

**IN MEMORIAM:
ZHANG, XIANGLONG (1949-2022)**



ZHANG Xianglong (Xianglong Zhang 張祥龍), Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Department of Philosophy, Peking University, China, and a member of the Advisory Board of this journal *Comparative Philosophy*, passed away on 8th June 2022 at his home in Beijing, China, due to the terminal stage of pancreatic cancer. Xianglong has made valuable substantial contributions to the development of this peer-reviewed open-access international journal in philosophy both as an Advisory Board member and as an author and peer reviewer. More generally, Xianglong has significantly and persistently contributed to cross-tradition philosophical engagement in the past decades. This memorial piece consists of three parts: in section 1, Xianglong's life journey and his academic achievements in general are highlighted; in section 2, specifically, his significant contributions and achievements in comparative philosophy (as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy) are focused on in view of its being related to the mission of this journal and of a range of academic cooperations between Xianglong and this author; in section 3, from a more personal lens of this author based on my first-hand experience with him, Xianglong's way as a whole person is commemorated.

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Xianglong was born in Hong Kong, China, on 14th August 1949 and moved to Beijing in 1954. As one of those who were admitted through the first national college-entrance examination held in 1977 (the so-called "77 term" of college students) after the "Cultural-Revolution" movement (1966-1976) in China, Xianglong enrolled at Peking University from early 1978 to January 1982, receiving his B.A. degree in philosophy. After a research stint at Philosophy Institute, Beijing Academy of Social Sciences (1983-1986), Xianglong studied philosophy in USA first at Toledo University (1986-

1988), receiving his M.A. in philosophy, and then at the State University of New York at Buffalo (1988-1992), receiving his Ph.D. degree in philosophy. Xianglong then taught at Peking University (1992-2012), China, as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Full Professor of Philosophy and as Executive Deputy Director of Foreign Philosophy Institute. After retiring from Peking University, Xianglong first taught at School of Philosophy and Social Development, Shang Dong University, China, as Professor of Philosophy at Rank 1 and Director of the Center for Phenomenology and Chinese Culture (2012-2017) and then at Department of Philosophy, Sun Yat-Shen University, China, as Chair Professor. Xianglong was a member of the founding team (2002) and President (2005-2008) of the International Society for Comparative Chinese and Western Philosophy (ISCWP), a member (2005-2008) of the Committee on International Cooperation, the American Philosophical Association (APA), and a co-founder and Coordinator (2021-2022) of the Consultancy Board of the International Society for Comparative Philosophy toward World Philosophy (CPWP).

Xianglong is a renowned and distinguished scholar, and his academic scholarship ranged widely especially in comparative Eastern-Western philosophy, phenomenology, and Confucian philosophy. His representative major works include these (in Chinese unless indicated otherwise), based on Xianglong's own choice: *Heidegger's Thought and Chinese Dao of Heaven* [《海德格尔思想与中国天道》] (Beijing: Sanlian Book Store; 1996, 2007, 2010), *From Phenomenology to Confucius* [《从现象学到孔夫子》] (Beijing: Commercial Press; 2001, 2011), *Sprache und Wirklichkeit* (coauthored with R. Puligandla, German trans. Christiane Dick, Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz; 2005), *Thinking to Take Refuge: The Chinese Ancient Philosophies in the Globalization* [《思想避难：全球化中的中国古代哲理》] (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), *Showing the Heart of Heaven and Earth by Restoration: The Implications and Ways of Confucian Recurrence* [《复见天地心》] (Beijing: Dong-Fang Press; 2014); *Home and Filial Piety: From the View between the Chinese and the Western* [《家与孝》] (Beijing: San-Lian Press; 2017), and *Lectures on the History of Confucian Philosophy* [《儒家哲学史讲演录》] (four volumes) (Beijing: Commercial Press; 2019).

