

# CULTURAL CROSSVERGENCE: THEORY, PRACTICE, AND SIGNIFICANCE IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

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*Abstract: This article will examine cultural crossvergence in China by analyzing its lack of theory and practice of critical discourse and the need for more awareness of its historical context, current situation, future direction, and significance in Chinese culture. The lack of cultural crossvergence in contemporary China is underscored by the still popular Orientalism and Occidentalism in critical cultural circles and the vigorous advocates of the Tianxia system and Cosmopolitanism. However, as a critical discourse, both Orientalism and Occidentalism deconstruct more than construct regarding the inequalities existing in the cultural communication between the Orient and the West. As a theoretical construction, the Tianxia system and Cosmopolitanism find themselves in a quandary over how to deal with the relationship between universality, particularity, and relativity of culture, nation, and state. Based on the consideration of the current trends of Chinese culture, such as “go global” and the “development of China’s knowledge system,” both presently being promoted by the government, it is apparent that we need to recognize the significance of cultural crossvergence and not just cultural convergence or cultural divergence. It is essential to highlight the “crossvergence” rather than “substitution” in the theoretical conception of constructing the Chinese knowledge system. The fundamental significance of cultural crossvergence, not only in contemporary China but also in other countries in the world, should be recognized as a more tolerant attitude, both in culture and literature, as well as in other areas such as politics, is a desirable way to build bridges between self and other.*

## Introduction

Whether Orientalism or Occidentalism, Tianxia (All-under-heaven) system or Cosmopolitanism,<sup>1</sup> fundamentally speaking, all involve the following issues: how to represent other cultures, societies, and histories; how to recognize the relationship between knowledge and power; how to treat the role of intellectuals, as well as how to deal with the methodological questions between different kinds of texts, text, and context, text and history. (Said, 1985, 89)

Prejudice towards the Orient and the Occident does exist in our daily life. Furthermore, the theoretical criticism implied by Orientalism and Occidentalism does not dispel but rather exacerbates this nonobjectivity and, to some extent, provides a theoretical excuse for extreme violence. With the advent of Brexit and Trumpism, the theoretical Utopia constructed by the Tianxia system and Cosmopolitanism now faces the challenge of political reality. In confronting the predicament of various “isms,” we cannot excuse the veridical dilemma of “realism” from the theoretical standpoint of “ontology” and vice versa. Real

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<sup>1</sup> Tianxia (All-under-heaven) system, advocated by Chinese scholar Zhao Tingyang in his series of works.

globalization and a multicultural world are far from being achieved. All kinds of “isms” eliminate the existing structures of order and rebuild future ones. Dialogue, equality, cooperation, and overlapping consensus are the discourse patterns of all “isms,” but there is no clarity on how these ideas can be realized. We believe that, instead of constructing various “isms” and “orders,” thus creating convergence or divergence between different cultures, we should attach much importance to the “crossvergence” among different cultures.<sup>2</sup> From the perspective of cultural crossvergence, more emphasis should be placed on understanding cultural differences and the overlapping consensus. Most importantly, it should be recognized that cultural crossvergence is a continually evolving dynamic interaction between different cultures, and new cultural factors have been introduced during such a process. We should also go beyond focusing only on the Orient and the Occident while ignoring the cultures of those countries around us. Moreover, we should abandon the grand and static model of order and system and realize the fluidity of crossvergence between different cultures, dynamically and reflectively.

### I. Orientalism and Occidentalism

Orientalism and Occidentalism are patently biased against each other, portraying their opponent with no humanity. This inclination is de facto on both sides, and no reasonable person would directly flaunt or dare to admit that they are in allegiance with either. However, such prejudices do exist, whether consciously or unconsciously. In an era advocating pluralism and globalization, it is politically correct and justified to oppose any instances of Orientalism or Occidentalism. Edward W. Said has already elaborated his original and profound insight into Orientalism in Western cultural life, academic institutions, political rights, and moral models. A thorough and refreshing analysis of Post-Mao Zedong Chinese Occidentalism by Xiaomei Chen also exists. Therefore, this paper's focus is not to analyze these phenomena of stereotyping or "otherizing" but to rethink the critical theoretical discourse supported by Orientalism and Occidentalism and to discuss why such critical discourse is ineffective, ambiguous, unfair, and arbitrary.

#### 1. AN OVER-EXPANDING CRITICAL DISCOURSE

Orientalism and Occidentalism criticism are both types of enlarged critical discourse. Every person and every piece of work can be labeled as Orientalism or Occidentalism.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “crossvergence” was advocated by David A. Ralston in his series of papers (Ralston, 1993, 1997, 2008), presented as a synergistic perspective to address the culture problems “seeming incomplete explanations of the previously proposed convergence and divergence perspectives.” Convergence perspective holds that at the pressure of globalization, different cultures will be “induced to adopt a similar-looking cultural system” (Dunn and Shome, 2009); however, the divergence perspective sees that cultural differences will dominate the cultural system; The crossvergence viewpoint advocates that both convergence and divergence “could be taken simultaneously between different cultures, but at different levels,” and cultural crossvergence is a dynamic interaction between different kinds of cultures providing “the driving force to precipitate the development of new and unique cultural values and systems in societies” (Ralston, 2008).

