

**Proceedings of the Fourth Conference  
on “One Hundred Year Reflection of the  
New Culture Movement: ‘Chinese New  
Thoughts: History and Method.’”**

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The “Chinese New Thoughts: History and Method” (中國新思想：歷史與方法) conference was organized by the Philosophy Department of the National Taiwan University and convened by Professor Jeu-Jenn Yuann (苑舉正) on May 30 and 31, 2015. This is the fourth in a series of five conferences to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the New Culture Movement. (The other conferences were held on the campuses of Anhui University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University, and Peking University respectively). Twenty-four scholars from Taiwan, mainland China, Hong Kong and the United States were invited to participate at this fourth conference. The theme of the meeting is fourfold: 1) the collision and attack (碰撞與衝擊) of the old and new cultures, 2) reflections on the methodology of Chinese new culture, 3) multiple readings of the New Culture Movement, and 4) the historical placement and projection of the

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New Culture Movement. The resulting papers converged around several important topics: the re-interpretation of the nature of the New Culture movement, a nuanced interpretation of the National Essence movement, the writings on science during the New Culture Movement, the scholarship of Hu Shi, the Anhui connections of Chen Duxiu and the evolution of Chen's thoughts on patriotism, the assimilation, sinicization and blending of East and West, and the limits of democracy and individual rights.

## Reinterpreting the New Culture Movement and Its Political Context

Prof. 吳展良 of National Taiwan University, in his paper “新文化運動新詮,” negated the definition of the New Culture Movement as either the Chinese cultural renaissance or the Chinese enlightenment. Instead he defined the movement as an “intellectual and cultural movement to explore a new direction of the total development of Chinese civilization.” In the search for a new culture, the freedom of the nation trumped the freedom of the individual, and consequently China could not guarantee individual liberty, and therefore was unable to release its “true life force.” Professor 丘爲君 of Dунghai University, in his paper, “「新文化運動」發生前後的中國政治潮流,” gave a historical context for the three political currents occurring in the years before and after the New Culture Movement. They were the revolutionary party led by Sun Yatsen, the monarchist force exemplified by the Qing bureaucrats and members of the defunct Protect the Emperor Society, and finally the bureaucrats in the Beiyang government post-Yuan Shikai.

## National Essence ( 學衡 )

The first paper by Prof. 陳俊啟 of National Chung Cheng University, “五四新文化運動的異聲／和聲？：重訪《學衡》與新文化運動，” examined the attitude of the National Essence advocate, Wu Mi, toward the assimilation of Western knowledge and culture. Prof. Chen argued that it was too simplistic to set up a binary opposition between the New Culture Movement supporters such as Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu, who favored the adoption of Western culture, and the National Essence group, who favored preserving Chinese culture. While Wu Mi and his Chinese classmates at Harvard were well-versed in Western literature and history as their opponents, but they selectively adopted Western knowledge based on the merit of the materials. Therefore the National Essence group was at once “opposed and not opposed to the New Culture Movement.” This nuanced understanding of the National Essence group is echoed by Prof. 葉雋, from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in his paper “南北大學與新舊交絕？——以若干留美學人的交誼與交鋒為中心的考察。” Prof. Ye likewise pointed out the inaccuracy of setting up a binary between the New Culture intellectuals and members of the National Essence group. Prof. Ye considered both parties to be “new intellectuals.” He believed that the existence of the National Essence group provided a necessary counterpoint to the New Culture intellectuals, holding the latter accountable and true to their role as intellectuals.

