Seeking Comparative Political Philosophy from an East Asian Perspective: *A Transversal Cross-Cultural Dialogue**

KANG Jung In and Ji Yun LEE

Abstract

This article speculatively explores comparative political philosophy from an East Asian perspective. First, the article presents the objective conditions that are currently facilitating the shift away from Western-centrism in favor of a more polycentric world, particularly the urgent need to create global common goods through international cooperation and the recent strong economic performance by non-Western regions and nations. Then, methodological ideas are suggested for conducting comparative political theory that traverses and links seemingly contradictory theories. Concepts such as transversality and cross-cultural dialogue are discussed, along with biological concepts such as homology, analogy, and convergent/divergent evolution. Whereas transversality provides the basic foundation for a comparative political theory, cross-cultural dialogue supplies a concrete method to apply the theory. The guiding spirit can come from evolutionary theory, which demonstrates that people and civilizations are never in a state of stasis or immutability, but rather exist as a steadily flowing and ever-changing wave.

Keywords: comparative political philosophy, transversality, multiculturalism, analogy, homology, universality, universalism

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Introduction

In today's era of rapid globalization, comparative political philosophy is more important than ever before, and yet, as Fred Dallmayr (1999, 1-2) observed more than ten years ago, "comparative political theory or philosophy is either completely non-existent or at best an embryonic and marginalized type of endeavor."[1] This article presents a speculative exploration of comparative political philosophy from an East Asian perspective.[2] In order to overcome the abiding Western-centrism[3] of the world, East Asian intellectuals must enact a comparative political philosophy by actively reinterpreting and reappropriating traditional political thought. There are three reasons why this is necessary and possible. First, the traditional political philosophy of East Asia (i.e. China, Korea, and Japan)[4] is potentially compatible (or commensurable) with Western political philosophy because of its basis in the common values of humanity, and this "compatibility" must be retrieved and secured. Second, to make an ecological analogy, the legacy of East Asian political philosophy must be cultivated and expanded for the sake of "biodiversity," because East Asian civilization offers precious potential and actual resources (including political philoso-

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1. See also Kang (1999, 2000, 2003) and Kang and Eom (2003).

2. Of course, this is not to say that comparative political theory from other national or regional perspectives is not equally important or desirable.

3. I use the term "Western-centrism" instead of the more common "Eurocentrism" in order to explicitly include European civilizations that have developed in non-European territories (e.g., the United States, Canada, Australia, etc.). Moreover, since the Second World War, the United States has surpassed Europe to become the primary nation setting the terms and agenda of global politics.

4. Samuel P. Huntington (1996, 45) distinguishes the Sinic (Chinese) civilization from the Japanese. But in this article, "East Asia" refers broadly to China, Korea, and Japan, which are linked by the strong influence of Confucianism on their political philosophy, even though each nation has a distinct cultural tradition. East Asia often includes Vietnam as well. For commonalities and regional differences in East Asia, see Murphey (2010, 1-19) and Fairbank et al. (1989, 1-16). In the next section, however, when I examine the prospect for a "polycentric world," the overall economic power of the East Asian region becomes more relevant, so I expand the connotation of "East Asia" to include the countries bolonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

phy) that are not available in Western civilization. Third, East Asians are in a strategic position to effectively develop this legacy, because it constitutes part of their identity and is therefore more familiar to them.

This article will first diagnose the objective conditions of today's world that are helping to displace the hegemony of Western-centrism with polycentrism. Then, it will suggest the proper guidelines for deconstructing Western-centrism and engaging in comparative political philosophy, by examining the ideas of transversality, cross-cultural dialogue, and biological analogies.

Toward a Polycentric World

An examination of contemporary life reveals that Western-centrism is being steadily supplanted by polycentrism, thereby enabling transversal and cross-cultural (or cross-civilizational) dialogue, and allowing for a more equal comparative political philosophy between the "West" and the "rest."[5]

First and foremost, I would like to note the development of globalization, which is making people realize the vital necessity of acknowledging the ascendancy of the indivisible global common good. It is now widely accepted that all the people of the world must work collectively to address various global issues, including the possible extermination of humanity through nuclear war, the responsibility for saving the ecosystem from great peril, the international guarantee of human rights, the improvement of social and economic conditions for the world's poor, and so on. We

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5. Stuart Hall (1992, 279) stressed the world's Eurocentrism by titling one of his articles "The West and the rest," using the term "rest" to refer to the "non-West," although both are synonymous and residual categories. In addition to East Asian civilizations, the "rest" includes Islamic, Indian, Southeast Asian, Latin American, African, and other civilizations, all of which have been forced to address the serious problem of Western-centrism. For more on this problem in social sciences, see UNESCO and ISSC, *World Social Science Report: Knowledge Divides* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2010), which examines the wide variations of the problem of Eurocentrism in diverse regions.

may also add the viability of a global economy that has greatly benefitted from this increased interactivity, yet is simultaneously threatened by it. Indeed, we are still in the midst of one of the worst global economic depressions in history, which is rooted in the breakdown of the U.S. financial system and its uncontrollable and unpredictable chain reaction all over the world. All of these issues demand the acknowledgment of an indivisible global common good. As Peter Taylor (2000, 68) points out, with the advent of globalization, "We have moved from the optimistic situation when the 'goods' of modernity were promised to all to the pessimistic situation with the 'bads' of modernity threatening all."

