

Thomé H. Fang and A. N. Whitehead:
the Twin Stars as Pre-Existing Postmodernists
of the Process Perspective

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Dedicated
to
Master Thomé H. Fang
For His Monumental Contributions
To The global philosophical community
As Chair Professor of Philosophy
(1973-77)
At the Fu Jen Catholic University
My Alma Mater

Suncrates

“The wondrous Way of Heaven as taught
in Chinese philosophy has already been
incorporated into my own writings.”

A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947)

“When there arises a sage from the East
Sea, he shares with us the same mind, the
same reason; when there arises a sage
from the West Sea, he share with us the
same mind, the same reason”

Lu Xiangshan (1139-1192)

“If you want to understand A. N. Whitehead,
read Thomé H. Fang;
If you want to understand Thomé H. Fang,
read A. N. Whitehead.”

Suncrates and The Writing Caruso

Introductory Remarks: “Pre-Established Harmony”

As indicated in our sincerely made “Dedication,” it is not without the mixed feelings of deep appreciation and great pride that we approach the present subject: Deep appreciation, for the Fu Jen Catholic University, our hosting institution today, was Suncrates’ *Alma Mater* from whom he graduated 44 years ago as Valedictorian for the first (1963) class of the Graduate Institute for Philosophy since its official restoration on this Treasure Island (1961); and as such, it still is and shall remain so *sub specie eternitatis*. Great pride, for it is exactly here in the Philosophy Department that Master Fang has made his most significant monumental contributions to all the “lovers of wisdom” the world over.

For instance, out of the thirteen volumes of his *Complete Works* at least five were delivered here: *Primordial Confucianism and Daoism*, *Eighteen Lectures on Neo-Confucianism*, *Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism*, *Hua Yan Philosophy: Lectures on the Avatamsaka School of Buddhism* (in 2 volumes), totaling to over 2500 pages. In the words of Professor Dale Riepe, State University of New York at Buffalo, NY, “Whatever our conclusion, we are deeply indebted to the vast philosophical labor of Professor Thomé Fang who helped us to understand the ingenuity and greatness of Chinese philosophy. His lofty generalizations make clear as never before the mountain peaks and river valleys of Chinese culture.”¹

For all these, we stress, sincere words of appreciation and acknowledgement are due to the Fu Jen Catholic University Authorities, then and now, particularly Former Vice President, Rev. Dr. Aloysius C. T. Chang (副校長張振東神父) -- Suncrates’ classmate. He was not only instrumental but crucial for the implementation of the offer of Chair Professorship of Philosophy to the Master. With all the Fu Jen Men and Women today we share the same glory, honor, and pride.

From among the participants at this Conference, it is our special joy to notice that several oversea scholars, with different backgrounds and from different locations, are addressing on the same cardinal issue for humankind, from a more or less similar process perspective: to mention a few, our Section Chairperson Dr. Roger T. Ames of UH, Honolulu (himself a disciple of Master Fang’s in the middle 70s) speaking on the great and grey virtue of “wisdom”; and Professor David Ray Griffin of UC Santa Barbara speaking

on a “global ethics.” Surely, globalization without a global ethics only ends up in global disaster. Unaware perhaps, they are all working together towards one and the same great philosophical goal: “How To Make the World Less Stupid?” How to account for such a phenomenon of convergent “Care and Concern?” In the Buddhist term, “Karma”; in the Leibnizian language, “Pre-established Harmony.”

Realizing the time-limit for presentation, we feel that we’d better adopt the strategy of classical Chinese painting: “Compressing thousand miles of landscape into the span of one square foot” (尺幅千里); or, as with Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, “Brevity is the soul of wisdom.” In either way, we must learn to cut the long story short. Interested audience, therefore, may turn to our earlier paper at the Salzburg Conference “Thomé H. Fang and A. N. Whitehead: the Twin Pillars of Process Thought East and West” (2006) for further references.²

I. Whitehead ‘s Affinity with Chinese Thought: A Matter of Impact or of Mere Coincidence?

For students of comparative philosophy, the case study of A. N. Whitehead and Chinese thought proves so intriguing that one seems to have hit upon a gold-mine. All the more intriguing is the finding when one asks: How far has Whitehead gone in his adventure of Oriental ideas in general, and of Chinese thoughts in particular? Surely, not quite far. How much do we know of his acquaintance with the “Chinaman” and “Chinese civilization? On this aspect our knowledge about Whitehead is no less meager than his about us.

