**The Vienna Circle in China: The Story of Tscha Hung**

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[Abstract] Tscha Hung was a member of the Vienna Circle who achieved high international academic recognition. He dedicated his entire life to spreading the philosophy of the Circle to China and developed deep insights in his criticisms to that philosophy. Hung was a witness to the encounter of Western and Chinese philosophy in the 20th century. His debate with Fung You-lan on metaphysics reflects different understandings of the nature of philosophy and metaphysics as well as different perspectives. Hung defended the position of metaphysics in Chinese philosophy in his own way and engaged in a contemporary reconstruction of Chinese philosophy.

[Keywords] the Vienna Circle, Tscha Hung, Fung You-lan, metaphysics, Chinese philosophy

2019 signaled the 110th anniversary of Tscha Hung’s birth and the 90th year of the publication of the Vienna Circle’s manifesto – *The* *Scientific World-conception: the Vienna Circle*. The two events are linked through the Vienna Circle’s connection with Tscha Hung who studied with Moritz Schlick during the 1920s and 1930s. Tscha Hung is today known as a member of the Circle who participated in its meetings on Thursday evenings. He is important in Chinese philosophy not only as a representative figure of the Vienna Circle but also as a symbol of the arrival of scientific reason in China and as a witness of the encounter of Western and Chinese philosophy in China. It may be of interest to the philosophical community at large to know what form that encounter took after Tscha Hung’s return from Vienna in 1937. In this paper, I will try to illuminate this encounter by telling the story of Tscha Hung’s struggle with traditional Chinese philosophy as it is exemplified by his debate with Fung You-lan on metaphysics. I will also explore how Tscha Hung’s philosophy led to a revaluation of some of the assumptions of the Vienna Circle. Finally, I will describe his relation to Chinese philosophy and metaphysics both in its historical and its philosophical dimension.

**1. Tscha Hung and his contemporaries in China in the 1930s and 1940s**

Tscha Hung (Hong Qian, 洪谦 in Chinese) is today considered to have introduced the Vienna Circle to China. But there were, in fact, two others who had done so before him. They were the cousin philosophers, Zhang Shen-fu and Zhang Dai-nian. Zhang Dai-nian published a paper on the Vienna Circle’s physicalism in the journal, *Da Lu* (*The Continental* in English) on March 1, 1933 when he was only 24. In 1934, his cousin Zhang Shen-fu, in turn, published a paper on the main currents in modern philosophy in which he expressed his appreciation of the philosophy of Vienna Circle. The two cousins had come to their understanding of the philosophy of the Circle by reading some its publications drawing on their own rich background in the natural sciences and their methodology. According to the historical documents, Zhang Dai-nian’s ideas on the Circle were inspired by Zhang Shen-fu who was at the forefront of elucidating Chinese philosophy for the first generation of modern Chinese philosophers. (Jiang & Bai, 2010) Zhang Shen-fu’s philosophy has been noted in China for its combination of dialectic materialism with logical analysis. However, his greatest contribution to modern Chinese philosophy was that he introduced Bertrand Russell’s philosophy to China. Zhang had studied mathematics and philosophy at Peking University in his early years and so could well understand Russell’s philosophy of mathematics and logic, including problems in the foundation of mathematics, and the relation of philosophy to mathematics. Because of his genius and his excellent training in mathematics, he could also fully appreciate the philosophy of the Vienna Circle in which he found something vivid, hopeful, promising and worth pursuing. (Zhang, Shen-fu, 1985: 68) Zhang generalized the philosophy of the Circle, suggesting that the goal of analysis was to clarify both ideas and language in order to determine the reality of the external world. (Zhang, Shen-fu, 1985:66) Still, most of his work in philosophy concerned the study of Russell’s philosophy rather than that that of the Circle. The reason of this change was probably the return of Tscha Hung from Vienna.

1. Tscha Hung’s philosophical background

Tscha Hung wrote his PhD dissertation on the problem of causation in modern physics under the supervision of Moritz Schlick and received his Doctoral degree in 1934. For the following two years he went on to do research at the University of Vienna until Schlick was assassinated by an insane student in the summer of 1936. Tscha Hung returned to Peking at the beginning of 1937 and afterwards began to lecture mainly on the philosophy of the Vienna Circle at Tsinghua University. Zhang Shen-fu had left Tsinghua by then for political reasons. Zhang Dai-nian had also quit his position at Tsinghua and was concentrating on writing his outline of Chinese philosophy in the Peking University library. After the July 7 incident of 1937, Tscha Hung moved to Yunnan, a southwest province of China, with other faculties of Tsinghua University in order to evade the war with Japan and he then taught the philosophy of the Vienna Circle at the National Southwest Associated University (NSAU). There is a legend about his teaching at NSAU. Hung taught in the Department of Foreign Languages rather than in Department of Philosophy, for some of the professors of philosophy disliked the Vienna Circle. So, Hung regularly taught German in the Department of Foreign Languages and the philosophy of the Vienna Circle only occasionally in Department of Philosophy. After the Second World War Hung was invited to Oxford and went to do research at New College until 1947. He was then appointed professor and head of the Department of Philosophy at Wuhan University. From 1951 he served as professor and head of the Department of Philosophy at Yenching University, formerly Peking University, and in 1956 he became the director of the section of the history of foreign philosophy in the Department of Philosophy of Peking University. From 1965 he was also the director of the Institute of Foreign Philosophy, an independent research institution not affiliated with the Philosophy Department, till he resigned from that position in 1987. He remained, however, a professor at Peking University until his death in 1992.

While Zhang Shen-fu spent much of his life bringing Russell’s philosophy to China, Tscha Hung made the study of the Vienna Circle his life’s career. Some scholars have compared his introduction to the philosophy of the Circle to China with Ayer’s introduction of the Circle to Britain, and they have concluded that Hung’s introduction is more comprehensive and more accurate while Ayer’s account is idiosyncratic. (Fan, Dai-nian, et al. 1992) That comparison appears to be fair but it is, in fact, based only on Hung’s work in the 1940s. Since the 1970s, Hung has advanced a variety of criticisms of some of the ideas of the Vienna Circle, expressing disagreement with Schlick and Carnap, in particular, on the problem of the foundations of knowledge and truth, and proposing an anti-foundationalism of his own. These criticisms have created a different image of Hung in contemporary Chinese philosophy, as being not only an advocate of the philosophy of the Vienna Circle (no matter whether his advocacy was accurate or comprehensive) but being also an independent thinker who reflected deeply on the problems the Circle posed. And it is in fact because he developed the philosophy of the Circle further in his own way that he has received global recognition. He was praised, for this reason, to have made a significant new contribution to the philosophy of the Vienna Circle and to have developed deep insights into logical positivism as well as into Wittgenstein’s philosophy. (Fan, Dai-nian, et al. 1992)

Tscha Hung had an extraordinary feeling for his tutor, Moritz Schlick, and the Vienna Circle, comparable with Schlick’s feeling for Ludwig Wittgenstein and Zhang Shen-fu’s for Bertrand Russell. He respected and admired Schlick personally. He treated Schlick, indeed, as his idol and insisted strongly on the philosophy of the Vienna Circle even when criticism and suspicions were advanced against it; and he did so by clarifying some ideas of the Circle. (Hung, 1990: 43-45, 69, 257) Though his ambition was to spread the philosophy of the Vienna Circle in China without any reservation, his spirited search for truth has influenced Chinese scholars for several generations. Ren Ji-yu, Hung’s colleague in NSAU and himself famous in Chinese philosophy and a former director of the National Library of China, called Hung the first to introduce the philosophy of the Vienna Circle to China. (Ren, 2006) Wang Zi-song, remembering his own studies at NSAU, wrote that Tscha Hung was the only professor who had studied Western philosophy abroad at that time. (Wang, Zi-song, 2007) Du Xiao-zhen, Hung’s colleague and professor of Peking University, recalled Hung’s support for her when she was translating Jean-Paul Sartre’s writings into Chinese: “Hung was concerned with logic and verification, but he was also full of humanity in his heart. His persistent and proud humanism has influenced me for a long time, even after his death.” (Du, 2005) Jin Xi-ping, also Hung’s colleague and professor of Peking University, praised Hung’s silence in the Cultural Revolution which allowed him to keep his academic position. (Jin, 2000) Wang Wei, a student of Hung at Peking University, explained the climate at the Institute of Foreign Philosophy by saying that the senior professors, including Hung and Xiong Wei (who had studied with Martin Heidegger in the 1930s), were true scholars in the Chinese tradition, men like Confucius who teach but don’t necessarily write. They recognized a commitment to the idea that it is difficult to express what can be expressed clearly and that we should keep silent on what cannot be expressed. They shied away from trying to express the ineffable. Only by keeping silent, they were convinced, can we show the meaning of language. (Wang, Wei, 2006:289) Taken together, these comments reflect Hung’s attachment to the Socratic motto that I know I know nothing.

