

THE EXILIC PRISM OF MODERNITY: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE POST-WAR PHILOSOPHY OF TANG JUNYI¹

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For Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978),² coming to terms with the modern world was not simply a matter of emulating or criticizing the West or appraising the relevance of Chinese intellectual, social, and cultural traditions for contemporary societies. Nor is Tang's thought confined to schematic juxtapositions of Chinese culture and Western civilization, of traditional and modern world-views, or of urban life styles in industrialized countries and the remnants of traditional life patterns in modernizing countries. Tang's philosophical reflection on social modernity goes beyond such schematism and entails a much more ambitious agenda which comprises a cosmopolitan notion of cultural patriotism that is set within a post-colonial "East Asian" context. But above all, there is a bold attempt to fathom the significance of the exilic condition in relation to the process of modernity as he perceived it in the mid-20th century. In the following, it shall be analyzed how Tang conceptualized the exilic experience as a sort of prism through which one may grasp the nature of modernity and conceive ways to cope with the modern world. It will be argued that the relation between exile and modernity is the benchmark of Tang's cultural patriotism and of his reflection on the identity and stability of the individual self in modern society. In order to explore this hitherto unstudied potential of Tang's philosophy, it is indispensable to retrace, in a first step, the biographical, intellectual, and historical context of his exilic thought.

1 A Confucian intellectual in emigration

Tang Junyi's exile began on June 8, 1949, when at the age of 41, travelling from Guangzhou, he arrived in Hong Kong accompanied by the famous historian Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990).³ Prior to this, his academic career had already taken him to many univer-

1 An earlier version of this article was published in German in 2004: see Fröhlich 2004.

2 Tang belongs to the philosophically most prolific representatives of so-called modern Confucianism of the 20th century. His exhaustive work which covers an exceptional range of subjects was produced for the most part while in exile and consists of over 450 texts, 20 of which were published as books. An index of these works can be found in Tang Junyi 1988i, 3–71; cf. also Feng Aiqun 1979, 29–117.

3 Tang Junyi 1988i, 70; Tang Junyi 1988h, 34.

sities on the Chinese Mainland, first as a teacher and then as a professor of philosophy. He had also occasionally worked as an editor in the office of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China.⁴ At the time that Tang decided to emigrate to Hong Kong his life was apparently not in danger, nor was there any other personal threat to him from the communist authorities on the Mainland. Tang had, indeed, never publicly criticized the Chinese communists before his years in exile.⁵ It may have been due to Tang's reticence that Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) decided to write him a letter in December 1951, suggesting that Tang return to the Mainland. Li Yuandeng 李源澄 and Qian Ziyuan 錢子原 also wrote letters at this time to Tang to the same effect. In January 1952, Tang reaffirmed to Liang his decision to stay in Hong Kong.⁶ He remained in Hong Kong, together with his wife Xie Tingguang 謝廷光 (Xie Fanghui 謝方回) who was also born on the Mainland, and his adopted daughter Tang Anren 唐安仁, the daughter of his younger sister, until his death on February 2, 1978. Yet, Hong Kong – the “colony of Englishmen” – was a place that had, as he explicitly stated, no more significance for him as “our land” than the English had as “our people”.⁷ Despite initial financial difficulties, he managed rather seamlessly to continue the academic and intellectual work he had started on the Mainland. As early as October 10, 1949, on the National Public Holiday of the Republic of China, he founded the evening school *Yazhou Wenshang Ye Xueyuan* 亞洲文商夜學院 in Hong Kong, together with Qian Mu and others. The school became well-known after it was renamed the *New Asia College* (*Xin Ya Shuyuan* 新亞書院) following a reorganization on February 28, 1950.⁸

Fourteen years after his arrival in Hong Kong, in 1963, Tang was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which was founded the same year. He remained at this university, also serving as dean, until his retirement in October 1974.⁹ During this period, he was able to travel abroad on several lecture tours

4 For a biographical outline of Tang's life and career, see Qin Xiaoyi 1988, 250; detailed biographical information is provided by: Tang Junyi 1988i, 3–243 as well as in Tang's diaries from 1948 to 1978 in: Tang Junyi 1988h. Illuminating comments on Tang's intellectual biography can be found in Metzger 2005, 194–226 (based on: Feng Aiqun 1979, 119–139).

5 Tang Duanzheng 2006, 50.

6 Lai Honkei 1997, 119–120.

7 Tang Junyi 1974b, 29; cf. *ibid.*, 43. Tellingly, Tang wanted to be laid to rest in Taiwan, not in Hong Kong, and explained this by stating that Taiwan was native soil; see Tang Junyi 1988i, 217.

8 *Ibid.*, 70–71.

9 After his retirement, Tang was invited by the University of Taiwan as visiting professor in April 1975.

and prolonged stays to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Europe, and the USA. However, his life in Hong Kong only at first seems to have been one of quiet academic harmony, for despite his experience of exilic hardship he never fully retreated into the academic world. In fact, besides his work in academic philosophy, a central component of his intellectual activities consisted of writing texts and delivering lectures that addressed a general audience. He was already active in this respect at the very outset of his life in exile and published a remarkable number of articles in a variety of journals and magazines targeted at a well-educated readership.¹⁰ Furthermore, from 1950 onwards, Tang organized a series of public lectures and seminars with various speakers and hosted over 100 events, mostly for small groups of 20 to 30 attendees. In 1962, together with the philosopher Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) and others, he founded the *Study Society for Eastern Humanism* (*Dongfang Renwen Xuehui* 東方人文學會) in Hong Kong, which assembled about 70 members worldwide. In addition, he was continuously involved in a diverse range of academic societies.¹¹

The above-mentioned intellectual activities, however diverse, shed some light on Tang's self-image as an intellectual in exile. Significantly, it is apparent that the ethic of responsibility of the intellectual, as held by Confucian emigrants after 1949, differs sharply from the traditional ethos of Chinese literati. The latter demanded that the educated person promote the commonweal and encouraged him to take an office in the imperial administration, the highest ideal of dedication to the community. In the colonial environment of Hong Kong, the ethos of the scholar-official inevitably faded out and became little more than a romantic social idea. As emigrants, intellectuals found themselves inevitably faced with the fundamental question of their self-image, since opportunities for practical political and social engagement were no longer the same as on the Mainland prior to 1949, let alone in imperial times. In the case of Tang Junyi, a highly ambiguous image emerges. With respect to practical concerns, it seems that the experience of exile strengthened his personal determination to advocate for a reconstruction of Chinese "national culture" and "humanism" (*renwenzhuyi* 人文主義),¹² while, during the 1950s, he grew increasingly critical politically of the democratic achievements of the various Chinese regimes in the 20th century. Intellectual life on the exilic periphery not only meant that Tang was physically detached from the Chinese governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. It also provided him with a unique

10 See Feng Aiqun 1979, 7–28.

11 Fang and Li 1995, vol. 1, 23–24.

12 For the term of "humanism," Tang was mostly using the Chinese word "*renwen* 人文" without the suffix "*zhuyi* 主意" (-ism).

opportunity: namely to assume the responsibility of a critical intellectual unburdened by the traditional ethos of scholar-officials. After all, he no longer felt the status-induced obligation to become a civil servant or an advisor to those in power. As a consequence, he could now take up the role of a free-wheeling social critic.

As an intellectual and social critic in exile, however, he did not engage in practical politics. No political parties developed within Confucian exile circles, nor did a Confucian social movement as such. Still, the politically active Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1886–1969) did speak of a Confucian “movement” in 1962 and identified the periodical *Rensheng* 人生 founded in 1951 in Hong Kong as its mouthpiece. In this context, Zhang described the *New Asia College* as a “center for the reappraisal and revival of Confucianism”. He additionally pointed to the existence of a programmatic platform, whose written testimony was the extensive manifesto *A Declaration to the World for Chinese Culture* (*Zhongguo wenhua yu shijie* 中國文化與世界).¹³ It was compiled by Tang Junyi and signed by Zhang Junmai himself, as well as by Mou Zongsan and the historian and intellectual, Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903–1982) and finally published in 1958 in *Minzhu Pinglun* 民主評論 (*The Democratic Review*).¹⁴ Supporting the assumption that there was a “modern” Confucian movement at that time, some scholars have pointed to certain developments prior to 1949 such as the establishment of academies and publications from 1939 onwards.¹⁵ As early as 1941, the philosopher He Lin 賀麟 (1902–1992) had made mention of a “neo-Confucian movement” in reference to a “modern culture” in China. The movement’s impact as a main strand within politics, society, and culture was said to be only a matter of time.¹⁶ Yet there is sufficient reason to doubt whether there was really a “movement” as such from the 1950s. The locations of the persons mentioned above initially contradict the idea of a concentrated Confucian engagement with political or social force: Zhang Junmai mostly lived in the United States after 1949, Tang Junyi and Qian Mu had lived in Hong Kong since 1949, Mou Zongsan stayed in Taiwan until 1960 before moving to Hong Kong, and Xu Fuguan did the same nine years later. By that time, the journal *Rensheng* – according to Zhang

13 Chang 1957–1962, vol. 2, 7.

14 Zhang Junmai et. al. 1958. The manifesto was first published under the title “Wei Zhongguo wenhua jinggao shijie renshi xuanyan – women dui Zhongguo xueshu yanjiu ji Zhongguo wenhua yu shijie wenhua qiantu zhi gongrong renshi” 為中國文化敬告世界人士宣言 – 我們對中國學術研究及中國文化與世界文化前途之共同認識 in: *Minzhu Pinglun* 9.1 (1.1.1958), 2–21.

15 For example, Fang and Li 1995, vol. 1, 17–19, 22–24; Bresciani 2001, 18–21.

16 He Lin 1983, 611–612.

Junmai, the “mouthpiece” of the movement – had already ceased to exist. *Rensheng* appeared until 1968; *Minzhu Pinglun*, founded in 1949 in Hong Kong, until 1966.

There were, moreover, significant political differences between these Confucian intellectuals. Even though Tang, Zhang, Xu, Mou, and Qian all held anti-communist convictions, they expressed different criticisms of world communism and Chinese communism. Their political outlook is even more inconsistent when considering their attitude toward the nationalist government of the GMD on Taiwan. For example, Qian Mu, who was not among the signatories of the manifesto written by Tang in 1958, had much fewer reservations about the rule of the GMD in post-war Taiwan than Tang or Zhang Junmai did during the 1950s. Although he travelled to Taiwan on two occasions during the 1950s and 1960s, meeting with Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] 蔣介石 (1887–1975) and Chiang Ching-kuo [Jiang Jingguo] 蔣經國 (1910–1988), Tang repeatedly indicated his skepticism about the GMD’s political agenda and its progress toward establishing democratic government and the rule of law in China prior to 1949 and later in Taiwan. To cite but two examples: When reconsidering China’s political development in the 20th century in a three-part article published in the weekly magazine *Zuguo Zhoukan* 祖國周刊 in 1958, he was clear that the GMD had failed to establish true democracy in China.¹⁷ Looking back at the GMD’s political record prior to 1949, he criticized the GMD’s “fascism” after the dissolution of its first united front with the Communist Party of China and during the war against Japan, when the fascist tendencies included a blind adoration for a spirit of war. Besides, he condemned the fact that the GMD was still unable to attain a true consciousness of the state and had thus failed to establish a modern state.¹⁸ Tang also distanced himself occasionally in private from the regime of the GMD. For example, during a trip to Taiwan in August 1956, he tellingly commented in a letter to his wife Xie Tingguang that, in Taiwan, politics was not as progressive as industry, agriculture or the military.¹⁹ The political differences and ambiguities among representatives of modern Confucianism do not end here, however. There was also room for disagreement in the field of political theory: Tang and Xu Fuguan, for example, openly and intensely discussed their concepts of democracy and the relationship between science and politics at the beginning of the 1950s.²⁰ As a mat-

17 Tang Junyi 1988c, vol. 8, 107–109. The article was entitled “The Practice of Democratic Ideals and the Consciousness of Objective Values” and published in three parts. On the trips to Taiwan in 1956 and 1961 (five more journeys followed in the 1970s), see Li Du 1997, 719.

18 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 10, 157–158.

