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THE *JUNZI* DOTH PROTEST:

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF REMONSTRANCE IN CONFUCIANISM

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the Confucian value of remonstrance (*jian*) and explores the degree to which remonstrance as a form of protest is a key value within the Confucian tradition. My claim is that the literature has undervalued the role of *jian*; that, in fact, *jian* serves as a critical counterpoint to sentiments of reciprocity, deference, and benevolence within the tradition. Furthermore, I argue that *jian* becomes an especially significant strategy for harmonizing values and practices in times when forces for change and continuity are in complex collision.

My point of departure will be with the works of Lu Xun, a fiction writer and cultural critic during the early years of the 20th century, and I will explore the degree to which he instantiates the value of *jian* and the role that it plays in his theory of "grabbism" (*nalai zhuyi*). While Lu Xun is conventionally perceived and portrayed as being anti-Confucian, I will present a reading that counters this depiction and contend that such a reading of Lu Xun will serve to clarify the creative dimension of remonstrance.

The two propositions that frame this dissertation are:

(1) Remonstrance as a form of protest is integral to Confucianism

and,

(2) Lu Xun's protest remains within the Confucian tradition

While the first will be my primary focus, I intend to establish these as interrelated propositions, the latter providing the context in which to more fully grasp the former. My methodology will rely not on analytic process; rather I will develop a narrative

understanding of *jian* through an exploration of how this term is used within a particular historical instance, in this case by focusing on the nature of Lu Xun's critique of Confucianism during the period of New Culture Movement. Such an extensive method is consistent with the Confucian tradition's own way of understanding its key terms and Lu Xun, through modeling the technique of *jian*, can be seen as the functional equivalent of the principle of protest at work. Commentary on this relationship will take place within a Deweyan framework.

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"Is there any one saying that can ruin a state?" Duke Ding asked.

"A saying itself cannot have such effect," replied Confucius, "but there is the saying, 'I find little pleasure in ruling, save that no one will take exception to what I say.' If what one has to say is efficacious (*shan*) and no one takes exception, fine indeed. But if what one has to say is not efficacious and no one takes exception, is this not close to a saying ruining a state?"

The Analects of Confucius, 13.15

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Introduction

This project is a study of the practice of remonstrance (*jian*) within the Confucian tradition. The reasons for this choice are twofold: *jian* can properly be seen as an indigenous means of protest, one that has been a documented part of the Confucian state bureaucracy from at least the Han Dynasty, with some elements dating back to the Zhou Dynasty. This topic is one especially worth pursuing at this time given that China is at present experiencing difficulty in negotiating a place for protest within contemporary society. Questions arise as to whom in the government or which policies can be properly or safely criticized and to what degree or level of command this criticism can extend. For instance, the central authorities' tolerance toward localized strikes and tax demonstrations and their overt encouragement of such protests as those against the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade contrasts sharply with the persistent campaign of repression that has been directed against Falun Gong members and the silencing of those who publicly question the policies of the Central Committee. Exploring such a homegrown means of protest not only demonstrates that this technique has historically had a place within the Chinese tradition, but also is useful in countering those who might claim that protest or freedom of speech need be discussed in rights language and its practice imported. My aim is not to address directly the applicability of such a conception of protest in contemporary China; that I will leave to political scientists. Instead, in

examining *jian* as both a philosophical and an historical phenomenon, I aim to contribute to the project of rearticulating Confucianism, making it more relevant and giving it greater cultural currency.

In addition, the concept of *jian* is an especially compelling one with respect to unpacking the idea and ideal of Confucianism as internally self-regulating. As classically framed, the "self-regulating" nature of Confucian praxis pivots on its unwavering emphasis on self and action as strongly socially constructed, as well as strongly socially constrained, in such a way that harmony emerges naturally to counter unbalanced power relations. So while I do think Tu Weiming's characterization of Confucianism as a set of "despotic, gerontocratic, and male-oriented practices" is a valid, but somewhat harsh description of many periods in China's long history, still the system did function well, and one could say "harmoniously," especially given its longevity.

To rule by moral example (*de*) instead of by force and violence was a central tenet of Confucianism; Confucius thought that a ruler who had to resort to force had already failed as a ruler – "If you govern effectively, what need is there for killing?" (*Analects*, 12.19). This was not a principle that Chinese rulers always observed, but it was the ideal of authoritative rule. While it should be noted that even such humane principles have been in practice both paternalistic and statist; nevertheless, the Confucian ideal avoids the worst of modern paternalism with the principle of government by example and by *wuwei* (not doing), putting classical Confucianism closer to Daoism than to modern practices of authoritarian control. Confucius thought that government by laws and punishments could keep people in line, but government by example of virtue (*de*) and good manners (*li*)

would enable them to control themselves.[1] In addition, words have ideals built into them; to call someone a "ruler" is not so much to describe his role in society as it is to prescribe the values and actions that should define his behavior. That is to say, things should be made to correspond to their names, and human beings especially should live up to their ideals, the ideals that are built into the language itself. According to Confucius, "the rectification of names" is essential for any society to be a good society; taking care of using language is a primary way of taking care of the world.

Still, I've wondered: Although Confucianism certainly required an acceptance of an often elevated degree of authoritarian control, what kept it, as a practice, from tipping completely over to despotism during those millenia? An emphasis on harmony, no matter how powerful a worldview, would not seem to have been potent enough for such self-regulation in a *real-politik* world, with despotic rulers and court intrigue as only two powerful countervailing forces. A system that is self-regulating implies that it is self-correcting, as well; and that there is no need and therefore no space for influence from outside of the system, no influence in the form of strong criticism or protest. Confucianism can perhaps best be understood as a biotic system, a model of things growing and changing within a coherent and consistent set of relationships and within certain parameters. "System" in this sense *is* the particular pattern of relationships in effect; and to be effective these patterns of relationships must be harmonious. Certainly Chinese history is filled with examples when discord and instability were manifest,

[1] The Master said: "Lead the people with administrative injunctions (*zheng*) and keep them orderly with penal law (*xing*), and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence (*de*) and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety (*li*) and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves." (*Analects*, 2.3)

frequently the consequence (or the cause) of foreign invasion or natural disaster. And yet the ideal of self-regulating harmony remained. How then was such balance and harmony theoretically possible and, moreover, how were long periods of political stability often achieved?

The concept of *jian* as a Confucian value goes far in solving that puzzle. If there is within the Confucian system the possibility for critique and protest as a means for returning to *dao*, the proper path, then the system seems more plausibly described as self-correcting; *jian* serves as a critical counterpoint to sentiments of reciprocity, deference, and benevolence – those values that underlie the Confucian tradition – and is a strategy that arguably enhances a view of the tradition as self-regulating. Moreover, when we interrogate Confucian tenets in their political and historical manifestations in the Confucian state, the institution of *jian* gives us a reasonable understanding of why Confucianism did not devolve into despotic totalitarianism or myriad other possibilities for political or cultural chaos.[2] If we understand the overarching goal of Confucianism to be regulating meaning, or the meaning of action, through *li*, and to arrive at effective patterns of relationship, then *jian* adds the possibility of a correcting or regulative action to a potentially closed and static system, although this focus on correction is not one that has been much explored in the Western literature.

[2] One obvious exception to this claim is that of Mao, although the argument can be made that Maoist totalitarianism, with its propaganda campaigns and cult of personality, achieved its ends in part because it was so successful in suppressing the Confucian tradition.

Jian as a Confucian value

While it is one's duty to remonstrate, to correct (your parent, the emperor, etc.), it would be misleading to call *jian* a duty in the Kantian sense. As it operates within a Confucian context, duty is not conceived as universalizable or as something performed out of reverence for a law. Therefore, it must be seen as a value – and in the same sense that we think of, for instance, *ren*, *yi*, *he*, and *cheng* as values; they are regulating standards by which a community determines its practices.

A useful discussion of value as practice can be found in Ivan Illich's *Vernacular Values* (1981). In the section "The Decline of Vernacular Values," Illich notes that "vernacular" has an Indo-Germanic root that implies "rootedness" and "abode." The Latin *vernaculum* made reference to what was homemade or homebred, as opposed to what was the result of formal exchange; it is, in Illich's interpretation, "sustenance derived from reciprocity patterns imbedded in every aspect of life, as distinguished from sustenance that comes from exchange or from vertical distribution." The Western intellectual tradition and way of life – unlike the Chinese – has evolved away from such an understanding of values and toward one in which a value is something like a guiding light, no longer imbedded in daily life but slightly above and beyond the mess of our world. In this sense, a person or community is not conceived of as "valuable" – able, that is, to embody and enact its values in everyday life.[3]

[3] See www.preservenet.com/theory/Illich.html for access to Illich's work on the web. I'd like to thank Peter Hershock for pointing me to this valuable source.

In Confucianism, however, values are constitutive of the tradition and are transmitted from one generation to the next, although they ought not be thought of as static. Rather they are qualitatively inflected relational patterns in which meaning is passed down, appropriated, and then made appropriate for the current personal or historical context. In this sense they are also practices, as it is a mistake to make a strong distinction between the two in a Confucian framework; instead, they are conceived of and work in the world as correlates. To illustrate, we can use the example of the relationship between *li* (ritual propriety) and *shi* (efficacy). Personal self-cultivation integrates one's nature, so that the values one subscribes to and one's feelings, actions, and thoughts coincide. As Roger Ames and David Hall note, *li* have normative force because they are generated out of uniquely human, and thereby compelling, situations; they both emerge out of these situations and provide access to them. Furthermore, knowledge of *how* to perform *li* manifests itself in the ability to perform them in a fitting and "site-specific" style. And, gratifyingly, one becomes transformed at the same time into the person who performs *li* in a particularly efficacious manner.

In what follows I will make the claim that *jian* is a Confucian value that has not received sufficient emphasis within the interpretive Western literature. The role of *jian* has been overlooked as it has not fit in well with the ideal of the virtues and, by extension, the virtuous people, when given the proper model, "ordering themselves" [*Analects*, 2.3]. Furthermore, I understand *jian* to play an essential ordering role within the constellation of other Confucian values and the Confucian project as a whole. Giving greater priority to *jian*, as a mechanism for making critical adjustments along the way,

enables imagining how the ostensibly conservative Confucian system might attune and accord with *dao* – the way of things across the full range of scales from the most particular to the most cosmic, a way that Chinese cultures have always viewed as characterized by change. *Dao* is at the same time a way, a path, and a method of pathmaking. It both a what and a how; not just what you are doing, but how you are doing it. It is both to know and to do, an active skill rather than a static principle, and shapes a culture that is both dynamic and relational in nature. One can appreciate the need for a strategy for re-tuning disharmonies in a world in which transformation and re-alignment is continuously foregrounded.

Continuity and Change

In a larger sense, this problem can be put in terms of the search for continuity within a culture where change is what is ontologically most basic. The dilemma manifests in lived reality as contrary imperatives for continuity and creativity and the resultant needs to achieve continuity, both conceptually and experientially, in the context of a world that is conceived of as being constantly in a state of change. In Chinese philosophy, Confucianism, with its emphasis on *li*, and Daoism, with its advocacy of *wuwei*, developed as strategies for making sense of a universe with an ever-changing ontological base. In this context, we can understand how *jian* becomes an especially significant strategy for harmonizing values and practices in times when forces for change and continuity are in complex collision; in the right hands *jian* can at the same time be effectively employed to both critical and creative ends.

This study focuses on such a period of intellectual and political turmoil in China during the early 20th century, a time when Confucianism had arguably hit its moral nadir. When morality becomes doctrinaire, it fails; and during this period Confucianism and the political bureaucracy it had sustained had degenerated into a coercive template that had become hopelessly unproductive in effecting social change. This state of affairs was reflected in the poverty, stagnation and corruption rampant throughout China. Everything that could possibly go wrong, did; cures were worse than the diseases they were intended to treat. In classical Chinese terms, the celestial mandate (*tianming*) had apparently been revoked.

This is also a time when China began seriously to engage with questions and problems arising from extensive contact with the West and military defeats by Japan. Given especially China's powerful past and self-conception as the world center (or centering), there was widespread agreement that, to reverse the tide, considerable political and social change was mandatory. Most agreed that China was mired in a degenerate past, and many began looking to Western concepts as a source of reform. To what degree ought they be appropriated? How was it apt to respond to these new, "modern" ideas and to the unfamiliar, and humiliating, occupations by foreign powers? Indeed, how might the process of change being mandated by the times force changes in how change is itself conceived? In a world conceived as and constituted by the active process of "worlding" (*ziran*), a process of spontaneous arising free of any grounding first principle, what meaning could or should attach to "radical change"? In fact, ought a radical re-ordering even be sought to emerge out of a particularly degenerate world or

situation? Given the Chinese analogy of the chicken and the egg, the question can then be put: what ought to be done with a remarkably rotten egg?

Lu Xun's Confucian Anti-Confucianism

My point of departure in the analysis of *jian* is with the works of Lu Xun, the cultural critic and fiction writer, one of the key figures of the May Fourth or New Culture Movement (approximately 1917-1923), and a potent moral voice in China today. "Rotten egg" is mild in contrast to many of his depictions of China and the Chinese. In 1906, when asked by a friend why he was giving up medicine to become a writer, he replied, "You don't think China's idiots, her wretched idiots, can be cured by medical science?"

It could be argued that the history of Lu Xun is the history of 20th century China; it is the history of a man whose life and whose values, both during his lifetime and after his death, represent and typify China's struggle to transform itself in the face of its own internal degeneration and stagnation, while simultaneously confronting the increasing presence and influence of foreign cultures and powers. Lu Xun was born into a family of tenuous nobility whose station was further threatened by his father's profligacy, opium use, and ill health. As the eldest son, Lu Xun was educated and began to sit for the series of state exams when a combination of factors diverted him from this path: the state bureaucracy that the exam system was designed to support was in turmoil; an uncle was found guilty of corruption (within a corrupt system) and dismissed from government service, bringing shame upon the family and limiting Lu Xun's chances for official success; and, after a long illness, his father died a preventable death. Lu Xun then studied

both marine science and medicine in Japan, read widely and was influenced by Western thinkers, became profoundly disturbed by the apathy of his fellow Chinese to their country's downhill course, and returned to China, determined to participate in reform. He then began a life of teaching, writing, and protest, all to great acclaim. After his death, Mao took advantage of Lu Xun's fame and moral stature, distorted his positions to advance his own political agenda, and by the 1970s the Communist Party was producing posters depicting Lu Xun's image and carrying such slogans as "Take over the brush of polemics, struggle to the end," "Carry forward the revolutionary spirit of Lu Xun," and "Study the revolutionary spirit of Lu Xun; become a pathbreaker in the criticism of Lin Biao and Confucius." Finally, in 1989, his words were inspiration for the protesters at Tiananmen Square and could be found on placards and banners during the demonstrations, demanding accountability from those in power.

Lu Xun had the good fortune to die in 1936 before he could be denounced by Mao, as he surely would have been had he lived to witness the development of Mao's policies; instead Mao was at liberty to later use him for his own devices. Lu Xun's avowed intellectual and literary preferences tended toward the "counter-traditions" in Chinese culture—strains of thought and sensibility in opposition to, or removed from, the orthodox Confucian tradition. These heterodox interests emerged from his research into the traditional literature of Daoism, especially of Zhuang Zi, and folk literatures, and helped to shape both his iconoclastic thinking and his writing style. In "A Madman's Diary," one of his best-known works of fiction, he depicts China as mired in a feudalistic and "cannibalistic" past, writing in the voice of a man who is self-avowedly mad. And

yet in even such an extreme example, in terms of both style and polemic, we are able here, and throughout his oeuvre, to trace important remnants of a formative and, indeed, an inescapable Confucian worldview and methodology. As opposed to those of his contemporaries who proposed specific cures – in the form of systematic political change – Lu Xun's role remained that of the indignant critic, at times verging on despair: remonstrance requires a kind of non-participation, but no withdrawal.

The May Fourth *literati* saw themselves as the rejuvenators of Chinese culture – the key to China's future, in their view – and much of what was taking place in the May Fourth period replicates contemporary aspects of China's process of modernization. I chose to focus on Lu Xun because he is a paradigmatic example of one who remonstrates; his criticism of the culture was at the same time a defense of the culture. He is widely considered one of the predominant anti-Confucian intellectuals of the May Fourth period, and yet, almost uniquely, Lu Xun's vociferous critique of Confucianism can be seen to remain within the Confucian tradition and to avoid the dichotomous thinking—to either turn to the West or back to the Han—of many of his contemporaries. Finally, the voice of Lu Xun, more than any others from that period, still resonates.

In the literature, beginning in 1918 and extending to the present day, he has invariably been labeled as anti-Confucian. Indeed, there is in most representations of Lu Xun's life and intellectual development an assumption about a teleology that moves from a young man grounded in tradition, to evolutionist, to May Fourth iconoclast, to leftist revolutionary. Only recently has scholarship begun to move beyond this teleology. For example, Wang Xiaoming's biography *Wufa zhimian de rensheng: Lu Xun zhuan* (*A life*

that cannot be faced directly: a biography of Lu Xun, 1992) seems to be working to counter the Lu Xun myth; in English, Leo Ou-fan Lee's scholarship (1987) and the new biography by David Pollard (2002) have contributed to debunking the Marxist canonical representation of Lu Xun's development, even as they succumb to different ideologically motivated representations. Why, we must ask ourselves, is it not possible for him to be both critical of Confucianism – what most would label "anti-Confucian" – and, at once, Confucian? Answering this question leads to an investigation of the strategy of *jian* and a consideration of some distinctions between the relationship between criticism and change in the Western and Chinese philosophic traditions.

Criticism and Change

While the earlier claim and project of comparative philosophy – the attempt to determine overarching commonalities between the Western and non-Western traditions – has been debunked, most would agree that an essential part of what we call philosophy in any cultural tradition involves thinking critically about serious issues. In the Western tradition this pursuit has involved questioning assumptions, revealing and interrogating underlying values, clarifying the meaning of key terms, determining relationships between cause and effect, and making important distinctions about important things. The pursuit of Truth "at all costs" has been paramount. This may seem antithetical to the aims of Confucius, who understood social harmony as instrumental in bringing about the cultural unity that is the most distinctive characteristic of Chinese culture. Harmony is valued above most other types of values as it goes hand in hand with social stability,

whose alternative is perceived as chaos and a general burden on social structure. Thus, although values typically associated with Confucianism such as social harmony and deference to authority might be taken to show that critical thinking and Confucian thought are divergent, in the Confucian tradition, too, the very activity of doing philosophy has involved thinking critically, by way of developing a critical attunement and making distinctions on a wide variety of subjects.

However, what can be seen to distinguish the two traditions is their response to impasse and the resultant recognition that change or transformation of some sort is necessary. In the Western philosophic tradition, with the realization that a problem seems to be unsolvable, the tendency is to go back to the essential basis of our assumptions and to question them. The paradigm in which we are working is one in which change is thought of as a from/to process – from A to B. Criticism leads to an understanding of a problem which leads to a return to question basic assumptions which leads to a system changed in its fundamental components and structure. The Chinese tradition, by contrast, is one in which change is not *from* one thing *to* another; rather it is change *by way of* – that is, it is a change from A to A'. *Jian* leads to an appreciation of a divergence from *dao*, which leads to critical re-evaluation and re-articulating the tradition.

"Apparent contradictions always demand attention," writes John Dewey in *The Ethics of Democracy.* By most accounts, Lu Xun is represented as anti-Confucian, but to what degree is this representation borne out? While taking into consideration his own anti-Confucian claims, along with Mao's strategic co-optation of him, I understand Lu Xun to be working within a Confucian methodology – change from (or becoming) A to

A' – and in support of a Confucian tradition open to rearticulation through internal critique. He was madly critical, that cannot be argued. However, early in his journalistic career he claimed, "If we want to preserve our national characteristics, we must first make sure that they can preserve us." [Lu Xun (1918), 30], and this critical attitude – this protest as protestation – can be seen to underlie his anti-Confucian stance and is key to understanding his method of critique. His view of change was one that involved becoming, as distinct from a change from being (one way or thing) to being (another).

Cultures, like humans, often make decisions that later are amended or revoked with new decisions made when conditions have changed. Decisions to prioritize one set of values over another are not etched in stone. Even so the stone can be broken down, or even taken to a museum or placed on a pedestal where it loses its real meaning. Decisions at one time reflect the circumstances normal at that particular time, and to stick to past decisions with no plan of adapting or making new decisions in response to changing circumstances causes a culture to freeze. Opting not to correct their past decisions, a culture would in effect be telling the world that it is constructing a wall around itself, giving nothing to the world and receiving nothing. However, if this strategy is followed for long, sociological and economic conditions generally do not lead to a successful outcome. Cultures need to change themselves, not merely to survive, but to prosper and to permit better lives for their members. The Chinese cultural archetype – that of the critical official, the one in the position to remonstrate the emperor and to advocate change – is as powerful a focus of loyalty as the figure of the oppressive emperor. After all, it is criticism that makes much philosophizing a social endeavor, and usefully so.

John Dewey

This work will reference a number of essays by John Dewey as commentary on Lu Xun's critique, and at this point I will answer a question that readers will be anticipated to raise: why Dewey? Interestingly, although not centrally, Dewey was in China during the two years following the events of May 4, 1919, during which time he spoke widely and wrote prolifically. Although Dewey's influence on China during this period is most commonly considered to be through the ideas of Hu Shi, his former student at Columbia, in fact Hu turns out not to have been the ideal importer of Deweyan democracy. As an alternative to Confucianism, which he initially viewed as bound to monarchy, Hu advocated the importation of the institutions of liberal democracy, his view of liberalism being one in which self-enlightenment, critical reasoning and civil rights were the its key elements. He thought that the most serious problem facing China was a lack of awareness of the rights of the individual, and his conception of democracy, while in many ways aligned with Dewey's, surprisingly diverged on this point. Hu's conception of a strong liberal democracy was one which would act as an objective link for individuals to connect and become a unified whole.

A Deweyan democracy, however, is based on the "communicating community," one in which individuals are conceived of as always/already linked, the purpose of democratic institutions being to promote and maintain those connections and the benefits that accrue thereby. Individuality, for Dewey, is not something that exists prior to community, not merely to be promoted by communal institutions; rather, individuality

emerges from social interactions and "cannot be opposed to association. . . . It is through association that man has acquired his individuality, and it is through association that he exercises it."[4] Deweyan democracy is a "process democracy" and, as discussed in the works of Roger Ames, Sor-Hoon Tan, and others, has strong alliances with Confucianism, and especially with the understanding of the self as a nexus of relationships. "An individual so construed is not a thing, but an event, describable in the language of uniqueness, integrity, social activity, relationality, and qualitative achievement."[5] This statement makes reference to Dewey, but could as easily be applied to the Confucian conception of self. Dewey himself was a public intellectual, a critic of U.S. policies, and in light of the alignment between Deweyan democracy and one possibly emerging from Confucianism, the application of Dewey's work to Lu Xun's critique proves constructive.

It is valuable to draw upon Dewey's own essays, especially those on democracy and the distinction he develops between cultural renovation and cultural innovation, to notice possibilities and directions for understanding and extending contemporary Confucianism. Indeed, most of the essays that I reference are not from the period of his China trip; these are matters that Dewey addresses in works throughout his life, both before and after that visit. However the arguments that he makes in those pieces, his criticism of religion as an institution, his distinction between ideas and ideologies, resonate closely with Lu Xun's criticism of Confucianism. Lu Xun was not a

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[4] Dewey, John, "Lecture Notes: Political Philosophy, 1892," p. 38, *Dewey Papers*.

[5] Hall, David L. and Roger T. Ames, "Confucian Democracy," in *Confucianism for the Modern World*, Daniel Bell and Hahm Chaibong, eds., Cambridge University Press, 2003, p141.

philosopher; he was an artist and a social critic. However, had he read these pieces of Dewey's, he would recognize this as his project, although Dewey, the philosopher, pursues his work in more analytical depth. Dewey, in a number of his essays, addresses the process of rearticulating an institution (religion, democracy) at the level of "idea" and the terminology he develops to voice this practice becomes effective as a framework in exploring Lu Xun's criticism of Confucianism.

The May Fourth Period was a time of unprecedented change, taking place within a political and moral vacuum; and yet for all the incessant virulence of Lu Xun's critique, there is a sense of caution about remonstrance that reflects a distinctly Chinese problematic: When things are going awry, what actions do we take (or not take) to bring them back into harmony? This focus on harmonizing is in contrast to a Western tendency to criticize or challenge the very foundations of a system and to rely on overarching principles to determine the outcome. *Jian* may not involve foundational criticism in the Western sense, but its functional role leads us to ask the question: When faced with a defective system, do we need to challenge the foundations of that system, or, within a Chinese framework, might remonstrance be a more apt or more effective alternative technique? Must we think in terms of problems to be solved; or is it possible, instead, to imagine not a problem, but a predicament, a situation that is open to having some particularities of its contours adjusted? This latter is a more Deweyan approach to the situation.

Ideology separates the heart from the mind. An ideology is felt as a transcendent imperative for conduct; we feel we must follow its dictates because the dictates come

from somewhere outside of ourselves. The belief of many of the May Fourth intellectuals was that the cure for China's condition was to go in search of "more mind" – "Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy," as the May Fourth intellectuals referred to them. In the same spirit that Dewey would argue that the cure for what troubles democracy will be "more democracy," Lu Xun, as distinct from those who surrounded him during the May Fourth period, argued that the cure for the ills of Confucianism is more *cheng*, more integrity or creativity. *Analects*, 12.22 states: "Fan Chi inquired about authoritative conduct (*ren*), and the Master said, "Love others." In Lu Xun what we will see is criticism that does not question the basic assumptions of Confucianism, but is used as a corrective in service of *dao* so as to "enable the public to form and manifest its purposes still more authoritatively."[6]

Confucian methodology

As a point of clarification: I am not using the term "Confucian methodology" in a Western philosophical sense. Here it will not have the meaning of a fixed set of rules or postulates, those generally agreed upon and employed by a certain discipline or within a certain domain. As an example, a philosophical methodology is generally understood to involve a systematic way of answering philosophical questions. Generally, this method would include generating doubt, formulating a question or problem, enunciating and justifying ones arguments for a solution, and offering these solutions for criticism or

[6] "We have every reason to think that whatever changes may take place in existing democratic machinery, they will be of a sort to make the interest of the public a more supreme guide and criterion of governmental activity, and to enable the public to form and manifest its purposes still more authoritatively. In this sense the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy." Dewey (1927): 294

discussion. In a Confucian context, however, "methodology" implies a set of procedures that, taken as a whole, gives one tools for self-cultivation with which to enact appropriate or skillful ways of being in the world. The justification of the solution would not take the form of reasoned argument, but could be witnessed by the degree to which harmony might be judged to prevail.

Traditional Confucianism had simply taken the whole person as the object of self-cultivation; in a certain sense, the human being and his or her development and performance within the social nexus can be seen as the "problem." Initially, Confucianism approached the solution to this problem through a relatively straightforward methodology that stressed forming a good character through self-discipline and the inculcation of good habits, with the disciplined observance of the rules of propriety serving as a major means to this end. When the neo-Confucian movement finally revitalized the Confucian tradition after centuries of Buddhist predominance, and building on the influence of Mencius, it was characterized by the incorporation of heart-and-mind (*xin*) as the central object of self-cultivation, with a developed awareness of interiority. As we shall see in what follows, an emphasis on transformation on the interior plane is reflected in Lu Xun's call for a fundamental change of the "Chinese character." That his methodology remains Confucian will be analyzed within the context of specifically Confucian values.

My aim is to trace not the history, but the genealogy of *jian* within the Confucian tradition. I begin with the assumption that *jian* has been and remains an essential part of Confucian methodology, but one which has been disregarded within an understanding of

Confucian values as constituting a self-harmonizing and self-correcting constellation, an understanding that has failed to place sufficient emphasis on the role played by remonstrance and one which, at the same time, undervalues the creativity inherent within the tradition. I am guided here by the Foucauldian concept of genealogical investigations as assisting in the "the insurrection of subjugated knowledges" against regimes of thought or institutionalized knowledge. A genealogical project is one that entertains "the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge."[7] Importantly, genealogy does not make the claim to be more true than institutionalized knowledge, but does attempt to supply the missing parts of the puzzle.

Through an analysis of the manner in which Lu Xun used the technique of remonstrance during the May Fourth period, as well as some examples in the classical tradition, we will be able to examine some specific instances of values and practices in play, one against the other. When there is a disjunct between the two, when value and practice reach a point where they are not in correlative relationship, *jian* plays a key role. Remonstrance acts not as a solution (or *the* solution) to a problem or a problematic state of affairs, but as a *solvent*, a clearing away of disharmonizing accretions that have

[7] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures: Lecture 1, 7 January, 1976," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1980, p83. Here Foucault gives a fairly straightforward definition of genealogy. "Let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today."

accumulated, perhaps unforeseen, over time. Remonstrance is a practice specifically geared to the constant refinement of the Confucian tradition.

History as hermeneutics

A final question arises for some readers: Why choose Lu Xun? He was not a direct exponent of the meaning of remonstrance or of a re-articulated Confucianism. Neither do we find in his work an explicit account of his method nor a developed theory of the function of *jian* in the Confucian tradition. There are, however, two things at play that explain my choice of this particular person and this particular time period and that support the strongly historical nature of this project. The first has to do with the nature of knowledge in Confucianism and relies on a distinction that Roger Ames draws between "knowing that" and "knowing how;" between ostensive or paranomastic meaning (knowing *how*) as opposed to meaning with reference to definition or objective denotation. In the former context, meaning is a function of the concrete relatedness of words in use; terms are not defined, but are understood through qualifying them in relation to other terms. Similarly, knowledge – with respect to knowing how to act in the world – is not, in a Chinese context, "knowing that," but knowing what to do in a certain situation. An understanding of remonstrance in this framework is realized through a contextualized and particularized project, one in which we can explore the ways in which remonstrance functions – both deriving meaning from and giving meaning to – in relation to other Confucian values and within particular contexts. If the Chinese tradition is

understood in relational terms, then it seems suitable to work within the norms of that tradition.

An additional consideration relates to the Chinese way of doing history. Meaning in Chinese history – the meaning of a particular period or event – is not understood with respect to some grand design or objective goal, but events have meaning in terms of their relation to other events. Dynastic histories were regularly revised at the beginning of each new dynasty because it was understood that a new meaning would emerge, given the changed circumstances. One is struck by the irreducible particularity of Chinese historiography, a method of doing history that is akin to Walter Benjamin's efforts, for example, to read all of 19th century modernism out of the phenomenon of Parisian arcades.[8] Hence, given this understanding of history, we need not worry about finding *the* key event or series of events from which to arrive at a definition, or definitive meaning, of remonstrance; we can read meaning out any number of possible situations, events, or lives. For this project, it is Lu Xun's life and his writing that provides access to the phenomenon of modernity in China and to a period of crisis highlighted by criticism and change. Although in a relational world Lu Xun is in a sense an arbitrary choice.

However, as luck would have it, there are many explicit reasons for choosing Lu Xun as a focus, reasons that make this choice not an arbitrary one at all. Not the least of these is the continued force of his example within Chinese culture. There are certain people or events that are so highly charged that it makes them powerful sources for

[8] Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (trans.), Belknap Press, London, 1999.

understanding and, as with important works of arts, whose meaning and resonances grow over time. The reasons all finally have to do with significant possibilities for connectivity and for discovering meaning through Lu Xun – both the man and his work – as a particular nexus of Chinese encounters with the challenges of change.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1

Lu Xun was a paradigmatic figure in the May Fourth period and one through whom we might explore some key Confucian concepts, specifically the technique of *jian* as a strategy to break out of the loop of an apparent power nexus closing off possibilities for individual self-cultivation, self-transformation and social change. In contrast to an understanding of Confucianism in the Western literature as a static and closed system engendering inertia, I view the tradition as containing within itself its own sources for creativity and revitalization. I hope to further an understanding of the vitality of the tradition by identifying one important element crucial to this process, the apparatus of critique. In both his writing and his life, Lu Xun instantiated the value of *jian* and the ideal of the sage as explicitly political, in the Confucian understanding of that term. This investigation might also prove useful in trying to open up more of a space for protest in the context of contemporary China.

Chapter 2

In response to the claim that Lu Xun is anti-Confucian, we must ask ourselves, "What do we mean by Confucianism?" In a recent (2003) collection of essays, *Confucianism for the Modern World*, Daniel Bell & Hahm Chaibong look at ways in which particular practices and institutions relate to the Confucian tradition. In their introduction they write:

> Rather than point to vague principles said to influence the "habits of the heart" of East Asians, our contributors tended to focus on particular practices and institutions still relevant and defensible today. In other words, they focus on concrete phenomena in East Asia, ideally tracing their historical evolution from their Confucian origins to the present day. It is certainly possible that contemporary East Asians have lost sight of that history, in which case it may not be implausible to argue that Confucianism can operate "behind the backs" of the people involved.[9]

In this chapter, I follow Bell and Hahm's injunction and engage in a fairly detailed history of remonstrance within the Confucian tradition. I am trying to trace not the history, but the genealogy of *jian* within the Confucian tradition. I begin with the assumption that *jian* has been and remains an essential part of Confucian methodology, and I aim to show the degree to which it is both well-entrenched and open to change. As well, I explore examples of remonstrance in action within the tradition, and discuss its limitations. Finally, it is important to understand *jian* in the context of other Confucian values and I integrate them all under the rubric of *dao*.

Chapter 3

This chapter will explore the dimensions of Lu Xun's critique during the May Fourth period, in particular contrast with those of Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi. Dewey's essays "Religion versus the Religious" and "In Search of the Great Community" will be applied to Lu Xun's critique. China's tradition of cultural conservatism will be assessed in the context of its sudden, rapid, heady and awkward transition to modernity during the early decades of the 20th century.

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[9] Bell and Hahm (2003): 27

Chapter 4

Most of what has been written about the Dewey/China connection concerns his influence on the Chinese struggle to modernize. In this chapter, I try to understand this period of change and renewal as much as possible from the position of the Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth period. Protest led to change, and change at this time led to a turn to the West. But in what mode were Western theoretical models imported into China? What happened to them, what did they look like, how were they (mis)understood? And in what ways did they then function within a Chinese context?

Lu Xun wildly distorted what he "took" from the West for his cultural renovation project, but I would also claim that his "grabbism" (*nalai zhuyi*) was ultimately more suitable for China and for the project of rearticulation than, for example, the Communism that Chen Duxiu advocated or Hu Shi's liberal democracy. These latter two political systems were proposed as solutions to the current crisis and ways for propelling China into the modern world. Lu Xun saw the crisis as being not only on the political level, but a crisis of "Chinese character" and proposed not a solution, but employed *jian* as a solvent to break through disabling accretions to both the Chinese character and the Confucian system.

Chapter 5

Like many of his generation, Lu Xun had been influenced by Social Darwinist ideas. It is impossible to exaggerate how profoundly the *scientific* credentials of Social

Darwinism and evolutionism affected Asian elites who had gained ample evidence of Western technical prowess in the process of Western expansion. It was within a Social Darwinist framework that much of the "national characteristics" critique took place. However, as distinct from his intellectual contemporaries, Lu Xun's critique did not start from the assumption that Chinese civilization was *inferior* to the modern civilization of the West; rather his analysis was that the Chinese culture, once vital, was "diseased." The cure, however, ought not and could not come from foreign medicine. To illustrate the distinctiveness of Lu Xun's critique and his proposed cure, in this chapter I will pay particular attention to his appropriation of Nietzsche and the Nietzschean concept of the *Übermensch*.

Chapter 6

In this chapter I will place both Lu Xun and the concept of *jian* within the context of the spirit of May Fourth anti-Confucianism in order to explore more deeply the uniquely Chinese approach to change "by way of." I will define the contours of Lu Xun's anti-Confucianism through a close a reading of a selection of Lu Xun's short *zawen*: "My Views on Chastity" (1918), "Confucius in Modern China" (1935), and two essays on the destruction of the Leifeng Pagoda (1924-25). This reading will follow the model used by François Jullien in his published doctoral dissertation, *Lu Xun: Écriture et révolution* (*Lu Xun: Writing and revolution*). Jullien's work was undertaken in part to counter the then-prevailing Maoist interpretation of Lu Xun. He believed Lu Xun's writing strong enough to resist Maoist co-optation and aimed to look at the text without any fixed ideology and

to find therein the true, or a more true, Lu Xun. "S'il est un *vrai* <<Lu Xun>>, c'est celui de son écriture, et c'est à travers l'étude de celle-ci que nous le percevrons. Ou encore, la seule *identité concrète* est celle de cette écriture elle-même."[10]

My approach and aim are similar. It is possible to recognize in Lu Xun's *zawen* both the process of *jian* at work and of Lu Xun as remonstrator, engaged in the issues of his day and as a particular nexus of Chinese encounters with the challenges of change. A close reading of these pieces will manifest the irreducible particularity of Chinese historiography – the manner in which meaning in a particular historical moment emerges in relation to and out of other, earlier, moments. Estrangement from hope and a struggle against the isolation of despair pervade these essays that became Lu Xun's weapon. Under his hand, the personal and parochial experiences of a life spent among the ruins of China's traditional society are transformed into statements of shared human meaning and importance.

Chapter 7

One thing that occurs to any reader surveying the New Culture phenomenon is the solipsistic arrogance of many Chinese intellectuals – "the concern of the educated elites ... that China's success or failure is ultimately about them," as Rana Mitter writes. The cure for this particular disease turned out to be Mao, who relegated intellectuals to the "stinking ninth" category of social usefulness. Can we justly exempt Lu Xun from the

[10] "If there is a *true* 'Lu Xun', it's the one in his writing, and it's through the study of that writing that we will find him. Rather, the only *concrete identity* is that found in the writing itself." Jullien, François, *Lu Xun: Écriture et révolution*, Presses de l'École Normale Supérieure, Paris, 1979, p12.

charge of solipsistic arrogance? In fact, as we shall see, immediately after his death in 1936, Lu Xun was championed by Mao and used for his own purposes. Chapter Six assesses the degree to which Lu Xun and *jian*, despite this co-optation and the resultant decades of misinterpretations, might play a role in a contemporary rearticulated Confucianism and suggests that Dewey's idea of the communicative community might be a framework within which to appreciate the value of *jian* in 21st-century China.

Précis

Chapter 1

Introduction and chapter overviews

Chapter 2

Establish proposition (1):

Remonstrance as a form of protest is integral to Confucianism

Chapter 3

Set up the framework for establishing proposition (2):

Lu Xun's protest remains within the Confucian tradition

Chapters 4 and 5

Substantiate proposition (2)

Chapter 6

Weave (1) and (2) together through close readings of four Lu Xun *zawen*

Chapter 7

Conclusion

CHAPTER 2

THE GENEALOGY OF REMONSTRANCE (*JIAN*) IN CONFUCIAN CHINA

Introduction

A discussion of the history and role of remonstrance in China runs the risk of becoming an excessively complex one, complicated in part by its very success as an institution in the evolving bureaucracy of the dynasties. Unlike in Japan where those in the Imperial court bureaucracy held positions that were little more than status markers, the Chinese bureaucracy actually functioned as a government. As a result, throughout its long history it continued to evolve and respond to political circumstance. Posts were created (and occasionally eliminated) as deemed necessary; as well, bureaus and posts were renamed and responsibilities shifted among them. This leads to difficulties when trying to chart a simple history.[11] Yet, as we shall see, throughout the history of Imperial China, the positions of official critic (remonstrator) and censor were ones that endured without rupture in the Confucian bureaucracy until the end of the Qing Dynasty (1911). And not only did this office and these roles persist, but from Qin times on (2nd century BCE) the organization of the central government, although it grew and changed, fell into an established pattern that emphasized and depended upon the censorial functions. In fact, the top stratum of government, directly under the Emperor, was always tripartite: a supreme military establishment, a supreme general-administration establishment, and

[11] See Hucker (1985) for a minutely detailed dictionary of official titles in Imperial China.

what has been translated into English as the Censorate (*yushitai*), officials whose numbers varied but who for the most part had unmediated access to the emperor.[12]

The theoretically absolute power of the emperor has in practice been subject to highly effective constraints. Although for over 22 centuries the Chinese emperor was reverently considered the Son of Heaven, he was compelled not only to uphold the institutions established by the founder of the dynasty, but also, ideally, to observe the customs, felt as commands, of his long list of ancestors. These traditions are what would evolve into the Confucian li, and were those established by the sages of antiquity, who were wise enough and virtuous enough to comprehend the requirements of heaven. He would have been instructed in this tradition from earliest childhood by teachers specially appointed to educate future rulers. As well, he would have internalized the understanding as to how his actions would be noted and evaluated by historians, as the writing of history was a long-established state institution. And in addition to these powerful, but relatively amorphous controls, there were explicit institutions that were established to meet the same ends. There was the system of remonstrance (*taijian*), by which officials were charged with the solemn duty of closely observing the Emperor's behavior and decisions and advising him of his faults. As well, there was the Censorate (*yushitai*) that performed similar duties with regard to officials.[13]

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[12] Hucker (1966): 11-12.

