Two Roads to a World Community: Comparing Stoic and Confucian Cosmopolitanism

Yudan Chen¹

Received: 24 February 2016 / Accepted: 28 February 2016 / Published online: 4 April 2016
© Fudan University and Springer Science+Business Media Singapore 2016

Abstract From the late twentieth century, cosmopolitanism is reviving in both the Western world and China (in the name of “Tianxia Zhuyi”). In a changing world where modern nation-state system is facing more and more challenges, it is interesting and helpful to compare their respective ancestors: Stoic cosmopolitanism and Confucian cosmopolitanism. The first section of the article examines the constitutions of political spaces in the two cosmopolitan thoughts. Both of them emphasize a “nothing outside” human community, though for Stoics, cosmos is ultimate and fundamental while for Confucians, family is the highest priority. The second section compares the ways to dwell in the world, i.e., why and how such a political space is harmonious. The Stoics and the Confucians have different starting points: one from individual Logos (Reason) and the other from inter-personal “Ren” (Benevolence). However, they reach the same ends: integrating “Self” and “Others” through practices and duties in a world community. The article concludes that the two classical cosmopolitan traditions are commensurable in their core values. They may even shed some light on contemporary IR studies since the ideas they share are those that modern theories have often ignored.

Keywords Cosmopolitanism · Stoicism · Confucianism · World Community · IR Theory

✉ Yudan Chen
chenyudan@fudan.edu.cn

¹ Department of International Politics, Fudan University, Rm 721, Wenke Building, 220 Handan Road, Shanghai 200433, China

1 Introduction

In the recent four centuries from the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, an inter-state system with national sovereignty as its fundamental principle has spread from Europe into the entire world. While nation-state has always been the core element in practice, reflections of cosmopolitanism which go beyond nation-state have never disappeared from human thought, from serious philosophical works to romantic poems.¹ Since the discipline of international relations was established in the early twentieth century, however, most IR theorists have centered on the concept and limit of “inter-national”. They regard the existence of nation-states as a prerequisite of their analysis, showing little interest in cosmopolitanism.² At the same time, cosmopolitanism is still vivid in the disciplines of political science, sociology and philosophy. Ulrich Beck, Robert Fine, Martha Nussbaum and Thomas Pogge are only a few names among modern cosmopolitanism scholars, and they do have their influence on IR studies, especially on normative theories. Many of them, in their discussions on cosmopolitanism, trace the cosmopolitan tradition back to Stoicism and even Cynicism.³ Stoic movement is indisputably the first among the “three major moments of cosmopolitan thought prior to recent and current re-engagement with its problematic and disposition” (Beardsworth 2011, 17). Stoic cosmopolitanism provides modern cosmopolitan researchers with not only the notion of “cosmos in which human kind might live together in harmony”, but also, to some extent, the idea of “world citizenship” (Held 2005, 18; Couture and Nielsen 2005, 183).

At the other side of the earth, China has witnessed the rise of its own cosmopolitanism under the name of “Tianxia Zhuyi” (The doctrine of Tianxia) since the mid-1990s.⁴ Some scholars have tended to employ this conception which is generated from Chinese classical traditions to transcend the imported idea of nation-state. Li Shenzhi, one of the most prominent Chinese IR scholars in the last century and the former president of Chinese Academy of Social Science,⁵ declares in his article “Globalization and Chinese Culture” in 1994 that “a vulgar nationalism, is totally against the trend and spirit of globalization as well as Chinese tradition...The traditional Chinese idea is ‘Tianxia Zhuyi’ but not ‘nationalism’” (Li 1994, 7–8). Another important article which raised enthusiastic discussion and even disputes on Chinese cosmopolitanism was by Sheng Hong, published in a leading Chinese social science journal under the title “From Nationalism to Tianxia Zhuyi” in 1996. The author argues that “since China is the only civilization in human history that

¹ It is interesting that in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the institution of nation-states was fixed in Europe, great figures as Kant, Goethe and Schiller were keenly calling for an idea of “world citizenship”. (See for example, Francke 1927, 183–190).

² There are however some exceptions (Brown 2000b, 7–26; Bartelson 2009; Beardsworth, 2011, etc.).

³ It is noteworthy that Martha Nussbaum herself is a well-known Classist.

⁴ “Tianxia” is a concept widely used in ancient China which means “the Universe”, or “under the Heaven” literally. “Zhuyi” simply means “-ism”. I will retain “Tianxia Zhuyi” if it is in a citation, but use “cosmopolitanism” otherwise for the reason of easy-reading.

