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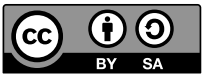

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SPECIAL ISSUE: TRANSFORMATIONS IN CHINA'S INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AT THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

Editor's Foreword

Introduction

Jana S. ROŠKER

The notion of modernity is a concept which doubtless helped to form contemporary societies, and in this regard, China is no exception. If we want to historically evaluate the Chinese attempts at establishing a "typical Chinese" philosophical basis for modernization, we need to consider the context of the questions linked to Hobsbawm's and Ranger's (1995) concept of "invented traditions". In other words, we must consider to what extent are the "past" intellectual "traditions" based on historic assumptions, and to what extent are they merely a product of the (ideological and political) demands of the current period. An important consequence of the current trans-nationalization of capital is that, perhaps for the first time in modern history, the global mode of production appears as an authentically universal abstraction that is no longer limited to its specific historical origins in Europe. Hence, the narrative of modernization is no longer an exclusively European one, and for the first time non-European societies are also making their own claims on the history of modernization (see Dirlik 1994).

In this context, it also seems important to go beyond narrow views that consider the prospect of a clash between Chinese and Western civilizations (e.g. Huntington 1993) without a basic historical grasp of the developments of the diverse, complex and multi-layered Chinese traditions in modern and contemporary China,[1] since the transition from the past to the present must necessarily be aware of these complexities (see, for example, Jiang 2011).

Diverse approaches to the questions related to the specifically Chinese mode of modernization have several times been at the centre of our interest, with a number of special issues of *Asian Studies* devoted to them. Among the papers published under the topic, several authors focused on the new modes of thought that were gradually brought to China from the Western world (e.g., Hočevar 2019; Vrhovski 2021), on the specifically Confucian forms of modernization (Huang 2020; Jia 2020), and on syntheses between Sinicized Marxism and the Chinese intellectual tradition (Dessein 2019; Paul 2021). However, most of these contributions were either centred on purely theoretical themes, or particularly focused upon questions of ideological transformations. To grasp a more comprehensive and coherent image of specific characteristics of Chinese modernity and

1 For a well-grounded critique of such approaches see, for instance, Yu Ying-shih (2005, 215).

its relation to the manifold historical developments of pre-modern China, we also need to examine the main elements that enable the amalgamation of traditional Chinese standards, principles and values into the framework of the dominant global developments in the realm of social and ideational history, sociology, and cultural studies.

The present issue aims to fill up this gap in the current literature. It deals with the period which embraces eight decades that were crucial to the development and establishment of present-day China. The period under research spans from the threshold of the previous century up until the 1980s, i.e. until the margins of the new millennium. This special issue explores how and why in the shaping of the first republic, China started the process of "national" consolidation. It explores several aspects of Maoist ideology which were brought to the fore in the subsequent socialist revolution, and investigates the implementation of widely based modernist experiments in social engineering and socialist, even communist, utopias. It shows that the abundant ideas developed in these experiments remained influential in China until the mid-1970s. The issue also depicts the intellectual background of the important shift in China's new image of modernity, in which the so-called Post-Mao transformations helped to establish a "state-socialist" directed approach to capitalism. It will hopefully help us to understand this significant shift and its consequences, which still pervade the social and political reality of contemporary China.

The issue is divided into three scopes of contents. The first questions some of the central theoretical and conceptual backgrounds of China's modernization. Joseph Ciaudo analyses whether the Western notion of "New Culture" can truly denote the scope of meanings and connotations implied in the Chinese term "*Xin wenhua*". Ady Van den Stock deals in the second article of this scope with the influence of Du Yaquan, a "cultural-conservative" scholar who lived on the boundary between the 19th and 20th centuries. Van den Stock's case-study analysis points to the hitherto overlooked complexity of different reactions to WWI in among Chinese academics on the edge of modernity.

The second scope deals with questions related to logic and methodology. In the first paper, Jan Vrhovski explores the Chinese debates and ideas related to the Marxist notion of dialectical logic, which started to circulate in the Chinese intellectual world in the late 1920s. This paper outlines the major landmarks within these debates in the 1930s, and sheds light on some new aspects of the connection between formal and dialectical logic in the scope of the sinization of Marxism in this period. The second contribution, written by Cui Qingtian, also deals with logic, but concentrates on the history of investigating, reviving and re-interpreting classical Chinese semantic logic. The last article in this scope is my own. It

analyses Zhang Dainian's work and shows its great importance in the search for a modernized methodology of Chinese philosophy.

Throughout the world, modernization was always connected not only with a sense of economic and political urgency, but also with ideals, hopes and passions. These are the main concerns of the third and last scope of contents, which contains two contributions, written by Federico Brusadelli and Téa Sernelj. The former also belongs to a certain type of case study, although it does not explore any particular person, work or idea. Instead, it investigates how the modernized form of a particular Western political order influenced certain Chinese intellectual strata. The author thus shows why and in which way the Swiss political system became a source of inspiration for several new institutions, organizations and intellectuals in modern China. The latter author also deals with an important source of inspiration, namely with the notion of beauty. It shows the connection of two large-scale aesthetic debates which took place in different periods of the second half of the 20th century, and have—each in their own way—profoundly influenced the contemporary views on the role and function of Chinese aesthetics and its connection to politics and economy.

Perhaps an important common thread of the present issue of *Asian Studies* is the fact that it confronts us with many unfulfilled ideals and promises that arose in the earlier eras of Chinese modernization, laying bare their opposites which manifest themselves in uncertainties and risks. It is important to see these risks, because many of them are still being mirrored in today's China. We must not forget that every uncertainty can also be seen as possibility; in this sense, new hopes can arise from old risks—as long as we are aware of them—and perhaps hopes and ideals are the most precious things we need to embrace when thinking about the present-day China and its future.

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SPECIAL ISSUE:

TRANSFORMATIONS IN CHINA'S INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AT THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

Evaluations and Critiques

Is "New Culture" a Proper Translation of *Xin wenhua*? Some Critical Remarks on a Long-Overlooked Dilemma

*Joseph CIAUDO**

Abstract

For several decades, we have been witnessing a profound renewal in our understanding of the "New Culture Movement". However, the aptness of "new culture" as a proper translation for *xin wenhua* 新文化 has almost never been discussed. The present paper argues that uniformly translating *xin* as "new" and *wenhua* as "culture" tends to blur the picture instead of making it clearer, for by so doing one unconsciously endorses the narrative of radical Chinese intellectuals while silencing other voices. Furthermore, the article puts forward the idea that terms such as *wenhua* 文化 encompassed a "multiplicity of potential readings" that have much to do with the transformation of Chinese language at the beginning of the 20th century, and with the emergence of a new conceptual repertoire. In their attempts to appropriate *xin wenhua* and turn it into a seemingly coherent movement with an agenda, Chinese intellectuals were fighting a war over the topic of "civilization/culture", but also, and perhaps primarily education. Yet, by employing the term "culture" in academic writing today, we tend to produce a historical dissonance for their use of this term is not our own: we thus fall into the trap of semantic transparency, and forget that the concept of "culture" has a problematic history in both China and the West. By questioning the use of *wenhua* with regard to the May Fourth Movement, I provide evidence that the accepted translation of culture can be problematic if one does not clearly spell out the meaning located behind it, as the Chinese *wenhua* often did not mean "Chinese culture" in our modern, all too modern, anthropological sense.

Keywords: New Culture Movement, historiography, conceptual history, culture, China

Ali je »nova kultura« ustrezen prevod za *Xin wenhua*? Nekaj kritičnih pripomb k dolgo prezrti dilemi

Izvleček

Že nekaj desetletij smo priča temeljiti prenovi našega razumevanja »gibanja za novo kulturo«. Vendar se o primernosti »nove kulture« kot ustreznega prevoda za *xin wenhua* 新文化 skoraj nikoli ni razpravljalo. Avtor v pričujočem članku trdi, da enoznačno prevajanje

* Joseph CIAUDO, Ghent University.
Email address: joseph.ciaudo@UGent.be

izraza *xin* kot »nov« in *wenhua* kot »kultura« zamegljuje sliko, namesto da bi postala jasnejša, kajti s tem nezavedno podpiramo naracijo radikalnih kitajskih intelektualcev, medtem ko utišamo glasove drugih. Poleg tega je v članku predstavljena ideja, da izraz, kot je *wenhua*, zajema »množico potencialnih branj«, ki imajo veliko opraviti s preobrazbo kitajskega jezika v začetku 20. stoletja in s pojavom novega konceptualnega repertoarja. V prizadevanju, da bi si prisvojili *xin wenhua* in ga spremenili v na videz skladno gibanje z agendo, so kitajski intelektualci bili bitko glede problema »civilizacija/kultura«, pa tudi in morda predvsem glede izobraževanja. Z uporabo izraza »kultura« v današnjem akademskem pisanju se nagibamo k ustvarjanju zgodovinskega neskladja, saj uporaba tega izraza ni naša lastna: tako pademo v past semantične prosojnosti in pozabimo, da ima koncept »kulture« problematično zgodovino tako na Kitajskem kot na Zahodu. S prevpraševanjem uporabe *wenhua* v povezavi s četrtomajskim gibanjem avtor podaja dokaze, da je lahko sprejeti prevod kulture problematičen, če ni jasno razložen pomen, ki se skriva za njim, saj kitajski izraz *wenhua* ponavadi ni pomenil »kitajske kulture« v modernem, vse preveč modernem, antropološkem smislu.

Ključne besede: gibanje za novo kulturo, zgodovinopisje, konceptualna zgodovina, kultura, Kitajska

Introduction

In the history of modern China, the "New Culture Movement" (*xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動) has long been an iconic one. Often regarded as a decisive milestone in the Chinese modernity narrative, it has been intimately associated with the whole May Fourth Movement and era. Until recently, following the almost canonical study by Chow Tse-tung (1960), the beginning of the New Culture Movement has often been dated from 1915 and been regarded as the crystallization of the intellectual transformations that inspired the May Fourth demonstration. Furthermore, it had an intricate relationship with the history of the Chinese Communist Party, of whom it would be legitimate to say that it integrated the former to its origin narrative. Yet recent academic literature has called into question these one-sided assumptions and readings. Not only have we gone beyond this "May Fourth paradigm" (Chow 2008), but we have also included dissonant voices, notably those of conservatives (Zheng and Jia 2005). The narrative of the Movement has thus been decentred (Ip and Lee 2003), and the overwhelming place given to "intellectual discourses" has been challenged as we have looked into the everyday social life of those involved (e.g. Lanza 2010). Far from being a clear break with the past, the May Fourth intellectual blossoming was in fact the result of a long process that stretched over several decades, and that found its origins in various forms of writings from the late-Qing period. The current state of the art

has, furthermore, shown evolution with regard to the importance given to individuals as well as places outside Beijing and Shanghai. Additionally, there has been an ever-growing process of "memorialization of the movement as an event, symbol, and imagery" (Wang 2019, 144). The commemorations of its hundredth anniversary confirm this orientation. Regarding the date of birth of the "New Culture Movement", we have started to abandon the idea that the movement began with the publication of *The New Youth* journal in 1915, or even in 1914 with the magazine *Tiger* (Weston 1998, 260). Some scholars have astutely noticed that the word *wenhua yundong* 文化運動 was to be found in no titles of periodical essays before 1919 (Kuo 2017, 55). In fact: "The expression 'New Culture Movement' was only invented in the late summer 1919, a few months after the May Fourth demonstrations" (Forster 2017, 1254).[1] The New Culture Movement found its origins in 1919 (Sang 2015). All in all, thanks to a better care given to the historical agents' vocabulary and positions, we have recently been witnessing a profound renewal in our understanding of this key moment in modern Chinese history.

Yet, with the recent celebrations of the May Fourth Movement's hundredth anniversary, the term "New Culture Movement" has been given new publicity and been widely uncritically used in academic and non-academic discourses, as if the interrogations recently raised by the specialized scientific literature were still unknown. As a consequence, and taking as a departure point some recent and very stimulating readings of the May Fourth period by Elisabeth Forster and Kuo Yapei, the present paper wishes to push their historiographical insights further. In this vein, I would like to open a critical reflection on a problem long overlooked in the literature: by translating *xin wenhua* 新文化 as "new culture" without adding clarification, we fail to capture the richness of what was being discussed in 1919 and project upon the past an anachronistic outlook.

In a 2017 article, Elizabeth Forster analysed the Chinese expression "New Culture Movement" and "the way discourses were created around it", and concluded that it not as a movement *per se*, but "a buzzword, used by little-known intellectuals to market a variety of agendas they had been endorsing for a number of years" (Forster 2017, 1254)[2]. It was thus a label retrospectively applied to a series

1 Forster had already put forward this idea in 2014. We also need to admit that about sixty years ago Chow Tse-tung had already noted that the term "New Culture" had only became popular in the early 1920s (Chow 1960, 194). However, he did not go as far as delimiting a clear line of separation between the "New Culture Movement" and the overarching "May Fourth Movement" as, for instance, Rana Mitter (2004, 18) has done.

2 Elisabeth Forster has since published a monograph on the year 1919 (Forster 2018) that discussed in detail not only the history of the "New Culture Movement", but also how this hegemonic buzzword redistributed symbolic meaning "within a pool of competing agendas, which had existed for a while" (ibid., 195) and would continue for a long time after 1919.

of propositions in order to market them (ibid. 2018, 91–129). Formulated by peripheral intellectuals, the expression was to be reappropriated by figures such as Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) or Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962). Kuo Ya-pei has also brilliantly argued that

> the New Culture Movement, with clear fault lines against all non-supporters and a stress upon ideological cohesion, was constructed in 1923–1924, when the young Chinese Communist Party formulated its propaganda strategy for the purpose of the United Front. (Kuo 2017, 54–55)

Chen's role was instrumental in building-up the proper noun "New Culture Movement", later to be formalized by Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899–1935) and Deng Zhongxia 鄧中夏 (1894–1933). Kuo has, in this regard, brought more support to Forster's position, while simultaneously deconstructing the genealogy of our historiographical outlook on the matter.[3] Her distinction between *wenhua yundong* and *xin wenhua yundong* in the prose of Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) is also very valuable (Kuo 2017, 62–63), as it has shown that *wenhua yundong* was obviously a term whose meaning was contested.

In direct continuity with regard to the works quoted above, the present paper wishes to question our understanding of what the New Culture Movement was. However, instead of bringing out new materials that would offer some supplementary insights into the already numerous and diverse arrays of studies concerning with this topic, I would like to offer a critical inquiry into the very term *xin wenhua yundong*, how we historicize it, and analyse it. I argue that the Chinese term *xin wenhua yundong* ought not to be systematically and uncritically translated as "New Culture Movement", because it is an expression that is genuinely ambivalent, and it is this very ambiguity that has loomed large in its subsequent use. If the term "movement" does not raise much concern—except for the opportunity of using the plural form of the word—I would beg to differ regarding *xin* as "new" and *wenhua* as "culture": reading *xin* solely as an adjective is not only reductive, but translating *wenhua* into "culture" could be also deemed anachronistic, because "culture" bears in today's parlance a strong national identity-related orientation that was not present in the concept of *wenhua* as discussed and contested at the time. In translating *xin wenhua* as "new culture", we are in fact endorsing the thesis that this or these movement(s) were calling for the complete Westernization of China, and destruction or at least transvaluation of Chinese national

3 In 1987, Ursula Richter had already pointed out the decisive influence the Chinese radical intellectuals and their simplification (or should we say appropriated narrative) had had on the outlook the young European and American sinologist had with regard to Modern China.

culture, understood as a social category that defines a specific way of life shared by a people.[4] Last but not least, though the notion of "buzzword" has its heuristic virtues, I would rather use the German *Schlagwort*. Following the conceptual history typology, I think that it is important to denote "culture" as both a "collective concept" (*Sammlungsbegriff*) and a "mobilization concept" (*Bewegungsbegriff*), i.e. concepts "capable of reordering and mobilizing anew the masses robbed of their place in the old order of estates" (Koselleck 1979, 113). The only remark I would add regarding this characterization is that before being a concept addressed to the masses, it first emerged as a concept to mobilize the intellectual elite as a social group, the "literati-*cum*-intellectuals" (expression taken from Hon 2013) and the students who were looking for new positions and a sense of belonging after the collapse of Imperial institutions.

We must be very careful because *xin wenhua* encompassed a "multiplicity potential readings" that have much to do with the transformation of the Chinese language at the beginning of the 20th century and with the emergence of a new key concept (*Grundbegriff*) in East Asia: 文化 (*wenhua* C., *bunka* J., *munhwa* K., *văn hóa* V.). In their attempts to appropriate *xin wenhua* and turn it into a seemingly coherent movement with an agenda, Chinese intellectuals were fighting a conceptual war over the topic of "civilization/culture", a struggle that, of course, shares some similarities with the opposition between the French *La Civilisation* and the German *Kultur* during the First World War, but that should not be regarded as a *bis repetita* of Western debates.[5] A strong emphasis on education and how one should write was also put to the fore. One therefore has to take into account the fact that if *xin wenhua* has often been translated as "New Culture", it is because some historical agents that proclaimed themselves actors of this movement translated the term as such. Yet, by employing this *terminus technicus* in academic writing today, we can produce historical dissonances as their use of the term "culture" is not our own. We fall into the trap of semantic transparency, and forget that the concept of "culture" also has a problematic

4 Research on the term "culture" has shown that this concept was far from having a shared understanding in the academic literature. In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn had already identified hundreds of definitions (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952), and in the years since many have tried to subsume these definitions under broad categories (e.g., Certeau 1974, 167–68; Jenks 2005, 11–12). In this study I use category nº4 of Jenks or category d from for Certeau, that were built on Tylor's affirmation that "culture or Civilization, (…), is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man a member of society" (Tylor 1871, vol. 1, 1). For a synthetic, but nonetheless pertinent description of the evolution of the use of "culture" as a category and concepts in the social sciences, see Cuche (2016).

5 In his investigation into culturalism and the concept of culture in Bengal, Andrew Sartori has already shown that it was possible to relocate the Bengali concept of culture into a global history without regarding it as a deviation or a reiteration of a European concept (Sartori 2008).

history—Raymond Williams used to present it as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams 1976, 76),[6] and this judgment is probably as valid in many other languages, including Mandarin. As such, the aim of this paper is not to offer a better alternative—something that would probably be difficult and perhaps not even necessary because in a sense our "culture" is as protean as the Chinese *wenhua*—but to raise our awareness that though there is never a truly ideal translation, it is always necessary to clearly denote the meaning of terms in context. Speaking of the "New Culture Movement" without any quotation marks or supplementary clarifications on the Chinese terminology in the specific context in which it is used can lead us to read the terms anachronistically and, for instance, think that a unified New Culture Movement was trying to dismiss the entirety of a Chinese traditional culture, understood in a national sense.[7]

This paper will proceed in three stages: firstly, I will formulate some critical remarks on our historiographical outlook regarding this movement, then the meaning of the character *xin* 新 will be reconsidered, and finally I will offer a brief preliminary inquiry into the problematic history of the concept of *wenhua* which operated at the core of the expression.

Some Remarks on Our Historiographical Outlook

To begin our reflection, one should take a step back, and consider the general schemes that orientated our understanding of the May Fourth period's intellectual debates up to today. It is possible to say that the following two paradigms have been very influential.

First, our approach to the sources has been dominated by the political agenda of the radicals. Following them, the so-called New Culture Movement has often been considered as "a cultural revolution" whose motive was to draw a clear line with the past (Lin 1979). A partial access to the documents, the weight of the Communist Party's discourse on the May Fourth Movement (notably Mao 1939), and also a conscious appropriation of the movement narrative by some

6 See the very rich notice provided by Jorg Fisch in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* dictionary (Fisch 1992).

7 I here am not completely convinced by Julia C. Schneider's recent argument regarding the idea that in China culturalistic concepts of the world became merged with nationalist concepts in the early twentieth century (Schneider 2020)—for her use of the term "culturalism" denotes more an analytical category used by researchers than a precise series of concepts in the source material.

of its actors (Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich 2001, 1)—notably Hu Shi[8]—could be pointed out as the main culprits for this one-sided approach. This paradigm has, however, been shattered by several new elements put forward by recent research. The continuity between the intellectual fights of the late-Qing era intellectuals and those of the early Republican period has been underlined by many studies, notably in the literary field (Wang 1997; Chen 2011), and with regard to the evolution of the Chinese language (Kaske 2004). It has been pointed out that the radical agenda of people such as Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi were not at first regarded as in a winning position (Forster 2014). Instead of being the concrete political prolongation of the reform of thought movement upheld by *New Youth* intellectuals, the events of May 4th 1919 saved the agenda of the former by providing it with a renewed popularity. Besides, the New Culture, or *xin wenhua*, was a project not exclusive to the radicals. Intellectuals often put under the "neoconservative" label even considered themselves as part of this movement. In a letter to Liang Boqiang 梁伯強 (1899–1968), Liang Qichao 梁啓超 (1873–1929), for instance, insisted on the fact that he wished to "propagate the new culture" (*xuanzhuan xinwenhua* 宣傳新文化) (Liang 1920b, 6027).

Liang Qichao, but also, Lan Gongwu 藍公武 (1887–1957), Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886–1973), Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1887–1969) and the entire group of scholars associated with the Research Clique (*yanjiu xi* 研究系) regarded themselves as contributors to this intellectual renewal movement (Peng 2003; Zhou 2019). As a matter of fact, they were the ones to establish the "Public Study Association" (*gongxue she* 共學社) and the "Lecture and Study Association" (*jiangxue she* 講學社), key institutions that made many translations of Western works possible (Zhang 1992, 139–46). They are also the ones who invited Western scholars such as Russell and Dewey to China. These people, later castigated as the enemies of the New Culture, were in fact its most important proponents on the institutional side. Therefore, we need to keep in mind that the New Culture was not the property of the radicals, at some point almost all intellectuals believed in participating to the movement. Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) is a well-known example here. But things changed when the intellectuals surrounding Chen started a move to appropriate the movement's entire narrative.

The second paradigm, and perhaps the most important, has been the narrative proposed by Joseph Levenson when he pointed at a supposed contradiction between

8 In his *Chinese Renaissance*, Hu put emphasis on his own contributions to the intellectual transformation of modern China, with sometimes a glimpse of hypocrisy, castigating Liang Qichao as only a mere journalist (Hu 1933, 38) or Liang Shuming as the author of a book with a pretentious title (*The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*) (ibid., 39), while suggesting that his own proposals for the reform of literature were "modest" (ibid., 58).

"Chinese cultural identity" and "modernity" (Levenson 1958). There is an entire field of literature debunking parts of Levenson thesis. And yet an important aspect of his work has been insufficiently discussed: the idea that Chinese Nationalism emerged as "a denial of culturalism" (ibid., 105). Without entering into the debate as to whether such affirmation is appropriate or not in terms of content, there is here a latent problem with its very formulation. It presupposes that the vocabulary and imaginary of the nation set aside the one of culture. The problem is that by saying so we neglect the history of those concepts and forget that "culture" is as modern a notion as that of a "nation", perhaps even younger. "Culture" has become such a common notion in our everyday vocabulary that we tend to forget that even during the historical period discussed here it was not a common term in Europe. In the early 1920s, it was still a novelty for French people to speak of a "national culture" (Bénéton 1975, 73–84), and only the Germans had any real use of the term *Kultur*. As has been rightly pointed out by Tessa Morris-Suzuki, the

> anthropological interpretation of culture as "the civilization of a people (particularly at a certain stage of development)" first appears in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1933, but for many decades the English use of "culture" remained unstable, hovering uncomfortably between the older notion of "mental and moral cultivation" and the newer notion of "the practices and beliefs of a particular society". (Morris-Suzuki 1995, 761)

The term "culture" gained worldwide popularity only from the 1920s on (Elliot 2002; Mauviel 2011; Cuche 2016).

Even the idea that there exists a field of "culture" distinguished from those of politics and economy is a very late distinction, and perhaps not an operative one in this context, as suggested by Fabio Lanza (2010). Besides, "culture" has always been a political notion. Therefore, one needs to question how Chinese intellectuals used this notion, and pay much attention to the chronology of events and texts. For instance, Chen Duxiu hardly had an operative concept of culture under the word *wenhua* before 1918 (Ciaudo 2015). *New Youth* did not attack the figure of Confucius because he was the core of "the traditional Chinese culture", but because his thought served as the foundation of a rotten social system. As Chen said himself: "This journal attacks Confucius, because it is a moral of a patriarchal society that is not appropriate for modern life. We have never put forward any arguments that go beyond this" (本誌詆孔，以為宗法社會之道德，不適於現代生活，未嘗過此以立論也) (Chen 1916, 11). The critique of Confucianism was social and not cultural (van Ess 2012). And it is in fact the theme of social reform that was at the core of the May Fourth Movement (Yang 2009). Placing emphasis on the importance of "society" (*shehui* 社會) as perhaps one of the most central

concepts of the time is, in this sense, crucial. As a matter of fact, much research in conceptual history has outlined the rise of this term in the decades preceding 1919, and how it acted as both an indicator and factor of historical change (Tsin 1997; Jin and Liu 2008, 180–225; Vogelsang 2012).

It is, furthermore, relevant that students and intellectuals organized themselves in a specific new form of social action, "the movement" (*yundong* 運動). Among the many features of these movements that were described in detail by Rudolf G. Wagner, one could point at their "elitist structure": "Its protagonists assumed the roles not of spokesmen and representative but of teachers, avant-garde, and guide for the rest of the population" (Wagner 2001, 67). Chen Duxiu's own understanding of what a movement was clearly puts emphasis on its agency as a political form of action realized by the citizens (ibid., 78). And, of course, through his intellectual and political activities, he intended to orientate the political activity of his readers. That is why one can legitimately regard his *xin wenhua* as a "mobilization concept". Besides, it is worth mentioning that the term "movement" (*yundong*) was widely used to describe social and political activities and dynamics in the 1910s and 1920s (see the many examples given by Weston 2004, 217 or Forster 2017, 165). Basically, each "agenda" was promoted through a "movement". Peter Zarrow was thus right when he framed this period as "an era of movements" (Zarrow 2006, 3). One should also note that the chronological proximity with the events of May 1919 and the rise of nationalistic claims by the Chinese population progressively estranged the "new culture" from a more globalized logic: civilizational renewal was no longer an international phenomenon, but something that China had for itself.[9] As such, when we speak of an overarching and all-inclusive "May Fourth Movement" (always with capital letters) as Chow Tse-gung first did it (1960, 5), we dismiss the plurality of sociopolitical actions under a unique label and we lock it up in a nationalistic theme.[10] Therefore, it could be worth wondering if instead of a May Fourth Movement it would not be better to speak May Fourth *Movements*, and by extension also New Culture *Movements*, exiting by this means the complete idea of a unified "May Fourth spirit", as proclaimed by some historical agents of the time such as Luo Jialun 羅家倫 (1897–1969) (Luo 1919). Affirming the existence of such a *Zeitgeist* when the events took place meant playing one's part in an intellectual debate, but taking back this term in academic

9 In these regards, Kuo Ya-pei's remarks about Cai Yuanpei or Zhang Dongsun first locating the debate in an international setting (Kuo 2017, 59) are very important. It points to the fact that the turmoil experienced by China were read through the angle of global transformation of human society, characterized by the rise of socialism (a topic put forward by the Research Clique). It was not simply a national issue.

10 Despite its international dimension, the idea of "Wilsonian Moment" postulated by Manela (2007) captures the May Fourth era into a nation-oriented narrative of modern Asian history.

literature is a fallacy in historical reasoning. After all, the Chinese language does not mark the plural, especially in the context of a *Schlagwort* whose semantic ambiguity adds to its performative power. Needless to say, Liang Qichao's "New Culture Movement" was not Chen Duxiu's.

Moreover, one needs to include in our reading framework the concrete economic and institutional dimensions of the problem. Despite the fact that they were located in an "intellectual field", the debates literarily took place on the pages of newspapers and journals that participated in "print capitalism" (Reed 2004, 8–9).[11] To survive, and to implement their agendas, "New Culture" actors had to sell their texts, a situation that explains the polemical tone frequently used. Accordingly, Wang Qisheng 王奇生 noted that the debates between the writers of *New Youth* and, for instance, *The Eastern Miscellany* (he took the 1917–1918 controversy between Chen Duxiu and Du Yaquan 杜亞泉 (1873–1933) as an illustration) were also part of an economic war. Chen's attacks against other journals were an editorial strategy: he hoped to delegitimize the journal and steal its readership (Wang 2007, 29–32). This problem became all the more important with the "war of the manuals" (Reed 2004, 206). Defining the New Culture meant defining what would be taught to students, and what manuals they would buy. The rise of *baihua* fostered a highly heated debate on whether it should be used as the main form of writing in manuals (Culp 2008). With the Education Ministry ordering all textbooks to be published in *baihua* in April 1920 (Zheng 2001, 206), the concrete consequences of the intellectual debates became obvious. It is also in 1920 that the Commercial Press released their "new culture" Collection. In the early 1920s, many institutions, associations, libraries, and groups were founded with names referring to the popular new expression of *wenhua* or *xin wenhua* (Zhang 1979). A section of Shanghai was even nicknamed the "Cultural Avenue" (*wenhua jie* 文化街) because of the dense concentration of bookshops and editors there. *Xin wenhua* was a term that crossed the entire society, and not simply a concept for intellectuals. Having these elements mind, let us now go back to the very term itself.

New or Renew the Culture?

An important historiographical remark I wish to make here is that one has to be cautious with how we understand and translate the character *xin* 新. Lee Oufan has defended the idea that "in the popular parlance (of the May Fourth era), to be 'modern' mean(t) above all to be 'new' (*xin*), to be consciously opposed to the

11 See more generally the "material side" of books and journal publishing and its impact on society recently put to the fore by Culp 2019.

'old' (*jiu* 舊)" (Lee 1991, 159). To support this idea, he took as an argument the multiplication of terms and journal titles including the character *xin*. He saw here a watershed between the ancient and modern, a transition between a cyclical understanding of time and a linear evolutionary approach. Chinese intellectuals felt they were part of a new epoch (Sun 1986), articulated by the "performative declaration" (Owen 2001, 171) of being *xin*. Lee's thesis is valuable as it helps us to better understand the intellectual positions of some evolutionist thinkers, notably people gravitating around the *New Youth* journal. When someone like Wang Shuqian 汪叔潛 wrote, "What we call 'new' is nothing but the culture imported from the West; what we call 'old' is nothing else but the culture that China has had for ages (所謂新者無他，即外來之西洋文化也；所謂舊者無他，即中國固有之文化也如是。)" (Wang 1915, 3), it fits perfectly in Lee's pattern. *New Youth* writers' uses of the term encompassed a Darwinian logic—Chen Jia'ai 陳嘉藹 would later write in a column for *New Tide* that "new means being adapted, being adapted that means being new" (Chen, Jia'ai 1919, 44). Yet, presenting the entire intellectual panorama under such a light would not only be incomplete but also partial.

First, the examples often quoted to stress the opposition between the "ancient" and the "modern" are more often taken from the debates relating to the problem of "the new thought" (*xin sixiang* 新思想) than from the one about "the new culture" (*xin wenhua*). It would be wise to distinguish the two, and also admit that in the scope of the earlier debates not everyone, even among *New Youth* writers, was totalistic in their rejection of the old—borrowing Nietzsche's term, Hu Shi understood the new thought as "a transvaluation of value" (Hu 1919). Besides, in the discussions on whether a new thought ought to be implemented in China in 1919, one finds almost no intellectuals associated with the *New Youth*. Most of them came from the Research Clique, or from people gravitating around *The Eastern Miscellany*. Among the main debaters, one can mention the opposition of Chen Jiayi 陳嘉異 (1919) and Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1919) to Zhang Dongsun (1919a; 1919b), or the exchange between Du Yaquan 杜亞泉 (1919) and Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟 (1920).[12]

Secondly, there is a logical pitfall in Lee's argument; because it rests on the idea that *xin* is an adjective or a substantive: it neglects the possibility of reading it as a verb. Of course, *xin* means "new", but it can also mean to "renew" or "renovate".[13] If one considers the reading materials used to teach Chinese pupils how to read at the end of the 19th century, like *The One-Thousand-Character Text* (*qian zi wen*

12 See also the synthesis of the debate proposed by Zhu Tiaosun (1920).

13 Reading *xin* as a verb in the intellectual texts of the late Qing and earlier Republican era has been a feature shared by several young French historians, such as Ma (2013) who translates Liang Qichao's *Xinmin shuo* 新民說 as *De la rénovation du peuple*, or Morier-Genoud (2014) who proposes reading *xin shixue* 新史學, "renouveler l'histoire" and not "new history" (ibid., 175, note 10).

千字文) or *The Great Learning* (*daxue* 大學), *xin* is first understood in a transitive sense. Let us not forget that the older generation of intellectuals knew by heart those texts since their childhood.[14]

That is why considering *xin wenhua* as a *Schlagwort* and not only as a "buzzword" brings the matter under a clearer light. Rather more than a catchphrase, a *Schlagwort* is "an expression that gains particular topicality in a specific time, and with which one often promotes a program or an objective. *Schlagworte* are to orientate the thought, the emotions and the attitudes of men" (Niehr 2007, 496). They are therefore part of the vocabulary used in political debates, and it is a common move to try to transform their meaning to attack one's opponent. Chinese intellectuals were not simply "surfing" on a trend, or marketing their position. With the popular expression *xin wenhua*, they could, of course, advertise their program, but the term in itself implied a renewal of *Weltanschauung* and social practices. In the case of *civilization*, Emile Benveniste had spoken of a word "that inculcates a new outlook of the world" (Benveniste 1974, vol. 1, 336). Such a description would also fit *xin wenhua* (especially when one considers that *wenhua* originally meant "civilization", as noted below). The problem was, however, that the Chinese did not agree on the outlook to transmit to the people—a situation that brought someone like Zhang Junmai to assert that to set the direction of a Chinese new culture one needed first to clarify an outlook on life (Zhang 1923, 914). This position stirred the 1923 debate over "Sciences and Outlooks on Life" (Huang 2002; Isay 2013). In his 1922 review of Liang Shuming's *Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, Zhang also implied that comparing the *wenhua* from East and West was no task for the present day, since China had no renewed culture (*xin wenhua* 新文化) yet (Zhang 1922, 225–26).[15]

By raising the issue of the grammatical nature of the character *xin*, I wish not to say that translating it as an adjective is wrong—in most of its occurrences it is the smoothest way to proceed—but instead to put forward the possibility of a "multiplicity of potential reading": each intellectual understood it as it fit best with his

14 In his study of Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), George Bê Duc did not hesitate to write that "for the intellectuals educated during the Qing era, the *wenyan* was the natural language for writing" (Bê Duc 2010, 28). I would go further as to say that it was also "the natural language for reading".

15 In 1920, Hu Shi also had a similar line saying that "China has, as of now, no culture, and even less a new culture" (現在并沒有文化，更沒有什麽新文化) (Hu in Sang 2015, 5). The lines of both Hu and Zhang are impossible to understand if one remains mired in the idea that "culture" should be understood in a totalistic or anthropological sense. A few years later, Zhang Junmai would resume this line of thought by stressing the fact that the mind of China was a battlefield between the proponents of "national quintessence" (*guocui* 國粹) and those wishing to "Westernize" the country (*xihua* 西化). The consequence of this situation was that there were no longer any criteria on which on could establish a proper education for the young (Zhang 1925, 113). On the cultural outlook of Zhang in the 1920s, see Ciaudo (2016).

own program. And therefore, *xin wenhua yundong* could be as much a "New Culture Movement" as a *Kulturerneuerungsbewegung*—a translation used first, to my knowledge, by Thomas Fröhlich (1998). After all, while in the United States Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) also wrote that, "The 'new' culture movement may be, after all, simply the self-consciousness and self-examination of the old" (Fung 1922, 611).[16] To dive deeper into this "multiplicity" of meaning, it is worth reading attentively the intellectuals that have been cast it out of it by previous scholarship. The authors of the "conservative" *Xueheng* 學衡 journal are here a great example. Wu Mi 吳宓 (1894–1978), one of the main writers of this periodical, offered for example a great critique of the possibility that the "new" ought to simply be the negation of the past, and the full-scale adoption of something foreign. For him, instead of opposing a "new culture" to an "inherent" (*guyou* 固有) Chinese culture, the problem was to aim at the fusion of different intellectual horizons. Following the definition of culture by Matthew Arnold, he wrote:

> Nowadays, the *Xin wenhua yundong* has translated itself as *New Culture Movement*, meaning as such that *wenhua* is "culture". Matthew Arnold has given of this term the following definition: (…) *Culture is the best of what has been thought and said in the world*. According to this, those who today desire to build the (re) new (ed) culture of China should select the quintessence of Chinese and Western civilizations, cast and thread them together.
>
> 今新文化運動，自譯其名為New Culture Movement，是固以文化為Culture也。Matthew Arnold所作定義曰: 文化者，古今思想言論之最精美者也。Culture is the best of what has been thought and said in the world。 按此，則今慾造成中國之新文化，自當兼取中西文明之精華而熔鑄之，貫通之。(Wu 1922, 13–14)

Wu Mi was, furthermore, very harsh on the young students who, according to him, did not understand the meaning of the movement. Elsewhere, he noted:

> Nowadays, young students read too little and lack experience, they make a mistake when consider that *xin wenhua yundong* advocate it only as the sole and full representative of Western civilization.
>
> 今中國少年學生, 讀書未多, 見聞缺乏, 誤以新文化運動者之所主張為西洋文明全部之代表。(ibid., 2)

16 Another Confucian thinker, He Lin 賀麟 would later even write in this regard that "On the surface, the 'New Culture Movement' was one big movement to 'smash the Confucian shop' and to overturn Confucian thought. In reality however, the movement made a far greater contribution to the new unfolding of Confucian thinking than the support for Confucianism by individuals from the previous period (of the Self-Strengthening Movement) such as Zeng Guofan (1811–1872) and Zhang Zhidong" (He in Van den Stock 2016).

It is obvious that the term *xin wenhua yundong* was at the centre of an intellectual fight. And one can find in Chen Duxiu's texts many elements that clearly show that he was conscious of this battle for the term. In "What is the New Culture Movement?" he wrote: "Now among the detractors of the *xin wenhua yundong*, there are two ill-omened voices: the first claim that Science is useless, and that one should focus on Philosophy. The second is the one that claims that Westerners are nowadays turning themselves toward Oriental culture." (Chen 1920, 1) With the tone of a polemist, Chen was trying to cast out of the global movement those supporting these two assertions. But more conservative minds, like the writers of the *Xueheng* journal, answered Chen's criticisms, by accusing the promoters of *xin wenhua* (in Chen's logic) of being no more than "sophists", "imitators and no creators", "people looking for fame but no scholars", "politicians and not educators" (Mei 1921). They did not reject the idea of a *xin wenhua*, they rejected the one offered by Chen. They also had Western models, but they were not the same (Ong 2004). They looked up to Irving Babbitt (1855–1933) (Hon 2008), who personally supported their attempt to renovate Chinese literature and education (Wu 2004).

By limiting us to the narrative that the New Culture Movement was an attempt to establish a clear break from the past, we fall into the trap of the radical discourse, and forget the entire context of the discussions and notably their origins in the late 19th century. As Chen Pingyuan has written, one should "pay a special attention to the 'late Qing' inside 'May Fourth'" (Chen 2011, 4). As it has already been noted by previous studies (see notably Zhang 2002), the early years of the 1920s were marked by the segmentation of the intellectual field and ever-growing attempts for the various intellectual groups to mark a distance between "us" and "them". Different groups had very different understandings and uses of this until then uniform "New Culture Movement". And this was not only the case for intellectual groups, since official political groups also defended their own new culture.[17] However, the strategy of the *New Youth* group to lump together all their opponents as conservatives who were enemies of "the New Culture" was successful in the long run, as the polarity between "conservative vs. radical" became an established historiographical convention.[18] Even today, the weight of a unified May Fourth narrative is so powerful that many still fall into the epistemological trap and affirm, like Ouyang Zhesheng, that "the opinions held by Chen Duxiu gained a consensus among the contemporary New Culture camp" (Ouyang 2016, 93), although in truth they did not, or at least not before the mid-1920s. The

17 See the example of the Nationalist Party, studied by Ouyang Junxi (2009).

18 For a discussion of this polarity and the problem of grouping Chinese intellectuals under such labels, see Kuo (2017).

so-called official or orthodox new culture camp simply cut out of his own narrative the dissonant voices, as has been shown by Kuo Ya-pei (2017).

"Culture" as an Anachronistic Concept: Some Remarks on the Meaning of *wenhua*

Let us now turn to the biggest problem that challenges our understanding of this movement, that is the meaning of *wenhua*. Here we should perhaps take inspiration from Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann's "crossed history" (*histoire croisée*), that they presented as a "triple historicization practice": a historicization "of the object studied, of *the scientific categories to analyze it, and also of the relationship between the researcher and his research*" (Werner and Zimmermann 2004, 10, my emphasis). We often see "culture" as a totalistic concept with a strong foothold in anthropology. Tylor's definition of "culture" as "the most complex whole" has had in this regard much influence in the general meaning associated with the term. In historical studies, "culture" is either used as a field of experience distinguished from, for instance, the political (*le politique*) or as "the instance of the social totality" (*instance de la totalité sociale*) (Chartier 2009, 73). Yet, one needs to keep in mind that culture is perhaps the "largest concept of social sciences" (Wallerstein 1990, 221), and that it has come to supplement a multiplicity of concepts. Indeed, one cannot fail to notice that it has become an unwieldy powerful indicator of difference, be political, social, racial, linguistic, or other. Furthermore, it is a fact that "definitions of culture are inevitably programmatic" (Bal 2002, 9). Therefore, culture as a direct translation of *wenhua* appears dangerous. The notion of "culture" is a heuristic tool that, in our case, brings more complexity to the problem than clarification.

To relocate precisely the meaning of the debate over the term *xin wenhua yundong*, we need to distance the vocabulary of the historical actors from our concept of "culture". A conceptual history of *wenhua* is all the more necessary because this topic has often been disregarded by previous research in conceptual history. Luckily, over the last two decades two Chinese scholars, Fang Weigui (2003) and Huang Xingtao (2006, later translated into English 2011) have attempted to study the history of the Chinese concepts of *wenhua* 文化 and *wenming* 文明 in a contrastive approach, setting up the first chronology for these terms. Huang offers a five-step narrative. First, China had her own notions completely independent from the Western ones. Then the Western concept of civilization was first introduced in the middle of the 19th century by missionaries. Fang even mentions documents written in 1833 in which they supposedly used *wenming*

as a translation of "civilization". Third, the period surrounding 1895 and the One Hundred Days Reforms witnessed a vast dissemination of this vocabulary in the writings of political figures and statesmen.[19] These were followed by a short period at the beginning of the 20th century in which emerged a reflection about the spirit (*jingshen* 精神) of "civilization". The last and final step was the May Fourth Era. This chronology is acceptable, but it has the default position of keeping the *wenhua* concept in subordination to the notion of *wenming*, aggravating the classic confusion between the two terms. As reckoned by both scholars, *wenhua* was a very rare term at the end of the 19th century. Huang identified its first occurrence in an article published in 1887 (Huang 2006, 20), but it only gained real popularity during the May Fourth Era, a time in which it seemingly distanced itself from *wenming*, a process unfortunately not analysed in Fang's and Huang's research.

Furthermore, despite this first framework, one needs to admit that their papers are not without epistemological issues. They strongly contrast what they call "traditional concepts of *wenhua* and *wenming*" with "modern concepts of *wenhua* and *wenming*". However, it is hard to accept that there were clearly established *wenming* and *wenhua* compounds before the end of the 19th century.[20] Of course, the literary and semantic background of the characters' *wen* 文, *ming* 明 and *hua* 化, that was embedded in Confucian thought, may have played a role in the orientation of the modern trajectory of *wenhua* and *wenming*, as they disclosed the persistence of past experiences. Yet, as noted by Koselleck, "the historical depth of a concept, which is not identical with the chronological succession of its meanings, gains (…) systematic import, which must be duly acknowledged by all sociohistorical research." One has to be concerned with the "contemporaneity of the uncontemporaneous" (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*) and not simply alternate between diachronic and synchronic readings (Koselleck 1979, 90). The problem is not to determine how a classic concept uninfluenced by the West turned into a "modern concept" for civilization or culture, but how different "Spaces of Experience" (*Erfahrungsräume*) and "Horizons of Expectation" (*Erwartungshorizonte*) interplayed in producing new meanings that in the end set the society on the move.

19 A situation probably triggered by the fact that "civilization" was a key term in the international environment (Gong 1984), and one can also agree with Prasenjit Duara when he presented "civilization" as "a postcolonial concept" (Duara 2001, 103).

20 A great example to illustrate this point is Luxun's text "Wenhua pian zhi lun 文化偏至論" (Luxun 1908). Most translations available today (be they in English, French or German) tend to translate *wenhua* into "culture". But in fact, the word appears only four times in the text, which is very few in comparison to the 29 *wenming*. Furthermore, on examining Luxun's prose it is obvious that the term doesn't have its modern, anthropological connotation. Its meaning oscillates between something very close to *wenming*, or a body of knowledge and practices that transforms men. On some occurrences, one could even doubt the fact that *wenhua* was one word, as it could be read as two.

Before going back to this issue, it could, however, be helpful to widen our outlook on this matter by considering the history of the "culture" concept in a larger East Asian context. Indeed, a burgeoning literature on the Japanese *bunka* and the Korean *munhwa* is very helpful here. First, in the Japanese case, it has been shown that *bunka* was a term developed after *bunmei*, and it gained its popularity only during the 1920s (Morris-Suzuki 1995, 763). Of course, some authors who participated in the "Nipponist moment" (1888–1897) (Perroncel 2016) articulated around the *Japanese* journal (*Nihonjin* 日本人) and the Society for Public Education (*Seikyō sha* 政教社), had occasional uses of the term *bunka*. Kuga Katsunan 陸羯南 (1857–1907) notably spoke of a "national culture" (*kokumin bunka* 国民文化) at the end of the 19th century (Nishikawa 2001, 249–63). But we need to differentiate the multiple chronologies, as it is not because one or a few authors use a term that it then becomes a concept. Indeed, according to Quentin Skinner, "the surest sign that a society has entered into the secure possession of a new concept is that a new vocabulary will be developed, in terms of which the concept can then be publicly articulated and discussed" (Skinner 1979, vol. 2, 352). As Suzuki pointed out, the term *bunka* was first used in Japan to translate German political notions such as *Kulturstaat*, it also held a role in the translation of *Kultur* as used by Neokantian philosophers.[21] However, during the public debate of the Meiji Era, it was not only very rare (it is for instance, absent in Fukuzawa Yukichi's 福澤 諭吉 (1835–1901) writings), but it also often meant the same thing as *bunmeikaika* 文明開化, and was but an abbreviation of this (Suzuki 1981, 54–55).[22] That is notably attested in Nishi Amane's 西周 (1829–1897) writing (Nishikawa 2001, 225). Furthermore, saying that *bunka*, or *wenhua* for that matter, served as a translation of the German *Kultur*, is rather doubtful, for a host of studies have now documented how the translation of the Western vocabulary in East-Asia didn't simply entail moving one piece of vocabulary to another context: translating was "a creative act of generating meaning and constructing discourse" (Howland 2003, 45). More recent research has furthermore strengthened the thesis that the concept *bunka* emerged out of the expression *bunmeikaika* (Chen 2016). This brings the attention to the importance of distinguishing the use of a term in a specialized field of discourse and on a more general level. In 1922, Liang Qichao could write that the term *wenhua* had been long discussed by German philosophers like Rickert and Wundt, but completely bypass their thesis in the production of his own definition (Liang 1922).

21 One could also mention here the contrasting example of the early translation of "culture" as understood by Matthew Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). The early Japanese rendition of this term was *bunka* 文華 and not *bunka* 文化 (Shimizu 2016; 2017), a term later abandoned.

22 One should note that there is also a problem in our translation of *bunmei kaika* in a Japanese context, since originally the first part, *bunmei*, meant "enlightenment" and the second, *kaika*, "civilisation" (on this issue, see Howland 1996, 33–35, 212).

Until recently, it has often been considered that *wenhua* was a loan word from Japanese (Sanetō 1982, 328; Liu 1995, 308, 312). However, it is difficult to fathom that "*wenhua*" was translated from the Japanese as early as its neighbour concept of *wenming* (*bunka* is, for instance, absent of Masini 1993's corpus). It is well attested that *bunmei* or *wenming* were imported from Japanese as early as the end of the 19th century, and that Liang Qichao played a decisive role in its dissemination (Huang 1972, 53–56; Kawajiri 2010). But at that time, the most common term used to defend what we would call today a Japanese "cultural identity" was *kokusui* 国粋 and not *bunka*—a term that would be imported by the Chinese intellectuals such as Zhang Taiyan or Liu Shipei, and the people revolving around the *Journal of National Essence* (*Guocui bao* 國粹報) (cf. Hon 2013). It is by the way worth recalling some remarks made by Laurence Schneider on this topic. He has written that at the end of the 19th century Chinese scholars discovered "culture" (*guocui* 國粹) as "a special body of native literature and art as a thing-in-itself, independent of and even more fundamental than the political and even social institutions which until then had been intimately associated with it" (Schneider 1976, 57). Schneider's translation of *guocui* as "culture" is perfectly understandable and legitimate in the context of the end of the Qing. However, it raises the question of why *wenhua* emerged later as a competing concept for this semantic field. Some scholars have suggested that there was a transition from *guocui* to *wenhua* (Liu 1995, 239–56), and the latter term gained pre-eminence over the former. But this process still needs to be documented and analysed in detail.

