Convivialism and Asian traditions of thought (*gongsheng/kyosa*i).

Faced with global struggles for recognition

by Alain Caillé

Some three years ago, I was put in touch with Ms. Song Bing[1], head of the Peking University branch of the Berggruen Institute, created and chaired by the German-American billionaire and philanthropist Nicolas Berggruen (raised in France). In a Berggruen Institute brochure, Song Bing noted the harmonies she felt existed between the notion of symbiosis *in biology, that of* gongsheng *already present in the Tao-Te-King and Confucius, that of* kyosai *more recently in Japan, and convivialism. Of the latter, she particularly remembered the subtitle of the first Convivialist Manifesto: "Declaration of Interdependence". In a book published in January 2024[2], she brought together some fifteen contributions from Chinese, Japanese, German (Frank Adloff) and French (me) authors. On March 29 and 30, 2024, she brought together some of these authors and others at Tokyo University. The text you tre about to read is the one I used to prepare my talk at the meeting, which was slightly expanded afterwards. Beyond the diversity of cultures, is it possible to ensure convergence on a few fundamental ideas and values? The stakes are high.*

Gongsheng in China, *kyosai* in Japan, *symbiosis* in biology, convivialism - all these notions or theories present themselves as thoughts of interdependence. Are the convergences between them profound and authentic, or merely superficial? Are these convergences deep and genuine, or merely superficial? After all, there are many ways of thinking about interdependence, if only to value it or, on the contrary, to attempt to free oneself from it and conquer one's autonomy or independence. The question of whether the convergences between us are real or only apparent and deceptive, is not only of academic interest, even if this is already quite important. If we are gathered here, it's because we are well aware that our world is going from bad to worse, to the point where humanity's very survival is not assured. The world is in a bad way for environmental and climatic reasons, which make it impossible to produce ever more to satisfy ever more material needs. But it's also in trouble because it's not only the scene of struggles between economic and ecological interests, but also, and increasingly, of struggles for recognition. We are witnessing a struggle between the global South and the global North (alias the West). A struggle by former empires - China, Russia, India, Turkey - to regain their former power and glory. A struggle of the former colonized against the former colonizers. Between skin colors, between

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[1] By the sociologist Craig Calhoun, former director of the London School of Economics and first president of the Berggruen Institute.

[2] Bing Song-Yiwen Zhan (Eds), *Gongsheng Across Contexts. A Philosophy of Co-Becoming*, Palgrave, Macmillan, Singapore, 2024, Open Access.

races. A struggle between religions and cultures to have their respective values recognized. A struggle between sexes, genders and sexualities. Between young people and boomers. And so on. We'll have to ask ourselves how all these different struggles - economic, ecological and prestige-related – are articulated, and how we might try to reconcile them.

But first, I'd like to stress the potential importance of our meeting. It seems to me that the only chance we have of helping the world to get better, to escape the terrible perils that threaten it, is to agree on a few fundamental values likely to be shared by a majority of human beings across the diversity of cultures, religions or political ideologies. It's a genuine universalism that we need to spell out. Or, if you prefer, a pluriversalism, in other words a universalism that is not just the one that the West has claimed to impose on the rest of the world, but a set of values and standards that make deep sense to the greatest number. And for this, the confrontation between Eastern and Western thought is an essential first step. I'd like to start by saying a few words about the relationship between East and West. I'll then explore the affinities and differences between *gongsheng* and convivialism. Thirdly, I'll try to show that both should encourage us to question what lies at the heart of human desire. Fourthly, I invite us not to shy away from difficult and complex questions. Finally, I'll conclude by asking what we could and should be doing in concrete terms.

Thought from the West and thought from the East

A collective work coordinated by jurist and historian Pierre Legendre, published some ten or fifteen years ago, compared the meanings given to nine Western notions such as state, religion, society and contract, in nine different languages[3]. The central conclusion was that there are far more differences between French or English and Chinese or Japanese than between French and English, on the one hand, and Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hindi or even African languages (Burkina-Fasso or Gabonese), on the other. Some fifty years ago, in my first doctoral thesis, a thesis in economics, I tried to show that our representation of the economy and economic rationality derived from modern Western rationalist thought, and that this was structured by a whole set of dichotomies.: between language and reality, to start with, and between nature/society, means/ends, form/content, man/woman, exchange value/use value, signifier/signified, etc. I defended the thesis that the idea of the economy and economic rationality is the result of modern Western rationalist thought and that rationalism has functioned as the modern substitute for (Christian) religion.

