Intellectual Communication East and West: A Historical and Rhetorical Approach

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Abstract

The encounter between the East and the West has increasingly been an important subject of study, but the intellectual aspect of this interaction has not yet received serious attention within the discipline of intercultural communication. A study of this aspect requires a historical and rhetorical approach, which has rarely been attempted in the discipline. Based on some observations of the Chinese intellectual transactions with the West, this essay argues that East-West communication scholars who largely focus on the present day face to face practice of communication cannot afford to ignore the intellectual interaction between the East and the West due to their subtle connections. Also discussed are points of view essential to an in-depth historical and rhetorical study of East-West intellectual communication.

Introduction

The encounter between the East and the West has increasingly been an important subject of study for intercultural communication scholars. However, the intellectual dimension of this interaction has yet to be a matter of serious concern. A survey of the past twenty-six volumes of *Communication Abstracts* (1978-2003) reveals that many scholars have approached East-West communication from a mass media standpoint, with emphasis on issues such as the effects of Western international broadcasting, the new world information order, the use of new technologies for the instantaneous worldwide transmission of information, the international telecommunication marketplace, and so forth. There have been many others who focused on the interpersonal dimensions of East-West communication and examined how people from both sides of the world interact face to face. However, few scholars have engaged in studying how fundamental concepts are introduced from the West to the East (such as “equality,” “science,” “struggle,” “revolution”) or from the East to the West (such as “harmony,” “virtue,” “humanity,” “nature”), which is an approach that looks at East-West communication more from a historical and rhetorical point of view.

Important cases of this kind of East-West communication, such as the French introduction of Confucianism in the Enlightenment and the late nineteenth-century Chinese championing of egalitarianism, are major historical and rhetorical events. Foreign ideas are introduced through translated works, public addresses, journal articles, and other forms of rhetorical discourse.

Scholars who study these cases deal mainly with historical and rhetorical texts rather than with people. They must examine these texts to discover how the authors effectively argued the introduced ideas that were supposed to sound foreign to the native audience. They need also study the conditions that made possible meaningful transactions between such arguments and the native audience.

The interaction between foreign ideas and native audiences should constitute one of the most profound chapters in East-West communication. It demands the participation of a large audience, and involves a tense dialogue between two conflicting cultural forms of discourse, rather than between two individuals. The effect of such an interaction must be great. The modern history of East-West communication has shown that the farthest-reaching influence from the West or the East has not come from its technology or goods, but from its thought. Regrettably, this form of communication has been overlooked by mainstream intercultural communication scholars.

In what follows I will further conceptualize this important but ignored aspect of East-West communication in three ways. First, I will specify the two general forms of East-West intellectual communication, with an emphasis on the one initiated by the native introducer of foreign ideas. Secondly, I will address the relationship between the East-West intellectual communication and the face to face mode of intercultural conversation. Thirdly, I will try to put my reader in a historical and rhetorical perspective to view how East-West intellectual communication can have great impact on the development of East-West relationship. Finally, I will discuss some important points of view, which I believe are helpful for one to conduct a historical and rhetorical study of this significant aspect of East-West communication.

East-West Intellectual Communication and its General Practices

First of all, I want to clarify here that the emphasis on the East-West intellectual communication in this essay does not intend to downplay the growing importance of South-North communication that takes place in both the East and the West. However, due to the differences in historical, social, and cultural developments that, by and large, have separated the East from the West, East-West communication has become an extremely important and influential trend of cross-cultural communication, especially in the modern period. Ever since the time of the overseas expansion of the Europe, the “East” has remained a place of mystery and attraction to Westerners, while in the East there are no things that have so dramatically changed the native people’s customary ways of life than the so-called “Western challenges.”

