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INTRODUCTION: INTERPRETING PHILOSOPHICAL CLASSICS—CHINESE AND WESTERN

During a 1986 interview Gadamer discusses the influence of speech on thought, “And so I developed a style of my own by speaking freely (not reading to an audience) and teaching this way. I learned to develop the melody of my own thoughts and although I do not think I am a bad writer, there always is the living voice behind the writing.”¹ While conversing philosophically, Gadamer’s thoughts became melodious, and I might add, comparable to the self-unfolding structure of organic life.² The weaving together of ideas is not strictly a function of syntaxes and grammar, but in addition takes its bearings from tonal affinities and rhythms of the spoken word. The capacity to think in concepts is enlarged by the music of language. This quantitative aspect of thought provides a platform from which to harmonize the seemingly divergent papers with one another in this supplementary issue of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*.

In general, these papers explore the interconnections between Chinese and Western classics that stem from the philosophies of Heidegger and Gadamer. They were among the earliest in the twentieth century to challenge logical positivism, then in the ascendancy at the universities in Germany, from the side of phenomenology and hermeneutics. In so doing, their inquiries enter into the range of Confucianism and Daoism and they in turn delineate the limits and hidden potentialities in Western thought. The room for cross-pollination is broad and in this issue appears in various themes including tact, formation of the self, dialogue, and ontological-creativity.

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I. TACT

In the wake of the linguistic turn, the humanities are often counterpoised to the natural sciences. If knowledge is mediated by language, so it is said, then it is impossible to transcend one's private discourse and attain a degree of non-personal objectivity. This is why hermeneutics is perceived as being antithetical to science. Gadamer seems to have endorsed the antithesis if indeed tact is to the humanities what method is to the sciences, but he alludes to common ground between them as well when he insists on the universality of hermeneutics.

Ron Bontekoe probes into this ground from the side of mid-twentieth-century developments in science. In "On Gadamer's Failure to Appreciate the Hermeneutic Dimension of Science," he argues that Gadamer's thinking about the sciences was overly influenced by W. Dilthey's distinction between explanation and understanding to the extent that around the time of writing *Truth and Method*, Gadamer did not recognize developments in science away from the strictures of logical positivism. Bontekoe explains that T. Kuhn, N. Goodman, and M. Polanyi argue for structures of understanding in the sciences that are in close proximity to what Gadamer attributes to the art of interpretation in the humanities. His paper serves to close the alleged divide between the two departments of learning, which in turn attests to the applicability of hermeneutics to different worlds of understanding and knowledge, that is, its universality.

Stephen Palmquist, in contradistinction to the oft-held belief that Kant is the defining figure of Enlightenment rationality, demonstrates that the *Yijing* is a mere collection of antiquated generalizations from observed experiences without any conceivable relation to Western philosophy, which draws the two together. The "Twelve Basic Philosophical Concepts in Kant and the Compound *Yijing*," presents the third installment in a trilogy of papers that assess the correlations or parallels between the twelve *gua* in the *Book of Changes* and the twelve categories of Kant's *Critical* philosophy while also acknowledging the differences; analytic a posteriori and synthetic a priori knowledge, a book subject to change, a theory that was intended to be unchanging. His paper affirms leitmotif of Gadamer's thought to fit opposites together while holding them apart for the sake of balance.

II. FORMATION OF THE SELF

In agreement with the theme of harmony, symmetry, and balance—two essays that seem to be at odds might well be in a complementary

relation. In “Paul Ricoeur and Hermeneutics” Morny Joy clarifies the shifts in Ricoeur’s thought from a hermeneutic to a narrative and ethical self in tandem with the existential circumstances and texts that transformed him. She focuses on his life-story, historical and intellectual context, interlocutors, method, philosophical imagination, and the narrative self. The scope of her argument allows her to bridge into, for instance, issues of the thwarted will, Ricoeur’s repudiation of Husserl’s transcendental ego, Heidegger’s solipsism, ongoing modification of self-understanding including disposition by a text, extension of Kant’s schematism to narratives, and the role or metaphor in interpretation. Throughout her analyses, Joy steadies her eye on the teleological trajectory between absolutism and relativism in Ricoeur’s journey toward selfhood in relation to others.

The telos Joy discerns in Ricoeur’s journey toward selfhood is tacitly challenged by Stephen Watson in the context of exploring Montaigne’s metamorphoses in the history of modernity. In “Montaigne’s *Of Cruelty* and the Emergence of Hermeneutic and Intercultural Modernity,” he frees the hermeneutic self from a sense of identity or identification by reconstructing the myriad ways in which Montaigne has been appropriated. Watson’s subversive interpretations deem Montaigne a modern before modernity yet also a hermeneut before hermeneutics and at the end of modernity. He explains how the French aristocrat tables a thick account of experience and quest for self-understanding that prefigures modern hermeneutics, a sense for impassioned reason beyond the merely sensual that is prescient of Merleau-Ponty’s turn to embodiment, an art of conversation taken into Lacan’s “fading self,” and a sense of empathy amidst cruelty that Horkheimer reads into a negative dialectic. For Watson, Montaigne’s ongoing influence speaks to the timeliness of hermeneutics; a hermeneutic that is and was for Montaigne inspired by intercultural philosophizing.

