Dialogical Confucianism as a Religious Tradition in a Global Context*

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Confucianism as a cumulative tradition has faced various challenges in its different stages. If the development of Confucianism from the late 19th century until now can be regarded as its third epoch, a dominant theme of this period in the whole context of East Asian civilization has been and continues to be its constant dialogue, including both amalgamation and conflict, with Western civilization characterized largely by Christian culture. But "inter-civilization dialogue" or "dialogue among civilizations" is still too general a concept with which to characterize the current development and future tendency of Confucianism. In my view, at present and in the future, the issue of religious dialogue is and will be a leading project of the third epoch of Confucianism. Confucianism as a dialogical tradition will also make special contributions to the dialogue among different religious traditions in a global context.

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* I would like to dedicate this article to Professor Liu Shu-hsien 劉述先 for celebrating his 80-year-old birthday. I am indebted very much to him not only intellectually but also in reality.

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I. The Third Epoch of Confucianism Revised

The phrase, "the third epoch of Confucianism", often reminds us of Tu Weiming 杜維明. It is indeed Tu Weiming who made this phrase well known, at least in the English speaking world. But Tu is not the creator of the phrase: he inherited it from his teacher Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995) and infused it with new vitality. Although it was Mou who for the first time used this word to describe the new development of Confucianism after the 19th century, this idea can even be traced back to Shen Youding 沈有鼎 (1908-1989), a Chinese logician who is one year older than Mou Zongsan. But for Shen, the third epoch refers to Chinese culture in general rather than Confucianism in particular.

For Mou Zongsan, the third epoch of Confucianism referred to the new development of Confucianism after the late Qing dynasty and was thus limited to the Chinese context. The core problem for the third epoch of Confucianism, according to Mou, was nothing but how to incorporate democracy and science into the Confucian tradition.[1]

Initially, Tu Weiming followed Mou's understanding of the third epoch of Confucianism. As he gained international experience, however, Tu gradually revised his definition of the third epoch of Confucianism. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, he added "religious feeling" and "psychological understanding of human nature",[2]

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1 Mou Zongsan, "Rujia xueshu zhi fazhan jiqi shiming" 儒家學術之發展及其使命 ("Development of Confucianism and Its Mission"), in his *Daode de lixiang zhuyi* 道德的理想主義 (Moral Idealism), in *Mao Zongsan quanji* 牟宗三先生全集 (Complete Works of Mou Zongsan) (Taipei: Lianjing Press, 2003), Vol. 9, pp. 1-17. This article initially published in 1949.

2 Tu Weiming, *Xiandai jingshen yu rujia quantong* 現代精神與儒家傳統 (Modern Spirit and Confucian Tradition), *Du Weiming wenji* 杜維明文集 (Collected Works of Tu Weiming) (Wuhan: Hubei Press, 2002), Vol. 2, p. 615.

to democracy and science, as to the project of the third epoch of Confucianism. In recent years as more attention has focused on the significance of dialogue among civilizations, Tu has reconsidered the third epoch of Confucianism in a global context. For Tu, the third epoch of Confucianism began to encompass not only transformation and renewal of the Confucian tradition in the Chinese context, but also a dialogue of Confucianism with Western and other non-Chinese cultures.[3] In short, for Tu Weiming, the updated version of the third epoch of Confucianism emphasizes two points: first, the primary task of the third epoch of Confucianism is the globalization of Confucianism beyond East Asia; or, at the very least, the expansion of non-Chinese/Asian awareness of Confucianism. Second, as a logical consequence of the first point, dialogue with other traditions must be a central project of the development of the third epoch of Confucianism. Especially after the terrorist incident of 9/11/2001, defining the third epoch of Confucianism from a perspective of dialogue among civilizations has become one of the defining characteristics of Tu Weiming's discourse.

But in my view, the third epoch of Confucianism so conceived still needs to be revised for a better understanding. I would like to suggest two points here.

First, the third epoch of Confucianism should be conceived as a geographical expansion of the tradition during its dialogue with other civilizations in the world, not only as a temporal evolution of a Chinese or East Asian tradition. Specifically, the first epoch of Confucianism consisted of the transformation of a local body of knowledge in the Lu Kingdom into a national value system of China. The second epoch encompasses the transformation of Confucianism from a Chinese value system into an integral and defining part of the entire East Asian Civilization. Both these epochs consisted of geographic expansion of Confucianism. Similarly, the

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3 Tu Weiming, *Lun ruxue disanqi* 論儒學第三期 (On the Third Epoch of Confucianism), in *Collected Works of Tu Weiming*, Vol. 3, p. 650.

defining characteristic of the third epoch involves the expansion of Confucianism beyond the boundaries of East Asia as it becomes one of the possible candidates of various value systems or ways of life that people throughout the world can chose.

