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A CHINESE WAY OF THINKING

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In an essay published in 1989 the distinguished poet and scholar A. K. Ramanujan (1929–1993) asked if there was such a thing as "an Indian way of thinking."[1] Having formulated his subject as a question, he then spent his opening pages reflecting on whether this question could be posed at all. An extensive study by a leading Japanese scholar of Buddhism, which Ramanujan did not mention, had analyzed the "ways of thinking of Eastern peoples" in a monograph originally completed in 1947 and published in an expanded English translation in 1964.[2] An approach such as Hajime Nakamura's (1912–1999) may have seemed already outdated by the time Ramanujan wrote; surely, we now know better than to identify patterns of thought with "peoples." Indeed, in Western academic writing we have pretty much stopped raising the question of national-specific thinking, or styles of reasoning (it bears pointing out that in other academic cultures, such as the Chinese or the Russian, not only are national characteristics constantly discussed, but, far from being problematized, their very existence is taken for granted). In this article I argue that the "ways of thinking" issue can be productively revisited with the help of a more nuanced terminology. Under various headings, some renewed interest in the subject has become apparent in scholarship during the past decade.

In 2007, a volume of essays was published under the editorship of Charlotte Furth and others, titled *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*. This volume discussed the use of "cases" mostly in two main domains of Chinese society in the late imperial period, law and medicine, with two additional essays on religion and philosophy.[3] The title *Thinking with Cases* was chosen in appreciation of the subtitle of an article by John Forrester, "If *p*, then What? Thinking in Cases."[4] The editors and contributors to the volume in Chinese studies seem to have been unaware of a collection in French, which dealt with the transition from the particular case to the general statement as a theoretical problem under a title strikingly similar to theirs. *Penser par cas,* edited by Jean-Claude Passeron and Jacques Revel, was published in 2005.[5] This Europeanist volume treated thinking "in," "with," or "through" cases as a general method of analysis and reasoning. Manifestations of such thinking in the Chinese cultural context were represented in *Penser par cas* by a specific "case," a chapter on ancient Chinese mathematics. Similarly, a collective volume in German, *Fallstudien: Theorie—Geschichte—Methode,*[6] which was published in 2007 as the outcome of a conference in Frankfurt am Main, where Charlotte Furth was the only sinologist participating, included a shortened version of her introduction to *Thinking with Cases,* but was otherwise strictly "Western" in composition. In the same year, contributors to a special issue of *Critical Inquiry,* "On the Case,"

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were obviously under no obligation to cover China, and in their essays they did not treat that part of the world.[7]

While the focus on Western material in the above-listed publications reflected the specialization of scholars involved in them, reluctance to engage with Chinese thought in a comparative framework also attests to a certain unease. On the one hand, the relativism promoted in the second half of the twentieth century by anthropologists and cultural historians has been influential in shaping an academic view of "other" cultures as systems with their own inherent meanings and values. By further denying the validity of universal criteria in cross-cultural study, this approach has discouraged East-West comparisons.[8] On the other hand, parochialism in the analysis of thinking is inevitable. In matters as basic to our humanity as the patterns of our thought and our judgments about what is regular and what constitutes an exception, perceptions are nearly innate: they instinctively mirror our worldviews. The exceptional—often the foreign—just "feels" wrong.[9] This is an epistemological barrier that every cross-cultural investigation must recognize.

In what follows, I will plead for the relevance of my subject, the study of a Chinese way of thinking, to conversation within a larger theoretical ambit. One of my purposes will be just that: to connect the threads of the discussion by situating the Chinese variety comparatively, within the general analysis of case-based thought. Another purpose will be to carry the inquiry into "thinking through cases" beyond the comfort zone of "traditional" China—perceived as stretching from antiquity to the end of the nineteenth century—by suggesting with the help of some examples from modern texts that such thinking is still extant today.

At the start of a methodological introduction to the German volume mentioned above, Johannes Süssmann points out that "case studies" *(Fallstudien)* are fundamental to a number of disciplines: law, medicine, literature and history writing, moral philosophy, and theology.[10] Chinese discourse, however, tends to employ cases to confirm the validity of established sets of beliefs. Rather than "case studies," therefore, the Chinese uses of the case may be more accurately classified comparatively as "case histories," "case stories" *(Fallgeschichten),* or anecdotes.[11] My twentieth-century examples will be culled from historiography and the rhetoric of public language with some additional glances at literature, popular religion, and, in conclusion, history of science.

A Culture of "Typism"

I would suggest that we start not with China but with medieval Europe. In his 1919 book *The Autumn of the Middle Ages,* Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) argued that "the medieval mind" was dominated by "typism": with no interest in the individual, it strove to demonstrate through the particular case the work of general ideas such as sin and virtue.[12] This "obsolete way of thinking," to quote Huizinga, operated through strings of examples from antiquity; hence also the "strong medieval inclination toward casuistry" and the tendency "to overestimate the independent value of a thing or a case." Huizinga denounces these features as hollow and superficial formalism.

