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THE PLACE AND ROLE OF SINO-CONFUCIAN CULTURE
AND CONFUCIANISM IN WORLD HISTORY
ACCORDING TO LIANG SHUMING'S THOUGHT
ON LIFE AND CULTURE

INTRODUCTION:
THE INDIVIDUAL-HISTORICAL OF LIANG SHUMING PUT
IN CONNECTION WITH THE UNIVERSAL-HISTORICAL

Liang Shuming's understanding of Chinese culture which he conceived of as Sino-Confucian culture, and of Confucianism differs from common and familiar understandings in the Sinological-academic world. It seems that the best way to understand Liang Shuming is in terms of his search for authentic existence.¹ Liang is really a multi-faceted personality which reveals itself in his thought and action (cf. Alitto, *The Last Confucian* and "The Conservative as Sage"). His thinking was predominantly gained from his life-world, and this world was submerged into a threefold crisis, i.e., his individual (Liang as a particular human being), national (Liang as a Chinese, a human

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¹In 1982, Frederick J. Streng (1933-1993) published a remarkable contribution with the title "Three Approaches to Authentic Existence: Christian, Confucian, and Buddhist" (371-392). Although his main concern was the comparison of thought among three 20th-century thinkers, that is, Paul Tillich (1886-1965), a Christian, Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909-1978), a Confucian, and Keiji Nishitani 西谷 啓治 (1900-1990), a Buddhist, he also explicated the concept of authentic existence: "To live authentically human being must know and actualize the 'the nature of things'" (Streng 371). To put it shortly, in every form of authentic existence, we have a tension between ontology and axiology through the lenses of an epistemological dimension, i.e., the relation of subject and object in knowing reality. Cf. also Wesolowski, "Understanding the Foreign" 366-374; Tu Wei-ming 242-273 and 396-400.

being belonging to a particular human culture) and universal (Liang as a part of the whole humankind) (cf. Wesołowski, "Understanding the Foreign" 368-369).

In his "Zishu" (Autobiography), Liang Shuming depicted that his thought about human life made three changes. In his retrospective, Liang understood them as follows:

As far as the changes in my thinking on human life, or [the so-called] philosophical change, are concerned, there are [altogether] three periods. The first period is that of pragmatism since I was 14 or 15 years old till I became 19 years old. I stood much under the influence of my father. The second period is that which I expressed in previous descriptions as the thought of world renunciation and conversion to Buddhism. It happened when I was 20 years old and lasted till my 28th and 29th year of age. In this period, I desired with all my heart to become a Buddhist monk. The third period marks the turn from Buddhism to Confucianism. I was 28 or 29 years old. It was at the time of the publication of my book *DXWH*. In these three periods there is something which seems amazing. Then the first period can stand for Western thought, the second for the Indian, and the third for Chinese thought. It is as though (*fangfu* 仿佛) the three great systems of world culture turned around in my mind. (ZS² 9)

This statement seems to be a key place to interpret Liang's thought on life and culture, because here the individually historical was connected with the universally historical. Despite the "as-though" character of Liang's statement, we can discover the highest (possibly rational) horizon of interpretation of Liang's self-understanding. He seems to have realized the individual participation in the three basic systems of cultures based on his psychogenesis as the development of his faculty of thinking with its three periods. The timeline of his psychogenesis ran through Western-pragmatic (14/15-19 years old), Indo-Buddhist (20-28/29 years old), and Sino-Confucian cultures (from 29 years old onwards) and the timeline of the history of humankind, which he presented in his *DXWH*, was a sequence of Western-pragmatic, Sino-Confucian and Indo-Buddhist cultures. This understanding goes beyond the rational structure of the human mind. Probably Liang saw himself implicitly as a Bodhisattva (Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 95, fn. 3; cf. also Hanafin, and Meynard). It, however, underlines Liang's basic concept of culture as manifestation of human spirit, mind or mentality, especially embodied in moral reason.

² List of Abbreviations see at the end of the Bibliography for this paper (p. 56).

1. LIANG SHUMING'S THOUGHT ON LIFE AND CULTURE

Liang Shuming's thought and his life were almost the same. His *DXWH* is actually a result of Liang's action-related epistemological interest, a fruit of his attitude of the unity of knowledge and action (*zhixing he yi* 知行合一) which is a Confucian ideal of acquiring and mastering (moral) knowledge.³ Besides, Liang understood himself as a "man-in-the-problem" (*wenti zhong ren* 問題中人)⁴ who could not help but solve the perennial problems of human life and later those of China. The solving of a problem meant for him an overcoming of dejection (*jiejue fanmen* 解決煩悶) (ZS 3). As far as Liang's thought regarding the "China problem" (*Zhongguo wenti* 中國問題) or that of Chinese society (which in comparison with that of human life is its concretization and a particular instance) is concerned, Liang made the following extensions of his thought:

1. At first there was fascination and trust in the modern political systems of the West (implying his participation in the revolutionary group).

2. Then a discovery of the relationship between a given political system and the customs and habits of a respective people was made, that is, a political system depends on a people's customs and everyday practice. A relevant question was: Does China have sufficient prerequisites for implementation of Western political systems?

3. Another step was that Liang focused on a need to educate and cultivate new political customs and habits in a village autonomy (*xiangcun zizhi* 鄉村自治: rural self-administration). Liang was interested in a program to educate habits to an organized group life (the top of which is a state). To implement his vision, Liang wanted to start with the smallest unit of Chinese society, that is, a village. According to him, this idea was conceived already in 1922. A Chinese village was for him a source of genuine Chinese culture, the roots of authentic Chineseness.

4. A next step was the realization of an intimate connection between a political system and the problem of economy, that is, the education and cultivation of political habits could solve economic problems, and *vice versa*.

³ This formula goes back to the words of the famous Chinese Neo-Confucian Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529). However, this life-oriented, epistemological attitude is some special for Confucian tradition.

⁴ This self-understanding Liang formulated in his "Ruhe chenggong jintian de wo?" 如何成功今天的我? (How Was My Present Self Achieved?, 1928), in *LSMQJ*, vol. IV, pp. 853-865. The phrase the "man-in-the-problem" is contained in the last sentence of this article.

5. The way for the reconstruction of the organizational structure of Chinese society after its breakdown was sought by Liang in comparative investigation of the organizational structure of Western society,

6. Liang's final result was a position of village government (*xiangzhi* 鄉治) which was later generally called – rural reconstruction (*xiangcun jianshe* 鄉村建設).

1.1 LIFE AND ITS WILL WITH THREE DIRECTIONS

As above already mentioned, Liang Shuming's understanding of Sino-Confucian culture and Confucianism stood in connection with his great desire to comprehend the culture and life of the Western world. He was the first Chinese who made a Buddhist-philosophical comparison of three world cultures (a Western, Indian, and a Chinese one) in a book form (1921). Liang in his search for the definition of Western culture formulates the universality of the problem of culture and life. Simultaneously, he also worked out the universality of his method of solving it. Therein he says:

I mean our search for the roots (*genben* 根本) or a source (*quanyuan* 泉源) of a culture is a method. What do you think: What kind of thing is culture? It is nothing else than the kind of life of a people. And what is life? Life is a will (*yiyu* 意欲) not [yet] exhausted [to the end.] The will here mentioned is more or less similar to the concept of will of Arthur Schopenhauer [1788-1860] – it is a continual [movement] between being satisfied and dissatisfied. It permeates a whole people and the whole life. But why does the kind of life, which was brought out by it, differentiate in two different forms of character? It is so only because the primordial and original will, which becomes such and such a kind of life, differentiates in two different directions. Thus, after its development there are two kinds. Based on this [we have the following line of reasoning:] If you look for the roots or a source of a culture, you have to grasp its original will, that is: How does the direction of one culture differentiate from that of another? If you look for wherein this direction differentiates, then reduce the well-known specific features of [a given culture] to an original starting point. It is not difficult to realize it with the first glance. (*DXWH* 352)

With this passage Liang considers himself ready to make a definition of Western culture, that is, to grasp its nature:

Western culture is [such a culture] whose basic spirit is to demand and go forward or [to put it in other words:] Western culture is a culture which, based upon the spirit possessing [the attitude] to demand and go forward, produced science (*sai'ensi* 塞恩斯) and democracy (*demokelaxi* 德謨克拉西) – these two specific characteristics. (西方文化是由意欲向前求的精神产生“赛恩斯与“德谟克拉西”两大异彩的文化.) (*DXWH* 353)

Chinese culture became Liang's second subject of definition. His direct descriptions of Chinese culture consist in the following parts of the *DXWH*:

1. "Presenting an Answer to the Problem of Chinese and Indian Culture" (p. 383);
2. "Short Description of Chinese Culture" (pp. 391-399);
3. "A Preliminary Attempt to Explain the Past Life of the Chinese" (pp. 477-482).

