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Truly Chinese, Truly Christian: An Exploration of the ronghe yu huitong – The Inculturation Model of Archbishop Stanislaus Lo Kuang

Paulin Batairwa Kubuya

Introduction

Regarding inculturation, or the process enhancing the interaction between the gospel and the culture, Archbishop Stanislaus Lo Kuang spoke of fostering an identity that is “truly Christian and truly Chinese” in the person of the one receiving Christianity in the Chinese context. He considered that the convert could be the receptacle and the meeting point of both the culture and the gospel and their respective worldviews, called to coexist and interact in a harmonious way. Given its contextual background, Christianity was associated with the West, in the same way as the Chinese culture was associated with the East. Consequently, the conversion of a Chinese to Christianity occasioned questions and challenges that arose from the meeting and interactions of those diverse religious and cultural worldviews. Lo Kuang was convinced that the arrangement was possible, primarily because the worldviews involved could be bridged and could communicate with each other – *ronghe yu huitong* 融合與會通 – and enhance an integrated identity – truly Christian, truly Chinese. Lo Kuang was convinced that this approach might effectively respond to

From October 19 to 23, 2022, a conference on “Inculturation of the Christian Faith and Today’s Chinese Society” was held in Macerata, Italy, the birth place of Jesuit China missionary Matteo Ricci (Li Madou 利瑪竇, 1552–1610). One of the main purposes of the conference was to provide an exchange platform for young Chinese Catholic scholars, especially theologians and philosophers, who are currently doing research in Europe. The conference was jointly organized by Li Madou Study Centre in Macerata and China-Zentrum in Sankt Augustin. 50 scholars from various European countries attended. Most of them were Chinese, but there were also a number of Europeans and one priest from the Kongo: Father Prof. Dr. Paulin Batairwa Kubuya SX. In this issue of *RCTC* we present to you his contribution to the conference in Macerata, titled “*Truly Chinese, Truly Christian: An Exploration of the ronghe yu huitong – The Inculturation Model of Archbishop Stanislaus Lo Kuang*.” Archbishop Lo Kuang 羅光 (1911–2004) of Taipei, born in Hunan, developed a method of introducing Chinese philosophy and religions to Europeans during his time in Rome. He continued to develop his approach of encounter and fusion between East and West after being assigned to serve the Church in Taiwan as Bishop of Tainan in 1961.

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the allegations made regarding Chinese who embraced Christianity as being lost to the Chinese culture. *Duo le yi ge jidutu, shao le yi ge Zhongguoren* 多一個基督徒, 少了一個中國人。

Gospel and culture form the poles around which rotate the fundamental questions of fidelity dealt with within inculturation. “Truly Chinese, truly Christian” and *ronghe yu huitong* require a double fidelity: first, the fidelity of the Christian faith to the local culture that enables it to feel at home in that context; and second, the fidelity to the faith, transmitted and received, which allows it to maintain all the aspects of its catholicity. Lo Kuang strove to highlight elements of that double fidelity, arguing and showing how their worldviews could communicate and how better knowledge of both universes reconcile the Chinese Christian believer and foster an authentic catholicity among the Chinese.

Given our understanding of inculturation as defined above, this essay will look at Lo Kuang in his striving to be a Christian at home with his Chinese cultural background, and at the same time a Chinese scholar predisposed to set his cultural knowledge and competence at hand, to facilitate the reception of Christianity in the Chinese context. First of all, who was Lo Kuang?

Who Was Lo Kuang?

Lo Kuang (Luo Guang 羅光), born to a Catholic family in Hengyang (China, Hunan Province) on January 1, 1911, was baptized as Stanislaus and raised in the Catholic faith. He later attended the Franciscan minor seminary of the Sacred Heart of Huangshangwan in the province of Hunan. It was as a Chinese Christian that Stanislaus Lo Kuang left China in 1929 for Rome.¹ Rome welcomed him as a seminarian, a candidate for the priesthood.² He was ordained priest in 1936.

After ordination he specialized in philosophy, theology and canon law and respectively obtained doctoral degrees in philosophy and theology from the Pontifical Urban University and a doctorate in canon law from the Lateranum. With such qualifications, he taught at the Urbaniana and served as an adviser to the Ambassador of the Republic of China to the Holy See, dealing with the retreat of the Republican government to Taiwan in 1949.

In 1961, Pope John XXIII consecrated him Bishop of Tainan, a position that enabled him to participate in all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council. In 1966, Lo Kuang left Tainan to serve as metropolitan bishop of the archdiocese of Taipei, a position he left in 1978, to succeed Cardinal Paul Yü Pin as the president of Fu Jen Catholic University. In 1983, Lo Kuang became the president of the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference – the highest organ of the Roman Catholic Church in the Chinese context. In 1992, he retired as President of Fu Jen Catholic University but remained influential and active in the Church, as well as in the academic environment.

1 For more biographical details on Stanislaus Lo Kuang, see Chen Fang-Chung, “Remembering a Pilgrim on His Centennial: Archbishop Stanislas Lo Kuang,” in: *Tripod 3* (Autumn 2011) 162, pp. 60-75.

2 The coincidence that brought Lo Kuang to Rome, according to Chen Fang-Chung, was a telegram from Archbishop Constantini to Archbishop Palazzi asking him to send another seminarian to continue his studies in Rome. Lo Kuang was chosen and left Hankou three days after his arrival. See: Chen Fang-Chung, *ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

Questions relative to inculturation have been central to his engagement. To better grasp the importance of his engagement, as a methodological procedure, it might be helpful to recall the reflection of David Tracy regarding the public character of theology. For Tracy, theology is public discourse and holds public status (Tracy 1981, p. 3) and each theologian “addresses three distinct and related social realities: the wider society, the academy, and the Church” (Tracy 1981, p. 5). With this frame in mind, it will be the task of this essay to illustrate the public status of the efforts of Lo Kuang, the realities and audiences he addressed.

An “Inculturated” Way of Thinking

The teaching and writing of Lo Kuang promoted his views on inculturation, even though, in the early stages he might not have used this expression. Due to his background, the formation, the training received abroad – and his initial work as a Chinese cleric and philosopher in a Western country –, Lo Kuang was brought to ponder on the questions of inculturation in a rather philosophical manner. The context he lived in made him realize the complexities of his own identity – a Chinese and a Christian. His teaching position was compelling him not only to understand himself but also to encourage others to comprehend that complexity. The initial efforts of Lo Kuang to make of inculturation a public discourse were academic and philosophical. The context defined his audience and impacted the articulation of his thought. Thus, he expressed his ideas of bridging East and West, of promoting the cross-fertilization of Eastern and Western thoughts and worldviews with the expression *ronghe yu huitong*. It was through that terminology that he sought to express the complexities inherent in the identity of a Chinese who professes to be a Christian.

