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Autor: Vetrov, Viatcheslav

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Viatcheslav Vetrov*

China's *New School of Thought-Masters* (*Xinzixue*): An Alternative to Sinologism?

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Abstract: As is well known, identity studies have always to do with drawing boundaries. In Western sinological works as in the debates of Chinese intellectuals concerning their cultural identity, there are a number of fields which are again and again demarcated against some corresponding fields in other cultures: Chinese philosophy, Chinese literature, Chinese history etc. The practice of drawing boundaries is not limited to the work of the so called cultural relativists. Universalists, who display a critical attitude towards cultural relativism and advocate the equality of cultural phenomena in the world as a matter of principle, construct their argumentation also on the basis of a crucial boundary, i. e. the conception of their own program – their own academic identity – as opposing the program of cultural relativism. The present study defends the idea that any discussion of questions concerning identity constructions, any act of drawing boundaries, as any criticism against drawing them can be interpreted as a political statement and that they become every time problematic when they are accompanied by an explicit negation of politics or when they are not reflected upon as participating in politics. The focus will lie on Chinese readings of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and on current Chinese debates about the issue of national identity.

Keywords: Chinese intellectual history, Xinzixue – new thought-masters studies, Sinologism, Orientalism, Chinese Identity

它山之石，可以為錯。
《詩經·小雅·鶴鳴》

1 Introduction

As is well known, identity studies have always to do with drawing boundaries. In Western sinological works as in the debates of Chinese intellectuals concerning their cultural identity, there are a number of fields which are again and

*Corresponding author: Viatcheslav Vetrov, Institut für Sinologie, Universität Heidelberg, Akademiestraße 4–8, Heidelberg 69117, Germany. E-mail: viatcheslav.vetrov@zo.uni-heidelberg.de

again demarcated against some corresponding fields in other cultures: Chinese philosophy, Chinese literature, Chinese history etc. The practice of drawing boundaries is not limited to the work of the so called cultural relativists. Universalists, who display a critical attitude towards cultural relativism and advocate the equality of cultural phenomena in the world as a matter of principle, construct their argumentation also on the basis of a crucial boundary, i. e. the conception of their own program – their own academic identity – as opposing the program of cultural relativism.

The present study defends the idea that any discussion of questions concerning identity constructions, any act of drawing boundaries, as any criticism against drawing them can be interpreted as a political statement and that they become every time problematic when they are accompanied by an explicit negation of politics or when they are not reflected upon as participating in politics.¹ The focus will lie on Chinese readings of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and on current Chinese debates about the issue of national identity. However, the problem is not restricted to Chinese intellectuals alone as the following two examples may illustrate.

In his *Lost Soul: "Confucianism" in Contemporary Chinese Academic Discourse* (2008), John Makeham addresses the issue of the *nuxue*-fever of the late twentieth century and still at its peak when he was writing this book, and discusses its role in the process of identity building of contemporary Chinese intellectuals. One of his main statements is that this issue pertains exclusively to the frame of cultural nationalism rather than state nationalism. The promotion of *nuxue*-studies is said not to have been orchestrated by the party-state² and the so called cultural nationalism which focuses upon a moral regeneration of the people and is independent of political nationalism³ has remained purely a concern of the Chinese academy. "Most fundamentally, however, *nuxue*-centered Chinese cultural nationalism is a movement directed at promoting the belief that it is *nuxue*-as-culture that constitutes the uniqueness and value of the Chinese

¹ The present study does not pursue the idea that any academic study on China is necessarily a political statement. However, politics, as far as it reflects the issue of mutual representations of East and West, the attitude towards cultural differences, either a negative one, characteristic of universalists, or an affirmative one, – remains a significant ideal background in the global production of knowledge on the East. Consequently, the main purpose of the present study is not reproaching Sinologists for participating in politics, but rather a critical reflection of a widespread phenomenon when politics is treated as a troublesome issue in questions concerning national identities.

² Makeham 2008: 7.

³ Makeham 2008: 14. For a contrary view on the high relevance of the *nuxue*-fever for the Communist Party, see Meissner 2006; as well as Lee 1998.

nation.”⁴ The axiomatic separation of culture and state as well as the exclusion of the Chinese academy from politics seems to be rather problematic. In the light of this exclusion, the words “Academic Discourse” in the title of the book cannot be understood in the sense of Foucault: the academia is put outside of power relations and this is a – even if not really plausible – statement with political implications.

Carine Defoort’s “Fu Sinian’s View on Philosophy, Ancient Chinese Masters, and Chinese Philosophy” may serve as a further example. The article discusses the reluctance of Fu Sinian (1896–1950) – one of the key figures in the May Fourth movement – to apply the concept of philosophy on the traditional Chinese thought. Defoort states a contradiction between Fu’s striving for objectivity and his evaluative emotional attitude towards Western concepts and Chinese tradition. She finds it striking that Fu’s descriptions go along with evaluations, which probably [sic] may have resulted from the critical situation of his nation.⁵ The inconsistencies of Fu Sinian’s scholarly method are explained in the following manner: “Fu Sinian, who came from Shandong, had a strong sense of the Japanese threat, which became ever more pressing while he was writing his book. As many scholars have pointed out, under such conditions, it was hardly possible to separate academic research from political concerns and nationalistic sentiments.”⁶ This passage suggests that in principle it is quite possible to separate academic research and political concerns in questions on national identity. Defoort does not provide any arguments in support of this suggestion, nor does she pay attention to the fact that the subject of the analysis in her own article – the applicability of the concept of philosophy to Chinese tradition – is by no means an unpolitical issue and has been part of a discourse in which Chinese and Western intellectuals have been involved since the end of the Qing dynasty and which has been dominated by the perception of un/equal global power relations and questions concerning the nature of ties between knowledge and power.

4 Makeham 2008: 338. Makeham owes his distinction of cultural and political nationalisms to John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (1987). It is worth mentioning that for Hutchinson both varieties of nationalism are directly involved in politics. Broaching the issue of cultural nationalism in Ireland, he discusses at large the political engagement of Irish intelligentsia, who, among other things, could “claim the mantle of a victorious war of independence against the British state.” (Hutchinson, 1987: 306).

5 Defoort 2012: 278.

6 Defoort 2012: 298.

It is well known that the relations between academic research and political concerns are also the central subject in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, a classic of post-colonial studies. Said exposes deformations of knowledge about the Oriental other by Occidental academia as an instrument of colonization. He formulates the aim of his study as a warning against "too close a relationship between the scholar and the state".⁷ In other words, he calls intellectuals to distance themselves from politics that produce deformed perceptions of the other as a means of colonization. He does not provide any definite answer to the question whether it is possible for human sciences to abandon political concerns altogether. Although he displays a tendency to plead for such an abandonment, which might be regarded as an idealistic attitude, he nevertheless demonstrates in a quite persuasive manner, how necessary it is for any scholar involved in issues of cross-cultural identities and cross-cultural knowledge production to critically reflect upon his/her own possible relationship to politics, to become aware of the dangers pertaining to cultural unconsciousness.