19 Tang Junyi 1988f, 315.

20 Mou Zongsan thus declared himself in favor of Tang; Lee 1998, 186–188, 192–204. Dif-

ter of fact, at no point in Tang's lifetime was there a common political program of modern Confucianism. It is therefore not surprising that Tang indicated in private correspondence on the manifesto that the rumors about the alleged desire to come together as a political party were to be dismissed.²¹ What is more, the manifesto of 1958 was not conceived as a partisan platform, and Tang in fact explicitly stated his disinterest in political activism.²² His position is thus markedly different from that of Zhang Junmai, who, 22 years his senior, had already founded a political party at the beginning of the 1930s, and, at the start of the 1950s, tried in vain during a short but intensive period to organize a political "third power".²³

What was actually achieved in the 1950s and 1960s within the Confucian exile circles was a rather loose intellectual, academic, and cultural-political collaboration – as between Tang and Qian when they worked together in founding the *New Asia College*. None of these intellectuals, however, was engaged in political or social activism. It is therefore likely no coincidence that the programmatic term "neo-Confucianism" (*xin ruxue* 新儒學 / *xin rujia* 新儒家) only rarely appears in the exilic writings of Confucian intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s, and, when it does, that it varies greatly in meaning. Even Zhang Junmai does not use this term in the first instance to describe contemporary Confucianism of the 20th century, but rather Confucian currents of the later imperial period.²⁴ As for the two key texts by Tang Junyi on the subject of exile, the term "neo-Confucian" does not figure in either of them. Tang published two long essays at the beginning of the 1960s in the periodical *Zuguo Zhoukan* which were entitled "On the Fall and Demise of the Flowers and Fruits of the Chinese Nation – on the Meaning and Value of Conservation and a Message for Persons Overseas," and "The Fall and Demise of the Flowers and Fruits and the Planting of a Holy Tree through the Self".²⁵

ferences also arose between Qian Mu and Xu Fuguan towards the end of the 1950s and the start of the 1960s, Tang Junyi 1988f, 208–218.

- 21 Tang Junyi 1988g, 116 (letter of 28th November 1957 to Mou Zongsan and Xu Fuguan).
- 22 For instance in the article that was published in 1955 in the journal *Ziyou Ren* 自由人: Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 421.
- 23 Xue Huayuan 1993, 52–53.
- 24 Cf. his essay in *Rensheng*, no. 297 (March 1963) entitled "Xin rujia sixiang shi xie wan yihou" 新儒家思想史寫完以後.
- 25 "Shuo Zhonghua minzu zhi hua guo piaoling – jian lun baoshou zhi yi yi yu jiazhi bing jinggao haiwai renshi" 說中華民族之花果飄零 – 兼論保守之意義與價值並敬告海外人士, *Zuguo Zhoukan* 35.1 (1961); "Hua guo piaoling ji linggen zi zhi" 花果飄零及靈根自植, *Zuguo Zhoukan* 44.4 (1964). Both essays were published in book form in 1974, to-

Earlier, Tang had spoken only in isolated moments about exile, above all in the second half of the 1950s. Specific examples can be found in his address to students at the beginning of a new term of study at the *New Asia College*, in shorter articles in journals and in the above-mentioned manifesto of 1958.

2 Fathoming modernity and exile

2.1 Convergences between modernity and exile

In his writings on the condition of exile, Tang often describes the hardships of emigration in a manner that is similar to the way he depicts the fate of “modern man,” whom finds to be displaced, deracinated, and socially isolated. As will be discussed, “Hong Kong” for him is just as much a symbol of exile as it is a representation of the disenchanting, reified world of modernity. The exilic experience coincides here with and even reinforces the downsides of “modernization” (*xiandaihua* 现代化)²⁶. It is hence no exaggeration to say that Tang’s perception of the modern world is shaped not solely, and possibly not even in the first instance, by his own experience of life in a modernizing, urban Chinese environment, but rather by his profound experience of exilic life in Hong Kong after 1949. In order to explore this relation between exile and modernity, and especially the intersecting descriptions of their downsides, Tang’s perception of social modernity will be taken as a point of departure.

What has been called elsewhere “*the dual character* of the fundamental experience of the modern”²⁷ is clearly evident in Tang’s discussion of modernity. This dual character encompasses two intertwined aspects of the individuals’ lives in modern societies: on the one hand, their experience of liberation from religious and traditional restraints leading to social, political, and intellectual emancipation, and, on the other, the dissolution of communal ties and the disintegration of traditional social and political values, triggering feelings of social isolation and alienation from shared social and cultural contexts. Tang makes a number of observations about modern life consistent with this diagnosis while travelling in the United States in 1957. He concludes that individuals, while enjoying increasing freedom in joining diverse social, economic and cultural associations, also face the increasing peril of such forms of particularity, namely, losing sight of and becoming indifferent toward “universal ideals of humanity”. Tang suggests that if this tendency

gether with a reprint of the manifesto of 1958 and two sets of lecture notes which had been published earlier in the *Ming Bao Yuekan* 明報月刊: Tang Junyi 1974b.

26 The term “*xiandaihua*” is used rather seldom by Tang; see e.g. Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 33.

27 Rosa 1998, 17, 308–309.

continues unabated in America and elsewhere, the outcome will be a global degeneration of freedom. The “transcending, comprehensive spirit” of humanity might then decrease on a daily basis and with it, the desire for establishing the freedom of humanity. In spite of his sometimes very blunt criticism of what he perceived as the detrimental social impact of rampant egotism in the United States and Western societies in general, Tang does not qualify these tendencies as a specifically “Western” phenomenon. What he sees at work here is rather a global, but also inevitable consequence of the progressive division of labor and specialization in production, science, technology, and education. He worries that this might lead to the gradual replacement of an “objective consciousness of values” by “outer values of efficiency” which would leave individuals unable to grasp the “inner value” of their work. What is at stake, in other words, is nothing less than the increasing “reification” (*wuhua* 物化) of the human being.²⁸

Tang restated his dire diagnosis of modern man’s reification in various texts from the 1950s to the 1970s. In a particularly succinct passage from an article on “World Humanism and Chinese Humanism” from 1959, he maintains that since humanity has lost control over the things it produces in welfare societies, a severe threat has emerged for Eastern and Western humanism, and even for humanity itself. This threat entails a surfeit of science and technology resulting in the production of weapons of mass destruction, as well as a severe spiritual crisis among urban citizens who live isolated, empty lives. Finally, a “hitherto unknown” “scientification” of modern political organizations might occur and lead to the establishment of highly rigid organizations in which the individual merely figures as a statistical number, unable to exert the “freedom of a spiritual life”. Tang observes two types of “materialism” from a global perspective that have emerged in this context: first, Soviet-style communism, which produced a “conceptual materialism” that locks human beings in an “intellectual cage” and triggers a “comprehensive reification of man”; second, the materialism found in the large cities of America and Europe, where a “behavioral materialism” effectuates the calculation of all human values against monetary standards. Both types of materialism coincide in their negative effect of depriving human beings of their subjectivity. Any solution to this crisis must therefore consist of enabling the human beings to “magnify themselves” and to spiritually rise above the sphere of material production.²⁹

28 Tang Junyi 1988c, vol. 8, 111–112. Tang does not elaborate on his use of the old expression “*wuhua*,” which can be found for example in *Zhuangzi*, Chap. 2. For an example of Tang’s attack on selfish individualism in the United States, see one of his articles in the *Mingbao* from 1974: *Ibid.*, 425–426.

29 Tang Junyi 1988c, vol. 8, 55–56.

Still, Tang's concept and diagnosis of modernity do not lend themselves to the romantic idea of a swift return to pre-modern humanistic traditions as an escape from the reifying tendencies of the modern world. This is also evident from his reflection on the basic structure of modern society: According to Tang, it is characterized by an ongoing differentiation of institutional and ideational/value-based spheres (i. e. law, art, morality, science). The "principles of societal organization" are hence such that the integration of and within these spheres is not realized through substantial traditions anymore, but contracts and laws.³⁰ By taking the stratified, functionally differentiated societal structure as constitutive of social modernity, Tang's conception is reminiscent of Max Weber's discussion of the "rationalization" of "occidental" culture leading to a functional "differentiation of 'spheres of values' (science, law, morality, art) that held their own particular 'logic of judgments about facts, justice or taste'".³¹ Tang and the co-authors of the manifesto of 1958 found China lacking in this regard and consequently proposed that a modern Chinese society would need a firm differentiation of institutional and ideational/value-based spheres. The manifesto stated accordingly that an individual's self-awareness and actions should not be solely related to the sphere of moral demands:

We say that Chinese culture, in accordance with its own demands, should deploy a cultural ideal of driving the Chinese not only to self-consciously [recognize] their self as a 'subject of moral practice' on the basis of the [Confucian] study of spirit and essence (*xin xing zhi xue* 心性之學). [The Chinese] should, at the same time, in politics strive to attain the ability to self-consciously [recognize their self] as a 'political subject', and in the realms of nature and knowledge, [they should strive to] become an 'epistemological subject' and a 'subject of the activities of applied technologies'. This is also to say that China needs a truly democratic national reconstruction as well as science and applied technologies. In Chinese culture, [we] must accept Western, or global cultures. (...) [This] will drive the personalities of the Chinese to attain an even higher perfection. The objective spiritual life of the Chinese nation [will thus] attain an even higher development.³²

Against this backdrop, the manifesto leaves no doubt that a modernizing China needs to conform to the ostensibly global structural outline of social modernity, even at the cost of abolishing traditional patterns of social and moral thought:

30 Ibid., 136.

31 For the quotations: see Habermas on Weber in: Habermas 1993, 206. Tang might have been familiar with Weber through the work of Talcott Parsons; on the significance of Parsons for the Chinese reception of Weber in the 1950s: see Gransow 1999, 63.

32 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 32–33.

If the Chinese want to possess this Western spirit of the theoretical sciences, then it is, in turn, indispensable that the Chinese are able to temporarily restrain their practical activities and moral goals. But since the end of the Ming Dynasty, this point was never clearly grasped by [Chinese] thinkers.³³

Overall, one may conclude that the concept of a functional differentiation of institutional and ideational/value-based spheres in modern society is indeed a normative reference for the whole modern Confucian project of China's humanistic "reconstruction". This "reconstruction" would require a broad range of efforts in modernization. The authors of the manifesto of 1958 bluntly state that industrialization in China had not yet reached a sufficient level, and the same is said to hold true for the development of modern science and technology in general. The deficits in democratic politics are also diagnosed as symptoms of failing modernization: Democratic institutions faltered already right after the promulgation of the republic in 1912 when representative government crumbled, leaving the plurality of social interests without a political voice, and denying local autonomy an adequate standing. Apart from these institutional failures, the manifesto deplors the fact that there were only very vague "notions of people's rights and democracy" among the people.³⁴

Yet the crisis that had to be addressed by the Confucian project of "reconstruction" was even more severe according to Tang. It had effects that went far beyond the above-mentioned, current deficits in Chinese modernization – effects that were already observable in the West. In order to understand why Tang was convinced that this mattered to China, one needs to recall that he conceptualized modernity as a globally ongoing process of modernization. In a paper entitled "The Reconstruction of Confucianism and the Modernization of Asia," which he presented in July 1965 in Seoul at the "International Conference on the Problems of Modernization in Asia," Tang elucidates his concept of modernization by pointing to what he believes will eventually emerge as the general direction of modernity, namely, the formation of modern nation-states in the political form of liberal democracies that safeguard fundamental human rights, complete with a scientific-technologically progressive, industrialized society.³⁵ This anticipation of a global convergence in modernization is clearly in line with the mainstream of modernization theories which had reached their climax in the United States in the 1950s and were prevalent in

33 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 35; on the differentiation of politics, ethics, religion in Western civilization and their conflation in Chinese history see *ibid.*, 18.

34 *Ibid.*, 41–42.

