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Western Philosophy of History and Confucianism

Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang*

Abstract

In order to compare ideas of history in different cultures, one must consider the cultural traditions from which these ideas originated and developed. Insofar as Chinese and Western cultures are concerned, it is necessary that we do not "essentialize" either Western or Confucian philosophy of history. In China, for example, there was a clear distinction between classical Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism; whereas, in the West, ideas of history took different forms in different historical periods. We must therefore avoid the teleological approach, which tends to characterize past historical culture from a modern perspective. Nevertheless, we might still be able to posit three major differences between Chinese and Western ideas of history. The first is religious. Unlike Confucianism that searches for an ideal past, Judeo-Christian tradition believes in the fulfillment of history, which was translated into the idea of progress in the modern age. The second is about the socio-political influence in historical writing. In contrast to the Chinese tradition in which history was often an official enterprise, Western historiography appeared more pluralistic and critical. The third is that in the Western tradition, systematic logic and rational thinking characterized its conception of history, whereas in China, rational and scientific thinking is more or less a modern development in historiography.

Keywords: history, ideas of history, Confucianism, philosophy of history, historiography, comparative historiography.

* Georg G. Iggers, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, History Department, University at Buffalo, SUNY.
Q. Edward Wang, Chair and Professor, History Department, Rowan University.

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There is a dual problem in regard to this topic, how to define Western philosophy of history and how to define Confucian conceptions of history as both relate to historiography. An initial problem raised by both is whether there indeed is a Western or a Confucian philosophy of history, which can be characterized as essentially Western or Confucian. In writing this article, my colleague Q. Edward Wang deals with the second question of a Confucian philosophy of history, whereas I consider mainly the tradition of Western philosophy of history. In both cases, we are dealing with traditions which extend over two and a half millennia and which in this period have had multiple facets, in China I think, for example of the distinction between classical Confucianism and the Neo-Confucianism beginning in the Song period. I shall primarily deal with Western philosophies of history in order to present a model that enables a comparison with other traditions of historical thought.

It is equally dangerous to adopt an essentialist approach in characterizing either the Chinese or the Western cultural tradition. First of all to China. While most Western scholars have customarily identified the Chinese tradition by and large with Confucianism, we are fully aware of the shortcomings of these generalizations. As is well known, during the fifth century B.C.E. when Confucius began to offer his teachings, he faced many competitors. In fact, his age was known to be the age of philosophers, in which many schools vied for existence and prominence. All these schools have left identifiable imprints in the Chinese tradition. Some, such as Taoism and Legalism, exerted important influences in Chinese politics and society at various times, whereas other lesser known schools were later either absorbed by or incorporated into the mainstream Chinese culture. The ascendance of Confucianism did not occur until the first century C.E., when Dong Zhongshu (c. 179~104 B.C.E.), a Confucian scholar who gained the trust of Emperor Wu (141~87 B.C.E.) of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.~220 C.E.), first suggested that Confucianism be made as the official ideology and that Confucian texts be treated as the Classics. Since the decision of adopting Confucianism was made out of political concern during the Han Dynasty period, the Confucian influence remained rather limited, more or

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less confined to the political arena. It was not until the Song Dynasty (960~1279), especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, that Confucianism began to exert more social influences, thanks to the rise of Neo-Confucianism. However, as we will discuss below, Neo-Confucianism addressed quite different issues from those of classical Confucianism, and this difference was due to the influence of Buddhism.

