

Rethinking Empire from a Chinese Concept 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia, 天下)

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In this paper the author argues that the Chinese theory of All-under-Heaven is the best philosophy for world governance. All-under-Heaven is a deep world concept with a trinity of meanings: the earth, people's hearts and a world institution. And it introduces a political principle, 'world-ness', that arguably transcends the principle of 'internationality'. The author argues that the theory of All-under-Heaven is a more appropriate 'world theory' than 'international theory' in dealing with world problems. The author also considers the philosophies of the UN and EU.

'Empire' is not only a geographical but also a cultural institutional concept. There have been great empires in the past, always reminding us of their splendid victories and fatal collapse. The modern age has been mainly an age of nations/states, in which the concept of empire has been distorted in terms of the imperialism that should assumed responsibility for the most terrible wars recorded in history. As is now realized, because of penetrating globalization and astonishing technological developments, the modernity of the nations/states system has been weakened, while a still-vague new age emerges,¹ an age of globality as the consequence of globalisation. But what is the most likely form of global governance? Personally I feel as if the steps toward a new empire could be now be heard, and indeed it has already been discussed (see Hardt & Negri, 2001). What ideal of empire could we expect for a new empire? It seems an important and serious question.. And here I would like to introduce the Chinese traditional conception of world governance, which is quite different from the usual understanding of empire, and which might give a more constructive and positive way to rethink the best Idea of an acceptable empire.

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1. The Concept of 'All-under-Heaven'

In contrast to the western concept of empire, China has a three thousand year-old traditional concept, 'All-under-Heaven', very closely relevant to the *Idea* of empire. We are led to think that a thing always has, in Platonic philosophy, its *Idea* that essentially makes it *as it is*. And an *Idea* also implies, if further interpreted, the perfect conception for a thing to be *as it is expected*. That means a perfect idea is turned out to be an ideal of a thing. Here the concept of All-under-Heaven could be considered as a supposed ideal of a perfect empire.

The term 'All-under-Heaven' (Tian-xia, 天下), found in almost the oldest Chinese texts, means firstly the earth, or the whole world under heaven.² It is almost equivalent to 'the universe' or 'the world' in western languages. Its second meaning is the 'hearts of all peoples' (民心), or the 'general will of the people'. The world is always the home-for-people, that is, the earth *as it is ours* more than the earth *as it is*. All-under-Heaven therefore consists of both the earth and the people. Consequently, an emperor does not really enjoy his *empire of All-under-Heaven*, even if he conquers an extraordinary vastness of land, unless he receives the sincere and true support from the people on the land. Just as Philosopher Xun-zi (313BC–238BC) said in his essay 'On kingship and supremacy':

Enjoying All-under-Heaven does not mean to receive the lands from people who are forced to give, but to satisfy all people with a good way of governance.

Its third meaning, the ethical and/or political meaning, is a world institution, or a universal system for the world, a utopia of the world-as-one-family. This political/ethical ideal of the world boasts of its very distinctness in its philosophical and practical pursuit of world governance ensured by a world institution. The ideal of All-under-Heaven as the philosophical concept of a world institution essentially distinguishes itself from the pattern of the traditional military empire, for instance the Roman Empire, or that of an imperialist nation/state, for example the British Empire. The conceptually defined Empire of All-under-Heaven does *not* mean a country³ at all but *an institutional world* instead. And it expects a *world/society* instead of nation/states. All-under-Heaven is a deep concept of the world, defined by the trinity of the geographical, psychological, and political worlds. From the viewpoint of this political ontology, our supposed world is now still a *non-world*, for the world has not yet been completed in its full sense. World institution and full popular support are still missing. We are talking nonsense about the world, for the world has not yet been fulfilled with its world-ness.

