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European Enlightenment in the Chinese Context



I. An Overview of the European Enlightenment in China

During the late nineteenth century, Chinese newspapers and magazines began to introduce the European Enlightenment movement to China. This process began in 1872, when *Ying Huan Suo Ji* magazine published the serial novel *Night and Morning* which looked at the repressive regime of the French Bourbon monarchs and how their rule had provoked Enlightenment thinkers at the time "to focus on learning, to debate in public, to take pride in talent in lieu of given authority, to voice the people's hardship and to enlighten the reasoning of the world". This set of ideas, advanced for its time, had eventually led to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. On 12 June 1875, the Chinese journal *Wan Guo Gong Bao* also published an article entitled "Translation and Analysis of Republic Nations and Their Constitutions and Parliaments", which described how the doctrines of human rights, freedom and equality of rights were what formed the foundation of Western politics. Western countries were viewed as being governed by their people, and with all men created as equals, and therefore no better or worse in their origins. Although the above introductions were brief, they marked the introduction of the European Enlightenment thinking to the Chinese people.

In addition, the many Chinese travelling abroad at the time began to pay greater attention to Enlightenment thinkers. On 3 April 1878 Guo Songtao in his *London and Paris Diary* mentioned how Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and Voltaire (1694-1778) criticised the ruling priest class in their books. In 1879 Huang Zunxian (1848-1905) became an ambassador to Japan and was influenced by the Japanese Civil Rights Movement. He also read the works of Rousseau, which changed his way of thinking; he wrote to Liang Qichao (1873-1929): "when I first arrived in Japan, I was often with my old companions who were mostly students of Sokken Yasui. Around the year 1879-1880, the idea of suffrage and civil rights was very popular. When I first heard about it, I was quite taken by surprise, and subsequently went on to read Rousseau and Montesquieu, and my mind was changed. I believed that to have peace in the world we must have democracy, yet I could not find a person to discuss it."

Prior to 1895, China's intellectuals had had limited exposure to the European Enlightenment. However, beginning in 1895 and following the First Sino-Japanese War, China's intellectuals and scholars began to be exposed to the European Enlightenment through the translated works of Japanese scholars, and began to take notice of the

Enlightenment movement. This phenomenon was related to China's historical backdrop at the time: the Qing dynasty was defeated during the First Sino-Japanese War and was forced to cede territory and pay indemnities. From here on, more Chinese students began to travel to the United States, Europe and particularly Japan to study, reaching a total of 40,000 students who went abroad between the years of 1896 and 1911. These Chinese intellectuals who made contact with Western civilisation were eager to find new ways of thinking to help revitalise their nation, which they saw as being in decline. China viewed the strength of the European powers as being linked to the role that the Enlightenment served in that region's historical development, and believed that European countries came to democracy and prosperity through Enlightenment philosophies. It was in this context that the European Enlightenment ideas came into China.

Overall, the introduction of the European Enlightenment into China took place through two broadly distinct channels. The first channel was through the Chinese youth who went to Japan to study and brought back to China the social changes of Enlightenment thinking. Such young people were exemplified by Chen Tianhua (1875– 1905), who expressed his radical nationalist ideology in the two articles "Fiercely Looking Back" and "Alarm to the World". There were also journals, such as *Min Bao*, that promoted the ideas of Rousseau and of the French Revolution, and that advocated that revolution was a necessary path to change for China. The second channel was through the Chinese who went to study in the United States, and who focused on more moderate elements of Enlightenment thinking, which centred on the principles of change through moderation and of the individual spirit of thinking. This latter group of students is exemplified by Hu Shi (1891–1962), who advocated the idea of the individual, contemplated on the meaning of freedom, and proposed that "tolerance is more important than freedom". Similar ideas can also be found in publications such as the journal *Critical Review*, which promoted the spirit of academics and the social responsibility of scholars, and called on intellectuals to turn closer towards nature and to actively foster the ideal of a model citizen in a republican nation.

Chinese intellectuals at the time were gradually introduced to Enlightenment thinkers from many countries, including the United Kingdom's Francis Bacon (1561–1626), John Locke (1632–1704), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Isaac Newton (1643–1727) and Edward Gibbon (1737–1794); France's René Descartes (1596–1650), Montesquieu (1689–1755), Rousseau, Voltaire and Denis Diderot (1713–1784); and Germany's Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), Christian Wolff (1679–1754) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). The Chinese took from these the key Enlightenment concepts of freedom, equality, the meaning of citizenship, the concept of a nation state, republican legislation, academic spirits, and, most notably, the aspiration for social change.

