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Why China? The Significance of China to the Postmodern Movement

by Pei Yong

At the Third International Whitehead Conference in Claremont, California, David Griffin called on us to make the twenty-first century a Whiteheadian century. In his speech titled "Why Whitehead," Dr. John Cobb made an in-depth review and clear interpretation of the upcoming Whiteheadian century, while discussing and depicting the new development and trend of the postmodern movement. Voiced by David and interpreted by John, it now requires each and every constructive postmodernist to further such analysis and tap practical approaches in an attempt to fulfill the prospect. Accordingly, I hereby would like to deliver my view of this to share with others.

While Griffin said it is a Whiteheadian century, others often say the 21st century belongs to China. Anyhow, to my mind there should be internal links between the two comments.

Early in 1975, the famous British historian Toynbee and the reputed Japanese religionist Daisaku Ikeda remarked in their conversation that the 21st century would be the century of China, even though China still lingered in the phase of Cultural Revolution at that moment. In an interview, Dr. Cobb also aired a similar opinion that China would probably become the world economic and political center within 50 years. Similar comments without an end have come out since then, especially in media and publications of the US, the UK, France, and Japan etc. this year. For example, the US publication *Newsweek* of May 9 this year spent 21 pages on the report titled "The Century of China," interpreting China's rising momentum in various dimensions. A typical statement published in an endorsed article of *The Times*, captioned "This is China's Century," is quoted as saying that the 18th and 19th centuries belonged to Britain, and the 20th century to the US. Even though the US now still boasts the strongest economic power, the one to change the world economy is not the US but China. Also, I watched US and Chinese TV programs in which renowned economists reviewed the year of 2005, and surprisingly found that they all aired the same view, regardless of TV channels, topics, or economists. The future of the dollar, Euro, oil prices, stock market, debt market, international trade, and economic growth all depends on the development of China.

The Chinese people certainly hope for its rejuvenation in the 21st century, and further brilliance of its civilization in the ongoing era. However, the Chinese people should maintain a diligent manner on this issue and make an in-depth analysis as to why the 21st century belongs to China. China's development now lies in a present progressive

tense, instead of a perfect tense. It depends on the direction of China, which may meet various obstacles. We can compare China to a hurdle racer, who now stands at the starting line ready for race. If he starts poorly or runs on a wrong track, or runs over many hurdles, he will not succeed and he may even affect others. As we know, Liu Xiang ran right in the Athens Olympics and won the gold for the 100-meter hurdle race. We certainly hope China runs as well as Liu Xiang. However, whether China runs well or not, it will surely make a strong impact on the world, good or bad, positive or negative. Therefore, no matter what movement you are about to promote, the factor of China should be taken into account. As the renowned Japanese management master Kenichi Ohmae noted, if one seeks a success, China must be considered, and it can never be neglected. This is the same for the postmodern movement that we are promoting.

Dr. Cobb has predicted that China will become the center of the study of process thought within 50 years. If so, China will likely be Whiteheadian in the 21st century. In other words, for the 21st century to become Whiteheadian, China must either develop in line with Whiteheadianism or develop principles with the connotation of Whiteheadianism. That is, it could creatively tailor its traditional culture, which is similar to Whiteheadianism, into a constructive form of postmodern thought and manage to realize post-modernization in this fashion. In this sense, it being the century of Whitehead, the 21st century will be also belong China. And it will also be remarked that a constructively postmodern world is realized in the 21st century.

I regard two indexes as necessary for the 21st century to become Whiteheadian. One is that Whiteheadianism becomes mainstream in the US; the other is that Whiteheadianism, or a para-Whiteheadian principle, equally becomes mainstream in China's development. The two are closely linked, and one cannot go without the other. Without either of them, it will be impossible for the 21st century to become the century of Whitehead. John Cobb and Wang Zhihe have jointly established a China institute named Institute for the Postmodern Development of China. In my opinion, it might be better named the Institute for Sino-US Postmodern Development, as both countries will decide the future of the postmodern movement, requiring joint research to promote postmodern development. China and the US—the largest developing country and the largest developed country in the world—will play significant roles as examples to the rest of the world through their postmodern orientation. However, it is difficult for postmodernism to become the mainstream in the US, because of the inertia of its boasts in the strength of modernity, and because of the obstacle of the strong modernity underlying its advantaged political and economic groups. These are US matters, and any postmodern development will be up to its own politicians, scholars and citizens. Nevertheless, other countries, including China, shall not just wait and watch for natural progress. China should set about its own steps according to its circumstances and requirements. But it is also difficult for postmodernism to prevail in China, though the difficulties are different.