The concept of All-under-Heaven shows its uniqueness in its political and philosophical world-view that creates the *world-wide-measure*, or the world-wide-viewpoint, of seeing the affairs and problems of the world in the measure of world-ness. It defines the world as a categorical *rethinking unit* of viewing and interpreting political life, constitution and institution. This methodology is essentially different from the western. In western political theory, the biggest political unit is found to be a

country or nation/state, while in Chinese theory it is the framework of ‘world/society’. States have always been seen as subordinate units inside the framework of the world/society that are regarded as a necessary and the highest political unit. Chinese political philosophy defines a political order in which the world is primary, whereas the nation/state is primary in western philosophy. Certainly, westerners do think about the world, but the western imaginations of the world are nothing higher and greater than international alliances or unions of nation/states, not going beyond the framework of nation/states. Such projects have essential difficulties in reaching the real integrality of the world for they are limited by the perspectives of nation/states, due to the lack of a vision of world-ness. To see the world from its world-ness is different from seeing it from part of it.

All-under-Heaven should be understood together with another closely related concept the ‘*Son of Heaven*’ (天子), that is, structurally pertaining to All-under-Heaven. The concepts of All-under-Heaven and the *Son of Heaven* make a philosophical foundation for the system of empire. The *Son of Heaven*, analogous to an emperor,⁴ is entitled to ‘enjoy his reign of the world under the heaven’ (see *The Poems*). He is born to have ‘All-under-Heaven as his home’, just as naturally as a man has a home of his own according to his natural rights, and ‘nothing left there out of his world of home’. Whilst not even the strongest empires have controlled the entire world, it is not difficult to conceive of the world controlled by a conceptual empire. Of most importance is that a *Son of Heaven does* rather than *is*. In other words, one could self-claim one’s destiny as the mandate of heaven to be, but has to be reconfirmed the *Son of Heaven* if and only if there is evidence to justify his qualification, that is, as a Confucian master Mencius argued, one’s being supported by the peoples.⁵ The people’s choice is conceived as the final evidence or examination of the legitimacy/justification of the governance. The Chinese theory of political legitimism allows two ways to prove the rightness of the reign, one of them is the *legitimacy* of establishment of an empire—that is to save peoples from a terrible situation when, and only when, welcomed by most of the people—and the other is the *justification* of enjoyment of the reign, which is to keep the world in the order that most of the people want.

According to Confucius’ theory of justification, ‘p is p if p does as p is conceptually meant to do’, we do not say that a king, an institution or a political system *is* better but rather *does* better as evidenced.⁶ However, what is considered evidence in the Chinese way is not always based on statistics, a democratic election, but rather the that collected by means of observation of social trends or preferences, and especially by the obvious fact that people autonomously choose to follow and pledge their allegiance, instead of voting for one of several dubious politicians. In fact, careful and sincere observations can better detect truth and come to a better reflection of public choice than do democratic elections, which become spoilt by money, misled by media and distorted by strategic votes. The autonomy of people *to follow or not to follow* is regarded as a fundamental question in Chinese political philosophy as the matter of ‘people’s heart’ (民心), and it is considered closer to the truth of political reality than

democracy. The problem of people's heart (it might better be translated in the western way as 'demo-allegiance') must, theoretically, be a better representation than democracy of the problem of public choice. If we follow the facts, it seems to be the case that the masses always make the wrong choices for themselves through a misled democracy.

The knowledge of public preference has never been an epistemological problem to Chinese minds, for evidence of public preference is thought to be apparent. Instead, the Chinese have taken the ethical problem of the 'sincerity' of concern for the people most seriously. The unspoken theory is that most people do not really know what is best for them, but that the elite do, so the elite ought genuinely to decide for the people. In the late nineteenth century, many Chinese began to think, influenced by western discourse, that the best way of carrying out the Chinese principle of 'people's hearts' was democracy. But the problem of public choice remains unsolved today, and has become an even greater difficulty, for democracy represents misled minds much more than the independent, the false want much more than true needs, and illusive advantages much more than real goods and virtues.