A Lifelong Concern

The reconciliation between East and West, *dong-xifang ronghe yu huitong* 東西方融合與會通, was the ultimate goal of Lo Kuang’s intellectual and pastoral efforts. “I have spent my whole life writing for one purpose: to make Catholicism penetrate Chinese culture ... I pray for Catholicism to penetrate Chinese culture.”³ And on other occasions, speaking of the contribution and integration of Confucianism – one of the religious and philosophical treasures of the Chinese tradition – for his spiritual life, he stipulates, “as a Catholic believer and observer of Confucian teaching, it is often through ‘union with Heaven’ (*tian-ren he yi* 天人合一) that I achieve my goal of being united with God.”⁴

In the course of his life, *ronghe yu huitong* became a strategy and even the guiding thread of his thinking and acting. The expression refers to a practice of reconciling different epistemological universes by borrowing the categories of the other (the host) in order

3 “我一生寫作的目標只有一個：使天主教進入中國文化 [...] 我求天主教進入中國文化。” Lo Kuang 羅光, *Luo Guang quanshu* 羅光全書, “Xu” 序, pp. II-III.

4 “我這個有天主教的信仰，又遵守儒家遺訓的人，常以‘天人合一’同天主相結合為目標。” Lo Kuang 羅光, “Bashi zongjie kai xin sheng” 八十總結開新生, Taipei shi: Lo Kuang 1991.

to understand oneself and to be understood. Lo Kuang attached great importance to this practice because he was convinced of the uniqueness of each culture and each rationality, but also of their communicability. *Ronghe yu huitong* puts into concrete terms the parameters of the encounter and interactions between different others. How can we ensure that encounters and interactions between cultures and rationalities do not end in the absorption of the other, in its negation in the form of assimilation, or in a syncretic amalgam?

Ronghe yu huitong is so central to Lo Kuang that it serves as the outline of his biography. In fact, the important stages of Lo Kuang's life correspond with the moments or passages required in the model of interaction or mediation that he proposed. Schematically speaking, the journey can be summarized in three stages proposed later as paradigmatic moments of the encounter. The three stages in question are: First, leaving home and becoming a guest. Lo Kuang did this when he left China for further studies in Rome. Second, becoming a host. While living abroad and receiving much from that world, he put this into practice because, mostly through his teaching, he welcomed the West to the East by introducing specific aspects of Eastern-Chinese culture. Third, making the most of all the opportunities and challenges that emerge from the encounter of different cultures. Lo Kuang lived this when, back in Taiwan, he advocated his concept of East-West mediation by implementing it in his pastoral work and promoting life education in Catholic educational institutions.

The Three Moments of the Encounter: Three-Stage Mediation

1. The West Welcomes Stanislaus Lo Kuang

Born in Hunan, it was as a Chinese Christian that Stanislaus Lo Kuang left China in 1929 for Rome.⁵ He was leaving behind a China searching for new intellectual orientations. The declaration of the Republic in 1911 put an end to over two thousand years of imperial system. The May Fourth Movement emerged as an inspirational renewal movement critical of the traditional values – associated with the rejected imperial system – and striving hence for new frameworks fostering the prosperity of the nation.

By the time Lo Kuang left China, he might not have been much aware of that transition, protected by the Catholic environment of his family and the Franciscan seminary of his educational upbringing. It would hence be in Europe, once confronted with the educational system and values of a European seminary that he would have to think thoroughly of his own background. Rome welcomed him as a seminarian, a candidate for the priesthood⁶ and provided him with the elite formation program following the reform introduced by Pope Pius XI. The new learning in the new context must have aroused a curiosity and a thirst about his own background. It could be considered that at a certain point in the journey of conversion, the convert must face a stage where he or she is called to consider seriously his/her background, to value and validate it in the face of the Chris-

5 For more biographical details on Stanislaus Lo Kuang, see Chen Fang-Chung, "Remembering a Pilgrim on His Centennial."

6 See footnote 2.

tian worldview to be embraced. One must at that time define the way of dealing with the past and its values vis-à-vis the new that is pending ahead.

In two important documents,⁷ Pope Pius XI had defined the contours of the formation Lo Kuang received at the Urbaniana, the Pontifical University that welcomed him. In *Officiorum Omnium* (1922), the Pope praised Latin and scholastic philosophy and their importance, recommending that they be among the pillars of the intellectual formation of the seminary. An effective knowledge of Latin would enable future clerics to engage in a dialogue with other disciplines. Knowledge of Latin will open the door to the sources of Christian thought, especially to the wisdom of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church whose writings are mostly in Latin. And above all, as a language, Latin represented the universality of the Church and it was therefore normal and necessary that the elite of the Church had an outstanding knowledge of it.⁸ The rules were still in force during Lo Kuang's study period. Talking offhand about the memories of his studies in Rome, Lo Kuang once testified that the teachers taught in Latin and that it was not difficult to follow the course.⁹

As for the intellectual content, it was undoubtedly philosophy and Christian theology. Philosophy referred to scholasticism, once defined as "the bulwark of the Faith and the strong entrenchment of Religion" (Encyclical Letter *Aeterni Patris*).¹⁰ In the words of Pius XI, it was the philosophy "energetically refined by the holy Fathers and by the Doctors of the School with a certain continuity of efforts, and as it was at length brought to the highest level of perfection by the exertion and genius of Thomas Aquinas."¹¹ As for theology, it was the exercise of knowledge of things related to salvation, a knowledge coming from divine sources, from the *magisterium*, from the fathers of the Church and from the councils, and which had to serve to present, to explain and to comment on the word of God, to consolidate the dogmas and the teaching of the Church and above all to refute the heresies.¹² For Pope Pius XI, following in the tradition of his predecessor Benedict XV,¹³ no other system could promise the expected results, except the Scholastic tradition crafted by St Thomas of Aquinas.

[He said: ...] "there should be as full an explanation and as invincible a defense of the truth divinely handed down as is permitted by human reasoning" – what

7 The Apostolic letter *Officiorum Omnium* of 1922 and the Decree *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* of 1935.

8 "Since Latin is such a language, it was divinely foreseen that it should be something marvelously useful for the Church as teacher, and that it should also serve as a great bond of unity for Christ's more learned faithful; that is to say, by giving them not only something with which, whether they are separated in different locations or gathered into one place, they might easily compare the respective thoughts and insights of their minds, but also – and this is even more important – something with which they might understand more profoundly the things of mother Church, and might be united more closely with the head of the Church. It is clear that the clergy should, in advance of the rest, be very studious of the Latin language for both these reasons, not to mention others; ..." See: Pius XI, *Officiorum Omnium*, <https://lms.org.uk/officiorum-omnium>.

9 Chen Fang-Chung, "Remembering a Pilgrim on His Centennial," p. 63.

10 Pius XI, *Officiorum Omnium*, <https://lms.org.uk/officiorum-omnium>.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 Benedict XV, *Motu Proprio, De Romana Sancti Thomae Academia*, 1914.

*brings this about is nothing other than Scholastic Philosophy, with Aquinas as leader and master [...].*¹⁴

Pius XI reiterates the same justifications in *De Scientiarum Dominus*, an apostolic constitution on culture, teaching and the training of priests, published on May 24, 1931.¹⁵ The Europe that welcomed Lo Kuang and shaped his impressions and understandings was largely dependent on the values contained in this document. After his ordination to the priesthood, Lo Kuang pursued three doctorates, two in philosophy and theology at the Urbaniana and the third in law/jurisprudence at the Lateran University. As we shall see later, these specializations were not only a response to his thirst for knowledge, but also served to transmit what, in his eyes, constituted the foundation of Chinese thought and culture. The immersion in Thomism will have awakened his latent interest in his Chinese roots.

