

Dialogue and Collaboration for the New Geopolitics: With some thoughts for Ethics and Religious Education

Stephen Sau-Yan Chow, Hong Kong [1]

November 22-23, 2016, Beijing

Jesus said, "To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another, 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, 'He is possessed by a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, 'Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'" (Matthew 11:16-19)

The world as we know is changing fast. We can lament on the loss of innocence, ideal, and vision that characterized the 1960s, 70, and 80s. People used to be helpful, polite, respectful and more or less reasonable. Now, the so-called 'developed and developing' parts of the world seem to have become more pragmatic, utilitarian, relativistic, pluralistic, egoistic, sensational, irrational, and simply rude. In short, the world is in an unbearable mess. No reliable norms for us to count on for each other. At the same time, globalization has significantly shortened the distances between cultures, ideologies, and religious faiths.

In 2013, President Xi Jinping of the Chinese Government announced a daring policy 'The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road', also known in its shortened form "The Belt and Road" or "One Belt One Road" (一帶一路), which will certainly create uncountable opportunities for collaboration between China and the other nations along the Belt and Road. But at the same time, these new collaborations will have to face no small challenges of cultural, ideological, legal, political, and even religious conflicts. How can we prepare our future generations to avail these promising opportunities but also expected conflicts or even destructive acts?

Are we afraid of diversity and conflicts? Do we rather have everyone agreeing with us? Must harmony be built on uniformity under one standard, one narrative? Yet our world has become more individualistic, relativistic or pluralistic. It would be unwise or really unrealistic to expect a universal narrative ruling over all. If we take a step backward, we should ask ourselves why we are thinking in this way. We can easily blame on "generational gap" when we see unruly young people whose thinking and behaviors are simply incredulous. But can we really blame it on the differences in age if the incredulous acts and ideas are coming from leaders in the international, social, and even moral and religious domains? What is operating in the background of our mind is our entrenched "modern" mindset while our surrounding cultures are moving into the postmodern context. This postmodern understanding of realities, dialogue, and collaboration are the foci of my exploration in this paper.

Hallmarks of Postmodernity or Postmodernism

According to the definition provided by B. Duignan [2], postmodernism is “*a late 20th-century movement characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power.*” Postmodernism characterized by skepticism and distrust toward overarching ideologies, universal values, objective reality, imposing authority, unchangeable truth, and rationality beyond and across contexts.

For the postmodernists, reality is just a conceptual construct that is specific to the language and subjective perception of the individuals concerned. Similarly, reason and logic are also specific constructs of the established intellectual traditions, not universal. For example, the so-called ‘common sense’ of a cultural tradition or gender group is better not imposed on another cultural tradition or gender group. What is common sense to Chinese or men may not be common sense to Turks or women, and vice versa. And for language, words are to be interpreted in relation to other words, contrasting or matching them. Words are never sufficient for providing meaning on their own. The meaning of peace in the Christian tradition is different from the understanding of peace in a political accord, in art, or in a marriage, etc. Hence, it is possible to have a multitude of meanings for the same word.

Postmodernism is a historical development that many of us have yet to appreciate. Many of us may need to reconcile our modern mind with the postmodern. Some of the famous postmodern philosophers include Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Richard Rorty, and Jean Baudrillard. It would be, however, a distraction to introduce these philosophers here.

But postmodernism is probably not a novelty to the Chinese intellects. A number of scholars such as Professor Yang Huilin (楊慧林) have been working with the postmodern themes. Fredric Jameson(詹明信), a famous critical theorist was teaching theories of postmodernism in the Peking University and Shenzhen University since mid-1985. His two gifted students are “*Zhang Yiwu and Zhang Xudong (張旭東) who later become scholars in analyzing postmodernity in China.*”[3] Zhang Yiwu (張頤武) and Wang Ning (王寧) later claimed that China has entered into a ‘new post-era’, free from the Western historicity and metanarrative. This new era has the Chinese postmodernism taking on a unique Chinese characteristic while linking itself to the global postmodernity at the same time. It is said that Deng Xiaoping’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and “democracy with Chinese characteristics” are examples of postmodern creativity,[4] which is not bound by existing overarching concepts, such as democracy used in the Western discourse. Deng took the names of these two concepts originated in the Western world, i.e., socialism and democracy, and cast them in the Chinese socio-political context of his time.

Postmodern Knowledge And Morality

As mentioned earlier, knowledge in postmodernity cannot stand independently on its own. It must be contextualized and constructed knowledge open for interpretation, e.g., socialism is to be understood and interpreted in the particular historical socio-economic-political context of China. Postmodern epistemology and morality are constructed within the context that one is in; they are therefore ‘relativistic’ or ‘pluralistic’ in relation to the other concepts, contexts or circumstances. For example, individuals or groups operating in different cultural contexts can interpret the concept of rights differently. What ‘the right of a person’ means for the Europeans, the Arab world, and the Chinese in PRC are different and, hence, pluralistic.

Furthermore, the underpinning values, ideologies, presuppositions, and frames of reference of any given knowledge are ‘deconstructed,’ i.e., questioned and analyzed with the understanding of the specific contexts and functions that these are assumed for. For example, the concept of fairness is laden with values and presuppositions of a given culture. Fairness is appreciated rather differently in a capitalistic system than a socialist system. It is therefore understandable that people may have different expectations for fair remuneration relative to these two systems. Any assumed relationship of a subject to another is to be questioned and analyzed by postmodern critical theorists.

