| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

The Interview and Survey as Philosophical Research Tools in Chinese Thought

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| **ABSTRACT**

Through this study, it is proposed to examine Chinese thought from a perspective that moves away from the limitations of Eurocentrism, which tends to relegate non-Western philosophies to the realm of myth or religion. To this end, a methodological approach will be adopted that prioritizes the analysis of primary sources, complemented by empirical research tools such as surveys and interviews, traditionally less employed in philosophical research. A deep exploration of Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism, which stands out as a philosophical system that significantly influences the shaping of Chinese and East Asian societies, can contribute to establishing a fruitful dialogue between Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. To this end, the universal human experience of death was considered as an object of study, as it may serve as a meeting point, capable of revealing the convergences and divergences in the conception of existence. For this purpose, interviews and surveys were conducted with Chinese citizens, allowing us to hear firsthand their ideas and thoughts on death. Although interviews and surveys have often been considered tools more suitable for social sciences, it is possible to recognize in them, through philosophical analysis and reflection, the philosophical principles present in all human endeavors.

1. Introduction

Focusing only on the guidelines of thought from a Euro-centrist vision would be limiting universal thinking, taking away the voice of all those cultures whose philosophies are still cataloged, by the West, within the myth, dogma, religion, and folklore because their ideas reflect their nature and worldview of reality]; as Said mentioned (2023), "orientalism expresses and represents, from a cultural and even ideological point of view, that part as a mode of discourse which is based on institutions, vocabulary, teachings, images, doctrines, and even colonial bureaucracies and styles."(Kindle pg. 130-132) Examples of this are Chinese classics such as *The Analects of Confucius, The Tao Te King of Lao Tse, and The Upanishads* which are part of Hindu literature and are the basis of Hinduism, or Buddhism, which is much more than a religious doctrine, and becomes part of a philosophical system that was and is present in India, China, Japan among other Asian and Western countries. Latin American thinkers have developed their thought influenced by Europe adapting it to their context, interpretation, and representation of reality. Therefore, it is urgent to explore and understand non-Western thought, its forms of expression, its philosophical and anthropological foundations, representation of philosophical thought, identifying their ethical, and moral differences, and conceptions of beauty and ideals, as wandering those meeting points.

Nevertheless, is there a lack of philosophy in the East? Is not death, its representations and conceptions, part of man's metaphysical work? And, therefore, a representation of the philosophical work both in the East and in the West. Although from the Western perspective, some Eastern cultures, including China, do not possess a philosophy, since they do not seek the first causes, and the specific subject of death, does not have a transcendence beyond the natural, being considered only as a biological process and not a subject of anthropological and philosophical interest. Hegel (1975), in his work *Lectures About Universal History*

Philosophy harshly criticizes Eastern philosophy since he indicates that it is nothing more than "a set of religious representations" (p. 111); the Chinese thought indicates that the Chinese culture "has been reduced as progress has been made in its knowledge" (p. 113). The author considers that in comparison with Europe, China is not at the level of development of European countries and that the West could never adopt them because no matter how formally developed these institutions are they cannot govern among us; we would never resign ourselves to them because in our countries such institutions instead of being a right, it would be on the contrary, the violation of all rights

However, by getting closer to the Chinese culture we will be able to realize that there are rites, traditions, and customs full of meanings, which go far beyond practicality and immediate usefulness. For centuries the image of the Chinese as "soulless people" has been perceived from a Christian and Western perspective, due to the interpretation carried out by the West based on ancient Chinese texts where Chinese intellectuals have not sought an answer to the question of what happens after death? as shown in Book XI- Xian Jin of The Analects, Ji Lu asked Confucius about death and he replied: "if you still do not know life, how could you know about death?" (Confucius, 2020, p. 72); also in the words of neo-Confucian Zhang Zai by Feng Youlan (1989) in his Brief History of Chinese Philosophy (1989), the Sage knows that "life brings no achievement and death no loss" (p. 354) focusing only on living the present, and not on what this means and what comes with it. Another quote from the same author mentions "In life, I follow and serve [the universal parents], and when death comes to me, I rest." (p. 353) There is nothing but the present and death is only rest, the end of everything, one lives in an eternal "here and now."

At first glance, it seems that death is not a present issue in Chinese society and that it differs by light years from Western thinking; however, the conception and representations of death impact the way life develops, no matter time, context, or history, whether one believes in heaven or nothing after death, the subject of death largely determines human behavior and represents a philosophical task.