Admittedly, *Process and Reality* proves to be no easy reading for anyone, even for most Western scholars, for instance, Bertrand Russell his ablest disciple in math and logic. If any Western scholar complains about Whitehead as hard reading, our honest blunt response is: “My good friend, you may need to read him with a Chinese eye, a Chinese heart-mind or, should you prefer, get yourself a pair of Chinese eye-glasses!”

It is much easier to establish the case of the Chinese-Whiteheadian affinity with supplementary indirect evidences than to conclude the case of impacts of Chinese thoughts on Whitehead with convincing hard evidences – until quite recently, i.e., in the middle 90s for Western and oversea Chinese scholars.

Take, for examples, the following statements -- mostly in Whitehead's own words. They all serve to arouse our curiosity (or suspicion) on the issue of the Chinese-Whiteheadian affinity:

(1) "The more we know of Chinese art, of Chinese literature, and of the Chinese philosophy of life, the more we admire the heights to which that civilization attained. Having regard to the span of time, and to the population concerned, China forms the largest volume of civilization which the world has seen."³

(2) "In this [ultimate] general position the philosophy of organism seems to approximate more to some strains of Indian, or Chinese, thought, than to western Asiatic, or European thought. One side makes process ultimate; the other side makes fact ultimate."⁴

(3) Towards the end of World War II, at a New York hospital, while receiving a Chinese visitor Zhang Junmai (1887-1969), a student of Henri Bergson and Rudolf Eucken, and a leading figure of the Neo-Confucianism of our time, Whitehead stammered "Oh, China, ... China, very good! ... Very reasonable!"⁵

(4) Of such supreme masters of thought as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, etc. Whitehead remarks, "Ultimately nothing rests on authority; the final court of appeal is intrinsic reasonableness."⁶ (We sincerely wish the very term "reasonableness" can be located in the Index of *Process and Reality*.)

(5) According to Joseph Needham, the distinguished British Bio-Chemist and an eminent intellectual historian of the last century, "Whitehead's philosophy of organism may be traced back to Daoist Zhuangzi--through Leibniz's *Monadology*, deriving from Leibniz's study of the first Latin translation of Daoist literature."⁷(An ingenious inference based on reasonable belief.)

(6) Yet, eventually, the hard direct evidence came from the testimony of one of Whitehead's Chinese disciples at Harvard in the late 30s, Hê Lin, who later became the Chairman, Philosophy Department, Beijing University: To three Chinese graduate students he had there, Hê Lin, Shen Youding, and Xie Youwei (賀麟、沈有鼎、謝幼偉), Whitehead openly

declares: “The wondrous way of Heaven as taught in Chinese philosophy has already been incorporated into my own writings.”⁸

Of all the above-cited documentations, we find Hê Lin’s testimony the most convincing and most conclusive. Whitehead’s affinity with Chinese thought now can be settled, at one stroke, as a matter of impact, not of mere coincidence.

No less deeply impressed was Hê Lin with Whitehead’s sound view towards history and tradition: To the question he raised on the study of histories of philosophy, Whitehead remarked emphatically: “For a student of philosophy, the study of histories of philosophy is indispensable. I myself often talk about Plato and Kant, and I often read their works. But, mind you, under no circumstances shall we be bound by tradition, so as to allow our own thinking today be dominated by the old sayings of those ancients ages ago.”⁹

Further, we have learned from Master Fang that, during his tenure as professor of mathematical physics at London University, for approximately a period of ten years until his departure for Harvard in 1924-25, Whitehead had purchased a large number of classic works on the religions of China and India, and read them voraciously.¹⁰ As the proverb goes, we can tell a person by the friends he keeps, as by the books he reads; moreover, Fang adds, by the way he uses his money. He likened Whitehead to Sudhana (“a character of all-around capabilities”) in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, of whom Fang speaks highly as an exemplar of what can be now termed true “value-orientation” and “value-realization.” It is noteworthy that they have all exemplified the true spirit of adventure as “search for perfection” – for Sudhana, by visiting and consulting fifty-three great men of learning in various worlds; for Whitehead, by crossing various fields from mathematics to logic, science, arts, philosophy, and religion, and calling for the integration of all isolated systems of thought into a consummate unification under the Vision of the Whole; for Master Fang, similarly, by combining in his uniquely rare philosophical personality the four great traditions of China, India, Ancient Greece, and Modern Europe; and the four divergent disciplines of science, philosophy, arts, and religion.

II. Thomé H. Fang and A. N. Whitehead

First of all, we wish to point out: Of all the contemporary Western

philosophers A. N. Whitehead proves the most Chinese; and of all the contemporary Chinese philosophers Thomé H. Fang proves the most Whiteheadian.

