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HEIDEGGER, MISCH, AND THE ORIGINS OF PHILOSOPHY

Abstract

I explore how Heidegger and his successors interpret philosophy as an Occidental enterprise based on a particular understanding of history. In contrast to the dominant monistic paradigm, I return to the plural thinking of Dilthey and Misch, who interpret philosophy as a European and a global phenomenon. This reflects Dilthey's pluralistic understanding of historical life. Misch developed Dilthey's insight by demonstrating the multiple origins of philosophy as critical life-reflection in its Greek context and in the historical matrices of ancient India and China. Misch's approach to Confucius and Zhuangzi reveals a historically informed, interculturally sensitive, and critically oriented life-philosophy.

I. Questionable Beginnings

Conceptions of what should and should not count as philosophy can be interpreted as temporally constituted phenomena, differing according to the social-historical circumstances of philosophical discourses. Such historically oriented contextualizing approaches to philosophy appear to risk becoming "just so" historical retellings of arbitrary opinions or sociological theories of subjective worldviews and relative social systems of knowledge that remain external to the internally motivating questions of the validity and truth of the thought, which are independent of the thinker and the idea's transitory historical conditions. This suspicion was raised by Martin Heidegger, in a comment that might seem prescient, when he stated in a 1924 lecture course on Aristotle that it is sufficient biographical information about the philosopher to state that he lived and thought: "Regarding the personality of a philosopher, our only interest is that he was born at a certain time, that he worked, and that he died"[1] The author's biography and the empirical historical conditions of the

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author's life do not illuminate but obscure and displace the more originary historicity of philosophical questioning in which it is thinking that thinks the thinker and language that speaks the speaker.

Heidegger, and his pupil Hans-Georg Gadamer, continue to be at the center of standard accounts of the character, tasks, and scope of hermeneutics as a philosophical instead of a philological enterprise. It is underappreciated how deeply Heidegger in the 1920s and Gadamer in *Truth and Method* are motivated to critically redefine and rethink hermeneutics against its earlier nineteenth-century incarnations. In particular, the internal moment of philosophical truth as the disclosure of world and language is intended to overcome the social-scientific, context- and biographical-oriented study of philosophy associated with Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) and his learned studies in modern European intellectual and cultural history and biography.

Dilthey and his student and son-in-law Georg Misch (1878–1965), who composed a pioneering *History of Autobiography* that included Arabic, Chinese, and other "non-Western" sources, emphasized the unique personal adaptation to and configuration of natural and social-historical forces in the living and cultivation (*Bildung*) of a concrete individual life. In this immanent and personalistic species of life-philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*), the conception of life encompasses more than the general physical, organic, and historical features of life shared by each and all; it is more fundamentally an indication of *a* life. It is here in the conditional and contingent circumstances of a life—forming a singular life-context or nexus (*Lebenszusammenhang*)—that reflection and philosophy begin and unfold in contrast to originating in a primordial experience of being or truth abstracted from that individual life.

Hermeneutics cannot be detached from the interpersonal relation in Dilthey and Misch, as it is defined as the art of interpersonal understanding that proceeds to others through their behaviors, expressions, objectifications, and monuments. The interpretive art has been cultivated in multiple ways in various cultural situations, this cultivation of hermeneutics outside the West includes in particular—Misch notes—the Confucian literati in China.[2] The disagreement between a contextualizing person-oriented and an ontological hermeneutics has a number of implications for the question: what is philosophy? In both interpretations of hermeneutics, the response to the question of what is and is not to be considered philosophy is articulated in relation to an understanding of the philosophy of history. Philosophy as the history of truth interpreted as unconcealment and disclosure, as the metaphysical concealment and displacement of its first Greek beginning, can uniquely originate in archaic Greece in Heidegger's narrative of the history of being. Philosophy as the fateful

destining of being culminates in the current impoverishment and plight of being, in the homelessness and disenchantment of modern technological Western civilization. The East and the South only derivatively participate in Heidegger's history of being to the extent that they are increasingly assimilated through the planetary advance of the technological world-picture—and its reduction of beings to instrumental calculation—which originates in the Greek experience of nature as *physis* (φύσις).[3]

II. Heidegger, History, and the Question of Origin

In the context of post-Kantian German philosophy, the question of whether there can be a Chinese, Indian, or African philosophy is determined by the interpretation of philosophy's history as more than a fortuitous contingent process or collection of facts. In his early thought of the 1920s, Heidegger unfolded a distinction developed in the correspondence and writings of Dilthey and Count Yorck von Wartenburg. History as the facts and explanations of historiography (*Historie*) is contrasted with history as occurrence and event (*Geschichte*).[4] Whereas *Historie* concerns the external reconstruction of contingently related phenomena, *Geschichte* points toward the temporal and historical occurrence of human existence as "being here" (*Dasein*). Dilthey described *Geschichte* as the living experience (*Erlebnis*), expression (*Ausdruck*), and interpretive understanding (*Verstehen*) comprising the first-person participant perspective of individuals. *Geschichte* becomes the ontological event of being in Heidegger, who confronted the conventional everyday and historiographical understandings of history with the facticity of history as an enactment (*Vollzug*) and as event (*Ereignis*) of being.

The living sense of one's own historicity must be interpreted ontologically rather than biographically and psychologically. This experience of being is presupposed yet not directly understood in the first-person perspective. It requires a critical destructive confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with the sedimentations of ordinary life and the metaphysical tradition to be encountered and properly thought as a question.

It is the destructuring, deconstructive dimension of Heidegger's project that binds philosophy to its Greek origin. The dismantling, which is called *Destruktion* ("destruction") in German in *Being and Time*, of the history of metaphysics motivates Heidegger's readings of the philosophers that pushes the inquirer back into the question of the origin. It is in the wonder of the origin that the thinker rediscovers more than the conditional and transient ontic beginnings of philoso-

phy. In this situation of dismantling the historical transmission in order to confront its originary source (*Ursprung*) anew, and thus reawaken the radicalness of the origin, any empirical ontic starting point (*Beginn*) of thought—which can happen anywhere and anytime—is distinguished from philosophy's primordial ontological origin and destiny.