Thus, we look first how Liang understand human life (cf. Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 118-125). For him, human life in its realization and concretization is a process of principally dealing with a threefold problem. First is a material problem: a domain of in principle limitless growth of human power over matter enabled by causality,⁵ understood as an influence by which one event, process, state or object, i.e., a cause, within the inorganic and physical world (matter) contributes to the production of another event, process, state or object, i.e., an effect where the cause is partly responsible for the effect, and the effect is partly dependent on the cause. That is for Liang the realm of a material problem. Second is a social problem: a domain of a conditional availability (or conditional non-availability) of the object of desire, that is of another mind or the will of another person. This domain is a realm of human relationships or a social problem. The act of loving in return (redamancy) is an example of such a conditional availability or conditional non-availability (the phenomenon of unrequited love or one-sided love). Finally, there is an individual-spiritual problem: a domain of the absolute non-availability within the power of causality, especially in view of the necessity of aging and death in the life process. Besides this threefold problem, there is according to Liang also a domain of neutrality – a kind of indifference towards desires being satisfied or not, a kind of Stoic *adiaphora*, i.e., actions that morality neither mandates nor

⁵Causality as the relation between cause and effect is the fabric of the dynamic world in which we human beings live. We all make frequent attempts to reason causation relationships of everyday events (e.g., the cause of my headache or any other cause of my suffering). Even the greatest scientific discoveries are about causality (e.g., Newton's discovery of the cause for an apple's fall, i.e. gravity, and Darwin's natural selection as the cause of evolution). Human causal thinking has become detached from space and time so that instead of just reacting to perceptual input, our minds can simulate actions and forces and their causal consequences. This finds its way in human development of technologies which in turn enable us to make observations and carry out experiments in an unprecedented scale. A fundamental Buddhist teaching on causality or causation and the ontological status of all phenomena is the doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination). The doctrine teaches that all phenomena arise in dependence on causes and conditions and lack intrinsic being.

forbids. For Liang Shuming, it was a realm of natural feelings and esthetical-artist expressions of life in which natural spontaneity is more at work, like in singing or dancing.

According to Liang, human life as such is a process of dealing with the above-mentioned three basic problems – material, social, and individual-spiritual (a threefold problem). In view of this understanding, the meaning and the timeline of human history is outlined. Human history is nothing else than a process through which the three problems of life are being resolved at the same time, however, following the progressive difficulty of the problems faced. Thus, a relatively easy problem is that of dealing with matter, which according to Liang is the first period of human history. For Liang, this period was coming – slowly but surely – to a close. Afterwards the main emphasis will be devoted to the second problem of social relationship, and humanity is according to Liang already on the threshold of this problem. The third problem of the individual-spiritual, which is the most difficult one, will become the most formidable challenge of humanity in the distant future.

Besides, fundamental for Liang was the understanding of life as a continuum of the organismic-volitional self-movement of the question-answer affairs, i.e., a constant, uninterrupted need to deal with problems (questions) that require an answer. The will-driven human life as a process of questions being followed by answers (that is actually a struggle, not only and totally suffering like in Buddhist faith) can assume within the scope of its threefold problem three basic attitudes: 1) to demand and to go forward; 2) to adjust one's own intentions, to hold the golden mean; and 3) to turn back and to move backwards. This explanation is very important to Liang. He says: "The three directions are of great importance, because our whole explanation of culture is based upon them" (*DXWH* 382).

Against this background, we have the definitions of two other world cultures – Chinese and Indian ones:

"Chinese culture is [such a culture] the basic spirit of which consists in the will-itself [tending to] harmony and holding the golden mean" (中国文化是以意欲自为、调和、持中为其根本精神的, *DXWH* 383).

"Indian culture is [such a culture] the basic spirit of which is to turn back and move backwards" (印度文化是以意欲返身向后要求为其根本精神的, *DXWH* 383).

Now we can easily discover the main strains of Liang's cultural thought. First, his typology of the three basic human cultures, i.e., Western, Chinese, and Indian, conforms to his typology of the individual awareness of three

types of men, i.e., that of the man in the street (Mozi 墨子 [ca. 468 – ca. 367 B.C.] or modern Westerners), Confucius (551-479 B.C.), and Buddha (ca. 480-400 B.C.), the last two whom Liang regarded as two precocious geniuses (early awakened men of humankind) who individually lived the Sino-Confucian and Indo-Buddhist cultures which will develop universally in the future. Second, Liang's typology of the tree basic cultures directly derives from the three basic directions of the will, i.e., to demand and to go forward is tantamount to Western-pragmatic culture, to adjust one's own intentions and to hold the golden mean is related to Sino-Confucian culture, and to turn back and to move backwards is identified with Indo-Buddhist culture. As we see, each of these directions allows humanity to resolve one of the three problems.

Liang's notion of prematurity (precocity) of Sino-Confucian culture, i.e., one of his key theorems of the premature character of Chinese culture articulated in the *DXWH*, was the quintessence of his cultural thought which was put into practice in his manifold activities of rural reconstruction during the period of 1928-1937. In order to connect Liang's *DXWH* to the next period in the development of his cultural philosophy, we will cite from his *ZGMZ* an interesting comparison as to the prematurity of Chinese culture:

China is like an intelligent child whose body has not yet fully grown, [but at the same time] he/she has prematurely developed her/his intelligence. Because of the prematurity of her/his intelligence, the growth of the body was [again] hindered. This obstacle [in turn] impeded [further] proper development of her/his intelligence. To say it pithily, China is not infantile but mature; although we say "mature," her form [however] sometimes displays infantile traits. That is what I said before – 'It was not in accordance with the normal process of nature.'

(但中国则仿佛一个聪明的孩子，身体发育未全，而智慧早开了。即由其智慧之早开，转而抑阻其身体的发育，复由其身体发育之不健全，而智慧遂亦不得发育圆满良好。质言之，中国不是幼稚而是成熟；虽云成熟，而形态间又时显露幼稚，即我前说的“非寻夫自然之常”是已). (*ZGMZ* 100)

1.2. HUMAN EPISTEMIC POWERS AND CULTURE

In the *DXWH*, Liang's concept of culture reached another philosophical pinnacle, because he used the Buddhist epistemological approach to grasp the essence of human culture. We can call it a Buddhist epistemological turn. This turn occurs in the short passage "Sanfang shenghuo zhi zhenjie" 三方生活之真解 (A True Interpretation of the Life in the Three Regions) (*DXWH* 485-487). This time Liang defines the three cultures as follows:

1. “The life of the West consists in that intuition (*zhijue* 直覺) applies to intellect (*lizhi* 理智)” (西洋生活是直覺运用理智的, *DXWH* 485);

2. “The life of China consists in the intellect applying to intuition” (中国生活是理智运用直覺, *DXWH* 485);

3. “The life of India consists in the intellect as it applies to sensation (*xianliang* 現量)” (印度生活是理智运用現量, *DXWH* 485).

These three definitions of human life, and implicitly of human culture, lead us to Liang’s *weishi* 唯識- Buddhist thought (cf. Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 199-210). In this Buddhist-soteriological perspective the three cultures can be roughly construed as follows:

1. Western-pragmatic culture is a culture whose direction of the will is a primordial one, i.e., to demand and to go forward. The epistemological emphasis of this culture lies in the condition in which the intuition of the world-oriented and differentiated self avails itself of the intellect. This culture – according to Liang – was reaching at the time its culmination, which means that the material problem would in principle soon be solved. The rise of this culture is due to the fact that an intellect, using the intuition of the self-based on the primordial direction of the will leads to a pronounced knowledge of itself which results in an overdue stress on the self. This constitutes the experience of a basic double duality, i.e., that of subject and object and that of one self and another self or other selves. This way of life means in the Buddhist soteriological perspective a dual attachment. The above-mentioned threefold problem of human life, i.e., a material, social and individual-spiritual one, can be understood with the help of the Buddhist concept of dual attachment (*er zhi* 二執), i.e., world-attachment (*fazhi* 法執, that of the reality of things) and self-attachment (*wozhi* 我執, that of the reality of the ego). The latter is double: an innate self-attachment (*jusheng wozhi* 俱生我執, a natural, inborn or intuitive one) and a differentiated self-attachment (*fenbie wozhi* 分別我執, an acquired, desire- and intellect-oriented one). According to Liang’s interpretation, the material problem is that of world-attachment, the social one that of self-attachment in the form of over-coming a differentiated self, and the individual-spiritual problem is, one of self-attachment in the form of overcoming an inborn and intuitive self. The proper product of Western culture is “the matter of the outer world” (*waijie wuzhi* 外界物質, *DXWH* 504). The prototypes of this cultural attitude were ancient Greek thinkers and Mozi in China. The culmination of this type was epitomized by John Dewey (1859-1952) and William James (1842-1910).

