

TANG GRANT REPORT SINOLOGY (2016)

PROJECT TITLE:
INTERCULTURATION: PEDAGOGY & PRAXIS

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In 2016, when Prof. Wm. Theodore de Bary was named the Tang Prize Laureate for Sinology but was unable to travel to Taiwan due to his health, he asked me to represent his work during the Award Ceremony on his behalf. I therefore had the honor of giving a lecture about the significance of his work (“A Bridge-BUILDER Who Became Himself the Bridge”), as well as representing the so-called “de Bary School of thought” at conferences and meetings throughout the Award Ceremony Week. That fall, Prof. de Bary also arranged for me to be the recipient of the Tang Research Grant in the amount of NT\$10 Million. The enormous and wholly unexpected gift let me know how much he believed in the work that Prof. James Jinhong Kim (former Special Projects Advisor to UCAME at Prof. de Bary’s request) and I had begun doing to spread the ideals of “Global Core” especially through the pedagogy and practice of “intercultural.” The generosity of the Grant from the Tang Prize Foundation and Prof. de Bary has enabled us to carry on the work of Symposium Global Inc. with many students and schools around the world for the past eight years, while also allowing us to further hone and present the theory and praxis of intercultural in writings and lectures in such different fields as theology, missiology, sinology, musicology, and of course education. It is therefore with enormous gratitude to the Tang Prize Foundation and in memory of Prof. de Bary’s life and work that we submit the Tang Grant Report below.

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REPORT SUMMARY

The 2016 Tang Research Grant in Sinology (“the Grant”) enabled two distinct but related projects:

1. The preparation and writing of four books relating to intercultural and intercultural pedagogy (including of Sinology) for publication;
2. Growing the “Classics for an Emerging World” movement through Symposium Global at Columbia and beyond, reaching between 80~175 students each year in many corners of the world from India and Pakistan to Taiwan, China, Nigeria, Singapore, Thailand, etc. through in-person and online (during Covid pandemic) workshops in further embodiment and promotion of the "Great Conversation" of civilizations as envisioned by Prof. Wm. Theodore de Bary.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECTS

Columbia University is widely known for its undergraduate “Core Curriculum” program, begun in 1919 for collegial learning of Western civilizational values in response to the unprecedented challenges to humanity brought by the First World War. During my lecture at the Tang Prize Award Ceremony in 2016, I gave a brief description the idea behind the Core Curriculum:

Unlike “general education (*tongshi jiaoyu*)” that is the basis of most undergraduate programs everywhere including Taiwan and the other Ivies in the U.S., Columbia’s “core curriculum” assumes that there are certain essential--or “core”--issues that confront humanity and the condition of being human. We do not presume to know or to determine ourselves what these issues are. Rather, we **look,** to **see** what issues have been recurring over and over as areas of primary concern and debate for and by humanity, to whose voices in that debate have been consistently acknowledged over long periods of time as adding significantly to the conversation, and in what ways those issues and voices continue to be relevant to us in our contemporary contexts today—in short, what constitute the so-called “classics.” If “general education” focuses on familiarizing students with contemporary *approaches* to the hard/social sciences and the humanities as modern *disciplines* of study, “core curriculum” seeks to develop **certain SELF-awareness, ability and habit of informed REFLECTION, and broad perspective on the CONDITION OF BEING HUMAN** as necessary pre-conditions to *engaging* with the sciences and the humanities in *humanly* meaningful ways.”

Then, with the Second World War, Prof. de Bary and the then Provost Jacques Barzun at Columbia recognized the urgent need to raise awareness for the challenges of living as a new *community of diverse civilizations*, and founded the Committee on Asia & the Middle East

(CAME) with the idea to prepare for that challenge by creating similar “core” courses where students could learn both about *and from* the human values of many civilizations of the world. To do so required the translation and compilation of world classics for use in these classes, as well as training instructors to teach these materials. In 1957, recognizing that this enterprise needed to be protected as well as encouraged in the era of radical departmentalization and specialization, Provost Barzun raised CAME to a rare *University Committee* status (UCAME). Thereafter, for more than 70 years until its dismantlement in 2017, UCAME was a unique institution in the world for its commitment to advancing the Core idea/ideal from global and interdisciplinary perspectives, including through the publication of over 160 works, both translations into English of individual world literary classics, as well as the translation and compilation of the renowned *Sources* series used by universities everywhere today (these include the *Sources of Japanese, Chinese, Buddhist, Indian, Korean, East Asian Traditions*, and more recently *the Tibetan* as well as *Vietnamese Traditions*; a *Sources of Islamic Tradition* was also planned early on, but on learning that the University of Chicago was about to embark on a similar project a decision was made to not compete). Obviously an enormously ambitious undertaking, I want to also call attention to the extraordinary *humility* of the undertaking – i.e., presenting the life history of a civilization NOT by narrating it but “simply” by giving readers the actual records of “conversations” as developed over the course of *that civilization’s own* known existence--records of central “conversations” ranging over philosophy, governance, religion, education, historiography, culture, economy, gender, aesthetics, etc. In other words, the project not only involved sifting through the vast source materials out there, most of it never before gathered in one place much less translated, determining which are the most historically significant among them and why, figuring out how they relate to one another in the history of ideas, organizing them into a coherent whole, and providing for each just enough context and introduction to enable the non-specialist student to derive meaning, while simultaneously “negating” all that work as much as possible in order that **each civilization might be allowed to speak for itself to new audiences, rather than mediated through the words of a narrator**. This was a huge and most important contribution, as indeed recognized by the Tang Prize Foundation.

These works at UCAME culminated in a series of seven faculty workshops held every summer between 2002-2008 toward the creation of four “capstone” global core courses on what Prof. de Bary felt were two fundamental themes of humanity: *Nobility & Civility* I and II, and *Nature & Human Nature* I and II. Over 70 senior members of faculty from all disciplines and even outside of Columbia came together every day for two weeks of each year for these workshops, to read and discuss classics from the world over together to determine which of them would work most effectively together for the newly envisioned courses. A distinguishing feature of these courses was to transcend regional boundaries – i.e., whereas earlier “global” core courses had been regionally divided into “East Asian,” “West Asian” “African,” etc., these courses had students confront ideas on “nobility and civility,” and “nature and human nature” from across all regions

in conversation with one another. Prof. de Bary titled the endeavor of these workshops and courses “**Classics for an Emerging World.**”

For my part, over the course of twenty years working closely with Prof. de Bary -- both overseeing the faculty workshops and taking a lead role teaching the courses that resulted from them -- I increasingly came to see two areas as needing further rethinking if we were to broaden students’ critical thinking for their newly emerging world contexts. One was the problem of pedagogy. In spite of the variety of world classics students read in these courses, I was frustrated to see students engage only very superficially with their unparalleled richness of ideas and worldviews. In time, I came to realize this was because they approached *all* texts through the Western mode of critical thinking they assumed by default of the very education they had excelled in order to get into places like Columbia. They weren’t seeing that different texts, such as the *Analects*, the *Daodejing*, and the *Baghavat Gita*, had been written in assumption of – and to help develop – other important traditions and approaches to critical thinking. **How can we get students to let down their default mode and practice other modes of critical thinking, so that from their variety each can develop their own, more truly *global* critical thinking?** Second, although Core and Global Core courses at Columbia are lauded for their discussion-based approach to learning, it is almost inevitable that the classrooms themselves turn into a kind of “echo chamber,” populated by students who have come to Columbia with certain shared expectations if not experiences. **How can we take the discussions beyond the “ivory tower” and the pages of its books, so as to re-involve the world itself in challenging our default modes of critical thinking?**

Around the time that I was struggling to articulate these questions, Prof. Kim, working in the very different field of theology and missiology, especially Neo-Confucianism and its impact on Christianity, had been developing a key concept called “interculturalism.” The word itself had been used by Catholic missiologists in the late 1980s to refer to what they hoped would be a paradigm shift in post-colonial missions, toward a new sense of *mutual partnership* between missionary and local culture. Prof. Kim, however, was using the word very differently to mean something almost the complete opposite -- **SELF-changing through one’s encounter with an Other.** It’s the idea that in any human relationship, those with “more power” open themselves to being changed *themselves* by their encounters, instead of focusing on changing the Other (mutually or not). Similarly, those with less nominal power, too, learns to be open to the “Other” not necessarily being something or someone outside of oneself; what keeps one from can be a beloved teacher, a family member, one’s education or inherited religion, social/cultural norms, one’s own sense of trauma or assumptions, etc. etc. Interculturalism, then, refers to discovering “together” but independently the *questions* that push *one’s self* to greater self-awareness. In that sense, interculturalism is what restores Power and Agency over meaningful change to their proper place in the “*I, over my self.*” It is a self-aware independence that is innately interdependent at the same time, rather than a zero sum game or even an imposed mutuality.

Thus defined, Prof. Kim identifies interculturalism as not only having been a crucial element behind positive, creative change throughout history both East and West (e.g., the European Renaissance, the adoption of Buddhism in East Asia, the growth in turn of *Xinglixue* or *Xinxue* from the interculturalism of that Buddhism and Confucianism, etc.). Even more significantly, his focus is on the potential for interculturalism to be integrated into *pedagogy* in education broadly defined and at all levels, to empower *self*-changing as self-cultivation. More will be said about interculturalism in sections below, but the concept clearly held tremendous interest for my question of advancing Prof. de Bary's legacy further toward students actually encountering and learning from the different modes of critical thinking developed by different civilizations, so as to become more truly glocal in their critical thinking.

Thus when in 2012 a fledgling student "club" calling itself "Symposium" came to UCAME for help, we saw it as a unique opportunity to work with Columbia undergraduates who already had some appreciation for the idea of the "core," to see what would get them to *practice and integrate* interculturalism into their own learning experience, as well as to see if they then in turn could *adapt and model* similar pedagogy to high school students in different cultural contexts. With no budget to speak of, however, the Symposium experiment was initially confined to providing limited "training" to mostly international students interested in sharing their love of Columbia's Core on their own with high school students in their alma maters back home. **With the generous support of the Tang Grant**, we were able to found the **DB Global Humanities Foundation** to be the umbrella organization overseeing Symposium, expanding its program and giving it new life by supporting students' travel to places other than their home countries, allowing faculty to establish partnerships with schools in places such as China, India, Pakistan, Thailand, etc., and initiating new pilot programs for more in-depth "laboratory" work. The Grant also gave us the freedom to devote more of our time to writing about interculturalism from different viewpoints – historical, theoretical, and pedagogical – while participating in various international conferences along the way for collegial discussion of our ideas. **THANK YOU, TANG PRIZE FOUNDATION!!!**

SUMMARY OF PROJECT I: WRITINGS & PRESENTATIONS

In our Grant Proposal, we had originally proposed the publication of two works: 1) *Classics for an Emerging World: Theory & Pedagogy of Interculturalism*; and 2) *Music (樂): Toward an Interculturalism of Nobility & Civility*. But the severely limited the face-time we had with students during the global Covid crisis made us feel an urgent need for a guidebook on "how to read" Confucius and other East Asian classics. Also, a wonderful opportunity presented itself to Prof. Kim to study a case study of interculturalism bridging the East and West, centered on Christianity which is arguably notorious for.

- **Kim, *Global Christianity and the Early Letters of Horace G. Underwood* (Wipf & Stock, 2022)**

The original plan for this book had been simply to present a collection of the hitherto unknown letters of the missionary Horace G. Underwood (1859-1916), mostly written from his adopted country of Korea to members of his family back in the U.S. between the years of 1884 and 1898. Unlike his already published official reports to the American Mission Society, these letters by the “father of Protestant Christianity in Korea” are much more opens about what he saw happening in Korea in the last years of the Chosŏn dynasty, more frank in the description of his concerns and wide-ranging observations, and thus rich interest on their own for such fields as mission history, Korean history, global colonial history, and more. But on closer reading, it became apparent that these early letters also contained subtle but clear indications of how Underwood and his very understanding of “God” underwent interculturation through what he observed of especially Neo-Confucian philosophy and practice in Korea. Initially upon arrival, Underwood was convinced that Koreans should be trained to become more like the Japanese, Westernized and modernized at least half a century earlier by Western Protestant missionaries. Over time, however, the tone of his observations about the Korean people and culture changed from compassion, to appreciation, to a deep faith that in the unexpected manner of “God’s presence” he saw among them, such that,

“I see this nation, reaching out strong, glad arms of influence – to China on the one hand and to Japan on the other, softening the prejudices and conservatism of the one, and steadying the faith of the other; the three joining the great circle of Christian nations who praise the Lamb for ever and ever..”

The change in Underwood was slow and gradual, and founded on discovering in Neo-Confucianism highly developed “natural” expansions of his own Scottish Enlightenment values:

- 1) the “substantiveness” of the material world and all things in it (無極而太極), giving this world and our actions in it both moral purpose and metaphysical meaning, which aligned well with Scottish Enlightenment’s emphasis on empiricism and social justice;
- 2) the Mencian idea of human nature – insofar as it is *human* and not some other – as having a “genetic” purpose to develop and be developed into qualities of humaneness, rightness, propriety, and wisdom (四端), sharing certain aspirational aspects of the Christian pilgrim;
- 3) inclusion of support for self-cultivation, popular education, egalitarian social renewal, as part of the obligations of government, as well as community compacts for social welfare, all of which in fact had inspired the European Enlightenment movement itself earlier when Jesuit missionaries sent Confucian and Neo-Confucian books from China. Underwood remarked on Koreans’ exceptional zeal for learning, including the desire to

take learning into their own hands (e.g., to study and make the gospel their own on individual and community levels);

- 4) the Silhak (實學) movement with its emphasis on pragmatism, practical, “scientific” learning and its application for the material well-being of people (e.g., advocating for policy changes and reforms, improving national transportation, currency, infrastructure, and communications, conducting scientific research, similar to Scottish Enlightenment’s interests in social sciences, economics, legal reforms, and the sciences.

For all that, in great many aspects the Korea that confronted Underwood was undoubtedly a poor, ignorant, backward country. But he was not above seeing the foundations beneath the tatters, and to value and *nurture* them. Moreover, all of the above and more were woven into the Korean Neo-Confucian ethos and egalitarian spirit of “rightness 義,” which Underwood found to transcend the Western concept of rights (權利) in many ways. While related to concepts of both rites and rights, rightness speaks to a more subtle, fluid, intimate, holistic, and often a more intangible aspect of balance in interpersonal relations. It belongs among Mencian Four Sprouts, but being subtle and fluid, sensitive to the least nuance of the infinite and constantly changing dynamics in human relations, it is also a principle that defies codification. Going beyond externally verifiable standards such as laws and rituals, rightness instead depends on there being a widely shared, cultural foundation of *feeling* or *ethos* for such proffering of sincerity that it satisfy the other’s soul (and/or Heaven) in ways mere propriety and established rites cannot. This was what Underwood saw when in November 1898, he witnessed an entirely spontaneous yet also entirely peaceful and orderly protest “for rightness” by a crowd of 30,000, which was huge for its time. The King had gone back on his word and, on the suggestion of certain of his advisors, even arrested some 19 leaders of the people secretly in the night. According to Underwood,

“...when it was learned the next morning, some 30 thousand people gathered on the street and big square and in a dignified way sent in a request that as the leaders of the people had been arrested and the leaders had only done what the people had asked, they too might all be arrested. For some four or five days this crowd with bonfires, etc. have continued night and day waiting to be arrested. They in a quiet way simply say that if they have done wrong they are ready to die and there they stay. The leading stores and merchants have all stopped business and closed their doors on the plea that if they have no rights they might as well die or starvation as oppression. They have in the main been quiet and orderly. The only thing that they have done that might be said to be wrong was that when a company of soldiers was sent to disperse them and the order was given to prepare to fire, they rushed up and disarmed the soldiers but nothing more, and then gave them back

their arms and let them go. There they still are camped, and there they say they will wait and die if they do not get justice.”

Prof. Kim saw the need – and opportunity – to *explicate* Underwood’s letters more in depth, to show 1) how they relate to Underwood’s gradual appreciation of Neo-Confucian thought; 2) how seeing Neo-Confucian values in action led to an expansion of his understanding of “God,” subsequently resulting in reversing his initial strong opposition to use of the Korean word “Hananim” to refer to “God”; and 3) ultimately, how this interculturalization within him was met with a reciprocal interculturalization among Koreans who accepted Christian faith as a teaching that resonated deeply with their own Neo-Confucian ideals yet also expanded on it. All of this, amounting to the opposite of the “Bible & Guns” approach to mission, suggests interesting connections to why Christianity continues to be so successful in South Korea today. The book goes on to reflect on how Underwood’s interculturalization got lost from view as a potential new model for Christian global missions for well over a century (eradication of history under Japan, the devastations of the Korean War and the focus given to material rebuilding of the country, saturation of ideologically radicalized politics as the Cold War’s frontlines for decades, the affects of neo-colonialism, etc.), and how it might still offer a path forward even now to healing the traumas of our collective imperial/colonial histories.