35 Tang Junyi 1988e, 361; see also an interview from 1974: Tang Junyi 1988c, vol. 8, 312.

social sciences well into the 1960s.³⁶ Whether Tang had actually studied such theories in-depth is unclear – after all, his own reflection on modernity has a rather weak footing in empirical social science – but it is still likely that he had acquired some general knowledge of them. Be that as it may, it is this perspective of convergence that allowed him to depict China’s historical development since the mid-19th century not as an aberration or anomaly of modernity, but as an integral, albeit temporally distinct, evolution *within* the modern world. The modern Chinese nation-state, in other words, is, like its Western counterparts, still in the making, albeit with a considerable backlog. Tang, however, did not share the common assumption of American modernization theories that a market-induced type of (originally Western) modernization will by necessity, sooner or later, affect similar political and cultural transformations in societies across the world. He thus also did not expect that “cultural” particularities will be eliminated or rendered altogether irrelevant in the course of modernization. Even though modernization, according to Tang, entails strong universal tendencies, it still allows, as an incomplete global process, for culturally particular manifestations. Nor did Tang subscribe to the general view that there exists an insurmountable chasm between modernity and tradition. He rather anticipated that Asian societies eventually succeed in securing the co-existence of modernized and tradition-based social subsystems.³⁷

Nonetheless, Tang does not expect that China will easily escape the dangers of modernity that are already threatening Western societies. It will not be feasible for the Chinese to simply side-step the downsides of modernization and implement only those selected parts that seemed to have been beneficial to Western societies. As an ongoing global process, modernity is too dynamic to be reduced to such a Sinicizing scheme, in which China’s modernization is completed only with the “best” of Western civilizations. Nor would such a conceptual strategy be compatible with the claim of Tang’s Confucian project of “reconstruction” to address a world-wide discussion on the ongoing process of modernization. In this case, Tang and the co-authors of the manifesto of 1958 could not have asserted that the project of modern Confucianism was indeed significant in terms of a world philosophy.

It is against this backdrop of global concern that Tang turned to the problem of mankind’s submission to the instrumental rationality fortified in the capitalist economy and the modern bureaucratic state – a criticism that was also expressed by Max Weber

36 Knöbl 2001, 11–12, 30–32.

37 This alignment of Tang’s concept of modernization is to some extent in accordance with Tu Wei-ming’s introduction of the concept of multiple modernities to the Chinese and East-Asian context; see Tu 2002.

and other Western theoreticians on modernity. Tang warns of the coercive nature of an instrumental modernity and the dangers of mankind's reification, calling attention to the "new bondage" which humanity experiences in "the modern industrialized community" and the "new slavery in the modern social and political systems". He sees "modern man" in the figure of an uprooted, socially isolated city dweller and worries that freedom and equality in modern societies are in danger of becoming simple formalities which have no practical repercussions for social relations. In this sober conclusion, he observes that, due to the progressive dissolution of family structures, it will be difficult for the modern individual, who is removed from a traditional ethical context, to develop a moral personality according to the Confucian ideal.³⁸ "Modern man" and the émigré thus share the predicament of having to reconstruct a social context of common values and normative ties in a situation where considerable parts of their lifeworld, including binding traditions and conventions, have been dissolved by the mounting pressure of instrumental rationality and/or enforced physical dislocation. When the place of emigration is a rapidly modernizing society like Hong Kong, the disorienting effects of the forceful nature of modern "rationalization" and emigration converge and, as Tang's vision of modernity and exile shows, are felt even more keenly. Tang addressed this convergence of the forceful nature of modernity and exile by taking up the delicate task of conceiving a type of normative reintegration in modern/exilic society that might be achieved without taking a harmful shortcut in traditionalism – that is, without haphazardly proclaiming the ostensibly healing effect of a return to communal life dominated by a substantial ethos, religion or mandatory set of virtues.

2.2 Alienation in modernizing societies and in exile

Tang's modern Confucian philosophy does not solely delineate the convergence of social modernity and exile with respect to their downsides. The exilic perspective also comes into play when Tang considers whether a continuous effort of modernization might produce a betterment of social modernity. The general fundamental assumption of Confucianism about modernity is that even though modernity has a forceful nature, it is *not* characterized overall by inevitability. Thus whatever the impact of historical contingency and structural development in the societal and economic sectors, in modern Confucianism modernity retains its optional nature as a *project* of modernization, which can largely be guided by ideational and normative inputs.³⁹ The current predominance of structural constraints and instrumental rationality over humanistic "cultural"

38 Tang Junyi 1988e, 370–371.

39 Ibid., 370–371.

resources in modern society is therefore not seen as an inevitable outcome of modernity, but rather as a manageable “deficiency”.

This perception of modernity leaves room for hope – however dwindling it may be – that “culture” can be liberated from the rampant, blind consequences of an all-pervasive economic professionalization, fragmentation, and reification. To this end, the historical inevitability of such negative consequences of modernity must be made intelligible by raising a common awareness of the historical evolution of these consequences.⁴⁰ This expectation is in stark contrast to Weber’s famous diagnosis of an administered society, in which shared values and norms are inevitably overwhelmed by the workings of instrumental rationality. In depicting modern society as an “iron cage of dependence” that is forged by the modern bureaucratic state and the capitalist economy, and from which no human agent, whether individuals or collectivities, can ever escape, Weber’s outlook is unavoidably pessimistic.⁴¹ His diagnosis of an irreversible disempowerment of historical subjectivity in the course of modernity thoroughly discredits any notion of human agents acting as helmsmen of their own history.

Just the same, Tang’s modern Confucianism is not naively optimistic to the point of proclaiming that the predicaments of modernity may be eradicated as such, once and for all, by concerted human action. Consequently, Tang remains critical of ideas concerning a substantial reconciliation of all inner contradictions in modern societies, such as Kang Youwei’s notion of a homogeneous world state of “Great Unity” (see below). Nor does he propose a model for a traditionalist infusion of modern society with pre-modern, communal forms of collective life. Rather, he wants to enlighten the modern individual to the fateful contradictions between, on the one hand, his subjective inwardness, dispositions and feelings and, on the other, the objective modern world, which is the outcome of an irreversible historical process. He consequently abstains throughout his writings from any call to substantially reintegrate the different ethical, political, economic, and cultural roles (or “subjectivity”) of individuals in modern societies. Therefore, a final reconciliation of subjectivity and objectivity – of spiritual inwardness and “outer,” “objective” social, economic, legal, political, and intellectual relations – is unattainable within the historical reality of the modern world⁴², as much as exile is an inextricable, fateful state of historical

40 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 10, 392–393.

41 For a concise analysis of Weber’s modernity theory, see Habermas 1998b, 208, 212; and Sandkühler 1990, 166–167.

42 With respect to the concept of modernity, Tang’s thought is here in line with Hegel’s; see Ritter 2003, 215.

existence for those who have to emigrate. The very historical form of modern and exilic life is hence characterized by alienation.

The fundamental, albeit implicit, message of Tang's reflection about modernity and exile may thus be summarized as follows: if the individuals can fathom the inner workings of modernity and exile, they might then be able to see through and grasp their own experience of alienation as the *historical* form of the modern world. This intellectual insight would accordingly mitigate the experience of alienation. But Tang neither contents himself with such Hegelian reflection nor does he demand from the individual a complete submission to an alienated *form* of life. Instead, his modern Confucianism assumes that, based on a reflective grasp of modernity and exile, forms of practical cooperation might emerge which eventually lead, if not to a perfect modern society, than at least to a society whose members retain the freedom to strive for their own spiritual perfection.

Against this backdrop, Tang's modern Confucianism sets out to "reconstruct" and supply those ideational inputs – political, social and ethical ideas, values and norms, religious convictions, and historical consciousness – that are conducive to breaking up the dominance of instrumental rationality in modernizing societies. This endeavor, a crucial part of which consists of a critical reconstruction of "humanistic culture," can just as well take place in exile. The exilic setting indeed has far-reaching implications insofar as Tang deems both the existing nation-states of the People's Republic on the Mainland and the Republic of China on Taiwan unfit to live up to the democratic promises of their respective republics and, hence, to fulfill an integral requirement of a *modern* nation-state.⁴³ For all its constraints, the place of exile is well-suited to reconsidering the foundations of modern China, whereas the political and social situation of the Mainland and Taiwan bear the imprint of an ideological aberration. After all, the regimes on both sides of the Taiwan Strait failed to set up *institutional* safeguards in order to guarantee an open social and political deliberation about modernization. Exilic reflection thus appears to have great significance for coming to terms with modernity and modernization in China exactly because the condition of exile fosters an undogmatic exploration of intellectual resources that remains unimpaired by those ideological fetters that paralyzed critical thought in China and Taiwan. According to modern Confucianism's self-understanding as presented in the manifesto, the experience of emigration and exile was the crucial stimulus for its attempt to reconsider "the problems of China" in the modern world (see below section 3.2). Yet this positive outlook on the exilic

43 For Tang, the true "Republic of China" (*Zhonghua Minguo* 中華民國), that is a "democratic Chinese nation-state," has not been established so far, but is a state in the making, see Tang Junyi 1988b, 175–176.

situation cannot betray the fact that Tang experienced exile first and foremost as an intellectual and historical void.

2.3 Exile as horror vacui

Tang depicts Hong Kong as a non-place in the sense of Marc Augé's anthropological theory of supermodernity: it is an alienating habitat, where individuals no longer recognize themselves because they cannot situate this place in their own historical, biographical, and generational narratives. Following Augé, Hartmut Rosa sees this particular deepening of inter-generational alienation as a sign of the modern transformation of places into non-places.⁴⁴ Neither Augé nor Rosa considers the condition of exile, however, which indeed may be depicted as a paradigmatic non-place. It is significant that Tang, in contrast to Augé, traces the reasons for the divisions between generations in daily life not only back to modern phenomena of accelerated social change, but also to exile. Ultimately, the exiles in Hong Kong society experienced isolation in their daily life due to the singular event of their emigration. This was further exacerbated by the experience of intellectual, personal, and biographical isolation, which separated the exiles from the non-exiled generation of their parents and from the succeeding generation of their own children, who were born in Hong Kong and had not experienced emigration. In other words, the exiles constitute a generation unto themselves. Since their horizon of experience is hallmarked by their experience of emigration, they are separated from the older and the younger generations by a deep gulf. In this limited, insular, exilic present, in which common inter-generational contexts are by and large lost in exile, the emigrants face the danger of being unable to express or establish their own personal identity in the contexts of shared values, lifestyles, and ideals and common cultural practices and institutions. In Tang's interpretation, the exilic self, possibly even more so than the modern self, is required to establish new value horizons and normative links *from within the self*. In the process of doing so, the individual is inevitably confronted with a new, puzzling plurality of horizons of meaning and lifestyles. This, in turn, hampers the stabilization of his or her personal identity within common horizons of cultural meaning.

It is significant therefore that Tang Junyi, Xu Fuguan, Mou Zongsan and Zhang Junmai describe the start of their exile as an experience of intellectual and emotional isolation and emptiness, in which they "looked around to all sides and saw only endless distance".⁴⁵ Similarly, Tang later defined the contemporary situation of the exiled Chinese by

44 Augé 1992, 100, cf. also: Rosa 1998, 205–206.

45 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 4. The wording quoted here comes from a poem attributed to the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (Koxinga 國姓爺; 1624–1662) who retreated

the fact that their “motherland has been destroyed and [their] home lost”⁴⁶ – that their hopes for their lives and educational ideals now “loom in the emptiness,” and they therefore “roam around” and are “carried by the wind”.⁴⁷ Tang’s description of the exile is not always lyrical; in some places his language is distinctively declamatory: His vocabulary includes terms such as “native soil,” “homeland” or “motherland,” terms that smack of a lingering nationalist-chauvinism. It is important to bear in mind here, however, that such expressions do not have the same historical baggage in the Chinese-speaking context as they do in European languages. As will be demonstrated, Tang’s language is not that of a nationalist, but rather of a conservative patriotic thinker. At times, for example, when he confesses his yearning for the landscapes he loved when he still lived on the Mainland, there is a coincidental, but all the same illustrative, consistency between his emotional writing style and the way cosmopolitan philosophers of the European enlightenment expressed their own patriotic fervor. If nothing else, this congruence reminds us that cosmopolitanism and patriotism are not mutually exclusive. Lao Sze-kwang was therefore mistaken when he suggested that Tang, in professing his longing for the mountainous landscape of his youth in his later writings, displayed a “national-cultural” consciousness and “love for tradition” together with a “strange” yearning for the reconciliation of human values with the “old society”.⁴⁸ Rather, Tang expressed here his emotional attachment to the landscape of his youth and his alienation from his place of exile – Hong Kong.

