

Research Notes 【研究討論】

An Ontological Exit for Chinese Democracy:
Beyond the State-Society Divide
退出國家——從文獻反思中國民主化的意義

Chih-yu Shih
石之瑜*

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關鍵詞: 民主、白魯恂、王德威、新左派、自由派、自由主義、主體性

* Professor, Political Science, National Taiwan University / National Sun Yat-Sen University.

Abstract:

Indeed Confucian societies including China are often seen as lacking in self-consistency. Lucian Pye, who makes this observation, argues that this lack is a cultural, not political, question. If this is true, then China's democratic prospect should be a matter of cultural reformation. This means that the assumed subjectivity in each Chinese citizen reflects more of a political advocacy than of reality. Therefore, democratization as a political discourse interferes in the creation of a "correct" subjectivity in Chinese citizens.

In the following discussion, I will also explore the meaning of democratic subjectivity, based on the following works: literature by Lucian Pye, David Dewei Wang (a Taiwan-born literature critic in the United States), and the debate between the Chinese liberals and the so-called new leftists. I hope to open up the meaning of democracy to allow agency for every Chinese practicing and interpreting subjectivity at the ontological level.

In the end, this paper will attempt to provide an analytical scheme that preserves fluidity concerning the future relationship between the Chinese state and the society, thus testifying to a democracy, in the Confucian context, that cannot be defined.

摘要

本文提出一種在近代中國語境下對民主化的新詮釋，並認可人們對於有關國家、現代性、傳統價值、民主、主體性、群眾、公平等論述加以實踐與詮釋的能動性，正在獲得提昇與普及的過程。所謂民主，即是每個人都被容許賦予他人的主體性以同情的詮釋，從而建構自己作為詮釋者的主體意識。但並不是每一個人都真的能自信地成為無所不在的詮釋者，故民主化所要求的，是每個人都有可能成為他人所同情地詮釋的對象，從而獲得主體性的認可，即使認可的內涵與意義會因人而異，甚至必然而且應該因人而異。本文檢討了共產黨、自由主義者、新左派、白魯恂、王德威的觀點。歸納比對後所得的民主，是透過有實踐性的論述來創造主體性，而不是在假定已經存在的主體性上，設計互動的規範或制度。

Uncovering Democratic Subjectivities

One important premise of democracy is that each citizen participating in politics has an undeniable sense of subjectivity. Subjectivity can be a kind of consciousness, referring to a self-centered mode of thinking and calculating; volition, referring to goal-oriented behavior; or self-consistency, referring to an overall preference system judging one's priority at anytime.¹ Oftentimes, without explanation of the assumption of innate subjectivity, the literature on democracy takes for granted its existence. It focuses on how to liberate citizens' subjectivity from political suppression.² Surprisingly, Chinese authorities have long been promoting Marxism or anti-imperialism, which they believe also aim at emancipation.³ For both Marxists and liberals, subjectivity is valued despite their otherwise well-known divergence. If Chinese citizens appear to have lacked such subjectivities, the prescription is how to extricate them, not about what they are. Lacking subjectivity is, for the liberals, only pathology or adolescence. For the Marxists, it is a bondage consisting in productive relationship.

Indeed Confucian societies including China are often seen as lacking in self-consistency. Lucian Pye, who makes this observation, argues that this lack is a cul-

1 "Subjectivity" became a popular term only very recently. Early authors do not dwell specifically on it. They assume it. For how to use such concepts as volition, preference, interest that are predicated upon subjectivity, see, for example, Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Market* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); William H. Riker and Peter C. Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting," *American Political Science Review* 62, 1, (1968), pp. 25-42; Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). A similar thought can be raised to the level of the state. Concerning the examples of treating the state as an entity of subjectivity in terms of interest, preference or rationality, see Stephen D. Krasner, *Defining the National Interest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

2 The suppression comes from the state, the Party, nationalism or the ideology, see the analysis by Merle Goldman, *Sowing the Seeds of Democracy in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Gordon White, *Riding the Tiger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Edward Friedman, *Democratic Prospects for Socialist China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1995); Ann Kent, *Between Freedom and Subsistence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

3 Information Office of the State Council, *Human Rights in China* (zhongguo de renquan zhuangkuang) (Beijing: Central Literature Press, 1991).

tural, not political, question.⁴ If this is true, then China's democratic prospect should be a matter of cultural reformation.⁵ This means that the assumed subjectivity in each Chinese citizen reflects more of a political advocacy than of reality. Therefore, democratization as a political discourse interferes in the creation of a "correct" subjectivity in Chinese citizens. In the following discussion, I will also explore the meaning of democratic subjectivity, based on the following works: literature by Lucian Pye, David Dewei Wang (a Taiwan-born literature critic in the United States), and the debate between the Chinese liberals and the so-called new leftists. I hope to open up the meaning of democracy to allow agency for every Chinese practicing and interpreting subjectivity at the ontological level. In the end, this paper will attempt to provide an analytical scheme that preserves fluidity concerning the future relationship between the Chinese state and the society, thus testifying to a democracy, in the Confucian context, that cannot be defined.

A Political Culture of Cognitive Dissonance

Pye argues that in Confucian political culture the capacity for cognitive dissonance is high, especially between public speech and private behavior.⁶ This proclivity for inconsistency between public and private continued after the Communists took over China in 1949 to become what Pye calls Confucian Leninism.⁷ In the same vein, Madsen spots a personality type in the Chinese village, which he refers to as "communist gentry."⁸ This suggests that the official adoption of communism has made little, if any, influence on the underlying culture of conformity, loyalty

4 Lucian Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988); at an early point, he says this is a racial perspective, see his *The Spirit of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968).

