

Lauri Paltemaa
Ph.D. Student
University of Turku
Department of Contemporary History

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Beijing Spring of 1978-1979 and Enlightenment Dissent –Observations on Consciousness-Centred Notions in an Underground Journal’s Argumentation

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Abstract

The article is a research report that discusses the ideological underpinnings of the Democracy Wall Movement’s argumentation in Beijing 1978-1980. Using the underground journal Beijing Spring (*Beijing Chuntian*) as an example, the author analyses the way the journal’s editors used consciousness-centred notions of politics in their democratic argumentation. It is argued that the consciousness-centred language of the activists influenced their social criticism and designs for social change. The article discusses the background of such language in the light of Chinese intellectual history as well as its role in limiting and guiding Chinese democratic dissent in general. Especially the role of the Neo-Confucian notion of renewing man, Fourth of May Movement’s thinking and its ideals of progress and enlightenment and their Maoist version is important in this respect. In general the author argues that analysing Chinese dissent focusing on the use of consciousness, enlightenment and progress as central categories in democracy activists’ argumentation yields a picture that is in some respects fairer to its subject than earlier studies on the Democracy Wall Movement.

Introduction

This paper presents an analysis of the use of consciousness-centred conceptualisations in the Beijing Spring (*Beijing Chuntian*) argumentation. Beijing Spring was one of the leading journals published by the Beijing Democracy Wall Movement activists in 1978-1979. The Democracy Wall Movement was the starting phase of the early post-Mao Chinese Democracy Movement. Beijing Spring was an underground journal edited and published by a small group of activist from the Beijing University circles. It has been analysed before as a part of the Democracy Wall Movement’s argumentation on democracy, human rights and rule of law, but here we propose a different approach to its argumentation.

The task we pose here is to contextualise the Beijing Spring's argumentation within Chinese intellectual history. We do this by analysing the content of Beijing Spring argumentation from a specific point of view of what we call here consciousness-centred conceptualisations. In short, the focus is on the way the contributors to the Beijing Spring used arguments related to consciousness, morality and enlightenment to justify, promote, and frame the proposals for reform. This work-in-progress paper is organised in a following matter: first we discuss the consciousness-centred argumentation in Chinese intellectual history. Then we move on to describe shortly the Democracy Wall Movement and after this we take a closed look in the Beijing Spring.

Consciousness-Centred Notions in Tradition

Although many authors in Chinese intellectuals history and politics note that notions of consciousness and morality are a persistent part of Chinese political discourses, the author has not found any good single analysis concentrating on the theme.¹ This is also true concerning Chinese dissidence. However, looking at the modern Chinese intellectual history, the fact that such themes can be detected in Chinese political thinking should not be surprising, as they have had a dominant position in the Neo-Confucian tradition. Arguably, most political values and beliefs have their historical background. Nevertheless, the question of the influence of tradition in Chinese political thinking and politics in general has been an enduring and contentious theme in Chinese studies.²

Consciousness and morality were central themes in the old Chinese political philosophy. Indeed, Neo-Confucianism can in some respects be seen as a study of human consciousness in the service of public good. Neo-Confucianism saw the universe as basically good, full of *ren*³, and the man as the

¹ For this see e.g. **Elisabet Perry**: *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven -Social Protest and State Power in China*, M.E. Sharpe, New York 2002, 316-317; **Saich Tony**: *Governance and Politics of China*. Palgrave, Basingstoke 2001, 194-195; **Joseph Fewsmith**: *China After Tiananmen -The Politics of Transition*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001; and **Kalpana Misra**: *Curing the Sickness and Saving the Party: Neo-Maoism and Neo-Conservatism in the 1990s*. In *Chinese Political Culture 1989-2000*, Shiping Hua (ed.), M.E. Sharpe Armonk, New York 2001, 153-154 gives a good example of the phenomenon when discussing Chinese neo-conservatism and its response to corruption in the Mainland China of the 90's claiming that the Communist Party "*Resort to explanations of bureaucratism and corruption as being individual behavioural problems rather than as arising from social structural base... It would seem that the historical and cultural appeal of rule by few virtuous individuals still retains a powerful hold over spectrum of political thinkers today.*"

² **Christiansen F. and Rai S.**: *Chinese Politics and Society -An Introduction*. Prentice Hall Harvester Wheatsheaf, London 1996, 22 argue against using tradition as an explanation in studying Chinese politics: "*The parallels between today's politics and events decades or centuries ago do not explain causality, they only postulate similarity.*" More sympathetic stance to the use of tradition as an explanation can be found for example in **June Teufel-Dryer**: *China's political System -Modernization and Tradition*, Allyn and Bacon (2nd ed.), London 1996, 12-14 and in Perry (2002, xxviii-xxix) where she argues that different models, also tradition, can be fruitfully used to analyse different aspects of the same phenomenon in Chinese society.

³ Benevolence, or *ren*, is the essential moral concept in Neo-Confucianism, but it defies any strict definition. It is the fundamental feature of cosmos, and the source of all the lesser virtues (like loyalty, filial piety, moral knowledge and righteousness). **Lucian Pye**: *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures*. Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan 1988, 75-77, argues that in practical terms benevolence can be said to be a compilation of the different moral qualities belonging to different roles of an individual: fraternal duty, filial piety, sincerity to friends, loyalty to the ruler, etc. This explains why the word *ren* cannot be comprehensively defined -its definition varies according to situation. To illustrate this point, benevolence is mentioned 66 times in the Analects alone and every time with a different meaning (Ray Huang: *1587 -a Year of No Significance: The Ming dynasty in Decline*. Yale University Press, New Haven 1981, 200). **Roger T. Ames**: *New Confucianism: A Native Response to Western Philosophy*, in Shiping Hua (ed.): *Chinese Political Culture 1989-2000*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York 2001, 71-73, even argues that this general vagueness of concepts makes Confucianism not a systematic philosophy, but an 'aesthetic tradition',

conduit of this goodness. However, the instinct for selfishness was also constantly present in human mind and could cloud and misdirect the flow of cosmic goodness through individual. Moral cultivation was therefore needed in order to either subdue or clear away the selfish desires in one's mind. Only thus could one fulfil one's duties in the society.⁴

The need for moral cultivation refers to the fact that in Neo-Confucianism knowledge and action forms unity – *zhī-xíng héyī*. Correct knowledge of the Universal Principle (*li*) and its Ways (*Dao*) leads unavoidably to correct behaviour. Lack of knowledge or selfish desires that block this knowledge leads unavoidably to incorrect behaviour. With moral cultivation that includes studying, meditation and self-reflection, one can grasp, or get, *li*, and therefore act according to it bringing about a better world for all. Consciousness-centeredness in Neo-Confucianism is demonstrated in a strong belief in the power of ideas to guide behaviour. Individual's behaviour is due to his or her knowledge and consciousness of the correct principles. Therefore, consciousness ultimately determines social reality.⁵

Lin Yü-sheng traces the source of what he calls 'cultural-intellectualistic approach' back to the same Neo-Confucian *zhī-xíng héyī* –epistemology. Regardless of the scholastic differences of gaining the knowledge required for action within Neo-Confucianism⁶, the both main Neo-Confucian schools shared a common category of social analysis in the '*monistic and intellectualistic mode of thinking, which approaches moral and political problems by stressing the power and priority of fundamental ideas.*' This approach to social reality leads to strong consciousness-centred features in Chinese political culture, which Lin describes as '*On a pervasive, cultural level, a Chinese tends to stress the power and priority of fundamental ideas, as he understands them, when he is confronted with moral and political problems.*'⁷

Old and New

The central role of consciousness in Neo-Confucianism is a less controversial issue than that what happened to Confucian values and beliefs in the turn of the last century. Judging from the studies made about the Chinese intellectual response to the Western intrusion at the time, one could argue that the modern Chinese intellectual history offers its student a dilemma: Quite every scholar agrees that in the early 20th century Confucianism as such disappeared as the dominant political ideology and was replaced with a modern political discourse employing Western vocabulary, yet almost everyone also agrees that something of Confucianism also survives even today in Chinese political culture.⁸

which offers narrative advice and examples that its readers can draw upon. Therefore, it is better to ask how Confucianism 'works', than to try to define it rigidly.

⁴ Thomas A. Metzger: *Escape from Predicament -Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Structure*. University of Columbia Press, New York 1977, 197-198

⁵ The different Neo-Confucian schools are discussed in detail in Metzger 1977 and Theodore Wm. de Bary: *Ch'ien Mu Lectures 1982: The Liberal Tradition in China*, The Chinese University Press, Hong Kong 1982

⁶ Wakeman F. Jr: *History and Will –Philosophical Perspectives of Mao Tse-Tung's Thought*. University of California Press, Berkeley 1973, 247 gives analysis of these differences.

⁷ Lin Yü-Sheng: *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness -Radical Antiradicalism in the May Fourth Era*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, 44-48

⁸ This notion is evident in Bin Wong: *Confucian Influence on Intellectuals in the People's Republic of China* in *Confucianism and Human Rights* ed. Wim Yi, deBary and Tu Weiming, Columbia University Press, New York 1998, 261: "*As the Judeo-Christian tradition influences Western societies even though most Westerners don't exactly know what it is, Confucianism continues to influence Chinese society, even though most Chinese, including intellectuals, have not read the Confucian texts.*"

The historical breakpoint between traditional and modern discourses has been pinpointed with various degrees of accuracy, but the confrontation between Western political ideas and indigenous Chinese thinking was at its most acute phase in the turn of the last century. In general, most authors see that Confucianism as a belief crumpled when the institutions supporting it, the examination system and monarchy, collapsed in the first decade of the 20th century.⁹ Others see the final blow to Confucianism was served by the Yuan Shikai's failed restoration attempt¹⁰, while many see the demise of the old fate in the May Fourth Movement in 1919 or the New Culture Movement of the 1915-1921.¹¹ **Metzger**¹² argues that both Confucian fundamentalism (belief in its dogma) and institutional Confucianism (belief in monarchy, etc.) all but disappeared from the political scene by the great transformation of the first half of the 20th century in the process, which is generally seen as the 'death of the Confucian world view'.

But if the demise of the institutional Confucianism was so complete, did anything remain? According to the argument developed here, to catch the influence of Confucian tradition, the focus should be turned from the beliefs in facts to a more structural level of political argumentation. It seems that **Joseph Levenson's** metaphor "*old bottle with new wine*" to describe the change in the Chinese political discourse at the turn of the century, catches the essence of the dilemma with tradition.¹³ For **Levenson** the metaphor meant that the issues (e.g. how to make the government to serve the people, or the *minben-principle*) in the Chinese political debate remained the same during the period of the introduction of Western political thinking in China, but the contents of the debate became modernised. Probably less coincidentally, it is also this view, together with Levenson's claim of Chinese intellectuals' emotional commitment to tradition, which seems to have caused a major controversy in Chinese intellectual history. There are those who think that **Levenson** went too far in admitting traditions' influence¹⁴ or criticise him for too psychological an approach.¹⁵ However, other **Levenson's** critics see that he did not go far enough in his emphasis on tradition's role in modern Chinese thinking.

⁹ Furth Charlotte Furth: *Culture and Politics in Modern Chinese Conservatism*, in Charlotte Furth (ed.): *The Limits of Change -Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, Harvard university Press, Cambridge 1976; See also Furth Charlotte Furth: *Intellectual Change -From the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895-1920*. In *An Intellectual History of Modern China*, Cambridge University Press, 2002; Kwok D.W.Y. Kwok: *Scientism in Chinese Thought 1900-1950*, Biblo and Tannen, New York, 1971, 7 and 199 sees that the years 1900-1950 formed an era, when modern identity of Chinese intellectual discourse was created.