Likewise, for a long time the way of thinking between West and East has been regarded as separate and opposite, with no search for meeting points, recognizing each other's human nature, and therefore their fears as well as those of death. Feng Youlan (1989) states that "a student accustomed to elaborate reasoning and detailed argumentation would not know what to do to understand these Chinese philosophers. He or she would be inclined to think that their thoughts are disjointed. If this were true, there would be no Chinese philosophy. Because a disjointed thought is not worthy of the name philosophy" (p. 27). It was until the 20th century that we began to identify ourselves, but still very little is known about Chinese thought and its representations. This is why it is essential and urgent to know how the thought of death in life is governed and how it influences the development of societies, not what there is after death, because if this premise was the purpose of death in China and the West, specifically from the Christianity vision, it would be abysmally different, but it sees the relevance of an approach to the East through death perhaps as a bridge linking both philosophical perspectives since our human nature, the restlessness of death is a guideline for our path and can be the meeting point of our humanity.

However, recognizing the diversity of thought that has occurred throughout history, Confucian thought has been selected to address Chinese thought, this is because it is the most widespread and influential Chinese philosophical school within Chinese thought both in antiquity and in the present. Botton Beja, Cervera & Yong (2020) mention that "Confucianism, which is not a religion, gave lasting ideological cohesion to social organization, the family and government, and had an unusual continuity in the form of administration through the centralized bureaucratic state that prevailed in China until the 20th century " (p. 78); in the same way the influence of Confucianism is not limited to China, it has also impacted the rest of East Asian countries such as Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan, stated that "today it is studied as the generator of "Asian values", in contrast to Western ideas and as a possible driver of the current economic prosperity of East and Southeast Asia" (p.83).

2. Literature review

As a first point the difficulty of identifying Chinese thought will be addressed, this is because the Chinese define their thought as philosophy, and just as it happens in their language, they do not feel the need to justify, spread, and seek to have their thought understood beyond their borders, which has made a difficult access to Chinese authors, their analysis and interpretation.

Adding to China´s hermeticism. the structures of Western thought have not found a concordance between what is called philosophy and Chinese thinking, so many times, Chinese philosophizing is cataloged within myth, magic, and religion. Baggini (2019) mentions that "what we see in the beginnings of philosophy is an attempt to move from stories transmitted and accepted under authority to more systematic explanations that are able to resist the scrutiny of reason" (p. 20); however, by subjecting Chinese thought to this scrutiny, it will often not get away with it, since Chinese reason differs from Western reasoning and it is the task of this research to know the way of thinking about death and its representations.

Another barrier that it was faced in the research of Chinese thought was the rejection of the other. Martínez (2007) states that "China is our other, as it has always been, an extremely distant country… and language has undoubtedly contributed to the reification of this stereotyped image" (p.13); reflecting on many occasions falling into mystification and rejection, based on Skliar (2002) "… is the other mythical and mythologized in a lurking exteriority, which strives to obstruct the integrity of our identity, which presents itself each time with a face or under a different shade or less usually with a face -or under a multiple - shadow" (p. 96). This image is constantly represented as the image of the threat to democracy, freedom, and values that are so representative of the West.

Enrique Dussel , a Spanish-American philosopher who has consistently defended the thought of the philosophy of liberation, rejecting Eurocentrism also analyzes China, not from a semiotic perspective, but from a decolonizing approach, the text published in 2004 and entitled "China (1421-1800) Reasons to question Eurocentrism" in the cultural magazine *Archipiélago* edited by the National Autonomous University of Mexico, through an exhaustive analysis, argues that the traditional Eurocentric position is affirmed through colonization, which was made possible not by "discovery", but by the "recognition" of geographies already known and mapped by the Chinese. Throughout the text, Dussel (2004) notes how the contributions of Chinese culture, which is voluntarily isolate it   from the rest of humanity, not ceasing to grow and develop its thinking; will contribute to the creation of the current world. Dussel (2004) points out that "although the western culture is globalizing -on a certain technical, economic, political, military level- it does not exhaust other moments of enormous creativity that affirm from their "Exteriority" other living cultures, resistant, growing. This is the case of China"(p. 13). This can be understood as a recognition of the contributions of China and other cultures, which, although they are not equal to the Western ones, their creativity and peculiarity are their foundation.

It is considered that, through the conduct of this research, it will be possible to approach Chinese philosophy from its sources, seeking to be objective and foreign to the Eurocentrism that has marked our Western thinking and consequently to better understand China and its thinking. It is also needed to be multicultural, expanding understanding through the knowledge of different philosophical traditions, because just as with language, since there is no universal language, it is a must to learn other languages to expand our understanding, the same applies to philosophy, there are many forms of thought as well as diversity in philosophical traditions, whether Western or non-Western, and the more philosophical traditions we know, the greater our understanding of reality. Therefore, the search for these philosophical traditions is part of this philosophical responsibility.