Tang Junyi described Hong Kong as a center of business and trade, in which the eminent spheres of “humanistic culture” – ethics, philosophy, art, music, literature and religion – have barely been developed. It was to him, to a certain extent, a historically empty place where neither historical époques nor intellectual-historical dimensions of culture can be experienced. He thus posed the following rhetorical question to the students of the *New Asia College* at the beginning of the new term in September 1959: “What intellectual ties do you have to ‘Hong Kong?’” According to Tang, in Hong Kong there are only ties related to tycoons and businessmen from industry and trade. Hong Kong, in his view, is meaningless, since there are no notable libraries, museums, academic symposia or societies to be found. The only things available are traded goods from all the world’s leading countries.⁴⁹

to Taiwan with his remaining forces when the Ming cause was finally lost on the Chinese Mainland after the establishment of the Qing Dynasty in 1644.

46 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 470.

47 Ibid., 478.

48 Lao Sze-kwang 2010, 21.

49 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 505–506.

Here, Tang paints a picture of a creeping, intellectual, emotional and practical colonialization of the lives of the exiles, a process that goes hand-in-hand with their acclimatization to the emptiness of the non-place “Hong Kong”. The historical and cultural awareness of the emigrants as a community of exiles is permanently at risk of becoming gradually dispersed under the colonial conditions of life, until the emigrants finally forget where they have come from and how they came to find themselves suffering from colonial repression. Against this backdrop, Tang assigns the exiles in Hong Kong and Taiwan the task of keeping alive the consciousness of their community – a community that is bound by a common fate in the face of a Chinese populace of Hong Kong, which accepts the colonial situation as an everyday reality. It is out of such concern that Tang, in 1956, points out that it is not only those students of the *New Asia College* born in Hong Kong who appear to have no interest in the problems of Chinese statehood, nationhood and “humanistic culture”. In fact, the “youth” and “high-ranking intellectuals” who are essentially living in “exile” (*liuwang* 流亡) are by now also experiencing noticeable difficulties in recognizing their responsibility in these matters.⁵⁰ In Tang’s view, this change in mindset had taken place between the mid-1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, not only among emigrants in Hong Kong, but also in Taiwan, South East Asia, Europe and America, as many “compatriots overseas” gradually came to terms with “living far away from home,” while at the same time, tensions were being eased in international politics.⁵¹ Such a transformation is also evident in Tang’s conclusion that only a steadily decreasing number of emigrants still experiences exile as an anomaly to be *suffered*. This limited group of exiles hence becomes noticeably isolated as a generation,⁵² sharing a particular horizon of experience that is specific to their lifetime. Thus, even within the generation of exiles, there are those emigrants who become increasingly oblivious to their status of exile and gradually adapt to a “normalized” everyday life in spite of the colonial circumstances. Emigrants like Tang consequently felt increasingly isolated as an exiled generation, for their historical and biographical narratives could only be interwoven with the narratives of those who (no longer) lived in exile with great difficulty, if at all. We may assume that the related feelings of social isolation, atomization and marginalization turned exilic space even more into a “non-place”.

50 Ibid. 428, 431. Origins also play an important, although secondary role here. Tang notably points out that Chinese people born in Hong Kong “originally come from the Mainland”: Ibid., 432.

51 Tang Junyi 1974b, 1.

52 This use of the term “generation” follows sociological work in the field of migration research, whereby immigrants are categorized as “first generation,” and those born to immigrants are known as “second generation”: Pan 1998, 17.

As Tang's writings attest, one of the core experiences of social separation and intellectual isolation in exile is undoubtedly the fact that answers to the question of origin within exile circles no longer seem so unambiguous. A wide range of identification with "China" as a place of origin comes to the forefront and, along with it, the possible diversity within such an identification. In the 1950s and 1960s, Tang thus continued to speak consistently of "China" as "*Zhongguo*" 中國 or – with stronger cultural connotations – "*Zhonghua*" 中華 as the place of origin of Chinese living outside the Mainland. But, at the same time, he employed a more differentiated terminology. Therefore, in Taiwan and Hong Kong, there is a "Chinese youth" (*Zhongguo qingnian* 中國青年) and a Chinese society, which he terms "*Huaren shehui*" 華人社會 (society of *Hua* people) or "*Zhongguoren zhi shehui*" 中國人之社會 (society of the Chinese).⁵³

For Chinese communities in other countries, he uses the term "societies of Chinese sojourners" (*Huaqiao shehui* 華僑社會), which clearly has much weaker national-cultural connotations.⁵⁴ Characteristic of these "societies of overseas Chinese," according to Tang, is a situation in which old traditions and customs are hardly maintained.⁵⁵ This situation, however, is not indicative of an emancipatory gradual dismantling of oppressive traditions, but much more a symptom of increasing repression in places of emigration. In Tang's view, Chinese communities in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Burma continued to be disadvantaged culturally, politically and economically. No less troubling for Tang was the fact that the "Chinese youth" from Taiwan and Hong Kong – he was thinking here in the first instance of the educated elite – had been dispersing across the globe for some time and taking on foreign nationalities in "comparatively civilized states" such as the United States of America. His fear, therefore, was that in forty or fifty years, the "societies of Chinese sojourners" could completely disappear. The "sojourning Chinese" (*Zhongguo qiaomin* 中國僑民) would then not even remain Chinese in name. Tang repeatedly describes the Chinese communities in Hong Kong and Taiwan and those in other parts of the world henceforth as "societies of Chinese sojourners" and thus dispensed with the terms "Chinese youth" and "society of *Hua* people," which would indicate much closer cultural ties

53 In today's language usage, "*Zhongguoren*" sometimes has connotations of nationality (People's Republic of China or Republic of China) and "*Huaren*" ethnic and/or cultural links to "China"; Tu 1994a, 25, 266. In Tang's writings, the terms "*Zhongguoren*" as well as "*Huaren*" appear to denote ethnic and/or cultural links to "China".

54 The term "*Huaqiao*" 華僑 dates back to the late 19th century and implies migration outside China. From 1910 until the regulation of its official use in the People's Republic, the term "*Huaqiao*" suggested belonging to the Chinese *nation*. Pan 1998, 16.

55 Tang Junyi 1974b, 5.

with China.⁵⁶ In this way, he made it clear that the progressive assimilation of Chinese communities into immigrant societies constitutes a threat to the survival of “Chinese” communities outside the Mainland, not only in terms of empirical sociological evidence, but also from a normative perspective.

According to Tang, the threat to Chinese communities is not in the first instance due to any physical or immediate danger facing their members. It is rather the self-conception of the emigrants as belonging to the Chinese nation that is in danger, and even more so since 1949: On the one hand, emigration prompts the question of the meaning and desirability of the individual’s continuing identification with the nation, particularly in a colonial situation where the issue is contextualized as one that lies between assimilation and anti-colonial opposition. On the other hand, emigrants could continue to weigh the question of how the Chinese nation should be defined and whether there could be to some extent an alternative “China” outside the communist Mainland and beyond a Taiwan ruled by the GMD. The survival of China as a cultural nation is unquestionably in acute danger in Tang’s opinion. He depicts this danger using the image of a large tree for the Chinese nation: The tree is threatened with extinction; its flowers and fruits are falling off and decaying, and some are gradually carried off by the wind. Only certain seeds will continue to survive in the foreign soil of “other men’s gardens,” in shadowy, moist ground, and in the corners where they benefit from the muddy soil.⁵⁷ As Tang’s metaphor implies, the Chinese nation may no longer be able to preserve its territory, history and culture, and, along with this, its morals and ethics, traditions and customs, and language and script.⁵⁸

Such a decay of the national culture threatens to hinder, as Tang suggests, the (cultural) “merging” and “absorption” within the nation, but also undermines the individual members’ “intellectual determination” to protect the nation and its culture. In assessing the current situation, Tang finds that this determination had diminished among the diasporic communities of Chinese, which was equivalent to the “beginning of the complete collapse of the national spirit” and the imminent “great tragedy of the nation”. Yet, Tang explicitly maintained that this was not a case of a “moral problem”. The emi-

56 Tang Junyi 1974b, 1–3, 39.

57 Ibid., 2. Tang’s metaphor underwent an optimistic change in Tu Wei-ming, whose edited volume on the concept of “cultural China” is entitled *The Living Tree*. The contributions by Tu follow Tang’s use of the term “cultural nation”: Tu 1994b, viii. Tu 1994c, 25–26.

58 Tang Junyi 1974b, 22.

grants had no *moral* obligation toward the nation and its culture, and the exilic individual's interpretation of nation and culture was not to be morally judged.⁵⁹

Therefore, instead of moralizing, Tang addressed the threatening consequences of converging exilic and colonial experiences. This convergence, in his view, is a symptom of the continuing demise of the Chinese cultural nation. In Hong Kong and even in Taiwan, he sees signs of a (self-) colonialization of the “social and cultural consciousness”. Evidence of the colonized servant's consciousness is found in the fact that interest in the Chinese heritage in the fields of science, education, and the arts is dwindling. In these fields, he notes, the Chinese no longer set their “own standards,” and consequently even “the standards for Chinese scholarship have fallen into the hands of outsiders”. Tellingly, the exhibits from the Palace Museum in Taiwan were only appreciated by the Chinese when they were on loan to an exhibition, after having first aroused interest in the United States.⁶⁰ No less worrying for Tang was the declining use of Chinese languages (*Zhongguo yuwen* 中國語文), which were no longer spoken even in the “homes of many high-ranking Chinese intellectuals in America and Europe”. He critically observes that at a meeting in Hong Kong on the founding of the *Chinese University of Hong Kong* the majority of people did not have any qualms about speaking in English. For Tang, this was a new development. He thus points out that during the Republican period (1912–1949) even the representatives of the so-called New Culture movement, who were critical of Chinese tradition, still used the Chinese language.⁶¹ He also deplors that, in the meantime, it has become commonplace that Chinese academics study abroad in order to gain recognition from their compatriots. An unfortunate consequence of this is that those like the graduates of the *New Asia College* in Hong Kong, who have not studied abroad, became disadvantaged in their careers and socially marginalized.⁶² Yet it seems that not all is lost: Tang also recognizes signs for China's increasing cultural significance in the world, such as the presence of Chinese culture and language as subjects of study at foreign universities.⁶³

59 On “intellectual determination” see Tang Junyi 1974b, 5; on the “collapse of the national spirit” see *Ibid.*, 37; on the “tragedy of the nation” see *Ibid.*, 23; on the “moral problem” see *Ibid.*, 2.

60 Tang Junyi 1974b, 33–38. Tang does not elucidate any further here the link between the colonized consciousness and Hegel's famous master and servant dialectic.

61 *Ibid.*, 4–5.

62 *Ibid.*, 36–37; cf. also Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 491–492.

63 Tang Junyi 1974b, 44.

3 Cultural patriotism in exile

3.1 Tautologies of the Chinese nation and its national culture

As Tang saw it, the loss of significance of “Chinese culture” had an immediate negative impact on the exiles. He had no doubt that the emigrants and, in particular, exiled intellectual elites suffered from being in exile. Consequently, he proposed to the various contemporary communities of emigrants – whom he regarded as extremely heterogeneous socially and culturally – that they adopt a self-image that reflects the common experience of exile as one of suffering due to the looming demise of China’s national culture. Just the same, many emigrants were apparently no longer linked as a community by the shared experiences of cultural vulnerability. In the eyes of Tang, this transformation had far-reaching consequences, because isolated individuals would not be able to cope with the experience of exile, which is only possible through participation in a cultural community. Tang, however, neither saw the idea of such a community embodied in contemporary communities of Chinese emigrants, nor in the nationalist construct of “China” established in Taiwan by the GMD regime. The desirable community envisaged by Tang would consist of members who identify themselves as members of the Chinese nation and agree that the binding qualities of the nation are humanistic and cultural in nature. They would furthermore assume that the nation consists of an ongoing, open process of interpretation and identification of national culture by its members. Any dogmatic definition of the national culture would undermine the continuation of the national culture itself.