- **Music (樂) in Early Chosŏn Korea: A Study on the Interculturalization of Nobility & Civility**

The second book, currently nearing completion, is also a historical example of interculturalization, but this time of Neo-Confucian thought in fifteenth-century Chosŏn Korea as leading to arguably **the most advanced formulation of East Asian conception of democracy**, as articulated by Sŏng Hyŏn (成俔, 1439-1504) using the analogy of *yue* (樂). I had written on Song Hyon’s work more than twenty some years ago for my dissertation (2002); it has been incredibly rewarding to revisit the subject, to see now all the richness of significance I had missed the first time!

Given Confucius’ reference to *yue* (rather misleadingly translated simply as “music”) as the ultimate horizon point to which every human endeavor, private and public, is to aspire, as well as the practice of *yue* in dynasties throughout millennia as an important feature of political discourse at court, contemporary scholarship on *yue* remains surprisingly small. It is also largely divided into two camps: those who focus on the political and social *idealism* of *yue* in ancient Chinese thought (Kenneth de Woskin, Scott Cook, Erica Fox Brindley, etc.), and those who study *yue* in terms of its material theory and practice in ritual music of different periods (Joseph S. C. Lam, Robert Provine, Lothar van Falkenhausen, etc.). Both in the West and elsewhere, four main factors have stood in the way of more enthusiasm to understand *yue*:

1. Much of the voluminous public or official writings on *yue* consists of arcane details of music theory admixed with things like astronomy and symbolisms bordering on an

“alchemy of sounds,” and debates over minutiae of what constitutes “correct” music relative to each specific aspect of sacrificial ritual it is to accompany. While it may be interesting *that* dynasty after dynasty had invested heavily in *yue* on such terms, such arcana themselves hold little interest today.

2. At the other end of the spectrum, accounts of *yue* as individual, essentially private experiences of “being in harmony with all things” tend to be allusive, eulogistic, and/or anecdotal, not conducive for “substantive” scholarly analysis.
3. For much of the 20th century, programs to modernize and Communize China repudiated Confucian traditions and values. Interest in *yue* at the heart of Confucian socio-political idealism was hardly welcome in that context.
4. Last but in some ways even more fundamentally, Confucius’ approach to pedagogy was to leave *yue* very deliberately in “negative space” – that is, its essential nature and workings hinted at *but left unarticulated* – so that it might be realized naturally and freely as a *byproduct* in the course of human endeavors, and not arrogated by interests or institutions.

So it was by a stroke of extraordinary luck that in Sŏng Hyŏn’s short and largely ignored “Preface” to his collaborative magnum opus, *Akhak kwebŏm* (樂學軌範 or *Model for Study of Music*, 1493), I unexpectedly found a text that *itself* broke with the first two traditions above, and at the same time directly addressed the last two – though it was only gradually that I came to realize just how radical and historically significant this was within the body of *yue* literature both before and after it. What Sŏng Hyŏn articulated in that Preface to a text commissioned on the centennial of Chosŏn dynasty was **a new and distinctly modern approach for discoursing on *yue*, founded on greater socio-political objectivity as well as a new liberal ideology that went against more than two millennia of tradition.** In it, he gives voice to **four basic tenets that make up the backbone of “Asian democracy,”** very different from Western-styled democracy, but also from the kinds of paternalistic “ruling for the benefit of the people” argument that has been the mainstay of various so-called “Asian democracies” in the twentieth century, ranging from Yoshino Sakuzo’s “*minbon shugi*,” to Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew, to indeed even the pyramid-form electoral system espoused by the People’s Republic of China. Indeed, we might name what Sŏng Hyŏn envisions a kind of principled but flexible **“communitocracy.” Instead of focusing on the location of sovereignty or even the purpose and limitations of sovereignty, Sŏng Hyŏn points to the nature of “civil society” itself** toward which rulers and the ruled must contribute equally in their different functions. **First**, he suggests that, as with music, a civil society is one that allows for certain amount of “deviations” from absolute consonance or rules of correctness, with the understanding that this is what heightens and enriches the overall experience of harmony, insofar as the deviations are not allowed destroy the overall balance in favor of harmoniousness. In other words, civil society is a liberal, tolerant society that has the wherewithal to absorb deviance within itself rather than to be

disordered by them. **Secondly**, he likens the different classes and cultures of peoples to there being different types of music (court music, folk music, banquet music, military music, etc.), and notes that in spite of the differences they are all founded on ordered codifications of principles found in nature (mathematical derivations of pitches and modes, organization of various timbres and styles, etc.), thus implying they are to be held in regard as such. **Thirdly**, like music, civil societies depend not only on the ability of those in leadership (e.g., the theorist, composer, conductor, as analogies for the ruler, ministers, bureaucrats, etc.), but equally on the ability and willingness of each and every individual citizen (performers) to embody the ideas in daily affairs and interactions with shared appreciation for what is created. **And finally**, just as musical notation can provide no more than a general outline or an outer shell which must be filled each time with the ephemeral reality that transcends the outline to make it a living “Music,” what makes civil societies “civil” also is ever ephemeral, never exactly the same twice, to be performed into beauty in real time the best one can. Unlike Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) Sŏng Hyŏn does not play with ideas/abstractions of a classless society insulated from the interference of outsiders, nor does he call for more “democratically minded” leadership as Huang Zongxi would with his *Waiting for the Dawn* (1662). He does not undertake to rethink the nature of legitimacy in relations between political authority and individual freedom as Jean-Jacques Rousseau would in *The Social Contract* (1762). Instead of seeking to define the boundary between unity and diversity, instead of affirming or denying the place of class and cultural differences, instead of proposing the proper division of authority between leadership and citizenship, Sŏng Hyŏn simply presents succinct principles for what we actually mean by a “civil” society. In doing so, he leaves it to each and every society to figure out *for itself* the means it needs and wishes to take from *its* unique contexts in history to achieve the principles of civil society for itself. In other words, instead of suggesting *a* corrective ideology or means, as many subsequent political thinkers would do, his approach reminds us of the *direction* toward which different ideologies are but different corrective (and reactive) approaches devised by differences of real and perceived circumstance/context. His approach embodies, in itself, a freeing, tolerant, respectful regard for the processes of others – one that, if it had been known and understood earlier, would perhaps have prevented or at least softened the far reaching consequences of Western imperialism and/or the Cold War.

One of the points of the book is that Sŏng Hyŏn did not arrive at such view of “Asian democracy” in a vacuum. It was founded on his trying to digest the work of four kings he deeply admired and even revered, each of whom in turn had struggled to *real*ize Zhu Xi’s Neo-Confucian ideal from their respective individual contexts as rulers. Today, some degree of glocalization is a fact of life for almost every country and person. What I hope to show with the book is a sense of the **committed, multi-generational process** by which an idea or an ideology imported from outside can become integral to one’s own cultural renaissance. In the case of Chosŏn, the path had been far from clear, easy, or straightforward. It had involved extraordinary moral choices and national dilemmas, battles to the death over what was believed to be right.

Today, more than 500 years later, Korea shows few outward signs of Neo-Confucian culture, and is instead working its way through the hidden traumas of colonization, military dictatorships, massacres, an unfinished civil/ideological war, etc. It is home to the highest suicide rate per capita in the world (save Lesotho, Africa). And yet, it is also home to people who come together to achieve a democracy “for rightness” by peaceful, orderly means when needed. Sometimes, fruits of interculturalism would seem to come from seeds buried deep.

- **The Pedagogy of Confucius: How to Read the Analects**

As mentioned earlier, teaching classics from many different civilizations as part of UCAME-designed courses led to a certain frustration and puzzlement. I couldn’t understand why so many intelligent, well-intentioned students couldn’t sense the infinite compassion in Confucian classics, or weren’t moved by their intensely personal challenges. Then one day, a favorite student of mine (and Symposium!) gave me the first key to understanding the problem when she came to office hours, and said with wonderful frustration of her own,

“I’m not sure what I’m supposed to *do* with Confucius! Instead of arguments, he just gives his opinions on things, so there’s nothing for me to grapple with – not in any kind of *critical* way! How can I argue with someone’s moral opinions except by lowering my own arguments to the level of opinion, too?”

Her comment was like a lightning rod for me. And observing more closely how students were reading the *Analects* or *Mencius*, I began to see how the unconscious default “critical thinking” most students assumed when reading was indeed the “argumentative” approach naturally suited to the argumentative pedagogical tradition in which Western and Westernized texts had been written, but not the Confucian classics. It also made me recognize how I had been automatically switching between very different modes of reading depending on which tradition I was engaging with, unconsciously adapting to the critical thinking tradition toward which each directed their pedagogy.

The purpose of this book, then, is to help students reach a similar awareness and adeptness by 1) identifying how Confucius conceptualized the complex act of “reading” in a manner different from how Westernized students are used to reading today, 2) and relating those components to the larger pedagogical “strategy” of each tradition. I am hesitant to name those components here before the planned publication, but have begun testing them out by very slowly introducing the principles as part of Symposium training beginning in 2023 – slowly because East Asian classics are only one part of the texts covered by Symposium each year. The response has been generally very positive so far, ranging from puzzlement to excited recognition and wanting more opportunities to “practice” it together, especially once they have their “Eureka!” moment about it. Some of the most enthusiastic responses have come from Asian students who have told me

it's extremely helpful and affirming to have "their" way of reading clarified and legitimized in this way, and that it's enabled them to appreciate Confucius and Confucian pedagogy "on a whole new level." This summer, one of the Symposium Fellows even expressed the ambitious desire to try to incorporate the ideas into how discussions are run during the Symposium workshop with students from Chongqing, China; I am looking forward to hearing her reflections about how that went!

Of the five chapters planned for this book, I now have two completed, and detailed outlines for the other three. I am deeply grateful to the Grant for giving me the time and the means to develop this book project, which I hope will open the doors to greater interest in Sinology, and allow more non-specialist students to form their own lifelong intimate friendships with Confucius, finding in him a compassionate, understanding mentor and an inspiring yet reassuringly human model for our humanity. Ultimately, I hope this will give students the means to break past just the one mode of critical thinking developed by the West, so they can think more richly and develop their own, more truly *global* critical thinking in this age of AI.

- **Classics for an Emerging World: Theory & Pedagogy of Interculturation**

The fourth book, tentatively titled *Classics for an Emerging World: Theory & Pedagogy of Interculturation*, examines core philosophical and literary classics from the West, East Asia, India/Southeast Asia, and West Asia *in relation to one another*, as a way to invite students and teachers alike to approach learning from an "interculturative" mindset. Because this opens up literally endless possibilities, we follow three premises in structuring the book. First, we will **limit the texts we work with to those collectively chosen by more than 70 scholars from across the humanities during the seven annual workshops organized by UCAME** as representative of different human conceptions/articulations of the values of nobility and civility, which I have been teaching since 2003, together with a few additional works we've used for Symposium workshops. Since as a year-long seminar *Nobility & Civility I & II* covers so many texts all the way from the ancient world to the 20th century, we have also decided to focus only on those works read in the first semester. These include: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Homer's *Odyssey* and *Hymn to Demeter*, Valmiki's *Epic of Ramayana*, Confucius' *Analects*, *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi*, Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Philoctetes*, Thucydides' *Plague of Athens*, *Mencius*, *Xunzi*, the *Baghavad Gita*, *Platonic Symposium*, Kautilya's *Artha Sastra*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, *The Buddhacarita*, *Lotus Sutra*, Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, Cicero's "Laelius: on Friendship," Visadhadatta's *Rakhasa's Ring*, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Ferdowsi's *Legend of Seyavash* from the *Shahnameh*, Farid al-Din Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*, *Tale of the Heike*, *The Epic of Son-Jara* (from West Africa), Al Hariri's *Assemblies of Al-Hariri*, Chretien de Troyes' *The Knight of the Cart*, writings of Zhu Xi, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, King Sejong's "Promulgation of Correct Sounds for the People," Thomas More's *Utopia*, Castiglione's *The Courtier*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and *The Song of Ch'unhyang*.

The second premise for the book is that the focus will be limited to suggesting the kinds of **potential questions that thinking across these texts might raise**. Each of the above texts are extraordinarily rich and dense in their own right (they are considered “core” for good reason!), and have countless scholarly studies already written about them by others with far more specialist knowledge than either of us, so that it would be both a foolish and needless endeavor to even try to outline the many perennial human issues they cover. But on the other hand, I don’t know of many projects where such a wide and diverse array of literature have been brought under a single roof for conversation amongst themselves. And because this is meant to be a book on/for *pedagogy*, the idea is to pose questions of potential interest rather than to argue any particular viewpoint. For example, what is the underlying difference in conception about what it means to be “an individual” in St. Augustine’s *Confessions* vs. Confucius’ extremely condensed “autobiography” in *Analects* 2:4? How are stories such as the *Hymn to Demeter* or the *Epic of Son-Jara* engineered to affect our thinking about reality, and what alternative strategies do we find in pedagogies that eschew story narratives? Nearing the end of the axial age as political units moved toward empire-building, what differences of attitude toward empire and its order do we find in Kautilya, Mencius, Xunzi, and Alexander the Great? Is there something different in how St. Paul understands empire as a Roman, a Jew, and a new “global” Christian in first century A.D.? Aristotle gave us his definitions of tragedy and comedy, but do we see different conceptions and degrees of comedy and tragedy in works like *Antigone* vs. *Mencius*, the *Daodejing*, and the *Baghavad Gita*? How do the *Knight of the Carts*, the *Assemblies of Al-Hariri*, and the *Daodejing* celebrate language while also pointing to its limitations, and with what differences of method and manner? Etc., etc. Our purpose is to suggest questions that unsettle cultural assumptions, so as to encourage and invite students/readers to discover their own questions.

The third premise for the book will be to consider what the texts say first and foremost from the perspective of what their actual human *experience* might have been. In part, this is to provide a common standpoint by which to understand the many different worldviews, pedagogical approaches, and styles of writing covered by such wide array of works. But also, it is an effort to lead students out from the unconscious default mode of thinking about a text *as text* – e.g., focusing on the structural unity or logic “of the text,” accepting the situation described in the text to be the whole of that situation, being “guided by” the author in making judgments about a character or situation, etc. Practices of privileging or “idea-lizing” the text in this way is increasingly spilling into domains beyond texts, such as photo images and videos, flattening or “two-dimensionizing” reality. In this book, the approach is to put students “in” the situation presented in the given text, as concretely and bodily in 3-D as possible, then to work backward from there *through* the possible multiple processes by which that experience might get digested, reconceptualized, and articulated/presented within the context of surrounding culture civilizations.

In short, our purpose with the book is to suggest the kinds of questions and approaches to pedagogy that raise awareness for interculturalization and hopefully also engage scholars, teachers, and students in raising their own critical questions toward both interculturalization and pedagogy toward organic, empowering self-transformation.

