

From Theology's Handmaid to the Science of Sciences: Western Philosophy's Transformations on its Way to China

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During the nineteenth century the category of philosophy was warmly adopted by Asian thinkers.¹ First in India, then in Japan, and finally in China, scholars who gradually became more acquainted with Western systems of knowledge accepted not only the uses of this category and its usefulness, but also its superior position within Western knowledge systems and hence its crucial importance for their countries in their perceived quest for modernization. These scholars thus attempted both to disseminate Western philosophical knowledge and to formulate their indigenous knowledge systems within its philosophical framework. This process of adaptation is particularly fascinating in light of the fact that the category— philosophy— had already been introduced to China in the seventeenth century, but was, overall, rejected.

In this article I sketch and analyze the various ways in which philosophy transformed in the West from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, that is, the process that made the category appealing to Chinese scholars at the end of this period. I present, first, the type of philosophy that was introduced to China by the Jesuits and, second, the various transformations philosophy underwent until its reintroduction in the nineteenth century. Philosophy's changing relationship with theology and religion is emphasized, as, I claim, this relationship had significant bearing on the modes of introduction as well as on the receptiveness to philosophy in China, particularly in the earlier period. Lastly, the reception of the category is outlined along with the dynamics of its changing nature during the dialogue between Western and Chinese protagonists.

I thereby problematize and challenge the assumption that philosophy was important always or by default in the West and therefore no justification was

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needed for its introduction to and importance in Asia. Philosophy, of course, has never been an immutable category that changes in content alone; the term itself has had different referents and thus its own intellectual history. Moreover, in none of the periods examined here was there a single type of philosophy; my focus is therefore on the kinds of philosophy—or rather, the kinds of perceptions of philosophy—that ended up in China in the context of philosophy's transformations in the West.

Jesuit philosophy and its opponents

The Jesuit Giulio Aleni (艾儒略, 1582–1649) was among the first to bring the category of philosophy to China. To present “philosophy” to his late Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) scholarly audience he first used a transliteration: 斐祿所費亞 (*fei-lu-suo-fei-ya*). He then equated philosophy with the “learning” or “discipline” of principles (理學/科)—the Neo-Confucian doctrine and ideology, which developed during the Song Dynasty and was closely related to the Imperial authorities—explaining the term as follows:

理學者，義理之大學也。人以義理超於萬物，而為萬物之靈。格物窮理則於人全，而於天近。然物之理藏在物中，如金在砂，如玉在璞，須淘之，剖之以斐祿所費亞之學。

The learning of principles is the great learning among the [various discussions of] meanings and principles. It is by way of “meanings and principles” that men surpass the myriad things and become the luminous spirit of the myriad things. The “investigation of things and the fathoming of principles” thus encompasses the entire human condition and comes close to Heaven. Indeed, as gold is [hidden] in the sand, jade in the uncut stone, so is the principle of things hidden within the things; one must filter [the sand] with water or chisel [the stone] in order to [arrive] at the learning of philosophy.²

Aleni's 1623 explanation, equating philosophy with the learning of principles, seems to have worked quite well, for soon thereafter the transliteration was abandoned and the Chinese term for philosophy became “the investigation

2 All translations are my own unless specifically noted. See Giulio Aleni 艾儒略, *Xixue fan* 西學凡 (*A Summary of Western Learning*), in *Tianxue chuhan* 天學初函 (*First Collection of Celestial Studies*), comp. by Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565–1630) (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1965), 21–60, at 31. For Alfonso Vagnoni's (1566–1640) equation of philosophy with existing Chinese categories in his *Xiushen Xixue* 修身西學 (*The Western Learning of Self-Cultivation*, 1630) and for Francisco Furtado's (1589–1653) similar approach in *Mingli tan* 名理探 (*An Exploration of the Patterns of Names* [i.e., logic], 1631), see Zhong Shaohua 鍾少華, “Qingmo Zhongguoren duiyu ‘zhexue’ de zhuiqiu” 清末中國人對於‘哲學’的追求 (“The Pursuit of ‘Zhexue’ [Philosophy] in Late Qing China”), *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu tongxun* 2:2 (June 1992): 159–189, esp. 162–63.

of things and fathoming of principles” (格物窮理), a classical Chinese formulation that was at the core of the learning of principles and well known to any Chinese scholar at the time.³

In the same essay, however, Aleni also presented several branches of knowledge and learning as well as the curriculum for the study thereof, not just philosophy. And despite his high regard for philosophy, he claimed that “all [these branches of learning] consider theology as the ultimate [learning]” (無不以陡祿日亞為極).⁴ Aleni, having already presented the transliteration of theology (*dou-lu-ri-ya*), further translated the term as “learning of the Way” (道學), again making it appear as an indigenous Chinese classical term that could also stand for Song Neo-Confucianism alongside the “learning of principle” (理學), which he equated with philosophy. It was theology, according to Aleni, that incorporated the teachings of the sages and worthies (聖賢) of the West, and by “making [theology's] Way bright and clear, there would be no meanings and principles in Christianity that are not established” (明其道使天主教中義理無不立).⁵

Aleni introduced “the great sage called *duo-ma-si*” (大聖名為多瑪斯), i.e., Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), whose writings were “extremely broad and also got hold of the previous sages’ words” (甚博又取前聖之言). He explained that “what theology elucidates is the most illuminated, the most selected, and the truest” (陡祿日亞所言, 最明, 最簡, 最確).⁶ Theology and philosophy were thus rendered as complementary—philosophy dealing mostly with the learning or the Way of humans (人學/道) and theology with the Way of Heaven (天學/道);⁷ yet the complementary relations were still hierarchical, with theology granted supremacy within Aleni's proselytization project.

This project was very clear to Aleni's audience, whether the audience was supportive and sympathetic to it or not. Two of the more sympathetic of Aleni's Chinese audience—Yang Tingyun (楊廷筠, 1562–1627) and Xu Xuchen (許胥臣)—also wrote prefaces to accompany the publication of the

3 For more on the notion of *gewu qiongli* see Willard J. Peterson, “Fang I-chih: Western Learning and the ‘Investigation of Things’,” in *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 369–409.

4 See Aleni, *Xixue fan*, 51.

5 Ibid., 50.

6 Ibid., 51.

7 E.g., *ibid.*, 56.

Xixue fan. These prefaces demonstrate how Aleni's (and others') attempts to use classical Chinese lexicon and idioms to convey Western knowledge may have backfired: while the use of classical Chinese terms made the Western concepts seem closer and more familiar to Chinese scholars, it also rendered Western philosophical terms superfluous to what the Confucians already had and may have prompted Chinese scholars to argue against such concepts of their own culture's making.⁸

Indeed, Xu Xuchen, in his preface to Aleni's *Xixue fan*, plainly asserted that such explanations about Heaven "did not begin with Western learning" (非自西學始也), and weighed in using the authority of the Cheng brothers (Cheng Hao 程顥, 1032–1085, and Cheng Yi 程頤, 1033–1107)—two of the Neo-Confucian sages of the Song Dynasty—on the significance of reverence to Heaven.⁹ For Xu, adhering to Christianity did not mean to discard his Confucian identity and teachings; rather, it meant to support or assist (翼) Confucian learning. Xu also brought into the discussion Xu Guangqi's (徐光啓, 1562–1633) notion of "when the rites are lost seek out in the open [i.e., outside of the civilized center]" (禮失求野) to further bolster the idea that the new teachings from the West were part of Confucian ancient teachings.¹⁰

Xu Xuchen therefore emphasized what "cohered with the teachings of the ancient sages" (有合于古聖之教) and thus time and again related to himself and his peers as "we/us Confucians" (吾儒), thereby exposing the anxieties over cultural identity that Christianity and Western learning as a whole had brought to the fore.¹¹ Similarly, Yang Tingyun began his preface with an explanation that Aleni's and Ricci's works addressed what the Confucians of antiquity had preached, and that only from the Qin and Han Dynasties onwards was this line of teaching broken (屈) and the Learning of Heaven (天學)

8 See also Howard L. Goodman and Anthony Grafton, "Ricci, the Chinese, and the Toolkits of Textualists," *Asia Major*, iii (1990): 95–148.

9 Aleni, *Xixue fan*, 21.

10 Xu also clarified the hierarchical order between mathematics and religious practice, for example in his preface to the translation of Euclid's *Elements*: "the major [type of learning] is self-cultivation and serving Heaven; the minor [type of learning] is the investigation of things and fathoming of principles [which includes mathematics]" (大者修身事天，小者格物窮理). See *Xu Guangqi ji* 徐光啓集 (*The Collected Works of Xu Guangqi*), collected by Wang Zhongmin 王重民 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), 1: 75.

11 E.g., Aleni, *Xixue fan*, 24. For more on the evolution of "li shi qiu ye" and other such catchphrases see Han Qi 韓琦, "Ming-Qing zhi ji 'li shi qiu ye' lun zhi yuan yu liu" 明清之際 "禮失求野" 論之源與流 ("The Origin and Spread of 'When the Rites are Lost Seek Out in the Open' During the Ming-Qing Transition"), *Ziran kexue shi yanjiu* 自然科學史研究 (*Studies in the History of Natural Sciences*) 26.3(2007): 303–311.

obscured (晦).¹² This explanation—echoed almost verbatim by those who later tried to reconcile Western with ancient Chinese mathematics and astronomy without recourse to Christianity—also highlighted the compatibility of Jesuit teachings with Confucianism.¹³ The solution to making Western concepts palatable to the Chinese audience thus also turned out to be the problem: if Confucian learning already contained these concepts, what need was there for foreign assistance in revitalizing them? Why should Confucian scholars be interested in Jesuit philosophy, especially when the theological side—tightly intertwined with the philosophical—often seemed not to correspond so neatly with Confucianism?

Jesuits, nonetheless, continued to try to draw attention to Christianity and to explain about both theology and philosophy. In 1654, for example, Luigi Buglio (1606–82, 利類思) wrote a preface to his translation of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, the *Chaoxing xueyao* (超性學要). In the preface Buglio explained that “the learning of the great West has six branches, and only the ‘branch of the Way’ is the most valued and important, for all the [other] branches are the learning of men, but the ‘branch of the Way’ is the learning of Heaven” (大西之學凡六科，惟道科為最貴且要，蓋諸科人學而道科天學也。). This “learning of Heaven,” Buglio continued, “is called *dou-lu-ri-ya* [theology] in the Western language, wherein *dou* points to the Lord of Heaven, originally called *deus*; and *lu-ri-ya* [*logiae*] points to explanations and investigations of the principles of the Lord of Heaven's workings” (天學西文曰陡祿日亞，雲陡指天主，本稱陡斯，雲祿日亞指講究天主事理也).¹⁴ Although Buglio stressed the need to study both the learning of Heaven and that of men, it was clear that the hierarchy, with Heaven at the top, was retained, and so was, of course, the religious purpose behind the translation project as a whole.

In 1669, just as the Jesuits regained their control over the Astronomical Bureau after the Yang Guangxian (楊光先, 1597–1669) affair when Yang tried to uproot Western influence especially at the Astronomical Bureau (successfully for several years, but vanquished by 1669),¹⁵ another work, written by Buglio,

12 Aleni, *Xixue fan*, 9–10.

13 For a discussion about Western scientific studies in seventeenth and eighteenth-century China see my “Confucian Scientific Identity: Qian Daxin's (1728–1804) Ambivalence toward Western Learning and Its Adherents,” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society* 6 (2012): 147–66.

14 See Luigi Buglio, “*Chaoxing xueyao zixu*,” in Xu Zongze 徐宗澤, *Ming-Qing jian Yesuhuishi yizhu tiyao* 明清間耶穌會士譯著提要 (*Abstracts of Jesuit Translations and Original Works from the Ming and Qing [Periods]*) (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 189–90.