2. The Host Who Offers: Course on China at the Urbaniana

After his being welcomed, we discover Lo Kuang using his own genius to introduce his land to the European public. The process involved a self-affirmation and the recognition of a unique dimension that is reconstructed in the encounter with European otherness. The process begins and coincides with Lo Kuang's professorial career at the Urbaniana.

About this career, Chen Fang-Chung says that it began abruptly. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1936, Lo Kuang planned to major in canon law. At the same time, his *alma mater*, Urbaniana, faced a problem: the Chinese priest expected to teach Chinese language did not arrive. To solve the problem, Propaganda Fide appointed Lo Kuang in his place.¹⁶ Thus began Lo Kuang's teaching career at the Urbaniana.

Curiously, Lo Kuang did not stop at teaching the Chinese language. He spared no effort to introduce the philosophical and religious thought of the Chinese to the public that the platform of the Urbaniana offered him. During this period, he developed courses on Confucianism, which he presented as the wisdom of the Chinese, another on Daoism, dedicated to Chinese philosophical conceptions, and a third on the history of religions in China. This trio was taught in Italian. He later published them in a series of books for students, under the titles *La Sapienza dei Cinesi*,¹⁷ *Una Concezione Filosofica Cinese*¹⁸ and *La Storia delle Religioni in Cina*. These three books are important because they offer a general vision of the systematic way in which Lo Kuang introduced the Chinese cultural and religious worldview to the outside world, at a time when the world of literati in the West was trying to create a systematic approach to Chinese thought.

Lo Kuang's work, therefore, requires a little more attention. Firstly, the presentation was in three points: wisdom, philosophy and history of religions. Secondly, if one looks deeply, one realizes that the content is presented in a logic accessible to the Western mentality,

14 Pius XI, *Officiorum Omnium*, <https://lms.org.uk/officiorum-omnium>.

15 Pius XI, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, #5.

16 Chen Fang-Chung, "Remembering a Pilgrim on His Centennial," p. 63.

17 Stanislao Lokuang, *La Sapienza dei Cinesi (Il Confucianesimo)*, Roma: Officium Libri Cattolici 1944.

18 Stanislao Lokuang, *Una Concezione Filosofica Cinese (Il Taoismo)*, Roma: Scientia Catholica 1946.

or following the rational tracks of the readers. This is visible in the titles of the chapters. For example, the eleven themes or chapters of Chinese wisdom (Confucianism) are in the following order: religion, metaphysics, norm of morality, virtue, the individual, family, marriage, paternal authority, filial piety, civil society and political doctrine. Regarding the philosophical conception, by which he means Daoism, he discusses it in three chapters. The terminology is perhaps closer to his European audience than to the Chinese. He speaks of metaphysical philosophy in the first chapter, of the philosophical conception of human life in the second and of religion in the last. His concern to be understood led Lo Kuang to borrow concepts with a fairly solid foundation in the West, without perhaps thinking too much about whether these terms have correspondences in the Chinese world. He speaks of Epicureanism,¹⁹ agnosticism,²⁰ fatalism,²¹ anarchy and sociology,²² all in relation to Daoism.

In the last book, Lo Kuang develops the history of Chinese religions in ten chapters, grouped in three sections. The section on the Confucian tradition is the longest and deals with such titles as: the historical events of the Chinese people, the Supreme God, the lower spirits, sacrifice and magic. The second section is made up of two chapters: one on Daoism and the other on Buddhism. Finally, the third section entitled “The Religious Life of the Chinese People” has two chapters, one on mythology (cosmic, Daoist, Buddhist, protective deities, heroes) and the other on the religious practices of the Chinese people – namely, ancestor worship, family festivities, social religiosity and popular morality.²³

The content and information contained in these three books are overlapping and at times may seem repetitive. This should not surprise the reader who is informed about the history of these books. These are textbooks written to include as much information as possible. They aim at “inculturating” the Chinese worldviews within a western-Christian context. From a scholarly point of view, Lo Kuang succeeds in this challenge by giving the West a Chinese knowledge wrapped in or presented according to the categories of scholastic philosophy with which they are familiar. This manner of treating the Chinese religious and philosophical thought was also expanding his audience to include not only intellectuals trained in Western schemas but also some Chinese thinkers. In fact, as will be seen later, after the fall of the imperial system, sympathizers of the renewal movement in China had defined a *modus operandi* referred to as *Zhong-ti xi-yong* 中體西用, consisting in adopting Western *savoir faire* – or *technique* in the scientific and epistemological fields while keeping Chinese values at the heart of the action.²⁴ It could be argued whether the

19 Lo Kuang, *Una Concezione Filosofica Cinese (Il Taoismo)*, vol. 40-2, in: *Complete Works of Lokuang*, vol. 40-1, 40-2, 40-3, pp. 244-245.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 258.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 306-310.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 339-340.

23 Lo Kuang, *La Storia delle Religioni in Cina*, vol. 40-3, in: *Complete Works of Lokuang*, vol. 40-1, 40-2, 40-3.

24 The *Zhong-ti xi-yong* 中體西用 as a way of doing things means adopting Western *savoir faire* – or *technique* in the scientific and epistemological fields while keeping Chinese values at the heart of the action. In the late nineteenth century, the *ti-yong* 體用 (essence–utilization) debate prompted government officials to embrace modernization by preserving Chinese learning as the essence (*Zhongxue wei ti* 中學為體) and appropriating Western learning for application (*xixue wei yong* 西學為用). The approach came from Zhang Zhidong, who towards the end of the Qing dynasty, proposed it as a way out for a China humiliated by the European and American invasion. Subse-

methodology of Lo Kuang was or was not an application of the same *modus operandi* to his own Christian context.

3. Fructifying the Encounter: East–West Mutual Enrichment

Compared to the first two stages, this is the most complex of Lo Kuang's intellectual journey. It presupposes a return to the fold, not empty-handed, but rather with a full bag and invincible determination. This stage coincides with Lo Kuang's physical return to the Chinese world, starting from Tainan, where he served as bishop, to Taipei as the metropolitan bishop and mostly in Fu Jen Catholic University, as Rector and professor of philosophy. He recognizes himself as the depositary of an unequalled wealth, namely, the content of his assumed Chinese-Christian identity and the method already tested in Rome, but only shared thus far with foreigners. The return to the fold allows him to reedit the experience of Rome but in a cultural context supposed to be his own. This effort will make it possible to externalize the objective assigned to his life of research: to serve as a bridge between the East and the West, to create an atmosphere that serves as a good office between the cultural, religious and philosophical universes of the East and those of the West. To achieve this, Lo Kuang set up several strategies: the comparison between the two philosophical and cultural universes,²⁵ the evocation of emblematic personalities of the meeting between the West and the East (Matteo Ricci,²⁶ Xu Quangqi,²⁷ Wu Jinxiong²⁸) for instance, and the criticism of sympathizers of other philosophical currents in China,²⁹ especially the one that emerged during the republican period (*Minguo pian* 民國篇), namely, the new Confucianism (Tang Junyi, Mou Zhongsan, Fang Dongmei).³⁰

However, with careful observation, one might realize that all these strategies revolved around the proposal of scholasticism as a method of research and interpretation of Chinese philosophy and culture. This is most evident in a volume published in Chinese (a way of defining the intended audience) and dealing exclusively with the issue of East–West comparison.³¹ The subtitles of the volume are suggestive of the prelate's areas of specialization in Rome. In the foreword, Lo Kuang explains in concise terms the motivations and

quently, several other thinkers adopted it as an adequate response to opening up and adapting to modernity. See Chinese Encyclopedia on line, http://ap6.pccu.edu.tw/Encyclopeia_media/main-philosophy.asp?id=6060.

