

Detour and Access, Deleuze and Guattari's Researches on Chinese Immanent Becoming¹

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This paper mainly discusses Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's researches on Chinese immanent becoming, they explain the theory of rhizome, the theory of becoming and the immanent philosophy from the relation between the grass and China, the line and Chinese Poetry Painting, the figure and Chinese thought, and display the others' visual angle from which they enter into Western philosophy by China. Meanwhile, by the intermediary of French sinologist François Jullien, Deleuze and Guattari encounter the immanent transcendence of modern neo-confucianism on the plane of immanence. This shows the interleaving operation between Chinese thought and western philosophy, and presents the movements of the thoughts which become each other and fuse each other between Chinese thought and western philosophy.

Keywords: Deleuze, Guattari, rhizome, becoming, immanence

Since the Enlightenment, the European intellectual circles have been filled with an exotic imagination of China and the whole world of the far East. Hegel, on the basis of the characteristics of Greek philosophy, puts forward the view that China has no philosophy. In 2001 Derrida's trip to China claimed that "there is no philosophy in China, only thought", which is only a distant echo of Hegel's view. Both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty try to find similarities and differences between Chinese thought and western philosophy. Merleau-Ponty inherits Husserl's idea and agrees that Chinese (and Indian) culture is the sample of empiricism and anthropology as opposite to the European rationalism which was born in Greece and revived in Renaissance. Merleau-Ponty read Feng Youlan's *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* and he thought that China had produced extensive thoughtful literature, but he did not point out how to re-open those documents.

Following Merleau-Ponty's path of thought, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari regarded Chinese thought as the "dehors" and "ailleurs" of the western philosophical thought in those works like *Anti-Oedipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus*, and *What is Philosophy?* Based on the Chinese thought and the study of Chinese art by a French Sinologist François Cheng and François Jullien, they further explained the concepts of one and multiplicity, immanence and transcendence, the virtual and the real, and revealed the interleaving between Chinese thought and western philosophy. François Jullien constantly responds to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical thought in *What is Philosophy?* and hopes that he can put Chinese thought and Western

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philosophy in one "chantier" (according to Michel Foucault), so that Chinese thought and western philosophy can be juxtaposed and interlaced together, making Chinese as a "detour" place for his "return" to Greek philosophy.

China and the West: The Grass and the Tree

Based on the western tradition, Deleuze and Guattari tend to regard Chinese thought as "the other" to access western philosophy, which is the distant and heterogeneous "ailleurs". It provides an important reference for them to think about western philosophy. Since Parmenides, western philosophy has been exploring the problem of Being (Etre) and Becoming (Devenir). Therefore, it established the priority and dominant privilege of Being to Becoming, and became the mainstream of western philosophy. Platonism is a typical representative of this philosophical tradition. The theory of Form provides a solid foundation for this important issue and deepens the understanding of Being of the noumenon and Becoming of the phenomenon. Being is essential and fundamental. While, Becoming is fluid and secondary which is subordinate to Being. The uppercase, absolute, transcendental Form is the highest Being of the knowable world, but all things belong to the changeable visual world. Deleuze and Guattari have always been engaged in the great cause of "reversing Platonism". They try to reverse the binary model which was constructed by Platonism and subvert the priority and dominant privilege of Being to Becoming. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they use the metaphor of the tree and the grass to explain the tree-shaped, transcendent West and the rhizomatic and immanent East, and use the grass to be a metaphor for China, showing a heterogeneous, multiple and endless rhizome world.

