

THE DEBATE ON SCIENCE AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE IN 1923

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China's modernization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has often been perceived in terms of tension between traditionalism and modernism. Those Chinese intellectuals who did not embrace the Western ethos in its entirety have been depicted as obscurantists, intellectually obtuse and psychologically insecure, while their critics have been upheld as enlightened modernizers. The Debate on Science and the Philosophy of Life of 1923 is a case in point. A number of perceptive scholars have construed the whole episode as a conservative offensive against China's new culture movement. They viewed the proponents of the philosophy of life as sentimental traditionalists who clung to *passé* values, and credited the science exponents as harbingers of China's enlightenment.⁽¹⁾

As our understanding of modern China deepens, this interpretation must be seriously questioned. Although it is generally true that, prior to the Reform Movement of the Ch'ing, modernization efforts encountered some intransigent opposition, it was no longer so thereafter. Chinese intellectuals in increasing numbers came to the realization that "tradition" would not provide answers to China's plight and that only radical departures from the old ways could save her very existence. Studies by Benjamin Schwartz have persuasively shown that the generation of K'ang Yu-wei, Yen Fu, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, T'an Ssu-t'ang, Chang Ping-lin, Wang Kuo-wei and others was really the "breakthrough" generation; they were the real transformers of Western ideas and values, and their commitment to Western learnings was sincere and genuine.⁽²⁾ In view of

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- (1) See, for example, Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, pp. 129-160; Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967, pp. 199-208.
- (2) Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Introduction," in Benjamin I. Schwartz, ed., *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement: A Symposium*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972, pp. 1-13; Benjamin I. Schwartz, "The Limits of 'Tradition Versus Modernity' as Categories of Explanation: The Case of the Chinese Intellectuals," *Daedalus*, 101. 2 (Spring, 1972), 71-88.

their intellectual orientation, it can be said that they were the first alienated group in modern China who no longer felt comfortable to dwell in the realm of Chinese culture alone. Wang Kuo-wei's belief that Chinese philosophy could not render him sufficient satisfaction and his decision to explore Western philosophy unequivocally attested his feeling of estrangement. In the first years of the present century, events of profound significance, such as the abolition of the examination system in 1905 and the 1911 republican revolution, to mention but two of them, took place in rapid succession. "The 'Confucian state' in its last decade," Ernest Young states, "was merely an evocation of the past, not its continuation." This was so because "[o]nly virtual unanimity among leaders could have produced such unruffled assent to the conspicuous dismantling of the old structure."⁽³⁾

The May Fourth period proved to have been a turning point in terms of the self image of the Chinese and their perception of Western culture. In this era nearly all the reflective Chinese searched in Western ideas for inspiration, and the categories of analysis became predominantly Western. Some leading intellectuals even began to denounce their own past in its entirety and to adore the West with fanatical zeal. Ch'en Tu-hsiu, beginning in the mid-1910's, declared an all-out war against Confucian philosophy; in his "Diary of a Madman," completed in April, 1918, Lu Hsün called Chinese tradition "cannibalistic"⁽⁴⁾; and in 1921 Hu Shih concurred with Wu Yü that Confucian teachings were a "man-eating creed" and hailed him as "the old hero from Szechuan who beat Confucius and Sons single-handedly."⁽⁵⁾ At the same time, these leaders deified science and democracy and consciously promoted total Westernization. The tenor was such that Yü-sheng Lin characterizes it as one of "totalistic iconoclasm."⁽⁶⁾

To be sure, opposition to total Westernization even in the first years of

(3) Ernest P. Young, "Nationalism, Reform, and Republican Revolution: China in the Early Twentieth Century," in James B. Crowley, ed., *Modern East Asia: Essays in Interpretation*, New York, Brace and World, Inc., 1970, p. 151.

(4) The cultural iconoclasm of Ch'en Tu-hsiu and Lu Hsün is treated in detail in Yü-sheng Lin, "The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Iconoclasm in the May Fourth Era," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1970

(5) Hu Shih, "Wu Yü wen-lu hsü" (Preface to Collected essays of Wu Yü), in Wu Yü, *Wu Yü wen-lu* (Collected essays of Wu Yü), Shanghai, 1921, pp. 1-7.

(6) This is the most central theme in Yü-sheng Lin's dissertation. Lin states: "When the May Fourth iconoclasts made their attack on Chinese tradition, they were not interested in making analysis as such. They tended to label the target in totalistic terms." p. 5.

the May Fourth era was not absent, but it was not until 1919 that it became potent. Taking advantage of the First World War and of the self doubt of some leading European thinkers in the postwar period, a few reflective Chinese began to argue cogently in defense of certain elements of traditional culture and against an indiscriminate worship of the West. This conservative departure from the majority opinion eventually resulted in a debate in 1923 between them and the Westernizers. Contrary to the viewpoints of some scholars, I would like to suggest that the central issue to this debate was the direction and substance of China's modernization, not modernization itself. As Charlotte Furth has perceptively observed: "The important conflicts within the May Fourth movement were over the CONTENT of the 'new culture'."⁽⁷⁾ It is against this background that I propose to present a revisionist interpretation of the 1923 debate, focusing on Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Liang Shu-ming, Chang Chün-mai and their opponents: Ting Wen-chiang and Hu Shih.

I

One of the first significant figures to challenge the dominant iconoclastic mood of the time was Liang Ch'i-ch'ao. A leader of the Reform Movement, he differed with the May Fourth radicals in some fundamental aspects. Although Western secular knowledge held a prominent place in his mind, Liang did not become wedded to a cult of science as did his younger compatriots; nor did he perceive Chinese tradition and Western values as mutually exclusive.⁽⁸⁾ Needless to say, the May Fourth iconoclasm deeply disturbed him. As one of the seven unofficial delegates to the Versailles conference in 1919, he had an extensive tour of Europe and recorded his impressions at length.⁽⁹⁾ The atmosphere he discerned provided him the opportunity to convey his messages.

In Europe Liang found men in a postwar mood of exhaustion and futility. The European philosophers he talked to, including Henri Bergson, Rudolf Eucken, and Emile Boutrous, offered few words of reassurance. A root cause,

(7) Charlotte Furth, "May Fourth in History," in Benjamin I. Schwartz, ed., *Reflections on the May Fourth Movement*, p. 67. Emphasis original.

(8) On Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's intellectual outlook and on some of the differences between the reform leader and the May Fourth radicals, see Hao Chang, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971, passim and chap. 10.

(9) Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, *Ou-yu hsin-ying lu* (A record of impressions of travels in Europe). I have used the shorter version *Ou-yu hsin-ying lu chieh-lu* (A condensed record of impressions of travels in Europe), Taipei reprint, 1960.