Secondly, while defining the third epoch of Confucianism from a perspective of dialogue among civilizations is definitely valid, this perspective is too general to reveal the salient feature of the Confucian project at present and in the future. "Civilization" is too broad a term. Politics, economy, culture and so on, can all be regarded as integral parts of civilization. But with the deconstruction of the Confucian value system, not only in China, but also in other East Asian countries that used to be "Confucian", Confucianism has not been considered a holistic "civilization" in dialogue with Western and other civilizations. The word "you hun 遊魂", "wandering soul", which Professor Yu Ying-shih 余英時 (1930-) has used to describe the modern fate of Confucianism, indicates that Confucianism can go beyond certain social, political, and economic structures and still play an important role as a personal belief or value system in people's spiritual life, although it cannot arrange the order of this world in a holistic way.[4] So, in this sense, "religious dialogue" instead of "inter-civilizations dialogue" is more accurate to depict the leading project that Confucianism is undergoing. In fact, if religion is the core of a civilization, the key part of dialogue among civilizations is nothing but dialogue among religious traditions.

II. Is Confucianism a Religious Tradition?

But before we claim the leading project of the third epoch of Confucianism is dialogue with other religious traditions in a global context, we have to answer the

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4 See Yu Ying-shih, *Xiandai ruxue lun* 現代儒學論 (On Modern Confucianism) (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1998), "Preface".

question first: is Confucianism a religious tradition?

Whether or not Confucianism can be called a "religion" depends primarily upon what understanding of "religion" we have. No doubt, "religion" as a modern Western term is originally from the Abrahamic tradition, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Accordingly, a transcendental personal God, an institutional church and a single scripture become indispensable defining characteristics of being a "religion". During the 20th century, however, Western scholars realized that religion encompassed much more than the traditional Abrahamic model. Increasing contact with the East suggested to them that religion need not be monotheistic, nor even deistic to serve a civilization in the same fashion as the Abrahamic religions serve in the West. Examples are Buddhism and Hinduism in South Asia and Confucianism and Daoism in East Asia. So, those Western scholars with global consciousness revised the traditional definition of religion and made it more comprehensive. Paul Tillich's "ultimate concern", John Hick's "human responses to the transcendent", and Frederick Streng's "means of ultimate transformation" and so on,[5] are all examples of this kind of revision. The reason that W. C. Smith tried to replace "religion" by "religiosity" or "religiousness" is exactly to stress that "religiosity" is "one" while various religions in the world are just different manifestations of this "one".[6]

Therefore, if we realize that the core of a religion lies in its "religiousness", which intends to make people have an ultimate and creative transformation, rather than in its particular form (such as those features that simply belong to Abrahamic tradition), our understanding of religion should be enlarged. If we know Buddhism

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5 See John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Frederick Streng, *Understanding Religious Life*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1985).

6 See W. C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978).

is originally an atheism that strives for personal liberation and Daoism has never accepted the heterogeneity between this world and the world of spirit, and we cannot deny that both Buddhism and Daoism are two kinds of religion in the world, we must embrace the idea that Confucianism should also be considered as a religious tradition: it has provided a resource, both spiritual and practical, for human beings to become "great persons", "noble persons", and sages by unceasing and strenuous self-cultivation. Distinctively, a Confucian way of ultimate transformation, the achievement of becoming a great person, a noble person and a sage through self-cultivation, does not mean a heterogeneous leap from humanity to divinity. Rather, it precisely means the full and perfect realization of humanity itself. Actually, besides Confucianism, there are many spiritual traditions in the world that should be understood as religious traditions although they do not necessarily have the features of monotheism nor are they necessarily institutional.

Besides the definition of religion, there are still two criteria of judgment that make us consider Confucianism as a religious tradition.