In his dialogue with Claire Parnet, Deleuze probed into the question of the tree and the grass. Claire Parnet thought that Deleuze and Guattari use the rhizome to oppose the tree and make the rhizomatic writing in the two. The tree is the image, function and whole assemblage of thought, which embodies a central, hierarchical, structural, temporal and powerful mode of thought, while the escape line, the generation and the memoryless time have created a multiplicity of the rhizome or the bad grass. Deleuze discussed the superiority of Anglo-American literature, as represented by British writer Virginia Wolfe and American writer Henry Miller. He regarded French literature and Anglo-American literature as the opposite of the tree and the grass. "The French think in terms of trees too much: the tree of knowledge, points of arborescence, the alpha and omega, the roots and the pinnacle. Trees are the opposite of grass. Not only does grass grow in the middle of things, but it grows itself through the middle. This is the English or American problem. Grass has its line of flight, and does not take root. We have grass in the head, not a tree: what thought signifies is what the brain is, a 'particular nervous system' of grass."² The tree and the grass reflect two different logic and mean two different ways of thought, French literature reflects the "tree" way of thought, but Deleuze criticized this way of thought, he explored an intermediate "grass" way of thought from American literature, drove out the implied, uppercase and transcendent "être" of the "tree" way of thought. "The tree imposes the verb 'to be', but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and...and...and....' This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be'. Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? ...American literature, and already English literature, manifest this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent; they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations,

² Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p. 39.

nullify endings and beginnings.”³ According to Deleuze and Guattari, the tree is the image of the West, which dominates the thought and reality of the West; the grass is the image of China, which deduces the wisdom and reality of China. The western world, which based on the tree model, has a special relationship with forests, deforestation and animal husbandry. Deforestation, cultivation of land, and livestock are all carried out according to the tree model. At the same time, the western world has also built some disciplines based on the tree model. From biology to linguistics, from epistemology to ontology, binary logic and correspondent relationship is gradually rooted in the depths of western thought and constructed a leafy, “tree-root” centered, and transcendent tree model. Binary logic is the spiritual reality of “tree-root” and the working mode of western thought. Deleuze and Guattari tired of this tree, trying to find a de-centered, non-hierarchical, non-stratified rhizome world. “ We’re tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much. All of arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to linguistics. Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes.”⁴ In Deleuze and Guattari’s writings, the eastern world presents a multiple different landscape: the East is connected with prairie and garden. The rhizomatic cultivation is carried out by the fragmentation of the individual, forming an immanent pattern that is opposite to the tree pattern. The China described by Henry Miller and the western America written by Whitman reflect this way of thought. There is a distinctive contrast of the transcendence and immanence between the East and the West: transcendence is a “peculiar disease of Europe” and a research on fondement-racine, immanence is the characteristic of oriental thought, it is the exploration of rhizome “a rhizomatic and immanent east”. Deleuze and Guattari cite the passage of American novelist Henry Miller, *Hamlet*, to present the rhizomatic image of “China”. “ China is the weed in the human cabbage patch. ... The weed is the Nemesis of human endeavor.... Of all the imaginary existences we attribute to plant, beast and star the weed leads the most satisfactory life of all. True, the weed produces no lilies, no battleships, no Sermons on the Mount.... Eventually the weed gets the upper hand. Eventually things fall back into a state of China. This condition is usually referred to by historians as the Dark Age. Grass is the only way out.... The weed exists only to fill the waste spaces left by cultivated areas. It grows between, among other things. The lily is beautiful, the cabbage is provender, the poppy is maddening—but the weed is rank growth ...: it points a moral.”⁵ In this dubious passage, we don’t know what kind of China does Henry Miller depict, ancient China, contemporary China, or imaginary China. Even Deleuze and Guattari have questioned it. Nevertheless, “or else Miller’s grass-becoming, what he calls his China-becoming”.⁶ They cite this passage as evidence of their thought about the West and the East, imagining China as a country of rhizome, full of the wisest lives, which makes a distinctive contrast with the western transcendent world.

In Deleuze and Guattari’s view, weed is one of the rhizomes, and is one of the best species to change the soil of western thought. As one of the rhizomes, the weed has some basic characteristics of rhizomes: (1) Unlike tree or root, rhizome is a non-central, non-graded and non-signifier system, consisting of crisscross lines, thus formed a n-dimensional and linear diversity which deconstructed the subordinate relationship between one

³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 25.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p.15.