5 Lucian Pye, "How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied," in J. Unger (ed.) *Chinese Nationalism* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 86-112.

6 In addition to his 1988 publication, for the political rationale behind this national character, also see Lucian Pye, *The Dynamics of Chinese Politics* (Cambridge: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1981)

7 Pye, 1988: 31-35.

8 Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

and nepotism. Motivation behind actual behavior includes the elements of private interest, kinship and social networking. Since the demarcation between public and private is fluid, the important point is to appear selfless, in accordance with the situation in which one is involved. Similarly what is considered "private" depends on the situation. Pye believes that the Confucian political personality is accustomed to pursuing private interests incompatible with the public ideology. Cultural changes in terms of personality are insignificant.

Wang, on the other hand, sets out to disclose the changes that he believes have incorporated modernity into the Confucian culture since the late Qing period.⁹ The rise of various modern discursive styles in response to the Western introduction of modernity is, for Wang, itself a process of cultural change. Wang painstakingly extricates traces of this transformation from a wide range of literature. However, he does not depend on his authors to be specifically aware of the arrival of modernity. The meanings of modernity to these Qing and Republican era writers and their responses are open-ended; they are to be reinterpreted and re-presented at later dates by different readers. The important issue is to uncover inexpressible agency that enabled writers to adapt, each in his or her own way. Wang's tendency to sometime over-read meanings into lines is therefore of no harm. For the purpose of this paper, it is not necessary to introduce the substance of his work. His epistemology is more important than his method of over-reading, because it is his epistemology that recognizes that those writers he examines participated in producing the knowledge of modernity. They produced this knowledge by responding to modernity's forceful arrival in various ways, unsystematically. The notion of "responding" suggests that indigenous and Western subjectivities are mutually constituted.

To what extent "responding" can be considered as a cultural change that incorporates modernity is also the focus of the debate between contemporary liberals and

9 See David Dewei Wang, *The Making of the Modern, the Making of a Literature: New Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Chinese Fiction* (如何現代，怎樣文學) (Taipei: Maitian, 1998); *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2000).

the new leftists in China. According to the liberals, the Chinese political practices remain feudal in many aspects. They feel that the rule under the Chinese Communist Party is antagonistic to liberalism, which is an institution celebrating individual subjectivity. The new leftists, in contrast, concentrate on the roles that the peasants, workers and soldiers are encouraged to play under Maoism. Their challenge to the liberal ideal is that it is alien. Equality in the socialist sense, which they argue is not traditional, represents an institutional change toward modernity, although it is modernity embedded in a certain collective subjectivity.

Figures I, II, III about Here

The meaning of culture is therefore contingent upon which type of personality, discourse and institution being discussed. All are related to subjectivity, with Pye being interested in diagnosis of dissonance, Wang in agency to adapt, the liberals in consciousness of self-interest, and the new left writers in volition to achieve emancipation. Whether or not Confucian culture has incorporated some degree of modernity alludes to the question of democratization in two ways. First, they both rest upon individual subjectivity. Next, they both involve Confucian responses to Western values. With regards to democratization, Pye looks at how motivation irrelevant to, if not incompatible with, democracy undermines democratic values behind the repeated oath to engage in democratization. Wang wants to see how talks of democracy have generated discursive adaptation that broadens the meanings of democracy. The liberals and the new leftists continue their debate on the balance between limited government and the mass line. It is not difficult to see that Wang is the only party who appears passive when prescribing a right form of subjectivity. For him, "responding" is a practice sufficient to demonstrate agency, hence subjectivity.

Let me first tackle the meaning of cultural change. First, Pye's preoccupation with personality analysis implicitly denies the possibility that the contents of public discourse affect citizenship. He overlooks the significance that in the early 1900s,

state patriotism gradually replaced Confucianism and they contrasted sharply in their expectation of good leadership. Under traditional Confucianism, the government should pursue no interests, signaling harmony. At the turn of the century imperialism was at its peak; but in the aftermath of the 1911 Republican Revolution, the philosophy of rule under Kuomintang converted into state nationalism or patriotism. From being a disinterested ruler to an active revolutionary, the political leadership under Kuomintang reinterpreted the notion of selflessness as the devotion to a strong state. The previous "inconsistency," so to speak, between the public and the private, hidden in the selfishness underneath the disguise of "no pursuit," loses relevance. The new "inconsistency" is between the active pursuit of a strong state and selfishness. As a result of change in leadership philosophy, the selfless pretension, preserved via sheer rituals required to keep alive the drama of harmony, has turned into demand for sacrifice. If the rise of statism is a modern phenomenon in Confucian political culture, the continuance of the public-private inconsistency after 1911 should be understood in a different light. Subjects adapting to rituals of harmony are not the same citizens adapting to statist mobilization.

With the exception of Pye, other narrators surpass the element of personality to focus on cultural changes in the public domain. The liberals' criticism of feudalism's continuation, by pointing to the lack of respect for individuality under statism, is from the perspective of institution. They disagree with the new leftists as to which institution can strengthen the state the most. This is nonetheless a critique of the public institution, rather than a style of personality. Similarly, the cultural changes are clear to Wang, since he is able to detect new discursive characteristics. In other words, while for Pye "cultural change" is a matter of personality change, it is to Wang and many contemporary Chinese writers, an issue of discourse or institution.

On the other hand, the liberals and Pye are on the same side in terms of their common concerns over individual integrity, with the exception of liberals believing that the right institution can resolve Pye's diagnosis of public psychotic self-denial.