Graham (2012) states that "we, like the Chinese, only become fully involved in thinking when we manage to link it to our problems" (p.11); so the knowledge of Chinese philosophical thought could generate that bond between West and East, by involving us in each other's thinking. This would mean to involve ourselves in Chinese thought by linking death as a West theme such as well as to all human civilization, in this way it could never be indifferent.

Likewise, as the subject of Chinese thought has been deepened, the complexity of its thought and the lack of original texts allow us to have a real approach that allows us to understand it and not refer to the translation and Euro-centric interpretation. Another element that has been identified in the lead-up to this research is the large number of prejudices and stereotypes that limit the possibility of knowledge, but as researchers, we must be open to knowledge, free from prejudice and dogma, whether these are cultural or epistemic.

Although various studies have explored Chinese thought about the West, it is important to highlight that many of these studies have been conducted in Europe or the United States, with few originating from Hispanic America. Recently, El Colegio de México published the book *Historia mínima del confucionismo* by Flora Botton Beja, José Antonio Cervera, and Yong Chen (2020). While it is a valuable contribution to the dissemination of Chinese thought, it approaches the topic from a historical point of view rather than a philosophical perspective and does not compare to Western thought, making it more descriptive than analytical.

In addition, a growing interest has been identified by Chinese researchers, who have worked the Chinese and Western philosophy through comparison as is the doctoral research of Zao, Lin (2017), in *Beyond conflicts: a comparison between Unamuno's tragic philosophical thought and classical Chinese philosophy*; a doctoral dissertation from the Autonomous University of Madrid at the Department of Spanish Social Anthropology and Philosophical Thought, which presents an analysis, a comparison, and an evolution of both classical Chinese thought and the philosophical thought of Unamuno. Also, Li, Ya (2020) in *Death in contemporary Mexican literature compared to oriental thought* a doctoral dissertation in Linguistic, literary, and cultural studies from the University of Barcelona at the Department of Hispanic Philology where the theory of literature and communication works as a type of study: descriptive, exploratory, and interpretative, which, although it has an approach similar the present research that focused on literature and not on philosophy. Li, Ya (2020) makes a journey through the historical background of death in Mexico and China, finally showing the evolution of death and its manifestation in contemporary literature. Accessing this dissertation is of great help since it allows us to see the representation of death from the Chinese thought and the interpretation of it in Mexico from the Chinese view. The Spanish author Telletxea, J. (2015) in *El capitalismo y las religiones en China: revisión de los postulados de Max Weber en la China del nuevo siglo* doctoral dissertation from the Public University of Navarra at the Sociology Department, carries out an analytical type of study in four phases: cultural assimilation, study of the educational, state and government, and the industry and business sphere. These investigations show the similarities that exist between the West and East, but the need for an approach from Latin America has been identified, work that has not yet been done.

3. Methodology

In order to understand the knowledge of Chinese thought and to be able to recognize the representations of death in Confucianism, it was proposed a research method with a qualitative starting point. But why this method and not another? let's begin by identifying that the object of study is a cultural element since philosophical thought represents the man´s work. Although the concept of culture could have many definitions, the proposal by Niklas Luhmann (1997), quoted by Carassale and Martinez (2016), will be considered stating that "culture occupies a meta-level, in which it remains indeterminate concerning the relations of social order" (p. 9), and it is within this meta-level that we will find philosophical thought.

Identifying the research as a cultural fact, how do we approach it? Carassale, S., and L. Martínez (2016) note that "Culture as an object of research has been approached from different perspectives and disciplines of the social sciences -in particular anthropology, history, and sociology- to define and orient (delimiting and directing) the content and work of cultural research" (p. 10) there are different approaches for this, such as the structuralist, pragmatic and cultural pragmatic proposed by Jeffrey Alexander. In the case of the study of Chinese thought, the approach can be from the pragmatic theory since it allows to know "the meaning emerging from the contingencies of individual and collective actions and that analyze cultural patterns as reflections of power and material interests" (Jeffrey Alexander, 2005). Confucianism has been identified within these reflexes of power, being the ideology promoted by the different dynasties, as well as with a more pragmatic purpose, such as the social order.

Quantitative research has dominated in recent centuries and requires elements such as those mentioned by González (2007): universal categories, classification routines, and affirmation criteria, criteria that the cultural fact does not possess at the moment to be changing, particular, and although it can be established criteria of validity, not of affirmation. The subjective sense, as well as a social subjectivity presented through "social representations, myths, beliefs, moral, sexuality, it is crossed by the discourses of meaning that configure its imaginary organization" (p. 44), precisely one of the interviewees constantly questioned whether he should answer from his point of view, either academically or socially, since he indicated that there is no single "representation of death", but a set of representations which vary based on the one who answers. This is why using quantitative criteria for our research would not be feasible, since we need tools that allow us to understand the "individual subject as a methodological need", considering who and what is being studied.

