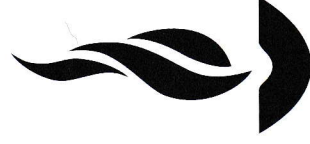


**Quatre-vingt-unième  
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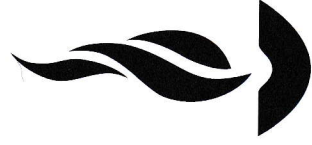
COMPTE RENDU



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COMPTE RENDU



## Ali Dinçol

Born in Istanbul, on February 1, 1943.

Abitur at the German High School in Istanbul (1961); Study at the Department of Ancient Languages and Cultures, Chair Hittitology, Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University (1962-1966); Research Assistant at the same Department, Istanbul University (1966-1972); Ph. D. at the same Department and Faculty (1972); Habilitation (1976); Professorship (1983); Chairman of the Department of Ancient Languages and Cultures, Faculty of Letters, Istanbul University (since 1985).

Free University of Berlin by a scholarship of the German Archaeological Institute (one year, 1969-1970); University of Munich by a state scholarship (three months, 1981); Berlin Free University by a scholarship of the German Archaeological Institute (two months, 1984); German Archaeological Institute, Central, Berlin (two months, 1987); German Archaeological Institute, Central, Berlin (one month, 1989); German Archaeological Institute, Central, Berlin (two months, 1995).

Attended to several congresses, symposia and other international fora.

Member of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft.

Member of the Turkish Association of History (Türk Tarih Kurumu).

Member of the American Research Institute in Turkey.

Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute.

Member of Societas Anatolica (Paris).

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## Belkis Dinçol

Born in Istanbul, on July 20, 1943.

Graduate of the Girl's Lycée at Yeni Mahalle, Ankara (1960); Enrolled to the History Department of the Faculty of Language, History and Geography of Ankara University (1960-1962); Study and Graduation of the Department of Hittitology of the Faculty of Language, History and Geography of Ankara University (1962-1966); Research Assistant at Alanya Museum (1967);

Head Keeper of the Cuneiform Archives at the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara (1968-1976); Attendance to courses of German at the Goethe Institute at Boppard for four months; study at the Altorientalisches Seminar, Marburg by a state scholarship (1971-1972); Joined to the teaching staff of the Department of Hittitology at the Istanbul University as an expert of cuneiform (1976); Magister Artium at the same Department of Istanbul University (1988); Doctor phil. at the same university (1991); Habilitation again in Istanbul University (1993); Promotion to Professorship at the Dept. of Hittitology in Istanbul University (2000).

Study on several aspects of Hittitology at the Universities of Munich and Berlin for periods of two or three months by scholarships of the German Archaeological Institute (1981, 1984, 1994).

Member of Excavation team at Konya-Karahöyük, Eskişehir and Yalbürt. Epigraphist for the decipherment of hieroglyphic seals at Hattusa-Bogazköy.

Member of the Publication Commission of the Hittite Tablets returned from Berlin (them East Germany).

Member of the Turkish Institute of Archaeology.

Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute.

## 2

## EXPOSÉS

## A. Assemblée générale d'ouverture

*Globalisation and Conceptual Biodiversity*

par Christoph Harbsmeier

Professeur à l'Université d'Oslo

I believe there is something profoundly unsettling about European traditions of intellectual history. Let me try to explain.

Frustratingly many contemporary observers have diagnosed a pervasive and accelerating intellectual "Coca-Colonisation" of the minds of intellectuals throughout the developing world and indeed throughout the world.

Cultural and political keywords the world over have become loans or loan translations from English. What look and sound like Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, or Swahili keywords turn out in fact to be loan translations. As far as political and cultural buzzwords are concerned, English has become the model language, the rest of the languages of this world are mere replica languages.

