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THE LONG MARCH OF SINICIZING MARXISM**

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Editor's Foreword

This special issue of the journal *Asian studies* is dedicated to the Sinicization of Marxism as a paradigm for research on Marxist philosophy in contemporary China. There are several reasons for choosing this topic, and are by no means limited to the fact that just a few months ago, on May 5th 2018, we celebrated Karl Marx's bicentenary. As far as Marx in our time is concerned, my impression is that over these two centuries he was maturing, a bit like a noble cheese or a vintage wine not appropriate for Dionysian parties or guzzling at the firing lines. Rather, he is a stimulating companion for profound thought about the meanings of modernity and especially of human emancipation, an issue which remains of significance for the contemporary world.

The topic itself stimulates our interest, for, as we all know, a great many curious things have befallen Marxism as an intellectual and political tradition, and its adoption by the revolutionary forces under the leadership of Mao Zedong was by no means the least of them. So, how did the Long March of Sinicizing Marxism began?

Although the wide influence of Marxism can be traced back to September 15, 1915, i.e. the date of the foundation of the leading progressive magazine *Xin Qingnian* (新青年) or *The New Youth*, serious discussion by Chinese intellectuals of Marxist dialectics and historical materialism, did not start until after the Russian Revolution of 1917. As Tian Chenshan, who is one of the crucial authors of this issue, has pointed out, the introduction of Marxist dialectics into China can be divided into three periods. First, between 1917 and 1927, there were discussions of historical materialism, particularly after the publication of essays on historical materialism in the special issue of the famous journal *The New Youth* in 1919. Second, between 1926 and 1937, there were discussions of Russian writings on dialectical materialism starting with Qu Qiubai's lectures in Shanghai. This period saw the campaign to popularize the concept of dialectics, headed by leading communist theoreticians like Ai Siqi. The third period began after 1937 with Mao Zedong's idea of the Sinicization of Marxism (马克思主义的中国化) and his essays *On Contradictions* (矛盾论) and *On Practice* (实践论).

The Yan'an period, especially the year 1937, in which Mao wrote these two famous essays, is widely regarded as the actual beginning of the Sinicization of Marxism. The current emphasis on Mao's pre-Liberation contributions to Marxist theory makes it appropriate and relevant to raise for discussion the distinctive manner in which Mao addressed this problem of integrating the universal theory of Marxism

with the “concrete practice” of Chinese society and the Chinese revolution. One of the main goals of this issue is also to address the question of how the ideological debates and Marxist prescriptions that shaped the historiography of Chinese philosophy from the late 1950s of the Mao era still provide a background for the contemporary period.

Mao's proposal for the “Sinicization of Marxism” remains one of the most intriguing issues in the ideological history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Strangely, although this concept is given passing treatment in numerous studies of the Chinese Communist movement, little attempt has been made to subject it to a more detailed historical or theoretical analysis. Hence, it is also the purpose of this issue to analyze the form, contents and wide reaching influences of this Sinicization of Marxism at Mao's hands. Broadly, the concept contains several interrelated, though distinct, dimensions. Hence, we aim to illuminate it proceeding from several different perspectives.

The content of the present issue is thus divided into four scopes. The first one is entitled *Hegel, Marx and Traditional Chinese Dialectics* and mainly deals with theoretical and methodological foundations of the Sinicization process. It includes four articles, which elaborate on several crucial questions linked to culturally determined differences in dialectical thought and the fate of the Hegelian heritage in the Chinese theory. Tian Chenshan, the author of the first article, entitled *Mao Zedong, Sinicization of Marxism, and Traditional Chinese Thought Culture*, argues that due to the fact that the Chinese tradition also created a model of dynamic dialectical thought, certain of Marx's cosmological assumptions were better understood by the Chinese intellectuals and were more suitable for Sinicization than many other theories. The second paper, Fabian Heubel's *Beyond Murderous Dialectics: On Paradoxical Thinking and Maoism*, deals with the contradiction between Marxist foundations of the current “socialism with Chinese characteristics” on the one side and the renaissance of traditional culture and classical learning on the other, proceeding from the assumption that the power of Mao Zedong's thought derived from its capability to systematically subordinate the transformative philosophy of Chinese tradition to the Marxist model of class struggle. *Hegel and Chinese Marxism* is the title of the third article in this scope. Its author, Tom Rockmore, explores in this contribution the relation between this German philosopher and Sinicized Marxism from the viewpoint of Xi Jinping's notion of the “Chinese dream.” The author of the last paper in this scope is Ozan Altan Altinok. In his contribution, entitled *Mao's Marxist Negation of Marxism: The Limits of Revolutionary Subject's Negation of Revolutionary Theory without Affirming Itself*, he analyzes Mao Zedong's conception and application of Marxism in some of Mao's own works.

The second scope explores the relation between Marxism and the Chinese, particularly the Confucian ideational tradition. While Téa Sernelj's paper *Modern Confucians Objection against Communism in China: The Unique Case of Xu Fuguan* critically introduces the relation between the Modern New Confucian movement and the Maoist communism, Andrej Ule deals with the question of harmony in a similar context. In his paper *Harmony as an Ethical and Political Idea*: he investigates the possibilities of achieving genuine harmony as a part of solidarity based on the reciprocal and universal cultivation of personal dignity and virtuous humaneness. The third article in this scope, Bart Dessen's *Guo Moruo on Marx and Confucius* analyses how Guo Moruo, despite being a self-declared Marxist, kept on adhering to some Confucian principles. Through his analysis, Dessen finds some additional explanations for the fact that, after having been criticized in the early seventies of the 20th century, Guo is now, within the revival of Confucianism, being once again reevaluated again.

The next scope of contents deals with the theories and ideologies of Sinicized Marxism. In his paper *Marxist Theories of Ideology in Contemporary China: The Pioneering Work of Yu Wujin*, Adrian Krawczyk explores the contemporary application and many topical connotations of the notion of ideology, which is one of the central terms of Marxist theory. The second paper in this scope is entitled *From Religion to Revolution...and Nationalism: Hui Identity and Historical Materialism in the Work of Jamāl al-Dīn Bai Shouyi and Beyond*, and written by Ady van den Stock. In this article, the author explores the relation between national identity and Marxist political theory through the lens of Islamic philosophy. In her contribution *Li Zehou and His Rocky Relationship with Marx: Class Struggle as a Form of Kantian Transcendental Illusion*, Jana S. Rošker introduces Marxist and Kantian elements in the theory of the contemporary Chinese philosopher Li Zehou.

The last scope includes three papers from the fields of history and social sciences. The first article in this scope, *On the Transformations of PRC Academic Philosophy: Maoist Features and Their Use under Xi Jinping*, was written by Yvonne Schultz-Zinda, who compares the Maoist features during the transformative period in the 1950s and that under Xi Jinping's contemporary politics. Marko Hočevár's paper *Mao's Conception of the Revolutionary Subject: A Socio-historical Approach* on the other hand, illuminates the multifaceted relations between different classes, focusing upon the one that marks the complex connections between the peasantry and the proletariat. Last but not least, the scope (and the entire special issue) concludes with the paper *Equ(al)ity and Community in China after 40 Years of Economic Reforms: Sinicised Marxism and "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" in Crisis*. In this article, its authors Alessia A. Amighini and Peitao Jia illuminate how Sinicized Marxism accentuated Marx's philosophy of

history, rather than any version of Marxist egalitarian political philosophy, concluding that it has, through such an approach, developed a culturally distinctive version of Marxism as an authoritarian (rather than democratic) discourse.

Through the lens of these multifarious approaches, this special issue clearly shows that in its political aspects the notion of Sino-Marxism refers to the specific, often highly problematic ways in which the “foreign” theory of Marxism-Leninism could be adapted to the concrete historical realities of modern China, including the under-development of capitalism, the absence of a large urban proletariat, the central role of the rural peasantry, and so forth. These are difficult problems of political theory, and they have not yet been resolved satisfactorily either in Chinese or Western scholarship. Whether Marxism has been truly Sinicized in this sense—and whether it has survived the process intact—are highly controversial issues, and we hope that some of them could be illuminated, if not clarified in this volume.

All this points to the fact that the idea of the Sinification of Marxism has a distinctly cultural side to it. In its cultural dimension, it refers primarily to the problem of reconciling a foreign ideological doctrine with the distinctive cultural character of China. Hence, another important dimension of this volume regards the ideological role of the Chinese cultural tradition in the process of Sinicization of Marxism. In this respect, it is important to proceed from the contemporary situation and to show why and in which way the present, ideologically modified Confucianism, along with the so-called “traditional culture,” were implemented as a new symbolic capital into the discourse of the new Chinese nationalism. It is also important to reveal that such a modified tradition remained effective insofar as those struggling for ideological legitimacy remain silent about the Chinese revolutionary legacy and ideology, namely socialism and Marxism. But this is problematic, for no one can cancel out in one stroke China’s revolutionary past. The ideologized version of Confucianism, on the other hand, can neither truly serve as an indigenous thought legitimizing a new national autonomy, because contemporary Confucian discourse itself is being constituted globally as an integral part of the ideology of capitalist globalization. At the most, it can reflect a radical metamorphosis of nationalism from a discourse of resistance to a discourse of domination. When Immanuel Wallerstein speaks of “nationalism as domination,” (1974) he is primarily concerned with “those more frequent moments when nationalism operates ... as the nervous tic of capitalism as a world-system.” In the case of China, the transition from resistance to domination is a precarious one, and it is based upon the suppression of a powerful revolutionary legacy. On the other hand, however, the current leadership by no means surrenders itself entirely

to the capitalist world-system, as shown by the persistence of the slogan, however empty and self-contradictory in its content, *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*.

All this generates a profound uneasiness with the “official” nationalism, which is, at first glimpse, Confucian oriented. Hence, several authors of the papers included in this special issue attempted to purify Confucianism from its recent ideological and nationalist connotations in order to make room for a more objective and academically more reliable discussion on certain traditional notions that can shed additional light to the process of integrating the Chinese intellectual tradition into the scope of Marxist theories. We hope that such an intercultural dimension of theoretical exchanges can—inter alia—serve as a first step in the search for a better understanding of recent history and its multifarious ideational heritages.



Jana S. Rošker, Chief Editor

Hegel, Marx and Traditional Chinese Dialectics

Mao Zedong, Sinicization of Marxism, and Traditional Chinese Thought Culture

Chenshan TIAN*

Abstract

The informed perspective presented here may rouse a sensitivity to the differences in reading Marxist philosophy from the perspective of the Inseparability of One and Many worldview and philosophy (a doctrine of internal, constitutive, relations—“intimacy”) on the part of Chinese intellectuals, particularly Mao Zedong, a great campaigner for philosophical and discursive Sinicization of Marxism. Marxism has provided an opportunity for a philosophical conversation with Chinese tradition, and this conversation was not launched by a government or official campaign, but instead by the efforts made on the part of countless grassroots intellectuals. It is argued that the reason for this was perhaps due to the fact that certain of Marx’s cosmological assumptions, in contrast to those of the main Western categories, are more capable of being understood and Sinicized in terms of particular philosophical currents in the Chinese tradition. This was particularly so for the two decades of the 1950s and 1960s, and until the end of the 1970s when Deng Xiaoping came to power and openly declared the start of his “Economic Reform” with the slogan “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.”

Keywords: Sinicization, inseparability of One and Many, vocabulary, Ai Siqi, *bianzhengfa* (dialectics)

Mao Zedong, sinizacija marksizma in tradicionalna kitajska miselna kultura

Izveček

Perspektiva informiranosti, ki je predstavljena v tem članku, lahko pripomore k večji dojemljivosti za različne možnosti branja marksistične filozofije z vidika svetovnega nazora neločljivosti enosti in mnogoterosti ter filozofije (oziroma doktrine) interne, konstitutivne relacije – »intimnosti«, ki so jo razvijali kitajski izobraženci pod vodstvom Mao Zedonga, ki si je zelo prizadeval za filozofsko in diskurzivno sinizacijo marksizma. Marksizem je nudil možnost za filozofski dialog s kitajsko tradicijo, ki pa ni bil vedno vladna ali uradna kampanja, temveč je temeljil na prizadevanjih številnih nevladnih intelektualcev kot posameznikov. Članek izhaja iz predpostavke, da razlog za to tiči v dejstvu, da so bili določeni marksistični kozmološki elementi Kitajcem bolj razumljivi in zato primernejši za sinizacijo v smislu

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razvijanja posamičnih filozofskih tokov kitajske tradicije kot preostale prevladujoče zahodne kategorije. To je še posebej veljalo za obdobje 50. in 60. let 20. stoletja in je trajalo vse do konca 70. let, ko je prišel na oblast Deng Xiaoping, ki je javno objavil pričetek kapitalistične »ekonomske reforme« pod imenom Socializem s kitajskimi posebnostmi.

Ključne besede: sinizacija marksizma, sinteza marksizma s kitajsko tradicijo, kozmološki vidiki marksizma

Introduction

Marxism is definitely the most significant element in Western thought that has provided an opportunity for a philosophical conversation with Chinese tradition in modern times. In the process of this conversation, a Chinese version of Marxism started to develop and finally came to fruition in the thought of Mao Zedong. What is particularly worth noting are firstly that this conversation was not a government or official campaign, but the efforts made on the part of countless individual intellectuals who felt deep concern for the future of China after the downfall of the Qing Manchurian rule. Secondly, it is worth nothing that the philosophical conversation had a striking feature of “dialectics,” or *bianzhengfa*, which not only pervades philosophical levels of discourse in China, but also the thinking and speech of ordinary persons in their everyday lives, particularly for the two decades of the 1950s and 1960s.

A Different Form of Marxism

We need to understand that the form of Marxian dialectics, wherever one finds it in the West, is different from what appears to be the Chinese analogue. Marxian dialectics in China is not the same as the inherited legacy of Marxian dialectics in Europe. What are the differences between the Chinese form and the original Western one? This study aims to address directly how and why Marxism has assumed the form it has adopted in China. There are at least five corollaries to its thesis:

1. There is a clear style of “thought,” or philosophy, that is distinctly but not necessarily uniquely Chinese, that is available to Chinese intellectuals.
2. There is a strand of Chinese Marxism, which draws on the Chinese tradition and overcomes some of the difficulties having attended Western Marxism.
3. This form of Chinese Marxism finds itself in many writers, and finally in Mao Zedong. It exemplifies a powerful strand of Chinese philosophy.
4. Mainstream Western Marxism finds its roots in Engels, whose formulations are alien to Chinese thought.

5. Although Chinese Marxism finds some of its roots in Engels, Chinese Marxists read his philosophy in a different way. Chinese Marxism is clearly similar to Western Marxism in some important respects; however, we can safely conclude that it represents a third alternative between Marxism on the one hand and traditional Chinese thought on the other.

In fact, in the West, the word “dialectics” has different meanings in the writings of different philosophers, and the early Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Engels, and Lenin, all understand something different by the term. A comprehensive comparison of the many doctrines of dialectics in the West and then a comparison with the dialectics in China would be too enormous an undertaking for this project to pursue. So this work is then rather about how and what the Chinese conceived the dialectics of Marxism to be at about the start of the 20th century and after this. It is an account of *bianzhengfa*—a Chinese translation of “dialectics”—in terms of how that term encountered China and was and is understood there.

Arif Dirlik suggests that the articulation of Marxism in China underwent a process of “re-creating,” “rephrasing,” and “restructuring.” Mao Zedong, as well as many others of his time, did not just read Marxism in accordance with a Chinese historical experience, but also insistently read the Chinese historical experience into Marxism. As Dirlik points out, the Sinification of Marxism was a theoretical project with special relevance for the problem of a Marxist revolution in agrarian China (1997, 602). The Chinese vernacularized Marxism, and as Dirlik states: “The Marxism (Marxism-Leninism) that Chinese Communists inherited was a Marxism that had already been ‘deterritorialized’ from its original terrain in European history,” and was reterritorialized upon a Chinese terrain (1997, 613–14). As he notes, there are tantalizing traces in Mao’s philosophy of various traditions in Chinese thought (*ibid.*, 611); any parallels drawn between his Marxism and native traditions are of necessity speculative (*ibid.*, 593–615). What then is the role of Chinese thought in the vernacularization or reterritorialization of Marxism upon Chinese terrain? How are we to understand this process? The questions remain undealt with satisfactorily in Chinese or English.

Tongbian: A Form of Correlative Thinking since the *Yijing*

This paper tries to draw attention to the fundamental issue that certain cosmological assumptions of the Western tradition have led to the differences between Western Marxism and a particular philosophical current in the Chinese tradition, known as *tongbian* 通变, that developed independently of Western Marxism. Following the assumptions of David Hall and Roger Ames concerning a “correlative” modality of thinking, I argue here that the philosophy of *tongbian* has considerable significance in the discourse of “dialectical materialism,” or *bianzheng*

weiwu zhuyi. Moreover, it facilitated reading Marxist “dialectics” in a worldview of continuity between all things or events, a worldview devoid of transcendence and order, in which the complementary and contradictory interactions of the two basic elements of a polarity, like yin-yang, constitute the related forces and produce change. This distinct modality of thinking has precluded the dichotomy and related difficulties that have attended Western Marxism.

The kind of correlative polar “metaphysics” in Chinese Marxism’s “dialectics” (*bianzhengfa*), as can also be found in Confucianism’s “polarity,” may be traced back to the ancient philosophical text of the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*), wherein the functional analogue of the meaning of *bianzheng* is conveyed in terms of *dao* (way), *yi* (change), *yin-yang*, and, in particular, *biantong* (change with continuity). The *Yijing* tells us:

A door’s being shut may be called [analogous to] *kun* 坤, and its opening, *qian* 乾. Opening succeeding shutting may be comprehended as an [event] of *bian* (change); getting through a process of [one] opening to shutting to another may be called *tong* 通 (the constant course of [things or events]). (*Yijing, Xici Zhuan* I, ch. 11)

In this passage, both *bian* and *tong* have analogical relations with the two events—the door’s opening and being shut—and both refer to the process of changing from opening to being shut, or *vice versa*. While *bian* suggests becoming in light of difference, *tong* expresses the kind of becoming in light of continuity—a “becoming” from one event to another. This suggests that there is a continuum in becoming; or if there were not a continuum between this and that, there would not be a becoming. In turn, if this does not vary from that, then there could not be any becoming.

Many notable Chinese thinkers find *bian* 变 and *tong* 通 in all relationships among all the *wanwu* 万物 (ten thousand things) under the sky—which can be seen as something discovered in the objective material world, in a Western sense. Moreover, *bian-tong* 变通 is also seen reversed, i.e., as *tong-bian* 通变, which means “knowing *bian*,” here *tong* has changed from meaning “the opening succeeding the being shut” and “the passing from one of these states to the other endlessly” to “comprehending changes and doing in accordingly changing manners” and “what to carry out and what to operate with.” This indicates that *bian-tong* extends its analogical relations into *tong-bian*; *tong-bian* is to comprehend *bian-tong*, to comprehend is thus a continuum and to do a process of getting through to *bian* and *tong*. Or to put it briefly, to think and do correlatively as the world does.

According to the classical texts, “to comprehend change(s) is [our] affair” (*Yijing*, *Xici Zhuan* I, ch. 11);¹ “transforming and shaping is what we called *bian* (change)” (*ibid.*);² and “following and carrying this out is called *tong* (*ibid.*).”³ Now the meaning of “*tong*” has changed from “the constant course of [things or events]” into “following and carrying it out,” which suggests that “*tong*” entails a continuum of getting through the changes of the ten thousand things under the sky as well as one getting through humanity’s thinking and doing accordingly. These two “continuums” are interdependent and correlative. This is how the modality of the strand of Chinese thought *tongbian* establishes itself as a correlative way of thinking.

Tongbian involves four significant ideas. First, everything (or event) in the world correlates with another. Second, the manifold and diverse relationships of things (or events) to any other things (or events) are a matter of interconnectedness, and can be viewed as following the same basic pattern as *yin* and *yang*, namely, the interaction and interdependence of complementary opposition. Third, it is this basic pattern of *yin* and *yang* that ceaselessly brings everything (or event) in the world into constant change or movement. Fourth, everything is in a process of change and presents itself as a focus-and-field relationship.

Each item is understood as “this particular focus,” which articulates the totality of things from its perspective; and, with regard to the totality, it focuses totality in its entirety. The totality is itself nothing more than the full ranges of particular foci, each defining itself and its own particular field. In characterizing an item as focal, we are indicating that it inheres in its immediate context in such a manner as to shape while being shaped by that context as field.⁴

Tongbian is a clear style of “thought” (or philosophy) that is distinctly but not necessarily uniquely Chinese. As typical as the assumptions of Hall and Ames, the world in terms of *tongbian* is one of correlations and self-so-ing, or one of continuity through change. The patterns of correlation are many and diverse, multi-level, multi-dimensional, multi-fold, and multi-category. Continuity goes through change whereupon the sky, earth, and ten thousand things correlate with each other; humanity thus considers itself as continuous with nature through

1 “*Tong bian zhi wei shi* 通变之为事”

2 “*Hua er cai zhi* 化而裁缝之”

3 “*Tui er xing zhi* 推而行之”

4 The focus/field model results from understanding an item’s relation to the world to be constituted by acts of contextualization. A correlative order emerges from the coordination of so many “this’s” and “that’s” as various foci and the fields they focus. The act of contextualization involves appreciation of harmonious correlations of the myriad unique details (*wanwu*), which make up the world. For this model, see Hall and Ames (1998, 234, 236, 239, 242–44, and 268–78).

correlations, as well as through a thorough comprehension of nature. In *tongbian*, there is no concept of God, but rather a spirituality that depends entirely on how much a person can develop his or her intelligence. Change itself is an embodiment of correlation in motion, or continuity between differences and varieties that are not strictly contrastive. *Tongbian* is the constant way of alternating one with another, changing into each other, exchanging with each other, displacing each other, and so on, that follows the occurrence of change, where *shen* (the indescribable) describes the efficacy of these interactions of complementary opposition. The nucleus, or the most salient feature, of *tongbian* is that it is not God but the complementary and contradictory interactions of the two basic elements of a polarity like *yin-yang* that constitute the forces, and produce change.

It is a way of correlative thinking that tends to preclude the kind of metaphysics, dualisms, ontologies, epistemologies, and even the foundations of objective certainty itself, which include the forms of Plato, the will of God, the spirit of Hegel, and the impersonal reason of Kant. For this reason, when Western versions of dialectics are engaged in a dialogue with the style of correlative thinking that developed in the light of *yin-yang* and *tongbian*, they undergo a process of development which results in their being altered, and calling upon the meaning of *xiangfan xiangcheng*, that is, “complementarity in opposition.” If we say, “the relationship between *yin* and *yang* is *bianzheng* or “dialectical,” we are in fact saying that it is *xiangfan xiangcheng*. Here *xiangfan xiangcheng* and *bianzheng* (“dialectic”) convey exactly the same understanding, that is, “(of two things to) be both opposite and complementary to each other, opposite to each other and yet also complementary to each other” (*A Chinese English Dictionary* 1985, 752).

The explanation of the creative process in terms of the interaction of complementary opposition is fundamental to the Chinese tradition. In the absence of the Western-style dualisms that establish an ontological separation between some determinative principle and that which it determines, the interconnectedness of all things promotes a correlative mode of philosophizing and of explaining order in the world. Tradition played an important role in the understanding and representing of Marxist philosophy in China. Let us look into a Chinese version of Marxism, which eventually developed and came to fruition in Mao Zedong.

Mao's Study of Western Philosophy

In the engagement of dialectical materialism with the thought of *tongbian* of the Chinese tradition, which involved thousands of Chinese intellectuals and translations of a voluminous foreign literature, a Chinese version of Marxism eventually

developed, reaching its peak in Mao Zedong. We note that Mao's infatuation with philosophy starting in the 1930s involved a voracious consumption of texts and almost entirely depends upon Chinese translation. As he read widely the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, Mao paid most attention to the texts of a number of Soviet and Chinese authors, like Mitin, Shirokov, Li Da, and Ai Siqi. Mao's view of dialectical materialism could have been contaminated by positivism and dualism, since he obtained his knowledge mostly from Russian texts, which are full of terms and formulas of Soviet orthodox Marxism. Nevertheless, Mao identified many elements in dialectical materialism with the *tongbian* and appealed to classical Chinese expressions in his reading.

Mao's version of Marxism is saturated with correlative thinking. Although he did not formulate a view that has in some way "recovered Marx" from 2nd International Marxists, we do see that on certain points Mao seems close to Marx, and thus that there is a dialogue between them. For instance, both Marx and Mao have a similar view on "internal relations." In Ollman's reading, Marx's dialectic is categorized as the philosophy of internal relations that does not allow absolute distinctions between society and the natural world, which is similar to Mao's. Mao had not been able to read any Marxist literature in a foreign language though, until he read the English version of *The Communist Manifesto* at the age of 63, even though he did study English as early as 1920.⁵ However, he did read the *Manifesto, A Critique of Gotha Programme, the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*, and some texts in English on logic, and he made detailed marginalia (Lin 1987, 249–51).

Mao read a Chinese translation of the *Manifesto* and Karl Kaustky's *Class Struggle* as early as 1920. He first quoted Lenin's *State and Revolution* in May and September 1926 when he taught at the Peasants Movement Lecture School. Mao read Engels's *Anti-Dühring*, Lenin's *Two Strategies of the Social Democratic Party in the Democratic Revolution*, and "Left Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder during the Long March, according to the memoirs of Wu Liping and Peng Dehuai (ibid., 23–25). In the years of Yan'an, Mao consumed many Marxist-Leninist works, which included Marx's *Capital, The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science, Selected Works of Lenin*, Lenin's *the State and Revolution*, and Stalin's *Theory and Strategy* (a collection including *The Foundation of Leninism*), and *Several Issues of Leninism*, and also *Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin on Arts* (ibid., 24).

Once in preparation for one of his inspection trips in October 1959, Mao ordered hundreds of works of Marx, Engels, Linin, and Stalin, including *Capital, Selected*

5 Mao told of his study of English, philosophy, and newspapers in his letter of June 7, 1920 to Li Jinxi (see Chen 1996, 704).

Works of Marx and Engels, Wage, Price and Profit, The Critique of Political Economy, Anti-Dühring, the Dialectics of Nature, the Letters of Marx and Engels, Selected Works of Lenin, Lenin's From the February Revolution to the October Revolution, the Proletariat Revolution and the Traitor Kautsky, State and Revolution, "Left Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, and so on (ibid., 18).

Mao read a great deal of Lenin and loved his writings. However, his interest was rather in articulating Lenin's theory of reflection with specific issues around him, and more precisely the problem of some people's pessimistic attitude, which Mao believed was due to their inclination to think in merely abstract terms that separated thought from the actual situation. For Mao, "idealism," or *weixin zhuyi*, refers to ways of thinking that lack continuity with the actual situation, and pessimism arises as a result of this "idealism" (Lin 1987, 704).

Besides Marxism, Mao had adequate knowledge of other Western philosophies. He had showed great enthusiasm about Western thought as a young man, and actively participated in preparation for the visits Dewey and Bertrand Russell to Hunan in October 1920, and was one of the stenographers at the symposiums where Dewey and Russell gave presentations. Mao also studied Hegel when he was in the Hunan First Normal School between 1914 and 1918. Hegel was an important topic on the agenda of his study group with Li Weihan and Cai Hesen. Even more than forty years later, when once he met with a foreigner in August 1965, Mao still claimed that one must read Hegel (ibid., 694). Mao read even more on Western thought in the period of Yan'an and after 1949 when the People's Republic was established. He demonstrated good familiarity with Western philosophical history, particularly some classical philosophical works. In Mao's view, ancient Greek philosophy and classical German philosophy, which is represented by Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach, could be regarded two pinnacles in Western philosophy (ibid., 694–95).

Mao's Roots in *Tongbian*

It is not difficult to assume that Mao's appeal to many classical Chinese expressions when reading Marxist dialectical materialism was a result of his deep roots in *tongbian*. Like many Confucian scholars, by the age of sixteen Mao had been well-educated with the *Four Books*, namely *The Great Learning (Daxue)*, *The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong)*, *The Analects of Confucius (Lunyu)*, and *Mencius (Mengzi)*, as well as the *Five Classics*—namely *The Book of Songs (Shijing)*, *The Book of History (Shujing)*, *The Book of Changes (Yijing)*, *The Book of*

Rites (Liji) and *The Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)*, and he always loved Confucius. Mao has never suspended his study of classical Chinese philosophy, especially Pre-Qin Confucianism, Daoism, the Li Learning (*lixue*) of Song and Ming Dynasties.

Nurtured in classical Chinese thought, Mao had a worldview fostered with striking characteristics of *tongbian*. First, *tong*: in his view, the world was one with the continuity of *tian-di-ren*, or a view of continuity running through nature and humanity, which gave a “world” as a dynamic process. In the letter to Li Jinxi of August 23, 1917, Mao claims that “all the human beings under the sky constituted a continuity of the universe” (Zeng 1991, 61).⁶ Second, *bian*: in his *Classroom Notes* of October and December 1913, Mao writes: “There are ten thousand events under the sky and they are changing in ten thousand ways without pause” (Li 1991, 206);⁷ “for instance, so deep as water is and so scorching as fire is, it is nothing but movement that is presenting itself (*ibid.*).”⁸ In his marginal notes to Friedrich Paulsen’s *A System of Ethics*, Mao pointed out that “changes make ten thousand varieties (*ibid.*).”⁹ There is no thing that never revolves, and never changes. Human ideas and their physical conditions are all the time changing. “We love change and have a sense of curiosity. We cannot even suspend changes in ourselves for even a minute (*ibid.*).”¹⁰ As he believed, humanity and the ten thousand things are alike in revolving and changing without pause, “human bodies are changing every day,” and “The sky and earth are nothing but rather movement (*ibid.*).”¹¹

Mao’s deep roots in *tongbian* are seen in two concurrent respects, on the one hand, his comprehension represents a *tongbian* reading of Marxist texts, and on the other, he read elements of classical thought as “dialectical materialism” (*weiwu bianzhengfa*). Mao was particularly interested in classical Chinese “dialectics,” and especially in the “dialectic” of Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Xunzi, Mozi, Qu Yuan, Sima Qian, Zhu Xi, Zhang Zai, and Wang Fuzhi, and finally developed his early “dialectical” style of thought and employed it in his own thinking and writings (Li 1991, 234). He regarded Mozi as a “Great Master” (*dajia*) of “dialectical materialism” (Mao 1983, 140)¹² and celebrated Mozi as a “Chinese Heraclitus” and “a Great Ancient Master of ‘Dialectical Materialism.’”

6 “Tianxia zhi shengmin gewei yuzhou zhi yiti.”

7 “Tianxia wanshi, wanbian wuqiong.”

8 “Ru shui yi shen, ru huo yi re, yi yun zhi er yi yi.”

9 “Bianhua wanshu.”

10 “Wuren you hao bianhua, haoqi zhi xin, ren buneng you e qing bu bianhua zhe.”

11 “Ren zhi shen gai ri ri bianyi zhe,” “tiandi gai weiyong dong eryl.”

12 “Gudai bianzheng weiwu lun dajia,”

A considerable proportion of the classical philosophy that nurtured Mao's *tongbian* thought had come from Laozi. By the age of twenty, Mao was very familiar with Laozi. In his *Classroom Notes*, we find perhaps his earliest quotation from Laozi: "In the world there is nothing more submissive and weaker than water, Yet, for attacking that which is harder and strong nothing can surpass it" (Laozi, ch.78). One time Mao picked up a conversation with an old hermit on traveling together with one of his friends in 1917. He mentioned Laozi and Zhuangzi, stating that he had read *The Thirteen Classics (shi san jing)*, *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*, and commented that Wang Bi made the best annotations to *Laozi*, and Guo Xiang, to *Zhuangzi*. We find his following marginal notes to Paulsen's *A System of Ethics*:

I am sure that once we entered a reign of Great Harmony, waves of competition and friction would inevitably break forth that would disrupt the reign of Great Harmony. It is for this reason that the conception of a society in which the sage is exterminated and the wise discarded, and the people of one stage grow old and die without having had any dealings with those of another, put forward by Laozi and Zhuangzi, remains but an ideal society and nothing more.¹³

The passage was a condensation of Chapters 19 and 80 of Laozi's *Daode jing*. Mao referenced Laozi's "simple dialectics," and particularly, continuity of opposites, and mutual transformation between *mao* and *dun*. Mao quoted the same analogue from Laozi, the interdependence of good and bad fortunes, in his "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People,"

We must learn to look at problems from an all-around perspective, seeing the reverse as well as the obverse side of things. In given conditions, a bad thing may give rise to good results, and a good thing to bad results. Laozi had said even two thousand years ago that good

13 Mao wrote this marginal note to the following passage of Paulsen:

But not this alone; the content of historical life is also lost. The forms of historical life are nothing other than the forces of the struggle between good and evil that develop with the times. If states had no schemes for aggression there would be no military preparations. If no one acted improperly there would be no need for laws. Military forces and laws are the means by which the state fights against foreign and domestic disorder. If all disorder, both domestic and foreign, were eliminated, and all observed the way of justice, peace, kindness and tolerance, then war and diplomacy, courts and police, and all the aggressive features of government would disappear, and the perfect state would also vanish. Religion, too, is nothing but a form of the struggle between good and evil. If there were no evil acts, human beings would all be gods, and religion too would vanish. (Li 1991, 109–10; see Schram 1992, 238)

fortune lieth within bad, bad fortune lurketh within good. (Mao 1957, 66–67)

Mao had studied Zhuangzi before he was twenty, and quoted him in many of his writings from 1913 to 1965. In particular, we find that, of the several paragraphs of the quotations in his *Classroom Notes* from Zhuangzi, there is the famous anecdote of *Hundun* (*Chaos*):¹⁴

The ruler of the North Sea was “Swift,” the ruler of the South Sea was “Sudden,” and the ruler of the Central Sea was Lord of *Hundun*—“Chaos.” Swift and Sudden had on several occasions encountered each other in the territory of Chaos, and Chaos had treated them with great hospitality. Swift and Sudden, devising a way to repay Chaos’ generosity, said: “Human beings all have seven orifices through which they see, hear, eat and breathe. Chaos alone is without them.” They then attempted to bore holes in Chaos, each day boring one hole. On the seventh day, Chaos died.¹⁵ (*Zhuangzi, Yingdiwang*)

Mao found “dialectical elements” in Confucius, too, even though Mao did not particularly like him as he thought he was too “metaphysical.” There are many “dialectical elements”, however, Mao suggests, as Confucius explains the correlations of “naming” (*ming*) and “actuality” (*shi*), of “culture” (*wen*) and “quality” (*zhi*), and of “talking” (*yan*) and “doing” (*xing*). So it is still, as Confucius expresses his view on “nature” (*ziran*) by the famous phrase: “While standing by a river, the Master said, what passes away is, perhaps, like this, day and night it never lets up (Mao 1983, 148; also see Chen 1995, 664).”¹⁶

Besides *bianzhengfa* (dialectic method), *duili tongyi* (the unity of opposites), *xiangfan xiangcheng* (contradictory but complementary), Mao has other expressions to suggest “dialectics,” which are *mao-dun* (spear-shield), *yifenweier* (one divides into two), and *liangdian lun* (the two-point theory). These expressions all come from classical text of *tongbian*. Hanfei zi, a pre-Qin dynasty thinker, first

14 According to David Hall and Roger Ames, the anecdote describes the positive contribution of “chaos” and provides an ontological rendering of the characteristic of Chinese correlative sensibility. “Chaos” makes a dynamic sense of order which, rather than separating what orders from what is ordered, locates the energy of change within chaos itself by insisting that order is always richly vague. (see Hall and Ames 1995, 230–31)

15 “*Nanfang zhi di yue Shu, Beifang zhi di yue Hu. Zhongyang zhi di yue Hundun. Shu yu Hu xiangyu yu Hundun zhi ye, Hundun dai zhi shen hou. Shu yu Hu mou suoyi bao zhi, yue: “Ren jie you qiqiao, yi shi ting shi xi, bi du wu you, chang shi zao zhi? Ri zao yi qiao, qi ri er Hundun si.”*”

16 “*Zi zai chuan shang yue, zhi zhe ru si fu, bu she zhouye,*” As for Mao’s dislike of Confucius, see Chen (1995, 665). Mao made it plain in his speech at the 12th Plenary Session of the 8th Central Committee of CCP that he perhaps was a little biased, not liking Confucius too much.”

used the analogue of *mao-dun* in referring to something or idea that entails “inconsistency,” “internal contradiction” or “self-contradiction.”¹⁷ Many intellectuals used *maodun* as equivalent to “contradiction” when Western dialectics was introduced into China. Mao adopted the analogue in his *tongbian* reading of dialectical materialism, especially the law of the unity of the opposites, or *duili tongyi*. He entitled his famous essay on *duili tongyi* “On *Mao-dun*” (“On Contradiction”).

Mao frequently used *yifenweier* (one divides into two) for dialectics in 1960s; the expression was first used in the classical texts of the *Yijing*:

In the *Yi*, there is *taiji* (the Supreme Ultimate), from which grow the two elementary aspects. From them then grow the four emblematic images; and from the four emblematic images grow the eight Triagrams. (*Yijing*, Xici I, ch. 11)¹⁸

Shao Yong, a *Lixue* School philosopher of the Song dynasty, further developed the passage as “*Taiji* indeed means one, which never moves and begets two. Two is spirit-like, and from the spirit-like grows numbers, from numbers grow images, and from images grow tangible things (Shao 2006, col. 8, II: 23).”¹⁹ Furthermore, Zhu Xi, the best-known Song Dynasty *Lixue* School philosopher, explained the passage as follows:

Here it means simply “one divides into two,” and things go generation after generation as such as a continuity without an end. Everything grows from one to two. (Zhu 1986, vol. 67)²⁰

As for *liangdian lun*, or the two-point theory, Mao himself confirms that it has roots in the *Yijing*. He examined in the first part of the book the passages “*gang* and *rou* push themselves each into the place of the other, and hence produce changes and transformations (*Yijing*, Xici I, ch. 2),”²¹ and “A *yin* and a *yang* are what is called *dao*.” As Mao makes it plain, these two analogues describe “dialectical materialism,” that is, the *pubianxing* (“universality”) of motion and change and developmental processes of the unity of opposites. For him, *gang-rou* and *yin-yang* are functional analogs of the meaning of

17 Hanfei zi (c. 280?–233 BCE) The definition of *maodun* in Xindai Hanyu Cidian contains Hanfei’s first use of the analogue of *mao* and *dun*.

18 “*Yi you taiji, shi sheng liangyi, liangyi sheng sixiang, sixiang sheng bagua.*”

19 “*Taiji yi ye, budong sheng er, er ze shen ye, shen sheng shu, shu sheng xiang, xiang sheng qi.*”

20 “*Ci zhibi yi fen wei er, jiejie ruci, yizhiyu wuqiong, jie shi yi sheng liang er.*”

21 “*Gang rou xiang tui er sheng bian hua.*”

the sources of development in things “as the law of the unity of opposites...” Mao stresses the point by saying, “Ancient Chinese stated that a *yin* and a *yang* were what was called *dao*. There could not be *yin* without *yang*, or *yang* without *yin*. This is somewhat the kind of two-point theory of ancient times.” (Mao 1965; Zeng 1991, 248)

Dialectical Materialism as Seeking Continuity

It was from Chinese classical texts that Mao inherited the expressions as well as the thought of *tongbian* in his reading of the unity of opposites in Marxist philosophical literature. Even though Mao derived all his understanding of “dialectical materialism” from Russian texts—entirely in Chinese translation—there could not be a plausible judgment that Mao’s view of “dialectical materialism” was contaminated with positivism and dualism, or orthodox Marxism. The difference in Mao’s reading is that “the unity of opposites” (or *duili tongyi*) suggests a continuity of two pairing aspects, and that the mutual transformation of quantity and quality and the negation of the negation are rather patterns of the continuity or correlativity of two pairing opposites.

For example, Mao has two interesting analogues for the concept of negation, or *fou ding*; one was from the *Yijing*, the other, *Nangong ciji*.²² Mao wrote “*wanquan fou ding, qian kun huo jihu xi* (entire negation, *qian* and *kun* would almost to cease to act)” in the margin by the paragraph in which Shirokov and Aizenberg quote Lenin, “If I grind wheat grain, or kill insects, I am accomplishing the first action of negation, but the second action becomes impossible.”²³ The phrase that Mao quotes, “*qian kun* would almost to cease to act,” is from the text of *Xici*, the *Yijing* (Sung Z.D., *The Text of Yi King*, 303).²⁴ For another analogue, Mao noted “with the body

22 *Nangong ciji* is a collection of scattered Ming Dynasty verses, compiled by Chen Suowen. They were a particular type of verse, very popular in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, with tonal patterns drawn modeled on tunes drawn from folk music.

23 The English is my translation, since the original text is not available. However, translating from Chinese to English, it may sound more Chinese, and closer to what as understood by Mao. (see Mao 1988, 123)

24 I did revisions in the English translation of the passage. For example, I changed “system” into “continuity,” which is more appropriate from the *tongbian* perspective. This passage runs: May we not say that *qian* and *kun* (=the *yang* and *yin*, or the undivided and divided lines) are the secret and subtleties of the *Yi*? *Qian* and *kun* being established in their several places thereby a continuity of changes constitutes. If *qian* and *kun* were taken away, there would be no means of seeing this continuity; and if this continuity were not seen, *qian* and *kun* would almost cease to act.

of sister is brother, and with the body of brother, sister (Chen 1996, 812)”²⁵ by the paragraph in which Shirokov and Aizenberg claim, “‘dying out’ is also ‘preserving’” at the same time, dialectical negation is the dynamic cause of development process. On the one hand, it makes sublation, which is, overcoming the old thing. On the other hand it preserves the old thing as a subsidiary dynamic cause.”²⁶ The function of these two analogues in Mao’s reading of negation demonstrates it adequately, that is, to indicate correlativity or continuity. For Mao, negation does not suggest separation, not something clean cut, but rather that something going first entails (or in a continuum with) something else going after it; and *vice versa* (Mao 1988, 121). As he argued, the continuity in *fouding zhi fouding*, or the negation of the negation, is not something that imposes externally (*ibid.*, 126). Mao’s paid close attention to the negation of old things by new things as *yangqi* (sublation), which is not only negation but also continuity (*jishi fouding, you you jicheng*); this is an important characteristic of Mao’s thinking (Chen 1996, 813).

Moreover, on the issue of internal and external contradictions, Mao adopts numerous classical Chinese expressions that suggest a continuity of inner changes with external conditions. As Mao writes,

A thing must be rotten first, and then worms start eating it. A person must be unsure first, and then he would believe slanderous talks. That it was not that I was defeated, but that the Heaven did not want me to win are wrong. Running water never is stale; it is not that flowing water becomes stale. A door-hinge never is worm-eaten; it is not that the door-hinge becomes worm-eaten. How well a thing is in itself makes a primary reason? If one never feels sorry for an inner self-inspection, then there would be nothing for him to be worried about and afraid of. (Schram 1992, 66)

What is dialectical materialism really about? For Mao, it is about “continuity,” or *tongyi*. As he repeatedly states, the kernel of *bianzhengfa* (dialectics) was *duili tongyi*, or continuity of opposites. Mao’s most notable contribution to the science of dialectics was his development of the concepts of “principal contradiction” and

25 The passage runs: “Brother, let’s mould figures of the two of us with brown clay, making one to look like you, the other to look like me. Let’s mould them to be an exact replica of us; let’s make them to sleep in a same bed. Then we dash them and restart molding. Again, we make a figure to look like you and another to look like me. With the body of brother is sister, and with the body of sister is brother.”

26 Like footnote 32, the English is my translation, since the original text is not available (see Mao 1988, 124).

“the principal aspect of the principal contradiction (ibid.).” Indeed, these concepts all mean seeking continuity. In his “On Contradiction” we read,

If in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principle contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate position. Then in studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved. (Mao 1965, 1: 332)

Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be principal and the other secondary. The principal aspect is the one playing the leading role in the contradiction. The nature of a thing is determined mainly by the principal aspect of a contradiction, the aspect which has gained the dominant position. (ibid., 333)

Here, the English translation is rather misleading, for such expressions as “leading and decisive role,” “secondary and subordinate position,” “is determined” and “dominant position,” etc., tend to lead people to the old issue of which determines which. It seems that the principal “contradiction” and the principal aspect of the principal “contradiction” are the determining elements that do not require reference to the determined for explanation, and deny that both the determinate and indeterminate elements in the process are important. It seems that from the determining to the determined is a single causal order that separates what determines and what is determined, and thus can be understood as a “whatever this, then that,” therefore there can be the problems of causal reductionism and simple determinism.

However, this is not the case in Mao; rather, as from the perspective of *tongbian*, Mao’s conception of principal “contradiction” and the principal aspect of the principal “contradiction” is to indicate the correlativity of the determinate with indeterminate aspects of a continuity process. “The principal contradiction” is rather as a focus of correlations in a specific field. To say “leading and decisive,” “secondary and subordinate position,” “is determined” and “dominant position” is to locate the focal center of correlations in the richly vague field of relationships where the energy of change is. To grasp the principal contradiction relies on an appreciation of the continuity of the focus with the field. As corollary to this, the principal “contradiction” and the other elements of the continuity process, as focus and field, are never finally fixed or determinant. This is not a matter of the determining vs. the determined, but rather that of the site-specific, appropriate situation, and proper time on the part of the principal “contradiction.”

The relations of the principal contradiction to its field of relationships are not established in terms of the presumption of “essences” or “natural kinds” defining membership. This is particularly the case with the principal aspect of the principal “contradiction.” For Mao, the principal aspect and the other aspect of the principal contradiction are certainly an analogue of paired aspects *mao* and *dun*. To name one of them as “principal,” “with the leading role” and “dominant position,” and the other, “secondary,” Mao plainly suggests the right time and position on the part of one of them that manifests as the nature or *zhi* of a thing. As the terms “principal,” “with the leading role” and “dominant position” are adopted as analogues of *tongbian*, they do not contain the same implications in English. Perhaps it would be more suitable to say that they mean *zheng* (appropriateness) and *shi zhong* (right time and in a proper situation). This is exactly the same point Mao makes in terms of *zhongyong* (free from being inappropriate, “not change”) in his mentioning Mozi in his letter of February 1, 1939 to Chen Boda, when Mao claims that a *zhi* has two aspects in an ongoing process, with either of them as the principal and comparably stable. And he adds that *zhi* has to be one-sided (or *pian*) toward the principal aspect. *Zhi* exactly means that aspect; it is not *zhi*, otherwise. By “having the two but being free from one-sidedness to each (*liang er wu pian*),” what Mozi proposes is “free from going to a different *zhi* on either the side of left or right. To be one-sided with either aspects of a *zhi* would not make one-sidedness but *zheng* (appropriateness). It is here that we find what Mao’s “principal,” “with the leading role,” and “dominant position” exactly suggest by *pian* (one-sidedness) and/or *zheng* (appropriateness). And *pian* and *zheng* entirely rely on continuity of paired aspects (Mao 1983, 142–43).

An important continuity of paired aspects that Mao is most interested in is that of theory with practice and *yingyong* (using the Marxist position and views as guidance in the revolution). Relevant to this are many of the claims of continuity, that is, the continuity of intention and results of doing (*dongji yu xiaoguo*), thinking and actual circumstances (*sixiang yu shiji*), and knowing and doing (*zhi he xing*). So is it as regards “continuity with the masses” (*lianxi qunzhong*), his analogue of arrow and target (*you di fangshi*), his pet phrases “seeking continuity through actual things” (*shishi qiushi*) and “change the world and remould world views” (*gai zao shijie he gaizao shijieguan*), his emphasis on “active reflection” theory (*nengdong fanying lun*) and so on. Indeed, all these claims were relevant to the classical *tongbian* with regard to viewing humanity as continuous with the world.

We often perceive that there is a material world in contradiction to human subjectivity. *Tongbian* suggests, however, that knowing and doing, exploring and comprehending, and other activities of the like of human subjectivity, have the same reference to continuity through change; all are believed to be continuous with a

world of correlations. Continuity requires humanity not only to have a thorough comprehension of change, but also to do things according to continuity to effect changes in actual circumstances as well as in himself. In such a view of *tongbian*, we see no separation of humanity from nature and no dichotomy of human subjectivity vs. the physical world. As a person makes himself continuous with the physical world, what he comprehends and does is simply the way in which the world changes; and thus there is no contradiction. Human plans are never made away from the continuity of a changing world, and thus would not go wrong. By an ever-varying adaptation, a person achieves successes in his undertakings. Such a perspective from the modality of *tongbian* has been so profoundly rooted in Chinese tradition that it has become a Chinese “logic.” Mao tends to hold a view that Marxism must turn up as a continuity with the specific characteristics of China, and that the real power of Marx-Leninism lay in the fact that it would make a continuity with particular revolutionary practices in different countries (Mao 1965, 449).²⁷

For Mao, doing is continuous with both thinking and actual circumstances; doing (or practice) itself may make a continuum, “practice goes through the entire process of our knowing” (Mao 1988, 33). He even asserts that doing goes first, and then knowing (*ibid.*, 474.); for him, both reading and applying are a kind of knowing, and applying is an even more important kind. It is often not a matter of knowing first, and then doing, but that of doing first, and then learning, for doing itself knows (*ibid.*, 1: 189–90). Of course, doing is more a manifestation of the characteristic of the active role of humanity, if doing is assumed as continuity with actual circumstances, then it does make a continuum of thought and the physical world and would be successful in rendering positive results. If it goes astray from continuity, it would end up with failure. Yet, a person is able to learn from failure, adjust himself not to abandon continuity, and then makes himself a continuity. It is in this sense that Mao regards doing highly and the phrase “failure is the mother of success” (*Shibai shi chenggong zhi mu*).

Many China students in the West view Mao as voluntarist, but they seem to have forgotten that he never assumed that people are capable of doing whatever they want; but rather, from the perspective of *tongbian*, what Mao truly suggested is that a person is unable to accomplish anything if he abandons continuity with actual circumstances. Mao seemingly places heavy weight on the active role of humanity, but also makes the individual a focus of correlations in the field of relationships where he is. It is at this standpoint that Mao

27 “*Makesi zhuyi bixu he woguo juti tedian xiang jiehe...Makesi Liening zhuyi de weida liliang jiu zaiyu ta shi be gege guojia juti de geming shijian xiang xianxi de.*”

emphasizes “the theory of active reflection,” or stresses the need “assume a full play of the active role of subjectivity.” (ibid., vol. 2) Although he develops this concept after mentioning Lenin in the essay, “On New Democracy,” Mao emphasizes the idea of “*far hui zhuguan nengdong xing*” (assume a full play of the active role of subjectivity) in many occasions until it becomes a popular phrase of the masses).²⁸ What this is about is indeed “seeking a continuity of thinking with actuality.” In Mao’s view, even though there is not a dichotomy of thought vs. the physical world but rather that, as foci of correlations with the field of relationships, thoughts are continuous with actual circumstances; continuity could not be comprehended automatically. If it could, then this would indeed be a dichotomy, since continuity is correlative, rather than single-sided. Hence, the active role of thinking is exactly what continuity is about. Only when there is doing (including thinking) on the part and as an active role of humanity, and a continuity of field with focus comprehended, can there be an adequate continuity. Otherwise, there would only be separateness, looseness, and one-sidedness, or what as Mao criticizes, *xing-er-shang-xue*, or *zhuguan zhuyi* (subjectivism), or *pianmian* (one-sidedness).

Continuity of theory with practice lies in *yingyong*, or “applying Marxist theory and method as guidance in doing.” *Yingyong* as an active role on the part of humanity requires taking into full account of specific circumstances and proper time. As regards this point, Mao refers to “attaching importance to study of current circumstances and history,” which include “the current circumstances of politics, economy, military, and culture in both China and the world” and historical circumstances from the time of “Confucius to Sun Yatsen” (Mao 1965, 499). One of Mao’s famous analogues that functions to indicate the active role of humanity in continuity with actual circumstances is that of “arrow and target (*youdi fangshi*).” As Mao states, “the continuity of Marxism-Leninism with Chinese revolution is just like that of arrow and target...the arrow of Marxism-Leninism must shoot the target of Chinese revolution (ibid., 3: 38).”

There are also many more examples that may require a separate project on how Mao reads Marxism distinctly and represents *tongbian*. Mao’s focus of attention has been on reading correlativity or continuity in “dialectical materialism,” or say, wherever relations (relationship) matter, Mao would conceive them as correlativity and continuity. As Mao himself claimed, insofar as people have studied

28 “*Nengdong fanying lun*.” Although he developed this concept after mentioning Lenin in the essay, “On New Democracy,” Mao emphasized the idea of “*fa hui zhuguan nengdong xing*” (assume a full play of the active role of subjectivity) on many occasions until it became a popular phrase of the masses.

“dialectics,” it is exactly continuity and interdependence of the “opposites” that matter (ibid., 81–82).²⁹

It is clear that, for Mao, dialectical materialism is about “continuity,” or *tongyi*. As he repeatedly stated, the kernel of *bianzhengfa* (dialectics) was *duili tongyi*, or continuity of opposites, to juxtapose the three laws, as has been always in the old texts, is not appropriate, and those categories (perhaps there are more than a dozen of them) should all be explained as continuity of contradictions and opposites in things (ibid., 505–7). As Mao stated again and again, as far as “dialectics” is concerned, it is nothing else but continuity as long as we think about “opposites” (ibid., 81–82). It may suffice to say that for a Chinese version of “dialectical materialism,” which has developed amid Marxism’s encountering Chinese tradition, and comes to fruition in Mao, it is explicitly about *tongyi* (continuity), rather than dichotomy. Mao has developed the concept of Sinification of Marxism from the perspective of *tongbian*, that is, to construe continuity of Marxism with particular circumstances of China. His thought with Marxist rhetoric marks a new and more sophisticated phase of the traditional strand *tongbian*. Its sophistication and maturity lie in the fact that Mao not only advocated but also performed it. His modern version of *tongbian* is so articulate that it not only becomes a major thinking modality for the general theoretical realm of Chinese Marxism, but also has a profound impact on the entire history of modern China due to the revolution under his leadership.

Post-Mao Era Marxism

The form that Marxism assumed in China was no longer the same as the inherited legacy of Marxian dialectics in Europe. It is a third alternative, a rendered version that indeed articulates *tongbian*, a traditional Chinese modality of thinking in the language composed of the terminology of Western Marxism yet in Chinese translation. In this sense we can consider it a modernized form of traditional thinking. Known as *bianzhengfa* (“dialectics”), the new strand finally came to a mature formation in the thought of Mao Zedong and is both powerful and available to people in all walks of life in China.

However, this version of Sinicized Marxism has, more than forty years after Mao’s death, changed since the end of the 1970s when Deng Xiaoping came to power and openly declared the start of his capitalist “Economic Reform” with the name of “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.” We see currently an utterly different situation

29 Here the language Mao uses is Marxist, though, that is, *bianshengfa yanliu zhe xuduo, jiusi duili de tongyixing huo xiangbu shentou*.

in which China has been encountering the domination of the Western idea of liberalism. This shows the Chinese authority's engagement in economic reform, which has appealed to the doctrines of neo-liberalism, and more and more rendered a liberal account of China's future. It seems there is a complete breakup of the trend of *tongbian* or "dialectics" in both official ideology and the community of intelligentsias. This tendency has been well seen as many students and others with an interest in Chinese politics, and both international and Chinese media, have been watching closely so as not to miss any small piece of information which may indicate a significant move towards political reform that the Chinese authorities may have been taking in the direction of liberal democratization. In this respect, Hu Jintao's ascendance to power in 2003 was regarded a great opportunity for such a change.

It may be interesting to find that, however, just like the case of Marxism in China, liberalism, wherever one finds it in the West, may be significantly different from what appears to be now the Chinese analogue. As we pay close attention, it may be that neo-liberalism and liberal democracy have assumed a third form in China, a rendered version that articulates the traditional *tongbian* in the language composed of liberalism's terms yet in Chinese translation. We may call it a Chinese style of liberalism and find, however, as a clear strand of thought of Chinese tradition, *tongbian* is still available. Although Chinese liberalism finds some of its roots in Western ideology, it may have read it in a different way.

In this respect, it is helpful to mention Yan Fu, the case of perhaps the first Chinese liberalist. He produced the first Chinese version of evolutionary theory in 1898. While he was no doubt deeply impressed by Western liberalism, Yan Fu rendered the original form of liberalism as one that was rather focused on the individual as a means to the end of community; beyond this, individual liberty found little room in his intellectual world. (Zhou 2003) This revisionist view was because the ultimate spiritual core of liberalism—the concept of the worth of people within society as an end in itself, did not come through in Yen Fu's approach (Schwartz 1964, 240).

Almost precisely one hundred years later, in 1998, Liu Rong, a professor of philosophy at Zhongshan University, argued in exactly the terms of *tongbian* in his work in defense of Deng Xiaoping's articulation of a "dialectical" way of "incorporating capitalism into socialism,"

"The two systems (socialist and capitalism) under one state are *xiangfan xiangcheng* (contradictory yet complementary);" Deng's wisdom lies in his employing the dialectical method, *duili tongyi* (the unity of opposites), and viewing both contradictory relations and identical elements

(*gongtong dian*) of the two systems, that is, unity, identity, sharing, and agreeability, their reliance on each other, penetrating into each other, and co-operation. Under certain conditions, they complement and benefit from each other, glorifying and promoting each other. (Liu 1998, 405–6)

Right or wrong, capitalism as a practice of neo-liberalism under the current Chinese circumstances is rendered in Liu's hand a new form which is not considered as necessarily contradicting socialism, but rather is supposed to be a means to the end of the community.

What are the typical patterns for Chinese liberals to read Western liberalism? Again, any explanation needs to start with the issue of the absence in Chinese tradition of Western-style dualisms that establish an ontological separation between some determinative principle and that which it determines, and the correlative mode of philosophizing and explaining order in the world. It was in this setting that Chinese liberals produced an ideology and adopted actions. The nearly forty years since this process began have witnessed great changes in the authorities' treatment of the fundamental political concepts in Marxism. thanks to the typical patterns in which the Chinese liberals read Western ideas, as outlined below:

- 1) No Debate (*bu zhenglun*): one of Deng Xiaoping's key phrases, which means that any debate regarding what is socialism or capitalism is rejected, since debate on this issue would lead economic reform to a deadlock.
- 2) Market Economy: Capitalism is an economic system based upon private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit. Characteristics central to capitalism include private property, capital accumulation, wage labour, voluntary exchange, a price system and competitive markets. In a capitalist market economy, decision-making and investment are determined by every owner of wealth, property or production ability in financial and capital markets, whereas prices and the distribution of goods and services are mainly determined by competition in goods and services markets. As a concept in terms of neoliberalism, a market economy is primarily related to the 20th-century resurgence of 19th-century ideas associated with *laissez-faire* economic liberalism, which includes such policies as privatization, austerity, deregulation, free trade, and reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society. These market-based ideas and the policies they inspired constitute a paradigm shift away from the post-war Keynesian consensus, which lasted from 1945 to 1980. However, Chinese reformists tried hard to promote such a neo-liberal style of market economy by saying that it could serve either capitalism or socialism, and thus persuading people that what this market economy is driving at is definitely socialism.

- 3) Preliminary Stage of Socialism: The purpose of stressing this concept is to persuade people of a shifting of the political direction of socialism, which involves restraining capitalism, to productivity development, which means adopting the market economy and science and technology of capitalism.
- 4) Productivity: taken as a pure economic concept, productivity could develop independent of socialist and together with capitalist productive relations.
- 5) “White Cat and Black Cat”: a reductionist view of economic development as a matter of means rather than ends.
- 6) “Science and technology constitute the primary productive force.” This is another of Deng’s pet expression, which renders a misunderstanding of Marx’s view of science and technology for a form of determinism. Here “the economic foundation determines the superstructure” is mistaken for a linear, one-track dualism. This is not Marx’s view, even though for him production constitutes a decisive course because in Marx changes exert impact on the inner-related process of production, consumption, distribution and exchange. “Economic determinism” became a popular term, which is based on the fallacy of scientific and technological determinism. In Marx’s critique, nothing would be worse than a theorist who holds this fallacy. For instance, property relations are the concern of law, which is a superstructure and necessary for production. Furthermore, the human factor is responsible for primary productivity.

It seems all to find that in the *tongbian* reading a more *tongbian* yet empiricist form of Chinese Marxism has become a dualist and philosophic fallacy. As the process of economic reform appealed to the doctrines of neoliberalism, the Chinese have gradually entered a new discourse on the future, a modified interpretation of the Marxism-Leninism that they had followed for over ninety years since the 1920s.³⁰ In addition, they revived discussions of Confucianism. At this time, however, both a modified interpretation of Marxism and the revival of Confucianism were carried out in terms of neoliberalism (Tian 2006).

However, even though in the course of about forty years’ economic reform China has been experiencing a rush for wealth, and the slogan “to be rich is glorious” seems to have become the motto of all society, from the perspective of *tongbian* it is still an unclear situation as for both the masses and government. The attitude is far more paradoxical than models of liberalism can explain. There has not been a sign of any certain direction that China is definitely going to take for the time being; apart from enormous uncertainty, a teleological transition to liberal

30 Since economic reform there has been a popular circulation of Deng Xiaoping assertion—“what socialism is about is not clear, other than to develop productive forces.” Scholars of Marxism have also started an attack on the theory of class struggle in Marx and Mao.

democracy simply does not exist. For this reason, there is less plausibility for abstract theoretical prediction to occur in such a scenario.

President Xi Jinping, the current top leader of China, is seen making particular effort to build an image of affinity with the common people. Xi seems to be reaching back to the Zhou dynasty 3,000 years ago for inspiration in this regard. His idea of a “new era” of global relations based on a “community of common destiny” has drawn from the concept of *tianxia*, or “all under heaven,” that reigned during that ancient era. This might be, however, be an alternative version of the *tongbian* way of understanding of Marx’s idea of communism—*datong*, meaning living in harmonious coexistence.

Attention all around the world will now be paid to the claims of harmonious cooperation along China’s new Silk Road—spanning from Eurasia to Africa—to see how the aspiration of a common destiny is playing out in reality. This is perhaps an indication, just as Hall and Ames observe, that the leadership of today’s China maintains many of the same characteristics that have dominated Chinese government since the Han dynasty—namely, the nation understood as a family, filial respect for the ruler as father, and the consequent sense of rule as a personal exercise (Tian 2006, 213).

There will thus be the possibility at some point that new leadership rethinks the whole process of the campaign of reform and, as a result, turns to traditional virtues and ethical values as both ideology and political solutions for handling elements that affect social stability. In this scenario, what they will be forced to consider is how to assess and even retreat from certain reforming programs that are endangering the future of China. This will be very disappointing to the proponents of teleological liberalism.

For *tongbian*, there is hope if we just try to comprehend historical phenomena through correlations and continuity within a full range of dimensions in contextual settings, and avoid comprehending them as dualistic, separate and unrelated conceptual models. For all the related possibilities, the worldviews, modality of thinking, traditional virtues, and cultural and moral values will play a fundamental role in determining the direction China is going to take, even if there is the use of Western concepts, liberal or otherwise, on the surface.

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Beyond Murderous Dialectics: On Paradoxical Thinking and Maoism

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Abstract

This essay has been inspired by the writings of the contemporary Neo-Confucian philosopher Mou Zongsan and the German sinologist Wolfgang Bauer. It assumes that the power of Mao Zedong's thought sprung from its ability to systematically subordinate the transformative philosophy of the classical *Book of Changes* to the Marxist model of revolutionary class struggle. If dialectical thinking requires thought to think against itself and thereby be able to continuously change itself from the inside, Mao seems to have been a master of dialectical thinking. One of the intellectual impulses for the Great Cultural Revolution was the radically unsentimental judgement that, in order for the socialist revolution to succeed, it was necessary to erase the ancient Chinese legacy of paradoxical thinking, and that this was a precondition of the possibility of Mao's Sino-Marxist discourse. But the enormous power that Mao's thought derived from the tension between revolutionary heroism and transformative flexibility revealed itself as self-destructive. Mao tried to fight against the failure of his revolutionary vision and the possibility that the wisdom of paradoxical thinking and the classical heritage of China could, finally, gain the upper hand in the ongoing struggle for modernization. From this perspective, this essay touches upon a contradiction, which can be understood as the principle contradiction of contemporary Chinese philosophy: the contradiction between the defence of Sino-Marxism as the ideological foundation of a "socialism with Chinese characteristics" on the one hand, and the renaissance of traditional culture and classical learning on the other, which entails a powerful challenge to this very foundation.

Keywords: dialectics, paradoxical thinking, Mao Zedong, Mou Zongsan, Wolfgang Bauer

Onkraj morilske dialektike: O paradoksnem mišljenju in maoizmu

Izvleček

Navdih za esej prihaja iz razmišljanj sodobnega neokonfucijanskega filozofa Mou Zongsana in nemškega sinologa Wolfganga Bauerja. Osnovna predpostavka eseja je, da je moč Mao Zedongove misli izviral iz sposobnosti, da transformativno filozofijo klasične *Knjige premen* sistematično podredi marksističnemu modelu revolucionarnega razrednega

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boja. Če dialektično mišljenje v končni fazi zahteva od misli, da misli proti sami sebi in s tem neprestano spreminja samo sebe od znotraj, se zdi, da je bil Mao mojster dialektičnega mišljenja. Ena od intelektualnih pobud za Veliko proletarsko kulturno revolucijo je bila radikalno nesentimentalna sodba, da je za uspeh socialistične revolucije nujno izbrisati staro dediščino paradoksnega mišljenja in da je to predpogoj za možnost Maovega sino-marksističnega diskurza. Vendar pa se je neznanska moč, ki jo je Maova misel črpala iz napetosti med revolucionarnim heroizmom in transformativno fleksibilnostjo, izkazala za samodestruktivno. Mao se je poskušal boriti za svojo revolucionarno vizijo in za možnost, da bi lahko modrost paradoksnega mišljenja in dediščina klasične Kitajske nazadnje prevladali v nenehnem spopadu za modernizacijo. S tega stališča se ta esej dotakne težave, ki jo lahko razumemo kot temeljno protislovje sodobne kitajske filozofije: protislovja med obrambo sino-marksizma kot ideološkega temelja »socializma s kitajskimi značilnostmi« in renesanso tradicionalne kulture in klasičnega učenja, ki predstavlja velik izziv temu temelju.

Ključne besede: dialektika, paradoksalno mišljanje, Mao Zedong, Mou Zongsan, Wolfgang Bauer

Murderous Dialectics

For Mou Zongsan, one of the most important and widely recognized Confucian philosophers of the 20th century, Mao Zedong was a “great devil.” A devil, however, whose thoughts and actions were nourished by philosophical sources, especially materialistic dialectics. For Mou, this materialistic turn in dialectics has been extremely harmful. Polemically, he intertwines dialectical thinking, political practice, and historical catastrophe:

The harm was not yet apparent in Hegel himself, but with Karl Marx, the arising of dialectic from absolute existence settled upon material existence as “materialist dialectics,” whose emergence was not just the “source of tremendous chaos,” but became actual chaos for the whole world and caused millions of heads to fall. Look at how many people died in China because of this! Mao Zedong was a great devil, and the source of his devilry is in Hegel. (Mou 2003a, 464; Engl. 114–19)

For Mou Zongsan, the chain from Hegel to Marx to Mao entails a materialistic turning of Hegel’s idealistic dialectics. The idea of dialectics, thereby, expands its reach into the realm of historical developments, which now can be understood as driven by struggles between different social classes. The political implementation of this idea has thus led to murderous consequences.

Even a superficial glance at the *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung* (Mao Zedong) will suffice to show that he thought of class struggle in China as a struggle

for life and death—and acted accordingly: “A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.” (Mao 1968, 6–7) In March 1949, for example, he expresses the conviction that the class struggle would not end with the military victory over the bourgeoisie led by Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi): “After the enemies with guns have been wiped out, there will still be enemies without guns; they are bound to struggle desperately against us, and we must never regard these enemies lightly.” (ibid., 9) Even before the victory in the civil war and the foundation of the People’s Republic of China, Mao stressed that the class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie would continue after the Communist seizure of power, and “continue to be long and tortuous and at times will even become very acute.” (ibid., 10) It is well known that ideological struggles were fought again and again with relentless cruelty in the years after 1949, and until Mao’s death (see Dikötter 2014, 2010, 2016). For critics of the Marxist theory of class struggle (from Sun Yat-sen (Sun Yixian) to prominent Confucian philosophers), the disastrous consequences of socialism in China are not merely due to mistakes in the realization of a good idea, but due to the basic idea of historical materialism and a “history of civilization” driven by class struggles as such (Mao 1968, 10).¹ In addition, the ideological struggles became especially brutal because of the nationalist orientation of the socialist revolution in China, which merged social and national liberation, the class enemies with the traitors of the people.

“*Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland*” (“death is a master from Germany”). This famous line from a poem by Paul Celan seems to be true also for some masters of German philosophy: the dialectical thought of Hegel and Marx is, for Mou Zongsan, one of the devilish sources, which in Chinese reality “caused millions of heads to fall.” There is a strong consciousness of the catastrophic side in modern Chinese history among contemporary Neo-Confucians like Mou Zongsan. They have shown great interest in German philosophy, but what about reflections on the dark side of contemporary German history? May they even be accused for not recognizing and addressing the philosophical significance of the “destruction of the European Jews” (Raul Hilberg)? Particularly with regard to the central position of Auschwitz in Frankfurt School Critical Theory, silence in this respect must be deeply disturbing. One reason may be that racial ideology and the idea of racial struggle (*Rassenkampf* in the vocabulary of National Socialism) that emerged in 19th century Europe did not play a role in China’s internal political struggles; we do not find the philosophical exaltation of this idea that is evidenced in Heidegger’s link between anti-Semitism and the “history of being” (see Trawny 2015).

1 “Classes struggle, some classes triumph, others are eliminated. Such is history, such is the history of civilization for thousands of years. To interpret history from this viewpoint is historical materialism; standing in opposition to this viewpoint is historical idealism.”

There has been some influence of social-Darwinist racial ideology, expressed in the sometimes almost alarmist fear about the extinction of the “yellow race” in its struggle with the “white race” (evident in Sun Yat-sen’s *The Three Principles of the People* but also in the *Confucian Manifesto* of 1958) and in largely defensive ideas of national self-strengthening. On the other hand, class ideology and the idea of class struggle were so powerful and effective that they had to be perceived as a philosophical problem of extreme urgency. Therefore, the criticism of materialistic dialectics and the theory of class struggle is, for Mou Zongsan, one of the main reasons to develop an idealistic moral philosophy. And the relation between Kant and Hegel is, in contemporary Chinese philosophy, marked by ideological struggles that have left deep and painful traces in the interpretations of their writings.

In the Chinese context, why are moral questions connected to the discrimination and murder of millions of Jews by the regime of National Socialism often regarded as a European problem, or even as German idiosyncrasy? In most cases, this attitude does not seem to imply a revisionist intention. Rather, it simply seems difficult to understand why the destruction of the European Jews should be attributed such a prominent place in the history of modern historical catastrophes. Adorno, for example, famously stated that a “new categorical imperative” has been imposed on humanity by Hitler, namely, “to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz does not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen” (Adorno 1975, 358; Engl. 365). From a Chinese perspective, does it not appear as a bitter irony of history that shortly after Adorno published his reflections on that “new categorical imperative,” not only students but also well-known philosophers in Western Europe indulged in glorification and defence of Mao Zedong, who undoubtedly belongs to the ranks of 20th century political mass murderers? Did many left-wing intellectuals not hail Mao as an alternative to the encrusted Soviet ideology and celebrate the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution with barbaric naivety? The collective blindness toward leftist cruelty remains mysterious so long as those fundamental problems of liberalism and liberal democracy are ignored, problems arising from their entanglement in economic structures that are, in many respects, exploitative and disastrous. How deep must contempt and hatred for “liberal thinking” and “capitalo-parliamentarism” be in order to make philosophers like Alain Badiou willing to defend, with provocative gestures, the thought of Mao Zedong, whose murderous consequences are well documented today? He concedes “serious mistakes” and the “high price of human lives,” only to praise, in the next moment, the great dialectical mastery of Mao. This leader of the Chinese Communist Party succeeded in fighting his party “completely alone,” and in rebelling against state socialism while being, at the same time, the highest representative of that socialist state; he has thus, for Badiou, opened the possibility

of revolutionizing the socialist revolution; by pushing a revolutionary party to abolish itself, he opened up the possibility of a breakthrough towards a politics “without a party” (Badiou 2009, 124–26).² These are interesting points, but the euphemistic undertone appears to be fatally reminiscent of Martin Heidegger’s loyalty to the “greatness of the movement.”

In the last chapter of his *Negative Dialectics*, entitled “Meditations on Metaphysics,” Adorno revolts against the tendency towards “squeezing any kind of sense, no matter how bleached, out of the victims’ fate” (Adorno 1975, 354; Engl. 361). He is convinced that the Nazi “administrative murder of millions” (ibid., 355; Engl. 362) excludes any construction of historical-philosophical sense. No course of history, however dialectical, no cunning of reason, however twisted, may or can be allowed to appropriate these crimes as a step toward historical progress or the realization of higher ends. The understanding of Auschwitz as a “rupture of civilization” and as the “signature of an entire age” (Jürgen Habermas) attempts to mark this radical discontinuity. In his unsentimental self-reflections and paradoxical turnings of negative-dialectical thinking, Adorno considers that Hitler’s thoughts and actions confront philosophy with the impossibility of coming to terms with them. But those thoughts and actions by no means fall out of history, and, on the contrary, must be reconsidered, precisely for this reason, in their pre- and post-history. One condition of the possibility for realizing the “new categorical imperative” is thus to integrate Auschwitz into modernity, to recognize it as a paradoxical consequence of modernity. Adorno’s reflections show that Germany’s cultural and political development after the Second World War remains dialectically tied to the Nazi-regime from which it tried to distance itself as clearly as possible.

Does it make any sense to see a paradoxical cunning of reason at work in the Nazi regime because its barbaric destructiveness opened up the possibility of Germany’s successful democratization? Or: Cannot Maoism in its most destructive, anti-cultural, and anti-Confucian excesses be understood as the inevitable price to be paid, either for the victory of communism or for the so called “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation?” A price that may have been very high, but ultimately seems to be justified from a greater historical perspective? And has the barbaric destructiveness of the Communist regime not only failed to achieve the goal of destroying traditional culture and classical learning, but even created the conditions for their creative transformation?

These are questions that arise when one tries to critically approach the constellation of Hegel, Marx, and Mao as Mou Zongsan understood it, or the “continuity

2 See also the “Introduction” by Slavoj Žižek to Mao (2007).

of the dialectical line Hegel-Marx-Lenin-Mao” (Holz 1970, 84). What emerges then are questions about the relationship between the dynamic of modernization, dialectical thinking, and the transformational philosophy of the *Book of Changes*, a relationship with which the German thinkers Joachim Schickel and Hans Heinz Holz had already dealt in an interesting manner at the time of the Great Cultural Revolution (Schickel 1976, 231–33; Holz 1970, 72–99). First of all, they have made clear how grotesquely one-sided the esoteric reception of this classical book has been in the West. They have also perceived something the desperate anti-communism of Mou Zongsan had to underestimate in its traumatic fear concerning the destruction of Chinese culture by the politics of the Chinese Communist Party, namely, that Mao’s thought, however unconsciously and against his will, was able to go beyond Hegel, Marx, Lenin, and the Soviet Russian ideology precisely because he was able, in a strangely radical way, to make the transcultural dynamics of Old and New, East and West fruitful for his own thinking. The “spiritual atom bomb of infinite power,” as Lin Biao, in his Introduction to the *Quotations of Chairman Mao Tse-tung* describes Mao’s thought (Mao 1968, xxxiv), is, as I would like to suggest, the result of a transcultural dynamic in which dialectical either-or (*entweder-oder*) and paradoxical as-well-as (*sowohl-als-auch*) have entered a complex and explosive relationship.