First, Confucianism has already been accepted by other religious traditions as an indispensable counterpart in the religious dialogue around the world. Internationally, for many scholars, Confucianism, as a spiritual and religious tradition, has been an unquestioned starting point for further relevant discussion. A few books in the English-speaking world on Confucianism from the perspective of religious studies have been published since the 1970s. Quite a few international conferences on the dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity have been held in Hong Kong, Boston, and Berkeley. All these are exactly reflections of this point.

Secondly, we usually acknowledge that the insiders of a tradition have priority in defining their own tradition. A consensus shared by representatives of contemporary Confucian scholars, from Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909-1978), Mou Zongsan to Tu Weiming, Liu Shu-hsien (1934-), is acknowledgement of the religious dimension of the Confucian tradition. For example, Tang Junyi clearly

articulated that Confucianism should be understood as a religious tradition and he even claimed that Confucianism should be reestablished as an institutional religion. Mou Zongsan delivered a lecture entitled "Confucianism as a Religion" in 1959, which was included as a chapter in his book, *Zhongguo zhexue de tezhi* 中國哲學的特質 (Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy). A notable aspect of Tu Weiming's works, as I mentioned before, is his elaboration of Confucian religiousness from a perspective of comparative religious studies. The brilliant work of scholars such as Paul Tillich, W. C. Smith, John Hick and Frederick Streng are the spring of his inspiration. His definition of Confucian religiousness as "a way of ultimate self-transformation" is directly inspired by Streng; but the prefix "self", which he added to "transformation", clearly indicates a Confucian approach that emphasizes a person's inner capacity for self realization. A well-known manifesto of contemporary Confucianism that was published in 1958 (drafted by Tang Junyi and jointly signed by Zhang Junmai 張君勱 [1887-1968], Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 [1903-1982]) particularly stressed the religious nature of Confucianism.

III. Dialogical Dimension of Confucian Tradition

When we carefully scrutinize the history of Confucianism, we should be aware that the development of the Confucian tradition is actually a process of dialogue, including both dialogue with other traditions and dialogue among different schools within the Confucian tradition itself. It is this dialogical dimension or "dialogicalness" that enables Confucianism to be more and more enriched. Here, let us take Confucianism in the Chinese context as an example of this dialogical dimension.

When it emerged in the pre-Qin period, Confucianism was only one of various intellectual trends among so called "*zhuzi baijia* 諸子百家", literally, "many masters and hundreds of schools". But through dialogue with other masters and

schools, Confucianism, which started locally, eventually became the dominant value system of Chinese civilization. Furthermore, even the thought of Confucius himself was shaped and developed from his dialogue with his students. If we look both at the *Lunyu* 論語, the *Analects*, which is without doubt the authoritative record of Confucius's thought, and at some newly unearthed Confucian texts inscribed on bamboo slips found in the 1990s, we recognize that almost all Confucius said was in a dialogue with others, including his students, friends, acquaintance, passersby, strangers and even his rivals.

From the Tang dynasty to the Ming and Qing dynasties, the development of Confucianism was particularly characterized by a dialogical process. Inside China, after a long and productive dialogue with Buddhism and Daoism, classical Confucianism was transformed into a new paradigm known as Neo-Confucianism, which absorbed many Buddhist and Daoist ideas without giving up its own identity. Also, through embedded dialogue with local civilizations, various new Confucian traditions with their own cultural characteristics were shaped in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and other East Asian regions after Chinese Confucianism was introduced into these areas. In this period, it is no exaggeration to say that Confucianism in general played an important or even leading role in the whole of East Asian civilization. If East Asian civilization can be differentiated from West Asian civilization and its Abrahamic religions and from South Asian civilization and its Hinduism and Buddhism, the defining religious tradition in East Asian civilization is nothing but Confucianism. Briefly, throughout the process in which Confucianism was transformed into a leading role of East Asian civilization from something simply Chinese, a striking feature of Confucianism was still its "dialogicalness".

From the late Qing dynasty until now, Confucianism has emerged into another period, which is the third epoch we defined previously. In this period, one of the most important features of new Confucianism is also its dialogical dimension. Compared with the previous dialogue among different branches inside the

Confucian tradition and dialogue with Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, and Islam, the dialogue of Confucianism with the whole of Western civilization is omni-directional and multilevel. In contrast to traditional Confucian scholars, modern Confucians have to face and understand the complexity and diversity of various traditions. In this sense, their burden is much heavier than ancient Confucians. For example, both Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan engaged in a lifetime dialogue with Western philosophical traditions, especially German idealism. Their understanding of Western philosophy not only goes far beyond their teacher, Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968), the initiator of modern Confucianism, but also surpasses some Chinese scholars who specialized in Western philosophy. As for Yu Ying-shih, a great Confucian historian, his understanding of Western culture in general and Western history in particular surpasses that of his teacher, Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990), who is also a great master of Chinese traditional learning.