There is nothing altogether new about this: we all know the pervasive intellectual hellenisation first of Rome, the Roman empire, then of Europe, then of North America, of the Americas, of India, of Japan, of China, of Africa, of the world. The Greek and Roman heritage, revived, translated and elaborated into the spirit of secular modernisation from the French Revolution onwards, became synonymous with intellectual progress.

The flow of conceptual influence between civilisations and cultures has been profoundly asymmetric throughout the varied history of mankind, and not always as a part of colonialist or imperialist plots. The Greek *lingua franca*, (known as *koinè* Greek) was accepted as completely dominant even as the Greek empire was in sharp decline and Rome was calling the shots.

The immense flow from Arabic to languages like Persian, Turkish, Indonesian Malay and so forth was only partly linked to Islamic empire-building.

And in the phenomenal case of Sanskrit, the sustained authority of this language imposed itself throughout large parts of South Asia, South-East Asia, and East Asia, with but little trace of Indian conceptual despotism.

Modern "occidental conceptual despotism" may still turn out to be an intellectual manifestation of a fundamental military/economic and technological ascendancy first of Western Europe and then of the US, on the world scene.

But one hastens to remind oneself that in the hellenisation of Rome a Roman military superpower came to be totally dominated by a defunct Greece which was only a shadow of its short spell of Alexandrian imperialism. Epictetus the Greek slave became the intellectual master of Marcus Aurelius, the emperor.<sup>1</sup> The Romans surrendered, conceptually and philosophically, to the vanquished Greeks. And this is a story which I have always had the greatest problems in explaining to modern American audiences: one is always met with disbelief.

The Japanese were not really colonised in the crucial 19<sup>th</sup> century. But the anglicification of Japanese has gone so far, I discovered on a recent visit to that country, that one may be excused for feeling that bye and bye ANY English word, mispronounced *à la japonaise*, amounts to acceptable current academic Japanese. Similarly for Hindi.

My own slightly more extensive experience with Malay, for example, suggests that the situation has long been very much the same: Arabic reverberates from the minarets everywhere in Malay country, but the social and political keywords of that Muslim society are anglicised throughout. What ever is Arabic in origin is by and large held to be ultimately understood as explicated in terms of English. (I say by and large: for ultra-fundamentalists do persist.)

To make sense has become, increasingly and everywhere, synonymous with "to make sense in English or when translated into English". Just as in the European Middle Ages to make sense came to be synonymous with "to make sense in Latin, or when translated into Latin". No one ever began to find it strange that Thomas of Erfurt, in his 13<sup>th</sup> century, wrote his *Grammatica Universalis* "Universal Grammar" in Latin and exclusively about Latin. Noam Chomsky's pathbreaking *Syntactic Structures* deals exclusively with English. The highly problematic paradigm is the same. Only the medium has changed.

Even the formidable German philosophers, to the extent that they wish to establish themselves as international authorities, have long been reduced to

expounding Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* very much as if Immanuel Kant had written a book entitled *Kritik des reinen Verstandes*. Of course, Immanuel Kant wrote nothing of the kind in what we now hasten to call his *Kaliningrad*, but the intellectual category or concept of *VERNUNFT* is not internationally respectable because it does not happen to go well into English – if it goes into English at all.

And what does not go comfortably into English must either be imported as appalling examples of conceptual aberrant degeneracy, like *Schadenfreude*, and *Weltschmerz*, or it is consigned to the limbo of intellectual oblivion – of concern only of parochial conceptual romanticists.

When I agreed to speak to you today I thought I might be allowed to address an *Union Académique Internationale* in my favourite language, French. Mind you: I never thought that the *raison d'être* of this honourable institution was the cultivation of the French language. But I was quietly looking forward to speaking to you about such things as come naturally to me in that language. I do find here a peculiar stubborn linguistic *embarras de richesse*: there are so many things which are routinely left unsaid because they do not go well in English. There is a certain *je ne sais quoi* which would have made me feel particularly well in French when addressing an *Union Académique Internationale* before it is renamed *International Union of Academies*.