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[3] *Le tour du monde des concepts, Fayard,2014. The nine words were: Contract, Body, Dance, State, Law, Nature, Religion, Society, Truth. And the nine languages: Arabic, Persian, African languages of Burkina-Faso and Gabon, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Persian, Russian, Turkish.*

Forgive me for mentioning this unpublished thesis, which has had virtually no echo[4]. I'm doing so, even though I don't like to put myself forward, because the idea seems to me strong and right, and I haven't seen it anywhere else. Or, rather, I hadn't read it anywhere else when I first wrote this text. Since then, I've been reinforced in this analysis by two very different contributions. The first is by Belgian philosopher Jacques Dewitte[5], commenting on a little-known article by René Girard, "Différenciation et réciprocité chez Lévi-Strauss et dans la théorie contemporaine"[6]. Comparing Lévi-Strauss and Bergson, whom everything seems to oppose, or rather, between whom we see no connection, Girard notes in both authors a "metaphysical dualism" within which there can be successive valorization of one pole, then of the opposite pole, without "that changing much of the case" (p. 74), the incessant flux of reality in one, the eternal structure of the human spirit in the other. Girard goes on to note that Sartre's thinking in L'être et le néant, with its clear-cut opposition of the "in-itself" and the "for-itself", can be understood as a variant of the same metaphysical dualism. With French structuralism, so violently opposed to Sartre, there is no way out of metaphysical dualism, since it is the structure itself that has become the subject," summarizes J. Dewitte. "There can be no other subject than the structure itself," wrote Girard (p. 98). Dichotomy or metaphysical dualism, it is indeed the same a priori structuring of the field of modern Western thought that is the problem.

But is this just *modern* Western weighing? Philosopher Roger Ames, a leading expert on Chinese thought and, more specifically, the Confucian tradition, notes that, from its Greek origins, Western thought has been characterized by the search for a substance or essence of things and beings[7]. This is particularly clear in Aristotle. Western thought is founded on an ontology, a science of being. Chinese thought, on the other hand, is entirely relational. For it, there is no being, and even less no being in itself, only bundles of relations in perpetual change.

Let me summarize: there is a major difference between modern (an eventually ancient) Western thought, which has always reasoned in terms of dichotomous oppositions, and Eastern thought, which has always reasoned in terms of dialectical oppositions, as can be seen so clearly in the opposition of yin and yang. And in the *Yi King*[8].

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[4] I had largely forgotten about it myself. It was brought back to mind by the impressive work of recollection carried out by Brazilian sociologist Andrea Magnelli in "La théorie critique du don. Cheminements et programmes d'Alain Caillé et du MAUSS (1982-2022), *La Revue du MAUSS semestrielle* n°63, 1st semester 2024.

[5] Jacques Dewitte, "Découpage et convenance. Rereading Girard and Castoriadis", *La Revue du MAUSS semestrielle* n°63, 1st semester 2024.

[6] Jacques Dewitte, "Découpage et convenance. Rereading Girard and Castoriadis", *La Revue du MAUSS semestrielle* n°63, 1st semester 2024.

[7] Cf. for example his *Human Becomings. Theorizing Persons for Confucian Role Ethics,* 2021, State Universrity of New York. And, most recently, *Living Chinese Philosophy.,* State University of New York. Roger Ames was present at the Tokyo meeting. His remarks reinforced my feeling of the importance of the figure of dichotomy in the West. If beings and things have a substance of their own, then they can easily be dichotomously opposed.

[8] It may, of course, seem quite ridiculous to attempt to set out in a few words the essential differences between two such vast continents of thought. But I don't think it's useless to try and highlight a few salient features. Regrading Japanese thought, cf. the works of Augustin Berque.