In his eponymously titled book, *Orientalism*, Said devotes himself to revealing how the West transforms the Orient into the Other through “judgment,” “research,” “description,” “illustration,” and “reconstruction.” He stressed that Orientalism is not just a superficial description of the ignorant “Orient” by the “Western” empire. At a broader and more profound level, it is an attempt to infiltrate and control the Orient. It implies political, academic, cultural, and moral power. Said summed it up as: “It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two great unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of ‘interests’ which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape, and sociological description, it not only creates .... but also maintains it.” (Said, 1994) Said also suspected Orientalism in the works of many of the West’s most well-known scholars of the Orient, as well as in travel diaries. Not surprisingly, this expanded critical discourse of Orientalism was later heavily criticized by some scholars claiming that its accusations “seriously distorted history” and “simplified” Western historians’ thinking (Kopf, 1980).

Firm in his convictions, though, Said had gone further in his book, pointing out that “direct observation or circumstantial description of the Orient are the fictions presented by writing on the Orient.” (Said, 1994) Western writers singing the praises of the Orient were merely imaginary, romantic Orientalism, the idealizing and exoticizing of the East. At the same time, it is realistic Orientalism when Western writers devalue and misinterpret the Orient, highlighting its ugliness and strangeness. No matter what is praised or criticized, it is not based on “objective knowledge” about the Orient but rather a kind of orientalist fiction. However, one could easily ask that even if eastern scholars write about the East, is it possible to have objective knowledge about it? Although Said pointed out in an addendum to the publication of *Orientalism* that he was not so naive as to think that only Eastern scholars could write about the East, his discussion on Orientalism can easily give the following illusion to the critics: Does the study of the East by Western scholars necessarily constitute Orientalism?

Chen Xiaomei’s critical theory of Occidentalism also has this kind of critical discourse expansion phenomenon. Chen explores how post-Mao Zedong China achieves its political goal of internal domination by constructing an image of the Other (West). Chen divides the creation and appropriation of the image of the Western Other in China into “official” and “anti-official.” “Official Occidentalism” is “the Chinese government use of the essentialization of the West as a means for supporting a nationalism that effects the internal suppression of its own people” (Chen, 1995); “Anti-official Occidentalism” is the opponent of official ideology among various groups of the intelligentsia, and “such Occidentalism can be understood as a powerful anti-official discourse using the Western Other as a metaphor for a political liberation against ideological oppression within a totalitarian society.” (Ibid.,8)

Unlike Said, who saw Orientalism as pursuing domination and hegemony over the Orient, Chen sees Chinese Occidentalism as an imaginary construct, not attempting to dominate the West but to discipline and dominate the Chinese at home. “As such, it has been both a discourse of oppression and discourse of liber-

ation,” (Ibid.,5), Which means that when we misappropriate Western culture, both the commendatory (unofficial Occidentalism) and the derogatory (official Occidentalism) are a kind of Occidentalism, where the former is used to glorify the ideology of the West to rebel against the authority, and the latter is used to vilify the West to maintain its rule. It is the same logic that Said used to create Orientalism, whether it is to beautify or vilify the East.

The critical discourse of Orientalism or Occidentalism must face the following problem: how to define the critical boundary? When every writer and work may be reduced to Orientalism or Occidentalism, the necessity of its existence as a critical discourse is diminished.

## 2. AN UNFAIR CRITICAL DISCOURSE OF THE AUTHOR/WORK

As a critical discourse, Orientalism and Occidentalism lack objectivity in their critical attitude towards the author and works. "Discourse analysis is always, in a sense, unfair to the authors." (Clifford, 1980) If critics take a particular "ism" as a theory to analyze the author and his works, they can always find an argument for their discourse.

Taking contemporary Chinese cultural and literary criticism as an example, many scholars criticize Mo Yan, Zhang Yimou, and other internationally influential writers and directors, all of whom have confined themselves to the critical discourse of Orientalism or Occidentalism. Alternatively, they deliberately accentuate oriental tastes and stigmatize the East to cater to Western audiences; Or they intentionally maintain the tradition and power and reject the West. Taking *Shadow*, Zhang Yimou's latest film, as an example, some critics argue that the film's black and white ink composition, Bagua(八卦) symbols, calligraphy on the white veil, and other Chinese elements highlight the philosophical meaning of traditional Chinese culture. However, others argue that these so-called Chinese elements are nothing more than an exaggerated and overwrought oriental aesthetic designed to appeal to the Western orientalist imagination. At the same time, *Shadow* tells the story of the mantis stalking the cicada, utterly unaware of the oriole behind it, subtly implying that Occidentalism could also interpret the change of power. By laying out the brutality of power, the goal can either be to resist the rule of power (unofficial Occidentalism) or to intimidate the audience away from power and reach the preservation of the existing order (official Occidentalism).

Faced with the argument that all works with a Chinese element are essentialism and that it is why they have dominated Western markets, we can think about questions like the following: Are the artists using Chinese elements to please the West as they have been criticized? Or are we over-reliant on the "Orient Eye" or the "Occident Eye" to see ourselves? Concerned with these problems, Said's assertion of "orientalism of the Self" is undoubtedly profound. He stressed that "the accommodation between the intellectual class and the new imperialism might very well be counted as one of the special triumphs of Orientalism." (Said, 1994) As the Oriental intelligentsia consciously critiqued its own culture with orientalist discourse and reflected on itself as a kind of discourse, Orientalism has, to some extent, extended to the East itself.

