The Possibility of the Recommeniment of Philosophy in Chinese Thought

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In modern Chinese thought, “philosophy” and the whole disciplinary system rooted in it have had a far-reaching influence on the Chinese understanding and interpretation of their own tradition. If we are to avoid a na"ive and simplistic final interpretation of traditional thought, the most prudent and reliable way to go about it is to ponder the whole framework and realm on which this understanding is based before we proceed to understand tradition. Before the inevitable problematization of “Chinese thought,” we should try to problematize “philosophy.” This demands that we find, in the constant rise and fall of philosophical trends, the view of philosophy by which Chinese thought is generally judged, and make it the object of questioning. Mou Zongsan’s attempt to reinterpret classical Chinese thought, based directly on Aristotle’s theory of the four causes, cannot be viewed as a success. The so-called first beginning of philosophy means establishing, led by the question of being—ontology, a system in which cheng (completion) is prior to and identical with sheng (generation). Now that Chinese thought has encountered Heidegger and thus rediscovered Aristotle and the whole of classical Western thought, the time is ripe for us to reexamine and assess the beginning of philosophy in terms of the complete and original experience whence Chinese thought arose.

Keywords: Chinese thought, theory of the four causes, Aristotle, Mou Zongsan, Heidegger
About ten years ago, the question of whether such a thing as “Chinese philosophy” exists in the strict sense provoked heated discussion in Chinese academia. That discussion has been silent for years, but due to a lack of reflection on its premises, the question has yet to be thoroughly resolved. Fundamentally, this question depends both upon the understanding and design of traditional thought in China and upon how one views “philosophy” itself. In certain circumstances, the latter may be more important. This is because in modern Chinese thought, “philosophy” and the whole disciplinary system rooted in it have influenced Chinese people’s understanding and interpretation of their own tradition in a far-reaching way. If we are to avoid naïve and ultimate interpretations of traditional thought, the most prudent and reliable way to go about it is to ponder the whole framework and realm on which this understanding is based before we understand tradition. In other words, before the inevitable problematization of “Chinese thought,” we should try to problematize “philosophy.”

This demands that we find, in the history of the constant rise and fall of philosophical movements, that view of philosophy by which Chinese thought is generally judged, and make it the object of questioning. Philosophy must be traced back to Socrates; this is an inherent inevitability. Both Hegel and Heidegger held that philosophy was Greek.¹ Pursuing this approach, Heidegger followed Nietzsche in saying that philosophy equaled Platonism.² Socrates, as recorded by Plato, once gave philosophy a cautious definition: philosophers “love the contemplation of truth,” where truth is “being” (on or einai, to be) or “the one.”³ Aristotle formally took research on being qua being and exploration of ousia (substance) as the fundamental task of the first philosophy. So Heidegger’s view seems tenable: philosophy explores being.⁴ From the very beginning to the metaphysics of Aristotle, Greek philosophy was the first beginning of philosophy.⁵ In the important manuscripts marking the turn in his thought from the 1930s, Heidegger followed this train of thought, and summarized his work as a transition or leap from the Greek beginnings of philosophy to another beginning.⁶ Heidegger’s thinking is particularly noteworthy in the context of the relationship between Chinese thought and philosophy. Therefore, we have tried to take the opportunity of reinterpreting classical Chinese thought by means of the “problematization of philosophy itself” displayed in the establishment and dissolution of the first beginning of philosophy. The most explicit and the most profoundly influential elements in Aristotle’s philosophy are the theory of the four causes and the theory of being—truth underlying it. Therefore, we have chosen Aristotle’s philosophy and its theory of four causes as a guiding thread, first, taking Mou Zongsan as an example enabling us to critically check the efficacy and limitations of the first beginning of philosophy and its mainstay, the theory of four causes, when used to explain

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¹ Martin Heidegger, “What is Philosophy?”, p. 591.
² Martin Heidegger, Zur Sache des Denkens, pp. 61 and 63.
⁴ Martin Heidegger, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, p. 12.
⁵ Martin Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 17.
⁶ Martin Heidegger, Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning), pp. 176-180.
Chinese thought; then, focusing on Heidegger, we provide a critical examination of the penetrating interpretation encountered at the end of Western philosophy by the first beginnings of that philosophy, and the fatal one-sidedness of this interpretation. We next reinterpret the preconditions of the entire experience of Aristotle’s philosophy, ascertaining the historical meaning of the first beginning of philosophy, and refer to research on Confucianism by taking the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean as a paradigm. Finally, we try to answer the question “Can philosophy find a new beginning in the reinterpretation of classical Chinese thought?”

I. Focusing on Mou Zongsan: A New Chinese Philosophy Based on the Four Causes and Its Limitations

“Philosophy” is not a classification inherent in Chinese thought, and the emergence of “Chinese philosophy” is a result of the selection and interpretation of the inherent content of Chinese thought in the light of “philosophy.” First of all, such an interpretation depends upon one’s understanding of Western philosophy itself. The first beginning of Western philosophy terminated in Aristotle. To a certain extent, the strong influence upon philosophy of both Aristotle and the first beginning he represents has never received adequate attention from the philosophical interpreters of Chinese thought. After MacIntyre, Western moral philosophy’s examination of modern ethical presuppositions consciously turned from Kant to Aristotle in a return to the basic line of vision of classical thought. 7 We provide an analysis of Mou Zongsan’s narrative of the history of Chinese philosophy, an example worthy of comparison with MacIntyre’s self-awareness.

Mou Zongsan attempted to use Kant’s basic questions and concepts to interpret Chinese philosophy, writing, “The concept of ‘ontological nature’ has been raised.... Therefore, the Confucian teaching of complete or perfected (cheng 割) virtue developed by the Song and Ming Neo-Confucians can be viewed as an approach to Kant’s realization of the ‘metaphysics of morality’, and also as the inclusion and absorption of Hegel’s philosophy of mind.” 8 This quotation indicates that for Mou, Song/Ming Neo-Confucianism was a further development of Kant’s metaphysics of morality, with Hegel being somewhat further from Neo-Confucianism than Kant; it also suggests that a thoroughgoing Kantian philosophy can contain Hegel’s philosophy of mind—all of which were determined by Mou Zongsan’s philosophical interpretation of ontological nature, guided by history.

Since neither xing ti (性体 ontological nature) nor xin ti (心体 ontological mind) is a Western philosophical concept, Mou had to interpret them with terms borrowed from Western philosophy. According to him, mind-nature is neither single nor dual: “Objectively it is called nature, and subjectively it is called the mind.... ‘Ontological nature’ is actually ‘simultaneous

7 Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue.
8 Mou Zongsan, Ontological Mind and Ontological Nature, vol. 1, p. 34.
being and activity,' therefore it can mobilize the myriad things, and plays a great role in the 
sheng (生 generation) and hua (化 evolution) of the cosmos and the creation of morality.”
Revealing this endlessly profound ontological nature is in fact the major theme of both the 
Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean. The later Analects of Confucius and the 
Mencius reveal the mind as benevolent nature, emphasizing ontological mind, which is 
“simultaneous activity and being.” On the one hand, Mou Zongsan replaced his master Xiong 
Shili’s concepts of form and function with “being” and “activity,” a pair of concepts with 
abundant historical connotations in Western philosophy, so as to give a universal interpretation 
to what he called “the ontology of mind-nature”; on the other hand, he observed that Western 
philosophy actually had no concept of an “ontological nature” that both is and acts, despite 
its frequent mention of “being” and “substance.” Only Kant’s metaphysics of morality, which 
approached the realm of ontology via morality, came close.⁹

Mou Zongsan’s thinking displays his great mind and his talent, but it does present some 
difficulties. For instance, the proposition that all non-Kantian Western philosophy is in the 
dark about “simultaneous being and activity” obviously does not fit with historical fact. For 
example, Fichte’s Tathandlung (a fact and/or act), Hegel’s unity of “subject and substance” 
and Schelling’s Naturphilosophie (philosophy of nature) are all closer to the principle of 
simultaneous being and activity than Kant. In particular, Hegel and Schelling’s point of 
departure was not a subjective ontological nature but rather an ontological nature that was 
simultaneous being and activity. Conversely, one can only say that overall, Kant’s metaphysics 
of morality contained ontological nature in ontological mind, with no trace of the “ontology-
cosmology,” which must be contained in a system of ontological nature.

