



Faculty of **Education**
The University of Hong Kong

Invigorating China's Soul: A Sustained Effort of Contemporary Chinese Academics in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Humanities and Arts: East and West
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The Arts and Humanities in Higher Education

- Through illustrating the centuries-long desperate search by Chinese intellectual for their spiritual homeland,
- My paper aims to demonstrate the central place of the arts and humanities in contemporary higher education.



Questions to Get Started

- As Chinese people, are we feeling settled and happy?
- Are contemporary Chinese people Chinese (or Chinese enough)?
- Do we know how to be Chinese in the present day?



**Tu Weiming
(2000: 200-
201)**

East Asian intellectuals have been devoted students of Western learning for more than a century. In the case of Japan, from Dutch, British, French, German, and, since World War II, American learning, the samurai-bureaucrats learned the superior knowledge of Western science, technology, manufacturing industries, and political institutions. Similarly, the Chinese scholar-officials, the Korean yangban, and the Vietnamese literati acquired knowledge from the West to rebuild their societies anew. **Their commitment to substantial, comprehensive, or even wholesale Westernization was remarkable.** Through their perceptions and firsthand experiences of the *modus operandi* of the modern West, they **thoroughly transformed their economies, politics, education systems, and societies.** Such positive identification with the West and active participation in a fundamental re structuring of their "lifeworlds" enabled them to **emulate the West with marvelous success.** In this process of massive cultural absorption, East Asian countries **deliberately relegated** their own rich spiritual resources to the background. However, this **enhanced their need to appeal, often inadvertently, to native patterns to reshape what they had acquired from the West.** This model of **creative adaptation** helped them to position themselves strategically in **forging a new synthesis of Enlightenment rationality and Confucian humanism.**



A Spectre: Haunting

- To a great extent, modern world history can be viewed as a product of Western ideas traveling across cultures and continents.
- China's modern higher education system was based exclusively on Western experience, putting an end to its own rich traditions institutionally and resulting in fundamental 'divisions between formal curricula of Chinese education and China's sociocultural realities.
- The challenge of integrating traditional Chinese and Western values has been a spectre haunting Chinese intellectuals ever since the early 20th century down to the present.



China's Western Education System

- Echoing the rest of the world, China's modern education is Western, from textbooks, teaching contents to values, and school organization and operation.
- Such a institutionalized Western system allows little space for China's indigenous intellectual traditions that remain omnipresent and ubiquitous in the society.
- China's contemporary education produces people with little knowledge of their social and cultural traditions.
- Even when many educated Chinese elites are determined to achieve the integration, they are not well equipped to do so.



The force at the core leading our cause forward is the Chinese Communist Party.

The theoretical basis guiding our thinking is Marxism-Leninism.

— Opening address at the First Session of the First National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China (September 15, 1954).

領導我們事業的核心力量是中國共產黨。
指導我們思想的理論基礎是馬克思列寧主義。

— 《中華人民共和國第一屆全國人民代表大會第一次會議開幕詞》
(一九五四年九月十五日)，一九五四年九月十六日《人民日報》



**Fu Sinian
(1896-1950)
observed in
1919,**

“If you are to research Chinese literature, yet never understand foreign literature, or if you are to document the history of Chinese literature yet have never read any of the history of foreign literature, you will never ever grasp the truth.”

“如果你要研究中國文學，卻不瞭解外國文學，或者如果你要記錄中國文學的歷史，卻從未讀過任何外國文學史，你永遠不會掌握真相”。

- 傅斯年.出版界評：王國維《宋元戲曲史》[A]. 歐陽哲生(編). 傅斯年全集（第一卷）[M]. 長沙：湖南教育出版社，2003，1492頁.



**Liang Shuming
(1893-1988)
(Liang,
1921/1990, p.
50) remarked
in 1921 that**

“Chinese people will never gain a clear understanding if they only remain within the structures of Chinese society; if only they first look to others and then at themselves, then they will immediately understand.”

“如果中國人只留在中國社會的結構中，他們永遠不會有清醒的認識；如果他們先觀察別人，然後再看自己，那麼他們便會立即明白。”

- 梁漱溟. 中國文化要義 [A]. 中國文化書院學術委員會 (編). 梁漱溟全集 (第三卷) [M]. 濟南: 山東人民出版社, 1990, 3-16頁.



Integration Often Taken for Granted

“The Confucian emphasis on sympathy and empathy suggests a radically different approach. Self-interest, no matter how enlightened, is never adequate as a basic principle for personal growth, let alone a cornerstone of national policy.”

- Tu Weiming. (1996). Beyond the Enlightenment mentality: A Confucian perspective on ethics, migration and global stewardship. *The International Migration Review*, 30 (1), p. 68.



Tugged between Chinese and Western culture - Wang Guowei

“It’s been indeed quite a long time since I was at the heels of philosophy; philosophically, on the whole, what is lovely cannot be credible, and what is credible cannot be lovely. I know truth, but also wish it to be a fallacy. The great and lofty metaphysics, the exalted and rigorous ethics, and the pure and refined aesthetics, are my obsessions, but it is best to seek what is credible with positivism in epistemology, with hedonism in ethics, and empiricism in aesthetics. I have been greatly annoyed in the recent two to three years by the fact that what I know is credible but I cannot love, and what I feel is lovely but I cannot believe. ... As a person, I have too much emotion and too little reason to be a philosopher, and too little emotion and too much reason to be a poet. This is what tortures me.”



“余疲於哲學有日矣。哲學上之說，大都可愛者不可信，可信者不可愛。余知真理，而餘又愛其謬誤。偉大之形而上學，高嚴之倫理學，與純粹之美學，此吾人所酷嗜也。然求其可信者，則寧在知識論上之實證論，倫理學上之快樂論，與美學上之經驗論。知其可信而不能愛，覺其可愛而不能信，此近二三年中最大之煩悶，而近日之嗜好所以漸由哲學而移于文學，而欲於其中求直接之慰藉者也。要之，餘之性質，欲為哲學家則感情苦多，而知力苦寡。欲為詩人，則又苦感情寡而理性多。”

- 王國維. 自序二 [A]. 幹春松 (編). 王國維學術經典集 [M]. 南昌: 江西人民出版社, 1997, 第5頁.



Ferrying Knowledges between East and West

- 蔡元培(Cai Yuanpei): “思想自由，相容並包” (Freedom of Thought and All-embracing)
- 王國維(Wang Guowei): “學問無新舊，無中西，無有用無用” (There is no distinction between old and new knowledge and between Chinese and Western knowledge)
- 錢鐘書(Qian Zhongshu): “東海西海，心理攸同；南學北學，道術未裂” (The hearts and minds of peoples by the East Sea and by the West Sea are the same)



The Ferryman as Higher Education Objective

- Formal curriculum is a mix of the Chinese and the Western that has never been set right.
- Once considered as remote dream for most higher education graduates, being able to navigate between East and West becomes increasingly required.
- Theoretically, such cultivation is unprecedented historically and significant globally.



Mission of the Chinese University of Hong Kong

- To Combine Tradition with Modernity (結合傳統與現代)
- To Bring Together China and the West (融會中國與西方)



Yenching
University
(1919-1952):
Freedom
through truth
for service
(因真理、得自
由、以服务)





Thank you kindly for your sharing!
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