No individual state, however large and powerful, can ever hope to enact the indivisible global common good, which is why all nations are increasingly aware of the need for international cooperation. As such, the concept of "global" has become synonymous with "universal," meaning "for all of humanity." This global consciousness represents a radical challenge to the dominance of Western civilization, presaging the fundamental subversion of Western-centrism.

Another auspicious sign that Western-centrism is being displaced is the recent strong economic performance by non-Western regions and nations, e.g., East Asia (notably China), Brazil, India, and Russia. Over the last two or three hundred years, many non-Western societies have tried to match the political and economic strength of the West in order to grow out of Western-centrism. Thus, they have been forced to play the game of modernization, which was designed to disadvantage them from the beginning. In other words, in order to develop more effective strategies to counter Western-centrism, non-Western societies must first accommodate Western-centrism by adopting Western political and economic strategies. Once non-Western nations have attained political and economic equality with the West, they may begin to demand the revision of the rules of the Western-centric game, but until then, they must struggle to survive by conforming to the biased rules set by the West. In relationships marked by dominance, the weaker party must acquiesce to the rules set by the dominant party, putting itself at a disadvantage, and prove its ability according to these rules. In the process of modernization,

Table 1. Percentage of the GNI by Region

	1980	2000	2010
World	100	100	100
EU	33.8	28.4	27.36
China	1.9	3.6	9.1
China (including Hong Kong and Macao)	2.1	4.2	9.5
Japan	11	13.6	8.6
South Korea	0.6	1.4	1.6
China + Japan + South Korea	13.7	19.3	19.7
ASEAN	1.6	1.9	2.6
China (including Hong Kong and Macao) + Japan + South Korea + ASEAN	15.3	21.0	22.3
USA	25.9	30.6	23.4
Canada	2.5	2.1	2.3
Mexico	1.5	1.8	1.6
North America	29.9	34.5	27.3
Brazil	2.3	2.1	2.9
India	1.7	1.4	2.5
Russia	-	0.8	2.3
Brazil + India + Russia	4.0	4.3	7.7

Source: World Bank (http://data.world.bank).

Note: The figures are rounded to one decimal place. In 2000, the combined individual ratios of China, Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN differ slightly from the cumulative ratio of those regions, because the relative ratio was slightly different when weighed against the total global GNI. For the years 1980 and 2000, the total for the EU represents the cumulative total of the individual GNIs of the 27 member states of the EU as of 2010. For this table, the ASEAN total does not include Myanmar, because relevant data was not available. The GNI of Brunei in 2010 is not available, and was thus excluded. No data was available from 1980 for Vietnam, Laos, Russia, Macao, and Cambodia. The data for Hong Kong in 1980 is based on GDP, rather than GNI.

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non-Western societies have been forced into this type of no-win situation, and unwittingly internalized Western-centrism.

Of course, we must never deny the significance of the monocentric military dominance of Western civilization, as exemplified by the recent conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, led by the United States and its allies. Nevertheless, the dynamic economic growth of East Asia, Brazil, Russia, and India represents a definitive long-term shift towards polycentrism. Economic trends over the last three decades confirm this, as seen in the following table, which shows what percentage of the global gross national income (GNI) was represented by the individual GNI of major states (and state confederations) in the years 1980, 2000, and 2010.

According to Table 1, in 1980, the GNI of East Asia (including China, Japan, South Korea, and the ASEAN) was 15.3% of the global total, while that of North America was 29.9%, and that of the European Union (EU) was 33.8%. In 2010, however, two years after the global financial crisis began in the United States, the GNI of East Asia had risen to 22.3% of the global total, while that of North America was 27.3%, and that of the EU was 27.4%. Thus, the relative weight of East Asia in the total global GNI increased by an impressive 7%, while the total for Brazil, India, and Russia also made a strong showing, rising from 4.0% to 7.7%. The EU has seen a rather sharp decrease of 6.4%, although the decline since 2000 has only been about 1.0%. Since 1980, North America's overall decline of 2.6% has been rather moderate, but the 7.2% drop since 2000 is much more considerable. That 7.2% drop comes almost entirely from the United States, which also fell off by 7.2% from 2000 to 2010. In that same period, China enjoyed a phenomenal increase of 5.5% (from 3.6% to 9.1%), overtaking Japan, which declined from 13.6% in 2000 to 8.6% in 2010. In fact, if not for Japan's loss of 5%, the total GNI of East Asia in 2010 would have equaled or surpassed that of the EU and North America.[6]

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6. For reference, "In 1960, the aggregate GNP of Japan and East Asia came to no more than 4% of that of the global total, while that of North America (i.e. United States, Canada, and Mexico) was 37%" (Kang 2004, 502). Of course, GNP is measured differently from GNI.

