A Brief Report on the Workshop "Reading Matters: Chinese and Western Traditions of Interpreting the Classics" at Leiden University (10th to 11th June, 2011) held by IIAS

Dennis C. H. Cheng[*]
Professor, Dept. of Literature and Cultural Studies,
Hong Kong Institute of Education

1. The topic and the goal

On the 10th and 11th of June, 2011, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden University held a workshop entitled "Reading Matters: Chinese and Western Traditions of Interpreting the Classics" at the Lipsius building of the Faculty of Arts. Professor Dennis C. H. Cheng, the European Chair of Chinese Studies of IIAS acted as the convener. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Asian Studies Program of Pennsylvania State University, the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS) and the Modern East Asia Research Centre (MEARC). Mr. Frank R. H. Liu (劉融和代表) hosted the welcoming banquet to greet all participants in the first evening on behalf of the Taipei Representative Office in the Netherlands (外交部駐荷蘭代表處).

Textual, exegetical and philosophical investigations have long constituted some of the most important scholarly pursuits in the areas of Chinese and Asian studies. The Chinese hermeneutic traditions are continuous, copious and complicated, composed of multiple layers of meanings accrued over time and deposited by hosts of intellectually diverse exegetes and commentators, spanning and traversing the intellectual domains of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and beyond. Since antiquity, the canonical and classical texts have been constantly reread and reinterpreted, and thus vitally refreshed, reinvented and renewed, serving as crucially important cultural, spiritual, ideological as well as political inspirations for successive generations of interpreters as they sought to rebuild and reform

[*] 時任 European Chair of Chinese Studies, IIAS, Leiden University

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

culture. Not only has intra-sectarian reading (within the ken of Confucianism alone, for instance) generated new commentarial texts, but inter-sectarian (Confucian-Buddhist syncretism, for example) interpretation has also produced innovative exegeses.

On the other hand, research and translations in the past decades, not to mention centuries, have thrown into relief the humane and humanistic values of the rich Chinese classical traditions in cross-cultural and universal terms. They have done much to establish the rightful place of the Chinese classics in the world's canon. European and American sinologists, bringing their knowledge of Western hermeneutics and theories of reading to bear on the Chinese texts, have made enormous contributions in bringing to light their pluralistic and global significances. It is reasonable to say that we have come to a pass where we may fruitfully rethink the Chinese classical traditions in light of western hermeneutic theories. It is also time we productively embarked on meaningful comparisons between Chinese hermeneutics and their European counterparts.

2. Presenters and discussants

- Axel Schneider: Centre for Modern East Asian Studies, University of Göttingen, Germany (discussant)
- Barend J. ter Haar: Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), the Netherlands (discussant)
- Dennis C. H. Cheng: International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), the Netherlands / National Taiwan University (convener, presenter and discussant)
- Erica Brindley: Pennsylvania State University, USA (presenter)
- Haizheng Yang: Department of Chinese Language & Literature, Center for Ancient Chinese Classics & Archives, Peking University, China (presenter)
- Hung-lam Chu: Department of Chinese Culture, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (presenter and discussant)
- Jonathan Silk: Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), the Netherlands (discussant)
- Kai-hsuan Fu: Graduate Institute of Chinese Literature, National Taiwan University (presenter)

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

- Leonard K. K. Chan: Faculty of Languages, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong (presenter and discussant)
- Maghiel van Crevel: Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), the Netherlands (discussant)
- Mizukami Masaharu: University of the Ryukyus, Japan (presenter)
- On-cho Ng: History Department and Religious Studies Program, the Pennsylvania State University, USA (presenter and discussant)
- Paul van Els: Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), the Netherlands (discussant)
- Tineke D'Haeseleer: Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), the Netherlands (discussant)
- Tze-ki Hon: History Department, State University of New York at Geneseo, USA (presenter and discussant)
- Yuet Keung Lo: Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore (presenter)

3. Presentations

Dennis Cheng's paper "Speculating Upon the Philosophy of 'Changes': On the Notion of Time and the Diversities on Meanings" reexamines the relationship of the philosophies of the *Yijing* (*Zhouyi* or *I Ching,* 周易, 易經, *Book of Changes*) text (經) and the commentaries (傳). He argues that this had long been ignored by the mainstream of *Yijing* studies ever since the rise of "skepticism" in East Asia, while the structure of *Yijing* philosophy is easily distorted by the limitation in illustrating the diverse meanings of words when translating the text. This paper provides a brief retrospect on "skepticism" in Japan and China to highlight the historical background of the ignorance of *Yijing* philosophy. The author then discusses the philosophy of *Yijing*, focusing on the notion of "time" in terms of dialectical ideas "終始" (ending and beginning) and reflecting the complexity of diverse meanings of hexagram names. Reconstructing the *Yijing* philosophy by elaborating on the interpretation tradition does not deduce the restoration of all old disciplines preserved before

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

the 19th century. Removing teleological assumptions to guarantee the purity of academic research is the only way to extend our respect to all the great masters of humanities in speculating on the great traditions of mankind.

