

EDITOR'S WORDS

2020 is unusual to each of us and to society as a whole for one common event, the burst of COVID-19, and perhaps more or less for some other reason(s) to many. In the past year, some social tensions and conflicts at deep levels on both international and domestic fronts manifested themselves in prominent or even violent ways. Indeed, from the ancient times to today, our human world is full of contraries (distinct views, approaches, and treatments in tension, conflict or even severe clash) on a variety of jointly concerned issues: from those in our daily life routine, to those concerning the interpersonal relationship, to those in academic areas, and to those in the worldwide political affairs. How to look at (understand and treat) contraries and their due relationship? This concern is closely relevant to each of us (as one doing philosophy and as one among ordinary folks), as our lives are intrinsically bound together (more or less) with tensions and conflicts of distinct approaches to a range of (larger or smaller) jointly concerned issues; how to look at and treat contraries (directly, or indirectly and implicitly) bears on healthy development of each of us and of our human society as a whole, the quality of our mental lives, our living environment, and the future and trend of the human community. A range of events in the past year that bear on our lives well show the breadth and depth of their consequences in all these connections.

What is addressed above points to the methodological significance, relevance and (potential) contribution of the Journal's "constructive-engagement" emphasis to the development of contemporary society, as highlighted in the opening statement of the "About This Journal" document posted at the Journal's website:

[The Journal] *Comparative Philosophy* is a peer-reviewed, open-access/non-profit international journal of philosophy, *with emphasis on the constructive engagement of distinct approaches* to philosophical issues, problems, themes from different philosophical traditions (whether distinguished culturally or by style/orientation) *for the sake of their joint contribution to the common philosophical enterprise and the development of contemporary society, and on general theory and methodology of comparative philosophy.* (Emphasis in italics is added when the passage is cited here.)

Indeed, in one way, the goal of the "constructive-engagement" strategy in philosophy can be characterized in terms of seeking complementarity between distinct approaches: by way of reflective criticism and argumentation, and with the guidance of adequate methodological guiding principles, it is to inquire into how distinct approaches from different philosophical traditions in treating a range of jointly concerned issues *can talk to and learn from each other* for the sake of *making joint contributions* to the contemporary development of philosophy in a *complementary* (mutually supportive and/or supplementary) way. The foregoing "constructive-engagement" strategy in

comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy, due to its general and fundamental character, suggests one across-the-board account of how to understand and treat contraries and their due relationship, not only in philosophical exploration but also in a more widespread social setting.

In the more complicated social setting, the constructive-engagement-oriented complementarity-seeking account can be elaborated and presented in a more inclusive and holistic way. There can be three distinct main types of complementarity to be sought through the “constructive-engagement” strategy: (i) *concordant complementarity* (between those contraries that can harmoniously work together), as shown in the *Yin-Yang* model of how to look at contraries; (ii) *restrictive complementarity* (between those contradictory contraries that might result in or from sublation), as shown in the Hegelian model of how to look at contraries;¹ (iii) *critical-reflection-generated complementarity* (in plain words, through critical reflection, the agent can learn from the involved parties’ mistakes)^{2,3} In so doing, one is expected to <1> maintain already-achieved complementarity by alerting to and overcoming (possible) excessiveness and <2> keep a thorough open-minded and self-criticism attitude towards one’s own approach (instead of being *blindly* based on faith or authority).⁴ Such theoretic elaboration might as well be called an ‘overall-complementarity-seeking’ account.

The foregoing complementarity-seeking direction/orientation of the “constructive-engagement” strategy as emphasized by the Journal (through its involved theoretic work, its review work, and its authors’ contributing writings as a whole) in the past decade, together with further theoretic elaboration on overall-complementarity seeking, can contribute relevant methodological resources in need to the development of our contemporary society in understanding and treating tensions and conflicts, especially in view of the current situation on both international and domestic fronts.

Bo Mou
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¹ For a detailed explanation of the foregoing two types of complementarity as well as their associated two models of how to look at contraries, see Chapter 4 of Bo Mou, *Cross-Tradition Engagement in Philosophy: A Constructive-Engagement Account* (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), 197-222.

² In this way, even the case of an extreme approach that would include neither eligible perspective nor adequate guiding principle can be still treated in a constructively complementary way.

³ Though these distinct types of complementarity are conceptually distinct and can be pursued separately, they might be jointly pursued in a specific project in treating contraries. For example, given the distinction between methodological perspectives (eligible vs ineligible ones) and methodological guiding principles (adequate vs inadequate ones) [as explained in the Journal’s “Theme Introduction”, *Comparative Philosophy* 1.1 (2010): 1-32, esp. its Sec. 2], concordant-complementarity seeking can be focused on in treating distinct eligible and consistent perspective respectively from different approaches; in contrast, both pre-sublation restrictive complementarity and post-sublation concordant complementarity can be jointly sought in treating distinct eligible but contradictory perspectives respectively from different approaches at the pre-sublation stage and in treating those eligible and consistent perspectives (newly generated from sublation) at the post-sublation stage. (Cf., *op.cit.*, 375-377.) Furthermore, whenever there are ineligible perspective(s) and/or inadequate guiding principle(s) involved in either of different approaches, critical-reflection-generated complementarity can be sought.

⁴ Cf., *op.cit.*, 378-379.