2. Sino-(Taizhou 泰州⁶) Confucian culture is a culture whose basic direction of the will is harmony. The epistemological stress of this culture lies in the claim that intellect applies the intuition which especially wants to know life as such (life-intuition within an innate self-attachment). The epistemic identity is in this case the awareness of the inborn and intuitive self.⁷ This culture has already reached its individual culmination in the life of Confucius (Confucius' self-finding as true harmony⁸). According to Liang, this kind of culture is on the brink of becoming the dominant cultural attitude of the world in the near future. Its rise is due to the fact that an intellect-oriented intuition (or: an intellect based on the cognition through the life-intuition) with the help of harmony as the basic direction of the will achieves a pronounced knowledge of life and its truth as self-finding or self-accepting. The proper product of this cultural attitude is a "life of the inner world" (*neijie shengming* 内界生命) (*DXWH* 504), i.e., Confucian spirituality as a life of just inborn, intuitive self-attachment. This is tantamount to the solving of the second, i.e., social problem of human life. Liang saw a kind of Confucianizing of world culture starting to take place at the time (see below).

⁶In Liang Shuming's understanding of the Taizhou scholars, and especially that of their founder Wang Gen 王艮 (1483-1541), the precious point was that they were not only thinkers, but also activists. To be a scholar-activist was an ideal for Liang Shuming as a Confucian. Cf. Cheng 45-65; Alitto, *The Last Confucian*; Yang 173-188. The Taizhou School was a Confucian school of the Ming Dynasty which is identified with Wang Gen 王艮. Because he came from Taizhou 泰州 (Jiangsu Province), the school was called after that name. Wang Gen's basic guiding conviction was: "What for common people is of everyday use, is *Dao*" (*baixing riyong ji Dao* 百姓日用即道), cf. *Zhexue da cidian* 529.

⁷Here is required the knowledge of Buddhism: Liang believed in a double attachment (*erzhi* 二執), i.e., *fazhi* 法執 (world attachment) and *wozhi* 我執 (self-attachment), the latter of which has two kinds: *jusheng wo* 具生我 and *fenbie wo* 分別我. *Jusheng wo* is for him the inborn, life-oriented, and intuitive self and *fenbie wo* is a differentiated, egocentric, and egoistic self which is at work in Western-pragmatic culture. Cf. Wesolowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 115.

⁸*DXWH* 480-481: "Only the attitude of Confucius was anything but 'to be tolerant and [merely] indulgent' and 'to deal with something carelessly.' He 'never got into a position in which he did not find himself.' Only [on the basis of] this self-finding (*zide* 自得) [one can] [completely] take the second way [of human culture]. Only then is there a positive appearance [of such a culture]. Self-finding is the only appropriate direction of the second way which is the will, which is only harmony (*tiaohe* 調和) and keeping the golden mean (*chizhong* 持中). All compliance, patience and careless handling are considered harmony that has become natural. But only self-finding is true harmony (*zhen tiaohe* 真調和)". This spiritual ideal of life, which Liang saw realized in Confucius, is an authentic human existence (to be oneself and to show oneself whom he is) within the second cultural way, i.e., Sino-(Taizhou-)Confucian culture.

3. Indo-(*weishi*-)Buddhist culture is a culture whose basic direction of the will is to negate itself, i.e., to turn back and to move backwards towards a renunciation of the world (ascetic attitude). The epistemological emphasis of this culture is based on the notion that intellect only applies sensation (*xianliang* 現量⁹). The epistemic moment of identification is the highest awareness, i.e., the *alaya*-consciousness.¹⁰ According to Liang, this cultural attitude has already been individually realized in the life of Buddha. It will be universally extended in the long run as the third and last stage of human history. The rise of this culture is due to the fact that intellect bound to the backward-oriented will avails itself of sensation. The proper product of it is the “primordial being of non-life” (*wusheng benti* 無生本體, *DXWH* 504), i.e., a unity with the only true reality as the entrance into Nirvana.

What for us is here of special interest is the conviction of Liang Shuming that the imminent future mode of world culture will be that of the Sino-Confucian cultural attitude.

2. LIANG SHUMING’S UNDERSTANDING OF CONFUCIANISM IN HIS SCHEME OF WORLD HISTORY AND PREMATURENESS OF CHINESE CULTURE

Chinese culture – in Liang’s understanding: Sino-Confucian – takes a special place and unique rank among other very advanced civilizations of humankind. This is so because it has been continuously growing at least four

⁹ This epistemic attitude leads a total renunciation of the world, which consists in a radical attempt to completely destroy the dual attachment (i.e., world-attachment and double self-attachment as an innate and a differentiated self-attachment). Here one could cite the whole section “Fojiao de xing’er shangxue fangfa” 佛教的形而上學方法 (The Metaphysical Method of Buddhism; *DXWH* 409-414) and especially the words: a radical attempt to completely destroy [*xianliang*] lead unswervingly to: Silence! Cessation! Liberation!” (*DXWH* 412-413).

¹⁰ The classification of so-called “Eight Consciousnesses” is a teaching of the *weishi*-Buddhism (Yogācāra). According to this teaching, there are five sense consciousnesses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body), which are supplemented by the sixth awareness, i.e., the mental consciousness (thoughts / ideation) and the seventh known as the defiled mental consciousness (also called: deluded awareness; posited on the basis of straightforward cognition in combination with inferential cognition; its form of physical phenomenon is, e.g., self-attachment: with Liang, a specificity of Western culture), and finally the fundamental store-house consciousness (all-encompassing foundation consciousness), which is the basis of the other seven. This eighth consciousness is understood as the one to collect and store away the impressions of previous experiences, which form the seeds of future karma in this life and in the next after rebirth. Cf. Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 196.

thousand years, and it continues to grow today. China is not the oldest among all the cultures, but the oldest among our present cultures, which survived until today. This cultural continuity of traditional China is concomitant with its pronounced ideologically construed coherence, retold ages by ages by Confucians. In China's history the awareness of this cultural uniqueness became a fact taken for granted. It enormously influenced China's self-understanding. History as such and the awareness of it became an instrument of paramount authority with the possibility of great manipulation.

Through Chinese sages who laid claim as "pure preservers" of ancient tradition, like Confucius (551-479 B.C.),¹¹ Confucianism became an official state doctrine during the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 8 or 32) and continued that role – more or less successful – till the Revolution of 1911. The Confucian state doctrine became a kind of teaching on ruling and exercising government with sociopolitical and state-oriented ethical dimensions which borrowed from other Chinese traditions like Legism, Daoism or from old Chinese cosmological speculation on the order of the universe, and later from a foreign tradition of Buddhism. It was the Confucianist Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179?-104? B.C.) who gave the Confucian state doctrine its ideological basis and explication. He was influenced by the natural-philosophical mystic of the Yin-Yang School, with its worldview based on Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行) of change. This system of thought presents a special form of thought which is based on a proto- (or pre-)scientific understanding of the relations of the cosmos and human society (cf. Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 174). Dong Zhongshu saw a close relation, actually a direct interdependence between nature and the human, that is Chinese society. The latter was expressed in the concept of *tianxia* 天下 – "land under heaven" (human, that is the Chinese world). Cosmic and natural processes and those of human society should move without any obstruction and collision. This harmony and equilibrium of the whole universe consisted in harmony and compatibility between the two complementary primordial forces of the cosmos, that is *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽. Heaven (*Tian* 天), which was an epitome of natural forces with moral power, ruled the human world not directly, except for a special intervention called *tianming* 天命 – the mandate of Heaven. In its reign, Heaven used its special agent in the person of the Son of Heaven. The power of his virtue (*de* 德) and sacredness (*sheng* 聖) through

¹¹ His "tradition creed" is to be found in *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects 7/1): "The Master said: I do not create anything new, I am just handing down (*shu er bu zuo* 述而不作); I believe in ancient times and cherish them...."

his being the Son of Heaven imparted to him sacral features and a special role. Thus, cult and culture coincided in his person. A traditional Chinese state presented a political and cultic unity. Such are the roots of Confucianism as a state doctrine, a state cult or even a state religion and a kind of a Confucian “Church,” which was attempted by Kang Youwei according to the model of Christianity. The fall of imperial China at the beginning of the 20th century totally changed the political and cultural reality of China. The whole process of modernization of China, focused predominantly on the concept of (Chinese) culture, has been accompanied by a kind of collective crisis with deep experience of the meaningless of life, despair or even suicidal consequences.

