CHINA'S CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL REJUVENATION

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Introduction

China has emerged as a new engine of economic growth in Asia and this has been welcomed by many countries in the world. However, the rise of China is likely to make an even more profound contribution to the world - a contribution of civilizational significance - if its economic growth is accompanied by a cultural and intellectual rejuvenation.

From a historical perspective, radical economic and social transformations are often accompanied by intellectual ferment and cultural effervescence. As examples, we may cite Ancient Greece and Ancient China during the Spring-Autumn and Warring periods respectively, the Islamic golden age, the Mughal period of India, and the Tang-Song period of China. The most recent experience is the European Renaissance and Enlightenment, which produced giants in the fields of philosophy, science and mathematics, social sciences, fine arts, music, architecture, and literature. Intellectuals[1] in Europe then acted as a positive historical force during a very critical period of their history, functioning both as social conscience and as sources of forward-looking ideas. The fruits of their labour have shaped the character of modern European civilization.

The Chinese Renaissance

The economic re-emergence of Asia has occurred for several decades, with Japan taking the lead. By early 1990s, business magazines and serious academic journals were talking about the phenomenon as something significant to watch. Some even described it as "the Asian Miracle" and the 21st century "the Asian Century". While most were focused on the economic, social and political aspects, a few of them were looking at the cultural and civilizational aspects. Reflecting this position is the book *The Asian Renaissance* by Anwar Ibrahim, a former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. "The economic rise of Asia, though critical and fundamental, is only a dimension of a much deeper, more profound and far-reaching reawakening of the continent which may be called the Asian Renaissance. By Asian Renaissance we mean the revival of the arts and sciences under the influence of classical models based

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[1] Intellectuals here refer to "that group of cultured people who with an independent status and relying on the strength of knowledge and spirit express a fervent public concern towards society and embody a sort of public conscience and spirit of public participation. (Xu Jilin, quoted in Cheek 2006, p.412). Xu's view is very similar to that of Alatas (1977).

on strong moral and religious foundations; a cultural resurgence dominated by a flowering of art and literature, architecture and music and advances in science and technology (p.17-18)."

Based on this conceptualization of Asian Renaissance, it may be argued that China has gone through Renaissance and even early Enlightenment. Some historians have used the term Chinese Renaissance to describe the cultural and intellectual achievements of the late Tang and Song period (Fairbank *et al* 1989; Gernet 1996). This period, from 960 to 1279, saw the emergence of a culture that was to remain characteristic of China until the early twentieth century. It is one of the most brilliant periods by virtue of the diversity and richness of its accomplishments in science, technology, literature, philosophy, painting, pottery, architecture, and so on. Just as what their Renaissance counterparts in Europe did, the Chinese thinkers of that period drew inspiration from the ideals of antiquity and wellsprings of their civilization. One of them, Zhu Xi (1130-1200), was generally regarded as the most influential Confucian philosopher after Mencius. He produced a synthesized system known as Neo-Confucianism – based on Confucianism and borrowed freely from Buddhism and Daoism. There were polymaths like Shen Kuo and Su Song who excelled as statesmen as well as scholars in biology, physics, geology, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, archeology and literary criticism. The extensive use of moveable type printing meant that more books were printed and sold at cheaper prices. There were many well-educated women and some of them were renowned poets. Commerce developed to unprecedented extent, trade guides were organized and paper money came into increasing use. Several cities with inhabitants of more than one million flourished along the principal waterways and southeast coast. Private academies and state schools produced graduates in the thousands to run state bureaucracies.

The embryonic period of Chinese Enlightenment is late Ming and early Qing which produced several brilliant thinkers – Huang Zongxi, Wang Fuzhi, Gu Yanwu, Zhang Xuecheng, and Dai Zheng. They were very similar to their European Enlightenment counterparts. Huang Zongxi (1610-1695) was the first to embark on a study of the intellectual history of China, and undertook research in astronomy and study of the classics. He was best known for his book *Waiting for the Dawn: a Plan for the Prince*. In it he attacked the theory of the divine rights of sovereigns. He believed that human beings were by nature self-interested and self-serving. Thus arose the need for a sovereign to look after the public interest of the community. The prince and his ministers should behave and function as public servants. Huang and others like him exerted a deep influence on his time. Moreover, they inspired the reformers and revolutionaries of the late 19th and early 20th century. The ideals of these radical thinkers and social activists, coupled with fresh ideas from abroad, found concrete expression in the famous May Fourth Movement of 1919 (we would return to it later).