A propos French: It is widely believed that some varieties of French wine do not in fact travel very well over long distances: upon arrival in Australia these are not held to be very good. None the less no one in his right mind would say that Bourgogne red is inferior to Bordeaux red just because the Bourgogne travels less well. A true lover of good food would go a long way to enjoy something that does not travel, something so vulnerable that it must be enjoyed *in situ*, in the environment where it belongs.

Concepts are like wines: some travel well, others lose their characteristic force and their communicative flavour as they leave their natural environment. But when a concept does not travel well into de-anglicised International Basic Conference English, up-to-date globalised respectable intellectuals tend to summarily disregard it. With regard to concepts they have lost that sense of aesthetic connoisseurship which is so important for French lovers of wine. (Mark, by the way, that I say modern intellectuals "disregard" these local concepts. I do not say "they dismiss" them. For, in order to dismiss something, it seems to me one needs to know what it is that one dismisses.)

My point is simply this: many splendid concepts and nuances do not travel very well into current de-anglicised International Basic Conference English. I quite agree that these parochial concepts do seem to have lost their subtle flavour upon arrival in that peculiar international idiom. But it is quite unjust-

<sup>1</sup> As Rudolf Wagner has pointed out to me, the predominance of Aramaic in a large cultural area, similarly, was not based on the despotism of any superpower but on something like a free choice of the recipients.

tified that they are, for that reason, deemed unsuitable for intellectual consumption or discussion.

Here are some relevant examples from China. A key Chinese concept like *yijing* 意境 loses everything when lamely paraphrased as “spiritual depth”, a key concept like *shényin* 神韻 is loses everything when unpacked as “spiritual resonance”, a key concept like *jingjie* 境界 loses everything when awkwardly paraphrased as “spiritual horizon”. These paraphrases are the best I can do by way of translation. But they have none of the redeeming features of memorability or even comprehensibility: they are never registered, if registered forgotten, and even if remembered never understood. Yet they are the very concepts that Chinese men of letters live by and have lived by for millennia.

In China it is perilously easy to persuade large audiences that the very charming reason why Westerners disregard any notion of a “spiritual horizon” is that they unfortunately have got to a stage where they have very little of the thing referred to by the traditional Chinese concept of *jingjie* 境界, since these Westerners are – as it were – somewhat short of that secular but intensely spiritual hierarchy of the aesthetically sublime which is so important to the Chinese men of letters – excuse me: persons of letters. Erasmus of Rotterdam in his splendid *Adagia*, on the single word item *amousois* suggests that things have not always been that way: *antiquitus enim nihil eruditum habebatur sine musica* “In antiquity nothing was held to be learned that lacked musicality.” It is this dimension of conceptual musicality that does not in fact travel very well at all into *koinē* Basic English, it is this musicality that boils away when things are boiled down to that globalised, de-anglicised international medium.

My claim is that as modern intellectuals we disregard such concepts as these at great cost and to our own detriment, that we could learn a great deal about conceptual aestheticism from the French lovers of good wine.

Descending from this lofty moralising perspective, let me revert to our banal and yet so scandalous point of departure: modern intellectual analysis increasingly consists in “boiling down” whatever is to be analysed, in relating it to its common linguistic denominator, our Basic Conference English.

And we must note that the effects of this “boiling down” are not necessarily negative: many things become clearer when boiled down – in the realm of thought that is!

Moreover, since we have this pervasive and ubiquitous need for translation of everything into Basic *koinē* English, the remarkable result is that this worthy successor to *koinē* Accadian, Hellenistic *koinē* Greek, classical Arabic, and post-classical *koinē* Latin, is continuously enriched by the need to find ways of saying all sorts new things that are not native to the *koinē* English medium. *Koinē* English has thus been tremendously enriched while at the same time losing much of its idiomatic force and richness of nuance as it is all

too often (ab)used and shaped by non-native speakers of that language – like myself.