Relativism vs. Pluralism

But one might ask if there is fundamental difference between relativism and pluralism, or they can be treated similarly, which might have been the case in casual usage. It is indeed important to make a distinction between relativism and pluralism, especially for the case of dialogue.

Narrative in relativism changes according to the changing context in relation to its object. It cannot hold a steady stance for a meaningful discussion, especially when a decision is to be made over a period of time. Relative stance is readily affected by the changing context. For example, what is agreed is fair can be changed instantly when the condition in which the agreement was made is changed or disappears. When fairness is solely based on self-interest validated by a given condition, that perceived fairness would no longer be ‘interesting’ to the same individual when the condition is changed. What is the point of reaching fairness when it is so relative and transient? One could say that the others were being fair to him/her in a specific circumstance. But would the others need to cater for that person constantly in his/her changing contexts to be fair?

Pluralism accepts multiple narratives in relation to the same object and each narrative can be different by degrees or essentially incomparable or incommensurable from the other. Pluralism opposes to the assumption of an overarching or meta-narrative providing essential meaning or values to the object, e.g., a dominant understanding of ‘fairness’ or ‘goodness’ from the one in power.

What is possible is that different narratives can contribute to the fullness of the picture, even though they might or might not interpret the meaning or value of the same object by another narrative in the same manner. For example, if an agreement is to be upheld by all parties concerned, these parties must share the same platform to

articulate what each of them think is fair, or not, while a common agreement of fairness is fostered. So one can say that postmodern pluralism provides a democratic discourse.

Hard Pluralism vs. Soft Pluralism [5]

Going further into the world of pluralism, one may encounter two camps, i.e., hard (exclusive) pluralism and soft (inclusive) pluralism. Those in the hard pluralism camp would hold that narratives are absolutely incommensurable or incomparable since every narrative in its entirety is complete, independent and unique. No narrative has the right to interpret or complement another narrative. For example, the faith narrative and the socio-political narrative are totally incomparable in the mind of some Christians and non-Christians alike. In their mind, religion and politics cannot or should not be mixed.

Those operating from the soft pluralism camp would allow different narratives to be less incomparable and somewhat inclusive with the others. It is possible that the contexts that give rise to the respective narratives could be sharing something in common such as interests, likes and dislikes, values, and understanding through the process of deconstruction and reconstruction by re-framing. For example, faith narrative and socio-political narrative can share similar, though not identical, values such as equality, freedom, and harmony but they are, undoubtedly, two separate entities.

Story

An old monk asks a young monk, “you will suffer death if you are to take a step forward or take a step backward, what will you do then?”

Without any hesitation, the young monk replied, “I will take a step sideways.”

Consider a different perspective if you are facing challenges from both sides, maybe then you will understand what it means to have a third path besides the given paths.

Soft Pluralism And Constructive Dialogue [6]

While hard pluralism would make the questing for a common ground practically impossible between narratives, soft pluralism allows the possibility of a meaningful dialogue in search for a common ground/narrative and common interests while preserving the uniqueness of the different narratives. This dialogue is made between parties of equal status or treated as equals. True dialogue requires the involved parties be open, listen intently, and willing to make necessary changes.

In the process of identifying common ground and interests, constructive dialogue can help create new conditions and objects that can better respond to the common interests and needs. This process will be realized through creative collaboration among the parties in dialogue. For example, two or more independent entities can, for their mutual needs and interests, come to define the essential conditions of their own

needs and interests (deconstruct) such as autonomy but connection, identify intersections among the essential conditions of the parties involved (reconstruct), and together creating new objects or conditions in order to have their intersect needs and interests fulfilled. Their other needs and interests are not required to enter into this constructive dialogue.

Creative Collaboration

Like dialogue, collaboration is best achieved among entities when their leadership is exercised in an egalitarian manner with that of the others. Creativity is best experienced when there exist no *a priori* restrictions except for the goal commonly set by the collaborating entities. Even that, the goal can be reviewed and refined throughout the process as agreed by the engaging entities. The review and refinement are carried out in respect to the context that gives rise to the need and interest, which might have modified or changed throughout the process.

An Example Of Collaboration Among Well-Meaning But At Odd Entities

Entities at odd with each other are like narratives that perceive themselves as essentially incomparable or even a threat to the other. Yet these entities could be holding needs and interests that are similar or even inter-dependent of each other for their own fulfillment. They can also be holding benevolent interests for the same object, e.g., peace for the people, but not acknowledging that of the others. Yet through dialogue, the deconstruction and reconstruction process of their understandings, they would be able to see that their benevolent interests are not at odd with each other essentially. What would only stop them are their incomparable stances. What would help them, however, are their creativity and allowance for the new common conditions or new objects that can better serve their common needs and interests.

An example of dialogue and creative collaboration are the Oslo Accords (I and II) between the government of Israel (Judaism) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (Islam): the Oslo I Accord, signed in Washington, D.C., in 1993 and the Oslo II Accord, signed in Taba in 1995.

A critical architect behind these agreements was the former President of Israel, Shimon Peres, supposedly hawkish general who was condemned by the Hamas for being responsible for the massacre of the United Nations-run Palestinian Refugees Camp at southern Lebanon in 1996. President Peres himself was an ardent opponent against compromising with the Arab states who also supported the establishment of Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza district. But his stance started to change when the then Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made his historic visit to Israel in 1977. It was reported that Peres had felt the sincere intention of the Arab world to negotiate from Sadat's visit. An intention, which he believed, his people also shared. The visit of President Sadat eventually helped to craft the first ever peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979 after the Camp David Accords in 1978.

