RUSSELL ON CHINESE CIVILIZATION[1]

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Bertrand Russell arrived in China with Dora Black in October 1920. World War I had deepened his disillusionment with both the capitalist system and Western civilization in general. Seeking a socialist solution, he had visited Soviet Union just a few months before. But he had found that the Communist state there presented an unappealing alternative to the capitalist West in that it treated its citizens as slaves. The sad mood in which he "set out for China to seek a new hope"[2] was described in his *The Problem of China*, published in 1922 after his nine-month visit: "It was on the Volga, in the summer of 1920, that I first realized how profound is the disease in our Western mentality, which the Bolsheviks are attempting to force upon an essentially Asiatic population, just as Japan and the West are doing in China" (p. 18).

The 1920s were a time when China, both as a nation and as a civilization, was in deep trouble. Her young people were eagerly looking outside their country to find a way of saving her. Since the 1840 Opium War, the Western Powers had poured into China, which had been a closed society, at least in Karl Popper's sense,[3] for more than 3,000 years. With the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, China had been thrown into a state of anarchy by feuding warlords. The Great World Powers had both politically and economically dominated China

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[2] (London: Allen & Unwin, 1922), p. 20.

[3] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton U. P.), p. 173.

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through successive wars with her;[4] through demanding indemnities, the cession of territory, fixed tariffs, etc.; and through controlling the corrupt and inept central government and warlords. Meanwhile, China was plagued by famine, piracy, brigandage, incipient rebellion,[5] and the failures of various attempts at reform and revolution.[6] China was well on the way toward disintegration, divided into "spheres of influence" by Britain, Germany, France, Russia and, especially, Japan.

In the 1920s, China was also in the period of the May Fourth Movement—named after a popular student protest on 4 May 1919—against foreign imperialism and an impotent Chinese government. It was agitated by the Treaty of Versailles which transferred, at the request of Japan, the properties and privileges of the German sphere of influence in the Shandong Peninsula to Japan. This movement advocated learning science and adopting democratic principles in order to save China. It is important in Chinese history as a symbol of Chinese awareness of the need for the most profound changes in her tradition.

All of these factors constituted the background to Russell's visit to China and thus affected the formation of his distinct view of the problem of China.[7] The invitation to him was a part of Chinese efforts in seeking methods from the West to save their country. Russell had already been known in China as a great philosopher, not only for his philosophy of logic and science, but also for his views on social problems. Some Chinese had access to his books: *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1916), *Political Ideals* (1917), *Roads To Freedom* (1918), and magazine publication of parts of *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920).[8] Considering this background, it is quite understandable why

[4] For example, Britain and France 1856–60, Japan 1894–95, 1914–15.

[5] For example, Taiping 1850-65, and the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

[6] The revolution of 1911 actually just changed the name of the government, rather than the reality of society.

[7] A detailed description of this background as "psychological roots" can be seen in S. P. Odgen, "The Sage in the Inkpot", *Modern Asian Studies*, 16 (1982): 529–600.

[8] For example, Zhang Shenfu, a student originally majoring in mathematics in Beijing University, had read almost all of Russell's writings then, including *The Problems of Philosophy*, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, etc. Before 1920, in about six years, he had translated, annotated and written more than ten articles on Russell. After talking to Zhang in Shanghai, Russell described him as one "who knows my writings, all of them...." See Vera Schwarcz, "Between Russell and Confucius: China's Russell Expert, Zhang Shenfu (Chang Sung-nian)", *Russell*, n.s. 11 (1991):

he strongly criticized the Powers' policy in China as imperialistic;[9] why he repeatedly told the Chinese not to accept anything from Western civilization except science; and why the Chinese, including those who were Communist, respected and trusted him, while many Westerners accused him of passionate prejudice or unfairness in his criticism (Clark, p. 408).

However, also because of that background, his view of Chinese tradition and culture had some understandably inaccurate and inconsistent aspects. In this paper, I shall argue that his image of China was, in some basic ways, superficial and that his judgment with respect to Chinese tradition was not completely satisfactory. I will defend my position by a brief look at some main features of the tradition. Finally, I shall argue that, in spite of those weaknesses, many of Russell's fundamental ideas with respect to the development of civilizations are still of great value to China today. In particular, I think that Russell's insight into the criteria of evaluating traditions for different purposes suggests a primary principle for the Chinese who are still faced with the problem of the development of their civilization.

I. COMPARISON AND EVALUATION OF CULTURES

At the beginning of *The Problem of China*, Russell says that the questions raised by the present condition of China fall naturally into three interrelated groups: economic, political and cultural. He thought, I think quite correctly, that the cultural questions are the most important, both for China and for mankind (pp. 9–10). He thought of China as an "artist nation", having both the virtues and vices to be expected of the artist: virtues chiefly useful to others, and vices chiefly harmful to oneself. One of the main questions that Russell wanted to discuss was: Shall and can Chinese virtues be preserved? or must

117–46; also her "A Secondary Bibliography of Zhang Shenfu on Russell", *ibid.*, 200–3.

[9] See his "China and the Powers", *Foreign Affairs*, London, 3 Nov. 1921, pp. 19–70; "A Plea for China, Her Independence Chief Question", *The Sun*, Baltimore, 24 Nov. 1921, p. 8; "Missionary Influence in China", *Manchester Guardian*, 13 April 1923, p. 7; "British Imperialism in China", *The New Leader*, 8, no. 12 (19 Sept. 1924): 3; and "British Policy in China", *The Nation and the Athenaeum*, 37 (18 July 1925): 480–2.

China, in order to survive, acquire, instead, the vices which make for success and cause misery to others? (p. 10).

To answer this question, a discussion of what these virtues are and why they are worth preserving is needed first. This is related to the criteria for evaluating cultures. Russell thought that China and the West both can point to certain respects in which one is better than the other. Thus Westerners must cease to regard themselves as missionaries of a superior civilization, or as people who have a right to exploit, oppress, and swindle the Chinese whom they regarded as an "inferior race". Moreover, Russell held that, when comparing different cultures, we need to answer the following questions: What are the things that I ultimately value? What would make me judge one sort of society more desirable than another? What ends should I most wish to see realized in the world? The answers which appealed to Russell involve two kinds of things:

(1) Main things which are important on their own account and not merely as means to other things; such as, knowledge, art, instinctive happiness and relations of friendship and affection. By "knowledge" Russell meant mainly scientific knowledge. Yet here he did not mention the weakness of China in this respect. Nor did he clearly describe what merit China has artistically. He asserted that "instinctive happiness" or joy of life "is a strong reason for thinking well of Chinese civilization" due to its commonness in China but its non-existence in the West through industrialism and the high pressure under which most people live (p. 12).
(2) The effects which a community has on other communities. In this respect, said Russell, surely China is better than the West. Western prosperity, Russell said, was obtained by widespread oppression and exploitation of weaker nations, while the Chinese were not strong enough to do so. They got what they had by means of their own merits and exertion alone (p. 12).