¹⁰ Feigon Lee Feigon: *Chen Duxiu -Founder of the Chinese Communist Party*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1983, 107 and 118) argues that during 1911-1915 something did happen to Chinese political discourse: Before this time the concepts of Western political philosophy were used in the Chinese political debate mainly to show their similarities to traditional concepts (as interpreted by reform minded Confucian scholars). However, after the said time, mastery of western ideas became more valued on its own and traditional concepts did serve merely a subsidiary role.

¹¹ Li Zehou and Vera Schwarcz: *Six Generations on Modern Chinese Intellectuals*, in *Chinese Studies in History*, Winter 1983-1984; Lin Yü-sheng 1979, 11-12 and 21-24

¹² Metzger 1977, 193

¹³ Levenson Joseph. R Levenson: *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1958 and Joseph R. Levenson: *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao And the Mind of Modern China*. Thames and Hudson, London 1965 (reprint)

¹⁴ Philip C. Huang: *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Modern Chinese Liberalism*, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1972

¹⁵ Furth (1976, 24) argues that in analysing Chinese political thinking, one should concentrate in actual debates of intellectuals in the context of intellectuals' immediate situations, not in their psychological relation to tradition. Similar criticism on culturalistic approach can be found in **Marina Svensson: The Chinese Conception of Human Rights -The Debate on human Rights in China 1898-1949**. Department of East Asian Languages, Lund University, Lund 1996, 18-19.

Metzger¹⁶ sees that the ‘Levensonian’ school in Chinese intellectual history has emphasised the discontinuities, like nationalism and iconoclasm in Chinese history, while **Metzger** himself sees that discontinuities are not necessary as important as the continuities in explaining the modernisation of Chinese moral and political thinking.¹⁷ He sees that instead of craving Chinese flavour to otherwise Western ideas, Chinese intellectuals of the turn of the century were actually using Western ideas to supplement and redefine their already existing Neo-Confucian *Weltanschauung* in order to make it more relevant to their times, not to abandon it.¹⁸

A similar idea is expressed by **Lee Feigon** who argues that the intellectual background of those people who first imported Western ideas to China is hardly inconsequential: “*The most receptive to Western ideas were those who had themselves earlier been drawn to Chinese ideas that were iconoclastic in terms of Chinese tradition and bore much similarity to the Western ideas they were later to advocate.*” Here **Feigon** refers to Chen Duxiu who had the background of a critical ‘new text’ Han-learning, as did Liang Qichao.¹⁹ **Feigon** sees that this meant that it was the interest in the traditional Chinese iconoclastic notions that draw these reformers to Western ideas at the first place and that their familiarity with the traditional ideas continued to influence their understanding of Western ideas and helped to make them more palatable to their audience.²⁰

Also Furth points out that the reform Confucianists of the turn of the 19th century, like Kang Youwei, could easily believe in the value and worth of Confucian philosophy and still be willing to accept some parts of Western thinking without seeing it superior to Confucianism.²¹ They simply believed that the thoughts were compatible and even complementary to their own philosophy. The rejection of tradition came only with the May 4th generation. Using similar line of argument, **Metzger** points out that the approach to the question of the diffusion of cosmopolitan influences in Chinese thinking should focus on the motivational factors behind the accepting group’s actions, and argues, that this motivation is largely formed by ‘*those vital attitudes and values which lie largely below the level of individual consciousness*’.²² These include the beliefs of the nature of authority, self, group and the meaning of politics or the ‘ultimate meaningfulness of social mobilisation and transformation.’²³

Indeed, according to this argument, the initial success of the Western ideas was based in the way they offered new ways to personal enlightenment and social change, which both were traditionally high on the agenda of the reform-minded Confucian scholars. They found the positive call for social progress in the Western thinking, and could appreciate the democratic notions as devices for creating better society, but at the same time used their own Neo-Confucian understanding of consciousness-driven politics to fathom and explain the base of the needed changes.²⁴ **Furth** argues

¹⁶ Thomas A. Metzger: *Foreword* in Richard W. Wilson, Sidney L. Greenblatt and Amy Auerbacher Wilson (eds.): *Moral Behaviour in Chinese Society*, Praeger, New York 1981, xv

¹⁷ 1977, 6

¹⁸ 1981, xv

¹⁹ Feigon 1983, 14-15; Also Wakeman (1973, 99-100) sees that the intellectuals’ New Text (or *gong-yang*) Confucianism made the intellectual transition from traditional Confucianism to social criticism possible in the first place.

²⁰ Feigon 1983, 97-98

²¹ 2002, 31-36

²² Metzger 1977, citation orig. by Ralph Linton

²³ Metzger 1977, 194

²⁴ For example see Don C. Price: *Russian and the Roots of the Chinese Revolution, 1896-1911*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1974 (especially the ch. 7) how the image of the self-image of Chinese revolutionaries took its modern guise from the Russian model, but by and large was a projection of older Chinese heroic ideals and was largely an ideal image created by the Chinese themselves and based on haphazard knowledge of the original.

that the reform generation's situation should not be approached as a linear substitution of traditional ideas with modern Western thinking. Instead, the way they created new answers to the Chinese society shows how they worked on the problem of how to fit the new into old. That is, what was relevant and good in the tradition and the Western ideas alike. Their generally shared view of history as progress towards utopian society was the major condition through which they assessed social institutions and individual's role in it.²⁵ The intellectuals did not therefore take all the Western ideas they were offered, but chose the ones they were interested in.²⁶

Consciousness-Centred Notions

So where did the traditional notions enter the modern calculus of Chinese intellectuals? Lin Yü-sheng sees that both the reform and destroyer generations²⁷ of Chinese intellectual history of the turn of the last century had the same task: “[to] *complete transformation of the traditional Chinese world view and ... a new mentality adaptable to modernisation.*”²⁸ Here mental and cultural change had priority to political social or economical changes, as the latter was build upon the former. As noted, Lin uses a term ‘*cultural-intellectualistic approach*’ to describe this consciousness-centred approach to politics implying ‘*fundamental belief that cultural change was the foundation for all other necessary changes.*’ Indicating the direct belief that social change was accomplished only through change of the worldview of individuals and in this order. Culture with values, beliefs and symbols would change only when individual worldviews would change. And only when the culture would change, would politics change.

Lin calls this approach to political issues *presupposed mode of thinking* (or ‘category of analysis’) as against presupposed ideas or concepts like the innate goodness of man in Confucianism. It is also an idea in itself, but a dynamic one, a mode of thinking how to approach social problems and discover their reasons. It is not a static belief in some social ‘fact’ like monarchy. Lin sees culturalist-intellectualistic approach as a simplistic, but powerful tool of social analysis in the midst of crisis. The approach was however deep-seated with traditional Confucian predispositions of monism (that is, the unity of knowledge and action discussed above) and intellectualism, not directly influenced by Western sources or socio-political concerns. Although the content of the two generations’ thinking was strongly influenced by the West, the cultural-intellectual approach remained dominant in the application of these new ideas to the Chinese reality. As Lin shows, such iconoclasts as Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun and Hu Shi all were well versed in classical learning and that this directly influenced their approach to politics with cultural-intellectual emphasis. First reform generation was even more successful in their classical learning than this second generation and Lin considers this a direct link between tradition and the approach they took to the importance of Western learning.²⁹

Thomas Metzger, calls the Neo-Confucian *Weltanschauung* which the modern thinkers inherited ‘the ethos of interdependence’³⁰. He argues that what he calls the ‘ontology of elusive immanence’

²⁵ Furth 2002, 15-18

²⁶ Wylie Raymond F. Wylie: *The Emergence of Maoism -Mao Tse-tung, Ch'en Po-ta and the Search for Chinese Theory 1935-1945.* Stanford University Press, Stanford 1980, 3, sees that the bottle metaphor was displayed in practise on how the Chinese Marxists intellectuals chose from wide array of Western ideas by accepting some, rejecting others and fitting the rest to their own practical and intellectual needs.

²⁷ These names to the intellectual generations are given by Li Zehou and Vera Schwarcz (1984).

²⁸ Lin Yü-sheng 1979, 26-27

²⁹ Lin Yü-sheng 1979, 26-29

³⁰ Metzger 1977, 197

and knowability of the universal moral truths are the features of Neo-Confucianism that have continued to influence the Chinese political culture to the present. According to them, with correct moral knowledge, man's social behaviour will be public-minded. The question is therefore, how to acquire correct knowledge. The resemblance of Metzger's categories to Lin Yü-sheng's notion of cultural-intellectual presupposed mode of thinking is clear.

Li Zehou³¹ has developed a 'sedimentation theory', which asserts that Neo-Confucianism deeply influenced Maoism and most of the progressive Chinese intellectuals in the 20th century. Mao's ideas of 'New Man' and 'New Society' were not so 'new' after all, but were a result of certain assumptions in traditional thinking that have been 'sedimented' in Chinese culture.³² According to the sedimentation theory, every individual is a bearer of 'cultural psychological formation' (*wenhua xinli jiegou*). Sedimentation means the accumulation of experience of a culture, which creates "cultural-psychological structures" or "formations", which, according to **Woei Lien Chong**, means a 'propensity toward particular forms of thought and attitudes.'³³

Li uses the Marxist notion that society's mode of production finally determines the psychological-cultural structures and its formations, but he sees that cultures are otherwise relatively autonomous in history and cannot be changed though campaigns like Mao Zedong was trying to do. **Li** argues that in China's case the small-scale agriculture and tight kinship context has created a specific Chinese cultural-psychological formation, which makes its members seeing and perceiving world around them in certain ways. The unfinished socio-economic transformation of Chinese society explains the perseverance of 'feudal thinking' in China even today.³⁴

For **Li** there are three important sediment formations: First is *the doctrine of benevolence* i.e. the idea that one has to cultivate inner being and to be willing to sacrifice oneself in order to save the world. Second is the idea that *the universe is ultimately depending of one's moral self-cultivation*. Finally the third notion is that an *individual and self in society where self are not understood to exist outside social hierarchy*. **Li** argues that these notions have been sedimented into the culture of the Han people especially because they focus on internal psychology of individual, not external rites.³⁵

Although the three scholars call this phenomenon with different names, it is clear that they are talking about basically the same thing, which we call here *consciousness-centred view of politics*. It displays itself in the belief on the import of ideas, beliefs and knowledge to social reality. It follows that social problems are easily attributed to individual consciousness or morals and social projects are primarily directed to moral mobilisation and rectification. As noted by Lin Yü-sheng, it is a dynamic idea of where to look for the sources of social problems, not a belief in any particular dogma as such, which makes consciousness-centred notions very adaptable to different political

³¹ According to Timothy Cheek: *Introduction -A Cross Cultural Conversation on Li Zehou's Ideas on Subjectivity and Aesthetics in Modern Chinese Thought*. In *Philosophy East & West* Volume 49, Number 2 April 1999, 113-114, Li Zehou is one of the most prominent Chinese humanists of the 1980's and his influence can be seen in today's younger generation of intellectuals as well. His materialist way of seeing the relations between the tradition and Chinese society is not unique, but can be found in mostly conservative analysis of the state of the Chinese society today. (See Fewsmith 2001)

³² Woei Lien Chong: *Guest Editor's Introduction -History as the Realisation of Beauty: Li Zehou's Aesthetic Marxism*. In *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, vol. 31, no. 2, Winter 1999-2000, pp 3-19, 2000, 139-140

³³ Woei Lien Chong: *Mankind and Nature in Chinese Thought Li Zehou on the Traditional Roots of Maoist Voluntarism*, in *China Information*, Volume XI, Nos. 2/3 (autumn / winter 1996-1997), pp 138-176

³⁴ Woei Lien Chong 2000, 150-152

³⁵ Chong 2000, 155-156; Chong Woei Lien Chong: *Combining Marx with Kant: The Philosophical Anthropology of Li Zehou in Modern Chinese Thought*. In *Philosophy East & West* Volume 49, Number 2 April 1999, pp. 133

dogmas. It is suggested here that the 20th century Chinese political discourses, and also Chinese dissident thinking, can be approached analysing the use of consciousness-centred notions.