[13] There was also a long tradition of literary criticism in China. Both by necessity and intention more subversive than the state-sanctioned criticism of censors and remonstrators, this literature could have a strong affect on public opinion, something of great concern to the government. See especially Francois Jullien's *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*, Chapter III, "Under the Cover of the Image: Insinuated Criticism."

In this chapter, I will trace the history of the Censorate in the government of Imperial China and the history of the Remonstrance Bureau within the Censorate, exploring some of the defining characteristics of remonstrators in order to clarify what purpose they served. That is, given their elevated status[14] within the bureaucracy, what role can we say they played within the Confucian tradition? I will also take note of some of the divergent views on the power and role of the Censorate with regard to Imperial power. What were they critiquing, to what end, and with what effect? My goal will be to try to clarify what is the "Confucianism" that Lu Xun, a 20th century remonstrator, is protesting so determinedly against and to begin to understand the vacuum that was created within the Confucian state when the Censorate no longer functioned. In order to do so, I begin by discussing some distinctly Confucian aspects to the act of remonstrance. How does it integrate with Confucian practice/process?

Alteration as Preservation

Remonstrance involves a number of important philosophical terms central to the Confucian tradition. Those discussed here are ones especially relevant to and intimately concerned with an understanding of the crucial role that remonstrance plays in upholding that tradition: specifically, *dao*, *yi*, *de*, *li*, and *xiao*. None of these "organic" or correlative concepts, as we shall see, can easily be spoken of without reference to the others.

[14] To illustrate, in the Qing dynasty the mandarin squares that Censors wore on their robes depicted the *Hsieh-Chai*, a mythical animal able to distinguish between right and wrong.

What are we doing when we engage in remonstrance? When we use this term (if we ever do), what we mean is a kind of admonition. We might be reminding someone of her duties or obligations or, with more of a caveat in mind, expressing a warning or disapproval. In a more stern tone, to remonstrate would carry the weight of a reproof or a censure, even. Oftentimes, too, remonstrance has a formal quality to it; one thinks of a letter addressed to an official, to someone in government. Most often, the word implies a formal protest (a letter to a sovereign from a subject, for example) or a serious investigation at play. For instance, Benjamin Jowett uses this term in the Introduction to his translation of Plato's *Crito* when he observes:

> Socrates proceeds: 'Suppose the Laws of Athens to come and remonstrate with him: they will ask 'Why does he seek to overturn them?' and if he replies, 'They have injured him,' will not the Laws answer, 'Yes, but was that the agreement? Has he any objection to make to them which would justify him in overturning them? Was he not brought into the world and educated by their help, and are they not his parents?'. . .Thus he has clearly shown that he acknowledged the agreement, which he cannot now break without dishonour to himself and danger to his friends. . . . In any well-ordered state the Laws will consider him as an enemy.

Here it is the Laws themselves which are in the position of remonstrator to Socrates and the discussion takes the form of an (imagined) argument, with the Laws giving a series of reasons in opposition to the possibility of Socrates' escape. The Laws, in this case, carry the weight of the final word on the subject and the outcome is discussed in terms of a series of either/or possibilities, the final arbiter being the principle of law underlying the Athenian state, a principle that Socrates has agreed to uphold and with regard to which there seems to be no compromise.

When we put the term in a Confucian context the best way in which to think about *jian* is as a correction, as when one adjusts the tiller after checking the compass. The goal is to get back on the path, the *dao*.

> A sustained image that the Chinese text presents is Confucius finding his way. That is, in reading the *Analects* in the original language, a term such as *guo* that is often nominalized as "faults," or if its verbal aspect is acknowledged, translated as "to err," has the specific sense of "going astray" or "going too far": not just erring, but straying from the path.[15]

When erring in this way, what we most require, if our internal compass is not fully functioning, is someone who understands that it is her responsibility to guide us back. Yet it is important to note that, as in other contexts, *dao* here is not meant to convey the sense of a one, single, correct path. It is not the idea of "staying on the straight and narrow." One's energies are not directed at discerning precise footsteps to follow. Rather it ought to be thought of as a process of adjusting to the terrain, and of thereby building up a road, or, more aptly, participating in shaping it. This road will not be THE right road, but it will be the right road, nonetheless.

The goal of correction is to be brought back into balance, into harmony, and one gets here the sense of optimism in the flexibility of a person, an openness to change, that is fundamental to the Confucian project. Interestingly, we see a similar optimism in a short piece written by Lu Xun in 1919, "Random Thoughts (66) – The Road of Life"[16]

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[15] Ames and Rosemont (1998): 46.

[16] Given the '66' in the title, we may surmise that this selection was written after the May Fourth demonstration.

that indicates both his hope for the future (which will soon be tempered) and a way of speaking of that road into that future that is distinctively Confucian.

> The road of life is progressive, ever ascending the infinite hypotenuse of a spiritual triangle, and nothing can obstruct it.
>
> Nature has endowed men with a good many incompatibilities, and a good many men become atrophied, degenerate or backslide themselves, yet life never retrogresses because of this. No matter what darkness may dam the stream of thought, what misfortunes may assail society, what crimes may violate morality, mankind's aspirations for perfection will always advance trampling over these iron spikes....
>
> What is a road? It comes of trampling places where no road was before, or opening up wasteland where only brambles grew.[17]

Now if bringing us back into balance is the goal, how is this harmony to be accomplished? In the Confucian understanding, harmony is brought about by appropriate actions, with special attention paid not just to which specific actions one chooses to perform, but more to what *kind* of actions and to how one performs them. *Yi*, or appropriate actions performed appropriately, carries with it the sense of doing one's duty, but especially in a way that would fit together with other actions and the actions (and needs) of others. It is a kind of social "sixth sense" that transmutes those actions into meaningful ones, given especially an attentiveness to the communal context in which they are performed.

How is harmony made manifest? The measure is those individuals who have most realized their *de*. Examples in history include King Yao and King Shun (see below) and, of course, Confucius. These are individuals who more often than not we can say were

[17] Lu Xun (1980), 54. This selection also provides us with an example of Lu Xun on the receiving end of a remonstrance. He ends his article with this exchange: "L– rejoined disapprovingly, 'You are talking like Nature, not like a man. You ought to be more careful.' I think he was correct too."

"broadening the way."[18] They are the ones against whom others gauge themselves, the models within the community whose characters "command" deference. The way they are broadening, *dao,* is the character of the culture accumulated over time that is realized ("made real") in the world by the efforts of such persons of *de* who act as mediums for its manifestation. As Confucius concludes, it is a human being actively engaged in the world who makes the way great; hence, it is the duty of the leader to develop and preserve the way.

Finally, the opportunity through which one might demonstrate harmony and the guide to its expression is *li*. These are the observations of rites, the observance of which allows us all to have meaningful contact with one another; they ought also be seen as providing us the opportunity to develop or to deepen relationships. We shake hands, we acknowledge successes, we go to funerals, we make special dinners, we open doors.

> Master You said: "Achieving harmony (*he*) is the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety (*li*). In the ways of the Former Kings, this achievement of harmony made them elegant, and was a guiding standard in all things large and small. But when things are not going well, to realize harmony just for its own sake without regulating the situation through observing ritual propriety will not work.[19]

We perform these acts not in a rote manner and not with the aim of maintaining order or control over others. Rather, we invest these responsibilities with meaning that is both their due (as ritual acts) and the expression of our investment in the relationship. We act as daughters, friends, teachers, neighbors, citizens; learning to rightfully perform *li* is part

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[18] "The Master said, 'It is the person who is able to broaden the way (*dao*), not the way that broadens the person." Confucius, *Analects*, 15.29.

[19] *Analects*, 1.12.

of what both develops one as a person and contributes to the flourishing of the community of persons one inhabits.

All of these terms are to be placed within the context, not simply of harmony, but of harmonious relationships; for the harmony that one is aiming toward is not an abstract Pythagorean perfect pitch, not the application of laws of cosmic harmony, but a Whitmanesque mélange where self and other are in vital dynamic relationship, one to the other, and where human perceptions overlap and form a web of experience:

> And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
> And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
> And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.[20]

Whitman here expresses an imagined sense of connection to those in a world extending beyond one he has physically encountered, and yet his harmony, too, differs from the Confucian in this important sense: a Confucian experience would have as its goal the *actualization* of such a harmony, a process beginning close at hand, at home, and extending out into the world, and finally the cosmos. This harmony is actualized through the appropriateness of one's daily interactions. It is not "just for its own sake," but to "regulate the situation," a situation that is at base relational.

It must be stressed, finally, that the primary characteristic of relationships in the Confucian universe is filiality. It is family that is the primary model of order and *xiao*, filial relationships (parent/child, teacher/student, sovereign/subject), are the basis of all

[20] Whitman (2002): 15.

order. "That's what it's all about," is what Confucius is saying in the following passage from *The Classic of Filial Deference*:

> The Master said, "Do you understand how the former Kings were able to use their consummate character (*de*) and their visionary way (*dao*) to bring real order to the world, how the people were able to use it to become harmonious (*he*) and to live in accord with each other so that superior and subordinate alike did not resent each other?"
>
> Zengzi arose from his mat to respond, and said, "I am not clever enough to understand such things."
>
> "It is familial deference (*xiao*)," said the Master, "that is the root of character (*de*), and whence education (*jiao*) itself is born."[21]

Xiao is what ties all the other values together, like a river that runs through them, always demanding, always adjusting. It is how the goal of harmonious relationships, from family to cosmos, is achieved and it is what is required of us, implicitly, in all our interactions.

> Someone asked Confucius, "Why are you not employed in governing?"
> The Master replied, "The Book of Documents says:
>
> It is all in filial conduct (*xiao*)! Just being filial to your parents and befriending your brothers is carrying out the work of government.
>
> In doing this I am employed in governing. Why must I be 'employed in governing'?"[22]

That is, everything that one does, or ought to be doing, is in the context of, with regard to, and under the rubric of familial deference.

However, if *xiao* is the root of *ren* (authoritative conduct) (see *Analects*, 1.2),[23] then in what sense or to what degree can we fit *jian* into this equation? It would seem that

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[21] Ames and Rosemont (manuscript): 1.

[22] *Analects*, 2.21.

if duty and obedience were the primary values at work, and if the relationships in question were always hierarchical, then any suggestion of wrongdoing by an inferior to a superior would be acutely inappropriate. Not surprisingly, there is more complexity to this concept, as *xiao* is not simply straightforward obedience or the fulfillment of one's duty, as might be implied from these guidelines. A clear example is that of the Confucian parent-child relationship, which is one not based on a specific age association, but is, rather, a generational one. Parents must care for children; but then, later, children are above all bound to care for elderly parents.

We can distinguish three main aspects of *xiao*: care, obedience and moral vigilance.[24] Many of the references to *xiao* in the *Analects* refer to the first of these aspects: respectful care, especially of one's parents.

> The Master said, "When your father and mother are alive, do not journey far, and when you do travel, be sure to have a specific destination."[25]
>
> The Master said, "Children must know the age of their father and mother. On one had, it is a source of joy; on the other, of trepidation."[26]

And, in addition, this care must be carried out with the appropriate attitude.

> Ziyou asked about filial conduct (*xiao*). The Master replied: "Those today who are filial are considered so because they are able to provide for their

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[23] Master You said: "It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of filial and fraternal responsibility (*xiaodi*) to have a taste for defying authority. And it is unheard of for those who have no taste for defying authority to be keen on initiating rebellion. Exemplary persons (*junzi*) concentrate their efforts on the root, for the root having taken hold, the way (*dao*) will grow therefrom. As for filial and fraternal responsibility, it is, I suspect, the root of authoritative conduct (*ren*)."

[24] Roetz (1993): 53.

[25] *Analects*, 4.19.

[26] *Analects*, 4.21.

> parents. But even dogs and horses are given that much care. If you do not respect your parents, what is the difference?"[27]
>
> Zixia asked about filial conduct (*xiao*). The Master replied: "It all lies in showing the proper countenance. As for the young contributing their energies when there is work to be done, and deferring to their elders when there is wine and food to be had – how can merely doing this be considered filial?"[28]

Filial care, in other words, emerges from a feeling of responsibility and appreciation for what one's parents have done for one and is based on a sense of reciprocity that runs through all manifestations of *xiao*.

Xiao also has an aspect of obedience, a habit that can be easily shifted from parent to ruler. Here one is fulfilling one's duty, but the feeling of care is mostly absent and the more dominant focus is, appropriately enough, on stability of rule and effective submissiveness to power.

> The Master said, "It is because exemplary persons (*junzi*) serve their parents with familial deference that this feeling can be extended to their sovereign as loyalty (*zhong*), because they serve their elder brothers with deference (*ti*) that this feeling can be extended to their elders as compliance, and because they maintain an organized homelife that this sense of organization can be extended as proper order to the governmental offices. Thus when one is successful in what one does at home a name is established that will be passed on to posterity."[29]

And Mencius, too, notes this tendency.

> Mencius said, "There is a common expression. 'The Empire, the state, the family.' The Empire has its basis in the state, the state in the family, and the family in one's own self."[30]

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[27] *Analects*, 2.7.

[28] *Analects*, 2.8

[29] *The Classic of Familial Deference*, 14.

[30] *Mencius*, Book IV, Part A, 5.

It is on this aspect of *xiao* that many critics rightly focus their concerns; and, as we shall later see, many of the May Fourth reformers will denounce the kinship system as the ideological basis for despotism.

The third dimension of *xiao* can be seen to be a corrective to the possibility of such blind obedience. This is the aspect that Roetz calls "moral vigilance," and it takes the form of remonstrance (*jian*). While certainly one always must maintain proper respect, Confucius is unequivocal as to the additional duty to remonstrate with even one's parents:

> The Master said, "In serving your father and mother, remonstrate with them gently. On seeing that they do not heed your suggestions, remain respectful and do not act contrary. Although concerned, voice no resentment.[31]

And he was even more forceful (agitated, one might say) in *The Classic of Familial Deference*, when questioned as to whether a child should opt for narrow obedience:

> Zengzi said, "Parental love (*ai*), reverence and respect (*jing*), seeing to the well-being of one's parents, and making a name for oneself for posterity – on these topics I have received your instructions. I would presume to ask whether children can be deemed filial simply by obeying every command of their father."
>
> "What on earth are you saying? What on earth are you saying?" said the Master. "Of old the emperor had seven ministers who would remonstrate with him, and although he had no vision of the proper way (*dao*), he still did not lose the empire. The high nobles had five ministers who would remonstrate with them, and although they had no vision of the proper way (*dao*), they still did not lose their states. The high officials had three ministers who would remonstrate with them, and although they had no vision of the proper way (*dao*), they still did not lose their families. The scholar-officials just had a friend who would remonstrate with them, and they were still able to preserve their good names.

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[31] *Analects*, 4.18.

> If a father has a child who will remonstrate with him, he will not sink into immorality (*buyi*). Thus, in confronting immorality, a child has no choice but to remonstrate with a father, and a minister has no choice but to remonstrate with a sovereign. Hence, remonstrance is the only response to immorality. How could simply obeying every command of one's father be deemed filial?"[32]

Here we can see that filiality is more than just "honoring thy father and mother" and certainly it goes far beyond mere obedience. From the above example it is clear that even though neither the emperor, nor the high nobles, nor the high officials, nor the scholar-officials were adept at ruling, yet because they had ministers or friends who would correct them, then the kingdom was effectively ruled.

The classic example of appropriate filial piety, encompassing all three of the above aspects of *xiao,* can be found in the story of King Shun.[33] Parents can be far from ideal, and one might justifiably ask oneself what options are open to a son who remonstrated with his father, yet whose father continued to behave badly. Here one is given guidance, by Shun's example, on how to proceed.

In section 1, we come upon Shun toiling in the fields, but "weeping and wailing" at the same time. He was "caring for" his family by performing the required work, but felt, nonetheless, dissatisfied and distressed.

> Now Kung-ming Kao did not think that a son could be so complacent as to say, all that is required of me is that I do my best in tilling the fields and

[32] *The Classic of Familial Deference*, 15.

[33] The details of this story come from *Mencius*, Book V, Part A, 1-7.

> discharge the duties of a son, and if my parents do not love me, what is that to me?[34]

And yet, his mistreatment *did* bother him, although we are told it did not prevent him from acting the good son. The Emperor, clearly impressed, sent Shun two of his daughters to take as wives and a number of sons and officials to help him with his workload; still he was unhappy. What he sought was a harmonious relationship with his family.

> Most of the Gentlemen of the Empire placed themselves under him, and the Emperor was about to hand the Empire over to him. But because he was unable to please his parents, Shun was like a man in extreme straits with no home to go back to. Every man want to be liked by the Gentlemen of the Empire, yet this was not sufficient to deliver him from anxiety; beautiful women are also something every man desires, yet the bestowal of the Emperor's two daughters on Shun as wives was not sufficient to deliver him from anxiety; wealth is something every man wants, yet wealth of possessing the whole Empire was not sufficient to deliver him from anxiety; rank is something every man wants, yet the supreme rank of Emperor was not sufficient to deliver him from anxiety. None of these things was sufficient to deliver him from anxiety which the pleasure of his parents alone could relieve.[35]

At this point, we learn the extremes to which in the past his family had gone to harass him:

> Shun's parents sent him to repair the barn. Then they removed the ladder and the Blind Man set fire to the barn. They sent Shun to dredge the well, set out after him and blocked up the well over him.[36]

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[34] *Mencius*, Book V, Part A, 1.

[35] *Mencius*, Book V, Part A, 1

[36] *Mencius*, Book V, Part A, 2.

Thinking they had been successful in killing him, the family began to divide the spoils. However when his younger brother arrived at Shun's house, he found Shun, who had managed to escape these various assassination attempts, sitting on the bed. Shun did not let on that he was aware of the plots against him. Instead he merely said, "You can help me in the task of government" and sent his brother away to govern a remote part of his kingdom; in reality, the brother was powerless there.

> "A benevolent man never harbours anger or nurses a grudge against a brother. All he does is to love him. Because he loves him, he wishes him to enjoy rank; because he loves him, he wishes him to enjoy wealth. To enfeoff him in Yu Pi was to let him enjoy wealth and rank. If as Emperor he were to allow his brother to be a nobody, could that be described as loving him?"
>
> "May I ask what you meant by saying that some called this banishment?"
>
> "Hsiang [the brother] was not allowed to take an active part in the government of his fief. The Emperor appointed officials to administer the fief and to collect tributes and taxes. For this reason it was described as banishment. Hsiang was certainly not permitted to ill-use the people. Shun frequently wanted to see him and so there was an endless flow of tributes streaming in."[37]

Shun had given him the trappings of power, but was wise enough to entrust the rule to others and in this way was able both to protect himself and to continue to fulfill his filial obligations.[38]

Beyond the familial realm, the place (and need) for remonstrance in the subject/sovereign relationship was acknowledged in the *Analects* as well:

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[37] *Mencius*, Book V, Part A, 3.

[38] For further insight into the relationship between Shun and his father, see "Selfhood and Otherness: The Father-Son Relationship in Confucian Thought," in Tu Weiming's *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (SUNY Press, 1985). Here Tu argues that, although the father-son tie is central in Confucian teaching, this relationship does not have the resonance or explanatory power of religious symbolism that is later reflected in Freud's Oedipal conceptions.

> The Master said, "Can you really love the people without urging them on? Can you do your utmost (*zhong*) for your lord without instructing him?"[39]
>
> Zilu asked how to serve one's lord properly. The Master replied, "Let there be no duplicity when taking a stand against him."[40]

A desire to undermine the rule or to gain power for oneself is not meant to be the purpose that criticism is to serve, to be sure. Rather the aim of remonstrance is to make rulership the means to a still higher goal: that of harmony in the kingdom and evidence of the Emperor as the authoritative instantiation of such a harmony.

A more problematic state of affairs would be one in which the Emperor, or someone in position of power in the government, was unresponsive to remonstrance. As we saw in the example of King Shun, a skillful person would be able, with the help of some luck, to maneuver his way into a solution that would be the right one for all involved. However, there is very little that a remonstrator can do if those in the position of political power refuse to adhere to their advice. Not infrequently, the remonstrator paid with his life.

Since Confucian ethos made each official personally responsible for the welfare and criticism of the government, then officials at all levels had dual roles: as both advocate of policy and, unofficially, as censor. Moreover, once policy was decided, each official had the duty to see it implemented. One can imagine that difficulties and conflicts would arise when an official's own opinion as to the wisdom of policy conflicted with that of his duty. One can imagine, too, that his actions might fall short. Certainly over the

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[39] *Analects*, 14.7

[40] *Analects*, 14.22.

course of its development Confucianism has rested upon divergent assumptions as to the goodness of human nature.[41] Yet whether one considers humans to tend toward the good or toward the evil, all would agree that, faced with temptation, individual human beings are fallible creatures. We all have a constitutional weakness, whether acted on or not, that makes errant actions possible.

This is where the importance of the role of the Censorate comes into play for, since they had no policy implementation duties, this office could focus its efforts on its clear role as defender of the Confucian tradition. And although the office of the Censorate was subject to change during a particular emperor's reign, until the end of the Qing dynasty the desired end of even the most zealous or frustrated remonstrators was a criticism whose ultimate purpose was to preserve the tradition for which the Emperor stood. In order to more clearly understand how the Censorate fit into this tradition and the later crisis that Confucianism would face during the May Fourth period, let us now turn to a brief study of the institutionalization of remonstrance in the Confucian state ideology.

Institutionalization of *jian* in Confucian governance: (Mis)-Translation of Term "Censor"

It will perhaps be easier to understand the roles of the remonstrator and the censor if we begin with a discussion of what they are *not*. The most common translations of *yushitai* are the terms "censorship," "the censorial system," and "the Censorate", all of

[41] The two views that differ most strikingly are those of Mencius and Xun Tzu, with Mencius having a much more benign assessment of a human's natural tendencies.

which are, at best, approximate. They are also misleading, given the meaning surrounding the word 'censor' in the English language, as it has nothing to do with government control over publications or entertainment media.

> Westerners have derived the term "censorship" from a misleading analogy with the censors of republican Rome. One could just as misleadingly point out resemblances between the Chinese censors and the ephors of ancient Sparta, the missi dominici of Charlemagne, the fiscals of Frederick the Great and Peter the Great, the inspectors-general of Napoleon, the ombudsmen of modern Sweden, or even the party commissars of some modern totalitarian states.[42]

As Hucker notes, the censorial system does involve what we think of as "control." Yet it also carries the more freighted connotations of "inspection," "surveillance," "supervision," "censure," and "discipline."[43] While certainly there were aspects of all of the above terms in the activities of the Censorate and the more limited endeavors of the remonstrators, this collection of words brings to mind a decidedly sinister operation. One is led to picture Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as filtered through Foucault: the asymmetry of seeing-without-being-seen, the very essence of power, since for Foucault the power to dominate is based on such a differential possession of knowledge.[44] However, this is not the association most Chinese would have had of the Censorate. As we will see, the intention was for these checks on power to be exerted on *all* those within (and to a certain degree beyond) the official bureaucracy; this was neither a one-sided nor

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[42] Hucker (1966): 1.

[43] *ibid*, 1.

[44] Foucault (1983): 208.

a one-way negotiation. As an essential buttress of the Confucian state system its ultimate purpose was to "rectify administration."

In order to begin to comprehend the broad extent of the rectification duties of the Censorate, we can begin by comparing them with those of some intragovernmental agencies in the United States. These include controls Congress maintains over the executive branch through impeachments, resolutions, and activities of investigating committees; the duties of the F.B.I.; the fiscal control by the Bureau of the Budget; specialized supervisory functions of agencies such as the Army Inspector General's Department; appellate court review of judicial decisions; and locally exercised rights of recall and referendum.[45] We do not want to exaggerate these similarities however, as there is no one agency in the U.S. government the sole duty of which is to make itself accountable to itself – to act, in the words of Matteo Ricci, as "the keepers of the public conscience."[46]

A broad summary of the responsibilities of the Confucian Censorate (which at certain periods in history included those of remonstrators) would incorporate: 1) close scrutiny of governmental activities from a position close to, and yet external to the administrative hierarchy; 2) any necessary impeachment, censure, or punishment of officials; and 3) recommendations that policies or practices be changed, "often including

[45] Hucker (1966): 2. One can these days add to the list The Department of Homeland Security.

[46] Ricci (1953): 49. Ricci continues, "Neither King nor magistrates can escape their courage and frankness, and even when they arouse the royal wrath to such an extent that the King becomes severely angry with them, they will never desist from their admonitions and criticism until some remedy has been applied to the public evil against which they are inveighing."

direct or indirect remonstrances about the conduct and decisions of the ruler himself."[47] The structure of the government—a hierarchy of officials below an hereditary emperor—was suited to an "oversight and corrections department" integral to itself, rather than these activities being diffused within many branches of government. A noticeable distinction, too, is that in China the process of self-cultivation can lead to an unconscious self-censorship on an individual level.[48]

The Early Evolution of China's "Censorship" System

As it evolved, censorship in China became highly organized, highly systematized, and highly institutionalized, yet it should not be thought of as straightforward police activity. Rather, from its earliest manifestations it was an effort on the part of the government to police itself, both in the areas of policy formulation and policy implementation. "Against the formulators of policy, its weapon was remonstrance; against the implementers, impeachment."[49] These two duties were central to the effective administration of the Chinese state; however, it was not until relatively late – during the Yuan dynasty – that the functions of remonstrating and those of the censors were

[47] *Ibid*, 2.

[48] This tendency toward self-censorship will be part of the discussion in the final chapter, when we evaluate the present-day possibilities for and hindrances against remonstrance.

[49] Hucker (1959): 186.

combined into one (greatly expanded) agency.[50] One can begin to trace the evolution of their functions by looking at the etymology of the terms.

The oldest of the two terms, *yushi*, the term by which Chinese censors have always been known, is one that has the longest continuous usage of any official title (in any language, in fact). It appeared as a title on oracle bone inscriptions during the Shang dynasty (beginning 16th century BCE) and was in use until the end of the Qing in 1912. Herrlee Creel maintains that the basic element, *shi*, was a Shang dynasty term for a scorekeeper, which over time directly evolved into having the sense of "recorder." He traces the evolution as follows:

> The whole thing [character] is a cup-shaped tally-holder, used for keeping score in an archery contest; the hand holding it is that of the score-keeper....The bow and arrow was the chief offensive weapon of China until very recently. Archery contests were held, before the imperial court, as late as the present century [20th], and we know that archery contests were very important in ancient times. They kept score by means of wood and bamboo tallies, which were put into or taken out of a cup according to fixed rules. Naturally there had to be a servant specially appointed to keep this score, and he was the original *shih*. We find the score-keeper called by this name even in later Chou times. The servants designated for this service had to be intelligent, and their status was no doubt raised by the appointment. As writing developed there were other records to be kept, and the *shih* naturally took this duty upon himself. As these records developed into history, the *shih* became a historian. As learning developed, he became a scholar.[51]

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[50] Although Hucker disagrees here with Charles Walker. See his "The Control System of the Chinese Government," in The Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol. VII, November, 1947. Walker has the two tasks as being conflated at a much early period of time, soon after the collapse of the Han Dynasty. "Functions at this time included making remonstrances to the Emperor, examining law breakers, supervising the work of functionaries, and supervising munitions and supplies." Hucker, however, if one may make a determination by his formidable research in compiling the *Dictionary of Official Titles in China*, is able to substantiate his claim that these two were both specialized and distinct functions until sometime during the Yuan Dynasty.

[51] Creel (1937): 139-40.

Hucker claims that the modifying element, *yu*, can be understood to mean "royal" or "imperial,"[52] although he asserts that there is very little substantive information about the specific functions that these terms were associated with during the Shang and Zhou periods and no evidence that a *shih* would be someone yet entrusted with censorial techniques, nor that the duty was one that had yet been institutionalized. It was not until the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE) that institutionalized censorship emerged, as the need for supervisory agencies were required by the spread of the scope of the governmental bureaucracy[53] and it was during the later Sui dynasty (581-618) that the term *ermukuan*, or Eyes and Ears Officials (as they were the eyes and ears of the Emperor) began to come into use.[54] Over time, the Censorate came to include both Investigating Censors (*chiencha yushi*), divided administratively to oversee each of the provinces, and Regional Inspectors (*xunan yushi*) who were periodically sent out on long and arduous journeys to the provinces to maintain surveillance and report back to the more senior Censorate officials in the capital.

Remonstrance functions were in many ways more specialized and certainly required a great deal more tact than zeal. The duties of the remonstrance officials (*jiankuan*) developed independently from those of the *yushitai*. Originally the person who was in a position to remonstrate the emperor was associated with the title of Supervising Secretary and Grand Remonstrant, titles which appear to have originated in the Qin

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[52] Watson (1958): 71. Quoted in Hucker (1966): 10.

[53] Hucker (1966): 11.

[54] Watson (1958): 9.

dynasty. For centuries, these positions were held by eminent dignitaries, chosen because they were thought to be appropriate companions and mentors to the Emperor.[55] Only later were they chosen on the basis of the examination system.

The Confucianist/Legalist Divide

One way in which to more clearly understand the background of the *yushi* and *jian* functions is to look more closely at their philosophical underpinnings. Under the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE – 8) Confucianism became accepted as the orthodox philosophical justification of the state, and from that period on the government was entrusted to officials trained in the literature of classical Confucianism. However, the Confucianism that was adopted as state ideology was not identical to classical Confucianism.[56] In fact, as it developed, Confucian texts began to glorify the ruler to such a degree that they began to temper the strong anti-statism of the original texts.[57]

Compromise, of course, is in the nature of politics and in early imperial China this was the case as well. Confucianism as it developed as a state ideology was forced to adapt to the realities of living under the centralized and autocratic regime of the Qin dynasty. As the king of Qin gained power and dominance over the other six major states, he took the title *Shi Huangdi* (first emperor), a formulation formerly reserved for deities

[55] Hucker (1959): 188.

[56] I will take up this discussion in chapter 6 in discussing more fully the distinctions between three conceptions of Confucianism: as Confucian doctrine (represented by the *Analects*, Mencius, and other classical texts), as state ideology (that which dominated China for over 2,000 years), and as somehow synonymous (to a great degree mistakenly) with Chinese civilization itself.

[57] Hucker (1959): 184.

and the mythological sage-emperors, and imposed a centralized, nonhereditary bureaucratic system on his new empire. Centralization, achieved by ruthless methods, was focused on standardizing legal codes and bureaucratic procedures, the forms of writing and coinage, and the pattern of thought and scholarship. To consolidate their rule the Qin kings began to rely heavily on Legalist scholar-advisers; to silence criticism of imperial rule, the kings banished or put to death a number of dissenting Confucian scholars, confiscating and burning their books.[58] Thus, by the Han period the ruling ideology had become an amalgam of classical Confucian and Legalist ideas,[59] with a Confucian emphasis on ethics and *li* being brought to bear on the more inflexible Legalist principles and attitudes.[60]

These two schools of thought were instantiated in both the censorial and remonstrance traditions. As noted above, remonstrance was used against the formulators of policy, while censors assessed the implementers. Whereas both the classical Confucian and early Legalist political strategists concerned themselves with the necessity for finding proper men for government office and regulating them once they were there, we can make a fairly strong distinction between the philosophical impulses that gave vigor to the tactics used by each.

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[58] Fairbank (1992): 54-57.

[59] Although this official state ideology by no means remained static. Over the many centuries, both Daoist and Buddhist ideas were added to the mix – although the Confucian and Legalist elements remained the most dominant.

[60] In fact, because there was never a period when classical Confucian ideals persisted unmodified (in the political realm), Hucker suggests that when referring to the ideas and motivations of bureaucrats in imperial times we should replace the words Legalism and Confucianism with the more accurately descriptive terms "rigorist Confucianism" and "humanist Confucianism."

> [W]hile the Legalists were also very concerned with the problem of controlling men once in office, the Confucian thinkers had no worries on this score. They seemed to feel that once a morally superior man had been placed in authority, he could be trusted to do what was right. As a matter of fact, the whole spirit of classical Confucian political thinking clearly implies that he should not be interfered with.[61]

In other words, the Legalist instinct led them to formulate methods of surveillance and control, while the Confucian impulse was toward after-the-fact corrective. An emperor who needed to be scrutinized panoptically was no emperor indeed. Confucius said, "If people are proper (*zheng*) in personal conduct, others will follow suit without the need of command. But if they are not proper, even when they command, others will not obey."[62]

The Function of Surveillance

The spirit of Confucianism leads a remonstrance official to steer his superior back to the path from which he has strayed; while the Legalist impulse is toward prompt and efficient punishment. To this end, the censorial officials were empowered to find fault with their bureaucratic colleagues and under the Legalist-dominated Qin dynasty disciplinary surveillance was both institutionalized and became a foundation stone of the state, although over the course of centuries the specific duties and powers of the Censorate ebbed and flowed. Hucker notes that those appointed to the Censorate were typically young and new to the civil service, in order that they might display great zeal and satisfaction in their surveillance and impeachment duties. And since they were

[61] Hucker (1959): 199. Exceptions to this will be, of course, in the case of remonstrance.

[62] *Analects*, 13.6.

neophytes, they would typically have little to lose and much to gain (in terms of rising in the civil service ranks) for their enthusiastic work.[63]

To give some idea of the organization of the Censorate, we can look briefly at one or two examples. In the Han dynasty, for instance, the organization was headed by a Censor-in-chief, whose principal staff consisted of 45 Attendant Censors. All Attendant Censors were organized in Sections, the differing functions of which was not entirely clear, although from the Qin on central government Censors were regularly or irregularly dispatched to tour and inspect units of territorial administration and these travel aspects may have been behind the organizational design. From the Tang into the early Ming the standard organization included one or two Censors-in-chief, two Vice Censors-in-chief, a Headquarters Bureau staffed with Attendant Censors (discontinued after the Song), a Palace Bureau staffed with Palace Censors, and an Investigative Bureau staffed with Investigative Censors (presumably those who traveled throughout the provinces).[64]

By the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) the censorial system reached its apotheosis, with its net of disciplinary surveillance thrown effectively across the entire bureaucracy by the creation of branch Censorates (with responsibility for a more narrow range of "clients") and the establishment of Provincial Surveillance Office (eliminating the need for those in the capital to travel and yet still directly subordinate to the metropolitan Censorate). Kublai Khan once said of his three top-level governmental organs that "the Secretariat is my left hand, the Bureau of Military Affairs is my right hand, and the

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[63] Hucker (1959): 191.

[64] Hucker (1985) 593-94.

Censorate is the means for my keeping both hands healthy."[65] As the state bureaucracy evolved the office became even more effective in that dynasty-sustaining chore.

The Function of Remonstrance

As we have seen above, the Confucian tradition (associated with remonstrance) is of the view that criticism should be directed by inferiors at superiors, not vice versa. Thus, the very existence – and certainly the elaborateness – of the surveillance system appears justifiable only on Legalist premises. Classical Confucian thought does not seem to condone informers. Confucius said: "[*Junzi*] detest those who announce what is detestable in others; they detest those subordinates who would malign their superiors; they detest those who are bold yet do not observed ritual propriety; they detest those who, being determined to get what they want, are unrelenting. But Zigong, don't you, too, have things you detest?" Zigong replied, "I detest those who think that details and distinctions are the substance of wisdom; I detest those who think that immodesty is boldness; I detest those who think that revealing the secrets of others is being true."[66] Also, "The exemplary person (*junzi*) helps to bring out the best in others, but does not help to bring out the worst. The petty person does just the opposite."[67] Mencius, too, had reservations on

[65] Kao I-han, "The Evolution of the Chinese Censorial System," Shanghai, 1933. Quoted in Hucker (1959): 190.

[66] *Analects*, 17.24.

[67] *Analects*, 12.16.

informing on others: "Think of the consequences before you speak of the shortcomings of others."[68]

In addition, the function of remonstrance, by its nature, did not lend itself to routinization and institutionalization as well as did the surveillance function.[69] The job of speaking officials, as the remonstrators as a group were known, was focused on the evaluation of policy makers and the policies they proposed. Hence, they were a bit like personal attendants to the Emperor, and their offices evolved in early times without any relation to the surveillance organs. As a consequence, they tended to have greater prestige, both individually and as a bureau, and tended, as well, to be older than those in the Censorate.

Characteristics of Remonstrators and Censors

The first important traditional characteristic of the Censorate was its independence. It had to be independent of the Emperor and of other officials so that it could freely criticize the former, keeping him in line with tradition, and control the latter, assuring a high degree of efficiency in their work. As we will see, remonstrators, especially when one considers the risks that they took at times in criticizing the Emperor, needed to have an especially strong sense of obligation to serve, but as Walker notes, what added more incentive to work within the Censorate was that public opinion usually backed them. One clear distinction can be made between Censors and Remonstrators: the

[68] Mencius, Book IV, B, 9.

[69] Neither was it necessary, as the remonstrator, typically, had a duty only to a small number of superiors – most notably, the Emperor.

low rank and high prestige of the position of Censor made it especially attractive to young go-getters (of the whistle-blowing persuasion) as they would have little to lose and much to gain by the zealous prosecution of their duties.[70] A Remonstrator, on the other hand, was usually older and more sagacious—although this did not prevent a number of them from losing their heads by speaking out—with a strong internal sense of obligation to serve the tradition itself. The understanding was that criticism of the Emperor was to be performed in order that those he ruled over—as well as the Emperor himself—could live in (and up to) the belief that the Emperor could do no wrong.

As we have seen, even parents, to whom in classical Confucianism one owes primary loyalty, cannot be immune from remonstrance. The Book of Rites states: "to remonstrate with them gently without being weary...may be pronounced filial piety"; "when they have faults, to remonstrate with them, and yet not withstand them...this is what is called the completion [by a son] of his proper services.[71] So strong was the classical Confucian insistence on this aspect of the loyal minister's service that remonstrance became not only the right but the duty of all officials in the Confucian state. Although institutionalized only by the establishment of special remonstrance officials, it was in place in all filial relations.

A final characteristic to note has to do with the freedom of speech that was associated with the Censorate. While this freedom was decreed by tradition, in fact it was enjoyed more by censors than by remonstrators. As has been noted, those who criticized

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[70] Walker (1947): 15.

[71] Legge (1967):

the Emperor often did so at their own peril (as the Emperor could exercise his right of "Heavenly decree" and have a troublesome remonstrator put in jail or to death). All legitimate power derived from the Emperor, who as Son of Heaven, assumed for himself the sole right to make any final governmental decision, however petty. As remonstrators also enjoyed direct access to the Emperor, they were reliant on their own strong powers of persuasion when dealing with delicate matters.

Virtually all Western historians of China have taken note of the Censor tradition, with most conflating the role of remonstrator and that of censor. Many have praised it as the Chinese equivalent of a democratic force,[72] while others see it as the most extreme instrument of monarchical despotism.[73] Certainly to a great degree these views are dependent upon the personality of the Emperor, how open he was to criticism, and to what degree he and his close administrators felt compelled to use the censors as informants. In addition, the stability of the empire due to outside forces would have come into play: Were there outside forces threatening at the borders? Was this a good year for crops? Rulers, like all people, are complicated beings and many pressures compete in administering as vast an empire as China. Censors and remonstrators, too, were certainly

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[72] Matteo Ricci described Ming censorial officials as "a source of wonder to outsiders and a good example for imitation," commending them on their "courage and frankness." Ricci, 49. And Richard Walker was even more extravagant in his praise, suggesting that the United States could profit from the Chinese success. "For example, with an independent Censoral body in the United States the legislative bodies would not have to devote their valuable time to committee investigations of their own members and would be able in consequence to produce more carefully planned legislation. With a vigorous Control body in existence government jobs would be less open to criticism as nests for lazy people." Walker, 19-20.