Some questions arise with respect to Russell's criterion for judging which culture is "best". For one thing, as Russell accepted, different people may have different criteria, which creates a need to argue which criterion is preferable. Russell offered no justification why the criterion

which appeals to him should be one that "the reader may feel likewise". Instead, he simply avoided the problem by saying that "I do not know of any argument by which I could persuade a man who gave an answer different from my own" (p. 11). This leaves his answers totally exposed to attacks from cultural relativists.

The same attitude can be found in Russell's *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization* (1923), in which he took different views on a good society from those with different tastes. He said: "I cannot hope, therefore, to appeal to those whose tastes are very different from my own, but I hope and believe that there is nothing very singular in my own tastes."[10] But what if his tastes happened to be rare? Could he still argue for them? According to his non-cognitivist view of ethics, as opposed to science which can appeal to fact and scientific method, no objective criteria and arguments exist in cases involving ultimate human wishes, interests and tastes. The arguments in ethics can be persuasive, but not conclusive. And only finding that there is inconsistency inside an ethics or between the ethics and the remainder of the author's views can lead us to say that the ethics is wrong.[11] This suggests that he might have realized that his view of Chinese culture had this problem. As we see now, I think Russell's distinction between ethics and science is too sharp. It could be argued that criteria in science are also relativistic and non-conclusive. In my opinion, however, it does not prohibit us from arguing that both in science and in ethics we can still have a reasonable evaluation of different criteria. Yet this is not the topic of this paper.

More significantly, there was an inconsistency between Russell's criterion of assessing Chinese culture and his other views. Compared with what Russell had said in other places, the criterion was obviously incomplete. As a libertarian, he had supported the following items as very important needs in the lives of human beings and central to the character of any perfect society: some property (the elimination of poverty), individual freedom, social justice, democracy; the education of the masses; individual initiative or creative activity, progress; and so

[10] In collaboration with Dora Russell (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923), pp. 162–3.

[11] See, e.g., Russell's "On Scientific Method in Philosophy", *Papers* 6, and K. Blackwell, *The Spinozistic Ethics of Bertrand Russell* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), Chap. 1.

on.[12] Yet in dealing with China, Russell's criterion of comparison of cultures did not cover these needs at all. Nor did he describe the relationships between these items and his criterion, even though this is very necessary. For in respect to democracy, equality, individual freedom, and the education of the masses, obviously China was very weak. So, those who have a cultural assessment criterion covering all these would reasonably have a different view on China's tradition from Russell's.

This incompleteness shows up in Russell's explanation of "instinctive happiness" as well. According to him, it is the enjoyment of leisure without high pressure of hard work. Sometimes he even thought that because of this kind of "joy of life", a very poor Chinaman could be much happier than an average Englishman (*Problem of China*, p. 197). He claimed that what constitutes civilization is not something like trams but a palace built by an ancient emperor or a retreat in a lake for scholars weary of the world (pp. 201–2). We cannot be content with this claim. In rebuttal, we can simply point to what Russell said elsewhere about the necessity of the elimination of poverty for happiness of life in order to argue that leisure with an empty stomach hardly gives joy of life (e.g., "Without property, as things are, a man has no freedom and no security for the necessities of a tolerable life ..."[13]). These considerations lead us to conclude that there was indeed some inconsistency between Russell's assessment of Chinese culture and his general position on social problems.

2. THE CHARACTER OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION

What is the most distinctive and important character of Chinese civilization? For Russell, it includes three aspects:

> (1) The use of ideograms instead of an alphabet in writing; (2) The substitution of the Confucian ethic for religion among the educated class; and (3) Government by literati chosen by examination instead of by a hereditary aristocracy. (*Problem of China*, p. 34)

[12] *Political Ideals* (New York: Century, 1917), pp. 16–23.

[13] *Political Ideals*, p. 17; "British Imperialism in China" (see n. 9), p. 3.

These three characteristics distinguish China historically from all other countries. Significantly, Russell did not take the family system in China as one of its fundamental characteristics because it "represents a stage which most other civilizations have passed through, and which is therefore not distinctively Chinese" (*ibid.*). It is this omission that makes Russell's view of the Chinese tradition incomplete. The family system was a central and distinctive feature of this tradition, notwithstanding the fact that most other civilizations have once had it. Even if we do not call it "distinctive" in terms of Russell's usage of the term, it is by no means a less important feature than any of the other three. On the contrary, without seriously considering it, we cannot really understand the tradition, including Confucian ethics, since it was based on this system. The reason Russell ignored the family system as paramount in uncovering the "mystery" of China might have been due to the fact that when in China, he had no access to the most basic part of Chinese society, clan society in the countryside. It was a pity that Russell used "distinctive" in the way he did as the key to understanding the essence of Chinese culture. Distinctive elements in a culture, those that most other cultures never had, are not necessarily the most important elements for understanding the culture. Actually the use of ideograms was also what many other civilizations once had; and the Japanese are using a similar system today. Like chopsticks, it is not that in which the problems of China lie.

Similarly, I do not think that (3), government by literati, is as important as (2), the role of Confucianism, in characterizing Chinese civilization. Nor is it "much better than most other systems that have prevailed, such as nepotism, bribery, threat of insurrection, etc." (p. 45). Government by literati was just a tool to strengthen the rule of official Confucianism among the literate population in China. It forced every intellectual to follow only the classics of Confucianism.[14] Further, contrary to Russell's impression, in the history of China, the

[14] Again, owing to Confucianism, for all literati the purpose of learning is purely practical, i.e., it is only for training officials to practise Confucian ideals, not for "knowledge" in itself or any other purpose. Thus, since the examinations, as the precondition for becoming an official, just covered the classics of Confucianism, anyone who wanted to be a "literate" must be one who knew all and only all of the classics very well.

power of emperors, not that of the literati, was absolute. Government by literati has never produced any really good effects on the progress of China. Russell accepted Li Ung Bing's criticism that no system was more effective than this in retarding the intellectual and literary development of a nation (p. 46). Yet he still took it as a merit of Chinese culture. He did not mention his view expressed elsewhere that the most important thing in education is what we teach people, not merely teaching.