Tscha Hung published, in fact, only 31 essays in his entire life, ten of them in the 1940s, six in 1950-1979, and 15 after 1980. The essays published in the 1940s are collected now in his book on the philosophy of the Vienna Circle and the essays published after 1949 in his book on logical empiricism. For political reasons, Hung spent most of his time between 1949 and 1979 translating the works of Western philosophers. This undertaking is today recognized widely in the Chinese philosophical community as one of the great contributions of Hung to contemporary Chinese philosophy. His translation, compilation, and selectin of masterpieces of past philosophy, provided rare materials for academic research in China during that period. The two collections of masterpieces most respected by Chinese academics were *Selection of Original Writings of Western Classic Philosophy*, and *Selection of Original Writings of Western Modern Bourgeois Philosophy*. The former was published in five volumes between 1957 and 2013, including *Ancient Greek and Rome Philosophy* (1957), *Philosophies in the Western European Countries in the 16th -18th Centuries* (1958), *German Philosophy at the End of the 18th Century and the Beginning of the 19th Century* (1960), *French Philosophy in the 18th Century* (1963). The final volume on *Medieval Philosophy* was published only in 2013 having been translated and compiled by Hung’s students and fellows twenty-one years after Hung’s death. The *Selection of Original Writings of Western Modern Bourgeois Philosophy* was first published in 1964 and then expanded twice in two volumes re-entitled *Selection of Original Writings of Western Modern Philosophy* in 1993. Hung did the proofreading of the new edition shortly before his death. Both works have greatly advanced first-hand understanding of Western philosophy in China. They have set a standard for Chinese translation in being faithful, clear, and elegant. Hung upheld, in fact, very strict requirements for his translations. Even for a translation by a well-known scholar he asked a reviewer to undertake the proofreading, and sometimes even two reviewers. Meanwhile, he also encouraged young scholars to translate works under his careful guidance. He admired his collaborators and colleagues for their contributions but rarely mentioned his own work in them.

He fang-yu, a historian of modern Chinese history of ideas, has spoken of the unity of learning and academics in Hung’s work, saying that what made him so highly worthy of respect in China was not only that he introduced the philosophy of the Vienna Circle as well as Western philosophy to China but that, in doing so, he expressed the true mentality of a Chinese philosopher in his much admired sense of mission and his willingness to dedicate himself to the times in which he lived. (He, 2007) Thus, Hung expressed his concern with academics in China even during the second Sino-Japanese War in the 1930-40s. He wrote, “at the start of the establishment of a new country and the final victory over the Japanese, I commit myself to doing academic research in order to grow our culture and our future. We must carry on our mission very carefully and deliberately so as not to disappoint our mission and the hope of generations.” (Hung, 1944) After 1949 he also gave expression to the need to study the history of Western philosophy. In 1957, he published a paper in the *People’s Daily,* the top national official newspaper, in which he called for more attention to the study of history. This paper, however, gave him a political trouble in the political campaign prior to the Cultural Revolution. He was criticized politically because of his words were outdated in the official eyes and he was almost sent to labor camp in the countryside. Owing to some members of the Vienna Circle concerned with Hung’s situation during the Cultural Revolution, Zhou En-lai became involved in protecting some of the senior professors at Peking University from political persecution, Hung was allowed to stay on the campus, instead, and permitted to continue translating but not to teach. (Fan, Dai-nian, et al, 1992: 70) Hung did not complain of his unfair personal situation and, instead, during the Cultural Revolution devoted his time to the translation and compilation of writings of Western philosophers, which he considered to be the only thing worth doing academically and made him stay far away from political life. He was always seen as being aloof from political or material pursuits and self-contained in personality, but his behavior appears now as strong-hearted and full of feelings concerning the nation’s destiny.

1. Fung You-lan and his relation to the Vienna Circle

Fung You-lan is one of the philosophers we must mention in the relation to Tscha Hung. Their 1940s debate them on the topic of metaphysics is one of the historically significant academic debates in modern China. It reflects the difference between a traditional Chinese conception of metaphysics and one derived from the Western tradition, especially from logical empiricism. Before turning to the content of this debate, I want to describe Fung’s relation to the Vienna Circle and to logical empiricism.

There is no evidence that Fung had any personal contact with members of the Vienna Circle, except for Hung. We don’t know whether he read Schlick’s or Carnap’s writings. What he learnt about the philosophy of the Vienna Circle may have come from Zhang’s cousin first and from Tscha Hung later. Fung had studied for his PhD in the United States in the 1920s and had traveled in Europe in the 1930s and lectured in the States again in the 1940s. The experience would have made him familiar with the Vienna Circle. He may also have met some members of the Circle at the 8th World Congress of Philosophy in Prague in 1934. That Congress provided the first occasion for the Circle to present its philosophical ideas at an international event, in that the Circle proposed a panel organized by Frank on the frontiers of the philosophy of the natural sciences in which many members of the Circle made their presentations, including Schlick, Carnap, Lukasiewicz, Reichenbach, Nagel and Morris. (Stadler, 2001: 358-359) We don’t know whether Fung attended that panel but he would have known of the philosophy of the Circle by then. Fung was invited once again to deliver lectures on Chinese philosophy in the United States in 1946, at a time when some members of the Circle were living there and had changed their previous formulations of the Circle’s philosophy under criticism of American philosophers such as Quine. Fung may not have had contact with the members of the Vienna Circle in the US. But he had had a chance to meet Wittgenstein in Cambridge in 1933 when he traveled in Europe. The story is that he took tea with Wittgenstein one afternoon. They did not talk about philosophy but about cultural traditions in general. As we know, Wittgenstein had shifted his philosophy away from the *Tractatus Logico-Philoosphicus* by the time they met but that Fung also had no idea at all of Wittgenstein’s new philosophy. Fung knew Wittgenstein only through his link to the Vienna Circle. Even though Fung had no personal contact with the Circle, his criticism of logical empiricism has been very influential in the Chinese philosophical community.

The public debate between Tscha Hung and Fung You-lan took place initially on November 11th 1944. Hung, as has been said, had returned to China in 1937. He had taught the philosophy of the Circle first at Tsinghua and had then moved to Yunnan to teach German in department of foreign languages and the philosophy of the Circle in department of philosophy. As Zhang Dai-nian recalled, Hung’s ideas were much different from those of his colleagues in the department at Tsinghua including Fung You-lan and Jin Yue-lin. He went against any attempt to argue for ontology and disagreed with Fung You-lan’s new metaphysics and Jin Yue-lin’s realism in his writing *On Dao*. Hung took thus his distance from the department in academic respects. (Zhang, Dai-nian, 1996:539) According to He Lin, Western philosophy had begun to settle in the Chinese philosophical community since the 1920s when the Chinese Philosophical Society was established in 1925 and the Society’s Journal of *Philosophical Reviews* was first issued in 1927. (He, Lin, 2002:25) The Society also organized annual meetings in which scholars in Western philosophy published their new research papers. It is worth noting that the study of Western philosophy involved not only the introduction of Western doctrines but their exploration in a distinctively Chinese way.

The debate between Tscha Hung and Fung You-lan took place at the annual meeting in Yunnan in 1944. Th year before, Fung You-lan had published a paper entitled “New Metaphysics’ Place in the History of Philosophy and Its Method” in vol. 8 of *Philosophical Reviews*, in which he had criticized the Vienna Circle and had argued that its rejection of metaphysics did not affect his own new metaphysics. Hung’s critique of Fung aimed at precisely this point. He argued that Fung did not correctly understand the Circle’s rejection of metaphysics and that his new metaphysics was also not immune to the rejection of metaphysics. According to a record of this debate made by He Lin, Fung immediately responded to Hung at the meeting. Jin Yue-lin and Shen You-ding, the famous logician, also argued for Fung and against Hung at that moment. (Hu, Jun, 2002: 144-145) But there is no historical record of what Fung said to Hung and how Jin and Shen sought to justify Fung. Hu Jun, a professor at Peking University, comments that the debate derived, in fact, from a misunderstanding between Hung and Fung. (Hu, Jun, 2002: 196-206) In my judgment there was, however, no such misunderstanding. Their disagreement derived rather from different understandings of the nature of philosophy and from the different methods the two used to deal with philosophical problems. I will discuss these differences in the next section of the paper.

