Some turns in a 'journey to the West': Cosmological proliferation in an anthropology of Eurasia

*Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology
read 29 March 2017*

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Abstract: In Eurasia, cosmological traditions have been at the same time different and related as well as 'similar'. Furthermore, the hierarchy of the so-called great and little traditions seen as making up the landscape of Eurasian cosmologies is reversible over time, with the little traditions—whose 'life-giving myths' and 'animism' have made the social anthropologies of the South (e.g., Australia, South America, and Melanesia) and the North (e.g., the frontiers of the Arctic Circle and Siberia) relevant to those of the East and West—the more resilient.

Keywords: cosmology, social anthropology, history, great and little traditions, inter-civilisational interactions, Eurasia.

In the autumn of 1935, the ancestor whom we are honouring here journeyed to the East. During his stay at the University of Yenching, an Occidental educational institution with its Oriental-style campus situated in the northwestern outskirts of the city of Beijing (Beiping at the time), Alfred Radcliffe-Brown delivered a series of lectures to some of the pioneers of Chinese social sciences. These lectures, combined in a certain 'Chinese way' by Wu Wenzao (1990), the leader of the 'Chinese School of Sociology', with Robert Park's human ecology and Bronislaw Malinowski's (1948) ethnographic science, played a major role in the opening up of the 'Chinese phase in social anthropology' (Freedman 1963). Radcliffe-Brown was meanwhile reading extensively from Marcel Granet's sociology of Chinese cosmology, which convinced him that the concept of *yin–yang* was the Eastern counterpart of the ancient Greek idea of the 'union of contraries', fundamental to his own 'science of society'.[1]

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[1] At Yenching, Radcliffe-Brown came to know that in the social worlds of the Chinese, archaic practices such as ancestral worship and cosmological ideas such as *yin* and *yang* had continued to be effective.

Eighty years after his 'China trip', I received, with deep gratitude, the invitation to pay the present tribute to the mentor of mentors. I can be said to be much more fortunate than most of my predecessors in the East. When those in China whom Radcliffe-Brown taught were bearing all the hardships induced by the party-state-mobilised campaigns against 'bourgeois mentalities', I was just a child. In the period during which these pioneers were allowed back to their universities and academies, I was stabilising my career as a professional anthropologist. And then, they left our world one by one ...

But coming to this remote 'holy place' is inevitably both privilege and ordeal. The debts our mentors owed to their mentors and those I have owed to my mentors, as well as what we together have owed to such intellectual exchanges as those occurring in the 1930s and in the post-Cultural-Revolution periods, have piled up to make a mountain, compared to the weight of which my return, however ambitiously designed, is a small offering. I decided to offer what I now deliver, an exploration of the historical and relational qualities of 'Old World' cosmologies.

In an age in which archaic cosmologies, or, so to speak, age-old 'wisdoms of the world' are evoked either as radical critiques of hegemonic myths or summarily relativised as the legends of cultures or 'ontologies', the complexity of differences, similarities, and relations in and between traditions, to which our forerunners had begun to attach importance, need to remain at the centre of our anthropological concern. I will expound this point with constructive criticism of the self–other dichotomy, core to the ethnographic theories of witchcraft, 'primitive religion', 'savage mind', and 'civilisation', and to such scholarly new fashions as 'ontological anthropology'.

In Western anthropology, due to the subject's peculiar archaism, and perhaps anarchism, Eurasian traditions have most often been placed at the margins of ethnographic worlds. Leaving aside the benefits or otherwise of the ethnographic politics of such center–periphery relations, I wish to carry forward Radcliffe-Brown's accomplishments in comparative method, in which he always insisted on basing comparison on an inter-continental association of socio-logics and worldviews.[2]

Through some regional visitations inspired by a selection of relevant writings, in a so-called 'journey to the West', I move 'here and there', from the West to the South, from the South to the West and the East, from the North to the South, and back to the North and its intermediaries, thereby tracing the interaction of cosmological

With great curiosity, he began to develop a project to 'modernise' Granet's history of *Chinese Civilization* which he had begun to read during his Chicago years (Wu 1936). He involved several Chinese scholars in his project, seeking to gain from them an understanding of the ancient Chinese kinship system (Pan 1936) and its continued practice in contemporary lineage organisations (Lin 1936). Unfortunately, the implementation of the project was prevented by the Japanese attack in 1937 (Radcliffe-Brown 1977a, Stocking 1995: 353).

[2] Notwithstanding his emphasis on the 'primitive,' Radcliffe-Brown included ancient Chinese, Greek, and Roman cosmologies as relevant models (Radcliffe-Brown 1977a, 1977b).

traditions within and beyond the boundaries between worlds. My observations and thoughts from different places lead to an argument. In crossing the borders of some 'ethnographic regions' (Fardon 1990), I establish a link between two things: a resistance to typological contrasts, and, by synthesising Chinese and Western perspectives, images of what I have elsewhere defined as 'intermediaries' (Wang 2008), 'reciprocal alterity' (Wang 2014a), and 'supra-societal systems' (Wang 2015), concepts which should become clearer as my argument proceeds. I shall argue that, insofar as the traditions we study consist in certain cosmologies, then, be they Western or Eastern, Northern or Southern, they are internally varied and externally related.

The argument I make is more historical than 'sociological' and may strike some as removed from what Radcliffe-Brown envisaged for social anthropology. Nonetheless, I have taken it as close to the lesson he taught our forebears in the East and which is available only as a Chinese-language publication, namely that past–present and inside–outside relations are ethnographically complex (Wang 2016).[3] The lecture follows several directional turns (and perhaps returns) within which a framework of exposition unfolds.

MAGIC IN THE WEST

In my 'journey', I flew over the yellow and grey *landmass*, legendarily the enormous test Xuanzang, the Tang monk, was put to in his pilgrimage to the holy place in the West (India). But flying by aircraft instead of travelling on foot, I arrived smoothly at my destination, the greenest margin of Eurasia, from where I begin my narrative.

In the East, the case of England, in particular that of modern England, has been familiarised in varied ways. In Chinese late imperial times, England was known as the homeland of 'maritime barbarians (*yangyi*)' who, by means of giving free play to the 'hard power' of trade and war, brought major cosmic chaos to the Central Kingdom. But in due course, the negative side of the 'maritime barbarian' became forgotten. England was reconceptualised in our Occidentalist discourse in terms of 'soft power', the birthplace of such 'stranger-sages' as Darwin and Huxley, and was seen by both reformers and revolutionaries as the source of advanced institutions and social thought which would rescue their *tianxia* (all-under-Heaven) (Wang 2012) from History. For several decades of the post-imperial age, Frederich Engels' *The*

[3] In 'Some Suggestions for the Sociological Investigation of Rural Life in China' (Bulang [Radcliffe-Brown] 1936), a lecture delivered at Yenching (unavailable in English), Radcliffe-Brown focused on two aspects beyond 'synchronic or monochronic study': (1) the relation between ethnographic localities and other localities and between these localities and the greater areas of which they are parts, and (2) the changes in relations along the 'vertical' (historical) line.

Condition of the Working Class in England (1887) altered our image of the West again. England became synonymous with the world of the miserable. But in the late 1930s a positive image returned, as Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) redefined 'soft power' and inspired the minds of reformers.

In critiquing the 'post-colonialist' negligence of non-Western perspectives of alterity, I recently compiled a genealogy of Chinese Occidentalism (Wang 2014a) and set it against Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). We can continue adding images of modern England to this genealogy. But here I limit my attention to the fact that I go against the view of most of my colleagues in the East who view England in terms of simple linear history, whether good or bad. I argue instead that England is in fact made up of a history of plural cosmological traditions jostling ambivalently with each other.

Let me illustrate the point by referring to the magisterial study of the seeming 'decline' of magic by the English historian Keith Thomas (1973). In drawing our attention to the 'mental climate of early modern England', Thomas shows how new socio-logics and worldviews were promoted to replace old ones and how the promotion of the new cosmologies was complicated by the return of the mentalities and practices of magic. In so doing, Thomas demonstrates the replay of episodes in the dramatic interaction of magic and the modern.

According to Thomas, among the English, 'religion' was traditionally understood as 'a ritual method of living, not a set of dogmas', much as social anthropologists since Robertson Smith, Durkheim, and Radcliffe-Brown have viewed 'primitive religion' (Evans-Pritchard 1962, 1965). In late medieval times, the commoners paid hardly any attention to the difference between practising magic and performing ritual in the Church, and they well deployed the 'confusion' to press the Church into accepting the reality of what was happening. Consequently, not only were Church practices 'degraded', but magical practices were redesignated as religious ones. During the Protestant Reformation, however, this old religiosity was abandoned and a new one inserted into English society, which elevated the importance of the individual's faith in God and in scientific naturalism (Thomas 1973: 88). Thus, compared to the medieval Church, this reformed Anglican Church, much more rational and more hostile to magic, sought to forge a new direct link between the individual and God.

As Protestantism grew, the various late medieval, performatively efficacious procedures designed to serve the social and spiritual needs of the population were simplified, and the needs themselves redefined as what the individual should separately shoulder. Protestantism 'presented itself as a deliberate attempt to take the magical elements out of religion, to eliminate the idea that the rituals of the Church had about them a mechanical efficacy, and to abandon the effort to endow physical objects with supernatural qualities by the formula of consecration and exorcism' (Thomas 1973: 87). In a word, in paving the way for rationality and science,

Protestantism encouraged the individual to take a critical approach, and substituted the old legends of miracles with the norm of 'natural explanation'. The resultant split or rupture in the older Church created a gap which magic filled and so enjoyed a revival. So, while the campaigners for Protestantism and science were busily 'inventing' modernity from the very soil of the English country, various kinds of magic were flourishing, presenting the campaigners with a heavy burden.

The revival of magic was also observed in urban settings. Amazingly, as Thomas insists, in the 17th century 'It was in London that the sects, with their prophesies and healing miracles, were most successful; and it was there that the busiest astrologers had their practices.' And because the metropolis harboured every kind of popular magician, it 'was not exempt from witchcraft accusations' (796–7).

No history is a one-way street. The 'natives' of England in the 17th century persistently remained unconcerned by the 'distinction between magic and medicine.' Because of the persistence of magic, the expansion of naturalist cosmology in the form of an opposition between moral culture and material nature (Leach 1982: 36), proved to be nothing like a smooth process. 'Magic occupied the vacuum left by science' (Thomas 1973: 794–800), and its role in modern society continued to be 'more extensive than we yet appreciate' (799).

I see *Religion and the Decline of Magic* as making a good case for the anthropology of civilisations as envisaged by Robert Redfield half a century ago in several non-Western contexts—Mexico, India, and China. For medieval, modern, and 'late capitalist' England could largely be described in Redfield's terms as a long-term process in which old and new 'great traditions'—i.e., 'primary' and 'secondary' civilisations—came subsequently to reform the persons and things belonging to the 'little tradition' (Redfield 1973: 40–59, Wilcox 2004: 109–36). However, as I have also come to realise, to be applied in the English context, Redfield's theory of civilisation needs a couple of reformulations.

In its original definitions, 'primary' refers to the older civilisations internal to the societal wholes of the peasantries, while 'secondary' refers to the civilising process of modernisation intruding from outside—from the Christianities and the industrial power of the West—into such wholes as 'individualising forces'. In England, the sequence or order of the internal and the external seems reversed. With the 'primary' acting from the Romans outside and sometimes 'resisted' from within and the 'secondary' springing from within and exported abroad, England has indeed represented a different way of civilisation. In addition, the contestation of traditions in modern periods seems to end in what the historically optimistic Redfield had not expected: as Thomas points out, by removing the earlier ritualisation of religion, Protestant rationality left a gap that magic returned to fill in the lives of ordinary people, thus nurturing the needs of commoners who still equated ritual with magic.

In this regard, despite Macfarlane's caution,[4] I cannot help but associate the fortunes of English magic with what anthropologist Marshall Sahlins suggests about the new fortunes of Third World cultures. With the observation that 'culture is not disappearing', Sahlins (2000) argues that the cultural struggles of non-Western peoples have succeeded in undoing 'the received Western opposition of tradition versus change, custom versus rationality' (514).

Concentrating on the 'structures of conjuncture' between the West and the rest at the margins of the modern world-system, Sahlins hardly goes into the equivalent events occurring in the West. However, in effect, in these events the teleological structure extended to history has likewise been faced with a problem. The problem, in particular that defined by Thomas as the unanticipated persistence and revival of magic, has resonance with what Louis Dumont observes when attempting to explore different ways of modernity in modern France and Germany. As Dumont tells us, 'There are the new universal, modes of being that modern technics and perhaps modern ideas impose or carry with them, and there are older modes of being, proper to a population or a region, that manage to survive, more or less lively, more or less weakened or maimed by the former and their association with them' (1994: 4). In other words, the forces complicating the civilising process of the modern have not been from without but from within, but the outcome—sometimes explained in sociology as the resurgence of 'Axial Age' traditions in the multitude of modernities (Eisenstadt 2003)—has been similar to the persistence of the old in the 'other worlds'.[5]

To be succinct, by associating Thomas's case of England with the dramas of the interaction of traditions in non-Western contexts, we can arrive at the conclusion that the continuity of 'witch beliefs' is a more pervasive phenomenon than we have imagined.[6]

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[4] In *The Origin of English Individualism* (1978), Alan Macfarlane warns us against the danger of drawing parallels between England's transition and those in the currently developing Third World. According to him, England's transition took centuries longer than we have imagined. Even within Western Europe, it represents a special example—'special' because individualism had already been prevalent in the peasantry a few centuries before industrialisation. Drawing parallels between the untypical example and the hoped-for transitions can result in more intense trauma and difficulties in the Third World (202).

