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WHEN CONFUCIUS “ENCOUNTERS” JOHN DEWEY: A HISTORICAL AND  
PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF DEWEY’S VISIT TO CHINA

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WHEN CONFUCIUS “ENCOUNTERS” JOHN DEWEY: A HISTORICAL AND  
PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF DEWEY’S VISIT TO CHINA

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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## **Dedication**

*It is the person who is able to broaden the way, not the way that broaden the person*

(人能弘道，非道弘人).

-Confucius

To my family members of China and the United States, who encourage me to understand the West and East.

To my teachers from the University of Oklahoma, who enrich my intellectual and spiritual life.

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation focuses on John Dewey's experience in modern China by exploring educational encounters between Dewey and the five Chinese scholars (Hu Shih, Liang Shuming, Tao Xingzhi, Guo Bingwen, and Jiang Menglin). The main purpose of my study is an attempt to answer an important question: What motivated Dewey's Chinese students to introduce Dewey's educational thought to China? Part of an answer is derived by examining a more central question: How did Dewey's Chinese devotees find philosophical motivation from their Confucian education and Western learning in order to entertain Dewey's educational thought? By utilizing Jane Roland Martin's educational theory of encounter as a theoretical framework, this study illuminates the cross-cultural philosophical dynamic that took place between Dewey and his Chinese students. Therefore, I wish to borrow the concepts of "cultural stock" and "individual capacities" from Martin's theory to understand an encounter between Dewey's pragmatism and Confucianism during the May Fourth era. Simultaneously, my study also employs Martin's notion of "double-entry cultural bookkeeping" to analyze how Dewey's Chinese followers retained "the cultural asset" from Confucian education and Western learning, while removing "cultural liability" from both. According to the finding of this study, Dewey's Chinese students tried to adopt, transfer and apply Dewey's pragmatism into Chinese reality mostly because they were eager to find a "miraculous medicine" that would supposedly cure an ill within Chinese society. In other words, Dewey's pragmatism was very compatible with his Chinese students' cultural psychology stemming from Confucian educational experience.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### American Confucius

On October 19, 1919, National Beijing University held a generous banquet to celebrate an American philosopher's sixtieth birthday. The philosopher's name was John Dewey, who had already reached Shanghai by boat with his wife, Alice Chipman Dewey, and daughter, Lucy Dewey, on April 30 in response to his Chinese students' invitation. During the banquet, the chancellor of Beijing University, Cai Yuanpei, made a warm speech to welcome Dewey's arrival, on behalf of all faculties. More interestingly, October 19 of that year marked the birthday of Confucius, based on the Chinese lunar calendar. In his speech, Cai was delighted to make a brief comparison between the two great thinkers.

First of all, Cai emphasized the dissimilarities between the thoughts of Confucius and John Dewey. As he said,

Dr. Dewey's philosophy...should be treated as the symbol of modern western civilization. Correspondingly, Confucius's philosophy...can be thought of as the counterpart of traditional Chinese civilization. Confucius said respect the emperor, Dr. Dewey advocated democracy; Confucius said females are a problem to raise, Dr. Dewey advocates equal rights for men and women; Confucius said transmit not create, Dr. Dewey advocates creativity. These are fundamentally different.<sup>1</sup>

Subsequently, Cai's speech seemed to pay more attention to the fact that some educational thoughts from Confucius resonated with Dewey's pragmatic ideas.

According to the chancellor:

One of Confucius's sayings that 'learning without due reflection leads to perplexity, reflection without learning leads to perilous circumstance' indicates that his emphasis in the same importance of experience as thinking. Confucius

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<sup>1</sup>Cai Yuanpei, "A Speech Given at the Dinner Party of Dr. Dewey's Sixtieth Birthday (在杜威博士 60 之生日晚餐会上之演说)," in *Democracy and Modern Society: Dewey's Lecture in China*, ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiayang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 754.

further said that ‘If you listen broadly, set aside what you are unsure of, and speak cautiously on the rest, you will make few errors; if you look broadly, set aside what is perilous, and act cautiously on the rest, you will have few regrets.’ We can see the sigh of experimentalism [Pragmatism] from this saying.<sup>2</sup>

Following this argument, Cai Yuanpei concluded that “I already found out that there are some similarities between the thoughts of Confucius and John Dewey. They should be regarded as the evidences for the confluence of eastern and western civilization...”<sup>3</sup>

Historically, Cai was perhaps the first Chinese scholar who made a comparison between Confucius and John Dewey. More significant, his speech after such a brief comparison seemed to imply that Dewey might become a replacement of Confucius in contemporary Chinese society. As he stated:

When we celebrate the birthday of Confucius, our ceremony has nothing to do with the person who already passed away. However, Dr. Dewey can grant us instructions when we celebrate his birthday. Therefore, the latter for us is more approachable...<sup>4</sup>

As one of the leading figures in the fields of education and culture in China, Cai’s banquet speech reflected the high respect in which Dewey was held by Chinese intellectuals of the time. Perhaps inspired by Cai, some scholars even liked calling Dewey “Modern Confucius” or “Second Confucius.”<sup>5</sup> From 1919 to 1921, during John Dewey’s stay in China, modern Chinese intellectuals embraced him with a strong feeling of admiration. They adamantly chronicled their thoughts in regard to the

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<sup>2</sup> Cai ,“A Speech Given at the Dinner Party of Dr. Dewey’s Sixtieth Birthday,” 755.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Berry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment: Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1977), 11.

Jessica Ching-Sze, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 14.

Xu Guoqing, *Chinese and Americans: A Shared History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 204.

meaning of Dewey's ideas to Chinese society and people.

For instance, after John Dewey departed China for the U.S in July 1921, Hu Shih, one of Dewey's most famous Chinese students, enthusiastically expressed his thoughts about Dewey's trip to China in the farewell article titled "Mr. Dewey and China." In Hu's writing, he stated "

... In the history of China's contact with the West, no Western scholar had enjoyed such a large influence as Dewey. We can say in the following decades it would be impossible for another Western scholar to have an influence larger than Professor Dewey's.<sup>6</sup>

Hu Shih further asserted optimistically that:

...in the future, as 'experimental schools' gradually arise (in China), ...At the present time John Dewey is just a well-regarded name, but one or two decades later, his reputation will give birth to innumerable Dewey-style 'experimental school', which can indirectly or directly influence Chinese education...<sup>7</sup>

Obviously, Hu Shih's praise of Dewey's visit echoed Cai Yuanpei's banquet speech. The complimentary comparison of Confucius by Cai was more than the result of the coincidence of the birthdays of the two great thinkers. In fact, his speech was a reflection of the tendency that modern Chinese scholars endeavored to mingle Chinese civilization with Western civilization during the early Republican period. Likewise, when emphasizing the promising and unsurpassable influence of Dewey's educational philosophy upon modern Chinese education, Hu Shih also realized the significance of the Chinese culture's confrontation with Western culture within the period. Clearly, both tended to view Dewey's journey to China as a part of the history of cultural exchange between China and the West.

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<sup>6</sup>Hu Shih, "Mr. Dewey and China," in *Democracy and Modern Society: Dewey's Lecture in China* (民治主义与现代社会: 杜威在华讲演集), ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiayang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 743

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 743.

Furthermore, as one of the world's oldest civilizations, China has embraced a strong stability and continuity for thousands of years. Some historians have long held that the nation's civilization was well integrated and cohesive during its late imperial period, and even lasted and survived the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, they thought China's tradition and past would inevitably play an important role in her way to modernization.<sup>9</sup> Cai Yuanpei and Hu Shih realized the presence of both traditional and modern elements in China during the period of Dewey's sojourn to the country. In the meantime, Dewey was greatly attracted by the mingling of diverse cultures during the time of May Fourth/New Cultural Movement. As he wrote: "This is really the 'other side of the world' in every sense, and it is most interesting to see a culture where so many of our prepossessions are reversed...our own habit and beliefs would shrink too much."<sup>10</sup> Also, a historian of Chinese study, Benjamin Schwartz, remarked, "the encounter between John Dewey and modern China is one of the most fascinating episodes in the intellectual history of twentieth-century China..."<sup>11</sup>

My dissertation will address the fascinating encounter between John Dewey and modern China within the context of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement. Using an in-depth historical and philosophical analysis of Dewey's visit to China, the purpose of this study is to find out the reasons why Dewey's Chinese devotees were dedicated to

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<sup>8</sup>Feng Tianyu, Zhou Jiming, and He Xiaoming, *The History of Chinese Culture* (中国文化史)(Shang Hai: Shang Hai People Press, 1990), 34, 86.

Thomas D.Curran, *Education Reform in Republican China: The Failure of Educators to Create A Modern Nations* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 15,84, 426.

<sup>9</sup> Feng, Zhou, and He, *The History of Chinese Culture*, 86.

<sup>10</sup>John Dewey, John Dewey to Herbert W.Schneider, Beijing,3 January1921, Correspondence,no.03491, quoted in Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 75.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin I.Schwartz, "Foreword," In *the Dewey Experiment: Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1977), Berry Keenan, v.

the American philosopher's educational thought during the early period of the Republic of China. In order to better understand the historical and cultural implication of my study, an inquiry of contextualization is definitely demanded. The inquiry will help readers generally perceive the meaning of "modern Confucius." Meanwhile, the inquiry aims to disclose how Confucianism and foreign ideas competed and interacted with each other during the period when China transformed herself from a dynastic empire to a modern nation-state.

### **Contextualized**

"The history of China's contact with the West" in Hu Shih's writing can be traced back to the late Ming dynasty (1590-1644 AD).<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, an unprecedented full-scale cultural contact with China by the West was only initiated after The First Opium war, between 1840 and 1842.<sup>13</sup> The period following the war witnessed a series of foreign aggressions and domestic riots in China. As a result, the Manchu royal court was subjected to unequal treaties and the loss of territory imposed by foreign nations, which had been formerly treated as barbarian tribes by ancient Chinese imperial regimes. Fairly speaking, a cultural exchange between China and the West since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a direct result of China's military failure by the Western powers.

Culturally and philosophically, the Manchu Qing dynasty, like the Ming (1368-1644), still followed Neo-Confucianism (*lixue*) to govern the country. Under the Qing regime, Zhu Xi's philosophical thought, which had help created Neo-Confucianism, became a dominant ideology for both Chinese elites and ordinary people. During the Qing period, the traditional examination system was still an integral feature of life that

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<sup>12</sup>Feng, Zhou, and He, *The History of Chinese Culture* (中华文化史), 791-796.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 791-796.

served the interests of millions of people and could easily be viewed as a force for coherence and stability. At the same time, the system, based on the acquisition of Confucian canons, greatly contributed to forging ancient Chinese people's identity as a member of "the central kingdom." Nevertheless, the invasions of Western powers not only damaged Chinese sovereignty, but also greatly challenged the superiority of Confucianism.<sup>14</sup>

Noticeably, since China again lost terribly in the Second Opium War (1856-1860), Western civilization surging into China possessed an overwhelming advantage because of its intimidating military technology. From the perspective of the Neo-Confucian ruling elite, Western civilization was mostly characterized by strong and advanced military force. Culturally and psychologically, the tragic defeats of the Qing dynasty by the Western powers unprecedentedly imposed pressures on the Qing officials. As a well-known Neo-Confucian official-scholar Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) lamented: "China is definitely in the face of an unprecedented change in the country's history of over three thousand years."<sup>15</sup>

In reaction to Western aggression, some wise official-scholars launched "The Self-Strengthening Movement" (1861-1895).<sup>16</sup> In order to keep China powerful and

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<sup>14</sup>Peter Hay Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 7-9.

<sup>15</sup> Li Hongzhang, "Letter to Bao Huatan (复鲍华谭中丞)", in *Collective Works of Li Hongzhang* (Hefei: Anhui Education Press, 2007), quoted in He Xiaoming, *One Hundred Years of Misery: The Intellectual Movement and the Process of Modernization in China* (Shanghai: Dongfang Press, 1997), 170.

<sup>16</sup> During the decade following the Qing Restoration of the 1860s, leading both Manchu and Chinese, tried to adapt Western devices and science. This movement was based on the doctrine of "Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, Western learning for practical use." Western arms, steamships, science, and technology were seen as tools that could be utilized to preserve Confucian values. See in Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*. (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.217.

preserve Confucian legitimacy, some pragmatic classic official-scholars in service of the court were attempting to introduce Western learning, which mainly consisted of military technology and industry, to China. A philosophical formula called *ti-yong* amalgam<sup>17</sup> became a philosophic foundation for them to learn Western knowledge during the period of the late Qing dynasty. As a renowned classical scholar-official, Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909), summed up “Chinese learning for the substance (the essential principle or *ti*) and Western learning for function (the practical applications or *yong*).”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, China only needed Western technology to achieve national strength, while it could simultaneously reject the introduction of Western philosophy and ideology that could change the Chinese political system, culture, and the nature of society as a whole.

However, “The Self-Strengthening Movement” more or less provided Chinese people with an opportunity to view the outside world beyond the worldview of Sinocentrism. The movement allowed some works of Western social, economic, and political ideas to be intensively studied and imported by a group of Chinese scholars. For instance, as the first Chinese student receiving education in England, Yan Fu (1853-1921), translated Thomas Henry Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* into classic Chinese. In particular, when translating the work of the English biologist, he developed a strong interest in elaborating the theory of Social Darwinism, which inspired young Chinese scholars to apply Charles Darwin’s theory of species’ evolution to national salvation.

Furthermore, “The Self-Strengthening Movement” became the cradle of the

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<sup>17</sup>In Confucianism, briefly, “*ti*” means principles and codes which are connected to the root of “the authoritative conduct” (*ren*). “*yong*” represents instruments or tools that can be adopted to defend “*ti*.” See more details in He, *One Hundred Years of Misery*: 176-177.

<sup>18</sup>Zhang Zhidong, *China’s Only Hope: An Appeal*, trans. S. I. Woodbridge (New York: Revell, 1900), 63.

growth of Chinese new education. Between the 1860s and 1890s, the court established new schools, which aimed to learn Western military technologies and foreign languages. Nevertheless, guided by the *ti-yong* formula, the central government still treated the Confucian civil service examination system as the mainstream of Chinese education. For elite reformers, new education was still subject to the official classic educational system. It is necessary to emphasize that the birth of the new Chinese education was closely linked to the cause of national salvation.<sup>19</sup> Thereafter, the theme of national salvation penetrated all stages of the development of Chinese education, so much it even proceeded to deeply affect the development of Chinese education during the Republican period.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, the deadly defeat of China by Japan between 1894 and 1895 indicated the failure of The Self-Strengthening Movement. Triggered by the Japanese Meiji Restoration of 1868, some enlightened Chinese scholars began to cast their focuses from scientific technology to political institutions when furthering their foreign learning. For them, the establishment of a Japanese style constitutional monarchy became the best way to strengthen the country. The One Hundred Days Reform, led by Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Liang Qichao (1873-1929) in 1898, was a deep reflection of the intellectual dynamics. Notwithstanding, the transitory reform, controlled by Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908), was cruelly oppressed by the conservative forces. After the Boxer Rebellion and the invasion of the Eight-Nation Alliance in 1900, China was further in great danger of being torn apart by Western

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<sup>19</sup>Curran, *Education reform in Republic China*, 15.

<sup>20</sup>Yang Dongping, *Educational Theory in Civil Life* (走向公共生活的教育理论), (Beijing: Press of Beijing Normal University, 2009), 4.



powers. With the deepening of a national crisis, the Qing court eventually made a decision to launch the New Reforms during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A noteworthy matter is that educational reform played a significant role in the period of the New Reforms Movement.<sup>21</sup> In light of a serious mismatch between the classic educational system and a changing society, the court government in 1905 had to abolish the Confucian examination system, which was initiated during the Sui-Tang dynasties. Based on the Japanese model, the court attempted to establish a new school system to produce a new style of talented men. The *ti-yong* philosophical formula still set a tone for the new education. Nevertheless, with the abolition of the state exam and the rise of new education, the Qing court in effect lost its monopoly on the granting of gentry status and dissolved the bond between scholarship and the central government.<sup>22</sup> Simultaneously, the ending of the traditional educational system uncoupled plenty of young Chinese students from the restriction of the Confucian examination system, as many of them looked for chances to receive education from new style schools and studying abroad. From the perspectives of many patriotic Chinese scholars and students, the pursuit of new education at the turn of the century undoubtedly became an effective means to achieve national salvation.

With the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the Republic of China in 1912, national crises still overshadowed China. In a new historical circumstance, Chinese intellectuals further adjusted their perspectives toward Western civilization, especially when realizing that both the introduction of advanced military technology

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<sup>21</sup>Sally Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China: The Beginnings of the Modern Era* (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 48-50.

<sup>22</sup>Borthwick, *Education and Social Change in China*, 153.

and political reform were insufficient to empower the country. Consequently, they gradually expanded their focus on Western learning from modern military industry and political institution to the system of thought.

During the early part of the Republican period, the political power was decentralized in China because of the thriving military warlords. Chinese political instability derived from the warlord time (1912-1927) and unexpectedly provided relative freedom for intellectual and cultural reformations. Moreover, between the late Qing New Reform period (1901-1911) and the era of the May Fourth Movement, a stream of Western thought surged in China. In particular, some of Chinese treaty port cities, such as Shanghai and Tianjin, became major places where Chinese intellectuals gathered to learn and exchange fresh ideas. During the period, there was an emergence of new ideas such as Utilitarianism, Liberalism, Social Darwinism, Scientism, Democracy, Ibsenism, Henri Bergson's Vitalism, and Anarchism, among others. The variety of philosophical approaches and political theories altered over time, competing and complementing each other so that the debates about the future of China became increasingly spirited.<sup>23</sup>

When Dewey arrived in China in 1919, he coincidentally witnessed the outbreak of a student demonstration called the May Fourth Movement promoting an upsurge of Chinese nationalism. When realizing that China was in a period of great transition, he was immediately fascinated by China and the idea of establishing the first republic

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<sup>23</sup>Zhang Kaiyuan and Yan Changhong, *1911 Revolution and the Development of Chinese politics* (辛亥革命与中国政治发展) (Wuhan: Press of Hua Zhong Normal University, 2005), 339.

government in Chinese history.<sup>24</sup> Thus, he extended his brief visit to a year, and afterwards he accepted a visiting professorship at National Beijing University.

Although the movement embraced a strong political appeal by sparking the sense of a modern nation-state across China, its influence greatly expanded from a mere political appeal to a cultural reformation. Therefore, in a broad stroke, the May Fourth Movement is also called the New Cultural Movement.<sup>25</sup> In a new historical surrounding, Western ideas, (in particular the value of “Mr. Democracy” and “Mr. Science”) were greatly advocated by modern Chinese intellectuals to re-evaluate traditional Chinese culture. Some iconoclastic intellectuals, such as Chen Duxiu (1879-1942), Luxun (1881-1936), Wu Yun (1872-1949), and Li Dazhao (1888-1927), ascribed the suffering of Chinese people to Confucianism. Therefore, these radical people put forward a slogan of “Down with Confucius and Sons.”<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, some historians pointed out that although Confucianism came under sharp attacks during the early Republican period, the extent of its demise, as well as the speed with which that demise happened, has been exaggerated.<sup>27</sup> In fact, even some radical intellectuals did not fully reject positive aspects of Confucianism. As one of the iconoclasts of the May Fourth period, Li Dazhao, said, “ the target of my attack on ‘Confucius’ was not Confucius himself, but ‘Confucius’ as a ruling idol established by despotic emperors.”<sup>28</sup> Other scholars also discovered that both the May Fourth

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<sup>24</sup> Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 316-317.

<sup>25</sup> Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China* (New York: Free Press, 1981), 203-208.

<sup>26</sup> Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). 300-313.

<sup>27</sup> Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111-114.

<sup>28</sup> Li Dazhao, “Authentic Ethics and Confucius (自然的伦理与孔子),” in *Collected works of Li Dazhao*, ed. Fan Yaling (Beijing: People Press, 1984), 264.

Movement and the New Cultural Movement to some extent indicated some important features of Confucianism. For instance, Lin Yusheng asserted that the spirit of May Fourth actually inherited the ultimate concern about the nation's destiny of the Confucian scholar-apprentice (*shi*) model.<sup>29</sup> Vera Schwarcz also argued that the Literacy Reformation, one of the most important parts of the May Fourth /New Cultural Movement, actually carried out a Confucian tradition that illustrated scholars preferred to reform society by means of literature.<sup>30</sup>

In response to the radical intellectuals' attack on Confucianism, some other Chinese scholars had to think about re-conceptualizing this traditional legacy. A group of them, represented by Kang Youwei, advocated that the Chinese central government should revive Confucianism as the national religion. Meanwhile, other scholars were attempting to adapt some aspects of Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism to the construction of a modern society. In particular, upon embracing a syncretism between Confucianism and Western culture, the scholars believed that the uniqueness of Confucian value was still beneficial to the modernization of Chinese society, as well as the reconstruction of Western society after the deadly destruction of World War I.<sup>31</sup> This group of intellectuals eventually formed the school of "New Confucianism."<sup>32</sup>

As discussed above, with collapse of the imperial regime in 1912, Confucianism could not sustain its prestigious position of official ideology in Chinese society

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<sup>29</sup> Lin Yusheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-traditionalism in the May Fourth Era*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979),26-55.

<sup>30</sup>Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California press, 1986), 76-79.

<sup>31</sup>Liang Shuming, "The Rejuvenate of Confucian Thought (孔子学说之重光)," in *Liang Shuming's Lectures about Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism* (Guilin: Press of Guang Xi University, 2004), 4-7.

<sup>32</sup> John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006), 154-155,252-253.

anymore. Subsequently, the May Fourth Movement further undermined the dominance of the Confucian ethical code (*li jiao*) over Chinese people. Nevertheless, during the Republican period, the influence of Confucianism over Chinese people still existed in Chinese society. As a Chinese American historian, Yu Ying-shih, observed, to a large extent, the May Fourth Movement was a cultural and intellectual movement that never forced Chinese people to anti-Confucianism. Therefore, Confucianism still played significant roles connected with thoughts, daily life, and society before 1949.<sup>33</sup> When visiting China, John Dewey paid plentiful attention to a close bond between Chinese society and Confucianism. In his lectures in China, Dewey even emphasized that Chinese people should not avoid the influence of Confucianism when learning democratic values from the West.<sup>34</sup> Notably, in both camps of iconoclastic intellectuals and the scholars of New-Confucianism, there were some of John Dewey's Chinese devotees.

In summation, the social, political, and cultural changes in China during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century deeply impacted John Dewey's visit to China. The American professor's visit to China was definitely one of the most important historical episodes of cultural exchanges between China and the West since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a group of modern Chinese intellectuals, John Dewey's Chinese devotees witnessed and participated in a cultural mingling between China and the West. For Chinese intellectuals who wanted to achieve national salvation, the introduction of John Dewey's pragmatism toward China reflected an extension of their pursuit of Western

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<sup>33</sup>Yu Yingshi, *Chinese Nostalgia* (中国情怀) (Hong Kong: Tian Di Tu Shu Press, 2010), 83.

<sup>34</sup>Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 20.

culture from the stage of military technology and political institution, to the stage of the systems of thoughts and ideas. Correspondingly, Chinese scholars' identities were also undergoing a transition from Confucian scholar-apprentices to modern intellectuals, as China was attempting to transfer herself from a dynastic state to a modern nation-state.<sup>35</sup> Keeping a grip on the big picture of relevant historical and cultural context will be necessary to form a strong foundational perspective, which will contribute to illustrating my problem statement and identifying my research question.

### **Problem Statement**

According to the contextual inquiry above, it is fair to assume that the presence of John Dewey's educational philosophy in China was closely connected to modern Chinese intellectuals within the context of cultural exchange between China and the West. As one of Dewey's daughters, Jane Dewey, recalled "...when he was in China, Dewey left feeling affection and admiration not only for the scholars with whom he had been intimately associated [,] but for the Chinese people as a whole. China remained the country nearest his heart after his own."<sup>36</sup> A historian, Thomas Berry, also pointed out that during the May Fourth period, Dewey played a Matteo Ricci-like<sup>37</sup> role in confronting modern Chinese intellectuals, who embraced Western thought as enthusiastically as their ancient counterpart followed Confucianism a few centuries ago.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>He, *One Hundred Years of Misery*, 20-25.

<sup>36</sup>Jane. M. Dewey, "The Biography of John Dewey," in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Lewis Edwin Hahn (Chicago: North-western University Press, 1939), 3-45.

<sup>37</sup>Matteo Ricci(1552-1610), also known as Li Madou (利玛窦), an Italian missionary to China who brought Western mathematical and astronomical knowledge to China, as well as approached to Confucianism by networking with Confucian scholars.

<sup>38</sup>Thomas Berry, "Dewey's Influence in China," in John Blewett, *John Dewey: His Thought and Influence*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1960), 204-225.

The primary study of this dissertation is to focus on the Chinese intellectuals who greatly contributed to Dewey's visit to China. The research is aimed at finding out whether Dewey's Chinese followers engaged in finding the "miraculous medicine" from the West during the early years of the Republic of China for the purpose of achieving national salvation. While approaching and utilizing Dewey's educational philosophy, these students found a way to connect their educational experience from Confucianism with their journey into American pragmatism. The dissertation will rely on in-depth studies of five of Dewey's Chinese disciples to explore the interaction between Dewey and his Chinese disciples.

During the period of the May Fourth Movement/New Cultural Movement, most of American-trained Chinese returnees were dedicated to introducing Western learning to China. As part of the group of returnees, Dewey's Chinese students greatly contributed to reforming Chinese culture and education during the early Republican period. Most of them received education from Columbia University in the United States. They are Hu Shih, Tao Xingzhi, Jiang Menglin, Zhang Boling, Guo Bingwen, Zheng Xiaocang, Li Jianxun, Chen Heqing, and Feng Youlan. The majority of Dewey's Chinese devotees are from this group. In addition, it is worth realizing that some Chinese scholars who did not study with John Dewey also made great efforts to introduce and modify Dewey's educational philosophy, such as Cai Yuanpei, Liang Qichao, Zhang Dongsun, Huang Yanpei, and Liang Shuming.

In order to convey a sense of the intellectual variety of Dewey's Chinese devotees while avoiding the superficiality that would be inherent in any general survey of the ideas for all of them, my case study will mainly focus on Hu Shih (1891-1962),

Tao Xingzhi (1891-1946), and Liang Shuming (1893-1988). At the same time, my dissertation also considers Jiang Menglin (1886-1964) and Guo Bingwen (1880-1969). All of them achieved remarkable accomplishments in the educational and cultural fields during the time of the May Fourth/ New Culture Movement. Hu Shih was one of the key contributors in the cause of Chinese literacy reform. Tao Xingzhi played a leading role in the Chinese rural reconstruction movement. Guo Bingwen became the president of Nanjing Southeastern University. Jiang Menglin was the chief editor of *New Education Journal*. As one of the founders of New Confucianism who never studied abroad, Liang Shuming also dedicated himself to Chinese rural reconstruction.

In varying degree, the five Chinese scholars learned new ideas from Dewey's pragmatic educational thought. However, the ways they absorbed Dewey's educational philosophy were quite different. In the meantime, their views of Confucianism also varied, although all of them had plenty of educational experiences from Confucianism (or Neo-Confucianism). Therefore, I believe that inclusion of these five characters in my project will be conducive to highlight the unity as well as the diversity of Dewey's Chinese devotees.

In analyzing the intellectual developments of Dewey's Chinese devotees, the dissertation will focus on a varying time frame in order to allow for analysis of the development of American pragmatic thought in China. Among the Chinese intellectuals, Hu Shih, Tao Xingzhi, Jiang Menglin, and Guo Bingwen studied Dewey's pragmatic thought when in the U.S during the early and middle parts of the 1910s. In comparison, Liang Shuming became acquainted with the American philosopher's educational idea when Dewey visited China in 1919. A few of the scholars tried to



apply Dewey's pragmatic idea to Chinese reality during the New Culture Movement period (1917-1926). However, both Tao Xingzhi and Liang Shuming started pursuing the movement of rural reconstruction in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Liang's educational experiment in rural areas even lasted to 1937. Therefore, the analysis of the five people in my project will display the evolutionary pathway for Dewey's thought in China during the Republican period. Since this dissertation is not intended to be an amalgam of intellectual biographies, only certain details of these men's lives are needed. My primary attention will be on the connection between the Chinese scholars and Dewey's pragmatic thought, as well as the educational influence Confucianism had on them. An in-depth inquiry of the five devotees will help develop a more complete sense of the cultural and educational encounter between John Dewey and modern China.

### **Significance of the Research**

This dissertation will be conducive to educational studies in cross-cultural contexts. Today, an understanding of the diversity and globalization of education has become a main theme in the realm of education. In the global context, scholars cannot interpret significant educational issues or philosophy in isolation. This dissertation echoes the theme of diversity in education. John Dewey's two-year visit to China created a shared educational experience between America and China. Through a detailed historical and philosophical examination of the American philosopher's visit to China, current scholars can better understand the educational thought of American pragmatism and Confucianism from the perspective of cultural pluralism.

A comparative philosophical inquiry will improve our appreciation of Confucianism and John Dewey's philosophy in a given historical circumstance. These two philosophies had a fascinating encounter during the May Fourth Movement, even though they originally belonged to unrelated systems of thought. Hence, understanding the dialogue between Confucianism and Dewey's philosophy seems to have a deeper undercurrent than helping us understand each other. This study can provide us with a chance to find similarities, while also helping us identify some features embraced by Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism, which are fitting to modern democratic values.

This dissertation contributes to the current study of educational and intellectual history during the early period of the Republic of China. Because of a strong ideological restriction from the party since 1949, a systematic study of Republican China had been forbidden for almost three decades. During the post-Mao period, the party still maintains efforts to restrict the depth and breadth of the study within a controllable range. For instance, the study of the May Fourth /New Culture Movement in China always integrates the movement into the history of the communist revolution. Under a one-party system, the diversity of intellectual and educational dynamics during the movement has been deemphasized by scholars as a result. Accordingly, this dissertation tries to enrich the study of intellectual aspects of Republican China through discussing the encounter between John Dewey and his Chinese devotees.

### **Conceptualization of Specific Terms/Theoretical Frame**

#### **Defining "Confucianism" and "John Dewey"**

Confucianism, as a sophisticated and broad system of philosophical thought, had been experiencing long term dynamic changes for thousands of years. Accordingly, it is

necessary to further clarify the scope of “Confucianism” when referencing my research question. The time of John Dewey’s trip to China in 1919 was only seven years after the collapse of the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Specifically the Confucianism that the imperial government favored was *lixue* (Neo-Confucianism)<sup>39</sup> instead of orthodox Confucianism. The latter was formed during the periods of the Spring and Autumn (770 BC-476 BC) and the Warring States (476 BC-221BC). Nevertheless, there is a strong continuity between original Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism. The school of Neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming period shared fundamental grounds and concerns with the system of original Confucianism.<sup>40</sup> Simultaneously, all of the leading figures of Neo-Confucianism treated Confucius’s thought as the root of their philosophies. In fact, most of the important convictions proposed by the scholars of Neo-Confucianism were discussed in classic Confucian canons during the East Zhou period (770 BC-221BC).<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, to a large extent, Neo-Confucianism aimed to deepen and enrich the important convictions (e.g, *Tian* 天, *Dao* 道, *Ren* 仁, *Xing* 性, *De* 德) that already existed in orthodox Confucian canons. As a result, Neo-Confucian thinkers were looking forward to adjusting orthodox Confucian thoughts to successfully respond to the challenges from Buddhism and Taoism, rather than cut off the family bloodline with

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<sup>39</sup>Historically, “being sage inside and being kingly outside” (*nei sheng wai wang* or 内圣外王) was the centralized embodiment of the Confucian ideal personality. The former emphasized a high perfection of individual inner morality, and the latter paid attention to achievements of harmonizing and strengthening an entire empire. Actually, “being sage inside” and “being kingly outside” respectively became the two different schools of Confucianism since Confucius passed away. However, since the Song period (960-1279), the school of “being sage inside”, gradually dominated Confucianism. Confucian scholars during that period absorbed some elements of Buddhism and Taoism and transferred them into the paradigm of “Neo-Confucianism”. This approach overemphasized moral training and self-cultivation. See more details in Feng, Zhou, and He, *The History of Chinese Culture* (中华文化史), 657-660.

<sup>40</sup> Xu Zhaoyun, *The Development of Chinese Culture* (中国文化发展过程) (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992), 108.

<sup>41</sup> Xu, *The Development of Chinese Culture*, 108.

it.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, in terms of academic pedigree, Neo-Confucianism still belongs to the field of Confucianism. Of note, when elaborating on Confucianism, Neo-Confucians chose to change the way of their scholarly rhetoric through introducing some ideas from Buddhism and Taoism. In short, as a philosophical school, Neo-Confucianism is a product of the reformation of orthodox Confucianism within a changing historical and philosophical circumstance in Chinese history.

In light of this argument, the educational aspects of Neo-Confucianism were still closely relevant to orthodox Confucianism on many occasions. During the late Qing and early Republican era, even though the Western culture was influencing China, Cheng-Zhu's philosophical school and Wang Yangming's School of Mind (*xinxue*) still wielded cultural and intellectual impacts on Chinese society.<sup>43</sup> In particular, the two approaches contributed to the formation of New-Confucianism school in the 1920s. In addition, *Qian Jia Xue Pai* (Confucian school of Evidential Investigation),<sup>44</sup> which was founded during the middle Qing dynasty, continued to carry such enormous weight within the intellectual community since the early part of the Republican era. At the same time, the school of Learning of Practical Use to Society (*jing shi zhi yong*) from orthodox Confucianism also affected a large number of Chinese scholars and officials during that period. Generally speaking, the scope of Confucianism during the transitional stage between the late Qing and early Republican eras consisted of the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid,108

<sup>43</sup> Zhang Zhaojun, *Neo-Confucianism and Classic Learnings between Late Qing and Early Republican Period* (晚清民初的理学与经学) (Beijing: Shang Wu Press, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> A classic school in China from about 1600 to 1850. It was the most prominent during the rule of Qianlong and Jiangjing Emperors of the Qing dynasty. The school mainly focused on investigating the authenticity of Confucian classic books. In addition, studies of textology, exegetics, archeology, and philology also became important fields to the school.

schools of thoughts. All of John Dewey's Chinese disciples grew up during the late period of the Qing dynasty. Therefore they, in varying degrees, received their early education in the atmosphere of Confucian/Neo-Confucian teaching and learning. The importance of the themes from Confucianism (or Neo-Confucianism) and how they shaped the educational experience of John Dewey's Chinese students will be examined.

The term "John Dewey" also needs to be clarified. Like Confucianism, John Dewey's philosophy also had been undergoing a dynamic change during his lifetime. I can divide his works into the early years (1882-1898), middle years (1899-1924), and late years (1925-1953). In a word, the term "John Dewey" in my dissertation is closely connected to Dewey's middle year works and philosophy, which were gradually filtered by modern Chinese educators and scholars. When Dewey's Chinese devotees studied in Columbia University, they had the opportunity to review Dewey's *My Pedagogic Creed*, *The Child and Curriculum*, *The School and Society*, *School of Tomorrow*, *How We think*, and *Democracy and Education*, among others. As *Democracy and Education* synthesized the various aspects of Dewey's educational and democratic thought during his early time, the book won considerable attention from his Chinese followers. In particular, this book had a deep impact upon Dewey's supporters' educational thoughts and practices during the time of May Fourth/New Cultural Movement. The ideas of "the school is society, education is life, and education is growth" were popularized by Dewey's Chinese devotees among Chinese educators.

In addition, during Dewey's two-year stay in China from 1919 to 1921, he made over 200 speeches to spread his version of pragmatism among Chinese citizens. The topics ranged from political theory, the thought of democracy and science, the idea of

ethics, and philosophy of education. All of these speeches were translated by his Chinese students into Chinese. Before Dewey departed at the end of his visiting professorship, the five book editions of his lecture series in China soon appeared in major Chinese cities.<sup>45</sup> John Dewey's lectures in Chinese translation greatly prompted the expansion of his educational philosophy in China.

### **Theoretical Frame**

Considering John Dewey's visit to China occurred under the circumstance of a cultural exchange between China and the West during the era of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, my study regards a cultural dialogue between the educational thoughts of China (Confucianism) and the West (John Dewey) as a central theme that runs through each section of the dissertation. Jane Roland Martin's educational theory of *encounter*<sup>46</sup> will provide a valuable theoretical framework for analyzing the cross-cultural educational and philosophical dynamics that took place between Dewey and his Chinese devotees. Likewise, her theory is also helpful to delineate the development of the intellectual track of Dewey's Chinese devotees from their Chinese educational experiences to Dewey's pragmatic educational thought.

In *Education Reconfigured: Culture, Encounter, and Change*, Martin described a strong linkage between culture and education.<sup>47</sup> As she states:

It has often been observed that culture and education are closely connected, but the assumption that the individual person is the fundamental educational unit has seldom been changed. Putting culture on an equal footing with the individual, the theory of education as encounter represents education as an interaction

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<sup>45</sup>Sun Jiayang, "John Dewey's Visit to China and the Development of Modern Chinese Politics," In *John Dewey's Lectures in China: Democracy and Modern Society*. ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiayang, and Ren Bingqiang (Beijing: Beijing University Press), 2.

<sup>46</sup>Jane Roland Martin, *Education Reconfigured: Culture, Encounter, and Change* (London: Routledge Publisher, 2011), 7-25,

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 22, 37, 45.

between an individual and a culture in which both parties change. In the one instance, the change is what is commonly called individual learning, in the other, the change goes by the name of cultural transmission.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, the book develops that Martin's concept of education reconfigured as "encounter" and as a "maker of individuals and cultures."<sup>49</sup> According to her:

Education only occurs if there is an encounter between an individual and a culture in which one or more of the individual's capacities and one or more items of a culture's stock become yoked together; or, if they do not in fact become yoked together, it is intended that they do.<sup>50</sup>

In short, Martin attempts to combine individuals and cultural perspectives together to discover the meaning of education. In particular, cultural transmission plays a crucial role in realizing the educational encounter. Accordingly, it is worth stressing that an educational encounter in Martin's perspective would have a long term cross-cultural influence on the shaping of identity, attitudes, dispositions, and character traits of the individual.

Following Martin's theory, my study will treat each of John Dewey's Chinese devotees as one basic educational unit, that is, individual capacities. Among the five scholars, individual educational thought and practice will be the focus of this dissertation. In fact, during the May Fourth period, for these "individual capacities," a cultural transmission thoroughly occurred between their Confucian/Neo-Confucian educational experiences and Western learnings.

The clarification of cultural stocks is dependent upon the definition of the terms "Confucianism" and "John Dewey." Alongside the definition of "Confucianism," cultural stocks of Confucianism from my research mainly include classic canons,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.3

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.17.

observances and practices of rites, moral cultivation, development of the idea of traditional statecraft, and the method of academic training. All of these composed the substance of Dewey's Chinese devotees' classic education. On the other hand, the cultural stocks from John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy are based on his thoughts of democracy and education. As discussed above, most of the ideas were derived from the works of Dewey's middle years (1899-1924). Furthermore, Dewey's speeches and writings from his two-year sojourn to China also contributed to the items of cultural stocks.

In view of the definitions above, I wish to borrow the concepts of "cultural stock" and "individual capacities" from Martin's theory to examine a philosophical encounter between Dewey's philosophical pragmatism and the elements of practicality in Confucianism during the era of the May Fourth/New Culture Movement. More to the point, in Martin's view, any cultural stock contains not just the culture's wealth or assets but also what may be considered its liabilities.<sup>51</sup> Correspondingly, Martin believes that the purpose of education is to minimize cultural liabilities and maximize cultural assets.<sup>52</sup> To achieve such an educational goal, the educational philosopher establishes a cultural bookkeeping system to keep track of the culture's wealth and liabilities.<sup>53</sup> In her discussion, Martin assigned a crucial task for her cultural bookkeeping system:

It goes without saying that a satisfactory cultural bookkeeping system presupposes a vast amount of research. The "Cultural-wealth research project" I envision would seek first of all to identify the culture's educational agents and

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<sup>51</sup> Jane Roland Martin, *Cultural Miseducation: In Search of a Democratic Solution* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 3,11,14, 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-136.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.



its stock. Assets and liabilities would then have to be distinguished and an inventory of each agent's stock taken.<sup>54</sup>

While delineating the scope of the mission of cultural bookkeeping, Martin's educational theory further emphasizes the importance of the system in human education. As she said:

Every culture needs a bookkeeping system that provides an overview of its stock-its assets and liabilities, the custodians, the methods and processes they use to yoke the stock of human capacities, the designated and the actual beneficiaries of the stock, and so on.<sup>55</sup>

Following the notion of cultural bookkeeping, this study will analyze during the process of educational encounter, how Dewey's Chinese followers attempted to preserve the cultural assets from the Confucian tradition while eliminating cultural liabilities. At the same time, how they were looking to adopt the cultural assets available in the Western knowledge (in particular John Dewey's thought) while wishing to avoid yoking any of the cultural liabilities of the West.

In addition, Martin's educational theory of *encounter* indicates another important implication of this dissertation. That is, education is much larger than school. Martin points out the items of cultural stock should go well beyond the range of certain educational institutes and curriculum.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the cultural stocks in education can take a diversity of forms, which are also in "the keep of churches, museums, libraries, synagogues, mosques, business, banks, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, the military, publishing companies, advertising agencies, television networks, internet website, and so on."<sup>57</sup> More importantly, she implies the meaning of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.,10.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

cultural stock can be extended to emotions, beliefs, morals, attitudes, images, ideas, behaviors, societal norms, and manners of thinking, etc.<sup>58</sup>

In compatibility with these comments of cultural stocks, Martin conceives “education” very broadly to embrace all items of cultural stocks in human society. Her theory of education places all forms of learning experienced by the individual regardless of location or educational agent on equal footing. Therefore, encounters between the individual and culture in Martin’s thought are expected to occur in the context of all-encompassing education. As a result, a whole-person’s metamorphosis becomes one of the most important goals in Martin’s educational theory.<sup>59</sup>

Coincidentally, both Confucian and Deweyan education resonate with Martin. The ultimate goal of Confucian education is the perfection of the Confucian scholar-apprentice in an ethical sense. Through studying classic canons and practicing ceremonial rites, the scholar-apprentice is expected to internalize the moral values of Confucianism, then become an exemplar person (*jun zi*). The implementation of moral education in orthodox Confucianism is not limited in classic schools and curriculums. On the contrary, moral education encompasses all aspects of the life of the scholar-apprentice. For example, *The Great Learning*, one of the Four Books which constitute the Confucian canons, describes the pathway for Confucian students to achieve an ideal educational end. According to the classic book:

The Ancients, who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue under the heaven, they first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 139-160.

<sup>59</sup> Jane Roland Martin, *Educational Metamorphoses: Philosophical Reflections on Identity and Culture* (New York, Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.<sup>60</sup>

In brief, the famous text exhibits that Confucian education permeates from the individual, the family, and the state, to all lands under the heaven. As a result, the acquisition of knowledge by the Confucian student must take place in a broad scope, in that original Confucian education aims to transform the scholar-apprentice' life from a perfect moral gentleman to a committed and capable statesman who can bring harmony to the empire. In other words, the coupling of all items of cultural assets from Confucianism and the individual capacity of one student can lead to a holistic metamorphosis.

Chinese education in the atmosphere of Neo-Confucianism also echoes the aspect of broad education from Martin's educational theory. For example, Wang Yangming's School of Mind, as one of the most important approaches in New-Confucian education, emphasizes that the importance of a unity of the acquisition of moral knowledge and social practice. From Wang's perspective, a Confucian student's moral cultivation should be based on all living things from his daily life instead of learning classic curriculum and reading classic texts.<sup>61</sup> In short, Chinese education in the contexts of both orthodox Confucian and Neo-Confucian philosophy illuminates an interaction of individual learning and cultural transmission during an educational process.

If someone review John Dewey's works, he or she also can find a shared common ground between the educational philosophies of Dewey and Martin. In fact,

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<sup>60</sup>Confucius, *Great Learning* (大学), trans. James Legg. doi: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/confucius/c748g/>

<sup>61</sup>Feng, Zhou, and He, *The History of Chinese Culture* (中华文化史), 783, 784, 785.

Dewey believed that educational philosophy could not be separated from culture. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey offered his argument of the intimate connection between culture and education. He stressed that the making of a good democratic society demands a communicational pathway to pass on the cultural assets to younger generations.<sup>62</sup> In Dewey's discourse, this cultural transmission takes place through "communication," which comes through the diverse arrays of social practices between children and adults. In *Freedom and Culture*, Dewey further argued that human culture was a mixed product of politics, economy, morality, law, religion, and arts.<sup>63</sup> Evidently, Dewey mingled his educational thinking with a variety of cultural practices.

For both Dewey and Confucius, social discourse was believed to play a crucial role in their understandings of a broad "cultural" education. The latter demonstrated that the significance of all rituals in secular life in the way one treats family, friends, teachers, and officers. Through getting involved in social activities, Confucian scholars eventually developed some of the key moral educational concepts in Confucianism into cultural norms. In correspondence with Confucianism, education in Dewey's writing was defined by these social interactions based on transmission of culture. As the American philosopher states:

Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. The transmission occurs by means of ideal, hopes, expectations, standards, and opinions from those members of society who are passing out of the group to those who are coming into it. Without this, social life could not survive.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol.9 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 4-14.

<sup>63</sup>John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (New York, Prometheus Books, 1989).

<sup>64</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 6.

Accordingly, Dewey was not inclined to portray education only as a strictly intellectual affair whose ultimate purpose is to learn the subject matter and material. Dewey's idea about teaching the whole person meant teaching not just the mind, but also the body and the spirit. Consequently, similar to encounter in Martin's theory, the acquisition of experience by the student should extend from classroom and school to all aspects of a society.

In sum, Martin's educational theory proposes a strong link between education and culture. Through extending the scope of cultural stock, education from Martin's view is an all-encompassing concept. Both Confucianism (Neo-Confucianism) and John Dewey's pragmatic educational philosophy also accentuates an interaction between the individual and culture during a long-term educational process. Moreover, for both schools, the purpose of learning is to develop a well-rounded person through cultural acquisition. Both believe the process of learning is intimately tied with education in a broad sense. In particular, for modern Chinese intellectuals, a cross-cultural dialogue between China and the West became a main theme during the May Fourth period. In light of my understandings above, the utilization of Martin's educational theory as encounter is very applicable to this dissertation.

### **Identifying Research Question**

According to the problem statement and discussion of theoretical frame, I can explicitly formulate the main research question: What motivated John Dewey's Chinese disciples to introduce his educational thought within the context of the May Fourth/New Culture period? Answering this question will depend on investigating the four relevant sub questions: What did the Chinese disciples learn from John Dewey? What did they

learn from Confucian legacy? How did they traverse between the thoughts of John Dewey and Confucianism, or combine them to pursue the goal of national salvation? How did they apply Dewey's pragmatism to Chinese societal and educational reality?

By answering these questions, the dissertation expects to explore the more central issue of how Dewey's Chinese students find a philosophical motivation from both their classic and Western learning in order to entertain Dewey's educational thought. In other words, how American Chinese followers attempted to find a philosophical bridge between their educational experiences from Confucianism (or Neo-Confucianism) and imported pragmatism when reforming Chinese education and society will be explored. It is necessary to realize this study is not inclined to analyze both Confucianism and Dewey's pragmatism in a general sense. Conversely, the key to this dissertation is to explore how specific parts from both philosophical approaches interacted through individually studying certain Chinese scholars. This study engages in discovering the integrity and the multiplicity of the Chinese scholars' synthesis of Confucianism (Neo-Confucianism) and Dewey's thought. Simultaneously, my study seeks to find out how and to what extent Dewey's thought affected his Chinese devotees' ideas of democracy, education, and creating modern citizenship.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section expects to promote readers' understanding of scholars' works related to John Dewey's visit to China. In accordance with an analysis of certain achievements and limitations of these works, I can demonstrate the originality and contribution of my project. After comparing and synthesizing important works regarding Dewey's visit to China, three categories emerged. The first category regards Dewey's visit to China as an influential event in Chinese history. The researchers using this framework focused on Dewey's activities in China, as well as the discussions of the American philosopher's influence upon modern Chinese education and culture.<sup>65</sup> Most of them successfully delineated the limitations and achievements of Dewey's influence on China.

Within this group, Barry Keenan's *The Dewey Experiment in China: Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* is the most pertinent book to my dissertation, as it is a pioneering historical study of Dewey's visit in China.