If our critique of culture and literature only spins around in a dichotomy of Orient and Occident rather than from a cultural crossvergence perspective, this

critique has no significance. Feirde Fogleman divides criticism into three categories: measuring, disrupting, and emancipating. Measuring criticism focuses on “justifications on normative yardsticks or standards”; (Vogelmann, 2017). Disrupting criticism is disrupting what is criticized; Emancipating criticism is “emancipating us from the grasp of that which we criticize” (Ibid., 102), most importantly, from the “ideological fence.” Considering the current critical discourse in contemporary Chinese culture, art, and literary criticism, we need a criticism beyond all kinds of “doctrines,” especially a critical discourse that could emancipate us from the barriers of the Orient and the Occident.

### 3. A CRITICAL DISCOURSE THAT URGENTLY NEEDS TO TRANSCEND BINARY OPPOSITIONS

Orientalism and Occidentalism must go beyond the following thinking modes: Orient and West, Self and Others, “We” and “They.” As a critical discourse, Orientalism and Occidentalism inevitably fall into what they oppose: dualistic opposition.

Said’s identity in the critical discourse is complex, and opponents see him as a contradictory combination of Orientalist and Occidentalist. He is an Orientalist because his critical discourse is still based on Western discourse. He has a self-orientalized plot in his heart because when one criticizes Western knowledge of the Orient as having no objective knowledge of reconstruction, the critic has already made a stand for you. “Edward Said’s discourse analysis itself does not break away from the all-encompassing Occidentalism that he so thoroughly criticizes as opposed to orientalism.” (Clifford, 1980) Some critics point out that criticizing Orientalism or Occidentalism itself requires “beyond the binary” to get away from the dualist position of “we” and “they.” Otherwise, “the author of the critical Orientalism will himself become the object of criticism.” (Varisco, 2007)

Compared with Said, Chen Xiaomei’s critique of Occidentalism is more likely to be labeled orientalist by critics. Chen’s Occidental criticism explores how China in the “post-Mao Zedong Era” can turn its criticism of “them” into a criticism of “us”. At a particular time, perhaps this analysis makes sense. But the question needs to be considered, as a critical discourse, why the criticism of Orientalism is to criticize its aggressiveness, while the criticism of Occidentalism is to criticize its internal ideology? Does this imply a cultural hierarchy of the critics, a so-called “self-orientalization” plot?

However, both Said and Chen Xiaomei have repeatedly stressed that they do not hold dualistic opposition and that they are trying to achieve an equal dialogue between different kinds of cultures by criticizing Orientalism or Occidentalism, “separating dichotomies such as Orient/Occident, Self/Other, traditionalism/modernism, and male/female, but by engaging these binary oppositions in a constant and continuing dialogue without ever claiming one version of ‘truth’ at the expense of celebrating the diversities of all ‘truths.’” (Chen, 1995) However, this may be the contradiction between theory and practice. The pluralistic advocacy of theory cannot avoid criticizing the dualistic opposition pattern of Orientalism and Occidentalism in practice, which inevitably leads to Utopia in theory and ideology practice—said expressed his thoughts about this binary distinction or position. He believes that, in reality, there are Orient/Occident, South/North, White/Color, and other dichotomies, and we

cannot pretend to ignore them, which means that the problem is real. However, dichotomizing these phenomena will lead us into the mire of dualistic methodology. In academic and cultural activities, this distinction only exacerbates the antagonism, “yet an openly polemical and right-minded ‘progressive’ scholarship can very easily degenerate into dogmatic slumber, a prospect that is not edifying either.” (Said, 1994)

Orientalism / Occidentalism criticizes the inequality between cultures and the dualistic opposition. However, they have become trapped in the dualistic position and cannot realize the cultural pluralism and equal dialogue they expect; they cannot have a multi-dimensional understanding of the literary work’s esthetic implication and the thought connotation. Some commentators have argued that Edward Said’s critique of orientalism “only points to intolerance and prejudice, and does not reflect the universal egalitarianism he espouses.” (Clifford, 1980) Then, the following question is: can the *Tianxia* system and Cosmopolitanism, which attempt to construct multiculturalism and universal civilization, achieve an equal dialogue between different cultures? For example, what is the relationship between literature and Cosmopolitanism? What is the relationship between World Literature and Literary Cosmopolitanism? Taking Cosmopolitanism as a critical discourse, is it still a critical failure mode just like orientalism / Occidentalism?

## II. *Tianxia* System and Cosmopolitanism

*Tianxia* system and Cosmopolitanism are the second significant aspect of discussing the relationship between different cultures from the perspective of cultural crossvergence. In this era of globalization, Orientalism/Occidentalism’s critical discourse coexists in the ideological trend of culture and literature with the theoretical assumptions of *Tianxia*/cosmopolitanism. The concept of *Tianxia*/Cosmopolitanism is as much a political philosophy of equal dialogue as an ethical concept of universal ethics and an emphasis on Cosmopolitanism in culture, art, and literature. They both share a theoretical basis, a theoretical assumption of equal communication and multicultural coexistence. However, is it possible or even necessary for cultural pluralism to be advocated by *Tianxia*/Cosmopolitanism? How can they be compatible with nationalism and statism? Is the culture, art, and literature of Cosmopolitanism possible? How does Cosmopolitanism manifest itself in works of art? Moreover, is evaluating literary works with Cosmopolitanism as a critical discourse objective and realistic?