In Chinese philosophy, the legitimacy of All-under-Heaven is asserted as *absolute* whereas a *Son of heaven* is not, which indicates three implicative principles: 1) the political legitimacy of reign of All-under-Heaven is independent of and prior to any ideology or religion; 2) the reign of All-under-Heaven is open to any qualified candidates who best know the Way (*Tao*, 道) to improve the happiness of all peoples universally; and 3) this will not be a dictator or a superpower, but one who has the right and power to justify the governance of All-under-Heaven. Laozi, the founder of Taoism, pointed out:

a king could rule a state by his orders, win a war by strategies, but enjoy All-under-Heaven only by doing nothing to decrease the freedom and to deny the interests of people. (see Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, c.500BC)

The appeal to the evidence of the people's support had become the justified reason for another political group to launch a revolution, a 'rewriting of the mandate of heaven' in Chinese terms. In fact the justification of revolution has become 4000-year-old tradition. And the theory of All-under-Heaven has no discriminating rule to deny the opportunity for any nation to be in charge of the governance of All-under-Heaven. Historically, the Mongolian and the Menchu had governed China for 400 years and their governance had been considered legitimate dynasties of China. More interestingly, both the Mongolian and the Menchu emperors had adopted the theory of All-under-Heaven in establishing their legitimate reign.⁷

In the Chinese system of ideas, family-ship is very powerful in interpreting ethical/political legitimacy, for family-ship is thought to be the naturally given ground and resource for love, harmony and obligations, and thus a full argument that 'exhausts the essence of humanity'.⁸ Chinese philosophy has developed the very consciousness of the virtue of family-ship.⁹ The essence of humanity, fundamentally constituted as family-ship, is claimed as the 'first thing with which a Lord is concerned most' and

the only thing 'impossible to be altered forever', while all other rules and knowledge are alterable.¹⁰ Family-ship is the minimal and irreducible location of harmony, cooperation, common interests and happiness, so that it is arguably the universal framework through which to interpret all possible cases of harmony, cooperation, common interests and happiness.

The virtue of the-world-as-All-under-Heaven is always understood and interpreted in terms of family-ship. And it analytically implies the claim for the wholeness and harmony of the world to be a world, for the necessary conditions of family happiness are always its wholeness and harmony. And as also implied logically, anything against the wholeness and harmony of the world is defined as politically unacceptable (the interference in the liberty of an individual might be an unacceptable political mistake, whilst the damage to harmony, the first political mistake). Thus the principle of harmony, originating in the ideal of family-ship, is made a paradigm applied further to the explanations of the possibility of any kind of harmony in the world. All-under-Heaven is nothing but the greatest family, a world-family; that said, all political levels, defined as 'All-under-Heaven, states and families', should be essentially homogenous or homologous so as to create a harmonious system. This is the key to understanding Chinese political theory. The world's effective political order must progress from All-under-Heaven, to state, to families, so as to ensure universal *consistency and transitivity* in political life, or the *uniformity of society* (just like the uniformity of nature), while an ethical order progresses from families, to states, to All-under-Heaven, so as to ensure ethical consistency and transitivity. It implies that a world is of order if and only if it is ordered with the highest world institution, while the world institution must reflect the virtue of family-ship. Under this principle, Chinese political and ethical theories are made one. We all have reason to highlight the importance of political/ethical consistency and transitivity, because any inconsistency or contradiction in the system will be a disaster. For instance, democracy, equality and liberty have been developed in western domestic society, but never extended to the international society. This case of political inconsistency and intransitivity could greatly damage the reputation of democracy, equality and liberty.

The Chinese system of families, states and All-under-Heaven, which differs fundamentally from the western system of individuals, nations and internationals, is often criticised for its neglect of the individual as well as individual rights, but this is a misunderstanding of Chinese philosophy and a poor understanding of political society. There is no Chinese denial of the value of the individual, but rather a denial of the individual to be a political foundation or starting point, because the political makes sense only when it deals with 'relations' rather than 'individuals', and the political is meant to speak for co-existence rather than a single existence. In a very Chinese way, politics aims at a good society of peaceful 'order' (治), which is the first condition for any possible happiness of each and all, and at keeping a society from the 'disorder' (乱) that destroys all possibilities of individual happiness. This political conception could find a strong argument in Chinese ontology, the *ontology of relations*, instead of the western *ontology of things*.