As noted above, in Japan *bunka*, as culture, only gained popularity in the 1920s, when there emerged "a competition over cultural goods". Jordan Sand has rightly pointed out that the discourse over *bunka*—and the multiplication of *bunka* as a prefix for anything and everything, a process translated as "cultural splash" (*bunka donburi* 文化丼) by Harootunian (2000, 57)[23]—signified a "fragmentation of public discourse" (Sand 2000, 99). *Bunka* was not a term used by intellectuals alone in their quest to identify and defend a specific culture or civilization, but embraced the entire society in its most practical and concrete sense. The rise of *bunka* in the 1920s and 1930s is in this regard impossible to isolate from the rise of what we would call "mass culture". According to Tsumura Hideo 津村 秀夫 (1907–1985), quoted by Harootunian, "the term culture had been entirely absorbed by material artifacts, leaving nothing for the realm of spirit" (Harootunian 2000, 57), a phenomenon denounced as Americanism. In the intellectual field, we

23 In China, one does not find this kind of semantic construction. However, the word *wenming* was often used in the sense of "Western" and "modern" in association with daily products. In her review of Chinese neologisms, Mateer gives the original example of the "Foreign-style shop" (*wenming jianfa chu* 文明剪髮處) (Mateer 1922, 39).

also have to wait for the writing of Sakaguchi Takakimi (坂口昂君 (1872–1928)) to put forward the idea that *bunka* is the most important unifying factor of a people, before race or ethnicity (Doak 1998, 191). In a purer philosophical register, "The Concept of *bunka*" (*Bunka no Gainen*文化の概念) by Hajime Tanabe 田邊元 (1889–1962) published in 1922 can also be regarded as one of the first publications raising *bunka* toward the status of a local philosophical concept and not simply a translation device. As a matter of fact, *wenhua* became popular in China at the same time as *bunka* in Japan.

The Korean scenario also points toward the late development of the concept of *wenhua*. Ku Inmo has argued that *munhwa* was a concept imported from Japan only in the 1920s and was part of a Japanese attempt to call "its colonial ethnic groups the people of the Japanese Empire" (Ku 2007, 169). Despite the research on a common Korean *munhwa* developed by the intellectuals associated with the *Gaebyeok* journal stirred up Korean nationalism (Robinson 1988, 57–64), Ku has claimed that *munwha* was a highly instrumentalized notion. In those years, it was redefined through its relation with the Japanese *bunka*. If the term *munhwa* was present in Korean writing at the end of the 19th century, it was at this point only a synonym of "civilization". In his description of the history of *munhwa* in Korea before the 1920s, Kim Hyunjoo dates back to the years 1906–1908 the use of this term to translate the European notion of "culture/*Kultur*". Such a position is for instance obvious in Choe Nam-seon's writing, where it is understood it as "the whole lifestyle of a nation" (한 민족의 생활 방식 전체or한 民族의 生活 方式 全體) (Choe in Kim 2015, 26). Yet, despite the appearance of this "emergent" concept of *munhwa*, Kim insists that the understanding of *munhwa* as "civilization" remained the "dominant" approach. In his partition between a "residual concept" of *munhwa*, a "dominant" and an "emergent" concept, Kim Hyunjoo's article is here illuminating, and offers elements for comparison in the Chinese intellectual field. In China, as in Korea, under the term *wenhua* were included various different concepts, or I would say conceptual directions.

Let us focus on the problem of the residual, or what I would rather frame as the "contemporaneity of the uncontemporaneous". In analysing the term *wenhua*, we often have one word in mind. Yet when we say that *wenhua* is one word, we close our analysis to other possibilities. Of course, *wenhua* is a neologism, but Chinese neologisms have a specific feature that we need focus on. As Michael Lackner framed it "their indivisibility is but apparent, because the semantic depth of the elements building every neologism act in such a manner that the reader is tempted to analyze them separately and dissociate them from one another" (Lackner 1993, 149). Therefore, a conceptual history of *wenhua*, or any modern Chinese concept, would require both semasiological and onomasiological studies at the

level of the final concept, and at the one of the morphemes working as suppress building blocks. We have to be conscious of the transformation underwent by *wen* to understand the potential meanings of *wenhua*. In these regards, the meaning of *wen* has experienced important changes throughout its history, and notably by the end of the 19th century, when it shifted from "Ornament" to "Literature" (Blitstein 2016). But let us not open too many doors at once, and come back to the problem of how to read *wenhua*. For some leading intellectuals, notably those who had been educated in the traditional system before the collapse of the Imperial examination system, it was still possible to divide the *wenhua* compound. A striking example is offered by Zhang Junmai in 1922:

> The direction for the (re)new(ed) Chinese culture of tomorrow should depart from our own choices, and take its sources in the exigencies formulated by our people's spirit and initiative. When the Westerners do one thing, and we imitate them, we are but puppets on a stage or hat-wearing monkeys, there is nothing that could be called a *wen*, there is even less that could be called a *hua*.
>
> 吾國今後新文化之方針，當由我自決，由我民族精神上自行提出要求。若謂西洋人如何，我便如何，此乃傀儡登場，此為沐猴而冠，既無所為文，更無所為化。(Zhang 1922, 225)

Although Zhang was obviously aiming for a literary effect, his division of the term *wenhua* shows us that it was not counterintuitive for him to read the components of the word separately. As such, *wenhua* could be understood as the fusion of two morphemes having clearly distinct meanings. In fact, four possibilities could be offered to us. One could read it as one lexeme, one syntagm, two lexemes or one lexeme with a supplementary suffix. This later reading—that is understanding *wenhua* as the adding up of the suffix *-hua* "-ation" to the concept of *wen*—could in this regard be very engaging. In such a manner, *wenhua* would not mean "culture" but "*wenization*" or education, alphabetization. With such a reading, the importance of promoting a new language (a new *wen*) but also new "civilized" or "Western" social practices and patterns[24] (*wen* in one of its original sense) by the most famous activist of the *xin wenhua yundong* would be clearly put under a new light. It, for example, clearly applies to Zhang Dongsun's affirmation that the *wenhua* movement had as its main aim promoting education (*guangyi de jiaoyu* 廣義的教育) (Zhang 1919c). In 1920, Jiang Menglin also defined the "raging tide of *xin wenhua*" as something similar to the European Renaissance. It was mainly focused on education (*jiaoyu* 教育) and scholarly knowledge (*xueshu* 學術) (Jiang 1919). In those utterances it appears clear that *wenhua* did not mean "culture" in

24 See notably the discussion around civilizing the emotion of the Chinese people in Messner (2015).

its contemporary anthropological sense, but "a patrimony of 'works' (*oeuvres*) to preserve, to diffuse, or in reference to which one positions oneself" (de Certeau 1974, 167). Keeping in mind that the "(re)new(ed) culture" was understood as a body of knowledge, and how to express this would give more force to a strand of academic literature that stresses that the literary revolution was the core or even the origin of the May Fourth and New Culture Movements (e.g. Geng 2015, 234; Xie 2017, 166). As such, one could even make the point that the problem is not located in the difficulty in understanding what Chinese activists meant when using each specific term—for this is exactly what scholarship is supposed to find out—but in the inappropriateness or fuzziness of our contemporary vocabulary to translate, denote, or explain them. One could wonder whether Philippe Bénéton was not right when he wrote in his history of the term "culture" that it would be a good idea to simply get rid of this term for the sake of clarity (Bénéton 1975, 149).

Returning to the conceptual history of *wenhua,* we have said that like in Japan and Korea, the notion of *wenhua* was at first understood as "civilization". Indeed, the American missionary William A. P. Martin, who was the director of the *Tongwenguan* 同文館, used the word *wenhua* as a translation of "civilization" (Huang 2011, 5). The first time *wenhua* was used in a Chinese-foreign language dictionary, in 1913 (*A Modern Dictionary of the English Language Translated into Chinese* 1913, 114), it was again a translation of "Civilization, n., the state of being civilized". If we check the first texts mentioning the word *wenhua* in the *New Youth* journal one must admit that it did not cover the entire semantic realm of "culture", only the ergologic division between nature and culture (see notably Tao 1917). In those texts it meant "civilization" as a universal process that leads man out of his state of nature. With each passing year, it started, however, to take a more spiritual connotation. In 1920, Chen Qixiu wrote that the word *wenhua* "designates the progress and the amelioration of the spiritual life of individuals and society" (Chen 1920, 1), a meaning still very close to what Fukuzawa Yukichi had coined for *bunmei* in Japan (Fukuzawa (1875) 1967, vol. 4, 3). A progressive distancing of *wenhua* from *wenming* seems to have started with the 1917–1918 debate between Chen Duxiu and the editors of the *Eastern Miscellany.*[25] During the exchanges, *wenhua* emerged as a competing notion used to criticize "modern" and not simply "Western civilization". And the intellectuals who started to use the term *wenhua* endowed to the Chinese the mission to save the entire universal and modern civilization (see Li 1919, and Liang 1920a). They proclaimed a Chinese *Sonderweg* (Meissner 1994) that bears many resemblances with the utopian aspiration of German *Kulturkritik*. It is only in 1921 that we can really find in a text by Chen Jiayi the operative use of the term of *wenhua* closer to our contemporary

25 For a general presentation, cf. Jenco 2013; Wang 2013 and Ciaudo 2016, 214–36.

totalistic understanding of it. Chen defined it as "the ensemble of spiritual phenomena of our nation" (Chen 1921, 299–300, note 1). He furthermore distinguished the term from the logic of "going back to Antiquity" (*fugu* 復古) and from the rules and social systems implemented by the first Chinese emperors (*dianzhang zhidu* 典章制度).

One can say that from that time on emerged two tendencies, that supplemented the more classical understanding of a body of texts and knowledge: 1) the anthropologically inclined attempt to see in *wenhua* the totality or the form (*Gestalt*) of the spirit shared by a nation/people; and 2) the relocalization of *wenhua* as a field of experience distinguished from other fields such as the political, the economic, *le culturel* or *der Kulturbereich*. Indeed, *wenhua* was not a totalistic concept for people like Chen Duxiu or Luo Jialun (Luo 1920) who clearly separated a *wenhua* movement and a social movement. From the 1920s on, Chen only used *wenhua* in this reduced sense, limiting it to the domain of arts and knowledge, understood as distinct from politics and economics (Huang 2006, 27–28). But here again we cannot simply put the radicals on one side, and the more conservative ones on the other.[26] Zhang Junmai, for instance, sometimes used *wenhua* as a field like Chen (Zhang 1921, 311–12), and sometimes as a totalistic notion. It seems that no intellectual succeeded in clearly imposing a precise definition for this term. The border between *wenming* and *wenhua* remained very porous during the Republican Era. As with any concept, *wenhua* was no univocal term. The marketization of *wenhua* and *xin wenhua* by the editorial world also complexified these potential ambiguities, because, as noted by Forster, they used it to market everything and anything.

This leads me to a last remark. The vocabulary and the meaning associated with the different compounds used by the intellectuals was still far from being established in the mid-1920s. The famous text of Hu Shi, "Our Opinion toward the Modern Western Civilization", in which he articulated perhaps in the most systematic manner his plea for the Westernization of Chinese society, is notable here. This text was first published in Japanese (Hu 1926a), before being made available for a Chinese readership (ibid. 1926b). However, by comparing the content, one can note a clear discrepancy between the two versions. In Japanese, Hu Shi uses *bunmei* and *bunka* in a very fluid manner without really questioning their meanings. In contrast, the Chinese text opens up what Hu Shi wanted to be authoritative definitions of the terms *wenming* and *wenhua*. Considering that the Chinese discussion was going nowhere because of a lack of precision in the terms,

26 See the problem of the notion of culture and its links with conservatism, as studied by Axel Schneider (2010).

he took on himself, probably with a particular agenda, to define once and for all what *wenhua* and *wenming* were in Chinese—something less needed in Japanese. Such a situation should alert us to the problem of the multiplicity of readings that permitted all May Fourth intellectuals' participation in the *xin wenhua yundong*, while not agreeing on its definition. In short, since Chinese intellectuals did not agree on what "*wenhua*"[27] was, was it even possible for them to agree on a *xin wenhua*?

Conclusion

As has become obvious after the historiographical considerations set out above, the potential re-evaluations of what was/were the (Re)New Culture(?) Movement(s) are far from being over. Elizabeth Forster rightly pointed it out that "the New Culture Movement meant, or was made to mean, different things for different people" (Forster 2017, 1257). This situation can be explained because it was a *Schlagwort* employed in editorial and political battles, but also because there was much ambiguity concerning the meaning of the compound *wenhua*. Intellectuals rarely specified what this "*wenhua*" was; they kept talking about, and many possibilities were at hand. Furthermore, it is not because a writer wrote this term with a specific and clear-cut idea in his mind that his readers understood it in this sense. Let us remember that Chinese intellectuals with different European educational backgrounds did not understand the terms "culture" and "civilization" in the same manner if they had received their educations in Germany, France, Great Britain, the United States or Japan. Furthermore, these Chinese debates took place just at the end of the First World War, after a period in which the German *Kulturkritik* discourse went to war, by claiming the superiority of the German *Kultur* over Western *Civilization*, while the French claimed that they were fighting "to defend Civilization" (Beßlich 2000; Beßlich and Agard 2018).

Thus, one really needs to question whether "culture" is always an appropriate term to understand the intellectual debates over *xin wenhua*. We tend to forget that it is too ambivalent and covers too large a semantic field that changes from one European language to another to be a very apt heuristic notion. I would argue that by translating *xin wenhua* as "new culture" we have sometimes blurred the picture instead of making it clearer. I do not believe that there is an ideal translation for

27 One should also clearly point to the fact that Chinese intellectuals were completely aware that they were fighting a war over vocabulary, and that the precise definitions of *wenhua* and *wenming*, and their semantic historical and transnational contexts, were of key importance, see notably the reply of Zhang Shenfu 張申府 (1893–1986), alias Zhang Songnian, to the above-mentioned article by Hu Shi (Zhang 1926)

that term, and as I already pointed out above, the polysemic term "culture" could be very appropriate to render *wenhua* as it is also polysemic. Yet, a key issue is that scholarship has long tended to regard *wenhua* as a translation of a Western concept of "culture" without considering the difficulties that faced Chinese intellectuals in their appropriation of the Western vocabulary,[28] nor the very complex transnational history of the concepts at hand. Hence, writing a full-scale history of the cluster of concepts that articulated what we would nowadays locate under the semantic field of "culture" appears to be a necessity if we want to grasp what was going on in these debates on the terms of those involved. More thorough attention should be given to the many *Sclagworte* that were deployed during this period, and how they affected ongoing debates, but we could also investigate the broader socio-linguistic aspect of words, concepts and constructions during this time[29]. A much more systematic exploration of the web of connections between people who read and wrote about these terms is also required, as this paper could not explore extensively all the productions of the time. Of course, these are projects that would go far beyond this paper, and that would require the collaboration of many colleagues. For the time being, the author of the present paper finds solace in the thought that his potential readers may wish to delve into these tremendous tasks. My goal with his article, still plagued with many loose ends, was not to give a definitive answer to the problem, but rather to raise awareness and fire new questions, in short, to open a discussion. With the one-hundredth anniversary of May 4th already behind us, it is probably the time to approach its historical reality seriously by giving full attention to the terms used by its participants, except if we want to continue employing the expression "New Culture Movement" as a *Schlagwort* with a contemporary political purpose.

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28 A topic that has notably been studied in the context of the translation of scientific terms (see notably Wright 1998; Lackner, Amelung, and Kurtz 2001; Elman 2009).

29 Ivo Spira's (2015) work on "-ism" (*zhuyi* 主義) has already shown the relevance of this type of inquiry to our understanding of the intellectual debates as well as their political and social ramifications.

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Beyond the Warring States: The First World War and the Redemptive Critique of Modernity in the Work of Du Yaquan (1873–1933)

*Ady VAN DEN STOCK**

Abstract

The intellectual impact of the First World War in China is often understood as having led to a disenchantment with the West and a discrediting of the authority of "science", while at the same time ushering in a renewed sense of cultural as well as national "awakening". Important developments such as the May Fourth Movement, the rise of Chinese Marxism, and the emergence of modern Confucianism have become integral parts of the narrative surrounding the effects of the "European War" in China, and bear witness to the contested relation between tradition and modernity in twentieth-century Chinese thought. Through a case study of a number of wartime and post-war texts written by the "cultural conservative" thinker and publicist Du Yaquan (1873–1933), this paper tries to draw attention to the complexity and occasional ambiguity of responses to the "Great War" in modern Chinese intellectual history. More specifically, the following pages offer an analysis of Du's critique of "materialism" in the context of his quest for social freedom and cultural continuity, his enduring commitment to scientific notions of social evolution and political governance, and his approach to the relations among war, the nation-state, the individual, and the international interstate order developed against the background of the First World War.

Keywords: First World War, modern Chinese intellectual history, Du Yaquan, war, nationalism, science

Onkraj vojskujočih se držav: prva svetovna vojna in odrešilna kritika modernosti v delu Du Yaquana (1873–1933)

Izvleček

Vpliv prve svetovne vojne naj bi na Kitajskem v intelektualnem smislu pripeljal do razočaranja nad Zahodom in do diskreditacije avtoritete »znanosti«, hkrati pa naj bi povzročil obnovljen občutek kulturnega in narodnega »prebujenja«. Pomembni dogodki, kot so četrtomajsko gibanje, vzpon kitajskega marksizma in pojav modernega konfucijanstva, so postali sestavni deli pripovedi o učinkih »evropske vojne« na Kitajskem ter pričajo o problematičnem odnosu med tradicijo in modernostjo v kitajski misli 20. stoletja. S

* Ady VAN DEN STOCK, Department of Languages and Cultures, Ghent University.
Email address: ady.vandenstock@ugent.be

pomočjo študije primera številnih vojnih in povojnih besedil »kulturno konservativnega« misleca in publicista Du Yaquana (1873–1933) članek poskuša opozoriti na kompleksnost in občasno nejasnost odgovorov na »veliko vojno« v moderni kitajski intelektualni zgodovini. Rečeno natančneje, naslednje strani ponujajo analizo Dujeve kritike »materializma« v kontekstu njegovega iskanja družbene svobode in kulturne kontinuitete, njegove trajne zavezanosti znanstvenim pojmom družbenega razvoja in političnega upravljanja ter njegovega pristopa k odnosom med vojno, nacionalno državo, posameznikom in mednarodnim meddržavnim redom, ki so se vzpostavili v ozadju prve svetovne vojne.

Ključne besede: prva svetovna vojna, moderna kitajska intelektualna zgodovina, Du Yaquan, vojna, nacionalizem, znanost

There is hardly any difference between the situation in the age of the Warring States and the present day anymore. (Du 1918b, 364)

Introduction: The "Great War" in China as Event and Narrative

There is an oft-quoted saying by the French poet and essayist Paul Valéry (1871–1945) according to which the First World War confronted humanity with the fact that civilizations too are mortal beings (Valéry 1977, 94).[1] In the context of the intellectual history of modern China, it might be more accurate to say that in the wake of the war, Chinese thinkers learned that Western civilization in particular was mortal, if not already moribund. This at least is how the story was and still is often framed: the post-war period in China was one of national as well as cultural "awakening" (*juewu* 觉悟) (see Wang 2016, 41–48), and entailed a call for nothing less than a "liberation from the West" (Zheng 2011).[2] Generally speaking, the discourse surrounding the impact of the First World War on China hinges on fluid terms such as "civilization" and "culture", and draws heavily on dramatic metaphors of "death", "awakening", and "rebirth". Perhaps this already indicates that the war does not figure so much as a factual event in this context, but rather as a narrative structure, one allowing for a decoupling as well as recombination of discursive elements from historically and culturally distinct traditions, at least on a more abstract level.

1 What is usually ignored however is that Valéry's melancholy diagnosis is followed by a celebration of the "European genius" in the second part of his text.

2 More precisely, Zheng Shiqu 郑师渠 understands such "liberation" as coinciding with an end of the normative appeal of capitalism and the rise of historical materialism, as if the social reality of the war had opened up the cracks in the ideological superstructure of the New Culture Movement necessary for Chinese Marxism to impose itself.

Admittedly, the horror of trench warfare, massive civilian casualties, and unimaginable destruction during the "Great War" may seem to rail against the adoption of such a dispassionate approach. However, we are not, in my view, merely dealing with a stubborn indifference to the cruelty and contingency of historical events which always threaten to shatter the crystal palace of philosophical abstraction. In retrospect, we can clearly see that the brutal reality of armed conflict did not prevent Western as well as Chinese thinkers from approaching the struggle between the great powers as an opportunity for reassessing their respective traditions as well as the prospects for a possible encounter or reconciliation between them. In turn, such a rethinking was seen as a response to very real and pressing socio-political issues. After all, as the historian James Q. Whitman claims, in the modern conception of war, armed conflicts are supposed to deliver a "verdict", in the sense that "victory in war either proves or legitimates a certain cultural, moral, or metaphysical value" (De Warren 2014, 727).

To be sure, the many problems besetting the embattled nations were widely reported in Chinese media (Sachsenmaier 2007, 118), even if the First World War seems not to have been primarily approached from a "phenomenological" standpoint focused on the lived experience of soldiers and civilians on the frontlines by most Chinese thinkers. Travel journals and the reports of Chinese living in Europe at the time and published after the war contain detailed eyewitness accounts which offer a more personal and lively counterweight to the somewhat dreary and repetitive discourse on the "Decline of the West" often associated with this period.[3] As Eugene W. Chiu 丘为君 indicates, while the Chinese experience of the "European War" (*Ouzhan* 欧战), as it still sometimes referred to in China, was at first characterized by a certain detachment, the mass of reports and analyses in journals and newspapers allowing the events on the Western front to be approached as a gargantuan "text", Chinese commentators gradually shifted their attention to the actual living conditions of common people caught up in the war (Chiu 2005, 94, 118).

Just as importantly, many if not all intellectuals in China were highly concerned with how the situation in Europe would impact the East-Asian context, especially after Japan (aided by Great Britain) started moving in on Germany's concessions in Shandong province. As such, they were hardly unaware of the global dimension and broader geopolitical implications of what was, after all, an increasingly worldwide conflict. What is crucial to point out, however, is that more philosophically minded observers approached the war not so much as a factual occurrence, but rather from a more macroscopic perspective, that is to say, as an epochal event

3 Professor Jing Chunyu 景春雨 at Shanghai University's Department of Literature is currently involved in a study of Chinese accounts (by figures as diverse as businessmen and novelists) of their wartime experiences in France.

(in a quasi-Badiouian sense) necessitating an "awakening" and a retrospective insight into its larger historical and cultural causes and conditions. China's definitive loss of Shandong to Japanese imperialist ambitions following the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 obviously played an important role in this respect.

As Du Yaquan's 杜亚泉 (1873–1933) statement which serves as an epigraph to my paper indicates, the causes and conditions of the First World War were not necessarily sought in the recent past alone. For Du, chief editor of the influential journal *Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi* 东方杂志) between 1911 and 1920,[4] the social and ideological upheaval characteristic of the modern era could in some sense be seen as entailing a return to the political chaos and intellectual confusion (or, in positive terms, richness and ferment) of the Warring States period (481–221 BCE) in Chinese history.[5] As anyone familiar with the development of traditional Chinese philosophy knows, such an identification should not only be read in a negative sense, since this period is also the origin of the "hundred schools" of pre-Qin thought. More to the point, as Nicolas De Warren notes with respect to the philosophical response to the war in Europe, it is easy to forget that when the First World War broke out, it was also greeted with a certain sense of enthusiasm by some thinkers, as an event harbouring the potential for a social revolution and "destructive renewal" of the world within itself

4 Du had *de facto* already been in charge of the journal's affairs since 1909, see Wang (2016, 5).

5 The analogy between the Warring States period and the modern world order following the end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) and the collapse of the *tianxia* 天下 ("all-under-heaven") paradigm became an even more prevalent theme during the Second World War with the appearance of the so-called "Warring States Faction" (*Zhanguo ce pai* 战国策派), a group of intellectuals (most of them Tsinghua University graduates) associated with the bimonthly journal *Zhanguo ce* 战国策, which was published in the beginning of the 1940s and was followed up by an eponymous supplement to the Chongqing-based newspaper *Dagongbao* 大公报. Common themes in the writings of "Warring States" intellectuals were a reappraisal of the philosophy of Nietzsche (and German culture in general), a tone of militarist nationalism, and a defence of "hero worship". He Lin 贺麟 (1902–1992), often credited with having been the first to use the expression "New Confucianism", was also counted among the ranks of the "Warring States Faction". For more information, see Fung (2010, 120–26). A representative figure of this relatively short-lived current of thought, which came to be condemned as "fascist" on the mainland after the founding the People's Republic, was the Shakespeare specialist Lin Tongji 林同济 (1906–1980), in whose article "The Recurrence of the Age of the Warring States (Zhanguo shidai de chongyan 战国时代的重演)" many of the themes mentioned in the above are joined together. In this text, Lin makes it clear that the idea of the "Warring States" refers to a universal phase in the history and socio-cultural evolution of different societies (each culture having a distinct *Gestalt*, *tixiang* 体相). As such, it denotes a stage of total warfare (*quantizhan* 全体战), where every single thing and person is mobilized for the sake of war, a process Lin sees as being epitomized by the Qin dynasty which unified China at the end of the Warring States period in 221 BCE. For Lin, war was thus not something to be solved or prevented, but rather embraced as a means for the self-assertion of the Chinese nation (see Lin 1983, 443–44).

(see De Warren 2014, 716).[6] Likewise, in China, figures as diverse as the radical intellectual Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879–1942) and the more moderate and reconciliatory Du Yaquan saw the Great War as a tragic manifestation of the patriotism of the citizens of European nations. As such, it was also an opportunity to reflect on what they perceived to be the lack of patriotic spirit among their compatriots and raise the Chinese nation from its state of slumber and stagnation (see Zheng 2011, 70–71; Zhang 2016, 113).[7] As Du wrote, in biologistic terms which I will further explore below,

> the mind of organisms is always stimulated and aroused to action by impressions coming from its surroundings. The same applies to the people of a country (*guomin* 国民). Our self-absorbed and protective compatriots have remained in a state of stagnation for thousands of years due to a lack of stimuli from the outside world. (Du 1914b, 187)

Additionally, there was a perhaps surprising amount of Germanophile sentiment among Chinese intellectuals after the war broke out, at least until China officially declared war on Germany in 1917. Contributors to the flagship journal of the New Culture Movement *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年), such as Chen Duxiu saw the Germans as a "springtime people" (*qingchun zhi guomin* 青春之国民), whose cultural energy they contrasted with that of older and "decaying" European nations, most notably France, as the birthplace of a revolution that had failed to make good on its promises and normative demands on a global scale (see Zhao 2017, 109–12; Zhang 2016, 112).

In more general terms, a relatively positive appraisal of the intellectual impact of the war is still seen among contemporary Chinese observers. The Taiwanese scholar Edward W. Chiu, for instance, presents the Great War as a veritable catalyst for an "Enlightenment" in China (Chiu 2005). The mainland Chinese historian Zheng Shiqu 郑师渠 has argued that these dramatic historical events allowed the West to overcome an arrogant and exaggerated belief in the merits of its own civilization, while at the same time freeing Chinese thinkers from decades of self-depreciation and feelings of cultural inferiority (Zheng 1997, 213–14). Similarly, Xu Guoqi, a historian who has done much to draw attention to the neglected role of China in the First World War, characterizes the latter as a "vehicle for China's

6 Some scholars believe that the First World War played a considerable role in the already emerging rift between continental and analytical philosophy, and served as a catalyst for the closely related decline of British Idealism after the latter's German Idealist sources fell into disrepute. (See Vrahimis 2015, 84–93, and Morrow 1982)

7 A few months after the armistice, Du wrote a short article outlining the various "benefits" (*liyi* 利益) China had gained during the conflict in predominantly pragmatist terms (Du 1919b).

transformation, renewal, and regeneration" (Xu 2005, 10). As he puts it, "the war provided the momentum and the opportunity for China to redefine its relations with the world through its efforts to inject itself into the war and thus position itself within the family of nations" (ibid., 9). While such arguments are probably intended to be descriptive rather than ideological, it should at the same time remind us of the importance of carefully considering in what sort of narrative the Chinese response to the war is framed and retold. According to Dominic Sachsenmaier, already at the time "a variety of groups in China, from free-trade liberalists to early Marxists (…) saw the Great War as part of a teleological history" (Sachsenmaier 2007, 120). In Xu Guoqi's opinion, the ultimate explanation behind China's apparent eagerness to join the war effort is to be found in what he calls the Chinese "obsession" (Xu 2005, 2) with joining the ranks of the international order, an attitude which supposedly also conditioned the overall response of Chinese intellectuals to the outbreak of the war.

However, if we direct our attention to analyses of the cultural-historical trajectory seen as leading up to the war, specifically those made by thinkers critical of (Western) modernity, a less clear-cut picture imposes itself.[8] More precisely, Xu Guoqi's assessment seems to underestimate the extent to which reflections on the war were not only about an imagined and long-awaited convergence between China and the West, and were not merely focused on the prospect of China finally coming into its own as one nation-state among others, but also gave rise to more ambiguous and at times incongruous reflections on the nature and limits of modernity and its political institutions. The intention of this paper is to highlight and explore some of these ambiguities in the writings of Du Yaquan, who is usually labelled as a cultural conservative without further examination of to what degree this is actually true. Before turning to a more detailed analysis of Du's philosophical reflections on the "Great War" in relation to the question of Chinese modernity, I will proceed by first providing some additional background information that will allow us to get a better picture of the broader cultural impact of the First World War on Chinese intellectual history.

8 For studies on the impact of the First World War on Chinese intellectuals, specifically on cultural conservatives, see Zheng 2002; Zheng 2008; and Sachsenmaier 2007. To date, one of the only analyses of the relation between the war and the emergence of "New Confucianism" in particular (somewhat predictably focused on the debate concerning "science and metaphysics") is Lei (2015).

Post-war Chinese Discourse on Science and the Shifting Boundaries of the "New"

The above observations indicate that the Chinese response to the Great War, in which China participated as a "forgotten ally" (Alexeeva 2015)[9] supporting the Allied Forces by dispatching an estimated 140,000 Chinese labourers to the Western Front,[10] has to be framed in a larger historical context. The two Opium Wars and China's defeat at the hands of Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 had already made it clear that the waning Qing empire needed to adopt modern (especially military) technology. With the increasing implausibility of maintaining a rigid conceptual distinction between a Chinese "substance" (*ti* 体) and a Western "function" or "application" (*yong* 用), the adoption of technology was gradually discovered not be a mere matter of "technique" (*shu* 术) as opposed and inferior to "learning" (*xue* 学), but to involve the appropriation of "science" (*gezhixue* 格致学, later *kexue* 科学 (see Elman 2004)) as well. In this context, "science" was understood not so much as a mathematized form of objective inquiry, but rather as a much more generally applicable and socially performative "method" and "spirit" (see Luo 2000, 57–66) that would allow China to successfully achieve modernization and position itself in the world as a sovereign nation. As Wang Hui 汪晖 has aptly put it, science thus took on the form of a veritable "moral imperative" (Wang 1989, 23).

Moreover, modernization was seen as something that not only had to occur on an institutional and political level, but also on that of individual virtue, not in the least by radically reinterpreting the relation between the "private" sphere of morality and the "public" domain of politics, a view epitomized by Liang Qichao's 梁启超 (1873–1929) call for the creation of a "new citizen" or "new people" (*xinmin* 新

9 For Olga Alexeeva (2015, 44), the fact that the design for a grandiose mural entitled *Panthéon de la guerre*, commissioned by the French State while the war was still ongoing as a celebration of all allied nations and their contributions to the envisaged victory, originally included Chinese labourers, only to be replaced by the figures of American soldiers in the final version, symbolizes the fact that the Chinese war efforts were consigned to oblivion in Western historical consciousness.

10 See Xu 2005, 114–54. The Republic of China adopted a strategy known as "labourers in the place of soldiers" (*yigong daibing* 以工代兵), labourers which were recruited and dispatched to Europe through the intermediary of private companies, thus allowing China to retain a semblance of neutrality while still supporting the Allied Forces against Germany. This strategy was devised by Liang Shiyi 梁士诒 (1869–1933), a cabinet minister and a close confidant of Yuan Shikai. Liang, sometimes dubbed the "Chinese Machiavelli", had already started arguing for the strategic importance of China entering the war at the side of the Allied Forces in 1914. He saw it as a way for China to achieve full recognition as a nation-state, not in the least through a return of German concessions in Shandong. (See ibid. 82–83, 87, 90–91) Ironically, most of the Chinese labourers sent to the frontlines were recruited from Shandong province, which was later ceded to Japan at the Paris Peace Conference.

民).[11] The growing awareness of the need for science, as the blueprint for culture as a whole, is usually understood as coinciding with an increasing loss of the normative power of the Chinese tradition, particularly of Confucianism, as a model for political governance, communal life, and individual conduct. The failure of the newly founded and politically unstable Chinese Republic to prevent General Yuan Shikai from proclaiming himself emperor in 1915, a move that was backed by Kang Youwei's 康有为 (1858–1927) "Confucian Religious Society" (*Kongjiao hui* 孔教会) which proposed installing Confucianism as a state religion, further fuelled calls for the abolishment of traditions seen as inhibiting the emergence of a "new culture" (*xin wenhua* 新文化) and to what the intellectual historian Luo Zhitian 罗志田 has termed a "worship of the new" (Luo 2017, 1–60).

Within this familiar synoptic account, the period following the First World War is usually interpreted as signalling a shift away from this "worship of the new" and a naïve celebration of all things Western toward a more conflicted and at times syncretistic approach to what became known as the "problem of Eastern and Western cultures" (*dongxi wenhua wenti* 东西文化问题).[12] As far as Du Yaquan for instance was concerned, the war had endowed the seemingly straightforward yet highly changeable and indeterminate terms "old" and "new" with a completely different sense. In his view, the "new", which had previously more or less meant imitating the West, now had to give way to a different kind of "novelty", that is to say, to the creation of a genuinely "new" form of culture that would not simply coincide with a one-sided emulation of Western civilization, but combine elements of the "new" and the "old" within itself (see Du 1919c, 401–2). Just as importantly, after the war "the West" ceased to be seen as a consistent totality, but instead began to appear as a force-field of contradictory if not antagonistic forces (see Luo 2017, 250–51). The spectacle of advanced technology being put to the service of relentless slaughter and destruction had caused science to be "put to shame by the cruelty of its applications" (Valéry 1919, 97). In turn, the continuity between "science" and "democracy", as symbols for the epistemological and institutional requirements of modern society (and quasi-religious objects of faith in the discourse of the New Culture Movement, see Wang 1989, 22–23) was ruptured, in the sense that scientific and technological ingenuity had clearly failed to translate into a rational organization of individual societies and the international order as a whole (see Han 2017). Instead, a gaping chasm had opened up between "force" (*li* 力) and "principle" (*li* 理) (Zhang 2016). The reputation of the sort of social

11 See in particular the chapters "*Lun gongde* 论公德 (On Public Virtue)" and "*Lun side* 论私德 (On Private Virtue)" in Liang (1994, 16–22, 161–94).

12 See Wang Yuanhua (2000) for a good overview focused on the role played by Du Yaquan in particular.

Darwinism previously embraced by many Chinese thinkers suffered considerably in the process (Xu 2018, 163). Additionally, Western philosophers associated with German militarism became symbols of the malaise of modernity and prominent targets of critique.[13]

In a lecture entitled "The Crisis of European Culture and the Direction of China's New Culture" (*Ouzhou wenhua zhi weiji ji Zhongguo xin wenhua zhi quxiang* 欧洲文化之危机及中国新文化之趋向) from 1922, Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1887–1969) went so far as to claim that continuing to slavishly emulate Western nations after the war would signify the end of culture (*wenhua* 文化) as such, since there would no longer be any "patterns/refinement" (*wen* 文) or "transformation" (*hua* 化) (Zhang 1922, 238) in the first place.[14] To be sure, although it is tempting to be carried along by the sweeping statements many intellectuals made at the time, some nuance and restraint is necessary in this context. This much Zhang Junmai actually indicates himself a little further on in the text of the same speech, when he argues against making simplistic overgeneralizations concerning Western and Chinese cultures. A similar caution should be displayed when it comes to the supposed discrediting of science in post-war China. It is often claimed that the destruction and suffering brought on by the war put a definite end to the optimistic belief in science, the most well-known example undoubtedly being Liang Qichao's call to awaken from the "dream of the omnipotence of science" following his tour of Europe between 1919 and 1920 (see Zheng 2006).

However, what Wang Hui has called the "community of scientific discourse" (*kexue huayu gongtongti* 科学话语共同体)—a community extending beyond the "scientific community" in the narrow sense, thus including all intellectuals who invoked concepts derived from scientific reasoning or articulated their views by appealing to the discourse of science—managed to far outlive such largely rhetorical attacks. Wang argues that the two world wars did not in fact end up undermining the authority of science, quite to the contrary:

> this competitive world scene reinforced sovereign states' demands for science and technology, further guaranteeing the development of

13 It appears that the wartime and post-war discrediting of Nietzsche as a philosopher of militarism, not in the least by British propaganda efforts which managed to spread the appealing myth according to which every German soldier carried around a copy of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in his backpack instead of the Bible (see Vrahimis 2015, 86), seems to have influenced Chinese thinkers as well. See for example Cai Yuanpei's 蔡元培 (1863–1940) text "*Dazhan yu zhexue* 大战与哲学 (The Great War and Philosophy)" (Cai 1984, 200–1).

14 For a more detailed study of Zhang Junmai's understanding of the war, see Ciaudo (2013).

> science and technology, professionalization, state control of science and technology, and the dominant position of the scientific worldview. (Wang 2008, 131)

In his view, this dominant position is also reflected in the influential "debate on science and metaphysics" from 1923, a debate in which "metaphysicians" such as Zhang Junmai and Liang Qichao argued for maintaining the proper boundaries between scientific and humanistic modes of reasoning and cast doubt on the applicability of a scientific outlook to the domains of "existence", "morality", "culture", and "politics", as distinct fields of knowledge and action irreducible to "science". As Wang Hui emphasizes, the position of the "metaphysical" camp was thus not that of an outright rejection of science, but rather reflected an implicit acceptance of the scientific attempt to arrive at a rational division of labour and functionally differentiated taxonomy of knowledge across fields of learning which could no longer be reconstituted into a coherent whole or an unmediated continuum (see ibid., 132–37).

Crucially, questioning the "omnipotence" of science in the context of the post-war "awakening" to its limitations and pathological consequences almost never came down to a straightforward call for the restoration of traditional forms of knowledge, but rather entailed a shift toward an assertion of the importance and autonomy of other, equally novel fields of knowledge, such as "philosophy".[15] This much becomes apparent in the following passage from an article Zhang Dongsun 张东荪 (1886–1973) published in Liang Qichao's journal *Xuedeng* 学灯 (*The Lamp of Learning*) in 1919 in response to Chen Duxiu's continued pleas in favour of the authority of "Mr. Science" (*Sai xiansheng* 赛先生) and "Mr. Democracy" (*De xiansheng* 德先生):

> And now that we have just experienced the anguish and suffering of the war, everyone feels the need to invite Mr. Philosophy (*Fei xiansheng* 费先生, *fei* being the abbreviation for earlier transliterations of the term "philosophy" such as *feilusufeiya* 费禄苏非亚 and *feilusuofeiya* 斐录所费亚 before the adoption of the Japanese neologism *tetsugaku/zhexue* 哲学) back in to provide us with a fundamental and peaceful solution. This is because Mr. Philosophy can be of great help in allowing Mr. Science to reach his goal. Moreover, if we as human beings want to attain a more exalted state of existence, we have no choice but to rely on Mr. Philosophy. In sum, if the previous ten years can be described as a dictatorship

15 For more background on the relation between the fields of "science" and "philosophy" in modern Confucian philosophy in particular, see Van den Stock (2016, 197–215).

> of Mr. Science, we have now entered the era of a commonwealth of Mr. Science and Mr. Philosophy. (quoted in Dai 2009, 145)[16]

Here, "science" and "philosophy" have already become universally applicable categories of knowledge that are no longer constrained by geography, culture, or time and are explicitly framed in relation to the equally universalist desideratum of social freedom (a "commonwealth" instead of a "dictatorship"). Following the abandonment of traditional Chinese taxonomies of knowledge, it would be these universalized terms that would serve as vehicles for the reassertion and renegotiation of cultural particularity. Additionally, we should bear in mind that, at least to some extent, Chinese post-war critiques of science and "Western materialism" echoed the Romantic self-critiques of many European intellectuals at the time (see Zheng 1997, 213; Sachsenmaier 2007, 111). As such, they should not be confused with indiscriminate assaults on Western culture as a whole, but can rather be seen as creative appropriations and reconceptualizations of such auto-critiques.[17] The post-war European interest in Chinese "wisdom", or the "wisdom of the East" in general, undoubtedly influenced the attitude of Chinese intellectuals toward their own tradition as well.[18] What is also important to remember is that such reappraisals of the value of Chinese culture were not always met with a warm welcome in China. Some like the liberal pragmatist Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962) feared that the protests directed at Western power politics and the perfectly justified critiques of the atrocities of the Great War would degenerate into a renewed Chinese sense of "arrogance" and "complacency", the Orientalist admiration for China expressed by some Western scholars in his view merely counting as a "temporary psychopathological state" (quoted in ibid., 210).

In any case, as the title of Zhang Junmai's lecture quoted in the above indicates, what was at stake for Chinese thinkers in their reflections on the war was both

16 In a similar vein, Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995) would later castigate proponents of the New Culture Movement for having forgotten about "Miss Morality" (*Mo guniang* 莫姑娘). (See Mou 2003, 252)

17 Henri Bergson (1859–1941), one of the thinkers most often invoked by the "metaphysicians" in their critique of scientism during the 1923 debate, was involved in propagandist denunciations of "the mechanization of spirit" (Bergson 1915, 36) he associated with Prussia/Germany and in drawing binary distinctions between the "*élan vital*" of the French people and the mechanistic materialism of Germany. Similarly, on the German side, the vitalist philosopher Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926), another favourite of the Chinese "metaphysicians", approached the war as a means for the liberation of Germany and German culture.

18 One anecdotal indication for this surge of interest is the fact that no less than eight different German editions of the *Daodejing* 道德经 appeared in the years following the end of the war. (See Zheng Shiqu 1997, 208)

the "crisis" of Western culture as well as the development of a "new culture" for China. The adoption of a civilizational discourse in which a wedge was driven between "novelty" or "modernity" on the one hand and "the West" on the other was a means of articulating this ambiguous and unstable position. In the process, "conservative" critics of "Western" modernity tried to wrest equally "Western" ideologies such as Marxism and socialism from their cultural confines and redefine them as genuinely universal political projects that could draw on, or be reconciled with, the Chinese tradition. As Du Yaquan for one insisted, after the war the "old" Europe had to give way to a new civilization propelled by the rebirth of the "old" culture of China in combination with a "new" (i.e. non-militarist) Western culture. Hence, it is not so surprising to find the "supposedly conservative" Du Yaquan declaring the lower classes of all countries to be the true subjects and victors of the war, and greeting the rise of international socialism with much enthusiasm. In his view, it is only from the perspective of the "old world" of militarism where "right is might" that the end of the war and a farewell to its "instruments of misfortune" (不祥之凶器)[19] could count as defeat instead of a liberation (Du 1919a, 206–8). Du believed the abolition of class differences and economic inequalities to be the only sure means to put an end to military conflict once and for all (see Du 1914b, 191; Du 1918e, 458). His position thus hardly shares anything in common with a straightforwardly conservative withdrawal into already discredited political and ethical models without any regard for the structural features and ideological discourse of modern societies.

The post-war "problem of Eastern and Western cultures" gave rise to heated debates between radical iconoclasts and more moderate thinkers who still believed in the viability of certain aspects of the Chinese tradition. However, both shared a mistrust of the Western powers following the "betrayal" of the Versailles Peace Treaty, which led to student demonstrations and strikes across the whole of China, ushering in what later became known as the May Fourth Movement. As such, they shared a common concern over "culture" (*wenhua* 文化, *Kultur*), and not merely "civilization" (*wenming* 文明, *Civilization*), that is to say, a form of "awakening" and "enlightenment" that would, in one way or another, reflect and serve the particularities of China as a nation, regardless of whether these particularities were understood in a culturally determinate or a more universalist sense (see Xu 2018).

After the Versailles "betrayal", cultural conservatives had to abandon the notion that Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations counted as an incarnation of the

19 A reference to chapter 31 of the *Daodejing*: "Weapons are instruments of misfortune, such things are always detestable, that is why one who possesses the Dao does not involve himself with them (夫兵者，不祥之器，物或惡之，故有道者不處)."

age-old Confucian idea of *datong* 大同 ("great unity") (see Xu 2005, 253–54). Nor could Chen Duxiu still speak, as he had done in the period of short-lived enthusiasm immediately following the German defeat, of a "victory of universal principle over power" (公理战胜强权, or, more colloquially: "the victory of right over might") (quoted in Gao 1999, 9). Instead, Chen had come to terms with the fact that any "universal principle" always remains dependent on the support of political and military power, without which it would remain an easy prey for the powers that be (see Chen 1982). Clearly, then, following the war, both radicals as well as conservatives were engaged in a pursuit of the "new", that is to say, a different kind of "novelty", the semantic horizon of which had expanded considerably in the meantime.[20]

20 In this respect, it is worthwhile considering the work of Ku Hung-Ming (Gu Hongming) 辜鸿铭 (1857–1928), born in the British colony of Penang (in Malaysia) and educated in Edinburgh, who is usually portrayed as the epitome of an arch-conservative "reactionary" and a living fossil from Imperial China. However, a closer examination of one of his books, *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, which bears the Chinese subtitle *Chunqiu dayi* 春秋大义 (*The Great Meaning of the* Spring and Autumn Annals) from 1915, partly written in response to the American missionary Arthur Henderson Smith's (1845–1932) (in)famous *Chinese Characteristics* from 1894, which had remained popular in the first decades of the 20th century, quickly complicates the picture. *The Spirit of the Chinese People* contains a lengthy appendix entitled "The War and the Way Out" (Ku 1915, 147–68) which is interesting to consider in the present context. The importance Ku attached to this essay is apparent from the fact that he already provides a summary of his main argument in the preface to the whole book, which has the ambition of showing his readers the "real Chinaman" and the actual "characteristics" of Chinese civilization. While Ku claims that Chinese civilization is now in a position to "save" the war-torn West, his staunchly "conservative" line of reasoning is full of praise for Germany, which he sees as "the true, rightful, and legitimate guardian of the modern civilization of Europe" (ibid., preface, 15). While he concedes that German militarism is the immediate culprit for the outbreak of the war, Ku argues that the German "worship of might" should actually be seen as a reaction against the "religion of mob-worship" (the subtitle of his essay) he associates with British civilization in particular. As he puts it later on in the main text of the essay itself: "If there is to be peace in Europe, the first thing to be done, it seems to me, is to protect the rulers, soldiers and diplomats from the plain men and women; to protect them from the mob, the panic of the crowd of plain men and women which makes them helpless." (ibid., 154) He then goes on to argue that the German (over)reaction against "mob worship" can be balanced out and remedied by returning to a Confucian "religion of good citizenship", that will allow nations to expect absolute loyalty from their subjects, thus giving rise to a "Magna Carta of loyalty" (see ibid., 9–12). Additionally, in Ku's view, the "mob-worship" on the level of politics had been exacerbated by the "mob rule" of the commodity in the "selfishness and cowardice" of what he calls "the spirit of Commercialism" (see ibid., preface, 18–19). For Ku, then, the problem that surfaced with the war was not the rupture between "science" and "democracy", or an excess of "Westernization", but rather the delirious influence exerted by the "mob-worship", as represented by democratic politics and the capitalist economy, on Western civilization as a whole. While his position clearly contain elements which are straightforwardly identifiable as "conservative", his radical reinterpretation of Confucianism as simply amounting to a "religion" that can ensure loyalty to the state confronts us with the unwieldiness and indeterminacy of the term "conservatism" in modern Chinese intellectual history which Benjamin I. Schwartz already identified decades ago.