Secondly, Confucianism itself was by no means a holistic entity. Rather, it represented a highly contested space where many hermeneutic activities left their distinct marks. Not long after the canonization of the Confucian texts in the Han Dynasty, at the turn of the first century C.E., Han scholars were confronted by the authenticity issue compounded by the discovery of a new version of some Confucian classics in the walls of Confucius' residence. From that time onward, Confucian scholars were by and large divided into two schools; one believed in the "modern text" version of the classics, accepted by most Han scholars, and the other preferred the newly discovered version, known to be the "old text" because of its ancient writing style. However, what really differentiated these two schools was not simply a textual preference, but a different approach to interpreting Confucianism. After the fall of the Han Dynasty in the third century, Confucian scholars faced more serious challenges; they had to deal with not only differences among themselves, but also with an outside competitor-Buddhism. While the rise of Neo-Confucianism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was credited for the successful revival of Confucianism, it was also well known that the success of Neo-Confucianism was built on its eclecticism, namely its receptive approach to Buddhist influences. Indeed, Neo-Confucian scholars offered us very innovative interpretations of Confucian texts. In addition, they supplied a new Confucian canon, the "Four Books," whose importance soon surpassed the original "Five Classics," which were believed, at least by some Confucian scholars in the past, to have been composed by Confucius himself. The impact of this Neo-Confucian hermeneutic "revolution" was far-reaching. To some extent, it shaped the entire course of Chinese intellectual history during the later imperial period, marked by various attempts made by scholars to look for a true understanding of the meaning

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of Confucianism, either through the heart-mind meditation advocated by Wang Yangming (1472~1528) and his disciples or the philological investigation of ancient texts practiced by Qing "evidential scholars."

In the Chinese tradition of historical writing, beginning in the pre-Han period, we also find clear traces of this lively and diverse cultural and philosophical tradition. For example, in Sima Qian's (c. 145~85 B.C.E.) works, we see elements of various schools of thoughts, especially Taoism, despite the author's intention to be an heir to Confucius in writing history. It is particularly interesting to note that Sima Qian lived in a time when Confucianism had begun to receive political endorsement. Yet even in the times after Sima Qian, the Confucian influence in historiography, namely the interest in moral education through historical examples, or the "praise and blame" emphasis, remained inconsistent and a choice of individual historians. The establishment of the History Office in the Tang Dynasty (618~907) in the seventh century, of course, represented an attempt made by officials and official historians (it was difficult to differentiate them) to exercise more political influence in historical writing, at least in the composition of the official dynastic histories, or the so-called "standard histories" (*zhengshi*). However, that political influence was not exclusively Confucianism either, for by the time when the Tang rulers founded their dynasty, Buddhism had gained tremendous currency in Chinese politics and society. Also, the establishment of the History Office at the time was not short of critics. Liu Zhiji's sharp criticism of the Office serves as a good example. It was not until the Song Dynasty, due to the influence of Neo-Confucianism, that we witness a more systematic attempt to incorporate Confucian ideas into historiography. Two historians distinguished themselves in this regard. They were Ouyang Xiu (1007~1072) and Sima Guang (1019~1086); the former launched, and completed, the ambitious project of rewriting previous dynastic histories from the Confucian perspective and the latter composed an impressive, voluminous *Zizhi tongjian* (The comprehensive mirror of aid for government), in which he adopted the "praise and blame" approach to evaluating the moral character of previous rulers, aiming to provide historical lessons for his own

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emperor. Having received high praises from their peers and inspired many followers, both Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang however had no true successors. During the later imperial period, namely the Ming (1368~1644) and Qing Dynasties (1644~1911), historians changed the focus of their interest from philosophizing history to historical methodology, whose significance I shall return to below.[1] In sum, China's past boasted a diverse and multifaceted cultural tradition, shown in both legacies of Confucianism and historiography. In our comparative study of Chinese and Western historical cultures, to be sure, we must seek certain generalizations in order to form a basic framework. But, at the same time, we also need to notice the temporal and specific characteristics of each culture.

Coming to the West, my first point is that there is no Western philosophy of history as such, but rather that there is a multiplicity of philosophies of history and traditions of historical writing in the West. Thus, an essentialist approach, which posits characteristics that are common to all aspects of Western thought, is difficult to maintain. On the other hand, there are elements of thought that recur in the West which may make it possible to compare Western with Chinese thought.