The Chinese people never lacked for integral organic thought and awareness, holding these unconsciously on a collective basis. The difficulty of China falls is its odd status developmentally. My idea is that China now stands in a complex of pre-modern, modern, and postmodern states. As many propose, China should shift to modern society before it seeks to be a postmodern society. This reflects the linear social thought about development prevailing now in China. In this sense, China also manifests a strong modernity, no less than the US. The difference is that the US has reached the modern peak, whereas China is rushing towards the modern summit. In China nowadays, true modernity is not expressed through Marxism, another form of modernism. The present economy of China is a complex oriented by the market; and another complex pattern is manifest in China's development of thought, politics and society. In the meantime, as China has yet to enter mature modern status, some backward, negative, and conservative pre-modern factors linger in people's minds and consciousness. Some cultural egotism divorced from reality still exists. Also, participatory awareness and the custom of fair play have yet to establish themselves. In other respects, defects of modern society and its expansion have been exposed, such as environmental pollution, energy shortages, abusive consumption, and nearsighted pursuit of economic growth. In some degree, China thus also bears conditions awaiting a postmodern transition. Thereupon, the key for China lies in how to understand and handle the relationship between its pre-modern tradition, modernity, and postmodern development. Some intellectuals who have been connected with constructive postmodernism now call for direct access to postmodern society through a leap across typical modernism, thereby avoiding the disastrous track of Western modern development. Nevertheless, this idea has not yet prevailed as mainstream—the voices are not strong enough nor the direction clear enough.

Nevertheless, we are delighted to find that process thought and constructive postmodernism have made a significant and positive impact after being introduced in China by various means, thanks to the support of Dr. Cobb and Dr. Griffin and the efforts of Wang Zhihe. As we all know, China has established ten process thought research centers, while representative publications of process thought and constructive postmodernism are now present in China, an achievement closely linked to Mr. Wang Zhihe. In my mind, Chinese scholars, officials and concerned parties shall make further endeavors to promote China's postmodern transition on this basis while making in-depth postmodern analysis in line with Chinese traditional culture and practical conditions. As Dr. Cobb pointed out, very clearly we need both idea and action; and sometimes the great idea comes out of action. Undoubtedly, the same point, the idea of "combining knowledge and action," though varying in expression, was delivered by ancient Chinese sages. To my understanding, the postmodernists here are not only thinkers but also practitioners. They express the postmodern thought and attitude in their practical action. As a current of life in China, Buddhism practices its theory in life; also our postmodernists practice a postmodern life. For example, my understanding is that Dr. Cobb donated greatly from his earnings to support CPS. Dr. Griffin designed an ecological house for himself, eats a mostly vegetarian diet, and

drives a type of environmentally-friendly car whose original purchase price was considerably higher than comparable autos. Clifford Cobb is also an environmentalist in lifestyle—in the real sense. I am much impressed with such attitudes featuring a combination of awareness and action—a must for every postmodernist.

Therefore, the significance and contribution of China to the postmodern movement falls upon these two aspects, idea and action. Herewith, I would like to make clear the significance of China in postmodern movement through the two aspects.

Ideas: Spiritual resources the Chinese tradition can contribute to the postmodern movement.

The postmodern perspective based on process philosophy is marked with more than one clear 'logo,' including the following aspects. First of all, it opposes dualism and advocates the integral organic idea. Accordingly, the universe is an organic integration and runs in a process of flow and change while things reconnect with each other. The world development is an open system as well as a process of constant creation. Secondly, it rejects radical egoism in individual relations and advocates a "self in relation" in a bid to clear the conflict between individuals. Thirdly, it calls for a dynamic balance in the relationship between humankind and nature. Nature is not an object under the domination of humankind, so both should coexist peacefully. Thus it calls for ecological protection. The following aspects concern the approaches it applies. Fourthly, it adopts a comprehensive thinking pattern. Fifthly, it advocates diversified theories, dialogue, and mutual transformation. Sixthly, it extends the merits but rejects the defects of modernity, rather than dismissing it entirely. The preceding summary may generally indicate the most basic characteristics of postmodern thought. It happens that Chinese traditional culture and religion actually have many conceptual elements that qualify as profoundly 'postmodern,' thus presenting endless spiritual nutrition and thought treasure for postmodernism. As Dr. Cobb is quoted as saying, process philosophy, constructive postmodernism, and Chinese traditional culture have many links.

I would like to raise two of the most basic examples. As we know, process thought views the world as a process of flow and change, as well as an open system. The Book of Changes (Yi Jing), a well-known Chinese ancient classic, may be viewed as a process philosophy in some degree, perhaps even more profound than process philosophy in some ways. It mainly interprets the flow and change of things. According to its idea, all things are made up of yin and yang, feminine and masculine elements in the universe; they interact, affect and change each other, so the world runs in a harmonious flow as well as the harmony in flow. The Book of Changes conveys three meanings of change: eternal change, relative invariability, and the simplicity of change. Specifically, changes are eternal, but the principle of change is invariable and simple. Another key feature of the Book of Changes is an open system reflected inside. There are 64 forms of change in the book, representing all possible changes of the

world. In the book, the last form of change is named “never-ending” (Wei Ji), referring to the change yet to be completed. This indicates that the flow and change of the universal world is a process, opening forever. To take another example, Buddhism thoroughly rejects the concept of entity. According to its principle, no laws hold invariably; all things come with both necessity and opportunity; all are mutually related, interacting, and transferred; no entities are constant forever. Therefore, it advocates that people should break away from obduracy, whether in self awareness or enforcement of public principle. One’s self consciousness and the universal principle are not made up of invariable entities. In Chinese Ch’an Buddhism, there turns out to be an attitude that rejects obduracy. For everything, one should not stick to appearances, as everything is variable in essence. If you stick to it, rigidity and inflexibility will follow consequently, and the original essence will lapse, so you will fail to get an exact vision.