Now, religious dialogue can be further divided into two types, inter-religious dialogue and intra-religious dialogue.[7] The former refers to the dialogue among different religious traditions, for example, the dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity, the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism, the dialogue between Hinduism and Islam, and so on. The latter refers to the dialogue among different ramifications or schools within one religious tradition, for instance, the dialogue among Baptists, Methodists, and Evangelicals in Christianity. But whatever

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7 The term "intra-religious dialogue" always reminds people of the work by Raimon Panikkar. See his *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, rev. ed. (Paulist Press, 1999). For Panikkar, the proposal of "intra-religious dialogue" is based upon his discontent with "inter-religious dialogue". But I think the purpose of "intra-religious dialogue" Panikkar anticipates is actually the same with that of "inter-religious dialogue". So, I am not using "intra-religious dialogue" in Panikkar's sense. Instead, I would like to redefine it as a dialogue among various schools and branches in one religious and spiritual tradition and the purpose is to eventually deepen the self-understanding of this tradition.

perspective we take, the history of Confucianism is a dialogical process.

First, let us look at the development of Confucianism from a perspective of intra-religious dialogue. I already mentioned the dialogical feature of Confucius's thought. After Confucius, Confucianism even in the pre-Qin period was already complicated. Different branches were always in a state of dialogue and sometimes conflict. Typically, two different orientations initiated respectively by Mengzi and Xunzi were developed into an enduring dialogue by later Confucians. Although Confucianism in the Han dynasty in general focused on commentary on classics, different approaches and their debates, especially "*Jinwen jingxue* 今文經學" and "guwen jingxue 古文經學" among others, were also reflections of the dialogue within Confucianism. As for Neo-Confucianism, the well-known debate between Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) and Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139-1193) that occurred in 1175 reflected two different approaches to the Confucian learning in Neo-Confucian tradition and was not only polemic but also dialogical. The learning of the Wang Yangming school was particularly shaped not only through dialogue with the learning of Zhu Xi but also through dialogue among many brilliant students and followers of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1427-1529). Most works recording the thought of almost all Neo-Confucian masters recount their discussions with and correspondence with their students, colleagues, friends, or even rivals. This is an outstanding feature that indicates the strong dialogical dimension of Neo-Confucianism.

Secondly, from a perspective of inter-religious dialogue, the dialogue between Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism reached its peak in the late Ming dynasty. Neo-Confucianism per se was the result of this inter-religious dialogue that lasted hundreds of years. The so called "East Asian consciousness" was precisely shaped by the dialogue of Chinese Confucianism with local cultures in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and so on. This has already been mentioned previously. Now, I would like to add a couple of examples to highlight the fruitful products resulting from the

dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity and Islam in China. Those great Confucian Christians such as Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1557-1627), Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562-1633), Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1565-1630), or even the Confucianized Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) in the late Ming dynasty, have already been studied.[8] Recently, the thought of Wang Daiyu 王岱輿 (ca. 1570-1660) and Liu Zhi 劉智 (ca. 1670-1724), which represent the most important achievement of the dialogue between Confucianism and Islam in the 16th and 17th centuries, have also received global attention.[9]

I do not need to deliberately stress this dialogical dimension of Confucianism. Some brilliant Western minds already realized this point too. For instance, William Theodore de Bary believes that the "dialogical imperative" has been always embodied in the Confucian tradition as an integral part of East Asian civilization.[10] Actually, when we look at the Chinese history, we should realize that the Chinese people have embraced almost every world religious tradition, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, let alone Confucianism, Daoism and various indigenous popular religions.[11] It is precisely because of this intrinsic "dialogicalness" of Confucianism and the arrival of globalization that religious dialogue, as I am trying to argue, must be a leading project of the third epoch of Confucianism in a global context. As a matter of fact, one of the salient features for the development of contemporary Confucianism is moving in this exact direction.

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8 For example, Nicolas Standaert made a substantial study on Yang Tingyun, see his *Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christianity in Late Ming China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1988).