This first ever peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state laid the ground for Israel to consider an agreement with their neighbor, the Palestinians. These two sworn

enemies facilitated by Norway, while ushered by their own desire for a peaceful future, worked out a 5-year transition plan to a permanent peaceful settlement. Shimon Peres was an important engineer behind these accords. The Oslo II Accord even acknowledged the eventual establishment of the Palestinian sovereignty and the complete withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank. These two Accords have left the respective religions aside. They are not about which religion is to replace which. The focus was on peace for the people of Israel and Palestine.

But the Oslo Accords were thrown into limbo when someone from the far right camp of Israel assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Individuals' of this camp rigidly adhered to their extreme narrative and it was their fear that their vested interests would be seriously undermined with the two Accords. They did not want to engage in further dialogue with the Palestinians. Their rejection further alienated and reinforced the position of the Palestinian Hamas group, which did not recognize the existence of the Israel State. We can ask if the far right camp of Israel was ever included in the original negotiation or the subsequent negotiation.

With the increase of Israel's settlements on the West Bank and the independence of Palestine declared in 2013, the Oslo Accords have been rendered virtually irrelevant. Shimon Peres passed away on 28th September 2016 with his dream for his people yet to be realized. But is this the end of the peace narrative between these two people? Is it the creative collaboration that failed disastrously or a dialogical process that requires more inclusiveness, further deconstruction and reconstruction processes from all the parties at stake?

If the processes can be handled with goodwill and patience from all identifiable parties at stake, the common narrative can be reconstructed and re-confirmed. Yet the so-called 'common' narrative need not be identical to all parties due to their unique cultural, political, religious, social and historical contexts, as long as the kernel of the reconstructed common narrative is acceptable to all. This would, in fact, leave room for plurality and incomparability presented by the respective narratives. Respecting the kernel but letting it evolve for the best interest of all parties may be more desirable than pushing for a uniform understanding and solo way of proceeding in the long run. This may, however, require ongoing dialogues to achieve deeper understanding of the common narrative and decide on possible adjustments throughout its implementation.

Possible Implications For The Sino-Vatican Dialogue?

Can this not be applied to the Sino-Vatican dialogue between two states, and between two faiths (Communist faith and Catholic faith)? The policies of the Chinese government and the Vatican appear to be at odd with each other shortly after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). But the negotiation process between the Vatican and PRC for possible normalization did not start until 1987.[7] Waves of optimism and pessimism mark the entire process until recently, when under the common efforts of Pope Francis, President Xi and their respective teams, some common understanding has been reached as reported and both parties have mutually conveyed friendly signals. Presumably it is for their mutually agreed core interests that the dialogue can continue between PRC and the Vatican.

Assuming, and only assuming, that the mutually agreed core interests after the respective processes of deconstruction of the narratives of PRC and the Vatican, and the reconstruction of the agreed narrative and core interests are: a) the healthy and constructive development of PRC through full participation of the Catholic Church in its land and, b) free exercise of the mission of ‘proclaiming the good news’ of the universal Catholic Church in PRC, which aims at the betterment of the quality of moral and spiritual life of the Chinese Catholics and people. These assumed core interests could become the foundation of creative collaboration between PRC and the Vatican after a respectful and patient dialogical process. These two core interests if agreed by PRC and the Vatican could mutually improve the life of the people in PRC, and by that enhances the development of the country.

If such a respectful and equal-partner type of dialogue is missing but substituted with entrenched confrontational and incomparable narratives, there will most likely not be any mutually agreed narrative or creative collaboration. This has, in fact, been happening recurrently in the past decades of Sino-Vatican negotiations. Each side seemed to have adopted an incomparable narrative that the other side must accept certain a priori tenets of their own narrative before any meaningful dialogue could be carried out. The outcomes were obviously non-constructive or even destructive. Fears appear to be the root of this mode of confrontation, either-or mentality. From fears comes distrust, from distrust comes contempt, and from contempt comes exclusion.

Assuming that the creation of some ‘understanding’ is in the process, it is necessary that all the parties at stakes will have sufficient representation throughout the preparatory dialogical and collaboration processes, if the understanding is to be feasible and sustainable. They should be able to represent their interests and concern equally from the same platform, or through on-going consultations by the representing parties.

For example, the Catholic Church represents the Faithful of the so-called Open Church and Underground Church. The PRC represents the Government and the Patriotic Association. It is important that all stakeholder groups are well included lest the resentment of the ignored party could sabotage the overall process.

It should, however, be acceptable that whatever understanding these two entities might construct could be interpreted differently in their own contexts, as long as the mutually agreed core interests are being satisfactorily addressed. For example, freedom to appoint bishops can be interpreted somewhat differently by PRC and the Vatican, while adhering to the agreed principle of appointment. The same logic can be applied to freedom of exercising religious faith. The core interest is acceptable religious freedom but the measures used to legalize or exercise such freedom are decided by each entity upon a collaborative dialogical process.

There must be goodwill and trust from these entities before the dialogical process can be fruitful. When and if the concordat is secured, neither party will interpret the understanding for the other party, but respect their interpretation of the understanding for their own contexts. This will help preserve their pluralistic realities and own uniqueness. The Communist government is likely to continue governing China with its atheistic maxim, while the Catholic Church in China can spread the good news of Jesus Christ among their Catholics or even the Chinese people.