The Ongoing Chinese Enlightenment

In the 19th century, China was challenged at the fundamental level by foreign economic competition backed by military powers. China lost war after war and became a semi-colony. To revive its fortune, it bought modern weapons and machineries and instituted piecemeal reforms. All these measures failed to roll back the tide. It was late in the century that the Chinese appreciated the intellectual and cultural dimension of the crisis (Grieder 1981). This led to the birth of the New

Culture movement. It was very critical of the narrow Confucianist orthodoxy and was open to foreign ideas like democracy, science and Marxism. When the victorious Western powers (alliance of China) in the First World War gave Germany's treaty rights in China to Japan in the Versailles Peace Conference, it sparked off the May Fourth Movement of 1919. It was an anti-traditional and anti-imperialist movement which marked an important phase in modern Chinese history. This was a period of intellectual ferment and produced some of the best literature of modern China. It was often referred to as the Chinese Enlightenment.

The intellectuals were deeply disillusioned by the West which advocated freedom and democracy while practicing colonialism (Grieder 1981). As foreign powers continued to encroach on China's sovereignty, the New Culture movement was overshadowed by political issues, and the Enlightenment project ceded place to the critically urgent task of national salvation (Schwarcz 1986). The more radical were animated by the Russian Bolshevik revolution and saw in it their model. They were drawn to Marxism as a powerful ideological weapon in their struggle against imperialism. Subsequently, they set up the Communist Party of China in 1921. Displaying great skill in mass mobilization against Japanese occupation and capitalizing on the rampant corruption of its rival the Guomintang, the CPC fought its way to power in 1949. The early years of the CPC victory restored peace in a war-ravaged country and revived the economy. The Party cadres and government officials were known to be honest and disciplined. These were the years when Marxism enjoyed immense popularity and replaced traditional thoughts as the new orthodoxy. But it was not to last. The Cultural Revolution traumatized the people. It wrought immense damage to the Chinese economy and society.

After the economic reform initiated by Deng Xiaopeng in 1978, the intellectual debate began cautiously and within the confines of Marxist ideology. A year later, a monthly journal *Dushu* was founded and a group of leading young scholars became its core contributors in 1984. The year 1984 also saw the birth of a publication project and the Academy of Chinese Culture. Between them, the three events of 1984 exerted a significant impact on subsequent intellectual development, and that year marked the advent of the New Enlightenment Movement (Xu 2004). It was a continuation of their May Fourth predecessors.

The New Enlightenment began with a commonly shared desire to re-evaluate all values, which became the general impetus of its various intellectual currents and schools (Xu 2004). It exhibited some key features of the New Culture movement of the early last century. There was a deep interest in comparing Chinese and Western culture, and there was "a near-universal approval among Chinese intellectuals of modernity as it was articulated in the West. (*ibid:* 192)." However, this homogenous feature was not to last, and the breakup was brought forward by the Tiananmen Incident of 1989. After a brief period of hibernation and self-reflection, the homogenous movement broke up. According to Xu (2004), three stages may be identified. In the early 1990s, there were critical reflections on the quality of the debates in the preceding decade. Some even went back to reflect on the May Fourth enlightenment of the 1920. The subsequent stage was a response to the social economic changes which happened in the wake of Deng Xiaopeng's southern tour of 1992 and the subsequent rapid economic growth. The intellectuals were acutely aware of the pressure brought to bear on culture and academia by commercialization and