Tang thus interpreted the Chinese nation – to a certain extent in the classical manner – as a cultural nation, even if he could not avail himself of a phrase in Chinese for “cultural nation”. Cultural-nation theorists assume, first of all, that the nation is a form of community worth striving for, mostly because it allows its members to autonomously achieve political unity. As the term suggests, the nation acquires its cohesive power through its “national culture,” which functions as a source of communal values, including equality, justice, freedom, autonomy and solidarity, and common daily life practices.⁶⁴ These values and practices, in turn, are believed or “imagined” to enhance the identification of individuals or whole collectivities with the nation – a type of identification which undoubtedly includes psychological and emotional ties to the cultural nation. It goes without saying that those who see themselves as members of the nation

64 It was Max Weber who identified a feeling of solidarity as the crucial criterion of any claim to establish a nation: “In the sense of those using the term [“nation” – TF] at a given time, the concept undoubtedly means, above all, that it is *proper* to expect from certain groups a specific sentiment of solidarity in the face of other groups.” Weber 1978, vol. 1, 922.

assume that historical reality befits the national culture as well as the nation itself.⁶⁵ Tang accordingly presented China's "national culture" as the central cohesive force for the Chinese "nation" and, at the same time, as the point of reference for endowing individuals as well as the collective life with meaning and orientation and shared interpretations of the historical world. In emphasizing the historical continuity or *longue durée* of the nation, the concept of the Chinese cultural nation as developed in Tang's modern Confucianism is also consistent with classical theories of the cultural nation. Accordingly, the national culture is imagined to be a time spanning horizon of shared values, ideas, norms and practices, which extends from the past to the present and into the future. While conceding that contingency plays a part in the history of the nation, Tang and the co-authors of the manifesto of 1958 were convinced that the *longue durée* of the nation was mainly the upshot of ideational, intentional factors, among which Chinese philosophy and religion were particularly influential.⁶⁶

In his narrative of the historical formation of China's national culture, Tang highlights the topics of unity and continuity. He claims that Chinese culture evolved out of a "single root" and took the form of a single "cultural system" early on, whereas Western cultures evolved in different currents.⁶⁷ Even though there were distinct "cultural regions" in Chinese antiquity, and thus different cultural "trunks," Tang claims that a consistent current of cultural transmission had already emerged as early as the age the "Three Dynasties" (Xia, Shang [Yin] and Zhou; 2070–256 BCE). He further believes that this consistency is manifest in Chinese history as the very quest to continuously reconstruct the core of China's spiritual culture. Tang consequently notes that in the imperial age of the Qin, Han, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, a "continuous course" of

65 Lepsius 1993, 193–194, 197. As is well-known, the term "imagined community" calls to account the fact that the nation as opposed to the nation-state has at its disposal neither fixed international borders, nor clearly identifiable constitutional institutions. See, for example: Koselleck et al. 1992, 148–149, 388; Anderson 2003, 5–7; Geulen 1998, 348.

66 With regard to philosophy and religion, the authors of the manifesto place particular emphasis on the respective "notions of human life" in this context: Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 27.

67 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 13. According to Tang, there were three dominant currents in Western culture: Greek (in philosophy), Hebrew (in religion), and Roman (in law). On this basis, "relatively autonomous domains in culture and scholarship" evolved, as Tang claims; see *ibid.*, 14. In a similar manner, Tang refers to Whitehead's distinction of Western notions of transcendence in the form of ideas of fate in Greek tragedies, the Roman notion of law, and the Christian notion of creation; see Tang Junyi 1997, 75–76.

“transmitting the way” in culture, scholarship and thought persisted despite changing periods of territorial and political “separation” (*fen* 分) and “unification” (*he* 合).⁶⁸

Tang’s depiction of the Chinese nation and culture is clearly tautological. First, he assumes that the national culture is a historical entity – in terms of popular or elitist culture or both –with typical features, such as an inherent consistency and continuity, which can be uncovered in historical reality. He then infuses these features with normative contents in the sense described above to coin a comprehensive concept of national culture, which, in turn, is portrayed as the crucial factor for the historical reality and persistence of the Chinese *nation*. This approach, taken together with its schematic patterns of cultural essence, chauvinistic portrayal of non-Chinese cultures⁶⁹ and claim of the *longue durée* of the “nation” and “culture,” is reminiscent of the so-called “metaphysics of Germanness” (“*Deutschtumsmetaphysik*”) which was current in Germany in the early 20th century. Much like the “metaphysics of Germanness,” the manifesto of 1958 claims global significance for national culture and derives a strong sense of a historical mission from that fact. One of the eminent philosophers of the “German spirit” was indeed the same Rudolf Eucken whom Zhang Junmai had visited for four months in Jena in 1920 and whose thought became popular in China in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷⁰

It was on this basis that modern Confucianism strongly emphasized the importance of Chinese national culture and the Chinese nation. In Tang’s metaphor of the uprooted tree, the final collapse of “China” is, significantly, tantamount to the collapse of the nation, which, in turn, results from the dissolution of its *cultural* cohesive forces, and not simply from the seizure of power on the Chinese Mainland by communist armed forces in 1949. Tang thus did not accord key significance to the *territori-*

68 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 13. The use of *fen* and *he* is allusive to the quasi-metaphysical elevation of the empire as narrated in the *Three Kingdoms*. In the same context, Tang is also using the common allegory of the “great river” to refer to the course of China’s national culture and its “humanistic spirit” which is said to continuously absorb both religion and politics in spite of dynastic change; see Tang Junyi 1974a, 414.

69 See, for example, the judgment about Indian culture as lacking self-consciousness: Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 26. In a similar manner, there are assertions that in antiquity the “value” of “Chinese” culture was higher than the value of “barbarian” cultures; *ibid.*, 30.

70 On Eucken’s metaphysics of Germanness see, Lübke 1963, 187–188. On Zhang Junmai’s relation to Eucken, see Fröhlich 2000, 140, 151, 165. It is also noteworthy that beginning in the early 1950s, in the context of the formation of modernization theory, there was a strong tendency in American anthropology, social sciences and historical research to posit essentialist concepts of more or less unchangeable elements of American culture and national character. Notions of an American exceptionalism and book titles like *The American Mind* were not uncommon; see Knöbl 2001, 135–138.

a/ boundaries of the nation. Indeed, if territorial integrity were solely responsible for the nation's survival in the form of a nation-state, Tang would no longer have needed to trouble himself with pondering the future course of the Chinese nation after 1949. When he still referred to the Chinese nation long after the communist takeover, he was evidently aware that its territory no longer constituted a unified nation-state. The cultural nation, in other words, no longer had any state territory to lose. It was, however, in danger of losing its national culture – and therein lay its true vulnerability:

On the other hand, considering it objectively, Chinese culture can persist in the world, whereas the Chinese nation withers away, just like the Greek culture persists, whereas the Greek nation withered away. There is no guarantee for a necessary integration of any nation and culture. However, this fact itself is again causing me pain. (...) Neither have we resigned to the Chinese nation's withering away or to the persistence of Chinese culture solely in the mind of Sinologists. (...) Culture might surpass the nation and have an influence on other nations, whereas the nation cannot part from its original culture.⁷¹

3.2 Hermeneutical and exilic perspectives on the “main current” of Chinese humanism

The exilic project of a modern Confucianism, therefore, did not need to join with the political and military struggle of the GMD regime to recover the territory of the Chinese nation-state on the Mainland. Instead, it was sufficient to react to the concerns about the continuity of China's “national culture”. This was not about defending outer, territorial borders of the nation-state, but a matter of ensuring the inner cohesion of the nation by renewing the appeal of national culture among Chinese communities worldwide. Toward this end, Tang introduced, concomitantly with other representatives of modern Confucianism, the notion of a “main current” (*zhu liu* 主流) within China's national culture. This current is said to consist of the so-called “study of spirit and essence” (*xin xing zhi xue* 心性之學), which allegedly constitutes the “core” (*hexin* 核心) or the “essence” (*benzhi* 本質) of Chinese culture and scholarship.⁷² This “essence,” in fact, is said to be the spiritual lifeline of China's national culture:

71 Tang Junyi 1974b, 53. In this context, a statement made by Michael Walzer on the South African poet and exiled intellectual Breyten Breytenbach sounds familiar: “If he [Breytenbach – T. F.] is marginal to the world that apartheid has made, he nonetheless declares himself to be in the mainstream of his own history and his national culture”. Walzer 2002, 218.

72 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 8, 21. At times Tang also used the term “discourse on spirit and essence” (*xin xing lun* 心性論) instead of “study of spirit and essence”; see for example: *Ibid.*, 389.

As mentioned above, in conducting research about Chinese history, culture and scholarship, we have to consider these as manifestations of the objective spiritual life of the Chinese nation. But where is the core of this spiritual life? We can say that it is amidst the thought or philosophy of the Chinese. This is not to say that Chinese thought or philosophy would determine the culture and history of China. But it is to say that only by starting from Chinese thought or philosophy can one illuminate the spiritual life in Chinese culture and history.⁷³

The reference to “thought or philosophy” might have been misleading because the “study of spirit and essence” was not to be mistaken for academic philosophy. According to Tang, the aim is not only to coin a scientific “theory” or to indulge in pure reflection on human practice. The “study of spirit and essence” is, after all, imbued with religious ideas, many of them about human nature, the position of man in cosmos, and the spiritual embodiment of transcendent agents (such as “Heaven,” Buddha, gods) in the human being. Although these concerns are of course not exclusively found within Confucianism, Tang and the co-authors of the manifesto of 1958 strongly assert that the “main current” attained its most comprehensive expression in the context of Confucian traditions and experienced its heyday during the Song and the Ming Dynasty.⁷⁴

The meaning of “Confucian” is understood here in its very broad sense. Accordingly, the concept of Confucian “traditions” does not rely on references to a clearly defined canon of authoritative texts that would comprise the point of departure for a sought-after contemporary revival of Chinese culture.⁷⁵ For all its essentialist aspects, this depiction of a main current is generally intended to provide a basis of inclusion for non-Confucian thought. This is demonstrated by the way in which Tang presents the historical development of the main current, dating it back the period of the so-called Warring States (403–221 BCE).⁷⁶ He asserts here that one salient feature of the “study of spirit and essence” is the various notions of continuancy, which were coined in a broad range of references and over the course of millennia. They covered, for example, Daoist notions of longevity, religious practices such as the ancestor cults during the Zhou Dynasty, Confucian notions of the human spirit’s “permeating the spirit of

73 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 12. In this context see also Tang’s rejection of the assumption that the contents of national culture may be defined in an “objective,” positivistic manner: Tang Junyi 1974b, 8.

74 Ibid, 21.

75 On the identification of “Confucian thought” as a main intellectual current within China’s national culture, see, for example, Tang Junyi 1974a, 592; Tang Junyi 1988b 374, as well as Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 8, 11–12, 21.

76 Ibid., 27.

Heaven” (*tong yu tian xin* 通於天心), but certainly also the very idea of preserving the Chinese nation and its culture.⁷⁷ That the “main current” is not thought of as exclusively Confucian is also evident from a reference to Buddhism, which is said to converge to some extent with the “study of spirit and essence”. Yet as inclusive as it may seem, this approach still bears the imprint of a Confucianization of non-Confucian thought, as the discussion of Buddhism in the manifesto of 1958 clearly shows: The authors’ interest in Buddhism is focused explicitly on its quasi-Confucian aspects, and the evaluation of Buddhism is accordingly based on this criterion. Buddhism is thus appraised for its convergence with the “study of spirit and essence,” and Buddhist-inspired scholars of the late Qing-period like Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), Zhang Taiyan’s 張太炎 (= Zhang Binglin 張炳麟, 1868–1936) and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865–1898) are lauded for their interest in the “study of spirit and essence”. The manifesto is quick to add, however, that Buddhist-inspired interpretations do not grasp the “study of the spirit and essence” in the same manner as the “Chinese Confucians” of the Song and the Ming-periods.⁷⁸

Whenever the tradition of the “study of spirit and essence” is presented as crucial for understanding how the history and culture of the Chinese nation attained their remarkable consistency, the focus lies on the *Confucian* “humanistic” belief in the human being’s ability to “know human nature” (i. e. “its essence”; *zhi qi xing* 知其性), and thereby to “know Heaven” (*zhi tian* 知天) by “exerting his spirit” (*jin qi xin* 盡其心).⁷⁹ In Tang’s interpretation, Confucian humanism elevates the human being to the position of the “soul” of this-worldly reality (the “ten thousand things”) and accords an “absolute” value to individual personhood. While Confucian humanism is different from a belief in “objectively [present] gods,” it still has a religious dimension which centers on the belief that the human spirit may permeate “Heaven”. The Confucian

77 On Daoism (Tang refers to the *Daodejing* 道德經) and Confucianism (with references to the *Yijing* 易經 and *Zhongyong* 中庸): Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 27–29; on filial piety: *Ibid.*, 29.

