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China in the Process of Globalization

Highlighting the Humanistic Spirit in the Age of Globalization: Humanities Education in China

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The essay first describes the Chinese intellectual condition in the age of globalization and the necessity of liberal arts or humanities education, and then deals with the function of humanities education in China's institutions of higher learning with Tsinghua University as the particular case. Since current Chinese universities are divided into three types: (1) research universities; (2) teaching-research universities; and (3) teaching-oriented universities, liberal arts education always plays an important part in students' comprehensive schooling although in most of the research universities priority is given to science and technology. As China has a long tradition of humanities education, even long before the establishment of those Western type universities, offering humanities education to all the university students as a major educational task has never changed. Even during the Cultural Revolution when all the universities stopped teaching and research work, students and faculty members were still educated with Mao's instructions. Along with the rapid development of Chinese economy, traditional humanities are suffering more or less. But the author argues that no matter how rapidly the Chinese economy has been developing and how well Chinese people are pursuing the so-called Chinese Dream, it is necessary to pay attention to the humanities and to offer humanities education to young students. The author also offers his reconstruction of Neo-Confucianism as an alternative discourse to various postmodern discourses in the new framework of global culture.

Obviously, China is undoubtedly one of the very few countries that have most benefited from the advent of globalization in an overall way: economically, politically, socially and culturally. It is true, however, that along with the rise of popular culture and consumer culture, elite culture and traditional humanities are confronted with severe challenges and even 'marginalized'.¹ Thus, how to give full play to the function of liberal arts or humanities education and how to highlight the humanistic

spirit in the age of globalization are what contemporary Chinese intellectuals and scholars of the humanities are most concerned about. The present essay will first describe the current Chinese intellectual condition in the age of globalization and the necessity of humanities education, and then deal with the function of humanities education in China's institutions of higher learning, with Tsinghua University as the particular case. I want to argue that no matter how rapidly the Chinese economy has been developing in the age of globalization and how well Chinese people are now pursuing the so-called Chinese Dream, it is all the more necessary to pay considerable attention to the humanities and offer liberal arts education to young students. In our international communication and dialogue, if we want to utter our own voices, we should have our own cultural and theoretical discourse. In this sense, reconstructing a sort of Neo-Confucianism will not only benefit China's humanities education, but also enable this doctrine coming from Chinese cultural soil to function as one of the major discourses in international cultural and academic communication.

Current Chinese Intellectual Condition Reflected

No doubt the past three decades have been the most open period in the history of 20th century China. Along with China's opening to the outside world and economic reform, which started in the latter part of the 1970s, tremendous changes have taken place in almost all the aspects of contemporary Chinese society and intellectual life. Since the beginning of the 1990s, China's socialist planned economy has been shifting to a market economy, and the country has been in a 'post-socialist' or 'post-revolutionary' period. This is also viewed as a transitional period of politics, economy and culture, with different forces and discourses coexisting and complementing each other. But confronted with the various challenges raised by popular culture and consumer culture, quite a few scholars and intellectuals of the humanistic sense are very much worried about the increasing shrinking of the humanities and the 'crisis of the humanistic spirit'. They still want to follow the elite tradition of being opposed to such forceful challenges. But in the age of globalization this will not work at all. However, what we could do is to find the right channel through which we could offer humanities education not only to young people, but also to everyone in general. Although there was a theoretic debate about the 'crisis of the humanistic spirit' in the mid-1990s,² the situation did not change toward a favourable direction.

Upon entering the new century, along with the acceleration of globalization and China's market economy, consumer culture is indeed becoming more and more powerful in deconstructing both the dominance of the official master discourse as well as the established canonical culture and its product, literature and art. We cannot neglect the following conspicuous phenomena in current Chinese society: the popularization of internet writing has enabled about three hundred million internet writers to be active in the vast cyberspace as China is now the biggest country of internet and cell phone users; the numerous netizens' enthusiastic writings, their communication and publishing practices have forcefully undermined the traditional way of writing, communicating and publishing; the popularization of Sister Lotus (Furong jiejie)