Leonard Chan's paper "Reading Du Fu between Texts: The Intertextuality of Du Fu Criticism in Ming Anthologies" discusses the process of canonization of Du Fu. The author argues that the process starts from the Song Dynasty and concretizes in the modern histories of Chinese literature. Nonetheless, the reception of Du Fu's poetry in the course of time is not simply a series of reinforcements of previous critical judgments. In the Ming Period, we can observe the various questions raised and arguments proposed by critics to challenge or testify to Du Fu's status as one of the most prominent Tang poets. A notable and yet rarely discussed phenomenon in the Ming is a pastiche kind of anthology, which amply reveals the diversity of critical opinions in a sophisticated way. In these pastiche anthologies, writings of different schools are often incorporated in the very same collection. A variety of heterophonies thus are voiced out on the same writing space, complicating and elaborating one another's poetic visions. The author investigates two anthologies of this pastiche kind, i.e., Shen Zilai's *Tangshi sanji hebian* (沈子來《唐詩三集合編》) and Tang Yuxun's *Huibian Tangshi shiji* (唐汝詢《彙編唐詩十集》), with special reference to the multifarious Du Fu criticism. It demonstrates how Du Fu's poems were read between texts, and concludes that the conglomeration of the diverse critical opinions leads not to the diminution, but to the substantiation of Du Fu's canonicity.

Tze-ki Hon's paper "A Representation of Sacred Time: The Genealogy of the *Yijing* Authors in Yuan China" examines one of the contested sites of the Cheng-Zhu school of classical exegesis—the interpretation of the *Yijing*. As a composite text including visual images, numerology, archaic statements and early commentarial materials, the *Yijing* was difficult to comprehend. To make matters worse, Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi followed different commentarial traditions in interpreting the text. Based on the *Xici* (繫辭), Cheng Yi read the *Yijing* as a philosophical treatise about moral metaphysics. Concentrating on the hexagram images, Zhu Xi read the *Yijing* as a divination manual to give answers to the uncertainty in life. Thus, in lending support to a coherent Cheng-Zhu school, the scholars in the fourteenth century had to create an interpretative framework to reconcile the differences between Cheng and Zhu. The author uses the writings of three Yuan scholars—Hu Yigui (胡一桂), Dong Zhenqing (董真卿) and Hu Bingwen (胡炳文)—to examine the early efforts in building a coherent system to integrate Cheng's and Zhu's *Yijing* commentaries. He argues that by giving new meaning to "the genealogy of the *Yijing* authors" (Fu Xi, King Wen, the

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

Duke of Zhou, and Confucius), the three Yuan Dynasty writers privileged a combined Cheng-Zhu commentary as the authentic and authoritative reading of the classic.

Kai-hsuan Fu's paper "Liu Shi-pei's (劉師培, 1884-1919) Reinterpretation of *Gushi*" discusses Liu's effort to construct a new picture of the development of *gushi* (古史, ancient Chinese history) by reinterpreting the Chinese Classics. Liu accepted a theory by Albert Terrien De Lacouperie (1845-1894), claiming that Chinese civilization originated in the West and regarding the Han Chinese as China's first colonists. Most Confucians viewed the "Six Classics" (六經, *Liu Jing*) primarily as records of how the *shengwang* (聖王, Sage-kings) governed, with morality as the source of the regime's legitimacy. Liu, in contrast, interpreted the "Six Classics" as primarily demonstrating that Chinese society had also experienced the same developmental transitions, i.e. from nomadic to agricultural, and from matriarchal to patriarchal, experienced by Western civilizations. Furthermore, Liu believed that race consciousness, the struggle for existence, and militarism—themes that in Liu's view were fundamental to the rise of the West—were also topics of great concern for the ancient Chinese. Liu's interpretation of *gushi* was influenced by not only Social Darwinism, but also by the work of Qing Confucian scholars, whose shifted from a focus on moral self cultivation to concern for the life of ordinary people. In Liu's view, this was an effective new method to integrate China into the global milieu and combine Westernization with *fugu* (復古, a return to antiquity).