Liang believed, lay in part in the direction of contemporary Western civilization. The belief in enduring values is an essence of human life, but the West was abandoning the belief. Above all else, the belief in the omnipotence of science helped uproot the enduring values in Western religion and philosophy and erode man's sense of certainty. The Western man became excessively aggressive and self-aggrandizing. Such a belief was also responsible for the genesis of a deterministic, scientific view of life. In increasing numbers, European thinkers subjected man to the analysis of the laws of necessity, denying the existence of free will and spirituality. "[T]hose who sang the glory of the omnipotence of science all wished that once science succeeded the golden world would appear," yet in effect the new trend of thinking failed to establish eternal truths in place of those it destroyed. "The Europeans have had a grand dream of the omnipotence of science, but now they are talking about its bankruptcy."⁽¹⁰⁾ A few Westerners even became convinced that the entire Western civilization had been bankrupt. Liang recollected the following conversation:

[A] noted American correspondent by the name of Simon.....asked me, "What are you going to do after you return to China? Are you going to introduce to China some Western culture?" I said, "Of course." He heaved a sigh and said to me, "Alas, Western culture is already bankrupt." I asked him, "What are you going to do when you return to America?" He said, "When I go back, I shall shut the door and wait. I want to wait until you have introduced Chinese culture to save us."⁽¹¹⁾

The position of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao needs a reexamination, for he did not analyze the European scene for its own sake. Contrary to what has been persistently depicted of him, he did not declare that science had been "bankrupt;"⁽¹²⁾ he did not view the prospect of Western civilization "with a trace of ironic satisfaction;"⁽¹³⁾ nor did he dwell "lovingly on European confusion and pessimism."⁽¹⁴⁾ Europe was no more than a backdrop in his mind. In so far as the West was the only referent among the majority of Chinese intellectuals, it was difficult to discuss China's problems without referring to it; in view of

(10) Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, pp. 12, 10-12.

(11) *Ibid.*, p. 15. Translations are those of D.W.Y. Kwok, *Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900-1950*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, p. 138.

(12) Hu Shih made such an allegation in his "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-Kuan hsü" (Preface to *Science and the philosophy of life*), *KHYJSK*, 1:3.

(13) Grieder, p. 131.

(14) Levenson, p. 200.

the profound Chinese inferiority complex, it was a painful necessity to point out the less godly aspects of the West in order to rekindle the Chinese sense of self-respect. What Liang proposed was essentially a frame of mind. The Chinese, he warned, should be more discriminating in borrowing from the West when EUROPEANS themselves were talking about the "bankruptcy" of science. On the other hand, he was quick to remind his compatriots: "The reader must not be mistaken so as to belittle science; I absolutely do not acknowledge the bankruptcy of science, though I do not recognize the omnipotence of science either."⁽¹⁵⁾ And he took pains to admonish them not to entertain any fantasy of the decline of the West.

Having heard of what I have described, you probably will conclude, "if what you say is correct, isn't the entire European civilization in total ruin? The material sphere has been so exhausted and the spiritual realm so chaotic, what then is left for her? Egypt, the Middle East, Greece, and Rome all accomplished splendid civilizations, yet all these civilizations have either vanished altogether or been periodically uprooted. Is the European civilization plunging toward the same destiny?"[M]y.....emphatic answer is, "No! No! Absolutely No!"⁽¹⁶⁾

To Liang the social, political, and intellectual foundations of modern Europe were rooted deeply and diversified enough to face the challenge. As in the case of Yen Fu, what impressed him the most was the supposedly inexhaustible potentials of Western individualism and democratic tradition which to him had tremendous regenerative power. Individualism and democracy would also make it possible for diverse philosophies to compete and flourish, arriving at a fundamental consensus based on which Europe would be able to sharpen constantly her outlooks. Liang also predicted that the catastrophic lessons of the recent war would prompt perceptive Europeans to perceive science as a means to promote general welfare, rather than an instrument to realize selfish ends. On the strength of these analyses he concluded that whereas the vicissitude of individual European nations could not be foretold, Europe as a whole would not collapse.⁽¹⁷⁾

Although consciously aware of China's plight in modern times, Liang did not believe that she should completely sever herself from the past to survive. Rather he maintained that a continuation of certain eternal elements in tradition

(15) Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, p. 12.

(16) *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

(17) *Ibid.*, pp. 16-20, 115.

is a prerequisite for a sense of balance and that any criticism of a tradition must be preceded by an understanding of its innate spirit. In the words of Karl Popper, "we have to know of and to understand a tradition before we can criticize it..... I do not think that we could ever free ourselves entirely from the bonds of tradition..... [W]e can free ourselves from the TABOOS of a tradition; and we can do that not only by rejecting it, but also by CRITICALLY accepting it."⁽¹⁸⁾ Liang cautioned: "We should realize that any system of thought must have its own period as the background. What we need to learn is the essential spirit of that system and not the conditions under which it was produced."⁽¹⁹⁾ The self-debasement and the unreserved worship of the West, therefore, were the most deleterious in his mind. He lamented, "If it is wrong to regard the teachings of Confucius, Mencius, and Ch'eng-Chu as the infallible gospel, is it appropriate to take those of Marx and Ibsen as such?"⁽²⁰⁾ Chinese culture, he acknowledged, did need stimuli from without, and they had to come from the West, for "their [Western scholars'] methods of study are highly refined..... and their thought has long been emancipated [from the bonds of the past]."⁽²¹⁾ However, the revaluation of Chinese culture and learning from the West should be preceded by a frame of mind "not constrained by a single preconceived notion."⁽²²⁾

Two years after the appearance of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's work, Liang Shu-ming, a philosophy professor at Peking University, also began to challenge the preponderancy of the West in Chinese consciousness. The occasion was a series of lectures he delivered in August, 1921 which, after revision, were published under the title *The Cultures of East and West and Their Philosophies*.

Liang Shu-ming embarked upon the study of the modern viability of Chinese culture in 1917 when cultural iconoclasm was ascending to its peak intensity. He was deeply saddened that the confrontation between the Chinese and Western culture had resulted in "an absolute victory of and a total dominance by the latter."⁽²³⁾ This was so not only due to the relentless Western onslaught on

(18) Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965, p. 122. Emphasis original.

(19) Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, p. 37. Translated in William Theodore de Bary, et al., comp., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2 vols., New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, 2:186.

(20) Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, p. 27.

(21) *Ibid.*, p. 28.

(22) *Ibid.*, p. 27.

(23) Liang Shu-ming, *Tung hsi wen-hua chi ch'i che-hsüeh* (The cultures of East and West and their philosophies), Shanghai, 1921, p. 4.