market economy. The mass consumer culture prompted some to posit that China's modernity had come to an end. They responded by calling for a public and intellectual affirmation of the spirit of humanism. The third stage was marked by the public debates between the New Left and the Liberals. Their disagreements reflect the increasing complex economic and social conditions in the 1990s. At the risk of oversimplifying their positions, we may say that the New Left are similar to the neo-Marists of the West while the Liberals are inspired by the ideas of Western liberals like Berlin and Hayek. The New left are critical of the negative aspects of Chinese modernization such as increasing social disparity and corruption, and advocate a strong state to redress the problem. The Liberals, on the other hand, prefer a weaker state, and argue that the existing social, economic and political problems can be resolved by adopting liberal ideas and practices like democratic system and rule of law. The serious differences that emerged in different forms since the Tiananmen Incident seem to be a normal phenomenon within an intellectual and cultural movement. It happened in the May Fourth movement. It was a feature of the European Enlightenment; the *philosophes* were a quarrelsome lot (Gay 1966).

Chinese Cultural Modernization – the Neglected Dimension

The history of China since its big scale encounter with the western powers may be seen as a continuous and conscious national project to modernize its economy and society. Though modernization has improved the livelihood of hundreds of millions, it has also increased the gravity of certain old social ills and created new ones. China is confronted with corruption, moral vacuum, social dislocation, alienation, growing social and economic disparity, marginalized peasantry, environmental degradation and crimes. There is an ongoing lively debate on how to move the project of modernization forward. A proposal often put forward to tackle these problems is democratic reform of the political structure. However, the debate has often neglected to focus on another important aspect, namely the emergence a new set of ideas, values and culture .Why should China care about the emergence of a new set of ideas, values and culture?

First, modern ideas, culture and values are an organic and integral part of a modern society. Certain customs and traditions that existed for centuries are ossified and have to be discarded in their present forms. To the extent that fundamental rationale behind the customs and traditions is in accord with the human spirit, the challenge is to find new forms and rituals for them. It is also an issue of identity formation, expressed in terms of the relationship between the heritage of the past and the demands of the present.

Second, there is the grave social impact of ideological crisis and moral vacuum. There were times in the past when the young in China were brimming with idealism and infectious intellectual vigour. They discovered that they were taken for a ride during the Cultural Revolution. The idealism and vigour returned as a societal protest against corruption and inflation in the early 1989. They evaporated with the sad conclusion of the Tiananmen Incident. The incident has converted the idealistic young into apolitical citizens who prefer to channel their energies to promoting their careers. Money making is the new calling; consumerism is the new social norm. There is also the lurking danger of narrow nationalism taking hold of those who are politically disgruntled and hot-headed. Thoughtful Chinese are deeply concerned

about spiritual disorientation among the young and the moral crisis among the general population. The situation provides a fertile ground for an upsurge of interest in the religious practices (Tu 1993). In the face of all these, the Chinese leadership is sponsoring a revival of Chinese traditional values centered on Confucianism, which also serves as the moral underpinning for its quest for a harmonious society.

Third, there is the expediency of economic development. While the physical landscape in many Chinese cities show evidences of economic modernization, one very often comes across a dysfunctional business culture. "Know-who" is more important than know-how. Primitive exploitation of the labour force is still much in use, with some cases bordering on slave labour. The Chinese mass media often carry news reports of practices that reflect mindsets that are out of step with a modern economy. Even where there are modern social-economic institutions in the formal sense, they fail to work properly due to the pre-modern mentality. On their own, such institutions cannot work. Social-economic institutions are effective in so far as they are concentrated expressions and consequences of the underlying culture, values and ideas. Indeed, one may say that social, economic and political life is based on the cultural bedrock of a society.

Fourth, for economic development to be ecologically sustainable, China must avoid the high level of material consumption currently prevalent in the West. It would be wrong for China to become a second USA or a hegemonic power. Adequate material wealth is essential and this must be combined with spiritual health. To achieve this balance would require a great deal of cultural and intellectual resources.