15 For more on the Yang Guangxian affair in the 1660s see, e.g., Zhu Weizheng, *Coming Out of*

along with Gabriel de Magalhães (1610–77, 安文思) and Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–88, 南懷仁), was written about the West. It contained much previous work done by Aleni and added to it the authors' views. This work—the *Xifang yaoji* 西方要記 (*Important Records of about the West*)—contains an entry on “Western Learning” (西學), wherein the authors reaffirmed the hierarchy of religious teachings over philosophy explicitly: “Among the various scriptures, the most revered is the classic of the Lord of Heaven [i.e., the Bible]; next are the writings of the sages and worthies in history; and all the types of ‘investigation of things and the fathoming of principles’ come next” (經典書籍，最上則為天主之經，其次則歷代聖賢所著述者，而格物窮理諸種 [. . .] 次之). Thereafter the authors explained—following Aleni—the six types of learning; and theology (as Aleni put it—the learning of the Way, 道學) was deemed: “the most important [type of learning]” (最重), related first and foremost to “the Lord of Heaven and the scriptures” (天主經典).¹⁶

Such religious purpose, however, seems to be missing altogether from one of the major (and last) treatises about philosophy written by the Jesuits in China. This treatise, the *Qionglixue* 窮理學 (*The Learning of Fathoming Principles*, also known as *Cursus philosophicus*), seems to have omitted theology and was focused on philosophy.¹⁷ Indeed, Verbiest's memorial to the Kangxi Emperor of October 16, 1683, anchored the import of the book in the significance of philosophy: “philosophy is the root of all [types] of learning. And so, too, all renowned scholars, past and present, have said in their discussions of that which is essential, refined, pure, and precious in every [type] of learning that philosophy is the fountainhead of all learning”

the Middle Ages: Comparative Reflections on China and the West (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), esp. 81–112; Jacques Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures* (Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. 134–35; Eugenio Menegon, “Yang Guangxian's Opposition to Johann Adam Schall: Christianity and Western Science in His Work *budeyi*,” in *Western Learning and Christianity in China*, ed. Roman Malek (*Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XXXV/1*, 1998), 311–338; Harriet T. Zurndorfer, “‘One Adam Having Driven Us Out of Paradise, Another Has Driven Us Out of China’ Yang Kuanghsien's Challenge of Adam Schall von Bell,” in *Conflict and Accommodation in Early Modern East Asia: Essays in Honour of Erik Zürcher*, eds. Leonard Blussé and Harriet T. Zurndorfer (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1993), 141–68; John D. Young, *Confucianism and Christianity: the First Encounter* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), 77–96; Elman, *On Their Own Terms*, 134–44.

16 Luigi Buglio, et al., *Xifang Yaoji* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936; Congshu jicheng chubian vol. 3278), 3–4.

17 We should keep in mind that the entire *Qionglixue* has not been preserved, and that in those sections that are preserved there are indeed references, though cursory, to theology. See Shang Zhicong 尚智丛, “Nan Huaren *Qionglixue* de zhuti neirong yu jiben jiegou” 南怀仁《穷理学》的主体内容与基本结构 (“The Basic Contents and Framework of Ferdinand Verbiest's *Qionglixue*”), *Qingshi yanjiu* 3 (Aug., 2003): 73–84, esp. 75–76.

(窮理學為百學之根也。且古今各學之名公凡論，諸學之粹精，純貴，皆謂窮理學為百學之宗)。¹⁸

Philosophy, one might surmise, gained the upper hand and theology, along with religious fervor, was discarded. However, religion and theology were not discarded, though they were not mentioned at all; they were the elephant in the room or, in this case, in the emperor's and his officials' halls. The final aim of introducing philosophy in this way was, via its incorporation into the examination system, to bring in the means for better convincing the Chinese and the Manchus of the religious agenda Verbiest had in mind. As the Jesuit Andrea Lubelli (陸安德, 1611–85) put it just two months after Verbiest's memorial, the aim was that the Chinese “would easily find their way to the divine law.”¹⁹ Philosophy still served as a means to a religious end. The Chinese officials and the Manchu emperor (and officials), nonetheless, could see the religious agenda through the veil of philosophy, even though God or the Bible were not mentioned; anyone who had read even a small part of the Jesuit works in Chinese—including that of Verbiest—written before the *Qionglixue* could hardly fail to see the tight connection between philosophy and theology.

Thus, while interpretations over the meaning of the argument used by the officials to discard the *Qionglixue* (namely, the incongruity between the Western notion that cognitive faculties are located in the brain and the classical Chinese notion that they are located in the heart) may vary, with Elman focusing on discrepancies over medical knowledge and Kurtz seeing it as a “mere pretext” these interpretations are complementary rather than contradictory. For the purposes of this article, I would stress the understanding promulgated by the Jesuit I. Dunyn-Szpot around 1700, that “there was a particular doctrine of divine law embedded within [European philosophy] that ran counter to the wisdom and the religion that had ruled China for so many olympiads of centuries.”²⁰ The *Qionglixue* thus represented philosophy's swan song in China until the late nineteenth century.²¹

18 Ferdinand Verbiest, “Jincheng *Qionglixue shu zou*” 進呈窮理學書奏 (“Memorial on the Respectful Presentation of the book *Cursus philosophicus*”), reprinted in Xu Zongze, *Ming-Qing jian Yeshuishi*, 191–193, on 192. For a full translation of the memorial see Joachim Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 81–84. The translation here is largely based on Kurtz's translation with minor modifications.

19 See Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic*, 69.

20 Quoted in Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic*, 86.

21 See Benjamin A. Elman, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China, 1550–1900* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 146–47; Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic*, 86.

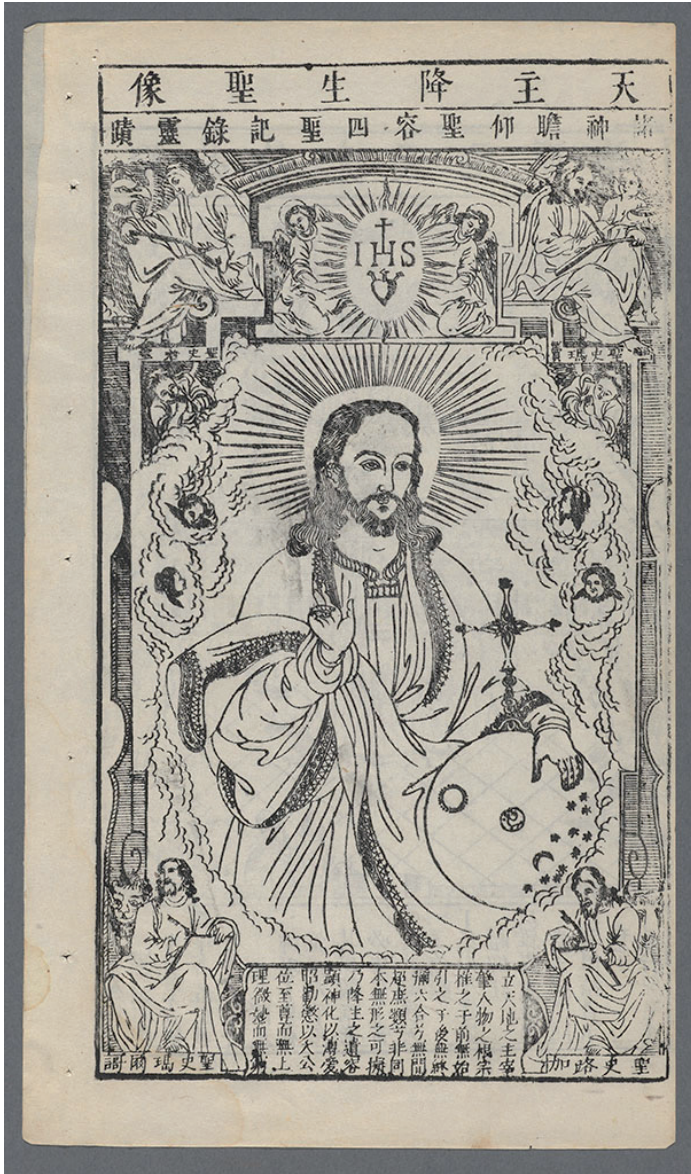


Fig. 1: The elephant in the halls. Jesus and the four evangelists (from top-right, clockwise: Matthew 瑪竇, Luke 路加, Mark 瑪爾訓, and John 若望) as depicted in various illustrated

publications on the life of Jesus, such as Aleni's *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* (天主降生出像經解, *Illustrations and Explanations of the Incarnation of the Lord [Jesus]*). This work was first published in 1637 and was later republished several times with a wide circulation and in various forms. Some of the images were also used by Chinese opponents of the Jesuits—such as Yang Guangxian—to expose and attack their religious agenda. The image here is from a circa 1640 similar edition of the *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* by Aleni, titled *Tianzhu jiangsheng yanxing jixiang* (天主降生言行紀像, *Records and Illustrations of the Words and Deeds of the Incarnation of the Lord [Jesus]*) ms# 52-1049 (f.4v), Houghton Library, Harvard University.²²

Therefore, although Verbiest's formulation of philosophy as “the root of all [types] of learning” and “the fountainhead of all learning” seems similar to the later formulation of philosophy as “*scientia scientiarum*” (“the science of sciences”), discussed below, significant discrepancies remained: first, it was clear that above the “fountainhead of all learning” resided a queen, theology, even if concealed; second, the breadth of the category philosophy, as shown below, made it clear to Chinese scholars (long before the *Qionglixue*) that they could pick and choose from those fields of knowledge that they deemed essential (astronomy and mathematics in particular) without partaking of Verbiest's entire philosophical project. Lastly, the historical context wherein Verbiest's *Qionglixue* was proposed is significant: by 1683 the Qing Empire had just consolidated its rule over mainland “China” and the island of Taiwan. The form of the examination system along with its underlying Neo-Confucian ideology had been reestablished not long before, and the Kangxi emperor remembered the bitter experience of the (by far milder) examination reform that took place and was rescinded just as he was about to take power in the late 1660s. The empire in 1683 seemed to work quite well; the need for an external knowledge system to replace the well-oiled examination machine or Confucian learning as a whole was absent.²³ And the threat of a new knowledge system to the very identity of “us Ru” (a term used by Xu Xushen, among others, in order to squelch the almost unavoidable cultural-identity objection, as well as by those feeling the threat) was perceived even if God was put out of the equation.²⁴ To substitute the fundamental texts that served as the basis for the examination system (or even to append to them a significant foreign part) was to substitute the very cultural basis of the examinees' identity, not just to

22 For more on such illustrated texts, their origins, sources, and circulation see, e.g., Nicolas Standaert, *An Illustrated Life of Christ Presented to the Chinese Emperor: The History of Jincheng shuxiang (1640)* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2007); D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), 38–48.

23 See Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), esp. 524–34.

24 See Sela, “Confucian Scientific Identity.”

teach them a different method of reasoning. Indeed, the Kangxi era was the time when parts of seemingly more neutral fields of knowledge—astronomy and mathematics—were firmly grounded and legitimated through the ethos of “Western learning originated from China” (西學中源), to some extent because of the threat to Confucian identity.²⁵

In short, as Nicolas Standaert has successfully demonstrated, Verbiest’s project “failed definitively” and Western philosophy was marginalized no later than the late seventeenth century; not long after entering the Chinese stage, the Western category of philosophy stepped out of the scene.²⁶ Standaert also noted the negative reaction of the eighteenth-century *Siku quanshu* editors to Western philosophical texts and concepts, for example in their comments on Aleni’s *Xixue fan* where, after reiterating Aleni’s explanations of the Western categories, they wrote:

The things they [the Westerners] investigate [所格之物] are secondary aspects of tools and figures, and the principles they fathom [所窮之理] are even more irrelevant, prodigious, and intractable. That is why theirs is a heterodox study (*vixue*) [異學].²⁷

What the Chinese scholars rejected, however, was not Western philosophy *in toto* but rather Jesuit philosophy, even if in their view the knowledge transmitted by the Jesuits was fully representative of Western knowledge or

25 Ibid.

26 For more on seventeenth-century categories and their transition into Ming and Qing China, see Nicolas Standaert, “The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth-Century China,” *Renaissance Studies* 17.3 (2003): 367–91; Nicolas Standaert, “The Classification of Sciences and the Jesuit Mission in Late Ming China,” in *Linked Faiths: Essays on Chinese Religions and Traditional Culture in Honour of Kristofer Schipper*, eds. Jan A.M. de Meyer and Peter M. Engelfriet (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 287–317. See also Nicolas Standaert, “The Investigation of Things and the Fathoming of Principles (*gewu qiongli*) in the Seventeenth-Century Contact between Jesuits and Chinese Scholars,” in *Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), Jesuit Missionary, Scientist, Engineer and Diplomat*, ed. J. W. Witek (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994), 395–420. For more on contemporaneous philosophy, both Jesuit and general, see Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter eds., *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: the Nature of a Contested Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Paul F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); John W. O’Malley, ed., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); and Liam M. Brockey, *Journey to the East: the Jesuit Mission in China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007).