Enlightenment and Progress

One can find consciousness-centred notions from all major intellectual figures of the turn of the century from Liang Qichao to Mao Zedong. One of the most influential person in the modernisation of Chinese political discourse was Liang Qichao, who introduced the concept of Enlightenment to Chinese intellectual history,³⁶ and advocated the project of creating of new China through creation of ‘new citizen’, transforming national character and breaking the ‘habits of mind’ that obstructed the establishment of well functioning democracy. Liang certainly believed that transforming society begins in transforming individual consciousness. This call was consequently taken up by the following generations.³⁷

Liang was for New Citizen, but he was not against the Chinese traditional culture *in toto*. However, with the downfall of the Qing-dynasty and the descend of the new republic into warlordism, a more pronounced concern with Chinese traditional culture began to emerge.³⁸ The May 4th Movement in 1919 epitomises the break in modern Chinese political discourse.³⁹ When the earlier reformers had called for establishment of the new consciousness of citizens required by constitutional monarchy, the May 4th generation modified this call to a total rejection of false consciousness created by tradition. Chen Duxiu and his associates, like Lu Xun, have earned their name of ‘destroyers’ for changing the Liang Qichao’s call for cultural rethinking and borrowing into an iconoclast call for smashing the old culture for good. Their followers, who formed the core of the May 4th Movement, took up this call. These demands were summed up in the slogan of “Science and Democracy” (or “Mr. De” and “Mr. Cai”). As Chen Duxiu saw it, what the Chinese needed was *zijue*, self-consciousness, which according to Schwarcz came close to the Kantian notion of ‘*courage to be guided by one’s own understanding*’.⁴⁰

³⁶ Schwarcz, Vera: *The Chinese Enlightenment -Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919*. University of California Press, Berkley 1986, 29- 32; According to Schwarcz, the concept of Enlightenment was brought to Chinese awareness through Japan. Its Meiji restoration had witnessed a short-lived intellectual movement for ‘Japanese Enlightenment’, *bunmei kaika*, which began to fascinate the Chinese intellectuals especially after the 1895.

³⁷ Andrew J. Nathan: *Chinese Democracy*, University of California Press, 1986; Philip C. Huang 1972, Chang Hao: *Liang Ch’i-ch’ao and intellectual Transition in China 1890-1907*, Harvard University Press, Mass. 1971, and Levenson 1965 all discuss these themes at length. **Philip C. Huang** (1972, 7-8) argues that Liang Qichao ‘*defined some of the fundamental assumptions of much of twentieth-century Chinese thought be that liberal or Marxist. Although crystal clear in the turn of the century, these fundamentals were later taken for granted and become obscured as premises on which latter discourse was largely built.*’ Also **Andrew J. Nathan** (1986, 48-49, the quotation in 48) sees Liang’s role and influence in a similar light, and argues that: “*His [Liang’s] works defined the tradition within which later Chinese debates over democracy took place*”.

³⁸ Svensson (1996, 146 – 147 and 150-153) sees that the reason for this was that as long as the Manchus were to blame for the dismal situation of the country, Chinese did not have to attack their own culture. One can also tentatively argue, that in the philosophical tradition, where consciousness-centeredness had a strong position, it was natural to turn to cultural explanation after the institutions failed.

³⁹ The actual dates of the May 4th Movement have been under considerable academic debate. Strictly speaking the May 4th Movement refers to the student demonstrations that took place in Beijing at that day in 1919. However, in a broader sense (and with the insight that historical perspective brings to the observers) the Movement has been seen to involve the New Culture and New Thought movements that swept over China between 1915 – 1923 or 1925 (from the establishment of the New Youth journal to the May 30 incident in 1925). About the May Fourth Movement see Chow Tse-tung: *The May Fourth Movement -Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge University Press, Massachusetts 1960 and Schwarcz 1986

⁴⁰ Schwarcz 1986, 37-38

The fate of the Chinese liberal project of the May Fourth Movement in the 1920's and 1930's has usually been summarised by Vera Schwarcz's statement that after the attack of the Japanese in 1937 the call for *qimeng* (enlightenment) became subordinated to *jiuguo* (saving the country).⁴¹ But when the themes raised by the Movement are discussed this date is questionable, as it is clear that the idea of enlightenment has not disappeared from the Chinese political discourse.⁴² As **Chow Tse-tung** declared in the early 1960's: "*The issue [of the May Fourth Movement] is not dead. It remains to the present and may point to the future.*"⁴³ Also **Vera Schwarcz** finds the Movement's issues still important in the 1980's and saw that there existed a connection of May Fourth Movement thinking and the Democracy Wall Movement. **Joseph Fewsmith** finds criticism of the May Fourth Movement's enlightenment project in the Chinese political discourse of the 1990's.⁴⁴ However, the Communist Party has also carried the May Fourth Movement's argumentation with it.

Enter the Party

Mao Zedong's influence is essential in the way consciousness-centred approach to political issues has retained its grip in Chinese political discourse well beyond the early period of modernisation of Chinese political discourse. And it is a part in the chain through which moral argumentation became transmitted to the Democracy Wall Movement activists in the late 1970's. Mao was later reluctant to acknowledge his intellectual debt to Liang Qichao, Chen Duxiu or Li Dachao, but Meisner sees Li's influence crucial to Mao's early years⁴⁵. Neither man was willing to let the determinism of socio-economic development as predicted by orthodox Marxism ruin their Party. Historical materialism proved that socialism was inevitable, but it was ideas, will and true consciousness of men that would really bring about the new society.

Between the years 1935 to 1945 Mao Zedong rose to an unquestioned leading position in the CCP both in its organisational and theoretical work. During this period he and his intellectual 'think tank' laid the intellectual basis for what was called 'Sinification' of Marxism-Leninism.⁴⁶ In his theory, Mao links the need of creating new consciousness to dialectical materialism. His epistemological stance was that of the unity of knowledge and action, which has also been called voluntarism.⁴⁷ According to Mao, the universe consists of contradictions of opposite forces, but under given conditions two opposite forces can form a single entity, or unity.⁴⁸ There was also a unity of ignorance and knowledge:

*"At the very beginning of our study of Marxism, our ignorance of or scanty acquaintance with Marxism stands in contradiction to knowledge of Marxism. But by assiduous study, ignorance can be transformed into knowledge, scanty knowledge into substantial knowledge, and blindness into application of Marxism into mastery of its application."*⁴⁹

⁴¹ Schwarcz 1986, 231-233

⁴² Schwartz, Benjamin I: Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After. In *An Intellectual History of Modern China*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 100

⁴³ Chow 1960, 14

⁴⁴ Fewsmith 2001, especially the chapter 4.

⁴⁵ Maurice Meisner: *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism*, Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts 1967, 126-127

⁴⁶ The process is analysed in Feigon 1983

⁴⁷ Meisner 1999, 41-42

⁴⁸ Mao Zedong: *On Contradiction*. In *Selected Works I (SW)* Foreign Language Press, Peking 1965 / 1937, 342-343

⁴⁹ Mao Zedong: *On Contradiction*. In *SW I* 1937, 335

Therefore, the way Mao treats ignorance as Marxism's unity leads to situation where ignorance can be (it has to be) transformed into Marxism - otherwise it is just bogus social knowledge. This is where feudal or bourgeois ideologies belong. In the transformation of ignorance to knowledge something really changes in quality of people's thinking and worldview and in Maoist thinking it is exactly this worldview that guides man's behaviour.⁵⁰

It has been argued that Mao's voluntarism is directly connected to the Chinese intellectual tradition. According to **Chong**⁵¹, **Li Zehou** maintains that Marxism was 'misinterpreted' under Maoism and this misinterpretation owed much to the traditional ideas and their misperceptions of the structure of reality. Indeed, Chinese intellectuals were ill prepared to understand Marx in the first place, equipped with small-scale agricultural philosophy as they were. According to **Li Zehou**, this owed to the 'Lu-Wang' Neo-Confucianism, which influenced the young Mao and Mao's voluntarism was based on the idea of moral will as the main agent of change and nature's and mankind's holistic unity.⁵² Even more radical analysis is offered by Ames⁵³, who sees that in the process of becoming sinified Marxism became 'neo-neo-Confucianism', where democracy lacked all the notions that belong to it in the west: individualism, autonomy, independence, and human rights. **Metzger**⁵⁴ sees that Mao's emphasis on the import of individual consciousness cannot be a western import, neither can it be Mao's own innovation, being as popularly accepted as it was.

Mao applied his consciousness-centred analysis of politics to the party. For Mao the conflict within the party was a reflection of a deeper class struggle in the society. As Mao saw it, by the 1960's the signs of party resistance (or indifference) to his policies was a sign of not merely political power struggle, but it marked the lessening of revolutionary consciousness of party cadres, who were becoming more interested in building their careers, accumulating privileges and using the power they got to their own ends. In doing so, they would slow down and even block the progress of the socialist revolution. He called this taking the 'capitalist road'. By 1966 he saw that the party was ripe for another mass campaign, the Cultural Revolution.

The Cultural Revolution lasted from 1966 to 1969 or, as later was decided, 1976. Comprising the whole nation, it made millions of young Red Guards go through indoctrination to Maoist ideology, the thrill of mass political participation, seizing power and being let down by their demigod Chairman Mao and the party leftist, who persecuted them and sent them down after they had done as they were told to do. It led to widespread disillusionment, but also questioning of why such things happened, who and what were responsible for it and what should be done to the situation.⁵⁵ It also led to the rise to power of the leftist faction within the party and continuous power struggle at

⁵⁰ Mao was not alone with this perception. For example Liu Shaoqi's: How to Be a Good Communist (1939). In. Selected Works of Liu Shaoqi, Foreign Language Press, Beijing 1984, contains highly similar reasoning of the relationship of creating communist consciousness and its social consequences. The text was a mandatory reading in Communist training up until the Cultural Revolution when Liu Shaoqi was purged. This does not make his well-known ideas less representative, as the reasons for the purge were somewhere else than in his ideas.

⁵¹ 2000, 6-8

⁵² Chong 1999, 137-138; See also Jack Gray: *Rebellions and Revolutions -China from the 1800 to the 1980's*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1990, 202-205

⁵³ Ames 2001, 70-99

⁵⁴ 1981, xii-xvi

⁵⁵ Memoirs of the former Red Guards give good picture of what happened to the youth on personal level during these years, see e.g. Bennett A. and Montaperto R. N.: *Red Guard -The Political Biography of Dai Hsiao-Ai*. Doubleday & Company, inc. Garden City, New York 1971; Liang Heng and Shapiro, J.: *Son of the Revolution*. Vintage Books, New York, 1984; Ken Ling: *The Revenge of Heaven -Journal of a Young Chinese*. Ballantine Books, New York, 1972; Chen Jinsong: *Minzhu doushi -Wei Jingsheng zhuan* [The Biography of the Warrior of Democracy -Wei Jingsheng], Taipingyang guoji chuban youxian gongsi [Pacific International Publishing Co., Ltd. Hong Kong, 1998

the top between them and the more pragmatic faction led by Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. The emergence of the Democracy Wall Movement was directly connected to this power struggle in 1976-1978.