Now let us focus on Russell's view of Confucianism. It is said that Russell found Confucianism boring (Clark, p. 410). Probably influenced by his audiences and friends in China, most of whom were anti-Confucianist, including such leading figures as Liang Qichao,[15] Russell recognized that the Confucian outlook was essentially conservative, aimed at preserving the virtues of former ages. He had correctly figured out the weakest point in Confucianism: filial piety. "Filial Piety included obedience to the Emperor", said he, "except when he was so wicked as to forfeit his divine right—for the Chinese, unlike the Japanese, have always held that resistance to the Emperor was justified if he governed very badly" (*Problem of China*, p. 39). Russell thought, I think incorrectly, that this doctrine was the cause of frequent rebellions in Chinese history (pp. 39–40). Anyway he noted that family feeling had militated against public spirit and that the authority of the old had increased the tyranny of ancient custom. He was also right to point out that when China is confronted with problems requiring a radically new outlook, these features of the Confucian system have been a barrier to necessary reconstruction (p. 40). This is still true today.

Russell's criticism of Confucianism, however, was limited. He held that filial piety was "the only point where the system departs seriously from common sense" (p. 41). He repeatedly admired "Confucian virtues". He even praised filial piety itself as "less harmful than its Western counterpart, patriotism", because the latter "directs one's loyalty to a fighting unit" and therefore "leads much more easily to militarism and imperialism" (*ibid.*).

[15] Liang Qichao, one of the most influential leaders of the reform movement of 1898, advocated gradual evolution toward a constitutional monarchy, with a parliament and responsible government.

Russell seriously underestimated the importance of two things. The first is the influence of the concept of filial piety in the Confucian system. The second is the influence which this system has wielded in Chinese history. Let me deal with the second one first. Russell overemphasized the difference between Confucianism and other religions. He thought that Confucianism was better, particularly when compared with the traditional religions of some other ages and races: Confucius "has great merits, even if they are mainly negative" (p. 190). Because Confucianism "is [a system] of pure ethics", what most distinguishes Confucius from other founders of religions is that he inculcated a strict code of ethics which "teach people how to behave correctly on various occasions," without, however, assuming religious dogma (p. 190). "The virtues [Confucius] sought to inculcate were not those of personal holiness, or designed to secure salvation in a future life, but rather those which lead to a peaceful and prosperous community here on earth" (p. 38). In consequence, Russell seemed to think that the control of Confucianism over the minds of people was not as tight as that of other religions. I shall argue later that Confucianism was not only an ethic, but also a social theory of governing people, a theory with a strong religion-like effect on the masses for centuries.

Government by literati was another reason why Russell praised the Confucian system. He held that the Confucianist literati administration had been lacking in those qualities of energy and destructiveness which Western nations demand of their rulers. Again, it was not true. "Confucian ethics" had never had any real effect on rulers, but it had controlled the masses so successfully that they revolted only when their basic living conditions became extremely unbearable; they almost never revolted out of any spiritual need. The purpose of Confucianist moral principles and requirements was to solve the basic conflict between social order and individual freedom in terms of a conceptualization of family relationships. This was characterized by a patriarchal "human-heartedness" that overruled the rights of any aspects other than economic ones in people's needs. So Chinese rulers can by no means be considered benevolent. Even if they did perform according to those moral principles, they were still tyrants. As a matter of fact, I wonder how many rulers in the history of China can justifiably be regarded as sage-kings, even by the narrow criteria in the Confucian paradigm of the ideal society. It was the masses, not the rulers, that made Chinese tradition appear moderate. Due to the Confucian paradigm, Chinese people did not even know that they had any "rights" other than that to a very simple living. Because of famine and tyranny, Chinese living conditions frequently became unbearable. This was the reason why there were so many peasant revolts in the history of China.

The second underestimation is partly a result of the first. Russell actually took filial piety as a limited or separable "local" error, one which had no effect on other parts of the Confucian system. This can be shown by his praise of almost all other "Confucian virtues". He held that Confucianism was mainly a code of civilized behaviour, teaching self-restraint, moderation, and, above all, courtesy. Other Confucian virtues include: self-control—an extension of the kind which children learn when they are taught to "behave" (clearly this is very like filial piety); not breaking into violent passions, not being arrogant, being moderate in all things, never being carried away by excessive love or hate. These were exactly what the West had lost. According to Russell: "in China, though wars and revolutions have occurred constantly, Confucian calm has survived them all, making them less terrible for the participants ..." (p. 42). Russell also analyzed the character of the Chinese in these terms: self-respect, personal dignity, patience, tolerance, friendly affection, urbanity, humour, love of compromise, a habit of bowing to public opinion, candour, understatement, never interfering with nature, intellectual integrity, scepticism about religious faith, and so on. Russell did not spell out in what way these virtues were related to the Confucian system and, especially, to filial piety. He simply took these virtues—except those which come from Daoism (humour, understatement, and never interfering with nature)—as good results of the Confucian system. He said that Confucius "certainly has succeeded in producing a whole nation possessed of exquisite manners and perfect courtesy" (p. 190).

Among those virtues found to belong to the Chinese, Russell placed first what he called the "pacific temper, which seeks to settle disputes on grounds of justice rather than by force" (p. 213). As Ogden points out, Russell "never clarified the meaning of 'justice' in the Chinese context" (p. 577). I think Russell would have been more cautious in using the term if he had considered the strong effect of filial piety—as

opposed to public spirit, as he himself had realized—on those moral qualities, including "justice". In other words, Russell's praise of the virtues of the Chinese was superficial simply because he ignored their systemic Confucian character rooted in filial piety. As a result, as we will see later, this made Russell ignore the incompatibility between the spirit of natural science and the essence of the Confucian virtues when he urged Chinese to study science and technology from the West, while at the same time keeping these virtues.[16]

Furthermore, Russell left us with the impression that he even appreciated such Chinese qualities as passivity and conservativeness, habits based on the view that what our parents and we ourselves already enjoy is excellent, so why seek progress? He supported this view by saying that much of what we call progress is only restless change, and brings us no nearer to any desirable good (*Problem of China*, p. 195). We might accept this remark as a criticism of Western industrialism, which made World War I so destructive. Failure to progress is not, however, a proof that seeking progress is not worthwhile. While it may be the case that we have little evidence that we have made great progress, we do have proof that not to seek progress is harmful to mankind. Once again, this had been Russell's own position, but here he forgot it. He had repeatedly emphasized respect for individual creative impulse as one of the most important things for a man's ideal life. He said: "political and social institutions are to be judged by the good or harm that they do to the individual. Do they encourage creativeness rather than possessiveness? ..." (*Political Ideals*, p. 14). He also declared: "There can be no final goal for human institutions; the best are those that most encourage progress toward others still better. Without effort and change, human life cannot remain good", and again, "... a happy life must be one in which there is

[16] As I will argue, both for acquiring science and technology and, more generally, for attaining a just society, we need to remove the Confucian root from those virtues. We need to base the virtues on some other fundamental principles of society, such as those of reason, human rights and individual freedom. The virtues based on Confucianist ideals had been proven mainly good for rulers, rather than for the masses. As is shown by many people's behaviour in the Western democracies, those virtues are quite compatible with those other social principles and thus mean no harm to the masses. Contrary to many neo-Confucianists, to be virtuous will not necessarily lead to embracing Confucianism.

activity. If it is also to be a useful life, the activity ought to be as far as possible creative, not merely predatory or defensive" (pp. 23–4).