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<sup>65</sup>Timothy J Bergen, "John Dewey's Influence in China," *Proceedings of the Thirty-third Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Philosophy of Education Society* 33 (1983): 72-84; Thomas Berry, "Dewey's Influence in China," in John Blewett, *John Dewey: His Thought and Influence*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1960), 204-225; Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Fairbank, John King, *The Great Chinese Revolution: 1800-1985* (New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1986); Gao Qi, *History of Modern Chinese Education* (中国现代教育史) (Shanghai: Press of Beijing Normal University, 1985); Berry Keenan. *The Dewey Experiment: Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1977); S. Alexander Rippa, *Education in a Free Society: An American History* (New York: Longman, Inc.1997); Nancy. F. Sizer, "John Dewey's Idea in China: 1919 to 1921," *Comparative Education Review* 10, no.3 (1966):390-403; Su Zhixin, "A Critical Evaluation of John Dewey's Influence on Chinese education," in *American Journal Education*, 103.no. 1 (1995), 302-325; Sun Yongzhou. "John Dewey in China: Yesterday and today," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 35.no.1 (Winter 1999): 69-88; Shan Zhongxin, ed. *Biography of John Dewey* (Anhui, China: Anhui Province Education Press.2009); Yuan Weishi. *History of Chinese philosophy* (中国哲学史) (Guangzhou: Zhong Shan University Press, 1987); Yuan Qing, *John Dewey and China* (杜威和中国) (Beijing, People Press, 2001); Zhang Qing, "Pragmatism and the Enlightenment in Modern China (实用主义哲学与近代中国启蒙运动)," *Journal of Fudan University* 5 (1988), <http://www.fudan.edu.cn/wkxb/list.htm>.

Keenan's book analyzed the influence of Dewey's pragmatism in modern Chinese education, while simultaneously analyzing a series of mismatches between Dewey's educational thought and the Chinese societal and political realities during the early period of the Republic of China.<sup>66</sup> According to Keenan, "The greatest difficulty John Dewey's followers had in China was with something he spoke very little about—power. Deweyan experimentalism, as a way of thinking, as a way of acting politically, and as a component of democratic education, offered no strategy his followers could use to affect political power."<sup>67</sup> Undoubtedly, the way that Keenan depended on individual studies of certain Chinese scholars (Hu Shih, Guo Bingwen, Jiang Menglin, and Tao Xingzhi) to examine Dewey's experience in modern China is very valuable to my study. However, Keenan's analysis of Dewey's influence on Chinese education was mostly limited to the realm of educational administration. For instance, his work concentrated on how the change of Chinese politics during the early Republican period shaped Chinese educational leadership. Keenan's writing seems to pay little attention to the intellectual connection between Dewey and his Chinese disciples. In other words, when detailing Dewey's contribution to Chinese educational reformation during the early Republican period, his book avoided exploring intellectual and philosophical motivations behind the Chinese scholars' acceptance of American pragmatism.

Equally significant is Yuan Qing's *John Dewey and China*. In this book, Yuan explicated Dewey's life and lectures in China and the aftermath of the American educator's visit, arguing for the depth of his influence on Chinese intellectual and educational fields during the May Fourth period. Another valuable aspect of the work

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<sup>66</sup>Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China*, 161.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 161.



discusses the compatibility of Dewey's philosophy with Chinese scholars' cultural psychology that stemmed from traditional Confucianism.<sup>68</sup> Yet his work provided no in-depth discussion of the issue.

In contrast with the previous category, the second approach adopted by the scholars identifies the implications of Dewey's sojourn to China from the perspective of cultural exchange between Dewey and China. Generally speaking, the scholars of this group highlight the significance of cultural diversity by exploring an intercultural dialogue between Dewey and modern China.<sup>69</sup> In this category, two of the most substantive studies are Jessica Ching-Sze Wang's *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn* and Wang Yanli's *Approach to Dialogue: John Dewey and Chinese Education*.

In view of the conviction that "the encounter between Dewey and China in the 1920's was characterized by ambivalence, uncertainties, and changes on both sides,"<sup>70</sup> the first book aims to pursue an intercultural understanding between John Dewey and China. In the book, Wang reconsiders the implication of Dewey's visit to China through discovering a mutual influence between Dewey and China. The most important finding is the multiplicity of roles that Dewey played during his two-year stay in China: the

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<sup>68</sup> Yuan, *John Dewey and China*, 130.

<sup>69</sup> Gary Bullet, *The Politics of John Dewey* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books Press, 1983); Mei Hoyt, "John Dewey's Legacy to China and The Problem in Chinese Society," *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* 3.no.1 (2006): 13-25; Wang Rui, "John Dewey's Influence on Chinese Education" (Doctoral Dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1993); Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2007; Wang Yanli, *Approach to a Dialogue: John Dewey and Chinese Education* (走向对话: 杜威与中国教育) (Beijing: Education and Science Press, 2008); Xu Guoqing. *Chinese and Americans: A Shared History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Yang Dongping, *Chinese Education of the Twentieth Century* (艰难的日出: 中国现代教育的二十世纪) (Shanghai: Wenhui Publishing House, 2003); Yu Xiaoming, "The Encounter between John Dewey and the Modern Chinese Intellectuals: The Case of the 1922 Education Reform" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1991).

<sup>70</sup> Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 8.

teacher and the student. This work discloses that when modern Chinese scholars and educators learned new ideas from John Dewey's visit, they also contributed to the development of John Dewey's own intellectual thought and worldview.

However, in discussing the connection between John Dewey and May Fourth China, Wang seems to neglect clarifying the main intellectual schools existing during the period. Her writing showed a tendency to oversimplify the intellectual dynamics of the May Fourth time period. For instance, the book did not clearly define what part of Confucianism they targeted while arguing the standpoint of anti-traditionalism held by Chinese iconoclasts.<sup>71</sup> In another instance, when it comes to Liang Shuming's idea of Confucianism, the influence of Neo-Confucianism on Liang's understanding of Dewey's thought was not argued.<sup>72</sup> Even though the author realized the co-existence of Confucianism and Western thought during the May Fourth era, she paid insufficient attention to how Dewey's Chinese devotees build an intellectual connection between both parties.<sup>73</sup>

Similar to Jessica Wang's work, Wang Yanli's *Approach to Dialogue: John Dewey and Chinese Education* tried to put Dewey's visit in the setting of an equal dialogue between Dewey and Chinese history, which extended from the May Fourth era to the periods of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. In the conclusion, Wang Yanli wisely points out, "...the reason that John Dewey's idea deeply influenced modern Chinese educational thought during the May Fourth Period was because his educational thought fundamentally challenged the method of thinking of traditional Chinese

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, ch.1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 53-61.

<sup>73</sup> Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn*, ch.1, ch.2, ch.3.

education...”<sup>74</sup>According to the author, skepticism and the scientifically logical system embraced by Dewey’s educational thought opened a new world for modern Chinese intellectuals...Dewey’s educational idea was completely different from traditional Chinese education.<sup>75</sup>

Fairly speaking, traditional Chinese education since the late Qing period was still based on an intensive study of Confucian classic canons, which also centered on the content of classic civil service examination. However, as discussed earlier, Confucian style education was not limited to the range of school and curriculum. Conversely, this style of education is an all-encompassing educational concept. In light of the complexity of traditional Chinese education, an identification of which specific Confucian theme the author tried to target would be necessary. Due to the absence of a clear definition of traditional Chinese education in the book, Wang Yanli’s finding of Dewey’s influence on modern Chinese education is ambiguous. Furthermore, Wang Yangli’s discussion obviously indicated a dichotomy between traditional Chinese education and Dewey’s educational idea. As a result, in his writing the role of Confucian educational experience within Dewey Chinese devotees’ way to American pragmatism is not clear.

Another relevant writing in this category is from Xu Guoqi’s *Chinese and Americans: A Shared History*. In the book, Xu treats Dewey’s visit to China as one of the most significant parts of a shared history held by both China and America.<sup>76</sup> The author points out that when Chinese scholars learned new values and ideas from Dewey,

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<sup>74</sup> Wang, *Approach to a Dialogue*,166.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>76</sup> Xu, *Chinese and Americans*, 204-231.

<sup>77</sup> the American educator also transmitted the new ideas acquired from his Chinese sojourn to the American people.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Xu also mentions the point that “the most important and fundamental claim Dewey brought to China resonated deeply with Confucian value—“education is life and life is education.”<sup>79</sup> Because no explicit argument of this issue appears in his writing, my dissertation will deepen this argument.

The third approach utilized by the scholars is to examine the implication of Dewey’s visit to China from the perspective of intellectual history. In this category, works by some scholars expected to find an intellectual link between some influential modern Chinese intellectuals and John Dewey. These are works which, in varying degrees, focus on Dewey’s Chinese devotees as a specific group in the context of the May Fourth Movement.<sup>80</sup> In “The Encounter between John Dewey and the Modern Chinese Intellectuals: The Case of the 1922 Education Reform,” Yu Xiaoming concentrated on the interaction between Dewey and Chinese educational reformers in the 1920s by analyzing the role of Dewey’s educational thought in Chinese education reform.<sup>81</sup> Even though the author mentioned a shared ground between the educational thoughts of John Dewey and Confucius, his argument did not provide a detailed

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 214-219.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 226-231.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 228.

<sup>80</sup> Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Li Yun-shin, “John Dewey and Modern Chinese Education: Prospectus for a New Philosophy” (Doctoral dissertation. The Ohio State University, 2000); Lin Yusheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-Traditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); Wang Ying. *John Dewey’s School and Chinese Education* (杜威教育学派与中国教育)(Beijing: Beijing Institute of Technology Press, 2000); Xie Changfa. *The Study of Educational Activities of American-Trained Chinese Students before the Second Sino-Japanese War* (Shi Jiazhuang: Hebei Educational Press, 2001); Kuang Qizhang, “Pragmatism in China: The Deweyan Influence” (Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 1994); Zhang Hua jun, *John Dewey, Liang Shuming, and China’s Education Reform* (New York: Lexington Books Press, 2013).

<sup>81</sup> Yu, “The Encounter between John Dewey and the Modern Chinese Intellectuals,” 34-170.

explanation regarding how Confucianism affected Dewey's Chinese students when confronting Dewey's thought.<sup>82</sup>

In addition, Li Yun-shin's "John Dewey and Modern Chinese Education: Prospectus for a New Philosophy" aims to examine and evaluate the influence of John Dewey on the May Fourth generation. By studying some historical figures, including Hu Shih, Tao Xingzhi, Bertrand Russell, Mao Zedong, and Sun Yat-sen, his dissertation attempts to identify a philosophical dialogue occurring between Dewey and the diversity of Chinese intellectual thought.<sup>83</sup> When stating the reason why some Chinese scholars engaged in introducing Dewey's philosophy, Li states that the intellectual ferment experienced by the Chinese scholars was greatly shaped by Western learning (in particular, John Dewey's influence) and Chinese social-political reality. Simply speaking, Li's writing did not acknowledge Chinese scholars' educational experience from Confucian classic education and how it contributed to their intellectual development.

Among these works from the category, Wang Yin's *Chinese Education and the School of John Dewey* is the most recent book, which focuses on an intellectual linkage between John Dewey and his Chinese followers.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, his study of the intellectual development of these scholars is centered on the inquiry of modern aspects of the educational journey of Dewey's Chinese devotees. Conversely, traditional aspects of their educational experience were dismissed in the book. That is to say, the author regarded these Chinese scholars' acceptance of Dewey's pragmatism only as the result

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Li, "John Dewey and Modern Chinese Education: Prospectus for a New Philosophy," 81-184.

<sup>84</sup> Wang, *John Dewey's School and Chinese Education*, ch.1, ch.2, ch.3.

of the American philosopher's tremendous influence.

Besides, there are other works closely related to the studies of individual scholars that focus on Hu Shih, who became the most influential spokesman for Dewey in the Republican period.<sup>85</sup> As the first to write a comprehensive biography of Hu Shih, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*, Jerome Grieder carefully traced Hu's intellectual life through its various stages, and it placed him in an influential historical and social context. Some parts of Grieder's work indicated that Hu Shih's educational experience from Neo-Confucianism during his childhood already formed the foundation on which the structure of his thought was based.<sup>86</sup> In particular, the book pointed out the conviction that traditional skepticism of the school became one of the important linkages to approach Dewey's pragmatism.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, Grieder emphasizes that Hu Shih received insights from Dewey that contributed greatly to his intellectual development.<sup>88</sup> However, in reviewing Grieder's writing, it is not clear that how Hu Shih made a philosophical bridge between Neo-Confucianism and Dewey's thought in detail.

The three Chinese American historians, Chou Ming-chih, Tong Te-kong, and

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<sup>85</sup> Chou Ming-chi, *Hu Shih and Intellectual Choice in Modern China* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1984); Jerome B Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937* (Cambridge, Harvard University, 1970); Jiang Zhengyong, *The Story of Hu Shih* (胡适:璞玉成璧) (Beijing, Xin Xing Press, 2011); Li Ao, *The Biography of Hu Shih* (胡适评传) (Taipei: Wen Xing Press, 1964); Li Lingling and Wang, Xinan, *To View Hu Shih from His Diary* (日记中的胡适) (Xi' An: Shan Xi People Press, 2007); Shao Jian, *Early Life of Hu Shih* (胡适的前半生) (Guiling: Press of Guang Xi Normal University, 2007); Oei Lee-Tjiek, "Hu Shih's Philosophy of Man as Influenced by John Dewey's Instrumentalism" (Doctoral dissertation, Fordham University, 1974); Tong Te-kong, *Miscellaneous Recollection of Hu Shih* (胡适杂忆) (Taipei: Biographic Literature Publishing House, 1979); Yang Chen-te, "Hu Shih, Pragmatism, and the Chinese Tradition" (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Wisconsin, 1993); Yu Ying-shih, *Hu Shih in Retrospect: Rethinking of Hu Shih's Life and Thinking* (重寻胡适的历程) (Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian Press, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*, 19, 31, 50.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

Yu Yin-Shih, all made remarkable achievements in the study of Hu Shih. Chou's *Hu Shih and Intellectual Choice in Modern China* aimed to examine Hu Shih's life story through discovering subconscious conflicts that derived from a cultural gap between Chinese and Western civilizations. Similar to Grieder, Chou's writing also described his acquisition of certain parts of Neo-Confucianism during the formative stage of his lifetime.<sup>89</sup> His discussion showed how the atheistic aspect of the philosophical approach affected Hu Shih's worldview.<sup>90</sup> In *Memories of Hu Shih*, Tong Te-kong asserted that in essence Hu Shih was a true Chinese Confucian scholar apprentice, who was influenced by American education.<sup>91</sup> Yu Ying-shih's *Rethinking of Hu Shih's Life and Thinking* recognized a connection between the school of Confucian Evidential Learning and John Dewey's pragmatism in Hu Shih's intellectual world.<sup>92</sup> The findings from these three scholars offered very important clues to this study. However, the main focus of their works were not located in the investigation of how Hu Shih vacillated between his Confucian educational experience and Dewey's pragmatism. Therefore, their arguments still left some spaces to be developed.

The latest monographic study aimed at Hu Shih is Jiang Zhengyong's *The Story of Hu Shih*. According to Jiang, American schooling built a solid foundation on which Hu Shih developed his intellectual thought during his lifetime.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, Jiang simultaneously asserted that Hu Shih was the "product" of traditional Chinese culture.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, Jiang did not examine how Chinese traditional culture influenced Hu

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<sup>89</sup>Chou, *Hu Shih and Intellectual Choice in Modern China*, ch.1.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>91</sup>Hu Shih, *An Autobiography: As Told by Hu Shih* (胡适口述自传). ed and trans. To Tekong (Teipei, Yuan Liu Press, 2010), 123.

<sup>92</sup>Yu, *Hu Shih in Retrospect*, 192-209.

<sup>93</sup>Jiang, *The Story of Hu Shih*, 297,343.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 137,147.

Shih's intellectual evolution. Therefore, in Jiang's book, Hu Shih's educational experiences depicted by Jiang as influenced by the two sides seem to be separated from each other.

After Hu Shih, Tao Xingzhi also won considerable attention from scholars.<sup>95</sup> Philip Kuhn's "Tao Hsing-chih, 1891-1946: An Educational Reformer" characterized Tao as a progressive educational reformer who applied Dewey's philosophy of education to educational and social reform in the Chinese reality.<sup>96</sup> In "American Progressivism in Chinese Education: The Case of Tao Xingzhi," Hubert Brown also explored the role of Tao Xingzhi as an educational reformer during the Republican era. However, they displayed different perspectives of Dewey's influence on Tao Xingzhi.<sup>97</sup> Whereas Kuhn claimed that Dewey's pragmatism played an influential role in Tao and in the field of philosophy and education, Brown stated that the American philosopher did not wield as much influence on Tao as Kuhn thought.<sup>98</sup> This divergence between both scholars will be further explored in my dissertation. Additionally, even though both argued the connection between Neo-Confucianism and Tao's educational thought, the two researchers did not completely expound upon the issue.

In addition to the several articles mentioned above, a few books also bring some new insights to my research. For example, *A Confucius after Confucius: Life Story of*

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<sup>95</sup> Hubert Brown. "American Progressivism in Chinese Education: The Case of Tao Xingzhi," in *China's Education and the International World: Studies in Cultural Transfer*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe and Mariannne Bastid (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1987); Cao Changren, *Modern Value of Tao Xingzhi's Thought of Teaching Education* (陶行知师范教育思想的现代价值) (Hefei: Anhui Educational Press, 2011); He Rongxin, *A Rediscovery of Tao Xingzhi's Christianity* (Hefei: Anhui Educational Press, 2011); Philip Kuhn, "Tao Hsing-chih, 1891-1946: An Educational Reformer," in *Papers on China*, vol.13 (Cambridge, Harvard University, 1959); Zhang Kaiyuan and Tang Wenquan, *Confucius after Confucius: Life Story of Tao Xingzhi* (平凡的神圣) (Wuhan: Hubei Educational Press, 1992).

<sup>96</sup> Kuhn, "Tao Hsing-chih, 1891-1946: An Educational Reformer," 163-195.

<sup>97</sup> Brown, "American Progressivism in Chinese Education," 120-138.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-130



*Tao Xingzhi* (陶行知:平凡的神圣) by Zhang Kaiyuan and Tang Wenquan, proposed an idea that Tao's educational thought was intertwined in the Neo-Confucian Cheng-Zhu school, the Neo-Confucian School of Mind of Wang Yangming, and John Dewey's pragmatism.<sup>99</sup> In their discussions, Tao Xingzhi tried to reform both John Dewey's educational theory and Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucian philosophy in order to contribute to his rural educational movement.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, the issue of how Tao Xingzhi made a philosophical connection between both schools of thought need to be further explored.

Moreover, another book about Tao Xingzhi worth mentioning here is Cao Changren's *Modern Value of Tao Xingzhi's Thought of Teaching Education*. Like Zhang and Tang, Cao also believed that cultural stocks from both Confucianism and Western learning shaped Tao Xingzhi's educational thought. In contrast to researchers only paying attention to the influence of Neo-Confucianism on Tao Xingzhi, Cao perceived that orthodox Confucianism also had a deep impact on Tao's educational thought.<sup>101</sup> Yet without a clear definition of relevant aspects of Confucianism, the author's findings were conveyed in a very general sense.

Compared to Hu Shih and Tao Xingzhi, the remaining three characters (Liang Shuming, Guo Bingwen, and Jiang Menglin) have not earned tremendous attention from scholars. However, I still can find some studies of them.<sup>102</sup> Guy S. Alitto's *The*

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<sup>99</sup> Zhang and Tang, *A Confucius after Confucius*, 54-83.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Cao, *Modern Value of Tao Xingzhi's Thought of Teaching Education*, 29-30.

<sup>102</sup> Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979); Geng Youquan, ed. *A Study of Guo Bingwen's Educational Thought* (Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 2014); Liang Peishu, *The Last Confucian Master in China: My Father Liang Shuming* (Nanjing, Jiang Su Wen Yi Press, 2012); Ma Dongyu, *Biography of Liang Shuming* (Beijing: Dongfang Press, 1992); Ma Yong, *the Study of Jiang Menglin's Educational*

*Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* has been the most influential intellectual biography of Liang Shu-ming. In the book, Alitto detailed the development of Liang's intellectual thought and his social practices, specifically analyzing the interaction between Liang and a changing Chinese society and culture. The most important contribution from the book for my dissertation is to find out how and why Liang became one of the founder of New-Confucian school within a cross-cultural atmosphere.<sup>103</sup> Notably, the book mentioned Liang's reaction to Western culture, including Dewey's philosophy. When analyzing Liang's relationship with Western culture, the focal point for Alitto is to argue the last Confucian's linkage to a worldwide conservative response<sup>104</sup> rather than his idea of any specific Western thinking. The author did not describe in detail the movement of rural reconstruction and how Liang tried to interpret and transfer Dewey's educational idea.

As one of the latest Chinese works of studying Liang Shuming, Ma Dongyu's *Biography of Liang Shuming* aims to study Liang's life story from the perspective of New-Confucianism. In his analysis of Liang's rural reconstruction, the author points out Liang's reformation owed debt to Dewey's educational thought. However, this idea is not explored further.<sup>105</sup> Another book worth mentioning is Liang Peishu's *The Last Confucian Master in China: My Father Liang Shuming* (2012). As one of the sons of Liang Shuming, Liang Peishu's book provided researchers with some valuable

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*Thought* (蒋梦麟教育思想研究) (Shengyan, Liaoning Educational Press, 1997); Ma Yong, *Biography of Jiang Menglin: A Man Pursuing in the Western Tides* (蒋梦麟传: 赶潮的人) (Beijing: Dongfang Press, 2015); Wang Yuefang, *A Comparative Study between Cai Yuanpei and Guo Bingwen* (蔡元培郭秉文比较研究). (Nanjing, China: Press of Dongnan University, 2004); Wu Hongcheng, *A Study of Liang Shuming as an Educator* (教育家梁漱溟研究) (Jinan: Shandong People Press, 2016).

<sup>103</sup> Alitto, *The Last Confucian*, ch.3, ch.4.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ma, *Biography of Liang Shuming*, ch.5.

interpretations of Liang Shuming's rural reconstruction. This work, however, did not pay attention to the ways in which Dewey's philosophy influenced Liang Shuming's educational thought.<sup>106</sup>

Ma Yong's *the Study of Jiang Menglin's Educational Thought* and Wang Yuefeng's *a Comparative Study between Cai Yuanpei and Guo Bingwen* are valuable contributions to my dissertation. The former one clearly described Jiang's educational thought and practices. The latter compares the educational thought of Cai Yuanpei and Guo Bingwen. In addition, based on *the Study of Jiang Menglin's Educational Thought*, Ma Yong recently published *The Biography of Jiang Menglin*, which mainly focuses on the development of Jiang's educational thought and the sequence of events during his lifetime. In this book, the most important clue provided by Ma is how Jiang tried to mingle traditional Chinese culture (in particular Confucianism) with Western culture.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, all of Ma's studies above neglected the connection between the idea of Jiang Menglin's dissertation and his educational thought and practice.

Overall, the three approaches above are interrelated and complementary. While contributing to my investigation, most tend to neglect or downplay a significant point. That is to say, those studies do not acknowledge how Dewey's Chinese devotees traversed between their Confucian education and American pragmatism. Some of the researchers tend to ascribe modern Chinese intellectuals' dedication to Dewey's pragmatism and the influence of Western learning or American education. Additionally, Dewey's Chinese followers' educational experiences from Confucian learning during their formative stages have not been paid sufficient attention in the researchers'

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<sup>106</sup>Liang, *The Last Confucian Master in China*, 132-184.

<sup>107</sup> Ma, *Biography of Jiang Menglin*, 91-144.

writings. Obviously, from the perspectives of these scholars, there was a discontinuity between the experiences of Chinese education and American education. Yet even though some scholars discussed the educational experience of Dewey's devotees from Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism, they only slightly touched on the issue of what the role of this kind of educational experience plays in their acceptances of Dewey's philosophy. Moreover, a few of the scholars pointed out that some Chinese scholars' approach to pragmatism was based on the foundation of their classic (mostly Confucian) learning. Nevertheless, this important conviction has not been fully developed in the literature.

Therefore, the primary contribution of this dissertation to the scholarship is an attempt to fill the void left by those studies of the three approaches. In other words, compared to the works above, my study is inclined to treat the Chinese scholars' educational experiences from both Chinese and Western learnings in inseparability, then deeply investigate intellectual communications between the two sides. This approach lays a solid foundation for deep inquiry into Dewey's visit to China. Furthermore, when arguing to what extent Dewey's pragmatism affected his Chinese students, there was a divergence among several scholars mentioned above. Accordingly, the dissertation will further delineate the scope and depth of the influence of the American philosopher had on the Chinese devotees.

### **Source Access/Data Collection Methods**

The focus of this research is to discover the connection between Dewey's sojourn and his Chinese disciples' educational experience of Confucian or Neo-Confucian learning. The influence of the American philosopher's educational thought

on his Chinese students will be explored also. For this purpose, it is necessary to gather data from multiple sources in order to find out whether or not the information received can meet the criteria of relevance and pertinence. The depth and breadth of my research also depends upon the quantity and quality of the data occupied.

First of all, my dissertation greatly depends on an intensive study of original works, most of which were written by Dewey's Chinese devotees. For instance, among Dewey's Chinese students, Hu Shi and Jiang Menglin respectively published their own autobiographies during the Republican period: *Autobiography of My Forty Years* and *Tides from the West*. The collected works of Hu Shih, Tao Xingzhi, and Liang Shuming were already published. The works cover their scholarly writings, speeches, essays, diaries, and personal correspondence. Most of the sources above were originally published in Chinese.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, when citing them in my dissertation, I need to translate them into English.

In addition, the primary sources that I can get access to include some English writings by Dewey's Chinese students. During recent years, some English works of Hu Shih had been published in China. For instance, the book entitled *English Writings of Hu Shih* (which was edited by Chou Chih-Ping) collects some of Hu Shih's English writings on Chinese philosophy and history. The collections has provided researchers with valuable information that was potentially excluded from Hu Shih's Chinese works. At the same time, this non-Chinese data can help facilitate a more thorough understanding of Hu Shih's intellectual thought. However, these sources have not received sufficient attentions from the scholars who study Hu Shih and John Dewey.

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<sup>108</sup> Jiang Menglin published *Tides from the West* in English in 1947. In 1959, he published the book in Chinese in Taipei.

Even though Jiang Menglin and Guo Bingwen left fewer writings than the other three scholars, I found the English dissertations written by both educators while studying at Columbia University. There are Guo Bingwen's *Chinese System of Public Education* and Jiang Menglin's *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*. Both of the works were believed to be the pioneering monographies studying Chinese education. After returning to China, both Guo and Jiang published their dissertations. Guo's dissertation was published in Chinese in 1916. Jiang published his English dissertation in 1922. When studying Guo Bingwen, Chinese scholars tend to adopt Guo dissertation book in Chinese, ignoring his original English copy. In the case of the study of Jiang Menglin, few of them pay close attention to Jiang's English dissertation.

By studying these dissertations, I expect to gain ideas regarding how Dewey's educational thought influenced the two Chinese scholars. In addition, several of Guo's educational essays can be found in certain periodicals and journals. In the meantime, *The Selected Works of Jiang Menglin* preserved most of Jiang's articles, which reflected his thoughts of Chinese culture, education, and Dewey's pragmatism. In short, a survey of all of these primary sources will direct me to find the intellectual tracks of Dewey's Chinese devotees between Confucian learning and Western education. A philosophical foundation, on which some Chinese intellectuals depended to reach Dewey's pragmatism, will be shown.

In order to better understand the interaction between John Dewey and Chinese intellectuals, the primary sources also extend to the American educator's original works. For example, *The Collected Works of John Dewey* includes his entire writings during his stay in China (1919-1921). These works provide keen observations and

thorough analyses from Dewey regarding Chinese customs, traditions, culture, and politics during the May Fourth period. Since 2010, some of *The Collected Works of John Dewey* have been translated into Chinese in China. Additionally, the two books, *John Dewey's Lecture in China, 1919-1921* and *Letters from China and Japan by John Dewey and Alice Chipman Dewey*, portray Dewey's personal thoughts of his visit to China. Because of this, they also provide clues about the mutual influences between Dewey and his Chinese intellectuals.

In addition to the literature above, other relevant primary sources based on historical materials can be identified by using the resources of libraries or archives in China. The National Library in Beijing maintains a record of the collection of periodicals edited by modern Chinese intellectuals during the era of the May Fourth/New Cultural movement, such as *The New Education* and *The New Youth*. Both of Dewey's Chinese students, Jiang Menglin and Tao Xingzhi, successively took charge of editing the former. The periodical dedicated a whole issue to John Dewey's educational thoughts during his visit to China, as well as his Chinese students' perspective toward Chinese educational reformations based on American pragmatism. As one of the most influential journals during the period of the May Fourth Movement, *The New Youth* indicated intellectual dynamics in Chinese intellectual and cultural fields within the context of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement. In addition, the library also holds the oldest Chinese journal titled *The Eastern Magazine*, which was at the forefront of arguing against *The New Youth* about Confucianism within the period of the May Fourth Movement. These three important historical documents provided my project valuable information about the characters chosen and the events related to them.

A survey of the historical journals is beneficial to find data that enables inquiry into the intellectual complexity and diversity of Dewey's Chinese devotees.

Furthermore, Beijing University became another source of find primary documents for my project. Historically, Beijing University was the birthplace of the intellectual ferment during the period of the May Fourth Movement. Liang Shuming, a well-known cultural traditionalist, served the University as a professor during the period. Both Jiang Menglin and Hu Shih became the president of the university successively during the Republican time. Because of these historical factors, the University library collected amounts of pertinent historical documents, including newspapers, institutional records, official documents, articles, decrees of edicts, and archival materials relevant to the event of the May Fourth Movement and John Dewey's visit to China. At the same time, the library maintained many unpublished letters, diaries, and manuscripts written by several of Dewey's Chinese students. In all, the aggregation of the primary sources from both libraries developed an extensive research collection, as well as a firsthand account of the data pertinent to the dissertation.

Another university that proved beneficial in developing a historical attachment with Dewey's Chinese students is Columbia University. Most of the individuals chosen for my dissertation studied or were in contact with John Dewey, and obtained their doctoral degrees from the University. Their dissertations should reflect their current thoughts in the atmosphere of the progressive educational movement. These original writings appear under the heading of "Columbia University, Contributions to Education, Teachers College Series." This is a collection of the university's doctoral dissertations. By using the resource of the Starr Library at Columbia, the dissertations by Hu Shih,



Jiang Menglin, and Guo Bingwen are accessible. Further, there are substantial numbers of newspapers, books, and periodicals of the Republican period in Shanghai Library.

The resources collected in the library will also prove beneficial to my research.

As one of the major archives to hold substantial collections of East Asian materials in the United States, the Starr East Asian Library is strongly enriched by the Chinese studies collection. In particular, The Chinese Oral History Project in the collection provided useful information for this research. Since the triumph of the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949, many influential politicians and scholars who favored the former Chinese Nationalist Government became refugees in New York. In order to “save” the history of Republican China, Professor .C. Martin Wilbur from Columbia established the Oral History Project in 1957. The project took around three decades, and produced sixteen finalized reminiscences. Hu Shih was one of the interviewees in this project. Accordingly, the utilization of these sources definitely broadened the horizon of the researcher.

In short, an examination of the documents of Chinese and American libraries targets a better understanding of some pertinent events, as well as historical and cultural contexts during the May Fourth period. In pursuit of some insightful findings, I had been in contact with several professors, who are specialized in Confucianism, John Dewey, and the history of modern China. Through a study of literature, archival sources, and interviews, I am looking forward to providing deep insight into the historical, philosophical, and educational implications behind John Dewey’s visit to China.

## Chapter 3: **Balancing Chinese Education with Western Education, and Dewey's**

### **Pragmatism**

#### **-Introduction**

My inquiry into the encounters between Confucius, John Dewey and the five Chinese intellectuals begins with the study of the two renowned Chinese educators: Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin. In contrast with Hu Shih, Liang Shuming, and Tao Xingzhi, neither Guo nor Jiang left sufficient works for us to fully explore the process of their intellectual development. Notwithstanding, as briefly introduced in my previous writings, Guo's and Jiang's contributions to Chinese education in the Republican period cannot be neglected. Additionally, both Guo and Jiang were the trailblazers of introducing educational studies of China to the West. As the first Chinese scholar earning a doctoral degree from the Teachers College at Columbia University, Guo's dissertation *Chinese System of Public Education* became a pioneering work written in English, which concentrated on studying Chinese educational history. Following in Guo's footsteps, Jiang was the second Chinese scholar to obtain a doctoral degree from the Teachers College at Columbia University. His dissertation *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education* was the first scholarly work written in English by a Chinese intellectual, which explored traditional Chinese educational thought.

Moreover, during the time of the May Fourth/ New Culture Movement, both Guo and Jiang, working with the other Chinese Dewey devotees, made great efforts to spread the influence of Dewey's educational thought in China. Thereafter, before studying Hu Shih, Liang Shuming, and Tao Xingzhi, it is appropriate to integrate Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin into my dissertation in order to more completely

understand Dewey's influence in modern China. Based on their dissertations, this section will explore a few important questions: How did Dewey's pragmatism shape their intellectual thoughts? How did they view classic Confucian education? After answering these questions, my writing will analyze how Guo and Jiang practiced and spread Dewey's pragmatism in Chinese society or applied it to Chinese educational reformation.

### ***Analysis of Guo Bingwen's Chinese System of Public Education***

During his doctoral program at Teachers College of Columbia University (from 1911 to 1914), Guo Bingwen encountered a group of American progressive educators, including John Dewey, Paul Monroe, William Heard Kipatrick, George Drayton Strayer, Frederick Ernest Farrington, William Anderson McCall, and so on.<sup>109</sup> Of these intellectuals, Dewey is commonly believed to be a leading figure in the American Progressive Education Movement. Correspondingly, in keeping with Dewey's extraordinary influence, Teachers College successfully played a vital role in advocating American pragmatic educational thought. Therefore, while at Columbia, Guo was surrounded by the influence and thought of American pragmatism, and he incorporated Deweyan educational philosophy into his own thought. Not surprisingly, the yoking of Dewey's pragmatism with the individual capacity of Guo Bingwen exerts tremendous impact on his dissertation writing.

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<sup>109</sup>Zhou Hongyu and Cheng JIngrong, "An Unyield Reformer: Guo Bingwen: The Pioneering in the Modern Education of China (中国现代教育改革先驱:郭秉文)," in *A Study of Guo Bingwen's Educational Thought*, ed. Geng Youquan (Nanjing, Southeast University Press, 2014),3.

Guo's dissertation, *Chinese System of Public Education*, consists of eight chapters. The first three chapters outlined the history of ancient Chinese education. In these chapters, Guo combined the educational history from the Han Dynasty to mid Qing Dynasty (1700s) in one chapter. The remaining five chapters concentrated on the evolution of the Chinese educational system from the late Qing period to the early Republican period. So, in his dissertation, Guo paid most of his attention to the development of the Chinese educational system of the modern period.

In the "Introduction" of his dissertation, Guo expressed his motivation of studying the Chinese educational system:

The development of the educational system of China is a subject full of deep and varied interest to all students, whether of history, of politics, or of education. From it one might be able to trace the causes operating at an early period of the world's history to lead the people of China to so high a degree of civilization and to hold in unity as a nation so many millions of people. One might also be able to trace from it the method used to insure the perpetuity of the government and the content of the people. The way in which China's educational system has helped her to mold the character of the people, giving them a cohesion and a stability remarkable among the nation of the world...<sup>110</sup>

Evidently, in Guo's belief, a study of the history of the Chinese educational system would be useful to empower and glorify the Chinese nation. Like Dewey's other Chinese devotees, the cause of national salvation became a driving force behind Guo's pursuit of education in the United States. As one of Guo's students recalled: "Since the late Qing period, China was in the poverty and riots. Because Dr. Guo was eager to find out a solution to reform Chinese society, he decided to study in the U.S."<sup>111</sup> In this

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<sup>110</sup> Guo Bingwen, *Chinese System of Public Education*(New York: the Teachers College of Columbia University,1915), 1

<sup>111</sup> Gao Ming, "Mr.Guo BIngwen's Deeds and Virtue (郭故校长秉文先生行状)," in *The Festschrift of Mr. Guo Bingwen*(Taipei: The Institute of Chinese Arts, 1971), 4.

regard, Guo also yoked himself to the cultural stock of “Learning of Practical Use to Society” in Confucianism.

While writing his dissertation, Guo treated Dewey’s educational idea as a foundation on which Chinese education could be examined. In Dewey’s educational thought, the environment was supposed to become a determinative factor to shape the initial stage of human education. As he remarked:

The development within the young of the attitudes and dispositions necessary and progressive life of a society cannot take place by direct conveyance of belief, emotion, and knowledge. It take place through the intermediary of the environment. The environment consists of the sum total of conditions which are concerned in the execution of the activity characteristic of a living being.<sup>112</sup>

Dewey’s emphasis on the inseparability of environment and education directly affected Guo’s perception of Chinese education. When it comes to the goal of ancient Chinese education (2357-1123 B.C), Guo recapitulated “We have observed that at the dawn of civilization the aim of education, whether conscious or otherwise, was merely to devise means for the profitable use environment and for increasing the productivity of material resources.”<sup>113</sup>

More to the point, Dewey’s notion that “Education is Life” provided strong criteria for Guo to measure the weaknesses and strengths of traditional Chinese education. For instance, Guo’s analysis of the content of the curriculum in the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC) held that:

The whole curriculum of the time of the Chou (Zhou) dynasty...is expressed in the following terms: the six virtues, the six praiseworthy actions, and the six arts. The six virtues are wisdom, benevolence, goodness, righteousness, loyalty, and harmony. The six praiseworthy actions are honoring one’s parents, being friendly to one’s brother, being neighborly, maintaining cordial relationships with relatives through marriages, being trustful, and being sympathetic. The six

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<sup>112</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, ch.2

<sup>113</sup>Guo, *Chinese System of Public Education*, 14.

arts...consist of rituals, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics...Judged from the modern point of view the training was moral, physical, and intellectual in character, and closely related to life, preparing, as it did, the individual to participate in the daily activity of life.<sup>114</sup>

In view of his comment above, Guo concluded the educational system of the Zhou period was the best one in Chinese history because it was closely connected to human life.<sup>115</sup> A noteworthy point is that the curriculum of the Zhou period, in Guo Bingwen's opinion, was consistent with the content of Confucius's teaching. According to *The Analects of Confucius*, Confucius once bided to his students: "Inspire yourself with poetry, establish yourself on the rituals, and perfection yourself with music."<sup>116</sup> The classic canon further displays that "the Master taught under four categories, culture, proper conduct, doing one's utmost, and making good on one's word."<sup>117</sup> In light of the compatibility between Zhou dynasty education and Confucius's instruction, it is not difficult to infer that Guo thought of Confucius's educational thought as a cultural asset of traditional Chinese culture. Indeed, in his writing, Guo highly praised the educational thought of Confucius. He argued:

...Among the more important of these philosophers who have exerted an influence upon the development of education, are Confucius, Laotse, Mutse, Ynag Chu, Hsun Kuang, and Kwei Ku Tsu. Of these Confucius represented by far the greatest of them all, for this great sage, besides being a philosopher, was also a great moralist and statement, as well as a matchless teacher. His educational principles and methods together with those of his disciple Mencius are remarkable for their modernity of tone and for their depth of insight into the character and workings of human nature. The moral, social, and political principles embodied in his works and those of his disciples became in time the foundation of the competitive examination system, as well as the content of Chinese education.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>116</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: A Literal Translation with an Introduction and Notes*. Translated by Chichung Huang. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>117</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Roger T. Ames, Henry Rosemont, Jr. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 116.

<sup>118</sup> Guo, *Chinese System of Public Education*, 31.

From the perspective of Dewey's "Education is Life," Guo further assessed the history of the educational system during the period from the Han dynasty to the middle stage of the Qing dynasty. Guo argued that since the Han dynasty, the indoctrination of Confucius's idea of the ruling class strongly stifled the innovative spirit of Chinese scholars, so much so that the system of classic civil service examination between the Ming and the Qing period was totally alienated from social progress and human life.<sup>119</sup> In the concluding section of the chapter "Development of Education under Subsequent Dynasties," Guo argued:

The educational situation in China at the beginning of the modern era can be stated in a few words. Higher education is fostered by the government, but rather as a means to an end than for its own sake. The great end is the response of the state; the instruments for securing it are able officers, and education is the means for preparing them for the discharges of their duties. An adequate supply of trained candidates once secured, the education of the people ceases to be an object... This attitude of the government is reflected in the attitude of the people. To many of them education has come to mean nothing more than preparation for official life. Those who have no ambition to enter the official career regard as unnecessary all intellectual effort beyond the securing of a training for business and daily life. The kind of educational institutions found in the country also seems to support this conclusion.<sup>120</sup>

In contrast with orthodox Confucianism, Guo was inclined to regard official Confucianism (after the Han dynasty) as a cultural liability in the history of Chinese education. Guo's stance of supporting original Confucianism and denouncing official Confucianism to some extent matched Liang Shuming's perception of Confucianism.

After examining the traditional Chinese educational system, Guo extended his focus to modern education. Dewey's idea of "Education is Life" was the standard by which Guo Bingwen developed his argument of Chinese modern education. In the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 35, 64.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 63.

chapter “The Significant Issues in Contemporary Public Education,” Guo emphasized that Chinese missionary schools of the Republican period should avoid producing a citizenry who were “ill-adapted to the environment in which they must by force of circumstances live and work.”<sup>121</sup> In the same chapter, Guo specially wrote the section “Relating Education to Life” to further articulate his thought of Republican education. Like some wise Chinese scholars of his own period, Guo also called on Chinese educators to pay attention to a crucial issue of new Chinese education: to what extent did new style education match Chinese social reality? Guo stated:

There is at least one more educational problem of importance deserving special attention, namely, the problem of effectively relating education to the life of those who receive it...most of the modern school [in China] subjects such as geography, civics, and the like, have been introduced into the regular course of study, but these subjects are often taught without much reference to the daily life of the pupil or that of the community...There is a feeling on the part of some that both the subjects taught in school and the method used in teaching those subjects do little good to the children...The charge is made that from the moment a child enters school, he begins to alienate himself from the life of the family and that of the community, and by the time he graduates he is fit neither to be a farmer nor to be a merchant.<sup>122</sup>

To take this line of argument further, Guo ascribed the misalignment between new education and students’ daily lives to the misuse of pedagogy. He proceeded to argue:

This serious charge against new education, although it is not true of all schools, is yet not made without grounds. The root of the trouble lies, as already suggested, in the fact that much of the school work consists of merely imparting knowledge without reference either to the purpose which brought the children to school, or to the needs of the community in which they live. To remedy the evil something fundamental needs to be done both in the selection of material for the curriculum and in the method of teaching the various subject of study.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.,140.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.,162.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.



Accordingly, Guo attempted to write a prescription for Chinese curriculum and pedagogy. In keeping with his colleague, such as Tao Xingzhi, Guo also regarded the American experimental method as an efficient way to improve Chinese education.

According to Guo:

In connection with the question of selecting materials for the curriculum, there is a demand for a wider introduction of hand-work, eye-work, and sense-training into the schools. The new generation should be given every chance to become acquainted with the concrete and the practical, and to gain a knowledge of experimental method and inductive reasoning, for it is undoubtedly true that most of the occidental progress in the arts and sciences, in morality, and in manufactures, transportation, finance, commerce, and trade has been accomplished within the last century by the use of the inductive method of accurate observation, exact record, and limited inference.<sup>124</sup>

Next, Guo connected the adoption of the experimental method with national destiny of the new republican state. He asserted: “At all hazards, the rising generation of China must be given training in elementary science, in exact observation and faithful record, for upon this training depends largely the ultimate success of the new republic.”<sup>125</sup> In fact, the experimental and scientific method, which were strongly advocated by Guo, had been systematically explicated by Dewey in his book *How We Think*. While making a two-year visit to China, Dewey further stressed:

The application of the experimental method is not limited to this or that subject, but should characterize everything the school does, so that the school becomes pervaded with the spirit of experiment and pupils breathe in an atmosphere of experiment.<sup>126</sup>

In regard to these important arguments, it is very clear that there was a continuity between Dewey’s pragmatism and Guo’s educational thought. Notably, Guo Bingwen’s

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> John Dewey, “Science and Knowing,” in *John Dewey: Lectures in China, 1919-1920*, ed and trans, Robert W. Clopton and (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii), 250.

embrace of American pragmatism is not in contradiction to his reverence for the legacy of traditional Chinese education. In contrast with the Chinese iconoclasts of the era of the May Fourth/New Culture Movement, Guo expected to explore a common ground between Western culture and Chinese culture. Guo's dissertation mirrored his synthesis of the civilizations of Western and Chinese educations. As he acclaimed:

In the eagerness to learn from the West there is a danger of over-emphasizing the importance of Western education at the expense of all that is really vital in the Chinese national life...For to give the Chinese an education only along lines laid down as the best for men in the West would not guarantee the drawing out of the best for the Chinese. There must be a commingling of the best the West has to offer with that which has been proved unquestionably best for China through the centuries of her wonderful history. Dr. Paul Monroe, in his address before the Kiangsu (Jiangsu) Educational Association,<sup>127</sup> struck the same keynote when he said: "The task before the Chinese educators is to preserve the best-the essential, not the detail-of their old culture, and to add to it the essential-not the detail-of Western culture. It should be a fusion, not a substitution, and a fusion not too rapidly or too radically undertaken."<sup>128</sup>

In his conclusion section, Guo displayed confidence in the confluence of Chinese education and Western education in the future. As he asserted:

China is now confident that given sufficient time she will be able to work out her salvation in spite of the fact that the problem is fraught with difficulties. For the present she needs time to regain her breath from the shock which she experienced in the transition from monarchy to republic. She needs time to consider what are the elements in Western education best adapted further her vital interests, and what are the elements in her own system which have proved most favorable through the centuries of her history and which should be preserved with all vigor and tenacity.<sup>129</sup>

The above statement highlights Guo's motivation to combine the best aspects of Chinese education with Western education. Apparently, from the dimension of Martin's

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<sup>127</sup> Paul Monroe visited China in 1913 after he finished educational investigation in The Philippine. This was the first time that Monroe arrived China. See "Chronology of Paul Monroe's Activities in China," in *Paul Monroe's Lecture in China : Difference between Old and New Education* , ed. Zhou Hongyu and Chen JIngong (Hefei: Anhui Educational Press, 2013),159.

<sup>128</sup> Guo, *Chinese System of Public Education*, 166.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

educational theory as encounter, the Chinese educator was adopting the thought of cultural bookkeeping to deal with different educational cultures. According to a study of the dissertation, Dewey's pragmatism-centered educational philosophy greatly shaped the development of Guo Bingwen's educational thought. Aligned with most of Dewey's Chinese devotees, Guo also viewed Dewey's educational thought as a Western cultural asset, which was expected to reform Chinese education. Simultaneously, a cultural syncretism between the West and China emerged out of Guo's dissertation. More significantly, Guo's dissertation likely laid a solid intellectual foundation for his educational practices in China.

### **Guo Bingwen's Educational Practices in National Southeastern (Dongnan) University**

After graduating from Columbia University, Guo Bingwen immediately committed himself to the cause of the Chinese educational reformation. During the May Fourth period, as the first Chinese Ed.D from the Teachers College at Columbia University, Guo took the trouble to serve in the field of higher education in China. He first became the dean of Nanjing Higher Normal School in 1915, and its president in 1919. In 1921, Guo succeeded in having his educational institution promoted to the status of a national university, under the new title of National Southeastern University. Historically, National Southeastern University was widely recognized in comprehensive quality as excellent as National Beijing University during the Republican period. This outstanding achievement of National Southeastern University was dependent of Guo Bingwen's educational idea and practices.

Above all, the promotion of Nanjing Higher Normal School to the national university was a direct result of Guo's educational thought of integrating teacher school with university. This educational thought was reflective of John Dewey's educational philosophy. For Dewey, teacher education can never take place in isolation. According to his "My Pedagogic Creed," Dewey wrote:

I believe... the teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences. I believe, finally, that the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life...I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling: that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and securing of the right social growth...<sup>130</sup>

It is clear that in Dewey's mind, teachers were supposed to play a crucial role in connecting human knowledge with a holistic educational experience. In particular, the development of a community life was the ultimate purpose for teacher education from Dewey's perspective. Correspondingly, in his *Chinese System of Public Education*, Guo Bingwen emphasized the importance of the teacher education to Chinese educational development. He stated:

The difficulty of finding a sufficient number of competent teachers has been one of the greatest impediments to the progress of modern education in China...It is rather to be explained by the fact that it is easy to set up a school but it is hard to train a teacher. Teacher cannot be made on short notice, though a school house can. They must be in a sense grown, and growth, unlike manufacturing, takes much time. Consequently, while there were school houses and pupils in abundance there was a dearth of teacher...The rapid growth of the new educational system since its inception has made the problem of supplying the modern school with competent teacher increasingly more difficult to solve.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," 77-80.

<sup>131</sup> Guo, *Chinese System of Public Education*, 151.