Since the early nineties, Said's *Orientalism* has remained a most important point of orientation in the discussions of Chinese intellectuals on their national cultural identity in the global context. It is a big paradox that many of the studies, which rely heavily on Said and take the issue with representations of the other as a matter of politics, are also very critical of Said. One characteristic feature of these criticisms is that, turning against various epistemic distortions produced by Western scholars about China, they simultaneously try to neutralize the political side of their own position, to overcome politics, to make it non-present. Such attempts are either implicit (as in the case of Wang Mingming's *The West as the Other: A Genealogy of Chinese Occidentalism*, 2014) or explicit (as in Gu Mingdong's various critical studies on *Sinologism*.) The present study means to call into question the advisability of these attempts. It concludes with a discussion of China's *New School of Thought-Masters* (*xinzixue* 新子學), one of the most prominent current movements in the Chinese academia. If Gu Mingdong, who stresses the necessity for scholars to reject political concerns, takes his monograph on *Sinologism* to be an alternative to *Orientalism* and post-colonial studies, the present study raises the question, if the proponents of the *xinzixue*, who rather suggest the impossibility of such a rejection, are on their part not to be understood as a more plausible alternative to *Sinologism*.

7 Said 2003 [1978]: 326.

2 Part I: From orientalism to occidentalism

Among the first studies which documented an active reception of Said's *Orientalism* in China was the publication of a round-table discussion of it in *Dushu* 读书 (No.9) in 1993, six years before the book was translated into Chinese.⁸ From the *Dushu* discussion, a special attention among Chinese scholars received the article by Zhang Kuan 张宽 "Ou Mei ren yan zhong de 'fei wo zulei' 欧美人眼中的“非我族类” (“The ,Other’ in the Eyes of Europeans and Americans“.) According to him, it was a serious drawback of Said not to have reflected upon Chinese materials in his critique of Orientalism.⁹ From the very beginning, the occupation of Western intellectuals with China was imbued with ideology: idealistic representations of China in the age of enlightenment were succeeded by pejorative ones – China as a sleeping monster (*chenshui de guaiwu* 沉睡的怪物), as unable to innovate (*wu gexin nengli* 无革新能力¹⁰), etc. – at the end of the Qing dynasty. In Zhang's opinion, Chinese intellectuals of the twentieth century had also contributed to the construction of Orientalism in a significant way, as far as they oriented themselves towards Western norms, and under the influence of the West began to perceive themselves as *xenophobic* (*pai wai* 排外), *egoistic* (*zisi* 自私), *illogical* (*bu luoji* 不逻辑), and *unhygienic* (*bu weisheng* 不卫生.¹¹)

It deserves attention that already in this relatively early Chinese study on Said Orientalism is discussed alongside with a counter-discourse which Zhang calls *Xifang zhuyi* 西方主义 (*Occidentalism*.) By this term Zhang means a system of erroneous and distorting representations of the West, which was motivated by an *impulsive* (*fuzao* 浮躁), *blind* (*mangmu* 盲目), *irrational* (*feilixing* 非理性) attitude of Chinese intellectuals to the West since the early twentieth century. The Occidentalism manifested itself in many forms, from a self-identification with Western norms up to a total rejection of the West. As a discourse, Occidentalism is seen as a counterpart of Orientalism. Both are perceived as dangerous, if not critically reflected. Zhang's article is concluded by an appeal to the watchfulness of Chinese intellectuals in questions regarding the politicization of mutual representations by East and West.¹²

⁸ The work was first translated into Chinese in 1999 in Hong Kong as *Dongfangxue* 東方學 by Wang Yugen 王宇根 (Hong Kong, Sanlian shudian) and in Taiwan, in the same year, as *Dongfang zhuyi* 東方主義 – by Wang Zhihong 王志弘 (et al., Taipei, Lixu chubanshe.)

⁹ Zhang 1993: 5.

¹⁰ Zhang 1993: 6.

¹¹ Zhang 1993: 7.

¹² Two years later, he wrote a further polemic critical essay on Orientalism trying to liberate the Chinese academy of the hegemonic colonizing Western discourse (*xifang quanshi huayu, zhimin*

Two years after the publication of Zhang Kuan's article, Chen Xiaomei issued a monograph on politically instrumentalized representations of the West by China: *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (1995). She distinguishes between an official Occidentalism under Mao, among other things the three world theory, by which the party tried to discipline the population of China in accord with Maoist ideology, and an unofficial one. The unofficial Occidentalism is said to distance itself from the current ideology. By means of a number of highly critical representations of traditional Chinese identity symbols (as the Great Wall, the Yellow river etc. in the film *He shang he shang* in 1988) against the background of Western civilization, the unofficial Occidentalism was a way to express political opposition and to challenge the party state. Chen Xiaomei draws a parallel between this unofficial Occidentalism of the Post-Mao era and the one of the May Fourth period and stresses the ambivalent character of the latter:

When the West is used... as a strong anti-official statement against Confucian traditional culture, this Occidentalist discourse can be regarded as politically liberating. On the other hand, however, in view of the particular historical conditions of the May Fourth period, which is characterized by its embrace of an anti-imperialistic agenda as its top priority, the appeal to the West paradoxically turned out to be a yet another way in which Western fathers subjugated and colonized "Third World" women...¹³

Chen Xiaomei regards the liberation of women from the yoke of Confucian traditional norms as an idea pertaining to a "male-dominated-feminist" discourse, in which the voices of real women were hardly present. She discusses this gender issue at large in the concluding chapter of the monograph, in order to demonstrate "the continuity and complexity of Occidentalism in modern Chinese society".¹⁴

The observation of continuities between the Occidentalism of the May Fourth era and that of the end of the twentieth century appears to be a somewhat contradictory statement, especially when it is read in the context of Chen's

huayu 西方权势话语, 殖民话语.) (Zhang 1995: 37). For an early detailed critical discussion of Zhang Kuan's attitude towards Said, see Zhang Longxi 1998: 190–193. Zhang Kuan's dismissal of ideas and theories which were created in the last hundred years is designated as "incredibly arrogant and astonishingly self-righteous" (Zhang 1998: 192.) Zhang Longxi's monograph deserves attention also as reflecting the first wave of Said's impact on Chinese intellectuals and interpreting it in terms of politics, of the "rekindled sentiments of nationalism" (Zhang 1998: 190.) This critical attitude to the *nationalism* pertaining to Chinese critiques of Orientalism is shared by Tao Dongfeng (2010), who is discussed below.