This entails a serious problem. The biggest mismatch in taking Kantian philosophy as a 
paradigm of Western philosophy and using it to rearrange Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism 
and pre-Qin Confucianism is that Kantian philosophy, which approaches ontological nature 
from the perspective of ontological mind, definitely cannot contain the concepts of the Book 
of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean, and is therefore unable to cover the ontology—
cosmology—morality advocated by Cheng Hao and his followers. Kant’s cosmology falls 
into the category of natural science; it belongs wholly to the realm of phenomena. The 
only component of his system that is able to break through this limitation is his theory of 
teleological judgment; this turns on hypothesizing the existence of God, and has nothing to 
do with the “intuition of the intellect” related to things in themselves.¹⁰ Mou hit the nail on 
the head when he observed that ontological nature can play “a great role in the generation 
and evolution of the cosmos and the creation of morality.” With reference to the Book of 
Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean, however, ontological nature in Confucianism comes

⁹ Ibid., pp. 33, 34 and 36.
¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, Sec. 84-87. The distinction Kant makes here between 
natural theology and moral theology is of no help for approaching the systems of the Book of Changes 
and the Doctrine of the Mean.
simultaneously from the cosmos and from morality; the route taken may be different, but if the two were separated it would no longer be Confucianism. The defect of Kant's philosophy is not just that it puts forward a theory of the creation of morality in relation to ontological mind rather than one of the generation and evolution of the cosmos in relation to ontological nature, but that it divides the unity of ontology—cosmology—morality. Mou made the greatest mistake of his life by picking the wrong man when he used Kant to approach the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean. This was a hindrance arising from the interpretation of classics. The greatest difficulty still lies with the framework of Confucian thought, that is, the "being/activity" classification of concepts within the Confucian system.

In his Ontological Mind and Ontological Nature, Mou Zongsan relied totally and interpretation on this pair of concepts to syncretize Chinese and Western learning and appraise Confucianism. However, whether consciously or not, he did not specify their origin. They did not come from German conceptual theory; instead, they came from Aristotle, the perfecter of the first beginning of philosophy. The problem with Ontological Mind and Ontological Nature and other similar works lies in the fact that at the same time as they exhaustively exploit this pair of concepts advanced by Aristotle, they taunt but lightly, if at all, on the whole body of his thought.

However, in his Lectures on the Theory of the Four Causes, a short but impressive work, Mou Zongsan thoroughly adjusted his approach to the structure of Confucian thought. The concepts of being-activity give way to the four causes, and the Kantian approach is replaced with an Aristotelian one. Aristotle's theory of the four causes not only represents a better approach to the system of the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean than that of the theory of being/activity; it can even be used for assessing the teachings of the five systems of thought of the East and the West, not just within Confucianism. In this way, more than two decades after the writing of Ontological Mind and Ontological Nature, Mou Zongsan attempted a surprising MacIntyre-style switch in his later years, turning from Kant to Aristotle.

Aristotle brought consummation, grandeur and transcendence to Mou Zongsan. If we can say that Ontological Mind and Form of Nature is still limited to Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism and approaches the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean through the school of Cheng Hao and his followers, then Lectures on the Theory of the Four Causes distinguishes itself by directly interpreting the two classics and containing Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism.

One could say that the theory of the four causes, especially its simplified form (dealing with the material cause and the formal cause) has played a fundamental role in explaining the

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11 Sze-kwang Lao excoriated the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean, mixing up facts and values. Although it was not acceptable to Confucians, his line of thought was actually an echo of Neo-Kantianism. See Sze-kwang Lao, New History of Chinese Philosophy, vol. 2, Chap. 1, Third of Sixth, and Fourth of Seventh.

12 Mou Zongsan, Lectures on the Theory of the Four Causes, p. 225.
basic trends of different philosophical schools. In a manner of speaking, Western philosophy in the tradition of the first beginning—as well as the interpretation of Chinese thought carried out in imitation of Western philosophy—can be totally summed up in the theory of the four causes. However, both the “efficient cause” and the “final cause” have profound implications that cannot be covered by the pure “formal cause” although the latter does link up with the previous two. A very important contribution of Mou Zongsan’s later years was not only his return to Aristotle, but more importantly, his perceptive choice of the efficient cause and the final cause out of the four causes to use as his conceptual framework for interpreting Confucianism. Here, these two causes act as a framework, a role that had previously been played by the concept of “being/activity.”

Mou Zongsan approached the theory of the four causes from the point of view of the final cause, which constitutes the link between Kant, Aristotle and Confucianism. He observed that classical Chinese thought retained the connotations of the final cause and the efficient cause although it did not have those concepts as such. In the whole system of the Book of Changes, the most important two hexagrams, the Qian Hexagram and the Kun Hexagram, have these two meanings respectively. Qian stands for the principle of inventive and creative generation. For example, the Judgment on the Qian Hexagram says “So great is Qian as an origin, which is a foundation for the beginning of all things,” revealing precisely this principle, while Kun represents the principle of reaching completion and guaranteeing harmony.  

Mou Zongsan thus held that Confucian metaphysics was a teleological system, the only one in classical Chinese thought. Through Aristotle, he redressed the lethal fault that arose from his use of Kantian philosophy to reinterpret the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean. These two works take a different route from that of the Analects of Confucius, the Mencius and the Great Learning, taking the Way of Heaven as the route to the Way of Man. It is the concepts of the final cause and the efficient cause that help us arrive at the unity of the cosmos and of morality contained in ontological nature.

When he interpreted the four causes using the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean, Mou Zongsan paired the efficient cause with Qian, interpreted as “inceptive generation,” and the final cause with Kun, interpreted as “reaching completion.” Such an interpretation is both accurate and profound. The causa efficiens or efficient cause is how the scholastic tradition translated arche, literally “commencement/origin,” while the literal meaning of “telos” is “end” or “purpose.” However, Mou’s application of the theory of the four causes still needs to be discussed from the following points of view.

First, for Aristotle, ethical matters ranked below cosmic and ontological matters, although he consistently linked the cosmic and the ethical realm with the realization of telos. The validity of ethics does not rely on cosmic guarantees like “What Heaven has conferred is called Nature,” but simply on the virtue of the nobler part of the human soul. That is closer to

13 Ibid., pp. 16-18.
14 Ibid., pp. 16. This is an assertion in comparison with Taoism and Buddhism.
ontological mind than to an ontological nature that is separate from ontological mind. This is the difference between Mou’s interpretation and the ultimate purport of Aristotle’s philosophy.