In a sense, teacher education definitely became one of the most important tasks in Guo Bingwen's agenda. In his dissertation, Guo went on to uncover an incongruence between the classic Chinese teacher education and the new circumstances. On the one hand, he analyzed the following defects of the teacher training under the old-style educational system:

Under the old educational system any one could set up as a school teacher, and a great many scholars who had attained the first degree in the examination, to say nothing of the host of others who had failed, made this their chief means of obtaining a living. No certificate was required for teaching, and no book or curriculum was compulsory, except that which was universally established by tradition or usage. This instruction was usually imparted either in the home of the children or in that of the teacher...<sup>132</sup>

On the other hand, Guo stressed that the outdated teaching method adopted by old-style Chinese teachers can not fit in with the requirement of the new education of the Republican period. He remarked:

The kind of teaching tended to develop memory rather than reasoning power. Under the new system of education, the situation which the teacher has to face is entirely different. He must know more than mere Chinese classics and composition. He has to teach students in classes instead of individually. Again, the teacher in a modern school is expected to develop in the pupils the power of reasoning instead of only mere memory. And the old-style teacher does not easily lend himself to the new order...Modern pedagogy is to him so new a science that either he has little appreciation of its worth...Under such circumstances, the Chinese government and the people lost no time in restoring to various means to secure proper teachers to meet the urgent demand<sup>133</sup>

In regard to these important arguments, Guo Bingwen became aware that the professionalization of teachers was the first important part of the development of Chinese education. Meanwhile, the ideal teacher in Guo's mind was the person who embraced a comprehensive competence and broad horizon. In Guo's emphasis, under

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 151.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., 152,

Republican politics, Chinese teachers were expected to raise students who could contribute to the progression of human society. Apparently, the idea of teacher education to Guo corresponds to Dewey's idea of "Education is Life."

When taking charge of the leadership of Nanjing Higher Normal School, Guo was inclined to perceive teacher education in a very broad sense. In his view, the goal of Nanjing Higher Normal School was twofold. The first is to raise professional teachers.<sup>134</sup> The second is to transform some teachers to scholars of specialized areas. As such, Nanjing Higher Normal School, led by Guo Bingwen, was not a mere educational institution for the goal of training teachers, but also simultaneously took responsibility for producing well-rounded citizenry. Therefore, it is natural that Guo's educational thought resulted in broadening of the scope of curriculum in the normal school. As a motivated educational reformer, Guo emphasized that the arrangement of school curriculum in the normal school should satisfy the needs of human lives and intellectual standards.<sup>135</sup> In other words, teacher education in the school was required to mirror a changing society. Thus the content of the curriculum should go beyond the limitation of a mere training of teachers.<sup>136</sup>

Alongside such a conviction and, in addition to the majors of Chinese language and Mathematics, Nanjing Higher Normal School under Guo's administration also set up diverse curriculums to match social needs. For instance, in light of the setbacks of physical education (PE) knowledge in Chinese society, the school set up the program of

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<sup>134</sup>Mao Rong, *Guo Bingwen: President of Southeastern University* (至平至善, 鸿飞东南: 东南大学校长 郭秉文) (Jinan: Shandong Educational Press, 2004), 42-43.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

physical education in aim for generating qualified PE teachers for Chinese people.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, Guo wisely realized that although China was suffering poor productivity, there was not a systematic vocational education in Chinese schools. As such, Guo added the program of industry and technology to the curriculum of the normal school, followed by the creation of the program of agriculture and business.<sup>138</sup> By 1920, under Guo's leadership, there were eight departments in Nanjing Normal Higher School, including the Chinese language programs, Physical Education, Science and Technology, Business, Agriculture, Education.<sup>139</sup> It follows that the normal school embraced the feature of a comprehensive university.

In short, Guo's educational practice was an embodiment of his attempt to integrate the normal school within the realm of higher education. Some researchers articulated:

Borrowing the model of Teachers College of Columbia University, Guo Bingwen's idea of "integrating normal school into university" successfully combined teacher education and higher education together. His educational practice transformed teacher education as one part of the mainstream of higher education in China... Thus Guo's educational reformation break with the precedence between late imperial period and early Republican years that normal schools were not interact with society...<sup>140</sup>

In regard to this important comment, it is correct to say that Nanjing Higher Normal School laid a solid foundation for the founding of National Southeastern University. As a top leader of a higher education institution, Guo showed a strong preference for recruiting returned students from the United States. In particular, the majority of the

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<sup>137</sup>Ibid.,42.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid.,43.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid.,43

<sup>140</sup>Song Yechun, "Discourse of Guo Bingwen's Thought of Higher Normal School(论郭秉文的高等师范教育思想)," in *A Study of Guo Bingwen's Educational Thought*, ed. Geng Youquan (Nanjing: Southeast University Press, 2014), 312.

faculty in the department of education was selected by Guo from the Teachers College at Columbia University. In terms of school management, Nanjing Higher Normal School (or later National Southeastern University) also modeled Columbia University, the school board played a crucial role in school administration. This differs fundamentally from the communist party leadership in schools and universities after 1949.

Another important point to notice is that the yoking of certain aspects of Confucianism to Guo's individual capacity contributed to his educational reforms. For instance, in the late 1960s, in a conversation with one of his students, Guo summarized his educational thoughts (during the periods of Nanjing Higher Normal School and Southeastern University) into one Chinese word, “*ping* (平),” which is derived from Confucian classic canon *The Great Learning*.<sup>141</sup> In the context of Confucianism, “*ping tian xia*” is the utmost achievement that every Confucian scholar expects to reach. The classic Chinese term can be translated to “to bring a harmony under heaven.” Therefore, “*ping*” here can be interpreted to mean “harmony.” Philosophically, the Confucian ideal of harmony can tolerate different things, as well as encourage the establishment of a favorable relationship among them.<sup>142</sup> Therefore, in Confucianism, the substance of a harmonious relationship was featured as an equilibrium in an interaction among different things.<sup>143</sup>

Guo applied the meaning of “*ping*” to his educational practice. In his advocacy,

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<sup>141</sup> Zhang Qiyun, “Educational Policy of Dr. Guo Bingwen (郭师秉文的办学方针),” in *The Festschrift of Mr. Guo Bingwen* (Taipei: The Institute of Chinese Arts, 1971), 4.

<sup>142</sup> Wei Xiaohong and Li Qingyuan, “The Confucian Value of Harmony and its Influence on Chinese Social Interaction,” in *Cross Cultural Communication*, 9.no.1 (2013), 61.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.



there were the principles of “four pings (harmonies)” in National Southeastern University. The first one is that a well-rounded person is in harmony with expertise; the second one that is humanity is in harmony with science; the third one is that faculty is in harmony with facility, and the fourth one is that China is in harmony with the world.<sup>144</sup> In particular, among them, the second “humanity” mostly reflects Guo’s reaction to anti-Confucian iconoclasts of the May Fourth/New Cultural period. Guo disagreed with the Chinese iconoclasts’ perception of Chinese tradition. He believes that the traditional Chinese moral culture and Western democratic ideas were not in opposition. Chinese traditional culture, especially Confucianism, is the foundation of the Chinese nation, and could not be completely discarded.<sup>145</sup> The precondition for a Chinese scholar to learn Western democracy and science is to retain the essence of traditional Chinese culture.<sup>146</sup>

With Guo’s support, a group of pro-Confucian Chinese scholars (including some Chinese students who returned from America) founded the periodical *The Critical Review* (*xue heng*) to expound the essence of Chinese history, culture, and philosophy in order to argue against the Chinese radical intellectuals who supported “Down with Confucius and Sons.” Meanwhile, Guo understood China’s progression urgently demanded the introduction of Western science. As a result, Guo managed to make the campus of National Southeastern University the “headquarters” of the Chinese Science Association, which was one of the most influential civic science societies of the 1920s in China. It is very important to know there was no strict distinction between The

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<sup>144</sup>Zhang, “Educational Policy of Dr. Guo Bingwen,” 4-6.

<sup>145</sup>Gao, “Mr.Guo BIngwen’s Deeds and Virtue,” 5.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

Chinese Science Society and *The Critical Review*. Some scholars simultaneously worked for both *The Critical Review* and Chinese Science Association.

While at National Southeastern University, Guo Bingwen made great attempts to create a harmonious relationship between Chinese tradition and Western science. Along with the concept of “*ping*,” Guo adopted one of the three guidelines of learning in *The Great Learning*, “dwelling at the supreme good (*zhi yu zhi shan*),”<sup>147</sup> was the motto of National Southeastern University. In fact, the Confucian concept of “dwelling at the supreme good” embraced the ideal of universal harmony. Thus, it is correct to conclude that Guo endeavored to construct a modern style university, consistent with the Confucian educational ideal.

As exhibited in *Chinese System of Public Education*, Guo Bingwen’s yoking of Confucian educational philosophy to his individual capacity occurred through the framing of the syncretism of Chinese and Western culture. Further, Guo’s way of managing the university by synthesizing Chinese and Western culture was in correspondence with Dewey’s thought. While lecturing in Beijing during the time of his trip to China, the American educator announced: “the newest question that we confront nowadays is that how Eastern and Western cultures approached and interacted.”<sup>148</sup> Following Dewey’s footsteps, Paul Monroe further addressed in China that “one of the most important tasks for Chinese universities was to build a bridge between Chinese culture and Western culture, combining them into a brand new culture.”<sup>149</sup>In his

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<sup>147</sup>The three guidelines in *The Great Learning* is “The Dao (way) of Great Learning lies in making bright virtue brilliant, in make the people new, and in dwelling at the supreme good.”

<sup>148</sup> Liang , *the Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 251.

<sup>149</sup>Paul Monroe, *Paul Monroe’s Discourse of Investigation in Chinese Education*(孟禄的中国教育讨论), ed and trans, Cheng Baoquan, Hu Shih, and Tao Xingzhi (Shanghai: Shanghai Commercial Press, 1922), 121.

opinion, Chinese universities did not want to replace Chinese culture with Western culture, but establish continuity between the best parts of Chinese and Western cultures.<sup>150</sup> In this regard, Guo Bingwen's Nanjing Normal Higher School (National Southeastern University) met the demands of both Dewey and Monroe.

Unfortunately, the political interventions from military warlords resulted in Guo Bingwen's dismissal as the president of National Southeastern University in 1925. Afterwards, his influence over Chinese education faded. Nevertheless, historically, National Southeastern University (which was updated to National Central University since 1928) was believed to be one of the best Chinese universities during the Republican period. In light of this uncontroversial fact, Guo's educational practice in the field of higher education should be remembered in Chinese history. My dissertation previously explicated the educational encounter between Guo Bingwen, American pragmatism, and Confucian educational philosophy. Now it is proper to extend my focus to Jiang Menglin, the last figure of this dissertation.

### **Jiang Menglin's *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education***

As with Guo Bingwen, Jiang Menglin's pursuit of Western learning was also driven by the Confucian idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society." From Jiang's perspective, the field of education was more useful to empower China in comparison to other fields.<sup>151</sup> Similar to Guo, during his time studying at Teachers College at Columbia University (between 1912 and 1917), Jiang was also immersed in the atmosphere of American pragmatism.<sup>152</sup> When pursuing his doctoral program at

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<sup>150</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>151</sup>Jiang, *Tides from the West*, 72-73.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 87.

Teachers College, Jiang thought of John Dewey as his mentor.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, it is natural that Dewey's educational philosophy wielded a strong influence over Jiang Menglin's dissertation, *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*. In addition to the "Introduction" and "Conclusion," the main body of Jiang's dissertation contained four parts: "Heredity and Education," "Principles and Learning," "Principles of Teaching," and "Principles of Moral Education." Compared to Guo Bingwen's dissertation, Jiang's work paid substantial attention to the evolution of Chinese educational thought in a historical sequence.

According to the preface of the dissertation, the purpose of Jiang's study was "to articulate the Chinese thoughts on education which are found here and there in the voluminous works of many a Chinese, to interpret the more or less vague statements in clearer language and to weave the scattered thoughts into a related one."<sup>154</sup> In the meantime, the preface already revealed that Jiang's dissertation was very relevant to current Chinese reality. As Jiang wrote, "...in choosing materials, only those which have direct or indirect bearing upon the present-day problems are selected. It is hoped that to study the past is not for its own sake, but to make plain the educational theories of today in the light of past."<sup>155</sup>

Alongside Guo Bingwen, Jiang also merged the perspective of Dewey's pragmatism into his study of Chinese education. In the opening chapter of his dissertation "Introduction," Jiang defined: "Education is the method of life and thought,

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>154</sup> Jiang Menglin, *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education* (Shanghai, The Commercial Press, Ltd, 1922), iii.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

and life and thought are the contents of Education.”<sup>156</sup> If someone carefully review the seventh chapter, “The Democratic Conception in Education” in *Democracy and Education*, he or she finds a very relevant statement in the opening paragraph, which was made by John Dewey. According to the American educator, “For the most part, save incidentally, we have hitherto been concerned with education as it may exist in any social group. We have now to make explicit the differences in the spirit, material, and method of education as it operates in different types of community life.”<sup>157</sup> Obviously, Jiang’s definition of education was a reflection of his absorption of Dewey’s idea of “Education is Life.”

Extending from this definition, Jiang’s analysis of Chinese educational thought started from his inquiry into the life condition of ancient Chinese people. From Jiang’s perspective, traditional Chinese principles of education were greatly shaped by the ideal of Chinese life. According to Jiang:

One of the most fundamental ideas of the life of the Chinese is duty. To live is to fulfill the duties of life. One must attain the supreme good...The individual is required to perform to the utmost his duties of life. If he is a ruler, he must perform his duties of being benevolent to the utmost degree. If he is a state official, he must perform his duties of being loyal to the sovereign to the utmost degree. The duties of a father are to act according to the principle of parental kindness; of a son, according to the principle of filial piety; of a member of the state, according to the principle of truthfulness. Starting from these as the foundations of life the idea of the supreme good is to be extended to all the activities of life.<sup>158</sup>

Furthermore, Jiang stated “Thus, a teacher must do his utmost to fulfill his duties relating to teaching; a student, to study; a carpenter, to his work; a soldier, to war; a

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>157</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 87.

<sup>158</sup> Jiang, *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*, 1.

musician, to music; a farmer, to farming; ad infinitum.”<sup>159</sup> It is evident in Jiang’s revelation that ancient Chinese education mirrored the way of life of Chinese ancestors. Correspondingly, Jiang emphasized that Chinese educational institutions of the ancient period actually “grow in the life of a people,”<sup>160</sup> and they are “the expression of life.”<sup>161</sup> It is significant to realize Jiang’s classification of “duty” in Chinese people’s lives was an embodiment characteristic of Chinese society during the pre-modern period. It is thus to say that “life” in Jiang’s words mostly means a social life. The duties of all of rulers, officials, fathers, sons, and farmers can be highlighted only through getting involved in all kinds of social contacts. In this regard, Jiang shared one of the most important of Dewey’s educational convictions: “...the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals.”<sup>162</sup>

While examining the thoughts of ancient Chinese educators, Jiang attempted to assess their educational ideas based on the extent of the connection between education and social life. For instance, when arguing about Confucius, Jiang stated:

Confucius was a typical Chinese thinker...To him conduct is the criteria of knowledge. On him, the later Chinese thought is based. His chief interest lies in the practical conduct of men. The virtue of men is benevolent. To carry out benevolence is to start with filial piety or love of parents...Hence, to attain the supreme good is to carry out to the utmost degree the mutual devotion between the sovereign and the people, the parents and the children, and between friends. If these devotions are carried out to the utmost degree, there will be happiness in the family and peace and order to the state, and among the states. This philosophy, which holds the view that life and institutions are based upon practical moral conduct, may be called politico-ethical.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup>Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” 77-80.

<sup>163</sup> Jiang, *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*, 7.

Jiang also discussed the philosophy of Taoism according to the same standard. He pointed out that:

Opposed to it (Confucianism), we find the philosophy of Lao-tse (*lao zi*) and Tson-tse (*zhuang zi*), both of whom advocate life must be based upon the naturalistic tendencies, not upon the social or moral system, and certainly not upon the so-called practical conduct.<sup>164</sup> Significantly, after making a general comparison of all schools of ancient

Chinese education in a historical sequence, Jiang concluded that:

In the study of the education of a nation, the author consider it advisable to go back to a study of the underlying trends of thought of that nation. Education would be meaningless if detached and isolated from national life, ideals, and thought.<sup>165</sup>

Here, we can see the influence of Dewey's "Education is Life" upon Jiang Menglin's educational thought. Further, in the Chinese history of education, compared to other philosophical schools, Confucianism established the strongest bond with Chinese ideals, life, and thought. Jiang's conclusion seems to allude to his preference for Confucian education.

Coincidentally, Jiang's bond with Confucianism can be evidenced in his autobiography. According to *Tides from the West*, when he was a teenager, Jiang had already become coupled to the cultural stocks of a Confucian educational ideal. As Jiang wrote:

It is the teaching of the Confucian school that mental culture is the starting point of personal culture, which in turn will serve as the foundation for statecraft. Therefore, in order to save China, save yourself first. So I devote myself to study and thinking, to physical exercise and to proper conduct. This was, I understood it, the way to personal culture, which would someday serve the as the foundation for rendering service for the state.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 62.

The intellectual pathway from the individual to the state that Jiang attempted to take was also derived from the Confucian canon, *The Great Learning*. Evidently, before schooling in the United States, the yoking of Confucianism to the individual capacity of Jiang Menglin had a tremendous impact upon the development of his worldview. It is fair to say that Jiang tended to regard the value system in Confucianism as a cultural asset, which contributed to his spiritual growth.

Moreover, aside from “Education is Life,” Dewey’s idea of “Education is Growth” was also influential to Jiang’s dissertation. In Part I, “Heredity and Education”, Jiang borrowed the concept of “growth” from Dewey’s educational thought to analyze ancient Chinese educators’ perceptions of the implications of “nature” and “nurture” in education. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey wrote: “growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself.”<sup>167</sup> At the same time, Dewey also pointed out the suppression of the natural instinct of a child was inappropriate for human growth. As he observed in the chapter of “Educational as Growth”:

Natural instincts are either disregarded or treated as nuisances-as obnoxious traits to be suppressed, or at all events to be brought into conformity with external standards. Since conformity is the aim, what is distinctively individual in a young person is brushed aside, or regarded as a source of mischief or anarchy. Conformity is made equivalent to uniformity. Consequently, there are induced lack of interest in the novel, aversion to progress, and dread of uncertain and the unknown. Since the end of growth is outside of the beyond the process of growing, external agents have to be restored to induce movement toward it. Whenever a method of education is stigmatized as mechanical, we may be sure that external pressure is brought bear to reach an external end.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 58.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.55-56.



From here one can see that in Dewey's educational thought, growth should be compatible with the nature of a human being. Thus, he pointed out that "The two points in a boy's training are, to keep his natural and train off all but; to keep his natural, but stop off his uproar, fooling, and horseplay; keep his nature and arm it with knowledge in the very direction in which it points."<sup>169</sup>

Dewey's argument was strongly echoed by Jiang Menglin. While articulating the Confucian view of human nature, Jiang put forward the notion that "Growth is Natural." From Jiang's writings, we can discover that his educational theories had strong connections with Dewey's idea of "Education is Growth." First, Jiang believes education must be in accordance with human nature. As he described: "education has its limitations because nature itself is limited. Where the limit of nature is, education cannot go beyond."<sup>170</sup> Second, as Dewey criticizes the practice of oppressing children's nature by using false educational method, Jiang also points out:

But the method of education is far from reaching nature's limit. It is often the case that when the method of education is wrong, nature takes the blame. We often hear a teacher blaming a child's stupidity, when he really ought to blame his own stupidity in his teaching method.<sup>171</sup>

In order to support his conviction that "growth is natural," Jiang purposely cited Mencius's word in his writing. He said:

Mencius's metaphor of a man "helping" the corn to grow is quite to the point. To quote him: "...let not the mind forget its work, but let there be no assisting the growth. Let us not be like the man of Sung. There was a man of Sung, who was grieved that his growing corn was not longer, so he pulled it up. Having done this, he returned home...and said to this people: "I am tired to-day. I have been helping the corn to grow long. His son ran to look at it, and found the corn

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.57.

<sup>170</sup>Jiang, *A Study of Chinese Principles of Education*, 48.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.,48.

all withered. There are few in the world who do not deal with their growth as if there were assisting the corn to grow long...<sup>172</sup>

Additionally, similar to Guo Bingwen, Jiang also borrowed Dewey's notion that environment and education were inseparable. In his dissertation, Jiang attempted to find out how forces of the environment wielded tremendous impact upon human education within the Confucian educational philosophy. He held:

...We have the individual on one hand and his environment on the other. The same individual will respond differently when the environment changes. Mencius held that all things which are the same in kind are like one another. The variations among the same kind are caused by the environmental forces which are acting upon the individuals...When we sow barely and hope to reap in the future, we have to have these three elements in mind: the soil and its degree of fertility, the quantity of the rains, and the labor man devotes to it. The same kind of seeds may produce different quantities of crops on account of the difference in the quality of the soil, in the quantity of the rains, and in the amount of labor that the farmer devotes to it. In the same way, men vary greatly on account of the difference of the environment. Mencius correlated the change of the moral conditions of the people with the change of the economic conditions...This shows that Mencius saw clearly how greatly the influence of environment acts upon the nature of man.<sup>173</sup>

Here, Jiang Menglin's argument is similar to one of the significant statements by

Dewey in his *Democracy and Education*:

By means of the action of the environment in calling out certain responses. The required beliefs cannot be plastered on. But the particular medium in which an individual exists leads him to see and feel one thing rather than another, it leads him to have certain plans in order that he may act successfully with others; it strengthens some beliefs and weakens others as a condition of winning the approval of others.<sup>174</sup>

It is worthwhile to note that in Part II "Principle of Learning" of his dissertation, Jiang again displayed a tendency to integrate Dewey's perspective of "Education is Life" into his analysis of Wang Yangming's educational principle of "Unity of

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.,49.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.,49.

<sup>174</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 14-15.

Knowledge and Action.” Jiang praised: “This teaching of Wang Yangming explains explicitly and clearly that real knowledge is that which deals directly with one’s actual life. As soon as one detaches himself from it, the so-called learning is superfluous and unreal.”<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, Jiang concluded from analyzing Wang Yangming’s learning, “Knowledge, if it is properly acquired is a means or way to right living. There are methods by means of which men acquire knowledge properly... There must be methods to knowledge and in turn knowledge itself is but a method to life.”<sup>176</sup>

In short, in terms of academic genealogy, Dewey’s pragmatism provided a theoretical map for Jiang to develop his argument in his dissertation. Specifically, the notions of “Education is Life” and “Education as Growth” from Dewey’s thinking penetrated Jiang’s logical pathway to view traditional Chinese educational principles (particularly Confucianism). More to the point, except for certain educational theories above, the yoking of the scientific thought of Dewey’s pragmatism to the individual capacity of Jiang Menglin was dedicated to the Chinese scholar’s intellectual development. When it comes to one of the most important things he learned from the U.S, Jiang recalled in his autobiography:

Here (Columbia University) I learned the method and acquired the spirit of scientific research as applied to social phenomena. Among the professors who taught me untiringly, from whom I drew my inspiration and to whom I am greatly indebted, there is one I wish to mention particularly because of his connection with Peiking (Beijing) University. He is Professor John Dewey, who taught Dr. Hu Shih and myself at Columbia, and later through his writings, lectures, and personal contacts with contemporary thinkers in China, during his two-year sojourn as visiting professor at the National University of Peking (Beijing), influenced Chinese educational theories and practice to great extent. His pragmatism finds its counterpart in the practical Chinese mentality...<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup>Jiang, *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*, 92.

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup>Jiang, *Tides from the West*, 87.

Obviously, in Jiang's perspective, the scientific thought deriving from Dewey's philosophy was believed to be a great Western cultural asset. In the meantime, this important reference implies that similar to Dewey's other Chinese devotees, Jiang Menglin regarded the scientific idea of Dewey's educational thought as an efficient vehicle that could be applied to Chinese reality. Moreover, Jiang thought one of the most important functions in modern education was the scientific method. He emphasized: "the old method of education was based upon speculations, and unorganized experience. The modern method of education is based on inductive science and systematic experimentations."<sup>178</sup>

By this standard, Jiang attempted to uncover why the spirit of modern science had been absent from traditional Chinese education. In his analysis, the Chinese scholar ascribed the underdevelopment of scientific thought in Chinese education to Confucius's political-ethical system of thought.<sup>179</sup> Jiang pointed out that because of Confucian scholars' obsession with political-ethical learning, traditional Chinese education diverted the energies of students away from developing the ability to reason. More interestingly, although Jiang took a positive view of Confucianism as a philosophy of morality, he bravely criticized a miseducative aspect of the content from Confucian teaching-learning, which prevented China from approaching modern science. In light of the fact that China lacked sufficient education in modern science, Jiang claimed:

Science has nature as its subject matter with a systematic method of investigation. We [Chinese people] must no longer allow politico-ethical problems to occupy all the spheres of knowledge. An intense enthusiasm for nature must be aroused and systematic method of investigation must be

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<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 185.

<sup>179</sup>Jiang, *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*, 76-77.

introduced...The mere introduction, into the schools of physics, chemistry, or other science taught in a formal way, would not have much result in cultivating scientific interest unless we understand the spirit of science. In order to balance the overemphasis of politico-ethical problems, the students in the Chinese schools must be directed to make friends with nature and must be led to systematic experimentation and observation.<sup>180</sup>

Apparently, Jiang tended to treat the introduction of modern science education as a panacea to reform Chinese education. In this respect, both Jiang Menglin and Guo Bingwen shared a common perspective regarding the scientific thought of Dewey's pragmatism.

Additionally, a cultural comparative perspective between China and the West, which was underlined in Jiang's writing in his dissertation, is worth noticing. In the preface of his dissertation, Jiang wrote: "...The writer is always ready to make a comparative study of different schools of thought and also of Chinese and Western ideas."<sup>181</sup> In fact, a comparative approach between Chinese and Western culture thoroughly penetrated the period of Jiang's schooling in the U.S. In his autobiography, Jiang recapitulated his idea to compare Chinese and the Western culture while schooling in the U.S:

Things European or American I always measured with a Chinese yardstick. This is the way that leads from the known to the unknown. To gain new experience based upon and constructed out of past experiences the way to new knowledge...A Chinese student learns to understand Western civilization only in the light of what he knows of his own. The more he knows of his own culture, the better able he will be to understand that of the West...I felt that my midnight lucubrations on the Chinese classics, history, and philosophy in school in China were not labor lost. Only because of those studies was I now in a position to absorb and digest Western ideas. My work hereafter, I thought, is to find out what China lacks and take what she needs from the West. And in the course of

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., ii

time we will catch up with the West. With these views, I grew more self-confident, less self-conscious, and more hopeful for the future.<sup>182</sup>

Based on this paragraph, it is appropriate to say Jiang adopted a cultural bookkeeping strategy to deal with cultural diversity. It simultaneously displayed that a cultural comparative approach in Jiang's mind was still grounded in his Chinese educational background. In some researchers' explanations, Jiang equally treated both the Western culture and Chinese culture as two important parts of world civilization. Therefore he expected to discover a bridge for a dialogue between both cultural systems.<sup>183</sup>

Consequently, in Jiang's dissertation, it is not difficult for the readers to find sufficient evidence of the Chinese scholar's attempts to make comparisons between Chinese and Western education. For instance, after making a comparison between the educational principles of Confucianism and ancient Greece, Jiang concluded that Aristotle emphasized the rational nature of man while Confucius highlighted his moral nature.<sup>184</sup> There is also a comparative analysis among the educational thoughts of Wang Yangming and Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel.<sup>185</sup> In doing so, Jiang engaged in finding out a similarity between the educational philosophies of Neo-Confucian scholars and the Western thinkers.<sup>186</sup> Further, by means of making a comparison between Confucian scholars and John Dewey in terms of acquiring knowledge, Jiang wished to uncover the modernity in Confucian education.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Jiang, *Tides from the West*, 75.

<sup>183</sup>Wang Ying, *John Dewey's School and Chinese Education* (杜威教育学派与中国教育) (Beijing: Beijing Institute of Technology Press, 2000),122-126.

<sup>184</sup>Jiang, *A Study in Chinese Principles of Education*, 36.

<sup>185</sup>*Ibid.*,100.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*,54.

All in all, following in Guo Bingwen's footsteps, Jiang Menglin's dissertation also established a paradigm for the field of Chinese educational studies. Jiang was the first Chinese scholar, who adopted the Western theory (in particular the perspective of Dewey's pragmatism) to examine Chinese educational thought. Meanwhile, Jiang's dissertation displayed his connection to Confucian education, together with his willingness to develop modern scientific spirit in Chinese education. Likewise, a thought of making a comparison between diverse cultures was underlined by his writings. All of these ideas from his dissertation shaped Jiang's further endeavors in spreading Dewey's educational thought during the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement period.

### **The Spreading of Dewey's Pragmatism by Jiang Menglin**

In 1917, Jiang Menglin earned his doctoral degree from Teachers College at Columbia University. A few years after his arrival in China, Jiang became the editor of Shanghai Commercial Press, and subsequently took leadership roles in two important educational associations (Jiangsu Province Educational Society and the Society of Chinese Vocational Education). In 1919, supported by some of his colleagues (including Tao Xingzhi), Jiang founded a monthly journal titled *The New Education*, which aimed to reform Chinese society by introducing new foreign educational ideas.<sup>188</sup> For Jiang, *The New Education* was believed to be a useful medium, through which modern Chinese educators could exchange and spread their thoughts. More significantly, as chief editor of the journal, Jiang obtained a precious platform to voice his own educational thought via his writings.

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<sup>188</sup> Ma Yong, *Life of Jiang Menglin* (蒋梦麟传) (Zhengzhou: Henan Literature and Arts Press, 1999), 49.

In his autobiography, Jiang expounded the lines of educational thought that guided the main theme of *The New Education*. As Jiang wrote:

...*The New Education* stood pedagogically for initiative, the needs of children, and much that John Dewey stand for in his *Democracy and Education*. As regarded Chinese principles of education, it stood for Mencius's idea on human nature: that it is good. Hence education means a proper development of what there is in the child.<sup>189</sup>

In accordance with this important reference, *The New Journal* was a product of the comparison and synthesis of the educational thoughts of Dewey and Confucianism. In view of this fact, the implication of the journal was in continuity with Jiang's dissertation. With the advent of the May Fourth period, Jiang wrote essays in the journal to express his thoughts regarding the rise of the New Culture Movement. In the essay "The Raging Tide of New Culture", Jiang held:

Mr. John Dewey said:" Why do human generate social science? Because the society suffers disease." As a result, some researchers attempt to diagnose what style of disease the society suffers, so they want to discover a new learning. Therefore, the varying of environment can lead to the emergence of the new learning. In return, this new learning can further contribute to the changing of environment. While the environment is in a consistent varying, more and more people wants to understand this new learning. As this situation became more and more intensive, the tide of new culture is developing...As we know, Chinese society is suffering serious diseases. In light of this fact, we need to save the country by means of pursuing a new learning. When it comes to this point, we are approaching to the central issue of the May Fourth Student Movement. The pursuit of the new learning is located in the central issue of the New Culture Movement...<sup>190</sup>

Thus it can be seen that Jiang Menglin expected to limit the May Fourth Movement to the cultural and academic fields. At the same time, Dewey's idea of the relation between the environment and education had a great impact upon Jiang's view of the

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<sup>189</sup> Jiang, *Tides from the West*, 114.

<sup>190</sup>Jiang Menglin, "The Raging Tide of New Culture (新文化的怒潮)", in *Selected Works of Jiang Menglin's Writings of Education*, ed. Qu Shipai (Beijing: People Press, 1995), 128.



May Fourth period. When Dewey made a lecture trip to China, Jiang committed to promote the influence of Dewey's educational thought in Chinese society. In order to achieve this goal, in *The New Education* the Chinese scholar published some weighty essays to introduce Dewey's philosophy to Chinese people. In explaining Dewey's idea of human life in "John Dewey's Life of Philosophy," Jiang repeatedly adopted a cultural comparative approach, which had been applied to his dissertation. For instance, Jiang's writing compared Wang Yangming's School of Mind with Dewey's philosophy. In contrast with Wang's "Unity of Knowledge and Action," Jiang argued that Dewey's pragmatism was more closely connected to human social lives.<sup>191</sup> In the article "John Dewey's Moral Education," Jiang pointed out the inseparability between morality and social life in Dewey's philosophy.<sup>192</sup>

More importantly, some of Jiang's writings indicated that young Chinese intellectuals tended to view students' movement through the dimension of Dewey's "Education is Life." For example, in "The Youth's Psychology after the Student Movement and the Way to Communicate with Them," Jiang articulated that Dewey's educational thought was very conducive for Chinese students to develop a spirit of self-governance. As he stated:

Mr. John Dewey already made a new progress in his educational thought. He said: "Education is Life. A good education will make us have a better life." We should know a good life should be derived from the sense of initiatives...Students' self-governance can be a way to cultivate the spirit of initiatives. Self-governing association of students should become the

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<sup>191</sup> Jiang Menglin, "John Dewey's Life of Philosophy" (杜威之人生哲学)," in *Selected Works of Jiang Menglin's Writings of Education*, ed. Qu Shipei (Beijing: People Press, 1995), 88.

<sup>192</sup> Jiang Menglin "John Dewey's Moral Education (杜威的道德教育)," in *Selected Works of Jiang Menglin's Writings of Education*, ed. Qu Shipei (Beijing: People Press, 1995), 90-96.

organization, which can enrich students' lives. If students have an enriched school life, they can approach the end of "Education is Life."<sup>193</sup>

In another essay, Jiang further argued that students' lives should consist of the three parts: the life of pursuing new knowledge, the life of community, and the life of serving for society.<sup>194</sup> In Jiang's mind, relentless student strikes were harmful to Chinese education and society in the long run.<sup>195</sup> Echoed by Hu Shih, Jiang strongly believed that the transformation of the May Fourth Chinese students' movement to a radical political force would be destructive to Chinese future.<sup>196</sup> Accordingly, he maintained that the core mission for Chinese students was to save China through dedicating themselves to the cause of education and culture.<sup>197</sup> It is particularly important to realize that the deep implication behind Jiang's perspective of "students' self-governance" actually embraced the perspective of cultural reformism and gradualism. In fact, this thought was in continuity to Dewey's pragmatism, which was opposed to the theory of class struggle in Marxism.<sup>198</sup>

Additionally, throughout his writings in *The New Education*, Jiang strongly advocated experiment and scientific method, vocational education, common education, and child-centered pedagogy during the May Fourth period. All of these issues were also strongly tied to Dewey's educational philosophy. Besides Jiang, a large number of Chinese educators and intellectuals (including Dewey's Chinese devotees) published

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<sup>193</sup>Jiang Menglin, "The Youth's Psychology after Student Movement and the Way to Communicate with Them(学潮后青年心理的态度及利导方法),"in *Selected Works of Jiang Menglin's Writings of Education*, ed. Qu Shiwei (Beijing: People Press, 1995), 142.

<sup>194</sup>Jiang Menglin and Hu Shih, "Our Expectation of Students (我们对于学生的希望)," in *Selected Works of Jiang Menglin's Writings of Education*, ed. Qu Shiwei (Beijing: People Press, 1995), 197.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.,196.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 195-201.

<sup>197</sup> Jiang, *Tides from the West*, 123.

<sup>198</sup> Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China*, 2.

their writings about Dewey's pragmatism and Chinese education in the journal. When Dewey was visiting China, the journal printed a special issue named "Only for John Dewey (*du wei zhuan hao*)," which aimed to explicitly introduce Dewey's philosophy and life story. It is fair to say, under Jiang Menglin's editorship, *The New Education* contributed a great deal to spreading Dewey's pragmatism in the Chinese intellectual community. This extraordinary accomplishment became one of the most important reasons to explain why Jiang's journal enjoyed a prodigious reputation during the May Fourth period.

Although Jiang made great efforts to spread the democratic and scientific aspects of Dewey's pragmatism, he did not participate in the Chinese iconoclasts' attack on Confucianism. On the contrary, in reaction to the tides of "Down with Confucius and Sons," Jiang, like Guo Bingwen, attempted to balance traditional Chinese culture with Western culture. In his essay titled "New, Old, and a Syncretism," Jiang regarded the Western and Chinese culture in unity so there was not a strict boundary between new (Western culture) and old (traditional Chinese) culture.<sup>199</sup> He further concluded that the relationship between the traditional Confucian culture and new Western culture was not static. As time and environment changes, the new Western culture may become the old one. Meanwhile, after the two infused, traditional Chinese culture would take on a new look.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Jiang, "New, Old, and a Syncretism (新旧与调和)," in *Selected Works of Jiang Menglin's Writings of Education*, ed. Qu Shiwei (Beijing: People Press, 1995) 131-134.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

Of note, in the bottom of Jiang's heart, Confucianism was the foundational principle of the settlement of life for Chinese people while Chinese culture and Western culture encountered each other. As Jiang expressed:

...We must not forget that the old Chinese moral edifice, built up through centuries of vicarious experience and generations of continuous effort, by such various means as the Confucian classics, literature in general, the graphic arts, music...Such moral precepts as loyalty, honesty, love of parents, truthfulness, benevolence, righteousness, moderation, and broad-mindedness have contributed much toward the moral emotional make-up of the Chinese people. Intellectual honesty that grows out of modern science will reinforce these virtues that have grown out of ages of moral teaching...On the stem of the Confucian system of knowledge, which starts with the investigation of things, or nature, and leads to human relationships, we shall graft the Western system of scientific knowledge, which starts with the same investigation of things or nature but leads the other way round to their inter-relationships.<sup>201</sup>

After Chinese Nationalist Government came to power since 1927, the GMD party appointed Jiang Menglin as the Minister of Education in the Republic of China. In spite of being a public intellectual, Jiang assisted the nationalist government in implementing the educational policy "Three Principles of the People (*San Ming Zhu Yi*)."<sup>202</sup> Here, Jiang's support of the GMD seemed to contradict his dedication to Dewey's democratic educational thought. Some researchers explained that Jiang deeply appreciated the "*San Ming Zhu Yi*" educational policy on upholding Confucian tradition and national culture because he always identified with Confucian morals and ethics.<sup>203</sup> At the same time, in the face of national crisis, Jiang was a staunch advocate of balancing the needs between national salvation and individual freedom. Thus in the

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<sup>201</sup> Jiang, *Tides from the West*, 254.

<sup>202</sup> "Three Principles of the People" was derived from the core part of Sun Yat-sen's political thought. It meant nationalism, democracy, and the livelihood of the people. The KMT government updated this thought to an official ideology since the reunification of China between 1927 and 1928.

<sup>203</sup> Ou Tsuin-chen, *Selective Works of Education and Culture* (教育与文化书选集) (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1972), 218.

Chinese educator's mind, there was not an irreconcilable conflict between the implementation of official educational policy and the new learning from Deweyan pragmatism.<sup>204</sup> Since Jiang assumed the position as the Chancellor of National Peking University in 1930, he continued to maintain a balanced relationship between new thought and old culture, the cause of national salvation and the independence of Chinese people.

### **Conclusion**

This section of my dissertation targeted the two “supporting roles” in the group of John Dewey’s Chinese devotees: Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin. To throw some light on Guo and Jiang, it would be valuable for the readers to have a relatively complete understanding of an educational encounter between John Dewey and Confucianism during the era of The May Fourth/New Cultural Movement. As pioneering works, their dissertations founded a paradigm for studying Chinese education. By utilizing Western theories, Guo and Jiang respectively studied certain fields of Chinese education (History of Chinese educational system and traditional Chinese educational principles). As discussed above, John Dewey’s educational thought of pragmatism had a strong impact on the two scholars’ dissertations. For the two Chinese authors, Dewey’s ideas, such as “Education is Life” and “Education is Growth,” and “The thoughts of scientific method” became strong theoretical guidelines, on which they could examine or assess Chinese education. The yoking of Dewey’s pragmatism to their own individual capacities tightened the ties of their studies to modern scholarship. Evidently, in their dissertations, Dewey’s pragmatism was

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

understood as a Western cultural asset, which was then introduced to Chinese education.

Meanwhile, from works of Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin, it is clear there is a strong cultural connection between Confucianism and their educational thoughts. A noteworthy matter is that both Chinese scholars still critically thought of Confucianism in correspondence with a strategy of cultural bookkeeping. Guo thought of Confucius's educational idea as a cultural asset while still criticizing the official "Confucianism" since the Han dynasty as a cultural liability. Correspondingly, Confucian moral education was viewed as a cultural wealth to Jiang. At the same time, he regarded the content from Confucian teaching-learning as a cultural liability, that prevented China from learning modern science.

The line of balancing Chinese culture with Western culture thoroughly penetrated the dissertations of Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin. In their educational practice, the two educators tried to apply such a conviction into Chinese reality. Guo merged a perspective of cultural syncretism into his educational reformation in the field of higher education. The yoking of Confucian educational ideas from *The Great Learning* to his individual capacity contributed to the development of National Southeastern University. Subsequently, while attempting to spread Dewey's pragmatism by means of *The New Education*, Jiang insisted on retaining Confucianism as a fundamental principle to guide Chinese people's lives. It is worthwhile to realize that compared with Guo, Jiang seemed not to specifically identify with certain parts of Confucianism, which can be conducive to modern Chinese education. In light of his stance of favoring the KMT educational policy of the "Three Principles of the People,"

Jiang perhaps preferred to view Confucianism as a symbol of Chinese national spirit and identity during the period of national salvation.

## Chapter 4: From Neo-Confucianism to American Pragmatism

### Introduction

As one of the leading figures during the May Fourth period, Hu Shih was widely recognized as an outstanding philosopher, essayist, thinker, educator, and political critic in modern China. In spite of the many facets of renowned intellectual, his most crucial role was that of reforming Chinese literature and formulating a new paradigm for a study of Chinese philosophy during the era of the May Fourth /New Cultural Movement. Significantly, Hu Shih stated that his convictions of the literacy revolution and his philosophical study were deeply affected by John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy. As he said in the preface of *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*:

Since then (1915), John Dewey's Pragmatism became the mentor of my life and thinking, as well as the foundation of my philosophy...In fact, my *Development of Logical Method in Ancient China* and *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* were directed by the school of thought. My idea of Chinese literacy revolution also embodied the thought of the pragmatism.<sup>205</sup>

During his lifetime, Hu Shih thought of himself as Dewey's faithful disciple, dedicated to prompting the influence of pragmatism over Chinese society. While introducing Dewey's thought during the May Fourth era, Hu Shih dedicated himself to support the group of Chinese iconoclasts who argued "down with Confucius and sons."<sup>206</sup> In his essay "the Question of Chastity," Hu Shih questioned the legitimacy of Neo-Confucian doctrines over the preservation of Chinese women's chastity in the new period.<sup>207</sup> In 1919, Hu Shih's lecture, titled "Dewey's Experimentalism (Pragmatism)," further emphasized that Confucian principles of "Three Cardinal Bonds and Five

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<sup>205</sup>Hu Shih, "Self-Introduction", in *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad* (胡适留学日记) (Beijing, China: Tong Xin Press, 2012).

<sup>206</sup>Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, 307.

<sup>207</sup> Hu Shih, "The Question of Chastity (贞操问题)," *New Youth*, 5.no.1, July 15 1918.



Constant Virtues (*san gang wu chang*)”<sup>208</sup> were highly inappropriate to a modern society.<sup>209</sup> All things seemed to indicate Hu Shih’s critical attitude toward Confucianism.

In theory, speaking out in favor of Dewey’s thought was in contradiction with the embrace of Confucianism during the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement; however, Hu Shih had been immersed in the Confucian (or Neo-Confucian) educational atmosphere before he studied abroad. From the perspective of John Dewey’s educational philosophy, educational experience must embody the characteristics of continuity, which run through all stages of someone’s life.<sup>210</sup> According to this notion, this study takes into account Hu Shih’s Confucian educational background and the role it played in his approach to John Dewey’s pragmatism.

In view of these important concerns, this section of the dissertation is an attempt to explore the intellectual connection between Hu Shih’s educational experiences from Confucianism/Neo-Confucianism and John Dewey’s pragmatism. It followed logically that my research pays attention to four sub questions: What did Hu Shih learn from his Confucian educational experience? How and to what extent did Dewey’s pragmatism influence Hu Shih? How did Hu transform himself from classic Chinese education to Dewey’s pragmatism? How did Hu integrate Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy into a Chinese reality?

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<sup>208</sup> In Confucianism, “Three Cardinal Bonds” are as follows: “the emperor was the master of his subjects, the father the master of his sons, and the husband and master of his wife.” The Five Constant Virtues” include benevolence, righteousness, propriety, knowledge and sincerity.

<sup>209</sup> Hu Shih, “Dewey’s Experimentalism (实验主义),” in *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol.2, ed. Ou-Yang Zhesheng (Beijing, Beijing University Press, 1998), 223.

<sup>210</sup> John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (Champion, Kappa Delta Pi, 1938), chapter. 3.

## Neo-Confucian Father Figure

In 1891, Hu Shih (born as Hu Hongzi) was born in Shanghai city. His father, Hu Chuan (1841-1895), was a minor official in the Qing government, as well as a faithful Neo-Confucian scholar. Hu Chuan died when Hu Shih was only three years old. Therefore Hu Shih was primarily raised by his mother. His formal schooling started in his hometown, Ji Xi county of Anhui province around 1895. The content of the traditional elementary school (*sishu*) curriculum was overwhelmingly a study of classic Confucian canons, consisting of *The Classics of Filial Piety*, *The Great Learning*, *Analects of Confucius*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Book of Mencius*, etc.<sup>211</sup>

During the periods of Ming-Qing dynasties (1368-1911), when Cheng-Zhu philosophy<sup>212</sup> of Neo-Confucianism became the official ideology and mainstream thought, ancient Chinese students who wanted to pass the classic civil service examination were required to read most of the books that young Hu Shih studied. Briefly speaking, these Confucian classic learnings aimed to describe a developmental pathway for ancient scholar-apprentices to achieve self-cultivation first, followed by family harmony, then good order in the state, and finally peace in the empire. In accordance with the ideas of the orthodox Confucian canons, the final goal of Neo-Confucian education was still centered in raising Confucian exemplary persons, who could bring harmony under the heaven.

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<sup>211</sup> Hu Shih, *Autobiography of My Forty Years* (四十自述) (Beijing: Zhuo Guo Hua Qiao Press, 1994), 20-22.

<sup>212</sup> Cheng-Zhu School is one of the major philosophical schools of Neo-Confucianism during the periods of Northern and Southern Song dynasties, based on the ideas of the Neo-Confucian philosophers Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao, and Zhu Xi.

During the late imperial period, Cheng-Zhu School of Neo-Confucianism, pushed by the Qing court, still exerted a strong influence on Chinese society and education.<sup>213</sup> From traditional Chinese scholars' standpoint in the era, the philosophical school played a crucial role in the belief system of Chinese daily lives, which channeled Confucian ideas and values to construct their cultural psychology.<sup>214</sup> In particular, in Hu Shih's hometown, Anhui Province, the Cheng-Zhu School enjoyed high popularity among local residents.<sup>215</sup> In such an educational and cultural atmosphere, it would be difficult for Hu Shih to completely shun the influence of certain aspects of Neo-Confucianism. As Jane Roland Martin confirmed, in an educational process, individual learning and cultural transmission are inextricably bound together.<sup>216</sup>

Even though Hu Chuan passed away when Hu Shih was only three years old, a few of Neo-Confucian books written by Hu Chuan greatly contributed to Hu Shih's intellectual growth.<sup>217</sup> The first book, *Poems of the Study of Manhood*, enabled Hu to understand the inseparability of classic education and the preservation of Confucian virtues.<sup>218</sup> Simultaneously, the book emphasized the importance of learning and investigation to self-cultivation in human affairs. The second book titled *Yuan Xue (The Origin of Learning)* taught Hu Shih how to understand the thought of Neo-Confucian cosmology.<sup>219</sup> According to Hu Chuan, the universe and world consisted of two

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<sup>213</sup> Zhang, *Neo-Confucianism and Classic Learnings between Late Qing and Early Republican Period*, 2-8.

<sup>214</sup> Curran, *Education Reform in Republican China: The Failure of Educators to Create a Modern Nations*, 30-32; Zhang, *Neo-Confucianism and Classic Learnings between Late Qing and Early Republican Period*, 118-128.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>216</sup> Martin, *Education Reconfigured: Culture, Encounter, and Change*, 7-25, 14, 17.

<sup>217</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 20-22.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

concepts from ancient cosmology, *qi* (vital force) and *li* (principle), instead of ghosts and devils.<sup>220</sup> In Neo Confucian Hu Chuan's perspective, all things were brought into being by the union of the two universal aspects of reality, so it is impossible that supernatural beings exist at all.<sup>221</sup> According to Hu Shih's recollection, Hu Chuan strongly objected to any form of religious activities in his family because of his firm standpoint on Neo-Confucianism.<sup>222</sup> When Hu Chuan was still alive, he even formulated strict family regulations to separate his family from the influence of Buddhism and Taoism.

Hu Chuan's deeds and writings truly embodied Neo-Confucian's view of religion. In fact, the founders of Neo-Confucianism tended to downplay the role of religion in human life although the philosophical school absorbed some elements from Taoism and Buddhism. For instance, as one of the leading figures of Cheng-Zhu school, Zhu Xi (1130-1200) did not highly promote the worship of spirits and offering to images. Generally speaking, the rites in Neo-Confucianism were a secular one, linking man and man, rather than man to the divine. In other words, to Neo-Confucians, the purpose of ritual practice was to maintain an ethical code and hierarchical relations within a human society.<sup>223</sup> In this regard, Neo-Confucian followers to a large extent embraced Confucius's view of religion.