## Science

In a fascinating article by Prof. 潘光哲, Director of Hu Shi Memorial Hall and Research Fellow, Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica,

we learn that Hu Shi lauded the French scientist Louis Pasteur as not only a hero of science, “科學英雄,” but also a patriot who contributed to strengthening France with his scientific discovery. Prof. Pan traced the first introduction of Pasteur to the Chinese readers to the pages of the *Review of the Times* in 1890, and mentioned the opening of a tofu factory in France by Li Shizeng, the son of Qing mandarin Li Hongzao in 1908. Li had conducted research at the Institut Pasteur in France in 1906 and understood the nutritious merit of soybeans. He Shi hoped to use Pasteur’s example to exhort the young to work hard to save the country, and to develop a wholesome individualism (健全的個人主義). Continuing in the theme of science, Prof. 徐光台 of Center for General Education, National Tsing Hua University, in his paper, “科學與儒學：新文化運動以降的回顧與反思,” argued that the conventional explanation of citing Confucian reverence for antiquity as the cause for why China did not develop modern science was inaccurate. Adopting a comparative methodology, Prof. Xu examined the interaction of Christianity and science in the West to explore the relationship between science and Confucianism in China. Prof. 黃克武 of Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, in the paper “迷信觀念的起源與演變：五四科學觀的再反省,” argued that the secularization of Chinese cosmology with the advent of Western knowledge led to a shifting definition of the word “superstition” (迷信). During the May Fourth period, “迷信” and “religion” (宗教) were set in opposition to “science” (科學). But the opponents of the May Fourth intellectuals differentiated between “superstition” and “religion,” and believed that “science” could eradicate “superstition,” but that science was not omnipotent. By the 1920s and 1930s, the categories of the study of religion and the study of superstition were established, leading to a constantly shifting definition of the meaning of “superstition” over time. Dr. 嚴曉珮, Post-doctoral Fellow, Institute of Modern History,

Academia Sinica, in her article “發現過去：北京人與民國時期科學的國族建構，” traced the process by which Chinese intellectuals in the 1930s rejected the theories of Western origin of humans, and instead embraced the idea that Central Asia was the original cradle of humans. Prof. Yan explained how the discovery of Peking man was appropriated by Chinese intellectuals, and with the encouragement of Western scientists, as a symbol of national pride and vindication of the antiquity of the Chinese race.

## Assimilation, Sinicization and Blending the East and West

Western philosophy, when introduced into China, experienced a process of sinicization, according to Prof. 韓秋紅 from Northeast Normal University, in his paper “西方哲學中國化發展的理論精髓：積極應變，自覺反思，主動融入。” Prof. Han analyzed the process of assimilation of Western philosophical thoughts during the New Culture Movement. The prevalent theories were: the cyclical theory of history, the dialectical materialism of Marxist ideology, and the social Darwinian view of historical progression. He analyzed how these theories underwent a process of extreme adaptation when they entered the Chinese intellectual world. The ideas inspired introspection among Chinese intellectuals, and eventually became a paradigm for investigating Chinese philosophy, as well as structure by which Chinese intellectuals examined Western philosophy. One of the most challenging questions for the intellectuals of the New Culture Movement was how to carefully and selectively use Western methodology to apply to Chinese cultural tradition. Prof. 陳國球 of Hong Kong Institute of Education, traced the evolution of renowned poet Zhu Ziqing's theory of literary criticism. After assuming

the chair of the department of Chinese literature at Tsinghua University in 1931, Zhu and his colleague aimed to develop two hitherto lacking components of Chinese literature. One was to develop a modern standard of literary criticism, and the other was to create new literature. Prof. Chen demonstrated how Zhu was able to blend the Chinese traditional standard of poetry criticism with the methodology of late nineteenth, early twentieth-century British literary criticism, in order to forge a connection between the new literary genre and the Chinese classical literature.

## Hu Shi

Four papers studied various aspects of Hu Shi's scholarship. Prof. 林明照 of National Taiwan University analyzed Hu Shi's methodology in the latter's 《中國古代哲學史》 (*A history of Chinese ancient philosophy*). Prof. Lin analyzed the construction of Hu's methodology, and Hu's goal to assess the significance of philosophy in Chinese culture. Prof. Lin's conclusion is that while Hu's analysis of the thoughts of pre-Qin philosophers may be lacking, however, his methodology offered a new perspective with which to view classics, and in that regard should be measured by a different yardstick. In “胡適的「方法意識」與延伸思考,” Prof. 李賢中 of National Taiwan University discussed Hu Shi's effort to find a modern methodology for studying philosophy. Applying Western philosophical standard of logic, he found that Wang Yangming lacked inductive method, whereas Zhu Xi was strong on induction. Prof. Li contrasted the three-prong method of Mohist philosophy with the five-step questions of John Dewey's pragmatism, and suggested a reconstruction of Mohist theory. Prof. Li cautioned that Hu's effort was targeted toward the practical concerns of China one hundred years ago, and