27 See Standaert, “Investigation of Things,” 418. See also Zhong Mingdan 鍾鳴旦 [Nicolas Standaert], “*Siku quanshu zongmu* duiyu xixue de pingjia” 四庫全書總目對於西學評價 (“The Evaluation of Western Learning by the *Siku quanshu zongmu*”), *Zhongwai guanxi shi xuehui tongxun* 4 (1983): 4–11.

learning.²⁸ Moreover, some important aspects of Jesuit philosophy—such as mathematics or physics—were incorporated into the Chinese discourse, especially at the turn of the eighteenth century (by Mei Wending 梅文鼎, 1633–1722, for example), even if they too had their challengers.²⁹ Yet the category as such was dismissed. What, then, did the category of philosophy stand for in the eyes of the Jesuits?

Philosophy, according to Aleni's *Xixue fan*, included logic, physics (part of natural philosophy in other Jesuit texts), metaphysics, and mathematics (including geometry, astronomy, and music; in other Jesuit texts and curricula, mathematics was sometimes treated as a category separate from philosophy).³⁰ At the center of this philosophy stood Aristotle, as Aleni's *Xixue fan* demonstrates.³¹ Philosophy thus conceived was a broad category, and there was no consensus in the sixteenth century (when the Jesuit order was established) as to where exactly the "jurisdiction" of philosophy began or ended.³² Since

28 For such rejection—not wholesale but of the general cultural and religious implications of Western learning—by prominent early Qing scholars, esp. Fang Yizhi, Gu Yanwu, and Mei Wending, see, e.g., Willard J. Peterson, "Changing Literati Attitudes Toward New Learning in Astronomy and Mathematics in Early Qing," *Monumenta Serica* 50 (2002): 375–90; and Peterson, "Fang I-chih."

29 See Sela, "Confucian Scientific Identity."

30 See Standaert, "The Classification of Sciences," 287–317. For more on Jesuit education, see Brockey, *Journey to the East*, 211–17.

31 In his section on the beginnings of Western philosophy Aleni treated Aristotle as the major figure, writing: "[T]here was one worthy scholar named Aristotle, his knowledge outstanding, his learning profound, his talent vast. He was the teacher of Alexander the Great" (有一大賢名亞理斯多，其識超卓，其學淵深，其才曠逸。為歷山大王之師); see Aleni, *Xixue fan*, 42. For more on the varieties of Aristotelianism brought to China see Robert Wardy, *Aristotle in China: Language, Categories and Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

32 When discussing Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540), Malusa, in a passing remark, defined Vives' view of philosophy "as the true knowledge of things human and divine," also noting that for Agostino Steuco (1497–1548) "'wisdom' and 'philosophy' [were] synonymous." See Luciano Malusa, "Renaissance Antecedents to the Historiography of Philosophy," in *Models of the History of Philosophy: From Its Origins in the Renaissance to the 'Historia Philosophica'*, eds. Giovanni Santinello et al. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), 1: 3–65, at 12, 20, 42. According to the Jesuit Francisco de Toledo (1532–1596) it was not "appropriate to consider philosophy to be a separate science" since it was identical to wisdom in general; "rather it was almost a *universal genus*, 'containing the various sciences within itself'" (Ilario Tolomio, "The 'Historia Philosophia' in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Models of the History of Philosophy*, 1: 66–160, at 91). See also Cesare Vasoli, "The Renaissance Concept of Philosophy," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds. C. B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, and Eckhard Kessler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 57–74. Pereira (1535–1619) contended that "philosophy is divided chiefly into three kinds of Sciences: Natural, Mathematical and that divine one that is called Metaphysical," quoted in Michael John Gorman, "Mathematics and Modesty in the Society of Jesus: The Problems of Christoph Grienberger," in *The New Science and Jesuit Science: Seventeenth-Century Perspectives*, ed. Mordechai Feingold (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 1–31, at 22.

Augustine (354–430), philosophy had been rendered subservient to Christian theology; but the philosophy thus incorporated into Christian discourse was very limited in scope, mainly taking Neo-Platonism as a basis for Christian metaphysical assertions. The reintroduction of Aristotle via Arabic sources into the Christian world proved problematic to the relation between philosophy and theology, as the 1277 Condemnation of many philosophical works related to Aristotle demonstrates.³³

At the same time scholars were trying to reconcile Aristotelianism and theology. Some of the main points of dispute included Aristotle's claims about "the eternity of the world and the denial of the possibility of creation *ex nihilo*."³⁴ Some late medieval scholars considered philosophy the "queen" of the "sciences" or the "liberal arts,"³⁵ or separated philosophy and theology altogether. Another way to bring Aristotle into the Christian fold without losing the theological credo was to separate Aristotle's metaphysics from his natural philosophy. In doing so, however, a new problem arose, namely how to reconcile natural philosophy, metaphysics, and theology. Thomas Aquinas, whose teachings would later form an important part of Jesuit philosophy (and Thomas Aquinas was also introduced to China, as I have demonstrated above), put theological limits on the scope of philosophy, incorporating natural philosophy, metaphysics, and theology into one hierarchical scheme.³⁶

For the Jesuits, following Thomas Aquinas, philosophy, however venerated, thus became the "handmaid" or "servant" of its "mistress" theology (*philosophia ancilla theologiae*), which was often understood to be the "queen of the sciences" (*Regina scientiarum*).³⁷ Theology's supremacy, as interpreted by the Church, is perhaps best illustrated by Jesuit founder Ignatius Loyola's (1491–1556) famous dictum: "We ought to hold fast to this principle: What I see as white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determined it."³⁸ Although this rule,

33 Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes' System of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35–48.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Herrade of Landsberg's (12th c.) diagram of the Liberal Arts provides a wonderful visual illustration of this notion; see Michael Masi, "A Newberry Diagram of the Liberal Arts," *Gesta* 11:2 (1972): 52–56.

36 Gaukroger, *Descartes' System of Natural Philosophy*, 35–48.

37 See Avihu Zakai, "The Rise of Modern Science and the Decline of Theology as the 'Queen of Sciences' in the Early Modern Era," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 9.2 (2009): 125–51, on 126.

38 George E. Ganss, S. J., ed., *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* (New

the thirteenth of the “Rules for Thinking, Judging, and Feeling with the Church” in Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*, was not written to elucidate the relationship between philosophy and theology, nonetheless, the basic epistemological stance that puts the Church above other forms of knowledge, captures the idea that the religious ruled supreme. The purpose of philosophy, thus conceived, was to prove the theological truth, not to express or develop new worldviews and certainly not to contradict any theological claims.³⁹

Christopher Clavius (1538–1612), who was in many ways the mastermind behind the Gregorian calendar reform of 1582 and Matteo Ricci’s teacher at the Collegio Romano in Rome, though engaged deeply in mathematical and astronomical studies, also adhered to this view of theology. Clavius thus insisted that astronomy was of use to theology (*Astronomiae utilitas ad Theologiam*) and that “astronomy is necessary for ecclesiastics” (*Astronomia necessaria est personis ecclesiasticis*). Indeed, the very project of the Gregorian calendar reform was driven by religious impetus.⁴⁰ Although Jesuits thinkers did not always abide by this principle, participating as they did in the “scientific revolution” and occasionally going beyond the stagnant position assigned to them,⁴¹ the backdrop for their work was, overall, an acceptance of theological

York; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991), 213. See also the first rule in this section: “With all judgment of our own put aside, we ought to keep our minds disposed and ready to be obedient in everything to the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, which is our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church,” *ibid.*, 211, and note 162 on 432. See also Wade Rowland, *Galileo’s Mistake: A New Look at the Epic Confrontation between Galileo and the Church* (New York: Arcade Publishers, 2003), 100; Roger Ariew, “Christopher Clavius and the Classification of Sciences,” *Synthese* 83:2 (May 1990): 293–300. For more on the relation between philosophy and theology, see Margaret J. Osler, *Divine Will and the Mechanical Philosophy: Gassendi and Descartes on Contingency and Necessity in the Created World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers eds., *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

39 See also Paul Blum’s distinction between *Philosophenphilosophie* and *Schulphilosophie* and Ian Hunter’s application of that distinction to the Jesuit case. For Blum’s full argument, see Paul Richard Blum, *Philosophenphilosophie und Schulphilosophie: Typen des Philosophierens in der Neuzeit [Philosophers’ Philosophy and School Philosophy: Types of Philosophizing in the Modern Period]* (Stuttgart: Frantz Steiner Verlag, 1998); Ian Hunter, “The University Philosopher in Early Modern Germany,” in *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: the Nature of a Contested Identity*, eds. Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35–66, esp. 45.

40 See Volker R. Remmert, “‘Our Mathematicians have Learned and Verified this’: Jesuits, Biblical Exegesis, and the Mathematical Sciences in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,” in *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions*, eds. Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 1: 667.

41 For recent accounts see Michael Elazar and Rivka Feldhay, “Honoré Fabri S.J. and Galileo’s Law of Fall: What Kind of Controversy?” in *Controversies within the Scientific Revolution*, eds. Marcelo Dascal and Victor D. Boantz (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011), 13–32; Mordechai

supremacy. As Joachim Kurtz put it with regard to logic: “The logic taught at Jesuit institutions of higher learning throughout this period was intended to defend dogma, but it was not at all dogmatic in its methods.”⁴²

The Jesuits did not introduce—and had no reason to—competing seventeenth- or eighteenth-century philosophies to China, the types of “new philosophy” that would eventually be regarded as synonymous with the advent of the scientific revolution and modernity. Descartes (who started out as a Jesuit), Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Leibniz, and Newton, to name just a few of the new philosophers, were for the most part muted in Jesuit discussions in China, as were the Renaissance humanists. Although the Jesuits had books by these authors and others available at their libraries in China,⁴³ as far as the Chinese audience was concerned these books and their authors were invisible. At the same time, European philosophers (Leibniz being one of the more famous examples) could increasingly obtain information on Chinese systems of knowledge—using the term “philosophy” to label them—as the term was broad enough to encompass the Chinese variety. Indeed, when Nicolas Trigault (金尼閣, 1577–1628) translated Ricci's journals, which were written in Italian, into Latin, he systematically rendered Ricci's term for the Chinese scholars—“*letterati*” or “*mandarini letterati*”—into the Latin “*philosophi*.”⁴⁴ For the European audience, Trigault's translation published in 1615 (with many following republications and translations into other European languages) was the only accessible source, since Ricci's Italian version remained unavailable until the early twentieth century. The publication of other Jesuit works on “Chinese philosophy,” the most famous of which was the *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (published in Paris in 1687),⁴⁵ brought new ideas from China

Feingold, ed., *Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

42 Joachim Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 23.

43 See Nicolas Standaert, “The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth-Century China,” *Renaissance Studies* 17.3 (2003): 367–91. For more on Renaissance philosophy in general, see Cesare Vasoli, “The Renaissance Concept of Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 57–74.

44 Similar terms were employed by Trigault, such as “*senatus philosophicus*,” or “*Philosophicis Magistratibus*.” See Luca Fezzi, “Osservazioni sul De Christiana Expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Iesu di Nicolas Trigault,” *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 35.3 (Feb., 2000): 541–66, esp. 555–57; Jacques Gernet, “Della entrata della Compagnia di Giesù e Christianità nella Cina de Matteo Ricci (1609) et les remaniements de sa traduction latine (1615),” *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 147e année, N. 1 (2003): 61–84, esp. 68–69.