III. Heidegger and the Occidental Essence of Philosophy

Heidegger has been a widely used and yet abused inspiration and source for comparative philosophy. A recent work by Lin Ma has deftly exposed the mythology surrounding the subject of Heidegger and the East.[5]

Still, unlike most twentieth-century philosophers, Heidegger had a continuing interest in Asian forms of thinking since the 1920s when he read aloud from the *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》 at social gatherings. Heidegger repeatedly incorporated images and phrases from translations of Daoist and, less frequently, Zen Buddhist texts. He is particularly concerned in these instances with the Daoist discourse of emptiness and the word "*dao* 道" itself as the fundamental concept and guiding word of Chinese thinking. Heidegger found an affinity between Zhuangzi's free and easy wandering (*xiaoyaoyou* 逍遙遊) in the *dao* and his thinking that he described as a way (*Weg*) and a "being underway" (*Unterwegssein*) without a predetermined goal or destination. Heidegger is often described as enthusiastically discussing Asian poetry and thinking with Asian students and visitors, even attempting to co-translate the *Daodejing* 《道德經》 with Xiao Shiyi 蕭師毅 in the mid-1940s. Heidegger's actual dialogues with Chinese and Japanese students and visitors are taken up in a number of his writings.[6]

Despite Heidegger's lively interest and the vast literature in the West and the East deploying Heidegger's concepts and strategies to interpret Asian texts and figures, this attention should not be conflated with an endorsement of Asian thinking as philosophical. On the contrary, Heidegger himself consistently and explicitly opposed the possibility of a Chinese or other forms of non-Western—that is to say a non-Greek—philosophy. In a typical utterance, Heidegger claimed that: "The style of all Western-European philosophy—and there is no other, neither a Chinese nor an Indian philosophy—is determined by this duality 'beings—in being.' "[7] For Heidegger, insisting on the Greek origin and exclusively European essence (*Wesen*) of philosophy, "the West and Europe, and only these, are, in the innermost course of their history, originally 'philosophical.' "[8] Heidegger argues that the peoples of "ancient India, China, and Japan" are not

"thought-less" though this thought cannot be thinking "as such."[9] The thoughts of the East are not determined by the Greek conception of *logos* (λόγος) and its fate that characterizes what Heidegger calls "thinking 'as such'" and "our Western thinking."[10] Heidegger's destructuring confrontation with the *logos*-orientation of Occidental philosophy remains bound up with its historical conceptualization as essentially and necessarily Western, as do the later critiques of logocentrism developed by Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty.[11]

In Heidegger's worst and more sinister moments in the 1930s, the original Greek origin of philosophy and the evening land (*Abendland*) and its repetition is identified with what he describes as a "decision against the Asiatic" in 1934.[12] Decision, as expressed in the German word *Entscheidung*, means a crucial transformative cutting apart and separation of the Greek vis-à-vis the Asiatic world. The image of a Greek confrontation with and overcoming of Asiatic hordes reoccurs throughout his lecture courses and writings on early Greek philosophy and the German poet Hölderlin, who—according to Heidegger in 1934/35—creatively surpassed "the Asiatic representation of destiny" as the Greeks originally and singularly overcame "Asiatic fate."[13] Prefiguring Germany's task, Heidegger's envisions the "Greeks" as only becoming a people (*Volk*) by creatively confronting and differentiating themselves from what was "most foreign and most difficult to them—the Asiatic."[14] In 1936, Heidegger likewise spoke of the need for the "preservation of the European peoples from the Asian," playing the geopolitical philosophical game of an alien Asiatic threat menacing and overwhelming the European world and thereby justifying National Socialist politics.[15] We should note that Heidegger's former teacher Edmund Husserl can be said to celebrate the unique achievements of Occidental civilization in his writings on history and science during this period; yet his situation is fundamentally different, since Husserl interprets the basic tendencies of Western culture to be ethical and rational and directs them against the irrationalism and fascism characteristic of the geopolitical situation in the 1930s.

Heidegger's provocative and fearful language concerning the menacing and uncanny presence of the Asiatic is primarily applied to Soviet communism in the 1930s. However, Heidegger still opposes the "Asiatic," as the primary antagonist of the Greek, in the 1960s, contrasting its threatening darkness with the Greeks ability to reorder it through the imposition of order, measure, and light upon it: "The Asiatic element once brought to the Greeks a dark fire, a flame that their [i.e., Greek] poetry and thought reorder with light and measure."[16] Although this could be construed as the generous gift of heavenly flame, the fire of heaven of the Greeks inspiring the native poet of which Hölderlin speaks, the statement is problematic given

Heidegger's association of the Asiatic with the irrational and the emphasis here on reordering and illuminating rather than guarding this "dark fire."[17]

Despite the totalizing character of the technological modernity of the West, Heidegger warned in the 1966 *Spiegel* interview "Only a God can save us" of "any takeover (*Übernahme*) of Zen Buddhism or any other Eastern experiences of the world (*Welterfahrungen*)." Whatever affinities Heidegger noted between his conception of way and a non-coercive "letting releasement" (*Gelassenheit*) with Chinese *wuwei* 無為 and Daoist and Zen Buddhist expressions of letting and responsiveness, Heidegger reasserted in this interview that the question of philosophy and of Europe is necessarily an internal one: the needed shift in thinking (*Umdenken*) is only possible through a new appropriation of the European tradition.[18] The crisis of European philosophy and culture that characterizes modernity can be countered only through a return to and emancipating confrontation with the Greek origin that determines it.