This cultural phenomenon has caused – in my own conviction – a process of “secularization” of Chinese culture. What Christianity was for Western tradition, by analogy was Confucian culture for traditional China. The heritage of this Sino-Confucian culture seems in the long run to be rather a burden than a blessing. As such it has become for the Chinese themselves something like an enormous “sign” and “symbol” difficult to be understood and deciphered since the New Culture Movement (*Xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動) in the 1910s and 1920s. It is in this context that Liang Shuming appeared and tried to overcome a tremendous cultural crisis in China by rediscovering his own Chinese culture on the universal level of world cultures. His way was that of Sinodicy¹² (cf. Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 178) as an undertaking to justify and defend the weaknesses and shortcomings of Chinese culture which especially came to the fore from the First Opium War (1839-1842) onwards.

2.1 CONFUCIUS AS AN EARLY AWAKENED MAN IN HUMAN HISTORY

The Buddha and Confucius represented for Liang two types of higher human awareness, the first stood actually for the highest one and that of Confucius was only second to the highest. However, their early awareness showed itself in two diametrically different modes in view of life – one positive, that is through life-affirmation (Confucianism), and the second negative, that is through life-negation (Buddhism).¹³ In Liang’s understanding

¹² This neologism is consciously coined with analogy to “theodicy” (Leibniz) and “anthropodicy” (German: Anthropodizee [Nietzsche]).

¹³ Cf. *DXWH* 522: „Buddha was an early awakened man (*xianjue*) through the way of negation of liberating himself from instincts (*benneng*), and Confucius went agreeably on the way of harmonizing instincts.”

of human history, it is the Indo-Buddhist culture that will be the final state of humanity, but only after the Sino-Confucian culture has come to an end, as in Liang's conviction the Western-pragmatic culture was coming to a close. Thus, the insight into the time factor and historical circumstances were for him of utmost importance. Here we can understand more deeply the context of Liang's "conversion" to Confucianism.¹⁴ In the *DXWH*, we find also a "holy wrath" of Liang against "the men in the street" (only average humans) when describing Mozi and the Westerners:

I always feel Mozi was stupid (*tai ben* 太笨). I always feel the Westerners are stupid, and China was since the Yellow Emperor, Duke Zhou and Confucius, and the likes of them too intelligent (*tai congming* 太聰明). (*DXWH* 481)

Against the background of what has been already said, we can easily discover the main strains of Liang's cultural thought:

1. His typology of the three basic human cultures, i.e., Western, Chinese, and Indian, conforms to his typology of individual awareness of three types of men, i.e., that of the man in the street (Mozi or modern Westerner like Dewey and James), Confucius and Buddha, the latter two regarded by him as earlier awakened men in human history;

2. Liang's typology of the three basic cultures directly derives from the three basic directions of the will, i.e., to demand and to go forward tantamount to Western-pragmatic culture, to adjust one's own intentions and to hold the golden mean, that is Sino-Confucian culture, and to turn back and to move back-wards, identified with Indo-Buddhist culture;

3. Liang's typology of the usage of epistemic powers within cultures: 1) the intuition of the world-oriented and differentiated self avails itself of the intellect, leading to the emergence of "the matter of the outer world" (Western-pragmatic culture); 2) intellect applies the intuition which especially wants to know life as such (Sino-Confucian culture), guiding to the formation of a "life of the inner world," and 3) intellect only applies sensation, ushering to the "primordial being of non-life" (Indo-Buddhist culture).

In order to describe Confucius as an early awakened man in human history, Liang Shuming made in his *DXWH* many contributions: 1) "Kongzi duiyu sheng zhi zanmei (Confucius' Praise of Life; pp. 448-449), 2) "Kongzi zhi bu rending de taidu" (Confucius' Attitude of Non-final Determinability; pp. 449-451),

¹⁴ The Buddhists have the concept of *upāya* (expedient means, skills in means) which refers to wise guidance along the Buddhist paths on the way into nirvana. In Liang's case, it could mean an insight into solving the China problem within his understanding the timeline and sequence of three world cultures, i.e., world history.

3) “Kongzi zhi yiren zhijue (Confucius’ Total Surrender to Intuition; p. 452), 4) “Kongzi suowei ren shi shenme? (What is Confucius’ *ren* [Humaneness?]; pp. 453-457), 5) “Kongjia xingshan de li” (Confucian Theorem of the Goodness of Human Nature; pp. 457-458), 6) “Kongzi zhi bujijiao lihui de taidu” (Confucius’ Attitude of Not Calculating and Comparing Gains and Losses; pp. 458-462), 7) “Kongzi shenghuo zhi le” (Confucius’ Joy of Life; pp. 464-466), 8) “Kongzi zhi zongjiao” (Confucius’ Religion; pp. 466-477).

All these above contributions show us Confucius as an early awakened man in human history. Let us here quote from a passage from *DXWH*:

To institute rites and music was probably the first difficult task in the world. Only Confucius worked in this area with all power and dedication. He was an early awakened man. Actually, in the world there were only two early awakened men: The Buddha who in an opposing way went on the way of self-liberation from the instinct, and Confucius who compliantly went on the way of self-liberation from the instinct. The future situation cannot but go on the way of intellectual (*yi lizhi* 以理智) education of the instinct. This is already borne out of by ironclad evidence. As a matter of fact, there is no other possibility as to learn it from Confucius. (522-523)

Liang’s intention was to show the universality of Confucianism as a representative of Chinese culture, i.e., Sino-Confucian culture, in the realm of world culture by pointing to its legitimate place as a “second period” of human history, dealing with the solution of social problems. As to the process of Confucianization of the present and future world culture, there should be differentiated its two realms: 1) within the present-day Chinese culture, i.e., there is a need for re-Confucianization of its certain cultural aspects, and 2) in view of the rest of world culture, Liang saw already some “signs of the times”¹⁵ in view of Confucianization of world culture (see below).

Liang’s thought of the universal value of Confucianism stands in connection with the idea of prematurity of Chinese culture (*zaoshu* 早熟)¹⁶ – a topic which is actually the content of his *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi* 中國文化要義 (An Essential Meaning of Chinese Culture: *ZGWH*)¹⁷ and which

¹⁵ An apocalyptic phrase in the Gospel according to Matthew 16:3: “(...) you know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.” This Biblical expression has been used with a general meaning of significant events and trends in many languages for centuries.

¹⁶ The very term appears almost at the end of the *DXWH* (526), but in its corresponding meaning appears much earlier, for example, where the tragic in the great genius of Chinese culture was a topic, cf. *DXWH* 481.

¹⁷ Already translated into English by Li Ming as *Fundamentals of Chinese Culture* (Amsterdam University Press, 2021).

Liang never gave up in his cultural thought. That is why the *DXWH* has its action-oriented program: a) On page 502 Liang made arguments for establishing an institution to direct human feelings as modernization of time-honored Chinese rites and music (*liyue* 禮樂). It would mean a kind of revival of a part of Confucian tradition as help for the emotional impoverishment or even coldness of human relationships in China and in the whole world, which were diagnosed by Liang; b) In the penultimate short passage of the *DXWH* – “The style of teaching which should be created again at present” (*DXWH* 539-540) – he argued for the renaissance and modernization of Song and Ming teaching and instructional work.

Actually, Liang’s action-oriented program reached its height and breadth in the short passage “Women xianzai ying chi de taidu” (The Attitude Which We Ought to Accept Now; pp. 528-537) at the end of the *DXWH*. He said: “First, the Indian attitude should be discarded. Nothing in the least can be preserved [from it.] Secondly, Western culture [should] be totally accepted (*quanpan chengshou* 全盤承受) and thoroughly transformed, in that its attitude must be reshaped in many ways. Thirdly, the original Chinese attitude will be critically selected again.” This passage is a concrete direction of Liang’s future action and the engagement for the Chinese. Until this statement his *DXWH* was just “a comparative study of the cultures in the East and West – a theoretical and philosophical grasp of three cultures in which Western culture was a starting point. With this “now,” however, there is a turning point in the *DXWH*. Thus, we see Liang’s conclusion and instruction for action not only for himself, but also for all his compatriots. His cultural thought became eventually nothing else than a this-worldly soteriology of China. In this line of thought Liang’s specific strain is already adumbrated, that is, his “Sinodicy” (cf. Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 178) attempts to justify and defend the weaknesses and shortcomings of Chinese culture. We can conclude that Liang’s *DXWH* is not only an ultimate quest for solving the problem of Chinese culture, but also an ultimate answer to this problem. His later life and thought can be construed as the concrete realization of it.