[73] The censorial tradition persisted into the Nationalist government of Chiang Kaishek in the form of the "Control Yuan" and in the People's Republic incorporated many surveillance organs, most notably the hierarchies of the Committees of People's Supervision and of People's Procuratorates. See Tung's *The Political Institutions of Modern China* (1964).

over the course of centuries better and less suited to their positions. It is inarguable, however, that whatever the excesses and limitations of the institutionalized Censorate in the government of China it contributed effectively to the stability and persistence of Confucianism as a state ideology.[74]

An Unsettling Transition

As we have seen, since the time of Confucius a particular conceptualization as to the relationship between political rulers and cultural elites had evolved. The way (*dao*) and political power were separated and their unity was ideologically envisioned as the final political-cultural goal. Governance relied on a basic division of labor, with rulers in charge of government and Confucian scholars administering the transmission of the way. The author of the *Zhongyong* was aware of this division when writing: "Even if one has ascended the throne, if he has not achieved the necessary excellence (*de*), he dare not initiate ceremonies and music (*liyue*) for the court. If he has achieved excellence but does not occupy the throne, he also dare not initiate ceremonies and music for the court."[75] And since they were perceived as representatives of *dao*, then Confucian scholars, most particularly those in the Censorate, were in theory justified in opposing political authorities when the situation was deemed necessary.

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[74] From the late 16th century onward, from Ricci's time forward, foreign observers took note of the longevity of China's governing system. "If the checks on Chinese rulers little resembled those on their Western contemporaries, these checks nevertheless made possible a political order whose serenity and justice were long enviable in Western eyes." Kracke (1971): 315.

[75] *Zhongyong* 28.

However, during the Qing dynasty this relationship began to destabilize. In his *Philosophy, Philology, and Politics in 18th Century China,* Chin-shing Huang traces the growth of autocracy in Chinese political history and posits that the coming of the "sage-emperor" Kangxi in the early 18th century came at the expense of the autonomy and the critical stance of the Confucian intellectuals. Kangxi sought to embody both the models of Kings Yao and Shun in terms of governance and, at the same time, the model of Confucius as a teacher, thus successfully merging the tradition of the way and that of governance. Before the Kangxi emperor, the movement toward autocracy took the form of attempts to restructure political institutions in an attempt to monopolize political power. Autocracy became complete, however, only when the cultural authority of the Confucian scholars was usurped by the Emperor. This was Kangxi's most important, and ultimately destructive, ideological achievement.[76] Yet, was this not the highest Confucian ideal: an emperor who could embody both traditions?

The views of Chang Hsueh-cheng, an important 18th-century Confucian thinker, reflect the *zeitgeist* of his time and bear witness to the resulting disappearance of the critical strain in the philosophy of Confucian governance during this period. Chang dismissed all Song Confucian metaphysical discussions as irrelevant to politics and claimed that there was no point in conceiving of *dao* apart from its concrete manifestations in history, most importantly for governance as it is manifested in the power of the emperor.

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[76] Huang (1995): 157.

However, if the way is manifest always and only in the concrete forms of the emperor, that is if "history" is conceived only in terms of the power of the emperor and not in the shared power of the emperor and the Confucian officials, then the capacity of the way to stand apart from the historical process and criticize the existing power is denied.[77] While many other factors contributed to the corruption and eventual dissolution of the Confucian state during the Qing dynasty, this conceptual conflation of the idea of *dao* and the form of *dao* is a move that led inexorably to a state where political authority became lacking in the necessary authoritativeness to rule. The emperor, and by extension the state, arrived at a time in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when not only was it unchecked by the Censorate, but also unhinged from its spiritual origins.

A Call to Arms

We have seen the outcome of a state of affairs when the Emperor will not respond to criticism: the remonstrator is the loser, often in a very literal sense, indeed losing his life. But what might be the outcome if a censor emerged to critique not just the individual emperor, but the *role* of the emperor, as well? What might be the consequences within the tradition when the ultimate goal of the critic becomes not that of preserving the tradition, but seemingly to radically change it, overthrow it even? Is it possible to be an advocate for such radical change without at the same time supporting wholesale revolution?

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[77] Huang: 167.

Lu Xun was an example of such a critic. By the time he had turned to journalism in the second decade of the 20th century and become a much-published gadfly, the political struggle was engaged most directly against the feudal-minded literati, and those aspects of Confucianism that we identified at the beginning of this chapter as constituting the authority of *jian* now lacked all effectiveness for political regulation. The state had become one in which tradition was an old man; worse, in Lu Xun's prose that tradition had become cannibalistic, devouring those it was to protect.[78]

We can see examples of this in a work from late 1919, "What is Required of Us as Fathers Today." This article is an extended comment on *xiao*, rather the empty shell that remains.

> A man once wrote a verse entitled "To Encourage Filial Piety," which ran something like this:
>
> *Your dear mother is working at home, boy,*
> *As to school with your fellows you run;*
> *She is making you sweet almond broth, boy –*
> *Will you still be an unfilial son?*
>
> This writer considered himself "an ardent champion of morality." But, in fact, the almond broth of the rich and the bean milk of the poor have the same value in love, and possess this value only if the parents expect no reward. Otherwise this degenerates into trading, and the almond broth is like the human milk given to pigs to fatten them. Morally speaking, it is worthless.[79]

The filial relationship has become one in which the older generation has a strong sense of privilege, but no sense of responsibility, in which all parties are merely engaged in

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[78] See most especially Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman," first published in *New Youth* magazine in 1918, where the society itself is depicted as "man-eating."

[79] Lu Xun (1980): 61-62.

"trading." Lu Xun has diagnosed the pervasiveness of a "false morality," as a result of which the society is now empty of all authority to govern. And yet still, nothing substantive is changing in any way that will bring about a true revitalization. "While what must crumble crumbles, the trouble-makers still make trouble, and the rule-makers still make rules."[80] The *li* have become impoverished, hollowed-out forms,[81] devoid of meaning; simply rules to be followed and external guides to conduct imposed by others.

What to hold on to? What to restore? What to obliterate? And how to make such distinctions? We see Confucius confronting the necessary features of *li* and the necessity for acting with authenticity, in the following:

> The Master said: "In referring time and again to observing ritual propriety (*li*), how could I just be talking about gifts of jade and silk? And in referring time and again to making music (*yue*), how could I just be talking about bells and drums?[82]

Lu Xun struggled against this same impasse, although on a larger and more overtly political scale than in the above example, and his criteria begins to become apparent in another of his "Random Thoughts" essays, this one from 1918. He speaks of the Chinese "national characteristics" and the current discourse over what it means to "be Chinese": how to reconcile one's "Chineseness" with a recognition that China must both engage with the West and become more "modern." In the past, for instance, the "great mandarin" argued that students going abroad should not cut off their queues. Others argued for a

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[80] Lu Xun, 69.

[81] "The Master said: 'What has a person who is not authoritative (*ren*) got to do with observing ritual propriety (li)? What has a person who is not authoritative got to do with the playing of music (*yue*)?'" *Analects*, 3.3.

[82] *Analects*, 17.11

restoration of "Han sovereignty." Now he wonders, what do people mean by "national characteristics" beyond that they are things typical of one country rather than another?

Here we see him posing a question with decidedly Confucian undercurrents: "Distinctive things are not necessarily good, so why must they be preserved?"[83] That is, just because acts or intentions are recognized by their *form* to be Chinese, they must yet be open to critique and condemned if they are detrimental to the harmonious function of the culture. In much of his writing during this period, Lu Xun railed against the conservatism and superstition of the stagnant ethos. Indeed, from this piece and others we can compile a short list of his perceived weaknesses in the Chinese "character": intolerance, inertia, hypocrisy, servility toward a superior, arrogance toward a subordinate, opportunism, and hesitation.

Lu Xun's discussion of Chinese "characteristics" was one much debated by reformers of the era, emerging out of the "Self-Strengthening Movement" of the mid- to late-18th century.[84] This movement, a serious and organized effort on the part of the Qing rulership to grapple with the need for China to modernize, was less than successful. Western science and languages were studied, factories and shipyards were established according to Western models, and students were sent abroad (to Japan, the United States, and Europe) by the government in the hope that national regeneration could be achieved

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[83] Lu Xun, 29

[84] See also, Arthur Smith's *Chinese Characteristics*, first published in 1894, and recently reissued by University of Michigan Press, with an introduction by Lydia Liu. The original edition was the most widely read book on China by Westerners until Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth,* and Lu Xun urged his students to read it as well, though for many years it has been criticized for its perceived "Sino-myopia" and Orientalism.

through the application of Western practical methods. However, amid these activities came a parallel attempt to arrest dynastic degeneration by restoring traditional order. The effort, the Tongzhi Restoration, was named for the Tongzhi Emperor (1862-74) and was engineered by the emperor's mother, the Empress Dowager Ci Xi (1835-1908). The restoration, which applied "practical knowledge" while reaffirming the old mentality, was not a genuine program of modernization.

"The 'village worthy' is excellence (*de*) under false pretenses."[85] What Confucius draws our attention to here is the duplicitous behavior of those in positions of power, like Ci Xi, whose deceptive actions belie their true intentions or abilities. Such a "village worthy" might have the outward appearance of a superior person, but be lacking the necessary constitutive elements of a true leader. They no longer have the ability to govern, they do not have the good of the common people as their objective, and they have nothing of their own to contribute to governance. Such a person might be mistaken as a model, but through the practice of a desiccated form of *li*, devoid of personalized and creative elements, they have a decidedly detrimental effect on those around them.

"Where the norm is properly set then the common people will be stirred; when the common people are stirred then heresy and aberration will disappear."[86] This final attempt to shore up the Qing dynasty was a decades-long hypocrisy, causing much greater harm than good; it had all the pretensions of taking the high road, just to get to the low road more quickly.

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[85] *Analects*, 17.13.

[86] Mencius, Book VII, B, 37

Lu Xun saw these rulers for the empty shells that they were. The problem was that many others in China were allowing themselves still to be duped. His appraisal, a "call to arms," is characteristic both of his asperity and the pragmatic, non-ideological stance he would maintain for the rest of his life; at the same time, however, it suggests an underlying aspiration to recover certain values. He writes: "If we want to preserve our national characteristics, we must first make sure that they can preserve us."[87] This power to preserve will be the criterion by which to judge what (or rather *how*) to recover those values. It is important to note that we ought to read his use of 'preserve' here not in the sense of pickling, certainly; rather, it is more the sense of sustaining and upholding both the individual and the culture. The challenge will be to discover a method by which the Confucian underpinnings of the state ideology can be *made* to serve again, in other words to revitalize and re-personalize *li*. As we shall see, Lu Xun is not advocating obliterating all remnants of Confucian culture, rather his focus is on making what is worth preserving stronger, while jettisoning those aspects that are consuming its members.[88]

This process will be one not of disjunction, not a break with the past tradition, but of self-transcendence, and thereby self-renewal, a process consistent with the cyclical history of China. Throughout its long history, Confucianism was able to survive and thrive as a system of thought, as well as the basis for an effective political system by constantly engaging in creative philosophical debates with its opponents. In this process it was being repeatedly reformulated, adapting to the times and to the influences of

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[87] Lu Xun, 30

[88] The Master said: "Learning without due reflection leads to perplexity; reflection without learning leads to perilous circumstances." *Analects*, 2.15.

opposing schools of thought, both indigenous and foreign.[89] The May Fourth period provided Lu Xun and those others engaged in the struggle to determine the course for China's future with yet another opportunity for such productive syncretism.[90]

Conclusion: Prospects for Re-articulation and Self-transcendence

Given that the socio-political framework for critique was no longer in place (the abolishment of the Censorate was effected as part of the overthrow of the Qing dynasty), Lu Xun was not working from a robust theoretical position. In that case, what justification might he (or we) have for claiming that he could be seen to be taking the place of the remonstrators of the Confucian state? Especially if he is perceived (on a first reading) to be arguing against the Confucian tradition and given that he remained committed throughout his life to critique all "-isms."

In China during the May Fourth era, reformers were preoccupied with one concern: that the attempt to rejuvenate a corrupted and hollow China would involve a transformation of the traditional Chinese worldview. Against those theories of change that emphasize political power, social conditions, or modes of economic production, this view focuses on the necessary priority of intellectual and cultural change as the

[89] There have been many instances in the China's history of this process of reinvention. For instance, Confucianism adapted to the influence of the Legalist school by evolving into a bureaucratic ideology fit to further the interests of the empire. More notably, Neo-Confucians in the Song era absorbed the influences of both Buddhism and Daoism, syncretizing them in a way that gave Confucianism more of a mass appeal.

[90] See *Zhongyong* 28 for Confucius' own reflections on mining the past for a certain sustenance during periods that lack direction. What Confucius aims to provide are not so much examples of *li*, but reminders of the way in which *li* were performed and the effect that such performance can have. These are reminders that the importance and the sustaining power of *li* rest in their original idea, not in their present form.

foundation for all other necessary changes. Some Western observers, most notably Joseph Levenson, have structured their analysis of this period in terms of a dichotomy between "history" and "value" – a tension between an intellectual commitment to Western values and emotional ties to a Chinese past.[91] However, a more fruitful approach would be to locate the tension not between the intellectual and emotional spheres, but within the same intellectual and moral sphere, where the tradition is at the same time rejected and found to be meaningful. The challenge, then, is find a means that allows for a creative transformation of that rejected tradition.

A productive framework we might employ is by turning to John Dewey and exploring the relevance here of some of his writings on democracy, particularly those focusing on the distinction he makes between the conservatism of political and institutionalized forms and the vitality of their underlying "ideas." In so doing I believe we will find a useful method of criticism and valuation through which to give theoretical contour to some of the changes taking place in the May Fourth period.

[91] See Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (1959) and *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, 3 vols. (1958-65).

CHAPTER 3

LEANING TOWARD MODERNITY

Introduction: Dewey's Encounter with China during the May Fourth era

On May 1st, 1919, John Dewey and his wife arrived in Shanghai, having accepted invitations from his former student Hu Shi and others to speak in Beijing, Nanjing, and a number of other cities in China. Without having planned such an extended visit, the Deweys came to spend two years, two months, and ten days in China. While he was not in Beijing for the May Fourth uprising, he soon became aware of the waves of criticism and attack on all forms of traditional thought and institutions. "New doctrines, new 'isms', and new ideas in many branches of modern knowledge were introduced and discussed in a somewhat superficial manner but with vigor and enthusiasm."[92] The period that followed was one of unrest and intellectual ferment, mingling skepticism, romanticism, liberalism, realism and anarchism in the thought of intellectuals and students. A brief survey of some of the new journals that began publication during this period reflect this development. *Young China* was dedicated to "social services under the guidance of the scientific spirit, in order to realize our ideal of creating a young China"; *Save the Nation* was established "to promote popular education and to save society"; and the goal of *The New Woman* was "to rouse women as a means of reforming society."[93]

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[92] Chow, Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960, 182.

[93] Others mottos were variations on these themes: "to study society and introduce Western ideas," to advocate the new literature in the vernacular and brave criticism," and most idealistically "to introduce new

In an article in *New Republic* the following year, Dewey remarked:

> A friend who made a careful study of some fifty of the students' papers says that their first trait is the question mark, and the second is the demand for complete freedom of speech in order that answers may be found for the questions.
>
> In a country where belief has been both authoritatively dogmatic and complacent, the rage for questioning is the omen of a new epoch.[94]

Such students and other intellectuals whom Dewey encountered in urban China were engaged in a conscious repudiation of a past and a political tradition that had produced a semi-feudal and semi-colonized present; and by asking questions, by explicitly questioning the tradition, they were perforce implicitly placing the "problem" within the status quo. The "answers," the solution to the problem, that they sought (that is, a better future) and the freedom of speech that they demanded as the necessary tool to arrive at that solution, all implied change. "Answers," by another name, would turn out to be widespread cultural transformation. In other words, antiquity and the respect for tradition that it engendered was no longer the criterion for excellence in this new epoch that Dewey chronicles.

Lu Xun's Anti-Confucianism in contrast to Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi

During this period Lu Xun was writing prolifically in newspapers and the new vernacular journals, declaring that the Chinese should live for themselves rather than for

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thoughts to the world, and to apply an optimistic but critical attitude to the reconstruction of society." There was a "periodical fever" in the cities of China during this era. Lin (1960): 180.

[94] Dewey, John, "The Sequel of the Student Revolt," *New Republic*, Vol. 21, March 3, 1920, p380-82. Quoted in Chow, 182.

their ancestors and that modern science and Western knowledge was more important than to recite the Confucian classics. "Even a cow cannot serve both as a sacrificial animal and as a draught animal, both for beef and for milking; how can a human being survive both for his ancestors and for himself?"[95] Certainly it is possible for the members of a society to *survive* while devoting a good portion of their energies to shoring up a disintegrating traditional way of life. However in order to *flourish* Lu Xun advocated for a commitment to creation rather than to preservation. If one is not inclined to follow the revolutionary course with its promise for a "new path to the future", then at least turn to something new and innovative for China, he seemed to be saying. "Rather than worship Confucius and Kuan Kung, one should worship Darwin and Ibsen. Rather than sacrifice to the God of Pestilence and the Five Classes of Spirits, one should worship Apollo."[96]

We see here another example of Lu Xun's apparent anti-Confucianism. The standard target of his polemic was, indeed, the "despotic, gerontocractic, and male-oriented practices" of imperial China and such verbal attacks, printed in a number of the popular journals of the time, led to his becoming one of the spiritual leaders of the reform movement.

As an illustration of his critical stance, we can look briefly at one of his most famous short stories from that era, "Diary of a Madman." Published in the May 1918 issue of *New Youth* magazine, this short tale was a virulent critique of the old Confucian civilization and a metaphorical account of its damaging effects. In the story Lu Xun says

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[95] Lu Xun, "Random Thoughts," No. 46, *New Youth*, VI, 2 (Feb. 15, 1919), 212. Quoted in Chow, 309.

[96] Lu Xun, quoted in Chow, 309.

(through the madman): "I try to look at history, but my history has no chronology and scrawled all over each page are the characters: 'benevolence, righteousness, and morals.' Since I could not sleep anyway, I read intently half the night until I began to read between the lines. The whole book was filled with the two words—'Eat people.'"[97] And: "How can a man like myself, after four thousand years of man-eating history—even though I knew nothing about it at first—ever hope to face real men?" The madman concludes: "Perhaps there are still children who haven't eaten men? Save the children...."[98] A later issue of the magazine interpreted this story by explaining that those who speak of rites and ethics with most intensity and devotion are the most brutal cannibals.[99]

Such anti-Confucian diatribes must be put in the context of Lu Xun's entire corpus, however. From his earliest engagement with essay writing while he was still in Japan, and continuing through his later journalistic pieces, Lu Xun was skeptical of those who, critical of the constraints of the conservative Confucian tradition, looked for solutions to China's problems by turning to the West for modes of response. For instance, after China's humiliating military defeats in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there were many who, not perceiving the true depth of China's problems, promoted strengthening the military power of the state. Certainly, many students returning from study abroad were in favor of this approach, one that Lu Xun dismissed as rubbish of the

[97] Lu Xun (1980): Vol. 1, 42.

[98] Lu Xun (1980): Vol. 1, 51.

[99] In the Confucian tradition, what is cannibalistic can be interpreted as that which will not let the particular express or develop itself.

West – "rubbish" as these solutions do not address the more substantial problem. In Lu Xun's view such actions are nothing more than band-aid solutions to an even deeper, unacknowledged problem. "Even if one grants the importance of military strength, could China acquire it if the people are still weak and backward?"[100] While he acknowledged the need for modern weapons for national defense, he argued that without a renewed spiritual and cultural foundation, they would be all but ineffective.

In addition, he was wary of those who advocated for constitutionalism and popular rule as lacking "enough intelligence to seek a real solution for China's problems...and com[ing] to argue for the rise of the masses as a means of resisting foreign encroachments."[101] His view was that a belief in the power of the majority was as superstitious as a belief in charms; "the masses" first and foremost needed economic sustenance. However, allied to concern for the economic well-being of the large peasant class emerging from a feudal past was his fear that without preparatory education popular rule might quickly degenerate into tyranny by the majority or that the populace might be too easily swayed by a "new emperor."[102] Indeed Lu Xun's concerns were well-founded, as the politics and history of later 20th-century China have demonstrated.

While we can point to numerous differences in the views of the intelligentsia reformers during this period, most were preoccupied with one primary and overarching concern: "that the task of rejuvenating a corrupt and atrophied China involved nothing

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[100] Quoted in Lin (1979): 111.

[101] Quoted in Lin (1979): 111.

[102] For a contemporary treatment of this issue, see Amy Chua's recent work, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, Doubleday, 2002.

less than complete transformation of the traditional Chinese world view and total reconstruction of the traditional Chinese mentality."[103] While Lu Xun shared this goal, his approach to such ambitious change was, for want of a better term, "cultural intellectualistic," implying that a cultural change was the prerequisite or foundation for all other necessary changes. Lying behind this approach was the assumption that cultural change — change in the system of values and beliefs — would come about through changing (or reinvigorating) ideas about the conception of and relationship to cosmic and human reality. As opposed to those theories of change that stress political power, social conditions, or modes of economic production, this view emphasizes the necessary priority of intellectual and cultural change over political, social, and economic changes. This view further assumed that such cultural change (a change in the system of symbols, values and beliefs) would be brought about most effectively, by changing an individual's worldview.

"Intellectualistic" as used here should not be read to imply a connection with a rationalistic or idealistic approach to epistemology, ontology or ethics in Western philosophical discourse. In the Confucian context that Lu Xun inhabits ideas are not things in the ether waiting to be discovered, but are methods or ways of being in the world, dependent upon their environment for their mutable constitution. This cultural-intellectualistic approach is itself an "idea" about the correct way to approach social and political change, but it is an idea that is used dynamically. We might better refer to this

[103] Lin (1979): 26

belief in the effective role of ideas in changing the world[104] as a mode of thinking, one emerging from the classical training that molded both the critics of the Qing and the generation that followed them, the iconoclasts of the May Fourth generation.[105] Lu Xun shared this mode of thinking with two notable reformers, Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi. I will discuss them briefly, principally to contrast their strategies with that of Lu Xun. Such a comparison will work to highlight the degree to which Lu Xun's commitment to change remained within a Chinese/Confucian view of transformation, an approach that is itself dependent upon the concept of *shi* ("potential born of disposition.") If reality is to be understood as the "disposition of things," then a change in the reality (as manifested in actions in the world) must be effected so as to predispose those things toward a different reality. However, this is not to be understood as assuming a sharp theory/practice distinction – a move that the "Western" approaches of Chen and Hu seem uncritically to be making.

Chen Duxiu, the original publisher of *New Youth* magazine, framed his argument in Social Darwinist terms, a model enjoying great popularity in China at the time, and used it as the basis for claiming the necessity of change or "progress." Change, he argued, was necessary for survival and in the vociferousness of his polemic he seemed to be

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[104] This belief is partnered by a concomitant conviction in the efficacy of education.

[105] However, Lin points to an important distinction between the first generation of Chinese intelligentsia (that of the 1890s) and the second generation (that of the 1910's and 20s). Those in the first generation, while stressing the priority of intellectual and cultural change, were not prone to the totalizing critique of the later generation, who attacked the tradition as a whole. Lin (1979): 28-29. After 1919 especially, after the humiliation that the Chinese suffered during the Versailles treaty negotiations, the consensus became that anything less than a major, and radical, overhaul of the Chinese political and economic structure was effort in vain.

arguing that almost any change would do, as long as it was away from the Confucian tradition. Chen, however, never criticized the Confucian tradition on its own philosophical plane. That is, although he had a classical education and was familiar with the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*, Chen never engaged in a substantial critique of any of the central concepts of Confucianism, such as the relationship between *ren* and *li*. Chen's quarrel was, if he had articulated it explicitly, against *lijiao*, the cult of ritualized subordination into which the tradition had devolved.[106]

In a generation when iconoclasm flourished among Chinese intellectuals, Chen was the iconoclast *par excellence*, an uncompromising and virulent critic of the Chinese past, as well as of the nascent attempts to engage in "progressive" discourse. More temperate reformers, such as Hu Shi, made an effort to discriminate between what had become the sterility of orthodox Confucianism and vital subtraditions of criticism and self-expression that were emerging. In Chen's view, however, everything "traditional" in China had been corrupted by the influence of Confucianism. Everything Confucian is evil and hateful, therefore the Chinese tradition *in toto* is corrupt, evil, hateful and unworthy. In other words unfit, and not fitting the Chinese to survive.

Survival, then, was Chen's first concern – a priority influenced by the strong sway that Social Darwinism had come to have in China around the turn of the century. But we must ask ourselves, "survival" of what? While denouncing the effects of a moribund Confucian culture, Chen was at the same time contemptuous of those with nationalistic programs. In an essay called "Patriotism and Consciousness of Self" he wrote: "Some

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[106] Lin (1979): 72-74.

people argue that the nation, even if loathsome, is better than no nation at all. But I say that the ruthless exploitation of the people – the situation in which we find ourselves – is more marked under a loathsome nation than when no nation exists at all. . . . Those who wish passionately to preserve even a despicable nation would, in fact, protect a despicable government."[107] Chen went on to become the founder of the Chinese communist party, Communism in his view being the most efficient method for modernizing Chinese society.

Hu Shi, another contemporary of Lu Xun, became the principle advocate for the wholesale importation of liberal democracy into China. Hu, like Chen, claimed that Confucian values were not distinctively Chinese; rather, on his understanding, what Confucius transmitted were "universal human values" such as filial piety (*xiao*), authoritative conduct (*ren*), and compassion (*ai*), values that were not unique to China, but were those shared by all civilizations in the world.[108] Hu Shi's advocacy of Westernization, in its early stages, was based on a belief in the supremacy of Western scientific worldview and its ability, given the resources, to solve any problem it might encounter.

And yet Hu also combined his recognition of the urgency of the current crisis in China with a conviction that the pace of change should be tempered. His advocacy of political gradualism was a corollary to the pervasive enthusiasm for the "scientific

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[107] Quoted in *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History*, Jerome B. Grieder, The Free Press, 1981, 296.

[108] On the other hand, China's "unique treasures", he argued, were the "[sterile] eight-legged essays, bound feet, eunuchs, concubinage, five-generation households, memorial arches for honoring chastity, hellish prisons, and law courts filled with instruments of torture." Quoted in Lin (1979): 97.

attitude," the steady accumulation of "facts" on which to base an objective description of the realities of Chinese life as a first step toward the solution of China's problems. Hu remained confident of what can be called "intellectual evolution" – the belief that if ideas are allowed to circulate freely the result must be the survival of the "fittest": the ideas best suited to insure China's gradual revival and transformation.[109]

Lu Xun took up none of these options; he embraced neither communism nor liberal democracy, neither was he part of any reactionary movement toward the reinstitution of Confucianism. While clearly Lu Xun advocated Western iconoclasm—that is, not just narrow critique of a problem or situation, but wide-ranging criticism of established beliefs or systems—over "Confucian idolatry," we want to be careful not to see him as advocating a wholesale abolition of all Confucian underpinnings of the state. Throughout his life what we find is Lu Xun arguing against idolatry or mindless veneration in *whatever* form and in *whatever* tradition he finds it. Certainly, we cannot claim that Lu Xun ever overtly *defends* Confucianism in any strong thematic way; yet, his denunciations were directed toward the prevailing orthodox interpretation of Confucianism and the practice and attitude of "worship," an attitude of utter dependence. He was never an idol worshiper and consistently came out strongly against any excessive praise of authority, either conservative or revolutionary, on the part of both the Confucian literati, as well as many of the May Fourth writers who would go on to write "revolutionary literature," whether they were writing in support of Jiang Jieshi (Ch'iang

[109] By the 1930s, Hu Shi began to fear the emergence of what he called "new-style dictatorship" in China's future and put forth a proposal for a "government by non-action" (*wu wei zheng zhi*). See Grieder, 347-348, for the limitations of this vision, given China's philosophical and political traditions.

Kai-shek) or Mao. The danger, as Lu Xun sees it, is not in worshiping *Confucius*, but in *worshiping*, tout court. It's the attitude of worship that must be interrogated.

In a short essay written in 1933, three years before his death, Lu Xun reflects back on those he calls the "modern clique," earnest reformers during the reign of Guangxu in the period immediately following the end of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95).[110] Lu Xun writes, not without sympathy:

> Even middle-aged men in their thirties and forties started studying mathematics and chemistry, and tried to learn English and Japanese, not ashamed to let others hear them reading laboriously aloud with odd accents and odd expressions. Their aim was to study "foreign books," and they wanted to do so because that would help to make China rich and strong. Today on the old book-stalls you may still come across volumes from the "Rich and Strong Library," books which were all the rage at the time like the *Dictionary of Useful Terms* and *Basic English* today.[111]

He contrasts these earlier reformers with those whose behavior and strategies he observes in 1933, by which time he concedes that "the May the Fourth [*sic*] Movement is also a thing of the past." While remaining supportive of China's youth, he also remains skeptical as ever as to the degree to which China has changed.

> Lately we have often hear the saying: "You cannot put new wine in old bottles." Actually this is not so. You can put new wine in old bottles and old wine in new bottles. If you do not believe me, try changing Chinese wine and brandy. The Chinese wine in brandy bottles will still be Chinese wine. This simple experiment shows that not only can old folk-tunes be

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[110] The First Sino-Japanese War was a brief struggle for control over Korea, won easily by the more modern Japanese army. Most historians place the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War (or the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War) after the Battle of Lugou Bridge (Marco Polo Bridge Incident), July 7, 1937. However, Chinese historians place the starting point at the Mukden Incident, September 18, 1931. This led to the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo, February, 1932. Thus, at the point that Lu Xun was writing this piece, the Japanese had already annexed Manchuria.

[111] Lu Xun, "Thinking of the Past," in *Selected Works of Lu Hsun*, Vol. 3 (trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang), Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1959, p331.

> fitted with new words, but that in these modern youths there may well lurk vestiges of conservatism and obscurantism.[112]

Dewey and the Distinction Between "Religion" and "the Religious"

At this point we may now turn to Dewey as a means by which to open this discussion to philosophical reflection. Dewey, like his disciple, Hu Shi, spoke of the need for change in ways that addressed concrete realities of everyday life. In his second lecture on social and political philosophy in China (autumn 1919), he writes, "Here in China a number of people have asked me, 'Where should we start in reforming our society?' "

> My answer is that we must start by reforming the component institutions of the society. Families, schools, local governments, the central government – all these must be reformed, but they must be reformed by the people who constitute them, working as individuals – in collaboration with other individuals, of course, but still as individuals, each accepting his own responsibility. Any claim of the total reconstruction of a society is almost certain to be misleading. The institutions which make up the society are not "right" or "wrong," but each is susceptible to some degree of improvement. Social progress is neither an accident nor a miracle; it is the sum of efforts made by individuals whose actions are guided by intelligence.[113]

In this view, it is not the "rightness" or "wrongness" of the institutions that must be interrogated, but the degree to which those institutions are open to redefinition and

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[112] "Thinking of the Past," p332.

[113] John Dewey, "Science and Social Philosophy," *Lectures in China, 1919-1920* (translated from the Chinese and edited by Robert W. Clopton and Tsuin-Chen Ou), University of Hawaii Press/East-West Center, Honolulu, 1973. pp62-63).

reform by their constituents, by the participating individuals that constitute them as social wholes.

In Dewey's "Religion versus the Religious" (1934) he makes a distinction between these two terms (*religion* and *the religious*) that has strong bearing on early 20th-century Confucianism and reflects Lu Xun's attempts to distinguish between these two aspects within the Confucian tradition (although explicitly religious language was not a part Lu Xun's vocabulary during such discussions). In brief, Dewey characterizes the "religious" as the source from which a "religion" emerges and later becomes institutionalized. The danger, an all but inevitable one, is in conflating the two.

> The moment we have a religion, [then] the ideal factors in experience that may be called religious take on a load that is not inherent in them, a load of current beliefs and of institutional practices that are irrelevant to them.[114]

What we call "religious", for it to maintain its dominion, must be kept distinct and "unburdened" by the beliefs and practices of religion. The religious is not to be identified with religious practices; rather it is an attitude, a way of being in the world that one has, or that one develops. "It denotes attitudes that may be taken toward every object and every proposed end or ideal."[115]

To take two examples: That which marks Buddhism from its earliest manifestations to the present are not its *aspects* of institutionalized religion, its temples and rituals, although they certainly work to maintain its structure, but what marks it as Buddhism is an *attitude* of non-attachment, based on an understanding about the basic

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[114] Dewey (1934): 404.

[115] Dewey, 406.

impermanent nature of experience. Similarly, we may claim that Confucianism is grounded in an *attitude* of deference. It developed around the project of self-cultivation, a project itself emerging from an understanding of the inextricably social nature of the world in which we find ourselves (or better said, the world that we create).

> Zigong asked, "Is there one expression that can be acted upon until the end of one's days?"
>
> The Master replied, "There is *shu*: do not impose on others what you yourself do not want."[116]

Through the tenacious observance of *shu*, imagining oneself in the place of the other, one develops an understanding of appropriate modes of interaction. Rather than the Christian doctrine of treating others as you have determined that you would like to be treated, one instead shifts ones awareness to the field of interaction *between* oneself and the other and acts accordingly. Such an awareness brings with it a concomitant responsibility: the need for continual self-cultivation and, in the moment, adjustment to the present situation in order to optimize relatedness.[117] Dewey speaks of such an awareness as a "religious" attitude, a series of constant adjustments that, over time, effect changes in ourselves and outward into the world. His claim is that this adjustment is not brought about by religion, per se, but made possible by the religious attitude.

Dewey develops the distinction in this context between "religion" (a noun substantive) and "religious" (as adjectival or adverbial). There is no direct causality

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[116] *Analects*, 15.24

[117] We could add also the Christian *attitude* of brotherly love as a mode of being in the world, if we see all God's creatures as our relations.

involved in the changes that come about, because, to begin with, there is no one particular act that is insisted upon. Rather religious attitude is a way of modifying the fertile field in which forms of existence might be played out.

> For [the religious attitude] does not denote anything that can exist by itself or that can be organized into a particular and distinctive form of existence. It denotes attitudes that may be taken toward every object and every proposed end or ideal.[118]

The religious attitude, finally, is linked to a continual adjustment and betterment of the individual, a process of harmonization. Religions claim that they are responsible for the shift within the individual; that the church building itself, the chants, the prayers, the set of beliefs, the powers of the priests—the conglomeration of which we call religion—effect inner change. Dewey claims otherwise. He states that whenever an enduring inner change takes place, it emerges out of a definite religious attitude.[119] Furthermore, a religious attitude is based in "directed cooperative human endeavor."[120] This process is not one that is performed for individual spiritual achievement or growth, but within the spirit of communal development. Altogether, religious attitude is a manifestation of the trust in the appropriateness of the outcome of an underlying interrelatedness between this human and this environment. Dewey champions the *process of revealing*, not a completed revelation, and insists on particular relationships, not individual transformations.

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[118] Dewey, 404.

[119] Dewey: 406.

[120] Dewey: 409.

Dewey rejects religion, in great part, because it assumes the pre-existence of something more true that reality must conform to. The ideal, for Dewey, is contrary to this stance; it is not one of immutability, but of adaptability. Moreover, Dewey wants to disencumber the religious from its association to religion and its inexorable slide toward an unyielding institutionalization. When he brings into question the necessity that religious aspects of natural experience be tied to the supernatural aspects of religion, the important question then becomes what might be the possible dimensions of a religious nature of experience.

> For the moment we have a religion,...that moment the ideal factors in experience that may be called religious take on a load that is not inherent in them, a load of current beliefs and of institutional practices that are irrelevant to them.[121]

Religions, in other words, are historicized. The ideal attitude around which the religion began to acquire definition takes on, in a particular historical moment, the beliefs and practices that appear necessary for its expression. But like barnacles on a ship, they fuse to the hull in a seemingly natural process and are difficult to dislodge, ultimately to compromise the vessel itself.

This dichotomy between religion and the religious is a familiar one in theological discussions of religiosity, a term which has the meaning both of "religiose" – excessively, falsely, or sentimentally pious – as well as a sense of a deeply felt, meaningful, and potentially transformative connection to the divine. In the history of the study of religions, this is a distinction that has often been explored: Max Weber distinguished

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[121] Dewey, 404.

routinization from charisma, Ruth Benedict 'Apollonian' from 'Dionysian' religious modalities, Jack Goody literate from non-literate religions, and Victor Turner structure from communitas.[122]

The modern thinker who has dealt with this question most profoundly is Martin Buber, whose project – like Dewey's – was to endow the social sphere with a religious dimension and in his insistence on revolution over reform, we can see reflections as well of the spirit behind Lu Xun's critique of Confucianism. Influenced by Kierkegaard and the existentialist thought of his time, Buber struggled in much of his writing to make religious belief meaningful and developed a sense of religiosity (*Erneuerung*) which stresses re-newal, re-creation, and re-invention. To the degree to which a religion can encompass such a capacity for renewal, it retains its ability to make religious belief both meaningful on a personal level and effective as potential forces of change in the social sphere. Buber's vocabulary was one of renewal and renaissance, but not one of gradual reform. "[B]y renewal I don't mean anything gradual, an accumulation of small changes," he wrote in his "Renewal of Judaisim" of 1909, "but something sudden and awe-some; not continuation and improvement, but return and revolution."[123] To change the religion of ones father is a revolutionary act, but is essential for spiritual renaissance; reform, on the other hand, is a matter of replacing old idols with new ones within the same institutional framework.

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[122] Thiselton, Anthony, *A Concise Encylopedia of the Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2002.

[123] Buber, Martin, *The Martin Buber Reader: Essential Writings*, (ed. Asher Biemann), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

To continue Dewey's analysis, not only are religions historicized, they are institutionalized as well, a process by which they increasingly become conceptually distorted and morally freighted. The process of institutionalization is necessarily one of corruption because human beings are involved and, fallible creatures that we are, we inevitably taint what we touch.

> How could the course of religion in its entire sweep not be marked by practices that are shameful in their cruelty and lustfulness, and by beliefs that are degraded and intellectually incredible?[124]

As mentioned above, the alternative conception that Dewey presents is of religious attitude unencumbered by the baggage of historicized and institutionalized religion. However, this transformed conception ought not tend one toward a belief in a pre-existing abstract ideal, although we may be predisposed to long for such a connection, but ought to open up the possibilities for the experience (which for a *junzi* would be a regular one) of a "unified self." Dewey writes: "The religious is [manifest]...only when the ends of moral conviction arouse emotions that are not only intense but are actuated and supported by ends so inclusive that they unify the self."[125] The implication here is not that the self has been fragmented and is made whole by the religious attitude, but that the religious attitude is marked by a particular self acting in the world in such ways that further her ends while concurrently furthering those of the community in which she exists, "the universe to which the inclusive self is related."[126] Dewey makes two

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[124] Dewey, 403.

[125] Dewey, 408.

[126] Dewey, 408.

fundamental points in this essay: that the substance of the religious attitude is just this unique self-disclosure in community and that such self-expression stands in danger of getting smothered by religion. Such a non-productive relationship has destructive consequences for both the individual and the community.

Deweyan Democracy and Confucianism

We can now begin to examine some ways in which the Deweyan sense of the religious might be brought to bear on early 20th century Confucianism in China by turning to an earlier essay of Dewey's, "Search for the Great Community" (1927). Dewey here examines the "principles of associated life" which define democracy and makes a distinction, useful to our purposes, between the "idea" and the "form" of democracy. The idea of democracy represents an aspiration that is never fully realized, even when the state is functioning at its best. In addition, it is barren until it is given form, via the institutions and human relationships that make up the democratic state. The idea is not fully responsible for the forms that it takes, as these are constrained by such factors as historical particularities and the specificities of political and human interactions. Indeed, there are multiple empirical factors at work that determine the particular form any democracy takes in a particular time and place. Dewey's model of the person emphasizes interdependence, social learning, and individuality as distinction within a community; his epistemology is premised on the belief that "knowledge is a function of association and communication; it depends upon tradition, upon tools and methods socially transmitted,

developed and sanctioned."[127] The idea of democracy is, for Dewey, the realization of community.