Chinese culture but also because of the self-abnegation on the Chinese part. Some Chinese "feel bashful enough unable even to open their mouths when speaking of Chinese tradition. Confucian ideas have become something which cannot openly face the world."⁽²⁴⁾ While speaking fondly of his heritage, however, Liang was never committed to any established state of affairs of either the present or the immediate past, and he was acutely aware of the dazzling achievements of the modern West. The concept of cultural nationalism, while singling out an important source of his intellectual orientation, does not offer a full explanation of his disenchantment with the science exponents.⁽²⁵⁾ Despite his special concern with the fate of Chinese culture, Liang was simultaneously attempting a general structure to confront dilemmas of modern culture. After two suicide tries in 1912 and 1913 respectively, he devoted himself to the study of Buddhism. Failing to acquire a complete satisfaction he turned to Confucianism. In 1918 his father Liang Chi committed suicide, which profoundly affected him. Imbued with a sense of the tragic and temperamentally and intellectually interested in transcendental philosophies, Liang Shu-ming so constructed his ideas that they went beyond his cultural identity crisis and his nationalistic sentiment.⁽²⁶⁾

Liang defined culture as "a way of life" of a given people and "a way of life" as the manifestation of limitless "wills." The divergent cultural styles hence are the results of different expressions of human will. Based on this premise, he postulated the existence of three ways of life depicting the major cultures in the world. The Western way is the first stage, most distinctive for its "intellect" — the endless forward surge, an assertion of man's dominion over nature, and a scientific approach to human problems. The second stage of cultural development is epitomized by the Chinese way of life, governed by an "intellectual intuition." Instead of an incessant pursuit of the unlimited desires, in the Chinese way man's natural instinct is guided by a refined intuition, and his life goal is to harmonize desires and seek self-contentedness. India represents the third and

(24) *Ibid.*, p. 206.

(25) A convincing refutation of cultural nationalism as the exclusive preoccupation of the cultural conservatives is presented in Wei-ming Tu, "Hsiung Shih-li's Quest for Authentic Existence," in Charlotte Furth, ed., *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 242-275, and Hao Chang, "New Confucianism and the Intellectual Crisis of Contemporary China," in *Ibid.*, pp. 276-302.

(26) For a brief account of Liang Shu-ming, see Guy Alitto, "The Conservative as Sage: Liang Shu-ming," in *Ibid.*, pp. 213-241.

highest way of life. Neither trying to satisfy nor harmonize wills, the Indian way completely negates desires and strives to achieve the vacuity of the mind.⁽²⁷⁾

Each of these three ways of life has weaknesses and merits, Liang maintained. The Chinese and Indian outlooks toward life were in the main responsible for their humiliations in modern times, for they were not able to compete with the intelligent, aggressive, scientific Western culture. The West, on the other hand, possesses precisely the qualities which China and India lack. The West's "achievements in science and philosophy are not matched by any other people by even one-ten thousandth..... Her refinement and sophistication in knowledge and thought excel those of all other peoples."⁽²⁸⁾ However, the West also suffered from her own success; her feats "have inflicted spiritual wounds and incurred suffering in her daily life."⁽²⁹⁾ Despite its splendor, modern scientific culture generated a sense of alienation and engaged man in a hopeless struggle for self-aggrandizement. Such a culture inevitably invoked disillusionment and revolt. Since the conclusion of the war, according to Liang, there had been an unequivocal trend in the West which valued moderation, human relationship, religion, and spirituality. This tendency, furthermore, was really an unwitting conversion to the Chinese way of life. "In essence the future culture of the world will be the revived Chinese culture."⁽³⁰⁾ After perfecting the qualities of the Chinese way, humanity would move on to the Indian stage.

In the meantime, the Chinese should engage themselves in a critical soul searching. Although India's is "the highest developed form of human culture,"⁽³¹⁾ Liang insisted that China at the present should categorically reject it. The development of human culture, he reasoned, cannot be forced. Man first has to look after the problems of survival; next he will have to learn to live with others with concord and to realize his limitations; only then will he be able to accomplish the absolute quietude of the mind. China's task at the moment was to adopt and modify certain Western elements without discarding the enduring features in her own past. Although considering machine to be "the devil of the modern world,"⁽³²⁾ he nevertheless acknowledged the indispensability of modern scientific culture. In accepting it Liang proposed that China transform

(27) Liang Shu-ming, pp. 24, 48-63, 158-160.

(28) *Ibid.*, p. 63.

(29) *Ibid.*

(30) *Ibid.*, p. 199.

(31) *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 113-114.

(32) *Ibid.*, p. 162.

its fundamental spirit so that science would no longer be an instrument of human greed. And to balance the aggressive and intelligent Western culture, the retaining of the Confucian moral-spiritual value would be imperative. What Liang Shu-ming had in mind were the Confucian emphasis on the cultivation of inner strength and an unsnobbish outlook, a benevolent attitude, the inculcation of a vivacious mind and of a spiritual hedonism, the mentality of perseverance derived from a deep compassion, a benign intuition controlled by a refined intellect, and a suspense of judgment toward any set doctrines.⁽³³⁾ Only then, he concluded, would China be able to withhold her spiritual independence and create a new culture to consummate the second stage of human development.

Liang Shu-ming's was a most ambitious attempt of its kind in the May Fourth period. His spirit was that of an evangelist. At the time when the lectures were delivered, he was merely twenty-eight years of age. His theory of the development of culture is quite problematical, and his conviction that the West was converging to the Chinese way was, in fact, no more than a wishful thinking. Like many of his compatriots, he too readily drew similarities and compatibilities between Chinese and Western ideas, unaware of their dissimilar concerns and diverse conclusions. However, Liang's understanding of Chinese culture was intimate and insightful. To him Chinese culture was not a social system dictating concrete modes of conduct, but rather a more generalized theory of timeliness, moderation, and harmony with the cosmos. These arguments, furthermore, were founded on his sincere belief that Chinese culture has its intrinsic worth. Viewed as a whole, Liang's philosophy significantly goes beyond the confines of Chinese culture and assumes a transcendent scope.

The most fundamental criticism of the notion of the omnipotence of science was rendered by Chang Chün-mai, a student of Confucian philosophy and European idealism. In the lecture which he gave at Tsinghua University on February 14, 1923, entitled "The Philosophy of Life," and in several essays produced both in 1922 and 1923, Chang eloquently took issues with the proponents of science. The Tsinghua speech, as it turned out, became the most direct cause for the inception of the Debate.

Chang Chün-mai was much perturbed that science had grown into a "superstition" in China. "For the last twenty or thirty years the central ideology of our learned circles has been the omnipotence of science... The very mention

(33) *Ibid.*, pp. 114-153, 211-214.

of science invokes a supreme deity whose dictates dare not be challenged by a divergent opinion."⁽³⁴⁾ Science, said Chang, is "objective," "analytic," based upon the assumption of the "uniformity of the course of nature," works within and is limited by the laws of causality. It does not attempt to answer questions of the highest order or deal with human mind. No matter how advanced it may become, then, science can never resolve the problems of a philosophy of life—the Weltanschauung which deals with the most immanent principles of one's existence. Life is a continuous stream of élan vital, consisting of man's most intricate psychological evolution, unique personality, and creative spirit. A philosophy of life, therefore, is "subjective," "synthetic," and has its own "free will." Its focal point is "I," not an inanimate object. There are different Weltanschauung simply because human beings possess their own free will and conscience.⁽³⁶⁾

Much of Chang Chün-mai's motif can be traced to the Lu-Wang school of neo-Confucianism and European idealism, particularly the philosophy of Henri Bergson. As Bergson conceived it, the universe was in a state of constant flux, in an "indivisible" ceaseless change. In such a state of ceaseless change, intellectual analyses are like "simple snapshots we have taken..... along the course of change;" they introduce stops or articulations into the ceaseless flow of reality, rather than reality itself. "Intuition," on the other hand, is "a philosophical method" by which one realizes one's participation in the vital surge of change, hence the inner meaning of life. As a revolt against European determinism and the mechanistic interpretation of life and the cosmos, Bergson's concept of free will emphasized the meaning of action and of responsibility for action.⁽³⁶⁾

Like Bergson, Chang insisted that "a philosophy of life is a complete totality which cannot be partitioned and analyzed."⁽³⁷⁾ Unlike Bergson, intuition, free will, and conscience in Chang's writings all implied the same thing: they

(34) Chang Chün-mai, "Tsai lun jen-sheng-kuan yü k'o-hsüeh ping ta Ting Tsai-chün" (Another discussion of the philosophy of life and science, and a rejoinder to Ting Wen-chiang), *KHYJSK*, 1:2.