[5] The persistence of 'culture' seems also close to that of 'folk belief' in China where the contexts in which each of the 'civilising processes' of the Neo-Confucian, missionary, revolutionary, and reformist projects have one after another given new life to 'superstition' (Wang 2004, 2009).

[6] In Continental Europe, historical circumstances and cultural patterns there are undoubtedly not the same (Macfarlane 1978: 2–3); nevertheless, similar phenomena to 'superstitious persistence' must have been existent, otherwise we cannot properly explain classical anthropologists' broad inclusion of all the Continental 'cultural survivals', such as Arnold van Gennep's ethnographic accounts of the 'folkloric' in France, and the local foundation of the ethnos of Velkskunde and Völkerkunde in Germany (Stocking 1987: 46–77, 186–237).

OTHER IN THE SELF, SELF IN THE OTHER

'Magic' in early modern England is not the same as 'primitive religion', or, to be more fashionable, 'Amerindian perspectival ontology' in Amazonia (Viveiros de Castro 1998), divination in Cuba (Holbraad 2012), or shamanic 'body–soul dialectics' in Siberia (Willerslev 2007). However, in the so-called 'superstition' of persistent magical practices, there is a cosmology close to what is often perceived as 'animism'. It echoes what is designated in China as *mixin* ('confused belief'), an old concept employed by Chinese authorities to refer to the mental state of 'popular religion' (Feuchtwang 1989, Wang 2011). This is a kind of 'universalism', which, as Thomas notes, ignores the 'naturalistic' or 'rationalistic' distinction between humans and non-humans (be they divinities, tangible things, or intangible Powers).

The case Thomas makes for English magic, together with such recent ethnographies of contemporary Western witch-hunting allegations as Jean La Fontaine's *Speak of the Devil* (1998), reveal not only the blindness of Occidentalism to other phenomena than those of intruding remote Occidental Powers, and the misfortunes they brought to the 'Mandate of Heaven', but also challenges our discipline's 'location of cultures'. The anthropology of witchcraft, founded by E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1937) in an African context, presented 'superstition' as a hybrid of spirituality and physicality and made it look as if it had existed only in other parts of the world than the West.

But the 'mythical realities' of magic turned out to be far more universal than what was ethnographically represented as remote 'local knowledge'. Witchcraft and witchcraft beliefs are not absent or extinct in the West; on the contrary, their continued lifeforms, sometimes described as distant 'cosmologies of capitalism' surviving the 'civilisation' of colonial modernity (Sahlins 1988), have in fact been quite evident in the civilising West, not only in its early state but also in its 'high time'.

As La Fontaine points out, witchcraft and witchcraft beliefs have continued to exist in the age in which the most sophisticated technologies and scientific knowledge as well as the most powerful bureaucracy in human history have dominated Western social life. Some witchcraft accusations, based on certain myths of satanic abuse, continued to form a major part of English public life (La Fontaine 1998: 177–92). By the end of the last century, the naturalist approach to beliefs in supernatural phenomena had been deeply embedded in the civilisation of England. It supported a sceptical attitude (held mostly by independent intellectuals) towards the allegations of satanic abuse; nevertheless, 'the surface change hid a continuity that indicates the tenacity of the campaign and the importance, to both sides, of issues that underlie both the old and the new forms of witch-hunting' (163).

Admittedly, even if it could be said to refer to expressions of certain 'witchcraft beliefs', contemporary folklore of satanic abuse is different from witchcraft itself; but

for the allegations to be justified, it indeed requires the actual existence of its 'target phenomena'. So, as La Fontaine reckons, if there has indeed been a continuity of witch-hunting, then, at least to those who organised the campaigns, there must have been a continuity of witchcraft. This, to those who took the sceptical approach based on a belief in the triumph of reason, could not be the case. However, if we relate witchcraft to a broader category—e.g., non-operational 'superstitious activities'— we are able to find numerous such 'cultural survivals'. [7]

Presently, historical circumstances have altered; but the altering of condition and cosmology has not led to a 'breakthrough' in the structure of relationship of traditions. What is more, the campaigners opposing 'superstition' have turned out to be equally 'superstitious'. For they have treated science as if it was ethico-ideological guidance, 'trusted' in technology as if it would perform miracles, and made their political claims sound as if they were as effective as the 'confusions of beliefs'.

Perhaps the predicaments of modernity and tradition explain why the ethnographer of science, Bruno Latour has given one of his books the title *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), which would have been more inspiring had he extended his scope of the anthropology of the moderns to the sphere of magic. On this, perhaps we can append a theoretical implication. To our appreciation of the implication of modernity being among traditions, or even being one tradition among several others, historians like Thomas and anthropologists like La Fontaine have made major contributions. By bringing to light the fact that different cosmologies—even those as mutually contradictory as modern and traditional—share the fate of being co-present in history, the historian and the anthropologist of Western magic and witchcraft have given us a new sense of 'existence'.

'... he who cannot find wonder, mystery, awe, the sense of a new world and an undiscovered realm in the place by the Grays Inn Road will never find those secrets elsewhere, not in the heart of Africa.'[8] What Arthur Machen famously said about London may be exaggerated; but it conveys something relevant to the issue we have just raised. The Chinese proverb 'seeking far and neglecting what lies close at hand (*shejin qiuyuan*)' seems to apply well to some aspects of anthropology.

Needless to say, the pursuit of 'the view from afar' (Lévi-Strauss 1985) has its recognised merits, and we often remain unwilling to embrace the enterprise of repatriated anthropology (Marcus & Fischer 1986: 111–36). However, reading about English magic, one wonders if it is unproblematic to sacrifice the 'unnecessary' traditions

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[7] As Thomas also argues, in today's England, 'astrologers and fortune-tellers continue to be patronised by those for whom psychiarists and psycho-analysts have not provided a satisfactory substitute'. On the other hand, 'contemporary doctors and surgeons engage in many ritual practices of a non-operational kind' (Thomas 1973: 799).
[8] Cited from Ackroyd (2001: 503).

within anthropology's own birthplace (the West) as the price for the recursion of the subject's civilisational self-identification. And does not the anthropological distancing of the other, intended as emancipating our discipline's understanding of life, society, and world from the singularising process of 'civilisation', end, unfortunately, in the 'expulsion' of human understanding of being in the universe, core to what we mean by 'cosmology'?

COSMOLOGIES OF THE WEST AND THE REST

To specify the issue, let me dwell on our French colleague Philip Descola's *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2013), a project which, for the very reason we have just indicated, has regrettably failed in its attempt to subvert the burgeoning hegemony of the distancing dichotomy in anthropology.

In this book, Descola provides an extensive comparative perspective. Perhaps because he has been reoriented towards an animistic mode of knowledge, the author has freed himself from earlier comparative frameworks. What are given up are certain disciplinary derivatives of naturalism, which, as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1977) indicated some decades ago, are deeply troubled by the classical issue of whether the affinity between cultures 'is to be explained by a common origin or by an accidental resemblance between the structural principles which govern the social organisation and religious beliefs in both areas' (133). Unlike most of the preceding comparisons, which sought either to explain away the troubling relationship between 'singularity and multitude' or to place singularity (Western) outside multitude (the rest), Descola simply situates the 'one' among all others, making the modern European catalogue of persons and things a member of a larger catalogue of types.

The 'ontologies' Descola fetches from the distant and compares with the near (naturalism) are mainly two—animism and totemism—and these can be characterised in the anthropologist's own words as follows:

> Naturalism and animism are all-inclusive hierarchical schemas that are the polar opposites of each other. In the one, the universality of physicality extends its system to cover the contingencies of interiority; in the other, the generalization of interiority becomes a means of attenuating the effect of differences of physicality. Totemism, in contrast, appears as a symmetrical schema characterized by a double continuity of both interiority and physicalities, the logical complement to which can only be another symmetrical schema. (Descola 2013: 9)

With such distinctions in hand, Descola proceeds to map the geographic distribution of the ontologies in his chapter on the non-autonomous essence of the wild and the domesticated, where he dwells most heavily on the remote realms of animism and

totemism, the nomadic spaces, the Amazonian gardens and forests, the rice paddy, the hunters' resorts, and so on. He then contrasts these realms with the modern dwellings of naturalistic existence, whose 'structural faults', as he reveals, have become apparent since the Enlightenment. Between the two worlds, Descola adds a long frontier, made up of medieval European, ancient Chinese and Mexican, and contemporary African constructs of 'analogism'.

The frontier ontology is defined as 'a mode of identification that divides up the whole collection of existing beings into a multiplicity of essences, forms, and substances separated by small distinctions and sometimes arranged on a gradual scale so that it becomes possible to recompose the system of initial contrasts into a dense network of analogies that link together the intrinsic properties of the entities that are distinguished in it.' As Descola continues, the mode 'is a hermeneutic dream of plenitude that arises out of a sense of dissatisfaction' (201–2).

Eventually Descola creates a certain trichotomic division of the world, close to that envisaged long ago by Marcel Mauss (1990). For Mauss, the three-fold worlds are the circles of the primitive, the historically archaic, and the modern, while for Descola, they are those of the 'primitive' (animistic or totemic), the analogist, and the naturalist. The worlds, constituted with the same concentric structure of the 'three rings' (Wang 2015: 136–66), are compared from a viewpoint opposing them to ethnocentrism.

Seemingly, this kind of worldscape is similar to the Japanese ethnologist Umesao Tadao's map of Eurasian civilisations.[9] Both are opposed to the old dualisms such as that of East and West, both are adapted to the concentric conception of Eurasia. Nonetheless, a major difference exists between the two. While Umesao presented the core areas of Eurasia (India, China, and Arabic worlds) as encircled by British, French, German, and Japanese 'advanced modern civilisations' from East and West, Descola, engaging all available ethnographies of 'primitive ontologies' from his own South and some others' North (Ingold 1986, Pedersen 2001), depicts it in terms of the

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[9] By the late 19th century at the latest, Japanese intellectuals had invented their own Orientalism and Occidentalism. Siding with Western Europe, they tended to see China and India, despite both being situated to the West of Japan, as 'Oriental,' and to regard Japan and Western Europe as both 'Occidental'. So, in the Japanese perspective, Orientalism refers to Japanese narratives about China and India, while Occidentalism denotes the Western and modern civilisation. In the post-war decades, Umesao Tadao (2003) reworked the old dichotomy into a new concentric model of Eurasia. He substituted the 'nonsensical' diametric model of East and West with his concentric model of two zones. According to this new perspective of the world, Japan and Western Europe (Great Britain, France, and Germany) form a unity of advanced civilisations (Zone One), encircling Zone Two (China, India, Arabic worlds, and Russia), the core areas of Eurasia. While advanced capitalism and bourgeoisie control of power are the characteristic systems of Zone One countries, the opposite scenarios—undevelopment and revolutions—are seen in Zone Two (38–61).

dichotomy between the lands of totalitarian analogism and aggressive naturalism and those of animism and totemism surrounding them. Compared with Omesao's ethnocentric and modernist perspective, Descola's approach is thus considerably more alter-centric and archaic. Whatever it ends in, it allows the author to derive a comparative anthropology from subverting the accepted hierarchy of centre–periphery relations.

As an endeavour in making modern naturalism 'more accommodating to nonmodern cosmologies and better adapted to the circulation of facts and values' (xvii), *Beyond Nature and Culture* tells us a great deal about different ways of being in the universe. It brings into play not only the different 'ontologies' of the 'low' natives, and the 'high' shamans, but also those of the priests, poets, artists, scientists, and even Confucians. By means of centring the remote and marginalising the near, and identifying the middle, he successfully relativises Western modern socio-logics and worldviews.

I see good reason to believe that Descola 'offers a radical change in the current anthropological trajectory' (Sahlins 2013: xii). However, this has not prevented me from feeling somewhat disconcerted by the implicit contrasts lurking behind the trichotomy.

In Descola's overall depiction, the naturalistic 'mode' on this side of the planet is now chiefly organised by the thinking subjects in Europe who all the time since the emergence of modernity feel a need to choose between being human or otherwise, and demand a naturalistic schema in which they can locate their own lives; and by contrast, the 'natives' on the other side who appear much more 'cosmopolitan'—living, as they do, in enchanted social morphologies on the blurred boundaries between interiority and physicality, enjoying conceptual mobilities along the animistic, totemistic, analogical journeys, while remaining in their own traditions of cosmological authenticity. This picture of contrasted cultures has struck me as what may be labelled 'typological self-identification'.

Descola's mental travel departs from the wonders of the 'unthinking' side of the Earth, where the wisdoms of the world are found in the local ontological realities. Neither does Descola end his travel simply in the West (he arrives at a conclusion concerning all humans), nor does he characterise the non-naturalist cosmologies as all alien to Europe (he seems to say that the ancients in the West were not that different from others). Nonetheless, in imposing a certain scepticism upon the possibility of creating functional hybrids out of components of what he perceives as 'irreconcilable properties' (Descola 2013: 392), he has drawn out a circle of boundaries around naturalism and attributes it to the modern (Western). In so doing, he has made the 'anthropology of nature', supposedly complementary to the 'anthropology of culture', dependent upon the principles with which Evans-Pritchard enhanced the efficacy of the anthropology of witchcraft.