The East-West intellectual communication that is of concern here has been practiced in two general ways. The first practice has been undertaken by those who try to introduce, in a systematic fashion, a fundamental concept or a school of thought, or a system of learning of their own culture to the other side of the world. The imposed Western education in many Eastern colonies like India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong used to be a typical example of this way of communication. This kind of practice now often takes the form of mutual exchange, such as participating in a scholarly exchange program, giving lectures at a foreign institute, attending an international conference, submitting a paper to a foreign journal, and so on. The other way of practicing East-West intellectual communication takes the opposite direction. It is initiated by the native speaker who tries to introduce important concepts and thoughts from the other side of the world to his or her own culture, as in the case of the past century’s native campaigns for Western learning in many developing Eastern nations.

The second method of East-West intellectual communication appears unusual as a

practice of cross-cultural communication, especially as its communicator is a native. However, it has become a more dominant and influential method of communication in the past century. Many great thinkers in the West such as Marx and Darwin did not pay much attention to the unfamiliar East, nor did they intend to speak to it, but today there are still many in the East who try to follow their teachings. The Chinese sages such as Confucius and Laozi never went to the barbarian West, but there they have their faithful audience. These interactions become possible because we have this second channel of East-West intellectual communication.

Even Western scholars who come all the way to an Eastern society to give lectures, still have to rely upon the second method of communication. They need a translator, unless they can speak a native language. They might also need their native introducer, spokesperson, popularizer, or so forth, should they wish to be heard outside the lecture room. At the very least, they need an invitation to come in the first place. With its complete withdrawal from the East as a colonizing force, the West is no longer able to determine when and how to export its ideas and thoughts to the East.

Despite this, Western concepts and thought are still in greater demand than Eastern concepts and thought in the market of intellectual "information." The intellectual exchange between the East and the West has never been equal. The flux of ideas from the powerful West to the less powerful East has for centuries remained a mainstream of East-West intellectual communication. While in today's Eastern nations, the West no longer acts according to its own will as a free speaker, the ideas from the democratic and highly developed industrial West are still very welcome. The study of East-West intellectual communication should take special note of the second method of practice, i.e., that method initiated by native communicators.

The Intellectual Communication and the Face to Face Communication

The question now is how a study of this kind of communication can contribute to the understanding of contemporary East-West communication. In other words, can East-West communication scholars who focus on the present day face to face mode of communication afford to ignore the intellectual interaction between the East and the West? We now need to view the significance of East-West intellectual communication in relation to the face to face mode of communication.

A Crucial and Advanced Stage of East-West Communication

The intellectual transaction between the East and the West is usually the most advanced and profound form of East-West communication. For a non-Western developing nation amidst modern Western challenges, the interest in the material aspects of the Western civilizations such as goods, technologies, industries, and institutions, often precedes the interest in Western ideas and thought, although Western scholars might come in at the same time with Western troops, merchants, and technicians. China, for example, felt an urgent need to learn from the "barbarian West" soon after its disgraceful defeat in the Second Opium War of 1857-1860. Yet for thirty years Western learning meant to the Chinese, first of all, the study of military techniques and the natural sciences. Only in the 1890s, especially when those techniques and sciences proved incapable of saving China in the fateful Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, did the Chinese begin to view Western thought as a real source of wealth and power. Only then did interaction with Western ideas become a nation-wide movement in China.

Furthermore, the interaction with the intellectual sources of socioeconomic, political, ethical, and religious practices on the other side of the world is a deeper stage of East-West transaction. This stage grants us access to the rational structures and justifications of another

cultural way of life. It is in this stage that we come to deal directly with the *minds* of people on the other side of the world.

Usually, we begin to have a great appreciation of another culture when we come to read its rich and deep thoughts. A simple practice of face to face communication does not provide such an opportunity. A foreign visitor might simply pay attention to whatever appears strange and interesting. The daily practice of trading might even lead a foreign trader to think of the local people as dishonest.