Similar features of postmodernism are widely present in Chinese traditional culture and religions. Though not entirely equivalent to postmodern thought, they may still serve as rich resources for postmodernism. These traditional ideas include ecological principles such as the Confucian “combination of human and nature”, Taoist “universal laws from nature”, and Buddhist “non-duality (one, undivided unity) of humankind and environment”; the balance principle such as the Confucian “doctrine of the mean” and Buddhist “Madhyama-pratipada” (holding a median status); as well as the idea of universal equality, and the principle of harmony in difference etc.

David Griffin pointed out in his book *Spirituality and Society* that the postmodern spirit is not the same as to re-establish pre-modern traditions, but to recover people’s concern and respect for the past. Similarly, when paying attention to postmodern factors in Chinese traditional culture, we are not about to go back to the simple past. Instead, we attempt to enrich and expand resources of postmodern thought by innovative exploration and interpretation. Similarly, John Cobb noted, that he does not view pre-modern things as post-modern, but from a certain angle, postmodernism benefits much from pre-modern ideas. Chinese traditional ideas are attractive to constructive postmodernism, but we should not simply go back to them. They should be updated by conscientiously respecting science and social innovations.

Therefore, we shall make rational, postmodern interpretations of thought resources from Chinese traditional culture. Especially, we Chinese scholars should establish new interpretations, such as postmodern Confucianism, postmodern Buddhism, and postmodern Taoism. Through these analyses and interpretations we may promote post-modernization of Chinese traditional culture. This will be a way for Chinese traditional culture to contribute to the postmodern movement, and perhaps a new global civilization as well.

Actions: Start the postmodern transition from the Chinese modernization process

As time and tide wait for no one, we should not talk as armchair strategists. Instead, we should start from now to take actions and make efforts to realize China's postmodern transformation. In my view, the action driving China's postmodern transition should include two aspects: One is to promote the establishment of consensus. Specifically, China's modernization and its postmodern transition do not conflict; instead, they supplement each other and constitute the sole effective way for China's development. The other is to lead all walks of life in taking practical actions in the constructive postmodern principle.

1. Promote the establishment of consensus.

At present, an opinion exists among some Chinese scholars, who argue that it is still too early for China to discuss access to postmodern society, as China should realize modernization before heading for postmodern society. According to the logic underlying this statement which dominates part of the Chinese people, the ecological crisis as a product of the unlimited economic growth of modernization can only be solved *after* thorough modernization. This idea evidently loses its point.

Other scholars view it in a comparatively rational manner. As they believe, postmodernism is not incidental in the West, but the outcome of relatively mature modernity. In other words, modernity is the realistic cradle of postmodernism, which cannot be separated from modernity. China's development reflects independent choice and strong rationality. China not only needs postmodernism but also, apparently, modernity. It would be ignorant to fancy a leap across modernity directly towards postmodern status. This has yet even to be acknowledged by the Western establishment. Failing to foster modernity will mean failure to realize main goals in China's social development and further complicate the consequences of its progress. Therefore, China can by no means realize the direct-link leap from traditional society into postmodern society. But worthily investigating postmodernism can play a role of precaution in shaping China's modernization pattern.

The foresaid idea is rational to some extent, but it remains obscure in some parts and requires analysis and explanation. Undoubtedly China should foster modernity which, however, features a wide range of contents, including merits together with many defects and restrictions. It is not necessary for us to accept everything for the purpose of fostering the modernity, especially those negative factors of modernity identified in practice. Is there a way by which we can realize the postmodern transformation while not only fostering modernity but also avoiding its defects? I suggest that there are still chances for China, which has not yet completed modernization, to independently choose a rational framework, avoid defects of modernity, and explore ways of shifting from modernization to the postmodern stage. Modernization and the postmodern transition can jointly proceed in parallel without mutual interference.

First of all, we should affirm the positive factors of modernity instead of simply denying modernity. It has positive factors in various aspects, such as the

Enlightenment, democratic system, science and technology, and full individual respect, etc. Such positive aspects of modernity should be reserved in the postmodern transition. As Griffin pointed out in *Spirituality and Society*, modernization has brought about some favorable changes. Its move beyond the pre-modern self is reflected in the postmodern self. Nonetheless, China must also tread carefully and surmount the defects of modernity.

Also, as Dr. Cobb noted, it is very important that China should not simply repeat the mass mistakes committed in Western modernization. China pursues the same technical processes and economic growth that have had serious consequences in the West. These malign effects are greatly felt in social and ecological areas. I believe some of these malign aspects have now occurred in China. It will be disastrous for a country whose large population bears upon the environment greatly to simply follow the existing way of modernization. But the foresaid opinion seems to insist that China *should* repeat the mistakes committed previously, though partially rectified now. But if so, the consequence will be dreadful not only for China. China not mean to follow the same old disastrous road when we absorb the modernization lessons of other countries. Therefore, I hope China will pay attention to Western critics of modernity. I hope constructive postmodernism can provide various realistic and practical choices to the formation of modernity currently dominant.