Du Yaquan on War, Materialism, Evolution, and Statehood

In the remainder of this paper, I will attempt to provide more concrete illustrations of the general observations made in the above by analysing a number of Du Yaquan's wartime and post-war writings that are indicative of the complexity of the cultural conservative Chinese response to the First World War. In doing so, I will start by considering the socio-political dimension and significance of his critique of "materialism". Although this type of anti-materialism may at first sight appear to be a hackneyed and predictable theme echoing the *cliché* of a "spiritual East" *versus* a "materialist West", we should bear in mind that it continued to figure prominently in later Republican-era "debates" (literally "wars of opinions/discourses", *lunzhan* 论战), namely those on "science *and* metaphysics" (1923), the applicability of historical materialism and its categorization of the developmental stages of society to Chinese history (from the late 1920s to early 1930s), and the conceptual validity of dialectical materialism *vis-à-vis* formal logic and science (during the first half of the 1930s). Moreover, as I will try to show in what follows, post-war cultural conservative attacks on "materialism" are not to be dismissed out of hand as reactionary gestures drawing on a simplistic and culturalist East-West dichotomy, but have to be understood as part of an intellectual effort to rethink the modern normative requirement of social freedom.

Du Yaquan almost immediately started paying close attention to the "European War" and contributed a significant number of articles to this topic in *Eastern Miscellany*, which became one of the journals providing the most extensive and detailed coverage of the war under his editorial leadership (Chiu 2005, 95–98; Wang 2016, 54). Du wrote a series of reports (*xuji* 续记) on the latest state of affairs concerning the war from 1914 to 1917, which were later collected in a slim volume entitled *A History of Events in the European War* (*Ouzhan fasheng shi* 欧战发生史) published by Shanghai Commercial Press in 1924 (see Chiu 2005, 103). However, it is not these factually oriented and largely descriptive texts, but rather his philosophical analyses of the underlying causes behind the war as well as the latter's broader cultural significance for which Du is still remembered to this day. In a particularly well-known text, entitled "The State of Our Compatriots' Awakening After the End of the Great War" (*Dazhan zhongjie hou guoren zhi juewu ruhe* 大战终结后国人之觉悟如何) from 1919, Du makes it clear that the war has led to an awareness of the necessity of spiritual as well as material reform on a global level (Du 1919a, 205).[21] In other words, he is not simply proposing a reassertion of the dominance of "spirit" over "matter" along the lines of Rabindranath

21 The passage in question is sometimes rather misleadingly translated as denoting an opposition between material and spiritual values. (See for example Xu 2018, 164)

Tagore's (1861–1941) triumphalist praise for the putative spiritual superiority of Asia as a whole. In effect, one of the most interesting aspects of Du's writings is the coexistence of culturalist and universalist orientations, which are not always easy to disentangle. Thus, while Du famously described the West as a "dynamic civilization" as opposed to a "static" China, insisting that this is not merely a gradual but a substantial difference, he at the same time took care to note that the lives of a considerable portion of the Western populace were still entirely "static" in nature. Employing the universalist distinction between the urban and rural as metaphors for the tension between tradition and modernity, Du compared his compatriots' pre-war blind admiration for the West to the situation of a farmer or shepherd from the countryside who is dazzled by the hustle and bustle of city life without being aware of all the contradictions and social suffering there (see Du 1916c, 343). As Feng Youlan's 冯友兰 (1895–1990) (see Van den Stock 2016, 144–52) and Liang Shuming's 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) socio-political philosophy (see Van den Stock, forthcoming) as well as the development of Maoism bear out, the deceptively simple binaries of traditional-modern, Chinese-Western, and rural-urban would give rise to varied and by no means straightforward conceptual constellations throughout the subsequent history of modern Chinese thought.

The abovementioned tension between "culture" and "civilization" can also be found in Du Yaquan's critique of materialism. Already a year before the war broke out, Du published a series of three essays bearing the title "On Saving the Nation through Spirit" (*Jingshen jiuguo lun* 精神救国论) in *Eastern Miscellany*. However, in contrast to what the title might suggest, Du does not engage in an indiscriminate attack on the philosophical position of materialism here, but rather targets the latter more selectively and strategically, namely by engaging in an extensive critical overview and discussion of evolutionary theory and social Darwinism. These reflections are explicitly articulated against the background of the rise of European colonial militarism, which Du portrays as an incarnation of the "animal nature" unleashed by the "materialist" view of the world as a struggle for power in which might is right. Du argues that the "materialist" pursuit of "wealth and power" (*fuqiang* 富强) and lopsided interpretations of the theory of evolution (*tianyan* 天演)[22] were introduced into China at a time when their adverse social consequences had already begun to become evident in the West and a resurgence of "idealist" positions could begin to be discerned (Du 1913, 33–34). In this context, Du explicitly links "idealism" with a certain *voluntarism*, that is to say, a belief in the power of human autonomy and self-determination. In contrast to

22 Du is obviously referring to Yan Fu 严复 (1854–1921) here. Incidentally, the war led to a volte-face in Yan's own attitude toward Western culture and the Chinese tradition at large. (See Luo 2017, 251)

"materialism", Du saw an urgent need for the pursuit of a social freedom that departs from the irreducibility of the human being and its spiritual-moral capacities. That "idealism" is a very fluid category for Du becomes clear from the fact that it is supposed to includes thinkers as diverse as Montesquieu, Hume, and Hegel. Another indication of Du's association of idealism and materialism with autonomy and heteronomy, respectively, can be found in his analysis of the authoritarian turn in Japanese politics following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, which Du sees as reflecting a departure from an "idealist" belief in the power of the human mind that was still embraced at the beginning of the Meiji Restoration (see ibid., 37–38).

What Du Yaquan proposes over and against the immoral kind of "materialist" evolutionary theory that had cast the modern world into a merciless struggle for the survival of the fittest is what he calls "social cooperationism" (*shehuixielizhuyi* 社会协力主义) (Du 1915a), a notion inspired by the anarchist Peter Kropotkin's (1842–1921) idea that "mutual aid" plays an important role in biological as well as social evolution. After the war, Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1863–1940) would also describe the victory of the allied forces as coinciding with a triumph of Kropotkin's ideas over "militarist" Nietzscheanism and social Darwinism (see Cai 1984, 203). Crucially, for Du, "cooperationism" also points toward a future synthesis between nationalism and internationalist pacifism. In his view, such a synthesis had become unavoidable given the increasing economic interdependence between nations in a world governed by military and monetary power (see Du 1918c). Even more importantly, a reconciliation of nationalism and internationalism would ideally serve to prevent events such as a world war from ever happening again. However, invoking the transition from "governing the state" (*zhiguo* 治国) to "pacifying all-under-heaven" (*ping tianxia* 平天下) prescribed in the classical Confucian text of *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大学), Du argues that any future form of "internationalism" would have to be grounded in a prior cooperation between citizens on the level of the nation-state (see Du 1915a, 21–22). The need for attaining a balance between "strength" (*jianqiang* 坚强) as well as "reconciliation" or "harmony" (*tiaohe* 调和), as quasi-cosmological concepts Du primarily deploys in analysing the "phenomenal" (*youxing* 有形) dimension of politics, would first of all have to be realized "internally", that is to say, inside of a certain nation-state and people, before the latter can attempt to peacefully position itself within an international interstate order (see Du 1916b, 171–73). In short, in the same sense that "inner" moral perfection is the precondition for "outer" social order in the traditional Confucian logic of governance, nationalism counts as the logical precondition for internationalism here.

In Du Yaquan's view, while China had traditionally been preoccupied with "governing" (*zhi* 治), that is to say, ensuring the general well-being of its own people,

and thus remained relatively indifferent to the possible existence of other states falling outside of the scope of "all-under-heaven" (*tianxia* 天下), it now had to come to terms with a more competitive world-order in which "protecting" (*wei* 卫) the nation had imposed itself as a new and urgent political imperative, all while remaining on guard against a form of militarism that would depart from China's supposed tradition of pacifism (see Du 1915c).[23] In his own words: "our compatriots should become aware that the existence of the state is a factual and not a conceptual affair, and that its basis of existence is located in military power, and not governance through culture (*wenzhi* 文治, more colloquially: 'civil administration')" (Du 1915c, 149). Interestingly enough, Du associates what he takes to be the traditional Chinese focus on "internal governance" (*neizhi* 内治) with an attitude of indifference toward the external material world supposedly found in "Indian contemplative philosophy (印度之潜心哲学)" (ibid., 148). This again indicates that his attack on "materialism" has little or nothing in common with "idealism" as it is defined in more vulgar examples of Marxist intellectual historiography. In contrast, Du's "idealism" is profoundly activist in orientation and serves as a means of safeguarding the possibility of autonomy in the face of historical processes which are beyond the control of individual human beings. In this sense, before all else, "spirit" serves a symbol for autonomy rather than denoting a specific metaphysical position. Indeed, for Du, the problem lies not so much in the analytical privilege given to the tangible aspects of human existence by materialist theories, but rather in the very notion of ideology and its imposition of misleading abstract requirements on social reality, as the passage below vividly illustrates:

> Those who are now propagating various "isms" seem to be begrudge the integratedness (*tongzheng* 统整) of our traditional culture and cannot refrain from engaging in manoeuvres to acquire power and luxurious wealth, using Western thought as a pretext to bring it to ruins (…) Expecting to be saved by these various isms would be like expecting the devil to show us the way into paradise. Oh you demons, the end is upon you! (魔鬼乎，魔鬼乎，汝其速灭)" (Du 1918b, 367)

Despite his frequent appeal to the Chinese tradition, then, Du Yaquan's position cannot be straightforwardly identified as "conservative", and does not entail

23 By contrast, in his wartime private correspondence Yan Fu favoured a much more pragmatic and utilitarian approach, in which any moral and normative considerations would have to be temporarily subordinated to the task of saving the nation. Yan argued that China needed to return to the military strength and vigour of the Qin dynasty and the strategic acumen of the Legalist school of pre-Qin philosophy, rather than focus on moral supremacy. Additionally, his observations of the "European War" had led him to the conclusion that the democratic system was hardly conductive to the efficient mobilization of military force. (See Chen 2012, 122–23)

a rejection of the new political form of the nation-state, but rather involves a complex attempt to mediate between tradition and modernity. This is precisely why the term "reconciliation" (*tiaohe* 调和) figures so prominently in his writings on the "problem of Eastern and Western cultures". Du's repudiation of social Darwinism is a case in point, since he continues to work under the assumption that there is a strong parallelism and even a continuum between nature and society and that the same force or constellation of forces govern the domains of the physical and the social. The use of physiological metaphors of "anaemia" and a symptomatic "excess of blood" in his post-war diagnosis of the condition of a "static" China and a "dynamic" West (see Du 1916c, 342) already suggests as much.[24] These biologistic metaphors obviously call to mind Chen Duxiu's call to reinvigorate the "metabolism" of the Chinese body politic with the cells of a new culture and remove its old and "rotten" elements in *A Call to the Youth* (*Jinggao qingnian* 警告青年) from the inaugural issue of *New Youth* in 1915 (see Chen 1915).[25] As Du himself put it unambiguously with reference to the question as to whether the current situation of a world embroiled in war can really be blamed on individual states or political parties: "That which governs the tendencies in the world of society is actually no different from the natural forces governing the ten thousand things." (Du 1917c, 194) This also becomes apparent in a text from 1916, where Du describes the war in cosmological terms as an embodiment of the tension between "love" (*ai* 爱) and "strife" (*zheng* 争) (Du 1916a). Evolution in both the natural and the social world is thus approached as the result of an interplay between contradictory forces such as the centripetal and centrifugal forces in physics (cf. Du 1916b; 1918a). While such an approach seems to shift the burden of accomplishing a transformation of society from the individual to history as a process that escapes the immediate control of nations as well as citizens, Du's "anti-materialist" leanings leave the door open for the individual (and by the same token, the state) to regain command of its own fate.

The cosmological appropriation of the logic of evolutionary theory sketched in the above has important consequences for understanding Du Yaquan's approach to the reconciliation of nationalism and internationalism he envisaged against the backdrop of the Great War. Again, for all of his criticism of the social Darwinist sort of "evolution without ethics" (to paraphrase the title of Huxley's famous book), Du clearly embraces the basic logic of evolutionary thinking in arguing that the

24 In another text, Du argued that civilizations, much like children, have to go through periods of illness in order to develop and be reborn. (See Du 1917b, 346)

25 For an extensive analysis of the notion of "youth" as a symbol for the social change in Republican China, with specific reference to the emergence of the Communist Youth League, see Graziani (2014).

progression from a state of savagery to one of civilization involves a change in the reasons for which war is fought: from a broader historical perspective, Du discerns a progression from the rationale behind warfare which moves from contingent empirical reasons (i.e. immediate bodily needs, in which case wars remain on the level of struggles between animals or squabbles between children), to a calculated consideration of "interests" or "benefit and harm" (*lihai* 利害), to finally reach a point where normative and ideological considerations enter the fray, and wars are fought over "right and wrong" (*shifei* 是非), such as for example the American Civil War (see Du 1915b).[26] Within this line of reasoning, the Great War counts as an archetypal "war of ideas" (*sixiang zhan* 思想战) over right and wrong, and is not merely a battle between conflicting, unreflective animal instincts. In this sense, we can say that Du's "conservatism" is one which has already internalized certain "scientific" narratives of historical development that were far from discredited through the event of the war. Rather, the latter provided him with an opportunity to rethink and redeploy these narratives, all while attempting to link them with elements from the Chinese philosophical tradition.

We should bear in mind here that Du started his career as an autodidact intellectual who devoted himself to introducing natural scientific knowledge into China after having abandoned the prospect of pursuing a career as a scholar-official after reaching the entry-level degree of *xiucai* 秀才 ("flowering talent") in the imperial examination system at the age of 16. Eight years later, in 1898, Du was recruited by Cai Yuanpei, the future president of Peking University who then still served as rector of the Shaoxing Chinese-Western School (*Shaoxing zhongxi xuetang* 绍兴中西學堂) in Zhejiang, to become a teacher in mathematics, meanwhile applying himself to the study of natural scientific subjects such as chemistry, mineralogy, zoology, as well as philosophy, politics, and other "humanist" disciplines, which were more likely still seen as part of the epistemological continuum of what Neo-Confucian thinkers called the "investigation of things" (*gewu* 格物). In 1900, Du founded an academy for the study of science in Shanghai and published the inaugural issue of *Yaquan zazhi* 亚泉杂志, one

26 In an earlier text (Du 1911), invoking the authority of German authors such as Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1896) who affirmed the positive significance of war, Du still argued that a people has to possess a certain "martial spirit" (战斗之精神) in order to uphold itself among other nations. Additionally, he presented a typography of various kinds of war, including racial, religious, economic (with colonialism as an example), and political wars. Within the category of "political war", he further distinguished between "internal" and "external" warfare, the latter being concerned with conquest and control. The category of "internal war" is further differentiated into wars for independence and domination on the one hand, and "purely internal wars" (纯为内战者), that is to say, "revolutionary wars" (革命战争) in the proper sense on the other. Already here, Du is engaging with the question concerning the relation between the "internal" establishment and reform of the nation-state ("revolution") and the "external" positioning of the state in the global order through war.

of the first Chinese journals devoted to popularizing the natural sciences (with a focus on chemistry), to which he would personally contribute a significant number of texts and translations (from the Japanese) until it ceased publication in 1901. Du invested much of his time and sometimes his own resources in science research and education, as well as to such mundane affairs as a setting up a shop selling laboratory equipment in Shanghai. His endeavours as an author and editor at Shanghai Commercial Press led to the publication of pioneering works such as the *Comprehensive Botanical Dictionary* (*Zhiwuxue da cidian* 植物学大辞典) (1918) and the *Comprehensive Dictionary of Zoology* (*Dongwuxue da cidian* 动物学大辞典) (1923) (see Xie 1988, 8–11). Tellingly, Du's activities toward the spread of scientific knowledge hardly stopped after the war (see Chen, Kang, and Yao 2008, 1046–49). As late as December 1933, a few months before his death, Du put the last touches to the compilation of book entitled *Natural Scientific Terms for Elementary Education* (*Xiaoxue ziran keci shu* 小学自然科词书), an endeavour that would not have made sense if he had lost his faith in science following the war.

Crucially, Du Yaquan's appeal to the authority of "science" also surfaces in his critique of the deficiencies of modern democracy. In Du's view, the majority of the common people want as little as possible to do with politics and remain completely indifferent to the affairs of the state. The Chinese people's overall apathy and lack of knowledge makes them questionable subjects of the "awakening" necessitated by the Great War. As Du put it: "the so-called will of the people is actually so somnolent as to appear involuntary (所谓民意者，实则为朦胧无意而已)" (Du 1917c, 195). In this sense, it seems that Du expected "Mr. Science" to come to the aid of "Mr. Democracy": in his utopian vision of a future where all nations and military factions will be abolished and national democracies will give way to global socialism, he imagined the emergence of a new social class that would combine specialized scientific knowledge with the practical skills and energetic potential of the labouring population. This activist class of scientists would serve to supplant the apathetic unconscious "will of the people" largely driven by "material" desire instead of rational choice (ibid., 198).[27]

27 His socialist leanings notwithstanding, Du was highly suspicious of the lower classes in China, who he saw as lacking organization and as not yet having sufficiently internalized the ideals of socialism. Additionally, for Du, the majority of the lower classes in China was to be found not in the industrial proletariat, but rather in its "wandering population" (*youmin* 游民), an indeterminate and unstable mass of people resembling what Marx called the *Lumpenproletariat*, as a reserve army of industrial labour power. Du presented this "wandering population" as a highly dangerous section of society, suffused with resentment they cannot yet canalize in a productive and targeted manner, thus giving rise to uncontrolled outbursts of anger and violence that can never succeed in ushering in positive social change. (See Du 1919a, 211; Wang 2000, 281–82)

Du's cosmological-evolutionary framework for the interpretation of natural as well as social changes provides us with an important clue to the significance of what he defended as the outlook of "continuism" (*jiexuzhuyi* 接续主义) (Du 1914a). From a "continuist" perspective, there is no necessary contradiction between the old and new or tradition and modernity. In socio-political terms, this means that the continuation of the past into the present does not come down to a reactionary attitude aimed at restoring an already defunct social order, but rather embodies a unity of conservatism and progressivism ensuring that national unity is not only safeguarded on a spatial-territorial, but also on a temporal-historical level. As Wang Hui has shown, the questions of national sovereignty and cultural continuity were closely connected in Du's writings (Wang 2016, 60), where the "reconciliation" of the old and the new is presented as being predicated on such a "continuist" attitude. Interestingly enough, whereas Du's 1914 text on continuism written just before the outbreak of the war still called for subordinating the individual to the interests of the state, in his wartime and post-war writings, the nation-state begins to appear as the medium for the reconciliation of opposites, that is to say, as a place where the dialectical interplay between the cosmological forces of the centripetal ("love") and the centrifugal ("strife") as well as the opposition between the private and the public could be balanced out.

In an article from 1917 entitled "On the Boundaries between the Individual and the State" (*Geren yu guojia zhi jie shuo* 个人与国家之界说), Du came to argue that individualism should be reconciled with, and not sacrificed to, nationalism, a position he takes up in opposition to German militarism (Du 1917a, 168). Such a reconciliation involves drawing the proper boundaries between the domain of the individual and that of the state, instead of propagating a straightforward subordination of individual to national interests. At the same time, he assumed that upholding these boundaries could also serve the purpose of preventing individual interests from usurping the public good. Once again, Du's argument is framed within the Confucian logic of the continuity between individual self-cultivation and the governance of the state, with Du invoking a passage from the *Analects* (14.42) which insists on the necessity of "cultivating oneself in order to bring peace to the common people (修己以安百姓)" (quoted in Du 1917a, 167). His line of reasoning thus wavers between the two poles he seeks to reconcile and takes up an ambiguous position in between individualism and nationalism. Du proposes that if individuals are simply sacrificed for the sake of the nation without being given the opportunity to "cultivate themselves", they would in effect cease to be of any use to the state, since they would have no proper self or "personality" (*renge* 人格) to sacrifice in the first place. In his own words: "if we want people to fully devote themselves to the affairs of the state, we have to first allow them

to care for themselves" (ibid.). In his view, top-down government measures have to be supplemented with a "spiritual socialism" (精神上之社会主义) (Du 1919a, 210) on the level of individual morality. It is not clear if this should be read as a defence of individualism *per se*, or merely as a functionalist argument in which individuals must be allowed to develop themselves for the greater good of the state. On the one hand, Du seeks to reaffirm the traditional continuity between "governing the self" (*zizhi* 自治), that is to say, moral autonomy, and "governing the state" (*zhiguo* 治国), while at the same time insisting on the importance of upholding the proper boundaries between state and individual. In short, Du seems to be struggling here with what would continue to be a dominant theme in retrospective evaluations of the New Culture and May Fourth Movement, namely the conflict between the search for "national salvation" and the pursuit of "enlightenment" (i.e. individual autonomy) as Li Zehou 李泽厚 famously, if rather simplistically, put it (see Li 1987). In spite of his rejection of Li's diagnosis, a very similar conclusion was reached by Gao Like 高力克, who argued that in these movements of "unfinished enlightenment", "'individual awakening' was merely an indirect manifestation of 'national awakening'" (Gao 1999, 11). Du Yaquan's historically informed writings on the relation between individual and state can thus be seen both as a precursor to more recent Chinese discourse on the "dialectics of Enlightenment", as well as a possible resource for comparative philosophical reflections on the possibility of social freedom in the modern world.

Conclusion

The examples given in the above indicate that Du Yaquan did not seek to repudiate, but rather to redeem modernity, as something containing the potential for a "reconciliation" between the past and present, as well as contradictory aspects of intrastate and interstate politics within itself. As such, Du's critique of evolutionism could go hand in hand with an analysis of war as a quasi-natural catastrophe, one destined to eventually evolve into a vehicle for the attainment of political freedom and economic equality on a global level. Similarly, his condemnation of the economic injustices he saw as the basis of the Great War was accompanied by a strong belief in the ability of industrial capitalism to continue increasing productivity, while redirecting the latter toward the creation of actual material wealth and disentangling it from unequal relations of distribution (see Du 1918e, 459). Perhaps most importantly and timely from our current perspective, in analysing the Great War Du explicitly called for critically reflecting on the limitations and dangers of nationalism, an ideology he tended to present as a necessary evil rather than a positive good, and, paradoxically, as the only means available to China to secure a position within a more long-term historical process leading to the

overcoming of the nation-state (see Du 1917d, 398; 1918d). Rather than simply being concerned with the relation between individual and state in general, the problem for Du would seem to have been that, under the condition of the continuing threat of war and the ever-present possibility of a return to an age of "Warring States", it is the "individuality" of the state within a competitive global order of nation-states which provides the basis for individual human well-being and the right to subsistence. Within this logic, there is no space of mediation and "reconciliation" between the individual (private) and the social (public) in the absence of the nation-state. Lacking the necessary cohesion and resistance against external aggression, China would become violently assimilated into the economic realm of Western colonialism and lose its autonomy to unbridled and goalless "material" impulses, thus effectively falling back to a more atavistic, pre-normative stage in the evolution of society and being severed from the necessary "continuist" connection to its own tradition. As such, for Du, the "individuality" of the state comes before that of the individual in the strict or ordinary sense, precisely because war has consistently threatened to undercut the already fragile social and moral cohesion of the Chinese people throughout its modern history. While not going as far in his critique of the category of the nation-state as contemporary Chinese intellectuals who advocated reasserting the traditional notion of "all-under-heaven" (*tianxia*), Du's conflicted attitude toward nationalism is testament to the modern dialectics of autonomy, where the requirements of freedom and autonomy are always caught in a tension between the spheres of the individual, the state, and geopolitical interstate conflicts. By contrast, invocations of the ideal of "all-under-heaven" as a straightforward alternative to the "Western" notion of the state conveniently ignore the fact that the logistics behind the realization of a universalist vision such as that of *tianxia* risk remaining caught up in the geopolitical logic of modernity, that is to say, one of different nation-states ruthlessly competing for the benefits of global capitalism, as the only de facto universality in the contemporary world. Over a century after the armistice, Du's wartime and postwar writings remind us of the fact that relation between intrastate political freedom and interstate war is not an extrinsic one, and that the historical specificity of this relation should not be left out of the picture in comparative political thought.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: TRANSFORMATIONS IN CHINA'S INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AT THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

Logic and Methodology

A Few Important Landmarks in the Chinese Debates on Dialectical and Formal Logic[1] from the 1930s

Jan VRHOVSKI

Abstract

With the rise of the discourse on dialectical materialism in the late 1920s, ideas related to the Marxist notion of dialectical logic started to circulate in the Chinese intellectual world. Not long after the first public discussions on dialectical materialism started to emerge in the early 1930s, the discussants on both sides started to address the question of the Marxist notion of logic and its relationship with Western formal logic. Consequently, over the 1930s, a series of separate public debates ensued, in which dialectical logic contended against the "conventional" forms of logic, such as traditional Aristotelian and modern formal logic. This paper outlines the major landmarks within the public as well as internal Marxist debates on logic in the 1930s. The discussion starts with a general overview of the intellectual background of the debates, and proceeds by analysing the principal developments in them, starting with Ye Qing's and Zhang Dongsun's polemic about "dynamic logic" from 1933, and concluding with the internal Marxist discussions on the sublation of formal logic in the last years of the decade.

Keywords: dialectical materialism, dialectical logic, formal logic, 1930s debates on logic, Republican China

Nekaj pomembnih mejnikov v kitajskih razpravah o dialektični logiki iz tridesetih let 20. stoletja

Izvleček

Z vzponom diskurza o dialektičnem materializmu v poznih dvajsetih letih 20. stoletja so ideje, povezane z marksističnim pojmom dialektične logike, pričele krožiti med kitajskimi izobraženci. Kmalu po vzniku prvih javnih razprav o dialektičnem materializmu v zgodnjih tridesetih letih 20. stoletja so udeleženci razprav na obeh straneh pričeli naslavljati vprašanja, povezana z marksističnim pojmom logike in njegovim odnosom z zahodno formalno logiko. Posledično je v tridesetih letih prišlo do razvoja več ločenih javnih razprav, v katerih

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* Jan VRHOVSKI is a research fellow at University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Email address: jan.vrhovski@ff.uni-lj.si

je pojem dialektične logike nastopil v nasprotju s tradicionalno aristoteljansko in moderno formalno logiko. V tem članku bom orisal osrednje mejnike tako javnih kot internih marksističnih razprav o logiki iz tridesetih let 20. stoletja. Pričujoča razprava se začenja s splošnim pregledom intelektualnega ozadja razprav ter se nadaljuje s podajanjem analize njihovih glavnih razvojnih smernic. Analitični del članka tako podaja pregled osnovnih vsebinskih segmentov razprav, od polemike med Ye Qingom in Zhang Dongsunom iz leta 1933 do razprav o sublaciji formalne logike v zadnjih letih istega desetletja.

Ključne besede: dialektični materializem, dialektična logika, formalna logika, razprave o logiki v tridesetih letih 20. stoletja, republikanska Kitajska

Introduction

Following the gradual introduction of classical works of dialectical materialism and dialectics of nature, in the late 1920s a general discourse on dialectical logic started to form, which in the years to come was shaped both by the Chinese adherents of dialectical materialism as well as proponents of other philosophical worldviews in China (see Tian 2019, 149). At the initial stage, the discourse had been deeply immersed in the traditional Chinese world of ideas, poised between the classical philosophical concepts of complementarity, harmony, change, and so on one hand, and novel scientific, universalist systems of objectivity on the other (Rošker 2019, 204). With the subsequent introduction of more recent Soviet theories into Chinese Marxist discourse, which was heavily permeated with political ideas of class struggle and the notion of an unbridgeable distinction between idealism and materialism (Heubel 2019, 38), by the mid-1930s the discourse shifted onto an entirely different plane.[2]

While the textual and conceptual introduction of the Marxist philosophy of logic and mathematics started already in the mid- to late-1920s, the first extensive public debates

2 The article does not discuss the general discourse on logic in the above-mentioned period, but focuses only on the debates on dialectical logic in the 1930s. Although, in the 1930s, the discourse on dialectical logic also involved debates on the nature of formal logic, these did not represent the actual state of the science in the country. Furthermore, these debates did not overlap with the academic—at the time essentially philosophical—discourse on formal logic, yet were nevertheless partially dependent on it, in the sense that certain ideas about formal logic were extracted from the works of the members of Qinghua School of logic. The article further treats the development of the discourse on dialectical logic as a consequence of the establishment of dialectical materialism in Chinese intellectual circles, which were not directly connected to hose associated with other schools of logic. As such, the 1930s discourse on dialectical logic was, in the first place, a process of introduction and theoretical appropriation, which, in the case of its propagators, also indirectly involved a general idea of logic and dialectics prevalent among non-expert members of the intelligentsia. Finally, the manner in which the academic discourse on formal logic overlapped with the discourse on dialectical logic depended heavily on the participants' relationship with the former.

started to ferment only at the beginning of the 1930s. The first major polemics related to dialectical logic broke out in the framework of broader debates on dialectical materialism, which, speaking more generally, developed between a group of philosophers led by Zhang Dongsun 張東蓀 (1886–1973), on the one side, and Chinese adherents of Marxism headed by Ye Qing 葉青 (original name Ren Zhuoxuan 任卓宣, 1896–1990) on the other. The various discussions which developed in the course of the following decade (up to 1939), were extremely numerous and complex, with the participants addressing the question of dialectical logic at different stages of the debates. Over time, the arguments and sources adopted in the discussions also varied. If the debates in the early 1930s revolved around Plekhanov's notion of "dynamic logic", around 1935, when a second motion was promulgated in the framework of internal Marxist debates on dialectical logic by Li Da 李達 (1890–1966) and Ai Siqi 艾思奇 (original name Li Shengxuan 李生萱, 1910–1966), the focus of the debate shifted to the question of the overall relationship between formal and dialectical logic. Finally, between the years 1937 and 1939, a more scattered discussion on "sublation of formal logic" developed.

In the following discussion, I shall try to outline the main developments in the public and internal Marxist discussions on logic in the 1930s. Since, due to the broadness, wide scope and complexity of the discourse on logic in the focal decade, it would be impossible to convey a complete picture of the debates, I shall only focus on a few developments and contributions that are most relevant for the 1930s discussions on the Marxist notion of dialectical and formal logic. At the same time, the main aim of the following discussion will also be to provide considerable supplementations and, to a much lesser degree, corrections to the already existing contemporary survey on development of dialectical materialism in Republican China. Moreover, the following overview will represent one of the first surveys focusing on the debates on dialectical logic in Chinese 1930s in the Western sinological discourse.[3]

3 In Chinese, the earliest systematic overview focusing on the criticism and polemics on formal logic in the 1930s was given in the Vol. 5 of the series *Zhongguo luoji shi* 中國邏輯史 (*History of Logic in China*), written by Zhou Yunzhi 周云之 and Zhou Wenying 周文英 (1989). Akin to the mentioned monograph, the later historical overviews of Chinese logic or logic in China tend to attach less importance to dialectical logic and mainly only provide a summary of the content of the Marxist criticism of formal logic. In specialized studies devoted to the history of dialectical logic in China more attention is usually given to the much wider discussions which developed throughout the 1950s, also referred to as the Great Debates on Logic (*Luoji da taolun* 邏輯大討論). By and large, the 1930s discourse on dialectical logic has been more intensively discussed in studies devoted to history of dialectical materialism in China. In more recent years these also represented the aspect of Chinese scholarship which has been most extensively translated into English, which is also the reason why the present article, in its attempt to contribute to the Western scholarship on the topic, seeks to complement Tian Chenshan's historical overview of (materialist) dialectics in China.

Setting the Stage: Translations and Early Chinese Treatises on Dialectical Logic

An early important translation, which probably catalysed the early part of the debates on dialectical logic, was Zheng Chaolin's 鄭超麟 (1901–1998) translation of an excerpt from Georgi V. Plekhanov's (1856–1918) Fundamental Problems of Marxism (1908). The text "Dialectics and Logic (Bianzhengfa yu luoji 辯證法與邏輯)" was first published in 1924 in the influential *La Jeunesse* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年, *New Youth*) journal. In this, Plekhanov posited that, in opposition to formal logic, the logic of dialectics incorporated the laws of a changing, perennially moving universe. Using the principle of change as the main condition of objectiveness, Plekhanov distinguished between a "dynamic" logic (*dongde luoji* 動的邏輯) and a "static" logic (*jingde luoji* 靜的邏輯). Because, according to classic dialectics of nature, movement arises as a result of inner contradictions that underpin all existence, a "dynamic" logic would have to integrate the principle of contradiction into its fundamental laws. Thus, if the partial and subjective formal logic asserts that "yes is yes, and no is no", the "dynamic" dialectical logic reflects the principles of movement by postulating that "yes is no, and no is yes". By that token dialectical logic surpasses formal logic in realism and objectiveness. He believed that, while formal logic is concerned mainly with a mechanical idea of motion, dialectical logic takes into account the inner characteristics of change as such, and while formal logic is only concerned with the rational formal characteristics of human thought, dialectical logic encompasses the laws which underpin all aspects of material existence (Plekhanov 1924).

In the following years, the increase in the number of Chinese translations of classical and contemporary Marxist works broadened the scope of available material on the topic in China. Through the gradual introduction of work and thought of Hegel, Marxist intellectuals also became familiar with certain aspects related to the Hegelian roots of Marxist dialectics as well as the notion of dialectical logic itself. At the same time, translations of Engels's thought on the dialectics of nature and some minor aspects of Lenin's view on dialectical materialism helped Chinese intellectuals to gradually gain a more comprehensive view of the foundations of, as it were, the "classical" philosophy of dialectical materialism.

A significant increase in both translations and Chinese treatises on dialectical or dynamic logic occurred around the year 1929, in the framework of the

general surge in Chinese translation of quintessential works of Marxism.[4] The early translations of works on dialectical logic included Ke Bonian's 柯伯年 (1904–1985) translation of Josef Dietzgen's (1828–1888) *Dialectical Logic (Bianzhengfa de luoji* 辯證法的邏輯) from 1930, and Peng Weisen's 彭葦森 (?) translation of A. K. Toporkov's *Elementary Principles of Dialectical Logic* (*Bianzheng luoji zhi jiben yuanli* 辯證邏輯之基本原理) from 1932, among others. The earlier presence or even overall relevance of the notion of "dynamic logic" (*dongde luoji* 動的邏輯) in Chinese intellectual discourse was also affirmed by the pragmatist logician and psychologist Shen Youqian's 沈有乾 (Eugene Shen, 1899–?) review of B. Bogoslovsky's book *The Technique of Controversy: Principles of Dynamic Logic* (1928), where the so-called "dynamic logic" was treated as the third contemporary alternative to the "orthodox Aristotelian logic" (Shen 1930, 1). The remaining two contending logics were the form-centred mathematical logic and the profoundly psychologistic pragmatist logic (or "experimental logic") (ibid.).

Another notion synonymous to dialectical logic, the "logic of contradictions" (*maodun luoji* 矛盾邏輯) was discussed in an early example of a Chinese treatise on dialectical materialism, Guo Zhanbo's 郭湛波 (original name Guo Haiqing 郭海清, 1905–1989) *A Study of Dialectics* (*Biazhengfa yanjiu* 辯證法研究) from 1930. In this book, Guo discussed the dialectical method as a form of logic equal in value to Western formal logic. One year later, Guo published "A Comparative Study of Formal Logic and Dialectics (Xingshi luoji yu bianzhengfa de bijiao yanjiu 形式邏輯與辯證法的比較研究)", where he already expounded on "logic of contradictions" as a logic completely dissimilar to formal logic. Following the paradigm of Plekhanov, he described the latter as a narrow, static and extremely abstract perspective on reality, while in dialectical logic he recognized such characteristics as dynamism, wholeness and a practical approach. According to Guo, its main principle was to penetrate the inner contradiction between "movement in stillness and stillness in movement" and the "identity in differences and differences in identity". At the time, Guo found the resolution of the relation between dialectical and

4 Such as Li Tiesheng's 李鐵聲 translation of *Bukharin's Dialectical Materialism*, Yang Dongchun's 楊東 translation of Josef Dietzgen's *Materialist View of Dialectics*, and Lin Boxiu's 林伯修 translation of Deborin's *Materialist Dialectics and Natural Sciences* were all published in 1929. Ling Yingfu's 凌應甫 translation of Deborin's *Introduction to Materialist Dialectics* was published in 1930, and Du Weizhi's 杜畏之 translation of Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* in 1932. The year 1935 saw the publication of Li Da's and Lei Zhongjian's 雷仲堅 translation of Shirokov's *Textbook of Dialectical Materialism* (*Bianzhengfa weiwulun jiaocheng* 辯證法唯物論教程) and Pan Gushen's translation of the Soviet manual *Outline of Dialectics of Natural Sciences* (*Bianzhengfa de ziran kexue gailun* 辯證法的自然科學概論).

formal logic in their complementarity, rather than in precedence of one over the other.[5]

Between 1930 and 1932, individual treatises on Hegel's dialectic and related questions started to emerge. In 1930, for instance, Shen Zhiyuan 沈志遠 (1902–1965) composed his book *Hegel and Dialectics* (*Heigeer yu bianzhengfa* 黑格爾與辯證法), which touched on what Shen called Hegel's "logic of revolution" (*geming de luoji* 革命的邏輯) and his idea of sublation (Ger. *Aufhebung*), as philosophers and other scholars such as He Lin 賀麟 (1902–1992) and Zhou Gucheng 周穀成 (1898–1996) started pondering Hegel's notion of dialectics more intensively from various standpoints. The early signs of Chinese Marxists' discovery of Hegelian dialectics came to expression, for example, in Wang Zhaogong's 王昭公 (?) controversial article "The Decline of Formal Logic and Completion of a New Scientific Methodology (Xingshi luoji zhi bengkui yu xin kexue de fangfalun zhi wancheng 形式邏輯之崩潰與新科學的方法論之完成)" from 1931. In his paper, Wang enunciated that Hegelian dialectics had already superseded formal logic and negated its fundamental laws. Hegel's dialectics, however, represented only the first stage in the subsequent development of materialist "synthetic" (*zonghe* 綜合) scientific methodology.[6]

Between 1932 and 1934, perhaps the most important platform through which ideas of both dialectical materialism as well as logical positivism and mathematical logic were disseminated was the "World Currents of Thought (Shijie sichao 世界思潮)" column in the *Dagong bao* 大公報 (*L'Impartial*) newspaper (Tianjin). The chief editor of the column was Zhang Shenfu 張申府, original name Songnian 崧年 (1893–1986), who was a professor of mathematical logic and modern Western philosophy (specializing in Russell and the Vienna School) at Qinghua University, as well as an ardent propagator of dialectical materialism and one of the original founders of the Communist Party of China. In the early 1930s, Zhang developed a syncretistic philosophical worldview, whose main goal was a synthesis between dialectical materialism and logical analysis. During his editorship of the "World Currents of Thought" column, Zhang himself published a wide array of articles and translations on contemporary logic, while the topics

5 In 1932, the philosopher Zhu Baiying 祝百英 (original name Zhu Tingzhang 竺廷璋, alias Fang Yiru 方亦如?)—writing under the pseudonym Yiying 亦英, composed two essays, "Formal Logic and Contradictory Logic in Epistemology (Renshilun zhong de xingshi lunli yu maodun lunli 認識論中的形式論理與矛盾論理)" and "Rule of Equilibrium and Law of Contradiction (Junhenglü yu maodunlü 均衡率與矛盾律)" in the influential *Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi* 東方雜志).

6 A similar approach was adopted by Li Shicen 李石岑 (1892–1934) in his article "Bianzhengfa yu xingshi luoji 辯證法與形式邏輯 (Dialectical Method and Formal Logic)" from 1932.

in dialectical materialism and logical positivism were taken over by his younger brother, the philosopher Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (1909–2004), who later also became a lecturer at Qinghua University. Emulating his older brother, between 1933 and 1934 Dainian wrote prolifically on the possibilities of attaining a "creative synthesis" between new (dialectical) materialism, logical positivism (including logical analysis and mathematical logic) and the idealism inherent in traditional Chinese philosophy. In the 1930s, the Zhang brothers, especially Zhang Shenfu, became widely known as the proponents of a syncretistic faction of dialectical materialists, advocating the synthesis between mathematical logic and dialectical method (see Guo 1935, 183–90 etc.).

Zhang Dongsun, Ye Qing and the Polemic on "Dynamic Logic", 1933–1936

Although the main debate on dialectical materialism between Zhang Dongsun and his followers on one side, and Ye Qing and other Marxists on the other, had already started in 1931, the discussion began to involve dialectical logic only around 1933 (cf. Tian 2005, 110). Apart from the influential Dagong bao, where Zhang Dongsun's article which sparked the debate had first appeared,[7] another important locus of the discussion was also the *New China* (*Xin Zhongua* 新中華) review. Following the initial confrontations between Marxists and the critics of dialectical materialism, led by Zhang Dongsun, another one of Zhang's articles, "Is Dynamic Logic Possible? (Dongde luoji shi keneng de ma? 動的邏輯是可能的嗎?)", published in the abovementioned periodical, opened a new minor discussion on dialectical and formal logic.

In his essay from 1933, Zhang refuted the plausibility of the concept of "dynamic logic", pointing out that within logic there is no such polar antagonism as that between a static and dynamic quality (Rošker 2015, 112). By a related token, Zhang stressed that dialectical logic can only be considered a form of methodology, which meant that it pertained strictly to dialectical principles as inherent in cognitive models and hence could not be a priori objective. He further criticized both prevailing interpretations of the relationship between formal and dialectical logic in Marxist discourse, namely that dialectical logic can either supplement or completely replace formal logic, stating that while the

7 The polemics were probably initiated by Zhang Dongsun's article "I also Discuss Dialectical Materialism (Wo yi tantan bianzheng de weiwulun 我亦談談辯證的唯物論)", which appeared in the "Modern Currents of Thought (Xiandai sichao 現代思潮)" column of the Dagong bao newspaper in September 1931.

dynamic aspect is already encapsulated in natural science per se, in epistemology there only exists a dualism between intuition and intellect, where formal logic represents the only function (*yong* 用) of the latter.[8] Furthermore, since reality is always in a "dynamic" state, this entailed that there cannot be something called a "static" mode of understanding, which in turn implied that the notion of "dynamic logic" had no meaning.

Not long afterwards, Ye Qing's "A Dynamic Logic is Possible! An Answer to Professor Zhang Dongsun (Dongde luoji shi keneng de! Da Zhang Dongsun jiaoshou 動的邏輯是可能的！答張東蓀教授)" and Deng Yunte's 鄧雲特 (?) essay "Formal Logic or Materialist Dialectics? (Xingshi luoji haishi weiwu bianzhengfa? 形式邏輯還是唯物辯證法?)" were published in the new "Polemic on 'Dynamic Logic' ("Dongde luoji" lunzhan 動的邏輯論戰)" column of the *New China* review. Both emphasized that in his criticism of dialectical logic Zhang misunderstood Hegel's idea of sublation and the dialectical principle of evolution in the context of the relationship between formal and dialectical logic. Ye further claimed that dialectical logic was the "affirmation of negation" of formal logic, and thereby a higher evolutionary stage of the latter. Moreover, Ye asserted that in its evolution dialectical logic had already integrated the inductive method through a positive development process and was therefore equal to a "general scientific method" (*pubian de kexue fangfa* 普遍的科學方法), whereas by means of sublation *(Aufhebung)* it absorbed the method of deduction. A major corollary to that was that dialectical logic was more comprehensive than any other form of logic, and it also implied that it was more objective than formal logic, as well as more universal.

The Zhang-Ye debate on dialectical materialism reached its peak by 1934, while in 1934 and 1935, respectively, Zhang and Ye, each according to his own views, compiled an anthology of the most important contributions to the debate (see Zhang 1934a; Ye 1935a). In 1934, Ye Qing published his lengthy work *A Critique of Zhang Dongsun's Philosophy* (*Zhang Dongsun zhexue pipan* 張東蓀哲學批判) in two volumes. The problem of "dynamic logic" was addressed at length in the second volume of Ye's book (see Ye 1934, 615–60). In 1934, Zhang recapitulated his criticism in various writings, such as "A Few Fashionable Questions in the Forum of Ideas (Sixiang de luntan shang jige shimao wenti 思想的論壇上幾個時髦問題)". In this lengthy essay, Zhang gave an overview of the main questions raised in the framework of the ongoing discussions, such as "Can dialectics replace the law of identity?", "Is contrariety (*xiangfan* 相反) contradiction (*maodun* 矛盾)?", "Are

8 Zhang claimed that he followed Russell's logicist idea of logic.

all changes sublation (*xiaoliu* 消留, *Aufhebung*)?"[9] and so on. This time Zhang's criticism of the idea of dialectical logic was also directed exclusively against Plekhanov's theory of logic.[10]

On both sides a number of other discussants addressed the question of dialectical logic. On Zhang Dongsun's side of the debate, the most notable argument against dialectical logic came from Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995), who at the time maintained a deep interest in mathematical logic.

Mou Zongsan raised his objections against the Marxist notion of dialectical logic in an article entitled "Logic and Dialectical Logic (Luoji yu bianzheng luoji 邏輯與辯證邏輯)" from 1934. In his argument against dialectical logic, Mou draw from the idea of pure logic advanced in the contemporary *Chinese New Realist* circles. Having repeated the same maxim as advanced by the Qinghua logician Jin Yuelin in the very same year (see Jin 1934), Mou stated that there only exists one logic, which is objective, absolute, universal, normative and in accord with "what is potentially so". Mou presented a rare perspective in the debate, in which the mathematical logic of Principia Mathematica was described as the highest developmental stage of formal logic. In the same text, Mou implicitly indicated that "modern" formal logic was far beyond the antiquated Marxist doctrine on logic. After having outlined the general characteristics of "pure logic", Mou compared his fundamental laws (principles) with those of the proposed dialectical logic. He noted that the main flaw of dialectical logic resided in its definition of the "law of contradiction", which did not discern between the identity expressed by a proposition and negation in the form of a term (*mingcheng* 名稱). In other words: dialectical logic distorted the law of contradiction by treating "is A" (是 A) as the opposite value of "non-A" (非 A). This all originated in its misunderstanding of the law of identity, which could be defined using three different concepts of identity (cf. Suter 2017, 158–67).

From his own point of view, identity and contradiction were based on the a priori essence of human intellect, which meant that they can neither be proved nor disproved, nor can they be derived from each other. Furthermore, these laws are

9 Zhang used the word *xiaoliu* 消留as a translation of Hegel's Aufhebung or the verb aufheben. The term combined the words *xiaoshi* 消失 "dissolution" and *baoliu* 保留 "preservation". More commonly used Chinese terms for sublation, such as *qiyang* 棄楊 and *zhiyang* 止楊, had been borrowed from Japanese sources.

10 By 1939, Zhang seems to have changed his mind. In his novel theory of cultural conditionality of logic (see Zhang 1939), Zhang treated dialectical logic as one of the four kinds of logic, calling it "the socio-political" logic. He even claimed that although Chinese culture did not produce mathematical logic because there was no historical need for it, metaphysical and socio-political logic had always constituted an important segment of traditional Chinese thought.

applicable solely to logical propositions and bear not direct relation to the factual state of affairs, or even time and space. This was in essence his idea of pure logic. To further illustrate how dialectical logic can lead to inconceivable fallacies, Mou cited a few examples from Jin Yuelin's article "Immediate Inference of A, E, I and O" (1930). Following his direct criticism of Chen Baoyin's 陳豹隱 (original name Chen Qixiu 陳啓修, 1886–1960) lectures on dialectical materialism from 1932,[11] Mou then concluded that dialectical logic is not logic, but a theory occupied with analysing facts; neither is it a methodology nor can it be considered a special method of thinking. Finally, he also listed four Marxist misconceptions about logic: (i) that formal logic is the starting point for analysis of the world; (ii) that dialectical logic is a scientific fact; (iii) that objective facts are logic and that dialectical logic is the counterpart of formal logic; and (iv) that the laws of logic depict objective facts.[12]

Internal Marxist Debates: From the Relationship between Dialectical and Formal Logic to Sublation of Formal Logic, 1935–1939

The early confrontations between the group of philosophers led by Zhang Dongsun and Ye Qing and other Marxists led to two particular developments: on the one hand, they gave rise to inner philosophical debates in the circles of Chinese adherents of dialectical materialism, in which more moderate interpretations of the classical doctrine, such as that of Ye Qing, were set in contrast with the narrower, mainstream expositions of current Soviet doctrine. On the other hand, the early debates communicated a sense of the broader intellectual relevance of dialectical logic—as a most advanced method reasoning with practical applications in all everyday matters and not only in strict formal inference—to the members

11 "Methodology of Studies in Social Sciences". Chen's lectures were recorded by Xu Wanjun 徐萬鈞 and Lei Jishang 雷季向 and published as a monography in 1932.