However, the Enlightenment in twentieth-century China also differed significantly from the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The European Enlightenment occurred at all levels – including the human spirit, social reform, and the relation between man and society – and each level had its own process of gradual improvement and modification. However, for China, various viewpoints of the European Enlightenment came to bear all at the same time and left people at a loss. For example, in the European Enlightenment the concept of human freedom was first understood as gaining independence from the Church, followed by cultivation of the spirit of self-reliance, and only thereafter finally leading to individual freedom. In China however, a departure from old customs, spiritual self-reliance and individual freedom were put forth all at the same time. This contraction of social changes made it exceedingly difficult for China to transform Europe's Enlightenment ideologies into practice.

According to Tawney's view:

"[The] economic, political and intellectual movements, which elsewhere made their way by gradual stages and small increments of growth are, in the China of today, in simultaneous ferment. The Renaissance; nationalism; the attempt to create a sovereign, unitary state, and its struggle against local particularism and centrifugal ambitions; the beginnings, on the eastern seaboard and rivers, of an industrial revolution, with the criticisms and aspirations which are its natural accompaniment; the reform of local government, of education, of the financial system, and of the complicated structure of Chinese jurisprudence; the partial dissolution of the venerable institution of the Chinese family, with the whole system of personal responsibilities and social relations of which it was the centre—all these, and much else, have been crowded into the space of little more than a generation." (Tawney 2001: 34–35)

One hundred years of European Enlightenment ideas came to China in the span of a single decade, and this left intellectuals struggling with the difficulty of choice. Simultaneously, China faced the problem of declining national power, and the combined result was that the Enlightenment in China became closely associated with revolution, and ultimately served the revolution.

II. The introduction of the European Enlightenment into Chinese Modern Journals

For roughly the time roughly the time between the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the May Fourth Movement in 1919 – European Enlightenment ideas came into China in large quantities and received a tremendous response in the country's intellectual circles. Before 1895, Chinese thinkers knew little about Western socio-political thought and also lacked a strong desire to understand the West. After 1919, Marxism and the Russian Revolution came into China, and the influence of the European Enlightenment gradually declined. The two decades between the First Sino-Japanese War and the May Fourth Movement therefore was the period during which the European Enlightenment had its greatest impact on China.

During this period, China saw a growing number of political journals and a diversity of published content that was unprecedented in the country's history. The journals that introduced Enlightenment thinking included *New Youth (La Jeunesse)*, *Critical Review*, *Qingyi Bao*, and *Min Bao*, *New Wave*, most of which were founded by people who had studied in the West or in Japan and had backgrounds in Western education. These journals typically shared the following characteristics. Firstly, at the early stages of the journal's founding, the journal introduced and utilised the fundamental concepts of the Enlightenment, such as freedom, equality, democracy, republicanism, the nation state, science, the academy and others, to explain their position. Secondly, these journals called for young people to become independent and self-reliant as a prerequisite for helping the country to save its future. Thirdly, during the later stages of the journal's development, different political opinions would emerge and lead into endless ideological debates, and it was within this context that Marxism would take root in China and gradually overshadow the previous Enlightenment discourse.

The contribution of Chinese Modern journals to the introduction of the European Enlightenment into China lies in three areas: first, the introduction of the Enlightenment attitude; second, the adoption of Enlightenment concepts in a way that aroused young

people's political awareness; and finally, the desire by followers to change the backwardness of Chinese society through revolution.

A. The Introduction of the Enlightenment Attitude (using Critical Review as an example)

Critical Review magazine was founded in January 1922, and was discontinued in 1933 after the publication of seventy-nine issues. Its main founders were Hu Xian, Mei Guangdi and Wu Mi, all of whom studied in the United States. The manifesto of the *Critical Review* was: to conduct academic research, to seek truth, to raise awareness of cultural legacy, to understand new knowledge and to be critical from an objective perspective. It aimed to not belong to any party, to not conform to any biases, to not be radical, and to not blindly follow. It also aimed to reveal the glory of the nation's culture.¹ This school of thinkers was referred to at the time as the "critical review school", and because of their criticism towards the New Culture Movement they were also seen as believers in cultural conservatism and revivalism.

Though *Critical Review* was viewed as Revivalist, this was not a comprehensive view. The approach which *Critical Review* took towards the New Culture Movement did not criticise the concepts and beliefs of the Movement, but instead criticised the so-called "evil" elements they perceived within the Movement. These are alluded to in their statement: "they are not thinkers but sophists; they are not creative but are derivative; they are not true scholars, but opportunists; they are not educators but politicians." (Mei 1922). In addition, *Critical Review* did not indulge in criticism of the New Culture Movement, but rather agreed with the Movement in some aspects.

