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THE ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY VIEWS IN CLASSICAL CHINESE LITERATURE AND THE MODERN CHINESE AVERSION TO THE FALL OF THE IRON CURTAIN

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ABSTRACT:

THE PRESENT STUDY AIMS AT EXPLAINING THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHINESE STATE ESTABLISHMENT AND CHINESE PUBLIC PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE FALL OF THE IRON CURTAIN AND THE DEMISE OF COMMUNISM IN EAST EUROPE IN 1989, IN THE LIGHT OF THE CHINESE PAST, CONSIDERING THE CHINESE LITERARY SOURCES THAT WERE OFTEN INVOKED BY MODERN DAY INTELLECTUALS AND POLITICAL FIGURES AS REFERENCES TO THE IDEA OF REVOLUTION. THE ROMANIAN REVOLUTION OF 1989 WAS AN ICONIC EVENT FOR THE FALL OF COMMUNISM WORLDWIDE AND IT HAD A VERY OBVIOUS IMPACT ON THE EVENTS THAT UNFOLDED IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE TIANANMEN SQUARE ONES IN CHINA DURING THE SAME YEAR.

FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH, THE STUDY PROVIDES A THOROUGH SURVEY OF THOSE SOURCES, RELEVANT FOR TRACING THE ARGUMENTS THAT SOME LATER INTELLECTUALS HAD IN SUPPORT OR AGAINST THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, AN EVENT THAT MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE MODERN ERA IN EUROPE AND AFFECTED CHINA AS WELL. AS AN AVATAR OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, THE ROMANIAN ONE ALSO ENDED IN "REGICIDE" WITH THE EXECUTION OF THAT PERSON THAT ACTED AS THE HEAD OF A STATE, HOLDER OF AN ABSOLUTE POWER EXERCISED IN ABUSIVE MANNERS. THE OUTCOME WAS THE MOST SHOCKING FOR THE WORLD AT LARGE, BUT ESPECIALLY FOR THE CHINESE ESTABLISHMENT WHO HAD A TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FALLEN ROMANIAN REGIME.

THE RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THERE WAS A PROFOUND FEAR OF REVOLUTION IN CHINA, INHERITED FROM THE PAST AND ENCOURAGED BY THE OLD CHINESE TRADITION AND THAT THE FORMER IMPERIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IS ACTUALLY A MATTER OF PRIDE THAT NEVER LOST RELEVANCE AND WAS NEVER DISCARDED, REGARDLESS OF THE REGIME CHANGE IN A COUNTRY WITH A RICH HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE.

KEY WORDS: FRENCH REVOLUTION, CHINESE LITERATURE, KANG YOUWEI, ROMANIAN REVOLUTION.

December 26, 1989. Los Angeles Times is posting a very colourful account of a poster being harboured by some students in the campus of China's Beijing University, an action meant to ridicule the then deposed Romanian dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu, who had just been executed in the backyard of a Romanian army unit, few days after the poster became public and only months after the Tiananmen student movement started in Beijing. [1]

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The revolution was felt as a necessity by most of the Chinese youth who felt oppressed by a suffocating party bureaucracy that was contrary to the ideas that they embraced through their education. Beijing University was always a cradle for revolutionaries and the most Western inspired institution of higher learning. It was here that the European culture started to be studied and appreciated, in a school founded with the help of the Christian Missions to China. This seemingly forgotten detail is somehow essential for understanding the roots of the upheaval. According to the article, the poster called Ceaușescu a “lost dog”, and although this information does not benefit from a Chinese rendering as well, the result of the translation can be approximated to an already existing cliché in Chinese classical culture, the same cliché that Sima Qian 司馬遷, the Grand Historian, used in describing Confucius, “a dog without a shelter” 散家之狗 [2]. It is not a coincidence that the same description was applied in both cases, since in a way both characters were reviled similarly by the mass of emancipated youth, a generation that endeavoured to discard the past and embrace the new, in an effort to modernise an already sclerotic establishment.

In the Chinese students’ mind, dictator’s flight, be which he tried to avoid the rage of crowds that roamed the streets of the Capital during those days in Romania, meant that he was supposed to take refuge in China, since the relationship between countries was a very close one at that time. According to the article, the poster implied that there were four other “dogs” that waited for him to join, respectively Deng Xiaoping, Li Peng, Yang Shangkun and Jiang Zemin, all important figures within the Chinese Communist Party. He obviously was a lost one, just like Confucius in the olden days, without a home and a receptive audience. In this respect, the Beijing University students seemed to be still animated by the same antinomian spirit that guided the 4th of May Movement in China, a movement so celebrated by the Party authorities, ignorant of its real essence and of the future implications of it: Change was beneficial, but a revolution would be dreadful!

The earlier Cultural Revolution is still a sensitive topic in China. It was somehow a very particular embodiment of the same spirit that guided the students in the Tiananmen Square, recurring under different circumstances and guises.

Great events were always painful and traumatic for the Chinese nation. The violent upheavals, like outbursts of popular rage, led by great social forces, could be sudden and ravaging, shattering the peace and stability of a rather frail political colossus. Despite their stability, huge entities are bound to break easier than the smaller, more flexible political forms of governance. In this way, nurtured as an ancestral principle, peace was required by tradition, with the name of the Square accorded to it, The Square of the Celestial Peace, reminding of a tradition that, far from being a Communist invention, was considered since antiquity as the supreme virtue of a good governance and representative to the much wanted political stability that China was always proud of.

However, such peace needed to be secured by force and when taming the youth through education was not enough, bullets were always a viable alternative. This turning point in the Chinese history signified actually the commencement of a new cataclysm, because the price for change usually requires blood and wasted lives. The ideology behind such revolutions in China were mostly inspired by the terrible events that took place much earlier at the end of the 18th century in France, an upheaval that according to some historians marked the beginning of the modern age. What happened in Romania during the last months of the year 1989, just two hundred years after the French Revolution, looked just like a reverberation of those terrifying, much earlier events. The Romanian Revolution marked the bloodiest and the most dramatic regime change that took place in East Europe and it became symbolic for the fall of

Communism worldwide. A bloody revolution thus became the marking point for the demise of the so-called Iron Curtain, term once coined by Winston Churchill in order to describe that separating wall between the Eastern and the Western Block during the Cold War.

Worth to note is that the Chinese perception towards such events was and still is always influenced by a possible reference to the past. Chinese have always considered their past as a mirror in which they can find clues about the present. There were rumours that circulated unofficially about Li Peng's fainting upon hearing about Ceaușescu's death sentence and execution. As it was expected, the Chinese leadership, having experienced months of domestic turmoil, started to be afraid of the possibility that China might also follow on the path tread by the East Europe and succumb to the Western pressure that demanded the establishment of a genuinely democratic system in the former communist countries. Apart from that, the Chinese opposition to the idea of a violent regime change was a most motivating factor in changing attitudes towards those that were perceived as acting in an "improper" way.

In China the definition of the idea of revolution was always associated mostly with that of a regime change and violence. It did not consist necessarily in a popular upheaval of the masses, driven by a common ideal and motivated by something that doesn't necessarily depend on the will of one individual. Even the language term of revolution, *geming* 革命, was borrowed from the earliest sources of literature in China, appearing in the Book of Changes 周易 in the entry dedicated to one of the 64 hexagrams. Later on, the solution provided for avoiding the violence of such regime change was represented by a much debated concept that was meant to make such transitions more flexible and benign, the willingness of yielding the power or *shanrang* 禪讓, a much praised political practice. This type of behaviour is very hard to be taken as a historical fact, considering the human propensity for abuse and lack of transparency in matters that deal with political power. This practice of letting go and acknowledge one's own limitations was rather a rare display of virtue and not a general rule, although there are some historically documented examples of such practice becoming a political reality. The sources related to it are however only an official version, consisting of mere chronicler accounts. At the same time it is less arguable that in China the killing or execution of a ruler, since ancient times, was considered to be a bringer of misfortune to the people who chose to walk along that specific path, unless it was condoned by and in conformity with the heavenly will. The critique of power in China was often structured around this question related to the treatment of a former ruler.

Only the despots were those condemnable for committing political crimes and usurping their superiors in order to accede to power. The unlawful power was thus sanctionable not by the will of the masses but by that of the Heaven *tian* 天, seen as an entity that governs from above the human affairs. The Grand Historian, Sima Qian, also gives a more thorough account of this practice in his works while in some chapters of his historical records dedicates a special place to those biographies in which he describes a type of morality that rises against the abuse of power and the use of force in effecting regime changes, biographies like those dedicated to Bo Yi and Shu Qi, the legendary princes of the Guzhu 孤竹 kingdom. He records also the debate that took place between two scholars during the Han Dynasty, Yuan Gusheng 辕固生 and Huang Sheng 黄生 regarding the legitimacy of the so-called revolution started by Lord Tang 湯 of Shang 商 and once by King Wu 武 of Zhou 周. It is from that hoary Chinese

antiquity that some modern age thinkers such as Kang Youwei (1858-1927) have inherited the resent for the use of force and the usurpation of power. His discourse against the depredations of the French Revolution is to be found in one of the most interesting pieces of Chinese literature, “Notes on the great French Revolution” (“法國大革命記”), that aimed to describe the events of those times and trace the cause of such changes and mass behaviour. The evocative way in which he renders in Chinese the big picture of the French Revolution, the expressive power of his account shows a very close and passionate research of his subject and can be seen as representative for the Chinese modern view on those events that decisively marked the Western modernity.

By following this thread, one can get a complete picture of the implications that such events had for the Chinese at the beginning of the 20th century, implications that affected them in conducting their diplomatic affairs well into the second half of the century, during the Cold War, and influenced their international politics even to the present age.