The question of philosophy is consequently and persistently a question of the German (in the 1930s and early 1940s) and, after the end of World War II, of the European and Western confrontation with the history of metaphysics from its initial Greek origins to its unfolding in the modern technological world-picture. In Heidegger's account, globalization, and the emergence of phenomena such as "world philosophy," is a further realization of the enframed and reified world of Western modernity.

IV. On the Prejudices of the Philosophers

The historical account of the developmental unity of European philosophy from the Greeks to the moderns is a common dominant trope of much European philosophy. From Herder and Hegel through Heidegger to Derrida and Rorty, only that which stands in an internal historical relation to philosophy's Greek origins is considered philosophy in contrast with other forms of thought and reflection. It is notable that this Hegelian narrative continues to shape the approaches of those thinkers claiming to explicitly oppose the totalizing nature of Hegel's philosophy of history as the developmental unfolding of spirit toward the absolute.

Heidegger not only problematized the modernity that is the culmination of Hegel's narrative, he also questions the height of classical Greek civilization for the sake of what it purportedly conceals: the experience of being as *physis*, as upsurge and holding sway into the openness of being. The "other beginning" (*der andere Anfang*) that

Heidegger began to articulate in the 1930s does not occur through imitating the first Greek beginning (*der erste Anfang*), but rather by confronting it, exposing all that is questionable and uncanny (*unheimlich*) in it.

Heidegger's division of the philosophy of the evening land (*Abendland*) of the West and the non-philosophical thinking of the morning land (*Morgenland*) of the East presupposes his destructuring of metaphysical thinking underway to its origin. The other beginning is suggestive in that it might be taken as a beginning outside of Greece.[19] Nonetheless, non-Western thought cannot constitute another beginning for Heidegger insofar as it is not a differentiating confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with the first Greek beginning.

The Eurocentric paradigm defining the present scope of philosophy depends on a particular conception of history and consequently can sound odd to non-philosophers while remaining academic philosophy's dominant paradigm. This Eurocentric strategy, challenged by Misch, has had significant implications for contemporary thought as it operates as the basis of claims of Derrida and Rorty that there is no philosophy outside of the West.[20] Heidegger's strategy is revised and radicalized in Derrida's and Rorty's deconstructive unweaving of the tradition of Western metaphysics that indirectly and in the last analysis preserve the primacy and privilege of the Western essence of philosophy. In contrast to the "dialogue of peoples" articulated by thinkers such as Georg Misch, Helmuth Plessner, and Martin Buber, even the discourse of the competition between Athens and Jerusalem—as representing Greek philosophy and its Jewish other—in Leo Strauss, Levinas, and the later Derrida remains too restrictive insofar as it is closed to Qufu 曲阜 or what is exterior to the dynamic of this dyad.[21]

V. Another "Another Beginning"?

I would like to propose here that there is another "another beginning" in thinking about the origin of philosophy. In the hermeneutical life-philosophy of Dilthey and Misch, philosophy does not have one unique starting point. It has multiple temporal beginnings as do all sciences, life-attitudes, and worldviews. There is no one origin insofar as they are born of various provenances and inevitably mediated by personal and social life. In the multiplicity and singularity of human life, in its strivings and conflicts, typical patterns emerge that can serve as heuristic models to begin to approach and interpret individuals and peoples across diverse historical cultures.

The nineteenth-century German historical school or historicism had taught the relativity of all forms of life such that one needs to perceive

and interpret a perspective from the inside in order to understand it. Dilthey, however, checked historicism's radical perspectivalism and relativism by developing notions of structure and pattern as well as the anthropological dimension of human existence. The dynamic social, psychological, and anthropological structures of human life are relational and positional rather than defined by an underlying essence or constant identity. These common formations are investigated in the human sciences as well as how they are individuated in myriad ways in the lives of individuals and peoples. Such structured formations limit and place a check on the incommensurability of forms of life and language games. It also challenges, as evident in the critical responses of Misch and Plessner to Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, the possibility of a pure historicity and existential decisionism that denies all natural and anthropological determinations and limits.[22]

This alternative conception is one that Heidegger explicitly rejected. Heidegger critiqued Dilthey's thesis of the plural ontic origins of philosophy in the name of the unity of the question of being, which can fundamentally only be the one question of philosophy, in his winter semester 1928–29 lecture-course *Introduction into Philosophy*.[23] In his 1928–29 lecture-course, Heidegger presented his last sustained reflection on Dilthey's thought and indirectly Misch's interpretation and extension of it. Misch's role has been little noticed in scholarship about Heidegger despite the fact that, in an interesting footnote in *Being and Time*, Heidegger mentioned his reliance on Misch's interpretation of Dilthey.[24] In the lecture-courses of the late 1920s and early 1930s, Heidegger takes up and responds to a number of topics from Misch, including Misch's work *Life-philosophy and Phenomenology* (*Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie*) that developed one of the earliest extended critiques of *Being and Time*.[25]

Heidegger claimed in *Introduction into Philosophy* that Dilthey's worldview thinking is absorbed and lost in the ontic starting points of thought and reflection, as if there were any other points of departure but those of ontic life, without recognizing the dignity and unity of the ontological origin. This origin consists in the ontological difference between beings as separate entities (*Seiende*) and being (*Sein*) itself. Heidegger concluded that Dilthey leaves us adrift in an endless sea of ontic multiplicity and human scientific investigations without a proper relation to the ontological origin.[26]

Despite the insights Heidegger acknowledged gaining from Dilthey in the 1920s, Dilthey cannot be counted a philosopher. It is the human scientist and historiographer who investigates the plurality of contingent conditions of ideas and worldviews.[27] The philosopher in Heidegger's estimation must rise or return to a higher vocation in the movement from history as a science to history as the event of being.