According to the grammar of Chinese philosophy, the political philosophy focusing on the absoluteness of individual or nation misleads political questions and logic, for it encourages conflicts and consciousness of the enemy, which creates more problems than solutions. Carl Schmitt's wonderful theory of recognition of enemy/friend could be an example. It rightly reflects the typical wrong in western political consciousness, or sub-consciousness, in which political impulse divides and breaks up the world. In contrast, one of the principles of Chinese political philosophy is said 'to turn the enemy into a friend', and it would lose its meaning if it were not to remove conflicts and pacify social problems—in a word, to 'transform'(化) the bad into the good. Today, some investigations in game theory seem to support Chinese philosophy in that in a game, maximizers will find a limit to improving their own interests, because Pareto efficiency for common happiness would be impossible without trusted cooperation.

The concept of All-under-Heaven is meant to be an empire of world-ness responsible for the common happiness of all peoples. It refers to a theoretical or *conceptual* empire that has never really existed. I do not say that Chinese dynasties, for instance the Chin (秦) dynasty, were not empires. Quite the opposite, China had been an empire in its usual sense for a long time. Every dynasty of Chinese empire had tried to apply the concept of All-under-Heaven, but had never been able to realize it because of practical limitations. All-under-Heaven means a very different empire, that is not necessarily a world superpower, but a world under a commonly-agreed institution, a plan to make the world a place of world-ness. The ancient Chinese empires had no power to accomplish the plan of world-ness, but had tried to be an exemplar empire of family-ship. The comprehensive view of the world as All-under-Heaven surely takes the whole world as a single political system that is much greater and higher than a single country or nation/state. Consequently, the empire of All-under-Heaven highlights the problem of time rather than of space, that is, the problem of its duration rather than of its territory; and it has been apparent in the Chinese concern for the legitimacy of its dynasties rather than actual territorial conquest.

The ancient Chinese practical project of the empire of All-under-Heaven had many sub-states (國) that were *institutionally* loyal to the empire, which were institutional centres, but independent in their governance. These sub-states were not nation/states at all but ruled by kings or noble families and politically recognized by the emperor. Before the centralized government of the vast Chinese Empire was set up in 221BC, China had been an 'ideal' empire, close to the concept of All-under-Heaven, consisting of many 'sub-states',¹¹ independent in their economies, military powers and cultures, but politically and ethically dependent on the empire's institutional centre. There was a tributary system between the suzerain centre and the sub-states. And the suzerain centre enjoyed its authority in recognizing the legitimacy of the sub-states, but never interfered unless a sub-state declared war on another member of the family of All-under-Heaven.

The Chinese institution of empire experienced revolutionary reform in 221BC when the Chin Emperor the Great conquered China and created a country with centralized governance over many provinces, instead of sub-states. But this institutional reform did not change the ideal of All-under-Heaven. On the contrary, it seemed to lead the Chinese to the idea of an even wider understanding of the world, a nearly 'global' picture of the world in which all foreign countries, near and far, were seen as the theoretically taken-in sub-states. So the former smaller picture of All-under-Heaven had been just mapped onto the enlarged one. And the *legal tributary system* had also been redefined and transformed into the *voluntary tributary system*, in which foreign countries volunteered to decide whether or not to join.