Let me turn, now, in a little more detail, to the case of China. A Chinese specialist in “Chinese linguistics” will typically think that he has analysed his Chinese sentences to the extent that he or she (many scholars in the humanities today are women, but this is a fairly recent development) to the extent that he or she, I say, has subsumed the structure under Western syntactic morphological and semantic concepts: for example, he will by now only be satisfied when he has found Western-style “words” in Chinese, and adjectives. But Chinese is a language which has been studied intensely for well over two thousand years by Chinese linguists without any notion of a “word” whatsoever. And adjectives, in Chinese nearly always function as verbs. Including notions like that of a “word” raises more problems than it solves. And in the good old days grammatical facts were reduced to Latin categories. Only the medium has changed. The nature of the prejudices is the same.

A Chinese historian will typically think that he has understood “Chinese history” to the extent that he has successfully introduced any notion of “history” as *historia ipsa*, “the historical process as such” which was notably marginal if not actually quite absent in China.<sup>2</sup> China may have had the most sustained and greatest tradition of historiography, but a concept of history it had not, and had to borrow it from the Japanese. Chinese historians happily apply western concepts such as feudalism, revolution, society, rights, human rights, politics to the facts of Chinese. Like nearly all their academic Chinese colleagues they thus subsume the Chinese facts under modern (read: Westernised) conceptual schemes. No wonder they need to study abroad to learn to do this well.

A Chinese scholar of “Chinese literature” will typically think he has understood the Chinese literary heritage to the extent that he has imposed on it a Western notion of literature on China which was totally alien to the Chinese tradition until the Westernising 19<sup>th</sup> century in which the Chinese learnt to subsume their literary world under a host of alien categories.

A Chinese scholar of “Chinese philosophy” will typically think he has understood Chinese philosophy by first imposing a Westernising notion of philosophy on the Chinese evidence which is quite alien to the Chinese tradition, and by then looking for such features as logic, idealism, and materialism in the bad old days, and nowadays for more fashionable Westernised notions such as metaphysics, ethics, utilitarianism, skepticism etc. etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Mi Shi*, often mistranslated as “history”, refers to 1. history books; 2. archivists in classical Chinese. *Lishi* 歷史 refers to the history books throughout the ages, only in modern times, as a loan from Japanese, the expression refers to “history”.

A Chinese scholar of the "history of science" will typically begin to think that he has understood Chinese history of science if to the extent that he has successfully imposed the utterly alien notion of "science" on Chinese intellectual history, and then looking for antecedents or adumbrations of Euclidian axiomatic systems and a theory of formal proofs, geology, chemistry, and the like.

A Chinese scholar of "art history" will typically begin to think that he has made sense of his own heritage after he has imposed the western notion of "ART" on the Chinese material he has to work with, and then to apply the notion of an "ARTIST" which again is a category that remained alien to Chinese thinking until modern times. You can be a painter, but not an artist. What the Chinese prized and still often tend to appreciate, was and is the man of letters with artistic accomplishments, not the "mere" specialised professional artist.

A typical Chinese scholar of the "history of religion" will typically begin to think that he has made sense of China when he has successfully imposed an alien concept of religion on the Chinese evidence, and a kind of dualism between the sacred and the profane which will enable him to apply Western methods to these Eastern peoples of China. Needless to say: there is no concept of religion in China.

A Chinese scholar is *módnēng* 摩登 i.e. "modern and up-to-date" to the extent that he has surrendered to the conceptual dictatorship of primarily American and secondarily European academic discourse.

We have heard much from Karl Wittfogel and others about "Oriental Despotism", but what is more in evidence today, as we have seen, is "occidental conceptual despotism", westernised concepts imposing themselves everywhere in the place of local indigenous ones.<sup>3</sup> There is much talk of the frightening loss of biodiversity. I am concerned here with the equally rampant loss, in such a short time, of so many concepts and of so much conceptual diversity in the rapidly globalising intellectual world.