among young college students has deconstructed the traditional idol-worship among the young; the reinterpreting of some canonical works and having them on TV or in the popular book market has ruthlessly deconstructed the established canon, paving the way for canon reformation; the reinterpretations of such Chinese classics as *A Dream of Red Chambers* (Honglou meng) by Liu Xinwu, *The Romantic Evolution of Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi) by Yi Zhongtian and *Confucian Analects* (Lun Yu) by Yu Dan have all effectively undermined the authority of those serious scholars of the fields who are engaged in Chinese classics studies, but the popularizing of these classics has enabled works to be better known and more popular among the broad contemporary audiences; the enthusiastic promotion of the ‘super-girl’s voice’ (chaoji nvsheng) and the hermaphroditic image of Xiao Shenyang has damaged the traditional aesthetic standard of lofty music and masculinity, emancipating young people’s musical and artistic imagination; and the wide circulation of some well-designed popular magazines has marginalized elite literary and intellectual journals; and so on. This is undoubtedly an age of no dominant trend; an age of no humanities masters; this is also an age of no governing moral value and aesthetic standard. That is why some humanities intellectuals are trying to save the humanistic spirit. But for us humanities scholars, how to save a society that is obviously lacking in humanities education is more important.

Apparently, Chinese people who have experienced numerous wars and natural disasters, especially the ‘ten years catastrophe’ of the Cultural Revolution, really long for a free and loose atmosphere at which they can utter their own voices without any constraints. Thus, the current state policy to build a well-off and harmonious society and pursue the so-called ‘Chinese Dream’ has made it possible for those people who have become rich first to enjoy their lives in a more comfortable and even aesthetic way. Since they are mostly successful elites or talented personnel in their fields, they cannot be satisfied with material enjoyment only. What they want is to ‘consume’ cultural commodities in an artistic and aesthetic way while living luxuriously. In this aspect, they, after a busy daily routine of work, really want to be relaxing and enjoying some light artistic performance before a TV screen rather than going to the cinema; they would rather read some short non-fictional works closer to their daily lives than sit down to read those thick canonical literary works that are far from the present realities. The recovery of elite literature after Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize did not last for long before Alice Munroe received the Prize in 2013. If not for the popularity of the Nobel Prize for Literature, Mo Yan would hardly be better known than the most popular netizen writer Han Han whose picture even appeared on the cover of *Time*.

Interestingly enough, high cultural products have become these rich people’s consuming goods rather than their spiritual nourishment, since many of them did not receive any high education. Although Luciano Pavarotti’s singing can hardly be understood or well appreciated by these new nobles, as many of them are unable to enjoy the beauty of music, they still want to spend money listening to his concert, viewing it as a sort of ‘symbolic capital’ that might well change into ‘financial capital’. Many young people are said to know more about the film star Zhang Ziyi than the

greatest modern writer Lu Xun. They do not have a great hope for the future, nor do they want to remember the past. What they are most interested in is to experience the present's immediate enjoyment. In the face of all the above, what shall we humanities intellectuals, who are mostly literary and art scholars, do? Shall we still stand on a higher plane trying to enlighten these popular culture producers and consumers in the usual way? Or shall we just involve ourselves in researching these phenomena so that we will function in a way of 'post-enlightenment'? I think the latter attitude is more realistic toward the closing gap between high culture and popular culture in the present age of globalization.³ That is, to offer some cultural and spiritual nourishment is necessary since many of the population still want to enjoy being educated.

Highlighting the Humanistic Spirit in Universities

Undoubtedly, university students are excellent representatives of contemporary young people, especially in China where the nationwide annual entrance examinations enable universities to admit the successful examinees to further their studies. It is really very competitive for young high school graduates to succeed in the entrance examinations, which sometimes even change one's entire career and life. Some people even boast that if you enter Tsinghua University or Peking University, you are actually on the threshold of a prestigious American university, and you are moving toward the world. So studying in different types of universities can decide the future career of a young student.

Generally speaking, similar to the situation in the West, Chinese universities are normally divided into three types.