The coincidence of the relative economic decline of the United States and the phenomenal growth of China's economy and military spending has led to the proliferation of the "China threat" theory and the term "G-2" (Group of Two). While no one can predict how the global political order will be shaped in the long run, the world is undeniably shifting towards polycentrism with the rise of East Asia (especially China), Brazil, India, and Russia.

Transversality

Any attempt to deconstruct Western-centrism must transcend the Western view that observes the world in terms of binary oppositions (e.g., subject and object, reason and emotion, mind and body, West and non-West) and then privileges one of the two sides. In order to avoid the trap of focusing solely on isolated differences and diversity, we can turn to the concept of transversality, which fundamentally challenges the Western universalism. The term "transversality"[7] has been taken up by various postmodern theorists, including Calvin O. Schrag, Félix Guattari, and Hwa Yol Jung. Applying their theories in an attempt to characterize global citizenship, Dongsoo Lee described transversality as follows:

> Transversality aims to formulate a series of solidary, collective commonalities from the traversing and crossing communications among individuals, while still preserving their identities. The goals of transversality are to enhance communicability between individualities, to build sympathy and mutual understanding, and to simultaneously cultivate diversity and commonality, while maintaining individualities (D. Lee 2010, 183).

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7. In mathematics, a transversal is defined as a line that cuts through two or more other lines. Jean-Paul Sartre first used the concept of transversality in a philosophical context in his 1934 essay, *La Transcendance de l'ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique* (The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness), and the concept was later developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

In my discussion of transversality, I rely upon recent works by Hwa Yol Jung, who has extensively applied the term in the field of political philosophy while attempting to deconstruct Western-centrism. Jung (1995, 15) declares that transversality is the "crossroads of truth across the boundaries of different cultures; it is the way of thinking about truth cross-culturally." In order to apply the concept of transversality properly, we must first examine its implications for comparative political theory.

First of all, the concept of transversality exposes the universalism of modernity as an embodiment of Western-centrism, thus articulating the problematique of Western-centrism. No political theory can have any privilege of truth, for there is no such thing as a universal political theory that embraces all political theories.[8] Therefore, no political theory—past or present, Eastern or Western—can make a monopolistic claim on inclusive universality. Instead, it is essential to forge a transversal connectivity by recognizing and incorporating different voices from divergent cultures and societies. Furthermore, communicability and integration must be actively enhanced in order to preserve such diversity.

Second, transversality does not merely present non-Western political theory as an alternative to Western political theory, while recognizing the differences between the two. Certainly, there will always be differences that cannot be sutured by universalism, but the world cannot make real progress so long as such differences are simply established and entrenched, with no communication. Transversality refuses to either ignore differences or totalize them into a single whole. The recognition of diversity that is inherent to transversality is not intended simply to identify differences, but to transfigure them. Jung's concept of transversality involves interacting with diversity in order to reform something during a stage of transition. The goal is to complement "what is lacking or deficient in one . . . by the other," thereby enacting a "self-transfiguring process of one's encounter with the Other and becoming another being" (Jung 2009a, 432).

Third, transversality avoids several fallacies that have hindered other

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8. This is adapted from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's remark: "There is not a philosophy which contains all philosophies" (quoted in Jung 1999, 277).

attempts to overcome Western-centrism. Non-Western attempts to decon-
struct reductive Western universalism tend to stress differences from the
West, thereby university reinforcing the supposed primacy and ascendency
of the West and reproducing the binary oppositions embedded in West-
ern-centrism. Any dichotomy that emphasizes the West and non-West can
only ever be an assimilative or reverse model (i.e. reverse Orientalism) that
inevitably bestows universality upon one of the two. Transversality, however,
informs us that cultures are always plural, and that genuine global cultures
can only emerge when each culture is encouraged to maintain its own indig-
enous roots while actively engaging with other cultures. That is, cultures
must develop through transversal mediation with one another. From this
perspective, Western-centrism can only be supplanted by interrogating both
Eastern and Western political theories from a broader perspective that
incorporates cultures from different places and time periods.

According to Jung (2009b, 28-29), the concept of transversality opens
up the horizon to overcome the "polarizing dichotomies" of universality
and particularity, identity and difference, and the West and non-West, and
"advances the cause of cross-cultural fertilization or hybridization as well
as cross-disciplinary engagement in which truth as communicability priv-
ileges, and is monopolized by, neither the West nor philosophy alone."