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With Xianglong's general significant achievements in various areas as highlighted in the previous section, in this section, I focus on one general methodological foundation and theoretic basis for Xianglong's achievements in the addressed various specific areas, i.e., his significant achievements and contributions in comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement for three considerations: first, as already suggested above, his work in this area is foundational and methodological and provides one due basis for his own scholarly works in the other specific areas and for our understanding and evaluating his scholarly work as a whole; second, Xianglong's work in the area of comparative Chinese-Western philosophy and cross-tradition engagement in philosophy is more closely related to the coverage and concern of this journal where this memorial article appears; third, I as the author of this

memorial writing am more familiar with Xianglong's work in this area. I present Xianglong's work and contribution in cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy in a distinct way related to the Journal and the two-decade-long academic cooperation between Xiangling and this author in this area, which can be complementary to other memorial articles with distinct focuses for a more complete understanding and characterization.

Though I knew Xianglong for more than thirty years tracing back to a more personal episode addressed in the next section, the substantial communication and academic cooperation between us started two decades ago at the turning point of the last century and this century when I began teaching at San Jose State University in USA while Xianglong had already taught philosophy at Peking University in China. Indeed, as far as specific topics and focuses in the areas of Chinese philosophy, Western philosophy, and comparative philosophy are concerned, Xianglong and I largely had distinct emphases and focuses with different styles of doing philosophy: he is more "Continentially" oriented/styled while I more "analytically" oriented/styled (both 'analytic' and 'Continental' understood broadly in a cross-tradition way). However, we had some common concerns and shared some normative bases for philosophical exploration at a deeper level; we both think that cross-tradition engagement in philosophy is both necessary and possible. In 2021, we exchanged our recent academic publications. Xiaonlgong sent me a copy of his essay collection *From Phenomenology to Confucius* [《从现象学到孔夫子》] (Beijing: Commercial Press; 2001) which includes his then representative essays in studies of Western philosophy (Heidegger's, Husserl's, Wittgenstein's and Tarski's relevant thoughts) and comparative Chinese and Western philosophy (comparative studies of religious thoughts and aesthetic thoughts), while I sent him a copy of my edited anthology volume *Two Roads to Wisdom? – Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Traditions* (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), which includes a range of original essays by respected scholars, Donald Davidson's "Foreword" on analytic method and cross-tradition understanding, and my own contributing essay that gives an analysis of the structure of philosophical methodology. Our further substantial contact and communication is a kind of 以文會友 ("making friends by one's writings"): we further understand each other's relevant thoughts and methodological approaches. Xianglong then taught a graduate seminar on comparative Chinese and Western philosophy, including this anthology volume as one of its readings: for careful understanding and evaluation, Xianglong organized his graduate students translating most of the contributing essays in the volume into Chinese and proofread some of them. Their translation work became one of the major sources of a Chinese anthology volume, *Reflections on Methodology in Studies of Chinese Philosophy: Comparative Philosophy and Philosophy Analysis* which I edited several years later but came out late only this year¹ before his death.² The theme of this volume,

¹ For its reference info, see footnote 6.

² Indeed, we then both saw a significant trend of development in contemporary studies of Chinese philosophy. Especially since the end of the last century and the beginning of this century, from the vantage point of international philosophical exploration, there are two prominent and relatively systematic features: for one thing, analytic method understood broadly has played important role; for

as explained in my theme-introduction essay, is this: in studies of classical Chinese philosophy for the sake of contributing to the contemporary development of philosophy, analytic method without adequate guidance of comparative-philosophy method would be blind, while comparative-philosophy method without analytic method, which assures the possibility of mutual understanding and being open to criticism and embodies some basic academic norms of reflective exploration, would be empty.

In 2002, I talked with Xianglong and several other colleagues about establishing *the International Society for Comparative Chinese and Western Philosophy* (ISCWP) to meet the due need and promote comparative studies of Chinese and Western philosophy for the sake of contributing to the contemporary development of philosophy and society. Xianglong gave his firm support and actively participated in its preparatory work. Xianglong then served as the founding Vice President of the first term of ISCWP board (2002-2005) (while I assumed President) and became President in the 2nd term (2005-2008). In 2008 Xianglong successfully organized ISCWP's conference on methodology of comparative philosophy at Peking University. As the founding team members of ISCWP, Xianglong and I have a long-term trustful and effective cooperation for the sake of healthy development of ISCWP and, more generally, of comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy in the past two decades. With shared visions and in view of his holistic and wise command of relevant situations, Xianglong has persistently given his effective and valuable support of a range of strategic ideas and events of ISCWP while giving constructive suggestions.

