

Li Zehou's Theory of Emotion as Substance and Confucianism

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Abstract

Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1930-) publicly criticizes the assertion that Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995) and other Modern Neo-Confucian philosophers constitute the third stage of Chinese Confucian tradition (*di sanqi ruxue* 第三期儒學). He argues that they in fact advocated the four stages of Chinese Confucian tradition (*ruxue siqi shuo* 儒學四期說), while regarding Modern Neo-Confucianism as part of the Modern Confucianism of the Song-Ming dynasties. What is the main focus of Li Zehou's criticism of Modern Neo-Confucianism? His theory of emotion as substance (*qing benti lun* 情本體論) is one of the main reasons for his low appraisal.

Li Zehou believes that philosophy concerns the fate of humanity; its task is to explore the fate of humans by addressing philosophical questions such as “why do we live?” and “how do we live well?” The meaning and value of being alive must be sought based upon the fact that “man is alive.” A theory of historical ontology must focus on the daily life of a vivid individual rather than a certain paradigm, concept, absolute spirit, or ideology. Therefore, the theory of historical ontology covers a broad area of research which includes psychology and the emotions of individuals. “The theory of anthropological historical ontology starts from reason (humankind, history, inevitability) and concludes with emotion (individual, incident, psychology).” This approach is the subversion of the one adopted in traditional philosophy which begins with emotion and concludes with reason. The theory of historical ontology concerns psychological substance and emotion as substance that an individual human being has.

Li Zehou escalates the status of emotion to the level of substance with the intention of highlighting the importance of real life and the living conditions of an

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individual. The meaning of life lies in emotion. Even the relation between human and God is ultimately a question of emotion, not a matter of recognition. He criticizes the materialistic historical view that excessively emphasized the objective law of society and argues that more attention should be paid to the survival of ordinary individuals, with an emphasis on how an individual speaks for and decides one's own fate based on one's power. Individuals are always concrete, sensitive, and heterogeneous and therefore, he questions "what can be a psychological subject, if not substance? Traditional philosophy always goes from sensitivity to reason, while anthropological historical substance starts from reason and ends with sensitivity.... Without emotion, the substance of the Way, the substance of the heart/mind, beings, and Heaven, do not exist any longer."

The substance of emotion takes its place in the inner life of all individuals and is the most sincere and fundamental entity in itself. Therefore, it no longer demands another transcendent being having control over individuals within the corporeal world, nor does it demand a more perfect ideological world.

Keywords: Li Zehou 李澤厚, theory of emotion as substance (*qing benti lun* 情本體論), Confucianism, one-world view (*yige shijie guan* 一個世界觀), four stages of Chinese Confucian tradition (*ruxue siqi suo* 儒學四期說)

1. Introduction

Various interpretations have been offered with regard to the study of modern Confucianism. Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990) and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995), two representative Modern Neo-Confucian scholars posit opposing ideas on this topic. Mou Zongsan's unique interpretations of Confucianism have exerted a significant influence on the study of Confucianism in the Chinese cultural sphere, including Hong Kong and Taiwan. Mou Zongsan's viewpoint has been most prominently countered by an opposing scholarly group led by Li Zehou.

Li Zehou 李澤厚 (1930-) publicly criticizes the assertion that Mou Zongsan and Modern Neo-Confucian philosophers constitute the third stage of Chinese Confucian tradition (*di sanqi ruxue* 第三期儒學). He argues that they in fact advocated the four stages of Chinese Confucian tradition (*ruxue siqi shuo* 儒學四期說), while regarding Modern Neo-Confucianism as part of the Modern Confucianism of the Song 宋 (960-1279) and Ming 明 (1368-1644) dynasties.¹ In the *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體 (Substances of the Heart/Mind and of Human Nature), Mou Zongsan proposes a philosophical system based on reason and morals; however, according to Li, this system is unable to surpass the theory of the heart/mind and human nature (*xinxing lun* 心性論) discussed in the Confucianism of the Song-Ming dynasties. Li's most strident criticism of Modern Neo-Confucians is what he perceives as their deviation from the fundamental spirit of the ancient Confucianism advocated by Confucius and Mencius.

What is the main focus of Li Zehou's criticism of Modern Neo-Confucianism? His theory of emotion as substance (*qing bentu lun* 情本體論) is one of the main reasons for his low appraisal of Modern Neo-Confucianism. However, this theory does not criticize Modern Neo-Confucianism for its sole or overarching goal. Rather, it seems more appropriate to regard this theory as an attempt to create a new universal or world philosophy as mandatory for the post-modern era. Li clearly states "the theory of emotion as substance is not merely Chinese, but rather a global or humanistic approach. However, it understands the world on the basis of Chinese tradition: it is a humanistic approach from the Chinese perspective."²

¹ Li, *Shiji xinmeng*, 109.

It is a severe underestimation of the philosophical value of Li Zehou's work if we interpret his theory of emotion as substance as a mere criticism of Modern Neo-Confucianism, or as a modern interpretation of the core elements of Chinese philosophy. Instead of this rather unjust interpretation, Li's theory of emotion as substance should be regarded as a creative approach that contributes not only to Confucianism, but more importantly to world philosophy in general.

Emotion has rarely been the central theme of Chinese or Western philosophy. What is more, emotion has not been understood as substance. Li utilizes his theory to discuss the emotion of everyday life within philosophical contexts. This is in logical accord with his fundamental belief that philosophy should be a philosophy for humans (*ren de zhexue* 人的哲學).

Even the individual self is lost and disappears when the absolute ideology and its authority constructed by reason and rationality are deconstructed, and when "God is dead" (Friedrich Nietzsche), and "humans are dead, too" (Michel Foucault). How can one live one's life facing uncertainty and the loss of meaning? Li proposes the theory of emotion as substance as a response to this critical question.