However, as a non-Western scholar, I have some lingering questions,
perhaps even dogged skepticism, regarding postmodernist discourses—
including those on transversality—that stress the need to recognize and
acknowledge the differences of the Other. Since Western-centrism tends
to ignore those differences, any added emphasis would seem to be a posi-
tive development, but I believe such view often serves to reinforce the
Western perspective. In fact, models that privilege difference merely for
the sake of difference inevitably evoke a rather ludicrous situation by
encouraging people to overlook universal problems. For instance, what are
Westerners to do about the harsh authoritarian regimes, rampant political
corruption, and patriarchal oppression of women, which are commonly
found in non-Western countries? Of course, all of those problems are also
embedded in Western culture, but does that mean that Westerners should
abstain from criticizing them out of respect for the different cultures of

the Other?

Furthermore, non-Westerners have learned, either voluntarily or forcibly, not only to recognize but also to respect the distinctive aspects of Western civilization—the West's "Enlightenment," reason and philosophy, liberalism, democracy, feminism, science and technology, industrialism and capitalism, and so on—in the name of universality. But while Western exceptionalism has privileged these cultural elements as superior, the distinctive aspects of Eastern culture are typically dismissed as inferior and deviant according to Orientalism. In other words, attempts to simply respect one another's differences will forever be unbalanced, unless Western culture begins to show greater respect for non-Western cultures, and non-Western respect for Western culture becomes demystified to a certain extent.[9] Thus, following only the suggestions offered by the concept of transversality, non-Westerners may never be able to recognize and acknowledge their differences from the West on an equal footing, although the acceptance of Western universality is clearly and gradually receding in the postmodern world.

In reconsidering the nature of universality, Immanuel Wallerstein's examination of the supposed universalism of European social science

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9. In my discussion, there are two critical points with regards to postmodernist discourses of difference and otherness. The first point criticizing cultural relativism has been widely addressed in Western literature, but to my knowledge, the second point criticizing the imbalance between the West and the "rest" in terms of their respect for each other's differences has not been critically addressed. For example, take the need for heteronomy (ethics of focusing on the Other) that is stressed by Emmanuel Levinas, particularly his ethical philosophy of dialogue and responsibility on the primacy of the other (Levinas 1999, 97-109). His philosophy is primarily applicable to dominant groups (e.g., Western society, whites, males, the upper class, Christians, etc.), because marginalized groups (e.g., non-Western society, non-whites, females, the working class, people of non-Christian religions) are already well-versed in the ethics of heteronomy. Indeed, while heteronomy is imposed on the latter groups each and every day, for the former groups it is simply an optional virtue, a postmodern variant of the "white man's burden." Kwame Anthony Appiah commits a similar error when he defines the "second strand of cosmopolitanism" as the "recognition that human beings are different and that we can learn from each other's differences" (Appiah 2006, 4), without seriously considering the imbalance of power that is inherent between diverse groups.

may yield some insight:

> European social science was resolutely universalist in asserting that
> whatever it was that happened in Europe in the sixteenth to nineteenth
> centuries represented a pattern that was applicable everywhere, either
> because it was a progressive achievement of mankind which was irre-
> versible or because it represented the fulfillment of humanity's basic
> needs via the removal of artificial obstacles to this realization. What you
> saw now in Europe was not only good but the face of the future every-
> where (Wallerstein 1997, 96-97).

As a social scientist who is well acquainted with the bewildering diversity
and multiplicity of today's social world, I do not agree with Wallerstein's
use of "universal" to mean "equally applying and as a matter of principle
everywhere in the universe" (Lummis 2002, 69), a definition better suited
to scientific truths or Hegelian idealist philosophies. However, the reason
why the universalist claim of European social science is well explained by
Wallerstein (1997). He suggests the reason is a Western unilinear progres-
sive view of history with European supremacy, i.e. that the progressive
development of humanity is overshadowed by the achievements of mod-
ern Europe, which has later been forcibly implanted in the rest. Hence
comes the emergence of the universality of European social science, and
thus the task of Europeanization (or Westernization) is thrust upon the
"inferior" non-West.

  In other words, the principal ideas and values representing the prog-
ress of the world—democracy, liberalism, capitalism, human rights, and
enlightenment rationality—are purported to have originated exclusively in
the West, so that other civilizations were basically forced to pursue those
ideals as their desirable end (*telos*). Western civilization was placed in a
superior position by being granted these original (genetic) and teleological
privileges. As a result, non-Western societies had no choice but to take
Western civilization as their reference point and pursue Westernization in
the name of modernization.