Whatever the other merits or faults of Heidegger's understanding of history and philosophy, and its impact on contemporary thought through Derrida and Rorty, it presents the idea of philosophy primarily in a monistic manner. This manner can be interpreted as an existential a priori that binds the questioner and as a method of discovering the ontological in the ontic. Heidegger described this as a hermeneutical anticipation or formal indication that abstracts from the particularity of one perspective in order to allow the multiplicity of concrete particulars to be encountered. The unity of the ontological difference would consequently permit the plurality of concrete forms of existence and ontic ways of being to be disclosed and recognized.

I want to propose here that Heidegger's method of formalization is not formal enough.[28] It remains committed to a particular kind of experience and bound to an ontological prejudice that marginalizes the ontic empirical particularities that are the plural points of departure for self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*) in the context of *a* life. In the context of the hermeneutical life-philosophy of Dilthey and Misch, and in classical Chinese philosophy as evidenced in Chung-ying Cheng's onto-generative hermeneutics of the *Yijing* 《易經》, the point of departure for reflection is life itself instead of an abstract conceptuality. Such life is a changing and dynamic holistic nexus rather than the static identity of one determinate origin or a determinate systematic totality that subordinates all elements.[29]

Heidegger might well break with the prejudices of abstract theorizing and mathematical vision that limited Husserl's phenomenology. The ontological prejudice prevents Heidegger, in spite of himself to the extent that he wishes to prepare for a dialogue with Eastern thought, from recognizing philosophy in different settings that do not stem from the Greek origin and do not prioritize the question of being. As Misch and Plessner both suggested in the politically charged atmosphere of 1931, Heidegger's idea of philosophy is intrinsically Eurocentric.[30] It addresses the "being-there" of the Indian, the Etruscan, or the Egyptian only insofar as they can adopt themselves to a classical-Christian tradition.[31] Heidegger's vision of philosophy is transfixed by and beholden to an "ethnocentric a priori" that still structures contemporary Western philosophical discourses and institutional practices, even if in the guise of Rortyan "ethnocentric relativism." Philosophy has been enthnocentric to the extent that its very idea is restrained to a particular—whether racially or culturally conceived—ethnically based historical tradition.

It is remarkable that modern and contemporary Western philosophy continues to conceive of itself as a closed universe. Medieval and early Modern European thinkers were aware of and in discussion with Jewish, Arabic, and eventually Indian and Chinese sources.

Whereas Leibniz and Malebranche assessed elements of Chinese philosophy positively or negatively in relation to Christianity, philosophers since Herder and Hegel have excluded Chinese thought as incommensurable with Western philosophy. Even after the end of explicit developmental teleological philosophies of history that conclude with the triumphant culmination of Greek *logos* in modern Western thought, this ethnocentric a priori remains operative in its critics.

VI. Georg Misch and the Multiplicity of Origins

One hermeneutical tendency understands interpretation as proceeding from the self to the other as it extends itself into the world, expanding the circles of its horizons, and eventually returning to itself in self-understanding. Another tendency finds the self confronted with misunderstandings, obstacles, and resistances that cannot be overcome and integrated into the presence and mastery of the self. Such experiences of alterity and difference lead the interpreter to recognize the irrevocable multiplicity, particularity, and perspectivality of things. For Misch, as for Dilthey, intercultural interpretation follows the model of all interpretation as an oscillation between the typical and the unique, the general and the singular: what appears alien and other is initially approached through the typical at the same time as the typical needs to be reformulated through the experience of, reflection on, and responsiveness to the individual.[32]

This alternative conception of the philosophy of history allowed Georg Misch to recognize the multiple beginnings of philosophy across different cultures and epochs. The beginning of philosophy, according to Georg Misch in his 1926 work *Der Weg in die Philosophie* (*The Way into Philosophy*) is not the self-certainty or self-presence of the origin to itself.[33] Philosophy did not only begin once in Greece; it occurs as a unitary phenomenon in the ruptures of ordinary experience that provoke a reflective questioning and reconsideration of that experience.[34] Philosophy is an internal break with immediacy and entrance into self-reflection, which has no necessary or one culturally specific origin (*Ursprung*). Philosophy, according to Misch, is not bound to one particular form or one given question; in the breakthrough or cutting through (*durchbruch*), "it strikes us like a message from another world."[35] This assumption is both born within the European philosophical tradition, the horizon of Misch's point of departure, and looks beyond the boundaries of this horizon.[36]

The very first illustration Misch provided for such a beginning of philosophy, the transition from one particular horizon to another

horizon that characterizes the philosophical break-through, is the story of "Autumn Floods" (*Qiushui* 〈秋水〉) in the *Zhuangzi*.[37] The great river believes itself to be greater than all the small tributaries and channels that lead into it until it encounters the great sea. In this encounter, the ordinary self-conception is placed in question as a one-sided, partial, and limited perspective. In Misch's portrayal of this Zhuangzian narrative, the limited and partial is confronted with the expansive. There is a break-through out of the ordinary natural attitude of everyday life to reflection on that life that proceeds through the "categories of life" or what his Göttingen colleague Plessner called "the material a priori."[38]

The narrative from the *Zhuangzi* permits Misch to challenge the ordinary one-sided and limited conception of life and the relation of philosophy to it. The shifting multi-perspectivalism of Misch's hermeneutical life-philosophy allows the play of perspectives in the *Zhuangzi* to come forth not only as another alien form of thought but as a specific form of philosophical reflection in response to a question that in its structural affinity addresses the human condition.

In Misch's second chapter on "breaking through," the other beginnings of philosophy are located across divergent points: in the Buddha's experience of the fundamental reality of suffering, in Spinoza's articulation of ethical decision and moral personality from the reality of the whole, and in Plato's Socrates proceeding from the limited and qualified to the good as such in the allegory of the cave.