In 2010, this journal, *Comparative Philosophy*, was established. Xianglong has made valuable contributions to the development of this peer-reviewed open-access international journal in philosophy through his roles as an Advisory Board member and as its author and peer reviewer.

Now let me say a bit more about Xianglong's most recent valuable contribution to the development of comparative philosophy. Since the 2020 burst of COVID-19, the world of tensions and conflicts at deep levels as evidenced by a range of events augments the need for the due role that comparative philosophy (as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy) can

another thing, the comparative-philosophy method that emphasizes the jointly concerned issues and philosophical interpretation has achieved a magnificent development in theoretic exploration and reflective practice of studies of classical Chinese philosophy. Inquiries into how both can constructively integrated and complementary for the sake of further enhancing and enriching contemporary studies of Chinese philosophy is one subject that has profound theoretic value and important significance in reflective practice. This constitutes the subject of this Chinese anthology volume, which consists of selected translations from the two English anthology volumes to which I am contributing editor, i.e., the aforementioned volume *Two Roads to Wisdoms? ?—Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Traditions* (Open Court, 2001) and the volume *Davidson's philosophy and Chinese philosophy: Constructive Engagement* (Brill, 2006) and some selected essays. It includes Xianglong's own representative essay on the methodology of comparative philosophy, whose revised English version, "Comparison Paradox, Comparative Situation and Interparadigmaticity: A Methodological Reflection on Crosscultural Philosophical Comparison", appears in *Comparative Philosophy* 1.1 (2010): 90-105.

play via its methodological and theoretic resources concerning how to enhance dialogues and mutual understanding and learn from each other (in a constructively engaging and complementary way) between contraries in a more widespread social setting. In a private conversation late 2020, I suggested to Xianglong the idea of establishing a strategic critical-discussion platform and effective academic-exchange channel of comparative philosophy without being restricted to certain local areas but worldwide especially in view of its “direction” dimension as “toward world philosophy”: we thought about whether there would be genuine need for it, whether the relevant conditions had already become mature but for various reasons no one else seemed to be ready to stand up to do it, whether we needed to carry out this from a strong sense of duty. With careful consideration of its genuine need and possibility in the holistic setting of the development of world history and the development of philosophy worldwide, in April 2021, I invited Xianglong to be co-founders of *the International Society for Comparative Philosophy toward World Philosophy* (CPWP, <cpwponline.org>). We set the basic orientation and strategy: there is no need for excessive propaganda; it is to start in a natural and constructive way, sensitive to situations; there is neither need of excessive pushing nor burden of having to be a certain “representative” in an absolute fixed way. The point is quite simple and straightforward: it is to constructively promote comparative philosophy as a general cross-tradition engaging way of doing philosophy toward world philosophy; being sensitive to the due needs, it is to provide the interested colleagues with more effective and flexible academic-exchange channels and engaging-discussion platforms. In this setting, comparative philosophy has its explicit strategic identity, i.e., comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy (‘comparative philosophy toward world philosophy’ for short). Although all of its three dimensions (i.e., its “character” dimension as “a general way of doing philosophy”, its “approach” dimension as “cross-tradition engagement”, and its “direction” dimension as “toward world philosophy”) had been more or less suggested and explained before in an explicit or implicit way, the strategic theme “comparative philosophy toward world philosophy” as a whole marks a momentous accumulating point of the significant development of comparative philosophy as a general way of doing philosophy through cross-tradition engagement toward world philosophy especially concerning its “direction” dimension. In May 2021, the CPWP was formally established with its Constitution approved by almost one hundred members worldwide. Xianglong joined in the CPWP leadership as the Coordinator of the Consultancy Board together with the first term (2021-2024) of the Executive Board (Nevad Kahteran at University of Sarajevo in Bosnia & Herzegovina serves as Vice President, Elizabeth Schiltz at College of Wooster in USA as Secretary-Treasurer, and I as President), forming up the first term of the CPWP leadership team. Then, among others, the CPWP leadership team immediately planned its first international virtual conference on the theme “Comparative Philosophy Toward World Philosophy”. The conference was highly successful, effectively fulfilling its goal. Though Xianlong could not make it to present his talk due to his terminal illness, he would happily see