This paper begins with an explanation of the theory of historical ontology which serves as Li Zehou's philosophical system, and of the theory of emotion as substance which constitutes one axis of his theory of historical ontology. Thereafter, it will analyze the core ideas of the theory of emotion as substance, as well as the culture of optimism and the one-world view, which characterize the notion of emotion as substance and Confucianism. Finally, it will suggest a new interpretation of the history of Confucianism based on the theory of emotion as substance.

2. Li Zehou's Philosophical View and the Theory of Historical Ontology

What is philosophy? In a passage from the *Zhexue tanxun lu* 哲學探尋錄 (Seeking of Philosophy), Li Zehou stresses that philosophy is not the sole possession of a few exceptional people. The essence of philosophy is "thinking," and thinking is the prerogative of any ordinary person. Therefore, the realm of philosophy encompasses not only profound thoughts, but also daily occurrences and even absurd nonsense. In this regard, philosophy should defend and protect the right to "think." How can we gain this right

² Li, *Gai Zhongguo zhexue dengchang liao?*, 80.

to think? We can acquire it as long as we are alive; one is able to think as long as one is alive.³

Li adopts the phrase “man is alive” (*ren huozhe* 人活着) as the starting point of philosophy. What does this mean? Li maintains that “man is alive” is the reality that we should consider first, for the fact of being alive is more fundamental than the reason for being alive. This is because “being alive” (*huozhe* 活着) is a self-evident fact, and not a manmade choice or decision. The fact that man is alive implies living in the world while coexisting with others, or in the words of Heidegger “being with others, within the world.” This is not a choice or decision made by oneself. Co-existing with others, namely “living together in this world” is simply to take part in everyday life. The fact that man is alive is intertwined with the trivial facets of everyday life such as having meals and wearing clothes.⁴ Li introduces the notion that man is alive as the starting point of philosophy, epitomizing his belief that philosophy should not and cannot be removed from the life of human beings. As such, philosophy must concern humans and their lives.

Li's phrase “man is alive” has two meanings which are in turn related to two themes that philosophy should deal with. The first is as a philosophy for human beings,⁵ the discussion of which centers upon humans. The second emphasizes the historical meaning of the fact that man is alive, i.e., it draws attention to humans as historical beings. In addition, Li states by way of his central premise that the ultimate reality of all phenomena is the man in “man is alive” and that the entire progression of history has taken place under the aegis and propulsion of those humans.

What is a philosophy for human beings? Li believes that philosophy is meaningless if it moves beyond humans, and that issues such as cosmology should be dealt with by science, not philosophy.⁶ As a result, his philosophy is generally devoid of any elements of natural ontology (*ziran benti lun* 自然本体論). He explicates the important trends of modern Western philosophy by way of the following classifications: philosophy of animals, where all values are deconstructed and only what we can see is considered true; philosophy of instruments, which emphasizes precise analysis of languages; and philosophy of soldiers (in Heidegger's terms) which blindly rushes toward death in enormous sorrow.⁷ Even if these philosophical ideas contribute to

³ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 163.

⁴ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 243.

⁵ Li, *Meixue si jiang*, 266.

⁶ Li, *Shiji xinmeng*, 242-243.

new perspectives, all of them belong to “an anti-philosophical philosophy”⁸ which cannot resolve the urgent problems of life. Here, Li argues that philosophy should be “for human beings” and encompass human nature, emotion, coincidence, and more solidly the fate of humanity.⁹

Li believes that philosophy should deal with the fate of humanity.¹⁰ What is the meaning of fate? Here, “fate should be interpreted not as inevitability or predestination ... but as coincidental; that is, every individual endeavors to understand and grasp accidental existence and fate given to oneself: “knowing fate” (*zhiming* 知命). By knowing one’s fate, one can establish oneself: “establishing fate” (*liming* 立命).¹¹

If the main theme to be addressed by philosophy is indeed the fate of man, then it cannot be explored scientifically. This is because fate is neither prescribed nor clearly observed and its laws cannot be detected. On the contrary, it is filled with coincidence and subjective will, and personal desires and emotions play a crucial role. As such, the course of fate cannot be grasped based on scientific reasoning. Li believes that “philosophy is the poetry of life and acquires everlasting charm because it concerns the fate of humanity.”¹² He defines philosophy as the learning (*xuewen* 學問) of an amalgam of science and poetry, not simply as the study of linguistic analysis or scientific methodology.

Because of its inclusive nature, philosophy includes elements of science and poetry. On the one hand, it contains the scientific elements needed to achieve a general comprehension of the basic developments in objective reality (nature and society). On the other, it also contains the expressions of human subjective intentions, desires, and sentiments associated with a specific age and society. These philosophical expressions reveal ideas that are subtle and obscure, unable to be grasped and defined by science, and yet which have to do with the existence of human beings, with the value and significance of life, and with the fate and poetic feelings of persons.¹³

His definition of philosophy as the learning of an amalgam of science and poetry seems to imply that philosophy contains the characteristics of both science and poetry, which are based on reason and emotion respectively. The

⁷ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 165-166.

⁸ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 166.

⁹ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 248.

¹⁰ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 28.

¹¹ Li, *Lunyu jindu*, 20.

¹² Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 28.

¹³ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 28.

crux here is how these two characteristics harmoniously connect together. Li believes that excessive emphasis on reason leads to “philosophy of instruments” while overemphasis on emotion results in “philosophy of animals.”

Another important facet of the proposition that “man is alive” is that man is a historical being rather than a living and physiological being. His philosophy of humans adopts an approach that centers on humans, or the subjectivity of humankind, which is a contrary concept to objective nature. Here, Li introduces his unique philosophical system using three kindred terms, namely a theory of anthropological historical ontology, a theory of historical ontology, and a theory of anthropological ontology in which humans, history, and substance are connected.