As noticed above, Whitehead has taught only a handful of Chinese students at Harvard in the 30s, and Fang was not one among them. For he had already returned from US to China subsequently after his graduation from University of Wisconsin at Madison (1924), one year before Whitehead's arrival at Harvard (1925). Paradoxically, it is this brilliant young Ph.D. at the age of 25, whom Whitehead had never taught nor met in his life time, yet who has proved to be the most Whiteheadian, in spirit and in temperament, of all the great philosophical minds of 20th century China.

Early in 1939, at Chung King (the war time capital of China) Master Fang received the formal visit by Dr. Servapelli Radharkrishnan, Chief of the Indian Delegation of Culture and Education, and accepted the latter's most friendly challenge, and invitation as well, to play the same role for China as he did for India: by serving as a spokesman for the philosophical and cultural heritage of their nations, respectively.

With such a historical background in mind, we can better appreciate his accomplishment in a twofold sense: Firstly, with the elegance and precision of the Whiteheadian language as a most appropriate linguistic expediency (*upaya*), he is enabled to best serve his role as a spokesman for the philosophical heritage of China; he has thus advanced an ingenious hermeneutical interpretation of the imports and implications of the great *Book of Creativity* on the one hand, and those of the Buddhist tradition, especially, the Hua Yan (Avatamsaka) School, on the other. Secondly, with the great vision and insight generated by the Whiteheadian mode of thought as another powerful weapon, he is enabled not only to bring forth the essence of Chinese philosophical and religious tradition but, more significantly, to criticize the inherent shortcomings of Western philosophy, anticipating much of what is to be expected from the Postmodernist camp. For instances, his criticism of vicious bifurcation from the wholistic perspective parallels the postmodernistic refutation of various forms of neat opposition of contrary terms, and the presence-centric and logos-centric tendencies inherent in Western philosophy.

In his Preface to *The Chinese View of Life* (echoing *The Hindu View of Life* of Radharkrishnan and *The Greek View of Life* of Lowes Dickinson),

Master Fang explicitly acknowledges: “In some places I have intentionally adopted a language which sound somewhat like that of H. Bergson, Lloyd Morgan and A. N. Whitehead who, if coming into closer contact with ‘that large volume of civilization’ in China, might breathe creative life into the same utterance.”¹¹

For example, the six fundamental principles in *The Book of Creativity* can be all formulated in the Whiteheadian technical terminologies as follows: I. Principle of Life; II, Principle of Love: II. Principle of Creative Advance; IV. Principle of Primordial Unity; V. Principle of Equilibrium and Harmony, and VI. Principle of Extensive Connection, each further elaborated with a set of Explanatory Categories. A condensed version, however, is advanced in his *opus magnum: Chinese Philosophy: Its Spirit and Its Development* (1982): I. Principle of Life; II. Principle of Creative Advance; III. Principle of Extensive Connection; and IV. Principle of Process of Creative Life as Process of Value Actualization. Whether for the fuller account as early advanced or the brief version as finalized, we are, as Professor Riepe urges, “deeply indebted to the vast philosophical labor of Professor Thomé Fang,” who is thus enabled to “make clear [to the West] as never before the mountain peaks and river valleys of Chinese culture.” Without the Whiteheadian terminologies no such a Herculean performance would be made possible and the Western appreciations of Chinese philosophical wisdom, we are afraid, would have to be delayed for an indefinite period of time! On the same token, Fang’s another monumental contribution – his hermeneutical interpretation of the Hua Yan Philosophy -- is no less phenomenally well done, as borne out by his last *opus magnum*. So much for the linguistic devise of *upaya* (expediency).

III. Twin Character of Resemblance Fundamentally Considered

At any rate, however, we are more concerned with a deeper-level or, what amounts to the same, a meta-level investigation on the twin character of resemblance between Fang and Whitehead in their ways of doing philosophy and living an authentic human life. For ultimately philosophy is a matter of mood, attitude or, as with the postmodernists, mindset: The know-what presupposes the know-how.

For Whitehead, “‘Philosophy’ is an attempt to express the infinity of the universe in terms of the limitations of language.”¹² For Ernst Cassirer, “The real difference between languages is not a difference of sounds or signs

but one of ‘world perspectives’ (*Weltansichten*)”¹³ Although Fang’s intentional adoption of a Whiteheadian language for adequate expression of both the Chinese and Buddhist views is a wise choice, we recognize that it is well grounded on the awareness that the Chinese-Whiteheadian affinity, if thought through, is more an affinity in world perspectives than one in “sounds or signs.”