They all deal with the public-private dichotomy. Here, the new leftists become their ally in the sense that their search for institutions to emancipate the masses from exploitation by the bourgeoisie is also predicated upon the public-private (or the state-society) dichotomy. For all of them, there isn't any question about the state representing the public and the society representing the private. The modern dichotomy of the state and the society connotes a significantly different cognition contrary to the Confucian teaching that the personal and the heaven are linked through parents, gentlemen, princes and the son of heaven. Both Pye and the liberals erred in misconceiving the continuity of a Chinese personality type or feudalism.

In contrast, the hiatus of the dichotomy of the state and the society in Wang's discursive analysis is conspicuous. This gap partially explains why Wang is never bothered by inconsistency, which presupposes the dichotomy. The institutional search by the liberals and the new leftists, who collude in reproducing the dichotomy between the public and the private, must also be responsible for indirectly granting legitimacy to the Pysian mode of analysis. To study where Pye's (as well as the Chinese contemporary writers') dichotomy originates is therefore critical to understanding their analysis and prescription.

Table I. Discourses on transition to modernity in China

Narrators Discourse	Pye	liberals	New-leftists	Wang
diagnosis	cognitive dissonance	feudalism and state suppression	the masses exploited by Imperialism	modernity suppressed
subjectivity	self-consistency	self-interest	volition	agency
Cultural change	no	no	yes	yes
modernity	fixed form	fixed form	open	open
Public-private	yes	yes	yes	no
prescription	personality change	democracy	the mass line	over-reading

Deconstructing the Public-Private Dichotomy

In the Confucian teaching, there is a clear distinction between the gentleman and the mediocre man. Presumably the gentleman follows the rule of righteousness; the mediocre man follows the rule of interest. The gentleman serves all under heaven and the mediocre man lives in the rice field. However, the demarcation between the public and the private is never clear, nor should it be.¹⁰ "Righteousness" refers to appropriateness, which certainly includes interest-driven behavior under given circumstances. Whose interest a gentleman should pursue is a matter of contingency: it is often defined according to how close the interest recipient is to the gentleman. The famous story of Mencius's mother relocated three times to find a right environment for her son is an example of conscious and appropriate calculation. In other words, all gentlemen have their individual and private interests, although there isn't a clear cut definition for the term "private." For the prince of a kingdom, his private realm included all the subjects in his domain. His public realm, on the other hand, referred to the relations among the son of heaven, the other princes, and himself. But, when the prince considered the welfare of his people, he obviously acted on behalf of all under heaven. In other words, there is no dichotomy. At the most, we can call it symbiosis of the public and the private.

The norm that a prince should not extract unreasonably from his own realm was not a matter of choosing between the public and the private. One can say that it was the prince's private interest since frugality could actually ease his reign, according to Confucianism. One can also claim that it was a public interest for him to restrain extraction from the subjects' point of view. The symbiosis of the public and the private has another complication. A gentleman is no longer a gentleman if he violates the rule of righteousness. An mediocre man is no longer an mediocre man if she/he can respond in times of need as the capacity of selfless leadership. If we di-

10 See the criticism of both Western and Japanese sinology for misrepresenting "the private" in China in 溝口雄三, *Sinology in the Japanese Perspectives* (日本人視野中的中國學) (trans.), Li Suping, Gong Ying and Xue Tao (Beijing: Chinese People's University Press, 1996).

vide the gentleman from the mediocre man to meet the dichotomy of the public and the private, we will erroneously fix a person to a predisposed role. To try to divide the state and the society would be committing the same mistake.

Since the rule of righteousness has no fixed contents, so too does the moral power of the prince. Morality has no confinement, thus no one should limit the prince's discretionary power. However, the rule of righteousness is at the same time a limitation upon power. Righteousness presumes selflessness. The prince's moral supremacy derived from the voluntary submission of power by his subjects, and not from his own pursuit. To do otherwise would hurt his image and, subsequently, reduce his power. On this the Pyesian analysis has an excellent grasp.¹¹ No one had the legitimacy to deny the prince unless the prince himself said no. Ironically, the greatest power of the prince is to restrain from exerting his own discretion. Only by self-restraint under the right circumstance could the prince justify submission of power by his subjects. One way of confirming the righteousness of the prince was to create circumstances for the prince to perform it. If the prince carries the task sincerely, we call the performance the ritual of propriety. If the act lacks sincerity, we call it the art of power. This is where Pye goes wrong because he oversimplifies by identifying the whole mechanism dissonance.

For Pye, who lives in a Christian society where one's belief should be self-consistent within despite possible situation involving himself, the Chinese rule of righteousness is just an empty word. If an interest is only real when it is for individuals, the symbiosis of the public and the private cannot but be spurious. To Pye, the statist who demand sacrifices for the sake of patriotism are no different from pretentious mandarins. He further discredits the contemporary state as a disguise.¹² This is, in my opinion, truly insightful. The state is a mobilizing mechanism for most national leaders. Therefore, citizenship has little to do with voluntary participation or rights-consciousness. As a result, the state owns the people, not vice versa.

11 Lucian Pye, *Asian Power and Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985)

12 Lucian Pye, "China: Erratic State, Frustrated Society," *Foreign Affairs* 69, 4, (1990), pp. 56-74

The motivation behind state building in Republican China began to counter imperialism. Anti-imperialist leaders become dictators if they fall for the temptation of extreme discretionary power. On the other hand, numerous reports suggest that modern Confucian politics is still determined by social networking, and not by dictatorship. The on-and-off style of dictatorship frustrates both the liberals and the new leftists. The former are antagonized due to aborted citizenship projects of numerous kind since the Boxers' Rebellion, and the latter because of the unavailing mass line which treats the masses ruthlessly.