All of these were forgotten in *The Problem of China*. Yet as soon as *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization* (1923), he resumed this appraisal of those "creative impulses" (p. 154ff.). And he wrote: " a good society must be progressive: it must lead on to something still better"; "new growth will come from the creative people, the men of science" (p. 158). He made it clear that what he meant by progress is mainly the progress of ideas (pp. 158–9). Though we understand that when he asked Westerners to be less "progressive" (p. 187), he meant that the evil and destructive aspects of industrialism should be avoided, his argument for Chinese passivity was still invalid. This is because Chinese conservatism is in effect anti-progressive in both senses: it is against any "progress", no matter whether constructive or destructive, and it eventually ruled out the possibility of creating anything new that would be needed for making both material and intellectual progress. Supporting universal passivity and conservatism by pointing out the destructiveness of industrialism is not sufficient.

Many thoughtful Chinese, probably only with the exception of Lu Xun,[17] shared Russell's way of estimating Confucianism. They were inclined to think that even though Confucianism was bad as a theory of government, it is still possible to extract something, such as moral concepts, from the Confucian system as the "essence" of Chinese culture. They did not realize that these moral concepts themselves should be further divided into two parts: the "essence" and the "dross". That is, they did not recognize that almost every feature of the system has a connection to filial piety which the concepts presupposed.[18]

[17] Lu Xun, probably the greatest literary giant in modern China, is famous for profoundly revealing the conservative and passive personality of the Chinese as it was shaped by Confucianism. He believed that without this kind of personality, regarded by many conservative Chinese as virtuous, it would have been much easier for China to get rid of her troubles. Odgen has mentioned Lu Xun's criticism of Russell's failure (p. 577).

[18] For example, as Schwarcz has described, Zhang Shenfu tried to make a distinction between Confucianism as a social philosophy that supports the governing class and Confucius as a thinker of merit about moral ideals such as humanness, tolerance and impartiality. The former is bad but the latter good. Zhang declared, for example,

It can hardly be expected that Russell, who had a strong sense of the evil of the West and had very little access to the evil aspects of the historical China as an age-old clan society, could give a full criticism of something like "Confucian calm".[19] My feeling is that a large part of *The Problem of China* was written for Western readers—a way to express his deep disappointment with them. Probably because of this, he praised even the weakest point in Confucianism as opposed to its Western counterpart. When he turned to writing for the Chinese, however, his voice had a different tone. Good examples are the last three chapters of *The Problem of China*, which were specially about what reforms, and in what order, China should take; and his "Bertrand Russell Gives Impressions of China",[20] "China's Road to Freedom",[21] and "Reconstruction in China".[22] Owing to his keen sense of Western evils, he strongly persuaded the Chinese not to have too great a faith in Western remedies. Yet he faced a dilemma. Even though he liked China very much, he knew he could not live the Chinese way of life very long, and he knew that Chinese civilization was dying (see Clark, pp. 389–95). Thus he strongly suggested that, in order to survive and to make progress, the Chinese even accept some Western vices, such as patriotism, and give up some merits in Chinese tradition, no matter how good they were.[23] As we can see, it is not

what Confucius meant by human-heartedness is quite the opposite of what is often understood as that passive forbearance—it meant nothing more than "human". Unfortunately, Zhang's effort was, as were many others', in vain. As I argue, considering the original meanings of Confucian ideas, clan political relations were just components of "human-heartedness" or, in Zhang's term, "humanness". Zhang's explanation of the idea amounts to no more than imposing his own ideal on Confucius (see Schwarcz, and, as another example, G. Y. Chen, "Is Confucianism the Mainstream of the History of Chinese Philosophy?", *Mingbao Monthly*, March 1990).

[19] As Blackwell points out, "a certain kind of calm" or "peace of mind" in connection with Spinoza's "intellectual love of God" had been considered by Russell to be a goal in the good life. The notion of "calm" for Russell has both the sense of pacifism and the sense of the love and joy of intellectual knowledge of the natural world (see *Spinozistic Ethics*, pp. 87–8 and pp. 112–19). Russell's calling Confucian virtues "Confucian calm" might be owing to his thinking that the virtues are pacific.

[20] *The Peking Leader*, 15 Dec. 1920.

[21] *The Peking Leader*, 7 July 1920, p. 3.

[22] *The Chinese Student Monthly*, Baltimore, 17 (April 1922): 283–5.

[23] This is consistent with his basic idea of the relation between tradition and progress (which I will discuss in the final section). His praise of Confucian calm was

easy to understand Russell's position in the dilemma. Probably he himself felt some difficulties in locating his position. He once said: "I would do anything in the world to help the Chinese, but it is difficult. ... [T]hey are like a nation of artists, with all their good and bad points. Imagine [Mark] Gertler & [Augustus] John & Lytton [Strachey] sent to govern the Empire & you will have some idea how China has been governed for 2,000 years" (Clark, p. 395).

But he did spend a lot of time considering China's social reconstruction. This desire was motivated both by his conscience at the distress of the Chinese and by the expectations of his audience, reformist and revolutionary Chinese. In the following, let us briefly discuss his principles concerning the path Chinese civilization should take.

3. CHINA'S SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

Obviously, Russell was fully aware how serious the Chinese situation was in 1921. He believed it was chiefly because of the weakness of the Chinese military, especially the navy which allowed the European Powers to inflict upon China a multitude of humiliations and disabilities (*Problem of China*, p. 63). The weakness of the military was, in turn, the result of two factors. The first, with respect to cultural considerations, was the pacific temper of Chinese: all of those virtues had no use in war. The second was the lack of science and technology, which, Russell held, was the only way in which Western civilization was superior to that of the Chinese.

Thus, the ways of reconstructing China were principally two: one was to discard the native Chinese moral virtues, when learning science and technology from the West; the other was to retain these virtues while learning such science and technology.

Since, for Russell, those virtues were what made Chinese culture superior to Western culture, he wanted the Chinese to choose the latter way. Indeed, he clearly realized that, for this purpose, it would be necessary to eliminate some of the old, dead, indigenous culture of

aimed mainly at his Western readers. But anyway, as we will see, he did not realize some deep conflicts between that Confucian calm and the spirit of science when he offered a programme for the Chinese to save their nation.