Peter Burke has recently tried to define what is peculiarly Western in the Western tradition. He has identified ten characteristics of the Western tradition, which I shall briefly recount here as a basis of discussion. Burke has been careful in his formulation, considering this list as ideal types which do not fit all aspects of Western thought and recognizing that the distinctiveness of Western thought consists not in a series of unique characteristics, many of which are also found in non-Western thought, but in a unique combination of elements which "vary by period, region, social group and individual historian." Nevertheless, these ten points in Burke's view are "not isolated, but linked ...(and) add up to a 'system', 'model', or 'ideal type' of Western historical thought."[2] The ten follow in approximate

1 See Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University, 1984).

2 Peter Burke, "Western Historical Thought in World Perspective: Some Theses for Debate," German version in Jörn Rüsen ed., *Westliches Geschichtsdenken. Eine interkulturelle Debatte*

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order of importance. The most important characteristic from his perspective is a linear conception of history, an idea of progress, which assumes that change is cumulative and which differs sharply from cyclical conceptions of history characteristic of historical thought in almost all other cultures. There follows in second place what Burke calls the "western concern with historical perspective" and "anachronism". Next comes what Burke calls the historicist concern for individuality and development. Connected with this in fourth place is the concern with what Burke terms "collective agency," the role of groups, groups which in Western historiography are often smaller than the state or the nation. There follows, fifth, the central place of epistemology, sixth, of causal explanation, and, seventh, of objectivity. The preoccupation with quantitative data, eighth, is unique to the West, although it seems to me that Sima Qian's "Treatise on the Balanced Standard" introduces causation, social groups, and even statistical data. Finally, ninth, Western historiography has its own literary form and, tenth, only the West has dealt, not only with the temporal, but also with the spatial aspects of history.

There are, however, a number of problems with Burke's characterization of Western thought which at first glance may seem convincing. The first one, to which I shall return, is whether there is indeed a West stretching back into Antiquity, parallel to a Chinese civilization of comparable or even greater antiquity. Several of the characteristics that Burke identifies as Western are in fact modern or even very recently modern, such as quantitative history and the concern with the historic aspects of space, which have been restricted largely to the *Annales*-School, most notably Fernand Braudel, building on the human geography of Paul Vidal de la Blache. The idea of progress is a phenomenon of historical thought since the Enlightenment not to be confused with the eschatological visions of Christian thinkers in the tradition of Augustine, who saw no direction in the worldly sphere. Perhaps Joachim de Fiore represents a possible exception. The West as a cultural unit did not exist before the Middle Ages. What preceded it was a Mediterranean world, much less homogeneous than the

(Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 31~52.

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Chinese world contemporary with it. A number of different cultures, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Persian, and Hebrew, to mention only some, coexisted and interacted but maintained their own identities. The West as a world different from that of the Mediterranean emerged only slowly after the division of the Roman Empire into a Latin and a Greek unit. The role of the Roman Catholic Church in the formation of Western identity should not be overlooked.

Moreover the West of Latin Christianity was not a unit over time. It was marked not only by regional diversity but also by chronological breaks. The characteristics that Burke associates with the West have little relevance for the medieval period; there was no sense of secular progress, little of a historical perspective or of an understanding of anachronism, no serious concern with epistemology, and no serious commitment to objectivity. The recognition that individuals differ is also found in China. When I saw the excavations near Xian, I was struck by how every soldier looked different in contrast to the stereotypical representations of persons in Byzantine and medieval Catholic art. Very early in Chinese historiography, beginning with Sima Qian's *Records of the Historian*, biographies form an important genre. In fact, they occupy a much more central place in Chinese than in Western historiography. Nor is it true that Chinese and Japanese thought were not aware of the striking differences between historical periods. Painting and sculpture are good indications of this, as Burke realizes, and in China and Japan frequently portray differences in custom and style. On the contrary, Western art in its portrayal of the past is remarkably ahistorical not only in the Catholic Middle Ages but well into the eighteenth century. As to the crucial question to what extent the preoccupation with the problem of knowledge was unique to the Western tradition: undoubtedly in regard to the critical treatment of texts, in Charles S. Gardner's opinion "the Chinese are not a whit behind Western scholarship in the exacting domain of textual or preparatory criticism, that domain that is concerned with the authentication, establishment, and meaning of text."[3] Beginning as early as