Second, Aristotle laid more emphasis on the final cause than on the other three. Mou was often inconsistent in dealing with the relationship between the final cause and the efficient cause in Confucianism. On the one hand, he asserted that Confucianism was the only system in Chinese thought that dealt with the final cause, but on the other he followed the interpretative approach adopted from the Song and Ming dynasties on, especially that of Xiong Shili. He thus made the Kun origin, previously as important as the Qian, subordinate to or even totally merged into Qian. According to Mou’s interpretation, the *Book of Changes* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* represent a teleological system that evolved along the same lines as Kant and Aristotle; nothing else offers the implications of ontological nature unfolding the cosmos/morality. However, in accordance with the traditional Neo-Confucian interpretation on which Mou further relied, which focuses on Qian as origin, the system of the *Book of Changes* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* has to be classified under the efficient cause. This is actually a variant of “simultaneous being and activity,” that is, ascribing activity to the efficient cause or force, and being to the final cause or end, but with greater emphasis on the latter.

Therefore, all Mou’s syncretic and interpretative work contains a tendency toward self-destruction. His effort to re-interpret classical Chinese thought through direct reliance on the theory of the four causes cannot be seen as a success. Apart from the dilemma, handed down from Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism, of how to settle the Qian/Kun generation/completion relationship, the most serious difficulty with Mou’s application of the theory of the four causes was his failure to submit it to thorough reflection on its premises. Mou does not seem to have completely grasped all the premises or intentions of this theory of Aristotle’s. For Aristotle, the final cause is the final answer to the question of being, while the efficient cause is the final answer to the question of nature; ultimately, the two are neither the same nor different. Here, what should be reviewed first is actually the questions rather than the answers. Why did Western philosophy put forward “the question of being”? Why did classical Chinese thought come close to raising the question of nature, while conspicuously omitting the question of being?

These are the true questions we have to face before we use the first beginning of philosophy to interpret Chinese thought—“questions about philosophy” rather than “philosophical questions.” The modern exposition of Chinese thought represented by the work of Mou Zongsan was almost blind to such questions. Before we explore them ourselves, it will be helpful to examine how the Western philosophical tradition itself looks at the first beginning as it emerged from the hand of Aristotle.

**II. Focusing on Heidegger: The New Western Philosophy That Rejects the Four Causes and Its Limitations**

Twentieth century Western philosophy’s meticulous analysis of and conscious break with
its own tradition was first embodied in Heidegger, who made “interpretation of Western philosophy” his mission in life. He spent his whole life reflecting on “the question of being,” seeing it as the primary question for Western philosophy. It was on this basis that he established a benchmark for interpreting all philosophical traditions. However, even a little knowledge of the history of philosophy will tell us that the question of being did not emerge immediately upon the birth of philosophy; almost all pre-Socratic philosophy was engaged with questions of nature. Socrates researched the good mainly by questioning the nature of ethical matters, and Plato followed Socrates in viewing the idea of the good as the supreme question “transcending being.” Aristotle was the only one who explicitly viewed research on being qua being (to on het on) as the supreme task of the first philosophy in his *Metaphysics.* It was therefore Aristotle who acted as the most important of those who launched Heidegger on his intellectual path.

From the moment when Heidegger was seized by the question of being—or rather, by the question of the (multiple) meanings of being—he was fated to remain forever reliant upon Aristotle. The system underlying Aristotle’s answer to the question of being depends upon the theory of the four causes. In the introductory first book of his *Metaphysics,* Aristotle defines wisdom as the exploration of causes. In Book IV, which puts forward the theme of “being qua being,” he goes so far as to affirm the mission of the first philosophy as being to research the “first causes” of being qua being. Books VII, VIII and IX lead up to his final resolution of the question in Book XII by means of the expanded theory of the final cause. Correspondingly, Heidegger’s work took on Aristotle’s question of being and all the latter’s interpretations of the concepts of “being” and “beings” while at the same time rejecting its resolution through theory of the four causes. For Aristotle, it was ultimately the final cause that was dominant among the four causes; therefore, it is not surprising that Heidegger’s essential departure from Aristotle’s interpretation started with the weakening of the final cause.

Researchers have noted Heidegger’s dismantling of the final cause. Schührmann holds that through analysis of Aristotle’s theory of *techne* (craftsmanship or art), Heidegger traced the four causes back to the understanding of being contained in craft, and revealed the origin of traditional philosophy in the “metaphysics of craft.” He thus argues that it was Heidegger’s work to reveal and dismantle the traditional teleocracy of Western philosophy and expound the new intellectual attitude of being—there contained within authentic being.

16 Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* 1003a21. Unless otherwise indicated, citations from the *Metaphysics* come from the Greek-German bilingual edition. The international identification code for the *Metaphysics* is given hereafter.
19 See R. Schührmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy,* with particular reference to Part II, especially Sections 13 and 14.
holding that by deconstructing Aristotle, Heidegger revealed that both theory and practice are systematically rooted in *poiesis* (making). This view is untenable. As Volpi found in Heidegger’s interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the interpretation that dominates the basic framework of Heidegger’s analysis of being-there is Aristotle’s *phronesis* (prudence) rather than *poiesis* or making. It is the former rather than the latter that is the source of Aristotle’s teleology. But Volpi does not explore the fact that the teleology contained in the concept of prudence is different from the teleology of metaphysics and from the final cause as an affirmative approach to the question of existence. At the same time, he completely fails to examine how the ethical concept of prudence was “ontologicalized,” nor does he treat seriously the departure that occurs in Heidegger’s interpretation. In fact, without such a departure, the de-teleological ontologization leading to *Being and Time* and even the theories of Heidegger’s later years would be completely impossible. If we link Heidegger’s earlier interpretation of ethics with his later interpretation of theoretical philosophy, we can clearly see how he relied on, transformed, departed from and even rejected Aristotle’s four causes.

Heidegger seldom generalized about the four causes as a whole. A notable exception is *On the Essence of Ground*. In this treatise, he discusses the *a priori* conditions for putting forward the four causes, tracing the essence of all “causes” or “grounds” back to the self-transcendence of being-there. It is only when being-there is transcendent toward the world for its own sake that it is possible to establish the “authentic being” of all “grounds.” It is this opening and transcendence toward the world that is “freedom”; freedom belongs to the very form of being of being-there itself. “Freedom as transcendence... is... the origin of ground in general. Freedom is freedom for ground.” The variety of fundamental ways in which freedom is established contains arguments, or rather, contains the possibility of asking “why” about all forms. This way of raising the question already contains beforehand the general understanding of what to be, how to be and being. That is to say, without the ontological awareness of being-there, the line of questioning that brought about the emergence of the four causes could never have appeared. It is the mode of existence of being-there that contains the questioning of such and such.

The basic phenomenon of this “why” “asked of such and such” contains two aspects. One is the basic structure that being-there manifests in departing from itself: the self-transcendence of being-there, or freedom. The other is that what is needed in this manifestation is the “cause” or “ground.” It is the conjunction of the two that is freedom toward the ground. According to the line of thought in *Being and Time*, as further pursued in *On the Essence of Ground*, the questioning of “Why be?” about the ultimate ground must be fulfilled in being-there itself, while being-there itself, near and intimate as it is, has to resort to the questioning of what is

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remote and distant.23 Yet the basic ontological mode of being-there itself is to depart from itself. Heidegger thus concluded that freedom is indeed the ground of all grounds, but as departure, it is also the “abyss” (Abgrund, literally “removal of the ground”) of being-there.24

Roughly speaking, Heidegger absorbed the four causes as derivatives into the self-trancendence of being-there’s pursuit of ground. If we place this thesis in the whole of Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle, however, we find that the situation is not so simple as it appears. As Volpi and others have shown, the mode of being of being-there is actually based on the ontological translation of Aristotle’s “prudence.” For Aristotle, prudence itself is to be correctly understood through the final cause and the efficient cause. Heidegger’s absorption and dissolution of the four causes as a whole is thus actually premised on the particular transformation of each of the four causes.