The so-called cognitive capacity of the Chinese people to tolerate, or even capitalize, the seeming conflict of interest between the state and themselves is worth reconsideration. Let us look at the early missionary who honored the coexistence of ancestor worship and Christianity. The missionary had to pretend that he could better spread gospels by accepting Confucianism. Pye certainly would not consider such strategic adaptation to be a piece of evidence for cognitive dissonance. Yet, for late Qing Chinese, they claimed that their new faith were consistently denounced as "the junior hairy" (or *er mao zi*) (with the missionary "the senior hairy" or *da mao zi*). This means that the ordinary people are not tolerant toward cognitive dissonance. Accordingly, the so-called conflict between the state and private interest is actually between the fake state and the pretended citizenship, neither of which is a private concern.

First of all, pretended citizenship is a disguise of traditional cultural values, including Confucianism. Concerns over kinship relations prevail over those for civic rights. Theoretically, no dichotomy of the public and the private is universal under Confucianism; as a result the conflict between Pye's fake state and the private interest is a conflict between the fake state and the Confucian tradition. Further, since this fake state is a modern product of anti-imperialism in the case of China, the conflict has to be one caused by the intrusion of modernity. In short, the inconsistency Pye discovers in the Confucian mind set is more a conflict between modernity and tradition than one between the public and the private. The state to the ordi-

nary people is like Confucianism to the early missionary; Confucianism to the mediocre people is like Christianity to the missionary. From the view of the Pysian dichotomy, this is actually a conflict between two different public ideologies. Ordinary people indoctrinated by these two ideologies experience a conflict within themselves. Consequently, inconsistencies between the modern public and the traditional public have become a private conflict, which led to Pye's mistaken statement of cognitive dissonance.

In the following table, different kinds of conflicts are summarized: the conflict between citizenship and subject, citizenship and Confucianism, subject and statism, and statism and Confucianism. These conflicts and the g dichotomies associated all began with a foreign attempt to transform Confucian culture. The factors include an indigenous attempt at xenophobia. Only in the discourse of modern statism would Confucianism be a symbol of backwardness; only in the eyes of citizens responding to the call of the revolutionary state would self-surrendering subjects appear feudal. The complication exists when modern statism and Confucianism co-exist while citizens and subjects are symbiotic. To blame cognitive dissonance between private citizenship and public statism is not analytically useful, not to mention the aforementioned views that citizenship is not just citizenship and that statism is not just statism.

Due to the fact that the discourse on modernization prevailed, Confucianism became further associated with feudalism. If the need to jettison the Confucian legacy and strengthen the state did not exist, the subject would not have been ridiculed as feudal or blamed for dragging modernization. Statism calls for self-sacrifice of all, regardless of their status or role. Here, the conflict between modernity and Confucianism becomes real – officials losing moral power to the state while still remaining socially connected to the masses. The conflict leads to adaptation in behavioral pattern as well as in discourse. This allows state officials to alternate between the roles of professional and gentry, selfless patriotism to coexist with kin-centered

clientelism, and ordinary citizens to engage in anti-imperialism while opening to the outside world.

Table II. Possible Loci of Pysian Cognitive Dissonance

Modern Identities Traditional Identities	National / Citizen	Modern State
Subject	Private vs. Private	Private vs. Public
Dynastic Under-heaven	Public vs. Private	Public vs. Public

Hybridized Modernities

The New-left approach to modernity brings in the notion of multiple modernities. Subscribers struggle to unclothe indigenous subjectivities by studying how the intellectuals have adapted from various native positions that embrace no liberal teleology of modernity.¹³ An opened teleology is not teleology. Subjectivity in the form of mass line, which is collectivistic, can be acknowledged accordingly. The mass line, as reified by the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, was a response to the challenge of the West, but its development was not predetermined by the West or by feudalism. It was inconceivable that any of these political campaigns could be given birth to feudal China. Cultural changes toward modernity have been obvious to the new leftists.¹⁴ For them, Pye's Eurocentrism is evident when reducing the cadre to the mandarin. There must have been a fixed form of modernity that Pye employs to judge that neither character is modern. From a tradi-

13 In fact, the dichotomy of modernity and tradition is a modern concept. The dichotomy suggests that China has been adapting. For further discussion, see Wang, Hui, "The Schools of Thought in Contemporary China and the Issue of Modernity," (當代中國的思想狀況與現代性問題) *Tianya* 5 (1997), collected in Li, Shitao (ed.), *Intellectual's Positions: The Debate on Liberalism and the Division of the Chinese Intellectual World* (知識分子立場：自由主義之爭與中國思想界的分化) (Changchuen: Shidai Wenyi, 2000), pp. 83-123.

14 The mass line is thus not a feudal strategy, it is a Chinese response to the threat of the capitalist imperialism, for further discussion, see Gan Yang, "Liberalism: For Autocrats or for People?" (自由主義：貴族的還是平民的?) in Li (ed.), *Intellectuals' Positions*: 1-12.

tional Confucian point of view, the party cadre has never been a culturally familiar role. Despite the disaster inflicted by the Cultural Revolution, it is a part of Communist modernity, not Confucian tradition. Another bad news for the liberals is that the new leftists believe there is something positive to be uncovered in association with the Cultural Revolution.

This attitude frightens contemporary liberals who doubt that any signs of modernity could be uncovered during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁵ The mass line, which the new leftists laud lacks a mechanism to check the abuse of power by its leaders. The liberals will not applaud Pye, either, even though they seem to share a same version of modernity. For the liberals, both modernization and democratization are doomed to take place in China.¹⁶ The liberals are hopelessly optimistic in light of the suppression they have all suffered since the entry of liberalism into the Chinese discursive arena.¹⁷ Pye is, by contrast, pessimistic. Interestingly enough, the new leftists adopt a Pyesian critique when they deride liberals for their inconsistent throughout modern history.