But we shouldn't believe that this opposition between East and West is itself absolute, dichotomous. Just as there is yin in yang in ever-varying proportions, and vice versa, so there is West in East, and East in West. Relational in Western thinking, and substantial in Eastern. It's all a matter of proportion, epoch and more or less marked hegemony. Some twenty years ago, philosophical friends and I edited a history of Western moral and political philosophy, bringing together some twenty specialists. This history was organized around the idea that all the great philosophical doctrines since Antiquity have been differentiated and opposed to each other according to whether they are more or less utilitarian or anti-utilitarian in inspiration. The central question is: can the good and the just, for individuals and societies alike, be defined and achieved on the basis of a rational calculation of pleasures and pains? Or is it not? French philosopher and sinologist François Jullien has focused on the differences between Chinese and Western thought, using Mencius in particular[9]. But it seems to me that there is no more utilitarian school of thought in China than the School of Legists. Han Fei Tse, for example, foreshadows Machiavelli as well as Bentham and Adam Smith.

Conversely, we could cite many Western authors who are neither utilitarian nor prisoners of the dichotomy. And today, in the wake of Bruno Latour and Philippe Descola in particular, all ecological thinkers and activists are radically denouncing the opposition between nature and culture or nature and society. It's become a basic banality. In fact, there is a risk of going too far in the opposite direction. For example, by wanting to abolish all differences between humans and nature, or between masculine and feminine.

If, then, the opposition between Western and Eastern thought is neither dichotomous nor absolute, we have reason to hope that we can find common ground between us to enunciate a few universalizable values and norms. But this agreement must not be based on too many misunderstandings. This is why, in my contribution to our collective work, I insisted on the possible divergences between *gongsheng/kyosai* and convivialism. Ms Song Bing has carefully and accurately recorded them. Now we need to discuss them.

Gongsheng/kyosai and convivialism: the same battle?

As our joint book shows, there are very different conceptions of *gongsheng* or *kyosai*, depending on the period or country (China or Japan). Similarly, one of the strengths of convivialism is that it can be arrived at from a wide variety of origins: liberal, communist, socialist, anarchist, Christian, agnostic, Buddhist, Muslim, and so on. So there are quite different readings of *gongsheng*, *kyosai* and convivialism. But it's easy enough to pinpoint the main difference between the two blocks of thought. *Gongsheng* and *Kyosai* philosophies will easily agree, I believe, with the first three principles of convivialism: common naturalness, common humanity and common

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[9] Specially in his early books.

sociality. But, as Song Bing rightly observes, they may have more difficulty with the other two: the principle of legitimate individuation and the principle of creative opposition. Of course, Chinese and Japanese thinkers know perfectly well (even better, maybe, than Western philosophers) that there are great differences between human beings, and that relations between them can be extremely violent. But it seems to me that their primary aim is to organize social relations and power relationships in such a way as to achieve a lasting form of harmony through respect for some form of hierarchy. It is this harmony between differences that is aimed at, above and beyond oppositions and conflicts. Individuals and groups must submit to this objective. Conversely, it could be said that the modern West recognizes conflict not only as inevitable, but also as necessary and legitimate, and tends - increasingly so - to place greater value on individual rights and freedoms than on social harmony. To put it in the language of anthropologist Louis Dumont, world-famous in the 1980-90s and largely forgotten today, Asian societies remain primarily holistic (the whole matters more than the elements of the whole), Western societies primarily individualistic (the individual matters more than the whole).

Who's right? On the principle of legitimate individuation Song Bing cautiously concludes, and rightly so I think: "While the notion of gongsheng/kyosei does recognize and celebrate differences, there is nonetheless a general shortage of intellectual resources for robust individuality or personal rights against the authorities, and thus there may be much to learn from this notion of legitimate individuation and related practices". And concerning the principle of creative opposition, she writes: "How opposing views, particularly against political authorities can be creatively expressed and engaged in political and social spheres, remains a big cultural or political challenge particularly in China".

I feel in harmony with these formulations, but if we do not want to remain in the sphere of pure ideas we must try to deepen them by asking ourselves which social forms the holistic and individualistic choices correspond to. I don't think the answer is very mysterious. As our book clearly shows, and to stay with the case of China, *gongsheng* thought is intimately linked to the doctrine of *Tianxia*, "all united under one sky"[10]. And this represents what seems to me to be the most accomplished expression of the empire form, which has the great advantage of accepting differences as long as they do not endanger the unity of the empire and pay tribute to the emperor. The model is well summarized by Ren and Su (quoted by Song BIng); "the "tributary system" (can be viewed) as a *gongsheng* (symbiotic) system whereby there were "multiple centers and overlapping intersections that allow each country in a region to be secure in its position." In this order, the smaller states accorded deference and respect to the large ones, and the latter in turn fostered and protected smaller states, with each performing their respective roles in the ritualistic order of tianxia 天下 (all under tian)" .