  The supposed universality of European social science seems to rely
upon and derive from the genetic and teleological privileges of Western

civilization, rather than the superiority of its scientific method or logical reasoning. Thus, the universality of Western civilization in general and Western social science in particular is not a universality of scientific knowledge (universal truth), but rather a hegemony (consensus), i.e. moral and intellectual plausibility.

This point also applies to the universal values of Western modern civilization. Today, we accept human rights as universal values, not in the sense that they are valid across all of time and space, but in the sense that they are "prevalent over all" or "widely applicable." Human rights were developed as European universal values in conjunction with the emergence of capitalism and the sovereign state, which monopolized the legitimate use of violence. However, they cannot be reasonably claimed as valid across all of time and space. For example, the provision that "[n]o one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 9) would have no meaning in a society that has no police or prisons. In the same way, the "right to form and to join trade unions" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 23.4) will serve no purpose in a society whose economy is not based on wage labor. Such rights would not have been useful in an African tribal society or in sixteenth-century Korea, where capitalism was unheard of. The idea that human rights are universal values in the contemporary world (in the sense that they are "widely applicable") derives solely from the fact that most non-Western societies have now adopted capitalism and the sovereign-state system (i.e. a program of capitalist industrialization under the auspices of a sovereign-state government) by way of colonialism, imperialism, violent conquest (or its threat), or rational persuasion.[10]

In other words, the West has effectively transformed non-Western societies into with societies with some Western semblance by transplanting and generalizing Western institutions and practices (e.g., sovereign states and capitalism) all over the world. As a result, non-Western societies have come to accept the values and ideas that are necessary for Western civilization (e.g., democracy, freedom of the press, etc.) as universal

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10. My discussion in this paragraph is indebted to Lummis (2002, 67-68).

values and ideas. This shows the hegemonic, *ex post facto* process by which much of Western modernity has become universalized. In this sense, Western modernity may be universal, but only in the sense that it is "prevalent over all" or "widely applicable." Rather than universal truth, modernity represents a hegemonic consensus—*prima facie* universality—which is always subject to revision according to temporal and spatial contexts.

Returning to the relevance of transversality for comparative political theory, theorists of transversality have not yet advanced a concrete and viable methodology of how to engage comparative political philosophy transversally. However, their theories point to cross-cultural dialogue among different cultures and civilizations. In the next section, I will focus on cross-cultural dialogue and then suggest some biological analogies that might indicate the proper method for comparative political theory.

Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Various theories of multiculturalism have been enthusiastically advanced within Western academia. Within the liberal tradition, liberal universalism (Barry 2001) and liberal multiculturalism (notably, Kymlicka 1989, 1995) occupy opposite poles, while outside the tradition, value pluralism (Gray 1995, 1998) competes with interactive multiculturalism (Parekh 2006). Notably, however, the theories of both liberal universalism and liberal multiculturalism are founded on the conviction that takes liberalism as universal in principle, which explains why they have acquired *prima facie* plausibility within Western nations where liberalism is accepted as the universal frame. However, in order to conduct a cross-cultural and transversal dialogue in comparative political theory at the global level, the universality of liberalism should not be taken for granted, for such an assumption will be susceptible to claims of Western-centrism. Thus, Bhikhu Parekh's interactive multiculturalism, which does not presuppose the universality of liberalism, merits serious examination. The idea of cross-cultural dialogue that I outline in this article largely relies on his work.

According to Parekh, as different groups of people develop their own living capacities and seek the meaning and significance of human life, they create distinct varieties of culture. Although all people share some common capacities, those capacities are differently defined and developed by our distinct cultures. As such, culture mediates human universality. It is impossible for any one individual culture to thoroughly realize the full range of human possibilities, and in most cases, a culture will focus more intently on some capacities and sensibilities, while neglecting or marginalizing others. Therein lies the reason why cross-cultural dialogue is needed. To a greater or lesser degree, each of us must function within the boundaries of our own culture, which has developed in a particular way. Contact and exchange with other cultures inevitably allow us to deepen and enrich our knowledge and understanding of our own culture, while also providing welcome opportunities to borrow and integrate attractive aspects of other cultures into our own. Accordingly, cross-cultural dialogue is an essential condition for the flourishing of human life (Parekh 1998, 212-213).

Parekh (2008, 156-157) notes that culture is not static, but composed of heterogeneous strands and differing interpretations that are constantly competing with one another. Indeed, this inherent heterogeneity and mutability is what allows us to incorporate elements of other cultures into our own through cross-cultural dialogue. In light of this idea, Parekh urges us to abandon the notion of liberalism as a fixed doctrine in favor of free intellectual exploration, deconstructing liberalism into a set of principles or values and accepting only those that are relevant when combined with values from other cultures. In fact, he regards his theory of multiculturalism as an example of such an exploration, wherein he approves of certain liberal values (e.g., human dignity, equality, critical rationality, respect for others, and tolerance), but reinterprets them with reference to other cultures. For instance, he endorses rationality, but in a persuasive and conversational form, rather than an argumentative and combative form. He cherishes individuality, while recognizing our cultural embeddedness, and he stresses that any universal values we may have are inherently mediated through particular cultures (Parekh 2006, 368-369).