- **Articles, Presentations, Lectures, etc.**

In addition to working on the above four books, Prof. Kim and I have either published or given lectures on the following at various conferences. Below is a brief listing:

- ❖ "Inculturation as a Core Curricular Criterion: *Tongmong sŏnsŭp (Primer for Youth)* as a Case Study" in *The Quest for Excellence: Selected Papers from the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Association for Core Texts & Courses*, ed. by Gish, Dustin, and Christopher Constanas, New York: University Press of America, 2016.
- ❖ "Migration and the Mission: Globalization and Interculturalization toward Evangelization 'by Their Own Hands'" (Vrije University, Amsterdam, 2017)
- ❖ "Church & Civil Society from an Intercultural Standpoint: Horace G. Underwood and Neo-Confucian Dialogue on Church and Civil Society": Paper Presentation and Lecture, 2018 IRTI (International Reformed Theology Institute) International Conference on *The Church and Civil Society* held at Vrije Universiteit / PThU, Amsterdam, Netherlands, July 7, 2018.
- ❖ "Mencius as Pedagogical Tool in Inter-religious Dialogue," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Global General Education and Asian Texts: What Should Students Read?* Sponsored by the Association for Core Texts & Courses, Concordia University, CA, July 2018.
- ❖ "A Theology of Dao," in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, pp. 1-6, New York: Sage Publications, May 2019.
- ❖ "Basics of Reading Confucius" (Global & Interdisciplinary Core Curricula University Seminar, Columbia University, NY, 2022)
- ❖ "A Case of Interculturalization: H. G. Underwood and the Mission Field" An Interview with the 400th Commemorative Edition of *Saemoonan Journal* (Seoul, Korea, 2022) (<https://bit.ly/3TxsNw0>)

- ❖ Pedagogical Issues in Teaching *Mencius* in Global Core Contexts (Global & Interdisciplinary Core Curricula University Seminar, Columbia University, NY, 2023)
- ❖ “Interculturation: Rethinking the Pedagogy of Leadership in the Age of Global Polarization” (IRTI International Conference on *The Calling of the Church in Times of Polarization* at Vrije Universiteit / PThU, Amsterdam, Netherlands, July 2023).
- ❖ “Toward Interculturation: Critical Thinking of Critical Feelings as Pedagogy” (Global & Interdisciplinary Core Curricula University Seminar, Columbia University, NY, 2024).
- ❖ “Symposium & Pedagogy of Interculturation” (CUSP Lecture, Columbia University 2025)
- ❖ *KBS Docu-On*, “Interculturation and American Missionaries to Korea” (140th Commemorative Easter Special, Korean Notional Broadcasting, Seoul, Korea, 2025) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eM7g0Y65pA4&t=3s>)
- ❖ “Interculturation as Basis of Missions & Missiology” A Keynote lecture at the 140th Commemorative International Conference on *Pioneering the Future of Higher Education: Fostering a New Dialogue—Life & Medical Science, Artificial Intelligence & Technology, Humanities and Christian Missions* (Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea, September 24 through 26, 2025)

SUMMARY OF PROJECT II: SYMPOSIUM

As briefly described in the Grant Proposal in 2016, our second project involved nurture and support for the growth of Symposium as both a “laboratory” for pedagogy and a *movement*. Symposium originated in 2012 with a simple idea from two international students at Columbia wanting to give high school students back home a mini experience of the excitement of Columbia Core’s discussion-based approach to learning. Today, Symposium is a whole network of “Symposians” who organize workshops around the world, engaging on average over 125 students every year in reading and discussing foundational classics across cultures, **while practicing interculturative learning themselves**. With the support of the Tang Grant, we have been able to greatly invigorate Symposium activities for the past eight years, from providing much more layered and intensive training to Discussion Leaders (DLs); strengthening group structure, bylaws, and operations; and expanding workshop formats as well as building long term institutional relations with local schools. Having begun with just two workshops in Beijing and Shanghai, we have now offered them in Taipei, Mumbai, Jaipur, Indore, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Singapore, Lahore (Pakistan), Lima (Peru), Thailand, as well as NYC itself, with some schools especially in India and China becoming “permanent” partner schools who eagerly await

the Symposium program each summer. In fact, we have even given rise to Symposium “offshoots” such as the non-profit “Entre Nous,” founded by a former Symposian! Whenever possible, the favored workshop format is for two or three Symposians to team lead the discussions in-person with 14-25 local students per workshop, as this offers incomparable richness of experience to both sides. But online workshops developed during Covid also continues to be a successful alternative where appropriate, and we also ran a pilot program where a pair of outstanding Symposians lived at a school in India to teach Symposium style for six months. It is important to note that, as an experiment in *pedagogy*, the measure of Symposium’s growth is the maturing understanding among Symposians themselves much more than any metrics from the workshops. To keep things brief while also giving clarity to the sense of ongoing development at Symposium, I outline its activities in terms of the three phases below:

- **Phase One (2013 – 2016): The Beginnings**

Phase One was a period of great dynamism if also the absence of unifying standards as a project, because we wanted to give Symposium’s student leaders enough time on their own to become more cognizant of the nature and needs of a long term operating project. As mentioned above, Symposium had its beginning in 2012 with two international students at Columbia wanting to give high school students at their alma maters in China a “mini experience” of Columbia Core’s discussion-based approach to learning. Using social media, they got a handful of students in Shanghai and Beijing respectively to get together to simply read and discuss a couple of Western texts. Buoyed by the positive experience from that, that fall they came to Prof. Kim and myself at UCAME asking for faculty oversight in growing the idea. We immediately saw it as an opportunity to experiment with expanding the Core idea both outward and inward – outward beyond the walls of the ivory tower, carried out by students themselves, and inward in terms of studying the world’s classics in terms of one another and on equal footing. Wanting to honor Symposium’s roots as a student-initiated club, however, we began slow, giving guidance only when asked, and providing pedagogical training with a light touch. In fact, our only condition for getting involved was that future activities always include not just Western classics but foundational classics from a minimum of three different civilizations (to deflect binarism), to be discussed *in conversation with each other*, and that Symposium would remain a free program for participants wherever it went.

During this initial stage,

- ❖ Students recruited new members to the Symposium “club” each fall, and carried out their activities throughout the year more or less on their own. Members fell into one of two groups (some doing both) —“City Directors” who used social media and other means to organize the workshops in designated locations for the year, usually in their hometowns (recruiting participants, finding available local venue, overseeing logistics, etc.); and “Discussion Leaders” who focused on leading the actual discussions sessions

at these workshops organized for them, usually for two weeks, two hours daily. With no budget to speak of initially, decisions about locations depended mostly on where members came from, “doing Symposium” for a part of their summer break back home.

- ❖ Members of the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), anchored by Profs. Gareth Williams (Classics), Robert Pollack (Biology/Philosophy), Douglas Chalmers (Political Science), Kim, and myself, rotated to give Symposians one or two training sessions per year, usually in the spring, focusing on a select text per session, to help them prepare to lead the summer workshops. But although everyone was encouraged to incorporate that year’s “focal texts” in planning their “syllabus,” each Symposian was free to choose whichever three texts s/he wished, as long as they were from three different civilizations (local, Western, and neither). While this was enlivening for students in many ways, it made any sense of “quality control” quite impossible.
- ❖ On the whole, Symposians at this stage understood their endeavor primarily as “teaching” high school students in their home countries and elsewhere about the joys of discussion-based learning. Their enthusiasm for “teaching” led to tremendous expansion in just a few years -- by 2016 workshops were offered each year not only in Beijing and Shanghai, but also in Shenzhen, rural China, Singapore, and Bangkok; there had also been “one-off” workshops Tokyo, Tokushima, even Paris, as well as NYC with an underprivileged high school in Harlem.

- **Phase Two (2017-2020): Tang Grant, Greater Faculty Involvement & Consolidation**

Phase Two was distinguished by the generosity of the Tang Grant, which allowed Symposium to take meaningful new initiatives for its further development, led by the Faculty Advisory Committee taking on a greater role within Symposium. This was a natural as much as necessary development, as there was growing awareness within Symposium of the need for change. While many students had initially found the fast expansion of workshops during the club’s first four years exciting, it had also become clear to everyone that focusing on quantity came at the cost of quality. There was increasingly also the need for institutional memory as Symposium’s earliest members graduated to be replaced by continually new ranks filling their place. So Symposium entered a new phase – refocusing its mission, taking steps to raise the standard and coherence of its programming, bringing more stability and clarity to its operations.

An important part in all this was how, with the Grant, Symposium could now support flights expenses for students to lead workshops in countries other than their own, which occasioned including an exceptional workshop in Taiwan (2019) where four faculty members joined four Columbia students for joint sessions at the National Taiwan Normal University. The Tang Prize Foundation lent further importance and weight to that occasion by organizing a public forum at which Prof. Gareth Williams delivered a lecture (“Generations in Conversation: Some Greco-Roman and Renaissance Reflections on Intergenerational Dialogue”), and inviting the entire

Symposium delegation to a very special luncheon with Dr. Jesse Chern. The Taiwan workshop moreover became the occasion of *the first interculturative reflection* by a Symposian known to us – a special moment that validated the Symposium enterprise as a whole for us, and showed the way forward. Since then, we have had many Symposians come back to us with self-reflections of their changes in view (some of which are shared in the next section).

Developments from this period include

- ❖ Formal creation of FAC to provide more – and more intensive – training of DLs, including by guest faculty members specially invited on a variety of texts. It was also established that at least two of the three texts covered at the workshops would consist of works covered during training that year, giving Symposians the opportunity to engage in shared discussion of the texts amongst themselves long before they take the discussions to the workshops, and facilitate FAC meeting separately with each individual DL team to review their syllabus.
- ❖ While remaining open to offering new workshops, a decision was made to prioritize quality over quantity. To that end, we also began keeping a running record of the training sessions, syllabi, and DL/participant feedback whenever possible, to review for improvements, and to be a record for our research on humanities education.
- ❖ Symposium was officially approved to become a part of the University Seminar on global & Interdisciplinary Core Curricula.
- ❖ Bylaws were drafted.

- **Phase Three (2020-present): Maturation thru Covid, Pilot Projects, & Partner Schools**

Phase Three saw the maturing of Symposium in many respects, from flexibility of formats to adapt to different situations, to stability and responsibility brought on by working with long-term partner schools, and the “return” of former and graduated Symposians in support of growing the program:

- ❖ Covid worldwide pandemic in February 2020 initially threatened to put a stop to all Symposium activities, but everyone came behind adapting the program to online format, in part to test how (and how well) interculturalization could be supported through remote engagement. Since January 2021, it has become an important alternative format to situations where in-person travel is difficult, such as when working with students in Nigeria, or this past summer with schools in Chongqing and Beijing. We now work regularly with teams on making online discussion more engaging and dynamic.
- ❖ In 2022, we also initiated a pilot program in partnership with the Emerald Heights International School (EHIS) in Indore, India, by sending two outstanding Symposians to spend six months there to teach Symposium-styled workshops and classes. The pilot became an important “life-changing” experience for the two Symposians (one of whom

gave up his Fulbright Fellowship to participate in the pilot), and did much to plant Symposium's ideas among students at EHIS; it also taught us much about the Indian education system and the importance of working "bottom up."

- ❖ In addition to EHIS in 2020, the Neerja Modi School (Jaipur, India), and the Obafemi Awolowo University (Ife, Nigeria) became "permanent partner" schools in 2023 and 2024 respectively. We are currently exploring two schools in China about their interest in becoming partner schools.
- ❖ Another meaningful development has been a number of Symposium participants who, upon admission to Columbia, immediately reach out to join Symposium to serve as DLs, Eboard members, and City Directors. Without exception, they have been very open about how much taking part in Symposium meant to them, and how much they want to be a part of bringing similar experiences to others in turn. They have consistently been some of our most dedicated, hardworking organizers.
- ❖ Similarly, Symposium has now become a network of Symposians who keep in touch with one another and step up to help the younger ranks. Many of those who graduated as Columbia's Symposians are now pursuing doctoral or professional degrees at Columbia, Stanford, Harvard, Yale, MIT, Princeton, Duke, NYU, Cambridge, Oxford, Heidelberg, etc.; others are on Rhodes or Fulbright Fellowships, others are working as entrepreneurs, a clerk for U.S. Supreme Court justices, a journalist for the NY Times (Hong Kong), attorneys at such leading firms Sidley Austin, Skadden, and Latham & Watkins, bio-medical researcher, etc. Together, they have scouted promising students for Symposium, helped develop new workshop locations (e.g., both Pakistan and Nigeria workshops came about through the work of former Symposians), liaised us with various local schools (in Taipei), led training sessions based on their Symposium experiences, led workshops in pairs with younger colleagues when their schedules allowed, and made time to join the annual gathering of Symposians – in some cases traveling back from California to do so! Others, now established professionals in India, act as "anchors" to Symposium programs there, giving warm welcome and support to new DLs there each year. Their very visible presence has become an important – and beautiful – part of how Symposians feel connected to the enterprise as "part of life" long after university.

- **What Makes Symposium Different:**

1. Symposium asks everyone to engage with a minimum of *three foundational classics from three different civilizations in conversation with each other*. This helps everyone break from the habits of binary thinking (e.g., "us vs. them," "West vs. the rest"), and moreover establishes a dynamic where no one is a cultural "expert," including the DLs.
2. Symposium approaches discussion of texts for more than analysis. Instead of focusing on talking "about" the texts (their culture & history, interpretations over the ages), we seek for

the participating students to develop *personal relationships* with the texts, such that even texts that are foreign or "not-mine" becomes an intimate friend with which to discuss *one's own* human questions .

3. At Symposium, following etymological root of the Greek "*paidagōgós*" who were servants who led or escorted children to school ("*país* παῖς" meaning "child," and "*ágōgos* ἀγωγός" meaning "guide"), neither the faculty nor the trained DLs consider themselves "teachers," but simply those who take students to the point where they themselves learn (i.e., engages in interculturalization; different from merely imbibing knowledge).

- **Concluding Reflections & the Future**

With the generous support of the Tang Grant, we were able to found the DB Global Humanities Foundation to be the umbrella organization overseeing Symposium, expanding its programs and giving it new life by supporting students' travel to places other than their home countries, engaging with students in different parts of the world in the discussion of classics as part of a movement we've been calling "Classics for an Emerging World." For the past ten years, Symposium has been reaching over 125 students each year on average through its in-person – and some online – workshops. Evaluations from the high schools as well as participating students have been extremely positive – something further supported by how those who subsequently gained admission to Columbia, have all joined Symposium in turn as DLs and even members of the Executive Board upon their arrival on campus, because they want to have a hand in bringing similar experiences to others.

It has been equally gratifying to see how those who join Symposium generally stay with it for the entire time they are at Columbia, and increasingly beyond graduation as well, as working year-round together to bring classics alive for/with others creates a close bond among the current members and even across "generations" of Symposians eager to support younger members. Symposians – now leading professionals in such different fields as law, media, cutting-edge cancer research, astrophysics, anthropology, art history, medicine, computer engineering, biochemistry, comparative literature, public health, philosophy, and entrepreneurial start-ups, etc. – support one another and serve their fields from a mindset of interculturalization and the love of learning from the world's classics, including East Asian classics.

For everyone on the Faculty Advisory Committee, working with Symposium has been a deeply enriching experiment, as well as a labor of love. While we also visited schools in different countries on occasion to meet with their educators and lay the groundwork for Symposium, in many ways it has been more revealing to encounter and engage with learning contexts outside of U.S. *through* the eyes and experiences of Symposians. **As students, they were often able to open doors that were closed to us as faculty, enabling the pedagogy to be tried with new/different demographics and contexts.** With their boundless energy and enthusiasm, they sometimes ventured into opportunities that in the end did not work out very well. However, even

those efforts provided invaluable lessons. For example, they helped us to recognize a pattern of contexts where Symposium can contribute most effectively and those where they were less open. Sometimes language was the obstacle – students who were not comfortable reading and speaking in English were effectively locked out of the program (one Symposian eventually founded a separate Symposium-like non-profit organization for students in rural China). In other cases, it was often the school administrators and educators who closed the gates before their students had a chance to experience Symposium. Recently, however, we have also been getting schools reaching out to us because one or more of their students who participated in Symposium individually subsequently appealed to the school heads to host the program so that more of their peers could experience it!

Reaching so many high school and college students who otherwise might not have a chance to encounter the world’s highest expressions of humanity in conversation with each other has been a tremendous achievement, and we are fully committed to continuing that work. Equally meaningful, however, has been the change we see among Symposians themselves. In emphasizing their role as “NOT teaching” but as rather “opening themselves up to intercultural,” we have observed **how these Symposians experience SELF-change, and from it reorient their approach life toward asking ever more questions rather than settling for assumed answers.** We have also observed *self-change’s* healing and creative power, carrying enormous **implications for many potential areas, including overcoming and/or healing the traumas of our collective colonial/imperial histories.** It is an idea we plan to continue to study and explore with writings to come.

Finally, Symposium has been a significant experiment demonstrating the tremendous importance and potential of pedagogy. Although further work is needed, we now believe **making small but meaningful changes in pedagogy can lead to exponential increase in critical thinking, intercultural learning, and self-change** – all more important than ever in the age of Artificial Intelligence – even *without* requiring large scale changes to curriculum or institutional reforms. It is true that Symposians, as undergraduates at Columbia, have ready appreciation of the idea of the “core.” With them our goal was to get them to further deepen that appreciation through integration of intercultural, then to challenge them to *independently* adapt and model the pedagogy beyond the ivory tower, for high school students in different cultural contexts, many of whom had never engaged in open-ended discussion of their own classics, much less classics of other civilizations. Even at such remove, with young, inexperienced “pedagogues” leading the discussions, the impact on students has been palpable and sometimes even moving (see Appendix B3, esp. re the second day of discussion on the *Daodejing*, in students’ own unedited words).

Perhaps our biggest difficulty in this endeavor – at least until recently – had been trying to *explain* “intercultural” in the pedagogical context (as distinct from historical or even literary

contexts). Because interculturalization is a recognition that happens within the most intimate mind-space of an individual, and because every individual is different and at a different juncture, interculturalization is not something that can be directed or predetermined in any way, defying any kind of prescriptive method, formula, curriculum, or syllabus as basis. In that sense it is perhaps closer to being a *principle* of learning (as in “Unity of principle, diversity of its applications 理一分殊”), leaving its application or practice as something never exactly the same twice. This was difficult for many Symposians to grasp as a concept because they are much more used to thinking in terms of straightforward analysis and scalable/repeatable patterns of cause and effect. Through some trial and error, however, we have found that if we can get students to *experience* interculturalization personally in some way first, then point it out to them as such, it makes them appreciate its significance much more, and much more intimately. We then **challenge them to see if, instead of merely talking about their experience of interculturalization with younger students in turn, they can “abstract the pedagogy” from their experience to apply it creatively toward helping others have their own experiences of interculturalization. It is a huge leap, but one that we are beginning to see more of at Symposium.**

To be a part of ushering in these changes at Symposium year after year has been a tremendous joy and a privilege. We are also grateful that our theorization and writings about interculturalization get to be grounded on – and continually refined by – this kind of sustained fieldwork in multiple countries. We hope to find sponsors, grant opportunities, and/or other sources of funding who will allow the momentum to build and grow, to lay the foundations for the *next era* of the Great Conversation – across civilizations, across time, and most of all across the chasm of the isolated Self.