12 Earlier in 1932, a similar attempt had been made by Wang Dianji 汪奠基 (1900–1979) in his article "A Critique of Principles of Formal Logic (Xingshi luoji yuanli de pipan 形式邏輯原理的批判)". Wang had shown how formal logic had been superseded and rectified by mathematical logic, a form of logic closely connected to contemporary science and mathematics. By having demonstrated how traditional formal logic could not be considered representative of deductive logic as such, Wang rendered the Marxist criticisms outdated and irrelevant for the contemporary discourse on logic. Secondly, if the exponents of dialectical logic claimed that dialectical logic was superior or equal in value to formal logic, the same could not hold for mathematical logic. Finally, this also implied that Marxist evaluation of deductive logic ought to take place within the comparison between dialectical and contemporary mathematical logic, were the laws of contradiction and excluded middle had already been proven inadequate.

of Marxist circles, stimulating their active engagement in the developing public discourse. Thus, in 1935, an intensive debate developed between Ye Qing and Ai Siqi, which reflected the Chinese instigation of the Soviet controversy between Deborin's and the official interpretation of dialectical materialism (Tian 2005, 112). Concurrently, in 1935, Li Da also started a new chapter in the debate on the relationship between dialectical and formal logic, which channelled and proliferated the more recent mainstream Soviet doctrine into Chinese Marxist discourse on logic. The year 1935 thus marked a pivotal moment in the history of Marxist discourse on logic in China, mainly because it delineated the main direction of Chinese debate on the same topic for the following few decades.

Ye Qing and Ai Siqi, 1936

In his *Lectures on Philosophy* (*Zhexue jianghua* 哲學講話), first published in 1936, Ai Siqi set out to refute the notion of identity in formal logic. In a derogatory manner, Ai remarked that, in accordance with its paradoxical law of identity, formal logic leads one to believe that the young are always the young, even after they become adults. Otherwise, Ai's criticism of logic further accentuated the main points of contention against formal logic as outlined by Li. (Ai 1936a, 151–63)[13] In the same year, Ai's critique was countered by Ye Qing, who published two articles titled "Formal Logic and Dialectical Logic (Xingshi luoji yu bianzheng luoji 形式邏輯與辯證邏輯)". As in his early reflections, Ye assumed a more moderate position, claiming that dialectical logic was, in fact, a synthesis between inductive and deductive logic. Ye advocated a resolution to the problem of the relationship between formal and dialectical logic dissimilar from the idea of dialectical sublation, in which the fundamental laws of both logics would have been conjoined in a harmonic unity. Ye's ideal of complementarity (*xiangfan xiangcheng* 相反相成) presupposed that in the new logic the laws of dialectics would be juxtaposed against the principles of formal logic, forming a series of principles that would correspond to the law of unity of contradictions (*maodun tongyi lü* 矛盾統一律). If in formal logic the law of identity stipulated that "A is A", in dialectical logic its principle of identity would have been directly modified to state that "at the same time A is A and A is not A" (Ye 1936a, 73). In turn, Ye also impugned Ai's critical remarks on laws of contradiction and identity in formal logic, saying:

> The statement "this young person is a salesman" is clearly (an example) of the use of the law of excluded middle from formal logic. The formula

13 In the same year Ai also wrote a few responses to other participants in the debate. (See, for instance Ai 1936b)

> of the law of excluded middle is "A is B or A is non-B" (A 是 B 或是非 B), and the meaning of "this young person is a salesman" is the same as "A is B". The formula of the law of unity of contradictions would here be "A is B and A is non-B" (A是B又是非B), that is "yes-no, no-yes". Following that example, we get: "this young person is a salesman and a non-salesman" or "this young person is a salesman and also is not a salesman". (ibid., 80)

Ye stated that Ai did not properly understand the laws of contradiction and excluded middle in formal logic, and hence was unable to understand the real relation between formal and dialectical logic. By advocating his harmonistic view, Ye caused a considerable rift between two interpretational currents among Chinese adherents of dialectical materialism. He caused a stir among the hard-line Marxists who maintained that dialectical logic was superior to formal logic, whose responses subsequently caused the debate to shift to a different level. Thus, in 1937 a debate on the "sublation of formal logic" (*xingshi luoji de yanggi* 形式邏輯的揚棄) started to ferment among Chinese Marxists, which ultimately reached its peak in 1939.

Li Da on Logic, 1935–1936

In the years 1935 and 1936, Li Da's writing aimed at rectifying the content of the Chinese discourse on dialectical logic. In comparison with more, so to say, "moderate" interpretations of the dialectical variety of logic, his article "Dialectical Logic and Formal Logic (Bianzheng luoji yu xingshi luoji 辯證邏輯與形式邏輯)" utilized a more politically coloured rhetoric, which depicted formal logic as a mere ideological invention of metaphysicians and idealists.

> All metaphysicians or idealists are not aware that in their mental view, apart from formal logic, there is also a dialectical logic. They praise formal logic as the science of the method of correct thinking and declare that formal logic is a scholarly instrument "unchangeable in all times, countries and people" and that for any learning, problem and course of events formal logic is (always) the right method of thinking. Whenever a polemic arises about a certain question, they will employ this "Mr. Formal Logic" to serve as their advocate. Therefore, metaphysical and idealist views on nature, on society as well as their general worldview all take formal logic as their (only) methodology. (Li 1935a, 1)

Akin to other examples of Soviet criticism, Li's text revolved around the three laws of logic. Li's updated exposition of the Soviet dogma led him to reject all

three laws as abstractions of the principle of identity, claiming that a false notion of identity had caused formal logic to neglect the true principle of dialectical unity of identity and difference. Hence, according to Li, formal logic was devoid of any real substance. It was:

- Subjectivism, whose form did not represent objective reality.
- Devoid of an evolutionary or developmental perspective.
- It ignored the principle of interrelatedness of all phenomena (dialectical logic was "comprehensive" or "holistic").
- Its principles were isolated from all aspects of social practice. (ibid., 4–5)

Li also presented a theory of development of logic, which was based on the theory of "historical developmental process of human cognition" from Engels's *Dialectics of Nature*. In Li's historical model, formal logic emerged at the developmental stage of "metaphysical thought", while its successor, mathematical or symbolic logic, developed under "the social conditions of the age of (capitalist) manufactures". Because it emerged in the same period as natural sciences and modern mathematics, it absorbed their knowledge and emulated their form. In contrast, dialectical logic developed at the highest evolutionary stage of human thought. Consequently, dialectical logic was not only a form of logic which superseded mathematical logic, but a higher form of thought which sublated all the lower forms: it cleansed the idealist elements and integrated its concrete elements. In this regard, Li's idea of the superiority of dialectical logic was closer to Hegel's idea of sublation (*Aufhebung*) (see Hegel 1986, 365–67, 565). On the other hand, sublation also implied a conceptual dissolution of formal logic as such.

Other contemporary writings of Li reveal his strong interest in a dialectics of nature, and especially in a Marxist philosophy of mathematics. He maintained a positive view of mathematics and called it a universal language for describing the spatial principles of material reality (see Li 1935b; 1936a). In 1936, however, Li also published a number of other articles on logic. In an article entitled "Dynamic Logic" he reviewed Plekhanov's idea of dialectics as the logic of change. In a lecture entitled "The Logic of Dialectics (Bianzhengfa de luoji 辯證法的邏輯)", which was recorded by Yang Mingzhang 楊明章 and published in *Yanching University Weekly Magazine* (*Yanda zhoukan* 燕大周刊), Li integrated the notion of "dynamic logic" into his general outline of characteristics of the advanced form of dialectical logic. In "Dynamic Logic" Li further defined change as the embodiment of two main principles: the world as a totality of the material transformations and general developmental laws of the physical world. He treated dialectical materialism as scientific truth and philosophy as scientific methodology, and

disputed Bohr's model of atom as an argument against the claims of dialectical materialism, defining the objectivity of science or philosophy in terms of their accordance with the process of change and practice. In the same year Li Da's "Fundamental Principles of Logic (Luoji de genben yuanli 邏輯的根本原理)" and "Essentials of Logic (Luoji dayi 邏輯大意)" were published in the *Zhongshan Institute for Culture and Education Quarterly* (*Zhongshan wenhua jiaoyu jikan* 中山文化教育季刊).

Sublation of Formal Logic, 1937–1939

By 1937, Ye recapitulated his views in yet another article on "Formal Logic and Dialectical Logic (Xingshi luoji yu bianzheng luoji 形式邏輯與辯證邏輯)", which presented a comprehensive response to all criticisms directed against him. Later the same year, Ai Siqi epitomized and further expanded the criticisms against Ye in an extensive monograph *Critique of Ye Qing's Philosophy* (*Ye Qing zhexue pipan* 葉青哲學批判). Finally, in the same year Ye presented an expanded exposition of his views on logic in his monograph *Problems of Logic* (*Lunlixue wenti* 論理學問題), which also devoted part of its discussion to mathematical logic—Ye's sources were Kurt Joachim Grau's Grundriß der Logik (1921) (translated into Chinese in 1927 by Chen Daqi 陳大齊) and Wang Dianji's *A Treatise on Logic and Mathematical Logic* (*Luoji yu shuxue luoji lun* 邏輯與數學邏輯論) from 1927. Although Ye believed that, as the most developed Western logic, mathematical logic possessed the same theoretical limitations as its predecessor, he nevertheless made the following striking conclusion:

> I have already quoted Engels's words, which say that dialectics is "a theory of thought and its laws" or "the science of the laws of the process of cognition in itself". In that way, dialectics must also be an investigation of the form(s) of thought. That is so because, besides content, thought has also got form. Content is a reflection of external things, and [the discipline] which investigates it is epistemology. Then, the only thing which reflects one's [inner] self is form. And this form (*xingshi* 形式) is thought, that is the form of movement (*yundong xingtai* 運動形態) of external things taken in (*shequ* 攝取 "absorb", "receive") by our thinking organ (*siguan* 思官). Because of that dialectics must be the science of the form of thought. According to my view, following the example of formal logic, dialectics could also adopt the mathematical form (*shuxue xingtai* 數學形態) and become a dialectical mathematical logic (*bianzhengfa de shuli luoji* 辯證法的數理邏輯). (Ye 1937b, 138)

Between 1937 and 1938, a series of treatises recapitulating the views expressed in the previous years, supported with new material on the matter, were published. These treatises argued in favour of either of the two options. Thus, for instance, in 1937 Pan Zinian 潘梓年 (1893–1972) composed a treatise entitled *Logic and the Science of Logic* (*Luoji yu luojixue* 邏輯與邏輯學). Pan presented an overview of the materialist version of the history of logic, propagating the idea that formal logic had been sublated by the dialectical logic. The book was probably the first Chinese monograph to offer a comprehensive overview of the Soviet Marxist theory of physical matter. One year later (1938), the book was republished under the title *Science of Logic and Logical Methods* (*How Dialectics Sublated Formal Logic*) (*Luojixue yu luojishu* (*Bianzheng zenyang yangqi le xingshi luoji*) 邏輯學與邏輯術(辯證法怎樣揚棄了形式邏輯)), to emphasize its main doctrinal purport and orientation.

The number of articles advocating the sublation of formal logic increased between 1937 and 1939. Probably the earliest article adamantly asserting the orthodox Marxist view on formal logic was Feng Ding's 馮定 (1902–1983) "Sublation of Formal Logic (Xingshi luoji de yangqi 形式邏輯的揚棄)" from 1937. Feng, who at the time was writing under the pseudonym Beiye 貝葉, outlined the main paradigm which was to underlie the forthcoming mainstream discourse on the sublation of formal logic in Chinese Marxist circles. Feng claimed that, due to its idealist essence, formal logic lacked all practical implications in the modern world: "Formal logic could indeed be used in everyday domestic environment, but this kind of domestic environment would be an old-fashioned one, with no deeper connection to the (current) society …" (Feng 1937, 252). Feng continued: "In the future, dialectics will enable small children to effortlessly acquire advanced knowledge." (ibid.) Whereas, in the same future, dominated by dialectical materialism, the antiquated formal logic would be only found "in the local museum".

By 1939, the idea of sublation became commonly accepted in Chinese Marxist circles. The only question which still remained to be answered was: how was it supposed to be carried out? Or, in other words: to what degree ought formal logic be assimilated[14] into dialectical logic? A notable case against the total elimination of formal logic was put forward by Ai Siqi in his critique of Pan Zinian's book from 1938 (Ai 1939). This time, Ai spoke about a "critical assimilation of formal logic". Although he described modern formal logic as a complete antithesis to dialectical logic—since its main purpose was to resolve the paradoxes or contradictions from human thought—he still believed that it contained numerous useful

14 It appears that for some authors, like Ai Siqi, sublation was synonymous or at least closely related to "assimilation". This again shows a substantial diversity of interpretations of these key notions in Chinese Marxist circles at the time.

"techniques" which could be extracted from their idealist background and inculcated into dialectical logic. In the same manner, Ai proposed that the laws of formal logic could be reformulated to fit dialectics and fused into an expanded body of dialectical logic, where deduction and induction would attain a complementary union. In comparison with the standpoint advocated in his earlier writings, the ideas presented in his work from 1939 appear to have conveyed a less narrow notion of logic.

The debate was more or less concluded by Li Da's article "On the Question of Sublation of Formal Logic (Xingshi luoji yangqi wenti 形式邏輯揚棄問題)" (1939), which also recapitulated the most important points indicated in the preceding discussions. At the same time, Li also presented some new arguments. As the chief contemporary sources in the theory of logic Li listed Wang Tefu's 王特夫 *The System of Logic* (*Lunlixue tixi* 論理學體系) (1933), Lin Zhongda's 林仲達 vitalist treatise *Synthetic Logic* (*Zonghe Luoji* 綜合邏輯), Ai Siqi's *Methodology of Thought* and Pan Zinian's *Science of Logic and Logical Methods*. In addition to the abovementioned commonly advocated views on the history of dialectical and formal logic, Li also provided a detailed criticism of two contending contemporary forms of logic: Russell's mathematical logic and Dewey's experimentalist logic. Li criticized the former, saying that:

> The philosophical foundation of mathematical or symbolic logic is rationalism (*lixinglun* 理性論). Rationalism advocates that the actual world must be explained in terms of the truth as contained in human intellect. In consequence, mathematical or symbolic logic advocates that logic is merely a formal development of human intellect as such, it is a boundless derivation and advancement of reason. This is why mathematical logic constructs logic on the forms of thinking and tries to assemble these forms so that they might be mystically turned into an illusion of the objective world. Since this school of logic investigates only the developmental forms of reason, it must necessarily resort to the use of the deductive method. However, no other discipline is more able to rigorously use the method of deduction than mathematics. Therefore, it was necessary that this logic, which focuses on form as its object of research, adopts mathematical method of deduction, … claims that akin to mathematics logic has also got permanent and unchanging formulae, and advocates that the forms of thinking contain some unchanging "logical constants", and that (in this manner) one can detect objective facts. Therefore, the members of this school of logic, such as Mou Zongsan, advocate that "logic is universal, formal and semantically undefined inferential relation

> between (different) propositional functions" … We could really call this school of logic an extreme and pure (version) of formal logic. (Li 1939, 111–12)

Finally, in 1939 Li also enumerated four major laws of formal logic, including the law of sufficient reason (*chongzu liyou lü* 充足理由律). Correspondingly, he also listed four kinds of limitations of formal logic: (1) formal logic is divorced from epistemology, (2) it totally neglects the developmental viewpoint, (3) it totally neglects the aspect of interconnectedness of things, and (4) it separates theory and practice. As noted above, Li's critique of mathematical logic followed the very same lines, with a special emphasis on the assertion that its sole focus was the form of human reasoning.

Conclusion

Though presenting only a superficial view of the debates on dialectical and formal logic of the 1930s, the above discussion confirms the conjecture made in the introduction to this article, namely that the complex network of influences, contributions and opinions was webbed into the general intellectual discourse on dialectical materialism and logic before and during the 1930s debates in China. A brief comparison of arguments and advocacies presented on both sides of the debates shows that at the time the discourse was undergoing constant change, while at the same time some doctrinal precepts, such as the extensions and derivations of the paradigm set down by Plekhanov or the Marxist interpretation of the basic laws of logic, were consistently preserved throughout the whole period under observation. While it is highly probable that the special circumstances which arose during a time of war drastically affected or even overturned the overall intellectual trends that had ensued from the intellectual developments in the 1920s, the ideological dissonances of the late 1930s opened up a new window of opportunity for establishment of the Soviet hard-line doctrinal model in Chinese Marxist philosophical discourse.

To put it in concrete, plain terms: The main conceptual background for the abovementioned debates in the early 1930s were the general philosophical discourse on logic and science from the 1920s, on one side, and the more specialized Chinese Marxist discourse on dialectical materialism from the same period, on the other. Although the debates between Zhang Dongsun and Ye Qing ensued in direct consequence of the large-scale popularization of dialectical materialism and the sudden surge in number of publications on the topic in the late 1920s, contextually these discussions were still rooted in the discourse of the mid-1920s. Ye Qing's

attention to Plekhanov's "dynamic logic" as the, as it were, "logic of change", and his synthetic solution of the problem of the relationship between formal and dialectical logic was thus profoundly reflective of his semi-traditional notion of dialectics, which still did not completely absorb the incoming current of sources on dialectical materialism. Similarly, the very idea of the significance of logic also derived from the developing Chinese philosophical discourse on logic from the 1920s, as well as the current developments in the notion of logic as an academic discipline at most prestigious Chinese universities in Beijing—especially the Qinghua circle of logicians and New Realists. This was also the reason why mathematical logic and the analytical notion of pure logic were brought up by the opponents of dialectical materialism so early on in the debate—Wang Dianji in 1932 and Mou Zongsan in 1933. The subsequent integration of mathematical logic in Marxist discourse on the sublation of formal logic was also a relatively special feature of Chinese debates on dialectical materialism. Historically, this tendency might have been an extension of the strong presence of Russell's philosophy of mathematics and the notion of mathematical logic in discourse generated in the early Communist circles in Beijing in the late 1910s and all of the 1920s. As mentioned above, the person facilitating a theoretical synthesis of the two theories was Zhang Shenfu, one of the cofounders of the Communist Party of China and a professor at Peking and Qinghua universities.[15] Moreover, a strong syncretistic tendency has been an underlining feature of the thought of a great number of important shapers of Chinese intellectual discourse in the 1910s and 1920s, and seems to have also been retained as an important attitude in some of their students, who later became affiliated with the Chinese Marxist discourse.

On the other hand, the influx of new knowledge about the Soviet doctrine on dialectical materialism as well as other translations of classical works of Marxism caused an internal rift in the lines of Chinese Marxists. The internal antagonisms were at their peak between the years 1935 and 1937, when, for example, Ye Qing's moderate views clashed with Ai Siqi's more critical attitude towards the sublation of formal logic. Setting aside the internal tensions related to other aspects of political or philosophical doctrine, which probably existed in the Marxist circles throughout the 1930s—also due to diverging opinions with regard to the notion of "Sinicization" of dialectical materialism and science—in the years between 1937 and 1939 the views of some of those named above seem to have undergone a considerable transformation, in which parts of the discourse seem to have aligned with the sentiment of cultural relativism, which

15 Zhang's teaching on mathematical logic and dialectical materialism influenced the discussants on both sides of the debate, from Guo Zhanbo to Mou Zongsan.

permeated the intellectual climate, allowing a greater degree of compromise between the two logics. Concurrently, different opinions finally started to converge, creating an impression of consensus and a general move towards codification of the tenets of "Chinese Marxism".[16] Thus, in the end, on both sides more complementary solutions and syncretistic visions of coexistence of the "two logics" took ground. On the other hand, in the case of Zhang Dongsun the same rationale as incapsulated in the idea of "Sinicization" came to expression in the form of neo-traditional cultural relativism, and in leftist circles the harmonic synthesis as advocated by Zhang Shenfu and Zhang Dainian gradually manifested in a short-lived increase in the relevance of a more moderate notion of sublation of formal or mathematical logic into dialectical logic.

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16 The apparent push towards the codification of the tents of dialectical materialism in Chinese Marxist circle might have also been facilitated by Stalin's promulgation of Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism—also known as "Diamat", as the official ideology of the Soviet Union in 1938.

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Researching the History of Chinese Logic: The Role of Wen Gongyi in the Establishment of New Methodologies

*Cui QINGTIAN**

Abstract

During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the progressive intellectuals, who were confronted with the all-embracing crisis of Chinese society, yearned to find the new truth within the Western ideas on the one hand, and the works of the classical Chinese philosophy of the pre-Qin era on the other. These social and historical circumstances started the research into the history of Chinese logic. In the process of these investigations, it soon became clear that more appropriate methodologies were needed to explore Chinese logic, as those used for researching Western logic were not suitable for the task. The revival and modernization of such methods took place in the latter half of the 20th century, and one of the most important figures in these processes was Professor Wen Gongyi, who was hence one of the pioneers of modern research into the history of Chinese logic. Therefore, the present article also offers a short presentation of his biography and his contributions to the development of the research into traditional Chinese logic.

Keywords: Chinese logic, traditional Chinese methodology, historiography, Wen Gongyi

Raziskovanje zgodovine kitajske logike: vloga Wen Gongyija pri vzpostavljanju novih metodologij

Izvleček

V obdobju dinastije Qing (1644–1911) so si napredni izobraženci, ki so se soočali z vseobsegajočo krizo kitajske družbe, močno prizadevali najti novo resnico v zahodnih idejah na eni strani in na drugi v klasičnih filozofskih delih iz obdobja pred dinastijo Qing. Te družbene in zgodovinske okoliščine so dale zagon raziskavam o zgodovini kitajske logike. V poteku teh raziskav je kmalu postalo jasno, da so za raziskovanje kitajske logike potrebne primernejše metodologije, saj so bile tiste, ki so jih uporabljali v raziskavah zahodne logike, popolnoma neprimerne za to nalogo. Obujanje in modernizacija teh metod sta potekala v drugi polovici 20. stoletja. Med najpomembnejšimi osebnostmi, ki so prispevale k temu procesu, je bil profesor Wen Gongyi, ki tako velja za enega od pionirjev modernih raziskav o zgodovini kitajske logike. Zato bom v tem članku podal krajšo predstavitev njegovega življenja ter njegovih prispevkov k razvoju raziskav o tradicionalni kitajski logiki.

Ključne besede: kitajska logika, tradicionalna kitajska metodologija, zgodovinopisje, Wen Gongyi

* Cui QINGTIAN, Professor Emeritus, Nankai University, Tianjin, PR China. Email address: qingtiancui21@gmail.com

Introduction: Historical and Intellectual Background

In classical Chinese theory, there was no term for logic or "Chinese logic", and the modern Chinese word *luoji* 邏輯 is a phonetic translation of the Western term. The appearance and investigation of "Chinese logic" are a matter of the 19th century, and therefore belong in the era of modern Chinese history.

Following the First Opium War of 1839–1842, great changes took place within Chinese society. During this period, China was confronted with the gradual spread of Western ideas into the East, which also included a systematic introduction of Western logic.

This gradual import of Western ideas naturally also involved the introduction of Western logic. The first person to introduce Western logic into the Chinese system of thought during this period was Yan Fu 嚴復. He not only presented the importance of understanding logic on the basis of the current urgent problems in China, but also established academic organizations which were involved in adopting the logical knowledge of the time. He translated the most prominent works of Western logic and systematically introduced this discipline to others in China. His translations of J. S. Mills *A System of Logic*, *Ratiocinative and Inductive* was first published in 1905, and followed in 1909 by his translation of W. S. Jovons' *Primers of Logic*.

These translations, which found their way to China at the beginning of the 20th century, represented the first systematic introduction of traditional Western logic, which was based on the elementary contents of Aristotelian logic. They not only provided a solid ground for a new, more integral understanding of this discipline in China, but also paved the way for certain progressive intellectuals, who started to rethink traditional Chinese theories from the viewpoint of Western logic. Thus, a very important precondition for the beginning of the research into the history of Chinese logic was fulfilled.

The central subject of this research was concentrated on the investigation of Moist logic, which could be found in the disputations of this philosophical school. However, the Moist school was forcibly shut down after the end of the Han dynasty. Thus, their main work, *Mozi*, was also discarded, drowned in the long, deep river of Chinese history. It was only at the end of the Qing dynasty that it was revived by the representatives of the so-called Hanxue movement within the scope of new, reflective theoretical investigations in the classical philosophical schools from the pre-Qin era.

Concerning *Mozi*, their research deserves our attention in two aspects. Firstly, they (to a certain extent) managed to overthrow the orthodox Confucian interpretation

of this book; within this intellectual mainstream, *Mozi* was regarded as a "false doctrine".[1] Therefore, the theoretical reinterpretations of the Hanxue scholars managed to re-legitimize this work, as well as the Moist School as a whole. Thus, Moist philosophy was finally adequately evaluated and was once again rendered its proper position within the system of traditional Chinese thought. Secondly, the Hanxue theoreticians from the Qing period were diligent and accurate scholars, who were strict at applying the method of provable evidence. In a few decades of difficult and tiresome work, they updated Mozi with a huge amount of qualitatively outstanding commentaries. Due to their efforts—and consequently also due to the achievements of their followers, who were specialized in the investigations of the Moist School—*Mozi*, which was always regarded as lacking both traditional mediation as well as comprehensible commentaries or interpretations, became a readable book once again.

Their work paved the way and established a solid basis for the entire modern and even contemporary research into Moist philosophy. Since Moist theory represents one of the most important issues in classical Chinese logic, their work also provided a basic fulfilment of the second crucial condition for investigations into the history of traditional Chinese logic.

After the First Opium War, 1839–1842, "learning from the West" was the most visible tendency in Chinese culture. This resulted in the following question: what is the basis of the so-called "Western", or "new" learning? Certain intellectuals believed that the elementary foundation of Western culture was to be found in the spirit of natural sciences, which were capable of providing methods for "eliminating falseness and preserving the truth".[2] Logic was seen as the embodiment of such spirit and its methods. Yan Fu quoted Francis Bacon, saying that logic was "the method of all methods, and the science of all sciences". Therefore, it was only natural for logic to become one of the most influential discourses within the scope of "Western learning", which gradually spread to the East. But Chinese scholars, who focused on studying Western logic, could hardly secede from their habituated way of thinking, which was rooted in traditional Chinese

1 This was, among other issues, probably connected with the fact that the Mohist, and especially the Later Mohist School were much more analytical in their approaches than Confucianism, in the sense that they tended to proto-theorize their philosophical arguments with an analytical language (Rošker 2015a, 305), without placing too much emphasis to ethics and morality, which was in the forefront of Confucian concerns.

2 However, this—sometimes much too naïve—faith in the consequent and straightforward Western reliance on "truth" was certainly linked to China's confrontation with European economic and military supremacy in the 19th century, which, among other issues, often invoked a period of self-criticism among Chinese intellectuals (Dessein 2020, 252).

culture.[3] For this reason, a reflective search of those elements within traditional Chinese thought, which could be understood as compatible with Western logic, became one of their crucial theoretical issues. This can be seen as another indispensable element, which contributed to the development of the research into the history of Chinese logic.

As follows from the above, the main factors which contributed to the development of investigating the history of Chinese logic can be found in the gradual spread of Western ideas to the East, which resulted in deeper research into classical Chinese philosophy, as well as in the revival of Mozi. Furthermore, the inquisitive respect shown toward the Western learning, which was brought to life by enlightened Chinese intellectuals, accompanied by reflective reinvestigation of their own traditional thought, is also of great importance in this respect.

Establishing Research into the History of Chinese Logic

The 20th century was the initial era of research into the history of Chinese logic. The most important representatives of this work were Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and Hu Shi 胡適.

Concerning classical Chinese logic, the following works of Liang Qichao can be named as the most influential: *Mozi's Ethics* (*Mozizhi lunlixue* 墨子之倫理學 (1904)), *Mozi's Studies* (Mozi xuean 墨子學案 (1921)) and *The Interpretation of Mozi* (*Mozi xiaoshi* 墨子校釋 (1922)). Hu Shi's main work in this field includes *The History of Logic from the Pre-Qin Era* (*Xian Qin mingxue shi* 先秦名學史), which was completed in 1917, but published in 1922, *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy, Part I* (*Zhongguo zhexue shi da gang* 中國哲學史大綱 (1919)), and *A New View of the Chapter 'Xiao qu' in the Book of Mozi* (*Mozi xiaoqu pian xin gu* 墨子小取篇新詁 (1919)).

Their direct successors did not manage to overcome their theories, neither concerning the elementary methods, nor in respect of their basic interpretations. This is why this period can be regarded as the initial era of research into the history of Chinese logic.

According to the basic opinion, which imbues these works, the classical Chinese "disputes" (*bian xue* 辯學) and the traditional "theories of naming" (*ming xue* 名學) were equivalent to Western logic. Therefore, the attempts to construct a Chinese theory of logic, based on the reinterpretations of classical Chinese disputes and the theories of names—mainly those from *The Moist Disputes* (*Mo bian* 墨

3 By the late 1920s, however, various forms of modern Western logic had already been widely established throughout the most progressive Chinese intellectual and academic circles (Vrhovski 2020, 232).

辯)—through the optics of Western, especially traditional European logic, which is grounded on the contents of Aristotelian theories, became part of the mainstream of cognitional and methodological issues in researching the history of Chinese logic. But some scholars in this period already asserted that the book *The Moist Disputes* was a classic, which was used by the Moist school for debates, and that *The Book of Disputes* (*Bian jing* 辯經) was nothing more than a handbook for the art of disputation. This opinion gave rise to further considerations as regards the relation between *The Moist Disputes* and traditional Western logic, as well as the connection of this logic and the logical elements, which were contained in *The Moist Disputes*.

Expansion: New Methods and New Approaches

New developments in the research into the history of Chinese logic appeared in the 1930s. The most important works in this field published during this period were Wang Zhanghuan's 王章煥 *Survey of Ethics* (*Lunlixue da quan* 倫理學大全 (1930)), Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 *History of Chinese Philosophy, Part I* (*Zhongguo zhexue shi, shang ce* 中國哲學史 /上策/ (1931)), Guo Zhanpo's 郭湛波 *History of the Art of Disputes of the pr -Qin Era* (*Xian Qin bianxue shi* 先秦辯學史 (1932)), Tan Jiefu's 譚戒甫 *Simple Explanation of the Moist Classic* (*Mo jing yi jie* 墨經易解 (1935)), Zhang Dongsun's 張東荪*Thought and Culture* (*Sixiang yu wenhua* 思想與文化 (1938)), and *Different Logics and Chinese Rationality* (*Bu tongde luoji bing lun Zhongguo lixue* 不同的邏輯並論中國理學 (1939)).

The above-mentioned works involved different tendencies. The first one followed the basic cognitional and methodological guidelines of Liang and Hu and was based upon the opinion that the classical Chinese disputes and theories of naming were equivalent to Western logic. The second tendency was based upon the conviction, that it was wrong to interpret those discourses according to the model of traditional Western logic, and that it was necessary to reconstruct the autochthonous Chinese logic. One of the most important representatives of this conviction was Zhang Dongsun (see Rošker 2015b, 110). He asserted that logic depended upon culture, and that different cultures gave rise to different types of logic. According to his opinion, logic should be interpreted with respect to the particular culture in which it arose. Tan Jiefu was also against comparisons of classical disputes and theories of naming with traditional Western logic, and stressed the independence of Chinese logic. However, he did believe that *The Moist Disputes* were to a great extent similar to traditional Indian logic.

Although the concrete expositions that derived from their basic prepositions were not always absolutely valid, Tan Jiefu's and Zhang Dongsun's thesis about the "independence" of logic, contained in the ancient Chinese theories, as well as their stressing of the necessity of cultural interpretations of logic, were of utmost importance. To a certain extent, their arguments represent an improvement of Liang's and Hu's theories. Since they had a very stimulating effect on further studies in modern Chinese thought, their contribution should not be underestimated in this regard.

The Period of Stagnancy, Revival and New Development

Following the beginning of the anti-Japanese war in the 1940's, the economic and cultural situation in China became extremely difficult, which brought the research into the history of Chinese logic to a standstill. Therefore, only a few publications from that period are worth mentioning, e.g. Zhang Shizhao's 章士釗 *The Essential Issues of Logic* (*Luoji zhiyao* 邏輯指要 (1943)), Guo Moruo's郭沫若 *Review of the Theories of Naming and Disputes* (*Ming bian sichao pipan* 名辯思潮批判 (1944)), as well as Hou Wailu's 侯外廬, Zhao Jibin's 趙紀彬 and Du Guoxiang's 杜國庠 *General History of Chinese Thought* (*Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中國思想通史 (1947)).

Zhang Shizhao stressed the equality of the theories of naming and traditional Western logic. He strove for a systematic ordering of Chinese "laws of naming" in accordance with the framework of traditional Western logic, while Guo Moruo, on the contrary, stressed the differences between traditional Western and traditional Chinese logic. In his opinion, *The Moist Disputes* is a book about the art of disputation, i.e. about the methods of disputation; therefore, it could not be equated with the strict system of Western logic. Hou Wailu and several other scholars, however, was one of the few who explicitly pointed out the tight connection between traditional Chinese logic and epistemology.

Following the 1950s, research into the history of Chinese logic gradually began its revival. The first work in this regard, which was published at the beginning of the decade, was Shen Youding's 沈有鼎 *The Logic of the Moist Classic* (*Mo jingde luoji xue* 墨經的邏輯學). The author believed that this Moist work represented the summit of the development of the classical Chinese logic. His book was based upon the hypothesis that the laws of human cognition and the form of logic do not depend on an individual nation or class. On the other hand, it also stressed the special influence of particular languages on the different modes of logical expression.

In 1957, Lu Jianfeng's 盧劍峰 book *The Moist Formal Logic* (*Mo jiade xingshi luoji* 墨家的形式邏輯) was published. It followed the opinion that the art of disputes, as formulated by Mozi in his Moist classic, was logic, and that it set up a basis for Chinese formal logic.

Wang Dianji's 汪奠基 work *The History of Chinese Logical Thought* (*Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史) was written already in the 1960s but was not published until 1979. Although the author believed that the so-called disputes of the Moist school were a kind of logic, he also clearly asserted that Chinese logic, including the Moist form, had autonomous particularities, and that its systematic reconstruction does not need a comparison with Western formal logic.

Wen Gongyi's 溫公頤 *The History of Logic from the Pre-Qin Era* (*Xian Qin luoji shi* 先秦邏輯史), *The History of Ancient Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo gu luoji shi* 中國邏輯史) and *The History of the Mediaeval Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo jingu luoji shi* 中國近古邏輯史) were published in 1983, 1989 and 1993, respectively. In the first of these he asserted that it was always wrong to compare Moist disputation or logic to Western or Indian logic, because the mode of logical thought was tightly connected to the linguistic expressions of particular languages. In his opinion, each particular language has its own idiomatic structure and expressions, and therefore the particular structural organisations of each single type of logic differ from each other. In the same book, we also encounter (for the very first time) the differentiation between the "Moist logical thought" and the "logical thought of the theories of correct naming". On this basis, the author drew a new outline of the development of logic in the pre-Qin era.

During the 1990s, a number of Chinese scholars started to review the past research into the history of Chinese logic. They began to review the previously performed work and discuss its results. The following questions appeared based upon this reflection:

- What is the kind of logic that is actually contained in the ancient disputes and theories of naming?
- Are those discourses equal to Western logic?
- Are the thoughts expressed in ancient Chinese theories the same as those expressed in traditional Western logic?
- Do the Chinese theories of logic have an autonomous quality, and how is this quality expressed?
- Which methods should be applied in the research into Chinese logic?
- What is the connection between the research into the history of Chinese logic and the establishment of a new Chinese culture?

The above-mentioned problems are only some examples of a whole array of other, similar questions, that turned up during the 1990s. They still attract the attention of many theoreticians, and continue to promote deeper investigations and accelerate the more sophisticated development of further research into the history of Chinese logic.

Elaboration of Crucial Research Methods

The "gradual irruption of Western ideas into the East", which generated the initial research into the history of Chinese logic after the 19th century, also provided Chinese scholars with a number of related research tools and methods. Above all, this meant that they tried to explain Chinese logic through the optic of the "gradually irrupted Western ideas" (i.e. traditional Western logic). The basic characteristic of this method was "to compare ancient Chinese theories to the new laws of European or Western thought". The essence of this kind of "comparison" within the research into the history of Chinese logic was basically the application of elementary traditional Western logical concepts, principles and systems, which were used as a basic pattern to explain and reconstruct the classical Chinese disputes and theory of names, with the single aim to show that those ancient Chinese discourses were actually equal to traditional Western logic.

We have to admit that under the given historical conditions, the application of this method was in fact meaningful to a certain extent. For example, it led towards an important conceptual shift in this research: the investigations of traditional disputes and theories of naming escaped the frame of the general research in ancient classics and found their way to completely new developments. It also caused researchers of classical disputes and theories of naming to no longer concentrate solely on commenting on old texts; at the same time, they started to pay greater attention to analysing and expounding their semantic systems. It was also very effective regarding the fact that the Chinese academic world became acquainted with traditional Western logic, for it opened a new way of thinking for the future research into the history of Chinese logic. It provided elementary support, as well as a solid basis for further investigations in this field.

However, on the other hand, this method also showed severe deficiencies. Although the classical Chinese disputes and theories of naming have certain similarities with traditional Western logic, it is still impossible to regard them as completely equal. They are quite different in regard to their objects and contents, and thus cannot be seen as the same discipline. The object of the Chinese theories of naming can be found in the name. Their main problem is the relation between the

name and the actuality, and the central content of these theories is "the correction of names". The main object of the art of disputation are arguments, its basic problem is the exploration of the essential quality and functionality of disputes. The elementary contents of this discipline are centred on the principles and methods of disputation. However, the object of traditional Western logic is to be found in the proper form, as well as in accurate principles of cognition, while its basic content is to be found in efficient reasoning. Therefore, the above-mentioned method, which was based on the complete equalization of disputes and theories of naming with traditional Western logic, muddled up different disciplines with different objects and contents. Thus, it is understandable that the application of this method with regard to the comparison of both kinds of logic was not necessarily free from certain habitual elements. These elements not only impeded an accurate comprehension of classical Chinese disputations and theories of naming, they also hindered the proper understanding of the logical theories contained in these ancient Chinese discourses.

If we want to overcome the above-mentioned deficiencies and deepen the investigations into the history of Chinese logic, it is necessary to change the method of explaining the classical Chinese discourses and reconstructing the Chinese logic solely according to the laws of traditional Western logic. For this sake, we have to be aware of the importance of historical analysis and culturally bounded interpretations.

Historical Analysis and Culturally Bounded Interpretations

The so-called culturally bounded interpretation is based on the presumption that Chinese logic is an organic part of traditional Chinese culture. Such interpretations attempt to find a rational explanation for Chinese logic, and take into account the characteristic elements of traditional Chinese philosophy, ethics, political theories, linguistics and traditional scientific technology.

A culture is always a culture of a certain specific historical period. This is why every culturally bounded interpretation has to involve a historical analysis. This means that such an interpretation of Chinese logic sees this discipline as deeply rooted in the geopolitical context of the historical period in which it was established. Theoreticians who work on culturally bounded interpretations have to form concrete analyses of the specific conditions, which determined the social, economic, political, and cultural life in that period. Moreover, they have to elaborate precise analyses of the influence of all these elements on scholars and thinkers who created the Chinese theories of logic.

Historical analyses and culturally bounded interpretations by no means exclude comparative research, but this has to be grounded on a clear awareness of the special social and cultural background which created and determined Chinese logic.

The reason for the necessity of historical and culturally bounded interpretations in the investigations of the history of Chinese logic is connected to the requirement for a proper understanding of theoretical thought. Thus, we have to understand its basis, which can be found in the concrete social circumstances of the thinkers who brought it to our attention, as well as in the social problems they were confronted with. We have to understand the characteristic features of their specific cultural background and their motivations. Only once we have understood the socio-cultural factors which formed and determined those ancient theories will we be able to understand their specific quality. The understanding of these factors also represents an urgent precondition to an objective and correct interpretation of the texts which contain ancient theories. The problems that arise cannot be solved solely on the basis of their comparison with different, foreign ideas (so much less if the respective comparisons are based on the mode of identification). Therefore, a proper understanding of this academic thought must also be grounded on the concentration upon historical and culturally bounded interpretations. In this respect, the research into the history of Chinese logic is by no means an exception. The application of the above-mentioned methods is even more important if we take into account the close connection between logic and culture.

This close connection is determined by the wholeness of culture, as well as by the special position of logic as one of the main forming factors of this wholeness. In a broad sense culture represents the totality of all human activities and their results within a civilization. It is formed by mutual connections of many different elements, which are compounded by certain modes of interaction. It represents an entity or a system of special qualities and functions. Logic as a discipline, investigating the various modes of reasoning, represents an important part or element, which takes part in the formation of this entity. It is tightly connected to the different modes, and even with the different customs of thinking, and represents an important content of cognition. On the other hand, specific manners of cognition are even deeper and more elemental factors of every individual culture.

The systematic nature and the wholeness of culture reveal that the vital basic of its regulated totality has been compounded by a number of important culturally bounded elements, including logic. These elements have a great effect and a huge influence upon the changes and development of every culture. On the other hand, logic, as one of these elements, is regulated by the totality of culture. It needs the systematic nature and wholeness of culture as a vital precondition, for this

determines its existence, its development and enables it to express its meaning.

The regulative function of culture determines every single logical system, which is to a certain degree always also a product of certain historical circumstances and therefore has a universal, as well as a specific side. The European logician Anton Dumitriu expressed the plurality of logic very clearly. Proceeding from the history of the development of logic, he wrote:

> We have already expounded two thousand five hundred years of the development of logic, and this period have been able to see many different ways, in which human beings constructed and interpreted this discipline. It is obvious that there are huge differences between different periods ... Each single stage in the developmental process of logic reflects a specific historical background. (Dumitriu 1977, 12)

The well-known contemporary Chinese logician Zhou Liquan also pointed out:

> Each proper understanding and each science have to apply and respect the correct forms of reasoning and laws, which are the object of logical inquiry and represent a common good of entire mankind. Therefore, logic itself, which reflects the proper ways of reasoning and their laws, is also common to the humanity as a whole. In this sense, there is no discrepancy between the particular logic of different nations, classes or individuals. But, on the other hand, if we look at logic as a system of knowledge, it is always a product of a certain historical era, certain nation or a certain individual and therefore necessarily comprises of the characteristic features of this era, nationality, or individual person. Consequently, the historical process of the development of logic produced a number of different logical classifications, which can be summarised in three large systems: the Chinese, the Indian and the Greek logical system. (Zhou 1987, 535)

No matter whether dealing with the above-mentioned "huge differences", or with "the characteristic features of an era, nationality, or individual person"—each inquiry always has to be grounded on a specific part of logic, which is formed by the specific historical, social and cultural background.

On this background, the above-mentioned universality of logical thinking comes into existence. On this reasoning, all human beings apply the same, universal components and functions, which are always grounded on common elementary classifications and principles. Simultaneously, these universal features also construct the universality of basic logical theories and contents of thought. On the

other hand the above-mentioned specific nature of an individual logic points out the discrepancies between different logical traditions, which were derived from particular social and cultural traditions. The most important differences in this respect are the particularity, based on the prevailing classification of reasoning, the specific modes of its expression, differences in the particular processes of their change and development, and so on. Only the consideration of the specific historical and cultural backgrounds, which formed and determined different logical traditions, enables us to analyse and interpret a certain logical tradition. Proceeding from this basis, we can understand not only the universality, but also the specific features of different logical traditions. Only this kind of inward knowledge enables us to explain logic in a proper way. Therefore, the research into Chinese logic needs to be grounded on historical analysis and culturally bounded interpretations.

Wen Gongyi and the Research into the History of Chinese Logic at the Nankai University

This important method, which takes into account the cultural conditionality of different types of logical reasoning, can be traced back to the cultural studies of the aforementioned scholar Zhang Dongsun. However, in the second half of the 20th century it was also continued and upgraded by several scholars, mainly those belonging to the so-called "Nankai School of Chinese logics". The founder of this school and its basic methodological approaches was Professor Wen Gongyi 温公颐 (1904–1996). Hence, in this last part of the present paper, we must—at least briefly—introduce his pioneering research work in the field of the cultural conditionality of Chinese logic.

Wen Gongyi was a contemporary Chinese philosopher, logician and teacher. He worked as a professor at the following institutions: Beijing University, The College of Educational Sciences in Beijing, The Girls College for Educational Sciences in Hebei and the Hebei Branch of the College for Educational Sciences in Beijing, where he also served as the Chair of the Department of Chinese Language and Literature. At Nankai University in Tianjin, he worked as a professor and Chair at the Department of Philosophy. In addition, he was the vice–president and academic adviser of the Chinese Association of Logic.

In his early years his main research fields were Western and Chinese philosophy, especially in the field of ethics. The most important works that he published at that time, were: *An Outline of Philosophy* (*Zhexue gailun* 哲学概论 (1937)), *Moral Teachings* (*Daode xue* 道德学 (1937)) and *Logic* (*Luoji xue* 逻辑学 (1958)).

Although his *History of Chinese Philosophy* (*Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中国哲学史) was already given to the publisher in 1994, it was never published.

In the 1970's, Professor Wen Gongyi started to focus his research on the history of Chinese philosophy and logic. After this period, most of his work was on various investigations into the history of Chinese logic. In the 1980s he published the following titles: *History of Logic from the pre-Qin Era* (*Xianqin luoji shi* 先秦逻辑史 (1983)), *The Medieval History of Classical Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo gu luoji shi* 中国中古逻辑史 (1989)), *The Premodern History of Classical Chinese* (*Zhongguo jingu luoji shi* 中国近古逻辑史 (1993)), and the first textbook on the history of Chinese logic entitled *A Textbook on the History of Chinese Logic* (*Zhongguo luoji shi jiaocheng* 中国逻辑史教程 (1988)).

In addition to his academic research work, Professor Wen Gongyi raised a competent professional team of young researchers and established the basic conditions for further investigations into the history of Chinese logic.

Due to his dedicated tutorial efforts, his work has been carried on to the present day. This work was based upon his previous research results and carried out by a number of specialized, independent-thinking researchers, working at the Department of Philosophy at Nankai University. Thus, the Chinese academic world has long regarded this department as an important research and education institution in the field of the history of Chinese logic.

With respect to the research methodology applied to the history of Chinese logic, Professor Wen Gongyi opposed the method of comparing Chinese logic to Western and Indian logic at all costs. He believed that the application of this method alone could not provide an explanation for the genuine essence of traditional Chinese logic. He was convinced, that

> logic forms a tool of human rational thought; it is a bridge that helps mankind obtain new knowledge. Thus, it naturally contains universal features of the entire mankind. The three main branches of logic systems that can be found in the Western (and Eastern) traditions of thought have therefore a number of common points. However, the cognitive tools have been tightly connected to the languages of the various societies, in which they came to see the day of light. Every language is determined by specific social and historical particularities. Therefore, different logic systems can not be entirely the same in respect to their organizational structure.[4] (Wen 1983, 12)

4 逻辑是人类正确思维的工具，是人类求知的桥梁，当然它具有全人类性的特点，东西方三支逻辑体系当然有它们的共同点….但思维的逻辑工具是和民族的语言密切结合的。而世界各民族的语言就各有其社会历史不同的特点，因而在逻辑的组织结构上就不会完全一样.

He also firmly believed, that "the origins of logic theories could not be subjective products of certain logicians, but were tightly connected to the social actualities, in which these logicians lived."[5] (ibid.)

On the basis of such an understanding, he appealed for the establishment of a unified view of history and logic in his research into the history of Chinese logic. In his opinion, the interpretations of the various theories by ancient Chinese thinkers had to be based upon the considerations of specific social conditions and actualities by which they were influenced in their time.

Proceeding from Professor Wen Gongyi's thought, the Nankai School clarified and defined the following new ideas concerning research into the history of Chinese logic:

1. There is a tight connection between logic and culture; the development of logic is defined by culture. On the other hand, the development of culture is also profoundly influenced by logic.

2. Different traditions of logic have been marked by universal, as well as specific, particular elements.

3. Therefore, "historical analysis and cultural interpretation" should be applied as the basic method in researching the history of Chinese logic; in the comparison of Chinese logic to other logic systems, one should be focused upon the similarities, but should also pay attention to their differences.

4. Any research into logic should consider the cultural interpretations. To the same extent, cultural studies should also reflect the developments in logic.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that understanding ancient Chinese practices and theories of thought has broad cross-cultural value. There has always been considerable debate about the proper approach to classical Chinese logic. This debate corresponds with various phases of the reception of Western logic in the Chinese scholarly community. However, a survey of the views involved shows how rich and fascinating this discourse is and how diverse the interpretative spectrum (Rošker 2015, 309). This article has clearly demonstrated that the reconstruction of classical Chinese logic offers a paradigmatic case for the epistemic shifts that continue to shape interpretations of Chinese intellectual history. It thus remains one of the

5 逻辑理论的提出，不是逻辑学家主观自生的东西，它和逻辑学家的实践密切相关.

most important areas of research in contemporary sinology, Chinese philosophy, and transcultural methodology.

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Modernization of Chinese Philosophical Methodology: Zhang Dainian's Innovation and the Challenges of Neo-Materialism[1]

*Jana S. ROŠKER**

Abstract

The present paper aims to shed light on certain methodological challenges that Chinese intellectuals faced in the process of coming to terms with Marxist thought. Even at the beginning of these processes, i.e., in the first decades of the 20th century, Chinese theorists faced several difficulties regarding the issue of cross-cultural philosophical syntheses. Thus, in their endeavours to adapt Marxism to the specifically Chinese worldview, they sought suitable adaptations of traditional philosophical methodologies that would enable them to fruitfully integrate classical Chinese and modern Marxist discourses. Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (1909–2004) has played a particularly prominent role in this process. Therefore, this paper aims to shed light on his contribution to the establishment of new Chinese and cross-cultural philosophical methodologies. In terms of exploring general philosophical issues, Zhang established a unique philosophical system known as "neo-materialism" in which he attempted to integrate Marxist materialism with some basic approaches of traditional Chinese philosophy. The crucial features that defined this philosophical system were based on his innovative methodology, which is critically presented in this paper.