FROM INNER NEW GUINEA TO ANCIENT GREECE TO CHINA: 'UNITIES OF DIVERSITY'

Any anthropology which feeds itself on such a contrast between self and other inevitably misses the fact that any society, culture, or civilisation is a 'unity of diversity' (Fei 1988). Even in the most distant realms which some would identify as the worlds of animism and totemism, cosmologies can be far more varied and divided than we have imagined. For instance, in the region of the Mountain Ok in inner New Guinea, among the small population of 15,000 individuals, the variation the anthropologist Frederick Barth (1987) found in the local cosmological systems is as enormous as that found in 'complex societies'. More or less similar to Descola's Achuar, the Mountain Ok people, whose languages are closely cognate, physical types indistinguishable, and house and dress strikingly similar, are a group who live in a 'simple economy', with their subsistence based on horticulture and extensive hunting and collecting of forest and streambed products as well as raising domestic pigs. However, among them, 'religious practices and beliefs vary dramatically as between groups and communities' (2–3). Internal cultural contrasts can easily be detected in the cults of ancestors, symbolism in initiation, ideas of conception, and uses of fire. Even the major modes in which religious and cosmological ideas are expressed differ dramatically between Mountain Ok communities.

As Barth notes, in locating personally remembered events, while Baktaman consolidate their vision in terms of the change 'from a better past when the ancestors were alive and taro and welfare were better, to a present time (since e.1950) when steel axes have replaced stone axes (both obtained externally through ceremonial trade) and the blessing of ancestor has failed', Telefolmin have developed from the same set of concerns and experiences certain more embracing and abstract concepts. What is more, on their part, the Bimin-Kushusmin 'have created a different and cyclical vision. Baktaman envision the beginning of human life from a kind of covenant with the original ancestor—the tree-foraging, ground-burrowing "white" marsupial who bestowed taro and instituted clan organisation' (49). Thus, as Barth argues, if there is an Ok cosmology, then it is distributed as sub-traditions between numerous places (villages and temples), and these sub-traditions are subject to constant oscillations between public performances and personal 'magical' rituals.[10]

In comparing his 'Neolithic' Ok example with those found in the 'complex societies' where the development of literacy has produced a novel durability of verbal state-ments, Barth tends to see the non-literate Ok people as keeping more multivocal and multivalent sacred symbols (75–6). We have no answer to the question of whether

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[10] This is perhaps similar to the pendulum of the ideal types of hierarchy and egalitarianism in Highland Burma (Leach 1954)

civilisations with literacy are in fact less multivalent than the 'primitive societies'; but we are certain that they are no less multivocal. As I shall show, as with Barth's Mountain Ok cosmology, a civilisation fed on literacy can be understood as the precipitate of a cultural history of changeability, producing parallelism, convergence, and divergence.

We first move to the North, to look at the cosmological examples of the 'Axial Age' provided by Greece and China. Descola avoids simply following the ancient Greek definition of naturalism (172–3). However, in most places, he models the West in such a way that his narratives remind us of what the French mythologist Jean-Pierre Vernant (2006: 157–260) said decades ago about classical Greek cosmology.

As Vernant postulates, prior to the coming of age of philosophical cosmologies, the early model of what may be called 'geometric naturalism' had evolved quietly in the life of Greek society. This kind of 'geometry' was political, in that the *meson*, or middle, defines the shared and public domain (the *xunon*), as opposed to what is private and individual. This geometrical form of centre–periphery relations originated in the Greeks' domestication of a religious worldscape primarily charted by the 'Easterners'; but it was a radically different cosmology from those patterned in the kingdoms of the Oriental.

On the basis of this observation, Vernant makes the following contrast between East and West:

> In the Eastern Kingdoms, political space took the form of a pyramid, dominated by a king, with a hierarchy of powers, prerogatives, and functions stretching from top to bottom. In the city-state, in contrast, political space is symmetrically organized around a central point, as a geometrical schema of reversible relationships governed by equilibrium and reciprocity among equals. (Vernant 2006: 214)

In presenting the geometry of ancient Greece, Vernant emphasises that this is a culture of political space with a perspective on the universe. Matured in Anaximander's philosophy, archaic Western cosmology defined the earth as immobile and situated geometrically at the centre of the universe so that all the surrounding stars could be seen as equally moving around it. By contrast, in the so-called 'Eastern kingdoms', astronomy was 'arithmetic' rather than 'geometric'. There, accurate knowledge of certain celestial phenomena was well developed, but no geometric model was advanced to represent the movement of the stars in the sky (198–9).

The contrast Vernant sets up intrigues us as being similar to that between naturalism and analogism established by Descola, especially when he relates analogism to Louis Dumont's Indian hierarchy (Dumont 1980) and Marcel Granet's Chinese relationalism (Granet 1930, 1932). The two theorised comparisons of archaic cosmologies together define the deeply historical geo-cosmic models behind Occidental

democracy and 'Oriental despotism'. However, this contrast makes little sense of each of the areas of East and West.

I do not mean that ancient Greek and Chinese 'wisdoms of the world' were the same. As I can appreciate, certain important differences existed between the two 'ends' of Eurasia, and these can be exemplified with different 'myths of creation', in particular those of Kronos and Pangu.

Drawing on Edmund Leach (1981: 124–31), Anthony Aveni (1995) argues that the myth of Kronos, the religious pendulum bridging the calendars of 'work and days' and the almanac, is based on the myth narrated as 'a lengthy genealogical catalogue of alternating good and evil deities who represent different parts and powers of a highly animate, personified universe' (58). In it, creation or the origin of the order of time is traced back to the separation of Father-Heaven and Mother-Earth: 'For the Greeks, Kronos created the pattern when, out of the homogenous symmetry of chaos, he polarised the universe. He made time when he parted the earth and the sky, when he separated the male principle that fell into the sea to become its own opposite, the female principle in the form of Aphrodite' (63).

In the Chinese 'genesis' myths—if they can be called such—Pangu (literally 'Plate Ancient'), a hairy giant with horns on his head and clad in furs, is the closest to Kronos. Legends suggest that in the beginning there was only chaos or 'con-fused (I have added an '-' to 'confused', to avoid the word being confused with 'confusion') complexity' (*hundun*). Over about 18,000 years, this coalesced into a cosmic egg. From the egg, Pangu emerged and began to order the world. Like Kronos, he sought to separate sky from earth and *yin* from *yang* with a swing of his giant axe. But unlike Kronos, Pangu did not go back and forth in-between sky and earth: to keep sky and earth apart, he simply stood between them and pushed up the sky. This task took 18,000 years; with each day the sky grew ten feet (three metres) higher, the earth ten feet wider, and Pangu ten feet taller. The myth continues that after the 18,000 years had elapsed, Pangu himself became the original source of all things in the world (Yuan 1991: 73–5).

A certain contrast can be drawn from the different myths. In the ancient Greek myth, by means of separation, Kronos 'performed out' the mobile element of time. In early China, in a comparable myth, the 'division of labour' between the male and female principles, perceived as 'natural' in being what originally existed, were only reproduced by Pangu. It seems arguable that the myths of Kronos and Pangu repre-sent two different types of cosmology: one classificatory and, perhaps, 'analytical'; the other 'holistic'.

However, this does not mean that there is no 'reciprocal translatability' (Lévi-Strauss 1970) or 'transformation of each other' (Goody 1996) between the two: while the classificatory Kronos is insignificant without the reference of its opposite, chaos,

or the 'con-fused complexity', the 'holistic' Pangu was reliant, in its own making, on the 'pre-existent senses' of the distinctions between celestial and earthly levels and persons and objects. More importantly, internal variation seems to be characteristic of the philosophical cosmologies in West and East,

Let us return to the issue of ancient Greek 'naturalism'. According to philosopher Rémi Brague, this is not the whole story of ancient Greek cosmology. The Greek 'Axial Age' saw Socrates's 'sociologism' and Plato's cosmologism, as well as such other schools as Atomism, the Scriptures, and Gnosticism (Brague 2003). Thus, apart from the Greece invented by Socrates and restored by Plato, there were three other Greeces. These four models were also 'anthropologies' because they all related the world to human knowledge and judgement.

As Brague explains,

> Out of the Greek concept of the world as kosmos there arose an anthropological dimension. This might appear paradoxical if, as I have assumed, the concept of 'world' only becomes possible at the moment when man has been excluded from its contents. In fact, the Greek idea of world contains an implicit appeal to the idea of subject, which it obliquely draws into it. Man is completely excluded from any active role in the construction of the world. But it is exactly because man does no 'making' to the world, because his presence adds nothing to any part of the world and his absence takes nothing from it, that he is able to appear as the subject to which the world shows itself in its totality. (Brague 2003: 24–5)

In each of the four models, there are thus the intrinsic ontological value of the world and the interest a knowledge of it has for humans. It is by way of these two means of access that the four models offer different perspectives, including the following:

> In the Timaeus Plato responds in a very positive way to the two questions about the value and the interest of the world: the world is what is best, and knowledge of it is supremely interesting, since such knowledge and it alone, enables us to reach the full-ness of our own humanity. For Epicurus, the world such as it is is not bad, but it has no more value than any other arrangement of atoms; a knowledge of it, in theory, is not indispensible, but it is useful in fact, since it enables one to be assured. For those who claim to be of Abraham, the world is good, and even 'very good,' because it is the work of a good God; a knowledge of it is also useful, since it leads to a knowledge of the Creator. For Gnostics the world, the work of a clumsy or perverted demiurge, is bad. (70)

Brague also tells us that at a later stage, some of those diverse 'concepts of things/persons' got marginalised by the Abrahamic vision of the world; but the Abrahamic vision itself was not a way of being post-traditional—it restored the archaic cosmology of sacrifice and managed by so doing to stay on a higher plane. The Abrahamic

vision, as Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1981) tell us, in fact stayed 'down' in the tracks of the exchange ethics of classical sociologism.

Were one to take 'sociologism' and exchange ethics as naturalistic 'socio-centric modes', one would reduce all these into different manifestations of naturalism and analogism: for instance, Atomism into the original statement of naturalism and cosmologism into socially related cosmic patterns. In whatever ways these can be related to the typology entertained in Descola's *Beyond Nature and Culture*, the overall impression we just gained from reading the cosmologies of Antiquity reveals the plurality of thoughts, a closer examination of which would show that the Greek 'Axial Age' was not a 'society' with a correspondent cosmological tradition, be it analogism, naturalism, or something else, but a world in which a variety of traditions coexisted and interacted over space through time to make the *polis*. The shapes of the civilisation, being not devoid of relations with other shapes, were not that different from those that anthropologists observe in such 'living Neolithic societies' as that of the Mountain Ok. Not only in the Western part of Eurasia but also in the Eastern can such a culture history of internally varying traditions be reconstructed.

In an interview (Kohn 2009), regarding the overall patterns of the four modes, Descola gives the following synopsis:

> 1) animism, in which differently embodied kinds of humans and non-humans share a similar interiority, this is exemplified by Amazonian multinaturalism; 2) naturalism, where humans and nonhumans share a physicality but only humans have an interiority, a mode best exemplified by modern western science; 3) totemism, where certain groupings of humans and non-humans are united because they share interior as well as physical attributes, a mode found in Aboriginal Australia; and, 4) analogism, in which humans and non-humans are understood to be made up of fragmented essences, essences whose relationships can be mapped onto similarly linked essences possessed by other entities, this is a mode exemplified, as you note, by the ancient Inca State. (Kohn 2009: 141)

The four modes Descola has alloted to their own rooms of existence have impressed me as mostly available—though in a most cases in combined forms or in fragments—in ancient China.

Influenced by Edward Burnett Tylor, who spent seven lengthy chapters on animism in his masterpiece *Primitive Culture* (1871), a number of early-20th-century Chinese scholars extended the concept of 'survival' to their own culture, and they discovered a great number of expansive systems of animistic customs and beliefs among the peasants and ethnic minorities (e.g., the Heze in the Northeastern frontiers, see Ling 1931) as well as in the classical records (Jiang 1928). But as a neatly defined type, animism seems not to find a precise counterpart in written Chinese philosophies. However, once combined with naturalism, it becomes 'Chinese', as in the ontology shared by first-generation Daoist philosophers.

For instance, Zhuangzi (Chuang-tzu), who rejected almost all forms of classification, said that 'the sages ... see things in the light of Heaven [Chinese notion of Nature]. [For them], the "this" is also "that". The "that" is also "this" ' (Chuang-Tzu 1989 [edn]: 44). Like the animists, Zhuangzi did not differentiate humans ('this' or 'that') from non-humans ('that' or 'this') or non-humans from humans, and he even often described his own physical transformation into a flying bird and a dreaming butterfly; but he did not see the sameness between humans and non-humans in the light of 'culture' which he would attribute to Confucian socio-logics—he saw it instead in the light of Heaven, the ultimate level of existence which, as more or less the 'natural law' of nothingness but not being, was definable neither in terms of materiality nor in terms of spirituality.

Zhuangzi's 'depersonification' and 'declassification' of the world, as philosophical thinking, were undoubtedly not the same as either animistic, perspectival cultural universalism or natural relativism (Viveiros de Castro 2012). Articulated as a response to the situation associated with the over-pervasiveness of deity cults, although it seemed to include an ontology of metamorphosis, Daoist philosophy seemed far from the universalism of 'interiority'. A more appropriate understanding of it requires a situational approach: the cosmology emerged out of its confrontation with another philosophy, also concerned with the pervasiveness of deity cults in the 'little traditions'—Confucianism—which was in turn derived from certain sociologistic reactions to the cosmologism of Daoism.