An interesting reaction against this is the politically correct and post-colonially apologetic "conceptual orientalism" which is thriving in certain places. One now tends to celebrate the conceptually "other" as an antidote against prevalent conceptual boredom with an increasingly distant and ill-understood regurgitatively Latinate Western/European tradition.

But what is needed is a more radical cure.

What if instead of mechanically applying the most fashionable linguistic theories to the facts of Chinese one tried to develop one's basic linguistic ana-

<sup>3</sup> I say: "imposing *themselves*". It is not always a matter of some culprit imposing them. There is no need to assume an imperialist conceptual conspiracy.

lytic tools for the Chinese language on the basis of traditional Chinese philology and pre-modern Chinese primary evidence?

What if one could try to study Chinese history (and perhaps even some of world history) by developing one's analytic tools on the basis of the rich concepts in the immense wealth of Chinese historiography and Chinese historical sources?

What if one could approach Chinese literature by basing oneself on traditional Chinese ways of looking at their own literary heritage, instead of applying current literary theory to the facts of Chinese?

What if philosophers of language attempted to see what there is to learn about human language in general from that intractable case of Chinese, instead of subsuming Chinese reflections on language as more or less promising proto-forms of modern analytic philosophy?

We can go on asking "what if?" like this forever. And the Chinese answers one gets will often be most disappointing. The Chinese linguist, historian, philosopher, political scientist will still tend to explain his own indigenous concepts in his irreversibly Westernised mother tongue: his Modern Standard Chinese mother tongue was created, after all, as part and parcel of a movement of radical Westernisation, a radical rejection of Chinese traditions.

Enough! I am repeating myself. But I am repeating myself because history is repeating *herself*, incessantly. Continues to do so. Nearly everywhere, or so it seems.

In China itself, there have from the very start been those who reacted against this rampant imposition of Western concepts. There has always been a strain of patriotic intellectual traditionalism, as for example in the case of the remarkable scholar Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) whom I have never met and Mao Zedong's teacher Liang Shuming 梁漱冥 (1893-1988) with whom I was able to discuss these matters at some length, and for whom it always remained important to keep Westernised perspectives and Western ways of thinking from distorting the legitimate Chinese indigenous perspectives on their own culture. Moreover, it is important to recognise that scholars like Qian Mu were among the first who protested explicitly against what we now may fashionably identify as the dangers of "occidental conceptual despotism". The recognition of these dangers in modern intellectual history has never been a Western privilege.

In contemporary China there is a new vogue of fundamentalist cultural patriotism not only in matters of research. The bizarre religious cultural fundamentalism of Indian *Hindutva* has basic parallels with the cultural fundamentalism of government-sponsored patriotic Confucianism. And these current developments are not unrelated to current economic developments, the economic and political rise of India and China.

Both in India and in China we find a new wave of "conceptual patriotism". Some time ago, I have been able to buy five books with titles like *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* 中國可以說不 "China can say no". (There must be many more such books.) Their subject is exactly this: the importance of saying "No!" to the imposition of Western keywords and value concepts on China. Former President Lee Kuan Yew's Singaporean idea of an *Institute of East Asian Philologies* to promote philosophical underpinnings for "Asian Values" is being adopted on a vastly greater scale by the current Chinese government. There is a desperate search for the conceptual roots of whatever that is: Chinese identity. (People lived without the concept of an identity for millennia in China. Because they had the thing, perhaps, they did not need to talk about it. By the time the Western concept became such a rage (under the name of *rèntóng* 認同 "identity"), it was too late: self-construal in terms of identity was destined to be conducted in Westernised modern terms.