As Dr. Wang Zhihe also pointed out,

Postmodernism is to deny the hegemony of modernity rather than the existence of modernity, the restriction of modernity rather and the merit of modernity. It appreciates the material and spiritual progress following with modernity, but strongly opposes the negative effects of modernity. Postmodernism raises the problem: Can it manage to effectively absorb the merits of modernity and avoid the defects of modernity?

Just as David Ray Griffin remarked,

China may avoid the destructive influences of modernity through learning about the misdeeds of the west. By this way, China goes on a de facto way of post-modernization.

Therefore, according to my understanding, postmodernism is not a mode of existence far out of reach. It just requires that we remove our obduracy, rectify our deviation, and transform our world values and patterns of thinking. It requires integral and organic world values and an interactive and comprehensive mode of thinking.

In the world today, there is no precedent for us to refer in fulfilling a postmodern transition and constructing the postmodern society. Therefore, there are still chances for China to create a new pattern of social development in its pursuit of innovation. To

realize postmodern transition is a realistic demand of a modern country for its sound development, rather than blind following of fashion. Nor should we repeat what others have done. Others have not managed it maybe because they saw it as beyond their capability and understanding or failed to get rid of existing bad practices.

Just as Griffin noted,

Modernity in the worst sense dominates and is rooted so solidly in the US that there is little hope of setting about a constructive postmodern transition in a true sense. If China and other countries wait for the US government to spearhead the postmodern movement, they will wait until this planet is unlivable. Apart from the US, China may well be the country of greatest significance to human destiny. Though showing a strong will for pursuing modernization (in the worst sense) in recent years, China still has chances to recognize and avoid the defects of modernity and start its own way of postmodern transition. If China advances in this way, other countries will be encouraged, such that in recognizing that the US fails to provide a feasible mode, the postmodern transition will not linger merely at the level of imagination. Therefore, I hope that developing countries will take the lead to drive the postmodern transition. If hopes increase when China and India start the postmodern transition, it will make little sense for others to refuse by waiting for the West to spearhead the action.

As Cobb also pointed out,

It appears that Western substance thinking affects the Chinese people as it supports the modernity that China is strongly pursuing. But I am assured that the Chinese people have a mighty capability of in-depth perception and will finally get it proved.

China's advantage lies in that its people have no awareness of substance thinking; its modernity is not of the worst kind; its modernity has yet to take finally form; and it still has chances to make self-adjustments, create its history, and promote modernization and postmodern transition concurrently. The "China mode" of modernization has been noted. Joshua Ramo, the former editor of *The Time* has noted a development pattern that he titled "Beijing Consensus" in one of his research reports. In his view, this pattern replaces the widely-disputed Washington consensus. The latter is believed to be an economic theory, holding Washington to be the coach of all others for governance. It turns out, perhaps, to be the end of an arrogant history, causing a series of disasters in the global economy. The new development mode of China aims to promote equal, peaceful, and high-quality growth, and it has overthrown traditional thought such as privatization and free trade. It is flexible enough, and not just another simple theory. It sticks to no uniform solution for every problem. It may be defined as acutely innovative and experimental. Being realistic too, it reflects Chinese traditional philosophy with almost no separation between theory and practice. I do not intend to make a positive or negative remark to this "Beijing Consensus" here, but I find the Chinese development mode summarized here rife with

many postmodern factors. As a matter of fact, the Chinese people and its government have unconsciously applied the postmodern idea, or the Enlightenment brought about by the postmodern nature of its traditional culture.

However, what I hope is that China will secure the self-awareness that modernization and the postmodern transition can run concurrently, confronting a chance of creating a Chinese pattern, moving from unconsciousness to consciousness, from unawareness to awareness.

2. Promote the postmodern movement in all walks of life in China

Whiteheadianism and postmodernism both advocate a kind of synthetic thinking, as well as a sort of all-directional action. As Dr. Cobb appealed,

The current world is in urgent need of a credible comprehensive insight; also a mode of thinking that integrates various knowledge fragments into a common and internally consolidated integer. Rather than appreciating various fragments of knowledge, society and action, it aims to integrate thought and practice, individual and society, and the past, the presence and the future, thus making up a mode of existence with certain internal uniformity.

As I have found, process thinkers and postmodernists are widely erudite, rather than restricted to a certain field of knowledge or practice. Dr. Cobb is a thinker, philosopher, and theologian, also an economist and sociologist. Each time I read his works or interviews, I feel the charm of the greatest postmodern master, who has profound thought, a wide field of vision, and gives universal affection to the world. I revere him very much. One of his students, David Griffin, apart from having the same attributes, calls for global democracy and international fairness. In his new book, *The New Pearl Harbor*, he raised a challenge to authorities, representing a kind of international conscience and respected courage. In fact, Chinese traditional culture is generally a synthetic mode of thinking and Chinese people have a custom of integration in essence. I regard these postmodernists as like the ancient sages of various schools prior to the Qin Dynasty in China. In early times, Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, and Xunzi were thinkers, philosophers, and also politicians and educationists. They wandered to and fro in various states to advocate their thought. Though failing to be accepted most of the time, they persevered and never gave up. Finally they left their good name forever. Therefore, I may here call Dr. Cobb *Cofucius*, one letter short of Confucius, and Griffin *Gricius*.