Later in the same chapter, under "The Forms of Thought in Practice," he further develops his critique of a "way of thinking" that, for him, may be clearly assigned to the medieval past.[13] It goes without saying that Huizinga's approach to the Middle Ages has been roundly contested in later scholarship. But reading Huizinga comparatively—and he is still worth reading—leaves one with a definite sense of similarity as well as the realization of a key difference. Everything just quoted from Huizinga on the "typism" of medieval Europe can be said of China. Where students of China cannot follow Huizinga is in the clear line he implicitly draws between the thinking he classifies as characteristic of the "medieval mind" and that which he ascribes to the modern age. For Huizinga, the presumed break from medieval patterns of thought in Europe is so evident that it does not need spelling out: it is for him a foregone conclusion that the way of thinking grounded in typification had become "obsolete" by the time of his writing. As we do not quite see this break in Chinese thought, we cannot reach the same conclusion in the Chinese context.

To borrow Huizinga's terminology, China is the culture of *typism* writ large. To say so is admittedly to generalize provocatively, and many counter-arguments to this statement could be made. Certainly, China is no stranger to tensions between the universal and the specific. However we may wish to avoid "essentializing" any culture by reducing it to a set of assumptions, it can hardly be denied that the Chinese worldview has been characterized by a strong pull toward coherence. Thus, a new study by a scholar of Chinese philosophy argues that both the Confucian and Daoist traditions look for establishing "oneness," where in the Western tradition we would expect to see the questioning of identity, value, and knowledge under the separate categories of ontology, ethics, and epistemology.[14] The Confucian world order was moral and cosmic: beginning at the level of the virtuous one, it stretched out in concentric circles into society and the world at large so as finally to encompass "all under heaven." The one was a single person perceived as a type, not as an individual; *model* type, or a human exemplar. His—Confucianism had very different postulations about the duties of women—adherence to the correct norms of behavior was a necessary qualification. The righteous gentleman and state servant embodied the positive moral characteristics awaited of the ideal type. Chinese culture exerted strong pressure on persons to think of themselves as models, or types, and passed judgment on them in the same terms.[15]

In her introduction to *Thinking with Cases,* Furth interprets the Confucian "collective biographies of groups of people identified by moral or social type . . . as a form of 'thinking with cases'."[16] The higher up in the hierarchy that one's position was, the greater was the pressure on one to conform to the expectations set and monitored by a cultural code requiring that the specific should illustrate the universal.[17] The printed biographies of China's clerks, magistrates, and ministers were a main didactic tool in the confirmation of the "good" type and the parallel condemnation of the "bad." Illustrative stories, or anecdotes, demonstrating these qualities were the standard method of conveying the message.[18] In Chinese Buddhism, too, the religious truth was imparted "through concrete examples and individual instances."[19] While social roles were prescribed, in reality a person could perform

many of them in sequence, or even in parallel, rather than be limited to a single one.

The idea of exemplarity was maintained with the support of the state through a canon of Confucian texts, which remained unchallenged as doctrine from about the tenth century C.E. These texts were intensely commented upon and their interpretation, even their authenticity, was disputed, but only in the early twentieth century did basic doubt arise about their standing as containers of the culture's highest truth claims and its most complete ethical guidelines. The canonical books had related the words and described the behavior of the sages and saints: even as Confucianism was cast in doubt, canonicity itself was not. In the 1920s, under the dual impact of an encounter with Western political literature—including critiques of China and its "national character"—and Western political power, encounters to which the introduction of social Darwinist theory had lent particular urgency, participants in the May Fourth movement criticized incisively the old Confucian worldview. Authors at this time defied the established idea that the past was to serve as a compass for the present. A new belief in progress demanded alternative rhetorical tools to replace the language of cases, which derived its authority from accumulated historical precedents. Much as "cases" were marshaled by Confucians before, however, the speakers who now gathered under the banner of "science" had switched to marshaling what they called "facts."[20] The basic dichotomous division into "good" and "bad" was not put out of respectable use (as it was in Europe) by the gradual relativization of moral discourse. For example, both the Nationalists and the Communists in China classified individuals and social groups as "good" or "bad" elements, and such language is still constantly in evidence.

European Casuistry and Exemplarity, and Chinese Case-Based Thinking

In a contribution to the *Fallstudien* volume, which he has developed further since, Carlo Ginzburg set out to consider casuistry while putting aside its moral dimension.[21] It is hardly possible to make this distinction, and even Ginzburg cannot maintain it, since the relation of the casuist argument to morality stands at the center of any discussion of casuistry as such.[22] Furth recognizes European casuistry, which she glosses as "cases of conscience," as the closest parallel to Chinese "thinking with cases." She sees the casuist *exemplum* as particularly comparable with Neo-Confucian "cases of learning," pointing out that Chinese *exempla* were always embedded in a "moral discourse."[23] The unacknowledged difference remains—to recall Huizinga—that in Europe the dominance of this thinking did come to an end. The question is why and when this change occurred. Ginzburg reminds us that the logic of casuistry derived much of its power of conviction from confidence in the continuity between past and present, and hence the authority and relevance of past examples. According to Ginzburg, this assumption of continuity was first challenged in the sixteenth century by Europe's discovery of the New World. It was shattered along with "the world of casuistry" by the scientific advances of the seventeenth century.[24]

Others have defined a "crisis of exemplarity" in the late Renaissance, when the validity of the exemplum as the "illustrative anecdote with a moral point" was put in doubt by "the humanist's disenchantment with imitative symbols of moral conduct."[25] This crisis is considered to have culminated with Montaigne (1533–1592), for whom no example of the many past cases of human behavior, which he retold in his *Essays,* was as fully satisfactory as the evidence of his own life.[26] But attaching an expiration date to "typism" in the West proves somewhat harder than Huizinga would have allowed: some recent research has highlighted the uses of examples and strategies of exemplarity in the age of the Enlightenment.[27]