Mou Zongsan’s criticism of Mao’s theory of contradiction seems intellectually helpless in the face of the power and violence of such revolutionary thought. One reason for the discursive weakness of Mou’s thought consists in the failure to conceive the *Book of Changes* as a “logical model of permanent revolution” (Holz 1970, 79).³ Mou can be regarded as an expert on the subject as one of his first book publications from 1935 was *Natural Philosophy and the Moral Meaning of the Book of Changes*. Later, his criticism led to the moral accusation that the philosophy of the *Book of Changes* has been materialistically abused by Mao, by exploiting the ability to “observe subtle tendencies of development in the change of things”—like those legalist philosophers who helped the first emperor of the Qin dynasty to unify the empire. In this sense, Mou considered the Chinese Communist Party as guided by a modernized version of Legalism.⁴

3 “Daß die Interpretation der Zeichen 63 und 64 zum logischen Modell einer permanenten Revolution kommen muß, liegt auf der Hand.”

4 From very early on, Mou Zongsan developed a sharp understanding of dialectics as technique of power (*quanshu* 權術) in the hands of Mao Zedong. Simon Leys has defined this sardonic side of dialectics with admirable precision: “Dialectics is the jolly art that enables the Supreme Leader never to make mistakes—for even if he did the wrong thing, he did it at the right time, which makes it right for him to have been wrong, whereas the enemy, even if he did the right thing, did it at the wrong time, which makes it wrong for him to have been right” (Leys 2013, 194; see also Mou 2003b, 89–119).

Mao sometimes provocatively compared himself to the violent unifier of the empire, and Mou likes to allude to this comparison. But this perspective is rather misleading insofar as the explosive potential of the hybrid entanglement between transformation and revolution in Mao's theory and practice remains largely unthought. As a consequence, Mou Zongsan seeks refuge in the moral demonization of Mao Zedong.

"Heaven" has used the private and partisan aspirations of the first emperor to promote the public good. This is a famous idea from the historical-philosophical writings of Wang Fuzhi that Mou Zongsan links to the paradoxical effects of the cunning of reason in Hegel. However, Mou hardly makes any attempt to involve Mao and materialist dialectics in the movement of such paradoxical thinking. Theoretically, he withdraws from it by introducing a sharp contrast between idealistic and materialistic dialectics, in which the limits and potentials of his philosophy become particularly obvious. It seems as if, in the rupture between these two types of dialectics, Mou despairs of the transcultural entanglement between Old and New, East and West. He retreats to a simplistic opposition between old and new China, Chinese and Western dialectics: the idealistic or, as he also says, "ascetic dialectics" (*gongfu bianzheng* 工夫辯證), which has been developed in Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism is contrasted to the dialectics of the Chinese Communists, who absorbed from the West the poison of a materialistic turn of dialectics, already contained, for him, in the inadequacy of Hegelian thought. According to Mou, this inadequacy consists in the fundamental problem of having brought dialectics into the world of historical struggles and thereby anthologising them instead of restricting them, as in classical Chinese philosophy, to the ascetic sphere of "spiritual cultivation" (*jingshen xiuyang* 精神修養). For Mou, this self-limitation of dialectics has a great advantage. First, the old conflict between logical and dialectical contradiction can be circumvented by introducing a distinction between logical paradoxes that can be solved and dialectical paradoxes that are unsolvable. What emerges here is the possibility of a dialectics that becomes aware of the paradoxical and, at the same time, turns into an *exercitium*, into an exercise of cultivation dedicated to learning how to think and live with and through paradoxes. "Dialectics must finally be applied again to dialectics," as Mou Zongsan says. As soon as this happens, the broad field of "ascetic dialectics" opens up, a field Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist philosophers have been concerned with for millennia. Mou seems to be convinced that only "ascetic dialectics" have saved and can save dialectical thought from "turning into disaster" (*zhuanwei huohai* 轉為禍害). (see Mou 2003a, 462–65; Mou 2003c)

At this point, a philosophical correspondence to Adorno's move from Hegel's dialectics to negative dialectics comes to the fore. In negative dialectics, as Jürgen

Habermas observed in his criticism of Adorno, dialectical thinking has once again “reflected on itself,” thereby transforming dialectics into something that can “only be understood as an exercitium, as an exercise” (Habermas 1987, 515). If Mou Zongsan had known Adorno’s turn of dialectics against itself, he might have arrived at a different conclusion: an understanding of dialectics as *exercitium*, as an exercise in self-cultivation began, finally, to emerge in modern Western philosophy. However, the likelihood that both would have been able to discuss this problem in a meaningful way is very slim. More or less unavoidable misunderstandings about the ideological opposition between idealistic and materialistic dialectics would probably have made a dialogue impossible from the start. Both philosophers had developed their philosophical positions through painful meditations on the historical catastrophes associated with the names of Mao Zedong and Adolf Hitler, respectively, but Mou’s reflections on Mao led him to a radical critique of materialism, while Adorno’s reflections on Hitler led him to a radical critique of idealism.

Mou claims that Wang Fuzhi already developed a dialectical thinking, which resembles that of Hegel’s philosophy of history, and applied it to China. But, for him, this is a highly ambivalent achievement, because thereby Wang also paved the way for the reception of Marxist dialectics within Chinese thought. With regard to Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy of energetic transformation, which is systematically intertwined with his historical-philosophical reflections, Mou’s tendency to oppose idealistic-ascetic dialectics (China) with materialistic dialectics (Europe) turns out to be problematic. The affinity between Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy and the thought of the young Mao seems to have led Mou Zongsan to a forced and uncompromising rejection of philosophical perspectives developed within the so-called “energetic learning” (*qixue* 氣學) of Neo-Confucianism from Zhang Zai to Wang Fuzhi.⁵ Even today, followers of Mou Zongsan tend to deny the very existence of “energetic learning” within the broader field of Song and Ming dynasty Neo-Confucianism.

This line of Confucian learning, strongly influenced by the “Grand Commentary” of the *Book of Changes* and the *Zhuangzi*, has elaborated a discourse on what can be called “experience-dependent metaphysics” (*erfahrungsabhängige Metaphysik*). Mou is reluctant to use the paradoxical dialectics developed in the *Book of Changes*, and articulated in all its richness by Wang Fuzhi’s commentary, for an immanent critique of materialistic dialectics. In order to do this, it would have been necessary to break through the ideological frontline

5 For a more detailed discussion of this topic see Heubel (2007).

between idealistic and materialistic dialectics and connect the “paradoxical as-well-as” (*guijue xiangji* 詭譎相即), which he identified as the basic motive of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist philosophy, with the “ontology” of materialistic dialectics.

This is at least what I try to do in this essay: On the one hand, to liberate philosophy and reflections on the modernization of China from the teleological narrowness of dialectical materialism and to open it to the horizon of the three dominant traditions of modern political discourse (conservatism, liberalism, socialism) and their paradoxical constellation; on the other hand, however, the question I want to address here is to what extent the awareness of the paradoxical needed for such an analysis already has, in itself, “ascetic” conditions and cannot be separated from exercises in paradoxical thinking. By cultivating an “equalizing assessment” of idealistic and materialistic dialectics and by transforming their relationship into a paradoxical one, the freedom to a “solution by non-solution” (*Lösung durch Nicht-Lösung*) begins to emerge.

Solution by Non-solution

A rustic from Lu sent to King Yuan of Song a puzzle consisting of two knotted cords. King Yuan issued an order throughout the state that anyone who was clever should come and unravel them, but no one could do so. A disciple of the dialectician Ni Shuo begged leave to go unravel them, and he succeeded in untying one but not the other. He explained, “It is not that it could be untied and that I was incapable of doing it, rather that it was inherent in the nature of the thing that it was impossible to untie it.” He asked the rustic of Lu about it, and he said, “That is so. It is inherent in the nature of this knot that it is impossible to untie it. I knew it could not be untied, because I made it. But you knew without having made it—thus, you are cleverer than I am.” Therefore, those like the disciple of Ni Shuo untie things by not untying them. (*The Annals of Lü Buwei* 2000, 412)

It seems to me an ingenious intuition of Wolfgang Bauer to conclude the last chapter of *China and the Search for Happiness*, focusing on Chinese Marxism and

Maoism, with this parable (Bauer 1989, 575; Engl. 419).⁶ For Bauer, this parable expresses the “paradoxical secret” of every search for happiness, of every pursuit to realize ideals and utopias; the stronger people aspire to their realization, the more distant those ideals become. In his reflections on this paradoxical secret, he touches upon issues which are imposed by a Chinese modernization that has, for a long time, neglected or even denied its inherent paradoxical knot, because it has mistaken *forgetfulness of the paradoxical* for a necessary precondition of modernity. Furthermore, Bauer proposes a theoretical perspective that makes an interesting suggestion for further reflections on the modern dialectic of enlightenment and liberation. He proposes to “solve” (*lösen*) or “untie,” in a “wise and more cultivated” manner, the “mysterious problem” as to why the ardent striving for the realization of modern ideals and utopias has, paradoxically, turned into unprecedented disasters. The solution he proposes is “solution by non-solution” (*Lösung durch Nicht-Lösung*). This solution is at the same time non-solution, insofar as it consists of relinquishing the solution of that part which is unsolvable; it entails to solve (or undo, untie, unravel) the knot through contemplation of its (partial) insolubility. To the “solution by non-solution” (*yi bu jie jie zhi* 以不解解之) Bauer contrasts the classic example of a “total solution”—the violent cutting of the Gordian knot with the sword. “During long periods of its history, and particularly in recent centuries, the West preferred,” according to Bauer, this kind of solution (Bauer 1989, 575; Engl. 420).

In the same chapter, Bauer interprets the modern idea of revolution in China in the light of the philosophy of transformation developed in the *Book of Changes*. He thereby seeks to better understand the inscrutability of the relationship between revolution and transformation. He provides some interesting evidence for

6 Wolfgang Bauer uses the translation by Richard Wilhelm (*Frühling und Herbst des Lü Bu We* 1928, 267–68). My discussion has been strongly inspired by this translation, which plays with the word *lösen* (*jie* 解) in a manner I find more consistent than that of the English translation, where *jie* is rendered as “unravel” and “untie”: “Ein Mann aus Lu schenkte dem König Yüan von Sung einen Knoten. Der König ließ einen Befehl durch sein ganzes Land gehen, daß alle geschickten Leute kommen sollten und den Knoten auflösen. Aber niemand vermochte ihn aufzulösen. Ein Schüler von Erl Schuo bat um die Erlaubnis hinzugehen und ihn auflösen zu dürfen. Aber er konnte nur eine Hälfte auflösen, die andere Hälfte konnte er nicht lösen. Da sprach er: ‘Es ist nicht so, daß man ihn auflösen kann und nur ich ihn nicht auflösen vermag, sondern er läßt sich überhaupt nicht auflösen.’ Man befragte den Mann von Lu. Der sprach: ‘Ja man kann ihn wirklich nicht auflösen. Ich habe ihn gemacht und weiß, daß er nicht auflösbar ist. Aber einer, der ihn nicht gemacht hat und doch weiß, daß man ihn nicht lösen kann, der muß noch geschickter sein als ich.’ So hat der Schüler des Erl Schuo den Knoten dadurch gelöst, daß er ihn nicht gelöst hat.” (魯鄙人遺宋元王閉，元王號令於國，有巧者皆來解閉。人莫之能解。兒說之弟子請往解之，乃能解其一，不能解其一，且曰：「非可解而我不能解也，固不可解也。」問之魯鄙人。鄙人曰：「然，固不可解也。我為之而知其不可解也。今不為而知其不可解也，是巧於我。」故如兒說之弟子者，以不解解之也。)

the hypothesis that the modernization of China has been shaped by the blending of revolution and transformation, but also for the idea that the classical Chinese philosophy of transformation can only be meaningful for the present if it is not simply opposed to revolutionary change. In the course of these reflections, the question arises whether the transcultural entanglement between the Old and the New, between East and West in contemporary China can be “solved.” Moreover, can the paradoxical constellation of these moments perhaps even be understood as internal to Mao Zedong’s way of thinking and acting? Bauer remarks that Mao was, from the beginning, “the most Chinese” in the group of leading Chinese communists (Bauer 1989, 533; Engl. 389). However, Bauer’s analysis does not fail to suggest that Mao was also highly “un-Chinese,” because, like no other, he advocated a “total solution,” a solution that did not actually solve the “secret problem” (the paradox of Chinese modernization), but “destroyed it in an almost barbaric fashion” (Bauer 1989, 575; Engl. 419).

Is the hermeneutic contrast of total solution (West) and solution by non-solution (China), introduced by Bauer, misleading because it does not sufficiently recognize that there have been experiments with total solution in Chinese history too, and that Mao was able to affirmatively refer to those experiments? Such an objection is certainly not unjustified. It should, however, not obscure Bauer’s fascinating hypothesis that, on many occasions, the Chinese Communist Party fatefully ignored the “necessarily complicated, paradox-stricken conditions” in China, whereas, on the other hand, it also helped to bring about a breakthrough for a dialectical thinking that is, to a considerable extent, less forgetful of and more tolerant towards paradoxes.

Bauer’s analysis points to the affinity between the philosophy of transformation in the *Book of Changes* and the Maoist understanding of permanent revolution as a way of life. He arrives at the remarkable diagnosis that the pathological consequences of Chinese modernization can be traced back to a kind of short-circuit between transformation and modern revolution. The dialectic of stillness and movement is replaced by the heroization of revolutionary unrest: “According to Mao’s conception of the permanent revolution, such movement does not lead to a happy society, but already represents happy society” (Bauer 1989, 559; Engl. 408). The transfiguration of restlessness reaches into the realm of the ethical, where immobility and injustice correspond to one another. Within Maoist anti-traditionalism, Confucianism represents a rigid, hierarchically ordered, unequal society, and therefore is understood as an obstacle to modernization, which must be removed for moral reasons, as well. In this sense, a de-Confucianised, de-cultured, running wild type of human being was gradually created, “inclined toward combat and movement by natural disposition, and who also carried this orientation into the civilian sphere.” It was exactly this

human type Mao sought to strengthen as an ideal during the Great Cultural Revolution in order to “combat the ‘demon’ of solidification [*Erstarrung*]” (Bauer 1989, 561; Engl. 410). This cult of movement, ready for every sacrifice, arose out of the fear that the forces necessary to cope with the task of Chinese modernization could be so greatly diminished and hindered by the burden of tradition that they might cause the failure of the whole project of modernity in China:

Every step toward stabilization is now viewed with suspicion as the onset of a new stagnation, as the beginning of the end. All recourse to the past arouses the fear that, like so much mildew, the dust of the centuries will settle once again on what has newly grown. This is the reason for the constant forward thrust, those countless movements and leaps. They are meant to stay the drift into the sleep of the past. (Bauer 1989, 572; Engl. 417–18)

Can the dialectic between stillness and movement, which has been a central component of the classical philosophy of transformation, be reintroduced into this revolutionary movement, which is increasingly, in the aftermath of the Great Cultural Revolution, not experienced as happiness, but as disastrous restlessness? Can the socialist tradition be transformed in this direction? Bauer discusses this question philosophically by linking Mao’s theory of contradiction and practice with the “conceptual framework of the *Book of Changes*” (Bauer 1989, 538; Engl. 393). Following a quotation from Mao’s “On Contradiction,” Bauer remarks:

To find the bases for this conviction of a “dialectics of nature,” we need not go back to Engels, still less to Trotsky, with whose “Permanent Revolution” Mao only has the name in common. Here also the traces lead back to the oldest Chinese book, the *Book of Changes*. For it is hardly possible to find a more exact description of the ontological system in back of the *Book of Changes* than this statement of Mao about the creative contradictions of things. (Bauer 1989, 541–42; Engl. 395)

The Chinese notion of transformation stems from historical sources that date back to the archaic beginnings of philosophical discourse in the *Book of Changes*. From this perspective, it seems reasonable to conclude that Mao’s vision of modernization, including his anti-traditional radicalism, arose from intertwining transformation and revolution. Dialectical thinking in 20th century China may have been more long-lived than Soviet ideology—by which it has been influenced, but with which it also fought bitterly—because the combination of materialistic dialectics and philosophy of transformation helped to develop greater ideological flexibility. This, at least, seems to be a plausible explanation for the strong

tendency of socialism with Chinese characteristics towards historical experimentalism. By way of this experimentalism, the Chinese Communist Party succeeded, even after 1989, in maintaining the necessary amount of political legitimacy that cannot be secured by brute force and sophisticated mechanisms of control alone. Now, the assumption emerges that precisely within this socialist experimentalism a historically deep-reaching capability of paradoxical thinking and doing was able to overwinter. This enduring capability has recently found expression in the idea of a new communication among the three traditions of conservatism, liberalism, and socialism or in the dialogue among Chinese tradition, Western influence, and Marxism. If these developments can be understood as an indication for the reactivation of paradoxical thinking in contemporary China, the question arises whether they serve, primarily, the purpose of stabilizing so-called “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” This may be true to a certain extent, but this renaissance of paradoxical thinking within contemporary Chinese thought corresponds also to the discursive crisis of legitimacy which haunts the Communist regime. The internal dynamic of this renaissance may become so challenging and far-reaching that, sooner or later, it may lead to the collapse of the cultural and ideological (political) framework established in 1949.

Following Wolfgang Bauer, I would like to suggest that the explosive power of Mao’s thought emerged from the ability to systematically subordinate transformative thinking to the Marxist model of revolutionary class struggle. Mao sensed the dangers that this ancient legacy could pose to his revolutionary project. If dialectical thinking requires thinking to think against itself, to be able to turn against the innermost driving forces of one’s own thinking in order to constantly change it from the inside, Mao can be seen as a master of dialectical thinking. One of the intellectual impulses for the Great Cultural Revolution has been the radically unsentimental judgement that, in order for the socialist revolution to succeed, it is necessary to erase the ancient legacy of paradoxical thinking which has been a condition of possibility for Mao’s Sino-Marxist discourse.

This is consistent from the perspective of a dialectics infused in messianic utopianism, which seeks, in one last turn, to sublimate itself (*sich selbst aufheben*). In this regard, to speak of a “continuity of the dialectical line Hegel-Marx-Lenin-Mao” seems to be justified. From the perspective of the transformative and paradoxical—or negative—dialectics of the *Book of Changes*, however, this consequence is highly non-dialectical. Thus, the enormous powers of change and destruction that Mao’s thought derived from the dialectic of revolutionary heroism and transformative flexibility must, inevitably, turn into self-destruction: “Things cannot remain permanently destroyed,” as is said in an explanation to the hexagram 24, “The Return (The Turning Point)” (*I Ging* 1924, drittes Buch, 102). The return of the light

(bright) and living force announces itself only inconspicuously by the emergence of a continuous Yang-stroke on the bottom line of the hexagram *fu* (☰). However, this revitalization, “just at the moment when it seems completely conquered,” is inevitable—at least according to philosophers who think about the renaissance of classical Chinese culture from the rather detached perspective of an ongoing “to-and-fro between cultivation and vitalization” (*wenzhi xiangfu* 文質相復) (Ke 2012, 37–91). Mao fought, with all his powers, against the failure of his revolutionary vision and thus against the possibility that the wisdom of paradoxical thinking and the classical heritage of China could still gain the upper hand in the ongoing struggle for modernization. How to deal with the contradiction between the defence of revolutionary heritage and the renaissance of classical culture? This question is one of the most important, if not *the* most important, philosophical challenges in contemporary China.

Philosophically speaking, Mao’s struggle against the legacy of the *Book of Changes* contains a fundamental problem within his own thinking—the dialectics of nature. “Consistent dialecticians from European philosophical traditions reject a dialectics of nature,” as Hans Heinz Holz argues (Holz 1971, 82). However, for Holz, such a rejection is based on the assumption that “the cosmological bond between man and nature is broken” (*ibid.*).⁷ As mentioned above, Wolfgang Bauer recognized in Mao’s theory of contradiction and his conception of the “creative contradictions within things,” as well as in his conviction of a dialectics of nature, the “ontological system” of the *Book of Changes* (Bauer 1989, 540–42; Engl. 394–95). Similarly, Holz sees in this system an operational model for a “nature-grown dialectic” (*naturwüchsige Dialektik*), which at the same time develops a typology of situations with regard to content and a formalized procedure of movement out of contradictions” (Holz 1971, 83). In my view, however, Holz misjudges the difficulties that Mao had with the recognition of this side of his own thought. Mao himself had a very ambiguous relationship with cultural tradition; the legacy of classical learning, especially Confucianism, was generally regarded, by Chinese Communists, as an obstacle to the modernization of China. On the one hand, Mao styled himself in a traditional way as poet and calligrapher, but on the other hand did everything in his power to destroy the social and political conditions of classical literati culture. Seen in this light, his thinking seems to have been deeply influenced by a paradoxical knot formed by Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy on the one hand and the classical thought of transformation on the other. Against the legacy of paradoxical dialectics *within* his own thought, Mao believed that the

7 For Holz, Leibniz has developed the “only European system of thought in which related problems have been overcome in an exemplary way” (Holz 1971, 117).

sword of revolution in his hand could still bring this knot to a “total solution” (Bauer: *totale Lösung*).

The pathological and traumatic consequences of Mao’s attempts at total solution are hardly understood and worked through in China, even decades after his death. On the contrary, the urgently needed working through the Maoist past is still not encouraged and faces many obstructions. Hence, the barriers that obstruct the communication of the three traditions and the equal realization of their normative ideals are undoubtedly enormous (see Heubel 2018). Part of the theoretical attempt to come to terms with this troubled past could be the reconstruction of discursive struggles among conservative, liberal, and socialist positions that have accompanied the twisted and tortuous way of Chinese modernization. In this essay, it is not possible to enter into a deeper discussion of the cultural, social, economic, and political conflicts which make it almost impossible to solve the knot of modernization by (partial) non-solution. I would just like to mention one particularly interesting barrier to communication, which seems to render such a possibility unthinkable.

It is characteristic of the dialectic of enlightenment that enlightenment produces, both itself and out of itself, the monsters that destroy it. This is one of those modern paradoxes which, of course, can be seen at work not only in Europe, but also, in one way or another, in all the regions of the world that have been dragged into the maelstrom of modernization in the course of European expansionism. Today, European intellectuals find it extremely difficult to recognize the consequences and side effects of European influence in the sometimes very unpleasant challenges emerging out of globalization. Europe has exported the paradoxes of modernity as well as its pathologies, and has contributed to the emergence of hybrid discourse formations all over the world, largely being unaware of it. Worse than that: the philosophical discourse of modernity in Europe seems to lack the basic curiosity and sincerity to face the paradoxical consequences of this discourse in non-Western parts of the globe. Without self-reflection the tendency towards further self-provincialization of contemporary European philosophy will intensify. For now it is the “others,” the “foreigners,” who rather than “we (Europeans)” bear the conditions of possibility for a trans-positional thinking capable of working with the complex connections between Old and New as well as East, West, South, and North.

Conclusion

It is hard to deny that Mou Zongsan hits the mark when he claims that Mao’s thought abused the wisdom of the *Book of Changes* for his revolutionary purpose.

He made the transformational logic of the 64 hexagrams serve a theory of contradiction, which is no longer concerned with the twisted communication marked by the paradoxical turning and reversal of interconnected positions, but mainly with the annihilation of the political enemy. However, Mao was enough of a dialectical thinker to know that, on ideological grounds, no total solution is possible. He nevertheless still strived for it.

“The sudden change after his death in 1976 revealed his great vision as Chimerica” (Bauer 1989, 576). Mao foresaw, feared, and condemned the paradoxical turn to economic liberalism that occurred soon after his death. Does this not indicate that, finally, the paradoxical dialectics of transformation prevailed over the murderous dialectics of revolutionary struggle? Mao was, until the very end, a revolutionary ideologue, deeply convinced that the tolerance towards paradoxical thinking cultivated in classical Chinese philosophy would be an obstacle to China’s modernization, and that it should be replaced by a friend-enemy distinction that would serve revolutionary class struggle. Since Mao’s death, the deep-seated fear that transformative and paradoxical thinking may lack the competitive power to meet global challenges seems to have gradually given way to greater confidence in a Chinese “way” of modernization. Thorough reflections on this development, however, are in need of further elaboration, even within the world of contemporary Sino-philosophy (*dangdai hanyu zhexue* 當代漢語哲學). This may be due to the fact that Western philosophers still have great difficulties in overcoming their old fear of the paradoxical, and still tend to regard paradoxes primarily as a problem or even as an illness, a pathology which has to be cured.

It is not only Chinese hybrid modernization that fits well with the phrase from Kant’s famous essay “Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?": “Here as elsewhere, when things are considered in broad perspective, a strange, unexpected pattern in human affairs reveals itself, one in which almost everything is paradoxical.” Does the confrontation with contemporary Chinese philosophy not lead to the assumption that this statement is true in a far more radical sense than Kant could have foreseen in his time: because the way of Chinese modernization urges “us” to learn how to think and live paradoxically?

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Hegel and Chinese Marxism

*Tom ROCKMORE**

Abstract

China is presently embarking on the huge task of realizing what President Xi Jinping recently called the Chinese Dream. China is officially Marxist, and Marx thus inspires this dream in his assigned status as the “official guide” to the ongoing Chinese Revolution. This paper will focus on the crucial relation between Hegel and Chinese Marxism. Marx is a key Hegelian, critical of, but strongly dependent on, Hegel. Since the Chinese Dream is not Hegelian, but rather anti-Hegelian, it is unlikely, as I will be arguing, to be realized in a recognizably Marxian form.

Keywords: Hegel, China, Marxism, Marx, Engels

Hegel in kitajski marksizem

Izvleček

Kitajska se podaja na pot uresničitve projekta, ki ga je predsednik Xi Jinping pred kratkim imenoval »kitajske sanje«. Kitajska je uradno marksistična in Marx zaradi statusa »uradnega vodiča« sedanje kitajske revolucije, ki so mu ga pripisali, navdihuje te sanje. Članek se bo osredotočil na ključno razmerje med Heglom in kitajskim marksizmom. Marx je ključni hegelianec, ki do Hegla ni le kritičen, ampak je tudi odvisen od njega. »Kitajske sanje« pa niso hegelianske, temveč prej antihegelianske, zato je, kot bo razloženo, malo verjetno, da se bodo uresničile v prepoznavno marksistični obliki.

Ključne besede: Hegel, Kitajska, Marxism, Marx, Engels

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On the Relation of Marx and Hegel

Marx's followers as well as his critics tend to approach him through Marxism. Classical Marxism, often called simply Marxism, is the theory invented by Engels and further developed by his followers. Engels, who has positivist tendencies, substitutes science for philosophy in his reading of Marx. His study of Feuerbach presents an influential view later restated by him and others.

Engels often suggests, incorrectly in my view, that Marx is responsible for the extra-philosophical, scientific component of Marxism. One of the more important passages occurs in his speech at Marx's graveside. In the eulogy, Engels generously compares Marx to Darwin. He claims that Marx "discovered the law of development of human history," which, if this is a reference to political economy, presumably means that economics is prior to every other explanatory factor, specifically in its capacity as "the special law of motion governing the present-day capitalist mode of production and bourgeois society that this mode of production has created." (Engels 1989, 468) Other observers reject this interpretation of Marx. According to Ernest Mandel, a Trotskyist theoretician, "He [i. e. Marx] was not seeking *universal* laws of economic organization. Indeed, one of the essential theses of *Capital* is that no such laws exist." (Mandel 1982, 11) Similarly, in his recent biography of Marx, G. S. Jones calls attention to the difference between Engels' favourable comparison of Marx's view, which he describes as the establishment of the law of historical development, and Darwin's theory of natural selection that, Jones points out, is not and should not be interpreted as deterministic. (see Stedman Jones 2016, 566)

Despite its limits, Engels' anti-Hegelian interpretation of Marx quickly became canonical. His anti-Hegelian approach to Marx has long influenced Russian Marxism and continues to influence Chinese Marxism. In broad terms Chinese Marxism is dependent on two main sources: Russian Marxism and the Chinese intellectual tradition. The shared Russian and Chinese anti-Hegelian interpretation of Marx was called into question in the middle of the last century through the relatively late publication of crucial Marxian texts, that is texts prepared by Marx and that are crucial for understanding his position.

Russian Marxism is strongly influenced by Lenin, who was active early in the twentieth century. When he was active, a number of important writings, crucial for understanding Marx's position, were still unpublished. They include the *Paris Manuscripts*, the *Grundrisse*, the manuscripts routinely known as *Theories of Surplus Value*, the *German Ideology*, and so on.

Lenin's political credentials exceed either his philosophical training or his philosophical competence. Lenin was interested in and, unlike Engels, partly trained

in philosophy. But he was understandably more concerned with bringing about a successful revolution than in winning a philosophical debate. His understanding of both Marx and Marxism is almost wholly based on Engels rather than on Marx. In his most important philosophical foray, *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, he cites Engels more than three hundred times but Marx only once.

Lenin's interest in Hegel was stimulated by his teacher, Plekhanov, a Hegelian Marxist. Lenin was initially concerned with Hegel at the very end of the nineteenth century. He later returned to Hegel after he wrote *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* (1909), particularly several years later when he was writing his "Philosophical Notebooks" (1914). This unfinished text reflects his effort to master Aristotle, Feuerbach, Marx and Deborin, but above all Hegel.¹

Due to his early death, Lenin did not live to develop his understanding of Hegel. Stalin, Lenin's political heir, later codified the Marxist account of Marx. In "Dialectical and Historical Materialism" he notes, in silently conflating Marx and Engels and in paraphrasing the former's remarks on dialectic in the Afterword to the second edition of *Capital vol. 1*, that Marx and Engels took from the Hegelian dialectics only its "rational kernel" while casting aside its idealistic shell. According to Stalin, Marx provided dialectic with a modern scientific form. Though there were Hegelian Marxists such as Ewald Ilyenkov in the Soviet Union, in part because of the enduring influence of Engels, Russian Marxism has always been basically anti-Hegelian, and if Marx is a Hegelian, anti-Marxian.

On the Soviet Background of Chinese Marxism

Individual Chinese thinkers, perhaps foremost among them Zhang Shiyong (see Wang 2014, 90–96), are centrally interested in Hegel. Yet Chinese Marxism mainly follows the anti-Hegelian lead of Engels, traditional Marxism, and Russian Marxism for two reasons. On the one hand, there is the political pressure to maintain the Marxist vision of Marx. On the other, there is the fact that Chinese Marxism, like Russian Marxism, arose before the publication in the middle of the last century of crucial Marxian texts pointing to Hegel's central role in the formulation of Marx's position.

The discovery of Hegelian Marxism by Lukàcs and Korsch in the early 1920s had a powerful and enduring impact. With exceptions, it is at least plausible that Western Marxism as a whole can be described as broadly Hegelian. (see Anderson 1976) In the absence of statistics, it is difficult to be precise about the importance

1 See, for a sympathetic reading of Lenin's efforts to master Hegel, Anderson 1995.

of Hegel in the Chinese Marxist debate. The Hegel debate in China, though perhaps large—though how large is unclear—if for no other reason than the large number of Chinese Marxists, is comparatively small. In any case it is not large in comparison to the discussion of Chinese Marxism. The debate on Chinese Marxism is omnipresent, though mainly on the ideological level. Anyone who has spent time in China is aware that ideological, forced-feeding of the Chinese version of Marxism is obligatory fare for all Chinese students. To the best of my knowledge no Chinese university lacks a Marxist school. These, however, routinely dispense a form of Marxist propaganda that differs in kind from philosophical Marxism that is studied in some but not all departments of philosophy.

It is important to distinguish between those who inculcate Marx and Marxism as a form of propaganda and those who study it seriously, as one would study other forms of philosophy. The subjective impression of the present writer is that Chinese students of Marx and Marxism are often less aware of Marxism outside China than their Western counterparts. For obvious reasons, given such factors as the important language barrier, Hegel's criticism of Chinese philosophy, and the strong official Chinese identification with Marxist ideology, Chinese Marxist students often have a relatively weak grasp of Western Marxism. Other reasons include the fact that Chinese scholars tend not to know German, or at least not to know it well, not to be more than distantly aware of the Western Hegelian Marxist discussion, nor to be more than vaguely familiar with recent Western Marxist publications, and so on. Though there are exceptions, above all Li Zehou, in comparison to Western Marxists the Chinese show relatively less interest in or awareness of Hegelian Marxism.

Li's anthropological ontology, the basis of his approach to modernity, underlies his effort to transform Kant's dualistic theory of subjectivity into a monistic, materialist theory of subjectivity. His theory is both original and atypical of the Chinese Marxist debate.² It is thus not surprising if a recent study of Chinese Marxism has nothing specific to say about the role of Hegel in Chinese Marxism. (see Chan 2003)

Chinese Marxism arose in stages, initially through translations from German, Russian and Japanese sources early in the twentieth century. It later developed through the importation into China of the influential Russian debate between the mechanists and the dialecticians (or so-called Deborinists) concerning Marxist materialism. This debate, which is sometimes cast as the first great debate of Soviet philosophy, interested Nikolai Bukharin, a tragic political figure later liquidated by Stalin, and as well as Stalin himself, who favoured the mechanists.

2 See, for an exception, Gu 1996, 205–45.

Russian mechanists were mainly concerned with science or the philosophy of science. They tended like Engels to favour natural science. Lyubov Akselrod, the leading mechanist, was better known under the pseudonym Ortodoks. She studied in Berne and later became a Marxist. In the debate on empiriocriticism she criticized both Lenin and Bogdanov. As a Marxist she was allied with Plekhanov. Russian dialecticians, unlike the mechanists, were interested in Hegel, and, as the term suggests, took a dialectical approach fostered by Abram Deborin, a Soviet Marxist philosopher, and his allies. Deborin was a member of the Academy of Sciences and a former Menshevik. Kolakowski captures the main theme here in a single sentence:

The opposition between the mechanists and the dialecticians represented the opposition of the natural sciences to philosophical interference, while the dialecticians stood for the supremacy of philosophy over the sciences and thus reflected the characteristic tendency of Soviet ideological development (Kolakowski 1978, 64).

In 1929 at a meeting of the Second All-Union Conference of Marxist-Leninist Scientific Institutions a resolution was passed condemning mechanism. In normal circumstances, this would have meant an end to the debate. Yet one year later the controversy broke out anew over the suspicion of “menshivizing idealism,” or rendering idealism politically acceptable. This term, which was in wide use from approximately 1930 until 1950, referred to the supposed separation of theory and practice as well as other egregious errors allegedly committed by the Deborinists. The so-called new view, which was advanced by M. B. Mitin and P. F. Yudin, adopted dialectical materialism as well as the so-called dialectics of nature favoured by Engels and the mechanists, and later Stalin. This view, which was represented by Mitin and Yudin, was later codified in Stalin’s view of dialectical materialism in his “History of the CPSU (Short Course, 1938).” (see Stalin 1941) Philosophy at the time was not for the faint of heart. Deborin, the central figure for the dialecticians, and Akselrod, the central figure for the mechanists, both survived, but many other participants in the debate simply disappeared.

Chinese Marxism Reacts against Soviet Marxism

The Soviet debate between the mechanists and the dialecticians that was influential in the Russian Marxist debate was also influential in the development of Chinese Marxism. With Stalin’s support, Mitin quickly rose through the ranks. In the 1930s Chinese dialectical materialism was formalized under his influence

on the Chinese debate. Li Da and Ai Siqi translated many of Mitin's writings into Chinese. The Chinese Marxists strongly supported Mitin against Deborin. (see Knight 2005) Then as now, the Chinese were understandably uninterested in following foreign models.

This disinterest in simply taking over a foreign model not surprisingly led to an interest in working out a form of Marxism applicable to the specific Chinese situation. Mao Zedong, for instance, was later critical of Mitin's so-called new philosophy, hence of Stalin's conception of dialectical materialism. In the late 1930s, Mao, under Engels' influence, began to develop a Chinese version of dialectical materialism in emphasizing the concepts of contradiction and practice. For mainly political reasons, Mao's view continued to be influential until at least the 1970s. Yet trained Western philosophers are often sceptical of Mao's philosophical understanding and intellectual accomplishments. Leszek Kolakowski, for instance, who knew Marxism very well, described Mao's so-called peasant Marxism as "a series of repetitions of a few commonplaces of Leninist Stalinist Marxism." (see Kolakowski 1978, 3: 499)

The term "*Mao sixiang*," or Mao's thought, which is described as "Marxism-Leninism applied in a Chinese context," was officially adopted in the Chinese Constitution. Yet after Deng Xiaoping said it was not always necessary to follow Mao, his position was often disregarded. For instance, on a recent anniversary of the Cultural Revolution the Chinese government said that this series of events was a mistake that would not be repeated.

Still, Mao's view continued to be influential at least into the 1970s, mainly for political reasons. Mao was especially interested in practice and contradiction (*maodun*). In "On Practice" he argues that knowledge comes from practice, and that true knowledge is verified by practice and other approaches fail to grasp the importance of dialectical materialism. According to Mao, the truth-value of ideas can only be judged in practice. In "On Contradiction" he breaks with Marx in following Engels' view that contradiction is present in matter itself as well as in ideas in the brain. According to Mao, there is always a struggle between different contradictory aspects as well as what he called a principal contradiction. The class struggle, which is the main contradiction, can only be resolved through a revolution that overcomes the antagonism between labour and capital.

Chinese Marxism in the post-Mao period is, like the great Confucian classics, and like China itself, intensely practical.³ Deng Xiaoping is often said to have saved the Chinese economy after the Cultural Revolution, and typically insisted

3 See, for recent helpful discussion, Xu 2016.

on practice almost to the exclusion of theory. Beginning in 1978, he promoted the slogan *shishi-qiushi*. This was mentioned in a speech at the Sixth National Congress CCP in reference to pragmatism, and later became a key element of Maoism. Beginning in 1978, this slogan was promoted by Deng as a central component of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In echoing this slogan, Deng famously said it does not matter if a cat is white or black so long as it catches mice. In a widely known article that captures Deng's pragmatic approach, Hu Fuming, an associate professor of philosophy at Nanking University proclaimed: "Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth" (1978) (Hu 1993).

The phrase identified with Deng suggests two points concerning the origin and interpretation of this slogan. On the one hand, there is its origin. As is often the case in China, slogans that come to the attention of the public have a long prior tradition. An example is President Xi Jinping's recent reference in a visit to the National Museum of China (2012) to the "Chinese Dream" (*zhongguo meng* or *zhongguomeng*).

Xi's language here is consistent with Chinese political practice. All series of Chinese presidents have coined slogans. Jiang Zemin proposed the slogan "Three Represents" to suggest that the Communist Party of China represents advanced social forces, advanced culture, and the interests of the majority. Hu Jintao suggested the idea of a moderately well-off society in referring to the Confucian term *xiao kang she hui*. This term describes a society composed of a functional middle class. According to President Xi, the Chinese dream includes the "Four Comprehensives" or *si ge quan mian zhan lue bu ju*. This slogan refers to the conception of a moderately prosperous society, including deepening reform, governing according to law, and the strict governance of the party.

This phrase was originally written during the Southern Song dynasty by the poet, Zheng Sixiao's poem, "Flowing Spring." Zheng composed the famous line: "Heart full of [the] China Dream." Similarly, Deng's slogan that was cited earlier by Mao Zedong in 1938 can be traced back as early as the Han Dynasty. The *Book of Han*, also known as the *History of the Former Han*, a history of China finished in 111, contains the following passage: "*he jian xian wang de yi xiao jing qian er nian li xiu gu shishi—qiushi*."

The proper interpretation of this phrase is unclear. "*Shishi qiushi*" means to seek truth from facts, as in the idiom about a practical and realistic work style, "*shishi-qiushi de gongzuo zuofeng*." Deng's famous insistence on practice over theory could mean different things. In the West the distinction between theory and practice goes all the way back in the philosophical tradition to Aristotle. Late in the 18th century, Kant identifies the difficulty in an article titled "On the common saying: That may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice" (1793).

Marx's initial criticisms of Hegel in the early 1840s already point to the difference between traditional philosophy, which he thinks is satisfied with mere theory that changes nothing other than itself, and a new form of theory that realizes itself in changing practice. At stake, as Marx famously points out, is only interpreting the world, or on the other hand changing it. Following Marx, Marxism routinely stresses the pre-eminence of practice over theory. With that distinction in mind, Deng's slogan might be intended to signal the interest in practice, or to indicate a relative emphasis on practice over theory, or again to point out that practice is the highest value, or even some combination of the above. We cannot answer that question here. But suffice to say that Deng was centrally concerned in the midst of the political and social chaos that occurred in the wake of the Cultural Revolution to focus attention on practice, especially the economy. With that in mind, we can say that in this specific context Deng's emphasis on practice was a strategic move that enabled him to undertake deep revisions to Mao's policies.

The pragmatic, anti-theoretical transformation of Chinese Marxism continues today. As in the Soviet Union during Stalin's time, it is reflected in the use of primers to inculcate a specific governmental view of Marxism-Leninism at all levels of the Chinese educational system. Yet care is taken to avoid any criticism of the government in its task as the self-anointed guardian of the Chinese Marxist view.

An important example lies in the debate on humanism in the West after the publication of the *Paris Manuscripts*. This text contains an important account of alienation. Alienation and humanism are linked concepts. Alienation points to the failure to develop as an individual in modern industrial society. Humanism focusses on the idea of the realization of human beings as individuals as the goal of a future version of modern industrial society. The discussion of alienation produced a split between Marx and Marxism. It simultaneously called attention to the important philosophical core in Marx's position as well as to the possible link of Marxist institutional practices with forms of alienation.

In the West, in reaction to the relatively late publication of Marx's *Paris Manuscripts* as well as the *Grundrisse*, the French Marxist philosopher Althusser rushed to the defence of Marxism. The French thinker's view, which was clearly intended to support the one institutionalized in the French Communist Party, was that the mature Marx was a scientist who, in following Feuerbach away from Hegel as well as idealism and philosophy toward science, had decisively left his early philosophical interests behind.

The theme of Marx's humanism played out in an analogous manner in the East as well. In China, reference to this concept could be taken as criticism of the Chinese government. After 1978, after the Cultural Revolution, after the downfall of the Gang of Four, and after Mao had left the scene, a new intellectual discussion with

important humanist elements quickly arose. This moved away from a discussion dominated by the needs of the Party and toward debate loosely centred on what can be called traditional humanism. The lead up to the debate on alienation began with discussion of the criterion of truth in 1978, before quickly turning to the concepts of humanism and alienation in linking together the ability to think independently with the concept of a human being.⁴

The theme of alienation was raised in early 1980 by Zhao Yang, deputy director of the PCC propaganda department, and Wang Ruoshui, deputy director of the *People's Daily*. Around 1983, the theme of “man” (*ren*) was a central topic in all the Chinese social and human sciences. (see Wang 1983) The Chinese government, which took this debate as threatening, rapidly intervened. Hu Qiaomu, the Party's chief ideological authority, accused its participants of supporting bourgeois humanism.⁵ But Li Keming, president of South China Normal University, further insisted that Marxist philosophy needed to deal with the problem of alienation.⁶

Gao Ertai also played an important role here.⁷ In a long article entitled “Humanism: A Memorandum on the Contemporary Debate,” he refuted Hu Qiaomu and supported humanist Marxists accused of being sources of “spiritual pollution.”⁸ Since Deng had already made known his views in his speech, Gao's publication required considerable courage, like Xu Changfu's writings today. Gao later published his views on alienation in an article entitled “On the Concept of Alienation.”⁹

All in all, in view of its importance, the Chinese Marxist debate on alienation, which lasted from 1980 to 1984, was very short, in no small measure because the political authorities took steps to end it as quickly as possible. It is then not an accident that, in his speech on October 3, 1983 entitled “The Party's urgent tasks on the organizational and ideological fronts,” Deng said that alienation could not occur in a socialist country, and need not be discussed since that would only confuse the people.¹⁰

4 For remarks on humanism and alienation, I rely on Yuhuai He 2001.

5 See Hu Qiaomu, “On problems concerning humanism and alienation,” (*Guanyu rendao zhubuyi yihua wenti*,” in *Renmin Ribao* 27 January 1984).

6 “A Marxist Philosophy Should Deal with the Alienation Theory (*Makesi zhubuyi zhexue yao yanjiu yihua lilun*”), in *Guangzhou Ribao* 8 December 1986.

7 For remarks on the discussion surrounding alienation in China, see Lin, Rosemont, and Ames 1995, 727–58.

8 “rendaozhubuyi – dangdai zhenglun de beiwanglu” in *Sichuan shida xuebao*, 4, 1986.

9 “lun yihua gainian” 1989.

10 Speech at the Second Plenary Session of the Twelfth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, vol. 3, 1982–1992.

Marxism in China currently bears little resemblance to Marxism as it is discussed and practiced in Western universities. Chinese Marxism is routinely referred to through the term “*zhuyi*,” meaning “ideology,” more precisely the political ideology of the Chinese government in which it plays an important role. The history of Marxism has often been the theatre of intense theoretical struggles among powerful intellectuals. In contrast, this intellectual dimension was much reduced in the Soviet Union, where it was simply not possible to disagree with Stalin’s view of Marxism. Chinese Marxism today mainly faithfully reflects the political views of the Chinese government.

Hegelian and non-Hegelian Marxism

Marx’s position begins in a dialogue with Hegel that in different ways runs throughout his entire corpus. The proper interpretation of this dialogue remains controversial. After extensive discussion, it is fair to say that while much has been attempted little, not nearly enough, has been learned. The difference between Hegelian and non-Hegelian Marxism is crucial. Marx’s reaction to and appropriation of Hegelian and other German idealist insights, and his criticism of Hegelian and German idealism, is not well understood. His relation to classical German philosophy is also unclear. Marx’s position is based on the idea of the revolutionary subject, largely borrowed from Fichte, as self-developing in and through its interaction with others and with the surrounding natural world. But, as noted above, non-Hegelian Marxism is based on revolutionary self-development through knowledge of what Engels thinks is the law of human history.

The belated publication of a number of Marxian writings in mid-twentieth century, above all the *Paris Manuscripts* and the *Grundrisse*, seems to many observers to tip the balance toward a Hegelian approach to Marx incompatible with other, non-Hegelian interpretations. Both texts suggest continuity, including a continuous interaction with and reliance on Hegel, and in my own view to a lesser but crucial extent Fichte as well, rather than discontinuity in Marx’s development.

Engels, who has always been central to the reception of Marx’s theories, was self-taught in philosophy. He was neither competent to evaluate nor perhaps even to understand either Hegel’s theories or Marx’s reception of them. His lack of an adequate philosophical background is apparent in his literally fantastic suggestion that Kant’s thing in itself is overcome by practice and industry. (see Engels 1996, 23) Classical Marxism, which is often simply identified as Marxism, is mainly due to Engels. Engels in turn relies on the supposedly crucial role of Feuerbach in Marx’s intellectual trajectory. According to Engels, Marx followed Feuerbach

away from Hegel, away from classical German philosophy, away from philosophy, and towards materialism and science. In sum, and according to Engels, Marx overcame his early false start in simply throwing aside Hegel and in opting instead for the intellectual tools available in modern science.

This is not the place to provide an account of Marx's relation to Hegel, even in outline. Suffice it to say that Hegel, who was the most important living German thinker when he died, only passed from the scene in 1831. Marx received a Ph.D. in philosophy in 1841, when, though his influence was declining, Hegel was still the central philosophical figure. As his widely known letter to his father indicates, Marx became deeply interested in Hegel while still an adolescent, and this interest later continued throughout his career.

Hegel's views are inseparable from his continual interpretation of and reaction to Kant. Althusser notwithstanding, Marx's lifelong dialogue with Hegel similarly takes different forms at different times. It includes: Hegelian treatment of ancient Greek materialism in the *Dissertation*, a Hegelian conception of the proletariat based on the master and slave passage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the motor of a future revolution, criticism of Hegel in the *Paris Manuscripts* as well as the formulation of Hegelian conceptions of objectification and alienation, a theory of surplus value based on the conception of self-objectification in a series of more economic writings, the restatement of the conception of alienation as fetishism in *Capital*, and so on.

Marxism, which, like ice cream, comes in different flavours, advances different views of Hegel. With some exceptions, Western Marxism is Hegelian (see Anderson 1976), and Hegel is an idealist. After Hegel's death, the rise of German neo-Kantianism and the rapid development of modern science turned attention away from idealism. Western, or in another formulation Hegelian, Marxism, was devised nearly simultaneously but independently in 1923 by Lukács and Korsch, the former more than the latter, in calling attention to the central Hegelian thrust of Marx's position.

On Human Flourishing

I have been suggesting that Marx is a critical Hegelian, but that traditional, Russian and Chinese forms of Marxism are all in related ways anti-Hegelian. What difference does it make? Philosophical theories are formulated to respond to perceived difficulties, enigmas or conundra. It would thus be useful to address the main difficulty for which Marx's position was formulated.

I suggest that Marx, who never turns his back on philosophy, instead seeks to respond to a traditional philosophical concern. Though Marx is among other things

a student of modern industrial society, this is not and should not be seen as his basic concern. His main interest is not the so-called law of human history, nor the anatomy of modern industrial capitalism, nor the interpretation of ancient Greek materialism, nor a theory of alienation, nor the relation of superstructure and base, nor related difficulties, though all are important, but rather to identify and to promote the real conditions of what I will be calling human flourishing.

The term “to flourish” refers to the social development of a fully-individual human being. This term presupposes a distinction between two kinds of needs. Basic or reproductive needs are often described through the canonical phrase of *food, clothing and shelter*. Human needs, or the need to develop as a human individual in realizing one’s person-specific capacities as a fully individual human being, presuppose the capacity to respond to basic needs. Human flourishing, which runs throughout the Western tradition, takes different forms at different times.

The Socratic concern with life in the social context continues in modern industrial society. Yet human flourishing is understood differently in Ancient Greece and in the modern world. In the former, it centres on happiness (*eudaimonia*) and/or virtue that in a class-based society was mainly reserved for the few. In the modern world, at least since Rousseau, a number of observers think it concerns freedom in all its many dimensions, understood as the full development of individuals.

Now the relevance of philosophical theory to human social practice, precisely the difficulty that led Marx to insist on the need to transcend mere interpretation, is often regarded as suspect. Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx and others are centrally concerned with the general problem of human freedom in the modern social world. Rousseau gives this theme a modern form in famously remarking in the first sentence of the *Social Contract* that though human beings are born free, everywhere they are in chains.

This striking formulation suggests a basic dualism encompassing an unwritten, tacit, but also unfulfilled contract with human society based on a difference in kind between the obviously mythical state of nature, in which human beings were supposedly free, and the various but unnatural forms of modern society in which one is in practice, and perhaps in theory as well, still not free. Life in the modern world is not directed toward returning to the state of nature. It is rather directed toward constructing a form of modernity that will bring about a more meaningful form of freedom than that supposedly abandoned in leaving the state of nature.

Rousseau’s problem echoes in different ways throughout the later debate. Kant is aware of the need to understand freedom in the modern world, but unable to formulate an acceptable approach to it within the confines of critical philosophy. His

view falters on an obvious contradiction: on the one hand, he describes freedom as rational self-determination; for instance, in acting according to the categorical imperative. On the other, he runs up against the supposed compatibility, in fact an incompatibility, between dualistic conceptions of human action as wholly self-determined and causal determinism in nature. According to Kant, moral action requires formulating a universalizable moral rule and in fact so acting. Yet Kant cannot explain the transition from the *a priori* to the *a posteriori*, from self-determination in order to act morally to in fact acting morally in a world that is supposedly causally determined.

Kant is mainly concerned with moral freedom, but Hegel is primarily concerned with social freedom. Hegel's view of freedom is understood in many different ways. Many observers think Hegel is interested in freedom in relating freedom to autonomy. There seems to be broad agreement that the Hegelian view of autonomy culminates in a social view of freedom encompassing both the individual and the group, which different observers often understand as an expansion of the Kantian view of morality into the social realm. Yet there is no consensus about how to understand the Hegelian view of social freedom.

Different observers emphasize one or more aspects of autonomy in pointing to the need to surpass the individual level. The popular stress in the Hegel debate on freedom as autonomy, and autonomy as not moral but ethical, is part of the answer. Yet it fails to identify the specific problem or problems Hegel's theory is meant to address. More specifically, it neglects to examine Rousseau's influential restatement of the question of human flourishing in the form of the modern industrial state, something that for both Kant and the post-Kantian Hegel requires a constructivist approach. At a minimum this means that, unlike Marx, who denies that human beings flourish or even could flourish in modern industrial society, for Hegel they can and do flourish as a group within the institutions they construct for themselves and within which they "recognize" themselves as at home so to speak.

Marx's Hegelianism and Human Flourishing

Hegel's conception of social freedom is not, like Kant's view of morality, based on rational self-determination, that is, on successfully formulating and following a self-constructed, universalizable rule, a rule valid in all times and places. It is rather based on the idea that the human world is a social construct in which we find or recognize ourselves as who we potentially are, and in the right conditions can

through development become, in interaction with others and within the institutions of the modern state.

Marx's conception of social freedom builds on Hegel's, with the latter claiming that capitalism and freedom are compatible, and that the institution of the private ownership of the means of production is a basic prerequisite of human freedom. But Marx comprehends this as a main source of the modern inability to achieve human self-development beyond the minimal level of meeting basic or reproductive needs. Marx clearly rejects the Hegelian approach on this point, but he relies on it in another way.

Marx's main suggestion for human flourishing in modern industrial society lies in a Hegelian distinction suggested (but not worked out) in the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* between objectification and alienation. Elsewhere I have argued that the constructivist approach runs throughout and links together Kant, Fichte and Hegel, the main German idealists. This view of cognition, which is central to the critical philosophy, is widely known as the Copernican revolution in philosophy, but rarely studied in detail. (see Rockmore 2016)

German idealist thinkers (Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and in my view Marx but not Schelling) are linked together by the effort to formulate a successful version of constructivism. This view comes into classical German philosophy in the often-mentioned but rarely examined Copernican revolution. Hegel's theory of freedom in the modern world, for instance, relies on identifying with and recognizing oneself in the institutions of modern industrial society that one has constructed. Marx, who rejects the view that significant freedom is possible in modern capitalism, contends it will be possible after the abolition of private ownership of the means of production in postmodern communism.

The development of finite human beings as individuals depends on the future separation of objectification and alienation. Marx follows the Hegelian view of objectification, both early and late. In the *Paris Manuscripts* he identifies alienation as the result of objectification in the capitalist period. In *Capital vol. 1* in the chapter on "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret," he points out that the human quality of labour takes on an objective form in the process of production. Objectification has a dual function as the presupposition of alienation as well as self-development as a human individual. In making, producing or constructing an object, for instance, a commodity destined for sale in the market place, an individual, as Hegel notes in the master-slave analysis, also "objectifies" himself in the form of the object. Objectification is further the way in which a person gives external manifestation to the future individual in developing one's capacities beyond merely meeting one's reproductive needs as a fully individual human being.

Human Flourishing and Chinese Marxism

Hegelian Marxism is based on the idea of the revolutionary subject as self-developing in and through its interaction with others and the surrounding natural world. Anti-Hegelian Marxism in all its forms is based, as already noted, on revolutionary self-development through knowledge of the so-called law of human history. I have argued that Marx is a critical Hegelian, and that his Hegelianism is central to his self-assigned task of resolving the problem of human flourishing through the transition from capitalism to communism. I have further argued that Chinese Marxism is a form of classical, non-Hegelian Marxism. In short, non-Hegelian forms of Marxism, including Chinese Marxism, are incompatible with the Marxian project.

Western and Eastern conceptions of human being differ in fundamental ways. Marx and Confucius thus present humanistic views of the world based on different conceptions of finite human being. The Western model stresses a view of the individual that is very different from the Chinese model that, though there are many variations on this theme, overall stresses the group. The modern Western model of the individual emerges over many years. It is already beginning to take shape in the Magna Carta, in which the English people won rights in relation to the king. This basically secular conception later crystallized in the American Constitution in the phrase *life, liberty and happiness*. It was restated during the French Revolution as *liberty, equality and fraternity*, and more recently reformulated as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Marx, who is a Westerner, understands human beings based on the Western model of a person endowed with inalienable rights, that if necessary justify revolution and develop through the basic transformation, hence the relative discontinuity, of modern Western society.

In contrast, Chinese Marxism insists on a strong continuity with the Chinese tradition, especially Confucianism, which stresses family and social harmony, hence social stability. Though there are many different interpretations of Confucianism, it will suffice here to say that it stresses family, fixed social roles, and social harmony, for instance the practical order, rites, loyalty and filial piety. According to Confucianism, social harmony requires that every individual play a predetermined part in the natural order and play that part well. As Confucius writes, “There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son.” (Confucius 12: 48)

Two Criticisms

It will be useful to anticipate two obvious criticisms to the ideas outlined above. I have argued that Marxism is basically anti-Hegelian and Marx is basically Hegelian. I have further suggested that the conceptions of human beings in East and West are basically different. It could be objected that there is no strict distinction between Hegelian and non-Hegelian, or even anti-Hegelian, Marxism, since the development of Marxism is more complex and, instead of a sharp distinction, there is a continuous series of Marxist views that are more or less Hegelian, since none is purely anti-Hegelian and none is purely Hegelian. It could further be objected that the idea of an opposition between a Western conception of human being or man (*ren*) and an Eastern, basically Confucian conception is an exaggeration, since Confucianism is a collection of different doctrines including, say, Xunxian (and legalist) “state-oriented and Mengxian “aesthetic-ethically” oriented conceptions.

In my view there is merit in both objections. In a sense, it is correct that there is always continuity as well as difference, and the degree of continuity as well as difference is a function of interpretation. This is the case both for the extent to which Marx is Hegelian, and the extent to which Marxism of all kinds is anti-Hegelian. Marx’s own Hegelianism is important enough for him to call attention in the Afterword to the second edition of *Capital*, despite his critical relation to Hegel, to his role as a pupil of the German philosopher. Marx, who was trained as a philosopher according to the standards of the day, and thus thoroughly steeped in Hegel. This has, with very few exceptions, above all Lukács, never been the case for either traditional Russian or Chinese Marxism, where a grasp of Hegel, whose views are not well understood, is undermined by the conviction that Marx supersedes him or at least leaves him behind.

Marx, of course, does not hold any version of this view. He clearly indicates his belief that the correct way to appropriate Hegel’s dialectic is to turn it right side up. In this respect, Engels has a thoroughly muddled and finally problematic role. Engels holds a contradictory view of Hegel. On the one hand, we recall that Feuerbach, on whom Engels relies in claiming that Marx turned away from philosophy, hence from Hegel, was a minor Hegelian, later a minor critic of Hegel, and an important Protestant theologian. Yet Engels, who was not trained in philosophy, and who was most familiar with Schelling among the German idealists, thinks that Feuerbach is the only contemporary philosophical genius. He believes, as noted, that Marx simply threw Hegel aside in following Feuerbach away from idealism, away from philosophy, and toward science. This gross exaggeration vastly overestimates Feuerbach’s influence on Marx, which was initially important, but

quickly faded. On the other hand, Engels also says, in contradicting the former view, German socialists are proud to trace their descent from Kant, Fichte and Hegel. (Engels 1989, 24: 459) This point is correct, but Engels, in insisting that Marx left philosophy behind, undermines it.

The other objection is supported by the development of Confucianism that consists of the original view worked out by Confucius as well as related doctrines added to it over the centuries. Now different sources point to differences in emphasis, and though this suggests the need to take differences in emphasis into account, it does mean there is not a central conceptual Confucian core series of beliefs very different from the Western view of human beings, nor suggest that the differences in the different forms of Confucianism are so important as to invalidate the differences not merely in degree, but also in kind, between the Western and Chinese views of humans.

Hegel, Marx and Chinese Marxism

Marxism takes different forms as part of the continuing effort to realize Marx's project, which is interpreted in different, even incompatible ways. This paper has studied the relation between Hegel, Marx and Chinese Marxism in calling attention to four points. First, it points to the theme of human flourishing as Marx's central problem. Second, it links Marx's proposed solution to realizing individuality in a future post-capitalist phase. Third, it suggests that Marx's understanding of the practical conditions of human flourishing in terms of individuals in a future form of the world depends on his critical Hegelian perspective. Fourth, it identifies basic differences between Western and Eastern, or a specifically Chinese, view, in suggesting that, in virtue of his dependence on Hegel, Marx relies on a specifically Western model of the human individual.

My conclusion follows directly from these four points. The so-called Chinese Dream incorrectly suggests that Chinese Marxism focuses or at least carries further a conception shared by Marx, Chinese Marxism and contemporary China. Marx is, on the contrary, concerned with a Western view of the individual on a critical Hegelian basis. Chinese Marxism, which is not Hegelian, and is not more Hegelian than Russian Marxism or classical Marxism, is mainly concerned with a traditional Confucian conception of the human being. This conception is opposed to the Western model as well to its Marxian variation. I thus conclude that the so-called Chinese Dream is unlikely to reach Marx's goal, since the Western and Eastern conceptions of human being are essentially different.

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Mao's Marxist Negation of Marxism: The Limits of Revolutionary Subject's Negation of Revolutionary Theory without Affirming Itself

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Abstract

In this paper, my main aim is to analyse Mao's conception of Marxist theory and his Marxist subjectivity in theory construction in his three articles. While doing so, I will use two main approaches, first is the idea that Karl Marx's method in understanding social relations and his theory of knowledge is in many aspects compatible and in continuation with an epistemological reading of Hegel's subjectivity, and the second is the general structure about the relationship between the object and subject's process of knowing is similar in all three thinkers. While doing so, I will advocate the position that Mao's epistemology is compatible with the Marxist understanding of Hegelian epistemology, and that from such an epistemological understanding it is possible to investigate Mao's three texts in a way that yields, not an orthodox or "end result" Marxism, but instead a more general, meta epistemological understanding of Marx, that is understood better structurally. Eventually, I will claim that while using "scientific" or "orthodox" Marxism as a method to understand society, Mao further uses the subjective element in the same way as Hegel and Marx used it, although eventually he diverts the Marxist subjective manoeuvre to another direction.

Keywords: Hegel, Marx, Mao, dialectics, epistemology

Maova marksistična negacija marksizma: omejitve negacije revolucionarne teorije s strani revolucionarnega sebstva brez samopotrjevanja

Izvilleček:

Osnovni cilj tega članka je analiza Maove koncepcije marksistične teorije ter njegove marksistične subjektivnosti v konstrukciji teorij treh njegovih člankov. Pri tem bom izhajal iz treh osrednjih izhodišč. Prvo je najti v ideji o tem, da sta Marxova metoda razumevanja družbenih odnosov in njegova spoznavna teorija združljivi z epistemološkim branjem Heglove subjektivnosti in predstavljata njeno nadgradnjo. Drugo izhodišče je v podobnosti splošne teorije o strukturi relacij spoznavnega procesa, ki predstavlja interakcijo med subjektom in objektom spoznanja, pri vseh treh omenjenih teoretikih. Pri tem bom potrdil pozicijo, da je Maova epistemologija združljiva z marksističnim razumevanjem Heglove

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epistemologije. Iz vidika takšnega epistemološkega razumevanja je možno ta tri Mao-va besedila raziskati tako, da ne vodijo do ortodoksnega marksizma oziroma njegovega »končnega rezultata«, temveč do bolj splošnega, bolj epistemološkega in strukturnega razumevanja Marxa. Na koncu članek pokaže, da je Mao sicer uporabljal »znanstveni« oziroma »ortodoksni« marksizem kot metodo razumevanja družbe, vendar je poleg tega uporabil elemente subjektivnosti na enak način, kot sta ga uporabljala tudi Hegel in Marx, četudi je konec koncev ta marksistični maneuver obrnil v popolnoma drugo smer.

Gljučne besede: Hegel, Marx, Mao, dialektika, epistemologija

Introduction

Put very crudely, this paper aims to provide a perspective to understand whether the Marxism of Mao Zedong can be considered within Marxist orthodoxy or not. In many cases, the criterion for Marxist orthodoxy is seen to be fidelity to “Marxist laws” or employment of Marxist epistemology in theory construction (Knight 1983, 2005). Although there are many different understandings of Marxist orthodoxy and Mao’s Marxism, I will employ Lukács’ definition of orthodoxy, since its emphasis is on the method rather than concepts of Marxism to determine the correct interpretation of Marxism. The reason for that is, in terms of concepts or theory, it is not easy to see Mao in traditional Marxian terms, while through the interpretation of Marxism based on “Marxism as a guide to action” perspective, the criteria of Marxism are generally very loose. If we try to see Mao’s three works in totality to yield a general attempt from a Hegelian–Marxist consciousness, I believe that the evaluation of another perspective on Marxist orthodoxy is possible.

The texts I will analyse are three of Mao’s works: *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society*, *On Practice* and *On Contradiction*. I will take *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* as the basis to claim Mao’s orthodoxy in theoretical terms, and therefore, his *assertion* of Marxist orthodoxy. In the second one, *On Practice*, I will argue for Mao’s epistemological Marxist orthodoxy in this text, while I will claim that he starts to become theoretically unorthodox. In this way, I will consider this to be his *negation* of Marxist theory, while still being within the boundaries of Marxism. And lastly, I will analyse *On Contradiction* as an attempt to negate the first negation Mao did in his *On Practice*, which can serve as a basis for Marxist orthodoxy on the grounds that Mao’s writings in this era are not strictly identical with traditional Marxism.

On Practice and *On Contradiction* are considered to be Mao’s main philosophical writings in the Yan’an period, where there was relative political and military stability, and the Chinese Communist Party was able to focus on philosophical readings and teaching. While the third one is an older work, written in 1926,

about his general perspective on Chinese society, and has a more orthodox basis and is an analysis of society based on “Marxist science.” I think it is important to read through these three works, and while *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* clearly expresses Mao’s understanding of the social reality and his theorization of the society, his philosophical works *On Contradiction* and *On Practice* define how he relates ideas to the social reality.

Orthodox Marxisms; Method and Consciousness

Marxism is many things. It is a certain understanding of the world, it is a certain theory, it is a certain epistemology and it is a certain guide to action. As Dirlík (2005, 76) notes “All Marxism may be viewed as a philosophy of praxis (or practice intended to change the world), as it was Karl Marx himself who stated that the goal of philosophy was not just to interpret but to change the world....” Marx himself already declares it in his “young Marx” phase in *Theses on Feuerbach*, famously in the 11th thesis on the spring of 1845 as, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx, 1976, 5). Of course the discussions about the scientific status of Marxism as advocated by Althusser’s *For Marx* or the reception of Marx as a guide for revolutionary action in general, regardless of the scientific content in his writings, is also a thorny issue. I assume that, in line with Louis Althusser, in late Marx it makes sense to see a scientific form of Marxism. However, “young Marx” also holds a key to “understand and change the world,” due to his more manifest relationship between theory and practice, and the role of consciousness in theory construction. Quite naturally this is a more “Hegelian” reading of Marx, which puts a heavier emphasis on consciousness and the relationship of the consciousness with theory. Understanding a form of fidelity to the theory, while departing from certain limitations of theory, requires such a reception of Marxism. In order to formulate it, first we shall look into Hegelian epistemology.

Hegelian Epistemology

Hegel’s entire philosophy was treated—rightfully—as a theory of knowledge right after his works were published. Starting from the 1980s, Hegel was started to be seen an epistemologist not only in continental philosophy, but also in analytical philosophy, marking the renewed interest in his work. This turn came about from several well-known philosophers and scholars of Hegel (Ameriks 1992). One important philosopher who investigated different aspects of *Phenomenology*,

Kenneth Westphal (1989, 2003), looks into *Phenomenology of Spirit (PS)* to extract an epistemology which can be integrated to modern currents of epistemology, through applying Hegel's work as a kind meta epistemology. On the other hand, Rockmore (1989, 1997) uses a different approach. Rockmore's aim is not to integrate Hegel's epistemology to the modern epistemological picture, but rather read through *PS* and his other works to understand the structure of it. I argue Rockmore's idea about the circular structure is an appropriate method to understand Hegel, since Hegel uses this structure repetitively in order to create his own ground for knowledge. Moreover, I believe this same structure can be found in Marx and Mao.

Circularity, Anti-foundationalism and Subjectivity

I will employ an anti-foundationalist and circular reading of Hegel in this text, because in order to place a subjectivity out of theory, while still holding the theory as true, requires an element that perceives the theory both as true and in need of improvement at the same time. I think this understanding can enable us to see Mao's Marxism in subjectivist and orthodox terms. The alternative of creating a foundation and then trying to construct a theory based on this single foundation is quite contrary to dialectical method.

The criterion for truth, according to Hegel, is the process of knowing itself (Rockmore 1997). For Hegel's *PS* the standard for truth can exist only in another level of consciousness that the subject has to reach, because at the level of asserting a truth on that stage, there is no standard of truth. The standard emerges only within the boundaries of another level of consciousness. "Thus in what consciousness affirms from within itself as *being-in-itself* or the *True* we have the standard which consciousness itself sets up by which to measure what it knows (PS §84, 53)."

In Hegelian understanding, the subject relates itself to the object and through this relationship produces truths about the object and its own self. However, when a contradiction arises due to the subject's knowing of the object and a new knowledge of the object or the subject, the subject needs to carry itself to a greater understanding that can negate the first negation.

For with regard to a knowing that is not truthful, science cannot simply reject it as just a common view of things while giving out the assurance that it is itself a completely different kind of cognition and that that other knowing counts as absolutely nothing for science; nor can science appeal to some intimation, contained within that other knowing, of something better (PS §76, 55).

This way, Hegelian epistemology enables the subject to understand the truth of the knowledge in a knowledge structure, which cannot be held true within the limitations of the structure that it is intended to be expressed. This is the exact Hegelian example, and in fact it justifies the truth of something that is not founded, yet cannot be wrong at the same time. The example of geometry is practical here. We can understand that, for any fully developed structure, all parts are meaningfully true with respect to their relationship that occurs when the whole structure is complete. We can justify our knowledge of a triangle's angles only with the knowledge of the full structure of the triangle.

Furthermore, when the idea that the foundation itself is not the standard for truth but rather the method for asserting the foundation itself, if considered within the scope of Hegel's own works, then this applies to *Phenomenology of Spirit* even stronger, since the idea is that *PS* presents the subject within its quest for truth.

Departing from this point, it makes better sense to think about a second level of thought, that is not a circle but more of a spiral. Of course for this spiral to be in effect, there needs to be a subject that mitigates the process. It is well established by many scholars that Hegel puts heavy emphasis on subject's active role in knowing (Rockmore 1989, 1997; Westphal 1989, 2003; Žižek 2017).

Furthermore, in each and every level of knowing in *PS*, there is also a subjective element, a mediator, that is in relationship with the previous mode of knowing. Without this middle ground, which results in the higher level of knowing, there would be no place for the subject to hold the truth of the other stages of consciousness. As Quante (2013) states, Hegel in *PS* takes two stances on conceptual development, one from the standpoint of philosopher who knows the whole story, and the other being psychological, that goes through the whole process of knowing as we read. The standpoint of a philosopher who can hold the different stages of knowing as true also justifies the pragmatic conception for the reason that the subject's effort can hold different kinds of truths together without going to a contradiction. I believe this is Marx's position with respect to theory.

Marx's Criticism of Lack of Subjectivity

What I will do here is try to understand Marx based on the reading of Hegel's circular epistemology and the subjective element in knowing. The distinction between Marxist science and the Hegelian understanding of knowledge with a Marxist subject will be crucial here. For this purpose, I will focus on *The German Ideology* precisely because it is a critique of a purely theoretical level of knowledge. Furthermore,

in *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels introduce a consciousness and a subjectivity which is the level from which we can see several levels of consciousness together.

The Active Role of Consciousness and Marxian “Leap Forward”

In his younger works that Marx wrote with Frederick Engels, especially in *The German Ideology* he criticizes the contemporary handling of the relationships between “idea” and “reality,” while undertaking the major task of creating a new understanding of the world. One way to see this general attitude is simply maintaining that if Marx and Engels could find a way to analyse reality and its relationship with ideas once and for all, they could eradicate “bourgeois and petit bourgeois” ideologies, and could finally bring thinking to its proper path where we should no longer be worried about ideas being out of reach or false, as long as we are within the boundaries of Marxism. This perspective differentiates between science and ideology, and holds that the true essence of things can be seen through science while ideology masks reality. However, a different way to approach it is to think that the relationship between ideas and reality can be established in proper way, in which the ideas—whether they are from Marx or Jesus or Feuerbach—are always subdued to another reality that encompasses them.

At this point, I would like to distinguish two kinds of “activities” Marx undertakes. They are on different stages of consciousness. First is the more familiar one to most people, a similar work that is done in the name of “orthodox Marxism” or the “scientific conception of Marxism,” while the other is the subjective element’s activity that is put forward by Marx. The critical method employed by Marx and Engels is composed of seeing the object of cognition in its falsely constructed form, and by seeing it so they reconstruct the object based on a more correct understanding. The account for this accuracy does not reside in the false construction of the object but in the sciences, as they claim. In addition to this distinction, Torrance (1995, 45–47), also claims that, Marx distinguishes between knowledge of appearance and essential knowledge. In doing so, Marx creates a division between everyday knowledge of the people, such as “the Sun sets,” and the scientific knowledge “the Earth is revolving around the Sun.” However, although he distinguishes between these two aspects of seemingly same phenomenon, he does not classify them as the correct or the false ones. On the contrary, he says that both of them are true in their own right, since they are based on the practice and daily life of the individuals involved.

Moreover, it is this level of consciousness that grounds its truth with respect to the truth of other two levels by making this manoeuvre. I think this is exactly the Marxist method in *The German Ideology*, where the authors’ do not criticize the

primary level in detail, but strike at the pseudo-scientific “bourgeoisie” conceptions of religion, state, family and so on. This argument is structurally very similar to circular epistemology of Hegel.

In their own critique of bourgeoisie ideology;

The products of their brains have got out of their hands. They, the creators, have bowed down before their creations. Let us liberate them from the chimeras, the ideas, dogmas, imaginary beings under the yoke of which they are pining away. Let us revolt against this rule of concepts. (Marx and Engels 1976a, 23)

This is already in the preface, and the question “Are you going to be able to hold the product of your brains,” can thus be answered from the subject’s position here. Their own concepts are grounded by their subjective relationship to their own concepts. This leap towards a higher level of consciousness makes it possible to see the previous consciousness’ scientific activity, and grant it truth hood by seeing that it is not absolutely true, but can only be perceived true as such with a subject that is related to its object.

In practical understanding, an objection of Marx to the Marxist terms can be seen within this respect. Take class, for example, for the orthodox Marxist it might be easy to define society in two distinct classes, such as the proletariat and bourgeoisie. However, as Chandra (2002) claims that there is no strict definition—at least from Marx and Engels—of one of the presumably most central concepts of Marxism: class. Moreover, Chandra also shows how they altered their definition of class in different works.

Marxist Orthodoxy

Orthodox Marxism is considered to be many things. Mandelson (1979, 76) claims that orthodox Marxism was a project that was proposed by Engels as a reply to the leadership divide within the SPD, and the main points were concentrated around finding a “world outlook” that could “unify truth,” and creating a materialist ontology as the basis as well as a functioning rigid and static mechanism for dialectics. Eventually, the dialectic itself became a static understanding of the world, devoid of its critical tendency.

In current discussions, this understanding of orthodox Marxism is the most agreeable definition, since the proponents of orthodox Marxism can then still somehow defend a position, some sort of “objective” conception of the world, devoid of any

subjective approach, and can call it a “scientific” or “true” understanding of the world. Being such, Marxism can be used to fight against “false consciousness” or “ideology,” since it is the one and only true depiction of the world, and so other approaches towards the world can only be wrong, similar to any other scientific realist approach.

One very interesting definition of orthodox Marxism is put forward much earlier, when orthodox Marxism hadn't yet suffered many objections from different political and social movements, and many different geographies. As early as in 1919, Georg Lukács used a definition of orthodox Marxism that was much different than what is in circulation today. Lukács starts the first chapter of his book, *History and Class Consciousness* (1971) by quoting the famous 11th thesis of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. It is no coincidence that this is exactly his position for his understanding of the correct conception of Marxism. Although orthodox Marxism is conceived to be many things, I believe that one of the most accurate is the one used by Lukács.