⁵ Li participated in China’s foreign affairs actively in 1950s with Premier Zhou Enlai and in late 1970s with Deng Xiaoping. He was also the founder of Institute of American Studies in Chinese Academy of Social Science in 1980s.

once ended a warring states period with the establishment of ‘Tianxia Zhuyi’ culture, its cultural tradition may become a spiritual resource for us to establish ‘Tianxia Zhuyi’ culture today” (Sheng 1996, 19). From then on, quite a few Chinese scholars have tried to view the world from a traditional cosmopolitan perspective.⁶ Like their Western counterparts, Chinese researchers often look back upon the Classical period, picking up phrases from Confucian classics 2000 years ago, which have been regarded as the main source of traditional cosmopolitanism. When China put forward the conception of “harmonious world” in 2005, some scholars also tended to connect classical cosmopolitanism with the “harmonious world” idea, to prove that the latter is based on unique Chinese culture and can benefit from traditional cosmopolitanism.⁷

Since both modern Western and Chinese cosmopolitanisms appeal to a sense beyond nation-state to some extent, it would be interesting and helpful to compare their respective ancestors, that is, Stoic cosmopolitanism and Confucian cosmopolitanism.⁸ Are they essentially different and incommensurable? Or do they share something common that will even benefit contemporary reflections on a changing world? The comparison between these two cosmopolitanisms in this article includes two aspects: the political space for people in the world to dwell in, and the way they live harmoniously in such a space. The article then turns to modern theories in the conclusion, with a brief discussion based on the consideration of the two ancient thoughts.

2 Cosmos and Tianxia: The Space to Dwell in

During the classical period (fifth to fourth century B.C.), both the political thoughts and political practices in Greece reached their climax within the form of polis (city-state). Beyond the level of polis, there were senses of ethnos and even “Greek identity”, but the latter referred to common religion, culture and blood, not a political community.⁹ However, the fourth century B.C. witnessed the conquest of Greek poleis by Macedon, a peripheral kingdom, and it was Alexander the Great who led the Greeks to destroy the most typical barbarian figure in their minds: the Persian Empire.¹⁰ The city-state system then began to collapse in political practice.

⁶ The most influential figure is Zhao Tingyang, a professor in philosophy. He published the book *The Tianxia System: A Philosophy for the World Institution* in 2005, which has been widely spread among IR scholars in China.

⁷ There are numerous books, papers and articles on this topic, among which, I have to say, only a few are serious and profound academic works (See for example, Yang 2008).

⁸ While there existed diversity within both Stoicism and Confucianism, this article will take them as unified theories, or it would be too much for the capacity of a single paper.

⁹ Recent studies in Classical Greek inter-state relations are shared by classicists and political scientists (cf., Arnopoulos 1999; Low 2007; Giovannini 2007).

¹⁰ We should keep in mind that the Macedonians were seen by the Greeks as semi-barbarians. Demosthenes in his famous *Philippic III* held Philip, the king of Macedon, in strong contempt: “not only is he no Hellene, not only has he no kinship with Hellenes, but he is not even a barbarian from a country that one could acknowledge with credit;—he is a pestilent Macedonian, from whose country it used not to be possible to buy even a slave of any value” (Pickard 1912, 31).

Meanwhile, ideas beyond city-state and even beyond the distinction between Greeks and barbarians appeared in political thought.

Diogenes, the renowned Cynic philosopher in the fourth century B.C., as “a homeless exile, to his country dead”, might be the earliest to put forward a cosmopolitan idea when he said, “I am a citizen of the world (*cosmopolitēs*)” (Diogenes 1972, VI. 38, 63).¹¹ However, he has no works surviving today, and it is difficult to make clear the real meaning of his words. It might be “rather a rebellious reaction against every kind of coercion imposed by the community upon the individual” than true “philosophic implications” of cosmopolitanism (Hadas 1943, 108).¹²

The Stoic school created in the late fourth century B.C. is always seen as the real origin of Western cosmopolitanism. The early development of the school was in the Hellenistic period, when Greek civilization spread into the non-Greek world. Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was even not an authentic Greek. The center of Stoicism in the middle phase began to transit outside the Greek world, and the late Stoa finally had its headquarters at Rome. Therefore, Stoicism was born with the characteristics of universality and tolerance. We should not be surprised to read from the works of late Stoics, some of whom were Roman politicians, an ethical tendency of world citizenry.

Confucian cosmopolitanism, however, developed in a different background. It did not appear and develop following the change of the world. On the contrary, it pursued an old universal world order against the emerging new system of independent states.¹³ “Confucius”, as Cho-yun Hsu noticed, “defined the idea of Confucian political culture through re-interpreting the Western Zhou order” in the era of “the collapse of rules of propriety,” and modified the institution of Zhou “into the ideal political regime in Chinese culture” (Hsu 2010, 14).