There are some striking visual traces by which "thinking through cases," applied to examples of moral and immoral conduct, may be seen at work in China in the early twentieth century. A collection of such images is included in the permanent exhibition of the Museo Missionario Francescano in the convent of San Francesco in Fiesole, near Florence. The small museum draws on the bronzes, porcelains, and other artifacts assembled by the Franciscan friars from Tuscany, who served as missionaries in China in the 1920s and 1930s.[28] The set of images that demonstrates the enduring logic of examples in the Chinese imaginary is a series of large-size paintings of hell.[29] Most of the personages in them are sinners: after death, they come before the judge in the underworld, who decides on their proper punishments. These are then meted out, with much enthusiasm as the anonymous artist imagined it, by the demons in hell. Interestingly for our purposes, the writing next to the pictorial representation matches the punishment with a description of the sin perpetrated. One picture shows a son, who killed his parents, the worst possible offense to the value of filial piety: he is about to be sliced. A man whose legs are seen protruding out of the torture wheel had once led a dissolute life, so we are told, seducing women and children. A picture of a sinner being beheaded is the only one of the museum's paintings that bears a year, 1921. While there is no published catalog, the museum opened in 1925, and the hell-paintings on exhibition suggest a common origin.

Another picture makes clear what will happen to someone who had killed another man for money: he will be eaten by a tiger. Next to him, a man has his head sawn off because (so the writing explains) he had blamed Heaven and did not honor the gods. The text accompanying the image of a fortunate person, who in the netherworld is shown royally seated on a mythical beast, announces that "every man who in the course of his worldly life has built bridges, fixed roads, built ships and ferries" will be rewarded by this rope-led unicorn. All the punishments, and the rare rewards, are presented here as paradigmatic: *if* that's what you do in life, *then* this is what you will get once you die. In death as in life, individual fates illustrate the typical. Christian religious painting, which has often depicted sinners in hell, seldom explained why they had arrived there.[30]

Scholars of Chinese religion see the belief in divine courts, with their sets of laws and netherworld bureaucracy, as evidence of a perceived "judicial continuum" between the earthly world and the afterlife.[31] We can also conclude from these pictures that the Buddhist notion of karmic retribution provided another source for case-based

thinking in China at the grassroots level. Earlier we have seen such thinking embodied in Confucian ideology. The next part of this article will argue that thinking through cases persisted into the twentieth century, finds common expression in modern texts, and remains a characteristic of Chinese rhetoric. "Case-oriented thinking," as one of the editors of *Thinking with Cases* has called it with regard to imperial China,[32] is therefore still with us.

Learning from the Sages in Modern China

The rapid disqualification of the traditional performative roles and models with the end of the Chinese imperial order in the early twentieth century[33] occurred in tandem with China's discovery of the West. However, contrary to the common sense underlying Carlo Ginzburg's argument about the reasons for the end of casuistry as a method in Europe, the discontinuity ushered in by the fall of the Qing dynasty did not bring about a critical reconsideration of the need in models as such. While change there certainly was, scholars who today resort to the metaphorical language of an "epistemological upheaval" amid the "crumbling" of the Chinese "cosmological order" overstate the extent of the conceptual revolution that supposedly followed, or had shortly predated, that of 1911.[34] Instead, disenchantment with *old* models appears to have liberated mental space for new figures to be placed in the position of exemplars. When in the first decades of the twentieth century new model lives were set up in the writings of the Chinese intelligentsia, the main novelty about them was that they were no longer Chinese but Western.

Interest in these new sages did not dwell only on their intellectual, literary, or political achievements. Their biographies and what was known or rumored of their personal conduct attracted no lesser attention. Lu Xun (1881–1936), by common verdict the very symbol of Chinese literary modernity, couched his polemic in this style: "Herbert Spencer never married, but I have yet to hear that he felt frustrated or bored. James Watt lost his children early, yet 'he died peacefully in his bed'."[35] There is irony in such statements. The literary tradition that they evoke goes back to the personalized style of the familiar essay or jotting, the short prose known as *sanwen* or *xiaopin wen,* and the older precedents of such genres, *biji* and *suibi.*[36] As Russian literature became increasingly popular among readers and writers of the May Fourth generation, it was perceived to offer another moral example for the new age.[37]

Let us look more closely at one "case" of what might be called case-based rhetoric: a lecture on liberalism by Lin Yutang (1895–1976), published as an essay in the Shanghai journal *The China Critic* in 1931.[38] Educated at Shanghai's St John's University and then at the universities of Harvard and Leipzig, Lin is the best known among the few Chinese authors in the twentieth century to have earned literary fame by writing in both Chinese and English. *The China Critic,* which Lin edited, was the first English-language periodical published in China by a Chinese editorial staff. However, Lin's rhetorical devices in this English-language text are symptomatic of modern Chinese writing. In the excerpt quoted below, I highlight in bold the examples Lin uses, gleaned from the biographies of foreign sages: note the close connec-

tion, which we have already discussed, between exemplarity and the biographical genre:

> **Jesus**, the propounder of the liberal truth that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, was crucified, and then somehow turned out to be the founder of the greatest religion on earth. **Socrates**, who may be called the first liberator of human thought and critical thinking, drank hemlock for corrupting the youth of Athens, and then was discovered by the future generations to be after all a very sane and honest moralist. **Luther** got a reputation for inculcating a loose and licentious view of life and subverting the church, and then turned out to be the emancipator of Europe from mediaeval Christianity. History is full of such **instances**. **Copernicus** was imprisoned, and **Galileo**, if I am not mistaken, had to sign a confession, stating that after all he believed the sun revolved round the earth.