- (1) Research universities. These are devoted to high-level and cutting edge scientific research in the international context so that the achievements will directly serve the nation's need and contribute to international academia. At the moment, there are altogether nine Chinese top universities that undertake such a task. They are Tsinghua University, Peking University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, Xi'an Jiao Tong University, Chinese University of Science and Technology and Harbin Institute of Technology, with the financial and other supportive priority given to the first two top universities. The Chinese government has realized that in order to build one or two world-class universities in the near future, it is necessary to build quite a few research universities first. In this way, over 30 universities are now categorized as research universities, and receive particular financial support from both central as well as local governments. They should not only cultivate excellent personnel for the country, but also contribute to China's, as well as international, academia with their cutting edge research achievements.
- (2) Teaching-research universities. The number of these universities amounts to some 400, including all those that not only offer undergraduate courses

to students but also supervise graduate students who are working on their master's and doctoral degrees. They chiefly satisfy the needs of certain regions or the country and contribute more domestically than internationally.

- (3) Teaching-oriented universities. These include all those that chiefly offer undergraduate education and some graduate courses at the master's level. Their major tasks are to provide excellent young candidates for the above research universities, to cultivate excellent personnel for the local areas they are located in, and contribute to the economic construction and development of these areas as well as the country.

Among the above three types of universities in China, humanities education always plays an important part in university students' comprehensive schooling, although in most of the research universities priority is still given to science and technology as well as business and management.

As is well known, China has a long tradition of humanities education, from long before the establishment of those Western-type universities, which are the product of modern science and technology. So offering humanities education to all university students as a major educational task has never changed, even during the Cultural Revolution when all the universities stopped their teaching and research work, and students and faculty members were still educated with Mao's instructions and everyone was reading his 'red book' every day. At the time, Mao's political doctrines obviously took the place of the once dominant Confucian doctrines, which were severely castigated. So immediately after the Cultural Revolution, when Mao's doctrines were partially criticized and belittled, there appeared a vast gap in the beliefs of the new generation. It was after the 1990s, when China's leader Deng Xiaoping realized that the greatest mistake of the previous ten years of the reform lay in education or, more specifically, humanities education, for the tremendous achievements in China's economy were so conspicuous that they apparently overshadowed the traditional humanistic spirit.

In current Chinese universities, there are also two types of humanities education: one is to the students whose major is arts and humanities, and the other is to those whose major is science and technology, including disciplines in social sciences. The former will probably be engaged in teaching or research in the arts and humanities disciplines in the future, and the latter only want to be offered some humanities knowledge and endowed with some aesthetic taste so that they will enjoy arts and life in a more professional way. At the moment, all students are entitled to study a foreign language, usually English, and some other humanities courses such as Chinese literature and art appreciation, journalism, film appreciation, and so on, if their major is not that of the humanities.⁴ Frankly, most of the science students are very interested in literature and art, and some even spend their spare time in either theatre performance or literary writing. We can hardly find in them a conflict between arts and sciences, and many of the well-known contemporary Chinese writers were not necessarily trained in the Chinese department. However, most of the humanities

students are not necessarily good at science and technology. So in this way, it is also necessary to offer such courses as on the history of science and philosophy of science to these students. At quite a few polytechnic universities, there is a course called 'dialectics of nature' which is the combination of philosophy and science. All the above efforts made by China's educational institutions are becoming increasingly favourable to the atmosphere of humanities or liberal arts education.

Humanities Education at Tsinghua University: A Special Case

As one of the two top universities in China, Tsinghua University has, to the outside world, always been leading China's cutting edge scientific and technological research. It is even more famous for its excellent alumni such as the current or former top Chinese leaders, Xi Jinping and Hu Jintao, and the former premier, Zhu Rongji. Few contemporary people still remember its splendid past in the humanities and social sciences. So before dealing with humanities education at Tsinghua University, I would like to say a few words about its past humanistic tradition and present state of the humanities education.