What are the most relevant factors that account for their affinity in world perspectives? To mention a few: Both are process-oriented; both are inspired by an organismic vision of the Whole; both are cosmopolitan in outlook; both are lured for perfection; both are creativity-intoxicated; both are motivated by the will to unification; both are value-centered; both are dedicated to adventure as “search for perfection”; both are great lovers of poetry. Fang is himself a great poet leaving posterity with a treasure of approximately one thousand consummate exquisite poems as the gem of classical Chinese poetry. The late sharp critic Qian Zhongshu of Beijing is heard to remark regrettably that Professor Fang may be the last of the great classical poets who are going to be irretrievably lost -- gone forever.¹⁴ We hope that Qian’s predication never comes true.

As shown in Fang’s first book *Science, Philosophy and the Significance of Life* (1927, 1936), he seems to have fully endorsed to Whitehead’s broad conception of philosophy: “Philosophy is not one among the sciences with its own little scheme of abstraction which it works away by perfecting and improving. It is the survey of sciences, with the special object of their harmony and of their completion.”¹⁵ Take for example Bertrand Russell’s comment on John Dewey’s metaphysics.

By criticizing John Dewey’s metaphysical position in *A History of Western Philosophy*, he becomes better aware of his own position, so much so that he admits, with perfect candor, that the difference between philosophers is fundamentally a matter of temperance towards analysis or synthesis. Russell is analysis-oriented whereas Dewey is synthesis-oriented. In this regard, Fang belongs to the same grand camp as Dewey, Bergson, and Whitehead, surely not without a touch of Neo-Hegeliansim. Generally, the distinguishing marks for the synthetic type of minds are (1) the organismic vision of the Whole; (2) the will to unification;¹⁶ specifically for our present case, (3) the search for Perfection; (4) the drive towards Harmony (“*Apratihata*” in Sanskrit), and (5) the lure for Beauty, etc.

All these core-features can be said to have been derived from a “value-centric outlook” in general, hence a commitment to a value-centric philosophy of Nature (as *natura naturans*). For Whitehead, “if something exists, it possesses value.”¹⁷ His epigrammatic formula “Good matters because of Beauty” and his conception of “God” as “the measure of aesthetic consistency of the world”¹⁸ are often cited as the ground to pronounce (rightly or wrongly) the whole system of his philosophy of organism an aestheticism, though with ‘Beauty’ taken in the broadest sense. So is the case with Cassirer’s whole system of philosophy of culture being titled “comprehensive aesthetics.” So is the case with Fang with whom some leading contemporary Neo-Confucianists are fond of taking issues on the priority of ethical or aesthetical value, except the late Professor Tang Junyi, one of Fang’s early disciples, who calls for the consummate state of all values integrated. For Whitehead, ‘Beauty’ is used in the highest and fullest sense, as synonymous to “Importance” or “Value,” *par excellence*, “Quality” consummated.

IV. Whitehead as an Exception in Western Philosophy

In Fang’s 1969 East-West Philosophers’ Conference paper “The Alienation of Man in Religion, Philosophy and Philosophical Anthropology,” he pays such a high tribute to Whitehead as to hail him as an “exception in Western philosophy.” Fang argues, it is typical of Western philosophers that whenever they speak of Being, they “usually deposit it as something given beforehand”; “There is no genuine becoming in any being which has been laid out beforehand.” Thus, he continues:

The reason for this is that Western ontology has been grounded on a formal logic fixed in formulas of static identity. Plato in later *dialogues*, especially in *The Sophists*, Bergson in *Creative Evolution*, Whitehead in *Process and Reality*, and Heidegger in *Being and Time* are exceptions. These exceptions, however, prove the rule which always applies in Oriental philosophy.¹⁹

This being the case, there is little wonder that the wondrous way of Heaven as taught in Chinese philosophy finds its parallels in Whitehead’s works, e.g., *Process and Reality*, beginning with his process view of Reality, and culminating in his dipolar theory of God as both Primordial and Consequent. Much of his treatment of God and the world, as found in the concluding chapter of *Process and Reality*, sounds like the thematic

variations of the Confucian *Commentary to the Appendices to the Book of Creativity*. Since it is a topic already covered in Suncrates' early work, there is no need to go into any details here.²⁰

V. Fang and Whitehead as Pre-Existing Postmodernists

In the following section we wish to treat Fang and Whitehead and their significance for globalization and postmodernism. Globalization, what is it? As an emergent ongoing project, it brings hope, it brings anxiety, it brings fear. Postmodernism, what is it? A new mindset making its impact increasingly felt in various fields of cultural activities. That neither has a neat definition, is a truism. Granted that 'globalization' can be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept capable of multi-significations and susceptible of multi-faceted interpretations; it can be approached from various directions and viewed from various perspectives; it gives rise, for instances, to a full scope of issues: economical, commercial, political, religious, sociological, anthropological, ethnological, linguistic, cultural, ideological, communicational, inter-communicational, and philosophical, etc.