Orthodox Marxism, therefore, does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the “belief” in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a “sacred” book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to *method*. It is the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth and that its methods can be developed, expanded and deepened only along the lines laid down by its founders. It is the conviction, moreover, that all attempts to surpass or “improve” it have led and must lead to over-simplification, triviality and eclecticism. (Lukács 1971, 1, his emphasis)

The most notable point here is obviously how he contrasts the results of Marx's investigations and his method. As exemplified by Mandelson, the general opinion today is that orthodox Marxism is the end result of Marxist study, leading to concrete schematics of society, economy and philosophy. However, there is also a contradiction in Lukács's conception. Although he starts with advocating orthodox Marxism as a method, he eventually ends up saying that attempts for improving or surpassing dialectical materialism will not lead us to any productive end. I believe that on this point his understanding of orthodox Marxism is explained much clearer than his understanding of dialectical materialism. On this argument, it makes sense to see that both Mandelson and Lukács—as well as the common conception today—are pointing towards the direction that orthodox Marxism is an accumulation of the end results in Marxist theory. Moreover, Lukács also emphasizes the subjective element in his writing, retaining the main corpus that is shared in both Hegel and Marx, that is taking social relationship as a medium for knowledge.

Only in this context which sees the isolated facts of social life as aspects of the historical process and integrates them in a totality, can knowledge of the facts hope to become knowledge of reality. This knowledge starts from the simple (and to the capitalist world), pure, immediate, natural determinants described above. It progresses from them to the knowledge of the concrete totality, i.e. to the conceptual reproduction of reality. This concrete totality is by no means an unmediated datum for thought. (Lukács 1971, 8)

My working definition of orthodox Marxism is the same in its essence. The end results of Marxist inquiry, such as defining society as fundamentally divided into two classes or noting the dominance of infrastructure under every circumstance over superstructure, while being the results of Marxist inquiry, are not “ultimate” laws or relationships. Moreover, if we assume that Marxism works like a science—a claim which most orthodox Marxists will agree with—then we have to assume the criticisms that the philosophy of science put forward also apply to for. Such criticisms like those of Hacking (1983) or Cartwright (1984) show us that referring to the “laws of nature” as if they are unchanging discoveries without a subject’s cognitive or interventive capabilities is not possible.

On this law-like and productive perception of Marxism, Gronow (2016, 20–22) states that “laws” that are based on Marx’s *Capital* were some of the most important kernels of orthodox Marxism. And such “laws” were considered to be more general in their explanation than the timescale of the capitalist mode of production, they were seen as general laws of history that could apply to history in its totality. As proposed by Fleetwood (2012), such law-like structures, when seen as ultimate laws rather than special kinds of tendencies, are shown to be not very useful for Marxist political economy—the field that is considered to be the exemplar of the Marxist way of doing science.

Mao’s Theoretical Orthodoxy; *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society*

Written in 1927, around the time when the First United Front was in a very unstable state, Mao’s *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* is a text that can be used to observe how Mao categorizes classes. In this text, Mao considers different classes in China. Although the multiplicity of the classes in his analysis might be seen as unorthodox, Marx himself used the analysis of many different classes in his own writings as late as *Critique of the Gotha Programme* as in the following: “Did anyone proclaim to the artisans, small manufacturers, etc., and peasants

during the last elections: In relation to us you, together with the bourgeoisie and feudal lords, form only one reactionary mass?" (Marx and Engels 1989, 89).

This was written by Karl Marx in 1875 to criticize German Social Democratic Party's new programme. In this text it is clear that Marx recognizes the existence of other classes than bourgeois and proletariat. It is also very clear that Marx employs other classes in his analyses in his earlier works, such as *Communist Manifesto* (1848). That vulgar Marxist criticism put aside, let us see how Mao organizes the classes in society.

For Mao in *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society*, although there are many classes which are considered within the text, they are analysed based on two of their properties. One is the economic analysis, that sees the classes in society based on their economic relationships. In the economic analysis, Mao names six main classes, and finds many subclasses within them. The classes are evaluated based on their relationship to the means of production, but also with respect to their material wealth. Moreover, their economic situation is observed within their ability to change classes based on their capacity to be able to accumulate financial gains or not, and due to this degrade to a lower class, upgrade to a higher class or protect their presence within their own class. In addition, their main standings as a general class is affecting changes in their class position strongly. Marx and Engels also propose something very similar in *Communist Manifesto*:

The lower strata of the middle class—the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production. (Engels and Marx 1976b, 491–92)

Mao also analyses the classes of China politically. When he considers the political behaviour of various classes, he does so with respect to their attitude towards the revolution and working class leadership. When he writes about the intermediate classes politically, he sees that the classes will eventually dissolve into two big camps.

The intermediate classes are bound to disintegrate quickly, some sections turning left to join the revolution, others turning right to join the counter-revolution; there is no room for them to remain "independent" (ibid. 14).

The relationship is obviously similar to how Marx writes about the political struggle of the classes in *Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels already propose that when the revolutionary struggle is heightened, the two camps will emerge not only from the primary antagonistic classes of the proletariat and bourgeois, but the other classes will have to pick a side, based on their economic relationships, and even part of the bourgeois will side with the proletariat.

In this sense, Mao is rather a structuralist, although conceptually not exactly an orthodox Marxist. He sees that the basis of the social reality, that is the economic activity, shapes peoples' lives and their consciousness, and eventually their political activity.

The link between the infrastructure and superstructure is very clear in this text:

The owner-peasants and the master handicraftsmen are both engaged in small-scale production. Although all strata of this class have the same petty-bourgeois economic status, they fall into three different sections. The first section consists of those who have some surplus money or grain, that is, those who, by manual or mental labour, earn more each year than they consume for their own support. Such people very much want to get rich and are devout worshippers of Marshal Chao; ... This section is a minority among the petty bourgeoisie and constitutes its right-wing. ... The third section consists of those whose standard of living is falling. ... Such people are quite important for the revolutionary movement; they form a mass of no small proportions and are the left-wing of the petty bourgeoisie. In normal times these three sections of the petty bourgeoisie differ in their attitude to the revolution. But in times of war, that is, when the tide of the revolution runs high and the dawn of victory is in sight, not only will the left-wing of the petty bourgeoisie join the revolution, but the middle section too may join, and even right-wingers, ... will have to go along with the revolution. (Mao 1965, 15–16)

The analysis is functional; he sees classes with respect to their relationship to the social reality instead of "pure" economic categories, and their relationship to revolutionary activity as well as their subjective position within war and peace alike, which are factors that can lead them to taking different sides. I claim it is obvious that Mao can and does employ fundamental Marxist social theory with expertise as well as being politically in the same line with Marx. Mao is also a materialist in the Marxist sense, since he holds that it is the material relations of production that shape the consciousness and sociality of individuals. Knight (2005), also analyses Mao's knowledge of Marxism and his ability to conceive the classes of the Chinese

society, and concludes that both from other Chinese scholars and his own reading of Marxism, Mao was capable of structuring a Marxist analysis in China.

Mao's Epistemology and Negation of the Theory; *On Practice*

Strict conceptual and theoretical Marxist orthodoxy is achieved by Mao, however as indicated earlier by Lukács in 1919, a better way to search for Marxist orthodoxy is through method. Mao's primary work in this regard, about the role of the theory and the flexibility of the theory manifests itself in what is contradictory to theory, for him, namely practice.

Healy (1990) holds that Mao's epistemology is rather Marxist in the sense that Mao distinguishes between superstructure and infrastructure, as well as accepting their correspondence on certain occasions, although retaining that they are of distinct nature. Knight (1990), in a similar line, notes that Mao's epistemology is Marxist, in the sense that Mao prioritizes matter over mind. However, these are very general understandings of Marxism. They sweep the possible differences within under the rug, leading to the conclusion that any analysis which differentiates between infrastructure and superstructure, and holds infrastructure as more important than superstructure, is Marxist. A better way to see how Mao employs the theory is to look at a concrete Chinese example and how he relates reality to theory and other sources of knowledge in his *On Practice* (1936). Mao's position with respect to theories is very clear and "revisionist" in the sense that he holds that theories themselves do not depict reality as it is. "But generally speaking, whether in the practice of changing nature or of changing society, men's original ideas, theories, plans or programmes are seldom realized without any alteration." (Mao 1965, 305) This is Mao's explicit position with respect to theories in general. Here Mao acknowledges the reality of the theory, ideas, and plans, however, while being still centered around theory, he believes that the plan can be altered through the relationships it has with what it is operational on, he says that the theories may be those of engineering, science or revolutionary struggle, and in this sense his epistemology is not limited to social theory. However, this is a "mistake" for Lukács, as he claims "When the ideal of scientific knowledge is applied to nature it simply furthers the progress of science. But when it is applied to society it turns out to be an ideological weapon of the bourgeoisie." (1971, 10)

Despite this, Mao's epistemology is applied to all "knowledge" regardless of their domains. Since he already leaves Marxist theory within the limitations of theory, attention should be shifted to other areas to find a Marxist orthodoxy, and one way to find it is through a more general epistemology, and the other is through the similarity of Hegelian/Marxist consciousness and Mao's consciousness.

One interesting link between Mao and Hegelian consciousness is found by Boer. Boer (2017) finds Mao's philosophical works in Yan'an show a Hegelian consciousness with respect to conscious subjectivity. He holds that Mao studied Lenin extensively, and cited him most often in his philosophical works *On Contradiction* and *On Practice*, even though he did not read Marx or Engels directly from original sources. In addition to this, what Mao cited in these works is the most Hegelian work of Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*, which Lenin wrote in 1914–1915 when he was in exile in Bern, Switzerland, where he studied Hegel thoroughly. In addition to Boer's account, Knight (2005, 71) also claims that the Marxist orthodoxy—when orthodoxy is defined pragmatically as the party's accepted line—is constructed around Soviet Union's New Philosophy. The New Philosophy was widely read by the CCP leadership, including Mao. In retrospect, canonized in 1928, the New Philosophy can be seen as some sort of a balance between the ideas of its predecessor, more Hegelian Deborinites, followers of Hegel and Plekhanov, and its successor, a more Stalinist mechanistic understanding of the world. Within the perspective of the New Philosophy, there is a role for subjectivity against pure determinism.

The New Philosophy frowned on a strictly economic determinist reading of Marxism. "Economic materialism," as it came to be known in Soviet philosophical and historical circles in the early 1930s, had argued for the decisive role of the economic base in historical change and development; the superstructure and human consciousness were mere reflections of the economic base. (Knight 2005, 81)

In this sense, Mao was epistemologically orthodox. The limitations of a subjective element are obvious from the detachment from theory on one hand, and the negation of theory due to concrete circumstances is on the other. On this grounds, Dirlik (1983) claims that it was Marxist theory which "tamed" Mao's subjectivity. Yet, if there is alteration in the theory, the theory itself is not complete or true in this level. On the necessity of altering the theory due to its incapacity to represent truth, Mao says that:

This is because people engaged in changing reality are usually subject to numerous limitations; they are limited not only by existing scientific and technological conditions but also by the development of the objective process itself and the degree to which this process has become manifest (the aspects and the essence of the objective process have not yet been fully revealed). In such a situation, ideas, theories, plans or programmes are usually altered partially and sometimes even wholly, because of the discovery of unforeseen circumstances in the course of practice. That is to

say, it does happen that the original ideas, theories, plans or programmes fail to correspond with reality either in whole or in part and are wholly or partially incorrect. (Mao 1965, 306)

This quotation shows Mao's general understanding of the role of the theory. It can be seen that he operates on three levels here, first "as things should be," second "how we think we can analyse them," and third, "the world that changes our theory." Since Mao himself did not engage in the development of Marxist theory in abstract or "scientific" terms, but was involved in "applying the theory" to the concrete circumstances, it is convenient that he starts from the abstractions of the theory to negate them with practice. I think this perspective is still a Marxist one, since Marx himself claims in *Capital* that, because economic science is not equipped with the instruments that the other sciences possess, he has to use abstractions in place of other tools to engage with reality. And although these abstractions can become guidelines, there is no reason for them not to be mistaken. However, the difference we see in *On Practice* is that, instead of a Marxist consciousness that tries to engage the reality under the appearance, Mao relies on refinement and falsification practices to find the truth. This is not orthodox in Marxist epistemology or the Marxist understanding of theory.

Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. (ibid., 308)

Half of this seems almost Popperian, in the sense that a given theory should be falsified or verified, and when falsification is the case, the false parts of the theory should be abandoned and new theories should arise. The other half is on the other hand, very Hegelian, the knowledge of perception should be turned into rational knowledge within the medium of practice. The theory as an object outside the subject, is reformed through the subject's attempts. Therefore, I think epistemologically, Mao is orthodox so far as he embraces both Marx's scientific, mature look towards knowledge, and at the same time his young, Hegelian understanding of knowledge as a process. The orthodoxies are twofold, and the fidelity to different aspects of Marxism creates a novel understanding of Marxism.

These were from the concluding remarks of *On Practice*. But is this some sort of truth in the sense that it approaches reality? If it is the case, we can already see that the negation of the initial concrete Marxist theory that Mao distinguishes in

On the Analysis of the Classes of Chinese Society from something that is external to the theory is, I claim, the Marxist subjectivity. The subject mitigates the transition from the abstract theory to an external reality. The “ideal” theory in its abstractness is negated, and because of the Hegelian nature of this negation, the subject looks for something external, the subject will try to find this ground in a different ontology, and for Mao this is *On Contradiction*.

On the other hand, if we consider that the subjective interpretation of the theory is eventually dependent on “what the world is like,” there is a staunch objectivism in this position. If the alteration of the theory is due to the certain set of relationships that exist in the world, eventually the theory will end up depicting what the world is like. This depiction, in turn, might not be too much of a revolutionary theory.

Mao’s Subjectivity and Negation of Negation; *On Contradiction*

Mao works within a Marxist theoretical framework when he negates the “scientific” claims of Marxism with a Marxist consciousness. Even so, he uses the conception “Marxist theory of knowledge” in many places in these works instead of using “Marxism” or “Marxist theory.” He understands that Marxism provides him with a theory, a theory which he works both within and on. Interestingly though, Mao uses the term “theory” more than twice as much in his *On Practice* than *On Contradiction*, I believe that this is because he negates the theory by practice, while in *On Contradiction*, he is creating an ontology, not a methodology or epistemology. These eventually are exactly the lacking elements in his analysis, and he ends up with an ontology that has almost no epistemology. Although he ended *On Practice* with a very objectivist account, where the external reality changes our theories and we should not only allow it to do so, but facilitate the process *On Contradiction* draws a much different world. I claimed that Mao negated the theory with reality in *On Practice*, and here he negates the objectivist account of *On Practice*. However how far he goes here and if he could achieve a level of consciousness that allows for the negation of negation to hold are not very easy to determine.

In the first part of the text “The Two World Outlooks,” Mao gives an account of the world where the world itself is loaded with contradictions. At first, he draws a historical account of human thought where different groups of thinkers were always in contradiction; on one hand there were metaphysical outlooks and on the other hand there was the dialectical outlook. However, Mao considers even the relatively correct dialectical outlook incomplete, since it was not dialectical materialist outlook that is supposed to give the true depiction. It is important to note

here that he does not contrast metaphysics with materialism, but with dialectical materialism, since throughout the text he asserts his place between mechanism—that is a branch of materialism—and metaphysics, attacking both to solidify his own position. This move against both right and left-wing deviations is a common theme in Leninist parties (Or Communist Parties as they were called in 30s). Knight (2005) also reports that for Mao philosophy had a “party character,” which is to say that philosophy should provide a worldview for the party and it should not be an understanding of the world that merely tries to unify knowledge. Meisner (1971) also claims that Mao’s organizational principles were genuinely Leninist, thus making Mao a defender of the “party line” of the philosophical orthodoxy. This basically means that the party creates a philosophy in order to locate party in the correct line of the spectrum and limit the behaviour of the party periphery and this way solidify centralism.

This understanding of the party line puts Mao in a subjectivist position again. Although there are many contradictions that occur, the party should pick a side on these and defend itself from possible deviations coming from both left and right. In the next chapter, “Universality of Contradiction,” Mao elaborates on what he understands from contradiction, asserting an ontological claim that in the world there are many different contradictions, even in the natural sciences or mathematics. In his words:

The universality or absoluteness of contradiction has a twofold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things, and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end. (Mao 1965, 316)

Therefore, Mao has two claims, one is that there is a positive aspect of contradiction, and that development is possible only through contradiction. This claim is a somewhat Hegelian in ontology; it is only through contradiction that development is possible. The second one is the counter claim, that the contradiction that occurs during development is constant. The second claim does not only say that contradiction necessarily leads to development, but also the contradiction of opposites is constant through the whole process.

This is the claim which I find rather unorthodox in many senses, since in the traditional Hegelian or Marxist dialectics a contradiction is expected to occur within a certain process, leading to another stage in development. However, Mao claims that contradiction is constant, in every development and every process and never-ending. He will later use this claim to justify the changing priorities of the revolution.

In the next chapter, “Particularity of Contradiction,” Mao makes another move. Since in the previous chapter the concept of contradiction was very abstract and

it was difficult to use it in concrete cases and within geographical, historical and similar limitations, he proposes that the particular aspects of the contradiction form a different structure. Eventually, similar to his distinction between theory and practice, we see a divide in ontology.

Of course, unless we understand the universality of contradiction, we have no way of discovering the universal cause or universal basis for the movement or development of things; however, unless we study the particularity of contradiction, we have no way of determining the particular essence of a thing which differentiates it from other things, no way of discovering the particular cause or particular basis for the movement or development of a thing, and no way of distinguishing one thing from another or of demarcating the fields of science. (Mao 1965, 320)

This way, Mao rearranges his ontological structure to yield a dualism, where the abstract principles of contradiction are at work in the world, although we are in need of understanding certain particularities to be able to place each particularity in its proper general field. The gap between our understanding of a thing and the thing itself is laid open here again. Mao's naïve realism in that regard is very strong, the world of contradiction exists independently from us, while our understanding of contradiction, when done properly, will lead to a concrete result. This way, the objectivism that was in *On Practice* is negated to a form of dualism. While Mao still holds that reality is "out there," our understanding of it will lead us to a correct grasping of it.

From here, Mao moves to an organization of this ontology in the next chapter, "The Principle Contradiction and the Principle Aspect of Contradiction." In this chapter the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity reaches its peak. On the objective side, Mao seems to be in line with Marxist orthodoxy in that he accepts the main schemes of Marxism in the social and economic domains. Although he concurs that objectively there are other contradictions in everything that develops, as he already claimed in the previous chapter, there is a primary contradiction in the complex processes where there are many different contradictory elements in the overall development. Dirlik (1983, 197) claims that the idea of principle contradiction is the element that saves Mao from detachment from Marxism, since it subordinates other contradictions under the same theoretical structure, the one principle contradiction that subdues them all, however this move did not stop Mao from interpreting the principle contradiction subjectively in the long term. The second half of the text expresses this subjective element under the name the principle aspect of contradiction.

For instance, in capitalist society the two forces in contradiction, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, form the principal contradiction. The other contradictions, such as those between the remnant feudal class and the bourgeoisie, ... are all determined or influenced by this principal contradiction. (Mao 1965, 331)

Here it is obvious that Mao is following an objective Marxist line of contradiction, it is as if he reaffirmed his position in *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* through the negation of his own position in *On Practice*. However, he eventually moves to an extreme subjectivist position from there. Mao proposes something extraordinary, already embedded in his writings. While talking about the principle aspect of contradiction he claims that “when the principal aspect which has gained predominance changes, the nature of a thing changes accordingly” (ibid., 333). The idea is that the subject’s position with respect to reality alters the reality somehow. This way, Mao creates a disunited world, while many things in life are in contradiction, the subject is able to choose the primary contradiction amongst the many. Knight (1990, 20–21) also make the analysis that, although Mao employs “three laws of dialectics” in his Yan’an period, “negation of the negation” is used less frequently than the other laws. Furthermore, he makes the analysis that Mao adheres to law of contradiction as the primary law of dialectics. In Mao’s later writings, he also notes, the usage of “negation of the negation” became less frequent and the meaning of negation became both ambiguous, and most often among its usages was the in the meaning of “reaching to an agreement of two opposing sides.”

Eventually, in the next chapter, “The Identity and Struggle of the Aspects of a Contradiction,” Mao somehow solves the problem by providing limitations for the contradiction to operate. However, the problem is persistent, there is no determining limit for the aspects of contradiction. Mao takes the divided aspects of a process as opposing elements of contradiction, and these aspects remain within the contradiction, yet there is no direction for the struggle of the opposites to channel, there is no predetermined path and even no criterion for choosing a side within the contradiction, let alone choosing the principle aspect of contradiction.

Without its opposite aspect, each loses the condition for its existence. Just think, can anyone contradictory aspect of a thing or of a concept in the human mind exist independently? Without life, there would be no death; without death, there would be no life. (Mao 1965, 338)

The negation of an aspect of the counterpart seems to go on forever. This is the point where Žižek also criticizes Mao about his lack of end result, negation of

negation, contradiction ending to create something new at some point, leaving the previous contradiction at its end or Hegelian *Aufheben*.

Back in 1953, the young Louis Althusser published a text in *La revue de l'enseignement philosophique* in which he congratulated Stalin for rejecting the “negation of negation” as a universal law of dialectics, a rejection shared by Mao. It is easy to understand this rejection as the expression of the spirit of struggle, of “one divides into two”: there is no reunification, no final synthesis, the struggle goes on forever. However, the Hegelian dialectical “synthesis” has to be clearly delimited from the “synthesis-of-the-opposites” model with which it is as a rule identified. (Žižek 2013, 300)

The problem of the revolutionary consciousness of Mao can thus be seen within this perspective. Although Mao goes through various phases of dialectical consciousness, he does not eventually settle for the negation of negation of the original position. Although he negates the negation, this negation is not towards a direction, it is a divergent negation which does not enable him to formulate the limits of the consciousness or the metric of subjective activity. This is why Mao swings between a stark objectivity on his assertion of the classical Marxist categories first and the belief in an objective world secondly and a hyper subjective interpretation of Marxism at his third move.

In the last chapter of *On Contradiction*, “The Place of Antagonism in Contradiction,” it looks like Mao is aware of this problem that he is not able to reach a level of consciousness that enables him to hold the contradictory elements through the process of knowing. In order to solve this, Mao differentiates between antagonism and contradiction briefly. However, this difference, although it places an objective element to contradictions that are antagonisms, still does not provide a criterion for choosing how to make this distinction.

Conclusion

This work provides one perspective to a very general, diverse, and thorny collection of issues. However, when one is entitled to the certain assumptions made during the paper, I think the following conclusions are in order.

Mao uses different orthodoxies through these three texts. The conceptual orthodoxy he employs in *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* is eventually replaced by an epistemological orthodoxy in *On Practice*, which moves towards an objectivist

account. In *On Contradiction*, Mao negates the objectivist position for the sake of an ontology, an ontology that can be used in turbulent political times where alliances and conflicts are changing rapidly. However, as Mao develops this ontology, he still relies on some kind of naïve realism, he holds that the contradictions are eternal and the principle contradictions will arise by themselves, although the subject has a limitless control over them. The very eternal character of his understanding of contradictions, this way, obstructs the possibility of final negation to yield into the formation of a new consciousness.

Against the consciousness that insists on its position being the Absolute—in this example the orthodox Marxists who relentlessly resisted the idea of moving to the rural areas, towards peasantry, at the expense of abandoning the urban proletariat—Mao could enable himself a negation of the orthodoxy of this kind. In the times when there were many supporters of non-interference by Communists in their country's struggle against Japanese imperialism, even when it meant tactical alliances with the Kuomintang, Mao could “bend” the theory, with a Marxist subjectivity. The very reason for the failure of the orthodoxy is the illusion of seeing their current position as the final stage of consciousness. Mao knew that he was not in the final stage, but from these texts it can be seen that he also asserts that there is no final one. The negation is negated, not towards an end, but towards eternity, and whether the subject will be able to hold the theory and practice together is not bound by any rule, as its measure is left to be only itself.

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Marxism and Confucian Thought

Modern Confucian Objection against Communism in China: The Unique Case of Xu Fuguan¹

*Téa SERNELJ**

Abstract

The article investigates the political views of one of the most prominent representatives of the so-called second generation of Modern Confucianism, Xu Fuguan. It reveals his unique position within this intellectual movement. Even though all other adherents of Modern Confucianism were focused upon metaphysics and ontology rather than political theory, Xu believed that these lines of thought could not contribute enough to solving the various urgent social and political problems of modern China. In this regard, the present article focuses upon a critical analysis of Xu's critique of the Chinese Communist Party. The author presents and evaluates his critique mainly with regard to his search for a resolution of the problematic and chaotic political and social situation of China during the first half of the 20th century. In conclusion, the author provides a critical evaluation of Xu's social democratic thought and particularly of his attitude towards the Chinese Communist Party.

Keywords: Xu Fuguan, Modern Confucianism, Mao Zedong, Communism in China

Moderni konfucijanski ugovor proti komunizmu na Kitajskem: unikatni primer Xu Fuguana

Izvilleček

Članek predstavi politična stališča enega najpomembnejših predstavnikov tako imenovane druge generacije modernega konfucijanstva, Xu Fuguana, in opozori na njegov edinstven položaj znotraj te intelektualne struje. Čeprav so bili drugi pripadniki sodobnega konfucijanstva bolj kot na politično teorijo osredotočeni na metafiziko in ontologijo, je Xu Fuguan verjel, da ti pristopi ne bi mogli veliko prispevati k reševanju negotovih družbenih in političnih problemov sodobne Kitajske. Tako se članek osredotoča na kritično

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analizo Xujeve kritike kitajske komunistične partije. Avtor predstavi in ovrednoti njegovo kritično stališče predvsem v zvezi z njegovim iskanjem rešitve problematičnega in kaotičnega političnega in socialnega položaja Kitajske v prvi polovici 20. stoletja. Na koncu prispevka avtor kritično ovrednoti Xujev socialdemokratski pristop in še posebej njegov odnos do kitajske komunistične partije.

Ključne besede: Xu Fuguan, moderno konfucijanstvo, Mao Zedong, komunizem na Kitajskem

Introduction

Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903–1982) was a Chinese intellectual and historian who made important contributions to Modern Confucian philosophy. He belonged to the second generation of Modern Confucians, who after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 lived and worked in Taiwan, Hong Kong and United States of America. The philosophy of Modern Confucianism is distinguished by a comprehensive attempt to revitalize traditional (particularly original Confucian and Neo-Confucian) thought by means of new influences borrowed or derived from Western philosophical theories. Therefore, Modern Confucianism of the 20th century is defined by a search for synthesis between Western and Chinese traditional thought, aiming to elaborate a system of ideas and values, suitable to resolve social and political problems, not only for China but for the whole modern world.

Xu Fuguan was the only member of the second generation of Modern Confucians who started his professional career in military and political affairs. When studying at the military academy in Japan, he became inspired by socialist ideas and Marxist philosophy, as lectured, interpreted and translated by the famous Japanese anarchist and communist, Kawakami Hajime. After his return from Japan, Xu became a military and political strategist in the Nationalist Party. In 1943 he was sent to Yan'an as a negotiator between the party and Communist guerrillas for the establishment of a united front in the resistance against Japan. Although he was at first inspired by the socialist ideas and enthusiasm of Mao Zedong and the Communist cadre in resolving China's difficult social and political situation, he changed his position when faced with their actual political and social actions. From then on, Xu Fuguan started to emphasize the presupposed hypocrisy and inhumanity of the Communist Party's ideology. After returning from Yan'an, Xu became one of Chiang Kai-shek's closest advisors regarding the reformation of the Nationalists to gain more popular support, and an analyst of the ideological and political strategies of the Communists. However, disappointed by the corruption and incompetence of the Nationalists as well as the "inhumanity" of the

Mao's Communist regime, Xu decided to pursue an academic career after he met his teacher, Xiong Shili. Xu shared his critique of the Communist Party with other Modern Confucians.

As already noted, Xu Fuguan belonged to the second generation of Modern Confucians, who strove for a revitalization of their own cultural identity in the sense of “transplanting old roots” (*Chong zheng jiu xue de genji* 重整舊學的根基) of their own tradition because they saw this method as the only way for a possible survival of the cultural tradition from which they arose. This renovation of the “roots,” however, should not merely serve as a tool for the survival of Chinese tradition. The members of the second generation hoped that it could also provide new methods for the elaboration and further development of ethics on a global level.

The Peculiar Case of Xu Fuguan

The members of the second generation of Modern Confucianism, in addition to Xu, included Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), Tang Junyi (1909–1978) and Fang Dongmei (1899–1977), and these all dealt with the problem how to re-evaluate and adapt the Chinese intellectual tradition to meet the needs of modernization. Most Modern Confucians understood modernization as a kind of rationalization of the world (Rošker 2013, 88). Most of the members of the Modern Confucian movement were proceeding from the supposition that the Chinese ideational tradition lacked a coherent development of rational and logical reasoning, which belongs to the crucial precondition for the development of scientific thought and technological innovations. In their view, the prevailing currents of traditional philosophy were focused upon ethical and moral thought, particularly upon questions linked to the inner moral cultivation (see for instance Ott 2017, 80–82). In the traditional binary category of “internal sage and external ruler” (*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王), this inconsistency manifested itself in the domination of the former over the latter². Lee Ming-Huei (2001, 15) states that while most Modern Confucians saw the inner sage as a basis for the concept of the external ruler, the latter was never understood as being merely an extension of the former. Their aim was to establish the subject within the complementary relation between both poles. The development of science, democracy and modern technology, however, was a crucial for the advance of

² An important methodological step had already been taken previously by Mou Zongsan, with his concept of the self-negation of the moral Self (*daode ziwode kanxian* 道德自我坎陷, see Mou 1975, 123)

modernization. They thus explored their own tradition for authentic concepts comparable to the two Western paradigms essential for modernization, i.e. the concepts of subjectivity,³ and of reason and rationality.

In search of a new philosophical basis, most of the Modern Confucians focused on metaphysical and ontology-related issues, which they recognized in the context of Western ideas and philosophical systems. They thus emphasized the importance of establishing ontology and metaphysics as the basis for Confucian renovation.

Xu Fuguan, however, was practically the only representative of the second generation who did not consider metaphysics and ontology as appropriate frameworks for understanding ancient Chinese thought, and much less for the development of its interpretation. He argued that it was precisely the pragmatic nucleus of Chinese traditional thought that did not lead to any composition or any structured and coherent conception of a metaphysical and ontological system, as has been established, for instance, by the ancient Greek philosophers (Rošker 2013, 88).

According to Xu, in Chinese antiquity the idea of ethics developed directly from the mythological society, and was based on the divine core of the human being. Thus, ethics was not connected with metaphysics, and even less with religion. According to Xu, ethics, morality, all the central Confucian virtues as well as all of Chinese traditional culture, are based on the sense of “concerned consciousness” (*youbuan yishi* 憂患意識). For Xu, concerned consciousness is the realization of the consequences of individual’s actions and decisions that emerge from the sense of responsibility.

Xu Fuguan comprehended and discussed human beings within the framework of socio-political history, as an individual struggling according to or against historical processes, while other Modern Confucians emphasized the transcendent nature of human beings. In this sense, Xu Fuguan’s position is a materialistic one, while most of other representatives of the second generation could be regarded as idealistic.

The ideals of Modern Confucians were not limited to the quest for revitalization and rehabilitation of the ideological tradition from which they arose. For them, it was clear that the intellectual process of modernizing Confucianism could only begin on the basis of its synthesis with the ideas imported from the Euro-American philosophy, since it represented the cultural background from which modernization actually emerged. The presupposed acceptance of the Western models of democracy and science, which ought to lead China from a backward to a

3 According to Jana Rošker (2018, 262), the historical positioning of the notions of subjectivity and autonomy as were developed in the Chinese intellectual tradition, was elaborated by several Modern Confucian scholars, particularly by Mou Zongsan (1971) and Tang Junyi (2000).

modernized society, has therefore led to a new reflection on the role and meaning of the Confucian intellectual tradition. The main guiding principle for Modern Confucians was to revitalize the traditional Chinese intellectual tradition based on the original Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming dynasties, combined with a deeper knowledge of Western philosophical concepts and cultural specifics. Of course, this process did imply the reproduction of a Confucian intellectual system of thought, albeit one based on the reinterpretation and redefinition of Confucian concepts through Western philosophical systems (Chang et al. 2018, 53).

In the process of modernization, the second generation represented the position that China must preserve and develop important elements of its own traditions, as these contained the seeds for its democratic and scientific development. Contrary to most other Chinese intellectual currents at that time, which believed that Confucian ideology was the main obstacle for China's modernization, the second generation was convinced that it was compatible with both science and democracy, and that East Asian societies would fail to develop modern democratic social systems insofar as they did not originate from and consider various segments of the Confucian tradition (ibid., 97).

In this regard, it is important to mention Xu Fuguan's argument that Confucian theory is inextricably compatible with democracy, since already in classical Chinese texts, such as the *Book of Documents* (*Shu jing* 書經), the records are found that people are the basis (*minben* 民本) of the state as well as an important and active subject in constructing a righteous and harmonious society. Although these records are vague, Confucius took over this idea, and Mencius then upgraded and elaborated it further, explicitly stating that the people are the most important element in a state, and the ruler the least (Mengzi, *Jin xin xia*).

On the other hand, Xu points out that in the autocratic Chinese history such presumably democratic elements could not be realized in practice, and therefore the idea of the subject as a political actor failed to develop (ibid.). He also claimed that the realization of Confucian "democratic" ideas failed to be realized in practice because there was no legal system in the autocratic society that would protect the rights of the people, as well as regulate and judge the actions of the rulers (ibid., 17).

Regarding the development of science, Xu claimed that, although Confucianism did not contain a scientific dimension, it did not suppress or disapprove science as such. He claimed that Chinese tradition did not develop a methodology suitable for the development of scientific research because such an approach would be naïve, but instead it developed a methodology based on the cultivation of

personality (Rošker 2013, 104). Xu argued that this originates from a perception of the world that is based on the concept of “concerned consciousness” in ancient China, in contrast to the sense of curiosity, which was the basis for understanding humans and the world in ancient Greece, and resulted in the pursuit of objective knowledge, especially regarding the development of metaphysics and science. According to Xu, Modern Western thinkers inherited this position but shifted from “knowing” as a way of education to knowledge as a persistent search for power through possessing and controlling the external material world (Ni 2002, 283). According to Xu, Western science treated people as a mechanistic integral part of nature, while in Confucianism humans always remain at the forefront of interest. Nature is therefore interpreted through the lens of the human (Rošker 2013, 103). Besides, the Confucian tradition was not interested in abstract laws of the objective world, but it objectified the world through moral virtues.

Xu argued that traditional Chinese culture is composed of three dimensions: despotism, Confucianism and peasant society. For him, the latter embodies the true spirit of traditional Chinese culture, while the true Confucians were supposed to be the protectors of this against despotic exploitation (Lee 1998, 16–17).

Born in 1904, Xu Fuguan was the only member of the second generation of Modern Confucians who came from a poor rural background, and was always closely and emotionally connected to the suffering and striving for survival of peasants. Hence, it is not surprising that in his youth he enthusiastically embraced the socialist idea of the common good for all members of the society.

Xu’s Encounter with Marxism

Already as a young student, Xu became familiar with the ideas of Marx’s and Engels’ materialism through the reading of Sun Yat-Sen’s political philosophy on the “three principles of the people” (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義). Even before devoting himself to a deeper study of Marxism, he had already participated in the Wuhan campaign of the leftist clique of the Nationalist Party against Jiang Jieshi’s (Chiang Kai-shek’s) massacre of communists and workers of the trade union in Shanghai.

After completing his studies in China, Xu could not survive as a teacher or professor at the faculty, so he decided to pursue a military career which he followed from 1926 to 1942. He attended a military academy in Japan and frequently attended lectures at Meiji University, where he became familiar with the works of the first influential Japanese Marxist, Kawakami Hajime. When Xu arrived in Japan the Japanese Communists were actively participating in trade unions and on university campuses, despite the severe repression and police control they faced. At that

time, many Chinese and Taiwanese students, among which were later famous intellectuals and politicians such as Guo Moruo and Li Dazhao, were strongly influenced by Kawakami's translations and interpretations of Marxism (Lee 1998, 43). After Xu became familiar with Kawakami's works, he often organized readings of Marxist texts at the military academy.

According to Xu, before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War socialist ideas inspired all Chinese political groups, and to some extent even surpassed the May Fourth demands for democracy. For Xu, the socialist idea of the common good was compatible with Confucian humanism; in his opinion, this was one of the reasons for its popularity among young Chinese intellectuals. On the other hand, Marxism, which originated from the West and was at the same time critical of it, coincided with the tendency for westernization, as well as with the rejection of Western imperialism (Xu in Lee 1998, 44). Thirdly, for Xu, Marxism provided concrete guidelines for practical action in a transitional society.

However, in 1931, Xu and many other Chinese students studying in Japan strongly protested against the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. The Japanese military police arrested them, and he was expelled from the academy half a year before completing his studies.

After returning to his homeland, Xu was disappointed and outraged over Chiang Kai-shek's conciliatory policy towards Japan. However, already in June 1932, Xu started working as a colonel of the Nationalist Party (GMD) in Guangxi. During his military career, he was rarely involved in direct battles. The duties he was carrying as a commander in Guangxi were mostly linked to strategic and political planning and ensuring public safety. During the Sino-Japanese war, Xu occupied increasingly high positions as a strategic and political adviser, and the conflict made a strong impact on him. He witnessed death, sickness and hunger, as well as rampant corruption in politics. In 1942 he was transferred to Chongqing, where he served as a military instructor. Soon after that, Xu was offered a position of an adviser to the Alliance in Yan'an (Lee 1998, 52).

Given his interest in socialist and Marxist ideas, it is not surprising at all that Xu found himself in close company with the leading Communist politicians. His task in Yan'an, which he visited in 1943, was to establish a liaison with the Communist army as part of the United Front to resist Japan, and as the negotiator between the Communist guerrillas and the Nationalist government with regard to lifting the blockade of weapons, food and medicine by the latter if the former would hand over the occupied territory and army. Xu met up with some of the key figures of the Communist Party, namely Zhu De (1886–1976), Zhou Enlai (1898–1976) and Liu Shaoqi (1898–1969), and expressed deep respect for their idealism, patriotism and self-sacrifice.

However, for Xu, Mao Zedong (1893–1976) was undoubtedly the most charismatic personality of all. Although he was 11 years younger than Mao, they both grew up in similar social conditions. In addition, they were both experienced in the field of military strategies and loved philosophy, literature and history. During their five long conversations, they dealt with a variety of topics, and Xu was deeply impressed by Mao's vision of revolution and by his analysis of Chinese history (Lee 1998, 52).

Xu and Mao attributed great importance to the peasant population, and they were equally disturbed by the arrogant and superior attitude of the intellectual elite towards peasants. First and foremost, they both criticized the exploitative and oppressive attitude of local autocrats towards the peasant population. Nevertheless, Xu Fuguan did not agree with the Communist idea of class oppression, which was seen by Mao and his comrades as the main reason for the poverty in rural areas. In contrast to Mao, Xu claimed that in addition to the polarity between landlords and tenants, there was also a huge number of owners and partial owners of land (such as his own family). Therefore, in his opinion, improvements to the means of production and resources were much more important than overthrowing the dominant production relations (*ibid.*, 53).

Xu thus claimed that the class struggle would not help much in resolving the problems of the China's countryside. Still, he partially agreed with Mao's Agricultural Collective Project, arguing that in order to solve the problems of the rural population it would be necessary to remove harmful factors, such as corruption and exploitation by local property owners, because only in this way would it be possible for the peasants to plan their own survival independently and without external interventions. However, he emphasized the danger of the deforming and destroying of interpersonal relations that could happen in the name of collectivism and the class struggle.

Even though he served under the Nationalist government, Xu remained a secret admirer of the Chinese Communist Party. When he heard Zhou Enlai's speech on international politics in 1937, he declared that there was no one in the GMD who was as gifted and intelligent as Zhou. The reason why he never joined the Communist Party was that he saw a great discrepancy between Marxist theory on the one hand and the Communist reality on the other. Xu's enthusiasm for the Communist Party diminished in 1940, when he travelled to the Taihang Mountains as a Nationalist guerrilla supporter. He initially advised the guerrillas to try and understand the Communists and learn from them. But when he met with the local population, this positive view of the Communists changed radically.

In order to expand its Red Army, the Communist Party seized all the property of the villagers, and fed young boys on the condition that they had to join the army. Such exploitation of the population was something that the GMD also did, but Xu initially hoped that the Communist Party (CCP) would be different in this respect and truly protect the poor (ibid.).

In addition, he soon became aware of the duplicity of the CCP as it worked to consolidate its power. In the areas under the control of the GMD, the Communists defended “freedom and democracy,” and spread slogans such as: “The ones who have money, contribute money; those who have power, contribute power.” They thus advocated “cooperation between workers and capitalists.” In those times everyone was attracted to such slogans. On the other hand, in the areas under Japanese occupation, which could not be governed by the Nationalists, Xu saw that the Communists used denunciation and the breakdown of local communities to take full control under the pretext of resolving the conflict between the oppressors and oppressed (ibid.).

Xu’s Critique of the Communist Party

One of the stories that most shocked X, was about a son who denounced his father, the result of which was that the whole community wanted to publicly execute the man. In fact, the son himself was supposed to kill his father, but could not do it, as he fainted and collapsed on the ground. All the villagers then covered their heads and cried. In that moment, a member of the Red Army came by, picked up a knife and killed both father and son.

Xu recounted this story along with his recent attitude towards Communism in an essay entitled *The Humanness of the Communist Party* (*Gongchandang de renxing* 共產黨的人性), published in 1951, when he was already in Taiwan. In this he emphasized that the mutual slaughter and destruction of cohesion and coherence of the local communities in the name of class struggle would never end under the Communist regime. He argued that, if the relationship between father and son is devalued and denied, then no other interpersonal relationships are possible. Xu was enchanted by the Marxist aspiration for social justice, but was equally horrified by the idea of the class struggle and its tactics of denunciation and betrayal, which were allegedly necessary in order to achieve this justice (Xu in Lee 1998, 129). In this sense, Xu defined Communist ideology to be in its essence a denial of universal humanity.

In his essay entitled *The lesson given by the Soviet Union to humanity* (*Renqu sulian suo geiyu renlei de jiaoxun* 人去苏联所给与人类的教训), written in 1953, Xu

explains why the class struggle will continue after the defeat of the bourgeoisie. Since the Communists deny humanness, they will sooner or later regard the workers themselves as their potential enemies. And even dictators who are at the top of the hierarchy of political power must continue to fight with their comrades in order to maintain their position. This necessarily lead to an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and denunciation in interpersonal relations. Because of their disregard for the intrinsic value of human beings, the Communists were used to resorting to violence to resolve conflicts (ibid.).

Here, we might already see a first connection with Xu's later turn to Confucianism, because the abovementioned story is very similar to the famous Confucian criticism of the son who denounced his father who stole a sheep:

子路： 葉公語孔子曰： 吾黨有直躬者， 其父攘羊， 而子證之。 』
孔子曰： 「吾黨之直者異於是。 父為子隱， 子為父隱， 直在其中矣。」

Zi Lu: The Duke of She informed Confucius, saying, "Among us here there are those who may be styled upright in their conduct. If their father have stolen a sheep, they will bear witness to the fact." Confucius said, "Among us, in our part of the country, those who are upright are different from this. The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this." (*Lunyu* 2018, 18)

Xu also questioned the position of the Communist Party, saying that it could not come to power without a military fight, and thus made efforts to arm itself, and at the same time transform each of the Party's members into both politicians and fighters. He also condemned their secret police, who worked inside and outside the Party. Within the Party, it controlled all members who were prevented from any personal relationships beyond the organization. Outwardly, it carried out various strategies to win over the Nationalists. According to Xu's analysis, the Communist Party would be able to defeat the GMD for two reasons. First, it recruited the peasant population, which consequently became part of their army. The GMD failed to establish its power in the countryside because it did not care enough for the people's struggle for survival, and were mostly occupied with getting the support from the domestic and international political elite. In addition, the CCP used "democracy" as a convenient tool to win domestic and Western support. Prior to assuming leadership over a particular area, it underlined the freedom of association. When it gained power, it then banned people's independent activities and integrated all groups into the military wing of its organization (Chang et. al 2018, 63).

Xu's Shift to Academia

After six months in Yan'an, Xu returned to Chongqing and became Chiang Kai-shek's advisor, confidant and secretary. In this position Xu was quickly promoted, and became the general's daily reporter on the functioning and strategy of the CCP. Even after the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1945, Xu remained an indispensable advisor about the strategies used against the CCP and the reformation of the GMD. He thus moved back to Nanjing with the Nationalist government.

According to Lee (1998, 65), the relationship between Chiang Kai-shek and Xu at the time was comparable to the typical traditional Confucian relationship between the ruler and one of his ministers. The later clash between Chiang Kai-shek and Xu was due to land reform, which was for Xu the only possible way to defeat the prevailing power of the CCP, while Chiang did not see this as a top priority. Instead, in order to maintain his political power, he sought allies among the bourgeoisie and warlords in the countryside. In August 1945, the war with Japan ended. To Xu, it became clear that the Nationalist Party would not sacrifice its new political power in order to carry out land reform (*ibid.*).

In 1949 Xu Fuguan, disappointed by the incompetence and corruption of the GMD as well as the manipulation and "inhumanness" of the CCP, decided to finish his political career, leave the GMD and dedicate himself fully to academic life. This shift happened when he met Xiong Shili, who became his teacher. In addition to his faith in nationalism and socialism, he began to believe in democracy, and was convinced that Confucianism, especially its humanism, was of key importance for the modernization of Chinese society.

The first "proof" of Xiong's influence was Xu's foundation of the academic journal *Academic Monthly* (*Xueyuan*) in 1947 in Nanjing. When the situation in the GMD deteriorated after the Sino-Japanese war, Xu's efforts for political reforms began to diminish. In the same year, Chiang Kai-shek asked him to establish secret combat units that would prolong the *status quo* of the Party's power, which also disappointed Xu. He considered that such plan was far from his original idea of a complete reorganization of the GMD. He gained the feeling that there was no one in the military or political circles who was honest and determined enough to save China, so he adopted Xiong's idea that academic research is the key to the nation's rehabilitation and that the solution to China's problems lies among its intellectuals. Xu persuaded Chiang Kai-shek to financially support the *Academic Monthly*, whose aim would be the establishment of a connection between the government and university professors (Lee 1998, 82).

Xiong Shili believed that a democratic republic would promote creativity. He therefore encouraged his students to study biology, psychology, Western philosophy, sociology and political science, in order to interpret Chinese classical texts more scientifically. While most of Xiong's contemporaries considered that Chinese culture (or Confucianism) had nothing in common and Western culture and science, he argued they were compatible because Ancient Chinese thinkers had already begun with rudimentary scientific research. In addition, he was convinced that Confucian ontology and morality were as crucial as science for the contemporary world. This position inspired Xu, and after 1949 he chose the Chinese history of ideas as his main field of research, and studied it according to Xiong's recommendations. Despite his great respect for the teacher, Xu retained intellectual autonomy and developed his own method of academic research. However, Xu and Xiong shared their enthusiasm over socialism, patriotism and democracy.

In 1949, Xu and other Modern Confucians found exile abroad. Xu and Mou moved to Taiwan, Tang to Hong Kong and Fang to the United States. Xiong decided to stay in his homeland although Xu persistently tried to convince him to follow him out of the country.

In *Manifesto for Re-evaluation of Chinese Culture as a World Heritage* (*Wei Zhongguo Wenua Jinggao Shijie Renshi Xuanyan* 為中國文化敬告世界人士宣言) initiated by Zhang Junmai (1886–1969) and written by Xu, Tang and Mou in 1958, the authors emphasized that the reason why Chinese people accepted Communist ideology so easily was mainly because of its resistance to the aggression of Western capitalism and imperialism. In its dynamic power, Communism managed to meet the Chinese social and political demands of the time. The anti-imperialist movement of the Chinese people was mixed with the premise of fighting for their own independence and survival, as well as with the desire to propagate their culture in the modern world. According to them, this positive requirement had been incorporated in the spiritual life of the Chinese people from time immemorial. For these authors, Marxism was therefore only a temporary tool (or phase) for achieving the positive demands and goals of the Chinese people.

In this context, however, the authors of the manifesto listed a number of reasons why, in their view, the dictatorship of the Communist Red Army would not exist for a long time as a guiding principle in Chinese cultural and political institutions in mainland China (Chang et al. 2018, 19). In the ideology of the Red Army the authors saw a discourse that is contrary to human nature, and *a priori* violates the rights of individuals. According to them, Communist ideologies are dogmatic and constitute an obstacle to the free development of humanity. The danger of mutual slaughter and political purges is always present as a mode of action, because in

Communist ideology everyone is treated as a potential enemy. Any expression of disagreement with the leaders' positions leads to a struggle for dominance among fractions. There is only one solution to avoid bloodshed, which is a free and democratic elective system along with the fundamental rule of law, with these laws put forth by the people themselves. Only in this way will the transfer of political power be possible through a peaceful process (*ibid.*)

Conclusion

As we have seen in the article, Xu's argument of the Communist negation of humanness, which he experienced especially through the story of father and son, and which was carried out in the name of class struggle, was for him as well as for other Modern Confucians a crime against Chinese culture and human civilization in general. For Xu, in Communism a person is judged and valued exclusively on the basis of the social class to which he or she belongs. He believed that in Communist regimes all people are treated as impersonal figures, subordinated to the manoeuvring of their leaders. His trust in the Communist Party, which promised the building of a socialist China, was destroyed precisely because of its denial of humanness, which, in his opinion, is at the heart of Confucianism and the Chinese tradition in general. Therefore, for Xu as well as for other members of the second generation of Modern Confucians, the only possible way for modernization of China was the implementation of democracy based on Confucian tradition.

Xu Fuguan's position regarding the Communist regime in China and its alleged inhumanness and destruction of interpersonal relations seems to be very problematic, and in the first place too generalized. First of all, the horrible social situation in mainland China improved after the Communist Party defeated the government of the GMD. Not only because they managed to consolidate the rural areas and provide concrete solutions and actions regarding the survival of the people, but also in terms of strategic solutions concerning the future economic and social development of China. In this situation, the main problem was precisely the survival of the devastated and hungry people and not any concern as to how China could (or could not) become a democratic and modernized society. In this respect, Xu's accusation of the inhumanness of the Communist Party seems exaggerated and even inappropriate. After 1949, the connections between Taiwan and mainland China were cut off, and thus Xu and other Modern Confucians were not aware what was going on in the Great Leap Forward and in the Cultural (or Great Proletarian) Revolution. Only at that point Xu's supposition of the danger of Communist ideology and its strategies concerning the consolidation of

political power became relevant, and thus also plausible. In this sense, his fear of the destruction of interpersonal relations, devaluation of humans as well as the inhumanness of the Communist ideology set out by Mao Zedong and the Communist cadre seems almost visionary.

However, if Xu Fuguan's approach to political, social and economic analysis were really founded on Marxist grounds, then such a critique of the Communist regime in China in the mid-20th century would not be possible. In this regard, it becomes obvious that Xu Fuguan's critique of the Communist Party's struggle for resolving China's situation at that time was politically deficient, and often unjust.

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Harmony as an Ethical and Political Idea

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Abstract

Although the idea of harmony is one of the basic Confucian ideas, two of its key classic authors, Mengzi and Xunzi, emphasised either the ethical-personal or socio-political aspects, respectively, and this contrast was only maintained and deepened in later Chinese history. The socio-political considerations of harmony often considers an ideal state of community to be static, with social and ethical states being preserved, rather than dynamic. On the other hand, personal and spiritual harmony was valued by artists and autonomous thinkers, which often found themselves in conflict with the state. However, an open conflict between these two lines of thought very seldom if at all appeared in traditional China, and thus the differences often remained implicit. A self-cultivated individual without external social support was condemned to social isolation and personal defeat. Even among contemporary Chinese Marxist politicians and theorists, the idea of a “harmonious society” follows Xunzi’s rather legalist emphasis, even if (in Marx view) the term “social harmony” stands for some surface phenomena of seemingly harmonious societal interrelationship, covering up the brutal reality of social and economic contradictions. I argue that not only in China, but also elsewhere, a better balance is needed between the personal and the social ideas of harmony. However, manifesting harmony can become something worthwhile only if it becomes a part of a broader project, namely that of active solidarity based on the reciprocal and universal cultivation of personal dignity and virtuous humaneness.

Key words: harmony, Confucianism, harmonious society, Marxism, solidarity

Harmonija kot etična in politična ideja

Izvleček

Čeprav je ideja harmonije ena osrednjih konfucijanskih idej, sta dva od njenih osrednjih klasičnih avtorjev, Mengzi in Xunzi, poudarjala bodisi etično-osebne ali družbenopolitične vidike in to nasprotje se je ohranjalo in poglobljalo v nadaljnji zgodovini Kitajske. Družbenopolitično pojmovanje harmonije se pogosto opira na misel o idealnem stanju družbe, kjer se družbeno in etično stanje ohranja kot nekaj statičnega, ne pa dinamičnega. Po drugi strani so umetniki in samostojni misleci cenili osebno in duhovno harmonijo in so se zato pogosto znašli v konfliktu z državo. Vendar je v tradicionalni Kitajski le

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redko, če sploh, prihajalo do odkritega konflikta med tema pojmovanjema harmonije, zaradi česar so razlike pogosto ostajale implicitne. Samokultiviran posameznik brez zunanje socialne podpore je bil obsojen na družbeno izolacijo in osebni poraz. Celo med sodobnimi kitajskimi marksističnimi politiki in teoretiki zamisel o »harmonični družbi« sledi Xunzijevim precej legalističnim poudarkom, čeprav (po Marxovem pojmovanju) pojem »družbene harmonije« zajema površinske pojave domnevno harmoničnih družbenih odnosov, ki prikrivajo surovo naravo družbenih in ekonomskih protislovij. Zagovarjam misel, da ne le v Kitajski, temveč tudi drugje po svetu, potrebujemo boljše ravnotežje med osebnimi in družbenimi predstavami o harmoniji. Vendar je dejanska harmonija lahko nekaj vredna le, če postane del širšega projekta, namreč projekta aktivne solidarnosti, ki sloni na medsebojni in splošni kultivaciji osebnega dostojanstva in vrline človečnosti.

Ključne besede: harmonija, konfucijanstvo, harmonična družba, marksizem, solidarnost

Introduction

The idea of “harmony” (*he* 和) is one of the central ethical, social, and political ideas of Chinese culture (Zhihe 2012). It is the central idea of Confucianism, but it was also present in Daoism, Legalism and Chinese Buddhism. It encompasses the fundamental principles of nature, society and humanity. It is also a prerequisite for cultivating one’s morality, protecting one’s family, governing one’s nation and stabilising the world.

In The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 中庸), one of the Confucian classics, ascribed to Zisi, the grandson of Confucius, one reads the deep connection of harmony with the Dao of the world:

喜、怒、哀、樂之未發、謂之中。發而皆中節、謂之和。中也者、天下之大本也。和也者、天下之達道也。致中和、天地位焉、萬物育焉

Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centred; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. Centred: this is the great root of the world. Harmonious: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centred harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby. (Eno 2016a, 1)

Harmony presents the dynamic synthesis of unity and difference. The concept of harmony corresponds well with the fundamental Chinese mode of looking for social and political harmony, i.e., to correlative thinking which follows the ever fluid unity of contrarities (*tongbian* 通變). *Yijing* (易經), *The Book of Changes*, a classic text in Chinese culture, emphasises “Grand Harmony” (*datong* 大同),

which claims that the world is full of different things, yet all these harmonise even as they constantly change. As such harmony can be said to stand at the very core of Chinese traditional culture, and the *yin-yang* (陰陽) form is one of its main symbols.

According to Confucius, striving for harmony was mostly an *ethical* principle. Striving after harmony is what characterises the behaviour of a “virtuous man” (*junzi* 君子). Confucius in *The Analects* (論語) connected the striving for harmony with the fidelity to rites and rituals of propriety that were respected in the Zhou dynasty (*li* 禮)

有子曰：「禮之用，和為貴。先王之道斯為美，小大由之。有所不行，知和而不以禮節之，亦不可行也。」

Master You said: In the practice of *li*, harmony is the key. In the *dao* of the kings of old, this was the beauty. In all affairs, great and small, follow this. Yet there is one respect in which one does not. To act in harmony simply because one understands what is harmonious, but not to regulate one's conduct according to *li*: indeed, one cannot act in that way. (Eno 2015, 1, 12)

One of the main functions of rites and rituals of propriety (*li*) is precisely to harmonise people of various kinds. Confucius and his disciples take rituals as a central aspect of government and believe that, through the good use of rituals, good government can create a harmonious society.

Confucius advocates the harmonious coexistence of different individuals, but without seeking likeness with others:

子曰：「君子和而不同，小人同而不和。」

The Master said: The *junzi* acts in harmony with others but does not seek to be like them; the small man seeks to be like others and does not act in harmony. (*Lunyu* 2018, Zi Lu, 23)

One of the most important instruments of Confucian sages with regard to achieving personal and social harmony was ritual music. It helped to expand the field of harmony from individuals and their interrelations to cosmic dimensions. Music thus helped in legitimising the “harmonising” actions of rulers and other guiding social authorities as something intrinsically cosmic. As Erica F. Brindley stated in her book on music and politics of harmony in early China:

Music, as I have argued so far, emerged as a distinct aspect of ritual practice with a life and significance of its own. Fused with concepts of

harmony and tightly bound to the operations of the cosmos, music stood out from other traditional, cultural, and man-made practices. It took on meaning as that which was “natural” or “intrinsic” to the subtlest aspects of the cosmos. It thereby became something that rulers or anyone who sought authority and a privileged status or power vis-à-vis the cosmos held close to their hearts. (Brindley 2012, 63)

In their article “The Confucian Value of Harmony and its Influence on Chinese Social Interaction,” Xiaohong Wei and Qingyuan Li point out four main characteristics of harmony for (most) Confucians (儒家, followers of *Ru* or *Rujia*)¹:

Harmony is an ethical notion, which describes how human beings ought to act. It is the Way, the Confucian way of life.

Harmony is, by its very nature, relational. It presupposes the coexistence of multiple parties. Harmony is achieved by coordinating different parties to behave cooperatively, with benevolence, authoritative conduct (*ren* 仁), righteousness, morality (*yi* 義/义), and ritual propriety (*li* 礼) being the main criteria of cooperation.

Confucian harmony is not mere agreement without difference. When harmony is achieved, the coexisting parties still differ from each other; while harmony does not preclude sameness, sameness itself is not harmony. ... Since harmony is not a state but, more importantly, a process, disharmony is necessarily present during the process of harmonisation.

In the Confucian view, parties conjoined in a harmonious relationship mutually enable and limit one another. Put differently, a harmonious relationship implies that parties mutually complement and support each other. (Wei and Li 2013, 62)

From the Confucian perspective, striving for harmony necessarily encompasses *self-cultivation*, i.e. moral transformation of the actor so that he may realise the Way (*dao* 道). By practicing the rituals and respecting mutual responsibilities required to sustain so-called “five relationships” (father-son, husband-wife, older brother-younger brother, ruler-subject and friend-friend), Confucians tried to bring harmony to family, communal, and political life. Those who managed to

1 Although *Ru* or *Rujia*, the tradition (or the family) of scholars is the more correct name for the intellectual and cultural tradition which has been following the seminal thought of Confucius (the Master Kong – Kong Fuzi), I will use the established Latinised terms “Confucian” and “Confucianism.”

fully master this practice served as role models for those around them. In Confucianism, to follow the Way means to follow one's human nature (*xing* 性) and demonstrate benevolence (reciprocity) (*ren*) to other people. The *Analects* express this sentiment as follows:

子曰：「參乎！吾道一以貫之。」曾子曰：「唯。」子出。門人問曰：「何謂也？」曾子曰：「夫子之道，忠恕而已矣。」

“Shen, a single thread runs through my dao.” Master Zeng said, “Yes.” The Master went out, and the other disciples asked, “What did he mean?” Master Zeng said, “The Master’s dao is nothing other than loyalty and benevolence.” (Eno 2015, 4, 15)

In ancient Confucian culture there are two main stages in the pursuit of self-cultivation: the “inner sage” (*neisheng* 內聖) and “outer kingliness” (*waiwang* 外王). The “inner sage” refers to the process of inner moral development, while the “outer kingliness” refers to the process of outward social development: here, one’s social development is regarded as the elaboration of one’s moral development. In another Confucian classic, *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), the two stages are described as follows:

物格而後知至，知至而後意誠，意誠而後心正，心正而後身修，身修而後家齊，家齊而後國，國治而後天下平。自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以修身為本。其本亂而末治者否矣，其所厚者，而其所薄者厚，未之有也！此謂知本，此謂知之至也。

Only after affairs have been aligned out may one’s understanding be fully extended. Only after one’s understanding is fully extended may one’s intentions be perfectly genuine. Only after one’s intentions are perfectly genuine may one’s mind be balanced. Only after one’s mind is balanced may one’s person be refined. Only after one’s person is refined may one’s household be aligned. Only after one’s household is aligned may one’s state be ordered. Only after one’s state is ordered may the world be set at peace. (ibid. 2016b, 1)

In the later developments of Confucianism, the idea of harmony took on different, sometimes contradictory interpretations. Xunzi understood harmony as the regulation of society and human behaviour that is in accord with established principles of behaviour (*li*) and regularity (*yi* 義) which follows the way of Heaven (*t’ien* 天). This regulation was strictly hierarchical and supported the central role of the “heavenly” Emperor in the Chinese state. As one of the main methods for the

establishment and preservation of harmony, Xunzi suggested the establishment of different forms of punishment. (Rošker 2013, 11) Xunzi was not alone with his idea of a hierarchically based harmony, as Mohists and Legalists argued for similar ideas.

Unlike Xunzi, Mengzi laid the greatest emphasis on cultivating the internal harmony between mean/balance (*zhong* 忠) and the inherently benevolent human nature (*renxing* 人性). Such harmony in one individual, when realised, spontaneously radiates outwards and helps in realisation of harmony in others. Mengzi discussed striving after harmony as the looking for spontaneous interpersonal coherence among people, and as the ability for conforming to the tradition the old Sages (*ibid.*, 9–10).

It is rather clear that the concept of the hierarchically ordered social harmony was much more “useful” for the Chinese rulers than Mengzi’s more ethically and personally coloured concept. This holds true particularly for the state-legitimised Confucianism, where the idea of harmony as an ideological cover for preserving peace and absolute imperial power prevailed in a socially strictly stratified Chinese society, while the idea of harmony as an ethical-personal guide found its embodiment in the circles of “literati” and autonomous thinkers. However, as open conflict between these two lines of thought and practices very seldom if at all appeared in China, the differences often remained covered with symbolic and metaphoric language. The picture of a series of heroic battles pitching ethically and spiritually harmonised individuals against an oppressive pseudo-harmonised social system in traditional China is thus completely inappropriate. In traditional China a self-cultivated individual without strong social support was soon pressed into social isolation and condemned to personal defeat.²

The ideal and the practice of the strictly stratified harmonisation of society almost completely eliminated open social criticism.

In a society ruled by Emperors under a “mandate of heaven” and strictly organised according to rules of authority and obedience through a long list of dynasties, political *critique* incurred heavy punishment. ... Criticism in traditional China shows itself mainly in the arts, and the interpretation of classics. Political criticism is best to be avoided, unless official corruption severely threatens ordinary life. (Chu 2012, 53)

2 However, there were some cases of virtuous individuals who openly and clearly criticised the unjust and unwise measures of some Emperors and the state administration, e.g. some brave literati such as Fang Xiaoru in the 14th century, and Hai Rui and Zuo Guangdou in the 16th century, among others (Huang 1995, 138).

I believe much the same holds true for the actual understanding and propagation of a “harmonious society” in China under Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping (although in this case the interpretation of the Chinese classics is replaced by the interpretation of Marxist and Maoist classics). Jana Rošker, in her analysis of the use of the concept of harmony in contemporary People’s Republic of China, states that this understanding and propagation “derives directly from Xunzi’s interpretation of this notion. They can thus be regarded as Confucian, but in terms of their fundamental aims they derive from elaborations of the original Confucian teachings which were functional to the integration of despotic elements into the new state doctrine formulated in the Han period.” (Rošker 2013, 11–2)

Many modern Chinese political and cultural theoreticians (both from the People’s Republic and abroad) are highly sceptical of this new Xunzian reaffirmation of the concept of harmony in “late-communist” China. More specifically, I am inclined to think that it is impossible to find any sound Marxist interpretation of such a concept as pertaining to social harmony.

Marx rarely spoke of social harmony, and even then his remarks were mostly sceptical and/or negative. In his view, the term stands for a surface phenomenon, seemingly harmonious societal interrelationships covering up the brutal reality of social and economic contradictions. For example, in *Economic Manuscripts (Grundrisse)* Marx harshly criticises Fredric C. Bastiat in France and Henry C. Carey in the USA because of their advocacy of the thesis of the “harmony of interests” in capitalist society. Carey argued for a harmonious relationship between wages and labour productivity, so that the former rise in proportion with the latter, while Bastiat defended the idea of bourgeois society based on harmonious laws. In Marx’s words:

Both therefore find it necessary to criticise the theoretical expression which bourgeois society has historically achieved in modern political economy as a misunderstanding and to demonstrate the harmony of the relations of production at the point where the classical economists naively analysed their antagonism. The entirely different, even contradictory national context, from which their writings derive, nevertheless impels them in the same direction. (Marx 2010c, 6)

Marx was especially critical of the idea of harmonious class relations. Graeme Duncan in his book on Marx and Mill writes:

In Marx’s view classes as such had to be destroyed, He felt that it was futile to seek long-term harmonious relations between entities which

were by nature antagonistic, and bitterly attacked talk of the political, economic and social equalisation of classes. The “equalisation of classes,” literary interpreted, is nothing but another way of saying the “harmony of capital and labour” preached by the bourgeois Socialists... For Marx, the harmonisation of classes was, like the goal of private property for all, an impossible aspiration, and one quite inadequate to realise human emancipation. (Duncan 1973, 188–89)

Marx would probably be very critical of, if not downright horrified at, the idea of building a harmonious socialist society *before* the abolition of private property, the money economy and the circulation of capital. He would also sharply oppose the Confucian and Neo-Confucian notions of state-regulated harmony, decrying them as state-ideological means intended to create the impression of “social balance” and cover up various forms of social oppression present in the old and modern Chinese states.

Mao Zedong, the leader of socialist revolution in China, also very rarely spoke on social harmony as an aim of the movement. Sometimes he spoke about “entering into the Great Harmony” which will appear after abolishing the class society in China, but noted that before this a strict “people’s democratic dictatorship” under the leadership of the Communist Party would be necessary (Mao Tse-Tung 1961, 412, 413, 418).

However, in spite of Marx’s criticism of the idea of a harmonious economy or harmonious society, positive allusions to the concept of such a society can be found, particularly in Marx’s early descriptions of the higher forms of communism, e. g. in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (from 1844):

Communism as the positive transcendence of private property human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being—a return accomplished consciously and embracing the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution. (Marx 2010a, 296–97)

This is a powerful visionary and utopian picture of humanity, nature, and society. It could thus be argued that, for Marx, the notion of harmonious relationships between human beings and nature, and with each other, was conceived as a utopian idea, but it also contains the necessary critical standpoint to all attempts at realising social harmony in a class society.

Marx believed that the development of modern productive forces, especially scientific production, would sooner or later enable us to enter into a class-less society, “and that, like slave labour, like serf labour, hired labour is but a transitory and inferior form, destined to disappear before associated labour plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind, and a joyous heart” (Marx 2010b, 11). Marx also hoped that the first worker co-operatives, which appeared in England and the USA in the middle of 19th century, represented the rudimentary elements of a new society.

Duncan contrasted Marx’s concept of a harmonious class-less society with Mill’s and other liberals’ concepts of a modern society which do not try to eliminate private property or promote social hierarchy as a reasonable social goal. Duncan warned of the danger “that the removal of all the limiting institutions of liberal capitalist society, which both constrain and define men, would lead, not to the emergence of the free and co-operative individual, but to an even more restrictive and destructive social order.” (Duncan 1973, 184) We are all familiar with the bad results brought forth by the “socialist experiments” which took place in the former Soviet Union and other “Eastern” countries, as well as with the serious problems with even elementary human rights and freedoms in modern, socialist China.

In spite of Marx’s criticism of the grand-scale ideal of social harmony, the proposal for achieving some “local” and “partial” realisation of harmony in an actual social setting are much more feasible. Confucian, and especially Mencian, concepts of harmony seem especially relevant, in that they favour realisations of harmony in the everyday lives of men. Such concepts and ideals of harmony try to balance the ethical and spiritual development of individuals and the community without the need for any compulsory social hierarchy and political oppression. I believe that such concepts of harmony may be used in the development of some alternative concepts which do not present an ideological covering of the class division and brutal reality of various social and economic contradictions. They may thus be highly relevant for the democratic and genuinely emancipatory development of China and modern world in general.

Marx’s criticism of the concept of social harmony as pertaining to actual capitalist societies is still more than relevant if one considers the disturbing social conditions in modern industrial societies burdened with ever greater social and economic inequalities, growing destruction of the social state and natural world, and with the growing threat of global economic and ecologic catastrophes.

Marx's criticism reminds us also of the need for much stronger and active forms of human interconnectedness than those encompassed in the ideal of social harmony. Marx gives us many hints as to how this interconnectedness should be manifested, e.g. by his demand for *collective solidarity* of workers in their resistance to capitalist living conditions.

For Marx, workers need different forms of collective solidarity so as to become the social subject which can become a truly revolutionary force. It is through political practices of engaging in joint struggle that workers, who share objective economic interests (a "class in itself"), become aware of their shared class interests and develop relationships of class solidarity (a "class for itself").

In his book *Global Solidarity*, Laurence Wilde writes that the quest for solidarity originated in the nineteenth-century struggles of working-class social movements for democratic rights and economic security (Wilde 2013, 258). From the very outset it was inspired by an internationalist vision, but that was soon eclipsed by the rise of popular nationalism. Wilde stresses that

now, in the era of globalisation, a global political agenda has emerged at a time when many of the old social movements have suffered dispiriting setbacks. At the same time, new movements have developed to revive the hope that solidarity, a feeling of sympathy shared by subjects within and between groups, impelling supportive action and pursuing social inclusion, may yet be realised. (ibid.)

The modern world does not know of classical class antagonisms, e.g. the conflict between the capitalist and worker class, but it knows of a meshwork of deep social injustices and social conflicts which are locally and globally interconnected and produce the large-scale experience of growing inhumanity. Wilde pleads for a global network of active solidarity movements which perhaps come to a collective consciousness of their common interests. In these conditions new forms of solidarity may appear which grow out of our basic mutual esteem for each other and not out of some specific interests.

This idea expresses the strong need for new, trans-political forms of communality, basic democracy, and global social movements which may bring relevant alternatives to the dominant late-capitalist modes of production and social relationships. Not by striving for global revolutions, but by revitalisation of the common and simultaneous defence of the freedom and human rights of all people and virtuous humaneness. It is here that new occasions open up for a historically relevant Sino-Western "synchronisation," namely in the need for a novel and broader understanding of the interrelation between the defence of dignity of individuals and

the cultivation of personal dignity, benevolence and humaneness of “worthy” individuals. It is quite clear that the West was mainly preoccupied with the defence of the personal and civil dignity of individuals, which includes striving for freedom and defending the human rights of ever more people, while China was focusing primarily on the cultivation of personal dignity and ethically worthy individuals. Western philosophers and social theoreticians dealt mainly with the defence of human dignity of men in general, especially in terms of the political freedoms and the fundamental rights of individuals, but they invested significantly less effort in recognising and realising the ethical virtues which are necessary for a self-conscious and responsible human life. On the other side, Chinese philosophers and social theoreticians engaged mainly in a balance between the search for social harmony and moral self-cultivation, but they invested much less effort in the defence of broader social aspects of human dignity, especially in political freedoms and fundamental human rights.

It is true that Chinese cultural tradition included seeking some broader forms of communality outside one’s family- and clan-solidarity, e.g. cultivation of true friendship (Vervoorn 2004), but this cultivation was mostly limited to circles of “true gentlemen” and rarely, except, say, in Mohist ideas of inclusive concern and care for all, became the cultivation of commonality with the people, oppressed or painfully subordinate men and women. Sure, there were some important exceptions to this general trend, e.g. Confucius had some students from poor families, some notable Confucians showed sincere concern for the poor and abused common people, and Zhuangzi in some of his stories explicitly empowered women, elderly and disabled persons and so on, but these cases of the cultivation of trans-personal and truly social solidarity as a rule lacked justified forms of collective action on a properly political level, and thus did not change the general trend of mostly personal ethical cultivation. Here lie the inherent social and historical limits of the classical Chinese concepts and ideals of social harmony. These concepts and ideals do not suffice for the development of new, trans-political forms of communality.³

3 In spite of the limits for the development of some broader, transpersonal forms of communality in traditional China, Confucians knew the broader, utopian concept of communality, namely the ideal picture of *Great Unity* (*datong*) where the world is shared by all men alike, men regard all parents as their own parents, and all sons as their own sons, they use their power for the best of all men, where no thieves and rebels exist, etc. This ideal was first presented at the beginning of classic book *Liji* (*Book of Rites*). In this text Confucius presented this ideal as the portrait of the long lost Golden Age, and implicitly as a hope for at least partial realisation in the future. The concept of *datong* came again to the fore of Chinese political and social thought in the 19th and 20th centuries as Chinese thinkers confronted the challenges of the West and modernisation, most notably in the reformist and utopian writings of Kang Yuwei (1858–1927) (Chen 2011).

Similarly, in the West one can find some cases of clear efforts in the cultivation of ethical virtues and the development of self-conscious and responsible individuals, e.g. some Christian saints, early scientists and spiritually awakened persons, but there was no elaborated common culture and practice comparable with the ever growing cultivation of civic virtues and the struggles to establish basic human rights for all.

What we need now, in the conditions of late modernity, is some synthesis of “Western” and “Eastern” (e. g. Chinese) ways of individual and social cultivation which contains a reciprocal and universal cultivation that may give reasons for active broader solidarity with oppressed, excluded, and persecuted people. Without this type of cultivation, any realisation of post-traditional solidarity and community would quickly dissipate into a meshwork of superficial emotions of triviality and political romanticism. The same holds true for any contemporary attempts at manifesting harmony, be it in an individual, among individuals, or in a society. Manifesting harmony can become something worthwhile only if it becomes a part of a broader project, namely that of active solidarity based on the reciprocal and universal cultivation of personal dignity and virtuous humaneness.

Certainly, we have to take care not to fall in the trap of adopting some easy short-cuts in the construction of such synthesis, e.g. by adding some Eastern practices of “spiritual” embodiment (like those of Indian or Chinese yoga, meditation, Tai Chi, and so on) to social and political activism, or by adding some Western practices of party-activism, public discussions and civil society movements to the Eastern practices of personal and inter-personal harmonisation. Such short-cuts would inevitable produce deeply illusory feelings of self-righteousness, frustrations because of social and political inefficiency, and instrumentalisation of individual efforts for some other, non-emancipatory interests, e.g. those of Capital, populist politicians, and fundamentalist movements.

What we really need is to achieve a cultural and social context which would foster a stronger connection between the “inner” personal-ethical attitude of individuals and their “outer” emancipatory socio-political activity. I believe that the common work of many people in the world for global solidarity, as expressed by Laurence Wilde, may present such a context.

In his book *Disrespect* Axel Honneth, a student of Jürgen Habermas, put forward a similar idea when he wrote of the need for a deeper mutual esteem among men and their active bearing of responsibility for others:

in this sense, mutual esteem consists in our viewing each other in the light of values that cause the capacities and characteristics of other persons to

significant for our common activity. Relationships of this kind are to be considered instances of solidarity because they elicit not mere passive tolerance with respect to other persons, but emotional participation in their individual particularity. It is only to the degree to which I actively bear responsibility for another person's ability to develop qualities that are not my own that our shared goals can be realised. (Honneth 2007, 261)

A central claim of Honneth's theory is that there is a strong moral force inherent in the expectation of recognition involved in struggling for rights and forging solidarity. Honneth supposes there are moral feelings of indignation against various forms of disrespect that act as an important motivating force for the members of any organised struggle. Honneth further believes that new forms of communities, the "post-traditional communities" which are based on the given kind of solidarity, may appear which transcend the traditional political communities and institutions of liberal democracy.