From the cultural and intellectual perspective, how are the Chinese going to cope with the many and various problems associated with modernization? The Chinese have a deep attachment to their civilizational heritage (Wang Gungwu 2003). They loathe to see the demise of ancient Chinese ideals as expressed in the virtues of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, compassion, propriety, righteousness, integrity, and honour. They wish to modernize the Chinese society without losing their cherished traditions and values. At the same time, they cannot ignore the positive aspects of foreign ideologies and culture. The issue here is how to select, absorb and synthesize them. In the process of doing so, they want to preserve the link with the past and to make a meaningful contribution to world culture. These are two major challenges facing the Chinese. We shall dwell on these two points in the next two sections.

Drawing on their own Cultural Resources

A society confronted with serious problems tends to tap its own intellectual heritage for insights to find a way out of the imbroglio. The current Chinese leadership is following this time honored practice. It is turning to China's Confucian heritage for social harmony and cultural ballast. This is not surprising given the influence of the Sage in Chinese history. Though Confucius is seen as the greatest Chinese Sage, there are other big names in Chinese philosophy. Most of what is known as Chinese philosophy took shape during the Spring-Autumn and Warring periods (771-221 BCE). Chinese philosophy includes all these schools and the thoughts of their detractors and commentators. Between them, they form part of the cultural and intellectual resource used by the Chinese in their search for a modern China.

Throughout history, Chinese emperors, statesmen, military leaders and key social actors drew on Chinese philosophy. Their exploits were examples of skilful application or otherwise of the teachings of the masters. At the same time, their exploits were used as materials for later thinkers to advance the works of earlier thinkers. Like others, the Chinese would interpret and re-interpret their past in order to get new insights that can solve their contemporary dilemmas and difficulties.

Another cultural resource comes in the form of literature – stories, myths, plays, historical novels and poetry. They provide the ideals, metaphors, proverbs and aphorisms which allow scope for selection and multiple interpretations. One ancient ideal refers to a society where goods lost on the way will not be pocketed by passers-by, and one does not need to lock the doors at night. It is a Chinese metaphor of good society. Between them, the stories, myths and proverbs, etc offer another level and perspective for the people to understand their own society and condition. For example, Chinese business people have turned to the historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* （三国演义）for insights to improve their business performance.

Old ideas can put on new garments. They have a tendency to take on new meanings and interpretations when they are studied in the context of new social problems. Though formed two and a half millennia ago, Lao Zi's teachings are relevant to modern life. It strikes a chord among those concerned with diet and health, environment, peace and war, gender issues and meanings of life. Another Chinese thinker who holds modern meaning is Mencius. He advocated benevolent government and sovereigns who ought to share the joy and sorrows of the people. He argued that the people were the most important, followed by the country, and the sovereign last. Indeed, his name was invoked by officials of imperial court to restrain absolute power of their emperors. A *modern* interpretation would see Mencius as a strong champion of democratic ideals and his thoughts could be evoked to advance Chinese democracy.

When people draw upon the words of the ancient Sages, they make selection and interpretation. How they do so depends on their backgrounds and the problems they face. They may consult commentaries on these classic texts. In the process, they may impute new meanings into the text; they may appropriate the text for their own ends. In the end, they are likely to arrive at new insights which were unanticipated by the great masters. In other words, the pupils have produced fresh insights and original ideas though they still bear traces of the masters' thoughts. Zhu Xi leaned heavily on Confucius, Lao Zi and Buddhism. But he was certainly an original thinker. So was Huang Zongxi. All intellectual systems share this common characteristic. Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume, Kant and Marx were products of the Greco-Roman civilization but they were all original thinkers in their own right.

Learning from Others

The second challenge facing China concerns learning from the intellectual and cultural legacy of others. While the Chinese are keen to adopt advanced Western technologies, business practices and institutions, they are much more cautious with external ideas, values and culture. In other words, they want modernization with a Chinese character. This does not mean that they have been impervious to foreign ideas and culture. In its long history, China has displayed flexibility and openness in

borrowing and learning from non-Chinese sources. In fact what we called Chinese way of life contains many elements of non-Chinese origins. At the level of ideas, China has accepted Buddhism and Marxism - two systems of thoughts that are alien to Chinese tradition.