With a view to justifying the claim that Fang and Whitehead can be both regarded as "pre-existing postmodernists," we have adopted the strategy of selected emphasis, e.g., (a) We have taken "postmodernism" not in the calendar sense, rather we have taken it as an axiological concept pointing in the direction of value-orientations and reorientations; thus considered, chronological priority proves irrelevant to our assessment on the status of Fang and Whitehead as postmodernists in their own right. (b) While discussing postmodernism in the current context, we focus on the recognition that postmodern philosophy results from its criticism of Western philosophy. Thus considered, both Fang and Whitehead must be regarded as forerunners in the enterprise anticipating much of what the postmodernist are attempting to do. (c) While discussing globalization, we focus on the recognition that it is a philosophical issue besides all the other concerns and as such, we look forward towards cosmicism as its state of "purposiveness without purpose" (*Zwecksigkeit ohne Zweck*, to borrow a Kantian expression). (d) While reassessing the intrinsic worth of Whitehead's *Process and Reality*, we focus on its great imports and implications as *A Great Book of Wisdom*, as Richard Wilhelm has said of *The Book of Creativity*.²¹ (e) For Fang as for Whitehead, education in the sense of cultivation of the person and the growth of wisdom are the alpha and the omega of the philosopher's concern in his life time career.

We are fully aware of the vastness and complexity of the issues involved. Obviously, neither Fang nor Whitehead has ever heard of “post-modernism” or “globalization” in his life time. “Postmodernism” has an entry to the lexicon only with the appearance of Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* in 1979. “The term ‘globalization’ was coined in the latter half of the twentieth century, and the term and its concepts did not permeate popular consciousness until the latter half of the 1980s.”²² To the question, “Is globalization a philosophical issue?” our answer naturally is in the positive, “Yes, of course, for the philosophically minded.” On October 17-19, 1996, a “Globalization Conference” was held at the St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri, attended by such distinguished figures in philosophy as Jögen Herbamas from Europe and Lewis E. Hahn of America (Socrates’ teacher).

But, let us bear it in mind, that for any novel attempts or alternative modes of thinking there have always been *pros* and *cons* involving positive and negative images and associations simultaneously. “Going global!” is a natural tendency of postmodernism, which, as Richard Mulcaster of Canada points out, “has given birth to cultural pluralism, the view that an appreciation of differing cultures will enhance our perspective and enable us to better appreciate our world. As a movement, it is inexorable and will get stronger.”²³ On the other hand, nevertheless, its very inexorableness or viability is equally open to question. Some sees it as but another name for cultural imperialism, Westernization or, worse still, Americanization! Whatever the case may be, or whether one likes it or not, we must face it squarely; as with Plato, even the wolf deserves a hearing. We tend to grant Fredric Jameson such as hearing and give him credit for the frank statement he has made: “What seems clear is that the state of things the word ‘globalization’ attempts to designate will be with us for a long time to come;...”²⁴

This being the situation, we need wisdom now more urgently than ever. To modify the Kennedy’s dictum, let us proclaim: “Don’t ask what globalization and postmodernism can do for us as process philosophers. Instead, ask ourselves what we can do for them as apparently new moves in the course of human history.” The process perspective represented by Fang and Whitehead is such by nature that, for the postmodern-minded, it can be ignored only at their own perils. Let us consider the most relevant factors in the passages that follow.

(1) Critical Reflection and Fallacies Scanned – For Josiah Royce, “You philosophize when you reflect critically upon what you are actually doing in your world.”²⁵ Criticism is the soul of philosophy from Socrates down to the present. Now, let us focus on the crucial feature of postmodern philosophy: “Postmodern philosophy is an eclectic and elusive movement characterized by its criticism of Western philosophy.”²⁶ In this regard, we believe, either Fang or Whitehead has much to offer, and the postmodern philosophers have much to learn from them. Throughout contemporary Western philosophy few are better aware of all the fallacious modes of thought as inherent in Western philosophy than Whitehead. Awareness of fallacies is the first step towards de-stupidism.