The concept of the Enlightenment were clearly revealed through *Critical Review*. The journal's emphasis on cultural heritage aimed to help people regain a sense of history and to rebuild the nation's cultural identity. This emphasis was essential to confronting the influx of Western thoughts at the time, and in providing a foundation of Chinese heritage through which people could avoid the feeling of loss brought by superficial Westernisation. At the same time, *Critical Review* allocated special focus to the attitude of enlightenment, and advocated that scholars should be independent-minded, noble and truthful in their search for truth. It advocated that critics be knowledgeable, fair and socially responsible. In addition, the journal introduced the broader theories of the European Enlightenment, including the promotion of freedom, equality and republican concepts, and reflected in depth on the effects of these concepts as a way to guide the thinking of China.

In short, the journal *Critical Review* had an academic understanding of the European Enlightenment movement. In the clash of an advanced West versus a backward China, and of Western cultures versus national traditions, the journal adopted a critical attitude towards all these issues in order to strengthen China's advantages and prevent China's weaknesses. To put the Enlightenment into practice, *Critical Review* looked first to understand the Enlightenment's history, and only afterward sought to cultivate a critical spirit.

¹ Manifesto of *Critical Review*.

B. The Introduction of the Enlightenment Concepts (using the *New Youth* and *New Wave* as examples)

In September of 1915, Chen Duxiu (1879–1942) founded *Youth Magazine* in Shanghai, which was later renamed *New Youth*, after the release of its second volume. From that point on and up to July 1922, a total of fifty-four issues were published, bounded into 9 volumes. Chen Duxiu, Qian Xuantong, Gao Yihan, Hu Shi, Li Dazhao, Shen Yinmo and Lu Xun all served as editors for the journal.

Overall, *New Youth* promoted democracy and the sciences, and had a major impact on the New Culture Movement in China. However, it paid little attention to the historical background of the European Enlightenment. Its aim was to arouse young people's free thinking towards the spirit of republicanism and revolution and towards social responsibility. The journal argued that revolution was a key path to rescuing Chinese society's ongoing decay, and such Enlightenment ideas advocated by it were centred on the people's political consciousness. In the face of its critical domestic reality, *New Youth* gradually moved towards Marxism and advocated proletarian revolution.

Chen Duxiu's experiences during his studies in Japan explained the attitude of revolution adopted in the *New Youth*. The Meiji Restoration in Japan and the growing European influence over Asian heritage were all closely linked to the introduction of the Europe Enlightenment movement in China. *New Youth* actively advocated for the natural correlation between the Enlightenment and revolution. The journal wrote: "The main ideas of the Declaration of Human Rights state: first, rights of freedom and equality exist from birth; second, that national sovereignty belongs to the people; and third, that laws are determined by a general will" (Gao 1915 b); "*The Social Contract* states that the founding of the nation must rely on everyone's self-awareness and a consistent emotion, and that from this laws and regulations are formed, making judgments system to enforce a collective will. The principle of *The Social Contract* lies in democracy." (Gao 1915 b)

New Youth introduced the concept of national freedom by citing the example of Edmund Burke's (1729–1797) attitude towards Britain's reign over its North America colonies:

"Edmund Burke, a person from Dublin [said that] the love of liberty is the nature of the Americans. Britain also loved liberty in the past and it should continue to do so today. Britain should embrace its liberal spirit, to allow its colonies to develop and prosper with it. Although British power over the colonies is legal, it is indeed incompatible with the concept of liberty." (Gao 1916)

New Youth held on to a very specific description of the concept of personal freedom. For example, Gao Yihan (1884–1968) stated that there are two layers of meaning in the concept of freedom: first is self-restraint, to respect the freedom of others; second is independence, to be free from the influence of others. He wrote: "self-restraint is autonomy, and freedom from other's restraint is freedom." Following similar lines, Bao Shengkui wrote: "self-restraint is to restrain one's individual interest to accommodate a collective interest; to give away personal interest for the goodness of the community." (Gao 1916 b). Such ideas from the journal's contributors were quite consistent with the definition of individual freedom proposed by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873).

New Youth in particular paid attention to the education of youth and strived to make them into virtuous patriots. The journal introduced both the European Enlightenment movement and also the French Revolution, in the hopes of starting a revolution in China to reform the country. *New Youth* was replete with statements such as:

"The nation is weak, moral and learning has decayed, and responsibility for the country rests in youth. The youth of our country are still in the learning stage, but they should look out to the world. This journal uses plain language to speak the noble truth. It strives to gather all scholarly matters that suffice to raise the interests of youth. We hope to provide you with spiritual assistance in your spare moments of learning."²

These words reveal the historical background from which *New Youth* was founded, and speaks of the founders' eagerness to introduce China's youth to the Enlightenment.