3 Charles S. Gardiner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 18.

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Sima Qian, the questions of the authenticity of texts and of the techniques of textual criticism are much more highly developed in China than in Europe until the age of humanism.[4] But, this is the area of external criticism which sought to establish the authenticity of the sources. In the field of internal or historical criticism, which sought to test the credibility of sources, Chinese scholarship admittedly made fewer advances. Nevertheless Liu Zhiji (661~721) composed the great classic on historical criticism *Shitong* (Generalities of History) which had no parallel in the West until the modern period. Benjamin Elman in a recent work[5] has argued that in the eighteenth century an academic community came into existence in southeast China which developed highly sophisticated methods of historical criticism. Not unlike the intellectuals in Europe at the time but independently of them, scholars in this community set themselves the task of finding and verifying historical knowledge. Burke is right that the characteristics he associates with the historiography of the West are less developed in other traditions of historical thought and historical writing, including those of East Asia. But, the characteristics which Burke identifies as Western define Western thought only in the modern period. Key to them is Max Weber's conception of rationality. Rationality involves the questioning of authority. On-cho Ng refers to a recent much acclaimed work by Jeffrey Stout in which Stout characterizes modern Western thought as "flight from authority," born in the early seventeenth-century crisis of authority generated by the Reformation and the attending religious conflicts.[6] In this period, a historical and a scholarly outlook emerged in the West which in basic elements corresponded to Burke's conception of the Western historical outlook. But, it was only in the eighteenth century, and then only partially,

4 See E.G. Pulleybank, "Chinese Historical Criticism. Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang," in Beasley and Pulleybank eds., *Historians of China and Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 135~166.

5 Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology.*

6 See On-Cho Ng, "A Tension in Ch'ing Thought: 'Historicism' in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century, Chinese Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 54 (1993), 566, 581. Jeffrey Stout, *The Flight from Authority: Religion, Morality and the Quest for Autonomy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

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that this outlook gained hold in historical scholarship. This new outlook was by no means as free from myth as it proclaimed and in fact created new myths and authorities.

A key notion that gained dominance in the course of the Enlightenment is that of a master narrative that gives history unity and direction. In the place of the many historical accounts which compose history, the idea emerges that there is a history (*die Geschichte*), the history of the evolution of mankind which finds its highpoint in the modern West as it does in Hegel's philosophy of history, or in an only slightly modified form in Marx's dialectic. [7] Undoubtedly, the place of teleology in the Western Judaeo-Christian historical outlook has in its secularized form had a deep influence on the conceptions of world history as a directional process.[8] Marx, too, despite his avowed atheism, sees history in eschatological terms. This eschatological note is lacking in East Asian but also in classical Greek and Roman thought. In medieval Christian and Islamic thought, it is restricted to the otherworldly sphere. For the modern West, it provides a convenient tool for bringing coherence into the multiplicity of historical events and situations. Burke is right in pointing at the literary character of this new history, its similarities to the novel. The classical novel of the nineteenth century also told a coherent story in which the actors were individuals with coherent personalities. The great historians of the nineteenth century thus structured their stories in similar ways as the great novelists. But, this is a specifically modern and not a generally Western phenomenon. And, new authorities emerge. The professional scholars of the nineteenth century, whether Droysen or Michelet, went into the archives to construct myths of the national past. Outside the West, modern Western conceptions of the coherence of the historical process penetrated conceptions of history. In China, as Elman and Pulleyblank suggest, Chinese historical thought had moved independently in similar directions which facilitated the reception of modern Western ideas in the twentieth century without constituting a total

7 On the emergence of the notion of a history, see Reinhard Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985).

8 See Karl Löwith, *The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

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break with Chinese traditions.

So far, I have argued against Burke's ideal type of a Western historical outlook which distinguished it from that of other cultures including those of East Asia. If Burke's ideal type were restricted to the modern period, I would accept a great deal of it. But, even in the modern period historiography and philosophies of history are so diverse that we must be cautious in generalization. The idea of a master narrative culminating in the modern West was not accepted by various historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Jacob Burckhardt, Brooks Adams, Henry Adams, and Jan Huizinga. It has come under massive attack in the late twentieth century by diverse postmodernist thinkers, such as Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Frank Ankersmit, and Hayden White, and postcolonialists, such as Ashis Nandy who have questioned not only that there is direction or coherence in history but also the possibility of rational inquiry. To cite Hayden White, history is as much "invented" as "found."[9] None of the above thinkers I have quoted is a practicing historian and their radical attacks on the assumptions which have guided modern historical consciousness occupy a marginal position in the work of historians.