At first glance, the Stoics look forward in their political contemplation, while the Confucians look backward. However, they in fact share the same idea in different ways, that is, the state system cannot comply with the development of the world, and there needs a superior political form to transcend the idea of independent states, whether the ideal pattern is new or old. Such a pattern is *Cosmos* for the Stoics and *Tianxia* for the Confucians. Two questions, then, will be explored as follows.

First, what are the respective characteristics of *Cosmos* and *Tianxia*, as both are expected to be the higher political space beyond single states?

¹¹ See also VI.72 in the same work: “The only true commonwealth was, he said, that which is as wide as the universe.” Both the Greek and English texts I cite here are from R. D. Hicks’s text in Loeb Classical Library.

¹² For a brief but detailed discussion on Diogenes’ cosmopolitanism and its relations with Stoic cosmopolitanism, see: Schofield (1991, 141–145).

¹³ The Western Zhou (1046–771 B.C.) was a united dynasty of feudality. The Eastern Zhou (771–256 B.C.) roughly covered two phases: the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 B.C.) and the Warring States Period (475–221 B.C.). There are still disputes on the problem that to what extent the inter-state system from 771 to 221 B.C. is parallel to the modern nation-state society. But the states during the period were essentially independent, despite that there was still a nominal “common lord”. Confucius was living during the end of the Spring and Autumn Period, and his school was booming in the Warring States Period.

It is easy to find that Cosmos and Tianxia share the same essence: a largest space which includes all human beings. Zhao Tingyang, a leading Chinese philosopher who authored *The Tianxia System: A Philosophy for the World Institution*, defines Tianxia as “nothing outside” (无外). While recognizing it as a precise conclusion of Tianxia, I do not agree with his statement that “China has a world view totally different with Western world...Only Chinese thought can reflect on harmony” (Zhao 2005, 14–15). At least, the Stoic Cosmos is also of “nothing outside”. Moreover, we should not forget that the word “cosmos” in original Greek language means a harmonious system, although Chinese and Greeks might hold somewhat different perspectives on “harmony”.

It is no doubt that Tianxia excludes none in political meaning. Examples can be easily found from Confucian classics, such as “Under the wide heaven, all is the King’s land. Within the sea-boundaries of the land, all are the King’s servants”; “[Y]ou obtained all within the four seas, and became sovereign of Tianxia” (Shijing-Xiaoya-Beishan; Shangshu-Dayumo).¹⁴

Nevertheless, one can not simply conclude that there is no distinction between “the one” and “the other” from a Confucian perspective. One of the Confucian classics says that “the barbarous tribes disturb our great bright land” (Shangshu-Yaodian), which may remind us of the ancient Greeks’ view of barbarians. However, unlike the Greeks’ conception, the barbarians in the eyes of the Confucians are also covered by Tianxia. They are not, as Persians to Greeks, an absolute and external image of savages, but can be converted by and integrated into the central civilization through education. What is more, even Shun and King Wan, the two legendary ideal ancient rulers highly admired by the Confucians, were recognized as “Eastern barbarian” and “Western barbarian”: “Shun was born in Chû-fang, removed to Fû-hsiâ, and died in Ming-t’iâu;—a man near the wild tribes on the east. King Wan was born in Châu by mount Ch’i, and died in Pî-ying;—a man near the wild tribes on the west. Those regions were distant from one another by more than a thousand lî...But when they got their wish, and carried their principles into practice throughout the Middle Kingdom, it was like uniting the two halves of a seal. When we examine those sages, both the earlier and the later, their principles are found to be the same.” In other words, there is no definite distinction between barbarians and non-barbarians, what matters here is not the kinship, but the “principles” one carries out. Such a special way is considered by Liang Qichao, an early twentieth century politician and scholar, as “a Chinese idea which was developed quite early, that the world (four seas) is a family and all men are equal” (Liang 2010, 51).

It was difficult for Greeks in the Classical Period to imagine such a “nothing outside” world, since “the other” was essential for them to building the identity of “self” (Cf., Hall 1991; Harrison 2001; Cartledge 2002). But a new thought appeared from the very beginning of Stoicism. According to Plutarch, “the much-admired *Republic* of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, may be summed up in this one main

¹⁴ The Confucian classics cited in this article include: *Shijing* (Classic of Poetry), *Shangshu* (Classic of History), *Liji* (Classic of Rites), *Chunqiu* (Spring and Autumn [Annals]), *Lunyu* (Confucian Analects) and *Mengzi* (The Works of Mencius). The English text comes from the translation of James Legge, except for some slight changes when necessary (Legge 1885, 1960).

principle: that all the inhabitants of this world of ours should not live differentiated by their respective rules of justice into separate cities and communities, but that we should consider all men to be of one community and one polity, and that we should have a common life and an order (cosmos) common to us all” (Plutarch 1936, 329A-B).¹⁵

Zeno’s *Republic* is not surviving today. But we can again see Marcus Aurelius, a representative of late Stoics, repeating and developing the view on Cosmos as an encompassing political space: “for what other single polity can the whole race of mankind be said to be fellow-members?” (Aurelius 1930, IV.4)¹⁶ Therefore, a Stoic, or a world citizen, will not see any man in the world as “the other” that is alien to “self”. As Martha Nussbaum concludes, according to Stoicism, “we should think of nobody as a stranger, outside our sphere of concern and obligation” (Nussbaum 1997, 9).