RECORD OF EXPENDITURES

To our great gratitude, we were able to use the grant funds on the whole in accordance with the budget proposal submitted in 2017. The main difference of note is that, due to the pandemic and the extension of the projects due to it from five years to eight, we minimized supporting salary to half the original allocation, and put more toward various administrative functions as well as support of Symposium's activities.

Project Title: Classics for an Emerging World: Interculturation, Its Pedagogy & Praxis

Project Duration: April 2017 - July 2025 (3 extra years)

Total Grant Amount: Ten million NT (\$10,000,000NT)

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Project One: | \$3,082,000 NT |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partial sabbatical substitutional salary: \$500,000/yr. x 5 years = \$2,500,000NT• Faculty workshops/conferences/research: \$90,000/yr. x 4 years = \$360,000NT• Publication costs in 4th-8th years (editing, indexing) = \$222,000NT | |
| 2. Project Two: | \$3,072,000 NT |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training sessions:
21,000NT/session x 8 sessions/yr x 8 years = \$1,344,000NT• Subsidy for international travel by Symposium:
36,000NT/RT travel x 8 people/yr x 6 years = \$1,728,000NT | |
| 3. Administration of DB Global Humanities Foundation | \$3,846,000 NT |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Books, office supplies, web design & maintenance: \$1,096,000NT• Office maintenance: \$250,000/yr. x 8 years = \$2,000,000NT• Part-time staff: \$150,000NT/yr x 5 years = \$750,000NT• Accounts audit costs: \$220,000NT | |

Total Projected Expenses:	\$10,000,000NT
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Total Expenditure:	\$10,000,000NT
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Global Christianity
and the **Early Letters** of
Horace G. Underwood

James Jinhong Kim

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GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY AND THE EARLY LETTERS
OF HORACE G. UNDERWOOD

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Introduction

Re-evaluating Underwood's Significance in Context of Global Christianity

THIS BOOK CULMINATES in the examination and analysis of previously unknown private letters of Horace Grant Underwood (1859–1916), arguably the most historically significant yet under-recognized Protestant missionary of the nineteenth century. I say “culminates,” because in order to convey some sense of the significance of these letters for rethinking the future direction of Christian missiology in the twenty-first century, it was necessary first to establish the different early formative influences that helped shape Underwood’s basic missiology, but then also to bring to light the Neo-Confucian ethos of “rightness” he encountered in Chosŏn Korea, which was to subtly yet so fundamentally change the nature and color of his later missional activities. In a sense, what I want to point to with this book is the presence and nature of this *change in the missionary’s own conception of the gospel* through his encounter. It is well known that in evangelizing Asia Minor, Apostle Paul “Hellenized” what had been largely a Judaic Messianic event, in effect *expanding* Christianity—not just regionally but *theologically*. Presumably this had not been his design when leaving for Asia Minor; he could not have planned in advance for such an approach in his mission, just as it is doubtful he would have had reason to insist on a Christ who transcends circumcision and kosher laws if he had not been sent to live and work among people to whom his being an upright Pharisee had no meaning. Similarly, Apostle John could hardly have re-configured Jesus as “the Word” (or “*logos*”) if he had not recognized in the Greek idea of divine reason implicit in the cosmos a *further clarification of* the Christ he himself knew and experienced. In other words, his reference to “*logos*,” far from being an imperfect “translation” or a spiritual/cultural “compromise” to Hellenistic contexts, signified a meaningful *expansion* of his earlier, culturally limited understandings or articulation of Christ

one step closer to a fuller, more universal intuiting of him. This *mutuality* of conceptual expansion between the missionary and “missionee” is the essence of what I mean by “intercultural,” and contra our general picture of missionaries as those sent to bring change *to* others, history has shown that the most significant, peaceful, and foundational missions have been those where a dynamic of interculturalism was most effectively at work. The fact that Underwood embodied this spirit of interculturalism in his person and his mission, and did so through his encounter with Neo-Confucian Korea, in East Asia, despite having been born in Great Britain and raised in America during the height of Western imperialism in the nineteenth century—there is great significance, and much we can learn, for the future of global Christianity in his example.

So who was Horace G. Underwood? As the first Protestant missionary to set foot in Korea, and the architect behind much of the early work that took place there, Underwood is regularly credited with Christianity’s unparalleled success and fervent presence in Korea to this day. Among the many countries introduced to Christianity by Protestant missionaries since the early nineteenth century, only Korea currently boasts a 30 percent Christian population (as of 2010); among Koreans living in America that number is as high as 71 percent. Perhaps even more surprisingly, South Korea today has over twenty-five thousand full-time missionaries in 170 countries around globe,¹ making it second only to the U.S. in the number of missionaries it sends to foreign lands.² For this singular state of affairs alone Underwood ought to be the subject of much study. Yet except for the two books written about him by his wife Lillias Horton Underwood a century ago, and barely

1. According to the Korea World Mission Association (KWMA)’s 2013 Year-end Report. See also Timothy Park, “The Missionary Movement of the Korean Church,” 19.

2. Moll, “Missions Incredible,” 28–34. In making “Missions Incredible” about the Korean mission movement its cover story for the issue, *Christianity Today* expressed surprised admiration that “South Korea is on its way to sending out more missionaries than any other country on earth,” with an ambitious vision of sending one hundred thousand full-time missionaries to all over the world by 2030. The article went on to note that whereas only about 10 percent of the world’s Christian missionaries are willing to go to the very marginalized regions where the gospel has never yet been heard, a much higher 34 percent of Korean missionaries do not hesitate to go to such regions. Despite such passion in the service of the gospel, however, the article also cited frequent “lone-ranger complex” among Korean missionaries as inconducive to coordinated teamwork and harmonious relations with natives. See Moll, “Missions Incredible,” 28–34. Professor of missiology at Fuller Theological Seminary Dr. Timothy Kiho Park, in his Keynote Speech for the 5th Annual Underwood Conference, shared a similar analysis and overview of the situation. Timothy Park, “Korean Christian World Mission.”

a handful of articles in English, he remains relatively little known outside of Korea and the few scholars studying Korean Christianity.³

It may be that twentieth century ambivalence toward the frequent “marriage” of Christian missions with Western cultural and political imperialism has discouraged “yet another” extolling of a seemingly traditional nineteenth century missionary. John Coakley has written that although “the formation of Underwood [and his Methodist colleague Henry Appenzeller (1858–1902)] for their calling as missionaries . . . was partly an expression of the missionary spirit of their times, the spirit embodied in the notion of a ‘crisis of missions’ and the vision of an evangelized world within a generation,” was the same spirit that, decades later, “in the aftermath of the First World War, had come under criticism in America and elsewhere—for allying itself too easily with American culture, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, *for not adapting its theology adequately to the modern world*.”⁴ This is in important ways a fair and valid assessment. Underwood’s writings about Korea, for example, are not free of elements that to readers today may sound patronizing and presumptuous. But even where clearly encased in outdated modes of language and thought, in Underwood’s case I would argue it is also possible to see well defined foundations of entirely different missiological principles at work, which as I hope to show in this book ultimately rests on his openness to *intercultural* rather than simply *inculturation*. It must be remembered, too, that his public writings, such as his many mission reports and *The Call to Korea, Political, Social, Religious* (1908), were styled for the broad audience of his time and for the purpose of soliciting more support from them for the mission in Korea. The point, then, is not to discount or gloss over the imperialist cultural context to which he had been born and under which he fashioned his mission, but rather to not let it detract from identifying, inquiring after, and ultimately further building on those other principles at work in his ministry that provide valuable insights for how to approach issues today in the globalization of *Christianity* (as distinct from mere globalization of Western Christianity’s outreach).

By happy coincidence, Rev. Laurel Underwood Brundage, a great-granddaughter of Horace Underwood, recently brought to light a previously

3. Lillias Horton Underwood (1851–1921) wrote *Fifteen Years among the Top-Knots, or Life in Korea* (1904) and *Underwood of Korea: Being an Intimate Record of the Life and Work of the Rev. H. G. Underwood, D.D., LL.D., for Thirty-One Years a Missionary of the Presbyterian Board in Korea* (1918).

4. Coakley, “The Seminary Years of the Missionaries Horace G. Underwood and Henry Appenzeller,” 79; emphasis added. For an account of how the phrase “Evangelization of the world in this generation” or the origin of “watchword” came to be, see Robert, “The Origin of the Student Volunteer Watchword,” 146–49.

unknown body of his letters to his family from the early years of his mission in Korea. Written mostly to his brothers John Thomas (1857–1937) and Frederick (1858–91), these letters illuminate Underwood's understanding of the mission and of Korea at its most frank, intimate, and unguarded. His family were in many ways the most important and constant supporters of his mission, not only spiritually and emotionally but financially as well. Although Frederick—the “saintliest” of the Underwood brothers, according to Lillias (Horton Underwood)—would die at the young age of thirty-three, merely six years after Underwood's departure for Korea, Thomas would continue for the remainder of his life, and even beyond Horace's death, to be the mainstay of his brother's many mission projects, including the founding of Yonsei University. Only two years apart in age, the two were not only close as brothers, but also shared an intimate understanding of the lifelong faith that had led Underwood to Korea as well as what he proposed to do there. These letters therefore carry a very different tone from Underwood's other, more official writings. As I have shown elsewhere, Underwood's Korean mission had its unparalleled success in large part because he (1) insightfully separated the empowering message of the gospel from the “guns” of imperialism—and this in spite of his personal entrepreneurial background; (2) proactively engaged in inter-denominational cooperation on both institutional and personal levels; and (3) committed himself to a long term vision of a Christian *Korea*, as distinct from churches or Christians *in* Korea.⁵ Each of these elements is present in these newly discovered letters to family. Indeed they saturate the letters, not as anything of note or new to the brothers, but as principles in which both of them are entirely at home and which they take for granted.

But more than that, Underwood also presages some of the most significant contemporary debates surrounding missiology today, and not necessarily as a negative example. As indicated earlier, this is not to say Underwood's understanding of the mission was free from the limitations and presumptions of the Western worldview of his time (or for that matter that subsequent developments in Korean Christianity have been free of problems). But if questions concerning the theological as well as political implications of separating the gospel from its historical encasing in Western cultural and political imperialism continue to be central to current debates about the dynamics of missions; if the meaning and/or possibility of unity across the many denominations attesting to the enormous variety of cultural and contextual transformations of Christian faith is central to

5. See James Kim, “Bible versus Guns,” 33–37; see also James Kim, “A Copernican Re-Evaluation of Appenzeller and Underwood's Mission in Korea,” 211–34.

the debates concerning "Global Christianity"; if the Church's relation to the structural imbalances in the world's socio-economic and political policies pose a fundamental challenge to the very ontology as well as function of religion in the world, then there, too, Underwood's example offers a relevant and thought-provoking case study for the building of a new, viably global missiology to be applied for the future.

It is neither the ambition nor the scope of this book, however, to analyze what relationship might exist between Underwood and contemporary missiologies. Instead, the aim here is simply to introduce the newly discovered early Underwood letters to his family, and to do so by way of providing an in-depth examination of key elements that would have played a critical role in his formation *and transformation* as a missionary, followed by a discussion of the historical and missiological points of interest raised by the letters themselves. As John Coakley has so astutely pointed out, Underwood was a particular product of his disposition, education, and his time.⁶ Of these, I focus on the different elements of his education—here broadly defined to include his family heritage as well as the formal schooling/training, the socio-dynamic experiences he had in America, and—not least—the deeply saturated Neo-Confucian culture and ethos with which he came into contact and learned from during his time in Korea, as most germane to and as yet absent from the study of Underwood as a missionary, and as central to the study of interculturalism as a new model for missiology.

Chapter 1 will consist of a brief overview of Underwood's life, after which chapter 2 will examine certain formative aspects of his education divided into three sections, each by coincidence spanning roughly thirteen years of his life: (1) his boyhood years in England and France where, in addition to early formal schooling, he absorbed from his family a deeply evangelical, mission-oriented, yet ecumenical social consciousness, as well as lively entrepreneurial mindedness; (2) his American years during which he gained equally from the unmediated personal encounters he had with wide swaths of immigrant population through his passionate if youthful evangelism, as from the training he received from some of the country's elite educational institutions; and (3) the years in Korea covered by the letters in which he encountered the Neo-Confucian culture and ethos that deeply saturated its people and that in many ways not only both echoed and complemented Underwood's Christian spirituality, but in turn ultimately also transformed Underwood's own understanding of the gospel and mission. An important implication for missiology in taking this approach—i.e., taking into account the broad idealisms of both the sending and receiving

6. Coakley, "The Seminary Years."

civilizations as mediating the dynamic and fundamental transformation of *both the missionary as well as the mission field*—is the idea of interculturalization, emphasizing the *mutuality* of enlargement as the path for the future of Global Christianity and its missiology.⁷

Chapter 3 is an analysis of Underwood's letters themselves with particular attention to this perspective of mutual interculturalization. Chapter 4 provides a transcription of the letters themselves.

7. In that sense I use the term "interculturalization" as distinct from both "inculturation" and "intercultural." Inculturation speaks primarily to the kind of contextualization of an idea such that it enables an organic renaissance of the receiving culture from within. While it recognizes the transformative energy within the receiving culture, it nevertheless continues to dichotomize the giver and receiver dynamic. See Schineller, *Handbook on Inculturation*, esp. 6–7, 16–20; Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, esp. 4–16. "Intercultural" is a much broader (and more recent), general term referring to any interaction pertaining to or taking place between two or more cultures, as for example between theology and culture. Intercultural theology has been described as "a domain of theology that pays particular attention to the identity of non-western forms of Christianity in dialogue with western forms." See Cartledge and Cheetham, *Intercultural Theology*.

Music (樂) in Akhak kwebom: an Interculturation of Nobility & Civility

Rachel E. Chung

Introduction (Draft; Not for Citation)

When I first wrote about *yue* (broadly and somewhat misleadingly translated as “Music”) for my dissertation more than twenty years ago in 2002, its unique role in East Asian political as well as ritual discourse was a little known and mostly disregarded subject in the West, save for a handful of pioneering studies by such scholars as Walter Kaufmann, Kenneth de Voskin, Robert Provine, Lothar van Falkenhausen, Scott Cook, and Joseph S. C. Lam.¹ Since then, there have been a few additional studies that have enriched our understanding of *yue*, notably by Erica Fox Brindley.² Yet for all that, the body of modern scholarship on *yue* continues to be disproportionately small given how Confucius himself made *yue* out to be the very horizon point to which every human endeavor, private and public, is ultimately to aspire, and dynasty after dynasty throughout the millennia had made *yue* a central feature of politics as well as of life at court. Four main factors, I think, have stood in the way of more enthusiasm to understand *yue* both in the West and elsewhere:

First, much of the voluminous public or official literature on *yue* consists of arcane details of music theory admixed with things like astronomy and symbolisms bordering on an “alchemy of

¹ Walter Kaufmann’s *Musical References in the Chinese Classics* (1976) serves to provide an excellent overview of the various contexts with which *yue* was associated in early Chinese literature. Kenneth de Voskin’s seminal *A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China* (1982) and “Early Chinese Music and the Origins of Aesthetic Terminology” (1983) delve into the importance of aural perception as a way of “seeing” and understanding the world in Chinese civilization, and how this extended into spheres far beyond music. *Theories of the Arts in China*, ed. by Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), also contains excellent studies by de Voskin and Tu Wei-ming on early Chinese aesthetics of music. Scott Cook’s *Unity and Diversity in the Musical Thought of Warring States China* (1995) and “The *Lüshih Chunqiu* and the Resolution of Philosophical Dissonance” (2002) offer detailed and insightful analyses of how conflicting philosophies around the concept of harmony coalesced in the early Chinese dynasties. Joseph S. C. Lam’s *State Sacrifices and Music in Ming China: Orthodoxy, Creativity, and Expressiveness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998) is unique for showing how seemingly rigid court ritual music in fact could function as an instrument of creative political as well as ritual expression as late as the Ming dynasty, though it does not differentiate between *yue*’s role in Confucian vs. the more recent Neo-Confucian governing ideologies, possibly because the Ming ritual music itself did not invest in such differentiation. Robert C. Provine’s many studies on Korean Neo-Confucian ritual music, including the latter’s *Essays on Sino-Korean Musicology: Early Sources for Korean Ritual Music*, Traditional Korean Music Series, 2 (Seoul: Iljisa, 1988), provide a wealth of information on textual sources and the historical lineages of musical repertoires from esp. the Neo-Confucian Chosŏn period, but does not relate the music in any way to the *concept* of *yue* as such. This list obviously does not include the large body of scholarship done by scholars in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese languages; even so, it should be noted that the majority of their studies have focused on reconstructing the material details of music in the tradition. For an overview of studies on early Chinese music prior to 1982, see deVoskin, *A Song for One or Two*, p. 4-5.