The Democracy Wall Movement

The relation between the power struggle in the party and the Democracy Wall Movement dates back at least to the Tiananmen Incident on the 5th of May 1976. Chairman Mao died in 9.9.1976. However, even before he went to see Marx, fighting over his legacy and political survival in the post-Mao China had begun within the CCP leadership. Deng Xiaoping was purged for alleged responsibility for the Fifth of April Movement or *Qingming* riots at the Tiananmen Square on the 5th of May 1976. This demonstration would carry important symbolic value for the Democracy Wall Movement activists, many of who participated in it. It also had the symbolic value of being the wrongful case (*yuan'an*) that Deng would have to get reassessed during the ensuing power struggle.

Power struggle was waged between Hua Guofeng's 'two whatevers' and Deng's 'seeking truth from facts' factions. As Goodman⁵⁶ points out, neither of the doctrines appeared particularly original or philosophically sophisticated. However, both had serious implications in the post-Mao politics in China. The struggle sent a message of uncertainty of the official interpretation of Marxism, which produced an atmosphere highly conducive to the Democracy Wall Movement.⁵⁷ The decisive victory for Deng came at the III Plenum of the XI CCP Central Committee in late November - early December 1978, which official Party history describes as a 'turning point to the Party'. Deng's victory was two-sided: The Plenum accepted his doctrines of 'emancipating minds' and 'seeking truth from facts' as the political baseline for the Party. In economic policy priority was given to the 'four modernisations'.⁵⁸ The reversal of the Tiananmen Incident verdict was decided in November 1978. The incident was reassessed as a 'completely revolutionary event' and renamed according to the normal way of naming important events in Chinese history after the date when they occur as the 'Fifth of April Movement' (*Wu-si yundong*).

During the III Plenum, and the working conference, which preceded it, something that had not taken place for a while was happening on the streets of Beijing. Groups of young activists were spreading wall posters and independent journals throughout the city and demonstrating at the Tiananmen Square. Most of them were voicing support to Deng's reform policies, criticising the Gang of Four and its 'leftist' supporters and, as the movement gained momentum, demanding political reform. This movement, dubbed either as the 'Human Rights Movement' or the 'Democracy Movement'⁵⁹ in the West, had its immediate roots in the power struggle. Different

⁵⁶ Goodman D. and Davis S.: *Beijing Street Voices: the Poetry and Politics of China's Democracy Movement*, Marion Boyars, Lawrence Massachusetts, 1981, 8

⁵⁷ Yeh, M: Ideological Flux and Intellectuals in Mainland China since 1978, *Issues and Studies* 26(9), September 1990, 32

⁵⁸ Hu Sheng (Ed. 1994): *A Concise History of the Communist Party of China*, Foreign Language Press, Beijing, 729 - 731 Deng Xiaoping (1978): *Emancipate Minds, Seek Truth from Facts and Unite as one in Looking to the Future*, in Deng Xiaoping (1995): *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping. Volume II (1975-1982)*. Foreign Language Press. Beijing, 150 - 163

⁵⁹ For clarity's sake the authors call the Beijing movement as the Democracy Wall Movement and the country wide movement as the Democracy Movement.

press campaigns before the reversal of verdict of the Tiananmen Incident had already indicated of a thaw in politics.⁶⁰ Now the reversal gave the immediate momentum for the movement.

The Beijing Spring

The rapid emergence of the Democracy Movement shows that it did not come into existence out of the thin air. The small groups of activists, which were willing to express their opinions of the state of the Chinese society already existed. Goodman⁶¹ classifies the activists in two categories according to their background. Most of the activists were former Red Guards, who had become disillusioned and frustrated with the Party and the political system during the Cultural Revolution. They were especially bitter on the way Mao had first used them to further his own political goals and later repressed them in 1967-68. Another group was the veterans of the Tiananmen incident of 1976 who were too young to have participated in the Cultural Revolution as Red Guards. Many of the members of both groups had lately been released from prisons or returned from the countryside. Both groups had previously been organised as prison and work mates as well as former Red Guards. They had personal experience of how arbitrary and unfair the system could be. They also had an experience of participatory politics and how to criticise the Party for its failings. Now they seemed to have an opportunity to express their thoughts in public.

One such group of Beijing University (*Beida*) students organised the Beijing Spring. Its chief editors were Chen Zimin and Wang Juntao. Chen was a former Red Guard and Wang a “Tiananmen Hero”. Both had participated in the Tiananmen incident and were persecuted for this. After the verdict on the Tiananmen Incident was reversed in November 1978, Chen and Wang became heroes of the May Fourth Movement overnight. Not only were they rehabilitated, they were also made members of the Communist Youth League (CYL), which had been re-established only a little while ago. Knowing their background it was hardly surprising that the Democracy Wall drew their attention from the beginning. It gave them an excellent opportunity to criticise the regime and their old enemies as well as propose political reforms.⁶²

Having, as it seemed, the official blessing of Deng Xiaoping and the reform faction, the Democratic Movement gained momentum throughout December 1978. Depending on the context and development of official attitude, the unofficial journals were called either people’s publications (*minjian chubanwu*), spontaneous publications (*zifa chubanwu*), ‘underground’ publications (*dixia chubanwu*), and finally counterrevolutionary or reactionary publications (*fandongq kanwu*). The publishers themselves preferred to call them people's publications (*minkan* short for *minban kanwu*).⁶³ They were usually mimeographed at activists’ homes or workplaces and were therefore of rather poor printing quality and had small circulation of only some 200 to 500 copies per issue. Their publishers had varying connections to the establishment.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Nathan 1986, 6-7; Chen Rouxi: *Democracy Wall and the Unofficial Journals*. Center for Chinese Studies Institute of East Asian Studies University of California Berkeley Studies in Chinese Terminology No. 20, 1982, 6-7

⁶¹ Goodman and Davis 1981, 36-38

⁶² For Chen's and Wang's stories, see Munro, G. and Black, R. (1993): *Black Hands of Beijing -Lives of Defiance in China's Democracy Movement*, John Wiley & Sons Inc, New York, 8-43

⁶³ Chen Rouxi 1982, 2. The author uses here term ‘journal’ for its brevity and neutrality.

⁶⁴ Baum R.: *Burying Mao - Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1996, 72; Burns, J (1983): Democracy, the Role of the Law and Human Rights in Beijing's Unofficial Journals 1978-1979, *Internationales Asien Forum* 1983 14(1), 35; Goodman and Davis 1981, 63-65

The journal with the closest ties to the Party was *Beijing Spring*, which premiered 8.1.1979. It declared to be standing for democracy, science, political reform and the four modernisations and took clearly Deng's side against the 'whateverists'. The Journal's connections to the Party could be seen in the content of articles that the journal ran. It had inside information of the Party policies and consequently it was able to advocate many of them before they were even made public, like the rehabilitation of Peng Zhen and Liu Shaoqi.⁶⁵

The editors of the journal, Chen Zimin and Wang Juntao, and the editor-in-chief of the journal Han Zhixiong, who was actually a member of the Youth League's central committee, mainly established Beijing Spring's connections to the Party.⁶⁶ The connections were so good that the journal was even rumoured to have enjoyed Deng Xiaoping's tacit approval. Wang Juntao's close connections to the Party leadership became evident already in 16.11. when he visited Hu Yaobang's home at his request in Zhongnanhai, and had a four hours long discussion with Deng's protégée. The most visible sign of the good connections between *Beijing Spring* and the Party was given when the Beijing Foreign Language Press printed Beijing Spring's third issue, which reached circulation of about ten thousand.⁶⁷ The support was gained with moderate points of view that supported the official line. This earned the editors the title of "Deng Xiaoping's propagandists" from other Democracy Wall Movement activists.⁶⁸

Beijing Spring had not only better access to printing facilities (which stopped after the 3rd issue), but also to 'inside' information. The journal could therefore publish news about the underhand dealings of Deng Xiaoping's enemies like the building project of vice-chairman Wang Dongxing. The journal's later issues were more critical and signs of investigative journalism were evident in its articles. It even reprinted the Wei Jingsheng's article "The 20th Century Bastille" criticising Chinese prison conditions.⁶⁹

The typical way to analyse the Democracy Wall Movement in the Western research is to take democracy, human rights or rule of the law into focus. However, as noted in the introduction, the question here is the way the contributors to the Beijing Spring used consciousness, morality and enlightenment related arguments to justify, promote, and frame their arguments for social change. Although the Democracy Wall Movement was about democracy even for its participants, we are not so much interested in the institutional nature of its proposals. This aspect of the Movement's argumentation is well analysed. Instead here we ask what kind of consciousness-related arguments did the activists use in the relationship they saw between these institutions and the people.

The reason behind this focus is the rather straightforward observation that consciousness is an attribute that can only belong to persons, not institutions and laws. Consciousness related arguments can therefore be found only where the actors and institutions meet or actors are discussed alone. Therefore, when talking about socialist democracy, the Beijing Spring writers usually make statements about the nature, level, and content of actors' consciousness either asking can a certain group participate in democratic institutions or discussing, how institutions affect their consciousness.

⁶⁵ Nathan 1986, 19-20. Peng Zhen was the former mayor of Beijing, whom the Red Guards had purged from his post during the Cultural Revolution.

⁶⁶ Chen Rouxi 1982, 44-45. However, both Han and Wang were forced to stand down from their CYL posts after participating in the Democracy Wall Movement.

⁶⁷ Black and Munro 1989, 45-46 and 50 10 Nathan 1986, 22-23

⁶⁸ Chen Rouxi 1982, 44-45

⁶⁹ Chen Ruoxi 1982, 45-47

The question that seems to be behind much of the argumentation in the Beijing Spring is do the actors possess the required consciousness for the proposed institutions to work correctly? For example, is the cultural level of the Chinese people too low for socialist democracy? The activists pose the question more or less explicitly, but, as argued below, the optimism in the answers varies. Further questions arise from this: what is the nature of the required consciousness and how it can or has been acquired? There is also a time dimension to the arguments. Those talking about historical subjects tend to employ certain narrative structures that emphasise the moral and consciousness, or lack of it, of the actors described and the historical track record of this consciousness.

The Argument Against the Left

The Beijing Spring and the faction led by Deng Xiaoping shared the anti-leftist agenda. The core of the ideological attack against the leftists in the Beijing Spring is the direct refutation of the leftist doctrines of the primacy of class-consciousness in politics and the subsequent claim that the Cultural Revolution was a mistake of certain individuals using the names of the leaders.⁷⁰ As the journal declares in its opening words, Chinese democracy since 1949 has suffered from two small shoes: ignorantism or barbarianism (*mengmeizhuyi*) and dictatorship. Therefore Chinese democracy has lost its ability to stand in the front line of world's democracies. To remedy this China has to strike down "modern feudalism" (*xiandai fengjianzhuyi*) and the "modern superstition" (*xiandai mixìn*) and establish socialist democracy and modern science. The Marxist stance of the journal is also announced by declaring that this road is guided by Marxism-Leninism, the Communist Party, supporting socialist road and realising the "let the 100 flowers blossom" by Chairman Mao.⁷¹

The collusion of the need of democratic institutions with consciousness-centred notions is clear in the opening words. The dismal social situation is seen as the result of two forces: dictatorship and superstition. The first one is an institutional term referring to the autocracy of the Party left, whereas superstition is one of the most commonly used terms to describe leftist ideology⁷². Feudalism, which is the usual term to call leftist regime, is not a term for a historical power sharing arrangement of feudal lords and the monarch, but a name for undesirable behaviour of the leaders. The backward nature of feudalism is a generally accepted fact for the writers, and to accuse their antagonists of feudal thinking is an accusation of the backwardness of their thinking.