In *The Analects*, Confucius himself tended to pay more attention to the problem of men than a metaphysical religion. According to him, "...not yet being able to serve other people, how would you able to serve the spirit...Not yet understanding life, how

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>223</sup> Feng, Zhou, and He, *The History of Chinese Culture*, 650-654.

could you understand death?”<sup>224</sup> The secular confusion people would face in a real world is always one of the most important concerns in Confucius’s philosophical thought. In Confucianism, “the absence of an essential religious orientation to life rendered secular education, as a form of human effort toward the achievement of the aims of life, that much more imperative.”<sup>225</sup> For instance, in *The Analects*, the Master further said, “The expression ‘sacrifices as though present’ is taken to mean ‘sacrifice to the spirit as though the spirits are present.’ ...if I myself do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as though I have not sacrificed at all.”<sup>226</sup> A study of religion was not centered in Confucius’ philosophy at all. All in all, both Confucian and Neo-Confucian scholars held onto the view that an ethical practice conducted correct action irrespective of belief, and it eventually developed into an atheistic stance.

In view of the comments above, under the influence of his father, the encounter between Hu Shih and New Confucian thought took place while studying in his hometown. Although Hu Shih criticized ethical codes of Neo-Confucianism during the period of the May Fourth /New Cultural Movement, he took a positive view of his father’s rejection of the worship of supernatural beings derived from Neo-Confucian perspective. As he stated:

My father had no any chance to be exposed to the influence of modern natural science. However, his emphasis upon the ideas of *li* and *qi* from Neo Confucianism was helpful to get rid of many ideas of superstition. Furthermore, Cheng-Zhu School always advocated *gewu qiongli* (the investigation of things and extension of knowledge), which somewhat matches the spirit of modern science.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>224</sup>Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Roger T.Ames, Henry Rose mont, Jr. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 144.

<sup>225</sup>Hu Changtu, *Chinese Education under Communism*, (New York, Columbia University, 1962), 3.

<sup>226</sup>Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 85.

<sup>227</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 36.

Obviously, Hu Shih recognized his father's Neo-Confucian atheistic idea as a cultural asset, which was conducive to his intellectual development. As a basic educational unit, Hu Shih started yoking himself to Neo-Confucianism through his father's edification during the early stages of his childhood. However, during the time, the influence of Neo-Confucianism on Hu Shih filtered by his father was still hazy. Thus, this part of the dissertation will further examine if the encounter between Hu Shih and his classic learning has a long-term educative meaning.

### **Way to Atheism, and Dewey's Pragmatism**

Even though Hu Shih's father made great efforts to create a Neo-Confucian style atheistic atmosphere for his family, most of the family members influenced by his thought were limited to males. Compared to Chinese males, Chinese women mostly followed Neo-Confucianism through maintaining a chaste widowhood (*shou jie*).<sup>228</sup> When Hu Chuan passed away, all adult males in the family had to leave their hometown to make a living. While fulfilling the custom of *shou jie*, Hu Shih's mother actively joined domestic women's practice of Chinese Buddhism. As Hu Shih recalled:

...the women of my family felt not constricted about my father's Neo-Confucian regulation anymore...they practiced Buddhism rituals and worshiped the diversity of deities freely...Guan Yin (female figure of Avalokitesvara in Chinese Buddhism) is their favorite god.<sup>229</sup>

Under this circumstance, Hu Shih was surrounded by religious activities held by his mother and other females. Although he already learned some basic knowledge from the Neo-Confucian atheistic thought of his father, Hu, a little boy at the time, was still

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<sup>228</sup> Zhang Zhaojun, *The History of Neo-Confucianism during Qing Period* (Third Volume) (清代理学史. 下卷) (Guangzhou, Guangdong Province Educational Press, 2006), 504.

Chow Kai-wing, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1994), 207.

<sup>229</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 37-39.

frequently terrified by all sorts of ghosts and demons in Chinese Buddhism, which were mentioned by the women of his family.<sup>230</sup>

Fortunately, Hu Shih's educational experiences from his classic learnings eventually helped him to unyoke himself from the shackles of superstition. According to his recollection, one day at the age of eleven, Hu had a meaningful encounter with the religious view of Sima Guang (1019-1086).<sup>231</sup> In Chinese history, Sima Guang was one of the pioneers of Neo-Confucianism during the period of North Song dynasty, whose thought contributed to the development of Cheng-Zhu school. He has been best remembered as a key contributor for the historic masterwork titled *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* (*zi zhi tong jian*).

In his writings, Hu Shih clearly documented how Sima Guang's sayings enlightened him when reading a paragraph of family precepts written in *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*. As Hu said, "...According to Sima Guang, the spirit was gone away once the human body died. As a result, it is useless to pay any sacrifice and memorial ritual to a ghost and spirit...after repeatedly reviewing this passage, I suddenly jumped with a great happiness!"<sup>232</sup> After that revelation, Hu Shih was no longer scared of evil spirits, and began to question the existence of hell in Chinese Buddhism.<sup>233</sup>

From studying Sima Guang's historical masterpiece, Hu Shih attempted to yoke himself to Neo-Confucian atheistic stance. His writings further recorded a historical

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>233</sup> Hu Shih, "My Belief"(我的信仰), In *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol.1, ed. Ou-Yang Zhesheng (Beijing, Beijing University Press, 1998), 9.

moment during his educational journey. As Hu Shih stated:

One day I read a famous paragraph from *On the Annihilation of the Soul* (*shen mie lun*) by Fan Zhen (450-515),<sup>234</sup> which was cited from Sima Guang in *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*, “The body is the substance of the soul; the soul is the effect of the body. That means the body refers to the substance. The soul to the substance is like sharpness to a blade; the body to the effect is like a blade to its sharpness. However, there is no blade without its sharpness, and no sharpness without the blade...”<sup>235</sup>

For Hu Shih, Master Fan Zhen’s argument deepened his disbelief in the existence of Hell in Chinese Buddhism. Furthermore, Master Fan Zhen’s argument eventually persuaded him to become an unbeliever. In accordance to Hu Shih recollection, “These thirty five words from Fan Zhen, cited by Sima Guang, completely drove out all ghosts and spirits in my mind. Since then I became a person disbelieving any supernatural beings.”<sup>236</sup> In retrospect, Hu Shih concluded “it was very surprising that Sima Guang’s *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government* had a great impact on my religious belief, so that I was completely converted to be an atheist...”<sup>237</sup>

Evidently, the yoking of Neo-Confucianism to the individual capacity of Hu Shih greatly contributed to his religious view. During his lifetime, Hu Shih took a very critical view of Chinese Buddhism. For instance, even in his late years, Hu still criticized:

I always believed that Buddhism, which was spread across China for the period of one thousand year from Eastern Han to North Song dynasty, was very harmful to Chinese people’s lives...Even ninety five percent of the contents of Buddhism was full of nonsenses, artificial speeches, and liars.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>234</sup>Fan Zhen was one of the Confucian pioneers who argued against Buddhism during the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589). In order to support his own anti-Buddhism stance and Neo-Confucian thought, Sima Guang deliberately reference Fan’s argument in his historical works.

<sup>235</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 40.

<sup>236</sup> Hu, “My Belief”, 9.

<sup>237</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 41.

<sup>238</sup> Hu Shih, *An Autobiography: As Told by Hu Shih* (胡适口述自传), ed and trans. Tong Te-gong (Teipei, Yuan Liu Press, 2010), 332.



Of note, Hu held a similar perspective toward Christianity while studying in the U.S. More interestingly, Hu Shih became interested in Christianity upon his visit to Cornell University to the U.S in 1910, so much so, that he almost determined to be a Christian.<sup>239</sup> However, one year later Hu Shih dramatically lost his interest in Christianity.<sup>240</sup> Subsequently, he even scorned Christianity based on the life experience he acquired from Chinese Buddhism. For instance, in his diary on October 12, 1912, the Chinese scholar wrote down his thoughts in response to a statement made by a Methodist minister: "...Whose [the Methodist minister's] views were preposterous and confused, resembling a Chinese village woman discussing the story of devils and ghosts in hell."<sup>241</sup> On Christmas Eve, 1912, Hu's diary recorded his reflection on the religious practice he observed in the Church:

...I notice that there were many statues in the middle of which was a crucifix...these were idols! Is there any difference between these and the Chinese idols? ...On the altar, the preacher closed his hands to extend greetings. All there were just like the repulsive Buddhist ceremonies. The prayers and hymns of the Catholics were all incomprehensible...<sup>242</sup>

During the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, Hu rejected Christianity as a cultural liability that caused a miseducative effect to Chinese society. When criticizing religious teachings from church schools in China in 1923, Hu Shih stated that "Now some of us want to question if the fundamental doctrines of Christianity can be

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>240</sup> The reason Hu Shih was once interested in Christianity is because he wanted was to strip Christianity of its religious elements and accept its secular value. He perceived Christianity as an ethical-moral system. That is, he put Christianity and Confucianism in the same category. See in Chou Ming-chi, *Hu Shih and Intellectual Choice in Modern China* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1984), 41, 42, 48.

<sup>241</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*. (Beijing, China: Tong Xin Press, 2012), 49.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 64.

validated; we want to ask if there indeed is God or spirit after life.”<sup>243</sup> It is fair to state that some of Hu’s writings above displayed a tendency to equate religion with superstition. Accordingly, in Hu’s belief, “religion” and modern education seemed to be incompatible. This conviction is in opposition to Western scholars’ perception of the relationship between religion and education.

From the perspective of Jane Roland Martin’s educational theory, when one or more items of cultural assets attach to Hu Shih’s individual capacity in his Neo-Confucian education, then his classic learning can be considered an educational encounter. As a result, an encounter between Hu Shih and Neo-Confucianism laid a solid psychological and cultural foundation on which he could rely to construct his lifelong view of religion. In connection with his critical view of religion, Hu could approach new educational learning. It is very important to realize that in Hu Shih’s view, John Dewey’s view of religion became a key factor to link Hu Shih with Deweyan pragmatism. As Hu Shih recalled during his later years:

...the reason that I became obsessive in his (Dewey’s) philosophy was perhaps because his view of religion was the most moderate in contrast with other pragmatists. Dewey sharply criticized William James. To be honest, I never enjoyed reading James’s *The Will to Believe*. I per se was one of the persons who lacked ‘the will to believe.’ Therefore, Dewey’s instrumentalism-related thought, more based on science instead of religion, greatly attracted me.<sup>244</sup>

In fact, John Dewey used to be a faithful Christian when he was a young man. Nevertheless, in Dewey’s philosophy, there was a strong tendency to secularize the ethics of religion. In Dewey’s view, religion is an expression of the social relations of

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<sup>243</sup> Hu Shih, “The Difficulties that Church Schools in China Meet Today (今日教会教育之难关),” in *Collected Writings of Hu Shih*, vol.14 (Taipei, Yuan Liu Press, 1986), 235.

<sup>244</sup>Hu, *An Autobiography*, 134.

the community instead of a mere feeling of the occult.<sup>245</sup> Thus, as a leading figure of progressive educational reform, Dewey further extended this conviction to his educational thought. For example, in *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey maintained:

I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling, that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth...I believe that in this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and usher in of the true kingdom of God.<sup>246</sup>

This important reference shows that Dewey was not a fanatic believer in heart. Instead, the purpose of his thought was to build up a bridge between religion and his educational reforms.

On the other hand, Dewey enthusiastically embraced evolutionary naturalism, challenged classical conceptions of absolute truth and constructed a non-theistic image of God that hardly represents the personal Heavenly Father evoked in the Lord's Prayer. For instance, Dewey's *From Absolutism to Experimentalism* indicates his reluctant attitude toward religion. Dewey declared in his essay:

I do not mention this theological and intuitional phase because it had any lasting influence upon my own development, except negatively. I learned the terminology of an intuitional philosophy, but it did not go deep, and in no way did it satisfy what I was dimly reaching for.<sup>247</sup>

Moreover, in *A Common Faith*, Dewey made more efforts to retain religious value while removing the indefensible stance of supernatural belief. In the American educator's view, it is obvious that belief in the supernatural was not reasonable in the modern world. As he argued:

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<sup>245</sup>John Dewey, "Christianity and Democracy," in *Religious Thought at the University of Michigan* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 2005), 60.

<sup>246</sup>John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," in *The School Journal*, vol. LIV, no.3 (Jan 16, 1897), 77-80.

<sup>247</sup>John Dewey, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism", In *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statement* (New York, Macmillan, 1930), 13-27,doi:  
[http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey\\_1930.html](http://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey_1930.html)

...it is this active relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name 'God'. I would not insist that the name must be given. There are those who hold that the associations of the term with the supernatural are so numerous and close that any use of the word 'God' is sure to give rise to misconception and be taken as a concession to traditional ideas.<sup>248</sup>

Simultaneously, *A Common Faith* displayed that for Dewey, human intellectual life must extend from traditional religious practice to the improvement of their knowledge and understanding. He pointed out:

...The crisis today as to the intellectual content of religious belief has been caused by the change in the intellectual climate due to the increase of our knowledge and our means of understanding. I have tried to show that this change is not fatal to the religious values in our common experience, however adverse its impact may be upon historic religions. Rather, provided that the methods and results of intelligence at work are frankly adopted, the change is liberating.<sup>249</sup>

Although his argument did not completely express an atheistic stance, Dewey's philosophy tended to place an emphasis on observing and understanding human experience in an earthly society. In this respect, Confucianism and Dewey's pragmatic philosophy share a similar common ground. Since Confucianism evolved into Neo-Confucianism after the Northern Song dynasty, the ultimate concern of Neo-Confucian scholars was still closely associated with human affairs. These significant similarities between both philosophical systems greatly inspired Hu Shih to approach and adopt his form of pragmatism. As Chinese-American historian, Tong Tekong (1920-2009) remarked "...Besides John Dewey, the other two of Hu Shih's teachers are 'Confucius' and 'Mencius.'"<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1934), 28.

<sup>249</sup> Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 31.

<sup>250</sup> Tong Te-kong, *Miscellaneous Recollection of Hu Shih* (胡适杂忆) (Taipei: Biographic Literature Publishing House, 1979), 53.

In consequence, Dewey's view of religion was very compatible with Hu Shih's cultural psychology stemming from Confucianism/Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, the American philosopher's view of religion and the atheistic stance from Confucianism were both cultural assets, which Hu Shih learned from Confucian and Western educational experiences. When approaching Dewey's pragmatism, Hu Shih was wise enough to build a bridge between the two cultural assets of China and the West.

### **Confucian Concept of Immortality and Hu Shih's Intellectual Thought**

In Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism, the rejection of supernatural beliefs by classic scholars was followed by the construction of the concept of immortality from the Confucian perspective. Therefore, when yoking himself to Neo-Confucianism, it is highly possible that Hu Shih also became coupled to the Confucian concept of immortality. Before examining the influence of Confucian immortality on Hu Shih's thought, a brief explanation of the implication of the concept is demanded.

In Christianity, the concept of Heaven can generally be seen as a personal or transcendent state of being. The doctrine of salvation took root in Christians' minds, such that Messianic prophecies became the most important mission to them. Therefore, all humans are endowed with immortality either at creation or by a gift already given through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In contrast with Christianity, due to the absence of this aspect of transcendence from "Heaven" in Confucianism, Confucian scholars expected a high degree of perceiving the totality of human affairs, consisting of the individual, the family, the state, and the world. As Max Weber said, "...it may be said that the orthodox Confucian Chinese, but not the Buddhist, performs his rite for the

sake of his fate in this world...but not at all for the sake of his fate in the 'hereafter.'"<sup>251</sup>

Additionally, since they simply refused to be continually burdened with "sin," Confucian scholars had no connection with supra-mundane God and a creatural world.<sup>252</sup> Thus, whereas Christian people pursue the idea of personal survival after death, Confucians portrayed their own concept of immortality through the lens of secular life.

The Confucian idea of immortality can be reflected by a historical dialogue between the two ancient statesmen, which were cited in Hu Shih's writings several times. According to *Zuo Zhuan* (左传), the earliest Chinese works of narrative history mainly covering the Spring and Autumn period (771-476BC), Fan Xuanzi, a politician from the Jin kingdom, asserted immortality is the preservation of the surname and the giving of clan branches, by which the ancestral temples are preserved and the sacrifices continued without interruption from age to age. However, Shusun Bao, an ambassador from the Lu kingdom in the Jin kingdom, disagreed with him. He said:

I have heard that the highest meaning of it is when there is established an example of virtue or character (*li de*); the second, when there is established an example of successful service for your country (*li gong*); and the third, when there is established an example of wise words (*li yan*). When these examples are not forgotten with length of time, this is what is meant by immortality after death.<sup>253</sup>

Hu Shih translated Shusun Bao's idea into the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three W's: the immortality of Worth, Work, and Words.<sup>254</sup> The doctrine argued by Shusun

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<sup>251</sup> Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 144.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>253</sup> Hu Shih, "A View of Immortality", in *English Writings of Hu Shih*, ed, Chou Chih-Ping (Beijing, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2012), 235.

<sup>254</sup> The immortality of Worth refers to the lasting influence of great personality. The immortality of Work is the permanent value of achievement of great statesmen, empire builders, great generals, great leader of men. The third immortality, that of Words, include great literature and great thoughts, words of

Bao was strongly echoed by both orthodox Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism.

For instance, in *the Analects*, Confucius said: “If at dawn you learn of and tread the way (*dao*),<sup>255</sup> you can face death at dusk.”<sup>256</sup> When it comes to his ideal, the master remarked “I would like to bring peace and contentment to the aged, to share relationships of trust and confidence with my friends, and to love and protect the young.”<sup>257</sup> In order to accomplish his ideal, Confucius expected to serve the government. As he claimed, “if someone were to make use of me in governing, in the course of one year I could make a difference, and in three years I would really have something to show for it.”<sup>258</sup> Confucius further instructed his students: “Exemplary persons despise the thought of ending their days without having established a name.”<sup>259</sup> In the meantime, the Master strongly encouraged his students to practice and polish their words because he believed that “without well-composed wise words, ideas of the exemplary person will not last forever.”<sup>260</sup>

In brief, from Confucius’s understanding, virtue, political achievement, and words became the three key paths to achieve life immortality. Historically, those who successfully reached the three goals can be remembered by Chinese people generation after generation. Another important point that I need to emphasize is that Confucian

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wisdom expressed either in the great philosophies or in the great poetry and prose of the various of nations. See Hu, *A View of Immortality*, 235.

<sup>255</sup> “*dao*” in Confucianism is to experience, to interpret, and to influence the world in such a way as to reinforce and extend the way of life inherited from one’s cultural predecessors. For Confucius, *dao* is a way of becoming consummately and authoritatively human. The term simultaneously means the deed of political righteousness for public interest. See Roger T. Ames, Henry Rose mont, Jr, “Introduction: Historical and Textual Background,” In *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Roger T. Ames, Henry Rose mont, Jr. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 26, 46.

<sup>256</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Roger T. Ames, Henry Rose mont, Jr. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 91.

<sup>257</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 102.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>260</sup> *Zuo Zhuan* (左传), Book .XI. Duke Xiang. [http://so.gushiwen.org/guwen/bookv\\_2946.aspx](http://so.gushiwen.org/guwen/bookv_2946.aspx)

immortality is characterized by the feature of public interest. That is to say, a Confucian exemplary person enjoying the status of immortality in Chinese history must “be the first to feel concern about the country and the last to enjoy oneself.”<sup>261</sup>

Historically, inheriting the main body of orthodox Confucianism, Neo-Confucian education further strengthened the integration of the immortality of the Three W’s. During the period of Ming-Qing dynasties, some well-known Neo-Confucian scholar-officials, such as Wang Yangming (1472-1529), Gu Yanwu (1613-1682), Zeng Guofan (1811-1872), Li Hongzhang (1823-1901), Zuo Zongtang(1812-1885), and Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909), all treated the Three W’s as their ultimate life goal.

In light of the comments above, it is concluded that, similar to an atheistic stance, the Doctrine of Immortality of Three W’s is also one of the most important cultural stocks from Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism. Thus, when receiving Neo-Confucian education during his early years, it is inevitable that Hu Shih yoked himself to the Confucian view of immortality. In an unpublished English manuscript, Hu Shih acknowledged he indeed attached his individual capacities to the cultural stock of the Immortality of the Three W’s. According to Hu,

From my younger days I have been attracted by this doctrine...For many years the idea of these Three Immortalities seemed to quite satisfactory to me. I was not interested in the idea of personal survival after death. As a matter of fact immortality in the sense of personal survival after death somehow has never aroused much interest in the Chinese intellectual class.<sup>262</sup>

In another English article, Hu Shih gave us more details about how he yoked himself with Confucian ideas of Immortality:

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<sup>261</sup> The famous saying was said by Fan Zhongyan, a Neo-Confucian scholar of the Northern Song dynasty. See in Fan Zhongyan, “Thought of Yue Yang Tower (岳阳楼记),” *Gu Wen Guan Zhi* (古文观止), ed, Wu Chucai (Wuhan, Wuhan Press. 2000), 407.

<sup>262</sup> Hu, “A View of Immortality”, 236.



...Every day, from my high seat, I could see on the north wall scroll on which was writ large a copy of part of a famous letter by Yen Chen-Ching<sup>263</sup>...As I began to learn to read the cursive writings, I recognized that the letter opened with a quotation about the three immortalities of Worth, Work, and Words. Fifty years have passed, but the vivid impression of my first discovery of those immortal words on the immortalities has always remained with me.<sup>264</sup>

These important references above indicated that Hu Shih's individual capacity and the cultural stock of Confucian immortality became yoked together. As discussed above, the core meaning of the Doctrine of Immortality of Three W's for the Confucian is to engrave his name on historical books through dedication to Chinese country and society. Especially, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when national crisis unprecedentedly overshadowed China, the Confucian principle of immortality inspired the Chinese intellectual class to develop a sense of responsibility for awakening Chinese people and modernizing the nation. As one member of the class, Hu Shih was no exception.

Some of Hu's writings in his early years further indicates the educative encounter between him and the Confucian concept of immortality. When receiving his new education in Shanghai, Hu Shih, a 19-year-old student at that time, wrote down his thought in *Jing Ye Xun Bao (Newspaper of Natural Selection)*,

...Confucius...had been in his pursuit of bringing harmony and happiness to the world. As a great sage, Confucius took his responsibility for an entire country, cherishing a high sense of honor...everyone knows honor is indispensable thing to our life...We are upright people, whose livings greatly depend upon the food and clothing from others in the world. We are supposed to do a right thing with vigor and vitality. We should benefit millions of people when we are alive. Our names will should be memorized by them after we die. If we can achieve the two goals, our lives have no any regret!<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>263</sup>Yen Chen-Ching, a well-known Confucian statesman and great calligrapher of the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Chinese history.

<sup>264</sup>Hu Shih, "The Concept of Immortality in Chinese Thought," in *English Writings of Hu Shih*, ed, Chou Chih-Ping(Beijing, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2012), 298.

<sup>265</sup>Hu Shih, "Honor(荣誉),"in *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol.9, ed. Ou-Yang Zhesheng (Beijing, Beijing University Press, 1998), 590.

This writing by Hu Shih emphasized his high motivation to pursue an outstanding achievement that would shine Chinese history.

Some phrases of Hu Shih's diary while studying abroad also showed the influence of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three W's on Hu Shih. On April 13, 1911, Hu's diary told us his ambition to be a literary critic of *the Book of Songs*.<sup>266</sup> He believed that "the classic book only with my commentary will be memorized by Chinese scholars forever."<sup>267</sup> On February 18, 1915, Hu Shih wrote:

Master Zeng Zi<sup>268</sup> said, 'Scholar-apprentice cannot but be strong and resolved, for they bear a heavy charge and their way is long. Where they take authoritative conduct as their charge, is it not a heavy one? And where their way ends only in death, is it not indeed long?' I bear an important responsibility and my road is very long. Therefore, I should prepare for them earlier.<sup>269</sup>

On May 28, 1915, the young Chinese student further expressed in his diary:

...according to my observance, my homeland greatly needs talented men in all fields. Thus, I want to be knowledgeable and open-minded person, so that I can be qualified to become the teacher of Chinese people in the future.<sup>270</sup>

It is fair to present that the Confucian view of immortality left an indelible mark on Hu Shih during his young period. Following Martin's view of a cultural bookkeeping, it is correct to say that Hu Shih regarded the main body of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three W's as a cultural asset of his Confucian learning. The traditional doctrine highly motivated Hu Shih to pursue the goal of national salvation.

After Hu returned China in 1917, he attempted to embed modernity in the Confucian view of immortality. Under the influence of the Western idea of democracy

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<sup>266</sup>*Book of Songs*, also known as the Classic of Poetry (诗经), is the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry, consisting of 305 works dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. It is one of the five classic canons compiled by Confucius.

<sup>267</sup>Hu, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*, 12.

<sup>268</sup>Master Zeng Zi (503-435BC), one of the most outstanding Confucius's disciples.

<sup>269</sup>Hu, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*, 325.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

and individualism, the young Chinese scholars revised the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three W's to the theory of Social Immortality. The heart of such a theory lies in a conviction that "the totality of human experience consists of not only a few outstanding historical figures, but also innumerable common people."<sup>271</sup> From Hu's perspective, it is inevitable that the individual (*xiao wo*) is destined to perish from the world. However, as a whole, the society (*da wo*) exist forever.<sup>272</sup> Thus, Hu Shih concluded that "it is quite possible and logical for us moderns to reinterpret this ancient conception and democratize or socialize it, so that worth may mean all that we are, work may mean all that we do, words may mean all that we think and say."<sup>273</sup>

Compared to the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three W's, Social Immortality theory somewhat alluded the fact that the cause of national salvation in Hu Shih's mind was believed to be centered in social progression as a whole. More to the point, derived from the spirit of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three W's, Hu's idea of Social Immortality still aimed to achieve an accomplishment in a "secular" world. This is in continuity with the idea of "Not yet understanding life, how could you understand death"<sup>274</sup> from *The Analects of Confucius*.

### **Idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society"**

Together with the yoking of the Confucian concept of immortality, another relevant Confucian tradition, the idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society" (*jing shi zhi yong*) was naturally adopted by the young Chinese scholar. When it comes to idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society" (*jing shi zhi yong*), some scholars tend to

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid.,19.

<sup>272</sup> Hu, "A View of Immortality," 239.

<sup>273</sup> Hu, "The Concept of Immortality in Chinese Thought," 299.

<sup>274</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 85.

understand the idea from the perspective of bureaucratic statecraft.<sup>275</sup> In fact, the thought was derived from pragmatic thought of Confucianism, which stresses the importance of political and social participation, as well as reflects the ideal of Confucian humanism.<sup>276</sup> As Confucius said “It is the person who is able to broaden the way (*dao* 道), not only the way that broaden the person.”<sup>277</sup> Therefore, the development of classic bureaucratic statecraft by Confucian official-scholars was actually bolstered by an activism-based educational idea from Confucianism.<sup>278</sup>

In terms of education, the classic idea emphasizes the conviction that the purpose of learning should contribute to the resolution of social and political problems, by serving the government. For instance, when talking about learning the arts of poetry, Confucius commented:

If people can recite all of the three hundred Songs and yet when given official responsibility, fail to perform effectively, or when sent to distant quarters, are unable to act on their own initiatives, then even though they have mastered so many of them, what good are they to them?<sup>279</sup>

Logically speaking, Confucian education was not inclined to view learning for the sake of learning. Instead, Confucian scholars believed education should assume a responsibility for serving a political and social goal. As one of the Confucian students, Zi Xia (~420BCE/1999) argued: If while serving in public office one has a surplus of energy, it should be directed toward study, if while studying one has a surplus of

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<sup>275</sup> Zhang Hao, “Interpretation of the Thought of “Jing Shi” since Song-Ming period (宋明以来儒家经世思想试析”, in *Self-Selected Works of Zhang Hao* (张灏自选集) (Shanghai, Shanghai Education Press, 2003) 58-78.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-78.

<sup>277</sup> Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, 190.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-78.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

energy, it should be directed at seeking public office.<sup>280</sup>

More to the point, to most of Confucian scholar-apprentices, if they could not become officials, they still prefer to keep the state in their mind, in order to bring benefits to a society by dedicating themselves to the fields of scholarship and moral cultivation. Consequently, the idea of “Learning of Practical Use to Society” represented a pragmatic aspect of Confucian education. This branch paid considerable attention to achievements of harmonizing and strengthening state by applying “useful” knowledge from the classic learning into Chinese social reality.<sup>281</sup>

The late 19th century witnessed the tradition increasingly accepted by Confucian official-scholars in response to unprecedented Western cultural and military challenges. In fact, a philosophical dualism of “*ti-yong*,” which had been increasingly advocated and adopted by the official-scholar class, was mostly derived from the motto of “Learning of Practical Use for Society.” As my preceding chapters note, based on *ti-yong* frame, the court only encouraged Chinese students to learn military technology and industrial science; correspondingly, the introduction of the values of civil liberty and democracy was firmly rejected by the Chinese ruling class.

Nevertheless, For Hu Shih’s generation, they extended their focus through “individual capacities” beyond Confucian *ti-yong* dualism to learn Western thought and idea. Simultaneously, the idea of “Learning of Practical Use for Society” still wielded a great influence upon them. Consequently, saving the Chinese nation with “a useful learning” still became the most critical issue that Hu Shih and his contemporaries

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<sup>280</sup>Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Feng Tianyu, *The Essence of Classic Chinese Canons* (中华元典精神) (Shanghai: Shanghai People Press, 1994), 273-280.

needed to explore. As a result, Hu Shih made a careful selection of the items of cultural stocks of Western learning, which should be yoked to himself.

For example, when receiving new education in Shanghai between 1904 and 1910, Hu Shih enthusiastically embraced the notion of Social Darwinism, which was promoted by Yan Fu (1854-1921)'s *Tian Yan Lun (On Evolution)*.<sup>282</sup> According to Hu Shih's recollection, the two terms introduced by Yan Fu's translation, "natural selection" (*wu jing tian ze*) and "survival of the fittest" (*shi zhe sheng cun*), quickly became one of the most fashionable slogans of him and his classmates.<sup>283</sup> The popularity of these two terms among Chinese youth was a reflection of the fact that China was in danger of being torn by Great Powers. Inspired by the slogan of Social Darwinism, Hu Shih changed his first name from "Hongzi" to "Shih," which was directly drawn from the term of "survival of the fittest."<sup>284</sup>

In addition, the book entitled *New Citizen*, which was written by Liang Qichao during the early 1900's, also had a powerful impact upon Hu Shih's thought. In the book, Liang stated that China urgently demanded more than new armies, technology, industries, and law, so that best way to save the country was to create new Chinese citizenship, with a new set of values.<sup>285</sup> As such, Liang pointed out the significance of learning new virtue and culture from the West to national salvation. In Liang's mind, Western ideas and thought could become a useful tool for China to overcome national crisis. More to the point, the Liang Qichao's work greatly inspired Hu Shih to perceive

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<sup>282</sup>*Tian Yan Lun* is the first Chinese translation book of *Evolution and Ethics* by Thomas Henry Huxley, which elaborated on Darwin's theory of evolution. While studying *Tian Yan Lun*, most of Chinese youth preferred to understand Western Darwinism from the perspective of international politics.

<sup>283</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>285</sup>*Ibid.*, 149-219.

a new culture and world outside of his homeland. As Hu recalled, “*New Citizen* definitely opened a new world to me. The book made me completely believe the existence of more developed culture and nation outside China.”<sup>286</sup>

In short, the yoking of Social Darwinism and the idea of the New Citizen to Hu Shih’s individual capacity further strengthened the young Chinese scholar’s motivations to study more “useful and practical” knowledge from outside China in pursuit of national salvation. In order to contribute to the empowerment of China, Hu Shih first determined to pursue the major of agriculture upon coming to Cornell University in 1911.<sup>287</sup> However, two years later, Hu found the study of philosophy more attractive to him, as well as more useful to save his country.<sup>288</sup> Hence, he changed his major to philosophy. Yet Hu Shih quickly lost his interest in studying at Cornell University because he was bored by the objective idealism preached by the philosophers there.<sup>289</sup> In a few paragraphs in his diaries written while studying at Cornell University, Hu expressed his desire for finding “a more useful learning” from the U.S. On January 25, 1914, he said:

...Today learning what my country urgently needs is not a novel theory or profound philosophy, but a system of knowledge which can be practically useful for education, social customs, and government method in China. In my view, there are three forms of learning which can be miraculous for Chinese society: the method of induction, a historical horizon, and an evolutionary view.<sup>290</sup>

Coincidentally, it turns out that Dewey’s philosophy to a large extent embraces these three forms of learning.<sup>291</sup> In this diary, Hu further listed the knowledge that he wanted

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<sup>286</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 56.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 636.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, 636.

<sup>289</sup> Hu, *An Autobiography*, 132.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>291</sup> Yu Ying-shih, *Hu Shih in Retrospect: Rethinking Hu Shih’s Idea* (Shanghai, San Lian Press, 2012), 195.

to pursue when studying abroad. He wrote: “The first is Western evidential scholarship, the second is the knowledge of practical use for society, and the third is the theory of natural rights.”<sup>292</sup> Hu even blamed himself for his superficial understanding of them.<sup>293</sup> It is obvious that Hu’s American schooling had been clearly affected by the combination of the Confucian idea of “Learning of Practical Use to Society” and his new learnings.

More interestingly, Cornell University philosophers’ sharp critiques of Dewey’s pragmatism inspired Hu Shih’s interest in the American thinker’s idea. He recollected that “before going to the Columbia in 1915, I spent a whole summer reading most of John Dewey’ works. Since then, Dewey’s pragmatism became a guide for my life and thought. It also became the foundation of my philosophy.”<sup>294</sup> From Dewey’s philosophy, Hu Shih finally found “a system of knowledge which can be practically useful for education, social customs, and government method in China.”<sup>295</sup>

In short, the branch of Confucianism focused on the precept of “Learning of Practical Use to Society” became a philosophical driving force behind Hu Shih’s approach to Dewey’s philosophy. Although Hu Shih extended his focus through “individual capacities” beyond Confucian-style *ti-yong* dualism to learn Western ideas, he still tended to treat that knowledge from a pragmatic perspective. In other words, the yoking of a new cultural stock to the individual capacity of Hu Shih seems to strengthen the coupling of himself to the idea of “Learning of Practical Use to Society.”

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Wu Zhengyin, *History of Chinese Education* (Taipei, Shi Da Shu Yuan Press, 1996), 29.

<sup>292</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad*, 82.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Hu, *An Autobiography*, 133.

<sup>295</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad*, 83.



As a result, Western learning, including Dewey's philosophy, became a useful method, which can reach certain utilitarian goals. In brief, through a cultural bookkeeping strategy, Hu Shih's recognition of the cultural assets from both Confucian and Western learnings depended on a fixed standard: they should be useful for China. Hu Shih's pragmatic view of Dewey's philosophy can be further evidenced by some of his writings. When Dewey departed China for the U.S in July, 1921, Hu Shih wrote:

Dr. Dewey did not leave us some special ideas, such as Communism, Anarchism, the idea of free love, etc. The only thing he gave us is a way of philosophic thinking, so that we can use this method to resolve our specific problems. We call this way pragmatism.<sup>296</sup>

During his later years, Hu Shih again emphasized his practical perspective toward Dewey's thought, asserting:

My variety of works of Chinese thought and history revolve around the idea of "method", which actually have dominated all of my writings for forty years. Basically speaking, this idea was definitely benefited from John Dewey's influence.<sup>297</sup>

Considering these references, Hu Shih surely believed that Dewey's pragmatism was an instrumental philosophical system, rather than a novel theory or profound philosophy.

### **Scientific spirit and Confucian School of Evidential Investigation**

The preceding writings already uncovered that the yoking of the cultural stocks from Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, such as the atheistic worldview, the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three W's, and the idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society," to the individual capability of Hu Shih become the keys to understand his acceptance of John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy. Apart from those classic

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<sup>296</sup> Hu Shih, "Mr Dewey and China," in *Democracy and Modern Society: Dewey's Lecture in China* (民治主义与现代社会: 杜威在华讲演集), ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiexiang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 743.

<sup>297</sup> Hu, *An Autobiography*, 135.

learnings, the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation (*pu xue*) also played a very important role in Hu's Chinese educational experience.

Historically, the School of Evidential Investigation was mostly derived from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Under Manchu rule, the implementation of the policy of literary inquisition by the court forced Chinese scholars to avoid critically inquiring into Confucian classic canons and politics. Hence, most of them had to find a "safe" subject to study.<sup>298</sup> During the period of Qianlong (1711-1799) and Jiaqing emperors (1760-1820), more and more Chinese scholars chose to concentrate on the School of Evidential Investigation, which emphasized pursuing concrete analysis of Confucian classic texts. Through very carefully studying the classic books and ancient relics, Confucian scholars expected to examine their authenticity, interpolations, and exact meanings. Based on evidence and logical reasoning, the grand axiom of the School of Evidential Investigation was to determine the truth in the facts.

Briefly speaking, the school was an embodiment of classic methodology of researching classic canons. Of note, from the perspectives of Confucian scholars, the driving force behind textual investigation was to achieve "Dao" through discovering the original meaning of Confucian classic texts.<sup>299</sup> During the Qing period, The School of Evidential Investigation was prevalent in the Chinese intellectual class. Most members of the May Fourth generation received training in this scholarship when growing up during the late Qing period.<sup>300</sup> To this case, Hu Shih made no exception.

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<sup>298</sup> Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Harvard University, 1984), 16.

<sup>299</sup> Yu, *Hu Shih in Retrospect*, 226.

<sup>300</sup> Ou-Yang Zhesheng, *Historical Interpretation of the May Fourth Movement* (五四运动的历史诠释) (Taipei: Showwe Information Co, Ltd, 2011), 3.

Before coming to the U.S, by studying *The Thirteen Classics of Chinese Literature* (十三经注疏),<sup>301</sup> Hu Shih gradually developed a strong interest in the School of Evidential Investigation. Within the period of seven years studying in the U.S, the young Chinese scholar still spent considerable time writing some essays focusing on the classic school. For instance, based on his training from the School of Evidential Investigation, Hu wrote an excellent article to examine the real meaning of certain words in *the Classic of Songs* (the earliest collection of ancient Chinese poetry between 1046 and 771BC).<sup>302</sup> While studying in the U.S, The many of classic works he made efforts to examine covered the canons of Daoism, Chinese Legalism, Confucianism, and other traditional approaches of the Pre-Qin period.<sup>303</sup>

More importantly, accompanied by his acceptance of John Dewey's idea in the U.S, he began to consider the linkage between the ancient school of evidential investigation and a modern scientific method. Connected to my previous argument, Hu Shih was more inclined to regard Dewey's thought as a practical method of useful leaning. For example, when studying Dewey's *How We Think* in the U.S, Hu Shih tried to interpret the scientific feature of the book from a pragmatic dimension. To his understanding, this book aimed to expound how scientific thinking can effectively resolve puzzled problems, through formulation of hypothesis, evidential analysis, and inductive reasoning.

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<sup>301</sup> A famous Qing dynasty collection of thirteen Confucian canons edited by Ruan Yuan(1764-1849) , together with scholar's commentaries.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 169-172.

<sup>303</sup> Ou-Yang, *Historical Interpretation of the May Fourth Movement*, 6.

In this regard, Hu Shih believed both the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation and Dewey's ideas are related. When discussing the influence of *How We Think* on his thought, Hu Shih addressed:

...Dewey's method of thinking help me understand the procedure of a normal scientific research. His idea also help me understand the methodology of ancient scholarship in China for the latest three hundred years, such as the fields of textology and exegetic. I translated the totality of these classic learnings into English as 'The School of Evidential Investigation'...I was the first one who found out a common ground between modern scientific law and ancient Chinese textology and exegetic. Dewey's thought resulted in my conclusion.<sup>304</sup>

During the May Fourth/New Cultural period, in his famous article titled "The Research Ways of the Scholars of Qing period" (Original title: "The Scientific Research Way of the Scholars of Qing period"), Hu Shih articulated that the strength of the Qing scholars' School of Evidential Investigation lies in the fact that they knew how to formulate a hypothesis. At the same time, they also knew the importance of utilizing evidence to prove their own hypothesis. Therefore, Hu Shih concluded that the classic school greatly embraced a modern scientific value...<sup>305</sup> As a result, Hu Shih epitomized the methodology that the Qing scholars adopted into one sentence, "Bring up hypothesis bravely while proving it carefully."<sup>306</sup>

More interestingly, Hu Shih made a similar comment on John Dewey's pragmatism. According to him:

John Dewey provided us with a philosophy of thinking, treated thinking as a arts, as well as a skill...I found out that this skill was applicable to both natural science and historical science...The substance of this skill is located the conviction that bring up hypothesis bravely while proving it carefully. This

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<sup>304</sup> Hu, *An Autobiography*, 138-139.

<sup>305</sup> Hu Shih, "The Research Ways of Qing Scholars", in *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol.2, ed. Ou-Yang Zhesheng (Beijing, Beijing University Press, 1998), 288-289.

<sup>306</sup> Hu, "The Research Ways of Qing Scholars", 303.

experimental thinking skill should be qualified to have the title of ‘creative intelligence’.<sup>307</sup>

During his late years, when discussing the generality of scientific law, Hu Shih further stated:

...During recent decades, I always simplified scientific law as the formula of “Bring up hypothesis bravely while proving it carefully”. I acknowledged that my understanding of all procedures of scientific law highly depended on Dewey’s instruction. In fact, both the East (China) and the West share the same perspectives of research methods. The reason that both have a shared view of this issue is because the two sides embrace common experience of human being.<sup>308</sup>

Apparently, Hu Shih believed that there was a common ground between the theory of the research method in China and the West. Meanwhile, he regarded the School of Evidential Investigation as a cultural asset of Confucian scholarship, which can direct him to embrace the scientific law of John Dewey’s philosophy. As a Chinese-American historian scholar, Yu Ying-shih states:

...Hu Shih approached to Dewey’s thought based on his academic background of the classic learning, in particular, his training from the School of Evidential Investigation. With this background, he found out both Dewey’s pragmatism and the Confucian school share a similar research procedure, which were made up of “historical method”, “hypothesis”, and “prove”. On the other hand, Hu thought that American pragmatism was superior to the School of Evidential Investigation because it can be utilized to resolve all problems in human society. For Hu Shih, this is the highest status of the latest scientific methodology.<sup>309</sup>

Accordingly, the yoking of the School of Evidential Investigation to the individual capability of Hu Shih also contributed to his dedication to Dewey’s philosophy. Moreover, in contrast with the classic academic school, Hu Shih detected that the scientific thought from Dewey’s philosophy was more “useful” because it can resolve all problems in human society. Following this conviction, Hu believed that only

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<sup>307</sup> Hu, “My Belief”, 18.

<sup>308</sup> Hu, *An Autobiography*, 139-140.

<sup>309</sup> Yu, *Hu Shih in Retrospect*, 197.

those scientific methods, which were under verification, can be applied into Chinese social reality.<sup>310</sup>

In fact, Hu Shih's perspective toward modern science was a reflection of the view of science held by the Chinese intellectual community at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chinese intellectuals' understanding of science was mostly derived from the approach of empiricism, which has been prevalent in the West since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Western science, which was highly admired and introduced by the Chinese intellectual class of the May Fourth era, was basically founded on instrumental rationalism.

More to the point, a large number of Chinese intellectuals preferred to view modern science from the pragmatic aspect of Confucian education. As another of Dewey's Chinese devotees, Jiang Menglin remarked:

In my people's eyes natural science is useful only because practical uses come out of it. The Greek philosophers are remote even from modern natural sciences. What earthly use is there in them? The Chinese people are in sympathy with the usefulness of science but recoil from the idea of science for science's sake. "Leaning is for the sake of its use," is an accepted dictum among Chinese scholars.<sup>311</sup>

Hence, Jiang concluded, "When modern science began to trickle into China after the opening of the commercial ports, it was its practical value that attracted the attention of the Chinese scholars."<sup>312</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the school of American pragmatism integrates the basic insights of empirical-based and rational concept-based thinking. As a result, the scientific aspect of Dewey's pragmatism, in accordance with the spirit of empiricism,

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>311</sup> Jiang Menglin, *Tides from the West: A Chinese Autobiography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), .247-248.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 250.

greatly attracted the Chinese intellectual community. With dedications to John Dewey's thought, modern Chinese intellectuals shared the feeling of worship of scientism during the era of May Fourth/ New Cultural Movement. For those Chinese scholars, science almost became an ultimate value to direct all aspects of human life. This is the scientism during the May Fourth period (This dissertation will provide a detailed analysis of this concept in the section Liang Shuming).

### **Hu Shih's Application of Dewey's Pragmatism in Chinese Reality**

During the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, Hu Shih made great efforts to apply the scientific method from John Dewey's pragmatism into his study of Chinese society and culture. According to Hu Shih, the principal of the scientific method consists of collecting new data as soon as possible, scrupulous regard for objectivity in its interpretation, sensitivity to the evolutionary dimension of the research problem, an awareness of the larger implications of one's conclusions, and a constant willingness to revise them based on new findings.<sup>313</sup> In essence, the research methods advocated by Hu Shih were characterized by an empirical approach. At the same time, Hu Shih's vision of science was a reflection of his understanding of Dewey's way of thinking, which was written in *How We think*.

The first book written by Hu Shih, *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* can be regarded as the best example of his utilization of Dewey's scientific method in the field of Chinese culture. The book was published in 1922 as an updated version of his dissertation titled *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China*, which was advised by John Dewey. Historically, traditional Confucius scholars usually blurred

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<sup>313</sup> Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 244.

the distinctions between the disciplines of philosophy, metaphysics, and history. From their perspectives, Chinese philosophy was still subjected to Confucian classic learning as it had been for thousands of years.

In light of this fact, Hu Shih first engaged in making a clear definition of Chinese philosophy based on a scientific method, so that this discipline would be independent from others. Consequently, Hu attempted to search for reliable evidence to support his discourse during the periods in which the ancient philosophers developed their own thought. For instance, Hu Shih rejected a long-term tradition that the history of Chinese philosophy should be traced back to the mythology of the sage kings of Yao, Shun, Yu, Chengtang, and Zhougong.<sup>314</sup> In his emphasis, there was not sufficient evidence to support the arguments of their thoughts and ideas. As a result, Hu Shih's inquiry of the history of Chinese philosophy started with Confucius (551-479 BC) and Lao Zi (571-531BC), both of whom had been confirmed by Chinese historical records.

In short, all Hu Shih's analysis of Chinese philosophy in the book was based on evidential analysis. Skepticism, emphasized by Dewey's pragmatism, was also adopted by Hu Shih to uncover nonsensical parts from philosophical discourses by some ancient Chinese scholars. A scientific procedure directed the development of his argument in the book. Accordingly, in contradiction with those traditional Chinese scholars who were only devoted to making explanatory commentaries for classic texts, Hu's book focused on placing some privileged classic canons under a logically scientific scrutiny.

Applying the idea of science to the study of Chinese past, Hu believed that would help liberate ancient Chinese philosophers from a state of intellectual isolation.

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<sup>314</sup>Yuan Qing, "John Dewey and His Influence in China", *Journal of A Study of Modern China*, no.2 (2001),153.



Furthermore, as a long standing dominant ideology in China, Confucian thinking, in Hu Shih's eyes, was equal with other ancient philosophical approaches because a scientific spirit must not allow the researchers to bias his or her studies. In *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, the monopoly of Confucianism over the field of ancient Chinese philosophy was replaced by an equal dialogue among the diversity of schools of thought.<sup>315</sup>

While studying the Deweyan wisdom, Hu Shih still displayed a strong interest in studying classic Chinese philosophy and history. In particular, his *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* examined the authenticity of some important philosophical writings by ancient Chinese scholars. This goal was also what Confucian scholars of the School of Evidential Investigation of the Qing period tried to pursue. To take further steps, Hu Shih aimed to integrate classic research methods from the classic school to modern scientific frame.<sup>316</sup> In other words, the scientific method from John Dewey's philosophy apparently became a good instrument for him to investigate Chinese "antique." In this respect, Hu Shih's book was a mixture of his educational experiences from the both the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation and John Dewey's pragmatism.<sup>317</sup>

In view of the comments above, some contemporary scholars believed that Hu Shih's *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* created a new paradigm for Chinese philosophical study.<sup>318</sup> Since the publication of the book in 1918, there has

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<sup>315</sup> Yuan, "John Dewey and His Influence in China", 154.

<sup>316</sup> Ou-Yang Zhesheng, *Exploring Hu Shih's Intellectual World* (探寻胡适的精神世界) (Beijing, Beijing University Press, 2012), 138.

<sup>317</sup> Yu, *Hu Shih in Retrospect*, 230.