When we recognize the “nothing outside” characteristic of both Cosmos and Tianxia, another question follows to be explored in this part: what is the relationship between Cosmos/Tianxia and the individual states?

Cosmos and Tianxia, in their respective systems, obviously surpass the independent states. But it does not mean that the latter is simply removed from or replaced by the former. Neither Stoics nor Confucians exclude individual states, or other social or political organizations, from Cosmos/Tianxia. Hierocles, a Stoic whose life is little known now, provides a famous metaphor of concentric circles which “beginning with that representing our own body, then the circles representing our parents, siblings, spouse and children, and on to more remote relatives, and then to members of the same deme and tribe, to fellow citizens, to those who belong to the same people or ethnos, until we arrive at the widest circle, which is that of the entire human race” (Ramelli 2009, p. lvi).¹⁷ Confucians have a similar illustration of circles which expand from self (body), to family, to state, and finally to Tianxia (Liji-Daxue). Both Stoics and Confucians thus admit that one can own different identities, belonging to smaller units and to Cosmos/Tianxia at the same time.

Moreover, while international society is always regarded as opposing domestic society in modern IR theories, neither Cosmos nor Tianxia represents a field with totally different principles as those within a state. Cosmos/Tianxia is a magnified state. Marcus Aurelius argues repeatedly that “the Universe (cosmos) is as it were a state (polis)” (see for example, Aurelius 1930, IV.3-4). And the term “cosmopolitēs” (world citizen) frequently used by Stoics is itself a combination of “cosmos” and “politēs” (citizen of city-state). Cosmos therefore is a larger and higher space for the accomplishment of city-state’s political ideas. Similarly, Confucians see Tianxia as rather an extension than an objection of state. A capable emperor, according to the Confucians, “regulated and polished the people of his domain”, and in the same way “united and harmonized the myriad States of the empire”, and what he brought about at last “was universal concord” (Shangshu-Yaodian).

¹⁵ The English text is from Frank Cole Babbitt’s translation in Loeb Classical Library.

¹⁶ I use here the English translation of C.R. Haines in Loeb Classical Library.

¹⁷ Nussbaum also mentioned a similar illustration in Cicero’s *De Officiis* (Cf., Nussbaum 1997, 9).

However, a critical difference exists here between the Stoic and Confucian cosmopolitanisms. For the Stoics, Cosmos, although a magnified city-state, is superior and prior to state, and is the ultimate achievement embedded in all the lower political forms. Cosmos is “the highest state, of which all other states are but as households” (Aurelius 1930, III.11). Similarly, Epictetus says to his readers, “Never in reply to the question, to what country you belong, say that you are an Athenian or a Corinthian, but that you are a citizen of the world”; since if one “has learned that the greatest and supreme and the most comprehensive community is that which is composed of men and God...why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the world” (Epictetus 1890, I.9.1-6). And the most renowned statement is from Seneca: “Let us embrace with our minds two commonwealths (*res publicae*): one great and truly common—in which gods and men are contained, in which we look not to this or that corner, but measure the bounds of our state (*civitas*) with the sun; the other the one to which the particular circumstances of birth have assigned us”. Briefly speaking, “the true city” for the Stoics “is the cosmic city” (Schofield 1991, 93).

Confucians, on the contrary, believe that the most private family ethics, which comprises the second smallest one in the concentric circles, is the fundamental political element. It is said in *Liji*, one of the Five Classics of Confucians, that “[t]he laying the foundation of (all) love in the love of parents teaches people concord... Therefore he who is perfectly filial approximates to be king, and he who is perfectly fraternal approximates to being presiding chieftain”, and this was the way the ancient kings “united and kept together the kingdom with its states and families” (*Liji-Jiyi*). A more popular version can be found from the doctrine of Mencius: “Treat with the reverence due to age the elders in your own family, so that the elders in the families of others shall be similarly treated; treat with the kindness due to youth the young in your own family, so that the young in the families of others shall be similarly treated;... do this, and the kingdom may be made to go round in your palm” (Mengzi-Lianghuiwang I). Tianxia is just a larger form of state, but not a superior being. Both Tianxia and state are natural extensions of the prime relationship: family.

