

Prof. Dr. SUN Xiangchen (School of Philosophy, Fudan University / Shanghai)

WS 2019/20

Seminar 16026 (BA, advanced)

Thema: A Modern Interpretation of Chinese Philosophy

Mittwochs von 10:00 bis 12:00 Uhr

Ort: Institut für Philosophie, Habelschwerdter Allee 30, Seminarraum 1

Unterrichtssprache: Englisch

Kommentar:

For thinkers like Heidegger Western philosophy is so deeply rooted in Greek philosophy that it cannot avoid to speak Greek. In this sense, there is no philosophy in traditional China. There is only Chinese thinking. In contemporary Chinese academic circles, the legitimacy of Chinese Philosophy is still a heated debate. Some scholars doubt that we can rely on Western philosophical concepts to interpret Chinese traditional texts. They fear this will distort the original meaning. Ironically, however, even the modern Chinese language is deeply influenced by Western languages. In this sense, even if you use modern Chinese language to interpret Chinese traditional thoughts, you will fail to grasp the original Chinese way of conceptualization.

The danger of distorting traditional Chinese thinking should remind us to be careful and to avoid an unreflective use of Western concepts when interpreting traditional Chinese textual resources. However, we still need some method to interpret Chinese thought in a modern way. That means that we cannot settle for simply quoting what Confucius or Mencius said. We should rather present the overall logical framework behind these sayings.

Phenomenological-existentialist philosophy provides an excellent way to approach traditional Chinese texts in this respect. It even encouraged to strip the maze of traditional philosophical concepts and categories from traditional Western philosophy as it developed from ancient Greece to Hegel. That kind of philosophy hindered Western philosophy from expressing its basic underlying existential experiences. In this sense, phenomenological-existentialist philosophy revolutionized Western philosophy.

Phenomenological-existentialist philosophy urges us to suspend each and every distinct cultural tradition by means of phenomenological reduction in order to show its basic existential structure. Phenomenology's slogan "back to the things themselves" allows philosophy to break the bonds of traditional philosophical concepts and categories and enables inquiries that get again in touch with basic existential experiences. The existential accounts of Heidegger's *Dasein*, Sartre's for-itself and for-others, and Levinas' encounter with the Other all evince the achievements and possibilities of phenomenological-existentialist philosophy. Such accounts of the existential structure are highly instructive for the analysis of the existential structure in the traditional Chinese framework, because they enable us to identify the basic existential experiences underneath the surface of the different expressions of the traditional culture and thus provide a promising framework to understand Chinese traditional thinking philosophically.