1. Jin Yue-lin as Tscha Hung’s contemporaries

Among Tscha Hung’s contemporaries were some other Chinese philosophers who concerned themselves with logical positivism. Professor Jin Yue-lin, mentioned above, is the most prominent among them. Jin studied political science at Pennsylvania State University and at Columbia University in 1914-1921 and he worked in Britain, Germany, and France for some years before returning to China in 1925 at the invitation of Tsinghua University. He, then, became the first professor of logic at Tsinghua and he was thus the first to systematically introduce modern logic and the frontiers of logical studies to China. We can reasonably compare his work as a logician with the contribution that Carnap has made to modern logic. Both declared modern logic to be central to modern philosophy. But Jin paid more attention to Bertrand Russell than to the Vienna Circle in his career. There are two reasons for this. Jin Yue-lin preferred Russell’s philosophy, first of all, to logical positivism. The logical analysis Russell proposed was, for Jin, meant to achieve an understanding of the world, while the doctrine of the Vienna Circle concentrated more on the logic of language. In addition, Jin himself had strong ambitions in metaphysics which he combined with his research in logic and knowledge. Modern logic was for him just a more general form of logic which reveals the nature of things as far as their logical form is concerned. Jin Yue-lin interpreted his logic thus metaphysically. (Wang, Zhong-jiang, 1993) He had for this reason little interest in logical positivism.

**2. The Philosophical Debate Between Tscha Hung and Fung You-lan**

Having described the historical context of the debate, I now want to look at the philosophical difference between its two protagonists. That difference, I have tried to show, was rooted in their different understandings of the nature of philosophy and the philosophical method they used. Let’s look in details at the difference respectively in terms of Hung’s criticism of Fung’s understanding.

1. On the nature of philosophy

Tscha Hung insisted on the Vienna Circle’s understanding of the nature of philosophy as a clarification of the meaning of our propositions. According to that understanding, the mission of philosophy was to guarantee that our formulation of human knowledge was clear. The theory of knowledge was, of course, the key to philosophy in order to know the external world exactly. Philosophy was thus to be understood as a practical way of thinking that could help people to learn more about the world and to act well in a moral sense. Tscha Hung viewed the theory of knowledge, not ethics, to be the center of his philosophy, even though Schlick had focused much on ethics in his philosophy. Hung had a good background in the natural sciences, which made him look at the world and deal with philosophical problems in a scientific way. He had studied physics, mathematics and logic under the guidance of Schlick in Vienna. By contrast, Fung You-lan, though he had studied philosophy in the United States and recognized the importance of logical analysis in philosophy, did not consider philosophy to be a theory of knowledge of the natural sciences. He argued, instead, for the tenet of Chinese philosophy that philosophy is a search for the meaning of life in which the nature and ground of human life are considered. He viewed the mission of philosophy to be a working for the highest ideal of being human and thought that we could get an ontological understanding of what we know only from the knowledge that we know nothing. It was from this traditional Chinese perspective that Fung criticized the Vienna Circle’s rejection of metaphysics. It was obvious, however, that his understanding of metaphysics was not the same as that in the Western tradition. According to Carnap, traditional metaphysics is a study of what is beyond our experience and concerns the so-called nature of entities. (Carnap, 1996: 132) For Fung, on the other hand, metaphysics meant searching ontologically for a realm of imagination, a dream-like kingdom. He wrote: “The function of metaphysics is only the sublimation of the human mind without any particular knowledge of the world. It helps man raise his soul to the highest realm.” (Fung, 1986, vol.5: 167)

According to the Western tradition, there is no conflict between metaphysics and natural science in general; the two are understood to be complementary. (Ribeiro, 2015) But for Fung they are opposed in their methods. Fung argued that metaphysics is a study of the form of experience in a negative way, while the natural sciences deal with the content of experience in a positive fashion. In speaking of the form of experience Fung meant to refer to the emptiness of experience; this meant that metaphysical propositions cannot make any substantial claims about empirical matters. Metaphysical propositions are commensurable with any fact in the empirical world since they are empty of factual content. Fung thus proposed that approaches to metaphysics could be divided into two, the positive and the negative. “The positive approach is the studying of metaphysics by logical analysis, and the negative one is about what cannot be said. What cannot be said is a metaphysical approach to philosophy.” (Fung, 1986, vol.5:173) The negative approach as he called it, is a searching for the realm of emptiness and the positive approach is a means for the searching. Fung’s understanding of the nature of philosophy is obviously distinct from that entertained by Hung and the Vienna Circle. For them logical analysis is not a means for philosophy but the essential part of philosophy and research in the logical form of knowledge is not a means for philosophy either but the essence of all knowledge. As Schlick said, “every cognition is an expression or a representation. That is, it expresses a fact which is cognized in it. This can happen in any number of ways, in any language, by means of any arbitrary system of signs. All these possible modes of representation - if they otherwise actually express the same knowledge -- must have something in common; and what is common to them is their logical form.” (Schlick, 1979: 156) Fung however, had a radically different understanding of the nature of philosophy and logical analysis as thus upheld by Hung and the Vienna Circle.

1. On the method of philosophy.

Tscha Hung agreed with the Vienna Circle that logical analysis aims at a clarification of the meaning of propositions, by which all the differences between various doctrines can be detected. He also rejected Kant’s synthetic a priori judgements as a logical illusion. If a proposition is related to reality, he said, it must be justified by experience. If a proposition cannot be justified this way, it cannot be a proposition about empirical facts. Since a synthetic a priori judgement is supposedly not empirical, it cannot be justified (or falsified) by experience. The conclusion is that there cannot be such a proposition. Hung also rejected Fung’s attempt to construct metaphysics by means of logical analysis. He argued that Fung’s metaphysics was based on a category mistake which confused different concepts in the theory of knowledge. Thus, Fung’s understanding of metaphysics was untenable. (Hung, 1989: 233,236)

Fung thought, however, that he had justly criticized the logical positivism just by revealing the mistake in the Vienna Circle’s rejection of metaphysics by means of logical analysis. He borrowed intuitions from common sense to analyze metaphysical propositions into two kinds and sought to reconcile the negative approach to metaphysics with our common judgements. But he failed to argue adequately for his new metaphysics in formulating his propositions. His four arguments for his new metaphysics, for example, are based on his understanding of commonsense intuition. The first is that everything is what it is. It is the law of identity in logic that A equals A. Fung explained this law by means of the proposition that what makes a thing to be itself is the reason that there must be something that makes a thing to be itself. It is evident that this proposition is about what causes a thing to be itself. And this, in turn, is said on the basis of the commonsense intuition that everything has a cause that makes it to be. He did not, however, consider the debates about this concept of causation in the history of philosophy. He simply proposed the proposition on the basis of commonsense. Fung’s second argument was that everything must be there. He explained this by the propositions that existing things are existing and existing things exist based on what makes them exist. This explanation of existence by the existent is once again in accord with our commonsense. The third argument is the following inference. The primary thing is that existence is a movement and existence is about something. Thus, the conclusion is that existence of something is a movement of something or cause of existence. This reason of all the things is reduceable to the one. He claimed the one to be the Dao or Origin as the first cause of all movements. All these ideas came seemingly from Daoism which held that thing is derived from nothing and nothing is identical with Dao which is origin of everything in the world. Fung’s fourth argument was the proposition that the existence of all things is called wholeness or completeness. It asserted thus the identity of wholeness with the existence of all things. But wholeness, if there is such a thing, is not the existence of all things according to Western metaphysics; it is, rather, the being beyond all things and the determination which determines all things. Fung’s understanding of wholeness is, however, in accord with the common understanding of the concept in ordinary life. Thus, Fung’s explanation of metaphysics is derived from our commonsense understanding of these terms, but covered in a philosophical clothing that is taken from the West. However, even from the point of view of a commonsense understanding, Fung’s terms are actually not genuine concepts; they are but chaotic and fail to discriminate. This means, for Hung, that Fung’s understanding of metaphysics is, in fact, unacceptable as a clarification of concepts and has nothing to do with our ordinary experience either.