Effects on the Face to Face Mode of East-West Communication

The relationship between an intellectual interaction mode and a face to face mode of East-West communication can also be examined from an interactive perspective. On the one hand, the latter does influence the former. People have to seek answers from the intellectual traditions of another culture when their routine interaction with that culture becomes very difficult to understand. That is why intellectual transactions between two cultures usually occur in connection with the popular and important activities that are going on between those two cultures. Europe, for instance, first came to have regular contact with the Far East in China not for technological or economic advantages, but for the purpose of religion. The first Christian missionaries (the Jesuits) came to China at the end of sixteenth century. To facilitate communication with the Chinese on a daily basis, they felt obligated to learn the Chinese Classics and to convince their Chinese audience that the law of Christianity actually did not run contrary to the principles of Confucianism (Gernet, 1985, pp. 15-30). Thus occurred the first intellectual dialogue between two great civilizations.

East-West intellectual communication, on the other hand, can impact upon the face to face practice of East-West communication in a more subtle way. It is always helpful for one culture to learn another culture's intellectual traditions to establish a normal, everyday tie with that culture. One's competence in dealing with another culture's intellectual traditions is often seen as a prerequisite of success in gaining acceptance in the practical world of that culture. This is especially true in many Eastern cultures that have valued an individual's spiritual and academic achievements. The first Jesuit missionaries—the Italians Ruggieri and Ricci—came to learn, soon after their arrival in China, that if one wished to be well received in Chinese society one had to present oneself "as a moralist, philosopher and scholar" (Gernet, 1985, p. 16). Ricci, therefore, grew a beard and long hair, and wore the black silk robes of the Chinese literate elite. Moreover, as Ricci himself reported in 1596, "we shall, in these early days, open neither church nor temple, simply a preaching house, as do their own most famous preachers" (cited in Gernet, 1985, p. 17). This prudent policy, as well as others of the same kind, though later being considered to have made "too many concessions," accounted for much of the early Jesuit missionaries' success in China (p. 21).

What is most important to know is that a good, productive exchange of ideas provides a rationale and justification for face to face, day to day communication. The early dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism was, indeed, necessary and consequential. Without establishing faith in the possibility of communication between the two great systems of teaching, the Jesuit mission of evangelical preaching in pagan China would have seemed pointless. China, on the other hand, would have had no reason for accepting such a heretical preaching.

However, intellectual dialogue is not always productive. After Ricci's death in 1610, with the Vatican's intervention the Jesuits came to perceive Confucianism and Christianity as so fundamentally different that they were confronted with a choice between the Sovereign on High

(*Shangdi*) of the Chinese Classics and the God of the Bible, between the Confucian virtue of humanity (*ren*) and Christian charity, and between ancestor cults and church rituals. The Jesuits seemed to have failed to work out a constructive way to solve these conflicts. The channel to the majority of Confucians was virtually closed when the Vatican later condemned Chinese faiths and rituals as superstitions (Gernet, 1985, pp. 31-32, 181-192). Whether such decisions were appropriate for the task of evangelical preaching in Confucian China should be left to theologians and scholars of religious communication to decide. Here, what is more important is the significance of intellectual transition between the East and the West. Indeed, without a meaningful and productive communication between two cultural systems of teaching that may have developed independently from each other, it would be unlikely that anyone could bring the two groups of people into a meaningful interaction.

An intercultural communication scholar can go on to study another culture's intellectual traditions, and then offer advice on how to understand the people of that culture—this is actually what many contemporary intercultural communication scholars have been doing. Yet such study alone is not sufficient. Intercultural communication scholars may need to know how the intellectual forerunners of their own culture interacted with the other culture, as those approaches might have influenced later attitudes toward the people of the second culture. If there is at least some sense to be made by Said's concept of Orientalism (1979), then when a Westerner communicates with an Easterner, he or she might think that they are merely interacting with the type of Oriental that the so-called Orientalists in the past so distinctly defined with bias.