As if preemptively answering Heidegger, Misch maintained that all four examples are: "not the primordial utterances of philosophy; they were rather revivals and recollections of an original knowledge which is anterior to them both logically and historically. And the echo they awoke in us may just be something that the natural course of human life awakes in every human, quite spontaneously, at one time or another."[39]

Philosophy begins in "metaphysical need" and in the cultivation and expression of a feeling of life: this need is echoed in manifest ways that hearken to this origin of self-reflection in the midst of life.

Exemplary moments such as autumn floods indicate and repeat in their own manner the reflective break with the natural unreflective attitude. Misch identifies this with the genuine beginning and the way of philosophy. This multiplicity of ontic beginnings cannot count as the origin of philosophy for Heidegger who remains beholden to the ethnocentric a priori as much as Hegel. Hegel claimed that "we" modern educated interpreters of world history can only begin to feel at home in history with Greece, since only here do we arrive at the origins of spirit.[40] While Hegel—unlike many of his successors—did in fact use the word philosophy in non-Western contexts, he also explic-

itly stated that "genuine philosophy" arose only in the Occident with its "freedom" of "individual self-awareness" that he considered to be in principle contrary to the "Oriental spirit."[41]

Misch refused to identify the unity and necessity of philosophy with one unique and necessary historical experience of individual freedom in classical Greece (Hegel) or with an originary experience of being in the early Pre-Socratic philosophers of archaic Greece (Heidegger):

> The assumption that Greek-born philosophy was the "natural" one, that the European way of philosophizing was the logically necessary way, betrayed that sort of self-confidence which comes from narrowness of vision. The assumption falls to the ground directly [when] you look beyond the confines of Europe. The Chinese beginning of philosophy, connected with the name of Confucius, was primarily concerned with those very matters which according to the traditional European formula were only included in philosophy as a result of the reorientation effected by Socrates, namely, life within the human, social, and historical world. The task of the early Confucians was to achieve a rational foundation for morality which should assure humans their dignity and provide an ethical attitude in politics.[42]

In an earlier essay published in 1911, after his return from a journey to India and China, Misch remarked that "the rational gestalt of personality," which is encountered in and through history, is as much Chinese as it is Greek. Rational moral personality is a good discovered in the ancient Chinese Enlightenment-movement of Confucianism as well as in the modern European Enlightenment and an ethically oriented life-philosophy.[43] This is further supported by the influence of Confucian moral-political thought on the European Enlightenment, notably in Leibniz, Wolff, and Voltaire.[44] Integrating rationality and the historical sensibility of concrete ethical life, ideal norms and practical affairs, reverence for humanity and particular local affective bonds, early Confucianism is a primary exemplar of an enlightened "philosophy of life." Misch describes it as "the supreme example of a movement of thought grounded in life itself."[45]

Confucius emerges in Misch's writings as a figure evoking the immanent ethical and historical enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) and moral cultivation (*Bildung*) of life—which is the vocation of philosophy in Misch's estimation—in contrast to the powers of myth, mysticism, and nature; or, of being. The Confucian form of rationality disenchants and demystifies, yet it is not therefore purely atheistic for Misch. The passages concerning heaven (*tian* 天) in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 《論語》) reveal background metaphysical and cosmological inspirations and an ethical and philosophical form of monotheism, which Misch discusses in relation to the priority of the ethical moment in the Hebrew prophets.[46]

Misch reformulated the point made in the above quoted passage in his 1931 work *Life-philosophy and Phenomenology*: the Chinese origins of philosophy do not begin in the enchantment of the question of being. Its beginnings arise from ethical self-reflection, questions of proper governance and the appropriate way to live, and the anxious care for right action such that Heidegger's reductive identification of philosophy with the thinking of being restricts and distorts philosophy itself.[47]

The Greek origin has a necessity through the concrete moment of reflection (*Besinnung*) of life concerning itself. It is as inadvertent and provisional as other origins of self-reflective thinking from the unreflective natural attitudes of ordinary life. Its significance, unity, and necessity arise through the moment of interpretive self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*) in relation to one's own life-experiences (*Lebenserfahrungen*). This movement of life understanding and interpreting itself from out of its multiple ontic conditions is what allows the plurality of thought with all of its varied contents of diverse provenance to come into view as a whole:

> Despite this diversity, however, we can speak of the beginning of philosophy, using both words in the singular. Thus we approach the historical facts on the assumption that philosophy is a unity. This assumption comes from our European tradition; and with our modern view of history, which has learnt to look beyond the bounds of the European horizon, it might seem a mere prejudice. For we meet with a plurality of beginnings and first efforts regarding which one may well enquire whether the one name philosophy should be applied at all. The historical positivism of our time, which everywhere breaks down the universal into the particular, naturally seeks to do the same in respect of philosophy by resolving its ideal unity into a multiplicity of philosophies. And it is true that we do encounter such a multiplicity at the very outset. Nevertheless the historical facts, once their significance is properly understood, reinforce our conviction that philosophy is a unity.[48]

Ontic multiplicity is not the negation of the essence and dignity of philosophy, if it is the arena in which philosophy takes place as an event and enactment not of impersonal being and neutral Dasein—a formal neutrality that is derived "after the fact" of the partiality and perspectivality of historical life—but, following Dilthey's interpretive individualism, of individual and personal life.[49] Misch extended Dilthey's immanent and pluralistic personalism, challenging the conceptualization of the person as universally human and yet at the same time oddly particular (exclusively Occidental) that led European thinkers to denigrate non-Western cultures. This view is expressed in Hegel's contention in his philosophy of history that: "World history travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of world

history, Asia the beginning."[50] The end of history, as the dynamic realization of free individual consciousness and spirit (*Geist*) as what guarantees the common life of such subjects, is an ultimately modern Western achievement prefigured in classical Greek culture.[51]

The multifaceted concern with interpreting and cultivating an individual life is not solely a Western one, as Misch persuasively illustrated in his *History of Autobiography*, since autobiographical and biographical literature from direct narrative to deeply personal self-reflection is found throughout the world.[52] Misch does not deny that Western modernity has produced a particular way of experiencing and conceptualizing the person nor does he posit an unchanging underlying "person" independent of the self's contextual formation (*Bildung*). The individual person emerges immanently through the formative interpretive practices that address life as *a* life in the context of the contingency of historical conditions and a multiplicity of intersecting roles and diverging and conflicting perspectives.