The Han dynasty lasted from 206 BCE to 220 CE. Its collapse was followed by a long period of disorder, violence and disunity. As the ideological bedrock of the dynasty, Confucianism began to lose its influence among the people. Part of this vacuum was filled by Buddhism, which was introduced to China in the first century CE. Buddhism in China had to adapt itself to a civilization profoundly different from the one in its birth place. Buddhism became acclimatized in the Chinese world to the extent that certain of its components corresponded with preoccupations and traditions of the Han period and subsequent ages. At the beginning, Buddhist texts were interpreted with ideas taken from Daoism. Chinese Buddhism is the form of Buddhism that has made contact with Chinese thought and thus has developed in conjunction with Chinese philosophical tradition. In doing so, the Chinese Buddhists enriched the teachings and practice of Buddhism and promoted it to the neighboring countries. One example is provided by what is known in Chinese as *Chan* and in Japanese as *Zen*. Its influence was so strong that in the Song dynasty, it was adopted by the most influential Confucianist thinker Zhu Xi as an integral part of Neo-Confucianism.

Buddhism became part of Chinese intellectual, cultural and religious life in the traumatic period (220 – 589), between the disappearance of the Han dynasty and a reunified China under the Sui dynasty. It was a time when China was challenged at the core by non-Han peoples and influences. It was a time when the very survival of the Chinese civilization was at stake. Though China suffered bitterly during this period, it overcame the crisis by incorporating non-Han peoples and ideas into mainstream Chinese life. The synthesis revitalized the Chinese civilization which outshone the most glorious days of Han dynasty (Fairbank *et al* 1989). It also laid a firm foundation for the brilliant cultural and intellectual achievement of the Tang-Song period later.

In the short term it would appear that Buddhism had displaced Confucian teachings. In the longer term, what it really displaced was the narrow interpretation or fossilized version of Confucianism. In the longer term what we see is the cross fertilization and creative synthesis of the old and the new, the local and the foreign.

The crisis faced by China in the 19th century was similar in many ways to that faced by China after the collapse of the Han dynasty. The threat posed by foreign powers revealed the weaknesses of the Chinese social system based on its traditional civilization. It was a crisis serious enough to threaten China's national survival. In the struggle for national salvation, the radical Chinese leaders opted for Marxism as the guiding ideology. Like Buddhism, Marxism's birthplace was not China. As it turned out, Marxism was able to adapt itself to the concrete social, economic and political conditions of China. The Chinese revolutionaries described their struggle as a continuation of the numerous peasant uprisings in Chinese history. Those who were inspired by the uprisings would feel attracted to the anti-imperialist and egalitarian character of the CPC program. Its social ideals of equity and economic justice resonated well with the Chinese ideal of great harmony (Gernet 1996). The earlier

writings of Mao were peppered with concepts and terms from ancient Chinese sages. Mao Zedong Thought may be seen as a sinification of Marxism-Leninism (Schram 1967).

In the above two cases, the Chinese demonstrated a capacity to absorb ideas and cultures that are very different from they own[2]. They did so when they found that their own cultural and intellectual resources were inadequate to cope with the challenges of the time. The origin of the new idea is not crucial. Rather, an idea tends to find fertile soil if it is able to address the needs of the people. However, it is difficult to tell a priori which idea will be the best solution. It is a drawn out process of learning. In solving the problems, both indigenous ideas and borrowed ideas tend to intermingle and find new forms through a long drawn out process of cross fertilization and creative synthesis. We have seen this in the works of the European Enlightenment thinkers (Cassirer 1951). With China closely linked to the outside world we can expect to see a new Chinese culture which is rooted in its past, but which borrows abundantly from foreign elements. But, it would take time for the new ideas and culture to grow deep roots in Chinese soils.