Here Dewey wants to interrogate what he calls the *idea* of democracy. In this and other essays on democracy, he works through his distinction between religiousness and religion in a more fundamental vocabulary, with its political application in mind. While the religious attitude, for Dewey, implies a communal endeavor, democracy is an explicitly social undertaking – so much so that democracy becomes for Dewey a religious (in the Deweyan lexicon) idea. Democracy is not one political form among many, but an idea of *how* particular persons should interact optimally within their environments; furthermore democracy is, for Dewey, a quality inherent in each individual. "Regarded as an idea, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself."[128]

Dewey asks that when we begin to contemplate the philosophical dimensions of democracy we start by conceptualizing community as "a fact." Democracy when it is defined in terms of such abstractions as liberty and equality, is not what can give us the dimensions of democracy; these are empty terms, shibboleths, when they remain in the realm of the utopian. It is only when these abstractions take on some dimension, when they are conceived of as aspects of associative community, that they begin, for Dewey, to work as defining aspects of democracy. Equality, for example, is not a "natural

[127] Dewey (1927): 298

[128] Dewey (1927): 295

possession," but a fruit of the community, the result of a community's endeavor to act on behalf of its members, especially those who are least advantaged.[129]

Dewey wants to make a clear distinction between democracy as a way of life and democracy as a system of government. Although the two are related, the idea of democracy in the former sense was a "wider and fuller idea" than can ever be exemplified by the state. Dewey imagined it affecting all modes of human association: family, school, industry, religion; as such, democracy was an inherently participatory ideal. Robert Westbrook notes: "Whatever his weaknesses as a political theorist and strategist, Dewey was never guilty of shortchanging democracy as a moral ideal."[130]

Importantly for Dewey, and for our following attempt to interrogate Confucianism within a Deweyan framework, true community is in many regards also deemed an achievement:

> We are born organic beings associated with others, but we are not born members of a community. The young have to be brought within the traditions, outlook and interests which characterize a community by means of education, by unremitting instruction and by learning in connection with the phenomena of overt association. Everything which is distinctively human is learned, not native, even though it could not be learned without native structures which mark man off from other animals.[131]

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[129] Dewey: 296. "Equality does not signify that kind of mathematical or physical equivalence in virtue of which any one element may be substituted for another. It denotes effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique in each, irrespective of physical and psychological inequalities. It is not a natural possession but is a fruit of the community when its action is directed by its character as a community."

[130] Westbrook, Robert, *John Dewey and American Democracy,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991. p

[131] Dewey (1927): 297.

However, what we call democracy is that which is conceptualized as the realization of that community. In short, Dewey conceives of us as born into a community, and our goal is, or ought to be, to work toward realizing the qualities (of democracy) that make us most fully human.

While too close a dialogue between Confucianism and democracy would run the risk of glossing over their many distinctions and dissimilarities, nonetheless it can be useful to take some insights from Dewey's conceptual model of democracy that make distinctions between the idea and the form of democracy and apply those insights to the Confucianism that was the object of Lu Xun's critique. We might say that by the early 20th century Confucianism had become more and more of a "religion" and to a greater degree cut off from its "religious" aspects. We might also productively claim that while Lu Xun assumed the "idea" of Confucianism, he protested the "form" that it had come to manifest as state ideology.

While an ideology can thought of as a communal, or agreed-upon way of looking at things, a collection of ideas, it most commonly has the more Marxist understanding of a set of ideas that a dominant class of society imposes on the populace, or society, as a whole. Dominant ideologies are ones that have the disturbing characteristic of appearing to be neutral. They can best be described as expressions of *apparently* transcendent imperatives for conduct; consequently, we feel that we must follow the dictates of an ideology because they come from somewhere outside ourselves. Ideologies naturalize, they historicize, and they eternalize. Ideological structures appear to be natural, to be structured according to an almost divine order of things; they appear to be the logical

conclusion to an historical development; and there is an assumption that now that this (natural) state of affairs has been reached, that things will – and ought to – continue down this same road, barring regression (or enemies of the state). While the Deweyan sense of ideology does not directly reference its Marxian hegemonic sense, it does reflect an understanding of democracy as having acquired, in the conception and practices of its adherents, these naturalized, historicized and eternalized aspects.

Dewey helps us to re-conceptualize the relationship between ideas and their application by claiming that if we stop conceiving of ideas as ideologies, but rather treat them as tools, as things that we have made, and thereby as things that can be adjusted (or differently disposed), then we can imagine that we might try them out and adapt them and change them. When we begin to think of ideas as tools to cope with the world, then we are freed from ideologically-bound behavior, as well. The great influence here was, of course, Darwin. What Darwinism implied was that the reason we have minds is not to mirror the world objectively, because there is no adaptive utility in mirroring the world objectively. The reason we have minds is to help us cope with our environments. Once you think about thought and ideas as a form of coping, then you are no longer thinking ideologically.

Dewey tells us that it is the natural progression of powerful ideas, both the religious and the political, to become ossified over time. Form is conservative; it does not reform itself. The hidden danger to reform is our own unwillingness to criticize what we mistakenly view as sacred traditions. "We seem to be approaching a state of government by hired promoters of opinion called publicity agents. But the more serious enemy is

deeply concealed in hidden entrenchments."[132] We must not think of the tradition as "sacred." Neither must we be fearful of applying the experimental method to "human concerns." We do ourselves and our community a disservice in the "idealization of the long established, in a facile optimism assumed as a cloak, in riotous glorification of things 'as they are,' intimidation of all dissenters – ways which depress and dissipate thought all the more effectually because they operate with subtle and unconscious pervasiveness."[133] We cannot go back to an innocent, Rousseau-inspired period. Rather, the only means by which we can "learn to be human" is though a conscious involvement in effective communication. Dewey conceptualizes the need for such communication as the moral claim that we have and must make on one another[134] and develops an image of transformation that highlights the role of the community. The individual gains meaning only through transformation that affects the community and the goal of community development; what Dewey calls "democracy" involves a religious dedication by individuals to this task.

However much Dewey may have been made uneasy over the "publicity agents" who were squelching criticism of democracy in the United States in the 1920s, it is fair to say that this was a much less dire political state of affairs than that of early 20th century China. The virulence with which Lu Xun criticized not only those in power, but those who capitulated to that power, was an indication of the degree to which the culture had

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[132] Dewey: 302.

[133] Dewey: 302.

[134] Dewey: 297.

succumbed to the worship of the "sacred" forms. After the protests and calls for reform during the post-May Fourth period, we see a marked tendency on the part of the reformers to look outside their borders for solutions to China's problems. In the following chapter we will explore the attraction of the Western concept of the individual and its appeal to Chinese reformers of this period. The philosophy of Nietzsche was especially widely read during this time. How was he understood, or misunderstood by Lu Xun? China was determined to modernize. What did it mean to become modern? What models did the reformers turn to? What were the consequences of this somewhat reluctant encounter with modernity?

Confucian Conservatism

However, before turning to a discussion of "modernization" in China during this period, it would be useful to discuss briefly "Chinese conservatism." To say that the Confucian elite was "conservative" is only to rehearse one of the more durable clichés on which our understanding of the high culture of old China – and, in somewhat different ways, the popular culture as well – is based. As Dewey remarked in 1920, "That the Chinese do not progress more systematically and rapidly because they are a conservative people is clearly repeating in other words the thing that needs to be explained."[135] Nonetheless, conscious attachment to, and replication of, the customs and judgments of earlier generations – which is the general sense of "conservatism" in popular usage – is

[135] John Dewey, "What Holds China Back?", in *Characters and Events: Popular Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1929, Vol. I, 212.

so conspicuous an attribute of Confucian culture from first to last that the term itself is inescapable. The best we can do is to try to refine it to make it more useful.

It is worth noting, in the first place, that the manner in which "conservatism" is expressed, whether in attitude or in language, depends to a considerable degree upon the sense of the past which animates the conservative impulse: the dimensions of that past and the general perception of transmission and elucidation of inherited intellectual assumptions, the communication through time of an acknowledged "great" tradition, is a different thing from the social conservatism that is involved in the repetition of acts the authenticity of which derives from a vague awareness, or an unthinking conviction, that identical acts have "always" been performed. The latter, indeed, may not qualify as "conservatism" at all, but rather be a kind of "traditionalism," lacking the self-consciousness that distinguishes the true conservative.[136]

In this connection, it must also be borne in mind that the environment in which "conservative" thought is expressed profoundly affects its substance. Affirmation of the continuing relevance of inherited modes of conduct and belief becomes increasingly explicit as it becomes defensive – that is, as changing circumstance calls the value of the

[136] This distinction between "conservatism" and "traditionalism" is taken from "Time, Institutions and Action: An Essay on Traditions and Their Understanding," J.A. Pocock, in *Politics and Experience: Essays Presented to Professor Michael Oakeshott on the Occasion of His Retirement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968. 209-237 Oakeshott's views of conservatism has limited relevance to Confucianism in that it has been, throughout its history, remarkably adept at assimilating other traditions and thus accommodating change. Conservatives, in Oakeshott's view, will have nothing to do with innovations designed to meet merely hypothetical situations. Confucian adaptation and rearticulation (for instance to Buddhism and, in this later era, to Enlightenment capitalism), on the other hand, took place in response to very real threats to Chinese culture and could hardly be seen as hypothetical. For more on this subject, see *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, Charlotte Furth, ed., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1976, especially Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Notes on Conservatism in General and in China in Particular" and Charlotte Furth, "Culture and Politics in Modern Chinese Conservatism."

inheritance into question. It may be, as Karl Mannheim suggests, that conservatism as an identifiable intellectual and cultural style can be seen as the product of a process of cultural disintegration, when "the simple habit of living more or less unconsciously, as though the old ways of life were still appropriate, gradually gives way to a deliberate effort to maintain them under the new conditions, and they are raised to the level of conscious reflection, of deliberate 'recollection'."[137] In China in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as the cultural and economic crisis deepened and the challenge to established assumptions became ever more explicit, Confucianism became clearly conservative in the Mannheimian sense.

There is good reason, however, to regard Confucianism as a conservative mode of thought in terms of its own historical development, irrespective of the challenge of the West that Lu Xun and others of his generation were confronting. The Confucian tradition had always taken into account the possibility that imperial reality had the potential to mock the Confucian theoretical ideal. This reality is evidenced not only by the institutionalization of the Censorate, but by the way in which the effort to "return to the Way," to retrieve the essential (a truer, earlier, more efficacious) meaning of the Confucian message, played itself out in many historical manifestions. This effort lay behind all the great reformations of Confucian thought: Tang and Song dynasty neo-Confucianism, Wang Yangming's confrontation with Buddhist challenge and the

[137] Karl Mannheim, "Conservative Thought," in Kurt Wolff (ed.), *From Karl Mannheim*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1971. 173

subsequent incorporation of an emphasis on intuition and self-transformation, and the several attempts during the Qing dynasty at reform.

Given the vividness of the Confucian sense of the past, the place assigned to history in the classical curriculum is not surprising. Confucius himself valorized the texts and eminent rulers of the past. Thus, from the outset, Confucians regarded history as a central authority of their beliefs and, through the articulation of this history in *li*, as the principal vehicle by which these beliefs were transmitted.

Certainly, the Chinese have not been alone in using the force of history as a source of moral suasion. One thinks of the coronation of Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor, thereby immediately conferring on himself the power of many centuries of moral and spiritual legitimacy. What makes the Chinese situation remarkable is the nature of their perception of the history that inspired them: not only its undeniable antiquity, but the associated sense of an unbroken continuity of human experience reaching back from the present to a very distant past. As well, there is the attendant certainty of the relevance of ancient values to the moral dilemmas of any age. Confucian scholars and those in the Censorate grappled with the problem of the country being turned from the *dao* by opportunistic or corrupted Imperial servants (or, indeed, the Emperor himself). And yet at the same time they lived with the belief and the assurance that there had been no devastating rupture in the flow of their culture from the Golden Age in which Confucian inspiration had its source.

As has been widely noted, time, in the Chinese imagination, moved not along a line from an identifiable point of origin to a predictable culmination. Rather, the

traditional Chinese time sense was cyclical: human experience turning upon itself in circles, even as cosmic events repeat themselves at fixed intervals.[138] This perception of time influenced in direct and striking fashion the understanding of history. Viewed from within its own historiographic traditions, Chinese history lacked an emphatic beginning; there was no cosmogonic act carrying with it a sense of metahistorical purpose and design. It also lacked an eschatological conviction, the sense of movement toward some ultimate fate, some material or moral end. History was not an inevitable succession of events, but instead a persistence of fixed patterns and types, variations on the theme of the "eternal return."

One might argue, then, that by temperament those educated in the traditional Chinese system might therefore be characterized as "nostalgic" rather than "hopeful." Certainly that was one critique of the Confucian "glorification" of the past and when, toward the end of the 19th century, the idea of progress[139] began to make itself felt in the Chinese intellectual world, the apparent need for a fundamental revision of traditional assumptions began to be felt. Time itself became an element in the unfolding controversies of Chinese intellectual life: the sense of urgency, the frustration with a long-stagnating present, and a new sense of optimism presaged revolutionary change.

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[138] Chinese astronomers meticulously recorded and very early learned to predict with considerable accuracy astronomical phenomena. These cosmic events were, as well, understood to be tied to the moral qualifications or present standing of the current Emperor.

[139] I am thinking here, specifically, of the popularity that Social Darwinism that took hold in China, a development that will be discussed in the following chapter. As well, there was the Western Enlightenment confidence in the orderly evolution of political institutions and cultural values.

We must qualify the above-mentioned "fatalism" that is oftentimes attributed to the Confucian tradition, for Confucian scholars as both historians and moral instructors clearly understood that times do change and require that the Classics adapt to the times. As noted earlier, Confucius and Mencius both warned against a mindless aping of tradition. A person's life might be no more than a fragment of some far larger pattern, but in itself it had a beginning and an end, and each life must be justified in terms of the Confucian project of engagement with the problems of a particular historical/moral situation.

However in China by the early-20th century, few could believe with genuine conviction that the institutions of imperial monarchy could meet unchanged the reasonable needs of its people or of the nation *vis à vis* the rest of the world. In the context of late imperial Confucianism, conservatism was no longer a matter of investment in a mutually beneficial mode of engagement, but had degenerated into a matter of habit and privilege. On the whole, Confucian conservatism had become, essentially, a defense of the established order – a defense, that is, of the dynasty and of the interests of the dynasty's Confucian "servant-participants." This was not the sort of Oakeshott conservatism in which institutions that have stood the test of time (as reasonable means to accepted ends) ought not be tampered with for the sake of something as vague as "progress." Rather, Confucianism was becoming conservative in the Mannheimian sense: it no longer reflected an implicit agreement as to the workability and sustainability of moral and social patterns of behavior. Intellectually, it had become

almost an act of will, of blind faith, of empty ritual; and institutionally it had devolved into an inflexible and finally panic-stricken defense of vested interests.

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> "Imagine an iron house having not a single window and virtually indestructible, with all its inmates sound asleep and about to die of suffocation. Dying in their sleep, they won't feel the pain of death. Now if you raise a shout to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making these unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you really think you are doing them a good turn?"
>
> "But if a few wake up, you can't say there is no hope of destroying the iron house."
>
> True, in spite of my own conviction, I could not blot out hope, for hope belongs to the future. I had no negative evidence able to refute his affirmation of faith. So I finally agreed to write . . .[140]

This metaphor of the iron house is Lu Xun's and one he invokes in his preface to *A Call to Arms*, his first collection of short stories, published in 1922. Here he recounts a conversation he had with his friend, the historian Qian Xuantong, in which he speaks in stark language of his despair as to the possibility for change in China. "Why bother?" seems to be the overwhelming feeling. And yet he did bother. Lu Xun approached the problem of political engagement through his moral commitment. It was a moral duty, as he saw it, to keep going down a road when even he was not sure where it would lead. He, no less than traditional Confucians, felt that a *description* of politics was that it was a dirty, but necessary, business, and he felt distinctly unsuited for direct involvement. And

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[140] Lu Xun, Preface to *A Call to Arms*, from *Lu Xun: Selected Works*, Vol. 1, (translated by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang), Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1980, pp37-38.

yet he affirmed the Confucian *ideal* of politics as based on an ethics of intentions in pursuit of moral ends.[141] Lu Xun had identified the "deplorable character" of the Chinese people as the fundamental cause of the country's problems (a state of affairs that Nietzsche had labeled "higher Chinadom"). Such an attitude implied that the only solution was to change the nature of the people, and thus their propensity to act in a certain way, through intellectual and spiritual revolution. Political revolution could change only the external forms of government; it could not render the truly essential renovation for a better future.

Here we can distinguish the principal distinction that must be drawn between the political impetus behind the views of the majority of the New Culture advocates for change and those of Lu Xun. Cultural innovation is not an easy process to program; and yet there was a belief during that period in China in a strategy of cultural transformation – whether in Hu Shi's liberal democracy or Chen Duxiu's eventual push toward Communism – that was "scientifically" reliable. Implicit in this strategy was the assumption that a society, or a culture, can be disassembled piece by piece, its parts evaluated as to their usefulness, and then put back together altered in social form and intellectual substance. "It is always reason that guides and directs," wrote Hu Shi.[142] This was at the core of the progressive political agenda. Its strategies for social and political

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[141] For Lu Xun's stormy relationship with the Communist party and the ways in which his moral stature was abused by the party after his death see Lin Yu-sheng's "Lu Xun, The Intellectual" in *Lu Xun and His Legacy* (edited by Leo Ou-fan Lee), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985; Merle Goldman's "The Political Use of Lu Xun in the Cultural Revolution and After" in the same volume; and, Leo Ou-fan Lee's *Voices from the Iron House*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987.

[142] Hu Shi, "A Reply to Mr. Ch'en Hsü-ching," quoted in Grieder, p268.

change were based on the assumption that desired ends could be achieved through reforms in the political institutions alone. That is, once an understanding of what progress would depend upon (acquisition of technology and democratic political institutions, for instance), then change would be a matter of acquiring the knowledge necessary to achieve this goal.[143] In contrast, Lu Xun's vision of society was as a living entity; it was a Confucian view of moral community as a vital organism that cannot be dismembered – even with the sharp edge of reason – without lethal consequences to the life force that animates it. Radical change, therefore, would be for him not a matter of redefining ends, but of revitalizing the very conditions for the possibility for the production of change.

Conclusion

Upon his return to the United States in 1920, Dewey commented on the spirit of the New Culture movement for which he had served as both commentator and occasional mentor.

> In politics, Young China aims at the institution of government by and of law . . . But it realizes that political development is mainly indirect; that it comes in consequence of the growth of science, industry and commerce, and of the new human relations and responsibilities they produce; that it springs from education, from the enlightenment of the people, and from

[143] See Mary Tiles, "Balancing acts: rational agency and efficacious action," in International Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1999) for a comparison between the ancient Greek and traditional Chinese valuations of those skills necessary for attaining stable political order (or "the good life," more narrowly conceived). Action that is efficacious is that which tends toward harmony (*he*), but that action is not attuned to any predetermined end. Rather, its attunement is to the variety of factors and influences that make up the environment in which it is unfolding

special training in the knowledge and technical skill required in the administration of a modern state.[144]

However, Dewey went on to note: "One realizes how the delicate and multifarious business of the modern state is dependent upon knowledge and habits of mind that have grown up slowly and that are now counted upon as a matter of course."

Dewey claimed that philosophy's biggest mistake is to extrapolate from the everyday, from the lived, and then to expect to make distinctions that can be mapped back on to human experience and human needs. We might do well to keep this assertion in mind as we move to the following chapter and ask the following question: If we want to maintain that Lu Xun is anti-Confucian, why does he not advocate those answers to China's problems that others, such as Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi, take up, communism and liberal democracy respectively?

In order to answer this question, we must perhaps begin by wondering if the fact that he does *not* have an answer is itself part of the answer. If we look at his reluctance to claim for himself the label of "revolutionary," at his recalcitrant relationship with the Communist Party[145] and his rejection of all "isms" and consider these in the light of his ruthless critique of contemporary Chinese culture and its slavish adherence to a moribund

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[144] John Dewey, "The New Leaven in Chinese Politics," *Asia*, April 1920; reprinted in *Characters and Events: Popular Essays in Social and Political Philosophy*, Volume 1 (edited by Joseph Ratner), New York, H. Holt and Company, 1929, p253.

[145] Although Lu Xun was never an official member of the Communist Party, the prominence he gives in his writing on exposing the exploitation of peasants and the working class fit well with the revolutionary message of the CCP. In 1937, after Lu Xun's death, the Lu Xun Academy of Arts was established at the Communist base of Yan'an to instruct artists in the art of propaganda. The party used his reputation as a sort of "symbolic capital" – the "accumulated prestige and honor" in Pierre Bourdieu's term – that had built up during the 20s and 30s to give moral credence to their program.

past, then we must wonder what possibilities for change remain open. What strategies might obtain for Lu Xun?

However, here we come up against a more "meta" question about the presuppositions that lay behind framing our inquiry in such terms. By looking for possible strategies, aren't we already thinking in terms of a means/end relationship and searching for a specific ideological commitment for shaping his political agenda? That is, if one takes up the political framework of an alternative model to be projected onto the Chinese world, what is taking place is the imposition of political will to achieve a pre-established goal. I would suggest that in doing so, we would consign Lu Xun to a course comparable to one both Chen and Hu advocated. A better and more appropriate question than "*what* strategies for change might obtain?" would be "*how* did Lu Xun appropriate transformative strategies?" As Roger Ames notes: "Taking our cue from Chinese medicine, we have to think physiologically rather than anatomically: in understanding Confucianism, we might need to feel a pulse [*zhenmai*] rather than locate an artery."[146] We have seen already that Lu Xun spoke of change using a medical model and medical metaphors,[147] and although he never explicitly described himself as such, it is not difficult to imagine him as the doctor who is called upon to cure China's *xin*, her heart-and-mind.

This alternative way of framing the question presumes not that radical change be conceived as a radical break from the current situation, but posits alternatively that the

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[146] Roger T. Ames, "New Confucianism: A Native Response to Western Philosophy," in *Chinese Political Culture, 1989-2000*, Shiping Hua, ed., (Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 2001). p72

[147] For instance, his decision to give up his medical studies in Japan, mentioned above, was expressed in terms of diagnostics and treatment.

future, even one vastly different from the present, might emerge from the past in an organic fashion. Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi assumed that the existing political and social order would change by giving birth to a new order (*paisheng*), an order that stands independent of its sources. In this model, the causal relationship requires the origin of change to enter into the equation as an introduced element, familiar to a Western analysis of change which generally requires an explanation in terms of an efficient cause. That is, the principles employed to answer the question of why a thing (or a state of affairs) is the way it is most often are conceived of in terms of Aristotle's four causes, the efficient cause being the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing this matter and that form together in the production of a thing (or state of affairs). For example, the efficient cause of a new automobile would include the factory workers, robots, quality control workers, and others who use steel and plastic to build the car in accordance with the design for its construction. Clearly the resulting automobile would not be what it is without their contribution.

To use the situational example of China in the New Culture Movement, the necessary efficient cause for change during this period, if we are to go by the model proposed by Hu Shi, would have been the principles and institutions of liberal democracy that he claimed were based on Western scientific principles. Sensitive to the charge that he might be betraying his own cultural heritage, Hu did not intend to blindly apply Western ideas without concern for China's own traditions. Rather, Hu proposed that the *Hanxue* scholarship – historical scholarship on "Han learning" in reaction to the recent more metaphysical approach of the recent "*dao* learning"– arising in the early Qing

Dynasty rested on the same methods as Western science.[148] To apply the formula of efficient cause to this situation, then, a modern China would be seen to result from the "labor" of liberal democratic institutions in accordance with their principles. However, as we shall see in what follows, Hu's proposal was an incontrovertible failure for a number of reasons, chief among them the paradoxical fact that liberal democracy can only arise from a democratic society; it offers no source of power other than public opinion, which cannot be effective in a system driven by brute force.[149]

In contrast, the strategic model that Lu Xun works within is that of something transforming itself (*hua sheng*) to be something else, but with the presumption that what develops is inherent already within. We can contrast this to the Aristotelian conception of potentiality where matter undergoes change by "taking on" a new form, where matter has within it the potential for change but needs the "addition" of a new form in order to activate the process of change. The metaphor is a directly sexual one, form conceived of as male, and matter female, and the process one of outside/in – that is, the active element is introduced from without. A *hua sheng* model, by contrast, conceives of change as a transformation, although it is one that is engendered, or caused to develop, out of the "underlying myriad things," the Confucian project of re-articulation of the tradition to make it appropriate and dynamic for its own time. Change in this sense and within this

[148] This is a strategy similar to the later Communist invocation of a "popular tradition" in Chinese history.

[149] For a discussion of Hu Shih's project, see Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970. And for background on *Hanxue* scholarship, see Hall, David L. and Roger T. Ames (1998). Chinese Philosophy. In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. Retrieved January18, 2005, from http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/G001SECT9.

tradition is a qualitative adaptation, emerging in response to the conditions of the present moment. In answer to a "why" question, we want an explanation and an efficient cause is an explanatory factor. The Confucian question, however, is not one of "why" but one of "how" – change occurs "by way of" A to A'.

Lu Xun, as a man of his time, was someone who was in the business of "creating a world," one of the characteristics of a *junzi*. We will look more closely at these ideas and the way in which they function when Lu Xun *does* look to the West; as in the effort to become "modern," Lu Xun turned to both Darwinism and Nietzsche. Our presuppositions will be twofold: 1) that China's attempts at revitalization involved turning outside and drawing the external into itself, and 2) that in the process of translating external sensibilities into the Chinese center, they become radically altered. In reviewing and assessing this process, my goal is to not simply point to the manner and degree to which Western concepts are misunderstood, but to approach the inquiry with the attitude that such mis-understandings and mis-translations might prove to work better and be more appropriate to the Chinese context.

CHAPTER 4

CHINA (EN)COUNTERS MODERNITY

Introduction

Daniel Bell and Hahm Chaibong note in the introduction to their recent (2003) volume, "Confucianism for the Modern World," that modernity as an overarching goal in China was almost never in doubt. They claim, in fact, that "one of the most remarkable aspects of Confucianism's encounter with modernity is that unlike in the case of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, there has never been an organized Confucian resistance to modernization. Confucianism seems to be one 'religion' where one would be hard put to find any 'fundamentalist' adherents at all."[150] While certainly there were powerfully conservative elements that at times prevailed and helped to define and delimit Confucianism as a persistent ethical and political doctrine, during its long history there was a tendency, perhaps more powerful, for Confucianism to reinvent itself in response to philosophical and political influences and threats from outside of China (for example, Buddhism) or from within (Daoism). As well, there were the political and bureaucratic adjustments and resistance to incursions by the Mongols and the Manchus, one example being the retention of the civil service examination as the route to civil service throughout all of these periods of "foreign" rule. The single most striking aspect of Chinese adaptability during such periods is not the survival of Chinese culture under a vastly

[150] *Confucianism for the Modern World*, (edited by Daniel A. Bell and Hahm Chaibong), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p2.

foreign rule, but the conceptual conditions that made a singular vitality and growth possible within an ethos stressing continuity.

However, by the final decades of the Qing dynasty the process of social and political reinvention had reached a standstill and during the early years of the 20th century there was widespread agreement that political and social change was essential, although the direction was as yet uncharted. By the early years of the 20th century, China was economically, politically, socially, and philosophically sinking under the weight of an oppressive combination of historical factors – the Qing dynasty survived until 1911 only because there was no regime in sight to replace it and because both Chinese and foreign interests in China preferred order, no matter how petrified, to disruption. This is not a formula for a dynamic society and in part the eruption of intellectual and political fervor after 1919 can be seen as the result of those many years of stagnation. In order to understand some of the circumstances leading to the May Fourth period, a brief historical review of that period is in order.

The treaty that ended the Opium War in 1842 had begun what the Chinese called "the century of humiliation."[151] This debasement took a number of forms: Foreigners could live and trade in China, protected by their own law rather than Chinese law. Tariffs were kept low to favor foreign goods in the domestic market. Missionaries preached Christianity, calling the Chinese ignorant heathens. The largest and most prosperous cities were the treaty ports, where foreigners "had special privileges, ran the local

[151] Murphey, Rhoads, "Introduction," *The Chinese: Adapting the Past, Building the Future*, Robert F. Dernberger, ed., Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan Press, 1991, p13.

administration, dominated trade and banking, and excluded Chinese from their parks and clubs."[152] In addition, China was humbled many times in small-scale wars that both demonstrated Western technical superiority and brought a series of concessions from the Qing government.

These humiliations were especially harsh for a people so proud of their tradition, who in their history could find no civilization that rivaled theirs. And yet those in power still found it difficult to acknowledge that they could or should learn anything other than technological expertise from these latest "barbarians." Meanwhile, China's economic decline became graver, the government more ineffective, and the country was humbled yet again when Japan annexed Korea. The archconservative Empress Dowager died in 1908 of old age, and in 1911 the dynasty expired, according to Rhoads Murphey "of similar causes [i.e., old age], rather than because of the strength of the poorly organized revolutionary effort which overthrew it."[153]

With no strongly organized opposition by 1916 China had broken up into rival warlord regimes, although nationalistic sentiment was growing. When at Versailles in 1919 the Japanese were given rights to the former German concession areas, bringing them onto Chinese soil, mass demonstrations, led by students and intellectuals, broke out. These demonstrations – the May Fourth Movement – marked the real beginning of the struggle for a "new direction" for China. With China mired in a degenerate past, some within the country had begun to look to Western concepts as a source of reform. Max

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[152] Murphey, 13

[153] Murphey, 14

Weber, for one, had argued that Confucianism, with its focus on the individual accommodating to society (rather than actively imposing change on the world around him), was the key hindrance to economic development in China; that with Confucianism as the official ideology China would fail to modernize.

In this chapter I will be looking at the period during which the Chinese began seriously to engage Western modernity, in all of its philosophical, political, artistic and economic forms. While this encounter had been taking place for many centuries – China has never been as gloriously isolationist as much of the literature has claimed – it was only at a point when the need for change within the Chinese state became impossible to ignore that the Chinese themselves began to seek out other (e.g., Western) possible philosophical and political modes of being in the world. The recognition of this need led to a rethinking and reorganization of Chinese culture on a scale and within a time frame unprecedented in its history. As Yu Ying-shih notes in his "Radicalization of China": "The idea of total demolition of tradition as a precondition for the building of a new society was wholly inconceivable to the traditional Chinese imagination, but it was one of the absolute presuppositions of the May Fourth icononoclastic antitraditionalism."[154] The fierce encounter between tradition and modernity in early 20th-century China will be the focus of this chapter. Protest led to change, and change at this time led to a turn to the West. But how were Western theoretical models imported to China? What happened to them, what did they look like, how were they (mis)understood? And in what ways did they then function within a Chinese context? Lu Xun wildly distorted what he "took"

[154] Yu Ying-shih, "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century," in Daedalus, Spring 1993, p133.

from the West for his cultural renovation project; however, my contention is that his "grabbism" (*nalai zhuyi*) will prove to be more suitable for the project of rearticulation than, for example, the direct appropriation of Communism that Chen Duxiu advocated or Hu Shi's liberal democracy. Although Lu Xun appropriates any number of Western concepts in his critique of Confucianism, this critique remains within the Confucian tradition. To illustrate, I will pay particular attention to Lu Xun's appropriation of Nietzsche and the Nietzschean concept of the *Übermensch*.

What Do We Mean by "Chinese culture"?

It is important to note here that while I use the term "Chinese culture," it is with recognition that this term in many ways contributes to a myth: that there was ever a single thing called "Chinese culture." That is, although one might acknowledge the abovementioned influences and adjustments of the Chinese culture to often radically novel ideas, still there is a tendency when speaking of China to acquiesce to the myth of a singular native culture. Steven Owen writes in the Harvard Asia Pacific Review (Summer 2002): "There was never such a single body of values, beliefs, and practices to be characterized as internally coherent and consistent through time, essentially native, and impervious to outside influence." In many ways, the idea of "traditional" Chinese culture was a modern necessity, serving either as the enemy of the forces of modernization or as a nostalgic or utopian trope. In actuality, pre-modern China was a constantly changing field of contention, made up of different groups with different values, and "Chinese culture" is better conceived as a shifting aggregate of cultural systems within historical

China. However, it is in the former mythic sense – that of a monolithic entity – that the culture becomes the straw man foe generally conjured up by May Fourth intellectuals.

In addition, we must acknowledge that what we mean in English by the term "culture" comes with its own history, in the main unreflected upon as well. When we talk about culture, we usually conflate two senses of the term: that of "high" culture, or culture as art, and culture as a whole way of life. Culture in the former sense, separated from the whole of society, is regularly associated with the idea of perfection through the study of the arts. One becomes cultivated through a process of refinement. However, it was not until the mid-18th century that this came to be what the term connoted, and its complex relationship to the term "civilization" began to emerge at that time as well. In fact, Raymond Williams sees "culture" as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." Its etymology is from the Latin *colere*, a word that has a range of meanings: inhabit, cultivate, protect, honor with worship. Williams goes on to observe that culture "in all its early uses was a noun of process: the tending *of* something, basically crops or animals." Culture as an *abstract* process (as in "enculturate") or the end product of such a process was not understood as such until the mid-19th century (especially after the Enlightenment period in France and the Romantic movement in Germany.)[155] Thus, while our common understanding of the term – that of enculturation – is the one that has taken hold in the West, it is important to note that this is a term that evolved from earlier, more process-oriented, origins.

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[155] See Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp87-93.

Chinese culture, as I will be using the term, or more specifically Confucian culture, will encompass a tradition of civilization marked for over 2000 years by the use of writing, urbanization, a developed artistic culture, social stratification and a political structure which more or less successfully coordinated a huge population. The equivalent modern Chinese term for culture is *wenhua*. As Leo Ou-fan Lee notes, the word is made of two characters – *wen* and *hua*, each of which is commonly used in the classical texts, although they are seldom combined together as a word compound. When the compound does occur, it is already loaded with a "cultured" meaning: *wen*, which serves to define the beginning of (elite) Chinese culture, when combined with *hua*, connotes that especially in its institutional form (*wenzhi*) it has a kind of transformative power – in a Confucian context a transformative influence that lies in moral suasion through education (as in *jiaohua*).[156] Lee notes, too, that it may not be coincidental that the character *wen*, which originally means pattern, also forms part of the Chinese word compound for both culture and literature (*wenxue*), as well as the literary arts (*wenyi*). These are all modern Chinese words, probably taken from Japanese renditions of Western terms that in turn were borrowed from classical Chinese vocabulary.[157] Embedded, therefore, in the modern Chinese terminology of culture one can determine a complex history of cultural transactions or mediations between Asia and the West as China entered the modern world.

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[156] Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Some Notes on *culture*, *Humanism*, and *the Humanities*" in *Modern Chinese Cultural Discourses*, Surfaces Vol. V, 1995.

[157] See the appendices of modern Chinese terms retranslated from the Japanese in Lydia Liu's book, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity: China, 1900-1937*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995.

As a preliminary generalization, it can be argued that since the late 19th century the modern meaning of culture in China became intertwined with what might be called Western-oriented forms of "modernity," which in the Meiji parlance was referred to as *bunmei* (*wenming* in Chinese) or "civilization."[158] The popular epithet for modernity was *xin* or "new," as in "New Culture" (a term used in the 1920s) and "New Learning" (*xinxue*, a term used since the turn of the century), both of which became catch-phrases and referred to the trends set in motion by the "new-style" intellectuals who looked to Western knowledge as a vital source for transforming China into a modern nation. Thus, the modern word compound *wenhua*, a "sign" of modernity, began to be construed as a dynamic force – so much so that it could be used later on to activate revolution. In fact, the familiar phrase, "cultural revolution," popularized by Mao, could be traced back to the May Fourth movement of 1917-23, considered a "cultural revolution" by both its leaders and subsequent scholars. In this revolutionary context, culture – or more specifically New Culture, a nearly synonymous term for the May Fourth Movement – was viewed as a radical force of iconoclastic anti-traditionalism. And yet implicit in this formulation, some recent scholars argue, is the conviction among modern Chinese intellectuals that New Culture in the form of ideas has a shaping impact on personality and society, which, despite these iconoclastic ruptures, provided at some deeper level a continuity with the traditional mode of thinking.[159] It is at this deeper level that Lu Xun's critique of Confucianism is taking place.

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[158] Lee, *Some Notes*

[159] Lin, *Crisis of Chinese Consciousness*

What Do We Mean by "modernity"?

In order to begin an exploration of China's confrontation with modernity and modernizing trends, a short discussion of the meaning of the term as it is understood in the West will be useful. Broadly speaking, we can conceive of modernity as having both objective and subjective components. The objective are those that constitute modernity as a social and political system, most often categorized as democracy, capitalism and the rule of law; and the subjective components, while many and varied, can best be summed up by what Charles Taylor in *Sources of the Self* calls "the affirmation of ordinary life."[160] The significance given to the everyday in human life, along with the central place given to autonomy, is arguably definitive of the modern West. Other aspects of modernity can be said to include Modernism as a movement in the arts; the "modern age" as a period during which social experiments in government are essayed, a prime focus of those in China looking to the West for models, and a period when industrial capitalism starts its global expansion; and "the modern spirit" or a spirit that believes in the power of human reason to effect positive change in the world. Finally, and connected to the latter, is an Enlightenment notion of history that conceives human activity through time as a developmental, teleological, and purposeful process and as a course of action working towards a better, freer humanity. Although the issues surrounding the meaning of modernity and the modern are vastly more complex than this short consideration

[160] Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989, p13.

indicates, what is important for the purposes of this discussion is an understanding of historical periods as not inevitably following their precedents but seen as open to alteration by historical contingencies. One of the primary distinguishing features of modernity emerges from just this urge to break with tradition.

In China, as well, the perception of historical development began to change following the collapse of dynastic rule. Shu-mei Shih notes in her *Lure of the Modern*: "Time, rather than space, was the crucial category in the radical rethinking of Chinese culture and literature during the May Fourth era. That is, the quintessential embodiment of the May Fourth *zeitgeist* was the desire to leap into the time of the modern. . . . But for the magical leap to be possible, modern time had to be a concrete and measurable entity with a universal standard that could be accessed with due effort. This measurable time was the Darwinian time of linear development, the Hegelian time of World History, and modern Western calendrical time that allowed the emergence of a global consciousness."[161] Shih claims that taking on a linear, temporal mode of thinking elided the force of the classical Chinese recursive conception of time while at the same time worked to legitimize the anti-traditional and cosmopolitan stance of the May Fourth intellectuals. It provided the conceptual tool with which to breach the cyclical and dynastic mode of imagining historical events, and the traditional Chinese mode began to appear a stagnant and obstructive technique. Most importantly, she claims, "This modern

[161] Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917-1937*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, p49.

time was perceived as the property of the West and Westernized Japan, but nonetheless universally available to those behind the trajectory who wanted to catch up."[162]

As an example of this progressive spirit, she cites "Phoenix Nirvana" (*Fenghuang niepan*) Guo Moruo's famous 1920 poem which was seen as capturing the essence of the May Fourth spirit as it celebrated the radical transformation of a phoenix into a new, and wondrously inventive, being.

> The linear procession of death and rebirth served as a perfect metaphor, for the now-totalized Chinese "tradition" had to be slain if May Fourth intellectuals were to be reborn in the new, modern time. The death of tradition was the premise for a magical leap into modern time, for only by killing off tradition could a new youthful self of "freshness," "sweetness," "radiance," "passion," and "love" be born out of the ashes.[163]

This theorization of modernity as a disjuncture from the past in order to construct a new present was certainly present in many, if not most, of the May Fourth reformers. It is a marker of the period and emerges from a belief in the tenets of Social Darwinism, at least as it was understood in China at the time.[164] As Shih points out, the May Fourth advocacy of discontinuity with tradition diverged from a Western understanding and was, of

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[162] Shih, p49.

[163] Shih, p49.

[164] Shih contrasts the way in which Guo Moruo treats the phoenix metaphor with what we find in Hegel. "While the Chinese phoenix had to die to be reborn a totally new being (as in Guo Moruo's poem mentioned earlier), the Western phoenix, in Hegel's conception, draws strength from its previous incarnation to engender a new form. In a characteristic movement of Hegelian dialectics, the sublation of the previous form allows the phoenix, the embodiment of Hegelian Spirit, to emerge "exalted and transfigured"; however, instead of negating the past self, the Spirit "reworks that existence, so that whatever went before is the material for what comes after, as its labor elevates it into a new form." Thus, its changes are "*elaborations* of its own self" (emphasis mine) rather than negations of its past self. Unlike the Hegelian phoenix, the May Fourth phoenix did not elaborate upon its past self but simply repudiated it; there was no luxury of continuity in sublation." Shih, p52. As I will later discuss, Lu Xun is a rare exception to this movement toward repudiation.

necessity, conceived in much more radical and totalizing terms. The extremity of the discourse can be understood in part because it did not emerge from internally developed notions of modernity, but rather from the "horizontally transplanted modernity of the West, made powerful and convincing by the West's proven superiority"[165] – therefore, not just another break of the present from the past, but caused by a reaction to the sudden and powerful influence of "successful" – so perceived – Western concepts associated with science and democracy.

