

FOREWORD

David Nivison came to Stanford in 1948 as an acting instructor in Chinese in the Department of Asiatic and Slavic Studies. Prior to this time he had graduated from Harvard with a major in far eastern languages, served for three years in the United States Army from 1943–1946 as a translator of Japanese, and begun graduate work at Harvard. While holding various positions at Stanford in the early 1950s he completed his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1953 and in the fall of that year became an instructor in Chinese and Philosophy at Stanford. After his one-year appointment, which ended in 1954, he received a Fulbright Research Fellowship for study in Japan in 1954–1955 and then returned to Stanford as a Lecturer in Philosophy from 1955–1958, a position that gave him considerable freedom to teach what he wanted and continue research. In 1959 he was appointed Associate Professor of Chinese and Philosophy at Stanford, and he continued as a tenured member of the Stanford faculty until his retirement in 1988. Beginning in 1974 he became Professor by Courtesy in the Department of Religious Studies. In 1983 he was appointed the Walter Y. Evans-Wentz Professor of Oriental Philosophies, Religions, and Ethics, and in connection with this Chair, a member of the faculty in the Departments of Philosophy, Asian Languages, and Religious Studies. During his many years as a faculty member at Stanford, David split his time on a regular basis between the Department of Philosophy and the Department of Asian Languages, and in the later years the Department of Religious Studies. He was active in all three of these departments both intellectually and administratively.

As can be seen from this brief academic history, David originally concentrated his intellectual energies in the study of Far Eastern languages. His interest in philosophy began to be serious in the early 1950s. In the winter of 1952 he audited my Intermediate Logic course. To develop his teaching skills in philosophy, he took charge of the sections in Elementary Logic in the fall of 1955, and then gave the lec-

tures himself in the spring of 1956. Moreover, in 1952–1953 he had a faculty research fellowship from the Ford Foundation for study in philosophy at Stanford and Harvard; one of the highlights of that fellowship was auditing Quine's Philosophy of Language course at Harvard. In those early years, he also attended several courses of Donald Davidson's and was a continual participant in Davidson's graduate seminar in philosophy from 1956 until the early 1960s when Davidson left Stanford for Princeton.

Apart from this brief summary of how David developed his interest in philosophy, what is important to note is the central role he played over many years in the Department of Philosophy in the teaching of a variety of courses in Chinese philosophy, as well as courses in elementary logic, philosophy of history, and Marxist ethics. The philosophy department was indeed fortunate to have such a distinguished scholar of Chinese intellectual thought continually engaged in the academic life of the department, even when he was carrying a substantial load in other areas. But there is more to it than I have yet expressed. I remember in the late 1960s reading some of the reviews of his extraordinarily well-received book, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsiieh-ch'eng*, and I thought, it is very clear that David is becoming one of the few distinguished American scholars of Chinese intellectual thought in what we would consider the early modern period. Not long after that, however, he began a course of research that took him in a new and surprising direction. He began research on ancient Chinese inscriptions as he became engrossed in the problem of a more accurate dating of early Chinese chronology.

From his interest in Chinese chronology and ancient Chinese inscriptions, he was led to what has turned out to be a deep and continuing interest in ancient Chinese astronomy, a subject in which after many years he is just beginning to publish, for example, in his work on the origin of the Chinese lunar zodiac. Even more surprising is that after he saw an exhibit of pre-Columbian work at the National Gallery in Washington D.C., he saw immediate parallels between Aztec and ancient Chinese astronomy. He has since proceeded to learn much about Aztec astronomy, even to study the Aztec language and to attend a variety of conferences on astronomy in Mesoamerica. I can remember when he told me about his ideas about Aztec astronomy about ten

years ago. It was like other conversations I have had on many occasions with David. I always learn something that I did not know before, and often in a very enlightening way.

I now want to turn to a survey of David's surprisingly wide-ranging administrative services at Stanford. Already in 1962 he served as Acting Head of the Department of Asian Languages for several months, and then served as the first Director of the Stanford Center for Chinese Studies in Taipei, Taiwan. In 1969–1972 he served as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy which, in my own judgment, was the most difficult period to be a Chairman in the modern history of Stanford. This was a time of student riots and problems between students and administration in universities throughout the world. I can remember that David spent one night in 1970 in his office in order to protect the Department of Philosophy building from attack. This is only one of several occasions during this tense period when a Chairman was called upon to have strength of character far beyond that ordinarily thought of as a requirement for the position. David was fortunately the best possible choice as chairman during this period. He also served in 1970–1972 as a faculty member on the Judicial Council, which handled a series of tense and difficult disciplinary cases. The faculty members on this committee were often verbally attacked publicly by students during this period. He served again as Chairman of the Department of Philosophy for the academic year 1975–1976 and was Acting Chairman of the Department of Asian Languages for 1985–1986. He served on numerous other committees at Stanford, too numerous to mention, and in particular on committees of all three departments of which he was a member during the last years of his academic appointment.

Outside of Stanford David has also had an active role in a variety of organizations, but I want to mention especially, as a measure of his esteem among philosophers, that he was elected President of the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association for 1979–1980.

David's long-term interest in Mencius, Confucius, and central problems of what we would term Chinese moral philosophy continues, but now he is as interested in ancient Chinese astronomy and even its relation to Aztec astronomy. Although I was surprised at this shift, I was not as surprised as I might have been, because I have known for a long

time about David's strong interest in one of the famous outstanding problems of number theory, namely, does there exist an infinite number of twin primes, that is, prime numbers p such that both p and $p+2$ are prime? He did not solve the problem, which is still open, but I know that he did spend, at various times, a lot of time thinking about it and trying various approaches to a proof. Anyone who has thought hard about the twin prime problem is bound to find logic easy to learn, and I guess we could even generalize this to ancient astronomy. As I said already, every time that I see David I learn something new. I would not want to predict in what direction his intellectual energies will next be focused.

Patrick Suppes
Stanford, California