Concluding Remarks

Thirty years since reform started, the economic achievements of China are there for all to see. What about the achievements in the cultural and intellectual arena? The intellectual, cultural and philosophical achievements, though much less obvious, are significant when viewed in the historical context. In his article Intellectual Effervescence in China published in 1992, Tu Wei-ming observes, "Among the non-Marxist ideas that have emerged in the 1980s, three feature most prominently: scientific rationalism, democratic liberalism, and humanism. Their fruitful interaction among them is reflected in journals such as *Reading, Toward the Future, Culture: China and the World*, and *the New Enlightenment* and also in the networking of institutions such as the Academy of Chinese Culture, the Youth Forum, and the Twenty-First Century Research Institute."

Novels, plays, poems, essays, songs and music have contents and forms that are simply unthinkable three decades ago. The works of their cream have been noticed by China's watchers abroad. "It seems that Chinese intellectuals have already constructed an international forum and some of their works have been acclaimed as the new Chinese conscience by sympathetic critics from North America to Australia. (Tu 1993, p.XXVII)" Since Tu's published remark in 1993, the trend has continued, e.g. Nobel Laureate of literature Gao Xingjian, sociologist Wang Hui (2003), economist-historian Qin Hui (2005) and historian-public intellectual Xu Jilin (Cheek 2006)[3]. Though China has not yet produced a galaxy of thinkers to match those of the European Enlightenment, there are grounds to believe that the prospects are bright.

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[2] China is not unique in such borrowing and learning. Many in Western countries have found Daoism very appealing; they feel that Daoism is able to speak to them at a very deep level (Clarke 2000).

[3] This does not include the well known anthropologist and sociologist Fei Xiaodong (1910-2005) whose contributions spanned the pre-revolutionary, revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods. (Arkush 1981).

First, the intellectual tradition expected the scholars to put their talents at the disposal of the society and to possess a deep sense of moral and spiritual responsibility (忧患) for the future of their state, people and civilization. This *shi* (士) tradition shaped Chinese political culture in the past. It is such a strong tradition that decades of CPC's indoctrination could not eliminate this intangible heritage (Wang 1993). At the same time, it is this heritage which rendered them social prestige and they were therefore politically significant, even in the pre-reform days when intellectuals had limited freedom (He 2004).

Second, the intellectuals have recovered their independent-mindedness since the mid-1980s (Tu 1992). Since then there is no going back to the days when the CPC would not tolerate any deviation from its rigid ideological line. Even more important is that the career possibilities of intellectuals are vastly different from that of the pre-reform days when the sole provider of employment was the party-state establishment. Many find gainful employment in the business sector and as independent professionals like doctors, lawyers and free lance writers. University academics enjoy much more autonomy than ever before since the birth of the New China. One result of this is the emergence of business, trade, professional and management associations, as well as learned societies in the social sciences and humanities (Pei 1998). Chinese intellectuals can be credited with having actively promoted the roles of non-governmental or partial non-governmental organizations. The rapid growth of these new social organizations is one of the structural transformations that have occurred since the reform in 1978 (Gu 2004).

Third, Chinese intellectuals are tapping on their cultural and intellectual heritage as potential resources while making a critical study of European Enlightenment and modernity. One example is Wang Hui (2004)'s *Rise of Modern Chinese Thought.* The conditions for doing such works have improved greatly. Chinese intellectuals nowadays have easy access to Western ideas. There is a healthy dialogue among Chinese and Western scholars trying to understand the complexity of Chinese modernization. See for example a recent issue of the journal *Modern China* (Huang 2008). Hundreds of thousands of students have studied abroad, some of them at graduate level at top global universities. Social scientists who are familiar with the works of Western intellectuals are applying them to study Chinese modernization (Cheek 2006; Davis 2007; Huang *et al* 2006). They are urged to aim at "an eventual development of Chinese theory after careful mastering of Western masters. (quoted in Cheek 2006, p.418)"

Fourth, the Chinese society is becoming more confident and is more open than ever to the outside world. There are huge numbers of foreigners working and studying in China. Millions of Chinese are holidaying abroad annually. Millions have become citizens or permanent residents of other countries; they act as carriers of foreign ideas and ways of life when they return to visit their friends and relatives. There is a lively press catering for the demands of the readers. And let us not forget the Internet which acts as a source of information and public forum. Moreover, in spite of its hierarchical structure, the Chinese society is enormously fluid, allowing information, ideas, values, and goods to flow incessantly from one stratum to another (Tu 1993).