Confucius nurtured his ideal of 'being social' neither in the non-human world nor in human society, but in the intermediary between nature and civilisation, and he derived his socio-logics from the correspondence between 'geo-cosmic patterns' and 'human (social) order' (Fung 2011: 56–89, 398–419). Although he did not explicitly trace human ancestry to non-humans as most totemists did (Viveiros de Castro 2012: 73–104, Ingold 2000: 132–52), he did strongly emphasise the political efficacy of kinship, which, to him, not only made proper relations for the living but also related them as living persons/things with ancestors as subject/objects.

It is true that in ancient Chinese cosmologies, the *xing* (nature) of an existing being is 'not produced by a dynamic opposition between mind and matter' (Descola 2013: 207). However, the terms '*xing'* does not simply mean what expresses 'the distinctions that are established between the states of elements and the proportions of their respective mixtures' (Ibid.). As I will explain, even if we insist on 'discovering' certain 'analogistic' remnants in Chinese cosmologies, we should be warned against treating parts as wholes.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Wang Guowei (1908), the mentor of almost all modern Chinese historians, argued that, in classical times, apart from the two different philosophies just mentioned, a third philosophical tradition emerged in the classical poetic excursions, in which the thinker and poet Qu Yuan transgressed the

boundary between the two schools by means of analogising the Confucian socio-centric worldview to the ideal of 'other things' in the wilds. Unlike Confucius, who 'by respect for the Spirits keeps them at a distance' (Confucius 1998 [edn]:73),[11] as Wang (1908) argues, Qu Yuan's mind was all the time among the Spirits. We should not consider Qu Yuan's poems to be the same as what is expressed in 'the savage mind'; but the kind of spiritual excursions he made in his poetic creativities also mapped the relationship of the fragmented essences of humans and non-humans onto similarly linked essences possessed by other entities, and it has been said to be pervasive throughout the history of Chinese literature and 'wild' or vernacular historiography (*yeshi*). Because Qu Yuan moved between Daoism and Confucianism, he made in his own mind (and heart, I must add) a good synthesis. His poems proved to have 'ten thousand things (*wanwu*)'—plants, animals, landscapes, celestial beings, ancestral spirits, etc—talking just like living humans[12]—to inspire and lift him up beyond chaotic human worlds onto the higher plane of wisdom. These entities also proved to have many of the sociological anxieties which Confucius had; but they were more animistic, because they made a large sum of non-humans contrastively relevant to humans.

SYNOPSIS OF A GEOHISTORY OF SOME VARIED AND RELATED MODELS

In integrating culture and nature into a social system (Descola 1994), one accomplishes a critique of sociologism and environmentalism, whose common error has been its naturalistic dualism. However, one contines to be faced with the difficulties of freeing the social from the restrictions of the idea of self-contained cultures. The ontologies under speculation are still discrete ways of 'identification' and 'relations', of persons identifying themselves with things, and things identifying themselves with persons (Descola, 2013: 112), and 'the external links between beings and things that are detectable in typical behavior patterns and may be partially translatable into concrete social norms' (113). Still, they are altered expressions of the composite mode of dividual

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[11] This explains why modern Confucianists like Qian Mu (2004) do not believe that China has anything to do with animism, which they, in most cases, identify with the West, where, as they perceive it, the Spirits are everywhere.

[12] Therefore, Qu Yuan can be said to be greatly different from the Western philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2012) notes, does not believe in the possibility of human–animal communication, and he is more similar to the Amerindians, for whom, as Viveiros de Castro describes, 'lions, or rather jaguars, not only can talk, but we are perfectly able to understand what they say—they "speak of" exactly the same things as we do' (112).

and individual persons and groups who are related with each other only to the extent that 'each party is irreducibly differentiated from the other' (Strathern 1988: 13–14). These altered expressions surely make a syntax of the combinations of physicalities and interiorities, but, having been characterised as usual as the manifestations of the differences determined by cultures, they remain removed from the so-called 'ontological realities', which, as I believe, often gain their identities across the boundaries of cultures.

What Sahlins brilliantly argues about the dialectic of inter-cultural identification and relation can be repeated here as a critique of the topological view of ontologies:

> Divinities or enemies, ancestors or affines, the Others are in various ways in the necessary conditions of a society's existence. Sources of power and cultural good things, though they may also be dangerous, these beings from the beyond represent a predicament of dependency in which all peoples find themselves. All must construct their own existence in relation to external conditions, natural or social, which they did not create or control, yet cannot avoid. They are constrained in some ways, if never the only possible way, by the passage of the seasons, the annual rainfall, the customs and actions of their neighbors. In such respects, no culture is sui generis. And a more or less self-conscious fabrication of culture in response to imperious outside 'pressures' is a normal process—dialectic or schismogenic, perhaps, but not pathogenic. (Sahlins 2000: 489)

Because no society exists alone, 'The dialectic of similarity and difference, of convergence of contents and divergence of schemes, is a normal mode of cultural production' (Sahlins 1999: 411).

As Sahlins proposes, to 'fetch' the facts of the related cultures, we can simply revisit the ethnographies which have well indicated that 'cultures were never as bounded, self-contained and self-sustaining as postmodernism pretends that modernism pretends'. However, being more concerned with the dialectic of similarity and difference of the related 'Old World' traditions, I have chosen to add to the ethnographic enterprise a synoptic geo-history of the political cosmologies in the Eastern part of Eurasia.

Chinese geo-cosmic perspectives have been studied as advanced in the 'age of chronology', beginning in the 8th century BCE within the geographic confines of the 'agrarian civilisation' of the 'Central Plains'. In most of the available interpretations, the civilisation has been understood as different from the 'frontiers' where most of the nomads and hunter-gatherers were. It thus has been represented with hardly any reference to the ontologies of the 'peripheral peoples.' Instead of the identification and relations between hunters and prey, humans and 'beasts', herdsmen and animals, the cosmologies in the 'agrarian' world have been construed with reference to plants, soil, water, birds, butterflies, wind, and sky, and the 'ecologies of relationship' they yielded

have been seen as neither the primitive way of sharing and trust, nor the pastoralist ontology of power—dominance and subordination (Ingold 2000: 61–76). That is to say, they have been characterised as something 'similar to that of the farmer who does no more than encourage the growth of his plants and in no way intervenes in the process of germination and growth' (Gernet & Vernant 1990: 84).

However, 'adaptation', a concept often appearing in the characterisation of 'agrarian civilisation' rendered by Western sinologists and by modern Chinese intellectuals alike,[13] represents only the tip of the iceberg of the universe of the varied cosmological ideas in the East, even if we only speak about China's 'Central Plains'.

Liang Qichao (1902), in mapping the histories of classical Chinese ideas in geographic terms, and writing as early as 1902, demonstrated that the 'hundred schools of thought' were all deeply rooted in the varied local worlds of the culturally differentiated regions. The higher level regional division was that between North and South, roughly corresponding to the division between the two major civilisations advanced along the Yellow River and the Yangtse River. In different eco-geographic situations, the two great civilisations advanced different agricultural and political systems, and founded different discursive traditions. In the North, agriculture was conducted in harsher environments, where for their limited livelihood, the humans competed among themselves. In the contexts of tension, stronger political powers were developed, and thinkers, be they Confucians or Legalists, had their minds oriented toward pragmatics, action, hierarchy, and state power. In the South, in contrast, agriculture, conducted on more fertile land and in friendlier environments, more easily yielded great harvests, and there thus saw, on the one hand, less serious social tensions, and on the other hand, more non-humanistic ontologies. There in the South, thinkers, with their eyes more open to the universe, were more inclined to develop metaphysics, inaction, equality, and anarchy. As Liang concludes, in the North, thinkers made efforts to make the rulers and the commoners follow the way of Heaven which they ought to fear, whereas in the South, they sought to remain in the state of inaction under Heaven (143–58).

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[13] A certain Eastern negation of the naturalist dichotomy has become dominant in past decades. In two mutually related works, the late Fei Xiao-tong provides such a negation. In one work, 'Re-examining the Cultural Constructs of the Interrelationship Between Humans and Nature' (Fei 2004), Fei puts the ancient Chinese perspective of Heaven–human (nature–culture) unity side by side with the worldview of the world's 'ethnic peoples' and treats them as an alternative to the Western dichotomous cosmology, which, as Fei argues, has been behind all industrial powers and the man-made disasters they have brought to the world; in another work, 'On Extending the Frontiers of Traditional Sociology' (Fei 2009), argues that Western social sciences, constructed upon the destructive cosmological basis of dichotomism, cannot continue to be beneficial; alternatively, a new sociology conceptualised in the Eastern philosophical terms of Heaven–human unity must be invented. Leaving aside the issue of Fei's past devotion to rural industrialisation, we still find in his critiques, which can definitely impress many of us as finely in line with recent cosmological reconsiderations in Western anthropology, a sense of ethnocentrism.

In addition to the Northern (Confucian and Legalist) and Southern (Daoist) schools, there were other schools: for instance, the one invented by Mozi. Born in the archaic kingdom of Song situated between North and South, Mozi combined the two major schools into a third. He embraced the Confucian orientation toward pragmaticism and action, but he also adopted Daoist metaphysics and inaction (148).

In each of the higher level schools, there were sub-schools, which became more divided in the periods in which communication (including debates) between different cosmological traditions became frequent. Convergence often yielded not only combination but also differentiation. Being virtually a 'great tradition', each of the sub-traditions tended to uproot itself in order to join the more 'universal' dialogues with the other greater schools. However, what made its self-identity tangible was paradoxically its link to local culture. For instance, Yellow River Valley in the North had two major sub-regions: the West (upper basin of Yellow River) and the East (lower basin of Yellow River), the latter open to the sea, the former situated within the confined agricultural areas restricted by the mountains. Confucianism was prevalent in both the sub-regions. Nonetheless, in the Western sub-region, it was much more concerned with the worldly affairs of humans, whereas in the Eastern sub-region, faced with pressures from the popular great tradition of the necromancers' cosmology, it had to allow more space for speculation about 'celestial issues' (150–1).

A kind of 'geographic determinism' hidden in Liang's narrative worries many of us; but this depiction of the regional dynamics of cosmological formation has impressed me as well illustrating the temporal and spatial variations of cosmology in the long centuries of the pre-imperial period (the so-called 'Axial Age'). The variations stemming from the constant inter-regional division and interaction in fact had emerged in an earlier period than Liang's age of 'the hundred schools'.

Long before the 'hundred schools' gave voice, in late Neolithic times, in conceptualising the oneness, similarity, or distinction between humans and non-humans, and in advancing their wisdoms of the world, the peoples occupying different regions had come to differentiate the beings residing in the cultivated and the wild, the house and the mountains, and the worlds below and beyond. They seemed not to be satisfied with such binaries, and they multiplied them with a concentric geo-cosmic model of quarters surrounding the centre or, conversely, the centre orienting to the quarters. The model, later known as that of 'five quarters/directions (*wufang*)' or, alternatively, that of 'pentology', could be said to be a composite one, a model mediating the reciprocating binaries (inside and outside, self and other) and the hierarchical triads (upper, middle, and lower levels, e.g., Heaven, humans, and Earth) and making the combination of horizontality (binaries) and verticality (triads) possible.[14]

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[14] A recent astro-archaeological reinterpretation of numerous findings has indicated that the model had been applied in late Neolithic times in various spatial patterns of the sacrificial platforms situated

In late Neolithic times, there had not been the 'Central Kingdom', and the Eastern part of Eurasia formed a multitude of the 'regional chieftains (*fangguo*)', and so, as the Chinese archaeologist Su Bingqi (1999) points out, was just like the 'sky sown with stars (*mantian xingdou*)'.

Following Liang's three-fold division of cultural areas, the historian and mythologist Xu Xusheng (1932) long ago mapped these 'chieftains' into three major groups (Xu 1932). According to Xu, these groups, who jointly made the history of civilisation through their contestations, comprised Chinese (the Western group), 'barbarians'—the 'Eastern barbarians' (known as Yi) and the 'Southern barbarians' (known as Man)—each inhabiting West, East, and South.

The archaic geo-cosmic model of 'pentology' seems to have been shared by all the 'chieftains', but it also seems to have been variously conceptualised in different 'cultural areas'. While in the Eastern basin of the Yellow River, the archaic kingdoms had their worlds more vertically oriented, placing more emphasis on the link between the low (humans) and the high (gods and Heaven), in the West the kingdoms put more emphasis on the middle realms (mountains and rivers) in which they sought to become connected with the ancestors, the non-humans, and Heaven. For instance, in the Shang dynasty (approximately 1600 to 1046 BCE), whose founders brought with them the tradition of one of the archaic kingdoms in the East and the Northeast, the model combined a certain 'ancestral landscape' (Keightley 2000) in a system of Di, in which the categories of supreme heavenly deities and ritual practices worked together to erect the verticality of the kingly. In the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE), whose founders were the descendants of several of the archaic chieftains in the West previously attached to Shang as fiefs, the Shang model was reconstituted with political ontologies derived from the ancestors in the West, and was much more horizontal (binary, feudal, reciprocal, and 'outward-going') (Wang 2014a: 49–86). In addition, there was a third version in the South, a less politico-religious one, in which the Miao group or the 'Southern barbarians', having been excluded from the contest of dynastic alternations in the North, found their own opportunities to expand into the South.

Compared with the earlier models of political space, classical cosmologies were more theorised; but they continued to be transformations of the earlier models. Specifically, Zhuangzi's world was centred in the outside, the further outward being the higher; Confucius's world was centred in the middle, in which sagacity or civilisation between culture and nature was the higher; and Qu Yuan's world was centred in the outside as 'the most inner inside', contrastive to the ordinary and thus lower self.

outside human settlements in the uncultivated fields between mountains and low rivers in different areas and in numerous jade ritual objects unearthed near these platforms (Feng 2007: 124–75).