it is the task of scholars today to find solutions to problems relevant to our times. In “新文化的異域迴響：胡適及其著作在日本，” Prof. 歐陽哲生 of Peking University found that Hu Shi had visited Japan nineteen times in his life, and developed a deep friendship with Aoki Masaru 青木正兒. The Japanese intellectuals were impressed by Hu’s work in literature and philosophy. His exchanges with Japanese scholars of Zen Buddhism were contentious but collaborative at the same time. The scope and evidence-based methodology of Hu’s “re-ordering Chinese antiquity” project was inspired by the Japanese scholarship. Prof. 杜保瑞 of National Taiwan University critiqued Hu Shi’s discussion of Zen Buddhism. He argued that Hu Shi mis-identified factions of Buddhism, and his lack of in-depth understanding of philosophy led to problematic analysis of the relationship between Zen Buddhism and the naturalistic philosophy of Daoism, as well as a less than accurate account of the dispute between the believers of instant enlightenment (頓悟) and those of gradual enlightenment (漸悟).

## Chen Duxiu

Anhui provincials played an important role in the New Culture Movement, as two of the prominent leaders of the movement, Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu, both hailed from Anhui. Three papers focused on the Anhui intellectuals and the activities and thoughts of Chen Duxiu. Prof. 汪楊 of Anhui University, in her paper “在思想與文學之間——以皖籍知識分子與中國現代文學為中心的探討” identified five categories of intellectuals who played influential roles in the dissemination of modern literature. They were intellectuals and thinkers such as Chen Duxiu and Hu Shi, writers and poets such as Jiang Guangci and Tai Jingnong, literati of the latter Tongcheng school such as Li Guangjiong and Guang

Mingfu, educators such as Tao Xingzhi, and publishers such as Wang Mengzou. She argued that their extraordinary influence on the New Culture movement was due to the geographical proximity of Anhui to the urban centers of cultural activities, to the rise of charismatic leaders who connected the province to the urban cities, and to the native place, professional and ideological ties of these intellectuals. Prof. 王達敏 of National Academy of Social Sciences, in his paper titled: “對李憲瑜教授所撰〈關於陳獨秀的輿論經驗與尋求之斷想：以《安徽俗話報》為中心〉的評議” traced the influence of the Tongcheng school of Confucian thoughts on Chen Duxiu’s network of newspaper colleagues. Just to mention one example, Wu Rucheng and Li Guangjiong were both students of the Tongcheng master Wu Rulun. Prof. Wang also concluded that the reason why Chen discontinued the publication of the *Anhui Suhua bao* was because newspaper-publishing was an ineffective way to save China. Instead he joined the revolutionary society *Guangfu hui* and taught in schools such as the Anhui Public School as a more direct way to overthrow the Qing. In her article, “The Evolution of Chen Duxiu’s Ideas About Patriotism: A Computational Analysis of His Writings, 1897-1942,” 趙沈允 (Anne Chao) of Rice University used the method of text-mining by way of statistical analysis to trace the evolution of Chen Duxiu’s idea on patriotism from 1897 to 1942. She calculated the frequency of appearance of six keywords, 國民 (citizen), 青年 (youth), 民主 (democracy), 革命 (revolution), 民族 (people) and 愛國 (being patriotic) throughout Chen’s writing career. Her conclusion is that Chen’s thoughts on patriotism matured from a generic, sentimental desire to love one’s country, to advocating Western style democracy, to championing Marxist socialism over time. However, toward the end of his life, he concluded that Soviet style dictatorship was not socialism, and that capitalist democracy afforded



more protection of the individual than Soviet-style dictatorship. Prof. Chao discussed the pros and cons of using a digital humanistic approach to historical analysis.