East-West Dichotomous Thinking

It is significant to know from a historical and rhetorical perspective that the past practices of East-West intellectual communication have contributed to producing a number of useful cultural dichotomies, such as East versus West, collectivism versus individualism, and femininity versus masculinity, which are having profound impact, in one way or another, on the current practices of East-West communication at all levels. As a matter of fact, many of the influential East-West cultural dichotomies in intercultural communication studies took form at the time when the modern Western intellectual traditions first came to a serious confrontation with the Chinese. As early as in the Chinese New Culture Movement (1915-1925), the leaders of the Movement already had a heated debate with the cultural conservatives over the fundamental distinction between the East and the West. The debate gave birth to a variety of reductive views of East-West difference, such as "the peace-oriented versus the war-oriented," "the family-oriented versus the individual-oriented," "the emotion-oriented versus the law-oriented," and "the lethargic versus the dynamic," (e.g., Chen, 1915; Du, 1916). Li Dazhao (1918/1984), an important figure of the New Culture Movement, provided the most comprehensive summary of these dichotomous views. For him, Chinese culture represented "the way of the south", while Western cultures "the way of the north":

> One is natural, the other is artificial; one is restful, the other motivated by the spirit of struggle; one is passive, the other active; one is dependent, the other independent; one is seeking momentary ease, the other seeking radical change; one is conformist, the other creative; one is conservative, the other progressive; one is intuitive, the other rational; one is abstract, the other concrete; one is artistic, the other scientific; one is spiritual, the other materialistic; one attaches importance to the soul, the other values the pleasures of the flesh; one is metaphysical, the other is practical; one

emphasizes the dominance of nature over man, the other emphasizes man's conquest of nature.

Of these conceived East-West dichotomies the most fundamental and resounding was probably that of collectivism versus individualism. As Liu He (1995, pp. 77-99) observes, the New Culturalists have effectively exploited the rhetoric of Chinese collectivism versus Western individualism to champion the Western Enlightenment notion of the individual, and to argue that individualism was "the single most effective medicine to cure China's illness"(p. 90). Consequently, the modern European concepts of individual dignity, independence, freedom, and emancipation, as discussed by men like Rousseau, Kierkegaard, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Ibsen, have been selectively brought into the Chinese reformist discourse (e.g., Du, 1914; 1917; Min, 1916; Jia, 1916, Hu, 1918).

Meanwhile, the cultural reformists had to let individualism to take much of the blame for their projected problems of the West. One of the staunchest Western-minded reformists, Hu Shi (1925), found no excuse but to admit: "since the nineteen century, the malady of the individualist tendency has gradually become visible. One has increasingly felt the pain of living in a capitalist society. Men of profound insight realize that the economic system of free competition could not achieve the goal of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity.' To ask a capitalist for fair treatment is like asking a tiger for its skin." The following Chinese communists soon made these perceived corrupt practices of individualism the bases of their anti-Western attitude. They continued to make use of the Chinese collectivism versus Western individualism dichotomy, but turned it against the individualistic and capitalist West, for they believed that its current system could not really lead to realize the ideals of people's dignity, independence, freedom, and emancipation (e.g., Chen, 1920; Li, 1920/1984; 1921/1984; Wang, 1921; Deng, 1922).

In Mao Zedong's era, the Chinese communist literature on the West was imbued with suspicion and hostility toward Western imperialism and colonialism (e.g., Mao, 1936; 1949/1969; 1958, 1961; 1964). For the Chinese communists, imperialist expansion and colonialist plunder simply expressed how far Western individualism and capitalism could go to extend itself politically, economically and culturally. It is largely with this essential suspicion and hostility toward Western individualism and capitalism that the Chinese government, for about thirty years after the communists took over China in 1949, discouraged any regular form of interpersonal contact with the West.