⁵ Henry Miller, *Hamlet*, New York: Carrefour, 1939, pp. 105-106.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p. 50.

and multiplicity in western thought. (2) Rhizome can not be reduced to one or multiplicity. It is not one which can generate two or directly generate three, four or five. It is not the multiplicity derived from one, nor the one is added to one (n-1). (3) There is no beginning or ending of rhizome, but it has always been in the middle of its growth and spread, just like weed which grow among other things. The weed, which grows wildly and bears no restriction on artificial cultivation, breaks down the central, hierarchical farming methods and fully reflects the basic characteristics of rhizome. The weed is heterogeneous, sprawling, growing aimlessly, wandering around, connecting and communicating with each other, which embodies a variety of forms and reflects the "sense of communication" thought of the symbiosis of all things in China. Even though Deleuze and Guattari questioned Henry Miller's image of China, they still chose the weed as the image of China, because the weed reflects the main features of the rhizome and contrast with the tree representing the West imagination, it becomes one of the important strategies of introspecting the west from the outside. What Deleuze and Guattari are most interested in is the rapid breeding ability of grass. The ability of grass to grow in the middle, among things, "between" shows a way of communication between things which is exactly what they're trying to figure out. It is also consistent with the idea of writing in Deleuze and Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus*, that is, writing is a direct connection to the outside. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish two opposing books: as 'an assemblage with the outside', one is called "rhizome-book", as an image of the world, the other one is called "image-book". The "image-book" is Deleuze and Guattari's "root-book". it is the image of "world-tree" or the tree or root which is an image. It is a classic book which remains the noble, organic, signifying, subjective, and recurrent internality. It mimics the world in its own way, constantly showing the rule that one divides into two, two divides into four, and obeying the binary logic and one-to-one correspondence rule. While, the "rhizome-book", which no longer obeys the logic of dualistic differentiation, is a system of lateral root or fibrous root. This kind of book shows a vigorous growth trend and obeys n-1 rather than one. It forms a diverse, heterogeneous, rhizomatic assemblage which is also de-territorialization and re-territorialization.

In brief, the tree and the grass correspond to the two ideas — exploring the root-based, transcendental West and the rhizomatic, immanent East, becoming the basic frame of the rhizome theory which was constructed by Deleuze and Guattari and Chinese thought. Their purpose is not to impel the two models to oppose each other, but to explore an immanent becoming process.

China and the West: Line and Imitation

In Deleuze and Guattari's researches, the theory of becoming is one of the most important theories to reverse the great cause of Platonism and the most valuable exploration to deconstruct the traditional western philosophy internally. They finally set Becoming free from Being and form an ever-changing rhizomatic world. In the theory of rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari show that the rhizome appears all kinds of becoming among different elements and furtherly explain the theory of becoming from the intrinsic compared perspective of China and the West's theory of art, especially they find a kind of immanent becoming theory from the traditional artists of China. They point out that Chinese poets and painters are "not imitative or structural, but cosmic"⁷, thus they discuss the problem about the theory of becoming-imperceptible. This conclusion is profound and targetable: firstly, 'not imitative' aims at the theory of imitation pointing at the past when the theory of imitation is the dominant theory in the area of literature and art from ancient Greece; secondly,

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 280.

pointing to nowadays, 'not structural' aims at structuralism which prevailing in France in 1960s to 1970s and affecting multiple disciplines; Thirdly, the "cosmic" is about the theory of becoming, pointing to the future, which is dissatisfied with the principle of resemblance of imitation theory and the principle of binary opposition of structuralism, tries to explore a kind of immanent becoming and multiple coherent plane. And the world which Chinese poets and painters explore, which provides the best evidence for Deleuze and Guattari's becoming theory becomes one of the important resources of their theoretical construction.