² See Erica Fox Brindley, *Music, Cosmology, and the Politics of Harmony in Early China* (2013), and *Ancient China and the Yue: Perceptions and Identities on the Southern Frontier, c. 400 BCE-50CE* (2015).

sounds,” not to mention conflicting debates over minutiae of what constitutes “correct” music relative to each specific and constantly changing ritual context in court that it is to accompany. However interesting it may be to note *that* dynasty after dynasty had historically invested heavily in *yue* on such terms, from today’s perspective there is not much motivation to try to wrestle meaning from such literature.

Second, at the other end of the spectrum, accounts of *yue* as individual, essentially private experiences of “being in harmony with all things” tend to be brief and allusive if in the first person, or eulogistic and anecdotal if in the third person, and neither is deemed conducive (or in fashion) for “substantive scholarly” analysis.

Third, since the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1910, China’s programs of modernization and Communization were understood as requiring a strong repudiation if not outright eradication of Confucian traditions and values. However much what they were reacting against were largely the corrupted, ossified shells of once vital Confucian ideals long in need of renewal from within,³ any effort to study *yue* at the heart of the Confucian socio-political idealism could only be suspect in that context.

And last but in some ways even more fundamentally, there is the fact that Confucius’ approach to pedagogy was to leave *yue* very deliberately in “negative space” – that is, its essential nature and workings hinted at *but left unarticulated* – so that it might be realized naturally and freely as a *byproduct* in the course of human endeavors, and not arrogated by interests or institutions.

It was extraordinary serendipity, then, that in taking a closer look at Sǒng Hyŏn (成僎, 1439-1504)’s short and largely ignored preface to his collaborative magnum opus, *Akhak kwebŏm* (樂學軌範, 1493; henceforth *Model for Study of Music*), I unexpectedly found a text that *itself* broke with the first and the last of the above, while at the same time cutting a direct path to addressing the second and the third -- though it was only gradually that I came to realize just how radical and historically significant this was within the body of *yue* literature both before and after it. Essentially, what Sǒng Hyŏn articulated in the late fifteenth century was a new and distinctly modern approach for discoursing on *yue*, founded on greater socio-political objectivity as well as a new liberal ideology that went against more than two millennia of tradition. His approach did something else as well. It subtly changed the understanding of *yue* from a *condition* upon which social harmony is to be had, to an *analogy* from which to draw practical human principles of social harmony. This was seed of a radical and potentially liberating change, and not as obvious a step as one might suppose. After all, it is not uncommon to find major traditions and/or pockets of traditions even today that hold a variety of ritual proprieties as non-negotiable requisites to achieving desired ends. Equally important in my view is that, in spite of its brevity Sǒng Hyŏn’s preface gives voice to three basic tenets that make up the backbone of “Asian democracy.” Very different from Western-styled democracy, its ethos is different yet also from the kinds of paternalistic “ruling for the benefit of the people” argument that has been

³ See James Jinhong Kim, “A Review of Heup Young Kim’s *Theology of Dao: a*” in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 1-6, 2019, 3.

the mainstay of various “Asian democracies” in the twentieth century, ranging from Yoshino Sakuzo’s “*minbon shugi*,” to Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew, to indeed the pyramid-form electoral system in the People’s Republic of China itself. In that sense how Sǒng Hyǒn sees a society of *yue* borders closer to what we might name a “communitocracy.” Instead of focusing on the location of sovereignty or indeed even the purpose and limitations of sovereignty, Sǒng Hyǒn points to the nature of “civil society” itself toward which rulers and the ruled must contribute equally in their different functions. He suggests that, as with music, a civil society is one that allows for some “deviations” from absolute consonance or unity, with the understanding that this is what heightens and enriches the overall experience of harmony, as long as the deviations are not allowed destroy the overall balance in favor of harmoniousness. Moreover, as there are different types of music there are different classes and cultures of peoples, yet the fundamental essence of all of them are but applications of codifications of principles of order found in nature. And finally, like music, civil societies depend not only on the ability of those in leadership to unite the people in the appreciation of these premises (“prescriptive”); the appreciation must derive equally from the willingness and ability of individual citizens to embody them in daily affairs and interactions (“descriptive”) above and beyond attachments to immediate and self-centered gain. Unlike Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) Sǒng Hyǒn does not play with ideas of a classless society insulated from the interference of outsiders, nor does he call for more “democratically minded” leadership as Huang Zongxi would with his *Waiting for the Dawn* (1662). He does not undertake to rethink the nature of legitimacy in relations between political authority and individual freedom as Jean-Jacques Rousseau would in *The Social Contract* (1762). Instead, by *NOT* seeking to define the boundaries of harmony between unity and diversity, neither affirming nor denying the place of class and cultural differences, and neither giving more authority to leadership nor to citizenship, what Sǒng Hyǒn gives us is a picture of the “mean 中庸” at the core of what we mean by “civil” society, all the while leaving open (in negative space) the question of the means a given society might take at any particular point in time to arrive at that *yue* in ways appropriate to *its* unique contexts in that moment for our critical thinking through critical feelings as individuals. Instead of suggesting *a* corrective means, as many political thinkers would come to argue, his approach reminds us of the general direction toward which different ideologies are but different corrective (and reactive) approaches devised by differences of real and perceived circumstance/context. Sǒng Hyǒn’s ideas may not be new, in the sense that their roots may be found (or found to be implied) in early Chinese classics such as the *Record of Music* and *Record of Rites*. But his bringing them to the fore in such clear, direct, streamlined fashion gave them a new clarity and forcefulness as a lens by which to see the tradition of *yue* anew.

It is interesting that Sǒng Hyǒn chose to articulate such groundbreaking ideas in a preface (序文) to a text like the *Model for Study of Music*. On the one hand the contents of the main body of *Model* is as a bastion of tradition and conformity, a consolidation of existing musical materials, knowledge, and practices from throughout Chinese classical civil culture into a single

easy-to-use source, including most of all the ritual music that was held in utmost importance by the Chosŏn court. Once completed, it was held as the standard, and reprinted numerous times throughout the subsequent 400 years of the dynasty. It's not surprising that Walter Kaufmann relied on the illustrations of musical instruments in *Model for Study of Music* for his own *Musical References in the Chinese Classics*, for example, on grounds that "many musical instruments of China had undergone changes while those imported into Korea more or less retained their ancient shapes."⁴ The chapters on how to derive pitches and modes in tune with one another, and how to apply the modal system so derived, similarly don't deviate from long established tradition. Sŏng Hyŏn mentions by name Cai Yuanding (蔡元定, 1135-1198), an early proponent of equal temperament whose treatise *New Treatise on Pitch Pipes* (*Lǚlǚ Xīnshū* 律呂新書) had been a catalyst that set off King Sejong's pursuit of correctly pitched instruments of ritual music, including large bronze bell sets and stone chimes, but otherwise makes no move to incorporate or explore anything so marginal in the body of *Model for Study of Music* itself.⁵ Indeed, the very tone of Sŏng Hyŏn's writing throughout is more reflective than argumentative. On the other hand, however, there can be no question that Sŏng Hyŏn also understood the *Model for Study of Music*'s historic importance, then as now. Commissioned by King Sŏngjong and his court, and coinciding with the centennial of the founding of Chosŏn dynasty (朝鮮 1392-1910), the project was not merely a demonstration of the ruling house's confidence and independence in testing all the technical aspects of musical knowledge and production firsthand, and to consolidate it all into a neatly organized whole of its own making as *the* new classic. It was an answer to the question raised by a century of unprecedented commitment to Neo-Confucian idealism and social experiment: *What should/does "Chosŏn (Korean) civilization" mean?*

For reasons we shall see in Chapter One, this was a question that the rulers of Chosŏn had been intensely engaged with from the very founding of the dynasty itself -- perhaps to an extent quite unusual in the world of dynasties, as such things go. By the end of Chosŏn's first century, the question had become an existential as much as a political one. Locked to the sidelines of the much larger and more powerful Ming China (1368-1644), in accordance with which Chosŏn found itself often having to adjust even its domestic policies, yet at the same time recognizing

⁴ Kaufmann, *Musical References in the Chinese Classics* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1976), 13. Since its completion in 1493 the *Model for Study of Music* was reprinted numerous times in Korea for the next 400 years until the end of the Chosŏn dynasty, and continues to be consulted both in and outside Korea today as a prime source on Confucian and Neo-Confucian court and ritual musical practices.

⁵ Of the 163 volumes (or fascicles) that make up the *Sejong sillok* (*Annals of King Sejong*, completed in 1454), volumes 136-147 deal specifically with ritual music. The preface to those twelve volumes on music states that "In the autumn of [1430], [King Sejong] conducted a close reading and explanation (*gangdok*) of Cai Yuanding's *New Treatise on Pitch Pipes* during the royal lectures. Greatly impressed by its meticulous reasoning and orderliness of thought given to the high and low (尊卑) of matters, he desired to craft pitch pipes (*hwangjong*). Yet, as the pitch of *hwangjong* was not easily ascertainable, he treated the matter as of the utmost importance." While Cai's idea of equal temperament was never adopted, none other than Zhu Xi wrote a cautious yet encouraging preface to his treatise, praising its scholarly rigor and innovative approach for reaffirming the importance of music in maintaining societal harmony and aligning human behavior with cosmic principles, thus giving the work significant intellectual and moral credibility within Neo-Confucian scholarly circles.

how much of its own high culture and ideals owed to that of the Chinese civilization, it was no mere theoretical question to ask what the difficult work of maintaining real national independence (as distinct from independence in name only) was *for*. *Yue* was in many ways the arena ideally suited for discoursing on such questions. Conceptually, *yue* had been understood since time immemorial to both contribute to and to be an accurate measure of extant harmony (or the lack thereof) in a society, thus allowing room for carefully thought out experimentations as well as national self-reflection. Politically as well, there was the long and well established tradition of *yue* as an instrument of diplomacy and negotiative discourse between parties trained to understand its subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) language.⁶ In the century between the founding of Chosŏn and the publication of *Model for Study of Music*, Chosŏn had had nine successive kings, only four of whom reigned for longer than ten years. Of the four, three—Kings Sejong (世宗, r. 1417-1450), Sejo (世祖, r. 1455-1468), and Sŏngjong (成宗, r. 1469-1494)—were not only exceptional musicians in their own right but took a strong interest, personal as well as political, in exploring the answers to the question through the discourse of *yue*. Having trained as a young official under one such king, and serving long as a high official under another, Sŏng Hyŏn writes about the work of these three kings in his preface. In other words, Sŏng Hyŏn's ideas did not come about in a vacuum. They were the culmination of a century and more of wrestling with Neo-Confucian questions of what constitutes a civil society, and the commitments necessary to maintain it. It is a question perhaps even more relevant today than when I first explored Sŏng Hyŏn's text more than two decades ago.

Outline of Chapters

Since Sŏng Hyŏn's writing represents a culmination, this book is organized into five chapters, beginning with an overview of landmark developments along the way to his work, followed by a close analysis of the preface to *Model for Study of Music* and its translation in English, and closing with some reflections on what global communities today—some five hundred years later now—might take away from that arc of development.

Chapter One begins by examining the earliest extant writings on *yue* from ancient China, to lay the groundwork on some of the complexity of the early Confucian tradition surrounding *yue*. It then continues with a brief discussion of the Neo-Confucian ideas from the twelfth century that infused Confucianism with new vitality while at the same time posing new challenges to the governing elite—challenges that would be taken up by Ming and Qing China, but arguably with greater commitment and efficacy in the smaller and more intimate setting of Chosŏn Korea.⁷ The focus then turns to the work of three Chosŏn kings who, each from their

⁶ Arguably the most famous instance of these is referred to in the *Analects*, where Confucius criticizes the Marquis of _____, a powerful lord of a vassal state to the Zhou, for holding a musical event where eight rows of eight dancers each performed (a total of 64 dancers). Having 8x8 dancers perform at once was the prerogative solely of the Son of Heaven; to flout this was tantamount to declaring a direct challenge, albeit in a manner that perhaps left more room for dissembling and negotiation than, say, throwing down the gauntlet or declaring war.

⁷ For the most part the Neo-Confucian thinkers of the Song dynasty (960-1279)—Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, the Cheng Brothers, Zhu Xi—did not themselves write about *yue*. As scholar-officials who chose to serve well outside the court and capital they would have had little access or even the right to be concerned with something so

respective individual vantage points, were most concerned with turning *yue* from the previous Koryo dynasty's Confucian and Buddhist syncretic affair to a new Neo-Confucian orientation. For King Sejong (r. 1418-1450), whose Neo-Confucian concern for people extended even to inventing a whole new alphabet system called Han'gul in order to enable the gift of universal literacy, the most urgent issue facing the establishment of *yue* in Korea in the early decades of the dynasty was how to reconcile the theoretical correctness of the authoritative classical texts and traditions with the affective needs of his non-Chinese court and people. Insofar as those classics formed the core beliefs of the very Neo-Confucian ideology for and on which Chosŏn itself had been founded, state rites and music needed to adhere absolutely to the principles outlined in those classics, yet it was equally important for him that this music also speak to the people of Korea on terms intimate, natural, and moving to *them*. After all, Neo-Confucianism itself claimed, "Unity of principle, *diversity of its applications* [befitting context]." For King Sejong, then, the first order of concern for establishing *yue* on Korean terms meant on the one hand giving support to indigenous mastery of the scientific knowledge and technological know-how needed to make the complete set of musical instruments for a full orchestra (representative of the cosmos), including the massive tuned bronze bells and stone chimes, without having to rely on any outside help or resources. On the other, it meant concurrently working to create a new body of ritual music repertory that satisfied both Korean musical affinities as much as the "universal" musical principles enumerated in the classics. Assisting the King in both of these tasks was Pak Yŏn (朴堧 1378-1458), the musician and music theoretician whose sometimes ingenious approaches to reconciling the universal and the particular will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

For King Sejo (r. 1455-1468), the stakes were in many ways much more intensely personal and political. When King Sejong died, his eldest son Munjong (文宗, r. 1450-1452) succeeded him, only to pass away less than two years later, leaving his eleven year old son Danjong (端宗, r. 1452-1455) to rule through a Council of regent ministers. As the brilliant second son of King Sejong, Sejo made himself king after overthrowing—and eventually executing—his young nephew and a large number of scholar-officials who refused to bow to him out of loyalty to the rules of succession. The violence shocked the nation, and left it deeply divided. For Sejo who had revered both his father and elder brother, and ultimately proved himself an effective ruler, there was inevitably the constant question of legitimacy, not simply of his reign or of the sincerity of his filial feelings as a son and younger brother, but of the very nature of civil society itself. Are there instances when the very needs of civil society call on and require violent means from its members, even against parts of itself? If so, what are those instances, and who is qualified to take on such unenviable task? Sejo's wrestling with the question led in part to his many pragmatic reforms of the government, including streamlining the multiple and overlapping bureaus of music at court into a single, better organized office for greater unity and efficiency. But his greatest contribution to the evolution of *yue* in Chosŏn may have been through his philosophizing of it with the kinds of questions he frequently put to his ministers at court as well as on civil service examinations, elevating the debate beyond its tradition of complex semiotics.