Such terms as humankind, anthropology, and anthropological ontology used in my previous works are quite different in connotation from those employed in Western philosophical anthropology, which stresses the biological connotation while leaving out the socio-historical ones. On the contrary, what is stressed here is social practice as the concrete process of the historical development of human beings as a whole. This is the social existence of humans, which transcends their biological nature as a species creature. This is also what I mean by subjectification.¹⁴

The term anthropology as employed by Li in “a theory of anthropological historical ontology” and “a theory of anthropological ontology” does not refer to a branch of anthropology or philosophical anthropology. In fact, Li is emphasizing the process of human development as the entirety of history where it is the subjectivity of humankind that exceeds biological limits. Through this concept, he argues for the substance of humans (*ren bentu* 人本體) rather than the substance of the god (*shangdi bentu* 上帝本體) or the substance of nature (*ziran bentu* 自然本體), and refers to it as “a theory of anthropological ontology” or “a theory of anthropological historical ontology.” Because of the connotations embedded in the term anthropology which are incompatible with what Li wishes to convey, he subsequently renames his theory “a theory of historical ontology.” The history mentioned here is that of humans, not of nature.

“A theory of historical ontology” emphasizes the fact that it regards the total historical process of man and nature as the final reality of all appearances, and includes the meaning “I am alive.” It does not mean to get out of the life of a living individual. If it is separated from the life of each living individual, then how can there be an ontology of

¹⁴ Li, *Pipan zhexue de pipan: Kangde shuping*, 94.

anthropological history? Therefore, “a theory of historical ontology” or “a theory of anthropological historical ontology” is not an abstract object, nor a certain paradigm, nor conception, nor absolute spirit, nor ideology. It is just the vivid daily life of man itself. A man as this vivid individual has only to be born, live, and survive within a certain group which is under invariable temporal-spatial conditions, and always to live in this world and to be together with others.¹⁵

The task of philosophy is to explore the fate of humans and to address philosophical questions such as “why do we live?” and “how do we live well?” The meaning and value of being alive must be based on the fact that man is alive. A theory of historical ontology must focus on a vivid human’s daily life, rather than a certain paradigm, conception, absolute spirit, or ideology and so the theory of historical ontology covers a broad area of research which includes psychology and the emotions of individuals. “The theory of anthropological historical ontology starts from reason (humankind, history, inevitability) and concludes with emotion (individual, incident, psychology).”¹⁶ This approach is the subversion of the one adopted in traditional philosophy which begins with emotion and concludes with reason. The theory of historical ontology concerns psychological substance and emotion as substance that an individual human being has.

3. The Theory of Emotion as Substance and the Return to Individuals

Li Zehou believes that philosophy should center on the fate of humanity. He maintains that his philosophy represents a historical ontology, and that philosophy should return to the basic notion that man is alive. He converts the question of “how is cognition possible?” raised by Kant (1724-1804) into that of “how is humankind possible?” to underpin his own philosophical ideas.

Since the fate of human beings is the primary concern of my philosophy, I must consider the possibility of humanity, its roots and stems. Questions such as the possibility of cognition, morality, and aesthetic appreciation originate from and are subordinate to the question of the possibility of humanity. For me it is through the processes of using, making, and renewing instruments that humanity forms social existence, which then constructs human cognition (symbols), human will (ethics), and human

¹⁵ Li, *Lishi bentu lun*, 32.

¹⁶ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 190.

enjoyment (appreciation of beauty). As these psychological constructions evolve, the rational dissolves into the sensuous, the social into the individual, and the historical into the psychological. Certain unconscious sensuous states turn out to be the result of millions of years of human historical development.¹⁷

The theory of historical ontology seeks to answer the question, “how is humankind possible?” from the way that humankind has survived using instruments, reason, order, and aesthetics for millions of years, and the way that humankind has formed experiences from these concrete activities. The issues of “techno-social substance” and “psychological substance” arise in relation to this inquiry. The theory of historical ontology is composed of techno-social substance and psychological substance and emphasizes the importance of these two kinds of substance for the survival of humankind. They represent dual substances and are related to humanism and human nature respectively.

On the basis of the above viewpoint, Li emphasizes the importance of psychological structure and explains that “our primary task in the study of psychological structure is to explore how deep-level history, namely the study of multidimensional structures under apparent historical phenomena, changes through sedimentation into deep-level psychology or multidimensional structures of the heart/mind.”¹⁸ Deep-level history, which emphasizes the diverse elements that trigger historical events, has sedimented within the psychological structure. This is related to the progression of cultural-psychological formation: how culture has sedimented within psychology throughout history.

Li did not use the notion of “emotion as substance” from the outset. This terminology is related to psychological substance and new sensuousness, terms which emerged in a chronological manner. The term “psychological substance” was used earliest, followed by “emotion as substance” and then “new sensuousness.” Discussing aesthetic perception in the *Meixue si jiang* 美學四講 (Four Essays on Aesthetics), he talks “mainly about the construction of new sensuousness related to the philosophical issue of building emotion-sense substance,”¹⁹ thereby revealing that he gives new sensuousness and emotion as substance the same meaning. After the 1990s, Li began to favor the term “emotion as substance.” What is the difference between emotion-sense substance (*qinggan benti* 情感本體) and emotion as substance

¹⁷ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 40.

¹⁸ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 40.

¹⁹ Li, *Meixue si jiang*, 304.

(*qing bentu* 情本體)? Whereas emotion-sense substance focuses on humankind and its emotional structure, emotion as substance is mainly concerned with individuals and their daily lives. Thus, his interests become refocused upon the daily life of an individual and as a result, the daily emotions of the individual begin to occupy the very essence of his philosophy.

But how can emotion be regarded as substance? Many people have questioned the notion of emotion as substance. First of all, is emotion as substance a criticism of the concept of substance itself or of the theory of substance? Li's proposition is different from both these general concepts. He instead advances a series of concepts related to substance, such as historical substance, instrumental substance, psychological substance, and emotional substance. That being the case, in what sense is the concept of substance employed?