One question we will have to ask ourselves is to what degree Lu Xun embraced this conceptual rupture. My understanding is that he managed to avoid the preoccupation of his contemporary reformers, as a result of his unique, albeit distorted, appropriation of Western influences, Nietzsche in particular, an appropriation carried out in a manner that reveals as well his stubborn underlying Confucianism. We can begin to note his approach in an early essay, "On Cultural Extremes" from 1908, where Lu Xun contends that throughout its history the West had been vacillating between "cultural extremes," and that in each period of history people had to correct certain extremes that they had inherited from the previous age. And yet the very means by which they overcame these old "cultural extremes" would give rise to new "cultural extremes," which in turn had to be taken on by a later generation. For example, to fight obscurantism, poverty and autocracy – the cultural extremes of the medieval world – the modern West had acquired military power, scientific progress, economic prosperity, and political democracy. With the old extremes gone, however, these new properties had become the new extremes. One

[165] Shih, p52.

of the modern extremes, he believed, was democracy. Lu Xun considered it to be a noble ideal, but one that carries with it the risk of neglecting a person's "unique individuality" and "forcing individuals into uniformity."[166] Another modern extreme was an overemphasis on material progress at the expense of a person's spiritual life.

Lu Xun thought these two "cultural extremes" were especially dangerous to the Chinese who, he alleged, already had a tendency to be too "materialistic" and "intolerant of geniuses" in their past. He warned that if China were to import such extremes from the West, it would fair no better than "a chronically sick person infected with new diseases." Here we see Lu Xun avoiding the dichotomy that most reformers of his generation took up: having to choose between an emotional attachment to a Chinese past and an intellectual commitment to Western values. Rather, he is able at the same time both to reject the tradition and to find sustained meaning within and through a creative transformation of that rejected tradition.

The "modernity question" in China: *ti-yong* and "Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy"

In the 103 days from June 11 to September 21, 1898, the Qing emperor, Guangxu (1875-1908), ordered a series of reforms aimed at making sweeping social and institutional changes. This effort reflected the thinking of a group of progressive scholar-reformers who had impressed the court with the urgency of making innovations for the nation's survival. Influenced by the Japanese success with modernization, the reformers declared that China needed more than "self-strengthening" and that innovation must be

[166] Quoted in Shao Lixin, *Nietzsche in China*, New York, Peter Lang Publishing, 1999, p49.

accompanied by institutional and ideological change. The court also planned to send students abroad for firsthand observation and technical studies. Of course, like all students who study in foreign cultures, they absorbed not only technical knowledge, but were exposed to ideas and concepts that they interpreted and carried back home with them. However, China's attempts to grapple with the question of how to become a modern nation predated the influx of returning students and their accompanying Western texts. Starting in the mid-19th century, Confucian state officials had recognized the need to resist foreign aggression and had tried to devise a means by which to do so, while at the same time increasing the Chinese power and prestige. The solution, devised by Zhang Zhidong, was: "Chinese learning as the goal, Western learning as the means," the formula better known as *ti-yong*. Before discussing the suitability of the *ti-yong* model to its time and the Confucian culture, it will be useful to give a brief background of Zhang Zhidong and his objectives.

Zhang Zhidong (1837-1919) was one of the foremost reformers of his time. From 1862 to 1882 he was a scholar and educational director in the Confucian bureaucracy; from 1882 to 1907 he rose from provincial to national level, his rise due in part to his support of the dowager empress Cixi, who favored him with many promotions. His main concern was with rejuvenating China, although not to the point of changing the dynastic political structure. Rather, he searched for a way for China to survive in the modern world that could accommodate Western knowledge but preserve traditional ways. His attempt to launch China's first iron-and-steel works failed, but he later spearheaded the construction of a railway that extended from Hankou to Beijing, and he founded a mint,

tanneries, tile and silk factories, and paper, cotton, and wool mills. In response to China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War, Zhang turned his attention to education, encouraging study abroad for Chinese students, to the establishment of a school system, the translation of Western and Japanese books, and the acquisition of knowledge from foreign newspapers. He also urged that the civil service examinations be abolished, a change that occurred in 1905. However, Zhang's primary hope was to fit all this technology into the classical Confucian scheme of things.[167]

It proved impossible for the last Qing generation to foreswear Confucianism entirely, and in Zhang's proposed *ti-yong* formulation we can see his attempt to find in foreign models a way to reaffirm certain inherited Chinese values. In the same way as Japanese reformers facing modernization had proposed to combine "Eastern ethics and Western science," in China Zhang as the top ideology-fixer of his day put forward his famous formula, "Chinese learning for the substance [the core principles or *ti*] and Western learning for function [the practical applications or *yong*]." This formulation had the advantage of a palatable and smooth-sounding compromise, although its limitation is a fundamental one. This formulation is at its base inconsistent given that *ti* and *yong* refer in Chinese philosophy to correlative aspects of any single entity. That is, Chinese and Western learning each had its own *ti* and its own *yong*.

Cheng Chung-ying draws the distinction between the surface activities (form) and the underlying structure (content) as the *ti-yong* paradigm in the metaphysical aspect of Confucianism. "The surface activities are "function," suggesting action, operations, the

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[167] Fairbank, John, *China: A New History, Cambridge*, Harvard University Press, 1992, p220.

application of a method, or the achievement of a purpose. The underlying institutions and standards are "substance," giving rise to the surface activities and supporting and sustaining them. Thus in the processes of life, substance is realized in function and function in substance."[168] To give this paradigm a social focus, political and economic activities are functions of the institutions and productive forces of a society and the community of individuals who are its members, which can be seen as the substance of these activities. Therefore, as we shall see, it becomes conceptually (and practically) impossible to alter the surface activities – in this case the political institutions of China before and during the May Fourth era – without affecting the substance, the *ti*. In fact, to think of the relationship as a dichotomous, rather than a reciprocal relationship, goes counter to concepts of correlativity at the very heart of the philosophical underpinnings of Chinese culture. Nonetheless, the *ti-yong* slogan was widely promoted in China from its initial formulation since it seems to give priority to Chinese values and adopts Western learning as a set of tools. To imagine the modernizing process in such terms manages at the same time to promote and enhance "new knowledge" while still maintaining allegiance to established values and scholarship; however, this strategy ultimately proved limiting as a conceptual bridge between tradition and modernity.[169]

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[168] Cheng, Chung-ying, "Confucianism: Twentieth Century", *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, Antonio S. Cua, ed., New York, Routledge Press, 2003, p161.

[169] Mao, especially, seemed able to exploit the potential for cultural self-critique that resulted from the conceptual disjunction between Chinese and Western learning; the valorization of Western standards of progress and development seemed to be possible only at the expense of China's own Confucian heritage. From a passage in a 1957 speech at a CCP National Conference on Propaganda Work meant to justify intensive reeducation efforts, he states: "We still have to wage a protracted struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. It is wrong not to understand this and to give up ideological struggle. All erroneous ideas, all poisonous weeds, all ghosts and monsters, must be subjected to criticism; in no circumstance should they be allowed to spread unchecked." Almost a century after Zhang Zhidong

By the May Fourth period, however, the public intellectuals who had claimed the helm were no longer satisfied with the results of even a half-hearted adherence to traditional Confucian values. "Chinese learning" had not come through as a goal, having failed to deliver either politically or economically, and the intellectual project changed to one that promoted the cause of "Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy," a slogan coined by Chen Duxiu. This moment demarcated a clear transition period in Chinese culture. If China was to rise and assert herself, it was not thought by many that she needed to harness just those modernizing forces that had made the West so strong. "Modernization" became strongly identified with "Westernization," and as Western discourses were disseminated, they were bound to, and indeed did, clash with more traditional Confucian discourse. However, this antagonistic encounter was neither as straightforward nor as dyadic as one might imagine. The West, and by extension modernity, was both an attractive and repulsive force.

A number of factors contributed to the drive of this encounter. There was the increasing number of students who had begun to study outside of China, primarily in either the United States and Europe or in Japan, and who returned home with stronger language skills for translating Western texts (many of which they had read and studied while abroad). In addition, there was the development of a publishing industry in the new vernacular (*baihua*) and the ensuing expansion of popular education. Both of these were forces working to change the culture at the intellectual level. Finally, and most

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originally developed this formula as a means for China's modernization, the CCP was intent on the effort to expel traces of conservative Confucian elements from Chinese minds.

importantly, there was the demise of the Qing dynasty in 1911 and the political vacuum and turmoil that resulted. The political crisis that ensued called upon the Chinese intellectuals to become political reformers. In the decades both before and after the dynasty's last gasp, there was much intellectual activity focused on the question "whither China?" In what direction would it head and under what influences? Demolition of the tradition may have been the presupposition and the *cri de combat*, however now those calling for cultural change needed to deal with immediate realities for political stabilization as well. This necessity caused many to look to the West for templates for modernization. Arguably, the confrontation with Western concepts and ideals would have taken place, notwithstanding the collapse of the Qing. However, what is certain is that by the early decades of the 20th century the virus of modernity began to establish itself in China; although as we shall see, this virus, like many, mutated in the process of transmission.

Modernization as Westernization

Debates over the nature and direction of modernity have been a part of the process of modernization in China throughout the post-Dynastic period: during the Qing reform period and the subsequent May Fourth movement, as well as the modernization phases during the Guomindang and the later Maoist era. During each of these phases, the key issue has been the fate of Chinese culture and differing attitudes toward that culture have shaped attitudes toward the desirability of modernization. Although the later periods would see the development of a more self-conscious modernization "in a Chinese mode,"

the early periods were marked by a clear turn toward and focus on the West as the source for modernizing trends and ideas.[170]

In a recent essay, "From Marco Polo to Leibniz: Stories of Intellectual Misunderstandings," Umberto Eco charts different possibilities for intercultural interactions.[171] When two cultures meet, he claims, there are a number of possible directions these encounters might take, and he charts three abstract models for these encounters. The first possibility is Conquest; this has often been the case when culture A perceives culture B to be "barbarians," nonhuman or subhuman beings, and the usual outcome is that culture A will either civilize or destroy culture B. Eco gives the example of Europe's subjugation of African and Amerindian cultures. The next possibility is that of Cultural Pillage: when culture A perceives culture B to be "bearers of an unknown wisdom," then the outcome will still be political and military subjugation. However, there will be a simultaneous attempt to understand and translate the wisdom of this culture, as in the case of the Greek and (later) European encounters with Egyptian culture. The third model is that of Exchange. This encounter, marked by "a two-way process of reciprocal influence and respect," is what denotes the early contacts between Europe and China.

> At the time of Marco Polo and certainly at the time of Father Mateo Ricci, these two cultures were exchanging their secrets, the Chinese accepted

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[170] For a brief study on the turn toward modernization in the 1930s, see Yu Keping's "Culture and Modernity in Chinese Thought in the 1930's: Comments on Two Approaches to Modernization in China," Working Papers in Asian/Pacific Studies, Beijing, Institute of Contemporary Marxism, 1994.

[171] Eco, Umberto, *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*, New York, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998. In this collection of essays Eco explores the degree to which errors and lunacy can lead to unexpectedly serendipitous results. While I do not think that Lu Xun's interpretations and appropriations of Western concepts are in any way lunatic, they certainly can be seen to be in error. However, as Eco demonstrates, such error can lead to unexpectedly apt and useful results.

> from the Jesuit missionaries many aspects of European science, and the Jesuits brought to Europe many aspects of Chinese civilization (to such an extent that Italians and Chinese are still debating the question of who invented spaghetti).[172]

However, by the early 20th century this Exchange model between China and the West becomes more complex and must be extended if we are to use it as an explanatory framework within which to understand the encounter. Eco speaks of this complexity in terms of exoticism – "by which a given culture, through misinterpretation and aesthetic *bricolage*, invents an ideal image of a distant culture, such as the *chinoisieries* of the past, . . . or the Paris of Vincente Minelli" – what we can understand as Orientalism without the manifestly political and economic efforts, an Orientalism minus its urge to colonize. Within the discourse of Edward Said's Orientalism, China is seen as "the other," against which the West defines itself, and "the exotic," against which the West is normal and rational.

Said's critique claims that when the West encounters the Orient, the Orient is seen as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive. It has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. It displays feminine penetrability and malleability. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always Other, the conquerable, and the inferior. The dimensions of this critique are more complex, but Said's main point is that the West is in the business of defining the Orient and the definition is based on one in which the West is the standard against which the non-West is judged.

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[172] Eco, p54.

Most scholars would agree, however, that the encounter between China and the West does not fall into such a clearly delineated pattern. There are many reasons – political, economic, cultural – why Chinese modernism of the early 20th century departs from the common binary models of the non-West's confrontation with the West. In what follows I will problematize this understanding of Orientalism further by noting that Said, or at least most discussions of Said's work, does not account for the possibility of a counter-discourse emerging from within the non-Western/Oriental culture. In the case of China, this counter-discourse took the form of "native resistance," developed as an anti-official discourse, where the Western other becomes a metaphor for political liberation from and against indigenous forms of ideological oppression. That is, the West and Western concepts have often been consciously and deliberately used and misused in China. They are appropriated and mis-appropriated, and *because of*, not *despite* this misunderstanding or mis-appropriation, these concepts can be applied – and in the case of Lu Xun, have been applied – very successfully to Chinese needs and the specificities of Chinese culture.

Due to historical and contextual differences, China was not simply the "destination" of Western modernism. As Shu-mei Shih argues, "China" factored in the cultural imaginary of the Western modernists and played an important part of the "non-Western alterity" that helped to define Western modernism.[173] Shih's critical diagram focuses on what she calls semi-colonialism, a term she uses to "describe the cultural and political condition in modern China to foreground the multiple, layered, intensified, as

[173] Shih, p15.

well as incomplete and fragmentary nature of China's colonial structure."[174] According to Shih, the uneven colonial rule in China resulted in Chinese intellectuals' strategies of bifurcation that divide the West into the cosmopolitan and the colonial. Compared to countries that were fully colonized, such as India, where intellectuals sought in traditional Indian culture weapons of resistance against colonialism, China was allowed to preserve its own language and most of its cultural traditions; it was Chinese intellectuals, not the colonizers, who – during the early years of the 20th century – attempted to eradicate Chinese traditions. While under the influence of Western cosmopolitanism – that is, the influence of Western concepts and models – they were already aware of the danger of colonialism. In fact, this awareness was arguably the most powerful impetus for political and cultural change.

Nonetheless, with many of the May Fourth generation in the late teens and early twenties – "Occidentalists" in Shih's terminology – there was "a willing acceptance of the unilinear travel narrative of Western modernism." The reformers of this period, witnessing the success of the Western cultures, turned to Western models as sources for Chinese cultural and political reform. Although problematic, most May Fourth intellectuals and reformers justified this appropriation of modern Western concepts as a means of critique and a counterdiscourse to a "failed" Chinese tradition. As Shih notes, from this "local" perspective Chinese modernists can be seen as retaining agency as

[174] This expression, "semi-colonialism," is perhaps slightly confusing. Shih's term is not meant to imply that China, itself, was a half-hearted colonizer, but that it was a semi (as in partly) colonized country. Shih, p15.

actors in their own cultural production, although from a "global" perspective they can rightly be judged as "semi-colonial."

> In a perfect illustration of how "imperialism as ideological domination succeeds best without physical coercion" through the colonization of consciousness, many Chinese writers valorized Western modernism as the signifier for the modern and the tool to delegitimize traditional Chinese culture, binding modernism to a kind of masochistic denial. Not surprisingly, therefore, what is often missing in Chinese modernist writing is a self-conscious investigation of the ideological content of Western modernism. Instead, in a kind of principled naiveté, writers saw modernism as a liberating discourse and literary style, one that, like other Western "isms," would help the Chinese "reach" modernity and modernization.[175]

Tu Weiming, too, has noted, the demand for effective action and tangible results led to an urgency that prompted May Fourth reformers to advocate wholesale westernization, a move that was ultimately self-defeating in that it undermined the rich natural resources for cultural renewal.[176] The thinking seemed to be: the devil they had recently met could not have possibly been as bad as the devil they had known for millennia.

As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, this move toward a universalization of Chinese values was not an uncommon strategy. In an effort to expand their cultural horizons many of the May Fourth reformers made the same universalist move as Hu Shi. His claim was that Confucian values were not values that were distinctively Chinese; rather, by his understanding, what Confucius had understood and transmitted were "universal human values" such as filial piety (*xiao*), authoritative conduct (*ren*), and

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[175] Shih, p14

[176] Tu, Weiming, "Confucianism: Humanism and the Enlightenment," *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, Antonio S. Cua, ed., New York, Routledge Press, 2003, p90.

compassion (*ai*), values that were not unique to China, but were those shared by all civilizations in the world. Like many during this period, Hu saw himself as a cosmopolitan intellectual who argued for progress through an "organic assimilation" of the modern civilization of the West, given the underlying symmetry of their values. We can get a good sense of Hu's position in a short commentary on a contemporary discussion between the terms "modernization" and "westernization."

> Mr. Hu Shi uses the word "globalization" (*shijiehua*). I myself also have employed these terms in my essays. But I think that, essentially and fundamentally, the so-called global culture and modern culture are nothing but western culture. The term "westernization," therefore, not only contains both of them, but also is more specific and easier to understand. Moreover, Mr. Hu Shi continues to use the term "maximum possible Westernization" (*chongfende xihua*) side by side with "globalization."[177]

In Hu's view the result of a totalistic Westernization of China would be a vitalized Chinese civilization on an indigenous basis; he saw his doctrine of Westernization as a means to the end of vitalizing Chinese civilization.

However, this proposed policy displays a confusion on Hu's part: such a commitment to wholesale application of Western models for social change was a process as well as an end, a process involving an evolutionary "organic assimilation" of the modern West, specifically in Hu's case of Deweyan democracy.[178] In other words, the uncritical borrowing of a Western discourse implicates its users in its epistemological and power hierarchy. Shih asks: "To what extent was modernism as a social, ideological, and

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[177] Chen Xujing, quoted in Yu Keping, "Culture and Modernity in Chinese Thought in the 1930s: Comments on Two Approaches to Modernization in China," *Working Papers in Asian/Pacific Studies*, Asian/Pacific Studies Institute, Duke University, 1994.

[178] Lin, p94.

cultural choice self-empowering, given its ineluctable imbrication in the unequal relationship between China and the West?"[179] Still, such a move to Western models, an example of Shih's semi-colonialism, was not the only possibility: the only alternative to stagnant Confucianism is not to take recourse in universalism.

Is there a way for theory to be imported that might guard against these universalizing tendencies? The remainder of this chapter will focus on an exploration of an alternative strategy for appropriation, one employed by Lu Xun, that does not fall into the semi-colonial mode that Shih takes note of. In order to begin a discussion of his strategy, we might begin by thinking through some of the problems associated with the process of importing, or appropriating, theory from one culture to another. I want to provisionally think of "appropriation" as what one does when one takes possession of a work or a concept in order to make it suitable for ones own purpose or use. When do we want to say that such an appropriation, especially when it is of concepts and values not native to one's culture, is appropriate? To what degree is usefulness a determining factor? Or accuracy with respect to the meaning or intent of the original work? Is there a danger in this process of subsuming one's own culture? And finally, I'll attempt to answer the question: What are appropriate modes by which theory be appropriated into China during the May Fourth period?

[179] Shih, p15.

Lu Xun's "grabbism"

I will now turn to an exploration of the strategy employed by Lu Xun. This strategy has been translated as "grabbism" (*nalai zhuyi*), the principle of taking from foreign cultures that which is useful and good to the Chinese while at the same time criticizing those who try to imitate others and forget themselves in the process. As we have seen, by the time he returned from his years in Japan, Lu Xun was well versed in the current literature of the West and was an active participant in political debates about which theoretical models ought to be chosen to chart China's future. Like other May Fourth intellectuals, he had read, either in the original or through translation, all of the Western thinkers who were to have the most profound effect on China in the early years of the 20th century – Darwin, Thomas Huxley, Hegel, and Nietzsche[180] – and like others of his generation he mined these works for solutions to China's problems. However, Lu Xun diverged from his contemporaries in this important respect: not only did he employ Western concepts as a counter-discourse to the ineffectual, yet still hegemonic, Confucian tradition, but he was at the same time also wary of rejecting the Confucian past and in this sense cannot be grouped with those in the May Fourth era that Shih represents as "semi-colonial." However, to make this move to mine the Confucian tradition, however, is not simply to advocate a retreat to a hermetically-sealed local culture; the alternative to universalism is not ethnocentrism. Lu Xun's counter-discourse was marked not only by appropriating what was useful from the West, but at the same

[180] While it does not seem that Lu Xun read Marx, by the late 1920s he was certainly involved in discussions of Marxism through his acquaintance with Chen Duxiu, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party.

time, and inseparable from this appropriation, was a criticism of his native tradition. His appropriation, as a result, became both for the purpose and part of the process of his objective to rearticulate the native Chinese Confucian tradition. As Lu Xun himself asked, does one necessarily burn down the house simply because the previous owner was a villain?

Lu Xun's "grabbism" is an example of a theory that advocates eclectic, confident borrowing from the foreign without concern for the possibility of usurpation by what one borrows. In contemporary terms, there was at the time no fear of cultural or intellectual capitulation to foreign hegemony. While he never developed this theory systematically, we can identify some aspects of this model most directly in a short essay, "Thoughts Before the Mirror," written in 1925, a year of much political turmoil in China. On the surface this essay addresses Lu Xun's feelings and casual ruminations upon finding some old bronze mirrors in a trunk. He begins by describing the mirrors and their origins and then compares them to ones Chinese might find in the present day. His style seems casual and the reflections almost haphazard, but the light tone disguises – none too well – serious judgments on contemporary Chinese culture. The mirror image is important: Lu Xun is reflecting on the mirrors, on his discovery of these old mirrors, and at the same time we see him – and more to the point, contemporary Chinese – being reflected *in* them. While he writes in 1925, the mirror metaphor allows him and the reader to make a link to an earlier period of Chinese history, the periods in which the mirrors were made. Additionally, the metaphor allows, or perhaps urges, the reader to reflect on the Chinese tradition as a whole.

The first mirror he describes is from the Han period, a "sea-horse and grape mirror," so described although there is no actual seahorse on the mirror. What makes these mirrors notable is that the decorative imagery on their back was not particularly Han, in fact it had "nothing to do with those Han Dynasty events." The seahorse designation, he tells us, comes from the convention of prefixing the word "sea" to the names of objects from abroad. "Thus 'sea' was the equivalent of our modern 'foreign,' and translated into present-day Chinese a sea-horse means a foreign horse."[181] The importance of the horse image for Lu Xun is not just that it denotes foreign-ness, but that during this period the Chinese exhibited a confidence in using such non-Chinese imagery. Such imagery is employed, he says, to commemorate an important event in Chinese history, the acquisition of "celestial" horses from Ferghana, present day Turkistan.

> When Emperor Wu Di of the Han Dynasty opened up communications with Ferghana and Parthia to obtain the best horses and grapes, it was no doubt considered a most important event; hence these designs were used for various utensils.[182]

The importance of this event in Han Dynasty history was twofold: these horses played an instrumental role in Wu Di's expansion of China's borders, and communication with these neighbors to China's west led to the development of trade and the establishment of the Silk Road.[183]

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[181] Lu Xun, "Thoughts Before the Mirror," *Collected Works, Volume II*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1980, p119.

[182] Lu Xun, p119.

[183] Chinese historians of that era say that all peoples from Fergana to Parthia (i.e. all Central Asia) used a single language – most linguists think it must have been Greek. This explains Lu Xun's use of this example as standing for "foreign."

For Lu Xun, writing in 1925, what these events signified was a mode of interaction that appropriated the foreign while simultaneously asserting the native. He goes on to reflect on how "broad-minded" were the Chinese of earlier periods in history, broad-minded in the sense that they had the vision and confidence to borrow and glorify foreign images as design elements on these mirrors. They were able to celebrate these horses – in fact they became the celestial horses in Chinese art – because the Han made them serve their purposes as war horses, replacing the smaller and much less powerful indigenous breed. The essay uses other examples of such borrowing from other periods of Chinese history, but he then goes on to make a comparison with 1925 China.

> The stone animals in front of Han tombs are usually sheep, tigers or mythical beasts, while the sepulcher of Emperor Tai Zong in Changan has a horse pierced with an arrow carved on it in relief, as well as an ostrich – something quite unheard of before. But who today would dare use a foreign flower or a foreign bird in an ordinary painting, let alone on a tombstone?[184]

Such examples illustrate one important aspect of Lu Xun's "grabbism": the confidence to take from foreign cultures that which is useful and good for China. Celestial horses led to greater territory; foreign contact led to the Silk Road trades: why not celebrate horses and ostriches, foreign flowers and birds? They were put in service to a stronger and more cultured China. "So when they used anything from abroad they took it captive, as it were, and did what they pleased with it without any misgivings."[185]

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[184] Lu Xun, 120.

[185] Lu Xun, 120.

This is not to claim, however, that we are able to make a straightforward comparison between appropriation of foreign objects or concepts during the Han and making this same move during the May Fourth period. During the Han dynasty and in the other examples that Lu Xun selects, China had been a powerful country *vis à vis* her foreign contacts; while in the early years of the 20th century the balance of power had shifted dramatically, in this case toward the West and had set up the conditions for unwitting capitulation to Western cultural hegemony. As we have seen, Shu-mei Shih claims that in such a situation an inevitable relationship of semi-colonialism developed in China from the wholesale or uncritical borrowing of Western models of modernism. How, then, does Lu Xun's "grabbism" not participate in this same dynamic?

In order to answer this question, we can now examine an additional aspect to Lu Xun's technique of appropriation. If we turn back to his essay, we can see a number of instances where he follows up on the implications of his question: "Who today would dare to use a foreign flower...?" Repeatedly, Lu Xun criticizes Song dynasty artists, and by implication the citizenry of the May Fourth period, comparing them to those in the Han.

> I don't know whether we never produce fearless artists, or whether we have but such men were so persecuted that they faded away and died. . . . When the state grew weak and decadent, though, people became unduly sensitive: if they came across anything foreign they assumed it had come to capture *them*, and would resist in panic, or shrink back and run, trembling all over with terror, and racking their brains for some self-justification. Thus national characteristics became the treasure of those weakly kings and slaves.[186]

[186] Lu Xun, 120-21.

It is this tactic of insistent criticism, focusing in the main on what he saw as the "weakness of the Chinese character,"[187] that is the additional, and fundamentally key aspect of Lu Xun's "grabbism". While he advocates an appropriation of non-Chinese ideas (or in the case of this essay, decorative motifs with the symbolic weight of foreign concepts), this is not done without a strong critique of the Chinese character. This critique of national character is a prevalent aspect of Lu Xun's discourse and always accompanies his appropriation of the foreign and the modern. While it is, in part, an argument for why a turn to the West is necessary – given the "backwardness" of China *vis à vis* the modern West – it is at the same time a demonstration of an alternative mode of appropriation that contains a valuation of the native tradition, albeit through an apparent disvaluation of the Chinese character. As was noted earlier, the technique of remonstrance in the Confucian tradition is not meant to destroy that which it critiques, but plays a key role, during times of discord, in a process of re-harmonization. This negative dimension of his "grabbism" is essential to its effectiveness: it is critical both of the tradition and of those who try to imitate others, thereby losing themselves in the process, and yet it manages at the same time to assert the value of the very tradition it critiques.

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[187] It is not surprising that there is debate over whether Lu Xun's stinging critique of the limitations of the Chinese character and the role this played in China's political problems is an example of his having sold out to Orientalist categories, a "comprador intellectual." The terms of the argument are: Is he a cultural imperialist or a courageous reformer? We can note a resemblance to Nietzsche's attack on slave morality and hypocritical moralists who perpetuate such dogma. As Robert Solomon points out in his discussion of Nietzsche's tactics, he does not remain at the same level of abstraction as his antagonists. "What he does instead is to *dig under them*. What could be more effective against the self-righteousness pronouncements of some philosophers and theologians [read dogmatic Confucians] than an *ad hominem* argument that undermines their credibility, that reduces their rationality and piety to petty personal envy or indignation?" (Robert Solomon, *What Nietzsche* Really *Said*, New York, Shocken Books, 2000, p112.) Unlike Nietzsche, however, Lu Xun does not extend his argument to claim that Confucian "morality" originated among actual slaves.

The mirror metaphor comes into play again here as Lu Xun holds the mirror up to present-day China so that it can face what it encounters there. He ends his essay with the observation that glass mirrors, which gave a more honest reflection of reality, had by his day replaced Han Dynasty bronze mirrors. And yet, he remarked, there were some Chinese who still preferred and valued the old bronze mirrors, making the unlikely claim that they gave a less distorted likeness.

> All I know is that during the reign of Xian Feng [1851-1862] Mr. Wang Yuezhen attacked glass mirrors in his book *Huzhou Products*. After a comparative study, he reached the conclusion that bronze mirrors were superior. Most puzzling of all, he stated that glass mirrors give a more distorted reflection than those made of bronze. Can the glass mirrors of his day really have been as bad as that, or was the old gentleman viewing them from the standpoint of national characteristics?[188]

Such an "attack" on glass mirrors was just the sort of self-defeating and retrogressive argument that was keeping China mired in the past and an indication of the gerontocratic practices of Confucianism at its worst. Lu Xun's criticism of national characteristics goes back to his rejection of the *ti-yong* attempt at reform. He did not see the possibility for progress by focusing only on the importation of modern Western forms; if the core principles are weak, then this debility would influence and shape the way in which the practical applications traveled, or were received, in China. What China ended up with was an ineffective, tepid, and ultimately brutal version of a formerly vital culture.

> I have never seen a good Song mirror. Nine out of ten of them have no decorative figures, nothing but the name of the shop and such pedantic inscriptions as "One should dress neatly." Men really "grow more

[188] Lu Xun, p124.

> degenerate very day"! But if we want to progress and not regress, we must have new ideas of our own all the time, or at least new ideas from outside. With all these scruples, misgivings and petty rules, this horror of offending our ancestors, this dread of behaving like barbarians, this perpetual sense of treading on thin ice, this constant fear and trembling, how can we ever do anything worthwhile?[189]

We recall Cheng Chung-ying's criticism of the *ti-yong* proposal of Zhang Zhidong: that it is inconsistent within the Confucian framework in that it goes against a fundamental understanding of Confucianism, that *ti* and *yong* must be seen as correlative aspects of the same process – in this case, the process of modernization.

> Very early in Chinese philosophy, there is a recognition of substance (ti) that entails yong because it is inseparable from its function and use; there is also a recognition that any use or application of an idea, talent, or knowledge implies or presupposes an understanding of a situation or the substance in a situation. The unity and inseparability of substance and function are, therefore, implicit in the Chinese notion of reality.[190]

In this analysis, the danger in the *ti-yong* strategy is that the *yong* aspect (Western practical applications) will prevail and, in the process, the *ti* aspect (Chinese values) will be effectively compromised. Shih's analysis of pernicious Westernization would claim that the practical applications do not travel without embedded epistemological assumptions. Lu Xun, in his criticism of Chinese characteristics, is claiming that the Chinese must "fix" the *ti* aspect, rather than rely *only* on modern, Western *yong* as a cultural curative. What he understood was the "destructive" potential of a conceptual disjunction between the correlative aspects of *ti* and *yong*.

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[189] Lu Xun, p123.

[190] Cheng, Chung-ying, "*Ti-Yong*: Metaphysics", *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, Antonio S. Cua, ed., New York, Routledge Press, 2003, p723.

David Hall and Roger Ames note the degree to which the concept of transcendence pervades the Western philosophic tradition and the resultant vocabulary of disjunctive binaries that give us such concepts as God and the world, mind and body, reality and appearance. In contrast, the key elements in the cosmos of the classical Chinese tradition – heaven, earth and man – are not conceived of as binaries but as mutually entailing, none of which is of greater conceptual importance than any of the others. To try to discuss or to mold the Confucian cosmos into a Western dualistic framework would be to import a number of unwarranted assumptions that would result in a mis-shapen Confucianism.

> The mutual immanence of the primary elements of the Confucian cosmos – heaven, earth and man – precludes the use of the language of transcendence and therefore renders any sort of dualistic contrast pernicious. The epistemological equivalent of the notion of an immanental cosmos is that of conceptual polarity. Such polarity requires that concepts which are significantly related are in fact symmetrically related, each requiring the other for adequate articulation. [191]

What happens, however, when we separate the two elements and one element "transcends" the other – in this case because of the power relations of the early 20th century? Lu Xun saw that this transcendence ran the risk of beginning to determine "the essential meaning and order of the world."[192] His concern was that the wholesale importation of Western models for modernization and progress in China – as determining concepts for China's future – would have the power to determine the order and values of

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[191] Hall, David and Roger Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1987, p17.

[192] Hall and Ames, p18.

the Chinese world. If *ti* and *yong* no longer function as correlatives, within a relationship in which each "requires the other as a necessary condition for being what it is"[193] – and given the political and economic power disparities at work, this seemed unlikely – then China was preparing dangerous ground for the possibility that the Western model would begin to determine the values at the base of Chinese culture.

"Grabbism" speaks of appropriation, but it is a process that acknowledges that there are two sides of the mirror. There is the back of the mirror, the one Lu Xun describes in his example from the Tang Dynasty, beautifully decorated with motifs, no matter that some might have been of foreign origin. But there is, as well, the glass front needed for honest reflection, and in this case what was reflected required critique. However, at the same time, this criticism implies two aspects of Chinese values and the Confucian culture that they supported: those from a period when they were vital and those of the May Fourth era when they worked against the possibility for progress in China. By this time the underlying structure was no longer substantive and, as Lu Xun saw it, there were dangers both in doing nothing, remaining mired in the past, and in naively "traveling abroad" in the hopes of acquiring modern intellectual substance.

> Hence "Times are not what they were" precisely because too many gentlemen have muttered, "Times are not what they were." That is still the case today. Unless we become more broad-minded and boldly and fearlessly absorb all we can of the new culture, we shall soon reach a stage when men like Yang Guangxin[194] will be pleading with Western masters to spare China's spiritual culture.[195]

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[193] Hall and Ames, p18.

[194] Yang Guangxian was a court official in the early Qing Dynasty involved in the debate as to whether or not to adopt Western technologies to compute the calendar. Lu Xun points out that even though he admitted

Thus we can claim that while his criticism appears to be destructive, it is in fact working to preserve the Confucian cosmos. What Lu Xun does is to hold up the mirror in an effort to reconcile modern man to the modern world; in his hand, under his pen, the mirror serves not only as the source of reflection, but also as the tool for change.

Conclusion

Why might we argue that Lu Xun's misappropriations, his "grabbism," are appropriate strategies?[196] The simple answer is that because they keep him from making the universalist move. Lu Xun's mode of appropriation is one in which Western concepts are contextualized; they are appropriated without having been universalized. Thus appropriate appropriation will prove to be partial – in many senses of the word – both in the sense of "not whole," but also in the sense of being biased. "Partial" in the sense of partial to one's own situation, partial in not being total, and partial as opposed to being

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that he "could argue but could not compute" – that is, as it turned out he did not know anything about astronomical calculations – he still believed that the methods of Schall von Bell, the Western Jesuit who introduced calendrical science to China should not be adopted. Yang argued: "Foreigner's hearts differ from ours. We would rather have an imperfect calendar than have Westerners in China."

[195] Lu Xun, p124.

[196] I'm not sure strategy is, in fact, the best word to use here, since it implies some kind of deliberation, and Lu Xun is not engaged in any kind of *catechresis*, as a deliberate strategy of resistance. While this term originally referred to a grammatical misuse, Gayatri Spivak has used it to mean a kind of self-conscious appropriation of the foreign. I am not arguing, however, that Lu Xun's "grabbism" was a developed theory of resistance. Spivak's claim is that colonized subjects, in the act of catachresis, can take and "reinscribe" the traditions or concepts of imperial cultures, such as parliamentary democracy. "When Spivak speaks, for instance, of the ability of the subaltern 'to catachrize parliamentary democracy' she means 'the insertion and reinscription of something which does not refer literally to the correct narrative of the emergence of parliamentary democracy.' That is, while parliamentary democracy emerges from a specific European history and culture, its adoption into, and adaptation by, the culture of the post-colonial society, including the assertion, for instance, that there exists a pre-colonial native tradition of parliamentary democracy, may offer an empowering avenue of self-determination to the subaltern subject." *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, Bill Ashcroft, et al eds., London, Routledge Press, 1998, p34.

impartial. In order to avoid the danger of semi-colonization that Shih points to during the May Fourth period, when the balance between China and the West was marked by a political and economic power differential, appropriate appropriation will involve the Confucian technique of remonstrance, taken to the level of a critique of elements of that tradition. Appropriated concepts such as "individualism" are not intrinsically oppressive or liberating. Certainly the appropriation of the concept of the *Übermench*, when put into critical use against the domestic hegemony of the ruling Confucian ideology, as was the case with Lu Xun, can rightly be viewed as positive, liberating, and even desirable. Seen from this perspective, Lu Xun's strategy was above all else an anti-official discourse, but one that sought to be in service to the tradition through the critique of that tradition itself.

CHAPTER 5

LU XUN'S APPROPRIATION OF NIETZSCHE

Introduction: Lu Xun Encounters Nietzsche

Lu Xun's "theory" of "grabbism" raises an interesting issue: When he appropriates Western concepts in a "grabbism" manner, can we rightly claim that this is *in support of* the Confucian tradition? In order to better explore this question, I will look closely at an example of how and what he chose to grab. I will focus on Lu Xun's appropriation of Nietzsche, specifically his appropriation of the concept of the *Übermensch*, as both criticism of the Confucian tradition and an attempt to make it stronger and more appropriate to the modern era. I want to begin by contextualizing both Lu Xun and Nietzsche in the history of modern China.

Mary Rankin has identified three dominant political themes among the reformers in early 20th century China.[197] The first is nationalism, which in the beginning was anti-Manchu in character, only later to become more anti-imperialistic. The second theme is individualism, interpreted as the personal need to escape from tradition and family, a theme that became stronger during the May Fourth Movement. The third theme, which embraced the other two, is modernization and change. This theme was the oldest of the three, having been advocated to some extent, as we have already discussed, by some individuals as early as the 1860s, although their understanding of modernization differed

[197] Rankin, Mary, *Early Chinese Revolutionaries: Radical Intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902-1911*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971.

considerably from that of the reformers and revolutionaries in the early twentieth century.[198] Lu Xun's concerns were informed and shaped by all three of these themes.

Given China's threatened position, Chinese intellectuals searched for ideas and methods that could help save the nation and primary among the ideas that elicited the most interest at the turn of the century were those of nationalism and Social Darwinism. The influence of Social Darwinism, which stipulated that societies that were unable to adapt themselves to modern conditions were at risk of disappearing, was quite widespread. As James Reeve Pusey has shown, Social Darwinism seemed to explain China's current dismal state of affairs and show a way out, because it legitimized violent change and gave some hope for the future if only the Chinese would become "fit."[199] This argument plays a role, too, in the Chinese character debate. Lu Xun's particular diagnosis was that the Chinese suffered from "Ah Q-ism," a phrase that refers to his story "The True Story of Ah Q," in which the lead character is a selfless and passive object of the external world. As Kirk Denton notes: "Ah Q's inherited disease is that he is, in some strange way, overly sensitive to the outer world, allowing it to intrude on, indeed to shape his very behavior. He has no real self in the sense of an active, creative, whole, and stable essence." We might dispute his use of the term "essence" here in reference to the Chinese self; however, Denton points to the degree to which Ah Q represents the character traits that Lu Xun so despairs of in his generation. While a detailed discussion of the influence

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[198] These modernizing attempts include Zhang Zhidong's *ti-yong* program, discussed above.

[199] Pusey, James Reeve, *China and Charles Darwin*, Cambridge, Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, Harvard University Press, 1983. Also for a more extensive discussion of the direct influence of Social Darwinist thought on Lu Xun, see his *Lu Xun and Evolution*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1998.

of Social Darwinism on Lu Xun would be profitable, a more rewarding inquiry will be to focus on the influence of Nietzsche.