Keywords: modern Chinese philosophy, Chinese and intercultural philosophy, modernization of Chinese thought, methodology of Chinese philosophy

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* Jana S. ROŠKER, Professor of Sinology, Department of Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.
Email address: jana.rosker@ff.uni-lj.si

Modernizacija kitajske filozofske metodologije: Zhang Dainianova inovacija in izzivi neomaterializma

Izvleček

Pričujoči članek je nastal s ciljem osvetlitve metodoloških izzivov, s katerimi so bili soočeni kitajski izobraženci in izobraženke v procesu sprejemanja marksistične miselnosti. Že na samem začetku teh procesov, tj. v prvih desetletjih 20. stoletja, so bile kitajske teoretičarke in njihovi moški kolegi prisiljeni ukvarjati se z reševanjem problemov v zvezi z medkulturnimi filozofskimi sintezami. Tako so v prizadevanjih po prilagoditvi marksizma specifično kitajskemu videnju sveta iskali primerne načine prilagoditev tradicionalnih filozofskih metodologij, ki bi jim omogočili plodno integracijo klasičnih kitajskih in sodobnih marksističnih diskurzov. Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (1909–2004) je v teh procesih igral še posebej pomembno vlogo. Zaradi tega želi pričujoči sestavek osvetliti njegov prispevek k vzpostavitvi novih kitajskih in medkulturnih filozofskih metodologij. Za reševanje splošnih filozofskih problemov pa je Zhang poleg tega ustvaril enkraten filozofski sistem z imenom »neomaterializem«, s pomočjo katerega je želel marksistični tip materializma povezati z določenimi temeljnimi pristopi tradicionalne kitajske filozofije. Ključne značilnosti, ki so opredeljevale ta filozofski sistem, so temeljile na njegovi inovativni metodologiji, ki jo avtorica v tem prispevku kritično predstavi.

Ključne besede: moderna kitajska filozofija, kitajska in medkulturna filozofija, modernizacija kitajske miselnosti, metodologija kitajske filozofije

Political and Intellectual Background: The Troubled Waters of Sinicized Marxism

Before focusing on Zhang Dainian's new methodology, we need to introduce the intellectual background against which it was established. Its roots can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century and the emergence of the so-called "New Intellectuals", who were mainly educated abroad and were mostly advocating a more intense Westernization of Chinese culture. Among the most influential of the young scholars, who dedicated themselves to the dissemination and popularization of Marxist thought in the 1920s, and especially during the 1930s, were Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942), Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889–1927) and Ai Siqi 艾思起 (1910–1966).

While Ai Siqi's reputation is based on his systematic treatises in the field of "socialist philosophy", which were a mainstay of standard philosophical textbooks for many decades, the first two figures are among the founders of Chinese Marxism.

> As the first party leader, Chen drew many intellectuals away from earlier Chinese radical movements, such as anarchism, while Li's arguments

> for interdependent moral and economic revolutions formed the basis for Marxist ethical thinking in China. (Bunnin 2002, 9)

The works of these pioneers of Chinese Marxism were mostly aimed at introducing and popularizing a theoretical framework and providing social, as well as historical constructions of dialectical materialism.[2] Here, we should also mention the modern logician, Zhang Shenfu, who translated Wittgenstein's *Logical Philosophical Treatise*, and is best known for his attempt to fuse Confucianism with the philosophy of Bertrand Russell and dialectical materialism.

These beginnings bore their fruits much later, during the second half of the 20th century in which a more profound study and theoretical elaboration of Marxism, in terms of integrating certain aspects of traditional Chinese approaches into the framework of Marxist thought, was carried out.

Of the long list of theorists who, each in their own way, contributed to a similar cognitive synthesis and succeeded in formulating their own, more or less innovative theories, we should mention the Modern Confucian, Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990), whose work was examined in the previous chapter, as well as Feng Qi 馮契 (1915–1995), and Zhang Dainian 張岱年 (1909–2004). The works of the latter will be summarized in later sections of this paper.

Alongside the creation of these new cognitive systems, "philosophy" also served as a purely symbolic tool for the formation of dominant ideologies. The main goal of these popularized forms of "Marxist-Leninist" or "Maoist" theories was, obviously, to preserve the political power of the ruling oligarchy, and to formulate the direction of concrete policy. This form of popularized philosophy, which was usually expressed in all-inclusive slogans, assumed the role of providing ideological links between the existing power structure and those it ruled, in the same way as orthodox forms of Confucian doctrine had done in traditional China. Hence, every major government official was also a "leading philosopher" who formulated the "correct" interpretation of "Marxist" (and, in Taiwan, Modern Confucian) "truth", which replaced the dogmas of orthodox Confucianism in the latter half of the 20th century, while most leading politicians were also immortalized in philosophical encyclopaedias and modern histories of thought. This practice, which had already emerged during the first Nationalist Republic, is still alive and well today, not only in the People's Republic, but also in Taiwan.

The gamut of "theoretical systems" in contemporary Chinese encyclopaedias and philosophical textbooks thus includes a great number of ideological currents,

2 For a more detailed information on these processes, see for instance Tian (2019, 13), Rockmore (2019, 56), Altinok (2019, 76), and Sernelj (2019, 102).

beginning with Sun Zhongsan's (Sun Yat-Sen's) 孫中山 concept of "Three National Principles 三民主義", and followed by Mao Zedong's "Maoism 毛澤東思想". Even in later periods, these kind of slogan-guided ideologies have flourished, for instance in Deng Xiaoping's 鄧小平 "Theory of Socialism with Chinese Features 中國特色的社會主義理論", Jiang Zemin's 江澤民 ideology of the "Three Representations 三個代表", and the current "Chinese Dream 中國夢" promoted by Xi Jinping 習近平.

However, it is clear that these theories do not in any way represent new theoretical systems, and are therefore of little scholarly interest and, besides, the majority of these treatises were not written by the political figures to whom they were ascribed, but by their "court ideologues". For example, modern sinology demonstrated many years ago that the works of Mao Zedong 毛澤東, who is still considered by many to be the spiritual father of so-called "Maoism" (i.e. the sinicized form of Marxist-Leninist theories), was mostly of plagiarized.

> Several works analyzing the close dependence of Mao Tse-tung's theoretical works on Soviet sources, and his plagiarisms, have already appeared (Wittfogel, Takeuchi Minoru, Schram, Lippert, Wylie, Knight, Fogel) and do not need to be discussed at length here. Wittfogel notes the fact that approximately 40 per cent of Mao's work *Dialectical Materialism* is plagiarism, while the other parts hardly deviate at all from Soviet models. (Meissner 1990, 11)

The transformation of Marxism to Maoism was, to a great extent, based upon the "inertial" principles of Chinese tradition, which also pervaded the social reality of the new "socialist" society:

> There is little evidence to suggest that contemporary China has abandoned any significant elements of its syncretic Confucian orthodoxy. The dynastic leadership of contemporary China maintains many of the same characteristics that have dominated since the Han dynasty: a governing state ideology that assigns each person their respective place in their community, the nation understood as a family, a programmatic constitution which functions more like a "Bill of Rites", than a Bill of Rights, a filial respect for the ruler as "father and mother" of the people, and the consequent sense of rule as a personal exercise. With respect to the personal character of ruler, objecting to the policies that articulate the existing order continues to be considered a condemnation of the ruler's person. (Hall and Ames 1998, 10)

The only real changes that Mao made in his modification of Marxist thought are his emphasis on specific elements which, in his view, define even the most general category, and his idea of permanent revolution. This idea, which served Mao Zedong throughout his long rule as an ideal foundation for mobilizing the masses in order to preserve his power, was rooted in the classical concept of correlative dialectics, by which synthesis (as the repeated reappearance of a qualitatively new state) does not occur in an instantaneous leap, but through a continual process of interaction between contradictory poles. The former idea can also be found in ancient Chinese tradition, in its specific understanding of humanness (人性) and its tendency towards more flexible criteria for regulating human social interactions, which considers the particularities of a given situation (and which is most clearly expressed in the classical concept of rituality (禮)). It is precisely this situational adaptability that provides the crucial discriminant with respect to the normative, legal regulation of social relations which forms the basis of Western societies (Rošker 1996, 71).

> Human malleability and the fluidity of social nature go far beyond the standard Marxist line. Where Marx stresses the uniformity of class-originated identity, Mao emphasizes the importance of those differences which derive from ways of living and thinking that must be factored into the evaluation of any specific 'concrete' personality. There is in Mao a basic distrust of abstract, general claims, and a recurrent return to specific cases and historical examples. The contemporary Chinese view so historicizes the Marxist sensibility as to allow for an almost unlimited flexibility in terms of the shaping of individual personalities and the development of individual skills. (Hall and Ames 1998, 10)

However, this very Maoist version of popularized Marxism also established elementary valuation criteria for public debates that embraced a wide range of socially significant disciplines, including philosophy and the theory of knowledge.

> The utopian aims and ideological rigidities of Mao's thought were used repeatedly to restrict the range of debate, even though Mao's theory of contradictions distinguished between acceptable and dangerous disagreements. The imposition of orthodoxy curtailed much of the potential creativity of Marxist theory. Nevertheless, some philosophers contributed to serious Marxist thought and historical reassessments of Chinese philosophy. (Bunnin 2002, 9–10)

Among these "court ideologues", whose theories were entirely at the service of the ruling party and its ideological directions, we can mention Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978), who created a new periodic classification of the history of Chinese philosophy. His categories were based upon a simplified application of Marxist conceptual frames and provided new valuation criteria for a number of philosophers. His judgement of philosophers as either progressive or reactionary did much to shape the study of the history of philosophy in China. In the open exchanges earlier in the century, Guo's rejection of a static essence of Chinese society and thought "contributed to the development of historical understanding, but when imposed as orthodoxy, these views distorted and constricted philosophical study" (ibid., 10).

Most of Hou Wailu's later works 侯外盧 (1903–1978) are based upon similar, though much more complex and theoretically more profound periodizations, and, in terms of content, much better differentiated approaches, making him one of the most important modern historians of Chinese thought.

> From the 1930s on, he explored Chinese history in accordance with Marxist theories and methods. His research was an important pioneering work in the fields of social and ideal history. His *General History of Chinese Thought*, a work of many volumes which he co-authored with others, still remains the most complete work on the history of Chinese thought and had a profound influence on the academic world. Other works worthy of mention are: *On the Social History of Ancient China*, *A History of Ancient Chinese Theoretical Thought* and *A History of Modern Chinese Theoretical Thought*. He was also a chief editor of *The History of Modern Chinese Philosophy*, *An Outline of Chinese History of Thought* and *A History of the School of Principles of the Song and Ming Dynasties.*[3] (*Zhexue xiao cidian* 2003, 485)

Despite the great, at times almost unbearable, political and ideological pressures in the latter half of the 20th century a number of theorists were sufficiently subtle and creative (and sufficiently courageous) to plant the seeds of new theories that combined Marxist, Confucian, Daoist and even Buddhist approaches. While maintaining a Marxist perspective, they tried to reconstruct

3 從 30年代起, 他應用馬克思主義的理論和方法研究中國厲史, 在社會史, 思想史領域作了大量開闢性的研究工作. 和他人合著的多卷本 '中國思想通史', 是迄今中國最詳備的一部思想史著作, 在學術界影響很大. 著作另有 '中國古代社會史論', '中國古代思想學說史', '中國近世思想學說史' 等, 並主編 '中國近代哲學史', '中國思想史綱', '宋明理學史'.

Chinese philosophy and methodology. Through this combination of commitments, they were perhaps more culturally representative than many other Chinese philosophical figures from the 1940s through the 1990s (Cheng Chung-Ying 2002, 381). Zhang Dainian, to whose work and thought we will turn in the next sections of this paper, belongs to such brilliant scholars who have truly and distinctively shaped the modern image of Chinese philosophy and its methodology.

Zhang Dainian's Life and Work

Zhang Dainian was one of the most influential Chinese philosophers of the era that was very briefly described above. He thus belongs among the most important Chinese philosophers and historians of philosophy who left an enduring impact on the development of modern Sinophone thought. His research mainly focused on interpretations of Chinese intellectual history, on developing a new methodology of Chinese philosophy, and also on questions linked to intercultural philosophy and various encounters with Western thought. In his cultural philosophy, Zhang rejected total Westernization, but also disagreed with cultural nationalism. He strove for a synthesis of Chinese and Western culture and a mutual completion of different Chinese and Euro-American philosophical discourses.

Due to his revitalization of classical categories and the concepts of traditional Chinese philosophy he later—in the second half of the 20th century—also became famous outside China. One of the reasons for this international fame doubtless lies in his important contribution to the modernization of cross-cultural methodology. Among other issues, he established numerous innovative and extremely significant methodological approaches for researching ancient Chinese traditions of thought and created a number of specific tools for comparative philosophy and related cultural sciences.

> The continuation of the Chinese tradition was already apparent in the philosophical works of Jin Yuelin and Feng Youlan. With Zhang Dainian, this continuity finally became a conscious, self-aware methodology. It can be said that Zhang Dainian, as opposed to Jin or Feng, was not only vigilantly preserving the special characteristics of traditional Chinese thought but, more importantly, was also preserving and continuing traditional methodological principles ... In terms of its range, Zhang Dainian's continuation of the Chinese philosophical tradition goes far beyond Jin

> Yuelin's and even Feng Youlan's. His work represents a genuine synthesis of the continuations of traditional philosophy.[4] (Hu 2002, 230)

Zhang Dainian was born in the Xian 獻 district of Hebei 河北 province. Influenced by his older brother, he began studying philosophy at an early age. He attended Beiping University of Education (北平師範大學), graduating in 1933. A number of his early philosophical treatises attracted considerable attention and even before the establishment of the People's Republic he was recommended by Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 and Jin Yuelin 金岳霖 (Cheng Lian 2002, 235). He first taught Chinese philosophy at Qinghua University (清華大學) in Peking, where his brother was also a professor, and in 1952 he began teaching at Peking University (北京大學), where he worked as professor emeritus until his death in 2004. However, the turbulent periods of the Anti-rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution did not spare Zhang Dainian, and he was forbidden to lecture or publish for a number of years. Because of political and historical factors, his ideas received little attention until the last two decades of the 20th century. Although his major works were written before 1949, only a few were published. Thus, while his older contemporaries Feng Youlan and Jin Yuelin established their academic reputations before 1949, Zhang was not so fortunate (ibid. 244).

In China, Zhang Dainian is also well known for elaborating and completing the innovative philosophy developed by his brother, Zhang Shenfu 張申府 (1893–1986), which combined analytical, Marxist and ancient Chinese thought.

His major works were published in 1996 in eight volumes with the title *Collected Works of Zhang Dainian* (張岱年全集). His most important works include *An Outline of Chinese Philosophy* (中國哲學大綱), the modern methodological classic *Key Concepts and Categories in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (中國古典哲學概念範疇要論), which has also been published in English and German, the collections of essays *Culture and Philosophy* (文化與哲學) and *Searching for the Truth* (求真集), and the anthology *Zhang Dainian's Collected Academic Essays, selected by the Author* (張岱年學術 論著自選集).

During the first three decades of the 20th century, Zhang closely followed the ideological disputes between the radical proponents of a complete Westernization (全盤西化) and the conservatives who argued for a renewal of the ancient

4 在金岳霖與馮友蘭那裡, 對中國傳統哲學的繼承是 浸透在他們的哲學研究中的, 而到了張岱年, 終於將 這種對傳統哲學的繼承轉化為一種自覺的方法論. 可以說, 較之金, 馮二人, 張岱年不僅更注意對中國傳統哲學特征的 整體把握, 也更注重繼承傳統的方法論原則... 張岱年對中國傳統哲學的繼承, 就其廣度而言, 遠遠超出了 金岳霖, 也超過了馮友蘭, 顯示他對傳統哲學繼承的'綜合性'.

Chinese traditions (復古派). However, Zhang, who actively participated in these debates, began looking for a middle way which would combine the most appropriate aspects of both discourses.

> This view of culture has obtained popularity in China over the last two decades as the "synthesizing innovation theory of Chinese culture" ... An enhanced version was developed and expounded during the period of the cultural debate in the 1980s. For Zhang, the important question is not what to synthesize, but how to synthesize. (Cheng Lian 2002, 243)

Over the course of his intellectual and academic career, Zhang gradually developed his own specific vision of a method capable of achieving such a synthesis. As a young man, he was interested in certain Western philosophical issues, and was especially attracted to the analytical philosophy of Moore and Russell. But increasingly he devoted himself to exploring ways of integrating analytical methods into re-constructions and reinterpretations of classical Chinese philosophy. A systematic treatment of this approach, which would henceforth constitute the main thrust of his intellectual interests, can be found in his *Five Essays on Men and Nature* 天人五論, which appeared in 1940 and can also be found in his *Collected Works* (1996).

Methodology and Epistemology: From Chinese Tradition to Marx and Beyond

For Zhang, approaching Chinese philosophy from a Marxist point of view was extremely fruitful, for Marxism represented an important contribution to examining the relationship between being and consciousness (*Sein – Bewusstsein*).

> Although Chinese philosophy has its own specifics, its basic problem is still the problem of being and consciousness. This is a universal characteristic of all philosophies.[5] (Zhang 2003, 12)

In his cultural studies, he sought a synthesis of traditional Chinese and Western approaches, especially with regard to the relations between men and nature, the individual and society, and analytic and dialectical reasoning (Bunnin 2002, 11). He believed that future Chinese philosophy should be based upon the development

5 中國哲學雖然具有自己的特殊性, 但中國哲學的基本問題 也是思維與存在的問題. 這是不同民族的哲學所共有的普遍性.

and elaboration of positive elements from within its own tradition: "In the future, Chinese philosophy will surely be influenced by Western philosophy; but at the same time, it also has to be the product of its own ancient thought"[6] (Zhang 1982a, 587).

His vision of intercultural syntheses was based upon a renovation of the central approaches belonging to traditional Chinese philosophy:

> Contemporary Chinese philosophy should remain connected to and continue the Chinese philosophy of the past. The kind of philosophy we need should not be based only on the most recent results of Western currents but should look primarily to the authentic and original Chinese tradition.[7] (ibid. 1984, I, 219)

Of course, this did not imply denying the need to confront Western (and international) philosophy. European and Indian philosophy were especially valuable here, for they contained many elements that could not be found in the Chinese tradition. In Zhang's view, the exploration and application of these elements not only provided a precious tool for generating new systems of thought, but also helped the Chinese to gain a better understanding of their own tradition:

> In studying Chinese philosophy we must also possess at least an elementary knowledge of Western philosophy. Ancient Greek philosophy developed clear concepts and sound argumentation. Its system was quite well developed. This can help us to practise our reasoning. And modern bourgeois philosophy represents one of the most developed stages of world philosophy. German classical philosophy, which is part of this tradition, also provides one of the ideal foundations of Marxism. Thus, it is even more worthy of being understood ... In general, the works of ancient Chinese philosophy did not establish such a formal system. Their philosophical positions were usually expressed hermetically and between the lines. Therefore, its profound meaning is difficult to understand. But if we first gain some knowledge in Western philosophy, and then try to explore Chinese philosophy anew, we will discover its genuine profundity. Only by comparing these works with Western philosophy, we will be able to discern the real value of dialectic logic

6 將來的中國哲學, 固然必是西洋哲學影響下的產物, 而亦當是中國舊哲學之一種產物.

7 今日中國的新哲學, 必與過去中國哲學有相當的繼承關係, 我們所需要的新哲學, 不只是從西洋的最新潮流發出的, 更須是從中國本來的傳統中生出.

> in Laozi or Yizhuan, or the real significance of Mo Di's and Xunzi's logical theories.[8] (ibid. 2000, 2)

Zhang underscored the error of using incompatible methods, which try to explore and evaluate China's history through the perspective of Western concepts and categories: "Different philosophical theories apply different concepts and categories. Concepts and categories applied by philosophical theories which arose from different cultures (nations), are even more divergent"[9] (Zhang 2003, 118).

According to Zhang, Chinese philosophy differed fundamentally from European or Indian philosophy; systematizing it, therefore, meant first understanding its basic characteristics, for if we tried to apply European or Indian paradigms, the subtle essence of Chinese philosophy would necessarily elude our comprehension (ibid. 1982a, 5). In his historical research he thus tried to develop a specific system which would inherently correspond to Chinese philosophy. To this end, he made an exhaustive analysis of semantic contexts and formal functions in order to establish a framework for traditional categories that avoided the limits of (often misleading) purely chronological categorizations.

> In 1935–36 he explored conceptual categories and the multi-layered system of Chinese philosophy, and integrated it into his book *An Outline of Chinese Philosophy*, which represents the first modern systematization of Chinese philosophical categories.[10] (*Zhexue da cidian* 2003, 1911)

His system followed a strict differentiation between the notions of categories and concepts which, as he pointed out, had already been developed by classical Chinese philosophy in inquiries into the relation between names and actualities. This approach placed him in disagreement with most modern students of traditional Chinese logic, who generally considered distinctions of "names" (*ming* 名), as

8 學習中國哲學史, 還要具備西方哲學史的基本知識. 古代希臘的哲學思想, 概念比較明確, 論證比較詳密, 系統比較完整, 對於進行思想訓練有較大的幫助. 而近代西方資產階級的哲學, 是世界哲學發展的較高階段, 其中德國古典哲學更是馬克思主義的來源之一, 更有理解的必要... 中國古代哲學著作大都沒有形式上的系統, 很多哲學觀點是用’厄言’,‘雋語’表達出來的, 其所包涵的深刻含義不易理解. 受過西方哲學的初步訓練, 再來鑽研中國哲學著作, 才能發現其中的精旨奧義. 例如 ‘老子’,‘易傳’的辯證法,‘墨經’‘荀子’的理解學說, 拿來西方思想對照, 才顯出其中的精精滲意義.

9 不同的哲學理論包涵不同的概念, 範疇. 不同的民族的哲學理論, 更是具有不同的概念, 範疇.

10 1935–1936 他研究中國哲學的概念範疇和層次體系, 著成 ‘中國哲學大綱’, 為中國近代第一本系統論述中國哲學範疇的專著.

applied by Moist, Nomenalist and other logical traditions, as differentiations between concepts and categories:

> "Concept" (*gainian*) and "category" (*fanchou*) are translated notions. Ancient China developed the so-called "name" (*ming*). This word had a dual meaning: terms, and concepts. In the "Mo Jing" it was written: "Terms (*ming*) can be divided into complete and particular (*partial*)". Here, both kinds of terms represent concepts. Xunzi's distinction between "Great universal names" (which referred to every thing or being) and "Great particular names" (which referred to particular species) in his essay on "Correct names" was also dealing with concepts in both cases.[11] (Zhang 2003, 118)

Thus, Zhang Dainian saw concepts as a way of naming concrete objects and phenomena. Naming could embrace wider, more general entities, as well as their specific or partial features, but in each case they always referred to concrete existing things. These distinctions were therefore always of an exclusively quantitative nature. Hence, the two meanings implied by the ancient Chinese term *ming* 名 did not represent any differentiation between concepts and categories. For Zhang, the latter notion represented only a formal, arbitrary tool for decomposing actuality. In the ancient Chinese tradition, it could be found, for example, in the work of the philosopher Han Yu 韓愈:

> In his work *The Origin of the Way (The Origin of Dao)*, Han Yu developed a theory of categories "*xuwei*" and concepts "*dingming*". In this work he wrote: "Humanity and justice are concepts, while Dao and virtue are categories". A so-called category is an empty shelf, which can be filled by various contents. Confucians, Daoists and Buddhist all spoke about Dao, but for each of these currents, Dao meant something different; therefore, this term refers to a category (*xuwei*). On the other hand, the terms humanity (*ren*) and justice (*yi*) do have precise, fixed, inherent meanings. While Confucians professed humanity and justice, Daoists opposed them. They did not advocate any other form of humanity or justice. Hence, the terms humanity and justice are concepts (*dingming*). The meaning of Han Yu's term "*xuwei*" is very close to the Western term "category".[12] (ibid.)

11 '概念' 和 '範疇' 都是翻譯名詞. 中國古代有所謂 '名'. '名' 有兩層意義, 一指名詞, 一指概念. '墨經' 說: '名: 達, 類: 私'. '達名', '類名' 都是概念. 荀子 '正名' 篇所謂 '大共名' ('物') 和 '大別名' ('鳥獸') 也都是概念.

12 韓愈 '原道' 有虛位定名之說. '原道' 云: '仁與義為定名, 道與德為虛位'. 所謂虛位即是空格子, 可以添 上不同的內容. 儒家, 道家, 佛教都講道, 而其所謂道, 彼此意義不同, 所以稱為虛位. 至於仁義, 則有確定的內涵. 儒家宣揚仁義, 道家反對仁義, 不可能提出另外一種仁義, 所以仁義是定名. 韓愈所謂虛位, 比較接近於近代所謂範疇.

He also tried to prove this difference based on the etymological meaning of the Chinese translation of the western term "category":

> The expression category (*fanchou*) is a foreign word. It is a compound of two words taken from the essay "The Great Plan" from the book *Shang Shu*. This essay is divided into "nine sections (*chou*) of the universal plan (*fan*). Here, the word '*fan*' means a principle, and the word '*chou*' means 'kind'. The compound word '*fanchou*' means principal kinds (or the principles of sorting). The use of this compound word as a translation of the Western term 'category' seems quite appropriate."[13] (ibid., 118–19)

Zhang stressed the importance of understanding essential and culturally determined specifics of categories and concepts. Exploring the history of thought without an analytical comprehension of these methodological foundations could easily result in false interpretations. This was especially important when researching traditional Chinese thought, an area in which many of his contemporaries critically applied Western methodological premises:

> When researching the history of Chinese philosophy, we have to know and understand the original meanings of Chinese philosophical categories and concepts. Only on this basis will we be able to properly perceive (i.e. in a relative sense) the ideas of individual philosophers. We must also know the processes of the modification of these categories and concepts. Only in this way will it be possible to gain a deeper knowledge of the developmental processes of Chinese philosophy.[14] (ibid., 130)

From Marxist Philosophy to Marxist Ideology

However, due to objective circumstances which prevailed in his country after the establishment of the PRC, the understanding of these processes always implied the ideological valuation of particular currents and their representatives. Until the mid-1990s, such valuations had to be based on the opposition between materialism and idealism. In this respect, Zhang Dainian was no exception; just like most

13 範疇是譯名, 而範疇二字源於 '尚書' 的 '洪范' 篇, 所謂 '洪范九疇'. 范者原則, 疇者類別. 範疇即是事物的基本類別. 用範疇二字翻譯西方 '楷特格里', 看來還是適切的.

14 我們研究中國哲學史, 必須了結中國哲學的概念, 範疇的本來意義, 才能對於思想家的哲學學說有比較正確的理解. 同時, 必須了結其概念, 範疇的演變過程, 才能對於中國哲學思想的發展過程有比較深刻的認識.

other scholars of the time, he had to adapt to the prevailing guidelines of creating "proper" theory.

> The struggle between the defenders of materialism and idealism is fundamental and most important. The history of the human processes of comprehension is intricate and complex, but at its heart, this process is one of the triumphs of truth over error. Basically, materialism is the current which explains the world as it is. Therefore, this direction is the proper one. Idealism, on the contrary, drowns in illusory escapes from reality; it deals with fragmentary treatises on insignificant matters. Therefore, this current is false. We cannot avoid this great issue of the difference between right and wrong.[15] (ibid., 117)

The second important criteria for distinguishing between "good" and "bad" philosophers was, in keeping with the Marxist theory of class struggle, class affiliation and, consequently, the moral-political integrity of a specific philosopher's thought.

> We also have to accurately determine which class of that society was supported by the opinions of a given philosopher, we have to discover to which class interests a philosopher's theory was serving and to which class his theory was useful. This is the most important method for evaluating the class essence of any thought or teaching.[16] (ibid., 34)

The "consistency" of Zhang's analyses in his historical work can be seen from the fact that all "idealistic" philosophers are introduced as potential explorers, whereas proponents of the "materialist" worldview are usually seen as possessing social awareness and as potential revolutionaries.

> Li Zhi, for instance, criticized the Mencian stream of Confucianism, while still acknowledging the importance of Confucius himself. He criticized false feudal morals and strove for equality between men and women, and showed compassion for the suffering peasants and merchants, but opposed peasant uprisings. Hence, it is obvious that his thought to a

15 唯物主義與唯心主義兩個派別的對立鬥爭是根本的, 是最重要的. 人類認識史的內容複雜錯綜, 但總的說來, 是真理戰勝謬誤的厲史. 從基本觀點來說, 唯物主義按照世界的本來樣子來理解世界, 方向是正確的; 而唯心主義耽溺於製造脫離實際的幻想, 從事於支離煩瑣詭辯, 方向是錯誤的. 這個大是大非的問題不能迴避.

16 其次, 要全面考察一個思想家的主張符合當時的哪一個階級, 一個思想家的理論要求同當時哪一個階級的實際要求相符合, 一個思想家的理論對於哪一個階層有利. 這是確定一種思想學說的階級實質最重要的方法.

> certain extent corresponded to the needs of the bourgeois class. The fact that he was not able to create an independent, authentic and coherent philosophical system of his own indicates the weakness of the bourgeois social class at that time. Let us also look at the class background of Wang Fuzhi, whom some people also believe to be a representative of the bourgeois class. Wang advocated the feudal system. He passionately opposed landlords and their tyrannical usurpation of land. He showed pity for the suffering of the people, but opposed peasant uprisings. We can therefore conclude that he represented the interests of the lowest class of proprietors.[17] (ibid., 35)

Zhang's main argument for the correctness of the materialistic worldview was based upon a materialistic worldview itself, an irony which was typical of the China of that time. He explained this in the following way:

> Why do we say that materialism is theoretically more valuable? Above all, because it is closely connected with the natural sciences. Natural sciences are based on materialism and therefore represent the chief support for philosophical developments. Hence, materialism is the force which brings about progress in philosophy.[18] (ibid., 114)

In his historical studies Zhang, being an orthodox Marxist, concentrated upon the exploration and exposition of "materialistic" traditions in ancient Chinese thought, the interpretations of traditional dialectical methods and on different aspects of humanism and Confucian social ethics. In the 1990s, however, Zhang was a firm supporter of the campaign for the liberation of thought (*sixiang jiefang* 思想解放) and a severe critic of the exaggerated politicization of theory:

> In recent years, we witnessed unhealthy tendencies, namely tendencies of calculation. Articles were written in accordance with the prevailing current. The interests of the ruling authorities were more important than

17 又如李贄, 他一方面批判孔孟之道, 另一方面又給孔子一定的地位; 他批判封建禮教, 主張男女平等, 同情商人和農民的痛苦, 又反對農民起義, 可以看出, 他的思想在一定程度上反映了市民階層的要求. 但在哲學上, 他未能提出完整的哲學體系, 這又表明了當時市民階層的軟弱性. 再如王夫之哲學的階級性問題, 也有人認為他是代表市民階層的. 我們看看他對當時社會各階級的態度, 他維護封建制度和封建秩序; 猛烈反對豪強大地主兼併土地; 同情人民的痛苦, 但反對農民起義, 可見, 王夫之還是代表地主階級中下層的利益.

18 為什麼我們要肯定唯物主義有較高的理論價值呢? 主要是因為唯物主義是與自然科學密切聯系的, 自然科學建立在唯物主義的基礎上, 而自然科學的進步又是哲學發展的憑借, 所以唯物主義是引導哲學思想前進的主要力量.

> the actual situation. If they declared that something was right or wrong, it had to be accepted. This attitude is not an academic one and articles, written in this spirit, cannot be regarded as scholarly either. Now we have to eliminate these unhealthy tendencies.[19] (Zhang 2003, 134)

Later, in a private conversation with Edmund Ryden, the English translator of his work *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy,* Zhang admitted that he was forced to apply "Marxist jargon" during periods of intense political pressure, and he permitted Ryden to omit from his translation those portions of his book which were included only as a tribute to the then prevailing ideology (Ryden 2002, XV).

Foundations of "Neo-Materialist" Thought and Dialectics of Complementarity

Although Zhang's theories were based upon a materialist worldview, he still stressed that ideas cannot be reduced to the category of matter (Bunnin 2002, 10), and tried to apply the traditional binary categorical pair of "roots or basis" (*ben* 本) and "completion or (achieved) perfection" (*zhi* 至) as a dialectical basis for the unification of (primary) matter and (secondary) idea. Zhang revised Marx's dialectical materialism in accordance with the Neo-Confucian modification of the classical Chinese model of correlative relations. Although he still saw matter and idea (or economic base and ideal superstructure) as parts of a strictly hierarchical structure, in this context they were mutually dependent and complementary. Both revisions produced similar results, though tending in opposite directions. While the Neo-Confucian revision of the classic correlative dialectics, in its original construction of egalitarian correlativity, introduced the principle of the (unequal) valuation of both poles, Zhang's revision of the Marxist dialectic, in its primary hierarchically structured construct based upon an absolute contradiction (discrepancy and mutual exclusion) between both poles, introduced a principle of relativity and mutually complementary interaction. In this model, which to some extent was both Neo-Confucian and Maoist, the elementary poles of the dialectical process were no longer seen as absolutely contradictory, but merely as parts of a contradiction, based upon mutual interdependence. In contrast to the classical concept of ancient China, which already appeared in the oldest "proto-philosophical"

19 過去若干年中, 有一種不良的風向, 即窺測風向, 看風向寫文章, 不管真實情況如何, 專門看權威者的意向, 完全以某一權威的是非為是非. 這種研究學問的態度, 不是科學的態度; 這樣寫出的文章, 不可能是具有科學性的文章. 我們現在要糾正這種不正之風.

theories of *yin* and *yang* 陰陽, and which had remained unchanged in its basic structure until the Song 宋 dynasty, this renewed type of correlativity was no longer seen only as an interaction between two parts (or situations) of the same entity, which because of the all-embracing relativity of all that exists, manifested itself in a bipolar opposition; in this new framework it became a relation, based upon a hierarchically valued differentiation of both poles (Zhang 2003, 23–24). While this new construct destroyed the original balance of the bipolar relation, it also made possible a dynamic development of both poles, which grew out of the inherent tension of this new imbalance. Thus, for Zhang, the economic base still represented the "basis" (*ben* 本), without which the ideal superstructure could not exist; but without the superstructure, the basis could not manifest itself in its "wholeness" (*zhi* 至), which represents the only relevant reality (ibid. 1982b, 9).

For reasons which can be easily understood (the possibility of a "higher" valuation of ancient Chinese philosophy from the viewpoint of Marxist conceptual patterns), Zhang argued that traditional Chinese theories, which are based upon the principle of complementarity, represented a kind of dialectic. He saw this construct as a form of an ideational pattern which had to be distinguished from the traditional European structure based on static, formalized concepts of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, but which were still defined by interaction between two opposite poles. Therefore, according to Zhang, the principle of complementarity also represented a form of dialectical thought.

> Dialectic thought in Chinese philosophy arose from observing nature and men. (Ancient Chinese) Philosophers claimed that these necessary principles defined reality, while Hegel believed that they represented a necessary form for understanding ideas. We have formulated arguments for applying the term dialectical method to the aforesaid theories of Chinese philosophy, just as we can apply the term dialectical method to certain ideas of Heraclitus or Spinosa.[20] (Zhang 1984, I, 139)

In our view (which is based on different assumptions), defining the traditional principle of complementarity in this way is admissible, especially if we consider the etymology of the word dialectic. As with the concepts of philosophy or logic, the concept of dialectic, in different cultures and within divergent linguistic structures, has been expressed differently and can appear in diverse structural

20 中國哲學中的辯證法思想, 主要是對自然及人事的觀察. 哲學家們肯定事物有必然的規律, 而不是像黑格爾那樣, 認為這是 理解觀念的必然方式. 我們有理由把以上所述的這 些理論稱為中 國哲學中的辯證法, 正如我們有理由把西方 赫拉克利特斯 辟諾 薩的許多思想稱為辯證法一樣.

patterns which are mainly defined by the language itself. As demonstrated at the outset of this study, if the naming of certain theoretical discourses is based solely upon Western categorical patterns, then traditional Chinese philosophy cannot be considered as philosophy at all. The same holds true for logic, dialectic or epistemology. However, if we accept the premise that these concepts assume different structural forms in different cultures, then the ancient Chinese theories of the principle of complementarity can also be considered as belonging to the discourse of dialectical thought.

Zhang Dainian also found a categorical correspondence to the Western concept of matter in traditional Chinese thought, which despite its dialectical union with the idea, in his view indubitably represented a primary defining pole of the aforesaid binary pair. As with the majority of other (much earlier) Chinese advocates of materialism, Zhang saw a determinant of matter in the ancient (and much disputed) notion *qi* 氣 (substantiality, vitality). He supported his assertion by citing specific interpretations of Laozi's 老子, Zhuangzi's 莊子 and Xunzi's 荀子 philosophies, which are analysed, however, for the most part without taking into account their full contextual connotations:

> *Qi* is a thing that constructs everything that exists ... *Qi* itself has no life, and no consciousness, but it is their basis. It can be said that *qi* is the concept of matter within Chinese philosophy ... In short, the so-called *qi* in Chinese philosophy is a lifeless objective substance without awareness that represents a foundation of life and consciousness.[21] (Zhang 1984, 123–24)

The supposition of the existence of a clear concept of substantiality (matter) in traditional Chinese philosophy would characterize all of Zhang's efforts to reassess his own tradition of thought. Although insufficiently grounded in terms of academic discourse, it still satisfied the demands for a popularised sinization of Marxism, which was dictated by the specific circumstances in China during the latter half of the 20th century. In this respect, Zhang's research was an adequate response to the obligations he had to meet if he wished to survive (in an intellectual sense) and continue to work and develop.

His focus upon "materialistic" streams that could be found in the framework of the historical development of Chinese philosophy, also led Zhang to analyse one of the basic differences between Chinese and European philosophy, or their different approaches to the problem of the relation between noumenon and phenomena.

21 氣就是構成萬物的東西... 氣是無生, 無知, 而是生與知地基礎. 我們可以說, 氣是中國哲學中的物質概念... 總之, 中國古代哲學中所謂氣是無生命無意識而為生命和意識的基礎的客觀實體.

While Western philosophy proceeded from the presupposition of a strict division between the concepts of substance and appearances, as Zhang pointed out, this distinction was completely alien to traditional Chinese thought:

> Although materialism is not an orthodox Chinese current, we can still find some basic tendencies in Chinese philosophy which are compatible with it. The unity of appearances and reality is a basic cosmological tendency in Chinese philosophy. Appearances are identical with reality and *vice versa*. The concept of a reality situated somewhere beyond appearances is completely alien to Chinese philosophy.[22] (Zhang 1984, I, 231)

The Chinese translation of the European term substance with the old Chinese expression *benti* 本體 was thus mistaken and could lead to profound misunderstandings in the field of ontological research. According to Zhang, the term *bengen* 本根 was a much more appropriate translation of the notion of substance, though even here he cautioned against simplified equivalents. In his view, the most influential currents of the European ideal tradition saw the relation between substance and being as primarily a relation between actual and non-actual (實在與非實在), while Chinese tradition treated this relation as one between substance and non-substance (根本與非根本) (ibid. 2003, 231). He was thereby relying once again (though only implicitly) upon the ancient Chinese principle of immanent transcendence. In Chinese tradition "the relation between substance and actuality is not a relation between superficial appearances and reality which lies beyond them, but a relation between source and stream, between roots and branches"[23] (Hu 2002, 236).

Conclusion

Zhang Dainian's most significant contribution to modern Chinese philosophy is to be found in his attempts to synthesize Chinese and Western traditions of thought, and therefore in the field of intercultural methodology. His "*theory of creative synthesis* 綜合創新論" differs from most of his predecessors and contemporaries in terms of its specific content, but most especially in its methodologies. His search for the most reasonable interactions between different discourses was much more complex and subtle than first appears. Zhang's aim was not that of

22 唯物論雖不是中國的正統思想, 但中國哲學有一些根本傾向, 頗合於唯物論. 在宇宙論,中國哲學之基本傾向是不將現象與實在分為二事, 現象即實在,實在即現象. 在現象背后之實在的觀念, 在中國哲學中是沒有的.

23 根本與事物的關係不是背后實在與前面現象之關係, 而是源流根枝之關係.

finding a balance between the conservative (復古派) and progressive (全盤西化派) currents, for he realised that both discourses proceeded from flawed premises.

At the same time, intercultural synthesis for him was something more than a conglomerate of discrete, mutually unrelated contents or methods, which could (in a scientific or moral sense) serve as suitable tools for constructing a fusion of intercultural discourses. While his methodological studies are not always fully realized, one senses the genuine search for an innovative integration of both cultural traditions which could meet the demands of a global world, and which were based upon the principle of equality. For Zhang, a cultural project is an everlasting endeavour that constantly assimilates new truths. His philosophy displays a passion for truth and morality, a capacity to incorporate a broad scope of human values, and an attachment to the needs and problems of his era (Cheng Lian 2002, 234–44). In this sense, we cannot but acknowledge the great significance of his theories for the modernization of Chinese philosophy.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: TRANSFORMATIONS IN CHINA'S INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AT THE THRESHOLD OF MODERNITY

Foreign Ideals, Indistinct Hopes, and Intimate Passions

Swiss Enchantment: Modern Chinese Intellectuals and a Federal Utopia

*Federico BRUSADELLI**

Abstract

A vast and hyper-centralized Asian empire built on the premise of an alleged cultural homogeneity. A small, federalist Alpine state sustained by the ideal of coexistence of different languages and religions. The differences between China and Switzerland could not be wider, and it is therefore understandable that the Swiss confederacy has been fascinating Chinese intellectuals in both the modern and contemporary era. In the late Qing and early Republican period, Switzerland was mentioned by prominent figures like Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, who praised its democracy, and in the 1920s the Swiss political system became a source of inspiration for "provincial patriots" in Hunan or for Chinese federalists such as Chen Jiongming. The present paper intends to survey these political encounters and perceptions, focusing on the transformation of the Swiss institutional model and historical experience into a "political concept", and on the reasons for its final rejection as an unrealistic utopia unsuited for China.

Keywords: Chinese federalism, utopia, China and Switzerland, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Chen Jiongming.

Navdušenje nad Švico: sodobni kitajski intelektualci in federalistična utopija

Izvleček

Ogromno in močno centralizirano azijsko cesarstvo je zgrajeno na predpostavki domnevne kulturne homogenosti, majhna, federalistična alpska država pa vztraja pri idealu sožitja različnih jezikov in religij. Razlike med Kitajsko in Švico ne bi mogle biti večje, zato je razumljivo, da je švicarska konfederacija kitajske intelektualce navduševala tako v modernem kot sodobnem času. V poznem obdobju dinastije Qing in zgodnjem republikanskem obdobju so Švico omenjale ugledne osebnosti, kot sta bila Kang Youwei in Liang Qichao, ki so hvalile njeno demokracijo, v dvajsetih letih pa je švicarski politični sistem postal vir navdiha za »provincialne domoljube« v Hunanu in kitajske federaliste, kot je Chen Jiongming. Pričujoči prispevek namerava raziskati ta politična soočanja in predstave s poudarkom na preoblikovanju tega švicarskega institucionalnega modela in zgodovinske izkušnje v »politični koncept« ter na razlogih za njegovo dokončno zavrnitev kot nerealistične utopije, neprimerne za Kitajsko.

* Federico BRUSADELLI, University of Naples "L'Orientale".
Emal address: fbrusadelli@unior.it

Ključne besede: kitajski federalizem, utopija, Kitajska in Švica, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Chen Jiongming

Introduction: Confucius in Switzerland

In 2010 the Chinese journal *Bijiaofa yanjiu* 比较法研究 (*Comparative Law*) published a paper entitled "Royal is not Necessarily Big: Common Values between China and the West through a Survey of Swiss Federalism (*Wang bubi da: cong Ruishi lianbangzhi taolun zhongxi gongtong de jiazhiguan* 王不必大: 从瑞士联邦制讨论中西共同的价值观)". Its author, Su Yigong 苏亦工 (1962–)—who two years earlier had been a guest at the University of Fribourg presenting a lecture on Swiss federalism "from the perspective of Confucianism"—argues that the institutional and political mechanism of the Alpine confederacy seems to reflect many of the Confucian prescriptions on "good government". More specifically, according to Su, the Swiss system is a rare embodiment of the "kingly way" (*wangdao* 王道) as opposed to the ruthless "autocratic way" (*badao* 霸道), or "way of the hegemon" (Su 2010). The latter, implying concentration of power in one man, with an extensive use of violence and constriction, was traditionally associated with the short-lived Qin dynasty, but often extended to define any tyrannical figure censored by the Confucian orthodox historiography.[1]

Mixing classical quotations—from the *Lunyu* 论语, the *Daxue* 大学, the *Mengzi* 孟子 (especially with regard to its well-known theory of "the people as the fundament" (民本 *minben*)), or from the Song scholar Zhang Jiucheng 張九成 (1092–1159)[2]—with descriptions of the Swiss institutional arrangement and of its practices, Su Yigong portrays the confederation as the almost utopian realization of a harmonious polity based on consensus and local self-government. He writes

1 As Sumner Twiss and Jonathan Chan observe, "given the misuse to which the system of lords-protector (*ba*) was put—that is, its devolution into aggressive hegemony relying on military force—both Mencius and Xunzi clearly think that a more legitimate and virtuous authority is needed to use properly such a powerful tool of statecraft" (Twiss and Chan 2012). However, under a careful observation the *Xunzi* seems to provide a more nuanced view on the issue, looking at the *badao* as a historical necessity (often leading to "decent" political experiences), rather than as a moral abomination. (See also Kim 2013, and Harris 2017)

2 Besides reflecting on the *minben* theory, Zhang Jiucheng also rearticulated the aforementioned relationship between *wangdao* and *badao* as a neatly binary opposition between good and bad governance.

> Switzerland is one of the few countries in the world that still make an extensive use of direct democracy. But where does the essence of its democracy reside? From a Confucian point of view, it is not in the fact that it is governed by many people, but in the fact that it does not need to dwell on a strong authority or on the force of violence in order to gain the trust of the people. (Su 2010, 123)

Such praise from a Confucian perspective echoes the Deweyan interpretation of democracy, by which the diffused practices of consensus building, embodied by "cultural" or "social" policies, are seen as the pathway to allow a broader political participation among the populace, more than the normative establishment of a specific set or rules and mechanisms.[3] No pressure from above is needed to convince the citizens to trust and take part into the administration, and no single (or personal) authority is entitled to make decisions for the entire community, thus allowing the public spirit to triumph over the selfish tendencies (and here, in his Swiss eulogy Su returns to another binary opposition inherited by the Confucian classics: the one between "common interest", *gong* 公, and "disruptive selfishness", *si* 私). The Swiss confederacy is presented as inspired by the "acceptance of differences" and the "division of power", and favouring the bottom-up participation of "self-governing political communities" to the federal government of the country (ibid., 125). In conclusion, promoting an "external neutrality" and an "internal federal democracy", Switzerland deserves to be defined as "closely resembling the Royal Way praised by the Sage Philosophers of the Chinese antiquity" (ibid., 132).

Su Yigong's approach might be considered as a curious, partially naive, somehow isolated exercise in comparative analysis, inspired more by the venerable Confucian tradition of "praise and blame" than by scientific objectivity. However, with his paper Su puts himself in continuity with a perhaps marginal—but nonetheless significant—tradition of Chinese idealized descriptions of the Swiss confederacy, which are the object of the present article and which will be examined in their "ideal" and "conceptual"—more than purely historical—entanglements and resonances.

Conceptualizing the West: Nations as Political Models

This analysis of some modern Chinese descriptions of the Swiss political system is based on two assumptions. First: the observation of foreign models (specifically

3 For an extensive analysis of how Dewey's views on democracy resonate with modern and contemporary Confucian elaborations, and of how they were imported in China, see Ames and Hall (1999).