78 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 21–22. The accentuation on *Chinese* Confucians indicates that the reference to the periods of the Song and the Ming has strong national-cultural and/or ethnic connotations and significantly excludes Confucian thought from the “non-Chinese” periods of the Yuan and the Qing. These connotations are also present in the Chinese term *Song Ming lixue* 宋明理學 which is often translated as “Neo-Confucianism”.

79 Cit. from Tang Junyi 1988a, 60; see also Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 23–24, 26. Tang refers here to *Mencius* VIIA.1: “Mencius said, ‘For a man to give full realization to his heart (*jin qi xin*) is for him to understand his own nature (*zhi qi xing*), and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven (*zhi tian*).’” This is D. C. Lau’s translation: Lau 1970, 182.

humanism that Tang has in mind is thus not at all antagonistic to religions; on the contrary, he considers humanism “complete” only insofar as it acknowledges the importance of religions. It is on the basis of this premise that Tang stresses the potential of Confucian humanism to accept and incorporate non-Confucian religions, while at the same time comparing this quasi-transcendental outlook of Confucian humanistic religiosity with Western forms of idealistic philosophy. He consequently describes Confucian humanism as an “idealistic humanism” or “humanistic idealism”.⁸⁰ To delineate the broad range of possible manifestations of Confucian humanism, Tang further refers to it as a “view of life,” a “thought,” an “attitude” and a “belief”. He remarks that, like most forms of Western humanism, Confucian humanism strongly emphasizes a comprehensive intellectual, moral and spiritual education of the individual, while sharing with humanism in Western traditions the reverence for “humanity and its culture” in general. Tang also asserts that Confucian humanism attributes an even higher position to culture.⁸¹ Further similarities pertain to the emphasis on ethical relations and the focus on the historical dimension of the world.⁸² Equally consistent with common depictions of Western humanism is Tang’s judgment that Confucian humanists are immune to the lures of dogmatism. When encountering “non-humanistic” or “anti-humanistic” thought, Confucian humanists apparently make no effort to suppress it, but rather try to understand the respective “psychological, personal, cultural and historical background” and in this way potentially overcome their own hostile attitude.⁸³

This insistence on the undogmatic attitude of Confucian humanism is rather typical of the ambivalence that characterizes Tang’s reflection on nation and national culture in general. For all its culturalistic and essentialistic simplifications in favor of “Confucianism,” Tang’s hypostasis of national culture and its humanistic “main current” does not amount to a *traditionalist* reaction. He neither assumes that there is an unbroken normative validity of traditional culture in the modern world, nor does he subscribe to the idea of a return to a safe haven of tradition. The cultural nation, therefore, does not persist in eternally valid, fixable elements of national culture or a rigid arrangement

80 Tang Junyi 1974b, 592–597. On the above-mentioned notion of a “complete” humanism, see a passage in Tang’s *Zhongguo wenhua zhi jingshen jiazhi* as quoted in He 2009, 68.

81 Tang elaborates in this context on the term “*wen*” in “*renwen*” and is aware of the fact that “*wen*” has certain layers of meaning that are not fully covered by Western concepts of humanism: see Tang Junyi 1974b, 591–592. He identifies a passage from the *Yijing* 易經 as an early occurrence of the word “*renwen*,” but he does not present an interpretation of it; see *ibid.*, 590, 594.

82 *Ibid.*, 596–597.

83 *Ibid.*, 598.

of customs and values from a Confucian orthodoxy. The normative relevance of the “main current,” according to Tang, cannot be taken for granted by relying on an authoritative source. Instead, it has to be “reconstructed” in terms of a reinterpretation which rejects any claim to a historically incommutable essence. The historical transmutations and changing expressions of the “main current” have to be retraced from within a horizon spanning the modern world and its exilic dimension. In other words, the “main current” itself cannot be isolated from this horizon of interpretation in order to constitute an objective truth. The reader of those texts in which Tang reflects on the topics of China’s national culture, the exilic situation and the process of modernity may indeed find Tang to be a hermeneutic thinker: He (often implicitly) insisted that the “main current” was not simply a *result* of interpretation, but an integral part of the cultural horizon of a community of interpreters – that is, a historical context of the act of interpretation per se. Due to this hermeneutic approach, Tang can conceive of the humanistic-cultural “essence” or “main current” as a sort of normative web that ceaselessly transforms itself in light of new identifications, interpretations and appropriations.⁸⁴ What is more, this hermeneutic approach enabled Tang to characterize his project of modern Confucianism as self-reflexive with regard to its own temporal and spatial interpretive context. He thus imposed his own limits on the essentialist extent of his interpretation of humanistic culture and its Confucian “main current”. On this basis, the question as to whether “Western” thought could be removed from the horizon of interpretation altogether in modern times never even arose.⁸⁵

A topic that did arise in this context was the coping of individuals with the fateful experience of exile. Tang’s concept of interpretation took account of distinctly exilic experiences by inscribing the exile into a comprehensive horizon of interpretation and meaning. The constitution of the hermeneutic subject – the individual interpreter of the “main current” – was hence understood as inextricably linked to the exilic situation,

84 This concept of cultural essence differs from the concepts which were presented in the *Journal of National Essence* (*Guocui Xuebao* 國粹學報) after 1905 and by members of the *Southern Society* (*Nanshe* 南社) after 1909. Those concepts focussed on philological and literary traditions, and not on “Confucian” traditions. Furthermore, they did not assume that the national essence itself might be subject to historical change. Zhang Taiyan’s concept was a notable exception in both regards, even though he refrained from singling out Confucian traditions. Later on, the circle of authors of the *Critical Review* (*Xue Heng* 學衡), which was formed in 1922, also identified a national essence of different contents; see Furth 1976b, 31; Schneider 1997, 82, 109–112; Laitinen 1990, 116–118.

85 On a programmatic statement in favor of a broad inclusion of Western thought and traditions, see e.g. Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 46–59.

that is, the specific historical context of the process of interpretation itself. The individual suffering in exile was thus infused with hermeneutic relevance: The manifesto of 1958 declares that only by virtue of the particular experience of intellectual and emotional isolation – shared by the exiled intellectuals at the beginning of their time as emigrants – was it at all possible to “once again” and in a “fundamental manner” turn to “Chinese scholarship and culture, as well as the problems of China”. Tang also suggests that the “problems” of China and its culture are only clearly recognized in exile and, moreover, that “true wisdom” emerges out of the “suffering” (in exile). This suffering, in other words, gives rise to an intellectual openness – or, as Tang calls it, “a transcendental and all-encompassing state of mind” that was not present “ten years earlier”. In Tang’s view, what is at issue here is the liberation of the interpretation of national culture from a “fixed pattern of life” and an overcoming of the “narrowness of one-sided opinions”.⁸⁶

Tang emphatically defended the hermeneutic openness of his understanding of national culture against historical determinism in the historiography of China’s national history. According to him, the nation’s historical course as a whole is in no way determined by the hermeneutics of a national-cultural essence, nor predetermined in any other way. The “historical future” has no “particular imperative direction,” and even if there were such a thing, Tang explains, no one would be capable of recognizing it. The course of national history is unpredictable. Tang’s understanding of the “tragedy” of the Chinese nation thus has the status of an interpretation, not a scientific diagnosis or prognosis. Equally unpredictable are the duration of exile and the “methods” by which the condition of exile might be overcome. It is precisely these unknowns that trigger the sense of despair in exile, which, Tang states, cannot be eluded. The exiles cannot truly find “hope” or “trust” in the promises for the future provided by a nationalist ideology; instead they have to engender such positive sentiments from within themselves. A prerequisite for this, in the first instance, is a “true to life experience” of despair, far beyond the dazzling allure of ideology. Only then can a thorough reflection on the reasons for despair begin that will allow autonomous individuals to establish “ideals” and form their own “will,” provided that their reflection entails some sort of meditation on the history and culture of China in a state of “emotionally reminiscent gratitude”. Here, Tang’s language once again appears to suggest a nationalist attachment to China, but he in fact takes great pains to point out that normative insights, “the ideals,” can only be gained in conditions of “absolute liberalism”. Thus what is true for the process of reflec-

86 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 4; see also: Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 478. Tang was undoubtedly aware of Mencius’ claim that personal suffering was an impetus of individual cultural productivity (cf. *Mengzi* VI B.15).

tion is also borne out in practice: Neither the cultural nor the political activities that befit normative insights are predetermined.⁸⁷

3.3 Cultural patriotism and cosmopolitanism from a Pan-Asian perspective

The distinction between nationalism and (cultural) patriotism is crucial for understanding the basic orientation of Tang's project of modern Confucianism. For Tang, the highest purpose of China's humanistic culture is not tied to the nation or the nation-state. His modern Confucianism is therefore not nationalistic, but rather an expression of a conservative, defensive type of cultural patriotism.⁸⁸ As a Confucian patriot in exile, Tang strove above all to preserve China's humanistic culture. Such preservation should, of course, secure the continuation of China's national culture and thus guarantee the existence of a Chinese nation. The intention, however, was not to save the nation or the nation-state for their own sake or at the price of sacrificing the ideal of a humanistic culture. Tellingly, Tang maintained a critical distance from the unifying nationalism of the GMD regime. His concept of national culture differed considerably from the sort of (Confucianized) nationalism which the GMD installed in the 1950s and 1960s as the ruling ideology in Taiwan. It is therefore not surprising that he clearly distinguished his Confucian cultural patriotism from Sun Yat-sen's reform nationalism and explicitly took issue with Sun's brand of nationalism and his claim that the nation-state requires ethnic homogeneity in order to safeguard its existence. According to Tang, such a premise amounts to nothing less than an elimination of the idea that the citizens shall decide to strive for unity within a state *by reasonable choice*. In bolstering his argument against Sun Yat-sen's ethnic nationalism, Tang contends that national consciousness does not emerge as a direct, "natural" upshot of common origins, language, beliefs, traditions or culture, but indeed arises from the individuals' reasoned "self-awareness" of these commonalities. He therefore insists that the citizens develop their national consciousness in terms of a "rational" construct.⁸⁹

87 Tang Junyi 1974b, 47, 49–54, 59–60.

88 Tang does not use the Chinese term "*aiguozhuyi*" 愛國主義, which is the common translation for "patriotism," most likely because "*aiguozhuyi*" is part of the ideological vocabulary of the PRC. However, his brand of cultural patriotism is consistent with European concepts of patriotism from the 19th century, when patriotism was increasingly related to concepts of nation and finally served as a concept countering ideas of an expansive nationalism. On patriotism and its link to cosmopolitanism and enlightenment in Europe of the 18th century, see Alter 1985, 12; Giesen 1996, 273; Kluxen-Pyta 1991, 163–165.