There are many reasons to investigate the impact of Nietzsche in China. In the first place Nietzsche was the source of one of the most important slogans of the May Fourth Movement: His "transvaluation (of all values)" (*chongxin guding jiazhi*) was frequently applied to the Confucian tradition, then regarded as the most impeding obstacle to any social modernization. In addition his "overman" (*Übermensch*, or *chaoren*) focused hope that the morally developed individual might initiate liberation from traditional values, furthermore integrating a concept of progress taken from the natural sciences, especially Darwinism. All of the modern authors who were to become labeled "noted" (*zhuming*) in the May Fourth movement read Nietzsche and many of them drew considerable inspiration from his works, most prominently Mao Dun, Guo Moruo, Yu Dafu and Lu Xun.[200]

The first Chinese writer to have mentioned Nietzsche is probably Liang Qichao in 1902, in his Japanese exile journal *Xinmin congba*, when he wrote of the then popular British social Darwinist Benjamin Kidd as a synthesizer of "idealism" and "materialism."[201] Surprisingly, Liang's example for idealism is Marx, whereas Nietzsche is called a materialist "whose teachings of social Darwinism and egoism are very

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[200] Findeisen, Raoul David, "The Burden of Culture: Glimpses at the Literary Reception of Nietzsche in China," Asian and African Studies, 6, 1997, 1, p76-91.

[201] Kidd's 1894 book *Social Evolution* was based on the theme that religion is the hub of humanity and that reason limits humans in the more important crises of life. The book also included a strong attack on socialism and was translated into ten languages, including Arabic and Chinese.

influential all over Europe and can be considered a *fin-de-siècle* religion."[202] Another important contribution to the spread of Nietzsche's reception in China was Guo Moruo with his translation of the first part and portions of the second part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The partial Zarathustra translation by Guo carries the title "Zaruthustra's Lion-Roaring," alluding to the chapter "Of the Three Metamorphoses" in which Guo's Nietzsche stresses unlimited creativity as the only force capable of destroying and reconstructing values. The antagonist of the lion is the dragon – a metaphor more appropriate to represent traditional Confucian values than Nietzsche ever could have imagined – and the destruction of traditional values, in Guo's interpretation, was also a creative act.[203] However, arguably the most "Nietzschean" of all of the Chinese appropriators was Lu Xun.[204]

Lu Xun began his reading of Nietzsche during his stay in Japan (1902-1909) where he began to read magazines informed by Western ideas and others consisting of translated articles. He read Yan Fu's translation of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, a translation that incorporated much commentary relating to the Chinese political

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[202] Quoted in Findeisen, p80.

[203] As with most translations of Nietzsche, this one missed the mark. The dragon was, for Nietzsche, the metaphor for the values of the culture, the "thou shalt" as he puts it. They are the impositions of society that one has not chosen. In order to fight the dragon, the camel must metamorphose into a lion, from a beast of burden into a beast of prey. This change involves adopting the stance of one who is able to claim, "I will." The old values are not destroyed, however, and this act does not create new values. What one gains is the freedom to create; the dragon will be there, but one can resist with what Nietzsche calls the "sacred NO." Guo ignores the final stage, the metamorphosis of lion to child, a being capable of the "sacred YES."

[204] Yu Ying-Shih has pointed out that within a very short span of time, Chinese intellectuals were introduced to a whole range of political ideas that had developed over several centuries in the West. They often encountered ideas from the nineteenth century at the same time as, and sometimes even before, ideas from the eighteenth century. See "The Radicalization of China in the Twentieth Century," Daedalus, Spring 1993.

situation and a publication that had a powerful influence on the mindset of Chinese intellectuals of the period. This interpretation of Social Darwinism called on the Chinese to replace their backward-looking or cyclical philosophy with a forward-looking Social Darwinist one, sounding the alarm that their previously superior civilization (and race) was in danger of going under in the "struggle for existence." Lu Xun was immediately taken by these ideas and "Darwinism" was to dominate his thought, and those of most of the reformers of his era, for decades to come.[205]

However, Lu Xun was not a philosopher. His thoughts as he set them out were systematic only within the confines of the *zawen* (short essays) he committed himself to producing upon his return to China. If protracted, his expositions tended to expose loopholes and inconsistencies. He was very well-informed, but his positions were taken instantly and instinctively; in that way he was more sensitive as a sounding board than a philosopher who fits his perceptions into his scheme of things. After Lu Xun converted to "mental fight" in Japan, he had to find new inspiration. No Chinese hero seemed to fit the bill and the fighter *par excellence* that he discovered was Nietzsche, in the role of the prophet Zarathustra. The example of Zarathustra sustained Lu Xun through his periods of despair when he felt isolated, misunderstood, and despaired of substantive change ever taking place in China (or, more to the point, within the Chinese). Like Zarathustra, Lu Xun did not expect to succeed, but would not spare his enemies and would go down fighting. Zarathustra said, "Of all that is written, I love only what a man has written with

[205] Pollard, David E., *The True Story of Lu Xun*, Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press, 2002.

his blood. Write with blood, and you will experience that blood is spirit."[206] That could well have been Lu Xun's motto. He embodied more than any other prominent Chinese intellectual the spirit of Nietzsche. It was during this period that Lu Xun began translating the "Prologue" of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, first into classical Chinese and then into the written vernacular. He also refers repeatedly to Nietzsche in "Random Thoughts," essays published regularly between 1918 and 1920; and during the year before his death, weak from the tuberculosis that was to kill him at the age of 56, he was even engaged in proofreading translations of Nietzsche.

During his stay in Japan Lu Xun read Nietzsche as a cultural critic, and in this reading felt a strong resonance. He believed that wholesale Westernization, and more specifically the industrialization his fellow reformers advocated, would inevitably result in serious conflicts. More germane to this dissertation is his ideological rejection of the *ti-yong* project of the earlier reformers, given his understanding that change must first take place at the level of the "Chinese character." That is why he calls for an "ethical evolution" (*lunli jinhua*) in order to form a counter-weight to a purely material civilization. In his "Shortcomings of the Culture" written in 1907, he declares that such an ethical evolution should start from the individual and gives an overview of the history of Western individualism, starting with Luther and mentioning Nietzsche among many other representatives. To Lu Xun, Nietzsche's ideal of the "overman" appears the paramount of such an ethical evolution: "Only when the overman appears, there will be

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[206] Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "First Part, On Reading and Writing," *The Portable Nietzsche* (trans. Walter Kaufman), New York, The Viking Press, 1974, p152.

peace on earth." (*wei chu chaoren, shi nai taiping*).[207] Lu Xun drafts the emergence of a future elite of "independent and autonomous humans" (*liren*), of "genuine men" (*zhen ren*) who are capable to define moral ideals and to contribute thereby to the awakening of common people, the masses, characterized as passive and subordinating because of the burden of tradition.[208]

In "On the Power of Mara Poetry" (*Moluo shi li shuo*) from 1908, Lu Xun further elaborates his ideas, based upon what he sees as the Promethean revolt in Western romantic poetry, in particular the so-called "satanic poetry" of Shelley. All the poets included in the study were depicted as fearless scourges not only of physical tyranny, but also of the mental tyranny of outdated ideas and stultifying morality. They were "warriors in the spiritual realm."[209] Lu Xun had from his youth a strong interest in mythology and folk traditions, and in this essay he traces the creation myths of a number of world civilizations, comparing the Indian, Judaic, Persian, Arabic, and Russian, and reflecting on contemporary China. While admiring literary works such as the Vedas, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* of Indian civilization, he does not hesitate to criticize the mentality of boasting of one's past glory and wonder why creative minds could attain such perfection in their literary and artistic endeavors yet could not deliver people from their

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[207] Quoted in Findeisen, p85.

[208] An interesting note to the translation of this term "overman" in Chinese takes place in a review by Jon Kowallis of a new German translation of the collected works of Lu Xun, [Wolfgang Kubin, et al., trans., *Lu Xun, Werke in sechs Banden* (*Lu Xun: Six Volumes of His Works*), Zurich, Unionsverlag, 1995.] In this review Kowallis notes that Kubin has translated "The True Story of Ah Q" (*A Q zhengzhuan*), one of Lu Xun's most famous short stories, as "The True Story of Mr. Everyman" (*Die wahre Geschichte des Herrn Jedermann*).

[209] Lu Xun chose as Mara poets Pushkin and Lermontov from Russia; Mickiewicz, Slowacki and Krasinski from Poland; Petöfi from Hungary; and the English Romantic poets Byron and Shelley.

miserable conditions. It is significant that Lu Xun used the Sanskrit word "Mara" (in Chinese *moluo*) in the title of the essay; he is making clear his longing for the Mara power. Indian mythology eulogizes both the power of Mara (the demon who attempts to seduce the Buddha), while at the same time the orthodox tradition advocates Dharma vanquishing Mara. In Lu Xun's interpretation both these strains of Indian civilization have been internalized by Chinese culture, and in the seesaw battle between Dharma and Mara (*moluo*), he obviously plants himself on the side of *moluo*, determined to stand Chinese tradition on its head. He does not want to do away with the tradition, but wants it infused once again with the Mara power.

At the same time Lu Xun seems quite aware of the dangers of such a destructive work. Iconoclasm can lead to despair, to a worldview in which no relevant ethical values are left. He therefore vividly defends the human experience and ideals, embodied in the Confucian tradition, traditions which at that time – and even more so during the later May Fourth period – were attacked as a whole for being superstitious and an obstacle to progress. And yet, at the same time, he was not uncritical towards an overly enthusiastic embrace of the Western scientific path as the solution for China, warning that this may also result in irrationalism (an understanding of the overly-Westernized person) if not properly guided by ideals.

> There are, in fact, people in Europe who propose the creation of a religion based on science. The German scholar Ernst Haeckel, through his studies in biology, established monism – the theory that all phenomena in the universe arise through a single underlying principle. He proposed the dedication of a shrine to rationality, the true Trinity of the nineteenth century. What were its three components? Truth, goodness, and beauty. He believed that rites and ceremonies continued to have a function, that is, to enable people to cope with present-day realities and encourage them to

> make further advances. Nietzsche, on the other hand, adopted Darwin's theories of evolution to attack Christianity and created an entirely different philosophy, that of the *Übermensch* or superman. The proposals of Haeckel and Nietzsche, albeit based on science, were still tainted by distinctly religious and fantastic elements, and thus implied an alteration in, not the elimination of faith.[210]

Thus it is evident that quite early in his life Lu Xun had assimilated the Nietzschean ideal of the *Übermensch*, but understood it as a call for ethical ideals. In this essay, he surveys the history of science in the West and concludes that knowledge must not be divorced from moral values, and that thinkers and artists are just as important as scientists and engineers. He criticizes contemporary Chinese reformers for their preoccupation with technology while neglecting people's minds. Influenced by Nietzsche, Lu Xun's vision of a future China was quite different from that of most of his contemporaries. The priority was to "elevate man" by "promoting his individuality and ennobling his character."[211] What he means by "individuality" and how this word made its way to China will be the focus the following sections.

"Traveling" Theory

In order to study Lu Xun's appropriation of the term "individual," one has to examine how the concept was introduced into China and, consequently, how it was rendered into the Chinese language. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, China saw

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[210] Lu Xun, "Toward a Refutation of the Voices of Evil," translated by J.E. Kowallis, Renditions: A Journal on Chinese Literature and Culture, No. 26, Autumn 1982.

[211] Shao, p49

rapid conceptual and political changes that mutually influenced each other. New modes of thought on self and society were reflected in the creation of a new vocabulary. Some of these words and concepts have indigenous roots in the Confucian political discourse, whereas others were neologisms imported from Japan or created by the Chinese scholars themselves. The process whereby new words and concepts were created and adopted is extremely complex and still little understood.

Influenced by the work of Edward Said, Lydia Liu has discussed the problems that arise when a theory or a concept is appropriated from one language into another. Said's discusses the movement of ideas and concepts from place to place in an international environment as a response to changing social and historical circumstances. Liu has, however, criticized Said's concept of moving theory for having abandoned the what she calls the "traveling aspect" and, in particular, for passing over the problem of the means of transmission of theory. The vehicle of such transmission is translation, and Liu believes that one needs to look more closely at which language and for what audience does the translation take place. She herself talks about "translingual practice," which she says allows us to understand the process through which concepts are translated, adapted, and appropriated in another language.

> Broadly defined, the study of translingual practice examines the process by which new words, meanings, discourses, and modes of representation arise, circulate, and acquire legitimacy within the host language due to, or in spite of, the latter's contact/collision with the guest language. Meanings, therefore, are not so much "transformed" when concepts pass from the guest language to the host language as invented within the local environment of the latter.[212]

[212] Liu, p26.

Liu prefers to speak of translation from a guest language into a host language, rather than using the more conventional terms of source language and target language – a choice that is motivated by her emphasis on the active role played by Chinese writers and translators themselves in "inviting, selecting, combining, and reinventing words and texts from the guest language," and then determining the meaning and usefulness of these words and texts for their own needs and concerns. Liu thus focuses on how a concept is taken up in a new linguistic and political environment, taking into account the struggles over meaning that surround the domestication of new concepts. This approach to the transmission/translation process highlights the complex interaction between a process of discovering and interpreting foreign ideas, on the one hand, and building upon and relating them to native terms and domestic political concerns, on the other hand. The concepts inevitably will alter given the unique environment in which they are now employed. In Liu's language they are re-invented within the local environment.

The concept of "individual" is very much an evolving and contested concept, having among it differing meanings those of "individualism" and "individuality." The term has done some considerable traveling both in time and space within the West, from Augustine to Rousseau to Kant, before it traveled to China. The concept of "the individual," furthermore, did not travel on its own to China, but was accompanied by concepts, such as democracy and nationalism among others, that informed its understanding. It also arrived with what one today would call strange bedfellows, such as Social Darwinism. Furthermore, the concept did not travel to China just once and for all; it made the trip several times over the years under different circumstances, taking

different routes and using different vehicles. As we will see, Lu Xun took hold of the Nietzschean idea of the *Übermensch*, valorized the self-strengthening aspects that he read onto its meaning as a strong and sincere individual, and used it for his own purposes within his own cultural and historical terrain.

The process whereby new concepts were rendered into Chinese is extremely complex and was in many cases influenced by choices already made in Japan. In the 1860s, however, China had led the way in translating Western works that were then translated by the Japanese, who thus took over words Chinese and Western writers had already coined. By the 1890s this trend was reversed. To complicate matters further, many of the perceived Japanese loan words introduced at the time had actually first been coined in Chinese. Some of these originally Chinese inventions did not become widespread in China until they were reintroduced from Japan in the 1890s and early 1900s. Beginning in the 1870s the Japanese had been particularly active in studying and translating Western works, creating a new political vocabulary in the process. Japanese scholars used Chinese characters to translate these new Western terms, creating neologisms. Many words for Western concepts now widely used in China, such as society (*shehui*), economics (*jingji*), and human rights (*tianfu renquan*), were first coined in Japan and later introduced in China.[213]

When the English word "self" first entered modern Chinese discourse, a number of Chinese characters were used to translate it, including *ziwo*, *wo*, *ji*, and *xiaoji*. *Ziwo*, like many other two-character nouns in modern Chinese, is probably a "returned graphic

[213] Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p80.

loanword" imported from Meiji Japan. The rest of the translations of "self" were appropriated from classical Chinese philosophy, neo-Confucianism in particular, although with radical and important shifts in meaning. In addition, there is also a family of words *geren*, *gewei*, *geti* in modern Chinese – translations of the English word "individual" – that are sometimes used interchangeably with the *ziwo* family.[214] China inherited the slippage of meaning in English between "self" and "individual", but as we shall see, these meanings become additionally complicated by the Confucian cosmos into which these terms are imported. Furthermore, given the highly unstable politics of the period, the May Fourth notion of the individual will inevitably be tied up with those of nation, state, and society, both as emerging notions and as shifting relationships.

Lu Xun Encounters Zarathustra

From 1915 the names Nietzsche and Zarathustra, and catchwords such as "God is dead," "reevaluation of values," "slave morality," "master morality," and the *Übermensch* came to be very much in vogue in China. Young Chinese intellectuals appropriated the vocabulary of Nietzsche to attack the traditional Confucian-based culture that they blamed for China's failure in the modern industrialized world. Nietzsche was also invoked by Chinese youth to challenge the authority of the older generation that they saw as having failed as national leaders and they saw themselves cast in the heroic role of saviors of the nation. While Lu Xun never aimed for political leadership, his appreciation of Nietzsche has deep roots. During his student years in Japan, Lu Xun had

[214] Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p82.

read (and translated) the Prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and had been taken by the image of the *Übermensch* as the symbol of the individual daring to take a stand against conformity and smallness.

In brief, what we find in the Prologue is the following trajectory: Zarathustra has been living in a cave with a serpent and an eagle, gathering wisdom, but feels a responsibility to return to speak with others about the *Übermensch*. The world to which he returns is suffering from a spiritual malaise, and his solution comes from the understanding that we must create an *Übermensch*, an Overhuman, an extraordinary person to embody and reflect a higher meaning in a world that no longer has a pre-existing higher meaning. This message is rejected by the masses, through a lack of comprehension on the whole, even on the part of the disciples that he attracts. Thus Zarathustra, in turn, rejects them, he renounces his commitment to them; they become examples of the "herd mentality" that Nietzsche despises. Zarathustra travels and eventually returns to his cave to commune once more with his eagle and serpent.

Lu Xun's translation of the *Prologue* was published in China, and in his writing for the rest of his life we can see the influence that Nietzsche had on his thinking. The concepts that he appropriated and mined were those of the individual and his relationship to an authentic life; he exhalted them to a similar degree as Zarathustra, but, as we'll see, these concepts have vastly different meanings for him than they would have had for Nietzsche. In order to begin to discuss the meaning that the Nietzschean *Übermensch* – with his sense of destiny and commitment to greatness – had for Lu Xun, it must be put into the following context. It was not until the late Qing that the terms *ziwo*, *geren* and

geren zhuyi (self, individual, and individualism) were introduced into the Chinese vocabulary. This is not to say, of course, that the Chinese Confucian vocabulary did not have a concept of self; in fact, self-cultivation was the highest virtue within the Confucian culture. However, we can say that this concept of self was a vastly different one than the Enlightenment individual self that is championed in the West.

When we in the West think of our self, we think of the individual. That is, I think of me, a rational being, with a certain set of attributes. This is who I am in the world, and as this individual I then interact with the world, making meaning and making relationships. This would not have been Lu Xun's sense of a self at all. The Chinese Confucian self is not something that one has, but is something that one does or that one achieves. A self has no meaning in isolation; what I am is the sum total of my relationships. I am my mother's daughter, Blake's sister, Lori's friend, Dr. Ames' student, Jean's tenant, and so on out into the world. There is much more to be said about this sense of self, but what is its most remarkable distinction, for my purposes here, is the lack of appeal to any kind of essential or universalizable self. This is not an existential sense of self either, where existence precedes essence, where if you build up enough of a relationship-nexus, then finally, *voilà*, you achieve an essential self. No, there is never any essence.

So we need to imagine Lu Xun encountering the concept of the *Übermensch* at roughly the same time as a nascent sense of what begins to come close to what we, in the West, think of as individualism. And it becomes this sense of the individual, the super-man standing against the herd, that he is reading onto the pre-existing Chinese sense of

self; it is not surprising, therefore, that as a result he distorts Nietzsche's intentions. When Zarathustra perceived the satisfaction of the masses with a less than fulfilled life, he renounced his commitment to them and the "herd mentality" that they stood for. Whereas for Lu Xun a commitment to individualism became as well a commitment to the emancipation of his contemporaries, herd mentality notwithstanding.

Truth, truthfulness, and deception play important roles in Nietzsche's thought and *philaletheia* (the passion for truth) is an important link between Nietzsche and Lu Xun.[215] For Nietzsche, truth was meant to have the effect of a cold shower – bracing and feasible only for those who can live without the comforts of illusion. For Lu Xun, this vision resonated as an equally powerful corrective to his struggle against the moral and authoritative bankruptcy of early-20th century Confucian China and the complicity of its people in their refusal to protest. The term for truth (*zhenli*) was a quite recent one, introduced to China via Japan and its more extensive European contact; however the ideal that both Lu Xun and Nietzsche shared was not an abstract metaphysical commitment to Truth. Nietzsche draws a clear distinction between the more abstract notion of truth (*Wahrheit*) and truthfulness, *Wahrhaftigkeit*, with its more existential insistence upon an authentic lived existence. In *Ecce Homo*, he writes, "Zaruthustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His doctrine, and his alone, posits truthfulness as the highest virtue."[216] The analogous Confucian ideal has been that of *cheng* (sincerity/the

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[215] Kelly, David, "The Highest Chinadom: Nietzsche and the Chinese Mind, 1907-1989," in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, Graham Parkes, ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p154.

[216] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, IV, 3.

absence of duplicity, integrity, creativity).[217] *Cheng* is more of a psycho-social value, rooted in the behavioral norm of truthfulness in the sense of intending not to mislead, but it also has resonances in the *Analects* in its meaning of "effecting sociopolitical order" – an aesthetic order that involves the participation of both rulers and people in an emergent harmony. It is an order that is, at best, always novel and unique. So when Lu Xun appropriates the Nietzschean ideal of truthfulness, it is with the understanding that to "speak the truth" (or "be sincere" or "to personalize one's existence") will not be with the idea of distinguishing yourself from the masses, but will have a necessarily intersubjective dimension and be a means to a harmonious political goal.[218]

Lu Xun's prescription for change did not propose a template, he was wary of all models in the absence of more fundamental change. His view was that more than – or certainly in addition to – the turn to Western models for modernization, that the need for changes at the level of "Chinese characteristics" was necessary. Specifically, Lu Xun speaks a number of times of *cheng* and *ai*, sincerity and love, as those elements that were lacking, a conviction that he formed while still a student in Japan.[219] In fact, from his

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[217] Kelly, p154.

[218] Roger Ames and David Hall note that there is a strong association in the literature between *dao* and *cheng*. "Creativity (*cheng*) is self-consummating (*zicheng*), and its way (*dao*) is self-directing (*zidao*). Creativity is a process (*wu*) taken from its beginning to its end, and without this creativity, there are no events. It is thus that, for exemplary persons (*junzi*), it is creativity that is prized. But creativity is not simply the self-consummating of one's own person; it is what consummates events. Consummating oneself is authoritative conduct (*ren*); consummating other events is wisdom (*zhi*). This is the excellence (*de*) of one's natural tendencies (*xing*) and is the way of integrating what is more internal and what is more external. Thus, whenever one applies this excellence, it is fitting." *Zhongyong*, 25. Roger Ames and David Hall, *Focusing the Familiar*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, p106.

[219] Xu Shoushang, *Wo suo renshide de Lu Xun* (The Lu Xun I knew), Beijing, 1952, p19. Quoted in Kelly, p154.

earliest student days in Japan, Lu Xun carved a seal bearing the motto *cun cheng qu wei* ("preserve sincerity and dispel falsehood"). Marián Gálik, the noted scholar of modern Chinese literary criticism, writes: "it is very probable that a study and reading of certain works, like those of V. Garshin and L. Andreev, and perhaps also of St. Augustine, L. Tolstoy and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, had convinced Lu Xun that the voices of mind have to be sincere, must spring from a pure heart, present reality without either bias or embellishment, amidst their own failings and estimate their own capacities without superfluous illusions."[220] And in a footnote Gálik points to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as an additional source. Certainly we can hear strong echoes of Nietzsche in Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman": both use their "heroes" to broadcast a call for a utopia, Zarathustra calling for the *Übermensch* and Lu Xun's madman crying out for a *zhen de ren* (a man of *ren*). In one of his "Random Thoughts" zawen, published in the same year as "Diary of a Madman," he asserts that geniuses are oftentimes labeled as "mad." And as Raoul Findeisen points out, in a number of his earliest *zawen* Lu Xun uses the expression "genius" (*tiancai*) as a synonym for the "genuine man" (*zhen ren*) and for the "independently acting man" (*liren*) who were expected to realize the *Übermensch*.[221]

The belief of many of the May Fourth intellectuals was that the cure for China's condition was to go in search of "more mind" – "Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy," as the May Fourth intellectuals referred to them. In the same spirit that Dewey would argue that the cure for what troubles democracy will be "more democracy," Lu Xun, as distinct

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[220] Gálik, Marián, "Studies in Chinese Intellectual History III. Young Lu Xun (1902-1909)," *Asian and Oriental Studies* 21, 1985, p60.

[221] Findeisen, p87.

from those who surrounded him during the May Fourth period, argued that the cure for the ills of Confucianism is more *cheng*, more integrity or creativity. Self-cultivation can be seen as a means to the end of authoritative (that is, strong both politically and ethically) government. Lu Xun pays as much attention to the means as to the end, viewing them as metaphysically inseparable.

Übermensch as Confucian Supra-man

Lu Xun seized on individualism as a potential antidote to what he saw as the prevailing vice of rampant materialism, arguing that those pursuing power, fame, and wealth in the name of progress were misrepresenting Western civilization. He drew on many and varied sources: on Rousseau, Kierkegaard, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Ibsen, ignoring frictions and incongruities between them. In his essay on Mara Poetry, it was not simply the concern with the material among his peers (guns and factories as China's salvation) that he was reacting against, but the powerful force invested in matter itself by evolutionary theory. As compensation for a discourse that seemed to write the self out of the process of social and historical transformation, Lu Xun borrowed from Nietzsche a type of individual – the *Übermensch* – who is imagined by Zarathustra to overcome or transcend the cultural hand he has been dealt. The materialism and determinism of the evolutionary discourse within China produced in Lu Xun the need for a counterdiscourse – that of the Lu Xunian *Übermensch* – if the Chinese tradition was to engage in authentic progress. One must say "no to materialism" and "yes to the individual," Lu Xun claimed.

Lu Xun's primary source was Nietzsche, the source in whom he found a prescription for the reform of Chinese "national character." As we have seen in "On the Extremities of Culture", Lu Xun outlined the objectives of his "national character" reform: to "establish man" and to build the "kingdom of man."[222] To build the "kingdom of man", he confronted three obstacles: the anti-genius tradition, vulgar materialism, and the Manchu regime. He called on his contemporaries to "give free reign to the individual" and not to harm genius, and in "On the Power of Mara Poetry" he proposed a movement led by "fighters of the spiritual world" to overcome those obstacles. In short, Lu Xun's plan of revitalizing China, with the Nietzschean *Übermensch* as the agent, had two related parts. The first was an overthrow of the remnants of the Manchu regime under which the Chinese had developed a "national character" of slaves; the second was the actual remolding of this character.

Lu Xun characterized "Mara poets" as individuals who were able to fully realize their potentials due to their willingness to plunge into eternal conflicts. The concept seems to derive from Lu Xun's understanding of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, but it is also related to a Nietzschean will to power. The following excerpt from "On the Power of Mara Poetry" shows him under the influence of translations of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals*:

> According to Nietzsche, the weak considers the strong to be evil because the latter has triumphed over him. Here "evil" stands for "strength." Nietzsche glorifies the strong in order to empower himself, Satan challenges the strong also in order to empower himself. Their views on

[222] Lu Xun, quoted in Chiu-yee Cheung, *Lu Xun: The Chinese "Gentle" Nietzsche*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang Publishing, 2001, p101.

> good and evil may be different, their thirst for power, nonetheless, is the same.[223]

So far as Nietzsche's intentions are concerned, Lu Xun's comparison does not quite hit the mark. *Beyond Good and Evil* attacks the dogmatism that Nietzsche sees as having afflicted philosophy up to that point, especially with regard to the nature of truth and morality: any pretense on the part of a philosopher to objectivity is just a pose. He calls for "new philosophers" who would create new values through a process of open-minded experimentation. The philosopher, in this sense, has a significant political role, directing cultural development. While we can certainly see some affinities here between the projects of Nietzsche and Lu Xun in their attacks on dogmatism – for Lu Xun, it was doctrinaire Confucianism that he critiques – Lu Xun is not calling for the creation of "new values," but for the critique and rearticulation of the old ones. The challenge to philosophy's objectivity was not one that Confucianism needed to meet; claims to objective truth were never part of Confucian epistemology with regard to the source of validity for its moral claims. Rather, it was the authoritativeness of the individual who was making that claim; and thus the individual's embrace of "evil," "Satanic," or "Mara" power is, from Lu Xun's point of view, the source of his strength. Certainly, words such as "evil" and "Satanic" and terms such as "thirst for power" do not have dark or alarming

[223] Quoted in Shao Lixin, *Nietzsche in China*, p51.

resonances in the Chinese culture.[224] For Lu Xun, they are used as exhortations to reclaim a balance of power within both the individual and the culture at large.

Nietzsche postulates a fundamental drive to ever-greater vitality and life-enhancement, and suggests that this characterizes not only human motivation, but the behavior of all that lives. Nietzsche's will to power is not that of the individual will power, but the human ability to manifest a more cosmic force. It is, especially in the human realm, the force of ideas. "A tablet of good hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold, it is the voice of their will to power."[225] And later, "And life itself confided this secret to me: 'Behold,' it said, 'I am that which must always overcome itself. Indeed, you call it a will to procreate or a drive to an end, to something higher, farther, more manifold: but all this is one, and one secret.'"[226] Those who are willing to say in chains by simply "rewilling" the past; but there is more and greater to be had. "I led you away from these fables when I taught you, 'The will is a creator.' All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident – until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I willed it.' Until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.'"[227] Will to power in the strictly Nietzschean sense involves a life force that can be directed either in a direction toward self creativity and a enhancement of this life force, or it can

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[224] We might see here the influence of Lu Xun's early immersion in Daoist literature. From Daoism, and reinforced later from Buddhism, came the acceptance of allowing room in the social order for the unassimilable that might disrupt the community.

[225] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, 15, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufman, New York, Viking Press, 1974, p170.

[226] Nietzsche, II, 12, p227

[227] Nietzsche, II, 20, p253.

be allowed to become overly concerned with "self-preservation" at the expense of creation. "The most concerned ask today, 'How is man to be preserved?' But Zarathustra is the first and only one to ask, 'How is man to be overcome?'"[228]

We can recall here the words of Lu Xun: "A friend of mine has said most aptly: 'If we want to preserve our national characteristics, we must first make sure that they can preserve us.' Certainly self-preservation comes first. All we ask is whether a thing has the power to preserve us, not whether it is characteristic or not."[229] Self-preservation for Lu Xun does not have the necessarily soul-deadening connotation that it has for Nietzsche given that the Confucian project of self-preservation implies not simply a narrow focus on survival, but carries with it conceptions of flourishing as well: self-preservation implies both self-cultivation and self-creation. The issue is not so much the preservation of the self, but the way in which this is done. Lu Xun's critique focuses on what had become the obsessive focus in the Confucian tradition: on whether the sources of this power and the outcome would be "characteristically Chinese." Such a concern, he claims, is antithetical to the true sense of self-preserving and creative power.

What Nietzsche does offer to Lu Xun is a role model in the figure of Zarathustra. In his Mara poets essay, he quotes him as saying:

> I [Zarathustra] have gone so far ahead that I am all alone and without company. Turning back and looking at the civilized country and motley society: what a faithless society, what an unimaginative multitude! How

[228] Nietzsche, IV, 13.3, p399.

[229] Lu Xun, "Random Thoughts." 1918, p30.

> can I stay in such a country? I am exiled from my own country. All I can hope for are the future generations.[230]

This is not a direct translation of a single passage, but a paraphrase of the following passage from the Second Part, "On the Land of Education":

> I flew too far into the future: dread overcame me, and when I looked around, behold, time was my sole contemporary. Then I flew back toward home, faster and faster; and thus I came to you, O men of today, and into the land of education. For the first time I really had eyes for you, and a genuine desire; verily, it was with long in my heart that I came. But what happened to me? For all my anxiety I had to laugh. Never had my eyes beheld anything so dappled and motley. . . . And with fifty mirrors around you to flatter and echo your color display! . . . With the characters of the past written all over you, and these characters in turn painted over with new characters: thus have you concealed yourselves perfect from all interpreters of characters. . . . Thus, I now love only my *children's land*, yet undiscovered, in the farthest sea: for this I bid my sails search and search.[231]

Zarathustra preaches on a wide range of philosophical ideas that include not just the "will to power" but also presents the idea of the *Übermensch* (the super-man), the ideal aim of human development. The *Übermensch* forever aspires to greatness, living a life of creative adventure, and is devoid of limiting timidity – and is contrasted to "the Last Man," a caricature of someone too tentative and diffident to pursue higher aims. Although, importantly, the *Übermensch* is seen by Nietzsche as the sort of human who contains those values that he venerates – aesthetic sensitivity and creativity – he is one who also transcends these human capacities and embraces, too, his animal nature.[232]

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[230] Quoted in Shao Lixin, p51.

[231] Nietzsche, p229-231.

[232] Parkes, "Introduction"

While the pathos of an alienated prophet was kept intact in Lu Xun's translation – in fact, Lu Xun must have seen Zarathustra as mirroring himself – as we can see Nietzsche's philosophical intent was lost; or, rather, Lu Xun brought his own background concepts with him in the form of the Confucian understanding of the ideal human being, or ideal human relatedness. The Confucian *Übermensch*, as understood by Lu Xun, is not someone who is conceived as transcending human capacities, not a *super*-man in that sense of overcoming the human; rather it is a person whose capacities are developed to the greatest extent, a *supra*-man, with the sense of a person who is beyond or earlier. His understanding of the *Übermensch* is one who develops his neglected human qualities, but without the connotation that this person has properties that are inherently out of reach. The *Übermensch*, for Lu Xun, was an individual who did not aspire to qualities that would set him apart, but still his "evil" strength was the source of his individuality; more specifically, the *Übermensch* represented the "active force." Lu Xun in his role as the doctor who is called upon to cure China's *xin*, her heart-and-mind, will not propose a solution (or *the* solution) to a problem or a problematic state of affairs, but use his critique as solvent, as a clearing away of disharmonizing accretions that have built up over time.

The struggle was not about the survival of the fittest (individual or culture), but the survival of the moral order that would or could have the power to sustain those individuals and that culture. The Mara poets were models, moral exemplars in the sense that they have the Lu Xunian "will to power." However, when Lu Xun appropriates this term, he understands it in the sense of the Confucian value of *cheng*, sincerity/creativity

(with the sense of acting authentically), and the associated term, *qi*, the energy of transformation that resides within the world.[233] For all of Lu Xun's carrying on about "national characteristics," it was the dissipation of *cheng* that he saw as being at the root of China's problems. Lu Xun speaks in his Mara poets essay of the "voice of heart", that which is passed on from generation to generation, sustaining and invigorating a people. When a people could no longer access the "voice of heart" and fell silent, they would soon perish as a nation.[234]

> The most powerful thing a culture could leave to posterity is the voice of heart.[235] Ancient people intuitively penetrated the mystery of nature, miraculously became one with the universe, and communing with nature, they spontaneously expressed themselves and produced poems and songs. Nietzsche was surely correct when he attributed a rejuvenating power to primitive people.[236]

Here again we see parallels to Nietzsche, both in his evocation of nature mysticism and the presence of the Dionysian element as a rejuvenating power. "The necessity for concomitant creation and destruction is at the core of what Nietzsche calls 'the Dionysian', a crucial feature of eternal recurrence, where what must be willed is the recurrence of everything that has led up to the present moment."[237] The Dionysian elements within each person are those that "rise up from man's innermost core, indeed

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[233] For a more developed discussion of these terms and their relatedness, see "Glossary of Key Terms" in Roger Ames' *Focusing the Familiar.*

[234] Roger Ames notes that "we don't [although he implies that we should] use the word [*cheng*] to talk about the serious business of being human."

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[236] Lu Xun, "On the Power of Mara Poetry," quoted in Shao Lixin, p50.

[237] Parkes, p16.

from nature,"[238] – the source of creative and rejuvenescent power for both Lu Xun and Nietzsche. The voice of heart, for Lu Xun, is tied both to *cheng* and to the creative font of nature; and Nietzsche, too, speaks of the "genius of the heart" in one extended and beautifully poetic passage in *Beyond Good and Evil.*

> The genius of the heart as it is possessed by that great hidden one, the tempter god and born pied piper of consciences whose voice knows how to descend into the underworld of every soul, . . . the genius of the heart from whose touch everyone goes away richer, not favoured and surprised, not as if blessed and oppressed with the goods of others, but richer in himself, newer to himself than before, broken open, blown upon and sounded out by a thawing wind, more uncertain perhaps, more delicate, more fragile, more broken, but full of hopes that as yet have no names, full of new will and current, full of new ill will and counter-current. . ."[239]

If we recall Lu Xun's "Thoughts Before the Mirror" essay, where he notes the vitality of the décor on his Han period mirror that used foreign-inspired imagery, we can suppose his dejection and dismay that the "voice of heart" has been missing in China from some time now. As a result the Chinese have been capitulating to those in power, both inside and outside of their country, an attitude that will prove fatal to them, for "such people always grow weaker every day, for they pass all their time in fear and trembling, and have lost the will to live"[240] – that is, they have lost the connection to the spirit of the Dionysiac and the Mara. Lu Xun, in his role as physician, prescribes the tonic – again in a vial containing a message from Nietzsche:

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[238] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p17.

[239] *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp199-200.

[240] Lu Xun, "Thoughts Before the Mirror," p121.

> Once ancient sources are exhausted we will look for fountains of the future and for new origins. Oh my brothers, it will not be long before new lives originate and new fountains surge from the depth.[241]

In other words, they could gain access to the "voice of the heart" by turning to "new [foreign] origins" or "new [foreign] fountains," although this appropriation will turn out to be partial in both senses of that word: both a biased understanding – and thus a mis-appropriation – and incomplete.

While some have criticized Lu Xun's "national characteristics" campaign as an example of "self-Orientalization," this is not an entirely reasonable evaluation of his position; his view was more nuanced and rested on the belief that the inner self had to change in order for the culture to change and rests on an understanding of traditional Confucian notions of the harmonious interplay between inner self and outer world. The Chinese people, he believed, needed to make changes at that fundamental level and only in that way would China be able to stand up and survive in the struggle among nations. In this context respect for the individual and the implementation of broader political participation could help unleash the energy of the citizenry to the benefit of the nation. Lu Xun's reading of Nietzsche shows the possibility of a struggle to develop a strong sense of individuality, an effort that helps to explain (in his interpretation) the strength of the West, an effort he also saw as one of self-cultivation. It would be wrong, however, to describe this critique of the Chinese tradition and Chinese character as self-loathing or a

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[241] Lu Xun's translation, from "On the Power of Mara Poetry," is not literal. Nietzsche's own words from Zarathustra, 3.12.25: "Whoever has gained wisdom concerning ancient origins will eventuall look for wells of the future and for new origins. O my brothers, it will not be overlong before *new peoples* originate and new wells roar down into new depths." Kaufman, p323.

manifestation of self-orientalization. In fact, it had many elements of a conscious and deliberate Occidentalism, in which the purpose was to attack tradition and those in power rather than to slavishly copy the West.[242] We can see in Lu Xun's theory of "grabbism" an Occidentalism that is an active method of appropriation, one that had a strong liberating quality and has contributed to Lu Xun's enduring influence in China, despite his later cooptation by Mao.

Conclusion

> Of course, a man who writes short stories cannot help having his own views. For instance, as to why I wrote, I still felt, as I had a dozen years earlier, that I should write in the hope of enlightening my people, for humanity, and of the need to better it. I detested the old habit of describing fiction as "entertainment," and regarded "art for art's sake" as simply another name for passing the time. So my themes were usually the unfortunates in this abnormal society. My aim was to expose the disease and draw attention to it so that it might be cured.[243]

We are all left with the chasm that modernity has opened up. Nietzsche says, "God is dead," but then what are you left with? The timeless problems are still there. Religion exists to deal with, or to answer, these timeless questions and problems. It exists because of death and plagues and unfairness. Religion tries to stitch these divisions back together.

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[242] See Chen Xiaomei for a definition of Occidentalism in *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995. Chen develops this concept with reference, of course, to Edward Said's account of Orientalism, as strategy of Western world domination; whereas Chinese Occidentalism (per Chen) is primarily a discourse that has been evoked as one of liberation. This issued played a prominent role in Chinese national debate after the 1988 television production of *He shang* ("River Elegy"), in which some saw the positive image of a scientific and modern West in the film as evidence of "the ideological power wielded by the West." Chen argues that, on the contrary, *He shang* "can best be understood neither as an example of Chinese naiveté nor of Western imperialism, but as a potent anti-official discourse employed by the Chinese intelligentsia to express what was otherwise politically impossible or ideologically inconceivable." p28

[243] Lu Xun, "How I Came to Write Stories," *Selected Works*, Vol. III, p263.

Modernity, and the scientific attitude that came in the room with it, emerged with the belief that it could solve these problems rationally. But the problems resist solution (Botox notwithstanding). What can broadly be called Nietzscheanism is alive and well in China today, in part as a response to the sense of dislocation and disillusionment in the post-Mao period. We can take the example of Liu Xiaobo, one of the strongest voices to emerge from the student movement in 1989. He became an archetype of the rebellious individual, the one called upon to inspire and thus overthrow the traditional social structure.