<sup>318</sup> Cai Yuanpei, "Preface", In Hu Shih's *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* (Shanghai, Shanghai Guji Press, 2000), 1.

been an increasing distrust in classic writings of Chinese philosophy and history among Chinese intellectual class. As a result, the application of scientific method in the study of old Chinese civilization became a shared consciousness among them.

Apart from the study of ancient Chinese philosophy, the scientific method from Dewey's pragmatism also contributed to Hu Shih's Literary Revolution during the period of the May Fourth/ New Cultural Movement. On the surface, the central mission of the Literary Revolution was to supplement the classic literary style with Chinese spoken language (vernacular language) as a written medium for scholarship and all purposes of communication. In essence, as Hu Shih pointed out, the overthrow of the dominance of classic Chinese language over Chinese people would be very useful to emancipate their thoughts from the restriction of ancient culture, custom, and character.<sup>319</sup>

In order to "justify" the advocacy of Chinese vernacular language literature, Hu Shih connected his cause of literary reformation with the ideal of Social Darwinism. In his diary essay titled "Making a Comparison between Classical writing and Vernacular Language" on July 6, 1916, Hu emphasized the point that "for classical writing, the spreading of vernacular language is not the result of degeneration rather than the result of evolution."<sup>320</sup> More significantly, Hu Shih wisely realized a powerful educational motivation behind the vernacular movement.

In his insistence, the Chinese vernacular must be viewed as more than an expedient instrument to the end of communicating with the semi-literate and teaching the illiterate. Education itself is meaningless unless it takes place within the context of a

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<sup>319</sup> Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, 276-278.

<sup>320</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*, 531.

culture.<sup>321</sup> Therefore, an important objective of the literary reformation was to democratize education. When still studying in Columbia in 1916, Hu asserted that “literature should not be the private possession of a few educated elites, but should be accessible to the great majority in a nation.”<sup>322</sup> During the period of the May Fourth /New Cultural Movement, Hu Shih more explicitly emphasized this point:

We have realized at last that certain things must be given up if Chinese is to live. If we really want education, general and universal education, we must first have a new language, a language which can be used and understood by tongue and ear and pen, and which will be a living language for the people. For years and years we tried to have education, but we feared to use the spoken language...<sup>323</sup>

Obviously, Hu Shih’s vernacular movement reflected his advocacy of common education in China. Hu’s view of education was in correspondence with his understanding of John Dewey’s educational thought. In one of his writings, Hu Shih remarked: “A key contribution from Dewey’s educational philosophy was to reform educational system and theory, which was derived from class society. His educational theory aimed to generate the men of talent for a civil society...”<sup>324</sup> Indeed, the heart of Dewey’s philosophy of education was the importance of preparing students for democratic citizenship.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argued that by improving a common education, all members of a society would embrace democracy as a mode of “associated living” and “conjoint communication experience,” not simply a political and governmental arrangement.<sup>325</sup> In his lecture in China on “Education in Democracy” in

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<sup>321</sup> Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 231.

<sup>322</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih’s Diary of Studying Abroad*, 538.

<sup>323</sup> Hu Shih, “The Renaissance in China”, in *English Writings of Hu Shih*, ed, Chou Chih-Ping(Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2012), 28.

<sup>324</sup> Hu Shih, “John Dewey’s Educational Idea,” in *John Dewey and China*, ed, Zhang Baogui (Zhengzhou: Hebei People Press, 2012), 131.

<sup>325</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 93.

1919, Dewey further stated that the meaning of education in the modern period is not supposed to serve as the privilege of a chosen few but an indispensable right to which every citizen is entitled.<sup>326</sup> The purpose of education, emphasized by the American educator, was to improve the common people's well-being.<sup>327</sup>

As Dewey's educational idea resonated in Hu Shih's mind, his scientific wisdom also contributed to Hu's idea of the Chinese vernacular movement. As discussed above, one of the most influential ideas that Hu Shih learned from Dewey was to regard science as a useful method or instrument, which can efficiently solve all problems in human lives. It is not surprising that Hu Shih attempted to extend this idea to his Chinese vernacular movement, such that he inferred that Chinese literature can be examined by a scientific method. When arguing against some of his Chinese friends in the U.S, who defended the classic literary style, Hu held:

The history of Chinese literature is simply the history of the slow substitution of outmoded forms by new literary forms (instrument)...The vitality of literature depends entirely upon its ability to express the sentiments and thoughts of given period with a living medium. When the medium has become ossified, a new and vital one must be substituted for it: this is "literary revolution"...Therefore, we can say that all the literary revolutions in history have been revolutions in literary instruments.<sup>328</sup>

In order to verify his notion of the literary reformation, Hu Shih adopted Dewey's claim that science, with its emphasis on experimentation and facts, could be applied to all aspects of social reality. For instance, his diaries, while studying abroad frequently displayed his efforts to apply the scientific method to reforming Chinese literature. On July 30 in 1916, to articulate his idea of Chinese literary reformation, Hu

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<sup>326</sup> John Dewey, "Education in Democracy," in *Democracy and Modern Society: Dewey's Lecture in China* (民治主义与现代社会: 杜威在华讲演集), ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiayang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 354.

<sup>327</sup> Dewey, "Education in Democracy", 353.

<sup>328</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 105.

Shih said:

...the question of whether Chinese vernacular language can be used to create poetry or not depends greatly upon our efforts to find answer. It is impossible to find out the way of resolving this problem from ancient Chinese scholars...Instead, we need to examine it through a scientific method. Why don't we try for another time after the first failure? If we truly follow scientific spirit, we are not supposed to give up our efforts if we only fail once.<sup>329</sup>

Moreover, on August 4 in 1916, Hu Shih wrote in his diary:

Shi Nai'an and Cao Xueqing<sup>330</sup> already proved the fact that Chinese vernacular language can be used to write novel. Nowadays we need to examine whether Chinese vernacular can be used to write Chinese prose by an experimental method or not.<sup>331</sup>

In his diary on August 21 in the same year, after listing the eight necessary prerequisites for the literary revolution, Hu Shih again emphasized "...Chinese vernacular language will be my own laboratory to examine the applicability of new Chinese literature."

Logically speaking, Hu Shih was making a strong connection between the scientific method and Chinese literature reformation.

Over 20 years later, Hu Shih made this point clearer while talking about his thought of Chinese literature reformation. As he recalled:

The reason why I made a decision to examine the feasibility of vernacular language poetry is because of the triggering of the debates between I and my friends, as well as the influence of pragmatic philosophy on me. Dewey's pragmatism teaches us: any theory should be only a hypothesis before it is under scrutiny...my thought about vernacular literature is indeed a hypothesis. One part of the hypothesis, such as traditional novel and opera, has already been examined by our history. Nevertheless, vernacular poetry, as the rest part of this one, still needs to be testified. Therefore, I am willing to apply the theory of pragmatism into the verification of the feasibility of Chinese vernacular

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<sup>329</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*, 555.

<sup>330</sup> Shi Naian (1296-1372), the writer of *The Story of Water Margin* (水浒传), one of the four greatest classic novels of Chinese literature. Cao Xueqin (1715-1763), the writer of *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红楼梦), also one of the four greatest classic novels of Chinese literature.

<sup>331</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*, 558.

poetry... As a result, I call the book of my vernacular poetry *Tentative Proposal*  
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During his late years, Hu Shih again recalled the influence of John Dewey's pragmatism upon his proposal of the Chinese literature revolution. In his discussion of *Tentative Proposal*,<sup>333</sup> He maintained that

...this book (*Tentative Proposal*) obviously indicates the impact of John Dewey's pragmatism on me, so that I tried to apply his pragmatism into Chinese literary revolution. According to this school, any theory should be a hypothesis before we examine them. Only experiment is the sole criteria of inspecting the truth...<sup>334</sup>

Inspired by Dewey's idea, in practice, Hu Shih endeavored to bring Chinese literature into contact with the modern scientific standard. For Hu Shih, in Chinese history, the great writers, the people, the street singers, the rustic lovers, and the tavern entertainers have accepted and used this living language to express their feelings and their aims, but there has been in the past no conscious experimentation to adopt the language, no conscious experimentation to defend it.<sup>335</sup>

Therefore, the leaders of the Literary Revolution, including Hu Shih, tried to supply this need by resolving never to write anything except in this new language. In addition, while writing create *Tentative Proposal*, Hu Shih gradually extended his experiments to the fields of novel, prose, and opera. During the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, influenced by Hu Shih, an increasing number of young writers had succeeded in producing presentable specimens of literary experiment.

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<sup>332</sup> Hu, *Autobiography of My Forty Years*, 124-125.

<sup>333</sup> *Tentative Proposal* is the first vernacular poetry book in Chinese history, which was written by Hu Shih. It was published in 1920.

<sup>334</sup> Hu, *An Autobiography*, 204.

<sup>335</sup> Hu, "The Renaissance in China," 29.

As a result, directed by scientific procedure from Dewey's pragmatism, the Literary Revolution Movement eventually established the legitimacy of Chinese spoken language in all aspects of Chinese society. According to Hu Shih, the Chinese vernacular language movement succeeded in revolutionizing all the school texts, and it also succeeded in making the school life of millions of children easier than that of their fathers.<sup>336</sup> Simultaneously, the spreading of Chinese spoken language had given the youth of the nation a new channel to express their emotions and ideas.<sup>337</sup>

It is fair to say that the triumph of Chinese vernacular language during the May Forth/New Cultural period was a result of Hu Shih's absorption of Dewey's pragmatism. However, the progression of Chinese society by launching literary reformation was one of the greatest legacies left by Confucian scholars. For instance, within both the Tang and Ming dynasty, Confucian literati made great painstaking efforts to reform the literary style with the purpose of purifying Chinese people's character and strengthen Confucian codes. The duty of literature only for moral and political instructions was carried out by ancient scholars. In other words, Chinese literature embraced the idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society."

Therefore, from Hu Shih's eyes, Chinese literature is not for the sake of literature. As he argued: I believe that literature should be closely related to human's real life. Only literature, that deeply influenced social reality and people's minds, can enjoy permanent honor.<sup>338</sup> In Hu's emphasis, the rise of England, France, Italy, and Germany benefited from the emergence of new literature and of new values in those

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Hu, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*, 538.

countries. By the same token, the Literature Revolution was also conducive to the cause of national salvation in China.<sup>339</sup> Hence, it is not surprising to see that the driving force behind Hu Shih's advocacy of the Chinese literary revolution was aimed at strengthening and saving the country.

### **Conclusion**

In this section, my dissertation aims to analyze an educational encounter between Hu Shih's Confucian educational experience and his Deweyan learning. As my research shows, Hu Shi's Confucian or Neo-Confucian educational experience illuminates the implication of Martin's educational theory. Martin's theory states that "education only occurs if there is an encounter between an individual and culture in which one or more of the individual's capacities and one or more items of a culture's stock become yoked together..."<sup>340</sup> Following the conviction of the theory, when one or more items of cultural stock attach to Hu Shih's capacities in his Neo-Confucian education, then his classic learning can be considered an educational encounter.

According to my findings, Hu Shih was employing a sort of double-entry cultural bookkeeping in the process of the encounter between his individual capacity and cultural stocks. While yoking to Confucianism, whether the cultural stocks were conducive to empower and modernize China became the main standard that Hu Shih identified as the cultural assets or liabilities of the Confucian tradition. Thereby, the items of certain cultural assets in Confucian or Neo-Confucian education became the main linages for Hu Shih to gain access to John Dewey's pragmatism.

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<sup>339</sup> Hu, *An Autobiography*, 233.

<sup>340</sup> Martin, *Education Reconfigured: Culture, Encounter, and Change*, 17.



First, through yoking the cultural stock of the atheistic stance from Neo-Confucianism to his individual capacity, Hu Shih felt, in contrast with other Western philosophers, John Dewey's view of religion was the most acceptable. Second, Hu Shih tried to unyoke himself from a *ti-yong* dualism by becoming coupled to new thoughts, such as Social Darwinism and Theory of New Citizen. Third, yoking the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Three Ws and the idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society" to the individual capability of Hu Shih inspired him to pursue the Western idea as a "miraculous medicine" that would supposedly achieve the goal of national salvation.

In addition, Hu's academic training from the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation contributed to his absorption of the idea of scientific wisdom from John Dewey's thought. In short, Confucian or Neo-Confucian educational experiences still played fundamental roles in his acceptance of Dewey's pragmatism. More importantly, Dewey's pragmatism, in Hu Shih's view, became the most important cultural asset from Western civilization that Chinese intellectuals should learn. In the words of Martin's educational theory, the culture's attitudes and values, perception and expectations held by Hu Shih from Confucianism determine which items of cultural stock from John Dewey's philosophy are singled for yoking.

In other words, Hu Shih's selection of the cultural assets of his Western learning was greatly fashioned by the pragmatic aspects of Confucianism. This fact directly led Hu to focus on certain parts of Dewey's pragmatism, which matched with his cultural psychology stemming from Confucian or Neo-Confucian education. Influenced by the practicality of Confucian educational thought, Hu seemed to intentionally simplify

Dewey's thought into a system of method that can be used to resolve all social problems.

That is to say, a scientific method was treated by Hu as the most outstanding cultural asset of Dewey's thought. In Hu Shih's understanding, science from Dewey's philosophy mostly highlighted an empiricism-oriented experimental procedure. Depending on this notion, Hu Shih applied Dewey's pragmatism to his study of ancient Chinese philosophy and the Chinese literature revolution. Furthermore, Hu's advocacy of the Chinese vernacular movement exhibited that he became coupled to the cultural assets of democratic education from Dewey's *Democracy and Education*.

Although Hu Shih participated in the iconoclasts' attack on Confucian ethical codes during the May Fourth time, his real attitude toward the Confucian legacy is very complicated. This part of the dissertation already indicated that Hu Shih never completely got rid of the Confucian influence underlying his thought while approaching Dewey's pragmatism. More interestingly, when recognized as the Chinese spokesman of John Dewey's pragmatism, some of his English writings even attempted to articulate the existence of an embryonic democratic idea within Confucianism.<sup>341</sup> In a sense, Hu Shih expected to find a philosophical and cultural foundation in Confucianism, in which Chinese people can approach modern democracy. Indeed, this conviction is compatible with his insight into the continuity between the Confucian School of Evidential Investigation and Dewey's idea of modern science.

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<sup>341</sup>Hu Shih, "Historical Foundations for a Democratic China", in *English Writings of Hu Shih*, ed, Chou Chih-Ping(Beijing, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2012), 41-57.

In summation, in pursuit of the goal of national salvation, the yoking of the cultural stocks from Confucianism (or Neo-Confucianism) and the individual capacity of Hu Shih led to his acceptance of Dewey's pragmatism. In return, his application of Dewey's thought into Chinese social reality further enhanced his exploration of the cultural values of Confucian legacies, whether intentional or not.

## Chapter 5: A Philosophical Dialogue between “Last Confucian” and “American Confucian”

### Introduction

Unlike Hu Shih, Tao Xingzhi, Guo Bingwen, and Jiang Menglin, Liang never studied abroad during his lifetime. While schooling at Columbia University, the four Chinese scholars were in contact with John Dewey and learned his philosophy. However, Liang became acquainted with the American educator’s thoughts around the May Fourth period. Specifically, in contradiction with an anti-traditionalism atmosphere derived from the May Fourth period, Liang greatly advocated to retain and reform Confucianism. Due to his everlasting dedication to practice and the spread of Confucianism in modern China, some scholars called him “The Last Confucian.”<sup>342</sup> In this regard, Liang seemed to be significantly excluded from the mainstream thought of the May Fourth/New Culture era.

More interestingly, as the slogan of “Down with Confucius and sons” was spreading within Chinese society, John Dewey surprisingly received the title of “Modern Confucius” from Chinese intellectuals.<sup>343</sup> Coincidentally, when Dewey was invited to Beijing University as a guest professor in 1919, Liang Shuming was teaching Indian and Chinese philosophy there. There is no evidence that Liang had direct contact with Dewey. Nevertheless, when dedicating himself to the Chinese rural reconstruction movement in the late 1920’s, Liang intensively studied Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*. During the time of rural reconstruction, Liang wrote the article titled “A

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<sup>342</sup> Guy S. Alitto. *The Last Confucian : Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

<sup>343</sup> Berry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment: Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 1977), 11.

Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea." Assumedly, Dewey exerted an intellectual impact upon Liang Shuming.

This section aims to uncover a philosophical dialogue between the Chinese "last Confucian" and the American "Confucius." In order to explore the main issue, this section will focus on several sub-questions: How did Liang Shuming defend Confucianism in response to the challenges of Western civilization during the May Fourth/New Culture period? What did Liang think of John Dewey's educational philosophy? How did Liang make a connection between Confucianism and John Dewey's educational thought? How did Liang apply his New Confucian thought and Dewey's educational thought to Chinese reality?

#### **Liang Shuming and the Thought of "nei sheng" and "wai wang"**

Similar to Hu Shih, during his early years, Liang Shuming's intellectual growth was also affected by his father, Liang Ji. As a former Neo Confucian official-scholar of the late imperial period, Liang Ji greatly advocated the aspect of "being kingly outside (*wai wang*)" of Confucianism in face of an unprecedented difficult time in China. In short, this aspect of Confucianism strongly emphasizes that Confucian scholars were expected to achieve outstanding accomplishments, which could bring order and prosperity to the entire empire. Following this conviction, Liang Ji believed that all learnings/teachings were futile unless they were beneficial to national salvation.<sup>344</sup>

Therefore, Liang Ji rejected the classic civil service-oriented examination while supporting new style education.<sup>345</sup> In 1906, one year after the ending of traditional civil

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<sup>344</sup>Liang Shuming, "Intellectual Transformations during My Early Years (自述早年思想之再转再变)," in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.7 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 178.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

service examination, Liang Ji sent 13-year old Liang Shuming to a new middle school in the capital of Beijing, where Liang Shuming could learn “*shi xue* (practically useful knowledge).” Influenced by his father, during the time of his study in the new middle school, Liang Shuming made a decision to dedicate himself to saving the Chinese nation and society.<sup>346</sup>

The idea of “being sage inside” (*nei sheng*) in Confucianism also deeply shaped Liang Ji’s thought. In fact, the philosophical thought of Neo-Confucianism since the Song-Ming period (960-1644) thoroughly revolved around this idea. Compared to “being kingly outside (*wai wang*),” the idea of “being sage inside” mainly focuses on a perfection of individual inner morality, which was regarded by Neo-Confucian scholars as the root of all things. This Neo-Confucian theme resonated in Liang Ji’s mind. As an advocate of “New Reform” during the late Qing period, Liang Ji asserted that a fundamental role in achieving the goal of national salvation was “the purification of people’s heart (*zheng ren xin*).”<sup>347</sup> In his opinion, for Confucian scholars, the development of one’s “inner sagehood” should become a requirement for the realization of “outer kingship.” Under Liang Ji’s influence, this intellectual pathway from “being sage inside” to “being kingly outside” also yoked to Liang Shuming’s thought.<sup>348</sup>

The coming of the Republican period in 1912 did not display a sign that China would become prosperous and strong as Chinese intellectuals expected. Deeply depressed by China’s difficulties and his mother’s death, Liang Shuming once suffered

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<sup>346</sup> Ma, *Biography of Liang Shuming*, 19.

<sup>347</sup> Alitto. *The Last Confucian*, 24.

<sup>348</sup> Xu Jiling, *Intellectuals in a Big Time* (大时代中的知识人) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012), 202-204.

a serious spiritual crisis during the very early part of the Republican era.<sup>349</sup> In order to find psychological comfort, he was immersed in studying Buddhism for a time. However, Liang gradually realized that Buddhism was unrelated to real Chinese society.<sup>350</sup> Eventually, the Confucian ideal of pursuing “being kingly outside” reenergized Liang’s aspiration from the crisis, pushing him to return to a normal life.<sup>351</sup> In 1917, Liang was invited to be a member of the philosophy faculty at Beijing University. According to Liang, one of the strongest driving forces behind his acceptance of the offer was to speak about “Confucius” in the University.<sup>352</sup> In November 1918, his father, Liang Ji, committed a suicide. The last essay that was left by Liang Ji indicated that the Neo Confucian scholar sacrificed his own life mostly for the Qing dynasty and Confucian morality.<sup>353</sup> The former collapsed in 1912, and the latter was undergoing severe attacks from modern Chinese intellectuals since the founding of the Republican China.

Liang Ji’s suicide further deepened Liang Shuming’s attachment to Confucianism. According to Liang Shuming, his father’s life journey was an embodiment of a Confucian moral principle: “Confucian scholar-apprentices should be ashamed of their incompetence in bringing happy life to common people instead of their rude clothing and coarse food.”<sup>354</sup> For Liang Shuming, Liang Ji enabled him to

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<sup>349</sup> Liang Shuming, “Self-Introduction (自述),” in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.2 (Jinan: Shandong People Press, 1989), 10.

<sup>350</sup> Liang, Shuming, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies* (东西方文化及其哲学) (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 2012), 234.

<sup>351</sup> Liang, “Self-Introduction,” 12; Liang, *The Last Confucian Master in China: My Father Liang Shuming*, 44,45..

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Alitto. *The Last Confucian*, 46-47; Ma, *Biography of Liang Shuming*, 8.

<sup>354</sup> Liang Shuming, “History of My Self-Taught (我的自学小史),” in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.2 (Jinan:Shandong People Press, 1989), 664.

understand the sense of a “call of duty” stemming from Confucianism. Consequently, after his father died, the core mission in Liang Shuming’s life was to achieve national salvation through the rejuvenation of Confucianism in a modern society.<sup>355</sup> In order to better understand the connection between Liang and Confucianism, it is necessary to explore how Liang Shuming defended Confucianism during the May Fourth period.

### **Liang Shuming’s Defense of Confucianism during the May Fourth Time**

As the preceding chapters describe, one of the most significant themes embraced by the May Fourth/New Culture Movement was to re-evaluate the role of Confucianism in Chinese society. Generally speaking, from Chinese iconoclasts’ perspectives of the May Fourth era, Confucianism became an obstruction for the Chinese nation’s way to her modernization. In their critiques, traditional bonds of the family system, which are based on Confucian/Neo-Confucian morality and virtue, psychologically poisoned Chinese people.

For example, in 1918, Lu Xun published his short fiction, “The Diary of a Madman.” In the story, Lu Xun presented diary entries written by a madman (in a first person narrative), who wanted to cure his paranoia by reading classic Confucian canons.<sup>356</sup> Satirically, while reviewing the books, the mad man found out nothing except for the Chinese characters “Eat People” displayed between the lines of the texts in classic writings.<sup>357</sup> Here, the word “Eat People” hinted the fact that Confucian ethics was destructive to the spirit of Chinese people.

In the meantime, some influential Chinese intellectuals tended to regard the

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<sup>355</sup> Liang, “Self-Introduction (自述),” 11.

<sup>356</sup> Jerome B. Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers), 271.

<sup>357</sup> Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 272.



Confucian legacy as a foe to the spreading of modern democratic ideas. For instance, after disclosing the four defects of Confucius's thought,<sup>358</sup> Yi Baisha concluded that in Chinese history, the implementation of Confucianism can easily lead to a tyrannical ruling.

Chen Duxiu, a professor from National Beijing University, echoed Yi Baisha's argument. He declared that Confucianism had been completely in contradiction with the civilization of modern period. He pointed out:

...the theory of 'Three Cardinal Bonds' (*san gang*) in Confucianism becomes a solid foundation of Chinese political ethics. All of the three principles are in interdependence. Therefore, it is impossible to separate any one from each other. The essence of Confucian "Three Cardinal Bonds" is a class system. In this system, the purpose of Confucian ethical code (*li jiao*) is to establish a hierarchical relationship among the classes of the wealthy, the poverty, the noble, and the rabble. Nevertheless, modern Western political ethics is based on the value of liberty, equality, and independence. This fact, which is in opposition to Chinese class system, becomes a watershed between Chinese and Western civilization.<sup>359</sup>

Moreover, Chen stated: "if we want to embrace democracy, we definitely need to oppose Confucianism, [and other things deriving from it, including] Confucian ritualism, the cult of women's purity, traditional ethics and politics."<sup>360</sup>

In spite of his moderate view of Confucianism, Cai Yuanpei, the Chancellor of National Beijing University, attempted to rethink the role of Confucianism in modern

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<sup>358</sup> The four defects are as follows: First, Confucius's respect for monarchial ruling, which easily generates despotic regimes. Second, Confucius's teaching discouraged students' critiques of their instructor, which easily generated cultural dictatorship. Third, some ambiguous fields in Confucius' thought, which can be used by schemers for their interests. Fourth, the linkage of Confucius's thought to politics, which can be used by tyrants to rule the state. See in Yi Baisha, "Assessment of Confucianism," quoted in Ou-Yang Zhesheng's *Historical Interpretation of the May Fourth Movement* (Taipei, Showwe Information Co, Ltd, 2011), 38.

<sup>359</sup> Cheng Duxiu, "My Ultimate Awakening" (吾人最后之觉悟), in *The Selective Works of Cheng Duxiu*, vol.1 (Beijing: Shenghuo, Dushu. Xinzhi.Sanlian Press, 1984). 108.

<sup>360</sup> Cheng Duxiu, "Statement of Defense for My Journal (本志罪案之答辩书)," in *The Selective Works of Cheng Duxiu*, vol.1 (Beijing: Shenghuo, Dushu. Xinzhi.Sanlian Press, 1984). 317.

Chinese education during the May Fourth era. As he suggested:

During the Manchu Qing period, the objectives of Chinese education included Loyal to Emperor, Respect to Confucius...Loyal to Emperor is in contradiction to the form of republican government, and Respect of Confucius does not match with the principle of freedom of religion...<sup>361</sup>

In accordance to this conviction, Beijing University, under Cai's leadership, abolished most of the curriculums of Confucian classic learnings. Apparently, for the majority of modern Chinese intellectuals, Confucianism was treated as a degenerate part in Chinese history, that should be abandoned during modern period. They believed that the yoking of the cultural stock of Confucianism to millions of Chinese people placed obstacles in the way of actualizing the modernization of China. Overall, the May Fourth/New Culture Movement undermined the dominance of Confucianism in the fields of Chinese culture and intellect. Even though its influence on Chinese society still existed, the school of classic thought indeed lost its prestigious status in Chinese history.

Notably, the May Fourth period also provided some Chinese cultural conservatives, in particular New Confucian scholars, with an opportunity to rethink the issue of Confucianism.<sup>362</sup> Unlike the scholars attempting to update Confucianism as a national religion, New Confucian conservatives opposed any endeavors politicizing Confucianism in modern times. This group of scholars believed that the institutionalization of Confucianism by the ruling class in fact distorted the essence of the philosophical school. In particular, they pointed out when Confucianism/Neo-Confucianism transformed to an official ideology, it only became a dogmatic code for

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<sup>361</sup>Cai Yuanpei, "My View of New Education" (对于新教育之意见)," in *Collected Works of Cai Yuanpei*, vol.2 (Beijing, Zhong Hua Shu Ju Press, 1984), 134-136.

<sup>362</sup> He Ling, *Culture and Life* (文化与人生) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 1988), 5.

Chinese people. Therefore, the living spirit embraced by Confucius's thought was forfeited by the indoctrination of the philosophical school.<sup>363</sup>

As one of the founders of the school of the New Confucianism, Liang Shuming believed that under the influence of Confucianism, the Chinese nation did not develop a strong cultural and social foundation for constructing a religious tyranny over scholarly thought. This is one of the most outstanding merits of Confucianism.<sup>364</sup> Unfortunately, since the Song dynasty, with the transformation of the philosophical school into an official ideological dogma (*li xue*), the sense of joy of life and dynamic thought completely vanished from Confucianism.<sup>365</sup> Thus, the dogmatized Confucian value system merely became "a spiritual opium" used by emperors to poison Chinese people. In light of this fact, radical Chinese intellectuals today criticized Confucian ethical codes as the idea of "Eat People."<sup>366</sup> However, Liang Shuming thought those intellectuals' critiques of Confucianism were tortuous. He spoke out during the May Fourth period:

...What Confucius's critics want to attack is "Three Cardinal Bonds and Five Ethics (*san gang wu chang*)." They regarded these things as the essence of Confucianism. In fact, all of them (Three Cardinal Bonds and Five Ethics) have nothing to do with the truth of Confucianism...<sup>367</sup>

Liang pointed out that it is unfair that Chinese people ascribed all failures in China since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to Confucianism. In his view, to search for the truth in

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>364</sup> Liang Shuming, "The Foundation of the Eastern Scholarship (东方学术之根本)," in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.2 (Jinan: Shandong People Press, 1989), 136.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>366</sup> Liang Shuming, "Examining the Thoughts of Confucius and Mencius based on Marxism (从马克思主义及观点审查孔孟之道)," in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.7 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 312-313.

<sup>367</sup> Liang Shuming, "How to Find out the Truth of Confucius, (如何求孔子的真面目)," in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.7 (Jinan: Shandong People Press, 1989), 770.

Confucianism should be the most urgent task for modern Chinese intellectuals.<sup>368</sup> To this end, a cultural bookkeeping strategy had been adopted by Liang Shuming. As a result, Liang Shuming did not think of Confucianism as a cultural liability in Chinese history. Conversely, he expected to explore the cultural assets from Confucianism, which could be applied to a modern society.

Another significant divergence between cultural conservatives and new intellectuals was how to deal with scientism. As my previous chapters described, the thought of scientific empiricism deeply influenced the Chinese intellectual community at the turn of the century. Since the early Republican period, the decline in the prestige of Confucianism opened a pathway for the increasing popularity of science in Chinese society.<sup>369</sup> From the perspectives of modern Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth period, science went well beyond the realm of a system of foreign knowledge, which was based on testable explanation. During the time, science was gradually developed to a new “faith” to replace Confucianism in the minds of new Chinese intellectuals.<sup>370</sup> In their emphasis, science could be a miraculous medicine to resolve all difficulties China was confronting.<sup>371</sup> Apparently, scientism was regarded by many as the biggest cultural asset from Western civilization.

For instance, Chen Duxiu maintained that only science can get rid of superstitious ideas embraced by all classes in Chinese society.<sup>372</sup> While considering

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<sup>368</sup>Liang, “The Rejuvenates of Confucian Thought,” 3.

<sup>369</sup> He, *One Hundred Years of Misery*, 293-294.

<sup>370</sup> Yan Bofei, “Analysis of the May Fourth Intellectual’s Understanding of Science (论五四时期中国知识分子对科学的理解),” in *Understanding May Fourth Movement from the perspective of pluralism* (Hong Kong: San Lian Press, 1989), 198-212.

<sup>371</sup> Yan, “Analysis of the May Fourth Intellectual’s Understanding of Science,” 198-212.

<sup>372</sup> Cheng Duxiu, “To Inform Youth (敬告青年),” in *The Selective Works of Cheng Duxiu*, vol.1 (Beijing: Shenghuo, Dushu. Xinzhi. Sanlian Press, 1984), 77, 78.

Confucian legacy as a cultural liability, he held that science should play a religion-like role in Chinese people's lives during the Republican period.<sup>373</sup> Furthermore, Hu Shih stressed that scientific law should be a guideline for all aspects of Chinese society.<sup>374</sup> The notions of Chen and Hu were bolstered by Ding Wenjiang (1887-1936), a well-known geologist of the May Fourth era. Ding argued:

Scientific method had been used by scientists to achieve great accomplishments in natural world. Therefore, we can expand the method to other fields in the world. We need to treat science as a religious beacon, which can award us honest mind and instrument for exploring the truth of the world, as well as strong will and skill to illuminate human virtue.<sup>375</sup>

The conviction of scientism was even extended by some new Chinese intellectuals to the reorganization of Chinese tradition, including Confucian classic canons. To pros- scientism Chinese scholars, all of the Chinese classic learnings were dead knowledge, the value of which would be scientifically categorized as a "historical fossil."<sup>376</sup>

Not surprisingly, the modern Chinese intellectuals' zeal for scientism garnered counterattacks from the cultural conservatives. In opposition to the new intellectuals, they attempted to reject scientism as a Western cultural liability. Disillusioned with the deadly destruction caused by World War I, this group of Chinese intellectuals concluded that the supremacy of scientism in Western civilization was questionable. While visiting Europe in 1919, Liang Qichao was shocked by a distressing scene of material impoverishment and spiritual corruption there. He expressed that the West had cherished the dream of the omnipotence of science, but today they are dealing with the

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<sup>373</sup>Cheng Duxiu, "My Discourse of the Problem of Confucianism," in *The Selective Works of Cheng Duxiu*, vol.1 (Beijing: Shenghuo, Dushu. Xinzhi.Sanlian Press, 1984), 166.

<sup>374</sup>Hu Shih, "My Belief"(我的信仰), in *Collected Works of Hu Shih*, vol.1, ed. Ou-Yang Zhesheng (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1998), 22.

<sup>375</sup>Ding Wenjiang, "Metaphysics and Science," in *Science and Philosophy of Life*(Jinan: Shandong People Press,1997),181-210.

<sup>376</sup>Mao Zishui, "National Antique and the Spirit of Scientism," *New Tide*,1, no.5 (1919), 731-745.

bankruptcy of science.<sup>377</sup> According to Liang, Europeans' worship of scientism led to a disregard of man's spiritual life, inspiring the relentless pursuit of wealth and power that ended in the catastrophe of the Great War.<sup>378</sup>

Some of Liang Qichao's followers enthusiastically supported his argument. Zhang Junli (1886-1969), for example, proclaimed that no matter how developed science is, it could never solve the problems of the philosophy of life, which depends completely on man himself.<sup>379</sup> Zhang Dongxun (1886-1962) further elaborated that although the scientific method is analytical and controlled by the laws of reason, its usefulness is limited to improving our understanding of relationships that can be viewed objectively. He argued, however, that human life is subjective; it is the result of direct experience; it synthesizes, rather than analyzing; it posits free will and individual uniqueness, not determinism and uniformity.<sup>380</sup> Hence, he emphasized that not all of life's questions can be reduced to a clear-cut formula of science.

In addition, the conservatives displayed a tendency to borrow the cultural stocks from Confucianism to argue against new Chinese intellectuals. For instance, after reflecting on how viciously the idea of the supremacy of science destroyed Western civilization, Liang Qichao believed that Chinese people must discover the "unique qualities" of their own civilization in order to avoid the same catastrophe.<sup>381</sup> In his proposal regarding reconstructing Chinese civilization during the May Fourth period, Liang Qichao resorted to the idea of the "middle way" from a Confucian book titled *The*

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<sup>377</sup>Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 134-135.

<sup>378</sup>*Ibid.*, 134-135.

<sup>379</sup>Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 328.

<sup>380</sup>Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 257.

<sup>381</sup>Philip G.Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1972), 146-147.

*Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸) to avoid any extremism.<sup>382</sup> While explaining the uniqueness of Chinese civilization, Zhang Dongxun epitomized the social ideal of equalized poverty from *the Analects of Confucius*.<sup>383</sup> It is worth realizing that this standpoint of cultural traditionalism during the May Fourth time was most explicated in Liang Shuming's intellectual thought.

### **Liang Shuming's *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies***

In response to the May Fourth Chinese iconoclasts' attack on Confucianism, Liang Shuming in 1922 published his famous book titled *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*. In this book, Liang attempted to examine the unique value of traditional Chinese culture in the context of world civilization. His writing defined "culture" as a "way of life," and "life" as the relationship between the individual and his environment.<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, in Liang's terms, culture has been shaped by "will."<sup>385</sup> Following this statement, Liang categorized world civilizations into three styles: Western culture, Chinese culture, and Indian culture.<sup>386</sup> Western culture, in Liang Shuming's eyes, was the prototype of the first stage of the evolution of the world civilization.<sup>387</sup> The cultural system was derived from basic needs and the material requirements of human survival. The "will" of this culture is to look forward to seeking the pleasure of satisfaction, emphasizing reason, utility, scientific knowledge and the conquest of nature, and a life of struggle.<sup>388</sup> In light of this conviction, Liang criticized

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<sup>382</sup>Huang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism*, 146-147.

<sup>383</sup> Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China*, 260.

<sup>384</sup> Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophy*, 26.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 18-46.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

the failure to perceive inner life as the weakness of Western culture.<sup>389</sup> More interestingly, although being a conservative scholar, Liang viewed democracy and science as the two great cultural assets of Western civilization.<sup>390</sup>

In contrast with Western culture, Liang argued that Chinese culture should represent the second stage, which takes a middle way, instead of forward or back forward, accommodate in its view of the relationship between human and environment.<sup>391</sup> The “will” from this cultural type was based on the will’s self-adjustment, self-sufficiency, and the cultivation of inner peace. By maintaining a balanced point between their desires and the environment, the Chinese people could achieve great spiritual happiness while suffering material poverty.<sup>392</sup> Liang further stated the third stage of cultural development was represented by Indian culture. Within this culture, the “will” for people is to turn backward for ultimate enlightenment.<sup>393</sup> In this stage, Indian people believed that the world is an illusion. Therefore both self-denial and austerity played important parts in this religious practice.<sup>394</sup> When confronting difficult times, they chose to withdraw any hardships from their minds, rather than solving them by satisfying the will and harmonizing themselves with the environment.<sup>395</sup> In Liang’s argument, the three cultural systems are equally important to the evolution of world civilization. Without intrusive external forces, the three civilizations, which were argued by Liang in sequence, could always develop in isolation.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>389</sup>Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*,145.

<sup>390</sup>Alitto, *The Last Confucian*, 88-96.

<sup>391</sup> Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*,58, 70.

<sup>392</sup>*Ibid.*,60.

<sup>393</sup>*Ibid.*, 169-171

<sup>394</sup>*Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>395</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>396</sup>*Ibid.*, 70,123.



In Liang Shuming's comparison between Western and Chinese culture, the yoking of Neo-Confucianism to the individual capacity of Liang Shuming seemed to contribute to his thought. Alongside the idea of Neo-Confucianism, Liang's work tended to divide a man's life into the spheres of "outer" and "inner." In this New-Confucian scholar's mind, all accomplishments in the West belonged to the category of "being kingly outside (*wai wang*)." From Liang's perspective, in Western culture, intellectual calculation toward the external world led to the development of science; individual self-interest and desire for one's rights resulted in democracy.<sup>397</sup> Despite this, Liang took a positive view of democracy and science, he believed that both "cultural assets" were the products of the Western "will," which aimed to conquer the external material world.<sup>398</sup>

In contrast, Liang addressed that Chinese culture, which was mostly based on Confucianism, paid considerable attention to the inner working of the minds.<sup>399</sup> Moral and spiritual cultivation became a main theme running through a Confucian man's life, so that his life goal was to pursue a spirit of happiness and tranquility instead of outer material achievement.<sup>400</sup> When living a Confucian life, the practice of rites and music will take on the role of religious spirituality without the extremism often seen in religion.<sup>401</sup> Through this way, a Confucian man can develop the character of benevolence (*ren*), and this is the basis of all of his happiness.<sup>402</sup> Thus, in Liang's view, the core meaning of Chinese life under the principle of Confucianism is to embrace a

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<sup>397</sup>Alitto, *The Last Confucian*, 88.

<sup>398</sup>Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>399</sup>Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance*, 145.

<sup>400</sup>Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 147-149.

<sup>401</sup>Ibid., 150.

<sup>402</sup>Ibid., 134-138.

joyful life with the perfection of morality. Liang stated:

What is relative joy? This [kind of] joy stands in opposition to and is consequent upon suffering... Ordinary people traveling the road of intellectual calculation always want to use means to attain their end. Consequently, they must first get something they want, then they feel joyful... Their joy is completely tied to the thing that is their goal, and so it is dependent on the external environment. If they do not get, they suffer... Confucius was different from this view. From the beginning he had no concern for fixing [the external material environment into calculable quantities and certain categories], or calculating [and thus] connecting his emotion to the external. He had not the slightest concern for success or failure, but abundant, rich zest for life. His vital force was very strong. There was no situation in which he was not at ease and self-possessed. Never for a moment was his heart not elated. As Confucius said, 'The benevolent (*ren*) are not anxious; the wise (*zhi*) are not in a quandary; the courageous (*yong*) are not timid' ... When understand the meaning of happiness, someone can understand the meaning of '*ren*'.<sup>403</sup>

Evidently, Confucianism from Liang's perspective was not a stagnant and oppressive doctrine, but a dynamic philosophy of life.

More meaningfully, Liang had a way of characterizing Chinese culture as "premature" culture. In his revelation, before developing the first stage of allowing the pursuit of material well-being and rationality, China already fell back on the second stage of having the will to be in equilibrium with nature.<sup>404</sup> In this sense, Liang believed that although Chinese culture did not create democracy and science, Confucian life is morally superior to the deplorable Western obsession with material progress.<sup>405</sup> In this regard, he maintained that China was ahead of the West. In light of the perceived spiritual destruction of Western civilization since WWI, Liang thought Confucianism could take a responsibility for becoming the teacher of the West. As the New Confucian scholar confidently predicted:

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<sup>403</sup>Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 147.

<sup>404</sup>*Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>405</sup>*Ibid.*, 235.

...Confucius wholeheartedly focused upon the emotional aspect of humanity...The difference between Confucius and Westerners-their basic point of conflict-lies precisely in this! The Westerners never paid attention to this in the past. Nowadays, they should start to get close to the school of Confucianism. Therefore, I will not doubt that the Westerners will take Confucius's path.<sup>406</sup>

Liang further asserted:

I really pity the Westerners. They have been suffering material poverty [after the WWI] and desiring to revive their spiritual life. However, their spirit is only derived from Hebrew civilization. Because the Westerners cannot break through this restriction, I never heard that they eventually achieved "Dao". Should not we lead them to Confucius's path?<sup>407</sup>

To a large extent, Liang's writing indicated his stance as a cultural nationalist. For the purpose of dealing with an imminent national crisis, Liang held that the urgent task for Chinese was to borrow certain Western cultural assets, such as science and democracy.<sup>408</sup> Meanwhile, he further emphasized that China must avoid the aspects of aggression and selfishness from scientism, retaining the essence of Chinese civilization.<sup>409</sup> In terms of the notion of cultural bookkeeping, Liang expected to preserve the cultural assets of Confucianism and mix it with potentially beneficial pieces of Western civilization.

Overall, Liang Shuming's *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies* laid a solid foundation for his New Confucian philosophy. In this work, Liang emphasized the revival of Confucianism and its crucial role in the empowering of China for the future. At the same time, Liang wisely realized that the reconstruction of Confucianism in a modern period demanded some fresh thoughts and ideas from the Western world. Thus, the New Confucian scholar was devoted to opening a pathway for

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<sup>406</sup>Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 184.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

Confucianism in order to connect with Western cultures. He confidentially expressed: “I feel I have the greatest responsibility for integrating Chinese Confucianism to modern scholarship”<sup>410</sup>

Nevertheless, compared to Dewey’s other Chinese disciples, Liang’s perception of the relationship between Chinese and Western learnings was still modeled by the formula of *ti-yong* from Confucianism. In other words, in his thought, Confucianism must be the substance (*ti*) to be preserved. Correspondingly, the knowledge of Western learnings, including science and democracy, was only treated by Liang as a function (*yong*) to “modernize” Confucianism. This logic directed Liang Shuming’s selection of the cultural stocks from Western culture, as well as his educational reformation during the Republican period.

### **Confucianism and Henri Bergson’s Vitalism**

During the May Fourth period, as foreign ideas competed and interacted with each other in China, both progressive and conservative intellectuals were in search of new cultural stocks to enrich their own thoughts. Through intensively studying the schools of Western philosophy, Liang Shuming eventually found the useful cultural assets from the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859-1941). Briefly speaking, Bergson’s philosophy emphasized the importance of “Intuition” in a human being’s life,<sup>411</sup> criticizing the belief of supremacy of scientism.<sup>412</sup> In response to scientific determinism, Bergson created the term “Duration” as an entirely qualitative multiplicity, an absolute

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<sup>410</sup> Liang, “The Foundation of the Eastern Scholarship,” 136.

<sup>411</sup> John Dewey, “The Contemporary Three Philosophers,” in *Democracy and Modern Society: John Dewey’s Lecture in China*, ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiaying, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 250.

<sup>412</sup> H.I. Wesseling, *Certain Ideas of France: Essays on French History and Civilization* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 44.

heterogeneity of elements, which come to melt into one another.<sup>413</sup> From the French thinker's view, because the essence of "Duration" is more derived from our inner experience, it cannot be grasped through a scientific method.<sup>414</sup> More to the point, the essential concept in Bergson is vital impetus, which aimed to explain evolution in a dynamic way. As the author of *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity*, Guy S. Alitto, remarked:

Bergson believed that humans are intent upon intellectual calculation of natural events because of the anxiety they feel when confronted with uncertainty and disorder. Only occasionally can they coax into full flame that 'almost extinguished lamp,' the intuition, which reveals to them the existence of another natural order based not on a cosmic mathematics but on *elan vital*.<sup>415</sup>

In short, as one of the most influential Western thinkers, Bergson's philosophy emphasized the permanent flowing of free will and vital force in the world, as well as opposed the stance of scientism. Therefore, this philosophical approach was widely accepted by conservative Chinese intellectuals of the May Fourth period.<sup>416</sup> In particular, the idea of Bergson's Vitalism struck a deep chord in Liang Shuming's heart. As he discussed that:

Henry Bergson strongly criticized any fixed and measurable idea from supremacy of scientism. He believed that metaphysical philosophy requires a soft and flowing idea, which was opposed to the thought of scientism. His philosophy opened a pathway for the development of Chinese style thought?<sup>417</sup>

It is clear to present that Liang attempted to build a philosophical bridge between Confucianism and Bergson's idea. In his thinking, what Bergson tried to

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<sup>413</sup>Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 98, 99.

<sup>414</sup>Dewey, "The Contemporary Three Philosophers," 251.

<sup>415</sup>Alitto. *The Last Confucian*, 99.

<sup>416</sup>Dong Defu, "Henri Bergson's Philosophy and the May Fourth Idea," (柏格森哲学五四进步思潮) in *The Journal of Social Science*, 5, (May 1996).doi: <http://211.151.247.143/magazine/article/SHKX605.008.htm>.

<sup>417</sup>Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 127.

discover through his vitalism was in essence the same as what Confucius wanted to achieve. As Liang affirmed: “Only the spiritual life held by Confucius, which somewhat played a religious role in Chinese people’s life, can match the Western School of Vitalism.”<sup>418</sup> In view of such a notion, Liang made great efforts to perceive Confucianism from the perspective of Bergson’s vitalism. In *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, Liang held that Confucius’s thought to a large extent embodied the feature of vitalism.<sup>419</sup>

Noticeably, while borrowing Bergson’s vitalism, Liang often interchangeably used the concepts of “*sheng ming* (生命)” and “*sheng huo* (生活)” in his writings. Both Chinese words can be translated into the English word “life.” The former means *vita* or *anima*, and the latter means human lives. In his discourse, Confucianism from his perspective is both “*sheng ming*” and “*sheng huo*”. As Liang argued:

The word ‘life (*sheng ming*)’ is the most important idea in Confucianism. An understanding of this word should be a key to a grip of all of Confucius’s sayings...The essence of Confucius’s thought is to follow a natural way, carrying out a spiritual and lively flow. He thought that universe will be full of a natural life (*sheng ming*) force flowing everlastingly through all things.<sup>420</sup>

Meanwhile, in his article “How to Find the Truth of Confucius,” Liang Shuming elaborated: “What is Confucius’s learning on earth? The finding from Confucius’s *Analects* shows that Confucius’s learning is his own life (*sheng huo*).”<sup>421</sup> He further stated in the same article: “...we should discover the truth of Confucius’s thought based

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<sup>418</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>419</sup>To support his argument, Liang’s work referenced some of Confucius’s maxims, such as “the greatest virtue illuminated by Heaven and Earth is to cherish life” and “Does Heaven speak? And yet the four seasons turn and the myriad things are born and grow within it.” See in Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 130.

<sup>420</sup>Ibid., 130.

<sup>421</sup>Liang, “How to Find out the Truth of Confucius,” 768.

on his life (*sheng huo*). If we can totally understand his life (*sheng huo*), we can totally understand his thought.”<sup>422</sup>

Moreover, when yoking to the vitalism of Bergson, Liang Shuming synthesized the meanings of Chinese characters of “*sheng huo*” and “*sheng ming*” into his Confucian rhetoric. He affirmed:

The core meaning of Confucianism is to prompt the growth of life (*sheng ming*) in the universe....the most important thing from Confucianism is the perfection and harmonization of human life (*sheng huo*). Except of Confucianism, other schools of thought are inclined to strife, repress, damaged, and messed human life (*sheng huo*).<sup>423</sup>

In one of his writings, Liang even insisted: “‘*sheng ming*’ and ‘*sheng huo*’ from my view are the same thing...”<sup>424</sup> It is important to realize that Liang’s synthesis of “*sheng huo*” and “*sheng ming*” alluded to his interpretation of John Dewey’s educational thought in the future (my following writing will discuss the issue).

In addition, Liang Shuming merged the idea of “intuition” from Bergson’s work into his thoughts regarding New Confucianism. For Liang, Confucius like Bergson understood life as a continuous flow during which only intuition can appear.<sup>425</sup> Hence, Confucius always followed an intuition to live a life that rejected calculation.<sup>426</sup> As the New Confucian scholar said:

When average people used the ability of rationality in their lives, Confucius rejected it. When they used the way of logical reasoning, Confucius still rejected it. Those who utilized the ability of rationality easily made their lives be messy. Instead, Confucius, who had never been interested in using rationality, could

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<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 769.