89 Tang Junyi 1988b, 183.

What is more, Tang's Confucian cultural patriotism entails a Pan-Asian outlook as well as an insistence on the cosmopolitan ideal of a world citizen. In this context, Tang's education ideal for the *New Asia College*, which he declares with much pathos, is highly illuminating. He exhorts the students not to content themselves to be simply "citizens of Hong Kong," for after all, this is what they are purely by virtue of living in Hong Kong. The role of the *New Asia College* is therefore to support the students in becoming "impressive Chinese [personalities]" and "world citizens of colossal [intellectual] stature". This congruence of patriotic and cosmopolitan personality ideals is characteristic of Tang's quest to enable the (exilic/modern) self to achieve authenticity. He thus advises students of *New Asia College* to focus their research on Chinese and Western humanism, philosophy and literature. Students might study Confucius, Menzius, Xunzi and Zhu Xi, as well as the poets Du Fu and Li Bai, and, equally important, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Dante and Shakespeare. All of these illustrious names were apparently considered to be outside Hong Kong's narrow intellectual spectrum. The "intellectual intentions" of the *New Asia College* would therefore not be limited to Hong Kong, but include China and the entire world.⁹⁰ Significantly, Tang is convinced that the renewal of China as a cultural nation can only succeed if Western civilization is appraised even in those core areas of Chinese culture, in which individuals attain the "intellectual determination" to save the nation.⁹¹

The Asian perspective is not to be sidelined, however. As Tang declares: It is now a matter of bringing "new life" to Asian cultures, including Chinese and Indian cultures, which are older than European cultures. This is particularly true, as Tang asserts, given that Asia had been degraded as Europe's largest colonial area over the previous 200 to 300 years. Despite Asia's backwardness in terms of scientific and industrial-technological developments, Tang contends that one should not conclude that the entire "spirit" of Asian cultures is backward.⁹² Notwithstanding this essentialistic reference to Asia's cultural spirit, Tang's culturalist concept of a new Asia stops short of proposing any ideas of ethnic homogeneity of a "yellow race". It clearly differs in this respect from previous forms of Pan-Asianism, which became popular in Japan in the 1890s and were propagated by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) between 1896 and 1899. Tang's interpretation of a "new Asia" is closer to Liang's post-1919 concept of cosmopolitanism, in which he emphasizes that each individual member of the Chinese nation has responsibilities toward world

90 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 505–506; cf. also 488.

91 See, for example, Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 4–5, 18, 32–35, 41–42.

92 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 457–458.

civilization.⁹³ It is in relation to this cosmopolitan framework that Tang refers to a singular Asian culture and a new Asia, and the same may be said of other Pan-Asian notions such as “Eastern/Oriental cultures” (*Dongfang wenhua* 東方文化) or “people from the East/Orient” (*Dongfangren* 東方人).⁹⁴

Nevertheless, Tang’s cosmopolitanism is entrenched in (post-)colonial Pan-Asian ideas about the global relevance of East-Asian cultures in the modern world. His depiction of the current differences between Western and Asian modernization is at times rather crude and also betrays his own sophisticated explorations into Western philosophy.⁹⁵ The reasons for the ambivalence of Tang’s intellectual open-mindedness toward Western civilization and his personal resentment towards “the West” most likely stem from profound feelings of inferiority. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Tang gives frank testimony about his inner conflict: He loathes neither Western thought nor cultural traditions, but deplors the fact that most people when he travelled to Europe and the United States in the late 1950s did not show him much respect or interest. Rather than asking him for his opinion of Western cultures, they treated him instead like some insignificant traveler. He concluded that most Europeans and Americans do indeed look down on visitors from East Asia, as if they were visitors from an inferior region.⁹⁶ Yet Tang’s estrangement is not merely a consequence of suspicions he had of Western cultural imperialism. When travelling in the West, he astutely observed his own reactions to personal encounters he witnessed between people from Western and East Asian countries. He professes to having had some resentment even with regard to physical differences. For instance, he recalls his discomfort in noticing how an East-Asian person of short stature was forced to look up to a taller person from the West when shaking hands. He felt similarly uncomfortable when he observed that the bridge of a Westerner’s nose was higher and his eyes more deeply set. He even suspects that it is also

93 Huang 1972, 80–82 (on Liang’s Pan-Asianism); Tang 1996, 192–193 (on Liang’s cosmopolitanism).

94 By “people from the East/Oriental” Tang means Chinese, Japanese and Koreans. He distinguishes “true” from “ordinary” Chinese, Japanese and Koreans and assumes that there is a common attitude toward life among “people from the East/Oriental,” which he quite schematically distinguishes from Western attitudes with respect to inwardness and quietness (Eastern) as well as outwardness and activity (Western); see his travel notes while visiting Korea in 1965: Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 10, 354, 367.

95 Tang Junyi 1988e, 365.

96 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 10, 364.

perhaps why Westerners were so proud and the East Asians so submissive in their personal encounters during the second half of the 19th century.⁹⁷

Apart from these psychological issues, Tang had other reasons for being concerned about the prejudiced view of East Asian culture. A loss of normative validity for “East-Asian traditional culture” as a result of East Asia’s intellectual colonialization would have serious consequences for his conceptualization of modernization. As he conceived of modernization as concerted collective action based on *conscious* cultural transformation, a postcolonial self-deprecation in East-Asian countries would have had disastrous consequences if allowed to go unchecked. It might indeed have undermined the belief that the process of modernity and its instrumental rationality could be reigned in by firmly establishing “cultural” forces within modern societies. Tang thus underscored the need for a normative interpretation of (East-Asian) culture and advocated a “spiritual reawakening,” a “revival” of the “innate spirit” of a culture in a “new form”.⁹⁸ This “spiritual reawakening,” he suggested, should also take the form of a “spiritual renewal on a daily basis” in the education and cultural ideals of a new Asia as well as in the ideals of the *New Asia College*.⁹⁹

Contemporary Japan was an exemplary case for Tang in this regard. In an article from 1971, he identifies the country’s potential to develop its “traditional culture” within the modern world.¹⁰⁰ He believes that Japan so far has been more successful than Korea, the communities of overseas Chinese, European countries and the United States in preserving many elements of a traditional “cultural way of life”. This comprises a form of ethical life characterized by the prominence of arts, literature, ethics, religion, and wisdom in everyday life. Tang thinks that this is partly due to the fact that there had been no (international) conflicts on the main territory of Japan proper since the mid-19th century. He adds, however, that Japan is also now struggling with the effects of industrialization and a growing tendency among Japanese to take up Western-style attitudes of “utilitarianism”. There were even signs of a gradual demise of traditional ethical life among the “lower stratum” of Japan’s industrial society and in the student protests of 1969 some of which he witnessed when visiting in Kyoto. But he apparently only took note of these developments in passing and remained optimistic overall with respect to Japan’s ability to conquer this cultural “crisis”.¹⁰¹

97 Ibid., 349.

98 Tang Junyi 1988e, 361.

99 Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 459.

100 Tang Junyi 1988c, vol. 8, 212.

101 Ibid., 208–210.

Such optimism is symptomatic of a vision of modernity based on a sugarcoated Pan-Asian construction of “East-Asian” culture. For all his astute observations on the downsides of modernity, Tang seems to have been oblivious to the deleterious effect of militant Japanese Pan-Asianism and its euphemistic “East-Asian” rhetoric. Indeed, he had little apprehension when visiting Japan in the late 1950s, as evidenced by his letters to his wife on.¹⁰² He showed no interest in analyzing the formation of Japanese militarism in the context of modernity – a topic he treated only occasionally and never in-depth.¹⁰³ It seems that Tang was not especially interested in Japan as such, but more in its promise of a better modernity. As he saw it, Japan had been very successful in establishing an industrialized society while preserving traditional forms of an ethical life. He suggests that this was the upshot of a conscious effort by the Japanese, and not just the result of a unique and fortunate historical constellation. In other words, post-war Japan symbolized for Tang the human ability to consciously withstand the negative forces of modernity by making specific choices related to humanistic culture. This constellation had an even more intimate relevance from the Chinese perspective insofar as Tang portrayed Japan in many ways as just another, albeit more successful, “China”. He was in fact convinced that the Japanese still orientate their choices concerning humanistic culture and forms of ethical life toward the Chinese model, taken from the periods of the Tang and the Song Dynasties: So it was a “Chinese culture on a small scale” that was still extant in Japan and which, moreover, never collided with the exigencies of modernization. Tang adds, tellingly, that it should be even easier for the Chinese than it was for the Japanese to achieve such a form of modernization.¹⁰⁴

102 Tang Junyi 1988f, 330–331 (letter dated February 22nd, 1957), 334 (letter dated February 23rd, 1957).

103 See, for example, Tang Junyi 1988c, vol. 8, 210; Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 10, 358. Yet it has not always been a case of too little interest in the matter: On August 1, 1957, Tang delivered a speech at *Asia University* in Tokyo (founded in 1941) on “The progress and self-consciousness of humanity” in which he deigns in a vexing manner to play down the Japanese war crimes committed in China during the Second World War, stating that the Sino-Japanese relations had turned into an “unfortunate relationship”. He assumes that this “unfortunate” state would not last forever, quoting from the famous Chinese novel *Water Margin* (*Shuibu Zhuan* 水滸傳): “no fighting, no friendship,” and adding that “quarrels among elder and younger brothers are perhaps due to the fact they have a relationship in which the feelings [for each other] are too good” (!); see Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 10, 312–313.

104 See an interview by Tang in the *Mingbao* from 1974: Tang Junyi 1988c, vol. 8, 313, 327.

Tang's depiction of contemporary Japan as a model for a future China stands in stark contrast to the bleak situation of the Chinese in the 1950s and 1960s. It seems that when emigrants like Tang were forced to accept the unfortunate truth that a Chinese nation-state which fulfilled the requirements of being "modern" was neither in the making on the Chinese Mainland nor in Taiwan, the appeal of Pan-Asian ideas and the Japanese model grew considerably. The latter apparently served the purpose of compensation for the loss of hope of rescuing the Mainland from communism: In exile, the intellectual struggle for the political and cultural emancipation of "Asia," together with an orientation towards an emerging "world" culture in East Asia, gradually supplanted the hopeless struggle to save the Chinese cultural nation on the communist-ruled Mainland. If the Chinese contribution to the modernization of East Asia and to the modern world more generally was based on a reconstruction of China's humanistic traditions, the exilic space might indeed become a bridgehead in the struggle for future modernization. China's responsibility toward the modern world would then take its due course. As Tang envisioned in a letter to his wife in 1965, the reconstruction of China's humanistic traditions would first encompass Japan and Korea and then India, Europe and the United States.¹⁰⁵

3.4 A defense of "authenticity" in exile

Notions of reconstructing Chinese and (East-)Asian cultures, along with the idea of recovering a humanistic "main current" or a cultural "spirit," are highly charged with normative meaning, not only in the context of Tang's diagnosis of modernity, but also of his reaction to the exilic experience. In reflecting on exile, Tang assumes that coping with the exilic fate requires individuals to situate their own biographical narratives and actual lifestyles in terms of a humanistic-cultural continuum. In other words, only those exilic individuals who succeed in identifying themselves as historically, culturally, and ethically situated subjects might be able to attain a sound notion of personal selfhood and to realize their personal identity in an authentic manner.

Tang applies here a pathos-rich language of authenticity with phrases such as "true self-awareness" and a "true self". He elucidates that human beings, who were called to life as "biological beings" may achieve their authentic "existence" only by clearly recognizing their "true reality" – that is, by absorbing "instruction and nourishing" through the medium of the language, history, culture, customs and traditions of their nation.¹⁰⁶

105 Tang Junyi 1988f, 488.

106 Tang Junyi 1974b, 8, 11. In his late work *Shengming cunzai yu xinling jingjie* 生命存在與心靈境界 (The Existence of Life and the Horizons of Spiritual Potency), Tang further develops this notion of the embeddedness of the subject. He introduces the notion of so-

Such a process requires that the normative significance of the “past and present” of the national culture be “conserved”. According to Tang, authentic self-awareness is thus constituted by the (re-)interpretation of the national culture itself – i. e. by acts of interpretation in which the individual is already embedded through his very existence.¹⁰⁷

Tang’s culturally conservative yet effusive language tends to mask the critical-emancipatory substance of his concept of authenticity of the self: Even though he assumes that the perpetuation of national culture can occur in a “natural” or “direct” manner and thus, to a certain extent, without critical reflection, cultural “conservation” for Tang is never simply uncritical absorption. Rather, it requires a guiding conservative principle of conscious reappropriation. Tang emphasizes that because each decision about the transformation of elements of national culture is difficult by itself, conscious changes should only be allowed in cases in which there is no doubt that those elements called into question are now “without value”.¹⁰⁸ Tang’s preference here for a critical, albeit defensive, stance towards national culture, and not for a blind apology, is apparent in those passages where he declares that it would “self-evidently” be better if all individuals were to “analyze and reflect on” the national culture, instead of simply following established habits.¹⁰⁹ The highest authority with respect to the personal adoption of the national culture is therefore the individual “conscience”. It is here that the conserved elements of national culture must stand the test.¹¹⁰

As Tang understands it, the freedom of conscience is a necessary, albeit not sufficient precondition for authentic self-awareness. Two more components are required, namely, the expression and the situating of the self.¹¹¹ In Tang’s philosophy, expressivity plays a crucial role in coping with intellectual, emotional, and social isolation in exile and in the modern world in general. The creation of opportunities for overcoming this

called “horizons” of the subject’s interrelation with its physical, historical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual environment. Only in relation to these horizons can the human being acquire self-awareness and subjectivity, as well as his views of life, world views etc. For a brief introduction to the idea of “horizon” in *Shengming cunzai yu jingjie* see Liao and Wang 2003, 39.