25 Cfr. the three parts *Zhong-xi zongjiao zhexue bijiao yanjiu* 中西宗教哲學比較研究, *Zhong-wai lishi zhexue zhi bijiao yanjiu* 中外歷史哲學之比較研究 and *Zhong-xi falü zhexue zhi bijiao yanjiu* 中西法律哲學之比較研究 of vol. 19, in: *Luo Guang quan shu*.

26 Lo Kuang 羅光, *Li Madou zhuan* 利瑪竇傳, Taipei: Guanqi she 1960.

27 Lo Kuang 羅光, *Xu Guangqi zhuan* 徐光啟傳, Taipei: Zhuanji wenxue chubanshe 1982.

28 Lo Kuang 羅光, *Rensheng zhexue* 人生哲學, xiudingben 修訂本, Taipei: Furen daxue 1989.

29 Lo Kuang's unparalleled contribution to Chinese philosophy is his collection on the history of Chinese philosophical thought published in six volumes in Chinese, *Zhongguo zhexue sixiang shi* 中國哲學思想史. The title in English is: *History of the Chinese Philosophical Thought*.

30 Lo Kuang, *Zhongguo zhexue sixiang shi*, vol. 6.

31 Vol. 19: *Zhong-xi zongjiao zhexue bijiao yanjiu* 中西宗教哲學比較研究 (part 1), *Zhong-wai lishi zhexue zhi bijiao yanjiu* 中外歷史哲學之比較研究 (part 2) and *Zhong-xi falü zhexue zhi bijiao yanjiu* 中西法律哲學之比較研究 (part 3), in: *Luo Guang quan shu*.

criteria that guided his work. First, he notes that Chinese philosophy is not systematic³² and suggests that it could find advantages in systematization following the model of the Western thought. He says: “This book is designed according to the model of the philosophy of religion of scholastic philosophy with the addition of some theological concepts related to philosophy.”³³ Secondly, he explains that his choice of reference points for comparison is in scholastic philosophy and Catholic theology. According to Lo Kuang, this is self-evident because the roots of European philosophy are to be found in Catholicism, Protestantism being only a later development. Thirdly and finally, Lo Kuang points out some similarities and differences in certain landmarks (belief in God, religious meaning). He also establishes similarities between the attitudes of Chinese and European philosophers on the central points of the philosophy of religion.³⁴

By comparative philosophy of religion, Lo Kuang means “a rational study of the act of faith.” And as in the West, the discourse focuses on the place of religion in Chinese philosophy vis-à-vis the place of religion in Western and American philosophy, on the problematic of the existence of God, on the attributes or characteristics of God, and finally on religion in everyday life. Although at a first glance the work compares the two worlds in a paralleled and conciliatory fashion, a closer look reveals that there are also differences which can contribute to mutual enrichment. The general history of Chinese thought aligns two streams of interpretation based in the two central concepts of Chinese philosophy: the *you* 有 and the *wu* 無. Generally speaking, *you* refers to existence, to what is, and *wu* on the other hand to what is not. Regardless of the subtlety that Chinese interpreters give to these concepts, there is unanimity that *you/wu* should not be unilaterally regarded as the equivalents of Western philosophy’s being and nothingness. On the other hand, it is worth pointing out the repercussions of the different interpretations of these concepts on the worldview and ethics, as well as on the conception of Chinese philosophy.

Similarly, Lo Kuang protested against certain interpretations which, in the name of inculturation or the creation of a local exegesis, created inadequate correspondences between Christian thought and the Confucian tradition. For him, it was necessary first of all to fit into the general logic of these two thoughts, otherwise one might lose sight of the specificities of each of these systems.³⁵

32 “中國的宗教哲學，不是系統的哲學篇章，而零亂的宗教信仰。從各種古籍裡按照西洋宗教哲學的觀念，予以結集，稍加系統化，讀者可以對中國的宗教信仰取得一個系統的概念。” Cfr. *Luo Guang quan shu*, vol. 19, p. i.

33 *Luo Guang quan shu*, vol. 19, p. ii.

34 “《中西宗教哲學比較研究》，首先是宗教信仰在哲學上的地位不相同，其次是研究的方法更有差別。相同之點，則是對於尊神皇天上帝和天主的信仰，內容很相似，而且有許多點相同。在祭祀和祈禱意義上，也有相同之點。[...] 我們中國哲學家也都信上天，但在他們的哲學觀點裡，則都不提到宗教信仰。[...] 中國哲學家沒有人倡無神論而背棄上天，王充的無神，祇是無鬼神。西洋哲學家則有人公開提倡無神論，不信有上天。馬克思的辯證無神論就是很顯明的例子。” *Luo Guang quan shu*, vol. 19, p. ii.

35 “One should not indiscriminately draw comparisons or interpretations between certain philosophical concepts of the Song dynasty (Song dai lixue 宋代理學) with certain ideas of Catholic scholasticism. For example, between Taiji and God. ‘It is true that Chinese philosophy talks about Taiji, but it has never said that Taiji is God, nor has it ever established that Taiji is [exists]. Besides, Taiji has an origin.’
“不能用宋代理學的範疇與天主教的士林哲學的一些觀念隨便做比較或者解釋。例如：太極上帝：‘中國哲學講太極，從來沒說太極是上帝，也沒有說太極是自有。太極更有根源。’ Lo Kuang, “Zhongguo zhexue de jieshu lun” 中國哲學的結果論, in: *Rujia zhexue de tixi* 儒家哲學的體系, vol. 17, part 1, in: *Luo Guang quan shu*, Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju 1996, p. 28.

Concerning emblematic personalities, Lo Kuang had a deep consideration for the other (the foreigner in his effort to get closer to the Chinese). In his study of the evangelization of China, apart from the portraits of missionary congregations and their exploits,³⁶ he was particularly interested in certain people: the missionaries, bearers of the gospel and of European thought and culture in the Chinese context. For this reason, he devoted time to the historical study of Matteo Ricci. He credited him with the introduction of *zhuanji* 傳記, biography, as a literary style in the history of Chinese literature.³⁷ As for the greatness of his personality, Lo Kuang believes that it did not lie in the teaching of Western doctrine, nor in his mastery of the Chinese language, but came from his self-sacrifice, his firm courage and constant willingness to take risks, his unparalleled love for the Lord, and the fact that instead of seeking his own glory, he sought only to glorify God.³⁸ Speaking of *Tianzhu shi yi* – *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* and also of his understanding of the role of scholasticism, Lo Kuang considers Matteo Ricci a precursor of inculturated theology. He alludes to the way Ricci used the Chinese classics to draw from them the terminology necessary for the explanation and defense of Christian doctrine; a double task also attributed to scholasticism.