We can find varying treatments of the four causes in other texts of Heidegger’s. As Schürrmann and others stress, the formal and material causes come from Heidegger’s phenomenological interpretation of poiesis and techne. Heidegger’s discussion of the efficient and the final cause is necessarily more complex, involving both ethical interpretation and the corresponding metaphysical analysis. That is because the practice, activity and art that Aristotle raised in the context of ethics are described and understood in metaphysics through the paired concepts of potentiality/actuality. These paired concepts are themselves actually more profound forms of the efficient/final cause. In Book IX of the Metaphysics, on potentiality/actuality, Aristotle divided the concept of potentiality within the field of action and motion into two types: “being acted on,” and potentiality in the sense of the efficient cause.25 “The actuality (energeia) is the end.”26 Actuality is the process of moving from potentiality to ergon (function), and its completion is entelecheia (complete reality), literally, “achieving its purpose” or “reaching its end.” For Aristotle, “actuality” is prior to “potentiality” in the three aspects of “definition,” “time” and especially “ontology” or substance. In other words, the end is prior to the force. The force “tends” toward an end, and exists for the sake of the end. Although the force is the “beginning,” only the end is the beginning in the true sense. Following this train of thought, Book XII of the Metaphysics uses the theory of actuality to resolve the central task pursued in this work, the primary substance or first noumenon.

More than this, Aristotle resolves the problem of describing practice, which corresponds to ethics, in the same way, through “potentiality/actuality.” Potentiality, as the source of action and motion, also exists within “the part of soul that has logos.”27 Unlike potentiality in the absence of logos, this potentiality of force can produce contrary effects. Only one of a pair of contrary effects can eventuate; what decides this is “desire or will” rather than the

23 Ibid., p. 204.
26 Ibid., 1050a9.
27 Ibid., Chap. 2 and 5. See also Nicomachean Ethics, vol. 1, Chap. 13, pp. 1729-1867. The “part of soul that has logos” and its relation to the other parts are the source of practice and virtue.
potentiality of force. At the same time, “every action and rational choice is thought to aim at some good”; “appetite is in every form of it relative to an end.” Clearly, it is a purpose or a certain kind of good that determines the actualization of the potentiality of logos. In view of the fact that “good” and “end” or “purpose” were used as synonyms in the context of the first introduction of the four causes, it would seem that we can affirm that for Aristotle, the final cause is the dominant cause of practice.

However, Heidegger made a crucial departure when he interpreted this theory of Aristotle’s, weakening and even subverting the dominant position given to the final cause by Aristotle.

In his interpretation of the Nicomachean Ethics, Heidegger lays considerable emphasis on the discussion in Book VI about the five ways in which the soul grasps authenticity—Aristotle’s so-called five “intellectual virtues.” These five modes include not only knowledge, nous and wisdom, but also prudence (practical wisdom) and art. Heidegger deduces that being-there “exists in authenticity,” thus gaining a starting point for distinguishing different senses of truth and modes of being. According to Volpi, Heidegger pays special attention to the difference between art or craft and prudence, a difference which corresponds to that between inauthenticity and authenticity—the twofold ways of being in Being and Time. The ontologicalization of the concept of prudence is precisely the concept of “being-there” that assumes a prominent role in Being and Time.

For Aristotle, the purpose of art is products, but its originating (i.e. efficient) cause is within the subject of art, namely the soul of man. That is to say, the activities of art are not themselves the purpose of art, and the final cause of art is different from its efficient cause. A prudent purpose is not a particular product; rather, it is “what conduces to living well as a whole,” while “the originating causes of the things (efficient causes) that are done consist in the end at which they are aimed.” It was this feature that Heidegger grasped and built on, saying that the object of prudence is being-there itself. “The purpose is of the same ontological character as prudence itself.” The purpose of practice is neither a particular act nor the effects of the act. In order to reverse the usual understanding of the purpose of prudence, Heidegger emphasized that what prudence considers is human life as a whole, “rather than the thing wherein the practice reaches its end (Ende).… A result is not constitutive for the Being of an action; only the Wie, the how, is.” It is not a certain “what,” nor a certain being in the world.

Here we see Heidegger’s subtle departure from Aristotle. First, in the manner the latter

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28 Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1048a9-10.
29 See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, vol. 1, 1094a3-4.
32 See Martin Heidegger, Platon: Sophistes, GA 19, p. 23.
34 See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1140b15.
35 Martin Heidegger, Platon: Sophistes, pp. 48-51.
had criticized, he separated "the good" from "good things," turning it into a "how" that is not attached to any being in the world. That is also one of the meanings of Heidegger's distinction between ways of being and even between ontological theories. Second, life is "how to be," the being that is different from any being in the world as "what to be," the kind of being that we have always been. Thus, at the moment when "good" is transformed into "how to be," "good" and "being-there" and even "existence" begin to merge. Since the object of prudence is life itself, then life itself is groundless unfolding, and then good as "how to be" cannot be embodied as any purpose, and can only become a special way of being. Turning "good" into a certain way of "being" is not done in order to solve the problem of "good" by starting with mode of "being" (as Aristotle had transformed Plato); rather, it is in order to completely substitute "the question of being" for "the question of good." It is this that is the fundamental elimination of the final cause at the level of ontology.

If it can be said that Heidegger's interpretation of ethics still follows Aristotle's text in equating the purpose of practice with its efficient cause of practice, then his interpretation of Book IX of the *Metaphysics* specifically absorbs the final cause into the efficient cause. Here Heidegger takes further what he acquired from his ethical interpretation, pointing out that the end, as "how," actually falls under *Kraft* (force). And in this potentiality or source of change (also translated as first cause or efficient cause), "there is, as it were, the demand upon itself to surpass itself (sich zu übertreffen)."36

Comparing Heidegger's interpretation of the *Metaphysics* with his interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we can easily see that in the latter, being-there itself as the object of prudence i.e., the "subject" of practice, is precisely the potentiality possessed of logos of Book IX of the *Metaphysics*. The relation between being-there and the good as purpose or end is precisely the relation between potentiality and the good that has been chosen and determined to be realized. We can draw an important conclusion from this: being-there that takes self-transcendence as its mechanism of being originates from the ontologicalization of the efficient cause. This basic mechanism, in Heidegger's theory, should be attributed to the "unfolding" structure of temporality and temporalization. From the perspective of the historical sources of philosophy, however, it would be better to wholeheartedly return it to the practical efficient cause contained in prudence rather than attribute it to the "ontologicalization of prudence" as Volpi does. In other words, ontologicalized prudence is precisely potentiality with *logos* as its efficient cause. Being-there, a way of being identical to prudence, is no more than the self-transcendence mechanism contained in all efficient causes (beginnings).

From this a dialectic conclusion can be deduced: Heidegger's refutation of the four causes depends precisely on his transformation of one of the four causes, the efficient cause. From the specific interpretation of ethics, Heidegger magnified consideration of the whole of human life into the only object of prudence, and at the same time assigned the contrivance of all the world's affairs to art. In other words, in his interpretation of Aristotle's ethics, it was only

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by sacrificing the duality of "worldliness," contained in Aristotle's concept of practice that Heidegger was able to eliminate the final cause in terms of ontology and thus abstract the efficient cause alone, making it a mechanism for the unfolding of the self-transcendence of being-there.