(35) *Ibid.*, *passim*; Chang Chün-mai, "Jen-sheng-kuan" (The philosophy of life), in *KHYJSK*, 1: 1-13; Chang Chun-mai, "K'o-hsüeh chih p'ing-chia" (A critique of science), in *Ibid.*, 2: 1-10; Chang Chün-mai, "Jen-sheng-kuan chih lun-chan hsü" (Preface to The debate on the philosophy of life), in *Jen-sheng-kuan chih lun-chan* (The debate on the philosophy of life), Shanghai, 1923,

(36) Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans., Mabelle L. Andison, New York: The Wisdom Library, 1946, pp. 16, 30.

(37) Chang Chün-mai, "Jen-sheng-kuan," p. 7.

meant not only responsibility for action, but the Confucian moral knowledge and moral conscience as well. In other words, what he defended was the doctrine of "mind" of the Lu-Wang school and those values which he found congenial in the European idealistic philosophy. Moreover, his perception of these matters was intimately related to his comprehension of the meaning of determinism. In European traditions of materialistic metaphysics the universe of inalterable law is usually interpreted in terms of a strict metaphysical naturalism. Chang, on the other hand, associated this cosmic portrait with social, cultural, and economic phenomena of the industrial European culture. In the final analysis, the evils of industrialization disturbed him more than the logic of necessity. He saw the routines of machine as the things which are mechanistic, the restraints of human freedom, and the dilutions of man's sense of moral conscience.

Notwithstanding this difference between Chang's ideas and the European idealistic philosophy, his was a stand against scientism, rather than science itself. He at once faulted the scientific mentality as shallow and detrimental and praised the accomplishments of science. Conceived as it was by some contemporary Europeans, science, he held, had become an instrument responsible for the increasing commercialization of values, the conception of expansion and colonization as the ultimate national policy, and the tendency to negate the old in the name of the new. A materialist culture came into being.⁽³⁸⁾ Chang was aware of the dichotomous implications that such a term as materialistic civilization would evoke. Every civilization, he conceded, has its spiritual and material sphere. "When we say that Western ocean-faring ships and cable cars are material civilization, are not Chinese sailboats and carts also material civilization?"⁽³⁹⁾ But there is a difference in emphasis and in nature. He believed that in the West during the past three centuries much emphasis was placed on a mechanistic interpretation of human phenomena and excessive obsession with industrialization, resulting in the degradation of man's independence. Like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Liang Shu-ming, Chang was convinced that the First World War was a culmination of Western materialism and that the West had revolted against such an attitude. Unlike Liang Shu-ming, however, he did not believe that Europe would look to Chinese civilization for inspiration. Since every

(38) *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11; Chang Chün-mai, "K'o-hsüeh chih p'ing-chia," pp. 6-7; Chang Chün-mai, "Tsai lun jen-sheng-kuan yü k'o-hsüeh ping ta Ting Tsai-chün," *passim*.

(39) Chang Chün-mai, "Tsai lun jen-sheng-kuan yü k'o-hsüeh ping ta Ting Tsai-chün," p. 78.

people have their cultural heritage and psychological peculiarities, Europe would most likely seek a renewed strength in her own traditions.⁽⁴⁰⁾

It is against this background that one can understand Chang's reprobation of the apotheosis of the West. "My compatriots always take a hypercritical stand toward all of China's traditional learnings, such as the Confucian philosophy, yet they rarely display a critical faculty toward Western culture."⁽⁴¹⁾

While acknowledging that "China's traditional culture is corrupt to the extreme,"⁽⁴²⁾ he nevertheless held that a cultural reconstruction is more than an indiscriminate renouncement of the old. "Culture grows out of the inner spirit of a people..... It is individualistic and independent..... The direction of China's new culture must be determined by ourselves and by our own spiritual demands."⁽⁴³⁾ China's urgent assignment, he contended, was to assert the inherent values in her past as well as "to adopt from the West what is beneficial to us and get rid of [that which] is injurious."⁽⁴⁴⁾

Chang Chün-mai by no means advocated a return to the ideal of equalized poverty or urged that China remain bound to her primitive agricultural style of life. He conceded that industrialization could not be avoided and should not be discouraged, and he realized the imperativeness of fostering a democratic and scientific spirit. Notwithstanding this, he maintained that a balance should be struck between the impersonal, aggressive, material modern culture and the idealistic elements in tradition. To combat scientism he propped that the original spirits in Confucian philosophy and the philosophies of Kant, Bergson, Eucken be carefully distilled. Moreover, the humanistic insight of the former and the cognitive faculty of the latter should be made to complement each other. In addition to science and technology, education should emphasize aesthetic, religious, and philosophic appreciation. Metaphysics, in place of science, should be rendered as the most embracing, most synthetic knowledge.⁽⁴⁵⁾

(40) Chang Chün-mai, "Ou-chou wen-hua chih wei-chi chi Chung-kuo hsin wen-hua chih ch'ü-hsiang" (The cultural crisis of Europe and the direction of China's new culture), *Tung-fang tsa-chih*, 19.3 (Feb. 10, 1922) 117-121.

(41) *Ibid.*, p. 122.

(42) *Ibid.*, p. 121.

(43) *Ibid.*

(44) Chang Chün-mai, "Jen-sheng-kuan," p. 12.

(45) Chang Chün-mai, "Tsai lun jen-sheng-kuan yü k'o-hsüeh ping ta Ting Tsai-chün," pp. 67-68, 73-74, 84-95; Chang Chün-mai, "K'o-hsüeh chih p'ing-chia," pp. 8-9; Chang Chün-mai, "Jen-sheng-kuan chih lun-chan hsü," pp. 14-15, 16.

II

Since Chang Chün-mai's "The Philosophy of Life" constituted the most direct challenge to the conception of the omnipotence of science, it evoked an immediate rebuttal from science advocates. On April 12, 1923, Ting Wen-chiang, a British trained geologist, opened the first fire.