this encouraging result from our collective efforts in which he has participated with his valuable contribution to the CPWP enterprise.

Indeed, in the past two decades, though our respective styles of doing philosophy are more or less different and there are disagreements on some of our jointly concerned philosophical issues, Xianglong and I had smooth, effective and trustful academic cooperation and mutual support in a range of major collective projects in promoting and enhancing comparative philosophy (among others, the ISCWP project, this journal project, and the CPWP project). At the same time, we also had frank and constructive critical discussions on some of our jointly concerned issues either at some relevant workshops or in our private conversations. In view of all this effective academic cooperation, fruitful scholarly projects of joint efforts, and constructively engaging discussions between Xianglong and me in the past two decades, I have felt so proud of having such a trustful and valuable friend and colleague like Xianglong.

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At a more personal level, Xianglong is a long-term trustworthy friend and colleague both in the international setting and in the Chinese setting. My remarks here in this connection are not rendered complete but are restricted to my first-hand experience in the past decades: I limit my memorial remarks in this connection to only two happenings, the beginning one and the ending one in our bond of three-decade-long span; I give an elaboration of something deeper in Xianglong's character between my narratives of the two events.

Xianglong and I both grew up in the Beijing humanistic environment from around the mid 50's (he moved to Beijing from Hong Kong in 1954 when he was 5-years old while I was born there years later). Although we both belong in the group of college students of the previously mentioned "77 term", we started in different majors in college (Xianglong in philosophy while I in math) and graduated in early 1982. We had not known each other until a personal episode around 33 years ago (1989) related to philosophy. Many academic persons at our age who had an educational background and life experience in both China and USA would recall the aspiring period around the mid/late 1980s in China; many of them were then eager to study abroad exploring new fronts in multiple senses. Xianglong and I were no exception. Xianglong went to the USA in 1986 pursuing his graduate degrees in philosophy first at Toledo University; after receiving his M.A. in philosophy there, he started his pursuing Ph.D. at the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1988. Then I held a research position at the Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, after I changed my interest to philosophy and received my M.A. degree in philosophy. In spring 1989, I already applied for some Ph.D. programs in USA and waited for the results; on one Tuesday that was the "working-at-institute" day (once a week), there came a long-distance call made from USA to the Institute of Philosophy that asked me to take the call: it was Xianglong who was entrusted by the Director of the Graduate Studies at SUNY Buffalo to tell me timely in Chinese that my application for pursuing Ph.D. there had been accepted with full financial aid. My applications were made basically to some schools in New York State (to be near to my elder brother who then pursued his

doctorate in biology at Cornell University); this is the first offer of full financial support that I then received from a school in New York State; I subsequently also received the offers of full financial support from Philosophy Departments at University of Rochester and Columbia University. Although with the plan to return to my then institution after receiving Ph.D. degree I eventually chose UR for its five-year full-financial-aid package with the financial-stability and safety consideration, I then came to know Xianglong, impressed by his kindness and carefulness in treating such “small” things.