To illustrate the Chinese reception of the gospel and European culture, Lo Kuang speaks of Xu Guangqi³⁹ and pays tribute to the first Chinese who not only integrated the knowledge learned from Matteo Ricci but also, in a time when European science was still unknown, devoted himself to it with such dedication that he became the first Chinese to introduce scientific knowledge to the Chinese public.⁴⁰ He has similar respect for Wu Jinxiong (John Wu Ching Hsiung), whom he knew closely while serving as the Chinese ambassador to the Vatican in 1947–1949.⁴¹ They not only shared the same ideal of a mediation and reconciliation between East and West,⁴² but somehow agreed on the methodology to achieve that mediation.⁴³

36 Lo Kuang, *Tianzhu jiao zai Hua chuanjiaoshi ji* 天主教在華傳教史集, Taipei: Guangqi 1967.

37 Lo Kuang comments that in order to write history, the Chinese only had the *xingzhuàn* 行傳 and the *nianpu* 年譜. According to Lo Kuang, the former style is too short, too concise and the latter is otherwise too simple to bring out the specifics of the person one wants to present.

38 “不在於灌輸西學，不在於精通中文，乃是在於它能克己，能勇進，能適時，另外在他愛主心切，不求榮己，只求榮主。” Lo Kuang 羅光, *Li Madou zhuan* 利瑪竇傳, Taibei: Xian zhi 1972, pp. 206–208.

39 Lo Kuang, *Xu Guangqi zhuan*.

40 “文定在科學上雖沒有新的發明但是在全國不重視科學的時代，他研究科學，提倡科學，這種科學精神，則配成一位特殊的科學家。宜乎中國文化史，推崇他介紹西洋科學的第一人。” Lo Kuang, *Xu Guangqi zhuan*, pp. 3–4.

41 Chen Fang-Chung, “Remembering a Pilgrim on His Centennial,” pp. 66–67.

42 “If the East does not find the West in Christ, it will never meet the West and love it. If the West does not find the East in Christ, it will never meet the East and love it. If the East is westernized, it becomes worse than the West. If the West is made eastern, it becomes worse than the East. If the East and the West are married outside of Christ, the union will not last, being the result of momentary infatuation, which will only produce monsters. Only when they are united in the bosom of Christ will they love each other with the love of Christ, and the union give birth to the new man.” John C.H. Wu, “Christianity, the Only Synthesis Really Possible between East and West,” in: *Chinese Humanism and Christian Spirituality (CHCS)*, St. John’s University Press 1965, p.170.

43 To get an idea of this, one need only compare the content and methodology of Wu Jinxiong’s *Chinese Humanism and Christian Spirituality* and Lo Kuang’s *Zhong-xi tian-ren he yi lun* 中西天人合一論 (China and the West: On the Harmonious Unity between Man and Heaven). The harmony in question is posited on an investigation of the relationship between man and heaven in the different Chinese religious traditions (Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism) compared with the author’s perception of the West. The difference is that the central place of scholas-

The third moment in Lo Kuang's mental progression has two other important specificities to consider: on the one hand, there is the encounter with other Chinese thinkers, scholars who like him are concerned with creating a space for Chinese thought in the concert of world philosophies; on the other hand, there is the philosophy of life that Lo Kuang discovers to be fundamentally Chinese and therefore capable of enriching the universal philosophical quest.

In Dialogue with Chinese Philosophers

Apart from the champions of the encounter mentioned above, the third moment of the East–West encounter in Lo Kuang's thought involves a critique of protagonists of other philosophical currents in China.⁴⁴ In his *Minguo pian* (section covering the Republican period), he focuses on the explanations of Tang Junyi, Mou Zhongsan, Fang Dongmei, all members of the new Confucian philosophical movement.⁴⁵ Accustomed to scholasticism to organize and think Chinese philosophy, Lo Kuang is for the first time confronted with the syntheses or systematizations of other Chinese thinkers whose thinking has proceeded in a different way than his own. For Lo Kuang, the encounter becomes an opportunity to position his argument vis-à-vis the statements of these thinkers and to defend the existence of a specifically Chinese philosophy close to Catholic Christian thought.

His argument, whose scholastic underpinnings can be well established, is that there is a metaphysics within Chinese philosophy that on a practical level inspires the search for harmonious integration or union with heaven and earth and the practice of filial piety. Moreover, in his presentation and analysis of the works of these Chinese thinkers, Umberto Bresciani notes his predilection for those whose thought is close to his own.⁴⁶ Tang Junyi (1909–1978) is an example. He dedicates an important place to him in his *Minguo pian*. The Chinese philosophy of Tang Junyi makes use of many concepts borrowed from the Western philosophy. It speaks in terms of treatise, epistemology, metaphysics, etc. It also highlights an important point that Lo Kuang considered as constitutive of Chinese philosophy: life, the meaning of existence.

The Philosophy of Life

Lo Kuang's assertion that the philosophy of life is peculiar to Chinese thought was the result of his return to Chinese philosophy through scholasticism and interaction with other Chinese thinkers. Systematic analysis of the Chinese classics⁴⁷ revealed the importance that

ticism in Lo Kuang is given to the mysticism of St. Therese of Lisieux. For more details, see Lo Kuang, *Zhong-xi tian-ren he yi lun* 中西天人合一論, Taipei: Furen daxue chubanshe 2001.

44 See footnote 29.

45 Stanislaus Lokuang, *Zhongguo zhexue sixiang shi*, vol. 6.

46 Umberto Bresciani, "Lo Kuang's Assessment of the Philosophy of Tang Jun-yi," Conference on Scholastic Philosophy and Confucianism: In Memory of Archbishop Stanislaus Lo Kuang (Fu Jen Academia Catholica, March 28–29, 2014).

47 “從詩、書開始，中國生命的哲學，《易經》予以形上的哲學基礎，歷代儒者予以發揮，成為儒家思想的脈絡，上下連貫，從古道今。道家佛家也在生命的哲學上和儒家相通，生命便是中國哲學的精神。中國哲學將來的

the Chinese elders and sages gave to life. The starting point is in the *shengsheng zhi wei yi* 生生之謂易 stipulated in the *Yijing* 易經. A primordial reference of Chinese thought. Life, in its metaphysical sense, emanates from the interaction (continuous change) within the *Ying* and *Yang*. Lo Kuang believes that *shengsheng* 生生 represent two epistemological moments of life: life as power and life as the act of existing. This transformation and its epistemological and moral implications have fascinated Chinese thought, making it a philosophy of life. All the different currents of thought in China – Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism – have had to subscribe to the problematic of human life.⁴⁸ The quest for the meaning of life is a common transversal within these different traditions. It is expressed through expressions such as *shengsheng zhi de* 生生之德, or the conception of education as *qiu dao zhi wei jiao* 求道之謂教 or the *qiu rensheng zhi dao* 求人生之道 in the “Zhongyong” 中庸. The preponderance of these expressions leads Lo Kuang to conceive of Chinese philosophy as a quest for the meaning of life. Since philosophizing cannot be separated from this quest, he repeated that the object of philosophy must be human life. “The peculiarity of Chinese philosophy” he said, “consists in the fact that it speaks of life [...]. This way of thinking about life is part of the Chinese philosophical tradition, it is also its peculiarity.”⁴⁹

Lo Kuang verifies or applies his ideal of reconciliation between East and West also in this particular aspect of Chinese thought. He establishes that the *shengsheng zhi wei yi* of the *Yijing* constitutes the metaphysical part. This language allows other correspondences and parallels, which allow us to explain the thought of the sages about “essence and existence,” “form and matter,” “power and act.” The same type of reasoning also allows us to subdivide or organize the words of the sages in cosmology and also in morality.