The most valuable Whiteheadian legacy consists in his formulation in technical and precise terms of the fallacies committed in Western tradition, some persistent since the time of ancient Greece, some prominent in the last three hundred years: to mention a few: fallacies of vicious bifurcation of nature, of misplaced concreteness, of axiological neutrality, of simple location, of isolated system, of perfect dictionary, or perfect definition, etc.

In his Preface to *Process and Reality* Whitehead has listed nine technical fallacies prevalent in 19th century philosophy. They are: (i) distrust of speculative philosophy; (ii) trust in language as adequate expression of proposition; (iii) the mode of philosophical thought which implies, and is implied by, the faculty-psychology; (iv) the subject-predicate form of expression; (v) the sensationalist doctrine of perception; (vi) the doctrine of vacuous actuality; (vii) the Kantian doctrine of the objective world as a theoretical construct from purely subjective experience; (viii) arbitrary deductions in *ex absurdo* arguments; (ix) belief that logical inconsistencies can indicate anything else than some antecedent errors.

Needless to say, Fang has endorsed himself almost entirely to the refutation of all these fallacies, of which some prove still dominant in the intellectual climate of our times; nay, some are deeply rooted in our mindsets! The price for certain fallacies is to be paid with human tears and blood, e.g., the fallacy of vicious bifurcation in the form of Arian or non-Arian as a form of racialism so viciously committed under the Nazi rule of Hitler!

(2) Generality of Outlook and Morality of Outlook – Those who miss Whitehead’s moral earnestness and see his system as a reduction of ethics to

aesthetics have a good deal to miss; they should be reminded of his powerful words on the mutual implication of generality of outlook and morality of outlook: “Generality of outlook is inseparably conjoined with morality of outlook. The antithesis between the general good and the individual interest can be abolished only when the individual is such that its interest is the general good, thus exemplifying the loss of the minor intensities in order to find them again with finer composition in a wide sweep of interest.”²⁷

For Whitehead, metaphysics is the foundation of religion. Echoing the Kantian note of *The Metaphysical Foundation of Morals*, we should address more attention to *The Moral Foundation of Metaphysics*. Whitehead’s *Process and Reality – An Essay in Cosmology* is a great book with too modest (hence, misleading) a subtitle. It is a masterwork in Ethics, Education, and Moral Perfection in disguise. Even the subtitle “A Critique of Pure Feelings” fits in with the contention better.

(3) True Philosophers as the Citizens of the Universe – If the generality of outlook and morality of outlook imply each other, it follows that true philosophers of the world characterized by a cosmopolitan outlook, from the ancient down to the present are as a rule “the citizens of the universe,” unless one belittles oneself. But he who thus belittles himself ceases being a philosopher (as the lover of wisdom), to say the least. In this broadest context, the great Ch’an Master D. T. Suzuki in Japan is a citizen of the universe when he sings, “The world is my country; to be good is my religion.” So is Socrates: “Socrates was asked where he was from. He replied, not ‘Athens,’ but ‘the World.’ He whose imagination was fuller and more extensive, embraced the universe as his city, and distributed his knowledge, his company, and his affections to all (hu)mankind, unlike us who look only at what is underfoot.” “We are all huddled and concentrated in ourselves, and our vision is reduced to the length of our nose.”²⁸

In sum, Melvin Rader observes, “The spirit of philosophy – its enlargement and liberation of the mind through the greatness of the objects it contemplates – is captured in these words of Montaigne. The major philosophers, whether Plato or Spinoza or Whitehead, have been ‘citizens of the universe, not only of our walled city at war with the rest.’”²⁹

(4) Education of the Person – In his “Autobiographical Notes” Whitehead states: “England was governed by the influence of personality; this does not mean ‘intellect’”; “My father was not intellectual, but he

possessed personality”; “The education of a human being is a most complex topic, which we have hardly begun to understand. The only point on which I feel certain is that there is no widespread, simple solution.”³⁰ Such candid and noble confession on education of a human being is reminiscent of Plato in the “Seventh Letter” where he reveals why he chooses to refrain from “putting in words in regard to it” or “composing a handbook” on the same subject. For, he advises and warns, “Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining.”³¹

VI. Wisdom, What Is It?

Before answering this question in positive terms, let us proceed negatively with what it is Not. It is not knowledge; otherwise, the more knowledge, the higher wisdom. This is obviously not the case, for there seems to be no correlative advance in knowledge as in wisdom. Next, to put more specifically, it is neither skill, nor technology, nor scholarship, nor ability, nor even genius. Take for examples the art genius Van Gogh and the military genius Napoleon Bonaparte, neither can be accorded the wreath of wisdom, to say nothing of that evil genius Hitler. With a straight razor Van Gogh got one of his ears chopped off, and sent it to please the woman he was so infatuated with! Leading 700.000 troops to invade Russia in the wintry season (November), Napoleon lost 600.000 French men, logically just for one small fallacy he committed: the fallacy of false assumption. He assumes: the loser of the battle surrenders. The outcome all the world knows.