China. But he thought that this process should be limited. Russell warned the Chinese: when eagerly seeking some new elements from Western civilization to vitalize native traditions, do not go so far as to construct a civilization just like the Western one by becoming a slavish admirer of the Western way of life, and especially "the Western philosophy of life" in its brutality, its restlessness, its readiness to oppress the weak, its preoccupation with purely material aims (p. 208). These evils also included militarism, imperialism, the belief in technical efficiency as everything, the mechanical view of the human being, i.e. the habit of regarding mankind as raw material to be moulded by scientific manipulation into whatever form may happen to suit the current fancy (p. 82).

Hence, as is repeated by Russell many times, the only thing that the Chinese could and should learn and that the West could teach the Chinese is science: "the real problem for Chinese intellectuals is to acquire Western knowledge without acquiring the mechanistic outlook" (p. 81). As he wrote:

> This is the aim which Young China should set before itself: the preservation of the urbanity and courtesy, the candour and the pacific temper, which are characteristic of the Chinese nation, together with a knowledge of Western science and an application of it to the practical problems of China. Of such practical problems there are two kinds: one due to the internal condition of China, and the other to its international situation. In the former class come education, democracy, the diminution of poverty, hygiene and sanitation, and the prevention of famines.... Both classes of problems demand Western science. But they do not demand the adoption of the Western philosophy of life. (Pp. 250–1)

The program has some problems. Indeed, Russell suggested that the industrial development of China would require a great change in Chinese morals, such as the development of a public spirit in place of the family ethic (pp. 246–7). He held that "Confucius does not satisfy the spiritual needs of a modern man", and so China needs some new elements for a deep reform. We are told, however, that the "new elements" are nothing other than science, by which all China's problems could be solved. It seems to me that he was inclined to think that Western science and the spirit of scientific rationality could be unproblematically married to Confucian calm—to those moral qualities he admired. He asserted: "Although Chinese civilization has hitherto been deficient in science, it never contained anything hostile to science, and therefore the spread of scientific knowledge encounters no such obstacles as the Church put in its way in Europe" (p. 193).

All these lead to a problem which can be highlighted by the question: why did modern science develop in the West but not in China? If we insist on Russell's line of argument above, a separation between science and other aspects of Western civilization is possible. Thus, we could explain neither the origin of modern science from its cultural background, nor the interaction between science and the cultural factors which encouraged its development. Unfortunately, this *is* just the case with Russell. We can see this by looking at his idea of the origin of modern Western civilization. He points out that there were three sources of Western civilization: (1) Greek culture (represented by Plato); (2) Jewish religion and ethics (the Old Testament); and (3) modern industrialism as the outcome of modern science (Galileo). He asserted that the three sources "have remained singularly separable down to the present day" (p. 186). This assertion left him with the problem of how to explain the birth of modern science from the background which existed before Galileo.

In his writing about the problem of China, he did not say anything about that. It is quite obvious that modern science was produced and promoted by other cultural factors. It is widely accepted that, for example, Plato's philosophy of ideas provided a spirit of reason for the basis of modern science. Plato's idea of mathematical harmony even stimulated such discoveries as Kepler's of the laws of planetary motion, for instance. Science ought to be considered, in this sense, at least partly a child of ancient Western civilization. Russell, however, clearly did not think so. In *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945), Russell continued separating Plato and Aristotle from those people who contributed to the birth of science (he said that they both "did much to kill Greek science" [*HWP*, p. 132]). Russell interpreted Plato mainly as a metaphysician of ethics, having "the Good" as the dominating concept in his thought; as the originator of the first Utopia in history which, because of its rigidity, "will almost certainly produce no art or science" (p. 115); and a philosopher whose theory of ideas is largely harmful to science because of his "ethical and aesthetic bias" in believing in the good (p. 132). Russell did not seem to take Plato's concept

of reason as a paramount one in his philosophy (he just briefly mentioned the concept in the discussion of Plato in his *History*). On the contrary, he seemed to understand the nature of Plato's "good" and other ideas in light of Plato's "ethical bias".

Actually, although the Platonic Socrates "was determined to prove the universe agreeable to his ethical standards" (p. 143), the ethical standards were thought of by Plato as a result, not a cause, of reason. It is the reason of logic and mathematics, not the ethical standards, that dominates and characterizes the nature of universe and ideas. And, indeed, it is true to say that for Plato, knowledge comes from studying logic and mathematics, not from experience, and thus he discouraged empirical investigation. If, however, we remember that modern science from Galileo was a result of the combination of empirical observation, mathematical reasoning and theoretical construction; and that although craftsmen in ancient China had some remarkable empirical knowledge and technology, they never developed a science of theoretical form just because of the Confucianist idea of knowledge which has nothing to do with reason, it will become clear why Plato should be thought of as contributing to the origin of science in more than one way.

Russell's treatment of Plato's ideas and forms makes Kepler's discovery an awkward case for him. He found it "strange", "curious and worth considering" that Plato's stress on "the mathematics of the motion of ideal heavenly bodies ... proved to be a fruitful point of view in connection with empirical astronomy" (p. 131). Later he satisfied himself by taking this as an example showing that "any hypothesis, however absurd, *may* be useful in science", but that it may be proved more harmful later, as Plato's geometrical simplicity was proved illusory by Kepler's discovery that planets move in ellipses, not in circles (pp. 131–2). It is strange that Russell, an empiricist, but also a logician, failed to appreciate the significance of the spirit of reason and mathematical methods for science in dealing with Plato. For such an empiricist, very many successes of contemporary theoretical science would be "worth considering".

Although it is debatable what factors were responsible for the absence of modern science in China, one thing is certain: Confucian ethics was not conducive to natural science. The Confucian paradigm of an ideal society had no room for the existence and survival of any

concept of non-moral nature which is worth studying, and thus the spirit of reason and empiricism and scientific method, as shown in, e.g., Plato, Bacon, and Descartes' philosophies of science, never arose. Nor was there any possibility of speaking, in the Confucian paradigm, of the freedom of thought of individuals, of justice on the grounds of spiritual equality of individuals, and of the pursuit of truth outside the paradigm of clan ethics, all of which are necessary for science. It follows that unless China could institutionalize some new values, like freedom of thought and a sceptical attitude concerning any authority or "sage" in her culture, it would be very unlikely that any science imported from the West would thrive.[24] The acquisition of these new cultural values is incompatible with the preservation of such moral qualities as Confucian calm since they were contrary to those values. Thus in this sense, Russell's praise for these qualities and his call for the acquisition of science are incompatible.