However, there are exceptions to this. And one egregious such exception is the man whom – I understand – the Chinese recently have voted, by a very large majority, as the most important Chinese personality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, way ahead of Mao Zedong as a distant no. 2. I am referring to the writer of knight's tales, Jin Yong 金庸 (born 1924, at present, rumour has it, now a PhD student in Oxford!), who publishes in the West under the name Louis Cha. And the one feature that makes Jin Yong so famous in China that bookshops have whole rooms dedicated to his works, is the fact that he writes a Chinese style which is chemically free from all Western influence. He is a modern Chinese writer whose prose is kept entirely free from Western-origin or Westernised Chinese vocabulary. Since Jin Yong knows English well, he is equipped to keep all traces of English away from his prose. (Those who have no strong base in English have a much harder time with this.) As an overseas Chinese, paradoxically, Jin Yong stands out as a paragon of Chinese cultural identity unsullied and unpolluted by the ubiquitous American influence that inundates practically all Chinese media.

Consumption of text in China is to a huge extent consumption of translated texts, of texts translated from American English. The Chinese language is transformed by serving so extensively as a medium for the translation from English. In any large dictionary of Chinese, the loanwords from English constitute an easy majority of the dictionary entries. The planned creation of Modern Standard Chinese in the early twentieth century was part and parcel of a whole-sale rejection of the Chinese traditional heritage, Confucius, Laozi, Buddhas and all. Modernisation came to be Westernisation in regard of all the cultural keywords and buzzwords. The guiding concepts were liberty, democracy, science, socialism and so forth. The modern Western vocabulary was borrowed on a huge scale from Japanese in the East. Necessarily, then, any attempt to find one's way back to the roots of Chinese intellectual civil-

isation had to be in terms of this Westernised loan-terminology. (Which, incidentally, the Japanese had created typically "on the basis of classical Chinese"!)

Both the traditionalist philosopher Qian Mu and Mao Zedong's teacher Liang Shuming wrote a moderately but distinctly Westernised form of Chinese. None of them would have liked very much to be reminded of their conceptual dependence on the West. And as far as I know none of them have focussed on this conceptual feature of their philosophical discourse. Key-words like science, ethics, progress, democracy, philosophy, logic had to be central to the way in which they expounded what was special to China, if they were to be taken seriously in their time. They advocated pristine Chineseness very much in Western terms, though not – perhaps – on Western terms.<sup>4</sup>

Not so the great novelist Jin Yong 金庸. Defiantly, Jin Yong celebrates a purely Chinese ethos in which such notions as freedom, democracy, science, society, politics, political movements, political parties, theory, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, logic, etc. etc. play absolutely no part. An ethos where a person is not a bundle of legal rights, but rather a bundle of moral obligations and firm personal commitments.

Jin Yong's is the ethos of a semi-historical imagined bygone age, a world all of its own, far removed from the mundane realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And yet, it stands to reason that the moral and psychological paradigms of self-construal created in Jin Yong's *Knights Tales* do indeed speak volumes about current, very modern yet at the same time deeply atavistic, modes of self-construal in contemporary China. It is as if many Chinese inscribe themselves nostalgically into a mythological narrative universe of which the novels of Jin Yong 金庸 alias Louis Cha are something of an iconic prototype.

As Goethe has it: *Hier bin ich Mensch, hier darf ich's sein*. "Here I am human, here I am permitted to be just that."<sup>5</sup> So, in reading Jin Yong/Louis Cha, the Chinese feel "Here I am Chinese. Here I am permitted to be just that, unmediated by any outlandish conceptual or intellectual impositions."

It is all just a sentimental nostalgic literary game, of course. But it is a psychologically – perhaps even politically – serious game. A culturally symptomatic common practice.

At this late stage of cultural development it is not at all an exaggeration to say that the urbanised Indians, and the urbanised Chinese, for certain, often have come to feel "exotic unto themselves": just as a German has begun to feel just a little bit like "going ethnic" when he devours his *choucroute*, *Sauer-*

<sup>4</sup> At a deeper philosophical level they had much in common with the famous Westerners of Chinese philosophy, Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895-1990), or like Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909-1995).