Putting the theory of imitation and structuralism opposite the theory of becoming, Deleuze and Guattari usually discuss the theory of imitation and structuralism together and criticize the theory of imitation and structuralism the latent illusions of the traditional western philosophy. There is no doubt that structuralism is an important revolution in theoretical paradigm which learns the world and masters the world in a more rational way. Instead of escaping from the set pattern of the traditional western philosophy, structuralism is still immersed in the illusion of analogy, antagonism, and identity, still subjects to the same pattern, without providing effective explanation to the becoming problems. Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly declare that the theory of becoming is not parody, analogy, or identity, in order to distinguish it from structuralism. "Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, 'appearing', 'being', 'equaling', or 'producing'."⁸ Becoming is a flowing, dynamic, and interchangeable process containing immanent potential. Broadly defined, the theory of becoming is understood as the criticism of the theory of Being, because Being is static and fixed, as well as contains transcendental prescript. While the representative pattern of the theory of imitation is related to Being, such as the representation of truth, origin, essence, and Being in existence.⁹ For Deleuze and Guattari, there is no Being, at least no Being which is separated to dynamic Becoming. In their theory, the whole world is formed by various moments of becoming, there is mutual becoming between things and the connection of different powers. Everything is in dynamic transformation. Taking the place of the theory of imitation, the theory of becoming becomes the theory to express all kinds of relations of the world. They cite Sinologist François Cheng, a Chinese-French, to demonstrate becoming by Cheng's statement about the concept of Chinese Art from his book *Research on Chinese Poetic and Pictorial Language*. "François Cheng shows that poets do not pursue resemblance, any more than they calculate 'geometric proportions'. They retain, extract only the essential lines and movements of nature; they proceed only by continued or superposed 'traits', or strokes."¹⁰ Chinese painters reject resemblance and analogy but express eternal change by lines which fits into Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming. This becomes the best example for them to discuss the theory of becoming-imperceptible.

In Deleuze and Guattari's opinion, the purpose of art is to inspire becoming, though music, painting and writing inspire becoming in different ways, in the end in all kinds of ways cross the "wall" of signifier, and explore the deepest becoming-imperceptible. "Cross the wall, the Chinese perhaps, but at what price? At the

⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 239.

⁹ Simon O'Sullivan, *Art encounters Deleuze and Guattari*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p.55-56.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 280.

price of a becoming-animal, a becoming-flower or rock, and beyond that a strange becoming-imperceptible, a becoming-hard now one with loving.”¹¹ Writing lines, drawing lines, and musical lines collapse the “wall” of signifier. Chinese calligraphy and painting describe the world by lines, and breed the images of the world by Tao, so the Chinese artists regard the world as a kind of becoming, seeking for the harmony of man and universe, creating a world where nature and man have communication and man is a part of nature. As the line of flight, ‘traits’ or strokes breed the transformation of the universe: man and the world are becoming together, or becoming-world, becoming-universe, painting, calligraphy and poem are essentially a trinity. It is the very change of lines that embodies the changes of the universe. Chinese poetry can express the secrets of the universe through the lines changes of Chinese characters, presenting an art world of varied lines. The ever-changing Chinese calligraphy has reached the level, realizing the ultimate direction of understanding the universe. Strokes is the core element of Chinese painting, containing “all specific connotation of painting”, “From the point of philosophy, all we need to emphasize is that the drawn stroke are indeed the connecting line between man and the supernatural in the eyes of Chinese painters, because the stroke is one and multiplicity at the same time through its internal unity and infinite capacity for change. It embodies a process in which the painter and the movement of painting combine. (The movement of painting the stroke echoes with the action of drawing one from the chaos, which separates the heaven from earth.) The strokes, meanwhile, are Qi, Yin and Yang, heaven and earth, and all things on earth. At the same time, the stroke bear the rhythm and secret impulsion of man.”¹² In the art of brushwork, calligraphy and painting coexist and are all one. The trends of brushwork breeding the becoming of strength construct a vivid and dynamic world. The painter “has nothing in mind”, the lines (strokes) drive by Qi, and the rhythm is endless and ever-changing. The painters only express their inner world, which means there is no archetype and the painting is the projection of their inner world. “In the eyes of a Chinese artist, finishing a piece of work is a spiritual activity and a dialogue time for subject and object, the visible world and the invisible world. It is the emergence of the inner world as well as the unlimited extension of the external world, but all of these are still under the dominance of cyclic and strong laws.”¹³ The lines become the matrix of the trinity of poetry, calligraphy, and paintings playing an art world which is different from the one in the theory of imitation. Painters create works not by copying or depicting the world, but finish instantly and directly without adding or modifying. They explore the power of the universe, becoming and changing with the world. “In China, landscape painting is an attempt to find the constant momentum of the universe through the contours of the landscape.”¹⁴