¹³ Chen 1995: 25.

¹⁴ Chen 1995: 25.

constant references to Foucault and the discussion of the Occidentalism discourse as being tied to power relations.¹⁵ As the power relations in the post-colonial era are diametrically different from those of the early twentieth century, it would make more sense to speak about two different discourses with respectively different ties between knowledge and power: if for the May Fourth the attempts of self-strengthening and Westernization were to a large extent accompanied by the perception of the West as a real or potential threat, in the post-colonial discourse the West appears as a provider of theories, in which its own hegemonic scholarly practice of the past is being exposed and the other – the epistemically decolonized – becomes the subject of a fair democratic treatment.

Another recent monograph on Occidentalism by Wang Mingming: *The West as the Other: A Genealogy of Chinese Occidentalism* (2014) may serve as an illustration of the diversity of discourses, between which Chen Xiaomei observes continuities. It sets out with the following criticism of Said:

As a canonical work for post-colonial studies, it [Said's *Orientalism*-V.V.] ironically carries on the same modern Western thought it critiques. While Said is critical of the expansive power of modern Western knowledge, his work paradoxically functions as if a spirit possesses us and presses us to treat the West as the only imaginative and perceptive subject.¹⁶

Wang's genealogy of Chinese images of the West extends from the Zhou dynasty up to the May Fourth era. The last is seen as taking leave of the traditional associations of the West with India and the Kunlun-mountain. The newly created modern vision of the West is that of Europe and America, which appear as new sources of truth, as a promised land of Mr. Science and Mr. Democracy. Similarly to Chen Xiaomei, Wang pays attention to the ambivalent character of this new ideal-image:

Yet the West now also became the source of imperialism. To “fetch the scriptures” from it was thus not to be seen as putting the East into the “Western world.” On the contrary, they were seen as applicable and valuable only when they served to make China an integrated “isolate”, separated from the “world system” of imperialism. Only in this way could such scriptures be of any use.¹⁷

It is striking that Wang, who bases his genealogy methodologically on post-colonial studies and is largely inspired by Foucault and Said, dedicates only some scarce passing remarks to them and does not discuss the current power

¹⁵ Chen 1995: 25.

¹⁶ Wang 2014: 9.

¹⁷ Wang 2014: 238.

relations or the current discourse from which his monograph has arisen. The decisive image of the West as the source of post-colonial theories is not part of his genealogy and the above criticism of Said belongs to the very few statements he makes on this subject. He does not mention that discussions on Chinese imagination in comparison with the imagination of the West are by no means a new theme in the dialogue between China and the West. For example, this topic was of great interest for Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936) in *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* 中國小說史略 (1925.) Wang Mingming draws on some of the same sources as Lu Xun (*Mu tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳, *Shan hai jing* 山海經) and, again, like Lu Xun he is engaged in comparing these texts with Greek sources. The difference of discourses may be demonstrated by the fact that Wang’s judgment on the materials under study is diametrically opposed to that of Lu Xun: while Lu Xun complained about the scarcity of transmitted pieces of Chinese myths and related it to an underdeveloped imagination of Chinese in comparison with their Greek counterparts,¹⁸ Wang Mingming observes “a more sophisticated reflection on the self-other relationships in ‘civilization’”¹⁹ characteristic of Chinese imagination in contrast to Greek texts. Ignoring this historical parallel between his own and Lu Xun’s judgments can be interpreted as a sign of insufficient political self-awareness or as an attempt to transcend politics. In either case, politics remains a big – if even carefully concealed – issue for his analysis, which is reflected both in his confronting Chinese and Western cultures in qualitative terms and in his criticism of Said’s theory.²⁰

Political implications of Chinese critiques against Said were subject of Tao Dongfeng’s 陶东风 essay “Jingtí Zhongguo wénxué yánjiū zhōng de mínzú zhuyì qǐngxiàng” 警惕中国文学研究中的民族主义倾向 (“Warning against nationalistic trends in Chinese literary studies.”) In his opinion, Zhang Kuan and other critics of Said use Said’s theory only as a weapon (*wuqi* 武器²¹), their real aim being not a correction of Said or other post-colonial theorists, but the negation of the May Fourth. Tao interprets it in terms of a current Chinese cultural crisis, which is due not to a rupture with some ancient tradition but to the one with Lu Xun.²² By these words he addresses the humanist enlightening spirit Lu Xun’s and his attempts to correct what he himself considered to be lacking in his own culture in order to decrease the confrontation of East and West. The same may be observed about Edward Said, who, being a Western scholar, pursued a

18 Lu 1982: 21–22.

19 Wang 2014: 111.

20 For a more detailed discussion of Wang Mingming’s book, see Vetrov 2014.

21 Tao 2010: 46.

22 Tao 2010: 48.

similar aim of correcting deep flaws of the Western production of knowledge about the Orient. Ironically, Chinese theories of Occidentalism which all depart from Said's book did not reduce the confrontation between East and West, but contributed much to enhancing it in a substantial degree. The highest polemic point was reached by the critics of the so called Sinologism, who therefore deserve a separate discussion.

3 Part II. Sinologism: A farewell to politics

Similarly as in the case with Orientalism, the concept of Sinologism originated from the West and initially aimed at a critical reevaluation of Western knowledge production about China in a Western dominated discourse. Bob Hodge und Kam Louie, who were the first proponents of the critique of Sinologism, explicitly refer to Foucault and Said as a theoretical basement for their monograph *The Politics of Chinese Language and Culture: The Art of Reading Dragons* (1998.) For example, the use of the concept *discourse* in the sense of Foucault is explained as follows:

Discourse in Foucault's sense operates as part of a mechanism for social control in other spheres of public life. Sinology in the West is a classic instance of a discursive regime in this sense, in its role as a site for controlling who can speak with authority about China, what can be known and what is constituted, by the rule of this discursive formation, as forever unknowable, unspeakable, about China. In fact it is illuminating to use Foucault's ideas in this area also, to look at the processes that have constructed China in and for the West.²³

The authors limit the active role in the production of Sinologism to Western scholars. Thus, China as it is reflected in the Western academic discipline of Sinology is seen only as an object of epistemic constructions in a field where the West displays its undisputed hegemonic role. The study is openly conceived as a political critique, for which Foucault and Said provide an illuminating theoretical background. Unfortunately, this monograph remained rather a relatively short introduction into Sinologism than a systematic analytical critique of it. Among the most crucial questions which remained open was the participation of Chinese intellectuals in the production of Sinology as well as the corresponding mechanisms of cooperation between East and West. Nevertheless, the book received lots of attention in academic circles and initiated heated discussions of Chinese intellectuals on the politics within Sinology.

²³ Hodge/Louie 1998: 12.