Hung-lam Chu's paper "Reading the *Great Learning* to the Ming Emperors" suggests that the little Confucian book *Great Learning* (大學, *Daxue*) became a classic in the statecraft learning of the Chinese emperor when Zhu Xi first presented it to the throne in the Southern Song court. During Ming times it became a must-read to the emperor in the Classics-mat imperial lectures and to the heir-apparent in his course of study. While the main exegetical tradition remained the one set by Zhu Xi, different ways of interpretation and ideas were proposed and given during the course of Ming history. Lecturing officials of different schools of Confucian thought offered subtle and nuanced interpretations to elucidate their persuasions and to attract the emperors. Readings of the classic were not determined by whether an emperor could be advised to incline towards an attitude or to prefer a course of action. This paper highlights cases from the fifteenth and sixteenth-century Ming court, to show ways of reading the book that were proposed to the emperors. Essays presented during the reading and exposition sessions of the emperors and heirs-apparent are discussed to throw light on the interpretations of the classic that were specific to the emperor but not uncommon amongst scholar-officials as well.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

Yuet Keung Lo's paper "Suicide as Text: Intentionality in Getting Killed in Early China" argues that although suicide is a mundane event and a familiar concept, its meaning and significance may not be immediately evident or universal. In fact, what constitutes suicide may be debatable. While the physical act of killing oneself or getting oneself killed knowingly is the same in all "suicides," the meaning of the act needs to be deciphered and interpreted much like a text, as the act implicates a host of cultural and personal variables and circumstances which actually frame it and make it possible in the first place. Thus the act of killing oneself, or getting oneself killed knowingly, can be understood as a performative text in which a plenitude of meanings are inscribed and which are amenable to hermeneutic interpretation. In its mundane sense, nothing is more important than life itself, without which no values, including moral ones, can be cherished and practiced. No life goal can be materialized without a conscious human being. Yet, in the pursuit of moral values, physical life can become secondary to the intended goal, and in fact, is sometimes ironically given up in the process. In early China, suicide could be an event of momentous personal and cultural significance, and if suicide can be analogized to a text, it would certainly be regarded as a "classic." As a performative classic, it attracted an unbroken succession of commentaries that helped to unravel its embedded meanings to the fullest, and in this sense we can actually speak of a tradition of suicide that was shaped, informed, created, and enriched by those who committed suicide, literally in person. By analyzing suicides of legendary significance, this paper examines the motives that impelled human beings in early China to sacrifice their lives in their moral pursuits, and at the same time, seeks to understand what moral values early Chinese people cherished and why they were considered superior to their own lives.

Erica Brindley's paper "Understanding Creation Myths in Early China: The Case of Cosmic Generation in the 'Heng Xian' (恆先)" discusses "Heng Xian," the excavated text from the Shanghai Museum manuscript, which might translate into something like "The Prior-to-Constancy." The text provides a story of cosmic generation and birth. Erica argues that beyond the fact that we have no documentation of its transmission into later centuries — making everything in it appear to be new — this text also provides a radical vision of the spontaneous genesis of things in the cosmos. Such an account at once enhances and complicates our understandings of the many varieties and flavors of early Chinese philosophical and religious beliefs, as well as the nature of "creation" and "creativity" in some belief-systems. It enhances our understandings because it adds to the variety of philosophical, religious, and political voices and perspectives stemming from Warring States

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

China. Yet it also complicates our understandings by confounding scholars not just with respect to the basic meaning of the text, but with respect to how its concepts relate to the larger context of beliefs in the Chinese tradition. In this paper, the author discusses the text's main theme, cosmic generation, in terms of the concept of "spontaneous arising." The author analyzes the ways in which the received tradition—in particular, texts such as the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, and even Zhang Zai's writings in the Song—might be employed to interpret this problematic and abstruse text. She also highlights the dangers that accompany certain uses of the received tradition in unraveling and interpreting newly excavated materials.

Haizheng Yang's paper "On Yang Xiong's Critique of the *Shiji*" points out that Yang Xiong (53 BC-AD18), as a great thinker and intellectual of the late Western Han, was born in an era in which classicist thought had achieved supremacy. Thus Yang consciously modeled his works after the Confucian Classics. Yang's critique of Sima Qian (司馬遷) and the *Shiji* (史記 , Records of the Grand Historian), although it is fragmentary, unerringly identifies and critiques the aspects of the *Shiji* which do not agree with the norms of classicist thought. Yet his comments on the *Shiji* are not limited to pointing out places where it does not accord with classicist thought. He also introduces terms that would later become highly influential on the study of the *Shiji*, such as the idea that the *Shiji* is a "*shilu*" (實錄, true record), and that Sima Qian "*ai qi*" (愛奇, to have a fondness for the unusual). The theory of Sima Qian's "fondness for the unusual," first raised by Yang, underwent more than two thousand years of continuous development. It has become a universally accepted truth in the study of the *Shiji*, often brought up and discussed together with the idea of the "true record." In short, it is an important aspect of the study of Sima Qian's technique and his thought. "Fondness for the unusual" came to be seen not only as an important tendency in Sima Qian's thought and composition, but one that also reflected what was most rare and lively in Sima Qian's world-view. It gave form to a number of artistic characteristics in the *Shiji* that would have a deep influence on the development of Chinese literature. Scholars gradually came to understand that Sima Qian's "fondness for the unusual" was not an excessive partiality for unusual characters, nor was it a simple fondness for legendary fairy-tales of people's spirits or ghosts, nor again was it a mere search for novelty. His "fondness for the unusual" was the highest union of content and form, through which he wanted to reflect the strangeness of history and of the realities of life in society. He wanted to completely reflect history through his description of extraordinary historical characters. The artistic techniques which he used, and his selection of materials, were entirely in the service of displaying those extraordinary characters. Seen from this perspective, Sima