45 For further research on the differences in the introduction of Confucian scholarship and schools of thought to Europe see Knud Lundbaek, “Chief Grand Secretary Chang Chü-cheng and the Early Jesuits,” *China Mission Studies (1550-1800) Bulletin III* (1981): 2–11; Knud Lundbaek, “The Image of Neo-Confucianism in Confucius Sinarum Philosophus,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44.1 (Jan.–Mar., 1983): 19–30; Claudia von Collani, “The First Encounter of the West with the Yijing:

to Europe. These presented various forms of Confucianism (in a positive or negative light, according to the presenter), and allowed European philosophers to modify some of their own philosophical concepts in the process.⁴⁶ These “new philosophies” and their dynamics of polemics with Jesuit philosophies were relevant to the changes in the category of philosophy within Europe, and perhaps also to the “birth of non-religion [which] led to the birth of the modern category of religion,” as Standaert claimed.⁴⁷

It should be noted that in addition to philosophy *per se* the Jesuits in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe were also interested in other, related fields of knowledge, participating in discussions and disputes on topics like history, philology, and their relation to philosophy⁴⁸; the history of philosophy⁴⁹; the quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns⁵⁰; and, naturally, the Reformation.

Introduction to and Edition of Letters and Latin Translations by French Jesuits from the 18th Century,” *Monumenta Serica* 55 (2007): 227–387.

46 See Arnold H. Rowbotham, “The Impact of Confucianism on Seventeenth Century Europe,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 4.3 (May, 1945): 224–42; D.E. Mungello, “European Philosophical Responses to Non-European Culture: China,” in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, eds. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 87–100; Jonathan Israel, “Admiration of China and Classical Chinese Thought in the Radical Enlightenment (1685–1740),” *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 4:1 (June 2007): 1–25; Zhang Yunyi, “The Western Spread of Chinese Philosophy” and Marxism,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 6:1 (2011): 114–33; Eric S. Nelson, “The Yijing and Philosophy: From Leibniz to Derrida,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38:3 (Sep. 2011): 377–396; Edmund Leites, “Confucianism in Eighteenth-Century England: Natural Morality and Social Reform,” *Philosophy East and West* 28:2, Sinological Torque (Apr. 1978): 143–59; Edmund Leites, “Philosophers as Rulers: The Literati in Early Western Images of Confucianism,” in *As Others See Us: Mutual perceptions, East and West*, eds. Bernard Lewis, Edmund Leites, and Margaret Case (New York: International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, 1985), 203–14; Thijs Weststeijn, “Spinoza sinicus: An Asian Paragraph in the History of the Radical Enlightenment,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68:4 (Oct. 2007): 537–61; Bernard Paul Sypniewski, “China and Universals: Leibniz, Binary Mathematics, and the *Yijing* Hexagrams,” *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005): 287–314; James A. Ryan, “Leibniz Binary System and Shao Yong’s ‘Yijing,’” *Philosophy East and West* 46:1 (1996): 59–90.

47 Nicolas Standaert, “The Jesuits Did NOT [sic] Manufacture ‘Confucianism,’” *East Asian Science, Technology and Medicine* 16 (1999): 115–32, esp. 127–29.

48 See, e.g., Donald R. Kelley, “The Theory of History,” in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, 746–61; R.W. Serjeantson, “Hobbes, the Universities, and the History of Philosophy,” in *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: the Nature of a Contested Identity*, eds. Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 113–39.

49 See Donald R. Kelley, “Introduction,” in *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to Enlightenment*, eds. Donald R. Kelley and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 1–4; and various essays in Santinello, *Models of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1 (note the scarcity of Jesuit scholars mentioned in this very detailed monograph, e.g., Kircher, 24; Francisco de Toledo, 91; Pereyra (or Pereira), 92–95; and Torsellini, 411).

50 I take this quarrel broadly as including not only the so-called original quarrel (also known as

None of these discussions and the philosophical debates that came in their wake⁵¹ travelled to China with the Jesuits. More importantly perhaps, the relation between metaphysics and natural philosophy—"the single most problematic and important theme of the textbook tradition [and] the major source of philosophical concern since the revival of interest in Aristotle in the Christian West"—was not introduced.⁵²

Emerging as a problem in the late Middle Ages, as Aristotelianism was taking hold of the Christian discourse, the relation between metaphysics and natural philosophy became even more pressing by the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a related problem surfaced: the relation between natural philosophy and mathematics, or between "Aristotelianism's qualitative approach to natural-philosophical explanation and competing conceptions of natural philosophy in which the quantitative understanding of natural processes was the chief aim."⁵³ With Descartes and other champions of mechanical philosophy, the quantitative approach began to displace the qualitative one, accompanied by the idea that knowledge claims should be tested by means of experimentation (empiricism) and by doubts concerning the possibility of valid knowledge (skepticism).⁵⁴

These new concerns did not, however, undermine the superior position of the broad category of philosophy in the seventeenth century, especially as

the Battle of the Books) of ca. 1687–1715, but rather as a broad theme that extended far beyond the eighteenth century. On the "original" quarrel see Joan E. DeJean, *Ancients Against Moderns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), ix–xii. On the broader quarrel, from Machiavelli to Rousseau, see Patrick Riley, "Rousseau, Fenelon, and the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 78–93. On the quarrel as early as the fifteenth century, see Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), xxvii, 282–83, 346–53, 396, 406–9, 435–36; see also Anthony Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15, 18–19, 174, 248. On the quarrel as a theme in 1960s France and as related to structuralism, see Francois Dosse, *History of Structuralism, vol. 1: The Rising Sign, 1945–1966*, trans. Deborah Glassman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), esp. 191–201.

51 See Malusa, "Renaissance Antecedents," esp. 52–59. Debates on the origin of philosophy (as a divine, human, or demonic product) were also not transmitted to China. On these debates, see Santinello, *Models of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1 as well as Tolomio, "The 'Historia Philosophia' in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," 66–160.

52 Gaukroger, *Descartes' System of Natural Philosophy*, 36.

53 *Ibid.*, 36.

54 See *ibid.*, 53, 68–70. Also see Charles H. Lohr, "The Sixteenth-Century Transformation of the Aristotelian Division of the Speculative Sciences," in *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to Enlightenment*, 49–58.

philosophy “replaced theology as the foundational discipline.”⁵⁵ In Descartes’ system of knowledge, mathematics, mechanics, medicine, and natural and moral philosophy were all to be unified. Philosophy, for Descartes, was a tree in which metaphysics was the root, natural philosophy (or physics) the trunk, and “the specific sciences of mechanics, medicine, and morals [...] the branches.”⁵⁶

In the two-and-a-half centuries between the publication of Descartes’ *Principles of Philosophy* (1644) and the reintroduction of Western philosophy to China, however, the categorization of knowledge in the West went through fundamental changes. As the quantitative sciences rose in prestige, the branches of Descartes’ tree increasingly claimed to be roots, or else completely different trees. In the eighteenth century and even more so in the nineteenth, *scientia*, formerly a generic term for knowledge, came to signify specific (often quantitative) knowledge systems that were in the process of breaking away from philosophy.⁵⁷ Philosophy’s “jurisdiction” narrowed, its larger claims for being the upholder of knowledge were questioned, and the “scientist” as a social and professional designation came to challenge the philosopher in importance and prestige. In the contemporary view, as Michael H. McCarthy has put it, “the liberation of reason from faith” was to be “complemented by the liberation of empirical sciences from philosophy.”⁵⁸ At the same time, “the scientific character of philosophy [...] lost credibility, and the hope of achieving a final system of knowledge lost its fascination.”⁵⁹ Philosophy was waging a losing battle.

Why then did Chinese intellectuals (and their Western and Japanese interlocutors)

55 See Werner Schneiders, “Concepts of Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26–44, at 26.

56 Gaukroger, *Descartes’ System of Natural Philosophy*, 226; see also Roger Ariew, “Descartes and the Tree of Knowledge,” *Synthese*, 92:1 (July 1992): 101–116. In 1682 the German bibliographer Martin Lipen (1630–1692) could still claim to “take the word philosophy in a broad sense (*in ea latitudine capio*), as is common in the academies (*Academiis*). In these, apart from the three faculties of theology, law and medicine, one finds also philosophy. [...] [A]ll knowledge of languages, antiquities, and sciences, all criticism (*Critica*) of ancient and more recent writers, all history, philology, rhetoric, poetics—in short anything bearing the name of polymatheia or pansophia—are related to philosophy.” See Ilario Tolomio, “The ‘Historia Philosophia’ in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” 81.

57 See the various essays in David Cahan, ed., *From Natural Philosophy to the Sciences: Writing the History of Nineteenth-Century Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and in Davis Baird, Eric Scerri, and Lee McIntyre eds., *Philosophy of Chemistry: Synthesis of a New Discipline* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006). On the growing distinction between the arts and the sciences in the seventeenth century, see Claire J. Farago, “The Classification of the Visual Arts in the Renaissance,” in *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to Enlightenment*, eds. Donald R. Kelley, and Richard H. Popkin (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991) 23–48.

58 Michael H. McCarthy. *The Crisis of Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 2.

59 See Werner Schneiders. “Concepts of Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, 26–44, at 41.

continue to regard philosophy as the most important tree in the garden of knowledge even at the turn of the twentieth century? The answer, I suggest, is to be found in the way philosophers and historians of philosophy had remolded and remodeled philosophy, first in the West, then in China and Japan.

***Scientia scientiarum*: philosophy's grand claims**

The rise of the “sciences” was not the only cause of philosophy’s retreat. Some branches of philosophy itself had questioned the very possibility of valid knowledge. Hume, for example, questioned the then-prevalent theory of causality, undermining the possibility of knowledge of cause and effect. Like other empiricists (e.g., Locke) before him, Hume further called into question the very possibility of valid a-priori knowledge, a cornerstone of the “rationalist” philosophy of Descartes, Leibniz, and others.⁶⁰ Such skepticism, too, was a source of concern about the fate of the philosophical endeavor as a whole.

In order to survive philosophy had to redefine itself, this time not as a tree in the garden of knowledge but rather as the overarching structure of the entire garden. Philosophy was thus recast as the “*scientia scientiarum*”—the science of sciences⁶¹—the system that held the various disciplines together, gave them their methods, and provided them with justification. It was Kant, above all, who was credited with redesigning “the architecture of philosophy”⁶² in such a way as to give philosophy this overarching role. With his “Copernican Revolution in philosophy,”⁶³ Kant inaugurated what Haakonssen calls “the epistemological paradigm,” in which “the most deep-rooted element [...] [was] the assumption

60 See Georges Dicker, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge: An Analytical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

61 See Roy Tseng, *The Sceptical Idealist: Michael Oakeshott as a Critic of the Enlightenment* (Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 2003), 60. Note that the term “*scientia scientiarum*” had been used since the Middle Ages to describe various fields, including dialectics, the study of Canon Law, and, of course, theology. See, e.g., Gérard Defaux, “Rabelais and the Monsters of Antiphysis,” *MLN* 110:5 (1995): 1017–1042; Karl Shoemaker, “When the Devil Went to School: Canon Law and Theology in the Fourteenth Century,” in *Crossing Boundaries at Medieval Universities*, ed. Spencer E. Young (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 255–76, on 262; Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Nonetheless, the *scientia* of the late eighteenth century had different meaning from the *scientia* of the Middle Ages or Renaissance, and while dialectics, law, or theology had been in one way or another under the aegis of religion beforehand, by the late eighteenth century the sciences and philosophy were breaking away from such aegis, as I discuss below.