Metaphysics is really a worthless devil — having scraped along in Europe for something over two thousand years, until he is now coming to find himself with no place to turn and nothing to eat, suddenly he puts up a false trade mark, hangs out a new signboard, and comes swaggering along to China to start working his swindle. If you don't believe it, please just take a look at Chang Chün-mai's "The Philosophy of Life."⁽⁴⁶⁾

In view of the fact that Ting and Chang served together as China's unofficial delegates to the Versailles conference in 1919 and were longtime acquaintances, this attack was an especially instructive indication of the supreme confidence of the science exponents. Throughout the debate they labeled those representing the philosophy of life as "metaphysical ghosts" and often employed vituperative language.

To Ting Wen-chiang science represents a mode of thinking, a methodology which promises to be the only valid way of understanding life and the world. The sense of urgency prompted him to search for a blanket answer to and solution of all the problems China confronted, and the presumed objectiveness and universality of the scientific method and attitude provided such a formula. He asserted: "The omnipotence of science..... lies not in its subject matter, but in its method. Einstein's theory of relativity is science, James's psychology is science, Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's historical methodology is science, and so is Hu Shih's study of the *Dream of the Red Chamber*."⁽⁴⁷⁾ Furthermore, science to Ting deals with concrete, irreducible facts, and a scientific conclusion is derived from sense perception alone.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Empirical scientific methodology, according to his understanding, signifies clarity of the mind and an objective attitude both of which constituted an integral part of his cultural-intellectual reform measures. Ting argued thus:

(46) Ting Wen-chiang, "Hsüan-hsüeh yü k'o-hsüeh" (Metaphysics and science), in *KHYJSK*, 1:1. Translations are those of Grieder, p. 150.

(47) Ting Wen-chiang, p. 20.

(48) *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, 12-13.

Science.....is the best instrument available for education, because the daily search for truth, the constant desire to banish preconceptions, not only gives the student of science an ability to seek truth, but, moreover, it inspires in him a sincere love of truth. No matter what he may encounter, he can always proceed to analyze and examine it with detachment and candor, seeking simplicity out of complexity and order out of confusion, using reason to discipline his thinking and thus increasing his power to think, using experience to guide his intuition and thus enlivening his intuitive powers. ⁽⁴⁹⁾

In contrast, Ting viewed with deep suspicion, even hostility, all a priori knowledge and speculative thinking which in his mind are synonymous with utter irresponsibility and foolishness. In particular, he criticized the Lu-Wang school of neo-Confucianism as being devoid of meaning and detached from reality, and he attributed to it all the negative historical happenings in the late Sung, Ming, and early Ch'ing; it was the ultimate source of all evils. "After all," he concluded, "what is the value of such a "spiritual" civilization?"⁽⁵⁰⁾ Because of this irreconcilable misgiving, he severely distorted Chang Chün-mai's viewpoint which Ting equated with irrationalism. He expressed grave concern lest the young generation be misled by Chang that various problems "do not come under the control of theoretical knowledge. There are no right or wrong, true or false concerning them. All they need do to solve them is to apply a subjective, synthetic, free-willed philosophy of life."⁽⁵¹⁾

Ting's notion of science as a mode of thinking also enabled him to defend European civilization with great intensity and naivete. Though deeply committed to the application of science to the practical areas, he nonetheless disassociated science in Western society from any reality.

A laboratory and a factory are absolutely two different things..... The laboratory is the place where truth is sought, and the factory is the instrument for making money..... The great industrialists of Europe and America are for the most part men like our military governors and inspectors-general, of inferior birth and without scientific knowledge.⁽⁵²⁾

It was the industrialists then who engendered human greed and materialistic

(49) *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21. Translations are those of Grieder, p. 158. Ting's views in this regard were quite similar to those of Yen Fu's. See Benjamin I. Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964, *passim*, and Charlotte Furth, *Ting Wen-chiang: Science and China's New Culture*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University press, 1970.

(50) Ting Wen-chiang, pp. 27-28.

(51) *Ibid.*, p. 18.

(52) *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22. Translations are those of Grieder, p. 159.

tendencies. Religion, symbol of human ignorance in Ting's mind, was equally responsible for the troubles of Europe. Theologians, he told us, were the most unscientific in attitudes and convictions and yet dominated one of the most vital human activities, education. In England, "not a single head master of the prestigious secondary school is not a clergyman; even nine out of ten deans of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge are clergymen."⁽⁵³⁾ Ting's view concerning the role of science in politics was the most radical of all. He demanded that only those with knowledge of "science" be qualified as politicians. "We need only look at those men who, never having studied science, have served as British and American parliamentarians, prime ministers, and presidents to know that science has never directly influenced politics."⁽⁵⁴⁾ These premises enabled Ting to conclude: "even if European civilization were bankrupt (which is not the case), science is absolutely not responsible for it."⁽⁵⁵⁾

Psychologically, science was a means for Ting Wen-chiang to achieve a sense of emancipation. In him we find a compelling urge to transcend all the conventions and accomplish an identification with the all-powerful science.

Only when one comprehends the manifold relations of the universe, of the biological and psychological realms can one become truly aware of the happiness of life. This kind of "vivacious" state of mind can be thoroughly appreciated only by those who explore the infinity of the universe with a telescope and who peer into the minutia of the living world with a microscope.⁽⁵⁶⁾

To the May Fourth romantic writers, love was a symbol of defiance and a means of transcendence. As Hsü Chih-mo conceived it, "[t]o love is an act of supreme honesty and defiance — stripping oneself of civilized hypocrisy and renouncing all the external restraints of artificial society so as to merge ecstatically with nature. The consummation of love, which may lead inevitably to death, also brings ultimate freedom." In particular, "Hsü wanted to rise above all the 'sorrow and joy, parting and reunion, strife and existence' of life in twentieth century China. For Hsü, to fly also means to attain total freedom, to go beyond the reaches of social convention."⁽⁵⁷⁾ Science afforded Ting the same end. The romantics and science worshippers partook of one thing: they

(53) Ting Wen-chiang, p. 24.

(54) *Ibid.*, p. 25. Translations are those of Grieder, p. 159. n. 80.

(55) Ting Wen-chiang, p. 22.

(56) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

(57) Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 162, 172.

both wanted to liberate themselves from all the traditional bounds and achieve a sense of immortality and supreme ecstasy by coalescing with what they considered to be an all-penetrating, everlasting truth. It was the embrace of such a "universal" truth such as "love" or "science" which in an extremely depressing setting of reality afforded many Chinese a feeling of new identity and of arrogance.

On the intellectual plane Ting Wen-chiang demanded that science be the instrument to unify man's outlook. To him all the reality that man can know anything about is part of the natural world; and all true knowledge of this world is scientific knowledge. Differences in beliefs, Ting held, derive from man's imperfect knowledge, emotions, and mental derangement. When these are eliminated by science, a "unified" philosophy of life would emerge.