I believe that this type of solidarity based on the cultivation of mutual esteem among individuals, and emotional participation in their individual particularities, necessarily guides us in the transition from the level of interpersonal solidarity to the global network of post-traditional communities and solidarity. This process transcends the realm of politics as striving to dominance over people and nature. It presents the basic socio-historical context and cultural support for new, deeper forms of personal, inter-personal and trans-personal harmony.

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Guo Moruo on Marx and Confucius

Bart DESSEIN*

Abstract

Through the analysis of two of Guo Moruo's literary works—his “Marx Enters a Confucian Temple” published in 1926, and “Confucius Eats” published in 1935—Guo Moruo's assessment of Confucius and Marx is discussed. It is shown how Guo Moruo, although being a self-declared Marxist, kept on adhering to some Confucian principles, and how this attitude of his helps to explain why Guo Moruo, after having been criticized in the “pi Kong pi Lin” campaign, is now, within the revival of Confucianism in the People's Republic of China, being reevaluated.

Keywords: Guo Moruo, Confucianism, Marxism, “society creation” (*Changzao she*), Confucian revival

Guo Moruo o Marxu in Konfuciju

Izveček

Članek na osnovi analize dveh Guo Moruojevih literarnih del, »Marx vstopi v konfucijanski tempelj« (1926) in »Konfucij se prehranjuje« (1935), prikaže Guo Moruojevo ovrednotenje Konfucija in Marxa. Analiza prikaže, da Guo Moruo sledi nekaterim konfucijanskim načelom, četudi je samooklican marksist. To v nadaljevanju pojasnjuje ponovno vrednotenje Guo Moruoja v okviru oživitve konfucianizma v Ljudski republiki Kitajski, čeprav so ga v kampanji »Kritizirati Konfucija in kritizirati Lin Biaota« (Pi Kong pi Lin) močno kritizirali.

Ključne besede: Guo Moruo, konfucianizem, marksizem, »Ustvarjalno društvo« (*Chuangzao she*), oživitev konfucianizma

Introduction

According to an internet message placed on the website “Guanchazhe” 观察者 on 28 December 2014, Guo Moruo's 郭沫若 (birth name Guo Kaizhen 郭開貞; 1892–1978) 1925 story “Makesi jin wenmiao” (马克思进文庙 Marx Enters a Confucian Temple) had, in 2015, become a hotly debated issue, as in that year it was one of

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the topics for the examination in political analysis, assigned to potential MA research students (*Quanguo shuoshi yanjiusheng zhaosheng kaoshi* 全国硕士研究生招生考试).¹ (see “Makesi jin wenmiao” 2014) The message published on “Guanchazhe” stated that, apart from this text by Guo Moruo, the content of speeches by State President Xi Jinping 习近平 was also a topic in this examination: more precisely, the test asked how Xi Jinping’s saying that, “The lion China has already awakened, but it is a peaceful, lovable, and cultured lion” (*Zhongguo zhe tou shizi yijing xing le, dan zhe shi yi zhi hepingde, keaide, wenmingde shizi* 中国这头狮子已经醒了，但这是一只和平的、可爱的、文明的狮子) should be understood.

Another internet message, published one day earlier on the website “Pengpai Xinwen” 澎湃新闻 and reporting on the same examination for potential MA research students, stated that the materials for the students’ examination were mainly selected from the *Renmin ribao* 人民日报.² The message assessed this as a sign that actual politics had become an important aspect of the students’ examination on politics. (Zheng 2014) The message mentioned that the examination focused on five topics: (1) the meeting in November 2014 of the World Internet Conference (*Shijie hulianwang dahui* 世界互联网大会);³ (2) the implementation of the policy for the development of the non-state economy and small scale enterprises, summarised as “let big cats and small cats all have their own developmental path” (*Rang da xiao mao dou you zoulu* 让大猫小猫都有走路); (3) Guo Moruo’s text “Marx enters a Confucian Temple” that fuses Marxist thought (*sixiang* 思想) with China’s traditional Confucian thought (*sixiang*); (4) the rule of the country according to law, as theme of the fourth plenary meeting of the 18th Party Congress; and (5) the question first raised by Montgomery: “Could China become a hegemon once having become strong?”

The present paper discusses Guo Moruo’s assessment of Confucius and Marx, and interprets this assessment against the background of the apparent re-valuation of Confucianism in contemporary China. This evaluation of Guo Moruo’s “fusing” of Marxist “thought” and Confucian “thought” mentioned on the “Pengpai” website is done through the analysis of two of Guo Moruo’s texts: his 1925 “Makesi jin wenmiao” 马克思近文庙, and his 1935 “Kongfuzi chifan” (“Confucius Eats” 孔夫子吃饭).

1 This message was originally published in the *Renmin ribao*, and was reposted on *Wenkuwang* (2014).

2 *Renmin ribao* of 5 May, 20 May, 26 May, 24 October, 29 October, and 21 November 2014.

3 The World Internet Conference is also known as Wuzhen Summit 乌镇峰会 (*Wuzhen fenghui*), and is an annual event, organized by government agencies in China to discuss internet issues and policy. The first of these conferences was held in 2014.

The 1920s: From a “Literary Revolution” to a “Revolutionary Literature”

The May Fourth Movement and the Development of Revolutionary Literature

By 1920 the May Fourth Movement (*Wu Si yundong* 五四运动) of 1919 had developed in two directions: a politically activist branch, and a cultural and scientific branch. One of the consequences of this was that many radical intellectuals moved to Shanghai, the city where Western influence was most palpable. This also was the city with the most advanced media and editorial culture. Beijing, to quote Brunhild Staiger (1989, 365), again became “the new centre of conservatism and tradition, but also the one of scientific research and erudition.” These differences between Beijing and Shanghai were also reflected in China’s literary scene, that witnessed the creation of a series of literary associations. The two associations that dominated the 1920s were the Society for Literary Research (*Wenxue yanjiuhui* 文学研究会) and the Society Creation (*Chuangzao she* 创造社). The Society for Literary Research was established in Beijing in 1921 with the purpose of gathering innovative authors, translating foreign literature with a focus on the literature of Asian peoples and oppressed European peoples, and boosting the status of professional writers (*ibid.*). Most well-known and established authors were members of this society. The Society Creation was established in July 1921 in Shanghai, i.e., the same month in which the Chinese Communist Party (*Zhongguo gongchandang* 中国共产党; hereafter CCP) was established, also in Shanghai. Guo Moruo, who, starting in 1918, had studied at the Medical School of Kyūshū Imperial University, but whose greatest interest was in literature, was one of the co-founders of this society. Other illustrious figures such as Yu Dafu 郁达夫 (1896–1945) and Cheng Fangwu 成仿吾 (1897–1984) were co-founders of *Chuangzao she*. In 1922, the *Chuangzao she* decided to publish a journal: *Creation Quarterly* (*Chuangzao jikan* 创造季刊). Two other periodicals followed: *Creation Weekly* (*Chuangzao zhoubao* 创造周报), which was published from May 1923 to May 1924, and *Creation Daily* (*Chuangzao ri* 创造日), of which one hundred issues were published between 21 July and 31 October 1923. These daily issues were attached to the newspaper *China Daily* (*Zhonghua ribao* 中华日报). In 1924, a group of younger writers joined the “Society Creation”. They started the publication of a new fortnightly newspaper, *Deluge* (*Hongshui* 洪水). The presence of these younger writers further radicalized *Chuangzao she*, which resulted in some of the veteran members of the Society moving to Guangzhou. In 1926, these veteran members transformed the former quarterly journal *Chuangzao jikan* to a monthly journal *Creation Monthly* (*Chuangzao yuekan* 创造月刊), which lasted until January 1929 (Staiger 1989, 366; Lee 2002a, 165).

Whereas the writings of the first four years of the existence of the *Chuangzao she*, i.e., the period from the foundation of the Society in 1921 to early 1925, had been

characterized by an influence of Western romanticism and individualism, an influence that is, for example, clearly visible in Guo Moruo's first poetry anthology, titled *Goddesses* (*Nüshen* 女神), the events of 30 May 1925 in which the international police in Shanghai opened fire on striking workers (see Schmidt-Glitzner 1999, 526; Lee 2002b, 197), and the rupture between the Nationalists and Communists in April 1927, introduced a major shift in the orientation of the society's writings. From the middle of 1925 onwards, and until the end of the society's existence in 1929, the activities and writings of the members shifted from romanticism and individualism to more socially and politically engaged works (Staiger 1989, 365–66, 372; Schwartz 2002, 137). This change was typified as a transition from a “literary revolution” as characteristic of the early May Fourth Movement, to a “revolutionary literature” by Cheng Fangwu in his article with the same title published in the February 1928 issue of *Chuangzao yuekan* (see Staiger 1989, 372; Lee 2002b, 197). This shift towards a revolutionary literature that characterized the “junior partners” of *Chuangzao she* who had gained firm control in Shanghai, resulted in their eviction of Yu Dafu from membership, and their persuasion of Cheng Fangwu and Guo Moruo to use the society's publications as an “ideological stronghold” of Marxism. With the orientation of *Chuangzao she* having shifted towards “revolutionary literature,” the Society joined forces with others such as the *Sun Society* (*Taiyang she* 太阳社) who were influenced by the Soviet Union, to, in 1930, form the League of Leftist Writers (Staiger 1989, 372). This was opposed to the Crescent Moon Society (*Xinyue she* 新月社) that had been established by the poet Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 (1897–1931) in 1923, and of which the majority of members had studied in Britain and the United States and advocated liberalism and literary autonomy, devoid of any class consideration and opposed to proletarian and revolutionary literature (ibid., 373).⁴

Guo Moruo: From an “Individualist” to a “Marxist” Writer

Judging from a letter Guo Moruo wrote to Cheng Fangwu on 9 August 1924, it was very likely while in Japan, after having read a book written by the Japanese economist Kawakami Hajime 河上肇 (1879–1946), one of the pioneers of Marxist political economy in Japan, that he became a Marxist. (Goldman 1967, xvi; Staiger 1989, 368; Lee 2002b, 197) In this “Guhong – Zhi Cheng Fangwude yi feng xin” (“Letter to Cheng Fangwu” 孤鸿 – 致成仿吾的一封信), Guo Moruo

4 Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936) who, earlier, had sponsored the publication of a translated text called “Su-e wenyi lunzhan” (“Literary Debates in Soviet Russia” 苏俄文艺论战), by the “Unnamed Society” (*Weiming she* 未明社) in Beijing, became a leading figure of the “League of Leftist Writers” (see Lee 2002b, 197).

wrote that he had completely changed his former thinking that was deeply rooted in individualism, and that he had now,

[b]ecome an ardent supporter of Marxism. For the time in which we are living, Marxism is the only precious raft.

[...] 成了个彻底的马克思主义的信徒了！马克思主义在我们所处的这个时代是唯一的宝筏。) ⁵ (*Guo Moruo quan ji* 1989, 16: 8; quoted in Wang 1992, 224)

Guo Moruo's self-proclaimed conversion to Marxism and his revolutionary zeal were already announced, as it were, in the following statement he made on 18 May 1923 in his "The New Movement of Our Literature" (*Womende wenxue xin yundong* 我们的文学新运动), on the occasion of the bloodshed that happened when the warlord Wu Peifu 吴佩孚 (1874–1939) sent his troops to besiege the Worker's Union of Jiang'an 江岸 on the Beijing-Hankou railway and slaughtered the unarmed workers and the picketers on 7 February 1923,⁶

China's political life is at the verge of breaking down. The imperiousness of the military that resembles wild animals, the disruptive activities of shameless politicians, and the oppression by greedy foreign capitalists, have made the blood and tears of our Chinese people swell to a red stream that resembles the Huanghe and the Yangzi [...]. [Let us] struggle, exchange a repulsive society for a tassel of warriors of valiant mankind.

中国的政治局面已到了破产的地步。野兽般的武人专横，破廉耻的政客蠢动，贪婪的外来资本家压迫，把我们中华民族的血泪排抑成了黄河、扬子江一样的赤流。[...] 奋斗，做个赳赳的人生之战士与丑恶的社会交缠。⁷ (*Guo Moruo quan ji* 1989, 16: 6; quoted in Wang 1992, 213)

5 Also see Schmidt-Glintzer 1999, 515. In this letter, Guo Moruo states that Kawakami Hajime's book *Social construction and social revolution* (*Shehui zuzhi yu shehui geming* 社会组织与社会革命) is one of only three books he took along on his voyage to Japan (see *Guo Moruo quan ji* 1989, 16: 6).

6 By the end of 1922, 16 individual workers' unions had been established along the Beijing-Hankou railway and the members felt it was necessary to have a federation of unions. Therefore, the preparation commission of the "Federation of Workers Union of Beijing-Hankou Railway" decided to hold the establishment ceremony on February 1, 1923. The workers' intentions were interfered with by warlord Wu Peifu, who sent his military police to sabotage the hall where the ceremony was scheduled to take place. To protest against Wu's actions, the Federation decided on a major strike on February 4, 1923, and relocated its office to Jiang'an, in the city of Hankou. On February 7, Wu Peifu sent his troops to besiege the Worker's Union of Jiang'an and slaughter the unarmed workers and the pickets.

7 Also see Schmidt-Glintzer 1999, 514–15.

In the same text, he expressed his revolutionary zeal in the following way,

We want to howl like the storm, we want to erupt like a volcano, we want to radically exterminate and incinerate all existing filthiness, to radiate the whole soul, manifest the whole life.

我们要如暴风一样唤号，我们要如火山一样爆发，要把一切的腐败的存在扫落尽，烧葬尽，迸射出全部的灵魂，提呈出全部的生命。⁸ (*Guo Moruo quan ji* 1989, 16: 4; quoted in Wang 1992, 218)

Building on the same comparison, he urges the new literature to be,

[a] literature that resembles the Huanghe and the Yangzi and melts all things foreign into the self.

融化一切外来之物于自我之中 [...] 黄河扬子江一样的文学。⁹ (*Guo Moruo quan ji* 1989, 16: 5; quoted in Wang 1992, 218)

Guo Moruo's statements in the above quotations are, on the one hand, exemplary of the May Fourth Movement that wanted to formulate an answer to the dominant West (bring "the disruptive activities of shameless politicians, and the oppression by greedy foreign capitalists" to a halt), but on the other hand also testify to what Shu-mei Shih (2001, 97) called the "asymmetrical cosmopolitanism" that characterizes some of the May Fourth literature. With the term "asymmetrical cosmopolitanism," she points to the fact that,

[t]he application of the term "cosmopolitanism" is by definition asymmetrical, depending on the position of the subjects in question. When applied to Third World intellectuals, "cosmopolitanism" implies that these individuals have an expansive knowledge constituted primarily by their understanding of the world (read: the West), but when applied to metropolitan Western intellectuals there is a conspicuous absence of the demand to know the non-West. This "asymmetrical cosmopolitanism" is another manifestation of a Western-dominated world view.

8 Also see Schmidt-Glintzer 1999, 515.

9 Also see Schmidt-Glintzer 1999, 515. This new appeal to literature is in line with the statements Deng Zhongxia 邓中夏 (1894–1933) and Yun Daiying 恽代英 (1895–1931), two members of the Chinese Communist Party, had made in the journal *Zhongguo qingnian* (*Chinese Youth* 中国青年): "Literature should be used as a weapon to arouse people's revolutionary consciousness." (see Zhang in Li et al. 1951, 36–49; also see Lee 2002b, 197)

When, therefore, Guo Moruo calls for the creation of “[a] literature that resembles the Huanghe and the Yangzi and melts all things foreign into the self,” he testifies to the conviction that reviving Chinese culture exists in creating a “modern universalism” that would overcome the East-West dichotomy. This had to be done through searching for those elements in the Chinese tradition that have a homologue in the Western tradition. Through this psychological process, the Chinese tradition was presented as of equal value to the Western tradition. Phrased differently: overcoming the West was to be achieved through including the West.

In the above quoted letter to Cheng Fangwu of 9 August 1924, Guo Moruo also gives his opinion on the nature of the new literature:

My opinion about literature has completely changed. I am of the opinion that the problem is not the different -isms with respect to the technical aspect [of literature]. The only problem is the problem of the literature of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The literature of yesterday are the sacred works that while away the time of the unconscious aristocrats who have come to possess privileged powers in life. [...] The literature of today is our literature, that we now go on the road to revolution. It is our lament because we are suppressed, the cry of a suppressed life, the spell of warriors, the anticipated joy of revolution. The contemporary literature is a revolutionary literature. [...] And what is the literature of tomorrow like? Oh, Fangwu, that is the time and place of transcendental literature you once mentioned. [...] Fangwu, we are on a revolutionary path, our literature can only be revolutionary literature.

我现在对于文艺的见解也全盘变了。我觉得一切伎俩上的主义都不能成为问题，所可成为问题的只是昨日的文艺，今日的文艺，和明日的文艺。昨日的文艺是不自觉的得占生活的优先权的贵族们的消闲圣品[...]. 今日的文艺，是我们现在走在革命途上的文艺，是我们被压迫者的呼号，是生命穷促的喊叫，是斗士的咒文，是生命预期的欢喜。这今日的文艺便是革命的文艺[...]. 明日的文艺又是甚么呢？芳坞哟，这是你几时说过的超脱时代性和局部性的文艺[...]. 芳坞哟，我们是革命途上的人，我们的文艺只能是革命的文艺。¹⁰ (*Guo Moruo quan ji* 1989, 16: 19–20)

10 On the controversy between Hu Feng 胡风 (1902–1985) and Guo Moruo on popularization and “national form” of the literature (see Fokkema 1965, 24–25).

In 1926, in Guangzhou, where the Northern Expedition of the Guomindang 国民党 and the CCP against the Northern Warlords was to be launched, Guo Moruo wrote his “Geming yu wenxue” 革命与文学, a text that is now generally regarded as the “manifesto” of the era’s revolutionary literature. In this, he argued that genuine literature can only be revolutionary literature, because,

[e]verything that is new, is good; everything that is revolutionary fulfils the need of mankind and constitutes the keynote of social organization. [...] Literature and revolution never stand in opposition but always convert

凡是新的总就是好的，凡是革命的总就是合乎人类的要求、合乎社会构成的基调的[···]。文学和革命是一致的，并不是两位的。¹¹
(*Guo Moruo quan ji* 1989, 16: 36–37)

This statement makes clear that Guo Moruo, aligning with the ideas of the May Fourth Movement, saw literature as a vehicle of the revolution.

“Marx Enters a Confucian Temple” (*Makesi jin wenmiao*)

Background and Personages of “Marx Enters a Confucian Temple”

It is in the January 1 1926 issue of *Deluge*, the “radical” journal of *Chuangzao she* that had been established in 1924, that Guo Moruo published “Marx Enters a Confucian Temple” (“Makesi jin wenmiao”), a short text he had written a few weeks earlier, on 16 December 1925. (Guo 2017). This contains a fictitious conversation between Marx and Confucius at the Shanghai Confucius Temple, set on 15 October, the day after *dingji* 丁祭, i.e., the first day of the second and of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, on which sacrifices are brought to Confucius. Confucius, who is accompanied by his disciples Yan Hui 颜回, Zilu 子路, and Zigong 子贡, welcomes Marx in the temple with the famous words “Having a friend who comes from afar, does that not make happy” (*You peng zi yuan fang lai, bu yi le hu* 有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎). (*Lunyu* 1: 1,2)

11 *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue shi cankao ziliao* (*Research Materials on the History of Modern Chinese Literature* 中国现代文学史参考资料) (in Lee 2002b, 197–98).

Confucianism as Pre-scientific Marxism

After this welcome, a conversation develops between Marx and Confucius through the aid of an interpreter. Marx states that he has come to receive instructions, as he has heard that:

[o]ur -ism (*womende zhuyi* 我们的主义) has already reached your China (*nimen Zhongguo* 你们中国). I hope that it can be realized in your country. However, recently there were a few people who said that my -ism is completely different from your “thought” (*sixiang* 思想). My -ism therefore has no chance to be realized in China where your “thought” is widespread. That is why I have come to receive instructions from you directly: what is your “thought” eventually like? In which way is it different from my -ism? To which degree is it different? I would like to receive your guidance regarding these questions.

我们的主义已经传到你们中国，我希望在你们中国能够实现，但是近来有些人说，我的主义和你的思想不同，所以在你的思想普通着的中国，我的主义是没有实现的可能性。因此我便来直接领教你：究竟你的思想是怎么样？和我的主义怎样不同？而且不同到怎样的地步？这些问题，我要深望你能详细地指示。¹²

Here, we touch upon a first important element to assess Guo Moruo’s standpoint: he uses the term *sixiang* 思想 to denote Confucianism. According to Franz Schurman (1966), “*sixiang*,” “thought,” is different from “theory” (*lilun* 理论). “Theory,” according to Franz Schurman, is pure ideology, i.e., it is universal and always applicable. “Thought,” on the contrary, is practical ideology, i.e., the practical use of “theory” in concrete circumstances or in a specific time and place. Interpreted in this way, Guo Moruo’s denoting of Confucianism as “*sixiang*” means that, in practice, Confucianism can be replaced by Marxist ideology without effecting the higher “theory,” “*lilun*.”¹³ Judging from the continuation of the story, this *lilun* might be defined as the Chinese essence (*ti* 体), as Confucius’s answer to Marx’s question is the following:

[m]y “thought” has no system (*tongxi* 统系) because, as you [Marx] knows, when I was living, there was no science (*kexue* 科学) yet and I am a person who does not understand logics (*luoji* 逻辑).

12 All quotations from Guo 2017, “Makesi jin wenmiao.”

13 The adaptation of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete Chinese situation is, among other things, also evident from the focus on the mass line, the focus on antagonistic (as different from non-antagonistic) contradictions such as the class struggle, the idea of permanent revolution, or the concept of “learning revolution by executing revolution.”

我的思想是没有什么统系的，因为你是知道的，我在生的时候还没有科学，我是不懂逻辑的人。

The evaluation of Confucianism as “pre-scientific Marxism”—and hence of Marxism as logical, “scientific” continuation of Confucianism—is a clear illustration of the phenomenon of “asymmetrical cosmopolitanism” mentioned above: by claiming that both Confucianism and Marxism are “*sixiang*,” they are given the same (universal) value, and this should make it possible that a “modern” China is created based on the “universal” values China shares with the “advanced” West.

The Real System of Pre-Qin Thought

This is very much in line with what we read in Feng Youlan’s 冯友兰 (1895–1991) introduction to the first volume of his famous *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中国哲学史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy*), published in Shanghai between 1931 and 1934,

Logic is a requirement for dialectic discussion, and since most schools of Chinese philosophy have not striven greatly to establish arguments to support their doctrines, there have been few men, aside from those of the School of Names, who have been interested in examining the processes and methods of thinking; and this school, unfortunately, had but a fleeting existence. Hence logic, like epistemology, has failed to be developed in China. [...] Is it true that Chinese philosophy lacks system? As far as the *presentation* of ideas is concerned, it is certainly true that there are comparatively few Chinese philosophical works that display unity and orderly sequence; therefore it is commonly said that Chinese philosophy lacks system. Nevertheless, what is called system may be divided into two categories, the *formal* and the *real*, which have no necessary connection with one another. It may be admitted that Chinese philosophy lacks formal system; but if one were to say that it therefore lacks any real system, meaning that there is no organic unity of ideas to be found in Chinese philosophy, it would be equivalent to saying that Chinese philosophy is not philosophy, and that China has no philosophy. [...] According to what has just been said, philosophy in order to be philosophy, must have *real* system, and although Chinese philosophy, formally speaking, is less systematic than of the West, in its actual content it has just as much system as does western philosophy. This being so, the important duty of the historian of philosophy is to find within a philosophy that lacks *formal* system, its underlying *real* system. (Feng 1953, 1: 3–4)

This passage in which Feng Youlan accepts that Chinese philosophy lacks the formal finesse of Western philosophy, but claims that the *real* system of Chinese philosophy is of equal value to that of Western philosophy, is in line with the early twentieth-century claim of the necessity of a Mr. Science (赛先生 *Sai xiansheng*) and a Mr. Democracy (德先生 *De xiansheng*) in China: as much as Europe had had to return to (the roots of scientific thinking and democracy of) Greek antiquity to overcome the “darkness” of the Middle Ages, China also had to return to pre-Qin thinking to arise from the ashes of the defunct empire.¹⁴

Feng Yu-lan’s position is also likely to have been influenced by figures such as the American pragmatist John Dewey (1852–1952), under whom he had studied at Columbia University. After John Dewey had, between 1919 and 1921, given a series of lectures at Chinese universities, the majority of those intellectuals who saw scientific progress as the means for China’s “renaissance” became advocates of American pragmatism. Pragmatism taught them that philosophy should not only explain and interpret reality, but that it also needed to be able to change reality. This pragmatism also was close to a fundamental characteristic of traditional Confucianism: a concern with the world here (see Rošker 2008, 149–50). Vera Schwarcz (1986) has, in this respect, rightfully pointed to it that intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement not so much longed for a “new Chinese culture” as they longed for a “renewed” culture, a “Chinese Renaissance,” an attempt to reshape tradition.

An assessment of Guo Moruo along these lines can be read in a message, published on *Tengxunwang* 腾讯网 on 29 December 2014, as follows:

Guo Moruo first saw Confucius as “a giant with everlasting life,” but later called him “a famous reactionary personage.”¹⁵ In the period of May Fourth, against the tide, Guo Moruo respected Confucius, and wrote his [...] text: “Marx enters a Confucian Temple.” [...] “Marx enters a Confucian Temple” shows how Guo Moruo respected Confucius all his life. Guo had experienced a Confucian education since his youth, and when he went to Japan to study, he read the works of Wang Yangming after school time. In the period of May Fourth, when the people of the moment were thrown into the stream of “smash down the Confucian shop” (打倒孔家店 *dadao Kongjiadian*), Guo Moruo continued to call Confucius “a great talent,” “a full personage,” “a giant with an everlasting life.” (Qzone 2018)¹⁶

14 This standpoint is similar with the position of the early 20th century adherents of Radical Confucianism (*junxue* 君学) (see Hon 2014).

15 See also further.

16 Also see Guo 1998, 22.

It can in this respect be remarked that it might therefore not be without importance that, in his article “Artists and Revolutionaries” (“Yishujia yu gemingjia” 艺术家与革命家), published on 4 September 1923, Guo Moruo did not put the same demand on artists as he did on revolutionaries. For Guo Moruo, activists cannot be expected to create propaganda literature, and neither can revolutionary artists be expected to throw bombs. He justifies this position by claiming that all true revolutionary movements are artistic movements, and all zealous activists are real artists; and that all zealous artists who want to change society are real revolutionaries (see Schmidt-Glintzer 1999, 515).

Confucianism and Marxism for the People

The conversation between Marx and Confucius continues: Confucius does not feel at ease to explain his “thought” as he is afraid that his lack of logic will only confuse Marx. Moreover, so Confucius states, there is not one book of Marx that has already been translated into Chinese—we may recall here that the conversation between Marx and Confucius develops through an interpreter. He therefore invites Marx to start explaining his -ism. Marx agrees, but before explaining his doctrine he wants to first elaborate on the basic premises, the point of departure (*chufadian* 出发点). Marx thus claims that his “thought” (*sixiang*)—again, referring to Franz Schurman, one “thought” can be exchanged for another “thought”—is not like the doctrines of ordinary religious specialists (*zongjiaojia* 宗教家). His -ism does not regard the life of human beings in the universe as nihilistic (*xuwu* 虚无) or as evil (*zui'e* 罪恶), but, as we happen to live in this world, it is only through exploration (*tanqiu* 探求) that we can reach the highest joy and that our world can likewise be made suited to our lives. This characteristic, it can be repeated, is parallel to the “this world” orientation of Confucianism. If, so says Marx, this basic premise of his -ism is different from Confucius’, it would be useless to continue the conversation.

A Confucian and Marxist Utopian World

After Zigong has approved the words of Marx, claiming that the aim of Confucianism is in this world, Confucius continues the conversation, stating that their basic premise is indeed the same. This having been made clear, Confucian asks about Marx’s utopian world (*lixiangde shijie* 理想的世界). Marx replies that, according to many people, he is a materialist (*wuzhi zhuyi* 物质主义) and that, therefore, there are many people who take him for a wild animal that only knows

eating, and as a person who is devoid of any ideal. In reality, however, so claims Marx, he is a person who envisions a lofty and remote utopian world. His utopian world is one in which everyone can freely and equally develop his or her capacities, in which all people can do what they can without longing for remuneration, in which all people have an ensured livelihood and do not have to be anxious about hunger or cold. This world, so says Marx, is what he calls the Communist society of “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” (*Ge jin suo neng, ge qu suo xu* 各尽所能, 各取所需). When this type of society is realized, would that not be a heavenly kingdom (*tianguo* 天国) established on earth?

With this, we reach another important point for assessing Guo Moruo’s attitude towards Confucianism and Marxism. The enthusiastic answer of Confucius is:

Your utopian society and my world of unity (*datong* 大同) agree without prior consultation.

你这个理想社会和我的大同世界竟是不谋而和。

whereupon Confucius invites Marx to listen to part of an old text of his that he will recite by heart. The text he recites is the following:

When the big road of virtue was followed, “all-under-heaven” (*tianxia* 天下) was public good. Functionaries were selected according to their abilities. Their words were trustworthy, and they cultivated harmony. That is why people did not only treat their own relatives as relatives, did not only treat their own children as children, and made sure that elder people had all they needed until the end of their days, that grown-ups had all they needed, that children had all they needed to grow, that widowers and widows, orphans, and sick ones all had what they needed to sustain themselves. They made sure that men had a job, and women had a place where they belonged. They did not allow the harvest to be left in the field, but neither did they want to hoard it for themselves. They disliked that their power was not made useful for others, but neither did they want to use it for themselves. Therefore, bad plans were not put into practice, there were no robbers, thieves, nor traitors. Therefore, outer doors were not closed. This is what is called *datong*.

大道之行也，天下为公。选贤与能，谁信修睦，故人不独亲其亲，不独子其子，使老有所终，壮有所用，幼有所长，矜寡孤独废疾者，皆有所养。男有分，女有归。货恶其弃于地也，不必藏

于己；力恶其不出于身也，不必为己。是故谋闭而不兴。盗窃乱贼而不作，故外户而不闭，是谓大同。 (*Liji* 1988, 120)

and he concludes with the rhetorical question: “Is this not completely in accordance with your utopian world? (这不是和你的理想完全是一致的吗?)”

This passage is, of course, the famous part of the seventh chapter “Liyun” 礼运 of the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji* 礼记), the Confucian political handbook that was compiled in the third-second century BCE, in which the Confucian concept of *datong* is explained. This shows that, for Guo Moruo, the Confucian and the Marxist *lilun* of the ideal society are the same (see Pusey 1983, 34). The convergence of the Confucian and the Marxist utopias is also reminiscent of the interpretation of the *datong* concept in late imperial and Republican China (see Dessein 2017), and presages the claim by Mao Zedong (1893–1976) when he alluded to the leading role of the CCP in its historical mission of modernizing the Chinese peasants and workers and uniting them in a Communist society:

China can develop steadily, under the leadership of the working class and the Communist Party, from an agricultural into an industrial country, and from a new-democratic into a socialist and communist society, can abolish classes and realize the “great unity” (*datong*).¹⁷ (Mao 1961)

Discussing the above part of the chapter “Liyun,” Joseph Needham (1958, 167–68) noted that it must have been “a very peculiar historical turn of events that this highly subversive account became embedded in one of the Confucian classics,” as passages with the same wording are also found in the *Mozhi* 墨子 and thus point to an original Mohist affiliation of the concept. We do know, however, that Mohist philosophy was among the interests of Chinese Communist thinkers.

Similarities between the Confucian and the Marxist utopian worlds are also mentioned in the concluding section of the story. When Marx continues to delineate the Marxist progress of history, with a gradual exclusion of private property, the state as central unit, and international ideological expansion, Confucius replies that also he is of the opinion that first production should be lifted, after which it will become possible to distribute wealth evenly—a viewpoint we know from the economic chapters of the eclectic *Guanzi* 管子 that are accepted to be of Mohist affiliation.

17 Notice that the original English text reads “Great Harmony” instead of “great unity” (see also Schram 2002, 411–12).

“Confucius Eats”

In the story “Kongfuzi chifan (“Confucius Eats” 孔夫子吃饭), a text Guo Moruo wrote on 3 June 1935, and that first appeared in the journal *Zawen* 杂文 published in Tokyo (Guo 1935),¹⁸ we read the following story: Confucius and his disciples had not eaten for seven days. They stayed in a wood just outside of a village. When they arrived there seven days earlier, some of Confucius’s disciples went stealing melons from the fields of nearby farmers because they were so thirsty. The day after, the local farmers who had seen them stealing their melons, had encircled them. Because the farmers thought they had been robbed by a group of bandits, they were afraid and did not dare to come closer. The disciples of Confucius also did not dare to do anything. The resulting stalemate explains why they had not eaten for seven days. On the morning of the 8th day, while Confucius was still asleep, Yan Hui took action. He draped a white cloth over the walking stick of Confucius and went towards the farmers. He explained what had happened, and the farmers broke their encircling. They even felt pity for them, and gave Yan Hui some polished rice (*baimi* 白米) to cook for his master and the other disciples. Having returned to Confucius and the fellow disciples, Yan Hui explained what had happened. Confucius was very happy, but said to Yan Hui: “Did I not tell you that I am taken care of by the old man in heaven?” (我不是早就说过吗？我是有天老爷看承的呀。)。Yan Hui gathered firewood, and started to cook gruel because he was afraid that, since the lot of them had not eaten for so long, they might not be able to digest a heavy meal. The disciples’ anxiety had gone, but some were still afraid that the gruel might contain too little rice. Confucius saw how Yan Hui at a certain moment lifted the lid from the kettle, put his other hand in the pot, took two fingers full of rice out and put them in his mouth. This disrespected Confucius deeply. After all, he was the leader, and leaders should eat first. However, he did not say a word until Yan Hui had finished preparing the gruel and brought the first bowl to Confucius. Confucius wanted to reveal the hypocrisy of Yan Hui, and said, “[Yan] Hui, a while ago, I dreamed of my father. [...] When there is drink and food, one first has to offer it to one’s superiors, and only then eat oneself. Would you please help me to offer some food to my father first?” (回呀，我刚才梦见了我的父亲。[...] 有饮食要先敬了长上，然后再吃。你替我在露天为我的父亲献祭罢。)。Yan Hui hurriedly answered, “Sir, today’s rice is no good to offer to the gods” (先生，今天的饭是不好拿来敬神的。)。 “Why is it no good to offer to the gods?” (为什么不好拿来敬神?) Confucius replied. Yan Hui said, “I have heard the master saying: vessels of millet used in sacrifices should be clean. The gruel of today is not clean; it is no good to offer it to the gods”

18 In December 1936, it was also published in *Shiti* 豕蹄.

(我听先生说过 ‘粢盛必洁’, 今天的稀饭不干净, 不好拿来祭神). “Why is it not clean?” (为什么不干净呢), asked Confucius. Yan Hui answered, “A while ago, when I opened the lid, some charcoal ash flew into it. I quickly used my fingers to get it out. However, I burnt my fingers, and therefore, I put them in my mouth...” (刚才我揭开锅盖的时候飞了一团烟渣进去我赶快用指头把它拈了起来。但丢掉又觉得可喜, 我的指头也烫了, 所以我便送进了口去。). Upon hearing this, Confucius said, “OK, OK, Hui, You are really a sage; even I cannot catch up with you” (好的, 好的, 回呀你实在是一位圣者, 连我都是赶不上你的。). Having said this, he confessed his suspicion and his testing of Yan Hui to the other disciples. As an afterthought, although well aware that Yan Hui had been lying, Confucius thought: “My respect as a leader has not been hurt” (我的领袖的尊严, 并没有受伤。).

This story is, interestingly, based on one in the *Spring and Autumn of the Lü Clan* (*Lüshi chunqiu* 吕氏春秋), a work that was written in the 3rd century BCE, and that was “intended to comprehend every aspect of philosophical thought that bore on the task of government, on the education and role of the ruler, and on the values that the government should practice and teach.”¹⁹ (Knoblock and Riegel 2000, vii) The original story in the *Lüshi chunqiu* is, more precisely, found in Book 17, 3.4 (“Employing Technique”; Ren shu 任数).²⁰ In the translation by John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel (2000, 418) it goes as follows:

When Confucius was in straits in the area of Chen and Cai, the broth of greens contained no rice, and for seven days he did not taste any grain, so even during daylight he had to lie down. Yan Hui asked for some rice, obtained it, and prepared it. Confucius observed that Yan Hui reached for something inside the pot and ate it. He pretended that he had not seen it. When after a while the food was cooked, Yan Hui announced it to Confucius and brought out the food. Confucius rose and said, “Just now I dreamed of our late lord. Since this food is pure, I will offer some to him.” Yan Hui replied, “That would not be acceptable. A while ago some charcoal ash fell into the pot. Because it is inauspicious to throw food out, I took it out of the pot and drank it.” Confucius sighed and said, “What I believed was my eyes, but it appears that my eyes should not be trusted; what I depended on was my mind, but it appears that is insufficient to be depended on. Disciples, take note of this: knowing other

19 Needham (1958, 36) values the *Lüshi chunqiu* as, “extremely important for the scientific aspects of Taoism.”

20 Referring to Lu Xun’s *Old Things, Newly Edited* (*Gu shi xin bian* 故事新编), we can see also this story as a “new edition of an old story.”

people is assuredly not easy.” Thus, it is not the knowing that is difficult, but the means by which we know others that is difficult.

孔子穷陈、蔡之间，藜羹不糝，七日不尝粒，昼寝。颜回素米，得而爨之，几熟。孔子望见颜回攫其甑中而食之。孔子佯不见之。选间，食熟，谒孔子而进食。孔子起曰：‘今者梦见先军，食洁而后馈’。颜回对曰：‘不可。乡者煤入甑中，弃食不祥，回攫而饮之’。孔子叹曰：‘所信者目也，而目犹不可信，所恃者心也，而心犹不足恃。弟子记之，知人固不意矣’。故知非难也，孔子之所以知人难也。

It is clear that the difference between Guo Moruo's version of the story and the original version is that, for Guo Moruo, it is not the “means of knowledge” that is difficult to know, but (Confucian) knowledge itself. Confucius, and therefore Confucianism, are criticized for being hypocritical.

Appreciating Guo Moruo

Comparing “Marx enters a Confucian Temple” and “Confucius Eats,” it appears that Guo Moruo's assessment of Confucius became increasingly negative. That he became a “convinced Marxist” may explain his appointment as head of the Third Section of the National Military Council's newly created Political Department in charge of propaganda in 1938 (Lee 2002b, 242). The elevated position of Guo Moruo is also evident from his role as chairman of the “National Congress of Literary and Art Workers,” held in Beijing in July 1949 (Fokkema 1965, 33–34). Guo Moruo also became Vice-premier of the government from 1949 to 1954.²¹ In an article in the *Renmin ribao* of 1 July 1956 on the “One Hundred Flowers Movement,” Guo Moruo stated that the “goal of the contending schools should be the building of socialism and, ultimately, communism” (see Fokkema 1965, 91).

In contrast to the above, in an interview with a Bulgarian journalist, published in the *Renmin ribao* on 18 December 1956, Guo Moruo on the one hand stated that,

The policy of “letting the one hundred flowers bloom and the one hundred schools contend” is advanced under the people's democratic

21 Other positions he held were Vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Chairman of the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and President of the Academy of Sciences (see Goldman 1967, xvi–xvii).

dictatorship. This freedom of writing and discussion is a prerequisite to serve the people and does certainly not mean *laissez faire* without limitations. If the writings and opinions are counterrevolutionary, there should be no freedom for them,

but on the other hand also stated that,

The self-education of the intellectuals cannot be suspended for a moment. They must be allowed at all times to cultivate *their own consciousness and will to study Marxism-Leninism* in the light of reality, and to foster the spirit of serving the people and national construction with the result that their work will improve. (see Fokkema 1965, 91; *italics mine*)

The latter statement explains why, in the already quoted assessment of his “Marx Enters a Confucian Temple” in *Tengxunwang*, we read that when Guo Moruo published his *Shi pipan shu* 十批判书 (*Ten Books of Criticism*) in 1945 he “still called Confucius ‘following the tide of the changes of then society’ (‘顺应着当时的社会变革的潮流’), ‘in great line standing at the side of representing the benefit of the people’ (‘大体上他是站在代表人民利益的方面的’), and ‘benevolent’ (‘仁’).” (Yang 2014)²²

Guo Moruo’s ambiguous position is, among others, corroborated by the fact that in a report called “The Tasks of the Intellectuals in the High Tide of the Socialist Revolution” (在社会主义革命高潮中知识分子的使命 *geming Zai shehuizhuyi gaochao zhong zhishifenzide shiming*) he submitted to a session of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference on January 31, 1956, he advised intellectuals to examine themselves on three questions in the manner of one of the disciples of Confucius, Zeng Can 曾参, i.e., Zengzi. The three questions are: (1) Are we in any way not positive enough in serving the people and socialist construction? (2) Do we really contribute toward the expansion of our ranks and the unity of internal forces? (3) Are we studying Marxism-Leninism and progressive political experience with a high degree of self-consciousness and without negligence?²³ Guo Moruo’s reference to Zengzi may help to explain why he was forced to give a “self-criticism” in 1966, and why he, after Lin Biao 林彪 (1907–1971) had died, became targeted in the “pi Kong pi Lin” 批孔批林 movement because of his position in the *Shi pipan shu*, i.e. his position of “revering Confucianism and [acting] against the law (尊儒反法).” (Yang 2014) During that

22 Also see Guo 1982, 87, 445.

23 *Renmin ribao*, February 1, 1956. (Cf. Levenson 1958, 136–37; Levenson 1962; also see Fokkema 1965, 58)

period, Mao Zedong wrote a poem on Guo Moruo, in which he stated that “He (Guo Moruo) is said to be a Communist, but reverses Confucius and Laozi” (名曰共产党，崇拜孔老二). (Yang 2014) Still according to Mao Zedong, “the way Old Guo treats Qin shi huang and the way he treats Confucius are like Lin Biao” (郭老对待秦始皇，对待孔子那种态度和林彪一样). (ibid.) Soon afterwards, Mao Zedong presented a copy of the *Shi pipan shu* to Jiang Qing, saying it was “to be used for criticizing” (为批评用的) (see Feng 2004, 315–18).

In the foreword to the revised edition of his *Zhongguo shi gao* 中国史稿 (*Draft of Chinese History*), published in 1976, i.e., two years before his death, Guo Moruo explicitly stated that:

In the assessment of Confucius in the original draft of the work, there were serious mistakes. Now, a fundamental revision is done.

原来的稿子中的对于孔丘的评价有严重的错误。这次作了根本的修改。

Comparing this new edition with the first edition of the work, we see that Confucius as a personage who “follows the tide of history,” was changed to “a political and ideological representative of the nobility of slave ideology” (日趋没落的奴隶主贵族的政治和思想上的代表), and “a famous reactionary personage” (一个著名的反动人物) (Guo 1976, 1: 318, 384).

Conclusion

An analysis of “Marx enters a Confucian Temple” and “Confucius Eats” shows how Guo Moruo developed from being an advocate of a “literary revolution” to an advocate of a “revolutionary literature.” This fact notwithstanding, his attitude towards the Confucian tradition remained an ambivalent one. This explains why he was criticized during the “pi Kong pi Lin” movement, and why he later revised his opinion on Confucius.

That the text “Marx enters a Confucian Temple” is now a renewed object of study is an example of the ambivalent attitude that Chinese Communism has *vis-à-vis* the country’s Confucian tradition. As such, this issue illustrates what Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer stated, as follows,

China wanted to completely throw away its past, a young generation wanted to open a new page in history, and yet, getting free from the past was not successful, and this was seen as the core problem of China by many (Schmidt-Glintzer 2009, 33).

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Theory and Ideology

Marxist Theories of Ideology in Contemporary China: The Pioneering Work of Yu Wujin

*Adrian KRAWCZYK**

Abstract

Despite widespread beliefs to the contrary, Marxism is still highly significant in China. Therefore, my paper studies the contemporary usage of one of the key concepts of Marxist theory: ideology. While one can draw on numerous accounts of Western political scientists of the shifting ideology of the CCP leadership, Western scholarship has overlooked critical theories of ideology of Chinese origin that developed in the 1990s in the context of an academic re-evaluation of Karl Marx's theories. My paper analyses the work of Yu Wujin (俞吾金, 1948–2014), a key representative of this intellectual current. His monograph *On Ideology* was the first comprehensive treatment of the concept by a Chinese scholar. Clarifying the relation of Yu's theory of ideology with CCP positions, I will argue that in leaving behind dialectical materialism and in reviving ideology in its critical sense, his work provides a theoretical foundation for a limited pluralization of Marxist discourse in reform era China.

Keywords: Marxism in China, concepts of ideology, critique of ideology, Yu Wujin

Marksistične teorije ideologije v sodobni Kitajski: pionirsko delo Yu Wujina

Izvleček

V nasprotju z razširjenim prepričanjem je marksizem na Kitajskem še vedno zelo pomemben. Zato članek obravnava sodobno rabo enega ključnih konceptov marksistične teorije: ideologijo. Čeprav se pri tem lahko opremo na številne interpretacije zahodnih političnih teoretikov, ki se nanašajo na spreminjajoče se ideologije vodstva L. R. Kitajske, je zahodni akademski svet spregledal kritične teorije ideologije, ki so se na Kitajskem razvijale v 90. letih v kontekstu akademske reevalvacije Marxovih teorij. Članek se tako osredotoča na delo enega ključnih predstavnikov tovrstnih teoretskih tokov, Yu Wujina (俞吾金, 1948–2014). Njegova monografija z naslovom *O ideologiji* predstavlja prvo celovito obravnavo tega koncepta, ki je nastala pod peresom kitajskega teoretika. Z razjasnjevanjem odnosa med Yujevo teorijo ideologije in običajnih pozicij kitajske komunistične stranke članek nazorno prikaže, da predstavlja Yujevo delo, ki se odmika od dialektičnega materializma in hkrati ponovno oživlja kritični pomen

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ideologije, teoretsko osnovo za omejeno pluralizacijo marksističnega diskurza na Kitajskem v obdobju reform.

Ključne besede: marksizem na Kitajskem, koncepti ideologije, kritika ideologije, Yu Wujin

Introduction

For roughly two decades since the 1990s, there was not much scholarly interest in critical analyses of the supposedly worn-out concept of ideology in China studies. This tendency corresponded to the general research atmosphere in the humanities and social and political sciences after the end of the Cold War that was influenced by the in part de-politicized, in part neo-conservative trend in journalism and promoted the biased view of the “end of history”¹ and triumphantly predicted the advent of a “post-ideological age” in the process of the worldwide victory of capitalism (Herkommer 1999, 5–6).

Thus, when faced with the Chinese reform policies, the mainstream of Western academia and media in the 1990s usually portrayed ideology as an anachronistic relict in a process of “de-ideologisation” that was supposed to be characterized by a purely pragmatic striving at economic modernization. These approaches lacked the explicit clarifications of the underlying concepts of ideology, while platitudes of Western discourses on China such as the notorious “ideological vacuum” contradicted the dominant political self-image of the CCP (Kittlaus 2002). Thus, protestations of the CCP’s ruling elite to adhere to the road of socialism and to attend to the further development of Marxist theory are dismissed by many Western observers as mere lip service to a seemingly outmoded state doctrine.

Chinese scholars of Western philosophy and Confucianism joined in the widespread celebration of the supposed prospect of the “end of ideology” in China. Among them was a tendency to look down upon Marxism as a mere study of politics that lacked any serious philosophical foundation. Their lack of understanding can be explained by the fact that they only learned about Marxism from Chinese translations of the Soviet textbooks on Marxist philosophy. These books portrayed the orthodox Stalinist version of dialectical materialism that had been the authoritative source of knowledge of Marxism in the PRC far beyond the Mao Zedong era.

1 “The end of history” had been predicted by Francis Fukuyama (1992).

Despite increasingly outright denunciations of Marxism per se as anachronistic and dogmatic, beginning in the 1990s, China's academic sphere nevertheless witnessed what the Chinese scholar Hu Daping calls a "re-Marxization" (Hu 2010, 193). It shows an increased engagement of Chinese scholars with the esoteric parts of the work of Karl Marx and with Western Marxism. A part of this is a shift towards interpreting Marx' oeuvre primarily as a critique of capitalist modernity. How does this discourse relate to the official Marxist discourse, that is the efforts to create a theoretical foundation for "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi* 中国特色社会主义)? Hu Daping describes the first line of research as "un-ideological, academic" and the second as "ideological." However, in his view, the peculiarity of the Chinese context is not that these two Marxist discourses exist at all, but that they usually cannot be distinguished from one another (ibid., 194). In a similar vein, Arif Dirlik stresses the necessity to differentiate between "Chinese Marxism" (*Zhongguo makesizhuyi* 中国马克思主义) and "Marxism in China" (*makesizhuyi zai Zhongguo* 马克思主义在中国). The latter is "broader in compass and more diffuse" (Dirlik 2016, 302) and has hardly been researched.

In my view, dichotomizations of "CCP Marxism" and academic Marxism are only valid to a limited degree. Therefore, my paper aims at showing the overlap of these two supposedly different Marxisms by analysing Yu Wujin's monograph *On Ideology* (*Yishixingtai lun* 意识形态论), which at the time of its publication in 1993 was the first comprehensive treatment of the topic and a milestone in the re-appropriation of Marxist theory in China (Yu 1993). I will argue that Yu Wujin departs from the former orthodoxy of dialectical materialism and the connected neutral conception of ideology, and puts forth a position in which Marx's theory of ideology is mainly viewed as a critique of ideology. In simultaneously reaffirming the validity of theories of ideology of "the Eastern socialist states," Yu's book presents a field of tension between the officially approved reevaluation of texts of the Marxist tradition that is marked by the search of a coherent theory for the Chinese reform era, on the one hand, and the critical potential that goes along with the dissemination of new interpretations of Marx's work, on the other. Thus, initial insights into Yu's theory of ideology shall serve as a window into the vibrant discourses of Marxist theory in China.

Concepts of Ideology in the Marxist Tradition

Given that ideology is a highly ambiguous term and that a generally accepted definition does not exist,² an overview of the meanings of ideology in the Marxist tradition must suffice here in order to mark the intellectual heritage and environment of Yu Wujin's work. All of these concepts of ideology can be traced back to the writings of Marx and Engels, who developed a critical-theoretical concept that they applied differently in various contexts. Three main lines of thought have been derived from their writings: 1) a critical conception advocated by Georg Lukács and proponents of the Frankfurt School, who interpret ideology as false or reified consciousness; 2) a conception advocated by Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser in which the ideological is viewed as an ensemble of apparatuses and forms of practice that organizes the understanding of individuals of themselves and their world; 3) a neutral and positive conception mainly put forth by Lenin that conceives of ideology as a class-specific worldview that became dominant in Marxism-Leninism.

(1) The Critical Conception of Ideology

For the young Karl Marx of the 1840s, ideology designates a system of ideas, beliefs and worldviews that faces men in an alien way and therefore dominates them. In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels use the concept in order to analyse the activities and ideas of contemporary intellectuals in so far as the latter justify rule and engage in the illusionary universalization of class interests (Khatib 2010, 1–28). Accordingly, *ideologiekritik* attempts to discard heteronomy by way of revealing the subservience of patterns of understanding to bourgeois rule (Reitz 2004, 690).

In his seminal work *Capital* Marx gave up the concept of ideology in his development of the theory of “commodity fetishism and its secret.” People do not meet directly in the process of commodity exchange, but through the commodity that they exchange. The commodity obscures the social relation and makes the exchange appear as a relation between things—commodities. The idea of the

2 A comprehensive review of *all* relevant definitions of ideology is neither possible nor necessary here, since my analysis is limited to inner-Marxist debates on ideology. In his seminal work on the subject, Terry Eagleton stresses that ideology can be defined in roughly six different ways: 1) General material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life. 2) Ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class. 3) The promotion and legitimation of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interests. 4) The promotion and legitimation of sectoral interests, but confined to the activities of a dominant social power. This may involve the assumption that such Ideology dominant ideologies help to unify a social formation in ways convenient for its rulers. 5) Ideology signifies ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class, specifically by distortion and dissimulation. 6) False or deceptive beliefs that arise not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole. The term ideology remains pejorative, but a class-genetic account of it is avoided. The most celebrated instance of this sense of ideology, as we shall see, is Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities. (see Eagleton 1991, 28)

autonomous interaction of commodities goes along with naturalizing the social and historical character of the commodity exchange and controls the actual social condition of human beings in capitalist societies (Eagleton 1991). Thus, in *Capital*, two factors Marx had stressed in *The German Ideology* are missing: the justifying function of the thought form in question and the systematizing activities of “ideologues” (Reitz 2004, 699).

Based on Marx’ reflections, Georg Lukács conceptualized ideology as a necessary and false consciousness that is structurally determined by commodity fetishism (Lukács 1991). In this interpretation, ideology neither evolves from intentionally fraudulent manoeuvres by “ideologues” nor from subjective misconceptions, but designates an objective social relation.

Lukács and all subsequent currents in neo-Marxism (such as the theories of the Frankfurt School) that highlighted the significance of “commodity fetishism” aim at the enlightening and liberating effect of the self-knowledge of bourgeois societies (Khatib 2010, 9). As Herbert Schnädelbach points out, ideology is a critical concept and its meaning inseparable from the impulse of enlightenment. For him and many other Critical theorists, the term is only used legitimately when the refusal to view the status quo of society as something final and unchangeable is combined with the awareness that all spontaneous expressions of opinions about society that lack a previous intellectual effort are necessarily ideological (Schnädelbach 1968, 92).

(2) The Materiality of Ideology

In contrast to critical concepts of ideology, the French philosopher Louis Althusser rejected the dominant meaning of the term as a system of ideas and conceptualized it as living, habitual and social practice (Althusser 1971, 121–76). In his structuralist reading of Marx, Althusser suspenses the entire vulgar and neo-Marxist problem of ideology as one of false or necessarily false ideas along with all its epistemological implications, and locates ideology in the material practices and rituals of “ideological state apparatuses (ISA).” Thus, while he externalizes the ideological in an outer apparatus, the subject as the locus of the old understanding of ideology disappears and is constituted through an ideological and material effect of an ideological interpellation as a subject by the ISA. Ideology is thus viewed as performative materiality that is created through ritual practice (Rehmann 2004, 717–60).

(3) Neutral and Positive Concepts of Ideology

Neutral concepts of ideology view it as a corpus of ideas that is characteristic for certain social groups or classes. Around the end of the 19th century, early Marxists such as Georgi Plechanow and Karl Kautsky picked up on the sense of ideology as

the mental forms within which men and women fight out their social conflicts that Marx put forward in his later writings. The revisionist Marxist Eduard Bernstein began to speak boldly of “socialist ideology,” which marked the transition of ideology from a negative to positive concept in socialist discourses (Eagleton 1991, 89–90). From then on, ideology was used neutrally in many Marxist-oriented political theories and positively when discussing the efforts to mould the political thinking of the masses in a manner consistent with socialist aims (Mahoney 2009, 135–66). In Lenin’s writings, “ideology” is identical with the scientific theory of historical materialism. Thus, in socialist states Marxism-Leninism served as the ideology of the proletariat. Here, ideology stands for a system of theories that not only claims to generate correct, scientific knowledge, but also guarantees success in achieving and maintaining political power as well as in creating a socialist social order, and further development towards a communist social order (Herkommer 1999, 5).

In “What is to be done?” Lenin referred to socialist ideology as “true consciousness” (Lenin 1961, 347–530). To him, Marxism was an ideology insofar as it was a discourse deployed to transform the “false consciousness of capitalist values.” In Lenin’s conception it was only through the formulation of the “correct” proletarian ideology of communist vanguard parties that ideology could be used as a weapon of the masses in the struggle to overcome capitalism.

As Gregory Mahoney points out, it was in Lenin’s sense of the term that ideology (*yishixingtai* 意识形态) entered the Chinese language between 1895 and 1910 via Japanese through an unknown Marxist text that was supposedly written by Lenin (Mahoney 2009, 141). Since the beginning, ideology was thus a positively framed term in China and carried with it the Leninist conceptualization of vanguardism (*ibid.*, 135). In Chinese Marxist discourse, *yishixingtai* and the much broader term *sixiang* (思想) are often used equally as concept words for ideology.³ Furthermore, *yishixingtai* had a fixed meaning long before Marxist intellectuals had begun to translate parts of the *The German Ideology* into Chinese little by little. For these reasons, “ideology” became a key concept in the revolutionary transformations of modern China. Mahoney stresses that “the Chinese concept of ideology remained stable as a specialized term in the CCP lexicon from Mao Zedong to the present day, even if its substance has transformed through time” (*ibid.*, 136).

3 Unsurprisingly, this frequently causes theoretical confusion. A rigorous analysis of the concept words of ideology in Chinese is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article. For a brief discussion of linguistic and translational aspects of Chinese Marxism and ideology, see Mahoney (2011, 72–76).

The Status of “Ideology” in China Studies

Keeping in mind this brief overview of the competing concepts of ideology, the undifferentiated use of which can quickly cause misunderstandings, the status of ideology in China studies and China-related political science can be illustrated.

In contrast to mainstream scholarship on China in the 1990s, to Kalprana Misra issues of ideology and intellectual debates about policy remained extremely significant in the Deng era. In her seminal work on the development of Chinese Marxism in the 1980s and 1990s she therefore argues against the dominant, “cynical views of ideology” in China studies. Misra claims that these views deny the important role of ideology on the basis of a “power-interest” perspective that regards it as nothing more than a cover-up in power struggles or retrospective rationalizations of practical measures in service of certain interests (Misra 1998, 6). Furthermore, most Western studies of Chinese politics highlight the “authority of ideology” during the Mao era, and hold practical flexibility responsible for the reform program of the Deng era.

Exceptions to these biased dichotomizations can be seen in the work of Arif Dirlik, Bill Brugger and David Kelly, among others.⁴ In the 1990s, they argued for a more nuanced, leftist perspective on the trajectory of Chinese socialism that also involved outright critiques of the “doyens” and opinion leaders in the field of China studies in the US after 1945, mainly Benjamin Schwartz (who was also one of the targets of Misra’s critique) and Stuart R. Schram.⁵ Taking a generally sympathetic attitude towards the aims of the Chinese revolution (but not its brutal excesses and aberrations) Dirlik, Brugger and Kelly emphasize the continuing importance of ideology in the reform era. Without discussing the concept ideology at length, they mostly use it in its neutral sense.⁶ To them, Schwartz and Schram represent a conservative or even reactionary Cold War approach to the study of China and “Eastern ideologies.” This approach corresponds to Sebastian Herkommer’s critical observations regarding the perspective of German scholars on the ideology of the Soviet Union. In their view “Eastern ideologies” are blind to reality, hold on to illusions about the nature of men and function as a tool of oppression, while they claim that their own position is rational and un-ideological (see Herkommer 1999, 5). Thus, a highly influential strand of scholarship on China—especially in the 1990s—denied the relevance of ideology and used the term in a pejorative sense.

4 The works of Maurice Meisner, Paul Healy, and Nick Knight also deserve mention in this respect.

5 The most direct attack on their scholarship can be found in Dirlik et al. (1997).

6 For instance, see Dirlik (1997).

Roughly over the last fifteen years, the study of ideology became mainly confined to China-related political science.⁷ Scholars such as Heike Holbig and Kerry Brown explore the institutionalized ideology of the CCP's ruling elite (Holbig 2013, 61–81; Brown 2012, 52–68). They generally use a neutral term of ideology that differs significantly from that in the Marxist tradition. It is mostly informed by Michael Freeden's conceptualization, which defines ideology as a "political arrangement by which groups (...) attribute decontested meanings to a set of mutually defining political concepts." To him, ideologies compete over the control of political language as well as over plans for public policy in order to support the respective political actors' status, interests or agenda (Freeden 2003).

Through the study of speeches and writings of CCP leaders, Holbig and Brown evaluate the relevance of ideology within the CCP elite and analyse the function and effectiveness of "ideological work" in China (Brown 2012, 51–52). Furthermore, they examine to what degree the top-down dissemination of ideology meets the purpose of bringing about social cohesion, in Chinese society or at least among the political elite (*ibid.*). There is a general consensus that the purpose of the construction of a comprehensive party-state ideology is "to secure long-term CCP rule by creating confidence in the China path as an alternative to the Western political and economic system" (Shi-Kupfer 2017, 23), or simply "to legitimize authoritarian rule" (Holbig 2013, 61).

Drawing on Freeden's description of the operating modes of ideology and/or post-modern, Foucauldian analyses of power relations, ideology in China is depicted as "a matter (...) of playing by the rules of the official language game" (Holbig 2013, 61; Brown 2012, 65). Very often, this strand of research is implicitly governed by the apparent mystery of how the supposed "pragmatism" of the CCP in the reform era goes along with the observation that nevertheless "in the language of CCP leaders (...) there does seem to be ideology" (Brown 2012, 52). In my view, this dichotomization of "pragmatism" and "ideology" overlooks the fact that the invocation in politics of pragmatism itself is highly ideological. In the context of reform era China it seems safe to state that "pragmatism" is not the opposite of the CCP's ideology, but a crucial part of it.

Pointing to the expansion of the nationwide system of party schools since the beginning of Hu Jintao's chairmanship in 2004, Holbig highlights the CCP's quest to strengthen the institutional network for "ideological work." Scholars of

7 In cultural and literary theory, discussions on ideology tend to be overloaded with postmodern and poststructuralist theory of one kind or another and usually do not deal with the issue at hand, that is Marxist theories of ideology and their political implications. An excellent exception is Liu Kang's work, especially "What is 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'?" (Liu 2003, 46–77).

the CCP's propaganda apparatus such as Ann-Marie Brady and David Shambaugh stress that contrary to the widespread belief that economic reforms and the commercialization of the media have led to a decline in importance of propaganda and ideology, "propaganda and thought work are the very life blood of the party-state," and in recent years have been utterly successful (Holbig 2013, 66). Therefore, these recent studies conclude that ideology still plays a significant role in Chinese politics, thereby rejecting the idea of China as a post-ideological society that was popular in the 1990s.

It needs to be acknowledged that the aforementioned works on the ideology of the Chinese party-state give a precise definition of the term and rightly discard the idea of the declining significance of ideology in the CCP leadership. However, it is exactly this narrowing of the issue of ideology to a matter of high politics, propaganda and party training that prevents any engagement with *critical theories* of ideology in China. Indeed, although institutes of philosophy and schools of Marxism at most Chinese universities all over the country place great emphasis on the study of critical approaches to Marxism (and ideology),⁸ to date no Western study on this topic is available. Likewise, Arif Dirlik observes that "recently published studies on Chinese Marxism read mostly as histories of policy innovations by successive generations of communist leaders that are now endowed with theoretical status in the formulation of Chinese Marxism." Furthermore, he sees "little visible concern in these texts for theoretical discussions that critically engage issues of Marxist theory with reference to Deng's and other leaders' theories" (Dirlik 2016, 340).

Yu Wujin's "On Ideology"

Below, I will take the CCPs interpretations as a frame of reference for locating and observing Yu Wujin's work on ideology. Having served as the Director of the Institute of Modern Philosophy and leader of the Research Center of Contemporary Foreign Marxism at Fudan University, Yu Wujin (俞吾金, 1948–2014) was one of the leading scholars of Western Marxism in the reform era and was

8 One can easily illustrate the ongoing relevance of Marxist theory in China by looking at its institutional foothold: Alongside more than 100 schools of Marxism that are affiliated with almost every relevant university all over the country, there is a large system of party schools that together publish over 100 journals (Mahoney 2016). Additionally, the study of Marxist theories constitutes an integral part of research at Chinese universities, especially at institutes of philosophy many of which have established research facilities that are dedicated to the study of "Western Marxism" (*xifang makesizhuyi* 西方马克思主义).

engaged in the reevaluation of Karl Marx.⁹ While Western scholarship has completely overlooked Yu Wujin, he enjoys high academic status in China.¹⁰

Yu's monograph *On Ideology* (*Yishixingtai lun* 意识形态论) was published in 1993. So far, it is the most comprehensive study of the topic by a Chinese scholar and can be considered a key text of the academic re-evaluation of Marxist theory in China in the 1990s. *On Ideology* traces the evolution of the concept from its origins in the writings of French enlightenment philosophers to contemporary analyses by proponents of Critical Theory, and ends with an account of the theory of ideology of China in the early 1990s. The main focus lies on the analysis of the work of Karl Marx that roughly constitutes one third of the book.

One reason why *On Ideology* deserves our attention is that it was published in a watershed period. The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the demise of the Soviet Union and state socialism in Eastern Europe. As a consequence, in the early 1990s the narrative of the “end of ideology” and the “end of history” became hegemonic in Western media. In China, the tragic events at Tiananmen Square in 1989 put to rest attempts to reform Chinese Marxism by a young-Marxian group of recognized Party intellectuals on the basis of humanism. At the times of the limited liberation of Marxist philosophy and political economy that took place after 1978, this group competed in stimulating discussions about the future of Chinese socialism with proponents of orthodox Marxism-Leninism and a group of “revisionists” (the “reformers” or “progressives” from a western point of view).¹¹ In the 1990s many public intellectuals became professional scholars, focusing on the rebuilding of academic standards, while many younger scholars—such as Yu Wujin—preferred to find a niche as specialists within the disciplinary structure of the academic establishment instead of engaging in public debates on the future of China.¹²

9 Born in Xiaoshan in Zhejiang province in 1948, Yu Wujin's family moved to Shanghai in his childhood. After his *gaozhong* graduation in 1968, at the age of 20, he became worker at a power supply factory in Shanghai where he worked for 10 years before he became a student of Philosophy at Fudan University, where he also obtained a doctoral degree and eventually became professor in 1993.

10 The “First Yu Wujin Academic Forum” (*di yi ju Yu Wujin xueshu luntan* 第一居俞吾金学术论坛) held at Fudan University in 2016 points to the importance placed on Yu by Chinese academic circles.

11 For an excellent study of the Marxist discussions in the 1980s in China with a special focus on Marxist humanism, see Brugger et al. (1990).

12 For a general overview of the intellectual field in the reform era from a liberal perspective, see Xu (2000, 169–86).

Against this background, I will now provide an overview of three themes in Yu Wujin's discussion of ideology: 1) dialectical materialism and Stalinism; 2) humanist Marxism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; 3) the "nature" of Marx's theory of ideology.

Yu Wujin's Evaluation of Dialectical Materialism and Stalinism

Yu Wujin devoted his energies to the study of the concept of ideology because of his dissatisfaction with the dominance of dialectical materialism of the orthodox Stalinist kind in official accounts of Marxist philosophy in China. In the section titled "A Tentative Definition of Ideology," Yu stresses the necessity to distinguish between the concepts of "consciousness" (*yishi* 意识), "social consciousness" (*shehui yishi* 社会意识) and "ideology" (*yishixingtai* 意识形态). In the authoritative philosophical textbook of the Soviet Union and in its Chinese translations, the concept of ideology mainly appears in the section on dialectical materialism (*bianzheng weiwuzhuyi* 辩证唯物主义). Here, consciousness is presented as a "reflection of being" (*cunzai de fanying* 存在的反映), and social consciousness as a "reflection of social being" (*shehui cunzai de fanying* 社会存在的反映). To Yu, this division of consciousness is groundless, for it fosters the illusion of the existence of a socially unmediated consciousness. Thus, he concludes, this division contradicts the intention of Karl Marx who emphasized that consciousness is always a product of society (Yu 1993, 126–28). Furthermore, Yu perceives a lack of a clear systematic distinction in the use of the Marxian terms "ideology" (*yishixingtai*) and "form of consciousness" (*yishi xingshi* 意识形式) that limited the quality of reasoning in Chinese Marxist philosophy. The source of the confusion is partly a matter of translation: The literal meaning of *yishixingtai* is "form of consciousness." Thus, it was necessary for Yu Wujin to clarify the different meanings of the terms. In the writings of Marx and Engels, Yu explains, the concept of ideology stands for a totality or an "organic whole" (*youji zhengti* 有机整体) that consists of a multitude of different forms of consciousness such as religion, law, etc (ibid., 129).

Furthermore, Yu Wujin prepends a discussion of the contributions of the late Friedrich Engels to Marx's theory of ideology to his brief comments on Joseph Stalin's "theory of ideology" (*yishixingtai lilun* 意识形态理论). In Yu's view, Engels must be praised for his vehement refutation of the tendency within the organized Marxism of his time towards mechanistic materialism (*jixie weiwuzhuyi* 机械唯物主义). Defending Marx's and his own writings against their appropriation by proponents of "formalizing interpretations and stereotypical, narrow-minded usages of historical materialism," Engels highlighted the "relative autonomy" of ideologies. To Yu, it is

Engels' great achievement to have further demonstrated how retroactive effects of ideology on the material basis operate, how ideologies differ in respect to the degree of directness of retroactive effects on the basis, but also to have stressed the strict limits of these effects that by no means can be enforced arbitrarily (Yu 1993, 118–23).

Yu sees a further important contribution of Engels to Marx's critique of ideology in his introduction of the principle of the negation of the negation (*fouding de fouding* 否定的否定) and the concept of sublation (*yangqi* 扬弃). For Engels, the process of dialectical negation (*bianzheng fouding* 辩证否定) is at work in nature and society. Yu disagrees with Engels on this point, but avoids directly criticizing him and highlights the supposed benefits of Engels' conception for the theory and practice of society: "Dialectical negation doesn't simply say no to tradition and ideologies, but includes elements of preservation as well as elements of over-coming" (ibid., 124).

Building on the review of the late Engels' contribution to Marx's theory of ideology, Yu passes a historical judgment on Stalin. The latter was a "great Marxist," but "on the political and ideological level, his false line of broadening class struggle significantly led to disastrous and fatal results for the Soviet Union and all socialist projects in Eastern Europe" (ibid., 126). Yu criticizes the mechanistic elements in Stalin's "theory of ideology" that mistakenly saw dialectical materialism (*bianzheng weiwuzhuyi* 辩证唯物主义) as the basis of historical materialism (*lishi weiwuzhuyi*, 历史唯物主义), as to Yu it is clearly the other way around. He states that Stalin was right when he stressed—like Engels and Lenin before him—the significance of the ongoing struggle in the history of philosophy between materialism and idealism, but going beyond his intellectual predecessors in simplifying and sharpening these contradictions was a huge mistake that provided the theoretical basis for the misguided class struggle in Soviet society. In contrast, Lenin and the early Mao Zedong had made comments on the matter of ideology that were in accordance with the idea of the relative autonomy of ideology, and had dismissed the sense of ideology as just the passive product of social life. For Yu, it was especially in Mao's writings of the late 1930s that included arguments against mechanistic materialism and stressed the necessity of a dialectical handling of traditional ideologies (ibid., 12).

Humanist Marxism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

Yu Wujin speaks favourably of the CCP's reform path after 1978 and the official positions regarding ideology, but stresses the necessity to "seek a balance between a scientific spirit and humanism" (ibid., 348). This statement obviously relates to

the open and heated discussions among Marxist establishment intellectuals in the 1980s. Facing the disastrous results of the “Cultural Revolution” and Stalinism in the Soviet Union, Wang Ruoshui (王若水, 1926–2002) and his intellectual companions sought a revitalization of Marxism on the basis of humanism and the theory of alienation, both of which were important themes of Marx’s early writings. By the end of the decade though, Marxist humanism had been silenced through several interventions of orthodox Party theoreticians who denounced it as a form of “bourgeois humanism” that harms China’s socialist system.¹³

Yu does not directly mention the theoretical discussions on humanism in the 1980s in *On Ideology*, but he evaluates them implicitly in a brief portrayal of the developments of socialist ideology in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of Stalin’s death. Yu cites a group of Russian philosophers who in 1955 called for a new socialist ideology, “a truly humanist, deeply fraternally ideology, that is thus the peaceful ideology of the people of all countries” (Yu 1993, 7). This “new ideology,” Yu goes on to explain, builds on the philosophical doctrine of abstract humanism (*chouxiang de rendaozhuyi* 抽象的人道主义) that had developed from the French enlightenment movement. Subsequently, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe witnessed the rise of unorthodox, “unofficial” (*minjian* 民间) theories of ideology propagated by Czech existentialism, the Yugoslavian praxis group, the Polish group of philosophical humanism and the Budapest school, which de-emphasized the class character of ideology and relied heavily on Western philosophy. For Yu, this departed from Marx’s scientific theory of ideology by abandoning historical materialism and denying the “basic truth of the clash of socialist and capitalist ideology.” However, Yu is equally critical of the official theory that highlights the unity of the class-relatedness and the scientific character of socialist ideology, but is too formalized and lacks innovative research on ideology (*ibid.*) Under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, Yu observes, the “unofficial ideology” (*minjian yishixingtai* 民间意识形态) slowly turned into official ideology. The dissolution of the Soviet Union is a warning to Yu that the awareness of the confrontation of the “two big ideologies” and the conscious preservation of socialist ideology remains a crucial task of theoretical research in socialist societies (*ibid.*, 9).

Yu Wujin’s rather hasty review of theoretical currents in Eastern Europe that aimed at overcoming the dogmatism in orthodox Marxism certainly gives a hint at his perspective on the not explicitly mentioned matter of humanist Marxism in China. As is well known, the writings of Chinese humanist Marxists such as Wang Ruoshui drew heavily upon ideas from Western Marxism and unorthodox

13 For Wang Ruoshui and humanist Marxism in China, see Brugger (1990).

Marxists from Eastern Europe, especially the praxis group and the Budapest School. Yu dismisses these theories as expressions of a false abstract humanism, thereby subscribing to the official position of the CCP. Yu's line of reasoning seems to contradict his initial assertion that Chinese Marxism needs to combine a scientific spirit and humanism. Yu does not elaborate on this point, and it is very likely that this was for tactical reasons, given the repressive political atmosphere in the aftermath of the suppression of the protest movement in 1989.

In his discussion of intellectual controversies in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe,¹⁴ for example about the relation between socialism and capitalism, Yu Wujin applies value-neutral and positive concepts of ideology concerning socialism, and pejorative, but not critical, concepts concerning capitalism. Yu's reasoning corresponds to organized Marxism, which, starting with Karl Kautsky, used the term ideology interchangeably with theory or spirit. The term was also used in Marxism-Leninism as a political slogan that was applied in its positive sense with respect to "scientific communism" as a system of theories that provides true knowledge. These broad definitions of ideology allowed for the distinction of class-specific ideologies, in particular bourgeois and socialist ideology. Here, socialist ideology was viewed positively and served to enhance consolidation in socialist societies in the struggle against the ideology of the perceived class enemy (Herkommer 1999, 64).

The "Nature" of Marx's Theory of Ideology

As has been mentioned before, the description and analysis of Karl Marx's theory of ideology figures prominently in Yu Wujin's history of the concept. The primary purpose of *On Ideology* lies in making his new interpretation of Marx's theory of ideology accessible to a Chinese audience, which mostly knew Marx's work through the lens of its Marxist-Leninist distortions. This observation can be confirmed through a glance at the final passage of the book, in which Yu states:

Written jointly by Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* is not only the most important document in the history of Marxist philosophy and the history of the concept of ideology, but also one of the most important documents in the history of thought of all mankind. This means that Marx is our contemporary; this means that understanding Marx is still

14 This observation holds also true for his discussion of the development of the CCP's ideology in the reform era.

the philosophical subject of our times; this means that to understand Marx we must go back into Marx's own writings. (Yu 1993, 381)¹⁵

In the introductory chapter of *On Ideology*, Yu Wujin explains that the “real significance” and value of research on ideology lies in broadening knowledge of Marx's historical materialism. To Yu, Marx' theory of ideology is “essentially” (*benzhi shang* 本质上) a theory of critique of ideology (*yishixingtai pipan lilun* 意识形态批判理论). Furthermore, the critique of ideology is the precondition for historical materialism, just as historical materialism is the starting point of critique of ideology. Yu Wujin underlines that “only through the study of the problem of ideology, we can see that historical materialism is a critical theory, or rather a critique of ideology. Thereby, we can reach a meta-critical perspective” (ibid., 15). In Yu's view, without a critique of ideology historical materialism could degenerate into an unsophisticated empiricism. This would result in a merely academic form of knowledge that completely abandons the much needed critical dimension and the focus on totality (*zongti* 总体). Thus, in order “to maintain [its] revolutionary nature,” ideological critique must be considered an indispensable element of the theory of historical materialism (ibid.).