As Liang also brilliantly reveals, between the 2nd century BCE and the 3rd century AD, the classical schools of thought took turns to shape and reshape the imperium. In the first empire (Qin, BCE 221–7), Legalism overshadowed Confucianism; in Western Han (BCE 202–8 AD), Legalism lost its dominant position, and Confucianism regained its hegemony. In Eastern Han (25–225 AD), Confucianism cleared away almost all other schools of thought and, with direct support from the emperor, succeeded in turning all the intellectual debates into those concerning the annotations of the scriptures. However, soon after the Eastern Han perished during the period of 'disintegration' of the Three Kingdoms (220–80) and the Six Dynasties (222–589), the Southern school, Daoism, returned to the ideological stage; now, having become 'neo-Daoism', it created a long phase of 'political nihilism'.

The agrarian core of the East Asian continent, complex enough with all its sub-regions and sub-traditions within its confines, existed among other regions. Whereas the Western basin of the Yellow River was often under siege from the 'barbarians' known as the Rong and the Di in the Northwest and North, the Eastern part on the one hand tied itself to the basin of the Huai River in the South and on the other hand drew its civilisation from the constant exchanges of goods and ideas with the peoples living in the linguistic and cultural region comprising the vast land from Siberia to Northeast China. The South of the agrarian world was likewise surrounded by other 'quarters'. While the peoples speaking Sino-Tibetan and Mon-Khmer languages occupied all the high plateaux and mountains to the Southwest, those speaking Malayo-Polynesian languages occupied the islands, coast, and hills in the Southeast, forming two other outer 'quarters'. In these surrounding zones to the North and South, there were the nomadic livestock-raisers of the steppe, the mountain peoples, and those with mixed cultures of gathering, hunting, livestock-raising, agriculture, and fishing, who developed different ontologies out of different environments of relationship.

Many sino-centric historiographies have endorsed the cultural achievements of the sage kings, the archaic dynasties, and the classical thinkers in and around the 'Central Plains' as the only civilising forces. However, such achievements were actually accomplished in a much wider geo-historical context in which the 'barbarians' in the outer realms, with their own expansive systems of hard and soft power, also occupied a major position.

In order to enable their authority to be broadly received, the emperors ruling their world (all-under-Heaven) during the periods of unification usually adopted inclusive cultural politics towards other cultures. For instance, Wudi, the greatest Han emperor of (reigning between BCE 156 and 187), whose combined form of authority reminds me of the charismatic leaderships in the modern villages Stephan Feuchtwang and I (2001) have jointly studied, not only made good efforts to blend the Northern schools

of Confucianism and Legalism into his 'ceremonial laws' and bureaucracy and to draw from the Southern Liang kingdom Sima Xiangru's kind of poetic vision for all-under-Heaven (Wang 2010: 236–339) but also tried his best to cherish the non-Han cosmologies.

Living his life as an emperor over two thousand years ago, Wudi could not be an actor in the modern drama of 'superdiversity' which, following Steven Vertovec (2007), anthropologist David Parkin (2016) has recently described in terms of a multi-scalar and overlapping interpenetration of cultural lifestyles, religions, and languages that, since the 1990s, new migrants have brought to the world's metropoles.[15] Nonetheless, Wudi was also a person with different identities which he expressed at different space–times. He, likewise, operated as a node in a strand of related activities, which in turn was related to other nodes along a hierarchical chain of networking, setting up a good example of what may be defined anthropologically as 'scale'.

A paragraph from Granet's book suggests a lot about that:

> He sought less to create a religion of the imperial person, than to become the high priest of syncretistic worship, abounding in splendid ceremonies. He called to him the scholars and magicians of the North-east as well as the sorcerers of the country of Yue, while he had brought into his palace the golden idol which the king of Hiu-ch'u worshipped, and into his study the celestial Horse taken from the Prince of Ferghana. He consulted the fates by means of chicken-bones after the methods of the Barbarians of the South-east, and in the Chinese manner by using shells of tortoises. He sacrificed on flat hillocks as well as on high terraces. He spent great sums on alchemy, spiritualism and traditionalist literature. He had hymns composed, classic in form and inspiration, and patronized the poems in which Ssuma Siang-ju imitated, it is said, the poetry peculiar to the country of Ch'u. (Granet 1930: 123)

The celestial Horse which Wudi loved came from the direction from which the nomadic powers intruded on the agricultural world. This pointed to the outer zones beyond the Great Wall, the long belt comprising the regions of the Northeast, North (the Mongolian grasslands), Northwest, and Tibetan plateau (Lattimore 1967). The peoples living in these zones were undoubtedly varied; but in common they derived their military, political, and civilisational competence from both their local cultures and their interactions with the 'agrarian' world. When the opportunity was ripe, they raised their local traditions to higher levels of greater scale, and at such levels, they invented their own arts of domination with cultural borrowings from the sinic world. Arriving from the perilous frontiers, they pressed a major part of the Chinese

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[15] According to Parkin, instead of making the societies in the global cities individualised, 'superdiversity' has produced more dividual persons and newly mixed speech communities which 'can no longer be ranged alongside each other as relatively self-contained and clearly distinct from each other' (Parkin 2016).

population into the South, created their own kingdoms in the North during the periods of 'split and war',[16] and, eventually, in the so-called 'late imperial' times, established such great empires as Yuan (1271–1368) and Qing (1644–1912), in both of which some of the Han ways of the world were mobilised, together with such those of Tibetan Buddhism, as parts of the 'barbarian' whole of civilisational plurality.

While the North was faced with heavy pressures from the horse-riding barbarians, the South, from where Wudi of Han learnt the skills of sorcery and chicken-bone divination, became more and more important. The provinces along the tributary rivers of the Yangtse were settled in the 6th century. Consolidation of this new expansive region was completed under the South Song dynasty (1127–1279) whose capital itself was located in the city of Hangzhou in the Southeast. Further South, in Guangdong and Fujian, by the middle of the Tang dynasty, colonialisation and cultural advance were achieved. From the Yuan to Qing dynasties, the Southwestern areas, including Yunnan and Guizhou, were brought under imperial administrative and cultural control.

Compared with the countries beyond the Great Wall, the Southern countries were further from the imperial capital. In Charles Patrick FitzGerald's comparison (1972), while the 'Northern barbarian' countries 'were close to the capital (almost always in the North), and their hostile power could strike at the heart of the empire, resulting in two total conquests and two which were confined to North China', the Southern frontier was 'less dramatic': 'No power arose in the South capable of challenging the rulers of China, nor even of arresting for long the slow, steady spread of her Southward drive' (xix). However, it was in the South that Chinese civilisation came into direct contact with cultural influences emanating from another great centre: India. In the Southeast, before the Chinese system of local administration was charted, Hinduism and Buddhism had their own sacred architectures erected. In the Southwest, the native chieftains (*tusi*) had long developed close ties with the Hinduised kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Along with the increase in Chinese elements, the places in the South became more and more like the meeting points of different civilisations. Such places are exemplified by the towns of Dali in the Southwest (Liang 2010) and Quanzhou (Wang 2009) in the Southeast. To them, in conjunction with the 'little traditions' symbolised for the Han emperor by the magics of sorcery and chicken-bone divination,

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[16] While others have adopted the trichotomy of Antiquity, Medieval, and Modern to frame Chinese history, I have followed historian Chi Ch'ao-ting (1963) in characterising the two millennia of imperial times in terms of two long cycles of unity and 'split', namely from the first period of unity and peace between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century AD to the phase of 'split' and war between the fall of Han in 221 to the late 6th century, and that between the second period of unity and peace of Sui and Tang (581–907) and the second phase of 'split' and war between the early 10th century and the early 13th century, which was followed by several long centuries of unification and peace.

came Confucianism and Daoism from the North, Hinduism and Buddhism from Southeast Asia, and such other religions as Islam, Manichaeism, and Catholicism.

The interactions between civilisations were not restricted to the Southern margins of the Han world. The co-presence of different civilisations had been more than apparent in the Northern imperial capital of Xi'an (Xiang 1933). As early as the Han dynasty, Buddhism had been introduced into the Chinese world from the West and the South, and by the time of the South and North Dynasties (420–589), it had created a 'Buddhist phase in Chinese history' (Liang 1902: 199–214). In the post-Tang periods of disintegration (the 10th to the 13th centuries), particularly during the Song Dynasty (960–1279), Confucianism revived. However, depending now not only on older versions of Confucianism but also on Buddhism, it was rejuvenated in both the 'Central Plains' and in the South as Neo-Confucianism. Not long after the invention of Neo-Confucian tradition, the 'history of the heart (*xinshi*)' emerged in such writings as those by the sorrowful Zheng Sixiao of South Song (Chen 2001) as a Southern Chinese intellectual response to the 'Northern barbarian' intrusions. According to Wu Han (1956), this kind of response, combined with sinified Manichaeism, was what was behind the Han popular anti-barbarian movements in late Yuan, which resulted in the establishment of the Neo-Confucian Ming.

The gaze we cast on ancient China confirms that cosmological traditions, be they 'great' or 'little', were diverse and interactive. Even if the notion of 'agrarian civilisation' is useful for our appreciation of the overall pattern of 'Chinese cosmology', it contains very little about the schools of cosmological thought as developed in the creative alternations of regional 'sub-traditions' in history and in the inter-cultural relations with the 'external' worlds to each of which the civilisation sometimes opened itself up and from which it sometimes closed itself off.

Such creative alternations and relations can be patterned in structural and historical terms. To a great extent, what we have drawn from Liang's geo-history of the great traditions of cosmology and from the later counterparts of centre–periphery relations suggests an idea of the structure of relationships. Such 'geo-histories', as we may name them, are undoubtedly 'etic perspectives;' but they are also in full relationship with the 'emics', for instance, with the transformative model of centre and quarters, whose 'ideal types' conditioned the alternations ('historical processes') and made the imperium a system of recognised and re-enacted relations defined by Granet (1930) in terms of the 'religion of the imperial person'.

'SAVAGE WITHIN'

We have passed by the West and the East as well as the South; in each of the 'quarters' we have observed the varied nature of cosmology, and have followed with interest the phenomena of the interaction of traditions. Obviously, between the examples provided so far, there have been discrepancies. The modern dramas of the interaction of traditions occurred between two contesting cosmologies situated 'vertically' in the higher and the lower planes (the emergent Protestant tradition as against persistent 'superstition', and the rational as against the 'magical'); comparatively speaking, those taking place in both ancient Greece and classical, early and 'middle-age' China involved a number of 'horizontally distributed' traditions.

The discrepancy may have stemmed from the greatly different scales of the 'societies' compared, or from the greatly different periods to which the chosen societies belonged (early modern absolutist states or modern nation states and the ancient civilisations and empires). But whatever explains it, it holds true that the one-to-one model developed by Redfield is far from being sufficient.[17]

Stanley Tambiah (1970) has argued that Redfield looks insufficiently into the varied and cumulatively changing qualities of the great traditions, apart from paying too little attention to the referential and legitimating function of texts and knowledge among the commoners (3–4). Suspending the issue of whether Redfield's model itself is a social science extension of the notion of the folklore of the singular culture nation(-state), we would just add that great and little traditions vary not only historically but also 'synchronically'.

If we follow Wu Wenzao (1990: 254–62) in thinking that China should be compared with Europe as a whole but with not one of its nations, we will find great similarities between the two civilisational ensembles.[18] Each of the ensembles involves several major 'sub-traditions', each of which was associated with the others in developing its

[17] In making us aware of the importance of great traditions in 'peasant societies', Redfield not only opens our eyes to history and humanistic studies but also makes it possible for us to involve ourselves in comparative studies of civilisations. In addition, in distinguishing great and little traditions, Redfield, quoting his colleague McKim Marriott (1956), points to the direction of interactions of traditions. He emphasises that between the higher learning and the lower in both traditional and modern societies are constant interflows of cultural elements, including 'universalisation' (great traditions taking up and heightening some elements of folk beliefs and practices) and 'parochialisation' (little traditions' reformation of great tradition as local cult).

[18] As Mauss (2006) points out, the 'nations' advanced their own political and legal regimes which functioned to mark themselves off from each other; however, such regimes, in their own making, also depended heavily upon inter-national and inter-civilisational borrowing of 'myths, tales, money, commerce, fine arts, techniques, tools, languages, words, scientific knowledge, literary forms and ideals' (38). Consequently, the 'nations' all had, within them, all the available elements of the civilisations, and associated with the civilisational ensembles.

own characteristics, and each of which was differentiated from the others in borrowing cultural elements from them. The mutual borrowings and self-identities of the great traditions of modern individualism in France and Germany (Dumont 1994) as well as in England (Macfarlane 1978) are more or less comparable to the older interactions of cosmologies in the 'Central Plains' of China. In addition, if we compare European nations with the core regions of the Eastern end of Eurasia, then we can also say that like the latter the former are surrounded by certain intermediate and outer 'quarters' which in turn form certain interactional relationships with the 'core.' Meanwhile, the variations of cosmology are not unique to the Old World. On the contrary, similar situations are also found in the 'remote places'.