62 Michael H. McCarthy, *The Crisis of Philosophy*, 188.

63 See David Roger Oldroyd, *The Arch of Knowledge: An Introductory Study of the History of Philosophy and Methodology of Science* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986), 123.

that knowledge has to be accounted for in terms of the activity (or passivity) of the individual person's mind."⁶⁴ By prioritizing epistemology Kant enabled philosophy to assume its position as *scientia scientiarum*; now, according to this view, all the other sciences depended on philosophy's descriptive and prescriptive explanations of the relationship between the mind and external objects and phenomena. The scientist's methods, his ability to comprehend reality, and his limitations in doing so were accordingly understood as depending on philosophical inquiry.⁶⁵

By prioritizing epistemology, Kant also proclaimed a duality between the world as it is "in itself" and the world we can perceive. In so doing,

Kantian epistemology made the theological world safe for the reconciliation of tradition and modernity. This aspect [i.e., dualism] of the Kantian legacy provides what amounts to an epistemological "fire wall" enabling theologians eager for reconciliation with the modern world to embrace scholarly results and cognitive advances apparently antithetical to Christian faith.⁶⁶

After the late eighteenth century Kantian epistemology thus became a staple of many types of theologies, making Kant's views of philosophy even more dominant in the Western world. As many in the West sought either to reconcile modern science with theology or to sever the two, philosophy, conceived as *scientia scientiarum*, could serve either as a mediator or as a barrier between them.⁶⁷

Institutionally, philosophy's role as the "science of sciences" made it "the only [discipline] that can generate a unifying abstract metaphysics [to]

64 Knud Haakonssen, "The History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy: History or Philosophy?" in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, 3–25, at 19. Kant was not the first to put the human mind center-stage (Descartes, Locke, and Hume, to name a few, had prioritized epistemological issues well before him); Kant's project seems to have been the most ambitious, however, as well as the most successful in terms of its historical influence; see, e.g., Anthony Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy, vol. 3: The Rise of Modern Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), 101–102.

65 See also Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), esp. 5, 126.

66 Gordon E. Michalson, Jr., *Kant and the Problem of God* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 1999), 17.

67 This is not to say that Kant's assertions went uncontested; yet they could rarely be dismissed offhand. For more on Kant's influence on nineteenth-century and later theology, see, e.g., Adina Davidovich, *Religion as a Province of Meaning: The Kantian Foundations of Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) and Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Kant as Philosophical Theologian* (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

unite and underpin the whole project of a university.”⁶⁸ Kant’s own views were quick to be institutionalized in many German universities due to efforts by Kant’s students and by Kant’s patron, Karl Abraham Freiherr von Zedlitz, the minister in charge of Prussian higher education.⁶⁹ Whether it was because of social-institutional factors or because of his philosophical ingenuity, Kant’s thought became a cornerstone for generations of scholars to come. As Guyer and Wood note (even if with some exaggeration), “all modern thinkers are children of Kant, whether they are happy or bitter about their paternity.”⁷⁰

One further feature of Kant’s project is pertinent to our discussion, namely Kant’s own view of the history of philosophy and of philosophy’s role in history, a view instrumental to shaping our understanding of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy, at least until recently. Kant, following others such as d’Alembert, treated the history of philosophy as a history of human reason at a time when the discipline of history itself began prioritizing, at least in part, the history of reason and the human mind.⁷¹ Kant and others thus provided an explanatory model of the scientific revolution, one in which historical progress in philosophy—i.e., in human mind and reason—was the causal and enabling factor in the revolution in science.⁷² Within this framework, logic—

68 T. J. Hochstrasser, “The Institutionalisation of Philosophy in Continental Europe,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, 69–96, at 91.

69 It should be noted that the institutionalization of philosophy did not follow the same path in all countries. In this respect, Germany and France provided the main alternatives. I focus on Germany because the German view of philosophy was predominantly the one the Chinese and Japanese would later encounter. See also T. J. Hochstrasser, “The Institutionalisation of Philosophy in Continental Europe.”

70 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23.

71 See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelin and J. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 218. For a critique of Cassirer as taking an overly philosophical approach to history see Donald R. Kelley, *Fortunes of History: Historical Inquiry from Herder to Huizinga* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2–3. For various histories of human reason, ideas, and thought, such as *Kulturgeschichte*, *Geistesgeschichte*, *histoire des mentalités*, and their modern reincarnations (including intellectual history), see Ernst Schulin, “German ‘Geistesgeschichte’, American ‘Intellectual History’ and French ‘Histoire des Mentalités’ since 1900: A Comparison,” *History of European Ideas* 1:3 (1981): 195–214. See also Anthony Pagden, “The Rise and Decline of Intellectual History,” *Intellectual News* 1 (1996): 14–15; Michael Oakshott, *What is History? And Other Essays*, ed. Luke O’Sullivan (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), esp. 345–372.

72 On the “historical task of reviewing and celebrating ‘the progress of the human mind,’” see Kelley, *Fortunes of History*, 41–42. For the rise of the notion of “progress” (especially linked to the quarrel of the ancients and moderns at the turn of the eighteenth century) see John Bagnell Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into its Origin and Growth* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), 56. On the view of philosophers as predominant in the intellectual history leading to modernity in the eighteenth century and later (and for a critique of this view), see Paul Wood, “Science, Philosophy, and the Mind,” in Roy

“the science of the rules of the understanding in general”—was prioritized, although in different ways by different scholars.⁷³ Kant thus won a decisive battle in philosophy’s war for survival, but the war itself was (and is) not over. Significantly, however, Kant and his followers managed to shift much of the battleground to the human mind, and, as I will show, it would take some time until new contenders, such as psychology, would contest philosophy on this newer battleground.

During the nineteenth century, first the German Idealists and then the Neo-Kantians took Kant in different directions and often disagreed over what Kant actually said or should have said.⁷⁴ Hegel, his disputes with Kant notwithstanding, proposed that philosophy was “the only genuine ‘scientific knowledge of truth,’” perpetuating philosophy’s self-prioritization, even if not without opposition.⁷⁵ Mathematics, for example, challenged philosophy’s claim for scientific supremacy. Already in Kant’s writings we can see mathematics as philosophy’s main contender, and the notion that mathematics was the most important discipline kept surfacing throughout the nineteenth century, as Karl Friedrich Gauss’ (1777–1855) famous statement that “mathematics is the queen of the sciences” demonstrates.⁷⁶

Though neither philosophy nor mathematics won a decisive victory—the struggle has lingered well into our own time—each discipline declared itself victorious. Philosophy, however, has gradually spread its wings over the other disciplines to form the “philosophy-of” disciplinary model: the philosophy of history, the philosophy of science, the philosophy of mathematics, and so on.⁷⁷

Porter ed., *The Cambridge History of Science, vol. 4: The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 800–824. See also Haakonssen, “The History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy: History or Philosophy?”; Bernard Cohen, “The Eighteenth-Century Origins of the Concept of Scientific Revolution,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37:2 (April–June, 1976): 257–288; Joseph M. Levine, *The Autonomy of History: Truth and Method from Erasmus to Gibbon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

73 See David A. Duquette, “Kant, Hegel and the Possibility of a Speculative Logic,” in *Essays on Hegel’s Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 1–16, at 1.

74 See Christopher Adair-Toteff, “Neo-Kantianism: The German Idealism Movement,” in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870–1945*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27–42.

75 Roy Tseng, *The Spectacular Idealist*, 59.

76 This dictum was published posthumously in 1857 as a quote by Gauss. See, e.g., Jacqueline Boniface, “The Concept of Number from Gauss to Kronecker,” in *The Shaping of Arithmetic: After C. F. Gauss’s Disquisitiones Arithmeticae*, ed. Catherine Goldstein et al. (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 315–42, esp. 335. Other essays in the anthology trace the development of this idea after Gauss.

77 See the essays (half written by mathematicians, half by philosophers of mathematics, trying, as it

However, mathematics was not the only discipline to challenge philosophy. During the eighteenth century historians were also claiming priority for their discipline, often invoking the same arguments philosophers used to claim priority for theirs.⁷⁸ The “history-of” genre—the history of philosophy, of science, of culture, and so on—can in this respect be thought of as the equivalent of the “philosophy-of” model. Ironically, perhaps, with Neo-Kantian historians in the nineteenth century more inclined to present philosophy as the *scientia scientiarum*, even history conceded to philosophy, and historical narrative itself became a vehicle for the dissemination of philosophy’s grand image.

It was not only the German Idealists and the Neo-Kantians that accepted this superior view of philosophy: Victor Cousin, for example, went so far as to describe philosophy as “the light of all lights, the authority of authorities,”⁷⁹ and George Bale described the beginning of positivism as “an attempt to bring philosophical salvation to wayward science.”⁸⁰ August Comte, the pioneering French positivist, wrote that “the object of our philosophy is to direct the spiritual reorganization of the civilized world”⁸¹; and Ernst Mach, one of positivism’s most important proponents in Germany, claimed in 1883 that “the true endeavor of philosophy [lies in] guiding into one common stream the many rills of knowledge.”⁸² For the positivists, knowledge of self, society, and nature had to be based on similar scientific principles, hence positivism’s association with scientism (and sometimes with materialism). The potential for gaining such scientifically valid knowledge was thought to be vast. Philosophy and science were thus tied together hierarchically and with one overarching methodology.⁸³

were, to reach an understanding) in Bonnie Gold and Roger A. Simons (eds.), *Proof & Other Dilemmas: Mathematics and Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Mathematical Association of America, 2008).

78 See Kelley, *Fortunes of History*, 5–6.

79 Victor Cousin, *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, trans. Henning Gotfried Linberg (Boston: Hiliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins, 1832), 23. On Cousin’s relation to the history of ideas and to eclecticism see Donald R. Kelley, “Eclecticism and the History of Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 62:4 (Oct. 2001): 577–592.

80 George Gale, “Scientific Explanation,” in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870–1945*, 608–620, at 614.

81 August Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, trans. J. H. Bridges (London: Routledge, 1908), 49.

82 See Ernst Mach, *The Science of Mechanics: A Critical and Historical Account of its Development*, trans. Thomas J. McCormack (Chicago and London: Open Court, 1919), xi. Mach also asserted that “a philosophy is involved in any correct view of the relations of special knowledge to the great body of knowledge at large—a philosophy that must be demanded of every special investigator” (*ibid.*, 505–506).

83 See more on scientism and positivism in Richard Olson, *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008); see also Rom Harré, “Positivist Thought in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870–1945*, 11–26. Similarly (though with a different agenda in mind) Herbert Spencer thought of philosophy as “completely uni-

John Stuart Mill, a positivist thinker himself in some degree, stressed the methodological point much further. For him, within the broader category of philosophy, logic was ascendant. Inspired by Bacon, Mill thought of logic as the *ars atrium*, “the science of science itself.”⁸⁴ Most important for Mill was inductive logic, the laws of which he saw as “the laws of thought,” providing “a method of proof.”⁸⁵ Mill’s *A System of Logic* (1843) quickly became popular, and as mathematicians pursued logic as a mathematical discipline, logic grew in both prestige and autonomy.⁸⁶

The notion that philosophy had to salvage or at least direct the sciences (and humanity) was linked to the growing “crisis of modernity” and the anti-modernist trend, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many in this period decried “the threat of industrialization and mass society to the values inherent in Western civilization.”⁸⁷ Although portents of this crisis can be seen as early as Hegel and the “problem of modernity’s self-reassurance” (more on this below), the crisis began in earnest only a few decades later, perhaps due to Hegel and his followers’ attempts to reconcile the tension that Habermas defines as follows:

Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch [...] [I]t has to create its normativity out of itself. Modernity sees itself cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape.⁸⁸

For Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897), history rather than philosophy provided a possible way to cope with the crisis. Through history Burckhardt sought “to preserve the ‘spiritual continuum,’ to demystify the crisis of modernity,

“fied knowledge”; see Herbert Spencer, *A System of Synthetic Philosophy*, vol. 1: *First Principles* (New York: Appleton, 1882), 134.

84 See John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (New York: Harper Publishers, 1859), 6.

85 Harré, “Positivist Thought in the Nineteenth Century,” 16–17.

86 See Peter Simons, “Logic: Revival and Reform,” in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870–1945*, 119–127.

87 Woodruff D. Smith, *Politics and the Sciences of Culture in Germany, 1840–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 73, 193.

88 Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1987), 6–7, 16.

to rehabilitate the past, and to secure future cultural renewal.”⁸⁹ Rejecting the notion of historical progress—one of the cornerstones of modernity for many historians and philosophers—Burckhardt “sought to undermine modernity and to solve the derelict, meaningless experience of his own day.”⁹⁰ The “task of the historian,” Burckhardt thought, was to bring to light the relationship between materiality and spirituality wherein “the spiritual, in whatever domain it is perceived, has a historical aspect under which it appears as change [and] every event has a spiritual aspect by which it partakes of immortality.”⁹¹ Spirituality, it is worth noting, is to be taken here not as related to ecclesiastical forms of any kind, but rather as the opposite of what is material and, as the German term *Geist* suggests, in intellectual terms.⁹² Thus, in condemning Enlightenment philosophy and its offshoots for destroying the human spirit⁹³ and in trying to overcome philosophy with history, Burckhardt, like those he criticized, inadvertently produced a philosophy of his own.