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

Qian's "fondness for the unusual" is in fact united with the spirit of creating "a true record."

On-cho Ng's paper "Consonance and Counterpoint: Western Hermeneutics and Confucian Exegesis" suggests that while seeking to better theorize the rationale and practice of Confucian exegesis of the classics by appealing and referring to the Western philosophies of reading, addressing in the process such universal hermeneutic issues as original meaning, contemporary appropriation, authorial intent, readerly contingency and audience reception, thereby throwing into sharp relief the cross-cultural consonance discernible in acts of interpretation and understanding, the paper sheds light on the attendant counterpoint engendered by divergent cultural assumptions, contrasting religio-philosophical values, varying epistemological stances and different ontological conceptions concerning textuality, classicity, canonicity, authorship and readership. Acknowledging and endorsing the fruitful and meaningful Eurotropic move toward construing the classical Chinese commentarial endeavors in light of the Western iterations of similar enterprises, the paper asserts and affirms the deeply ingrained contextual variances that inform our very own presentist hermeneutics in the projects of reading and interpreting. To comparatively engage with reading matters East and West, and to say that reading matters are a universal imperative, is to posit that between apparent and inevitable commensurability and contravention, new common paths of reading toward a deeper understanding of our multivalent textual testaments may be paved.

Mizukami Masaharu's paper "A Preliminary Inquiry into the History of Textual Criticisms in Japan" suggests that textual criticism is a fundamental step for establishing the correct forms of the texts of canons, and is a basis for interpretation and distribution of canons. China has a long tradition of textual criticism, and Japan, which continued to import and study the canons of Confucianism, also has a long history of it. As early as in classical times, Japanese people came to recognize that there were differences between the texts of a certain kind of Confucian classics, so they started to practice text criticism. This paper deals with the history of textual criticism in Japan in comparison with that of China, tracing the transition of forms and situations about it. At the primary stage, the form of text criticism was simple, people compared the texts of two versions of a certain canon to each other, and based on one text, wrote the difference in the margin. Yet the achievement of this stage had bibliographical values in itself. Afterward, at the developed stage, the form of textual criticism became advanced and complicated, scholars compared the texts of various versions of a certain canon and tried to get the correct text. It should be noticed that scholars in the Edo period perceived the values of their accomplishments of textual criticism. They knew

臺灣人學學術期刊資料庫

that sometimes the accomplishments of textual criticism were imported into China and earned good reputations, and they felt proud of that. The achievements of Japanese scholars occasionally affected and stimulated the Chinese philological scholars engaged in textual criticism. Although each accomplishment of textual criticism in Japan has been referred to by scholars, few scholars had consciousness of it. It is certain that this topic will become important in the context of scholarly pursuits in the field of the hermeneutic tradition, so this paper focuses on it, and the discussion will be regarded as a fundamental study.

During the past decade, the convener of this workshop, Professor Cheng, has already cooperated with different institutions in East Asia and North America, organizing workshops and symposiums on the theme "interpretations of Classics," and a few edited volumes have already been published. This one and a half day workshop is actually the seventh one. This time we include papers on different areas and topics, including philosophy, philology, history and classical studies, thus guaranteeing diversity as well as inter-disciplinary research. Professor Cheng is expecting to work with Professor On-cho Ng on editing a volume in which fine workshop papers will be included.

〔作者附記〕我很榮幸在 2011-2012 年參加甘懷真教授主持之「跨國界的文化傳釋整合型研究計畫」。作為計畫成員，2011 年 6 月 10 至 11 日我以召集人及萊頓大學國際亞洲研究院（IIAS, Leiden University）歐洲漢學講座的身分，在該院主辦了一個為期一天半的國際學術研討會。該次研討會的主題是中國與西方經典詮釋傳統相遇與比較的問題，是「東亞研究」的重要課題之一，也是當年甘教授與我共同參加「東亞近世儒學中的經典詮釋傳統研究計畫」（教育部大學學術追求卓越計畫，2000-2004）研究工作的延續。本文是英文版研討會報告，與大家分享會議主旨與成果。

鄭吉雄謹識，2011 年 8 月 24 日

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