Western, with the exception of Meiji Japan) was a central element in the intellectual and political discussions on how to save China and build a strong state that developed from the late Qing to the mid-20th century. As Peter Zarrow explains "Educated Chinese at the end of the nineteenth century, no matter how great their pride in their culture's general accomplishments, saw China as a loser, not a pacesetter, in the historical race". Consequently, "they were willing to forgo many long-accepted ideas about political order to build a modern nation-state, taking as models various examples of success: Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Russia and Japan" (Zarrow 2012, 20). Rather than looking *within* China in search of virtuous examples from *their past*, as the traditional Confucian understanding of history prescribed, they looked *outside* and *forward*, positioning China and the West along a linear vision of time and using Western institutional inspirations in order to catch up with the most advanced countries. In this process, "intellectual resources from the West and from China's past (were) cited, translated, appropriated or claimed in moments of perceived historical contingency so that something called *change* (might) be produced" (Liu 1995, 30). As the collapse of the traditional order, and the very real threat of a partitioning of China by foreign powers, grew in intensity, the knowledge of the "Occidental Other" became less a neutral process of knowledge transfer, than—as Theodor Huters points out in his study on the appropriation of the West in late Imperial China—a somehow forced exchange, charged with a sense of urgency and anxiety. For the Chinese intellectuals of the time, then, "the recourse to the West was at the same time mandatory and highly distasteful" (Huters 2005, 14). By this token, "the question of the position of Western knowledge became an important—if not the most important—leitmotif within late Qing thought, with overtones reaching throughout the twentieth century" (ibid., 45). Talking about the West was not an exclusive feature of the discourse promoted by the Westernized radicals, as Edward Fung calls them (Fung 2010, 27–58). Praising foreign models could mean looking at experiences as different as the enlightened authoritarianism of Peter the Great (as in the case of Kang Youwei), US Republicanism (as for Sun Yat-sen), at the German centralized state, or at the British constitutional monarchy. In some cases these foreign examples could also serve to reinforce conservative positions on the necessity to nurture and express a "Chinese essence", as European countries had presumably done in the past. Countries—or more precisely, the political system represented by those countries in that specific historical moment—became a pivotal part of the transfer of concepts between China and the outside world. Indeed—and this is the second assumption of the present paper—as this process was not limited to an objective geographical or anthropological description, but was entangled to political discourses, those countries became "political concepts" in themselves.

Therefore, they can be studied, in their "translation", "circulation" or "appropriation", through the methodological lens of conceptual history/*Begriffsgeschichte*—defined as the study of concepts

> seen as focal points of interpretations and understanding; as identifying regularities and differences in human discourse; as windows through which we can appreciate how comprehensions of the world are organized and brought to bear on action. (Steinmetz, Freeden and Fernández-Sebastián 2017, 1–2)

In this regard, "nation-concepts" can be observed as undergoing all the four processes defined by Reinhart Koselleck as pertaining to the *Sattelzeit*—the saddle-epoch in which a "jump to modernity" took place in 18th century Europe. They were "temporalized"—by virtue of a linear understanding of history; they were "politicized"—as part of a political discourse on how to reform China; they were subsequently "ideologizable", in other words they could be used in the construction of an ideology; they were "democratized"—as knowledge of the foreign countries became an essential part of a much broader debate than the pre-1850s discussions on the external world, which were limited to the elite.

When we look at the circulation of these concepts, we are also exploring two dimensions of "comparative political thought", following the guidelines by Michael Freeden and Andrew Vincent, namely "the self-understanding of the entity in question" (China, in this case), and "how the entity understands others" (Freeden and Vincent 2013, 12).

Within this framework, I will try to show that the "nation-concept" of Switzerland presented some interesting and unique features. More specifically, it was permeated by a utopian nuance from the beginning of its transfer into China, something which—as witnessed by Su Yigong's article—has survived until today.

Why was Switzerland-as-a-concept temporalized by being positioned at the end of history—if we intend Utopia as a premonition of the final stage of mankind's evolution, the *non plus ultra* of historical development? Why did it become a counter-concept to the traditional Chinese political order—if by "traditional" we intend the centralized, monarchical and authoritarian model that was blamed by the late Qing modernizers (as well as by the late Ming reformers)? And why was it presented to the public as an unreachable option for China?

I will argue that the answer to this confinement of the Swiss model to the realm of utopia is to be found not so much in the *democratic* nature of Switzerland (which also plays a role in the Chinese fascination with it, of course), but in its

de-centralized structure—both administratively and culturally—and in its *bottom-up* processes of political legitimation: in other words in its *radical federalism*.

The "Peach Blossom Spring" of the West

The idealization of the Swiss system—or its conceptualization as a utopian political order—was already explicitly discernible in the first description of the country circulating in modern China.

In 1849, at a moment in which the knowledge of the Western world was an almost virgin field of inquiry, and yet a matter of pressing urgence, Xu Jishe 徐继畬 (1795–1873) wrote the *Yinghuan zhilüe* 瀛环志略 (*A Short Account of the Maritime Circuit*), a text whose production and circulation overlaps with the more famous *Haiguo tuzhi* 海国图志 (*Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*) by Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857), which in its third edition, completed in 1852 and marking a pivotal moment in the Qing understanding of the external world,[4] contains passages identical to Xu's work.

In the fifth chapters of his atlas, Xu depicts the small Alpine country. There, in the author's personal remarks concluding the survey, Switzerland is described as the "Western land of happiness" (*Xitu zhi lejiao* 西土之乐郊), a land in which the "thought of liberty" has thrived, a spot "untouched by military invasions" and "admired by all the Western countries". The importance of local government is stressed as the historical peculiarity of the country: "At first Switzerland was divided into three parts, then in 13, and they all elect their local administration." "I would say that Switzerland is the Peach Blossom Spring of the West", Xu concludes (Xu 1849, *juan* 5).[5]

With this last observation, Xu presents a Western country as the realization of a popular Chinese fictional *topos*, introduced in the eponymous work by the poet Tao Yuanming 陶渊明 (365?–427) in the 5th century. In his short poem *Taohua yuan* 桃花源 (*The Peach Blossom Spring*), Tao had imagined a small and idyllic community undisturbed by the unification of the Qin Empire, in which a communal and pre-Imperial way of life had been preserved in the midst of a pristine natural environment. This narrative, reused and reshaped throughout the

4 To quote Peter Michell, in Wei's work "errors occurred, particularly in the confused description of Western religions, but still it was commendably accurate, illustrating a comprehensive inquisitiveness and detailed attention to facets of barbarian culture outside of mere curiosities and exoticisms meant for the reader's amusement" (Mitchell 1972, 192).

5 Wei Yuan will include Xu's chapter on Switzerland in the third edition of his famous Atlas, without altering a single word (the reference to the Peach Blossom Spring included).

following centuries, has often (but not unanimously) been credited as the first example of utopian literature in China (see Zhang 2002). Through Xu's literary comparison, Switzerland is thus put in connection with Tao's anti-authoritarian dream, and indirectly contrasted to the *badao* imposed on China by the First Emperor and later allegedly preserved across the dynasties. The Swiss political system—sketched by Xu in its basic features, through which its strong local and anti-centralist orientation are highlighted—is *de facto* praised as an anti-authoritarian (anti-Legalist, to frame it in the traditional philosophical debate of Imperial China) model of governance. At the same time, however, by comparing it to the non-historical community described in Tao's fictional poem, it is pushed to the borders of utopia. In other words, rather than being presented as a credible political model to be used—at least for inspiration, if not for full adoption—it is de-historicized, and treated as a fascinating but ultimately useless antipodean political structure coming from the "far West".

The perception of the Swiss model as exotic and useless (in political terms), becomes even clearer when looking at how, in the same text, Xu Jiyu introduces another federal country of 19th century Europe, Germany (Xu 1849, *juan* 4). In contrast to the utopian treatment reserved for Swiss federalism, the German example is conceptually adapted to the Chinese context by connecting it not to a fable-poem, but to a historical precedent: namely, the *fengjian* (封建) system. The latter, following Arif Dirlik's definition, indicated

> something akin to a ritual enfeoffment, or the establishment of a fief, that prevailed during the early Zhou dynasty, when the Zhou kings formally made grants of land and labor to their subordinates, creating a landed nobility with whom they shared the administration of the Zhou territories. (Dirlik 1996, 229)

As will be discussed later in this article, the association of a modern federal system with the Zhou model of shared governance—used here by Xu as a way to familiarize his audience with a foreign political structure—would ultimately strike a fatal blow to the aspirations of Chinese federal movements in the early 20th century.

"Turning Swiss": A Model for Independence

As the crisis of the Qing Empire accelerated towards its dramatic conclusion, references to Switzerland started appearing in texts charged with a clearer political urgency, when compared to the prevalently informative nature of Xu's and Wei Yuan's works.

In 1902, a few decades after the publication of Xu's accounts, Yang Yulin 杨毓麟 (1872–1911), a Hunanese patriot fighting for the independence of his province in the last years of the Manchu rule over China, would optimistically claim: "We will turn my Hunan into a Cuba, we will turn my Hunan into a Switzerland" (Yang in Platt 2007, 119). The pairing between Cuba and Switzerland is interesting: it might suggest an anti-colonial interpretation of two very different historical experiences, but the fact that this claim for independence was not directed towards foreign invaders, but rather against the Qing Court, underlines its autonomist component. Provincial independence was to those activists the only way towards a new China, free from Manchu domination but also free from an oppressive "centre" of internal domination.

A much more famous revolutionary from Hunan, Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893–1976), would also use Switzerland as a model for his project of provincial autonomy in 1920 (before turning into an admirer of Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝 and of his hyper-centralism, once the CCP was set to conquer power at the national level): "Some people regard Hunan as the Switzerland of the East. We can indeed look at Switzerland as a model for our ideal Hunan" (Mao in Platt 2007, 195).[6]

"Turning Swiss" might have been an unprecedented—and exotic—slogan for Hunan. Yet, a book with this title by Thomas Brady, published in 1985, shows how this had been a relatively popular political claim across 15th-century central Europe (a historical fact which, we would guess, was not common knowledge in 20th century Hunan).

At that time, in the decades preceding the Reformation, the Swiss confederacy was a powerful "political model for surrounding peoples" (especially in South Germany), a freedom-based model which appeared to "reproduce itself by example" (Brady 1985, 30). In that context, "turning Swiss" became a "revery" for the country's neighbours as a new concept of "liberty" seemed to threaten the Imperial order (ibid. 34).

> Liberty in the old sense, which began to fade during the seventeenth century, appeared in the heart of the feudal order and could, and did, become lordship's bitterest foe. It could mean a monastery's immunities, a city-state's autonomy, the clergy's freedom from lay jurisdiction, the provincial estates' rights to consent to taxes, or simply the rights of self-administration of a city or of a rural folk. Though radically egalitarian only by contrast with dominant social patterns, nowhere did liberty in this

6 Mao, "Declaration on the Occasion of the Founding of the Association for Promoting Reform in Hunan", again quoted in Platt (2007, 195).

> sense flourish more radically than in the Swiss Confederacy, and there nowhere more fully than in the Forest Cantons. What seems radical about this self-administration of ordinary people is the association of liberty with productive labor, a European idea that departed dramatically from Graeco-Roman culture's belief in the incompatibility of human labor with true humanity. The disruptive power of the idea of liberty lay therefore not so much in its formal definition as in its extension to the commons, those free and mostly free persons who were normally ruled by their social betters and who "are now allowed to have minds and spirits". (ibid., 6)

"They deprive the nobles against their will of their serfs" and "make the subjects disobedient" (ibid., 31), a Habsburg supporter lamented, commenting on the Swiss threat against the imperial system. Through the eyes of those whose authority was menaced by it, the Swiss model appeared as the negation of a naturally hierarchical political order. It is easy to imagine that the Imperial Confucian bureaucrats at Court, facing the demands for a larger degree of local autonomy or—even worse—some forms of communal liberty and "self-administration" raised by Yang Yulin and his fellows, would have shared the contempt of the Habsburg supporters, rather than the 21st-century admiring look of Su Yigong at the fulfilment of a Confucian "royal way". The emergence of small and autonomous (and democratic) polities might have realized a utopian condition in literature, but when applied to politics it would have presented a dystopic threat to the Confucian-legalist principle of a single and undisputable source of authority and legitimacy for the entire *tianxia* (天下)—a barbaric subversion of the necessary hierarchy that assigns the *junzi* 君子 (gentleman) and the *xiaoren* 小人 (common man) to their respective duties and positions.[7] Facing the crisis of the Qing, the idea of localism started to attract more interest, seen as all the more exciting in the radical political change that it would bring to a traditionally holistic conception of the polity. And again, Yang Yulin's coupling of Cuba and Switzerland in his pamphlet seems to suggest this conceptual focus on the issue of self-determination and rupture of an Imperial (or imperialistic) political order in the name of grassroots freedom.

As Luo Zhitian wrote in this context,

> Shortly after the Boxer disaster, Chinese scholars began to feel that the Qing government could not be relied upon to save the country and started engaging in a type of intellectual gymnastics that resulted in the notion that national salvation could only be achieved without the central

7 On the endurance of monarchic values in China, see Pines (2012).

> government, only through the fragmentary method of local self-rule (*difang zili* 地方自立). (Luo 2017, 324)

Back to Utopia: Kang Youwei in the "Garden of Europe"

As for the fortunes of the "Helvetic model" across Europe and America, in the centuries following the Reformation idealizing the political system of Switzerland became ever more common, especially among Republican thinkers or federalist theorists—from Rousseau (who defined the Swiss "among the happiest people in the world") to John Adams (who praised the canton of Neuchatel as having "the only constitution in which the citizens can truly be said in that happy condition of freedom and discipline, sovereignty and subordination") (see Maissen 2019). Xu Jiyu's description of the country, noted above, clearly carries an echo of that laudatory tradition. Two years after the appearance of Yang Yulin's pamphlet in Hunan, a prominent Chinese intellectual—who was fighting his political battle on the opposite camp, advocating the re-centralization and constitutionalization of the Manchu monarchy—was equally fascinated by Switzerland as such a "happy" place. In contrast to Yang, though, Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858–1927) had actually been to that small and diverse European country. His impressions became a short text among his collection of travel journals from Europe.

The following excerpts clearly show the picturesque (and again, almost unrealistically utopian) impression left in Kang's eyes by the Swiss confederacy in 1904.

> Switzerland is not a country; it is the garden of Europe. And it is not just a garden for Europe; in fact, it is an unsurpassed place of pleasure for the entire world.
>
> Family houses along the lakes are incredibly old and their gardens are surrounded by small fences; up and down on the mountains, you can see so many churches, but they are old and covered with white dust, many of them shabby and run-down. There are villages with a hundred families, and some three-storied houses are extremely worn-out; villagers are poor, but they collect firewood and carry it on their backs to embellish their homes.
>
> People living on the Swiss mountains are so poor, their homes so humble ... Even in the city of Luzern, the buildings along the main avenues are modest, houses are low, streets are narrow: being surrounded by mountain peaks, they have had no development, and their old traditions are still preserved.

> Walking in the capital you won't find shops: people are too poor to go shopping, and there is nothing worth seeing except for the Parliament, the University, the Museum, that are all nice and new.[8] (in Kang 2007, book 7) (author's translation)

Poor and happy, Switzerland appears as an almost idyllic context in which there is no need for authoritarianism or political coercion:

> Their political system is extremely egalitarian, every individual has the right to vote.
>
> All the political power emanates from the Parliament which convenes in the Swiss capital, they have no Imperial Palace and they have no president. As they have no president, instead of him they have a speaker.[9] (ibid.) (author's translation)

As noted earlier, differently from Yang and other "provincial patriots", Kang could not be counted among the supporters of federalism, of Republicanism (at least in his activity as a political activist for China) or provincial independence. On the contrary, his failed reform plan of 1898 for the transformation of the Qing into a constitutional monarchy might be considered as the last attempt at re-centralizing the ailing Manchu dynasty, a response to the increased provincial power from the Taiping War onwards, rather than a blueprint for de-centralization.[10]

Kang's fascination with Switzerland, then, reflects his utopian propensity, more than his concrete political plans. Such a propensity—built over his progressive interpretation of Confucianism and his linear view of history as moving from chaos and separation to order and unity—would be fully expressed in the *Datongshu* 大同书 (*Book of Great Concord*). In this text, allegedly completed in 1902, but deriving from a much longer reflection started in the 1880s—and fully revealed to the public only posthumously in 1935—Kang describes human history as a triumphal

8 瑞士非国也，欧洲之大公园也。非惟欧洲之大公园也，实全球之绝胜乐土也。沿湖人家楼屋甚古，园林皆有短垣，依山上下，亦多塔庙，然白灰尘旧，率多敝坏。有村舍百家，楼屋而三层敝坏尤甚，村人贫苦，但为渔樵，晒网负薪，无自修铈其屋。瑞士山居本甚贫，屋甚卑小，卢顺大市而街衢楼阁亦甚卑，屋层亦甚矮，道甚窄，殆以山间崎岖，无从展布，而也旧俗相沿。瑞士山居本甚贫，屋甚卑小，卢顺大市而街衢楼阁亦甚卑，屋层亦甚矮，道甚窄，殆以山间崎岖，无从展布，而也旧俗相沿。进京无商务，民贫物贱，亦一无可观，惟议院、大学、博物院，三者皆新稍可人耳。In the following decades, more Chinese intellectuals, journalists or officials would visit Switzerland and write their impressions. A collection (translated into German) is provided by Fröhlich and Gassmann (2000).

9 其政最平等，人人皆有选举权。瑞士京之议院，盖全瑞政权之所自出，以其别无王宫，亦无总统署。盖瑞士无总统，只有议长。

10 For an in-depth study of the 1898 reforms, see Karl and Zarrow (2002).

march from conflicts and suffering to an age of global stability. At the end of history, a one-world democratic and republican government, in which political offices are time-limited and elective, will rule over the entire planet, abolishing boundaries (social, economic, sexual, racial, linguistic, religious) and granting peace and welfare for every individual. At first sight, the political system imagined for the Age of Supreme Equality very much resembles a "globalization" of the Swiss direct democratic model. At the same time, however, Kang's one-world utopia does not seem to adopt the Swiss *federalist* structure (and inspiration). If we define federalism as underpinned by the principle of a "shared rule" (Kincaid 2011)—and, from a cultural point of view, as a system based on and conducive to the acceptance of linguistic, religious, ethnic pluralism—then the utopian world cultivated by Kang out of the classical concept of *Datong* (大同) does not seem to be inspired by such a necessity for the preservation of pluralism. On the contrary, the Great Concord is the universal expansion of a process of centralization—meaning central planning and redistribution of resources, and centralized institutions—from the national to the global level.[11] Kang thus offers yet another variation on the Swiss conceptual theme. Admired for its peace and frugality, the country is seen as something of a utopia for its democratic and republican system, which is openly praised (including the practice of a "collective leadership"); but its federalism—so central in the rhetoric of Hunan's independentists—is left out of the picture. The ultimate goal of history, according to Kang, is the highest possible degree of unity as a protection against conflict. If Switzerland recognizes linguistic and religious pluralism, in the world of *Datong* only one language will be spoken and religion will exhaust its function, as the hopes and aspirations of mankind will be fulfilled by the power of technology and pervasive socio-political planning. The need for a universal homogeneity, as marshalled by Kang, makes the Swiss garden an idyllic but politically fragile solution to the pressing questions of "modernity".

Liang Qichao and Chen Jiongming: Switzerland and the "Immaturity" of China

A few years after Kang's Swiss travelogue, his most famous pupil would cast a less picturesque and more substantially political look at the confederacy, considering Bern as a potential (although ultimately discarded) model for actual reform. In "Issues Concerning the Construction of a New China" (*Xin Zhongguo jianshe wenti* 新中国建设问题) written in 1911 during the tumultuous revolutionary

11 For an analysis of Kang's apparently ambiguous reflections on democracy and republicanism, focusing on his two-sided (utopian *vs*. statist) approach to political action, see Brusadelli (2017).

autumn, Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929) describes the institutional asset of the small country at the heart of Europe as part of a survey of the possible models for post-Imperial China:

> How about a political system with no head of state? This is possible without incurring in frauds and problems only in very small countries like Switzerland. The power of the Swiss central institutions can be extremely weak, and in cases of extremely important laws the National Assembly hands the power to vote to every citizen.
>
> This is a country that has been always neutral, with no foreign aggression, small and scarcely populated, with a perfected habit of self-governing, which therefore did not aim at a strong government. As for our country, if we do not get a strong and powerful central government, how could we even survive as a country?[12] (Liang 1999, vol. 8, 2434) (author's translation)

The key element in Liang's reflection—and in his subsequent considered rejection of the Swiss model—is, again, the acknowledgement of the necessity of having a strong central authority in China. Even for a convinced reformer like Liang, the Confucian-Legalist paradigm of a central power, hierarchically superior to any possible local sub-power, cannot be sacrificed on the altar of representative democracy. If modernization means building a stronger and more efficient state, the geographical, social, cultural and external conditions of China—in combination with the existential threat posed by the foreign powers—make it imperative to look at centralizing processes rather than at a radically federal solution. And if China needs a new and "modern" community of citizens, as Liang firmly believed, this requires a centralized nation to be constituted and nurtured, without dispersing energies on the local level, at least until those "new citizens" are mature enough to make decisions at a grassroots level without jeopardizing national unity. Japan or Germany, countries that interpreted local government not in terms of federalism—as a "shared rule"—but as a top-down "devolution" of power, are taken by Liang as better examples than the ultimately 'utopian' Swiss institutional architecture.

Although put aside by Liang, Switzerland unsurprisingly became the focus of attention as a potential source of inspiration for the (unsuccessful) Chinese federalist

12 不置首长之共和政体何如？此惟极小国若瑞士者，乃能行之而无弊。瑞士一切中央机关，权力皆甚微弱，稍重大之法案，国会辄不敢擅决，以付诸国民投票，不独执行机关为然也。彼为永世中立国，绝无外患，内之则地狭民寡，而自治之习甚完，无取夫有强大之政府也。我国今日，非得一极强有力之中央政府，何以为国？

movements that thrived during the following decade, partially following on the steps of the "local patriots" of the pre-1911 period.

After the provincial secessions of 1911/1912, and before the success of Jiang Jieshi's 蒋介石 (1887–1975) reunification in 1927, the adoption of a federalist institutional asset seemed to be a reasonable solution for post-Imperial China. One of the most complete and detailed plans for a federal China—and at the same time one of the last attempts at providing a political alternative to the centralism of the Guomindang (GMD)—was written during the completion of the Northern Expedition by the "intellectual warlord" Chen Jiongming 陈炯明 (1878–1933).

A key ally of Sun Yat-sen 孙中山 (1866–1925) in 1911, then governor of Guangdong, Chen opposed the GMD's idea of using the southern province's revenue to finance the Northern Expedition in 1923–1924. His defence of the local prerogatives of Guangzhou led him to a conflict with the father of the Republic that marked him as a traitor.[13] Sun's turn to the Soviet Union influenced his own political agenda: his federalist sympathy was buried under the Leninist organizational model of democratic centralism, thus fuelling the conflict with Chen.

After fleeing to Hong Kong, Chen would continue to advocate a federal solution to the division of China. In 1927, as the GMD was finally conquering the North, fulfilling Sun's dream of a newly reunified Republic under the control of a strong central administration, the exiled Chen published his own roadmap for a different kind of national reunification.

In his *Modest Proposal for the Unification of China* (*Zhongguo tongyi chuyi* 中国统一刍议) (1927), Chen wanted to prove that a convinced federalist could also be a "national patriot". He drafted a program that, at least in his opinion, would harmoniously blend a democratic approach to local legitimacy with the need for a strong state (and for a unified military, overall). It is not the work of a philosopher, but the reflection of a *xiucai* 秀才 "(talented official) of action"—the man that John Dewey described as "the most impressive of all the officials whom I have met in China" (Dewey in Chen 2000, 1).[14] Opening with a foreword by the prominent nationalist intellectual Zhang Binglin 章炳麟 (1869–1936), the text provides an analysis of the chaos in Chinese that claims it is caused by six elements: the absence of a constitution, the absence of a proper parliament, an unelected president, an unchecked government, a decentralized army, and dysfunctional (and non-democratic) political parties.

13 One example of the Communist narrative of Chen as a "traitor" can be found in Huang (2003). A rehabilitation of Chen's federalism, inviting a rediscovery of his "sincere democratic spirit", is attempted by Duan and Ni (2008).

14 In his book, Leslie Chen presents an accurate analysis of his father's political blueprint.

Chen's solution to the broken Chinese state is then articulated along the following lines: unifying the army; creating a political union, for permanent institutional stability (a significant move, by which he tries to conceptually disentangle "federalism" from the idea of division or fragmentation); putting power back into the people's hands, thus defeating the "two jackals from the same cave" (the Southern one-party policies of Jiang's GMD and the Northern military cliques, who were both preventing the emergence of a democratic China); and preserving the multi-ethnic nature of the traditional Empire in the new Chinese federation, as the first step to an Asian federation.

Chen's federal China should be based on three principles: the principle of self-government (*zizhizhuyi* 自治主义), thus fully legitimizing provincial institutions as "institutional actors"; the principle of self-sustainment (*zijizhuyi* 自给主义), as the foundation of a federal economy, through which a significant portion of local resources would be managed on a local level; and the principle of federation (*lianhezhuyi* 联合主义), the political core of the platform, which would provide the country with a set of shared institutions embodying the common identity of the Chinese people.

When elaborating this last point, Chen interestingly presents the possible models through which "federative processes" might be implemented.

Here, following Liang's method, Chen surveys some of the possible models China could look at. After examining presidentialism and the British cabinet-system—both unsuccessfully applied by Republican China, Chen says—he discusses the "committee system" (*weiyuanzhi* 委员制), which he ascribes to Switzerland:

> The committee system is in vogue now—it was even experimented with by members of the Party—and if the results were not noteworthy, this is not due to the system itself. Switzerland implements it with remarkable success: a small country with many capable individuals, in which the people have a rich political experience, members of the administration are satisfied with their duty and follow the directives of the legislative body, and there is an appeal system that amends the shortcomings of the legislative body; that is why the system is implemented with full benefits. Let's look at China's circumstances: would it be possible for us to rigorously adopt the Swiss system? It is not quite suitable, and it would need adjustments which are not to be discussed now.[15] (Chen 1927, 11) (author's translation)

15 委员制颇属时髦，且为党人所试验，虽其结果无何特色，不尽由制度本身。然瑞士行之所以成效卓越者，国小而多材，人民富于政治经验，行政部安于职守，俯听立法部议决之指挥，而又有创制复决制度，以救立法部之失，所以推行尽利，试问中国情势，欲严格采仿瑞制其可得乎。其为不尽适宜，须加损益，已不待言也。

Switzerland, once more, is examined, and almost uncritically praised, but ultimately discarded as an extremely "exotic" political model, unfit for China. However, it is not federalism itself that is really addressed here by Chen, but the shared type of political leadership exercised by the federal government. Even if not directly related to the issue of local self-administration (which, in contrast, plays an important role in Chen's plan), the Swiss institutional arrangement is again presented as characterized by the idea of a diffused political legitimacy—shared not just among different territories, but even among different individuals at the central level, or often distributed among the common citizens.

Although discarding the excessively "utopian" Swiss system, Chen's proposal moves on to describe a federal and democratic plan for China, much closer to the Jeffersonian model than to the Soviet (or Prussian) centralized model, cherished both by the Nationalists and the Communists after the mid-1920s. And yet Alexis de Tocqueville—whose praise for the American model as embodying the perfect balance between a central government responsible for the state's general safety, and a decentralized administration allowing the full participation of the people, is justly celebrated—would perhaps have ironically sided with the GMD, in his conviction that China "provides the most perfect model of a centralized government that exists in the universe" (Tocqueville in Thompson 1988, 192). In this cross-cultural and diachronic game, Chen Jiongming would have found some comfort in the observations handed down by another French intellectual, Evariste Huc (1813–1860), who praised instead the richness of China's "decentralized administration" as a noteworthy feature of the Empire (Thompson 1988, 191).

Conclusion: Utopia and Failure

Evariste Huc and Chen Jiongming's admiration for the local dimension of political power in China would ultimately prove to be delusional. Federalism in general—even in its less utopian forms, as in Chen's manifesto—missed the window of opportunity that had been opened from the Taiping rebellion (with the pendulum of power moving from the ailing Qing Court to the provincial governor) up to the early years of the Republic. Already in the mid-1920s, a decentralized China ceased to be considered a viable option, politically and conceptually.

The closure of this path is confirmed by the fate of the term *fengjian*: for centuries used by the opponents of centralist authoritarianism as the marker of a more decentralized and balanced political system, and often used by proponents of modern Chinese federalism to anchor their model in some historical precedent—as it was discussed earlier in this paper—it started being used by Marxist intellectuals

to translate the negative concept of "feudalism" (see Dirlik 1996). Consequently, an originally neutral, or even positive historical concept (associated by Confucianists with the golden age of the Zhou king and contrasted to the tyrannical centralization of the Qin), became irreversibly (and negatively) associated with pre-modern values: within the inescapable Marxist teleology, it was precisely "*fengjian*" (feudalism) that had been obstructing the linear and evolutionary progress of Chinese history for centuries.

With this conceptual shift from "decentralization" (as a potentially positive solution to many of the political problems plaguing China) to "feudalization" (as an irredeemably negative historical experience)—a shift facilitated by the traumatic experience of the *actual* political and territorial division of China in the warlord era—federalism could not be seen as entailing modernity anymore. On the contrary, it became synonymous to the preservation of those traditional "local loyalties" that had repeatedly undermined national unity and left China vulnerable to external attacks. In the end, as Prasenjit Duara notes, "the interplay of power politics and authoritative language enabled the hegemonic, centralizing nationalist narrative to destroy and ideologically bury the federalist alternative early in the history of modern China" (Duara 1995, 177–78).

Back to Switzerland, then, for our conclusion. If countries can serve as concepts, and can be observed and interpreted as semantic coalescences in which—to follow, again, Reinhart Koselleck—historical experiences are accumulated and formulated and then projected on time, then the small Alpine country, temporalized and transformed into a "utopian" concept, appears as a counter-concept (*Gegenbegriffe*) to "traditional China" intended negatively as a hyper-centralized polity.[16] As Poland was used in China across the 19th and 20th centuries as a warning on the danger of the "death of the country" (see Wagner 2017), so Switzerland emerged as an example of the utopian experience of an anti-monarchic and anti-centralist polity. The fate of this political concept—in its different declensions, as we have briefly sketched above—ultimately reflects the problem for Chinese intellectuals or activists in conceptualizing federalism, or more generally the lack of a precise political/cultural centre. The *Erfahrungsraum* ("space of experience") of Switzerland was therefore confined to a utopian dimension: from a Chinese perspective, it represented a fascinating program, unfortunately impossible to some, or potentially dangerous to others. This last connection—between the lack of a clear and unquestioned source of political/cultural authority and the implosion of the country—became especially prevalent after the trauma of division and

16 See Koselleck 1979, 349–75. A recent example of conceptual studies focusing on geographical concepts is provided by Mishkova and Trencsényi (2017).

internal violence experienced during the warlord era, thus strengthening the ideological links among feudalism, localism and separatism. Breaking the totem of monarchism and the probably stronger myth of centralism represented a fracture that required some kind of "utopian projection" to be accepted. The "exoticization" of Switzerland and the political (and conceptual) failure of federalism in China thus seem to be connected: elaborating a shared view of sovereignty, substituting the Imperial model of *tianxia*, by which authority necessarily flows from one undisputed source at the top of the system, and substituting it with a system that acknowledges polycentrism and institutionalizes the practice of self-government, was a difficult—finally impossible—task. A conceptual difficulty, as noted, both originating from and sustained by the dire *historical* circumstances of political fragmentation in the "dynastic cycle". "In a world of disaggregated states", writes Anne-Marie Slaughter, "the sovereignty that has traditionally attached to unitary states should arguably also be disaggregated. Taking this step, however, requires a different conception of the very nature of sovereignty" (Slaughter 2004, 186). In those countries that successfully embraced it, federalism emerged in parallel to the acceptance of the idea of "fragmenting" the political order of the Empire, shifting the ideal of Unity from the Kingdom of Men to the separated religious dimension of the Kingdom of God. With no way out to a spiritual level separate from Nature (and from Politics), the Chinese concept of Unity/*tianxia* had to be formulated as pertaining to *this world.* As Yuri Pines points out, monarchic centralism served as one of the ideological pillars of the "everlasting empire", whose legacy remains robust (Pines 2012). As the cult of centralism seems to be daily reaffirmed in Xi Jinping's China, Su Yigong's paper—with his praise for the Confucian (and anti-legalist) Swiss model—provides a contrast that, in its echoing of fascinations with federalism from an exotic Occident, appears as counter-historical and utopian as its predecessors.

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Modernization of Beauty in China: From the "Great Debate on Aesthetics" to the "Aesthetic Fever" and Beyond[1]

*Téa SERNELJ**

Abstract

The article explores the socio-political and historical development of the great debate on aesthetics and the aesthetic fever in China during the 20th century. It introduces the main figures of the aesthetic movement and their aesthetic theories. It introduces the period of appropriation of the aesthetic debates to Marxist ideology that prevailed in China after 1949 and lasted until the end of 1970s. The 1980s and 1990s represent a shift in the Chinese aesthetic debate which focused on the adoption of Western aesthetic concepts and paradigms in a more scientific way. The article tackles the problem of Chinese society on the verge of the millennium, and problematizes the consumerism of art and attitudes towards aesthetics in general.

Keywords: great debate on aesthetics in China, the aesthetic fever, the aesthetization of everyday life

Modernizacija lepote na Kitajskem: od »velike razprave o estetiki« do »estetske vročice« in naprej

Izvleček

Članek raziskuje družbeno-politični in zgodovinski razvoj velike razprave o estetiki in estetski vročici na Kitajskem v 20. stoletju. Predstavi glavne osebnosti estetskega gibanja in njihove estetske teorije. Obravnava obdobje prilagajanja estetskih razprav marksistični ideologiji, ki je na Kitajskem prevladovala po letu 1949 in trajala do konca sedemdesetih let. Osemdeseta in devetdeseta leta pomenijo premik v kitajski estetski razpravi, ki se je na znanstven način osredotočila na prevzemanje zahodnih estetskih konceptov in paradigem.

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* Téa SERNELJ, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.
Email address: tea.sernelj@ff.uni-lj.si

Članek se loteva problema kitajske družbe na prelomu tisočletja ter problematizira potrošništvo umetnosti in odnos do estetike nasploh.

Ključne besede: velika razprava o estetiki na Kitajskem, estetska vročica, estetizacija vsakdanjega življenja

Introduction

The development of aesthetic theory in China at the beginning of the 20th century was characterized by the multifaceted adoption of Western ideas and thought, with aesthetics playing an extremely important role as an academic discipline. On the one hand, aesthetic theory was an academic field free from political encumbrances; on the other, the philosophy of art, as part of aesthetics, provided a platform for a recognition and reassessment of China's long and rich cultural heritage. It is therefore by no means coincidental that in the last two decades of the 20th century, which were marked by economic, cultural and to a certain level also political liberalization, led to numerous heated debates about Chinese aesthetics.

In the 1980s, these discourses blossomed under the fashionable label "aesthetic fever", which represented a kind of ideological liberation movement that could also be called an enlightenment or renaissance in China (Li and Cauvel 2006, 23).

In order to better understand the socio-political context in which aesthetics emerged as an academic discipline, we will therefore first briefly present the principal stages of development that led to the Chinese "aesthetic fever" and point out its later implications.

The Birth of Aesthetics as an Academic Discipline

Chinese aesthetics as an academic discipline started to form at the beginning of the 20th century. While Confucianism (and traditionalism in general)—together with all the conservative ideologies it brought along—was completely rejected and discredited as a result of the May Fourth Movement,[2] many Chinese

2 I am referring here to the long period that exceeds the narrow time frame of mere demonstrations, i.e. to the so-called "May Fourth New Cultural Movement" (*wu si xin wenhua yundong* 五四新文化運動) which was sparked by these protests and took place between 1919 and 1923. Although many scholars claim that it was carried out under the banner of "total Westernization" (Pohl 2009, 95), this view should be somehow relativized, since, at the time, this movement showed some tendencies to preserve certain traditional concepts and values, as well as to create syntheses between traditional Chinese and Western thought.

intellectuals still perceived their culture as an essentially aesthetic one. This position was of utmost importance, especially considering the entire anti-traditional atmosphere that prevailed in China during the process of exposure to Western ideas and appropriation of Western knowledge (Pohl 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that aesthetics as the academic study of beauty[3] (*meixue* 美學) began to flourish at this time. Moreover, aesthetics represented the intellectual field in which scholars attempted to redefine the essence of Chinese culture and establish a new Chinese identity after the end of imperial China (Woei 1999).

In the process of adopting Western concepts, skills and knowledge, Chinese intellectuals were not only the passive and unreflective recipients, but also critically engaged with their own cultural tradition in the new socio-political context. In doing so, they were initially strongly influenced by the Western intellectual tradition (especially German idealism and Marxist materialism), but at the same time they were also influenced by numerous elements of traditional Chinese culture. While aesthetics as a "theoretical discipline" was imported from the West, many modern and contemporary academics attempted to create a synthesis with certain Western concepts on the one hand, and some key concepts founded in the course of Chinese aesthetic history on the other.

The assimilation of Western ideas led to the formation of various intellectual currents within Chinese aesthetics. They were determined on the basis of different views on whether beauty is subjective, objective, or both, or how to develop Chinese aesthetics as a discipline. In defining Chinese aesthetics, they either sought a synthesis with Western aesthetics or tried to find its unprecedented uniqueness. In discussing these problems, Chinese aestheticians referred to 18th- and 19th-century German philosophy as well as to the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist philosophical traditions. The pioneers of this early phase of the establishment of aesthetics in China were Wang Guowei 王國維 and Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培.

Wang Guowei's (1877–1927) concept of *jingjie* as an aesthetic state and aesthetic idea is a typical attempt to synthesize the Chinese tradition with Western ideas.

3 The term was introduced in China by Chinese students studying in Japan. Before World War II, Japan represented a mirror image of Europe to the Chinese. Many modern Chinese words are derived from the Japanese (and thus, actually European) system, such as philosophy, aesthetics, literature, art, etc. (Gao 2006a, 107). Li Zehou believes that the translation of aesthetics as *meixue* 美學 (lit.: the study of beauty) is not appropriate and accurate, since the Western term *aesthetics* derives from the Greek term referring to perception. Li Zehou thus suggests that *shenmeixue* 審美學 would be a far better and more suitable translation of the meaning, because it actually refers to the study of the process of recognizing and perceiving beauty (Li and Cauvel 2006, 19).

Wang interpreted this Chinese Buddhist concept of *jingjie* through Kant's "aesthetic idea" creating a new and very significant concept within a new and unique Chinese aesthetics.[4] The encounter with Western thought and new and incredibly interesting ideas led, *inter alia*, to the search for comparable concepts within the Chinese cultural tradition. Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), the dean of Beijing University during the May Fourth Movement, was the first to outline the idea of a cultural and aesthetic self-understanding of the Chinese. When studying in Germany, he became acquainted with Western philosophy, especially Kant. He recognized Westerners as a people who were decisively influenced by religion, and claimed that aesthetics, as a combination of rituals, art, beauty and ethics in China, was a practical "spiritual" equivalent to religion in the West (Pohl 2007, 425). In this context, he emphasized the importance of aesthetic education of Chinese youth. Such education was supposed to replace religious education as conducted in the West (ibid., 91). In the Chinese tradition, aesthetic experience was always considered the highest state of the human heart-mind (*xin*), which enabled people to experience a higher level of life or the transcendental, with comparable effects and meaning to the experience and function of religion in the West.

At this time, there were two intellectual currents concerning the development of Chinese aesthetics. The first maintained that, since aesthetics as a discipline has Western roots, it would be unnecessary to develop a special discipline called "Chinese aesthetics", just as it would be superfluous to establish "Chinese mathematics" or "Chinese logic". The second current held that it would be useful and necessary to re-examine Chinese literature and art (as well as literary and art theory), with an appropriate methodology because of its long tradition. This kind of theoretical investigation and research would then lead to the establishment of a new academic discipline, namely Chinese aesthetics, which could thus provide a good and valuable explanatory tool for the development of traditional Chinese thought (Gao 2006a, 28).

Gao Jianping 高建平[5] specifically singled out Zhu Guangqian 朱光潛, Zong Baihua 宗白華, Cai Yi 蔡儀 and Li Zehou 李澤厚 as the most influential academics in the field of aesthetics of that time. According to Gao, Zhu Guangqian was a typical representative of the so-called "Western aesthetics in China". He

4 *Jingjie* 境界 is one of the most fundamental and very complex concepts in Chinese aesthetics. It refers to perfect aesthetic fusion of the artistic idea (or feeling) with a concrete (external) scene. It later gained a general aesthetic meaning that signified the aesthetic idea as well as the most sublime state of human consciousness (Pohl 2015, 91). *Yijian* 意見, however, has a similar meaning.

5 Gao Jianping (1955–) is one of the leading Chinese aestheticians of the 21st century, along with Li Zehou (1930–) and Wang Keping (1955–).

translated numerous classics of Western aesthetics (Plato, Croce, Vico, Hegel, etc.) into Chinese and introduced the scientific method of combining Western thought and Chinese substance (or material). Zong Baihua was the first to translate Kant's *Critique of Judgment* into Chinese. He researched the arts in great detail, studied the theory of painting and uncovered a great difference between the Chinese and Western spirit of art, and thus between the two kinds of aesthetics. He claimed that Western painting originated from architecture and therefore contained many scientific implications, while Chinese painting originated from calligraphy and contained similar aesthetic elements to those found in music and dance. For Zong, Western aesthetics is based on spatial-temporal consciousness, and on the dichotomy between subjective and objective, while Chinese aesthetics implies understanding of the world through the identification with nature (ibid., 26). According to Gao Jianping, Zong Baihua sought to complement the model of Western theories through the originality of unique details from Chinese art (ibid.).

The Great Debate on Aesthetics Based on Marxist Ideology

However, the polemic on the development of Chinese aesthetics is considered to be the first phase of the whole discourse on aesthetics, since the main concern in the aesthetic debate in the mid-20th century was establishment of Marxist aesthetics in China as part of the spread of Marxist ideology[6] after 1949. Among all the so-called "open debates" on various problems, where the political elite of Chinese Communist Party actually decided which discussants were right and which were wrong (with the latter punished accordingly), the aesthetic debate was actually the only exception within these debates that was truly open, thanks to the intrinsic connexion between art and society on the one hand, and to the established Marxist ideology on the other.

In the famous Yan'an Forum *On Literature and Art* in May 1942, Mao Zedong made the clear demand that the role of art is to serve the people and socialism in the spirit of class struggle and the needs of the revolution (Li and Cauvel 2006, 32). With the onset of the Cultural Revolution, aesthetics suffered a decline, but the results of the debate came to the fore again during the "aesthetic fever" soon after Mao's death. The 1950s and 1960s were thus marked by a major discussion

6 According to Amighini and Jia (2019, 271), the Sinicized Marxist theory emphasizes Marx's philosophy of history rather than any version of Marxist egalitarian political philosophy; this is doubtless not a coincidence and this also seems to be a main reason because of which it can be called ideology.

on aesthetics between Zhu Guangqian, Cai Yi and Li Zehou,[7] whose political background was the Chinese Communist Party's striving for a national ideological re-education of intellectuals, in which idealism was to be replaced by dialectical materialism in order to strengthen the spread of Marxist ideology in China (Rošker 2017, 3).

While Zhu Guangqian and Zong Baihua belonged to the first phase of the development of Chinese aesthetics, which at the beginning of the 20th century was characterized by a multifaceted engagement with Western thought, Cai Yi and Li Zehou represented the second phase, which took place in the second half of the century and in which leftist ideas came to the fore.

In the first years after the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese aestheticians were under a strong influence of Soviet theories and ideologies. They attempted to establish a Marxist aesthetics by applying a materialist epistemology and emphasizing that beauty is objective and "typical". At the same time, as leftist intellectuals they also strove for artistic intervention in the realm of social reality (Gao 2006a, 109). Although this theory of art did not completely oppose emotions or feelings, and although it argued that every "type" of art must be typical, that is, defined by specific and unique qualities in addition to its aesthetic element, both Cai and Li essentially advocated the transcendence of individuality and feelings in the realm of art. As leftist intellectuals, they also strove for artistic intervention in the realm of social reality (ibid.).

Another important issue in this debate was whether beauty is subjective or objective, or in other words, whether it is the result of an idealistic or materialistic worldview. Zhu Guangqian argued that beauty is a combination of the subjective and objective, Cai Yi claimed that beauty is objective, while Li Zehou insisted that it is social, objective, and intuitive (Woei 1999, 50). As a materialist philosopher, Li believed that beauty must be objective because it is socially preformed

7 Li Zehou began to develop his aesthetic thought in the 1950s; at that time, he was strongly influenced by Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, in which Marx developed the theory of alienation. Li became acquainted with Marx during his regular studies of philosophy at Beijing University. Soon after graduation, he started to participate in academic discussions regarding various interpretations of certain Marxist notions. In this respect, he gained a lot of attention in intellectual circles as early as 1956 (when he was 26 years old) with the publication of his first mature theoretical essay, entitled "On the Aesthetic Feeling, Beauty, and Art (*Lun meigan, mei he yishu* 论美感，美和艺术)". Later on, he further developed his own interpretations (Rošker 2019, 206). In addition to Marx, Li Zehou also sought great inspiration in Kant's philosophy. He endeavoured to reconstruct Kant's epistemology through Marx's ideas about social life and practice, namely, the material production activities, such as the making and using of tools. On this basis, he also examined the various concepts of human nature found in both original Confucianism and early Marx (Pohl 1999, XIV).

and as such must be independent of the psychology of the individual. In this aspect, he referred to Marx's theory that nothing in the external world possesses beauty *per se*, and that it is only through the objectification of the human being that it becomes "socialized" and thus acquires beauty. This, he argued, is a collective rather than an individual psychological process (ibid., 62). In this regard, Li claimed that idealist aestheticians reduced beauty to the individual's subjective sense of beauty and regarded it as the result of certain pre-empirical, subjective "psychological functions", which they believed were common to all human beings. In this respect, idealists denied the objective existence of beauty, which should be seen as the result of social and historical conditions (ibid., 60).

After relations between China and the Soviet Union cooled down in 1956, Chinese aestheticians attempted to establish their own aesthetic system. Unfortunately, this attempt was interrupted again, this time by the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", which lasted from 1966 to 1976 (Gao 2006b, 109).

However, the debate had another important focus. It had laid the theoretical foundations that emphasized the theoretical concepts of art and refuted the conceptualization of its so-called "sloganization" (i.e., ideological propaganda). On the one hand, there was a strong attempt in the field of art and literature to bring art into social reality; on the other hand, the aesthetic world emphasized the notion of pure art. Against this background, it is certainly no coincidence that China was swept by the wave of "aesthetic fever" shortly after the death of Mao Zedong. At this point a period of constant, increasingly turbulent, controversial debate began in the world of academic, artistic and literary discourse.

The Aesthetic Fever (*Meixue re* 美学热)

The so-called aesthetic fever became extremely popular throughout the country and caused a huge wave of translations of various western authors of aesthetics, which indicated that aesthetics has become a leading discipline in the humanities in China. Schools and universities started teaching aesthetics, and books on the subject became bestsellers. The return of aesthetic thought was the result of exhaustion and boredom of previous omnipresent ideological constraints and revolutionary asceticism. People wanted to explore new ways of expressing their own individuality, and in this regard they also dealt with the question of what beauty is (Zhou 2005, 105).

All the aforementioned ideas led to a wider debate about aesthetics, which also included politics and culture, and resulted in what was called cultural fever (*wenhua*

re 文化热). In the 1990s, a new standpoint emerged among some Chinese literary theorists, emphasizing that Western influences on the study of Chinese literature and art in the 20th century were very problematic, and that the existing Chinese literary and art theories were not fit for purpose. They argued that Chinese literature has its own tradition and that there are special systems and categories in Chinese literary criticism that were not taken into account by their predecessors. There were also many academics who idealized the West and wanted to apply Western concepts of literary theory to Chinese art and literature. In contrast, some literary theorists argued that it was essential to thoroughly study ancient Chinese works on art and literature and, and on such basis establish and develop new aesthetic theories, based on comparative study of Chinese and Western aesthetic theory. Most Chinese aestheticians then adopted this position and began to explore certain traditional Chinese concepts such as *qi* 氣 ("vitality, creativity") and *qiyun* 氣韻 ("rhythm of *qi*"), comparing them with concepts from Western aesthetics.

The period of aesthetic and cultural fever is considered as a very complex and important "movement" in Chinese modern aesthetics, which had a remarkable influence on contemporary Chinese aesthetics, as well as to the formation of more autochthonous theories.

The Significance and Implications of Aesthetic Fever in the 1980s and 1990s

In the search for the most appropriate strategies for China's successful entry into the third millennium, we cannot overlook the political or ideological role that aesthetics has played. On the one hand, as a latent rebellion against the society of the prevailing pragmatism and as a manifested pursuit of beauty, or as a kind of emotional emancipation; and on the other, as a discourse that has always been closely linked to politics in China, with the possibility of reinterpreting or upgrading Marxist theories.[8] However, we should not forget the fact that Chinese aesthetics and literary theory focused primarily on rationality and the social dimension until the beginning of the 1980s. As already mentioned, the aesthetic fever gained an exceptional dimension in Chinese society at that time, spreading like a kind of theoretical epidemic; already in the early 1980s, the bookshelves were full of

8 The further development and upgrading of Marxists theories was perhaps most visible in the field of Marxist dialectics, for many Chinese scholars aimed to complement or synthesize it with the basic tenets of traditional Chinese correlative dialectical models that were based on the principle of complementary and rooted in the so-called *tongbian* dialectics (see for instance Heubel 2019; Rockmore 2019; Tian 2019).

translations of Western authors who wrote about aesthetics. The entire decade were therefore defined by the systematic translation and presentation of Western formalistic literary theories. Thus, during this period, all the most important works of the Russian formalists, Anglo-American New Criticism, Chicago School, archetypical criticism and structuralist poetics were translated into Chinese.