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[10] Cf. on this point Zhao Tingiang's excellent book, *Tianxia, tout sous un même ciel*, éditions du cerf, 2018. Cf. also Régis Debray and Zhao Tingiang, *Du ciel à la terre.* La Chine et l'Occident, Les Arènes, 2014.

The democratic and individualistic Western model, on the other hand, is the heir to the ancient Greek cities (Athens) and the Italian republics. It was built in opposition to all attempts to recover or rebuild the Roman Empire, and to all attempts to merge power and religion (power and knowledge). If we wanted to find an equivalent in the history of China, we could speak of a form of perpetuation of the period of the Warring Kingdoms. The European kingdoms were built as miniature empires against the great empire. Kings were said to be "emperors in their own kingdom". And, little by little, the king was replaced by the people within the framework of nation-states, a people symbolically defined by the same ethnic origin, language and religion. This is how modern democracy came into being. But just as the emperor was replaced by the king, and the king by the people, the people are now replaced by individuals, and individuals by consumers. At the risk of destroying every possible form of coexistence and social harmony.

This is where we are. To revive the imperial form, a world empire would have to exist. But no country can place itself at the heart of a world empire. The United States is still a great power, but it is clearly on the wane, as are the Western democracies. Europe has no political or ideological power. China has great economic and military power, but no ideological power.

At this point, we can see two initial conclusions. The first is that we absolutely need universal values, but since no country is strong enough to impose its values on the whole world, it is essential that we at least succeed in formulating and clarifying these values at the crossroads of East and West. The second, as we can guess, is that the East will have to give more space to individual emancipation and the West more to the collective. It will have to become more holistic. Or, to put it another way, we need to find the right balance between individual and collective freedom. How can we do this?

Clearly, proclaiming great so-called universal values will serve no purpose whatsoever, and we'll be preaching in the wilderness, if they bear no relation to the actual needs and desires of human beings. We are therefore obliged to agree on what we think these needs and desires are

What do humans want?

On this crucial question, the two convivialist manifestos are not very detailed. The reason is easy to understand. There are so many opposing theories on this subject that, in order to achieve the minimal consensus we're looking for, it would be counterproductive to give the impression of leaning more towards one than another. But that hasn't stopped the two manifestos from making a theoretical choice that is, in fact, extremely radical. The starting point for convivialism is the observation that we can no longer find sufficient resources in the great political philosophies of modernity (liberalism, socialism, communism, anarchism) to oppose neoliberalism, and that one

of the reasons for the latter's worldwide triumph is that it functions as a kind of default moral and political ideology.

Why are the great political ideologies of which we are heirs no longer equal to the times? The main reason is that they are based on a vision of human desires that is both erroneous and now clearly inviable. All of them, apart from a few marginal variants, are based on the premise that the primary driver of human action is material need. All believe that if there is conflict between humans, it is because of material scarcity, because there are not enough goods to satisfy all needs. As a result, they all assume that if enough were produced, then there would be no more conflict, and we could achieve a state of perpetual peace. Today, however, we know that it is materially impossible to produce more and more, *ad infinitum*. Convivialism adds to this factual observation the idea that this representation of human subjects is false. In a word, no, humans are not homo ecnonomicus. At least, not only. I think we'll agree on that. But if they're not economic men, what are they?

On this point, I believe that two decisive answers to this question can be found in Marcel Mauss's famous *Essay on the Gift* (1924-25), whose centenary we are celebrating this year. In this book, which I consider to be the most important in the history of the social sciences and even of moral and political philosophy, Mauss (Emile Durkheim's nephew and intellectual heir) brings together all the ethnological knowledge of his time in order to show that archaic societies were not based on contract, barter, market or economic exchange, but on what he calls the triple obligation of giving, receiving and giving back. As I said a moment ago, there are two lessons to be drawn from this discovery. In fact, there are three ways of reading *The Gift*. The first is based on the first page of the essay, which presents the gift as a social lie. All of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology stems from this first reading of *The Gift*. But in fact, the rest of the essay contradicts this first reading, and authorizes two others, which I must present briefly.