A particular liberal whom the new leftists repeatedly cite is Hu Shih. Known for his extreme liberal philosophy during the Republican period, Hu surprisingly sided with Chiang Kaishek and the Kuomintang (KMT) during the Communist revolution and went on to serve as the President of Academia Sinica in Taiwan. Since then, the Chinese Communist Party has denounced Hu. Contemporary new left writers suggest that their knowledge of Hu Shih came from the CCP's texts, which portrays Hu Shih as a fake liberal.¹⁸ Here, the new leftists reflect upon the method-

15 For a representative of the liberal critics, see Ren, Jiantao, "Read 'New Left'" (解讀 "新左派"), in Li (ed.), *Intellectuals' Positions*: 191-214.

16 See one of the most fervent advocates of liberalism, Xu, Youyu, "Liberalism and Contemporary China" (自由主義與當代中國), in Li (ed.), *Intellectuals' Positions*: 413-430.

17 Xu Jilin bitterly recalled how all major parties in China had treated liberals in his "The Historical Legacy of Social Democratism" (社會民主主義的歷史遺產) in Li (ed.), *Intellectuals' Position*: 474-486.

18 For example, see Wang, Binbin, "A Research Note on Liberalism" (讀書札記：關於自由主義), in Li (ed.), *Intellectuals' Positions*: 165-177.

ology, which they use when criticizing the liberals, to appreciate Hu Shih as a liberal.

It is a methodology of "opening." By opening, new leftists appreciate the deep-seated alienation from Western modernity and redefine modernity in terms of the volition of the masses.¹⁹ Through this approach, they provide agency for change to the seemingly manipulated masses, even during the Cultural Revolution.²⁰ Hu's positive response to Chiang's cooptation, just like the masses worshipping Maoism, requires more analysis than simply dismissing him as a fake. One wonders where Hu Shih's agency for reinterpreting liberalism is. If the masses were allowed agency for reinterpreting the Cultural Revolution from a point that Mao failed to see, why shouldn't Hu be allowed agency for reinterpreting liberalism to incorporate anti-communism in a way Chiang could not see.

The new leftist criticism is seriously flawed when they depend on its CCP-indoctrinated simple-mindedness to deny Hu's contribution to Republican era's liberalism. This was precisely the mode of thinking when the liberals completely rejected the new left reading of modernity into the mass line. The new left writers' negligence in this regard led to the suspicion that denying the liberals of agency for change was politically motivated.

Taking the methodology of opening seriously shows that, Hu was doubtlessly a liberal, and that Chiang was a man of modernity. His dedication to statism and patriotism was based on a sincere hope for a strong China, albeit under the KMT's reign. It is true that Pye could easily discover all kinds of "traditional" traits in him, or disclose the authoritarian nature of his understanding of state, but Chiang was not just a Fascist. He was a Confucianist, a Fascist, and a part-time liberal. He trusted a group of neoclassical economists to transform Taiwan into a modern state for ex-

19 See Cui, Zhiyuan, *The Second Thought Liberation and Institutional Renovation* (第二次思想解放與制度創新) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1997).

20 Gan, Yang, for example, specifically promotes the true spirit of "great democracy," (大民主) a notion that was once popular during the Cultural Revolution, op. cit.

ample. "Multiple modernities" is a meaningful expression only if Chiang, Hu, the liberals and the masses are all allowed agency to practice modernity each in their own way. Locking modernity exclusively into the mass line and juxtaposing it along with Western modernity creates the impression of a fake opening.

Wang adheres to this methodology of opening by concentrating on how Confucian society has adapted discursively. The assumption of engaging in discursive analysis is that personality does not singly determine behavior; the discursive range of possibilities also shapes both the values that can be sensible and the options that can be understood. Wang's attempt is to read subjectivity into the novelists by detecting between the lines the emergence of any new discourse. Wang's discursive analysis thus gives the main characters in the novels, as well as their authors, subjectivities that show when these people try to make sense out of and respond to phenomena that latecomers call modernity. Furthermore, he explores other possibilities that might emerge in the future. This indicates an epistemology that meanings today cannot determine its future path, even if today influences tomorrow. From there a new kind of democracy is preserved. It is a democracy at the ontological level where meanings have no structural determinants.

Practicing Subjectivities

Wang is close to advocating a new democracy. What he seems to be trying to do is to discover subjectivities as an agency that gives meanings. Ordinary characters in novels each have their own ways for reinterpreting things. Qing, as well as Republican writers, legitimate all the reinterpretations by recognizing their existence. Wang shows how the authors he reviews enliven these characters; they are torn between tradition and modernity, no matter how bizarre their meaning system may look to contemporaries or latecomers. Wang extricates traces of modernity in the authors' strategies of bringing out these reinterpretations. As a result, no political

leaders, liberals or Western intruders can monopolize the meaning of modernity. The definition of modernity is democratized.

An implied accusation in Wang's literature review is that the subjectivity liberals assume exist in each individual carries suffocating effects on democratization of the definition. The accusation is potentially both against Pye and the contemporary liberals, because both advocate a single form of subjectivity. Pye's diagnosis of psychotic dissonance is undemocratic because he denies subjectivity to those people practicing a notion of modernity that has no counterpart in liberal philosophy. Seeming dissonance is no pathology for Wang, who sympathizes with those historical contexts that normalize fluidity of subjectivity, instead of rigidities. The liberals long for an institution of limited government to protect individual freedom and engage in an undemocratic cultural transformation denying subjectivities to those subscribing to collectivism in one way or another.