9 See Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light: Wang Tai-yu's Great Learning of the Pure and Real and Liu Chih's Displaying the Concealment of the Real Realm* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2000).

10 See William Theodore de Bary, *East Asian Civilizations: A Dialogue in Five Stages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

11 See Paul Martinson, *A Theology of World Religions: Interpreting God, Self, and World in Semitic, Indian, and Chinese Thought* (Minneapolis, Minn: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987).

IV. Confucian Contributions to Global Religious Dialogue

Now, with the wave of globalization, religious dialogue has become one of the most striking issues in the world. If globalization means not only a process of homogenization but also a process of heterogeneity, the reason for the latter is the differences among various religious traditions. Therefore, how to treat those differences and try to mitigate the clash of civilization caused by religious conflict through "dialogue" instead of "confrontation", has become an urgent issue for the whole body of mankind. Actually, an essential aspect of the clash of civilization, even in Samuel P. Huntington's sense, is still more religious than political, economic and so on. Hans Küng's statement "There can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions", has been validated by history and become a consensus among people of vision. So, in my view, a dialogical Confucianism can make at least three contributions, both conceptually and practically, to a global religious dialogue.

The first is a principle of dialogue that advocates "harmony without uniformity". Until now, most participants of religious dialogue in the world have already realized that the purpose of dialogue should not and cannot be to transform others' beliefs into our own. Otherwise, the result is monologue rather than dialogue, fruitless and unavoidably leading to conflict. Dialogue should be a process of mutual learning. The minimum purpose of dialogue should deepen mutual understanding. Although mutual understanding does not necessarily mean mutual appreciation, it is a precondition for minimizing the possibility of the large-scale clash of civilization caused by religious conflict. In the Confucian tradition, the principle, "harmony without uniformity", advocated by Confucius has always been respected as a way of co-existence. This principle means every individual shares a sense of togetherness and integration while his or her individuality is fully developed. Obviously, this

should be a basic principle for global religious dialogue at present and in the future, maybe the best state we can anticipate. There are two extremes about religious dialogue. One is a particularism that believes dialogue is fruitless and there cannot be helpful communication between different religions. The other is a universalism that believes dialogue is a panacea that can lead people with different religious backgrounds to a homogeneous state. By contrast, this Confucian principle of "harmony without uniformity", which goes beyond excessive pessimism and optimism, can provide a reasonable and feasible middle ground for global religious dialogue.

The second is a Confucian pluralism. Now, we know that the attitude a religion takes toward other religious traditions can be typologically divided into three categories: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. An exclusivist denies the value of other religious traditions and claims the monopoly of religious truth. An inclusivist concedes that other religions can have truth; but he or she will say the truth other religions have is already included in his or her own religion and this truth is not ultimate. Only his or her religion can reveal the ultimate truth. Karl Rahner's term, "anonymous Christians", is an example of this standpoint. Religious pluralism is now a very influential trend, which not only accepts that other religions can reveal truth but also realizes the particularity or limitation of every religious tradition. Contrary to inclusivism, this standpoint does not presuppose the priority of a certain religion. A religious pluralist believes that every religion can provide a way of ultimate transformation. As John Hick's metaphor suggested, all religions in the world should be considered as a rainbow of human's faiths, they are different reflections of the same light of divinity.[12] Of course, every religion cannot be simply and absolutely clarified into any one of these three types, while every religion can simultaneously include these three attitudes toward other religions.

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12 John Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths* (London: SCM Press, 1995).

Because of its open-minded standpoint, religious pluralism has been increasingly accepted by more and more liberal minds. But pluralism in general has to face the danger of becoming a kind of relativism. Pluralism with an implication of relativism apparently can accept every religion, but actually denies there can be a unified truth of the ultimate in the cosmos. It is not willing to or cannot seriously consider that different religions can treat the unified truth of the ultimate in different ways and stress different aspects of the same truth. It consequently undermines the necessity of dialogue among religions. So, the significance of a Confucian pluralism is that Confucianism, throughout its history, has developed a middle ground. As a dialogical tradition, Confucian religious pluralism advocates that, on the one hand, every religious tradition is a manifestation of the "Way" or a unified truth of the ultimate while the absolute truth that every religion claims is only a "convenient way" (*upaya*) or "relative absolute",[13] not the "absolute" *per se* as the ultimate truth; on the other hand, the ultimate and the unified truth of the ultimate should be acknowledged no matter whether or not this ultimate reality and truth can be clearly uttered with one accord. I've named this distinctive feature of Confucian pluralism as "*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊", a term from Neo-Confucianism, which literally and roughly means "one principle, many manifestations".