I believe that other memorial articles of Xianglong would also address different “small” things that would manifest Xianglong’s same character of this kind, perhaps with distinct labels to highlight it. In the following, instead of listing more specific cases, I intend to say something deeper in Xianglong’s character that can explain why it can be labeled multiple ways but had better be not restricted to one *ad hoc* fashion; otherwise one who is not so familiar with Xianglong might feel puzzled by some distinct labels with different orientations for him. In plain words, it is a kind of “purity” in Xianglong’s life journey. Indeed, one might label Xianglong as a ‘Confucian’ or a ‘Daoist’ in view of his certain positions in social-political philosophy or of some part of his style of life. However, in view of *his holistic way as a whole person of character and learning*, Xianglong is among the rare “pure” intellectuals in China, more profound than what can be told from either a Confucian perspective or a Daoist perspective... and less of “Chinese” features (in both prescriptive and descriptive senses of the phrase) in some connections.³ Xianglong as a whole person has his “pure” character in a combined way of multiple senses: among others, <1> Xianglong has “purely” pursued truth⁴ in a cross-tradition truth/*dao*-pursuing spirit that can be jointly captured by one

³ CHU Zhaohua (储昭华), an expert scholar in Chinese and comparative Chinese-Western philosophy who is also familiar with Xianglong’s work and life style delivers the shared point in our recent communication on Xianglong’s passing away in this way (in Chinese): Xianglong “是大陆这边为数不多的较纯粹的知识分子之一：虽然推崇儒家和中国传统文化，但为人、为学上恰恰较少‘中国特色’。” The subsequent remarks in the main text are my elaboration of this shared point.

⁴ Xianglong talked about truth neither in the subjective “anything goes” sense of radical relativism nor just in some moral sense nor in a pragmatist sense but in the sense of people’s pre-theoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth which, so to speak, constitutes one common normative basis for many constructively engaging discussions between Xianglong and this author as well as for his own research (if my understanding is correct). Xianglong’s strong sense of persistent truth pursuit in an objective way can be shown in one private farewell passage to some of his former students before his death whose Chinese original excerpt is given as follows: “...我以前和你们讲的，教你们的，心里想讲的东西，并无半点虚言，... 我很负责任地告诉你们，佛性，天性，禅性，道性，儒性，真的有那么个东西，是能起作用的，我无法再描述。我只能说，有你们这些学生，我很高兴，也很幸福，在追求真理的路上，我们没有错。我说的很抽象，但只有真的到了这个境地，你们才能体会。最后希望你们大家都好，追求真理，不止是追求世俗的利益。...” (The above unpublished Chinese original is from LIU Yuedi (刘悦笛), a colleague in China, who has verified its reliability with the confirmation made by Xianglong’s family.) Also see Xianglong’s *From Phenomenology to Confucius*, “Preface”, 9-10, where his narrative of a bird-observing event for illustrating his “视-域”-style phenomenologist outlook clearly presupposes the pre-theoretic “way-things-are-capturing” understanding of truth. In view of the above, we can see the complete point that Xianglong made in his clarifying expalanation of the relationship between “视” and “域” in his *Heidegger's Thought and Chinese Dao of Heaven* (“Introdcution”, endnote 1) where he addresses the [epistemologically] “mutual constitution” (相互做成) relation between them; he also

ancient maxim from the classical Chinese philosophy “朝闻道夕死可矣” [literally, having heard the *Dao* in the morning, one may die content in the evening] and one ancient maxim from the classical Greek philosophy “*Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*” [Plato is my friend, but truth is a better friend (often translated into Chinese “我爱我师, 我更爱真理”)]⁵; <2> Xianglong “purely” pursued cultivating himself into a *jun-zi* (君子 a person of nobility) for the sake of that’s own value in the tranquility of his inner soul, which can be captured by a Chinese proverb “君子独善其身” [to the effect that one goes high in cultivating oneself on one’s own, no matter how some others might go low]. In these two basic connections of one’s “pure” pursuit, to Xianglong, what one should do and what one feels like to do are eventually unified and in accordance with the fundamental way of this natural world as a whole of which humans with their thoughts are parts. When using the term ‘eventually’, I mean this: Xianglong as a real-life person in the real world had his own tensions between fulfilling distinct or even opposed expectations from outside and between his own distinct internal mental expectations/desires, had his own preference for a certain style of life (or a life-style complex), and had his own temperament. But, to my knowledge, Xianglong is wise enough to eventually balance various expectations (either from inside and/or from outside) and have them in accordance and complementarity, though not necessarily only in a “harmoniously-balanced” way but (to my observation) partially also in a “synthetically-balanced” way, sensitive to situations and contexts.