Here we have a highly significant situation. Whether we look at Mou Zongsan's expansion of Aristotle's four causes or Heidegger's dismantling of them, the two men ended up coinciding in their emphasis on the efficient cause and weakening of the final cause. The only difference is that Mou did so unconsciously, lured on by the Neo-Confucian tradition of interpreting the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean, but in Heidegger's case it was completely intentional.

To take this path, however, and depend on Aristotle to re-interpret Chinese thought means falling into the same stereotype as using the overthrow of Aristotle to reconstruct Western philosophy. Both dependence and overthrowing are lacking in the thoroughness they profess. For this reason, we have to return to the origin of the theory of the four causes so as to see why Aristotle attached so much importance to the final cause, albeit it was set aside, either deliberately or unintentionally, by two philosophical giants of the 20th century.

III. Generation/Completion, Making and the First Beginning of Philosophy: The Origin and Esoteric Meaning of the Theory of the Four Causes

For Aristotle, the theory of the four causes was not so much his personal contribution as a requirement of philosophy itself. Therefore, all schools of philosophy fall within the framework of the four causes.37 For the basic task of this essay—the problematization of philosophy itself—there is no better means than reviewing the origin and profound meaning of the theory of the four causes. The premise for questioning the first beginning of philosophy is precisely the questioning of the whole of the original experience from which both the theory of the four causes and the consciousness of questioning contained in it originate.

The concept of αίτια (causes) occurred as early as Plato's Socrates, and is decisive for ascertaining the origin of the theory of ideas.38 But Plato did not work out a systematic theory of causality; making causality the central concept of philosophical research was Aristotle's contribution.

Aristotle provides a serious treatment of the four causes in two places, once in the third chapter of the first book of the Metaphysics,39 and once in the seventh chapter of the second book of the Physics. The theories as set out here play the role of a guide. Without them,

37 See Aristotle, Metaphysics, vol. 1, Chap. 3-6. Also, Physics, vol. 2, Chap. 2, 194a30-35.
38 See Plato, Phaedo.
39 In the Metaphysics, vol. 5, Chap. 2, Aristotle returns to causality once again. The content here is basically the same as in the seventh chapter of the second book of Physics, but in the former, unlike the latter, causality does not play the guiding role for the discussion of the whole work.
there would have been no unfolding of major research on the first philosophy or physics. In terms of context, the former deals with philosophy in general, while the latter is the branch of research on nature.

In the first chapter of the first book of the Metaphysics, Aristotle distinguishes wisdom from experience, and especially from art. Compared with experience, art contains the knowledge of causes, and is therefore richer in wisdom. But theoretical knowledge without any external practical purpose contains more thorough cognition about origins and causes than the knowledge of making or art. Therefore, "Clearly, then, Wisdom is knowledge about certain principles and causes." In the light of this conclusion, Aristotle specifically defines the task of philosophy as probing into causes. In the third chapter of the first book of the same work, he systematically puts forward the four types of causes: "the substance, i.e. the essence," "the matter or substratum," "the source of the change" and its opposite, i.e., "the purpose and the good" of motion. Early in the preceding chapter, he had made it clear that the most advanced step in this theory rests in the cognition of purpose—i.e., the "basic good" of each thing and the "supreme good" of the whole of nature.

We can see that the four causes were introduced through the difference between wisdom and art. But this was not Aristotle's only discovery with respect to this difference. More systematic and richer discussion of some aspects can be seen in the sixth book of the Nicomachean Ethics. The primary difference between wisdom and art does not lie in the thoroughness or purity of their cognition of causes; rather, wisdom is rational, and is concerned with what is eternal, certain, universal and unchangeable. These themes are superior to man's practice and instruments. In comparison, art is of the nature of making. As with prudence, what it relates to is temporary, contingent, perishable and particular human things. As the unity of knowledge and nous, the sublime themes reflected by wisdom include nature. In this way, the "excellence of wisdom" in the theory of the four causes introduced at the beginning of the Metaphysics is embodied in the Ethics as, for example, the transcendence of natural objects over produced objects. The differences between nature and art are precisely the basic approach of the theory of the four causes brought out in the second book of the Physics. The sixth chapter of the Nicomachean Ethics builds a bridge between the two sources of the theory of the four causes. As we see, the center of this bridge is "art"—a concept that occurs in three texts. It is by constantly distinguishing them from art and making that wisdom and the nature it studies display their greatness and sublimity. In other words, art seems to have some kinship with the theory of the four causes.

However, such Aristotelian clarity has a certain unmeasurable ambiguity at its root.

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40 Aristotle, Metaphysics, 982a. In the light of the first chapter of the fifth book, the concept of origin can be subsumed into the concept of cause. Thus the "origins" discussed in early Greek philosophy were simply all the particular causes in the four causes.
41 Aristotle, Metaphysics, 982b6-7.
42 See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, vol. 6, Chap. 7.
The first is the definition of art. When he discussed art on its own, Aristotle did not overlook the fact that apart from "making," art also involves "using." The making of art requires cognition of the material of products, while the use of art needs to know the forms of the products made.\textsuperscript{43} Aristotle even implied that the art of using is the "dominant art" that dominates or rules the art of making.\textsuperscript{44} Such inherent distinctions are obviously related to those made by Plato in Book X of the \textit{Republic}.\textsuperscript{45} Plato did not specifically distinguish between art and practice, so what he interpreted in terms of the art of using is precisely what Aristotle tended to interpret in terms of practice or prudence.\textsuperscript{46}

However, when he attempted to compare art with nature or practice or with wisdom, Aristotle tacitly limited it to the art of making. It is this limitation that supports the beginning of the \textit{Physics} and even penetrates into the premises of the whole theory of the four causes.

As in the beginning of the \textit{Metaphysics}, Aristotle had to distinguish wisdom from art to develop the theory of the four causes. Similarly, he discriminates between nature and art at the beginning of the second book of the \textit{Physics} to support his causal approach to nature. The difference between nature and art is primarily one of ontology. As things that are generated and attained, natural objects differ from products made by means of art chiefly in that the first cause of the former lies in itself,\textsuperscript{47} whereas the first cause of the latter lies outside itself—"If the fact that a bed would not produce a bed shows that not its shape but its material is its nature, the fact that a man produces a man shows that his form is his nature."\textsuperscript{48} That is to say, the major difference between natural and artificial objects lies in whether the efficient cause is attributed to the objects themselves.

Nevertheless, ascription to the efficient cause is limited to distinguishing natural objects from man-made objects. The efficient cause is neither the only nor the primary direction for questioning. The only task of the second book of the \textit{Physics} is to disclose that all the four causes—especially the final cause—are applicable to research into nature. For this purpose, after natural objects are separated from the products of art, Aristotle immediately does exactly the opposite, restoring a series of decisive analogies between nature and art so as to raise questions in the study of nature relating to form, material and especially purpose.

It is evident that natural objects have their material and efficient causes, and what Aristotle most needed to demonstrate was simply that natural objects also have their forms and ends. For this, he had to resort to the similarity between nature and art. "If art imitates nature, and the same art studies form and to some extent matter (as the arts in fact do), physics also

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Aristotle, \textit{Physics}, vol. 2, Chap. 2.
\item See Aristotle, \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, vol. 1, Chap. 1.
\item See Plato, \textit{The Republic}, vol. 10, 601c-602b.
\item With respect to the complexity of Plato's view of art, see the various skills enumerated in the \textit{Statesman}. There, he reviews politics, an activity classed under prudence in Aristotle, under the category of art.
\item See Aristotle, \textit{Physics}, 192b14. Here, it refers to the self in the sense of species.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
will study both senses of nature.” “If there is purposiveness in art, there is purposiveness in nature.”