> Facing the thousands of people who cheered me on, I was completely carried away. Now here I was, speaking at Tiananmen Square, I felt that my words could sway the fate of the nation.[244]

Although in China many see him as the fulfillment of the Nietzschean type and tradition, in fact, Nietzsche had a strong ambivalence about such rugged individualism – when it turned nihilistic and devolved into a "me against the world" attitude – and Liu Xiaobo's association with his views, his naïve appropriation of the powerful political individual, is another example of the way in which Nietzsche has been misappropriated in China since the beginning of the 20th century.

> His tragic, assertive, forthright individual, though up-dated with many direct borrowings (*en-soi, Dasein*) from the existentialism of Heidegger and Sartre, remains a *fin-de-siècle* caricature. Lacking a sense of irony, Liu sees little but rebellious individualism in Nietzsche.[245]

The Communist Party may have once applauded Lu Xun, but it is no fan of his heirs. Liu Xiaobo went to prison and was condemned in the official media for "betraying

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[244] Liu speaking in "Gate of Heavenly Peace", PBS documentary on 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising.

[245] Kelly, p166.

his nation's honor." Yet in a sense even Liu never went quite as far as Lu Xun, who helped revolutionize Chinese writing and began to write in the vernacular (*baihua*) in order that more readers might have access to his thoughts. Moreover, Lu Xun had the deepest natural affinity for Nietzsche, who was able to diagnose a cultural malaise that Lu Xun knew well in China and Nietzsche could only imagine that they had.

> On that first road, which can now be completely surveyed, arise adaptation, Higher Chinadom, modesty in the instincts, satisfaction in the dwarfing of mankind – *a kind of stationary level of mankind.* Once we possess that common economic management of the earth that will soon be inevitable, mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of the economy – as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, every more subtly "adapted" gears.[246]

However, as David Kelly points out, Liu Xiaobo's generation differs from Lu Xun in the level of "Chinadom" with which they deal. As a result of the political and cultural policies during much of the twentieth century, by the 1980's China had evolved – or devolved – into Lu Xun's nightmare, combining "all the worst features of modernity and feudalism," and the generation of Tiananmen protesters believe that "the Nietzschean critique of culture attempted in the May Fourth movement, far from being excessive, did not go far enough."[247]

As we have seen, it is possible to understand Lu Xun's appropriation of Nietzsche, specifically the way in which he understood and interpreted the concept of the *Übermensch*, as both criticism of the Confucian tradition and an attempt to make it stronger and more vital in the modern era. It is safe to say that he never stopped being

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[246] Nietzsche,, *Will to Power,* 866. Quoted in Kelly, p168.

[247] Kelly, p168-169.

influenced by Nietzsche: in his valorization of the nature mysticism of the Mara poets, in his self-identification with Zarathustra as the "mad/genius", and in his insistence on a manner of criticism and self-criticism that took as its highest value a Nietzschen *Wahrhaftigkeit*, or truthfulness, for almost 30 years he incessantly harangued his countrymen for their lack of *cheng*, which had turned them into slaves.

Critique for Lu Xun was not a matter of pointing out to another that they have broken a rule, but it was an opportunity to teach. If he felt *jian* as a duty, it took the following form: that we are all called upon to be each other's teacher. However, Lu Xun didn't make big speeches about democracy, about freedom, about world government, and he didn't talk about progress in any kind of utopian terms. Rather, he talked about the little details of life, about the everyday details that make life important and that bring dignity to people. In the following chapter we will focus on some representative *zawen*, or short essays, that were published in newspapers and magazines during the last 20 years of Lu Xun's life. These essays for the most part took as their subject matter daily events in the lives of his contemporaries, but in his hands they became masterful examples of cultural criticism dripping with despair and relentless in their honest appraisal of contemporary China.

CHAPTER 6

EVIDENCE OF *JIAN* IN LU XUN'S *ZAWEN*

Introduction

In the following chapter I will explore further the possibilities for opening up the concept of *jian* within the Confucian tradition. This discussion will involve both a deeper analysis of the role of remonstrance within the tradition and, following, a close reading of a number of Lu Xun's *zawen*. The latter is intended to give us an appreciation of the technique of *jian* at work.

By the beginning of the 20th century there was growing dissatisfaction and pockets of anger at the strongly negative socio-economic effects of a corrupt and decaying, but still powerful, Confucian bureaucracy that ruled China; and yet the cultural landscape of pre-modern China could still be fairly described (as it has been by Tu Weiming) as one dominated by "despotic, gerontocratic, and male-oriented practices" (a description that holds through the 20th century, one could add). We can compare this history to our own European past, and it can be argued that these practices remained entrenched to an even greater degree in a dynastic culture that reveres tradition in such a ritual ways on both institutional and individual levels and had yet to experience a widespread period of anti-royal protest such as took place during the Enlightenment. And yet, there exists within Chinese Confucian discourse a fertile ground for extending the possible meaning of the practice of *jian* and that a deeper exploration of its history will work to destabilize the fixed meaning and power it has acquired.

Further Reflections on *jian*

While the pursuit of modernity has been a dominant theme in the history of 20th-century China, it nonetheless remains a strongly past-conscious culture. In order to begin this final discussion of *jian* and to extend its meaning, we need first to further clarify its place within the tradition. Confucianism, as originally conceived by Kongzi (Confucius), was a response to a long period of political upheaval and an attempt to produce a model for a highly functioning and stable society. During the Warring States period (475-221BCE) the disorder and destruction of repeated warfare had led to conditions of political chaos and moral confusion; the prescriptions of Confucius were an attempt to reestablish order and were modeled on rules and values of an earlier period that he considered to have been a "golden age" and worthy of emulation. Ultimately, Confucianism became the most successful socio-ethical system in human history, if judged by the numbers of people who have been – and continue to be – affected by its precepts over the past 2500 years. However, it is important to note that during all of its philosophical evolutions it has remained the case that there is no soteriology in Confucianism beyond the socio-political realm. There is no conception of a better world beyond this one, no appeal for legitimation to a transcendent realm, and no ideal outside of the realm of the relational from which models for human and political relations are derived. The project of the *Analects* was to ascertain how best to order *this* life; its challenge is for humans to maintain the precepts on an individual and social basis. Still today, as Tu Weiming and other New Confucians will argue, what retains primacy in the

Confucian tradition is an emphasis on the continuity between the ethico-religious and the political. In this sense politics is understood as not just about managing the world in social and economic terms, but also has as its project the transformation of the world in an educational and cultural sense. It is the within the framework of the possibility for transformation that the discussion of *jian* will take place.

As it developed, especially in its neo-Confucian evolutions, there is a strong emphasis in the tradition on the importance of the cultivation of the self and the role that self-cultivation plays in maintaining relationships. But it is important to keep in mind the conceptual continuity between the individual self with its intimate relations, and the social and political realm. The relationships to be maintained are not ones that remain solely in the personal sphere, but are ones that extend outward from the family to the community and to the state. In addition, these relationships are marked not just by their continuity, but by their inherent reciprocity and their "differentiated manifestation" as well.[248]

The continuity between self and the political realm was conceptualized early on in the tradition. We see a clear path depicted in the *Great Learning*:

> Their persons (the self) being cultivated, their families were regulated.
> Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed.
> Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.[249]

What originates with the self, in other words, is made manifest in a well-functioning society. A standard neo-Confucian reading of this passage emphasizes the cultivation of

[248] Tu (1985),138

[249] Legge, 45

one's personal life for the sake of society, indeed the world at large, and seems to declare that when the state is not functioning well, this is a time for a necessary re-emphasis on individual self-cultivation.

> Implicit in the statement that 'when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated' is an assertion that, as long as the family is not yet regulated, the cultivation of the personal life must be continued. By analogy, if the body politic is not yet in order or if peace has not yet pervaded all under Heaven, the effort of self-cultivation should not be interrupted. Learning (*hsüeh*), in the Neo-Confucian sense, requires an ultimate and continuous commitment.[250]

However, it is important to note that the *Great Learning* continues:

> From the Son of Heaven (the emperor) down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person (the self) the root of everything besides (the most essential thing).[251]

While self cultivation as the "root" is clearly both the conceptual starting point and the site of ultimate return, it is a mistake to conceive of this root as located within the family of the populace exclusively. That is, it is clear in the passage above that the emperor himself is not exempt from the admonition to develop a high level of *de*, of virtue, in order to preserve his power to rule. In fact, as we will see, he has a special duty, for the sake of the kingdom, to maintain a level that transcends what is required of the ordinary person.

It is not surprising, then, that one distinguishing features of Confucianism is the emphasis that it places on *jian* as a duty. In English, the term has come to mean "a formal statement of grievances or similar matters of public importance." To remonstrate is "to

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[250] Tu (1985), 135

[251] Legge, 45

protest against (a wrong); to point out, state, or represent (a grievance, etc.) to some authority." It has the sense of voicing a reproach, but in an official capacity, in the public realm, and in matters of importance. It is not something that one would undertake casually; as well, it is an objection that is made in some formal manner to a person in a position of authority. In Western democratic culture, this kind of official protest most commonly takes place when we vote. As David Hall and Roger Ames note in their work on the history of democracy in China: "[In the West] remonstrance has been associated ideally with the power of the bourgeoisie and intellectual classes to influence government through the exercise of the ballot, and through participation in the actions of educational and voluntary associations."[252] Given the very real political and economic powers at work to counteract this influence, it is arguable to what degree this is actually the case; nonetheless, the framework is there in Western democracies for official protest to be voiced. However, in traditional China, this would have been impossible. The institutional structure was not one that permitted the general populace from having a voice that could be heard, or even expressed, in such a way to the emperor. In the orthodox Confucian tradition, it was the ruler's ministers who were given this role. Indeed, the role of minister was defined such that there was an expectation that he would not only serve to carry out the policies of the emperor, but would also be expected to advise and, if necessary, to criticize.

One important distinction that needs to be made at this point is the different meaning that the verb "to protest" has in English and in Chinese. A Western

[252] Hall and Ames (1999), 154

understanding of the term is 'to object to', 'to dissent or dispute.' The position that one takes is one of an adversary. One is in opposition to the original stance and is voicing disagreement and mounting a challenge, at least implicitly. The Chinese interpretation, however, is more along the lines of the alternate English meaning: 'to affirm with solemnity', as in "I protest my innocence." Roger Ames ("Protest in the Chinese Tradition") has argued that many features of the Chinese world order work to challenge and limit the nature of protest, that they circumscribe it within the limits of the second of the two meanings. And that this latter meaning is ineffectual in mounting substantive challenge to prevailing modes of authority. Instead, what takes place is a reaffirmation, a resuscitation of an ideal template.

> It is a recurring feature of the history of Confucianism that individuals will arise to dispute the claims to orthodoxy of a current dominant type of Confucianism...Most major claimants to reinterpretation would offer their own commentaries and draw from other earlier commentaries that supported their viewpoint. However, the most fundamental claim in each reinterpretation was not to a novel vision – which would have been abhorrent! – but to having perceived the original and true meaning of the Classics.[253]

This "return to the future" becomes the desired end of *jian*.

The termination of each of the historical dynasties was marked by a period of corruption and a falling away from the central tenets of the Confucian tradition; the beginning of each succeeding dynasty a restoration in the form of a powerful leader committed to the Confucian Classics. Historically, China's future has been a series of adaptations on the past and protest has had as its overarching goal the realignment of the

[253] Mungello, 37

traditional path; one might, if fact, see the whole history of political authority in China as, "meet the new boss, same as the old boss." And yet, ideally, the "boss", the authority, has been freshly interpreted in the light of current political realities and this authority is made manifest in the person of the Emperor, in a sense dressed, not in new, but freshly restored ceremonial robes.

Given the above limitations of protest in the Confucian tradition, how then can we interpret the role of the minister, whose duty it was to advise and protest? What might he have to say beyond affirmations of the status quo? Indeed, his role went beyond that of cynical window dressing that one might assume; but in order to conceive of the possibility of his effectiveness, it is necessary to explore the status of the emperor and the manner in which, on a conceptual level, his power is accrued.

Looking briefly at early Chinese history, we see that the sense of *ming* (to command, to cause to happen) had been closely tied to a notion of fate and the ruler was one who happened to be endowed, as if by fate, with a particular amount of royal virtue. However, by the eleventh century B.C.E., with the establishment of the Zhou dynasty, the position of emperor became invested with a different conception of *tianming* (the "mandate of heaven") and the legitimacy of his rule became closely tied to the degree to which he either augmented or dissipated his *de* (his virtue). A proper ruler would be one who paid great attention to his conduct and understood his moral and religious obligation to take proper care of his virtue. This care came to involve an elaborate set of ritual duties, of *li*, that were incumbent upon him performing, and performing well. If he failed, especially by putting his own desires first, then he would be understood to be dissipating

his *de*. Eventually he would lose his power and, more importantly, his legitimacy to rule, and the position would be transferred to someone who had shown himself to be morally worthy to hold it. Given such an understanding, virtue trumps all else—strength, heredity, wealth—as the necessary condition for power and authority.

If the conditions under which the emperor was to remain in office were so closely connected to his ability, indeed his *suitability*, to represent the power conferred on him by *tian*, then – given the natural tendencies of all human beings, emperors not excluded, to stray from the moral straight and narrow – we begin to see the necessity for the position of remonstrator among the Emperor's ministers. In the Confucian tradition, the issue and the aim is not to be good, but to be *good at* whatever project or interaction one is involved in. In order to live properly, to follow the *dao* (the "proper way"), is for most neither a facile nor an effortless undertaking. In fact, what is easy is to be led astray. In this light, a conceptual space begins to open for *jian*, for correcting the path.

In the Chinese Confucian tradition order in the society and the state is evidence of the personal ordering of the constituents of that society. Yet at the same time, it emphasizes the degree to which personal order is possible only within the context provided by social and political life. In other words, individuals and the state are never viewed as an instrumental means to serve the realization of the other. Instead, they serve as mutually implicating ends. Repeatedly throughout the *Analects* Confucius emphasizes this interdependence and thus marks an understanding of political relationships that is distinctly unfamiliar to categories of Western philosophical theory. Even in contemporary China the concept of inalienable rights remains foreign to the culture. What underlies the

distinction between ruler and ruled, in the West, is a clear distinction between rules as procedures for promoting and maintaining social order, and those elements of a society which require ordering. We rely on theory to justify and order our practice; the two are seen as necessarily different realms altogether, with the latter flourishing when it is most in conformity with the former. A Confucian order, or flourishing social structure, emerges rather from a valuing of the conditions in which all the particular constituents of the order can best manifest their particularities, especially in the performance of the ritual duties (*li*).

What do we mean when we speak of order? Our most common understanding of this concept in the West is to conceive of order in terms of a logical or uniform pattern, with the highest or purest order to be one in which the relationships are not to other members of the group, but to some objective standard. There is a sense of "rightness" that comes from the a-temporality of such an order and an ideal of permanence or effectiveness. Standing behind such an ideal is an assumption of the cosmos itself as being ordered by causal laws. There might be any number of these laws, but they are fixed in a single order, at least ideally. Such a teleologically patterned sense of fixed order has been challenged, most especially in modern times by post-Enlightenment thinkers. Given a powerful skepticism as to the existence of any higher power from which such an order might emanate leads to a conception of a universe that is not fixed or static. There may be patterns, but those patterns are understood to have a human, rather than a divine, origin. In addition, we have a more disturbing Foucauldian sense of order that focuses on a submerged "order of things" that works under the surface of socially

constructed human knowledge. Therefore, what we think we can know about truth and reality becomes challenged terrain.

However the dominant Chinese understanding of the term is one where the uniqueness of the members of the group is of prime importance to the way in which the order of the whole will emerge. An aesthetic ordering of the world gives primacy to the particular, a distinguishing characteristic of Confucian epistemology in which the reality in which a person finds himself emerges from the dynamic relationships which constitute that world. As a result, truth and reality need to be thought of as personal, rather than universal, categories. Order is not determined with reference to a formal ideal; in fact, what is ideal is determined by the characteristics of the constituent elements and, thus, may be ordered in a variety of ways. The Chinese cosmos is not an orderly harmonious systematic universe, it is "the ten thousand things." The goal is still harmony, but it is a harmony that is seen to emerge from within a specific context, not in accordance with universal principles. Fundamentally, the distinction becomes one between a rational and an aesthetic ordering, wherein the former appeals to rules and transcendent notions of rights, and the latter to particular ways of being in relationship between the constituent members of the group in question. When this group is a state the size and complexity of China, then the person in the position of protest can be conceived not as an individual speaking out against a particular individual or the state (with an appeal to a transcendental ideal), but as speaking in a particular way *for* the state, and thus for all of the parts of the whole.

Lu Xun's *zawen*

It will be constructive now to look closely at certain examples of Lu Xun's thought at this period as expressed in his *zawen* – short essays and pieces of journalism – in order to understand more clearly the way in which *jian* functioned within Chinese culture. In these essays we see *jian* "at work" and Lu Xun as remonstrator engaged in the issues of his day and as a particular nexus of Chinese encounters with the challenges of change. Lu Xun's *zawen*, written over an almost twenty-year period, manifest the irreducible particularity of Chinese historiography – the manner in which meaning in a particular historical moment emerges in relation to and out of other, earlier, moments. His subject matter is contemporary events, but his essays are filled with classical quotations, which he then proceeds to refute or demolish. The effort seems both in line with the standard practice of writing classical compositions and in the spirit of the May Fourth movement.[254]

In sheer volume, Lu Xun's *zawen* occupy an even more significant position than his short stories, prose poetry, and classical poetry, and in view of their obvious political and polemical content, the sixteen volumes of collected essays constitute arguably his most significant contribution to modern Chinese literature. Leo Ou-fan Lee gauges the extent of his originality as a modern writer against the traditional heritage and in his assessment the *zawen* assume enormous importance if for no other reason than the simple fact that in the total literary heritage of China's past prose essays of various kinds

[254] Lee, Leo Ou-fan, *Voices from the Iron House: A Study of Lu Xun*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987, p113.

claimed a much larger share than poetry and fiction combined.[255] He experiments with both the form and content of the *zawen* model, and his technique of cultural criticism is often combined with the metaphorical discourse of his fiction writing. As we have seen earlier ("Thoughts Before the Mirror"), one of his favorite methods is to turn something small into a metaphor for a larger facet of Chinese culture. The *zawen* I have chosen discuss span three decades of Lu Xun's active writing career: "My Views on Chastity" (1918), "Confucius in Modern China" (1935), and two essays on the destruction of the Leifeng Pagoda (1924-25). Here Lu Xun has chosen as subjects aspects of Chinese culture itself (chastity) and central icons, both human (Confucius) and material (the Leifeng Pagoda).

"My Views on Chastity"

In 1918, Lu Xun published an essay, "My Views on Chastity," in which he addressed the great attention being paid by writers and public speakers to the "insufficient level of chastity" of contemporary Chinese women. Their purported concern was to prevent women from joining the ranks of those who were "growing more degenerate every day." As is common in a time of crisis, women were being given the moral responsibility to save the nation, or at least to shoulder the burden of preventing further decline. However, Lu Xun was able to perceive this movement as a clear example of the worst of the Chinese tendency to retreat to the past and viewed all related arguments about what "forward direction" to take as being variations on the worthless.

[255] Lee, p110.

> This is the twentieth century, and dawn has already broken on mankind. If *New Youth* were to carry an article debating whether the earth were square or round, readers would almost certainly sit up. Yet their present arguments are pretty well on a par with contending that the earth is not square.[256]

Lu Xun saw this movement as merely "raising old banners" and the focus on the issue of chastity as especially retrograde. In this regard, women were not only expected to be chaste if unmarried, but also if and when her husband died.

> In short, when a woman's husband dies she should remain single or die. If she meets a ravisher she should also die. When such women are praised, it shows that society is morally sound and there is still hope for China. That is the gist of the matter.[257]

In his opposition to this crusade and its ilk Lu Xun is seen by many as advocating a turn in a straightforwardly Western direction as a solution. He begins his argument by asking in what ways unchaste women injure the country. China, he admits, is a country faced with ruin, but it is certainly not the case that the men in power have become dissipated because they have been corrupted by women. It is rather because the leaders have brought the crisis on themselves through their crimes and their mismanagement of the years of wars, famine, flood and drought. Lu Xun argues that it is not the louche behavior of the women that has led to this state of affairs; rather the moral and political decadence is "owing to the fact that we have no new morality or new science and all our thoughts and actions are out of date."[258]

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[256] Lu Xun (1918), p14

[257] Lu Xun, p15

[258] Lu Xun, p15

In demonstrating how such a view had come to hold such sway, he charts the path that the virtue of chastity had followed in the Confucian tradition to the current point where both men and women were unable to do much to change the situation. Many women, after being taught that submission is the cardinal wifely virtue, had a "spirit as distorted as her body" (a reference to foot-binding) and were thus unable even to conceive of objecting to this "distorted morality."[259] And, according to Lu Xun, the ones who did dare to express their desires were chastised (at the very least) for challenging the "eternal truth" that good women were above such aspirations. As to the men, they had been silenced as well by those that he calls the "professional Confucians."

> The fact is that after the Han Dynasty most mediums of public opinion were in the hands of professional Confucians, much more so from the Song and Yuan dynasties onwards. There is hardly a single book not written by these orthodox scholars. They are the only ones to express opinions. With the exception of Buddhists and Taoists who were permitted by imperial decree to voice their opinions, no other "heresies" could take a single step into the open. Moreover, most men were very much influenced by the Confucians' self-vaunted "tractability." To do anything un-orthodox was taboo. So even those who realized the truth were not prepared to give up their lives for it....[S]o they turned "tractable" and held their peace. This is why there has been no change right up till now.[260]

In Lu Xun's analysis Confucianism, as the state ideology, had by this time successfully achieved a high degree of interior colonization; the culture had become one in which a primary characteristic of its people was self-abnegation and the willingness to be led. It is this sense of the word "tractable" that so horrifies and angers Lu Xun. And given such a depiction of Confucianism as a system by which to "manage" men (and women), to make

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[259] Lu Xun, p21

[260] Lu Xun, 22

them easily controlled, one might easily understand why Lu Xun, like a number of his intellectual contemporaries, might then want to turn to such available Western values as those of self-determination and autonomy and away from a Confucian social framework and sense of self. While indeed this might have been the path he chose to follow, in fact those who see this turn misread not only Lu Xun, but important aspects of Confucianism as well.

One of the most significant of these misreadings is the degree to which many Western encounters with China have historically been based on notions of the Chinese as being "selfless," most especially when viewed in the light of unquestioned understandings of 'Western' individual selves. While the full dimensions of this distinction are too complex to cover here, it needs to be noted that this view of a "selfless self" is a mis-understanding and leads to such elisions as that between "tractability" and "self-abnegation." While, as we saw above, Lu Xun was angered by the degree to which he saw those around him having lost their backbone and having become easily managed ("tractable" in the worst sense of the word), we can by no means assume that he would therefore be advocating, as a "cure," a turn toward an autonomous self, in the Western understanding of this term.

As noted earlier, during his student years in Japan, Lu Xun had read (and translated) some Nietzsche and had been quite taken by the image of the *Übermensch*, as the symbol of the individual daring to take a stand against conformity and smallness. Yet still, we must not think that he is advocating the development of a separate, individual sense in the Western sense of "individual." As Roger Ames and David Hall observe, this

would be anathema to the Chinese. They note: "We should not ... think that because we most often associate self-actualization with individuated existence, there can be no appreciation and personal enjoyment of an alternative understanding of uniqueness among the Chinese."[261]

> The term "individual" can mean either one-of-a-*kind*, like a human being, or *one*-of-a-kind, like Turner's "Seastorm." That is, "individual" can refer to a single, unitary, separate, and indivisible thing that, by virtue of some essential property or properties, qualifies as a member of a class....by virtue [of which] it is substitutable. . . . Individual can also mean unique. Under this definition,...equality can only mean parity. It is this sense of "unique individuality" that is helpful in understanding the traditional Confucian conception of self. . . . Attributing the ideal of self-abnegation to the Chinese tradition involves importing both the public/private and the individual/society distinctions. To be selfless in the sense presupposed by some commentators on Chinese culture requires that an individual self first exist [as an achievement], and then that it be sacrificed for some higher public interest.[262]

It was the loss of a person's uniqueness, his "*one*-of-a-kindness" that Lu Xun saw as the humiliating inheritance of the Confucian tradition during the early part of the 20th century. However, it was the tractability, the acquiescence in the face of humiliation, that angered him more and what he considered to be the greatest hindrance to change. We see here one of the characteristics that most distinguishes Lu Xun from his contemporaries in their shared critique of the effects of the Confucian tradition. His criticism was directed not solely at the rotten framework within which the deterioration had occurred, but took aim at those who, through their silence and inaction, had allowed the temple to rot.

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[261] Hall and Ames, (1998), p25

[262] Hall and Ames (1998), 25

"Confucius in Modern China"

This second of the three *zawen* was chosen to illustrate Lu Xun's ironic appreciation of the see-saw policy of China's officials toward the West and as a demonstration, also, of his ability to draw a distinction between the idea of Confucianism and the ideologies that it was caused to serve. Written in the year before his death, it showed no diminishment of acuity and tackled some of the same subject matter and with the same fervor and biting humor as those written in the previous two decades. Indeed the tone of his *zawen* from 1926 until his death ten years later reflect the bitterness he felt after one of his students from Peking Normal Woman's University had been shot to death during a student demonstration. He called the it "the darkest day since the founding of the republic."

"Confucius in Modern China" begins with the observation that Confucius in the few depictions of him that Lu Xun has seen is represented as a "very lean old gentleman in a long, wide-sleeved gown with either a sword at his waist or a staff tucked under his arm, who never smiled but looked thoroughly awe-inspiring."[263] He appeared always stiff and straight and, in general, off-putting for "any normal person." These two aspects of his mien – the awe he inspires and his rigidity – are reflected in the fashion in which modern Confucian officials conduct affairs of state. Lu Xun briefly chronicles the wildly-fluctuating policies of the late Qing era, the first depicting Confucius as "Most Perfect, Most Sage King of Culture." This period, coinciding with Lu Xun's youth, was marked by Confucian scholars, "all knowing quite well that the earth was square, [who] were at

[263] Lu Xun, Selected Works, Vol. IV, Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 1980, p182.

such a loss on this round globe of ours that when they fought France and England, lands not to be found in the Four Books, they were defeated."[264]

> Then, whether thinking it more expedient to save their skins than to worship Confucius and perish, or whether for some other reason, at all events the government and officials began for the first time to waver in their fanatical worship of Confucius, and government funds were spent on large-scale translations of books by foreign devils. In second-hand bookshops today may still be found relics of that period: scientific classics such as J.F.W. Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, C. Lyell's *Elements of Geology* and J.D. Dana's *System of Mineralogy*.[265]

Lu Xun continues in this mordantly sarcastic vein, charting the ebb and flow of Confucius' fortunes in the short 50-year span of his own life. Confucius, he concludes, was most often used as a "brick to knock on doors" and as a tool for the ideological purposes of those in power. The study of Confucianism had become an enterprise undertaken only for the purposes of achieving a position as an official and the study of the Four Books and Five Classics were for the purposes only of access through the doors of power. "In other words, once the examinations were passed these things would be forgotten, just as a brick is dropped once the door is opened."[266]

Worse, once the door was opened these officials would preach one thing and practice another, further denigrating the Confucian tradition. Lu Xun uses a number of examples of unschooled warlords from his own time who began to dress as Confucian scholars, enact rites and ceremonies, and one who chose a descendant of Confucius as his

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[264] Lu Xun, p183.

[265] Lu Xun, p183.

[266] Lu Xun, p186

son-in-law, "thinking the Sage's Way something contagious like syphilis."[267] As a result, as Lu Xun notes, ordinary people – "those known as the ignorant mob" – may call Confucius a sage, but they have no real feeling for him. They may not be trained in the Classics, but they are, and have always been, smart enough to see hypocrisy when they are surrounded by it and oppressed by those who take advantage of the benefits of hollow, yet high-ranking, positions. However, the ordinary people are those who know Confucius best; those who have no recourse often have an insightful appreciation of those whose rules circumscribe their lives.

> They accord him respect but have no feeling for him. Yet I fancy no other people in the world know Confucius as well as the so-called ignorant mob in China.[268]

An analysis of this short passage allows us to explore an illustration of Lu Xun as remonstrator.

Of course, it is not the ignorant mob who will be reading Lu Xun's *zawen*, and although in one sense he is writing for them – on behalf of them – his intended audience are those readers who acquiesce to those in power. It is toward them and toward those to whom they intellectually kowtow that he directs his critique. These groups no longer respect Confucius or Confucianism – otherwise they would behave differently – and yet they profess feelings of attachment to the old traditions and bemoan the loss of old times and traditions. The "ignorant mob" for good reason has no warm feelings for the old times although, as Lu Xun mentions almost as an aside, they do respect Confucius. What

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[267] Lu Xun, p187

[268] Lu Xun, 188.

they respect, we can surmise, is the idea of Confucianism; at the same time they are downtrodden by the ideology.

Jian, as we have noted, is a strategy for harmonizing the relationship between values and practices at times when forces for change and continuity are in complex collision. Lu Xun is writing at just such a time of political and cultural upheaval in China, a period when Confucianism has lost its moral authority and become an ineffective, but oppressive, ideology. We can reflect back at this point to the idea/ideology distinction that Dewey draws upon in his discussions of democracy and understand how this distinction is at play in this *zawen*. The force of Dewey's distinction relies on his understanding of democracy as a human arrangement that calls upon what is highest and best in a human being. It is not a natural state, although he does conceive of us as social animals, but one that a person must be educated into. Democracy is an idea and a way of life that can never be fully realized by whatever form it takes, by way of state institutions. Yet, as the idea behind that form, it is a driving force toward the ideal of the "great community." Problems arise when the form becomes rigidified and no longer able to manifest democracy as a way of life. It is this state to which we can draw a parallel with early 20th-century China: we can understand Lu Xun to assume the "idea" of Confucianism, while at the same time protesting the "form" that it had come to manifest as state ideology.

His is a many-faceted critique. Read straight-forwardly, this essay might seem an unambiguous and uninflected call for the abolishment of Confucianism. Lu Xun seems to be saying that there is nothing of value in Confucianism for the majority of the Chinese,

and in fact that it has at its core a profound tendency toward oppression, especially of those with no hope of access to power. And yet it would be a mistake to underestimate the subtlety of Lu Xun's writing. If he were such a straightforward polemicist, then he would no longer be read as he is today. However, his writing style was very much the product of his studies of the classical essay forms, and he was quite skilled in their tactics. Leo Ou-Fan Lee notes that one of his favorite essay styles, the *xiaopin wen* (personal essay) from the late Ming, was appreciated by Lu Xun for its "satire, attack, and destruction." He also admired the "humor" and "elegance" of English essays he had read, but found them lacking a "dagger-like edge" and "fighting quality."[269] These tactics are all at play in a *zawen* such as "Confucius in Modern China."

If we turn once again to the opening of the essay – Lu Xun's discussion of the portrait of Confucius – we note two important elements. The first is Lu Xun's emphasis on the rigidity of Confucius' stance in all depictions that he has seen of him, and we can understand this representational depiction of Confucius the man as a metaphor for the degree to which Confucianism itself has become ossified and unresponsive. Over and over again, Lu Xun is telling us, when we try to capture the essence of a living spirit, the danger is that we turn it into something without life force – a rigid form, to use Deweyan language. This move is what turned "the ignorant mob" against Confucius.

The second, and related, element to note has to do with a mention that Lu Xun makes at the end of his opening paragraph to a character in an Ibsen play. Lu Xun begins the essay with a discussion of the paucity of images of Confucius. "It is the general rule

[269] Lee, p111.

to make portraits or statues of worthies larger than life; but in the case of the very worthiest, a sage such as Confucius, any portrayal at all appears sacrilegious and therefore it is better to have none. This is not unreasonable."[270] It becomes a problem for an artist when he attempts to portray him, as there were few written descriptions of him to go by; the alternative is for the artist to use his own imagination and this, according to Lu Xun, is even more risky. Hence, he concludes, "the Confucians finally had to adopt Brand's attitude: 'All or nothing.'"[271]

This is, on the surface, a puzzling reference and leaves one wondering what an "all or nothing" attitude might have to do with the number and accuracy of portraits of Confucius. However, what Lu Xun is doing here is very much in keeping with the allusive strategy of this style of essay. What resonates with the reference to Brand, a pastor in a Protestant church, is the awareness of his ultimately destructive rigidity and the effect that this stiffness had on the community that looked to him for spiritual leadership. Ibsen's play is a strong attack on the human consequences of the hard-heartedness that so often characterizes evangelical Protestantism. Brand has an inadequate picture of God, one that mirrors his own personal inadequacies, and Ibsen's feelings about religion and personal freedom – characters are constantly asked to make choices when they feel there is no choice – play a major role. The ice-church, a structure that at the end of the play collapses around Brand and kills him, signifies the negation of

[270] Lu Xun, p181.

[271] Lu Xun, 181. Brand is the protagonist of an Ibsen play of the same title.

love; and the pastor's inflexible devotion to duty destroys the love that he should feel towards his family, the congregation, and finally to God.

As noted earlier, Lu Xun's essay was written in 1935, by which time he had seen enough failed attempts at rebuilding a stable China that he could very well have imagined that, like the ice church in Ibsen's play, it might soon collapse in on itself. The allusion to Brand sends a stark message about the effects of a cultural institution such as Confucianism losing the very qualities that sustained the culture it is meant to support. Through a subtle reversal of values he turns a reference to Confucian portraiture, meant to venerate "the Sage," into a symbol of a dilapidated culture which becomes ever more impervious to change because new "portraits" of contemporary traditionalism are added to reinforce it. In this manner Lu Xun extends his indictment from the past to the present.

"The Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda" and "More Thoughts on the Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda"

The final essays I will discuss were written in response to the collapse in 1924 of a famous temple in Hangzhou, the Leifeng Pagoda, reputed to have contained relics of the Buddha himself. Lu Xun wrote the first of these two essays soon after he heard the news that the Pagoda had tumbled into ruin and, although it had once been an important monument, he declared this to be a good thing. "Now that it has collapsed at last, of course everyone in the country should be happy."[272] Associated with this temple is the famous "Legend of the White Snake" which tells the story of Lady White Snake, who begins life as a snake but turns herself into a beautiful woman to repay a kindness done to

[272] Lu Xun, Vol. II, p101.

her by Xu Xian. The two marry, but when the Buddhist monk Fa Hei sees Xu, Fa is able to perceive that he has been bewitched by Lady White Snake and so imprisons her under the Leifeng Pagoda.

Lu Xun writes that from childhood he disliked the traditional outcome of this legend – that the White Snake is reined in by the monk – and hoped that the pagoda would someday fall down. Now that it had, he is satisfied that the monk has received his due: "Can it be that when he built the pagoda it never occurred to him that it was bound to collapse some day? Serves him right."[273] Leo Ou-Fan Lee interprets this narrative as a parable on the overwhelming burden of conventional morality over instinctual desire and love. Translated into a Freudian metaphor, the Leifeng Pagoda becomes a totemic symbol by which the powers of the cultural "superego" oppress the forces of eros or the "id."[274] While Lu Xun had read enough Freud to make this a plausible interpretation, it is also possible to read this *zawen* more simply as a comment on the crushing burden of tradition and the destruction – in this case an implosion – that inevitably follows. Destruction, he seems to be saying, is not only unavoidable under such conditions, but to be celebrated.

What makes this first *zawen* significant, however, is the fact that four months later Lu Xun wrote a second essay on the same subject, "More Thoughts on the Collapse of Leifeng Pagoda." In this second Pagoda piece Lu Xun explores the dialectic of destruction and construction, the call for change and the need for continuity. This essay demonstrates a greater complexity in both its subject matter and its writing and

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[273] Lu Xun, p102.

[274] Lee, p119.

showcases some distinctive components of Lu Xun's *zawen* style: his ability to derive deeper meaning from concrete objects and his tendency to erect symbolic layers on top of baseline reality. Combined with his penchant toward irony and satire, a first reading of this essay, as is often the case with Lu Xun, might give one a mistaken impression of his intent.

The first Pagoda piece celebrated the destruction of the structure, but Lu Xun is not able to maintain this attitude in this second essay. Here he reflects more deeply on the aftermath of this collapse and is disheartened. He notes that what bothered many people after the collapse was not the loss of the pagoda itself, but the fact that it was one of the "ten sights to see" in that county. Every county in China, Lu Xun claims, has ten well-known sights, venerated either for their beauty or their historical importance; not eight or nine or eleven, but ten.

> There are ten sorts of sweetmeats, ten different dishes, ten movements in music, ten courts for the king of hell, ten cures in medicine, ten guesses for the drinking game; even announcements of guilty deeds or crimes usually list ten items, as if no one would stop at nine.[275]

The impetus behind those who "bewail" the loss of the pagoda is not so much that a treasure has been lost; there is no sorrow for the loss of its former beauty or the meaning that it held as a site of worship. Rather, it is because an empty hole has appeared in a meaningless category of sights.

In an ironic spirit of helpfulness, Lu Xun offers the following from the Doctrine of the Mean: All rulers have nine rules of government. "Why not use this as your

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[275] Lu Xun, p114.

standard?" he suggests; it makes little difference if we replace an arbitrary standard with one that is just as hollow and meaningless. Moreover it might help those suffering from the "ten-sight disease" to experience a "salutary sensation" and "at least make them feel times have changed, since one-tenth of their cherished malady has suddenly disappeared."[276] For Lu Xun "ten-sight disease" is a sign of limited vision, not what will give the country the foresightedness needed for change, and he predicts that those in power – "the cultured elite, the devout and the traditionalists with their glib tongues" – will work to rebuild the pagoda simply to fulfill the requirement that the county once again have ten "sights to see." This is not the spirit in which needed change will occur; it is, instead, merely empty adherence to rites and forms. "What is distressing is not the ruins, but the fact that the old traditions are being patched up over the ruins."[277]

It was inevitable that the pagoda would be affected by the passage of time, as all living things are. Cultures and traditions cannot be expected to remain unaffected by the forces of history, as well. However, if the process of change to a living tradition involves only destruction, and destruction carried out from those who are counted upon to maintain the tradition, then there is little hope that some better state of affairs will ensue. "Such slavish destruction simply leaves ruins behind: it has nothing to do with construction."[278] Here we see evidence of the interplay in Lu Xun's critical attitude between his urge criticize and tear down – to destroy the old and empty – and a

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[276] Lu Xun, p114.

[277] Lu Xun, p118.

[278] Lu Xun, p118.

concomitant impulse for construction and renewal of the tradition as appropriate for the changed times. Replacing ruins with tired and empty traditions will not lead to renewal. Nothing better will emerge if "change" involves mere replication; this is instead a formula for stagnation.

> True, without destruction nothing new can be built; but there may not be anything new built after destruction. Men like Rousseau, Stirner, Nietzsche, Tolstoy or Ibsen are, in Brandes' words, "destroyers of old tracks." Actually they not only destroy but blaze a trail and lead a charge, sweeping aside all the old tracks, whether whole rails or fragments, that got in men's way, but making no attempt to pick up any scrap-iron or ancient bricks to smuggle home in order to sell them later to second-hand dealers. There are very few men like this in China, and even when they appear they are likely to be spat at by everyone.[279]

Lu Xun's further protest is against the moral and spiritual state of the Chinese people themselves who concentrate their energies on entirely inappropriate endeavors, stealing scrap iron and such; a puny spirit is unlikely to engage in trailblazing. As it turns out, the cause for the collapse of the Leifeng pagoda was not age; the weight of tradition, as Lu Xun had implied in his first essay, did not cause the pagoda to implode. Rather, the structure had been pushed to its collapse because for a number of years local people had been stealing bricks from its base, for their own use, to sell for profit, and because they believed them to have curative powers. In reality China has no need for "foreign bandits" to bring it to its knees; "slaves [that is, the Chinese themselves] are ceaselessly undermining society"[280], while bandits steal for their own advantage.

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[279] Lu Xun, p114-115.

[280] Lu Xun, p117.