To get back to the point, I highlight that the postmodern movement stresses integration in its mode of thinking and practice. This takes account of my opinion that China should put forward a postmodern movement in all directions and at various levels. Undoubtedly, action is most important, but multi-layer actions will be more important. Even though these actions may start gradually, slowly and humbly, things

will rise from nothing and success will come from nil. In a word, the postmodern movement is required to gather experiences and practices. In my idea, the following aspects are of great importance to China's postmodern practices.

1. Political and governmental
2. Economic and ecological
3. Educational and cultural
4. Religious and spiritual

First of all, we start from the political and governmental aspect. On the issue of ecological protection, as Dr. Cobb once noted,

The people take the lead in ecological issues in the US, and the government is at most a follower, but its action will be very important.

As Griffin also pointed out,

There are indeed many people and institutions with favorable ecological awareness improving and disseminating new Green technology. But without the aid of government, it will be almost impossible to apply such technologies widely. It is certain that we individuals can make more contributions to lead pollution-free life. But without the management of government, we cannot rely on the effort of individuals.

Though ecological issues are concerned here, I think it is the same as for the other aspects. The appeal of scholars and civil organizations to postmodernism is certainly important, but the manner and action of governments tends to decide the pace and result of this process. As for the Chinese government, what manner and actions has it adopted on the issue of modernity and postmodern transition?

Innovation is the soul of a nation's progress, and an endless drive for a country's prosperity, said the report delivered at the 16th session of the CPC Central Committee in July 2002. Innovation means to constantly free thought, seek truth from facts, and advance with the times; there is no end to practice, nor for innovation, noted the report. This demonstrates that the Chinese government has an innovative idea and awareness, actually coinciding with the stress on innovation laid by process thought and constructive postmodernism. This also reveals there is possibility for China to seek an innovative way for the integration of modernization and postmodern transition.

In the foresaid working report, there is awareness of sustainable development. The Chinese government set as a main goal in the construction of well-off society that it continuously strengthen sustainable development, improve the ecological environment, markedly increase the efficiency of resource consumption, promote the

harmony between human and nature, thus driving the whole society on a track of civilized development with increasing production, well-off life, and sound ecological environment. Features of postmodernism are reflected inside through the sustainable development, sound ecological environment, and harmony between humans and nature. In February 2005, President Hu Jintao raised the strategy of constructing the harmonious society. As he pointed out,

The socialist harmonious society that we are about to build should be the one ruling by law, fairness and justice, credit and affection, vim and vigor and, peace and order, as well as harmony between human and nature.

In my view, the terms of harmonious society are postmodernism itself. Besides, the six characteristics of harmonious society mentioned therein actually conclude with positive values generally approved in modern society and some concepts of postmodernism. All these convey an indication that it is not impossible that China may integrate modernization and postmodern transition.

The same report also sets forth China's idea on diplomatic policies and international relations:

We advocate a new international political and economic order of fairness and reasonability. All countries should respect each other and consult mutually in politics, rather than imposing one's own will on others. In economy, they should advance each other and develop jointly, rather than causing the gap between the rich and the poor. In culture, they should learn from each other and prosper together, rather than discriminating against other cultures. In security, they should trust each other, maintain jointly, set up the new security view of mutual trust and benefit, equality and coordination, and solve disputes through dialogue and cooperation, rather than resorting to arms and threatening with force. All forms of hegemonism and power politics should be opposed. We call for the diversification of the world, the democratization of international relations, and the variety of development modes. As the world is multi-color, all civilizations in the world, as well as different social systems and development patterns, should pay respect to each other, learn from each others' strong points and offset one's own weakness in competition and comparison, and reserve difference and seek common points for joint development. Its own people should decide each country's affairs. World affairs should be negotiated on equal basis by all countries.

From the above expression, we may collect a few new concepts of international relations and politics with postmodern features: opposing all forms of hegemonism, the democratization of international relations, and equal consultation of all countries on world affairs. As Griffin noted in his work-in-progress, "Overcoming Plutocracy, Imperialism, and Terrorism"

The necessity of global democracy, the premise for establishing a true postmodern world, is to realize global democracy and practice democratic management in all aspects. The most innovative part of this change is to create a democratic management system on a global basis, endow the General Assembly with legislative authority through the reform of the United Nations, provide the International Court of Justice with the legislative authority of custody, and render it sufficient power for legal enforcement. Such changes will enable all the peoples of the world to overcome global racial segregation through laws governing human rights and environments.

China's principles on international relations may not be the same as Griffin's global democracy, but both share some of the same ideas. To oppose hegemonism is to surpass plutocracy in some sense; the democratization of international relations echoes global democracy in some degree; the equal consultation of world affairs somewhat reflects the international democratic management. As a matter of fact, both China and Griffin expect to establish an equal and democratic new order of international politics and economy.