In anthropology, the dualist division of the world has been achieved through making the primitive radically more authentic or original than the civilized;[19] in philosophy, it has reached a high key through attributing the 'logos' of the word 'cosmology' to Antiquity and its continuation into the 'middle age', and through defining primitive worldviews as, at their best, cosmography (descriptive accounts of the world) and cosmogony (the story of the emergence of things) (Brague 2003: 2–4). By means of relating modernity to magic and comparing Eurasian interactions of traditions to their counterparts in 'Neolithic' parts of the world, we have attempted to 'mingle' self and other. Our point is not new. It is a renewed expression of what Franz Boas said long ago about the primitive and the advanced: like all the 'advanced civilisations', the 'primitive cultures' have long histories behind them, and in the situation of the tribal, humans also live in accordance with their 'conventional pre-scriptions and rules' (Boas, 1974: 68), so much so that those factors, including the divergent traditions, attributed to the 'civilised' have also existed in the 'primitive.' It is also a re-decipherment of the relation between great and little traditions.

We have scrutinised the spread of the indomitable vitality of the 'primitive' into the great traditions when relating ancient Chinese cosmological models to the politi-cal ontological legacies of the contesting regional kingdoms established on the bases of late Neolithic local cultures, and we have offered a synoptic geo-history to illumi-nate the divergence and mutual dependence as well as the constant inversions, in the overall pattern of 'civilisation', between centre and quarters, Chinese and 'barbarians',

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[19] Like the 'ethnographic regions' in which they are situated, the philosophical concepts in Eurasia and the modes drawn from the 'savage mind' are different: whereas the ancient Eurasian cosmologies are inscribed as philosophies, the modes of the 'savage mind' are philosophical only after they have been deciphered by the anthropologists; whereas the Eurasian cosmologies are overtly political, the 'native modes' are not really so unless they are related to the anthropologists who write ethnographies of them (this implication of ethnography has been recognised as Roy Wagner's discovery (Wagner 1981). These differences have benefitted the anthropology of the tribal, and given a 'peripheral status' to the anthropology of the civilised.

and 'agrarian' and 'tribal', which, in later periods, were associated with the 'world religions'.

In spite of all our references to 'classical scholarship', our reconsiderations have been projected to question the belief that the prehistoric worldviews were not subjects of humanistic studies, and to warn ourselves against erasing the traces of the 'primitive' in the places where the discipline of anthropology was instituted.[20]

TO THE SOUTH: THE LIMITS OF CIVILISATIONS

To understand our difficulty in achieving a shared 'common fate', I now pursue a couple more directional turns, between the South, the central place for ethnographic life-worlds beyond Eurasia, and the North, home to literacy, world religions, great traditions of philosophy, and anthropology itself.

Regarding the direction of the South, Zhuangzi's story entitled 'The happy excursion (*xiaoyao you*)' can be said to be potentially relevant to our future discussions: the thinker roamed the landmass of Eurasia to discover in its end (the 'Great Lake') between Heaven and Earth the ontology of being happy.[21] However, because here we are not concerned with the Daoist philosophy of the 'equality of things (*qiwu*)', we leave this aside, and limit our attention to such works as Hegel's *The Philosophy of World History* (1956 [edn]) and Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* (1997).

These two Western masterpieces can be said to form a pair of landmarks. They were written by the two great thinkers living in two different epochs of the history of the interaction between 'Europe and the people without history' (Wolf 1982), and they are comparable because they both celebrate the 'great divide' between worlds. Between them, one (Hegel's) speaks of a world civilisation and treats it as the global progress of spiritual liberation. It has the consequent realisation of 'freedom' informed by a variety of cultures arranged as a sequence of steps toward history's own future, and it locates the New World (the South) at the lowest level. In a discussion of the geographic background of civilising freedom, the book engages with a depiction of the 'non-historical character' of the South, which, as Hegel (1956: 96–120) foresees, has its future externally determined by the spiritually free European settlers, especially the Protestants in North America. Along the way, America is divided into two parts, North and South, whose contest, as Hegel famously foretells, would end in the South becoming the burden of History.

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[20] To me, the 'prehistoric' is more universal and global than has been imagined, and our historical and ethnographic 'parochialisation' of it has proven to be problematic.

[21] This is that 'the perfect man has no self; the spiritual man has no achievement; and the true sage has no name' (Chuang-Tzu 1989: 30).

The other book, Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques,* also draws heavily on the contrastive shapings of the two worlds. However, unlike Hegel's, it expresses not only the author's disappointment at the civilising North, but also sadness about the progress of History. He takes the New World for inspiration or mental liberation, and makes the South the 'primary mode' which, as a cosmographic order, is both better, in terms of its closeness to the original, and more desirable, in terms of its scientific value, than the 'secondary modes'.

A strong sense of 'sentimental pessimism' has hindered Lévi-Strauss from giving a necessary tribute to the civilisation in which he writes cultures into myths (it is this civilisation that has enabled him to express himself so well); but it has not prevented him from inventing another anthropology of civilisations. Unlike Hegel who treats non-Western Eurasian civilisations as necessary steps toward the singular Civilisation, Lévi-Strauss supposes all civilisations to be secondary to 'culture', the mental intermediary between nature and society (Lévi-Strauss's 'culture' is almost the same as Confucius's sagehood) from which the natives in the South have continued to draw out their worlds. Lévi-Strauss says:

> It [Anthropology] shows that the basis is not to be discovered in our civilization: of all known societies ours is no doubt the one more remote from it. At the same time, by bringing out the characteristics common to the majority of human societies, it helps us to postulate a type, of which no society is a faithful realization, but which indicates the direction the investigation ought to follow. (Lévi-Strauss 1997: 477)

Before the first printing of *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss had travelled quite extensively in some ancient parts of Eurasia. In the same book, *Tristes Tropiques*, he speaks about his impressions. Let us jump from the pages on over-populated India and the bad future of São Paulo, over the long chapters on the Indian tribal worlds, to the last chapters, where we discover an anthropological critique of all civilisations.

We should quote at length Lévi-Strauss's own narrative:

> Mankind has made three major religious attempts to free itself from persecution by the dead, the malevolence of the Beyond and the anguish of magic. Over intervals of approximately five hundred years, it originated in turn Buddhism, Christianity and Islam; it is a striking fact that each stage, far from constituting an advance on the previous one, should be seen rather as a regression. For Buddhism, there is no Beyond: its whole teaching can be summarized as a radical criticism of life, such as humanity would never again be capable of leading the sage to deny all meaning to beings and things: it is a discipline which abolishes the universe, and abolishes itself as a religion. Christianity, yielding again to fear, restored the other world, with its hopes, its threats and its last judgment. It only remained for Islam to bind this world to the other world: temporal and spiritual were brought together. The social order acquired the prestige of the supernatural order, and politics became theology. In the last resort, the spirits

and phantoms, which superstition had always failed to bring to life, were replaced by masters who were only too real, and who were furthermore allowed to monopolize an after-life which added its burden to the already crushing weight of life here below. (Lévi-Strauss 1997: 499)

The issue of life and death, to Lévi-Strauss, was the issue of mankind's social bondage. Buddhism differentiated itself from primitive cults, but it retained the pre-Buddhist sense of placid femininity—a kind of 'third sex'—which frees human beings from 'the battle of the sexes'. Buddhism promised a return to the unifying kindness of the maternal breast, It kept a hope for the mutual belonging of human beings. However, 'the historical solutions offered by Buddhist morality face us with two chilling alternatives: anyone who gives an affirmative reply to the question shuts himself up in a monastery; anyone who replies in the negative can achieve easy satisfaction in the practice of egotistical virtue' (503). By contrast, Islam developed, according to a masculine orientation, a closed entity and a tendency to exclusion. In Buddhist civilisation, the infinite universal inclusion of alterity is thus central, while in Islam, the exclusion of the Other is the most characteristic (498). Christianity almost had a chance to synthesise the two into a good civilisation—into a posteriori reconciliation between the two extremes—but 'as a transition from one to the other the middle term of a series which, because of its internal logic, and geographical and historical factors, was destined thereafter to develop in the direction of Islam' (499).

Neither does Lévi-Strauss believe in what Radcliffe-Brown (1977a) saw as shared by the primitives and the Eurasians, nor does he believe in what (Catholicism) gave Evans-Pritchard and Mary Douglas hope (Douglas 1981). He meditates anthropologically on the ruins of history, and reaches a conclusion regarding the disappointing treatments of alterity in different civilisations: Buddhist universal kindness, Christian passion for dialogues, and Islamic fraternity. In the chapter leading to the closing of his narrative, he argues that none of the world religions managed to rescue, from history, the opportunity of inter-civilisational fusion—for him, the ideal way of 'being together' as humanity.

By the end, the lonely anthropologist-hero leaves himself roaming in several worlds, as he sighs, 'each truer than the one it encloses, and itself false in relation to the one which encompasses it' (504), and asserts the value of his hyper-science of the concrete, 'Kantism without a transcendental subject'. When he wrote his magisterial monograph on the elementary structure of kinship, he had been inspired by Granet's sinological sociology in advancing his own theory of alliance and exchange. However, because he has become so sad about history, he turns Granet's mapping of civilisation in the 'Extreme East' into a contrastive reference to the structure of 'the savage mind' or, in effect, 'Neolithicity' (Rowlands 2014), as one might say, which is not so much the

'original affluent sociey' as Sahlins (2003) describes it, but as culture's original way of just being 'semi-detached' from nature.

Both Hegel and Lévi-Strauss dwell upon the 'great divide' of historic fortune existing between the divided worlds of North and South. To them, and to many other philosophers and anthropologists consciously or unconsciously following in their footsteps, the 'other' side still remained in the 'primal stage', while on this side, civilisations, having being through the 'metal ages', continued to advance in the direction of expansive innovation. In the comparisons, the fact that post-Stone-Age civilisations were also 'invented' out of some prior Neolithic legacies is not denied; but for different purposes, the prehistoric foundations of the Old World are, in one way or another, described either as background to Eurasia's acquisition of civilisation or as a history of the degeneration or even loss of the primal. In the paradoxical attitudes to history, a certain historical truth is bypassed: not only did kings derive their 'ornaments' from distant alterities in the margins (Helms 1993, Wengrow 2010),[22] but there were also thinkers doing similar things. Thus civilisations, even the classical great traditions, were indispensable to the 'primal.'[23]

CIVILISATIONS AND THEIR RELATIONS IN THE NORTH

Evidently the parts of Eurasia that have concerned anthropologists were known in the history of religions as Indo-European and Semite. Since the 18th century, these, together with peoples of the vast regions of East and North Asia defined earlier as 'Turanian' (the 'non-Aryan' hunters, nomads, and farmers in the Eastern area of Eurasia), were seen as making up three major 'dialectical' or 'civilisational' entities formed in the deep past in which the unity of humanity had just begun to split up (Müller 1855, 2010).[24] In Western academia, these eventually provided three major regional foundations for a number of mythological and sociological theorisations—to

[22] Archaeological evidence has shown that prior to the 'urban revolution' (Childe 1950), in the late neolithic age, several geo-cosmological modes had been advanced in the peripheral areas removed from the metallised Central Plains, where jade had continued and transcended stone as being the medium between Heaven and Earth (Yang 2005), and it was from these modes that a sequence of early dynastic models of natural/social virtue were derived.

[23] Confucius always talked about his ideas as if they had been from Zhou, whose ideal kingly virtue had in turn stemmed from the sovereigns of what we now call the late Stone Age; Laozi and Zhuangzi talked about their concepts as if they had been from the age in which there had been no politics; Qu Yuan often hunted in the deep and high mountains for his ideal 'Lady' as if the mountains without humans had been truer than the social world of humans.

[24] Max Müller postulates that when time approached the age of the nations (the Bronze Age), these regions then became further divided and their languages got further refined, and in the process, 'nations' emerged.

mention just a few, the Indo-European model of 'trifunctions' (Dumézil 1970), Semite totemism and sacrifice (Smith 1893, Hubert & Mauss 1981), Chinese relationalism (Granet 1930), and grassland 'nomadology' (Deleuze & Guattari 1986). Undoubtedly, each of the divided civilisations has its core area of origination and existence, and each, as a characteristic collectivity of persons, things, and divinities, is distinct from the others, so much so that it can be illustrated as an example for comparison.[25] However, as we can see in the case of the East, through time, and in the intermediary spaces between societies, the constant interactions between cosmologies on a horizontal plane have created situations in which each has engaged the others in its own making.

Thus, the Great Wall, the extensive line of garrisons set up as the frontier line between the Han and the 'barbarians', did not prevent the Han from getting involved in the 'conjuncture' with 'barbarians' (Rong and Di) from the outside, specifically from the West and North. In the Northeast, Mongolia, Xinjiang, and the Tibetan Plateau many of these 'barbarians' from the transition of the 8th century had adopted Buddhism, Manichaeism, Islam, and even Christianity. It was by blending their 'peripheral traditions' and the 'world religions' that the 'barbarians' continued their interactions with the 'sinic world', which likewise combined its own traditions with others. From the 1st century AD people living in the 'Central Plains' had to depend upon India to gain a Buddhist understanding of the human condition (death, or the future of life)[26]. As the Dutch sinological ethnologist J. J. M. de Groot (1884) pointed out, the Han had their doors open in the direction of India. Between the 9th and the 13th centuries, maritime trade from the Southeast Coast brought with it incoming

[25] In his *Clan, Caste, and Club* (1963), Francis Hsu compares Chinese, Hindu, and American (Western) civilisations and argues that these are three different approaches to the world, characterised respectively by situation-centredness or mutual dependence (Chinese), individual-centredness (American), and supernatural-centredness or unilateral dependence (Hindu). Although Hsu claims his comparison to be a continuation of his early work on contrasting Chinese and American, it seems obvious that his trichotomy is based on a schema he inherited from Chinese culturological ancestors living in late imperial and early Republican times who saw Eurasia as composed of Eastern, Western, and Hindu worlds.