The first allows for a critique of all utilitarian theories of action, of RAT (rational action theory) or rational choice theories, in short, of the axioms at the heart of economic science (and neoliberalism too). All these theories are based on the premise that human subjects are, or should be, considered as isolated individuals, "mutually indifferent" (John Rawls' formula), whose sole objective is to satisfy their individual self-interest. Their only objective, neoliberalism would say, is to make as much money as possible as quickly as possible (*Greed is good)*. Contrary to this vision, to what I call the axiomatics of interest (all human behavior can be explained by interest), *The Gift* shows that our motivations are hybrids between what I propose to call self-interest and interest in others (or *aimance*, lovingness), on the one hand, and obligation and freedom (which I propose to call libercreativity) on the other. Put another way, we don't just act out of interest, be it economic interest, sexual interest or interest in power or prestige. We also act 1°) out of a sense of duty, 2°) out of sympathy, friendship or love for others, and finally 3°) out of a taste for freedom and the pleasure of creating or playing. These three sets of motivations - interest in others, obligation and libercreativity - are irreducible to self-interest. This is the first set of reasons to believe

that we are not, or not only, homo economicus. What we are and what we do is the result of our inclusion in multiple networks of social relations structured by the triple obligation to give, receive and return. We act in these networks of interdependence (sometimes in opposition to one another, hence conflicts of loyalty), trying to arbitrate as well as possible between our individual interests, our social obligations, our sympathy for others and our desire to create freely.

The second alternative reading of the Essay on the Gift to the economist interpretation gives us a better understanding of the current explosion of struggles for recognition that I mentioned in my introduction. In the Essay, Mauss explains that he is only interested in examples of rivalry through giving, agonistic giving, and not in what he calls "prestations totales", all forms of mutual aid and sharing. The best-known example of agonistic giving is the famous potlatch of Canada's Northwest Indians. In the potlatch, social actors don't try to take or receive as much as possible, but, on the contrary, to give as much as possible, sometimes even destroying their wealth to show that they are more valuable than their rivals. All the many examples presented by Mauss in *The Gift* are seen as attenuated forms of potlatch. We have here a series of spectacular examples of what Hegel, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (one of the summits of Western philosophy) called the struggle for recognition within the dialectic of master and servant (*Herr und Knecht*). A dialectic further dramatized by the Franco-Russian philosopher Alexandre Kojève, who before the Second World War spoke of the dialectic of master and slave. It could be argued that everything that has come to be known as French Theory (Baudrillard, Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, etc.) derives more or less directly from Kojève's reading of Hegel. But this reading is itself directly inspired by Kojève's reading of Mauss's The Gift, even if Kojève doesn't say so. This theme of the struggle for recognition heavily back in philosophical and sociological discourse at the end of the twentieth century with Axel Honneth, Charles Taylor, Nancy Fraser and many others.

So here we are, with another entry into the question of human desire. Humans desire to be recognized. This seems to me to be a fair but incomplete formulation. What does it mean to be recognized? By whom? Why? In what capacity? Etc. I propose to clarify the idea that we want to be recognized by saying that we want to be recognized as donors, for our generosity. We want to be recognized for the gifts we have made, are making or could make. Or, also, for the gifts we have received without doing anything about it, gifts that are totally free: a noble and wealthy family, beauty, intelligence, grace and so on. The problem, of course, is that if everyone wants to be recognized, these desires for recognition run the risk of becoming insatiable, tipping over into hubris and triggering a war of all against all.

At this point, we unfortunately have good reason to be pessimistic. Humanity finds itself trapped in a double impasse. On the one hand, we now know that it is impossible to satisfy all our needs (even by redistributing wealth as it is essential to do) by producing more and more, because that would require two or three planets. This is all the more impossible given that these needs are constantly expanding. New needs arise every day. At the same time, we can see that struggles for recognition are

becoming increasingly violent and uncontrollable. We can't get out of this double bind with fine words. To give us some reasons for hope, we must not be afraid to go into even greater detail on the reasons for pessimism, so as to better understand the nature of the problems we have to face, which will perhaps enable us to regain hope. So let's move on to a little more complexity.