1. On the relation of metaphysics and knowledge

In his 1943 paper. Fung divided human knowledge into four kinds: 1, mathematics and logic; 2, metaphysics; 3, science; 4, history. But it is very odd that metaphysics, is according to his division, part of human knowledge. For Fung, metaphysics in the sense of traditional philosophy has been abolished by the Vienna Circle, but his own new metaphysics is not abolished as a part of knowledge; it is strengthened, rather, by the illumination of its very nature. Hung strongly disagreed with Fung’s division of knowledge and he especially rejected the idea that metaphysics is included in human knowledge. He argued that Fung’s metaphysical propositions like “mountain is mountain” and “water is water” and the like, are not empirical, for they have nothing to do with the actual world. They are mere statements of identity and as such are logical, but not metaphysical. (Hung, 1989: 184, 188) For Hung, traditional metaphysics is not a theory of knowledge, though it can be a guide to finding the meaning of life and help man to live well. But Fung’s metaphysics has nothing to do with this. It is a total delusion that contributes nothing to our life and is less poetic than traditional metaphysics. It is thus reasonable to abolish it. (Hung, 1989: 191)

Some critics have argued that Hung misunderstood Fung’s metaphysics and that his criticism to Fung is untenable. Chen Xiao-ping, a representative of these critics, claims in his recent paper that Fung’s metaphysics can be analyzed in linguistic terms, which shows that a metaphysical proposition may be analytic only by its form rather than its contents. (Chen, Xiao-ping: 25-31) Chen reconstructs Fung’s metaphysics in an analytic approach. According to him, Fung’s metaphysical propositions, such as that what makes a thing to be itself is the reason why there must be something that makes a thing to be itself, is a logical inference based on the law of identity. In these propositions, Chen argues, Fung expressed his metaphysical insights in a logical way, for all the terms he used in them are logical, rather than empirical. Thus, Chen concludes that Fung’s ambition was understandable. However, I don’t think Chen’s judgment is compelling, because it is impossible to put Fung’s metaphysical propositions into a linguistic form. Fung’s propositions are not logical or linguistic but senseless in metaphysics. For they just had a seemly logical form at first glance. But they could not be justified both in logic and experience, according to the Circle’s principle of verifiability. In this sense, Fung’s metaphysics should be in the list of metaphysics the Vienna Circle would reject. As the matter of fact, Fung had been keen on Chinese traditional philosophy which focuses on subliming people’s horizon in spirituality, not on arguing for his ideas. He did not consider what language we should use to express our feeling of objects in the world, though he always criticized the failure of Chinese philosophy in logic.

Again. Chen comments that Hung misunderstood Fung’s metaphysics because of a difference in their approaches to metaphysics. According to Chen, Hung did not understand Fung because Hung followed the Vienna Circle without advancing any novel idea, whereas Fung interpreted metaphysics creatively in his own way. Thus, according to Chen, Hung could not understand Fung correctly. Chen mentions the famous comparison Fung proposed between a carrying-on narration and a repeating narration. For Chen, Hung just followed the repeating narration while Fung practiced the carrying-on narration. (Chen, Xiao-ping: 28) I don’t consider this criticism to be fair to Hung. Hung did not criticize Fung’s misunderstanding of the Vienna Circle’s rejection of traditional metaphysics on the basis of his own understanding of the Vienna Circle’s philosophy; his criticism of Fung proceeded on a different, methodological level. Chen’s accusation of Hung’s work as a just repeating narration is unacceptable for two reasons. It is hard to argue, on the one hand, that the comparison of the repeating and the carrying-on narration is accessible to evaluation of the two philosophers’ works. The most important one of criteria for judging the value of a philosophy is, I think, not the comparison but the novelty or creativity in philosophy comparing with other philosophical doctrines. Hung’s work was absolutely novel to the Chinese philosophy at that time, while Fung’s metaphysics was considered to be creative in understanding the traditional Chinese philosophy. According to the criterion, they were outstanding in their philosophical works. On the other hand, the comparison itself is unavailable in philosophical discussions. According to Joana Konova’s entry on repetition in The Chicago School of Media Theory online (https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/reptition/=08-05-2020), the philosophical discussion of repetition ranges from Plato’s understanding of repetition as reminiscence or recollection of an already existing knowledge (cf. *Phaedo*, *Meno*, *Philebus*) to Deleuze’s “upgrading” of repetition as an “active force […] producing difference” (Parr, 2005: 223). In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze discusses Nietzsche’s concept of the “eternal return” as “the power of beginning and beginning again” (Deleuze: 136). Deleuze counters Freud’s understanding of repetition as a compulsive reiteration of the past which psychoanalysis attempts to stop by representing it, with the understanding that repetition allows for reinvention (Parr, 2005: 224). In this sense it is hard, again, to argue that the carrying-on narration exceeds the repetition in philosophical discussions. On the contrary, the repetition is always more adequate in philosophy than the carrying-on narration. Tacit knowledge underlies the repetition, which provides us with the very authority for further knowledge or carrying-on narrations.

According to the judgement above on the comparison of repetitive and carrying-on narration, Fung’s metaphysics is also taken account for in repetition. Derong Chen, a linguist in Chinese language and culture from Toronto University, in his book on Fung’s new metaphysics interpreted that metaphysics as metaphorical. He compared Fung’s metaphysics with Hegel and argued that Fung’s ideas and metaphysical terminology were very close to Hegel, especially in his interpretation of Dao and Qi. (Chen, Derong, 2011: 153.) This is surely an interesting approach to the interpretation of Fung’s metaphysics from the perspective of methodology. Fung did provide a new way to understanding metaphysics metaphorically, different from the way the Vienna Circle understood metaphysics. That was, however, the methodological approach that Hung’s used in his criticism of Fung’s metaphysics. For Hung, it was unacceptable to account for a philosophical metaphysics in metaphorical terms, for a metaphysician could not be better in using metaphors in philosophy than a poet in poetry or a musician in music. As Carnap said, “metaphysicians are musicians without musical ability.” (Carnap, 1996: 30) On the methodological level, Carnap’s criticism of metaphysics is directly applicable to Fung, when he said that “logical analysis, then, pronounces the verdict of meaninglessness on any alleged knowledge that pretends to reach above or behind experience. This verdict hits, in the first place, any speculative metaphysics, any alleged knowledge by *pure thinking* or by *pure intuition* that pretends to be able to do without experience.” (Carnap, 1996: 26, italic original) According to this verdict, Fung’s is a speculative metaphysics of the kind that Carnap tried to eliminate by logical analysis.

**3. Replies to Criticisms of the Philosophy of the Vienna Circle after 1979**

As to the accusation, made by Chen Xiao-ping and others, that Hung’s philosophy was just a repeating narration, we must reply that Hung was not simply concerned with introducing the philosophy of the Vienna Circle to China, he also set out to explain that philosophy in his own way. He provided his own understanding of this philosophy with deep insights, and especially so in his replies to criticisms of the Vienna Circle after 1979.

1. Tscha Hung’s philosophical research after 1979

Historically speaking, the end of the Cultural Revolution was the beginning of Tscha Hung’s new academic life. After 1979 he was extraordinarily active in international philosophical circles, as if he was recovering from a long winter. In 1980 he was invited to the fifth International Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg am Wechsel, Austria, and visited the University of Vienna and Queens College in Oxford. He also attended the Schlick and Neurath Centenary in Vienna and visited Trinity College in Oxford in 1982. Two years later, he was rewarded with an honorary doctorate from the University of Vienna and he again visited Queens College, Oxford. In 1986 he was invited to deliver lectures at Tokyo University in Japan. He also attended the first conference on analytic philosophy and the philosophy of science in Hong Kong and visited the University of Hong Kong in 1988. Three years later, in 1991, some colleagues from Hong Kong proposed to published a volume in the honor of Tscha Hung’s 85th birthday, and philosophers and scientists organized a conference on realism and anti-realism in the philosophy of science in his honor which was scheduled for 1992. Tscha Hung was delighted to accept theses invitations and prepared for the events when he unexpected died in February 1992. Robert Cohen, one of editors of the proceedings of the conference on philosophy of science in Beijing in 1992, recollected his communication with Hung during his time both in China and at conferences outside of China. He spoke of the comparison of Tscha Hung’s work on the Vienna Circle in China with Ayer’s in Britain and Hempel’s in the United States, saying that “both the teacher and also the critic of his own mentors and colleagues, he was a scholar who quietly carried the roles of being the Ayer and the Hempel of China.” (Cohen, et al. ed. 1996: xi.) Fan Dai-nian, a well-known Chinese philosopher of science, also described Hung’s academic activities in China in his paper on Tscha Hung and the Vienna Circle in the proceedings. (Cohen, et al. ed. 1996: xvii-xxii) Fan together with two distinguished Chinese philosophers of science co-authored a summary of Hung’s philosophical insights on the philosophy of the Vienna Circle in an influential paper that conceived of Hung, in the way that Cohen had done, as a critic of his own mentors and colleagues in Vienna. (Fan, Dainian, et al. 1992) We can see from the Tscha Hung’s last master pieces on members of the Vienna Circle, collected in the anthology, *Essays on Logical Empiricism*, published in Hong Kong in 1990, that he attempted to argue for their ideas with some criticisms.