<sup>423</sup> Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 194.

<sup>424</sup> Liang Shuming, “Zhaohua (Morning Talk)”, in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.2 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989),92.

<sup>425</sup> Alitto. *The Last Confucian*, 98-101.

<sup>426</sup> Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 131.

have a joy of life. There was no conflict in Confucius because of his usage of intuition.<sup>427</sup>

More importantly, while gaining insight into Mencius's thought, Liang introduced the idea of "Intuition" into the realm of Confucian moral education. He wrote:

Everyone has an intuition and instinct to pursue goodness. Therefore, Mencius said: 'All people have a heart which cannot stand to see the suffering of others... Why do I say all human beings have a heart which cannot stand to see the suffering of others? Even nowadays, if an infant were about to fall into a well, anyone would be upset and concerned. This concern would not be due to the fact that the person wanted to get in good with the baby's parents, or because he wanted to improve his reputation among the community or among his of friends. Nor would it be because he was afraid of the criticism that might result from a show of non-concern.'<sup>428</sup>

Based on his analysis, Liang Shuming affirmed that the core ethical idea of Confucianism, the character of benevolence (*ren*), is in fact derived from human intuition.<sup>429</sup> In his explanation, *ren* is an inner state of being, peaceful and full of vitality. In light of this belief, Liang concluded that "the thought of Confucianism completely follows intuition. The most important mission that Confucian scholars want to achieve is to sharpen their intuitions...Consequently, Confucius encouraged people to pursue '*ren*'"<sup>430</sup>

In sum, the yoking of Bergson's Vitalism to the individual capacity of Liang Shuming brought the meaning of modernity to the philosophy of Confucianism in the May Fourth period. By "vitalizing" Confucianism, Liang transformed this classic philosophical system from a "dead" ideology to a spirited philosophy of life. Further,

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<sup>427</sup>Ibid.,132.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.,134.

<sup>429</sup>Ibid., 136.

<sup>430</sup>Ibid.,137.



the Confucian logical pathway from “being sage inside (*nei sheng*)” to “being king outside (*wai wang*)” provided a framework for Liang’s engagement in reforming Confucianism. In other words, the ultimate purpose of Liang’s reformation of Confucianism is not for the philosophy itself, instead to pursue the goal of “*jiu shi* (to save the society)” through “purification of people’s heart.”<sup>431</sup>

### **Liang’s View of Dewey’s Pragmatic Educational Thought**

#### **From Bergson to Dewey**

Together with yoking to the cultural stock of Bergson’s philosophy, Liang simultaneously tried to explore an intellectual connection between American pragmatism and Western vitalism. As Liang stated in the article “Differences between Chinese and Western Scholarship,”

Although Bergson does not share the same school with Williams James and John Dewey, his vitalism contributed to the development of the two thinker’s philosophies. Both thinkers have been affected by the theory of biology, then formed their theories. If one reads over Dewey’s works, he will find out where the philosophical root of the American educator’s thought located, and what logic he adopted to create such a theory.<sup>432</sup>

From Liang’s perspective, Bergson’s vitalism becomes a way for him to approach John Dewey’s pragmatism. In the article “Foundational Ideas of John Dewey’s Educational Philosophy,” Liang further stressed that there was a strong philosophical bond between his thoughts, and the thoughts of Dewey and Bergson. As he point out:

There is a continuity between my thought and Dewey’s idea. Dewey’s theory was based on the field of biology. Likewise, Bergson’s thought has a tremendous impact on my thinking. Bergson is a biologist. When elaborating on his own thought, Dewey repeatedly talked about “life (*sheng ming*).” ...Although Dewey’s theory was rooted in biology, his idea was not a result of

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<sup>431</sup> Xu, *Intellectuals in a Big Time*, 205.

<sup>432</sup> Liang Shuming, “Differences between Chinese and Western Scholarship (中西方学术之不同),” in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.2 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 126.

studying biology. What he study is indeed education...he really did a great job on studying education! ...<sup>433</sup>

According to this important reference, it is fair to say that Bergson's vitalism formed a platform for a philosophical dialogue between "the last Confucian" and "American Confucian." With such an interpretation, Liang was more inclined to view Dewey's educational thought from the perspective of vitalism.

In fact, Liang's understanding of Dewey's educational philosophy is very compatible with his discourse of Confucianism. For example, together with emphasizing "the word 'life (*sheng ming*)' is the most important idea in Confucianism,<sup>434</sup> Liang states that "Everything he [Dewey] talked about is based on the idea of life (*sheng ming*)...when discussing his theory...he [Dewey] always paid considerable attention to a vivid life (*sheng ming*)."<sup>435</sup> This philosophical connection between Confucianism and Dewey's philosophy, which was based on vitalism, can be further evidenced in some of Liang's writings. In a discussion of his New Confucian thought, Liang recapitulated:

...[In Confucianism] the universe is the sum of all livings. The main thread from biological development to evolutionary history of human society is a relentless creation of 'big' life (*sheng ming*). All livings are supposed to be the embodiment of this 'big' life (*sheng ming*).<sup>436</sup>

Correspondingly, Liang's writing utilized a similar tone to uncover the core of Dewey's educational thought. According to Liang:

From the standpoint of Dewey's educational philosophy, the universe is a 'big' life (*sheng ming*). An understanding of the universe demands an understanding

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<sup>433</sup> Liang Shuming, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea (杜威教育哲学之根本观)," in *Collected Works of Liang Shumin*, vol.7 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 686.

<sup>434</sup> Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 130.

<sup>435</sup> Liang, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea," 687.

<sup>436</sup> Liang Shuming, "Life is a Creation (人生在创造)", in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.2 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 94

of life (*sheng ming*). Although life (*sheng ming*) is everywhere, the core of the big life (*sheng ming*) of the universe is human being. The life (*sheng ming*) is full of vitality, and the most vital thing in the universe is people's heart. [For Dewey], if we can soundly perceive people's heart, we can understand the meaning of the life (*sheng ming*) in the universe.<sup>437</sup>

In Liang's revelation, Dewey's educational idea drew a pathway from the development of individual life (*ge ti sheng ming*) to the actualization of social life (*she hui sheng ming*).<sup>438</sup> Therefore, the New Confucian scholar believed that Dewey's educational philosophy offered insight into the cultivation of "inner growth first," then make a strong connection between individuality and society.<sup>439</sup> To this respect, Liang's way of interpreting Dewey's educational philosophy was in correspondence to a Neo-Confucian formula of "being sage inside (*nei sheng*)" and "being kingly outside (*wai wang*)." That is to say, for Liang, education was supposed to start with the development of inner-self.

### **Liang Shuming's Understanding of Dewey's Work**

In view of the convictions above, Liang Shuming encouraged the readers to utilize a unique way to study Dewey's *Democracy and Education*. In Liang's analysis, it would be inappropriate for the reader to review the book chapters in sequence. Liang preferred to read chapter four ("Education as Growth") first. As he explained:

Chapter four paid more attentions to individual life (*ge ti sheng ming*). It would be better for us to read this chapter in advance while studying the book, so that we can have an understanding of the essence of individual life. This is the foundation of human education.<sup>440</sup>

Here, it is worthwhile to consider what Dewey means by "growth." In fact, Dewey's

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<sup>437</sup>Liang, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea," 686.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup>Liang, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea", 686.

concept of “Education as Growth” aimed to emancipate children’s learning from a passive and repressive condition. More importantly, he attempted to offer the general principle of “growth” as the primary criteria to assess the educational value of experiences. For Dewey, the essence of “growth” represents a form of learning that enables individuals to reconfigure their educational experiences throughout their lifetimes.<sup>441</sup> Hence, the idea of “growth” in Dewey’s language is closely related to an “experience” of the world. When it comes to the idea of “intelligence” and “habit” in the concept of “Education as Growth,” Dewey tried to highlight the function of communicable experience and social interaction for the development of individuality.<sup>442</sup>

Nevertheless, while reviewing chapter four in *Democracy and Education*, Liang was inclined to explain the terms of “habit” and “intelligence” based on his own stance.

As he argued:

The primary purpose of Dewey’s education is to help people grasp the meaning of human life (*sheng ming*), so that they can avoid the two extremisms. If they are indulged in intelligence, they will lack of the competence in dealing with current affairs...If they are indulged in habit, they will easily become mechanic, dogmatic, and ragescent. Their life (*sheng ming*) have been restrained by their habit. As a result, they don’t know how to adapt to a new circumstance...<sup>443</sup>

Here, Liang obviously believed that the maintenance of the equilibrium between habit and intelligence, addressed by Dewey, depended on the development of individual life (*ge ti sheng ming*). Further, similar to his New Confucian argument, Liang also synthesized the meanings of Chinese characters of “*sheng huo*” and “*sheng ming*” into his interpretation of Dewey’s educational idea. The word “life” in the quote of

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<sup>441</sup>Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 46-59.

<sup>442</sup>Hua Junzhang, *Unique But Inclusive Individuality: A Dialogue with John Dewey and Liang Shuming toward Educational Reform in China* (Doctoral Dissertation, Florida State University, 2009) 113.

<sup>443</sup>Liang, “A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey’s Educational Idea”, 690.

“Education is Life” from Dewey’s thought was translated by Liang Shuming into “*sheng ming*.” Therefore, from his understanding, like “Education as Growth,” Dewey’s “Education is Life” is still associated with the cultivation of individual life (*ge ti sheng ming*).<sup>444</sup>

From Liang’s understanding, the logic of the remaining chapters in *Democracy and Education* was founded on the chapter four. Obviously, Liang identified individual life (*ge ti sheng ming*) as a foundation for human education. After discussing the significance of chapter four, Liang believed that it would be good time for the readers to review chapters one, two and three. In these chapters, Liang stated that Dewey aimed to explore the connection between individual life (*ge ti sheng ming*) and social life (*she hui sheng ming*).<sup>445</sup> The focus of chapter seven considers how education can develop social life (*she hui sheng ming*). Liang pointed out that this chapter should become the final section the readers study.<sup>446</sup>

In short, from Liang’s interpretation, the view of vitalism became a main theme, which penetrated all chapters of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*. Like what he did to Confucianism, Liang also “vitalized” Dewey’s educational philosophy. More meaningfully, based on the idea of vitalism, Liang was able to yoke his New Confucian thought to Dewey’s pragmatism. He explains:

...what his [Dewey’s] book explored is a word “*huo* (change)”. He completely understood life is about change...what he discussed is not an innovative thing. Instead, it is supposed to stay where it should stay. In his opinion, life should follow its own way, the only thing we can do is to exactly grasp the essence of life. This notion is the same as Confucianism.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Ibid.,687.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 686.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.,700.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 700.

In accordance with this short paragraph, we can see a basic assumption of Liang's understanding of Dewey's educational philosophy is to a large extent derived from his New Confucian way of thinking. In the following writings, I am looking forward to uncovering the intellectual connection between Deweyan learning and Liang's Confucian thought, together with discussing Liang's educational reformation in the rural reconstruction movement.

### **Confucianism, Dewey's Thought, and Liang's Rural Educational Practice**

#### **Rural Educational Reformation by Liang Shuming**

While writing the final chapters of *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, Liang Shuming was conceiving of how to implement his cultural theory in Chinese reality. As Liang stated:

...The philosophy of life of Confucius and Yan Hui<sup>448</sup> can resolve those problems of life anguishing Chinese young people, and eventually open a right pathway for them...Only the restoration of Chinese [Confucian] philosophy of life can revive Chinese people's force of vitality, which is disappearing and lapsing. A real vital force should come from Chinese inner spirit ...Since the May Fourth Movement, some scholars regards the New Culture Movement as the renaissance of Chinese civilization. In fact, this movement is only a result of the rise of Western culture in China...The renaissance of Chinese civilization should be based on the restoration of their own philosophy of life...<sup>449</sup>

This paragraph displays Liang's willingness to utilize Confucianism to reform Chinese society. At the same time, for Liang, the revival of Confucianism became a key factor to reconstruct Chinese people's spirit and morality.

Inspired by such an ideal, Liang decided to quit his faculty job at National Beijing University in 1924. From 1924 to 1936, Liang experimented with his

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<sup>448</sup> Yan Hui (21?-481BC), one of Confucius's favorite disciples.

<sup>449</sup> Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 229.

educational and cultural philosophy in a few rural counties in Henan and Shandong provinces. The most extraordinary accomplishment in his rural reconstruction is represented by his efforts in Zhouping county, Shandong province from 1931 to 1936. In the cause of rural reconstruction, Liang paid considerable attention to rural educational reform. Unfortunately, when Lian Shuming was promoting his experiment in Zhuoping County, Japan invaded China in 1937. As the Japanese army took over Shandong province in the following year, Liang's rural reconstruction movement came to an end.

A combination of specific factors shaped Liang Shuming's educational thought of rural reconstruction. First, Liang felt very disappointed in the modern educational system in China, which was blindly modeled on the Western style. Basically speaking, as described in the preceding chapter, the development of the modern school system in China was a result of the imitation of a foreign style of education since the late Qing time. During the period of the May Fourth Movement, Chinese educators increasingly believed the development of a new education system based on the Western model would be a good way to spread the ideal of democracy and science among Chinese youth. John Dewey's arrival further triggered Chinese educators' enthusiasm to introduce an American style school system. Even though Western-oriented Chinese educators made great progresses in the modernization of Chinese education, some wise scholars still proposed sharp critiques of a new Chinese school system. Liang Shuming was one of the critics.

In his article "Brief Introduction of My Thought of Running School," Liang expressed his feeling of worry about new education. As he said:

When it comes to our educational idea, the purpose of our education is supposed to make close friends with young people. To make friends with young people actually embraces the two meanings. First of all, we should help them learn how to take a right pathway. Second, to find out “a right way” refers to not only study a specific knowledge and skill, but also all aspects of their lives. Nevertheless...current school education only taught students some knowledges and skills at the expense of all things of their lives...how can formal school system help students understand their lives if our education only focuses on regular hour curriculum and subject materials? It is not correct for educators to only emphasize the importance of the acquisition of “knowledge”, ignoring students’ mental and physical growth...In my view, education aims to lead students to view all aspects of their lives, then help them take a correct pathway...the building up of both spiritual mind and lively body are essential to education.<sup>450</sup>

Here, Liang tended to conceptualize “education” very broadly in order to embrace all items of cultural stocks in human society. Following such a notion, Liang proceeded to elaborate on his educational thought based on the cultural perspective stemming from his work, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*. According to different cultural approaches, Liang argued that the West and China formed their own respective educational ideals. Western education emphasizes the significance of the development of human intelligence, whereas Chinese [Confucian] education pays considerable attention to the cultivation of human emotion and character instead.<sup>451</sup> While the former aims toward the acquisition of knowledge, the latter directs a student to focus on the lives of human beings.<sup>452</sup>

Based on his observation, Liang concluded that Western education tends to view human life from the perspective of instrumentalism.<sup>453</sup> From his perspective, the

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<sup>450</sup>Liang Shuming, “My Proposal of Running School (办学意见述略),” in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.4 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 778.

<sup>451</sup>Liang Shuming, “Differences between Eastern and Western Education (东西人的教育之不同),” in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.5 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 656-659.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 658.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, 658.



education that overemphasizes the significance of the development of human intelligence has nothing to do with achieving the ultimate moral concern of human life.<sup>454</sup> Conversely, Chinese education is a reflection of the principle of human life for the sake of itself.<sup>455</sup> Chinese education, therefore, as it is associated with the shaping of emotion and character, can correct the weaknesses of Western education.<sup>456</sup> Similar with his New Confucian thought, Liang held that the ultimate purpose of education is to develop someone's "intuition," which can help him or her experience the pleasure of human life.<sup>457</sup> In this respect, Liang's educational thought was in fact based on Confucius's life of philosophy, which was also addressed in his *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*.

Second, Liang Shuming's understanding of the uniqueness of Chinese society also contributed to the formation of his rural reconstruction educational thought. In Liang's view, an agricultural country like China could not cope with the new education. He argued:

...In fact, current school system does not match with our social reality...within new school system or modern society, our students easily develop an urban way of life. In cities, they are totally alienated from the lifestyle and interest of the masses. Therefore, since they go to town to attend the new elementary schools, rural children cannot live traditionally simple lives anymore...they dislike and cannot tolerate everything [in rural life]. Through new education, they only study some subjects (such as English and Mathematics) that unrelated to their real lives. They don't have the opportunity to acquire any basic knowledge of rural life...they don't know how to deal with farm labor... all the things that they learn through the new education are remote from their actual lives...the

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<sup>454</sup>Ibid.,658.

<sup>455</sup>Liang, "Differences between Eastern and Western Education," 658.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.,658.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.,658.

purpose of the new education only serves to produce brilliant persons for another society rather than for Chinese society.<sup>458</sup>

In this statement, Liang realized that there was a profound discrepancy between the new education and Chinese reality. According to his analysis:

Our society is very different from the foreign [Western] society on all occasions. The modern standard of living that they have attained exposes the deficiencies of our own country. However, we blindly adhere to their curriculum, how can this system function well in our country?<sup>459</sup>

In Liang's revelation, the Westernized educational system had failed to modernize the state by discarding all that was of value in traditional Chinese education. As a result, with the spreading of new education, the situation of Chinese society deteriorated further. As he criticized: "Since the introduction of new school system from the Europe and America, as I observe, this manner of education has not been successful. Instead, our society is suffering from it."<sup>460</sup>

Liang's prescription for Chinese education was compatible with his thought of New Confucianism. In his eyes, Chinese culture was deeply rooted in rural domains (rather than urban enclaves) and the fundamental difficulties were caused by the problem of "cultural disorder" within these regions.<sup>461</sup> Consequently, the rise of China greatly relied on the revival of Confucianism in rural areas. In addition, Liang's educational ideas were in correspondence with the Confucian logical pathway from "being sage inside (*nei sheng*)" to "being kingly outside (*wai wang*)."<sup>461</sup> As he wrote:

Education aims to improve human creativity. It once paid considerable attentions to the spiritual maturation of innumerable living individuals. For

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<sup>458</sup>Liang Shuming, "My Worries (我心中的苦闷)," in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.4 (Jinan: Shandong People Press, 1989), 837.

<sup>459</sup>Ibid.,837.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.,836.

<sup>461</sup> Liang Shuming, "Theory of Rural Reconstruction (乡村建设理论)", in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.2 (Jinan: Shandong People Press, 1989), 204-209.

them, the mission of education is to pursue inner growth. External achievements were merely the embodiment of their moral development.<sup>462</sup>

Alongside his father, Liang thoroughly treated the “purification of people’s heart” as a foundation for achieving educational goals. In accordance with such a New Confucian view, Liang made great efforts to engage in spiritual and moral reconstruction during the period of rural reconstruction.

One of Liang’s famous reform endeavors was to revitalize the custom of academic lectures (*jiang xue*), which were utilized by Confucian scholars during the Song and Ming dynasty. The ultimate model for classic academic lectures was based on the relationship between Confucius and Mencius and their disciples.<sup>463</sup> Generally speaking, this educational model combined moral and intellectual cultivation with the mutual interaction, encouragement, and criticism experienced in an intimate student-teacher setting. In this prototype, the development of character was reliably the most important task on the teacher’s agenda. For Liang, the utilization of this model provided Chinese rural education with an opportunity to free students from a rigid and inflexible class hour credit school system.<sup>464</sup>

More importantly, in Liang’s view, “*jiang xue*” became an excellent way to realize Confucius’s philosophy of life in his rural reconstruction. Through the acquisition of the spirit behind Confucian ritual and music, each villager was supposed to develop a good “intuition,” so that he can be educated to become an exemplary person. In reference to the classic educational model, Liang expected to restore a Confucian human relationship among the masses in rural areas. In brief, Liang’s New

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<sup>462</sup> Liang, “Life is a Creation,” 94.

<sup>463</sup> Alitto, *The Last Confucian*, 137-138.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, 137-138.

Confucian thought became an inner logic throughout his educational thought toward rural reconstruction. The focal point of Liang's rural educational reformation was to retain the superiority of Confucian civilization in the face of the serious cultural and ideological challenges from the West. Keeping a grasp on a clear picture of such a historical and cultural context is conducive to understand Liang's absorption of John Dewey's educational philosophy.

### **Liang Shuming's Usage of the Educational Ideas of Confucius and Dewey**

Together with his application of Confucianism to rural reality, Liang Shuming's interpretation of Dewey's educational philosophy also served as the goal of his endeavors in Chinese rural reconstruction. In his critiques of the modern educational system of the Republican period, Liang Shuming regarded Dewey's educational thought as a cultural asset to "decorate" his own discourse on the rural reconstruction movement. For instance, in order to "justify" his reflection on Western culture, Liang referenced some ideas from Dewey's *Democracy and Education*:

As Dewey thought, although today's [Western] society is in a great progression, it still embraces a large number of drawbacks. For many people, their relationships have been becoming more and more mechanic...For example, there is no a communication between workers and capitalists. They don't really understand each other. There is no social consciousness among them. Although they reside in a same society, there are no sufficient social interactions among them. If there was a society, where all people share a common sense, and organize themselves with the ability of reasoning. This society would be the most advanced and ideal style...<sup>465</sup>

From New Confucians' stance of anti-scientism, Dewey's attack on Western urban society greatly resonated with Liang Shuming's mind. In his *The Theory of Rural Reconstruction*, Liang repeatedly cited the similar ideas from Dewey's *Democracy and*

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<sup>465</sup>Liang, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea," 694.

*Education* to strengthen his advocacy of Chinese rural educational reformation. For instance, Liang said:

Based on his [Dewey's] observation, we must acknowledge that Western society has been making great progress today. However, there are still numerous social diseases. Although all members of society work together and depend on each other, they don't have mutual understanding at heart ... they just establish a machine-like relationship. When all parts of the machine are working independently to complete the same mission, they don't really recognize each other because they never share the same life goal.<sup>466</sup>

Similar to Dewey, Liang also embraced a critical attitude toward the abnormal development of the urban civilization. He even announced that “During the period of one hundred years, a blind imitation of Western urbanization became one of the most serious factors to result in the destruction of Chinese rural society.”<sup>467</sup> Evidently, in the case of criticizing Western civilization, Liang regarded Dewey as his “colleague.”

By intensively studying Liang, we can find out that Dewey’s educational idea left a deep mark on Liang’s thought of rural educational reformation. While engaging in reforming rural society, Liang frequently highlighted the concept of “growth” in his explanation of the implication of his rural reconstruction movement. He stated:

...the goal of our rural reconstruction is to establish a social institution. I frequently treat this social institution as a growth...It gradually develop from bud, it starts from tiny thing... It will grow up from rural area, then develop to a big society.<sup>468</sup>

In this short paragraph, the logical pathway from individual growth to social development somewhat mirror the influence of Dewey’s idea of “Education as Growth” in Liang’s thought.

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<sup>466</sup>Liang, “Theory of Rural Reconstruction,” 310-311.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>468</sup>Ibid., 337.

Moreover, Dewey's view of balancing school education with social education in *Democracy and Education* also contributed to Liang Shuming's rural educational thought. In "Foundational Ideas of John Dewey's Educational Philosophy," Liang disclosed that in Dewey's educational thinking, school education, and social education are complementary. Liang stated:

According to Dewey, social education can correct the disadvantage of school education. The most important thing is to find out an equilibrium between the two styles of education...it is necessary to transform today's school to mini community, make a continuity between the life of school and society, and get rid of certain artificial parts of current school life irrelevant to social reality....school education should embrace the meaning of society, at the same time, it is supposed to be superior to social life.<sup>469</sup>

Following this argument, Liang concluded that "Dewey's opinion on human education and societal life is the same thing, just two different words."<sup>470</sup> More meaningfully, as a follower of Confucius, Liang acutely realized that for both Dewey and Confucius, societal life and human education are in interplay. Consequently, when stating the idea of social education in Dewey's thought, Liang's writing simultaneously put forward the example that Confucius's attempts to create ancient private schools, breaking through the royal court's monopoly over mass education.<sup>471</sup>

At the same time, Dewey's idea of integrating school into society was echoed by Liang's educational theory and practice during the period of rural reconstruction. As a rural reformist, Liang submitted his own proposal "The Plan of Society-Oriented Education" to the Nationalist Government in 1933.<sup>472</sup> In this proposal, Liang called on the government to pay sufficient attention to social education as an efficient solution to

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<sup>469</sup> Liang, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea," 696.

<sup>470</sup> Liang, "Theory of Rural Reconstruction," 310.

<sup>471</sup> Liang, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea," 695

<sup>472</sup> Ma, *Biography of Liang Shuming*, 70.

improve the Chinese nation.<sup>473</sup> In the meantime, his proposal stressed the importance of the unity of school and society.<sup>474</sup>

In keeping with Dewey's idea, Liang attempted to foster an intimacy between schooling and villagers' social life by means of establishing the Peasant School (*xiang nong xue xiao*) during the 1930's. The school, in Liang's view, was expected to play both roles of educational and social institution in Chinese rural domain.<sup>475</sup> In order to achieve this goal, the curriculums in the school encompassed the diversity of educational programs, including literacy education, mathematics, music, medical care, professional training, and character and civic education.<sup>476</sup> All of the learnings in the Peasant School aimed to connect the students with their rural lives.

The majority of the students attending the schools came from local villages. In the school, the students were taught to learn basic three R skills (reading, writing, and arithmetic), as well as some knowledge of modern agricultural science and technology.<sup>477</sup> During afters-chool time, they were strongly encouraged to develop a strong sense of cooperation and autonomy through participating in a variety of farm works. In the meantime, a large number of autonomous associations, which aimed to serve for peasantry's needs, were created by the students of the school.<sup>478</sup>

More to the point, the Peasant School was still the embodiment of Confucian ethical idealism. For Liang Shuming, the development of the character of "being sage

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid.,70.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.,70.

<sup>475</sup> Liang, "Theory of Rural Reconstruction," 345.

<sup>476</sup> Xu Zhihui, "Rural Education and the Revival of Rural Society(乡村教育与乡村社会复兴)," in *Tao Xingzhi and Modern Chinese Education*, ed. Zhou Jiarong and Wen Zhaojian (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Educational Publishing Co,2010),6.

<sup>477</sup> Ma, *Biography of Liang Shuming*, 68, 69.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.,69.

inside” should become the most important thing in Chinese rural education. In Liang’s emphasis, the leadership of the school should be comprised of a group of Confucian exemplary persons, who enjoyed a high prestige in the village for their morality. Following the custom of academic lectures (*jiang xue*), the teachers who served for the school were also supposed to become a role model for the students.

Correspondingly, moral cultivation played a crucial role in the students’ educational life. For instance, the idea of “the rural compact (*xiang yue*)”<sup>479</sup> was adopted by the Peasant School to educate the students. After the removal of officially dogmatic aspects of the rural compact, Liang endeavored to retain the component of moral teaching and cultural transmission in the model. In the school community, Confucian ritual, became a strong guide to regulate the students’ behavior instead of law. At the same time, the students were required to practice a mutual exhortation of moral cultivation, together with developing an interdependent relationship to get through any hardship.<sup>480</sup>

Furthermore, Liang planned that the model of the peasant school could spread from the village to provincial level, and eventually form one great nationwide social-educational-cultural system. Within a Confucian atmosphere, millions of exemplary persons were expected to grow out of the system.<sup>481</sup> He believed that once rural reconstruction had built up its strength, a Confucian utopian society would eventually

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<sup>479</sup> The *Xiang Yue*, originally in the Song dynasty (960-1279). It was revived at the beginning of the Qing in the mid-seventeenth century for the edification of a wider audience than could be reached by ill-attended and irregular lectures at the school-temples. Local officials were to appoint scholars to expound at public lectures the maxims of emperors, most frequently the Sacred Edict of the emperors. In brief, the core of the *Xiang Yue* was to inculcate Confucian value in Chinese people. See, *Education and Social Change in China*, Sally Borthwick, 3.

<sup>480</sup> Ma, *Biography of Liang Shuming*, 69.

<sup>481</sup> Xu, *Intellectuals in a Big Time*, 209..



replace government.<sup>482</sup> Briefly speaking, Liang Shuming's experiment with the Peasant School was a reflection of his synthesis of the educational thoughts of John Dewey and Confucianism in the rural reconstruction movement.

Overall, Liang thought of Dewey's educational thought as a cultural asset, which could be conducive to his rural reformation. Therefore, Liang took a very positive view of Dewey's educational idea.<sup>483</sup> He even announced: "I will stand by Dewey to resist the trend toward anti-humanity in contemporary Western philosophy..."<sup>484</sup> However, after reviewing Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, Liang found that there was still an obvious limitation in Dewey's educational philosophy. He pointed out:

...he [Dewey] only understands the changing side of life. He does not perceive the unchanging part of life. Unchanging part is the substance (*ti*) of changing part, and changing part is the function (*yong*) of unchanging part. He only understands the "yong" of life. Instead, he does not understand the "ti" of life...what he study is about everything outside life itself. He cannot understand the essence of life...All things he said are quire moral but he has not discovered the truth of morality. His idea is close to Confucianism, However, he missed the most important part of it.

Liang's argument was a reflection of the yoking of Confucian *ti-yong* formula to his individual capacity. In this formula, Confucian morality plays a determinative role.

In correspondence to such a formula, Liang implied that Dewey's educational thought should belong to the realm of "yong," which only can serve for Chinese Confucianism as a complement. Therefore, for Liang, "Dewey taught people only how to apply intelligence in dealing with the practicalities of life, but not in reflecting

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<sup>482</sup>Alitto. *The Last Confucian*, 212.

<sup>483</sup>Liang, "A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey's Educational Idea", 688.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.,688.

inwardly upon the value of life.”<sup>485</sup> When criticizing the absence of a deep understanding of human life in Dewey’s thought, Liang’s conviction stemmed from his writing *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*. In this book, as mentioned in previously, Liang drew a conclusion that only Confucianism can grasp the essence of a life of philosophy after comparing the three style of civilizations (West, China, and India).

It is necessary to mention that, according to Liang, even though Dewey took a very critical view of current Western society, the American educator failed to find a real solution to cure Western social illness because his philosophy was mostly rooted in the Western civilization.<sup>486</sup> As a result, Liang exhibited strong self-confidence in helping Dewey through his theoretical dilemma. As he acclaimed: “...Dewey must need our assistance from the East. If I have surplus energy, I will help him out.”<sup>487</sup> In relation to previous analyses, Liang’s statement greatly exhibited his motivation to correct the disadvantage of Dewey’s educational philosophy based on Confucian philosophy. Overall, Liang’s perception of Dewey’s educational philosophy had been framed by his philosophical and cultural ideas from *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*. In other words, the yoking of Confucianism to the individual capacity of Liang Shuming determined what parts of Dewey’s idea can be recognized as cultural asset.

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<sup>485</sup> Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, “When Dewey’s Confucian Admirer Meets His Liberal Critic: Liang Shuming and Eamonn Callan on John Dewey’s Democracy and Education,” in *Democracy as Culture*, ed. Sor-Hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 176.

<sup>486</sup> Liang, “A Philosophical Foundation of John Dewey’s Educational Idea”, 688.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*,688.

## Conclusion

This section examined a philosophical encounter between Liang Shuming and John Dewey. Before approaching Dewey's *Democracy and Education* during the time of the rural reconstruction movement, Liang strived to develop his system of thought of New Confucian philosophy. While yoking Confucian idea of “being sage inside (*nei sheng*)” and “being kingly outside (*wai wang*)” to his individual capacity, Liang Shuming was highly motivated by his father to dedicate himself to achieve the goal of national salvation.

During the period of May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, Liang endeavored to utilize a strategy of cultural bookkeeping to deal with both Confucian legacy and Western culture. In an educational encounter, cultural stock can attach to individual capacities in a variety of ways that fall along a continuum from dead relic to living legacy.<sup>488</sup> Liang chose to regard official “Confucian ideology” as a cultural liability, which became dead relics to thwart social progress in China. At the same time, he made great efforts to find a living legacy of Confucianism, which was supposed to become a cultural asset in Chinese tradition. While most of the modern Chinese intellectuals embraced the worship of scientism, Liang rejected it as a cultural liability from Western civilization.

In reaction to the May Fourth Chinese iconoclasts' attack on Confucianism, Liang Shuming wrote his book *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*. In this book, Liang highlighted the unique value of Chinese culture (in particular represented by Confucianism) after a series of comparative analyses among the West,

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<sup>488</sup> Martin, *Education Reconfigured*, 158.

China, and India. More significantly, this book indicated the relationship between the Chinese and the Western culture from Liang's perspective of cultural nationalism.<sup>489</sup> Moreover, Liang discovered some relevant items of cultural stocks from Western philosophies that connecting Confucianism with a modern society. In Liang's system of cultural bookkeeping, Henri Bergson's philosophy of Vitalism was believed to be a cultural asset from Western culture, which was available to "modernize" Confucianism. The yoking of Bergson's idea to the individual capacity of Liang Shuming led to the vitalization of Confucianism.

Even though Liang Shuming became immersed in the Western vitalism, he still utilized Confucianism as the best solution to cure Chinese and Western civilization. The motivation behind Liang's rural reconstruction was to apply his New Confucian thought to the Chinese social reality. In Liang's belief, the revival of Confucianism in rural China eventually resulted in the restoration of Chinese civilization. In particular, Liang thought the application of Confucianism into rural educational reformation was one of the most important solutions in his prescription to prevent Chinese rural areas from Western cultural aggression. As a New Confucian scholar, Liang believed moral development and inner growth play crucial role in rural educational reformations.

When engaging in rural educational reformation, Liang carefully studied John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*. It is important to consider that Liang's view of Dewey's educational thought had been shaped by his New Confucian discourse. Additionally, Bergson's vitalism built up a philosophical bridge between John Dewey's educational thought and Liang Shuming's philosophy of New Confucianism. From the

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<sup>489</sup>Xu, *Intellectuals in a Big Time*, 211-221.

vantage point of New Confucianism, Liang also endowed Dewey's philosophy with the feature of vitalism. My findings further illustrate that Dewey's ideas, such as "Education as Growth" and "the Unity of School and Society," resonated with Liang's educational thought, together with his great advocacy of Confucian moral teaching. As a result, the Peasant School was a reflection of the combination of the educational thoughts of Confucianism and John Dewey.

From the perspective of vitalism, Liang indeed treated Dewey's educational philosophy as a Western cultural asset, which was in opposition to scientism. He believed that Dewey's philosophy can represent the best side of Western culture.<sup>490</sup> Nevertheless, the yoking of the Confucian *ti-yong* formula to Liang set a limitation to his full recognition of the worth of Dewey's educational thought. As a result, Dewey's educational thought in Liang's view, only plays the role of "yong (function)" in rural reconstruction. Taking a stance of the superiority of Chinese culture from *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, Liang strongly believed only Confucianism can correct the disadvantages of Dewey's educational philosophy. Therefore, it is fair to say Liang only viewed Dewey's *Democracy and Education* from his New Confucian perspective. While rejecting the belief of scientism, Liang's moral determinism from Confucianism plays a crucial role in understanding Dewey's educational philosophy.

In the final analysis, a philosophical dialogue between Liang Shuming and Dewey indeed mirrors Martin's educational theory as encounter. In her writing, Martin said, "Depending on the individuals, the coupling and uncoupling of stock and capacities can lead to that stock or other items of stock being reinterpreted, refigured,

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<sup>490</sup> Liang, *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*, 168.

reconstructed, or even rejected.”<sup>491</sup> According to my research, when Liang yoked himself to the cultural stocks of China and the West, both Confucianism and Dewey’s philosophy experienced reinterpretation and reconstruction in his New Confucian mind.

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<sup>491</sup>Martin, *Education Reconfigured*, 23.

## Chapter 6: Life is Education and Unity of Knowledge and Action

### Introduction

Among the five figures, Tao Xingzhi is the only person who had shared experiences with the other three intellectuals (Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin, and Guo Bingwen), and Liang Shumin. On the one hand, Tao, along with the three scholars, pursued his doctoral program at Columbia University while John Dewey was on faculty there. Like the three scholars, Tao also played a vital role in the educational and cultural reformation during the period of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement. On the other hand, being aligned with Liang Shuming, Tao dedicated himself to Chinese rural educational reformation during the Republican period. In addition, Tao embraced a Confucian/Neo-Confucian educational background before approaching Dewey's educational philosophy.

According to John King Fairbank, the most creative disciple of John Dewey was Tao Xingzhi.<sup>492</sup> In order to uncover the implication of Fairbank's comments regarding the Chinese educator, this section attempts to examine the salient features of Tao's educational theory and practice within the frame of Jane Roland Martin's Educational Theory of Encounter. There will be four important questions I attempt to answer. First, what thoughts did Tao learn from Confucian/Neo-Confucian legacy? Second, what idea did Tao learn from John Dewey? Third, how did Tao combine his Confucian educational experience and Dewey's educational philosophy? Fourth, how did Tao try to adopt, transfer, and apply Dewey's educational philosophy to Chinese rural educational reformation?

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<sup>492</sup>John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution: 1800-1985* (New York: Harper& Row Publisher, 1986), 200.

### Tao Xingzhi and Wang Yangming's School of Mind (*Xin Xue*)

In 1891, Tao Xingzhi (born as Tao Wenjui) was born in a small town in Anhui Province. Although Tao was raised in a poor family, his parents attached great importance to his education.<sup>493</sup> Before receiving modern education, Tao was taught by his father and Confucian teachers to learn traditional Chinese classics. In 1906, the first year after the abolition of the Confucian civil service examination, Tao entered a new style school in his hometown.<sup>494</sup> The school curriculum was shaped by a Confucian *ti-yong* formula. Hence, while studying Western subjects, such as English and mathematics, Tao was required to concentrate on Confucian classic learnings.<sup>495</sup> In 1910, Tao was enrolled in Jingling University in Nanjing city. During his studies there, Tao began to yoke himself to the philosophy of a Neo-Confucian scholar-official, Wang Yangming (1472-1529).<sup>496</sup>

To better appreciate the yoking of the cultural stock of Wang Yangming's philosophy to Tao Xingzhi, a brief introduction of the Neo-Confucian thought is in order. Generally speaking, since the Southern Song period, two trends of thought emerged out of Neo-Confucianism: the "Learning of Principle" and the "Learning of the Mind and Heart."<sup>497</sup> Both trends believed that all myriad of things in the universe are manifestations of the concept "Principle" (*li*), which is closely related to ethics.<sup>498</sup> By understanding the "Principle" that underlies the universe, a Confucian disciple should grasp the moral standard that he must put into practice for the purpose of cultivating

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<sup>493</sup> Zhang and Tang, *A Confucius after Confucius*, 54.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-57.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-59.

<sup>496</sup> Tao Xingzhi, "Action, Knowledge, and Action (行知行)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 687.

<sup>497</sup> Feng, Zhou, and He, *The History of Chinese Culture*. 783.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*



inner mind, regulating family, stabilizing the state, and eventually bringing harmony under heaven.<sup>499</sup> Nevertheless, the two trends of thought exhibited different perspectives as to how human beings are to interpret “Principle.”

Historically, the thought of “Learning of Principle,” advocated by the Cheng-Zhu school, enjoyed a prestigious position in the field of official ideology during the period of Ming and Qing. This approach stresses the significance of “the investigation of things and extension of knowledge” for Confucian students while understanding the essence of principle.<sup>500</sup> However, the thought of “Learning of the Mind and Heart” highlighted the subjectivity of human heart or mind in pursuit of the essence of “Principle.”<sup>501</sup> This trend in thought was mostly represented by Wang Yangming (1472-1529), a Confucian scholar-official of the Ming dynasty.

The Master Wang Yangming believed that inasmuch as each living thing is a reflection of “Principle,” then it is unnecessary for a Confucian student to look outside himself to seek it. That is to say, in order to pursue the perfection of self-cultivation, the student only needs to consult his own heart or mind, wherein the “Principle” surely is located. From Wang’s perspective, it follows that anyone who understands his own true nature was eligible to understand the “Principle” of the universe.<sup>502</sup> In light of this conviction, Wang Yangming constructed the idea of “Innate Knowing,” arguing that every person was able to know by birth the difference between good and evil.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid., 658-659.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., 651.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 783.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid., 783-784.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid., 784-785.

Simultaneously, compared to the Cheng-Zhu school, Wang embraced a very different view of the relationship between knowledge and action. For the Cheng-Zhu school, someone should acquire knowledge first, then put it to action. However, for Wang, there was no way to use knowledge after gaining it. In order to achieve the level of “Innate Knowing,” the Neo-Confucian master strongly believed that knowledge and action were unified as one.<sup>504</sup> More to the point, through uniting knowing and acting, in Wang’s emphasis, an ordinary person can become like a sage such as Confucius and Mencius.<sup>505</sup> In essence, the Master Wang Yangming had taught that self-understanding was the key to a moral action, and that ethics only had meaning when converted to direct, decisive, and spontaneous action.”<sup>506</sup>

Because of Wang Yangming’s critiques of the mainstream thought of the Cheng-Zhu School, the School of Mind had been oppressed by royal courts during the period of Ming and Qing dynasty. Nevertheless, Wang Yangming himself was an embodiment of the Confucian immortality of the Three W’s (the immortality of Worth, Work, and Words). Therefore, his thought was increasingly advocated by Chinese scholars between the late Qing period and the early part of the Republican era, when China was confronting a serious national crisis.<sup>507</sup> A more important reason Chinese scholars became interested in Wang Yangming’s philosophy was that his School of Mind greatly contributed to Japan’s Meiji Restoration, which eventually empowered and modernized the island country. In fact, many of the Japanese reformists thought of

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid., 784.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Struggle of Modern China* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 16.

<sup>507</sup> Yu Huaiyan, *Wang Yangming in Five Hundred Years* (王阳明的五百年) (Guiyang: Guizhou Educational Press, 2009), 117-123.

themselves as the disciples of Wang Yangming.<sup>508</sup> Inspired by a Japanese model, the idea of “Unity of Knowledge and Action” from Wang’s philosophy became a guide for modern Chinese intellectuals and educators to pursue national salvation.<sup>509</sup>

Logically speaking, Tao’s interest in Wang Yangming’s learning was closely connected to the prevalence of the Neo-Confucian School of Mind over the Chinese intellectual community. Because of his belief in Wang Yangming’s philosophy, Tao gave up his original name “Wenjun” and adopted the new name of “Zhixing,”<sup>510</sup> which means “knowing (*zhi*)” then “acting (*xing*).”<sup>511</sup> In fact, the combination of the two Chinese characters was derived from Wang Yangming’s saying that “knowing should be the beginning of acting, and acting should be the completion of knowing.”<sup>512</sup> The yoking of Wang Yangming’s learning to the individual capacity of Tao Xingzhi can be further evidenced by his bachelor thesis “The Spirit of Republic,” which was written in 1914. For instance, while elaborating on his own understanding of the relation between individuals and republicanism, Tao attempted to merge Wang Yangming’s thinking to his discourse. As he argued:

In republicanism, individual persons should be the owner of society and state. The master Wang Yangming’s thesis that “Everyone can become a sage” implicitly matches with our expectation for any individuals. If everyone can become a sage, why doesn’t he try to be sage? ... Although humans are different because of their social status and economic background, it is common for all kinds of people to learn how to understand the difference between righteousness and wrongdoing. Republicanism is a reflection of the current of thought, which

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<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 132-138.

<sup>509</sup> Chang Kun-Chiang, “Yangming Learning of Thoughts in Modern China and Japan: A Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Taiwan Eastern Asian Studies*, 5, no. 2 (December 2008), 35-85.

<sup>510</sup> Tao eventually changed *Zhixing* to *Xingzhi* in early 1930’s. See Tao, “Action, Knowledge, and Action,” 687.

<sup>511</sup> Tao, “Action, Knowledge, and Action,” 687.

<sup>512</sup> Chu Don-chean, “Tao Xingzhi’s Family Background and Educational Experience”, in *A Study of Tao Xingzhi Abroad*, ed and trans. Zhou Hongyu (Beijing: People Educational Express, 1991), 94.

underlines the possibility that each one could become a person who can make a right decision.<sup>513</sup>

Obviously, Tao Xingzhi regarded Wang Yangming's School of Mind as a Chinese cultural asset, which can be conducive to shape the spirit of republican citizenry. It is fair to say that during the very early stage of the Republican period, Wang Yangming's philosophy greatly resonated in Tao's mind. Some researchers, such as Atsushi Makino, pointed out that Tao's article "The Essence of Republicanism" in fact mirrored his understanding and absorption of *Records of Teaching and Practicing (Chuan Xi Lu)*,<sup>514</sup> which was one of most influential books written by Wang Yangming (This book systematically explicated Wang's philosophical and educational ideas, such as "Unity of Knowledge and Action" and "Innate Knowledge.") During his lifetime, the concepts of "knowledge" and "action" from Wang Yangming's learning play the most important functions in the development of Tao Xingzhi's educational thought.

Moreover, in Wang Yangming's philosophy, the idea of "Unity of Knowing and Acting" highlights a tendency to extend knowledge to practical affairs. This tendency was compatible with the Confucian idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society (*jing shi zhi yong*)." In other words, both approaches emphasize the significance of learning to the resolution of social and political problems. As my previous writing remarked, this pragmatic aspect of Confucian educational thought became a strong driving force behind Chinese intellectuals' yoking to Western learning since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect, Tao Xingzhi was not exceptional. From his perspective, education was not

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<sup>513</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "The Essence of Republicanism (共和精义)", in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 215.

<sup>514</sup>Atsushi Makino, "The Foundation of Tao Xingzhi's Educational Thought: Explanation and Absorption of Wang Yangming's Thought in the Period of Jingling University," in *A Study of Tao Xingzhi Abroad*, ed and trans. Zhou Hongyu (Beijing: People Educational Express, 1991), 131.

only for the sake of education itself. In his “Essence of Republicanism,” Tao views civic education as an efficient resolution to consolidate the republican system in China.

As he remarked:

...Education can make the poor become the wealthy, as well as make the fool become the wise. It also can remove partisanship and generate competent and faithful people. Good education can expel hypocritical politicians and open a pathway for wise statesmen. At the same time, there is no room for the thought of tyranny of the majority in good education...as Elwell said, the two essential factors from republicanism are respectively education and economy. Nevertheless, a good education will bring a satisfactory life to citizenry. Thus, education must become a necessary vehicle for the construction of a republican state...<sup>515</sup>

It is thus clear that education in Tao’s view bears an important mission for empowering and modernizing republican China. The previous writing in my dissertation already uncovered the fact that the goal of Hu Shih’s pursuit of Western knowledge was to acquire practically useful learning, which was considered a solution to resolve Chinese difficulties. Coincidentally, while studying abroad, Tao Xingzhi cherished the same thought as Hu Shih. When he provided a personal statement for his application to the Teachers College of Columbia University for a doctoral program, Tao’s statement implies that he became coupled to the pragmatic aspect of Confucian educational thought:

... As early as three years ago [1913], I made a decision to go to the University of Columbia as my final educational goal in America. Unfortunately I failed to make an enrollment in this school because of my financial problems. My life goal is to make a contribution to the establishment of a democratic China through education rather than military revolution. When witnessing a series of crisis and frustrations growing out of the founding of the Republican China, I strongly believe that there would not be a real republican state without a public education. I decided to devote my lifetime to [Chinese] educational administration...Upon returning China, I will collaborate with other educators to establish an efficient public educational system for Chinese people. I really wish

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<sup>515</sup>Tao, “The Essence of Republicanism,” 221.

that Chinese citizenry could follow in American people's footsteps, developing and retaining a real democratic system...<sup>516</sup>

Furthermore, the combination of Tao's writings above simultaneously exhibited the yoking of new cultural stock from Western culture to his individual capacity. Fairly speaking, Tao viewed democracy and republicanism and American style education system as Western cultural assets that could help China to enter a modern world. Tao's strong preference for Western culture greatly contributed to his acceptance of Dewey's educational philosophy.

### **Dewey's Educational Philosophy and Chinese New Education**

As a young student with a Confucian activist disposition, Tao Xingzhi went to the U.S in 1914 in pursuit of his new educational journey. He acquired his master's degree in political science from the University of Illinois in 1915. From 1915 to 1917, Tao engaged in a E.D. program at Teachers College, Columbia University.<sup>517</sup> While studying at Columbia, Tao took courses from some reputable professors, including John Dewey, William Heard Kipatrick, Paul Monroe, and George Strayer.<sup>518</sup> In his Columbia years, Tao intensively studied the history of American education, educational philosophy, sociology of education, and educational administration. According to Hu Shih's diary in June 16, 1916, both Tao Xingzhi and Hu Shih had close contact with John Dewey during their schooling at Columbia.<sup>519</sup> In addition, Tao also built a strong friendship with Paul Monroe.<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>516</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "A Letter to the Dean of Teachers College of Columbia University, Mr. J. E. Russell," in *Selected of Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, ed. Luo Ming (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 14-15.

<sup>517</sup> Chu, "Tao Xingzhi's Family Background and Educational Experience," 95-96.