Deleuze and Guattari get to know about Chinese Art theory through François Cheng’s works in which they have learned that Chinese artists have a deep understanding of the mystery of lines, and can depict the endless universe with complicated and varying lines. “The Cosmos as an abstract machine, and each world as an assemblage effectuating it. If one reduces oneself to one or several abstract lines that will prolong itself in and conjugate with others, producing immediately, directly a world in which it is the world that becomes, then one

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 187.

¹² François Cheng, *Research on Chinese Poetic and Pictorial Language*, trans. Tu Weiqun, Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2006, p. 340.

¹³ François Cheng, *Research on Chinese Poetic and Pictorial Language*, trans. Tu Weiqun, Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2006, p. 19.

¹⁴ François Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, trans. Zhuoli, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2009, p. 75.

becomes-everybody/everything. Kerouac's dream, and already Virginia Woolf's, was for the writing to be like the line of a Chinese poem-drawing."¹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari point out that Wolf eliminates all resemblance or analogy, abstracts herself to lines which twine with other lines to be difficultly distinguished, and then slide into an imperceptible, impersonal, non-representational world so that imitation destroy itself. "No art is imitative, no art can be imitative or figurative. Suppose a painter 'represents' a bird; this is in fact a becoming-bird that can occur only to the extent that the bird itself is in the process of becoming something else, a pure line and pure color. Thus imitation self-destructs, since the imitator unknowingly enters into a becoming that conjugates with the unknowing becoming of that which he or she imitates."¹⁶ Precisely basing on the essential attribute of line, Deleuze explains the theory of becoming-imperceptible taking the lines of Chinese poems, calligraphy and paintings as an example, because Chinese poems and paintings contain the ever-changing world in the form of line as well as assemble the universe itself as abstract machine. "Man do not encounter with the universe on the external resemblance of the surface, but at a deeper level, where, according to the idea of Chinese cosmology, endow the universe and man the same vitality... These lines, thick or thin, harsh or gentle, dry or dripping, temperate or unrestrained, are all the 'connecting line' of human's desire and the cosmic movement."¹⁷

Which must be pointed out is that basing on the theory of their own, Deleuze and Guattari cite François Cheng's point about China's traditional Art theory to explain their theory of becoming without considering the differences of theoretical backgrounds between China and the West. Deleuze and Guattari criticize the shortcomings of structuralism, point out the theory of structuralism still in the thought pattern of the theory of imitation. Experiencing a series of the evolution process of the knowledge spectrum, they criticize the tradition of western metaphysics since Plato. Different from that evolution process, Chinese theory of becoming is from the hominid's thinking about the relation between nature and man, and then form the theory of the unity of nature and universe which provide the most inspirational theory reference for Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming.

China and The West: Immanence or Transcendence?