In short, the early stage of the *New Youth* journal began with the introduction of Western theories concerning the concepts of freedom, equality and revolution, and in the later stage the journal would slowly turn towards the introduction of Marxism. Yet throughout, the journal's aim of raising social awareness in the youth and its position to use revolution to strengthen the nation never changed.

In January 1919, another influential journal, titled *New Wave*, was founded and it also attached great importance to Enlightenment concepts. This journal was established in a different way from that of other leading journals of the time.

During the early 20th century, some scholars launched a movement to systematise China's cultural heritage in order to rescue the "quintessence" of the nation. During this same period, other scholars hoped to introduce Western thoughts to China in order to modernise and reform the nation. At the beginning of 1919, students from these two schools of thought founded the "Cultural Heritage Society" and "New Wave Society" at Peking University. The *New Wave* journal was a publication founded by the members of the "New Wave Society", who included Luo Jialun (1897–1969), Fu Sinian (1896–1950), Yang Zhensheng (1890–1956) and Gu Xiegang (1893–1980). *New Wave* was similar to the *New Youth* journal in that its purpose was to raise the reader's social awareness. It was also similar to *Critical Review* in how it embraced the European Enlightenment movement, explored the scientific spirit, and searched for societal elements that would propel social progress. The core members of the *New Wave* journal were students, and therefore the style of its writing was lighter and removed of the severe critical tone that characterised other contemporary journals.

The *New Wave* journal concerned itself with social change. In light of both the international and domestic political conflicts faced by the country at the time, *New Wave*, along with the journal *Min Bao*, recognised and argued for the need for revolution in China and strongly promoted the ideals of the French Revolution:

"The French Revolution had a great impact on the liberation of Modern thought ... First, it influenced the reform of education. Following the theories of Diderot and Danton, it changed class education into equal education. Second, it influenced the transformation of art from an entertainment of the elite class to the realistic portrayal of the common people. Third, it influenced the political transformation which allowed the working class to participate in politics. In terms of the Revolution's significance globally, it announced three tenets to the world – freedom, equality and fraternity." (Luo 1919)

² Manifesto of *New Youth*.

C. From Enlightenment to Revolution (Using *Min Bao* as an example)

Min Bao was the official publication of the China Alliance Society (also known as the China Federal Association). Founded in Tokyo in November 1905, *Min Bao* promoted the Three People's Principles (*San-min* Doctrine) advocated by the Society. Compared with the *Critical Review*, *New Wave* and *New Youth* journals, *Min Bao* was firmer and more direct in its campaign to promote revolutionary ideals in order to create positive social change. The writings of *Min Bao* also introduced the Enlightenment movement, but did so with the main purpose of using this movement to launch a revolution.

The logic of *Min Bao* Enlightenment served as a means to Enlightenment served as a means to create public opinion for revolution, as in the example of when Enlightenment thinkers advocated for a Republic and individual freedom in order to inspire the revolutionaries to obtain these goals; second, the European autocratic monarchs and the Church oppressed the people to the point that revolution was inevitable; third, it was through revolution that the United States and France had emerged prosperous and stronger. Faced with tyranny and oppression, Chinese people needed to similarly resort to revolution to advance themselves on the road towards prosperity and power.

To serve the above aims, *Min Bao* vigorously introduced the French Revolution and also debated the necessity of revolution with the *New People's Journal*, where it won a complete victory. *Min Bao* published many articles to support the call for revolution, such as "History of Chinese Revolution" (Chen Tianhua, Issue I), "Biography of Gambetta: Builder of the French Republic" (Ma Junwu, Issue I), "Constitutions in China Must First Come from Revolution" (Issue II), "Biographies of the German Social Revolutionaries" (Issue II), "Roar of the Lion" (posthumous manuscripts of Chen Tianhua, Issues III to IX), "Rebuttal of Recent Argument against Revolution Published in *New People's Journal*" (Wang Zhaoming, Issue IV), "The Future of Revolution" (Feng Ziyou, Issue IV), "Rebuttal of the Argument that Revolution Will Result in Partition" (Wang Zhaoming, Issue VI), "The Moral of Revolution" (Zhang Binglin, Issue VIII) "Rebuttal of the Argument that Revolution can Result in Chaos" (Wang Zhaoming, Issue IX), "Critique of Kang Youwei's article 'The History of the French Revolution'" (Wang Dong, Issue XI) "The Power of Revolution" (Wang Dong, Issue XVII). In addition, the illustrations in *Min Bao* also promoted revolution, such as a depiction of the French Revolution in ("Capturing the Military Storage by the French Citizens", Issue II), Decapitation of French King Louis XVI (in "the Ends of Autocratic Monarchy", Issue V), the Phenomenon of French Revolution (Issue XVIII), the Expeditions of the National Protection Army's Youngsters during the French Revolution (Issue XVIII), the Number One World Advocator of Democracy: Rousseau (Issue I). In 1907, after the publication of its twelfth issue, *Min Bao* published a temporary supplemental issue called *Tian Tao*, which included articles such as "Censure of Manchuria", "Declaration to the Han People", "Declaration of Sichuan Revolution", and "Declaration of Jiangsu Revolution".