Vasilachis (2006) states that "Qualitative research is concerned with people's lives, their subjective perspectives, their stories, their behavior, their experiences, their interactions, their actions, their senses, and interprets all of them in a situational way, that is, placing them in the particular context in which they take place. Attempting to understand these contexts and their processes and explain them using local causality" (p. 33). As there is an interest in knowing Chinese Confucianist thought from different subjective perspectives, even more in the changing China, which currently combines past, present, and future: a generation that lived the cultural revolution of 1970, another that is the result of restrictions and controls such as birth control established since the 80's until the new generation, born in the new China, globalized, industrial and open.

If the research were to be focused quantitatively, the results would be sought from others, whereas in qualitative research this is not always possible since the subjects, relationships, and structures, as well as the role of the researcher will vary according to the method implemented and the context delimited within time and space. Likewise as Vasilachis (2006) mentioned, the flexibility to return to the field, reconsider the design, collect new data, implement our collection and analysis strategies, as well as review and modify interpretations, can only be given to us by qualitative research.

Furthermore, this research has a mainly philosophical approach, where cultural representations will also be addressed. Within the philosophical research, Sáez Rueda (2001), in his work *Movimientos filosóficos Actuales* shows us four of the philosophical research methods that are current in our time: *the phenomenological method*, inaugurated by Husserl, *the analytical philosophy* proposed by Wittgenstein, hermeneutics, which has Gadamer and Ricoeur as its exponents, and the dialogical theory, which has Habermas among its representatives. Ruiz, J. (2012) indicates that "qualitative methodology cannot be practiced without understanding the philosophical assumptions that support it and neither can it be understood by those who do not assume them" (p. 13) and this can be seen in these methods of qualitative research: dialectical hermeneutics, phenomenological, comprehensive, naturalistic, ethnographic and anchored theory, these proposed by Guardían-Fernández (2007), who share assumptions, but from different approaches.

3.1 Study Population

This research has a philosophical rather than sociological approach; therefore, the study population is found in the cultural representations shown through cultural products such as artistic rituals and literary representations. However, this research will not only be a hermeneutic analysis of texts but will also carry out field research through observation and interviews to directly understand the representations of death within Chinese Confucianism. For this purpose, and due to the health conditions found globally, the following criteria was considered for the selection of the interviewees:

- *Native Chinese citizens*. they are the ones who have experienced Chinese culture and its representations.
- *Native Chinese who are fluent in English.* Although there are Chinese citizens in Monterrey, many of them do not speak Spanish or English, due to the secrecy that exists in the Chinese community, which is why we sought citizens with whom we could communicate clearly and fluently.
- *Native Chinese who are knowledgeable about Chinese culture.* Being a citizen of a country does not mean that we know the culture, even if we live it. It was at the Confucius Institute of the Autonomous University of Nuevo León where we found Chinese citizens who know and seek to spread Chinese culture.

Considering the above, the study population can be limited to native Chinese who are knowledgeable about their culture.

3.2 Theoretical sampling

There are different types of samples, the intentional ones being the most suitable for qualitative research, among them: opinion sampling and theoretical sampling since it does not obey fixed rules, an element that allows the flexibility of the research.

Within the interview, a sampling of cases is carried out, since this "is aimed at filling the cells of the sample structure as evenly as possible or filling in all the sufficient ones" (Flick 2011, p.77). It is useful since, although we cannot interview all the teachers at the Confucius Institute, taking a sample and specific cases will allow us to understand part of the reality.

Flick (2011) mentions certain criteria for sampling that are *a priori* of the sample structure, it is impossible to sample without defining what you want to investigate, and although this limits the possible comparisons, it is necessary to delimit the focus of the research the theoretical method, proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), mentioned by Ruiz (2012) "is the process of collecting data to generate theory using which the analyst collects, codifies and analyzes data jointly and decides what data to collect next and where to find it, to develop his theory as it arises" (p. 44). This means that, although certain selection criteria must be in sampling, at the same time it is also open, and this does not end until theoretical saturation is reached.

In the sample, particularly typical cases were selected, to include, within the limits of the sample, the Chinese citizen and how it represents death and its connection with Confucianism. The maximum variation is discarded because it would show variations and differentiations, which are far from our research objectives, we want to know the typical not the different.

3.3 Study Context

The idea of conducting these face-to-face interviews was originally raised, if possible even in a field work within a Chinese province; unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic was an obstacle in this project; thus, these interviews were conducted virtually.