The voluntary tributary system expresses much of the diplomatic strategy of the ancient Chinese empire. It had developed stipulated reciprocity into the voluntary in a tributary system and always ran it in a pattern of much greater returns to any tributary gifts. Reciprocity has been a leading idea in Chinese thinking. And it has been performed within the norms of practical life to express mutual respect. The *Interpretation of Rites* says: 'the reciprocal repays is mostly preferred in the rites. And no pay or no repay no respect.'¹² Reciprocity is a truer echo of the other's heart-felt respect than an economically equal exchange. And it has been argued that the ideal of social relations is rooted in the essence of reciprocity as heart-for-heart, much more than the reciprocity of interests-for-interests. The primary concept or principle in Confucian theory is 'Jen' (仁), literally meaning the best relationship 'of-two-persons'.¹³ And even more interesting, the oldest literal meaning of Jen was the best relationship of 'thousands of hearts' (忝). Jen had been considered the only fundamental principle with which the harmony of peoples could be developed. Reciprocity understood in the Chinese way has less to do with the reciprocal utilitarianism or balance in commercial exchange and much more to do with the *reciprocity of hearts*.

The principle of voluntariness is key to the Chinese understanding of 'relations' from the viewpoint of other-ness. Some scholars have argued that the general Chinese ethical principle appears the same as the western Golden Rule (see Kung & Kuschel, 1993), but it differs essentially in the philosophical presuppositions wherein western philosophy sees in terms of subjectivity, but the Chinese in terms of other-ness. The Bible's golden rule, 'do unto others as you would have them do to you' sounds promising, but it would encounter challenges and difficulties when other hearts are taken into account. The other-ness of the other heart is something absolute and transcendent, so the other heart might reasonably want a different life. In terms of other-ness, the Chinese ethical principle thus runs: 'let others reach their goals if you reach yours'. It is easy to see the subtle difference between the western and Chinese rules. I have rewritten the Bible's rule in a negative representation to be a better representation of the absoluteness of other-ness: 'never do to others what the others would not want you to do to them'. When facing the problem of the irreducible diversities of the hearts of others, Chinese philosophy found a solution in the

highlighting of voluntariness. The 2000-year-old *Interpretation of Rites* says that harmony can be developed under two conditions:

To be heart to heart closed when congenial to each other; to respect reciprocally when different from each other . . . rites differ in forms but equal in essence as the expression of respect, just as in the same way, music differs in styles but is equal in essence as the expression of heart.¹⁴

That means that to love what is the same to ours is not a problem at all, and thus that it proves nothing of the essence of humanity. And our brilliant virtue of humanity could show its excellence only in respecting the dissimilar forms of life. And to respect the other in their otherness is at least to respect his voluntariness or rights in developing his culture.

It is proper to learn values from others whereas unjust to impose one's values onto the others. Or to say, the values are to be learnt by rather than to be taught to the others.¹⁵

Accordingly, an empire of All-under-Heaven could only be an exemplar passively *in situ*, rather than positively become missionary. Here we see the difference between the western and Chinese ethics: western philosophy sees humanity through the eyes of subjectivity, while the Chinese sees it through the eyes of other-ness. And this is a clue in distinguishing cultural empire from cultural imperialism.

2. The Relevance to Contemporary Problems

The All-under-Heaven pattern of all-states-in-a-family reminds us of the similarities with the United Nations pattern, one of which is that they are both world organizations dedicated to solve international problems and to ensure peace and order in the world. But their differences might be more important, taking into account the successes of the All-under-Heaven pattern in Chinese history to have bring long periods of peace and stable society in many dynasties, in contrast with the inability of the United Nations pattern to deal with international conflicts. Furthermore, we might be encouraged to find in the All-under-Heaven pattern the theoretical potential to resolve international and inter-cultural problems.

The comparison of the All-under-Heaven pattern with the United Nations might still sound a little far fetched for the United Nations is not an empire system, but it would also be a mistake to neglect the flexibility and inclusiveness of the concept of All-under-Heaven. One factor that could reduce the unreasonableness of this comparison is that the utopia of All-under-Heaven is not a narrowly defined empire but an extendedly-defined world society with harmony, communication and cooperation of all nations, guaranteed by a commonly-agreed institution.