As a matter of fact, Russell had personal feelings concerning the aspect of passivity behind the good character of the Chinese. He noticed that the Chinese cannot be considered a courageous people, "except in the matter of passive endurance"—they will endure torture and even death (*Problem of China*, pp. 209–12). However, even though he often connected his good impression of China with her tradition and the teachings of the ancient Chinese sages, he failed to do so this time. He did not inquire further into the relation between these

[24] Hu Shih once declared that there were also "scientific and critical spirits" in traditional Chinese philosophy by referring to Confucianists' methods and attitudes in textual criticism concerning the classics of Confucianism. And the birth of science in the West was explained by him as a result of a "lucky and accidental combination of many factors" ("The Scientific Spirit and Methods in Chinese Philosophy", *Philosophy and Culture—East and West* [Honolulu: U. of Hawaii P., 1962]). Actually it is not difficult to see that the methods used by the Confucianists were designed to make sure which classical texts were really written by their sages, such as Confucius and Mercius, and which were in fact not "real dogma" but written by others in the names of the sages. Once proven to be the real work of the sages, the doctrines were absolutely above question. And for any Confucianist, knowledge about anything should be obtained from the sages' books, not from observation. The scientific spirit in the West involves a fundamental scepticism about the truthfulness of any doctrine no matter who proposed or formulated it. As Russell said: "the men of science did not ask that propositions should be believed because some important authority had said they were true" (*Religion and Science* [London: Thornton Butterworth, 1935], p. 16).

weaknesses and Confucianist moral principles. Russell had touched the problem in another way. He had experienced the passivity of his Chinese students through his teaching in Beijing. He complained that they were eager, enthusiastic but ignorant and "lazy", expecting knowledge to be pumped into them without effort on their part (Clark, p. 389). But, again, Russell failed to connect this fact to his praise of those virtues and his judgment of Confucianism, a system of beliefs that led people to have no initiative to find any knowledge outside its paradigm or to challenge it.

My own assertion is that, first, very many Confucian principles, or virtues, entail negative character traits like passivity and conservatism, traits which are only good from a ruler's perspective. Anyone in a genuinely democratic society would not retain them. And second, it is these "virtues" that continuously promote a strong resistance to the development of the scientific spirit and democracy, as they in fact did in the history of China. Consequently, it is very doubtful that the problems of China would be solved by science imported in Russell's way. I shall justify my position in the following section.

4. THE CONFUCIAN PARADIGM OF SOCIETY

From the very beginning, Confucianism was not a "pure ethics" but a paradigm of ideal government, social life and a way of thought; a paradigm of the rationality of social behaviour and concepts. The paradigm consisted of a set of core concepts. The core concepts involved "human-heartedness" and "righteousness". The example of the paradigm was the ancient Chou Dynasty (11th century BC). The theoretical basis of the paradigm was Mercius' theory of human nature. For more than 2,000 years this paradigm was inherited as the official doctrine of almost all Chinese rulers and strengthened by methods like the competitive examination.

Historically, the most fundamental concept, human-heartedness, originally referred to filial piety, or clan fidelity. In the Chou dynasty, regarded by Confucianists as the most orderly, stable and thus ideal society, the emperor was the father or oldest brother as the head (patriarch) of the royal family and clan. The sons or younger brothers of the emperor were both the rulers of their fiefs and the heads of smaller royal clans in the fiefs. The subjects of the rulers were the

members of the same family or clan. The hierarchy of titles of the nobility and their fiefs were supposed to correspond to the blood relationship they had with the emperor.[25]

Thus the relationship between the emperor and rulers of fiefs, or between the rulers and their subjects, was primarily that between father and sons or older brothers and younger brothers. This relationship was taken as the ground for the stability of the kingdom so constructed—to have an ideal society is to imitate this kind of family-like political order. The intimate feeling among close members of a family—to attend one's parents and follow older brothers, etc.—was what the "human-heartedness" aimed to apply to all social relationships.[26]

How, then, did sons "attend parents" in that clan society?

Human-heartedness, as "love for men", means a graded love for graded men according to a blood relationship with the men of human-heartedness as the "lover". Mercius accused Motzu (*c.* 479–381 BC), whose doctrine asked for all-embracing love without any gradation, denying special status to the relationship with one's father, and declared that is like the "behaviour of wild beasts" (Mercius, 3b, 9). So in the end, it is completely rational that a sage extend love only to the "worthy", not to all people (7a, 46).

In the relationship between father (or patriarch) and sons (or masses), the absolute authority of father as patriarch (or emperor) is stipulated as unchallengeable in economic, political, religious and any other ways. The duty of a father is mainly nurturing his children and educating them to love their parents and rulers (3a, 4), while his right with regard to his children is universal: to ask or force them to obey his will, whatever it is. Asked what filial piety is, Confucius answered: "never disobey" (Confucius, 2.5). The order of the family or state is maintained by the children's universal filial piety and fraternal duty, rather than by the patriarch's love, at the cost of the children's right to prefer their own life, pursuing truth and acting freely. Indeed, a son's

[25] See F. G. Xu, *Zhou Qin Han Zhengzhi Shehui Jiegou Yanjiu* [*A Study of the Political and Social Structure of Zhou, Qin and Han Dynasties*] (Taipei: Zuesheng Shuju, 1972).

[26] See, for example, Confucius, *Analects*, trans. and ed. Yang Bojun (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980), 12, 1; Mercius, *Mercius* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1962), 6b, 3; 4a, 27.

very identity is defined by such relationships with father or patriarch. The children shall always "behave like children", as Russell had pointed out. This was exactly the basic principle and character of the family system, i.e. sons (or people) shall obey their father (or patriarchs) in both spiritual and practical aspects. Their obedience should be returned by the father's (or patriarch's) love, in the form of "materially" nurturing them—which has nothing to do with their spiritual freedom at all.

This "human-heartedness" was regarded as universal human nature by Mercius. He held that human beings are inherently good: everyone has feelings of human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom (Mercius, 2a, 6). Of these four feelings the first two are dominant. The nature of "wisdom", for instance, was strictly stipulated by them. The world was conceived by the Confucianists as a moral institution, the essence of which was regarded as the same as that of the moral and social order. The nature of wisdom as an innate virtue for such a moral world was surely moral, prior and pragmatic. Mercius suggested that knowledge is no more than a natural emotional tendency to attend parents and follow older brothers, and an awareness of one's location in that social hierarchy (7a, 15).

Consequently, the way of attaining such knowledge was just self-cultivation of moral virtue in the soul. To learn was to acquire and practise human-heartedness through the process of self-awareness of the morality in men's souls. In other words, if one had fully kept or restored moral virtue, one had not only fully understood oneself but also, as a result, obtained all possible knowledge about the essence of everything in the moral universe (see Mercius, 7a, 1). This was the Confucianist dogma of the so-called "identity of heaven and men". In summary, knowledge was only moral knowledge, and the only way of having it was moral introspection. So, for the Confucianist, any concepts of nature, reason, knowledge and truth which were independent of moral concepts are inconceivable. That is why epistemological questions concerning the relationship between men and nature were ruled out by the paradigm.[27]

[27] Qian Mu takes the dogma "identity of heaven and men" as the very advantage of Confucianism. He claims that the point of Confucianism is that, unlike Western philosophy, it considers both wisdom and, more importantly, human-heartedness. Yet he takes it for granted that the concept of wisdom in Confucianism is the same as that in Western philosophy. Now we can see that this is neither true, nor consistent with the dogma. See Qian, *Zhongguo Sixiangshi* [*A History of Chinese Thought*] (Hong Kong: Xinya Shuyuan, 1975), pp. 2–6.