Li responds to the criticisms of his conceptualization of substance by first of all arguing that "substance is the ultimate reality whose existence cannot be questioned, and it transcends cause and effect in the world of experience."²⁰ He adds that this is not a transcendental substance which is in conflict with or separate from the phenomenal world. "Substance is not noumena, i.e., not existing in the world of phenomena as raised by Kant, but means instead the reality of origin, root, and finality."²¹ In other words, substance is in phenomena, and both substance and phenomena belong to the same world. From this viewpoint, "so-called emotion as substance regards emotion as the ultimate reality and root of life."²² To be more precise, "emotion as substance is non-substance, not substance in a traditional sense. This metaphysical construct does not have the meta since the meta exists in the physical world... The reason emotion as substance is still called substance is that it is the only true meaning (*zhendi* 真諦) of life, truth of being, and ultimate meaning."²³ These definitions of the concept of substance and the theory of substance are closely related to Confucianism.

Emotion or emotion-sense is not treated as a crucial philosophical theme in traditional philosophy because it is thought to be the revelation of pure subjectivity or uncontrollable violent feeling evoked by external stimuli, and is accordingly disregarded by many philosophers. In contrast to this negative perception, Li's own concept of emotion is a rationalized one in which reason is embedded in emotion-sense; this emotion or emotion-sense is related to

²⁰ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 237.

²¹ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 55.

²² Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 55.

²³ Li, *Gai Zhongguo zhexue dengchang liao?*, 75.

psychological substance. Here, psychological substance does not belong to the realm of psychology which is experiential and scientific, but to the realm of philosophy. Psychological substance has a sensitivity structure in which history is embedded. This sensitivity structure can be regarded as substance because it transcends the limits of experience and is therefore no longer a biological being in nature.²⁴

Combining reason with emotion means that the animal nature of emotion is humanized, and the psychological structure of nature is given to humankind. Therefore, emotion retains goodness and reason. This emotion is different from that which is expressed by blind impulse or instinct in that this humanized emotion contains truth and rationality. Li adds that this psychological substance develops in three directions: recognition or logical ability, ethics and moral consciousness, and emotion and sense.²⁵ In his discussion of psychological substance, Li emphasizes its relation to emotion, which originally belonged to the realm of psychological substance, by escalating it to the level of substance itself.

Li escalates the status of emotion with the intention of highlighting the importance of the real life and living conditions of an individual. When asked, "what do you believe?" Li responds that "I believe in emotion. The meaning of life lies in emotion. Even the relation between human and God is ultimately a question of emotion, not a matter of recognition."²⁶ He criticizes the materialistic historical view that excessively emphasizes the objective law of society, and argues that more attention should be paid to the survival of ordinary individuals, with an emphasis on how an individual speaks for and decides one's own fate based on one's power.

Individuals in real life are always concrete, sensitive and heterogeneous. He asks, "What can be a psychological subject, if not substance? Traditional philosophy always goes from sensitivity to reason, while anthropological historical substance starts from reason (mankind, history and inevitability) and ends with sensitivity (an individual, incident, psychology)... Without emotion, the substance of the Way, the substance of the heart/mind, beings

²⁴ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 236.

²⁵ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 89: "The constitution of human nature from historical sedimentation, the humanization of inner nature, the cultural-psychological construction, and the emotional development, all refer to the same process. It evolves in three ways: the first is human recognition, logical faculties, and thinking patterns. The second is human ethics, morality, and volition, and the third is human emotion, including aesthetic sense and taste."

²⁶ Li, *Shiji xinmeng*, 243.

and Heaven do not exist any longer.”²⁷

Li draws a distinction between emotion as substance and psychological substance (cultural-psychological formation), and gradually shifts the focus to the psychological emotion of individuals. Since the 1990s, he has focused on emotion as substance and given utmost attention to the living conditions of individuals. In line with his scholarly interests, he is once again intrigued by the emotions of social groups and the theory of two morals: religious and modern social morals. For Li, the issue of emotion as substance is not limited to an individual being but encompasses the whole of present society. As such, it appears that the formation of emotion as substance goes through a cyclical process from humankind to each individual and then back again to humankind. Irrespective of whether the process flows from humankind to each individual or vice versa, what remains unchanged in Li’s view is that emotion can be equated with substance. Thus, we can presume that the first and most fundamental point of his philosophy lies in the current state of individuals as extant and alive.

4. Emotion as Substance and the One-World View of Confucianism

According to Li Zehou, emotion as substance is the core concept of a culture of optimism and represents the key aspect of Confucianism.²⁸ He adds that “a culture of optimism regards emotion as substance and emphasizes life, livingness, and the existence of sensitivity. In this culture, the natural desires of humans cannot be renounced nor be depreciated.”²⁹ Li suggests that the characteristics of Chinese culture which center on Confucianism constitute a culture of optimism. He formulates the philosophy of emotion based on this idea of a culture of optimism and introduces the concept of emotion as substance.

As Western culture is called the culture of sin awareness, in contrast to it, Chinese culture is outlined: some call it a culture of shameful awareness.³⁰ [Those who conduct themselves with a sense of shame,]³¹ and others as an awareness of concern.³² [The author of the Book of Changes may have had such concerns.]³³ I think that this is nothing more

²⁷ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 190.

²⁸ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 55.

²⁹ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 79.

³⁰ Herbert Fingarette is a good example of this school of thought.

³¹ *Lunyu* 論語, “Zilu” 子路: “行己有恥.” The translation of the *Lunyu* is based on the *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* by Ames and Rosemont.

³² Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 presents a good example of this awareness (*youhuan yishi* 憂患意識).

than imitating a meaning of sin awareness, and so it is much more appropriate to refer to it as a culture of optimism.³⁴

In comparison with the Western culture of sin awareness and the Japanese culture of shameful awareness (advocated by Ruth Benedict and Japanese scholars), Li coins the term “culture of optimism” to describe the characteristics or spirit of Chinese culture as rooted in Confucianism. The *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects) says, “Having studied, to then repeatedly apply what you have learned—is this not a source of pleasure? To have friends come from distant quarters—is this not a source of enjoyment?”³⁵ “Confucius is driven by such eagerness to teach and learn that he forgets to eat, he enjoys himself so much that he forgets to worry, and does not even realize that old age is on the way.”³⁶ “To eat coarse food, drink plain water, and pillow oneself on a bent arm—there is pleasure to be found in these things.”³⁷ This spirit not only represents Confucian perspectives, but also shows a collective consciousness or sub-consciousness of the Chinese people, a kind of structure of cultural psychology. This is why the term “pleasure” bears the practical meaning of substance in Chinese philosophy.³⁸

Pleasure in the *Lunyu* as quoted above is the pleasure of this world; it has nothing to do with the ecstasy of the afterworld pursued in other religions. The focal points of discussion for Chinese Confucian philosophers are the Way of Heaven, the Mandate of Heaven, and human nature; these themes are fundamentally aesthetic. They are not scientific nor speculative nor philosophical, but completely practical, emotional, and psychological. The ultimate embodiment of unity between Heaven and humans is closer to religious practice or experience, rather than something speculative or philosophical. In this respect, Li argues that even if Confucianism is not a religion, it belongs to the highest realm transcending morals. Confucian thinkers’ cultivation is equivalent to religious experience and holds aesthetic value. This aesthetical realm of Confucianism does not merely consist of sensual pleasure, but more importantly pursues the satisfaction of the heart/mind, as well as a spiritual inclination toward Heaven.³⁹

³³ Zhouyi 周易, “Xici xia” 繫辭下: “作易者, 其有憂患乎?”

³⁴ Li, *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun*, 309.

³⁵ *Lunyu*, “Xueer” 學而: “學而時習之不亦說乎, 有朋自遠方來不亦樂乎?”

³⁶ *Lunyu*, “Shuer” 述而: “發憤忘食, 樂以忘憂, 不知老之將至云耳.”

³⁷ *Lunyu*, “Shuer”: “飯蔬食飲水, 曲肱而枕之, 樂亦在其中矣.”

³⁸ Li, *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun*, 309.

³⁹ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 330.

Li classifies emotion into stages and associates each stage with religious levels or experiences. He also classifies aesthetics into three stages: pleasure of the ear and eye (*yue er yue mu* 悦耳悦目), pleasure of the heart/mind and intention (*yue xin yue yi* 悦心悦意), and pleasure of the lofty aspiration and moral integrity (*yue zhi yue shen* 悦志悦神).⁴⁰ The stage of pleasure of the lofty aspiration and moral integrity can be considered to belong to the religious stage or experience. “This stage of Confucianism transforms the emotion of being within and beyond the world into origin, basis, actual being, and substance.”⁴¹ That is why “pleasure does not only mean substance in Chinese philosophy,”⁴² but also “religious emotion.”⁴³

The philosophical background of a culture of optimism is the notion of one-world, which would be this world alone. In other words, the metaphysical world transcending this world or a particular religion with a personalized god is not necessary and neither is a separate kingdom of Heaven. Li makes it clear that the theory of substance representing one of the key ideas of his philosophy is also based on the “one-world view.”

I wish to clarify my use of ontology and noumenon. Both terms are meaningful in Western philosophy, but have different meanings when used from the perspective of the Chinese one-world view. We have no philosophical questions of being, or different realms of phenomenon and noumenon, for ours is not a dualistic world view. We translate noumenon as *benti*, a word coined from *ben* (root, origin) and *ti* (stem, body). *Bentilun* literally means a discussion, theory, study, or views of *benti*, and this compound was adopted to translate ontology in Chinese. So instead of a study of being, *bentilun* is a study of the *ben* (root, origin) and *ti* (stem, body) of things. Clearly, this approach views the origin of things from a more biological and historical perspective than from that of metaphysics. I suggest that the root and body of human practice is *benti* and, further, that human emotions (subjects) and tools (objects) are *benti*. I like to call *bentilun*, the study of *benti*, or historical ontology, and emphasize that *bentilun* is the study of the root and body of things. In addition, within the Chinese one-world view, the existence of everything is connected with the existence of human beings; hence being cannot be separated from the existence of human beings.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 116-122.

⁴¹ Li, *Lunyu jindu*, 29.

⁴² Li, *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun*, 309.

⁴³ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 185.

⁴⁴ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 40.

Li states that the concept of substance originates from the one-world view expressed in Confucianism. In this regard, the key ideas of his philosophy do not deviate from this one-world view. He argues in favor of a theory of historical ontology and a theory of emotion as substance on the basis of the one-world view, which does not distinguish between the phenomenal world and the substance world, and furthermore does not separate the human world from the transcendent world. The myriad things created in this one-world are all related to and cannot be separated from human beings. In this respect, the quintessence of his philosophy is nothing other than human beings and their history. Therefore, above all, philosophy should return to the fate and life of human beings, and discuss the fundamental proposition that man is alive. This assertion is strongly advocated by traditional Confucianism, which values the elevation and humanization of life.

One of the premises of the concept of emotion as substance is the active affirmation of real life and living. Active affirmation involves the rejection of a religion that believes in the kingdom of Heaven. It is very unfamiliar to the Chinese people to seek deliverance of the soul while denying and abandoning mundane matters such as life, home, and marriage. Everything from food, clothing, shelter, and conduct to health, longevity, and joy, all reveal the nature of a theory of emotion as substance in Chinese culture, where one searches for happiness in the everyday by elevating living and affirming life.⁴⁵ On this aspect, Li states:

From primitive times to the present, funeral rites and music humanize the animal terror of death. They mold and change it from an instinctive fear to deep and sad feelings, thereby enriching life and enhancing its value. A similar process occurs with sexual love, material love, and other instinctive drives: all mold and transform the instinctive desires and impulses into powerful life forces, which appear and develop in an individual's flesh, blood, and conduct or the psychological-emotional constitution. For this reason, art and aesthetic experiences do not belong to the realm of ethics and epistemology and cannot be replaced, understood, and expounded by intellectual knowledge. Entirely free from conceptual definitions and the restriction of moral norms, both art and aesthetic experience enjoy a free world of creation that originates from the depth of life itself.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 104.

⁴⁶ Li and Cauvel, *Four Essays on Aesthetics*, 151.