Chang Chün-mai has said that philosophies of life are "the most divergent of all" and that the scientific method cannot be applied to them. However, it is one thing to say that the philosophy of life cannot be unified for the present but quite another to state that it can never be unified. Unless you can prove that it can never be unified, we certainly have the duty to unify it. ⁽⁵⁸⁾

The Debate lasted a good part of 1923 and engaged a number of the leading intellectuals of the day. Not until late November, however, was a verdict passed. The arbiter was Hu Shih, probably the most influential intellectual in the nation. It is he who put forward a "scientific philosophy of life" in the long prolegomena to the anthology of the debate literature.

Like Ting Wen-chiang, Hu Shih saw science as an attitude and a methodology. The method of science, said he, "is nothing more than 'respect for facts and evidence.' In application, it is none other than a 'boldness in doubt and hypotheses coupled with a meticulous care in seeking verification.'" ⁽⁵⁹⁾ Hu took facts, evidence, and verification to mean the empirically provable objects and processes, and he believed in the universal validity of such a methodology with a religious devotion. "We may not easily and lightly admit that God is omnipotent, but we certainly believe that the scientific method is omnipotent and that man's future is inestimably large." ⁽⁶⁰⁾ Like Ting Wen-chiang and Yen Fu, the empirical

(58) Ting Wen-chiang, p. 3.

(59) Hu Shih, "Chih-hsüeh ti fang-fa yü ts'ai-liao" (The methods and materials of scholarship), *Hsin yüeh*, 1.9 (Nov. 10, 1928) 1-2.

(60) Hu Shih, "Wo-men tui-yü Hsi-yang chin-tai wen-ming ti t'ai-tu" (Our attitude toward modern Western civilization), *Hsien-tai p'ing-lun*, 4.83 (July 10, 1926) 88.

nature of science as Hu understood it would provide a corrective to China's cultural diseases. To underscore his message Hu on occasion even likened the method and spirit of the Ch'ing textual research to those of modern science.⁽⁶¹⁾ The bestowing of such an honor on the textual scholarship was in part a direct refutation of the Lu-Wang metaphysics which Hu considered to be a most baneful element in Chinese tradition.

The empirical bent in Hu Shih's thinking reflected a strong traditional influence in sharp contrast to the more discrete trend in the West which emphasizes "scientific imagination." Despite his frequently caustic remarks on Chinese culture, Hu was heavily, if unwittingly, influenced by the practical traditional mode of thinking. Dewey's role in this regard then was to a large extent one of providing confirmation and authority to Hu's conviction, and the confirmation was dictated by his temperament and particular concerns.⁽⁶²⁾ Dewey conceived scientific method as "the only method of thinking that has proved fruitful in any subject." While "the laws of science are universal..... their universality means abstractness and remoteness."⁽⁶³⁾ Although unreservedly espousing the universal nature of the scientific method, Hu Shih paid no attention to its abstractness and remoteness. Whereas Dewey regarded scientific method as essentially a thinking process, Hu Shih, on the other hand, perceived science as an all-inclusive system of nature which not only reveals objective reality concerning the physical universe but also prescribes the only legitimate outlook on human life and society.

Hu Shih outrightly rejected the contention that Europe was in a state of crisis. He dismissed Western soul-searching following the war as no more than

(61) Hu Shih, "Chi-ko fan li-hsüeh te ssu-hsiang-chia" (Several anti-neo-Confucian thinkers), in Hu Shih, *Hu Shih wen-ts'un* (Collected writings of Hu Shih), 4 vols., Taipei, 1971, 3:53-107 (written in February, 1928); Hu Shih, "Ch'ing-tai hsüeh-che te chih-hsüeh fang-fa" (The scholarly methodology of Ch'ing-period scholars), in *Ibid.*, 1:383-412 (dated Nov. 3, 1921); Hu Shih, "The Scientific Spirit and Method in Chinese Philosophy," in Charles A. Moore, ed., *The Chinese Mind*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, pp. 104-131. Hu was aware of the strenuousness of his efforts to establish similarities and compatibilities between the Ch'ing textual research and modern science. Instead of being taken at their face value, Hu's efforts should be understood in the broad context of his intellectual and psychological tension and of his cultural-intellectual reform program. I shall elaborate on these in greater detail elsewhere.

(62) On Dewey's influence on Hu Shih, see Grieder, pp. 44-51, and *passim*.

(63) John Dewey, "Science as Subject-Matter and as Method," in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed, Reginald D. Archambault, New York: The Modern Library, 1964, pp. 184, 191.

a reflection of "the pathological mentality of war-stricken Europe,"⁽⁶⁴⁾ and he denounced such thinkers as Bergson and Eucken as "reactionary philosophers who, in the course of things, have eaten to repletion of the delicacies of science, and then casually grumble a bit, like the rich man who has eaten his fill of meat and fish and then wishes to taste a little salted vegetable or bean-curd."⁽⁶⁵⁾ In the West, Hu noted, where there was a firm appreciation of science there was no need to be gravely concerned when a few "metaphysical ghosts" assaulted it. However, the situation in China was different. "At the present time, China has not yet enjoyed the blessing of science.....how much less, then, can we speak of the 'catastrophe' that science brings with it?"⁽⁶⁶⁾ A close look here reveals that Hu distorted not only the complaint of the two Liangs and Chang but the atmosphere in the nation as well. Hu's own words unwittingly refuted his own argument.

During the last thirty years there is one term which has acquired a supreme position of respect in the country. Whether people understand it or not, whether they are conservative or progressive, they all dare not reveal an attitude of contempt toward it. That term is "Science." [E]ver since the reform movement of the 1890's, there is no one who calls himself a forward-looking person who ever dares belittle "Science."⁽⁶⁷⁾

Hu Shih was displeased with the outcome of the Debate: he complained that, with the exception of Wu Chih-hui, all the science exponents occupied themselves with the hypothetical question as to whether science can indeed resolve all the problems of a philosophy of life. To him the only issue of meaning was to promulgate a scientific philosophy of life.⁽⁶⁸⁾

Hu first put forward his philosophy of life in February, 1919 in the essay "Immortality — My Religion" in which he took issue with some major conventional concepts. He dismissed the religious notion of immortality of the soul as groundless and found fault with the Confucian concept of Three Immortalities (san pu-hsiu) as expounded in the *Tso Chuan* — exemplary virtue,

(64) Hu Shih, "The Civilizations of the East and the West," in Charles A. Beard, ed., *Whither Mankind: A Panorama of Modern Civilization*, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928, p. 25.

(65) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," p. 7. Translations are those of Grieder, p. 157.

(66) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," p. 7. Translations are those of Grieder, p. 157.

(67) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," pp. 2-3.

(68) *Ibid.*, pp. 1-25.

outstanding deeds, and everlasting written records. This Confucian idea, according to Hu, is too "exclusive" for only those with exceptional qualities can expect to achieve the immortal status. To remedy the shortcoming he proposed the concept of Social Immortality in place of the ancient doctrine. Everyone, he said, is "immortal" in the sense that he is the product of everything that has gone before, and his own actions, whether he wills them or not, must affect the lives of all those who follow after.