Among all the contemporary journals in China at the time, *Min Bao* was the journal which most ardently advocated revolution. The introduction of the European Enlightenment in *Min Bao* became primarily a call for revolutionary against autocracy; other ideals emphasised by the Enlightenment, such as of individual autonomy in thinking and spirit, were neglected.

Journals during this period of time in China served as a major medium for the introduction of the European Enlightenment to the Chinese people. Through a critique of the shortcomings of the old system of China, the journals sought to promote the concepts and spirit of European Enlightenment, and hoped to strengthen the nation

through reform and revolution. In turn, the journals formed a public sphere of exchange and debate that itself embodied the characteristics of the Enlightenment.

III. Chinese Modern Thinkers' Interpretation of the European Enlightenment

Chinese contemporary thinkers can be broadly divided into three types according to their understandings of the European Enlightenment: the first type of scholar, represented by Liang Qichao and Hu Shi, believed that the Enlightenment could promote the gradual improvement of society; the second type of scholar, represented by Yan Fu (1854–1921) and Li Dazhao (1888–1927), believed that the Enlightenment could be used as a tool for national salvation; the third type of scholar, represented by Sun Zhongshan (1866–1975), believed that the Enlightenment was a prerequisite to revolution.

A. Advocacy of the Enlightenment to Promote Social Improvement (with Liang Qichao and Hu Shi as an example)

Liang's interest in the Enlightenment lay in his belief in the power of scholarship, learning and knowledge. The Enlightenment was based on scholarship, but it has the power to influence social change. Liang understood the social significance of the works and achievements of the Enlightenment thinkers, and proposed the idea that "scholarship controls the world." He wrote:

"All the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the things we use, the ways we travel and the things we know, did any of them not come from knowledge and learning? This is knowledge used by average people. To give examples of scholarship of learned individuals which changed the world: first, the astronomy of Copernicus; second, philosophies of Bacon and Descartes; third, *The Spirit of Laws* by Montesquieu; fourth, Rousseau's advocacy of human rights; fifth, the theories of electricity by Franklin and the invention of steam engine by James Watt; sixth, the economic theory of Adam Smith; seventh, the theory of the Nation-State developed by Bluntschli; and eighth, the theory of evolution by Darwin." (Liang [1902] 1999 b)

Liang Qichao was most familiar with two particular figures of the European Enlightenment: Adam Smith (1723–1790) from Scotland (Liang [1892] 1999 a: 47) and Rousseau from France. Not only had Liang Qichao read the major works by these Enlightenment thinkers – *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) and *The Social Contract* (1762) – he also called for more translations of Western works to open the vision of people in China. Liang Qichao also actively sought to apply the two Enlightenment thinkers' theories to China, with greater attention being given to Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. This was because, compared to *The Wealth of Nations*, *The Social Contract* advocated for the equality of men, and for the establishing of contracts between the individual and the state in order to protect the rights of the individual. For Liang Qichao, who supported reformation during the late Qing monarchy, *The Social Contract* was a suitable theoretical basis for his own idealised concept of a constitutional monarchy. On 7 June 1901, Liang Qichao published an article in the Journal *Qingyi Bao*, entitled "A Discussion on Constitution", which generated a major impact on the "preparatory constitution" policy by the Qing Court. In this article, Liang divided the world's political systems into three types: absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy and constitutional democracy. In the case of a constitutional democracy, Liang believed this system would cause frequent changes in policies and create too much competition for presidential election, and

therefore was not a good political model for the state. In the other case of an absolute monarchy, Liang argued that this system created sharp opposition between monarchs and common men, and led to the common men being forced to live in harsh conditions which in turn created a danger to the ruling class. Following this line of thinking, the end conclusion was that the best political system could be none other than a constitutional monarchy. Liang Qichao derived most of his political treatise from the influences and doctrine of Rousseau, and he published most of his articles on Rousseau in the year 1901. However, Liang's introduction of Rousseau did not focus on Rousseau's more revolutionary ideas, and instead centred on Rousseau's theories proposed in *The Social Contract*, which Liang then applied onto his own ideas for China's political system.

The scholar Hu Shi put forward his own very well-known academic approach, which he called "boldly making an hypothesis while cautiously making verification". This saying recognised both the power of human reason as well as the power of experience in guiding reason. Hu Shi advocated that in order to achieve freedom for all people in the Chinese environment, one had to not only strive for autonomy but also had to respect the rights of others and learn to tolerate. In addition, to guide the youth, Hu Shi also suggested that people first must enrich their minds, in order to acquire the necessary discretion for entering society. These attitudes were in accordance with the essence of the European Enlightenment.