Founded in 1911 with part of the Gengzi indemnity returned by the United States government, Tsinghua University was initially established as a preparatory school whose students were trained to further their study in the United States after graduation. The University was officially founded in 1923, and the Institute of Chinese Learning founded in 1925, whose faculty included the then most prominent humanities scholars in China, such as Wang Guowei, Liang Qichao, Chen Yinko, and Chao Yuanren. Wu Mi who got a master's degree at Harvard University in arts was Director of the Institute, had made clear the aims of the Institute, 'What I mean by Chinese studies refers to the entire Chinese scholarship and culture, and the way of research puts emphasis on the right and precise method, which is what people of today call scientific method. It also draws materials from Euro-American scholarship in Oriental languages and Chinese culture, which is where our Institute differs from other scholars in Chinese studies at home.' Wang Guowei's course 'Ancient History and New Evidence', Liang Qichao's 'Method of Historiography', Chen Yinko's 'Bibliography of Western Sinology', Chao Yuanren's 'Modern Linguistics' and 'Dialectology', and the like are all characterized by applying modern Western scientific methods to the interpretation of traditional Chinese culture and learning. The Institute was closed in 1928,⁵ but in spite of that, it had educated a group of outstanding scholars who excelled at using new Western thinking in Chinese studies, and functioned at the forefront of the history of Chinese scholarship and humanities research.

Tsinghua University followed a different educational principle from many other Chinese universities, and many departments stressed the importance of 'studying both the Chinese and the Western', in the hope of bringing out graduates with a mastery of Chinese and Western culture and history. For instance, the Chinese Department 'gave emphasis to studying both the old and new literature, and Chinese and Western literature', and the Department of Foreign Languages and

Literature aimed to cultivate ‘gentlemen of erudition and distinction’ ‘with a thorough knowledge of the Western mind’, and the History Department ‘highlighted a balanced study in both Chinese and foreign history’, and the Department of Philosophy underscored an interpretive relationship of mutual illumination between Eastern and Western philosophy. At the time, all the departments put foreign languages and culture, chiefly Western languages and culture, at the centre of their curriculum. For instance, one fifth of the required courses of the Chinese Department were those on Western languages and culture. The aim of studying Western languages and culture lay in studying the ‘Western method’ and using it on the redaction of ancient Chinese classics, or starting a new school. In accordance with this educational principle, the faculty’s research reflected the characteristics of this modern hermeneutics in the interpretation of the ancient.

As the very cradle of modern Chinese comparative literature studies, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature made major achievements in teaching and research in comparative studies of different literatures. The courses offered in the Department, such as Wu Mi’s ‘A Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Poetry’, I.A. Richards’s ‘Literary Criticism and Comparative Literature’, have already become famous landmarks in the field of comparative literature in China, and particularly, Wu’s ‘Literature and Human Conditions’ has made breakthrough contributions to the method of mutual illumination between Chinese and Western cultures. Graduates from the Department, such as Ji Xianlin, Wang Zuoliang, Li Funing, and so on, have later become major scholars in China’s comparative literature and Western literature studies, and a special mention should be made of Qian Zhongshu, who has elevated the modern Chinese hermeneutics to a new height with his *On the Arts* and *Guan Zhui Bian*.⁶ The Department of Philosophy gave priority to a synchronical approach to philosophical issues, and foregrounded proof, logic, and conceptual analysis, which is where the Chinese tradition is weak. The most influential works are Jin Yuelin’s *Logic* and *On the Way*, and Feng Youlan’s *Six Books of the Zhenyuan Period* and *History of Chinese Philosophy*.⁷ Pleading for a new historiography, the History Department inherited the legacy of the Institute of Chinese Learning and has brought out such important studies as Chen Yinko’s *A Political History of the Tang Dynasty* and *A Brief Study of the Origins of the Political Systems in the Sui and Tang Dynasties*, and Wu Han’s study of the history of the Ming dynasty. Different as they were in their perspectives and conclusions, they did not fail to probe into the historical phenomena to find out causes that were deeply rooted in its time and society. In short, the Tsinghua School of Humanities Studies has creatively inherited the splendid scholarship formed in the time of the Institute of Chinese Learning and, in its application of modern scientific thinking and methodology, has applied it to the interpretation of traditional Chinese culture. It has never shied away from seeking a broad and solid perspective.

In 1952, Tsinghua University became a multidisciplinary engineering school during China’s nationwide reshuffle of institutions of higher education, and its humanities and social sciences departments were suspended, and the faculty and students were reassigned to different universities or research institutions, such as Peking University and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. These students,

however, after graduation, have mostly become prominent faculty members in these institutions.