2.2 PREMATUREITY OF CHINESE CULTURE AS THE EARLY MANIFESTATION OF REASON

In connection with Liang’s presentation of Sino-Confucian culture in the *DXWH*, Liang proposed his theorem of the prematurity of Chinese culture. In the comparison of Chinese with Western culture in the “Zhongguo minzu ziju yundong zhi zuihou juewu” 中國民族自救運動之最後覺悟 (The Final

Awakening of the Self-Saving Movement of Chinese Nation; 1930; ZGMZ), we find Liang's new formula of this train of thought: "Because China is different from the West, that is why China later became inferior to the West; because [China] exceeded [the West], that is why [China] fell short [of the West]" (ZGMZ 63).

For Liang this new paradoxical formula has its presupposition, that is a two-fold riddle of Chinese culture: "One pertains to the society of long history without changes, a stagnated culture without progress. The second one [points to] human life almost without religion" (ZGMZ 64). The first riddle is well known and acknowledged, but the negative image of China in the Western Sinological world, especially popular through Georg W.F. Hegel's (1770-1831) lectures on philosophy of history. The second one seems to have been a special contribution of Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)¹⁸ to Liang. Russell in his book *The Problem of China* (London 1922) mentioned three features of Chinese culture, the second of which was: "the ethics of Confucius replaced religion in China" (ZGMZ 69). This conviction was already present in the *DXWH*. There Liang considered the Chinese as those who are "the most indifferent people [in the world] towards religion." (*DXWH* 524).

In his explanation of these two riddles, Liang used a very interesting parable which we would like to quote here:

China is like an intelligent child whose body has not yet fully grown, [but at the same time] she has prematurely developed her intelligence. Because of the prematurity of her intelligence, the growth of the body was [again] hindered. This obstacle [in turn] impeded [further] proper development of her intelligence. To say it pithily, China is not infantile but mature; although we say "mature," her form [however] displaces sometimes infantile traits. That is what I said before – "It was not in accordance with the normal process of nature." (ZGMZ 100)

This parable of an intelligent child belonged to Liang's most beloved analogies to make his view of the prematurity of Chinese culture more understandable. Even if there are still his other parables, for example that of China being compared with a 70-year old man and the West with a lad of 17 or 18 years (ZGMZ 67), the parable of an intelligent child should be first considered in the context of the growth of this "old man."

Liang's *ZGWH* is a quintessence of his understanding of Chinese, i.e., hitherto Confucian culture. At the beginning Liang enumerated fourteen items which according to him do not exhaust the variety and fullness of

¹⁸Russell was an outspoken atheist.

Chinese culture, but are its representative character. These peculiar characteristics are the following:

1. China is a vast land and populous people (*ZGWH* 14);
2. She displays the assimilating and fusing capacity of such a big nation (*ZGWH* 14);
3. She has a long history (*ZGWH* 14) – these are to Liang “the three great characteristics” of China;
4. Chinese culture embodies great power despite different weaknesses, such as those in acquiring knowledge, in economy (China remained an agrarian society throughout history), military and politics – the last two weaknesses resulting from the lack of organizational structure (*ZGWH* 14-15). In the final analysis (*ZGWH* 289-305), the second and fourth characteristics fall more or less into the same category, but are regarded from different perspectives;
5. China is a society which did not change for a long time and a stagnated culture without progress, so it is too difficult to judge what kind of society it is (*ZGWH* 15-19);
6. Chinese culture displays a human form of life which almost does not have religion (*ZGWH*, pp.15-16: the fifth and sixth characteristic are to be found in *ZGMZ*);
7. A deep-rooted family system of utmost importance (*ZGWH* 19-21; already in *XCJS*, 599-720, this became the basis of the old Chinese teaching, i.e., human-familial relationships);
8. The academic standard has not tended towards the advancement of science (*ZGWH* 21-22), (“... although China from early times made many discoveries and inventions”);
9. Chinese culture did not strive for democracy, freedom, and equality. The legal system was not (fully) formulated (*ZGWH* 22-26; according to Liang this does not go beyond the fifth characteristic);
10. In Chinese culture, the ethical climate is of special importance (*ZGWH* 26) (according to Liang this characteristic is intimately connected with the sixth as “one mode with its positive and negative aspect”);
11. China is not like a state – the Chinese have substituted the concept of state with that of *tianxia* 天下 as “all under heaven” (*ZGWH* 26-28) (this idea was already present in *XCJS*);
12. (Since the Eastern Han Dynasty) China was regarded as a culture without a proper army (soldiers) (*ZGWH* 28);
13. The special importance of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) (Poškaitė 99-114; Qi

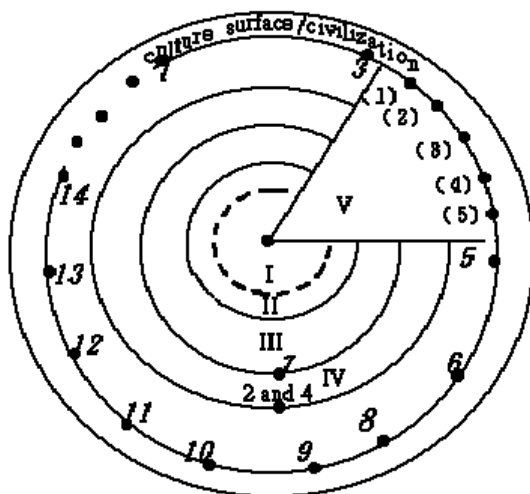
141-161; Whyte 106-127) – Chinese culture is a kind of *xiao*-culture (ZGWH 28-29);

14. Recluses/hermits (*yinshi* 隱士) were the conspicuous expression of Chinese culture (ZGWH 29).

In the conclusion of the ZGWH (289-306), Liang made a nine-part recapitulation of his investigation of Chinese culture with the help of peculiar characteristics. Without going into the details of this recapitulation, we want to state that an overall peculiar characteristic of Chinese culture that permeated the whole ZGWH is the early manifestation of reason (*lixing zao qi* 理性早啟), which was another name of his for the prematurity of Chinese culture (*wenhua zaoshu* 文化早熟), found in the DXWH. The premature character of Chinese culture, however, implied for Liang a kind of serious disease (cf. “Five Big Diseases of Chinese culture”, ZGWH 284-289). The five manifestations of this disease are as follows: 1) infantile disorder (*youzhi* 幼稚); 2) decrepit condition (*lao shuai* 老衰); 3) impracticality (*bu luoshi* 不落實); 4) having fallen into the negative passivity without a future (*luo yu xiaoji yi zai mei you qiantu* 落于消極亦再沒有前途), and 5) ambiguity without straightforwardness (*aimei er bu mingshuang* 曖昧而不明爽).

The following diagram depicts the main content of Liang’s theory of the peculiar characteristics of Chinese culture:

Chart: Liang’s Theory of Chinese Culture with All Characteristics and Layers (taken from Wesolowski, “Understanding the Foreign” 391)



The Latin numerals (I-V) depict as follows:

- I: the essence of Chinese culture: Prematurity of culture (*DXWH*) / early manifestation of reason (*ZGWH*);
- II: the modus operandi of early manifestation of reason: *wudui* 無對 (deconstruction of objects) done by reason; self-consciousness, autonomy and the setting out from mind (further explication see below);
- III: attitudes of Chinese life as results of realization of early manifestation of reason: inwardly directed effort, familial-ethical human relations;
- IV: a basic and conspicuous characteristic of Chinese culture displayed in history – Sinification;
- V: five manifestations of the disease of cultural precocity (as a part of historically developed Chinese culture; here on the right side).

The most salient point of Liang's theory of the peculiar characteristics of Chinese, i.e., Sino-Confucian culture comes from his concept of lack (*quefa* 缺乏), with the meaning of not having at all or not enough. This concept implies its dialectical counter-part, i.e., fullness or over-fullness, plenitude or over-plenitude and so on. Thus, the lack on one side makes the fullness on the other side. The mode of substitution (*yi* 以 ... *dai* [ti] 代[替] ...) in Liang's way of thinking is the simplest result of this dialectic. Thus, according to Liang, in China (1) morality was substituted for religion (*ZGWH* 95-122); (2) the concept *tianxia* was substituted for the state (*ZGWH* 26); (3) customs (*lisu* 禮俗) were substituted for law (*ZGWH* 198); (4) feelings were substituted for force (*yi qing dai shi* 以情代勢), (5) diversity in occupations (*zhiwu fentu* 職務分途) were substituted for social classes, and (6) the individual was substituted for organization (Confucian familism; collectivism: *ZGWH* 205). Among Liang's fourteen peculiar characteristics of Chinese culture, there are six which display the mode of lack (5, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12). As mentioned above, the opposite is plenitude, and this is especially seen in number 10 (moral atmosphere) and 7 (a deep-rooted familism). According to Liang, morality has a direct relationship with reason, and the concept of reason is a key one in the *ZGWH*, especially in view of Chinese culture as the early manifestation of reason.