The first Chinese study dedicated to Sinologism was the essay by Zhou Ning 周宁 “Hanxue huo “Hanxue zhuyi”” 汉学或“汉学主义” (“Sinology or “Sinologism””, 2004.) His aim was to warn the academy against dangers of *unconscious Sinologism* (*wu yishi zhong de “hanxue zhuyi”* 无意识中的“汉学主义”²⁴), of *scholarly colonization* (*xueshu zhimin(zhuyi)* 学术殖民(主义)²⁵) as well as of a *conspiracy of knowledge and power* (*zhishi yu quanli de “hemou”* 知识与权力的“合谋”.²⁶) Zhou Ning follows Bob Hodge and Kam Louie, as far as he also conceives his study as a political critique. The main difference is, however, that in his view it is not only Western scholars who are responsible for Sinologist constructions. Chinese intellectuals are said to be equally involved in it and it is primarily them to whom he sends his warning:

西方用中国文明作为“他者形象”完成自身的文化认同，中国却从这个“他者形象”中认同自身，汉学叙事既为中国的现代化展示了某种光辉灿烂的前景，又为中国的现代化运动埋伏下致命的文化陷阱。西方的文化霸权通过学术话语方式达成。²⁷

(“Using the image of Chinese civilization as the ‘Other’, the West completes its own cultural identification. But Chinese also identify themselves with this ‘image of the Other’. On the one hand, the sinological narrative shows some splendid prospects for China in the modernization process. On the other hand, however, it sets some deadly cultural traps to China within its modernization movement. The cultural hegemony of the West is being secured by means of a scholarly discourse.”)

Three points in Zhou Ning’s critique proved seminal for all the subsequent discussions of Sinologism in China: first, the role of cultural unconsciousness in the process of identifying oneself with images, theories and norms that originate from the West; second, the problem of objectivity in sinological studies, the observation, according to which Sinology only *seems* to produce objective (*keguan* 客观) knowledge and that in questions concerning the production of knowledge about China every scholar should exercise him/herself in scholarly introspection (*xueke fanxing* 学科反省); and third, the conviction that knowledge and power are inseparably mutually tied and the perceived necessity for the academy to be aware of its own involvement in politics.

All these points were later elaborated upon in the works of Gu Mingdong, who is one of the most prominent figures in the debates on Sinologism. It would be no exaggeration to say that it is largely due to his numerous essays on Sinologism in Chinese and English languages as well as to his recent monograph

²⁴ Zhou 2004: 5.

²⁵ Zhou 2004: 12.

²⁶ Zhou 2004: 8.

²⁷ Zhou 2004: 12.

Sinologism, an Alternative to Orientalism and Postcolonialism (2013)²⁸ that the topic has enjoyed an extraordinary enduring popularity among Chinese scholars. In spite of an obvious influence which Zhou Ning exerted on Gu Mingdong, the latter displays a quite different attitude towards the objectivity issue and the relationship between power and knowledge.

For Gu, sinologism is “a theory of knowledge production about China, guided by Western-centric ideology, epistemology, methodology, and Western perspectives, and immensely complicated by the responses of the Chinese and non-Western people.”²⁹ Epistemological colonization of China in Western and Chinese Sinology is the leitmotif of his critique. Although he points to the prominence of the Eurocentric approach to China within the Sinologism discourse, he also speaks about Sinologism as characteristic of studies that represent an explicitly China-centered approach, as Paul A. Cohen’s *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press 1984) or John Schrecker’s *The Chinese Revolution in Historical Perspective* (New York: Greenwood Press 1991), – works that try to defy prejudices of Western-oriented historical science and insist on a self-contained Chinese history. Both works are products of the modern Sinology. Among earlier studies criticized by Gu for Sinologism are discussions of China by Leibniz, Wolff, Hegel, Weber, etc.: both idealistic and critical visions of China, i. e. works, in which China is treated with a perceivable subjectivity.

As the title of his monograph on Sinologism suggests, Gu means by his critique not only to expose Sinologism as a variant of Orientalism in the sense of Said, but primarily – and in this point he differs considerably from his predecessors – as an alternative for, or a criticism against Foucault and Said. He accounts for the necessity of this alternative as follows: “My new vision is: as both Orientalism and postcolonialism emphasize political criticism, they are incapable of resolving purely scholarly issues. Most assuredly, they are incapable of disinterested scholarship.”³⁰ The act of distancing himself from the classics of postcolonial studies is the major theme in his various articles, for example in “Hou zhimin lilun de quehan yu hanxue zhuyi de tidai lilun” 后殖民理论的缺憾与汉学主义的替代理论 (“On the drawbacks of postcolonial studies

28 One of the important sources of inspiration for Gu Mingdong’s critique of Sinologism was a rather short English monograph by Adrian Chan, which appeared one year earlier: *Orientalism in Sinology* (2012.) Adrian Chan does not use the term Sinologism, but the aim of his critique is exactly the same – to dismiss Western concepts and theories, which have been produced by Western and Chinese sinologists, from China-related studies.

29 Gu 2013: 6.

30 Gu 2013: 25.

and on Sinologism as an alternative to them”³¹), in which it is stressed, that his critique of Sinologism is called to liberate Sinology of politics as well as of ideology and to promote the production of objective and bias-free knowledge, or in “‘Hanxue zhuyi’ lilun yu shijian wenti zai bianxi: zou xiang zijue fansi, jin keneng keguan gongzheng de zhishi chansheng” “汉学主义’理论与实践问题再辨析—走向自觉反思、尽可能客观公正的知识产生 (“A new critical analysis of the theory and practice of Sinologism: Towards the production of self-consciously reflected, the most possibly objective and bias-free knowledge”³²), which is introduced with the statement that his critique is to be understood as a theory of introspection (*fansi* 反思) and not as a political critique.

Scholarly objectivity, which Gu means to achieve by his rejection of politics and ideology, concerns primarily studies on China’s cultural identity in the global context. One could expect that Gu’s works would provide some argumentation in support of the pursued objectivity, or at least that they themselves may count as illustrating an objective and bias-free attitude. Yet Gu abstains from any argumentative epistemological justification of objectivity and practices a highly personal subjective style throughout his critical works, which contrast drastically with the objectivity issue. For example, in his above mentioned article “‘Hanxue zhuyi’ lilun”, he presents a scathing criticism of Foucault’s theory of knowledge and power, which is based only on Gu’s conviction, according to which Foucault’s thoughts are purely destructive and not able to answer questions concerning knowledge production.³³ It is also striking that, in order to support this conviction, he quotes the following lyrical passage from Ye Jun, a fellow-critic of Sinologism:

“权力”作为一个学术概念，发展到福柯，已经是“夕阳无限好，只是近黄昏”，因为它虽然作为概念工具很好用，但其实有很大的问题。因为它绝对不能抹杀人类对美好人性、社会和谐、情感的向往和追求。³⁴

(“As soon as the concept of power becomes part of Foucault’s theory, it is already a ‘beautiful sunset, which spreads everywhere, but is about to disappear in the dusk.’ Although it may be useful as a conceptual tool, in reality it is very problematic. This concept is not able to put an end to man’s striving for good human nature, for social harmony and sentiments.”)