Nevertheless, historical thought in the West has in the second half of the twentieth century undergone fundamental changes which justify us to speak of a postmodern mood. The conditions of life have changed fundamentally in an age of globalization and information technology. There are certain assumptions regarding the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of society which have been common to classical Greek and Roman antiquity, the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, and for that matter almost all other traditional societies and cultures until now. These traditional forms of class, ethnic, and gender domination, which despite the egalitarian rhetoric of the Enlightenment persisted until now, as well as the conceptions of history on which they rested have been challenged and replaced by new forms of domination in an age of global capitalism. Despite many continuities in outlook and cultural patterns, we

9 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 82.

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are moving into an age which is fundamentally different from the modern West which since the age of discoveries has dominated the rest of the world, including China. After having qualified the distinctions which Peter Burke made between historical thought in the Western and the non-Western world, I would like to posit three points at which Western traditions, including those of the ancient and medieval periods, may be different from Chinese and specifically Confucian ones:

The first is religious: Again it is important to avoid broad generalization. Western religiosity had its roots in two very different traditions, a Greek and a Hebrew one which merged in the New Testament and which also received impulses from Greek and Near Eastern mystery religion. As far as the Greek tradition is concerned, we are very much aware today, certainly since Nietzsche, that the Apollonian world of balance, beauty, and restraint, which we identify with classical culture, was only one side of the coin. Similarly China saw the interaction of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist strains and each of these traditions had many sides. Both the Christian and the Confucian traditions stressed obedience to established authority as central to political and familial behavior. Classical Confucianism has been much more secular in its outlook, involving a way of life at the center of which stood on the one hand the family and on the other the imperial state. The stress on the ancestors involved a certain conservatism that was linked to a philosophy of history that saw the past as normative. In practice this was true of the Christian tradition as well, which for the most part was thoroughly conservative. Yet, the secular outlook of Confucianism also made it possible to follow an activist practice in regard to commercial expansion and technological innovation. Comparisons have been made between developments in these areas in the Song dynasty (960~1279) and the vibrant commercial world of the Northern Italian cities of the early Renaissance. Max Weber and others have asked why there was a breakthrough to a modern capitalist, scientifically and technologically advancing world in the West at this point and not in China. Weber, as we know, linked the spirit of capitalism to a Calvinist ethic. In retrospect a century later, this explanation seems not convincing in view of the remarkable emergence of capitalist mentalities and capitalist economies in

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much of East Asia in countries with Confucian traditions in the second half of the twentieth century. The role of religion should most certainly not be overstated as a factor in the difference between East and West. In neither part of the world was religion static or uniform. The Judaeo-Christian conception of history centered around a teleology which among the Old Testament prophets placed the kingdom of God, the age when war shall be no more, in this world, while the Christian vision saw the world ultimately doomed and redeemed only in the hereafter. But, in a secular age, the idea of the fulfillment of history was translated into an idea of progress as it was in Marxism but also in ideologies of capitalist development as in Fukuyama's conception of the end of history. But then, chiliastic visions are not totally absent in China and may have contributed to the readiness of radical movements such as in the Taiping Rebellion or Maoism to accept Western ideas of fulfillment in history, whether Christian in the former case or Marxist in the latter.

The second is social and political: Western societies, including modern ones, appear to be more pluralistic than Chinese ones; this is true in the ancient, the medieval, and the modern period. Although Chinese civilization had a plural origin, as many modern scholars believe now, it evolved, with some violent disruptions, into something more monistic than plural from the third centuries B.C.E. on. Here despite changes and diversity, there appears to be an element of continuity in both cultures. The political structures in China and in the West were different, with much greater decentralization in the West and with greater autonomy of towns in classical, medieval, and modern times. One striking difference between China and the West is, of course, the bureaucratic character of the former through the ages. Dynastic histories, written after the end of each dynasty, occupied a great deal of Chinese historiography. Although there were private histories, a major part of historical writing was carried out by official historians. Beginning with the reunification of China and the establishment of the T'ang dynasty, the composition of standard dynastic histories was no longer the work of single individuals but of groups working in the History Office. Chinese history was thus written "by bureaucrats for bureaucrats. Its purpose was to provide

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collections of the necessary information and precedents required to educate officials in the art of governing."[10] Thus, historiography in China is largely a collective enterprise. It tends to be less pluralistic and critical than Western historiography. Conceivably, the Confucian communal ethics plays a role here.