We can conclude that Cosmos and Tianxia, as political space for people to dwell in, are similar. Both of the two concepts are a space of “nothing outside”, which includes the whole of human beings and eliminates the distinction between “self” and “the other”; and both of them cover as well as magnify the form of state, instead of excluding the latter. The only difference is that Cosmos is ultimate and fundamental for Stoics, while for Confucians, family is a highest priority, with Tianxia as a copy or image of it.

3 Cosmos and Tianxia: The Way to Dwell in

Although both Stoics and Confucians advocate a “nothing outside” world community (Cosmos/Tianxia) surpassing the individual state for people to dwell in, it does not mean that members of the community (man, state and other

organizations) are in natural harmony—even a domestic society with highest authority is not bound to be harmonious. We thus need to continue to explore Stoic and Confucian cosmopolitanisms with the question of how Cosmos or Tianxia creates peace and harmony.

From the perspective of Stoics, a world community is not in a “state of nature” as introduced by modern political philosophers. In fact, the term “Cosmos” itself implies that such a community is of order and good. But why and how? There lies an explicit distinction between Stoics and most modern political scientists. Cosmos, as a political space, is not only political in essence. It is a synthesis of Nature (physis), logic (logos) and ethics, in which natural philosophy and political philosophy are not two separate fields. The general principle in Cosmos is logos, which has a rich meaning covering logic, speech, and, the most important, reason. Since Cosmos is governed by universal reason, it is evidently harmonious and ordered. As Epictetus maintains, God has appointed “that there should be summer and winter, plenty and dearth, virtue and vice, and all such contrarieties, for the harmony of the whole.” (Epictetus 1890, I.12.16) Obviously, such an idea of universal concord under logos contains an embryo of “natural law” thought, and reminds us of Spinoza’s theory of harmony.¹⁸

The point here, however, is not that people, as well as other beings in Cosmos, need to do nothing but enjoy the existing harmony. On the contrary, individuals should “accord with Nature”, since “Nature (God, pneuma, cause, logos or destiny) is a perfect being, and the value of anything else in the world depends upon its relationship to Nature” (Long 1986, 179). Here lies the essence of Stoic (cosmopolitan) ethics. A “world citizen”, as Epictetus argues, is one who is able “to understand the divine administration of the universe and to take into account what follows from it” (Stanton 1968, 184).

Therefore, the harmony within Cosmos as a political community, the tie among individuals, or the basis of world order, is the universal reason shared by everyone, “If the intellectual capacity is common to us all, common too is the reason...If so, we are fellow-members of an organised community. If so, the Universe is as it were a state” (Aurelius 1930, IV. 4). The common reason of human beings is granted by God: “from God have descended the seeds...to all beings...and particularly to rational beings—for these only are by their nature formed to have communion with God, being by means of reason conjoined with him—why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the world, why not a son of God” (Epictetus 1890, I.9.4-6). Since each man is a son of God, sharing common reason, human beings can and should cooperate with each other, in equality and friendship, because “all that is rational is akin”, and “it is in man’s nature to care for all men”; because “rational creatures have been made for one another”; and because “the Nature of the Universe has fashioned rational creatures for the sake of one another with a view to mutual benefit based upon worth, but by no means for harm” (Aurelius 1930, III.4, IV.3, IX.1). The good order of Stoic Cosmos is thus rooted in single individuals, in his ability, as well as duties, to

¹⁸ For more detailed discussions, see Long 1986, 147–209; Colish 1985, 31–36.

achieve his perfect personality by following the direction of reason, which is the common *logos* of both Nature and human beings.

God or Heaven, in Confucianism, does not naturally guarantee an established harmony in *Tianxia*. However, just as the Stoics, the Confucians maintain that the order of the human community is not separated from Nature, that is to say, Heaven (Nature) stands as the fundamental ground and origin of human ethics in *Tianxia* (under Heaven) which may ensure harmony. One of the most remarkable Confucian classics tells us at the very beginning, “What Heaven has conferred is called The (human) Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path of duty... This Equilibrium (of personality) is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue” (Liji-Zhongyong).

While both the Stoics and the Confucians emphasize the connection between ethical persons and Heaven or Nature to create a harmonious political space, the core concept which the Confucians focus on is not the Stoic individual “Reason”, but “Ren” (roughly translated as benevolence or virtue), which is interpreted traditionally as “meeting of persons”, that “the notion of ‘human’ does not exist if each man is separated, which means that the so called ‘perfect personality’ would never be found if there were only one person alone in the world” (Liang 2010, 80).

As mentioned above, the Confucians cherish family ethics as the fundamental value, which represents the essence of “Ren”. Political principles in *Tianxia* are no more than a copy of relations between parents and children, and between siblings. The love and sympathy within family is the basis of social and political orders which is called “Li” (rules of propriety). Harmony in the world community, as well as in other organizations, is not only reconciliation or peace without justice. If one manifests harmony “without regulating it by the rules of propriety, this likewise is not done” (Confucius-Xueer).