There is no special reason to go further into the contents of what Lin has to say about liberalism: we are more interested in the form he gives to his argument and the predominance of anecdotes in it. The aligning of multiple examples in the manner Lin uses here combines the appeal to high authority with a listing of "case stories." A reader unfamiliar with the Chinese mode of argument is struck by the episodic enumeration. Traditional Chinese fiction *(xiaoshuo,* in which the second character refers to orally told tales or anecdotes) is also challenging for the non-native reader because of its apparent fragmentariness: as long as we are unaccustomed to the conventions of this literature, we may find that too many stories are being told at the same time, with too many characters for us to follow. The quick succession of names in a Chinese novel is facilitated by their being perceived as types, instead of individual "heroes"; similarly, roles in Chinese theater corresponded to a list of types rather than individual dramatis personae. It needs acknowledging that Lin Yutang's method is also reminiscent of a type of nineteenth-century Western writing that poses comparable difficulties today: for a salutary reminder that modern Chinese rhetoric cannot be read in isolation, as the expression of a "way of thinking" singular to China, consider how names of authority figures are aligned in the opening lecture of Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803–1882) *Representative Men* (1850), "Uses of Great Men."[39] While it is frequent enough in twentieth-century Chinese texts, understanding Lin Yutang's or Lu Xun's persuasion by anecdote and enumeration needs the additional caveat that, for writers as sophisticated as they, the use of this mode in the republican era was already self-conscious and, with such authors, often employed in satire.[40] It was the less educated who still used it in earnest and who were (and are) likely to quote authoritative sayings and stories about famous men without questioning them.

Chinese rhetoric has been studied far more closely in the ancient than in the modern setting. Whereas ancient rhetoric has been the subject of much recent sinological attention, only rarely do specialists in early China turn to modern texts.[41] One study, which begins by stating the ubiquity of the didactic anecdote as a tool of persuasion in early China and ends its analysis at the Western Han dynasty, does observe, in a brief conclusion on "legacies of the anecdote," that "the art of the anecdote never disappeared in China" and that "for a long time . . . the anecdote continued to

serve as a primary medium through which Chinese readers came to know the world, its history, and its meaning."[42] It remains to specify just how long is the "long time" we are prepared to consider. Innovative work has begun examining the discursive strategies of current official communications by the Chinese Communist Party; such research is still in its early stages.[43] One "case" of linking an exemplary life to the ideal of learning from examples may be seen recreated in the Communist Party's promotion of Lei Feng (1940–1962). This Communist model, a selfless hero soldier and fervent admirer of Chairman Mao, succeeded the foreign models that had dominated Chinese discourse in the republican period, and his political cult continues in the People's Republic of China today. The more fundamental issue, however, is that of cross-cultural communication. Beyond propaganda, foreign visitors in the PRC, or individuals communicating with Chinese business partners, are likely to encounter a style of reasoning and argument markedly different from forms familiar to them in the West. In what basic presuppositions does the difference lie?

Attempts to answer this question in terms of the particularity of Chinese thought, and to do so in the present tense as distinct from analysis limited to Chinese antiquity and the premodern era,[44] have been largely banished for reasons of political incorrectness from academic research in the West. They can be found in abundance in tourist guides, popular nonfiction, and various etiquette manuals, which aim to teach the foreign business person how to decode messages and avoid mistakes in negotiations with Chinese counterparts. These publications thrive on emphasizing cultural differences the better to claim credit for providing solutions to the problem of encountering "another logic." For example, they prepare readers for the eventuality that in the course of a discussion about China's combining a capitalist economy and rapid financial growth with adherence to Communist ideology they may be told that the engineer of new China, Deng Xiaoping, had resolved this contradiction when he said: "it matters not whether a cat is white or black; if it catches mice it is a good cat." Or when he said: "to get rich is glorious."

As exemplified by these two famous quotations, pithy sayings by wise men and maxims by "leaders" *(lingdao),* the usual term for both Party bosses and company managers, are often repeated in China (although Deng's "cat" probably features as often in comments on China by Western pundits and university professors). Explaining such usage as the unreflective repetition of Party discourse by speakers raised and educated within it, many of them old enough to remember the time in the 1960s and 1970s when quotations from Chairman Mao were recited daily as holy writ, would only be taking the easy road in coping with a real challenge to understanding; modern Chinese forms of argument are often a serious barrier to cross-cultural communication with the outside world. Instead, one should ask what factors in the culture have allowed a saying by a "leader" to assume the position of an explanation. While the notion of unfailingly correct "leaders" has had analogs in the Soviet Union, as well as elsewhere in Europe during the twentieth century, arguing that modern China borrowed the idea of "correctness" *(zhengque)* from Leninist Russia[45] is insufficient: even if we accept that the idea was so borrowed, a claim for which better evidence is required, it seems to have merged seamlessly with the Confucian teach-

ing that "correct ideas follow from proper behavior."[46] It is moreover unproductive to analyze in political terms alone a way of thinking, or a cognitive map, that is far from limited to the political context.[47]