King Sŏngjong (r. 1469-1494) had a very different path to the throne, and a very different

exclusively belonging to the Emperor's domain as ritual music at court. We cannot know whether it ever occurred to them to connect their transformative ideas on the metaphysics of "human nature" and emphasis on universal civil education to rethinking the very notion of *yue*; but it would take the better part of three hundred years for those ideas to saturate and "trickle down" to considerations of what they implied for *yue*.

kind of reign. As indicated by his posthumous reign name “Sǒngjong (成宗),” he was widely regarded as the king who achieved, brought to fruition, or made complete the mature state. But his ascent to power came about only after many side turns. As fate would have it, Sejo’s eldest son and crown prince died before the age of twenty, leaving two young sons of his own as heirs to the throne. Perhaps afraid to tempt fate, however, Sejo chose to pass the throne to his second son Yejong instead, then nineteen, who then died barely fifteen months into his reign (r. 1468-1469), leaving a three year old son and heir in turn. Rather than crown the toddler with expectations of a long regency, the court reverted the succession back to Sejo’s two grandsons by his eldest son, but interestingly it was the *younger* of the two boys who at age twelve was crowned over his apparently highly regarded and very capable elder brother.⁸ In fact, to help bolster his legitimacy, the Cabinet officially had Sǒngjong become an adopted son of Yejong, his deceased uncle—a proceeding he fought hard to overturn as soon as he gained his majority in 1475. From the very beginning, then, Sǒngjong was keenly aware of the politics that made him king (it is widely assumed that Han Myǒng-hwe, Sǒngjong’s father-in-law and the most powerful minister of state since the early days of Sejo’s reign, had a major hand in the maneuver), of how much he owed to his elder brother’s extraordinary self-effacing life for the peace of his reign (they would maintain a close and intimate relationship for twenty years until the elder’s death in 1489 at age thirty-four), and of the many subtle dynamics that kept the power at court in balance. By choice as much as by circumstance, then, Sǒngjong took to the task of codifying the laws and practices of Chosǒn as a unified Neo-Confucian society, taking the idealism that King Sejong had personified and the reformist zeal of King Sejo, and modifying them arguably with more experience of human nature, and more pragmatic attitude toward the workings of civil society with its many divided interests. The first such text officially completed and put into practice during his reign was the *Gyǒng’guk Daejǒn* (經國大典 *The Great Code for State Administration*; 1470)⁹; the last major code of his reign was, fittingly, the *Model for Study of Music*.

To better show the contrast between earlier understanding of *yue* and Sǒng Hyǒn’s new approach, Chapter Two takes a close look at *yue* through the eyes of Pak Yǒn, mentioned earlier, using two sample excerpts from the many memorials he submitted to rectify *yue* throughout his long career. As the chief architect of *yue* under King Sejong, Pak’s importance and influence on the history and content of court ritual music in Chosǒn Korea cannot be overstated. Working closely with King Sejong, he is widely credited with almost single-handedly overhauling Confucian music theory, orchestra, repertory, and practices in Korea through painstaking historical research and experimentation, such that it would be no exaggeration to say much of the

⁸ The generally accepted official line was that the elder prince was of a weaker constitution, thereby not conducive to political stability much desired at the time. It says much about the character of Prince Wolsan, as he would come to be known, that he went on to live an exemplary life supporting his younger brother’s rule, enjoying a quiet life of the arts. Even as a teenager he was noted for never even in the smallest way doing or saying anything that might lead to any speculation of his interest in challenging his brother.

⁹ In many ways *Gyǒng’guk Daejǒn* had been a work in progress since the very founding of the dynasty. In 1394 Chǒng Tojǒn (1342-1389), the chief founding minister of Chosǒn, first presented King T’aejo with *Chosǒn Gyǒng’guk-jǒn* (*Chosǒn Code for State Administration*), which outlined the Neo-Confucian vision of the nation for the new dynasty. After receiving sporadic revisions in subsequent decades, the text was much expanded structurally and its content greatly revised under the direction of King Sejo. The version initially completed in 1470 under Sǒngjong (then merely thirteen years old) was largely founded on Sejo’s work, but the work continued to undergo several more significant revisions during Sǒngjong’s majority until it finally achieved its final form in 1485. It is this 1485 version that became the standard for the remainder the dynasty until 1910, and is widely recognized as *Gyǒng’guk Daejǒn* today. Any subsequent amendments were clearly marked against that standard as amendment.

contents in the main body of the *Model for Study of Music* were based on his work. But for all his willingness to engage in creative solutions when needing to reconcile conflicting historical claims or fill in unknowable historical blanks, Pak's understanding of *yue* and the manner of its functioning was very much in keeping with the millennia of tradition preceding him. As the two sample memorials show,¹⁰ *yue* was fundamentally the art of putting together the correct combination of musical elements, each with its own accrued layers of semiotic meanings and associations, in knowledgeable and timely response to the signs occurring in nature and the cosmos, so as to properly harness the "energies" from both and achieve a state where nature, "spirits," and the human world mutually help balance and harmonize one another. In the first excerpt, Pak presents a short overview of how the basic principles of *yue* were derived from observing and reflecting nature; in the longer and more detailed second excerpt, he discusses how to balance *yin* and *yang* elements in ritual music, and why doing so is so paramount for proper workings of nature/spirits. Examined close-up in this way, the tradition can look both mechanistic and esoteric. Still, we might note that such mechanistic understanding carries at its core a fundamental belief that the primary function of the "science" of music is to link nature and human moral response so as to allow them to affect one another.

Chapter Three shifts the focus to Sŏng Hyŏn, and the immediate events leading up to the compilation of the *Model for Study of Music*. Unlike Pak, whose interests and abilities were more narrowly limited to the study and administration of music in spite of having entered court service through the civil service examinations, Sŏng Hyŏn was a scholar-official and literati of the first rank.¹¹ Upon passing the civil service examinations in 1462 at age 23, he was recognized as a gifted scholar and appointed to the Office of Historical Records,¹² then continued to rise in ranks through mostly offices having to do with administration of cultural policies and education. But his career also included turns as governor in three different provinces, as ambassador to China on numerous occasions, and as Associate Judge in the

¹⁰ The two excerpts chosen are among those included in the *Akko* (樂考; *Investigation of Music*) section of *Chŭngbo munhŏn pigo* (增補文獻備考; *Reference Compilation of Documents*), the encyclopedic collection of documents and sources recognized and culled by generations of Korean scholars as historically significant to Korea's civil order. Its 258 books are divided into sixteen subject categories that include genealogy, geography, kings, rites, music, military, law and punishment, land and taxation, fiscal records, census, commerce, diplomatic relations, civil services, education, government offices, and arts and literature. Modeled after the various *Tung-kao* (通考) in China, the *Reference Compilation* was commissioned by King Yŏngjo (r. 1724-1776) in December of 1769, and completed and published by the Korean government between 1903-5. Of the 258 books, nineteen collectively entitled the *Akko* (樂考; *Investigation of Music*) are dedicated to *yue*, and include excerpts from the *Model for Study of Music* itself as well as memorials by Pak Yŏn and others.

¹¹ Civil service examinations refer to a standard of qualifications for scholar-officials in China, Korea, and Vietnam that covered Confucian--and later Neo-Confucian--learning. In China, an early form of the examinations helped recruit "worthy" officials as early as the Han dynasty. After the fourteenth century, the examinations focused on the understanding of Neo-Confucian classics generally known as the "Four Books and Five Classics," but could also test the applicants' knowledge of history and institutions, as well as his ability to debate policy. On the origin and history of the civil service examinations in China, see Thomas H.C. Lee, *Education in Traditional China: a History*, Handbook of Oriental Studies, vol. 13 (Leiden, Boston, and Koln: Brill, 2000), 104-70. In Korea, the examinations were adopted in 958 and continued until 1894. For an overview of the civil service examinations in Korea, see Jin-Hong Kim, *Yi Yulgok's View of Neo-Confucian Education in Practice* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2000; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms), 5 and 28-42.

¹² The Office of Historical Records was a central administrative institution responsible for documenting significant political, military, ritual, and other important events of state as official records of the country; drafting and safekeeping documents related to the royal family; and providing education on matters of ritual etiquette. See

Ministry of Justice (刑曹參判 Hyŏngjo champ'an),¹³ before concurrent appointments in 1493 as the Minister of Rites (禮曹判書 Yejo p'ansŏ) and Director of the Office of Music (掌樂院提調 Jang'ak'won jejo). All in all, having entered court service as a historian during Sejo's reign, and observing at close range Sŏngjong's push to unify administration and laws throughout the land along with the inevitable contentious arguments and maneuverings it wrought among different parties to safeguard their own interests, Sŏng Hyŏn witnessed firsthand the difficulties of reform "from within" where it mattered most. As a prolific and accomplished writer, he voiced his perspectives and concerns on these and other matters in a three-part discourse in the form of dialogues among various imaginary characters, called the *Discourses of Bu'hyuja* (浮休子談論 *Bu'hyuja damlon*).¹⁴ But as much as the *Discourses* and other political writings provide insights into his more critical perspectives and views, it is his several collections of more personal essays and reflections—often humorous, sharply observant accounts of people, social mores, and anecdotal stories, etc.—that illuminate the character and sensibilities of the man who co-edited the *Model for Study of Music* with the controversial Yu Ja'gwang (柳子光, 1439-1512), and wrote its preface.¹⁵

Chapter Four is a close reading of Sŏng Hyŏn's preface, and so also the heart of this book. If Pak Yŏn's insistent attention to historical and scientific "authenticity" represents efforts of the transitional period to push past the saturated Confucian/Buddhist syncretic culture inherited from the late Koryŏ dynasty toward establishing a new, as yet unpracticed culture indicated by Neo-Confucian idealism, Sŏng Hyŏn's writing half a century later shows him wearing Neo-Confucian metaphysics as comfortably as one's everyday clothes. Indeed, Sŏng Hyŏn's preface seems closely modeled after Zhu Xi's own prefaces to such classics as the *Great Learning* (大學) and the *Mean* (中庸), including the structure whereby he begins with an overview of *yue*'s substance or nature, followed by a critical review of its practice in ancient times and subsequent loss into mere husks of its true essence, and closing with reflections on the nature of "*yue*'s teachings" in practical social application. For all their brevity and modest tone, Zhu Xi's prefaces had catapulted those classics to a new central position within Neo-Confucian thought and curriculum by showing how they could be read anew as tying together the metaphysics of the "unity and universality of human moral nature" with the responsibility of rulers to proactively help develop that moral nature universally as a prerequisite to sound government itself.¹⁶ Sŏng Hyŏn similarly attempts to elevate the meaning of a manual-like treatise that is *Model for Study of Music* into a meditation on what it means for "*yue*" to uplift society as a whole and for that society to reflect a state of *yue*. As a Neo-Confucian text commissioned by the state it is to be

¹³ As Associate Judge Sŏng Hyŏn would have participated in the deliberation of important legal cases, including criminal cases, and helped maintain law and order within the state as a whole with through understanding of legal principles and precedents.

¹⁴ Buhyuja was one of Sŏng Hyŏn's style names, meaning literally "one who floats in rest." The titular character in the work may be described as his avatar of sorts.

¹⁵ Among his writings, the collection of essays known as *Yongjae chonghwa* (慵齋叢話) is widely known and regarded a rich source of socio-cultural mores about the period. "Yongjae" was another of Sŏng Hyŏn's style names, meaning "carefree and nimble." Hŏbaekdang was another, meaning "empty blank hall," after which his collection of miscellaneous works, *Hŏbaekdang-jip* is named. His choice of style names bespeaks a man more content to observe from the sidelines than to throw himself wholeheartedly into politics—something he notes in his own autobiography as well.

¹⁶ Wm. Theodore de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Columbia University Press, 1999), 721-2.

expected that Sŏng Hyŏn expounds on the need for Heaven and Man to work together in order for the Way to be realized, and to emphasize the importance of universal moral self-cultivation. What is less expected is the directness with which he broaches such sensitive issues as ruler/ruled relationship, class/cultural relations, and conservative/liberal values -- all through a new view of *yue* as lens. After giving consideration to these matters, the Chapter closes with a copy of Sŏng Hyŏn's preface (written in classical Chinese)¹⁷ and my English translation of it.

In Chapter Five, I share some closing reflections on Sŏng Hyŏn's preface to *Model for Study of Music* as a glocal case study. After all, why should anyone care about a change of conception toward *yue* that took place more than five hundred years ago, especially if the art form relating to it hardly ever gets performed outside of Korea today (and mostly as museum pieces even in Korea)? To mention just one possible reason here, at a time when some level of glocalization is a fact of life for almost every country and person living today, I hope the sense of long term "research and development" leading up to Sŏng Hyŏn's preface offers an encouraging and illuminating argument for the process by which an idea or an ideology imported from outside can become an integral part of one's own culture. By integral I do not mean something that is simply commonplace or everyday part of life, but rather a spark that ignites a fundamental part of local culture to a new creative phase ("interculturalization").¹⁸ In other words, integral to a "*renaissance from within*" that lets a universal/global idea to gain a distinctly and uniquely local application and sensibility, which then over time may come to be seen by others in turn as itself carrying a new importable universal. But to be recognized as a potential "universal" value requires that it be part of a "macro database" and not just a wayward singular idea (to borrow from the language of contemporary AI). The preface to the *Model for Study of Music* may have been the work of one person, but the understanding of *yue* he captures could not come about without the previous work of kings who, instead of being satisfied to take the practice of *yue* as a traditional "consumable good" to be accepted as given, sought to work out and negotiate their real national, cultural, and personal dilemmas *through* it. Put another way, the Neo-Confucian redefinition of *yue* arrived at by Sŏng Hyŏn was as much the fruition of a very *particular* series of inquiries, themselves brought on by perception of context, and the critical thinking unfolding through *them* over time, as much as it was at the same time an interpretation derived "absolutely" from the critical study of Chinese classics relating to *yue*. Culture, thought this way, becomes less a matter of proprietary domain (ours vs. theirs, of the colonized vs. the colonizer, etc.), and more the depth of its "living meaning" in an entity. In that vein, the "sudden" flowering of indigenous Neo-Confucian music culture in Korea in the centuries following the publication of the *Model* likewise was neither sudden nor narrowly attributable to the socio-economic stability

¹⁷ During Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea in 1592, most of the instruments and music scores mentioned in the *Model for Study of Music* were burned or destroyed. The *Model* itself was recovered, however, and reprinted by the court in 1610, 1655, and 1743. The 1610 edition is the oldest copy extant in Korea, currently housed in the Rare Books Collection of the Seoul National University Library. In 1968, a pre-invasion copy was found in the Hosa Bunko Library in Japan, and made available in facsimile editions by Yonsei University Press (1969) and Publishers of Asian Culture (1975). It is a copy of this Yonsei facsimile edition that is provided here and on which I based my translation.

¹⁸ James Jinhong Kim who first used the term interculturalization in this sense, discusses it in context of theological enrichment in his *Global Christianity and the Early Letters of Horace G. Underwood* (2022), xi-xii.

provided by the relatively long reigns of kings Yǒngjo (英祖, r. 1724-1776) and Chǒngjo (正祖, r. 1776-1800). The latter certainly contributed, but the whole can be better understood as result of reaching a certain tipping point in the “popular saturation” of Neo-Confucian dilemmas and their resolutions since the founding of Chosŏn much earlier—an intensity of popular saturation that actually exemplifies the ruler/ruled relationship put forward by Sǒng Hyŏn in his preface.

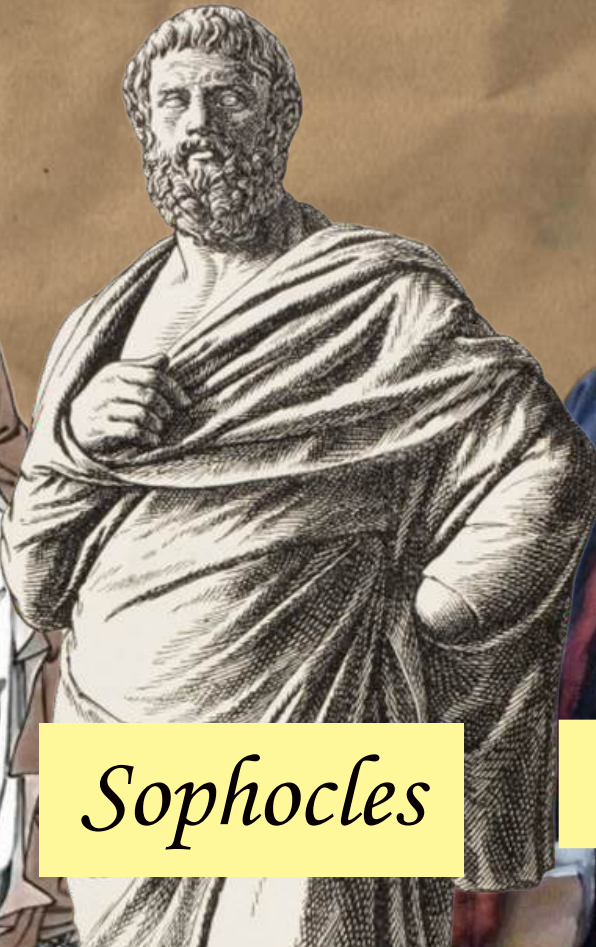
There can be no doubt that the whole of the *Model for Study of Music* is an important historical resource for East Asian studies, bringing together the essentials of Confucian orthodox music theories and practices used for state rites in a clear, detailed, and comprehensive manner, while also demonstrating its integration into the Neo-Confucian Chosŏn dynasty by the end of its formative first century. For that reason it is to be hoped that someone more capable than I will undertake to translate the text in its entirety so as to make it more accessible to scholars everywhere. But in classical East Asian scholarly literature there is a strong tradition of using prefaces to present and/or argue the core philosophical perspective by which to read the work that follows. This is very much the case with Sǒng Hyŏn’s preface to the *Model*, which is why I have thought it worthwhile to focus on it on its own in spite of its brevity. In dealing with the concept of *yue* Sǒng Hyŏn’s work represents nothing less the Neo-Confucian idea of the sublime, existential as much as social and political, as understood by late fifteenth-century Korea. It is my hope that this study will contribute to the revival of *yue* as a vital and contemporary “Asian” value, incorporating ideas from subsequent centuries of rich contacts with musics and their “*yue*-logical” ideas from around the globe.