The humanization achieved by polishing up instinctive emotion is not ordered by a transcendent god. “The power of this kind of life is distinct from the animal pursuit of an instinctive life, and emotion is finally humanized thoroughly even if it is based on animal instinct biologically. That is what I call emotion as substance.”⁴⁷ Reason does not control emotion here, but permeates it. Animal instincts, through permeation and mediation of reason, are fused into one without separating reason from desire. The substance of emotion takes its place in the emotional life of all individuals, and it is the most sincere and fundamental being in itself. Therefore, it no longer demands another “transcendent being” having control over individuals within the corporeal world, nor does it demand a more perfect “ideological world.”

5. The Tradition of Confucianism from the Perspective of the Theory of Emotion as Substance

Li Zehou was influenced by several ideas when establishing his concept of emotion as substance; his main ideas were derived from Chinese philosophy, and Confucianism in particular. Li effectively rearranges the history of Confucianism by using his concept of emotion as substance as a base. He emphasizes that the core of classical Confucianism or the original form of Confucianism lies in “emotion” and that Confucianism is in line with “a theory of valuing emotion.” Going one step further, he seeks to find the root of the theory of emotion as substance in traditional shamanism.

Classical Confucianism as advocated by Mencius and the *Guodian Chu jian* 郭店楚簡 (Guodian Chu Slips) contains many discussions of emotion, such as in the passage “would you then be comfortable?” found in the conversation between Zaiwo 宰我 and Confucius about the three-year mourning period described in the *Lunyu*,⁴⁸ Mencius’s “the heart/mind of compassion,” and the passage “the way begins from emotion, and emotion generates from human nature” described in the chapter “Destiny as the Provenance of Human Nature” in the *Guodian Chu jian*.⁴⁹ All regard emotion as fundamental.

Confucians regard emotion as an essential element to pursue the Way of humanity as well as the Way of Heaven. Even though *ren* 仁 (humaneness) and human nature are discussed from rational and objective perspectives in

⁴⁷ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 104.

⁴⁸ *Lunyu*, “Yanghuo” 陽貨: “於汝安乎。”

⁴⁹ *Guodian Chu jian*: “性自命出，道始於情，情生于性。”

Confucianism, they are not purely formal and transcendent concepts which exist in separation from real-world experience: they exist in emotion and are embodied in emotional activities.

Confucius explains *ren* through emotion (filial piety) between parents and children. Li argues that ties of kinship constitute the concrete social basis of Confucian humanism, and that filial piety (*xiao* 孝) and fraternal duty (*di* 弟) are the direct, unmediated expression of this basis. "Filial piety and fraternal duty-are these not the very root of humanity?"⁵⁰ "The gentleman is generous with his kin, and the people are incited to humaneness."⁵¹ The innate propensity for filial piety is rooted in human psychological emotion.⁵² This means that *ren* is not a profound and obscure concept, but a concept related to one's everyday behaviors. That is, the root of perfect virtue is to obey one's parents and respect seniors. In order to spread perfect virtue throughout all of society, a superior man (*junzi* 君子) should treat his close relatives sincerely, and then, the people will naturally move toward perfect virtue. Filial piety and brotherly love, which are the natural expressions of emotion between parents, children, and siblings, are emotions which all human beings have in common. Confucius endowed common emotion shared by kin with social implications and functions. Instead of being merely theoretical, his philosophical view is directly based on and appeals to emotion and psychological elements. This can be referred to as "a combination of reason and emotion."

In the context of a discussion of the three-year mourning period prescribed for one's parents by ritual, Confucius said, "How inhumane Yu is! When a child is born, for three years it does not leave the embrace of its parents.... Yu also received three years of his parents' love" [*Analects* 17.21]. Confucius does not appeal here to the gods, but to human beings; not to external regulations, but to internal emotions. The fact that he looks to a human psychological emotion-the love between parent and child-for the ultimate basis of humaneness, is a simple yet significant observation. For, fundamentally, humaneness is a consciousness of one's human nature-a nature that is fundamentally biological or animalistic (as expressed in the parent-child relation), and yet distinct from the animal (as expressed in filiality). In this view, these emotions of our human nature are both the ultimate reality and the very essence of what it means to be human. This is the starting point of Confucius's humanism, and indeed of all Confucian humanitarianism, as well as of its theory of human nature.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Lunyu*, "Xueer": "孝弟也者，其爲仁之本與。"

⁵¹ *Lunyu*, "Taibo" 泰伯: "君子篤於親，則民興於仁。"

⁵² Li, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, 40.

Based on the relationship between parents and children, Confucius awakes to filial piety which is inherently rooted in an individual as emotion. As it belongs to emotion, being filial pious cannot be achieved by compulsion; one attains this state of emotion of one's own volition. The three-year-mourning period is a formal system; Confucius attaches importance not to the system itself but to internal emotion, believing that this system is meaningful only to a truly filial person. As such, Confucius transforms the external form of courtesy into internal psychology, namely emotion; therefore, conforming to social norms is never blind obedience void of spontaneity or independent determination.

From the Qin-Han dynasties onward, emotion, heretofore positively perceived by Confucius, was divided into emotion and human nature, leading to changed perceptions of these two forces into a dichotomous relationship where human nature is good and emotion is evil. The phrase "preserve the heavenly principle and remove human desire" advocated during and after the Song-Ming dynasties demonstrates the advent of an absolute form of moral law which rejects desire. Human desire was again positively recognized from the mid-Ming to late-Qing, especially by Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865-1898), and during the May Fourth Movement. However, their discussions of human desire lack philosophical elaboration. Li argues that emotion was disregarded under the moral metaphysics of Modern Neo-Confucianism.⁵⁴ He objects to the view that Modern Neo-Confucianism as led by Mou Zongsan should be regarded as the third stage of Chinese Confucian tradition, criticizing it as nothing more than "the modern version of the School of Principle of the Song-Ming dynasties (*xiandai Song Ming lixue* 現代宋明理學)."