### 1. RECONSIDERING CULTURAL PLURALISM

Whether it can be done and necessary to do so is a matter of how Cosmopolitanism examines and addresses the relationships among universality, particularity, and the relativity of different cultures. Achieving the universality of culture comes with the price of losing its particularity, and keeping the particularity of culture is to fall into the relativism of culture. Since Cosmopolitanism wants to establish a de-centralized and de-hierarchical cultural order, it naturally pursues the universality of culture. However, at the same time, it also recognizes the essentialistic tendency of universality and advocates particularity based on universality. It emphasizes multiculturalism that takes all cultural factors into account. Moreover, the *Tianxia* system emphasizes “no

external” (无外), which is not the same as its literal meaning, and “harmony but different”(和而不同), “from outside to inside”(由内而外), “the internalization of the whole world” (整个世界的内部化), “the minimization of differences” (差异最小化) (Zhao, 2016). Thus, the *Tianxia* system and Cosmopolitanism believe cultural pluralism should be integral.

However, Cultural pluralism has the following disadvantages:

Though cultural pluralism points out the existence of multiculturalism, it ignores the interaction between different cultures and the contradictions that may arise in the process. In reality, the relationship between cultures cannot be static, and there is a possibility that all cultures' particularities will eventually be transformed or assimilated into universality. *Tianxia*/Cosmopolitanism only points out the *necessity* of “coexistence” among different cultures. They do not discuss the somewhat diluted *possibility* of “coexistence.”

The theory of cultural pluralism only emphasizes “overlapping consensus” between different cultures while largely ignoring the “differences.” “Coexistence” cannot be called true cultural pluralism if it is based solely on an agreement to eliminate or discount diversity. Thus, there are two possible scenarios in the so-called cultural pluralism: It is “still premised on the assumption of cultural essentialism and antagonism,” and the result is a “combination of cultural pluralism and cultural relativism” (Beck & Cronin, 2014); Or, the so-called cultural pluralism is simply the pursuit of “overlapping consensus” and universalization. The achievement of this cultural pluralism foreshadows its demise.

The question that cultural pluralism faces comes down to WHO's great story and is yet to be told. Yours? Mine? His? In particular cultural pluralism texts and discourses, it is a methodological consideration to insist on presenting multiple perspectives, but this does not solve the problem of synthesizing different frames of reference into the literature. There is still a dominant perspective among the many: “Regardless of their explicit message about multiculturalism, their point of view is a single and univocal perspective (Berkhofer, 1995). Although multiculturalism is supposed to represent multiple voices and perspectives equally, “it does not specify how to construe the relationships among those voices and viewpoints or how to assemble them into a coherent, interrelated structure” (Ibid., 201). Ultimately, all that cultural pluralism is telling is the story about “me”—the “me” who has the power to control the words. In a self-established discourse system by “me,” no matter how much “I” gives “he” or “she” the right to speak, in the end, it is “I” who is the decision-maker. “I” is the loudest voice. Thus, there is still a considerable distance between multiculturalism's theory and practice.

## 2. TIANXIA/COSMOPOLITANISM AND NATIONALISM/STATISM

*Tianxia*/Cosmopolitanism attempts to establish a culture that transcends boundaries. The question is, could the “conversion” of “exterior internalization” in the *Tianxia* system and “universalism” in Cosmopolitanism be compatible with nationalism and statism?

According to Benedict, national identity and nationalism are particular cultural constructs belonging to the imagined community. Some countries are made up of the same ethnic group, while others are made up of multi-ethnic groups and are a congealed community of political, economic, and cultural relations. Whether nationalism or statism, they have two faces, “vigorously eliminate differences”

at home and “create and emphasize differences” abroad. The distinction between inside and outside is the key to a nation and state as a community. To emphasize their uniqueness, “no nation imagines itself conterminous with mankind.”(Anderson, 2006) However, to highlight the absolute, internal unity, the double face of nationalism or statism might be, on the one hand, to acknowledge itself as a part of the world. However, by developing at a certain stage and promoting the ambition to be the only nation and state in the world system, I am the *Tianxia*/world; the *Tianxia*/world is mine.

Therefore, it is essential to consider who is substituted for or compatible with whom in the relationship between Nation/State and the *Tianxia*/World. One has to wonder whose *Tianxia*/World is in the so-called *Tianxia* system and Cosmopolitanism. Concerning the *Tianxia* system, the following questions must be asked: Could *Tianxia* be “China-centric” instead of “Eurocentric”? Is the *Tianxia* system’s advocate just Chinese scholars following the domestic ideology of “addressing the world’s problems with Chinese methods”? Is it just a game like to hear himself talk about the “deconstruction of nationalism and opposed discourse model in cosmopolitanism”? Is it a practical utopia mixed with realpolitik? (Callahan, 2008) Alternatively, is it possible to achieve *Tianxia*, but “American *Tianxia*”? (Babones, 2017) Regarding the *Tianxia* system as a constructive discourse, the dilemma, as some scholars have summarized it, is that “[by] taking the retro as the revolution, while criticizing the global hegemony, there is also the intention of establishing the world order dominated by China. However, the Utopia of world peace deliberately ignores the difference between order politics, the hegemonic connotation or the empire consciousness implied in the concept of the *Tianxia*, thus forming a kind of historical narration which is not historical.” (Hanshen, 2016)