1. Tscha Hung’s replies to criticisms of the philosophy of the Vienna Circle

These criticisms were based on a thorough understanding of the philosophy of the Vienna Circle. When Karl Popper claimed to have killed logical positivism with his own falsificationism, Hung replied in his lecture in Tokyo in 1988 that “it is a very rare thing in the history of philosophy that Popper, a world-famous philosopher, was proud of his murder of the logical positivism. But I believe that his murder failed.” For his murder weapon, his falsificationism, was not sufficiently sharp. According to Hung, the general statements of natural laws are neither verified nor falsified by one or some protocol propositions. Verification and falsification are only exceptions when we defend scientific propositions by appealing to our senses. (Hung, 1990: 43-44) Popper had, of course, not been welcomed to the Vienna Circle when he was living in Austria and Hung did not know him personally until they met in Britain in 1980. According to Popper’s autobiography (Popper, 1974: 72-90) and according to Malachi H. Hacohen’s account of Popper’s life in Vienna in the 1920s-30s (Hacohen, 1998), Popper admired the early writings of Schlick and attended seminars by Carnap and other members of the Circle. It is somewhat ironic that Popper was considered a member of the campaign against traditional philosophy, though he severely criticized logical positivism by means of his principle of falsification with regard to two central problems of epistemology: induction and the demarcation between science and metaphysics. Hung focused on the principle that no single factual assertion can be verified or falsified by observation. This, I believe, is indeed the correct way to understand the principle of verifiability, for Schlick and Carnap also changed their idea on the principle and spoke later of confirmation rather than verification or falsification.

Tscha Hung also replied to criticisms of logical positivism by Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend. As we know, Kuhn and Feyerabend proposed a social-historical approach to the study of science, which had a strong influence and was viewed as a development of logical positivism involving a second phase in the philosophy of science after the second world war. But Hung disagreed with their approach and accused them of being irrational. He claimed that the Kuhn-Feyerabend approach was a retrogression in the philosophy of science in that it was trying to analyze the structure of science in terms of society, history and culture with all their confusions, while logical positivism had tried to clarify that structure in logical terms. Hung argued that there is, in fact, a conflict and a mutual incompatibility between an analytic and a historical approach in the philosophy of science. (Hung, 1990: 257) Despite these disagreements, Hung collected some of Kuhn’s and Feyerabend’s writings in his edited anthology, *Selection of Original Writings of Western Modern Philosophy*, published in 1993.

As for Quine’s criticism of logical positivism, Tscha Hung admired his rejection of the first dogma of reductionism but disagreed with Quine’s rejection of the distinction between the analytic and the synthetic. As far as the first dogma was concerned, Hung said, “there is a conflict between the unification of science movement that Neurath and Carnap proposed based on the reductionism, and the development of the natural sciences up today. The point of conflict lies in difficulties in the reduction of biology to physics and chemistry, of psychology to neurophysiology and of the latter two to physics. Although scientists do not rule out the possibility of such a reduction in the future, they admit the very low of the probability. The big challenge is the theory of emergent evolution, according to which life or mind has an ad hoc form that one cannot infer or predict from natural law and any scientific theory. Thus, for a long time, most logical empiricists have seen this development as a historical event.” (Hung, 1990: 73) Hung disagreed with Quine’s rejection of the distinction between the analytic and synthetic. It is unintelligible, however, that Hung’s reason for disagreeing with Quine was that it would destroy the whole system of logical empiricism. Quine was, in fact, concerned only with rejecting the analytic-synthetic distinction. Hung thus failed to make his case against Quine. But Hung’s disagreement with Quine was in line with the logical positivist attitude to Quine’s rejection of the second dogma. Hung mentioned the serious responses of Carnap, Feigl and Waismann in his writings. (cf. Hung, 1990: 69) In the end, the dispute didn’t, however, matter, since the logical positivists eventually changed their position on the two dogmas of empiricism that Quine had identified.

**4. The Reevaluation of the Philosophy of Vienna Circle in the 1980s-90s**

As a teacher of integrity and a witness to a stage of the history of philosophy - as Cohen put it in his recollections (Cohen, et al. 1996: xv) – Tscha Hung did not only defend the original doctrines of the Vienna Circle, he also followed the subsequent development of that philosophy.

1. On the development of logical empiricism.

Tscha Hung denied, first of all, that logical empiricism was dead. In his 1986 Tokyo lectures Hung argued that no one would deny that logical positivism or empiricism has been one of the influential schools in contemporary philosophy, though it was not so fashionable today as it had been fifty years ago. He wrote, “there is such an epicenter any more today as that of logical empiricism in Schlick-centered Vienna fifty years ago, Carnap-Reichenbach-centered Los Angeles thirty-seven years ago, or Feigl-centered Minnesota later on. But the scientific conception of logical empiricism is still active in many countries in the West, for examples, with Ayer in London, B. F. McGuiness and A. Quinton in Oxford, Feigl in Minnesota, Hempel in Princeton, Haller in Gratz, Weingarten in Salzburg, Stegmüller in Munich, Geymonat in Torino, Nash in Oslo, and H. L. Mulder in Amsterdam.” (Hung 1990: 44)

Tscha Hung also noticed the development in logical empiricism in recent decades, such as the amendment of the concept of meaning, the transition from syntactic parsing to semantic analysis, the correction of the definition of verifiability, the concept of possibility and inductive logic, the containment of physicalism and the drift away from the unification of the sciences, and the adjustment and limitation of empiricism. All these are fully illustrated in publications by Feigl, Hempel, Kraft and Ayer who edited a series on the exact sciences in which the English translation of Schlick’s early masterpiece, *General Theory of Knowledge*, was published in 1974. It was illustrated equally by H. L. Mulder, R. S. Cohen and B. McGuiness who edited a Vienna Circle Collection, by Haller and McGuiness who edited a series on the Return to Schlick, and by T. E. Uebel who edited an anthology, *Rediscovering the Forgotten Vienna Circle*. All of these publications highlighted, for Hung, the revival of the Vienna Circle and logical empiricism at the present time. But, as Hung added, it is needless to say that the study of ethics has been overlooked in analytic philosophy beginning with the Vienna Circle. It is arguable that, for him, a system of philosophy should include ethics as an essential part in the system as is the case, for instance, in Kantian and Marxist philosophy. Hung referred also to Bertrand Russell’s criticism of logical positivism by complaining that this kind of philosophy had nothing to offer in philosophy but methodology. (Hung 1990: 247-248)

It is somehow odd that Tscha Hung, one of the last living members of the Circle in the 1990s, would offer such a complaint of logical positivism. For Schlick had studied ethics and published his book on ethics at a moment of transition in his thinking in which he sought to apply the method of logical analysis to some of the traditional ethical problems and to interpret ethical statements as empirical claims about the means of maximizing happiness. (Mihina, 2016; Oberdan, 2017) Neurath had also concerned himself with ethical problems and he had coined the term “felicitology” in his writings to characterize a version of ethics suitable for the scientific worldview of logical empiricism. (Stuchlik, 2011) Even Carnap had not entirely abandoned the study of ethics but had only restricted it in the appropriate way. (Carnap, 1996) Hung should have understood the Circle’s attitude to ethics when he studied in Vienna. After half a century, however, he complained of the attitude of the Circle to ethics and accused it of a weakness in its philosophy. I believe that there is only one explanation for this shift: Hung realized the more important role of ethical study and moral philosophy in contemporary philosophy than he had previously done. But his comparison of the philosophy of the Circle with systematic philosophy is confusing. There is once again only one explanation for this. I assume that he was overloaded with the German sentiment for systematic philosophy, even though he was educated in the scientific outlook in Vienna.

Austrian philosophy has had a strong inclination toward the natural sciences and empiricism in contrast to German philosophy, as J. C. Nyiri and B. Smith have pointed out. (Nyiri, J. C., ed. 1981, 1986; Smith, Barry 1994/1998) But Hung seems not to follow this Austrian trend even though he studied the natural sciences and mathematic logic with B. Reichenbach, Schlick, H. Hahn, F. Ehrenhaft and Carnap. German speculative philosophy had, in fact, dominated Chinese philosophical and intellectual circles in the 1920s when Hung was sent to Germany, initially to study the philosophy of mind with Rudolf C. Eucken rather than empiricist philosophy. Due to Eucken’s death when Hung arrived in Jena in 1927, he went on to study physics, mathematics and philosophy at the University. The most attractive lectures, the ones that impressed him deeply, were delivered by B. Bauch and P. F. Linke, both Kantians and phenomenologists. Reichenbach, to whom Hung used to listen in Berlin, was the key figure to recommend him to go to Vienna to study philosophy with Schlick. It might be due to Hung’s weakness in natural science that Schlick asked him to attend courses in mathematics and physics. But deep in his heart, Tscha Hung still greatly appreciated German philosophy, which he thought could provide insights into the meaning of the world and of human life. This may explain why in his later years he saw the Vienna Circle’s view of ethics as a weakness in their philosophy and why he admired Schlick’s early work on ethics. After 1949, Marxist philosophy occupied the whole field of philosophy in China, and that philosophy was, of course, intrinsically rooted in the speculative tradition of systematic German philosophy. Under the serious political control, Hung received this philosophy with some reluctance, but he realized absolutely that ethical problems needed to be probed in philosophy and that ethics was essential to any form of philosophical study.