Being unable to sympathize with the Chinese mindset bifurcated toward tradition and modernity, Pye then proceeds to explain the Cultural Revolution as a natural outlet of self-hatred caused by the suppressed subjectivity. However, the Cultural Revolution was an anomaly as well as a wrongdoing even under the Confucian political culture. There is no need in the Confucian culture where people must engage in the Cultural-Revolution. This sort of aggression would be therapeutic only to a Western liberal suffering cognitive dissonance. Pye's perspectives are those of an internally consistent liberal democrat. Therefore, he fails to see that cognitive dissonance is a way of practicing subjectivity for those facing the intrusion of liberal thought. Western observers are generally biased to the extent that they want to decide the genuine trend lies on which side of the inconsistent perspective. The undecidable teleology of a Confucian state leads to constant debate in the Western academic circle on China policy.

Western thinkers have failed to achieve a consensus on what modern Confucianism represents. The lack of consensus was noticeable before and after the pursuit for modernization of the state at the end of the 19th century. Classic thinkers

typically interpreted Confucian culture in reference with their own culture. Thinkers who were critical of Western tradition usually praised the Confucian values, while those who considered Europe as a vanguard of civilization seldom respected Confucianism.²¹ In the 21st century, the puzzle continues as some view China as a threat while others see opportunities. Although it is the same geographical China, this territory contains elements of a long history that, according to the liberal teleology of the state, is not supposed to take place during the same time period. This combination of elements is a source of puzzle, especially for those who subscribe to the teleology of state ending in liberalism.

As Chinese students learn more about the Western approach to social science, they adopt the same schema in reading meanings into indigenous politics based on their Western teachers' liberal teleology.²² Western teachers care more about their students' thesis than the students' life philosophy. This is because teachers expect students to think and act consistently as a liberal should. The learning speed of the students encourages the teachers to believe that all the other Confucian societies can do the same eventually. This misperception reminds one of Madame Chiang Kaishek's persuasion of Congress in 1943. She said that saving her country was no different than saving herself, who appeared to be a seemingly Westernized lady. Claiming to personify China, Mme Chiang instilled false expectation that Kuomintang politics was soon to democratize. In comparison, it is commonplace today for a Chinese female student to marry one of her male Western teachers. However, the

21 The critics, for example, include Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The compliment came from, for example, Francois Marie Voltaire, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Mark Twain and L. N. Tolstoi.

22 Among overseas Chinese scholars, the expectation that China will eventually develop toward liberal society or political democracy is popular, see Steven Cheung, "Will China Go 'Capitalist' ? An Economic Analysis of Property Rights and Institutional Change," *Hobart Paper 94, The Institute of Economic Affairs* (Norfolk: Thetford Press Ltd. 1982); Minxin Pei, *From Reform to Revolution: The Demise of Communism in China and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Yasheng Huang, *Inflation and Investment Controls in China: The Political Economy of Central-Local Relations during the Reform Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

liberal thought does not transform students into liberals more than it helps them find a job.

One significant impact is that capable Chinese students raise the expectation of Westerners. The liberals can even find disciples in China who never study abroad but still manage to read about liberalism enthusiastically. The statute of liberty which stood on Tiananmen Square until June 3rd, 1989, continued to fantasize Chinese liberal even long after the ugly political battles among pro-democracy students became widely known. It is arguably the pressure created by the rhetoric to be liberal that has led to the anxiety of students seeking an outlet. The politics to which they have socially been accustomed to includes hierarchy, harmony and duty. The liberalism they appreciate is about *laissez faire*, equality and populism. Liberalism as a hegemonic discourse among pro-democracy students suppresses the practice of subjectivity that allows fluidity by situations.²³ The need for hierarchy and duty-mindedness become inexpressible. The problem with Chinese political culture today is that it is not allowed to be inconsistent in its own way.

Democratization Exempt from Teleology

In the following discussion, I have produced two diagrams that read different possibilities into the process of democratization. The purpose of this exercise is to bring together seemingly incompatible elements. (Some contribute to liberal democracy, others to the populist, mass line democracy, still others to Confucian leadership, and so on.) Moreover, I intend to provide a discursive route through which a person schooled in collectivistic values and individualistic institution is able to voice her or his fluid identities without worrying of being treated as a psychotic

23 To my knowledge, the first Chinese writer to make this keen observation, Xiao Gongqin, was once mistaken as an advocate of new left authoritarianism, see his *History Denies Romantics* (lishi jujue langman) (Taipei: Liangchi, 1998); for further discussion of misplaced liberalism leading to violence, see my "The Decline of a Moral Regime," *Comparative Political Studies* 27, 2, (1994), pp. 272-301.

character. The integrity of a person is non longer fixed to any given ideology or tradition, but is fluid in performing divergent self-roles as responses to externally imposed values and institutions. The ability to perform any self-role in accordance with any imposed value system at a given point preserves the wholeness of subjectivity required to support other seemingly incompatible roles in different situations.

In Diagram I, there is no clear separation of the liberal-styled civil society from the Confucian-styled folk society. In the civil society, people are expected to be rights conscious, individualistic, and procedure-oriented. In contrast, people in the Confucian-styled folk society are expected to be duty conscious, collectivistic, and kinship-oriented. The set of roles surfacing at a particular time depends on the clues a person receives regarding her or his identity in the situation. The institutional setting, the nature of the issues at hand, the people involved, the image of the state, the social as well as personal mood, and a whole range of contingencies coincidentally determine the impact of a clue. Once the individual's role vis-à-vis the state is conceptualized, political responses follow.