Undoubtedly, the 1942 work of Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature*, in which the authors clearly distinguished between "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" literary studies that form the basis of formalistic literary theory, had a major influence on the development of contemporary Chinese literary theories. Particularly popular became related ideas about the "intrinsic laws" of literature and its aesthetic laws, discussed by Jakobson in his discourses of "literariness" (Zhou 2005, 105).

These debates were at the core of intellectual attention until 1981, when a translation of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* from 1844 was published. This document was also given great attention, and many theorists saw it as the basis of modern Marxist aesthetics. As for the autochthonous discourse on Chinese aesthetics, Li Zehou attracted immense interest and respect in academic circles during this period, not only in China, but also abroad. Following the experience of ten years of chaos and catastrophes caused by radical left politics, the Chinese Communist Party slowly turned away from ideas such as the class struggle and began to introduce the slogan "finding the truth in facts" (*shishi qiushi* 实事求是). Li Zehou's idea of "practice" in the field of aesthetics contributed to the new research atmosphere. In addition, Li Zehou's coinages for his other concepts, such as "sedimentation" (*jidian* 積澱) and "subjectality" (*zhuguanxing* 主觀性), the fusion of the social with an individual in the historical process, enriched the aesthetic debate of that time. Li Zehou is considered to be the greatest personality in the field of aesthetics during those years. On the one hand, he presented new concepts such as subjectivity and practice, derived from the fusion of Kant's and Marx's ideas, and on the other, he produced innovative interpretations of Chinese aesthetic and art traditions (see *mei de licheng* 美的历程).

Related theories were also represented in the same period by a number of less known and less influential but equally interesting theorists, such as the aforementioned art historian Zhu Guangqian or the philosopher Hu Jun 胡軍, who advocated a sinicized version of the Western concept of "aestheticization of everyday life". This aestheticization was perceived primarily as an emancipation and the everyday space of freedom, a space in which professional politics, with its dictates of pragmatic functionality, cannot interfere. This emancipation carried within itself a revolt against the world of a strict political hierarchy and the unconditional authority of individual political positions within that hierarchy.

The "subjective" negation of politics, which was the essence of the aesthetic fever of the 1980s, was constantly imbued with a charge of civil society politics. Thus the seemingly ivory tower of aesthetics was erected right in the realm politics; but this was not a policy of hierarchical relations of power and unquestionable authority, but a policy in the original sense, that is, a policy of people as *a priori* political beings (*zoon politicum*). The aesthetic fever that prevailed in China in the 1980s therefore stemmed precisely from the tendency to realize this kind of "subjective" political freedom. And yet the reality of the conditions of the rapidly changing Chinese society and its economic "liberalization" downplayed all such ideals, sadly drowned out in a flood of new, commercialized aesthetics that it is characteristic of all capitalist societies. Thus, it soon became clear that theories of aesthetic fever no longer fit the conditions of the rapidly changing Chinese social reality.

The Third Millennium and the New Culture of the Consumer Society

At the end of the 1980s, the role of aesthetics in China has been greatly transformed; aesthetics as an academic discipline relatively quickly (and for most intellectuals, unexpectedly) lost its revolutionary and emancipatory function. Already in the mid-1990s, it represented only a marginal academic discipline that dealt with abstract theoretical problems on the outskirts of social reality.

> Aesthetics nowadays no longer have any revolutionary and emancipatory functions. The enlightenment and humanistic significance it once had has been transformed. Since the expansion of capital included our everyday factors in the processes of the market, the way of our aesthetic experience radically changed. If you can easily buy any artistic object, activity, or even experience on the market, as if they were goods, then how can aesthetic values arouse utopian impulses? When the executive director of the advertisement company explicitly declares that "beauty can of course be ordered", how can we speak of aesthetic activities in the same way as in the past? (Zhou 2005, 110–11)

As elsewhere in the world, also in China, where the general sale and megalomaniac marketing of aesthetics has necessarily led to its devaluation. The former leading, emancipatory voice of aesthetics died, and the aesthetics of freedom sadly became silent: The "subjectivity of aesthetics", which Li Zehou, Zhu Guangqian and other theoreticians were advocating for, could not really face the large-scale turn of aesthetics as a factor in the commercialization of everyday

life. The aesthetics of emancipation could never solve the acute contradiction between its primary tendency for liberalization of subjectivity on one hand, and the aesthetization of everyday life in terms of commodity culture on the other. Its theoretical framework was never able to encompass this completely new aesthetic phenomenon, one that includes the complete negation of humanity in which human sensitivity is reduced to the mediator of economic functions (Haug 1971, 17), and in which aesthetics as such is only a part of the "cosmetics of everyday life" (Welsh 1997, 3). The notion of consumer society mainly refers to post-industrial societies in which consumerism has become one of the central motives of social life and production. In a consumer society, aesthetics and culture, including aesthetic and cultural production, are closely linked to economic values or economism. While in traditional societies the fundamental purpose of production is linked to the basic needs of members of society and their satisfaction, production itself in consumer societies far outweighs the principle of existence or survival.

When dealing with the question of whether today's Chinese society is already a completely consumer one we must be rather cautious, because the nature of China's transitional society encompasses specific historical, regional and other social elements that limit the possibility of establishing a single definitive definition that could relate to all aspects of society. Differences between rural and urban regions (centre and periphery), and imbalances in political, economic and cultural aspects, lead to the conclusion that China should be treated only as a society with extremely diverse connotations. If we consider it from the aspect of certain characteristics that are at the forefront in the developed regions and major cities, we can also refer to it as a society that has already entered the post-industrial and capitalist stage, especially if we take into account the vitality of its development and its economic boom, which was most clearly demonstrated in the last years of the 20th century after economic liberalization took hold.

> Regardless of whether we admit it or not, a successful consumer society is spreading in China. Producers and consumers of cultural symbols are so deeply involved in it, that they are subordinate to it, or they try to resist it and regain its power through confrontation. The consumer society's attack on literature is so unprecedented that no matter to which historical concepts we cling to, we must admit the profound changes that modern culture has suffered. (Chen 2005, 118)

The Aesthetization of Everyday Life and its Expression in Culture

The consumer society introduced a number of new lifestyles in China. The lives of modern, especially urban Chinese people are intertwined with new aesthetic interests and values. While in traditional and industrial societies aesthetic activities have been separated from production and everyday life, the everyday experiences of individuals in the consumer society of urban China are most closely related to the elements of art and its aesthetic characteristics. The feelings of modern people living in a consumer society are exposed to constant stimulation and are therefore more sensitive and colourful; aesthetic requirements have replaced only material needs, and all this is reflected in the external environment as well as in the inner worlds of individuals. The aesthetic interpretation of everyday life and the transfer of reality into an aesthetized illusion are two extremely important cultural mechanisms:

> Today, the everyday, political, historical, economic and other reality already includes the hyper realistic dimension of the simulation, so that we are now fully living in the "aesthetic" hallucination of reality. (Chen 2005, 127)

Since the 1990s, literary and visual art as well as the art of music have been confronted with the problems of commercialization, excessive simulation and universalization, which pose a challenge to traditional understanding of culture and aesthetics. This situation cannot be avoided, which is why we hope that contemporary artists will be able to confront these challenges in a constructive way. The challenges of a new, global culture also offer the possibility to reshape concepts and conceptual paradigms that were not present in traditional Chinese culture, such as individualism, free will, self-determination and active participation. In any given period, the function of a particular culture and its impact on social reality are closely related to the conceptual elements existing in this culture.

The sudden development of modern China has completely changed the image of all of its major cities: the huge flows of internal migration of the population, the megalomaniac number of new ring roads, motorways and four-way avenues, the demolition of traditional houses and the construction of new, ever-higher glass skyscrapers, all this confronts us with previously unimaginable visual contrasts in China. The unstoppable development of urbanization that modern Chinese are exposed to, and the rapidly changing rhythms of everyday life, are also reflected in the new culture and its aesthetic creations. This does not apply only to the Westernized popular culture, but also to a large-scale billboards present everywhere, which create new criteria of popular aesthetics adapted to the contemporary society. The imaginary division between life and art has also been erased in contemporary Chinese society: art has become life itself, just as commercial capitalist

activities are regarded as a kind of artistic imagination (Chen 2005, 128). Contemporary Chinese art (both visual and literary) is mostly created for the masses, to whom it sells well. This art is quickly popularized and also quickly forgotten, since its primary goal is to facilitate the survival of individuals within the rapidly changing contemporary world, marked by the consumer culture. Similar dilemmas and problems of expressing and conveying the contradictions of modern society are also reflected in other spheres of artistic or aesthetic creation in contemporary Chinese culture.

> It comes from the past and lasts until now; and would have the possibility of expanding further—it can eternally exist in the struggle of resistance and absorption of aesthetic hegemony of the consumer society. (ibid., 136)

Moreover, Chinese art is confronted with the ubiquitous influence of electronic and digital media on a daily basis, but it also contains a culture of past periods and a memory of them. In this sense, it is firmly anchored in the consciousness of society and its individuals, so it must be understood as one of the central, still existing milestones of history.

Conclusion

As we have seen, aesthetic debates in China during the 20th century provided an important platform for dialogue with Western discourses on the one hand, and recognition of the profound value and significance of the Chinese cultural and philosophical tradition on the other. However, although the development of aesthetics as an academic discipline was initially intertwined with the appropriation of Western knowledge which was later more or less reduced to sinicized Marxist ideology, its foundations are deeply rooted in the unique Chinese aesthetic tradition. In light of the global development of capitalist consumerism in the 21st century, art and aesthetics (like many other cultural aspects of societies, such as education and the value of knowledge as such) are constantly confronted with new (and not necessarily meaningful) challenges. To what extent the market will define or even destroy the aesthetic and artistic influence on the value and meaning of our lives remains an open question, not only in China, but globally.

Indeed, in recent decades we can observe a revival of traditional Chinese art and aesthetics in Chinese academic circles. In their restoration, however, many Chinese intellectuals one-dimensionally and uncritically emphasize the allegedly unparalleled brilliance of Chinese art and aesthetics. Such attempts are problematic,

in my view, because they are constructed upon the basis of inverted or reverse Orientalism and from Sinocentric perspectives. On the other hand, they can nevertheless also be seen as reactions to the to some extent still prevailing, overconfident dominance of Eurocentric discourses that exclude the importance and value of the ideational traditions developed by Other, non-Western cultures.

But nonetheless, the recognition of the profound, but subtle realms of Chinese aesthetics in general is of great importance for the eventual establishment of an intercultural aesthetics that could contribute greatly to the recognition of a true "unity in diversity", and hence transcend the static singularity of cultures. This is all the more important in light of our present human condition, which desperately needs new, fresh and inspiring views upon our perception of life and being.

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OTHER TOPICS

Japanese Reinterpretations of Confucianism: Itō Jinsai and His Project[1]

*Marko OGRIZEK**

Abstract

This article aims to introduce the study of Itō Jinsai from the point of view of the value of his Confucian interpretations within the context of the project of Confucian ethics—in other words, trying to ascertain in what ways Jinsai's project can help facilitate the study of Confucian ethics beyond the realm of intellectual history in the global context of the 21st century. It is imperative to allow Jinsai's notions, as much as possible, to speak for themselves; but it is also of great importance to first place Jinsai within his own time and inside the intellectual space in which he formulated his ideas. A number of scholarly sources will be considered, with the intention of illuminating Jinsai's work from a few different angles.

Keywords: Itō Jinsai, Japanese Confucianism, traditional Japanese philosophy, ethics

Japonske reinterpretacije konfucijanstva: Itō Jinsai in njegov projekt

Izvleček

Članek je uvod v študij Itōja Jinsaija z vidika vrednosti njegovih konfucijanskih interpretacij v kontekstu projekta konfucijanske etike – z drugimi besedami, ugotoviti poskuša, kako lahko Jinsaijev projekt pripomore k študiju konfucijanske etike onkraj intelektualne zgodovine, v globalnem kontekstu 21. stoletja. Jinsaijevim pojmom moramo nujno dovoliti, da spregovorijo sami zase; vendar pa je zelo pomembno, da Jinsaija najprej umestimo v njegov čas in intelektualni prostor, v katerem je osnoval svoje ideje. Upoštevani so različni akademski viri, s katerimi avtor Jinsaijevo delo osvetli z več različnih zornih kotov.

Ključne besede: Itō Jinsai, japonski konfucianizem, tradicionalna japonska filozofija, etika

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* Marko OGRIZEK, PhD student, Department of Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.
Email address: marko.ogrizek@ff.uni-lj.si

Introduction

As will be developed in the present article, a study of Jinsai's life and works shows that Jinsai's views on the *Analects* and the Confucian Way, though sometimes presented in a radical fashion, did not come about abruptly and were not based solely in doctrinal objections. Jinsai in fact worked his way diligently as a student—from studying the Neo-Confucian thought of the Cheng-Zhu School, to trying to find solutions to his personal crisis in both Buddhism and Daoism; through a slow disillusionment with Neo-Confucian concepts of both the Cheng-Zhu as well as the Yang Wangming School, and in the end settling on thoroughly analyzing the Four Books themselves, especially the *Analects* and *Mencius*.

The present article therefore aims to argue that while Jinsai's position may have first been based on certain textual concerns, his attitudes towards the "heterodoxies" of Buddhism and Daoism were developed both concurrently with his philosophical ideas as well as his ideas on proper ethical practice; and that while the latter was perhaps his more enduring motivation for the critique of Neo-Confucian thought, it may actually have been necessitated by his search for a universally valid Confucian ethics, based on the secular and every-day experience of the people.

As different scholars of Jinsai also stress different features of his work, a study of different scholarly sources should help illuminate as many aspects of Jinsai's thought as possible.

Itō Jinsai as Kogakuha 古学派 (The School of Ancient Learning)

It is usual in Japanese historiography to categorize the scholars of the Edo period, who identified themselves as Confucians, into three factions: *Shushigaku* 朱子学 (Zhu Xi Learning), *Yōmeigaku* 陽明学 (Wang Yangming Learning) and *Kogaku* 古学 (Ancient Learning). In this triad Jinsai is seen as belonging to the Ancient Learning faction of Japanese Confucian scholars—a group, whose best-known members also include Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622–1685) and Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728).

Kiri Paramore notes that these categories were seldom applied strictly in the historical reality of the Tokugawa period, but that they became reified by historians of the 20th century, notably Inoue Tetsujirō and Maruyama Masao (Paramore 2016, 194, note 2)—by focusing mostly on the ideas of different Confucian-identified figures of the time. He also notes that while there is some utility to such an approach as a means of linking different trends in Japanese Confucianism to continental trends, analyzing the relationships between different interpretations

of Tokugawa Confucianism only through these kinds of categorizations occludes many of the most socially and culturally significant aspects of Confucianism's legacy in Japan (ibid., 43).

Maruyama Masao 丸山真男, who as mentioned above helped popularize such categorizations, admits in his "Author's Introduction" to Mikiso Hane's translation of *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* (1974) that his original essays were flawed in many ways, especially in not taking into account important distinctions between the Japanese and the Chinese schools, as well as ignoring important influences like Korean Neo-Confucianism[2] (Maruyama 1974, xxxiv–xxxv). Another problem of categorization for this thesis comes from the criteria used. While Sokō, Jinsai and Sorai might all have been critical of what they perceived as the Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy through the lens of returning to the classical Chinese texts, their ideas were hardly identical in their intentions and consequences; nor where the texts to which they ascribed authority the same. Jinsai, for example, never wrote of Sokō's work and while Sorai did write of Jinsai's, it was mostly to criticize him harshly.

Another approach, taken by Paramore himself, is also possible: that instead of focusing on the *differences of thought* of the different factions, he tries to identify *similarities in practice*. He argues that "despite coming from a range of different intellectual schools of Confucianism, and disagreeing with each other on many theoretical issues, in terms of practice, context, and sociality, the Way of Heaven teachings, and the Confucianism of all these figures shared (…) similarities" (Paramore 2016, 44)[3]. But among the figures Paramore goes on to discuss in more detail, Itō Jinsai is notably absent.

As Jinsai was not a samurai and did not write directly of or to the samurai class, his ethics are presented in universal terms, with indirect political messages. John Allen Tucker sees this as being representative of a worldview belonging to the Edo period townspeople (*chōnin* 町人) class, which was by necessity more inclusive and more diverse (Tucker 1998). Jinsai also does not overtly connect Confucian

2 This is also remarked upon by Tucker in Tucker (1997b, 529).

3 "1. A clear focus on Neo-Confucian practice as outlined in key texts edited by Zhu Xi in the Song, and developed through practice in Ming dynasty China: notably the "Method of the Heart" (*xinfa*). 2. A syncretist tendency to present Neo-Confucian practice in relation to, or even as, Shintoism, Military Thought, or other indigenous-Japanese non-Buddhist traditions. 3. A vision of post-Han contemporary imperial Chinese society as a completely separate and ruptured society from the ideal historic Confucian age of Yao and Shun. 4. A related capacity to create a space for Japanese nationalist sensibilities and to criticize contemporary imperial China from a Confucian perspective. 5. Use of Neo-Confucianism to give meaning to the life of samurai in the new peaceful Tokugawa order. 6. Criticized by others as potentially or actually politically subversive." (ibid.)

practice to Shintoism or other indigenous-Japanese traditions—as Huang Chun-chieh notes, Jinsai's descriptions of the Confucian *dao* are turned to the everyday and the secular (Huang 2008). As Maruyama notes, Jinsai sees *Dao* as universally human, but also sees the world as historically evolved—he does not see it in a post-Golden Age time of the decline of the Way (Maruyama 1974); and it is true that Jinsai did himself keep a fairly low profile, possibly in fear of being criticized by others as potentially or actually politically subversive (Tucker 1998).

I would therefore argue that Jinsai does not fit as easily into Paramore's analysis of the commonalities of Confucian-identified thinkers in Japan. The value of both of these kinds of categorizations is thus limited in this context, and the approach I propose to take is more in line with analyzing internal similarities and differences of Jinsai's thought with the thought of those predecessors whose works he himself had engaged with, without prejudging the outcome. I also do not intend to discount different interpretations of Jinsai's own work out of hand, as they might each present important aspects of his project. I therefore merely propose to re-examine and try to synthesize these different views on Jinsai as they pertain to his philosophical work, while holding an open-minded stance on the different generalizations and categorizations already offered.

The views presented above need to be examined one by one, not to judge which of them may have had a greater influence on Jinsai, but to show that in fact Jinsai's project does in certain ways evade strict delineation. Certain aspects of Jinsai's work could thus even be called contradictory, but his project as a whole exhibits a high level of integrity.

Jinsai's Project as Facilitating the Dissolution of the Zhu Xi Mode of Thought

Maruyama Masao is widely considered as one of the most influential post-World War II Japanese scholars associated with the history of Japanese Confucianism. He was a University of Tokyo professor of political science and of history of political thought who idealized Western liberalism (Paramore 2016, 168). One of his two most famous works, *Nihon seiji shisō kennkyū* 日本政治思想研究, published in the form of short essays in the years before the war, then as a book in Japanese in 1952, later again translated as the *Studies in Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* by Mikiso Hane in 1974, describes the history of the political and philosophical role of Confucianism in early modern Japan.

Paramore notes:

> Although presented (…) as a history of Confucian thought, the book's points were deeply political and present (ibid.). As Maruyama himself wrote in an introduction to a later printing, the book was his answer and resistance to the 'overcoming modernity' and 'national morality' ideologies of the wartime fascist state (Maruyama 1974, ix, xxx, xxxi). He thus used the history of Confucianism in Japan as the central plank in his argument against the fascist nationalism. (ibid.)

Maruyama's book, understood within this context, may have lost much of its original interpretative power, but even if its main premise has been shown to be based on flawed assumptions (and as already pointed out, Maruyama himself has admitted to this to a certain extent), the book can still offer insight into the specific nature of the work of different scholars presented in it. The infamous schema in which a pure version of the Zhu Xi mode of thought is transplanted to Japan, where the eventual changes in political reality bring about its dissolution—as completed by the formation of the Sorai School, its antithesis—remains always in the background of any study of Maruyama's views on the *kogaku* scholars, but I would still follow Maruyama's own line of thinking, when he writes:

> From the perspective of the present day, there is room for a good deal of doubt how far the evolutionary schema implicit in the first two essays—of universal Zhu Xi type Neo-Confucian mode of thought followed by its gradual disintegration, or of a transition in emphasis from "nature" to "invention"—will actually stand up to the historical evidence. However, I like immodestly to think even if one totally discards the whole schema, several individual pieces of analysis (…) still have value as providing a basis for further research. (Maruyama 1974, xxxv)

Bearing the above in mind, I would like to set out Maruyama's specific observations of Jinsai's work.[4] I do not argue here either for or against Maruyama's observations.

a) Jinsai sought to purify Confucian ethical philosophy by emphasizing the normative aspects of the system (ibid., 51). His stated aim was to rescue Confucianism from its decline into a merely contemplative philosophy by reinforcing its practico-ethical character (ibid., 52).

4 Mikiso Hane's translation is lightly edited to better reflect my own use of the different philosophical terms in the text.

b) Jinsai made clear distinctions between categories such as the Way of Heaven (*tendō* 天道), the Way of Humanity (*rendao/jindō* 人道), the Decree of Heaven (*tainming/tenmei* 天命), structural coherence (*li/ri* 理), humaneness (*ren/jin* 仁), appropriateness (*yi/gi* 義), ritual propriety (*li/rei* 礼), wisdom (*zhi/chi* 智) and the "suchness" of things (*xing/sei* 性). He confined *yin* 隠 and *yang* 陽, as categories of the natural world, exclusively to the Way of Heaven, and humaneness and appropriateness, as moral categories, exclusively to the Way of Humanity (ibid., ed.).

c) Compared with the quiescent, rational view of nature held by the Song scholars, Jinsai's cosmology is strongly vitalistic. Such a view inevitably led Jinsai to the denial of the supremacy of *li* 理 over *qi* 氣. For Jinsai, *li* no longer provides the link between Heaven and man; it is no more than a "physical principle" (ibid.). However, Jinsai's criticisms of Song philosophers' theory of *li* and *qi* did not, as is often argued, confuse the logical priority they claimed for *li* over *qi* with a temporal priority. Rather, he feared that the supremacy accorded *li* by the Zhu Xi School might go beyond a logical supremacy and become a supremacy of value (ibid., 53).

d) Only a small part of Jinsai's overall philosophical system is concerned with his theory of the Decree of Heaven, but its importance in the intellectual structure of his philosophy cannot be ignored, as the logical origin of Jinsai's agnostic tendencies can be traced to it (ibid., 54).

e) By insisting that "there is no way outside of the people, and no people outside of the way" ("人の外に道無く、道の外に人無し") (Itō in Shimizu 2017, 26), Jinsai hoped to strengthen the ethical side of the Song School's Way, which had been weakened by its extension to cover the natural world (Maruyama 1974, 55). Having broken the continuity between the Way in general and the Way of Heaven, he now made it transcend suchness (*xing/sei* 性) as well. In Jinsai's opinion, humaneness, appropriateness, ritual propriety, and wisdom are not principles endowed upon man by birth, constituting his Original Humanness; they are ideal characteristics that men must strive to realize (ibid.).

f) However, because he respected Mencius just as much as Confucius and could not but support the former's belief in the goodness of humanness, Jinsai, while insisting on regarding humaneness, appropriateness, ritual propriety, and wisdom as transcendental ideas, placed the "four sprouts" (*si duan* 四端) i.e., the senses of commiseration (惻隠之心), shame (羞惡之心), compliance (辭讓之心), and moral judgement (是非之心), in the realm of humanness. The four sprouts are endowed in humanness as predispositions toward the realization of the way, which has an objective and autonomous existence (ibid., 55,56; see also Hu 2021).

g) Although Jinsai emphasized the imperative character of Confucian ethics, he was not intolerant of man's natural desires. For instance, he said, "if we were to judge things in terms of ritual propriety and appropriateness, we would find that feelings (*jō* 情) conform to the way and desires (*yoku* 欲) to appropriateness. There is nothing wrong with them." (trans. Hane in Maruyama 1974, 57, ed.) ("苟しくも禮義以て之を裁することあるときは、則ち情則ち是れ道、欲則ち是れ義、何んの悪むことか之れ有らん。" (Itō in Shimizu 2017, 98)) And, though happy to remain in abject poverty all his life, also remarked:

> Confucians pride themselves on showing little interest in monetary compensations and holding wealth and rank to be worth no more that dust and dirt. Society in general also respects those who hold mundane affairs in disdain and maintain an attitude of transcendence and aloofness. Both show that they are extremely ignorant of the Way. (trans. Hane in Maruyama 1974, 57)
>
> 儒者或は軒冕を錙銖にし、富實を塵芥にするを以て高しと爲、世間も亦超然遐擧、人事を蔑視するを以て至れりと爲す。皆道を知らざるの甚だしきなり。(Itō in Shimizu 2017, 45–46)

h) Jinsai said: "If the sages were born in the present age, they would rely on the common ways of today and employ methods of today" (trans. Hane in Maruyama 1974, 59) ("若し成人をして今の世に生まれしめば、亦必ず今の俗に因り、今の法を用いる" (Itō in Shimizu 2017, 109)). The emphasis on the importance of the historical development of the rites and music shows that the quiescent immobile rationalism of the Zhu Xi School had lost its hold on Jinsai's mind. Just as Jinsai the "moralist" was not moralistic, so Jinsai of the School of Ancient Learning did not believe that civilization had steadily declined since the days of the sages and that it was approaching its demise (Maruyama 1974, 59–60).

i) There are clear signs in Jinsai's thought of the disintegration of individual morality and government. For example, Jinsai said:

> A scholar must of course regulate his life in terms of these ideals, but the ruler must have as his basic principle a willingness to share the good and the bad with his subjects. Of what advantage would it be for the art of government if he aimlessly studied the principle of the upright mind and sincere intentions but was unable to share the good and the bad with his subjects? (trans. Hane in Maruyama 1974, 60)
>
> 學者の如きは、固に此を以て自ら修めずんばあるべからず。人君に在っては、則ち當に民と好惡を同じゅうするを以て本と爲

> べし。其れ徒らに誠心誠意を知って、民と好惡を同じゅうすること能わずんば、治道に於て何んの益かあらん。(Itō in Shimizu 2017, 106)

As has been remarked, and can now be seen, Maruyama traces Jinsai's thought from the point of view of opposition to what Maruyama himself calls "the Zhu Xi mode of thought". In all these different instances he tries to show ways in which to present Jinsai as a stepping stone between the Zhu Xi School and Sorai School—between the consciousness of the "natural" and the consciousness of the "artificial", the consciousness of the "public" and the consciousness of the "personal". While these interpretations do not seem to represent wrong readings of Jinsai *per se*, the underlying thread does seem to finally overreach; and at the same time, to limit the interpretative range (as has been established).

I would also argue that reading Jinsai too strongly in relation to Sorai, while useful in certain ways, may conceal important distinctions of Jinsai's own thought in many others. As Jinsai could never answer Sorai's aggressive critique (having passed away before he could respond to the famous letter), it is hard to say how the dialogue between the two scholars would go and how the main points of disagreement would be hashed out in person. I do contend that perhaps some of the most important parts of Jinsai's work—his own brand of humanism, agnosticism, and even liberalism—cannot be given adequate attention and value by trying to show him strictly in the same intellectual movement as Sorai.

In this sense, I follow John Allen Tucker's more grounded and nuanced study.

Jinsai's Project as a Philosophical Lexicography

John Allen Tucker points out that even if it is still useful to see Jinsai as one of the *Kogaku* scholars, Maruyama's formulations of the school are in many ways overburdened and there are many links missing between different *Kogaku* scholars as presented by traditional *Kogaku* scholarship. The most persuasive link between the different *Kogaku* scholars, Tucker argues, might therefore be found in a different place: the genre of philosophical lexicography.

Tucker points out the two important figures of Chinese Neo-Confucianism, who might have had the greatest influence upon the genre as well as *Kogaku* scholars in general:

> The impact of two Song Neo-Confucians, Chen Beixi 陳北溪 (1159–1223) and Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–1192), seems to account for the

> more salient characteristics of the Japanese School of Ancient Learning. (Tucker 1993, 701)

Rather than simply following the ideas of the Ancient Learning schools as a sort of a true anti-thesis to the Cheng-Zhu mode of thought in Japan, Tucker points to an often overlooked relationship between the works and ideas of the *Kogaku* scholars and tries to show that the *Kogaku* schools, instead of representing a real critical break with the Neo-Confucian tradition, in fact represent a sort of radical Neo-Confucian revisionism—a critical development of certain Neo-Confucian methods and ideas, which, though widely used and fitting to the circumstances of Tokugawa Japan, were not originally conceived there, but can be traced all the way back to China and to Zhu Xi's own contemporaries.

Tucker argues that philosophical lexicography, connecting the likes of Yamaga Sokō, Kaibara Ekken 貝原 益軒 (1630–1714), Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai, originated with an important disciple of Zhu Xi, Chen Beixi 陳北溪 (1159–1223) and his most important work, the *Xingli ziyi* 性理字義 (*The Meaning of Neo-Confucian Terms*). Tucker argues that:

> (While) Neo-Confucian texts, such as Zhu Xi's *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注 (*Commentaries on the Four Books*), had appeared in Japan several centuries before the Tokugawa period, Beixi's *Ziyi*, a brief, conceptually organized primer explaining some-twenty-five philosophical terms and/or groups of terms crucial to an elementary understanding of Neo-Confucianism, only reached Japan in the 1590s, presumably following Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1536–1598) first Korean invasion (1592–1593). (Tucker 1993, 683–84)

By then, the *Ziyi* had been through eight different Chinese editions (ibid., 684), but the relevant version of the work, which had the most influence in Edo Japan, is the 1553 Korean edition of the text[5]. This gained widespread popularity through the work of Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1657), one of the most influential Confucian teachers in the early Edo period, who also worked on providing a vernacular translation, titled *Seiri jigi genkai* 性理字義諺解 (*Vernacular Explanation of the Meaning of Neo-Confucian Terms*). By the time the latter was published, Beixi's *Ziyi* had become one of the most influential Neo-Confucian texts in early Tokugawa Japan (ibid.).

Tucker argues that without the *Ziyi* it would be impossible to imagine works such as Yamaga Sokō's *Seikyō yōroku* 聖教要録 (*Essential Lexicography of Sagely*

5 This was itself apparently a reprint of one of the earliest (if not the earliest) editions, the so-called Yuan period 元 (1279–1368) edition (ibid.).

Confucian Teachings), Itō Jinsai's *Gomō jigi* or Ogyū Sorai's *Benmei* 辨名 (*Distinguishing Names*) (ibid., 686) and shows how the structure, methodology and certain ideas are developed within these works. Tucker also points out that even certain factual mistakes which crop up in Razan's *Genkai* can be seen reproduced in both Jinsai's as well as in Sorai's work (Tucker 1994, 76).

> These similarities are not coincidental. Nor can they be explained by any other Neo-Confucian text, not to mention one with a publication record comparable to that of Beixi's *Ziyi* in seventeenth-century Tokugawa Japan. Zhu Xi's *Commentaries on the Four Books* are not arranged around the orderly, systematic discussion of the semantics of exclusively philosophical terms. Rather, Zhu's *Commentaries* follow the order of the texts—the *Great Learning*, the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*—which they explicate. Of course, the terms that Beixi discusses do crop up, here and there, in Zhu's *Commentaries*, but their various appearances provide no systematic model for the kind of ordered, lexicographical discussions found in the terminologically arranged works of Sokō, Jinsai, and Sorai. (Tucker 1993, 689)

The second thing Tucker points out about the genre of philosophical lexicography in Tokugawa Japan is that while Hayashi Razan popularized the *Xingli ziyi*, he also did it in a critical manner. His *Seiri jigi genkai* thus also contains Lu Xiangshan's critique of the notion of *wuji er taiji / mukyoku ji taikyoku* 無極而太極 ("the ultimate of non-being and the great ultimate") as a Daoist (and not a Confucian) concept. Razan presents Zhu Xi's answer to Lu Xiangshan's critique, but does not give an indication as to which of these two interpretations he thinks is the correct one, leaving it up to the reader. As neither Lu Xiangshan's critique, nor Zhu Xi's answer to it are found in Beixi's *Ziyi*, Tucker argues that:

> (F)rom the start, then, Razan's brand of Neo-Confucianism (in large part expressed for the first time systematically and conceptually in the *Genkai*) projected an ambivalence wavering toward criticism of notions like the ultimate of nonbeing, notions which even in the Song had sparked debate, being deemed by thinkers like Lu as dubitable due to their heterodox origins. (ibid., 629)

Tucker demonstrates how Jinsai's own critique of Neo-Confucian terms in the *Gomō jigi* systematically appropriates both Beixi's ordering of meaning within a philosophical lexicon as well as Lu Xiangshan's critical analysis of certain Neo-Confucian notions. I therefore follow his assertion that both Chen Beixi and

Lu Xiangshan can be taken as proper influences for Jinsai and his work and so place Jinsai within a line of scholars, who—though they may not all be connected in a simple linear fashion—still share in common the methodology as well as the influence of certain ideas found in the genre of philosophical lexicography that Hayashi Razan helped to popularize.

Because of the specific juxtaposition of these influences, Tucker also does not believe that the genre was itself something limiting to the scholars working with it. He rather points out:

> Conventional wisdom of course holds that lexicons limit meaning by legislating a rigid version of semantics. Yet in the first flush of unrestrained lexicography, Tokugawa philosophers revealed that through lexicography, meaning could be endlessly legislated and relegislated, established and fractured, defined and then differentiated in an asymptotic quest for final, definitive meaning. They showed that lexicography could be easily utilized by opponents of a given semantics to establish their own, opposing estimates of the meanings of words. (Tucker 1994, 77)

Tucker sees the genre itself as an inherently political Confucian project, and as the reason why in the Tokugawa period it ended up becoming a sort of an underground movement (ibid., 78). After writing his *Seikyō yoroku,* Yamaga Sokō, "who had never evinced, except in the realm of ideas, the slightest disloyalty to the Tokugawa shogunate" (ibid., 71), was exiled from the capital of Edo to the Akō domain on the orders of Hoshina Masayuki 保科正之 (1611–1673), the guardian of the shogun Ietsuna 徳川家綱 (1641–1680). Hoshina subscribed to the fundamentalist school of Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇斎 (1619–1682), whose views were antithetic to those of the *Kogaku* scholars. Ansai was considered the guardian of Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy, and had by this time managed to supplant even the famous Hayashi School itself (ibid.).

It is probably for this reason that Jinsai, while he himself never did fall afoul of Tokugawa shogunate's censors like Sokō did, did in fact refrain from publishing his most critical works while he was still alive.[6] Jinsai's relationship with the politics of the day for all intents and purposes remains intellectual, but it is also very clear from his writings that he had strong political views, especially supporting the politically more liberal ideas of Mencius.[7] Jinsai's ideas might have gotten him in trouble, if he was not such a non-openly polemic scholar and if his project had

6 Though a pirated version of the *Gomō jigi* did make the rounds and was the version studied by Ogyū Sorai.

7 See for example, Tucker (1997, 244–45).

been happening anywhere nearer to the capital city. As it was, Jinsai never ventured far outside the City of Kyōto in his life, and his political views remained in the realm of his philosophical ideas.

But Tucker argues Jinsai could not have been ignorant of the political realities of his time, and that his project also expresses his political views, which are those of a Kyōto *chōnin*.

Jinsai as a Kyōto *chōnin* Scholar

Setting out Jinsai's project as less a polemical rejection of Neo-Confucian ideas and more a critical revision of them, Tucker explores the possible socio-political and biographical elements, which may have influenced Jinsai's work. He writes:

> More than any other teacher or book, Jinsai's path as a scholar-philosopher was influenced by the socio-political environment into which he was born, that of Kyoto *chōnin* in early-Tokugawa Japan. (Tucker 1998, 39)

Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 was born as Itō Genshichi 伊藤源七 on the 20th day of the seventh lunar month of Kannei 寛永 4 (August 30, 1627) in Kyōto, Japan, as the eldest son of Itō Ryōshitsu 伊藤了室 (1599–1674) and Satomura Nabe 里村那倍 in his family's residence, on the east side of the Horikawa Street. The family residence stood not far from the imperial palace grounds in north central Kyōto and would later become the place of Jinsai's own school, the Kogidō 古義堂 (Tucker 1998, 29). As John Allen Tucker notes:

> (T)he proximity to the palace and the aristocratic community surrounding it facilitated for Jinsai's Kogidō (…) a following among Kyōto's social elite that few if any other Tokugawa schools, before or after, enjoyed. The Itō family was not, however, part of the old stock of Kyōto; rather they were newcomers as of the late sixteenth century. (ibid., 29)

Jinsai's grandfather, Itō Ryōkei 伊藤了慶 (1561–1615), brought scholarship into the family home, but could not interest his own children in it (Ishida 1960, 11). Ryōkei was interested in both the arts and religion, he associated with Zen Buddhists, practiced linked verse (*renga* 連歌) and pursued studies in Confucian thought. The texts that he supposedly owned included copies of important Cheng-Zhu texts, such as Zhu Xi's *Sishu* 四書 (*Commentaries to the Four Books*), Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian's 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) *Jinsilu* 近思錄 (*Reflections of Things at Hand*) and the imperially-sponsored Ming dynasty compilation, the *Xingli*

daquan 性理大全 (*The Great Compendium on Humanness and Principle*). These were allegedly among the first works Jinsai perused in his own studies of Confucian thought (Tucker 1998, 12).

When Jinsai was born the family fortune was already declining, and Jinsai's father wanted his son to pursue medicine, which at the time was a more lucrative profession, but Jinsai's own interests lay in other areas. Tucker writes:

> As a child and adolescent, Jinsai apparently circulated among Kyōto's cultural elite. Despite the low status of *chōnin* within a social system dominated by samurai, Kyōto *chōnin* were exceptions, enjoying relatively higher prestige and social standing as preservers of traditional arts, crafts, and cultural enterprises in the ancient imperial capital. Their standing was realized, however, provided that they remained in Kyōto, a world somewhat apart from the one that samurai otherwise were prone to rule more arrogantly and ruthlessly. (ibid., 32)

When he was ten years old, Jinsai began his formal education under his maternal uncle, Ōsuka Kaian 大須賀快庵, a noted physician, and was said to be impressed when introduced to the *Daxue* 大學 (*The Great Learning*) (Yamashita 1983, 456). At eighteen years old he obtained a copy of *Yanping Dawen* 延平答問 (*Dialogues with Yanping*) and is reported to have read and reread it until its pages disintegrated (ibid.). This brief work, edited by Zhu Xi, advocates the meditative practice of "quiet sitting" (*seiza* 静座), taught to Zhu Xi by Li Yanping.[8] It is quite clear that Jinsai was at this time a student of the Cheng-Zhu School Neo-Confucianism.

Tucker also delves into other possible early textual influences. He offers speculation on Jinsai's own descriptions in the *Dōshikai hikki* 同志會筆記 (*Records of the Society of the Like-Minded Scholars*), where Jinsai describes having read the *Great Compendium on Humanness and Structural Coherence* and the *Zhuzi Yulei* 朱子語類 (*Classified Conversations of Master Zhu*) at the age of 27. Tucker also wonders whether some of those books were not in fact too hard for a beginner and whether some of the titles Jinsai describes might not be copies of other titles, including Beixi's *Xingli Ziyi* (Tucker 1998, 37). Unfortunately, Tucker has to in the end admit that the question of when Jinsai first read the *Ziyi* remains unresolved (ibid.).

8 John Jorgensen discusses Li Yanping as having "taught a method for the realization of the singular pattern or coherence inherent in all divergent particulars, thus underscoring the value and worth of phenomenal reality. (…) Li advocated that students could gradually come to empathize with other things (and perceive coherence thereby) in the daily functions of life *via* quiet sitting and cleansing the mind" (Jorgensen 2018, 44).

Some biographers speculate that Jinsai attended lectures by Matsunaga Sekigo 松永尺五 (1592–1657), the Kyoto-based Neo-Confucian successor of Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩 (1561–1619) and at one time the teacher of Jinsai's cousin, Itō Masatomo 伊藤正知, but there is no actual historical proof of this (Tucker 1998, 38). Other possibilities include Jinsai studying with a fairly obscure and unknown teacher or being largely self-taught (ibid.). Yamashita, on the other hand, writes that Jinsai did indeed briefly study with Matsunaga, but stopped going to his school after only one or two lectures for some unknown reason (Yamashita 1983, 457). In any case, Jinsai in all probability did not have a very influential figure in his early life to study with, and this kind of independence might have also had a not insignificant influence on his thought and work.

Jinsai's pursuit of scholarship was not supported by his family, and in 1655, at the age of 29, this drove him into seclusion at the Kyōto Matsushita Ward. It also brought upon him a certain illness called, using modern terminology, "a neurosis", one which perhaps worsened by a heart condition or tuberculosis (Tucker 1998, 41). It is known that at this time, when he was by himself, Jinsai would communicate with people very rarely and barely leave his residence. His illness did not however stop him from further study, and in those years Jinsai would explore Daoist and Buddhist texts, as well as the Neo-Confucian teachings of Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1559) (ibid., 42). He also established his first study group there, the *Dōshikai* 同志會 (*Society of the Like-Minded Scholars*).

In 1662, and after a devastating earthquake, Jinsai—now 35 years of age and with a firmly renewed faith in the ethical teachings of classical Confucianism—returned to his family residence, where the *Dōshikai* then began to meet. Out of this Jinsai's School, the *Kogidō*, would be born, as well as his *kogaku* philosophy (ibid., 46). The inspiration for establishing the school might actually have been the Yamazaki Ansai School (*Kimonha* 崎門派), which stood across the street from the Itō family home (ibid.). As Jinsai's philosophy is often considered as the answer to Ansai's strict Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy, it is interesting to note the differences in the two scholar's teaching methods.

Tucker writes:

> Unlike Ansai, a demanding teacher who supposedly criticized his students for not memorizing Zhu Xi's writing precisely, Jinsai was more deferential, tolerant, and gentle in teaching, emulating Confucius' more liberal and humanistic pedagogical demeanor. The *Dōshikai* did not emphasize, within the classroom at least, differences between students and their teacher. Distinctions in relative social status were not stressed either. (ibid., 47)

He also notes:

> To some extent, the differences between Jinsai and Ansai reflected their social backgrounds and those of their students. Ansai was the son of a *rōnin*, and his students were mostly *bushi*, while Jinsai's school included representatives from wealthy *chōnin* families, prominent lines of Kyōto physicians, the cultural elite of the ancient capital, and members of the imperial aristocracy from distinguished lines such as the Fujiwara. Perhaps naturally, a strict and demanding atmosphere more prevailed within Ansai's school than in Jinsai's. (Tucker 1998, 47–48)

Even though the Kyōto *chōnin* were afforded some measure of independence, and Jinsai himself maintained scholarly independence from samurai patronage (ibid., 50), the *bakufu* power was quite evident even in Kyōto. Jinsai, living for a long time in the shadow of the imperial castle, could not be unaware of it, nor the wider political situation in the country. It is therefore interesting to note again that while Jinsai never directly engaged with the politics of the day, but his project, Tucker argues, as a proper Confucian one, must be seen as political and as championing the specific *chōnin* worldview. Jinsai also never wrote any political treatise, but his thinking is evident from some of his writings—most especially in his focusing on the people and his adoption, as has already been mentioned, of the more politically liberal ideas of Mencius.

Jinsai is thus a *Kogaku* scholar, influenced by his life as a *chōnin* in the ancient imperial capital of Kyōto. But it seems that to describe his project primarily in those terms might again be an overreach in itself, with the mistake being not taking into account Jinsai's own avowed positions. Jinsai himself never described his project in those terms, and it is doubtful that he would have seen it as such, as his ethical philosophy is in his works repeatedly presented in inclusive and universalistic terms, while maintaining a quite radical apologia of Confucius and Mencius's thought.

Jinsai as a Confucian Radical

Koyasu Nobukuni notes Itō Jinsai's Confucian radicalism in his belief that the *Analects* is the most perfect book in the universe (see Koyasu 2015), and this does have a bearing on Jinsai's project as a whole. In the *Gomō jigi* Jinsai describes his project thusly:

> I teach students to scrutinize the *Analects* and the *Mencius* thoroughly so that they can rightly discern, with their mind's eye, the semantic

> lineage of the teachings of the sage Confucius. When so trained, students will readily recognize the semantic lineage of Confucian-Mencian philosophical notions, and thereby fathom their meanings without error. (trans. Tucker in Tucker 1998, 69)
>
> 予かつて学者に教うるに語孟二書を熟読精思して、聖人の意思語脈をして能く心目の間に瞭然たらしむるときは、すなわちただ能く孔孟の意味血脈を識るのみにあらず、又能くその字義理会して、大いに謬まるに至らざることをもってす。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 14)

But Jinsai's project also had wider implications. Huang Chun-chieh describes it in the following fashion:

> The book[9] (…) represents a type of Confucian hermeneutics in East-Asia, a forceful apologia for Confucius against "heresies" of Daoism, Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism. Jinsai re-interprets Confucius by offering meticulous textual exegesis with fresh intratextual annotations of the *Analects* and faithful definitions of such key notions as *dao* 道 and *ren* 仁 as Confucius himself meant them, on the one hand, and intertextual collations of the *Analects* and the other Classical writings to show their mutual coherence, on the other. (Huang 2008, 248)

Jinsai shows himself in many ways to be a radical Confucian, and as an aggressive opponent of the notions which he believed were developed in the Buddhist and Daoist traditions and which he held to have corrupted the proper Confucian Way. But his view of what might be considered properly Confucian is also grounded in his own project and methodology. Jinsai found in the *Analects* and *Mencius* the textual authority to counter the teaching of the Cheng-Zhu School[10], but it is not that his objections stem from his Confucian radicalism; it is rather that his Confucian radicalism might have stemmed from his objections and search for universally applicable ethical teaching.

Jinsai went so far as to attack one of the four books—the *Great Learning*—as a non-Confucian text, writing a supplementary essay in the *Gomō jigi*, titled "Daigaku wa Kōshi no isho ni arazaru" 大學非孔子之遺書辨 (The Great Learning is

9 The book mentioned here is the *Rongo kogi* 論語古義 (*Ancient Meanings in the Analects*) (see Itō in Koyasu 2017; Itō in Koyasu 2018), which together with the *Gomō jigi* represents Jinsai's most valuable work.

10 As has been discussed, this might follow Lu Xiangshan's method.

Not a Confucian Text)[11]. In the introduction to the essay Jinsai writes the words most closely associated with his radical Confucian stance:

> The words of the *Analects* are plain and honest (*heisei* 平正), but its principles are deep and profound (*shin'on* 深穩). Adding even one word would be excessive. Taking away one would leave it imperfect. The *Analects* is the most perfect work in literature in the entire world (*tenka no gen koko ni oite ka kiwamaru* 天下之言於是乎極矣). It exhaustively explains the principles of the world (*tenka no ri koko ni oite ka tsuku* 天下之理於是乎盡矣). It truly is the greatest book in the universe (*jitsu ni uchū daiichi no sho nari* 實宇宙第一書也). (trans. Tucker in Tucker 1998, 234)
>
> 誠にもって論語の一書、その詞平正、その理深穩、一字を増すときはすなわち剰ること有り、一字を減ずるときはすなわち足らず、天下の言、ここにおいてか極まる。天下の理、ここにおいてか尽く。実に宇宙第一の書なり。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 99 & 160–61)

But Koyasu Nobukuni explains Jinsai's radicalism in different terms, as Jinsai discovering in the *Analects* a confirmation of his own views on everyday ethics and a tool to challenge the Neo-Confucian doctrine (Koyasu 2015, 21–22). Jinsai saying that "to speak of filial piety, brotherly deference, loyalty and trustworthiness suffices"[12], that "where there are not people, the Way will not be seen"[13] shows that in exhaustively reading the *Analects* (and the *Mencius*), Jinsai not only came to possess the language and textual authority to criticize the accounts of Cheng-Zhu School thought and practice (especially as put forth by the already discussed Kimon School of Yamazaki Ansai), but also that his preoccupation, rather than doctrinal, remained always with proper everyday ethical life of the people.

Jinsai's "ten proofs" why the *Great Learning* is not a Confucian text thus begins with his criticism of it as a book that aims at being too lofty and setting out too hard a road for the practice of the Confucian Way. Jinsai writes:

> But the *Great Learning* suggests that progress along the moral way is as difficult as climbing a nine-story pagoda.[14] We mount story after story, until finally reaching its pinnacle. Yet the Confucian way is nothing other

11 This essay was not in the Edo edition of the text, showing how Jinsai's radicalism might have subsequently been downplayed by his son, Itō Tōgai.