The crisis of modernity was also, relatedly, a “crisis of modern reason.” The roots of this crisis emerged, ironically, with the philosopher most closely linked to the glorification of reason, namely with Kant. Kant not only elevated the notion of reason but also demarcated reason’s boundaries, bifurcating its roles into theoretical reason on the one hand and practical reason on the other, the first responsible for knowledge of nature, the second for knowledge of morality. The contradiction inherent in this dual system of reason, according to Kant, was limited to human consciousness, however, and was not part of “the nature of things themselves.” In this way Kant sought, as it were, to save reason from itself. Nonetheless, the notion that human consciousness—the very abode of reason—was responsible for reason’s contradictions made reason suspect, giving rise to “the view that reason does not and cannot rule the world, that the world in its heart of hearts is chaotic and incomprehensible.”⁹⁴

89 John R. Hinde, *Jacob Burckhardt and the Crisis of Modernity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 201.

90 Hinde, *Jacob Burckhardt*, 201.

91 Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*, trans. M. D. Hottinger (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1979), 14–15, 36.

92 See Dilthey’s remark: “Spirit [*Geist*] has the same meaning as Montesquieu’s spirit of the laws, Hegel’s objective spirit, and Ihering’s spirit of Roman law,” in Donald R. Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 264.

93 Hinde, *Jacob Burckhardt*, 14.

94 See Michael Allen Gillespie, “Nietzsche and the Premodernist Critique of Postmodernity,” *Critical Review* 11:4 (1997): 537–554, esp. 538.

Though Hegel and others had tried to solve this problem, especially through the notion of historical progress (the progress of reason, among other things), the historical events of the mid-nineteenth century, the failure of political revolutions in particular, seemed to prove otherwise. A dissonance thus emerged between the lofty claims of various scientism-oriented systems and the “realization that it [science] does not and cannot provide any guidance for human life, [...] that the hegemony of modern reason actually undermines human well-being.”⁹⁵ As a result newer philosophical views such as perspectivism and relativism began to take hold, and doubts soared concerning the very possibility of attaining truth, philosophy’s traditional goal. One of the most trenchant attacks on Kant’s view of reason came from Nietzsche and his perspectivism.⁹⁶ But while Nietzsche rejected most of the philosophies that had come before him, positivism in particular, he still thought that “philosophy should ‘dominate’ [...] and that ‘*genuine philosophers are commanders and legislators*’; philosophy thus should be less about the ‘will for truth’ and more about the ‘will for power.’”⁹⁷ For Nietzsche, as for many others, philosophy thus simultaneously became the harbinger and signifier of modernity, the root of modernity’s crisis, and the facilitator of relief from modernity’s impediments.

Nietzsche, of course, also criticized religion (at times contending that philosophy itself had become a sort of religion, leading to nihilism), a critique which resounded more in Europe than in America, where philosophy often had a more pronounced religious tone in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, philosophy in America had much institutional success during the period in question, with many presidents of colleges and universities being themselves philosophers-cum-theologians. Princeton’s presidents John Witherspoon and James McCosh, who published widely on philosophical and theological issues, serve as examples of a larger trend; and the title of Princeton professor Charles W. Shields (yet another proponent of philosophy’s role as *scientia scientiarum*)—“Professor of the Harmony of Science and Revealed Religion”—says much about the agenda at play in nineteenth-century American academia.⁹⁸ As mentioned

95 Ibid., 540.

96 See also Patrick A. Heelan, “Nietzsche’s Perspectivalism: A Hermeneutic Philosophy of Science,” in Babette Babich and Robert S. Cohen eds., *Nietzsche and the Sciences, vol. II: Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), 203–220, esp. 203–205.

97 See Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 243.

98 See more in Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Paul Charles Kemeny, *Princeton in the Nation’s Service: Religious Ideals*

earlier, Kant's position was one of the enabling factors for just such a "harmony."

Other philosophical approaches that developed in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included pragmatism and analysis. While some thinkers of both strands tried to limit the scope of philosophy's undertakings, philosophy's stature remained largely intact. As Morton White put it, "Dewey and Santayana [...] remained, like Croce, sympathetic to Hegel's view of philosophy as synoptic, as a total view of the universe and man." And it was Dewey and pragmatism that played an important role in the philosophical interaction with both China and Japan. It is only later, as White writes,

when we come to the tradition of Russell and Moore, to Wittgenstein, to logical positivists like Carnap and his followers, to some of the American realists, that we find a complete and total rejection of [H]egelian doctrine and style. Philosophers in these traditions deny that philosophy must construct a world view that will encompass and illuminate science, art, morals, religion, and politics. They do so not only because some of them reject metaphysics as meaningless, but also because none of them thinks of philosophy as a super-discipline, as an instrument of cultural criticism, or as a substitute for religion.⁹⁹

During the timeframe that forms the core of the present article, however, analytic philosophy and its representatives played a very marginal role in China. Even Russell, who visited China and lectured at Beijing in the early 1920s, did not leave a significant mark on the way his Chinese interlocutors conceived of philosophy as a category in the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Dewey's pragmatist influence, while making a greater impact on Chinese scholars, left their basic views about philosophy intact.¹⁰¹ It was the

and Educational Practice, 1868–1928 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), esp. 100–122. See also Shield's *Philosophia Ultima or the Science of the Sciences, vol. II: The History of the Sciences and the Logic of the Sciences* (New York: Scribner, 1889).

99 See Morton White, *The Age of Analysis: 20th Century Philosophers* (New York: Mentor Books, 1964).

100 See also Jiang Yi and Bai Tongdong, "Studies in Analytic Philosophy in China," *Synthese* 175:1 (July 2010): 3–12.

101 For John Dewey's influence on Hu Shi, see Takeuchi Yoshimi, *What Is Modernity? Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi*, trans. and ed. Richard F. Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 93–102. See also Nancy F. Sizer, "John Dewey's Ideas in China, 1919 to 1921," *Comparative Education Review* 10:3 (Oct. 1966): 390–403; Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and*

former view of philosophy as a “super-discipline” that remained triumphant, at least in the initial stages of the introduction of Western philosophy to Asia. Whether presented as the guarantor of the sciences (as in positivism) and the producer of modernity or as the sciences’ “significant other” (and hence as “spiritual”), philosophy—especially modern philosophy, identified as it was with modernity—retained a supreme status in early twentieth-century China.

Furthermore, as early as the second half of the eighteenth century, when the distinction between “civilization” and “barbarism” gained currency, non-Western cultures came to be judged also by their capacity to produce philosophy of the Western type.¹⁰² For Kant, Mill, and many others, “barbarians” did not think in “abstract concepts” and were therefore incapable of producing the kind of philosophy associated with modernity. Kant explicitly claimed (and of course—he was not an exception at that time) that “humanity has its highest degree of perfection in the white race” and based on a variety of reasons, geographical determinism in particular, explained the intellectual superiority of Europe’s “white race.”¹⁰³ In this sense, only Europe, following in the footsteps of its ancient Greek forefathers, was a civilization in the full sense of the term.¹⁰⁴ Thus Victor Cousin, delivering a series of lectures on “The Course of the History of Modern Philosophy” in Paris in 1828 and 1829, summarized the rise of “modern civilization” and its tight nexus with “modern philosophy”:

[I]n the seventeenth century all Europe became the theatre of philosophy; philosophy was everywhere acclimated; it thrust its roots into the very heart of Europe, in France, in England, in Germany; these were the equal and different homes of modern civilization. [...] Behold modern philosophy then, at the end of the seventeenth century, constituted, I repeat it, interiorly and exteriorly; it possessed its four necessary elements: it

To Learn (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007).

102 One may argue that the Japanese (and the Chinese) had their own conceptions of “civilization” as well as of “barbarism,” but these changed toward the end of the Tokugawa era. See, e.g., David L. Howell, “Territoriality and Collective Identity in Tokugawa Japan,” *Daedalus* 127.3, Early Modernities (Summer, 1998): 105–32; and Joshua A. Fogel, “Issues in the Evolution of Modern China in East Asian Comparative Perspective,” *The History Teacher* 29.4 (Aug., 1996): 425–48.

103 See Immanuel Kant, *Natural Science*, ed. Eric Watkins, trans. Lewis White Beck et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 576. See also Michael Levin, *J. S. Mill on Civilization and Barbarism* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004).

104 See Haakonssen, “The History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy: History or Philosophy?”; Marcello Verga, “European Civilization and the ‘Emulation of the Nations’ Histories of Europe from the Enlightenment to Guizot,” *History of European Ideas* 34:4 (Dec. 2008): 353–60; Prasenjit Duara, “The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism,” *Journal of World History* 12:1 (2001): 99–130; Bruce Mazlish, *Civilization and its Contents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

was naturalized in the three great nations which represented civilization; it had at its service living languages, full of the future, and which place it in direct communication with the masses. Thus it marched forward, to become one day an independent, universal, and almost popular power.¹⁰⁵

As philosophy kept taking different routes and reinventing itself, such histories of philosophy and of the modern scientific, political, and economic revolutions continued to assert philosophy's central role.¹⁰⁶ Wilhelm Halbfass, discussing the interaction between India and Europe, pointed out that

[w]hile the European historians of philosophy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries still question whether the concept of philosophy can be applied beyond the tradition of European, fundamentally Greek thought, a process of globalization takes place in which non-European traditions not only adopt European philosophical concepts and teachings, but also reinterpret and reconceive their own ways of thinking as philosophy. Indians have responded not only to specific philosophical ideas, but above all to the term and concept "philosophy" itself. For modern Hinduism, the concept of philosophy has become a vehicle of self-understanding, of assimilation and "Westernization," but also of self-affirmation against the West.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, Halbfass shows how the Sanskrit term *darśana* (from the root *drś*, "to see") became the equivalent (among other contested terms) of "philosophy" in modern Indian languages (in particular Hindi and Bengali)

105 See Victor Cousin, *The Course of the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. O. W. Wight (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1866, vol. II): 119–121. For more on the rise of the notion of civilization in Europe see, e.g., Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London, New York: Zed, 2008); Herald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann, eds., *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004); Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism," *Journal of World History* 12.1 (2001): 99–130. In particular see the writings of François Guizot (1787–1874): François Pierre Guillaume Guizot, *General History of Civilization in Europe*, George Wells Knights, trans. (New York: D. Appelton, 1928); John Stuart Mill's *Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical, and Historical* (London: John W. Parker and son, 1859), esp. 160, and John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863), 133–39; and Thomas Taylor Meadows (1815–68), *The Chinese and their Rebellions viewed in connection with their National Philosophy, Ethics, Legislation, and Administration, to which is added, An Essay on Civilization and its Present State in the East and West* (London: Smith, Elder & Co; Bombay: Smith, Taylor & Co., 1856), 543–45. See also John K. Fairbank, "Meadows on China: A Centennial Review," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 14.3 (May, 1995): 365–71; and Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

106 See also Lucien Braun, *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Ophrys, 1973); and Ulrich Johannes Schneider, *Die Vergangenheit des Geistes. Eine Archäologie der Philosophiegeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990).