Therefore, Confucian cosmopolitanism means to expand family love to the world community, from the elementary stage that “Every one loves (above all others) his own parents and cherishes (as) children (only) his own sons,” to the ultimate stage that “men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons”, that “a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky (*Tianxia*)” (Liji-Liyun). Even then, Confucians reveal a “hierarchical” love for others as the basic characteristic of its cosmopolitanism, while the Stoics hold an “indiscriminative” love for all people in *Cosmos* since everyone is equally the son of God.

We may simply say that Stoic cosmopolitanism focuses on individual persons (or even self), while Confucian cosmopolitanism on ethical relations between persons. At first glance, this is quite close to the conflict between liberalism and communitarianism in political philosophy, or between cosmopolitanism (in modern sense) and communitarianism in normative IR theories (Cf., Brown 1992, 12). Indeed, modern cosmopolitanism is always regarded as a successor of Stoicism and Kant, while Confucianism is sometimes criticized by liberalists as communitarianism (Cf., Minghui 2005, 11–46). Nevertheless, with more detailed research, we will find that, unlike liberalism/cosmopolitanism vs. communitarianism in the

modern context, Stoic and Confucian cosmopolitanisms are not in rivalry with each other. Although they begin from quite different starting points, the two ways have similar ends.

Stoic cosmopolitanism does not seem to conform with Thomas Pogge's widely-cited statement that individualism, universality and generality are the three elements "shared by all cosmopolitan positions" (Pogge 1992, 48–49). Pogge's focus, I think, is universal individual rights. It is one of the main concerns of modern political philosophy, but not of classical Stoicism. State, from the perspective of modern political thinkers, is chiefly an institution used to protect individual rights; while for the classical Greeks, city-state is rather a space to perfect and display the virtue (*aretē*) of citizens through their participating in politics and taking responsibility for the community. When the Stoics say that *Cosmos* is like a city-state, they are not, as modern liberalists or cosmopolitans, calling for universal and general rights.

Marcus Aurelius tells us, as well as himself, "he that prizes a soul which is rational, universal, and civic...keeps his own soul, in itself and in its activity, rational and social, and to this end works conjointly with all that is akin to him" (Aurelius 1930, VI.14). An "unencumbered self"¹⁹ is not found from Stoic cosmopolitanism. "Self" can only be defined and perfected through responsibility for the world COMMUNITY, which is also the way to realize one's reason and establish a well-ordered soul (Shi and Xuefu 2009, 336). Colish correctly points out that "[t]he idea that all men share in the common possession of reason also means, for the Stoics, that all men by nature have moral obligations to each other. All men form a natural moral community of rational beings" (Colish 1985, 38).

On the other hand, although Confucian cosmopolitanism argues that the ethical relationship among people is the fundamental element, it does not, as some modern "collectivism" did, tend to dispel or oppress individuals. It is within communities, from family, state to the largest *Tianxia*, that individuals achieve self-fulfillment. That is why a noble man "cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people", and it is through personal cultivation that *Tianxia* "is thereby tranquillized" (Confucious-Xianwen; Mencius-Jinxin II). The ultimate stage that "a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky (*Tianxia*)" does mean that a great personality in the Universe is achieved (Liang 2010, 88).

Chang Hao, a renowned scholar in Chinese philosophy and history, argues that Confucianism is a kind of "personalism", a third way beyond liberalism and communitarianism, which integrates collectivity and individuality (Cf., Minghui 2005, 21). Therefore, we can say that Confucian cosmopolitanism is not a version of communitarianism in normative IR theories, since what it pursues is harmony and mutual perfection between individuals and community in *Tianxia*. That is why Qian Mu, one of the most celebrated Chinese historians and Confucian scholars in the twentieth century, concludes that the idea of "family" has not constrained the minds of Chinese, on the contrary, it is in the inherent transition from such an idea to the notion of humanity that the Chinese are able to surpass beyond the narrow scopes of nation and of state (Qian 1994, 52).

¹⁹ This is a term used by Michael Sandel to criticize liberalism (Sandel 1984, 85–87).

Starting from individual reason and personal relations, respectively, Stoic and Confucian cosmopolitanisms thus lead to the same final purpose: realizing self being through practices and duties in a world community.

4 Conclusion

Both Stoic cosmopolitanism and Confucian cosmopolitanism propose a “nothing outside” world community which establishes none as “the other” opposing “self”; and their ways for people to dwell in the largest community are quiet similar. There are of course a few differences between the two cosmopolitanisms. But the two theories share some significant points and are not incommensurable. This historical comparison between the two political thoughts existing more than 2000 years ago, however, may shed some light on current reflections on international affairs.