<sup>518</sup>Atsushi Makino, "Examination of Tao Xingzhi's Schooling Life During the time of Columbia University," in *A Study of Tao Xingzhi Abroad*, ed and trans. Zhou Hongyu (Beijing: People Educational Express, 1991), 153-155.

<sup>519</sup>Hu Shih, *Hu Shih's Diary of Studying Abroad*. (Beijing, China: Tong Xin Press, 2012), 528.

<sup>520</sup>Zhang and Tang, *A Confucius after Confucius*, 92.

In 1917, after becoming a doctoral candidate, Tao went back to China for the purpose of collecting data for his dissertation. However, upon returning his homeland, Tao immediately received a job offer from his friend Guo Bingwen, who at the time had recently become the president of Nanjing Higher Normal School (National Southeastern University). At the Normal School, Tao acted as professor and head of the Education Department, and the dean of Academic Affairs of the University. Afterwards, Tao dedicated his life to reforming Chinese education. Therefore he did not have sufficient time to finish his dissertation as he passed away in 1946.<sup>521</sup>

Tao's schooling at Columbia undoubtedly strengthened the yoking of Dewey's pragmatism to his individual capacity. As soon as Tao came back to China in 1917, he immediately wrote an essay "Educational Method in Pragmatism" to advocate American pragmatic educational thought. In this essay, Tao tried to indicate the importance of the experiment method in American pragmatism to the development of modern education. In this writing, Tao began to critically think of Wang Yangming's School of Mind, the system of thought he strongly believed prior to studying in the U.S.

In Tao's writing, Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian educational idea emphasized that the "extension of knowledge" should be achieved through "investigation of things."<sup>522</sup> As a reformer of the Neo-Confucian school, Wang Yangming wisely realized that Zhu Xi failed to identify any specific method to conduct an investigation of things.<sup>523</sup> Nevertheless, even though Wang took pains to reform Zhu Xi's theory, he could not discover a right method for "investigation of things" either. Accordingly, the Master

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<sup>521</sup>Makino, "Examination of Tao Xingzhi's Schooling Life During the time of Columbia University," 156.

<sup>522</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "Educational Method in Pragmatism (试验主义之教育方法)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 244.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid

Wang had to transfer “investigation of things” to “investigation of heart” in order to achieve the goal of the study of the Confucian “Principle.”<sup>524</sup> However, in Tao’s understanding, it is impossible for Wang’s School of Mind to perceive the essence of “extension of knowledge” because of the absence of the experiment method from his mind.<sup>525</sup> Following this argument, Tao further concluded that “What made both Europe and America progress rapidly is the implementation of the experimental method; and what made China lag behind the West is the lacks of it.”<sup>526</sup>

In view of this argument, Tao insisted that China should learn from American education. As he discussed:

Thirty decades ago, American education still followed in European model in every way. Since William James founded the program of [educational] psychological experiment, [Western] scholars gradually changed their perception. Nowadays, almost all of famous Universities created the major of education. At the same time, there are over one hundred programs of educational psychology across country...the spirit of experimentalism is very popular [among American educators]...the wise scholars from England and Germany thought that the pedagogy of American elementary school today became the best one in the world. It is reasonable for American education can make such a tremendous progress based on the spreading of experimentalism...<sup>527</sup>

After praising American education, Tao began to reflect on current Chinese education:

There has been a new education in my country over a decade. The size of modern Chinese education has become very presentable today. However, few Chinese scholars pay sufficient attention to the foundational theory of the evolution of education. Some of them still applied traditional educational thought to new education. Others desire to technically follow the format of new education...Confucius said: ‘Reviewing the old as a means of realizing the new—such a person can be considered a teacher.’ However, those who only become immersed in traditional educational thought still fall into the category of “Reviewing the old.” Simultaneously, when blindly following the format of new education, some scholars seem to be very innovative. In fact, from the perspective of Western educators, these Chinese educators still embrace

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid

<sup>525</sup> Ibid

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.,246.



outdated educational idea...If we want to truly reform Chinese education [in China], we must greatly advocate the idea of experimentalism...<sup>528</sup>

This paragraph shows that when arriving to China from the U.S, Tao strongly believed that American education should be a role model for its counterpart in China. Therefore, he ascribed the underdevelopment of Chinese education to the absence of the American educational experimental method. More significantly, Tao proceeded to connect the introduction of the American educational idea with the duty of national salvation. He stated:

Those who would like to make comments today always talk about national salvation through education. Nevertheless, can any styles of education save our nation? As I claim: ‘we cannot achieve the goal of national salvation unless China adopt the idea of education in experimentalism...’<sup>529</sup>

In 1919, the year of Dewey’s visit to China, Tao expressed similar thoughts again in the journal of *New Education*.<sup>530</sup> Apparently, from Tao’s viewpoint, American pragmatism was a miraculous medicine to improve Chinese education. Motivated by this belief, Tao passionately participated in the group of scholars who invited Dewey’s to China.

It is worthwhile to note that Tao’s view of John Dewey’s educational thought was also a reflection of the yoking of the Confucian idea of “Learning of Practical Use to Society” to his individual capacity. In one of his letters to Hu Shih before Dewey made a trip to China in 1919, Tao enthusiastically wrote: “... Dewey’s visit in East Asia must be helpful for Easterners to construct a new educational system. In return, Dewey’s philosophy would become a more widespread thought.”<sup>531</sup> In his essay called

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<sup>528</sup> Ibid

<sup>529</sup> Ibid

<sup>530</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “Pragmatism and New Education (试验主义与新教育),” in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 5-10.

<sup>531</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “A Letter to Hu Shih about Dewey’s visit in China (就杜威来华讲学之事致胡适),” in *Biography of John Dewey*, ed. Shan Zhonghui (Heifei: Anhui Educational Press, 2009), 349.

*Introduction of Dewey's Educational Thought*, Tao also asserted: "Dr. Dewey's thought is based upon public education and the method of experimentalism. His visit to East Asia must be connected with our educational reformation."<sup>532</sup>

Dewey's thoughts indeed proved enlightening to Chinese educational reforms. When Dewey was giving speeches in China, he addressed the importance of public education to the shaping of the spirit of republicanism. In the speech on "Common Education," Dewey emphasized:

The existence of Republican system necessitated a thorough common education program. The actualization of a democracy should depend on the implementation of common education. Therefore, the education of republican state should attach great importance to the spreading of compulsory education, as well as common education.<sup>533</sup>

Furthermore, while discussing pedagogy in a democratic society, Dewey pointed out that a civic education should avoid a machine-like relationship between teacher and student. As he put it:

...Most students tends to overvalue themselves in the classroom. They only pursue knowledge for the sake of their own interests, rather than contribute what they learnt to society. Simultaneously, the teaching methods which teachers adopted are also wrong; their teaching promotes the personality of selfishness among students. The cultivation of the sense of mutual support and public service has been neglected by their teachings...<sup>534</sup>

Therefore, in Dewey's advocacy, the most important thing in civic education is to nurture a mutual supporting relationship between teacher and student rather than help students learn the subject.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> Tao Xingzhi, "Introduction of Dewey's Educational Thought (介绍杜威先生的教育学说)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 300.

<sup>533</sup> John Dewey, "Common Education (平民主义之教育)," in *Democracy and Modern Society: John Dewey's Lecture in China*, ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiaxiang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 366.

<sup>534</sup> John Dewey, "Civic Education (公民教育)," in *Democracy and Modern Society: John Dewey's Lecture in China*, ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiaxiang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 383-384.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

Dewey's educational idea of public education resonated with Tao Xingzhi.

During his years at Nanjing Higher Normal School, Tao took actions to apply Dewey's educational thought to his educational practice. He recollected:

When I returned from the U.S, I noticed that our school teachers were concerned only with professing knowledge, and students were concerned only with receiving what was taught; so I was convinced of the need of educational reform. The worst model [of the separation between teaching and learning] can be represented by the education of Chinese universities. The title of the instructor is professor. Students are very proud of being taught by a 'professor.' The professor's pedagogy can be called 'the method of instruction' rather than 'teaching-learning method.' For the professor, he seems to use his "knowledge" as a relief fund for the poverty.<sup>536</sup>

After realizing the prevalence of cramming and the rote memorization learning method at the university, Tao attempted to create a less passive and mutual-learning environment between instructor and student.<sup>537</sup> Inspired by Dewey's notion of "Learning through Doing," the young professor endeavored to transform the teacher-centered method in the curriculum into the unity of teaching and learning.<sup>538</sup>

In addition to some remarkable contributions toward improving the curriculum and teaching methodology at the university, Tao Xingzhi also played a very important role in the New Education Movement of the 1920s. Since Dewey left China in the summer of 1921, Tao and some influential Chinese educators, including Cai Yuanpei (the chancellor of Beijing University) and Zhang Boling (one of Tao's fellow Columbia alumni), founded the Practical Education Survey to investigate and evaluate the conditions of Chinese education. One of John Dewey's colleagues from Columbia, a

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<sup>536</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing (教学做合一)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 125.

<sup>537</sup>Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China*, 87.

<sup>538</sup>Su Zhixin, "Teaching, Learning, and Reflective Acting," *Teachers College Records*, 98, no.1(Fall 1996),126-152.

progressive educator Paul Monroe was invited by the association to make a four-month survey of Chinese educational conditions from September 1921 to January 1922.

When staying in China, Monroe, with Tao Xingzhi's assistance, directly participated in Chinese educators' activities in making the new Chinese educational regulation. In 1922, the Chinese Ministry of Education promulgated the School Reform Decree, which incorporated most parts of the proposal of the Chinese new educational regulation from the Guangzhou conference. In accordance with Monroe's advice, the Ministry of Education gave up the Japanese model of a 7-4 system. Instead, the reorganization of Chinese elementary and secondary school years were legislated to follow the United States model of a 6-3-3 system.<sup>539</sup> Alongside the spirit of the Seven Cardinal Principles of American Secondary Education of 1918,<sup>540</sup> the School Reform Decree listed the seven provisions of Chinese educational criteria.<sup>541</sup> Some provisions, such as "To meet the need of social evolution," "the promotion of the development of individuality," and "education through life", are a vivid reflection of John Dewey's educational ideas of "student-centered pedagogy," "School is Society," and "Education is Life."

The creation of the School Reform Decree undoubtedly showed that American pragmatic education exerted an enormous impact on Chinese educational reformation during the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement period. As Wang Maozu, the educators of the Republican Period, remarks:

...Dr. Dewey's visit to China brought a very fresh idea of new education to Chinese people. Subsequently, Dr. Monroe provided us with a practical solution

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<sup>539</sup>Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China*, 66.

<sup>540</sup>Edward A.Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School 1890-1920* (New York: Harper & Row Press, 1964), 295-296.

<sup>541</sup>Yang, *Educational Theory in Civil Life*, 56.

to improve our education. Their arrivals further strengthen our belief in saving China through education. Therefore, China experiences a nationwide educational reform movement.<sup>542</sup>

Apparently, the yoking of American pragmatism to the Chinese educators became an indispensable factor for the creation of the new Chinese school system in 1922. In addition, it is necessary to realize the pragmatic aspect of Confucian education also affected the progressive Chinese educational community during the period of the New Education Movement. For example, during the period, Tao Xingzhi stated:

...when approaching foreign experience [in education], we only need to borrow suitable parts and avoid unsuitable parts from it. We should embrace the same attitude toward traditional Chinese education. We don't have to worry about whether the experience is old or new. We should only concern about the experience will be suitable or not. If we have this perspective, we can create a school system, which is compatible with national condition...<sup>543</sup>

From the standpoint of Jane Roland Martin's educational theory as encounter, Tao was adopting a strategy of double-entry cultural booking to deal with the cultural stocks of Western education. According to this paragraph, during the time of the New Education Movement, Tao strongly believed the American school model well matched Chinese reality. Before Monroe left for the U.S, all non-governmental Chinese educational associations were united into one efficient national association, which was named the Chinese National Society for the Advancement of Education (CSAE), upon his suggestion. Tao Xingzhi was elected as Director-General of the CSAE. The visits of Dewey and Monroe to China strengthened Tao's yoking to the idea of the common people's education. As a result, when taking the leadership in the CSAE, Tao gradually

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<sup>542</sup>Wang Maozu, "Forward of the First Annual Conference (第一届年会发刊词)," *New Education*, 5(3) (October, 1922).46.

<sup>543</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "Our Perspective of New Educational Regulation (我们对新学制草案应持之态度)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 40.

shifted his focus from formal school education reformation to the promotion of social education.

Consequently, focusing on the creation of the new school system, Tao wisely realized national salvation demanded education beyond the scope of formal schooling. Paul Monroe's survey report found that during the early 1920s, over 80 percent of Chinese people lived in poverty in the countryside and around 77 percent of the population was illiterate.<sup>544</sup> According to the survey report by CSAE, among the four hundred million Chinese citizens, only eighty million were literate.<sup>545</sup> As a democratic educator, Tao believed that the cultivation of republican spirit among Chinese citizenry greatly relied on the improvement of the mass literacy rate.<sup>546</sup> Therefore, he realized that the most urgent task for Chinese social and common education was the promotion of basic literacy education among millions of peasants in rural domain.

In order to pursue this educational goal, Tao resigned from his faculty position at National Southeastern University (updated based on Nan Jing Higher Normal School) in 1923, then devoted his life to rural education. Inspired by the idea of John Dewey's laboratory school, Tao and his colleagues worked together in 1927 to found the Morning Village (*xiao zhuang*) School (an experimental teacher school) in the rural area nearby Nanjing city. It is significant to know that the establishment of the Morning Village School was reaction to the spreading of Western style education in China.

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<sup>544</sup>Su Zhixin, "Teaching, Learning, and Reflective Acting," 129.

<sup>545</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "The Declaration of the Society of the Promotion of Chinese Common Education (中国平民教育促进会宣言)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 693.

<sup>546</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "The Essence and Organizational Method of Common People's Education in the Area of Yangtze River Valley" (长江流域平民教育运动之性质组织及方法)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 569-570.

Before a further in-depth discussion of the development of Tao Xingzhi's educational thought, it is important to first explore his reconsideration of new education in China.

### **The Limitations of New Education**

Since the New Education Movement, Chinese educators increasingly had been inspired by the slogan "saving China through education." Most of them sought to transform Chinese education as rapidly as possible, and in their haste they tended to accept Western models more or less uncritically. In fact, with the creation of the new school system, Chinese citizens residing within urban areas could enjoy great advantages from modern style education. Conversely, rural Chinese showed an indifferent attitude toward the new education.

Some researchers discovered a deep divergence between the educational situation of Chinese urban areas and rural regions. For example, Thomas Curran articulated that [during the Republican period] within the intellectual elite itself, the greatest impact of modern education was felt by the urban sector. Those who pushed hardest for, and benefited most from, educational reform were the urban elite.<sup>547</sup> Curran further pointed out that there was a strong resistance from rural Chinese to the modern schools. According to him, modern schools could also provide a new style of elementary education, "but in comparison to the *sishu* (classic Chinese elementary school) they were often alien in nature, requiring a peasant to leap out of the comfortable world of his ancestor and into an unfamiliar environment."<sup>548</sup>

After carefully observing the effects of the implementation of the new national educational code for five years, Tao Xingzhi soberly realized that there was a serious

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<sup>547</sup>Curran, *Educational Reform in Republican China*, 462.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

misalignment between Westernized education and Chinese rural reality. With the deepening of an understanding of Chinese national conditions, Tao, like Liang Shuming, began to criticize the drawbacks of the modern educational system based on Western model. He stated in 1927:

[Since the late Qing period], China completely took a wrong pathway to run her education. It teaches Chinese to abandon countryside to run to city; it teaches people to consume food but does not teach them to plan crops; it teaches people to build house but does not teach them to make forest; it teaches people to pursue luxury but look down on farm labor...it teaches sons of peasantry to become nerds; it teaches the wealthy to become poor, and the poor to become poorer; it teaches the strong to become weak, and the weak to become weaker...Education such as this all of us still carries to popularize. This is indeed a dream talk by a fool. Such an Education cannot and should not be popularized...<sup>549</sup>

During the same year, Tao further argued:

Recently we should pay attention to one point...all of the returned students from abroad attempt to introduce foreign educational system to China. However, they are unclear about if the system really match with Chinese reality at all. They just tend to treat the foreign educational system as a fashionable thing from the civilized countries...then uncritically input it to children's brain. As a result, our children have been suffering from this educational system. China has been surprisingly paying a high price for it. I used to be a follower of foreign educational system. Nevertheless, I realized that a blind imitation of foreign educational system can be deadly harmful to China and her people. I cannot do such a thing anymore. We must find out a solution for our educational problems based on Chinese reality...<sup>550</sup>

Taking this line of argument further, Tao assumed if China continued to blindly copy the Western style educational system, the Republic of China would be transformed to a nation-state, which was only for the sake of elite class.<sup>551</sup> In his opinion, it would be

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<sup>549</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "The Foundational Transformation of China's Rural Education (再论中国乡村教育之根本改造: 上海青年会的演讲)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 1.

<sup>550</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "The Purpose of the Founding of Xiao Zhuang Rural Experimental Teacher School," in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1(Nanjing, Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008),270.

<sup>551</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "What Style of Education Should be Popularized (普及什么教育)," in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 524.



destructive for the new Republic if Chinese education only aimed to generate modern gentlemen, fashionable ladies, useless bookworms, and ambitious politicians.<sup>552</sup>

Moreover, Tao found out that the false knowledge of the eight legged examination essay<sup>553</sup> had merely been replaced by the equally false knowledge of the modern schools.<sup>554</sup> As a result, the modern education system produced a Chinese false intelligentsia class, which had no purpose other than to cultivate and advertise its image as a corps of educated men in order to dwarf common people. As he criticized:

They [false intelligentsia] “wisely” have copied foreign educational system as a whole. They purchased foreign false knowledge, which is in disconnection with Chinese national condition...The Confucian Four Books [*The Analects of Confucius, The Book of Mencius, The Great Learning, and The Doctrine of Mean*] had been replaced by textbooks of modern science. The best-looking specimen and equipment, they bought, remain a valuable showcase for guests...In general, Chinese people makes a great fuss of this style of school...they called the students from there “foreign-trained” students. Nevertheless, Chinese people still treat these students from the perspective of classic education...Our society usually compared modern students (such as bachelor, master, and Ph.D) with classic degree-holders (*xiu cai, ju ren, han lin*). These new students have been very delighted to be flattered in such a way, so others envy them very much.<sup>555</sup>

Tao proceeded to stress:

...foreign eight-leggism and old eight-leggism are the same in not being true knowledge out of experience, and in being worthless false knowledge...How can science from books and experiment for exhibition be considered scientific experiment? It is the same as traditional -eight-leggism in being the useless thing. Where is science and invention in the past thirty years? ...There are many Chinese scholars studying science, but where are true scientists? Young students: to study science only from books is foreign eight-leggism. This style of

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<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> By the 1470s, examination essays were written in a highly stylized formula known as the eight-legged essay. A typical essay was composed of several sections, and combined prose and poetry in a rigid format that penalized stylistic carelessness as much as it did weakness in content. The training of the eight legged essay became a symbol of an examination-oriented education at the cost of student’s individuality and creativity. See in Curran, *Educational Reform in Republican China*, 26.

<sup>554</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “False Intelligentsia Class (伪知识阶层),” in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Nanjing, Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 271-282.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 280.

“scientists” lecturing on podium are the brothers of the traditional pedantic scholars teaching in old village schools. Don’t be misguided by them!<sup>556</sup>

It is important to emphasize the target that Tao criticized is not real Western education itself, but false Western education adopted by Chinese educators. That is to say, he believed that the Western school system established in China since the late Qing mostly strengthened the spirit of book learning at the cost of practical knowledge. Apparently, from Tao’s perspective, in Chinese circumstance, the modern educational system, which was blindly introduced from the West, had been transformed from a cultural asset to a cultural liability. The yoking of this cultural liability of “modern education” to Chinese people brought a series of miseducative effects to Chinese society.

After deeply reflecting upon the disharmony between the new school system and the Chinese national condition, Tao believed that China should develop an efficient and economic educational system, in which every common citizen can enjoy benefits from teaching and learning.<sup>557</sup> In light of this view, Tao concluded that Chinese educators must place their emphasis on rural education, so that the construction of a living education would be suitable for actual rural reality.<sup>558</sup> More to a point, similar to Liang Shuming, Tao also thought of rural education as a foundation for empowering and modernizing the state.<sup>559</sup>

### **Rethinking of Wang Yangming and John Dewey**

Tao’s sharp critique of Chinese new education triggered his rethinking of Wang Yangming’s School of Mind. During the late 1920s, Tao’s reflection on Wang

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “The Declaration of the Society of the Promotion of Chinese Common Education,” 694.

<sup>558</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “The Foundational Transformation of China’s Rural Education,” 1.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

Yangming's learning was not just limited to the field of Wang's method of investigation. In 1929, in his article "Action Is the Beginning of Knowledge," Tao reformulates the relationship between the two important philosophical concepts of "knowledge" and "action" in Wang's theory of "Unity of Knowing and Acting." He stated:

The Master Wang Yangming said, "Knowledge is the beginning of action, and action is the completion of knowledge." I do not agree. Action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action. Let us begin with children, they know that fire is hot only after they have felt the heat; they know that snow is cool only after they have felt the cold; they know that candy is sweet only after they have tasted it, and they know the stone is rocky only after they have touched it...all of these can prove "Action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action... Franklin could discover electricity only after flying a kite; Watt could discover the power of steam only after burning water; Galileo could discover the truth of the objects fell with the same acceleration only after dropping the two balls out of the Pisa Tower. Therefore, all of these experiments can prove "Action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action."<sup>560</sup>

Notably, when citing the examples of Western scientists in this paragraph, Tao seemed to imply that his revision of Wang Yangming's thought embraced the spirit of John Dewey's experimentalism. Subsequently, Tao repeatedly expressed a similar thought. In the early 1930s, after putting forward the examples of a few Western scientists, Tao further held:

Action is the father, knowledge is the son, and creation is the grandson. Therefore, I advocate the formula of "xing (action)" – "zhi (knowing)" – "xing (action)." The Master Wang Yangming created the theory of "Unity of Knowing and Acting"...he said "Knowledge is the beginning of action, and action is the completion of knowledge." I turned his theory half a somersault to "action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action." My theory is in opposition to Wang Yangming's theory...<sup>561</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> Tao, "Action, Knowledge, and Action," 687.

<sup>561</sup> Tao Xingzhi, "Common Education (普及教育)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 757.

Following this conviction, during late the 1920s, Tao eventually changed his first name from “*zhi xing*” to “*xing zhi*,” which means “acting” then “knowing.”<sup>562</sup> In Roland Martin’s word, a changing of the name represents a whole person metamorphosis.<sup>563</sup> It is worthwhile to mention that Tao’s experiment with the creation of the new Chinese school system also became a catalyst for his rethinking of John Dewey’s educational thought. In response to Dewey’s notion of “Education is life” from *Democracy and Education*, Tao wrote an article “Life is Education.” According to him:

The point that I want to talk about today is “Life is Education.” In the past, there used to be a very popular slogan of “Education is Life.” We are very familiar with it and use it very frequently. The notion of “Education is Life” was drawn from Mr. Dewey. Even though we usually employed it, we never explored the implication of the notion. Today I turned his theory half a somersault, then change it to “Life is Education.”<sup>564</sup>

Dewey’s Chinese disciple further explicated the reason why he advocated the idea of “Life is Education.” As he held:

The idea of “Education is Life” tends to treat education as a life. Good education can generate a good life. However, the “eight legged” education can generate an “eight legged” style life. The idea of “Life is Education” can fundamentally overcome this weakness...In the theory of “Life is Education,” education encompasses a very broad and free field...the notion of “Education is Life” just places both education and life inside the school...the idea of “Life is Education” acknowledges the value of all informal educations...For instance, to make a friend with peasantry is a good education, which has been excluded from formal schooling...The idea of “Life is Education” can extend education from subject materials to human life.<sup>565</sup>

Apparently, Tao became aware that Dewey’s educational thought was rooted in

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 757.

<sup>563</sup> Martin, *Educational Metamorphoses*, 77-80.

<sup>564</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “Life is Education (生活即教育),” in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 180.

<sup>565</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “Life is Education: To Answer Mr. Cao Zhengqiu’s Question One More Time (生活即教育: 再答操震球之问),” in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 199.

American culture and society. As some historians point out, the emergence of Dewey's pragmatism was a reaction to the rise of numerous economic, political, and social problems that the U.S faced at the turn of the century. Therefore, Dewey's educational thought represented an ideal of American progressivism.<sup>566</sup> Within such a historical context, the American educator's idea of "Education is Life" meant that the subject matter of schooling was to be taken directly from daily life, so that the school could become a microcosm of the model life which the society outside should be like.<sup>567</sup> Correspondingly, the ultimate goal for Dewey's educational thought was to transform the school into an idealized embryonic community that fostered a future citizenship for a democratic society.<sup>568</sup> It is reasonable that one of the most crucial conditions for the actualization of this educational ideal is the existence of a well-developed industrial and democratic society.

Although Tao shared a similar perspective of the role of education in democracy with John Dewey, he became aware that China had been lacking a social and cultural foundation for actualizing the ideal of "Education is Life." Based on Chinese reality, Dewey's Chinese disciple believed common people could only be educated in their life surroundings, where they lived and worked, in the village, the home or shop, wherever they gathered.<sup>569</sup> That is to say, for millions of Chinese peasants, actual rural life should become the best educational circumstance, in which they could attend. As Tao emphasized,

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<sup>566</sup>Wayne J.Urban and Jennings L.Wagoner, Jr, *American Education: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 223-263.

<sup>567</sup>Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment*, 89.

<sup>568</sup>Michael. W.Apple, "John Dewey 1859-1952," in *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education*, ed. Joy A. Palmer (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 179.

<sup>569</sup> Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 200.

We will teach whatever people need. If people need bread, we must live the life of a bread maker and receive bread-making education. If people need love, we must live a loving life and receive education in love. Following this logic, the kind of life that is led is the kind of education that is received.<sup>570</sup>

While reforming the idea of “Education is Life,” Tao Xingzhi also put “Dewey’s notion of “School is Society” under scrutiny. He argued:

The idea related to “Education if Life” is “School is Society.” This idea grows out of the thought of “Education is life.” Right now I also turn the idea of “School is Society” half a somersault, so that I changed it to “Society is School.” That is to say, the totality of social activities would be believed to be a scope of our education...we don’t have to say “the socialization of the school”...If school is a real society, we don’t have to socialize it. The idea of “School is Society” sounds like putting a bird in a cage. This idea tries to use a small school to accommodate all things from our society. Therefore, the notion of “School is Society” easily mislead us. On the contrary, the idea of “Society is School” wants to release a bird out of the cage, letting it fly swiftly. This idea wants to extend all things from school to the natural world. I believe that “Society is School” should be the requirement of “School is Society;” “Life is Education” should be the requirement of “Education is Life.” Such a school is a real school, such an education is a real education.<sup>571</sup>

Tao’s idea of “Society is School” was also a product of his reaction to Chinese rural reality. He further explained, to meet the needs of Dewey’s idea of “School is Society,” Chinese rural schools did not have enough “modern” knowledge to teach students. Accordingly, it is impossible for experienced peasants outside the school to teach students about agricultural knowledge.<sup>572</sup> Restricted by the theory of “School is Society,” all valuable extracurricular activities at the school are also closed to the outside public.<sup>573</sup> However, in correspondence to the idea of “Society is School,” educators have sufficient teaching materials and educational tools. Because there was

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<sup>570</sup> Tao, “Life is Education,” 181.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>572</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “Society is School: To Answer Mr. Cao Zhengqiu’s Question Third Time (社会即学校: 三答操震球之问),” in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 201.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.

not a boundary between school and society in the idea of “Society is School,” both teachers and students could learn from society as a whole, so that the community could benefit.<sup>574</sup>

The yoking of the cultural stock of Wang Yangming’s philosophy to the individual capacity of Tao Xingzhi greatly contributed to his transformation of Dewey’s educational thought. In his article “Creative Thinking,” Tao indicated his revision of Wang Yangming’s School of Mind affected an equivalent revision of Dewey’s educational thought. In his writing, Tao criticized the weakness of Wang’s thought again:

We know that the Master Wang Yangming advocated the theory of “Unity of Knowledge and Action.” His saying is “knowledge is the beginning of action and action is the completion of knowledge” Based on the saying, we should pour knowledge in our brains first, then try to do something. Therefore, many educators regard school as a place in which they can pursue knowledge. In the meantime, they treat society as a place in which students apply their knowledges to their actions. According to this viewpoint, school and society are in divorce, so that school only produce some bookish person, who are incompetent in putting their knowledge into action. Therefore, such a saying from Wang Yangming can represent the thought of traditional Chinese education of thousands of years...<sup>575</sup>

It is important to understand that although Tao put forward his critiques of Wang Yangming’s learning frequently, he never rejected the concepts of “knowledge” and “action.” In particular, Tao greatly highlighted the importance of “action” in educational theory and practice. In the following paragraph of the article, Tao attempted to adopt the concept of “action” to reflect on Dewey’s educational philosophy. He commented:

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<sup>574</sup>Ibid.

<sup>575</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “Creative Education (创造的教育)” in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 611.

Let us talk about the sequence problem-solving formula from Mr. Dewey's *Reflection of Thinking*. The first step is that identify and state the problem, the second step is that analyze the problem, the third step is that determine criteria for optimal solution, the fourth step is that propose solution, and the fifth is evaluate proposed solution. I want to put one more thing "action" before the first step of Dewey sequence problem-solving formula. Only "action" can help us to identify where the difficult exists, then we are motivated to resolve the difficult. Subsequently, a new value can be generated out of our experiments with resolving the difficult.<sup>576</sup>

Subsequently, Tao concluded: "Therefore, I believe that action is the father, knowledge is the son, and creation is the grandson."<sup>577</sup> More interestingly, as my previous writings displays, Tao wrote the same sentence while reflecting on Wang Yangming's idea. Obviously, Tao's understanding of "knowledge" and "action" from Wang Yangming Neo-Confucianism exerted a strong influence on his reconsideration of Dewey's educational thinking. It is fair to say that the name of "*Xingzhi*" was the embodiment of Tao's attempts to critically synthesize the thoughts of Wang Yangming and John Dewey into his own educational theory: Life Education. Tao explained the core meaning of this style of education:

The fundamental meaning of education is to mirror a changing life. While life is in a persistent transformation, it consistently encompasses the implication of education. Consequently, we shall say "Life is Education." Life is everywhere, thus education is everywhere. A whole society is the place for human life. Therefore, it is also the place for human education." Therefore, we also shall say "Society is School."<sup>578</sup>

All in all, Tao summed up: "life education means an education of life, by life, and for life."<sup>579</sup> In Tao's educational theory, both "Life is Education" and "Society is School" are expected to serve for the end of human life. In light of the notion of education aims

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid.,612.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> Tao Xingzhi, "Life Education (生活教育)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 633-634.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., 633.



to prepare for a full life, there was no a deep divergence between Dewey and Tao. Nevertheless, in contrast with Dewey's embrace of abstract concepts in his philosophy, Tao's idea of "Life Education" tended to avoid constructing profound philosophical discourse.

According to Dewey's essay titled "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," before forming his pragmatic philosophy, the American educators actually experienced long term conflicts between theological intuitionism, rationalism, German idealism, sensational empiricism, and Scottish common sense.<sup>580</sup> Correspondingly, while yoking to Dewey's pragmatism, Tao seemed not to realize the influence of these philosophical schools over his American master's intellectual thought. As a "quick-tempered" educational reformer, Tao mostly fixed his focus on specific concepts (such as Education is Life and School is Society) of Dewey's educational philosophy. In order to construct his own educational theory, to a large extent, Tao traveled between Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucian philosophy and certain ideas of Dewey's *Democracy and Education*. In particular, as a by-product of the interaction of Dewey's educational thought and Chinese reality, Tao's idea of "Life Education" aimed to resolve specific difficulties in Chinese education. Therefore, it is logical to say that Tao perceived Dewey's educational theory from a "technical" dimension, instead of a mere philosophical dimension.

Another important point that Tao Xingzhi likely ignored was Dewey's conceptualization of "action." In fact, while Tao attempted to improve Dewey's educational thought by using the concept of "action," Dewey expressed a similar

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<sup>580</sup> L.Glenn Smith and Joan K.Smith, *Lives in Education: A Narrative of People and Ideas* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), 292.

thought with Tao's idea of "Action is the beginning of knowledge" during his lectures in China. As Dewey addressed:

Action is the way to pursue in knowledge...Sun Yat-sen, a great Chinese statesman, said "the weakness and laziness of the Chinese is due to their acceptance of the statement of an old philosopher, to know is easy and to act is difficult." What a nice saying! Even although we cannot predict success or failure, we still need to take a risk to act. More actions lead to more experiments; more experiments generate more knowledge. Therefore, intelligence and belief (or sensation) are closely related. If we have a belief that action should go first, we surely can gain more knowledge through our actions. If we pursue in complete knowledges first, then apply them to action, it is impossible for us to really understand how to act...To learn knowledge without action is the same as to learn swim without going into the water. The [May Fourth] student movement can be successful this time because the students have such a belief [action should go first]. At the same time, since the students dare to take a risk, they gain a new knowledge and experience. Therefore, I believe that knowledge and belief (or sensation and knowledge) are independent...<sup>581</sup>

It is important to notice that in his speech, Dewey made a particular connection between "sensation" and "action." The speech above is reminiscent of the article titled "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," which was written by Dewey in 1896. In this article, Dewey emphasizes:

...the various activities of reaching and withdrawing will be the sensation, because they are that phase of activity which sets the problem, or creates the demand or the next act. At the next moment the previous act of seeing will furnish the sensation, being, in turn, that phase of activity which sets the pace upon which depends further action. Generalized, sensation as stimulus, is always the phase of activity requiring to be defined in order that a coordination may be completed.<sup>582</sup>

This reference indicates Dewey was inclined to view "action" from the lens of functional psychology. Briefly speaking, Dewey's thinking emphasized both the continuity of human action and its significance in terms of adaptation.<sup>583</sup> In Dewey's

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<sup>581</sup>John Dewey, "Speech of Ethics (伦理讲演纪略)," in *Democracy and Modern Society: John Dewey's Lecture in China*, ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiaxiang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 180.

<sup>582</sup>John Dewey, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," *Psychological Review* 3 (1896): 357-370

<sup>583</sup>Ibid.

belief, the total organism as it functioned in the environment is an active perceiver rather than a passive receiver of stimuli. “Action,” he claimed, was derived from the interaction between an organic unity and the environment. In contrast with Dewey, it is difficult to see that Tao’s writings also paid equivalent attention to the connection between “action” and psychological factors. In other words, Tao still avoided any obscure philosophical argument while conceptualizing the term of “action.” For the Chinese educator, “action” was more perhaps a practical concept drawn from Wang Yangming’s School of Mind, which can be quickly applied to Chinese reality. Therefore, Tao’s understanding of “action” holds continuity with his theory of “Life Education.”

### **Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing**

Upon constructing his theory of “Life Education,” Tao was no longer satisfied with Dewey’s pedagogy of “Learning through Doing,” which he highly advocated during his time at Nanjing Higher Normal School. For Dewey, “Learning through Doing” is supposed to take place within a school’s surroundings. Compared to Dewey, Tao tended to conceive of the teaching-learning relationship very broadly to include all items of cultural stocks from a whole life. As he acclaimed:

From a broad view of education, there is no strict distinction between a teacher and a student. In fact, if we break away from stereotyped view, an aged man of sixty still can learn a lot from a child of six. It is daily occurrence, though often unconscious, that those who are capable teach those who are incapable, and those who are incapable learn from those who are capable.<sup>584</sup>

In compatibility with Chinese rural reality, Tao made great efforts to update “Learning through Doing” to “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing.” In Tao’s

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<sup>584</sup>Tao, “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing,”126.

emphasis, the principle of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing” was a direct result of the implementation of the theory of “Life Education.” He revealed “teaching,” “learning,” and “doing” represent the related three aspects of human life.<sup>585</sup> Hence, the inseparability of teaching, learning, and doing is not only a way of life, but also a way of education.<sup>586</sup> Some observers pointed out that in accordance to Tao’s theory of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing,” students should learn the techniques of farming by working with peasantry in the field; as well, they should learn the skills of cooking through working with a chef in the kitchen.<sup>587</sup> When Tao Xingzhi explains the meaning of the “doing” in his new pedagogy formula, he again stressed the notion that “action is the father, knowledge is the son, and creation is the grandson.”<sup>588</sup> Evidently, the concept of “action” in Wang Yangming’s philosophy still played a dominant role in Tao’s construction of the idea of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing.”

Alongside the idea of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing,” Tao Xingzhi exposed the miseducative aspects of traditional Confucian education. The Chinese educator criticized Mencius’s idea of class division. In Mencius’s thinking, people should be divided into two groups: Some labor with their minds (*lao xin zhe*), while others labor with their strength (*lao li zhe*). The ancient philosopher asserted, “Those who labor with their minds govern others; while those who labor with their strength are governed by others. Those who are governed by others support them; those who govern

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<sup>585</sup>Tao Xingzhi, “Textbooks and “Unity of Teaching, Learning (教学做合一之下的教科书),” in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 289.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>587</sup>Liang Shuming, “A Very Meaningful Experience: My Thought of the Morning Village (一件有兴味的事:参观南京晓庄学校的所见),” in *Collected Works of Liang Shuming*, vol.4 (Jinan, Shandong People Press, 1989), 839.

<sup>588</sup>*Ibid.*, 289.

others are supported by them. The rightness of this is universally acknowledged in the world.”<sup>589</sup>

This motto had been held as a truth by Chinese people for two thousand years. Historically, the life goal for a Confucian scholar was to become an official who could write gaudy essays and make gimcrack speeches. Likewise, lower classes consisting of poor workers and peasants heartedly followed Mencius’s motto, giving up their rights of receiving education. Not surprisingly, there was a disunity of the experiences of both learning and teaching between the groups “who labor with their minds” and “those who work with their strength.”

Tao disagreed with Mencius.<sup>590</sup> In Tao’s view, this style of educational tradition wielded a negative impact on Chinese society for a long time. According to Tao, Mencius’s philosophy of dualism created the two opposed classes in Chinese society, therefore the social barrier between the two classes obstructed the channel of cultural transmission among Chinese people. He pointed out:

The class of “*lao xin zhe*” only pays attention to their mental work. At the same time, the class of “*lao li zhe*” only can make a living by doing hard physical labors...one from “*lao li zhe*” doesn’t know how to use his brain , therefore he is supposed to be controlled by others. In the meantime, one from “*lao xin zhe*” likely becomes an advanced loafer, who is ignorant of his real life...if someone only concentrates on his manual labor, he easily get used to a routine life. As a result, it is impossible for him to embrace the spirit of innovation. If someone only concentrates on his intellectual work, his thought will become more and more abstruse. Accordingly, the theory of “*lao xin zhe*” cannot be turned into a useful experience. The separation between mental work and physical work leads to the impossibility of the emergence of any progressive inventions.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>589</sup>Mencius, *The Works of Mencius*, trans. Irene Bloom. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 56.

<sup>590</sup> Tao, “Creative Education,” 612.

<sup>591</sup>Tao Xingzhi, “Working with One’s Mind While Working with One’s Strength (在劳力上劳心),” in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 287.

In fact, John Dewey expressed a similar thought to traditional Chinese education while lecturing his idea of experimentalism in China. The American educator held:

During the authoritarian ear [of pre-modern China], there was a strict class boundary in human society. Confucian scholar-apprentice belonged to the class only concentrating on intellectual work. Peasantry, worker, and merchant all belonged to the class working with strength. Those who work with mind have never examined their conducts according to experiment. Those who work with strength have never used their conducts to guide their minds. Therefore, it is difficult for Chinese people to propel social progress. China in a transitional period needs to strongly advocate experimentalism ...<sup>592</sup>

Logically speaking, Tao's critique of traditional Chinese education echoed Dewey's pragmatic educational thought. In particular, it is certainly true that Tao Xingzhi thought of Mencius's idea of class division as a traditional cultural liability. In light of this comment, Tao advocated the idea of "Working with One's Mind While Working with One's Strength (*zai lao li shang lao xin*)" to close the gap between the two opposed classes. Tao proceeded to argue:

To work with one's mind while working with one's strength is the mother of inventions. If everything is done with one's mind and one's strength working together, then the truth about them can be discovered. If everyone works with his mind while working with his strength, there will be no wasted human beings, and there will no classes anymore. To tame natural forces, and to create a great community of harmony is based on a monistic philosophy. The basis of this philosophy is to "*zai lao li shang lao xin*."<sup>593</sup>

From Tao's perception, the truth of "doing" should be derived from the idea of "Working with One's Mind While Working with One's Strength."<sup>594</sup> Markedly, while elaborating on such a notion, Tao again mentioned the case of Wang Yangming. Tao showed his sorrow that Wang made no attempt to integrate "*lao xing zhe*" with "*lao li*

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<sup>592</sup>John Dewey, "Experimentalism (实验主义)," in *Democracy and Modern Society: John Dewey's Lecture in China*, ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiayang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 274.

<sup>593</sup>Tao, "Working with One's Mind While Working with One's Strength," 288.

<sup>594</sup>Tao Xingzhi, "Answer the Question of Zhu Duanyan (答朱端琰之问)," in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 326.

zhe,” even although the Neo-Confucians put forward his theory of “Unity of Action and Knowledge.”<sup>595</sup>

More interestingly, when criticizing Mencius’s motto, Tao argued that Confucius, the predecessor of Mencius, planted a solid philosophical foundation for the development of Confucianism through applying his idea “doing” to human daily life.<sup>596</sup> Apparently, Confucius, in Tao’s mind, was a scholar who preferred “action” to “knowledge.” Thus, it is clear that Tao believed the meaning of “doing” was to embrace the spirit of “action [as] the beginning of knowledge.” It is fair to say that the concept of “action” from Wang Yangming’s philosophy also became the inner logic underlying Tao’s principle of “Working with One’s Mind While Working with One’s Strength.” In essence, “Action is the Beginning of Knowledge,” “Unity of Teaching, Learning, Doing,” and “Working with One’s Mind While Working With one’s Strength” are the same thing in Tao Xingzhi’s mind.

### **Tao’s Educational Practice in the Morning Village School**

When the Morning Village Experimental Teacher School was first founded, Tao Xingzhi put forward four specific goals of life education for a qualified elementary teacher: “a farmer’s physique and skill, a scientific mind, a consciousness of social reform, and an artist’s interest.”<sup>597</sup> First, with a farmer’s physique and skill, a hired teacher in the Morning Village was required to master all practical knowledges of farm work. He or she would deeply understand the uniqueness of Chinese rural society through interacting with the peasantry’s actual life. Those who wanted to teach at Tao’s

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<sup>595</sup>Tao, “Working with One’s Mind While Working with One’s Strength,” 288.

<sup>596</sup> Tao, “Answer the Question of Zhu Duanyan,” 334.

<sup>597</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “Biology is Important: Letter to Chinese Science Association (重视生物学:致中国科学社),” in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 307.

experimental school were to give entrance examinations which included a day of farm work.<sup>598</sup> The peasantization of life was the first most important thing for the school teachers.<sup>599</sup>

Second, in order to match the goal of “scientific mind,” the teachers took responsibility for introducing modern agricultural science and technology to rural residents, helping them improve productivity. Simultaneously, the spread of scientific knowledge and thought among peasantry supposedly matched with the principle of “Working with One’s Mind While Working with One’s Strength.” Third, with a consciousness of social reform, the Morning Village School encouraged the teachers to cultivate a sense of cooperation between teachers and students, as well as develop a sense of social progression through education. Fourth, Tao believed the fourth goal of rural education must also be to cultivate the spiritual and aesthetic dimension of life. From Tao’s perspective, arts is, in effect, a strong instrument that rural educators have that can enable their peasant students to approach that which lies deepest within the human heart.

Aligning with the specific four goals of the theory of “Life Education,” teachers and students attended the Morning Village School not to teach and learn the regular curriculums such as those in regular schools, but to cultivate their well-rounded life experience. For them, life itself was the curriculum of the school. In Tao’s advocacy, an exercise of Chinese martial arts can help students build up a good physique; an acquisition of gardening can help them develop a farmer’s skill; a study of biology can

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<sup>598</sup> Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment*, 101.

<sup>599</sup> Tao Xingzhi, “To Introduce a Big Matter to You: A Letter for College Students (介绍一件大事-给大学生一封信),” in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 309.



help them develop a scientific mind; a practice of theatre can help them nourish an artistic interest; and to participate in autonomous society can help them embrace the conscious of social reformation.<sup>600</sup>

In the spirit of life education, Tao held that the actualization of the principle of “Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing” cannot take place in the context of formal schooling. According to Tao, the implementation of this principle should be accompanied by the establishment of close friendship among people. As Tao wrote:

In the Morning Village School, teachers, students, and school staff will live together...a shared life among us can get rid of a strict distinction between classes. As a result, all problems derived from class distinction can be removed...if we [teachers] spend long time living with students, students will treat us as their friends. If we [teachers] spend long time with staffs, staffs also treat us as their friends. A close intimacy among people naturally creates a harmonious and joyful atmosphere in the school...<sup>601</sup>

In order to strengthen intimacy between teachers and rural residents, Tao and his colleagues designed some educational plans that integrate the experimental school in rural communities. In contrast with a well-equipped urban school, the Morning Village School was located in peasants’ houses. While students were in classes, all local residents were allowed to visit. After school, the school buildings were shared with villagers for various kinds of activities. In Tao’s school, inspired by the slogan of “let us do it together,”<sup>602</sup> teachers, students and peasantry were encouraged to have a shared educational and life experience. They did farm work and made agricultural tools

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<sup>600</sup>Tao Xingzhi, “The Second Year of the Morning Village Experimental Teacher School (第二年的晓庄),” in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 343.

<sup>601</sup>Tao Xingzhi, “The First Year of the Morning Village Experimental Teacher School (晓庄实验乡村师范学校第一年),” in *Selected Essays of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.1 (Nanjing: Jiangsu Educational Press, 2008), 301,302.

<sup>602</sup> Tao, “The Second Year of the Morning Village Experimental Teacher School,” 344.

together. They hosted seminars together, and even held a diversity of activities such as local concerts, festival temple fairs, fine arts, and theatre together.

For the purpose of attracting more local villagers to get involved in the educational circumstance, Tao and his colleagues even built up a tea house in the village, which was also open to public.<sup>603</sup> Rural residents were usually invited there by Tao to drink tea and have a talk. In the meantime, the tea house became a public place, where the teachers and students hosted lectures on a diversity of issues, including public health, personal hygiene, national and world news.<sup>604</sup> Villagers also could gather there to exchange their ideas after reading books. Moreover, Tao used the teahouse to help local young people learn worthy use of leisure time, so they could avoid alcoholism, gambling, and opium addiction.<sup>605</sup> Many of the youth were attracted to the teahouse to learn Chinese chess, the skill of playing Chinese instruments, and enjoy classic storytelling.<sup>606</sup> There was not a clear difference between teachers and students. The teahouse was a reflection of the spirit of “Society is School,” which combined educational and social dimensions together.

Moreover, through a cooperation between the Morning Village School and local villagers, the rural community experienced a great change from 1927 to 1930. The school founded a village hospital and kindergarten. A united village self-defense team was organized to protect the whole community from the attacks of gangs and bandits. Gambling and opium-smoking was strictly banned there. At the same time, with the

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<sup>603</sup> Tao, “The First Year of the Morning Village Experimental Teacher School,” 304.

<sup>604</sup>Min Keqin, “Report on Central University’s Experimental School for Commoners Number One (中央大学第一实验民众学校报告书),” *Xiangjiao Congxun*, 2, no.10 (1928),1-2.

<sup>605</sup>Tao, “The First Year of the Morning Village Experimental Teacher School,” 304.

<sup>606</sup>*Ibid.*, 304.

initiation of an adult literacy class, more and more villagers became involved in basic literacy education. Some modern agricultural science and knowledge spread among villagers. More importantly, Tao's rural experimental school simultaneously provided rural residents with opportunities to practice democracy in their lives. For instance, in order to mediate the feuds between villagers over water resources, Tao encouraged them to hold meetings and vote on the issue. Tao believed the general public must learn democratic experience through life education, so he named the meeting "The Issue of Water Resource and Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing."<sup>607</sup> Tao's training of peasants in democracy was tied to his early belief in consolidating the republican system through public education.