.....the individual self, which is the product of the accumulated effect of the social self, leaves an indelible mark of everything it is and everything it does upon that larger self which may be termed Society, or Humanity, or the Great Being. The individual may die, but he lives on in this Great Self which is immortal. ⁽⁶⁹⁾

By advocating a social immortality Hu Shih tried to accomplish two vastly diverse aims. Great Self first of all meant a particularistic entity in his mind—the CHINESE society. In this essay he strove to instill among the Chinese a high sense of responsibility for their own conduct: everyone should endeavor to put himself to good use for only then will he discharge his responsibilities toward the past and leave no evil legacy to the future. Hu Shih took issue with the "exclusive" Confucian concept of immortality, the Chinese concern with the continuation of family names, and the religious interest in the salvation of soul precisely because he wanted to create a stronger sense of participation and of community, and a socially oriented morality. In this regard Hu Shih was far more articulate than, but his concern was not radically different from, his contemporaries.

Paradoxically, however, "Immortality — My Religion" also displayed a perspicuous aspiration in Hu Shih to disavow himself from the Chinese affairs and signified his psychological quest for a sense of symbolic immortality. It is instructive to note that the Great Self was also a discrete concept—Great Being, Humanity. ⁽⁷⁰⁾ By emphasizing "Social Immortality" Hu Shih rejected the more "narrow" sense of biosocial immortality—living on through one's sons and daughters and their sons and daughters, by imagining an endless chain of biological

(69) Hu Shih, "Pu-hsiu — wo-ti tsung-chiao" (Immortality — My Religion), *Hsin ch'ing-nien*, 6.2 (Feb. 15, 1919), pp. 100-105. These ideas are condensed and translated in Hu Shih, "My Credo and Its Evolution," in *Living Philosophies: A Series of Intimate Credos*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931, p. 259.

(70) These exact terms do not appear but their meaning is obvious in his Chinese essay.

attachment. The disconsolate state of Chinese conditions pushed him to seek a psychological mastery of external events and an inner sense of continuous symbolic relationship over time and space to the supposedly endless continuation of mankind. Indeed he felt so alienated that he wanted to sever all relations with Chinese familism and the Chinese sociocultural center as a whole. To be sure, Hu's severe criticism of the Chinese family system was intimately related to his concern with personal freedom and the development of individuality, but there was a psychological aspect as well. Shortly after the birth of his son Hu Tsu-wang in 1918, he made the following unusual comment:

This child did not himself freely propose to be born and live in my family. We, the parents, did not receive his agreement but casually endowed him with life.....I want my son to know that I feel toward him only a certain contrition; certainly I take no credit for myself, nor do I boast of my own kindness. As far as my son's conduct toward me in the future is concerned, that is his own affair. ⁽⁷¹⁾

To live for Humanity, to live for posterity other than one's own, thus satisfied an important psychological craving. Old values and consensus had broken down. A sensitive soul often felt a great deal of loneliness. He thought that he was constantly misunderstood, that he had no one to share his inner world, and that he was the only person with feasible ideas for the time. There was a certain sense of tragic heroism and more than a slight trace of arrogance. Unable and unwilling to compromise himself, he became a lonely voyager. While yearning for companionship and understanding, he nonetheless guarded his desolateness with equal earnestness as a symbol of independence. To live for and with Humanity, then, Hu Shih could "be with many without being with anybody in particular." ⁽⁷²⁾

Not until the 1923 Debate did Hu Shih obtain another opportunity to present a more systematic outlook which he termed "a framework for a new philosophy of the universe and life." Evoking the authority of various sciences he arrived at the following conclusions:

1. "the world of space is infinitely large."
2. "the universe extends over infinite time."

(71) Hu Shih, "Wo-ti erh-tzu" (My son), *Mei-chou p'ing-lun*, no. 33 (August 3, 1919), p. 3. Translations are those of Grieder, pp. 102-103, n. 31.

(72) Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1963, p. 162.

3. "the universe and everything in it follow natural laws of movement and change..... There is no need for the concept of a supernatural Ruler or Creator."
6. Various sciences have revealed "the history and causes of the evolution of living organisms and of human society."
7. "all psychological phenomena are explainable through the law of causality."
8. "morality and religion are subject to change..... [T]he causes of such change can be scientifically studied."
9. "matter is full of motion and not static."
10. "the individual self is subject to death and decay, but the sum total of individual achievement.....lives on in the immortality of the Larger Self; to live for the sake of the species and posterity is religion of the highest kind; andthose religions which seek a future life either in Heaven or in the Pure Land, are selfish religions." (73)

On the basis of these premises Hu Shih offered his view of man's place in the Universe.

[M]an has his proper place and worth in that world of infinite magnitude..... [H]e has.....studied and discovered a considerable number of the secrets and laws of nature by means of which he has become a master of the natural forces.....

The increase of his knowledge has extended his power, but it has also widened his vision and elevated his imagination..... [H]e..... is slowly coming to a realization that the infinity of space only enhances his aesthetic appreciation of the universe, the infinite length of geological and archaeological time only makes him better understand the terrific hardship his forefathers had to encounter in building up this human inheritance, and the regularity of the movements and changes in the heaven and on earth only furnishes him the key to his dominion over nature.

Even the absolute universality of the law of causality does not necessarily limit his freedom, because the law of causality not only enables him to explain the past and predict the future, but also encourages him to use his intelligence to create new causes and attain new results. (74)

This was Hu Shih's most forcible declaration of the omnipotence of science. In his mind, science is the key to human freedom and creativity; it uncovers the secrets of the universe and enables man to gain a complete control over it, hence his own fate. In a word, science would offer the only universal solution

(73) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," pp. 25-27. Translations are Hu's own in his "My Credo and Its Evolution," pp. 260-261.

(74) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," p. 28. Translations are Hu's own in his "My Credo and Its Evolution," pp. 262-263.

to whatever problems China was confronted. This was, of course, precisely the point of departure for Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Liang Shu-ming, and Chang Chün-mai. To them, science, despite all its might, cannot assuage man's spiritual crises in any fundamental sense. Unfortunately, this most irreconcilable issue between the two groups was lightly bypassed by Hu Shih.

As the concept of "Social Immortality" gave him the sense of freedom from the confines of Chinese society, the scientific philosophy of life provided Hu Shih with an instrument by which to transcend all the visible and invisible bounds. By holding the key to the secrets of the universe, by being the master of external forces, Hu the "scientific" man now dwelt "in the universal" free of and transcendent from any cultural, geographical, and psychological restraints. His conception of science also gave him supreme confidence and a sense of irrepressible ecstasy. He was fully liberated from all the enslavements of the past, present, and future; he was on top of the Olympus, appreciating the movement and evolution of the universe.

Hu Shih's was the conceit of a person who took upon himself "the load of the universe."⁽⁷⁵⁾ He was unaffected by William James's horrifying vision of the "utter final wreck and tragedy..... of scientific materialism."⁽⁷⁶⁾ On the contrary, Hu put himself forward proudly as an espouser of a "purely materialistic, purely mechanistic philosophy of life."⁽⁷⁷⁾ Furthermore, he was unconcerned with Dewey's admonition against a "militant atheism." As Dewey wrote,

Militant atheism is.....affected by lack of natural piety. The ties binding man to nature that poets have always celebrated are passed over lightlyA religious attitude, however, needs the sense of a connection of man, in the way of both dependence and support, with the enveloping world that the imagination feels is a universe. Use of the words "God" or "divine" to convey the union of actual with ideal may protect man from a sense of isolation and from consequent despair or defiance.