The above discussion mostly reflects the principles, ideas and goals of the Chinese government for guiding domestic economic development and international relations, approaching postmodernism in some ways. Though some of them have been progressing, there is still a long way to go for their completion. Anyhow, such ideas and practices should be supported and encouraged. For domestic development, China is free to choose, seeking the right direction. For the development of international relations, it depends not only on the will of China, but also on joint efforts of all countries.

I take the two examples below to illustrate efforts made by relevant departments of the Chinese government on specific aspects, which clearly feature postmodernism. The one is the State Administration for Religious Affairs, in which I work. Our Director-General, Ye Xiaowen, together with the team led by him, has been committed in recent years to actively advocating the harmony, comprehensive thinking, and ecological ideas derived from Chinese traditional culture and religion as resources for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the peaceful development of the world. In the meantime, it is expected to encourage Chinese religious circles to tap the positive factors in each doctrine in order to realize conceptual integration and promote harmonious coexistence, dialogue and cooperation among all religions. These efforts harmonize with postmodern thought. In recent years, Mr. Ye has been present at various occasions both at home and abroad, advocating the idea of harmony existing in Chinese traditional culture and religions. He has delivered a number of articles and speeches such as "the Connotation of Harmony in Chinese Culture" and "The Support of Civilization for National Rejuvenation," "On the Ideas of Harmony of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism," and "A Message of Peace and Harmony

From the East to the West.”

The other example is the National Environmental Protection Administration. Its Deputy Director Mr. Pan Yue, also Chairman of the China Environmental Culture Protection Association, has been committed in recent years to fostering a kind of ecological and environmental culture, closely integrating it with national rejuvenation and the state development strategy. As a young theorist in the Chinese government, Mr. Pan Yue published an informative article titled “Environmental Culture and National Rejuvenation” in October 2003, systematically interpreting the profound connotation of environmental culture. He pointed out,

Any harmonious relations sought between humans and nature, and between human and human, and any cultural form committed to sustainable development, can be defined as environmental culture. Environmental culture is a new human movement of culture, a profound reform in the field of human thought and conception, a reflection and further extension of traditional industrial civilization, and a respect for natural laws at a higher level. With **ecological civilization** as the core, environmental culture is, indeed, an advanced culture in today’s world.

This complies with the ecological idea advocated in postmodernism. This year, Mr. Pan Yuan has also been devoted to advancing the **Green GDP** statistics, viz. **blind economic growth is not encouraged; economic growth should be integrated with ecological protection; an ecological index should be involved in the statistics of national economic growth**; only such economic growth is sound and sustainable. This method can also be called the one of the typical postmodern ecological ideas.

Similar efforts on the governmental level should also be supported and encouraged in an attempt to advance the constitution of Chinese postmodern political groups.

Next, we come to the economic and ecological aspect.

Economic system and economics

As Griffin noted, we need an economic system that exists for the common benefit of all beings. But I think no such economic system now exists. A variety of economic perspectives such as the Keynesian school, supply-side school, welfare economics, Vienna school, and systems economics, etc. are mostly based on a worldview of dualism and the assumptions of modernity. No fashionable or popular economic school considers the reality of human existence as well as the ecological principle. They are harmful in essence, outdated in this sense. A range of ideas such as stimulating demand, increasing supply, maximizing profit, free-market, and mathematical models, etc., have divided economic phenomena and economics into pieces. They focus on a single fragment but neglect the rest, let alone considering the premise and foundation of economic development on a macro basis. In this view, they

are rootless economic theories. Chinese economics also wanders at loose ends among various fashionable schools from overseas. They not only remain far from Chinese economic reality but also lack a new direction for economics based on the ecological principle.

The current mainstream economic system is the market economy of neoliberalism, taking the US as a typical sample and a model for many for other countries. The author of *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedrich August von Hayek (1899-1992), the famous representative of neoliberalism in economics, viewed the planned economy and totalitarianism as “the road to serfdom” and appealed to safeguarding the market economy and liberalism. Though correct to some extent, it should not go extremes. As he said in his masterpiece, “the road to serfdom is often paved by goodwill....” Man intends to forsake liberalism and plan society by his goodwill, only to lead to humankind to a deep abyss. However, provided the one abuses liberalism by his goodwill and drives liberalism and market economy to the extremity of the current ecological crisis, man will equally push human beings, through the hell of ignorance in the abyss of desire, onto the road to serfdom. Here, neoliberalism criticizes anything that opposes the rationality of market economy, or the rational liberalism in which market competition must be restricted by appropriate game rules, namely laws. Just as Cobb remarked,

I am sure the market plays a significant role in a sound economic system, and small-scale capitalism is of importance. Nevertheless, I think global capitalism is threatening the future of mankind and other beings and becomes the root of the current ecological crisis in the world.

As Griffin also stressed,

The overwhelming power of the US has made this situation more hazardous, as it may impose its modernity on the rest world and calls the process “globalization”.