THE “REVOLUTION” OF TANG AND WU

To have a look on history, one cannot dissociate it from literature. Qian Jibo 钱基博 in his history of the Chinese literature places the Book of Changes among the first six classical works *liu jing* 六经 that were considered as fundamental for the beginning of literature in China [3]. The text, apart from its cryptical nature and mystical character has also another more earthly dimension, a political one. According to some historical accounts, it has been compiled by King Wen of Zhou who supposedly used it, during the critical moments of his biography, to turn the chain of historical events to his favour, by relying on its divinatory function, as a compass to his further actions. Supposedly this made him prevail over his contenders.

This very book thus became essential for those who wanted to understand the subtle correspondence between the results of the human political actions and the divine will of Heaven. The Heaven was that abstract ruling principle that bestowed a “mandate” *tianming* 天命 upon those that, through their actions on earth, behaved like a mirror-vehicle for his will. The rulers thus “anointed” were chosen as a result of particular historical circumstances with a mission backed by a transcendent force that may or may not at some point leave the vessel to which she was entrusted. Retaining that force was therefore desirable for the power wielding rulers of the earth below, since the heaven above was the only authority that could actually legitimise their power. Loosing that power was a disruption of the mandate that was given in the first instance, only to be in the end taken away due to possible immoral acts and unlawful behaviour, according to a code that was beyond human comprehension. That disruption was referred to as *geming* 革命, a term that was later adapted to the modern use, meant to convey the idea of “revolution”, but whose significance originally referred to a replacement of political actors in the human world, a regime change. Precisely this etymology of the word is the one that still remained as such in the mentality of the people, having the connotation of a major political change. A political change was always seen as a potential source of instability, being often discarded because of its unhealthy effects on the general welfare of the society. However, the Book of Changes does condone such change when it is in accord with Heaven. The upheavals started once by Tang of Shang against the Xia dynasty and Wu of Zhou against the Shang dynasty were, according to the text, morally legitimate and natural, fulfilling the will of Heaven and accomplishing the order of things. The use of violence however was a much debated issue.

Qian Jibo mentions Confucius as the one who edited the text of the Book of Changes [4]. It can be surmised that the mention of Tang and Wu does not predate him, since from the biography of Bo Yi we come to know that King Wu was an actual usurper and wasn't afforded such a high status as the one featured in the Book of Changes. Bo Yi and Shu Qi resented Wu's use of force, although they praised his father, whose reputation was different than the son's [5]. At least from Sima Qian's point of view and from the angle represented by the semi legendary accounts that he refers to as a foundation for Bo Yi's biography, the house of Zhou was not an ideal royal house and it was in charge of the realm for as long as she was permitted to.

Being essentially a Confucian, Sima Qian didn't hesitate to highlight the decline of those houses that were held in great esteem by the Confucian orthodoxy of his times. This attitude can be found expressed in the biography dedicated to Laozi in which he points at the decline of Zhou as the main cause for the departure of Laozi 老子 from his position as an archivist at the Zhou court [6]. Therefore, the Book of Changes, as it has been transmitted over the centuries together with the incorporated *tuanci* 象辞 or explanation notes to the original text, was the result of an alteration of the original meaning and, up to a certain point, a distortion.

It is necessary to note that few were those literary works that remained spared from taking on a political colour. As it can be logically deduced, only a literature supportive to the ruling class would be allowed to be preserved, while the longevity and impact of such work depended very much on politics. Therefore while the core of the Book of Changes, through the hexagrams themselves, remains as pristine as it was meant to be, the accompanying critical apparatus has obvious political colours and alterations. It is not surprising then to find in the text lines that extoll the revolutions that took place during the times of Tang and Wu, events that lead to the fall of powerful dynasties. There are many reasons therefore to doubt the message of a text that was written and preserved under political auspices, although this does not detract from its original value as a document that can reflect very well the passage of time. The fragment that refers to the Tang and Wu disruptions of power translates like in the following:

“The revolution refers to the mutual exclusion between the fire and the water, like the case of two cohabitating women who cannot manage to get along with each other, therefore said to be on the brink of a revolution. The revolution can only be effected on the day proper after being empowered through trust. The Heaven and Earth would lead to a revolution and thus the seasons would take shape. Tang and Wu would lead to the revolution of a Heavenly mandate, following the Heavenly will and in resonance with popular expectations.”[7]

The conclusions drawn by the unknown author of the text are expounded in a profoundly evocative way. The eloquent flow of the argument is motivated by an almost revolutionary-like zeal, with a pathos of deep conviction, like a sermon. It is not surprising that the work held a Bible-like status and was always regarded with a religious reverence by the exegetes across centuries, since its use of words proved to be for the Chinese language as foundational as the use of the language in the King James version of the Bible was for English. Regarded as an oracle, the Book of Changes accumulated many more functions along the way without losing the original one. According to it, the revolution seems to be a natural function that does not depend on human agency but on a divine will. This idea was consecrated by that line that made history, indelibly impressed on the mind of the literati that took nourishment from this old gospel of China. Its influence over the centuries has produced a series of debates, some of which became legendary, some of which may only be implied and become obvious in the popular imagination.

As a concept, the "revolution" 革命, however provisory as a rendering in the limited semantic values provided by English it may appear, can still reveal the very mechanism of history. By conveying both the ideas of change and replacement it expresses a constant need for renewal as an answer to the demand of a permanent dynamics and transformative flow. Cyclical renewal therefore becomes an accepted reality, like the renewed succession of seasons mentioned in the explanation notes, not only in the context of Chinese thought, but also as a conclusion drawn by the research done by pertinent modern scholars such as Trompf, when he demonstrates the validity of historical recurrence as a way to understand history [8]. Therefore the obsession with change, seen as an alternate expression found as permutations in a binary form of yin and yang, has to be understood also as an awareness of a mechanism that can alter history and even transform the individual or collective destinies. This is the aspect which somehow makes the difference between the common fatalism understood in the West from the Chinese perception of reality.

While the general impression is that rules are to be obeyed and there exist even rules accepted as being situated above the narrow sphere of human affairs, rules that may seem implacable in nature, it would be the Chinese deep conviction that one can change things even under tyrannical conditions, that the harshness of fate is only temporary and by embracing and accepting it one can naturally transcend difficulties and reach for the desired goals. This turns into the very paradox that consists of breaking the rules by playing according to them. How can one vanquish adversity by yielding to it? This could be one key-question that Chinese have tried to answer to, and the very particularities of their history can demonstrate that the logic they adopted in the end made them, in many ways, a winning side in any competition for power. Perhaps the explanation to the present Chinese unprecedented rise to power can be found residing precisely in this aspect of their thought, either popular or scholarly. Their knowledge of history was as it can be documented the result of a long process of observation that turned their own history into a national project of engineering conducted by natural means, following the logical flow of international events, without fractures and traumas. Regarding culture, the transmission chain of knowledge was to be protected and preserved as a legacy left to the generations to come, for the sake of continuity. Steps in history had to be taken with care. Therefore, an important lesson to be drawn by learning from history is that a change should be effected only according to the necessities of time, that a change is never personal and it is bound to a complex of circumstances. Wang Bi, an exegete of the text from the Wei Jin period also mentions this necessity of concordance in his commentary to the hexagram:

"The people are more fond of their regular habits and can hardly adjust to change, They are more fond of the emerging happiness than of the beginning of worry. Therefore, if the way of revolution is not at a time trusted, another time shall come for it to be so. Through trust then the misfortune will be mitigated and things will emerge, rise, expand and mature naturally. Without trust a revolution will turn inappropriate even at the time proper to accomplish it." [9] Although apparently a staunch opponent of the Confucian orthodox thought, through his view on history, at least in this instance, Wang Bi doesn't take sides but takes cue from Laozi in considering the will of the masses as a necessary reference for any engaged ruler. One may argue and rightfully so that the Study of Mystery 玄学, a school that he represented, constituted nothing but the "medicine" necessary for the old Confucian core to get refreshed and revitalised in a period of ideological stagnation and moral decadence. The inspiring virtues could be found not within but without, much like in the message conveyed by the actual essence of the hexagram described. The change in society necessitated a replacement and a renewal, but not divorced from the basic context. It is this dependance on the context, which Nisbet noticed very

well in the case of the language and unfolding events and phenomena [10], that stands at the foundation of the Chinese view on history. Even tyrants and despots like the first emperor of China have endeavoured to build a context to legitimate themselves as rightful rulers. This approach applies to the Chinese view on the idea of revolution as well.

Generally speaking, the modern view of revolution is basically divorced from the context. French Revolution for example sought to completely cancel the past. Most of the revolutions in Europe and America, to some extent, have treated culture in the same manner, by cancelling it and establishing a new type of regime, representing different values.

French Revolution was also a cultural revolution. The measures taken in its aftermath can reflect that. The prescribed duration of the week was changed. So were the names of the days of the week, that were no more allowed to remind of the ancient Greco-Roman deities, another upsetting link to the past and not only to Christianity. The names of the months were also replaced with different ones, since these too were equal reminders of the past.

Of course, one can compare the Chinese so-called “revolutions”, their occurrence during the Chinese antiquity being also mentioned as such by scholars like Ding Shan [11], with the one started by Mao Zedong, the only revolution that was actually divorced from the context and able to produce a consistent damage to the cultural heritage of China.