Compared with this concept of knowledge, it is easy to see why Plato's theory of knowledge allowed for the formation of the modern concept of scientific knowledge, while the Confucianist one did not. For Plato, knowledge was that of abstract and unchangeable forms as the true reality behind concrete and changeable phenomena. Acquiring knowledge required reason in man's soul to reach the reality of truth and goodness. The form of goodness itself, regarded by Plato as the cause of the whole universe, does not have the practical moral sense that Mercius' virtues have; it is an abstract or somehow mathematical existence of the nature of reason. To reach the form of goodness is to be in harmony with this kind of principle of reasonableness ruling the whole universe. If one's reason is in control of one's soul, one "has a divine ruler within himself" and so is "ruled by divine intelligence" (Plato, *Republic*, 590d[28]). That is, for Plato, unlike Mercius, it was reason, not morality, that characterized heaven, nature and wisdom. Reason was logically prior to, and independent of, virtue. In other words, for Plato, mathematical or logical reasoning provided the paradigm of rationality, which would guide our learning basically because it represents the essence of the universe. Seeking knowledge would lead to having moral virtues, but usually not *vice versa*.[29] Plato held that virtue can be taught simply because it is knowledge and knowledge already exists in our souls. Therefore, the process of learning was primarily that of a struggle to "recollect" by studying mathematical science and using dialectic (see also Plato, *Meno* and *Protagoras*).

Due to the nature and the dominance of human-heartedness, the whole Confucian paradigm is in sharp contrast to Plato's model of society. They seem two incompatible worlds. Each concept in one world could not have an exact counterpart in the other. This also

[28] Trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974).

[29] As we know, Plato held that the development of reason in one's soul happens on the basis of some moral qualities one has: e.g., desire for knowledge, industriousness and so on. Yet I think, except for this aspect, it is correct to say that Plato's concept of virtues in the sense corresponding to that of Mercius is the result of his concept of reason.

means, in practice, that the same person with a certain personality would have different fates in the two ideal societies: he could live very well in one world but might have to die in the other. For example, a person living in Plato's society can appeal to an affection-free criterion of justice. Plato claimed if reason takes power inside one's soul, the three parts in one's nature would be in harmony and one would be a just man (*Republic*, 441e–444e). Justice is, therefore, the result of "performing" reason, independent of emotion. This means that one can defend one's rights against coercion even from one's parents.

Conversely, the person living in Mercius' society cannot appeal to a principle of justice independent of clan or family feeling. Like "knowledge", "justice" amounts to practising human-heartedness. The Confucian concept "righteousness"—which is closest to Plato's justice —mainly means respect for elders. Like Confucius, who declared that a son should cover up his father's criminal acts (Confucius, 13.18),[30] Mercius thought it right that rulers should make their relatives rich and noble even though they were criminals (Mercius, 5a, 3); and that a sage-ruler should give up his power to run away with his murderer-father to escape arrest (7a, 35). Justice was also under the claw of human-heartedness. To the masses, on the other side of that "clan love", justice meant absolute obedience, or cruel punishment.[31] Although Russell quoted that story as evidence of the way in which the Confucian emphasis on filial piety prevented the growth of public spirit, he praised the fact that the Chinese resolve their disputes on the grounds of "justice". He could not have realized that this clan-style obedience was based on the denial of many basic human rights and was the very thing behind those good characteristics of the Chinese, such as courtesy, calm, love of compromise, and the habit of bowing to public opinion.

The paradigm so produced is closed, conservative and rigid. It

[30] The story was quoted by Russell in detail in *The Problem of China*, p. 40.

[31] From Qin dynasty (221–207 BC) to Qing Dynasty (AD 1644–1911), the authority of patriarchs had been maintained as the primary principle of law. The law explicitly stipulated that in any case, it is a capital crime for a son to accuse his father or grandfather. Yet a father could kill the son who fails to respect him, without any punishment of law. A father's stealing his son's property would not be regarded as a crime because all of his son's property belongs to him.

existed together with Buddhism and Daoism because as a matter of fact they were concerned with different subjects and not in real conflict. Nothing outside the framework can be "rational". It would by no means be tolerant of such notions as freedom, democracy, natural science, individual rights, reason and truth. Furthermore, the moral principles it provided imply the rejection of science and democracy. It is hardly the case that we could simply import science and democracy into China, a clan and closed society under this paradigm, without meeting deep and firm resistance. Hence, Russell's suggestion to the Chinese for reconstructing China was theoretically inconsistent and, as Ogden said, practically difficult to implement (p. 563).

5. A METHODOLOGY FOR EVALUATING TRADITIONS

I do not think, however, that Odgen is completely correct in saying that "Russell will go down in Chinese history as a great logician, a man with many admirable social values, but a philosopher with too many flaws and inconsistencies in his philosophical viewpoint to influence social development" (p. 600). Indeed it is a fact that Chinese revolutionary ideas were not stimulated by Russell's ideas, even though many of his insights and predictions—say, about the threat from Japan and the Chinese capability for wild excitement of a collective kind—were proven true by later events. And as I argued before, his ideas about Chinese tradition did have some flaws. Yet I believe that his basic stand on, for example, the way in which the survival and development of a civilization is supposed to be ensured is essentially correct and is of great significance to the Chinese people now, because, sadly, the problem of China still remains.

Many Chinese reformists share Russell's hope that Chinese tradition would preserve its better values—to keep many of its virtues without undesirable Confucianist baggage and acquire the positive values of Western civilization so as to become a new and better culture.[32]

[32] The reformists in the 1980s include Bao Zunxin, a prominent historian, and Li Zehou, a leading philosopher. Li's stand sounds more moderate than Bao's. But both of them agree that those traditional virtues should be retained, in a new culture, not on the basis of the Confucian paradigm, but on the basis of some Western principles as part of the new framework for this culture.

Although the Chinese realize now that what they should learn from the West is not limited to science and technology, they still appreciate their Chinese way of life in many respects. They wish to be neither cultural nihilists nor cultural chauvinists. They do not want to live under the Confucian paradigm any more. Nor do they want an Americanization of China. Russell's basic idea can be their weapon in the struggle for a new purpose.[33]

There is one point in Russell's view of culture I would like to dwell on in particular. It is significant that even though he admired many things in Chinese culture very much, he took this admiration as irrelevant to the purpose of China's progress. This attitude was highlighted by "Bertrand Russell Gives Impressions of China", published in a Chinese newspaper.[34] It recorded Russell's ideas about the relationship between tradition and progress. In it he wrote: "The traveller arriving in China from Europe for the first time is struck to begin with by the great artistic beauty of all that is traditional, and the aesthetic ruin wrought by industrialism wherever it has penetrated." Naturally, the traveller strongly wishes "such peculiarities preserved, in order to increase the interest and diversity of the spectacle which the world offers to studious contemplation."