1. On the foundation of knowledge and theory of truth.

In his last years, Tscha Hung turned to the two fundamental problems in the theory of knowledge, the foundation of knowledge and the theory of truth. He published an essay on confirmation (*Konstatierungen* in Schlick’s terminology) and a review on Schlick’s writings on philosophical problems, in which he criticized Carnap’s and Neurath’s reductionism and their dependence on protocol statements. He also disagreed with Schlick’s foundationalism which placed the concept of confirmation at the foundation of knowledge. He said, “Schlick’s concept of confirmation or observation statements are much more empirical than his statements themselves. They fall in the field of psychology, rather than logic or grammar. Any claim of absolute certainty can be understood only in psychological terms, not in logical or grammatic terms, according to Schlick’s concept.” (Hung, 1990: 105) And, “Schlick tried to find a stable foundation for scientific knowledge in indubitable experience and self-evident perception. But for me, this is another form of psychologism to which he was strongly atracted in his early years and I think it is fundamentally wrong. Indubitable experience and self-evident perception, as Schlick used to think about them, are subjective and psychological.” (Hung, 1990:106) If protocol statements and confirmation cannot be the foundation of knowledge, what would it be for Hung? He did not give any answer to the question, but he was convinced that there was no such thing as a foundation at all. P. K. Chow correctly commented that Hung reminded empiricists that it is a waste of time to look for a foundation for knowledge, for it is not their mission to do so. (Chow, 1992) Hung proved to be thus an anti-foundationalist in the theory of knowledge. (Fan, Dainian, et. al. 1992: 76)

Tscha Hung also criticized Schlick’s correspondence theory of truth in his essay. He said that Schlick was right in criticizing Neurath and Carnap, arguing that their coherence theory of truth deviated from empiricism since it made compatibility with protocol sentences the criterion of truth and thus essentially returned to conventionalism. Schlick proposed, instead, a correspondence theory; but Hung argued that this theory would lead to sophisms and an empiricism of sense-data, for it took the correspondence with sense-data to be the foundation of truth. (Hung, 1990: 161) For Hung, there is no final criterion of truth. It was unfortunate that Hung had no time to make his case for this understanding of the theory of truth due to his death in 1992. I assume that, with his anti-foundationalism and denial of final criterion of truth, Hung would have chosen a form of pragmatism with an analytic approach to protocol or confirmation sentences, but he would still adhere to the philosophy of the Vienna Circle with such amendments. This is, in fact, what he had been doing since the end of the 1970s.

It is precisely because of his insights that Hung has been praised internationally for his continuing defense of logical empiricism and his novel take on the theory of knowledge and the concept of truth. His reputation was highlighted at the International Conference on the Vienna Circle and Contemporary Science and Philosophy in Memory of Tscha Hung in Beijing in 1994. More than 40 philosophers from different countries participated in the conference and focused on the relation of Tscha Hung to the Vienna Circle, speaking not only of their personal relation with Hung, but also of his contribution to the philosophy of the Circle. (Hu, Nai, 1995)

**5. Tscha Hung and Chinese Philosophy**

As a result of the debate with Fung You-lan, Tscha Hung has been seen as an opponent of the Chinese tradition in philosophy, as I have said above. Hung had, however, a strong feeling for Chinese philosophy. His philosophical ideal was to achieve a unity of spirit, to extend our minds, and to make intellectual progress, all of which are arguably characteristics of Chinese philosophy. (Jiang, Zhaoyang, 2016) His faith in Chinese philosophy has both a historical and a philosophical dimension.

1. Historical dimension

Historically speaking, Tscha Hung began his philosophical career with his first paper on Wang Yangming’s philosophy in the *Journal of Xueheng* when he was studying in a preparatory class at the Southeast University in Nanjing. The paper was highly praised by Kang Youwei, a well-known Confucian and political reformer at that time, who recommended Hung to Liang Qichao, the famous historian, philosopher and politician. Liang, in turn, recommended Hung to Uno Tetsuto, a distinguished Japanese Confucian and scholar on Wang Yangming’s philosophy, at Tokyo Imperial Universities. Due to sickness Hung was forced to return from Japan to Tsinghua University with Liang’s support and he was recommended once again by Liang to go to Germany to study classical German philosophy of mind with Rudolf Eucken, the German idealist, who was influential in China in the 1920s. Though he moved on to study natural sciences and mathematics, because of Eucken’s death before Hung’s arrival in Jena, Hung was inclined to concern himself with the important problems of life when he studied in Jena. It is the reason why Bauch and Linke’ lectures attracted much than Reichenbach, and he appreciated very much Schlick’s early book on ethics. This shows that Hung had a strong feeling for the problems he saw essential to philosophical investigations. These problems are like the concerns of traditional Chinese philosophy, which posits that the mission of philosophical investigations is to pursue the highest level of spirituality and to accomplish the meaning of life. Meanwhile, Hung also recognized as his mission to make progress in intellectual life, to spread philosophical ideas to the public, and to strengthen the power of ideas. Under strict political control, he published papers in official newspapers and academic journals on such topics as Hume’s *Essay on Human Understanding*, Kant’s Nebular hypothesis, Mach’s philosophy, and Carnap’s physicalism. Before the Cultural Revolution, he also appealed publicly for the academic study of idealism and of contemporary Western philosophy. During the Cultural Revolution, as we have seen, he did much translating and editing of anthologies of the writings of Western philosophers for students, but abstained from academic research because that was not allowed until 1979. Hung did not, however, content himself with translation in this period of his academic life. He was eager to continue academic research during the Revolution, not only for a philosophical purpose but with the reconstruction of Chinese philosophy in mind. Hung’s ambition and academic ideal burst out with energy after 1979. He attended many international conferences by invitation and published more than ten essays in top journals in China and in the world. In doing so, he was seen not just as a member of Vienna Circle but also as a distinguished Chinese philosopher. And he was proud of being Chinese philosopher. Though he had suffered much from political pressure during the Revolution, Hung did not complain of his pain at any later moment. This characteristic has also been seen as a feature of traditional Chinese intellectuals.

1. Philosophical demission

In his philosophical thinking, Tscha Hung did not deny the importance of metaphysics at all. Instead, he admired the implications of metaphysics in Chinese philosophy. In his criticism to Fung You-lan’s new metaphysics, Hung’s target was not metaphysics itself but Fung’s explanation of metaphysics.

For Tscha Hung, real metaphysics is necessary and indispensable to Chinese philosophy. But its significance is mostly practical in human life, rather than theoretical and doctrinal. Hung said, “metaphysics is a means to fulfil our inner life and the realm of experience, and to fill in the nothingness in our life with metaphysical propositions such as the immortality of the soul, free will and existence of God. It functions as poetry in culture to satisfy our desires for ideals and wishes in the mind, but it does not provide any scientific knowledge or theory.” (Hung, 1989: 116) In limiting the significance of metaphysics to practical life, Hung did not claim a priority of practice over theory or vice versa. He saw the two as equal, each functioning in a different field. “The meaning of life is infinite while the meaning of truth is finite. It is just as impossible to understand truth with the infinite meaning of life, as it is to experience life with the finite meaning of truth. The result will be a failure of both, neither being able to understand the meaning of truth nor to experience the meaning of life.” (Hung, 1989: 125) For Hung, Chinese philosophy gives priority in experiencing the meaning of life, an experience that can satisfy desires and fulfil our life, as artists working on artworks, Christians believing in God, and ordinary people experiencing and idealizing life metaphysically. (Jiang, 2016: 58) I am convinced that Hung appreciated Chinese philosophy as a metaphysical system, not only in the form of Confucianism, but also in that of Daoism and Chinese Buddhism. He studied Wang Yangming’s Confucianism when he was young and retained an interest in Confucianist philosophy for his whole life. While he was not a Confucian scholar, he practiced Confucianism as a Confucian. He was a Junzi, 君子, who maintained a noble character and high standards as a man. He followed Zhang Zai’s famous words, “to ordain conscience for Heaven and Earth, to secure life and fortune for the people, to continue the lost teachings of past sages and to establish peace for all future generations.” (Zhang, Zai, 2009: 10) Hung had a strong sense of mission for improving academics and searching for truth in his time. He practiced the Socratic motto that I know I know nothing, as well as Confucius’s saying in *The Analects*, “When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it - that is knowledge.” (Confucius 2009: 151)