Mao tried hard to rise above the first emperor by rooting out the power of the clans and traditional families and achieving a complete destruction of the traditional order of things, but again, by adopting such methods employed in the past by the First Emperor Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 of purging intellectuals and burning books [12] he did nothing but to subordinate himself once more to a much earlier historical context and a strand of Chinese tradition that promoted legalism fajia 法家, the doctrine that legitimised the absolute power of the monarch and set the law even above him as importance. However, although his policies were in line with a much earlier tradition, the impact and influence of modern revolutions was felt deeper during his times, this being a result of the process that began with the modernising movements in China, movements that were by definition divorced from the context. Just like the split of the atom, such ideologies coming from the West had a profoundly dividing and dissolving effect on the society, an effect that marked the modern age of change in a defining way. In the New China the revolutionary spirit has allowed the fondness for things Western to grow, since most of those borrowed aspects from the Western culture were byproducts of the same chain of revolutions that lead to the rise of the West. Discarding the past turned into a recipe for success and development. Mao didn't entirely adopt the mystique of power the First Emperor, the unifier of China, was known for. Though a unifier himself, Mao completely cut himself off from the past by disconsidering the former rulers of the realm, that he was then governing with an iron hand, and looking down upon them for their lack of culture and literary skills. Among those he also mentions in his poetic productions the First Emperor, whom he disconsiders as much as he would disconsider the Mongolian warlord turned world emperor, the terrifying and awe inspiring Genghis Khan [13]. Mao didn't try to look at the present as a natural outcome of history, but as an exception. His revolution was going to be something uncommon, something that China had never seen before.

The First Emperor was, however, still tributary to the past. He drew his legitimacy by ingeniously employing old models of thought like that the system of the five elements. According to Sima Qian, he adopted the earlier thought related to the five elements [14] that crystallised into the system promoted by Zou Yan 邹衍 who looked at the theory of the five elements as applicable to politics as well. While the general understanding about elements in

China is that the five elements *wuxing* 五行 have a generating cycle that follows the pattern consecrated by a rule according to which metal generates water, water generates wood, wood generates fire, fire generates earth and earth generates metal, the reverse to this is one of destruction, according to which metal destroys the wood, the wood destroys the earth, the earth destroys the water, the water destroys the fire and fire destroys the metal. Zou Yan attributes to each dynasty a specific element, and the succession of dynasties, according to him fits in the pattern of that cycle of destruction, which he renders to be a natural, implacable law that governs both nature and men. This cyclical, repetitive view of history, seems to be reflecting the content found in the Book of Changes, where there is the mention of fire and water. Important to notice is that this cyclical understanding of history is quite different than the Judaeo-Christian linear view that ends into an apocalyptic debacle and a final judgement. According to the old Chinese view there is no finality in this cyclical development. History doesn't end. This conclusion seems to be quite contrary to what Mao may have believed, as seen from his poems and also from the zeal of implementing a philosophy that was contrary to whatever concept the previous Chinese tradition supported. Mao enjoyed more the linear idea of history and time. He was in the position to lead China to a future that would be entirely new and, indeed, he managed to unleash something that former rulers never thought of. He almost completely gained the sympathy of the masses. Even his rivals or bitter enemies were soon compelled to acknowledge his power and influence. Mao was a providential person, a saviours and a messianic figure meant to make the peasant and the downtrodden rise from misery and begin an armed strife for power. This predestined role was something that he was very much aware of and his mindset was obviously shaped by the Judaeo-Christian thought that encouraged this active engagement with reality.

Worth to mentioning is that communism, paradoxically, is also a product of the Judaeo-Christian thought and that religious or not, Mao was a very much Western-oriented political thinker. He studied voraciously his country's history only to be able to find clues about the real problems Chinese society was facing. In fact, he didn't embrace the ideology of the past. For him both Confucianism and Taoism as systems of thought had certain flaws that made them less useful for his project of building a new society that would eventually be able to compete with the West. Chinese philosophy was decadent and only the Marxist thought or what was lying behind it could have been helpful in solving the real problems at that time. However, like any ruler, he had the same obsession with immortality. He thought, like many others, that his rule must endure. In this respect he had many things in common with the First Emperor. Mao also benefited more than his distant predecessor did from getting to know better the Chinese history and the mind of his subjects. His poems that present the First Emperor as lacking in culture were actually right. Even the theories that the First Emperor adopted, his chronological knowledge, were somehow lacking in sufficient historical data, unavailable at that time, while the new investigation methods developed by the modern sciences appealed to Mao more than any traditional method possibly available. He was even reluctant about using the services of the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), which he disconsidered [15]. Much different than this modern ruler and unifier of China, The First Emperor, following on Zou Yan's theoretical footsteps, saw himself as the founder of a dynasty that emerged under the auspices of water, the previous dynasty, the Zhou, being defined as belonging to the fire element (Water would extinguish the fire.) . As in the text incorporated into the Book of Changes, revolution is defined as a process in which fire and water exclude each other. Of course, it is hard to establish a link between this metaphor and the politics during the times of the First Emperor. It would be too hazardous to think that the content of such text was actually influenced by the book burner,

Qin Shihuang. It may be surmised that the First Emperor saw himself as a revolutionary, one that respected the patterns of Chinese history and whose accession to power was also mystically inspired. Acts like burning books and executing an entire scholarly class are usually expressions of a revolutionary spirit, although the First Emperor was never considered as such. He followed on the footsteps of Tang and Wu in this respect and his tendency to rely upon theories and views that would explain the logic of Chinese history in a quest for meaning would show that he certainly was taking his role as a reformer seriously. In the same way that Mao did during the modern age, he also tried to reform the writing system, in order to unify the country culturally and make the same knowledge available everywhere. His revolution was one targeted against the ruling clans and any ideology that would support that power. "Aristocracy" was also a threat to any centralised form of authority. If this is true in the case of any society, the huge swath of land that China represented under his empire was even more in need of such strong centralised management that would ensure stability and unity. Geographically speaking, China can be considered isolated from the rest of the world by natural boundaries that make it resemble like a citadel surrounded by water on all sides. This reality has to be seriously taken into account when someone tries to consider such political entity as peaceful. China was never peaceful. As a country, she was constantly ravaged by internal warfare between states during the antiquity and political and military factions during the modern age. The fact that, also because of the geography, China didn't become an expansionist force, doesn't actually mean that the Chinese emperors didn't consider themselves as "universal monarchs". Even Tang and Wu, much like Napoleon in the modern age, regarded themselves as enlightened products of an age of great political changes, dictated by that unexplainable force that according to old views would shape the destiny of nations from above. Chinese Emperors were sons of "Heaven" *tian* 天, they were also god-like figures that were revered by the common folk and who finally entered into the pantheon of the ancestral guiding spirits. As the father of the nation how he is still perceived till nowadays, Mao still receives the same treatment and as the former rulers, he too has become a "god" to worship. If the religious practice of the past with respect to the legendary Chinese emperors hasn't been perpetuated to the present, the worship of Mao Zedong is a reality that confirms his actual status. The author of the present study personally witnessed how in a Beijing restaurant the bust of Mao was installed facing the entrance, thus replacing the usual God of Wealth statue supposed to bring fortune and good luck by being worshiped with offerings, while in a Chinese household his portrait was worshipped for his properties to cure terminal illnesses and his magic that would hold demons under control.

However, it can be noticed also that according to the views held by the scholarly class in China, in many cases these revolutionaries were but tyrants and oppressors, especially when they tried to dissociated themselves from the past and become divorced from the context of the old Chinese culture. If for many members of the scholarly class, both of Taoist or Confucianist affiliation, continuity was essential and there was a sense of an enduring cultural identity that had deep roots in the distant past, then it is natural to think that there was also a natural fear of a fracture that could disrupt that continuity.

The internecine wars waged constantly inside China by different factions made the place unstable for extended periods of time and among the masses there was always a deep appreciation of genuine stability. The conclusion that only a unified empire could save the realm from permanent havoc and destruction appeared to be reasonable, while maintaining such an empire was accepted along with the required costs that were more or less painful. That is why, there was still a matter of debate whether the behaviour of certain rulers was indeed morally valid and because of that many of them were always concerned with their own

legitimacy. Apart from them, the concern also belonged to the entire structure that they may have created, the part of society that depended on them both materially and culturally.

However, the posterity would try to sanction such rulers. The debates regarding the revolutions started by Tang and Wu in later times were also centred around this idea of legitimacy provided by a context in the case of the two rulers that were according to different intellectual camps usurpers or divine tools, negative and positive characters in playing their role in the history of China. Such debate, perhaps the most popular, was the one having Yuan Gusheng and Huang Sheng as protagonists, an example of how much importance was afforded to this topic by different intellectual currents during the past. During the debate Huang Sheng represented the Taoist point of view, while Yuan Gusheng supported a Confucianist view on the matter. Sima Qian, as a historian has also allocated a place in his biographies dedicated to different scholars where he describes the debate between the two in the context of Yuan Gusheng's biographical account:

“Yuan Gusheng was a man from the state of Qi, who was afforded the title of *boshi* by the emperor, because of his work on the Book of Songs. He took part to a debate with Huang Sheng in front of the emperor Jingdi. Huang Sheng said: ‘Tang and Wu were not empowered by any mandate, it was simply murder.’ Yuan Gusheng then replied: ‘No it wasn't. When King Jie of the Xia dynasty and King Zhou of Shang dynasty started the trouble, all the hearts in the Under-heaven turned towards Tang and Wu. Tang and Wu then in conformity to the wishes found in the heart of the people of the Under-heaven, killed Jie and Zhou. Those subordinated to Jie and Zhou followed Tang and Wu, therefore the two had no choice but to establish themselves as rulers. Without a mandate how would that be possible otherwise?’ Huang Sheng then said: ‘Even if the hat is old, it must still be worn on one's head. Even if the shoes are new, they must still be worn on one's feet. Why is it so? Because they are hierarchically different. Although Jie and Zhou at that time lost their way, they were still rulers and Tang and Wu although sage-like, they were still their subjects. Even if a ruler has committed mistakes in his behaviour, his subjects shouldn't straightforwardly admonish him, kill him, and replace him as a ruler. What would this be if not murder?’ Yuan Gusheng then replied: ‘According to what you said then, the emperor Gaodi didn't have right to replace the Qin emperor as a Son of Heaven, did he?’ Upon hearing that, emperor Jingdi said: ‘If one eats only meat and doesn't taste the horse liver this doesn't mean that he is not familiar to the taste. If the scholars do not argue about the mandate of Tang and Wu this doesn't mean they are stupid.’ Thus he put an end to the debate. After that the scholars wouldn't dare to discuss anymore whether the Tang and Wu acted according to the mandate of Heaven or simply just murdered their ruler.”[16]

