bad, It’s Worse than You Think: Psychological Bias and the Ethics of Negative Character Assessments” shows that people are morally predisposed to judge others much more harshly than they judge themselves. At the same time, reason steers them to the Confucian viewpoint that being charitable in judging others positively affects self-judgment. David Wong’s essay “Growing Virtue: The Theory and Science of Developing Compassion from a Mencian Perspective” contends that Mencian conception of moral life dissolves the issue over the roles of emotion and reason in virtue ethics as the Mencian view can be counted as both an emotional and a rational account of virtue ethics. Bongrae Seok’s essay

“Proto-Empathy and Nociceptive Mirror Emotion: Mencius’ Embodied Moral Psychology” brings the insights of Chinese thought to bear on the contemporary theory of embodied mind in cognitive science by showing how Mencius takes the role of the body seriously in explaining empathy.

Arranged in the section titled ‘Political Philosophy and Ethics’ are five essays which make direct reference to contemporary authors in western analytical philosophy. In “A Criticism of Later Rawls and a Defense of a Decent (Confucian) People” Tongdong Bai poses the Confucian model of decent consultation hierarchy as an alternative to John Rawls’ liberal democracy, which merely tolerates a decent hierarchical society. Donald J. Munro’s essay “Unequal Human Worth” argues that contemporary psychology prefers the Confucian theory of unequal moral to the equal moral worth theory in Western philosophy. Stephen Angle’s essay “Virtue Ethics, The Rule of Law, and the Need for Self-Restriction” attempts to reconcile western virtue ethics exemplified by Aristotle and Hume with the New-Confucianism in Mou Zongsan’s theory of self-restriction. Angle suggests to dissolve the problem that self-cultivation of virtues is particular in character while the laws of states are universal in character. Kwong-loi Shun’s essay “Ethical Self-Commitment and Ethical Self-Indulgence” compares the western idea of ethical self-commitment with the Neo-Confucian idea of ‘*yi*-commitment’, showing that traditional Confucian ethics is still relevant to contemporary discussion of morality. In their essay “Confucian Moral Sources” Owen Flanagan and Steven Geisz suggest the long-standing, on-going, controversial issue concerning the need of transcendent or superhuman ground for morality is contingent upon historically evolved cultural settings. They contend this is evidenced by Confucian ethics not being grounded in a transcendent or superhuman assumption.

Finally, the section titled ‘Metaphysics and Epistemology’ embraces five essays, which compare the differences in root categories between Western and Chinese philosophies. In his essay “Senses and Values of Oneness” Philip Ivanhoe elaborates Neo-Confucian views of oneness, which is largely absent from the analytical tradition in the West. Brook Ziporyn’s essay “What Does the Law of Non-Contradiction Tell Us, If Anything? Paradox, Parameterization, and Truth in Tiantai Buddhism” uses the *Tian-Tai* sect of Chinese Buddhist as an example. It highlights the law of non-contradiction, which predominates analytical philosophy, is not present in Eastern philosophies. In their essay “Knowing-How and Knowing-To” Stephen Hetherington and Karyn Lai propose that epistemology within the framework of analytical philosophy can be enriched by incorporating the Chinese concept of “knowing-to”—a way of knowing in addition to “knowing that” and “knowing how”. Bo Mou’s essay “Quine’s Naturalized Epistemology and Zhuangzi’s Daoist Naturalism: How Their Constructive Engagement is Possible” shows both Chinese and Analytical philosophy embraces a naturalism, but their constructive engagement is only possible when both endorse non-physical aspects of nature. Brian Bruya’s essay “Action Without Agency and Natural Human Action: Resolving a Double Paradox,” deals with issues concerning action and responsibility by comparing western reason-based theory with Chinese spontaneity-based theory suggesting these two theories can be reconciled to form a unified theory of human action.

Overall, *The Philosophical Challenge from China* makes significant contributions to our understanding of the modern relevancy of Chinese Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. At the very least, this volume helps make people aware that modernity has tolerance, compromise, traditions, and diversity as its essential elements.

Dr. ZHAOLU LU, Professor of Philosophy, Tiffin University. Email: luz@tiffin.edu.