Finally, one can argue as does Max Weber that there is a logic of rational thought which distinguishes the Western outlook from that of other cultures. With a sense of superiority, which seems alien to us today, he argues that "a rational, systematic, and specialized pursuit of science, with trained and specialized personnel, has only existed in the West." At its core is an abstract, systematic logic, which he traces back to the Greeks and finds even in Medieval Christian theology. This way of reasoning defines the Western world outlook. Yet, one may ask whether Weber does not make the same mistake as Burke in identifying as characteristic of the West characteristics which are in fact modern. Joseph Needham in his comparative study of science and society sees a similar distinction between the systematic logic of the West and its absence in the East. Thus, he writes: "It would really be true to say that in Chinese culture, history was the 'queen of the sciences', not theology or metaphysics of any kind, never physics or mathematics."[11] Chinese culture thus failed "to develop systematic logic along Aristotelian or scholastic lines." Nevertheless, the scientific attitude finally conquered China in the twentieth century as did the historical outlook which Burke has described as Western but which is more properly modern. This modernity which has permeated modern China is Western although it inevitable builds on Chinese patterns of thought. The past century and a quarter has seen profound changes in Chinese historiography as Chinese historians became increasingly receptive of Western historiography and social thought in which they see instruments of overcoming Chinese powerlessness in an imperialist age.[12] The question

10 Beasley and Pulleyblank, "Introduction," 3, 5.

11 Joseph Needham, *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 242.

12 Cf. Q. Edward Wang, *Inventing China Through History: The May Fourth Approach to*

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remains to what extent Chinese historiography and historical thought became Western or merely accepted elements of Western thought and practice in the process of modernization. Did this mean a break with Chinese including Confucian traditions or merely their transformation to conform with modern realities? The postmodern challenge of the past several decades has questioned several key elements of modern Western historical thought, including the belief in scholarly objectivity and historical development. I see postmodernism not as a vision of the future, a break with the Western tradition and particularly with the scholarly ethos of modern scholarship, but rather as an opportunity to rethink certain basic assumptions of modern historical thought which deserve to be reexamined.[13] But, the commitment to scholarly honesty and rational methods of historical inquiry will survive this challenge and profit from it. The postmodernist debates doubtlessly affect contemporary Chinese and Confucian thought as well, especially at it has integrated aspect of modern Western historical thought.

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Historiography (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

13 See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997).

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中西史學思想之比較——
以西方歷史哲學與儒家思想為中心

Georg G. Iggers
王 晴 佳

提 要

本文試圖對中西史學觀念作一比較研究，特別注意這些觀念產生的文化背景、源流及其變化。在中西的文化傳統中，並沒有一個單一的歷史哲學或儒家思想史學的傳統，我們無法對之做「同質化」的處理。譬如在中國，秦漢的儒學與宋明理學便有明顯的不同，而在西方，歷史觀念在不同的歷史時期也採用了不同的形式。因此，我們不應用目的論的方法，用現代的眼光解釋過去。從總體而言，中西史學的觀念有三個不同特點。第一是宗教觀念的不同。與儒家思想尊重「三代」的作法相反，西方由於受猶太教與基督教的影響，認為歷史的演變有其目的，到了現代也就轉化成一種歷史進步的觀念。其次，史學發展的政治社會背景也有很大的不同。中國史學的傳統常常與統治者有較緊密的聯繫，而西方多私人治史，所以更俱批評性和多元性。複次，西方的史學觀念較早崇尚邏輯思維和理性思維，而科學史學在中國，則在現代有了長足的發展。

關鍵詞：歷史學　史學觀念　儒家思想　歷史哲學　史學史　比較史學

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