In Deng Xiaoping's era of reform, beginning in 1978, a group of open-minded Marxist theorists came to re-locate the present state of China's socialism (E.g., Shu & Feng, 1979; He, 1980; Song, 1982; Yu, 1987; Zhang, 1988). After drawing it back to what they called "the initial stage of socialism" that allowed certain practice of private ownership, China was able to re-open itself governmentally and individually to the West. Personal interactions with the West then became possible. From the 1980s onward, the Chinese gushed into the United States, Canada, Europe, and other Western countries for visit, study, or business, they then could have a close look at the West with their own eyes. But interestingly, Western individualism remains a recurrent theme of their talks about the Western impression (e.g., Wang, 1982; Jiang, 1983; Lin, 1997). Some Chinese scholars recently find their way back to the New Cultural Movement, and call to re-appreciate the modern Western concept of the dignified individual (e.g., Li, 1987, 7-49; Gan, 1990; Liu, 2002).

It thus can be seen that such a cultural dichotomy as Chinese collectivism versus Western individualism emerged strategically under a certain historical and rhetorical circumstance to

help to justify a given reform or a rationalistic movement. It was actually product of a certain historical and rhetorical process. Scholars in favor of such a dichotomous view, however, are often hoodwinked by this strategic act. In support of their dichotomous view, they usually cite from a cultural discourse, for instance, a Chinese collectivistic discourse or a Western individualistic discourse, without reference to its specific historical and rhetorical context (e.g., Triandis, 1988; Klopf & Park, 1982; Hofstede, 1980; Stewart, 1972). What is originally a historical and rhetorical labeling then is seen as a given cultural value.

Given its historical and rhetorical origin, the two seemingly opposite sides of the Chinese collectivism and Western individualism dichotomy actually are not mutually exclusive, because the former has absorbed certain aspects of the latter, as in the case of the Chinese New Cultural Movement. It is true that the Chinese communists have been trying to enforce the practice of collectivism, they have done it in a broader context of nationalistic movement.

There has long been a tendency to criticize a East-West culture dichotomy as too simplistic (e.g., Nakamura, 1964, p. 3-4; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Servaes, 2004). This criticism from the perspective of cultural diversity is, too, often out of context. As I have shown, an East-West dichotomy, however simplistic, can function as an effective way of dealing with the relationship between East and West. It has operated and will probably continue to operate to shape the Chinese relationships with the West at both governmental and personal levels. On the other hand, insofar as the dichotomy is seen as a cultural and strategic approach to an East-West relationship, we should not expect that it express the fundamental difference between East and West.

In any case, a discussion of cultural dichotomy or diversity would be beyond context if we did not ask how a certain aspect of one culture's intellectual tradition has effectively been introduced, in a given historical situation, to the discourse of another culture. It is this introduction that gives rise to cultural diversity. We thus should see the diversity of one culture as something that is historically developed out of this culture's strategic interactions with other cultures. It is not something inhering in this culture.

Some Observations about East-West Intellectual Communication

A historical and rhetorical approach to intellectual communication between East and West is therefore worthy of our serious attention. We should know that cross-cultural intellectual communication is much more sophisticated than the one with which we have been mostly dealing. To have an important concept from one culture across international, linguistic, and conceptual boundaries and blossom in the minds of many, one has to deal with much more than simply talking to foreigners face to face.

This essay does not attempt to formulate a theoretical framework for such a study. Yet the author believes that a thoughtful study of the intellectual aspect of East-West communication must consider certain points of view that may not be so important for the everyday process of cross-cultural communication.

First, intellectual interaction between the East and the West is usually initiated by the "taker" or "host culture" rather than by the "giver" or "guest culture." It is true that in places where the Portuguese, Dutch, Spaniards, and British imposed themselves through conquest from the sixteenth to nineteenth century, intellectual interaction could be undertaken in a more authoritarian manner. Unfortunately, this political and arbitrary imposition of Western concepts and thought took place almost everywhere in the colonial East. However, the time for this kind of intellectual communication has gone.

What is more worthy of our discussion here is the kind of communication that occurs in a

relatively free and democratic intercultural setting. China provides an appropriate example. By every account, from the welcome reception of Buddhism in the first millennium through the partial and temporary acceptance of Christianity in the second millennium, and to the active search for Western concepts and thought during the past two centuries, China has been playing the part of a critical, selective "taker," rather than the part of a passive, uncritical "receiver."