Overall, the reason the theory of the four causes can be applied to the study of nature lies in the following: nature and art resemble each other (because art imitates nature); the art of making fully possesses the four causes; so natural objects fully possess the four causes. Nature in the highest sense equates to the “purpose” and “form” of natural objects. In the introductory instruction of the *Metaphysics, the Physics and the Ethics*, however, it can be seen that all wisdom, including the study of nature, lies in its first being distinguished from art. According to this contradiction, it looks as though we can easily deconstruct Aristotle, just as Heidegger did, or simply follow Schürmann’s example and declare that Aristotle actually implicitly constructed all the traditions of Western metaphysics in the light of the experience of handicraft making.

From Heidegger’s critique, it can be seen that the crux of the first beginning of philosophy lies in the relationship between art and the four causes. Do the four causes then originate in the antecedent assimilation of the experience of making, subsequently applied to the question of the generation and completion of nature, precisely as shown in the introductory chapters mentioned above? Does the secret of the four causes lie precisely in the assimilation of nature to certain man-made products?

Ostensibly, the two causes (formal and material) which have the highest share and greatest influence in the resolution of the question of the primary substance are closely related to the art of making. However, the final cause is the one to which Aristotle himself attached more importance, and what distinguishes Aristotle’s philosophy and differentiates him from others such as Plato is the combination of the formal cause, the final cause and the efficient cause. In other words, the formal cause is ultimately integrated into the final cause, and therefore the whole group of formal/material causes acquires a renewed connotation from the paired concepts of potentiality/actuality, dominated by the final cause. Now, in order to thoroughly understand this question, it is necessary to develop it into the following one: Does the final cause that dominates the four causes originate from the experience of art or from any other experience?

There can be no doubt in the second book of *Physics*, Aristotle ascertained that natural objects likewise have their ends by analogy with art. What, then, is the purpose of art? *Physics* contains two different answers to this. In accordance with the exposition in the sixth chapter of the second book, the purpose of art is precisely the thing in which the activity of making terminates, that is, the product of making. On the other hand, in the second chapter of the same work, Aristotle points out in the context of his discussion of art, “We use their matter as existing for our own sake (for we are the end in one sense of ‘end’).”

50 See Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, p. 341.
Accordingly, the purpose of art and indeed of all "purposes" are subtly divided into two types: one is the purpose towards which the making activities are directed, i.e., the products; the other is the end for which the making activities are intended, i.e., the people who make use of the products. The latter is not only the direct purpose of the art of using, but also the final purpose of the art of making. Man-made products are none other than things used. Making shapes materials according to the requirements of using. Following Plato, Aristotle again established that the art of using "dominates" the art of making. Considering that Plato deliberately extended the range of "art" broadly enough to cover practice, whereas Aristotle's concept of art in the narrow sense was restricted to "making," the "art of using" with its end in man is closer to the concept of "practice." The dominance of the "art of using" over the "art of making" implies the dominance of practice over art.

The dominance of practice over art is crucial for the investigation of the premises of the theory of the four causes, and then for the reassessment of Aristotle's metaphysics as the first beginning of philosophy. We do not agree with the Heidegger-style conclusion radicalized by Schürmann—that the theory of the four causes and even the whole of metaphysics originate from the antecedent assimilation contained in the "experience of making." Our reason is that in the final design of the primary substance of the cosmos in Physics and Metaphysics, Aristotle proved that the efficient and final causes of nature are one. But in terms of the art of making, the efficient cause and the final cause are obviously not identical. Aristotle did resort to the analogy of art to introduce the end or purpose of nature, but this is not sufficient to deduce that the purpose of nature is precisely its efficient cause. Further, the conclusion by which Aristotle distinguishes practice from the art of making is precisely that "The first principle of what is done consists in the goal it seeks." There is no such thing as self-contained making; it is dominated by practice. Handicraft making is always embedded in the context of practice, and anyone who attempts to declare, as Schürmann does, that there is a "metaphysics of handicraft" must certainly have already unconsciously introduced the "metaphysics of practice."

Then, does the most basic distinguishing feature of Aristotle's philosophy, "the union of the efficient and final causes" really come from "practical experience?" Of course, it's not so simple. Aristotle did not simply turn to practice; rather, he attached more importance to the conditions for practice itself. His analysis of the conditions for practice, like his analysis of natural motion and theoretical speculation, reveals the "conditions for the efficient and final causes"; the two reach the same goal by different routes. In other words, the shared causal conditions of practice, of nature and of theory, rather than pure art or practice, are the true core of Aristotle's teleology. That is what Aristotle summed up and expressed in advance in his philosophical history—the relation between mind (nous) and the good. He emphasized

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52 The two types of purposes were translated as "towards which" and "for which" according to the Revised Oxford Translation. See Aristotle, The Complete Works of Aristotle, vol. 1, p. 332.

53 See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1140b15.
that mind is indeed the efficient cause and the good is indeed the final cause. The good does not exist apart from other forms, and is not an ultimate that transcends other ideas/forms. In this way, he linked reflection on the triple causes with the great philosophers who had preceded him. Analysis of the ultimate causes of practice, nature and theoretical thought all take the relationship between mind and the good as a guide for philosophy/history.

For Anaxagoras, nous is pure efficient cause, to which Socrates had to add the complement of the final cause, "the good." With Aristotle's combination of the efficient cause and the final cause, we can term this the good or mind. In the case of the noun noesis (mind), however, the verbal form, noeo, existed in the history of philosophy before Aristotle,\(^\text{54}\) and this had prepared a conceptual basis for Aristotle's discussion of the mind's "being and activity." Thus he mainly employed noesis and its verbal form (noeo) to support the loftiest passages in the *Metaphysics*: "Thinking (noesis) in itself deals with that which is the best in itself, and that which is thinking in the fullest sense with that which is the best in the fullest sense... (Thought) becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its object, so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which is capable of receiving the object of thought, i.e., the essence (ousia), is thought. But it is active when it possesses this object. Therefore, the possession rather than the receptivity is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation (theoria) is what is most pleasant and best... And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God." "Therefore it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks (since it is the most excellent of things), and its thinking is a thinking on thinking."\(^\text{55}\)

These two paragraphs represent the acme of the whole Aristotelian philosophy, and involve those questions that are crucial to all Western philosophy: the interdependent questions of the self-containedness of mind and the relation between thought and God (thus containing the relationship between philosophy and theology as well as religion), and the eternity of the being of God containing continuous and eternal duration. For Aristotle, the most thorough argumentation for the union of the three causes starts with the actuality of God (i.e., the good) and the self-containedness of mind. The trinity of God, thought and thinking are actually indistinguishable. It is only because of this that the cosmos has its eternal periodic motion.

From the above, it can be seen that the origin of Aristotle's theory of the four causes is not limited to the experience of making that distinguishes the first cause from the final cause, but is more evident in self-contained activities that unite the two causes and that have both natural generation and completion and practical wisdom. The esoteric significance of the theory of the four causes is that whether they are manifest as natural generation and completion or as

\(^{54}\) For example, ancient Greek thinkers from Parmenides on had begun to employ the concept noein (to think). See H. Diels, ed., revised by W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, p. 238.

practical wisdom, the quintessence of self-contained activities rests in the mind’s thought, whether it be the thought of God or the thought of man. Therefore, Aristotle’s theory of self-containedness can be viewed from the perspective of Chinese thought, especially neo-Confucian thought, as a kind of mind-nature theory.