Lo Kuang strives to present the philosophy of life as a particularly Chinese systemic whole but also capable of engaging other philosophical systems. In developing this system, Lo Kuang assures us that he is not trying to make Chinese thought “scholastic.”⁵⁰ He only

展望, 便在生命之仁的哲學上往前走。” Lo Kuang, “Hou ji” 後記, in: *Zhongguo zhexue sixiang shi. Qing dai pian*, 中國哲學思想史. 清代篇, vol. 13, in: *Luo Guang quan shu*, pp. 523-524.

48 “成為一個人意味著什麼, 若人似乎都有成真正自己的強烈願望, 但真正意識到, 生命是一不斷內在變易的本體的有‘能’到‘成’, 並力圖在變易中奏出‘苟日新, 日日新, 又日新’的生命定律, 展現出生命超越的特質, 是中國傳統知識分子的特性, 也是儒家, 道家, 佛家思想的精華。” Lo Kuang, *Shengming zhexue zonggang* 生命哲學總綱, p. 50.

49 “中國哲學的特點在於講論生命, [...] 這種生命哲學思想, 為中國的傳統哲學思想, 也是中國哲學的特色。” Lo Kuang, *Zhongguo zhexue de zhanwang* 中國哲學的展望, zai bian 再版 (reprint), Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju 1985, p. 35 and p. 38.

50 In the preface to the first edition of the *Philosophy of Life*, he explains that the emphasis in the philosophy of life is not on philosophy but on life. “《生命哲學》不是以哲學講生命, 而是以生命講哲學。” See Lo Kuang, *preface to Shengming zhexue* 生命哲學 (1985). In the second edition he gives more explanation: “During the five years that I have been thinking about the meaning of the philosophy of life, an idea came to my mind. The idea in question is also a reflection that in the first edition I had simply used ‘life’ to reconcile Chinese philosophy and scholasticism. For this reason, I had included the important parts of each of these philosophies (Chinese and Scholastic) in the book. The order of subjects was in accordance with the scholastic tradition. [...] Therefore, the reader’s impression was that it was about scholastic philosophy. In my new intuition, I realized that Western philosophy talks about being ‘有’; but what is being? It believes that it is not worth talking about and that we cannot talk about it. Chinese philosophy on the other hand makes explicit what being is ‘有’. Being is change ‘變易’, change is life ‘有’ is ‘變易’; change is the principle of life. ‘變易是生生, 生生是生.’” Besides, Chinese philosophy has not explained what life is. Thus, Chinese philosophy not only does not talk about life in an exhaustive way, reconciles everything to life, moreover it explains the meaning of life, and starting from the meaning of life, it offers an explanation of all existence.

wants to demonstrate that life is the starting and culminating point of Chinese philosophy, therefore, it is the turning point where other world philosophies can interact with it.

The philosophy of life also allows Lo Kuang to engage with other Chinese thinkers with whom he shares the same ideal. According to Lo Kuang, thinkers of the Confucian revival are unanimous on the existential link between philosophy and the search for the meaning of life.⁵¹ Lo Kuang refers to Tang Junyi (Tang Chun-I) for whom philosophy is the science that studies the relations between the different branches of knowledge and their links with life. For both of them, the task of philosophy consists in a search for the connecting thread of all the typologies of knowledge, a form of epistemology of life, whose primary concern is the meaning of life itself.

Critical Appreciation of *ronghe yu huitong* as a Mode of East–West Rationality

The formula that Lo Kuang proposed as a reconciler of East–West rationalities deserves several considerations regarding the solution proposed by Lo Kuang as well as his approach.

Why *ronghe*, why *huitong*?

The Chinese characters of *ronghe yu huitong* 融合與會通 are not easy to translate. Starting from roots, “*rong*” 融 means to thaw and “*he*” 合 means to unite, to assemble. “*Ronghe*” is commonly translated as “fusion.” “*Hui*” 會 expresses potentiality and “*tong*” 通 means “by, through.” Literally, then, “*huitong*” means “may pass through,” “by way of,” or “through.” But what is the proper meaning that Lo Kuang gave to these terms?

According to the usages of Chinese syntax, the character that often goes with *rong* 融 is *hua* 化. *Ronghua* 融化 presupposes a change of state, such as the ice cream which under the effect of heat melts down, or a metal in a furnace that liquefies and in the process liberates and loses some particles. Rather than *ronghua*, Lo Kuang chooses the concept of *ronghe* accompanied by *huitong*, a concept conveying the idea of conciliatory union. In *ronghe*, the modification is still possible but with the “*he*” 合, what is implied is the capacity to connect, to bridge, for “*he*” presupposes that there are two elements, two realities and in this case, two identities that are to relate to one another.

“五年來，我深入研究生命哲學的意義，漸漸有了新的構想。這個構想也是在反省第一版只想用‘生命’貫通中國哲學和士林哲學，注意點在貫通，是唯一一把中哲學和士林哲學的重要部分都列舉在書裡，全書的次序也是傳統士林哲學的次序，[...]。因而給人一個印象是在講士林哲學。‘新的構想’時發現西方哲學論‘有’，但對‘有’是什麼？認為不必講也不能夠講。而中國哲學論‘有’是什麼。‘有’是‘變易’；‘變易’是‘生生’；‘生生’是‘生民’；但沒有講生命是什麼。因此，把‘生命哲學’不僅是完全講生命，不僅以生命貫通一切，更解釋了生命的意義，再有生命的意義解釋萬有。” Lo Kuang in the preface of the second edition of *Shengming zhexue*, published 1994 in Taipei by Taiwan xuesheng.

51 “The Confucian philosophy of life has received the confirmation of contemporary neo-Confucianists such as Thome Fang, Tang Chun-yi, Liang Su-ming and Mou Tsung-san who all emphasized that Confucian philosophy is centered on life. In spite of this, however, nobody continued explaining this issue, much less developed it. I used ideas inherent to Scholastic philosophy in developing the Confucianist philosophy of life. I have established a metaphysical system for philosophy of life, and eventually set a foundation for spiritual life.” See Lo Kuang, *Essays on Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 42, in: *Complete Works of Lokuang*, p. 141.

Huitong 會通 literally means “can pass through” and for Lo Kuang it means “passing through ‘epistemological categories,’ through universes of thought and meaning of the other” and vice versa. Christianity, and the Western culture through which it evolved, just as the Chinese culture and its various religious and philosophical traditions, constitute two hermeneutic universes. While they might be thought incompatible, Lo Kuang insists that they can in fact communicate and it is necessary to find the instruments and mechanisms that facilitate the passage from one universe to the other. *Huitong*, in this sense, can also be translated as “thoroughness.” Without “thoroughness” one would be confronted with hermetic universes, which the *huitong* transforms into communicating vessels.

Lo Kuang found this instrument within scholasticism. It allowed him not only to systematically organize the teaching of Chinese sages and scholars, but also to create the atmosphere for a philosophical quest in which East and West could pose as protagonists. This is possible because the dynamism that *huitong* engages is not uniform, and does not exalt a single discourse. It is a serene process, not obsessed with commonalities, and for whom differences within those hermeneutic systems are not walls that cannot be approached and penetrated.