In support of this view, there is even a much earlier foundation for the kind of attitude that one should have towards a ruler while being at the same time his subject. Mencius 孟子, whose scholarly status was as solid as that of Confucius himself, provides with a blunt answer to the provocative attitude of King Juan of Qi: “King Xuan of Qi asked: ‘Was there anything like the exile of Jie inflicted by Tang and the punitive expedition of King Wu against Zhou?’ Mencius then responded: ‘There are records of it’. He was asked then: ‘Is it allowed for the subject to kill his ruler?’ Mencius answered: ‘The one who robs the benevolent is a brigand. The one who harms the just is a scum. The one who is a scum and a brigand is called a despotic autocrat. You have only asked me about killing a despotic autocrat and not about killing a ruler.’”[17]

As it can be noticed, the general Confucian attitude was somehow supportive towards the dethronement of despotic rulers. In this context, the later Taoist attitudes, influenced by the Legist thought and by the evolution of the initial Taoism into an eclectic philosophy that

combined different strands of thought into what is known as the Huanglao philosophy, the one centred around the personalities of Laozi and the Yellow Emperor 黄帝, promoted an ideal hierarchical system that was thought to be according to the natural laws. Xuansheng, later on in the biography recorded by Sima Qian is referred to as such a Neo-taoist. Compared to the Taoism reflected by the Inner Chapters 内篇 of Zhuangzi, this type of Taoism was the distortion of a later school that became quite influential and whose ideology can be found in the so called Outer Chapter 外篇. However, the idea of hierarchy and of respecting it was very much forwarded by Confucius. As the emperor Jingdi pointed out in the fragment, the Confucian scholars would intentionally avoid touching upon such topic, considering it as too sensitive and at the same time too challenging. The challenging aspect of it may consist in the actual mechanism of power that has actually nothing to do with morality. The realpolitik would always scare those who would try to associate power with morality.

The Taoist attempt was one to demystify the personality of Tang and Wu, to confer them a normal human status that is not infallible. The biggest challenge this attitude would pose is actually to those that have entrusted their moral ideal to such examples taken from history, that only have a legendary character and there were no proofs of their actual existence. The deconstruction of a Confucian “mythology” however doesn’t harm the authority, since the rulers given as examples were once thought to be usurpers who rose against their overlords and their detraction was welcome when such behaviour affected those in power. At the same time an usurper that becomes a ruler would demand loyalty from his subjects and an acknowledgement of his rule as lawful. In this case such a ruler that once was an usurper would feel quite uneasy if someone would attempt to rise against him with a critical attitude and he would be unavoidably marred inside by conflicting feelings about his own status. Such person wouldn’t like to be judged from an objective high moral ground. He would like his subjects to show a subjective preference towards him, he would like them to exhibit partiality in their allegiance, since objective impartiality could reveal his very illegitimacy as a ruler. That is why the Taoist voice in this debate represents exactly something that would upset the authority in a subtle, subversive way. According to this context the Legist philosophy on the other hand would turn into a political ideology that can disrupt the authority patterns of the past, based on the hierarchical family relationships and the blood related clan groups. This tribal infrastructure of the Chinese society was seen as something more oppressive than the misdeeds of a despot, precisely because these weren’t just sporadic events and the erratic behaviour of a drunken ruler, but constituted a deeply rooted social practice that would suffocate the individual even since childhood and mould it into that pattern necessary for the society to reach its collective goals. The “autocrat” that Mencius was criticising is the embodiment of a potential disruptor of that pre-established order of things, while Tang and Wu are the forces necessary for the aristocracy to maintain their authority in society.

Chinese history has always been marked by such a struggle between the aristocracy and the central authority or the emperor. It is the same kind of struggle that one can witness even today in China, at a different level, and it defines Chinese modernity in all its stages. The roots of the problem can be found in the size of the country and its population. To these, one may add the historical experience accumulated and the systems of government that were adopted, especially the bureaucratic establishment, the result of thousands of years of political experimentation and refining. It is easy to understand then the Chinese obsession with politics and management, since China has inherited that identity of an old political and economic colossus.

Another treatment of this question is given in the chapter “Daozhi” 盜跖 from *Zhuangzi* 莊子. While the paternity of the chapter remains still debatable, the anecdotal events, that probably didn't take place, represent a way by which a Taoist author with an unknown identity seems to belittle and even deconstruct the image of Confucius as an educator of kings and political figure, unveiling what he believes to be the Confucian hypocrisy. This is achieved indirectly by employing the instruments provided by the examples taken from history. The criticism towards Tang and Wu was not a defense of Jie and Zhou but rather a roundabout manner, meant to uncover the Confucian lack of consistency in morals and show the gaps of coherence in the Confucian discourse. Any Confucian mention of models of virtue is therefore dismissed by the supposed brigand Daozhi as a flawed way of looking at history. Tang and Wu were for him corrupt individuals that rose to power by unlawful means and compromised themselves morally even when this position of power was forced upon them to accept [18]. According to the Taoist's view, the choice is always there to adopt if this can save someone's virtue, while the will to choose belongs exclusively to the one found in a position to do so. The so-called "revolution" started by Tang and Wu was nothing but a fiasco that camouflaged an illegitimate takeover of power. This reality does not however change the fact that it was perceived as a movement started with a popular support. Later, the Confucian side during such debate would argue that precisely due to this popular support the events that took place were a mass movement and not a fight between despots that vied for power independently.

As it can be seen, the logical question would be about the character of a revolution, about how actually it should be defined. Yuan Gusheng explicitly emphasized the importance of the masses of people during this unfolding of events. People were the force that pushed such change forward. It was not an individual that started it. In this way, what the hexagram in the Book of Changes refers to is actually the change that resulted from an action started collectively by different social forces, an explanation given also by Wang Bi in his commentary to the text. In the end, even those followers of former emperors joined Tang and Wu in their project of building something different, pretty much like in the same spirit that the *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字 described the character *ge* 革 as the old hair of an animal being shed off in a natural process of cleansing and renewal [19]. This process was not the result of an individual will, but was a contextual change demanded by history.

The light in which the tyrant as a lone actor is shown is the one suitable only for the Taoist argument. This image tries somehow to decontextualize the emergence of Tang and Wu. The tyrant is always a lonely independent evil doer that does not represent a collective force. He constitutes an anomaly, while from a Confucian point of view justice is something that must be enforced morally.

The logic of a philosophical inquiry can take the discussion go even further by pointing out the relative understanding of what a “revolution” represents. There were always different attitudes to what came to be known as “revolution”: for some it was a struggle against tyranny and therefore legitimate, while for the other side it will be a replacement of one type of tyranny with yet another, the replacement of a despot with a potentially worse one. All such changes have yielded similar results along the human history and the regime changes in China were no less different. An essential aspect however was the idea of popular support. In this case the Confucianist would argue that a leader is only born out of a context given by the popular movements, by a mass turmoil. A revolution can only take place when the discontent has reached its peak. The modern revolutions would follow the same logic; however the difference, as pointed out, resides in the fact that the modern revolution do not invoke the past, they are

not reverberations of an older tradition. The past is not idealised as in the case of such upheavals that took place in China. Modern revolutions are divorced from the past and from the culture represented by the past.

A revolution in a stricter sense refers only to a cyclical movement that implies a restoration of some sort, like the restoration of seasons that results from a succession. The Chinese regime change always followed the old pattern that belonged to the familiar realm of cultural clichés. That is why the emperors of the past wanted to establish themselves and replace the former rulers in a certain natural succession, that formed the context of the perceived evolution of history, while the more modern type of monarchs, like Mao Zedong discarded any former historical context and saw themselves as situated outside the ordinary. These unilateral actions were always a subject of criticism for Taoists who regarded it as a form of abuse. However, the Confucianists didn't think of it as abusive or unilateral. The actions were conform to the deepest wishes of the masses and represented their will. The Tang and Wu were as legitimate as Yao and Shun, reputed for allowing the aristocratic values to be established. Later Taoists, influenced by the Legist thought saw nothing good in aristocracy and much like the Legists, would harshly criticise the idea of kinship and power based on blood relationships. Dao Zhi would also turn deconstructive in this respect by describing a virtuous society as one in which a child would only get to know his mother and not his father [20]. This matriarchal outlook on society comes to counter the patriarchal parochialism of the Confucian moral system in which the male persons were dominant and the female were only secondary as importance. The male principle to some extent, according to the Taoist voice within the text, can represent violence and oppression, while the female principle is more reclusive and peaceful. This understanding that underlies the Taoist view of how an ideal society should look like has been considered as "primitivist" by scholars like Graham when he was trying to define such current within the philosophical Taoism [21]. Liu Xiaogan would refer to such tendencies by associating them with a Chinese form of anarchism 无君派 [22]. However, at least in this context, given by the miscellaneous chapters, the debatable idea of replacing a sovereign has been deemed appalling only in the context of expressing a disapproval towards Confucius and his ideology.

In Europe, one of the largest countries and a huge colonial empire was France. The traumatic experience that France went through at the end of the 18th century caused a trauma that paradoxically became a source of debate, taught her what real revolutions can bring about. From this laboratory, some other countries like China tried to gather inspiration and also draw lessons. Currently, the French Revolution is still a topic that can be considered sensitive. Much like the contradictions that can be found in China regarding her domestic problems related to the past, the same contradiction becomes obvious in the case of her attitude towards what happened in France at the end of the 18th century. China is perhaps the only country in the former Eastern Block that had a sort of reluctance in approaching the subject of the French Revolution, especially in recent times.