The allusion to Li Shangyin’s 李商隐 poem *Ascending to the Leyou park* (*Deng Leyouyuan* 登乐游原) is called to pictorially suggest the impracticality of

³¹ Gu 2015a.

³² Gu 2015b.

³³ Gu 2015b: 12.

³⁴ Ye 2014: 6, quoted by Gu 2015b: 12.

Foucault's theory, to refute it by means of rhetoric, not by arguments. It is one of numerous instances, in which Gu Mingdong exercises rhetoric while he discusses the issue of objectivity and scholarly disinterestedness. Among further distinctive rhetorical means, to which he constantly resorts, are images from the semantic field of *purification* and *healing*. Here are some examples from the *Sinologism*-monograph: China's intellectuals are practicing an "unhealthy fetishization of Western theories" (p. 1), Gu's work is meant to contribute to "a healthy development of globalization" (p. 10), Sinologism displays "symptoms of the epistemological and methodological malady" (pp. 18–19) and suffers from "intellectual sickness" (p. 109), it is "an intellectual impediment to healthy globalization" (p. 96), etc. The complementary character of objectivity and health, which makes an argumentative treatment of the issue redundant, is expressed as follows: "It [Sinologism] has hindered objective understanding and representation of China and Chinese culture and will continue to be an obstacle to cultural exchange and the healthy development of globalization."³⁵

Intensive use of the healing and purification rhetoric may be regarded as characteristic of all great epochs of transition, which strive for a comprehensive epistemic restructuring. This was also true for the May Fourth movement and it seems to be no coincidence, that Gu – like the theorists of Occidentalism – dedicates a large portion of his critique to the May Fourth. He makes this movement responsible for a fetishization of Western norms and values, which eventually resulted in a firm establishment of Sinologism in Chinese modernity and in a rapid dissemination of the harmful idea of Western cultural superiority.³⁶

Gu's critique of Sinologism reveals a number of contradictions. His admonition to reject politics is accompanied by the demand to study Chinese materials only in terms of Chinese culture and to distance oneself from Western theories,³⁷ which is an out-and-out political statement. The main critical argument against Said is that China has never been colonized by the West.³⁸ And yet he himself makes regular use of the image of a mental colonization of China,³⁹ which lets

³⁵ Gu 2013: 18.

³⁶ For Gu's criticism of the May Fourth, see Gu 2013: 85–94. For the role of the *healing* and *purification* rhetoric in the production of new epistemic structures in Republican China, see Vetrov 2012.

³⁷ Gu 2014: 712.

³⁸ Gu 2013: 3: "the postcolonial discourse has its own limits... One obvious point is that China was never colonized by the West."

³⁹ Sinologism as a "non-territorial colonization" (Gu 2013: 11), Sinologism as a "non-violent colonization" (Gu 2013: 59), "the Chinese self-colonization" as "a form of epistemological colonization" (Gu 2013: 111), etc.

him appear as supportive of the Orientalism critique in Chinese context. Gu is occasionally aware of his contradictions and at some instances he calls himself a utopian,⁴⁰ which, however, does not hinder him to hold fast to his alternative and continue to ignore the obvious political implications pertaining to his apolitical gesture.

4 Part III Xinzixue: Fetching the stones from the other mountain

Chinese critics of Orientalism and Sinologism tend to a blanket rejection of Western scholarly methodology in China related studies. It is common for all of them, that Western methods provide them with a theoretical starting point, turn out to be crucial for the construction of their own scholarly identities, and yet at the same time – paradoxically – are felt as something negative. In such cases, critiques of Said and Foucault may be interpreted at least in part as a negation of one’s own academic identity, which reflects a wanting self-awareness. But not all debates of Chinese intellectuals concerning their cultural identity in the post-modern global context lose their way in a similar methodological dead end. Within the current Chinese academic landscape, a special attention deserves a large movement, which during the last four years has found supporters all over China, and even far beyond China – the *xinzixue*, or: China’s new school of thought-masters.⁴¹ Without being directly involved in the debates on Orientalism and Sinologism, the *xinzixue*-proponents raise all the

⁴⁰ Gu 2013: 9: “This last aim [getting free from political interference of any kind] may seem rather utopian...” Or: “For this purpose we need to desensitize awareness of a scholar’s ethnicity and intensify the necessity of scholarly objectivity in producing and evaluating knowledge about China and the West, even though it is impossible to totally separate scholarship from politics.” (Gu 2013: 186). For criticism of Gu Mingdong’s objectivity issue and the rejection of politics in studies on national identity, see the essays by Zhao Xifang 赵稀方 (Zhao 2014, 2015). In general terms, Zhao characterizes Gu’s views as utopian. However, in “Against dual confrontations”, he arrives at the following compromise solution of the problem: “Non-political knowledge, which is advocated by Gu, is not really possible, but we should accept it as an ideal in the process of our mutual rapprochement within the dialogue of cultures.” (Zhao 2015: 34).

⁴¹ For a good review of numerous academic talks and publications on the *xinzixue*, see Diao/Wang 2013 and Liu 2015. In Diao/Wang 2013: 3, Cao Chuji’s 曹础基 presentation ““Xinzixue” xuanxiang” “新子学” 悬想 (“Some Speculations on the *Xinzixue*”) is being discussed. Cao speculates upon the possibility of a two-fold syntactic division of the expression *xinzixue*: “xin zhi zixue” 新之子学, A New School of Thought Masters, i. e. old masters seen in a new perspective, or: xinzi zhi xue 新子之学, i. e. a School of New Masters of Thought, in which

issues discussed above and find solutions which seem to be much less contradictory.

The name *xinxixue* refers to the revival of ancient Chinese schools of thought and scholars (Laozi, Kongzi, Zhuangzi, Guanzi, Huainanzi etc.), who, due to the current global challenges for China, – since the beginning of the reform course in the eighties, since the beginning of the economic boom and the contrasting rather slow development of the cultural self-consciousness – are made subject of new interpretations and take a key position in the debates concerning China's cultural identity. Whereas the period between the eighties and 2012 – the year, when the first manifesto for *xinxixue*, Fang Yong's 方勇 article “Xinxixue gouxiang⁴²” “新子学“构想 (“Considerations concerning the ‘New School of Thought-Masters’”) was published, – was marked by the so-called *nuxue*-fever⁴³ and by the predominance of (Neo)Confucianism in various programs of identity constructions, the proponents of the *xinxixue* put forward the idea of plurality and competition among thought-masters (*baijia zhengming* 百家争鸣).