The interviews were conducted with citizens who have mastered the English language, so communication could be fluid, and they have a university academic background, as well as performing a job as "promoters of Chinese culture" abroad. The establishment where they were interviewed is a non-profit government organization and is sponsored by the government as part of promoting Chinese culture around the world. The historical moment when research began was in 2022, within a global pandemic, which has prevented face-to-face interactions but has facilitated communication through the *emergence* of massive use of digital platforms, they have broken the barriers of space, so both interviews were conducted through digital platforms: WhatsApp and Zoom, this because the interviewees said to feel safer keeping the recommended social distancing during the pandemic.

Surveys were also conducted among Chinese citizens through digital platforms, for this purpose, a survey with 12 items was published, which can be consulted in the annexes. The information was collected through some of the main Chinese platforms, including Weibo, Zhihu, Baidu, Tieba, and Douban.

3.4 Information gathering techniques

Ruiz (2012) mention that in the collection of data "it becomes of special importance ... to establish in advance the strategic position with which to start data collection, the process of approach to informants, guidance on not getting lost or stopping at secondary or disorienting aspects" (p. 63) as well as in quantitative research it is of vital importance for experimenting, for qualitative research it will be the confidence criteria that support the samples.

At the beginning of this research, it was considered that techniques such as observation and interviews were foreign to philosophical research, however, as the characteristics of qualitative research, its techniques, and methods have been further explored, it has been demonstrated that there are a set of tools that will be essential for the research from its beginning, development, and conclusions. Some of these tools have already been applied, some were applied unconsciously, but now with a clearer understanding of their correct application these can generate better results. One might ask: How can observation and interviews be used in such a distant culture?, one can answer that observation has been made through cultural representations, such as what is published on social networks, and digital platforms such as WeChat (equivalent to WhatsApp), Weibo (a combination of Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook), Bilibili (equivalent to YouTube) or Baike (equivalent to Wikipedia), it has also been possible to contact and establish a *rapport* with native teachers from the Confucius Institute of the Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon, which facilitates interviews, enabling engagement with specific individuals that will be useful for the creation of information, as we recall that the purpose of the interview, rather than collecting information, is the generation of knowledge.

Observation, in-depth interviews, and reading texts are the data collection techniques that stand out in qualitative research. Here again, the importance of the researcher's proximity to the research process is highlighted, since the aim is for the researcher to have easy access to the data acquisition, without any intermediary. It is precisely said that accessibility to the object of study is the first problem that the researcher faces.

Participant observation is a methodology for social sciences, which allows an approach to reality from an objective manner but considering the particular realities of each of the scenarios. Knowing and mastering techniques such as "snowball", which

introduces us to a certain scenario starting with a delimited group to gradually increase our sample based on the recommendation of another participant or keeping a record of what is not understood or what is believed to be understood allowing the generation of knowledge. This technique was considered for the research, although it was concluded that using it as the only method was not possible since it there was not immersed in Chinese culture, but still can be work done on observations without the context that could give us better results. That is why, although observation will be used, the interview is the main resource that will allow us to collect data.

The interview gives voice to the participant within the explanation of social phenomena, and this is achieved when granting "a practical rationality of the participant or social subject and the meaning of the action" (Hernández, 2016, p.80), these assumptions were proposed, although in different works, by Touraine and Bordieu and are analyzed by Hernández (2016), who applies these concepts in his study about the Totonacs and how they were addressed through the interview.

Hernández (2016) highlights the concepts of representation and symbolic violence in the research because within his investigation he seeks to "inquire about the meanings of being Totonac" (p. 65) that is, to know the representations through the interview, which he defines as "a technique that promotes the interviewee's discourse on topics of particular interest, which accounts for processes, meanings, and actions as well as the conscious interpretations that the participants make about said actions and processes" (p. 86) elements similar to those are proposed in the present research, where there is an interest in knowing the meaning of death within Confucian thought in China. These meanings can be known through the actions and processes of the participants, in this case, death rituals, from a social approach or philosophical texts as representations, but what are these?