Fifth, new ideas and culture emerge as an integral part of societal development. They are born in the process of understanding, expressing and solving various kinds of problems in society. We have observed this in the various periods of Chinese history as well as that of other countries. Intellectuals doing work closely related to the burning issues of the day, either at the theoretical level or practical level, are being nourished by the social issues, and their participations in turn contribute to social development. It is therefore heartening to note that all important categories of citizen movements in China have intellectual components (Kelly 2006, p.196). "China's intellectual politics is receiving powerful impetus from citizen movements as they have opened new kinds of action space for intellectuals. Reciprocally, intellectuals have adjusted their public role to speaking as citizens – or their counsel – rather than as an 'organic' elite of advisers to the state, or as detached professionals." (*ibid*, p.201)

At the same time, Chinese intellectuals would still face hurdles ahead, some of which are internal to themselves. The high-mindedness of the *shih* tradition among the intellectuals has declined with more economic opportunities and the corroding influence of the "glory of getting rich". Their high social standing has therefore suffered a dent. The mass media carry reports of universities running dubious part-time degree courses. University lecturers and professors even sell diplomas to increase their income (He 2004). "Some intellectuals are reluctant to write conference papers or book chapters without honorariums. As a result, academic result, the quality of intellectual works and intellectual autonomy are sacrificed and subject to the money considerations. (*ibid*: 270)"

In its engagement with the world, China's frame of reference is focused on the West. The term foreign is almost synonymous with the West. This is unfortunate, for by doing so, it has not paid due attention to the cultural and intellectual heritage of the non-Western world. There is certainly much for the Chinese to absorb from the rich Indian civilization, Islamic and pre-Islamic civilization and cultural achievements in other parts of the world. In terms of historical experience, there is much that other countries undergoing modernization can offer in terms of their accumulated experiences, both negative and positive.

Finally, the intellectuals have to contend with the attitude of the State. The more tolerant and open-minded the state power is, the more space there is for exchange of ideas and a vibrant cultural life. At the height of the Tang dynasty, the capital city Changan was the most cosmopolitan in the world, with communities of foreign traders, students, artists and visitors from all over Asia. A few of the students excelled in the Confucian examinations and ended up as court officials. The presence of foreigners certainly enriched the cultural and intellectual life of China then. A better example in Chinese history is provided by the Spring-Autumn Warring Period when the absence of tight political control ushered in the greatest period in terms of cultural and intellectual effervescence. This was a period closely associated with free debates and "opening-up", which allowed great ideas to emerge through competition and contest. The pattern also applies to the PRC history. With a strong grip on the "ideological work", the CCP's call for 'hundred schools of thought to contend' (百家争鸣) did not make much headway. The 1980s came as an exception only because the CCP loosened the grip as it tried to rebuild its political legitimacy in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Somehow the present Chinese party-state does not appear

to have been inspired by the golden period of its own history. It is still imposing regulatory control over NGOs (Gu 2004). The party-state continues to exercise tight control of the past in the public sphere, though things have improved over the last three decades.

The current economic and social transformation in China has provided an opportunity for the emergence of a vibrant modern civilization. The Japanese society has indeed undergone profound social, economic and political transformations since the end of Second World War but it has not experienced a correspondingly profound cultural and intellectual change. Whether a cultural and intellectual revival will happen in China depends a lot on the Chinese intellectuals and other social strata. Most important of all, they need an atmosphere wherein they can air, discuss and debate their ideas freely, without fear of harassment and suppression. If and when the cultural and intellectual rejuvenation does happen in its full glory, it will lift Chinese civilization to a higher level. In so doing, it would contribute to the cultural resources of the world. It would also impart a new meaning to the term *rise of China*.

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