The second feature in the opening words is the definition of actors in political struggle and their credentials for political participation. Beijing Spring declares that 'the people' want democracy and connects its activities directly to the Fifth of April Movement (the Tiananmen Incident 1976), which is the legitimating event for the activism in the Democracy Wall Movement in general. Through it the activists can show their credentials of correct revolutionary thinking and the fact that they are on the same side with Deng's faction in its fight against the leftists. However, it has another meaning as well, as it shows the maturity of the people in their thinking and that they can tell the difference between superstition and truth. Therefore, they have the right to participate in the fight

⁷⁰ Lü Min 1979, Beijing Spring 1/1979, in Collection of the Underground Publications Circulated on Chinese Mainland (CUP) 3, *Zhonggong yanjiu zazhishe bianyin* [Institute for Study of Chinese Communist Problems Publication], Taipei, 293; Similar criticism on the leftists is voiced by Wang Lei in "Wu si" *zhantu tan minzhu -Fangwen jiyao* [The Tiananmen Incident Heroes Talk about Democracy -Interviews], Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 5, 94-95 and Yi Ma: *Nan yi ge duan de lishi* [History Cannot Be Severed], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 126-133

⁷¹ *Fa kan ci*, Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 279

⁷² Leftism is called by other names, too, like 'new idiotism' (*xīn méngmèi zhūyì*), see *Gānyù shēnghuó shì zuojia de shénshèng zeren* [To Delve into Life Is the Sacred Duty of Writers], Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8 129-135

against dictatorship and propose reforms. The third element in the opening words is employing the notion of historical progress as an irresistible trend that the activists embody. The correct thinking is embodied in the progress of history and the activists are its tools.

The institutions that the Beijing Spring writers criticise are not usually talked in detail. As noted, they are generally called feudal, or feudal-fascist dictatorship (*fēngjiàn-fǎxīstī zhǔyì zhuānzhèng*). Only when the Beijing Spring prints articles of or by Li Yizhe⁷³, the system under criticism is called Lin Biao –system (*Lin Biao tǐxì*), when it refers to the revolutionary committees established in 1968-1969 under Lin Biao to end the Red Guard phase of the Cultural Revolution. The features of the old system are also discussed when the activists propose the Paris Commune type of institutional solutions (*Bali gongshe shi de minzhu zhidu*), where the system under criticism is defined as a ‘cadre appointing system’ (*gànbù wěirèn zhì*)⁷⁴, or hierarchal cadre system (*děngjī shòuzhì*).

Paris Commune as Ideal

In the Beijing Spring the Paris Commune type of institutional solutions is presented as a true socialist alternative for feudal-fascist dictatorship. The argument is developed by Lü Min, Wen Qi, Gao Jimin and others. They all rely on the Marxist perception of withering away of the state in their argumentation. According to Lü Min, the old state machinery (*guojia jiqi*) and bureaucracy are attributed as the sources of the feudal-fascist dictatorship. The origin of bureaucracy is the state machinery of feudalism and monarchy and its system of “ranks and hierarchies” (*děngjī shòuzhì*). This machinery was taken over by the communists in the revolution, but it has not been abolished. Instead, a cadre appointing system replaces it. The systems are different in class nature, but not in practical functioning, which is the core of the problem. In this system bureaucratic elements can be reborn and careerist (*yěxīnjiā*) can stage a restoration. Therefore, when establishing the Paris Commune system, not only should the people in power be changed, also the system of appointing them must go. Only this way can it be ensured that the people’s servants will not turn into people’s masters. Indeed, only attacking the bureaucrats and not the system, as the leftists did, is neglecting the source of the problems and is not true Marxism.⁷⁵

Because the bureaucratic system is divorced from the people, they cannot control or supervise it. And this divorce makes careerism and restoration of the old bureaucratic practises possible in the first place. If this state is allowed to continue, also the army will be taken over by careerists and country will change colour, as has happened in the Soviet Union. Lü Min offers an historical account of the reasons for this development. Here the consciousness-centred notions enter the analysis. After the revolution the internal and international situation made the abolition of standing army and cadre system temporarily impossible. However, the other reason was the in people’s consciousness: the level of people’s civilisation and ability of (self-)management was low (*renmin*

⁷³ Li Ying: *Li Yizhe wu zui* [Li Yizhe is innocent!] Beijing Spring 2/1979, CUP 2, 238-240 and Li Yizhe 20.12.1974: *Zhe shi makesizhuyi de yuanze ma? –San ping moxie quanwei de piping* [Is This a Marxist Principle? –Three Specific Criticisms of Authorities], Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 195-203

⁷⁴ Lü Min: *Zhubu fachu gongliao zhiti he jianli Bali gongshe shi de minzhu zhidu* [Gradually abolish the Bureaucratic System and Establish Democratic Structures after the Paris Commune], Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 290-296 (part I) and Beijing Spring 2/1979, CUP 2, 288-291 (part II)

⁷⁵ Lü Min 1979, Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 290-293; Similar criticism on the leftists is voiced by Wang Lei in “*Wu si*” *zhantu tan minzhu –Fangwen jiyao* [The Tiananmen Incident Heroes Talk about Democracy –Interviews], Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 5, 94-95 and Yi Ma: *Nan yi ge duan de lishi* [History Cannot Be Severed], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 126-133

wenhua chengdu yu guangli shuiping ji wei di xia). Without control from above the country would have collapsed into anarchy and the victory in the revolution would have been lost. But now after the things have calmed down, the cultural level for (self-) management has risen, and therefore gradual abolition of cadre system can follow. Otherwise the new bureaucratic class will entrench itself and usurp power.⁷⁶

Lü continues to develop his argument in another article *Abolish Party Committees' Basic Level Authority in Industry*.⁷⁷ Here he further argues that the withering away of the state should start at the party committees' basic level authority in industry. The party leadership at industrial enterprises should be replaced by elected "workers' representative assemblies" (*gongren weiyuan hui*). The process should then continue to higher levels. As party practises class dictatorship and nominates cadres to their posts from the top, the proletariat has no way of supervising it. Lack of supervision removes the cadres from the people and makes their moral character to deteriorate. Careerists and those suffering from bureaucratism actually can come to form the majority on the basic level, usurp power on the top level and restore capitalism. The reason for moral deterioration is in the class interests the bureaucracy has in ruling the people. The existence of this trend is proven by the history and explained in the Marxist classics as is the fact the to reverse this trend an electoral system and the right to recall officials have to be established.⁷⁸

Gao Jimin expresses this perceived relation between the old institutions and moral degeneration:

*"As the Party and state cadres stood on this old foundation [of hierarchical bureaucracy], then according to existing real laws of consciousness [genju cunzaide jue ding yishi de guilü], the old basis gradually changed their thinking and consciousness (sixiang yishi), their revolutionary character [geming pinzhi], and following the development, numbers changed quality and a great new bureaucratic class emerged."*⁷⁹

The right of the leftist to rule is therefore refuted using their level of consciousness as the justification. Gao Jimin continues about the historical reasons why the early Chinese Marxists adopted the old hierarchical system of appointing officials, and even here consciousness-centred explanation is evident:

*"The level of the revolutionary standards in China was never high, and those who understood Marx were only a few. And even those, who said that others do not understand Marx, did not themselves know Marxism. Therefore, it was hard for Chinese leaders to penetrate Marxist state theory. This caused that the "hierarchical cadre system" received the biased support [pianai] of the cadres influenced by feudal dictatorship, in addition to that after establishment of New China we followed without better judgement Soviet Union repeating the mistakes made by Stalin in the theoretical realm."*⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Lü Min 1979, Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 294-295

⁷⁷ Lü Min: *Quxiao chang-kuang qiye jiceng dang zuzhi de xing zheng lingdaoquan* [Abolish Party Committees' Basic Level Authority in Industry], Beijing Spring 2/1979, CUP 2, 255-258

⁷⁸ "Li Yizhe" *fangwenji* [Special Interview with the "Li Yizhe"], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 119-123

⁷⁹ Gao Jimin: *Jianchi makesizhuyi de guojia lilun zou Bali gongshe minzhu zhidu de daolu* [Support the Marxist State Theory – Take the Road of Paris Commune Democratic System], Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8, 95-96

⁸⁰ Gao Jimin, Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8, 96

What ails the hierarchal system is the lack of popular supervision, which alienates the cadres from the people:

*“And this leads to degeneration of the quality of the cadres [tuihuà bianzhi]. In a while, the people’s servants become people’s “masters”, that is, a new bureaucracy.”*⁸¹

Therefore, only by establishing the Paris Commune type of political system can the people grasp (*zhangwo*) the cadres and the productive forces and realise system of popular control (*renmin suoyou zhi*) and socialism. Indeed, Gao argues against the leftists and the rightists alike that

*“The criterion to distinguish between true Marxism is exactly the attitude to the abolition of the old state system and establishment of Paris Commune system (jiànbié zhenjia Makesizhuyizhe de shī jīnshí).”*⁸²

Gao also addresses the problem of low cultural level of the Chinese:

*“To establish the Paris Commune type democratic system requires certain cultural level from the people, the cultural level of the Chinese is very low, but although this is a definite hindrance in the reform movement, the [true] problem of the democratic reforms is the obstruction from numerous cadres who protect their own interests.”*⁸³

Gao furthermore argues that if the reforms had started in 1956 during nationalisation and collectivisation, the following problems would have been avoided. Yugoslavia is a country where they did it the right way right from the beginning.⁸⁴ With their system of popular supervision of the party they could overcome their economic and cultural backwardness and achieve living standards higher than those in China. *“Therefore, cultural backwardness cannot become the reason to oppose this reform.”*⁸⁵

But Paris Commune reform is not a one-off process that can be completed at once everywhere and at all levels from the periphery to the centre:

*“The reform steps will indeed have to be considered vis-à-vis the people’s cultural level, and must not exceed the actual level of [the culture of] the masses and propose programmes that are hard to implement. The reforms must proceed with the idea of raising the cultural level of the people according to the idea of “ship rises with the tide” [shuǐzhǎng-chuángāo]. Reforms advance culture, culture advances reforms. The development of culture and reforms will accelerate the whole country’s flourishing. If this is not understood and one does not reform and only waits for the rise of cultural level, the results of this waiting are not rising of cultural level, but the emergence of a great bureaucratic class.”*⁸⁶

⁸¹ Gao Jimin, Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8, 100

⁸² Gao Jimin, Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8, 101

⁸³ Gao Jimin, Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8, 102

⁸⁴ Also other authors see the Yugoslavian experience relevant and worth studying for China, see e.g. Han Zhixiong: *Lun jingji guangli minzhu yu zhengzhi minzhu* [On People’s Economic Democratic Management and Political Democracy], Beijing Spring 2/1979, CUP 2, 233-234

⁸⁵ Gao Jimin, Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8, 103

⁸⁶ Gao Jimin, Beijing Spring 7/1979, CUP 8, 103

This leads to vicious cycle where waiting leads to not reforming which leads to no economic development. More one waits, more serious the problems come. If there is no reform, then the alternative is a revolution more fierce than the Tiananmen riots.