As a practical and conciliatory philosophy, *ronghe yu huitong* is an invitation, a call to overcome prejudices and mistrust, to make an effort to understand and to facilitate the emergence of a rationality that is not dual or antagonistic but conciliatory. The *ronghe yu huitong* does not advocate an exclusive choice between this and that, but the effort to integrate this and that, without denying or misunderstanding the particularities of each of the two systems. The thinker is confronted with the challenge of identifying the connections and holdings through which different universes can intersect and fertilize each other. Because of this conviction, Lo Kuang insisted hence on a formation prompting better understanding of the other, convinced of the benefit that the knowledge of the other might contribute to facilitate the contacts and interactions. This need shaped the choices of his formation and work.

***Ronghe yu huitong* Applied to Other Fields**

Lo Kuang, Christian Chinese intellectual and self-taught by his experience, considered *ronghe yu huitong* as the way to integrate the layers of religious and cultural identity. The explanation borrows from philosophy, which is the intellectual training of Lo Kuang. However, *ronghe yu huitong* is not restricted to philosophy. It is a strategy extendable to other fields. Lo Kuang tried to embody it in himself and his Catholic environment. The design and décor of the cathedral of Tainan responded to the logic of *ronghe yu huitong*. The message sent across was the potential of Chinese culture to accommodate the requirements attached to a Christian cultic place. Colors and paintings used in the cathedral were adapted from the models of Chinese religious buildings.

In the 1970s, there were several attempts at liturgical adaptation, with celebratory moments in which passages from the Chinese wisdom and classics were read in the liturgy. At the same time, Lo Kuang moved to Taipei as metropolitan. He would support a theology of inculturation in many ways. From the seventies, the revival of the veneration of ances-

tors (*jingtian jingzu* 敬天敬祖) illustrated the working of an inculturated theology. This was made possible by the resolution of the Chinese rites issued back in 1939 and which allowed the Chinese faithful to perform the rites to their ancestors when the circumstances of social or family life required it, and explicating that they did not constitute a religious nature but rather cultural nature. Lo Kuang was among high ranking prelates to provide elaborate justification for the renewal and proposed instructions regarding the performance of such rituals. Furthermore, he recommended the practice among the specific marks of Fu Jen as Catholic University.

The *ronghe yu huitong* was also extended to his dealing with other religions. First of all, he was among the promoters of the creation of a department of religious studies within Fu Jen Catholic University. He foresaw it as a venue within university wherein Christianity and the Christian worldviews could interact with the Chinese religious worldviews. The idea proposed in 1967 only materialized in 1988. Second, in the encounter with religious and cultural otherness, being a Christian was not an obstacle to nourishing his curiosity about other religions. The preceding pages have mentioned his commitment to the systematic study of Chinese religions. In fact, we can see that his approach to religions was a practice of *ronghe yu huitong*.⁵² He had to step out of himself, to step into otherness, to try to understand its intricacies and to form a critical opinion. In this respect, his approach to Buddhism is an eloquent example.

After a systematic study of Buddhist thought, Lo Kuang produced a course on Buddhist philosophy – *fojiao zhexue* 佛教哲學 – which he taught until the end of his life.⁵³ His students, most of whom were Buddhists, have a positive memory of this course. Apart from the content presented in an uncommon logic, they evoke the respect, the spirit of openness and the determination to see his task through. One would not expect Buddhism to be the course that a Catholic prelate gives on his nearing deathbed. In fact, it was around his bed that the last generations of his students came to attend his lectures on Buddhist philosophy.

As for cultural otherness, Lo Kuang was aware of the challenges inherent in the intercultural encounter. The layers of his identity spoke volumes. Chinese by birth, raised in the Catholic faith and educated in the Roman tradition, he had to find a harmonious way to deal with the different heritages emanating from the different layers of his complex identity. The *ronghe yu huitong*, as a solution to the intercultural encounter, means that the different layers of cultural identity cannot be placed one on top of the other, but must penetrate each other and create a coherent unity with which the person identifies. In concrete terms, instead of *ronghe yu huitong* Lo Kuang spoke of the inculturation of Chinese religious thought. By inculturation, he meant the integration of different religious expres-

52 As in other cases, the presentation and the choice of arguments took advantage of the heritage of scholasticism. The content develops themes that appeared in his presentation of the history of Chinese religions. But in parallel with the framework of other Buddhist philosophies – Fang Litian's philosophy of Buddhism (Fang Litian 方立天, *Fojiao zhexue* 佛教哲學, Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe 1994) for instance –, the impression is that Lo Kuang's Buddhist philosophy is more adept at a comparison or dialogue with the philosophy of Western religions. It is complementary to his great project of integration and reconciliation of East–West.

53 The abridged version of this *Jian shuo fojiao zhexue* 簡說佛教哲學 course was accomplished during those moments of hospitalization in Rongzhong.

sions justified by the potential of the culture to bring out and transmit the divine and the sacred.⁵⁴ He suggested that the inculturation of the liturgy should take into account certain Chinese cultural values. The spirit of *ronghe yu huitong* also permeated religious art and architecture. The cathedral he built in Tainan was designed as an illustration of *tian ren he yi* – the climax of the cultivation of the spirit according to the Confucian model. Other signs of this integration could be in the liturgical ornaments and the decoration of the place of worship. Applied to the liturgy, *ronghe yu huitong* projected the religious place and the liturgy as an esplanade of the integrated expression of the religious meaning and aesthetic character of Chinese culture and the Gospel.

Finally, the *ronghe yu huitong* has elicited reactions – in terms of responses or expectations. In the field of philosophy, in connection with the idea of a Chinese-Catholic philosophy, sympathizers of Lo Kuang's method strove to erect the Fu Jen Philosophical School or Fu Jen Xue Pai 輔仁學派. Following the example of Lo Kuang, this school of thought will encourage philosophical-cultural exchanges between China and the West. They emphasize the great richness of the Confucian tradition, especially the philosophy of life and the new scholasticism. In theology, on the other hand, opinions diverge. Lo Kuang advocated the need for a local theology. He saw it not as passive, receiving everything from the West, but as one capable of contributing to and enriching universal theology. Among the central themes of this theology he cited *wulun*⁵⁵ or the five fundamental relationships and *xiaodao* 孝道 / *xiaojing* 孝敬,⁵⁶ – filial piety, a fundamental value of Confucianism. Although there is consensus on the need for a local theology,⁵⁷ its form and content are not necessarily those proposed by Lo Kuang. Yang Gucheng 楊古城, for instance, notices the plural character of Chinese culture and Chinese Christian theologies today. Therefore, local theologies would have no other purpose than the one stated in *Nostra Aetate* (NA 1): to answer the questions that continuously torment the human heart in its personal and social dimension, to turn the theological discourse to the contemporary man, and to make

54 “For many years, we Catholics have been discussing the Chinese Catholic culture; how to express the Catholic faith in the Chinese people's life. The Chinese Catholic faith should have faith on the one hand and culture on the other hand as a basis. For example, in funeral ceremonies, the Catholic should express his faith in the resurrection, on the other hand, show the great respect of the Chinese towards their ancestors.”

“我們天主教人士，多年來談論中國天主教文化，把天主教的信仰，在中國人的生活方式中表達出來。中國天主教文化，一方面要有天主教的信仰，一方面有中國文化的基礎。例如喪事禮儀，天主教人行喪禮，既表示對復活的信仰，又表現中國人慎終追遠的思想。” See: Lo Kuang 羅光, *Bashi de tiwaiyu* 八十的體外話, Taibei xian, Xinzhuang shi: Yishi pinglun zazhishe 1990, p. 122.