Hernández (2016) retakes Spivak (1988) for whom representation can be distinguished as 'the sense of an aesthetic image' and representation in the political sense, however Hernandez (2016) questions this by considering that when there is a representation from this approach, the researcher ends up silencing the "subaltern subject, keeping his voice oppressed while reproducing discourses of tutelage and domination" (p. 69); therefore he proposes the interview through dialogue and the recordings of the voices of the members of the organization that were studied considering knowing their symbolic capital, he also uses strategies that have been seen by other authors, such as the establishment of a *rapport*; it was able to detect that much of what was studied in Taylor's (1994) reading regarding participant observation applied to the interview, such as the recommendations at the entrance to the field, the gatekeepers, language learning; however, a different point of view from the observation is that in the interview the representations made by the interviewees have an important place regarding objectives, this will allow to share more information with the researcher or not. How the questions are asked, and avoiding the survey situation is also essential: the survey is just another answer, while in the interview, the interviewee is made to feel that answers are important, and shown understanding and sympathy. All these aspects remind of the points made by Martin Buber (2017) in his philosophy of dialogue, though Buber that handles it more as an ideology, this can be implemented in the interview, thus achieving better results.

It is important to highlight that the interview is a methodology with history, in knowledgeable areas such as psychology and education considered for decision-making as well as other areas. Likewise, our time is a "society of interviews" that according to Atkinson and Silverman (1997) refer to "the production of the self has been put on the front line and the interview serves as a social technique for the construction of the self", (p. 37) can tangibly sense this in the success of platforms such as YouTube or the podcasts that we find on Spotify. However, we should not confuse this type of interview with those used within qualitative research, in which the interview "becomes an approach based on careful questioning and listening to obtain meticulously verified knowledge" (p.37).

Kvale's (2011) vision is rescued, he shows research interviews as something between a philosophical dialogue and a therapeutic interview, the above being a philosophical dialogue, the interviewer poses questions to know the world of the interviewee, respecting this and not entering into debate, but rather into understanding, as well as therapeutic because the researcher encourages the personal expressions and emotions of the interviewee, to know his or her world, not seeking to change it because the aim of all qualitative research is the generation of knowledge, not the change of the reality being investigated.

Rapport is essential for the development of the research and consequently the interview. In the particular case of the Chinese, they are hermetic towards others, perhaps due to cultural differences or language barriers, plus the fact that the two interviewees were previously known through a teacher-student relationship, fluid communication is achieved. It is important to consider that the interview had a relationship where the interviewer was in a lower position than the interviewee because the interviewee was chosen because of his expertise, the approach was therefore different than if we were investigating another social problem.

3.5 Information analysis technique

Within qualitative research, the instrument through the information is obtained is crucial, as well as the information analysis technique, with which we will transform our data from information to generating knowledge.

To do this, the necessary tools must be considered and which have evolved as technology advances. An example of this is the use of CAQDAS (Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programs) which serve as support for the analysis and interpretation of texts. Although there is much debate about their use: for some authors, CAQDAS only carry out quantitative processes and do not allow for true interpretation, others indicate that they only help in data management and that interpretation will be the responsibility of the researcher. But to achieve this interpretation, data preparation will be carried out, with transcription being the first step to be taken, once we have collected the data.

In this research, digital tools were used for implementation, such as automatic audio and video recording through Zoom. This resulted in an MP4 audio file that allowed to have accurate information and then transcribe the interview. Although platforms like Microsoft Teams now offer automatic transcription, it is not recommended to use this feature because the resulting transcriptions are often unreliable and contain many errors, so this process was executed manually. It is important to note that during the English intervention, various challenges were found, including difficulties in comprehension, as well as the moment when the interviewee mixed phrases in English, Chinese, and Spanish in the same sentence. This is one of the faced challenges when conducting research with sources in different languages. The thematic coding and categorization was developed for this research using Gibbs (2014) coding defined as "the way we define what the data we are analyzing are about," (p. 75) meaning that there will be identifying and recording the data that exemplify some of the ideas from the work.

4. Outcomes

Based on the two interviews conducted, one synchronously via Zoom and the other asynchronously, by filling out the questionnaire the following results were obtained:

Both interviewees were Chinese, teachers, and residents of Monterrey, Nuevo León, and both spoke English fluently. However, it was noted that their age influenced their responses. The first interviewee was a man in his late 40s, while the second interviewee was a woman in her early 20s. This showed that while their responses were similar in some points, as we will see regarding philosophy and values, the issues of culture and specifically death rituals vary since as the second interview indicated, "I cannot represent all Chinese people" and she frequently mentioned the difference between the vision of young people and the elderly, while the first interviewee's answers were universal statements, without a doubt.

The interview was analyzed through 20 codes, categorized into four main groups: philosophy, culture, values, and death. The philosophy group consisted of eight codes: philosophical concepts, Confucius, philosophical currents, ethics, Chinese philosophers, origin of the world, subjectivity, and Taoism. Within this group, both interviewees emphasized the significance of Confucius in Chinese philosophical thought, since they consider him the basis of Chinese values and, by extension, ethics. It was noted that the teaching of Chinese philosophy, particularly that of Confucius, begins in basic education and is upheld throughout the life of the Chinese citizen.