Although China has adopted a proletarian camouflage, with a veneer of communist ideology, the essence remains basically the empire, together with the efficient bureaucracy that the empire structure was based upon. To use an analogy, once the Austro-Hungarian empire was known for the same efficient bureaucracy and good management. However, unlike the Westerners, the Chinese are never critical about the age of the Chinese empire. They choose to overlook the flaws of those rulers that can be considered as fallible or even depraved by all standards. Like for example the empress Wu Zetian of Tang dynasty has rarely been criticised by scholars or researchers for the supposed smothering of her baby child with the aim of using

the event as a tool for her accession to power [23]. The good that she supposedly has done was in the eyes of the public much more consistent than the sins and the poor morality or the heinous crime that she burdened herself with. Then, during the Qing dynasty, in the 19th century, only the empress Cixi became a notorious figure of the Chinese monarchy, for her authoritarian reflexes and her cruelty towards political opponents. She was both reviled and admired for the power that she wielded and it is in this context that much of the Chinese intelligentsia came into contact with informations translated from foreign books about the French Revolution and its outcome. At that time the problems faced by China were very much the same as those that France had to face one century earlier in changing the form of governance. A part of the intellectual elites considered republic as an option, while the other side proposed the model of a constitutional monarchy. The example of the failed project of a constitutional monarchy that ended in a bloody demise and a regicide somehow managed to scare the Chinese intellectuals. A reenactment of the French Revolution in China would have been a terrifying perspective.

It is in this context that a personality like Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927) comes at the forefront of the dispute and tries to save the situation by ways of reform, in a rather idealistic way.

KANG YOUWEI'S VIEW ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: A COMPARISON WITH THE CHINESE PAST

G. Lowes Dickinson in his account published in 1914 concerning China, Indian and Japan draw some interesting conclusions about the new wave of society reforms inspired by the western educated young men from China at that time, in the context of the Xinhai Revolution that brought down the last dynasty, the Manchu and marked the beginning of the republican age. He describes a society that is starting to change in a very profound way, while at the core of this change were the western values that started to grow in influence and transform people's minds. He also draws parallels with what happened in France during the 18th century. Since the French Revolution is considered to have ushered in a new age, a modern age, the kind of renewal that China was in need of at that time had found a correspondence in those modern ideals of the West. The Chinese world, according to him, seemed to be unchangeable and stuck in the past. This reality was disturbed only by the intrusion brought by the western education and missionary work. To Dickinson the fact that Chinese modernity owed much to the western influence was undeniable. There will be some scholars who would eventually try to incorporate some Chinese elements in what was meant to be a reconciliation between the old ways and the new. However, Dickinson is not confident about their success in this endeavour since the revolutionary zeal required a rejection of the retrograde past and its replacement with a completely new system of values. Those Chinese young students and followers of the western ways were animated by a spirit that decontextualised their behaviour:

“It is these young men that have made the revolution and established the Republic ; that are doing all they can to sweep away the old China, root and branch, and build up there a reproduction of America, There is nothing, I think, which they would not alter if they could, from the streets of Canton to the family system, from the costume of a policeman to the national religion.” [24]

Dickinson also remarks that the rise of the new generation, through the Western upbringing , managed to alter somehow the Chinese old fibre and customs and generate a qualitative change of the social fabric by bringing in new social forces with a fresh view of the world. He concludes that the advent of the republic, meant that “the breach of continuity has been complete, as complete as in revolutionary France.”[25] The republican ideal was perhaps

at that time the finest weapon to start a revolution with. The monarchies had to crumble and something new had to be built.

The revolution that was taking place was one that had to bring first destruction, so a new world can be born from the ashes of the old one. In order to accomplish this, something radical at first had to happen, something that would shake the public opinion and public spirit in such a way that the apparent insensitivity of the average Chinese, “honed” through centuries of pain and submission that he had to stoically bear while marching forward, had to be turned into a love for the country and the rise of a national consciousness, otherwise missing:

“Their social organisation has rested not on the central government, but on the family and the village. Government has been a mechanism imposed from above to make roads and canals, to do justice, and to collect taxes. And the comparative isolation of China for many centuries, the absence of wars waged for very existence, such as have built up the European system, prevented the formation of national sentiment by outside pressure.” [26] He certainly was right about the isolation and the lack of contact. However, China has met many internal problems that she had to manage by constructing a bureaucratic system that eventually became efficient and powerful. And if it is true that the bureaucratic system in China allowed meritocracy to have a say in the act of governance, then this made the country’s governance even closer to those ideals of the French Revolution that promoted individuals that could exhibit real skills in doing something, regardless of their station within the society. This bureaucracy that was relatively meritocratic allowed them to become great builders. It was within her power to coordinate those initiatives that would make the country flourishing and prosperous. One of the main concerns was actually the infrastructure and since then to the most recent times this quality never ceased to surprise foreigners. Dickinson thought China would never rise, he thought that the Chinese are too much a problem for themselves to become a great power.

The idea of real reform actually started first not in the shape of an anti-Manchu revolt, but as a try to preserve the monarchy of China, be it Manchu or otherwise, and transform it into a constitutional form of governance. This endeavour has revealed a reverence towards authority that the Chinese never discarded, no matter how westernised that reform may have seemed to be. Considering all the historical data available, the idea of preserving something appears to be yet another well known tendency for China .

From the political point of view, preserving a centralised system was essential for the stability of such a huge country, hard to manage otherwise than through a centralised rule. The only viable option for China in order to maintain unity and be able to mobilise efficiently in case of trouble was obviously a monarchic rule (even one camouflaged under the guise of a republic). It is perfectly true, like Dickinson stated, that China was not able to accept another form of governance, that the so-called republic was not an efficient option, that democracy was perhaps not something that can solve the problem of anarchy in China. Although China later on, in trend with Europe, adopted republic as a form of governance, that was only an external embellishment. The only thing that reminded of democracy was the bureaucratic system that could be considered more or less meritocratic, without necessarily being entirely so. The meritocratic bureaucratic system is generally not necessarily the result of a democratic development. A modern political thinker like Yarvin Curtis, thought to be behind the rise of Donald Trump and J.D. Vance, much criticised for his ideological support to the right wing factions within the U.S. and worldwide, has made a good point by observing that even in modern times China resembles more like a monarchy, although it remains a republic by name. If Curtis dreamt of a country like U.S. under the rule of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (F.D.R.) that can restore the dignity of a lost monarchical past dressed in democratic robes, China for

him still represents a strange kind of monarchy, but a monarchy nonetheless [27]. The Dark Enlightenment that Curtis is supposed to be an intellectual representative of can find then correspondence in many writing belonging to modern, much earlier Chinese thinkers, like Kang Youwei. Both him and Kang were against the so-called evils of the French Revolution and the Dark Enlightenment was only meant to offer precisely an alternative to the still lingering influences emanated from it. If one thinks of Curtis in the old terms, in the way in which the right wing ideologies appeared, can be mistaken nonetheless. Since times have changed, those ideologies, healthy or not, have also changed shape and turned into a modern variation, on a different scale. The many reactions that the recent conservatives have towards the French Revolutions are proofs of how important still it is and how influential and tide-turning this event in history was to the political developments not only of the West but also of the other parts of the world, where it came to be adopted in its ways as a standard for modernisation. Throughout his writings, Kang Youwei showed only a fear of the emanations of such a revolution that can spread eastward. He wasn't convinced that China can function otherwise than like a monarchy, since the Chinese traditional thought, regardless of the school, only supported such a form of governance. The idea of a monarch that can embody the will of heaven was deeply rooted in the Chinese mentality and it didn't disappear, since such a perception of power, accumulated with the passage of time, is quite hard to erase or discard. However, the form in which a monarchy can function was something that could be discussed and agreed upon.

Kang wasn't an apprentice of the West. He reviled the west for being barbaric and he saw the French Revolution as the result of backwardness, while he still held the Chinese monarchy in high regard. In this way he may be perceived as an idealist who thought that the Chinese monarchy can rise above all the forms of monarchy that existed in the past in some other countries, His reason was related to China having already the experience of a long history of social problems and crises that were solved due to her ability to deal with them properly. A monarchical system that endured for thousands of years would change its guise without altering its essence. In his account of the French Revolution he tries to get closer to and analyse the leading figures of the change that occurred in France and to identify the cause of it.

Psychologically speaking, great events are always charged with a consistent dose of emotional content that can be expressed in many ways. Reformers are usually the ones known for being motivated by such powerful emotions. As a reformer, Kang Youwei was also driven by his subjective emotions and could understand very well the state of mind that such revolutionaries as those from France may have had and how they may have felt. Most modern historians would overlook the role that the character of one single person may play during such great historical events. The modern history has been written by focusing mainly on the masses and the development of society, while forgetting the individual. Social determinism as a doctrine would afford less autonomy to the individual who is seen only as a product of those circumstances created by society as a whole.

However, although not a historian exposed to blame and criticism for a lack in methodology, Kang Youwei in his essay focuses first on one figure that he blamed and praised at the same time, with great affection. He starts his analysis of the French Revolution by emphasising the role once played by Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). While impressed by the personality of such an aristocrat that sought to protect the crown and at the same time implement progressive changes in the political system of France, he continues to criticise Lafayette's lack in understanding of the effect that such measures, not necessarily suitable for France and only successful in America might have in a different political environment. Kang Youwei suggests that Lafayette proved to be

dangerously mistaken about the political system based on equality as an option for his country, an option that once taken became disastrous for France and her people, leading to a huge number of deaths, ruin and chaos, with many innocent victims among them as well, thrown out of existence by the terror that followed.