In his manifesto, Fang Yong comments on the necessity of the revival of the ancient thought masters as follows: Since ancient times, the transmission of knowledge in China followed two courses, i. e. that of an official courtly scholarship (*wangguan zhi xue* 王官之学), which stood completely in the service of politics and identified itself with six canonical scriptures (*liu jing* 六经), and that of non-canonical competing masters of thought (*zhuzi zhi xue* 诸子之学), which, though being in direct contact with the official scholarship, differed from it in a considerable manner, as it displayed much more mobility and creativeness. The *zi* of the *xinxixue* is to be understood as a part of *zhuzi zhi xue*, and not as the adoption of the *zi* category pertaining to the traditional classification of knowledge into *jing* 经 (*canons*), *shi* 史 (*history*), *zi* 子 (*masters*), *ji* 集 (*miscellanea*), in which the *zi* category was not necessarily associated with original creative thought, but also subsumed masters of fortune telling, yin/yang calculations and astrology (*fangji* 方技.) The *xinxixue* program is an attempt of a new systematization of knowledge: the new school of thought-masters has to single out outstanding creative thought-masters of antiquity and to elaborate new ways of text-critical approach to them. The word *new* accentuates the important connections between this agenda, the current cultural identity problem, and the globalization consciousness (*quanqiuhua yishi* 全球化意识.) The role of the *xinxixue*

contemporary intellectuals are regarded as *zi* (*masters*), who are conscious of continuities between their own work and the legacy of ancient Chinese thinkers.

⁴² Fang 2012: 14.

⁴³ For the *nuxue*-fever, see foot-note 2 above.

studies in the process of current Chinese identity building is explained in terms of cultural peculiarities pertaining to Chinese thought-masters of antiquity:

子学根植于中国文化土壤，其学术理念、思维方式等皆与民族文化精神、语文生态密切相关。对相关学术概念、范畴和体系的建构，本应从中国学术自身的发展实践中总结、概括、提炼而来。“新子学”即是此理念的实践。如在思维方式上，诸子百家重智慧，讲彻悟，不拘泥于具象，不执著与分析。表述形式上，或对话，或随笔，或注疏，不拘一格，各唱风流。这些都是存在于特定历史阶段的思维方式和话语风格，本不与西方乃至中国当前的思维话语相类。⁴⁴

(The roots of the school of (Chinese) masters of thought lie in the soil of Chinese culture. Their scholarly principles, mentality etc. are closely connected with the spirit of national culture as well as with the ecology of language and literature. Any setups of corresponding concepts, categories and systems have to be derived from the real development of Chinese scholarship itself, have to sum it up, to be the pure fruit of it. The New School of Thought-Masters is the implementation of these principles into practice. As for the mentality, Hundred Schools of Thought appreciated wisdom and discussed the issue of complete understanding, without pursuing blindly a concretization or sticking to analytical precision. As for the form of exposition, they could make use of a dialogue, of an informal essay, of a commentary, in which they expressed themselves completely freely, without any restraints. All this existed thanks to a specific historically conditioned mentality and discourse, and was not at all of the same kind as the Western discourse, not even as that of contemporary China.)

By taking the issue with the clarity of exposition, analytical precision and formal constraint, Fang Yong addresses a topic, which has been heatedly discussed in China and in the West over the last hundred years, i. e. the applicability of the concept of philosophy to the heritage of Chinese thought. He discusses this issue at large in his other essays, as well, for example in “Xinzixue” “shen lun” “新子学” 申论 (“A detailed discussion of the *xinzixue*”), where it is stated that *history of philosophy* (*zhexueshi* 哲学史) is not an indigenous Chinese subject, but a Western *transplant* (*yi men yizhi de xueke* 一门移植的学科⁴⁵), a cast of Chinese materials into Western forms. In his view, the Chinese masters of thought were never preoccupied with meeting the criteria of pure scholarship or pure thinking (*chuncui de xueshu yu sixiang de biao zhun* 纯粹的学术与思想的标准⁴⁶), therefore they were not identical with Western philosophy (*zhexue* 哲学.) He calls his readers to follow the original discourse and to apply traditional methods of

⁴⁴ Fang Yong 方勇, “Xin zi xue” “gouxiang”, in: *Guangming ribao* 光明日报 22th Oct. 2012, p. 14.

⁴⁵ Fang 2013a: 74. On the relationship between Chinese Masters Texts and the discipline of philosophy as well as on the broader issue of the inter-cultural translation of disciplines, see also Denecke 2010.

⁴⁶ Fang Yong 2013a: 73.

scholarly approach, such as studies of rhymes and character variants, drawing on history, political and economic sciences, only then is it possible to know the *true face* (*zhenshi mianmao* 真实面貌⁴⁷) of the indigenous Chinese scholarship.

One might gain the impression, that the search for what is true, original and unique in the tradition would be accompanied by a rejection of Western methods, as it was the case with the Chinese critiques of Orientalism and Sinologism. But this is exactly not so, as Fang Yong and other pioneers of the *xinzixue* constantly emphasise. Already in his manifesto of 2012, Fang Yong stated that it would be false “to explain China only in Chinese terms” (*yi Zhongguo jieshi Zhongguo* 以中国解释中国.) According to Fang, one should not forget to adopt what constitutes the strength of Western scholarship, i. e. one should “fetch the stones from the other mountain.” *The stones from the other mountain* (*ta shan zhi shi* 他[它]山之石) are a metaphor for a dialectical development of one’s identity building: the West appears not simply as a challenge or as a threat, on the contrary it is the familiarity with the West – with the ‘Other’, that is as unique as the Chinese ‘self’ – which counts as a prerequisite for a successful cognition of one’s own cultural self. The dialectical perspective of perceiving what is one’s own in a pluralistic world has to be constantly thought of as analogous of the competition among ancient Chinese thought-masters. This is the key argument in Fang Yong’s “Zai lun “Xinzixue” “再论“新子学”⁴⁸ (“Talking again about the *xinzixue*”). The *vital force* (*shengmingli* 生命力) of the thought-masters manifested itself in their accentuated autonomy of character (*renge duli* 人格独立), spiritual freedom (*jingshen ziyou* 精神自由), in the equality of all schools of thought involved in a mutual polemic (*xuepai zhi jian pingdeng duihua, xianghu zhengming* 学派之间平等对话、相互争鸣.) Fang Yong backs these observations up, quoting from the bibliographical chapter (“Yiwenzhi” 藝文志) of the *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han*): “其言虽殊，辟犹水火，相灭亦相生也。⁴⁹ (“Although their [zi, thought-masters – V. V.] words were as different as fire differs from water, by mutual annihilation they also contributed to each other’s affirmation.”)