Since 1978, Tsinghua University has resumed or established such departments as the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, the Institute of Thought and Culture, the Institute of Education, the Institute of Science, Technology and Society, and Center for Art Education and some other departments and institutes of humanities and social sciences. On the basis of these departments and institutes the School of Humanities and Social Sciences was founded in December 1993, which has not only developed various disciplines on a higher level but also plays a leading role in Tsinghua's humanities education as well as in China's humanities education. Affiliated with the School is a Center for Liberal Arts Education, which takes charge of providing liberal arts or humanities education to the entire student community on the campus.

Upon entering the new century, the School leadership has designed its blueprint of development not only in disciplinary construction but also in highlighting the traditional humanistic spirit so that it will resume and develop the University's past splendour. The major tasks for Tsinghua's School of Humanities, which is independent of the former School of Humanities and Social Sciences, apart from its own disciplinary construction and academic development, lie in the following three aspects.

First, to offer advanced courses or graduate seminars to the students whose major areas are the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. In this aspect, its faculty members not only offer undergraduate courses but also supervise graduate students on both MA and PhD levels.

Second, to offer elective general courses to all the students in the university whose major areas are not those of the humanities but who are very interested in arts and literature training.

Third, to create a humanistic atmosphere at which school life is increasingly colourful and lively, especially in the current age of globalization when society has become more and more realistic and interpersonal relations are becoming less and less close.

Since I am involved in designing the development of the School, I would like to introduce some of the major changes in the curriculum and teaching methods in the School's humanities education.

First, are breaking through the constraints of departments or disciplines and letting all the students from the disciplines of literature, history and philosophy receive general humanities education. Specifically, we – unlike what the other Chinese universities usually do – divide all the newly admitted undergraduate students in our school into two big classes: one for the humanities and the other for social sciences. In the class of humanities, all the students could take the courses offered by professors from different departments or disciplines of the humanities. Some of the excellent students could even attend courses in English offered by professors of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature.

Second, are breaking through the constraints of languages and letting Chinese learning communicate more effectively with Western learning. Specifically, the

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, following Tsinghua's tradition of training excellent students good at both Chinese and Western learning, offers advanced courses in English to all the students from different departments of the humanities so that they could read the Western classics and modern works in the English original or translation and write their term papers in English rather than depend on translations. Similarly, students of an English major could also take the courses in Chinese offered by professors of the Chinese Department and the other relevant humanities departments. This is practised both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Third, we are making full use of the reputation of Tsinghua University and are inviting some cultural celebrities and social elites to give public lectures so that students can obtain rich work and life experiences from these successful people. We not only invite domestic successful personnel to lecture in Chinese, but also invite international renowned scholars, politicians and businessmen to lecture on their career development. Since Tsinghua University has trained numerous successful personnel, including high-ranking government officials, prestigious scholars, successful businessmen and other cultural celebrities, it is much easier to get them on our campus than most of the other Chinese universities. We have even succeeded in getting some of the most 'expensive' figures in the contemporary world, such as Bill Clinton, Colin Power and Bill Gates, to speak at Tsinghua University, which can hardly be done in any other universities in China. In this way, students, from entering Tsinghua University, are able to learn more outside of class and have a consciousness of global leadership in the future. And history will prove that this mode of humanities education will manifest itself as increasingly effective, although at the moment it is still far from satisfactory.

Reconstructing Neo-Confucianism from a Postmodern Perspective

It is true that globalization has made most people marginalized, politically, economically and even culturally, but it is, on the other hand, resisted by the other strong and stubborn force: localization, which finds particular embodiment in the fields of social sciences and humanities. Economically speaking, China is one of the very few countries that most benefited from the process of globalization. But what is the state of the 'exports' of Chinese culture and thought? This is a question often raised by Chinese intellectuals on different occasions. I think the situation must be rather pessimistic if one considers the statistical data. We have brought in too much Western theory and learning, but we have exported too little Chinese theory and learning. In recent years, in China as well as in some other Asian countries or regions, the revival of Confucianism might well serve as an oppositional force against the challenge of globalization. Confucianism in Chinese intellectual history has long been playing a double role: both a religious belief as most Chinese people do not have a religious belief, and a moral standard, and it has become increasingly influential in the past decade. We might well reconstruct it from today's postmodern perspective so that it will not only become another forceful theoretical discourse in our international

cultural communication but also function more effectively in domestic humanities education.⁸