[26] Mark Elvin (1985: 170) has noted the difference between Indian and Chinese understandings of the human condition; as he says, the Indians believed in the continuous cycle of rebirths among living beings into lives of suffering, the wheel of samsara. The Chinese believed, 'by and large, in a unique personal existence, no doubt fortified by the concept of a structure of kinship ascendants and descendants, stretching indefinitely back into the past and indefinitely forward into the future, in which the individual occupied his unique place. ... The Chinese, for whom birth and life are positive goods, felt no such need of such ideas of cyclical rebirth. They were, until the coming of Buddhism, innocent of soteriology.' As de Groot (1884) points out, however, it is the difference that made Indian ontology complementary to Chinese.

Moslems, who became entrusted by the Han and then the Mongols as superintendents of trade affairs.[27]

Lévi-Strauss (1977), endeavouring to balance similarity and difference, presents a concept of transformations (in my understanding, alternations of relationship structures corresponding to alternations of space–time), which he applies not only to the study of myths but also to the cross-regional transformations of the synthetic structure of varied reciprocal, 'ethnocentric', and hierarchical models of socio-spatial organisation along the America–Pacific continuum.

This understanding of regional variations of complex structure and their cosmological outcomes is from the study of the 'mythology' of the South; but it is relevant to the anthropology of the North.[28] As in the South, in the North, in each of the societies, on the one hand, there exist social phenomena which are limited to it; on the other hand, there are hyper-social or civilisational phenomena 'which are common to several societies, more or less related to each other' (61). Phrased in Lévi-Strauss's own terms, none of the social systems is 'simple', each being 'sometimes open to external influences and quick to absorb them; sometimes withdrawn into itself, as if to give itself the time to assimilate these foreign contributions and put its own stamp on them' (Lévi-Strauss 2013: 122). All are complex, being combinations of different modes, each yielding its own composite structure, which gives it a distinctive imprint and allows the extent of its distinctiveness to decrease or increase in accordance with the circumstances of inter-societal and inter-civilisation interactions.[29]

'Societies live by borrowing from each other, but they define themselves rather by refusal of borrowing than by its acceptance' (Mauss 2006: 44). Considering the fact that civilisations are often associated with a certain level of good or bad non-combinational 'self-awareness of culture', one must refrain from supposing that the actual unities or pluralities in Eurasia can be described in terms of 'con-fusions' or, in terms of Chinese Pangu myth—'confused complexities' (*hundun*); nonetheless, it is paradoxically true that such 'con-fusions' are precisely what Lévi-Strauss is getting at in spite of his linguistic logo-centrism—we should not forget that in radicalising

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[27] History continued to be that of such interaction when East came into contact with Europe, including the 'delayed return' of European Enlightenment for the 'gifts' of the old Chinese inventions of printing, gunpowder, etc. René Étiemble (1988) pushed China into interaction with the 'maritime barbarians' from further West, which in turn resulted in additions of Occidental and Oriental cosmologies.

[28] Let us note that Lévi-Strauss's *mythologique* of transformations is close to what Mauss says about civilisations: different from societies which are 'unfit to travel'. Civilisations 'are naturally able to do so', 'almost by themselves they overflow the (often difficult to determine) boundaries of a given society', and they are thus 'hyper-social' (Mauss 2006: 60).

[29] The 'elementary form of social life' can be said to be constituted with the phenomena of the social 'whose relative importance varies according to time and space' and those of the hyper-social 'whose size cannot be fixed a priori' (Mauss 2006: 60–1).

against Eurasian civilisations he in fact deploys his concept of 'alliance', actually a theory of 'mixing' as the prime value!

Needless to say, any focused inquiries into the complexities of inter-civilisational relations in Eurasia would lead us to see more than the idea of structure. As Lévi-Strauss (1970) himself reveals, this is defined in an abstract sense, a 'form of mental gymnastics, in which the exercise of thought is carried to its objective limits' (11) and so becomes visible. In front of us is an extensive landscape of transformations achieved historically on both the horizontal and vertical planes.

Regarding the 'horizontal plane', pre-modern India and China seem to form a related pair of examples. If pre-modern Indian society could be characterised in terms of 'caste', then it could be seen as a more rigid hierarchy, a transcending whole encompassing agents and social categories along the vertical line of priests, warriors, and producers (Dumont 1980); and if pre-modern Chinese hierarchy could be conceptualised as '*chaxugeju*' (the order of stratified closeness), then it could be said that the Chinese way had a propensity to involve a different order of relations, a certain hierarchical system of concentric networks reciprocally related (Fei 1992). Cosmographically, India and China shared the model of quarters surrounding the centre. However, the model seems to have been established on varied bases. The Indian variation (Mandala) has impressed us as vertical in principle, with the linkage between below and above located right in the centre; whereas the Chinese variation, the pentology of *tianxia* (all-under-Heaven), notwithstanding its similarity to the 'galactic polity' of Mandala (Tambiah 1985), is less so, in most cases, with the linkage (made of the five sacred mountains) situated outside the centre, in the intermediary circle transiting to the outside, reaching beyond but not above. Compared to India, China thus could be said to be more 'diametric'.

Nonetheless, as we have seen in the above, the Chinese 'order of stratified closeness' did not remain the same; on the contrary, it varied through time in the transformations of the structure of relationships between the regions. On the Hindu side, as Tambiah's depiction (1970) of change in the structural relationship between the 'triads'—kings, monks, and commoners—in the Southeast Asian context shows, similar transformations were observable.

The dynamics in the transformations of relationship structure often involved cosmologies from the 'exterior'. For instance, it was precisely from India that the Chinese living in ancient times, having been through all the Confucian illusion and disillusion of their own particularistic concentricity, borrowed the ontology of what Lévi-Strauss has called 'universal kindness' (Wang 2014a: 117–52).[30]

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[30] Thus, not surprisingly, Chinese turned Avalokitesvara, the handsome-looking young male bodhisattva of compassion into the comforting mother Goddess of Mercy (Overmyer 1972).

Redfield (1973) argues that, in studying the civilisations of the 'Old World', anthropologists have 'taken on some part of the responsibility for the study of a composite structure comprised of little and great traditions which have interacted in the past and which are still interacting today' (50). This idea of a 'composite structure' roughly reflects what we have said about ancient India and China. Nonetheless, evidently what occurred in the interface between the two civilisations transcended the boundaries Redfield draws between civilisations. In the interface, or where the interactions of great and little traditions within each of the core culture regions of the civilisations took place, there also occurred 'inversions of self and alterity' which made composite structures horizontally expansive.

The achievements of these so-called 'inversions' can be understood as the formation of expansive regional systems linking the world of the Kula Ring (Damon 1990) with India and China to make an extensive ensemble contrastable with the Western end of the Euro-Asia landmass (Damon 2016), or those linking South and Southeast Asian civilisations with the 'Neolithic' in Africa through the circulation of objects and ideas along the land and sea routes to create a 'civilisation' removed from the Bronze-Age centres of the Bronze-Age 'urban revolution' (Rowlands 2014).[31] Such formations were quietly made by means of hidden mobility over the past few millennia and they have resulted in turning the civilisations of the North (Eurasia) and the South (the Pacific world) into part of each other. Often, such 'horizontal transformations' that made the great cross-regional formations were realised through alternations along the 'vertical line' of the more or less class-divided great and little traditions in history.

In many of the examples I have encountered in my field journeys, I note that, while great traditions in the civilisations existed as supra-societal patterns of relationships linking communities, groups, and 'nations' into higher level 'communities', they, being restrictive as well as universalising, also tended to form parochial boundaries. Consequently, the geographic coverage of such great traditions often turns out to be more confined than what they 'encompass'. By contrast, notwithstanding their 'communal', 'particularistic', and 'parochial' characteristics, 'little traditions' have also been far more inclusive.

A few notes on the inversion of the 'ranks' of the great and the little in the areas within and beyond the Great Wall can validate the point. In Eurasia, little traditions

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[31] As Lévi-Strauss (1977: 245–68) shows, another linkage existed between the societies distributed in America and Asia: in prehistoric times, a long land bridge connected Asia and America, and along the edge of the Eastern part of Eurasia, a boulevard-like passageway allowed humans and their creativities to circulate freely from Southeast Asia to North America, via the long coasts in the East. Other connections in other direction could also be located in the intermediaries Westward, between Africa, South Asia, and Island Southeast Asia.

whose histories can be traced back to the Neolithic age[32] still exist everywhere, beneath each of the civilisations. In an urban setting in Southeast China (Wang 2009), 'folk religions' have existed as 'little traditions' inside and outside the world religions, including Confucianism, official imperial cults, Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Manichaeism, Christianity, socialism, and the 'market economy'. Throughout the late imperial dynasties and modern regimes, these 'little traditions' have allowed into themselves the 'great traditions', some of which (for instance, the Ming official Neo-Confucian ceremonials) have been imposed on them from top-down, and some of which (for instance, Buddhism) they have 'borrowed' from other parts of the world. As a result, these 'traditions' have 'interiorised' elements from 'exterior' and 'upper levels', and made them (often described in terms of 'great traditions') 'diffused' in the life-worlds of the neighbourhoods of the city. In a rural setting, linking local cults horizontally over larger areas to the great pilgrimage centres in the four quarters, 'folk religion', by means of making an alternation along the vertical line of the hierarchical order of the civilised and the 'vernacular', invents its own world-scape in the annually re-enacted model of the age-old 'pentology' of quarters around the centre, in accordance with which the human world is represented as a greater unity than is defined in the 'great traditions' (Wang 2016). This kind of 'inversion' is true of the situations not only in the Southeast but also in the 'frontiers' of the Southwest and Northeast.

In a recent collection of a dozen case studies which my former students analysed in Southwest China (Wang & Shu 2015), several modes of 'cultural combination' are examined. Situated in the China–Southeast Asia–India Continuum (Wolf 1982: 44–50), the Southwest can be called a 'corridor' or a system of 'corridors.' It is a passageway where varied 'great traditions' from North, South, East, and West encounter each other,[33] and, in Mauss's words, it is a line of 'frontiers' whereby civilisations overflow, 'either by spreading from specific centres by their own powers of expansion, or as a result of the relationships established between societies' (Mauss 2006: 37). However, the passageway or the line of frontiers is not a zone empty of people; on the contrary, the region also has an extensive variety of home places of tens of 'peripheral peoples'. The civilisations to which the groups are attached can be said to include all known 'great traditions', especially 'Axial Age' civilisations from all over Eurasia. However, these are religions with strong local characteristics, and core to such characteristics are the 'prehistoric folk religions' such as Miao witchcraft, Yi

[32] Thus Granet argues that the early imperial Chinese sacrificial systems were, in their 'improvisations', dependent upon 'the social pact which the aboriginal communities celebrated at their seasonal gatherings' before the Age of Chronology (Granet 1932: 9).

[33] For centuries, the region has undergone the impacts of a variety of civilisations, not only the more recent ones such as Qing, Christian, and Chinese Communist 'great traditions' (Harrell 1995), but also the preceding ones such as various Buddhisms and Islam.

and Naxi magic writing, Bai mountain worship,[34] Tibetan bon, and the like. In the Southwest, local rituals have thus proven to be 'synthetic texts' in which varied historicities, life-giving myths, calendrical systems, identities, and sanctive powers converge; local native chiefs are 'persons of varied personalities', whose lives are examples of varied traditions; and the towns are 'ports of trade' through which the interflows of goods, people, images, and symbols are exchanged.

In Xinjiang, in the famous cross-roads of civilisations from East and West, as a remarkable ethnological survey (Apar *et al.* 2010) has demonstrated, Qam (a local term for Shamanism according to the authors) has continued to be practised by all the Uygur Moslem groups. The survey covers a large variety of topics, including Yygur shamanic concepts of spirits, cosmic entities, human and non-human beings, and ghosts, and magical applications of shamanic techniques and rituals, and divination. One chapter also provides a rich set of data on the interpretations by Uygur religious (Islamic) specialists on shamanism. In the more formal interviews, these specialists tend to express a shared hostility toward Qam, arguing that animistic beliefs and magical practices, being bound up with vernacular notions of spirits and demons as well as satanic powers, are heretic. However, interestingly, in less formal conversations, they express other viewpoints, and some of them even quote from the Koran loose sentences to justify the vernacular ideas of demonic power and magical efficacy (72–80).

In Urumqi, I conversed with the authors of the survey and realised that the ethnologists shared a very interesting sense of history. For them, the shamanic practices they observe among the Uygur and other ethnic groups had existed in 'pre-historical times' in the periods prior to the spread of the world religions in Xinjiang and they are 'sincerely shared' by the divided '*minzu* (nationalities)'. Liu Xuetang (2009), one of the three authors of the survey, has also published an archaeology book, in which he has considered 'primitive religion' in Xinjiang in terms of the link between the vast areas of inner Asia, central Europe, and Siberia.