Of particular importance was Hu Shi's idea that "tolerance is more important than freedom", which meant that personal freedom should never be overbearing or harmful to others. Freedom that is not subject to abuse is positive, and this can then lead to liberty and freedom for all members in a nation: "the most simple and obvious meaning of liberalism is the respect for freedom. In political situations it means embracing democracy, tolerating opposition and protecting the freedom of minority." (Hu [1948] 2003 b: 725) "In conclusion, liberalism is progressive reform that embodies freedom, democracy, tolerance and peace." (Hu [1948] 2003 a: 733)

B. The Promotion of the Enlightenment in order to "Save the Nation" (with Yan Fu and Li Dazhao as examples)

During the time of the Enlightenment's introduction to China, many Chinese scholars felt a great sense of urgency with China's declining social situation and found Enlightenment ideals to be a compelling remedy for resolving the crisis. Yan Fu and Li Dazhao both wrote on this topic.

Yan Fu attached great importance to Rousseau and believed that Rousseau's theories could be applied to heal China of its social illness. This was a unique view but it also caused much controversy. In modern China, Rousseau was viewed mainly as a revolutionary thinker. This image of Rousseau in China was partly determined by Japanese scholar Chomin Nakae (1847–1901), who was regarded as the "Oriental Rousseau". Influenced by this revolutionary image of Rousseau in Asia, young people in China at the time went forward holding high the revolutionary banner, as exemplified in Zou Rong's book *Revolutionary Army* (1902) in which the author called on people to "let the banners of Rousseau and other great philosophers be held high on our land". Yan Fu seriously questioned this revolutionary image of Rousseau, and raised controversy with Zhang Shizhao (1881–1973) about whether Rousseau's *Social Contract* was in fact advocating revolution. In 1914, Yan Fu published "Commenting on *The Social Contract*" in the journal *Yong Yan Bao*, and stated that: "Since Rousseau's *Social Contract* became

popular, it has generated a great impact in Chinese society. Many people are willing to sacrifice themselves for such a cause; however, the system is not cured because the theory is flawed. Therefore, I am writing this article to alter this superstition in society.” In May of the same year, Zhang Shizhao published his “Reading on the Article ‘Discussing *The Social Contract*’” in *Jia Yin* (Volume I, Issue I), in which he opposed Yan Fu’s view of Rousseau’s theory. Yan Fu advocated reform, but saw Rousseau’s theories as dangerous and the path of the French Revolution as not being suitable for China. Zhang Shizhao on the other hand reasoned that revolutions were not successful in China because different revolutionary parties fought for mutual exclusion; and therefore he advocated that personal freedom was of greater importance than national interests.

In addition to the aforementioned two European Enlightenment thinkers, Yan Fu also introduced in his works the three principles of Newtonian mechanics and the concepts of freedom and equality. However, whenever Yan Fu was introducing these concepts, he always compared these ideas with China’s declining domestic situation, and such comparison often led to his feeling a keen loss of hope for improvement. (Yan [1895] 2004: 5) Yan Fu was in fact very pessimistic throughout his life, and as he translated Thomas Henry Huxley’s (1825–1895) *Lectures on Evolution* and wrote articles such as “Urgently Changing the World and Original Power” which criticised China’s current vices and thirsted for prosperity and change, Yan Fu felt that the overall decaying situation in China was so great that the country’s own evolutionary path could be nothing other than its eventual displacement by Western powers.

Li Dazhao believed that the European Enlightenment was a solution to “National Salvation”, but unlike Yan Fu he did not view China’s future with as much pessimism. The reason was that he followed the logical development of the European Enlightenment, and understood that European Enlightenment originated from the conflict between classicism and modernism. Modernism eventually won the debate because science increasingly demonstrated its power to change reality. In February 1923, Li Dazhao published “Past and Present” in the *Social Science Quarterly* (Volume I, Issue 2) in which he introduced the conflict between classicism and modernism as the context for the European Enlightenment. Li Dazhao also placed great emphasis on the present. He believed that all things of the past were once in the present, and all things in the future also originate in the present; therefore he argued that the present was the most valuable. He wrote:

“There is a body of people who are never satisfied with everything in the present. They see everything in the present as dark and evil, and see everything in the past as good ... in short, nothing today is better than the past. There is another body of people who hold optimistic hopes for the present and the future, and hold the view that past success should be bequeathed to future generations, and that the infinite past ends in the present where the infinite future begins in the present. The Debate between past and present has a considerable ideological significance, and led to a resistance against part of the Renaissance ideals.” (Li [1923] 2006: 269)

In the winter of 1923, Li Dazhao introduced the doctrines of the Enlightenment thinkers in his lectures on historiography at the Department of History at Peking University, and revealed his comprehensive and profound understanding of the subject. Li Dazhao not only knew the history of the Enlightenment, but was also familiar with its background, history and representative thinkers. He held in great esteem the French Revolution, and believed that the French Revolution was the key to making the Enlightenment ideologies of equality and freedom a reality, including through the “blood and iron” policies of Napoleon.