Nationalism/Statism, on the other hand, has always had a bad reputation and is considered a “regional loyalty.” Indeed, in this age of frequent terrorism, the advocacy of nationalism/statism is often seen as dangerous. In contrast, a tolerant *Tianxia*/Cosmopolitanism is seen as an ideal political and cultural order. When someone says they are cosmopolitan, they tend to have a sense of superiority, implying that they are more tolerant and compassionate. One thought that *Tianxia* and Cosmopolitanism share is that “no loyalty can ever justify forgetting that each human being has responsibilities to every other” (Appiah, 2010). We are not supporters of extreme nationalism or Statism, but we should also say that while loyalty to one station or nation cannot make us forget our responsibility to humanity as a whole, we cannot absolve ourselves of our responsibilities to the nation and station because of our responsibilities to humankind as a whole. Humans should not be, as Appiah mentioned, “a lover of his kind, but a hater of his kindred.” (Appiah, 2010)

In fact, we can break away from the prejudices of nationalism and Statism and look a little beyond the assessment of their “regional loyalty.” We can realize that although grand orders are important, it is a reality that cannot be ignored for every nation, state, and individual under this order. Moreover, it is a prospect to note that nationalism and Statism are not the stumbling blocks to *Tianxia* or Cosmopolitanism but are truly part of them. Nationalism is not a concept of absolute exclusion, nor is it a concept of Statism. Neither Statism nor nationalism



is necessarily incomplete conflict with *Tianxia* or Cosmopolitanism, and there is a path to Cosmopolitanism on the way forward.

### 3. WORLD LITERATURE AND LITERARY COSMOPOLITANISM

Some scholars have introduced Cosmopolitanism into the critical discourse of literature, analyzing the concept of world literature and advocating literary Cosmopolitanism. Taking world literature as an example, they stressed that all countries and nations are equal in literature, and all are members of the world literature family. It is to understand world literature in the plainest sense, that world literature is each country's literature. Literary Cosmopolitanism emphasizes the expression of Cosmopolitanism in literary works. Leaving aside the contradictory nature of cultural pluralism championed by Cosmopolitanism, as discussed above, and just starting from the concepts of world literature and literary Cosmopolitanism, it should be pointed out that if world literature refers to the literature of each country only in terms of scope, and emphasizes the equality of the literature of each country, then, this assumption is just a theoretical utopia, but it is never possible in reality. What's more, in light of the development of world literature today, this is no longer necessary to prove. Likewise, if literary Cosmopolitanism aims to convey the theoretical conceptions of Cosmopolitanism, such as pluralism, communication, equality, and dialogue through works, then it is entirely possible. However, using Cosmopolitanism as a theoretical discourse for critiquing literary works runs the risk of falling into the same parochialism as orientalism/Occidentalism and ignoring the aesthetic and ideological connotation of the works.

World literature is not a new term, and many commentators trace its origin back to Goethe, though some argue that Wallander and even Schlätzer (came up with-devised?) the term decades earlier than Goethe. Who coined the term is no longer important, but what is important is the new contemporary variation of the term and the cultural shift it represents. In today's globalized world, the desire to pursue dialogue between different cultures has never been greater, and the attempts of different cultures to gain a voice in the world have risen to unprecedented heights. Therefore, in this broader context, the connotation of world literature has changed from the simple concept of each country's literature to the influential literature that can stand in the world, the classicized literature, the literature that expresses cosmopolitan ideas. Such an understanding equates world literature with literary Cosmopolitanism. However, whether a work can gain influence in the world or be considered classical is not entirely a question of aesthetic factors. Instead, it involves political, economic, and other non-literary factors. As noted above, Cosmopolitanism is related to whom *Tianxia* and the World belong. Thus, all of the above concepts risk turning world literature into merely "literature of the world's dominant nations, or literature of the world's major nations," narrowing the meaning of the concept of world literature with "unprecedented cultural uniformity" hidden within. (Chen, 2015)

Similarly, there are many problems in literary Cosmopolitanism. As stated above, the cultural pluralism of Cosmopolitanism is neither possible nor necessary, politically or culturally. It cannot balance the relationship between the world, nation, and state. Therefore, to associate Cosmopolitanism with literature and express Cosmopolitanism in literature is no more than a perfect sentiment,

and it is neither possible nor necessary to achieve so-called Cosmopolitanism. It should be emphasized that if someone analyzes literary Cosmopolitanism from a series of arguments, such as the literature of different nations sharing a certain theme, eulogizing love, and friendship, or the common pursuit of good while rejecting evil, then we can establish a kind of world poetics or universal ethics, which is undoubtedly a kind of Cosmopolitanism overlooking its complexity and the richness of literary connotation. In particular, we cannot judge a work by whether it embodies Cosmopolitanism. Great Works, in whatever form, cannot embody a single thought, nor can their value be recognized through a single critical discourse.

The above definitions of world literature, literary Cosmopolitanism, or other arts under such a definition narrowed and solidified the concept connotation, expression method, and content of literature and other arts. Instead of pointing out what world literature is, we should think about what world literature is not; instead of emphasizing that literature should express Cosmopolitanism, we should think about whether literary Cosmopolitanism is possible and even necessary. World literature and literary Cosmopolitanism should be a mode of thinking, making us realize that “there has never been a single world literature classic, no single method of interpretation that can fit all texts, and no one method of interpretation of a text has always been effective.”(Damrosch, 2003) This dynamic and multi-dimensional way of thinking is an effective way to understand literature, art, and the world from the perspective of cultural crossvergence.