In spite of history's uncontrollable causes and conditions, the successes and failures of these two patterns, All-under-Heaven and the United Nations, are due to the different philosophical presuppositions upon which their world system concepts are

built. All-under-Heaven presupposes the Oneness of the world, and the oneness shows itself in all its diversities.¹⁶ Oneness of the world is also reflected in the political principle of 'inclusion of all' in All-under-Heaven in terms of family-ship. Oneness means the denial of the existence of any pagan, so that nothing in the world can be defined unacceptable, no matter how strange it might seem. But, slightly differently, the pattern of United Nations relies on two divergent presuppositions: pluralism and universalism. The pluralism is of the reluctant 'political correctness' to please the developing countries, and the universalism to satisfy the developed, especially the major western powers. In order to reconcile this divergence, the United Nations has made great efforts to validate rational dialogue to replace conflicts. There is no doubt that rational dialogue has had an impact in reducing wars and fighting, but not in conflict reduction, and instead has encouraged the strategic game of non-cooperation, thus universally enhancing the personality of the selfish maximizer. And, worse, the United Nations has no power to stop a superpower from universalizing itself alone in name of globalisation. The UN is more of a political market for nations and less of an institution for the world itself.

The consequential difference between these two patterns is rooted in their different understandings of the Oneness of the world. The concept of All-under-Heaven commits us to the Oneness of the world as the intact wholeness that implies the acceptance of the diversities as they are and are meant to be in the world. The concept of the United Nations has taken Oneness as a mission of western modernity to be accomplished. It is apparent and not surprising that Oneness as a mission has been developed from universalism. And unfortunately universalism is a type of fundamentalism. The reason is quite simple: universalism means to universalize something rather than everything, and to universalize the self instead of others, thus a sort of fundamentalism that insists on the ideology of making others the pagan. Political modernity has inherited from and never gone beyond the format of Christian ideology that had invented, among others, unacceptable others, cultural clashes and wars, ideological dogmas and propaganda. The worst is the universalism that tries to universalize the others in a way they do not want.

The theoretical problems of understanding Oneness as a mission to be accomplished has already been shown. The United Nations is an international organization mapping onto an individualist society. It inherits and enlarges the problems of an individualist society, for instance, international conflicts copy social conflicts. And, worse, it does not enhance international democracy over social democracy. As has been observed, a superpower has every opportunity to invalidate an international organization such as the United Nations. Furthermore, it would be the All-under-Heaven system, instead of an international organization, that would be a more effective channel to the ideal of the world-as-one, because of the logical impossibility of an always-justified international choice through democracy, according to Arrow's theorem. I am not criticizing the United Nations; it has tried its best. What I am discussing is the given limitations in the potentiality of the United Nations pattern. The United Nations is supposed to be an international organization,

conditioned by the interests of every nation/state, dealing with international problems in the age of nation/state rather than in the age of globality. And it seems to enhance rather than weaken, as Giddens pointed out, the system of nations/states as the modern political form (see Giddens, 1985). To be fair to the United Nations, it is not designed to take care of the world but of nations, it is of, not beyond, modernity. In short, internationality *is not* and *cannot be* world-ness. The question of *world institution* has now become more urgent since the world has plunged into globalisation.

It is interesting to consider the pattern of the European Union, maybe the European United States in the future. The EU is an excellent invention of a real and institutionally organized region. But it is still not a system that could be extended to the world, for it is just a company of nations/states, and it is difficult to form and give priority to a European common interest over the interests of each of its member nations/states, let alone a world interest. Theoretically speaking, the EU has gone not as far as Kant's idea. A well-organized region such as the EU is essentially something of an enlarged nation/state meant to compete with other world regions or powers, rather than an ideal for the world in its lack of its world-view of world-ness. The EU pattern enhances the integration of a region but also deepens separation from the world.