In the civil society, one treats the state as an intervening force to be checked and balanced. The capitalist property rights system, along with the liberal political thought, creates this civil-society mentality. In the folk society, the state is a potential dictator to be avoided; it is also a potential ally, depending on one's connection with the enlarged kinship networking of the leadership. In the folk society, the conviction is that there is always a way to establish connection with the leadership, no matter how far and how indirect. Therefore, the separation between the state and the folk society is unlikely. On the other hand, political leadership of the state also finds it easier to mobilize the folk society.

For a person located in the folk society, there is very little that can be done to resist mobilization, except looking for exemptions through the kinship connection. The emergence of the civil society provides an alternative – a person can assume her or his identity in the civil society and receive legal protection from state extraction. In other words, the function of the civil society is to resist the state. This is not

identical to the civil society understood in liberal discourses, as shown in Diagram II. It is participation, rather than resistance, that dominates liberal discourses. In Diagram II, the kinship networking that might cross the individualistic boundary is limited to core family members. Marxists who worry about the penetration of the state by the bourgeois are therefore conversant with and contributive to the liberal discourses. Whichever side one is on, liberalism or Marxism, the civil society is not there to simply resist. In the case of the Chinese society, however, people do not typically participate through civil identities, but through kinship networking.

Even the state official have access to the process of resistance in the Chinese society. With the rise of civil society in China, the officials' protection of their kinship circle continues to enjoy legitimacy. While this sounds unfair to the rest of society, people accept this as normal under Confucianism. In institutional economics, this is called rent seeking. With civil society emerging in China, an official can first return to the folk society and then sneak in the civil society to abuse the loophole. This official sabotages the policy she or he initially drafted for the state to extract from society in general. This is clearly a self-inconsistent move from a liberal point of view. For the contemporary Chinese liberal, that officials seek rent or resist the state attests to the lingering of feudalism while, for Pye, cognitive dissonance between the public and the private roles exists.

The liberals' denouncement of rent seeking as feudalistic is strange, because rent seeking is universal even in capitalist societies. In their criticism of feudalism, Chinese liberals apparently appreciate that rent seeking in Confucian societies is not simply an individualistic move, but also a collective one. In the Confucian societies, very few officials can deny requests made on them by kinship. The emergence of the civil society gives them a more sophisticated vehicle to fulfill obligations to the kin circle in the sense that they no longer do this openly. The individualistic procedure-orientation actually helps officials cover kinship-related collusion.

It is interesting to note the irony that while those who can receive help from their relatives in the government enjoy social recognition, those officials who refuse

to help relatives also enjoy such recognition. Neither Confucianism nor socialism highly regards the kinship-related collusion. Their solution is different from the liberals. Accordingly, both patriotism and citizen duty are emphasized so that the state and the whole citizenry can be conceived of as an enlarged kinship known as the great self, a terminology used by the early Republican revolutionary when striving to establish a modern state in China. This is an unliberal self-concept because the citizen is reduced to a little self, he or she is even less than the status under Confucianism. For liberals, the solution is to breed individualistic consciousness, which Pye considers almost impossible given the Chinese personality.

However, as many Chinese intellectuals and leaders have demonstrated, there is no cognitive barrier for the Chinese to learn liberal philosophy. Few of them belong to the bourgeoisie whom the new leftists dread. Pye's insight about cognitive dissonance, if reinterpreted, can be useful in appreciating the meaning of Chinese liberalism. As mentioned earlier, the notion of liberalism is more a mechanism of resisting the state than of participating in the state. What the new left writers mainly worry about is unequal participation. This is a legitimate concern even for the liberals, who care little about equality. They do so not because it is conceptually minor, but because it is not relevant to their ultimate purpose. In short, the liberals, albeit deeply involved in individualistic rhetoric, are concerned with society as a whole – they thus fit into the philosophy of little self perfectly. Many liberals advocate liberalism without worrying about political suppression because, as Hu Shih said, they care about the nation. To them, liberalism is a way to save and strengthen the nation.²⁴

It is not unlikely that a liberal like Hu Shih gave his support freely to Chiang Kaishek. Hu shifted from his citizen identity in the civil society, through his Chi-

24 See the discussion by Suisheng Zhao, "We Are Patriots First and Democrats Second: The Rise of Chinese Nationalism in the 1990s," in E. Friedman and B. L. McCormick (eds.), *What If China Doesn't Democratize? Implications for War and Peace* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 21-28; Qin, Hui, "Where Is the Intersection of Liberalism and Nationalism?" (自由主義與民族主義的契合點在哪裡?) in Li, Shitao (ed.) *Nationalism and the China's Lot during Transition* (民族主義與轉型期中國的命運) (Changchuen: Shidai Wenyi, 2000), pp. 380-388.

nese little self in the folk society, and entered the Chinese state apparatus to cope with forces that he believed could destroy the nation. His support at one given point is no guarantee that he would consider proper to return to his citizen identity and become a critic of Chiang's leadership at a later time or on a different issue. We do not have a political science today that allows us to treat this type of inconsistency. We find characters shifting among roles imposed by a society in constant transition only in novels. This is why I would like to go back to Wang in my conclusion.

Democracy as Resistance

It should be clear by now that both the liberals and the new leftists target suppression, the former targeting the suppression of the Party-state, the latter, the exploitation by the bourgeois imperialism. Both want a free country. The coexistence of these people testifies to a kind of cognitive dissonance at the micro-level. This is neither feudalistic nor psychotic. It is in fact a call for creative adaptation. It is a creative liberal discourse to the extent that liberalism means more resistance to than participation in the state. It is a creative new left discourse to the extent that the mass line can be a check on the state entering the capitalistic World Trade Organization. China's history moves back and forth without set directions, because people learn to play different roles at different times on different agendas.