Now, after all, what then is wisdom? Attempting to define it, as one defines ‘water’ in terms of “H₂O,” is guilty of committing what Whitehead calls the fallacy of perfect definition or perfect dictionary. It is not uncommon in the academic to raise such apparently rhetorical questions as “Does ethics rest on a mistake?” “Does aesthetics rest on a mistake?” given that we are required to define the indefinable and we know why it is indefinable. Can we appeal to the same strategy in the current case of defining wisdom? What is the purpose of the pursuit of definition? No one can expect to become a bit wiser by studying or memorizing a whole bunch of wisdom-definition stuffs!

In an article on “Knowledge and Wisdom” Bertrand Russell sums up the situation at his best, “Most people would agree that, although our age far

surpasses all previous ages in knowledge, there has been no correlative increase to wisdom. But, agreement ceases as soon as we attempt to define ‘wisdom’ and consider means of promoting it.”³² Instead of asking for the definition of ‘wisdom,’ Russell asks for its makeups or components: He asks what makes up wisdom, rather than what wisdom is. Thus, he succeeded in providing a list of wisdom-constituents or components, representing generally the enlightened Western viewpoint, and one can learn to develop wisdom by following it as a sort of practical guidance. According to Russell, the Western view of wisdom is composed of the following eight ingredients: (1) a sense of proportion (適度感); (2) a comprehensive vision 全瞻觀; (3) an awareness of the end of life (了悟人生目的); (4) intellect combined with feeling (情理和合); (5) impartiality in attitude (態度公正不偏); (6) love, not hatred (愛而非恨); (7) a pacific temper of mind, not war-like (和平心態, 非窮兵黷武); (8) a cosmopolitan outlook as the citizen of the world (大同精神, 世界公民).

Similarly, we may advance the Chinese view of wisdom as composed of the following eight ingredients: (1) creativeness (創造精神); (2) humaneness (仁愛精神); (3) reasonableness, in the sense of intellect and feeling perfectly blended (情理精神); (4) timeliness and flexibility or situationalness (時中達變精神); (5) harmony and equilibrium (中和精神); (6) authenticity as the way to enlightenment implying each other (誠明精神); (7) care and concern (憂患精神); (8) practice or experientialism (實踐精神).

Similarly, we may advance the Greek view of wisdom on the basis of a summary provided by Matthew Arnold: Generally the Greeks take wisdom to be a matter of “the happy and gracious flexibility, or the happy and right mean (智慧者、美妙仁厚, 通權達變, 因應恰到好處、中庸之謂也), characterized further by (1) lucidity of thought (思想清晰); (2) clearness and propriety of language (語言清楚而得體); (3) freedom from prejudices and freedom from stiffness (絕成見、去僵固); (4) openness of mind (心靈開放); (5) amiability of manners (態度和藹友善).

The Indian sages, fully aware of the limitation of language, emphasize the experiential way for cultivating wisdom. They dismiss the definition-method, yet convinced of the efficacy of the combined operation of prajña and karuna (wisdom and compassion). They urge us to be free from greed,

anger, and attachment (e.g., infatuation, obsession etc.). Supreme eloquence is not as good as supreme silence.

(印度哲人最了然於文字言說之窮，故對智慧之培養，尚體認，不重定義。篤信智不孤起，慧由悲生，倡悲智雙運)。戒貪、瞋、痴三毒。聖說法，不如聖默然。)

Now, to wind up: Various views of wisdom as conceived in the above four great traditions have a lot in common as overlapped. But, none of these wisdom-component analyses is advanced as a definition in the definitive sense. There is, of course, plenty of room for new discoveries. Certainly, the validity, efficacy or workability of each set can be established by indirect proof, namely, the opposite of each or any component contributes to the consummation of the opposite of wisdom, that is, stupidity. If we cannot exhaust the wisdom-science, at least we have located certain means of promoting it. If we cannot make the world any wiser, we can at least make it somewhat less stupid.