Finally, one can assume that new conflicts will invariably arise from the mutual agreement during its execution. As long as a dialogical relationship is maintained and stayed alive between PRC and the Vatican, creative narratives and objects can be fostered for further fulfillment of their mutually agreed interests. Dialogical process does not end between or among engaging entities since the contexts of the entities are likely to change after a while.

Implications For Ethics And Religious Education

This paper has explored the advantages of postmodern understanding of epistemology, contextual narratives, their incomparability, plurality, dialogical process, and creative collaboration. Examples of the two Oslo Accords between Israel and Palestine, and the Sino-Vatican dialogue were used to demonstrate how they benefited or can benefit from the postmodern dialogical approach and collaboration.

But if one is attentive to the analyses of the cases, one can see that the postmodern approach has not been totally true to its tenets. The existence and participation of basic values e.g., respect, trust, prudence, faith, hope and goodwill, are operating in the background. These basic values are like yearning in the human heart, regardless culture, age, gender, socio-economic strata, faith persuasion, or political affiliation, etc. Globalization is like a catalyzing platform for the human hearts meet and yearn for connection, trust, respect, hope, goodwill and unity in diversity. Without these basic values, dialogue and collaboration could hardly take place. Hence, it is a mixture of modernism, postmodernism and what comes after postmodernism in a coming-together-globalized reality that is available to the engaging parties to be used fruitfully to fulfill their common interests and needs.

What are, therefore, needed for the ethics and religious education in the new world order characterized by postmodernity and the new geopolitics from the Belt and Road: a) basic values shared by humanity; b) understanding of major world religions and religious sects, and their corresponding cultures; c) understanding of the postmodern approach to constructive dialogue and creative collaboration; d) looking into one's pertinent experiences; e) empathic and in-depth reflective skills; f) designing action plans; g) desirable method of evaluation in order to feed into the next learning cycle.

Points a to c were already covered in the above. Regarding 'experience', it is important for learning to be grounded in one's pertinent experiences. For example, how one has experienced one's own ethical dilemmas or faith experience of oneself or another person can help one to better appreciate the knowledge that one would need for the task.

'Empathic skills' is important to have so that one can reach deeper intellectual and affective understanding of the other parties through perspective taking. And 'in-depth reflective skills' can help one to arrive at critical and independent understanding as opposed to superficial and unprocessed standard understanding.

It is too common that individuals and groups stop at understanding without taking corresponding actions. Having learned from the steps above, especially through

empathy and in-depth reflection, one could start making intelligent ‘action plans’ for the required task. These action plans could be further research, acquiring more relevant experiences, or approach for a creative solution through a constructive dialogical process.

However, no action plan is likely perfectible or sustainable without appropriate ‘evaluation’. Without evaluation, one literally stops learning after action. Yet it is exactly through evaluative learning that one can become a better learner in the next task and next learning cycle. A simple but effective evaluation process would consist of three main components: a) what can one be ‘grateful’ for throughout the process, which nurtures positive motivation in order to go further; b) what can one learn from the process, any insights; and c) where and what could one do better.

It is often said that human beings are poor learners because we do not learn from mistakes. Despite it, through appropriate ethical and religious education, we hope our future generations and ourselves can become effective lifelong learners, ethical moral agents, and informed persons of faith, contributing meaningfully in a postmodern and globalized world order. May the kind of frustration experienced by Jesus can be addressed constructively with sincere dialogues and creative collaborations among different parties in our days and beyond.

THE END

ENDNOTES

- [1] Author is a Jesuit priest from Hong Kong.
- [2] Duignan, B. (2014) (Ed.). *Postmodernism*. Encyclopedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>
- [3] Lim, J. (2013). *Postmodernism and Its Effects on China*. *ChinaSource*, September 20, 2013. <http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/postmodernism-and-its-effects-on-china>
- [4] *Ibid*.
- [5] <https://thinkingreed.wordpress.com/2010/12/01/from-inclusivism-to-soft-pluralism/>
- [6] <https://www2.clarku.edu/difficultdialogues/learn/index.cfm>
- [7] Leung, B. & Wang, M. J. J. (2016). *Sino-Vatican Negotiations: problems in sovereign right and national security*. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 25, 467-482.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1104921>

【譯本】

為新地緣政治的對話與協作： 一些倫理和宗教教育的看法 香港 周守仁^[1]

2016 年 11 月 22-23 日

耶穌說：「我可把這一代比作什麼呢？它像坐在大街上的兒童，向其他的孩子喊叫，說：我給你們吹了笛，你們卻不跳舞，我們唱了哀歌，你們卻不捶胸。若翰來了，也不吃，也不喝，他們便說：他附了魔；人子來了，也吃也喝，他們卻說：看哪！一個貪吃嗜酒的人，稅吏和罪人的朋友！」
（瑪竇福音 11: 16-19）

我們所認識的世界瞬息萬變，我們對於標誌著 1960 年代、70 年代和 80 年代的那份純真、充滿理想和憧憬已經日漸消逝而感到悲傷難過。從前人們是助人為本、以禮相待、彼此尊重、處事多多少少講道理。今天，部分所謂「發達和發展中地區」似乎變得更加務實、急功近利、相對、多元、自我、偏愛煽情、非理性及行為粗鄙。總而言之，現今世界為七、八十年代的人，就是一個難以忍受的亂局。沒有可靠的規範讓我們可以相互指望。同時，全球化亦大大縮短了文化、意識形態和宗教信仰之間的距離。