As above clearly outlined, the most important concept of *ZGWH* is that of reason (*lixing*) within Confucian culture. According to Liang, this reason as such is a characteristic of humankind and the emotive dimension of human mentality (*renlei xinsi zuoyong de qing yi mian* 人類心思作用的情一面), whereas intellect (*lizhi* 理智) is an epistemic dimension of human mentality (*xinsi zuoyong de zhi yi mian* 心思作用的知一面; cf. *ZGWH*, pp. 125-126). The essence of reason lies in "impersonal feeling" (無所私的感情 – feelings

devoid of any selfishness: *ZGWH* 125). In view of comparison with the Western tradition, we could straightforwardly call Liang's concept of reason "moral reason." Such moral reason, emotive dimension of human mentality or impersonal feeling is manifested in sobriety and calmness, peace and harmony (*qingming anhe* 清明安和). The opposite of this feeling is a feeling of foolish hiding (*yubi* 愚蔽), one-sided stubbornness, violence or selfishness (cf. *ZGWH* 112). The human heart-mind (*renxin* 人心) is where reason plays its important role. Thus, within human mind and reason, Liang discovered the particularity of human life as such. In line with his vitalism and neo-evolutionary theory of development of human faculties (desire, instinct, sensation, feeling, intellect and reason), which was not systematically developed in *ZGWH*, Liang expounded their function, meaning and relations, as far as they were of help to express his cultural thought. For example, human intellect was seen by him "only as a developmental tendency within the instinct itself which consisted in reducing the use of the instinct and advancing the use of intellect" (*ZGWH* 124).

Against this background, Liang expounded the relationship between reason and Chinese culture, i.e., the early manifestation of reason. As above already mentioned, this early manifestation of reason brought about within Sino-Confucian culture – and especially in comparison with Western culture – some – in Liang's understanding "impressive" – cultural shifts, which we mentioned above.

At the end of *ZGWH*, Liang used a very special formulation to talk about the difference between Confucian China and the West:

To summarize what has been said, the problem [of selfishness and orientation towards self-profit] comes only from the structure of society and the needs of the times, and the Chinese and Westerners are basically not any different. If there is any difference, it is in this point: The Westerners set out from the body (*shenti* 身體) and the Chinese [partake of] the early manifestation of reason. (综核以上所论, 问题只在社会结构与时势需要上, 中国人西洋人根本没有什么不同。如其有之, 那就是西洋人从身体而中国人理性早起这一点). (*ZGWH* 315)

Against the background of *ZGWH*, this is the biggest difference possible! In his comparison of China with the West, Liang was searching to show the individuality (*gexing* 個性) of Chinese culture, i.e., to interpret it as a product of the early manifestation of reason within humankind. The problem of religion in the *ZGWH* became "Zhongguo wenhua de fenshui ling" 中國文化的分水岭 (The Watershed between Chinese and Western Cultures) (*ZGWH* 52-55). The main function and contribution of religion (Christianity) in the

West was for Liang its being a pedagogue of community life and organized life-style. It is this aspect of human life that – according to Liang – Chinese culture badly needed. Although China lacked this kind of pedagogue, there was, however, another one: morality based on radical familial-ethical human relations (Confucian familism) as an expression of the early manifestation of reason. This morality replaced religion. The Confucian tradition became the teacher of old China.

2.3 SIGNS AND WAYS OF PRESENT-DAY CONFUCIANIZATION OF WORLD CULTURE ACCORDING TO LIANG

Liang's main thought in the *DXWH* are instructions for action for the salvation of China on the basis of the life wisdom of Confucius with the adoption of the cultural achievements of the Western culture (science and democracy). The foundation of this soteriology for China, which became Liang's life mission, is the individual steadfastness (*gang*) as a lack of desires and as the resolute reason of the energetic commitment to revive the genius of Confucius with the acceptance of two characteristics of Western culture, i.e., science/technology and democracy, for the salvation of China. For Liang, the salvation of the Chinese from suffering will not yet go the radical and ultimate way of Buddhism, but as a way of supplementing it with the material achievements of the Westerners so that the original genius of Confucius should come to fruition as the second way of world culture. Against the background of the briefly presented history of suffering of the Chinese, Liang writes:

Only when there is this forward action (*xiangqian de dongzuo*) can one first remedy the conventional deficiencies of the Chinese and save the Chinese from the present suffering, and to this end avoid the evils of the Westerners, and [finally] cope with the worldly needs – [all this] is entirely in accordance with our above, maturely thought-out study of the three cultures. (*DXWH* 538-539)

1) An Imminent Renaissance of Sino-Confucian Culture?

This inner-worldly soteriology is accompanied by the outline of a new social utopia for Chinese culture. Liang as “prophet” says: “In the following [i.e., fifth] chapter, I will give our reasons for the imminent renaissance of Chinese culture” (*DXWH* 487). Liang's cultural utopian blueprint as anticipating the imminent renaissance of Chinese culture in terms of the emergence of a new society of China, which in the near future will be freed from

the excessive concern for the material problem of human life by the adoption of Western science and democracy (which means a kind of Confucianization of world culture and thereby its new orientation) is carried out within the framework of the engaged confrontation with the given and found reality, the final and absolute completion of which is for Liang Shuming to be equated with the Buddhist soteriological ideal of nirvana “at the end of time of humankind.”

As just said above, the salvation of China would be happening with the help of the implementation of the wisdom lived by Confucius and other great Confucians as those of the Taizhou School. It has produced the Sino-Confucian culture as a culture whose basic will orientation is harmony (Confucius’ self-finding as true harmony) and whose epistemic focus is that the mind engages the intuition oriented to the knowledge of life. The identity moment is the second highest awareness of the only innate intuitive self. This culture, which had its culmination mode already in the past as the individual anticipation of the universal-historical event in Confucius and at whose threshold mankind stands at present, has come about by the fact that the understanding intuition in the context of harmony had reached the distinctive cognition of life and had attained the life truth, i.e. the self-finding or self-acceptance. The actual product of this cultural attitude is “the life of the inner world” (*DXWH* 504), i.e., Confucian spirituality as the life of only innate intuitive self-attachment. This is tantamount to the solving of the second, i.e., social problem of human life. Liang saw a kind of Confucianization of world culture starting to take place at the time of his life. In the *ZGWH*, Liang did not connect directly this life of Confucius with his theorem of an early manifestation of reason. However, it hardly needs mentioning.

2) Confucianization of Western Philosophy?

As we know, besides Buddhism and Confucianism, Liang also mentioned the role of Henri Bergson’s (1859-1941) metaphysics of the philosophy of life in his thought on life and culture (Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 82-86). The basic concepts of intuition and life superficially point out to their deep affinity. For Liang, Bergson’s metaphysics is a harbinger of possible, renewed Chinese metaphysics, expanded by a Western scientific basis and in this respect a more advanced one.

As for the method of Chinese metaphysics, its specificity derives from the object of study, i.e., change (*yi*) which culminates in search for harmony

(*tiaohe*) (*DXWH* 444).¹⁹ The terminology applied in it is the product of intuition, i.e., meaningful hints (*yivei*) and mindsets (*qingxiang*), such as terms *yinyang* or *qiankun* (heaven–earth).

If we want to recognize such abstract meaningful hints or mindsets, one must use exclusively the intuition to understand and comprehend them experientially. Only then one can recognize the so-called *yin*, *yang*, *qian* and *kun*. This is certainly not what one can achieve with sensation. Likewise, it is not what is set in motion and accomplished on the basis of the function of intellect from which one then obtains abstract concepts. All concepts formed by the intellect are clearly outlined, but the others are lively flexible and interwoven. (*DXWH* 443)

That is why Liang was convinced that “(...) the modern criticism of the meaningfulness of metaphysics and the adequacy of its method has nothing at all to do with Chinese metaphysics” (*DXWH* 443) and had joy over the development of the philosophy of life with Bergson in Europe, especially in Germany,²⁰ as a sign of Confucianization of Western philosophy.

3) Confucianization of Religion in the Future of Humankind?