In my view, in the current environment of human existence, each country should integrate planning and market for the sake of ecological protection; such organic integration is also a must for the international economic development and the international trade balance in the international community. This is also an indispensable premise for the establishment of a new international economic order. As Dr. Cobb noted,

I believe some European social democrats have made the best ever mode of economic and political life thanks to their integration of capitalism and socialism. Unfortunately, economic globalization is threatening their achievements. If there is no necessary restriction of the global capitalism, the ecological crisis that has plagued us will worsen.

Therefore, it should be a direction of economic development to integrate the advantages of both socialism and capitalism on the basis of current ecological conditions. China's present theory of socialist market economy can be viewed as an attempt, but it must be integrated with the current ecological reality. China should endeavor to develop a kind of ecological economics and ecological economic system aiming at sustainable development, and integrating planning and market. Should it be fulfilled, China would at least realize the postmodern transition in economic field.

Energy

It is not appropriate for China to continuously rely on massive carbon energy consumption, as it may cause the exhaustion of energy resources and the deterioration of air quality, and economic development will be difficult to continue. China should not consume carbon energy at the rate the US does, which also should not continue with the existing mode of energy consumption. If China were to try to follow the US lifestyle, it would be possible but disastrous. The US accounts for one third of the world petroleum consumption every year, with a population of less than 300 million. If in China 500 million people had cars, wouldn't its petroleum consumption almost account for the other two thirds of world supplies, leaving nothing for other countries? In this way, China would meet its economic growth, but the energy sources would be exhausted soon and environmental pollution worsened; then the existence of China and the whole humankind would become a problem. Carbon energy sources that humans have relied on, including nuclear energy, are not clean and safe. They are the main actual and potential causes of environmental pollution and the ecological crisis. The days of the exhaustion of carbon energy sources are numbered, and the danger of nuclear energy is obvious. Therefore, it should be stressed to develop pollution-free energy sources. The all-around development of clean energy sources and their economical application will bring along the rational growth of a new economy, as well as gradually lessening pollution. China should set as state strategy the development of pollution-free new energy sources and fulfill it in practice, endeavoring to realize the energy revolution initially. Is there technological possibility for China to realize the energy revolution? As Griffin remarked,

In the sense that they have accepted the carbon-based economy, most developing countries have been modernized, though not yet as deeply as the West. Therefore, a massive and prompt postmodern transition is possible for these countries, especially in the technological aspect, for sustainable development. It is wrong to say the shift to pollution-free technology is expensive. Much research has revealed that non-carbon-based technology has a large economic potential, and it only takes one or two decades for this transition to recover the balance of income and expenditure.

As Griffin added,

As a matter of fact, our national leaders rely so much on funding from a few affluent

individuals and companies that they are hard pressed to vote for legislation on the shift to pollution-free energy resources. Due to their responsibility and economic strength, Western countries should also provide funds and technical support to developing countries to enable such transitions. However, there is little possibility for Western countries to take action.

In this way, it is also unrealistic for China to expect the support of Western countries. However, China may invite western individuals and institutions to help it improve and popularize green technology, provided Western countries set no barriers. More realistically, China may sweat and toil with self dependence to overcome the hardship.

Ecology

It should be admitted that China is still confronted with severe ecological conditions, though the Chinese government has realized the importance of ecological protection on a macro basis and civil ecologists are striving to promote ecological protection. The situation is far from optimistic. Though the central government has established the principle of ecological protection, local practices differ largely. In specific implementation, local governments tend to give way to near-sighted utilitarianism and temporary economic growth and fail to carry through the ecological principle, passive in most occasions or practicing off and on.

So far, China has established a whole package of legal systems regarding ecological protection, beginning with the Law of Environmental Protection promulgated early in 1989. There are a dozen laws governing ecological and environmental protection, as well as nearly 10 administrative rules and regulations. As China's legal system has yet to be perfected, these laws and regulations are not well implemented. Though there are only two environmental protection laws in the US, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act, the implementation is strict because of its legal system. But the US has its own problem in that it fails to pass important bills of ecological protection probably due to the lobbyism and obstruction of stakeholders. The goal of the US is to enact a number of bills related to ecological problems. As Dr. Cobb pointed out, the government will not work out relevant laws until people's concern is enough strong, but its legislation on such concern tends to be very effective. Though China has established laws for people's concern, there is still a long way to go on the perfection and implementation of legal systems in order for its efficiency.

Thirdly, we come to discuss the educational and cultural aspect.

For my personal understanding, China's current cultural and educational conditions are messy and worrying, from primary school to college, from childhood education to adult education. Though national education policy has raised the principle of all-around development, educational institutions and parents are not aiming at fostering all-around development and a sound worldview, but focused on developing

the knowledge and skills of modernity in segments and blindly expanding the intensity of such study. Especially, primary education has been intensified beyond the age; seriously speaking, it is a physical and mental torment. To provide society with such unhealthy talents in this way is also a torture for society and irresponsibility for the country. Therefore, it is urgent for China's education system to introduce humanist care in an all-around way. Chinese traditional education never runs short of humanism. Therefore, some scholars and men of insight have come to call for some recovery of Chinese traditional education. For instance, Master Chin Kung is preaching Buddhism in Australia. Though being a Buddhist, he attaches more importance to the recovery of Confucian traditional education. Meanwhile, he also aggressively promotes fair education among different civilizations and various traditions across the world, advocating mutual supplement and integration. As Dr. Cobb also noted,

The direction of philosophy's prospect lies in the mutual supplement and integration of Western and Eastern civilization and cultures.

