

Postscript

At the end of this year I will be 70 years old. When I look back at the decades I spent teaching philosophy, I wonder what philosophical thinking has been central in determining my life. It is liberal humanism. I received my philosophical training in Hong Kong and in Freiburg, Germany. My humanism comes from my teacher, Lao Sze-Kwang (1927-2012), and my way of seeing the existential conditions of human beings from Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Originally I studied architecture, but the sudden death of my father in a meaningless traffic accident changed the course of my life. I switched from architecture to philosophy and pondered the meaning of life along with what I learned from Chinese and Western philosophy. I have come to a conviction that philosophy does not reside in the books of the great philosophers or the lecture halls of the university. It lies, rather, in living philosophically. Philosophy must provide me with a way of seeing the world, of engaging in everyday life, and of giving my life a meaning, which is otherwise irrelevant to me. Philosophy is a way of life, as asserted by the ancient Greek, Roman, and Chinese philosophers. But it presupposes that we understand what the inevitable human conditions are. I do not know why I was thrown into this specific world, but I know I was born, grow old, and must eventually die. Between birth and death I am caught into endless struggles with the world, myself, and other people. I have to know what all these mean for me.

All the texts in this book were written for conferences and public talks, published or otherwise, during my tenure of teaching as a professor of philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. They all aim at understanding the phenomena of human existence. In these texts, existential questions regarding various aspects are raised and answered by what I have learned from Chinese and Western philosophy, especially from phenomenology. As I am now gradually approaching the end of my life, it is perhaps time for me to review what I wrote and thought, and to justify once again why I switched from architecture to philosophy.

I have been very fortunate to live a stable and happy life, surrounded by a caring family and trustful friends. However, I always remember what my teacher Philip Shen (1931-2004) told me years ago:

that my life in Hong Kong has been free, open and prosperous, without a threat of war and political turmoil, and that I belong to the luckiest generation that ever existed in the long history of China. I have been given the chance to learn, to think, to teach and to write whatever I wanted without any fear, in a university where academic freedom and integrity are values *taken for granted*. But these happy days are gradually changing. I am afraid my teacher would not recognize this place anymore if he ever had a chance to come back from the other side of life.

The publication of this book is a result of encouragement and support from good friends. First of all I wish to thank Elmar Holenstein for his kind suggestion that I should publish this book after his reading of all the essays. The title of the book: *Existential Questions, Chinese and Western Answers*, is his idea. I thank David Carr whole-heartedly for his sympathetic understanding of my work in the preface. My deep appreciation goes to Siglind Bruhn, who has helped me to realize this project as an editor and a good friend. Special thanks should also go to Kevin Ng for his meticulous copy-editing of all the chapters.

One of the most important factors which have given me favorable conditions to enjoy my academic life, creative work, and family life is the unfailing support of my dear wife, Jennifer, who has suffered from my carelessness and insensitiveness all through the years. I cannot think of any better way to express my indebtedness but to dedicate this book to her as a small token of my gratitude.

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