**individual/己(Jǐ)**

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| Final Remarks | SUN Xiangchen, Michel Espagne | 24 Feb 2022 |

JI and Individual have different meanings and different backgrounds and it is out of question that we could reduce a philosophy defining from the beginning man as a part of the world to the history of the opposition between subjectivity and the rest of the world.

Nevertheless both concepts “JI” or “Self” and “individual” are deep rooted in traditions of the “Axial age”. Traces of the self may be discovered as well in the fragments of Heraclitus as in Confucius Analects.

Philosophizing is a process of abstract, but the concepts are still influenced by cultural traditions in their evolution. For example, the Western concept of the individual is deeply affected by Christianity, especially the Lutheran concept of the “inner man”. The inner man's faith in God will support the “individual” to be independent from the collective power. The doctrine of heart in Chinese history also give Ji greater moral self-confidence. But Christianity is a belief for everyone, and the Song-Ming Dynasty tradition of The doctrine of heart is a kind of cultivation of superior man.

Of course, there are still many similarities between individual and Ji. Individual and Ji are key concepts for any attempt to define a morality. “To deny oneself for public” as a kind of moral principle may be easily translated in the main western principles of morality.

In both traditions the difficult connection of the individual or the Self and the collective approach of society is a permanent concern and a permanent challenge. No society can be founded without going beyond the borders of individuality or Self.

The Chinese notion of cultivating oneself is a key concept of Confucianism but may be also recognized in German idealism (Bildung). But the individual in a western context has to dominate the natural world. It is clearly different from the one-world philosophy. In Kantian and even more in Fichtean philosophy the individual is even supposed to create the world.

The translation of Mill’s “On Liberty” by Yan Fu is an interesting attempt to adapt liberty to Chinese philosophical expectations. It demonstrates perhaps the possibility of an interweaving of two traditions. If classical Chinese key concepts may be used in translation of Western philosophy they are at the same time able to develop to global tools of understanding.

Yan Fu's translation gave the Chinese an initial understanding of the idea on the individual and individual rights in the modern world. After that, in modern Chinese language, the word "Geti（个体）" was created to translate individual, to show the difference from classical Chinese, and this concept is integrated into more Western contexts. Yan Fu's translation and his explanation is also the beginning of Chinese Enlightenment.

Friedrich Wolff as follower of Leibniz, published 1726 a small Book on Confucianism and Chinese philosophy which is often considered as a contribution to German Enlightenment. The education of the individual is presented as a way to virtue and morality. Wolff fostered an unexpected importation of Chinese thinking at the beginning of German philosophy.