Complexities

If we are to move forward, we need to make both convivialism and our vision of democracy more complex. These two points are intimately linked.

For the moment, convivialism can be seen as one of the most successful expressions of a radicalized and universalized social-democratic political project. Or pluriversalized, if you prefer. It explains why we can't have any other ideal than a democratic one, even if it's not easy to define. But also why we can't believe in it unless it's also "social". To put it simply, adherence to democracy is incompatible with the vertiginous inequalities the world is experiencing today, a world in which a few dozen ultra-rich possess as much as half of humanity. Where, therefore, some individuals are economically worth as much as tens or hundreds of millions of others. This is the most visible expression of the *hubris* that both Convivialist Manifestos assert represents the greatest danger to human survival. On all these points, I consider the Second Convivialist Manifesto to be a success. But it's still far from sufficient, both to help us understand what's at stake on a planetary scale, and to be meaningful and inspiring enough for millions and millions of people to identify with it. And yet, this is essential if we are to give ourselves a real chance of escaping from the planetary hegemony of neoliberalism. What's missing?

What's missing, as we've seen, is taking seriously in account struggles for recognition. Ten years ago, it was still possible not to give them too much importance, because they remained closely linked to what sociologist Nancy Fraser calls redistributive struggles, to traditional class struggles. But struggles for recognition have now taken on such virulence that they increasingly seem to operate on their own, more and more independent of economic factors. Hatred is growing not only between different societies and cultures, but also within each country. Why is this happening? Social networks can be blamed for this, and indeed they play a considerable role. But there is an even more fundamental reason for this rise in hatred, which can be summed up by saying that struggles for recognition (luttes *pour* la reconnaissance) have largely become recognition struggles (luttes *de* reconnaissance). In the struggle *for* recognition, one strives to have one's value recognized y a third party or by an instance whose eminent value he acknowledges, for example the legitimate authorities, the state or the hierarchies instituted within a given country. In a recognition struggle, we challenge this eminence by attempting to place ourselves not in the position of those who aspire to be recognized, but in that of the recognizer, who believes himself to be the bearer of a supreme value and entitled to distribute recognition, to decree what is right and what is wrong, what is just or unjust, and even what is true and what is false (hence the

proliferation of fake news). For three centuries, the West dominated the entire world. As a result, it has found itself enviable and envied, the ultimate recognizer. It was the West that distributed recognition, both positive and negative, to all the peoples of the world, mainly through more or less hierarchical scorn and racism. Today, this Western hegemony is contested and threatened on all sides. Former empires, once sure of their worth and power, humiliated and scorned by the West, are raising their heads. China, first and foremost, of course, which is closest to achieving economic and military hyper-power; Russia, which is desperate to recover what it can of the shreds of its lost empire, starting with the Ukraine; Turkey, which has not forgotten that it once dominated a large part of the Muslim world. India too. The less powerful countries, those that have only dominated on a small scale or have always been dominated, are trying to make the best of their situation by selling their variable-geometry allegiances to competing recognizers. They all tend to converge in their resentment of the West. And more particularly, for different reasons, towards the United States and, secondarily, France, which bears the burden of a late and poorly managed decolonization.

In Western countries, confidence in the ruling elites is eroding as their dominance over the rest of the world erodes. Living standards are falling, identities are wavering. In a word, all hierarchies and dominations are being challenged, whether by political or cultural leaders, by men over women, by dominant religions over dominated religions, by dominant forms of sexuality over dominated forms of sexuality, by dominant legitimate knowledge over non-legitimate knowledge or ignorance.

This double critique - of Western domination over the rest of the world and, more generally, of established hierarchies - is legitimate and necessary. It represents the logical outcome of the dynamic of democracy as analyzed by Tocqueville. The demand for the imaginary equality of conditions acts in history with irresistible power. Criticism of the West (or the global North) enables humiliated peoples to regain their pride by asserting their own value. In the West, the *Black Lives Matter* and *Me Too* movements, for example, have made unbearable forms of domination that were not thought of and seen as such visible. But there is a limit to how far we can go. Criticism of the West is legitimate as long as it does not actually serve to consolidate the power of military or police dictatorships. Criticism of hidden forms of domination is legitimate as long as the competition of victims does not lead to such a breakdown of society that no-one knows who is who anymore, so that the very idea of democracy becomes elusive.