Kang compared the process of reforming the society with a quest for a proper cure to a particular illness. According to his view, that illness that a country in general can suffer from, as a patient, if improperly dealt with, would only get cured superficially and the method employed in one case would have no curative effect in others, since there is no such a thing as a universal cure or panacea. Kang therefore regarded Lafayette as a physician who applied the wrong kind of medicine in the case of his own country, a physician otherwise loyal to the monarchy and motivated by an intention to do good, but whose actions lead to terrible consequences, like in the case of a malpractice [28]. While in Washington, Kang Youwei had the opportunity to admire the statue of Lafayette, a figure that Americans still feel a reverence for. Kang's open respect for him had an argument primarily in the fact that Lafayette maintained a constant attitude loyal to the Bourbon monarchy, even during the times of the Napoleonic Empire, after the French Revolution. Lafayette was a monarchist throughout that never changed colours and never compromised himself by switching allegiances. It is this constancy in maintaining his political stance and the ideological coherence that gained Kang's sympathy, but didn't spare him from being further criticised. In this context Kang proceeds during his account at making a comparison between Lafayette and Confucius, referring to the idea of promoting reform inside a society. He takes Confucius as an example of that type of reformer that would wait for the conditions to be ripe before initiating any kind of changes, a wise one. According to Kang, hastily rushing into reforming a country without having first a relatively stable environment as a setting was something dangerous and unhealthy, since results can turn unpredictable.

Kang's impressions, put together, were woven into his description of the revolution, while having always his country in mind. A seasoned traveler, he was not without purpose in his tours. Even the account about those revolutionary events from France had the flavour of taking the reader along, while travelling through places. He sought to experience, at a virtual level, and internalise the events that he was writing about. As a monarchist, it is obvious that Kang would consider only the option of a constitutional monarchy as a valid one for France at that moment. He would criticise Lafayette for not being sufficiently preemptive in his measures and cautious in his actions, since Lafayette wasn't able to foresee the chain of events that followed that upheaval. The ideas that he adhered to, although noble, had turned to be perilous in the end. Kang would warn such a "physician" to be more cautious, since a little mistake would lead in such cases to irreversible damages to the "patient" involved.

Kang, from his subjective point of view, deplors Lafayette's lack of provision and foresight and comes with strong arguments, meant to prove that the French population at that time, those common people of whose zeal the Revolution took advantage of, were poorly educated, illiterate and therefore ignorant. To appoint officials and civil servants from their ranks was seen as something that should be avoided. (Of course, at that time Kang Youwei had no way to predict that such things would happen in China during the times of Mao Zedong as well.) Empowering the uneducated masses was thus considered as something inconceivably lethal for a country like France. According to Kang, at a much earlier date Confucius also shared the same system of values that promoted equality and rights for all. Therefore, Kang saw in this modern discourse on values during the Revolution, said to be first proclaimed in America, something similar to what Confucius actually was trying to implement and promote in China during antiquity. The criticism regarding the lack of education of the masses that he

comes with, can only show how much importance he afforded to education, as a principal element that can be decisive in a political process [29]. By giving the example of Confucius, Kang actually aims at asserting the Chinese superiority in comparison with France. For him, a real reform wouldn't be a realistic possibility, since only education could guarantee a sane development of the revolutionary process in France, a process that could degenerate as it did into a tragedy and spread throughout Europe. For Kang the French Revolution was only a tragic misstep that unleashed an untameable wave of violence and hatred within society, something that unavoidably would in the end lead to a fracture.

Such was the deep belief of a monarchist like Kang Youwei, loyal to an alien dynasty, the Manchus, who ruled China with an iron hand and oppressed its Han subjects without mercy. Those Tartars were rulers of China, but Kang Youwei had a soft spot for those sinicized barbarians. He was a Han nationalist only to a limited extent, otherwise he pleaded convincingly for the idea of the world as one, having the vision of a globalism based on Confucian values, values that were seen as common to the entire humanity and were not particularly Chinese. The Chinese superiority consisted in the fact that the Chinese were the first to discuss and uphold them, a civilising precedence that legitimised their leading status among the nations of the world.

The French Revolution was the episode that provided an insight into what may have been perceived by Kang as Western "barbarity", a negative example to stain the Western culture. Westerners were again those immature villains of history who committed grave crimes due to a distorted perception of reality, ignorant as they were, with an uneducated populace who couldn't pass a sound judgement over things political, while exercising the right to vote. An ignorant doesn't have the required discerning ability. [30]

This point made by Kang however can pave the ground for more inquiry and debate regarding a sensitive question. Should people in general be indiscriminately allowed to vote or exercise their rights? A monarchist would perhaps be more inclined to think in a negative way regarding this matter that seems to be sensitive even today, in the modern world. Later in his account Kang Youwei would criticise and accuse the ruling class of excesses in oppressing the people, an attitude that led to a general discontent and paved the way for a violent uprising. The American Revolutionary War had shown not only that a constitutional order can indeed be established, but also that the emancipation through violence can be achieved. It is this realisation that was more dangerous for a country like France than for the newly formed United States of America. The revolution that would take place at the centre of a colonial power with a long imperial tradition was potentially more destructive than the one that would take place in the colonies across the ocean. France obviously had more capital to risk in this venture than the newly formed peripheral American states. The country had much to lose and some idealists with a robust royalist morality but progressive aspirations like Lafayette were not fully aware of the implications of such development and course of events. As Kang Youwei pointed out, the unbridled popular power would flood and destroy anything that can stand in her way like a veritable force of nature, triggering a collective violence hard to placate.[31]

The idea that popular movements are unreasonable in their evolution and wild in their behaviour was something not uncommon to most of the crowned heads of Europe. Kang also couldn't conceive a world in which "there is no master and lord, no education and learning, no rites and justice, with brigandry on the rise." By rites he refers to the Confucian idea of the "rite" *li* 禮, also thought as a principle applicable everywhere. Through its use in the context of the French Revolution, he meant a code of hierarchical behaviour that implies the existence of a certain order, an order that was absent in a society without a proper rule. For Kang the

basic morality required the recognition of authority and reverence to it. What in the Christian world would be deemed as a “Godless person” in the Chinese world would find an equivalent in a “lordless person” or a “parentless person” . Mengzi also mentions that “only beasts do not have lords and parents”[32]. This very Confucian world view is obviously something that belongs to the core of Chinese belief and has been till recent times a guiding principle of ethical behaviour for most of the Chinese bureaucrats. Having this in mind it is easy to understand why revolution was and perhaps still is reviled in China.

The “education” that Kang mentioned in his description may as well describe religion, an aspect of the *ancien regime* that was purged by the Revolution. Precisely that authority exercised through education was the guarantee of order, no matter what kind of ideological tool stood at its foundation, religious or otherwise. Therefore the disrespect towards religion was seen as an impunity by Kang Youwei and a bad example. Kang Youwei saw in religion something that has the role of educating and keeping in check those unbridled passions and angry resentment. Since the order of things as they were had already been broken, Lafayette’s dream of reforming the society and at the same time preserving the monarchy remained nothing but the mere product of a self-deluded mind. The blood-thirsty scaffold that awaited those souls condemned to be executed by guillotine was a horrific place that shattered the society from the very root and made Kang Youwei exclaim “the most gruesome thing that ever happened in the past or present.” He saw in the Girondins during the Revolution a party that led an activity similar to the Confucian reformer sages of yore, however the Girondins actions led to their own downfall and for many even to the guillotine. The gravest thing however was not their downfall but the subsequent plunge of the entire society into chaos and the replacement with an abusive and tyrannical new leadership. Compared to the French state of chaos during those years and the dramas that followed, the Chinese society was considered as superior , the Chinese civilised manners being the result of a history from which the Chinese have managed to learn valuable lessons. According to Kang Youwei, the Chinese society was able to achieve those values so much praised in the West since very ancient times, Confucius being such a prominent figure through his civilising role that he played as an educator and reformer, giving China the opportunity to rise above the mere feudalism and despotism. For Kang this turn of events set a new direction in Chinese history that started to take effect beginning with the moment in which the Qin dynasty was replaced by the Han, thus a new era being ushered in. In the modern period his younger contemporaries thought of completely discarding tradition and adopting the Western ways. He regarded this trend that evolved into a movement among the youth, a current that advocated for western learning, as ignorant of the past. In this context he mentions:

“Therefore I know nothing about the empty words concerning an unlimited freedom and equality. However, all countries have laws and there is none to exclude human freedom. And if the French sympathise with the idea of an equality and freedom bought at an immeasurable cost in blood, then my country had already attained it long before and alas forgot it, being recently like in search for a bull while actually riding on one, ignorant of what is already in her possession and not knowing where actually to look for it. Today, you, those modernisers who try to emulate the French and speak highly of revolution, you should look at the facts and not at the words and then why not consider what actually is that the French obtained through freedom and equality ? After the French achieved all these , a country of 25 million people like ours wished the revolution may long live .Owing to the principles found in the classics and promoted by Confucius, after the revolutionary change that replaced the Qin dynasty with Han dynasty, a freedom and equality was attained.Now I know it. We should wish

Confucius may long live, together with those Chinese who gained freedom and equality first among all the nations of the earth.”[33]

The Chinese assumed mission was to have a leading role on the world stage. This desideratum is reflected in Kang Youwei’s vision of how an ideal society of the future should look like, an idea that he puts forward in his essay “The Book of the Great Unity” 大同书, in which he expounds the theory of a one world government, a Confucian model that according to him could be applied also to the modern international order. From his point of view, Confucius had a messianic role that the West could also benefit from.