In short, in connection with Tao's idea of "Life Education," Wang Yangming's philosophy on "action" thoroughly played the function of "cultural asset" in his educational practice. At the same time, useless bookish learning from the modern educational system was viewed as a cultural liability, and therefore was totally abandoned in Tao's school. Tao's educational experiment in the Morning Village School won considerable attention from both China and the U.S. One of John Dewey's colleagues from the Teacher College at Columbia University, William H. Kilpatrick was deeply impressed by Tao's rural educational experiment. After visiting the Morning Village School in 1929, the American educator was very satisfied with the educational reformation carried by Tao's experiment school. He wrote:

His (Tao's) principle and method of managing school, his idea of educational reformation, and the school's progression, all meets my demands... According to my observation, the school [The Morning Village] takes a unique duty to determine what sort of education can meet the needs of rural village. It wants to adapt rural area to a changing society. At the same time, the school wants to

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<sup>607</sup>Tao, "Life is Education," 186.

play a leading role in all of Chinese schools, spread its experience across the nation...<sup>608</sup>

He further announced: “Wherever I will visit, I want to tell people about the story of Chinese Morning Village Experimental School. I want to let the world know about the educational ideal of the school, as well as its facility.”<sup>609</sup>

Coincidentally, Tao’s experiment with The Morning Village School strongly resonated with Liang Shuming. After carefully observing the educational practices in the school in 1928, the New Confucian scholar remarked:

...the objective of the school [The Morning Village] is “the ultimate goal of our school is to raise good teachers, whom are respected by rural children and residents.” In other words, students from the Morning Village are expected to teach children while establishing a good school. At the same time, the school can help rural residents. The school is believed to become a center which reform rural society...The first thing impressed me is the principle of ‘unity of teaching, learning, and doing’ ...I think that this idea well match with educational regulation.<sup>610</sup>

Further, Liang stated the Morning Village School greatly inspired his strong interests in rural education.<sup>611</sup> It is very clear that Tao’s educational theory and practice contributed to Liang Shuming’s thought of the Rural Reconstruction Movement of the early 1930s.

If we say the New Educational Movement during 1920s was accompanied by the devolution of political power based on the thriving military warlords, Tao’s rural educational reformation was restricted by the spreading political influence of the Chinese Nationalist Government. As the GMD (Guomingdang Party) endeavored to unite China since 1927, the party immediately tended to wield political influence over

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<sup>608</sup>William H. Kilpatrick, “My Thought of Xiao Zhuang (The Morning Village),” in *A Study of Tao Xingzhi Abroad*, trans. Xuhongyi and Song Enhong, ed. Zhou Hongyu (Beijing: People Educational Express, 1991), 204-205.

<sup>609</sup>Ibid.

<sup>610</sup>Liang, “A Very Meaningful Experience,” 839.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 845.

Chinese education based on Sun Yat-sen's political thought. Under the oppression of the GMD government, civil space for the activities of Chinese educators and intellectuals dramatically shrank.<sup>612</sup> Unfortunately, when Tao expected to make the Morning Village School more progressive, his educational reformation in Xiao Zhuang county met its demise. Because Tao's school was accused of accommodating a few communist party members, the Nationalist Government sent troops to shut down the Morning Village School in 1930. Like Liang Shuming's rural educational reformation in Shandong province, Tao's Morning Village School was also ephemeral. However, the closing down of The Morning Village School never stopped Tao's motivation to further his common educational movement.

After 1932, while establishing The Rural Work Group, Tao attempted to spread the "Little Teacher Movement" in rural areas, to have illiterate individuals convey their new learning to others in a chain reaction.<sup>613</sup> Notably, the movement of the "Little Teacher" still carried out Tao's ideal of Life Education. Tao pointed out that his "Little Teacher" model was very different from the Western Lancaster (Monitorial) system, which occurred within the domain of the classroom.<sup>614</sup> In Tao's eyes, the "Little Teachers" were supposed to face a whole society and life, so that most of their educational activities took place after school time. They assumed responsibility for teaching their illiterate family members what they learned at school.<sup>615</sup> Through developing the "each one teach one" technique of building up educational networks in

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<sup>612</sup> Yang Dongping, *Jian Nan De Ri Chu: Chinese Education of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (艰难的日出: 中国教育的 20 世纪) (Shanghai: Wenhui Publishing House, 2003), 67.

<sup>613</sup> Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 200.

<sup>614</sup> Tao Xingzhi, "How to Instruct Little Teacher (怎样指导小先生)," in *Collected Works of Tao Xingzhi*, vol.2 (Changsha: Hunan Educational Press, 1984), 657.

<sup>615</sup> Tao, "How to Instruct Little Teacher," 657.

rural areas, Tao expected that more and more poor peasantry could get involved in basic literary training. As he said:

One literate person can teach two illiterate persons, because this [Little Teacher] embraces the power of public education. In doing so, ten million students could be counted as thirty million students; otherwise, if they teach each other in isolation, there are still ten million students. We cannot see any progression at all. So we must instruct “little teachers” to open the door for looking for their students.<sup>616</sup>

The “Little Teacher” movement was believed to be another major achievement in Tao’s lifetime after the creation of the Morning Village School. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War suspended this educational experiment launched by Tao. Until Tao’s death in 1946, he further exerted all of his energy to push the spreading of common education in China. Tao’s life journey indeed embodied the spirit of his first name” “*Xingzhi*.”

### **Conclusion**

In this section, I have discussed the philosophical encounters among Tao Xingzhi, Wang Yangming, and John Dewey. Before being educated in the U.S, Tao had extensively learned Wang Yangming’s School of Mind while studying at Jingling University in Nanjing city. Tao recognized Wang’s theory of “Unity of Knowledge and Action” as a cultural asset derived from Chinese cultural heritage. The concepts of “knowledge” and “action” from Wang Yangmng learning exerted an everlasting influence upon the development of Tao Xingzhi’s educational thought.

Simultaneously, Wang’s idea of “Unity of Knowledge and Action” to a large extent embraced the feature of the Confucian tradition of “Learning of Practical Use to

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 657.

Society (*jing shi zhi yong*).” This pragmatic aspect of Confucian educational thought became a strong driving force behind Tao’s yoking to Western learning. Tao’s article “Essence of Republicanism” indicated the yoking of Western values of democracy and republic to his individual capacity. Furthermore, like other John Dewey’s Chinese devotees, Tao Xingzhi also tended to view education as an efficient solution to achieve the goal of national salvation.

While yoking to Dewey’s educational thought, Tao concluded that an imitation of the American style public education would become a key factor to shape the spirit of Chinese republican citizenry. After Tao came back to China, he dedicated himself to reform the Chinese educational system. Nevertheless, Tao Xingzhi rapidly realized that there was a serious mismatch between the American educational system and Chinese social reality. As a poor agricultural country, China lacked of all conditions for actualizing Dewey’s pragmatism. In particular, the introduction of the American style education failed to resolve the critical issue of massive illiteracy in China. As a result, Tao did not view the Westernized modern school system as a cultural asset anymore. Conversely, he criticized it as cultural liability, which already brought miseducative results to Chinese people. Hence, Tao extended his focus from urban education to rural education.

In light of his disillusion with the new school system, Tao came to rethink both Wang Yangming’s philosophy and Dewey’s educational thoughts. After reflecting on his experience in the Chinese educational reformation of the 1920s, Tao bravely redefined the meaning of the theory of “Unity of Knowledge and Action.” In Tao’s emphasis, action, instead of knowledge, become the beginning point of human

understanding of the world. Knowledge can only be acquired through human activities. Therefore, Tao revised Wang Yangming's theory to "Action is the beginning of knowledge, and knowledge is the completion of action." It is important to realize that the yoking of the cultural stock of "action" from Wang Yangming's philosophy to Tao Xingzhi greatly contributed to the Chinese educator's own educational theory.

With the modification of Wang Yangming's learning, Tao made great efforts to reform Dewey's pragmatism based on Chinese national conditions. In correspondence with Chinese rural social reality, Tao transformed Dewey's "Education is Life" to "Life is Education." At the same time, Tao also changed Dewey's "School is Society" to "Society is School." As a result, Dewey's "Learning through Doing" had been directly transformed by Tao to the "Unity of Teaching, Learning, and Doing." In sum, all issues above lead up to Tao Xingzhi's construction of his theory of "Life Education."

Following such a theory, Tao advocated overcoming an intellectual division between the two opposed classes of "those who labor with their minds" and "those who labor with their strength" in Chinese history.

What is more, Tao realized that the division of "those who labor with their minds" and "those who labor with their strength" further deepened the gap between the "Principle (*li*)" and human nature in Confucian education. As Tao stated:

The traditional Chinese education was shackled by Confucian principle of "retaining heavenly principles while restricting human nature." In other words, the oppression of 'human nature' by 'heavenly principle' denotes the fact that 'heavenly principle' thoroughly enjoyed the priority in Chinese people's lives.

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Developing his argument on that, Tao proceeded to say:

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<sup>617</sup> Tao, *Life is Education*, 184.



The Confucian ethical code (*li jiao*) is closely connected to Confucian principle of “retaining heavenly principles while restricting human nature.” Nowadays, plenty of scholars denounced the Confucian ethical code as “*chi ren de li jiao* (the ethical code eating people).” Indeed, there are incalculable people who were already killed by “*li jiao*.”<sup>618</sup>

Undoubtedly, Tao’s critique of traditional Chinese education greatly echoed the theme of iconoclasm of the May Fourth/New Culture movement. Compared with Hu Shih’s support of a social progression through cultural reform in a broad sense, Tao paid more attention to how to unyoke Chinese people from the cultural liability of the Confucian ethical code. As Tao stated: “The driving force behind my advocacy of ‘Life Education’ is to make education meet the needs of mass, combing ‘heavenly principle’ and ‘human nature’ together.”<sup>619</sup>

In short, Tao was not only an educational theorist, but also an educational practitioner during the Republican period. In his lifetime, he took action to apply Dewey’s educational philosophy and his theory of “Life Education” to Chinese reality. The founding of the Morning Village School and the spreading of “Little Teacher Movement” bear Tao’s ideal of “education of life, by life, and for life.” More meaningfully, in contrast with Liang Shuming’s rural educational reformation in Zhouping county, Tao’s Morning Village School provided us with a different perspective toward the rural reconstruction movement of the Republican period. The issue of “national salvation through education” became a main thread penetrating all stages of Tao’s life journey. Unfortunately, a turbulent time repeatedly frustrated his efforts in Chinese educational reformations. Even though Tao lived a short life, his educational thought still permanently illuminates Chinese history.

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid.,184.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.,184.

In my final analysis, the philosophical dialogues among Wang Yangming, John Dewey, and Tao Xingzhi lead current educators to deeply think about the meaning of the educational encounter. First, Tao's case displays that the modernization of Chinese education cannot be achieved in cultural isolation. Conversely, from the perspective of Martin's educational theory as encounter, education is believed to be a two-sided process involving the transmission of cultural assets to individual capacities and non-transmission of cultural liabilities.<sup>620</sup> In view of this conviction, Tao's theory of "Life Education" is the result of a cultural transmission between China and America. Second, certain cultural assets from traditional Chinese culture and Western culture cannot be automatically transformed to driving forces, which contribute to the development of modern Chinese education. In particular, an uncritical imitation of a foreign educational model can perhaps transform the cultural asset to the cultural liability, which attaches to individual capacities in ways that do harm. Accordingly, while yoking to the cultural assets, one educator still needs to modify or revise the assets based on a current social and cultural circumstance. Tao's reconstruction of Wang Yangming's learning and Dewey's pragmatism can confirm this point.

Third, Tao's Morning Village School put forward an important question to us: what is a real modern education? Tao's educational experiment in the rural school indicates that modern education should not stop the perfection of "hard ware" (large governmental investments, large number of talented experts, and the geospatial extension of campus size, etc). On the contrary, the core values of modern education are greatly determined by the philosophy of the educator and the objectives of schools. That

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<sup>620</sup>Martin, *Education Reconfigured*, 117.

is, the meaning of education should surpass the scope of the subject and book knowledge, in order to concentrate on establishing an educative society rather than a mere educative school. In such a society, people can work together to maximize the transmission of cultural assets, and minimize the transmission of cultural liabilities.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation addresses the Deweyan experiment in modern China. The main purpose of this study is an attempt to reveal how Dewey's Chinese devotees find a philosophical motivation from both their Confucian education and Western learning in order to introduce Dewey's educational thought. To answer this important question, my study sheds light on a central issue: how Dewey's Chinese followers strived to build a philosophical bridge from their educational experience of Confucianism (or Neo-Confucianism) to Dewey's pragmatism. By studying five of Dewey's Chinese disciples (Hu Shih, Tao Xingzhi, Guo Bingwen, Jiang Menglin, and Liang Shuming), this research simultaneously uncovers the influences John Dewey brought to Chinese society during the May Fourth/New Culture Movement period.

By both privileging and utilizing Jane Roland Martin's educational theory of encounter as a theoretical framework for addressing my questions, my dissertation illuminates the cross-cultural philosophical dynamic that took place between Dewey and his Chinese students. Therefore, I borrow the concepts of "cultural stock" and "individual capacities" from Martin's theory to understand an encounter between Dewey's pragmatism and Confucianism during the May Fourth era. My study also utilizes Martin's notion of "double-entry cultural bookkeeping" to analyze how Dewey's Chinese followers retained "the cultural asset" from Confucian education and Western learning, while removing "cultural liability" from both.

In this dissertation, there are four sub questions revolving around the main question. First, what did John Dewey's Chinese devotees learn from their Confucian/Neo-Confucian educational experience? Second, what did they learn from

Dewey's pragmatism? Third, how did they traverse between the thoughts of both educational thinkers? Fourth, how did they apply Dewey's pragmatism to Chinese reality? Here, I try to summarize my findings following the line of these four sub questions.

**First, what did John Dewey's Chinese devotees learn from their Confucian/Neo-Confucian educational experience?**

My findings suggests the common thread binding Dewey's five Chinese devotees together is the Confucian idea of "Learning of Practical Use to Society." Notwithstanding, the educational encounter between Dewey's Chinese devotees and Confucianism took a variety of forms. In the process of educational encounters, all five Chinese scholars adopted the double-entry cultural bookkeeping strategy to carefully select certain parts of Confucianism as cultural assets, which can attach to the individual capacities of them. In the case of Hu Shih, the yoking of cultural stocks from Confucian education (atheistic idea of Neo-Confucianism, Confucian concept of immortality, and "The School of Evidential Investigation") was conducive to his intellectual growth. As a New-Confucian scholar, Liang Shuming strongly became yoked to the Confucian philosophical formula, "from being sage inside" to "being kingly outside." Through double-entry cultural booking, Liang treated Confucius's philosophy as a cultural asset while treating official "Confucianism" as a cultural liability. For Tao Xingzhi, his educational encounter with Wang Yangming's idea of "Unity of Knowledge and Action" exerted tremendous influence on his own educational thought. In addition, from the perspectives of Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin, the certain educational ideas from

*The Great Learning* should be singled out as a cultural asset of Confucianism, which can be yoked to their individual capacities.

**Second, what did they learn from Dewey's pragmatism?**

My research indicates that within the historical context of the May Fourth period, all five devotees regarded John Dewey's educational thought (in particular the thought of public education) as the Western cultural asset, which could be helpful to ameliorate problems in Chinese society. In Hu Shih's belief, Dewey's pragmatism was believed to be an efficient scientific method. The yoking of Dewey's scientific wisdom to the individual capacities of the other three scholars (Tao, Guo, and Jiang) brought about a strong belief in them that the usage of the scientific method can improve Chinese education. Compared to the other four scholars, Liang Shuming embraced a very reluctant attitude toward Western scientific wisdom. In particular, the New Confucian scholar targeted scientism as a destructive cultural liability, which placed an obstacle in the path of Chinese social progress. Furthermore, compared to other American-trained students, Tao Xingzhi tended to revise Dewey's educational thought according to Chinese national condition. When yoking to Dewey's educational philosophy, Tao insisted that there was a space to further revise the American educator's idea.

**Third, how did the five devotees traverse between both the thoughts of educational thinkers?**

From the perspective of Hu Shih, the atheistic idea of Neo-Confucianism, the Confucian concept of immortality, and "The School of Evidential Investigation" became three strong linkages for the Chinese scholar to approach Dewey's pragmatism.

Henry Bergson's vitalism became a philosophical bridge between Liang Shuming's New Confucian thought and Dewey's pragmatism. In Tao Xingzhi's educational experience, his modification of Wang Yangming's idea of "Unity of Knowledge and Action" resulted in his transformation of Dewey's educational thought to the theory of "Life Education." Both Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin concentrated on balancing Confucian education with Dewey's pragmatism.

#### **Fourth, how did they apply Dewey's pragmatism to Chinese reality**

Hu Shih yoked himself to the scientific thought of Dewey's pragmatism, and avoided dwelling on the epistemology in the philosophical approach. Therefore, he intentionally simplified Dewey's pragmatism into a system of scientific method, which can be used to resolve social problems in China. As a result, Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, in Hu Shih's belief, became a standard to examine the feasibility of his idea of literacy reformation. At the same time, Hu Shih believed that the spreading of vernacular language matched with the idea of common education in Dewey's *Democracy and Education* would benefit all Chinese citizenry across social-economic classes. Additionally, while writing *Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, Hu Shih further applied a scientific idea from Dewey's pragmatism to his study of Chinese history of philosophy. In short, Hu Shih practiced Dewey's pragmatism from the perspective of instrumentalism, which was in accordance with the pragmatic aspect of Confucian education.

In order to achieve the goal of national salvation, both Liang Shuming and Tao Xingzhi dedicated themselves to the movement of rural reconstruction. In the views of both educators, education was supposed to play a crucial part in their causes of rural

reformation. While engaging in rural educational reformation, Liang integrated some ideas (such as “Education as Growth” and “School is Society”) from Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* to his educational practice. However, Liang’s absorption of Dewey’s educational thought had been fashioned by his New Confucian thought in *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*. From Liang’s view, Dewey’s educational thought only plays the part of “*yong* (function)” in his cause of rural reconstruction, which aimed to rejuvenate Confucian life in China. To Liang, Confucianism was believed to be a “*ti* (substance),” which can correct the disadvantages of Dewey’s pragmatism. Compared to Liang’s educational practice, the ultimate aim of Tao Xingzhi’s educational reform was to transform Chinese peasantry into a qualified republican citizenry. The founding of the Morning Village School carried out Tao’s theory of “Life Education,” which was updated based on Dewey’s pragmatism. In the meantime, the theory was also dependent upon the revision of Wang Yangming’s “Unity and Knowledge and Action.” Of note, in contrast with Dewey’s pragmatism aiming to provide an overview of human lives, Tao’s idea of “Life Education” more focused on finding a solution for specific problems in China.

While holding leadership positions at Nanjing Higher Normal School, Guo Bingwen’s educational practice was an embodiment of his attempt to integrate the Normal School with the realm of higher education, which was in correspondence with Dewey’s idea of “School is Society.” As a chief editor of *The New Education* and by writing some influential essays, Jiang Menglin made a great contribution to spreading Dewey’s pragmatism in Chinese society. It is worth emphasizing that both educators



were seeking to balance Confucian educational thought with Western learning in their educational practices.

For example, as the president of National Southeastern University, Guo advocated that the principles of “four pings (harmonies)” should be utilized in the field of Chinese higher education. Correspondingly, Jiang’s writing displayed a perspective of a cultural conciliation between Confucianism and Western culture. As discussed above, the fields where Dewey’s Chinese disciples practiced or spread Dewey’s pragmatism were diverse. They covered the areas of vernacular literacy, classic philosophy, rural education, higher education, and academic journals as new media. To most of them, the usage of Dewey’s pragmatism to Chinese reality had been inevitably shaped by certain parts of their Confucian learnings.

All in all, my dissertation aims to fill the two significant gaps, which were left by most of the existing works (as discussed in the section of literature review). First, when studying Dewey’s Chinese disciples, many scholars tend to interpret their classic education and Western learning in isolation. By the study of the five Chinese scholars, this study makes a strong continuity between their Confucian educational experience and Western learnings. Second, these works pay insufficient attention to the interaction between Confucian educations and Western learnings of Dewey’s Chinese students. In light of this fact, my dissertation uncovers profound philosophical and educational dialogues between their Confucian and Deweyan learning, simultaneously exploring what role Confucian education performed in their dedication to American pragmatism. According to my major findings, the yoking of Confucian educational experience to the devotees’ individual capacities constructed a philosophical foundation for them to

study, adopt, transfer, and apply Dewey's pragmatism.

To take a risk of oversimplification, I try to epitomize the diversity of ways that the five Chinese devotees encountered Confucianism and Dewey's pragmatism. In their educational thoughts and practices, both Guo Bingwen and Jiang Menglin embraced a cultural syncretism to deal with the relationship between their Confucian and Deweyan learnings. Influenced by his Confucian/New Confucian education, Hu Shih's access to Dewey's philosophy showed his perspective of "philosophical instrumentalism." As a New Confucian, Liang Shuming's way to encounter with Dewey's pragmatism underwent a transformation from cultural relativism to cultural nationalism. In contrast with his Chinese colleagues, Tao Xingzhi tended to view both Wang Yangming's School of Mind and Dewey's pragmatism from the perspective of "philosophical revisionism."

Although in essence the philosophical thought of Confucius and John Dewey is different, both great thinkers provide a pragmatic focus on secular problems rather than attending to religious and/or metaphysical questions. Furthermore, both tend to treat education as a vehicle to resolve existing social challenges. As Joseph Grange explains, "A major reason why Dewey is a 'Second Confucius' is that he, like the Master [Confucius], saw experience as the forge with which personal and social change could be welded anew."<sup>621</sup> These significant similarities between the two educators greatly inspired Dewey's Chinese students to encounter his form of pragmatism in their own ways. That is to say, Dewey's Chinese supporters did not pursue the American scholar's philosophy for the sake of the philosophy itself. As Jiang Menglin said:

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<sup>621</sup>Joseph Grange, *John Dewey, Confucius, and Global Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 89.

Learning is for the sake of use. What is this use? It comes under two main principles. First, whatever has to do with the elevation of moral sentiments in the masses and with the cultivation of right moral attitudes in the individual. Second, whatever will contribute to national prosperity and the people's livelihood.<sup>622</sup>

In fact, What Jiang said above vividly reflected modern Chinese intellectual's perception toward education. That is to say, the reason that most of modern Chinese intellectuals (including Dewey's Chinese disciples) engaged in Western learning was because of their "secular" motivation. As Tomas Berry claims from a relatively contemporary perspective that:

So far as the Chinese intellectuals could judge, the power of the West lay not in any spiritual or humanist tradition and other profound ideas but in its understanding and control of the material world and in its democratic institutions. The best hope of China seemed to be in following the West in these areas of national development. The spiritual traditions of the West had not been communicated to the Chinese intellectuals with any great success in the past century so that they had little awareness of the profound spiritual discipline that had given the West its inner form of life and which still determined, to a large degree, the course of the Western development.<sup>623</sup>

Accordingly, during the period of the May Fourth Movement, Chinese intellectuals tried to introduce Dewey's pragmatism to China as a cultural balm as they were eager to find a "miraculous medicine" to cure an ill society. It is necessary to realize that the five of Dewey's Chinese disciples sought the "medicine" based on their own perception of Dewey's pragmatism. Generally speaking, Dewey's practical, utility-centered philosophical thoughts were very compatible with his Chinese devotees' cultural psychology. It is important to realize that the ideas and thoughts from Dewey's philosophy mostly attracted Chinese intellectuals were derived from his middle year

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<sup>622</sup>Jiang, *Tides from the West*, 254.

<sup>623</sup>Berry, "Dewey's Influence in China," 205.

works, especially *Democracy and Education*. Yet, conversely, Dewey's theory of aesthetics was greatly neglected by his Chinese devotees.

The encounter between Confucianism and Dewey's pragmatism is complicated and nuanced. In the words of Jane Roland Martin, compared to Chinese scholars during the late Qing dynasty, most of Dewey's Chinese devotees tried to unyoke themselves from a "ti-yong" dualism formula,<sup>624</sup> and yoked themselves to the Western learning that resonated with aspects of their cultural psychology through educational encounter. More interestingly, through a cultural bookkeeping, based on their own "taste," they carefully made selections between cultural assets and cultural liabilities in their Confucian and Western learning. Eventually, the yoking of a new cultural stock from American pragmatism to the individual capacities of Dewey's Chinese devotees is accompanied by the re-yoking of themselves to certain cultural assets from Confucian or Neo-Confucian education.

### **Chinese Influence over John Dewey<sup>625</sup>**

It is important to note in this study that educational encounter is an evolving process of two-way cultural communication. Although the central contention of this dissertation is the question of what motivated Chinese scholars to learn new cultural stock from John Dewey's pragmatism, we might also attend to the encounter between Dewey and Chinese culture. Even though the scope of the paper prevents us from

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<sup>624</sup> Among the five scholars, on the surface, Liang Shuming's thought seemed to be shaped by the formula of *ti-yong*. However, Liang was very different from the Confucian scholar-officials of the late imperial period. The latter still defended the legitimacy of the Confucian ethical code over Chinese society. However, Liang treated it as a cultural liability. He advocated original Confucianism, which had never been dogmatized by the ruling class.

<sup>625</sup> This portion is referenced from a print article. See conclusion section in James Zhi Yang and William C. Frick, "When Confucius Encounter John Dewey: A Brief Historical and Philosophical Analysis of Dewey's Visit to China," *International Education* 44, no.2 (Spring 2015):7-22.

completely examining this issue, several profound contributions that Dewey's visit in China made to the development of his intellectual thought are worth mentioning.

Briefly, Dewey's visit in China strengthened the degree of his acceptance of the diversity of cultures. Throughout the period of WWI and before his arrival in China, Dewey's thinking about international affairs was to a large extent preoccupied with the idea of an international and democratic government. With the outbreak of the WWI, Dewey thought that America's involvement in the war would benefit the spreading of American ideals of democracy throughout an international community. In the article titled *Conscription of Thought*, Dewey pointed out that the World War brought about a great change to Europe and America, as well as the world.<sup>626</sup> His writing further addressed the conviction that formal entrance of the United States into the war would be very conducive to the spreading the ideal of internationalism.<sup>627</sup>

Along with Woodrow Wilson's democratic idealism, Dewey assumed the war would become a means to realize the possibility of a democratically ordered international government. As some researchers said: "Dewey's attitude was that war was an evil but if a war had to be fought to extend democracy abroad and deepen American ideals internally, then Dewey could support it even as he mourned it."<sup>628</sup> In his *German Philosophy and Politics*, Dewey downplayed the orthodox European idea of national sovereignty, and expected to replace it with a new style of international democracy.<sup>629</sup> A noteworthy matter is that Dewey seemed to firmly embrace an

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<sup>626</sup>John Dewey, "Conscript of Thought," in *The Middle Work of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 276-280.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Martin, *The Education of John Dewey*, 265.

<sup>629</sup> Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 89.

America-centered historical and cultural perspective, although he greatly advocated internationalism. As Alan Cywar maintained:

Dewey viewed America as the most valuable political and cultural model which the contemporary world offered. On one plane patriotism brought him to perceive close ideological bond between Britain, France, and the United States. On a more fundamental level it brought him to envision a special role for the United States in a world reconstruction...<sup>630</sup>

However, Dewey's visit to China enabled him to perceive the international world from a non-Western circumstance. When Dewey witnessed the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement in China, he realized that China happened to be "a great place to study international politics"<sup>631</sup> and the crisis in the Far East "is infinitely more serious than we realize at home."<sup>632</sup>

In the most direct sense, Dewey's exposure to Chinese society and history helped him reshape his perspective about internationalism, together with the cultivation of his understanding of Chinese reality. As an American philosopher, Dewey attempted to further examine his thinking of democratic internationalism by taking a close look at Chinese circumstance on the world stage. He discovered that there were deep divergences between the West and China, which in fact were in opposition to the Western value of individual rights realized through governmentalism. In 1920, Dewey wrote in his "The New Leaven in Chinese Politics":

To the student of political and social development, China presents a most exciting intellectual situation... We take for granted the existence of government

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<sup>630</sup> Alan Cywar, "John Dewey in World War I: Patriotism and International Progressivism," *American Quarterly*, 21, no.3 (Autumn, 1969), 585.

<sup>631</sup> John Dewey, "John Dewey to James H. Tufts, Beijing, 23 February 1921," in *Correspondence of John Dewey*, no.07207, quoted in Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 90.

<sup>632</sup> John Dewey, "John Dewey to Dewey Children, Shanghai, 13 May 1919, in *Correspondence of John Dewey*, no.10754, quoted in Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and To Learn* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 90.

as an agency for enforcing justice between men and for protecting personal rights. We depend upon regular and orderly legal and judicial procedure to settle disputes as we take for granted the atmosphere we breathe. In China life goes on practically without such support and guarantees. And yet in the ordinary life of the people peace and order reign. If you read the book written about China, you find the Chinese people often spoke of as the most “law-abiding people in the world. Struck by the fact, the traveler often neglects to go beyond it. He fails to note that this law-abidingness constantly shows itself in contempt for everything that we in the West associate with law, that it goes on largely without courts, without legal and judicial forms and officers ...”<sup>633</sup>

In light of his findings of a deep difference between Chinese and Western civilization, Dewey gradually accepted the conviction that internationalism does not mean an imposition of one nation’s will on other nations. Conversely, Dewey believed that understanding and tolerating different cultures would play critical roles in spreading democratic internationalism. In 1921, the American scholar wrote his thought in “As the Chinese Think”:

...If we go deeper, we realize that many sources of discord and friction have their root in the fact that different peoples have different philosophical ingrained [sic] in their habits. They cannot understand one another and they misunderstand one another...The atmosphere that makes international troubles inflammable is the product of deep-seated misunderstanding that have their origin in different philosophies of life. If we are to take steps to dampen the atmosphere, to charge it with elements that will fire-proof international relations, we must begin with an attempt at an honest understanding of one another’s philosophy of life.<sup>634</sup>

Fully appreciating Dewey’s perspective on matters of worldview, especially as a result of his extended stay in China, he continues in the essay by further arguing:

The common belief at the present time that the Pacific is to be the scene of the next great world catastrophe, the fatalistic belief that conflict between the white and yellow race is predestined, are really expression of a sense of deep, underlying cleft that makes cultural understanding impossible...If we succeed in really understanding each other, some way of cooperation for common ends can be found. If we neglect the part played by fundamental misunderstanding in

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<sup>633</sup>John Dewey, “The New Leaven in Chinese Politics,” in *The Middle Work of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol.12 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 41.

<sup>634</sup>John Dewey, “As the Chinese Think,” in *The Middle Work of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol.13 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 218.

developing an atmosphere of combustion, any devices that hit upon for lessening economic friction are likely to turn out so superficial that sooner or later they will break down.<sup>635</sup>

From the passages above, Dewey clearly tried to make a connection between democratic internationalism and the foundation of cultural understanding. In order to arouse U.S. citizens' awareness of the independence of China and better understanding Chinese people's national consciousness, Dewey in 1925 sequentially wrote the three essays titled "American and the Far East," "Is China a Nation or a Market," and "We Should Deal with China as Nation to Nation." Apparently, Dewey's stay in China caused him to gradually realize the heightened significance of mutual respect for cultural diversity in constructing a harmonious and peaceful international community. Perhaps motivated by a strong will to understand different cultures, Dewey successively traveled to Turkey, Mexico, Russia, and South Africa between 1924 and 1934. In order to broaden U.S. citizen's horizon, Dewey continued writing his observations and understandings of different cultures and societies when visiting these countries.<sup>636</sup>

In view of his understanding of cultural diversity, Dewey seemed to further develop his idea of democracy. Before departing for China, Dewey in his *Democracy and Education* explicitly stipulated that "a democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."<sup>637</sup> The book elaborated on Dewey's vision of education as directly linked to the question of preparing people for active citizenship in a participatory democracy, and specifically in relation to the U.S. democratic context. Dewey, to a large extent,

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 85.

<sup>637</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 93.



viewed democracy from the perspective of Western culture. In contrast, *The Public and Its Problems*, written by Dewey in 1927, revealed that he was making an effort to integrate a cultural understanding into his thinking about democracy. As Dewey stated:

It is said, and said truly, that for the world's peace it is necessary that we understand the people of foreign lands. How well do we understand, I wonder our next door neighbors? It has also been said that if a man love not his fellow man whom he has seen, he cannot love the God whom he has not seen. The chances of regard for distant peoples being effective as long as there is no close neighborhood experience to bring with it insights and understanding of neighbors do not seem better. A man who has not been seen in the daily relations of life may inspire admiration, emulation, servile subjection, fanatical partisanship, hero worship; but not love and understanding, save as they radiate from the attachments of a near-by union. Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community.<sup>638</sup>

Evidently, Dewey merged a cultural perspective in the construction of his rhetoric regarding democracy. In other words, Dewey already believed that the formation of a democratic society should consist of the association of people of different cultures. From his perspective, democracy and cultural diversity are interdependent and indispensable. In addition, Dewey even critically reflected upon the U.S.'s democratic values and culture after he departed China. When the U.S. faced WWII, in the essay titled *The Basic Values and Loyalties of Democracy*, Dewey seems to completely abandon an ethnocentric perspective while viewing his own country. As he argued in 1941: "Our anti-democratic heritage of Negro slavery has left us with habits of intolerance toward the colored race-habits which belie profession of democratic loyalty."<sup>639</sup> He further warned:

Nationalism, expressed in our country in such phrase as 'America First,' is one of the strongest factors in producing existing totalitarianism, just as a promise of

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<sup>638</sup>John Dewey, "The Public and Its Problem," in *The Late Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol.2 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 368.

<sup>639</sup>John Dewey, "The Basic Values and Loyalties of Democracy," in *The Late Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol.14 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 277.

doing away with it has caused some misguided person to be sympathetic with Nazism.<sup>640</sup>

Obviously, the essay illustrates the fact that Dewey shifted his perception from the belief of U.S. “Manifest Destiny.” After 1942, when the U.S went to war against Japan, Dewey publicly took side with China. Thousands of leaflets containing a message from Dewey were scattered all over China by U.S airplanes in an effort to encourage the Chinese people to bravely fight against the Japanese invaders.<sup>641</sup> Dewey wrote in the message: “Your country and my country love peace and have no designs on other nations...We are now comrades in a common fight.”<sup>642</sup> Thus, it can be seen that during WWII, Chinese destiny became as important as American destiny in Dewey’s ideal of internationalism.

In sum, Dewey’s encounter with China provided him with a great opportunity to further develop his own intellectual thought. By encountering Chinese society and culture, Dewey endowed his ideal of internationalism with a broader appreciation of cultural understanding. Ultimately, Dewey extended an international cultural perspective by broadening his democratic educational ideal. Likewise, he clearly realized that the establishment of democracy greatly depended on enlightened communication, which was based on a solid foundation of cultural understanding. According to some scholars, the yoking of Chinese society and culture to the individual capacity of John Dewey led to a reconstruction of his view of “habit” and “custom” in

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<sup>640</sup> Ibid.

<sup>641</sup> Martin, *The Education of John Dewey*, 326.

<sup>642</sup> John Dewey, “Message to Chinese People,” in *The Late Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol.15 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 369-370.

human education.<sup>643</sup> As with his Chinese devotees, it is fair to say that John Dewey embraced a fascinating educational *encounter* from a different culture. Attractively reciprocal in nature, when Dewey's Chinese students made efforts to yoke themselves to American pragmatism, Dewey simultaneously yoked himself to new cultural stocks from China to reform his own worldview. Dewey's encounter with China serves as an important lesson, both for his Chinese devotees and for him: through encounter, cultural understanding and respect of human diversity will lead to both individual and collective progress. Within an atmosphere of reverence toward difference, there can be a positive and generative interaction between cultural stock and individual capacity.

### **Aftermaths**

In 1946, when Dewey was almost an eighty-seven year old man, Jiang Menglin invited the American educator to visit China again. Unfortunately, although Dewey delightedly accepted Jiang's invitation, his health did not allow him to leave for China.<sup>644</sup> Only three years later, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took over mainland China, and the Republican Chinese government under the Nationalist party was forced to take refuge in Taiwan Island. While confronting a complete change in social condition, Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin, and Guo Bingwen chose to flee to Taiwan or the U.S. Liang Shuming decided to stay in mainland, but was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution period.

With the founding of the People's Republic of China, the thoughts of Dewey were under fierce attacks. At the same time, the party launched a series of nationwide

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<sup>643</sup> Abraham Edel and Elizabeth Flower. Introduction, in *The Late Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol.7 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), xxii-xxiii.

<sup>644</sup> Martin, *The Education of John Dewey*, 327.

political movements to denounce thoughts of Hu Shih and Tao Xingzhi. Those of pro-Deweyan pragmatism Chinese intellectuals were purged. After being reeducated by the party, a few of Dewey's students, such as Chen Heqing (1892-1982),<sup>645</sup> acknowledged that Dewey's pragmatism was essentially a reactionary philosophy, which only served American imperialism.<sup>646</sup> In their confession, the scholars felt guilty of being "poisoned" by Dewey's educational thought before 1949.<sup>647</sup>

Obviously, since 1949, John Dewey and his Chinese devotees became the target of the CCP's politics of anti-America and class struggles. Undoubtedly, this would be a great irony for Dewey himself and his Chinese followers, who strongly opposed radical social revolution through the advocacy of gradual cultural reformations. The CCP also adopted a cultural bookkeeping strategy to deal with foreign and traditional cultures. On the one hand, the party treated the legacies of Confucius and John Dewey as a treacherous cultural liability, which was supposed to be eradicated from Chinese society. Simultaneously, the party introduced the Soviet Union model of educational system to China as a great cultural asset. Under such a historical circumstance, there was no further cultural encounter between China and John Dewey in almost thirty years.

Dramatically, with the approaching period of reformation and reopening after 1978, John Dewey's educational thoughts won the attention of Chinese intellectuals again. In particular, in recent years, the study of John Dewey seems to flourish in

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<sup>645</sup> Chen Heqing was a Chinese educator who specialized in child psychology and development. He obtained a master's degree from the Teachers College at Columbia University in 1919. Chen was believed to become the founder of the field of early child education of the Republican period.

<sup>646</sup> Mao Lirui, "The Reactionary Essence of John Dewey's Educational Thought (杜威教育思想的反动本质)," *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Science)* 1, (1957): 17-56.

<sup>647</sup> Liu Xiaodong, "The Life and Thought of Chen Heqing during the Political Reconstruction Movement (政治改造背景下的陈鹤琴的生活和思想)," *Journal of Nanjing Normal University (Social Science)* 6 (November 2012): 80-88.

Chinese society. For instance, in 2004, “The Center of Studying of John Dewey and American Philosophy” was founded at Fu Dan University in Shanghai. Since 2010, the institute has been dedicated to translating *The Collected Works of John Dewey* into Chinese languages. For contemporary Deweyan researchers in China, one of the ultimate purposes of studying the American pragmatism is to make a distinction between Dewey’s pragmatism and Marxism, then enrich and develop the latter one.<sup>648</sup> Apparently, following the Confucian *ti-yong* formula, from the party’s perspective, Dewey’s philosophy should be regarded as “*yong* (function)” rather than “*ti* (substance).” As a result, under a one party system, it is highly possible that Chinese students majoring in education only label Dewey’s democratic educational thought as one part of foreign ideas, which they need to “critically” learn in accordance with Chinese “political correctness.”

Upon writing here, I cannot help remembering what John King Fairbank wrote of Dewey’s visit to China in *The Great Chinese Revolution*. According to the American historian:

After Dewey’s departure several of his Columbia colleagues visited China to survey school conditions, advise on teaching science, devise Chinese intelligence tests, and the like. All in all, no foreign thinker of modern times had any greater exposure of his ideas to the Chinese educated publics than John Dewey. The result? Only superficial.<sup>649</sup>

I partially agree with Fairbank. As my dissertation discussed, all five Chinese scholars tend to understand selectively Dewey’s philosophy based on their own interest and Chinese reality. Notwithstanding, Fairbank’s comments still has space to be improved.

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<sup>648</sup>Liu Fangtong, “The Publication of the Translations of *Collected Works of John Dewey* and Its Significance,” *The Journal of Chinese Social Science* (October 8 2014), [http://www.cctb.net/llyj/llyj/llwz/201410/t20141010\\_313231.htm](http://www.cctb.net/llyj/llyj/llwz/201410/t20141010_313231.htm).

<sup>649</sup>Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 201.

Although being “superficial,” Dewey’s Chinese students of the May Fourth time become a symbol of independent modern intellectuals in a turbulent period in Chinese history. In this regard, they undoubtedly left a profound spiritual and cultural legacy for contemporary Chinese educators and scholars.

Of note, when Beijing University, the birthplace of the May Fourth/New Cultural Movement, marked the 95th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement on May 4th in 2014, the Chinese President Xi Jinping made a remarkable speech for the purpose of integrating the movement into the history of the communist revolution and current national development under the name of “Chinese Dream.”<sup>650</sup> Instead, his speech greatly downplayed the spirit of enlightenment embraced by modern Chinese intellectuals, including Dewey’s devotees. Presently, when celebrating the 98<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the May Fourth movement in 2016, in the speeches of several Beijing University students called on college students to carry out “Core Values of Socialism” whole-heartedly.<sup>651</sup> However, the young students perhaps forgot about Jiang Menglin and Hu Shih, who both successively became the president of the university during the Republican period. They made substantial contributions to the development of the university. In light of such a fact, I believe that the implication behind Dewey’s visit to China still demands more inquiries in China today.

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<sup>650</sup> Xi Jinping, “The Youth Must Voluntarily Carry on Core Socialist Value (青年要自觉践行社会主义核心价值观)”, *Ren Min Wang* (People.cn), May 4, 2014, [http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe\\_176/201405/167911.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_176/201405/167911.html),

<sup>651</sup>The Youth Communist League of Beijing University, “Carrying out ‘Core Values of Socialism’ and Opening a New Historical Chapter with Our Youth” (践行社会主义核心价值观, 书写奉献青春的时代篇章), [http://pkunews.pku.edu.cn/xwzh/2016-05/04/content\\_293651.htm](http://pkunews.pku.edu.cn/xwzh/2016-05/04/content_293651.htm).

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### Appendix (Lectures of John Dewey in China, 1919-1921)<sup>652</sup>

1919. 04.30 Arrive in Shanghai with Alice Dewey (wife) and Lucy Dewey (daughter)
1919. 05.03 Lecture on “Common Education” at Jiangsu Province Educational Society, Nanjing
1919. 05.07 Lecture on “The Essence of Common Education” at Zhejiang Province Educational Society, Hangzhou
1919. 05.18-21, 24-26 Lectures in Nanjing Higher Normal School, Nanjing
1919. 05.29 Arrive in Beijing
1919. 06.08,10, 12 Lectures on “The Development of American Democracy” at auditorium of Board of Education, Beijing
- 1919.06.17 Lecture on “The Trend of Modern Education,” in Beijing
- 1919.08.06 “The Student Revolt in China” published
- 1919.08.10 Lecture on “New Problem in Scholarship,” in Shangzhi Study Association, Beijing
- 1919.09.20-1920.03.06 Lectures on “Social Philosophy and Political Philosophy” at Law School of National Beijing University, Beijing
- 1919.09.21-1920.02.20 Lectures on “Educational Philosophy” at auditorium of Board of Education, Beijing
- 1919.10.09 Lecture on “The Great War and Education,” Taiyuan
- 1919.10.10 Lecture on “Moral Cultivation as the Primary Goal of Education,” Taiyuan
- 1919.10.11 Lecture on “Self-Autonomy in Education,” Taiyuan
1919. 10.12 Lecture on “Experimentalism in Education,” at the fifth annual conference of the National Association of Chinese Education, Taiyuan
- 1919.10.13 Lecture on “Higher Education Profession,” Taiyuan

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<sup>652</sup> This portion is referenced from “Chronicles of John Dewey in China,” in *Democracy and Modern Society: Dewey’s Lecture in China*, ed. Yuan Gang, Sun Jiayang, and Ren Bingang (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2004), 772-782; Li Jiehua, “Chronicles of John Dewey in China,” in *Biography of John Dewey*, ed. Shan Zhonghui (Heifei: Anhui Educational Press, 2009), 442-466..



1919. 11.14-1920. 01.30 Lectures on “Schools of Western Philosophy,” National Beijing University, Beijing
1919. 12.17 Lecture on “Higher Education and Public Opinion in Republican Nation” at National Beijing University, Beijing
1919. 12.29 Lecture on “View of New Life,” Jinan, Shandong Province
1920. 1.20 Lecture on “The idea of Human Right in Western Thought,” Beijing
- 1920.03.05 Lecture on “The Three Philosophers in Modern Period” at National Beijing University
- 1920.04.01-06.30 Lectures on “Educational Philosophy”, “History of Philosophy”, and “Experimental Ethics” at Nanjing Higher Normal School, Nanjing
- 1920.05.07-08 Lectures on “The Standard of Social Evolution”, “The Trend of Modern Education”, “General Education”, “The Call of Duty of Educators” at Nanjing Higher Normal School, Nanjing
- 1920.05.20 Lecture on “Relationship between Education and Social Progress,” Yangzhou
- 1920.05.29 Lecture on “The Essence of Vocational Education” at Chinese Vocational Training School, Shanghai
- 1920.05.31 Lectures on “The Perspective of Sociology of Expertise Education ” at Tongji School, Shanghai  
Lecture on “Science and Life” at St John’s University-Shanghai
1920. 06.01 Lecture on “View of New Life” at Chinese Vocational Training School, Shanghai  
Lecture on “The Relationship between Industry and Culture” at Nanyang Gongxue, Shanghai
- 1920.06.02 Lecture on “State and Student” at Hujiang University, Shanghai  
Lecture on “The Evolution of Society” at Shanghai Youth Association, Shanghai
- 1920.06.03 Lecture on “Civil Education” at Pudong High School, Shanghai  
Lecture on “The Essence of Democracy” at Chinese Vocational Training School, Shanghai
- 1920.06.05 Lecture on “Relation between General Education and Vocational Education” at Hujiang University, Shanghai
- 1920.06.06 Lecture on “Duty of Educators” at Gengsu Theatre, Shanghai

- 1920.06.10 Lecture on “New Trend of Elementary Education,” Hangzhou
- 1920.06.11 Lecture on “Social Philosophy and Political Philosophy” and “Socialism and Social Progress,” Hangzhou
- 1920.06.12 Lecture on “The Essence of Democracy” at Hangzhou Youth Association
- 1920.06.13 Lecture on “The Duty of Democratic Citizenry” at Hangzhou 1<sup>st</sup> Normal School, Hangzhou
- 1920.06.14 Lecture on “Relation between Science and Life” at Hangzhou 1<sup>st</sup> Normal School, Hangzhou
- 1920.06.17 Lectures on “New Trend of Education” and “How to Organize Education,” Xuzhou
- 1920.06.21-26 Lectures on “Experimentalism”, “Students’ Self-governance”, and “School and Society” at 3<sup>rd</sup> Normal School, Wuxi
- 1920.06.28 Lectures on “Duty of Educators,” Suzhou
- 1920.06.29 Lecture on “Education and Utilitarianism,” Suzhou
- 1920.07.09 Published lecture on “Goals of Educational Administration,” Suzhou
- 1920.08.01 Published *Five Major Lectures in China*
- 1920.10.26 Lectures on “Educational Philosophy,” Changsha
- 1920.10.27 Lectures on “Students’ Self-Governance” at 1<sup>st</sup> Normal School of Changsha, Changsha
- 1920.10.28-29 Lectures on “Educational Philosophy,” Changsha
- 1920.10.30 Lecture on “Teachers as Leaders and Directors” at 1<sup>st</sup> Normal School of Changsha, Changsha
- 1920.11.01 Lecture on “Educational Philosophy,” Changsha
- 1921.03.06 Lecture on “My View of Chinese Arts” at Beijing Higher Normal School, Beijing
- 1921.04.13. Lectures on “Educators as Social Leader” at 1<sup>st</sup> Normal School of Fujian Province, Fuzhou
- 1921.04.14 Lecture on “Study of Self-Autonomy” at Fuzhou Youth Association, Fuzhou
- 1921.04.15 Lecture on “The Essence of Democracy” at Shangyou Hall, Fuzhou

- 1921.04.20-22 Lecture on “Relation between Civil Education and State” at Fuzhou Youth Association, Fuzhou  
Lectures on “Self-Autonomy and Self-Governance” at 1<sup>st</sup> Normal School of Fujian Province, Fuzhou
- Lecture on “American Educational Society and Its Influence on Society” at Fujian Educational Society, Fuzhou
- 1921.04.29 Lecture on “Important Reason for Morality of Self-Governance” at Guangzhou National Higher Normal School, Guangzhou
1921. 04.30 Lecture on “School and Society” at Assembly Hall of Guangdong Province Educational Society, Guangzhou
- 1921.05.02 Lecture on “Western Contribution to Eastern Civilization” at Assembly Hall of Guangdong Province Educational Society, Guangzhou
- 1921.05.10 Lecture on “Educational Principle for Teaching Youth” at Beijing Female Higher Normal School, Beijing
- 1921.06.22 Lecture on “The Growth of Teachers’ Professionalism in Modern Time” at Assembly Hall of Beijing Higher Normal School, Beijing
- 1921.07.08 Farewell Lecture at Beijing Higher Normal School, Beijing
- 1921.07.18-22 Lectures on “Work of Educators”, “Sociological Aspect of Education”, “Relation between School Subjects and Society”, “School Administration and Society”, and “Psychological Aspect of Education”, and “Relation between School and Society”
- 1921.07.25 Arrives in Qingdao
- 1921.08.02 Leaves Qingdao for U.S