## Limits of Democracy and Individual Rights

Many of the leading thinkers of the late Qing, early Republic, such as Huang Zunxian, Liang Qichao, Wu Rulun, Zhang Taiyan, and Chen Duxiu, were influenced by the writing of the Japanese liberal thinker (aka Japan's Voltaire) Fukuzawa Yikichi. In his excellent paper, “啟蒙者所受的啟蒙——福澤諭吉啟蒙理念的形成,” Prof. 周程 of Peking University analyzed in-depth Fukuzawa Yukichi's respect for personal freedom. Yukichi firmly believed that protecting the rights of the individual was fundamental to the creation of an independent nation. Having visited the United States twice, he was deeply impressed by the respect for individual freedom, an inalienable right which he saw as key to the strength of the Western nations. He offered a two-part solution for Japan to realize the freedom of the individual. First, the Japanese people must pursue practical knowledge having to do with everyday life, topics such as modern ethics, modern science, modern politics, modern economics, and modern art. Second, the intellectuals must separate themselves from the ruling class, and to make it their responsibility to help the people realize this goal. In this way, Japan could become a nation that would be able to challenge the unequal power hierarchy among the world of nations.

How does an iconoclast of the New Culture Movement respond to the need to save the nation when the Japanese aggression threatens the very existence of China? Prof. 陳學然 of City University of Hong Kong, in his paper “新舊文化之碰撞與衝擊：以顧頡剛為中心的考察” argued

that during the New Culture Movement era, Gu forcefully dismantled the foundational myth of the “Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors” with the intention of discrediting the entire historiographic tradition of Chinese classics. But with the advent of the Japanese invasion in the 1930s, he contradicted his earlier intellectual pursuit by arguing for a mono-ethnic origin of the Chinese people, and by joining the Nationalist party in reconstruction of a Chinese philosophical narrative. Prof. Chen pointed out that intellectuals from a totalitarian state often reverted back to deference to the authority in times of crisis, out of a lack of a firm grounding in the freedom and rights of the individual.

The question of learning about oneself by the reflection of the other is one that Prof. 韓水法 of Peking University analyzed in his paper, “作為他者的自身——新文化運動中的中國認識與認同。” Prof. Han noted that in any society, the desire to look inward and to change occurs when there is tremendous social change. The New Culture Movement was the result of such a cataclysmic impact on Chinese society. However the May Fourth intellectuals were so engaged in finding solutions to China’s problems that they erred on finding the proper diagnosis. The allure of the West was so overwhelming that the self-became alienated and considered itself as the “other.” Combined with the urge to find a quick solution for China’s ills, this led the intellectuals to apply the wrong remedies. As a result social forces were harnessed and manipulated by certain political factions for specific political movements. It is time for a new affirmation of China, one whose foundation would include new principles, new systems, and new social structure.

On the question of the future of China, Prof. 劉康 of Fu Jen Catholic University revisited the question posed by Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng on whether or not China’s feudal society possessed a super-stable

structure. He concluded that from a system theoretical point of view, all systems are considered super-stable, as that is the purpose of a system. Thus any society, not just the Chinese feudal society, is propelled by the interaction of political, economic and cultural forces to move toward stability. Today's Chinese society, under the machinery built by the Communist Party, has prevented the formation of a civic society. Prof. Liu agreed with Jin and Liu that with the resurgence of the Confucian influence, and the succession and training procedures for party leadership in place, the reorganization of the one-party state is complete. China is now a state that can be "mathematically manageable," and therefore continues to be stable. It is still not clear as to the reason why China can continue to maintain a "super-stable structure," a question that may not be answered in our lifetime.

Overall, the participants offered new insights, new interpretation, and new findings on the people and the historical events associated with the New Culture Movement. The result is a vibrant collection of thoughtful and in-depth research papers yielding new interpretation of the period.