At present, globalization is sweeping China's economy and finance, which is a historical trend beyond anyone's expectation and resistance. It will also influence and perhaps has already influenced the establishment of Chinese national and cultural identity. What about our strategy in literature and culture? Shall we Chinese intellectuals try to construct a sort of theoretical discourse of our own? As for the first question, my answer is, the Chinese Writers Association has decided to translate 100 excellent contemporary literary works into the major Western languages, especially into English, so that Chinese literature will become known to more people in the world.⁹ Similarly, in the field of culture, along with the increasing interest in the Chinese language among world people, the government has also decided to invest a huge amount of money to develop the project of teaching Chinese to foreigners by setting up hundreds of Confucius Institutes worldwide.¹⁰ But even so, we cannot say that we have already had our own intellectual and theoretical discourse with which we could carry on equal dialogues with our Western and international counterparts.

As we know, the Confucian doctrine has undergone twists and turns in the history of modern Chinese culture and thought. It was severely criticized during the May 4th period and more severely castigated during the Cultural Revolution, for it was regarded as an oppositional force to modernity and to communist belief. During the age of globalization, Confucianism was revived as it coincides with the current government policy of constructing a harmonious society as well as a harmonious world. But the Confucianism in contemporary China has also been subject to a certain metamorphosis: its ethical and humanistic doctrines have been highlighted and its conservative feudal and religious doctrines excluded. So it will be good just to 'revive' the old Confucian ethics in a selective and critical way, and reconstructing a sort of Neo-Confucianism is completely possible in the age of globalization as it is increasingly influential beyond the Chinese territories. In this aspect, Mou Zongsan, Tu Wei-ming, Cheng Chung-ying and other overseas or Chinese-American intellectuals have made great efforts to promote it worldwide. Tu has not only frequently visited China in recent years and lectures in some leading Chinese universities on his Neo-Confucianist doctrine, but also has interviews at China Central TV Station and other popular mass media so that Neo-Confucianism could be more popular among ordinary people, or at least will coexist with the various prevalent Western cultural theories and moral standards that are largely accepted by the new generation of Chinese intellectuals. Since both postmodernism and Neo-Confucianism have deconstructed the totalitarian discourse of modernity and offered us an alternative modernity of Oriental or Chinese characteristics, they may well carry on effective dialogues and complement each other.

According to Tu Wei-ming, what we should take from Confucianism is not the spirit of political participation, but rather its humanistic spirit, for the Confucian 'calling' in the contemporary era 'addresses a much more profound humanistic vision than political participation alone, no matter how broadly conceived, can accommodate ... Confucian intellectuals may not actively seek official positions to

put their ideas into practice, but they are always engaged politically through their poetic sensitivity, social responsibility, historical consciousness and metaphysical insight.¹¹ The great efforts made by Tu in the past decade have proved his selective and compromising endeavour to 'globalize' Neo-Confucianism.

Cheng Chung-ying, another important Neo-Confucian scholar and philosopher, not only promotes Neo-Confucianism in some Chinese-speaking countries or regions, but also publishes extensively in the English-speaking world in an attempt to promote Neo-Confucianism in a global context. In one of the issues of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by himself, he not only discusses in detail the relationship between democracy and Chinese philosophy, but also offers his own paradigm on democracy from the perspective of Neo-Confucianism. To him, the purpose of democracy is twofold: 'It aims at achieving an enduring order and harmony of a community in which individual members may enjoy self-expression and other freedoms without dominance of others; it also aims at producing and supporting free individuals whose freedoms will be the basis for building an orderly and harmonious society and community. I believe that both aims should be achieved at the same time.'¹² Obviously, the emphasis of the humanistic and ethical aspect of Confucianism by these overseas Neo-Confucianists may well coincide with the current practice of the Chinese government of 'constructing a harmonious society', so Confucianism should develop without any intervention in contemporary China.