Yu Wujin evaluates Marx's use of the term ideology based on the categorization of Raymond Geuss, who differentiates between descriptive, pejorative and positive concepts of ideology.¹⁶ Yu does so, not by way of reviewing debates of ideology in Western Marxism that he had studied intensively,¹⁷ but by referring to theorists from the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In general agreement with Erich Hahn and Peter Christian Ludz, Yu arrives at the conclusion that the “true essence” (*zhen di* 真谛) of Marx's concept of ideology was pejorative, but is critical of GDR theorists who reduced ideology to a matter of “false consciousness”

15 马克思和恩格斯合著的德意志意识形态不仅是马克思主义哲学发展史和意识形态概念史上的最重要的文献，也是整个人类思想史上的最重要的文献之一。这就是说，马克思是我们的同时代人；这就是说，理解马克思仍然是我们时代的哲学主题；这就是说，理解马克思必须回到马克思本人的著作中去。

16 In Geuss' categorization the pejorative concept denotes “criticism of the beliefs, attitudes, and wants of the agents in a particular society” with the aim of freeing “the agents from a particular kind of delusion,” that is not based on a “empirical mistake.” His “pejorative concept” is therefore equivalent to what other theorists categorize as negative or critical. (Geuss 1999, 12)

17 In order to research Western ideological theory, Yu stayed at Frankfurt University from 1988 to 1990 as a visiting scholar under the supervision of the renowned German political scientist Iring Fetscher (1922–2014). Loosely associated with the second generation of the Frankfurt School, Fetscher analysed the development of Marxist theory as ideology in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Yu also participated in academic workshops on the concept of ideology organized by the philosopher Alfred Schmidt. Schmidt was Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's student and is considered to be a pioneer of an undogmatic, emancipatory reception of Marx. Yu states that through these encounters he reached a deeper understanding of key texts of the Critical theory of the Frankfurt School and Western Marxism in general. (Yu 1993, 8–9)

(*xujia yishi* 虚假意识).¹⁸ Although Marx and Engels occasionally used the term in a descriptive manner, Yu argues it would be best to view ideology “essentially as a spiritual force that fabricates illusions, obscures the real conditions and is an upside down, mystical reflection of reality” (Yu 1993, 128). Therefore, Yu defines Marx’s concept of ideology as follows:

In class societies, [ideology] takes shape in the legal and political super-structure that suits the economical basis and which is built on the latter. [It] represents the basic interests and emotions, the sum of appearances and ideas of the ruling class. Its basic feature is the conscious or unconscious use of illusionary relations in order to replace and disguise the real relations.¹⁹ (*ibid.*, 129)

Yu’s understanding of Marx’ concept of ideology,²⁰ as outlined in the above quotation, is in accordance with the Marx’s and Engels’ in *The German Ideology*, although they never explicitly defined the term.

Thus, it seems contradictory that in the passage on the development of Marx’s conception of ideology in *Capital*, Yu Wujin claims that the centre of Marx’s critique of bourgeois ideology is the critique of the commodity fetish (*shangpin baiwujiao* 商品拜物教), which conceals that the real purpose of the capitalist mode of production is the generation of value. In the fetishism of bourgeois economy the social character of things becomes a natural quality. Therefore, Yu considers the transformation of the labour theory of value of classical economy into a “theory of the value of labour power” (*laodongli de jiazhi lilun* 劳动力的价值理论) as Marx’s historical contribution to the research of political economy. Since Marx revealed that only labour power allows for the generation of value, Marx’s theory destroys the “centre of capitalist ideology,” which is the commodity fetish. Yu further emphasizes that the critique of the commodity fetish is highly important for both the analysis of capitalist societies and China’s developing commodity economy (*ibid.*, 89–92).

Therefore, if the commodity fetish is the centre of capitalist ideology and China is developing a commodity economy, this could be read as a claim that China was

18 To Yu, this reduction causes a lot of problems and misunderstandings, i.e. is ideology completely illusionary? Is it a malicious invention or unconscious false ideas? (Yu 1993, 130)

19 在阶级社会中，适合一定经济基础以及竖立在这一基础之上的法律和政治的上层建筑而形成起来，代表统治阶级根本利益的情感，表象和观念的总和，其根本的特征是自觉地或不自觉地向幻想的联系来取代并掩蔽现实的联系。

20 Yu states that this definition is not sufficient and needs to be supplemented by the five following features of Marx’ conception: practicality/ practice-orientation (*shijianxing* 实践性), aims at totality (*zongtixing* 总体性), class-relatedness (*jiejixing* 阶级性), disguises (*yanbixing* 掩蔽性) real conditions, relative autonomy (*xiangdui dulixing* 相对独立性). (Yu 1993, 129–37)

in the process of becoming a capitalist society. It would however be misleading to interpret Yu's line of reasoning as an indication of a subversive attitude. Yu emphasizes the "general confrontation of capitalist and bourgeois ideology," while also underlining that it is necessary to distinguish between "ideologies in a socialist society" (*shehuizhuyi shehui de yishixingtai* 社会主义社会的意识形态), and "socialist ideology" (*shehuizhuyi yishixingtai* 社会主义意识形态) that denotes the most important ideology in socialist society. Given the mix of forms of ownership and the existence and development of different classes in socialist China, Yu argues, that its socialist society is full of contradictions. This finds its expression in the ideological field (*yishixingtai lingyu* 意识形态领域), which consists of contradictory ideologies (socialist, bourgeois, petit-bourgeois, etc.). Therefore, in socialist China ideology becomes an ensemble of ideas (*guannian zongti* 观念总体) with complicated structural relations. (Yu 2009, 350)

Yu's view on socialist ideology is clearly in line with the official announcement in 1987 of the entry into the "primary stage of socialism" (*shehuizhuyi chuji jieduan* 社会主义初级阶段), a formulation that served as a theoretical justification for the re-introduction of markets and was said to correspond to the economic policies of the early PRC. His ideas also echo the position of the CCP of the late 1980s that China could make use of a capitalist sociation mode without importing its perceived "bad sides." Yu likewise implies (although he does not state explicitly) that it is possible to establish a commodity economy without falling in the trap of its ideology that is the commodity fetish. Given that the commodity fetish was explained by Marx as a "real abstraction," that is, as distorted economic practice instead of a spiritual distortion of economic practice, he would have rejected the idea of controlling the fetish by disseminating knowledge of it, rather than aiming at the destruction of its basis as a socialist praxis.

Despite Yu's tendency to move away from Marx in this respect, he still provided a huge contribution to the understanding of Marx's concepts of ideology, which had been obscured by the deformed interpretations in official Soviet and Chinese discourses. Building on Marx's argument in *The German Ideology*, Yu affirms the relative autonomy of ideology. To him, a critique of ideology should not adopt a simplifying and negative attitude towards it, but must apply the method of dialectical negation, a method that Yu sees at work in Lenin's writings as well as in the early thought of Mao Zedong. By contrast, the "ideological determinism" that in Yu's view guided the politics of the Cultural Revolution and led to a general condemnation of all old Chinese and present Western ideologies, is incompatible with Marxism and Leninism. (ibid. 1993, 126).

Yu strongly emphasizes the method of dialectical negation that aims at discovering a new world through the critique of the old one, and rejects historical determinism, which in official Soviet and Chinese accounts led to the dogmatic foretelling of the future. He argues that in contemporary China it is important to engage in a critique of ideology that is “faithful to Marx’s scientific spirit,” while acknowledging that the CCP’s focus on economic development is in line with the central assumptions of the ideological theory of historical materialism. (Yu 1993, 9–11)

Concluding Remarks

In *On Ideology*, there can be distinguished an overlap of Yu Wujin’s own re-appropriation of Marx’s theory of ideology and official positions towards socialist ideology. Yu’s work targets the petrification of Marxist theory that stemmed from the dominance of the Stalinist type of dialectical materialism as it was displayed in the Chinese translations of Soviet textbooks on philosophy. He highlights the necessity to re-engage with the original works of Marx, especially *The German Ideology*, and contemporary Western Marxism. Yu’s resolute departure from dialectical materialism does not imply the dismissal of Marxism-Leninism per se, and even less so the abandoning of dialectics. He advocates both a critical concept of ideology that he claims to be essential in Marx’s works, as well as the method of dialectical negation in the treatment of ideologies. According to Yu, ideological critique is a key component of the incontestable theory of historical materialism.

Yu’s interpretations are generally consistent with the CCP’s economic policy of the time. He expresses this, on a terminological level, through using ideology in a neutral or positive sense when discussing the “the ideology of the CCP,” and using the concept in a pejorative sense when touching upon “capitalist ideologies.” However, in emphasizing the critical character of Marx’s conception of ideology, Yu paves the way for abandoning the official use of the term in organized Marxism. Here, critique of ideology, which combines anti-authoritarianism with political intervention, was replaced by an abstract and general definition that at best understands ideology as the spiritual expression of the material circumstances and interests of a class. As Reitz argues, in the long run, this definition of ideology contributed to the official Soviet position that a tight form of sociation from above is sanctioned by Marxist theory. Consequently, the prior repression of ideological critique becomes one of the theoretical preconditions for Stalinism (Reitz 2004, 702).

Although Yu does not engage in a critique of ideology, his work indicates that Marx’s critical theory can also be applied in the Chinese context. Yu thus provides a theoretical foundation for a critical re-evaluation of Marxism in China, refuting

certain dogmatic forms of Marxism that had long become an ideology in its critical sense. Yu's work exhibits a remarkable fusion of Marxism as an ideology and Marxism as a critique of ideology.

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From Religion to Revolution...and Nationalism: Hui Identity and Historical Materialism in the Work of Jamāl al-Dīn Bai Shouyi and Beyond

*Ady VAN DEN STOCK**

Abstract

The work of the Marxist historian Jamāl al-Dīn Bai Shouyi (1909–2000), a member of the Chinese Muslim Hui ethnic group, offers a window into the close and complex relation between the contested categories of politics, religion, and ethnicity in modern Chinese intellectual history, particularly with respect to the historical development of Chinese Muslim identity in its encounter with Marxist historical materialism. In this article, I provide a limited case study of this broader problematic by analysing Bai's writings on Hui identity. In doing so, I attempt to contextualise his arguments with reference to the changing status of religion in contemporary Chinese Marxist discourse, and reflect on the entanglement of nationalism, religion, and ethnopolitics in modern China.

Keywords: Islam in modern China, historical materialism, Bai Shouyi, ethnicity, religion, nationalism

Od religije k revoluciji ... in nacionalizmu: Sino-muslimanska identiteta in historični materializem v delih Džamala al-Dina, znanega kot Bai Shouyi, in drugje

Izvilleček

Delo marksističnega zgodovinarja Bai Shouyija (1909–2000), člana kitajske muslimanske etnične skupnosti Hui, ponuja vpogled v tesne in kompleksne odnose med spornimi kategorijami politike, religije in etičnosti v moderni kitajski intelektualni zgodovini, še posebej glede na zgodovinski razvoj muslimanske identitete na Kitajskem, na katerega je med drugim vplival marksistični historični materializem. V tem članku ponujam del študije širše problematike z analizo Baijevih spisov o sino-muslimanski identiteti. S tem želim kontekstualizirati njegove argumente s sklicevanjem na spreminjajoč se status religije v sodobnem kitajskem marksističnem diskurzu in razmisliti o prepletu nacionalizma, religije in etnopolitike v moderni Kitajski.

Ključne besede: islam v moderni Kitajski, zgodovinski materializem, Bai Shouyi, etničnost, religija, nacionalizem

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I suppose you have a new slogan now, that “There is no God but Allah, but both Mohammed and Marx are his prophets” I suggested. But none of them would commit himself on such a ticklish question. They were prepared to march under the Red Star and the Crescent, but had not yet embroidered the name “Karl Marx” on their prayer rugs. (Nym Wales 1939, 163)

The Contested Meaning of Religion: Self-Reference and Substitution

It is probably no longer controversial to claim that terms such as “religion,” “ethnicity,” “philosophy,” “science,” “politics,” “society,” and “culture” do not simply denote natural or unproblematic categories which can straightforwardly serve to organise our academic knowledge of the world. Rather, they can be taken as referring to fluid, culturally variable, and thus highly contestable domains of knowledge and action used to describe, locate, and renegotiate human experiences, behaviour, beliefs, expectations, and identities within the field of social existence. Even if this is arrived at *via negationis* (e.g. “I am not a religious person,” “Chinese thought is not philosophy”), it seems unlikely that our self-understanding on a more everyday level can remain immune to these basic coordinates of an epistemological and institutional order which spread across the globe in a process we usually refer to as “modernisation” (which is in fact another of those terms).

The history of how a society such as China came to absorb and reinterpret this order under the direct impact of far-reaching socio-political transformations has already given rise to an immense scholarly literature.¹ Crucially, none of the terms I listed above had a direct semantic equivalent in traditional Chinese taxonomies of knowledge or imaginaries of everyday experience. The forced entry of China into the colonial horizon of modernity, usually taken as occurring with the outbreak of the First Opium War in 1839, gave rise to an increasingly extensive application of what would later become known as the “Needham question,” which famously asked why China had failed to develop modern science despite its considerable technological know-how. In a sense, starting from the late Qing period, this question came to be applied to nearly every one of the familiar, but at the same time highly indeterminate, terms which serve as coordinates in our current epistemological landscape. Where was religion, where was philosophy, where was (democratic) politics in traditional China? What does it mean to say, for example, that Confucianism was a form of philosophy and not a religion? Were these fields of learning and action insufficiently differentiated or did they rather form of more organic and integrated

1 To get a sense of the scope of this transformation, good places to start are Lackner and Vittinghoff (2004) and Jin and Liu (2009).

whole in the past?² And how, as Hu Shi 胡适 (1891–1962) put it, “can we best assimilate modern civilisation in such a manner as to make it congenial and congruous and continuous with the civilisation of our own making?” (Sela 2017, 336).

The broader stakes behind the overall question as to how retroactively applying these categories to different historical and cultural contexts affects and possibly distorts our understanding are well-known, and are often presented as very high indeed. The word “Eurocentrism,” while hardly explanatory or helpful in itself, is frequently used as a stand-in for the whole range of problems which this question entails. The close link between colonialism and the emergence of the discipline of religious studies, for instance, has been well documented and closely analysed (see Masuzawa 2005; Chidester 2014).³ As such, it is not hard to see why such categories, when imposed on the non-Western “Other,” are assumed to behave not like positive conditions of the possibility for the experience of historical or cultural alterity, but rather as rendering the latter inaccessible, or, conversely, reducing it to an imperfect adumbration of “Western” modernity. Efforts to retrieve the dawning of modernity or certain features of modernity in, for example, the work of thinkers from the Warring States Period (481–221 BCE) may succeed in restoring their normative validity or at least potential, but at the same time remain open to the accusation that they have failed to displace the standards of normativity used in the process by confining these “masters” (*zi* 子) to the domain of “philosophy.” Consequently, the much sought-after cultural particularity of Chinese thought risks being ignored or even effaced, thereby revealing, to quote the subtitle of Tomoko Masuzawa’s (2005) study on the invention of the notion of world religions, “how Western universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism.”

In a more general sense, it is worth pointing out that while individual identity is assumed to be a basic concern of people and communities in modern society, the latter are forced to make do with established (or to put it in stronger terms, “hegemonic”) and communicatively recognizable means of identification and individualisation.⁴ None of this means that the epistemological and identity coordinates I listed above can be treated as known quantities, quite the opposite. While everyday communication does

2 For Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929), even the very category of “history” and “historiography,” as a mode of social analysis conducive to simultaneously constructing and “saving” the nation, had to be invented by breaking with “old history,” the twenty-four traditional dynastic histories in his view not being histories at all, but rather “genealogies of twenty-four clans” (Sela 2017, 328).

3 On the introduction of the category of “religion” and the discipline of religious studies in modern China, see Kuo (2010) and Meyer (2015).

4 This explains the increasing ineptitude of claims to individual “authenticity,” and instead strengthens the appeal of enacting one’s social roles through what Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul J. D’Ambrosio have analysed as “genuine pretending” (see Moeller and D’Ambrosio 2017).

not require (and often shuns) exact definitions, the coordinating or orienting function of a term such as “religion” may not be immediately apparent on this level, seeing how religion is increasingly presented as a source of social conflict or even the dominant factor behind a veritable “clash of civilisations.” Arguably, the word “religion” in particular often serves to interrupt, complicate, or even preclude communication in the self-proclaimed secular societies of Western Europe and North America.

Additionally, the fact that I was personally unable to find a way around using the adjectives “culturally variable” and “social” immediately after having enumerated “culture” and “society” as examples of contested domains of knowledge and practice in the first paragraph of my paper, perhaps already indicates that it is hard to avoid a certain circularity in trying to pinpoint the historically specific semantic baggage of such terms. It would not be all that unusual to say, for instance, that the notion of culture is itself culturally variable (see for example Botz-Bornstein 2010), or more generally to see the *explanandum* recurring inside of the *explanans*. While such terms are obviously not devoid of more or less determinate extra-linguistic referents, there seems to be no other way but to gradually proceed by way of self-reference in using or reinterpreting them. From the perspective of Niklas Luhmann’s conception of meaning as an “autopoetic” medium of communication (for the case of “religion” as a form of meaning in particular, see Luhmann (2013, 1–35), this can hardly be accidental. The detour through self-reference seems unavoidable, even when the use of a term such as “religion” is deemed to be fundamentally unhelpful and even distorting in the study of premodern or non-Western societies, simply because any determinate negation of the category of “the religious” must specify how and why the meaning of “religion” has to be displaced or translated into something else altogether. Consequently, one has to proceed by dismantling “religion,” so to speak, from the inside out.

To give a specific example drawn from modern Chinese intellectual history, when the philosopher Xie Youwei 谢幼伟 (1903–1976) argued that there had never been such a thing as “religion” in traditional China, understood as a discrete form of ritual and spiritual practice concerned with a domain clearly marked off against “immanent” or “secular” social existence and interaction, he at the same time felt compelled to argue that the Confucian notion of “filial piety” (*xiao* 孝) could serve as a this-worldly and human-oriented “substitute” (代替品) for religion. In his view, filial piety could take over religion’s supposed socially integrating and emotionally comforting function, without reproducing the categorical divide between the domains of the human and the transcendent he associated with Christianity (see Xie 1946, 5–8).⁵ Xie’s negation of “religion” then was coupled to a certain anxiety over losing something seen as essential and crucial, specifically to modernising

5 As Goossaert and Palmer argue, Christianity often served as the institutional “model religion” in Republican China (see Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 67–89).

societies, in the process.⁶ In other words, from a historically sensitive perspective, the question for us becomes not so much what religion *is*, but rather what it is being *distinguished from*, what such a distinction is intended to effect, and which “substitutes” are introduced to occupy the discursive void left in its absence within a specific historical context.⁷ In turn, such a line of questioning can further inform and enrich our own efforts to gain a more precise understanding of a highly indeterminate category such as religion.

The Complexity of Religion and the End of the Revolution in Modern China

While the abovementioned considerations are admittedly abstract and formulaic, I believe they can be helpful for orienting ourselves within the more specific problematic I will attempt to address in the rest of my paper, namely the position of Islam as a religion within modern Chinese historical materialist discourse. I will do so mainly by means of a limited case study of the writings of the Marxist historian Jamāl al-Dīn Bai Shouyi 白寿彝 (1909–2000) on Hui identity. Additionally, I will try to show how Bai’s approach resonates with contemporary Chinese discourse on religion that is informed by a historical materialist perspective. The rather cheeky remark “Nym Wales,” a pseudonym of the famous journalist Helen Foster Snow (1907–1997),⁸ made in the course of a conversation with Chinese Muslim recruits to the Red Army during the Long March, according to which the unlikely figure of Marx might find his way into the Islamic declaration of faith (*shahādah*) made by every Muslim, serves as an epigraph to my paper for a reason: it can be seen as symbolising a complex social and discursive constellation in which the boundaries between the religious and the political are far from clear-cut.⁹

Arguably, one of the most striking features of the fate of religion in modern China in general, and specifically in the period between the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the beginning of the spectacular though still closely monitored return of the religious in the reform era, is that the communist assault on

6 For a much more elaborate and metaphysically buttressed modern Confucian argument which runs in the same direction, see Tang (1958, 27–54, ch. 2): “family-consciousness and moral reason (家庭意识与道德理性).

7 As the sociologist Andrew Abbott argues with reference to the evolution of the social sciences, a certain discourse must always try to find ways to accommodate the epistemic domain of their opponents or competitors once they have managed to discredit or simply outlive them. In his words, “any temporarily victorious pole of a dichotomy must comprehend subject matters that had been more comfortably comprehended by its erstwhile opponent [...] defeating one’s enemies means taking up their burdens.” (Abbott 2001, 18)

8 Wife of Edgar Snow (1905–1972), author of *Red Star over China*.

9 The most extensive and subtle historical analysis of the relation between Chinese Islam and communism to date is Cieciora (2014).

religion as ideology and “feudal superstition” still left the backdoor open for revolutionary politics to become a “substitute” for religion in its own right,¹⁰ albeit in a very un-Confucian and anti-Confucian manner probably not envisaged by Xie Youwei.¹¹ Paradoxically enough, the unmasking of ideology, which Marx saw as beginning with the criticism of religion, and as moving from “the criticism of Heaven” to a “criticism of the Earth” (Marx 1844), in turn became a means to legitimise the “organ of class domination” (Lenin 1917) known as the nation-state. In a classic case of the “return of the repressed,” the promise of liberation from religious illusions in itself became endowed with a quasi-eschatological potential. As Bourdieu famously observed, one of the main functions of the “religious field” is that its “theodicies” also serve as a form of “sociodicy” (Bourdieu 1991, 16), that is to say, as justifications for the preservation of a certain social order. “As above, so below,” one might be tempted say.

In contemporary socialist China, the envisaged emancipation of human beings from the shackles of religious and other “idealist” representations of social reality has given way to a discourse of deferred liberation that no longer opens onto a horizon beyond the party-state, with market dynamics now being expected to somehow usher in the advent of socialism in the nearby future.¹² In the reform era, a belief in the “scientific objectivity” and determining nature of economic laws came to replace a class-based conception of subjective revolutionary practice (see Misra 1998, 55–90).¹³ As such, the economy had to be allowed to work its magic, without any interference from

10 Gamsa (2009) provides an excellent discussion of this issue.

11 Like many other thinkers associated with “New Confucianism,” Xie was highly critical of communism and historical materialism (see Xie 1946, 33–53). A more complex and ambiguous case is that of Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988), who is often identified as one of the first representatives of the New Confucian current in modern Chinese thought and, in contrast to exiles such as Xie, stayed on the mainland after the establishment of the PRC and continued to develop his ideas through a dialog with Marxism and Maoism. For Liang’s argument that morality serves as a replacement for religion in Chinese culture, see Liang (1947, 95–121). Although this is not the place for a more extensive discussion, the following quote from a text Liang started writing one year after the founding of the PRC, in which he reflects on the historical role and accomplishments of the Chinese Communist Party, can serve as a vivid illustration of the entanglement of the religious and the political in modern (revolutionary) China: “In a nutshell, the Communist Party unintentionally [!] managed to accomplish the following two things: just like a great religion, it managed to fill in the empty space resulting from China’s lack of religiosity. This is the first point. Secondly, in doing so, it introduced a form of collective life to replace the old ethical order [...] *Filling in the empty space left by the lack of religion was a precondition for ushering in a new form of communal existence.*” (Liang 1951, 384, my italics)

12 The current president, Xi Jinping, has set the date for the realisation of the basis for “socialist modernisation” to somewhere between 2025 and 2035 (see Xinhua 2017).

13 This change is nicely symbolised by the title of an article by Hu Qiaomu 胡乔木 (1912–1992), who had previously served as secretary to Mao between 1941 and 1966: “Act According to Economic Laws: Speed up the Realization of the Four Modernizations” (*Anzhaohao jingji guilü banshi, jiaokuai shixian si ge xiandaihua* 按照经济规律办事, 加快实现四个现代化), *Renmin ribao*, 6 October 1978. (Misra 1998, 65)

political superstition in the ability of individual leaders. The reforms initiated under Deng Xiaoping also involved setting clear limits to the tenure of government leaders¹⁴ in order to avoid a recurrence of something like the Mao cult, which reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution. Perhaps this gesture can be read as an attempt to decouple revolutionary politics from its repressed “religious” dimension. At the same time, the overall loosening of ideological restraints and the depoliticisation of society allowed for a resurgence of “normal” religious activity among the populace and more unconstrained research on religion in the scholarly world. Notably, on the level of academic discourse as well as state policy (which in turn affect people’s everyday understanding), the ground for such a resurgence was prepared by positively redefining “religion” as an integral part of “culture,” the latter being approached as something inherently transcending class interests (see Mou 2003, 21; Tao 2010, 69–70).¹⁵

Still, the particular “complexity” (*fuzaxing* 复杂性), one of the “five natures” (*wuxing* 五性)¹⁶ ascribed to the religious question as early as the 1950s to account for the persistence of religion in socialist China, a notion rehabilitated under Deng Xiaoping in a new government directive issued in 1982 known as “Document Number 19,” has left plenty of room open for theoretical ambiguity. More precisely, if religion should still be conceived of as the “opium of the people,” while class antagonisms are supposed to have already been abolished and the class struggle has ceased to be a political imperative, the question becomes precisely which problem it is responding to, and who is being “anaesthetised” against what, even when the anaesthetising function of religion is reinterpreted positively (see Luo 1991, 151–53).¹⁷ Perhaps it could be argued that it is only now, with the rupture between religion and politics in the ideological shift from subjective revolutionary practice to a celebration of a “permanent revolution” on the level of the productive forces, that “secularisation” as the privatisation of belief comes

14 The term limits for the office of president were recently removed from the constitution by the National People’s Congress in March 2018, thus theoretically allowing the current president, Xi Jinping, to stay in power indefinitely.

15 As Fenggang Yang notes: “Culture is an all-encompassing and esteemed term in the Chinese context [...] when religion is studied as a cultural phenomenon, its ideological incorrectness becomes unimportant and its scientific incorrectness obscure, eliminating two key criticisms of religion by the militant and scientific atheisms respectively.” (Yang 2005, 27)

16 The other four being religion’s “mass nature” (*qunzhongxing* 群众性), “protracted nature” (*changqixing* 长期性), “ethnic nature” (*minzuxing* 民族性), and “international nature” (*guojixing* 国际性). The notion of the “five natures” of religion was first formulated by Li Weihan 李维汉 (1896–1984), the first director of the Central Party School. (see Tao 2010, 64)

17 On the historical reception of Marx’s famous “opium” quote, see Tao (2010). As Tao notes, the historical memory of the Opium Wars explains why “the metaphor of opium and religion, especially with respect to Christianity, had special implications for the Chinese people, for whom opium was viewed not only as a drug but as a source of national humiliation.” (ibid., 61)

into full swing.¹⁸ Needless to say, the full complexity of this problem cannot be done justice to in this short text. However, if people supposedly “no longer turn to religion for comfort because of suffering caused by class oppression and exploitation” (Luo 1991, 154), it seems logical to assume that the soothing function of religion has to be moved to the domain of individual subjective interiority. The so-called “mass nature” (*qunzhongxing* 群众性) of religion thus refers not so much to the importance of religion (and arguably, of ideology in general) for a social collective such as the working class, but rather to the sheer number of *individual* believers. Additionally, the desired overlap between religious convictions and the residual ideological requirements of Chinese socialism can now be defined in purely instrumental and pragmatic terms.¹⁹ This individualistic orientation could explain the emphasis placed on ambiguous and psychologistic terms such “perplexion” (困扰) (Dai and Peng 2000, 313) and the putative need for “psychological attunement” (心理调适) (ibid., 323) in Chinese Marxist discussions on the function of religion in the post-revolutionary era. Instead of counting as “the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering” (Marx 1844), religion now appears as the concern of private individuals in relative abstraction from a social context which is supposed to no longer give rise to any need for the illusions and false comfort of the religious opioid.

At the same time however, it is clear that the “complexity” of the religious question in post-revolutionary in China, specifically in the case of Islam, is closely related to what is known as its “ethnic nature” (*minzuxing* 民族性), which in turn is tied up with international relations, the legitimacy of the party, territorial integrity, and domestic security.²⁰ In other words, lingering in the background there remains a sometimes almost paranoid awareness of the immense ideological power of religion and of the risks of allowing it to flourish, even within a well-defined institutional framework

18 José Casanova (2006, 7) distinguishes between secularization as 1) “the decline of beliefs and practices in modern societies,” 2) “the privatisation of religion,” and 3) “the differentiation of the secular spheres (state, economy, science), usually understood as the ‘emancipation’ from religious institutions and norms.”

19 As He Yanji bluntly states: “What does it matter if religious believers do not understand the norms of socialist morality from the Communist viewpoint, when their behaviour conforms with the requirements of socialist material and spiritual civilisation, even though it is based on Islamic teachings and tradition?” (He 1991, 231)

20 This does not mean that Islam is necessarily seen as more threatening than religions that are not approached in “ethnic” but rather universalist terms such as Christianity. As Maja Veselič (2013, 101) points out: “Although the global discourse of the war on terrorism is now regularly instrumentalised by the Chinese government to justify religious and political repression in Xinjiang, Islam is generally viewed with less suspicion than Christianity due to the anti-Western-imperialist rhetoric and sentiments China shares with many Muslim majority countries, as well as to the lack of Islam’s political influence in more recent historical periods.”

of loyalty to the party and the state. The current unprecedented crackdown on the predominantly Muslim Uyghur population in the Western border province of Xinjiang shows that the return of religion to postrevolutionary China has been all but unconditional, with an estimated 1 million Uyghurs being subjected to “transformation through education” (*jiaoyu zhuanhua* 教育转化) in extra-legal internment facilities (see Zenz 2018 for a detailed report). In a Marxist textbook on the sociology of religion dating back almost two decades, Dai Kangsheng 戴康生 (1937–2003) and Peng Yao 彭耀 (b. 1937) already cautioned that every single one of the positive functions associated with the *pharmakon* religion can at the same time be identified as a potential source of risk, the relatively harmless need for “religious identity” for example harbouring the potential to lead to “narrow nationalism,” extremism, and separatism (see Dai and Peng 2000, 320–28). As the Marxist scholar Jin Ze 金泽 (b. 1954) dramatically predicts, echoing Jiang Zemin’s observation that religion might outlast the existence of classes and nations (see Tao 2010, 59–60):

Religious questions—and in particular the emergencies and mass incidents (突发事件和群发事件) *caused by such questions*—will seriously undermine social development in most cases, and the people affected will far outnumber the believers [...] Inasmuch as religion can influence and interact with an entire society, *and such influence and interactions are even more powerful than regime change and social transformation*, religion should be given particular prominence when a society draws up its cultural blueprint. (Jin 2014, 85, my italics)

No wonder then that in contemporary China, social protest which draws on existing forms of religious organisation and association has to masquerade as what Marx called a “criticism of the Earth” which can be articulated in purely economic terms devoid of more “transcendent” political aspirations (see Luo and Andreas 2016, 479).

Bai Shouyi and Hui Identity: Revolution, Nationalism, and the Indeterminacy of the Religious

It is crucial at this point to emphasise that the categories of ethnicity and race substantially complicate any consideration of the relation between religion and politics in modern China, particularly in the case of Chinese Islam and Muslim identity. Maja Veselič aptly characterises the ethno-religious identity of Chinese Muslim minorities such as the Hui as a “labyrinth” (Veselič 2013, 104–6). If the in itself already highly fluid category of “religion” is approached as the defining characteristic of the ethnic identity of certain groups, its status becomes even more ambiguous

and unstable, as something divided between the ethereal sphere of “belief” and more tangible or material aspects such as language, ritual, custom, dress, and skin colour.²¹ In Marxist terms, this means that the domain of the religious cannot be easily dismissed as a transitory epiphenomenon exclusively located on the level of the “superstructure,” but remains suspended between “Heaven” and “Earth” for as long as it is still allowed to exist. This indeterminate position of religion quickly becomes apparent if we turn to the specific case of the Marxist historian Bai Shouyi.

Bai’s life spans almost the entire twentieth century. He was born in 1909 in Kaifeng (Henan Province) and passed away in Beijing in 2000 after a long and active career in which he held various academic positions, most notably as head of the History Department at Beijing Normal University. Bai also served in a number of official capacities, such as vice-president of the Islamic Association of China (*Zhongguo yisilanjiao xiehui* 中国伊斯兰教协会), the official representative body for Chinese Muslims founded in 1953. Bai was thus clearly an establishment intellectual, who combined academic aspirations with political responsibilities.²² As most readers probably already noticed in the above, Bai also had an Islamic name (*jiaoming* 教名, or *jingming* 经名, “scripture/ Quranic name”), *Jamāl al-Dīn* (*Zhemaluding* 哲玛鲁丁 in Chinese). To avoid any misunderstanding, by most accounts, most importantly his own, Bai was not a practicing Muslim and the fact that he bore this name was probably simply due to the fact that he was born into a Hui family. To the best of my knowledge at least, Bai never signed any of his writings as “*Jamāl al-Dīn*.” There is also a certain anachronism in the statement that Bai was born as a Hui, since the Hui, just like the other nine “ethnic minorities” (*shaoshu minzu* 少数民族) in present-day China who are classified as followers of Islam, were only officially recognised as a separate “nationality” (*minzu* 民族)²³ by the state following a massive government-orchestrated ethnic classification project during the 1950s, something for which the way had already been paved during the Yan’an

21 Notably, while party cadres are all assumed to be “scientific materialists and atheists,” that is to say, not to belong to any religious denomination, an exception is made for members of an ethnic minority (see Chan 2005, 90).

22 For more detailed biographical information, see Bartke (1997, 1: 10), Liu (2011), and Chérif-Chebbi (2015).

23 This highly charged and ambiguous term can also be translated as “ethnic group” or even simply “people” or “nation,” as is the case in the common expression *Zhonghua minzu* 中华民族, “the Chinese people,” “the people(s) of China,” or “the Chinese nation.” The main problem with the term *minzu* is that it has ethnic, territorial, and political aspects, which are not always easy to separate analytically. Thus the Chinese “nation” (*minzu*) can be said to include a variety of different *minzu* 民族, ethnic groups, or “nationalities” in the more traditional Marxist phraseology. In what follows, I will use the term “nationality” with reference to Marxist discourse in particular, while employing the now more commonly used word “ethnic group” as a more neutral descriptive category. Since the secondary literature is not always consistent in this respect, the reader must allow for the appearance of variants such as “minority nationalities,” terms which are located in the same semantic sphere as *minzu*.

period (see Gladney 1998, 121; Cieciora 2014).²⁴ The complex history of how the term *hui* 回 (or more archaically, *huihui* 回回) changed from a designation for all Chinese Muslims that had been in use since the Yuan period (1279–1368) (see Bai 1943, 19) to a name for one of a number of Muslim minorities cannot be treated in the context of this short article.²⁵ In any case, by his own admission, it was only in 1937 with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War and the attempts by Japan dating back to the early 1930s to win over Chinese Muslims through strategic promises of greater

24 Numbering almost 11 million people and spread across the entire territory of the People's Republic (with substantial concentrations in Northwestern China) the Chinese-speaking Hui are the largest of the ten ethnic minority groups in present-day China identified as Muslim (of a total of 23 million). The other nine Muslim minorities (Uyghur, Dongxiang, Salar, Kazak, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Bonan, and Tatar) speak a variety of non-Sinitic languages and are mostly concentrated in specific geographic areas, the most well-known undoubtedly being the Uyghurs in the Western border province of Xinjiang. By contrast, vestimentary habits such as white skullcaps for men and veils for women aside, the only "visible" characteristic of the Hui which sets them apart from the Han majority is their assumed common faith in Islam and their observation of the ritual practices and religious obligations which come with being a Muslim (most notably abstaining from the consumption of pork and alcohol). This is why the Hui are sometimes inaccurately referred to as "Chinese Muslims," which is obviously a misnomer, since other Muslim minorities in the People's Republic are no less "Chinese" than their Hui fellow believers (Gladney 2008, 182). On the other hand, this shows to what extent perceived (physical, cultural) proximity to the Han majority is handled as a marker of "Chineseness." If one pushes this logic to the extreme, the "Chineseness" of the Hui becomes something like a "redemptive quality" for their being Muslim: "Hui culture is a combination of two great traditions: the Chinese and the Islamic. *The Chinese element of the Hui culture decided the Hui loyalty to China.* Examples of their loyalty were not only in the Republican era, but also in dynastic times. The Hui, scattering across China, are bound to the Chinese soil and to China's national fate. In fact, the Hui people have strong 'master-hood' consciousness as Chinese people, or as a group of people in China, in case the term 'Chinese' might lead to any misinterpretation. This characteristic seems outstanding in comparison with Islamic ethnic minorities in some other countries." (Lei 2012, 168, emphasis added). That the Hui are distinguished as an ethnicity on the basis of their faith alone is remarkable given the fact that religious affiliation is not recorded in the official census (Gladney 2008, 181), and is not used as a sole criterion for distinguishing one ethnic group from another. The Hui are thus something of a theoretical anomaly within the ethnopolitics of the Chinese Marxist universe (see Gong 2006, 43–44). The ensuing ambiguity of Hui identity in contemporary China is vividly illustrated by Lesley Turnbull (2016), who conducted anthropological fieldwork in the city of Kunming and rural Shadian (both in Yunnan Province) and describes a marked opposition between Hui women for whom only religious conviction and practice matters to their identity as Hui on the one hand, and those who argue that being Hui is a matter of descent and lineage and thus has little or nothing to do with Islam as a religion. As one her interlocutors who falls into the latter category put it revealingly: "We *Huizhu* have a genetic link to the *Qur'an*, so we are Muslims whether or not we practice the teachings of Islam" (Turnbull 2016, 129, my italics). Between these two extremes, it is of course possible to find a lot less clear-cut combinations of the ethnic and religious dimension of the term *hui* in everyday communication. (see Veselić 2013, 105)

25 See Gladney (1991, 65–98), Cieciora (2016), and Chen (2017) for detailed accounts. The semantic indeterminacy of the term *hui* becomes even more obvious if we consider the fact that one Republican-era author, Chen Jie 陈捷 (dates unknown), used the term *huijiao minzu* 回教民族 to refer to *all* followers of Islam across the globe. (see Chen 1933)

autonomy (along the lines of an “independent” Manchuria)²⁶ that Bai began to pay any real attention to the problem of the position of Islam in the Chinese Republic and, presumably, to his own identity as a Hui.²⁷ Bai’s concern for this problem was thus, at least initially, the direct result of what he saw as the enormous strategic and ideological importance of the Muslim peoples of China for safeguarding the territorial integrity of the Republic and resisting Japanese imperialism (see Bai 2001c, 81).²⁸

I have only found one somewhat obscure source which claims that Bai Shouyi was actually a devout believer in Islam and that his overt and consistent commitment to Marxism and historical materialism was simply a cover allowing him to quietly continue his scholarly work after the establishment of the PRC (Chang 1981, 36). However, like many other historians, a risky profession in a highly politicised society, Bai was subjected to harsh criticism during the Cultural Revolution, but somehow managed to survive these turbulent years relatively unscathed. That the author of the source in question, the scholar Haji Yusuf Chang (Chinese name Zhang Zhaoli 张兆理, dates unknown),²⁹ was a personal acquaintance of Bai arguably lends some credence to this claim. However, what is perhaps more interesting is the rhetorical strategy Chang uses to justify his portrayal of Bai Shouyi as a pious Muslim operating under the cover of the Marxist creed. More specifically, in Chang’s view, Bai’s adoption of the Marxist orthodoxy should be seen as part of an age-old defensive tactic used by Chinese Muslims to insulate themselves against external threats in times of danger (see *ibid.*, 34). As Chang writes in an earlier text:

All the Chinese Muslim scholars, whether of the past or the present, have contrived to defend Islam by using “syncretism” as a negative weapon in facing whatever ideology or influence threatened them under any

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- 26 Promises were made for the creation of a “Muslim nation” (*huihuiguo* 回回国) within the Greater East-Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere” of the Japanese empire (see Lei 2012, 143–46). Cieciora (2016, 127) surmises that the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 probably coincided with the emergence of the idea that the Hui formed a separate nationality (distinct from the Han majority as well as other Muslim minorities, most notably the Uyghurs).
- 27 Bai had already devoted two empirically oriented articles to the history of Islam in China, namely “Zhongguo huijiao shiliao jilu 中国回教史料编辑录 (Compilation of Historical Materials on Islam in China)” from 1935 and “Cong Daluosi zhanyi shuodao Zhongguo Yisilan zui zao de wenhua jilu 从怛罗斯战役说到中国伊斯兰最早的记录 (An Account of the Earliest Records of Islam in China in the Context of the Battle of Talas)” from 1936.
- 28 Bai was a member of the ethnographic expedition into Northwest China launched by the historian Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚 (1893–1980), whose journal *Yugong* 禹贡 devoted two special issues to the topic of Islam in China. For a description of Bai’s impressions during this journey, see Bai (2001, 584–623).
- 29 Chang was one of the participants in a “goodwill mission” organised by the “Chinese Muslim National Salvation Association” (*Zhongguo huimin jiuguo xiehui* 中国回民救过协会) during the Second World War in an effort to counter similar diplomatic propaganda initiatives undertaken by the Japanese (see Lei 2012, 151).

circumstances. So far, it has proven a very successful weapon. Unlike Islam, Buddhism, once syncretised with Confucianism or Taoism, has its original doctrines fundamentally changed or supplanted. (Chang 1960, 21)

Within this line of reasoning, Bai Shouyi's "syncretistic" adoption of historical materialism can be placed on a par with the elaborate usage of (Neo-)Confucian concepts to expound and defend the Islamic doctrine proposed by Muslim thinkers from the late Ming and Qing period, who are generally referred to as *huiru* 回儒, or "Islamic Confucians." The extensive corpus of texts they produced is collectively called the *Han kitāb* (*Han ketabu* 汉克塔布 in Chinese), an expression combining the words "Chinese" (Han) and the Arabic word for "book" (see Benite (2005) for a detailed historical study). In very general terms, these Sino-Islamic philosophico-religious texts made strong normative claims for the status of Islam as a *jiao* 教 or "teaching" endowed with the potential for subjective self-cultivation as well as socio-political transformation. As such, a basic idea motivating the *huiru* was that the Islamic teaching and way of life could exist side by side with and even reinforce established Confucian ideals of spiritual self-improvement and political governance. Additionally, according to Chang, the ideas developed in the literature of the *Han kitāb* remained fundamentally unaffected by the Confucian terminology they adopted.

It is certainly questionable whether any religious or philosophical doctrine can remain immune to the conceptual vocabulary and grammar it uses to articulate a certain worldview. The ideological encounter between Marxist materialism and Islam in modern Chinese history seems improbable enough in itself, although we would be mistaken to dismiss such an "unholy alliance" (Fowkes and Gökay 2009) purely on the basis of an abstract demand for conceptual consistency. In any case, if we turn our attention to Bai Shouyi's embrace of Marxism, we clearly find the exact opposite from the hermeneutical outlook Chang ascribes to the *Han kitāb* authors. Bai's historical materialist analysis of the doctrinal, social, and cultural development of Islam in China could no longer, either logically or on a practical level, claim to derive its normative validity from Islamic sources of authority such as the Qur'an and Hadith. Additionally, while it may have been tempting to buttress the "Chineseness" of Islam by drawing on the existence of a rich *huiru* tradition, such a strategy had to confront the fact that Confucianism had meanwhile become discredited as a "feudal" impediment to modernisation. Consequently, any transformation of the Islamic teachings into a vehicle for the national liberation and self-determination of China would have to be coupled with an effort to distance Sino-Islamic traditions from Confucianism as a marker of "Chineseness," or, alternatively, a radical redefinition of the status of Confucianism

as a “teaching.” In short, the “terms of agreement” and compatibility between China and Islam had changed drastically. In effect, Marxist inclusions of the *Han kitāb* authors into the historical tradition of Chinese Islam thus generally occur on a rather indeterminate level, in which abstraction is made from the specific content of their religious philosophy in order to turn the latter into intellectual expressions of exemplary “localisation” (i.e. “Sinicisation”) (see Jin 2017, 15) and precursors to the effective integration of Hui identity and nationalism.

In other words, Muslims and other “ethnic minorities” in modern China had to find a way of positioning themselves in relation to China as a new nation-state and to nationalism as the *sine qua non* of any performative political doctrine (see Aubin 2006), an effort that required much more than the ritual invocation of a (most likely apocryphal) saying attributed to the Prophet, according to which “love of the motherland is an article of faith” (*hubb al-watan min al-īmān*). The connection between religion and ethnicity became an unavoidable problem, one ultimately not “resolved” through academic discussion, but rather through the ethnopolitics of the Chinese communist state. Arguably, this connection was nowhere as complex as in the case of the nationality to which Bai belonged, the Hui, whose only defining characteristic vis-à-vis the Han, namely being Muslim, belongs to their religious “superstructure.”³⁰ Normally, Chinese Marxist theoreticians and anthropologists defined a nationality (*minzu*) by means of a whole set of material, cultural, linguistic, and psychological elements, which are assumed to converge in a certain nationality as a discrete carrier of historical experiences. In contemporary Chinese Marxist literature, the classical point of reference in this respect still seems to be Joseph Stalin’s “Marxism and the National Question” from 1913. In this influential tract, Stalin identified four criteria which define a nationality: common language, common territory, common economic life, and a common psychological makeup. That the Chinese-speaking Hui, who were and still are spread across the entire territory of the PRC and whose “economic life” can hardly be separated from that of the Han majority, only share a “common psychological makeup,” that is to say, all believe in Islam, makes their status as a separate nationality questionable, or at least highly unstable. However, as the Marxist scholar Gong Xuezheng 龚学增 (b. 1945)³¹ writes in

30 See footnote 25 above.

31 Gong served as president of the “Teaching and Research Office on Theories of Ethnicity and Religion” (中共中央党校民族与宗教理论教研室), one of the six offices which fall under the “Teaching and Research Department for Scientific Socialism” (*Kexue shehuizhuyi jiaoyanbu* 科学社会主义教研部) at the Central Party School in Beijing, between 1991 and 2004. The name of this research institute in itself points to the strong and historically rooted connection between religious identity and ethnicity in modern China, seeing how the party institutionally treats them as part of the same domain of knowledge.

a text discussing the nexus between ethnicity and religion, there are exceptions to the general rule described by the Stalinist criteria:

Within specific historical conditions, the spread and development of a certain type of communal religion can even exert a determining influence on the formation of a nationality (*minzu*). In this respect, the formation of the Hui nationality in our country is a typical example. Historically speaking, the Hui nationality is a nationality with many ethnic sources (回族是一个多族源的民族). But in their formation, the only commonality of the Hui was their belief in Islam. (Gong 2006, 40)

Bai Shouyi had already tried to argue from within the restrictive context of Stalin's scheme that the three "material" criteria (common language, territory, economic life) for nationality are subordinate to the fourth more subjective and "spiritual" dimension of a "common psychological makeup," which he described by means of the term "national/ethnic consciousness" (*minzu yishi* 民族意识); that is to say, a nationality's self-recognition and self-identification (see Bai 1991, 5–6). While he does not say so explicitly, Bai seems to assume that that the normal relation of dominance between the material and mental is to some extent upset or even reversed in the case of the Hui, as an ethnic group officially only defined by its religion. He notes that "ideas and consciousness are reflections of social existence (*ibid.*, 6)," but adds that the reverse dynamic, of the impact of consciousness upon social existence, is often neglected, although it plays a crucial role in understanding the history of the nation-state and its different, but all equally Chinese, "nationalities."³²

32 Similarly, in a work from 1957 published a few years after Bai's *The Righteous Uprisings of the Hui People*, Lin Gan 林幹 (1916–2017), a scholar specialised in history of the Xiongnu, argued that the ethnic contradictions between Manchu and Hui, which he saw as having given rise to the rebellions of the 19th century, far surpassed those between classes in late Qing society (Lin 1957, 69). At the same time however, Lin analysed factional struggles between Chinese Muslims belonging to different Sufi orders (*menhuan* 门宦) as religious expressions of class conflict (cf. Bai 2001d, 150–56). He thus asserted the primacy of the socio-economic *within* one of the two opposing parties in a broader social antagonism where the ethnic dimension prevails. Additionally, Lin discerned the beginnings of stronger social divisions within the Hui as a people during this period, particularly a nascent division between the land-owning classes (consolidated in the *menhuan* system) on the one hand and the labouring peasant population on the other, germinal intra-ethnic class divisions which were covered over by the larger interethnic conflict between Hui and Manchu. (*ibid.*, 71) Within this line of reasoning caught between ethnic and "material," class-based poles of analysis, Lin ultimately defers to the primacy of the economy in arguing that the Hui uprisings remained unsuccessful because of the absence of a "new class representative of the advanced forces of production," i.e. the industrial proletariat, which still had to come into being.

In more general terms, the ethnic minorities of the current day PRC are still often assumed to be more heavily influenced and in a sense defined by their religious convictions and customs than the supposedly a-religious, secular, and thus more “modern” Han majority. This would seem to suggest that the historical materialist dictum according to which the “base determines the superstructure” only applies to those members of the nation with the most advanced “superstructure,” a curious and targeted inversion of the basic logic of dialectical materialism. Ethnic minorities such as the Hui on the other hand are not so much perceived and described in terms of their material or social conditions of existence, but are rather seen as being overdetermined by the religious component of their social “superstructure.” This strategic suspension of the primacy of the material in turn is crucial for maintaining national unity. As Luo Zhufeng 罗竹风 (1911–1996)³³ for example argued:

The proportion of religious believers among the national minorities ranges from fairly high to very high, while in some groups virtually every person is a religious believer—clearly a situation with a specific “mass nature.” Religious beliefs, minority group feelings, and customs are integrated into an organic whole among these national minorities. Religion sets the norms for their core culture and morality [...] We must respect and take seriously their religious beliefs, or else it will affect the unity of the national minorities [with the nation]. (Luo 1991, 10–11)³⁴

A very similar line of reasoning is put forward by another Marxist thinker, Zhuo Xinping 卓新平 (b. 1955), who makes the routine argument that this dominating influence of religion on the life and mentality of ethnic minorities corresponds to a more primitive stage of social development:

In primitive society, religion and culture were united seamlessly. Primitive culture is none other than a type of religious culture. Every cultural

33 Luo was the first Marxist theoretician to give a positive twist to the “opium” metaphor for religion and attempt to disentangle a “Marxist” conception of religion from the negative overtones of this metaphor (see Tao 2010, 66–69).

34 Cf. Luo 1991, 34: “Although the religions of the Han Chinese are a component of their traditional culture, they are not so closely combined with culture, customs, and psychology as among the minority nationalities. Third, religion plays a large social function. Religion, among the minority nationalities, always plays an integral role in traditional spiritual civilisation [...] The social function of religion among the Han Chinese is far less important than it is for people of ethnic minorities.”

activity in primitive society is a religious activity.³⁵ It is only during its later development that human society creates numerous relatively independent cultural fields that are not subordinated to religion but are free from religious domination. *Precisely because of this, religion is still preserved as both a way of ethnic life and a cultural characteristic among many nations or nationalities.* (Zhuo 2014, 61, emphasis added)

As I already indicated, the problem of the relation between ethnicity and religion, which is obviously tied up with concerns over national unity, occupied a central position in the work of Bai Shouyi. Bai is probably best known for his role as the leading editor of the monumental 22-volume volume *Comprehensive History of China* (*Zhongguo tongshi* 中国通史), which was completed in 1999 after a decade-long collective effort of almost 500 individual authors (including 28 different editors), and covers the entire period stretching from remote antiquity to the founding of the People's Republic. Apart from overseeing the entire project, Bai himself was in charge of the composition of the first volume, which serves as a more theoretical introduction to the *Comprehensive History* as a whole. Revealingly enough, the first chapter of this book focuses on the idea that China is a “unified multi-ethnic state” (*tongyi de duominzu guojia* 统一的多民族国家) (Bai 2004, 1–98), an idea which would seem to be indebted to Fei Xiaotong's 费孝通 (1910–2005) characterisation of the Chinese people as being defined by a “structure of unity within diversity” (*duoyuan yiti geju* 多元一体格局) (Fei 1989). In an earlier and more concise text in which he already outlined this concept (Bai 1991), Bai argued that a history of China should compromise the historical trajectory of all its minorities and guard itself against “Han chauvinism.” The unity of the Chinese people cannot be seen as a transhistorical and unchanging given, but rather required a long process of historical development before finally crystallising into a dialectical unity in which difference is preserved within the modern socialist nation-state. The latter is thus the historical form in which ethnic minority groups can come into their own as a people whose “hyphenated” (i.e., “Sino-Islamic,” see Lipman 1996) identity is not

35 In a similar vein, Qin Huibin 秦惠彬 (b. 1940) speaks of the “phenomenon of the consubstantiality of religion and ethnicity (教族一体现象)” with reference to Islam in China (Qin 1996, 18). Thus, for Qin, unlike Buddhism, which he sees as an integral part of Chinese intellectual history, the historical development of Islam in China is to be located entirely on the level of social history. In effect, for Qin, Chinese Islam constitutes an anomalous exception to the “normal” laws of religious development: “It was completely determined by kinship relations and regional geographical relations. Generally speaking, the internal development of a religion should determine the development of its vehicle (*zaiti* 载体) [of transmission, i.e. a certain ethnicity]. But in the case of Chinese Islam, we find the exact opposite, namely that the vehicle determined its religious content.” (Qin 1998, 84)

a sign of duplicity or ambiguity, but of dialectical reconciliation (Bai 2004, 98).³⁶ In what is clearly a tautological argument, Bai identifies the Chinese nation not as a strictly circumscribed geographical area, but rather as “comprising the sphere of activity of the various Chinese nationalities throughout history *within the boundaries* [of China]” (包含境内各民族在历史上活动的范围) (Bai 1981, 4; cf. Bai 2001a).

In affirming the historically constituted unity of the Chinese people and the role played by Muslim minorities in Chinese history, Bai had already started arguing in the 1950s that a clear distinction should be drawn and upheld between ethnicity and religion. More precisely, he criticised the then prevalent practice of referring to all Muslims in China as Hui and to Islam as *huijiao* 回教, a practice which conflates the Hui as a distinct nationality with the entire Muslim population of China. Bai maintained that Islam is a world religion which should be rendered as *yisilanjiao* 伊斯兰教 in Chinese, not as *huijiao*, since this gives the mistaken impression that Islam is the belief system of the Hui alone, or that all Chinese Muslims are ethnically Hui (see Bai 2001d, 100–5). In June 1956, the State Council officially ratified Bai’s line of reasoning by issuing a decision to officially abandon the usage of *huijiao* in favour of *yisilanjiao* to refer to Islam (Gladney 1998, 122; Gladney 2008, 180–81; Cieciora 2014, 16). Arguably, Bai’s insistence that the Muslim population of China historically consisted of different nationalities such as the Hui serves the purpose of minimising the impact of “religion” on the historical existence and development of China’s Muslim minorities. In the case of the Hui, this remains a paradoxical endeavour, since they are only defined by their common belief in Islam and are usually not seen as conforming to the other three Stalinist criteria. Bai’s somewhat makeshift solution consists in sublating the religious dimension of Hui identity into the more indeterminate criterion of what he calls “national consciousness,” a notion

36 By contrast, back in 1929, the philosopher Li Da 李达 (1890–1966), one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, still identified the nation-state as an *impediment* to the complete unfolding of the productive forces. He saw the existence of distinct nations and ethnic groups as being restricted to the historical horizon of capitalism (see Li 1929). Invoking the authority of Lenin and Stalin, another famous Marxist historian, Jian Bozan 翦伯赞 (1898–1968), himself of Uyghur descent, drew a distinction between “assimilation” (*tonghua* 同化) and “amalgamation” or “fusion” (*ronghe* 融合), the former referring to how smaller nationalities with less developed “productive forces” are assimilated into the more advanced majority (throughout Chinese history, the Han), a process conditioned by the existence of classes, while the latter designates a “fusion on equal terms and a unity of a higher level between all peoples arrived at on the basis of international communism,” ushering in the emergence of “a new people that never existed before.” (Jian 1962, 92) That being said, Jian insisted that the practical logistics of social redemption through class struggle require a certain degree of non-coercive and non-violent “assimilation” in order to lead “backwards” nationalities in the right direction of historical and civilizational development, thus allowing them to “set out for the Yellow River basin as the cradle of Han Culture.” (*ibid.*, 96)

asserted over and against the more tangible Stalinist criteria for what counts as a separate nationality. As such, Chinese Muslim minorities can only play their part in the grand narrative of the Chinese people as a historically developing dialectical unity *as nationalities*, not as believers in a distinct, non-Chinese religion, so that the question concerning the ultimate marker of their ethnic identity (from the perspective of the state, religion) is bracketed. Instead, attention is shifted to a sense of belonging which does not violate the historical materialist principle according to which social existence determines thought. Historical materialism thus leaves room open for the autonomy of consciousness, but only in its “national” and not its “religious” form. This allows Bai to argue for a more or less seamless continuity between “patriotic education” and the endeavour of gaining insight into the history of China’s ethnic minorities, a history in which “nationalities” are portrayed as always already committed to building and strengthening the nation (see Bai 2001b). In this sense, the Hui qualify as an integral part of Chinese history because they are one of its many ethnic groups, “contributing”³⁷ to the larger historical trajectory of the dialectical unity of the nation, not because their religion was somehow compatible with or even conducive to the Confucian normative and institutional order, as the *Han kitāb* authors had previously argued. Bai makes this abundantly clear with reference to the Hui in the following quote from *The Rebirth of the Hui People* (*Huihui minzu de xinsheng* 回回民族的新生), where the notion of the Hui’s “psychological makeup” becomes almost completely detached from the domain of the religious:

What determined the psychological makeup of the Hui people was *not their religious belief, but rather their history as a nationality and their conditions of existence*. [...] The most salient characteristic of the psychological makeup of the Hui people as a nationality is that they rally together to help each other and their courageous fighting spirit. While it cannot be denied that this characteristic was influenced by religion, it was primarily the result of a long [experience of] repression and slaughter and of particularly harsh conditions of existence. (Bai 2001d, 104)

Unlike some contemporary Chinese scholars, Bai does not see Hui identity as being overdetermined by religion. His insistence on the distinctive “fighting spirit” of the Hui and their experience of particular hardships throughout Chinese history also makes it clear where his narrative of the history of Islam in

37 For the telling case of how the famous Chinese Muslim explorer Zheng He 郑和 (1371–1433) became presented as an “ethnic hero,” see Aubin (2005).

China starts out from.³⁸ More specifically, Bai devoted a lot of scholarly attention to a series of uprisings of Muslim minorities which took place during the second half of 19th century in the wake of the Taiping Rebellion (see Bai 1962, 9). He oversaw the compilation of a four-volume series of historical documents related to these events entitled *The Righteous Uprisings of the Hui people* (*Huimin qiyi* 回民起义), published in 1952.³⁹ Rather unsurprisingly, Bai Shouyi's orthodox Marxist outlook leads him to read these uprisings as ultimately being grounded in class contradictions, which in turn gave rise to ethnic tensions. As such, he is adamant that they were not instances of religious war. Rather, these ethnic conflicts were a "form" (*xingshi* 形式) (Bai 2001d, 148–49; Bai 1952, 303) in which class struggle manifested itself in the specific context of the social conflicts besetting the border regions of late Qing China. In this sense, the Marxist rhetoric of class struggle allows the Hui to figure as protagonists in the history of the Chinese nation and the historical struggle of the Chinese people against feudal oppression: "the Hui are a people who were always controlled by more developed and governing ethnicities, they are a people who [belong to a phase in history where] the feudalist system had not yet come to an end" (Bai 2001d, 116). Paradoxically enough, the "national consciousness" which Bai puts forward as being distinctive of the Hui as a nationality at the same time unites them with the Han majority, the latter qualifying as the "dominant nationality" (*zbuti minzu* 主体民族) or true "subject" (*zbuti* 主体) and "stabilising force" of Chinese history (see Bai 1981, 7–9). In the same manner that the proletariat qualifies as the "universal class" in Marxist thought, the Hui are presented as a people who embody the feudal class oppression assumed to be borne by the entire populace before the communist liberation of China and whose interests coincide with the revolutionary forces across different ethnic groups throughout Chinese history as a whole (see Bai 2001d, 162).

38 Bai described the history of the Hui as that of a "fighting people" (*zhandou de minzu* 战斗的民族) (see Bai 2001d, 118–45).

39 Bai's decision to devote so much importance to the collection and classification of historical data was enough to draw criticism from some of his colleagues, who argued that he did not pay enough attention to the fact that these uprisings were clear instances of class struggle (Ching 2010, 67, 80). The first of these uprisings was the so-called Panthay Rebellion, which took place in Yunnan between 1856 and 1873 and led to the temporary establishment of a sultanate with its capital located in Dali 大理. Another major uprising led by Yaqub Beg occurred in Northwest and West China between 1864 and 1877 is nowadays referred to as the Dungan Revolt. These uprisings elicited a violent backlash from the Qing court, resulting in an estimated 50 to 85% reduction of the Muslim population in certain areas, the result of the social suffering caused by war as well as active ethnic cleansing. The memory of the enormous loss human life during these events still persists to this day among certain Chinese Muslim communities (see Armijo-Hussein 2001).

Conclusion

In Bai Shouyi's writings, the Hui as a people can become a revolutionary subject of history through this strange overlap between their ethnic (Hui) and national (Chinese) identities, an overlap that occurs not because—, but in spite of—their religious identity as Muslims. The revolutionary tradition of Chinese Muslims such as the Hui is thus assumed to be perfectly compatible with, and in a sense to count as an expression of, historical loyalty to the ideals of the communist nation-state. In other words, the nexus between a form of revolutionary politics that is safely contained within the past on the one hand and multi-ethnic nationalism on the other made it possible for “religion” to be bracketed out and preserved in a state of relative indeterminacy where it would not endanger the political endeavour of building and maintaining a unified nation. There is thus a considerable continuity between Bai's investigations into Hui identity and the treatment of the institutionally buttressed relation between religion and ethnicity in contemporary Marxist discourse in China. While the religious aspect of Hui identity is never completely subsumed within the more “immanent” discourse of ethnic belonging in Bai's writings, his approach ultimately seems to favour the historical materialist primacy of the “conditions of existence” of the Hui as a revolutionary nationality *par excellence*. By contrast, as we saw above, the tendency to collapse the boundaries of the ethnic and religious with regard to Hui identity in more recent examples of the Chinese Marxist take on Hui identity arguably has the effect of theoretically blocking access to any consideration of the actual “conditions of existence” of Chinese Muslim minorities. Such considerations obviously exceed the boundaries of this article as well. One of the most important questions left unanswered here is how the historical constitution of Hui identity, as opposed to that of other Chinese Muslim minorities, left a minimal space open for renegotiating the boundaries between religious, ethnic, and national belonging, a freedom that has all but vanished in the case of the Uyghur population of China, even if there are signs that repressive measures against religious practice are also increasingly being extended to the Hui. Perhaps coming to an understanding of this process can provide us with a means to theoretically prepare for engaging with what lies outside of the confines of theory. For that is where the people who are the object of epistemological and institutional mechanisms of classification and control are hopefully still able to spend most of their lives.

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Li Zehou and His Rocky Relationship with Marx: Class Struggle as a Form of Kantian Transcendental Illusion¹

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Abstract

The present paper deals with Li Zehou's contributions to the discussions of Marxism in the second half of the 20th century. In Li's philosophy, Marx's theories were reshaped, modified, and upgraded in a theoretical framework that differed from the original. He agreed with Marx's presumption that the making and using of tools was the basic material practice, which made human evolution possible. Nevertheless, he saw Marx's further development of this theory as problematic, because he saw it as being one-sided: progress from the means of production to the relations of production, and then on to the superstructure, only concerned the external developments of the relation between the manufacture and use of tools. At this point, Li was more interested in their internal influences, i.e., in the ways in which the making and use of tools has reshaped the human mind. He was highly sceptical of Marxist economic theories and criticized the crucial concepts elaborated by Marx in his *Capital* through the lens of Kantian "transcendental illusions." Proceeding from his combination of Marx and Kant, the present paper will critically analyse some crucial differences between the Marxian idea of the class struggle as a driving force of social progress, and Li's own version of historical materialism.

Keywords: Li Zehou, Kant, Marx, transcendental illusion, Sinisation of Marxism

Li Zehou in njegovi burni odnosi z Marxom: razredni boj kot oblika kantovske transcendentalne iluzije

Izveček

Članek obravnava Li Zehoujeve prispevke k diskusiji marksizma v drugi polovici 20. stoletja. V svoji filozofiji je Li Marxove teorije preoblikoval, spremenil in nadgradil ter jih postavil v teoretsko ogrodje, ki je bilo drugačno od izvirnega. Strinjal se je z Marxovo predpostavko o tem, da je izdelava in uporaba orodja osnovna materialna praksa, ki omogoča evolucijo človeštva. Vendar je menil, da je kasnejši razvoj Marxove teorije

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problematičen, saj je bila ta kasnejša teorija po njegovem mestu enostranska. Marx je namreč napredek od proizvodnih sredstev k proizvodnim odnosom in potem k nadgradnji videl zgolj kot produkt zunanjih razvojev, ki so plod izdelave in uporabe orodja. Na tej točki je Lija bolj zanimal notranji učinek tega razvoja, tj. način, kako je izdelava in uporaba orodja preoblikovala človeško zavest. Zelo skeptičen je bil tudi glede Marxovih ekonomskih teorij in je kritiziral osrednje koncepte njegovega *Kapitala* skozi optiko kantovske »transcendentalne iluzije«. Članek izhaja iz tovrstne Lijeve kombinacije Marxa in Kanta in kritično analizira nekatere osrednje razlike med Marxovo idejo razrednega boja kot gonilne sile družbenega napredka in Lijeve lastne različice zgodovinskega materializma.

Ključne besede: Li Zehou, Kant, Marx, transcendentalna iluzija, sinizacija marksizma

Introduction

Li Zehou is doubtless among the most influential and well-known, but also the most controversial, contemporary Chinese philosophers. Due to his intellectual brilliance and charisma, he had a great impact on Chinese youth, most likely because of his emphasis on individual autonomy and democracy, and his questioning of formal authority (Li 2002, 1–19), a “disobedience” that also found expression in his theoretical essays. Therefore, it is not coincidental that the notion of “subjectality” (*zbutixing* 主体性) is at the centre of his theory. It is based upon the notion of an active subject forming an independent entity as a potential bearer for the realisation of ideals (Li 2002a, 174). It is therefore not difficult to understand the seeds of this attraction; Li Zehou sincerely and genuinely believed in the young people of Chinese, in their intellectual, emotional, and creative potential. As one of the central representatives of the post-Mao Enlightenment movement, he criticised the remains of traditional gerontocracy that suppressed any form of creativity and independent thought. He openly condemned the academic authorities who demanded only blind obedience from young people, memorisation of prescribed texts and uncritical accumulation of factual knowledge, and encouraged them to believe in themselves: “Young people should be confident; they should not allow themselves to be swallowed and overwhelmed by the huge piles of old Chinese papers...” (Li 1985, 4). Just like China itself, the young people exploring its culture should also leave the old, outdated things behind them and go towards the future (*ibid.*, 5). Li saw the innovative potential possessed by the young as something Chinese society still did not value enough. For him, the automatic authority of the old was a relic of the remote past:

I always feel this is the heritage of primitive societies. In primitive societies, it was clear that people who lived the longest and who had gone through the most things also possessed the best “education.” But pre-modern and modern societies are not like that; there are many young

people among the genuine inventors. Although they are not so experienced and they don't possess so much knowledge, they can discover a lot and generate numerous important inventions.

我总感觉这好像是原始社会的遗风。在原始社会谁的胡子长，谁的权威就最大。因为他活得长，经历的事情多，「学问」当然也最大。但近现代社会并不是这样。真正的创新家经常有青年人。他们并没有那么多的学问、知识、经验，却偏偏能做出非常重要的发现或发明。(Li 2016, 154.)

Li was convinced that China could not rely exclusively on experts with masses accumulated data-driven information, but that it also needed thinkers,² and since youth is the best time to develop one's ability to reason and think independently, young people should make the most of it and not waste their time living in fear of the authorities.

Hence, it was not so surprising that immediately after the Tiananmen Square incidents in 1989 Li found himself on the list of Chinese intellectuals who were marked as “black hands” (*hei shou* 黑手), and thus reproached for attempting to manipulate students to achieve for their own goals. Li Zehou was mentioned by name in the official report of the so-called “turmoil” as one of the elite scholars causing chaos. As a result of his criticism of the Chinese government's response to the protests, soon after the massacre he was branded a “thought criminal” and forbidden to leave Beijing. In 1991, following massive international pressure, he was granted permission to leave the country and visit the United States and Germany. He was given permanent residency in the former shortly after arriving.

Li Zehou's contribution to the Sinisation of Marxist thought can be found in his attempts to criticize Marx through Kant, and to complement the latter through the former. In this regard, certain elements of classical Confucian thought are also of utmost importance, especially regarding its historicist, dynamic referential framework (Brusadelli 2017, 119). However, in the present paper, we will primarily focus upon Li's critique of Marxist economic theories through the lens of Kant's notion of transcendental illusion.

2 Li has elaborated on the difference between these two categories of knowledge in greater detail. In his view the experts were good in storing, systemizing, and ordering the information, while the thinkers could also process it in the sense of analyzing and, above all, synthesizing the data—therefore transforming quantitative information into qualitative knowledge. In a later essay, which he also wrote to and for young readers (see Li 1996, 85), he pointed out that in the future experts could be replaced by computers and artificial brains, while thinkers would always remain nonpareil.

Li's Synthesis of Marx and Kant

We cannot understand Li's criticism of Marxist thought without being at least basically familiar with the broader context of his writings. They can be described as the search for a synthesis between Western and traditional Chinese thought, driven by the goal of elaborating a system of ideas and values capable of resolving the social and political problems that arise in modern life. In most of his works, Li thus attempted to reconcile "Western" (especially Kantian and Marxist) theories with "traditional Chinese" (especially Confucian, but to a certain extent also Daoist) ideas, concepts and values, in order to create a theoretical model of modernisation that would not be confused or equated with "Westernisation."

It is not coincidental that early Marx and Kant belonged to the central sources of inspiration for Li Zehou's own theory. However, his system cannot be seen as a mere blend of these philosophies; it exceeds a plain "synthesis of Kant and Marx" by combining their thought with Hegel's and, above all, with that of Confucius. Besides, Li Zehou's thought comprises several inventive essential features that cannot be found in the work of previous philosophers.

He became familiar with the work of Marx from his studies at Beijing University and was fascinated by his concept of historical materialism and the early Marxist humanism. But later, as he became acquainted with Kant's transcendental philosophy, the young Chinese philosopher was very much impressed by his emphasis on the idea of human subjectivity and the human subject as an independent, free, active and morally autonomous agent.

Kant's conception of subjectivity, however, was rooted in the existence of the transcendental forms that decisively influenced and reshaped the (human perception of) objective reality. While for Kant, these forms were *a priori*, i.e., independent of any kind of (individual or social and historical) experience, Li, who also presupposed the existence of similar forms of subjectivity, placed them into a framework of a dynamic historical development. He tried to relocate Kant's transcendental forms into a dynamic and historical context, defined by the principles of a materialist development of humankind. In this sense, he complemented Kant with Marx.

At the same time, Li complemented Marx with Kant. He modified the teleological and deterministic Hegelian-Marxist view of social development through the element of the (morally aware, yet unpredictable) human subject, her free will and his autonomy.

In this sense, the "meeting point" of Marx and Kant was for him particularly relevant (Li 2016, 154).

Li Zehou agreed with Marx's presumption that tools represented the basic means of production. Nevertheless, he saw Marx's further development of this theory as problematic because he saw it as being one-sided: progress from the means of production to the relations of production, and then on to the superstructure, only concerned the external developments of the relation between the manufacture and use of tools.

At this point, Li was more interested in their internal influences, i.e., in the ways in which the making and use of tools have reshaped the human mind. In other words, Li was interested in establishing and investigating the phenomenon of the cultural-psychological formations that were shaped in the human psyche in this process. For Li, this was a phenomenon tightly linked to the central questions of humanness (*ren xing* 人性), for it could reveal the actual difference between human beings and animals (Li and Liu 2011, 77).

In order to proceed a step further on this path of reasoning, Li also offered his own, unique hypothetical definition of this difference outside of the constructs of behavioural norms, ethics, upright posture, language, or the construction and use of tools. These are not uniquely and specifically human, for they are also displayed by various of animals. Li identifies the crucial difference in the fact that, for human beings, tools are a universal necessity (*ibid.*). If humans had only their bodily biological conditions to rely on, they could never survive (as human beings). In Li's view, this is also why humans are "supra-biological" beings.

Marxist Aesthetics and the Secret Readings of Kant

Following this line of thought, Li has also contributed some fresh and innovative insights to the development and a dynamic upgrading of Marxist ideas.

His main goal was to clarify the relation between Kant and Marx (neither of whom, in his view, was understood very well in China) and provide for the creative development of the synthesis of their philosophical contributions. In this regard he tried to supplement Kant through Marx, and vice versa. Hence, as already mentioned, the "intersection" of these two theories was of utmost importance (Li 2016, 154). However, he went even further: following this path Li took elements from both philosophies that he valued most. At some point he disagreed with both, and from then on developed his own theory and followed his own way. He created the great majority of his new, self-termed concepts during the period of the Cultural Revolution, in which he systematically connected Kant and Marx, positing their philosophies in a mutually complementary relation.

As already noted, he 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 of Marxist ideas, especially in the framework of his aesthetics and epistemology.

His relationship with Kant, however, began under completely different circumstances.

From 1970 until 1972, he was sent to a re-education work camp at the “May 7th Cadre School” in Henan province. He managed to smuggle into this an English volume of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. There he used to read it secretly, under the cover of *Chairman Mao’s Quotes*, pretending to be deeply immersed in this universally enforced practice. In some way, his cynical comments on this situation are quite logical: “In a difficult situation it is good to read a difficult book” (Li 2008, 318).

However, the fact that he took precisely this book along to the re-education camp was mainly the result of a highly pragmatic decision: it was relatively light, which was ideal since the weight of the luggage he was allowed to take with him was very limited. Also, the book was complex and difficult to understand, which meant that, although a small book, he could read it slowly and it would keep his mind busy and give him intellectual satisfaction for the longest possible time (*ibid.*).

In this camp, he also began to work on his first major theoretical monograph *Critique of the Critical Philosophy—A New Approach to Kant* (see Li 1990). With this work, Li’s own way was paved with a solid theoretical foundation. He often admits that, while interpreting Kant, he actually wrote his own philosophy (see for instance Li 2016, 153). In this, he aimed to synthesise Kant with Marx, providing the first with a Marxist historical dimension, but also criticising the latter because of his mechanistic nature and lack of consideration of the important role of the Kantian human subject.

His later version of Sinicised Marxism was completed in the 1990s and published in Hong Kong as late as 2006 in a book entitled *Marxism in China (Makesizhuyi zai Zhongguo)* 馬克思主義在中國, see Li 2006). Among other issues, Li tried in this work to incorporate some Kantian elements into the framework of Marxist dialectical materialism. On the other hand, he also criticised the later Marxist works through the lens of Kant’s notion of “transcendental illusions.”

Problems of Abstraction and Transcendental Illusions

This aspect of criticism was directed towards Marxist economic theories. In creating his philosophical theory, which is widely known under the name anthropo-historical ontology, Li Zehou was namely mainly following early Marxist theories. He was always highly sceptical of Marxist economic theories and criticized the crucial concepts elaborated in *Capital*, claiming that Marx had summed up the “two-fold character of commodities” in the “two-fold character of labour.” Here, the crucial point was that Marx saw “exchange value” as a product of “abstract labour,” since for him the exchange of commodities was an act characterised by a total abstraction from use value.