在 2013 年，國家主席習近平宣布了「一帶一路」對外發展的重要戰略，為「絲綢之路經濟帶」和「21 世紀海上絲綢之路」制訂的大膽政策，這必將為中國與沿邊一帶的國家之間的合作創造機會。不過，這些新的合作方式勢將不能避免文化、意識形態、法律、政治，甚至宗教衝突的挑戰。我們如何能準備後代善用這些尚好的機會，但同時預期會發生衝突甚至是具破壞力的行為呢？

我們害怕多元和衝突嗎？我們寧願人人都舉手贊同我們的意見取向嗎？和諧只能建立在劃一標準和一種表述方式之上嗎？不過，我們的世界已經走向更個人主義、相對主義或多元化。那麼，若期望向所有人灌輸一種普遍接受的理念，彷彿是不明智或不切實際之舉。如果我們退一步，問問自己為什麼會有這種想法。我們可以輕易地指責這是「世代差距」之結果，看看那些任性的年

輕人，他們的思想和行為都是不可信靠的。但是，我們能否真正將它歸咎於年齡的差異，倘若這些令人質疑的行為和想法，來自國際、社會，甚至道德和宗教領域的領導人又如何呢？其實，我們滿腦子充斥著根深蒂固的「現代」心態，而在我們周遭的文化正在進入後現代境況。這種對現實、對話和協作的後現代理解，是本文探討的焦點。

後現代性或後現代主義的特徵

根據杜能(B. Duignan) [2] 提供的定義，後現代主義是「20 世紀後期的運動，其特徵是廣泛的懷疑主義、主觀主義或相對主義；一般理性懷疑；以及對意識形態在維護和維持政治和經濟權力的作用的敏感銳性」。後現代主義的特點，是對總體意識形態、普遍價值觀、客觀現實、權威、不可改變的真理、超越和跨越境況的理性懷疑和不信任。

對於後現代主義者，現實只是一種特定於有關個人的語言和主觀感覺的概念構造。同樣，理性和邏輯也是已建立的知識傳統的具體結構，而不是普遍的結構。例如：文化傳統或性別群體的所謂「常識」最好不強加於另一種文化傳統或性別群體。中國人或男人的常識可能不是土耳其人或婦女的常識，反之亦然。對於語言，詞語應當與其他詞語相對應地進行解釋，對比或匹配。詞語從來不足以提供自己的意義。在基督徒傳統，和平的意義，跟政治協議、藝術或婚姻等對和平的理解不同。因此，同一個詞可能有多種含義。

在歷史發展中，後現代主義得不到很多人認同或欣賞。也許我們需要調整自己的現代心態，俾能與後現代融和。著名的後現代哲學家，有：馬丁·海德格爾(Martin Heidegger)、雅克·德里達(Jacques Derrida)、米歇爾·福柯(Michel Foucault)、讓-弗朗索瓦·利奧塔(Jean-François Lyotard)、理查德·羅蒂(Richard Rorty)和讓·鮑德里亞(Jean Baudrillard)。然而，筆者不打算在此逐一介紹這幾位哲學家。

為中國知識分子來說，後現代主義並不陌生。不少中國學者包括楊慧林教授，一直以後現代為研究主題。著名的批判理論家詹明信(Fredric Jameson)自1985 年中期以來，在北京大學和深圳大學教授後現代主義理論。他的兩位優秀學生「張頤武和張旭東，後來成為分析中國後現代學的學者」.[3] 張頤武和王寧隨後宣稱，中國已經進入了一個「新的後時代」，脫離了西方的歷史和元敘事。這個新時代，是一種中國後現代主義，當中具有獨特的中國特色，又同時聯繫到全球的後現代化。[4] 據說，鄧小平的「具有中國特色的社會主義」和「具有中國特色的民主」都可說是後現代創造力的例子，它不受現有總體概念的束縛，例如西方話語中所運用的「民主」一詞。鄧小平引用了「社會主義」和「民主」這兩詞彙，其概念源自西方，運用在他的時代的中國社會政治處境之中。

後現代知識和道德

如前所述，後現代的知識不能夠獨立存在。它必須運用於某種境況之中，而其構建知識的解釋也要開放，例如：社會主義要在中國特定的歷史、社會、經濟、政治環境中去理解和說明。後現代認識論和道德倫理學，是在那個人或物所處的環境中構建的；因此，當它們與其他概念、語境或環境一併觀察時，它們是「相對的」或者「多元的」。例如：個人或團體在不同文化背景下活動或操作，它們對於權利的概念會有不同的理解。「個人的權利」為歐洲人、阿拉伯世界和在中華人民共和國的中國人來說，意義上不同，兼且可以說是多元的。

再者，任何特定的基礎價值觀、意識形態、預設和參考框架都被「解構」，即在理解某些既有境況和假定功能的情況下被質疑和分析。例如：「公平」概念充滿了在某既定文化之中的價值觀和前提，在資本主義制度下的公平概念，與社會主義制度之中的理解不同。因此，人們對於這兩種制度的公平報酬會有不同的期望，這是可以理解的。一個主體與另一個體的任何假定關係，將由後現代批判理論家提出疑問和分析。