In 2004 Suncrates visited the Center for Process Studies, Claremont, CA, and was excited to learned that efforts have been made to found a Whiteheadian University. We, for instance, are sincerely looking forward to its implementation. Once it is installed on any part of the earth, we are the first to apply for the janitorship on voluntary basis.

Notes:

- 1) Cf. Dale Riepe, "A Northern American Looks at Professor's Philosophy of Immanent Organic harmony," selected in Executive Committee, the International Symposium for Thomé H. Fang's Philosophy (eds.), *The Philosophy of Thomé H. Fang* (Taipei: The Youth Press, 1978), p. 193.
- 2) Suncrates and James W. Kidd, "Thomé H. Fang and A. N. Whitehead: the Twin Pillars of Process Thought East and West," *Proceedings of the 6th International Whitehead Conference, Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Birth of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, Salzburg University, Salzburg, Austria, July 3-6, 2006; Cf. MainPage, www.thomehfang.com.

- 3) A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 6.
- 4) David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (eds.), *A. N. Whitehead, Process and Reality*, Corrected Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 7.
- 5) Cf. Mou Zongsan, *The Learning of Authentic Living: Collected Papers* (Taipei: San Min Books Co., 1971), p. 47.
- 6) A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 39.
- 7) Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1969), Vol. II, pp. 291-303. Needham is also quite impressed with the philosophy of organicism as developed by Zhuxi (1130-1200) in 12th century China.
- 8) Cf. He Lin, *Lectures on Contemporary Western Philosophy*, p. 104, cited in *Wang Sijun and Li Sudong, He Lin: A Critical Biography*, pp. 20-21.
- 9) *Ibid.*
- 10) Thomé H. Fang, *Lectures on the Hua Yan Philosophy* (Taipei: The Liming Cultural Enterprises, Co., Ltd., revised Edition, 2005), Part I, p. 71; old Edition , pp. 30-31.
- 11) Thomé H Fang, *The Chinese View of Life: The Philosophy of Comprehensive Harmony* (Taipei: Linking Publishing Co. Ltd., 1986), p. iii.
- 12) A. N. Whitehead, "Autobiographical Notes," in Paul A Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1951), p. 14.
- 13) Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1944, 1966), p. 120.
- 14) Cf. George C. H. Sun (tr.), Thomé H. Fang, *Chinese Philosophy: Its Spirit and Its Development* (Taipei: Liming Cultural Enterprise Co.,

- Litd., 2005), Vol. II, p. 244.
- 15) A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 87.
 - 16) Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 86, for Whitehead's keen observation on the romantic poet Shelley as "an emphatic witness to a prehensive unification as constituting the very being of nature." In Chinese philosophical terminology 'prehensive unification' is called 'hushe jiaogan; pangtong tonghui' (互攝交感, 旁通統貫).
 - 17) John Goheen, "Whitehead's Theory of Value" in Paul A Schilpp, *op. cit.*, p. 438.
 - 18) A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Meridian Books, 1971), p. 96.
 - 19) Thomé H Fang, *Creativity in Man and Nature: A Collection of Philosophical Essays* (Taipei: Linking Publishing Co., 1983), p. 85.
 - 20) Interested readers are therefore referred to Suncrates' early paper "A Summit Meeting in Metaphysics, Religion and Philosophical Anthropology," *Proceedings of the First International Conference in Sinology*, Academia Sinica, 1980, Section of Philosophy and Thought, Vol. II. pp. 117-182; an updated and expanded version (2005) is available on www.Thomehfang.com
 - 21) Cf. *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, the Richard Wilhelm Translation rendered into English by Cary Baynes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. liv.
 - 22) *Ibid.*
 - 23) Fredric Jameson, "Notes on Globalization as A Philosophical Issue," in Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (eds.), *Cultures of Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 47-77.
 - 24) *Ibid.*, p. xvi.
 - 25) Josiah Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (New York:

- Houghton Mifflin Co. 1920), p. 1.
- 26) From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.
 - 27) Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, David R. Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (eds.), Corrected Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. 15.
 - 28) Mechel de Montaigne, *Selected Essays*, tr. Donald M. Frame (Franklin Center, Pennsylvania: Franklin Library, 1982), “The Education of Children,” p. 183.
 - 29) Melvin Rader (ed.), *Enduring Questions* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), p. v.
 - 30) A. N. Whitehead, “Autobiographical Notes,” in Paul A. Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1951), p. 4; p. 6.
 - 31) Edith Hamilton (ed.), Plato, *Collected Dialogues* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), p. 159.
 - 32) Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory* (London: George Allen and Unwin, ltd.), 1956), p. 160.