Also Lü Min argues that the Yugoslav example gives ground for optimism even if the cultural level of the Chinese is still generally low. Here Lü develops an argument of what appears to be of mutual development of cultural level, economy and politics:

“They [the Yugoslavs] began the abolition of cadre appointment system in the late 50’s, and back then their economic strength and level of civilisation was lower than our now. So why could we not start this process?...in a country with backward civilisation, to gradually abolish the cadre appointment system must not wait for a certain level of economic development, they must advance hand in hand and correctly grasp the relationship between democracy and economy.”⁸⁷

Similar argument of the maturity of the Chinese workers to self-management is given by Li Yizhe,⁸⁸ who argue that

“In China workers with developed socialist consciousness (shehui zhuyi juewo) and culture (you wenhua laodongzhe), are demanding the actual power of managing the means of production, and that the higher [political] strata wholly represent the economic interests of the people.”⁸⁹

The confluence of consciousness-centred notions and institutional solutions to political reforms is evident also in ‘On the Abolition of the Hierarchical Bureaucratic System’⁹⁰, where Lü Min argues that in real Marxism the social problems should not be attributed to individuals, but to the social system. Attributing problems only to individuals is historical idealism, which the leftists practise. However, at the moment more and more people are realising this and the demands to abolish the whole bureaucratic system are increasing. This is the result of gradual learning of the people.⁹¹ Lü therefore detects an enlightenment progress in people’s thinking and seems to assume, that the people, especially the workers, are unspoiled by bureaucratic vested interests, and can therefore see through the false-consciousness created by the leftists and develop new consciousness that supports the establishment of Paris Commune institutions:

“...At the present there are many cadres, who proceed from protecting the special interests, twist Marx’s state theory [guojia xueshuo] trying to distort peoples’ thinking hiding the essential problems with this political theory in order to prevent the people from smashing down the hierarchal bureaucratic system. But the people cannot be deceived for long, in the final run the people can tell the difference between false teachings and completely grasp the pure quintessence, unequivocal objectives (?) and concentrate power to smash the hierarchal bureaucratic system.”⁹²

⁸⁷ Lü Min 1979, Beijing Spring 2/1979, CUP 2, 290

⁸⁸ *Fangwenji* [Special Interview with the “Li Yizhe”], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 119-123

⁸⁹ Li Yizhe, Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 122-123

⁹⁰ Lü Min: *Zai lun fachu dengjia shouzhi de guanliao tizhi* [On the Abolition of the Hierarchical Bureaucratic System], Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 190-193

⁹¹ Lü Min in Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 190

⁹² Lü Min in Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 193

The arguments of Lü Min use quotations from Marx and Engels, but echo the Maoist-leftist interpretation of the danger of the emergence of bureaucratic class that was dominant during the Cultural Revolution. The bad moral quality of bureaucrats is identified as careerism and bureaucratism. This is an indication of how isms - ways of thinking - are connected to institutional arrangements as both necessary condition for their proper functioning and their outcomes. Elections and supervision is needed to control the inherent tendency of moral deteriorating of an unsupervised bureaucracy. Indeed, no matter how much the old cadres fight, the system still will develop to be opposite to people if not reformed as the Beijing Spring writers propose.⁹³

Wen Qi gives similar reasoning in ‘On Self-governing Democracy and Withering Away of the State’⁹⁴. Wen argues that it is not enough to replace the individual soldiers and bureaucrats in order to prevent the alienation of the officials from the people. The whole systems, where they act on should be transformed into the self-governing democracy modelled after the Yugoslavian experience. The reason for this is clear:

*“Our Party uses over and over again the methods to get the cadres in touch with the people and [making them] learn through work, but bureaucratism still repeats itself, as does the phenomenon of becoming morally degenerate [tuìhuà biànzhi]. Is it not just because of the ‘state system’ causes this scourge?”*⁹⁵

Also Gong Ren sees the alienation of the party from the people as the biggest problem and advocates the abolition of the cadre appointment system and gradual establishment of Paris Commune style institutions.⁹⁶ However, as a response to the arrests of the most vocal activists of the Democracy Wall Movement in march-April 1979, Gong is more pessimistic of the possibility of quick progress. Here he employs a consciousness-centred argument for moderation:

*“Some youth demand democracy, they are sincere, but impatient for the results... and do not understand that in a country with a backward culture and lacking democratic tradition, trying to establish a beautiful democracy [rushing such things] could lead to its opposite.”*⁹⁷

Gong argues that common workers take democracy, human rights and freedom seriously. They just have to give it time and make the development gradual and this requires initiative from the people and transformation of the people and cadre’s consciousness.

*“But we have not lost our hearts, we believe that under correct leadership of the party we can enthusiastically and in a positive manner advance democratisation, implement the reform measures, first reform cadres’ quality, transform outer behaviour to inner behaviour [bian wai waixing wei neixing], scrupulously act according to economic norms. As the result China needn’t to worry about the future.”*⁹⁸

During the four modernisations the party should be the proletarian party of

⁹³ Lü Min in Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 192

⁹⁴ Wen Qi: *Zizhi minzhu yu guojia xiaomang xueshuo* [On Self-Governing Democracy and Withering Away of the State], Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 81-93

⁹⁵ Wen Qi, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 85-86, the quotation in 86

⁹⁶ Gong Ren *Yi pu shiji xing dong sheng guo yi da wang ling* [One Real Action Won One Great Guide], Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 91-96

⁹⁷ Gong Ren, Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 91

⁹⁸ Gong Ren, Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 92

*“[W]orkers who possess the spirit of sacrificing themselves, most enthusiastically progressive, rich in the spirit of struggle... Thinking must not be allowed to become ossified...”*⁹⁹

Also Gong sees that economic reforms and political ones must proceed hand in hand. Democracy is created like a brick tower: brick by brick.¹⁰⁰ Cultural level of the people will also rise along this progress and thus create a good cycle making wider democracy possible.

Similar confidence that the Chinese can be educated to understand the socialist democratic institutions is expressed by Su Ming in the ‘Tragedy That Might Happen in the Year 2000’.¹⁰¹ In his article the story is set to the year 2000, but the argument for supervision (*jiandu*) powers to the people is for the year 1979. Supervision power includes political, economical and legal content, like right to elect officials, personal freedoms and right to propaganda. Su Ming is confident that the Chinese people are mature enough to cope with the change. He argues that as the politics go through a such great change, also the people’s thinking will follow this change. Elections are a simple and familiar procedure. *“Just to write the name of the most preferred person on the voting sheet does not require anyone to guide you.”* Structural guarantees are anyhow needed that nobody forces one to vote against his or her sincere opinion.¹⁰²

However, no mental barriers evidently block the road. Indeed, as Su argues, socialist democracy on its own accord will teach the people to act right:

*“If the people really have the rights to take charge, apart from the benefits mentioned above, it would have wide and deep consequences. This kind of democratic education [minzhu jiaoyu] can remake the face of the Chinese people.”*¹⁰³

To want such socialist democratic rights is natural, because

*“The good outcomes are too many to enumerate... In history the rulers who wanted to be tyrants have been afraid of this kind of [popular] power, and have made them ignorant, dispersed them, and strangled them. Why should a socialist state still want to harm them? Harm them more than a feudal state would?”*¹⁰⁴

Therefore, supervision system should be established and democracy could be learned through practising it.

However, supervision system is a system that is designed to ensure the purity of the officialdom, not to make political system an open arena of competition and conflict solving. The justification of the system of popular supervision is mostly and primarily framed in the language of preventing moral deterioration of the officialdom, not through representing various interests or inherent rights of the people. Indeed, there is almost no talk about politicians, or creating them in the Beijing

⁹⁹ Gong Ren, Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 93

¹⁰⁰ Gong Ren, Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 95-96

¹⁰¹ Su Ming: *Keneng fashan zai 2000 nian beiju* [Tragedy That Might Happen in the Year 2000], Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 131-146

¹⁰² Su Ming Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 141

¹⁰³ Su Ming Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 142

¹⁰⁴ Su Ming Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 6, 143

Spring, but the political criticism is always about cadres or officials. Although it may appear as a trivial point, it is often lost in Western analyses of Chinese dissent. The Beijing Spring dissent, or remonstrance, is mostly about how to make the bureaucracy work for the people and provide what it needs (*wei renmin fu*), not to turn officials into politicians. The only one disagreeing on this point seems to be Min Ping¹⁰⁵ who argues that:

*“The iron bowl of cadres is the sole survivor of feudalism... The right to recall incompetent officials belongs to regular governmental life, and the recalled officials can still serve the people, they just have to correct their mistakes, receive the forgiveness of the masses, and then they can return to even higher leading positions.”*¹⁰⁶

Those selected from above according to the hierarchal system cannot be servants of the people, but a special privileged class of “successors”. The question of solving the successor problem is therefore a problem of finding persons of ability and the system of selecting cadres. However, here Min Ping makes a radical suggestion, which seems to imply free political competition: cadres have to take new uncommon stands (*liyì*) and compete one another (*huxiang jìngzhēng*) propagating their view on every occasion. As the consequence, those who are just copying ideas from others cannot become cadres. The people have to decide the outcome and here knowledge plays again a big role:

*“To ensure that the people can effectively enough enforce the right to election, their right to know the facts of a case (*zhīqíngquan*) has to be guaranteed, lacking knowledge (*zhīshi de pínfá*), hiding news from them (*xiāoxi de bìsè*), are the main obstacles in making the masses the masters of the society.”*¹⁰⁷

The supervision system proposed by the authors in the Beijing Spring is therefore not an argument for liberal competitive democracy, but a system whereby the correct functioning of bureaucracy is ensured through its high level of public-mindedness. The officials do not represent their constituencies’ interest vis-à-vis different other interest, but against their own interests as a class. The way the social development and establishment of new institutions is also made conditional to the cultural level of the people is also important to note –institutional solutions require consciousness-centred base even in Lü Min’s otherwise quite institutional articles, which make a clear difference between the structures and the men acting in them.

What Lü Min and others seems to imply, is that participation in ruling requires correct understanding of Marxism. This creates an interesting problem, which Lü does not address: do the people need to have correct Marxist consciousness in order to participate in socialist democracy as electors? Lü’s answer seems to be yes, as the way he criticises the leftist of advocating modern superstition and fooling the people to believe in wrong things means that there are certain conditions of correct consciousness for the people to participate in politics. The activists clearly have the credentials to participate in the reforms, but the writers quite never differentiate between the activists and the ‘people’ at large, which makes it unclear, how the right to participate and vote would be established in practise. It may be that the writers, who clearly know the Marxist theory quite well, believe that the workers have ability to grasp the true doctrines due to their class status. Here they for example do not address the problem of peasantry, which probably would have posed them some insurmountable problems.

¹⁰⁵ Min Ping: *Tan “zǔzhī bǎozhèng” he “xuǎnbá jiēbānrén”* [On Organizational Guarantees” and “Selecting Successors”], Beijing Spring 8/1979, CUP 9, 130-133

¹⁰⁶ Min Ping, Beijing Spring 8/1979, CUP 9, 130-131

¹⁰⁷ Min Ping, Beijing Spring 8/1979, CUP 9, 132

System Making People Bad

The way the activists perceive that they are dealing with consciousness-related phenomena are revealed also in the way they talk about their opponents. The problem of the old institutions is not only that they lead to the moral degeneration of the officialdom. The degenerated rulers also drag the people down to the same mire using ideology as their tool. Furthermore, the bad system makes the people behave badly. For example a short essay 'Flattery's Real Intentions'¹⁰⁸ discusses satirically the practise of flattery. This satirical essay identifies flattering as a central social problem. It is generally regarded despicable, but still widely practised, why? The source of the problem is given in the structure of society and the bureaucracy where only power means something. In China the officials have to flatter their higher ups in order to get promotions while ignoring or bossing around those under them. The logic of the situation makes people to continue flattering although they do not like it. Something should be done to the system that allows the harmful practises to exist. The result would presumably be a system that would value truth and not punish those expressing their truthful opinions. Here the system is bad because it makes the people behave untruthfully.