Contemporary French philosophy has experienced the baptism of Heidegger's philosophy and presents two development tendencies, one is the tendency of transcendence returning to Kant by Husserl, represented by Levinas and Derrida. The other one is the tendency of immanence returning to Spinoza by Nietzsche, represented by Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Whether the rhizome theory or the becoming theory, they both are permeated with a main line of immanence and transcendence. Deleuze and Guattari believe that the West and the East are in a sharp contrast to this point: The transcendental West and the immanent East. In other words, they had gained some theoretical inspiration from the East (China) which constantly inspire them to explore the philosophy of immanence. In their view, over the fight between transcendence and immanence in western philosophy, transcendence once was on the dominant position. Plato's theory, Christian God, and Kant's Transcendental Philosophy once ruled the world of Western thought and became the representatives of

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 280.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 304-305.

¹⁷ François Cheng, *Research on Chinese Poetic and Pictorial Language*, trans. Tu Weiqun, Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2006, pp. 375-376.

transcendental philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari emphasized “man is becoming with the world” and the immanent dimension of western philosophy. They always wanted to release the underflow which was covered by Plato's philosophy and hidden under the deep subsurface of western philosophy. Taking stoicism, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche and Bergson as the main research objects, they have drawn the immanent philosophy pedigree of the western world.

The immanent philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari begins with Deleuze's study of Spinoza's Philosophy, Deleuze believes that Spinoza's philosophy regards immanence as a basic principle. “Immanence is the very vertigo of philosophy”¹⁸, immanence is constantly moving forward, but it is only flowing within itself endlessly and dizzily, never leaving itself. “Immanence is immanent only to itself and consequently captures everything, absorbs All-One (Tout-Un), and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent. In any case, whenever immanence is interpreted as immanent to Something, we can be sure that this Something reintroduces the transcendent.”¹⁹ In addition to itself, immanence does not belong to anything else while “transcendence is always a product of immanence”.²⁰ Starting from Plato, then Descartes, Kant and Husserl, western philosophy indulged in the illusion of transcendence and was unable to extricate himself. Plato's “Form”, Descartes' “I think”, Kant's transcendental philosophy and Husserl's phenomenology introduced transcendence into immanence, leading western philosophy into a wrong path. Ingrained thought cannot be cast off overnight. Attempting to reverse this trend, Deleuze and Guattari want to think of transcendence from the inside of the immanent, looking forward to some immanent rupture, so they strategically introduced the thought of “the absolutization of immanence” from French Sinologist François Jullien to support their immanence theory. “It might even be said here, as Jullien says of Chinese thought, that transcendence is relative and represents no more than an ‘absolutization of immanence’. There is not the slightest reason for thinking that modes of existence need transcendent values by which they could be compared, selected, and judged relative to one another. On the contrary, there are only immanent criteria. A possibility of life is evaluated through itself in the movements it lays out and the intensities it creates on a plane of immanence: what is not laid out or created is rejected. A mode of existence is good or bad, noble or vulgar, complete or empty, independently of Good and Evil or any transcendent value: there are never any criteria other than the tenor of existence, the intensification of life.”²¹ By referencing the idea of “the absolutization of immanence”, Deleuze and Guattari highlighted the relationship between immanence and life, and considered immanence as “a kind of life”. It still reverberated “the dizziness of philosophy”. we will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing more. It is not immanent to life, but the immanence that is in nothing else is itself a life. A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence: it is complete power, complete beatitude.”²²

In order to further expound the philosophy of immanence, Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly mentioned “the absolutization of immanence”. They tried to draw theoretical inspiration from Chinese thought, so as to prove their immanence philosophy. “the absolutization of immanence” is the key concept of Jullien's signature work,

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in philosophy: Spinoza*, New York: Zone Books, 1990, p. 180.

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, London and New York: Verso, 1994, p. 45.

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina, New York: Semiotext(e), 2006, p. 388.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, London and New York: Verso, 1994, pp. 73-74.

²² Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina, New York: Semiotext(e), 2006, pp. 385-386.