In the pre-modern Tibetan world, as in that of the neighbouring world of the Han, the landscape of religious cosmology seemed to comprise mystic, sociologic,

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[34] In rural Dali in Yunnan, among the Bai, the inner orders of the villages are often organised according to the Confucian model of the lineage. It thus seems that, ever since the Ming, Dali has been totally civilised by Confucianism. However, in fact, such Confucian 'inner orders' have been encompassed by a greater ritual geography. This is a system of local cults (*benzhu*) which integrates local communities to the native Bai deity cults housed in the temples in the great mountains (Liang 2005). Had we adopted Redfield's distinctions, we would have seen Confucianism in ethnic Southwest China as a great tradition, and the Bai local cults and pilgrimages as the opposite. True that the latter consist in a variety of 'folk cults'. However, seen from the cultural region of Dali, they in fact form a much greater geographic unity. In this unity, the 'secondary' Confucian civilisation in the villages is included as a mere part of the 'primary' Bai civilisation.

and synthetic modes. In Tibetological anthropologist Geoffrey Samuel's terms, Tibetan Buddhism consisted of at least two orientations: 'Shamanic Buddhism' and 'Clerical Buddhism'. These were fundamentally different attitudes toward the world and human experience: the former evoked an alternative mode of reality for the social through Tantric ritual, and worked toward the transcendence of 'enlightenment', while the latter emphasised the acquisition of merit through virtuous activities, including scholarship, philosophical analysis, and monastic discipline (Samuel 1993). Samuel also says that most of the actors in Tibetan religious history did not see the two orientations as mutually exclusive. Although major figures in the Tibetan 'great tradition' seemed to be oriented toward either shamanic or clerical aspects, they generally operated in both modes, and in so doing shaped their cosmologies into such different syntheses as Gelugpa and Rimed.

The synthetic modes or 'composite structure' of Buddhism could be said to form the 'great tradition' of Tibet, whose higher learning rested in the transmission and elaboration of an omnipresent system of monasteries. The system of monasteries was not only where the doctrines of the schools of thought of Tibetan Buddhism were transmitted but also provided the links and lines of communication through which the great tradition reproduced itself as a culture region (Spengen 2000: 62–3).

However, beside the Buddhist modes, there was another extensive cultural system in Tibet. This was another shamanic complex—'folk religion' (Samuel 1993: 19–22). The pervasiveness of 'folk religion' achieved its own manifestation in the fact that even the Lamas were sometimes 'like the Siberian shamans or the "diviners" or "prophets" of sub-Saharan Africa', getting themselves engaged in realigning humans with their society and with the universe (21). Rolf Alfred Stein alternatively calls this 'folk religion' the 'religion of men'. Different from the 'religion of gods' (Buddhism), the 'religion of men' kept its own vitality through legends told by old men of the clan, which 'were always uttered in a poetic style characterised by the use of metaphors, cliches and proverbial sayings' (Stein 1972: 192).

Formed in shamanism and in the vernacular, this shamanic complex, the 'ancient matrix' the Tibetans shared with other peoples living in the surroundings, made the Tibetan civilisational 'self' a composite site of 'ethnocentrism' and 'alter-centrism'. Stein argues that the dual cultural identity the Tibetans have shared has stemmed from the Tibetan acceptance of Buddhism. As he puts it:

> As was the fashion in China, the Tibetans imagined themselves as the centre of a square made by other lands, at 'the navel of the earth,' as they say. At the same time, unlike China, they maintained a surprising humility that sprang from the dominance of Buddhist beliefs. They always regard themselves as savages living in the north of the world. ... They speak of the 'little known country of barbarous Tibet,' they describe themselves (like the 'wild' Horpas) as 'red-faced flesh-eating demons' and

many a time call themselves stupid, rough and dull, all this of course in relation to the civilizing influence of Buddhism. (Stein 1972: 40)

If these words have expressed Tibetan perspectives on civilisational self-identity, then they can be interpreted in other terms: by saying that 'we are barbarians', the Tibetans were just truthful to their own history—as Stein also suggests, it is the 'ancient matrix' that made Tibet a culture region and related it broadly to the neighbouring peoples. Many Tibetan songs and legends were related to Ge-sar of Phrom, a local version of 'Caesar of Rome' (39); and the Tibetan primal 'barbarian condition' was often confused with that of the nomads ('Turks' and 'Tartars') supposedly reigning in the North (41). It was precisely in the vast space in which shamanism or 'religion of men' continually reconstituted itself, that the most radical inversion of the hierarchical pattern of 'great and little traditions' took place. The Mongols, like the Tibetans, were originally shamanists, but as soon as they inaugurated their empire in the early 13th century, they not only put Buddhists at its service, but also advanced a highly tolerant attitude towards other religions and philosophies, from Buddhism to Christianity, from Manichaeism to Islam, from Confucianism to Daoism. Eventually, the empire turned most of the Eurasian great traditions into components of its original plurality nurtured in the fertile lands of the 'religion of men'.

CONCLUSION

For a long time, Eurasia, with its affiliated islands, has been diametrically divided and concentrically patterned. In the diametrical schema, Eurasia has been seen as comprising two parts, West and East, or Europe and Asia; in the concentric imaginaries, alternatively, the two parts have been jointly located in the 'circle' of the middle, contrasted with the fringes to the South and to the further North. The societies and civilisations in the Eurasian landmass, especially those with written records, have been compared, by the deployment of the concentric model, with the 'savages', the 'non-literate' in the outer rings imagined as living in more or less 'backward' life-worlds with their discrete cosmologies. They have also been compared, by the extension of the diametrical schema, with the 'more civilised' among their own kinds, celebrated as those who keep in their treasure houses the secrets of scientific and democratic as well as politico-economic efficacies, or, contrarily, remembered as those who, by way of depriving their own 'authenticity', bring infelicity to history.

In the 'journey to the West', I followed the conventional directions, but I proceeded in the manner of boundary-crossing to pursue reorientations. I departed from the destination of the 'journey', the modern West, where I browsed a history of magic and

an ethnography of witch-hunting allegations. The persistence of what may be defined as 'little traditions' in the core of the West, associated with the internal divisions and external challenges of individualism, and with the fortunes of the interplay between 'global modernity' and 'peripheral cultures', itself became revealing: it brought to light the paradox of othering in the Occidentalist and anthropological discourses.

Turning my attention to a part of the ethnographic world, I encountered the method of 'contrasting cultures', which has regained its dominance in certain comparisons of cosmologies. As we critiqued, even when meant to emancipate our understandings of life, society, and world from the singularising 'civilisation', it has misled us into regarding other cosmologies as remaining 'outside us' and in a state of non-change, and 'this' or 'our' cosmology as being exceptionally capable of 'making history'.

In 'considering others in our own places (*tuiji jiren*)', following the visit to the West, I allowed my mind to travel between the South, the West, and the East. The internal diversity of 'traditions' within societies, seen in the dramas of the interaction of traditions in the modern West, is also found in the South, in the 'living Neolithic societies', and in the regional cultures and philosophies of the West and East of the 'Axial Age'. I examined an ethnography of the sub-traditions of inner New Guinea, a history of four cosmological models in ancient Greece, and a perspective on the 'three kingdoms' of Chinese political thought. With a synthesis of these I sought to illustrate the 'unities of diversity' in the South and the North. In so doing, I moved between opposite directions, reconsidering the distinctions between the 'savage' and the 'civilised', which are often reasserted to maintain the disciplinary boundaries between ethnography and philosophy.

To explore the dialectics of 'inside and outside', 'isolation and communication', I continued my 'journey' inspired by a geo-history of cosmological thoughts in the East. Such thoughts arose in the East in close relationship to each other and with preceding traditions founded upon the local cultures of different regions in and around the 'Central Plains'. Regaining their vitality by being blended with other thoughts coming in from the non-Chinese worlds, from the places beyond the Great Walls and beyond the Yangtse, they continued throughout the two millennia of empire to have an impact on the life of society.

Cosmologies are not only models of 'human relations', broadly defined as intermediaries between humans and others (other humans, things, and divinities) (Wang 2014b),[35] but also models of relations between models. To inquire into the multi-modal models of cosmology anthropologically, it is important to revisit the sites

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[35] Surely, these can be considered in terms of the 'unconstrained creations of the human imagination' transcending the 'constrained real life experience of those who invent them' (Leach 1982: 213).

of relations between South and North, East and West and to pay more attention to the interactive and synthetic qualities of cosmological configuration in different 'ethnographic regions'.

But revisiting Hegel's optimistic history of the world and Lévi-Strauss's 'sad' reflections on Eurasian 'world religions' and the numerous ethnographic repetitions of them, we have come to realise that we have yet to accustom ourselves to making an association between the 'principles' of cosmology in the North (Eurasian civilisations) and the South ('primitive cultures') (Radcliffe-Brown 1977a).

In the South, in the world beyond the seas, 'when either a singular person or a collective group comes into relation with another, that relation is sustained to the extent that each party is irreducibly differentiated from the other' (Strathern 1988: 14). Such related transformations of the meaning of relationship between 'socio-ego' and alterity in the broad sense of the term have been studied in such a way as to create more complex personalities than we have lived with in the North. Nonetheless, as I must point out, these 'ontologies' are not contrary to those found in the North. In the North, in Eurasia, notwithstanding their distance from the 'original state' of mind where 'myth operate in men's minds without their being aware of the fact' (Lévi-Strauss 1970: 12), the 'conscious models' such as those found in the Western and Eastern ends of Eurasia are likewise invented out of their configurations of self–other relations, and out of their differentiated blendings of so-called ontological 'interiority' and 'physicality'. As Radcliffe-Brown (1977a, 1977b) pointed out long ago, in the great philosophical and religious traditions that we have habitually excluded from our ethnographic scope,[36] we can in fact find similar 'principles' of socio-logics and worldviews to those shared by the 'primitives'.

Besides, certain deep histories of the linkage between Eurasian 'civilisations' and the so-called 'animistic ontologies' found in the fringes or in places far away can be excavated not only along the Pacific Rim (Damon 2016) and along the networks linking Eurasia to the 'primitive worlds' of Africa (Rowlands 2014), but also along the intermediaries between civilisations at the core of Eurasia. I further journeyed to the Southeast, Southwest and Northwest of China, and the Tibetan Plateau, where I secured several examples of the interaction of traditions.

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[36] Thus, the argument that we should take seriously what the natives say, i.e., pigs are persons, persons are pigs, and bodies are concepts, reminds me of another sense of 'con-fusion' in the north. In the year 1195 in the South Song Dynasty, the great Neo-Confucian thinker Cheng Hao had a similar idea. When asked how to understand the self with reference to the other, Cheng Hao said: 'there is a level beyond things outside humans and humans themselves; this is heaven-reason, or what explains both things and humans. If we understand heaven-reason, then we also understand things and humans.' And Cheng Hao added that, 'plants are me' (Wang 2005: 169–70).

In these 'intermediaries' or 'corridors' (Wang 2008), in the 'contact zones' between the civilisational ensembles—be they Indo-European, Semite, or Turanian linguistic 'hyper-social systems' (Mauss 2006: 57–74), be they 'world religions', the trafficking or exchange of myths, tales, arts, words, literary forms, ideals, money, commerce, techniques, and technologies has been highly constant and constitutes a landscape of related traditions dramatically different from what Redfield (1973) and his associates conceptualised in terms of what may be seen as the 'vertical' transmission of traditions.

In the past two or three thousand years, situated on the 'frontiers' of the civilisations, the intermediaries on the one hand have been the extensive geographic belts along which the 'hyper-social systems' of the 'great traditions', expanding along the line of what I have defined as 'horizontal' from their primary spheres of existence towards the 'exterior', have met one another and created such cultural combinations as Chinese, Tibetan, or Southeast Asian Buddhism. On the other hand have been the habitats of the 'peripheral peoples' in which, through joining the cross-regional networks of mobility of persons, things, and divinities and through 'assimilating' the bypassing 'civilisations', the vernacular traditions have 'survived' the expansion of the 'great traditions', or have even transformed their 'parochialities'—for instance, their pervasive shamanic 'interiority' and techniques—into the 'universal' substrata of the regional 'hyper-social systems'.

The examples from the intermediaries are special but not exceptional. As we observed at the beginning, in the West—for instance, in England—while anthropologists are inculcating in themselves the habit of 'contrasting to know', the flexible nexus of traditions continues to evoke the old life-giving myths of 'animistic cosmology', to re-enliven itself in the core spheres of influence of the modern 'great tradition' of individualistic and naturalistic reason. Although the co-presence of 'great and little traditions' in each of the nations of the modern West can be depicted as a struggle within a new social hierarchy conceptualised as a new quest for enlightenment, evidently the 'great tradition' itself is more internally varied and externally related than it is usually represented: Isn't what we accept as scholarly and scientific in fact dependent upon the debates or contests of divergent views in a similar way to that in which, as I insisted, the making of the 'Axial Age' philosophies in the West and the East were dependent upon the contests of the 'four Greeces' and the 'three Chinas'? Shouldn't we describe the 'whole' of the new social hierarchy of 'great and little traditions' in terms of what has been constituted in the 'social environment' of a larger ensemble which, by living together as 'all-under-Heaven' for millennia, has constantly interacted with other ensembles? Hasn't Western anthropology, in all its efforts—often made through intellectual contests—to achieve the 'views from afar', bought into the 'society of naturalism' in which it has been a part the cosmological contents

and forms from the distant, and, has it not re-enlivened the complexity of the archaic in the modern?

The past is the prologue. Past experience, remembered, can inspire our under-standing of the present and the future; and I imagine that so long as we continue to exist on Earth under Heaven, in the future, we will continue to live among the others, and the others will continue to live among us, in the situations in which we and other humans, other things, and other divinities, converge and interact to make history, and that, as in the past, our different cosmologies as different approaches to 'living in the universe' will remain related—peacefully or otherwise—with their counterparts, here or there, at different levels of existence, observable in another 'journey to the West'.

Acknowledgements

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