Globalisation is breaking the world system of nations/states. It is not new. It is a composition of universalism and fundamentalism, in which fundamentalism, whether through capitalism, modern industry, post-modern technologies, self-claimed world religion or ideology, tries to universalize itself.¹⁷ And within the process of globalisation itself, it is likely for one or more nations/states to transform themselves into new empires, different from the imperialism of nations/states. Is it an age of new empires to come? Will there be a new form of empire, or just a post-modern return to the old way? We should consider whether there is a more reasonable and commendable concept of empire. Comparative study would help to clarify the concept of empire, though this is beyond the scope of this paper. The differences among the ideas of empires can be detailed as follows:

1. The pattern of the Roman Empire. This is the typical ancient empire, not referring only to the Roman Empire but also to others. It is considered a military superpower with territorial expansion. It would encompass the whole world if it were possible in its claimed or hidden ideal. Consequently it always has temporary frontiers instead of clearly-settled boundaries. We know this pattern has not worked since the age of nations/states.
2. The pattern of the British Empire. This is the typical modern empire based on a nation/state under the mixed ideals of nationalism, imperialism and colonialism. It has definitely divided boundaries except in disputed areas. The definite boundaries do not indicate the self-restraint of imperialism, but the safeguard of their national interests against the free entry of others. Instead of territorial expansion, imperialism has created colonies to develop and maintain its control of

the world and the division of the world into the developed and the undeveloped. This pattern has become impossible since the Second World War because of the universalizing of the system of nations/states, together with nationalism and the consciousness of independence.

3. The new pattern is of the American 'empire'.¹⁸ It is a new imperialism, inheriting many characteristics of modern imperialism, but transforming direct control into the hidden, yet totally dominating world control by means of hegemony or the 'American leadership' as Americans prefer to call it. This hegemonic imperialism is occurring not only in political and economical spheres but also in knowledge, especially through globalisation, in which it has the greatest power to universalize its own.¹⁹ This new imperialism differs from the traditional empire in that it is much more than a game winner, as it also defines the rules. The world would become disordered if a player in the game also became the rule-maker.
4. The pattern of All-under-Heaven. All-under-Heaven appears much like globalisation, but is essentially different as it contains no such sense of the '-isation'. All-under-Heaven indicates globalism instead. It means an *institutionally ordered world* or a *world institution* responsible to confirm the political legitimacy of world governance as well as local governance, and to allow the justification of systems. Its political goal is to create 'All-under-Heaven', the trinity of the geographical world (the earth), the psychological world (the hearts of all people) and the political world (the world institution). It is a grand narrative, maybe the grandest narrative in political philosophies. The very virtue of the All-under-Heaven pattern is its world view of world-ness, which could let us understand correctly and discover solutions to world problems. World-ness is a principle higher than internationality.

My conclusion is that the most important political problem today is not the so-called 'failed states' but the *failed world*, a disordered world of chaos. This is why I maintain that our world is not yet a world, but is still a non-world. And there are so many world problems too major to be resolved by a nation, a region or by any international contract. International theory in the framework of internationality finds its limitation in dealing with world problems, the common or shared problems of the world. World-ness cannot be reduced to internationality, for it is of the wholeness or totality rather than the between-ness. Our globe needs a world theory, rather than an international theory, to speak for the world. And the theory of All-under-Heaven as a world theory could provide a better view for political philosophy and political science.

Notes

- [1] But not all think so. Smith (1996, Chapter 6), for instance, insisted the system of nation/states would not be broken up as many think, because no new system could be stronger than nationalism in the coming future.

