

Lunchtime Seminar

Reinventing Cosmopolitanism: International Legal Order in Classical Chinese Canons

Walter Lee

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Wednesday 1 April 2015, 12:30-13:30

Small Moot Court, Room 723, Cheng Yu Tung Tower

The University of Hong Kong

Can ancient China ever be relevant to the discussion of global constitutionalism and cosmopolitan legal order? Yes, it depends on how you perceive classical Chinese canons. This seminar attempts to investigate the issues and problems of reassessing and adopting pre-Qin texts for the innovation of thoughts in contemporary Chinese international relations. How can the (re)-interpretation of classical Chinese resources facilitates international legal norm entrepreneurship? What kind of crucial roles does *The Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)* play at the intersection of the pre-Qin canons, cosmopolitan law, and Chinese IR? How may comparative law help to construct a methodological platform for such Chinese norm innovation? What are the potential contributions of Comparative/World Literature and Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory? The current response from public international law's point of view is poverty-stricken. I argue the main problem is with hermeneutics.

By coining and applying "Knowledge Archaeology of Chinese International Relations" (KACIR), I assert the fundamentalist hermeneutics of Confucian-Legalism must be replaced by a reinvented cosmopolitan hermeneutics, so that the classical Chinese conceptions can be emancipated and developed into norms and principles that could be useful to both China and the world. The rediscovery of a quasi-natural law tradition in the Chinese civilisation prompts us to ponder if such tradition is compatible with its liberal Western counterpart. If so, can there be a synthesis? Is a higher law possible? How may it help to transform the PRC's approach to international law and global ethics, the Chinese tradition, and the Chinese world view?



Walter Lee is Doctoral Candidate in Politics and International Relations at the University of Auckland. He holds a MA in International Relations from the University of Warwick. In 2013, he took a Visiting Fellowship at the CCPL, where he offered a seminar titled "The Legality of Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect in Classical China." Walter was also a Visiting Scholar to Division of International Politics Theory, Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing. His current visit to CCPL involves a postdoctoral research project on Chinese international relations, global governance and international ethics in light of Sino-Western comparative study of international legal theory.

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