Columbia **Symposium** 2025



Lao Tzu



Sophocles



*Rabindranath
Tagore*

What is Symposium

today, the world has evolved ,but, our past has left us with beautiful treasures of wisdom in the form of literature. Discussing them is what symposium is all about. Symposium helps us with better understanding of who we are and how different we are. Our school has given us this opportunity wherein we indulge ourselves in symposium discussions and, feel like a critic putting a bunch of different books, poems, or articles next to each other to see how the different perspectives we have.

Mentors

Meet **EMMA** – a junior majoring in
Cognitive Science, with a special
love for creative writing.

One fun fact about her?

*-She is a part of a band that plays Irish music
—though, funny enough, she is not really
Irish!*

A movie or song that resonates with Symposium, according to her?

*-Dead Poets Society—though
preferably without the deaths!*

Has literature shaped her perspective?

*-Definitely, English classes, and especially
seminars, opened her up to old texts from both
the US and UK,*

How do people describe her impact once she leaves the room?

*-She would like to think it's her
“friendly nature.”*

How does she see Daoism in today's world?

*She says Daoism isn't about success but
perspective—it helps her make life choices
by going with the flow*

How does she usually spend her free time?

*By Playing guitar, taking art classes,
or just being outside whenever she
can.*

Mentors

MEET **CHRISTOPHER** - AN ENGLISH MAJOR, THOUGH INTERESTINGLY, HE BEGAN AS A COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENT BEFORE FOLLOWING HIS PASSION FOR LITERATURE.

Does he connect philosophy to literature?

Yes—he relates strongly to Krishna’s advice to Arjuna about duty, linking it to Daoism’s flow while still seeing many possible ways to live.

How do people usually perceive him?

-Many think he’s serious, but he insists there’s a playful side beneath that first impression

What does he love about Columbia?

-He’s amazed by how much living in New York itself shapes and supports education—it’s truly part of the learning experience.

How does he spend his free time?

-He enjoys reading, writing, hiking, and walking dogs—activities that balance intellect with nature.

What makes him happiest on the campus of our school?

-Rock climbing, the dining hall staff’s friendliness, and of course, the lively symposium.

What are his impressions of India?

-Hospitality. He’s struck by how warm and welcoming people are.

Deep Dive into Symposium

What do Creon and Antigone teach about Dao, the universe's flow?

Respecting natural balance brings harmony; resisting it, like Creon, leads to consequences.

Would people still be divided if the king lacked personal desires?

Likely less divided, but his power still strongly shaped their views.

Can Jaising in Sacrifice relate to Ismene in Antigone?

Yes, both avoid sides at first, but their choices lead to very different outcomes.

How is a symposium different from a classroom?

Unlike structured classrooms, symposiums encourage open, peer-to-peer dialogue where everyone contributes, exploring diverse perspectives and engaging in deeper, shared discussions.

How does Sacrifice connect with Daoism?

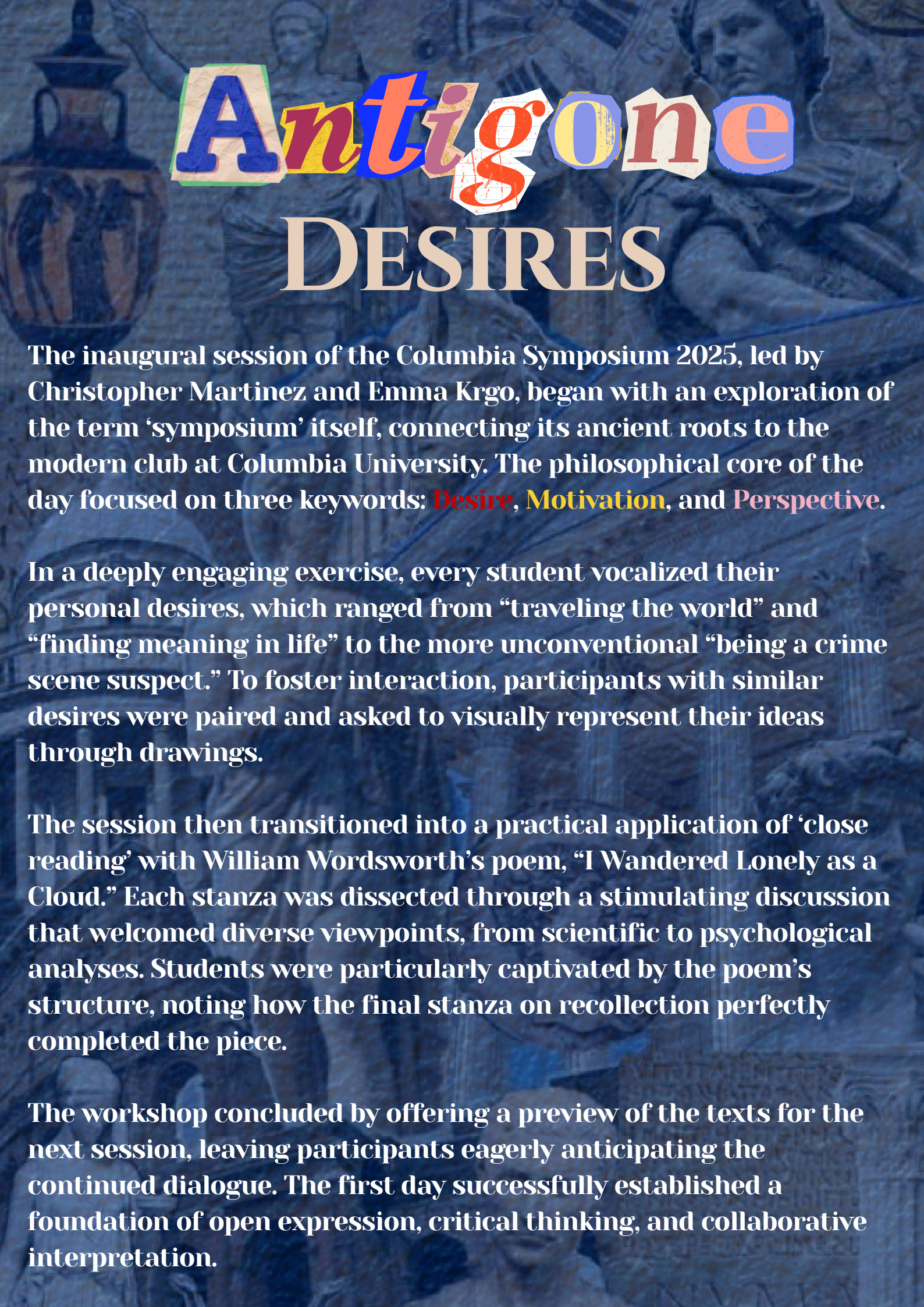
It shows peace comes from accepting life's flow, not resisting destiny.

In our very first session, To increase interaction amongst themselves, participants were paired with others who had similar desires and asked to visually represent their ideas through drawings. The activity showcased how any two similar desires could take on entirely different meanings depending on the person's perspective.

Within 1 hour, the session reached a discussion about 'close reading', and then a mock practice with the poem, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth. Each stanza of the poem was discussed engagingly and with interesting opinions. From scientific views to psychological perspectives, deciphering the poem invited creative insights. The binding of the poem with the last stanza and the way it completed the poem with itself kept the students on a roll of interpretations. At last, the session ended with snippets of the text that will be discussed in the next session.

I wandered lonely as a cloud

-William Wordsworth



Antigone

DESIRES

The inaugural session of the Columbia Symposium 2025, led by Christopher Martinez and Emma Krgo, began with an exploration of the term ‘symposium’ itself, connecting its ancient roots to the modern club at Columbia University. The philosophical core of the day focused on three keywords: **Desire**, **Motivation**, and **Perspective**.

In a deeply engaging exercise, every student vocalized their personal desires, which ranged from “traveling the world” and “finding meaning in life” to the more unconventional “being a crime scene suspect.” To foster interaction, participants with similar desires were paired and asked to visually represent their ideas through drawings.

The session then transitioned into a practical application of ‘close reading’ with William Wordsworth’s poem, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud.” Each stanza was dissected through a stimulating discussion that welcomed diverse viewpoints, from scientific to psychological analyses. Students were particularly captivated by the poem’s structure, noting how the final stanza on recollection perfectly completed the piece.

The workshop concluded by offering a preview of the texts for the next session, leaving participants eagerly anticipating the continued dialogue. The first day successfully established a foundation of open expression, critical thinking, and collaborative interpretation.

Antigone

DAY-2

The conversation began by discussing how the Chorus at first upheld Creon's patriarchal rule by firmly supporting the rule of law. However, as the tragedy unfolded, their conviction grew weaker. Their opinions changed over time, and as a result of events, they initially sided with Creon, then with Haemon, and finally, honored Antigone. This development revealed a more profound reality: wisdom is not confined to age but rather to the capacity to grow and change via experience.

From the start, Creon was the most talked-about character—not because of his power, but rather because of his pride and stubbornness, which ultimately led to his downfall. One of the participants drew an interesting parallel between Creon and Ravana from Indian mythology—both strong leaders deposed by their ego. The Chorus admired Antigone's unshakeable determination, even going so far as to compare her to a goddess, and yet condemned her as a fool for putting her life at risk rather than submitting to Creon's edict.

The play left enduring lessons: age, whether elder or younger, does not guarantee wisdom; growth is gradual, and clarity—like Antigone's—comes from important values.

Lastly, it reminds us that death is permanent and unchanging, but life moves forward, carrying its learnings and importance.

Daoism

DAY-1

The session with professors from Columbia University began with the Daodejing's words: "The Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way; the name that can be named is not the constant name." This opened a dialogue on Daoist philosophy, where the "Way" was seen as the flow of the universe—beyond words, beyond permanence, and always changing. It was reflected that naming creates opposites, while the Dao itself transcends such limits.

Discussions touched on destiny and desire, noting the paradox that giving up desire is still a form of desire. Destiny, it was agreed, is not fixed but shaped by choices and effort, while life's purpose is not taught but experienced. Some connected these views to nihilism, others to harmony with nature, showing Daoism embraces openness over certainty.

The dialogue also explored Daoist ideas of effortlessness and emptiness. The sage, it was noted, achieves without clinging to results, acting in alignment with the flow rather than competing in the "rat race." Emptiness was seen as equally important as presence: the hub of a wheel, the hollow of a vessel, and the space within a room all reveal usefulness through absence. These metaphors encouraged a shift in perspective, valuing what is unseen as much as the visible. The session itself reflected Daoism, not as a rigid lecture, but as an experience to feel and reflect upon. Instead of answers, participants left with curiosity, openness, and a sense of the "gateway of all subtleties"—a willingness to embrace mystery, contradiction, and the quiet wisdom of the Way.

Daoism

The concept of Yin & Yang

On the second day of discussing daoism, the students kicked off the session by getting into a debate about the human boundations of knowledge. While some argued that human wisdom has no limit, while others rebutted by saying that there is a limit to human understanding. The following debate led the students to discuss a philosophy by Socrates, “I know nothing” giving the students an existential crisis

Some students sat back in thought, visibly unsettled. Others leaned forward, eager to test the paradox further. The discussion unfolded like waves—assertion followed by reflection, rebuttal followed by silence. It was as if Daoism and Socratic philosophy had conspired to weave a single lesson: that wisdom is not the accumulation of answers, but the courage to dwell within questions.

By the end, the classroom carried an almost sacred stillness.

Laughter from the start of the session had given way to contemplative expressions—faces marked not by despair, but by recognition. In that moment, they were not just studying philosophy; they were experiencing it. The Daoist embrace of paradox, the Socratic humility before truth, and their own restless curiosity had merged into something alive.

The session closed not with resolution, but with a shared awareness: that perhaps the search for wisdom is less about conquering the unknown, and more about learning to live gracefully within its mystery.

Sacrifice

DHARMA & KARMA

The symposium on Rabindranath Tagore's *Sacrifice* explored the tension between dharma and karma—divine law and human responsibility—through characters across different traditions. Jaisingh from Tagore's *Sacrifice* was a central focus, portrayed as brave and intellectual enough to question rigid customs unlike Raghupati, who accepted them blindly. The curse on Gumavati, which denied her a child and demanded the sacrifice of three hundred children and a hundred buffaloes, was justified by Raghupati as the unquestionable will of the gods. For Jaisingh and Govinda, however, such beliefs could not be embraced without reflection. Jaisingh's resistance to this blind faith parallels Arjuna's dilemma in the *Mahabharata*, where divine decree clashed with human compassion and moral clarity.

This struggle finds a parallel in Haemon from Sophocles' *Antigone*, who defies his father Creon in defense of justice and love. Haemon's resistance, like Jaisingh's and Arjuna's, reveals the suffering born from family obligations, rigid traditions, and promises that bind individuals to painful choices. These figures collectively highlight how the weight of societal duty and divine expectation forces humans into moral struggles that shape both personal suffering and growth. Viewed alongside Daoist philosophy, these texts emphasize harmony, simplicity, and soulful living as a path to navigate such dilemmas.

Daoism suggests balance within the natural order of life, where compassion and conscious choice matter more than blind obedience. In times of uncertainty and darkness, these narratives affirm that it is the pursuit of larger goodness and the hope for renewal that guides individuals toward light and meaning.

Sacrifice

DAY-2

The symposium on Rabindranath Tagore's *Sacrifice* delved into the complex themes of morality, faith, and human connection. At the center of the discussion was Jaising, a character torn between conscience, choice, and destiny. Yet participants debated whether Jaising was truly the protagonist, or whether the role belonged instead to Govinda, Raghupati, the goddess, or even to the very conflict that drives the play. The title itself was seen as multilayered, as each character undertakes a sacrifice—whether motivated by love, desire, or faith—each convinced of their own centrality to the narrative. The ambiguous voice that haunts the drama sparked further dialogue, raising questions of divine authority, hallucination, or human manipulation.

The exploration of love revealed it as perhaps the greatest sacrifice, requiring acceptance of human flaws and imperfections. Raghupati's transformation from deep devotion to atheism after the death of his son was recognized as one of the play's most powerful shifts, while Aparna's forgiveness of him was regarded as the most humane act of sacrifice. Raghupati's request for one day before Jaising's sacrifice provoked speculation—was it an act of hesitation, conspiracy with Gumavati, or an attempt to resist exile?

The symposium concluded that blind faith bound to rigid tradition can be destructive, while true faith must rest on clarity, compassion, and responsibility. Ultimately, *Sacrifice* was seen as a meditation on universal truths, showing that when ritual fades, it is love, duty, and human bonds that endure.



The background image shows a classroom setting. In the foreground, the backs of several students' heads are visible as they sit in red chairs. In the background, a presentation screen displays a slide with the word 'Symposium' and some diagrams. A woman, presumably Mrs. Rupal Gupta Khandelwal, is standing at a podium on the right side of the stage, addressing the class. Other people are visible on the stage, including a man in a blue shirt and a woman in a white dress.

The session with Mrs. Rupal Gupta Khandelwal marked the end of this beautiful journey leaving the students with undying wisdom and full hearts.

In the session, Mrs. Rupal gave the students insights about the Columbia University and her career. Later on clearing their doubts. After the session, the students gave their final goodbyes to the mentors by discussing about the final sacrifices they and the characters in the texts made and what were their takeaways from the journey. To conclude, this wasn't just the end it was a part of the universal flow that tied all of us together in a wise journey.

In the end, we show immense gratitude towards the Emerald Heights counselling centre- Takshilla for providing us this opportunity that helped us grow



The Emerald Heights International School

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Select Reflections & a Report from Past Symposians

Some Reflections of Interculturation

- **From 2019:** “Taking the Core at Columbia I never questioned that critical thinking meant analytic questioning. But what I encountered in Taiwan was a very different way of relating to texts that was more of a very personally invested *moral* perspective, as in ‘How do I *apply* this principle in *my* life context?’ It was a shock to realize the analytic questioning we take for granted as the equivalent of critical thinking at Columbia is not ubiquitous at all, but is actually a particularity of our culture.”
- **From 2023:** “I spent a lot of time in India feeling like a lot of people in India were unloved every day. And months after my return, I started missing a love that I neglected to recognize during the six months I was in India which somehow, I felt cared for in a way that I didn’t understand then and I still don’t understand now. That’s my honest check-in about a place that at times made me miserable, and now that I yearn for in ways I don’t understand.”
- **From 2017, by a Chinese international student who went to India:** “I was so surprised by the religious approach to understanding texts I met with in India. While it didn’t necessarily make me religious, it was eye-opening to realize there is this very different way of experiencing the world I hadn’t really thought about before.”
- **From 2022:** “It took going halfway around the world to discover the meaning of family and roots, to see freedom in a different light.”