Downplaying thinking through cases as an effect of Communism also ignores the fact that it stretches farther back than to the establishment of Communist rule in mainland China in 1949. The continuity in assumptions about the exercise of authority in traditional China and the PRC has been addressed in previous scholarship.[48] Attested, inter alia, in the use of ancient maxims in formal writing,[49] it needs research attention that would keep equal distance from both the belief, common in past sinological writing, that contemporary Chinese speakers still necessarily followed the patterns set by their cultural tradition (understood as the legacy of Confucian philosophers between the Warring States period of the fifth to third centuries B.C. and the Song dynasty, which came to an end in the thirteenth century C.E.) and the present-day reluctance, especially of Anglophone scholarship, to notice differences between Western and non-Western styles of argument lest any commentary on these be criticized as "essentializing" or as "Orientalist."

The Anecdote as a Meeting Ground?

There is a sense in which fixation on the trivial biographical fact, arguing in examples, retelling homely anecdotes about great men, and the rest of what has been called here "thinking through cases" have a surprisingly modern ring to them. Or is "postmodern" the right word? In a number of areas of Western thought at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, the general has been challenged and subverted by the particular. Evidence of this development can be seen in contemporary historiography.[50] The rising popularity of micro-history has meant both a return to narrative—telling stories as a way of writing history has become legitimate once again—and a return to cases.[51] A new historicism, poised between literature and cultural history, has turned "the anecdotal" into "the truly exemplary."[52] What were previously derided as *mere* anecdotes are now no longer seen as all that insignificant. On the contrary, a perspective rejecting the hierarchical distinction between history and biography, text and context, gives them new relevance. In the history of science, Thomas Kuhn in 1962 had already discarded the hierarchical order placing theory above case studies and examples (taken as mere means to illustrate the theory); in Kuhn's revolutionary conception, cases and exemplars became paradigms.[53] Unhappy as Kuhn was about the inspiration his notion of "paradigm shifts" lent to sociological approaches to the history of science, he could hardly have predicted a new cultural history in which everything would become personal yet again.

As the bicentenary of Charles Darwin was being celebrated in 2009, some of the scholarly attention in his home country and in the world at large focused on the scientist's beard.[54] Wisps of hair from the Darwin beard were displayed in the Natural History Museum in London, while historians analyzed beard-wearing and Darwin's self-representation through it (it may be recalled that such procedures were not un-

precedented: the British installation artist Cornelia Parker had pulled feathers from Sigmund Freud's pillow and threads from his couch in the London Freud Museum). Biographers in 2009 also turned to Darwin's health history and eating habits to discover clues to the man left unnoticed in the old times, when all that scholars thought was worth knowing about Darwin was his scientific theory.[55]

Can the anecdotal, properly re-evaluated, become the ground on which East and West will meet? The Darwin anniversary was also marked in China: a high-profile international "Darwin–China 200 Conference" convened in October 2009 at Peking University. Another symposium, held at Shanghai Normal University under the title "Evolution: Past and Present," also commemorated the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species.* However, no attempts to investigate the Darwin beard or details of his private life were made on these occasions by local scholars.[56] The interests of cultural and gender history in the public fashioning of self and power are not yet widespread in the PRC, and settling on such personal trivia with regard to a Western authority figure may have seemed to scholars in China too unscientific, or, indeed, by coming dangerously close to the logic of case stories, too Chinese.[57] The President of the People's Republic, however, has no qualms about telling illustrative stories to suit just about any occasion; so numerous have Xi Jinping's anecdotes become that they have now been gathered in a book.[58]

This article makes no claim that "thinking through cases" represents the most salient difference between Chinese and Western modes of argument, nor does it suggest that it is the only mode of thought and argument in China or that it is inferior to the European. It does argue that thinking patterns or habits can be compared, and it identifies "thinking through cases" as a characteristic Chinese mode. Referring to the use of cases and anecdotes, types and models, exemplars and examples, it would be wrong to consider these terms interchangeable. No such claim is made here. Rather, this article argues that all of the above, conceptually related components of thought and rhetoric, are today still part of the Chinese worldview and among the means of its expression.

Notes

Drafts of this article were presented as a paper at the conference "Universal—Specific: From Analysis to Intervention?" sponsored by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich, on November 14, 2013, and in the Department of East Asian Studies seminar, Tel Aviv University, on May 12, 2015. It has benefited from the comments of both audiences, as well as those of reviewers for *Philosophy East and West.*

1 – A. K. Ramanujan, "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 23, no. 1 (1989): 41–58.

2 – Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India – China – Tibet – Japan,* ed. Philip P. Wiener (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964).

An original study from the 1960s is Liou Kia-hway, "The Configuration of Chinese Thinking," trans. Nora McKeon, *Diogenes* 49 (1965): 66–96.

3 – Charlotte Furth, Judith T. Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung, eds., *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007). This volume in English was a sequel to a volume in Chinese, put together by one of Furth's research collaborators: Ping-chen Hsiung [Xiong Bingzhen], ed., *Rang zhengju shuohua: Zhongguo pian* (Let the evidence speak: Case records in China) (Taipei: Maitian Chuban, 2001).