In the culture group, various codes were organized, including codes of evil, beliefs, cultural mixtures, the origin of the world, religion, and cultural similarities. Some codes appeared in two or more groups because they were linked to each other, such as the origin of the world, which has a philosophical foundation but is also transmitted from culture. Religion was the most recurrent code, since it is in this one that thought about death and action are based. Both interviewees agree that the impact of religion is great and the need for preparation for death, as well as the fact that the elderly fear it and little is said about it due to the superstition that mentioning it attracts death. However, it is here where we find a difference between young people and adults, since the interviewee tells us that young people are not afraid to talk about death and some of them have adopted Western beliefs such as Christianity, changing their conception of death to a hope for heaven. A code that allows us to compare whether the objectives of our research were achieved is the cultural similarities, in which it was discovered that there are resemblances in both cultures in concepts such as death and family, in the same rites exist similarities and these were analyzed in the group of codes called "Death."

This group of codes was made up of four codes: dealing with death, thinking about death, and Chinese rituals and traditions. It was considered to link the "Cultural Similarities" code. The ritual code allowed to identify cultural resemblances between China and Mexico since they manage to visit the graves to pay homage to the dead, clean them, and spend time with the dead, as well as having at least three festivals where they are honored, such as the Zhongyuan Festival, the Spring Festival, and the Qingming Festival, which takes place in April and it is similar to the Day of the Dead that is celebrated in our country. It is amazing how two foreign and distant cultures coincide not only in the ritual of death but also in the meaning of family.

An element that is not considered in the research, but I believe that could be investigated in future work is family and how values change when it comes to it, since the interviewee told us that in China, as in Mexico, your family may be delinquent, may be at fault in society, but it is your family and as such should be respected and always wished good. Acting with death is another code that is linked to religion and the thought of it. Since according to the religious idea or belief, one will act in front of death, these codes help to prove one of the hypotheses of the research, and it is how the ideas of death govern our conduct. Among the answers given to us, it was found that the elderly, by not believing in heaven, fear death, but the young prepare themselves, although the subject could be difficult.

Finally, the code group of "Values", which is formed by the codes of ethics, nature, human, and Chinese values and values. A separation was made between Chinese values and values, since in the West it is defined from one perspective, whereas China, thanks to Confucianism, has others that could hardly be interpreted from the Western prospect. Values, determine that human nature is good by nature, and it is the context that brings this change. It is important to note that this vision belongs only to one of the interviewees, that adult who still considers it universal, while the second interviewee, held that the value of all Chinese is to make a good world, a good country, but not that this was intrinsic. Regarding Chinese values, self-cultivation, benevolence, and virtue are handled and can only be understood from Confucianism. And, although other values such as generosity, respect, kindness, and courtesy are promoted, these differ from the Western ones, since they are all based on the relationship of the other, of the collective, and not of the individual.

In the emerging models generated by the Atlas.ti program, the relationship between these four groups of codes and the interrelations that exist between them were observed, which allows us to understand that they are not isolated codes, but that there is an interdependence between one and the other, there is no philosophy without values, culture transmits (and defines) these values, which are shown through the religion and beliefs of the people, finally reflected in cultural representations such as death and its rites.

In the virtual surveys, a total of 13 individuals were interviewed. Among them, 69% were aged between 40 and 69 years, while 23% fell within the 25 to 40 age range. Additionally, 58% of the participants were from Shanghai and Peking, the two main cities in China.

62% of the respondents believe in reincarnation, while 15% believe in heaven, another 15 in the underworld, and 8% in other beliefs. It is striking how the belief in reincarnation, of Buddhist origin, remains so strong in the present and predominates over other more traditional beliefs. However, it must be remembered that it is difficult to define a single answer because beliefs about what happens after death are intertwined. Likewise, the influence of older people is very great, as an example of this is the following answer obtained from an 18-year-old from Peking: *"I think that many people believe in reincarnation because we often hear older people say that those who die become new lives, even animals."*

Another question asked was about funerals, and the answers varied based on age and place of origin. A 40-year-old from Shanghai responded that funeral practices are *"simple but solemn, where relatives wear white or black clothing as a sign of mourning, and we use incense and paper money to honor the soul of the deceased,"* while a 27-year-old from the autonomous region of Guangxi, a province in southern China that is home to the largest population of ethnic minorities, responded: *"Funerals are very traditional, relatives come, bring offerings, burn paper money. Everyone mourns together, but they also tell funny stories about the deceased to lighten the mood.".*