“Reflection Report” from Symposium Indore, 2020, by Amad Ross

On the first day of Symposium, I was impressed by our students to a fault. Most students who spoke were remarkably polished. Josh and I began with a methodological discussion and an exercise on the “close reading” of difficult texts, something that seemed new to most students. Nonetheless, everyone in my breakout room quickly adapted to my expectations and presented excellent interpretations of the section at hand. It seemed to me, however, that their ease in performing our exercise derived from their exceptional ability to “do school.” I quickly noticed that most interpretations followed a charming but generic structure. One student who stood out mentioned that she and her

peers at the Emerald Heights International School had taken a required public speaking course, and I expect most students from other schools had done the same. It became clear to me that these students needed minimal intervention in the basic skills for classroom success. Most of them, were my seminar graded, would get A's without saying anything remarkable. Where I would need to push them instead was in abandoning the impressive voice they had been taught to use in classrooms and encouraging them to find their own.

Toward this end, I decided to focus on two themes in our discussion of Plato's *Symposium* the following day: love and humor. I intended to create an intimate and friendly space for our learning and to force students to reevaluate what themes they expected to encounter in the classroom. Everyone has something personal to say about love, whether from their own experiences or from movies they've enjoyed. I made an effort to encourage pop-culture references, which I found surprisingly fruitful, first because it allowed me to relate to students over the background of romantic comedies we happened to share in common, second because it allowed students to relate with each other in trying to explain certain references an American like myself might not recognize. Equally important, our discussion straddled the boundary between the stuffy academic discourse my students seemed to expect and the more whimsical and intimate discussion of friends catching up between classes. In one moment, we would discuss the improbable plot-line of a corny romance film; in the next, I would ask whether we could pull insight from such stories about the nature of love in general. Beginning with the most personal of our themes effectively introduced students to the philosophical method, as they were less shy to speak in such unacademic terms as the ones I encouraged, and consequently more confident in deriving philosophical ideas from them. I remember, for instance, a student raising the familiar romantic trope of misunderstanding. In the rush of infatuation, fictional lovers often jump to conclusions about their loves and act without circumspection. (Think Romeo and Juliet, except in our case a low-brow romantic comedy.) Dhroov quickly related this fictional theme to my earlier question about whether there could be a political philosophy based on love, and argued that love's irrationality put it at odds with politics. Importantly, such movements between the relatable and the theoretical became less and less pronounced, so that we quickly began doing philosophy in our own voices.

Our discussion of humor in the *Symposium* confirmed this project. During a ten minute break between our discussions of speeches by Pasuanus and Aristophanes, I asked my students to draw a rough sketch of the quadruped proto-humans from Aristophanes's myth. We had a good laugh, obviously, because for the most part these looked ridiculous. But soon questions arose about why our drawings differed so much from one another. I asked what it means to take these drawings and their myth seriously,

and how we might do so when accounting for their humor was an essential part of doing so. I felt this question altered the trajectory of our seminar just enough to reverberate in certain meta questions students asked later on. The idea of questioning not just the content of speech but the manner of the speech act itself was foreign to my students, and this theme of irony and indirectness complicated my students' readings of the *Symposium*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and especially *Zhuangzi*. Perhaps most importantly, this significant distinction between the content and manner of speech was raised viscerally by students already laughing and their peers' absurd drawings. They knew by experience that speech (or, in this case, sketch) means more than is communicated in the mere comprehension of its content. And this visceral experience of the ironical seemed to make them more critical readers.

Perhaps the day I was most excited for was when we would discuss the *Bhagavad Gita*. On our first day, I had asked students about their relationship with the text. Those who volunteered to speak echoed similar sentiments: the Gita is our mother, said Sambhav; for Diya it had all answers; and to Urja, the Mahabharata was in its own class of literature. So I asked those students who had not read the *Gita* to raise their hands, and the majority of them—including Diya, if memory serves—did. There could not have been a more exciting development! These students would be meeting their mother for the first time, it seemed, and likely shocked by what they found. But when it came time to discuss the *Gita*, I felt these skillful interpreters of Plato had taken a step back. Very few students grounded their interpretations in the text; many admired ideas that they seemed to have been told were there. Shikraj and Harsheen were exceptions, and they credited their aberrant readings to the fact that they are Sikh. But even Shikraj seemed to take a contrarian position rather than interpreting the text in front of him. **Indeed, it seemed that though students had read the text, they had not confronted it.** But as in the first class, it soon became clear that this orthodoxy of reading was self-selective: the students with aberrant readings were simply more hesitant to speak. And as soon as they shared their views, the orthodox readers became unlocked. Urja, Isha and Shikraj argued over whether Krishna promotes peace or war, and each cited the text intelligently and originally despite the strain this discussion raised. Sambhav and others soon explored the metaphysics of the text and the idea of determinism without much recourse to preconceived notions of what Hinduism has to say about these. And the religious ideas students held stopped authorizing what they felt comfortable sharing and instead became a symbiotic part of discussion, allowing Harsheen and Shikraj, one or two self-identifying atheists, many who considered themselves Hindu, and even my confused self to engage in forensic discussion of the *Gita*'s relationship with Hindu metaphysics.

Our discussion went an entirely different direction when Isha raised the question of caste. Indeed, our breakout room exploded somewhat, with dozens of blue hands being raised every moment and many students speaking over others. Somehow, the discussion remained productive. I'll not dive deeply into what was said (this reflection is long enough already), except to say that my biggest regret from our seminar is that Josh and I failed to moderate an organized discussion of caste after students had been introduced to the other texts. Even on this third day, students raised points in discussion about love in Plato and destiny in the *Gita* that I suspect would not have occurred to them before. Perhaps most importantly, the intimacy we had inculcated in the first two days remained even in our most heated discussions of caste, so that no one seemed worried to be misunderstood and disrespected by peers, but instead welcomed the chance for lively debate.

Our last text was *Zhuangzi*, which we introduced with mixed success. Although we intended to work through *Zhuangzi* with equal clarity to our treatment of *Symposium* and the *Gita*, students had a difficult time with the lesson plans we had prepared and we adapted accordingly. Somewhat accidentally, *Zhuangzi* became the key which unlocked our discussions for the next several days. In interpreting its parables and dream-shrouded myths, students revisited those questions of indirect communication I had raised in discussing Plato. Often, students' readings of *Zhuangzi* were deeply flawed. They seemed unprepared to use his reveries and a mirror and therefore question their own readings. Nonetheless, *Zhuangzi* influenced and complicated their readings of the other texts to an unexpected degree. The questions it raised—which, regrettably, went unanswered within the text—would be raised again and again in discussion of these other texts, much to our seminar's benefit.

I am confident that our treatment of these texts succeeded in making our students more confident and insightful in their reading. Students told me as much, from Shikraj and Urja saying they hadn't thought so hard in their lives, to the poem Diya shared expressing the new liberty she experienced in our class discussions. Two important sources of these successes are basic pedagogical tactics Josh and I employed. First, we structured our course to prioritize making students comfortable before pushing them to engage deeply with the texts. Hence our use of Plato to situate our method, the *Gita* to practice it, and the *Zhuangzi* to complicate our reading. Second, we made an effort to show every student that their input mattered. Whenever a student shared her interpretation, I would paraphrase and relate it to the discussion at hand, then give the student a moment to respond to my paraphrase. This way, students knew that they were heard and that their input was pushing discussion forward. We also often changed our daily schedules to address questions students raised the previous day, mentioning them

by name when doing so, such that everyone knew that our course was grounded in their interests.

One area of mixed success was our methodological framing of textual interpretation. We encouraged students to read each passage twice: first, to comprehend what's being said, and second, to identify genuine ambiguities in the text. We asked students to hone in on these ambiguities and interpret their purpose, their import, and their possible meanings. This encouraged students to be original in their interpretations, and I often used the language of this early message to steer students away from the generic statements students were often tempted to share. While this was successful in class, I think we failed to help students apply this method in their writing. Many of our response papers were creative and exciting. Harsheen and Shikhray wrote remarkable personal narratives that incorporated the themes of our texts. Urja wrote a story that personalized the authors we discussed and placed them in an imagined future constructed with an eye to their teachings. But some papers betrayed both brilliance and methodological confusion. I was eager to read Dhroov's paper, for instance, as he is a remarkably gifted close reader, but he didn't bother to replicate his contributions in class in his paper. I believe with Dhroov—and some others—that I failed to clarify that the reading methods we discussed in class could be extended fruitfully to the written page.

Nonetheless, I feel Symposium 2020 was an extraordinary success. I have received some of the kindest emails of my life from students thanking us for the experience, and I could not have enjoyed it more. My verification of its success is simply my own feeling in writing this. Symposium Indore was my most fulfilling experience as an undergraduate so far. I am still astonished by the level of intimacy Josh and I shared with students, and the startling fruits of that intimacy in terms of real, original reflection on the texts and our respective societies. As I mentioned, our discussion of texts transcended the classroom and informed our ideas of our respective societies and of ourselves as members of a global community. I can say with confidence that my encounter with our students disrupted my personal understanding, and likewise their encounters with each other. And I still ride that high in my reflections to this day, as evidenced by my journal full of entries on what I learned from my students.

My Reflection of the Columbia Symposium

-By Urja Joshi

My story with the Columbia Symposium started in the Winter of 2021. Doing my first symposium as a sophomore had a plethora of benefits for me. I had been an avid reader all my life, but my journey with Symposium taught me to read more than what the words told me. Having done four symposiums throughout my high school career, I have emerged not only as a reader but also a writer. The final projects at the end of each symposium challenged me to thoroughly examine and analyse the texts.

The Symposium was an immersive education in discussion, debate, and philology, exposing me to a multitude of disciplines, including etymology, history, and politics. Being conducted by people from the other side of the globe, the symposium provided an opportunity for intercultural exchange of thoughts and ideas. The liberal atmosphere within the symposium was a stark contrast to the rigid and restrictive environments I was accustomed to in the Indian system of education. This sort of fluidity allowed me to step out of bounds with my imagination and interpretation of texts.

The selection of texts for the symposium was unique. From Asian texts like Zhuangzi, the Gita, An Account of my Hut and The Sacrifice to Greek texts like the Odyssey, Thucydides and The Symposium by Plato, these texts have given me a vast understanding of ethnic and periodic differences and evolutions. As a 16 year-old I would often be intimidated by such heavy, foreign texts but now I approach them with open arms and sheer excitement.

One of my biggest takeaways from Symposium was learning a new and improved way to read. Spending hours settling on and discussing a singular line from a book taught me to develop a deeper understanding of hidden meanings, tones and undertones expressed by authors. Stories slowly became not just about the plot but about the characters, their words, the sentence structures, and even the authors themselves. It helped me not only in improving reading experiences for leisure, but also throughout school exams and even standardised tests like the SAT.

I have not only seen the impacts of Symposium on myself, but I have also seen a Symposium culture develop in my school and amongst my peers. The discussions taking place in symposium became debates during recess. My school has seen an uproar of writers, debaters, poets and critics emerge through Symposium. Some people even gained a friend or two.

Symposium also became a gateway for moral values and new beliefs. As someone who has never followed a religion, it became a path for me to explore and interpret a lot of different ideologies, and create a mixture of my own. One which stuck out to me was this particular set from the Bhagavad Gita:

“Karmanyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana; Maa karmaphalahetur bhoor maa te sango'stwakarmani”: to do one's duties, one has to be detached from its outcomes. This was particularly impactful to me as I have always lived in a world of expectations. Detaching myself from uncertain outcomes and fulfilling my duties has become a method which makes me a better student, artist, daughter and in vague terms, a better person.

Symposium was never just about the academic rigour of the programme. It was about bringing forth what was always inside us through guidance, mentorship and a platform. The papers we wrote for Symposium were never graded, but commented on and improved upon. This shows the flexibility of opinions accepted on this platform.

Symposium has established an emotional connection with me. Showing up to the same classroom (or zoom meeting) every day, and seeing this batch of people so willing and looking forward to reading and discussing texts has become a ritual. Reading the texts in school vacations and spreading what I had learnt with my community became a favourite activity. Through Symposium, I have made friends (Some real, some imaginary) for life, and learnt lessons and morals which shape who I have, and will continue to become.

I am blessed to be a part of Symposium, an activity that will stick with me through life as it isn't an experience, but a habit, a phenomenon. I will eternally be grateful to Columbia University for introducing us to this culture, and to Amad, Josh, Joon, Emiliya, my school, friends, teachers, Socrates, Vyasa, Tagore and everyone else that made the Symposium possible.

At last, I would like to share some of my writing that stemmed from my inspiration from a text we read for symposium:

Crescendo (An Autobiography Based on Confucius's)

The Rhapsody says, the start of all is chaos. Creating quantized order out of that chaos gives purpose to sound. What is a songsmith if not a slave to chaos? For without chaos there must never be order.

The gradual destruction of the created order is the principle of the Rhapsody. If one sound mightn't end, what might be the purpose of starting another? The halt of destruction of sound is hence the halt of existence of the Rhapsody. An endless stream must be barred for it to give meaning.

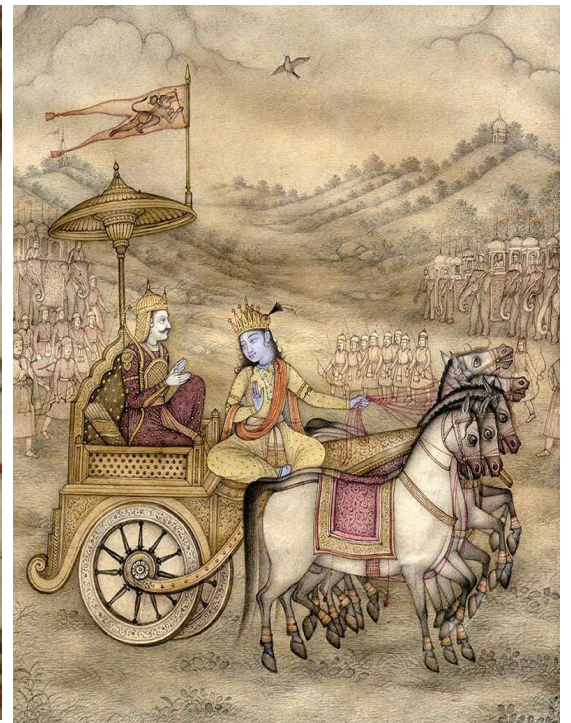
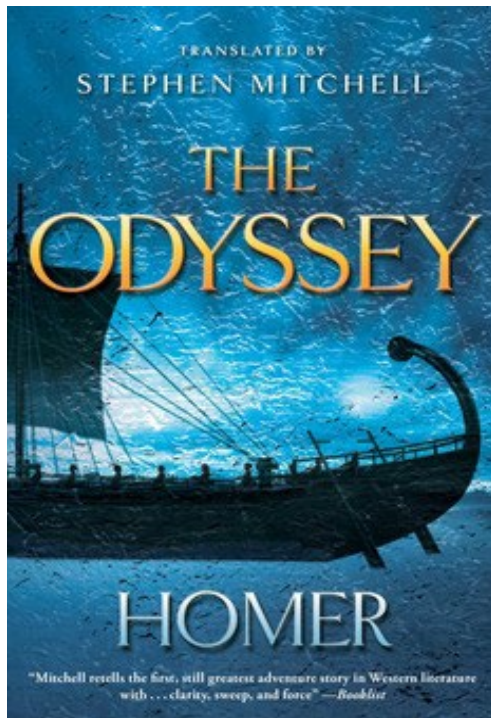
The Rhapsody says, what is man if not an octave? This Rhapsody arises at the foot of failure of words. What man cannot speak is what the Rhapsody is. She is produced with hands, feet, wind, waves, vibrations and everything in between which makes the man one with mother nature.

The Rhapsody shall love you if you shall love her unconditionally. For her love has no vices. Her love is pure and giving and hence her love must be valued. She is an addiction without consequence and a love without heartbreak.

The Rhapsody says, she is one to all. She is one with the noble and the peasant, she is one with the child and the elderly. Despite this similarity, how the man views her is what changes drastically. Her fluidity makes her a possession shared, yet a possession exclusive.

The Rhapsody says, "I am a woman as I am a mother.". The Rhapsody is indeed the mother of sentiment. The mother of order and chaos. The mother of good, evil and everything in between. She is the supreme as she is so painfully humane.

Symposium in Photos



Symposians Training



Engrossed in Discussion...



Taking things deeper...



At NTNU in Taiwan, 2019



Public Forum at NTNU, 2019



Celebrating Trust