4 – John Forrester, "If *p,* then What? Thinking in Cases," *History of the Human Sciences* 9, no. 3 (1996): 1–25.

5 – Jean-Claude Passeron and Jacques Revel, eds., *Penser par cas* (Paris: EHSS, 2005).

6 – Johannes Süßmann et al., eds., *Fallstudien: Theorie—Geschichte—Methode* (Berlin: Trafo, 2007). To anticipate our discussion of "the exemplary," cf. Jens Ruchatz et al., eds., *Das Beispiel: Epistemologie des Exemplarischen* (Berlin: Kadmos 2007), which, too, limits its coverage to Western Europe.

7 – See "On the Case," special issue of *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2007).

8 – Cf. Haun Saussy, "No Time Like the Present: The Category of Contemporaneity in Chinese Studies," in Steven Shankman and Stephen W. Durrant, eds., *Early China / Ancient Greece: Thinking through Comparisons* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 35–54, for an acknowledgment of the dilemma.

9 – In the spirit of "provincializing" Europe see, however, Kerstin Stamm and Patrick Stoffel, eds., *Europa: Eine Fallgeschichte!* (Essen: Ch. A. Bachmann Verlag, 2015).

10 – Johannes Süßmann, "Einleitung: Perspektiven der Fallstudienforschung," in Süßmann et al., *Fallstudien,* pp. 7–27.

11 – Cf. Christiane Frey, "Fallgeschichte," in Roland Borgards et al., eds., *Literatur und Wissen: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2013), pp. 282–287.

12 – Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages,* trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 250–251.

13 – Ibid., pp. 270, 276–278, 281.

14 – Brook Ziporyn, *Ironies of Oneness and Difference: Coherence in Early Chinese Thought: Prolegomena to the Study of Li* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013).

15 – Arthur F. Wright, "Values, Roles, and Personalities," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford University

Press, 1962), pp. 3–23, calls the scholar-officials "prime living exemplars" (p. 7); see more on "the authority of examples and exemplars," pp. 9–10, and the "role playing" involved in choosing past or living examples for emulation, pp. 10–16. Cf. Denis Twitchett, "Problems of Chinese Biography," *Confucian Personalities,* pp. 24–39, at p. 35. More recently, Robert E. Hegel, "Judgments on the Ends of Times," in David Der-wei Wang and Shang Wei, eds., *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation from the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 523–548, comments on the tendency of literary authors in the seventeenth century to personalize historical events and responsibility for them, rather than analyze them as faults in the Chinese imperial system (pp. 535–537).

16 – Furth, "Introduction: Thinking with Cases," in Furth et al., *Thinking with Cases,* pp. 1–27, at p. 15.

17 – "Every member of China's late imperial elite was, on the one hand, conscious of models to whom he was indebted and, on the other hand, aware that he himself was a model for others" (Susan Mann, "Scene-Setting: Writing Biography in Chinese History," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 [June 2009], pp. 631–369, at p. 631; see also Brian Moloughney, "From Biographical History to Historical Biography: A Transformation in Chinese Historical Writing," *East Asian History* 4 [December 1992]: 1–30, at p. 11).

18 – William H. Nienhauser Jr., "Early Biography," in Victor H. Mair, ed., *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 511–526.

19 – Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples,* p. 196. See his whole chapter 17, "Emphasis on the Particular."

20 – See Tong Lam, *A Passion for Facts: Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation-State, 1900–1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 41–49; cf. p. 166.

21 – Carlo Ginzburg, "Ein Plädoyer für den Kasus" (originally in English: "A Case for Cases"), trans. Mike Marklove and Gisela Engel, in Süßmann et al., *Fallstudien,* pp. 29–48, at p. 34. Ginzburg arrives at the question he wishes to avoid when his interpretation of *The Prince* triggers the assertion that "Machiavelli was not an immoral person" (pp. 39–40). Cf. Carlo Ginzburg, "Casuistry: For and Against: Pascal's *Provinciales* and Their Aftermath," Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Harvard University, April 15–16, 2015.

22 – Cf. Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1988).

23 – Furth, "Introduction," pp. 15–16, 18.

24 – Ginzburg, "Ein Plädoyer für den Kasus," pp. 42–45. As John D. Lyons puts it: "The Early Modern world, after being shaken by the discovery of the New World

and the Cartesian philosophical challenge to the value of learning from antiquity, often wondered whether the predictable cyclical worldview that had earlier given example its value was still valid" (John D. Lyons, "Exemplum," in Thomas O. Sloane, ed., *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], p. 279).

25 – François Rigolot, "The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59, no. 4 (October 1998): 557–563, at pp. 557, 559. In the same issue, see Karlheinz Stierle, "Three Moments in the Crisis of Exemplarity: Boccaccio-Petrarch, Montaigne, and Cervantes," pp. 581–595, at pp. 588–589.

26 – Stierle, "Three Moments in the Crisis of Exemplarity," pp. 584–586, and still in the same issue of *Journal of the History of Ideas,* cf. François Cornilliat, "Exemplarities: A Response to Timothy Hampton and Karlheinz Stierle," pp. 613–624, at p. 619.