Now let us say something about Liang Shuming’s conviction of Confucianization of religion in the future human culture. Without going into the details of Liang Shuming’s concept of religion (cf. Wesolowski, “Liang Shumings” 241-267 and *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 215-221), we want to delineate here his main thoughts.²¹

Religion, for Liang, represents an original “universal” of the mental and spiritual powers of us, human beings, thus, together with art, the earliest consciousness of humanity. Unlike the other universal characteristics of humanity culture, such as philosophy, science or democracy, religion in its true Buddhist form will also be the ultimate “universal” in Liang’s conviction. In Liang’s concept of religion, there are two general characteristics of religion, i.e., transcendence (*chaojue*) and the mystical (*shenmi*) (*DXWH* 419-420),

¹⁹ “Zhongguo xing’ershaxue de dayi” (An Overview of Chinese Metaphysics), pp. 444-448.

²⁰ Liang Shuming mentioned e.g. Rudolf Eucken. With his book *Geschichte und Kritik der Grundbegriffe der Gegenwart* (1878), Eucken turned to the philosophy of life and became one of its most popular representatives.

²¹ Cf. “Zongjiao wenti zhi yanjiu” (Research of the Problem of Religion”, *DXWH* 416-421), “Zongjiao shifou biyao zhi yanjiu” (Is There a Necessity to Make Research on Religion?”, *DXWH* 421-427), “Zongjiao zhi zhen biyao suozai” (The True Point of the Necessity of Religion, *DXWH* 433), “Zongjiao shifou keneng zhi yanjiu” (Is There a Possibility of the Research on Religion?, *DXWH* 433-436), “Zongjiao de zhen keneng suozai” (The True Point of the Possibility of Religion, *DXWH* 436-440); cf. also “Kongzi zhi zongjiao” (Confucius’ Religion, *DXWH* 466-477).

the first being the most decisive for because the mystical belongs only to intuition. The religion considered from Liang Shuming's point of view is fundamentally beyond theism and atheism. For him, Buddhism is the only true religion, which is also alone a satisfactory solution of the third, i.e., individual-spiritual problem of human life. It was realized in the early awakened man, the Buddha. For Liang, theistic consciousness, which gave rise to theistic rationality together with its metaphysics, will gradually fade into the background.²²

One could infer from what Liang said in *DXWH* about religion two possible trends of Confucianization of religion in the immediate future: 1) the aestheticization of the religious (such as through Confucian or similar and strongly effective rites and music)²³ and 2) the abolition of theistic consciousness through the ethicization of human life (for Liang, in China through a Confucian *ren-life*²⁴). However, at the end of the times of human culture, the only true religion of *weishi*-Buddhism – so Liang Shuming – will gain its relevance in solving the third problem of humanity.

4) A Love between Man and Woman the Most Formidable Problem of the Imminent Future of Mankind?

According to the conviction of Liang Shuming, – as we above many times reiterated – the imminent future mode of world culture will be that of the Sino-Confucian cultural attitude. He even prophesied that in the nearest future the emotion of love in its particular form as a love between man and woman (cf. Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 141, 145, 146, 272 f., 290, 315, 386, and 391), ending traditionally in conjugal love, will be the greatest and the most formidable problem of this period, i.e., the period of the second domain of a conditional availability or non-availability of the object of desire (see above), that is of another mind or the will of another person (Wesołowski, *Lebens- und Kulturbegriff* 145). This domain is called

²² As to theism and its rationality, Liang said: “Such religions with an absolute deity [such as Christianity and Islam] are long-lived, and it is not easy to overthrow them. However, although there is the progress of knowledge, it is still impossible to overthrow them. You cannot do away with them completely. This is so for the reason that there is still something altogether unknowable. [They] cannot be abolished by quantitative increase of knowledge. Here one must wait for the orderly unfolding of the intellect [...]” (*DXWH* 436).

²³ Interestingly enough, I have myself experienced this phenomenon during my stay in Germany (1986-1998) and since 2012 to the outbreak the Corona pandemic in 2019 that a multitude of Germans came to the churches for Advent and Christmas music before Christmas, and not taking part in the Christmas liturgy.

²⁴ Cf. “Kongzi suowei ren shi shenme? (What is Confucius' ren [Humaneness?], pp. 453-457.

by Liang Shuming a realm of human relationships or a social problem for the solution of which Sino-Confucian culture is responsible:

Therefore, mankind will pass from the age of the problem in which people face matter (*ren dui wuzhi de wenti*) to the age of the problem of interpersonal [relations] (*ren dui ren de wenti*) – the above-mentioned age of the second problem is that of the other heart (note: the third age – one could say – is the age of the problem in which single individuals face themselves [*geren ziji dui ziji wenti*]). The attitude of nature mastery cannot be used in the interpersonal relationship. The other heart is completely out of my domain: the fact that one immediately goes to work for the purpose of satisfying [one's needs] should not necessarily [mean that in doing so] he succeeds in [e.g.,] his being directed toward satisfaction and [successfully completing] the search for it in the outside world and the search [for satisfaction] in other people. At that time [of the problem of interpersonal relations] what one can only attain [is] to seek within, in the [other] self. This interpersonal problem is not just one. And the problem of love between man and woman will be the greatest among them. (*DXWH* 494)

Thus, Liang prophesied that in the nearest future the emotion of love in its particular form as a love between man and woman will be the greatest and the most formidable problem of the second period of world history which is now about to fully begin. How true it sounds today! The sexual revolution (1960-1980) as a time of sexual liberation was a social movement throughout the United States of America that challenged traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships. This crisis of love between man and woman, which in the present-day is connected with further sexual liberation and the crisis of sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and LGBTQ+ ideology should have been for Liang the most formidable problem at the beginning of the second social problem of humanity which is already under way. Of course, Liang Shuming himself must have believed that this crisis should be ultimately overcome because of his faith in Sino-Confucian familism, in which (natural) family (which nowadays is called “traditional”) is the only suitable and adequate locus of nascency, development and cultivation of human feelings. The beginning of these basic familial feelings are instinctive faculties in *xiao* (filial piety) and *ti* 悌 (brotherly obedience). *Xiao* and *ti* as originally instinctive faculties have to be developed first into feelings, and then cultivated as virtues in family relations.²⁵ This should be a task of future Confucian familial education. Unfortunately, things are not going in this direction so far, on May 17, 2019,

²⁵ Cf. “Kongzi zhi zongjiao” (Confucius’ Religion), *DXWH*, pp. 466-477.

the Legislative Yuan in Taiwan, representing Chinese culture, approved a bill, submitted by the Executive Yuan, recognizing marriage for same-sex couples.

CONCLUSION

Let us look back at our above investigation on “The Place and Role of Sino-Confucian culture and Confucianism in World History according to Liang Shuming’s Thought on Life and Culture” and state some basic results:

1. The perspective of Liang’s understanding of the place and role of Sino-Confucian culture has its objective historical reasons:

Liang’s four works, i.e., *DXWH* (1921), the *ZGMZ* (1930), the *XCJS* (1936) and the *ZGWH* (1949), which were consulted here, echo the tremendous predicament of Chinese culture, beginning with its new unprecedented phase of the foreign intrusion in China after the unequal treaty in Nanjing of 1842 in the wake of the First Opium War (1839-1842). Since then, Chinese culture has lost its own “transparency” and “non-questionability.” “The hundred years of national humiliation” (*bainian chiru* 百年耻辱: 1839-1949) began as the period of intervention and subjugation of China by Western powers, Russia and Japan (Adcock Kaufman 1-33). In comparison with other modern Chinese thinkers, such as Hu Shi 胡適 (1891-1962), representing a kind of scientific liberalism of Western style, or Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), as promoter of Marxist thought in China, Liang Shuming displayed a neo-traditional or conservative approach in solving the dilemma of Chinese culture.

2. The perspective of Liang’s understanding of the place and role of Sino-Confucian culture has his personal and subjective reasons:

In his thought on life and culture in general and on Sino-Confucian culture and Confucianism in particular, Liang made a connection of the individually historical with the universally historical. He seems to have realized the individual participation in the three basic systems of human cultures based on his psychogenesis as the development of his faculty of thinking with its three periods. The timeline of his psychogenesis ran through Western-pragmatic (14/15-19 years old), Indo-Buddhist (20-28/29 years old), and Sino-Confucian cultures (from 29 years old onwards) and the timeline of the history of humankind, which he presented in his *DXWH*, was a sequence of Western-pragmatic, Sino-Confucian and Indo-Buddhist cultures. This understanding goes beyond the rational structure of the human mind.