12 惟孝弟忠信を言ふて足れり。

13 人無きときは則ち以て道を見ること無し。(See Itō in Shimizu 2017, 27)

14 See *Daodejing*, ch. 64.

> than the Way of Humanity (*hito no michi* 人之道)! Because it was meant to be cultivated, how could it be so remote? Confucius himself remarked, "Is humaneness far away? As soon as I want it, there it is."[15] Mencius added, "The way is close, but can be sought even in distant places."[16] These passages imply that the way is very close by! Why must we climb a tall pagoda to reach it? (trans. Tucker in Tucker 1998, 236)
>
> 大学もって人の道に進む、九層の台に登るがごとく、一階を歴て、又一階を歴て、後進んで台上に至るとするか。それ道は他にあらず、即ち人の道なり。人をもって人の道を修む、何の遠きことかこれ有らん。孔子の曰く、「仁遠からんや。われ仁を欲すれば、ここに仁至る」。孟子の曰く、「道は邇きに在り。しこうしてこれを遠きに求む」。みな道の甚だ近きを言うなり。あに九層の台に登るがごときこと有らんや。(Itō in Yoshikawa and Shimizu 1971, 101, 161)

Jinsai's semantic project then connects to his radicalism concerning the ancient meaning of terms found in the *Analects* and *Mencius*. But this project comes from Jinsai's own striving for an ethical position which was not exclusive, lofty or hard to either understand or achieve; which was not turned to quietism and was not built in a way that demanded gradualism or some sort of ultimate attainment: it simply demanded the effort of sincerity. It demanded sincere practice. To Jinsai, the proper Way is the Way of the human condition itself. It is so fundamentally bound to the basic relations of life that going against it would be impossible to do and remain recognizably human.

If Jinsai's stated project is then first and foremost to discover the ancient meanings of terms—as opposed to the meanings that have become misunderstood through philosophically original interpretations of the Cheng-Zhu School—on the other hand, his work (as has been discussed previously) shows that he never lost sight of philosophical integrity and also conducted his teachings in a philosophically liberal way. In his striving to formulate coherent philosophical positions, supported by the textual authority of the *Analects* and *Mencius,* he also seems to be in line with his ethical project, much more than it being simply a semantic one.

Huang Chun-chieh also affirms this:

> Itō Jinsai thought that the *Analects* is "the loftiest, the greatest Primal Book in the whole universe" precisely because what it conveys are the

15 仁遠乎哉？我欲仁，斯仁至矣 *Lunyu*, 7/30.

16 道在爾而求諸遠 *Mengzi*, 4A/11.

> principles of ordinary daily living. Such a *Dao* bears its inevitable universality and universal effectiveness. (Huang 2008, 260)

Jinsai's project should therefore not be seen as strictly doctrinal and based solely on textual objections, aimed at purifying Confucian orthodoxy of the influences of Buddhism and Daoism (as he himself sees them), but more as a project which combines textual, philosophical and practical objections to the kind of ethical ideals that each of these traditions might have developed—a project, then, that is multi-faceted and complex. Jinsai here is a moralist and an ethicist, trying to fathom the teachings he believed to be true to life but also formulate philosophical answers against developments which he believed damaged the true *Dao* of humanity.

Jinsai's Project as Centered on the Practice of Virtue

Samuel Hideo Yamashita argues that to understand Jinsai, one has to firmly grasp Jinsai's views on the practice of virtue. He writes:

> Although it is commonly believed that Jinsai's philological studies inspired his criticisms of contemporary Neo-Confucian scholars, most of whom subscribed to one variety or another of the philosophy of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi, what has not been recognized is the part played by his new method of ethical practice, which he called, following Mencius, "nourishment" (*yang* / *yashinau* 養). Herein lies the value of studying Jinsai's early life and his preoccupation with the practice of virtue. (Yamashita 1983, 454)

It would be safe to say that Jinsai, as Yamashita points out, was convinced that performing acts of virtue was superior to explicating virtue through the study of the Confucian classics (ibid., 453), but Yamashita also shows that while Jinsai's enduring motivation for studying Confucian thought and engaging in his philological work was his attempt to pursue ancient meaning and achieve the proper practice of virtue, it was his inner need first to object to improper practice on ethical grounds, defend his objections on textual grounds, and then to finally formulate proper philosophical solutions to the problems that were facing him, that formed the core of his project.

The first expressions of Jinsai's thought are his early essays. Jinsai wrote four short essays between 1653 and 1655. They are the "Keisaiki 敬齋記 (Keisai's Testament)", the "Taikyokuron 太極論 (The Doctrine of the Great Ultimate)", the

"Shingakuron 心学論 (The Doctrine of the Learning of the Heart-Mind)", and the "Seizenron 性善論 (The Doctrine of a Felicitous Humanness)". The essays show Jinsai's knowledge and his interest—in this time still strong—in the Cheng-Zhu School; but they also show Jinsai's own preoccupations at the time were mainly with finding answers to the problems he was facing in his own life: alienation from his family and not being ready to follow their wishes for him as a son.[17]

> Jinsai's anguish enhanced the appeal of Cheng-Zhu philosophy, and Cheng-Zhu philosophy, as he interpreted it, salved his loneliness by sanctioning his interest in himself. Jinsai's separation from family and friends and his enormous self-absorption are the keys to his earliest writings. (Yamashita 1983, 458)

It would be during this time that Jinsai would slowly become more and more disillusioned with the Cheng-Zhu School, and he now tried to find answers further afield—in both Daoist and Buddhist texts and practices as well as in the teachings of Wang Yangming. Furthermore, Jinsai also sought personal healing in different kinds of meditation, as he seemed to recognize its power to bring peace to his troubled mind; but he also slowly recognized in meditative practices a deep antisocial streak, which he finally grew to reject. Jinsai's own description of meditation in quite striking, as it shows how he thought about it later in his life. Jinsai would describe his memories of the so-called "skeleton meditation" in the following fashion:

> The Zen Buddhists have a practice of meditating on skeletons. In this method, the devotee first sits quietly, reflecting on himself. When his concentration is complete, he sees himself as a skeleton, stripped of all flesh, and for that moment he is above lamenting his unenlightened state. In my youth, I tried this technique. Sure enough, when I had achieved complete concentration, I saw the skeleton in myself. I also imagined that when I spoke to anyone, I was conversing with another skeleton, and passersby appeared to be walking puppets, and everything seemed to be a dream: there was neither Heaven nor Earth, neither life nor death; and everything, even mountains, rivers and palatial mansions, appeared phantasmal. This is what the Buddhists call clarifying the mind and glimpsing one's humanness. I recall too that filial piety and loyalty seemed shallow and barely worth discussing. After I had practiced quiet sitting for some time, I regained my lucidity, and my views came naturally. (I know now

17 This might be said to represent a true Confucian crisis of identity.

> that) these were not the 'real principles of Heaven and Earth' and that it is because of practices such as this that Buddhists sever all ties with society and withdraw from daily affairs. (trans. Yamashita in Yamashita 1983, 460–61, ed.)
>
> 禅家に白骨を観ずる法といふことあり。白骨を観ずる法とは静座して自己の一身をおもふに、工夫熟ずる時、皮肉悉く脱露して只白骨ばかりあるやうにみゆるとなり。かくのごとき時、悟道せざる事を憂ずとへり。僕曽てわかゝりし時、此法を脩し侍り候。工夫熟して後は、自己の身白骨にみゆるのみならず、他人と語るにも白骨と対談するやうにおもはれ、道行人も木偶人のあるくやうにみゆ。万物皆空相あらはれて、天地もなく生死もなく、山川宮殿までも皆まぼろしのやうに思は侍り候。かれがいはゆる明心見性の理に自然に符合せり。孝悌忠信などは皆其浅くしていふにたらぬやうに覚て侍り。これ僕が静座する事久しくして心地霊明なるの至り、自然に見付たる見解にて天地の実理にあらず。仏者の人倫を掃、日用にはなるゝ皆此理より来れり。(Itō in Ishida 1960, 37–38).

From such experiences Jinsai's distrust of both the practice of meditation and of the Buddhist interpretations of notions that formed its theoretical background—as well as a distrust of what Jinsai called Zen-Confucian practices, such as the aforementioned "quiet sitting"—would emerge. Jinsai would go on to spend his life fighting quietism in Confucian practice as well as what he perceived as quietist principles in Neo-Confucian thought. This is without doubt another major part of his project: a possible starting point. That the experiences were so visceral to Jinsai shows that his shift in thinking was not born from simple doctrinal dislike of Cheng-Zhu school's thought, but from his experiences and his own attempts to come to terms with them. Jinsai struggled with being human and sought solutions both philosophical and practical.

In 1658 Jinsai wrote another short essay, the "Jinsetsu 仁説 (Theory of Humaneness)"; and in 1661 he wrote the "Shosai shishū 書齋私祝 (A Student's Pledge)". In both of them, Jinsai would completely renounce his former self-obsession as well as his Cheng-Zhu influenced views on individualism and sociability. He would become a staunch defender of the Confucian values of filial piety and brotherly love and would also radically shift the focus of his studies from the Neo-Confucian notion of seriousness (*jing / kei* 敬) to the study of the Confucian notion of humaneness (*ren / jin* 仁).[18]

18 This even shows in his choice of a name. Before this time, Jinsai 仁斎 took for himself the name of Keisai 敬斎.

It would seem that this was also a deep personal shift for Jinsai, the once rebel son, and it formed the backbone of the further development of his thought. Soon after, Jinsai's family home was struck by disaster and Jinsai returned there, where he, in time, established his famous school, the *Kogidō*. And of course, Yamashita demonstrates by looking at both Jinsai's writings as well as those of his son Tōgai that the shift in his thinking did not happen all at once, but was developed over many years, most of it between 1662–1677, when returning home he held the many meetings of the *Dōshikai* (ibid.)

> This interim period is important because it was then that Jinsai questioned the adequacy of his earlier textual solution to the problem posed by his affirmation of the emotions and began to search for another, more satisfying solution. His writings from this period, which include his lectures, the topics he raised for discussion in the meetings of the [Society of Like-minded Scholars], and the notes of these meetings, chronicle this search. From them we learn that Jinsai first sought philosophical solutions, then practical ones, and also that the former led to and perhaps even necessitated the latter. (Yamashita 1983, 466)

In this shift, Jinsai also encountered a problem of Zhu Xi's formulation of humaneness as "the *li* of love"[19] as described through Zhu Xi's duality of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣. Jinsai, with his newfound respect for sociality, was afraid that humaneness and human feelings had become too divided by Zhu Xi's formulation. It was to this concrete question, Yamashita argues, that Jinsai sought his answers and it was this question that in the end led him to abandon important aspects of the established duality (ibid., 462). But Jinsai's answers, at first, were based more or less on the simple textual authority of the *Analects* and *Mencius*.

Yamashita argues that Jinsai, having in a strictly ethical sense found himself at odds with elements of Neo-Confucian practice, which to his mind belonged instead to Buddhist and Daoist traditions, found in the *Analects* and *Mencius* the textual authority needed to support his own philosophical views, and through this tried to resolve his problems with Zhu Xi's formulation of the notion of humaneness. At first, however, he did this while still trying to preserve the duality found in the teachings of the Cheng-Zhu School. Later he began to question such textual solutions, which he found unsatisfying, and started searching for more complete philosophical ones (ibid., 468–69).

I will not be discussing here in what ways Jinsai finally managed to resolve the duality between *li* and *qi*. For the purposes of the present article, it is more important

19 See, for example, *Zhuzi yulei,* 6.

to note that Jinsai did in fact go on to formulate philosophical solutions which brought together human feelings and the inner disposition of goodness, and therefore in a certain sense achieved a re-valuation of the given duality, by asserting that "people having the same sense of right and wrong is what was earlier referred to as the feeling of commiseration" (trans. Yamashita in Yamashita 1983, 472; Itō 1717, vol. 4). Thus Jinsai, having combined the original humanness and human feeling, came to a more satisfying philosophical solution, which would have both ontological and ethical consequences.

But he was still not satisfied with this, as Yamashita writes:

> Jinsai recognized that although he had found an easy textual solution and then a more satisfying philosophical solution to the problem of reconciling virtue and the emotions, he had not found a practical solution, that is, an appropriate method of actually embodying virtue. What may have drawn him to Wang Yang-ming, then, was the latter's advocacy of both a monistic ontology[20] and an active form of praxis. (ibid., 473)

In 1662, Jinsai was busy trying to synthesize the views of Mencius and Wang Yangming and primarily interested in the proper practice of virtue. He would later go on to reject Yangming's solutions through embarking on his own philological project, and finally accepting Mencius' notion of *nourishment* as the one proper practice to settle upon.[21] However, while even his rejection of the *Great Learning* as a Confucian text is based on the exact argument that it stresses introspection above nourishment (Yamashita 1983, 478), Jinsai does not deny the value of introspection, but simply argues against any kind of order in which it comes before "nourishment". Still, it is safe to say that Jinsai's philological project, while surely driven by his search for classical textual authority and proper practice of virtue, was just as much driven by Jinsai's need to formulate a proper philosophical response to the prevailing doctrines of his time.

Conclusion

Jinsai's project can thus be traced from his ethical objections, in certain ways influenced by his *chōnin* life, to his search for textual authority through which to counter

20 Whether Wang Yangming had indeed formulated a monistic ontology can be disputed.

21 Yamashita writes: "Although it is possible that his decision to emphasize nourishment, albeit aimed at Yang-ming, was influenced by the latter's glorification of action, Jinsai did not acknowledge this influence but instead cited the Mencius as his *locus classicus*, as if this were sufficient authority." (Yamashita 1983, 475)

the quietist elements of the Cheng-Zhu School's interpretations, his attempts to formulate a philosophical solution to the problems posed, and on to practical solutions: a search for the proper practice of virtue. His radical views of the *Analects* and its ethical universality can be seen as no less important than his status as a townsman of the City of Kyōto and his philosophical work of establishing ancient meaning within the genre of philosophical lexicography can be seen as no less important than his textual objections to overreaching interpretational and commentarial work. But his final goal is clearly not simply contemplative, it is also decidedly practical.

Still, even though the philosophical work of Jinsai might perhaps be seen as neither the starting point, nor the actual goal, it can also be said to be the central activity that holds his project together. In this sense, philosophy to Jinsai might be seen as the means to an end, but that is also very much in line with the Confucian tradition. As John Allen Tucker has pointed out, Jinsai can certainly be regarded as one of the early-modern Tokugawa philosophers, and his work on Confucian ethics can be seen as important to that project. As his work had thus been shown to represent a specific mix of methods and influences, his own project can be considered as multi-faceted but also as philosophically relevant.

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DISCUSSIONS

Towards Post-Comparative Philosophy

Interview with Ralph WEBER by Nevad KAHTERAN***

Ralph Weber was born to Swiss parents in 1974 in Johannesburg, South Africa. He studied Staatswissenschaften (politics, economics and law) at the University of St. Gallen and at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. He then went on to study at the University of Hawai'i in Manoa and the University of Peking. He obtained his PhD in 2007 at the University of St. Gallen, and for a decade taught the history of political ideas and political theory there. Between 2008 and 2014, Weber was employed as post-doctoral researcher and senior researcher and lecturer at the University Research Priority Program "Asia and Europe" at the University of Zurich. In December 2014, Weber began his work as an Assistant Professor at the Institute for European Global Studies of the University of Basel. In 2016, he successfully completed his habilitation in Philosophy (*venia legendi*: comparative philosophy) at the University of Zurich. At the University of Basel, he holds full examination and promotion rights in Political Science, Philosophy, and European Global Studies, and in 2020 was promoted to Associate Professor. He has been the book review editor (Europe) for *Philosophy East and West* and since 2017 the President of the European Association for Chinese Philosophy (EACP).

Dear Ralph, according to your CV, your interests can be summarized in these three fields:

Comparative philosophy and questions concerning philosophy of comparison, as well as programmatic suggestions of a post-comparative philosophy;

Chinese philosophy, i.e. classic and modern Confucianism, particularly the sociological and political aspects, current political philosophy of the People's Republic of China and contemporary Chinese politics; and

* Ralph WEBER, Professor for European Global Studies / Director of the MA and PhD Programs in European Global Studies, Institute for European Global Studies, University of Basel.
Email address: ralph.weber@unibas.ch

** Nevad KAHTERAN, Professor of Eastern and Comparative Philosophy at the University of Sarajevo.
Email address: nevad.kahteran@ff.unsa.ba

Global political theory and the history of ideas, theoretical and practical questions of text interpretation as well as conceptual and methodological aspects of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural research, including discussions around Eurocentrism, area studies, and European global studies.

Let us start our conversation with the name for your research area, "Politics and Philosophy in European Global Knowledge Production", which focuses on Europe and its role in global knowledge production, straddling across the disciplines of Philosophy, Political Science and European Global Studies with its five research topics. Can you tell us a bit more about this, and what holds it together as a research focus?

Ralph Weber: Sure. Knowledge production is a key factor in our contemporary world. Its workings, promises and problems are intimately related to the pertaining social, economic and political conditions. The tension between philosophy, which fashions itself as being exclusively about knowledge, and politics, which understands knowledge at best as one goal among many and at worst consciously instrumentalizes it, is age-old. Today, in a time when historical legacies meet new global realities, the conditions and possibilities for knowledge production have become increasingly complex and entangled. The five research topics that I currently pursue are 1. Comparison and Comparative Philosophy; 2. European Studies from a Global Perspective; 3. European Global Studies: Concepts, Methods, and Aims; 4. Global History of Political Thought; and 5. Chinese Politics (BRI, China's Sharp Power and influence operations, Swiss-Chinese Relations). At first glance, these might look like quite disparate topics, but in my mind they add up quite consistently and build around the key idea of European Global Studies. This is of course not about making the global an extension of the European. It advocates a relational approach to Europe, which is a concept so elusive and contingent that it escapes in my view any attempt to fix it in a philosophical idea, as some previous philosophers have tried to fixate it. This relationality also explains why someone like me, who has research interests in "Africa" and "Asia", particularly "China", feels completely at home at an institute that has "Europe" in its name. The point is more about understanding how different actors and institutions make conceptual use of "European"/"non-European" and similar concepts, and how these politics inform our own knowledge claims when we, for instance, engage in philosophical argument or define disciplines in academia. One underlying problematic of all this is the problem of Eurocentrism, which is a topic that I've been teaching for several years and which continues to be high on my research agenda. Together with colleagues from Zurich, Edinburgh and Basel, we just launched a four-year research project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation, on the topic of "Reversing the Gaze: Towards Post-Comparative Area Studies", which has quite a few interlinkages with my work in comparative philosophy, but is bringing together a variety of disciplines.

Comparative Philosophy without Borders ***(written together with Arindam Chakrabarti, currently at Stony Brook University in New York) speaks about four phases of Comparative Philosophy in a Pluralistic World. According to your best insights and knowledge, in which phase are we right now?***

Ralph Weber: We divide the history of comparative philosophy into roughly three phases and advocate that we are indeed at the beginning of a new, a fourth phase, or at least that this is where we should be. We talk of stages rather than phases, since one phase has not simply replaced an earlier one such as in a palimpsest, but instead like stages building on each other they continue to co-exist in parallel and crisscrossing fashion. Let me just recall the three stages first, as we lay them out in the book. These are really just more caricatures than solid historical accounts, but they are supposed to bring out a contrast of basic ideas in terms of universalism, localism, and their critical conjuncture.

The imperative at the first stage amounted to something like modern Western philosophy has sophisticated debates about, say, freedom of the will, so let's find something similar in Indian or African philosophy. This exercise resulted in statements such as "we/they had something similar (but something which had to be looked for, retrieved)." Similar to the idea of strategic essentialism, some might have pursued a more strategic motivation in finding various resemblances, overlaps, and anticipations, namely to draw attention to non-Western traditions in the first place. It was thus happily and often apologetically claimed that Chinese thinkers also had philosophy and ethics in the Greek sense, that there was also logic and phenomenology in India! More boldly (with the arrogance of cultural insecurity), some asserted that "we said all of that long ago", and "we said it much better long before you". The basic idea at this stage is universalism.

At the second stage of comparative philosophy, the impetus was more to find contrasts and context-dependent culture-immanent peculiarities in non-Western philosophies, and to detect specific lacks compared to the Western tradition. The resulting lack-discourse ran a gamut of asserting that there was no possibility, no propositions, no deductive validity, no free will or a priori in Indian philosophy, no ontology, no logic and no truth claims in Chinese philosophy, no formal logic in African philosophy, and so on and so forth, or simply no philosophy at all. The moderate version drew the conclusion that these missing elements had to be introduced and adapted into Indian, Chinese or African philosophy. A more strident version of the second stage had it that these philosophies, if they were to retain their unique character, are better off without this Western theoretical stuff. Indian philosophy can easily do without the idea of "possible worlds", which shows that it is far from being a necessary or compelling topic to discuss. It thus

became an intellectual option to assert with confidence the lack of this or that, that there was no notion of correspondence truth or a creator God transcending the empirical world in Chinese philosophy, and no subject-object dichotomy in Latin American philosophy. That was in fact thus not even a lack, but a major strength. The implication was that Western philosophy should question these notions because there could be such rich traditions eschewing them altogether. The basic idea here is localism.

The third stage comprises some of the best comparative philosophy written today, that is, at the critical conjuncture between universalism and localism. The imperative is to re-interpret Indian, Chinese, or Japanese philosophy in terms of Western philosophical ideas as much as contributing to English-language philosophy by bringing in elements of Asian or African or Hawaiian philosophy. Such crisscrossing comparative philosophy harks back to the regional or intra-traditional philosophical traditions, the Western analytic, the Continental phenomenological, the Indian analytic, the Indian sociocultural, the Asian literary, the Feminist European, the historical-political, the literary aesthetic, and enriches them with the lessons of comparison. In this sense, we are approaching a more level and global epistemic playing field, and I would understand much of this in the context of the postcolonial and decolonial critiques of Eurocentrism at the intellectual level, as well as the increased connectivity at the practical level, including the new digital and technological possibilities that have changed our ways of communication and invalidated previous excuses for non-communication. Against this background, there is an immense space to be filled with studies and research deploying a more global vocabulary and trying the cross-cultural enterprise the other way. Importantly, however, many such attempts directly or indirectly remain tied to a comparative setting that operates with notions such as "Chinese", "European", "Japanese", "Islamic" philosophy, and so on.

This is where we stand today. Now, in our book, *Comparative Philosophy without Borders*, Arindam Chakrabarti and I wanted to put a spin on the practice of comparative philosophy at the third, current stage, which eventually might lead us to a fourth stage. The spin would take us beyond comparative philosophy to what I prefer to call "post-comparative" philosophy, but others, who work towards similar ends like, for example, Jonardon Ganeri, call by various different names. It would amount to just doing philosophy as one thinks fit for getting to the truth about an issue or set of issues, by appropriating elements from all philosophical views and traditions one knows of but making no claim of "correct exposition", and instead just addressing hitherto unsolved problems and possibly raising issues that have never been considered before, anywhere. The crucial point is one about epistemic authority. An argument is not persuasive because

it is one made, say, from within Indian philosophy, but it is persuasive because it is a good argument.

In this fourth stage, comparative philosophy can become truly borderless and eventually drop its epithet "comparative", although one should anticipate strong resistance against this last phase of dropping the qualifier. Good creative philosophy in a globalized world should spontaneously straddle geographical areas, languages and cultures, temperaments and time-periods (mixing classical, medieval, modern, and postmodern), styles and subdisciplines of philosophy, as well as mix methods, sprinkling phenomenology, and political economic analysis into analytic logicolinguistic or hermeneutic, or culture studies or literary or narrative methods—whatever comes handy. The result would be either very flaky mishmash or first-rate original work. Philosophers, especially those who strive for clarity and truth, have to live with more confusion than clear and distinct ideas, when they welcome fusion philosophy as their preferred genre.

There is a double movement required for a global post-comparative philosophy along these lines. On the one hand, comparative philosophy should simply be philosophy or, as we say in our book, "just philosophy", in both senses of the term "just", but with the distinguishing characteristic of being informed by a more global outlook, of which a variety of styles and conceptualizations is and probably should be advocated. This should not imply, in my view, the more radical stance that all philosophy must be such and only such philosophy. I still find it perfectly legitimate for a philosopher to study with, against and beyond Wittgenstein for all his or her professional career, or to work at the exciting space opened up between analytic philosophy and cognitive science, etc. What it implies is a normalization, say, to start an essay on Wittgenstein not with a contrasting reference to Plato, but to Al-Farabi, Dharmakīrti or Gloria Anzaldúa, that is, approaching Wittgenstein from a different positionality, or to work on the space between analytic philosophy and cognitive science by including arguments derived from Tibetan Buddhism. On the other hand, philosophy—regardless of whether comparative, post-comparative or decidedly not either—must find ways to connect to other disciplines in productive ways. Just as such connections exist with cognitive science or linguistics, it is imperative for philosophy, say, to introduce more up-to-date historiographical approaches when writing the history of philosophy, or to study how the meso-level of philosophical institutions interrelates with philosophical debates, thus establishing a sociology of philosophy within philosophy departments. Added to this is the question of interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, or, as my colleague in Basel, the global historian Madeleine Herren-Oesch, among others, proposes, post-interdisciplinarity, which I understand as an attempt to move beyond the often fruitless and poorly informed controversies of

disciplinarity *versus* interdisciplinarity. In other words, philosophy understood as a distinct but global discipline and a self-critical enterprise, that is aware of its own contingencies, the power-knowledge nexus, and new global realities, should not only be progressive by finding common ground with cognitive science and some select natural sciences, but also by redefining its relationship to disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences and epistemic formations beyond disciplinarity, and by updating its own ways of how to do philosophy in line with new digital and technological possibilities. This is really a point about diversifying philosophy, including current comparative philosophy, precisely in order to ensure its own attractive and distinct identity.

The need for a philosophy of comparison suggested in your opus poses a series of intriguing and intricate questions, comparing what with what, and in what respect? What "philosophy" is comparative philosophy comparing? And especially "how to compare?", or rather can you say a little more on the question of the methodological state of Comparative Philosophy?

Ralph Weber: Comparison is still a puzzle to me in many ways. I began with a static and I would think quite consensual view of comparison, which analytically distinguishes four aspects of comparison: 1) A comparison is always made by someone; 2) At least two relata (*comparata*) are compared; 3) The *comparata* are compared in some respect (*tertium comparationis*); and 4) The result of a comparison is a relation between the *comparata* in view of the respect chosen. Obviously, much hinges on the comparer, who for some reason or another has come to believe that, although everything is somehow comparable with everything else, the chosen *comparata* are particularly worthy of "being thrown together side by side" (παραβάλλειν), i.e. that they ought to be compared. I have claimed that it is useful to distinguish a fifth aspect that needs to be located in the above, roughly chronological characterisation of comparison between the first and second aspects: 5. The two (or more) *comparata* share a pre-comparative *tertium*, constituted by at least one commonality (i.e. being chosen for comparison by the comparer) and usually by many more commonalities (*tertia*). Crucially, most of these commonalities are already well established (even if only vaguely, implicitly known to the comparer, who is perhaps also unaware of them) before the comparer sets out to compare them. These commonalities inform the decision to compare and have a huge, but little-understood impact on the concrete respects for which one then sets out to compare whatever one compares. Of course, this touches on a whole lot of hermeneutical issues.

In light of this insight, I have then shifted my attention toward a more dynamic view of comparison, trying to understand what happens when we compare in

terms of the objects of comparison. At this juncture, I introduced another distinction. Before, I indiscriminately referred to *comparata*, but a finer distinction has *comparanda* on the one side (that which the comparer sets out to compare), and refers to that which is and comes to have been compared in the course of the comparison as *comparata* instead. In light of this distinction, the pre-comparative *tertium* emerges as a privileged vantage point from which to carry out analyses of comparisons. This gives us an opportunity with regard to the comparer (inasmuch as there is any such opportunity) to uncover the reasons and purposes attached to the comparison and to reconstruct some of the presuppositions that guided the comparer's understanding of the *comparanda* merely based on the given text that contains the comparison. That a comparer has compared two (or more) *comparata* without having any presupposition whatsoever that has led them to choose these *comparanda*, and not others, is a rare case, if it is possible at all. In academic comparison, where the universe of cases is always in one or another way predefined, we can safely rule out the existence of such a case. This means to the extent that the choice of *comparanda* is not random and motivated by asserted commonalities (beyond the one commonality of each being a *comparandum*), knowledge of these commonalities is in itself the result of prior comparison. For how else can you come to hold that two objects (or events, or anything else) share a commonality, if you have not put them next to one another and compared them with the aim of discovering a relation of commonality between them?

From a broader perspective, the pre-comparative *tertia* of a given comparison are often drawn from earlier comparisons (they are in this sense post-comparative), while the given comparison will necessarily produce new post-comparative *tertia* (perhaps in turn used in later comparisons as pre-comparative *tertia*). Thus emerges a dynamic network of a great chain of comparisons. As important as it is to understand this inevitable broader context in a given case of comparison, it is also pertinent to understand the exact workings of the case at hand as much as possible. The distinctions between *comparanda* and *comparata* as well as the pre-comparative *tertium*, the *tertium comparationis* and the post-comparative *tertium* offer an analytically refined take on an artificially isolated given case of a single comparison. However, examined more closely, it is found to contain just another chain and complex structure of comparisons which informs the resulting relation of the overall comparison. The proposed vocabulary helps highlight (and analyse) the inner dynamic of a given case of comparison, as advanced in the many scholarly articles or research projects announcing a comparative study in their titles, but also in more hidden comparative settings.

The inner dynamic in a chosen case of comparison marks an important gap that any comparative inquiry is bound to produce. When choosing to compare two

comparanda, the comparer has some presupposition or presumed knowledge of what the *comparanda* are. When then comparing them in each other's light, the comparer inevitably through this very effort acquires new knowledge about the *comparanda*, i.e. knowledge that he or she could not possibly have possessed before the comparison. This is the gap between what the *comparanda* and the *comparata* are in the understanding or knowledge of the comparer. Still, distinguishing between *comparanda* and *comparata* should not mislead us into thinking that the two are clearly distinct. In the process of comparison, *comparanda* are being transformed into *comparata*. The two terms demarcate an analytic distinction for two different stages in that transformation. But obviously, and without going into the intricate metaphysical problems of the nature of change, alteration, and transformation, the claim must be that the resulting *comparata* are still in an important way the same as the initial *comparanda*. In one sense, but not in another, for they are the same and they are different. If they were not the same in any sense, merely different, then the comparison would not have been what it was supposed (and perhaps announced) to be about. Were they the same and no different, then no inquiry and no comparison would have taken place.

Against this static and dynamic understanding of comparison, I have then delved into some specific questions, like the role of generalization, vagueness, the relation between comparison and analogy, the presumed problem of one-sidedness (which is not simply hermeneutical pre-judgement), the standard but in my view confused expression of comparison being about "similarities and differences", etc. All of this I found very rewarding, but, if anything, it increased my sense of puzzlement. One aspect that I was becoming very interested in concerns the fourth aspect in the static conception of comparison, namely the result of a comparison, which is conventionally understood as "a relation" between the *comparanda* "in view of the respect chosen". Actually, reading this carefully would bring one already to the conclusion that the result of a comparison is a relational relation, one in terms of the two *comparanda* and another one in terms of the respect in which the comparison has been done.

I linked this to a closer examination of the *tertium comparationis* (the respect) as located on a ladder of abstraction (an idea that I later learned Giovanni Sartori had worked on long ago in comparative politics), with maximal particularity at the one end and maximal abstraction at the other end. The level of abstraction chosen directly determines whether something in the end comes to be viewed as a commonality or a difference. This insight was a revelation for me. It helped me better understand what happens in academic group discussions, how disagreement more often than not is about the appropriate level of abstraction (specialists for obvious reasons tend to resist abstraction, while comparatists depend on

it), and how the perceived danger of one-sided comparison to some extent relies on a mistaken view of comparison, confusing singularity with particularity. Being as clear and precise as possible about the chosen level of abstraction for one's *tertium comparationis* is absolutely crucial for informed comparative discussions. Without it, what is claimed as a difference literally could also be a commonality. It is this sort of issue that has led me to believe that we really still do not quite know what we do when we compare things. Discussions across disciplines and comparative approaches (including law, theology or religious studies) are really important (political science, for instance, is great on selection bias, theology in turn on incomparability) and I am glad that Mark van Hoecke and Maurice Adams are editing a soon to be published volume (with Edward Elgar) exactly in this spirit.

Obviously, Comparative Philosophy has had its problems for decades and it has to be replaced with a more suitable approach, and I can agree with some of our mutual colleagues like Jana Rošker that the notion (and the methods) of comparative philosophy are outdated in the present forms. I have on my mind her new book that has been accepted for publication at Bloomsbury next year: **Interpreting Chinese Philosophy: A New Methodology.** ***Which one will be more convenient for you: Comparative or Post-Comparative, Cross-Tradition engagement in philosophy, Cross-Cultural Philosophy, Fusion Philosophy having on my mind Robert E. Allinson's contributing article ("*** **The Myth of Comparative Philosophy or the Comparative Philosophy Malgré Lui** ***") to Bo Mou's edited volume*** **Two Roads to Wisdom?—Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Tradition** ***(Open Court, 2001), as well as your own work that you co-edited with Arindam Chakrabarti,*** **Comparative Philosophy without Borders** ***(Bloomsbury Academic, 2015)?***

Ralph Weber: Of course, I have some personal preferences for my own approach, but I would not want everyone to accept and adopt it. That would not be helpful. I love seeing a kind of flourishing methodological pluralism, and I'm currently busy putting together an edited volume with Robert Smid and Steven Burik, featuring and discussing very different methodological approaches to comparative philosophy (forthcoming with Bloomsbury Academic). And I'd want to reserve the right for myself to use different approaches in different projects. Still, methodological pluralism might sometimes mean as little as that everyone does whatever they want, and method is then looked upon as of less importance. This is not my view. I think we need a healthy and vigorous discussion on method that necessarily and rightly remains inconclusive, and we also need more discussion on methodological pluralism at the meta-level. I have just finished a book manuscript with Martin Beckstein on this, regarding questions of interpretation in political theory (forthcoming with Routledge).

Personally, I have taken great joy in reading early Enlightenment philosophers who tackled the question of how to reconcile dogmatism with scepticism some three hundred years ago. They opted for eclecticism. Their point was not to create a third position, but rather to adopt a philosophical attitude that allowed combining the virtues of these philosophical traditions. Meant to serve as a "permanent makeshift solution" (Schneiders), philosophical eclecticism can be characterized as a meta-theoretical disposition *vis-à-vis* philosophical positions. Following scepticism, eclecticists stressed the importance of doubt. In contrast to Descartes, however, the *dubitatio eclectic*, as e.g. articulated by Christian Thomasius, aimed at questioning prejudices selectively and successively, rather than systematically—and remained committed to the quest for truth.

Eclecticism involves a self-critical disposition. It manifests itself in a commitment to fallibilism, which Thomasius expressed as sticking to his eclectically derived truths only "until somebody else disabuses myself from misconception." Finally, the critical/self-critical selection of elements from philosophical positions is guided by the *libertas philosophandi*. In other words, the eclecticist's work does not limit itself to a thoughtless combination of other people's thoughts, but takes the liberty to balance, interpret and appropriate them for the purpose of original philosophical construction. The eclectic *conciliatio* is not a harmonizing operation that marginalizes difference. On the contrary, mediation requires recognition of distinctness.

To eclecticism, I would add pragmatism. The work of early Enlightenment eclecticists included proto-pragmatist ideas. They were perceptive of the need to adapt ideas to the changing circumstances. Thomasius even likened truth to the useful, and the useful in turn to that which promotes welfare. Yet American pragmatism, as especially associated with the work of William James, more consequently encourages us to grasp theories or approaches as tools to make conscious, selective use of for our specific research projects. American pragmatism thus productively adds to philosophical eclecticism. And it is well-suited for a conceptual marriage because, like philosophical eclecticism, it is a meta-theoretical posture rather than a substantial standpoint, because it cultivates a like-minded distance to both dogmatism and scepticism and is equally committed to fallibilism (John Dewey). The Italian philosopher Giovanni Papini has given us the metaphor that most aptly captures the kind of methodological pluralism that a pragmatist eclecticism would advocate. As quoted by William James:

> (Pragmatism) lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith

> and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms.

This is how I would like to see practitioners of (post-)comparative philosophy pursue their projects in different rooms, but come together in the corridor where philosophy would also meet politics, economy, and so much more—a meeting that those philosophers would have to endure and successfully pass before they could claim more social relevancy beyond their own discipline.

BOOK REVIEW

Marie GIBERT-FLUTRE, and Heide IMAI, eds. *Asian Alleyways: An Urban Vernacular in Times of Globalization*

*Reviewed by Daniel BULTMANN**

(2020. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. 228 pages. ISBN-13: 978-9463729604ISBN-10: 9463729607.)

Alleyways in Asian metropoles can be spaces of refuge, vibrant communities, collective memory, mosaic-like identity formation, through traffic and shortcuts, and dense, conflict-laden interactions between the established residents and newcomers. They can be spaces of transit, territories of daily life, or both. They can be commodities for gentrification, with fading traditions and architectures, or pathways for reconciling development with community support. They can be marginal places with marginalized people or famous parts of a city, attracting tourists and the affluent. They can be traditional neighbourhoods in decline or sites of constant transformation and top-down or bottom-up reinvention. The only characteristics that seem to unite them—and hence all the case studies in this edited volume—are their narrowness and unclear positions, as many of these often less-known areas have unclear ownership and do not even appear on official maps. The volume edited by Marie Gibert-Flutre and Heide Imai approaches the ever-changing, multi-faceted Asian alleyways as spaces of everyday practice through dense descriptions of the quotidian and interviews with urban planners, businesspeople, and the residents of these "liminal places" (Jones 2007), thus bringing to light these often neglected—in real life as well as in academia—in-between spaces.

The volume presents a fascinating kaleidoscope of rich ethnographic detail gathered from metropoles across Asia, such as Ho Chi Minh City, Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul, Bangkok, Shanghai, Taipei, and Hong Kong. It furthers discussions on how spaces create collectives, how collectives create space, and how social change, local politics, and recent modes of globalization impact lived realities in Asian cities. The volume also shows how private life, public life, and the

* Daniel BULTMANN, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany. Email address: daniel.bultmann@hu-berlin.de

conflicts within and between them are negotiated in these dense spaces, as well as how alleyways not only create identities but also put these identities under duress. These insightful, multi-faceted descriptions do not only pertain to the realm of academia. Many contributors are additionally concerned with the consequences of and their own policy recommendations for urban planning, and with bottom-up neighbourhood initiatives or projects emanating from research that tests different spatial arrangements and interventions with the aim of impacting social behaviour.

Gibert-Flutre opens the volume with a chapter that characterizes Ho Chi Minh City's alleyways as liminal spaces "between 'network' and 'territory'" (p. 33). Since alleyways are related to a "network", they serve as connectors within the city. An increasing density of motorized circulation turns alleyways into crowded passages for city traffic. However, alleyways are also places of "territory", meaning spaces in which various facets of social life take place. Gibert-Flutre stresses that when alleyways are viewed as liminal interfaces, they (unsurprisingly) serve the dual functions of "territory" and "network" simultaneously. Using a wide range of data and established methods, such as urban morphology analysis, participative observation, and qualitative interviews within two alleyway neighbourhoods, Gibert-Flutre also shows how Ho Chi Minh City's alleyways result from both planned and spontaneous development, how they are transformed through governmental attempts to "civilize" and "modernize" them alongside their residents, how they are commodified as "cultural neighbourhoods", how their residents challenge transformations that occur through urban planning, and how population growth and traffic increasingly threaten their territorial function.

In her chapter on post-Olympic Beijing, Judith Audin offers a particularly vibrant, insightful ethnographic description of *hutong* society and the micro-politics of control, identity formation, and subalternity in a marginalized, dense space where residents constantly negotiate social and spatial distance. Audin focuses on the microlevel power networks coalescing around the territorial identities of the rich, poor, "established", and "outsiders", including "newcomers" (Elias and Scotson 1965), as well as the processes of distinction among residents who own different types of housing. She demonstrates how conflicts over the demarcation of private and public life characterize daily life and must be negotiated among various resident groups. The chapter also describes how authenticity is commodified as a brand, and thus can be leveraged to restructure the lanes with ventures such as guesthouses, coffee shops, and souvenir shops. During the commodification of the lanes, a strong division develops among residents, business owners, and outside visitors, which is accompanied by the micropolitics of grassroots party organizations seeking to mediate conflicts, organize community and sociocultural

events, and set up local patrols of volunteers to maintain "order". Like the opening chapter by Gilbert-Flutre, this one describes the attempts of the government to "sanitize", "reshape", and "civilize" the alleys along with the marginalized sections of their populations. The chapter analyses the formation of social stratification within a "street corner society" (Whyte 1943), how local identities are constructed distinctly from those of other social groups within a tightly-knit neighbourhood, and how resistance develops against governmental control.

Turning to the cases of Tsukuda and Tsukishima in Tokyo and Insadong and Ikseondong in Seoul, Heide Imai presents everyday narratives in which places serve as common territories for socially fragmented cities where "multiple and hybrid identities coexist" (p. 108). Unsurprisingly, she emphasizes that "it depends on the perspective of the individual as to how an everyday place like the alleyway is perceived and valued" (ibid.). Overall, the volume collects a wide range of interesting ethnographic materials that often provide valuable insights into urban placemaking. Yet some conclusions remain analytically vague or even commonplace, such as that old structures vanish, that spaces are marked by memories in which the past and present intersect, that spaces are associated with different individual meanings, and that different social groups make different use of places.

Adding fruitful tension to this volume, some authors take a surprisingly positive stance on gentrification and change. Wimonrart Issarathumnoon, for instance, discusses preservation efforts in the Phra Athit-Phra Sumen area of Bangkok that intend to promote cultural and creative sites. The author emphasizes that this area—now filled with coffee shops, restaurants, bookshops, art galleries, and the like—was transformed from "'urban ordinaries' into creative places" (p. 115), mainly due to state-led preservation efforts and bottom-up grassroot initiatives. While the area attracted many new residents and visitors, some older residents managed to upscale their smaller shops and cafés into larger businesses. The relatively original positionality of the author is interesting. For her, gentrification is revitalization, a means to harmonize the old with new, while only "some government policies aimed at promoting mass tourism and massive urban facilities have demoted charming local sites into characterless, formal, and unnecessarily monumental projects" (p. 134). She views commodification pragmatically and only criticizes state-led interventions if they create lifeless, meaningless monuments. While she clearly does not reflect upon this, her relatively unique position highlights the lack of consideration for positionalities in papers that decry the loss of tradition and, coming from different angles, may romanticize the past. Stronger reflection on positionalities in the field (Berger 2015)—for instance, how locals perceive the researcher and how he or she perceives the locality—would have deepened the analysis of the chapter's dense, sometimes overly descriptive ethnographic material.

Shanghai *lilong* residences are the focus of the chapter by Jiayu Ding and Xiaohua Zhong. Building on Henri Lefebvre (1991), they maintain that the *lilong* have changed from spaces of everyday life into conceived spaces that are gentrified and "dominated by political power and professional elites like scientists, urbanists, and architects" (p. 140). The most interesting aspect of the analysed transformation is how Ding and Zhong emphasize the specific intersection of capitalist interests and the legitimacy of central planning in Shanghai. While gentrification in Shanghai may have a similar pattern to that of European or North American cities (e.g., the lived spaces of marginalized populations are turned into art centres and eventually become capital-accumulating tourist attractions), "the mechanisms are totally different. Besides the state-driven or market-driven mode, the story of Shanghai shows greater eagerness for informal revenue from the bottom and regularization from the top" (p. 154). The result is a similarly conceived and commodified space, yet state intervention and the drivers of transformation within the informal revenue market both hold greater legitimacy among the populace.

Jeffrey Hou explicitly connects his analysis with his childhood memories of life in a semi-private, semi-public alleyway in Taipei, where the exteriors that multiple street vendors frequent also serve as the extensions of cramped homes. Hou views alleyways as potential sites for "commoning", where residents with various social backgrounds interact and resolve conflicts. As an example, he presents a conflict that occurred in the Shida Night Market, one of Taipei's most famous market areas. A group of "community workers" ameliorated tensions by staging several spatial and social interventions. They established community hubs, such as the White Hub, an active makerspace resulting from an event involving the collection of tools scattered on the streets. Consequently, residents with otherwise socially distant backgrounds began to interact within a non-profit realm in which neighbours with technical skills taught visitors how to repair their household items. Community gardens, storage spaces, and knitting and weaving workshops also fostered community understanding, cohesion, and cooperation. The density of the interactions between different social groups, types of residents, small- and large-scale businesses, private households, and political layers may lead to conflict. However, rephrasing Hou through the words of Emile Durkheim (2013 [1893]), neighbourhood conflicts can be turned into lived "mechanic solidarities" through community interventions.

Hou's chapter, which exemplifies how bottom-up social-engineering solidarity initiatives can ameliorate conflicts, is complemented by Melissa Cate Christ and Hendrik Thieben's report on social and spatial experiments in laneway spaces in Hong Kong. The chapter is the result of a study on the behavioural effects of social and spatial arrangements. Its aim was to gather data for a case study and apply it

in a still-ongoing project entitled "Magic Lanes", which is taking place in one of the oldest districts, Sai Ying Pun. In essence, the authors sought to "provide more inclusive public open spaces through placemaking and community co-creation" (p. 182). The construction of a railway line and governmental revitalization projects negatively impacted the area, resulting in sky-rocketing rents far exceeding the average household incomes of long-time residents. In view of the developments in that area, the authors' project aimed to democratize placemaking, create more open and inclusive public realms, and empower citizens in the process. The studied lanes within the locality have a unique morphology: they consist of different kinds of stairs. Largely due to these "street stairs" that cover the width of a street, these lanes are not used by traffic. This lack of traffic offers special restrictions and suggests potential usages. The study team began with qualitative research on community engagement, turned their results into a set of community events, and then made changes to the spatial arrangements of the lanes and their wide steps.

By using social engineering techniques supported by scientific evidence from previous data collection, the researchers encouraged the residents to socialize through placing furniture throughout the lane and holding a community festival, thereby establishing inter-group trust and fostering their collaborative capacities: "Through temporal interventions, the project team was able to test potential layouts for the lane and to document their impact on circulation patterns and social behavior" (p. 201). This fascinating study and its set of interventions into the of spatiality community life reinforce how space interacts with group identities. Nevertheless, in that regard, it is also worth noting that the project in many respects falls under the category of a "conceived space", as discussed in Ding and Zhong's chapter. That is, it functions as a space that scientists and architects create to yield specific behavioural changes. While the researchers sought to empower the residents, they also used the space as a power technique. In light of the notions and critical perspectives on urban development in other papers in the volume, a deeper reflection on that paradox would have enhanced the collection. The scientists and their project are part of a micropolitics of power in which certain interpretations of a "good" society—a sense of community, increased interaction in public realms, and certain varieties of stronger inclusion and cohesion—are "created." Whether this project actually changes patterns and inequities in social power is questionable. What it certainly does is cushion potential drivers of conflict within the structure. These "improvements" to community life may have unintended side effects that foster gentrification and marginalization for those affected by recent spikes in rent.

Finally, the conclusion does not systematically compare the different localities, theoretical angles, and empirical approaches contained in the volume. Rather, it

primarily meditates on the future of "integrated and diverse alleyways" (p. 211). The diversity of alleyways and their imaginations is at once an analytical and comparative problem throughout the volume, and diversity is also its biggest strength. Without systematic reflection on positionality and the similarities and differences among cases, many promising perspectives are only expressed as silent conversations among chapters. The concluding discussion by the editors clarifies that they are far more critical of the gentrification, marginalization, and commodification processes occurring within the studied localities than some of their contributors. A more systematic comparison of the chapters would have been a significant asset for the volume. As it stands, the chapters do not speak as much among each other as they could have. While differing in many empirical and theoretical respects, they still communicate with each other. All contributions are, for instance, connected by the themes of gentrification and capitalist commodification, social engineering and community structures, imaginations of the past and present, sources of solidarity and conflict within the micropolitics of a place, social structures of various localities, state-led and bottom-up developments, and different positionalities and imaginations within the field. However, the one thread that ties all the chapters and recurring themes together and thus remains integral to the volume itself is the spatiality of power, domination, and resistance.

Ultimately, each contribution delivers valuable descriptions of the everyday in different localities and political contexts. Alleyways are often—but not always—invisible or unmarked "liminal spaces" for marginalized and, as a consequence of urban development, threatened populations. In Marie Gibert-Flutre and Heide Imai's volume such alleyways take centre stage in the research, and this is an important achievement in itself. The volume also fosters interdisciplinary discussion on the relationship between constructed environments and human behaviours. The focus on everyday alleyway practices yields ethnographic materials that are so rich that the related systematic and deeper comparative discussions may appear lacking by comparison. Perhaps out of necessity, much of the inter-chapter dialogue is left to the reader's imagination. Nonetheless, the volume draws attention to alleyways, which were previously not described in such ethnographic detail, as social spaces affected by transformations within urban "territories of projects" (Goldblum 2015, 374).

The volume is highly recommended for a wide range of students and specialists across disciplines, particularly those in urban planning, architecture, sociology, anthropology, political sciences, and area studies. Due to its addressing social engineering, human–environmental interaction, solidarity, and conflict, it will be equally interesting to practitioners, members of civil society organizations, and planners from both the private and public sectors.

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