107 Tang Junyi 1974b, 24; cf. Tang Junyi 1988d, vol. 9, 484.

108 Tang Junyi 1974b, 8.

109 Ibid., 12, 16.

110 Ibid., 20. In this context, see also: Luo Yijun’s commentary on Tang’s understanding of “self-awareness”: Luo Yijin 1991, 57.

111 For the following analysis of Tang’s interpretation of authenticity, Hartmut Rosa’s critical analysis of Charles Taylor’s conception of authenticity proved very thought-provoking: see Rosa 1998, 24–25, 93–94, 149–155, 191–212.

isolation presupposes, according to Tang, that individuals retain the ability to express themselves as members of a national-cultural community whose ongoing interpretations of the humanistic “main current” are bound together with a sense of cultural patriotism. Individuals would thus reasonably identify certain collective ties in society and the state as integral elements of their own historical and biographical narratives. Otherwise, there would be no way for them to cope with their unique experiences of alienation, except for falsely retreating into purely subjective inwardness (as in the sense given by Max Weber). In Tang’s modern, romantic-expressivist notion of authenticity, the development of an individual’s authentic self-awareness requires opportunities for *expressing* this self-awareness in social contexts. Accordingly, by identifying himself as a member of a community of interpretation – in the broadest sense of the word – the exilic individual might express his authentic self-awareness and at the same time situate himself by participating in communal interpretations. Here, the acts of interpretation themselves appear to be a “place” (*chu* 處), which can be sought out by the individual “in any environment”¹¹² – including the setting of exile. Exile would thus lose its character as a non-place for an exilic subject, who now situates himself within the long continuum of interpretation and appropriation of China’s humanistic culture. Consequently, Tang sees the authentic self being realized in “concrete human beings” (*juti de ren* 具體的人) and concrete world citizens, who are able to preserve their moral autonomy and to assure themselves of their manifold collective ties, including their affiliation to a state or a nation and belonging to a cultural tradition. Only in this way can they achieve self-esteem, or in Tang’s words: an “independent personality of colossal stature”.¹¹³

To be sure, these “independent personalities of colossal stature” would neither reduce China’s humanistic traditions to a mere context, nor scrutinize them as rigidly fixed objects. Instead, they would realize that national culture emerges only in the process of interpretation itself and thus find its “place” *in* the interpretation. In terms of coping with the exilic experience, this re-conceptualization of national culture is of crucial importance. It exemplifies the conviction that the Chinese nation, while in danger of immediate extinction after 1949, might still survive in the hermeneutic “place” of its renewal through exilic cultural patriotism. This vision of a historical and normative continuity in interpretation has itself a compensatory effect insofar as it

112 Tang Junyi 1974b, 54, 59. Spatial topics with respect to the subject of individual self-awareness figured prominently in the philosophy of the so-called Kyoto school. However, I could not locate any substantial reference from Tang to this school of modern Japanese philosophy.

113 Tang Junyi 1974b, 56, 58.

posits the *longue durée* of interpretations, thereby temporally expanding the experience of historical time and bridging the generational isolation experienced in exile. It is at this point that the exilic hermeneutics of the national culture and the hope for its salvation converge in modern Confucianism's sense of mission.

In contrast to the (exilic) self-embedded in cultural patriotism, Tang elucidates the characteristics of a self that is not situated in the hermeneutic context of a national culture. What he has in mind here above all are “pure believers,” who seek their salvation by placing *unmitigated* trust in God or in an eventual paradise,¹¹⁴ and “abstract world citizens,” who advocate a false and empty universalism. According to Tang, the latter was demonstrated, for example, in an interpretation of the old ideal of “the ecumene as one family,” the *locus classicus* of which can be found in the *Record of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記; chap. “Li yun” 禮運). Tang wholly disagrees with those who accept this ideal out of a yearning for China's absorption into a “culture of humankind,” which would entail the complete disappearance of particular national cultures. Although he does not mention any names, he obviously opposes Kang Youwei's idea of universal equality for mankind, elucidated in *The Book of Great Uniformity* (*Datong shu* 大同書). It has an air of admonition when Tang states that such misguided universalistic notions do not constitute a *moral* problem as long as they are solely expressed as private opinions.¹¹⁵

Yet the situating of the self in the hermeneutics of the national culture is also threatened in exile by those positivist currents in the social sciences and the humanities that Tang declares philosophical war against. He mentions no names, but remarks nonetheless that some within the emigrant elite engaged in the humanities assert a positivist concept of culture under the influence of Western schools of thought. The positivist currents conceive of “Chinese culture” as a conglomeration of relics from a lost culture and reduce the interpretation of culture to a crude dichotomy of enquiry between subject and object. As a consequence, Tang argues that such positivism fails to live up to its own claims of objectivity.¹¹⁶ Tang locates this aberration in contemporary sociology, psychology, historical studies and cultural anthropology and traces the reasons for the anomalous objectivism back to untenable epistemological stances in the concerned academic disciplines. Positivist

114 Tang Junyi 1974b, 56, 58.

115 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 7, 28.

116 Ibid., 9–11. This critique explicitly comprises the historical studies of the so-called “reorganization of the national heritage” (*zhengli guogu* 整理國故), which was one of the dominant tendencies in historical research from the 1920s onwards. Its representatives, among them Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), claimed to lay the groundwork of a new, “scientifically” accountable cultural and social consciousness in China by conducting comprehensive scientific research in Chinese history; see Fröhlich 2000, 335–336.

approaches in these disciplines, he suggests, have restricted themselves to the detection of supposedly objective “facts,” which then must be accepted as “reasonable”.¹¹⁷

However, this apparently academic critique of the theoretical and methodological implications of rampant objectivism in the humanities does not constitute Tang’s actual line of attack. What is really at stake in his dealing with the untenable objectivism described above is the status and the significance of the “tragedy” of the Chinese nation. Inasmuch as positivist approaches “rationalize” the ostensibly imminent demise of China’s national culture, the awareness of the “tragedy” dissolves. As Tang explains, this would have disastrous consequences for the individual’s chances of attaining an “authentic” self. This is because, under the pretense of identifying “true values,” the positivist appropriation of “cultural theory” accords the human being the position of an ahistorical subject and hence renders it impossible for the individual to create an authentic form of self-awareness. As an “abstract self,” the individual would no longer command any “historical reality”.¹¹⁸ Yet by contrasting the objectivist approach to China’s national culture and history with what he calls an attitude of “empathic understanding” (*tongqing de liaojie* 同情的了解)¹¹⁹, Tang himself indeed exceeds the limits of philosophical hermeneutics. He in fact demands much more from a sound interpretation of national culture than just a hermeneutical awareness of its own historical and practical boundness and a reflection on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of seminal writings. For Tang, the interpreters should in addition take on the role of performers of national culture and be willing to infuse their intellectual interest with an emotional attachment to their “own” national culture. “Authentic understanding” would hence require empathy and respect for the national culture. Thus, for all Tang’s critique of dogmatism and positivism in the humanities, he himself opens the door to a notion of interpretation that is only partially reconcilable with philosophical hermeneutics.¹²⁰

117 On sociology, psychology, historical studies and cultural anthropology, see Tang Junyi 1974b, 18. On the problem of objectivist aberrations, see *Ibid.*, 18, 28.

118 On the rationalization of the “tragedy,” see Tang Junyi 1974b, 7, 18; on the epistemological position of the subject of interpretation, see *Ibid.*, 12; on the “abstract self” see *Ibid.*, 18, 28.

119 The concept of empathic understanding had been current in Chinese reflections on historiography at least since 1930, when the German-trained historian Chen Yinke (Chen Yinque) 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) called for an “empathetic understanding” of the historical manifestations of China’s “national spirit” (see e.g. Chen’s article on the first volume of Feng Youlan’s *History of Chinese Philosophy*); see Schneider 1997, 135–136; Schneider 2003, 127.

120 Zhang Junmai et al. 1958, 10–11.

3.5 Transcending boundaries

The considerable strain placed on hermeneutics in Tang's exile philosophy is to a large degree due to his insistence on the authentic self-awareness of a historical self situated in national culture:

Here, we have to clearly recognize, first of all, that the life of human beings does not exist solely due to its abstract probability, but exists due to its genuine reality. God and nature may create me in any society or territory; this is merely an abstract probability from [the time] before I have been created. But within this abstract probability, I am indeed without a life of authentic existence. My life of authentic existence still exists in that I am created as a member of the Chinese nation and accomplished by receiving an education and upbringing in the languages, culture and social customs of China; and this whole education and upbringing as well as the Chinese nation out of which I am created cannot be distinguished from the existence of my life. Whether I am self-conscious of that from which I have been created and about the whole existence of education and upbringing is in fact the same thing as whether I am truly self-conscious about the existence of my life.¹²¹

This passage reads like a nationalist avowal which also borders on denying self-consciousness to those who refuse to identify with China's national culture – even more so because of its almost intimidating tone. One cannot brush the statement easily aside, especially because it is hardly a unique occurrence in Tang's writings of the 1950s and 1960s. The question therefore arises once again of whether Tang crosses the line from a culturally conservative patriotism to outright nationalism. The picture remains ambivalent given Tang's aforementioned diffidence with respect to the ethnic nationalism of the GMD and his unswerving insistence on “absolute liberalism” for individuals to choose their own ideals. To help clarify this ostensible inconsistency, it should be noted that Tang made the above statement in a text that explicitly deals with the problem of exilic life. From this perspective, his message appears to be much less intimidating than defensive, stemming from an existential concern that the experience of emigration might deny the individual any awareness of historical belonging. One of the fundamental lessons of Tang's exilic philosophy is that an isolated individual cannot attain such awareness. To be meaningful to the exilic individual, the awareness of belonging to “China” – even if this “China” is only present in the form of interpretations of national culture – requires that the individual be able to assure himself that other individuals share the same awareness

121 Tang Junyi 1974b, 11.

and similarly identify themselves as “true Chinese”.¹²² Without this shared awareness among the emigrants, the exilic space inevitably turns into a non-place.

In Tang’s exilic thought, avoiding such a vacuous existence and the demise of the Chinese nation necessitates, as we have seen, a concept of national culture in which its “main current” is dissociated from the territorial boundaries of the contemporary Chinese nation-states. According to this imagined transgression of external boundaries that were imposed politically and intellectually, the nation and its culture would now be able to exist outside the two Chinese nation-states on the Mainland and on Taiwan. Even outside of these territories, however, there were intellectual boundaries imposed by “modern,” “(self-) colonizing” tendencies which threatened the continuation of the “main current”. As a consequence, the Chinese nation had to retreat behind “inner” boundaries, which were continuously drawn and redrawn through reflection and reinterpretation of the national culture.¹²³ Tang reflected on the “inner boundaries” in an allegorical way: He professed that, as an emigrant, he could only seek shelter in Hong Kong, and even if his life in exile was an unhappy one, he could still reach Shenzhou 神州 in his “dream-ego”.¹²⁴ “Shenzhou” traditionally represents two visions: A mythological place inhabited by immortal beings and a territory from which the civilization of the Chinese empire emerged. By expressing his longing for Shenzhou, Tang asserted that under the current conditions of exile and modernity his subjective yearning for transcendence had not yet been obliterated and his identification with China’s national culture had not yet been annihilated.

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122 Tang Junyi 1974b, 11.

123 On the concepts of inner and outer boundaries, see the analysis of Fichte’s *Reden an die deutsche Nation* in: Kallscheuer and Leggewie 1994, 156–161.

124 Tang Junyi 1974b, 29.

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