The universality of philosophy does not appear directly then in the form of a concept, intuition, or originary experience of being. Universalization is achieved indirectly through processes of mediation as ideals, norms, and values are formed from the contents of concrete empirical existence. The center emerges out of flux and creative formative individuality from Hume's "bundle of instincts and feelings."[53] The universal emerges from a metaphysical need and urge—born within the immanence of life—that motivates the struggle for the clarification, enlightenment, and self-understanding of life in the midst of the particularities of specific linguistic, historical, and environmental circumstances.[54]

Philosophy occurs in the interruption of the ordinary experiencing and thinking of the "natural attitude" and in the distancing from one's everyday absorption in oneself and one's situation that allows life as a whole to be experienced as a question. Philosophy was once born in Greek wonder about *physis* and cosmos (κόσμος); yet it was not born here alone and consequently cannot be defined as one determinate fated destiny. Philosophy is reborn repeatedly anew from a metaphysical need for transcendence that follows the routes of self-questioning and reflection rather than the routes of religious mystical experience or of religious authority, devotion, and faith.

One basic tendency of philosophy is born from the metaphysical need and urge for transcendence. This urge toward the beyond is countered and mediated in its conflict with the tendency toward self-clarification and enlightenment that is philosophy's other fundamental dimension. There is not solely the Greek origin of philosophy in wonder that prioritizes the experience of nature as *physis* and cosmos, which Misch also identifies as a singular experience of nature that

prepares the way for the natural sciences. There is the Indian origin that turns the self inward upon itself to examine the subjectivity and interiority of that self. There is a Chinese origin of philosophy from out of the practical lived-experience (*Erlebnis*) of the concrete bonds of social life and in self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*) on the possibilities of cultivating moral personality within this life-context. Misch thus indicates in a life-philosophical way the *xing* 行 character of classical Chinese thought in which knowledge is bound to practice and action.

None of the origins of philosophy persist within themselves as a destiny with a determined outcome or "cultural mind-set." Developing Dilthey's conception of peoples, a people cannot be characterized through an unchanging essence or the collective identity of a substantial "soul of a people" (*Volkseele*). A people are generationally and historically constituted through the tensions and affinities of individuals; that is, from the differentiating responses of individuals, and the associations and institutions that they form, to shared questions and tasks and through the irresolvable conflict of worldviews and interpretations.

Accordingly, in Misch's reading of Greek philosophy, there is no one defining essential Greek experience of being as *physis*. Even in ancient Greece there are multiple divergent and incompatible experiences and conceptualizations of philosophy, some of which became more dominant than others during different generations. To speak schematically: while the Pre-Socratics focused their gaze on the natural world, Socrates marked a turn toward the ethical question of the self, the Socratic schools focused on issues of moral personality and the good life, and later Neo-Platonism and early Christianity shifted Greek thought toward the experience of the subjective interiority of the self.

In Misch's multi-vocal narrative, multiplicity does not only apply between distinct cultures, as if each one had one fixed and constant identity, but within cultures as formational historical realities. Chinese philosophy did not only find its expression in the Confucian cultivation of moral personality and concern for the health and vitality of ethical life. It is also expressed Daoist sensibilities about the natural world and subjective self as well as legalist conceptions of power, order, and stability. Ancient Chinese philosophy, according to Misch, ought to be interpreted not so much as a reified monolithic unity, which led European thinkers to one-sidedly praise or condemn a reified image of "China," but through the affinities, tensions, and disputes between interconnected yet competing and differentiated forms of life and reflection within a given hermeneutical situation. Misch adjusted Dilthey's thinking of the interpretive encounter and

agonistic confrontation between worldviews for the sake of an intercultural art of philosophizing: the intercultural interpreter reflectively and responsively interprets an historical nexus from the typical to the particular in order to articulate its shared structures and the dynamics of their differentiation and conflict.

Misch's thinking of the tension between the typical and the unique is still salutary given contemporary discourses that continue to reduce the specificity of a form of lived-experience and reflection to a generic formula whether it is mysticism, skepticism, the perennial philosophy, or the question of being. Because of specific features in its social-historical milieu, texts such as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* cannot be reduced to the abstract formula of mysticism.[55] Misch argues that early Daoism differs from Greek and Indian philosophies of the subject or self. Daoism did not achieve the same results, as a formulaic definition of mysticism might suggest, since it cannot break with its own contexts and conditions such as the broader formative concern in early China for ethics and politics. Misch is particularly concerned with the tensions between—to employ his vocabulary—the realistic power politics of the "realists" (legalists), the focus on a moral ideal of humanity and social integrity in Confucianism, the idealistic reformism of Moism, and the multi-perspectivalism, the emancipatory power of symbolic expression, and free sensibility of life evoked in the *Zhuangzi*.[56] The tensions form a pattern indicating the early Chinese concern for an immanent worldly understanding of life—whether understood more naturally or culturally—and how to comport oneself and the community within this space between heaven and earth. The counter tendencies in such cultural matrices, for instance of Buddhist non-self (*anātman*) vis-à-vis Hindu self (*ātman*), reveal the power of a dominant model in a given culture.[57]

The plurality of feelings of life, perspectives, and arguments constitute a shared pattern constituted through its tensions and in distinct responses to common questions that form focal points of this pattern. To this extent, each classical philosophical culture had its prevailing and countervailing tendencies toward understanding and articulating life. Life is a structuring-structured nexus with myriad perspectives and possibilities for differentiation and integration, individuation and connectedness, in the hermeneutical *Lebensphilosophie* of Dilthey and Misch. Life can accordingly be experienced through nature in the sense of *physis* and cosmos in Greek thought, through the interiority of the subject in classical Indian philosophy, and through social and ethical community in early Chinese philosophy.