27 – See Christiane Frey, "Am Beispiel der Fallgeschichte: Zu Pinels *Traité medico-philosophique sur l'aliénation,*" in Ruchatz et al., eds., *Das Beispiel,* pp. 263–279, with a bibliography referencing many other publications on literary and medical "cases." See also materials of "For Instance: Eighteenth Century Exemplarity, Its Practice and Limits," the 12th Bloomington Eighteenth Century Workshop at Indiana University, *The Workshop,* no. 2 (2014).

28 – The Tuscan missionaries of the Stigmata within the Order of Friars Minor, founded by St. Francis of Assisi, were from 1921 based in Laohekou in the north of Hubei Province in central China (R. G. Tiedemann, *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* [Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2009], pp. 26–30).

29 – A substantial literature exists on such paintings, which, not rated highly as art, are rarely exhibited in museums. They are considered from the perspective of uniformity in form and variety in detail in Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), chap. 7, "The Bureaucracy of Hell."

30 – Considering the vivid imagery of the Chinese hell that these paintings present and the absence of any Christian symbolism in them it seems most unlikely that they would have been ordered or spread by the Italian missionaries: rather, the paintings must have been collected and brought to Italy along with other Chinese objects.

31 – See Paul R. Katz, "Indictment Rituals and the Judicial Continuum in Late Imperial China," in Robert E. Hegel and Katherine Carlitz, eds., *Writing and Law in Late Imperial China: Crime, Conflict, and Judgment* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007), pp. 161–185.

32 – Ping-chen Hsiung, "Facts in the Tale: Case Records and Pediatric Medicine in Late Imperial China," in Furth et al., *Thinking with Cases,* p. 153. Later in her article Hsiung refers to "case-based reasoning" (p. 166), and so does Judith T.

Zeitlin, "The Literary Fashioning of Medical Authority: A Study of Sun Yikui's Case Histories," in *Thinking with Cases,* p. 196. Such usage is less appropriate, as "case-based reasoning" directs to the terminology of computer and cognitive science.

33 – Cf. Wright, "Values, Roles, and Personalities," p. 21.

34 – The three quotations come from the introduction to Lam, *A Passion for Facts.*

35 – "What Is Required of Us as Fathers Today" (1919), in Lu Xun, *Selected Works,* 4 vols., trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2003), vol. 2, pp. 56–71, at pp. 67–68.

36 – Cf. James M. Hargett, "Sketches," in Mair, *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature,* pp. 560–565.

37 – Mark Gamsa, *The Reading of Russian Literature in China: A Moral Example and Manual of Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

38 – Lin Yutang, "What Liberalism Means," *The China Critic,* March 12, 1931, pp. 251–253 (signed L. Y.), republished in *China Heritage Quarterly,* nos. 30–31 (June–September 2012). For the context, cf. Qian Suoqiao, *Liberal Cosmopolitan: Lin Yutang and Middling Chinese Modernity* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

39 – Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Representative Men: Seven Lectures* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), chap. 1.

40 – Cf. the satirical essay "On Writers" (1941) by Qian Zhongshu (1910–1998), one of the most erudite authors and critics of his time, in Kirk A. Denton, ed., *Modern Chinese Literary Thought: Writings on Literature, 1893–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 443–449.

41 – See esp. two new volumes: Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern, eds., *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China,* and Joachim Gentz and Dirk Meyer, eds., *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China* (both published in Leiden by Brill, 2015). The materials of a workshop on "argumentation and persuasion in ancient Chinese texts," organized at KU Leuven, were published in *Oriens Extremus* 45 (2005–2006). The journal *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* has had several theme issues on these subjects: no. 14 (1992) on argumentation in China; no. 19 (1997) on exemplarity in the Chinese tradition; and no. 34 (2012) on "Political Rhetoric in Early China." In no. 34, Paul van Els, "Tilting Vessels and Collapsing Walls: On the Rhetorical Function of Anecdotes in Early Chinese Texts," pp. 141–166, shows how canonical quotations were "illustrated" by anecdotes. In no. 19, Anne Cheng, "La valeur de l'exemple: 'Le Saint confucéen: de l'exemplarité à l'exemple'," pp. 73–90, makes (at p. 75) the connection to Lei Feng, which I borrow below. With the exception of a polemical epilogue by Liu Zehua, "Political and Intellectual Authority: The Concept of the 'Sage-Monarch' and Its Modern Fate," in Pines et al., eds., *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China,* none of these studies extends

to the twentieth century. Stéphanie Homola, "The Fortunes of a Scholar: When the *Yijing* Challenged Modern Astronomy," *Journal of Asian Studies* 73, no. 3 (August 2014): 733–752, uses Alexei Volkov, "Analogical Reasoning in Ancient China: Some Examples," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident,* no. 14 (1992): 15–48, in a fascinating study on a Chinese scholar in Paris between 1937 and 1940, and the skepticism with which his "analogical reasoning" was received by his European peers.

42 – David Schaberg, "Chinese History and Philosophy," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing,* general ed. Daniel Woolf, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011–2012), vol. 1, ed. Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy, *Beginnings to A.D. 600*, pp. 394–414, at p. 413. Paul van Els and Sarah Queen, eds., *Between Philosophy and History: Anecdotes in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), was not yet available to me at this writing.