107 Wilhelm Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), 263.

and how the introduction of English curricula and universities (since 1835 and 1854, respectively) served to further establish the concept of philosophy in Indian intellectual life.¹⁰⁸

Back in China

From the 1860s onwards, Japanese scholars were fascinated with philosophy. Instead of using a familiar classical expression, however, as had been the case when the Jesuits brought philosophy to China two centuries earlier, in 1874 the Japanese scholar Nishi Amane (西周, 1827–97) coined a new term, *tetsugaku* (哲学), to express the category's newness and significance. This term soon became popular and the norm for translating or discussing philosophy in Meiji Japan and thereafter.¹⁰⁹ Following in the footsteps of Kant, Comte, and Mill—whom he studied in Europe—Nishi Amane described philosophy as “the science of sciences [...] chief among all sciences” (哲学は科学の科学; 哲学は、百学の学なり).¹¹⁰ In the context of the Meiji notion of and attempts for “civilization and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika*, 文明開化), the new term, category, and their contents, symbolizing modernity and modern civilization, quickly spread, and during the 1880s histories of philosophy—including Chinese philosophy—were published in Japan.¹¹¹

There was, however, nothing trivial about the fascination of Japanese scholars with the category of philosophy. This fascination stemmed from what the Japanese had learned from the West, and what they learned was that philosophy was not theology's handmaid but nothing short of *scientia scientiarum*, “the science of sciences”—the basis for everything, from a thriving economy and political structures to military strategy and technology. Philosophy was

108 Halbfass, *India and Europe*, 263–309.

109 See more on Nishi in Thomas R.H. Havens, “Scholars and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Japan: The Case of Nishi Amane,” *Modern Asian Studies* 2.4 (1968): 315–24. For more on the translation of Western terms and concepts during the Meiji see Earl Jackson, Jr., “The Metaphysics of Translation and the Origins of Symbolist Poetics in Meiji Japan,” *PMLA* 105.2 (Mar., 1990): 256–72.

110 See Ō Shuka 王守華, “Nishi Amane,” in *Kindai Nihon no tetsugaku* 近代日本の哲学 (*Modern Japanese Philosophy*), ed. Suzuki Tadashi 鈴木正 et al. (Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan, 1990), 14–51, esp. 24, 48 n. 17; Thomas R. H. Havens, “Comte, Mill, and the Thought of Nishi Amane in Meiji Japan,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 27.2 (Feb., 1968): 217–228; Gino K. Piovesana, *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought, 1862–1962, a Survey* (Tokyo: Enderle Bookstore, 1963), 12–13.

111 For example, Uchida Shūhei's (内田周平, 1857–1944) 1888 *Shina tetsugaku shi* 支那哲学史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*) and Inoue Enryō's (井上円了, 1859–1919) 1888 *Tetsugaku yōryō* 哲学要領 (*Essentials of Philosophy*). See also Hirakawa Sukehiro, “Japan's Turn to the West,” trans. Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi in *The Cambridge History of Japan: Volume 5—The Nineteenth Century*, eds. Marius B. Jansen, and John Whitney Hall (Cambridge, UK; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 432–98.

understood as the basis of the nation itself. In the meantime, having just been defeated twice by the West in the Opium Wars, and facing the difficulties in subduing the Taiping Rebellion of the 1850s and early 1860s, China's aim had been a material "self-strengthening" in order to build a stronger military. Protestant missionaries who taught in China—at the same time that Meiji Japan was importing Western philosophy—did not bring modern Western philosophy, and when they did it was partial and imbued with Protestant theology, not unlike the Jesuit case. Thus, as *tetsugaku* was winning decisive victories in Japan (and further changing in the West), no equivalent change was taking place in China.¹¹²

However, the Chinese witnessed firsthand Japan's success in building a powerful state and military during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. China's defeat by Japan drove Chinese scholars to try and understand how both Japan and the West had become so powerful. As Chinese scholars increasingly went to Japan after the 1894–95 War, and even more so after the failed 1898 "Hundred Days Reform" and the 1900 Boxer Rebellion, they came to believe that the key to recovery was not a self-strengthening type of material enhancement but lay, as their Japanese interlocutors had told them, in the new category just imported from the West—philosophy, rendered in Chinese as *zhexue* (哲學). In this way Japanese and Chinese scholars and officials came to prioritize philosophy, subscribing to (and reproducing significant parts of) the discourse of philosophy outlined above. And as in India and Japan a few decades earlier, Chinese scholars took it upon themselves to spread this gospel by disseminating Western philosophies while re-conceptualizing their own intellectual history with the help of Western philosophical toolkits and categories.

Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868–1940), who in the aftermath of the 1898 failed reform resigned from office and supported Western Learning in private academies, defined *zhexue* in 1901 as "the doctrine of principles, by which rules and principles of things are investigated and clarified" (原理之學，所以究明事物之原理原則者也). Cai saw philosophy as a "unified doctrine" (統合之學),¹¹³ as opposed to *lixue*, which he regarded a "partial doctrine" (部分之學). Along with the term/category the various branches, methodologies, and terminology of Western philosophy were also introduced, with logic, especially

112 See my "A Preliminary Overview of the Genealogy of *zhexue* in China, 1888–1930," in *What is Philosophy?—China*, eds. Ralph Weber and Robert Gassmann (Forthcoming, Brill, 2014).

113 Cai's notion of unified versus partial doctrines/learning/knowledge derived—in all likelihood—from Spencer through the mediation of Japan, and Nishi Amane in particular. See Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 134; Ō Shuka, "Nishi Amane," 28.

inductive logic, which was considered the basis for the sciences, at the center.¹¹⁴ After having studied in France and Germany, Cai later emphasized that “the most important among them [the sciences] are philosophy and politics” (其尤甚者為哲學及政治學) and admitted the great influence of Japan on his line of thought.¹¹⁵ Cai Yuanpei’s influence was significant. He not only served in private academies during the final decade of the Qing and as the President of Peking University (1916–1919) and Academia Sinica (1928–1940) but also in executive governmental capacities as the Minister of Education in 1912, and he continued to play key roles in the Guomindang during the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹⁶

Soon enough a broad range of Western modern philosophical works were translated and discussed by these intellectuals:¹¹⁷ Yan Fu translated works by Thomas Huxley, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer and wrote about many other¹¹⁸; Liang Qichao deliberated about Montesquieu, Rousseau, Bentham, Bluntschli, Darwin, and Kidd, and was presumably the first to introduce Kant to China¹¹⁹; Wang Guowei brought the thought of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer¹²⁰; and many others joined the intellectual feast.

114 Cai Yuanpei, “Zhexue zonglun” 哲學總論 (“An Outline of Philosophy”), in *Cai Yuanpei quanji* 蔡元培全集 (*The Complete Works of Cai Yuanpei*), Cai Yuanpei (Hangzhou: Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 1: 354–63; for Cai’s discussion of philosophy after World War I see Cai Yuanpei, “Dazhan yu zhexue” 大戰與哲學 (“The Great War and Philosophy”), in *Cai Yuanpei wenji* 蔡元培文集 (*Collected Works of Cai Yuanpei*), Cai Yuanpei (Taipei: Jinxiu chuban, 1995), 6: 226–33. See also Zhong Shaohua, “Qingmo Zhongguoren duiyu ‘zhexue’ de zhuiqiu,” 164–76.

115 Cai Yuanpei, *Zhongguo lunlixue shi* 中國倫理學史 (*History of Ethics in China*) (Taipei: Shangwuyin shuguan, 1966), 1–4, 151.

116 See Gao Pingshu, “Cai Yuanpei’s Contributions to China’s Science,” in *Chinese Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, eds. Fan Dainian and Robert S. Cohen (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 395–417. For Cai Yuanpei’s biography see Gao Pingshu 高平叔, *Cai Yuanpei nianpu* 蔡元培年譜 (*Chronological Biography of Cai Yuanpei*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980).

117 For the purposes of my discussion it is irrelevant whether or not Chinese intellectuals had a clear grasp of their subject matter or whether they misinterpreted some Western philosophers, as had been argued, for example, about Liang Qichao. See Huang K’o-wu, “Liang Qichao and Immanuel Kant,” trans. Hu Minghui and Joshua A. Fogel, in *The Role of Japan in Liang Qichao’s Introduction of Modern Western Civilization to China*, ed. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California Berkeley, Center of Chinese Studies, 2004), 125–55 (most of the studies in this volume are useful for understanding the formation of Liang’s thought and the way Western ideas, reshaped in Japan, made their way into early twentieth-century China).

118 Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), esp. 43, 84.

119 See Huang K’o-wu, “Liang Qichao and Immanuel Kant.”

120 See Joey Bonner, *Wang Kuo-wei: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., and London:

The first book entitled *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 (History of Chinese Philosophy) was published in 1916 by Xie Wuliang (謝無量, 1884–1964), who also mentioned the Japanese origin of the term *zhexue*, and stressed, like Cai and others before him, that “all the principles of science derive from philosophy [...] Philosophy is in fact the source of science” (凡科學之原理無不出於哲學[。]。]哲學實為科學之原矣).¹²¹ That the history of Chinese philosophy was written, however, did not mean that a consensus existed about the very idea that there ever was such a thing called “Chinese philosophy.”

In this debate, an offshoot of which has in recent decades been resurrected in the form of “the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy” (*Zhongguo zhexue hefaxing* 中國哲學合法性),¹²² the contenders argued about whether the indigenous thought and knowledge systems of China could be properly termed “philosophy.” While arguments for each side abounded, the main issue, for our purposes, was the great importance attached to this question: philosophy was so crucial for the modernization project that both sides in the debate saw China’s modern fate as, at least partly, dependent on it. Both sides wanted to appropriate modern Western philosophy either by discarding China’s thought in the past or by presenting it as compatible with modern Western philosophy. Feng Youlan (馮友蘭, 1895–1990), one of the most important historical actors in disseminating the notion that there was an indigenous “Chinese philosophy” and a Columbia University PhD graduate, wrote in 1930 that “philosophy is originally a Western term. Nowadays, the main task of those who wish to

Harvard University Press, 1986); Hermann Kogelschatz, *Wang Kuo-wei und Schopenhauer: eine philosophische Begegnung (Wang Guowei and Schopenhauer: A Philosophical Encounter)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1986).

121 Xie Wuliang, *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*) (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1930), 2.

122 Three issues of *Contemporary Chinese Thought* (37.1-37.3, Fall 2005 to Spring 2006) were dedicated to translations of Chinese articles on this subject. See also: Carine Defoort, “Chinese Scholars on Chinese Philosophy,” *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 30.4 (1999): 4–8; Carine Defoort, “Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy? Arguments of an Implicit Debate,” *Philosophy East and West* 51.3 (2001): 393–413; Carine Defoort, “Is ‘Chinese Philosophy’ a Proper Name? A Response to Rein Raud,” *Philosophy East and West* 56.4 (Oct., 2006): 625–60; Rein Raud, “Philosophies versus Philosophy: In Defense of a Flexible Definition,” *Philosophy East and West* 56.4 (Oct., 2006): 618–25. See also Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, “Wei shenme shi sixiang shi—‘Zhongguo zhexue’ wenti zai si” 为什么是思想史—“中国哲学”问题再思 (“Why is it Intellectual History—the Problem of ‘Chinese Philosophy’ Reconsidered?”), *Jiangan lundun* (2003.7): 24–26; Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, *Sixiangshi de xiefa: Zhongguo sixiangshi daolun* 思想史的写法: 中国思想史导论 (*The Method of Writing Intellectual History: An Introduction to Chinese Intellectual History*) (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2004); Fang Chaohui 方朝暉, “Zhongxue” yu “Xixue”: *Chongxin jiedu xiandai Zhongguo xueshu shi* “中學”與“西學”: 重新解讀現代中國學術史 (“Chinese Learning” versus “Western Learning”: *New Interpretation of the History of Modern Chinese Scholarship*) (Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 2002), esp. 29–108, 397–400.

discuss the history of Chinese philosophy is to search through each type of scholarship in Chinese history, get hold of that which can correspond to what the West has called philosophy, select and recount it” (哲学本一西洋名词。今欲讲中国哲学史，其主要工作之一，即就中国历史上各种学问中，将其可以西洋所谓哲学名之者，选出而叙述之)。¹²³

He further justified this urgent need to find philosophy in China by explaining the relationship between philosophy and modern science, or modernization more generally:

近代学问，起于西洋，科学其尤著者。[。。。] 所谓中国哲学者，即中国之某种学问或某种学问之某部分之可以西洋所谓哲学名之者也。Modern scholarship originated in the West, with science its outstanding [product]. [So,] what is called Chinese philosophy, are those types of scholarship or those types of sections of scholarship which can be compatible with what is called philosophy by the West.¹²⁴

Another prominent scholar who wrote about this issue was Qian Mu (錢穆, 1895–1990), especially in his *Xiandai Zhongguo xueshu lunheng* 現代中國學術論衡 (*Assessment of Modern Chinese Scholarship*). In it he discussed several categories that were imported from the West with no direct correspondent in Chinese history (such as “religion”). As for philosophy, he wrote:

哲学一个名词，自西方传译而来，中国无之。故余尝谓中国无哲学，但不得谓中国无思想。西方哲学思想重在探讨真理，亦不得谓中国人不重真理。尤其如先秦诸子及宋明理学，近代国人率以哲学称之，亦不当厚非。

The term philosophy was transmitted from the West; China did not have it. Formerly I have said that China did not have philosophy, but it does not mean that China has no thought. [That] Western philosophy and thought stress the inquiry of truth also does not mean that the Chinese

123 Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*) (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1992), 1: 5.