III. DIALOGUE

Middle-voiced harmony of speakers’ voices is a condition for the truth of a truth claim, characteristic of friendships of virtue in Aristotle’s *Ethics* that enable the thing itself to announce itself (being *qua* being) in language thus organized. Both Jules Simon and James Risser take up the task of how to let the thing being spoken about, speak for itself in the living lingual context that is enriched by Sarah Mattice’s tacit critique of Gadamer on the very prospect of unity in understanding.

In “The Art of Interpretation” Simon studies Heidegger’s phenomenological hermeneutics and Franz Rosenzweig’s *Mirashic* analysis with a view determining which of the two interpretive practices fosters

harmonious communities. For both, interpretation is way of orienting ourselves with each other in the world, both move us away from the “totalizing ontology of Hegel’s idealism” and yet, in ways that yield dissimilar normative commitments. It is these commitments that Simon elucidates in light of the motives and structure of Heidegger’s engagement with Hölderlin and the Greeks, Rosenzweig’s with “The Song of Songs” and “loving speech acts.” For Simon, Rosenzweig’s turn to the living language is a critical point of departure from Heidegger. The turn to the living language fosters an ethics in which contrary perspectives are enveloped into one moving self-regulating harmonious whole.

Risser’s concern for the hermeneutics of voice carries forward into his essay “A New Paradigm for Hermeneutics.” He challenges the assumption that the hermeneutic circle is a formal relation of part and whole in a text by rethinking them within the context of human facticity and the living language. Stated differently, he disengages Gadamer from the formalism of German idealism (Hegel) and romanticism (Schleiermacher) by positioning him in relation to Plato’s dialogical philosophy above all in the *Statesman*. Risser analyzes the structure of the philosophical dialogue into anticipation of meaning, a procedure of pairing, comparison and paradigm on the basis of which unity of understanding is possible. He circumvents the specter of relativism in hermeneutics with an auditory sense for unity (implicit in the turn to language) without deferring to a concept or the enticing third term.

Both Simon and Risser acknowledge that in the turn to the spoken language the voice of the other is audible and fellowship in human solidarity is realized. Who precisely is other? Who is “we”? According to Mattice, the speakers in a conversation after which Gadamer models the art of hermeneutics anticipate a meaning they already share. This calls into question the existential credibility of the celebrated unity of understanding. In “A Metaphorical Conversation,” she argues that the anticipation of one-dimensional unity is an impediment to understanding both fragmentary works and works with either many or no known authors. She suggests an alternative metaphor from elements of the *Zhuangzi* including roving bird, minnow, and potter’s wheel that do not presuppose unity and dovetail with Gadamer’s notion of play, that is, a self-unfolding ontology that allows, she argues, for different levels of unity.

IV. ONTOLOGICAL CREATIVITY

As pointed by On-cho Ng in “The *Yijing* and Onto-Generative Hermeneutics,” Western ideas have routinely been imported into Chinese thought. Their relation to one another has been asymmetrical. Papers in this issue reverse the flow. Ng explains that this is where

Chung-ying Cheng differs from his contemporaries. His approach to Chinese classics, which Ng outlines, unearths their multifaceted layers that renew them and their relevance to our times. For Ng, this has resulted in an explication of the ontological conditions of epistemology on the basis of “homo-cosmic dynamic of unity” of the *Yijing*. In this regard, he highlights in particular Cheng’s attending to the Way of the Classic of Changes (*Yi-cum-dao*) and where Cheng agrees and disagrees with Heidegger and Gadamer. Ng concludes by explaining the significance of Cheng’s onto-generative hermeneutics to a philosophy of culture.

In “Receptivity and Creativity in Hermeneutics,” Cheng explains how two aspects of hermeneutics, the receptive and creative are an answer to the transcendental conditions of knowledge, specified in Western philosophy by Kant and Heidegger for instance. His account of what happens during interpretation with reference to Ast and Dilthey becomes a framework for assessing Heidegger, Gadamer, and the *Yijing*. He brings them into constructive interplay by showing how the tradition of hermeneutics moves toward onto-generative grounds for creativity and then recoils from it. Cheng draws on Fu Xi’s comprehensive observation (*guan*) and feeling-reflection (*gan*) in order to broaden the scope of hermeneutics beyond language to include an objective order of being and sense of humanity toward which Heidegger and Gadamer incline yet also leave unarticulated. In Cheng’s work, Chinese and Western classics are freed their cultural and historical moorings to yield intercultural, trans-cultural and trans-historical understandings and regulative ideals for action that express the dialectical harmony between culture and nature.

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ENDNOTES

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1. James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-Reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 249n20. From Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics, Poetry and Modern Culture," in *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, eds. Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 66.
2. I have in mind Gadamer's remark that melody is Dilthey's favorite metaphor for a living organism, argument that Greek science was indistinguishable from mathematics by which he means a self-unfolding number and remark in *Truth and Method* that *Bildung* resembles Greek physics because it has no goals outside itself. For the Dilthey reference, see "Hermeneutic Access to the Beginning" in *The Beginning of Philosophy*, trans. Rod Coltman (New York: Continuum, 2001), 23. For the remark on *Bildung* see *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. rev., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2006), 10.