55 *Wulun* 五倫 or *wuchang* 五常 refers to the five fundamental relationships whose respect guarantees the emergence of a harmonious society according to the teaching of Confucius. These are the relationship between father and son, between prince and subject, between husband and wife, between elder and younger, between colleagues and friends. Each of these interpersonal relationships carries specific obligations whose perfect fulfillment defines a particular virtue.

56 “羅光總主教指出西方天主教的孝敬父母，受羅馬帝國重法精神的影響，歐洲孝道中義務與權利味道很濃厚，子女出生以後，父母養育；子女長大，父母予以教育。這是義務。至於權利：子女屬於父母，誰也不能奪去；子女該服從父母，孝敬父母。這是父母的權利。至於中國儒家的孝道，乃是以生命為基礎；子女的生命來自父母，子女的一生，便為孝敬父母而生活。父母去世了，子女也要祭祀，表示祖宗先人的生命繼續存在。” See Zhang Chunshen 張春申, “Zhongguo jiaohui de benweihua shenxue: jinian shenxueyuan chuanglei wushi nian” 中國教會的本位化神學：紀念神學院創立五十年, in: *Shenxue lunji* 神學論集 1980, no. 42, p. 445.

57 Zhang Chunshen, “Zhongguo jiaohui de benweihua shenxue,” pp. 405-453.

religion intelligible to the man of today in his concrete context.⁵⁸ Perhaps this consideration of Yang Gucheng remains the great challenge that *ronghe yu huitong* must address. What is the perception that *ronghe yu huitong* has of the torments of men and women in Chinese society today? How can this approach be an effective medicine?

Corollary Observation

A corollary observation about Lo Kuang's work is that he distinguished himself as an assiduous autodidact. As Felice Beretta points out, Lo Kuang was the first Chinese to undertake work of this magnitude. Lo Kuang was aware of this aspect.⁵⁹ He positioned himself as an innovator who, by virtue of his thorough research and method, spoke with authority and made critical judgments about his predecessors. His transmission of knowledge does not subscribe to the master-disciple formula prevalent in ancient Chinese culture, but rather to a scientific (librarian) research consisting of the collection and processing of data. Strictly speaking, he does not belong to any school: he has not been adopted by a single master (*baishi* 拜師) whose successor he would be. Therefore, he can freely criticize and comment on the words of others and impose himself as a master in his argument.⁶⁰ And on this point, it can be noted that he was not afraid to take a stand, to polemicize against remarks that he thought untenable. This was the case with questions about the nature of Chinese religion, about Buddhism as the true religion of the Chinese and even the description of the Chinese as an atheistic people.⁶¹

On the other hand, his self-taught method generates benefits and risks. On the one hand, it allows creativity. Without being beholden to a specific master, one is free to create one's own boundaries and swim within the limits of one's own abilities. For Lo Kuang, the strengths and limitations are his mastery of Chinese culture and the scholasticism he chooses as a tool to transmit and share this knowledge. This approach has allowed Lo Kuang to systematize his knowledge of Chinese culture, and to present it according to the rational categories of scholasticism. On the other hand, self-taught work presents risks in the sense that its fruits must be tested and accepted as representative of a tradition. In Lo Kuang's case, the final product of his efforts must be evaluated and received by both sides.

58 “針對人生與人類社會生活，並回答人心永久的疑問。” See Yang Jicheng 楊古城, “Shenxue benweihua jiu jing shi shenme?” 神學本位化究竟是什麼?, in: *Duo sheng* 鐸聲 12 (1974) 7-8, pp. 14-35.

59 Felice Beretta, “Preface” to Stanislao Lokuang, *La Sapienza dei Cinesi (Il Confucianesimo)*, p. iii.

60 The notes of references certify the mastery that he had made of the field. One can identify a global approach to support the theses discussed. Lo Kuang makes use of classical Chinese texts, commentaries of Chinese scholars such as Cheng'I, Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, Wu Jingxiong, etc. He does not forget the contribution or the interest that foreign authors have shown in certain themes discussed, Matteo Ricci and other sinologists.

61 “Some modern Chinese authors deny the existence of any religion in its true sense among the Chinese people and conclude that our people are inclined to religious sense. This is false: the assertion can be said to have matured on naturalistic tendencies to have an endorsement of atheism. Our people, since very ancient times have surrounded their private and public life with religious rites, and have not waited for Buddhism and Daoism to teach the relations between the deity and men. After the introduction of these two religions into society, the people always remained faithful to their traditional beliefs and did not receive the Buddhist and Daoist faith except as this faith was adapted to the already pre-existing ideas. The true religion of the Chinese people is not the religion of Buddhism or Daoism, but it is the religious faith preserved in Confucianism in regard to deity, souls of the dead and sacrifices.” Lo Kuang, *Una Concezione Filosofica Cinese (Il Taoismo)*, vol. 40-2, in: *Complete Works of Lokuang*, vol. 40-1, 40-2, 40-3, pp. 17-18.

But what would happen to Lo Kuang's much-vaunted mediation if the Chinese world rejected his reading of Chinese culture and philosophy, or if the ability of scholasticism to mediate were to be doubted? What would happen to the ideal so much praised by Lo Kuang, if the European side ignored the importance of scholasticism as a way of philosophizing today? Is the *ronghe yu huitong* a heritage? It will only be for those who discover it. We must therefore rely on history.

Conclusion

How can we analyze the encounter between East and West? What can we learn from the interaction of Western and Eastern rationalities? And in terms of religious application, what could be expected from the encounter of Christianity and Chinese Religions? How would a Chinese embrace the Christian faith and still remain faithful to his or her roots? These questions seem to have accompanied Lo Kuang's life and permeated his career as a thinker and pastor. His answer was based on the conviction that the two universes can be reconciled and mutually enriching. *Ronghe yu huitong*, the synthesis that explores this possibility, is an effort to integrate the scholastic method with the core of Chinese Confucian thought that Lo Kuang sees as a life-centered philosophy. *Ronghe yu huitong* is based on the rigor and clarity of scholasticism, a method that from its origin was created for the explanation and defense of truth. Scholasticism was born in a context of pluralism of thought. Its objective was to resolve contradictions, as well as to demonstrate the logic and rationality of the statements of faith. For Lo Kuang, *ronghe yu huitong* is called to fulfill the same task in the context of encounter and interaction between Eastern and Western rationalities.

Ronghe yu huitong does not advocate an exclusive choice between A and B, but seeks and identifies the angles of attraction or interconnection. This method promises inclusion and complementarity. It does not deny or minimize the difference but integrates it so that it is the enriching part of the encounter. As a method, it would benefit Chinese Christians and intellectuals, the marginalized and the excluded by the rationality of an exclusive choice.

In the end, the *ronghe yu huitong* method promises a dialogue that allows for several revalorizations. Within the Church, it affirms the genius of the early missionaries in China – their efforts to adapt and valorize the culture as an affirmation of the Catholic nature of the Christian faith. It also values the approach of the early Chinese converts, and especially the kind of (conciliatory) identity they tried to bring out as Chinese Christians. They were living examples of *ronghe yu huitong*. It also raises the question of the timeliness of the quest for a Chinese contextualized philosophical and theological praxis that cannot be done without the inclusion of other Chinese thinkers.

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