### III. Cultural Crossvergence: Historical Context, Theoretical Dimension and Ideological Value in Contemporary China

We oppose the critical discourse of Orientalism/Occidentalism not only because its subjective aim is to achieve a dialogue between the Orient and the Occident. In contrast, the objective result will only aggravate the estrangement between the two, but also because it is not an objective, critical discourse for the author and the work. In this context, we also reject the cultural pluralism advocated by the *Tianxia* system and Cosmopolitanism, as well as world literature and literature Cosmopolitanism, because it only emphasizes “overlapping consensus” while neglecting “difference.” It is static whether it emphasizes the particularity or universality of culture or art. It persists in exploring the possibility of communication between different cultures within the framework of system and order. It negates the diversity of aesthetics and the connotation of art. Therefore, can we go beyond the system and order framework and seek more practical communication between different cultures? Can we establish a more objective critical discourse about the author and his works? Is exploring a more diverse range of artistic concepts and content expression possible? Given the above problems and based on an in-depth consideration of various cultural phenomena and relevant theories, we advocate the “Cultural Crossvergence” theory by exploring its historical context, theoretical dimension, and current ideological value to provide a new viewpoint and theoretical premise for identifying the present binary opposition relations.

## 1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CULTURAL CROSSVERGENCE IN CHINESE CULTURE

Throughout thousands of years of Chinese cultural development history, cultural crossvergence has always been implicit or apparent in a specific historical context. Although it does not seem difficult for people to reach a general sense that culture is the result of the “integration” of the development of different historical stages, it is not so easy for people to understand the phenomenon of “crossvergence” between different cultures at a particular historical stage, especially between different cultures. Moreover, people pay more attention to the apparent “integration” of the “contents” of different cultures rather than the subtle “crossvergence” of the “modes” of thinking and methods. Here, we explore the complexity of cultural crossvergence in the context of the New Culture Movement as an example.

One of the disadvantages of the New Culture Movement was its complete rejection of tradition. Taking the criticism of Lu Xun as an example, some people took advantage of his writings on traditional Chinese medicine, Peking Opera, Chinese characters, cannibalism, and the Chinese people’s inferiority, putting greatly distorted emphasis on the deconstructive aspects of his thinking, while ignoring its constructive elements. However, they did not realize that Lu Xun’s negative criticism of traditional culture was a kind of analytical tool used to put traditional culture in a larger cultural field of vision and background to offer clarity and understand its advantages and disadvantages. In this sense, Lu Xun’s criticism of traditional culture is based on conscious reflection and self-reflection, which results from cultural crossvergence of thought, method, and mode of thinking. As David Der-wei Wang pointed out, “contrary to the conventional perception that the May Fourth era was a period of total anti-traditionalism, intellectuals at the time appeared to have been radical comparativists when analyzing modern, foreign importations as well as traditional legacies.” (Wang, 2018) For example, Lu Xun’s indebtedness to Nietzsche and Stirner and his revisiting of both Qu Yuan 屈原 (340–278 BC) and Tao Qian 陶潛 (395–427), and Wang Guowei 王国维 (1877–1927).

Whether the May Fourth era was a period of total anti-traditionalism, Lin Yusheng emphasizes the concept of “creative transformation” in his works. Furthermore, he tends to think that “Lu Xun could not only have explored more deeply about how to transcend the whole ethos of anti-traditional thought, but he should also have endeavored to invoke the creative transformation of Chinese tradition.” (Lin Yu-sheng, 1988) Combined with his own works, such as “Have Chinese People Lost Their Self-confidence?” (中国人失掉自信力了吗?) which emphasizes that Chinese culture has its own “muscles and backbones” (筋骨和脊梁), Lu Xun introduced his idea of “Grab-ism” (拿来主义), where he argued that “we need to grab from classical Chinese culture, Chinese folk culture, and foreign culture.” We also have reason to believe that the May Fourth New Culture pioneers represented by Lu Xun did not deny the traditional culture. Their attitude toward the traditional culture was based on the mode of thinking of cultural crossvergence.

The Second disadvantage that the *May Fourth New Culture Movement* was criticized for was its representative figures, such as Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培), Hu Shi (胡适) and so on, who held a paradoxical and inconsistent attitude toward

the relationship between Chinese and Western culture, as well as Cosmopolitanism. However, in our view, this inconsistency and its contradictions demonstrated that the pioneers of the New Culture Movement intended to try new things and cultures with great enthusiasm. However, in the process, they adhered to understanding new things and cultures in a dynamic development stage to reflect on Chinese culture deeply. Some of them may have lacked Lu Xun's sobriety and self-awareness. At some stage, they may have lost their critical awareness of western culture due to excessive enthusiasm, grief, anger, and resentment. They even sometimes lacked objective evaluation regarding traditional Chinese culture, single-mindedly thinking that only "change" was vital when considering traditional Chinese culture and literature. However, the true value of their significance lies in the development and dynamic understanding of the traditional culture or western thought from rejection to acceptance and vice-versa. This process is the representation of cultural crossvergence, where its significance lies.

Cai Yuanpei, for example, started believing in Cosmopolitanism but said later that "China was deceived by it, and so our country lost its nationalism. Therefore, we need not talk about Cosmopolitanism and democracy; we can only talk about Cosmopolitanism until the nation has reached its goal." (Gao, 1984) From Cosmopolitanism to Nationalism, Cai's change of heart was partly due to his recognition that Chinese intellectuals could not accept and adopt Western ideas. However, they also needed to address China's problems in the context of China's realities. Such a process of change is based on the comparison of and reflection on Chinese and Western society and culture, and the transformation of his ideology is the result of cultural crossvergence.