1. Tscha Hung’s criticism of Fung You-lan’s new metaphysics

Tscha Hung’s criticism of Fung’s new metaphysics, as I have argued above, was not of metaphysics itself but of Fung’s approach to metaphysics. Some commentators have argued that the debate between Hung and Fung might be described as one between a scientist who advocates the priority of science over metaphysics and a metaphysician who advocates the priority of metaphysics over science – a debate among Chinese intellectuals in the 1920s that was historically significant in the history of modern Chinese thought. (Jiang, 2016: 165-167; Li, Wei-wu, 2008: 2) This debate was highlighted in the so-called conflict of science and metaphysics (科玄之战). For a scientist like Ding Wen-jiang, philosophy should concern itself with knowledge of the empirical world and reject metaphysics in accord with the attainments of science, while a metaphysician like Zhang Jun-mai argued that philosophy should be studied in a metaphysical rather than a scientific manner. (Ding, Wen-jiang, 1923; Zhang, Jun-mai, 1923) Some scholars have claimed that the debate reflects a shift of philosophical models in modern China and the difference between Chinese and Western philosophy. (Li, Wei-wu, 2008: 2; Hu, Jun, 2013: 43-44) I consider that analysis too simple for providing an proper interpretation of the historical debate. Tscha Hung had, in fact, a clear conception of metaphysics in mind, as I have shown. His criticism to Fung’s metaphysics was not to give up metaphysics, but to delimit metaphysics within philosophy. Hung and Fung were thus concerned with two different understandings of the nature of philosophy. Strictly speaking, Hung did not think of Fung’s metaphysics as part of philosophy at all whereas Fung took his new metaphysics to beat at the heart of Chinese philosophy as he understood it.

Let us look carefully at the crucial point of Hung’s criticism of Fung’s new metaphysics in their debate. Hung thought that Fung misunderstood the logical positivist rejection of metaphysics and that Fung’s new metaphysics failed to reach its goal to replace the old metaphysics the Vienna Circle had rejected with his own new one. At the very center of Hung’s criticism was Fung’s misunderstanding of the method of logical analysis rather than of the nature of metaphysics. Fung argued that his new metaphysics was constructed by means of logical analysis. He correctly saw that traditional Chinese philosophy fell short of logical argumentation and inference. With an ambition to amend this, he tried to establish that metaphysical propositions are analytic and without any content concerning the world. He insisted, however, also that this kind of analytic proposition differed from logical propositions which are merely formal. He argued that the propositions of his new metaphysics were content-free, but affirmative of content concerning the world in an abstract or conceptual way. Hung counter-attacked that it was a contradiction to say that a formal or content-free proposition could have something to do with the world. In Hung’s view, the formal proposition is logical and has to do only with the logical expression as syntactics does in logic or linguistics. But Fung’s propositions tried to express something empirical about the world, though he believed at the same time that his propositions were also concerned with the highest realm of spirituality in the universe. Hung commented that Fung’s failure to reconstruct the new metaphysics was due to his method in metaphysics. He said, “first, Fung tried to establish his metaphysics by appealing to the Vienna Circle’s rejection of metaphysics in order to prove the base and place of his metaphysics in philosophy, but this metaphysics is just the opposite of the Circle’s point of view. We could say that the Circle’s rejection of metaphysics did not deny traditional metaphysics, but illuminated its nature. By contrast, Fung’s new metaphysics took the risk to be rejected by the Circle’s criticism. Second, Fung thought that it was possible to establish a metaphysics rising through the understanding to the highest realm of life by means of a formal metaphysics. But for the Vienna Circle, his contribution to metaphysics failed to go beyond and was indeed less great than traditional metaphysics. Third, with the method of metaphysics, it is possible to understand the significance of metaphysics for the philosophy of life through the intuitional approach of the Vienna Circle. But we would miss out on this significance if we applied Fung’s formal approach.” (Hung, 1989:192) Yang Guo-rong, a contemporary Chinese philosopher, agreed with Hung’s criticism of Fung, saying that, “on the one hand, Fung tried to combine logical analysis with logical construction by learning from Zhu-Cheng Confucianism in order to reconstruct metaphysics, but he strayed from the positivist line. On the other, he tried to formalize the system of metaphysics in order to obtain the analytic propositions that are in accord with the positivist criterion of meaning. It seems that he has thus returned to positivism. The two intentions underline the direction to harmonize the tension and conflict of metaphysics and positivism.” (Yang, 1996: 96) Yang concluded that the new metaphysics was untenable in its interpretation of reality, even though Fung intended the mission of his philosophy to be an interpretation of the whole universe. Due to this, the new metaphysics failed. Although Fung tried to go beyond positivism and traditional metaphysics, his ambition to formalize his metaphysics without any empirical content made it inevitable that he eventually failed to fulfill his purpose to give up abstract logical deduction while also abolishing the speculative illusion. (Yang, 1996: 97) It makes sense to consider Fung’s new metaphysics an attempt to reconstruct Chinese philosophy by means of a logical approach to metaphysics, but he failed, not because he misunderstood metaphysics but because he abused the logical approach to metaphysics. Hung was right when he dismissed Fung as having constructed a theoretical system of nothingness.

**6. Tscha Hung and Metaphysics**

Regarding with metaphysics, Tscha Hung did not just reject Fung’s new metaphysics in a negative way, but discussed the significance of metaphysics in Chinese philosophy as well as in philosophy in general. As I read, Tscha Hung published an essay on metaphysics in which he analyzed metaphysical problems as involving a misuse of expressions of our experience of life with his distinction of three kinds of metaphysics and explained the relation of meaning, truth and metaphysics in detail. He adopted the model of propositions in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* *Logico-philosophicus* in order to express his own understanding of metaphysics in the essay “Meaning, Truth and Metaphysics”. (Hung, 1989: 118-125)

1. The effable and the ineffable.

To begin with, Tscha Hung analyzed the role of metaphysics in philosophy generally. He recognized that there is something ineffable in our knowledge but understandable, nonetheless, in immediate experience. He distinguished what can be ineffable from what can be effable in our knowledge. For effability is intrinsic to knowledge; the ineffable is not part of our knowledge at all. He said, “by being effable we mean what can be expressed in our language or in a system of signs, no matter what kind of knowledge it belongs to. And the knowledge is an expression of facts, which is the nature of knowledge in its own way.” (Hung, 1989: 104) What is ineffable in our knowledge, for Hung, is not senseless but due to our senses. For example, when I see a pitch of red, I experience it as red but cannot express the content of my experience of redness such that a blind man can know what an image of redness is like only from the knowledge of redness. Similarly, no one can express his experience of life if he has not enjoyed life at all. Hung argued in this way that we have an immediate experience of content in the string of our consciousness, but we cannot, in principle, express that meaning. At stake is the distinction between *Kennen* and *Erkennen* as the Vienna Circle put it. (Hung, 1989: 105) The content and nature of our experience are ineffable, for we cannot find an effable way to express them in our language. And neither can we express the distinction between or the relation of two experiences. These are immediate experiences that are ineffable in any form of concepts.

Tscha Hung argued that all we can have knowledge of are relations of form, propositions of construction as Carnap called them. As Hilbert put it, a geometric concept can be defined only by being in accord with certain postulates, called implicit definitions. By an implicit definition Hilbert meant that the construction of concepts can be achieved only by propositions of construction which define the formal relation of concepts. Hung agreed with the Vienna Circle that all knowledge is about form, not about content and that knowledge is an expression of a calculation of formal relations, it is not an experience of things or objects. Hung excluded the experience of things or objects, in this way, from our knowledge of formal relation of concepts. He was thus demarcating the limits of knowledge, and by this means defended the position of metaphysics in philosophy. For Hung, metaphysics was about the ineffable in language, something which goes beyond the field of knowledge. It concerns personal experience that comes from our immediate relation with the world. It is an important part of our experience of the world and different from expressible scientific knowledge. Like poets and musicians, metaphysicians can communicate their feelings of the world in a poetical or musical way. Metaphysics thus expresses personal experiences, but not knowledge of the world. Hung distinguished natural sciences from the human sciences, *die Geisteswissenschaft*, just as the Vienna Circle did. He did not deny the importance of metaphysics for our experience of the world. Metaphysics can do what knowledge cannot, namely express the content of our experience in its own way. With the help of this understanding of metaphysics, Hung concluded that traditional Chinese philosophy was metaphysical in this sense, for Confucius and Mencius had already admitted the ineffable experience in their philosophy.

1. Criticisms of three kinds of metaphysics.

Tscha Hung criticized metaphysical approaches to knowledge from (1) a realist, (2) a reductive, and (3) intuitional perspectives.