IV. Another Beginning for Philosophy: Making, Generation/Completion and Ceaseless Generation

Thus, we finally acquire a benchmark to assess the rebuilding of philosophy in the 20th century in China and the West, and can further investigate the possibility of another beginning for philosophy. Heidegger can be said to have lacked a thorough understanding when he used “making” to interpret the first beginning of philosophy. Both Aristotle’s development of Plato’s views and Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle indicate that “practice” is inevitably latent in “making.” But it is the treatment and resolution of the efficient cause (generation) and final cause (completion) contained in practice that is the dominant question in the first beginning of philosophy. In other words, the principle of practice is the oneness of “generation and completion,” i.e., the self-containedness of the final cause united with the efficient cause. The questioning of making should be traced back to the inquiry into “generation and completion” and its self-containment.

Through all of Heidegger’s intellectual endeavors, the leap away from the first beginning of philosophy simply means a return from the “being” of Aristotle to the pre-Socratic physis (nature). It contains at least one approach: re-interpretation of the experience of physis with an ontology of the mind centered on to-be. Nevertheless, once the supremacy of the questioning of being is eliminated, can the mind-nature theory still be unfolded and transformed in a certain form? Can the experience of physis after the traditions of “generation-completion” and “making” become a new beginning for philosophy? These are the questions that will launch the recommencement of Chinese philosophy.

The seventh book of Aristotle’s Metaphysics lays down the task of the first philosophy as considering “What is being?” or “What is substance?” The twelfth book summarizes substance as falling under three types: the sensible and eternally in motion; the sensible and perishable; and the insensible and eternal. This classification of substances is a blend of the tripartite criteria of movement and rest, sensibility and insensibility, and eternity and destruction. The Physics affirms the principle of eternal motion, viz., the mover that itself does not move, while the Metaphysics studies what is insensible and eternal. The latter is introduced in the concluding book of the Metaphysics, where Aristotle resorts to the principle of “actuality” to interpret eternal movements. Therefore, the primary substance that keeps the cosmos in eternal motion is the god of the cosmos—the mind.

56 Ibid., 1028b4.
57 Ibid., vol. 12, Chap. 1 and 6.
That is the main course taken by Aristotle's theoretical philosophy. It has the following three implications. First, in the general framework of theoretical philosophy from the *Physics* to the *Metaphysics*, the criterion of movement and rest plays a primary role. Second, what moves is also what is, and is also a certain kind of substance or being, while what does not move but brings about motion is the primary substance, a superior form of being that makes motion itself be. In other words, the criterion of movement and rest is ultimately transformed into the question of the priority of being. Finally, what is still but yet makes all other objects move is none other than ontological mind. In view of this, Aristotle's first philosophy can be summed up as a theory of generation and completion guided by the question of being-substance and aimed at mind-nature theory.

From these three levels of meaning, the true endeavor of Aristotelian philosophy is to deduce from eternal motion (whose paradigm is eternal circular motion) the immovable form of the mind as the primary substance. In comparison, the Confucianism based on the *Book of Changes* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* also establishes the forms of mind and nature at rest in terms of eternal recurrence. The obvious difference between them is that the Confucianism does not put forward the question of being which originates from the copulative "to be," although it cannot be said that the profound implications contained in this question are absent from Chinese thought.

Aristotle's philosophy is a mind-nature theory reached through generation-completion. The efficient cause is generation and the final cause, completion. Fundamentally, what is called the first beginning of philosophy is nothing but the establishment of a system in which completion is prior to and identical with generation guided by the question of being-substance. The path opened up by Heidegger takes the reverse route, describing *Ereignis* (occurrence) prior to but not restricted to completion under the guidance of the question of being-substance. Once Chinese thought encountered Heidegger and thus rediscovered Aristotle and the whole of Western classical thought, it was able to reexamine and assess the commencement of philosophy from the perspective of an emerging complete and original experience. The Confucianism based on the *Book of Changes* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* is not indeed guided by the question of being, but it does take eternal motion as the basic experiential clue in the same way, and contains the connotation of being under the principle of motion. If the quintessence of Aristotle's philosophy is the principle of activity governed by the concept of being (*noumenon*), then that of Confucianism is the principle of activity governed by the concept of to-be. That is precisely the Way of generation-completion and ceaseless generation expounded by Confucianism—yi (change) or *cheng* (sincerity).

In Confucianism, the realm of experience is limited to what lies between Heaven and Earth. There, it is the Way of Heaven that is stressed; as is said, "the sage takes Heaven as

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58 See Aristotle, *Physics*, vol. 8, Chap. 8 and 9; *Metaphysics*, 1071b10-11.
59 See Ding Yun, "Being and Changeability," pp. 278-281.
the root.”⁶⁰ Heaven is Heaven by virtue of its eternal motion, unremitting, unceasing and endless. The Image under the Qian hexagram in the Book of Changes says, “The movement of heaven is full of power.” Kong Yingda’s annotation of this saying in the Correct Meanings of the Book of Changes says “That ‘The movement of heaven is full of power’ means that the motions of the celestial bodies are unceasing day and night, revolving in recurrence, without slackening or halting for a moment.” Likewise, the Judgment under the Fu hexagram says, “To return to the proper course and repeat it over seven days, this is the motion of Heaven.” Further, the Doctrine of the Mean asserts that “Sincerity is the way of Heaven.” In the saying “The highest sincerity does not cease,” “does not cease” describes the movement of Heaven and the highest sincerity defines the Way of Heaven. This is no different from the “eternal motion,” which forms the starting point of the Physics. In a similar fashion, Aristotle argued that the primary form of motion is displacement and that its eternal form is manifest in the orbital motion of the celestial bodies, a motion that is eternal.

Nevertheless, everlasting motion is simply a phenomenon common to both; it is the Way and the principles underlying it that are the esoteric quintessence of Confucianism. The systematization of Chinese thought begins with establishing eternal motion as the primary clue to phenomena; the dividing line between Chinese and Western thought starts with their different interpretation of phenomena. In order to explore the principle of eternal motion, Aristotle classified motion into different categories, and raised the concept of pure actuality—the mind as primary substance—via the theory of the four causes. If we can view this as a “path of logos” that starts from Confucian principles, then Confucianism has taken a “phenomenological path” that directly describes the manifestation of motion itself. In the Book of Changes, Heaven and Earth are the “forms,” “images” and “functions” of the Qian and Kun hexagrams, with Qian and Kun being the “origin” and the “form” that define Heaven and Earth. These two origins are not beings but a sort of “way” or mode (the We that Heidegger was so fond of); that is, with names acquired directly through their “virtue.”⁶¹ Qian is (the symbol of) strength; Kun, docility” (the Shuo Gua in the Book of Changes). Their attributes have the same sound as the hexagrams themselves. In accordance with this mode of identification,⁶² both the subject and “being” in the obvious sense are none other than a kind of “virtue.” They may be manifested as work and completion or as abundance or profusion, but they cannot be viewed as “origins,” and are inferior to Qian and Kun.