Parekh coined the term "interactive multiculturalism" for this theory, which is the result of his intercultural experimentation. This method of intercultural experimentation may be called "interculturalism," defined by an emphasis on respect for other cultures, the heterogeneity and fluidity of cultures, and the importance of intercultural dialogue.[11] Parekh illustrates the method of interculturalism by examining the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi. According to Parekh, Gandhi was born into an orthodox Hindu family and was educated in the Hindu tradition. Later, he went to England and South Africa, where he learned about Christianity, Judaism, and other Western thought, and began to critically question his own tradition. Gandhi had long supported the Hindu idea of *ahimsa* (non-violence), but after encountering Christian thought and practice, he realized that the Hindu idea was too passive, in that it merely sought to avoid harming others while taking no active interest in their well-being. Thus, he adopted the "socially oriented Christian concept of *caritas*" or *agape* (God's divine love for humanity) and "integrated it with the Hindu concept of non-violence, and arrived at the idea of the active service of all living beings inspired by the principle of universal love" (Parekh 2006, 371). Gandhi also felt that "Christian *caritas* was excessively emotional" and could thus imperil internal calmness and emotional self-sufficiency, so he "reinterpreted and revised it in the light of the Hindu concept of non-attachment (*anasakti*)" (Parekh 2006, 371). By interrogating the Hindu concept of non-violence from a Christian perspective and reinterpreting the Christian concept of *caritas* from a Hindu perspective, Gandhi propagated the "novel idea of an active and positive but detached and non-emotive universal love" (Parekh 2006, 371). His hybridization of Hinduism, Christianity, and liberalism represented a cross-cultural dialogue, or transversal comparison, between "different moral, religious, and cultural traditions," through which he "destabilized settled identities and created new ones"

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11. Parekh (2006, 372) explicitly refers to his theory as "creative and interactive multiculturalism," but does not give a specific term to his theoretical method, marked by transgressing established boundaries, borrowing from other cultures, and combining elements from different cultures. He only mentions "intercultural experimentation" when illustrating this method with his account of Gandhi (Parekh 2006, 370).

(Parekh 2006, 372).

For another example of how cross-cultural dialogue can provide a method for comparative political theory, we can critically compare the concept of human rights in modern liberalism and the concept of human relationships put forth by traditional Confucianism. Any political community should guarantee a minimum of human dignity for its members, including the right to subsistence, although this perquisite may be differential and discriminatory. Somewhere beyond the horizon of this primordial problematique, the differing approaches of "human rights" and "human relationships" encounter one another. A comparative study of political theory based on cross-cultural dialogue would inevitably require the "human relationships" approach to justify itself in light of individual freedom and equality, and as a result, the negative aspects of the approach would be accordingly reformulated. In contrast, such study would point out that the "human rights" approach neglects the care and responsibility for others, as stressed by the "human relationships" approach, and must therefore adapt itself to address some of the problems that can arise from "rights talk," such as the breakdown of community, the loss of authority, and atomistic and isolated individualism. A cross-cultural dialogue recommended by comparative political theory does not aim to construct a parallel layout of Eastern and Western political theories, but rather seeks to achieve confluence between the two. Such a comparative work could pioneer a new hybrid of political theory transcending both Western-centrism and East Asian particularism.

Cross-cultural dialogue is the key to successfully traversing East and West and overcoming Western-centrism. When working on a comparative political theory from an East Asian perspective, cross-cultural dialogue can help us reach an expanding and evolving consensus. In the first stage, we must critically question Western thought from the perspective of East Asian thought, and vice versa, in order to lay the foundation for a mutual consensus by identifying their affinities and differences. Then, in the second stage, we will build upon this initial work by engaging in more intensive exchanges related to the areas of conflict, thereby expanding the preliminary consensus. Charles Taylor makes a similar point in his article,

"Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights":

> This is the situation at the outset, in any case, when consensus on some aspect of human rights has just been attained. Later a process can follow of mutual learning, moving toward a "fusion of horizon" in Gadamer's term, in which the moral universe of the other becomes less strange. Out of this will come further borrowings and the creation of new hybrid forms (Taylor 1999, 136).