相對主義與多元主義

也許有人會問，相對主義和多元主義之間是否有何區別；或者它們是否偶然會被歸於同類使用。然而，確實有必要區分相對主義和多元主義，特別為對話而言。

相對主義的敘述，會根據主體與其對象所處於不斷變化的境況而改變。它不能只為一個具有意義的討論而維持穩定立場，特別是要過一段時間才能作出決定時。相對立場容易受到不斷變化的境況的影響。例如：一個經過磋商認為公平的協議，當訂立協議的條件有變化或消失時，它可以立即改變。如果公平僅僅基於維護個人利益的既定條件，一旦條件改變時，所謂的公平就不會再被有關人士所認同。若公平是如此狹隘和短暫，為何還要達到它呢？可以說，在特定情況下其他人對他是公平的；但是，當一個人處於變化的境況時，到底其他人是否需要不斷地提供他所需的，才算公平呢？

多元主義接受關於同一個對象的多個敘述，而每個敘述可以是不同程度的，或者本質上不可比擬的，或不可比較的。多元主義反對假設以一個泛涵蓋或元敘述為對象，為任何事物提供基本的意義或價值，例如：掌權者的「公平」或「善意」的主導理解。有可能的是，不同的敘述可以有助於瞭解總體事實，即使他們可能或不可能理解，由另一個敘述以相同方式，來解釋同一對象的意義或價值。例如：有需要各方都支持一項協議，所有當事方必須共享同一個平台，說出每一方認為公道的意見，從而促進一個公平的共同協議。所以，可以說，後現代多元主義提供了一種民主的話語。

硬多元主義與軟多元主義^[5]

當進一步走向多元主義的世界時，可能會遇到兩個陣營，即硬（獨有）多元主義和軟（包容）多元主義。硬多元主義陣營中的人認為，每個敘述是絕對不可比較的或無法比擬的，因為每個敘述本身都是完整、獨立和獨特的。沒

有敘述有權解釋或補充另一個敘述。例如:信仰敘述和社會政治敘述，在一些基督徒和非基督徒的心中是完全無法比擬的。在他們看來，宗教和政治不能或不應該混合起來的。

那些從軟多元主義陣營運作的人，能夠接受到不同的敘述，彼此較為不作比擬，卻可以有點互為包容。有可能的是，引起各敘述的不同境況，通過重構框架的解構和重建過程，可以共享，諸如興趣、喜歡和不喜歡、價值觀和理解的共同點。例如: 信仰敘述和社會政治敘述可以分享類似的，即使不是相同的價值，如平等、自由與和諧，但它們無疑是兩個獨立的實體。

故事

一個老僧人問一個年輕的僧侶:「如果你向前邁一步或向後退一步，你都會遭受死亡，那麼你會做什麼？」

年輕的僧人毫不猶豫，回答說:「我會向側邊走一步。」

當你面臨來自雙方的挑戰，考慮一個不同的角度，也許你會領悟，除了既定的路徑，會有第三條出路的意思。

軟多元主義和建設性對話^[6]

儘管硬多元主義使在敘述之間尋找共同點變得不可能，但是軟多元主義卻容許一種有意義的對話尋找共同的理據或敘述以及共同利益，而又同時能保存各敘述的獨特性。這種對話是在平等地位或平等對待的當事方之間進行的。真正的對話需要有關各方保持開放態度，傾聽和願意作出必要的改變。

在確定共同立場和利益的過程中，建設性對話可以幫助創造新的條件和目標，更好地回應共同的利益和需要。這個過程將通過各方在對話中的創造性協作來實現。例如:為了他們的相互需要和利益，兩個或更多的獨立實體，可以釐定他們自己的需要和利益（解構）的基本條件，諸如自主但聯系，識別所涉及各方的基本條件的共同點，並一起創造新的事物或條件，以滿足他們的相交需要和利益。他們的其他需要和利益，就不用切入這種建設性的對話之中。

創意協作

一如對話，一個實體能夠與其他實體平等地行使領導權，就是實現協作的最好時候。最好體驗創造力的情況就是協作實體能在沒有先驗限制的條件下共同設定目標。即使如此，該目標仍可以在整個過程中根據參與實體的同意，作出審視和改進，這些修訂和改進是因改變了的情況及其改變過程中所帶出不同的需要和利益引申出來。

擁有良好意願但不調和的實體協作例子

彼此不調和的實體，就像是一種敘述，它們認為自己本質上是無法比擬的，甚至是對另一些敘述構成威脅。然而，這些實體可能持有彼此相似或甚至相互依賴的需要和利益，以成就自身。他們也可以為同樣的目標抱持仁者的關心，例如為人民的和平，但卻不承認其他人所抱持的和平。然而，通過對話，以解構和重建過程理解大家，他們將能夠看到他們的仁慈利益在本質上彼此並不矛盾。能夠阻止他們的，只是他們無與倫比的立場。然而，可以幫助他們的，是他們的創造力和容許新的共同條件或新的事物，好能更好地幫助他們的共同需要和利益。

對話和創造協作的一個例子，是以色列政府（猶太教）和巴勒斯坦解放組織（伊斯蘭教）之間的《奧斯陸協定》（I 和 II）：1993 年在華盛頓特區簽署的《奧斯陸協定》和 1995 年在塔巴簽署的《奧斯陸協定》。