C. The Enlightenment as the Precursor to the Revolution (with Sun Zhongshan and Chen Duxiu as examples)

The third type of introduction of the European Enlightenment into China involved a combination of Enlightenment and Revolution ideals, or in other words sought to make use of Enlightenment theories to procure a public opinion for revolution. This understanding of the Enlightenment was exemplified by Chen Duxiu and Sun Zhongshan.

Sun Zhongshan, born in 1866, was more senior than Chen Duxiu, who has born in 1879. During the twenty year period that the Enlightenment was introduced to China, Sun Zhongshan was middle-aged and already dedicated to the practice of the Old Democratic Revolution, and Chen Duxiu was in his youth and committed to promoting the Enlightenment for the purpose of social reform. After the May Fourth New Culture Movement, Chen Duxiu believed in Marxism and moved towards the proletarian revolution, while Sun remained against Marxism and was critical of its concepts of class struggle (Sun [1924] 2006 b: 608) and surplus (ibid.: 609) values.

The central point of Sun Zhongshan's 's *Principles of Democracy* argued that people's right to equality was the result of society needing to first obtain this right and then give it back to its people, as opposed to society waiting for its people to request this right. The fundamental basis of this theory can be found in the doctrines of Rousseau. Sun said:

"Speaking about the history of civil rights, we all know France has one scholar called Rousseau who advocated extreme civil rights for the people in Europe. Due to his ideas of civil rights, the French Revolution took place. The most important work which outlined Rousseau's life-time ideal of civil rights is *The Social Contract*. The argument in *The Social Contract* was based on the ideology that people are born free and with equal rights, and every individual has his or her right." (Sun [1924] 2006 a: 493)

Chen Duxiu also agreed with the European Enlightenment's doctrines of freedom and equality, and believed that revolution was the only path to achieving this freedom and equality in China. He stated: "Today's Europe is dignified and brilliant. Why is it so? It was given by revolution. Revolution in European language means abandoning old things and replacing them with new things, which is different from the alteration of dynasties in China. Since the Renaissance, there have been revolutions in politics, in religion, in ethics, in literature and in art. There are no evolution and progress without revolution." (Chen 1917) Chen firmly believed that if modern China was to depart from its gloomy present, it could only do so through revolution, and that this revolution must start from literature.

In fact, all the revolutionary ideas of Chen Duxiu were closely related with the European Enlightenment. Although his political position made a transition from the Old Democratic Revolution to the New Democratic Revolution, in the end, Chen practiced what is still regarded as the most fundamental principles of the European Enlightenment: freedom and equality.

IV. On the Relationship between the "Enlightenment" and "National Salvation"

The spread of in China was in China was accoin China was accompanied by the rise of the Chinese revolutionary movement and played a key role in preparing the revolutionary ideology that provided theoretical guidance to the Chinese revolution. Confronting both colonial and semi-colonial crisis, the Chinese revolution spent great effort in resolving the historical task of "National Salvation" against imperialism before it was able to achieve the more general goals of the Enlightenment and of political democratisation. "National Salvation" was in fact a main objective of the establishment of an independent nation-state, and this objective was a prerequisite to achieving the Enlightenment. Since a modern political democracy could only be based on the participation of "all [its] citizens in the nation", an independent sovereign nation-state was a necessary prerequisite to becoming a modern political democracy. Moreover, the task of "National Salvation" was not unique to the Chinese revolution, but also existed in the revolutions of many countries, and first appeared on the main battlefield of the European Enlightenment movement, which was the French Revolution. China saw the violent nature of the French Revolution as being closely related to the prerequisite for "National Salvation." Perhaps for this reason the violence of the Chinese revolution was no less, if not greater, than that of the French Revolution. The astonishing violence of the Chinese revolution resulted in a number of political events that departed far from the original intentions of the Enlightenment movement.