Cross-cultural dialogue is not only applicable to different cultures (e.g., East and West), but also to the past and the present. Due to modernization (Westernization), non-Western societies like Korea have come to associate Western civilization with the present and East Asian civilization with the past. Thus, within the discussions of Korean scholars, the international (or inter-civilizational) cross-cultural dialogue between East and West takes on the characteristics of a cross-temporal (or diachronic) dialogue between the past and the present. Seung-hwan Lee has called for parallel cross-temporal and cross-cultural dialogues:

> The tradition to which I refer is the *quintessence* of values that have been tempered and sublimated through a harsh process of self-denial and self-verification in the midst of humiliating oppression from the outside world. It is only the dialectic of negation that can make tradition rise again in the aftermath of the devastating striking of the old by the *Western* and the *modern*. This in turn can let the resuscitated tradition strike at the modern, and can lay a majestic path that will make *tradition* truly traditional (S. Lee 1997, 196).[12]

Biological Metaphors and the Horizon of Comparison

In order to compare diverse and divergent political theories in an effort to spatially traverse East and West and temporally traverse past and present, we may look to the biological theory of evolution, which can elucidate the

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12. Emphasis appears in the original text.

mode of existence and the development of both Western and Eastern political theories. Specifically, biological concepts such as homology, analogy, and convergent/divergent evolution can provide useful insights into the nature and development of these theories.

In biology, homology refers to the "similarity of the structure, physiology, or development of different species of organisms"[13] stemming from a common evolutionary ancestor. In contrast, analogy refers to a "functional similarity of structure based not upon common evolutionary origins but upon mere similarity of use."[14] For example, the "forelimbs of such widely differing mammals as humans, bats, and deer are homologous"[15] because those mammals share a common evolutionary ancestor. The different shapes and functions of the forelimbs represent adaptive modifications that have occurred as a result of their different evolutionary processes. In contrast, the wings of birds and insects represent analogous structures. Although both types are used for flight, birds and insects do not share any common ancestors.

Early on, evolutionary theory stressed homology, while analogy was typically dismissed as a trick of nature. More recently, however, there has been renewed interest in analogy thanks to the theory of convergent evolution, which seeks to explain how species of different ancestry acquire the same or similar biological traits through their evolution in a similar ecosystem. Interestingly, homology relates to organisms that share a common ancestor but diverge through evolution because of different environmental needs (original affinit → divergent evolution with functional differentiation), while analogy relates to organisms with no common ancestor that converge through evolution because of similar environmental needs (original difference → convergent evolution with teleological assimilation). In this evolutionary dynamic, affinity and difference pre-

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13. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "homology," accessed December 21, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/270557/homology.

14. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "homology," accessed December 21, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/270557/homology.

15. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "homology," accessed December 21, 2012, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/270557/homology.

suppose and intersect.

This biological knowledge can elucidate a new orientation in comparative political theory by helping us compare the theories of the East and West in terms of their vital needs (or functions) and their surrounding environments—or ecosystems, if you will—without being overwhelmed by their original or current differences. To illustrate, I cite the recent theorization of Confucian constitutionalism, pioneered by Hahm Chaihark (2000). The concept of constitutionalism is widely known to have originated in the West, and liberal constitutionalism is typically associated with the rule of law, the guarantee of basic human rights, the separation of powers, judicial review, and impeachment. Concurrently, there is a common misbelief that the idea of constitutionalism was absent from Confucianism and other East Asian political philosophies, which are mistakenly believed to focus exclusively on arbitrary monarchical rule.

However, in tracing the origin of constitutionalism to Aristotle and Cicero in the West, we come to find that "constitution" originally referred to a "moderate and balanced form of government" or a "mixed government," rather than the full array of principles embodied by modern Western constitutionalism. According to Carl J. Friedrich (1968, 320), the idea of constitutionalism is simply a system of restraint on governmental actions, or to put it more succinctly: "How to rule the rulers?" From this perspective, constitutionalism is one of the essential problematiques that all political communities must somehow confront in order to sustain their very existence. Any political community that is not equipped with some institutional arrangement by which to check the power of rulers is surely doomed to self-destruction, for absolute power inevitably ruins rulers along with their political communities; a car with no brakes kills not only the passengers and pedestrians, but also the driver.

Following this insight, we are compelled to investigate the institutional arrangements that controlled Confucian rulers. In Confucianism, the role of checking the power of rulers relied heavily upon *li* 禮 (propriety), an intermediate form of doctrines existing somewhere between morals and laws. Following this path, Hahm has formulated a theory of Confucian constitutionalism, suggesting that the prime minister, royal lectures,

institutionalized remonstrance, and court historians were all vital elements, in addition to the rule of *li* and its accompanying arrangements, including legal codes and customary laws (Hahm 2000).

This kind of theorization based on the idea of convergent (analogous) or divergent (homologous) evolution transcends the facile comparison of similarities and differences between the East and West, allowing us to deepen our understanding of the original needs, spirits, and functions of a political community, as well as their homologous or analogous evolution. Such strategy would enable us to conduct a richer and more fruitful dialogue between the East and West and between the traditional and modern.