In chapter 1 of *Capital*, Marx described this abstraction of human labour in the following way:

Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labour embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labour; there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract³ (Marx 2015, 28).

According to Li, ideas such as socially necessary labour time, which were derived from the concept of abstract human labour, do make sense in rational analysis, but since they are completely separated from the actual circumstances of concrete human lives they are not empirically operational. In Li’s view, Marx has thus completely separated the concept of labour from its concrete empirical environment; he abstracted the “labour-power” from the actual labour and from the concrete historical practice of making and using tools. This caused him to slip into an abstract Hegelian idealistic speculation, in which he aimed to prove his concept of surplus value through a unified and homogenised, abstract idea of the “expenditure of human labour-power.”

In this abstract construct, the class struggle and the proletarian revolution became necessary, since Marx did not consider any of the complex, historically determined elements (as for instance the developmental stage of technologies in different societies and cultures). In Li’s view, such elements decisively influence the development of societies, which was in Marx’s view determined by the relations

3 The German original reads: Mit dem nützlichen Charakter der Arbeitsprodukte verschwindet der nützliche Charakter der in ihnen dargestellten Arbeiten, es verschwinden also auch die verschiedenen konkreten Formen dieser Arbeiten, sie unterscheiden sich nicht länger, sondern sind allzusamt reduziert auf gleiche menschliche Arbeit, abstrakt menschliche Arbeit (Marx 1876, 42).

between the class of the owners of the means of production and commodity-possessors on the one hand, and the working class on the other.

According to Li, this idea of class struggle between capital and the labour led Marx to the necessity of eliminating the market-guided production of commodities, which he replaced with a planned economy, in which social distribution should be organised according to the maxim: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.” In Li’s view, such a logic is problematic (Li 2006, 141). As he pointed out:

At the same time, I believe that this logic has no necessary relation with the core part of historical materialism, which I am emphasising, namely with the using and making of tools (and the formation of human language, which stems from it).

同时我也认为这一逻辑与我强调的唯物史观的核心部分，即使用 - 制造工具的实践（以及由之而产生人类语言）并无必然的关系。(ibid.)

Li considers the above-mentioned abstracted concepts of Marx’ economic theory as a form of Kantian “transcendental illusions.” Kant defined them as types of illusion,

which influence principles whose use is not ever meant for experience, since in that case we would at least have a touchstone for their correctness, but which instead, contrary to all the warnings of criticism, carries us away beyond the empirical use of the categories, and holds out to us the semblance of extending the pure understanding⁴ (Kant 1987, 385 /B 352/).

In Li’s view, such illusions represent conceptions of objects that can only be thought of, but not known, because they are shaped through abstract reasoning without any empirical foundation (ibid. 148). They are ideal illusions produced by transcendental reason. Such transcendental illusions are still actively effective in guiding and organising human thought, for they help us to achieve the greatest possible unity of reason (ibid., 389 /B359/). In this regard, Li emphasises, they positively influence the human ability to act and to change the world. As such, they have a profound philosophical significance.

4 The German original reads: “Wir haben es mit dem *transzendentalen Scheine* allein zu tun, der auf Grundsätze einfließt, deren Gebrauch nicht einmal auf Erfahrung angelegt ist, als in welchem Falle wir doch wenigstens einen Probestein ihrer Richtigkeit haben würden, sondern der uns selbst, wider alle Warnungen der Kritik, gänzlich über den empirischen Gebrauch der Kategorien wegführt und uns mit dem Blendwerke einer Erweiterung des *reinen Verstandes* hinhält” (Kant 1998, 405).

However, because of their transcendental nature, i.e. because they are completely separated from the empirical world, they cannot be directly applied in the concrete strategies and policies that are used in actual societies:

The system of equal distribution that has been implemented in the past in our people's communes was such a case: it seemingly aimed to achieve justice and equality. However, because it did not consider or take into account multifarious other aspects and complex empirical factors, it resulted in stagnation and regression of productive forces. The economic wages were overall equal, but the living standard and the quality of life of the people were stagnating or even deteriorating.

列入以前我們人民公社所採取的工分制，就因為沒有考慮，計算其他方面的複雜經驗因素，貌似公正，平等，造成的卻是生產力的停滯和倒退；經濟收入大體平等了，人民生活水準和質量卻停滯或下降了。(Li 2006, 146)

In Li's view, this was also the reason why Marx's economic studies could not be developed in the framework of a general economic theory, and why his theory of labour value was replaced by various concrete price theories. Although his theory of labour value has a great historical, philosophical and ethical significance, it completely lacks empirical operability.

A Critical Evaluation of Li's Critique

However, in many ways Li's critique of Marx seems to be too generalised or simply too harsh. In the following, I will hence show some of these, which are in my view based on a very superficial reading of *Capital* and the *Communist Manifesto*.

First of all, Li seems to have misunderstood some of the crucial notions pertaining to the Marxist idea of humanism. At least in his youth, he interpreted Marx's idea of alienation in a somewhat peculiar manner. Li started to develop interest in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts from 1844 in the 1950s, when he wrote his famous essay *Lun meigan, mei he yishu* 論美感，美和藝術 (*On the Aesthetic Feeling, Beauty and Art*). Li wrote this essay at the age of twenty-six, which was the age Marx was when he wrote his Manuscripts. Hence, Li's first interpretation of the Marxist term alienation can be seen as a dialogue between two very young philosophers from Europe and China, and it can thus offer us an interesting insight into the nature of intercultural misunderstandings rooted in Western and Chinese thought patterns.

According to Marx (2007, 29), the estrangement of the workers from their products means not only that their labour becomes an object, something with an external existence, but that it exists outside them, independently, as something alien to them, and that it becomes a power that confronts them on its own. This means that the life they have conferred upon the object confronts them as something hostile and alien. The workers put their lives into the object and, consequently, their life no longer belongs to them but to the object. In developing his theory on estranged labour and alienation, Marx (2005, 42) described the phenomenon of the estrangement (*Entfremdung*) of human beings as a species from their human essence or their species-being (*Gattungswesen*). In Marx's view, this phenomenon is a consequence of forced, exploitative labour and of stratified social classes, because being a part of such institutions estranges people from their human nature. In his abovementioned essay on the nature of aesthetic feeling, however, Li seems to have misunderstood the concept of alienation, for he endowed it with rather positive connotations. He wrote:

Nature as such is not beautiful. Beautiful nature is a product of socialisation, and a product of the objectivisation (i.e. alienation) of the human essence.

自然本身並不是美，美的自然是社會化的結果，也就是人的本質對象化（異化）的結果。（Li 1956, 57）

He also wrote:

Humankind has created objects, which caused that nature was socialised. Simultaneously, it also created a subject, which means that people achieved the possibility to appreciate the beauty of nature. Hence, ultimately, the beauty of nature is a special form of existence of the beauty of social life (or the beauty of reality)—it is the form of existence of estrangement.

人類創造了客體對象，使自然具有了社會性，同時也創造了主體、自身，使人自己具有了欣賞自然的宙美能力。所以，歸根結蒂，自然美就只是社會生活的美（現實美）的一種特殊的存在形式，是一種“異化”的存在形式。（*ibid.*, 59）

In this passage, Li obviously equated “alienation” with a certain kind of “objectification” in the sense of the uniquely human capacity to establish mutually separated concepts of “subject” and “object.” Hence, for him, alienation was also a precondition

or even a method of the specific human ability to project subjective feelings or sensations onto external objects, and hence, to consciously separate the objects of the external world from the internal world of the human subject.

Because of space limitations, we cannot go deeper into the reasons for this misunderstanding. However, it certainly has much to do with the fact that in mid-20th century China the establishment of a clear separation between the subject and object of comprehension was still a most urgent and progressive endeavour.

As we have seen, Li claimed that Marxist ideas such as socially necessary labour time, were derived from the concept of abstract human labour. He reproached Marx with a denial of any of the complex, historically determined elements (as for instance the developmental stage of technologies in different societies and cultures). However, this critique seems to be based on a misunderstanding, for in his definition of the socially necessary labour time Marx explicitly writes about the importance of these factors. In his view, they are historically and culturally defined and represent important elements of the category of the socially necessary labour time. According to Marx, these elements can vary throughout different societies, and they profoundly influence the value of both individual and social labour. He writes:

The labour time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time. The introduction of power-looms into England probably reduced by one-half the labour required to weave a given quantity of yarn into cloth. The hand-loom weavers, as a matter of fact, continued to require the same time as before; but for all that, the product of one hour of their labour represented after the change only half an hour's social labour, and consequently fell to one-half its former value.⁵ (Marx 1876, 43)

Li's critique which concentrates on his alleged separation of socially necessary labour time from the actual concrete conditions of the production, is therefore simply wrong, for Marx explicitly emphasises that:

5 The German original reads: "Gesellschaftlich notwendige Arbeitszeit ist Arbeitszeit, erheischt, um irgendeinen Gebrauchswert mit den vorhandenen gesellschaftlich-normalen Produktionsbedingungen und dem gesellschaftlichen Durchschnittsgrad von Geschick und Intensität der Arbeit darzustellen. Nach der Einführung des Dampfwebstuhls in England z.B. genügte vielleicht halb so viel Arbeit als vorher, um ein gegebenes Quantum Garn in Gewebe zu verwandeln. Der englische Handweber brauchte zu dieser Verwandlung in der Tat nach wie vor dieselbe Arbeitszeit, aber das Produkt seiner individuellen Arbeitsstunde stellte jetzt nur noch eine halbe gesellschaftliche Arbeitsstunde dar und fiel daher auf die Hälfte seines frühern Werts."

The value of a commodity would remain constant, if the labour time required for its production also remained constant. But the latter changes with every variation in the productiveness of labour. This productiveness is determined by various circumstances, amongst others, by the average amount of skill of the workmen, the state of science, and the degree of its practical application, the social organization of production, the extent and capabilities of the means of production, and by physical conditions.⁶ (Marx 1876, 44)

Furthermore, Marx never wrote about replacing the market-guided production of commodities with a planned economy, as such a system is a concept developed by the theoreticians of Soviet-style state socialism. On the contrary, he even criticised the germs of such theories as could be found in the works of several utopian socialists:

It may therefore be imagined that one can impose the stamp of immediate interchangeability on all commodities at the same time, as one may imagine, one could make all Catholics popes. The colouring of this Philistinopia is Proudhon's socialism, which, as I have shown elsewhere, does not even have the merit of originality, but was far better developed by Gray, Bray, and others long before him.⁷ (ibid., 67)

In this context, Marx also emphasized that no school has ever played more tricks with the word science than the utopian socialists.

On the other hand, it is also quite rewarding in this context to compare Li's critique of Marx with the ideas of some other, more widely known representatives of the Sinisation of Marxism. If we want to evaluate Li's view of Marx's philosophy against the background of so-called Chinese Marxism, it becomes very clear that his critique is completely incompatible with the views of all three of the most important Chinese leaders, who have shaped Marxist ideology as a legitimisation of the current system, namely Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Xi Jinping.

6 The German original reads: "Die Wertgröße einer Ware bliebe daher konstant, wäre die zu ihrer Produktion erheischte Arbeitszeit konstant. Letztere wechselt aber mit jedem Wechsel in der Produktivkraft der Arbeit. Die Produktivkraft der Arbeit ist durch mannigfache Umstände bestimmt, unter anderen durch den Durchschnittsgrad des Geschickes der Arbeiter, die Entwicklungsstufe der Wissenschaft und ihrer technologischen Anwendbarkeit, die gesellschaftliche Kombination des Produktionsprozesses, den Umfang und die Wirkungsfähigkeit der Produktionsmittel, und durch Naturverhältnisse."

7 The German original reads: "Man mag sich daher einbilden, man könne allen Waren zugleich den Stempel unmittelbarer Austauschbarkeit aufdrücken, wie man sich einbilden mag, man könne alle Katholiken zu Päpsten machen. ... Die Ausmalung dieser Philisterutopie bildet Proudhons Sozialismus, der, wie ich anderswo gezeigt, nicht einmal das Verdienst der Originalität besitzt, vielmehr lange vor ihm von Gray, Bray und andern weit besser entwickelt wurde."

Mao's agenda of Sinicised Marxism represented an attempt to synthesise Marxist theory with the specific characteristics of Chinese society, particularly focusing upon the concepts of permanent revolution and the crucial role of the peasantry that should, in his view, fill the gap existing due to the absence of a large urban proletariat, and replacing it in the class struggle between labour and capital (see Mao 1937).

Deng's "Marxism" was highly pragmatic, and he is often said to have saved the Chinese economy after the Cultural Revolution. He typically insisted on practice almost to the exclusion of theory, and famously said it did not matter if a cat is white or black, so long as it catches mice⁸ (Deng Xiaoping 324).

Xi Jinping has directed attention to what he calls the Chinese Dream. According to President Xi, this includes the "Four Comprehensive Strategies" ("Sige quanmian zhanlüe buzhu 四个全面" 战略布局, see Xi Jinping 2015). This theory refers to the conception of a moderately prosperous society, including deepening reform, governing according to law, and the strict governance of the party.

What all these approaches have in common is the ideational heritage of mechanistic, anti-Hegelian Soviet interpretations of Marxism, which provided the fundamental basis of autocratic state-socialism. Li's understanding of Marx is utterly different.

On the one hand, Li's critique of Marxism is focused on his emphasis upon the importance of class struggle. Especially in his later years, Li was a sharp critic of all violent and sudden social shifts; he utterly rejected the centrality of class struggle and permanent revolution. Instead, he proposed gradual, reasonable changes, and social progress based upon an evolution. In this sense, his view could be—at a first glimpse—seen as similar to that of Xi Jinping.

On the other hand, Li Zehou revealed that there is a great gap between Marx's theories and those of the so-called Marxism, which, as a system, is a product of later interpretations, beginning with Engels and continuing with Lenin, Stalin and the Soviet-type interpretations that belonged to the crucial pillars of Chinese Marxism. In this context, Li also highlights that the notion of socialism, which stands at the forefront of all three ideologies, is actually absent in Marxist theory, for Marx was primarily elaborating on the utopia of communism. Here, he exposed the fact that socialism was a product of later interpretations, the ones that provided the fundamental basis of autocratic state-socialism. In this aspect, Li's interpretation can be seen as a profound critique of all three of the aforementioned representatives of Chinese Marxism.

8 黄猫、黑猫，只要捉住老鼠就是好猫。这是说的打仗。

Conclusion

Instead of revolution, Li advocated social evolution, customised to free and autonomous personalities and taking into account the integrity of human subjects. He even argued that Marxism should not merely be seen as a doctrine of revolution; in studying Marx, readers should rather focus upon his “constructive” elements. Hence, he emphasises that Marxism is not only a philosophy of revolution, but is rather, and even more so, a constructive philosophy, a philosophy for constructing material and spiritual civilisations. This is also a core aspect of Li’s critique of Marxism through the lens of Kant’s philosophy, and his attempts to synthesise the theories of these two German philosophers.

For Li Zehou, the synthesis of Kant and Marx has much that is closely connected with the concepts of human emancipation and human dignity, an issue, which is also of great importance and actuality for the present era.

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History and Social Science

The Transformations of PRC Academic Philosophy: Maoist Features and Their Use under Xi Jinping

Yvonne SCHULZ ZINDA*

Abstract

To mark a period of transformation in China, Xi Jinping has been drawing on elements of the Maoist legacy, not only in the political arena but also in academia. In 2014, *New Philosophy of the Masses* was published, an updated and expanded version of Ai Siqi's *Philosophy of the Masses*. In May 2016, Xi Jinping (2016) delivered his "Talk at the Forum Discussing the Work in Philosophy and Social Sciences," a title which is reminiscent of Mao Zedong's (1980) "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" of 1942. Drawing on the background of China's 1950s academic philosophy, a comparison will be drawn to Xi Jinping's effect on China's academic landscape.

Keywords: philosophy of the masses, academic philosophy, Xi Jinping, Chinese characteristics, socialist ritual communication

Transformacija akademske filozofije Ljudske republike Kitajske: Maoistične značilnosti in njihova uporaba pod vlado Xi Jinpinga

Izvleček

Pri označevanju obdobja transformacije na Kitajskem se Xi Jinping naslanja na elemente maoistične zapuščine, ne samo na političnem, ampak tudi na akademskem prizorišču. Leta 2014 so objavili *Novo filozofijo množice*, posodobljeno in razširjeno različico Ai Siqinove *Novo filozofijo množice*. Maja 2016 je imel Xi Jinping (2016) govor z naslovom »Govor na forumu debat o filozofiji in družboslovju«, ki spominja na Mao Zedongov govor iz leta 1942 z naslovom »Yan'anski govori o književnosti in umetnosti« (1980). Preko raziskave okoliščin kitajske akademske filozofije iz 50. let 20. stoletja bo podana primerjava s Xi Jinpingovim vplivom na kitajsko akademsko pokrajino.

Ključne besede: filozofija množice, akademska filozofija, Xi Jinping, kitajske karakteristike, socialistična ritualna komunikacija

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Introduction

In the first half of the twentieth century, China's academic landscape was transformed by two great waves of Western influx. The first occurred during the 1920s, when the first group of overseas students returned to China from universities in the United States (US) and Europe. These students established Western-style curricula in academic philosophy. Major figures were Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 and Jin Yuelin 金岳霖 at Qinghua University; and Hu Shi 胡適, Zhu Guangqian 朱光潛, and Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 at Beijing University. All these scholars were transferred to the Southwestern University in Kunming after the second Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937. At this university, they taught a generation of People's Republic of China (PRC) scholars such as Ren Jiyu 任繼愈, who became mediators between the old Western scholarship of the Republican era and the new Marxist scholarship in the Mao era modelled after the Soviet Union. The second, and more far-reaching, phase was in the 1950s, when academics and academic philosophy in China underwent a major socialist transformation after the establishment of the PRC. In this project of socialist transformation, the 1950s were crucial for introducing the Marxist paradigm into PRC academic philosophy.

When Xi Jinping came to power, he declared that China would neither be treading on old paths of Maoism nor totally following the path of a Western-style market, but would be looking instead for a unique way (Barmé 2015). However, despite Xi Jinping's move away from incorrect Maoism, he has been drawing on elements of the Maoist legacy intended to block Western ideas and to enforce Marxist orthodoxy. Still, even in academia, at least two events are reminiscent of the Mao era. First, in 2014, the seven volumes of *New Philosophy of the Masses* (*Xin Dazhong zhhexue* [XDZZX]) were rereleased. These are an updated and expanded version of Ai Siqu's small booklet *Philosophy of the Masses* (*Dazhong zhhexue* [DZZX]) that had served as the introductory text book to Marxist philosophy, particularly for the generation of Western-trained Chinese scholars in the 1930s to 1950s. Second, on 17 May 2016 in a forum discussing China's work in philosophy and social sciences, Xi Jinping delivered a speech emphasizing that Marxism would remain the guiding theory in philosophy and the social sciences, which must be people-centred. The title of Xi Jinping's (2016) "Talk at the Forum Discussing the Work in Philosophy and Social Sciences" is reminiscent of Mao Zedong's (1980) programmatic "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art" given in 1942, which initiated the Yan'an Rectification

Campaign and became part of the academic canon for Chinese literature and art in the 1950s.¹

Based on these two events, a comparison will be drawn between the Maoist features of the transformative period in the 1950s and the transformative period occurring under Xi Jinping.² While some studies emphasise the political realm (Zeng 2016; Zhao 2016a, 2016b), a recent study was published on the role of Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries focuses on the effect of ideology on academia (Cheek 2015). Maoism is understood here as a depersonalised process beginning in the Mao era whose features are specific forms as well as values.

The present study will consider two issues. First, the study will consider the similarities in the values expressed in the DZZX and the recent XDZZX. In analysing the content of these publications, the historiography of Chinese philosophy will be considered, as will the crucial discussion of this philosophy in 1957, because it bears similarities to the ideas expressed in XDZZX. The 1957 debate has been considered from the perspective of the general context of the 1950s and 1960s (Kam 1986), and has been merely summarised in the literature (Chan Wing-tsit 1964; Zhang Yixing 2007). Second, a mode of ritual communication established in the 1950s campaigns will be presented. To date, only a few studies have focused on this campaign, and most of these concentrate on the political effect, neglecting the effect of this campaign on academic writing. Chan Lien's (1968) early study on the criticism of Hu Shi's philosophy in the 1950s examines the similarities between Hu Shi's pragmatism and Mao's pragmatic views. Vittinghoff (1993) treats the anti-Hu Shi campaign merely as a political top-down process. In her important research on campaigns in the 1950s, Goldman (1989) states that the aim of these campaigns was to impose political views on Chinese scholarship and discredit Western scholarship in the humanities as well as in the social sciences. However, Goldman's (1989) study does not go into detail on these issues. Yu Fengzheng (2001) considers the effectiveness of the campaigns. In the following discussion, the mobilisation model of Wang Shaoguang (2008) will be complemented by the model of the religious *rite de passage* by Michaels (2001), thereby

1 For example, at Beijing University and at Fudan University, the interview with Yue Daiyun 樂黛雲 (1931–), the director of the Institute for Comparative Literature at Beida (conducted 1 January 2008), and the interview with Zhang Peiheng 章培恒 (1934–2011), member of the Fudan University Department for Chinese Literature at the time (conducted 9 January) (Wang Weijiang, Shu Qin Yufeng forthcoming).

2 The research results for 1950s philosophy are part of my current research project titled "Institutionalising the Humanities in the PRC: The 1950s Funded by the German Research Foundation (2006–2010)."

highlighting the ritualised form of group behaviour in China's transformative period. Given that XDZZX and Xi Jinping's speech are also part of the transformative period, and symbolically refer to the Maoist era, the reaction of academic philosophy to China's new political directions will be considered in relation to the transitions of the 1950s.

Transformation of Academic Philosophy

In the 1950s, the three major institutions in terms of China's academic philosophy were the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), Beijing University, and later, the People's University of China. In 1949, immediately after the foundation of the PRC, CAS was established under the administration of the State Council as a government institution for the management of China's scientific research. CAS evolved from the pre-1949 Central Academy of Sciences, which was partly re-established as the Academia Sinica in Taiwan and the Beijing Academy (Hu Mingrong 2005).

On 29 September 1951, Zhou Enlai gave a speech titled "On Problems in Reforming the Thought of Intellectuals" (Chen 1960), thus beginning the first phase of the process of streamlining PRC academia. The Thought Reform was conducted among personnel at 20 higher education institutions in Beijing, Tianjin and other Chinese cities. In the course of the Rectification Campaign, teachers of schools and higher education were required to write a self-criticism. Some of these self-criticisms were published in the newspapers *Renmin ribao* and *Guangming ribao*. In 1952, five volumes of selected self-criticisms were published, among which were self-criticisms from professors, particularly those in executive academic positions from different universities and schools in China (*Guangming Ribao* 1952).

Intellectuals were summoned to reflect openly on their pre-1949 personal histories. These self-critical statements were about family backgrounds, private and professional associations, and political leanings. The idea behind the self-criticisms was that breaking with one's "incorrect past" was the basis for creating "new men." The main targets were the "old" intellectuals educated under the pre-1949 Westernised university system in China and abroad (Huang 2005; Chen 1960). For example, Jin Yuelin (1952) wrote a self-criticism in which he signalled himself as responsible for "intoxicating" his students with his "play of concepts," leading them on to reactionary thought, accusing Yin Fusheng 殷福生, who went to stay in Taiwan, and particularly the logician Wang Hao 王浩, who remained at Harvard (where he had received his PhD in 1948) of "serving the US imperialism." (Jin 1952, 56)

In October 1951, the State Administrative Council announced a reform in education institutions (*Zhengwuyuan guanyu gaizao xuezhide jue ding* 1951). Then, in 1952 under the Reconstruction of the Educational Institutions (*yuanxi diaozheng* 院系調整), all departments of academic philosophy were at Beijing University. Until 1956, Beijing University had the only department of philosophy in China. Selected intellectuals received special training in Marxist studies at the People's University, where in 1952 the first class for research on Marxism–Leninism was established. The special training comprised courses in Stalin's *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, political economy, Marxism, and the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which Soviet experts and Ai Siqi taught. The process of translating and transmitting from the Soviet material was a strenuous one.³

In 1952, Jin Yuelin was appointed head of the department of philosophy at Beijing University, taking over from Zheng Xin, who had held the office from 1949. However, Wang Zisong 汪子嵩 was secretary of the Party cell, and in reality was responsible for the department. In fact, he and others had written up his criticism during the Hu Shi criticism.⁴ It seems that some of the old Western-trained scholars who received prestigious positions only served as figureheads of the newly established socialist academic institutions, and were in practice marginalised (Wang 2009).

In 1954, the Hu Shi criticism campaign (Pi Hu Shi yundong 批胡適運動) was part of a restructuring process of the humanities following a five-year plan in 1953. On the 27 October 1954, the Ministry of Propaganda made an announcement to the CCP Central Committee that criticism should not only be restricted to Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 and classical literature, but should also be extended to Hu Shi's works on philosophy, history, and pedagogy, as well as to Hu Shi's bourgeois idealistic thought (Wei 2004, 100). This campaign served to narrow down the academics working in these fields, and resulted in the tightening of control over intellectuals (Goldman 1989, 236–37). In May 1955, the Ministry of Propaganda summarised the anti-Hu Shi campaign as “the first nationwide ideological battle against bourgeois idealism” (*Zhongyang* ... 1985, 563). By March, over 200 articles (not including the reprints in various newspapers) expressing criticism of Hu Shi had been published. Over 16 discussions were held in Beijing criticising Hu Shi's thought, not including those on

3 Refer to the interview with Gao Fang 高放 (1927–) (conducted 25 July 2009), who at the time was lecturer at the Institute for the Study of the Foundation of Marxism at Renda (Wang and Shu Qin forthcoming).

4 According to Zhang Shiyong 張世英, he and others assisted the older scholar Jin Yuelin in writing up their criticisms during the anti-Hu Shi campaign (Wang and Shu Qin forthcoming). For the article, refer to Jin, Wang, Zhang, and Huang (1955).

Honglouloumeng. Universities nationwide, their humanities departments, and seminars staged these discussions.⁵ Officially, five million intellectuals were to be educated during this campaign (Guo 1955a, 3–5; “Zhonggong” 1955, 459).

During the Mao era, criticism was often connected to negative examples to better illustrate and define correct thought and behaviour. Hu Shi was an ideal negative model for the streamlining of the humanities according to Marxist-Leninist thought, because he had published on history, literature, and philosophy. In contrast to other negative examples, such as Yu Pingbo, Liang Shuming, and Hu Feng, Hu Shi’s extensive academic work allowed for an illustration of the difference between old pre-1949 and new post-1949 scholarship on a wide scale. Around the time when the Hu Shi criticism campaign was conducted, most of the core academic journals in humanities were established, including *Zhexue yanjiu* 哲學研究 (January 1955).⁶ The editorial board of the newly established journal consisted of a mixed group of cadres, Marxist scholars as well as the scholars of the old system.⁷

In 1956, one year after the Hu Shi criticism campaign, many old scholars such as Jin Yuelin had entered the CCP. The departments of philosophy at several universities were then established or re-established. At Fudan University, Hu Qu Yuan 胡曲園 became the head of the Department of Philosophy, which had a research institute on dialectical materialism and historical materialism (Yu 1994, 81). In 1956, the Philosophy Research Institute at CAS was established in cooperation with Beijing University. Feng Youlan became head of a section history of Chinese philosophy. (“Fung Yu-lan, Part Two” (1958)). In 1956, departments of philosophy were established at other universities (e.g., Wuhan University, Fudan University, and the People’s University), and later at the Zhongshan University (1960) and Nankai University (1962).

Some events in the twenty-first century indicate partly or at least symbolically a return to features of the Mao era while enforcing Marxist values.⁸ In 2003, Hu

5 Discussions were also held in Shanghai, Changchun, Guangxi, Lanzhou, Tianjin, Qingnan and elsewhere (*Zhongguo* 1985, 563).

6 歷史研究 *Lishi yanjiu* (February 1954), 考古 *Kaogu* and 哲學研究 *Zhexue Yanjiu*. *Minjian wenxue* 民間文學 was established in April 1955 (Wang and Zhang 1988, 157). *Wenxue yanjiu* 文學研究 followed later in March 1957, and was renamed *Wenxue pinglun* 文學評論 in 1959 (Wang and Zhang 1988, 175).

7 In the impressum of *Zhexue yanjiu* the following editors are listed: Pan Zinian 潘梓年, Jin Yuelin 金岳霖, Yu Guangyuan 於光遠, 艾思奇, 胡繩, and Hu Sheng 楊獻珍, Yang Xianzhen had studied in Moscow, Peng Xuanwu 彭桓武, Li Da 李達, Ma Te 馬特, Feng Ding 馮定, Zhou Jianren 周建人, Sun Dingguo 孫定國, Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, Su Qian 蕭前.

8 For an analysis of the Maoist features in Hu Jintao’s and Xi Jinping’s cultural policy, see Motoh (2018).

Jintao (2003) made his first speech after being elected general secretary at the symbolic location of Xibaipo in Hebei, where Mao Zedong lived in 1948 and which was the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army. Like Hu Jintao, in July 2013, Xi Jinping also went to Xibaipo and emphasised that the “red country will never change its colour” (Xi Jinping 2018). In April 2013, Document 9 “號文件” had already been issued. This important directive was intended to make officials take action against the seven “do nots,” for example, against criticism of China's human-rights record and the nihilism of the Party's traumatic past (Zhao 2016a, 1172). From December 2013 to June 2014, Xi Jinping launched a campaign to ideologically train CASS Party cadres. In July 2014, an article appeared in *RMRB* summing up the training of over 1220 people. After praising the work of over 4000 CASS academics, the article emphasises the correct attitude of “conducting research for the people” (Zhang 2014),⁹ indicating the use of academia as a political tool. In January 2015, Document 30 (another directive) was issued. This document announced the strengthening of ideological education to “persist in using the theoretical system of Socialism with Chinese characteristics to arm teachers' and students' minds from beginning to end [and] guarantee Socialist orientation in education” (Zhao 2016a, 1184). The article also demanded joint control, among other things (*ibid.*).¹⁰

The National Planning Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences (NPOPSS), which is directly subordinate to the Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideological Work (*Zhongyang xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo lingdao xiaozu*) (see Heike 2014, 18), announces different project lines in social sciences and philosophy. Apart from the grand project, it issues lists of possible topics for the application of annual projects. Despite the fact that there are separate sections for Marxism, scientific socialism, and Party history, in the section of philosophy, propaganda and Marxism cover the largest group of topics. From 2012 to 2014, the number of these topics increased from 22 to more than 30.¹¹ In addition to Marxist theory, the PRC leaders' thoughts on policy and their nationalist cultural essentialism¹² are emphasised in other the

9 July 10, 2014, *RMRB* Zoujin Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan: Gaoyang Makesizhuyi wei renmin fuwu. For a partial translation see Fei (2015).

10 Document 30 (*Guanyu jin yibu jiaqiang ge gaijin xin shixingxia gaoxiao xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo de yijian* 2015) has not been published openly, but Xinhua issued a summary (see *Guanyu jin yibu jiaqiang ge gaijin xin shixingxia gaoxiao xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo de yijian* 2015). See also the translation of this summary (Creemers 2015).

11 In 2014 and 2015, there were 37 topics; in 2016, there were 32; and in 2017, there were 36. The annual projects are enlisted on the homepage of NPOPSS.

12 Thoughts on nationalist cultural essentialism include topics such as “The great Chinese tradition and its relation to the road of socialism” (2015) and “The philosophy of the Chinese way” (2016).

fields of philosophy, such as ethics, through topics such as family, professional, and individual ethics. This clearly reflects the use of the teaching of philosophy as a political tool.

From *Dazhong zhexue* to *Xin Dazhong zhexue*

In 2014, Wang Weiguang, president of CASS, edited an update of Ai Siqi's original one-volume booklet, in an expanded work of seven volumes titled the *New Philosophy of the Masses* (XDZZX). Originally, Ai Siqi's work served as the introductory text book in China to Marxist views on philosophy, particularly for the generation of Western-trained Chinese scholars of the Republican era. As early as July 2007 until January 2014, 81 meetings of the editors of XDZZX were held to discuss various issues relating to the preparation of the manuscript.¹³ This demonstrates that publication of the work had already been planned under Hu Jintao. During this period (in March 2008), Xi Jinping became vice president.

Both Ai Siqi's DZZX and its revised edition (XDZZX) were published in times of radical change in China. The 1930s saw major activities in laying the foundation for Marxist discourse in China. The bulk of the Marxist canon, with works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, were translated into Chinese, with Ai Siqi and Li Da leading the way (Fogel 1987; Knight 2005). In 1938, the Yan'an New Philosophy Association (*Yan'an Xin Zhexueshe* 延安新哲學社) was created (Lu 2006, 233). The DZZX was also part of the study material for Western-trained intellectuals in Yan'an.¹⁴

The revised edition of Ai Siqi's work appeared after the establishment of the PRC. Ai Siqi then worked for the Ministry of Higher Education, and was a key figure in training scholars in academia through additional courses on the principles of Marxism, thus inspiring more academics to read DZZX as an introduction.¹⁵ It

13 XDZZX is accompanied by a volume of material (Meihua zikuhuan lai: "Xin Dazhong Zhexue" bianxie ziliaoji 梅花香自苦寒來: "新大眾哲學"編寫資料集) that contains the outcome of the 81 meetings held from July 2007.

14 See the interview conducted 7 June 2008 with He Fang 何方 (1922–2017), who in 1938 came to Yan'an to study foreign languages at the Military and Political University of Resistance against Japan 抗日軍政大學 and entered the Foreign Ministry in the 1950s (Wang and Schulz Zinda forthcoming).

15 See the interview conducted 5 January 2007 with Qian Gurong 錢谷融 (1919–2017), who entered the National Central University in Chongqing in 1938 to study national literature; see also the interview conducted 24 July 2009 with Zhang Shiyong (1921–) (Wang Weijiang, Schulz Zinda forthcoming).

seems that school students also read the DZZX because the Marxist content of this work was easy to grasp.¹⁶

Even in structure, the 2014 XDZZX follows the DZZX. The DZZX (1938) had four parts (Ai 1938), the 1950 edition had five parts (Ai 1950), and the latest edition, the XDZZX, is expanded to seven parts and has over 1000 pages. After an introductory part, which explains the basics of philosophy and Marxist philosophy, the second part treats the dichotomy of idealism versus materialism, the third part treats dialectics, the fourth part treats epistemology, the fifth part treats the conception of history, the sixth part treats the value system, and the seventh part treats the view of life. Like Ai Siqi, the editors of the XDZZX (2014) are connected to the Party, and most of them are employed at the Central Party School. However, these editors have professional academic backgrounds, having studied philosophy at Beijing University, the Central Party School, Renmin University, or at CASS.¹⁷ Among a second group of referees are older-generation and prestigious scholars of Marxism. There are also prestigious people closely associated with Ai Siqi such as Wang Danyi 王丹一, the compiler of Ai Siqi's works, and Lu Guoying 盧國英, Ai Siqi's former secretary. This second group also includes Huang Nansen 黃楠森 (=黃柎森), who was employed for the Institute of Marxism–Leninism Studies at Beijing University in 1952, Ru Xin 汝信 (*1931) from CASS, and Yang Chungui 楊春貴 (*1936) from the Central Party School. Both Ru Xin and Yang Chungui were selected members of the newly established Marxism Theory Institute (XDZZX 2014, 1055).

In the foreword to XDZZX, Wang states that XDZZX is neither a philosophical textbook nor an academic study. He states that XDZZX focuses on questions derived from reality and attempts to find answers to these (XDZZX 2014, 6). Wang states that the XDZZX is in line with Ai Siqi's work and Han Shuying's *Tongsu zhexue* 通俗哲學, which was published in 1981 (XDZZX 2014, 1057). He continues that due to the transformations in the world and in China, a new edition was necessary to address new issues such as globalisation, the environment, and the capitalist influx after the reforms in China. Like Ai Siqi's in his work, Wang writes that the Marxist philosophy "talks the language of the Chinese common people" (*laobaixing de hua* 老百姓的話) (XDZZX 2014, 6).

16 See the interview conducted 5 December 2011 with Zheng Zhong 鄭重 (1935–) who entered Fudan University to study journalism in 1956, and worked as journalist for *Wenhuibao* from 1961 to 1996 (Wang and Schulz Zinda forthcoming).

17 Beijing University (Li Xiaobing 李曉兵); the Central Party School (Mao Weiping 毛衛平); Renmin University (Wang Weiguang, Pang Yuanzheng 龐元正, Li Jingyuan 李景源); CASS (Sun Weiping 孫偉平).

Like Ai Siqi's work, XDZZX includes many examples from everyday life to explain the correct world outlook. However, it is more all-encompassing, including contemporary socio-political and global issues. It addresses questions of the modern information society and the environment (e.g., discussing the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change in 2009). It also discusses socialist worker heroes coming from the past and present masses, such as Lei Feng 雷鋒 (1940–1962) (XDZZX 2014, 984ff.), Jiao Yulu 焦裕祿 (1922–1964) (XDZZX 2014, 1015 ff.) or the police officer Ren Changxia 任長霞 (XDZZX 2014, 1021ff.), who are introduced in the context of discussing the Marxist ethics of professionals. The final chapter of the seventh volume is titled “To Sacrifice Oneself for the Bliss of Human Beings,” thus indicating that this work claims validity not only for China, but for all of humanity.

The quotations used to support the prescriptions are almost exclusively taken from the Marxist canonical works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping. Despite Wang Weiguang's emphasis on the use of simple language, the chapters on philosophy are not easily accessible because they refer to names and quotations from Chinese and world philosophy from antiquity (e.g., the pre-Socratics and the Hundred Schools), as well as to contemporary philosophers such as Heidegger. However, the work might also have been directed to academics to emphasise the “Call for Scholarly Work in Marxism in the Service of the People.” (Zhang 2014)

The 1950 revised edition of Ai Siqi's DZZX differs from the edition published in 1938 by more specifically referring to relevant terms in philosophy, such as “*Weltanschauung*,” which might not have been widely used in the 1930s.¹⁸ In 1938, Ai Siqi stated that “philosophy is the basic attitude and knowledge of human beings regarding the world” (DZZX 1938, 12). In 1950, he provided more detail, stating that “philosophical thought is basic knowledge and perspective regarding the entire world. It is also *Weltanschauung* (DZZX 1950, 10).” Thus, for Ai Siqi, philosophy is simultaneously the comprehensive knowledge of the world and world outlook. Ai Siqi explains that philosophy provides answers to every problem concerning the entire world, while different kinds of thought deal with material problems (DZZX 1950, 10–11).

18 For example, Ai Siqi employed the term “heaven knows” (*tian xiaode* 天曉得) to indicate the falsely presumed limits of human knowledge. In the 1950 revised version, Ai Siqi used this phrase interchangeably with the technical term “agnosticism” (*bukezhibilun* 不可知論)—a term indicating the adversarial position in Marxist discourse, which is frequently used by Lenin in his *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* in relation to Haeckel and Mach (e.g. DZZX, Ch. 6.4). This indicates that in 1938 the Marxist terms were either not fully translated, or not yet in widespread use.

Under the explicit premise that “Marxist modern philosophy is the correct and scientific philosophy” (XDZZX 2014, 13), the editors of XDZZX follow Ai Siqi, stating that “Philosophy is defined as a theoretical, systematic world outlook [and] is based on theoretical argument and logical analysis to systematically answer the most universal questions of the world (XDZZX 2014, 3).” Marxist philosophy is connected strictly to reality and defined as “the essence of thought in the productive practice of human society and the research practice of science (XDZZX 2014, 3).” It underlies all economical and scientific processes. In this way, philosophy is not only conceived as an outlook, but also as offering the correct methodology in dealing with problems.

In addition, in XDZZX, philosophy is not strictly connected to reality in research only, and is afforded a more active part in society because it is presented as transforming reality (XDZZX 2014, 16). It is based on the main principles of dialectical materialism and historical materialism adapted to the Chinese needs (XDZZX 2014, 75). Given that philosophy is based on practical experience, the editors consider the process of Sinicisation of Marxist philosophy infinite (XDZZX 2014, 100–1).

Although the above definition of philosophy confirms the older values of the Maoist era, it does not entirely tread on old paths of Maoism because it allows the existence and necessity of other philosophies outside Marxism, stating that Marxist philosophy developed through the criticism of non-Marxist and anti-Marxist thought (XDZZX 2014, 4). In XDZZX, old, pre-1945 non-Marxist scholars such as Feng Youlan are not as heavily criticised as they were during the Mao era. The XDZZX editors go so far as to state that the “charm of philosophy” lies in the fact that it allows “for different viewpoints” that might have the same meaning or value (XDZZX 2014, 75).

In relation to the historiography of Chinese philosophy, in the 1950s, the guiding principle of evaluating the Chinese philosophical heritage was Zhdanov’s model of the history of philosophy as a struggle between idealism and materialism. This principle was reinforced after the rather liberal debate on the historiography of Chinese philosophy in 1957. The XDZZX implicitly reasserts the same model (without naming Zhdanov) in considering the history of philosophy—Eastern philosophy such as Indian and Chinese as well as Western philosophy—as a struggle between materialism versus idealism and between dialectics versus metaphysics. However, it allows Chinese and Western traditional philosophies to employ different terms and logical systems (XDZZX 2014, 28).

Given it was an introductory textbook the DZZX did not treat questions of historiography, and the present study will discuss two major issues relating to the role of

idealism in the Chinese heritage discussed in the debate of 1957, and these arguments will be compared with those expressed in XDZZX because there are interesting similarities. The first issue debated in 1957 was the value of idealism in the historiography of philosophy and the relationship of idealism to materialism. In 1957, Feng Youlan defined the relationship between idealism and materialism as “the two sides to one thing (philosophy). They exclude each other but they also influence each other, permeate each other. This is the contradiction of both sides as well as its unity (Feng 1957, 18).” Similarly, He Lin (He 1957, 189) also stated the relationship between idealism to materialism as interdependent, mutually beneficial, and absorbing. He Lin and Feng Youlan were heavily criticised for their views on idealism. However, in 2014, in XDZZX, the perspective of both scholars has officially been adopted, and it is asserted that the opposition between idealism and materialism is not absolute, but is permeating, in that they rely on each other (XDZZX 2014, 118).

The second issue debated in 1957 concerns the quality of idealism. A commonly employed argument for a more open-minded treatment of idealism is an attributed “rational kernel” (*heli hexin* 合理核心) (He 1957, 191–92; Zhang 1957, 218).¹⁹ Indeed, these open-minded scholars were also heavily criticised for this more positive view of idealism in the historiography of philosophy. Again, XDZZX does not follow the old orthodox path, but takes the argument of the reform-minded scholars of 1957. The XDZZX (2014, 118) states that idealism contained some “rational elements.” In XDZZX, the quality of idealism is further differentiated through the subdivision of subjective and objective idealism (XDZZX 2014, 115). For example, while the XDZZX (2014, 116–17) categorises neo-Confucianism as idealism, it refers to the school of principle as “objective idealism” and the school of mind as “subjective idealism.”

In 1957, the advocates of a more liberal approach to idealism and in 2014, the editors of XDZZX employed the same quotation from Lenin’s *Philosophical Notebooks* (Lenin 1915) to legitimise their perspective (XDZZX 2014, 118–19).²⁰ In the *Philosophical Notebooks*, Lenin (1915) granted idealism a place in the history of philosophy by remarking that intelligent idealism “is closer to intelligent materialism than stupid materialism (Lenin 1915).” Despite acknowledging the accomplishment of idealism and following the 1957 open-minded scholars, the

19 He Lin’s student Zhang Shiyong (1957, 218) more carefully stated that idealism had several rational aspects that were in opposition to idealism.

20 See Feng Youlan (1957, 283), who argues for an abstract meaning in the general content of ideas that can in the history of thought, take on different forms, both idealistic and materialistic, so that at times, contradiction between the two occurs. See also Wen Gongyi’s 溫公頤 (1957, 499) argument for the continuous existence of idealism. In addition, Yan Mingxuan (1957, 389), who, supporting Feng Youlan, argues with Lenin that the natural laws completely reflect nature in spite of their abstraction.

editors of XDZZX emphasise that idealism is not able to reflect reality (XDZZX 2014, 119), which is the principal function of philosophy. In particular, they brand subjective idealism as the “big enemy” of the Marxist party (XDZZX 2014, 133).

Despite the proclaimed importance, XDZZX has received very little public response in academic philosophy journals.²¹

Ritualised Communication

While the first organised mass public confession involving many Chinese academics through the Thought Reform focused on personal history and working background before 1949, it had not yet specifically stressed Marxism–Leninism as part of the future academic work. The criticism of Hu Shi can be considered the first campaign of its kind in the field of humanities. Similar to criticism against the philosophy historian Aleksandrov under Stalin, Hu Shi served as a negative example during the Hu Shi criticism campaign in 1955. However, different to the Soviet discussion on philosophy, the criticism of Hu Shi was planned (Pollock 2006, 28–29). The texts of self-criticism and criticism not only appeared in academic journals, but also in newspapers and the journal of ideology, *Xuexi*.

Wang Shaoguang (2008) suggests a mobilisation model that was applied in setting all major and strategic agendas in the Mao era. Wang Shaoguang (2008, 62) divides this model into five phases: 1) instructions through an official document from the CCP Central Committee, the State Council, or an editorial or commentator’s essay in *Renmin ribao* (RMRB); 2) dissemination of the instructions to all levels following a set order and an imposing propaganda campaign; 3) study of the instruction; 4) grasping typical cases, negative or positive, and disseminating the experience gained by the selected unit; 5) forming a consensus among the people. While Wang Shaoguang’s (2008) model clearly indicates the ways in which dissemination of the political guidelines should be achieved, the ritual aspects of this process will be suggested in the following accounting for the group behaviour during the campaigns, including the adoption the socialist writing style that was established in academia. As part of a streamlining process, the Hu Shi criticism campaign aimed to set new socialist standards in form and values through a ritualised form of communication between Party intellectuals and academics. Thus,

21 The CrossAsia database lists only 17 articles in core philosophy, literature, and history journals that refer to the full text of the XDZZX.

the campaign can be considered part of a transformation, a *rite de passage*. The Indologist Michaels (2001) indicates five elements that characterise a religious *rite de passage* of a wedding celebration, and these can be applied to the Hu Shi criticism campaign.

The first element of the *rite de passage* is transition. That is, the transition itself is the very condition for the “ritual transition.” In the case of the Hu Shi criticism campaign, it was marking the transition from a Western-style scientific method to academic discourse grounded on Marxism–Leninism. In a letter to Li Da, Mao wrote that the Hu Shi criticism campaign was an opportunity to introduce the philosophical terms among and outside the cadres (Knight 1996, 263).

The second element of the *rite de passage* (Michaels 2001) or ritual transition is a formally made decision. A sign of intention must be communicated for the time of transition to begin. Mao demonstrated his intention to begin a major criticism campaign against Hu Shi in October 1954 in a letter he sent to the editor of *RMRB* and members of the Politburo (Wei 2004, 99; Yuan Ying 2007, 87). Attached to this seemed to be a critical essay on the New *Hongloulou* School, of which Hu Shi, Yu Pingbo and others were the main representatives, written by the young students Li Xifan 李希凡 and Lan Ling 藍領, and published in *Wenyi bao*.²² The Hu Shi criticism campaign began in November 1954, when at a conference on *Hongloulou* held at Fudan University from 15 to 20 November it was indicated that Hu Shi should not only be criticised through literary criticism, but also through academic fields such as history, pedagogy, and philosophy.²³ Several other writings by Party institutions and intellectuals appeared in major newspapers and magazines, reflecting the formally made decision within the Party to streamline humanities academics and providing instructions. In an interview and speech given by the president of CAS, Guo Moruo, in 1954, Mao’s aims are confirmed. Guo Moruo encouraged young people to criticise the old generation headed by Hu Shi, and embedded the campaign into a greater process of rectification. Both Guo Moruo’s (1955b) speech in 1955 and an article by the Director of the

22 Li Xifan 李希凡 and Lan Ling’s 藍領 “Guanyu Hongloulou jianlun ji qita 關於紅樓夢簡論與其他” (Short Introduction to *Hongloulou* and Other Things) was published in *Wenyi bao* 文藝報 on 30 September 1954 (Kau and Leung 1986, 483–84).

23 *Shanghai wenyijie liangtiao douzheng da shiji* 1949.3–1966.8 (*chugao*) 上海文藝兩條鬥爭大事記 (初稿) (internal manuscript, date unknown), 14.

Philosophical Institute at CAS, Pan Zinian (1955),²⁴ emphasise the importance of this criticism.²⁵

However, after an initial guideline was provided, the standard was specified further in an official announcement on the “organization of speeches to promote materialism and criticise bourgeois idealistic thought” that targeted people such as Hu Shi, Yu Pingbo, and Hu Feng. (*Zhonggong Zhongyang* 459) It also imposes standard questions and guidelines highlighting eight aspects that should be emphasised in speeches. Four of these aspects can be divided into two general groups: 1) “Why do we have to criticise idealism? Why do we have to study materialistic *Weltanschauung*?”; 2) “What is materialism? What is idealism?” (*ibid.*). Hu Shi is specifically referred to in an additional four aspects (*ibid.*, 460):

- 1) What is the point in criticising Hu Shi’s, Yu Pingbo’s, Hu Feng’s, etc. thought?;
- 2) criticism of Hu Shi as representative of bourgeois idealistic philosophical thought;
- 3) criticism of Hu Shi as representative of reactionary political thought;
- and 4) criticism of Hu Shi as representative of the bourgeois idealistic historical point of view. (*ibid.*)

Further, certain articles from Beijing journals and newspapers were cited by the State Council as good examples articles of criticism. These announcements and instructions for group behaviour signify the starting point for the following group behaviour considered in the third element.²⁶

The third element of the *rite de passage* (Michaels 2001) or ritual transition is the formalisation of ritual action. It is thus characterised by formal, repetitive, stereotyped, and irrevocable action in public. This corresponds to the various articles the academics produced to criticise Hu Shi. By writing articles that criticised Hu Shi, reflecting their loyalty to Marxist–Leninist philosophy, the authors demonstrated their intention—disregarding whether it was of their own free will—to participate in the transition. The articles can be characterised as formal, repetitive, stereotyped, and irrevocable public actions, and thus mark a *rite de passage*. Ritual

24 After 1949, Pan Zinian held various positions: 1950–1953: director of the Ministry of Education, vice-chairman of the Cultural and Educational Committee; July 1954: council member of the China Philosophical Society; June 1955: member of the Standing Committee in the CAS Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences; 1955–1967 director of the Philosophical Institute (*Who is Who in Communist China* 1966, 539).

25 *Zhongguo kexueyuan Guo Moruo yuanzhang guanyu wenhua xueshujie ying kaizhan fandui zichanjieji cuowu sixiang de mendou dui Guangming ribao jizhe de tanhua* and Guo Moruo (1955a); Guo Moruo’s opening speech at a seminar (see also Guo Moruo 1955b and Pan Zinian 1955).

26 Examples in the following section drawn from texts about the Hu Shi criticism campaign merely present representative examples.

communication consists of verbal signs. That is, terms, names, events, and quotations that described Hu Shi's personality and thought became negative symbols and symbols of the enemy through reiteration. Concurrently, terms from Marxist–Leninist ideology, names of leading representatives of materialism, and crucial events in Marxist historiography became positive symbols. As will be discussed, some of these elements appear in the fourth element of modality.

Michaels (2001) divides the fourth element of the *rite de passage* into two aspects: the social and religious. This first is the social aspects. In these there is pressure coming from above, particularly students and colleagues of Hu Shi, as well as scholars trained in the West, who were asked to write criticisms of Hu Shi. The community was polarised into opposing camps—“us” and “them”—on the basis of political, practical, and ideological issues flowing from the Party line.²⁷ Dichotomies in terms of Marxist versus bourgeois thought were frequently cited in the Hu Shi criticism campaign. To create a new sense of community, friends were distinguished from the enemy, who was linked to values and networks in the “old Chinese system” that existed before 1949.

To create a sense of community facing the enemy, expressions such as “we all know” (*dajia dou zhidao* 大家都知道) were frequently used (Jin et al. 1955, 3). The “us and the enemy” dichotomy was further emphasised through rhetorical and polemic questions; for example, “we only want to ask one question: Do you [the pragmatist] acknowledge objective truth?” (Zhang 1955, 164).

Hu Shi was attacked as an enemy to strengthen the sense of community. As a servant of the political enemy, Hu Shi was frequently referred to as a “hatchet man” (*zougou* 走狗) for various opponents, including Jiang Kai-shek or as a US imperialist (Huang 1955, 164). Many types of images presenting Hu Shi as an enemy were used, as demonstrated in Ma Qingjian's and Lu Wanqing's (1955, 52) article: “loyal slave to US imperialism, Jiang Kai-shek's hatchet man, evil enemy of Marxism–Leninism, the deadly enemy of the Chinese people.” Hu Shi was often accused of “admiring and being close to the US” (*chongmei qinmei* 崇美親美) (Wang 1955, 30), a negative quality that had already been employed to identify wrong thought during the Thought Reform criticisms.²⁸ Demonstrating the academic character of the campaign, Hu Shi was referred to as a “deadly enemy of science” (Xia 1955, 72) or a “deadly enemy of objective truth” (Zhang 1955, 36), which is implicitly equated to being an enemy of the people. After connecting Hu

27 This was also observed by Nikolai Kremontsov in the context of the Soviet discourse (Kremontsov 1997, 53). It can also be applied to the PRC campaigns in the 1950s.

28 Huang Ping (2005, 410) calls for the elimination of “admiring and being close to the US” as part of the aim to abolish all non-proletarian terms such as “individualism” and “liberalism.”

Shi to John Dewey and US imperialism, Feng Youlan also states at the beginning that in the “battle of criticising Hu Shi, this is a ‘fortress,’ only by tearing down this fortress, our battle can be victorious.” (Feng and Zhu 1955, 93) Following this, he demonstrates credo by denouncing definition the wrong way. The Hu Shi criticism campaign represents a process of repeated affirmation of Marxist–Leninist ideology that enables the social dimension by creating the social groups of “us” and “them.”

The second aspect of the fourth element is the religious one (Michaels 2001). This aspect is reflected in practices reminiscent of religious rituals such as pronouncing repentance and citing credos and vows that are directed toward a vision of a bright future. Such “rituals” can be seen in many of the published articles.

In the Soviet Union, the ritualised form of criticism was borrowed from Party group behaviour: public confession, self-criticism, and repentance (Krementsov 1997, 52). In China, the same ritual was first employed during the Yan’an campaign in 1942, which served as a model for the 1950s campaigns. The editorial that appeared in the first issue of the leading journal for academic philosophy, *Zhexue yanjiu*, directly refers to the Rectification Campaign of 1942.²⁹ The model consisted of the steps of declaration of “one’s position—criticism—self-criticism and probation” (*biaotai*表態—*piping*批評—*ziwo piping*自我批評—*guoguan*過關) (Dittmer 1973). Self-criticism was necessary to progress, and the promise of reform functioned as an additional asset for the transition for scholars of the old system such as Feng Youlan (1955, 98), who proclaimed the following:

It is for people doing research into classical literature, especially like me who with Hu Shi “reached the same goal by different routes” so that I have to be extremely watchful regarding myself.

Another common feature of the Hu Shi criticism campaign is the affirmation of being part of a greater historical process, which is greatly reminiscent of belonging to a religion in that one’s religious beliefs are said to mean that one is a part of a mission that is greater than oneself. The authors of the Hu Shi criticism texts embed the campaign, as well as their own development and that of the PRC, into the process of the socialist revolution, which first unfolded with the Soviet October Revolution. For example:

[T]he Soviet socialist October Revolution and China’s New Democratic Movement brought a big crisis to US, British, Japanese, French etc. imperialism (Yin 1955, 57).

29 Wei Makeshuyi *zhexuede shengli er douzheng* (1955, 1).

After the Soviet socialist October Revolution, Marxism began to be spread extensively in China. As soon as the Chinese communist movement began it met all kinds of enemies. (Xu 1955, 79)

At the end of each article, the authors insert some sort of vow concerning the future. For example, the vow might be in the form of a battle cry, as in the following example:

Today there are still poisonous leftovers of this [Hu Shi's] thought taking all kinds of forms in each scientific section. We workers in philosophy should uncover them in time to strike a ruthless blow against it. To shoulder this kind of task is completely necessary. (Ge 1955, 147)

The vow might also be expressed as a vision of a glorious future, as in the following example:

[U]nder the leadership of the CCP and Chairman Mao taking the constitution of the Chinese People's Republic as standard for thought and action then we can lead our people to the road of real freedom and make China a rich, prosperous and lucky socialist state. (Zheng 1955, 129)

The vow might could also be an admonishment, as in the following example:

We seriously have to study the method of concrete analysis of Marxism–Leninism to emerge victorious over imperialist sophistry (He 1955, 17).

The fifth element of the *rite de passage* (Michaels 2001) or ritual transition is political content being inscribed into academic philosophy. In the campaign, the negative symbols, the new value system, the combative glossary, and the new academic style were inscribed into academic philosophy. This is evident in the more liberal debate of 1957 on the Chinese philosophical heritage.

As for the first element, Xi Jinping gave a sign of major transformation in his concept of the Chinese Dream expressed in November 2012, when he announced a rejuvenation of China (Ho 2018, 66). Since this speech, several guidelines for higher education have been produced, such as Document 9. Leading on to the more specific Document 30 and the CASS training campaign, the opinion of students is exploited to criticise the behaviour of academics, as occurred in the Hu Shi criticism campaign. In November 2014, the provincial Party paper *Liaoning ribao* published an open letter from the perspective of university students, which is presented as reflecting the opinion of many others across the country. In the open letter, the students criticise their teachers for disregarding Marxist ideology,

praising the West, and criticising the CCP. (*Laosbi* 2014)³⁰ In January 2015, in response to the article and to some controversial discussions online, the CCP Central Committee and the State Council issued Document 30.

While the wording of the open letter is not as harsh and polemic as the wording used in the 1950s campaign, it draws on some elements of the ritual communication of the Mao era. For example, it refers to the guidelines of the CCP Central Committee of the same year. Although the teachers are referred to with some respect because of their “expert knowledge, serious scholarly attitude and sense of responsibility,” (*ibid.*)³¹ the open letter clearly indicates a dichotomy between “us” (representing the students allying with the common people) and “them” (the negative examples of university teachers). Quoting Deng Xiaoping, the open letter emphasises the following belief:

University education is about seeking and examining the methods and paths by which China can modernise, about building a system of culture that is suited to the world’s most advanced trends. It is about bearing up the future of the Chinese people through the transfer of knowledge. (*ibid.*)

In an emotional manner, the open letter describes the predicament of the morally aloof students, who are forced to criticise their revered teachers. In addition, rhetorical questions are used. For example, a student named Kiko asks the following:

If China is truly as dark as our teachers make it out to be, with what sort of attitude are we to face this society once we’ve graduated? Who will give us the confidence and strength to build this society of ours? (*ibid.*)

At the end there are even some admonishments, for example:

China in the university classroom should clear antecedents. Historical development is continuous, and no period is an isolated scene. Contemporary China’s political forms, social organisations, habitual concepts have all been influenced by thousands of years of cultural tradition—and so, of necessity, it is imprinted with definite “Chinese characteristics.” In assessing China, we can’t look just at the surface, but must look even more at the lines of its history. (*ibid.*)

30 See also the translation by David Bandurski (2015).

31 Translation by Bandurski (2015).

However, despite some similarities to the style of 1950s socialist writing in the article considered above, what is most surprising is the lack of the public group behaviour outlined earlier in the third and fourth elements of *the rite de passage* in response to the guidelines set out in Document 30 during the training campaign at CASS, which merely included Party cadres and not all academics, as in the 1950s. In contrast to Mao's "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art," which became the standard in studies on literature and art in the 1950s, Xi Jinping's "Talk at the Forum Discussing the Work in Philosophy and Social Sciences" is rarely referred to in academic journals. Apart from the occasional response in articles in core philosophy journals that are either discussing or simply quoting Xi Jinping's words, the speech does not seem to have influenced academic philosophy.³² An examination of the articles published in *Zhexue yanjiu* at the time Xi Jinping made his speech indicates that neither the ideological training in general nor the idealism versus materialism opposition in the historiography of Chinese philosophy (as suggested in XDZZX) seem to have been influential. This also indicates that the *rite de passage* suggested by the employment of Maoist symbolism is incomplete because the new ideological content has not yet been inscribed into philosophical research.

Conclusion and Outlook

While Xi Jinping draws on symbols of the Mao legacy in transforming academic social sciences and philosophy, this use of symbolism from the Mao era has not created the public group behaviour seen in Chinese academics during the campaigns of the 1950s. In addition, the training is restricted to the Party and the guidelines are not disseminated among all academics. That is, this training is not carried out publicly. In contrast to the 1950s, core journals such as *Zhexue yanjiu* do not clearly and openly reflect the ideology expressed as in Xi Jinping's "Talk at the Forum Discussing the Work in Philosophy and Social Sciences" or the transformation of academia as part of the Chinese Dream. However, the use of such symbolism might recreate among the older generations of Chinese people the mood of that time (who through their own or their teachers' and relatives' accounts directly or indirectly experienced the Mao era), creating a feeling of alertness to what might follow these symbols or possibly the mood of awakening and departure to a new era that transfers the charismatic aura of Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping as part of mood management. In sum, the ideological

32 On the CrossAsia database, only 285 articles in core philosophy journals (e.g., *Zhexue Yanjiu*), journals of the nationwide academies of science, and university journals were found that quote or refer to Xi Jinping's talks.

transformation of present-day academia in China superficially has the look and feel of the Mao era, but it has not so far created such a profound and visible effect as in the 1950s.

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Mao's Conception of the Revolutionary Subject: A Socio-historical Approach

*Marko HOČEVAR**

Abstract

The article explores Mao's conception of the revolutionary subject, focusing on the relationship between the peasantry and proletariat. In the years after the October Revolution, when vulgar and reductionist readings and interpretations of Marx seemed to prevail, Mao, influenced by the specific material conditions and class relations in China, conceptualised an important novelty within the Marxist tradition. Namely, he developed a very different and original understanding of the revolutionary subject, and especially a different understanding of the relationship between the proletariat and peasantry. He introduced the split between the main revolutionary subject—the proletariat—and the main revolutionary force—the peasantry. This novelty, which was unique up to that point in Marxist theory, enabled Mao to think of the Chinese revolutionary movement within a Marxist framework while considering the material conditions of life in China.

Keywords: Mao, revolutionary subject, proletariat, peasantry, class consciousness

Maova koncepcija revolucionarnega subjekta: socialno-zgodovinski pristop

Izvleček

Članek raziskuje Maovo teorijo revolucionarnega subjekta, in sicer se osredotoča na odnos med kmeti in proletariatom. V letih po oktobrski revoluciji, ko se je zdelo, da sta prevladala vulgarno in redukcionistično branje in interpretacija Marxa, je Mao zaradi specifičnih materialnih pogojev in razrednih odnosov na Kitajskem konceptualiziral pomembno novost v marksistični tradiciji. Razvil je namreč drugačno in izvirno razumevanje revolucionarnega subjekta, predvsem pa drugačno razumevanje odnosa med proletariatom in kmeti. Uvedel je delitev med glavnim revolucionarnim subjektom – proletariatom – in ključno revolucionarno silo – kmeti, kar je bilo v marksistični teoriji nekaj edinstvenega. Ta inovacija je Mao omogočila, da misli kitajsko revolucionarno gibanje znotraj marksističnega okvira, upoštevajoč materialne življenjske pogoje na Kitajskem.

Ključne besede: Mao, revolucionarni subjekt, proletariat, kmeti, razredna zavest

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Introduction

The question of the revolutionary subject has always been a central concern of revolutionary theory and politics. Without the subject of the revolution, no revolutionary change is conceivable. This problem was well understood by Marx, who focused on the revolutionary potential of one emerging class in 19th-century Europe—the industrial proletariat. According to Marx, the proletariat is the product and negation of capitalist private property, the bourgeois-capitalist order and class society as such: “What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable” (Marx and Engels 2008, 51). In his reflections on the Paris Commune, Marx also mentioned the role of “the *prolétariat foncier*” (the rural proletariat) (Marx 2009, 44), but strongly doubted that the peasantry as a class could represent itself and thus play an important role in revolutionary and emancipatory processes (cf. Marx 1960).

Following Marx, Lenin and Gramsci devoted significant attention to the question of the revolutionary subject and the question of class alliances between the proletariat and peasantry. For both, it was clear that the proletariat was not big enough to sustain a revolution on its own, and that the revolution would not be legitimate if it did not have the support of the vast peasant masses. Referring to the revolution in Russia, Lenin wrote, “Is it not clear that without the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry there is not a shadow of hope for the success of this struggle?” (Lenin 1962, 298). Gramsci, influenced by the Italian context, also wrote about the necessity of a class alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry, especially when dealing with the “Southern question”:

The proletariat can become the leading (*dirigente*) and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State (Gramsci 1978, 443).

However, both Lenin and Gramsci still emphasised, theoretically and politically, that the proletariat was the crucial revolutionary subject and the main force of the revolutionary movement, although the political reality of the Bolshevik revolution was certainly at variance with this (cf. Wolfe 1969).

Within these debates about the revolutionary subject in general, and the revolutionary potential of the peasantry in particular, Mao managed to surpass the previously noted conceptions and develop a distinct theory, which can be best understood within the dialectical relationship of the classical tradition of Marxism and the specific material conditions of the first half of 20th-century

China. He developed a theory that, for the first time in the Marxist tradition, ascribed the role of the main revolutionary force to the peasantry, while still maintaining that the proletariat was the leader of the revolutionary process. With this innovation, Mao developed a new and more complex theory of the revolutionary subject. The aim of this paper is thus threefold. First, it explains Mao's reflections on the question of the revolutionary subject up to 1949, demonstrating that Mao considered multiple potential revolutionary subjects and not just one (the proletariat or peasantry). Second, it explains the peculiar separation of the main revolutionary subject (proletariat) and the main revolutionary force (peasantry). Third, it provides a socio-historical and materialist explanation for both why and how Mao developed such a distinct conception of the revolutionary subject.

In order to explain Mao's theoretical and practical innovations properly, while avoiding the trap of reducing his theory and practice to voluntarism, we proceed, after the introduction and clarification of the methodological approach, with an explanation of the social, political and economic context of the beginning of the 20th century in China. This section is followed by an in-depth analysis of various writings and speeches by Mao up to 1949, focusing on the question of the revolutionary subject and the relationship between the main revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force. The third section focuses on explaining and contextualising why and how Mao developed a very different theory of the revolutionary subject. The concluding section highlights the implications of Mao's innovation for the Marxist tradition and of the specificity of his theoretical and political practice.

Note on Method

Before we begin with the analysis of Mao's political theory, it is important to clarify the methodological approach used in this paper. This research is based on the "socio-historical approach" to explaining political thought developed by Neil Wood (1978) and Ellen Meiksins Wood (2008). There are two important points to emphasise about this approach. First, it puts strong emphasis on the context—as without contextualisation, one cannot properly understand political thinkers. The Cambridge School had already introduced the understanding of context into

1 The year 1949 is not chosen arbitrarily. The Chinese Communists came to power in 1949, and it was logical, after this event, for Mao to pursue a different strategy and different theoretical and political practices. However, this does not imply that there was some kind of epistemological break or rupture in Mao's political theory, though specific changes can certainly be seen after 1949.

the exploration and explanation of political theory, but—and this is the second important point—within the socio-historical approach there is a different understanding of context. For the Cambridge School, the context comprises various discourses, different textual materials and “*hoch politik*,” which provide the basis for understanding a specific political theory. In the socio-historical approach, by contrast, the focus expands to cover the material conditions of life, property and class relations, in addition to the textual materials. Wood (1978, 348) argues that it is important to have a clear picture of

the polity and the economy as aspects of the society in which the theorist is living and writing. Then we must determine the nature of the existing social structure, of class divisions, of the prevailing system of status, the connection between class and status, and their relationship to the state.

Therefore, Mao's theory of the revolutionary subject, in particular the separation of the main revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force, will be explained while focusing on the specific class and property relations in China at the beginning of the 20th century, and considering the various political, social and economic events and processes in this context, as well as the influence of the Marxist tradition.

Explaining the Context

Before proceeding with an in-depth textual analysis of Mao's thought, it is important to sketch the Chinese context, focusing on the specific class and property relations and the specific political events in China at the turn of the century. This contextualisation will help us to explain why and how Mao introduced his conceptual and practical novelties into the Marxist tradition.

First, although China has never been colonised, various imperialist and colonialist aspirations on the part of the Great Powers had a very important impact on an entire generation of Chinese political thinkers and politicians. The First Opium War (1839–1842) began China's long “Century of Humiliation” (Wright 2011, 99), which lasted until 1949 and the victory of the Chinese Communists. The subsequent wars—the Second Opium War (1856–1860) and the Chinese war against France (1884–1885)—as well as the constant confrontations with Japan and its imperial pretensions, which became very clear in 1895 and the first Sino-Japanese War, show that China had become a “playground” of the Great Powers and their interests. After the First World War, China, already a republic, lost certain territories despite being on the side of the victors. This led to demonstrations, which erupted on 4th May 1919, when the Allies at the peace conference in Versailles

gave the territories, formerly occupied by Germany, to Japan. Japan's expansionist politics and occupation of Northern China and Manchuria from the early 1930s onwards only continued to strengthen nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments, leading to the creation of the national liberation movement, which, crucially, coincided with the protracted Chinese revolutionary war.²

Second, the strong tradition of peasant rebellions throughout Chinese history, and especially the Taiping Rebellion, should not be overlooked when explaining Mao's emphasis on the peasantry as a potential revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force. The Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), which erupted in the Canton area in the decade that followed the Opium War, was based on Christian teachings and on the belief that the Taiping leader, Hong Xiuquan, was chosen to establish "his Heavenly Kingdom on earth" (Reilly 2004, 3). More importantly, because of its "commune-like structure and primitive form of economic communism" (Shoppa 2000, 25) the Chinese Communists saw the Taiping Rebellion as an important historic event. As Wolf put it, the Taiping Rebellion, together with the Rebellion of Nien, "proved to be rehearsals of a still greater event, the peasant-based Communist revolution of the twentieth century" (Wolf 1969, 118–19).³

Third, the turn of the century brought new unrest and problems for the *Qing* dynasty, which in 1911/1912 resulted in its downfall. In October 1911, a mutiny broke out in the city of Wuchang that spread very quickly, leading to the abdication of the last Chinese emperor at the beginning of 1912. Sun Yat-sen, the leader of the revolutionary movement, became the first president of the Republic. However, he was quickly forced to resign and Yuan Shikai became the new president, after which he "nipped China's fledgling democracy in the bud" (Mitter 2013, 35) and destabilised the republican government. After Yuan's death, the vast territories of rural and urban China were ruled for the next 10 years mostly by warlords, who took over political, social and economic control at the local and regional levels. Mao's experience of fighting the warlords, in different periods and jointly with the nationalist Guomindang, had an immense impact on the development of his thought, especially in relation to the peasant question and peasant guerrilla warfare.⁴

Fourth, one cannot ignore the febrile relationship between the Communists and the nationalists. The agent of Comintern for China, Borodin, met with Sun

2 For more on these topics, see Chesneaux, Bastic and Bergère (1977), Osterhammel (1999), Lowell (2011), Mitter (2013), and Saje (2015, 403–30).

3 For more on the Taiping Rebellion, see also Wolf (1969), Chin (2000), Reilly (2004) and Platt (2012).

4 For more on the topic of the downfall of the empire and the warlord era, see Wakeman (1975), Mitter (2004), Saje (2004) and Saje (2015).

Yat-sen in the spring of 1921, and was very impressed by his revolutionary enthusiasm, and thus believed that the Guomindang should lead the revolution in China, and that the Communists should join the Guomindang party (Saje 2015, 453–54). After the Communist Party of China (CPC) was formally established in July 1921 in Shanghai, negotiations began with the Guomindang about forming a coalition to fight the warlords and establish a centralised government under the leadership of the Guomindang. The pact was formed in 1922 and lasted until 1927; during the first phase of the Northern Expedition (July 1926–June 1928), a radical split occurred between the Communists and Guomindang, and within the Guomindang itself. After the siege of Shanghai, Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the nationalists ordered the mass slaughter of Communists. This marked the end of the so-called First United Front in China and the Communists were, for the next few years, mostly isolated in the countryside.⁵

Fifth, one should also mention the strange relationship between the CPC and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was from the beginning very supportive of the Guomindang. Certainly, there were many arguments and conflicts between Chiang Kai-shek and the Soviet Union, but even after the Second World War the Soviet Union supported the Guomindang more than it did the CPC:

Stalin, before the Soviet occupation of Manchuria, did not believe that the Chinese Communists could take power, and recommended to Mao Zedong to cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek. The agreement between Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek was, of course, a great disappointment for the Chinese Communists. (Saje 2015, 479)

Only when the military strength of the Chinese Communists became apparent did Stalin change his attitude towards them. Moreover, despite these disagreements, the CPC really had no other allies but the Soviet Union.⁶ This fact can help us understand and explain why Mao insisted that the proletariat and Party had to have a decisive role in the protracted revolutionary war in China, while also recognising that the peasantry was the main revolutionary force and that the Revolution was actually a peasant movement.

Sixth, Mao's insistence that the proletariat is the crucial revolutionary subject and the leader of the revolutionary process, because it is the most class-conscious class, cannot be understood apart from the influence of the Marxist tradition.

5 For more on the topic, see Kwai (1970), Mitter (2004) and Saje (2015).

6 For more on Sino-Soviet relations and the relationship between the Chinese and Soviet Communists see Saje (2004) and Saje (2015).

We have already explained in the introduction that this was, until Mao at least, the classical Marxist line of argumentation. However, because of specific class and property relations that existed in China, Mao altered certain things in his conception of the revolutionary process and revolutionary subject in order to be able to consider the revolution in a predominantly agrarian land.⁷

Seventh, we also have to consider the specific class structure and class composition of Chinese society at the beginning of the 20th century, in which at least 80 percent of the population were peasants.⁸ Certainly, many differences existed among the peasantry:

Countrywide, approximately 40 percent of the farmland was rented out by landlords. About 30 percent of farm families were pure tenants, and another 20 percent rented part of their land, leaving 50 percent as owners of plots of widely varying sizes. (Skocpol 1980, 68)⁹

However, Mao used the numerical size of a class as one of the most important criteria “when assessing the revolutionary potential of different social classes” (Meisner 1982, 58; see also Schram 1989, 39). The specific class structure of Chinese society proved to be crucial, since the Chinese revolution was a peasant one: “... obviously, no revolution in a more than 90 percent agrarian country could succeed without peasant participation, and [Chinese Communist Party] leaders had always known that” (Mann 2012, 399).

Therefore, the above-mentioned points have, at least, to be taken into account when engaging in a socio-historical and materialist explanation of Mao’s theoretical and political practice to avoid reducing it to voluntarism.

Mao and the Revolutionary Subject

In order to explain Mao’s theoretical and practical innovations on the topic of the revolutionary subject, it is necessary to analyse his various writings, speeches and letters. Therefore, this section first explains the relationship between the

7 Li Dazhao, one of the founders of the CPC, also ascribed an important role to the peasantry in the Chinese Revolution. Li and his theory had a great influence on Mao (see Meisner 1982, 33; Saje 2015, 454).

8 Cf. Feuerwerker (1969, 15), Skocpol (1980, 68) and Mann (2012, 398–399). Mao also emphasised that the peasants and workers comprised more than 80 percent of the Chinese population (Mao 1975a, 168).

9 However, as Skocpol (1980, 68) points out, Chinese agriculture at the turn of the century should not be seen as feudal, since “there were no seigneurs with juridical rights to dues or to serf labor as in precapitalist Europe. Nor did Chinese agriculture feature large, owner-cultivated estates.”

revolutionary subject(s) and the main revolutionary force. Then, the topic of class consciousness and its role in conceptualising the difference between the main revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force are introduced into the debate.

