Conrad Schirokauer, in Memoriam 紀念謝康倫 2018年10月2日

Dear Dave：

First of all, my deeply heart-felt condolences to you and Lore for this sad bereavement. My sorrow is even more intense because I met Conrad for the first time in 1976 on the occasion of Arthur Wright's funeral in the home of Jonathan Spence.

Because both he and I were Arthur's students, and actually the only two students who wrote PhD theses under him to be in the memorial that day, we have felt a special bond. Conrad always considered me as his "young brother" and gave me whatever support he could for me. Every time he passed by Hong Kong I was always there to greet him, and we had so much to talk in those youthful days. I remember so well I even accompanied him to see Liu Kuo-sung, the renowned painter whose painting Conrad used in his Chinese history textbook for illustration. Liu at the time was my colleague at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and I had secretly hoped that Liu would present one of his works to Conrad. Alas, this did not happen. Nonetheless, Conrad's love for East Asian art and culture left in me an indelible impression. I hate to admit that I have learned a lot East Asian historic sites, and even modern art, from him. When I was planning to visit Kyoto in 1988, he told me that Kinkakuji was too overwhelming, and that I should visit Ginkakuji first, and spare the former for a later visit. I also learned Ando Tadao's name for the first time from him.

Conrad and I shared a respect for Neo-Confucianism, even though both of us were Arthur's student, when Arthur was still heavily influenced by modernity theories. In Arthur's view, Neo-Confucianism and actually Confucianism in general accounted for the failure for China to develop modern science and civilization. This could easily be interpreted, especially by Chinese scholars, as anti-Confucian. And in this sense, one may feel that Conrad and I perhaps were not following Arthur's teaching. The truth is that in a deeper sense, Arthur was actually seeking to understand or fathom the very essence of the Chinese civilization, its raison d'etre. A lot of people, perplexed by his not dwelling on why modern Chinese thinkers and even scientists did not appreciate the "value" of modernity, neglected the deeper concern Arthur held and shared with his students. Conrad and I, for that matter, actually benefited deeply from his teaching. Conrad was even more receptive to Confucianism at its face value, and would occasionally tell me that Joseph Needham could not see the important contributions Confucianism made to science. For him, Needham was misled by Daoism and its mysticism. In Arthur's last trip to England, in 1976, he made a point of visiting Needham at Cambridge, for that, Needham was most grateful, and kindly remarked that Arthur was "a great friend" (in his lectures in New Asia College of The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1979). I told this to Conrad in 1991. I am sure Conrad and I were at the time the only people who could truly appreciate the friendship between Arthur and Needham.

Conrad's studies on Confucianism were thus an internalist one. He found in late Professors Wing-tsit Chan and Wm. Theodore de Bary a similar appreciation of a civilization that was not created to develop modern science and its related worldview. Conrad as a result was very close to both of them, being active in Columbia's Neo-Confucian seminar, Hyman Center, and, most importantly, world civilization core curriculum. In all these activities, he helped to present a China in the Chinese people's own views and own self-image.

In 2007, upon my return to Taiwan to take on directing the general education program in National Chiao-tung University, Conrad began to come to Taiwan, in 2008 and 2009, together with Douglas Chalmers, Rachael Chung, and James Kim, to help promote what Columbia has been so successful in doing, teaching world civilizations at its core curriculum program. I was very grateful for his supports and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, in recent years, Taiwan has retreated from its interests in the so-called "general education" and showed no new interests in Columbia's example, even if we tried very hard to explain how "core curriculum" was different from the smorgasbord-like "general education". My failure to succeed in convincing the then Taiwan government's Ministry of Education left me very disillusioned with the remnants in Taiwan of traditional Chinese educational philosophy, and very apologetic to the good friends who had so much high hope for spreading Columbia's system in East Asia.

I last saw Conrad in late July. He was so cheerful in seeing me and my wife, talking excitingly about writing his memoirs. I am hoping to read it soon. I know it would be very enlightening for me. I am sure yet, that the book will not be able to record all he had done, let alone all he must have thought of doing. As a gentleman who was simultaneously comfortable in America, in East Asia, and in Germany, Conrad was a "east, west, south, north" man. I could not find any remark to describe him that is apter than this. He has now moved even beyond it, and has become also an "up and down" man. Conrad, I will always keep you in my memory, as a reference in my reminiscences and my groping for an even more truthful understanding of the purposes of civilizations.