First, it implies the possibility to communicate Western tradition and Chinese tradition in considering the world. As mentioned above, with the rise of China, some Chinese scholars intend to prove that Chinese culture (mainly the doctrine of peace and harmony in Confucianism) is a substitute for Western political thought to shape a better world, since the latter focuses too much on individual national interests and struggles among nations.²⁰ It seems more like a passion to prove China’s cultural superiority against the background of China’s rise, than a serious and profound academic consideration. The study on Stoic and Confucian cosmopolitanisms, however, does not support such an arbitrary statement. I agree with Wang Dingding’s expectation in his article “World Citizen and Tianxia Zhuyi” that Stoic cosmopolitanism may act as a bridge for contemporary Chinese to understand our ancestors’ vision of Tianxia, which many of us have forgotten for too long a time (Wang 2008, 103). But even more important is to avoid establishing artificially the contrast between Chinese and Western traditions, which will only limit our minds in practice as well as in theory.

On the other hand, modern cosmopolitan political thought, which has by now been always rooted in Western philosophical tradition, may also turn to Chinese traditions to draw some useful elements. A “fusion of horizons” (a term borrowed from Hans-Georg Gadamer) is necessary and helpful in constructing and promoting international political thought.

Second, the ideas shared by the two cosmopolitanisms are actually what mainstream IR theories often ignore. Obviously, they provide another vision of the world, which may enlighten our thoughts to escape the “Westphalian Straitjacket”. Just as Jens Bartelson describes, many sources of visions of world community “have traditionally attracted little or no interest from students of international political thought” (Bartelson 2009, ix). Furthermore, modern IR theories often focus on the themes of states, international organizations and transnational corporations, where “scientific” patterns exist, while living humans disappear. The two classical

²⁰ Indeed, while the study on Western IR theories has already been an important subject in China, very few scholars are interested in cosmopolitanism.

cosmopolitanisms, when emphasizing on individual duties, provide us a new perspective that includes everyone into the international arena.

We should not simply look forward to establishing a world “order” or “institution” with Stoic or Confucian characteristics. That might be the least we could benefit from them.²¹ Reversely, we may recall Colish and Long’s words on Stoic cosmopolitanism, which also fit Confucianism well, “In the ideal cosmopolis there are few institutions. They are not needed, for in this state men function in terms of their natural reason...The mutual natural obligations which constitute the ideal cosmopolis are also incumbent on the Stoic in this imperfect world... Stoic political theory is not a blue-print for reform but a paradigm of the world as it might be if men could be united not by artificial ties but by the recognition in each other of common values and common purposes.” (Colish 1985, 39; Long 1986, 205) For the Stoics, every man is capable of sharing the common reason; for the Confucians, “[a]ll men may be Yaos and Shuns (the ideal sage kings)..... The course of Yao and Shun was simply that of filial piety and fraternal duty” (Mengzi-Gaozi II). With embedding international affairs into general personal ethics, the two cosmopolitanisms may help us to reflect on the tendency of “dehumanization” in IR studies, and remind us that world politics cannot only be a realm with struggles for power and conflicts for interests among states and statesmen, but also one with the possibilities of perfecting personality and virtue through duties in every man’s minds and practices.

Last but not the least, the Stoic and Confucian cosmopolitanisms may also help us to find a way out of the dilemma between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism in modern international political theories. Chris Brown, on the basis of Martha Nussbaum’s studies, offers “a sketch of one possible neo-Aristotelian resolution of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate” in an article in 2000. With a special emphasis on “virtue ethics,” Professor Brown has an acute observation that “[w]hile the virtues will be shaped by and can only be exercised in an actual community—thus endorsing the central communitarian intuition—they are in some sense universals, reflecting common human responses to common human experiences—and thus the central cosmopolitan intuition is also vindicated” (Brown 2000a, 76–99). The Stoic and Confucian cosmopolitanisms, with their similar focuses on virtue ethics, could be another, if not better, source to work out a solution of the “cosmopolitan-communitarian debate”. As mentioned above, the two classical cosmopolitanisms reach the same end by different routes. Both of them intend to integrate individuality and collectivity in a universal “nothing outside” scope, through the practical virtues and duties of each person. There is still a long way to go before the classical theories can effectively inspire modern international political thought. But such an effort should not be inutile, as a Roman adage says, “Antiquitas est Nova”.

²¹ For example, a Confucian Tianxia order would be much awkward in the modern world, since no one can answer such questions as which person or state should be the “sage king”, what is the status of females, how to distribute justice among sovereign states, etc. Yao Dali, a Chinese professor of history, pointed out that “[a]s for the political framework and institutional arrangement of national governance, Confucianism is no more than a low grade ore” (Yao 2012).