> We want wreckers who will bring about reforms, for their hearts are lit up by an ideal. We must learn to distinguish between them and the bandits or slaves, and must beware lest we slip into one of the last two categories. The difference is not difficult to detect: all we have to do is watch others and test ourselves. Anyone who in thought or deed shows signs of taking things for himself is a bandit, while anyone who shows signs of seizing small advantages is a slave, however splendid and handsome the banner he carries.[281]

More importanly, what is common in the culture, its "common property" as represented by the Leifeng Pagoda, is being destroyed by the Chinese themselves. The most important difference between the first and the second of the Leifeng Pagoda *zawen* is that in the latter Lu Xun makes the distinction that the collapse is caused by an erosion of the tradition from within. Traditions are living entities, certainly, but they get their life from those who uphold them, who continue to observe and participate in the rules and rituals that shape the institutions that give them form. If the participants who make up the community no longer enact those rituals and no longer value the institutions that together they are meant to maintain, then the tradition cannot be expected to last as a positive force. Furthermore, if change is understood as emerging from what is immanent in the culture and yet those who make up that culture act as bandits and slaves, then it should not come as a surprise that what emerges is of little value.

> The pagoda which was common property has gone, but the people are left with only a brick apiece, and these bricks will later be hoarded by other selfish people until they all turn to dust.[282]

To turn away from and fail to maintain those things of value that we have in common with others is a moral failing in the Confucian tradition. If we turn our backs on what is

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[281] Lu Xun, p118.

[282] Lu Xun, p117.

of value, then we ourselves are diminished and as lesser people we are able to contribute less to the greater community to which we belong.

Lu Xun's initial reaction was one of satisfaction that the Leifeng Pagoda had collapsed. It was something that he had been hoping for since he was a child. We can better understand this reaction if we remember his early attraction to the heterodox traditions of Chinese culture – to the folktales and philosophy of Zhuang Zi that he read throughout his youth. These certainly helped to shape his renegade personality and world view. If the pagoda is taken to represent the Confucian tradition, then his happiness at its collapse is hardly surprising. However, more interesting is the fact that this happiness is ultimately not a source of satisfaction for Lu Xun. As we see in the second of the *zawen*, Lu Xun is forced to reconsider his first response. This is in part in the light of the information he received about the cause of the collapse – that local individuals had stolen the bricks that made up the foundation – but it is also due to his inability to move out the Confucian construct that shaped both his personality and the culture he was committed, through his anger and criticism and despair, to restore.[283]

Conclusion

Between 1918 and 1936, Lu Xun wrote 26 short stories and hundreds of *zawen*. The characters in the stories were almost all caricatures made to represent the shortcomings in the character of the Chinese people under the influence of traditional

[283] One final note on the Leifeng Pagoda: In 1999, 75 years after its collapse, plans were drawn up for a new 5-storied pagoda to be erected on the same site as the original. This modern pagoda is made of steel, but designed to resemble the original. It opened to the public in the fall of 2002.

ethics and institutions, and the *zawen* reflect his growing bitterness in the face of resistance to change in a country where suffering was becoming a part of daily existence for ever greater numbers of people. Still, Lu Xun did not want to throw the Confucian baby out with the oppressive bathwater. In fact, even if he had wanted to, he would not have been able. An individual's Confucian heritage was in many ways like the Emperor's robe: not so easily discarded. Tu Wei-ming, in a 1992 essay, commenting on his experience teaching in China, writes:

> Before long, however, I came to realize that Confucianism, far from being foreign, is an integral part of what a leading contemporary thinker in China, Li Zehou, persuasively argues is the "psychocultural construct" of the contemporary Chinese intellectual, no less than of the Chinese peasant. The problem, indeed, is that they have been for so long, so thoroughly, and often so unreflectively immersed in this tradition that its very familiarity has bred contempt for it. Few could see much potential for creative transformation in a feudal ideology that has so repeatedly frustrated China's quest for modernity. Indeed, their lived experience in a society shaped by traditional habits of the heart has definitively, if not conclusively, persuaded them that the Confucian heritage – the embodiment of authoritarianism, bureaucratism, nepotism, conservatism, and male chauvinism – must be thoroughly critiqued again. As iconoclasts, they are indeed children of the May Fourth movement.[284]

He could as easily been speaking, as well, of Lu Xun's generation. One cannot throw off a "psychocultural construct" so easily. What Tu sees as the project of the "children of the May Fourth movement" is what Lu Xun was attempting to do during that period: to open the tradition up to internal critique, a project that continues to the present day. We can see in the three examples of *zawen* I have discussed the aspects of *jian* which made it an effective tool to both criticize and harmonize the tradition: his criticism of the trait of

[284] Tu Weiming (1991)

tractability as an example of his insistence on remonstrating the Chinese character; the distinction we can find in his criticizing the form, as opposed to the idea, of Confucianism; and finally in the Leifeng Pagoda essays we see elements of Lu Xun's struggle to balance his critique of the tradition with his recognition that it is part of the very fiber of who he is, his "psychocultural contruct" in Li Zehou's words.

I will conclude in the following chapter with a discussion of the contemporary relevance of Lu Xun's critique of Confucianism. Specifically, I will want to represent Lu Xun's work as a paradigmatic example of the technique of *jian* and Lu Xun himself as one who might be worthy of the position of "remonstrator."

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The concerns of this project emerged out of a number of interrelated interests and ongoing intellectual problems; primary among them are those arising from contact between western and non-western cultures and values, specifically between post-Enlightenment European culture and that of post-Qing Confucian China. One culture was in the full thrust of its intellectual and expansionist glory, and the other at a moral and political ebb. What took place during this early phase of contact and the resultant anxieties and socio-political realities necessitated by interchange are still being played out today. The questions are still being debated in China as to how best to respond to the challenges that this encounter and these new options pose to the Chinese worldview. Witness the debate over human rights in China and the process of democratization that is ongoing. What *kind* of a democracy will emerge as a result of an intersection with traditional Confucian socialization? How do the assumptions of a rights-based view of autonomous individual achievement intersect with a culture that has an equally powerful, but radically different, understanding of human flourishing? In which domains is free speech, especially speech critical of the central government, to be sanctioned? These are several of a host of areas of ongoing intercultural discussions and discontinuities arising out of initial contact.

Recent discussions within social science circles on "Rethinking Confucianism in Asia" have a tendency to depict contemporary neo-Confucianism as some kind of moral

"software" informing the "hardware" of East Asian authoritarianism or authoritarian capitalism. The arguments are often between those making positive claims about neo-Confucianism as the moral and cultural software in China's modernization – the glue that holds the culture together and enables stability in the course of rapid change – and negative claims about its role in legitimating patriarchal social relations and authoritarian political habits. "Neo-Confucianism is responsible for the subjugation of Asian women" is a common theme, although studies of elite women in late imperial China increasingly challenge this stereotype.[285] Another is: "Neo-Confucianism provides a liberal vision of human agency and mitigates against autocratic government," even though most Confucians since antiquity have willingly served authoritarian rulers and many late-20th-century politicians who call themselves Confucians favor neo-authoritarian governments. Moreover, we know that Confucianism in East Asia has been rife with dissension among elites in the face of state orthodoxy, especially in China during the late Qing and Republican periods. And certainly it can be argued that during the Mao era, the persistence of Confucianism is evidenced by the virulence and violence of the various campaigns to eradicate any of its dogged cultural manifestations.

It is a cliché, but true nonetheless, that one cannot fully understand what is going on in China today if one does not understand what happened there in the past. Thus, while current debates as to the place of Confucianism in contemporary Asian cultures are

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[285] See especially Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, University of California Press, 1997 and Wang Zheng, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories,* University of California Press, 1999.

strongly reminiscent of ones carried on during the early part of the 20th century, more often than not these contemporary discussions fail to take into account earlier generations of Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Chinese intellectuals who had engaged in just these debates. Many of these earlier thinkers had condemned Confucianism as the primary obstacle to modernity and were advocates of a "turn to the West" in order to get on the fast track to much-needed political change and economic development. Some of these thinkers, most notably Hu Shi in China, had even gone to the West for university degrees and returned home with plans for reform informed by specifically Western ideals. In some analyses Hu and other progressive reformers failed in their elitist conflation of their own understanding of "freedom" (that of individual thought) with the desires of the majority of the people for freedom from hunger and oppression. While this may be the case, Hu's agenda must be seen in the context of those of others during this same era, for instance those associated with the National Essence movement, who advocated less, not greater, freedom as the solution to China's social ills; theirs was a call for a reinstatement of pre-Manchu dynastic and feudal power structures under a neo-traditionalist aegis in order to provide the necessary stability to move into an uncertain future. During the years following the end of the Qing dynasty and before the consolidation of Mao's power, there were spirited and wide-ranging debates over the course that China ought to follow and the political framework within which this course ought to be charted, debates that took place on both political and philosophical planes and questioned the suitability of that framework remaining a Confucian one.

There are many who view Lu Xun's "rejection" of Confucianism – as expressed both in his fiction and his *zawen*, the short satirical essays that he turned into an art form – as one of the most extreme critiques of the period. Indeed, many criticisms of Confucianism leveled by Lu Xun's contemporaries *were*, on the surface, much less damning than his. One need only survey some of the bitter titles of his *zawen* during this early period: *My Views on Chastity* (1918), *Murderers of the Present* (1919), *Knowledge Is a Crime* (1921). Each of these essays, and many others published in the popular press, condemned both the degeneracy of the past and the suggested remedies of the present order. With his brutal and insistent depictions of the social evils resulting from the predominance of feudalistic ideas, one might understand how Kam Louie can claim that when Chen Duxiu, chief editor of the magazine *New Youth*, and Lu Xun launched their anti-Confucian movement, they were attempting nothing less than to replace the prevailing social order with one based on Western ideas such as equality and liberty – concepts that have as their locus the individual person.[286]

> His [Lu Xun's] most startling attack on Confucian ethics was his claim that *jen* and *li* in fact amounted to cannibalism, first put forward in the influential short story "Madman's Diary." The "madman" in this story claimed that while a history book he was reading was full of Confucian virtues, after carefully going through it for half a night, he was able to see between the lines the two characters "eat men." Wu Yü backed this up in an article written shortly after the story was published by giving some historical examples where cannibalism had actually been justified by Confucian virtues such as *jen* and *li*.[287]

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[286] Louie, Kam, *Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China*, Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press, 1980, p89

[287] Louie, p12

Certainly, this was a period when a remarkable number of neologisms from missionary Chinese texts and Sino-Japanense-European loan words were finding their way into modern Chinese. We see examples in new terms such as democracy (*minzhu*), duty (*yiwu*), right (*quanli*), and equality (*pingquan*). However, as we have seen, Lu Xun's appropriation of these concepts was by no means uncritical. He belonged to an interim generation in China and his particular historical contingencies, while limiting in some respects, afforded him a number of opportunities to "think outside the Chinese box." His education and literary output took place during a brief period of time after the imperial state had collapsed, but before Marxism/Leninism as interpreted by Mao replaced it as the official ideology, before ideology and the state were once again united.[288] This allowed him the conceptual freedom for a great deal of intellectual exploration.

Like others of his generation, Lu Xun had the instruction but, due to historical circumstance, lacked an official function within which to perform the role for which he had been trained. He had been educated as a traditional intellectual before the examination system had been abolished; and while he rebelled against it (and had family experience of its corruption), there is no doubt that this training marked him—intellectually, spiritually, and morally—in ways that were not possible for him to ever completely surmount. His early years were devoted to the traditional study of the Confucian classics, although as a teenager he attended, in both China and Japan, newer-style schools to learn mining, naval science, and medicine. And while one might argue, then, that this later training marks him off intellectually from traditional scholar-officials,

[288] Lyell, 312

he remained in many ways Confucian in his critique of Chinese culture. Lu Xun wanted change, change in the social and political structure of China, and his intense critical lens was focused almost exclusively on this goal throughout his over twenty-five years of literary output. Indeed, this leads one to ask whether it makes sense to speak of a modern intellectual like Lu Xun, someone who is committed to social change, as being involved in the perpetuation of Confucian humanism. On the surface, this seems not to be the case. And yet, in all of his writing, both fiction and *zawen*, important remnants of a formative Confucian worldview prevail.

During the May Fourth period, and until his death, Lu Xun was a fierce critic of the increasing foreign domination of China and those Chinese who collaborated with foreign encroachment, in the form of both European and American business interests and Japanese military incursions. There were many Western businessmen in China who insisted on unequal treaty privileges on the grounds that traditional Chinese laws and customs were archaic. But these same businessmen supported Chinese conservatives who advocated the preservation of the traditional laws, institutions, customs, and ethics. These foreign interests opposed the progressive movements, hoping to protect their own privileges in China and in Lu Xun's opinion what these people wanted was to subdue China with an invisible knife. He noted that almost all of those who praised the old Chinese culture were the rich residing in the concessions or other safe places.

Frustrated by the pace of change since the overthrow of the Qing and apprehensive of social retrenchment, in March of 1930, Lu Xun and 50 other writers founded the League of Chinese Left-wing Writers, affiliated with the communist party.

Members of the League attacked the Guomindang government, scorned those who advocated a return to traditional art and literature, criticized the school of writers who worshipped western culture. Many within the League looked to the Soviet literary movement as a model for the merger of art and politics.

Lu Xun, as ever cautious about wholesale adoption of foreign models, argued that old forms of art, if used selectively in the service of the revolution and combined with new content, were capable of giving rise to new and distinctive forms of art. He discussed this view in a 1934 essay, later adopted by the Chinese Communist Party as the official party viewpoint: "To work on behalf of the masses and strive to make things easy for them to understand, precisely this is the correct area of effort for the progressive artist. If we select from old forms, there will necessarily be parts we have to delete. And because of these deletions, there will necessarily be parts we have to add. This will result in the emergence of new forms, and will itself be a transformation." While rejecting the old, feudalistic and archaic traditional writing, Lu Xun looked for positive elements in China's artistic heritage. He discovered protest poetry, popularly written fiction, as well as a woodcut print style that looked back to Han dynasty bas-reliefs, Ming and Qing book illustrations and New Year pictures, combining them with themes having an intentionally agitational effect. Many stories of fictional and dramatic narratives had circulated for centuries in the people's oral tradition as well. Lu Xun, as part of the new generation of revolutionary writers, mined these popular literary works as potential models for new works of revolutionary art, and although Lu Xun was never an official member of the Communist Party – his distrust of "-isms" never waned – his literary emphasis on

exposing the exploitation of peasants and the working class fit well with the revolutionary message of the CCP.

In 1937, the year after Lu Xun's death, the Lu Xun Academy of Arts was established at the Communist base of Yanan to instruct artists in the art of propaganda. In his opening address Mao commented: "In my view, Lu Xun is a great Chinese saint – the saint of modern China, just as Confucius was the saint of old China. For his immortal memory, we have established the Lu Xun Library and the Lu Xun Teachers' Training School in Yenan, so that future generations may have a glimpse of his greatness."[289] Woodblock prints, the tradition that Lu Xun had worked to revive, were particularly suited for the purpose of propaganda because they were relatively cheap and easy to copy, and by the 1940s there were artists traveling through the countryside distributing prints with ideological messages. [see Appendix for an example from 1974]

Mao writes that before the May Fourth Movement the political guiding force of China was the intelligentsia of the "Chinese petty-bourgeois and bourgeois classes." After May Fourth, he said, political leadership of the "new-democratic" revolution was in the hands of the proletariat; Lu Xun, he declared, was the major figure in this movement. At the opening on May 2nd, 1949 of the famous Yenan Forum on Literature and Art, Mao spoke about the artist's role in developing a new revolutionary culture as part of the May Fourth Movement: "Since the May Fourth Movement such a cultural army has taken

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[289] Mao Zedong, "On Lu Hsun," 1937 speech at the meeting *Commemorating the First Anniversary of the Death of Lu Hsun* held in the North Shensi Public School on Oct. 19, 1937. Reproduced from July (*Zhiyue*), March 1938. Source: Maoist Documentation Project, http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/

shape in China, and it has helped the Chinese revolution, gradually reduced the domain of China's feudal culture and of the comprador culture which serves imperialist aggression, and weakened their influence."[290]

However in his concluding remarks, on May 23rd, Mao effectively undermined any residual readings of Lu Xun's critique that might be used against the emerging Communist hegemony. In the fourth section of this final speech Mao took up a number of themes directly related to the thrust of Lu Xun's technique of *jian*.

> "Literary and artistic works have always laid equal stress on the bright and the dark, half and half." This statement contains many muddled ideas. It is not true that literature and art have always done this. Many petty-bourgeois writers have never discovered the bright side. Their works only expose the dark and are known as the "literature of exposure."
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> "The task of literature and art has always been to expose." This assertion, like the previous one, arises from ignorance of the science of history. Literature and art, as we have shown, have never been devoted solely to exposure. For revolutionary writers and artists the targets for exposure can never be the masses, but only the aggressors, exploiters and oppressors and the evil influence they have on the people.
>
> "This is still the period of the satirical essay, and Lu Hsun's style of writing is still needed." Living under the rule of the dark forces and deprived of freedom of speech, Lu Hsun used burning satire and freezing irony, cast in the form of essays, to do battle; and he was entirely right. We, too, must hold up to sharp ridicule the fascists, the Chinese reactionaries and everything that harms the people; but in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region and the anti-Japanese base areas behind the enemy lines, where democracy and freedom are granted in full to the revolutionary writers and artists and withheld only from the counter-revolutionaries, the style of the essay should not simply be like Lu Hsun's. Here we can shout at the top of our voices and have no need for veiled and roundabout expressions, which are hard for the people to understand. When dealing with the people and not with their enemies, Lu Hsun never ridiculed or attacked the revolutionary people and the revolutionary Party

[290] Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art," Introduction, May 2, 1942. Source: Maoist Documentation Project, http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/

> in his "satirical essay period," and these essays were entirely different in manner from those directed against the enemy. To criticize the people's shortcomings is necessary, as we have already said, but in doing so we must truly take the stand of the people and speak out of whole-hearted eagerness to protect and educate them. To treat comrades like enemies is to go over to the stand of the enemy. Are we then to abolish satire? No. Satire is always necessary. But there are several kinds of satire, each with a different attitude: satire to deal with our enemies, satire to deal with our allies and satire to deal with our own ranks. We are not opposed to satire in general; what we must abolish is the abuse of satire.[291]

At the same time we witness Mao criticizing the means by which Lu Xun critiqued the Chinese culture – his satire – while assuming for himself and the Communist Party the weight of Lu Xun's influence on "the masses." In addition, he re-interprets for his own ends the very meaning and intent of such critical works as "The True Story of Ah Q," a work entirely critical of just the masses that Mao states that Lu Xun has never satirized. Most importantly, while Mao ostensibly is claiming that one ought not use satire against the masses, one ought to praise and strengthen them with writing and art, he was able to understand that such a critique was a very effective tool against those in power as well. Mao both undermines Lu Xun's method and redirects his critical message. In the future it will be Mao's determination what the appropriate targets for satire and criticism will be.

Mao ended his talk by declaring:

This couplet from a poem by Lu Xun should be our motto:

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[291] Mao Zedong, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art," Conclusion, May 23, 1942. Source: Maoist Documentation Project, http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/

Fierce-browed, I coolly defy a thousand pointing fingers,
Head-bowed, like a willing ox I serve the children.

> The thousand pointing fingers are our enemies, and we will never yield to them, no matter how ferocious. The "children" here symbolize the proletariat and the masses. All Communists, all revolutionaries, all revolutionary literary and art workers should learn from the example of Lu Xun and be "oxen" for the proletariat and the masses, bending their backs to the task until their dying day. Intellectuals who want to integrate themselves with the masses, who want to serve the masses, must go through a process in which they and the masses come to know each other well. This process may, and certainly will, involve much pain and friction, but if you have the determination, you will be able to fulfill these requirements.

Taken out of context and reinterpreted to such a degree, one can understand how for many in China, especially after the years of the Cultural Revolution when the intellectuals and "the masses" were made to "come to know each other" very well indeed, the force of Lu Xun's words had lost their effect. He had become, in effect, the unwilling lackey of Mao. The "children" that Lu Xun spoke of serving were not meant to symbolize the proletariat and the masses, an uncharacteristically patronizing stance, but were literally those who were young; he had seen the hope for the future of China in his students and in those who were truthful enough to speak against ones who could no longer be entrusted to rule efficaciously, who abused their power.

In 1978, Wei Jingsheng, the son of a high Communist party official, posted his manifesto, "Democracy: The Fifth Modernization" on the Democracy Wall in Beijing. Deng Xiaoping, as part of his move toward "socialism with Chinese characteristics," had announced four modernizations: in agriculture, science, technology, and national defense. To this list Wei added democracy, without which, he wrote, "the four others are nothing more than a newfangled lie." Although Wei said what many thought, he was the only

person both brave and foolhardy enough to openly criticize the ruler. For signing his name to this statement Wei paid a heavy price, spending the next sixteen years in prison, most of it in solitary confinement. After a short release he was back to prison for another thirteen years and finally was asked to leave for the United States for medical reasons in 1997. In 2000, Ian Buruma interviewed Wei about those years, wondering what it was that kept him from signing a confession to expedite his release. What Wei spoke of was Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q," the Everyman who seems to thrive on abuse, turning each humiliating calamity into an imaginary blessing. Lu Xun's aim had been to criticize the passivity of the Chinese people and their aversion to change their lot. Wei, however, used this story for his own devices: he interpolated the impetus that fueled Lu Xun, his critical voice, with the constant humiliation he was made to suffer in prison. While the guards spoke to him for years about the hopelessness of his situation, how nobody outside cared, how his former colleagues were concerned now only with getting rich – Wei told himself that he was freer than his captors because, unlike them, he could say what he thought. "Because I could speak the truth, I had more integrity than they did. Their official position may have made them better-off, but I was happier, for I could live life as it is, not life as we are told to think it is."[292] He understood that the smallest dishonest "self-criticism" would have turned him – the prisoner – into a slave.

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[292] Buruma, Ian, *Bad Elements: Chinese Rebels from Los Angeles to Beijing*, New York, Random House, 2001, pp104-105.

We now may ask: to what degree is Lu Xun's critique of Confucianism relevant today? We can begin by turning to his own words:

> Petitioning the government is common enough in every country. It doesn't necessarily result in death—except, of course, in China.[293]

A PBS "Frontline" video, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, produced after the events at Tiananmen Square in 1989 features this observation in its opening sequence. The program's producers wanted to make clear the point that, despite the enormous political upheavals, something quite significant had not changed in China in the more than sixty years that had passed.

Undeniably, China is not the only country where protest may lead to death. Undeniably, too, there has been progress. The Communist party emancipated hundreds of millions of peasants from the hopeless misery in which they had eked out an existence for hundreds of generations. Changes were made: opium was eradicated, brothels were closed, land was distributed, roads and railroads were built, literacy campaigns were launched, health care was expanded and an industrial base was developed. Lu Xun initially supported the Communist revolution, as a vehicle for his hope for a more just society. As well, he supported their critique of the feudal basis of the traditional Confucian social structure. However, Lu Xun's critique of Chinese politics was more deeply radical and pointed to a flaw not in the political realm, but in the philosophical and spiritual: his belief was that the conditions that obtained in early-20th century China were ones symptomatic of a malaise that gripped the character of the Chinese people.

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[293] Lu Xun, 1926

In 1918, with his publication of "A Madman's Diary," he popularized – through the fantasies of a madman – the term "man-eating" (*chi ren*) society and made the reader aware of the cannibalistic aspects of Chinese life. His aim was to expose the evils of the clan system, revealing Confucian virtue and morality as a man-eating, soul-destroying social structure that became symptoms of the traditional society's illness. Just how crazy was this madman, people began to wonder. Was it paranoia on the part of one insane individual? Or was the authoritarian state as dangerous as he claimed? It is safe to say that, although he would have been disturbed and angered, Lu Xun would not have been surprised by the violence that took place at Tiananmen in 1989. In the years that have followed, one of the strategies that the Chinese government has employed to silence dissidents is to offer them an unappealing choice. One is to stay in prison where they can retain popular sympathy but be politically powerless. The other is to go overseas, after which the public perceives the dissidents as 'cowards' – which also effectively renders them politically powerless. This dilemma is relevant because it points to the limitations of the remonstrance aspect of Confucianism both in the past and in contemporary China: it is ineffective against an Emperor who simply will not listen. In addition, China continues to be a culture based on a model of the family with the filial relationship at its center and such a social structure allows little space for "healthy suspicion" of state power without threatening the ties that bind ruler and people. "With respect to the personal character of rule, it continues to be the case in China that to object to the policies that articulate the existing order is in fact to condemn the ruler's person."[294]

[294] Hall and Ames, 1998

Values are real to the degree to which we are willing to risk something to make them prevail. When commitments we express are not followed by action, then these values remain in the realm of the virtual. They remain rhetoric about what we claim to be important. For most of the 20th century in China, the value of *jian* had been emptied of meaning, possibilities for protest have been grotesquely virtual, and both at the beginning and the end of the century many of those who hoped for reform turned to Western concepts of rights in order to speak in a meaningful voice.

However, by examinining more deeply the concept of *jian* from within the framework of the Confucian tradition, my aim has been to explore the possibility of opening up a space for argument, to loosen the hold that the prevailing modes of interpretation have had on possibilities for change. Within the terrain of this discursive space, there are possibilities that have not yet been articulated. The question becomes: How do you open up a discursive terrain so it is more hospitable to its own inchoate possibilities? Specifically, how might we begin from within the Confucian tradition itself to make room for internal transformation? At the center of Confucian ethics remains the question: How do I develop as a person? This seemingly simple question is the basis of the complex canon that has evolved over 2500 years and is still in process today. Indeed, what does it mean to be Confucian today? Does it have relevance? My hope is that by exploring an earlier period when the very legitimacy of the term "Confucianism" was being contested that we shed some light on this question today.

An argument can be made that Lu Xun has great contemporary relevance in his challenge to authority. Nicholas Kristof, writing (in a 1990 *New York Times* article) an analysis of post-Tiananmen China, begins by quoting Lu Xun:

> If China is not to perish, then as history tells us, the future holds a tremendous surprise for the murderers. This is not the conclusion of an incident, but a new beginning. Lies written in ink can never disguise facts written in blood. Blood debts must be repaid in kind: the longer the delay, the greater the interest.[295]

In his view, one shared by many, Lu Xun is "as untamed as ever," and his essays circulate widely. When the Chinese government launched a propaganda campaign to amend history after firing on the protestors at Tiananmen, Lu Xun's statement quoted above became the cry of the opposition. He wrote those words on March 18, 1926, hours after Beijing security forces fired on a crowd of student protesters, killing more than 40 of them. Immediately after the 1926 incident, as in 1989, the authorities denounced the students as "rioters," and after a while some people wondered aloud if perhaps the students had not been foolish to confront the Government so openly. Lu Xun called such suggestions one of the most frightening aspects of the violence. "If that is the case," he said, "then we Chinese are destined to perish wretchedly unless we are willing to be slaves 'without a murmur.' "

Such statements, and many others even more incendiary, can be found in the collected works of Lu Xun in any Chinese bookstore. The authorities might have banned his works, but this would be embarrassing. Lu Xun never joined the Communist Party, but he was a sympathizer and one of the most powerful critics of the regime of Chiang

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[295] Lu Xun, "More Roses Without Blooms (1926)," *Selected Works*, II, p259.

Kai-shek. And as we have seen, Mao eulogized Lu Xun: "On the cultural front, he was the bravest and most correct, the firmest, the most loyal and the most ardent national hero, a hero without parallel in our history." As a result during the Cultural Revolution, many intellectuals became bitter toward Lu Xun, resenting that after his death he had been held up as a model, in some cases his words having been twisted by Red Guards to justify persecuting others. "Lu Xun suffered considerably because Mao apotheosized him and used him as a justification for brutalizing intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution."[296] When Kristof spoke with Zha Jianying, the author of *China Pop* and a well-known writer on Chinese contemporary popular culture who moved to the United States in 1989, she noted that it was only recently that those in her generation began to appreciate the relevance of Lu Xun to contemporary China. "After China opened up, some of us were tired of being forced to read Lu Xun and tired of the fact that he was the writer liked by Mao. Then, just in the last few years, people started reading him again and realized that the real Lu Xun probably would have been very disillusioned with what happened after 1949, and that he wouldn't have stood a chance. He's very relevant, and the fact that he's so relevant is very sad."[297]

There are Lu Xun museums in at least four Chinese cities, and his works – although still cautiously selected – are required reading at university. There are also research institutes that analyze only Lu Xun's writings, and journals that do nothing but publish articles about him, although until recently, most were frantically upholding the

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[296] Link, Perry, *The Uses of Literature: Life in the Socialist Chinese Literary System*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, p253

[297] quoted in Kristof, 8

view that Lu Xun supported the Communist Party. The problem from the Communist point of view is that the party adopted Lu Xun because he opposed tyranny, and so now it would awkward to ban him for the same reason.[298] Kristof's view is that Lu Xun is "the greatest dissident left unfettered in China."[299] His denunciations of oppression in the days of the Guomindang and the warlords are being turned against the Communists who acclaimed him and they don't know how to react. For example, Lu Xun was referring to the 1911 revolution against the emperors when he wrote: "Before the revolution we were slaves. And now we are the slaves of former slaves." (1926) But after Tiananmen, when students quoted those words, officials squirmed.

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Between 1918 and 1936, Lu Xun wrote 26 short stories and many more *zawen*. The characters in the stories were almost all caricatures made to represent the shortcomings in the character of the Chinese people under the influence of traditional ethics and institutions. However, while Lu Xun had certainly read and been influenced by many western thinkers and was arguably the most scathing critic of the Chinese culture of resignation, as mentioned above he did not want to throw the Confucian baby out with the bathwater. As we have seen, his critique contains elements that attack not the tradition as a whole (the baby), but targets those who – unlike him – have remained victims of the negative effects and restraints of that tradition (the bathwater). From Dewey we have

[298] Kristof, Nicholas, "Ominous Embers From the Fire of 1989," *The New York Times*, April 15, 1990, p1.

[299] Kristof, p1.

made the distinction between Confucianism at the level of "idea," which is open to rearticulation, and Confucianism as ideology, which, through the practice of its adherents, has worked to establish historicized and eternalized aspects of the idea of Confucianism that set it off from critique. During a period when forces for change and continuity were in complex collision, Lu Xun advocated appropriations from outside the Confucian culture for their modernizing and unbinding influences. However, his appropriation of these (often) Western concepts were undertaken always with an insistence on a parallel "self-critique" of the native Chinese subject such that these non-native concepts will be introduced in a form that does not engender the semi-colonized state.

Sor-hoon Tan draws out a distinction between the social self and the moral/ethical self that is useful here in making clear the focus of Lu Xun's criticism.[300] Given a Confucian understanding of self as ineluctably in relation to others, we should be mindful that within this construct it is indeed possible to have a sociality, a pattern of social relations, that is highly dysfunctional. Although certainly Confucianism does not encourage dysfunctionality as the ideal, in Confucian terms we can imagine the case where persons might embody *ji* (a "background sociality" that emerges from and is the ground for all of our relations) without being *ren* (an authoritative "ethical" person). And although the inescapable reality of connectedness works to resolve those tensions that arise – since if we can't but imagine ourselves as connected, then we will need to resolve

[300] Tan, Sor-hoon, *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2003, p37-38.

that tension in order to attain both psychological and social equilibrium and flourishing – it is certainly possible for a culture to be both profoundly social and at the same time have that sociality turn destructively in on itself. This situation is the basis for Lu Xun's metaphor of cannibalism and it is these dysfunctional relationships and dystopic culture that Lu Xun protested against. How then to guard against the dangers of such a situation in contemporary Confucian societies? Tan claims that it is important in this respect to make a strong distinction between the social and the ethical:

> [I]f we are to reconstruct Confucianism so that it would not endorse all of those social evils that May Fourth intellectuals such as Lu Xun, Hu Shih, and others fought to abolish. . . . To be an ethical self, one must contribute to relationships that enhance the quality of experience of both oneself and others and consciously value one's intrinsic relationality. One should not perpetuate a dysfunctional social relation but should attempt to change both oneself and others so that the relation can become functional again."[301]

To imagine how this protest would work at the political level and in a contemporary Chinese framework, we can turn once again to Dewey to appreciate a final affinity between their projects. Some of the limitations on *jian* in China today reflect the age-old problem of how to balance need for social order with free speech, specifically group protest or individual remonstrance. In a Western context discussions about free speech are often framed around the first amendment[302] and attempt to balance the requirements of free speech with issues of civility, respect and human dignity. These

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[301] Tan, p37.

[302] The First Amendment to the Constitution states: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

discussions take place within a real or imagined community, which itself is part of the larger social order with its own, often competing set of values. Many arguments are based on what we find in Mill's *On Liberty*, where he asserts that protecting speech, even speech in error, is necessary in order that we eventually arrive at the truth. The process is one of a healthy "conflict of ideas in the marketplace." Truth, however that may be conceived, is the imagined ultimate goal.[303] If we are to make the analogy to China, then the role that *jian* plays within the Confucian system can be likened to a corrective in service of the *dao* so as to "enable the public to form and manifest its purposes still more authoritatively."[304] I am using Deweyan language here in order that we might reflect on the possibilities for protest in China within the context of a shared project of extending both contemporary Confucianism (as it could be envisioned) and Deweyan liberal democracy.[305] For both Dewey and contemporary neo-Confucians, ethics and politics are inseparable: both projects have a similar focus: "...the inseparability of the questions 'How should we live?' and 'How should we live together?'" They also have strong

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[303] There are additional legal arguments in favor of a broad definition of freedom of speech, many revolving around concepts of personal fulfillment.

[304] "We have every reason to think that whatever changes may take place in existing democratic machinery, they will be of a sort to make the interest of the public a more supreme guide and criterion of governmental activity, and to enable the public to form and manifest its purposes still more authoritatively. In this sense the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy." Dewey (1927): 294

[305] For current literature on this topic, see Hall, David and Roger Ames, *The Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China*, Chicago, Open Court Press, 1999; Tan, Sor-hoon, *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2003; Ames, Roger, "Confucianism and Deweyan Pragmatism: A Dialogue," Journal of Chinese Philosophy, Vol. 30, No. 3-4, Sept./Dec., 2003; Tan, Sor-hoon, "From Cannibalism to Empowerment: An Analects-Inspired Attempt to Balance Community and Liberty," Philosophy East & West, Vol. 54, No. 1, January, 2004.

similarities in their conception of the individual as a social person and their conception of the community as a spiritual project.

Many of Dewey's writing on democracy can be read as attempts to persuasively present his distinction between the idea of association and community, as ideal human endeavors. Thus, "Search for the Great Community" can be read as an argument for community as the starting point for democracy; that democracy is the one option for associative life; and that community is an achievement of the associated members of the Great Community. From his earliest writings onward, Dewey had argued that we are in error to think that individuals exist, but that the "popular will" is a fiction. To do so is to make the empiricist's mistake of assuming that what we can see is more real than what we can't see. "Society in its unified and structural character is the fact of the case . . . the non-social individual is an abstraction arrived at by imagining what man would be if all his human qualities were taken away. Society, as a real whole, is the normal order, and the mass as an aggregate of isolated units is the fiction."[306]

However, interspersed throughout Dewey's discussion of the components of the Great Community, are numerous references to the role of communication as the *sine qua non* of community, that which generates the conditions under which society emerges as a vital organism and not a simple mass. "Democracies are not just the sum of their constituent atoms because atoms are not independent of their molecules. They are always

[306] Dewey, John, "The Ethics of Democracy" (1888), *The Early Works, 1882-1898*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-72, vol. 1, p232.

functioning as parts of a greater whole. Participation changes everything."[307] In a healthy political system, whether a Western liberal democracy or an emerging Confucian model, one assumes that when there is dysfunction at the political level, then there will be, or at least could be, the possibility for protest. A representative government, one that claims a level of popular participation, is one that is both government *for* the people and government *by* the people. When one thinks of "government for the people," "the people," ideally, are conceived in terms of a Confucian or Deweyan community. It is society as "the normal order," not the aggregate of individuals. And when we conceive of "government by the people," then we normally imagine the *vox populis* – this is the will of the people to whom the government responds or the leader represents or embodies. However, it is also possible that we consider "government by the people" to be the voice in the wilderness, the voice of protest and remonstrance, a space within which the individual is the possible locus, when necessary, for being the singular voice of protest over and against a government or a ruler who no longer furthers the good of the community. One can imagine, were Lu Xun alive to hear it, that Mao's solemn concern with the "abuse of satire" would not have remained unmentioned.

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Just how likely is it, however, that reform at the institutional level might provide a check against the imbalance of power in a government that stifles protest? And what form might that reform take? We remember Max Weber's observation that China's difficulties

[307] Menand, Louis, *The Metaphysical Club*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001, p305.

in transitioning to a modern society were due to the Confucian culture with its emphasis on the individual accommodating to society rather than actively imposing change on the world around him. In a recent (2003) publication, Jongryn Mo addresses a similar issue: Is it the case, he wonders, that Asian values are incompatible with the idea of government accountability? Given that a key to good governance is the ability to keep power under control, a culture that stresses accommodation is not a fertile breeding ground for domestication of that power. A good government must be able to both control the governed, but it also must be able to control itself. However, Mo's claim is that, although many contemporary Asian leaders fall far short in this regard, and in fact may not even be committed in principle to its practice, nonetheless this deficiency ought not be attributed to Confucianism, "which is rather rich in ideas and practices promoting accountability."[308] Given an assumption that the "logic of bureaucratic behavior does not change much over time,"[309] he explores the structure of Censorate of the Chosŏn dynasty in Korea in order to find a source for potential improvements in the contemporary Korean system of accountability.

How do we best hold those in power accountable? Modern political theorists speak in terms of both "horizontal" and "vertical" accountabilities. Horizontal accountability is exercised between those in agencies of equal power or position; the system of checks and balances between three branches of government is a good example of this technique at work. However, in order for this to be an effective practice other

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[308] Jongryn Mo, "The Challenge of Accountability: Implications of the Censorate," in *Confucianism for the Modern World*, (Bell and Hahm, eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p56.

[309] Mo, p58.

conditions must also be met: the agencies must have enough autonomy from one another, there must be multiple accounting agencies of overlapping jurisdiction, and there must exist a means of vertical accountability – that is, a method of "voting the bum out of office." Although it's not necessary to go into detail here, Mo makes clear the degree to which these conditions were met in the Censorate of the Chosŏn; and we have discussed earlier (Chapter Two) the elaborate structure of the Chinese Censorate on which it was based. The weakest link, however, was the absence of vertical accountability that we find in most Western systems of government. Most political leaders were aware – at least they were taught to be aware – of the need for the support of the populace, even though they may not have been bound by institutional constraints. As well, the Confucian system had a strong conceptual dependence on the will of the people reflecting the mandate of heaven that was conferred upon the emperor; presumably this mandate extended to give the people the right to rise up against the emperor if he was not governing efficaciously. Nonetheless, the only outside restraints – in the event that the inner restraints did not hold – on the head of state was the threat of revolt or coup. And in the absence of democratic elections this continues to be the case in many former Confucian systems.

Mo proposes the reintroduction of the Censorate into contemporary Asian political systems. While his specific suggestions for implementation are not important here, what is of note is his claim that these governments ought to turn to their own pasts in order to look for ways in which to improve their democracies. He writes, "If there are historical institutions and practices that can be adapted to the modern democratic environment, they are more likely to succeed than those simply transplanted from the

West. I argue that the Censorate is one of those historical institutions."[310] Given especially the high level of distrust between the government and the (non-government-controlled) media and the unlikelihood of any argument for the right to a free press to succeed anytime soon in China, such a proposal is one possibly broad avenue toward a means for effective dissent. At the very least it would provide the possibility for critique at an institutional level of those whose power does not currently have the constraints it once had under the Confucian system and would give those at the highest levels of government the opportunity to benefit from critical reports on a range of important issues.

One of the dogmas of Confucian culture is that "harmony" and "unity" come at the expense of individual liberty and are a defining element of "Chineseness." Correct thinking, articulated and enforced by a class of scholar-officials and later by Party officials, has indeed been a defining feature of East Asian societies, where authority has often been enforced by such Confucianist dogma. However, to blame Confucius for this would be to miss the mark; as we have noted, repeatedly Confucius insists that those in the position to do so are required to speak truthfully to ones in the position of power, however unwelcome this truth might be. In reply to an inquiry by Duke Ding, Confucius responds that there is no one thing that those in power can say or do that can ruin a state.[311] States, like the human beings and the institutions that constitute them, are complex entities and can withstand occasional abuse and offense to their bodies. What will poison them in the long run, however, are silence and cowardice and the inability to

[310] Mo, p67.

[311] *Analects*, 13.15.

care enough about the relationships that sustain them to speak up in their defense. Lies corrupt politics; only if the truth can be told – and false names rectified – can good government follow.

APPENDIX

"Study the revolutionary spirit of Lu Xun, become a pathbreaker in the criticism of Lin Biao and Confucius," 1974

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