3. Basic elements of his understanding of life and culture were the life's will with its three directions: 1) to demand and to go forward; 2) to adjust one's own intentions, to hold the golden mean; and 3) to turn back and to move backwards, and the necessity of humankind to deal and to solve a three-fold problem:

For Liang, human life in its realization and concretization is a process of principally dealing with a threefold problem. First is a material problem. Second is a social problem: a domain of a conditional availability (or conditional non-availability) of the object of desire, that is of another mind or the will of another person. This domain is a realm of human relationships or a social problem. Finally, there is an individual-spiritual problem: a domain of the absolute non-availability within the power of causality, especially in view of the necessity of aging and death in the life process.

4. To these basic elements belong also the *weishi*-Buddhist epistemology as an instrument for understanding the essence of human culture:

In the *DXWH*, Liang's concept of culture reached another philosophical pinnacle, because he used the Buddhist epistemological approach to grasp the essence of human culture. There were for Liang the following epistemic powers at work: intellect (*lizhi*), intuition (*zhijue*), and sensation (*xianliang*).

5. The soteriological Buddhist perspective of dealing and solving of the threefold problem of human life as overcoming of dual attachment

The threefold problem of human life, i.e., a material, social and individual-spiritual one, has been understood by Liang with the help of the Buddhist concept of dual attachment (*er zhi*), i.e., world-attachment (*fazhi*: that of the reality of things) and self-attachment (*wozhi*: that of the reality of the ego). The latter is double: an innate self-attachment (*jusheng wozhi*: a natural, inborn or intuitive one) and a differentiated self-attachment (*fenbie wozhi*: an acquired, desire- and intellect-oriented one).

6. Liang gave a special place and role of Sino-Confucian culture and Confucianism as the second stage in the world history

Sino-Confucian culture has its second place in Liang's understanding of the development of human history, after the Western-pragmatic and before the Indo-Buddhist ones. For him, this Sino-Confucian culture's basic direction is the will in the shape of harmony. The epistemological stress of this culture lies in the claim that intellect applies the life-oriented intuition within an innate self-attachment. This culture has already reached its individual culmination in the life of Confucius (Confucius' self-finding as true harmony). According to Liang, this kind of culture is on the brink of be-

coming the dominant cultural attitude of the world in the near future. The proper product of this cultural attitude is a “life of the inner world” (*neijie shengming*), i.e., Confucian spirituality as a life of just inborn, intuitive self-attachment. This is tantamount to the solving of the second, i.e., social problem of human life.

7. In the *ZGWH*, this Sino-Confucian culture made some “wonderful” cultural shifts

According to Liang, in China 1) morality was substituted for religion; 2) the concept *tianxia* was substituted for the state; 3) customs (*lisu*) were substituted for law; 4) feelings were substituted for force (coercion), 5) diversity in occupations (*zhiwu fentu*) were substituted for social classes, and 6) the individual was substituted for organization (Confucian familism; collectivism).

8. According to Liang, Sino-Confucian culture is a result of its prematurity (precocity: *DXWH*), or in other words, the early manifestation of (moral) reason (*ZGWH*)

9. The author of this contribution understands Liang’s cultural thought as a manifestation of “Sinodicy” (*Huazhenglun* 华正论) as a philosophical theory of the justification of Chinese culture

This cultural theory is a kind of apology and argumentation for the greatness of Chinese culture in the face of its many different shortcomings which are actually part of each human culture. From the outset, Liang’s cultural theory was worked out against the background of Western culture, which existentially threatened and posed a real challenge to the identity of Chinese culture. Liang is the first Chinese thinker who through a philosophical comparison of Chinese culture with Western and Indian cultures attempted to find for Chinese culture its place and meaning in the system of world cultures.

10. Liang saw signs and ways of Present-day Confucianization of world culture

These were among others: 1) an imminent renaissance of Sino-Confucian culture; 2) on-going Confucianization of Western Philosophy; 3) Confucianization of religion in the future of humankind and 4) prediction of love between man and woman as being the most formidable problem of the imminent future of mankind.

11. The present economic and international rise of communist China does not seem to go into the direction of Liang Shuming’s great vision of Sino-Confucian culture.

The current thrust of Sino-Marxism (not Sino-Confucianism, as Liang wished!) has been a driving force of the Chinese economic boom as a way of solving material problem (poverty) of the Chinese in today's China. Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping were both Marxists who tried to Sinicize Marxist doctrine so that it could be better adapted to Chinese real situation. This Chinese dimension has been also linguistically fixed in the phrase: "with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese* 中国特色). China under Xi Jinping attempts not only to continue, but also to intensify this tendency.

12. 100 years have elapsed since Liang Shuming held his lectures on Eastern and Western Philosophies and their cultures in Shandong. All in all, he was a man of pithy but in-depth insights and of prophetic intuitions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- DXWH* *Dong-Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue* 東西文化及其哲學 (Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies, 1921). *LSMQJ*, vol. I, 1989, pp. 319-547.
- LSMQJ* *Liang Shuming quanji* 梁漱溟全集 (Complete Works of Liang Shuming, vols. I-VIII). Shandong Remin Chubanshe, 1989-1993.
- XCJS* *Xiangcun jianshe dayi* 鄉村建設大意 (A General Idea of Rural Reconstruction, 1936). *LSMQJ*, vol. I, 1989, pp. 599-720.
- ZGMZ* "Zhongguo minzu ziji yundong zhi zuihou juewu" 中國民族自救運動之最後覺悟 (The Final Awakening of the Self-Saving Movement of Chinese Nation; 1930). *LSMQJ*, vol. V, 1992, pp. 44-118.
- ZGWH* *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi* 中國文化要義 (An Essential Meaning of Chinese Culture, 1949). *LSMQJ*, vol. III, 1990, pp. 1-316.
- ZS* "Zishu" 自述 (Autobiography, 1935). *LSMQJ*, vol. II, 1989, pp. 1-34.

THE PLACE AND ROLE OF SINO-CONFUCIAN CULTURE
AND CONFUCIANISM IN WORLD HISTORY
ACCORDING TO LIANG SHUMING'S THOUGHT
ON LIFE AND CULTURE

S u m m a r y

Liang Shuming's understanding of Chinese culture, which he conceived of as Sino-Confucian culture, and his understanding of Confucianism differ from the common and familiar understandings in the sinological academic world. It seems that the best way to understand Liang Shuming and his thoughts is in terms of his search for an authentic existence. In his scheme of three modes of world cultures (Western-pragmatic culture, Sino-(Taizhou 泰州-)Confucian culture, and Indo-(*weishi*-)Buddhist culture) and their historical succession (as given above), the conviction of Liang Shuming was that the imminent future mode of world culture would be that of the Sino-Confucian cultural attitude. He even prophesied that in the nearest future the emotion of love in its particular form as love between a man and a woman would be the greatest and the most formidable problem of this period, i.e. the period of the second domain of a conditional availability or non-availability of the object of desire, that is, of another mind or the will of another person. This domain is called by Liang Shuming the realm of human relationships, or a social problem for the solution of which Sino-(Taizhou-)Confucian culture is responsible. The author concentrates on the place and role of Liang Shuming's understanding of Confucianism in his scheme of world history.

Keywords: Liang Shuming; life; culture; Confucianism; world history.

MIEJSCE I ROLA KULTURY SINO-KONFUCJAŃSKIEJ
I KONFUCJANIZMU W HISTORII ŚWIATA
WEDŁUG MYŚLI LIANGA SHUMINGA O ŻYCIU I KULTURZE

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Pojmowanie kultury chińskiej przez Lianga Shuminga, którą uważał ją za kulturę sino-konfucjańską, oraz jego rozumienie konfucjanizmu różnią się od potocznych i znanych w świecie akademickim. W poszukiwaniu autentycznej egzystencji, w schemacie trzech rodzajów kultur świata (kultura zachodnio-pragmatyczna, kultura sino-(Taizhou 泰州-)konfucjańska i kultura indo-(*weishi*-)buddyjska) oraz ich historycznej sukcesji, Liang Shumin żywił przekonanie, że przyszłym modelem kultury światowej będzie ta sino-konfucjańska, a nawet przepowiedział, że w najbliższej przyszłości emocja miłości w jej szczególnej formie jako miłość między mężczyzną a kobietą byłaby największym i najstraszniejszym problemem tego okresu, tj. okresu drugiej domeny warunkowej dostępności lub niedostępności przedmiotu pożądania, czyli innego umysłu lub woli drugiego człowieka. Tę dziedzinę Liang Shuming nazywa sferą relacji międzyludzkich, czyli problemem społecznym, za którego rozwiązanie odpowiada kultura chińsko-(Taizhou 泰州-)konfucjańska. Autor koncentruje się na miejscu i roli konfucjanizmu, w rozumieniu Lianga Shuminga, w Shuminga schemacie historii świata.

Słowa kluczowe: Liang Shuming; życie; kultura; konfucjanizm; historia świata.