The current trends of international intellectual communication are certainly in favor of the role of the "taker", and not the role of the "giver." Yet this is not to say that we are no longer able to initiate an offer to another culture. We, of course, can still try to propose an intellectual dialogue with the people of another culture whenever we want. However, a meaningful interaction occurs only when the "host culture" decides to respond intellectually. Then it become necessary for the "guest speaker" to be aware of what the "host culture" needs before he or she decides to speak.

Second, while some individual "takers" may approach foreign thoughts with a purely scholarly interest, a cultural movement toward foreign learning is necessarily motivated by social needs. The French acceptance of Confucianism in the Enlightenment, for instance, was not a purely intellectual choice. It was a fundamentally moral choice. Confucian classics were first introduced to the West as stimulating works of moral and political philosophies in the mid seventeenth century when the Jesuit missionaries placed their Latin translations on the European market (Reichwein, 1925, p. 20). Yet it was not until the eighteenth century that the men of the Enlightenment came to discover in these classics a new and exciting "continent" of scholarship. Men like Voltaire, Diderot, Helvetius, and Poivre tried to go beyond the narrow confines of traditional religion, and to build a new ethics on the basis of "virtue." They came to realize that more than two thousand years ago in China, "Confucius had thought the same thoughts in the same manner, and fought the same battles" (Reichwein, 1925, p. 77). This old man of the East was then seen as "the patron saint of eighteenth-century Enlightenment," and became a center of interest in Europe (p. 77). Another great man in Chinese history, Laozi, could have been treated with equally great reverence, but as his profound nihilism seemed to run counter to the spirit of the Enlightenment, his works became popular in the West only in later times.

Third, rhetoric and argumentation is culturally bound. Regretfully, the West has tended to see its logic as inevitable and universal. In her examination of a body of rhetorical discourses in Asian traditions, Mary Garrett (1991, p. 295) finds: "Many of these materials differ in substantial and provocative ways from the Western tradition: they assume a different audience psychology, value different modes of reasoning, recommend different strategies of persuasion, are grounded in a different cosmology, and espouse different goals and standards for the rhetoric." This means that should a cross-cultural communicator successfully make a Western (or Eastern) idea sound reasonable to an Eastern audience (or a Western audience), it is probably not because of his or her adherence to the argument through which the idea was originally developed, but rather due to his or her adaptation of the reasoning in a manner that is acceptable to the recipient culture.

Hence, as I state in another essay (Xiao 1996), "although great modern spokespersons of political reform in the West effectively defended the ideas of liberty and democracy by elaborating the mercifulness of God, stretching the principle of natural right of the individual, and appealing to the ethos of science, we cannot expect that the same rhetorical vehicles could lead the Eastern people to perceive these modern ideas as enlightened." Consequently, the great Chinese champions of the Western idea of equality, such as Tan Sitong at the close of nineteenth century, had to exploit the humanistic and organic ethos of Confucian tradition in defense of

that idea of equality as the true embodiment of the Confucian ideal of humanity (Xiao 1996).

Fourth, local mediators such as translators, spokespersons, introducers, popularizers, and the like play important and often the major roles in the East-West communication of ideas, especially in the process of introducing Western concepts and thought to the East. We see an irony in the past century's intellectual communications between the East and the West: i.e., when an Eastern scholar comes to the West to talk about his or her intellectual idea, for instance to give a lecture, he or she usually has to speak a Western language, most often English. Yet when a Western scholar goes to an Eastern, non-English-speaking country, he or she will probably use a Western language. The Western dominance in language has reflected the Western dominance in scholarship. Yet ironically, it has also indicated the importance of the Eastern taker. The West has paid a substantial price for maintaining its superiority in language: it loses direct contact with non-English-speaking Eastern audiences.