Process or creation: An introduction to the thought of the Chinese literati. Since then, immanence has become a key to Jullien's exposition of Chinese thought. Jullien explained the absoluteness of immanence from the relationship between heaven and earth. The transcendent heaven no longer provides a transcendental basis for human existence, in addition to reappearing the absoluteness of immanence. "Heaven is complete relative, because it only reproduces the 'absolutization' of the immanence: the reason why heaven is irresistible is that heaven cannot lead to the proof of human nihilism."²³ And Wang Fuzhi's thought fully embodies the absolutization of immanence and deduces the unique relationship between immanence and transcendence. "Wang Fuzhi's profound consideration is indeed contrary to the construction of any metaphysics or any religious belief. More than once, it is proved that transcendence is only the absolutization of immanence in Wang Fuzhi's thought, and in Wang Fuzhi's thought 'Heaven' is not evaluated as being outside (and superior to) the world, but as the pure procedural characteristic of things."²⁴ Henceforth, "the absolutization of immanence" has become the core theme of Jullien's *La Propension des choses*, *Figures de l'immanence* and *Fonder la morale* and so on, which constantly strengthened the relationship between immanence and transcendence. Relative to the world, "heaven" is transcendental, and itself is the integration or absolutism of immanence. This immanent thought of Jullien on one hand inspired by contemporary French philosophers. He consciously saw himself as the heir to the French contemporary philosophers Foucault, Deleuze and Barthes. This presents his position and orientation in contemporary French philosophy lineages. On the other hand, the profound influence of the immanent transcendence Theory was implied from the Modern Neo-Confucian, Mou Zongsan and Xu Fuguan. Since 1950s, Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan and Xu Fuguan all have been committed to demonstrate the immanent transcendence of Chinese philosophy. Mou Zongsan expounded the relationship between heaven and man by taking heaven as the entity. This provides theoretical support for his immanent transcendence Theory. "The Dao of heaven is superior and transcendent and becomes immanent when it is applied to human and turns to be internalizing human nature. Therefore, we can use Kant's word, saying that the Dao of heaven is transcendent on one hand, and on the other hand it is immanent (Immanent is opposite to Transcendent). Being both transcendent and immanent, at this time, the Dao of heaven can be described as the meaning of both religion and morality. Religion emphasizes transcendence, and morality emphasizes the immanent meaning. In ancient China, due to the special cultural background, the concept of the Dao of heaven has brilliant achievements in immanent meaning."²⁵ Although the Dao of heaven has the characteristic of transcending the nature of all things, but it is a gradual decline, and then becomes human nature. Man reached the level that the individual life communicated with the heaven destiny through the "transcendent tacit agreement", while man transform the heaven destiny into human nature through the "immanent tacit agreement", and based on this it has accomplished the immanent and transcendent spiritual qualities of Confucianism. Although Jullien did not clearly show the source of his works from Mou Zongsan, Xu Fuguan and Tang Junyi, he absorbed Mou Zongsan's thoughts with a little sense of "stealing" and ingeniously integrated into his works. Through the tireless efforts of Jullien, the immanent transcendence of Modern Neo-Confucianism provides a powerful theoretical reference for his detour entry into western philosophy. It is also in the plane of immanence that Deleuze, Guattari and Chinese thought converged together, forming the

²³ François Jullien, *Procès ou création*, Paris: Seuil, 1989, p. 117.

²⁴ François Jullien, *Procès ou création*, Paris: Seuil, 1989, p. 261.

²⁵ Mou Zongsan, The characteristics of Chinese Philosophy, in. *The Complete Collection of Mr. Mou Zongsan* (vol. 28), Taibei: Linking books Co., 2003, p. 22.

mutual elucidation of Chinese and Western Philosophy.