Notwithstanding Misch's critical appreciation of Confucius, Zhuangzi has the first and last hermeneutical life-philosophical word for Misch. The "poet-thinker" Zhuangzi challenges, expands, and

switches our horizons by liberating us from our conditional limited perspectives through relativizing them and by immanently locating and articulating life from and in life itself: hiding the world in the world so as not to lose it.[58]

VII. Conclusion

Heidegger's poetic anti-modernistic thinking of being has frequently been taken as a resource for intercultural philosophy even if his openness to the possibility of a Chinese or other varieties of non-Western philosophy is limited, and has been highly exaggerated, as Lin Ma has shown.[59] It is correct that Heidegger engaged at times with elements of Asian thought and culture and adopted them for his own purposes. Still, Heidegger consistently denied that any thinking that does not stem from the Greek origin and shared in the fateful destiny of Occidental metaphysics culminating in modernity should be called philosophy. Heidegger's argumentation has been decisive for thinkers such as Levinas, Derrida, and Rorty. They contest, reverse, and pluralize Heidegger's history of being and yet fail to overcome the disavowal of non-Western philosophizing.

The understanding of philosophy as proceeding from Greece has been associated with historical thinking, as it is articulated in historically oriented thinkers, particularly Hegel and Heidegger. Does then a commitment to the historicity and specificity of philosophy commit one to it being a Western endeavor? In another group of German historical thinkers we find that this is not the case. Plessner argued that Dilthey, who in numerous ways is an intermediate between Hegel and Heidegger, unlocked new possibilities for thinking and "a new responsibility" by relativizing "the reactive absolutizing of European value systems."[60] The art of interpretively understanding the other described by Dilthey has an ethical and political dimension insofar as it requires releasing the other by abandoning or challenging power over the other.[61]

Dilthey and Misch identified multiple origins and lineages of philosophy that emerge and unfold in relation to the feeling, expression, and interpretation of life. Heidegger described philosophy as the primordial possibility of Dasein, of human existence as "thrown" in the world; and yet there is only in the end Occidental philosophy. Philosophy is born of a fundamental mood and attunement (*Stimmung*) in Dilthey, an insight adopted by Heidegger in the 1920s. But Dilthey analyzed a broader array of existential moods and dispositions than Heidegger's focus on anxiety in *Being and Time* or extreme boredom in "What is Metaphysics?" In Dilthey's approach, the

"feeling of life" and life's dispositional mood can be altered as it is expressed—and intensified or deflected—in wonder or doubt, reverence or anxiety, enthusiasm or boredom. This feeling of life finds its expression not only in classically conceived Greek discourses concerning ontology and metaphysics but in religion, poetry, ethics, politics, and other forms of self-reflective historical life.

Misch explicitly extended this point further by demonstrating the multiple origins of philosophy within the Greek context, which have religious, poetic, and ethical dimensions as well as ontological ones, as well as in other cultural matrices such as those of ancient India and China. In contrast to thinkers such as Heidegger and his successors, who take history to entail an exclusive dynamic and potential that now afflicts the entire globe while remaining a primarily Occidental question, Misch interpreted philosophy historically as both a local—through the exemplary cases of ancient Greece, India, and China—and as a global and existentially human phenomenon. The hermeneutical attentiveness to the object in Dilthey and Misch encourages the articulation of the historical fabric of life as intrinsically heterogeneous and irreducible in its unfathomability to one—no matter how dynamically conceived—perspective or model.

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Endnotes

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1. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, hereafter cited as GA plus volume number, GA 18: *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2002), 4. Trans. *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).
2. Georg Misch, *Der Aufbau der Logik auf dem Boden der Philosophie des Lebens: Göttinger Vorlesungen über Logik und Einleitung in die Theorie des Wissens* (Freiburg: Alber, 1994), 566.
3. On the European character of modernization and globalization, compare Martin Heidegger, GA 79: *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2005), 65. Trans. *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); and Martin Heidegger, *Sojourns: The Journey to Greece* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 25–26.
4. On the different conceptions of history and philosophy in Dilthey and Heidegger, see my essays: Eric S. Nelson, "History as Decision and Event in Heidegger," *Arhe* 4, no.

8 (2007): 97–115; Eric S. Nelson, "Interpreting Practice: Epistemology, Hermeneutics, and Historical Life in Dilthey," *Idealistic Studies* 38, no. 1–2 (2008): 105–22; and Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger and Dilthey: A Difference in Interpretation," in François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson, eds., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 129–134.