124 Feng Youlan, *Zhongguo zhexue shi*, 9. Note that the English translation by Derk Bodde omitted this whole discussion (as the translator remarked: “portions which it was felt would be of less interest to westerners, have been omitted”, xii). See Feng Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), vol. 1. See also John Ewell’s discussion of Feng Youlan’s notion of philosophy in: John Woodruff Ewell, *Re-inventing the Way: Dai Zhen’s “Evidential Commentary on the Meanings of Terms in Mencius” (1777)* (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1990), 1–23.

do not stress truth. Especially those such as the masters prior to the Qin [dynasty] and all the way to the Song's and the Ming's "Learning of Principle," modern compatriots usually consider them as philosophy, and that should not be condemned.¹²⁵

"Chinese philosophy" was thus legitimated by the 1930s. Nonetheless, not everyone concurred¹²⁶—with philosophy's significance or with its Chinese legitimacy—since yet another debate had been brewing since the 1920s, the "view of life versus scientism" (人生觀/唯科學) debate. Among the disputed issues, a substantial one was the place of philosophy in modernity and in relation to (natural/exact) sciences. Was philosophy as important as the philosophers and historians of philosophy made it out to be? The question was left unresolved, but it resurfaced time and again during the twentieth century; yet even among those who advocated "only science" (唯科學, i.e., scientism) there were influential intellectuals—such as Hu Shi (胡適, 1891–1962)—who maintained that the scientific method and rationale leading the sciences was grounded in philosophy and within it, logic.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, another "philosophy" entered China and gradually gained more followers: Marxism, Socialism, and their various interpretations. In his 1923 "Shehui zhexue gailun" 社會哲學概論 ("Outline of Social Philosophy") Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白, 1899–1935), one of the political leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and one of its major theorists during the 1920s and early 1930s, presented all branches of science historically and as "emanating from within philosophy" (從哲學之中分出). He further argued that "as a result of the division between the sciences, philosophy was pushed to gradually be able to become [a] comprehensive and consistent [system of] knowledge, that commands every aspect of knowledge, both spiritual and material, and that seeks to find a tendency towards one whole universal perspective" (科學分

125 See Qian Mu, "Lüelun Zhongguo zhexue" 略论中国哲学 ("A Brief Discussion of Chinese Philosophy"), in *Xiandai Zhongguo xueshu lunheng*, (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 1984), 21–39.

126 For Fu Sinian's views against the adaptation and use of philosophy in discussions about China's past and his influence on Hu Shi and on institutional developments at Academia Sinica see Carine Defoort, "Fu Sinian's Views on Philosophy, Ancient Chinese Masters, and Chinese Philosophy," in *Learning to Emulate the Wise: The Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*, ed. John Makeham (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012), 275–310.

127 See Wang Zuoyue, "Saving China through Science: The Science Society of China, Scientific Nationalism, and Civil Society in Republican China," *Osiris*, 2nd series, vol. 17 (2002): 291–322; Fan Dainian 范岱年, "Weikexuezhuayi zai Zhongguo lishi de huigu yu pipan" 唯科學主義在中國歷史的回顧與批判 ("Review and Critique of the History of Scientism in China") *Kexue wenhua pinglun* 2.6 (2005): 27–40.

工的結果，使哲學漸漸能成為綜合一貫的智識，有統率精神物質各方面的智識而求得一整個兒的宇宙觀之傾向). In Qu's view, that was the main aim (and at times the accomplishment) of philosophy—or rather of “modern philosophy” (現代哲學)—especially since Kant and Laplace.¹²⁸

Ai Siqi (艾思奇, 1910–66), who was also one of the prominent intellectuals to shape Marxist thought in China, claimed in his 1934 *Dazhong zhexue* 大眾哲學 (*Philosophy for the Masses*) that although it seemed that the development of science had reached its apogee and that the various sciences could replace philosophy, it would be a grave mistake to believe this:

科学的研究，是各部分分门别类地实行的，所以每种科学的认识，也各有一定的范围，至于包含一切范围的普遍的认识，仍是哲学的任务。[。。。] 哲学则研究最普遍最一般的法则。
Scientific research is the practice of classifying and differentiating each section, by which each type of scientific knowledge has definite limits. But as for universal knowledge, containing all limits, this is the task of philosophy. [...] Philosophy, therefore, examines the most universal and the most general rules.¹²⁹

Both Qu and Ai exerted a profound influence in consolidating the view of Marxism in the Republican Era. Both were also influential in their relationships with the leadership of the CCP and with Mao Zedong in particular. It should thus come as no surprise that Mao himself held philosophy—his own philosophy—in high regard, or that when he managed to gain power throughout mainland China he saw (his own) philosophy as the guiding principle for any intellectual activity (and not just intellectual). Qu, Ai, and others—following in Marx's footsteps—precisely claimed that philosophy's most “important question was in its need to transform the world” (重要的問題是在于要改變世界).¹³⁰

128 See Qu Qiubai, “Shehui zhexue gailun,” in *Qu Qiubai wenji* 瞿秋白文集 (*Collected Writings of Qu Qiubai*) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1987), 2: 310–80, esp. 310–11, 340–57.

129 Ai Siqi, “Dazhong zhexue,” in *Ai Siqi wenji* 艾思奇文集 (*Collected Writings of Ai Siqi*) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1981), 1:129–282.

130 *Ibid.*, 140. For more on these thinkers and the development of Marxism in China at the time see Nick Knight, *Li Da and Marxist Philosophy in China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Nick Knight, *Marxist Philosophy in China: from Qu Qiubai to Mao Zedong, 1923–1945* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005); Arif Dirlik, *Revolution and History: the Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Joshua A. Fogel, *Ai Ssu-ch'i's Contribution to the Development of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Werner Meissner, *Philosophy and Politics in China: the Controversy over Dialectical Materialism in the 1930s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). See also Li Huaiyin's *Reinventing Modern China: Imagination and Authenticity in Chinese Historical Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013) for the impact of various philosophies (esp. Marxism) of historiography in China during

That was the background to the 1938 founding of the Xin zhexue hui 新哲學會 (The New Philosophy Association), which Ai Siqi launched with Mao's blessing in September of that year. In the announcement for the founding of the association (新哲學會緣起), Ai expressed the nexus of theory and practice: "Practice requires theory, but theory must be integrated with practice" (實踐需要理論, 理論必須結合于實踐). And as far as theory was concerned, and its relation with practice in particular, philosophy held supreme importance, for "philosophy is the only foundation of the most general methodology, it is the only synthesis of all particular sciences and all the way to all practical experiments" (哲學只是最一般的方法論上的基礎, 只是各科學及一切實踐經驗的綜合). As such, Ai claimed that philosophy was a critical endeavor in the most pressing concerns of China: "the war of resistance and the founding of the nation" (抗戰建國).¹³¹ Mao's opening speech at the association's 1940 first annual congress—in which, apart from Mao and Ai, Zhu De (朱德, 1886–1976), the commander of the Revolutionary Army at the time, and over fifty other participants joined—further expressed the urgency of philosophical research. Indeed, Edgar Snow's first impression of Mao—that of "a deep student of philosophy" who was widely read in various philosophical traditions—resonates with the importance Mao attached to the New Philosophy Association and its "brilliant" (光明) future.¹³² Just a year after the New Philosophy Association was established Mao had organized another philosophy group, the Zhexue xiaozu 哲學小組 (The Philosophy Group), in which (together with Ai) he was personally involved. Soon thereafter more philosophy groups and associations sprang up in different echelons of the Communist Party along with publications that served to circulate the philosophy discussed in the groups' meetings. These publications also emphasized the special Chinese circumstances and the need for the Sinification of the (Marxist) new philosophy to account for these special circumstances and characteristics. Ai Siqi's 1941 essay celebrating the New Philosophy Association's third year was therefore appropriately titled: "Discussion of the Special Characteristics of the New Philosophy and the Sinification of the New Philosophy" (論新哲學的特性與新哲學的中國化).¹³³ The nexus

the twentieth century. For more on Marx's complex notions of philosophy see, e.g., Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

131 See Yu Lianghua 于良華, "Guan yu Yan'an 'Xinzhexue hui'" 關於延安 "新哲學會" ("On the Yan'an 'New Philosophy Association'"), *Zhexue yanjiu* 3 (1981): 75–80.

132 *Ibid.*, 78. See Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 92–95.

133 See Yu Lianghua, "Guan yu Yan'an 'Xinzhexue hui'," 80; Knight, *Marxist Philosophy in China*, 106–107, 122–23, 197–213.

of philosophy, politics, practice, and national identity was accordingly consolidated in Ai Siqu's writings as well as in Mao's priorities.¹³⁴

Conclusion

The nexus of thought and action—in this case of Marxist philosophy (馬克思主義哲學)—was, however, not a new thing either in China or in the West. When the Jesuits tried to spread Christianity during the Qing period this notion was captured in the Confucian term “to save the world” (救世). This notion was tightly linked to the Confucians' cultural identity and hence Verbiest's final attempt to introduce philosophy as a basis for the examination system with the *Qionglixue* faced a dim fate. Even though Verbiest's description of philosophy as “the fountainhead of all learning” seems quite similar to Kant's *scientia scientiarum*, there is an important gap between them: the first had theology hovering above it; the second made philosophy autonomous. The first encountered a strong and confident empire and its reassured scholars; the second met with a crumbling empire and later a divided country struggling to survive. In both cases the cultural identity of the Chinese audience was at stake; in the first, the threat was resisted, in the second, intellectuals often felt they should change that identity because the “old culture” was considered by many as the very reason for China's decline. Those who felt the threat was too strong in the twentieth century sought ways to soften the blow, as it were, by anchoring new philosophies in Chinese antiquity (much like the “Xixue Zhongyuan” ethos before) or by finding precedents for new ideas in China's past. The immense differences in the historical contexts between the two encounters with philosophy meant that not only did the category “philosophy” change, but also that the entire background—of both those who transmitted and those who received it—was changed.

Therefore, the Jesuit thinkers who had introduced Western thought to China in the seventeenth century strove to reconcile what they understood as “philosophy” with China's indigenous knowledge systems and terms, feeling, as they did, less confident about their own superiority over China. As Kurtz has put it: “[T]he Jesuits had to prove that Europe in general and Christianity in particular had attained a level of civilization that was comparable to that of China.”¹³⁵ By the late nineteenth century, however,

134 A few years later the Party adopted “Mao Zedong Thought” (毛澤東思想) as the leading Party theory/philosophy. This was based to a large extent on the discussions about philosophy mentioned above. See *ibid.*, 211–13.

135 Kurtz, *The Discovery of Chinese Logic*, 26.

when philosophy re-entered China, its Western (and Japanese) propagators wished—and were this time able—to present philosophy as a new category altogether, to differentiate it from China's own terms, and to explain from a victors' self-confident perspective how it could aid the Chinese. Philosophy was not only the "science of sciences" but also the knowledge of the victorious. To be sure, it was much more than a break with theology: once philosophy—the new/modern philosophy—was tied to notions of modernity and civilization, to political, social, and economic power, and to progress as a whole, its significance for Chinese intellectuals was clear. It was up to these Chinese intellectuals, and not to the foreign propagators of philosophy, to find indigenous parallels with philosophy in their past if they wished (and many of them did). Indeed, by the turn of the twentieth century, philosophy's transformations in the West had made the category of philosophy appear sufficiently different from China's own systems of thought, helping to make it more relevant and enticing to the Chinese during a turbulent and particularly vulnerable period in their country's history.