According to the system of the Book of Changes, the principle of the motion of eternal generation and completion equates to Qian and Kun as the Way of Heaven and Earth. The

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⁶⁰ Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao, Collection of the Two Cheng Brothers, p. 274.
⁶¹ The wu xing (五行 Five Elements) are also the “way of motion” affirmed in the light of “virtue,” rather than being simply five things. For example, “water is to soak and descend,” “fire is to blaze and ascend,” etc. See “Hong Fan” in the Correct Meanings of the Book of History, the annotated version of the Thirteen Classics in the Ruan block-printed edition (photogravure).
⁶² To use form to denote virtue is what the Xi Ci Zhuan (系辞传) refers to as “what is above form is called the Way.” For details see Ding Yun, “Being and Changeability,” pp. 285-294.
six Yao lines of the Qian hexagram all belong to the category of yang, but have the function of ensuring Great Harmony. They share the common virtue of Heaven and Earth and contain the quintessence of the idea that “The successive movement of yin and yang constitutes what is called the course (of things).” Despite this, the tension between the two origins from the one source still exists in the tradition of interpretation of the Confucian classics. In order to avoid the confusion between the Way of Heaven and the Way of yin-yang, the concept of “one single source” should be established, in which all the tension between yin and yang, between Qian and Kun, and between the virtue of Heaven and of Earth are manifested. In the history of Confucianism, more than one concept meets these conditions, and all of them are interrelated in terms of intellectual history. In the system of the Book of Changes, it is yi (Andreessen, etc. ceaseless generation), and in the system of the Doctrine of the Mean, it is cheng (sincerity). Various interpretations of cheng unfolded over the history of Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism: it can also be “benevolence,” “mind,” “nature,” and so on.

One could say that cheng is an interpretive transformation of yi. The Book of Changes is very clear about the intrinsic tension and one-sidedness of the two origins from the one source or way. Therefore the Xi Ci says, “The successive movement of yin and yang constitutes what is called the course (of things). That which ensues as the result (of their movement) is goodness; that which shows it in its completeness is the natures (of men and things). The benevolent see it and call it benevolence. The wise see it and call it wisdom. The common people, acting daily according to it, yet have no knowledge of it” (The first part of Xi Ci in the Book of Changes). The one-sidedness of the benevolent and the wise all occurs because they perceive the completeness of form of the Way from the perspective of either Qian or Kun as separate origins. Benevolence dominates inventive generation, that is, it emphasizes the efficient cause; wisdom dominates reaching completion, that is, it stresses the final cause. Thus viewed, Aristotle’s final cause is undoubtedly the learning of the wise.

Given that the two origins from the one source or way are one-sided, there are two means of resolving it. One is to expand Qian as origin to contain the virtue of Kun, so that the one way belongs to Qian as origin. That is what Li Daoping meant by saying “one yin and one yang are all united in Qian as origin.” The other way is to take the ontology of sincerity further to unite and contain both Qian and Kun. That is why the Doctrine of the Mean was written. Li Daoping annotated the chapter “Ensuing Goodness and Completed Nature” in the Doctrine of the Mean with the words “Qian ’properly defines the natures and destinies of all objects,’ and that is ‘Nature.’...Man is guided by the goodness of Qian and fostered by the procreative force of Kun to complete his nature. Therefore, ‘That which ensues as the result (of their movement) is goodness; that which shows it in its completeness is the nature (of men and things).’ That is what is meant when the Doctrine of the Mean says that ‘What Heaven has conferred is called Nature; an accordance with this nature is called the Way.’”

63 Li Daoping, Compiled Commentaries on the Book of Changes, p. 560.
The words "What Heaven has conferred is called Nature; an accordance with this nature is called the Way" is the initial sentence of the Doctrine of the Mean, and originates from the expanded virtue of Qian. The virtue of Qian is what Heaven has conferred, and the Way of changes and definition of nature unites and contains Kun as origin with its virtue of harmony and correctness. Therefore, "What Heaven has conferred is called Nature" is a proposition that integrates Qian and Kun, or generation and completion. The creed of the Doctrine of the Mean can be summarized as cheng or sincerity, which is precisely the expansion of Qian as origin. "Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the Way of men" (Chapter 20, Doctrine of the Mean). No words can express the relation between Heaven and man more clearly than this, and nothing other than the Book of Changes can directly sum up the relation between Heaven and man in a single word.

Sincerity is a concept belonging to the same category as Qian and Kun. Like strength and docility, it is a concept borrowed from "virtue." Can a concept borrowed from human virtue describe the Way of Heaven? This has raised doubts among historians of philosophy who insist on the boundary between value and facts and between the man-made and the natural, as if Greek philosophy had never interpreted natural origins with such concepts as the good, the mind, thought, speech and union, which likewise originate in human phenomena. The greatness of cheng is no whit inferior to "thought" and "speech." The Shuwen Jiezi (Etymological Dictionary of Chinese Characters) explains cheng or sincerity and trustworthiness by cross-referencing. Therefore, cheng is the completion we spoke of, and is the self-fulfillment of the intention or word. From the point of view of Western philosophy, cheng represents the cohesion of such primary philosophical connotations as thought, language, existence and truth. From the perspective of Chinese-language studies of Confucian principles, the most important connotations contained within it are "generation" and "completion." Literally, cheng refers to the fulfillment and completion of words and intentions that have been generated—once generated, inevitably completed; such is cheng.

A close verbal correlation can readily be found between cheng/sincerity and completion. In the intrinsic relationship of the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean, "Sincerity" integrates Qian’s virtue as "generation" and Kun’s virtue as "completion" into one and correlates with the expanded Qian as origin, completely resolving the problem of the two origins from the one source. The Doctrine of the Mean, on the other hand, lays more emphasis on "ceaselessness" as the virtue of Qian as origin and "endlessness" as the virtue of the sage, integrating the Qian-like virtue of both Heaven and man into cheng or sincerity.

64 See Lao Sze-kwang, New History of Chinese Philosophy, vol. 2, pp. 62-69. Zhang Dainian had a similar train of thought; in his Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy, only Sincerity has two entries, under the categories “Natural Philosophy” and “Epistemology.” Further, Zhang made a sub-entry, “Moral Completion,” under his earlier entry on “Sincerity.” It actually has triple meanings, each of which is interpreted. See Zhang Dainian, Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy, pp. 100 and 232.

65 See Duan Yucai, Annotated Etymological Dictionary of Chinese Characters, p. 92.
“When there were heaven and earth, then afterwards all things were produced” (“Xu Gua” in the Book of Changes). Therefore, Heaven and Earth are not particular things; instead, they are the principle behind endless things. This principle is precisely the endlessness and oneness of *cheng*, the ceaseless generation of *yi*. Form and the function are not separate, whence the virtue of ceaseless generation, Sincerity, Heaven and Earth must be manifested as the endlessness of things and the ceaselessness of a man of noble character, rather than being existences suspended outside man or things. Both the Book of Changes and the Doctrine of the Mean advocate consummation of nature, preserving existence and returning to the Way. Inceptive generation must lead to the achievement of completion, but the achievement of completion is not an absolute purpose; there must be the start of a new round. Similarly, Chinese thought cannot led by questions of being (to be, what to be, essence, etc.); it presents a different facet of the same intellectual occurrence. The quintessence of classical Chinese thought lies in its containing generation and completion within ceaseless generation. The simple mention of generation and completion merely alludes to origin, prosperity, harmony and correctness; but the proposition of ceaseless generation implies origin rising from correctness and the recurrence of the *yang*. In this way, whether interpreted as ceaseless generation or sincerity, ceaselessness, endlessness, eternity and inexhaustibility are the entire form and great function of the evolution and circulation of *physis*. Another beginning for philosophy thus becomes apparent.

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