The Revolutionary Subject(s) and the Main Revolutionary Force

In the early 1920s, while working as a working class organiser and forming trade unions in the cities, Mao did not pay close attention to and did not write about the question of revolutionary subjects and the main revolutionary force. After 1925–1926, when he moved to the rural areas of Hunan province, he discovered the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, which is best seen in his *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. In this *Report*, Mao emphasised the role of the peasantry in the upcoming revolution, as follows:

The poor peasants have always been the main force in the bitter fight in the countryside. They have fought militantly through the two periods of underground work and of open activity. They are the most responsive to Communist Party leadership. (Mao 1975b, 32)

Given the title of this text, it is logical that the working class is barely mentioned in the entire *Report*. Hence, at this stage, one could perhaps conclude that Mao was focusing only on the peasants as the revolutionary subject and main revolutionary force. However, this would be wrong, because, as Schram has argued, the “Hunan peasant report of February 1927 attributed to the poor peasants the leading role in the struggle in the countryside; [but] it did not downgrade the importance of the cities, and of the classes based in the cities” (Schram 1989, 41).

In May 1927, Mao gave a speech to welcome delegates to the Pacific Labour Conference, in which he clarified his idea:

The Chinese peasant movement is the main force in the revolutionary process ... They [the peasants] should especially go hand in hand with the working class of the whole and rely deeply on the influence and guidance of the worker's movement. (Mao in Knight 2007, 79)

Thus, the class alliance between the peasantry and working class is seen as indispensable to the Chinese Revolution. Even more importantly, we already see here the split between the main revolutionary subject and main revolutionary force. At the beginning of 1930, Mao again made explicit this dual perspective of the revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force:

It would be wrong to abandon the struggle in the cities, but in our opinion it would also be wrong for any of our Party members to fear the growth of peasant strength.... For in the revolution in semi-colonial China, the peasant struggle must always fail if it does not have the leadership of the workers, but the revolution is never harmed if the peasant struggle outstrips the forces of the workers. (Mao 1975c, 123)

In December 1936, Mao made another explicit reference to the question of the revolutionary subject and the revolutionary force: “The masses of China’s peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie wish to take an active part in the revolutionary war and to carry it to complete victory. They are the main forces in the revolutionary war ...” (Mao 1975d, 191–92).

We see here that, somewhat curiously, Mao also included the urban petty bourgeoisie in the list of potential revolutionary subjects. Then, in May 1937, Mao again named the bourgeoisie as a potential revolutionary subject, stating that the new state will be “based on the alliance of the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie” (Mao 1975e, 275). It was logical for him to include certain layers of the bourgeoisie in the list of potential revolutionary subjects, since from the mid-1930s onwards, Mao believed that the upcoming revolution would be a bourgeois-democratic one. Thus it was that he wrote in 1937: “What we ask is: carry out firm revolutionary policies and strive for complete victory in the bourgeois-democratic revolution” (ibid.). It is not surprising, then, that Mao stated that the new state “will be a bourgeois-democratic state socially and economically” (ibid.).

In 1939 he then stressed that the “motive forces of the revolution are the proletariat, the peasantry and all members of other classes who are willing to oppose imperialism and feudalism” (Mao 1975f, 242; see also Mao 1975g). He expressed something very similar in *The Orientation of the Youth Movement*:

What kind of revolution are we making today? Today we are making a bourgeois-democratic revolution, and nothing we do goes beyond its scope. By and large, we should not destroy the bourgeois system of private property for the present; what we want to destroy is imperialism and feudalism. (Mao 1975f, 242)

It is thus clear why Mao insisted that the

proletariat, the peasantry and the other sections of the petty bourgeoisie ... cannot be ignored, either in the alignment of forces for the struggle (that is, in the united front) or in the organization of state power ... The Chinese

revolution at the present stage must strive to create a democratic republic in which the workers, the peasants and the other sections of the petty bourgeoisie all occupy a definite position and play a definite role. (Mao 1975g, 328–29)

However, even while writing about a bourgeois-democratic revolution Mao still considered the peasantry and working class to be the “backbone of the revolution,” since they formed “90 percent of the country’s population” (Mao 1975f, 242). Moreover, despite these formulations, Mao actually considered the peasantry to be “the main force in the revolution,” which is “led by the Communist Party, the party of the proletariat” (Mao 1975g, 317). Consequently, it is not surprising that in 1940 Mao argued, that “the Chinese Revolution is essentially a peasant revolution and that the resistance to Japan now going on is essentially peasant resistance” (Mao 1975i, 366). For him, it was obvious that the “armed struggle in China is, in essence, peasant war ...” (Mao 1975h, 287).

In April 1945, Mao mentioned four potential revolutionary subjects—the proletariat, the peasantry, the urban bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie—referring to the peasantry as the “the main political force for democracy in China at the present stage” (Mao 1967a, 250).¹⁰ However, he emphasised that one should not ignore “the working class, which is politically the most conscious and therefore qualified to lead the whole revolutionary movement. Let there be no misunderstanding” (ibid.). In 1949, Mao again named the peasants, workers and urban petty bourgeoisie, considering them to be the potential revolutionary subjects of the Chinese revolution:

The people’s democratic dictatorship is based on the alliance of the working class, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and mainly on the alliance of the workers and the peasants, because these two classes comprise 80 to 90 percent of China’s population (Mao 1975j, 421).

Let us thus summarise, without detailed explanation, the three clear points outlined above. First, contrary to some interpretations, Mao, and certainly from the mid-1930s onwards, considered at least three potential revolutionary subjects:

10 When speaking of the most important goals of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, Mao explained that the “target of this revolution is not the bourgeoisie in general but national and feudal oppression ... the measures taken in this revolution are in general directed not at abolishing but at protecting private property ...” (Mao 1967a, 247).

the proletariat, the peasantry¹¹ and the different layers of the bourgeoisie (national, urban and petty). This was logical because Mao considered the upcoming revolution to be only a bourgeois-democratic one. Second, it is clear that Mao saw the class alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry to be crucial for the revolution. Third, although the class alliance was considered crucial, Mao still emphasised, in the broader context of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, that the peasants were potentially the main revolutionary force and the proletariat the leader of the revolution. However, this still does not show us the complexity of Mao's reflections on the question of the revolutionary subject, and specifically on the separation of the main revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force, since there is another crucial topic to consider—that of class consciousness.

Class Consciousness as the Crucial Element in Mao's Theory of the Revolutionary Subject

The question of class consciousness is crucial to the Marxist tradition. In some of Marx's writings we can find a differentiation between the class in itself and class for itself (see Marx 1955). The topic was later developed by, among others, Lenin (1961, 347–530), Gramsci (1977) and most notably György Lukács (1968).¹² However, because of the different social, political and economic contexts and different strategical views, the topic of class consciousness in Mao's political

11 It is crucial that we must also ask which peasants Mao considered to be a potentially revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force. If we draw on his *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* (ibid. 1975k, 13–21), we can say for certain that he included in this broad spectrum the owner-peasants, which he categorised under the broader class of the petty bourgeoisie; the semi-owner peasants and poor peasants, whom he considered to be part of the semi-proletariat; and the peasants without land, whom he considered to be part of the lumpen-proletariat and who could be considered “brave fighters but apt to be destructive.” However, he also felt that they could become a revolutionary force “if given proper guidance” (ibid. 1975k, 19).

12 Mao demonstrated this theoretical knowledge of the topic in 1937, in the text *On Practice*, where he explicitly made the distinction between the class in itself and class for itself, a Hegelian-Marxist distinction: “In its knowledge of capitalist society, the proletariat was only in the perceptual stage of cognition in the first period of its practice, the period of machine-smashing and spontaneous struggle; it knew only some of the aspects and the external relations of the phenomena of capitalism. The proletariat was then still a ‘class-in-itself.’ But when it reached the second period of its practice, the period of conscious and organised economic and political struggles, the proletariat was able to comprehend the essence of capitalist society, the relations of exploitation between social classes and its own historical task; and it was able to do so because of its own practice and because of its experience of prolonged struggle, which Marx and Engels scientifically summed up in all its variety to create the theory of Marxism for the education of the proletariat. It was then that the proletariat became a ‘class-for-itself.’” (Mao 1975l, 301) Thus, the entire topic of class consciousness, education and cultural/ideological change has to be considered through the lens of this distinction.

theory has a different role, and is the basis for the separation between the main revolutionary subject from the main revolutionary force.

In the *Hunan Report*, Mao had already indicated the role of the Party and the proletariat in relation to the peasantry:

The Communist Party's propaganda policy in such matters should be, "Draw the bow without shooting, just indicate the motions." It is for the peasants themselves to cast aside the idols, pull down the temples to the martyred virgins and the arches to the chaste and faithful widows; it is wrong for anybody else to do it for them. (Mao 1975b, 46)

Thus, the Party should lead and direct the peasant struggle.

The importance of class consciousness appeared in Mao's work explicitly in 1928, after the split with Guomindang: "After receiving political education, the Red Army soldiers have all become class-conscious and learned the essentials of distributing land, setting up political power, arming the workers and peasants, etc." (Mao 1975m, 81). In December 1929, Mao made it explicit that the question of education of the peasantry and working class was crucial for getting rid of "incorrect ideas": "The source of such incorrect ideas in this Party organisation lies, of course, in the fact that its basic units are composed largely of peasants and other elements of petty-bourgeois origin /.../" (Mao 1975n, 105). Therefore, it was crucial to educate the masses, and especially the peasantry, "so as to provide fresh mass strength for the war, and towards consolidating the worker-peasant alliance and the democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants and strengthening proletarian leadership by building up the economy" (Mao 1975o, 129).

In 1936 Mao made it explicit that the proletariat and Party should have the leading role in revolutionary warfare, since they were the most class conscious. Therefore the role of educating the peasantry, which was seen as potentially the main revolutionary force, was indispensable:

Of all the social strata and political groupings in semi-colonial China, the proletariat and the Communist Party are the ones most free from narrow-mindedness and selfishness, are politically the most far-sighted, the best organized and the readiest to learn with an open mind from the experience of the vanguard class, the proletariat, and its political party throughout the world and to make use of this experience in their own cause. Hence only the proletariat and the Communist Party can lead the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie, can overcome the narrow-mindedness of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie, the destructiveness of the unemployed masses, and also (provided the

Communist Party does not err in its policy) the vacillation and lack of thoroughness of the bourgeoisie—and can lead the revolution and the war on to the road of victory. (Mao 1975d, 192)

Although, as we have seen, Mao considered that the revolution would be a bourgeois-democratic one, he was highly sceptical of peasant and bourgeois class consciousness, since these groups were

limited in their political outlook (and some of the unemployed masses have anarchist views), so that they are unable to give correct leadership in the war ... In this era, any revolutionary war will definitely end in defeat if it lacks, or runs counter to, the leadership of the proletariat and the Communist Party. (Mao 1975d, 192)

Thus, the proletariat and the Party are crucial in this context, since their role is to lead and to reshape the class consciousness of the peasantry and of the potentially revolutionary layers of the bourgeoisie.

In 1937, Mao argued again that the destiny of the revolution depended on the work of the Party in educating the peasantry and proletariat:

The change from the predominance of the bourgeoisie to that of the proletariat is a long process of struggle, of struggle for leadership in which success depends on the work of the Communist Party in raising the level of political consciousness and organization both of the proletariat and of the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie (Mao 1975p, 290).

Education and a rise in the level of consciousness were imperative:

To overcome the undesirable tendencies we have described, it is absolutely necessary to raise the Marxist-Leninist theoretical level of the whole Party, for Marxism-Leninism alone is the compass which can guide the Chinese Revolution to victory ... (Mao 1975e, 275).

Similarly, in 1940, Mao was writing about the importance of “educat[ing] the peasantry and other sections of the people in socialism properly and step by step” (Mao 1975i, 378). Education was seen as crucial, since, as Mao argued, the vast peasant and petty-bourgeois masses had one major shortcoming—the wrong class consciousness:

Among the proletariat many retain petty-bourgeois ideas, while both the peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie have backward ideas; these are

burdens hampering them in their struggle. We should be patient and spend a long time in educating them ... (Mao 1967b, 71).

Mao also admitted that the peasantry and certain sections of the petty bourgeoisie formed the majority in the Party. However, this meant that the level of consciousness of the vast majority of Party was "incorrect":

The revolutionary fervour of these comrades is admirable ..., but they have brought with them into the Party ideas which are out of keeping or not altogether in keeping with Marxism.... It constitutes an extremely serious contradiction, an enormous difficulty. (ibid. 1967c, 278)

Because of this, there was a rising ideological contradiction

between the proletarian ideology and non-proletarian ideologies (including those of the petty bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie and even of the landlord class, but mainly of the petty bourgeoisie), i.e., the contradiction between the Marxist ideology and non-Marxist ideologies, which was solved through education and that enabled the Party "to go forward with great, firm strides in unprecedented (though not complete) ideological, political and organizational unity" (ibid.).

After the end of the Second World War, Mao argued that the focus of the Party should be on

educating and consolidating the ranks of the Party and solving the contradictions between the Party and the masses by combining the efforts of Party and non-Party people according to the experience gained in Pingshan County (Mao 1975q, 193).

Without education, the hegemony of the Communist movement could not be established, as Mao wrote:

Give the middle peasants political education. If we do not do all these things, we will lose the support of the middle peasants. In the cities, the same holds true for the working class and the Communist Party in exercising their leadership of the middle bourgeoisie, democratic parties and people's organisations oppressed and injured by the reactionary forces. (Mao 1975r, 188)

Mao claimed that the “people’s democratic dictatorship” is “led by the proletariat and [is] based on the worker-peasant alliance.” However, this “democratic dictatorship” required that the CPC “conscientiously unite the entire working class, the entire peasantry and the broad masses of revolutionary intellectuals” (Mao 1975s, 372).

In 1949, Mao stated that a lack of education and class consciousness among the peasantry represented a “serious problem” for the revolutionary movement (Mao 1975j, 419). Even more importantly, in relation to the peasantry and different layers of the bourgeoisie, Mao made it clear that the proletariat was the leader of this (bourgeois-democratic) revolution, since it was the class

that is most farsighted, most selfless and most thoroughly revolutionary. The entire history of revolution proves that without the leadership of the working class revolution fails and that with the leadership of the working class revolution triumphs. (ibid., 421)

Thus, it is clear that the question of class consciousness plays a crucial role in this context, as only the class-conscious proletariat, class-conscious layers of peasantry and class-conscious layers of the bourgeoisie can be considered to be revolutionary subjects in Mao’s political theory. Here, one should add that the peasantry and certain layers of the bourgeoisie actually have to develop proletarian class consciousness. Crucially, this has fundamental implications with regard to the main revolutionary subject and main revolutionary force of the revolutionary process. It means that the main revolutionary subject, the leader of the revolutionary struggle, is the most class-conscious class—that is, the proletariat. On the other hand, only when the vast majority of the peasants have developed the class consciousness of the proletariat can they become the main revolutionary force of the Chinese Revolution.

Socio-historical Explanation of Mao’s Theory of the Revolutionary Subject

Thus far, the analysis has been based on an exegesis of Mao’s political theory. However, it is also important to explain how and why Mao came to conceptualise these novelties.

First, as we have shown, there were three different potential revolutionary subjects in Mao’s political theory up to 1949. This broad conception of the revolutionary subject has to do with the specific material conditions and class relations that existed in China at that time. That is to say, Mao conceptualised the upcoming revolution as only a bourgeois-democratic one. He did so because an important event had taken place in the early 1930s—the Japanese occupation of Manchuria

and northern China. From then on, Mao had to consider the revolutionary struggle alongside the national liberation movement. Moreover, the very specific class context and class structure of Chinese society helps to explain this conception. The peasants were the biggest class, and peasant guerrilla warfare proved to be successful against the warlords, while the proletariat was the most organised class and the bourgeoisie had the material resources that were necessary for the organised struggle against Japan. Thus, the occupation by Japan, the national liberation struggle and the specific class composition of China help to explain Mao's insistence that the revolution was not only dependent on a class alliance between the proletariat and peasantry, but also on the inclusion of certain layers of the bourgeoisie. Undoubtedly, this broad conceptualisation should also be attributed to the strategic orientation of Mao's political theory, managing to connect specific theoretical and political practices by connecting the revolutionary class struggle with the national liberation movement and the anti-imperialist sentiments of the broad masses.

Second, it is clear that Mao introduced the novelty of the separation of the main revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force. As we have explained, Mao based this distinction on the alleged different class consciousnesses of the two classes. He considered the peasants, with a developed proletarian class consciousness, to be the main revolutionary force of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, but he also considered the class-conscious proletariat to be the main revolutionary subject and the leader of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. However, there are also other reasons for this separation, which can and have to be traced back to the specific social, political and economic context of China. First, the peasants comprised the biggest class in China—over 80 percent of the entire Chinese population. Thus, a successful revolutionary movement would have not been possible without the support of the vast peasant masses. Second, after the violent split between the Communist Party and Guomindang in 1927, the Communists were mostly driven out to the countryside. Although while he was still fighting the warlords alongside the Guomindang Mao had already theorised the peasantry as the potential revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force, this split gave the Communists no choice but to rely on the peasantry. Third, the radical history of peasant uprisings reinforced Mao's conviction that the peasants had the capacity, if accompanied by the proper leadership of the proletariat and the Party, to become the main revolutionary force.

On the other hand, Mao stuck strictly to the traditional Marxist position that the class-conscious proletariat, as organised in the Party, was the leader of the revolutionary process. However, there is, in addition to this theoretical influence from traditional Marxism, another explanation for Mao's insistence that the proletariat had to be the

leader of the revolutionary movement, and that is the isolation of the Chinese Communists. The only support that they were getting was from the Soviet Union, which was—as noted above—more supportive of the Guomindang. However, without the support of the Soviet Union it would have been even harder to achieve victory in the revolution. Thus, this split has to be attributed to Mao's Marxist political and theoretical inclinations, and to his understanding of the class relations and political reality in China.

Thus, only by considering the specific context can we explain the distinct theory of the revolutionary subject and the separation of the main revolutionary subject and main revolutionary force in Mao's political theory. While never disregarding the specific Chinese context and by including certain Marxist concepts, Mao managed to resolve a potential contradiction in his theory of the revolutionary subject and between theory and practice in the revolutionary process.

Conclusion

Mao's conception of the revolutionary subject was one of the most important theoretical and practical innovations within Marxist theory and practice just before and after the Second World War. The transformation and adaptation of the Marxist theory of the revolutionary subject in Mao's political theory was a result of a strategic, practical and theoretical assessment of the existing political, social and economic conditions in China. The conceptualisation of the three potentially revolutionary classes, in the context of the national liberation struggle, proved to be crucial in this respect. Moreover, the specific separation of the main revolutionary subject and the main revolutionary force enabled Mao to both include and ascribe a huge importance to China's vast peasant masses. However, at no point did Mao disregard the canonical Marxist conception of the proletariat as the leader of the revolution on account of its specific class consciousness. As Schram has stated,

That Mao Tse-tung mobilized the peasants to make revolution is indisputably true; that he blindly followed the ideas of the peasants instead of leading them is patently absurd. The evidence for his commitment to the Leninist conception of the vanguard party, in theory and in practice, is overwhelming. (Schram 1989, 4)

Mao managed to connect specific Marxist theoretical insights with the concrete situation in China and to enrich the Marxist conception of the revolutionary subject. Only by considering the concrete material conditions in China, in combination with the specific Marxist theoretical background, could Mao come to regard the peasantry (the owner and semi-owner peasants, the poor peasants and

the peasants without land) with a proletarian class consciousness to be the main revolutionary force in the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China, led by the proletariat, a revolution in which certain layers of the bourgeoisie might also play an important role if and when they develop proletarian class consciousness.

Therefore, without adopting a socio-historical approach and examining Mao's embeddedness within the specific material living conditions of China in the first half of the 20th century, one cannot understand his specific theory of the revolutionary subject. Only when we consider all these elements together can we begin to grasp what Mao believed to be the true meaning of the term "Sinification of Marxism"—embedding Marxist theory and adapting it to specific living conditions in China, beyond voluntarism and determinism.

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Equ(al)ity and Community in China after Forty Years of Economic Reform: Sinicised Marxism and “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” in Crisis

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Abstract

We suggest a methodology that combines a refined conceptual approach with a theoretically-inspired empirical assessment, to analyse how Sinicised Marxist theory as well as practice has invariably emphasised Marx's philosophy of history, rather than any version of Marxist egalitarian political philosophy, and therefore developed a culturally distinctive version of Marxism as totalitarian and subsequently authoritarian (rather than democratic) socialism. We argue that Chinese socialism has appropriated and applied socialist ideals to China's post-cultural-revolution development into an economic reform agenda without political transition. We suggest that China today runs an ethically and politically problematic regime under which the people enjoy neither sufficient social justice nor decent community values. Such lack of equality and community represents a major inherent contradiction of “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” which has to accept and even accommodate increasing inequality to drive future growth. This contradiction also makes the so-called Chinese Dream more one of national aggregate prosperity than a dream for the Chinese people.

Keywords: Socialism with Chinese characteristics, Sinicised Marxism, equality, social justice, community

Pravičnost (enakost) in skupnost na Kitajskem po štiridesetih letih ekonomskih reform: Kriza siniziranega marksizma in »socializma s kitajskimi posebnostmi«

Izvilleček

Za analizo sinizirane marksistične teorije ter prakse, ki je bolj kot katerokoli različico marksistične egalitarne politične filozofije poudarjala Marxovo filozofijo zgodovine in tako razvila kulturno razlikovalno različico marksizma kot totalitarnega in kasneje avtoritarnega

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(namesto demokratičnega) socializma, predlagamo metodologijo, ki izpopolnjen konceptualni pristop združuje s teoretsko navdahnjenim empiričnim ovrednotenjem. Zagovarjamo tezo, da kitajski socializem uporablja in si prisvaja socialistične ideje za program razvoja ekonomskih reform po kulturni revoluciji brez politične tranzicije. Menimo, da Kitajsko dandanes vodi etično in politično problematičen režim, ki ljudem ne zagotavlja niti zadostne družbene pravičnosti niti dostojnih vrednot skupnosti. Takšno pomanjkanje enakosti in skupnosti predstavlja pomembno inherentno protislovje »socializma s kitajskimi posebnostmi«, ki mora sprejeti in celo negovati povečanje neenakosti za doseganje prihodnje rasti. Tako imenovane »kitajske sanje« postanejo torej skozi to protislovje bolj sanje o skupni nacionalni blaginji kot pa sanje za kitajsko ljudstvo.

Ključne besede: socializem s kitajskimi posebnostmi, sinizirani marksizem, enakost, družbena pravičnost, skupnost

Introduction

In late July 2018, social networking platforms across China were discussing a vaccine scandal, and then a lot of attention was attracted by a new round of the #MeToo movement. The vaccine scandal exposed various regulatory loopholes, challenged the top leaders' responsiveness, damaged the government's legitimacy and reduced the credibility of Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" project, because the government regulations failed to prevent substandard vaccines from being used in a compulsory public-health program and allowed numerous children to suffer or even die from getting injected with these products.¹ In the following days, some more #MeToo news was presented: additional sexual harassment and assault cases were revealed by their victims, and several prominent men within media, NGO, academic and activist circles were accused of misconduct. However, a surprising thing then happened: the woman involved in the #MeToo stories were soon widely judged and criticised for supposedly attempting to "distract" social media users from the vaccine scandal.²

This series of events happening in China within around five days can be seen as an epitome of the social and political crises of Chinese socialism. On the one hand, people find that the government cannot protect their well-being or values. It also fails in

1 For two informative English analyses of this, see Rebecca Tan 2018 and *The Wall Street Journal's* Editorial Board (2018) "China's Vaccine Scandal."

2 For a rare, direct report on this, see James Griffiths (2018).

protecting citizens' civil rights and freedom of speech,³ and in securing the people's livelihood that it has always promised and proclaimed as its mission. More specifically, for example, it cannot help with the parent-child relationship that is believed to be most valued by Confucian traditions, nor can it help ensure the safety of the country's children⁴, who have become increasingly precious since the One-child Policy was introduced. Ironically, the regime has put itself in a Hobbesian trap: the citizens have transferred almost all their rights to the state, but the state cannot even ensure "the security of a man's person, in his life, and in the means of so preserving life" (Hobbes 1651, 82).

On the other hand, Chinese citizens are easily mobilised to engage in mutual attacks: unlike what the ideals of Confucianism or communist collectivism may imply, in general they do not trust each other, and would rather live self-centred atomised lives. Faced with the problems of fragmentation and clustering (e.g., the simultaneous disclosure of the vaccine and #MeToo scandals) in their own lives, people seldom think of uniting to seek a systematic solution, but instead tend to compete for resources and attention while blaming one another for this competitiveness. The decline or fundamental absence of the community and public life in China has its roots in the traditional Legalist governance model that was introduced in the Qin Dynasty,⁵ and more recently in the totalitarian mass mobilisation model that peaked in the Cultural Revolution.⁶

In the light of notable theoretical and institutional aspects of this issue, the current article analyses how Sinicised Marxist theory as well as practice emphasises Marx's philosophy of history (rather than any version of Marxist egalitarian political philosophy). It represents a culturally distinctive interpretation of Marxism as a totalitarian and then authoritarian form of communism (rather than democratic socialism), which applies and appropriates socialist ideals to China's

3 The most common occurrence on Chinese social networking platforms is the deletion of articles, through the self-censorship of such platforms. Reports on the recent vaccine scandal also encountered large-scale deletion until the Premier and President expressed their concern and determination to solve this problem. The #MeToo story has also been plagued by the deletion of articles, and even blocked and removed accounts, and the final outcome of the Chinese #MeToo movement does not seem as hopeful as that of the vaccine scandal.

4 The "country's children" is not casual rhetoric: according to Chinese socialist collectivism, all children as well as adults are the property of the state, factually owned by the Party-State system.

5 This Legalist governance model is best described by Qin Hui (see Qin 2004).

6 Zheng Yefu (2006) has attributed the crisis of trust and the loss of social bonds in contemporary Chinese society since the economic reform to the political mood of all against all before and during the Cultural Revolution. Notably, he regards the socialist state-owned employment unit (*Danwei*) system as the seedbed for distrust (Zheng 2006, 227–32).

post-cultural-revolution development as an economic reform movement without political transition, and therefore establishes an ethically and politically problematic regime under which the people enjoy neither sufficient social justice nor decent community values.

The History of Chinese Socialism: Discourse Domination and “Historical Nihilism”

Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long while to make it short. It did not take very long to get over the mountain, you thought; but have you got over it indeed?

Henry David Thoreau⁷

It is not easy to outline the consequences of Sinicised Marxism and the history of socialism with Chinese characteristics. However, it is a necessary task before developing normative recommendations for the social syndrome of China, as a convincing description or interpretation is the prerequisite for any possible solution. In the opening paragraphs, we have proposed an approach to aid in understanding contemporary China and Chinese socialism in the light of the main concepts and basic conceptions of contemporary political theory. In this section, we set a background to support our main argument.

Stepping back a bit from the previous example to get a more extensive, general picture, we immediately face the contradiction that exists between the official, dominant discourse⁸ and the alleged “historical nihilism.”⁹ If delving into

7 See Henry David Thoreau’s letter to H. G. O. Blake on November 16, 1857, in Harding and Bode (1958, 498).

8 Since the ruling party believes that it represents history and the truth, the post-modernist term “discourse” is not suitable for its self-sufficiency. Ironically, some of the official mouthpieces are in fact keen to emphasise the “power of discourse” (*pouvoir du discours* in Michel Foucault’s words): one example is an article published on the official website of The State Council Information Office of the PRC (2017), where although Foucault is cited, the author shows himself as rather ignorant with regard to philosophy. In contrast, the term “discourse” itself appears rather nihilistic. It is necessary to say that the alleged opposition between the two terms “discourse” and “historical nihilism” is an amusing historical misunderstanding. However, now the situation might have forced us to use the two concepts to present our understanding of the facts.

9 For a brief definition of historical nihilism and some good cases, see Kate Whitehead’s article with *South China Morning Post* (2017). For a typical single figure regarded as historical nihilist, see Michael Forsythe’s report about Yang Jisheng (2016). For the Party’s attitude against historical nihilism, check an interview at *xinhuanet.com* (2017).

an examination of negative phenomena without sensitivity to the progress and achievements that have been obtained, the orientation and methodology underlying the descriptions and interpretations would be criticised as historical nihilism; if relying on conceptual frameworks within the official, dominant discourse, researchers would lose their prudence, judgment and integral comprehension of history. Fortunately, one important post-totalitarian trend after the Cultural Revolution has been the turn to a more pragmatic performance-legitimacy:¹⁰ under this, the ruling party has to really solve everyday problems related to people's lives and promote social development, rather than gain support for everything by just resorting to ideology. In this way, the continuous reconstruction of the official discourse itself contains historical clues for any outline of what actually happened. It is thus possible to enhance the informative, general understanding of contemporary Chinese history by extracting the changes in official key expressions.

Along with the history of the Reform and Opening-up that is still unfolding, the key transformation of expressions that is crucial for interpreting socialism with Chinese characteristics lies in a change occurring at the turning point of the 21st century in the expression used for Sinicised socialism—from “socialism with Chinese characteristics” to “socialism of Chinese type.”

The phrase “socialism with Chinese characteristics” (*you zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi* 有中國特色社會主義) was mentioned for the first time back in 1982 by Deng Xiaoping, and then adopted by all top leaders and used with reference to the major policies. However, in the 16th National Congress of the CPC held in 2002, the first Chinese character in this influential phrase was removed and the meaning was significantly changed: strictly speaking, the new phrase literally means socialism characterised by Chinese features, or “socialism of Chinese type” (*zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi* 中國特色社會主義),¹¹ which is the reason why this article will refer to this revised official path as simply “Chinese socialism.” After this terminological change, “*zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi* 中國特色社會主義” no longer follows a fundamentalist Marxism or adopts just several localised characteristics. In other words, on weighing the balance of Sinicisation and Marxism, the pointer has once again swung to the side of a Sinicised political system and social order and further away from the original ideas of Marxist socialism.

10 Zhao Dingxin (2009) is one of the earliest researchers using this concept, emphasising that “performance legitimacy” has played a particularly important role both in the history of China and in today's Chinese politics.

11 For a brief distinction between the old and the new slogan, see a report on “people.cn” (2002). People.cn is the online platform created and operated by *People's Daily*, the largest newspaper group in China, and one of the official newspapers of the Chinese Communist Party.

Still, terminology and metaphor are both superficial and inaccurate, and what actually happened at this turning point? During the National Congress of the CPC at which the wording of this phrase was changed, then President Jiang Zemin's "important thought of Three Represents" was emphasised, referring to the "continuation and development of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory," and written into the Party Constitution of the CPC. Factually speaking, it was the establishment of the Three Represents orientation that enabled Chinese socialism to change from "socialism with Chinese characteristics" to "socialism of Chinese type."

A second key change in China's official discourse was the transformation from an exclusive focus on efficiency into one that would try and deal with "unbalanced and inadequate development." After 1978, one key aim of China's economic reform and Chinese socialism was "efficiency first." "Efficiency first, fairness included" (*xiao shuai youxian, jianggu gongping* 效率優先, 兼顧公平) was further confirmed by the CPC as a principle of distribution¹² in 1993, although its importance was diminished in 2004; in 2005, official documents turned to place more stress on social equity and fairness, as well as the distributive aspects of the economic and social accomplishments that had been achieved since the start of the reform process.¹³ With regard the "new era," the current conclusion about economic development and social justice can be summarised as follows:¹⁴

As socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, the principal contradiction facing Chinese society has evolved. What we now face is the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing need for a better life.

The well-being of the people is the fundamental goal of development. We must do more to improve the lives and address the concerns of the people, and use development to strengthen areas of weakness and promote social fairness and justice. (Dang de shijiu 2017)

The conclusion about the "principal contradiction" was delivered in Xi Jinping's report for the 19th National Congress of the CPC in October 2017. This report can be regarded as the "programmatic document" of Chinese socialism for the new era and for the Chinese Dream,¹⁵ while the "new era" marks Xi's term of office

12 Not primarily a principle of production, but of distribution. This is the most significant point.

13 For a comparison of the two guidelines, see Liu 2005; for the two original CPC documents, see Zhongguo gongchandang 2008 and Zhonggong zhongyang 2002.

14 For a bilingual version of this recent document, see Dang de shijiu 2017.

15 For an official comment addressing Xi's report as the "programmatic document" for the new era, see Shang 2017; for another one addressing the report as the "programmatic document" for the Chinese Dream, see Shijiu da baogao zuochule 2017.

and the Chinese Dream remains his first theoretical contribution to the Sinicised Marxism. Comparing with earlier phases of Chinese socialism, the official discourse of the new era has admitted the fundamental significance of social fairness and the people's well-being.

Now the historical narrative is clear: during the 40 years from the beginning of economic reform to the New Era, the priority of efficiency over fairness and justice characterises the China model—the Chinese characteristics in Chinese socialism. Moreover, since the turning point of Xi's New Era, the people's "need for a better life" has finally been emphasised by the State's strategy. Still, the solution to the issue of giving people a good or better life is determined as addressing "unbalanced and inadequate development:" although the "unbalanced" development can be related to inequality and unfairness, the "inadequate" development implies that the State still regards "development" as the most reliable instrumental orientation to achieve justice and a good life.

There is a considerable development myth at work here: when the state pursues development as fairness or justice itself (officially speaking, "use development to ... promote social fairness and justice"), the Chinese Dream highlighted for the New Era becomes both vague and easy to be alienated from. Despite artfully evoking the American Dream, the Chinese Dream is rather vague in content, scope and horizons, and therefore purposefully serves Xi's political objectives without the need for him to actually deliver specific outcomes as a form of legitimacy in performance. In particular, it provides a powerful slogan to revitalise domestic confidence in the future of the country, at a time when the ongoing rebalancing of the sources of economic growth in China show a relative slowdown compared to the growth seen under the previous president, Hu Jintao, and painful restructuring in many sectors and regions.

On the other hand, by evoking the American Dream, Xi aims to reassure the country's new middle class that China will eventually be able to achieve prosperity, although economic growth has been and will continue to be slower under his leadership, and structural reforms are lagging behind, in both the financial sector and in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). Although Xi implicitly aims to reassure the country that the "new normal" will not force the new middle class to tighten their belts, there are increasing signs that in fact they might have to have a smaller Chinese dream than what Xi has inspired thus far. Even more importantly, the opacity of Xi's slogan makes it difficult to understand whether the Chinese Dream, in contrast to its American counterpart, actually aims at something more than material comfort—further expansion and advancement of the middle-income groups—or

something different from middle-class material well-being—i.e. overall national prosperity, promotion of social justice and ascendance in global governance.

Apparently Xi is facing increasing difficulty in convincing the people that China can be “rich and strong” while remaining a one-party state. If the Chinese Dream is not the American Dream, what is it? At the beginning of his term, Xi had to stick to the Party’s long-term plans to achieve a “moderately well-off society” by the time of the Party’s 100th anniversary in 2021, and the creation of a “rich, strong, democratic, civilised and harmonious socialist modern country” by 2049, the 100th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China.¹⁶ But demands for clarity have mounted as middle-income groups grow increasingly worried about environmental degradation and social unrest. In the meantime, the individuals in such groups are probably making their own dreams for the near future, hoping they are not too different from Xi’s.

Therefore, the Chinese Dream for the new era of Chinese socialism has trapped itself in a myth or even crisis, both in the sense of development and in that of justice. By covering up rather than solving the real “contradiction” of the society, this model uses development (especially economic growth) to eliminate other needs, but also finds that even development itself is difficult to sustain.

In this section, we have outlined the historical trends since the start reform and opening up, which show that even if using the official discourse we can always see significant risks and problems in the not-so-long history of Chinese socialism. However, any scepticism about the CPC’s narratives of the past—i.e., anything critical of the Party’s legacy and legitimacy, its past and current leaders or its leadership—is officially expressed as “historical nihilism,”¹⁷ against which a campaign has been launched by the Party.

The phrase “historical nihilism” itself contains a typical understanding of Marxism focusing on the philosophy of history—a teleological and certainly counter-nihilist historicism according to which history has an end and only the Communist Party represents this, both by making history and by interpreting it. The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, as a document typical of Sinicised Marxism and a perfect example of Chinese historicism, begins with a specific historical narrative about the CPC and the people in both its 1954 and 1982 versions. However, this constitutional relationship between the ruling party and the people is, again, by no means the conceptual ideal of “we the people” in the US Constitution.

16 These are the goals set out by the former president Hu Jintao. See more details at Key points 2008.

17 Cf. Kate Whitehead’s article in the *South China Morning Post* (2018).

Speaking of the Chinese Constitution, in an inspiring report on the Chinese Dream at the beginning of Xi's term, *The Economist* (2013) reported that a number of journalists went on strike in early 2013 in protest over a censored version of an article in a state-controlled newspaper, *Southern Weekend*, titled "The Chinese Dream: a Dream of Constitutionalism." While the original article said that only a division of powers could allow China to become a "free and strong country," the published version did not mention the Constitution.

In addition, when speaking of "we the people" it should be remembered that there is no such democratic and participatory "we" in the Chinese constitutional expression of the people, who are represented by the Party in a rather populist way. As a result, the Chinese people endure not only the crisis of development and the lack of justice, but also the impossibility of uniting to find a way out, or even just discussing their discontent publicly.

Equality and Distributive Justice: Class, Identity, and Opportunities for a Just Socialism

But the difference principle would allocate resources in education, say, so as to improve the long-term expectation of the least favoured... [T]he value of education should not be assessed solely in terms of economic efficiency and social welfare. Equally if not more important is the role of education in enabling a person to enjoy the culture of his society and to take part in its affairs, and in this way to provide for each individual a secure sense of his own worth. (Rawls 1999, 86–7)

Based on the previous historical background, we can argue that in facing the challenges of social justice and public connection (or the lack of these), both Chinese socialism and the Chinese Dream need to draw more on Marxist egalitarian political philosophy and non-collectivist communitarianism, rather than just on a Sinicised Marxist philosophy of history that emphasises the CPC's legitimate past and future.

Nevertheless, John Rawls's theory of justice has set the agenda for all the contemporary debates on equality and community, among which contemporary Marxist political philosophy can also be regarded as a critical and complementary revision of the Rawlsian theorisation. So it is also better, even for the Chinese case, to evaluate an actual social and political structure based on Rawls's distributive justice of the benefits and burdens.

Taking the most extensively used and widely misunderstood concept “equality of opportunity” as the main focus, Rawls’s theory of justice involves at least three approaches to equal opportunities:

A Theory Of Justice establishes two principles: one is that of “equal liberty” that is always to be implemented, involving equality in the assignment of basic rights and duties; the other is the principle of “democratic equality,” which advocates that social and economic inequalities (such as inequalities in the distribution of wealth and authority) should compensate the most disadvantaged members of the society in order to promote truly equitable opportunities and “fair” equality (Rawls 1999, 13, 57, 65).

It is precisely the second principle of justice that clearly and distinctly distinguishes between different types of “equality of opportunity” in the argument about what is needed to achieve democratic equality:

The first type is the formal equality of opportunity, which means various careers being open to talented individuals. It begins with a system of natural freedom, but if no effort is made to regulate the social contingencies caused by birth, this formal equality will lead to a natural aristocracy (Rawls 1999, 57–65).

Two of the obstacles that the formal equality of opportunity cannot overcome include social contingencies (esp. the social class) and natural contingencies (mainly capacities and talents), both of which deeply affect the realisation of equality. In response to this, the second and third categories of equal opportunities are designed to overcome life disadvantages caused by these two contingencies.

Thus, the second type of equality means that social positions and careers should not only remain formally “open” based on the first equality of opportunity, but also ensure that everyone has a fair chance to acquire them; that is, to ensure that the expectations of the people with similar abilities and aspirations should not be affected by the different social classes to which they belong. This is a principle of “liberal equality.” In order to achieve this, beside preventing excessive accumulation of property and wealth, attention should be paid in particular to ensuring fair educational opportunities for all, so that public and private school systems should aim to “even out” class differences.

Furthermore, the third type of equality emphasises that once we treat everyone as equal moral beings, we will not accept the fact that natural endowments impede equal opportunities, at least to the same extent as we do not accept that

social class causes the unequal distribution of wealth and income. In this way, although we might have to admit that as long as some form of family continues to exist, “the principle of fair opportunity can be only imperfectly carried out” (Rawls 1999, 64), we must also focus on reducing the “natural lottery” and its arbitrary influence, and eventually moving toward a democratic equality that is more preferable than those three possibilities of natural freedom, natural aristocracy, and liberal equality.

However, it should be noted that even “democratic equality,” as ensured by the “difference principle,” is still marked as an equal opportunity—except that the wording here highlights “fair opportunity” (not just opportunity in general), revised and pursued as “equality as equality of fair opportunity” or “fair equality of opportunity,” to be distinguished from those types of “equal opportunity” that are merely formally or textually “equal,” but obviously unfair, and therefore unjust.

The concept of “equal opportunity” in the Chinese context of everyday life often ceases its demands at the first level of the above-mentioned Rawlsian classification, i.e., “formal equality of opportunity,” as careers being open to talented individuals is usually understood as the possibility of raising one’s social position. This threshold of formal equality is worthy of attention in such a society where there prevails some other types of inequality that appear more unequal in terms of quantity or quality. But if we only focus on this, we will be normatively defeated by the most ruthless enemies, or trap ourselves in a self-defeating cycle based on the hope that “the most advantaged can be replaced by us,”¹⁸ and turn ourselves into new enemies against public interests.

Even so, the Chinese socialist social structure is even farther away from the Rawlsian egalitarian ideal: not just maintaining a stagnation in the formal equality of opportunity (so as not to present a better ideal than careers being open to talented individuals), but also retreating into increasing inequality of income and wealth distribution (so as not to prevent a natural or even bureaucratic aristocracy).

In the economic sphere, there is extensive empirical evidence¹⁹ on the gap between the significant economic growth in China and the limited improvement of people’s living standards in the western provinces of the country, together with an increasing income inequality between coastal and inner provinces on the one hand, and rural and urban areas on the other. Two type of statistics can be used in the analysis of these distribution gaps: first, we can directly focus on the locations

18 This is translated from a Chinese saying “*bi ke querdai ye* 彼可取而代也,” quoted from *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Historian*) by Sima Qian in the early Han Dynasty.

19 See for example Piketty et al (2016), Xie and Zhou (2014), Han et al. (2016), Wroblowsky and Yin (2016).

(mainly in rural area) covered by China's recent policy of "precise poverty alleviation,"²⁰ because in general the current political performance is based on previous bad outcomes and inaction; second, the relevant research can also be improved via organising some tables and figures showing the opportunity gaps between the upper and lower classes of China, similar to what Robert Putnam does in his recent book *Our Kids: the American Dream in Crisis*.

Due to the space limitations of a single article, we will summarise the increasing distributive inequality with the Gini coefficient to measure the inequality within Chinese socialism since 1978. First, after decades of the economic reform, China's Gini coefficient reaches 0.483-0.611 (1 being the maximum inequality distribution) according to various different governmental or academic data sources. The main causes of are two structural forces: regional disparities and the rural-urban gap, a context that is entirely different from the United States, where individual and household forces such as family structure and ethnic identity largely determine overall income inequality. (see Xie and Zhou 2014)

Secondly, in addition to regional differences, diachronic differences are also typical of a severe, and ever increasing inequality: from 1978 to 2015 in China, the percentage of national income distributed to the top 10 percent of the population increased from 26 percent to 41 percent, while the percentage distributed to the bottom 50 percent decreased from 28 percent to 15 percent; by a direct comparison, the bottom 50 percent received almost the same amount of income share as the top 10 percent at the beginning of the process of economic reform, while their income share in 2015 was about 2.5 times lower than that of the top 10 percent. The percentage distributed to the middle 40 percent has been roughly stable, although it has decreased slightly after a period of growth and then a plateau. (see Piketty et al. 2016) In the latter sense, the middle-income groups would not just remain sceptical and worried about the Chinese Dream, they would also have suffered from the increasing inequality, although not as significantly and seriously as the bottom 50 percent.

Very different from western countries, another obvious gap in post-reform China exists between ordinary people's social resources and what the State owns, which is based on a fundamental inequality and injustice and a type of authoritarian libertarianism that is also emerging in the political sphere.

Politically, the historical development myth noted above has implied that the Chinese model characterised by meritocratic elitism and consequential authoritarian

20 One good discussion of this poverty-alleviation policy, see Li's article (2015); and for a research on income distribution gap, see Chen's article (2007).

libertarianism are helpless in the battle against corruption, ossification, and the lack of legitimacy, as well as the economic distribution gap that has grown in China since reform and opening-up.

Besides, the development myth also shows that another simple way to understand the problems and difficulties with the political dimension of Chinese socialism is by revisiting China's partial attitude towards economic, social and cultural rights rather than civil and political rights whenever encountering challenges regarding human rights (i.e., livelihood rather than rights, performance rather than procedural legitimacy, etc.). And just like what happens with regard to the economic distribution and opportunity gaps, political rights and the participation gap not only represent the lack of social justice, but also directly contradict political values such as freedom and equality.

Back to the economic dimension, the State-owned system controls everything in a more fundamental way, leading to a more general, all-inclusive distributive injustice of the "benefits and burdens" across the country. This is usually regarded as a blend of state capitalism and bureaucratic capitalism, but to use Nozick-Rawls terminology, "authoritarian libertarianism" is a better concept presenting the anti-egalitarian nature of Chinese socialism. Here the authoritarian leadership system has the factual ownership of all economic and social resources, and dominance over the libertarian competition in the market and other social spheres. Equal opportunities are formally limited to the the Rawlsian "careers open to talents" and influenced by morally arbitrary disadvantages.

The domination of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as well as the unique Chinese market system represents a key feature of the country's authoritarian libertarianism. Considering that the socialist market economy is officially presented as the core aspect of socialism with Chinese characteristics, SOE-related issues are indicatively representative of the system. And to judge autumn by a single falling leaf, the Chinese market system essentially reflects the origins of the country's development myth.

If we begin with the more formal direct ownership and output of the State and SOEs, we see that China holds significant direct ownership and control over the means of production. National SOEs dominate the industrial landscape provide the government with enormous direct control of the economy.

To provide some perspective, the total asset base of SOEs in 2016 amounted to 155 trillion RMB, or 208 percent of nominal GDP.²¹ That same year there were 174,000 SOEs concentrated in industry, transportation, and wholesale. This gives

21 All data within this section's analysis of China's ownership structure is taken from WIND Data and self-created using national statistics.

the Chinese state vast control over the economy across everything from agriculture and mining to technology, and there is effectively no sector a Chinese SOE does not dominate.

Since the start of economic reform, except for the obvious transitional injustice of SOEs and especially the ambiguity of their property rights, the market system and development model led by SOEs have shaped the myth and crisis of Chinese developmental socialism. In comparison with Amartya Sen's ideal of "development as freedom," which believes that development entails a set of linked freedoms such as political liberty and transparency, freedom of opportunity, and economic protection from abject poverty (Sen 1999), the Chinese developmental philosophy emphasises justice as development—attempting to solve the problems with fairness and equality via a form of development that is considered to be more "adequate."

In practice, in comparison with India's Millennium Development Goals (Lindstrom 2010), China's development myth is obsessed with economic growth data such as the national economic output and the productivity of SOEs, rather than concentrated on more pragmatic goals for people's well-being, such as eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, etc. It is quasi-plausible to argue that China might not need to regard these achievements at the threshold level as national goals, because they have all already been realised in the country. But once again, considering the regional and rural-urban disparities, this is not the case. Taking gender and child mortality issues as an example: according to "The Global Gender Gap Report 2017" by the *World Economic Forum* (2017), China's gender equality index ranks 100th out of 144 countries in the world, and India's ranks 108th; for two of the sub-indexes (four in total) "health and survival" and "political empowerment," China falls behind and ranks 144th when India ranks 141st and 77th when India is 15th.

If China's lagging behind India in some key aspects of people's well-being can be arguably related to the lack of identity politics, in the entire previous analysis the series of economic and social inequalities are clearly related to the decline or continuous absence of class politics. Unlike the Rawlsian theory of justice dealing with political issues based on self-identity and membership, China's current economic and political issues with regard to social justice tend to be resting on a hierarchical class structure in the sense of classical Marxism, where on the other hand the former socialist "class" position has been lost in the market system and become an identity status to be regained. This leads us to the next section.

Against Collectivism without Communitarian Communities: Citizenship and Participation in a Community of Shared Future

[S]uch data can't tell us much about the experiences of growing up in a world where fostering opportunity for kids is increasingly a private responsibility, where the sense of "our kids" has shrivelled (Putnam 2015, 263).

According to G. A. Cohen, there is "no group in advanced industrial society" combining the six features that the traditional working class once had, since they: 1. constituted the majority of society; 2. produced the wealth of society; 3. were the exploited people in society; 4. were the needy people in society; and therefore, 5. would have nothing to lose from revolution; 6. could and would transform society (Cohen 2000, 107–8). Partly because of this trend and partly based on a reflection on the Rawlsian focus on the social structure, Cohen stresses the importance of people's personal attitude and choice, as follows:

[E]galitarian justice is not only, as Rawlsian liberalism teaches, a matter of the rules that define the structure of society, but also a matter of personal attitude and choice; personal attitude and choice are, moreover, the stuff of which social structure itself is made (*ibid.*).

However, in contemporary China, while workers, peasants and migrant workers who suffer from economic and political opportunity gaps still have the first four features outlined above, they more or less neither have-nothing-to-lose nor are willing and able to change the world. The reason why they are exploited and needy but not in solidarity or revolutionary lies in the lack of community resources and public life, which may bring us to the further discussion of community and social connection in contrast to an atomised, classless mass society.

In any case, Chinese workers and peasants are not merely and simply exploited by some random type of capitalism, but are exploited by the State-led socialist economic and market system. And this production and market system has been, on the one hand, constantly telling people about the sacredness of the working class, and on the other enrolling them into the tide of capital flows, forcing them to spend almost all their energy to earn a living.

The social union and community formed by voluntary and free association play a crucial role in both solving problems together and protecting ourselves against the dominant political authority acting with the agency of the largest political community in our society (aka, the State as a Hobbesian metaphorical Leviathan). In this sense, we may still rely on Hannah Arendt and others' republican insights into

the coexistence and even causation between isolated and incompetent citizens and the triumph of any totalitarian power (see Arendt 1958). The totalitarian history in communist China and its corresponding collectivism has caused a growing lack of publicness and public spiritedness, and led to the very opposite of what contemporary communitarianism promotes.

If reconsidering a distant tradition, we may immediately recognise that the Chinese traditional political-institutional culture—substantially Legalist with some Confucian appearances (*ru biao fa li* 儒表法裡), and quite different from the Greek and Roman tradition—encourages little informative and deliberative public persuasion and cooperation. As a result, whenever Chinese people, in history or today, have to unite and struggle together against (politically and economically²²) dominant powers or powerful enemies for a better life, they cannot find (or they even never look for) abundant forms of social capital to turn to.

When Cohen stresses personal attitude and choice, we had better always keep alert that the Chinese political tradition, whether it is referred to as a distant Legalist-Confucian system or as a recent socialist-communist one, cannot educate the people how to take a moderate attitude or how to make a just-right choice with regard to the common life and the public sphere.

Back within contemporary Chinese socialism, the overall control of the State as the largest community is primarily reflected in the economic sphere—in the socialist market system. Through either the experiences of workers and peasants or the social-life structure of the large, dominant community, we can academically reach the State's control over the economic system and adopt this as an important indicator to understand the non-communitarian collectivism of the Chinese model. Meanwhile, our previously discussed Chinese development myth implies not only serious distributive injustice, but also the lack of social resources or unions for private and public cooperation and participation.

In other words, commercial business is often the first breakthrough to free association in human history. But in China, even such space for economic possibilities is lacking. Too often when considering whether China is a market economy researchers rely strictly on data with clear dividing lines like economic output as a percentage of GDP. However, this is an error as the Chinese State chooses many other ways to control economic activity. It is important that these less quantitative channels are understood.

The Chinese State exercises enormous ownership control over the economy via channels that do not typically count as state ownership. Researchers err in how state ownership of the economy and output is counted. The common method is to

22 Nothing is merely economic without political elements in the entire past of China.

take state-owned enterprise output and then infer various aspects about the role of SOEs in the economy, but this is a fundamental error.

The term SOE in China is a corporate registration classification and not indicative of the overall level of state ownership of a firm.²³ Just as limited liability corporations (LLCs), limited liability partnerships, or corporations are common forms of corporate classifications, SOE is nothing more than a type of corporate registration in China given the appropriate owners. Many researchers therefore classify non-SOE corporate output as private output. This is an erroneous classification, but leaves us in a difficult area of measurement as non-SOE corporate registrations may be State-owned, private, or some combination.

In his 2008 book *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics*, Yasheng Huang unpacks the multi-layered complexities of estimating this obfuscated impact of Chinese State ownership. According to his estimates, the State still controls approximately 80 percent of the Chinese economy if we account for these various layers of State holding. (Huang 2008) It is thus important to replace simplistic classifications of State and non-state ownership structures with a more nuanced view.

There are not more recent estimates of the more broadly defined state-controlled economy beyond the 2008 estimate from *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics*. There is however, little reason to believe this has fundamentally changed, especially in light of the recentralisation we have witnessed since 2015. By one recent estimate, 80% of the aluminium sector is now under State control. It seems unlikely, though we do not have more recent empirical studies, that the level of state control via ownership structures has fundamentally become more market-oriented since 2008.

The level of explicit state control of the economy we refer to here covers instances where a company is not classified as a state-owned enterprise but the state owns a major or controlling shareholding in the company. In this instance, the channel of state control over the firm or economy is explicit though typically classified as private or market. This results in very different investment patterns. For instance, one study found the state-owned firms targeted strategic assets while private firms preferred large markets in which to expand. (see Amighini et al. 2013) There is yet another level of State control that has been exerted more recently.

In the past few years, the Chinese Communist Party has moved to explicitly place the control of firms under Party auspices. In China, there is a split between the State and the Party, with the Party above the State. For instance, the title that matters in Chinese politics is who is the Chairman of the Party Committee. Installing Party committees in firms throughout China gives the Party both explicit

23 As detailed in Hsieh and Song (2016).

and implicit control over a broader range of firms, whether they are State owned, controlled, or fully private.

There are two ways that this control plays out. First, the Chinese state has taken small, symbolic ownership stakes in key non-traditional firms. For instance, China has taken small ownership stakes of approximately 1percent of the market capitalization in tech firms like Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent (Li 2017). Even though the Party does not exercise a controlling equity stake, the symbolism is not lost on other shareholders as to who is the key decision maker.

Second, the Party committees, just as they do in the governance of the State, technically stand above the executive management and board of directors of the company. (Blanchard 2017) Though this is less than a formal ownership classification or controlling shareholder stake, it is clear who directs the activities of the company. These Party Committees engage in a wide range of activities, from organising Party-building activities through to policing, but also in more tangible corporate decision-making, like appointing key positions, and making strategy and investment decisions.

Both of these channels make it even more difficult to measure the various methods of government control over the economy, but they are undeniably real. Together the channels described here provide strong evidence that the Chinese government exercises enormous direct and indirect control over the means of production in every industry through state-owned enterprises, state-controlled enterprises, and managerial oversight of firms.

The Party and the State's overall control over production activities and economic life has closed the last door for members of Chinese society to any possible free association. In this regard, although Xi Jinping's new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics promises a "community of shared future" for all humankind, it still cannot guarantee the participatory citizenship required for a true common life in a communitarian society. The more serious the absence of community life remains, the more the people lack the willingness and necessary capabilities to live such a life. However, even the economic participation that is available to citizens remains subject to state control and national interests, to the exclusion of other types of social contracts and social interactions.

Conclusion and Further Remarks

One example reflects the whole picture sketched in our entire argument, as set about above: Xi Jinping emphasised in his 2018 New Year address that effort

itself is happiness and a happy life depends on everyone's hardworking hands. By so doing, he shirked the political system and government's responsibility for welfare and social security; however, on the other side of the coin, Chinese people also think little about how the top leader, the ruling party and the centralised government should be held accountable—separately, most Chinese citizens always believe the only agent he or she can always rely on is him- or herself.²⁴

Witnessing this picture and trying to call for public union, we should also never forget that while they are determined to rely only individually on themselves, the people who live in China are most likely working for a company and sector controlled by the Party and the State. Additionally, they are working for the maintenance of the existing economy that remains indispensable to the unjust social and political system.

Based on a basic historical narrative that exists in the narrow gap between the dominant discourse and alleged historical nihilism (Section 1), we see that China is still far away from Robert Nozick's, but even further from John Rawls', normative ideal (Section 2). Furthermore, Chinese socialism is still far away from the ideal Rawlsian social justice, but even further from both Cohen's Marxist egalitarianism and the communitarians' (or republicans') ideal of community life (Section 3).

With reference to the pair of priorities in contemporary political philosophy, neither social justice nor active citizenship has been encouraged and advanced by China's economic reform or socialism with Chinese characteristics. Social justice emphasises equality and moral egalitarianism, and active citizenship emphasises civic virtues and the community; the lack of both leads to an overall decline in both rights and accountability. Meanwhile, in Xi's "New Era," the current Chinese society also shares some common features with the West, including populism, anti-establishment feeling and problems with globalisation.

Moreover, the abovementioned Chinese problems emerge in forms or situations that are even more severe than the West: for example, the globalisation vs. anti-globalisation movements involve global justice challenges brought about by the state-sponsored Belt & Road initiative; the politically systematic anti-establishment feeling includes some clear totalitarian residue and may have serious constitutional consequences; and populism characterised by exclusive citizenship reflects not only narrow self-interest, but also the absence of community identity.

In order to be more relevant to improve our understanding of the peculiarities of the Chinese system, we suggest further theoretical and empirical research follows Marxist egalitarian political philosophy (for justice) and non-collectivist communitarian nationalism (for the community) to examine the issues raised in this work.

24 For a typical figure and story, see Chang (2008).

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Asian Studies in Slovenia

Žad iz gore Kun:¹ o simboliki žada v dinastiji Han

Jan VRHOVSKI*

Izvleček

Članek govori o tem, kako se je v dinastiji Han (漢, 206 pr. n. št.–220 n. št.) v različnih virih odražala raba simbola žada (*yu* 玉) in kakšno ozadje je imela. Delo poskuša osvetliti tudi to, kako se je simbol žada uporabljal v različnih miselnih strujah: od konfucijanstva do nekonfucijanskih miselnih struj (daoistični viri in sinteze različnih misli, na primer v delu *Guanzi* 管子) in nazadnje še v najzgodnejših kitajskih budističnih delih. Članek s tem podaja tudi pregled stanja rabe simbolike žada, iz katerega so vzniknile vse prihodnje rabe simbola žada v kitajskih literarnih in tudi filozofskih in religioznih delih.

Ključne besede: žad, simbolika, dinastija Han, *Guanzi*, *Baihu tong*

Jade from the Kun Mountain: on Symbolism of Jade in the Han Dynasty

Abstract

The article represents a discussion on the use and background of the symbol of jade (*yu* 玉) as reflected in various sources from the Han (漢, 206 BCE–220 CE) dynasty. The present article further attempts to shed some light on how at the time the above-mentioned symbol was used by various schools of thought: from Confucianism to the so-called non-Confucian currents of thought (Daoist sources and examples of synthesis of ideas pertaining to different traditions/currents), and last but not least the earliest literary vestiges of Buddhism in China. Consequently, the article endeavours to give a modest overview of the various connotations of the symbol of jade within a certain point in history, from which all the future ways of applications and use of the symbols of jade, be it in philosophical, literary or religious works, have been derived from.

Key words: jade, symbolism, Han dynasty, *Baihu tong*, *Guanzi*

1 Nekateri viri iz dinastije Han omenjajo bisere in žad iz gore Kun kot posebno dragocene. Žad iz gore Kun se tako omenja v *Zgodovinarjevih zapisih* (*Shiji* 史記 87, 6): 今陛下致昆山之玉，有隨、和之寶 (...) »Zdaj pa vaše veličanstvo prejema bisere iz gora Kun in poseduje zaklade Sui-ja in He-ja.« V *Razpravah o soli in železu* (*Yan tie lun* 鹽鐵論) – delu, v katerem je zapisana vsebina razprave o politično-ekonomskih razmerah v državi iz leta 81 pr. n. št. – pa se žad iz gore Kun omenja v naslednjem kontekstu (*Yan tie lun* 1, 2/15): 美玉珊瑚出於昆山，珠璣犀象出於桂林，此距漢萬有餘里。»Čudoviti žad in korale prihajajo iz gore Kun, biseri in [izdelki iz kosti] nosorogov in slonovina pa prihajajo iz Guilina. Oba kraja sta od [države] Han oddaljena več kot deset tisoč milj.«

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Uvod

V članku bomo obravnavali nekaj izpričanih načinov rabe simbola žada (*yu* 玉)² v virih, ki so nastali v dinastiji Han ali pa se nanašajo nanjo. Pri tem bomo pod drobnogled vzeli naslednje vire, iz katerih je mogoče o simbolu žada izvedeti dovolj, da lahko sklepamo na konkretni obstoj simbolične rabe: *Baihutong* 白虎通, *Guanzi* 管子, *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 in *Lihuo lun* 理惑論.³ Poleg navedenih bomo v razpravi omenili tudi druga relevantna dela iz zgodnejših obdobij, ki predstavljajo bodisi vir, od koder obravnavana dela črpajo svojo vsebino, ali pa se kakorkoli navezujejo na obravnavana dela. Izbor zgoraj navedenih osrednjih virov izhaja iz želje predstaviti rabo simbola žada v kontekstih posameznih miselnih struj. Delo *Baihutong* tako izraža rabo simbola žada v konfucijanskem kontekstu, medtem ko delo *Guanzi* na neki način združuje konfucijansko in daoistično rabo simbola. Ne nazadnje pa dela, kot je *Hanshi waizhuan*, prav tako združujejo konfucijanske moralistične obravnave poezije iz *Knjige pesmi* (*Shijing* 詩經), teorije o »binarnosti« *yin-yang* in komplementarnosti *wuxing* 五行 (»pet dejavnosti/dejavnikov, elementov« itd.) in druge literarne elemente. Delo *Lihuo lun*, katerega hanski izvor je sicer še vedno predmet razprav, pa osvetljuje, kako se je simbol žada pričel uporabljati tudi v zgodnjih kitajskih budističnih delih (razpravah, apologijah itd.; ne pa v budističnih sutrah) oz. kako so zagovorniki budizma v najzgodnejšem obdobju razumeli in uporabljali simbol žada, ki se je prvotno uporabljal v konfucijanskem in daoističnem kontekstu. Osrednji namen članka je tako, poleg prikaza stanja rabe obravnavanega simbola v dinastiji Han, prikazati tudi sosledje prenosa pomena simbola žada med različnimi miselnimi strujami: od daoističnih (oz. proto-religioznih teorij) do konfucijanstva in na koncu še do budizma. V članku bomo, skozi analizo zgoraj imenovanih virov, poskusili odgovoriti na naslednja vprašanja: Kakšno simbolno vrednost je imel simbol žada v virih iz dinastije Han, ki so svojo kozmološko, ideološko itd. ozadje črpali iz različnih miselnih struj? Ali pri tem obstaja skupni vir (klasično delo), na katerega so se dokumenti iz dinastije Han nanašali ob podajanju vsebine obravnavanega

2 V klasični kitajščini so obstajale številne besede, katerih pomen je označeval takšne ali drugačne vrste žada in izdelkov iz žada. V tem članku se bomo osredotočili samo na pismenko *yu* 玉, ki žad označuje v splošnem pomenu.

3 V zvezi z izborom virov je treba dodati še naslednje: ker se ta članek ukvarja z razvojem simbola žada v dinastiji Han, sem se po vsebinski analizi najpomembnejših virov iz dinastije Han odločil bralcu predstaviti tiste vire, ki odražajo različne načine razumevanja žada kot simbola, kakor tudi tiste, ki o naravi žada razpravljajo z zornih kotov različnih miselnih struj. Iz izbora sem tako izpustil znamenito in na veliko načinov pomembno delo *Huainanzi* (淮南子), saj se v tem beseda/pismenka *yu* 玉 bodisi pojavlja v kontekstu, kjer označuje bogastvo kot takšno (skupaj z zlatom, biseri, preostalimi dragimi kamni itd.), ali pa se omenja na način ali v kontekstu, ki je boljše ali obširneje izražen v katerem izmed tukaj uporabljenih del.

simbola? Kako pomen omenjenega simbola odraža ideologijo oz. miselni sistem, v katerem je ta uporabljen? Z ozirom na to, da je bil v dinastiji Han budizem na Kitajskem še precej mlada in slabše uveljavljena miselna struja: katera simbolna vrednost, ki jo je žad na Kitajskem imel v dinastiji Han ali že poprej, se je uporabljala v zgodnjih budističnih delih?

Baihu tong (白虎通) – Obnova starodavnega pomena žada v konfucijanskih razpravah

Tako imenovane *Obsežne razprave iz dvorane Belega tigra* so odlomki iz dvornih razprav o vsebini konfucijanskega nauka, ki so po ukazu cesarja Zhanga (章, 57–88) iz dinastije Han potekale v četrtem letu njegove vladavine (79 n. št., vladal 75–88), v eponimni dvorani Belega tigra. Delo je domnevno zapisal znameniti kitajski zgodovinar Ban Gu (班固, 32–92 n. št.), avtor uradne zgodovine dinastije Han. Izjemna vrednost *Razprav iz dvorane Belega tigra* je povezana z dejstvom, da delo povzema najpomembnejše aspekte konfucijanskega nauka in ga tudi interpretira v skladu s takratnimi kulturno-političnimi okoliščinami. Tako skozi obravnavano delo ne dobimo samo slike konfucijanske dogme in izročila, ki so jo imeli v dinastiji Han, ampak tudi jasnejšo podobo o tem, kako so takratni učenjaki in uradniki sam nauk dojemali in kako so med seboj povezovali posamezne aspekte konfucijanskega kanona. Interpretacije in povezave, ki so jih podajali udeleženci razprav v dvorani Belega tigra, odražajo posebnosti popularnega (in ne samo hermetičnega) konfucijanstva v dinastiji Han.

V delu se simbol in podoba žada pojavita večkrat. Pismenka *yu* 玉 »žad« hkrati predstavlja kot predmet in kot lastnost, ki ni omejena samo na žad kot predmet. Ena izmed simbolnih navezav, v kateri se pojavlja simbol žada, se povezuje z zlatom in biseri, ki skupaj predstavljajo posvetno, zgolj materialno bogastvo.

V prvi knjigi4 *Obsežnih razprav iz dvorane Belega tigra*, ki razlaga pomen statusnih nazivov v kraljestvu (*hao* 號), lahko tako beremo, da tisti, ki jih imenujemo *huang* 皇 (»cesar«):

故黃金棄於山，珠玉捐於淵。巖居穴處，巖居穴處，飲泉液，吮露英，虛無廖廓，與天地通靈也。

Opuščajo zlato, ki je [skrito] v gorah in zavračajo bisere in žad v globokih tolmunih. Živijo na vrhovih gora in se naseljujejo v jamah. Oblačijo se v kože, pijejo iz bistrih studencev in srkajo roso s cvetov. Prazni [misli], široki in odprti stopajo v stik z duhom neba in zemlje. (*Baihu tong* 2: 12/5)

Zgornja misel po eni strani razodeva osrednjo idejo, ki po Konfucijevi filozofiji stoji za pojmom vladarja; namreč da je vladar hkrati modrec, ki neguje svoj notranji stik s potjo neba in hkrati ne podlega pohlepu po bogastvu, ki ga je deležen zaradi svojega visokega položaja. V zgornjem odlomku se tako srečamo z idejo o izvoru višje oblike vladarja. Poleg tega pa so žad, biseri in zlato povezani tudi s statusnimi simboli, ki izražajo hierarhijo nazivov v kraljestvu. Modrečevo zavračanje žada in zlata lahko tako razumemo kot odrekanje uradniški službi in položaju, da bi navezal stik z nebom in zemljo. Tovrstni specializirani pomen žada se razjasni v nadaljevanju besedila, kjer se razodene tudi to, da je mogoče simbolični vrednosti žada slediti nazaj do samih izvorov kitajske tradicije.

V nadaljevanju lahko zasledimo podobo nebrušenega žada kot metaforo za »neobdelano« in neizpopolnjeno notranjost človeka:

學之為言覺也。以覺悟所不知也。故學以治性，慮以變情。故玉不琢不成器，人不學不知道。

Učiti se (學) pomeni zavedeti se (覺), postati razsvetljen v stvareh, ki jih ne veš. Zato se učimo z namenom, da bi obvladovali svojo naravo, in razmišljamo, da bi spreminjali svoja občutja. Tako kot nebrušen žad ne more služiti kot sredstvo (posoda), tako tudi človek ne more vedeti, ne da bi se učil. (*Baihu tong* 15: 115/2)

Dvorno obredje dinastije Han se je navezovalo na starodavne običaje. Te je kot svoj bistveni del skozi čas prenašalo konfucijanstvo, ki jih je tudi nenehno obnavljalo in ponovno vzpostavljalo. Po vzoru izročila, ki je po konfucijanskem nauku izhajalo iz zlate dobe Kitajske, so se vzpostavile povezave med državno hierarhijo na eni strani in obredjem ter definicijo moralnega ustroja človeka na drugi. Osrednji predmeti pomembnejših obredov so tako v nekaterih primerih tudi prevzeli vlogo simbola, ki je združeval moralni in statusni vidik uradnika. Na neki način bi lahko na ta razvoj gledali kot na idejo končnega produkta konfucijanske ideje *zhengming* (正名, »rektifikacija imen«). V tem smislu se v *Razpravah iz dvorane Belega tigra* simbol žada povezuje z vrlostjo oz. krepostjo (*de* 德) učenjaka ali uradnika:

圭瓚秬鬯，宗廟之盛禮。故孝道備而賜之秬鬯，所以極著孝道。孝道純備，故內和外榮，玉以象德，金以配情，芬香條鬯，以通神靈。玉飾其本，君子之性；金飾其中，君子之道。君子有黃中通理之道美素德。

Žadasta posoda za pitno daritev in žganje iz črnega prosa spadata med predmete (ki se uporabljajo) v ritualih v templju prednikov. Zato je tistim, ki so izpopolnili svojo spoštovanje do staršev, podarjeno žganje iz črnega

prosa, ki tako izraža njihovo predanost staršem. Ko je spoštovanje do staršev čisto in izpopolnjeno, potem znotraj vlada harmonija in od zunaj pride slava. Žad izraža vrlino in zlato je podobno (človekovim) občutjem. Aroma in vonjave žganja se dvigajo v nebo in povezujejo z duhovi. Žad, ki krasi ročaj [daritvene posode], je notranji značaj (narava) plemenitnika, zlato, ki krasi njeno notranjost, pa [ponazarja] plemenitnikovo pot. Kadar ima plemenitnik notranjost, ki je rumena kot zlato, se nahaja v povezavi s pravo potjo in je olepšal in očistil svoje vrline. (*Baibui tong* 20: 139/14)

V nadaljevanju besedila je ritualni pomen žada, zlata in daritvenega žganja še podrobneje pojasnjen:

金者⁵, 精和之至也。玉者, 德美之至也。鬯者, 芬香之至也。君子有玉瓚秬鬯者以配道德也。

Zlato je višek izpopolnjenja in harmoničnosti, žad je višek vrlosti in lepote, daritveno žganje pa predstavlja višek vonjav. Plemenitnik, ki poseduje žadasto daritveno posodo z žganjem iz črnega prosa, ju je prejel zato, ker se ujemata z (njegovo) moralnostjo in vrlostjo.

Povezava med žadom in krepostnostjo plemenitnika, ki se omenja v *Razpravah iz dvorane Belega tigra*, izhaja že iz *Petih klasikov* (*Wujing* 五經). Z žadom kot statusnim predmetom, ki simbolizira človekove vrline (krepostnost) se ukvarja že Konfucij, izvorno pa se obravnavana primerjava nahaja v *Knjigi obredov* (禮記 *Liji* 48: 17). V naslednjem odlomku iz *Knjige obredov* lahko preberemo Konfucijevo razlago, da so v starih časih tako visoko cenili žad, ker:

比德於玉焉：溫潤而澤，仁也；縝密以栗，知也；廉而不劌，義也；垂之如隊，禮也；叩之其聲清越以長，其終詘然，樂也；瑕不掩瑜、瑜不掩瑕，忠也；孚尹旁達，信也；氣如白虹，天也；精神見於山川，地也；圭璋特達，德也。天下莫不貴者，道也。

/.../ga je mogoče primerjati z vrlinami: mehak, gladek in svetleč je kot človečnost; plemenit, kompakten in čvrst je kot vedenje; oglat, vendar ne oster, kot pravičnost; viseč, kot da bo padel na tla, kot ritualno primernost; ko udariš po njem, zveni s čistim in dolgim zvenom, ki se nenadoma prekine, kot glasba; njegov manko ne zakriva njegove lepote in njegova lepota njegovih pomanjkljivosti, kot zvestoba; z notranjim žarom, ki seva na vse strani, kot zaupanje; svetel kot mavrica iz draguljev je kot nebo; njegovo esenca in duha je mogoče

5 Na tem mestu pismenke *jin* 金 ne prevajam v pomenu »kovina«, ker se pojavi v povezavi z žadom in daritvenim vinom.

videti v tokovih in gorah, kot zemlja; v doseganju posebnega značaja je kot vrlina; in pod nebom ni človeka, ki ga ne bi cenil, kot *dao*. (*Sishu wujing*: 464)

Iz zgornjega odlomka lahko razberemo, da *Knjiga obredov* (*Liji* 禮記) žad preobrazí v simbol, ki pooseblja krepostnega plemenitnika. Njegove lastnosti se skladajo s posameznimi vrtilinami, ki jih plemenitnik mora posedovati: človečnost, znanje, pravičnost in obrednost. Njegova posebna tekstura predstavlja glasbo, njegova prozornost je odraz zvestobe itd. In najpomembnejše: bistvo in duh, ki ju poseduje žad, sta povezana tako z nebom in zemljo kakor tudi s samo potjo (*dao*) vsega stvarstva. Na neki način bi lahko dejali, da žad predstavlja vzor stekanja vseh dobrih plati kozmosa v eno, kar se jasno izraža v njegovih fizičnih lastnostih. Žad tako ni samo simbol, ampak je hkrati tudi odraz istega naravnega principa, po katerem se mora ravnati plemenitnik in zaradi katerega so njegove kreposti učinkovite. Avtor odlomka v *Knjigi obredov*, ki govori o lastnostih žada, tako želi podati dokaz, da je žad sam po sebi materializacija tega, kar izraža. V isti knjigi se na nekem drugem mestu v povezavi s človekovimi vrtilinami omenjajo tudi naslednje lastnosti žada, ki poudarjajo njegovo uravnoteženo naravo:

玉者，有象君子之德，燥不輕，濕不重，薄不撓，廉不傷，疵不掩。是以人君寶之。

Žad predstavlja vrtiline plemenitnika: ko je suh, ni lahek, ko je moker, ni težek. Je tanek, toda ne lomljiv, je oster, a ne reže. Ne skriva niti najmanjše napake. Zato ga vladarji tako visoko cenijo. (*Baihu tong* 26: 168/3)

V konfucijanskem univerzumu, kjer bi bile vse stvari postavljene na svoje mesto (*zheng* 正) glede na svoje skladje in harmoničnost z *daotom* neba, bi bila tako urejena tudi hierarhična struktura družbe. Hierarhija najvišjega, vodilnega sloja družbe, od najnižjega uradnika do vladarja, bi bila tako vzpostavljena glede na usvojen moralni princip, tj. glede na krepost posameznikov. Po drugi strani pa bi bila za vsako uradniško pozicijo določena tudi mera krepostnosti, ki jo je treba usvojiti ali h kateri bi bilo treba težiti. Prav tej ideji pa je v resnici sledil tudi sistem insignij, ki kot eno izmed glavnih »sestavlin« vključuje tudi žad. V *Razpravah iz dvorane Belega tigra* lahko tako beremo o naslednjem načinu, na katerega se je žad – zaradi zgoraj omenjenih razlogov – uporabljal pri obeskih ali pečatih za izražanje položaja uradnika ali plemiča:

天子之純玉，尺有二寸。公、侯九寸，四玉一石也。伯、子、男俱三玉二石也。

Sin neba [ima ploščico] iz čistega žada, [veliko] en čevljin in dva palca. Vojvode in markizi imajo devet palcev [veliko ploščico], ki je imela štiri dele

iz žada in en del iz kamna. Grofje, vikonti in baroni pa imajo ploščice, [ki sestojе] iz treh delov žada in dveh delov kamna. (*Baihu tong* 26: 168/4)

Ob branju zgornjega odlomka moramo seveda upoštevati tudi to, da samo dejstvo obstoja potrebe po razpravah v dvorani Belega tigra, ki so se med drugim dotaknile zgoraj opisane rabe žadastih ploščic, verjetno priča o tem, da je bil obravnavani sistem insignij prej relikv dokumentov iz davnine kakor neka splošno uveljavljena praksa, od katere ni bilo nobenih odstopanj. Namen razprav v dvorani Belega tigra je bil namreč, na neki način, »rektificirati« konfucijansko dogmo in odpraviti razlike v interpretacij konfucijanskega nauka. V istem duhu nadaljevanje besedila razlaga rabo petih vrst žadastih ploščic/pečatov:

五玉者各何施？蓋以為璜以徵召，璧以聘問，璋以發兵，珪以質信，琮以起土功之事也。

Kako se uporablja pet žadastih [ploščic]? Ploščica *huang* se uporablja za pozivanje, *bi* (disk) se uporablja za uradne obiske, *zhang* se uporablja za mobilizacijo vojske, *gui* se uporablja za izpraševanje dobre vere, *cong* (cilinder) se uporablja ob iniciaciji k obdelovanju zemlje. (*Baihu tong* 26: 168/5)

V nadaljevanju *Razprav iz dvorane Belega tigra* so omenjeni še drugi načini rabe žada v statusnih insignijah. Besedilo tako govori o tem, da so v davnini cesarji – sinovi neba – nosili obeske iz belega žada in fevdalni gospodje obeske iz temnega žada (*Baihu tong* 37: 225/3 in *Liji* 13: 3/10). V tem sorazmerno mitološko obarvanem navedku je med drugim omenjeno, da so tovrstne obeske, ki so izražali status in vrednost, nosili tudi pripadniki najnižjih slojev družbe – ti obeski so bili seveda iz drugačnega materiala:

天子佩白玉，諸侯佩玄玉，大夫佩水蒼玉，士佩璠石。佩即象其事。若農夫佩其耒耜，工匠佩其斧斤，婦人佩其鍼鏤，亦佩玉也。

Nebeški sin je nosil obeske iz belega žada, fevdalni gospodje pa iz temnega žada. Višji uradniki (*dafu* 大夫) so nosili obeske iz vodno zelenega žada, običajni uradniki (*sbi* 士) so nosili obeske iz belega kremenca (*ruan* 璠). Tako so ti obeski predstavljali človekov poklic. Kmetje so nosili obeske, ki so upodabljali njihov plug in motiko, tesarjevi pa sekuro in dleto. Ženske so nosile obeske iz igle in niti, prav tako so tudi nosile obeske iz žada. (p.t.)