Li identifies two flaws in the theory of three stages of Chinese Confucian tradition. The first error is the generalization of Confucianism as a moral theory of the heart/mind and human nature; Confucius hardly paid attention to these themes. Moreover, even though Mencius discussed these themes to some extent, he attached far greater importance to social and political issues. The concepts of the heart/mind and human nature as discussed in the *Guodian Chu jian* are not abstract philosophical concepts and thus are not saliently different from emotion. Li argues that by adopting an abstract moral theory of the heart/mind and human nature as the fundamental basis for Confucianism, the theory of the three stages of Chinese Confucian tradition

⁵³ Li, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, 40.

⁵⁴ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 56.

puts an erroneous interpretation on classical Confucianism. "Mou Zongsan's philosophical system based on reason and morality is an application of the rational framework and logical category of Western philosophy; therefore, it is basically unable to pinpoint the status of emotion."⁵⁵

The second error is that the theory of three stages of Chinese Confucian tradition denies Xunzi 荀子 (c. 313-238 BCE) and Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (c. 179-104 BCE) who led the Confucianism of the Han 漢 dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE). Li believes that the value of Han Confucianism is equivalent to that of the Neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming. Moreover, he maintains that Han Confucianism exercised control over Chinese society and its people for a long period of time, even until today. For Li, any effort to efface its influence ends up as a reckless action.⁵⁶ Here, he denies the theory of the three stages of Chinese Confucian tradition, and claims four stages instead: the classical Confucianism of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi represents the first stage; Han Confucianism constitutes the second; Song-Ming Confucianism the third; and the Confucianism of the present and future the fourth.

Li criticizes Mou Zongsan's assertion that "inner sagehood results in a new outer kingship" (*neisheng kaichu xin waiwang* 內聖開出新外王) which does not go beyond the realm of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism.⁵⁷ He maintains that Mou Zongsan's "transcendent and inherent" viewpoint encompasses a fatal contradiction. The Confucian understanding of inherence denies transcendent Heaven under the rationale that "the heart/mind of humans is identical to that of Heaven" and that "the real nature of humans is akin to that of Heaven."

As such, the inherent moral nature of man is transformed into substance. "However, Mou Zongsan follows the structure of the two-world viewpoint of the West that establishes dichotomies between Heaven and the human world, the ideological world and the real world, substance and the phenomenal world. As a result, he regards the heart-mind and human nature as inherent and transcendent."⁵⁸ The Mandate, the Way, and the Will of Heaven are all related to the emotional attitude of humans, and the heart/mind of compassion is both emotional and psychological. *Ren* and compassion are emotions that people experience in their everyday lives, but these become transcendental in Mou's view. This inevitably leads to a flat contradiction

⁵⁵ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 56.

⁵⁶ Li, *Jimao wu shuo*, 2-3.

⁵⁷ Li, *Jimao wu shuo*, 5.

⁵⁸ Li, *Jimao wu shuo*, 5.

between transcendental (not related to emotion) and empirical (related to emotion); between holy (God) and secular (world).⁵⁹ According to Li, even from a historical standpoint Mou Zongsan's philosophy is never in accord with classical Confucianism.

Li expresses the unorthodox viewpoint that the high value Confucius placed on emotion can be connected to the shamanic tradition prior to Confucius. "This has two origins: history and reality. The historical origin is related to shamanistic ceremonies in ancient times. Loyalty and reverence were very important in these ceremonies because they contributed to mystical abilities. The absence of this respectful mind was regarded as profane and believed to bring about calamity.... As time went by, primitive shaman ceremonies were adjusted to the system of social rites, and the pursuit of inherent loyalty and reverence paved the way for Confucian theory about the heart-mind, human nature and emotion as described in the *Guodian Chu jian*. The Duke of Zhou (Zhou Gong 周公) regarded the establishment of rites and music (*liyue* 禮樂) as the final process of rationalizing shaman ceremonies. Confucius's understanding of courtesy as *ren* is considered the final process of rationalizing the emotion evoked in shamanistic ceremonies.... Rationalization of these ceremonies was a process which combined emotion and principle."⁶⁰

Li stresses that the shamanic tradition is one of the historical origins of Chinese philosophy. In this regard, while Confucianism rationalized shamanism, it still maintains its characteristics. For example, with the worship of ancestors at the center of importance, Confucianism demands sincerity and devotion when performing memorial ceremonies for ancestors. The shamanic tradition formed the in-depth psychological structure of Confucianism, and reason and emotion or desire are combined together in this structure with equal importance. His philosophical system is upheld by his assertion that the high value of emotion stems from the shamanic tradition.

The above discussion sheds light on the meaning of reverence (*jing* 敬) and dignity (*zhuang* 莊) as described in the *Lunyu*. While the notions of reverence and dignity originated from shamanistic ceremonies for spirits, heaven and earth, or ancestors, these notions carry strong emotional connotations. The *Lunyu* and Confucianism secularize and rationalize these notions. However, reverence and dignity as discussed in Confucianism still

⁵⁹ Li, *Jimao wu shuo*, 6.

⁶⁰ Li, *Shiji xinmeng*, 206-207.

maintain the emotional characteristics of religious tradition.⁶¹ Reverence, as an inner attitude is related to the emotion of fear, and respect is inevitably fostered in ceremonial processes consisting of rites and music. Confucius assigns the first priority to the inner psychological attitude, believing that it is where we find essential human nature and self-conscious humanity. Li Zehou points out that without this conscious humanity, even the sacred tradition of rites and music becomes a dried-up shell, a worthless heap of regulations.⁶²

Li states that the notion of emotion as substance is at the core of Confucianism, and emphasizes the relationship between shaman culture and this notion of emotion as substance. In shaman culture, religion, and politics developed together; based upon the dignified religious system of rites rooted in sacred shamanism, ethics, religion and politics coalesced into one, forming a ruling structure and ideology. Li maintains that under this socio-philosophical background, sacred religious emotion became the quintessence of Confucian moral principles and politics. Rationalized emotion, e.g. fear during the Yin 殷 dynasty, reverence during the Zhou 周 dynasty, and Confucius's *ren*, became the main characteristics of Confucianism; it became the universal law of the Han and the moral law of the Song-Ming. Emotion, including *ren* and love, became the substance of natural laws. Emotion plays an important role within all philosophical contexts of Confucianism and thus, the core of Confucianism is emotion as substance, not the substances of Heaven, force, principle, or nature.⁶³

In brief, religious morals as well as the half-religious and half-philosophical characteristics of Confucianism can be understood more clearly when approached from the viewpoint of religious emotion in the shamanic tradition which serves as the origin of emotion as substance.