Yet even an Eastern scholar who knows how to speak English might not necessarily be an effective speaker in an East-West intellectual communication. An effective communicator in a cross-cultural intellectual transaction knows how to address intellectual matters properly and persuasively with the people of another culture. One cannot possibly do so if one has failed to master the intellectual and scholarly traditions of that culture. Scholarship is always a prestigious territory of well-trained intellectuals who know how to address what they see as the most significant and profound issues in their cultural context. Usually, one must immerse oneself in the study of a great number of well-established scholarly works for years before one can possibly enter the territory of scholarship gracefully–this is what many Eastern students and scholars coming to study in the West have been trying to do to gain access to the Western and the international world of scholarship. Due to great differences in languages and in religious, ethical, political, and economic conditioning between the East and the West, many Eastern cultures have developed their traditions of scholarship in a very different way from those of the West. It thus would be hard even for a cross-cultural communicator to grasp both a Western and an Eastern tradition of scholarship. While in the East one may still be able to find a number of such competent communicators, there are not many in the Western scholarly world, apart from those scholars of Eastern studies, who can impress an Eastern, non-English-speaking audience not only with their skillful use of its language but also with their thorough knowledge of its scholarly traditions. Matteo Ricci should be seen as one of the few exceptions, but before Ricci gained acceptance in the literate circles in China, he spent more than ten years in China learning the spoken and written Chinese language, and studying the Confucian Four Books and other Chinese Classics.

Therefore, in the course of introducing Western concepts and thoughts to the East, a Western communicator, would have to rely heavily on native mediators for communication with the native audience. In many circumstances, we have even seen the absence of Western communicators. The native translator, spokesperson, introducer, or popularizer becomes the active "taker." They come to take from the Western traditions of thought what can best fit the situations of their nation. From this perspective, the native mediators or takers are the real speakers to the native audience, though they may think of themselves as merely speaking for a Western school of thought.

Finally, intellectual communication between the East and the West must be a complex, indirect, and creative process. As the above discussions have revealed, the communication is usually initiated, completely or partially, by the taker. The taking always occurs as response to the taker's cultural, social, and rhetorical situations. Furthermore, the taker has to adapt it to his or her cultural system of values and to his or her cultural modes of reasoning for the purpose of

meaningful communication. The communication, then, must be seen as a process of recreation. The idea recreated must differ to some degree from the original, especially when it is recreated by a native speaker (a translator, a spokesperson, an introducer, or a popularizer).

Yen Fu, the Chinese introducer of Darwinism in China, is a telling example. His quite successful translation of Thomas Huxley's lecture 'Evolution and ethics' (1894) was the first Chinese version of a Darwinian work. Its publication resulted in the rapid, widespread popularization of a Chinese version of Darwinism in China at the turn of the last century. Yet a close reading of the translation shows that it is a rhetorical recreation rather than a literal translation (see Xiao, 1995). The translator did introduce a key Darwinian idea that living species evolve because of their struggle for existence. Yet at the same time, he also added to it a great deal of his own opinions. In fact, he was trying to use the Darwinism to awaken his people to their dangerous situation after the humiliating Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, and to promote fundamental reform and national struggle for existence. In this sense, China at the time was not responding to Huxley directly, but to Yan Fu's rhetorical recreation of Huxley.

The case of Yan Fu suggests that notions of the "reception" and "assimilation" of foreign ideas can be very misleading as far as they assume that the native taker simply takes and transmits the foreign ideas unchanged. Thus, when we talk about intellectual communication between cultures from the taker's perspective, we are not talking about communication between cultures, as the idea is no longer foreign. But on the other hand, we can talk about intellectual communication between cultures, insofar as this rhetorical recreation is not a simple reprint of an old cultural form of the idea.

This essay does not intend to discourage those who will contribute to introducing their culture's intellectual traditions to other parts of the world. Yet they need to be aware of the complexity of intellectual communication between cultures, and should prepare themselves for all that might happen in the process.

After all, the view of the communication as a recreation can help to explain why the vigorous modern campaigns for Western concepts and thought in Egypt, India, China, and many other Eastern countries did not lead these countries to a complete state of Westernization even as they underwent modernization.

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