Thus, any attempt to traverse the East and West or the past and present cannot proceed from the assumption of reductive universality, which necessarily posits a particular concept, theory, or value of a given culture or civilization as universal and superior, and thus suppresses the existence and value of multiplicity and difference. Instead, we must begin with the assumption of "pluralist universalism," based on a comparison between the self and the Other, and a cross-examination of their respective origins and development, which might enable us to create a new confluent universality (Parekh 2006, 126-127).[16] This process naturally involves self-understanding, self-criticism, and self-transcendence through constant cross-analysis of the self and the Other. Moreover, such a process would eschew the same or similar answers, which tacitly presume the inclusion of some cultures and the exclusion of others, in favor of identifying a set of primordial problematiques that every political community has been confronted and preoccupied with at some point in time, and which have led to various (i.e. divergent) ideas and practices in response. At first glance, some institu-

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16. Parekh (2006, 126) notes that there are three broad answers to the "question of whether there are universal moral values or norms and how we can judge other cultures . . . . relativism, monism and minimum universalism." After critically examining and dismissing all three, he suggests "pluralist universalism" as an alternative, stressing the creative interplay between universal moral values and the "thick and complex moral structures of different societies, the latter domesticating and pluralizing the former and being in turn reinterpreted and revised in their light, thus leading to what I might call 'pluralist universalism'" (Parekh 2006, 127). For more of his account of the existence of universal moral values, see Parekh (2006, 127-134).

tions and practices seem to have originated and diverged within historical-
ly particular environments, and have thus assumed apparently incommen-
surable forms. In reality, however, even the most distinctive political and
social practices merely represent flexible responses to the fundamental
needs that are shared by all political communities. In other words, the
apparently diverse responses may be situated (embedded) within conver-
gent or overlapping problematiques, comprised of the values that all politi-
cal communities must seek to enact, the method for enacting those values,
and the way the community responds to historical vicissitudes. Returning
to the ecological metaphor, such varied responses must be nurtured and
respected in order to preserve "biodiversity" and avoiding falling into the
trap of imposing *a priori* superiority and inferiority, in accordance with the
evolutionary concepts of homology and analogy.

Conclusion

Based on the methodological ideas suggested in this article, including the
concepts of transversality, cross-cultural dialogue, and analogies of con-
vergent and divergent evolution, we can conduct comparative political
theory that traverses and links seemingly contrary theories. For example,
we may seek the confluence between Plato's philosopher-kings and the
Confucian idea of virtuous rulers, both of which address the qualities a
leader must have in order to realize an ideal state. Or we may intersect the
conservatism of East Asian Confucian scholars with that of European
conservatives, as both groups, despite living under radically different his-
torical conditions, vehemently opposed the advent of liberal and industri-
al civilization. We may also compare the differing conceptions of public
opinion as found in the principles of political legitimation given by Con-
fucianism and liberalism, or between political theories of realism, such as
those of the Chinese Legalists and the Machiavellians. Likewise, we may
contrast the embryonic Confucian feminism of East Asia with the early
liberal feminism represented by Mary Wollstonecraft.

　　The exploration of such topics would represent a transversal compar-

ison of East Asia and the West. The responses would uncover certain similarities, some of which might be attributed to a common origin, and others of which would specify the fundamental needs or functions of political communities. In other words, transversal analysis can help us identify the convergent or divergent evolutionary paths of the problematiques, moving us that much closer to answering some of the profound questions in political studies. What are the minimum benefits that a political community guarantees for its members? What are the basic elements of an ideal society? Where is the ultimate locus of political legitimacy? How does a political community inherit and sustain political legitimacy? How does a political community respond to revolutionary upheavals, e.g., the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, etc.? By what criteria are certain members of a political community (e.g., slaves, women, immigrants, etc.) either included or excluded? How do secular and transcendental values interact in a political community?

As I have suggested, theorists who support transversality have launched numerous attacks against universalism, the prevalence of rigid dichotomies (such as affinity versus difference), and the essentialization of culture and civilization (including Western-centrism). These are all valid points, but I hope that I have painted a different picture with my own analysis of cross-cultural dialogue, supported by the definition of universalism as "widely applicable" (Lummis 2002, 69), my discussion of pluralist universalism, and the biological metaphors from the theory of evolution. Namely, such criticism seems to go too far, demonstrating the exuberant, iconoclastic zeal that seems to mark every theory in its early stages. The history of political theory in both the East and West shows us that the need to refashion and transfigure old concepts, rather than outright rejecting them, is just as important as the need to develop entirely new theories. Perhaps, transversality might provide the basic foundation for a comparative political theory, while cross-cultural dialogue can supply a concrete method. For the guiding spirit, we need to look no further than evolutionary theory, which demonstrates that people and civilizations are never in a state of stasis or immutability, but rather exist as a steadily flowing and ever-changing wave.

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