Deleuze and Guattari explored the philosophy of immanence from the inside of western philosophy. This derives from Deleuze's continuous efforts in 1950s and 1960s for a breakthrough from the inside of the western philosophy, especially from his researches on Bergson, Nietzsche, Spinoza and other philosophers and constantly digging in the depth and broad dimension of philosophy. At the same time, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi and Xu Fuguan explored Chinese philosophy from western philosophy. They drew theoretical inspiration from western philosophers such as Kant and Hegel, and developed an effective theory of immanent transcendence which can effectively explain the Chinese philosophy. Finally, the two thoughts were intersected in Jullien's Sinology, which realized the integration of Chinese and Western thoughts in the plane of Immanence. More than that, drawing on Jullien's research, Deleuze and Guattari illustrated two ways of thought according to Chinese hexagrams in the book of *What is Philosophy?*. They believe that the Orient represented by China and the West represented by ancient Greece have formed two different ways of thought: one is to think through the figure, the other one is to think through the concept. Chinese hexagrams, Hindu mandalas, Jewish sephiroth, Islamic "imaginals", and Christian icons are all reflected in the former way of thought through the images. "Hexagrams are combinations of continuous and discontinuous features deriving from one another according to the levels of a spiral that figures the set of moments through which the transcendent descends."²⁶ Since ancient Greece, the latter way of thought through the concept was reflected in the West. The Greeks invented a plane of absolute immanence, however the Greeks no longer use the image but the concept to think. "the Greeks invented an absolute plane of immanence.....Immanence is redoubled. This is where one thinks no longer with figures but with concepts. It is the concept that comes to populate the plane of immanence. There is no longer projection in a figure but connection in the concept."²⁷ Adopting a way of cycling, Chinese thought recorded some kinds chart of Nature-thought in a plane. The changes of Yin and Yang of Chinese hexagrams projected on the plane of immanence which contains something vertical or transcendent while the concept is only the proximity and cohesion within the horizon. According to the above, "the absolutization of immanence" in Jullien's sense was produced. However, Deleuze and Guattari believed that the absolute immanence required by philosophy is completely different from it. The figure tends to be a concept in the limitless proximity to the concept, thus realizing the infinite motion in the plane of immanence. Through the two different ways of thought between the figure and the concept, Deleuze and Guattari found the Orient use the figure to think which belongs to former philosophy and their purpose is not to create or form a philosophical concept. Thought exists in the orient, but sometimes they do not think. The Greeks created concepts. Through conceptual thought, Being was constructed, as a result Deleuze and Guattari came to the conclusion: "Nevertheless, philosophy was something Greek-although brought by immigrants. The birth of philosophy required an encounter between the Greek milieu and the plane of immanence of thought."²⁸ Jullien also reiterated this point, and he emphasized again and again that philosophy is a Greek matter. Henceforth he has found the source and ultimate direction for his road of detour and access.

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, London and New York: Verso, 1994, p. 89.

²⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, London and New York: Verso, 1994, p. 90.

²⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, London and New York: Verso, 1994, p.93.

Conclusion

By discussing the thought of Deleuze and Guattari about China, we can look back the immanent transcendence of Chinese thought. Taking the Dao of heaven or “the heaven destiny “ as an example, Modern Neo-Confucian such as Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan are well-versed in both Chinese and Western thoughts. Under such a background, they ponder over the transcendence and immanence and gradually melt the “transcendence” and “immanence” as a whole. From Tang Junyi's “transcendent immanence” to “immanent transcendence”, it provides a new paradigm for our understanding the characteristics of Chinese thoughts. Jullien was taught by Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan. When talking about the Chinese thought, Jullien points out that transcendence creates “the absolutism of immanence” by projecting. Deleuze and Guattari are clearly in favor of this idea, and have confirmed their philosophical exploration, which provides a new path for their philosophical thought.

At last, Deleuze, Guattari and Jullien and other French philosophers, have become into Greek philosophers, returning to their hometown of philosophy with the aid of Chinese thought. Xiong Shili, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi and other modern Neo-Confucian have become into the Saints like Confucius and Mencius, returning to pre-Qin era with the aid of western philosophy. It is in the plane of immanence of thought that Chinese saints and the Greek philosophers meet, Chinese Saints have no idea, western philosophers reject the image, they reached the same goal by different means and played the universal music which resounded ceaselessly in ancient times and was immanent transcendence!

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