<sup>5</sup> Note the disastrous loss in translation here which may give you an inkling of what happens on a huge scale in translation from English to Chinese and vice versa!

*krant* or his pig's trotters, and most definitely dons his *Led-erhosen* "leather trousers". One can definitely "go native" in one's own obsolescent tradition. And one can begin to "eat ethnic" anywhere when one fails to see one's choice as being effectively circumscribed by the likes of T-bone steak, MacDonald's and Kentucky Chicken, followed by Starbuck.

The choice of conceptual Coca-Cola instead of indigenous tea need not be simply or always a commercial imposition induced through capitalist advertising, though. It can be quite as much a matter of preference in taste. But it is an "acquired taste": acquired by imitation of the more affluent, imitation of what is perceived to be more advanced and therefore perhaps felt to be more conducive to affluence.

In Freudian terms: conceptual despotism has resulted in "internalised conceptual submissiveness", in an "acquired spontaneous taste for conceptual subservience to the West".

Perhaps this is going too far. But in China I am sometimes tempted to diagnose even a kind of "conceptual masochism" through which Chinese intellectuals rejoiced in the destruction of their own conceptual heritage in their race towards westernised progress. One often notes a kind of pride in an inability to express oneself in one's mother tongue without resorting to English.

All the same: Westernising modernisation is not one thing, it turns out to many things because of the varying cultural conservatism, the reluctances and resistances of those modernising cultures. There is not one global perspective. There are multiple distinct conceptual modernities.

A concrete example will pin down the essence of this constellation of multiple conceptual modernities. Take the notion of "freedom". The Chinese *zìyóu* 自由 does loan-translate *liberty/freedom*, just as *liberty* transcribes *libertas*, and *libertas* loan-translates classical Greek *eleutheria*. But here comes the rub: in current ordinary Chinese the word *zìyóu* 自由, which translates "freedom", typically gets to be much closer to the negatively loaded English "licence" than to the positive "freedom". There is much that gets lost and distorted in conceptual transmission. "Freedom" gets transmitted as "licence". And the Chinese for "human dignity", the dignity of man, *zūnyán* 尊嚴, continues to be universally conceived in China as "high status" rather than as "human dignity". Human rights as well as intellectual property rights do badly in China partly because the very concept of a "right", *quánlì* 權利 sounds disastrously much like *quánlì* 權力 "power, ability to fix things". The concept of a "right" is hard to find in traditional China.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In Standard Chinese they sound exactly the same to the man in the street. And I have been witness to exhilarating public misunderstandings among Chinese human rights specialists at the Nobel Institute in Oslo.

This conceptual folklore, the philosophically inspired social anthropology of the uses of abstract concepts among the common people is important, and it has a fine tradition in Norway.<sup>7</sup>

A historical study of such conceptual anthropology is undertaken from a philosophical and sinological perspective in the international project I organise. (See the *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae* at [tfs.uni-hd.de](http://tls.uni-hd.de)) This works towards a globalised Chinese *pendant* to the remarkably ambitious *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française*, by Alain Rey (4 vols. Paris: Robert, 2006). There is nothing like Alain Rey's *Dictionnaire* in any other language, as far as I know. It is all very French. Like Barbara Cassin's comprehensive conceptual dictionary most well-known by its splendidly oxymoronic subtitle: *Dictionnaire des Intraduisibles* "Dictionary of Untranslatables" (Paris: Robert, 2000). *Vive la différence! Vive les nuances historiques – intraduisibles!*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I note with pleasure that the discipline of philosophical conceptual folklore was powerfully advocated in the 1950ies by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss. See his *Interpretation and Preciseness. A Contribution to the Theory of Communication. Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. His.-Filos. Klasse 1953. No 1. Oslo: I kommisjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1953.*

<sup>8</sup> Here is the miserable best I can do for an English translation: "Long live the difference! Long live the historical nuances in the various languages of the world – untranslatable as they must often remain!"