.....A humanistic religion, if it excludes our relation to nature, is pale and thin, as it is presumptuous, when it takes humanity as an object of worship.⁽⁷⁸⁾

(75) John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, New York: The Modern Library, 1922, p. 331.

(76) William James, *Pragmatism and Four Essays from The Meaning of Truth*, Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957, p. 76.

(77) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," p. 13.

(78) John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934, pp. 53, 54.

Hu Shih affirmed, instead, that "to live for the sake of the species and posterity is religion of the highest kind."

Hu Shih made it known that science is the only true source of human knowledge. Since his overriding concern was to apply science to the non-science areas, it became unavoidable that he considered scientific laws and value judgment to be organically associated. The difficulty he encountered, however, was more than he realized. A scientific law is factually neutral; it describes an unchanging regularity in nature. A value judgment, on the other hand, is the result of the interaction of many factors; it must pertain to but it cannot be derived from facts. The relationship between fact and value judgment, therefore, is that of one to many. Unmindful of this, Hu Shih insisted that a certain scientific assertion necessarily yields a predetermined view. Despite the claim that his scientific philosophy of life "is a hypothesis founded on the generally accepted scientific knowledge of the last two or three hundred years,"⁽⁷⁹⁾ Hu was convinced that by the effects of "education and propaganda" this scientific view would become a "more or less uniform" human outlook.⁽⁸⁰⁾

III

The above analysis demonstrates that it is erroneous to assume that the philosophy of life advocates were less genuinely committed to China's modernization or more emotionally charged toward their own past than their adversaries. By the May Fourth era, Chinese intellectuals had long passed the stage of debate as to WHETHER China should modernize herself. Instead the major question was the content of modernization, and it was here that lay the irreconcilable difference between the contending groups.

The views of the two Liangs and Chang can be said as conservative, but they were by no means traditional. While critical of many aspects of Chinese culture, they were not prepared to abandon their own past in its entirety. On the personal level, they lived comfortably in the realm of Chinese tradition. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Chang Chün-mai were deeply convinced that the preservation of China's cultural quintessence would serve as a vital link of balance between the old and the new. In addition, all three believed that China's past indeed had something intrinsic to offer to the future culture of China. These

(79) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," p. 27. Translations are his own in "My Credo and Its Evolution," pp. 261-262.

(80) Hu Shih, "K'o-hsüeh yü jen-sheng-kuan hsü," pp. 23-24.

conclusions were more based upon painstaking reflections than upon cultural pride or blind psychological allegiance to something called "the past." To be sure, Liang Shu-ming, and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Chang Chün-mai to a lesser degree, were not entirely exempt from psychological tension, but their unconscious emotional commitment was far less pronounced than some scholars have described. Moreover, in view of the traumatic cultural dislocation of modern China, compassion for and loyalty toward the past would be essential for a less disruptive cultural transformation. It can indeed be argued that an abrupt and complete severance with even the most obsolete traditional value system would only perpetuate cultural chaos and psychological estrangement.

For their part, the science exponents were the irrevocably alienated members of China's new intelligentsia. Estranged as they were, they found no satisfaction in Chinese tradition on the personal level, and they viewed their heritage with hostility and even debilitation. Certainly their daily behaviors were to a large extent influenced by the traditional mode; and both Ting Wen-chiang and Hu Shih spoke fondly of the Ch'ing textual scholarship. However, the traditional flavor of their behaviors was manifested only on the most unconscious level, and their equating the spirit of Ch'ing textual research to that of modern science was none other than an argument of expediency. Furthermore, because of their emotional intensity and superficial understanding of the West, the science proponents were not immune from naive and even irrational reasonings. In spite of their sincere aspirations for their country and people, the total effect of their argument was in the main negative in spirit. From the historical point of view, the indiscriminate advocacy of science by these leading intellectuals made China's cultural transformation all the more traumatic.

In view of the mood of the times, the outcome of the Debate was predetermined. Whatever the argument of the philosophy of life defenders, it would not have appealed to the majority of the educated elite. Hu Shih's retrospection of the episode ten years later accurately summed up the general attitude at the time.

When a part of the controversial literature was collected, it amounted to over 250,000 words. With the exception of a few conservative scholars..... the majority of those who took part in this debate were on the side of science which they held to be capable of dealing with all problems of human life and conduct. ⁽⁸¹⁾

(81) Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934, p. 91. The book consists of the lectures delivered in July, 1933 at the University of Chicago.

科學與人生觀之論戰

周 明 之

近人治中國近代史，每以國人過於保守，缺乏現代眼光，以至貽誤再三，而近代化終無所成。殊不知近代化之要件繁多，而尤不可少者，乃心理之平衡及對現代各種觀念之領悟貫通。倘一味師法西洋，則不但昧於國中實情，且心理及文化上失所憑依，其害大矣！

國人自民初以來，迷信科學萬能，深信一旦獲此至寶，即萬事備矣！成見既生，則科學之性質功能均不再探究。一九一九年以來，梁啟超，梁漱溟，張君勱等先後著論，欲將此一心理，加以糾正。梁啟超之中心思想與 Edward Shils 諸氏不謀而合。梁氏及 Shils 均認為「傳統」自有其可取處。在近代化之過程中，傳統穩定人心，使心有所主，而有所建樹。故國人之視中國傳統不可一味輕藐，恣意譏評。梁漱溟則以維護儒家之理想為其宗旨。蓋抽象之價值與實際之政事制度，有其精神及層次上之分野。國人萬不可以國中政事不修而捐棄傳統，迷信科學。張君勱遊學於 Henri Bergson 諸人，對於科學之本質及限制加以檢討。以科學無所及於價值判斷，故亦不能自成一哲學系統。三氏均以科學乃西方近代文明之精髓而不可忽視，然國人亦不得於科學在文化，社會上之破壞性無所瞭然。

張君勱之「人生觀」成於一九二三年初。文成後，主張科學諸人紛加責難，以「玄學鬼」之名冠之。丁文江以科學之方法萬能，西方之社會動亂，戰事頻仍，及侵略成性，均非科學之疚，並堅信科學之發達，將造成一統一之科學人生觀，則世界大同，指日可待。胡適亦以建立「科學的人生觀」為己任。其對科學之性能，乃全盤性之維護。蓋二氏以科學乃一超越國界之價值系統，則信仰科學，亦使其超越中國之文化及社會所囿也。

梁啟超，梁漱溟，張君勱等，已非清末之「中體西用」派所得同日而語。彼等之議論，雖非盡善，然均能洞悉國人之心理危機，瞭然於中外學術，覓自救之道。亦多發人深省之處。