Ultimately, we can understand the historical context of cultural crossvergence only in light of a particular historical stage, such as the New Culture Movement discussed above. As long as Chinese cultural history continues, each historical stage will intrinsically feature cultural crossvergence. It exists in the debate between ancient and modern times and is also present in the debate between China and other countries. Cultural crossvergence is not simply a natural phenomenon of culture, but it is, in fact, a more nuanced, conscious activity of human beings motivated by various reasons. Therefore, as well as understanding the historical context surrounding cultural crossvergence, we must also analyze its theoretical dimensions.

## 2. THE THEORETICAL DIMENSION OF "CULTURAL CROSSVERGENCE"

"Cultural Crossvergence" is an essential concept in cultural research. It is a theoretical concept relative to the 'Pure Culture' benchmark, even though pure culture has never existed. All kinds of cultures are intertwined with crossvergence for different reasons. Moreover, the key factor of cultural crossvergence is how to cope with the issues of compatibility and consistency. The principle of compatibility requires equal treatment of the differences between different cultures, and consistency is the coordination of the internal functions of the "new culture" formed by "integration" based on compatibility. The former is relative to cultural relativism; the latter is relative to cultural monism.

In cultural studies, many scholars have highlighted the mutual influence among different cultures. They have put forward several terms to describe such

phenomena, such as “dialogue,” “collision,” and “negotiation,” etc., all in an attempt to realize the equal exchange between different cultures. However, they only put forward the “necessity” of dialogue. They did not realize the dynamic process of cultural crossvergence operating between different cultures and the possibility of producing a “new change” of culture during such a process.

In the sense that “cultural crossvergence” inevitably pays attention to “innovation” and “new change” of culture, Lin Yusheng stressed that “in order to apply the western ideas suitably in China, they must be assimilated before used.” (Lin, 1988) Besides, some foreign scholars use Martin Heidegger’s concept of “Worlding” to emphasize the dynamic process of literature and culture development. Pheng Cheah used the concept of “in the world” to emphasize that the world should be conceived of as an “Ongoing” dynamic generating process of “Becoming.” The key to the cultural “Worlding” process is not to achieve or share an identity but to understand each other and turn the world into an “ongoing” process of negotiating differences. “The meaning of the world at a higher level is to reach universal human nature through spiritual communication, interchange, and fusion.” (Pheng Cheah, 2012) Using the concept of “Worlding,” Theodore Hunter analyzes the phenomenon of extreme criticism of traditional culture by Chinese intellectuals since the end of the Qing Dynasty, and he thinks that such criticism actually embodies the process of cultural “new change” by bringing “world” into “China” (Hunter, 2017). David Der-wei Wang argues that using the verbalized concept of Martin Heidegger’s “Worlding” is observing how China encounters and brings the world into China. The point of the term “Worlding,” he argues, is “to remind us that the world is not a static place, but in a state of flux, an existential way that is called and revealed (being-in-the-world). ‘Worlding’ is a complex, emergent process of the world, constantly updating representation, perceptions and thoughts to achieve open states.” (Wang, 2017)

It is not difficult to see that all of the discussions mentioned above emphasize the “dynamic” development process of Literature / Culture, which is undoubtedly a step closer than merely pointing out the “openness” of “dialogue” in thinking. However, there is no further discussion on achieving this “dynamic” development. Both the “dialogue” and the “dynamic” theories of culture emphasize the principle of “compatibility” of culture. The latter points out the necessity of “compatibility” to some extent but does not further explain how to achieve this congruity. Moreover, this is exactly what we try to explain in the theory of “cultural crossvergence” in this article. We emphasize that the “cultural crossvergence” theory is a dynamic process combining self-examination and self-consciousness in its ideological content, methodology, and mode of thinking.

First of all, cultural crossvergence is a theoretical attempt to remove the order, a frame, and a system, which is based on the “overlapping consensus” among different cultures and pays more attention to the objective existence of “difference.” Cultural crossvergence is a dynamic, continuous, and reflective cultural dialogue whose purpose is not merely to find common ground or to eliminate differences. It does not give either/or cultural value judgments and is not restricted to the dialogue between Chinese and Western cultures. The scope of cultural crossvergence spans time and space. Its effects are present in the relationships between Chinese culture and neighboring countries and ancient

Chinese culture with modern, contemporary culture. Cultural crossvergence is a far-reaching dialogue among theories, disciplines, and research methods.

Secondly, cultural crossvergence is not at the expense of cultural homogenization. Although it is based partly on common ground, its emphasis on differences in distinct cultural environments, even within the consensus, retains heterogeneity in the gestalt; Differences will produce new differences. People tend to understand the culture in the context of the social, cultural, and personal circumstances they are part of. We cannot refuse cultural crossvergence on the pretext of fear of assimilation. Specifically, we cannot bemoan that learning from other different cultures inevitably leads to the “decay” and “extinction” of our own. Again, taking the *New Culture Movement of May Fourth* as an example, “it is not the challenge of ‘Western Culture’ to ‘Chinese Culture’, nor the victory of ‘Western Culture’ over ‘Chinese Culture’, but the rebellion of modern Chinese intellectuals in the Chinese cultural circle against the traditional hegemonic discourse that has imprisoned the development of Chinese thought, and it is the criticism of ‘Chinese discourse’ to the traditional hegemonic culture of China.” (Wang, 2004) The result is innovation and development, not the decline and extinction of Chinese culture. Hence, we should be cautious not to let cultural crossvergence lead to cultural homogenization and instead focus our efforts on eliminating it.