6. Concluding Remarks: “The Philosophy of Fate” and “The Fate of Philosophy”

The notion of “philosophy of fate” might remind most people of fortune-telling. In fact, some people do not discriminate philosophy from fortune-telling. However, here the philosophy of fate originates from Li Zehou's idea that philosophy should deal with the fate of humanity. In other words, the fate of philosophy is to investigate the fate of humanity. “The

⁶¹ Li, *Lunyu jindu*, 18.

⁶² Li, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, 41.

⁶³ Li, *Lunyu jindu*, 79.

fate of philosophy” is closely linked to “the philosophy of fate.” How are these two notions connected? What reciprocal connection do they have?

Li perpetually claims that philosophy is meaningless if it exists outside the context of human beings and therefore that philosophy must explore humans and their fate. He argues that philosophy should be a philosophy of humans, and its exploration should include human nature, emotion, and, more solidly, the fate of human beings. He identifies philosophies that exist outside of the philosophy of humans with philosophy of animals, philosophy of instruments, and philosophy of soldiers. Moreover, Li criticizes Mou Zongsan, saying that “he formulates very complicated principles unrelated to practical daily life. He looks like a scholar who explains a textbook, confined to narrow academia while staying away from any of the public issues faced by modern society.”⁶⁴ This criticism clearly describes the problems philosophy faces today.

Where is philosophy heading? Can philosophy stand on its own? Can we predict its future? These questions address the crisis of philosophy, which was caused when street philosophy was confined to rostrum philosophy, and when philosophers built a high fence to prevent communication with the general public. Philosophy stuck in the ivory tower is full of theoretical debates, yet it is meaningless when its wisdom no longer intersects with the happiness of the general public as it overlooks the gradual deterioration of the world.

Li Zehou maintains that a philosophy which emphasizes wisdom as its main goal is in pursuit of guidance and awakening.⁶⁵ He claims that “the task of philosophy is not to advance a complicated and scrupulous theory, but to provide people with viewpoints, angles, judgments, and directions for the enhancement of their thoughts. Simply put, its task is to provide people with enriched life and intelligence.”⁶⁶ This means that philosophy should return to the basic premise that man is alive.

Li’s concept of emotion as substance is absolutely meaningful, in that he not only seeks to shift the focus of philosophy from the before and after life to living human beings, but also tries to position this focus as the main objective of philosophy. Such a philosophy should not be regarded as a counter-theory to a pre-existing theory; it only shifts focus to the notion that man is alive and regards emotion as substance. In this respect, his concept

⁶⁴ Li, *Jimao wu shuo*, 11.

⁶⁵ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 148.

⁶⁶ Li, *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua*, 149.

of emotion as substance should be considered a return to the core of philosophy itself, and not as some kind of an anti-philosophy. His definition of philosophy as adding poetry to science draws special attention to the theme of moving beyond the traditional emotionlessness of philosophy, which in turn evokes the issues of the philosophy of fate and the fate of philosophy.

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李澤厚的情本體論與儒家哲學

鄭炳碩

中文摘要

李澤厚批判了其將牟宗三和現代新儒家思想看為第三期儒學的觀點，對他們的評價并不很高，由此他提出了儒學四期說。他說牟宗三的代表作《心體與性體》皆以理性或者道德為根本的哲學體系，此尚未擺脫宋明理學的心性論架構。李澤厚對現代新儒家最硬地批評的地方在於他們就恰恰背離了先秦儒學的基本觀點。那麼，對現代新儒家所包含的界限或者難點，李澤厚從那些觀點來批判之？其中最具有代表性的就是情本體論。

李澤厚認為哲學本是一門研究人的命運的學問。哲學所探到的主題就是人的命運，由此出現“人為什麼活”“活得怎樣”的一些哲學的問題。但“活着”的意義和價值等的問題，首先以“人是活着”這基本事實為基礎。他所謂“歷史本體論”並不是某種理式、觀念、絕對精神、意識形態等等，它只關注於每個活生生的人（個體）的日常生活本身。在此，歷史本體論探求的對象，從人類整體或歷史，至於感性個體的心理和情感，擴大了其範圍。人類學歷史本體論則從理性（人類、歷史、必然）始，以感性（個體、偶然、心理）終。傳統哲學經常是從感性到理性，歷史本體論就是對這種觀點的一種顛覆。由此，歷史本體論可以探討作為個體的人的心理本體和情本體。

李澤厚把情提升到本體論高度的終極旨趣，就在於對個體的現實人生和生活所含的重要性加以積極肯定。人生的意義在於情感。包括人與上帝的關係，最後還是一種情感的問題，不是認識的問題。他批評了過分強調社會的客觀法則的唯物史觀，而現在更需要關注的課題就是個體的人的生存，這就在於現實里的個人如何依賴自己的力量以反映和決定自己的命運。就生活在現實里的個人而言，其存有常是具體的、感性的、不同的。他重述了一遍，這心理本體不也就是本體所什麼？傳統哲學經常是從感性始到理性終。……因為已經沒有在此情感之外的“道體”、“心體”、Being或上帝了。

情這個本體就存在於所有個體的感情生活上，其本身最真實又本質性的存有狀態。因此不再需要創造另一個主宰現實中的個體的“超越的存有”或更完整的“意識形態的世界”。

關鍵詞：李澤厚，情本體論，儒家哲學，一個世界觀，儒學四期說