References

- Arnopoulos, Paris. 1999. *Exopolitics: Polis—Ethnos—Cosmos*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Aurelius, Marcus. 1930. *The communings with himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, emperor of Rome: together with his speeches and sayings* (trans: Haines, C.R.). Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Bartelson, Jens. 2009. *Visions of world community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beardsworth, Richard. 2011. *Cosmopolitanism and international relations theory*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Brown, Chris. 1992. *International relations theory: new normative approaches*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brown, Chris. 2000a. Towards a neo-Aristotelian resolution of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. In *Value pluralism, normative theory and international relations*, ed. Maria Lensu, and Jan-Stefan Fritz. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brown, Chris. 2000b. Cosmopolitanism, world citizenship and global civil society. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 3(1):7–26.
- Cartledge, Paul. 2002. *The Greeks: a portrait of self and others*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Colish, Marcia L. 1985. *The Stoic tradition from antiquity to the early middle ages, I. Stoicism in classical Latin literature*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- Couture, Jocelyne, and Kai Nielsen. 2005. Cosmopolitanism and the compatriot priority principle. In *The political philosophy of cosmopolitanism*, ed. Gillian Brock, and Harry Brighouse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Diogenes, Laertios. 1972. *Lives of eminent philosophers* (trans: Hicks, R.D.). London: Heinemann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Epictetus. 1890. *The discourses of epictetus* (trans: Long, G.). London: George Bell and Sons.
- Francke, Kuno. 1927. Cosmopolitanism in German romantic thought. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 66:183–190.
- Giovannini, Adalberto. 2007. *Les relations entre États dans la Grèce antique du temps d'Homère à l'intervention romaine (ca. 700-200 av. J.-C.)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Hadas, Moses. 1943. From nationalism to cosmopolitanism in the Greco-Roman world. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4(1):105–111.
- Hall, Edith. 1991. *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek self definition through tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harrison, Thomas (ed.). 2001. *Greeks and Barbarians*. London: Routledge.
- Held, David. 2005. Principles of cosmopolitan order. In *The political philosophy of cosmopolitanism*, ed. Gillian Brock, and Harry Brighouse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hsu, Cho-yun. 2010. *We and the other*. Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company.
- Legge, James tr. 1885. *The sacred books of China. The texts of confucianism, part IV*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Legge, James tr. 1960. *The Chinese classics (in five volumes)*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Li, Shenzhi. 1994. Globalization and Chinese culture. *Pacific Journal* 2:3–11.
- Liang, Qichao. 2010. *History of political thoughts in Pre-Qin period*. Hunan: Yuelu Publishing House.
- Long, A.A. 1986. *Hellenistic philosophy*. London: Duckworth.
- Low, Polly. 2007. *Interstate relations in classical Greece: morality and power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Minghui, Lee. 2005. *Political thought in the confucian perspective*. Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 1997. Kant and Stoic cosmopolitanism. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 5(1):1–25.
- Pickard, Arthur Wallace. 1912. *The public orations of demosthenes*, vol. II. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Plutarch. 1936. *Moralia(IV)*, translated by Frank Cole Babbitt. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Pogge, Thomas. 1992. Cosmopolitanism and sovereignty. *Ethics* 103(1):48–75.
- Qian, Mu. 1994. *Introduction to the history of Chinese culture*. Beijing: Shangwu Publish House.
- Ramelli, Ilaria. 2009. *Hierocles the Stoic: elements of ethics, fragments, and excerpts*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Sandel, Michael J. 1984. The procedural republic and the unencumbered self. *Political Theory* 12(1):81–96.
- Schofield, Malcolm. 1991. *The Stoic idea of the city*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheng, Hong. 1996. From Nationalism to Tianxia Zhu yi. *Strategy and Management* 1:14–19.

- Shi, Minmin, and Zhang Xuefu. 2009. *Stoicism II*. Beijing: China Social Science Press.
- Stanton, G.R. 1968. The cosmopolitan ideas of epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. *Phronesis* 13(2):183–195.
- Wang, Dingding. 2008. World Citizen and Tianxia Zhuyi. *IT Managers' World*:42.
- Yang, Faxi. 2008. *From "Universal Concord" to constructing "Harmonious World"*. Beijing: Renmin Publish House.
- Yao, Dali. 2012. Zhu Weizheng and his style in historical studies. *Wenhui Bao*, March 19.
- Zhao, Tingyang. 2005. *The tianxia system: a philosophy for the world institution*. Jiangsu: Jiangsu Education Press.

Yudan Chen is Assistant Professor of the School of International Relations and Public Affairs at Fudan University, Shanghai, China. His research interests include History of International Thought (Classical Greek and Chinese thoughts) and Cultural Perspective of International Relations (music, literature, martial arts and gastronomy).