Vsi ti navedki izvirajo iz *Knjige obredov*, kjer se v zvezi s cesarjevo rabo žada omenja tudi to, da ta na svoji kapi, izobešeni pred obrazom, nosi dvanajst žadastih obeskov itd. Obravnavano delo, ki povzema konfucijanske razprave v dvorani

Belega tigra leta 79 n. št., navsezadnje omenja tudi starodavni kitajski običaj pokopavanja umrlih s predmeti iz žada (od žadaste obleke in žadastih krst pa vse do polaganja kosov žada na telesne odprtine umrlih), vendar razlaga pomen žada v popolnoma konfucijanskem duhu in na ta način zanemari daoistične ter zgodnjekitajske konotacije in pomen žada znotraj verovanj, ki so bila povezana s temi ravnanji. Knjiga *Razprave iz dvorane Belega tigra* tako razlaga prakso polaganja dragih kamnov v usta preminulih kot običaj, ki je povezan s položajem, ki ga je umrl zasedal v hierarhičnem redu na zemlji, in tako tudi z njegovimi zaslugami – notranjo moralno izpopolnjenostjo. Ban Gu je tako zapisal naslednje:

用珠寶物何也？有益死者形體。故天子飯以玉，諸侯以珠，大夫以璧，士以貝也。

Zakaj se polaga bisere in [ostale] dragocene predmete [v usta umrlih]? Zato da bi s tem koristno dopolnili podobo telesa umrlega. Tako se umrlemu sinu neba v usta položi žad, preminulemu fevdalnemu gospodu bisere, velikemu uradniku kamen *bi* in nižjemu uradniku školjko. (Chen in Wu 2012)

Kar se tiče obrednih praks, povezanih s pokopavanjem umrlih, se konfucijanskost *Razprav iz dvorane Belega tigra* odraža v tem, da se uporabi žada ne pripisuje mističnih ali nadnaravnih lastnosti. Hkrati pa drugi viri in arheološke najdbe iz dinastije Han pričajo o tem, da je imel žad zelo specifično vlogo pri pokopavanju umrlih, ki je izhajala iz spiritističnih verovanj – ta so imela sicer več opraviti z daoistično kot konfucijansko mislijo. V dinastiji Han je bil tako po vsej verjetnosti močno razširjen običaj, da so na telo umrlega veljaka polagali kose žada ali pa so, v primeru vladarjev, v obleko iz žada oblekli celotno truplo. Ta praksa je bila povezana z verovanjem, da ima žad sposobnost zadržati dušo *hun* (魂) in *qi* (氣)⁶ pokojnika v njegovem telesu. (Lewis 2006, 52) Znotraj tega izročila se je žadu očitno pripisovalo nadnaravne lastnosti, na primer visoko vsebnost principa *yang* in življenjske energije *qi*. V tem kontekstu je bil žad simbol nesmrtnosti. V nasprotju s to tradicijo pa takratna konfucijanska miselnost popolnoma opušča tiste mistične razsežnosti žada, ki so povezane z nesmrtnostjo in posmrtnim življenjem, in se osredotočajo samo na vlogo žada v reprezentaciji nebeškega reda na zemlji in družbene hierarhije, oblikovane v skladu z moralnimi razsežnostmi poti neba.

6 Koncept *qi* na se v indoevropske jezike prevaja z različnimi ustreznici. Na tem mestu je omenjeni izraz verjetno najprimerneje razumeti v pomenu »življenjska energija.«

Guanzi (管子) – Pomen žada v hanski sintezi daoizma in konfucijanstva

Čeprav je delo *Guanzi* že po samem naslovu pripisano filozofu Guan Zhongu (管仲) iz obdobja Pomlad in jesen (*Chun-qiū shidai* 春秋時代, 771–467 pr. n. št.), je velik del vsebine tega dela nastal pod peresi različnih, poznejših avtorjev. Kasnejšo obliko dela je uredil učenjak Liu Xiang (劉向, 79–8 ali 77–6 pr. n. št.) iz dinastije Han, kar na neki način izpričuje dejstvo, da je imela omenjena knjiga v miselnem svetu dinastije Han vendarle aktivno vlogo in pomen. Pri tem obstaja tudi možnost, da so bili prav v tem času knjigi dodani tudi določeni deli.

Vsebino dela *Guanzi* je mogoče povezati z več različnimi miselnimi tradicijami, saj vsebuje elemente tako iz konfucijanskega nauka kakor tudi iz daoizma in legalizma, v samem delu pa so bolj ali manj nazorno prestavljeni tudi nauk o petih dejavnikih, nauk o dualizmu *yin* in *yang*, ter nekatere prvine umetnosti vojskovanja in Šole imen (名家). Podobno kot v konfucijanski filozofiji je osredje Guan Zhongove misli utemeljeno na ideji, da se lahko zakoni, ki izvirajo iz nebeškega *daota*, na zemlji uveljavijo samo preko vladarjeve krepostnosti. V ideji utemeljevanja zakonov preko krepostnega vladanja se v misli dela *Guanzi* tako spajajo nazori iz konfucijanske in legalistične filozofije.

Težnja po izpričevanju starodavnih ritualov, ki je, kakor v izključno konfucijanskih delih, prisotna tudi v delu *Guanzi*, med drugim botruje tudi potrebi po navajanju daoističnih teorij in izročila. Prav na tem mestu pa se v delu *Guanzi* v omembah žada kot stvarnega predmeta, učinkovine in simbola »mistični« in nadnaravni elementi iz daoizma in ritualov Treh dob (*san dai* 三代)⁷ družijo s tistimi, ki jih izpričujejo tudi konfucijanske razprave iz dinastije Han, v katerih žad simbolizira nianse moralne izpopolnitve plemenitnika.

Že v drugem poglavju obravnavanega dela lahko tako zasledimo primero, v kateri podoba neusahljivega globokega tolmana simbolizira vir ustvarjalne življenjske energije v državi. V omenjeni prisposobi predstavlja tolmun vir *qi*-ja, ki se na zemlji uresničuje preko udejanjanja presežnega *daota*, vladar pa je najvišja zemeljska instanca, ki glede na svojo moralno izpopolnjenost boljše ali slabše prevaja življenjsko energijo iz kozmičnega tolmana. Žad je v tej prisposobi uporabljen kot simbol kreposti, vrlin. Besedilo govori tako:

淵深而不涸，則沈玉極矣，淵者，眾物之所生也能深而不涸，則沈玉至。主者，人之所仰而生也。能寬裕純厚而不苛枝，則民人附。故淵涸而無水，則沈玉不至。主苛而無厚，則萬民不附。父

7 Dinastije Xia (夏, pribl. 2070/1900–1600 pr. n. št.), Shang (商, pribl. 1600–1046 pr. n. št.) in Zhou (周, 11. stol.–771 pr. n. št.).

母暴而無恩，則子婦不親。臣下隨而不忠，則卑辱困窮。子婦不安親，則禍憂至；故淵不涸，則所欲者至；涸，則不至。

Če je tolmun globok in nikoli ne usahne, potem bo vanj potopljeno veliko žada. Tolmuni so vir življenja za številna bitja. Če so zmožni velike globine in ne presahnejo, se vanje potaplja žad. Vladar je nekdo, h komur se ljudje zatekajo po živež. Če je zmožen biti prizanesljiv in odkrit, pri tem pa ne zatiralski, potem se bodo ljudje navezali nanj.

Zato pa, če se tolmun izsuši, tako da v njem ne ostane nič vode, se vanj ne potaplja nič žada. Če je vladar zatiralski in mu manjka radodarnosti, potem se ljudje ne bodo navezali nanj. Če sta oče in mati kruta ter brez milosti, potem ju njuni sinovi in njihove žene ne bodo obravnavali kot staršev. Če so uradniki in ministri nezvesti, potem se jih bo ponižalo in bodo obubožali. Če sinovi in njihove žene ne poskrbijo za svoje starše, jih bo doletela nesreča. Zato pa se v tolmun, če ta ne presahne, potaplja, karkoli si ta zaželi. Če presahne, pa se mu ne daruje ničesar. (*Guanzi* 2: 1, 4)

Zgornji odlomek povezuje neusahljivost tolmuna kot vira življenja s pojmom kreposti. Tako je dosežena neusahljivost tolmuna predstavljena s prisotnostjo žada kot simbola moralne izpopolnjenosti: če vladar goji krepostnost, potem lahko predstavlja vir blagostanja za svoje ljudstvo. Prisotnost žada tako naznanja vsebnost nebeškega principa v materialnem ali človeškem viru energije *qi* in življenja. Pogoj za vzpostavitev povezave med nebesno potjo in človeškim svetom, preko katere se odprejo vrata za pretok generativne življenjske energije v tostranstvo, je prisotnost kreposti. Princip in tostransko utelešenje slednje pa je predstavljeno s podobo žada.

Naslednji odsek iz obravnavane knjige, ki zasluži našo pozornost, govori o žadu skozi perspektivo teorije o *yinu* in *yang*. O žadu in biserih pove naslednje:

珠者陰之陽也，故勝火。玉者陰之陰也，故勝水。其化如神。故天子臧珠玉，諸侯臧金石，大夫畜狗馬，百姓臧布帛。

Biseri so *yang* v *yinu*; zato nadvladajo ogenj. Žad je *yin* v *yinu*; zato nadvlada vodo. Njune preobrazbe pa so kot preobrazbe duha. Zaradi tega mora sin neba hraniti bisere in žad, fevdalna gospoda pa zlato in kamene; visoki uradniki morajo gojiti pse in konje, preprosti ljudje pa morajo hraniti zalogo oblačil iz konoplje in svile. (*Guanzi* 35: 1, 9–10)

Nekaj poglavij naprej je žad eksplicitno enačen z devetimi krepostmi, s tem da je na tem mestu razlagi njegove narave dodan še vidik teorije petih dejavnikov in bipolarne

manifestacije *yina* in *yang*a. Interpretacija tega, katere lastnosti žada ustrezajo katerim krepostim, ki je podana v besedilu, je podobna, vendar ne popolnoma identična tisti, ki jo zasledimo v *Knjigi obredov*. Omenjena definicija žada kot simbola ali utelešenja devetih vrtilin, ki hkrati kot fenomen predstavlja *yin* v *yin*u, je v neposrednem nadaljevanju besedila umeščena tudi v kontekst teorije o poteku človekovega nastanka in razvoja, ki se močno naslanja na zgoraj omenjeni teoriji (o petih dejavnikih in binarni opoziciji *yin* in *yang*). V devetintridesetem poglavju obravnavanega besedila lahko tako zasledimo naslednjo razlago o počelu in nastanku človekovega življenja:

人，水也。男女精氣合，而水流形。三月如咀，咀者何？曰五味。五味者何，曰五藏。酸主脾，鹹主肺，辛主腎，苦主肝，甘主心。五藏已具，而後生肉。脾生隔，肺生骨，腎生腦，肝生革，心生肉。五肉已具，而後發為九竅：脾發為鼻，肝發為目，腎發為耳，肺發為竅，五月而成，十月而生。

Človek je voda. Ko se tako združita (vitalna) esenca in energija moškega in ženske, med njima steče voda in se utelesi. [Tako nastali zarodek] prične v tretjem mesecu z nečim, kar je podobno sesanju. Kaj točno zarodek sesa? Pet okusov. To, kar pa teh pet okusov ustvari, se imenuje pet organov *zang* (臟). Kislo vlada [razvoju] vranice, slano vlada pljučem, trpko (ostro) vlada ledvicam, grenko jetrom in sladko srcu. Zatem ko je zasnovanih pet *zang* organov, se razvijejo še mesnati deli telesa. Vranica ustvari membrane, pljuča ustvarijo kosti, ledvica ustvarijo možgane, jetra ustvarijo kožo in srce ustvari meso. Ko je meso že ustvarjeno, se razvije še devet odprtin. Vranica sproži razvoj nosu, jetra razvijejo oči, ledvice ušesa, pljuča usta in srce spodnje telesne odprtine. V petem mesecu je [zarodek] popolnoma oblikovan in se v desetem mesecu tako rodi. (*Guanzi* 39: 1, 12–15)

Po obravnavani teoriji je tako zasnovano telo takoj po rojstvu zmožno dojemati stvarnost preko vseh čutil, med katera spada tudi razum. Vsa čutila skupaj pa novorojenemu človeku omogočajo dojeti srž vsega, kar je pomembnega.

Pri razumevanju simbolnega ali kozmološkega pomena žada v knjigi *Guanzi* igra ključno vlogo prav element vode, ki povezuje zgornji odlomek o človekovem razvoju od zarodka do rojstva s predzadnjim, ki govori o odnosu med vodo in žadom. V kozmologiji knjige *Guanzi* igra element vode osrednjo vlogo v nastanku življenja na zemlji. Medtem ko naj bi bila zemlja koren vseh stvari (fenomeni) in vir vsega življenja, pa je: »Voda kri in *qi* zemlje.« Kot utelešenje gibajočega se življenjskega potenciala pa je voda sama po sebi: »... popolna v svojih danostih ... saj je s svojo nežnostjo, voljnostjo in čistostjo dobra za spiranje človekovega zla. Voda je (tako) človečnost.« Kot smo že omenili zgoraj, je logika za tem, da žad

simbolizira človečnost ali krepost, ta, da njegove lastnosti predstavljajo vse vidike človečnosti ali vse vrline, ki tvorijo krepost kot celoto. Ista logika obstaja tudi pri interpretaciji simbolnega pomena vode kot elementa človečnosti. Poleg tega pa voda sama zase predstavlja tudi umerjenost (ali srednjo mero) in enega izmed petih mer (*wu liang* 五量). Kot smo omenili že prej, pa je žad utelešenje vseh vrlin, ki vlada vodi in s tem tudi življenju, rojstvu, energiji *qi* na zemlji itd. Na ta način predstavlja kozmologija, ki jo slika *Guanzi*, vrsto fuzije med konfucijansko teorijo vrlin in daoističnim pojmovanjem teorije petih dejavnikov itd. Utelešenje vrlin v obliki predmetov pa razkrije tudi dejstvo, da je skozi kitajsko tradicijo, ki jo definiramo bodisi kot filozofsko ali religiozno izročilo, etični aspekt bivanja predstavljal nekaj, kar ni ločeno od tostranstva in ni del onostranstva, ampak integralni del samega ustroja stvarstva: je stvar, postajanje in zakonitost hkrati. Po drugi strani pa je preskriptivna moralnost kot nekaj, kar je lahko izpeljano iz ontološko zastavljene etike, stvar skladja oz. harmonije med nivoji več-prvinskega kozmološkega ustroja. S tem pa je dobro in slabo, v nasprotju z nekaterimi prevladujočimi strujami evropskih filozofskih in religioznih tradicij, lahko deloma popolnoma materialna stvar. Rezultat skladja je harmonija, ki obsega vse nivoje stvarstva hkrati. Različica končne povezanosti med človekom in žadom se pokaže v naslednjem odlomku iz knjige *Guanzi*:

是以水集於玉，而九德出焉。凝蹇而為人，而九竅五慮出焉。此乃其精也。

Če se voda tako nakopiči v (obliki) žada, vznikne devet vrlin. Ko se zgosti, nastane človek in se pojavi devet telesnih odprtih, iz katerih vznikne pet oblik zavedanja. To je potem njuna esenca. (*Guanzi* 39: 1, 18)

Telesna estetika morale: hanski komentarji h *Knjigi pesmi* (詩經) in drugi viri

Kot v svoji knjigi *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* ugotavlja Mark Csikszentmihalyi (2004), se v zgodnjih (pozno obdobje Vojskujočih se držav in dinastija Han) komentarjih, ki razodevajo moralni pomen klasika *Knjiga pesmi*, simbol žada pojavlja v povezavi s fiziološko realizacijo moralne kulture pri človeku. Po Csikszentmihalyjevem mnenju se ti poskusi iskanja moralnega ozadja v *Knjigi pesmi*, ki po eni strani predstavljajo nadaljevanje konfucijanske interpretacije vrednosti klasičnih besedil, hkrati utemeljujejo na teoriji petih dejavnikov (*wuxing* 五行). V tovrstnih razlagah se tako zgodnja konfucijanska metafizika spaja s kozmološkimi elementi, ki so hkrati prisotni tudi v t. i. daoističnem izročilu. Tako lahko v delih, kot je komentar k pesmim *Hanshi waizhuan*

(韓詩外傳) iz dinastije Vzhodni Han, zasledimo rabo izraza *yuse* 玉色 »žadasto obličje/ten«, ki se pojavlja tudi v delu *Wuxing* (五行篇) iz obdobja Vojskujočih se držav. Slednje delo omenja izraz »žadasti ten« v naslednjem kontekstu:

智之思也長，長則得，得則不忘，不忘則明，明則見賢人，見賢人則玉色，玉色則形，形則智。

Mišljenje modrega je presegajoče. Če je presegajoče, bo (modri) pridobival (znanje). Če bo pridobival, ne bo pozabljal. Če ne bo pozabljal, potem bo videl jasno. Če bo videl jasno, bo prepoznal vrednega človeka. Če bo (znan) prepoznati vrednega človeka, bo imel žadasti ten. Če bo imel žadasti ten, bo (dosegel) telesno manifestacijo. Če se bo telesno manifestiral, bo dosegel modrost. (Csikszentmihalyi 2004, 77)

Poleg izključno telesne manifestacije modrosti, katere vidne značilnosti se v delu *Wuxing* povezujejo s simbolom žada, isto delo omenja še drugi čutni vidik utelešenja »principa žada« v telesu modreca: *yuyin* 玉音 »žadasti glas (zvok)«:

聖之思也徑，徑則形，形則不忘，不忘則聰，聰則聞君子道，聞君子道則玉音，玉音形，形則聖。

Mišljenje modreca je neposredno. Če je neposredno, potem je utelešeno. Če se utelesi, potem ga (ni mogoče) pozabiti. Če se ne pozablja, potem (se doseže) ostrina sluha. Če si ostrih ušes, potem (lahko) slišiš pot plemenitnika. Če slišiš pot plemenitnika, potem (lahko) dosežeš žadasti glas. Če se (doseže) žadasti glas, potem se telesno manifestira. Če se (doseže) telesna manifestacija, potem se doseže (tudi stanje) modreca. (p.t.)

Oba odlomka govorita o tem, kako se lahko v človeku razvijeta dve sposobnosti čutnega dojetja poti (*dao* 道): jasno videnje in oster sluh. V obeh primerih pa se poudarja predpostavka, da se zmožnosti dojetja poti udejanjijo tudi v telesnih znakih in so tako vidne v telesni preobrazbi, ki se približa metafizičnim in fizičnim lastnostim žada. Pojem žadaste telesne lepote je tako neposreden rezultat notranje izpopolnjenosti v skladju s potjo sveta kot celote. Z drugimi besedami: vse nivoje obsegajočo harmonijo s stvarnostjo. Po drugi strani lahko izraz *yuse* razumemo tudi kot nekakšno »avro«, ki spremlja modreca.

Podobno slike in načine rabe simbola žada lahko zasledimo tudi v moralnih komentarjih h klasiku *Knjiga pesmi*, ki izvirajo tako iz zgodnjega kot tudi iz poznega obdobja dinastije Han. Kot primer lahko navedemo delo *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩

外傳 (HSWZ), ki ga tradicionalno pripisujemo Han Yingu 韓嬰 (pribl. 200–130 pr. n. št.) iz dinastije Vzhodni Han. V tem delu beremo:

在內者皆玉色，在外者皆金聲。

Vsi prebivalci palače dobijo žadasti izraz in vsi, ki so zunaj palače, dobijo kovinski zven. (HSWZ, 1: 16, 4)

Odlomek se nanaša na pripoved o tem, da je v davnini sin neba v svoji palači imel pet različnih obrednih gongov. Ob določenih priložnostih – na primer, ko je zapuščal palačo ali ko se je vrnil nazaj v palačo – so v palači zaigrali (obstaja možnost, da naj bi on sam udaril po gongu) posamezni gongi, ki so bili namenjeni določenim situacijam. Tako se je ves svet, zunaj in znotraj palače, moral ravnati v skladu z naravo zvoka, ki ga je oddajal posamezni obredni gong. Ko je zazvenel gong po imenu *ruibin* 蕤賓, ki je oznanjal cesarjevo vrnitev v palačo, se je zgodilo tudi to, kar nazorno opisuje zgornji odlomek.

Na nekem drugem mestu knjiga *Hanshi waizhuan* (ibid.2, 18) obravnava domnevno klasično ozadje naslednjega verza (108,3) iz *Knjige pesmi*: »Lep je kot žad, lep je kot žad, zelo se razlikuje od vojvodovega klana.« V komentarju, ki mu sledi navedeni odlomek iz *Knjige pesmi*, Han Ying pojmuje frazo »lep kot žad« kot posledico, telesno manifestacijo notranje moralne izpopolnitve plemenitnika. Po njegovem mnenju je tovrstno »žadasto lepoto« ali »žadasto avro« mogoče doseči skozi dognanje in udejanjanje posameznih vrlin – kot smo omenili že zgoraj.

Spet drugje (ibid.2, 27) Han Ying obravnava tudi naslednji odlomek iz *Knjige pesmi* (128, 1): »Po izgledu topel in mehek kot žad in prebivajoč v koči iz lat, povzroča zmedo v vseh krivinah mojega srca.« V Han Yingovem videnju izraža ta odlomek kvalitete človeka, za katerega so značilne telesne izpopoljenosti modreca, vendar jih uporablja samo v skladu z vrlinami, iz katerih te telesne danosti tudi izvirajo. Nekdo z »žadastim izgledom« lahko tako prebiva v najpreprostejšem domovanju ali se odeva v najslabše obleke, pa pri tem ne bo izgubil svojega plemenitega telesa. Ravno nasprotno, če bo plemenitnik izbiral svoja domovanja in obleke v skladju s tem, kar narekujejo vrline in pot (*dao*), potem bo prav zaradi tega ohranil svoje notranje in zunanje danosti. Na splošno bi lahko te misli povzeli na naslednji način: kdor je notranje izpopolnjen do te mere, da se njegove vrline odražajo že navzven, se ne bo ravnal v skladju s svojo zunanjo podobo, ampak v skladju s svojim notranjim plemenitim vzgibom.

Besedilo obravnavanega dela vsebuje še vrsto omemb simbola žada, ki pa jih črpa predvsem iz izvornega konfucijanskega kanona. Tako omenja tudi misel, ki govori o tem, da je treba vsak kos žada najprej zbrusiti in šele nato bi lahko na primeren

način opravljal svojo vlogo. Brušenje žada je prispodoba za človekovo učenje, podoba nebrušenega žada pa izraža človekovo notranjo danost oz. zmožnost, da nekoč doseže notranjo in zunanjo izpopolnjenost. »Čeprav v svoji hiši poseduješ žad, ki je vreden tisoče zrn zlata, pa boš, če ne razumeš, kako z njim primerno ravnati, ostal reven.«

Pri obravnavi izraza *yuse* 玉色 je treba omeniti tudi to, da se pojavlja še v poeziji iz zgodnejših obdobj (na primer v delu *Chuci* 楚辭) in v *Knjigi obredov* (*Liji* 禮記). Pesnik Qu Yuan v knjigi *Chuci* uporablja izraz »žadasti izgled« v navezavi na očiščenje notranjega bistva. Izraz se prvič pojavi v pesmi »Yuan you« (遠游, »Dolgo popotovanje«), ki naj bi predstavljala daoistični odgovor na pesnitev »Li sao« (離騷). V pesnitvi »Yuan you« pesnik uporablja izraz *yuse* na naslednji način: »Mojo žadasto podobo so oblile žareče barve; ko bil očiščen sem tako, moje notranje bistvo se pričelo je krepiti.« V omenjeni pesnitvi se izraz *yuse* uporablja v povezavi z notranjo energijo ali esenco na eni strani in z draguljem *wanyan* (琬琰) na drugi. Tudi na drugih mestih v antologiji *Chuci* se obravnavani izraz pojavi skupaj z omenjenimi simboli, toda pogosto še v spremljavi izraza *baiyu* 白玉 (»beli žad«):

厭白玉以為面兮，懷琬琰以為心。邪氣入而感內兮，施玉色而外淫。

Toda postati moram podoben nekomu, čigar obličje je iz čvrstega belega žada, nekomu, ki kot srce nosi dragulj *wanyan*. Potem ko bo slabi *qi* vstopil vame in prevel moja občutja, bo moje žadasto obličje (玉色) zasijala navzven. (*Chuci* 13: 5, 4)

Od daoizma in konfucijanstva k budizmu: simbol žada in obličje Bude (Mouzijev *Lihuo lun* 理惑論)

Splošno gledano v budistični literaturi do dinastije Song (宋, 960–1279), ki obsega tako doktrinalna dela, nastala pod čopiči laičnih in kleričnih pripadnikov budizma na Kitajskem kakor tudi poezijo z budističnimi motivi, predstavlja simbol žada Budovo notranjo izpopolnjenost. Njegovo razsvetljeno bistvo, ki vznikna od znotraj ali je v notranjosti skrito že v sami osnovi, je kot dragoceni žad za navadnega človeka ali kralja atribut, ki prenesen na duhovno raven razkriva prestiž vrednosti. Imenovani primeri lahko v njeni analogiji sledimo po treh poteh. Prva je razumevanje simbolične vsebnosti, ki jo v kitajski tradiciji nosi žad, in odnosa vzpostavitev ustreznih metafor v poznejši budistični literaturi. Druga zadeva razumevanje prispodobe gore v povezavi z budističnimi modreci oz. njihove poti do razsvetljenja, postavljene kot miselnega vzorca idealov, ki povprečnega človeka

rešuje iz zablod tostranstva. Tretja pot pa je v resnici gledišče združevanja simbolov v jeziku poezije dinastije Tang, ki je služila kot močna opornica za retoriko pesnikov prihodnjih dinastij.

Žad kot simbol in predmet ima korenine globoko v začetkih kitajske miselne tradicije. Simbolične vrednosti, ki jih je podoba žada sčasoma pridobila v skladju z družbenimi vlogami, njegovimi atributi in dragocenostjo, so skozi čas pronicale tudi v budistično izrazje. V prid predpostavki, da se je to dogajalo postopoma ali samo znotraj domene laičnega budizma, kjer se so vplivi raznih miselnih tokov in kulturnih dejavnikov neprestano mešali, priča dejstvo, da v izrazju zgodnjih budističnih suter skorajda ne najdemo omembe žada, če pa jo najdemo, potem se podoba žada običajno nanaša na predmet s posvetno, materialno vrednostjo. Pojavnost žada v spisih budizma *Chan* in drugih šol lahko nekako navzdol zamejimo z dinastijo Han, ko so tovrstne omembe precej pogostejše. Žad se v poznejših primerih navezuje na podobe iz življenja mojstrov in patriarhov. Starejši budistični metafori za Budo, ki izražata njegovo izjemno dragocenost, pa sta dragulj in biser. Videti je, da je na Kitajskem žad zasedel mesto teh dveh simbolov, sočasno pa je v okvir simbola žada v navezavi na Budo vpeljanih še nekaj dodatnih pomenskih ravni, ki jih je žad nosil skozi kitajsko tradicijo. Biser *Maņi* nosi v budističnem diskurzu pomen *buda-esence*, ki je skrita očesu nevednega (Lai 1979, 245). Mogoče bi bilo torej reči, da v določenem trenutku postaneta žad in biser *Maņi* dve plati iste pomenske vrednosti.

V poznem obdobju dinastije Han, ko je budizem pričel po različnih poteh pritekati na Kitajsko, so nastali tudi prvi budistični spisi v kitajskem jeziku. Ti spisi so bili na začetku predvsem prevodi raznih suter (večinoma mahajanskih) v kitajščino. Drug tip budističnih besedil pa so predstavljala budistična besedila, ki so nastala v kitajskem kulturnem okolju. Njihova vsebina namreč marsikdaj jasno izraža spajanje med kitajskimi miselnimi tradicijami na eni in določen vidik budistične literature ali miselnega sveta na drugi itd. Primer takšnega besedila, ki naj bi nastalo že v poznem obdobju dinastije Han, predstavlja delo z naslovom *Libuo lun* 理惑論. Predgovor omenjenega dela pripisuje avtorstvo Mou Ziboju (170–?, 牟子博) oziroma mojstru Mouju (Mouzi 牟子), ki je živel v zadnjem stoletju dinastije Han. Delo je v glavnem sestavljeno iz dialogov med osebo, ki naj bi povzemala mnenja vseh konfucijancev, in mojstrom Moujem, ki zagovarja budistična (in v neki meri tudi daostična) stališča. V resnici predstavlja delo *Libuo lun* zgodnjo obliko budistične apologetike, ki v bran tej »barbarski« religiji uporablja elemente iz kitajske miselne tradicije in na ta način predstavlja vsebino budistične dogme skozi lokalne kulturno-miselne elemente. Pomembno pa je poudariti tudi to, da je *Libuo*

lun najzgodnejše ohranjeno delo takšnega tipa na Kitajskem in tako do neke mere vendarle izkazuje najzgodnejšo fazo procesa »umeščanja« budistične misli v kitajsko kulturno okolje.

Že v tej kitajski budistični proto-apologiji pa lahko zasledimo tudi prvo omembo simbola žada v budističnem kontekstu. Pri tem prav gotovo ne preseneča dejstvo, da je – glede na poprej omenjene razsežnosti žada kot simbola v dinastiji Han – podoba žada uporabljena v zvezi s podobo Bude, saj si lahko predstavljamo, da je bil eden izmed najpomembnejših ciljev neke zgodnje budistične apologije predstaviti Budo kot prototip modreca ali plemenitnika, ki je dosegel najvišjo obliko razsvetljenja. Prvo poglavje knjige *Lihuo lun* tako predstavlja Budova biografija, v kateri se prvič (če je delo resnično nastalo v poznem obdobju dinastije Han) v povezavi z Budovo zunanjo ali notranjo podobo pojavi tudi simbol žada. V omenjenem primeru povzema žad ali žadasta ploščica 32 Budovih posebnih telesnih znakov (*lakṣaṇa, xiang* 相) in »80 vrst odličnosti«, telesne in notranje lastnosti, ki naj bi jih posedoval vsak Buda oz. vsak razsvetljeni modrec:

身長丈六，體皆金色，頂有肉髻，頰車如師子，舌自覆面，手把千輻輪，頂光照萬里，此略說其相。

Visok je bil šest *zhangov*, njegovo telo je bilo v celoti zlate barve, na vrhu glave je imel mesnato figo, imel je čeljusti kot lev, njegov jezik je bil tako velik, da je lahko z njim prekril cel obraz, njegove roke so lahko držale kolo s tisočimi bodicami, luč, ki je sijala nad z vrha njegovega čela, je svelila več deset tisoč milj v daljavo. Tako lahko povzamemo njegove znake. (*Lihuo lun* 1: 4)

V delu besedila, ki opisuje dogodke iz časa, ko je Buda dopolnil devetnajst let, ga njegov oče, kralj, opiše z besedami: »Si kot žad, kot žadasta ploščica.« (*Lihuo lun* 1, 8) Pri tem je pomembno, da je v pripovedi tak opis uporabil vladar; s tem je bila namreč posredno izražena tudi povezava med posvetno vladavino in simbolom žada, pa tudi obliko (moralne in fizične) izpopolnjenosti, ki je v domeni te zaželeno. Pomembno je tudi to, da vse poprej opisane Budove lastnosti povzema prav simbol žada ali žadaste ploščice (popolno obdelan žad z ritualno vrednostjo). V tem trenutku pa Buda še ni dosegel razsvetljenja, zato se simbola žadaste ploščice v budističnem smislu še vedno drži neke vrste posvetnosti in nedovršenosti. Morda se prav zaradi tega v poznejši budistični literaturi pojavi simbol popolno oblikovanega žada, ki se skriva bodisi v (sveti) gori ali v žepu razcapanih oblačil razsvetljenega modreca. Najpomembnejši zaključek, ki ga lahko povzamemo iz tega zadnjega primera, pa je vsekakor to, da žad, ki v zgodnji kitajski budistični literaturi predstavlja obličje Bude, združuje tako

simboliko in pomen, ki ga ima ta v konfucijanski misli, kakor tudi njegove daoistične pomenske dimenzije: predstavlja notranje vrline na eni strani in njihove telesne manifestacije na drugi.

Zaključek

Na koncu kratkega pregleda rabe simbola žada v virih iz dinastije Han lahko podamo naslednje zaključke:

V virih, ki so nastali v okviru hanskih prizadevanj utemeljiti in poenotiti konfucijansko izročilo, se simbol žada običajno nanaša na družbeni red in z njim povezano »kozmolško« obrednost. Viri, kot so *Baihu tong*, tako črpajo elemente svojega simboličnega imaginarija na primer iz *Knjige obredov* ali Konfucijevih *Pogovorov*, pri tem pa so – kot je pričakovati – v teh prisotni tudi elementi, ki niso iz striktno konfucijanskih virov. Tako lahko vidimo, da, kljub močnim tendencam t. i. »rektifikacije« konfucijanstva, na koncu vendarle prevladajo pragmatične okoliščine rabe idej, kot je dejstvo povezanosti imaginarija, jezika kot celote in odraza kulture kot povezujoče sfere. Simboli in izrazje morajo biti fluidni in morajo posedovati enostavno »uporabnost«, saj predstavljajo medij, preko katerega se miselni sistem »samoutemeljuje«, razlikuje, drugači, vstopa v dialog z drugimi sistemi itd. Na ta način se snovalci konfucijanskega kozmosa v dinastiji Han niso izognili vključitvi kozmolških elementov, ki so jih uporabljali in se jih pripisuje drugim domnevnim miselnim strujam. Ker ti elementi predstavljajo del »objektivnosti« oz. kozmologije, ki se je takrat razumela kot nekaj neodvisnega od miselnosti – tj. kako svet deluje na najbolj osnovni ravni – niso posebej izpostavljeni ali razvidni, ampak so na neki način del sklepanja in definiranja povezav med koncepti.

Drugi viri, ki bi jih lahko označili za daoistične ali takšne, ki sintetizirajo razne miselne struje v dinastiji Han, pa ponujajo rabo simbola žada, v kateri so poudarjeni drugi aspekti simbolike, ki konec koncev niso popolnoma odsotni iz konfucijanskih virov. Tovrstna besedila prav tako črpajo iz drugih pred-hanskih virov, med katerimi so verjetno tudi takšni, ki so po vzponu konfucijanstva utonili v pozabo. Značilnost takšnih virov je, da poudarjajo enotnost med metafizičnim aspektom principov in njegovo fizično manifestacijo. To je sicer delno poudarjeno tudi v t. i. konfucijanskih virih, s to razliko, da se ti osredotočajo predvsem na aspekt notranjega moralnega razvoja, ki se nahaja v neposredni povezavi z nebeškim *daotom*. Prejšnji pa s principom, ki ga predstavlja žad, povezujejo koncepte, kot so nesmrtnost, telesna izpopolnitev in na koncu tudi notranji razvoj itd. Z drugimi besedami: predstavljajo tudi tiste aspekte starodavnih obredij in verovanj, ki so jih v konfucijanski redefiniciji kitajske antike izločili ali postavili na stran. V

obravnanih virih pa se na koncu pojavijo še rabe žada kot simbola lepote, ki se je uporabljal tako v starejši kot tudi v poznejši literaturi.

Simbol žada pa nenazadnje prevzamejo tudi zgodnji kitajski privrženci budizma, ki želijo z njegovo rabo ponazoriti Budovo notranjo in zunanjo izpopolnjenost. Morda bi lahko zaključili, da je razlog za to, da se simbol žada ali žadaste ploščice pojavijo že v najzgodnejših budističnih delih na Kitajskem, ta, da je bil žad v dinastiji Han dokaj splošno rabljen in razumljen simbol, ki je obsegal paleto pomenov, ki smo jih omenili v jedru tega članka.

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Research Article

Deleuze and Zhuangzi: Actualization and Counter-actualization

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Abstract

Deleuze has presented one of the richest ontologies in 20th century philosophy, and its conceptual machinery could be more fully used also in Sinology. This article focuses on two of his concepts: actualization and counter-actualization. Actualization proceeds from the virtual and through the intensive processes of individuation moves towards actual structures. Counter-actualization proceeds in the opposite direction, and starting from the actual, through creative involution discovers intensities and the virtual. It has the aspects of making a body without organs, creating intensities, and diversifying them. Actualization by differentiation is a common understanding of genetic processes in the Chinese tradition in general, and in the *Zhuangzi* in particular. In this article, Deleuze's concepts are used to (re)interpret the account of differentiation in the story of the death of Zhuangzi's wife, and the strange story from the chapter "Ultimate Joy" where "horses engender men." Counter-actualization by discarding, dismantling, forgetting, thawing of forms and reaching towards the intensive and the virtual, a merging with the Dao, is a recurrent theme in the Chinese Daoism, and it is shown on the example of Yan Hui's "sitting and forgetting," master swimmer of Lü, and the thought of death, how they project beyond the actualized rigid and metric forms toward a more intensive, plastic, and joyful existence.

Keywords: Deleuze, Zhuangzi, ontology, comparative philosophy, virtual, actual, intensities

Deleuze in Zhuangzi: aktualizacija in protiakualizacija

Izveleček

Deleuze je predstavil eno najbogatejših antologij filozofije 20. stoletja, katere konceptualen sistem bi se lahko obširneje uporabil pri sinologiji. Članek se osredotoča na dva od njegovih konceptov: aktualizacijo in proti- ali kontraaktualizacijo. Aktualizacija izhaja iz virtualnega in se skozi intenzivne procese individuacije giblje proti dejanskim strukturam. Protiaktualizacija poteka v nasprotni smeri in od dejanskega preko ustvarjalne involucije odkrije intenzivnosti in virtualno. Zavzema stališče oblikovanja telesa brez organov, ustvarjanja intenzivnosti in njihove diverzifikacije. Aktualizacija z diferenciacijo je splošno razumevanje genetskih procesov, navadno v kitajski tradiciji, zlasti pri *Zhuangziju*. V tem članku so uporabljeni Deleuzovi koncepti za (ponovno) razlago upoštevanja diferenciacije

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v zgodbi o smrti žene v *Zhuangziju* in čudne zgodbe iz poglavja »Največja radost«, v kateri »konji spočnejo ljudi«. Protiaktualizacija je z odstranjevanjem, razstavljanjem, pozabljanjem, spreminjanjem oblik in doseganjem intenzivnega in virtualnega, združenega z Daojem, ponavljajoča se tema v kitajskem daoizmu, prikazana na primerih Yan Huijevega »sedenja v pozabi«, mojstra plavalca Lü, in misli o smrti, ki ponazarjajo preseganje aktualiziranih togih in metričnih oblik v primerjavi z bolj intenzivnim, nazornim in radostnim obstojem.

Ključne besede: Deleuze, Zhuangzi, ontologija, primerjalna filozofija, virtualen, dejanski, intenzivnosti

Introduction

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) was one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century, but is still relatively little used in Sinology.¹ In his *Difference and Repetition* (published in 1968; see Deleuze 1994) he presents a rich ontology of actualization by differentiation which could be used as a machinery to be connected to other philosophical machines from the Chinese tradition,² where this kind of ontology is widespread. Another important topic in Deleuze concerns different methods of counter-actualization or counter-effectuation that work against the already actualized in order to make possible new actualizations. In the present article I shall interpret passages of *Zhuangzi* from the perspective of these two Deleuzian topics.

Deleuze's Ontology: Virtual, Intensive, Actual

Deleuze in his *Difference and Repetition* (1994) criticizes the Western metaphysical tradition based on identity, and instead proposes a philosophy of difference. His immanent ontology of the virtual and its actualization is one of the key elements of this philosophy.³

1 See, for instance Silantsyeva 2016, Zhang and Tian 2018; a special issue of the journal *Deleuze Studies* (2013) was dedicated to China. It seems that more has been done in relation to Deleuze's aesthetics than to his ontology (see also, for instance, Bogue et al 2014). In the case of Japanese philosophy, see Ott and Allik (2010).

2 This approach is different from hermeneutic approach of interpretation. As Deleuze and Guattari say, "We will never ask what a book means, as a signifier or signified ... we will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge" (1987, 4).

3 For the following discussion, see Deleuze (1994, 222–61) and DeLanda (2002). Deleuze usually changes his vocabulary from book to book, and these transformations can be regarded as an important part of his philosophical strategy (see DeLanda 2002, 157–80). Due to space limits, in this section I focus mainly on the conceptual network in the *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 1994), and on just a few central aspects of it.

According to Deleuze, the virtual and actual are two sides of every being and every situation. The virtual side of a thing or event is its differential structure, and the actual thing or event is unfolded from it in the course of an intensive process of actualization.⁴ We can analyse it in three stages:

- 1) Virtual. According to Deleuze, the virtual is made of differential relations and singular points (Deleuze 1994, 209–14).⁵ Manuel DeLanda compares it to the notion of state space in dynamic systems theory, where each dimension represents one degree of freedom of the system (e.g. a pendulum has two degrees of freedom, position and momentum), and where the singular points or attractors sketch the tendencies of the system (2002, 13–15). It is important here that: (a) the virtual does not resemble the actual, (b) the virtual is not homogeneous and indistinct, but all made of virtual differences. These two characteristics are different from the Platonic tradition, where the thing is a copy of an idea, and resembles it, while the idea itself is something simple and identical.
- 2) Individuation and dramatization, or individualizing and intensive processes, or spatiotemporal dynamisms. The virtual landscape of attractors is resolved into trajectories through a series of symmetry breaking events, by which a thing or an event is being unfolded (DeLanda 2002, 18–22). It takes place on a “field of individuation,” where—in the manner of Leibniz’s monads—a certain region of the virtual is selected, developed and becomes clear, whereas all the other virtual relations and points remain enveloped. Every monad is a “point of view” on the whole world and its clear field of individuation envelops in itself all other monads or individuals, although in a confused manner (Deleuze 1994, 252–53). On that field of individuation, the differential relations and singular points are developed into trajectories of actualization that may imply all sorts of transformations, torsions, accelerations, and decelerations (*ibid.*, 215). Embryogenesis is a good example of intensive and dramatic processes: the actualizing individual is initially in a very fluid and flexible state, it is covered by intensive axes and gradients, and

4 There is a scholarly discussion about what is the preferred ontological level: some would stress the virtuality (Badiou 1999, 43–54; Ansell-Pearson 2002, 99, 111; Hallward 2006, 28) and see it as the source of activity; others stress the intensities (Hughes 2009, 142; Bowden 2017, 236; Lundy 2017, 183) and say that the virtual is just a structure that by itself does nothing. Be that as it may, this need not bother us here, since the general scheme of differentiation is always the same, from the virtual to the actual (and back).

5 In his account of later phases of actualization Deleuze mostly uses these two terms. To be more precise, there is a synthesis inside the virtual itself: differential elements > differential relations > singular points (Deleuze 2004; see Hughes 2009, 134–41, where it is analyzed in more detail).

along these lines, step by step, by gradual symmetry breakings, the foetus develops, its regions differentiate and some parts migrate into other parts, and their contacts induce further differentiations. It is a dramatic process and only a foetus, a larva, is able to undergo such transformations, which would kill any adult animal.

- 3) Actual. While the intensive morphogenetic or praxiogenetic process is all about relative positions and contacts, intensities, and the precise Euclidian dimensions and volumes are not so important (foetuses are able, especially in the early phases of development, to successfully deal with some very radical interventions, as Driesch demonstrated upon the embryos of sea urchins at the beginning of the 20th century), the outcome is a spatially differentiated and temporally ordered individual in a metric space-time (Deleuze 1994, 217–21, 249–51). The body parts of an animal are juxtaposed with each other, and its time is sequenced by certain measurable rhythms (heart-beat, breathing, circadian rhythm, etc.); it has become determined as to its qualities (species) and quantities (body parts). So, the actual thing or situation is an outcome of an intensive and dramatic process, whereby spatio-temporal distinctions are unfolded, and these trajectories in turn are based on a virtual landscape of differential relations and singular points.

Deleuze's Ontology: Counter-actualization

If we take humans or other living beings as an example (it can be generalized to other cases), it is clear that on the one hand the actual form does not exhaust the actualization (and the more complex the individual, the bigger this discrepancy is), but that there always remains, as long as the system endures, a certain reserve for further actualizations.⁶ On the other hand, it is also clear that no actualized form is eternal (and again, the more complex the individual, the more vulnerable it is) and that it is prone to encounter a situation that drastically changes its way of actualization (and that in the case of a living being results in its death). This brings us to the second point of Deleuze's ontology I mentioned earlier, the counter-actualization,⁷

6 "[D]ifference has never ceased to be in itself, to be implicated in itself even while it is explicated outside itself" (Deleuze 1994, 228).

7 This term translates the French *contre-effectuation* that Deleuze uses in *The Logic of Sense* (Deleuze 1990, 178–79), and arguably it should be translated as counter-effectuation, since a dominant theme in that book is the Stoic separation of causes and effects (see Shults 2014, 266, n44). But for our purposes here the term 'counter-actualization' serves well, because our discussion concerns rather the questions of actualization than the Stoic distinction and the problematics of *The Logic of Sense*.

and its two aspects: first, self-cultivation as countering the actualized forms and enlarging the reserve for further actualizations, and secondly, death itself as a natural counter-actualization.

In the counter-actualization by self-cultivation we may discern three aspects: making oneself a body without organs, letting intensities pass on it, and diversifying them; in other words, the movements of disarticulation, experimentation, and nomadism (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 159). (1) Body without organs (BwO) is a concept Deleuze worked out together with Félix Guattari in “Anti-Oedipus” (1983) and “A Thousand Plateaus” (1987). It means the body as an intensive,⁸ and if an organism is a coagulation, hierarchization of energies and flows,⁹ then the making of a BwO means a dismantling or a thawing up of those actualized parts, “revitalising” oneself (but retaining a little bit of the organism, because otherwise you would simply be killed¹⁰). (2) It is not enough to turn to the intensive aspect of the body, if nothing happens there, if intensities do not pass (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 161). This might lead to catatonia. So, it is important to open the body to some connections, experiment, to open some channels; in Spinozist terms, to find out how my body matches other bodies, to create “common notions” (Deleuze 1981 and 1988, 54–58). (3) But even this may remain repetitive or a “cancerous” BwO (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 165), and therefore it is necessary to diversify those connections, to have adequate and flexible interactions with the world, being a nomad or “roaming freely,” to use a phrase from Zhuangzi.

8 “The BwO is the egg. [...] The egg is the milieu of pure intensity, spatium not extension, Zero intensity as principle of production. [...] [T]he egg always designates this intensive reality, which is not undifferentiated, but is where things and organs are distinguished solely by gradients, migrations, zones of proximity.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 164)

From a very different starting point, Merleau-Ponty’s analysis in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1965 [1945]), as well as the contemporary theory of embodiment (see Shapiro 2011) also indicate this kind of an intensive sphere.

9 “The organism is not at all the body, the BwO; rather, it is a stratum on the BwO, in other words, a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labor from the BwO, imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 159).

Zhuangzi’s story of perforation of Hundun (Mair 1994, 71) could be seen as a preparation of an organism upon a body without organs.

10 “This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 161).

As Shults (2014, 135) says, counter-actualization is not a “mystical escape,” but “a masterful intensification of intentional engagement in the world.” If an individual has certain usual actualized ways of interacting with the surroundings (with certain forms of affecting it and being affected by it), then counter-actualization would mean to tear those forms apart and, so to say, thaw them up, the result of which would be a body more capable of affecting and being affected in more diverse ways (see Spinoza’s *Ethics* 4.38, Spinoza 2002, 341), so that the individual “can escape from the sclerosis of *its* essence, *its* power, *its* capacity to be affected, without disappearing as *that* mode” (Philippe 1999, 61). Art is a very strong counter-actualizing agent (e.g. Jagodzinski 2013).

Concerning the “natural” process of de-actualization through death, Deleuze says (1994, 259) that on the one hand death means the dedifferentiation of “big differences” (i.e. juxtaposed, actual parts)—when an organism dies, its differentiated bodily parts fall apart; and on the other hand it means the liberation of small, i.e. intensive differences. One is the actual death that others can observe, the end of the organism, but the other death is a continuing transformation where intensities never equal to zero, and the “desiring machines do not die” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 330). In this second sense, death is never present, it is “*what is felt in every feeling, what never ceases and never finishes happening in every becoming*” (ibid., italics in the original). This intensive state of the individual is qualitatively different from the actualized state, because it is not subjected to the form of the “I” or the matter of the “self” (Sholtz 2016, 63–64).¹¹

Actualization from the Virtual: the Death of Zhuangzi’s Wife

Now I would like to map these two topics from Deleuze’s philosophy to the *Zhuangzi*.¹² Let us first take a story where Zhuangzi explains to Hui Shi how he overcame the sorrow for his wife’s death:

When she first died, do you suppose that I was able not to feel the loss?
I peered back into her beginnings; there was a time before there was a life. Not only was there no life, there was a time before there was a shape. Not only was there no shape, there was a time before there was energy.

11 For more on Deleuze and death, see Adkins 2007, Baugh 2000, and Beaulieu and Ord 2017.

12 I add the usual caveat that I do not treat the authorship of *Zhuangzi* here and by the personal name of Zhuangzi I simply refer to the authors of the *Zhuangzi* and to the textual figure of the same name that appears in the text.

Mingled together in the tuft,¹³ something altered, and there was the energy; by alteration in the energy there was the shape, by alteration of the shape there was the life. Now once more altered she has gone over to death. (Graham 1981, 123–24, translation modified)

是其始死也，我獨何能無慨然！察其始而本無生，非徒無生也，而本無形，非徒無形也，而本無氣。雜乎芒芴之間，變而有氣，氣變而有形，形變而有生，今又變而之死。(18/46/15-19)¹⁴

In the description of the genesis of a being, *viz.* Zhuangzi's wife, four phases are distinguished: (1) tuft (*mangwu* 芒芴); (2) energy (*qi* 氣)¹⁵; (3) forms (*xing* 形); and (4) life (*sheng* 生). I propose that this kind of genesis can be (re)interpreted in parallel with Deleuze, as follows:

- 1) Tuft as the virtuality from where all beings are generated. Zhuangzi does not describe it in as great detail as Deleuze, who uses differential elements, differential relations and singular points to describe the virtual, but at the very least we can say that the tuft is not homogeneous but has some distinctions that have not been developed yet (since the following genesis proceeds from it), and that most probably it is not a transcendent, but immanent cause. And if we equate *qi* with the intensive, then the tuft is “upstream” from this.
- 2) Energy or *qi* as the phase of intensities, of individuation and dramatization. In different sources there are different accounts of *qi* as to its extension or differentiation: at the very least it has two aspects, *yin* 陰 and *yang*

13 What I translate as “tuft” is *mangwu* 芒芴. According to the International Encoded Han Character and Variants Database (*International...* 2018), *mang* 芒 means: tiny thorns on a nut or leaf; sharp-pointed; cutting-edge of a blade, and *wu* 芴 means a kind of turnip. Usually some substitute words are used by translators and interpreters. For us here the metaphor of a tuft of turnip's leaves suits well (“a bunch or collection of something, typically threads, grass, or hair, held or growing together at the base,” i.e. turnip, where turnip would be the Dao and the “bunch” would be the things and events). Perhaps “brier,” “thicket” or simply “minute” would also fit. Graham has “amorphous,” but it has the drawback of introducing hylemorphic thinking. *Mangwu* is not a chaos before the implementation of forms like in Plato's *Timaeus*, but the very small, from which all big things are unfolded.

14 Reference according to *Zhuangzi Yinde* (Zhuangzi 1986): chapter number / page number / line numbers. The electronic text is from the Chinese Text Project at www.ctext.org.

15 *Qi* is often translated as life-breath, but as Edmund Ryden explains (Zhang 2002, 45–46), it is not limited to animate beings. Wing-tsit Chan translates it as “material force” (Chan 1963, 784), but it raises the question whether there are other forces than material. According the current understanding in physics matter and energy are equivalent, and in order to avoid the term “matter” here, which would again introduce hylemorphic thinking, we could simply use “energy.”

陽; some texts talk about six *qi*'s¹⁶; and at the extreme *qi* is as many as there are things, in the sense that every individuated thing has a certain characteristic *qi* and can be seen as a “coagulation” of that *qi*. On the one hand the *qi* is more differentiated than the tuft, but on the other hand it is not yet the phase of the actualized, with the juxtaposition of elements: it is not possible to cut off a piece of *qi* (that is, the *qi* as it is in itself) in the way you can cut off a piece of wood from a stick, for instance. Or in other words, if you “divide” it, it changes its nature like an intensive quantity (Deleuze 1994, 238).

- 3) Forms and life as the level of actuality: the phase of distinguished things that are spatially juxtaposed and temporally sequenced.

Intensive Transformations in the *ji* 幾

In the *Zhuangzi* and also in other texts, there is the notion of “tiny” *ji* 幾 which could be (re)interpreted in terms of Deleuzian intensive differences. In chapter 19 “Ultimate Joy” (*zhibile* 至樂) it is said that the “seeds [of beings] are tiny” (*zhong you ji* 種有幾). In fact, in the text there follows a row of transformations that on the level of actuality would seem utterly bizarre (cf. Goldin 2003, 226–27):

When they are found in water they become filaments. When they are found at the border of water and land they become algae. When they germinate in elevated places they become plantain. When the plantain is found in fertile soil it becomes crow's foot. The crow's foot's roots become scarab grubs and its leaves become butterflies. The butterflies soon evolve into insects that are born beneath the stove. (Mair 1994, 172).

得水則為鬢，得水土之際則為蛙蟻之衣，生於陵屯則為陵舄，陵舄得鬱棲則為烏足，烏足之根為螻蛄，其葉為蝴蝶。(18/47/41-42)

The description goes on for a while, until it reaches the human (“horses engender men” *ma sheng ren* 馬生人), and at the end it is said:

Humans again go back and enter the machine. All things come out of the machine, all go back into the machine. (Mair 1994, 173)

於機，皆入於機。(18/47/45-48/18/46)

16 For instance, in Chapter 1 of *Zhuangzi* (1/2/21); the notion of the six *qi* is also used in the Chinese medicine.

The “machine” (*ji* 機) is related to the “tiny” (*ji* 幾). On the one hand all individuals come from an intensive state and go back to it after death or destruction; on the other hand, this sphere of intensities is literally a machine, something that produces all beings (cf. the intensive sphere of the “machinic,” productive unconscious that is not theatrical or representative like the Freudian unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari 1983), or triggers their individuation (機 also means “trigger”).

It is hard to see how this Zhuangzian description could make any sense on the level of actuality (whatever was the biological knowledge of the Ancients or however we interpreted the text, it must be excluded that the author intended to say that an actual horse engenders a human being). Its focus is on the level of intensities, and it can be understood in this way that the intensive *qi* solidifies or is gathered (*ju* 聚)¹⁷ for a while, so that it becomes an actual qualified being with quantified parts, and that after this form of the individual is destroyed, the intensive factors are freed (just like Deleuze says of the “other side” of death (1994, 259, cf. Williams 2003, 9–11), and that they become available for new individuations. So, it is not the horse that produces man, but the intensive factors or *qi*, that are now in the form of an actual horse, and after the dissolution of this form may become part of a new actualization process that produces a human being. In Deleuze’s terms the intensities imply each other and an individual envelops inside itself all other individuals, so that with a shift in the clear part, in the “viewpoint” or the individuation field, some other individual might be actualized.

And perhaps the best way to understand this is not as a relation of before and after in actuality, but as a description of the intensive as it is in itself. Different individuals interpenetrate each other already now. Deleuze says:

[T]he ass and the wolf can be considered species only in relation to the fields of individuation which clearly express them. In the confused and in the enveloped, they play only the role of variables, of individual differences or composing souls. ... We call individuating factors the ensemble of these enveloping and enveloped intensities, of these individuating and individual differences which ceaselessly interpenetrate one another throughout the fields of individuation. ... [E]very individuating factor is already difference and difference of difference. It is constructed upon a fundamental disparity, and functions on the edges of that disparity as such. That is why these factors endlessly communicate

17 “Human’s birth is a gathering together of *qi*; if it gathers together, then there is life, if it scatters, then there is death” 人之生，氣之聚也，聚則為生，散則為死 (22/58/11). The idea of a genetic process as a gathering together of *qi* and destruction as a scattering of *qi* is common in the Chinese tradition.

with one another across fields of individuation, becoming enveloped in one another. (Deleuze 1994, 254, 257)

There is a self-cultivation practice (or “ascetism,” Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279) related to this fact of interpenetration of individualizations, and Deleuze later, in his work with Guattari, termed it “becoming-animal.” This is not an imitation of an animal or an identification with it, but a “creative involution” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 273) where one so adjusts one’s intensities that they come to the zone of proximity with another individuation.

This does not reveal itself as actually becoming an animal, but to some extent it liberates one’s individuation and intensities from the yoke of one’s self, from its identity and its imaginary variations, and puts one into better contact with the productive forces that produce that individual and that interpenetrate with the forces that produce other individuals. So, becoming-animal leads to becoming-imperceptible, which is its “cosmic formula” of becoming-animal (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 279). In the *Zhuangzi* there are some self-cultivators who have not been successful enough in their becoming-imperceptible and who attract students (Ch. 32, see Mair 1994, 324–26).

Counter-actualization: Making Oneself a Body without Organs, Creating Intensities, and Diversifying Them

This kind of creative involution is perhaps best exemplified in the *Zhuangzi* by the fictional story about Yan Hui, historically the favourite student of Confucius, who is “making progress”: first he says that he has forgotten rites and music, but Confucius says it is not enough. Then he says he has forgotten humaneness and righteousness, but again it is not enough. The third time Yan Hui says:

“I sit and forget.”¹⁸

“What do you mean, ‘sit and forget’?” Confucius asked with surprise.

“I slough off my limbs and trunk,” said Yan Hui, “dim my intelligence, depart from my form, leave knowledge behind, and become integrated with the Great Interpenetration. This is what I mean by ‘sit and forget’.”

“If you are integrated,” said Confucius, “then you have no preferences. If you are transformed, then you have no more constants. It’s you who is really the worthy one! Please permit me to follow after you.” (Mair 1994, 63–64, translation modified)

18 Livia Kohn (2010, 1) argues that it would be better to translate it as “oblivion” rather than forgetting.

曰：「回坐忘矣。」仲尼蹴然曰：「何謂坐忘？」顏回曰：「墮肢體，黜聰明，離形去知，同於大通¹⁹，此謂坐忘。」仲尼曰：「同則無好也，化則無常也。而果其賢乎！丘也請從而後也。」
(6/19/89-93)

Yan Hui in his counter-actualization first discards the culturally central forms (rites and music, humaneness and righteousness) and then sloughs off his limbs and trunk, departs from his form and leaves knowledge behind. This is the part of disarticulation that occurs in making oneself a body without organs. Thus he attains the ontological level of the pure intensities, the “Great Interpenetration” (*datong* 大通).

Ordinary life becomes physically, psychically and culturally attached to certain forms, so that the body is able to perform a narrow set of movements and the psyche behaves like a mental automaton, giving certain responses to certain stimuli. So, the first phase of self-cultivation is to undo, forget, blur, tarry, to sit motionless. The meditation practice of “sitting and forgetting” thus enables the mind not to present the first response, but to open up to greater nuances and variation.

On the other hand, in accordance with Deleuze–Guattari’s warning, he retains “a little bit” of the organism and knowledge. He does not literally mutilate himself or become crazy, but simply is able to distance himself from the actualized forms of body and mind, and to experience the pure intensities. In this way those free intensities can be productive, and not destructive. This is the part of experimentation.

This kind of existence is described in several of the *Zhuangzi*’s stories about persons who have attained supreme mastery of an art: master butchers, swimmers, carpenters, cricket-catchers. These stories show how those masters have forgotten their actual form and are as if melted into a substance (flesh, water, timber) or, better, they show how those people have experimented and, in an interaction with a substance, environment or other beings, discovered the singularities of those substances, environments or beings, as well as the singularities of their own bodies, so that their performance becomes marvellous.

Let us take the example of the master swimmer:²⁰

Confucius was viewing the Lü waterfall, which plummets several hundred feet, whitening the waters for forty miles around, impassable to fish

19 On the example of “Huainanzi” Ch. 12, where the same story appears, many interpreters amend 大通 to 化通. In my citation I follow the received version.

20 Deleuze in his lectures on Spinoza (see Deleuze 1981) also brings the example of learning to swim. Billeter (2010), who makes an important case of such kind of learning processes, takes the example of learning to ride a bicycle. This accords with Deleuze’s emphasis on “apprenticeship,” in contrast to “learning” (Deleuze 1994, 164–67).

and turtles. And yet he saw an old man swimming there in the torrent. Thinking the man had attempted suicide due to some suffering in his life, Confucius sent his disciples to run along the bank and try to pull him out. But the old man emerged several hundred paces downstream, walking along the bank singing, his hair streaming down his back. Confucius hurried after him and said, "I thought you were a ghost, but now I see you are a man! Do you have a method that allows you to tread upon the waters?"

"No, I have no method," said the old man. "I got my start in the given, developed via my own inborn nature, and reached completion through fate. I enter into the navels of the whirlpools and emerge with the surging eddies. I just follow the course of the water itself, without making any private one of my own. This is how I tread the waters."

Confucius said, "What do you mean by getting your start in the given, developing via your own inborn nature, and reaching completion through fate?"

I was born on the land and thus I feel securely at home on the land. That's the given. I grew up with the water and thus I feel securely at home in the water. That's my own nature. And I am thus and so but without knowing how or why I am thus and so. That's fate. (Ziporyn 2009, 81)

孔子觀於呂梁，縣水三十仞，流沫四十里，鼃鼃魚鼈之所不能游也。見一丈夫游之，以為有苦而欲死也，使弟子並流而拯之。數百步而出，被髮行歌而游於塘下。孔子從而問焉，曰：「吾以子為鬼，察子則人也。請問蹈水有道乎？」曰：「亡，吾無道。吾始乎故，長乎性，成乎命。與齊俱入，與汨偕出，從水之道而不為私焉。此吾所以蹈之也。」孔子曰：「何謂始乎故，長乎性，成乎命？」曰：「吾生於陵而安於陵，故也；長於水而安於水，性也；不知吾所以然而然，命也。」(19/50/49-54)

In the typical tripartite structure of these stories, the swimmer starts with his facticity, a certain already-actualized historical, geographical, cultural context. Then, in interaction with the water, he disarticulates this body and experiments with new assemblages, he learns how to match his body (its singularities, or in Spinoza's terms the specific relation of movement and rest that characterizes his body) with the body of the water and the stream (with their singularities). So, in this practice itself the swimmer counter-actualizes his form and reaches towards the intensive and the virtual differential relations and singular points expressed and developed by those intensities.

So, one important part of dismantling or thawing oneself in the process of counter-actualization is to attentively explore other things, bodies, environments, and to form assemblages with them, letting them to transform you. In this way one becomes a nomad that “swims,” roams or rambles (*you* 游/遊), which means that the intensities pass freely on the body without organs.

The third aspect of counter-actualization that we mentioned earlier, that of diversification, is very often not focused on in such stories. This opens two contrary interpretations: according to the first, all those masters would be prisoners of their art, so that they are able to reach the intensive only in one very specific field, and that they would not be accomplished persons or “real men” (*zhen ren* 真人). The second is that through one specific art they have attained the principle of the movement towards the intensive and the virtual, so that one art would be sufficient. The second interpretation seems more plausible, since the first interpretation would rather correspond to what in the characters’ own terminology is “to have a method” (*youdao* 有道) and to “know” (*zhi* 知). If you have a method and you know what you do, then you are still tied to certain actualized forms of objects and subjects, and there would be no real progress, because you would need to master an infinite amount of arts (and even then it would not be clear whether that would bring about some qualitative change). Those masters are precisely beyond methods and knowledge, they have really dismantled or thawed their body and subjectivity, so that their capacity to experiment extends well beyond their field of mastery, and they are capable of a real diversification in their intensities.

Intensive Transformations: Death as Natural Counter-actualization

In chapter 6, “The Great Ancestral Teacher,” Sir Plow goes to see his terminally ill friend,²¹ Sir Come, and asks, what will the Creator soon make of him:

Will He make you the liver of a rat, or the arm of an insect? (Mair 1994, 59)

以汝為鼠肝乎？以汝為蟲臂乎？(6/17/55)

The Creator is the Dao or the general transformation of things that is “upstream” of the actualized forms, in the intensive or the virtual. To a Western reader this terminology is easily misleading, as the Creator is one of the common names for God. And it is even true that in the *Zhuangzi* too the Creator does belong to the sphere of

21 There is an extensive literature on Zhuangzi and death, e.g. Schwitzgebel 2017, Chai 2016, Farrugia 2015, Hoffert 2015, Budriūnaitė 2015, Fraser 2013, Berkson 2011, Galvany 2009, Olberding 2007, Ames 1999.

the numinous or spiritual (*shen* 神; it is another word for a small, marvellous, intensive factor), but it should not be considered as a transcendent agent: the numinosity belongs to the “upstream” levels of the intensive and the virtual themselves, not to something external to them. Zhuangzi’s Creator is very much immanent, it denotes the creativity of the virtual and the intensive, while the virtual differences and singularities are all reciprocally determined, so the distribution of individualizations and the creation of things is an emergent property of the virtual.

In the *Zhuangzi*, being actualized in a form is compared to being tied by a cord, and death is the loosening of this cord, a liberation:

This would be what the ancients called loosening the cord by which (the life) is suspended (Legge 1891a, 248).

此古之所謂縣解也(6/17/53)

The ancients described (death) as the loosening of the cord on which God suspended (the life) (Legge 1891a, 201–2).

古者謂是帝之縣解 (3/8/18-19)

Death is like a return to home:

look on death as going home (Legge 1891a, 386)

視死若生者 (17/44/63)

or even more precisely, the return to home of an orphan who early on in life lost his parents:

How do I know that hating death is not like an orphan who has lost his parents as a small child and is not able to return home! (My translation)

予惡乎知惡死之非弱喪而不知歸者邪! (2/6/79)

And death can even be a “perfect enjoyment.” In Ch. 18 (whose title is “Ultimate joy” or “Perfect enjoyment”) the skull tells Zhuangzi:

In death there are not (the distinctions of) ruler above and minister below. There are none of the phenomena of the four seasons. Tranquil and at ease, our years are those of heaven and earth. No king in his court has greater enjoyment than we have. (Legge 1891b, 6)

髑髏曰：「死，無君於上，無臣於下，亦無四時之事，從然以天地為春秋，雖南面王樂，不能過也。」(18/47/26-27)

So, the distinctions of the actual world and society do not apply in the intensive netherworld.

The thought of this “natural” counter-actualization might also be considered a self-cultivation practice. There might even be some affinities between Zhuangzi and the “care of death” of Socrates/Plato, but there are also important differences. In both cases, this thought functions as a deterritorializing agent that distances us from our actual forms. But the philosophical and conceptual transposition is different: while in the Socratic tradition the body is the “tomb” of spirit (*sōma sēma*), like a container from which the spirit is freed at death,²² in the Zhuangzian tradition the description is immanent: the body is not an external container, but the (temporary) solidification of intensive *qi*; death is the liberation of those same individuating factors that produced the body, their re-entry into a state of interpenetration with other intensities. There is no “migration of souls” here (cf. Deleuze 1994, 254)—and we should take note of the question of Sir Plow above: it is not “as whom will you reincarnate,” so that a ready-made individual (or rather, its soul) would “change body”; he does not mention whole organisms, but parts of an animal or an insect (liver, arm). So, the re-individuation can enter very different constellations or assemblages, and is not subjected to the principle of identity and the repetition of the same (transmigration of a soul). Persons do not survive; what lives, are the intensities. Persons are rather a principle of death and degradation (they impose a fixed form on intensities and thus make it vulnerable to destruction).

Deleuze (1994, 259) says that death rises from within, but comes from without, and there is something similar in the *Zhuangzi*. We cited above the first half and we repeat it here with what follows:

This would be what the ancients called loosening the cord by which (the life) is suspended. But one hung up cannot loose himself—he is held fast by things. (Legge 1891a, 248, translation slightly modified)

此古之所謂縣解也，而不能自解者，物有結之。(6/17/53)

When Zhuangzi glorifies transformation (even to the utmost of the grotesque, when a person becomes so hunched that his nose touches his navel; or to the fantastic when parts of body are imagined to transform into a rooster, crossbow or

22 And because Zhuangzi does not have to fight against this kind of dualism, perhaps in his case a preparation of a body without organs is less dangerous: “the Daoist nomad is less prone to madness and excess because the Daoist nomad is not rebelling against an oppressive metaphysics” (Sigurdsson and Coutinho 2004, 71), although I believe there is always and everywhere a form of oppressive metaphysics, implicit already in the “common sense,” so that the difference of difficulty would be rather a difference of degree.

wheel) and says that death is just one of the transformations, it is not just a resignation and acceptance of the inevitable, or an abstract thought of life and death alternating like morning and evening, but it is a glorification of the intensive, of intensive transformations lived in one's own body.

So, while for Socrates the thought of death helps to train the soul in rational knowledge and in grasping of intelligible ideas, in *Zhuangzi* it helps to learn how to be (relatively) free from and unattached to fixed forms in both body and mind.²³ Death is a major transformation, a discarding of our personal form and a return to the intensive, and it can teach us to comply with the lesser transformations in this life, letting go of the forms. This is the meaning of *Zhuangzi*'s practice of "forgetting" or "sitting and forgetting." The objects of forgetting are the actual forms, and when they are forgotten, our intensive (un)ground shines through. This is a knowing with not-knowing: knowing belongs to the actual; not-knowing belongs to the intensive or to the virtual.

They accepted (their life) and rejoiced in it; they forgot (all fear of death), and returned (to their state before life) (Legge 1891a, 238).

受而喜之，忘而復之。(6/15/11)

From the story of the death of *Zhuangzi*'s wife we know that "before life" is the intensive, the *qi*, of which life is a certain transformation.

This thought of death is indeed a practice of counter-actualization; in the first chapter *Zhuangzi* criticizes those proto-Daoists who seek to prolong life, because by trying to free themselves in this way they still depend on something, on some actual things (certain tools and methods of practice), and in an even deeper sense, they are falsely attached to a particular actual form (the human form), whereas they should set themselves free for any transformation and plant themselves in the virtual, in the homeland where there are no actualized things (無何有之鄉, 1/3/46), in the "vast wilds of open nowhere" (廣莫之野, *ibid.*, Ziporyn 2009, 8).

Conclusion. Mutual Benefit

In this paper I have tried to map to the *Zhuangzi* Deleuze's ontology of virtuality and its actualization, and the corresponding practice of counter-actualization. More broadly, this paper might give new conceptual tools for understanding the

²³ The latter—freeing from fixed forms in the mind—could be related to Deleuze's notion of counter-effectuation in thought (see Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 159–62).

Chinese tradition, and the preceding analysis of some parts of *Zhuangzi* is just a very brief foray into what could prompt more systematic explorations on the following ontological levels:

- 1) Deleuze's notion of virtuality and its related concepts might give new tools for understanding such basic concepts of Chinese philosophy as *dao* 道, *de* 德, *kong* 空, *xu* 虛, *wu* 無, *wei* 微, *ji* 幾, *li* 理 and others.
- 2) Deleuze's understanding of individuation might explain the mainstream Chinese view according to which this is the result of a gradual differentiation, separation, coagulation. This could lead to a better understanding in the common world philosophy of individuation beyond actual individuals and collectives. Deleuze's ontology of intensities might give new insights into the notion of *qi* that has until now been difficult to integrate into Western concepts and systems. Intensive interactions (like Deleuze's notion of assemblage) might help us to understand a large array of notions not only in the sphere of Chinese philosophy, but also in other domains (like painting, calligraphy, poetry, *wushu*, etc.), where the question of the perceiving subject and the perceived object, or artistic representation of things in the world, has never been central. Instead, they are concentrated on how to prepare intensities in the artwork or one's own body, so that the actual rigid form is, to an extent, melted, and we become able to make new contacts and connections with other beings and situations.
- 3) Deleuze's concept of actuality could explain the Chinese philosophers' attitude towards actual things. The main problem with the actual things is not that they would be an earthly burden on a heavenly spirit, something bad and sinful in their materiality. Instead, the problem lies in the very fact that they have a certain form—which on the one hand, yes, testifies to the virtual articulation of differences and the power of their intensive actualizations, but on the other also closes this same actualization, and starts to limit further actualizations.
- 4) The ambivalent role of actuality prompts practices of counter-actualization. The organ of this counter-actualization, or the place where it happens, is for many Chinese philosophers the heart/mind, *xin* 心. The notions of consciousness and mind are sensitive topics in the contemporary Continental philosophical tradition, because for a long time they were used as notions of the level of actuality (consciousness of a certain actual being, namely human) and in the dualistic context of body and mind. The Chinese tradition is not burdened with such concerns; the *xin* 心 is a highway to the intensive and the virtual. This is a vast field open for further research.

The connections outlined in this paper also make new assemblages for Deleuzian philosophy, and contribute to the emergent world philosophy.

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