Regarding the third question about symbols of death in Chinese culture, everyone agreed on the importance of the color white, as it symbolizes solemnity and mourning, as well as the use of paper money, as shown by the response of another 18-year-old who mentioned *"White is the color that symbolizes death. We also use incense and paper money to show respect for the deceased. Young people may find these symbols somewhat mysterious."*

About festivals, the importance of the Qingming Festival is reiterated, the response of a 40-year-old respondent from Shanghai is particularly striking: *"During the Qingming Festival, everyone goes to clean the graves, but I think it is just a formality, many people go just to fulfill."* In particular, this individual showed a critical attitude towards rituals, considering them as formalities and unnecessary because *"they are just social customs. I think death is a natural part of life and does not need so much ceremony."*

As for the influence of the family on decisions related to death and mourning, its role remains fundamental, since as a response of another citizen of Shanghai *"the family usually makes joint decisions about funeral arrangements, the choice of grave, etc., respecting traditions and considering feng shui and family opinions. It is a way of showing respect for the deceased and a reflection of family unity."* Highlighting the importance of the family, as well as the elderly, as in the response of a respondent in his 30s, he mentions that *"the opinion of the family is very important, especially the decisions of the elders. In my family, the elders organize the rituals and specific details, and we young people mainly respect and follow their wishes."*

In the final question, which represents a conclusion to all of the above, when asking: What do you consider to be the cultural heritage related to death in China?, respondents agree on respect for ancestors through festivities, as well as funeral customs, in the words of a 25-year-old respondent from Shanghai: *"it reflects our respect for ancestors, traditional customs connect us with the past and teach us the importance of valuing life",* as well as *"it makes us feel a connection",* and *"it is an indispensable part"* of Chinese culture.

It is worth highlighting that, just as people were willing to respond voluntarily, many others responded but showed dissatisfaction with the survey being carried out. This is shown by the responses given by a 60-year-old citizen from the province of Heilongjiang, located in the extreme north of China, who responded: *"It is not your business. These symbols are part of our cultural heritage and there is no need to reveal them to outsiders."* Likewise, a 24-year-old young man from the province of Henan, located in the center of the country, showed distrust of the survey requested, mentioning *"There is no need for foreigners to evaluate Chinese literature and art. I do not believe that these questions are well-intentioned,"* and a respondent who did not provide age or location indicated that the topics questioned are private and it is not convenient or appropriate to respond: *"This belongs to the private sphere, I do not think it is necessary to explain it to outsiders, especially in a survey like this."* This type of response reinforces

Western stereotypes about a hermetic Chinese society, based on the words of one of the respondents "*These questions do not make sense to the Chinese. The Chinese have their traditions and it is not necessary to explain them to others*", as well as the request for this survey was removed from the platforms, it is unknown if it was due to reports of dissatisfaction by Internet users, or the possibility that it violated any of the institutional guidelines, however, it is necessary to point out that of the thirteen interviewees, only three showed this type of response, so there are more Chinese citizens open to dialogue and dissemination of their culture, as well as the answers given by these demonstrate the validity of the ideas studied in this research.

5. Conclusions

Through the interviews and surveys carried out, the gathered information allowed us to recognize the representations of death in China, representations marked through the rites, traditions, and beliefs of the Chinese people. Rites and traditions that, thanks to the ideological basis provided by Confucianism, have remained present and although they transform as society evolves, they remain since Confucianism grants the values that influence the representation of how death is prepared and experienced.

It was possible to answer the questions presented in this research by identifying that the representation of death in China, although it may generate fear or not, impacts the life of the Chinese citizen, forcing them to commit to their death and prepare for it. Furthermore, the values that the interviewees shared show how Confucianism influences Chinese ethics and morals reflected as values such as virtue, self-cultivation, and benevolence, regarding how every Chinese person is educated, and it is up to each person to seek and follow them.

Finally, it was gratifying to find the cultural similarities that exist between both cultures because, contrary to what is believed, death is a natural process that every living being must face. It is our human nature that allows us to find similarities in the way we face it, no matter whether we are Western or Eastern. Concepts such as respect, homage, love, and family are part of the human being, no matter their features, language, or nation.

This research is only the beginning of a great project since it opens the doors to other questions such as: Is Chinese Confucianism what Christianity is for the West? Is the value of the family a cultural concept or a universal concept? Does the difference between the thinking of Chinese youth and adults herald a change in ideology in China? Could it be consider a "westernization"?

Further research on this subject is encouraged, since it was able to reflect with this small sample that the obtained answers demonstrate the similarities that can surprise us and perhaps we will no longer see the other as a stranger, but as someone close, another with whom we can walk towards a globalized society by current demands, but a society where dialogue generates ties, not only because of the resemblances but also because of the differences that make us who we are and in which we can find other paths not walked so far.

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