The idealistic way in which the past is thus portrayed betrays an underlying nationalism, beneath the apparent looks of internationalist or globalist attitude. This nationalism comes to be strangely limited only to the strong adherence to an imperial ideology that he considered to be legitimate, in ruling the entire world. The imperial success in the past was a proof of Chinese superiority in managing a large and seemingly divided country. Such an empire would look down upon the achievements of lesser empires such as the British one. In his writings, the so-called “ill man of Asia” turned defiant and on account of his many historical achievements belittled the attainments of other political forces in the world, which he would consider inferior. This was the mistake that would cost China much. The sheer backwardness that she failed to acknowledge about herself was to be revealed only later, during the foreign invasions. The shock of reality would shatter the Chinese society to pieces and make her plunge into the same abyss of the modern world that tried to proclaim the death of tradition, in the very spirit of the French Revolution. It is those French values that made her reconsider the entire past and start her own revolution.

During her history, China converted temporarily first to the Mongolian, then to the Manchu way of thinking. In these instances China found herself forced to embrace ways that were totally foreign to her culture.

The entire modern western culture was a byproduct of the French Revolution and China was forced to accept it as well. However, the problem with getting used to accept a “yoke” is the eventual harming effect that the yoke can have on somebody’s “neck”. For Chinese, the forbearance was an important virtue that they invoked whenever they had to bear the oppression of an impossible master. Getting used with the oppression unfortunately was also the result of an education that denied the individual existence outside a predetermined social hierarchy and order. The individual was never autonomous. Autonomy was seen almost as a crime or in the fortunate cases was associated with psychological deviance as a pathology. Only a mad person would dare to rise against the norms and the authority behind them. Therefore Kang Youwei’s case is similar to that of most of the Chinese who faced great inner struggles psychological struggles in defining themselves and their purpose in life. This is the proper angle to look from at the problem regarding Kang’s allegiances and his bizarre support to an alien dynasty. To explore deeper his psychology one can take into account the fact that Confucianism was meant to be a universal doctrine from the start, although Confucius drew nourishment from the earlier Chinese culture and the example of the legendary kings of the past.

Experiencing a series of transformations during her history, China has become in many ways a country full of paradoxes that stunned not only the traveler but also the scholar. These paradoxes need not be coherent or explainable, being a sum of experiences, often contradictory, that shaped the destinies of her leading personalities. Such a personality was also Mao Zedong, who still is regarded by the common folk too have attained a divine status, being even literally worshipped in China. Mao replaced the Son of Heaven in the Chinese mind and created a new modern archetype that came to be imitated on a large scale. The Chinese “monarchy” thrived

by employing the wits of somebody that became her exponent without being suspected of usurping the past. However Mao, while enjoy his god-like status waged a revolution against the past and tried to manipulate the Chinese cultural gene.

Kang Youwei thought that China had already surpassed the stage of revolutionary changes and that reform was what the country needed, not revolution. However, the Cultural Revolution led in China to a series of tragedies that were born unpredictably, destroyed lives and in many ways fractured the continuity of her tradition. Mao learned from the emperors of the past whom he studied thoroughly how to wage a revolutionary war and how to apply the methods in a modern context. Through his educating policies he sent the youth to the countryside in order to dismantle the extended families and clans that may have been related to the old regimes, the former aristocratic families of old. Family was dangerous and, much like Kang Youwei, advocated for an education outside the family. The allegiance should be payed solely to the monarch, and loyalty should be towards him and not the clan or family. Blood relatives were thought to make somebody vulnerable. This striking similarity to the long forgotten unifier of China, Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 is somehow easy to accept, since as Kang Youwei mentions, revolution as a positive force in Chinese history consisted of a series of events and eventually ended with the replacement of Qin by Han, when the same values that were promoted by the French Revolution were adopted by the society at large . The changes in Chinese history, according to him were always dramatic and what followed was a decline. He also invokes Mengzi, in the context of the fall of Xia and Shang. Interesting is that he considers regime change as legitimate and necessary and points out how early China has already experienced those circumstances during times when the common people were oppressed by despotic and tyrannical monarchs that exercised their power abusively and decided to forcefully remove them from power as a way out.

By referencing those figures of the past like Qin Le or others, Kang Youwei is making use of the history in order to explain the present. However, from a historian's point of view this treatment of history is rather unorthodox. The idea of revolution encompasses also a regime change and the logic of the revolution is one that demands more than just a regime change, involving also a paradigm change. This paradigm change, that was expected from China during a revolution didn't really work in a country that wouldn't try to completely discard the past. Discarding the past would mean to completely leave out the idea of an absolute monarch. The Chinese empire was founded upon a bureaucracy, but at some point this very bureaucracy took on the character assumed by the monarchy. The hierarchical model was still there, untouched. Therefore, since this pattern was still present, the old mentality and the mechanism that allowed it to thrive remained in fact unchanged. Old habits die hard, the older the habits the harder is for them to die.

Taking these into consideration, Kang Youwei's reliance on tradition and the logic he was trying to incorporate in a modern context seems to be quite inappropriate, since the material conditions of the past were different, the access at knowledge was also different. The comparison with what happened during the ages of Tang and Wu is somehow farfetched and even at some point ludicrous if one should even try to draw the comparison between a peasant during the Xia dynasty or during the Shang, who lived in the second millennium BC and the peasant from the vicinity of Paris during 18th century France. Similar examples of monarchs who were overthrown because of their despotism and were executed can be found in Europe during the Middle Ages without those acts being considered as proper revolutions. In this context, Kang Youwei was using those events or examples that had some revolutionary character exactly in the same manner in which later communist historians were employing

them for an ideological purpose. Interesting is that those “revolutionaries” that he mentions were all founders of future dynasties, future kings and emperors. The debate concerning the figures of Tang and Wu as paragons of virtue and their actions involved also the argument that those leaders were empowered by people and that the masses turned to them for being led, that it was not them who appropriated the power by their own will, but acted on behalf of the people. However, this argument, close to the widespread tendency to romanticise the past, has feet of clay, since there is nothing to adduce as an evidence that the people’s will was behind those uprisings, that the revolts were spontaneous. And even if they were spontaneous, the modern day developments have few things to do with the ancient China or any other cultural space. The great confusion that most of the traditional Chinese historians made was to associate things from the past with the new developments in different geographical locations. The aforementioned introduction that Kang Youwei started at the beginning of his account regarding the personality of Lafayette is somehow relevant and can be used even in the case of Kang Youwei who tries to associate events that were not relevant to his present. He makes the same mistake like Lafayette that he criticises in using the logic of some events that happened during the times of Tang and Wu and applying the same logic to the 18th century France, without taking into consideration many factors like the different culture and the different economy. This discourse however it is not uncommon. In this way, his view of history comes essentially into conflict with that of those intellectuals whose work was focused on translating the French philosophers like Voltaire and Rousseau into Chinese and, according to him, forgot their own sources of tradition, sources that could yield a similar content and make them find models of inspirations there.

The 100 days Reform (1898) , of which Kang Youwei was the central figure, was followed later on by the Xinhai Revolution (1911) that ended the centuries old Manchu dynasty. Those Xinhai revolutionaries were those that Dickinson described in his account related to China. The western educated youth, being cut off from the past had a different worldview and those individuals that adopted the western ways and manners were the most criticised by him. They are the target when he refers to the “New Learning” *xinxue* 新學 . He even engages them directly by trying, with a poetic tonality, to reconvert them to the old ways, as it can be seen in a message within the text. Kang Youwei then points out at the futility of writing or translating about things that already are present within the Chinese tradition:

“The noblemen of the House of Jin indulged in philosophical chatter and therefore Qin Le could yell out loud. The palace at Xianyang was located high up, but ended being burned down by Xiang Yu. Because of this also Wang Yan met with disaster while being caught up in a fight for power between the princes and Yang Guang went to the guillotine first. Mencius mentioned: If the population is ruthlessly oppressed this would result into a king’s death and the destruction of a state. Shi Kuang mentioned: In which manner does the Heaven expose the remains of the executed in front of the masses ? As the hanging of the head of Zhou on the white flag of the Shang dynasty, or as Zi Ying was tied by the neck at the Zhidao pavilion, such is a revolutionary change, when it is righteous and, like the change effected by Tang and Wu, would correspond to the heavenly will and follow the wishes of the people. Liu Bang and Li Shimin were predestined to rise in order to eradicate an oppressive rule and save the people, this being compatible with the ideal of a gentleman. These events belong to the past history of China, very ancient and numerous and it wouldn’t be a bother to be used when referring to France. If China would have ten thousand such wantonly violent princelings , monasteries that own a third from the territory of the realm and a great deal of common people with no perspective of being appointed in official positions, then the ignorant should first learn how to

write and then chant with ardour about freedom, roll up their sleeves, take up arms and wipe out the crooked. Has China to wait for books to be translated in order to wage a revolution that has a foundation in already existing principles. Some put first the works of Rousseau and Voltaire and follow on their footsteps with conviction, but do not ask themselves whether China also has something similar?"[34]

This can illustrate not only the importance that Kang Youwei renders to the study of history but also reveals a tendency for national revival.