Leftism as an evil ideology is attacked head-on by Bu Shuming in *The Mystery of Modern Religion*.¹⁰⁹ In the article the writer equates the leftism practised by the Gang of Four and Lin Biao during the Cultural Revolution to religion. All the imaginary evils of old religions: persecution of non-believers, ignorance, hostility to science and practise, creating discord and social unrest, etc. are assigned to this 'modern religion' as well. Jiang Qing, her followers and Lin Biao were like the priest-queen and her bishops and priests. All were corrupt and rotten, usurping their powers, swallowing society's riches. For this they instigated struggles within the people.¹¹⁰

The old religion opposed science and practise because they could reveal the emptiness of its systems and wake people's pride so that he would not meekly obey their masters. Marx and Engels were scientists, but Lin and Jiang did not keep their light shining bright. They acted like sages and saviours of the people without whom the people would be doomed into ignorance. They replaced all sciences with their own 'modern theology' cum religion. They were far more than inheritors of feudal dictatorship -they developed it further. Now when they are gone, can we realise that democracy and socialist science are equally important. Declares the writer: "*Let us throw the Gang of Four's modern religion and the old religion together into the dustbin of history.*"¹¹¹

The article is interesting because it clearly makes beliefs as a central question in creating social reality, beliefs and knowledge can be good if scientific and critical, but as in the case of 'modern religion' they can become something that justify usurpation of power and silencing the critics. The low moral quality of the main leftist figures during the Cultural Revolution is graphically flaunted. Due to their evil nature the feudal dictatorship grew even worse under their rule, which helps to explain its dreadful consequences. On the other hand, the smashing of the Gang of Four and the

¹⁰⁸ *Pai Mazhe de kuzhong –Jianlun paimabide weide yiyi* [Flattery's Real Intentions –On the Flattering as a Great Opinion] Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 309-11; The article is dated 3.12.1978 and signed for the China Society University, Department of Political Philosophy, the College of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers

¹⁰⁹ Bu Shuming: *Xiandai zongjiao de mijue* [The Mystery of Modern Religion], Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 312-315

¹¹⁰ Bu Shuming, Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 313

¹¹¹ Bu Shuming, Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 314-315

present situation offer a chance to reverse this development through a return to truly scientific way of understanding society. The change of consciousness is therefore required from the people, now that the evil rulers and their institutions do not prevent this from happening anymore. The belief in science harks back to the May Fourth Movement's call for science and democracy. Interestingly, the writer manages not to mention Mao even once.

Wang Juntao offers another head-on refutation of the leftist doctrines in an interesting article 'On Testing the Theory of Left Opportunism'.¹¹² In the article Wang identifies source of the economic and political crisis in the incorrect application of Marxist theory, or indeed negligent disregard for its basic premises by the so-called 'leftist opportunism' and its theory of class struggle. Wang also refutes the leftist notion that history progresses through individual 'sage's' genius or that its retrogression can be explained by some bad individuals' effort. Instead, fundamental reasons behind social problems are economic, political and social. Wang attacks the leftist principle that "*consciousness / moral character determines all*" (*qingsheng jue ding yiqie*). The development of this mistaken notion is due to the fact that the leftist neglected the basic principle of historical materialism and class struggle: productive forces determine production relations, relations determine social systems and therefore ideas. Instead, the leftist ignored the first premise in analysing Chinese society and used the second principle in a superficial manner. The level of their studies was actually 'equal to capitalist historians'. The leftist criterions of deciding class enemies: political thinking, work style and political character were not truly objective class criterions. The reason for this misunderstanding was historical. When socialist thinking came to China, many thinkers could not understand it scientifically and rationally, but emotionally, based on their petty peasant / farmer thinking determined by the economic structure.¹¹³ Although Wang does not satisfactorily connect this early understanding of Marxism to the Party ideologues, the connection is presumably there.

Wang Juntao's article is interesting, as it shows almost paradoxical trends. On the other hand it strongly refutes the leftist doctrine of 'class-consciousness determines all'. And calls for 'objective' ways of defining class status. Nevertheless, it does not refute the importance of consciousness, as its explanation of the origin of the leftist fallacy demonstrates. Wrong (petty-bourgeois) thinking contaminated the correct understanding of the true principles of Marxism and using this mistaken understanding in politics has caused great havoc. So, consciousness-centred analysis is offered to criticise the use of consciousness-centred notions. This can be seen as a materialist attempt to regain the right to define Marxist orthodoxy and to refute the leftist Marxism as idealism. The criticism is therefore grounded in Marxist analysis of the development of consciousness: the reasons leftist Marxist understood Marxist principles in a wrong way have to lay in economic deep structure and petty-bourgeois thinking that is its result. However, the reason why the activists are not affected by it is in the Cultural Revolution and the *zijue* of the Chinese people, which the Fifth of April Movement showed.¹¹⁴ As such the article is not unique in the Beijing Spring.

History of Enlightenment

If correct consciousness is presupposed from the participants in the Democracy Wall Movement, how do the activists validate that they possess this consciousness? Not surprisingly, the contributors

¹¹² Wang Juntao: *Shixi zuoqing jihuizhuyi de jiaji dunzheng lilun* [On Testing the Theory of Left Opportunism], Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 159-164

¹¹³ Wang Juntao, Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 160-163

¹¹⁴ Wang Juntao, Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 165

in Beijing Spring employ only secondarily the language of legal rights as justification of their activism, although they do debate the rule of law or *fazhi* and the constitutional rights. As noted, these are institutional structures, and before one can talk about them one needs right credentials to use them in the first place. Indeed, quite all writers have to justify their activism in some other terms than simply claiming that they “have right to it”. This justification relies in consciousness-centred notions and historical narrative of enlightenment process of the activists. The Fifth of April Movement was an important event in building this justification. The direct historical connection of the Fifth of April Movement and the Democracy Wall Movement is therefore made clear times and times over. As one writer argued, the same young people that took part in the Fifth of April Movement can now be seen now at the Democracy Wall talking to each other: “*Compared to newspapers this is real enlightenment and true liberation of minds to advance democracy*”.¹¹⁵

Arguing the same point Chen Zimin describes his participation and activities at the Tiananmen Square during the Fifth of April Movement in clear consciousness-centred terms. For him it was as a moral choice between helping the people to advance truth, or letting it be, which would have been easier, but not right. Participation in the Fifth of April Movement was an occasion where one had to choose between the truth and lies and the struggle goes on: forces that oppose *fazhi* and democracy still exist and if they are not struggled, the four modernisations are in danger.¹¹⁶

Gong Nianzhou presents similar connection between the Fifth of April Movement and Democracy Wall Movement. According to him, after thinking of the lessons of the Fifth of April Movement, the people’s consciousness has risen and under the inspiration of the spirit of the Movement they have established the Democracy Wall and raised the banner of scientific democracy.¹¹⁷ Similar reasoning is found in an article advertising the Fifth of April Movement poems in the 3rd issue of the Beijing Spring. It declares that “*The Fifth of April Movement that erupted after the Qingming is a great revolutionary movement fighting for people’s democratic rights and opposing feudal-fascistic dictatorship.*” The collected poems of the Fifth of April Movement demonstrate the beginning of a new era and how the new superstition that had confined people’s thinking was broken into pieces. In the Fifth of April Movement is usually addressed in the similar language of enlightenment and knowledge.¹¹⁸

The articles in the Beijing Spring show how the writers accept the idea that the people have to be mentally ready for democracy. However, they also argue that thanks to their resistance to Gang of Four during the Fifth of April Movement they indeed are ready and therefore have the right to talk about the institutions of democracy in a ‘scientific’ spirit. They justify their actions by affirming this consciousness-centred condition by claiming that they fulfil it. The right to participate in political arena is therefore not justified only because they supported the winning side. It is justified because they were mentally mature enough to oppose the morally detrimental rule of the Gang of Four. The writers also imply that the process of maturing is therefore older than just starting in 1976 –it has lasted through the Cultural Revolution.

¹¹⁵ Min Tao: *Zhou Enlai jingshen wan sui!* [Long live the spirit of Zhou Enlai!], Beijing Spring 1/1979 in CUP 3 1981, 281

¹¹⁶ Chen Zimin: *Wu, Si yundong huijilu –Yongjiu zhunbei jieshou shidai de kaoyan* [The Fifth of April Movement’s Memoirs, Always Prepare to Accept the Trial of the Time], Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 300-303

¹¹⁷ Gong Nianzhou: *Zhi wen qishi* [Zhiwen Announcement] Beijing Spring 1/1979, CUP 3, 322-323

¹¹⁸ Xue Yuan: *Wu si shichao ji Jiang chuban* [Poems of the Fifth of April Movement to Come Out], Beijing Spring 3/1979 CUP 4, 210 (dated February 1979)

The Cultural Revolution as Background

The narrative of maturing consciousness of the Democracy Wall Movement activists does not start with the Fifth of April Movement. The story is taken a step further when Li Ying discusses the Li Yizhe in ‘Li Yizhe Is Innocent!’¹¹⁹ Here the writer argues for rehabilitation of the Li Yizhe members on the grounds that they have opposed Lin Biao, not Mao Zedong. Then he offers an account of Li Yizhe’s thinking by stating that the reason for the “On Socialist Democracy” poster in 1974 in Guangzhou was not surprising: the miseries brought upon the people by Lin Biao and the Gang of Four have taught the people. Li Yizhe were the first and most prominent representatives of the young people, who learned about politics through their own experience after throwing themselves into the Cultural Revolution with full enthusiasm. They represent the progressive forces of history. Many participants in the Fifth of April Movement knew the “On Socialist Democracy”.

Li Ying therefore argues that the enlightenment of many Democracy Wall Movement activist can be derived not only from the Fifth of April Movement, but from the experiences of the Cultural Revolution, directly and indirectly.¹²⁰ To bring it up in the Beijing Spring is to show the roots of resistance against the leftist. As the resistance to them began already during the Cultural Revolution, it is logical to make this connection and display it as a progressive trend that has existed as long as the leftists have.

To view the ongoing struggle as one between the progressive ones and evil ones is also clear in many accounts of the Fifth of April Movement and its aftermath. It is stated plainly for example In an article about the ‘Li Dongmin’s Counterrevolutionary Group’. The Li Dongmin’s group consisted of some 40 members, who planned to commemorate the Fifth of April Movement in 1977. They were arrested as counterrevolutionaries. As the writer argues, the case was a conspiracy by the *Gonganju*, Beijing Mayor Wu Han, and other leftists to suppress the struggle to re-examine the Fifth of April Movement: “Concerning the personal experiences of Li Dongmin and others during the Cultural Revolution and their moral character and political attitude, every [-one of these] liberated men had public mindedness.”¹²¹ But the conspirators suppressed and manipulated the people, fooled Hua Guofeng and others in order to violate people’s rights. The story is about ‘putting things straight’ i.e. rewriting history and creating a rightful narrative to show these credentials and the lack of them in the opposite.