So let's say a few words about democracy, since it's its destiny that's at stake on a global scale, and its dynamic that's proving, for the moment, to be uncontrollable. Obviously, it's impossible to cover its nature, history, current situation and possible future in just a few words. I shall confine myself to two observations and a hypothesis. The first observation is that the democratic ideal is often, and increasingly, seen as a screen for Western domination, an alibi for all its military interventions, rarely disinterested. But the fact remains that it is still the only universal political norm. Even

the most dictatorial regimes proclaim themselves democratic and legitimize their power by holding elections. The second observation is that this democratic ideal is intrinsically unstable (which is why there are dozens of different definitions of democracy). It is constantly torn between multiple poles, such as freedom, equality and solidarity. My hypothesis is that democracy can only function by preserving a certain balance between all these poles, and that for a little over a century it has experienced two major forms of imbalance. The first is the best known. It was represented by the totalitarianisms of the 20th century: communism, nazism and fascism. In these social and political forms, the collective is everything (the race, the state, the proletariat or the party, or today the Umma, the community of true believers with Daesh) and the individual is nothing. Since the end of the 20th century, on the other hand, the domination of rentier and speculative capitalism and neo-liberal ideology has created a completely new type of society in which everything that is collective is deemed to have no value, and in which in principle only individual choices count. In the first case, individual freedom is sacrificed in favor of a largely imaginary collective freedom. In the second case, collective freedom is sacrificed for the sake of individual freedom, which is also largely imaginary. This type of society presents itself as the absolute opposite of totalitarian societies, but it is so much the opposite that it shares a whole set of characteristics. To understand it, I suggest we speak of inverted totalitarianism (or parcellitarianism).

As we can see, it's a question of finding and clarifying a form of balance. Let's begin by formulating it in the language of convivialism. It's only gradually that we've come to realize that the four principles set out in the *First Convivialist Manifesto* (the principle of common naturality was not set out as such) each refer to one of the four great political ideologies of modernity. The principle of common humanity lies at the heart of communism, the principle of common sociality at the heart of socialism, the principle of legitimate individuation represents the core of anarchism, and the principle of creative opposition is what best characterizes liberalism. If convivialism succeeds in bringing together thinkers from very different ideological backgrounds, it's because each is particularly sensitive to one or other of the principles. But we need to go further than simply adding up these principles. In each specific situation, we need to find the right balance between them. Or, if you prefer, between communism, socialism, anarchism and liberalism. We find here, it seems to me, i the very logic of Taoism and the ever-changing interpenetration of yin and yang. This is also found in certain minority sections of Western thought under the term conjunction of opposites. But it's also possible to speak of a middle way, in which, mutatis mutandis, we find echoes of Confucianism, Buddhism or Aristotle's golden mean (*mesotes*).

Conclusion

I must now attempt to draw together the main themes or threads of my paper.

First, I've tried to suggest that, despite the very significant differences between Eastern and Western thought, it is indeed possible to try to identify common notions

and analyses. So, yes, Song Bing is right to insist on the proximity, the camaraderie as she puts it, between symbiosis in biology, *gongsheng/kyosai* and convivialism in ethics and politics. This proximity will be even stronger if we present all these doctrines, as the subtitle of our book invites us to do, as forms of a Philosophy of Co-Becoming. This formulation suits me perfectly. For at least two reasons. The first is that it invites us to rid ourselves of all the essentialist thinking that prevents us from moving forward. Nietzsche's phrase "Become what you are" is often quoted in the West. It's used in commercial advertising and by all the personal development companies that say "Be yourself". Yet these formulations implicitly presuppose that we are something or someone independently of others, which is obviously false, as all the contributions in our book demonstrate. Rather than "become what you are", it's better to say "be what we become". This is how I understand the philosophy of Co-Becoming. The second reason why I like this formulation is that I recently read that some Africans translate the famous *Ubuntu* doctrine, widespread throughout southern Africa, as "becoming together", co-becoming. If we also take into account the harmonies with the doctrine of *buen vivir* dear to the Amerindians of South America, it seems to me that we have good reason to believe that the ideas and values we are seeking to explain here are truly universalizable.