On the other hand, he pointed out at once that "the old beauty no longer has any vitality, and that it can only be preserved by treating the whole country as a museum." He declared: progress is only possible by abandoning the old even when it is really good. Industrialism, democracy, science and modern education do not have the statuesque beauty of traditional and unchanging civilization. Europe of the present day lacks the charm that it had four or five centuries ago, and yet hardly any European would wish to revert to the Middle Ages. He again held that any new gospel which is to be of value to China is impossible without a more democratic spirit.

[33] Ironically, many people in China like Russell's specific suggestion for reconstructing China more than his concept for the development of civilizations. Like Zhang Shenfu, who wanted to combine Confucius and Russell, or Confucian "humanism" and Russell's scientific rationality and analytical logic (see Schwarcz), they stick to the programme which advocates just adding science and technology to the Confucian paradigm which they want to keep as the framework of a new culture, as opposed to Bao and Li's stand. Given the clan character of Confucian "humanness" (human-heartedness), i.e., its notion of partial and graded love according to a blood relationship to a "lover"; its denial of spiritual needs as part of human nature; its requirement of absolute obedience of the "children"; and its rigidity, as a moral paradigm of both universe and society, I wonder what this new culture programme would be like.

[34] Cited at note 20.

The same stand was maintained in the last chapters of *The Problem of China*, in which he especially aimed to speak to Chinese. He held that in order to save China from her miserable state, the domination of the Great Powers, and Americanization, many things different from those virtues that he so admired were needed, such as patriotic spirit, a strong central government and military, and so on. He said that in order to preserve China as a nation, the Chinese have good reason to descend to the Western level, namely, to adopt some of the West's vices to some extent to earn the respect of the Powers (pp. 241–51). All of these, Russell thought, were supposed to be the standpoint of a patriotic progressive Chinese. Such a person wished the country to acquire what is best in the modern world, not merely to remain an interesting survivor of a bygone age, like Oxford or Yellowstone Park. "The European in China, quite apart from interested motives, is apt to be ultra-conservative, because he likes every thing distinctive and non-European. But this is the attitude of an outsider, of one who regards China as a country to be looked at rather than lived in, as a country with a past rather than a future" (p. 214). Russell emphasized: the Chinese should not regard their country as a museum, in order to please the European tourist.

This is exactly what I want to say. Many modern neoConfucianists, most of whom live outside mainland China, display something in their views similar to that of a typical tourist. They appreciate easily the "beauty" of the Confucian system, but without any experience of living in China. They cannot appreciate how China still suffers under the clan system praised by Confucianism. Of course, they do not want to live in this clan society or be members of the masses in this society. They rarely seriously consider the original social reference of Confucian ideas in interpreting them. Instead, they enjoy their fabricated imagination of the "moral excellence" of those ideas. In addition, some people who try to support Confucianism by comparing it with Western culture fail to catch the real distinctiveness and significance of both Confucianism and Western culture. When reading their arguments for Confucianism, one can hardly avoid the impression of emo-

tion, vagueness, exaggeration and arbitrariness. What they often use as a great support for their "modern Confucianism", which includes some new elements from the West, is the praise of foreigners. They are "outsiders". They seem never to have been faced with Russell's insight.[35]

Russell's insight into the relationship between tradition and progress suggests to me a methodology, a shift of positions, in assessing tradition and progress. He seems to suggest to us that when we assess the value, the merits and demerits, of a traditional culture, we need to divide its assessment into two aspects: (1) its assessment as a historical existence, and (2) its assessment as a paradigm restricting further development of the culture. The former assessment should be performed in terms of its own reference or criterion, rather than those in any other time and culture. We should not underestimate its historical value because of any unsuitability it may have to modern times. In this way, it may be acceptable to say that any tradition with its own historical distinctiveness would be of, at least, aesthetic value and therefore worth preserving to some extent. The assessment of tradition as a restricting paradigm, however, should be carried on in terms of present reference, need and situation. Thus, tradition is unjustifiable when it conflicts with present need. A tradition would be appreciated in most cases in the historical sense, but not as the paradigm for present-day action. Praising a tradition *per se* is one thing; following it in the present is another. The needs of progress are always prior. As far as I know, Russell was the first person to imply this distinction in talking about the situation in China. I am not aware of anyone who has acknowledged this methodological problem during the last ten years of widespread discussion of Chinese culture in mainland China. The debate among Chinese intellectuals concerning Confucianism often goes this way: we shall keep or restore Confucianism because it

[35] See, e.g., notes 17, 23, and 26; Y. S. Yu, "The Contemporary Significance of Chinese Culture in the Aspect of Value System", *Chinese Intellectual*, 2 (1988): 51–66; H. M. Gao, *Zhongguo Xianqin Zhexue He Guxila Zhexue Bijiao* [*A Comparison between Chinese Philosophy in Early Qin Dynasty and Ancient Greek Philosophy*] (Taipei: Zhongyang Wenwu Gongyingshe, 1983); W. M. Du, "River Elegy, Where Does Chinese Culture Go?", in *Longnian De Beishang* [*The Sorrow of Dragon Year*] (Taipei: Jinfeng Chubanshe, 1989); and S. K. Lao, *Zhongguo Zhexueshi* [*A History of Chinese Philosophy*] (Hong Kong: Chongji Shuju, 1968), Vol. 1.

was good; or, we shall reject it because it was bad. Russell's important distinction, together with many of his other views on Chinese civilization, can help to guide those Chinese who are still pursuing a way of developing their culture, seventy years after he wrote. Hence Russell should be regarded by the Chinese as not only a great friend, but also a teacher in seeking a new civilization.

POSTSCRIPT: RUSSELL'S LATER AWARENESS OF THE CONSERVATIVE VIEW

About thirty years later, Russell was told by Chow Tse-tsung (Zhou Chechong) that his view of Chinese civilization and criticism of Western culture were used by Chinese conservatives and traditionalists to object to the learning of science. This was certainly a distortion of his view, as Russell pointed out in his reply to Chow.[36] The essence of Russell's suggestion to the Chinese for the reconstruction of China was close to the idea, regarded at the time as conservative by many intellectuals, that Chinese thought should be retained as the basis of society, while Western science should be learnt for auxiliary use. Chow, too, realized this was the essence of Russell's thought.

[36] Printed in Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1960), pp. 237–8.