The third contribution is a conceptual and practical resource of multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities. Multiple religious participation means a believer in a religion fully gets involved in another religion or other religions and eventually becomes an inner participant rather than an outer observer. Accordingly, once one becomes not only an inner participant but also a believer in another religion or religions while not giving up his or her original

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13 See John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Leonard Swidler, *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

religious faith, this person already has multiple religious identities. Both multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities were issues raised by contemporary Western theologians or scholars in religious studies against a background of global religious dialogue.[14] For a conventional believer in Abrahammic tradition, multiple religious participation is very difficult, if not totally impossible; multiple religious identities are basically beyond his or her ability of imagination. But religious dialogue in academia or real religious dialogue caused by globalization, especially the wave of immigration, compel this issue to become a focal awareness of Western religious people. Intriguingly, in China or East Asia, there has been a long history of multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities. As mentioned above, in the dialogical history of Confucianism, rich experience about multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities has already been accumulated. In other words, for the Confucian tradition, multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities have already been a precondition or starting point for further consideration of relevant questions instead of a problem still needing to be wrestled with. For example, there were many Confucians who went back and forth with ease among Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism in the late Ming dynasty. Those brilliant minds in that period such as Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583), Zhou Rudeng 周汝登 (1547-1629), Guan Zhidao 管志道 (1536-1608), Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1541-1620), Tao Wangling 陶望齡 (1562-1609) on the one hand frequently communicated with Buddhists and Daoists and established deep friendship with them, made commentary on and published

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14 See John Berthrong, "Syncretism Revisited: Multiple Religious Participation," *Pacific Theological Review*, 25-26 (1992-1993): 57-59; John Berthrong, *All Under Heaven: Transforming Paradigms in Confucian-Christian Dialogue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), chap. 6. Robert Neville further elucidated its *Problematik* and significance, see his *Boston Confucianism* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 206-209.

Buddhist and Daoist classics, even practiced Daoist inner alchemy. They deeply engaged in the spiritual world of both Buddhism and Daoism. On the other hand, they still had their strong Confucian commitment and identity.[15] Or, they still defined themselves as Confucian rather than Buddhist and Daoist. A popular religion called "*sanyi jiao* 三一教" (literally, a three-in-one religion), initiated by Lin Zhao'en 林兆恩 (1517-1598) and prevailing in Southern China in the late Ming dynasty, was typically a syncretism of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism.[16] Furthermore, this was not only a local cultural phenomenon in Southern China. Even now, many temples established in different dynasties in Chinese history remain which offer sacrifices to Confucius, Laozi, and Buddha in one house at the same time. All these are exactly reflections of multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities. As Paul Martinson observed, the life of Chinese people has always been with the diversity of religious experience in history and a positive attitude toward this diversity has accordingly been developed.[17] In this sense, we can say that the issue of multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities has already got its answer, conceptual and practical, in a dialogical Confucian tradition with a plural vision. So, I do believe that more resources from Confucianism, if properly transformed, can contribute to the religious dialogue in a global context. The emergence of "Boston Confucianism"[18] is no doubt the newest

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15 See Peng Guoxiang 彭國翔, *Liangzhi xue de zhankai—Wang Longxi yu zhongwan Ming de Yangming xue* 良知學的展開——王龍溪與中晚明的陽明學 (The Unfolding of the Innate Good Knowing: Wang Longxi and the Yangming Learning in the Mid-Late Ming) (Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng Shuju, Chinese Philosophy Series, 2003, traditional Chinese version; Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, Sanlian and Harvard-Yenching Academic Series, 2005, simplified Chinese version).

16 See Judith Berling, *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

17 Martinson, *A Theology of World Religions*.

18 Regarding "Boston Confucianism", see Robert C. Neville, *Boston Confucianism: Portable*

example demonstrating that multiple religious participation and multiple religious identities have already been happening between Confucianism and Christianity. This case also indicates that the leading project of the third epoch of Confucianism in a global context is primarily a development of religious and spiritual dialogue.

Tradition in the Late Modern World (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).