5. Lin Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue: Anticipating the Event* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Note that this significant study provides further context to some of the arguments that are developed in this article.
6. Such as, for instance, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer" (1958); published in Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 1–56.
7. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 224.
8. Martin Heidegger, *What Is Philosophy?* Trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1956), 31.
9. Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, 137.
10. Ibid.
11. On the reverse or negative Eurocentrism of the deconstruction of the history of Western metaphysics as logocentrism, see Eric S. Nelson, "The *Yijing* and Philosophy: From Leibniz to Derrida," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, no. 3 (2011): 382–85, 388–89. For an alternative onto-generative conception of hermeneutical philosophy in critical response to Heidegger's ontological thinking, see Chung-ying Cheng, "Confucius, Heidegger, and the Philosophy of the *I Ching*: A Comparative Inquiry into the Truth of Human Being," *Philosophy East and West* 37, No. 1 (1987): 51–70.
12. Martin Heidegger, GA 16: *Veröffentlichte Schriften 1910–1976, Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges: 1910–1976* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2000), 333.
13. Martin Heidegger, GA 39: *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1999), 173.
14. Martin Heidegger, GA 13: *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens 1910–1976* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2002), 21.
15. Martin Heidegger, "Europa und die deutsche Philosophie," in *Europa und die Philosophie*, ed. Hans-Helmut Gander (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 31.
16. Heidegger, *Sojourns: The Journey to Greece*, 27.
17. Compare Ma's discussion of this passage in *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue*, 118.
18. Richard Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 113.
19. I developed this point in relation to early Chinese thinking in "Responding to Heaven and Earth: Daoism, Heidegger and Ecology," *Environmental Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2004): 65–74.
20. Nelson, "The *Yijing* and Philosophy," 388–89.
21. One of the most questionable expressions of this dyad is evident in Levinas's remark: "I always say—but under my breath—that the Bible and the Greeks present the only serious issues in human life; everything else is dancing." Emmanuel Levinas and Jill Robbins, *Is It Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 149. I discuss the case of Levinas and China, the misunderstandings and possibilities for communication, in Eric S. Nelson, "Levinas and Early Confucian Ethics: Religion, Rituality, and the Sources of Morality," *Levinas Studies* 4 (2009): 77–207. The Eurocentrisms of Levinas and Derrida are respectively updated in Philippe Nemo, *What Is the West?* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006) and Rodolphe Gasché, *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).
22. Particularly Georg Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931); Helmuth Plessner, *Macht und menschliche Natur* (1931) republished in *Gesammelte Schriften 5: Macht und menschliche Natur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981).
23. Martin Heidegger, GA 27: *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001).

24. Martin Heidegger, SZ 527, fn 14: "This is not necessary since we have G. Misch to thank for a concrete presentation of Dilthey that aims at the central tendencies that is essential to any discussion of his work." Compare Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 49.
25. Georg Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1931).
26. Compare, however, Cheng, "Confucius, Heidegger, and the Philosophy of the *I Ching*," 51–70. The *Yijing*'s logic of the multiplicity and temporal transience of origins can well be said to offer further support for Misch's argumentation in contrast with Heidegger's more monistic depiction of origins.
27. Heidegger criticizes Dilthey's ontic pluralism in GA 27: 347–350. I examine the difference between Dilthey and Heidegger concerning worldviews and ontic multiplicity in Eric S. Nelson, "The World Picture and Its Conflict in Dilthey and Heidegger," *Humana.Mente: Journal of Philosophical Studies* 18 (2011): 19–38.
28. Despite the limitations of Heidegger's approach in relation to non-Western philosophy and the multiple origins of philosophy, Heidegger's practice of formalization and emptying remains significant in a comparative philosophical context. I developed this point in Eric S. Nelson, "Language and Emptiness in Chan Buddhism and the Early Heidegger," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37, no. 3 (2010): 472–92. On formal indication, see Eric S. Nelson, "Questioning Practice: Heidegger, Historicity and the Hermeneutics of Facticity," *Philosophy Today* 44 (2001): 150–59; Eric S. Nelson, "Heidegger and the Ethics of Facticity." *Rethinking Facticity*, eds. François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 129–47.
29. On the logic of transformational multiplicity and unity in the *Yijing*, see Cheng, "Confucius, Heidegger, and the Philosophy of the *I Ching*," 51–70.
30. Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie*, 14; Plessner, *Macht und menschliche Natur*, 157.
31. Plessner, *Macht und menschliche Natur*, 157.
32. Georg Misch, "Von den Gestaltungen der Persönlichkeit," in Wilhelm Dilthey, ed., *Weltanschauung Philosophie und Religion in Darstellungen* (Berlin: Reichl & Co, 1911), 82.
33. Georg Misch, *Der Weg in die Philosophie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1926); which was published in a substantially altered and revised English translation as *The Dawn of Philosophy: A Philosophical Primer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951).
34. Misch, *Der Weg in die Philosophie*, 29; *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 39.
35. Misch, *Der Weg in die Philosophie*, 13; *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 1, 12.
36. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 39.
37. Misch, *Der Weg in die Philosophie*, 14; *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 16.
38. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 25.
39. Ibid., 25.
40. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: The Lectures of 1825–1826* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 9–10.
41. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 97.
42. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 44.
43. "Die Vernunftgestalt der Persönlichkeit ist sowohl chinesisches als griechisches und modern-europäisches Aufklärungsgut." Misch, "Von den Gestaltungen der Persönlichkeit," 95.
44. On hermeneutical Enlightenment, and the relation between Chinese and European Enlightenments, see Eric S. Nelson, "Leibniz and China: Religion, Hermeneutics, and Enlightenment," *Religion in the Age of Enlightenment* 1 (2009): 277–300.
45. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 172.
46. Ibid., 184–87.
47. Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie*, 14.
48. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 39.
49. Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie*, 47.
50. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 97.
51. Ibid., 54.

52. For instance, on the significance of Arabic biography, see Georg Misch, *Geschichte de Autobiographie* (Bern and Frankfurt: A. Francke und Gerhard Schultke-Bulmke, 1949–69), III, 2, 980.
53. Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 7.
54. Compare Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie*, 317.
55. On the problematic reduction of the *Zhuangzi* to unitary positions such as mysticism and skepticism, see Eric S. Nelson, "Questioning Dao: Skepticism, Mysticism, and Ethics in the *Zhuangzi*," *International Journal of the Asian Philosophical Association* 1, no. 1 (2008): 5–19.
56. Compare Misch, *Der Weg in die Philosophie*, 221, 229; Misch, *The Dawn of Philosophy*, 202.
57. Misch, *Der Weg in die Philosophie*, 221.
58. Misch, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie*, 89–90.
59. Ma, *Heidegger on East-West Dialogue*.
60. Plessner, *Macht und menschliche Natur*, 162–63.
61. Ibid., 164, 185.