Though the news of Xianglong’s passing in June 2022 is not too unexpected to me as Xianglong let me know earlier on in January this year that he had been recently diagnosed with terminal stage of pancreatic cancer, I still felt extraordinarily sad and lost. In our last email communication around the end of April, Xianglong told me that “...my treatment is still going on; the treatment was not quite effective but has a certain effect. What I am now facing is sleep loss, from which I am suffering, but I am trying to find a solution...”. I then noticed such words as “the treatment was not quite effective” and know this is an almost incurable cancer; but based on Xianglong’s positive and sanguine attitude toward his treatment I intended to think more of the optimistic side of his message: “the treatment...has a certain effect...I am trying to find a solution”. Actually just on the beginning days of June and upon the arrival of the news that the previously mentioned Chinese anthology volume had finally came out in May,⁶ I was thinking about the possibility of planning a short Zoom get-together meeting with Xianglong (if his situation would allow) to celebrate the publication of this volume to which he made much contribution while having a final opportunity to

stresses the status of “域”/“境” as the source of the agent’s experience, a point needs a due elaboration: in plain bird-observing words, the bird’s own movement *per se* in nature [as the “source” part of the “域”/“境” side] is metaphysically/ontologically, semantically, and logically prior to the agent’s experience with it; capturing it in the “视-域” thus presupposes the “way-things-are-recognizing” norm.

⁵ The maxim is often attributed to Aristotle, as a paraphrase of the *Nicomachean Ethics* 1096a11–15.

⁶ Mou, Bo 牟博 (ed.) (2022), 《中国哲学研究的方法论反思：比较哲学与哲学分析》[*Reflections on Methodology in Studies of Chinese Philosophy: Comparative Philosophy and Philosophy Analysis*] (北京 Beijing: 商务印书馆 The Commercial Press).

have a face-to-face talk with him. Then when the news of his death came, I felt so regretful for losing the last chance to say the final goodbye to him.

At the personal level, I have felt especially sad with Xianglong's death for another reason: in the past three years, three multiple-decade bosom friends have passed away in succession: in 2020, Adam Morton (1945-2020), my long-term mentor-like scholar friend;⁷ in 2021, SU Guoxun (蘇國勳 1942-2021), my high-school Russian language teacher, my former colleague at the Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and my five-decade-long mentor and friend;⁸ now in 2022, Xianglong (1949-2022) has gone. I had yet to fully recover from the sadness by the deaths of Teacher Su and Adam when the news of Xianglong's death came. In this setting I especially cherish the memories of the three scholar friends' shared *jun-zi*-like character and noble standing that have been shown in their routine handlings with tranquility. Though with their distinct scholarly careers and life journeys in different corners in the world and with their distinguished scholarly achievements in different areas of philosophy, they all share, and distinctly manifest, some similar noble character and decent standing which I deeply value and admire and which have inspired me in my own life journey.⁹

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⁷ For this author's English memorial article of Adam Morton, see *Comparative Philosophy* 12.1: 222-226; also see <www.amherstcremation.com/memorials/morton.html>.

⁸ For an abridged version of this author's Chinese memorial article of SU Guoxun, see 中国社会科学网 <http://ex.cssn.cn/zx/zx_gjzh/zhnew/202201/t20220131_5391249.shtml>.

⁹ An earlier shorter (Chinese) memorial article of 14 June 2022 (including some content that is not included in this longer English memorial article) is posed at the website of Philosophy Department, Peking University <<https://www.phil.pku.edu.cn/xwgg/dnzxlxszl/523823.htm>>. I am thankful to Joe Glover for his helpful suggestion of modifying several expressions in the draft of this writing.