- [2] Two thousand years ago, the popular Chinese imagination of the so called ‘All-under-Heaven’ was interesting in its square division of the world into ‘nine regions’ (九州) spreading from the central region to the rest in eight directions. And the land consisting of the nine regions was the area of ancient China while the oldest capital city in China is rightly in the central region. But Zou Yan (鄒衍), one of China’s earliest geographers, exceptionally had a much wider sight of the land that was thought to comprise 81 ‘nine regions’—reckoned by multiplying by nine—and he said that ancient China was ‘just the one of the eighty-ones’ in the world. See Shima Qian, 91BC, p. 2344.
- [3] A Chinese philosopher, Liang Shuming thought that ancient China had been developing itself as a ‘world’ rather than a ‘country’. See Collections of Liang Shuming, 1992, p. 332.
- [4] In Chinese history, before the King of Chin the Great self-nominated as ‘the first emperor’ in 221BC, the King in general was called *the Son of heaven* and kept as the interpretive name for emperor.
- [5] Mencius argued that people were of greater weight than the government and the support from people was the final confirmation of the reign. And he insisted that the king would lose his reign if he lost his people’s support, and he lost his people’s support because he was against the people’s hearts. And *Interpretation of Rites* also said: ‘enjoying the reign when receiving the support from the people, and losing the reign when losing the support of the people’ (see Mencius, c. 220BC, as well as *Interpretation of rites*).
- [6] Confucius had claimed his famous theory of justification as ‘p is p if p does as p is meant to do’, for instance, a king should do as the concept of king requires. See Confucius, *The Analects*, c. 500BC.
- [7] In 1271, the Mongolian emperor changed the empire name Mongolia into a Chinese name ‘Da-yuan’ (大元), meaning ‘as vast as the vastest’, for he thought the name Mongolia was rather local thus not good for his empire of All-under-Heaven (see Song Liang). And the Menchu nation had ruled China successfully for nearly 300 hundreds years with the support from people. The Menchu king had written an interesting letter to the Chinese emperor of the Ming dynasty before its declaration of a war on Ming, in which the Menchu king took advantage of the theory of All-under-Heaven to speak for his justice. He wrote: ‘all kinds of things from insects to humankind in the world are created and nurtured by the nature itself, not by your empire, so that nothing is your private property. And Heaven is always so fair that your empire will be blamed and punished for your abusing the governance . . . All-under-Heaven will be given to one who has greater virtues’ (see Pang, Sun & Li, 1984, pp. 289–96).
- [8] *Interpretations of rites* (c. 500BC), chapter on Da-zhuan.
- [9] Only a few Chinese philosophers had the opposite opinion to the principle of family-ship. For instance, Shang-yang said that the ethics of family-ship encouraged selfishness and evils rather than kindness and goodness, and he thought laws were the most important things. See Shang-yang (c. 300BC).
- [10] *Interpretations of rites* (c.500BC), chapter on Da-zhuan.
- [11] A Chinese sub-state in the ancient times appeared similar to a Greek city-state in many but not all aspects. The oldest word for state in Chinese is ‘或’, meaning ‘a militarily guarded city’ while the land outside is called the ‘field’ (野), and later added a wall or border around the city 口 to make a new word ‘國’. A sub-state was considered a member in a family-like empire.
- [12] *Interpretations of rites* (c. 500BC), chapter on Qu-li.
- [13] Jen has often been translated as ‘humanity’ or ‘kindness’. These are not good translations.
- [14] *Interpretations of rites* (c. 500BC), chapter on Yue-ji.
- [15] *Interpretations of rites* (c. 500BC), chapter on Qu-li.

- [16] Laozi said: 'the Way of the world produces the Oneness of its own. And the Oneness has its two-ness. Then the two-ness self-develops into the three-ness. And the three-ness is the minimal base for the diversities in the world'. See Laozi (c. 500BC) *Tao Te Ching*.
- [17] The Manifesto of the Communist Party was one of the earliest texts discussing something of globalization. It said: 'The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country'. And 'as in material, so also in intellectual production, the intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature'.
- [18] Hardt and Negri (2001) had argued in their *Empire* that the new empire of today is different from the European imperialism and mainly produced in American constitutionalism that is more akin to Roman empire than to European imperialism.
- [19] But the American empire seems still not satisfied with its 'leadership'. Nye calls upon the USA to enhance its 'soft power' as complement to its 'hard power', for the USA is still not powerful enough to 'go it alone' even though it is the strongest power since Rome. See Nye, 2002.

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