43 – Paolo Magagnin, "The Evolution of Metaphorical Language in Contemporary Chinese Political Discourse: Preliminary Evidence from the 12th and 18th CPC Congresses," in Tiziana Lippiello and Chen Yuehong, et al., eds., *Linking Ancient and Contemporary: Continuities and Discontinuities in Chinese Literature* (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2016), pp. 345–365, opens with a survey of the state of research since the publication of Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics: Five Studies* (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, 1992).

44 – See on Chinese "correlative" (or "proto-scientific") thinking in Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China,* vol. 2, *History of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), pp. 279–303, and Christoph Harbsmeier, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 7, part 1, *Language and Logic* (same publisher, 1998).

45 – Perry Link, *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 107.

46 – James L. Watson, "Rites or Beliefs? The Construction of a Unified Culture in Late Imperial China," in Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, eds., *China's Quest for National Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), at p. 99.

47 – Perry Link, *An Anatomy of Chinese: Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), cites sayings by Deng Xiaoping in the "Politics" section of his book (the cat parable is quoted above in Link's translation, p. 303), but does not explain why they have "taken on an iconic status" (ibid.). Similarly, on pp. 305–306 Link says that "elements" and "intelligentsia" were terms borrowed from Soviet Russia, but he does not ask why this happened or, long after their adoption, why they are still in use today. One would want to keep well clear of the kind of argumentation on these questions as offered in Richard E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why* (New York: Free Press, 2003), in

which a social psychologist reifies the East / West dichotomy for a popular audience.

48 – Cf. Philip A. Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 70: "We are verging here . . . upon the inner core of Chinese authoritarianism, a system of beliefs about human behavior that did not necessarily dissolve with the emergence of the modern state."

49 – A dictionary entry for the set phrase *shangxing xiaxiao* 上行下效 (literally: "[those] above act, [those] below imitate") traces its origin to the tenth-century *Old History of the Tang* and then suggests that the phrase may be employed in a modern sentence in a way such as the following: "when leaders do things incorrectly, this can lead to subordinates imitating the higher-ups *[shangxing xiaxiao]*" (*Shiyong Hanyu chengyu cidian* [Practical dictionary of Chinese set phrases] [Shanghai: Shanghai Yuandong Chubanshe, 1995], p. 533). Analyzing the imitation of authority—seen as manifesting itself by good or bad example—would take us beyond "thinking through cases." In another context, Chinese concepts of imitation are discussed in Mark Gamsa, "Translation and Alleged Plagiarism of Russian Literature in Republican China," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 33 (2011): 151–171.

50 – For more on this, with special reference to the rise of interest in "the case" in the 1990s, see Mark Gamsa, "Challenges to Generalization in Historical Writing," *Storia della Storiografia* 63 (2013): 51–68, an article based on Russian, French, and Hebrew material that does not touch on China.

51 – Jean-Claude Passeron and Jacques Revel, "Penser par cas: Raisonner à partir de singularités," in Passeron and Revel, *Penser par cas,* pp. 9–44, at pp. 28–29.

52 – Rigolot, "The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity," p. 561. See also the concluding section of Lionel Gossman, "Anecdote and History," *History and Theory* 42, no. 2 (May 2003): 143–168.

53 – John Forrester, "On Kuhn's Case: Psychoanalysis and the Paradigm," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 782–819, at pp. 816–818; and cf. pp. 798–799.

54 – Darwin grew his beard "after the age of 55, owing to problems with shaving" (Anthony W. D. Larkum, *A Natural Calling: Life, Letters and Diaries of Charles Darwin and William Darwin Fox* [Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2009], p. 410 n. 5). See principally Christoph Irmscher, "Darwin's Beard," in Christa Jansohn, ed., *Old Age and Ageing in British and American Culture and Literature* (Münster: LIT, 2004), pp. 87–106.

55 – An example of the new approach in Darwin studies is Tim M. Berra, *Charles Darwin: The Concise Story of an Extraordinary Man* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), advertised as "[digging] deeper to reveal Darwin the man by combining anecdotes with carefully selected illustrations and photo-

graphs"; this book has been followed by Berra, *Darwin and His Children: His Other Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

56 – The paper by Stefan Bengtson, "Darwin's Headache, Caused by the Cambrian Explosion," represented the trend in current research that has been summarized above.

57 – Lu Xun, in an essay titled "My Attitude, Capacity for Tolerance and Age" (1928), directed a critic who called him "oldie" *(lao touzi)* to the images of three long-bearded European sages: Tolstoy, Kropotkin, and Marx. See "Wo de taidu, qiliang he nianji," in *Lu Xun quanji* (Complete works), 18 vols. (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 2005), vol. 4, pp. 109–116, at p. 112. One will read with equal pleasure "My Moustache" (1924), trans. in Lu Xun, *Selected Works,* vol. 2, pp. 103–108, with its mock-serious comparison of Chinese and Japanese moustaches, the author's own, and Kaiser Wilhelm's. Recent historical attention to facial hair as part of the iconography of power is best illustrated by the title essay in Paul Edward Dutton, *Charlemagne's Mustache: And Other Cultural Clusters of a Dark Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

58 – *Xi Jinping jiang gushi* (Xi Jinping tells stories) (Beijing: Renmin Ribao Pinglunbu, 2017) is a collection of 109 stories and anecdotes.