In this sense, Neo-Confucianism, or the 'globalized' postmodern Confucianism, will be another forceful discourse in the age of globalization with more and more people intending to live comfortably without struggle or war. Confronted with the Western influence and globalism, getting Confucianism revived has a certain positive significance, but it is also a double-edged sword: it will contribute a great deal to the promotion of Chinese culture and civilization worldwide, but, will it also, as an opposite force to the West-centred globalization, cause another 'clash of civilizations'? This is undoubtedly a question I should like to briefly answer before concluding this essay.

I always think that, as both a religious doctrine and a theoretical discourse, Confucianism has undergone reconstructions in the current global postmodern context. Born from the Chinese cultural soil, it will function more and more effectively in contemporary China in its dialogue with various Western postmodern theories. In the age of globalization, commercialization is prevalent, while the humanistic spirit has been severely challenged, so it will be a good opportunity for us to call for the revival of the (reinterpreted and reconstructed) Confucianism in our liberal arts education. This is also what we Chinese humanities intellectuals could offer to the world. In this way, our strategy is: on the one hand, to revise, critique and reconstruct the traditional Confucianism from the perspective of global postmodernity in an attempt to enable it to become an important theoretical resource in constructing a harmonious society as well as a harmonious world; on the other hand, to question, critique and reconstruct various postmodern theories from the perspective of global Neo-Confucianism, in an attempt to make it one of the universal discursive forces in the current age of globalization in which different discourses coexist and complement

one another. Along with the rapid development of the Chinese economy and the heightening of China's comprehensive power, the forceful position of Chinese culture and civilization should be further established. So, in this sense, it will be significant to reconstruct Neo-Confucianism from a global postmodern perspective such that it will function effectively in China's liberal arts education as well as in international cultural communications.

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2. There was a heated debate on the issue of the crisis of the humanistic spirit in 1995–96 launched by a group of scholars in Shanghai around the journals of *Shanghai wenxue* (Shanghai Literature) published in Shanghai and *Dushu* (Reading) published in Beijing. Dissatisfied with the rise of popular culture and prevalence of postmodern theory in the academic circles, these scholars tried to recover the old tradition of a humanistic spirit, something like a sort of new humanism. But this debate came to an end without any result.
3. Considering the function of Culture Studies in contemporary Chinese intellectual life, cf. Wang Ning (2003) Cultural studies in China: towards closing the gap between elite culture and popular culture. *European Review*, 11(2), pp. 183–191.
4. Since many young talented students want to further their studies in the West, they spend more time studying English than reading Chinese classics. So some scholars of Chinese studies are trying to call for teaching all the university students the course 'college Chinese' instead of 'college English', which should be an elective course.
5. In order to celebrate the centennial of Tsinghua University in 2011 and to give full play to its past humanities tradition, the University authority decided in 2009 to found a new Institute of Chinese Studies.
6. As for the important role played by Qian Zhongshu and Tsinghua University in the history of China's comparative literature, cf. Wang Ning (2006) 'Death of a discipline'? Toward a global/local orientation of comparative literature in China. *Neohelicon*, XXXIII(2), pp. 149–163.
7. Considering the historical evolution of the Philosophy Department of Tsinghua University and its present status, cf. Wan Junren (2003) A characterization of philosophical knowledge in 'Chinese Modernity': philosophical studies in Chinese universities and the Academy of Social Sciences. *European Review*, 11(2), pp. 171–181.
8. Considering the interesting and complicated relations between Confucianism and postmodernity, cf. Wang Ning (2010) Reconstructing (neo) Confucianism in a 'glocal' postmodern culture context. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 37(1), pp. 48–62.
9. This project was launched by the Chinese Writers Association and supported by the Ministry of Finances, and is aimed to select 100 excellent contemporary Chinese literary works, chiefly novels or novellas, and translate them into the major foreign languages, especially English. I happened to have been invited to attend one of the preparatory meetings in Beijing in March 2006.

10. This project is now executed chiefly by the Office of the State Leading Group for Teaching Chinese to Foreigners and is aimed to popularize the Chinese language and culture worldwide.
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12. Cf. C.-y. Cheng (2007) Preface: the inner and the outer for democracy and Confucian tradition. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, **34**(2), Special issue on Democracy and Chinese Philosophy, p. 152.

About the Author

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