Today political science in general (and area studies in particular) are too pre-occupied with whether an exact same type of civil society as the European model (which is itself divergent in style and meaning across regimes, times and religions, etc.) would appear. We need an epistemology of democracy that does not assume a fixed ontology or a fixed teleology. This democracy enables people to resist fixation by any ideology, regime, tradition or self-consistency. Its form and meaning cannot be determined in advance, because the nature of suppression is never fixed. Just as one never expects oneself to become a liberal while growing up in a feudal village, one will likewise never know if one will discover that one is actually a gene, a queer,

or a split personality whom one considers an abnormal form of existence today in the future.

If political science is not ready to appreciate the type of personality either embedded in liberalism or aimed at participatory individualism, one possible place to look for heuristics is in novels. There are few laws that govern how a novelist writes. Given China's constant transition, novelists could develop more sensitive and sympathetic perspectives than social scientists on minor characters in societies. Critics who read and reinterpret novels make the inexpressible expressible and the non-existent existent. Wang and many of his colleagues are good at over-reading meanings into lines. The possibility that everyone can survive suppression of one kind or another, and can do that without knowing oneself being resistant preserves the most democratic style of discourse. Demonstrating this possibility is the ultimate statement of subjectivity, a subjectivity existing in the agency for change, fluidity and reinterpretation.

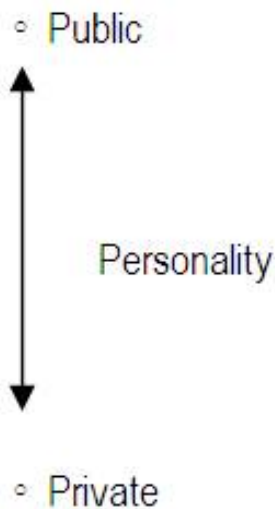


Figure I. The Public and the Private
(Reconciled by Pysian personality)

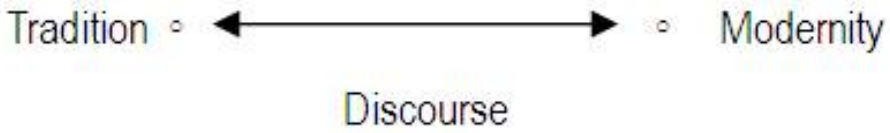


Figure II. Tradition and modernity
(Reconciled by Wang's discursive analysis)

Diagram I: Chinese State & Society

Diagram II: Western State & Society

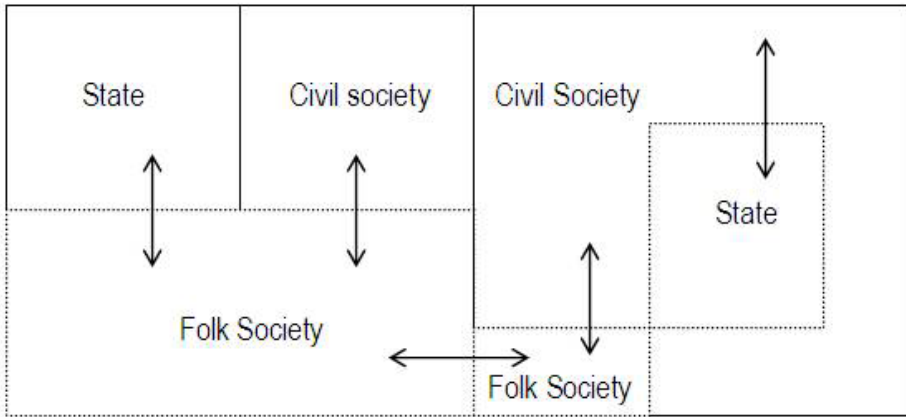
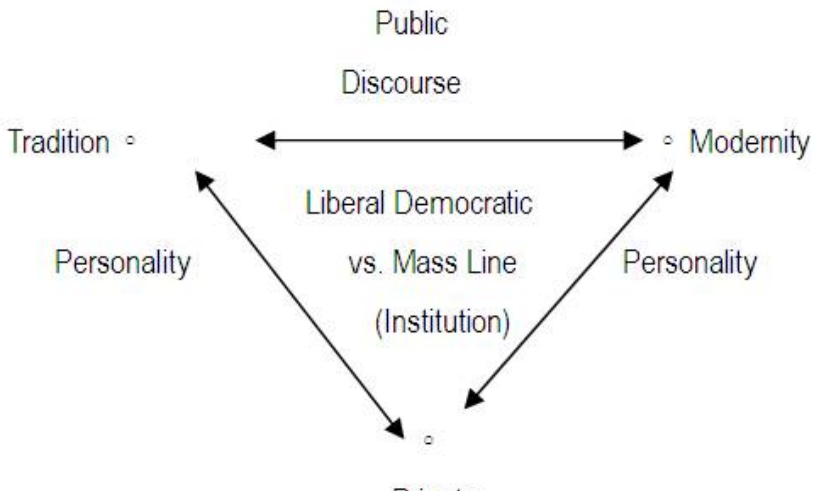


Figure III. Institution as a mechanism to
move private citizens from tradition to modernity

To the extent that tradition and modernity are irreconcilable, they coexist. Under this circumstance, two different types of Pysian personalities are called for to reconcile the contradiction between the private and each of the two modes of the public respectively, leading to the loss of institutional stability. Neither the liberal democratic approach nor the mass line approach remains as it is in theory. Neither is attentive to the contradiction between tradition and modernity. While the mass line approach may respond to the traditional need for moral leadership or the liberal

democratic approach may respond to the need for individualist subjectivity, they are logically unable to coexist♦



- arrow The route through which one can shift one's position/role/identity
- Separation of position/role/identity that is discursively fixed
- - - - - Separation of position/role/identity that is discursively permeable

♦ Responsible editor: I-fei You.

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