From the present to the future, it is necessary to build a culture with the mutual supplement and integration among various civilizations, whether for China or the US, or even the whole international community. Why should the cultural integration and mutual supplement between the West and East be highlighted? It is because both have their own advantages, and the mutual supplement of advantages can enhance the benefit of human beings. According to an experiment released by Michigan University in the US, in observing a single picture, US students pay more attention to the outstanding points in it, whereas Asian students attach more importance to the background and the overall picture. This reveals certainly different angles in observing the world. As Nisbet, the researcher in charge of these experiments analyzed, they observe the world in different manners; the West pays attention to outstanding objects, but Asians can get the connection around and grasp the whole. In his idea, this is caused by cultural difference, as the Chinese culture focuses on harmony but the western counterparts tend to seek solutions for the object and care less about others. This is related to their existing environment and production style coming over thousands of years. Cave, a scholar of Massachusetts University also holds that cultural difference evidently leads to the difference of cognition process. This indicates that people's manner of observing and exploring the world actually depends on their origin. Through the comprehensive understanding of such research, it may be discovered that people with certain cultural backgrounds are appropriate to do certain work, but it is difficult to tell which culture is better.

In my idea, the significance and revelation of this research lies in this: The West and the East indeed hold different manners of observing and understanding the world, each with its own strengths and advantages. But what we should be aware of, in common sense, is that such cultural differences are caused by different environments and production styles in history, generating various cultural traditions and conventions. When it comes to individuals, not all in the East pay attention to the whole, and not all

the West care for individualism. For instance, postmodernism features comprehensive thought. Also, human existence and production styles have essentially converged, and it should be possible for different cultures to mutually add, supplement and integrate their advantages. Therefore, it is very necessary to integrate such culture with mutual supplements and integration between West and East into the educational system of various civilizations, especially into children's education. In a psychological sense, it is more difficult for adults to shift ideas because of inertia in their thinking, concerns and interests. Therefore, comprehensive thinking habits should be fostered from childhood, as well as awareness of ecology, equality, balance, and harmony. For postmodernists, if it is difficult to shift from modernity to postmodern conceptions, we may pin our hope on introducing children to education and the postmodern-marked awareness of cultural integration between East and West. The faster we introduce it, the sooner the 21st century will belong to Whitehead, to China, and postmodernism.

Finally, we come to discuss the religious and spiritual aspect. In fact, David Ray Griffin has pointed the way for postmodern religion, and his views can be summarized: 1. A new religion is not what is recommended; instead, the post-modernization of existing religions should be stressed. 2. Religious pluralism should be adopted. It is proposed to appreciate the values and truth of various religious traditions and reject the religious view that only one's own tradition is authentic. 3. The dualism existing in modern religions should be rejected. 4. Religious militarism should be rejected. 5. Postmodern religions should lay religious grounds for global ethics. All religions should reflect and integrate their commonality in opposing the present world order of plutocracy and imperialism. They could establish a new, democratic world order, in which their common values would become the foundation of a global constitution.

In a bid to facilitate the establishment of postmodern religions, China should first drive to recover its great spiritual tradition represented by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. Next, it should promote the integration of pluralistic religions. The integration of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism has been historically completed, and Buddhist-Taoist-Confucians have existed since Chinese feudal dynasties. In comparison, the Western Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have yet to integrate. At present, China should promote Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism to be mutually supplemented and integrated with Christianity and Islam. As the localization of Islam has a historically sound base in China, the localization of Christianity should be promoted for its further development. Just as Cobb called himself a Buddhist-Christian, a future goal of Chinese religious integration is to embrace a wholly-integrated Islam or a fully-integrated Christianity. This is also the goal of the world pluralistic religious integration. Lastly, harmony and peace should be sought through the mental and spiritual cultivation and nurture of all religions, as all great religions hold the same idea that there is no external peace without internal serenity. Chinese religions have taken steps in this direction. Chinese Buddhist circles

are scheduled to hold the World Buddhism Forum in China next year, which aims to tap the connotation of harmony and peace underlying Buddhist spiritual traditions and laying new civilizing ground for building a new world order. The theme of the Forum—a harmonious world—starts with peace of mind. This may be regarded as a postmodern contribution in Chinese religions.

Undoubtedly, it will be a painstaking process for us to have access to a postmodern world, a success we should strive and battle for. On the thorny way, it will never appear easy to press ahead with an all-directional critique of modernity, whereas all men of insight in different civilizations should launch attacks against the modern defects in an all-around way with a warrior spirit. The name of Claremont, with the connotation of mountain-climbing, has forecast the hardship of this movement. However, we are not about to climb Mount Baldy in front of us, but probably an Everest of Himalayas. It is a hard course for us to go from Foothill to Summit. However, we should be aware that we are going upwards, and nevertheless we will reach the top finally.