Third, cultural crossvergence should focus on more than just the WEST while ignoring the cultures of our surrounding countries. There should be no inferior or superior attitude differences when we face different cultures. We do not want to be overlooked by “the eyes of the West,” so why should we overlook other surrounding countries through “the eyes of great China”? Such multilateral positions and postures are exactly what cultural crossvergence is against. We have repeatedly stressed that cultural crossvergence is not to seek common ground but to build cognitive activity based on differences. Its aim is not to establish a “system” or “order” that encompasses understanding various cultures. Rather, it focuses on China’s current literary and artistic creation and theoretical criticism concerning the binary opposite thinking implied in Chinese cultural acceptance and development principles.

### 3. THE CONTEMPORARY IDEOLOGICAL VALUE OF “CULTURAL CROSSVERGENCE” IN CHINA

The “cultural crossvergence” advocacy has its own special realistic context. With the development of the Chinese economy and culture, recognizing the relationship between nationality and world, tradition and modernity of culture under the new cultural context and cultural development strategy, along with how to view and construct the Chinese knowledge system, has become an urgent issue to be discussed.

One of the ideological values of the “cultural crossvergence” theory is to provide a method and premise for us to understand cultural phenomena, choose cultural strategies, and reconsider the Chinese knowledge system. To exaggerate the negative factors of things or ignore the realistic foundation’s elevation is a binary opposite thinking mode lacking a dialectic attitude. It cannot be used to understand and solve problems with a more inclusive attitude and vision. For example, we should emphasize carrying forward the traditional culture but

putting it and the contemporary culture in binary opposition, revering the past and neglecting the present under the one-sided assumption that contemporary culture must be inferior to traditional culture, making such judgments lose their objectivity. This critical stance does not examine the cultural transmission and new changes from the “cultural crossvergence” perspective.

Secondly, the reflection and spirit of self-consciousness emphasized by the “cultural crossvergence” theory is also one of its ideological values. Reflection is based on recognizing contradictions, failures, and setbacks, while self-consciousness lies in the initiative and self-discipline of the subject. Regardless of whether it is social or cultural/literary development, there is no doubt that it is a stage of detours, where complete denial or criticism makes us lose the thought and inspiration that such “detours” are supposed to teach us. Self-reflection and self-consciousness regard cultural crossvergence as a dynamic process rather than insisting on pure “positive” or “negative” mechanical thinking. Without self-reflection and self-consciousness, the subject cannot hold the objective attitude that a self-confident culture should have, making it impossible to achieve true cultural self-confidence.

Thirdly, the compatibility and consistency principles advocated by cultural crossvergence are important to its current ideological value. Using the development of new media culture, we cannot take advantage of its convenience while placing it at the bottom of the cultural order or adopting an excluded attitude. We should not essentialize the media culture and the others of the media age, especially ourselves. We cannot go back to the Paleolithic era. Facing the quintessence and dross of media culture, we retain self-reflection and self-consciousness and admit the difficulties and contradictions we will inevitably encounter under the new cultural context and the possibility of new cultural changes. It is the spirit of cultural crossvergence and its value in contemporary thinking.

Finally, cultural crossvergence provides a perspective and approach for thinking about the knowledge system of China. On the one hand, the current development of Chinese culture has been driven by the policies of “go global” and building “cultural confidence.” On the other hand, it has been criticized as lacking its own knowledge system and innovation and being colonized in thinking and thought by borrowing Western theories to solve China’s problems. It is also accused of completely rejecting “other” while blindly emphasizing “us” in culture. To some extent, this criticism is reasonable. However, we do not believe that China does not have its knowledge system, nor that establishing such a system necessitates a dichotomy with the Western knowledge system. The significance of cultural crossvergence lies in emphasizing the dynamic “generation” and “transformation” of culture and knowledge systems in epistemology and methodology. On the question and construction of the Chinese knowledge system, we should not base it upon the dualistic models of “Yes” or “No,” “good” or “bad,” “China” or “West.” Instead, it should be applied to specific problems to see the shortcomings or advantages of China’s knowledge system and discover its strengths and disadvantages. In exchanging different cultures, the theoretical conception of constructing the Chinese knowledge system should be based on the “crossvergence” thinking mode rather than “substitution.”

### Conclusion

In summary, we have focused on the theoretical blind spots of Orientalism and Occidentalism, the *Tianxia* system and Cosmopolitanism, but we believe that such blind spots themselves are significant; they show that there is a real need for further “crossvergence” between different cultural theories. At the cultural practice level, we also note that although people may have different cultural ideas, they share the same expectations and pursuit of cultural crossvergence and cultural creation. We emphasize the complementarity and convergence of different cultures and theories, thus generating new ideas and exploring solutions to real problems. Because of the current ideological trends in the world concerning the separation and even confrontation between the Orient and the Occident, ancient and modern, especially concerning contradictions and influences caused by the potential “dualistic” mode of thinking, it has become necessary to reinterpret some related cultural issues from the perspective of “cultural crossvergence”. The significance of this is not only academic and theoretical, but it is also closely related to the current context of cultural reality. The cultural crossvergence theory we advocate is dynamic, reflective and realistic. It emphasizes the coexistence and crossvergence of multi-culture, values “becoming”. It is based on the consideration of the current state of aspects of Chinese culture, such as “go global” and the “development of China knowledge system”. From the perspective of cultural crossvergence, analyzing the theory and critical discourse, as well as specific practices that exist in Chinese culture and literature today, recognizing their shortcomings, and then suggesting the theoretical vision and practical concerns that Chinese culture and literature should have, is what this paper attempts to explore and address.

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