The historical roots of the Democracy Wall Movement are discussed by ‘Fifth of April Movement warriors’ (“*Wu-si” zhànshì*), who are interviewed for the journal’s special issue commemorating the Fifth of April Movement.¹²² Although these interviews show a deep concern in legal rights and guarantees for the activists, they also discuss the Movement’s pedigree. As the editors state, the Chinese Socialist Democracy Movement was born under the white terror of Lin Biao’s and the

¹¹⁹ Li Ying: *Li Yizhe wu zui!* [Li Yizhe Is Innocent!] Beijing Spring 2/1979, CUP 2, 238-240

¹²⁰ This argument was general in the Democracy Movement and voiced also by some of those former Red Guards, who did not participate in the Democracy Wall Movement, See e.g. Rosen S. (1985): *Guangzhou’s Democracy Movement in Cultural Revolution Perspective*. In *The China Quarterly* 101 (March 1985), 1-31, 27-28; Zheng Yi (1996): *Scarlet Memorial – Tales of Cannibalism in Modern China*, trans. T. P. Sym, Westview Press, New York, 126-129

¹²¹ From a special reporter: *Li Dongmin “fangeming jituan” an shi yi da cuowu* [Li Dongmin’s “Counterrevolutionary Group” Is a Big Mistake], Beijing Spring 3/1979, CUP 4, 178-179

¹²² “*Wu si” zhantū tan minzhu –Fangwen jiyao* [The Tiananmen Incident Heroes Talk about Democracy –Interviews], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 93-103

Gang of Four's feudal-fascistic dictatorship. It developed through hardship from the Fifth of April Movement to the Democracy Wall.¹²³

Of the interviewees, Wang Lei gives what is probably the broadest analysis of the intellectual background of the Democracy Wall Movement:

*“The Fifth of April movement was a continuation of the Fourth of May Movement. Democracy Wall is the continuation of the Fifth of April movement. Nevertheless, the Fifth of April movement did not end in the toppling the Gang of Four. The Whateverists have inherited the mantle of the Gang of Four. Democracy Wall Movement has been from the beginning spearheaded against the Whateverists criticising and exposing them. Because our country does not have a perfect (wánshàn) political system, it has become the soil where the careerist can grow and multiply.”*¹²⁴

Not only is the past made to support the progressive and enlightened way of (at least the Beijing Spring part of) the Democracy Wall Movement activist. Also the future links to this, like Li Xilin, who connects the Democracy Wall Movement and the four modernisations as part of the same process, argues.¹²⁵ Also the maturity of the Chinese people to participate in government is discussed. Gao Jianying argues that the Chinese people should deeply remember the lessons of left opportunism suppressing democracy in the name of class struggle. Peoples' eyes are clear, they can elect their own leaders and their own road. *“Chinese people are not children - there is no need to hide truth from them”*.¹²⁶

Wang Lei is not the only one to connect the May Fourth Movement to the Fifth of April Movement and Democracy Wall Movement. Zheng Ming gives similar argument.¹²⁷ In a long article refuting the leftist arguments against the Democracy Wall Movement as a response to the arrests and tightening atmosphere in March. Zheng argues that the Socialist road, proletarian dictatorship, Party leadership, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought have been their goals for many decades and from the Fourth of May onwards many courageous people have sacrificed their lives for this cause. The struggle continued through the 10 years of Cultural Revolution and in the Fifth of April Movement.¹²⁸

According to Zheng Ming four cardinal principles make sense (*qínglǐ-zhōngshì*). But what makes the writer surprised is that the same people who benefited from the Gang of Four and continue to employ feudal-fascist methods also support the four cardinal principles on the surface. They now try to negate the third plenum of the eleventh central committee decisions on political ideological work and brand young people as counter-revolutionaries, trying to smear the youth as the captives of capitalist ideological trends (*zīběnzhǔyìsīcháo de fúlǚ*), and as the “black sheep (*hàiqúnzhīmǎ*)” harming the four modernisations.¹²⁹

¹²³ “*Wu si*” *zhantu tan minzhu –Fangwen jiyao* [The Fifth of April Movement Heroes Talk about Democracy – Interviews], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 93

¹²⁴ Wang Lei, Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 94-95

¹²⁵ Li Xilin, Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 99

¹²⁶ Gao Jianying, Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 97

¹²⁷ Zheng Ming: *Shei shi hai qun de ma?* [Who Harms the Masses], Beijing Spring 5/1979, CUP 7, 94-98. It can be noted that unlike usually mentioned in research, Beijing Spring argues for liberation of Wei Jingsheng already in this issue. (see p. 96)

¹²⁸ Zheng Ming, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 94

¹²⁹ Zheng Ming, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 94-95

To challenge this argument Zheng Ming reconstructs a historical counterargument about the spiritual development of the youth during the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution the naïve and unspoiled (*tiānzhēn-wúxié*) youth was used by others and deceived to take the road of evil (*qítú*) in politics. This was the shame on the youth, but the responsibility lies in the old cadres, who used the youth for their own purposes. However, for the youth the Cultural Revolution was the time of enlightenment:

“[D]uring the ‘reign of terror’ of Cultural Revolution, the youth saw through and rejected the false Marxism of Lin Biao and Gang of Four, personally experienced the extremely sad (cǎnjué-rénhuán) tragedy, the youth aroused themselves for the correct understanding of Marxism and its demands. Today’s youth is the awakened generation (juéxǐng yīdài), it is a generation that is concerned about the nation and the people (yōuguó-yōumín.) Fooled times and times again, they have learned to doubt and analyse, regardless if its about socialist or capitalist tenets they want to judge based on facts, study based on practise, not to be credulous and follow [them] blindly (qīngxì-mángcóng); Feeling strenuously around (kǔkǔ mōsuo) in the dark for ten years, they realised the value of truth. In a single day [they started to] firmly believe in the road of scientific socialism, they do not hesitate to defy the law and to use the young blood and bodies to spread out progress.”¹³⁰

Zhang continues by arguing that

“Some youth that do not understand Marxism have proposed naïve political ideas. Their mistaken ideas should be criticised and [they] should be helped.”¹³¹

However, first they must be analysed carefully. Most of them oppose strongly Lin Biao-Gang of Four feudal-fascism, are for the prosperity of fatherland, some of them use the capitalist “human rights” phraseology, but oppose private property and not public ownership, they simply want to realise the citizens’ constitutional basic rights. Although their language is sometimes aggravated and they criticise the party and socialism, they still are a part of the people (*shuyu renmin de fanchou*) and should be protected by law. Besides,

“At every turn to arrest people, is certainly not a good strategy in intellectual struggle but [it shows] weak nerves (shénjīng shuāiruò = neurasthenia), and weakness of the morality and justice (dàoyì) and mind (jīngshén) losing its faith... Everyone who has personally sought after the truth knows that the youth that have sincerely felt around for the truth and gone astray (wùrù-qítú) should not be likened to the counterrevolutionaries who have lost their ideals and ramble around (Sixin-tadi).”¹³²

Zhang argues for leniency and compassion in dealing with those young activists, who have been misdirected and made mistakes on ideological front. Indeed:

“The true black sheep are those who lay prone at worship (móbài) in front of the feudal tyrannical dictatorship’s bureaucratism.”¹³³

¹³⁰ Zheng Ming, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 95

¹³¹ Zheng Ming, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 95

¹³² Zheng Ming, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 96

¹³³ Zheng Ming, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 97

Also Zhang connects the cultural level of the Chinese to the state of the political system:

“Because our forces of production are extremely few and the cultural level of the people very backward (feichang luohou), for time being the sovereignty of the working class and the people is just legal, not factual, proletarian dictatorship is just dictatorship of the party that represents the interests of the proletariat, for the purpose of governing semi-literate (bànwénmáng) agricultural country, one has to revive bureaucracy, these constraints of the objective situation have caused these temporary measures to be taken.”¹³⁴

Here once again Zhang offers the Paris Commune system as the solution to the problem. It can gradually raise the cultural level of the people as well as do away with the maleficent bureaucratic practises. In the article the whole justification of activism is tied to the progressive nature and advanced consciousness of the youth that is the result of the Cultural Revolution and a historical continuation of the May Fourth Movement’s call for enlightenment. The argument of consciousness runs through as a defence of the arrested activists: their sincerity in the search for the truth must be tolerated even if they make ‘mistakes’ that is, stray out of the Marxist road. It is the lack of the same sincerity, which makes the leftists the true ‘black sheep’ at the moment and the greatest threat to progress in the form of four modernisations.

The historical credentials of the Democracy Wall Movement and the Beijing Spring are also established through articles and interviews of Li Yizhe group, which is well known to have opposed Lin Biao and the Gang of Four even before the Fifth of April Movement, and is in the same Marxist lines on the nature of needed democratic reforms with the Beijing Spring.¹³⁵ Beijing Spring’s writers’ self-perception vis-à-vis the party centre is probably best described by Wang Xizhe and Li Zhengtian when asked if Li Yizhe is an opposition faction and are they dissenters (*‘fanduipai’ he ‘chibutong zheng jianzhe’*). They answer that they are supporting the party and portray themselves as the “scientific socialism group” (*kēxuéshèhuìzhǔyìpài*). They used to oppose the Gang of Four and therefore by definition were ‘dissenting’ but now the things have changed. Now the party is returning to its good old ways and especially the result of the third plenum represented the interests of the people. They claim to support from the bottom of our hearts Hua, Ye and Deng and the Party core.¹³⁶

The similar narrativist technique of forming pedigree is used to discredit leftism. In the article ‘History Cannot Be Severed’ by Yi Ma the origin of the leftist opportunism is tracked down to the very beginning of the Party and all mistakes in the party history are attributed to it. The present whateverists are seen as its direct descendants.¹³⁷ Even here the Beijing Spring clearly equates itself to the correct party line and therefore to the progressive forces within it. As the writer argues, the popular support of the leftists during the Cultural Revolution was the result of their spreading of superstition before it. However, also the opposition to the doctrine of class struggle grew from the experience of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, its was a process of self-education for the Red Guards, who have carried this struggle on in the Fifth of April Movement and the Democracy Wall Movement. They have realised that it is not some individual bureaucrats that count, but the system. The Cultural Revolutionary experience is presented as follows:

¹³⁴ Zheng Ming, Beijing Spring 6/1979, CUP 7, 97

¹³⁵ “Li Yizhe” *fangwenji* [Special Interview with the “Li Yizhe”], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 119-123

¹³⁶ “Li Yizhe”, Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, *fangwenji* 121

¹³⁷ Yi Ma: *Nan yi ge duan de lishi* [History Cannot Be Severed], Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 126-133

“Youth that did not understand the truth about the calamities of many years put the blame completely on bureaucrats near them and entrusted their hopes to the higher level ‘complete authority’. They demanded socialist vitality and honesty and did their best to smash bureaucratism’s yoke, and give free rein to their own wisdom and wit... The Red Guards of those years are the representatives of this. During the Cultural Revolution the people educated themselves. From the experiences in their lives they came up with the profound conclusions that the new bigwigs are 100 times more evil than the old ones, the 11 years were not like the 17 years, the return of feudalism is more real danger than restoration of “capitalism”, [and] only opposing the “corrupt cadres” could not solve the hidden malaise in the society, the crazy superstitions and anarchism were not the solutions to bureaucratism and special privileges, only the socialist democracy and fazhi could bring about the Four modernisations in China and the bright future where the people are their own masters.”¹³⁸

The article by Yi Ma shows, how the activists interpret (party) history from the consciousness-centred view of creation and spreading of superstition and as an awakening process of the activists. They now rally people to oppose the new superstition of the leftists.

Some Tentative Conclusions

We find consciousness-centred notions as an element in wide range of the Beijing Spring’s arguments. They are present in the way the activist reconstruct their history as enlightenment process, they form the necessary condition for legitimate political participation of the Beijing Spring in the reforms the Deng’s faction seems to be promising, they can be found in the explanation of why and how the Cultural Revolution and leftist ‘superstition’ was possible to form and take hold, indeed the way leftism is talked about as ‘superstition’ itself reveals how the activist perceive the situation as dealing with evil form of consciousness to be eradicated. The need of political reforms and establishment of the Paris Commune type democratic structures are justified through the moral degeneration process the old bureaucratic system of appointing cadres makes possible. Indeed the supervision system is designed to counter this process. This argument is directed against the leftist neglecting all institutional features in their social analysis.

Therefore, it can be suggested that socialist democratic institutions the Beijing Spring activists propose are conditional to consciousness in two ways. First, institutions require certain level of consciousness from the people to function right; second, institutions affect consciousness of rulers and the people alike and should be judged through this influence. Much of the Beijing Spring criticism on the leftist institutions and rule is based on these premises. However, it requires that the Beijing Spring assumes the mantle of representing correct Marxist thinking, and by doing this Beijing Spring’s argumentation gets an implicit tone of condescend arrogance and intolerance towards left and right. Indeed, some of its authors do argue that those not understanding the things correctly must be re-educated. There is no tolerance to real free political debate in this. The Beijing Spring does not argue for liberal democratic institutions, and as it represents enlightenment and correct understanding of the truth, Marxism, it does not have to. Indeed, it leads to conditional understanding of democratic participation and institutions.

¹³⁸ Yi Ma, Beijing Spring 4/1979, CUP 5, 133