這些協議背後的一個重要建築師是以色列前總統西蒙·佩雷斯（Shimon Peres），他是被哈馬斯譴責為對 1996 年在黎巴嫩南部聯合國設置的巴勒斯坦難營屠殺需要負責的鷹派總統。佩雷斯總統自己熱衷反對與阿拉伯國家妥協，同時支持在西岸和加沙地區建立猶太殖民區。但是，當時的埃及總統安瓦爾·沙達(Anwar Sadat)在 1977 年到以色列進行歷史性訪問時，他的立場開始改變。據報導，佩雷斯從沙達的訪問，感到阿拉伯世界有誠意談判。他認為，他的人民也有相同的誠意。沙達總統的訪問，最終有助於在 1978 年的《大衛營協定》之後於 1979 年制定以色列和埃及之間第一份和平條約。

以色列和阿拉伯國家之間首次的和平條約，為以色列同他們的鄰國巴勒斯坦人簽署了一項協議。這兩個宿敵，由挪威推動，迎來了他們自己對未來和平的願望，也制定了一項為期 5 年的永久和平解決方案的過渡計劃。西蒙·佩雷斯是這些協定背後的重要工程師。《奧斯陸協定 II》甚至承認最終建立巴勒斯坦主權和以色列完全撤出西岸。這兩個《協定》把各自的宗教拋在一邊，它們不是要替代哪個宗教，而重點是以色列和巴勒斯坦的人民間的和平。

但是，當一個來自以色列極右陣營的人暗殺了伊扎克·拉賓總理(Yitzhak Rabin)時，《奧斯陸協定》陷入了混亂局面。這個陣營的人僵化地堅持他們的極端敘述，是因為他們害怕他們的既得利益將被這兩個協議嚴重損害。他們不想與巴勒斯坦人進行進一步對話，他們的拒絕進一步疏遠和加強了巴勒斯坦哈馬斯集團的立場，而該集團的立場是不承認以色列國的存在。我們可以問的是以色列的極右陣營是否包括在原來的談判或隨後的談判中。

隨著以色列在西岸增加殖民區和 2013 年宣布的巴勒斯坦獨立，《奧斯陸協定》幾乎變得無關重要。佩雷斯於 2016 年 9 月 28 日逝世，他為人民的夢想尚未實現。但這就是這兩個民族之間和平敘述的結束嗎？是創造性協作的災難性失敗還是需要更多包容性，進一步與有關持份者作解構和重建的對話過程？

如果這些過程可以用來自所有可識別的持份者的善意和耐心來處理，則可以重建和重新確認共同的敘述。然而，所謂的「共同」敘述不需要各方盡相同，因為他們擁有的獨特的文化、政治、宗教、社會和歷史背景，只要重建的共同敘事的核心是各方都能接受就成了。事實上，這將為各自的敘述提供多元

和不可比性的空間。尊重核心取向，但讓它為各方的最大利益而進化，長遠地可能比推動統一理解和唯一行事方式更可取。然而，這可能需要持續進行對話，以便更深入地了解共同敘述，並決定其整個實施過程中可能需要作出的調整。

可用於中國與梵蒂岡對話？

這方式可否用於中國與梵蒂岡對話嗎？它們是兩國之間以及兩個信仰之間（共產主義信仰和天主 信仰）的對話。在中華人民共和國成立不久，中國政府和梵蒂岡雙方的政策似乎出現矛盾。但是，梵蒂岡與北京關係正常化的談判在 1987 年才開始。[7] 期間，整個過程瀰漫了樂觀和悲觀的情緒；直到近日，在教宗方濟各和習近平主席的共同推動和雙方有關部門的共同努力之下，雙方取得了一些共識，互相都傳遞了一些友好的信息。大概這是因為北京和梵蒂岡雙方都能同意一些核心利益，而促使雙方繼續對話。

現在試作一個假設，經過北京和梵蒂岡各自 述的解構過程之後得出共同同意的核心利益，而重建後的認可 述和核心利益是：a) 中國通過天主 會在其土地上的全面參與達致健康和建設性發展；b) 自由行使天主 普世 會在中國「傳揚福音」的使命，旨在改善中國天主 徒和人民道德和精神生活的素質。在經過一個尊重和平的對話過程後，這些假設的核心利益有可能成為中國和梵蒂岡之間創造合作的基礎。如果中國和梵蒂岡同意，這兩個核心利益可以相互改善中國人民的生活，從而促進國家的發展。

倘若雙方缺乏這種彼此尊重與對等的夥伴關係的對話，取而代之是一些牢固的對抗性和不相容的 述，那麼很可能雙方不會達成任何商定的 述或創造合作。事實上，這在過去幾十年的中國與梵蒂岡談判中屢屢發生。每一方似乎都採用了一種斷言絕對的 述，好使對方必須接受某些一貫堅持的原則，才願意進行有意義的對話。這樣的接觸的結果，顯然是非建設性的甚至是破壞性的。恐懼似乎是這種對抗模式的根源，只有是非與黑白、我對你錯的心態。從恐懼產生不信任，不信任產生蔑視，從蔑視產生排斥。

假設雙方已經在進行某一些「共識」的過程中，各持份群體都必須在整個對話和協作籌備過程中有充分的代表性，這樣有關的共識才會是可行和可持續。他們應該能夠在同一平台上代表他們的利益和關注，或通過代表各方的持續磋商。例如：天主 會代表著所謂的公開 會和地下 會團體的信眾。中華人民共和國一方代表政府和愛國會。重要的是所有利益持份群體都能充分被考慮在內，以免惹起被忽視一方的怨恨情緒，最終導致整個過程被顛覆過來。