The proof of revolutionary elements in China's adoption of the Enlightenment was to establish political democracy, however this democratic intention turned towards autocratic ends due to the preconditioned mission of "National Salvation". Could China always be so unfortunate? In the history of the Chinese revolution, a question about the relationship between the "Enlightenment" and "National Salvation" emerged. In 1984, Vera Schwarcz addressed this relationship of the "Enlightenment" and "National Salvation" of the modern China in her book *Chinese Enlightenment Movement*, in which she wrote:

"Examining the impact of this imperfect 'Enlightenment' (that is, the New Cultural Movement) on the 20th century Chinese history, there were three obvious points: First, there was a long-term tension between the task of 'National Salvation' and the 'Enlightenment'. Second, the path of the 'Enlightenment' in the modern China was inseparable with the fate of Chinese intellectuals. Third, the 'Enlightenment' in China failed to eradicate the foundation of old culture and old thinking." (Schwarcz 2007: 341)

In 1986, Li Zehou published the article "the Double Variation of the Enlightenment and National Salvation" in the first issue of the journal *Walking Towards the Future*. He analysed the characteristics of the May Fourth Movement using the theme of the "Enlightenment" verses "National Salvation" and wrote: "soon after the launch of the New Culture Movement, which was centered on the 'Enlightenment', it was met with the anti-imperialist political movement which was centered on 'National Salvation', and the two movements merged very quickly (Li 2003: 7) ... the theme of the 'Enlightenment' and democratization of science were merged with themes of National Salvation and patriotism. These themes collided, wriggled and synchronized ... Chinese modern history was just like this ... the Enlightenment was not immediately overshadowed by National Salvation; and in a short period of time, the Enlightenment gained great momentum through the 'National Salvation' movement." (ibid.: 9) According to Li Zehou, the "Enlightenment" and "National Salvation" were in stalemate for some time, and the movement of "National Salvation" gradually overwhelmed the movement of "Enlightenment" to become the central characteristic of modern Chinese history. He

wrote: "All these suggest that the need for 'National Salvation', concerns for national interests and people's suffering, prevailed over all other needs, overwhelmed intellectuals' needs toward knowledge, equality, democracy, civil rights and the pursuit of a variety of wonderful ideologies, prevailed over individual dignity, individual rights and respect." (ibid.: 27) This was not only the characteristic of the May Fourth Movement, but also the characteristic of China's modern history. (ibid.: 26-27)

It is insufficient to only point out the tension between the themes of the "Enlightenment" and "National Salvation" in Modern China, or to regret the fact that the need for "National Salvation" overwhelmed the need for the "Enlightenment". First, we should see the objective necessity of the "National Salvation" movement for modern China. The "National Salvation" movement was to establish the sovereignty, independence and freedom of the Chinese state, which was also the primary objective of the Chinese revolution. This was the foremost important matter, over all other matters at the time. Therefore, to temporarily sacrifice the ideal of the Enlightenment, though unfortunate, was something that could be tolerated. Second, we should recognise the historical inevitability of the Enlightenment ideal, just as history has proven how it was an insuppressible force throughout much of the modern world. The implementation of a political autocracy for the purpose of establishing and consolidating a nation-state was necessary, but it could not be permanent and would ultimately be eliminated. However, moving beyond political autocracy required the distribution of the Enlightenment ideas, and required the great efforts of many enlightened individuals.

At the same time, there was also a change in the definition of the historical development of modern China. From 1895 to 1919, modern Chinese journals introduced the Enlightenment in Europe alongside the introduction of the French Revolution. In academic circles, these journals inspired a "revolution of civil rights" that called for freedom and equality and which led to the Old Democratic Revolution represented by the ideas and practices of Sun Zhongshan. The Old Democratic Revolution advocated freedom, equality and representative democracy in theory, and established the Republic of China in practice. During this stage, the "National Salvation" theme was already in existence but was not very prominent, and the Enlightenment was combined with revolution. After the Xin Hai Revolution, especially after the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, and as China experienced infighting among the warlords within the country and the Japanese invasion at its borders, the call for "National Salvation" became an essential theme. Influenced by the Marxism-Leninism brought by the October Revolution in Russia and the New Democratic Revolution, the Chinese revolution was transformed into a struggle for the rights of both Nation and for the country's workers and peasants, and "National Salvation" became increasingly radicalised and complex in its representation.

However, was the introduction of Marxism-Leninism lessened by the influence of the European Enlightenment? The answer should be negative. Whatever the case, Marxism-Leninism did not constitute a fundamental reaction towards European Enlightenment; China merely abandoned the latter in favour of the former, and its embrace of Communism never in the end contradicted the universal values of freedom, equality, human rights and democracy advocated by the Enlightenment movement. In fact, the ideology of Communism is still deeply rooted in the Enlightenment. Communism was the continuation and extension of the left-wing ideologies advocated by Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau and Mably (1709-1785). It was this fact that determined the impact of the European Enlightenment in the Chinese new democratic revolution, and led

to the development of contemporary China, following along the basic lines of the Enlightenment.

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