To give them real force, we need to succeed in convincing the majority of human beings that they would live better if they adopted them. That these values can really make it possible to draw up a new Reason of the world capable of overcoming and replacing the neoliberalism that constitutes the Reason of the world today. The most visible challenge facing humanity today is global warming. It is against this challenge that the most aware young people, those suffering from eco-anxiety, are mobilizing. They are right to do so, of course, but they fail to see that it will be totally impossible to respond to global warming unless we propose an alternative that is at once philosophical, ethical and political (in the most general sense of the term) to neoliberalism, whose only content is that greed is good.

But if we want to give ourselves a chance of breaking out of the hegemony of neoliberalism, we need to explain how humanity can break out of the double impasse - both theoretical and practical - in which it currently finds itself. On the one hand, it is clearly impossible to produce ever more material goods to satisfy ever more needs. On the other, the collapse of all instituted hierarchies - partly desirable, partly problematic - is leading to an unleashing of struggles for recognition, which are turning into recognition struggles that nobody knows how to control. These two impasses are in fact closely linked. The great French sociologist Emile Durkheim explained that it is impossible to satisfy needs if they are not limited by a higher moral principle. But there is no longer any "higher moral principle" that allows us to be satisfied with what we already have. The disappearance of any higher moral principle (what morality can exist if the only accepted rule is that greed is good?) leads to an unlimited desire for recognition, first among the richest and most powerful. And, little by little, by a trickle-down effect, the hubris of recognition and that of need, reaches just about everyone.

Since hubris first appears among the richest and most powerful, and then spreads by imitation from person to person, it's among them that we need to start containing it. Some of them would be in favor of it, but good will alone won't suffice. If we really want to take an important step forward, all those who are mobilizing for the common good of humanity need to agree on two or three concrete watchwords that are easy to state and share. The two convivialist manifestos put forward the idea of establishing a minimum income and an income and wealth floor. A minimum income, because no state can be considered legitimate if it leaves part of its population in misery. A maximum income or wealth level, because we need to make it clear that no-one is entitled to free themselves from the common humanity and sociality. What level should we consider? Trying to match the tax rates applied in the United States in the 1970-80s (80% on incomes over $460,000 (at the time)) could be a good start. It would also be advisable to consider an outright ban on tax havens. These are the most active instruments of rentier and speculative capitalism. They are where all the agents of global crime and corruption take refuge. Unless I hear otherwise, I can't see any good reason for them to exist, any reason that can be universally applied.

If we really want to take an important step forward, all those who are mobilizing for the common good of mankind need to agree on a concrete watchword that is easy to state and share. In my opinion, this watchword could be: an absolute ban on tax havens. Tax havens are the most active instruments of rentier and speculative capitalism. They are where all the agents of global crime and corruption take refuge. Unless I hear otherwise, I see no good reason for their existence, no universalizable reason.

But, more generally, there's little chance that we'll be heard or that we'll be able to spread the good word of gongsheng/kyosay- convivialism if we remain among ourselves, among a few philosophers, biologists or sociologists. How can we give our ideas a truly global reach? A first solution might be to try to bring together all existing initiatives to create some form of global citizen's parliament. For my part, I made an attempt in this direction with some friends two years ago. It was unsuccessful, perhaps because of a lack of resources. A second, possibly complementary, solution would be to organize, as soon as possible, a meeting of the world's highest religious, philosophical and scientific authorities (let's say a hundred or so people at the most), the only ones capable of calling on humanity to assume its responsibilities and of getting a sufficient echo. I'd be surprised if they called for anything other than the middle way, but a middle way that takes into account both the urgency of tackling the environmental crisis and the dizzying proportions of human **hubris**. And one that provides a clear answer to the question of what artificial intelligence (AI) will leave human beings with that is properly human. And this response will have to satisfy both the needs of the most disadvantaged and their aspiration for recognition of their dignity.

Global Citizen's Parliament, Summit of the Wise? In both cases, it will be a question of embodying and bringing to life the moral conscience of humanity. For the time being, I can't see any other possible form of *Tianxia*.