Xuan Hua 玄华, who is another *xinzixue*-proponent, dedicated to this dialectics of the mutual identity construction his essay “Guan yu ‘Xin zi xue’ ji ge jiben wenti de zai sikao” 关于“新子学”几个基本问题的再思考 (“New thoughts upon some fundamental questions concerning the *xinzixue*”). He also approaches this issue by a projection of the plurality characteristic of the current process of identity building into the antiquity: In a pluralistic world, one is always confronted with others (*tazhe*

47 Fang Yong, 2013a: 74.

48 Fang 2013b: 15.

49 “Yiwenzhi” 藝文志 (*Hanshu*, 1962: 1746).

他者), and one's own development goes parallel with a continuous self-alienation (*bu duan di ziwo fouding de fazhan* 不断地自我否定地发展⁵⁰). The concept of self-alienation is meant as a necessary component of self-assertion, a thought that was similarly evoked in Fang Yong's above quotation from the *Hanshu*. Both emphasise that the perception of differences is crucial for one's identity building. Xuan Hua's pleading for differences is as follows:

“诸子学现象”有一个较为突出的特点是，其内部组成部分之间存在极大差异，相互诘难，乃至否定，但在客观形式上却促成了各自独特性的确立。在学术文化上，任何诸子个体必须在面对他者，尤其是在面对多元的诸子现象本身时，才确立自身。如孔子正是面对老子、子产、墨子、韩非子等时才确立为孔子。⁵¹

(The phenomenon of the ancient thought-masters is marked by a specific peculiar feature, namely by massive differences pertaining to its constitutive parts, i.e. mutual confrontations and negations, which, if seen objectively, accelerated the affirmation of every competing individuality. Within this scholarly culture, an individuality of thought could affirm itself only when it was confronted with another or with the whole plurality of other thinkers. For example, the affirmation of Confucius resulted from confronting him with Laozi, Zichan, Mozi, Hanfeizi, etc.)

The implicit self-negation characteristic of the critics of Orientalism and Sinologism, who plead for a blanket rejection of Western methodology, appears to be much less problematic and contradictory *here*, as it is made an explicit subject of a direct theoretical investigation and as the negation, or self-alienation, turns into its opposite. The same seems to be true with the objectivity issue: in contrast to Gu Mingdong, who exercises rhetorical means while exerting himself for scholarly objectivity, the proponents of the *xinzixue* attempt to grasp the same issue conceptually, to provide a systematic argumentation in support of objectivity as a unity of negation and affirmation in the process of identity building. Only then, as a second step, do they resort to rhetoric, and it is not a coincidence that they, again similar to Gu Mingdong, who advocates a healthy global Sinology discourse, identify their own program as a medicine: Fang Yong speaks of a necessity to care for a “healthy development of Chinese national culture” (*tuidong Zhonghua minzu wenhua de jiankang fazhan* 推动中华民族文化的健康发展⁵²) in the face of globalization, and Xuan Hua concludes his study with the observation, according to which the *xinzixue* is going to become a *useful recipe* (*liang fang* 良方), by which China can finally overcome her “systematic complexes” (*jiaocuo zonghe zheng* 交错综合症.⁵³) One of the main

⁵⁰ Xuan 2013: 105.

⁵¹ Xuan 2013: 105.

⁵² Fang 2013b.

⁵³ Xuan 2013: 109.

reasons for the use of rhetoric of health, as in the case with the critics of Orientalism and Sinologism, is the understanding of one's own program as an epistemological restructuring. That's why a critical discussion of the May Fourth is also one of the main points in the *xinxixue*-agenda.

The critical attitude to unreflected borrowing of Western terms and concepts characteristic of the May Fourth was already brought into focus in Fang Yong's manifesto of 2012. Among other concepts, from which he tried to distance himself from the outset, were the above mentioned *philosophy* and *history of philosophy*. In his opinion, the alternative neutral term for the Chinese equivalent of *philosophy* would be *Zhongguo xueshu* 中国学术 (*Chinese scholarship*).⁵⁴ Liang Qichao, Hu Shi were among others responsible for propagating Western terms and methods, which eventually led to a loss of theoretical self-awareness of the tradition of Chinese thought-masters and to a degradation of this tradition to the status of a mere "vassal of the history of philosophy" (*zhexueshi de "fuyong"* 哲学史的“附庸”).⁵⁵

The May Fourth is consequently considered as a time of not reflected self-alienation, which did not leave any possibility for turning into its dialectical opposite. That is why the *xinxixue*-theorists regard themselves as overcoming the May Fourth, they confront it rather than state simple continuities between two discourses as Chen Xiaomei did in her monograph on Occidentalism. For example, Zhang Hongxing speaks metaphorically about "more than one hundred years of catastrophes" (*yi bai yu nian de zainan* 百余年的灾难⁵⁶), in the course of which Chinese culture has been exposed to ruinous criticisms, and Tang Tanping, who is also an active proponent of the *xinxixue*, bemoans "the one hundred year long struggle between China and the West, between tradition and modernity" (*zai bai nian lai de Zhong Xi gu jin de zheng* 在百年来的中西古今的争⁵⁷). The May Fourth is considered to have contributed to these catastrophes in a decisive way, primarily by promoting a blind identification of one's cultural self with Western concepts, as well as by an orientation towards Western norms and ideas with the only aim of strengthening the nation. That no affirmative identity construction could be achieved was due to a wanting self-awareness, and first of all to a wanting awareness of one's otherness in an intercultural comparison.

The dialectical turn of the *xinxixue*-advocates opposes any blind adoption of foreign identities, but at the same time it promotes the idea, according to which good knowledge of foreign identities is of great importance for one's own

54 Fang 2013a: 73.

55 Fang 2013a: 73.

56 Zhang 2013: 80.

57 Tang 2012: 96.

successful identity building. For this reason, even the concepts, from which they distance themselves most critically, such as *philosophy* and *history of philosophy*, may be regarded as *stones from the other mountain*: formal constraints, analytical precision, pure thinking, etc. – possessing theoretical knowledge of all these features as being constitutive for the identity of the other, as an ideal type, in contrast to what one experiences in one's own tradition, supports a better understanding of one's own cultural self. This is why the attitude of the *xinzixue*-proponents to the May Fourth is also marked by dialectics: despite an open confrontation with it, they put themselves simultaneously in a kind of genealogical relationship to it; for this reason, Xuan Hua speaks about the May Fourth as a station between antiquity and the current time of the *xinzixue*,⁵⁸ and Tang Tanping, in his contribution on the necessity of a new restructuring of cultural knowledge, draws a similar genealogical line and makes use of the Renaissance (*fluxing* 复兴) topos, – one of the most characteristic topoi of the May Fourth. This also is *a stone from the other mountain*,⁵⁹ which brings into focus the high degree of complexity pertaining to the perceived genealogy: the revival of the thought-masters of Chinese antiquity takes place not only by means of drawing boundaries between China and the West, or between today and the May Fourth, but in a significant way also one between today and the antiquity itself, regarding the current stage as a historical individual. This is one of the subtlest ideas in the article by Xuan Hua that the *xinzixue* is *different* from the ancient school of Chinese thought-masters due to the consciousness of one's cultural otherness in the global context, which the antiquity did not possess.⁶⁰ For this reason, the current Renaissance should be understood as a transformation and a necessary restructuring of the tradition of antiquity rather than a mere copy of it:

诸子学的真正觉醒，应该是酝酿于《诸子学刊》的创刊、《子藏》的推出和中国诸子学会的创立，其真正确立则是到“新子学”命题的提出。所谓诸子学自觉，是指将诸子学作为整体现象研究，同时将其从经学思维与体系的禁锢中解放出来，真正呈现其自身。⁶¹

(The real awakening of the new school of Chinese thought-masters began with the foundation of the *Zhuzi xuekan* periodical (“A survey of thought-masters”, 2008), with the organization of a special research project on the textual corpus of thought-masters,

58 Xuan 2013: 105.

59 During the May Fourth, the concept of *revival* (*fluxing*) was always associated with European Renaissance; the revival of one's own antiquity counted as a program of resuming a cultural experience of the West, to which the West owed its current strength. For the Renaissance concept and the Renaissance discourse during the May Fourth, see Grieder 1970 as well as Vetrov 2012.

60 Xuan 2013: 106.

61 Xuan 2013: 106.

with the foundation of a special Chinese research association for the studies of thought-masters of antiquity (2012), but the real appearance of this school took place with the formulation of the *xinzixue*-thesis [i. e., in Fang Yong's manifesto from 2012 – V. V.] The awakened self-consciousness of the school of thought-masters refers to a comprehensive academic research on them, which goes along with freeing them from the canonical thought and from the yoke of systematics.)

The perception of the current epoch as a historical individual, i. e. as a discourse, which differs from any other discourse of the past, is shared by all proponents of the *xinzixue*. Common for them all is also the awareness of the political component pertaining to discussions on national identity. The academia does not appear as something politically neutral or independent of political issues, nor as participating in a conspiracy between knowledge and power, but as a subject of an open discussion on political issues. Fang Yong, who was among the initiators of all the *xinzixue*-projects listed in the above passage by Xuan Hua, states his attitude to politics quite unequivocally in his manifesto of 2012:

在国势昌盛，经济繁荣的今天，全面复兴子学的时机已经成熟，“新子学”正以饱满的姿态蓄势待发。⁶²

(Today, in an epoch of a fully unfolded national power and booming economy, the time has come for a comprehensive renaissance of the learning of the thought-masters; the New School of Thought-Masters collects its strength and is waiting energetically for its decisive move.)

Here, too, the idea of a renaissance – *a stone from the other mountain* – appears as a resumption of a national cultural program from the epoch of the May Fourth, when culture was made a subject of heated polemics among Chinese intellectuals. The perception of one's own academic activity as part of a political issue of general national concern is also reflected in references which the *xinzixue*-proponents make to correspondences between their program and the decision of the Communist Party of the 18th October 2011⁶³: this decision stated a necessity “of the principle of letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred

⁶² Fang 2012.

⁶³ Zhang 2013: 81; Tang 2012: 95. The Decision was published in the *Renmin ribao* on 26th Oct. 2011 (p.1, p.5) under the title “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu shenhua wenhua tizhi gaige tuidong shehui zhiyi wenhua da fazhan da fanrong ruogan zhongda wenti de jue ding, 2011 nian 10 yue 18 ri Zhongguo gongchandang di shi qi jie Zhong yang weiyuanhui di liu ci quan ti huiyi tongguo” 中共中央关于深化文化体制改革推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣若干重大问题的决定，2011年10月18日中国共产党第十七届中央委员会第六次全体会议通过 (“Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture, Decision passed at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Seventeenth CPC Central Committee on October 18th 2011.”)

schools of thought contend”,⁶⁴ of “drawing upon and assimilating outstanding cultural achievements of other countries”,⁶⁵ which is motivated by the perception of the Chinese cultural development as being “not entirely in accord with our economic and social development”,⁶⁶ a need to “increase people’s sense of identity with the great motherland and the Chinese nation”⁶⁷ (*zengjin dui weida zuguo he Zhonghua minzu de rentong* 增进对伟大祖国和中华民族的认同), to “foster academic and artistic democracy”⁶⁸ (*jianchi fayang xueshu minzhu, yishu minzhu* 坚持发扬学术民主、艺术民主), to “carry forward the revolutionary cultural tradition established since the May 4th Movement”,⁶⁹ to “learn... of foreign countries”⁷⁰ and to “develop a philosophy (sic) and the social sciences with Chinese features”⁷¹ (*jianshe juyou Zhongguo tese, Zhongguo fengge, Zhongguo qipai de zhexue shehui kexue* 建设具有中国特色、中国风格、中国气派的哲学社会科学.)

Although the *xinzixue*-program displays considerable correspondences with the party decision, it is by far more complex than a mere fulfillment of a task which is sanctioned from above: their vision of the May Fourth, of the dialectics of self-alienation and affirmation pertaining to identity building, their handling of concepts – among other things that of philosophy – testify to a large degree of autonomy and creativity with which they address the issue of cultural revival

64 The English translation of the CPC Central Committee Decision text is taken from its official online English version (http://www.cctb.net/bygz/wxfy/201111/t20111117_285296.htm), here p. 5.

65 “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture” (2011): 5.

66 “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture” (2011): 6.

67 “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture” (2011): 10.

68 “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture” (2011): 12.

69 “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture” (2011): 12.

70 “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture” (2011): 12.

71 “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on major issues pertaining to deepening reform of the cultural system and promoting the great development and flourishing of socialist culture” (2011): 12.

and present the construction of national identity as a pluralistic process. Thanks to this plurality, to the adoption of the dialectical method and to the understanding of cultural development as a political issue, the advocates of the *xinzixue* do not only overcome a desperate confrontation with the West, which is characteristic of many critics of Orientalism and Sinologism, but also offer some useful stones *for* the other mountain. Among other things, they demonstrate that ties connecting power and knowledge are not necessarily harmful for an intercultural dialogue, as long as they are made subject of conscious attention and as long as nothing hampers the perception of peculiarities pertaining to *all* participants in the dialogue.

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