Tscha Hung agreed with Kant’s conception of the transcendent. Kant had described the transcendent as the problem of the reality of the external world under the assumption that this reality is independent of the phenomena. It is, on this view, a thing-in-itself that we are unable to know by means of the phenomena. The logical positivists had argued against this realism by means of their principle of verifiability. Realism is false, they had said, because it is unverifiable by empirical observation or the analytic propositions of logic. Hung sought to provide an alternative argument against realism. He borrowed Kant’s distinction between the thing-in-itself and the phenomena and asserted their relation to be external rather than internal. He said, “it is necessary to postulate a transcendent object if the relation of phenomena and thing-in-itself has to be dealt with and is expressible. It is the case, we might say, that what must be expressed in our language is not only about the phenomena but about the thing-in-itself if a formal relation is expressible for reality. In principle, the relation must be available to objects on different levels. …… Kant thought that the transcendent object is unknowable and that only phenomenal objects are knowable, because he did not understand the distinction between knowledge and experience. The transcendent object is not unknowable but it is unexperienced. Only phenomenal objects are experienced but they are unknowable.” (Hung, 1989: 110-111) Hung clarified in this way the importance of metaphysics for philosophy. Metaphysics is experienced but not perceived. We can understand our experience of the world but we cannot know the content of our experience. The content is experienced by our understanding of the world such as in the imagination or in the creation of experience; and this is the mission of metaphysics.

Tscha Hung further analyzed the reductive metaphysics which was proposed by some agnostics. They argued that there are unsolvable problems that science cannot deal with, such as the infinity of the universe and the nature of matter or force. But these are problems that metaphysics can deal with, according to these agnostics. Hung called this agnosticism an inductive metaphysics, for it claims that induction can resolve the metaphysical problems which are intrinsically unsolvable in science. But Hung argued that reductive metaphysics was due to a misunderstanding of the role that induction plays as a foundation of scientific knowledge. All inductive knowledge is empirical and falls thus into the domain of empirical science. It is absurd to claim the possibility of induction on a metaphysical level beyond empirical sciences. Hung said, “it is impossible to defend a metaphysics by means of induction, because, as a matter of fact, we cannot infer a metaphysical postulate from any inductive fact. And from a logical point of view, the reductive knowledge is transcendent just like the metaphysical and as such contradictory to the concept of induction.” (Hung, 1989:112) For Hung, inductive metaphysics could not be a kind of metaphysics at all.

Tscha Hung, moreover, also thought that some philosophers in the humanistic tradition such as Schopenhauer and Bergson claimed an intuitional metaphysics for which knowledge could be intuitionally a priori. Schopenhauer argued that the natural sciences view objects only from the standpoint of the external phenomena, like a scientist observing and describing a house only from the perspective of its environment. But a metaphysician has been in the house and has looked around inside. Bergson also thought that scientists are limited to descriptions of objects by means only of temporary formulas or signs while philosophers concern themselves with objects in their intuition. (cf. Schlick, 1979: 99-135) But Hung argued that this metaphysics also appeals to experience in speaking of intuitional contents and that being transcendent is misleading in that it uses language when we attempt to express our experience. This kind of metaphysics should be considered self-defeating, for the intuitional content of experience is based on mental explanations intrinsic in our mind, and have nothing to do with transcendent things. Hung said, “the intuitional metaphysician tries to obtain transcendent knowledge from the intuition of experience alone, but the result is contradictory. If we had such a knowledge of the transcendent, we would be appealing to a formal relation rather than the content of the experienced object or consciousness, but this is the mission of science, not of philosophy.” (Hung, 1989: 115)

Tscha Hung criticized various kinds of metaphysics by means of his distinction between science and philosophy. For him, science deals with what is happening in the world while philosophy concerns the meaning of what happens in the world. In brief, science is a description and a report of facts in the world and philosophy is the analysis and assessment of such descriptions and stated reports. But there seems to be no room left for metaphysics both in science and philosophy according to this distinction, for metaphysics by nature tries to talk about the descriptions and reports of the world in the way science does but fails, and it does not work as an analysis and assessment of the descriptions and reports either. This is likely the Vienna Circle’s position against any form of metaphysics. But the purpose of Hung’s argument against metaphysics is not to give it up completely. In contrast to the Vienna Circle, he admitted the significance of metaphysics in traditional Chinese philosophy and culture.

1. Metaphysics in history.

Tscha Hung analyzed the reason why metaphysics developed in history. He said that the reason was that metaphysicians were stubbornly holding on to the position that the truth or falsehood of a sentence was not determined independently but by its place in a system of metaphysics from which it could be inferred. And he argued that sentences of metaphysics could not be compared with reality, for the truth or falsity of a sentence in metaphysics could be determined only in and in accord with a system of metaphysics. In this sense truth in metaphysics is coherence among sentences and the criterion of truth is the principle of non-contradiction. It is evident that Hung implied that the coherence theory of truth is normally attributed to idealist metaphysics. It appears that, according to this theory, a metaphysical sentence can be true if and only if it is consistent with other sentences in the system of metaphysics it belongs to. Indeed, Hung thought of metaphysics as such a theoretical system in which a sentence is true due simply to its consistence with others. It looks in this way like a system of logic, for being true in logic is for propositions to be consistent with each other in a logical system. Fung might think of metaphysical propositions as analytic. But his understanding of analytic propositions was entirely wrong. The difference between the analytic and the synthetic is obviously not concerned with whether they are formal or not, but it is determined at the syntactical or a priori level. According to the logical positivists, a proposition is analytic if and only if its truth depends solely on the meaning of its terms, either because it is true (or false) by definition or by the conventions of language. While the logical positivists believed that the only necessarily true propositions were analytic, they did not define "analytic proposition" as "necessarily true proposition" or "proposition that is true in all possible worlds". Synthetic propositions were defined by them as propositions that are not analytic. These definitions applied to all propositions, regardless of whether they were of the subject–predicate form. Thus, under these definitions, the proposition "It is raining or it is not raining" was analytic, while for Kant it was analytic by virtue of its logical form. And the proposition "7 + 5 = 12" was analytic for the logical positivists, while under Kant's definitions it was synthetic. Obviously, Fung’s metaphysical propositions are neither analytic nor synthetic. They are senseless both in logic and in the empirical world.

Tscha Hung also argued, as Schlick had already done, that metaphysical problems are unanswerable or unsolvable, because they are senseless due to their being inappropriately constructed. He said, “the metaphysical problems in the history of philosophy are those that no one knows what they are talking about; they are specious problems. Thus, the only way to resolve these problems is to explore their senselessness by showing that there is no such problem at all. That is the only answer to those problems. Truth and meaning in a system of metaphysics, if there are such, are outside logic: metaphysics is not a system of truth in the logical sense.” (Hung, 1989: 124) But Hung did not reject metaphysics completely; he confined it, rather, to its own proper field. Metaphysics is fundamental to the meaning of our life in the world; it has a place in the significance of culture. For Hung, our search for the meaning of life is the same as our search for the meaning of truth, though they differ in the way they search. Hung compared the meaning of life and the meaning of truth by saying that the former is infinite and the latter finite and that it is impossible to understand the latter by the former and vice versa. Some commenters have argued that Hung admitted thus a positive metaphysics and that this is to be found in the practical dimension. (Jiang, 2016: 134) But Hung actually did not make such a distinction between a negative and a positive sense of metaphysics. Although he admired the practical dimension in defending metaphysics in Chinese philosophy, he just wanted to limit metaphysics to its right field, rather than propose a general distinction within metaphysics. We have seen that Hung defended Chinese philosophy as a metaphysics. This kind of metaphysics is helpful for people to attain a sublime view of the spiritual realm by practicing principles a priori. Chinese philosophy is, for Hung, full of this kind of metaphysics and differs in this way from traditional metaphysics in the West, which studies abstract essences and seeks to transcend experience. By contract, metaphysics in Chinese philosophy is concerned with human experience in the world, especially so in Confucianism and partly in Daoism. Thus, metaphysics is central to Chinese philosophy. By defining Chinese philosophy as a metaphysics, Hung excluded it from the field of philosophy in the Western sense. This does, of course, not mean that Chinese philosophy is not philosophy at all, just because it seems contradictory to philosophy in the Western sense. It means that Chinese philosophy is different from Western philosophy in its understanding of the nature of philosophy and metaphysics. This has remained a controversial issue for Chinese philosophers up till now. Hung seems to defend the characteristic of Chinese philosophy as a kind of metaphysics, though different from the sense of philosophy in the West.

**7. Conclusion**

From the Chinese perspective, Tscha Hung is a pioneer in the modern encounter of Western and Chinse philosophy. From the international perspectives, he is a legend who witnessed the historical transformation of philosophy in the last century. I believe that he was also an extraordinary philosopher with deep and creative insights into the problems of philosophy. His story is a marvelous episode in modern Chinese philosophy and it tells us what happened in 20th century Chinese philosophy. It is a unique chapter in the global history of modern philosophy in which Chinese philosophy emerged and engaged in the making of the world philosophy today. Tscha Hung played undoubtedly an irreplaceable role in this process through his involvement with the Vienna Circle and his reconstruction of Chinese philosophy.

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