但是，只要雙方商定的核心利益得到令人滿意的解決方案，這兩個實體有可能建立的任何協定其實都可以在其本身的境況下作出不同的解釋，這是可以接受的。例如：在自由任命主的議題方面，北京和梵蒂岡在遵守商定的原則時，可以出現不同的解釋。同樣的邏輯，也可套用於怎樣行使宗 信仰自由方面。核心利益必須是可接受的宗 自由，是取決於合法化或行使這種自由的某

些措施，就需要由每個實體在協作對話過程中決定。而在對話過程可以取得成果之前，來自這些實體的善意和信任會是必須的。

若果將來真的有共識而又被確定，任何一方都不能為另一方解釋共識，而是需要尊重他們為自己的境況對該共識所作出的解釋。這將有助於保持他們的多元化現實和自身的獨特性。共產主義政府可繼續以其無神論的精神管理中國，而中國天主教會亦可以將耶穌基督的喜訊傳播給他們的天主教徒甚至中國人民。

最後，可以預期在執行新的協定期間，新的衝突會無可避免地發生。只要在中華人民共和國和梵蒂岡之間保持著活潑的對話並互動，促進創造性的述和目標，就可以進一步實現雙方商定的利益。其實對話過程應該不會結束，因為相關實體的境況可隨著時間變遷而有所易轉。

對倫理和宗教教育的意義

本文探討了後現代理解的認識論、境況敘述、它們的不可相容性、多元性、對話過程和創造協作的優勢。文中引用以色列和巴勒斯坦之間簽署的《奧斯陸協定》以及中國與梵蒂岡對話為例，來說明他們如何從後現代對話方式和協作中得益，或可能得益。

不過，在細心分析個案，可以看到後現代方法並不完全符合其原則。一些基本價值，例如尊重、信任、謹慎、信念、希望和善意，都在背後運作着。這些基本價值都是人心中的渴望，不論文化、年齡、性別、社會經濟階層、信仰或政治派別等。全球化就像一個催化平台，讓眾人的心連繫着，一同渴望、信任、尊重、希望、善意和求同存異。沒有這些基本價值觀，對話和協作幾乎不可能發生。因此，這個由現代主義、後現代主義和後現代主義後的趨向全球化現實的結合體，可供參與的各方有效地利用，以實現其共同的利益和需要。

因此，在後現代和「一帶一路」的新地緣政治為特徵的新世界秩序中，倫理和宗教教育會需要什麼內涵：(1)人類所共有的基本價值；(2)對世界主要宗教和宗教教派以及其相應文化的理解；(3)理解後現代的建設性對話和創造合作的方法；(4)多了解自身的經驗；(5)同理心和深入反思技能；(6)制定行動計劃；(7)適切的評估方法，以便進入下一個學習週期。

這裡臚列的(1),(2),(3)三點，已經在上面涵蓋了。關於「經驗」，以一個相關的經驗為學習基礎是很重要的。例如：一個人如何經歷自己的倫理困境，或自己或另一個人的信仰經驗，可以幫助人們更好地理解所需要處理問題的是甚麼知識。

學習「同理心的技能」是重要的，以便能從認識另一方的觀點後，能夠達到更深入的知識和情感的理解。而「深入反思技能」可以幫助人們達成批判和獨立的理解，不是一些表面的和未經處理的標準理解。往往，個人和群體都

是在理解階段就停下來，沒有採取相應的行動。從上述步驟中學習過後，特別是通過同理心和深入反省的步驟，也許可以開始為所需的任務制訂明智的「行動計劃」。這些行動計劃可以進一步研究，獲得更多相關經驗，或者通過建設性對話過程創作解決方案的方法。

然而，沒有適當的「評估」，很難做出一些實在的或可持續的行動計劃。沒有評估，就簡單是行動後停止學習。但是，通過評估學習，才能在下一個任務和下一個學習週期中成為更好的學習者。一個簡單而有效的評估過程可以包括三個主要組成部分：（1）在整個過程中「值得感恩」的地方是甚麼，這有助於培養積極的動機，以便進一步發展；（2）從過程中學到什麼，可有任何見解；和（3）有甚麼地方可以做得更好。

人們經常說，人類是差勁的學習者，因為我們不從錯誤中學習。儘管如此，通過適合的倫理和宗教教育，我們仍希望自己和子孫後代，能夠成為有成效的終身學習者、倫理道德的媒介、有學識體會的信仰者，好在後現代和全球化的世界秩序中作出有意義的貢獻。願耶穌經歷的挫折，能夠通過各方之間的真誠對話和創意合作，在我們的及未來的世代得到建設性的解決。

【完】

註釋

[1] 周守仁神父是一位天主教耶穌會會士。

[2] Duignan, B. (2014) (Ed.). *Postmodernism*. Encyclopedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>

[3] Lim, J. (2013). *Postmodernism and Its Effects on China*. ChinaSource, September 20, 2013. <http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/articles/postmodernism-and-its-effects-on-china>

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] <https://thinkingreed.wordpress.com/2010/12/01/from-inclusivism-to-soft-pluralism/>

[6] <https://www2.clarku.edu/difficultdialogues/learn/index.cfm>

[7] Leung, B. & Wang, M. J. J. (2016). *Sino-Vatican Negotiations: problems in sovereign right and national security*. Journal of Contemporary China, 25, 467-482.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1104921>