Perhaps the way that the Chinese history has been taught to the youth during the Qing dynasty wasn't enough appealing to persuade them to get engaged in having a closer look at it, or perhaps his way of interpreting history was too unscientific to be acceptable for the taste of western trained students. Regardless of the reason why his thought didn't have much echo among them, the way that Kang uses history is perhaps one of the most worth studying, since the language in which he writes is as cryptic as the classical Chinese and the content of meaning that it encapsulates is very dense. The above translated fragment enumerates a few events in Chinese history that can constitute "study cases" like a whole panorama of the Chinese past. The cryptic rendering of place names only and abbreviated expressions made it necessary for us to expand the wording and mention within the text the name of those historical figures that the events were tied to. This way we come to know that the one tied at the Zhidao Pavilion 轶道 was actually the last king of the Qin dynasty, Ziyi 子嬰, who was massacred together with his retinue by Xiang Yu 项羽, a powerful warlord of the day, the head of the alliance that other states adhered to in order to put a resistance against the unifying Qin, the first dynasty that was able at some point to conquer all the other states and establish the Chinese empire. This event was subsequent to the shameful taking of Ziyi as a prisoner with a rope around his neck at the Pavilion mentioned. The white flag described belonged actually to the Shang dynasty and Wu, the king of Zhou was the one who beheaded the last king of the Shang dynasty, Zhou, an event that was featured in the aforementioned texts related to the Book of Changes as a true revolution, in a Chinese sense. The "philosophical chatter" came to be criticised by many intellectuals and literati as well as by the current leadership of China. The rise of metaphysics in China was associated with a neglect of the governance and meant a political decline. The so-called "philosophical chatter" or *qingtan* 清談, that appears to be somehow untranslatable, can be approximated by rendering it with the meaning of a straightforward and sincere discussion about philosophical matters. The Chinese code of behaviour seldomly allowed a straightforward inquiry into such matters or any other matters. The language itself was somehow codified and this rigidity of conduct had an effect in compelling those interested to seek sincerity and straightforwardness in their verbal expression, unconstrained by society norms. It is the Confucian way of imposing a certain pattern of behaviour, applied also to the way of speaking and communicating that created frustration and forced people to find ways of escape. Therefore, such philosophical discussions and metaphysical speculations were seen as a form of escapism and at the same time a sign of decline. The cause of that decline however was not the allurements of such discussions but the coercive nature of the ethical system that dominated the society. Education was more or less a form of control. The tighter the control, the higher was the tendency to resist it in diverse ways. This however may not mean that metaphysical speculations were a simple form of escapism. In all societies that are about to experience a change of regime, due to the political conditions, such escapism appears to be present and the fear of it is natural for a ruler that wants to preserve his status quo. Under some communist regimes, such fear was always a sign that somewhere there was a section of the

society capable of starting an uprising. The rebellious nature of philosophy was also revolutionary in character and like in the Islamic societies, the philosophers were often cursed for their rebellious spirit, that could be hardly tamed. The intellect could be tamed only if it was moulded into a pattern, that would prevent the mind from vacillating between concepts. This type of subtle engineering was needed in order to persuade those able to render the proper service to the society to commit themselves to a narrow task. Being useful and engaged in a certain activity was important, while uselessness was a crime, unacceptable by those charged with programming and educating the society. Conformity thus became a virtue, a code of manners that evolved through time. In this way Liu Bang 劉邦 entered the collective memory as a gigantic figure that founded the Han dynasty (202BC-9AD), a dynasty that Kang regards as a period of great achievement in Chinese history, when values like those promoted by the French Revolution, at least in its theory, became the general norm, for the first time in the history of mankind. Li Shimin 李世民 founded the Tang dynasty (618-907) and he too was considered as a champion of the people that rose against tyranny and injustice.

Through these examples Kang Youwei managed to give a complete picture to a history that could eventually be a source of inspiration for the present. He was right in putting his trust into the future generations, since there is a remaining question that still lingers: How much does the Chinese development owe to that imperial past and whether her international aspirations would be equally bold in their magnitude ?

CONCLUSION

The idea of revolution in China, like most of the western concepts which eventually were adopted into the Chinese culture during the advent of the “western learning” became something particularly Chinese and took on slightly different colours. The practical and down-to-earth spirit that the Confucianists promoted turned the understanding of revolution into a notion that referred to a regime change. During the course of such change the popular presence was less obvious. The common people’s will didn’t get to play a major role . The commoner didn’t become the symbol of a struggle. The masses were powerful when moved but otherwise remained inert and spiritless. There was no such a romantic embodiment of the revolutionary spirit that would represent the common will, the exaltation and zeal or nothing that would show that the revolution against oppression and injustice led to a massive collective movement that had the quality of what may be considered as revolutionary in nature. At least the chroniclers in their accounts do not include such descriptions.

During such changes there was always a monarch that took the lead. It is the monarch who constituted that embodiment of a revolutionary spirit. According to this logic only a Napoleon in China would be able to represent that spirit, only a Napoleon could become emblematic .This idea would seem queer for most of the French who wouldn’t perhaps conceive such a thing, but for the Chinese this possibility was very much incarnated in the personality of Mao Zedong and it is this recent ruler of China that became associated with the idea of a modern revolution in the eyes of most of the Chinese, being at the same time equally associated to the image of the kings and emperors of old that he also mentioned in his poems. In this respect the Chinese spirit always had to face an inner struggle, a struggle between their respect for authority and the historical need for change. Authority was impersonated by the head of the clan, the father or the monarch, while any change meant a revolution and a break in hierarchy. When the change had to be effected through force, it often led to a fracture and wounds that could be damaging to the society. While they have never excluded the possibility of following such a path, the Chinese were very weary of using force, since their long history

was one of constant bloodshed. As Laozi also once mentioned, the weapons were inauspicious objects and their used had to be avoided [35]. At the same time, the popular rage could be the equivalent of such weapon that according to the Taoists should not be brandished and employed as an instrument of power, since it could easily turn harmful against the user who would wield it.

The common historical facts can reveal that the masses constituted such instrument power and that many have tried to use it for their purpose. The masses were meant to be kept ignorant and blind by a person of authority who was neither ignorant nor blind, but manipulative. Under such authority the masses could become such force like the torrent described by Kang Youwei when he was describing the unbridled spirit of the violent ignorance of the French Revolution. The Chinese “revolution” was a “guided” one. It is the public hatred that many Chinese rulers tried to exploit. Precisely that feeling of hatred was the one that was unleashed and manipulated during the Cultural Revolution in China and such it became known worldwide for its viciousness. Fearful of that rage, the rulers of the past tried to find many ways of using it rather than taming it. The collective emotion needed to be channelized into something. Those rulers didn’t let themselves dominated by it, but tried as much as possible to achieve a dominance over it. Following this logic, one can notice that in the Chinese literature of the past there was an obsession about analysing the human character and finding its usefulness. Kang Youwei would perhaps even claim that the study of human character and human psychology in China was a precursor of a discipline related to the puzzling field of modern human resources. This obsession can be translated through fear. The authorities in China were always afraid of their subjects and they wanted to obtain a knowledge of human nature as thoroughly as possible. Therefore, those thought to be the villain characters of history had a double role, one that allowed the authorities to show how a negative example of human character looks like and by doing so to train the public into hating and detesting such personality type; the other function, more meaningful and important was that of being subjects of study and observation, since precisely these elements were the biggest threats for the establishment, no matter what kind of qualities they actually had, moral or immoral in nature. Those threats could constitute the real seeds of a revolution, sown on the soil of fertile hearts that could provide a proper medium for that. Prediction and divination was such weapon and, by primitive means, kings like Wen of Zhou devised methods employed in this trade of getting insights in the hearts of people that he would consider dangerous or unpredictable. The Book of Changes was born from that endeavour. Having more than a mere divinatory function, the content of the text was meant to be a classic on the science of prediction, consisting of estimating the probability of events. Regime changes were among the most important concerns and this is how the hexagram that corresponded to the idea of revolution was born. For such kings and rulers, those who wouldn’t fit into the category of a controlled opposition that cooperated with the establishment in order to maintain the peace and stability of the realm were considered dangerous and immoral, ending up by being demonised by the regime. The Taoist “unknowable” and reluctance to provide with definite answers therefore, in many cases was something threatening for the establishment. According to such logic, safety was always a virtue in China and the greatest threat to stability and safety was the idea of incertitude and ambiguousness present through the Taoist literary expressions. It is easy to understand why the Chinese classics, most of them, emphasised very often this idea. Chinese history was one of instability. To counter it, even the mythological past was used as an example of stability. The Chinese mythology therefore provides glimpses into the Chinese psychology of power. The emperors were always some mythical figures and civilising heroes that never ceased to be worshiped. They entered the Chinese pantheon in pretty much the same way by which much

the kings of the past entered the Romanian pantheon of church saints and started to be worshipped even nowadays. There was no figure such as that of Prometheus from the Greek mythology that would confront the gods and steal from them something that would dispel the veil of ignorance from the eyes of his brethren and brighten their cold nights : an illuminating fire. The western culture has inherited from the Ancient Greece those seeds of disobedient questioning and propensity for debate and protesting. The exercise of public discussions, criticism and debate was something quite alien to China. When the aforementioned debate between a Taoist and a Confucianist became too sensitive in the arguments presented, the emperor under whose auspices it was organised closed it himself out of fear that his legitimacy and authority would come into question. As always in such cases some conclusions remained unsaid. While in Greece during the antiquity somebody like Socrates would be jailed, ostracised and executed for his courage to question the official order of things, in China any such attempt would be held in check and stopped before having any effect.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the revolutions in the West had a very distinctive feature that made them different from the type of revolutions that took place in Asia. This has to do mostly with the perception of time. While in the western cultures the time is linear, within the Asian cultures it is cyclical and revolving. In the West, the linear time perception is the result of a Christian influence, while the recurring patterns of history and the agrarian awareness of a cyclical succession of seasons made the Chinese trust more, even nowadays, their own tradition regarding the passage of time than that brought by the western calendar. The Western perception refused to acknowledge such recurrence, since revolution couldn't be explained by such a reference to the past. Kang Youwei, in his writings shows opposition to that kind of linear change supported by the Western perception. That is why he tries to associate revolution to past events , while emphasising only the violent aspects of it. He regarded the theories of Voltaire and Rousseau as futile and worthless, acknowledging at the same time the potential danger they represent. Rousseau through his idea of social contract was seen as threatening the authority of the monarch while Voltaire was an atheist for who the monarch and the god that appointed him were symbols of authority that should be discarded , authorities that a Chinese would always cherish. The idea that the revolution that can be a positive step in the evolution of a society can bring about a real shift of paradigm was unconceivable for the logic of the cycle-oriented Chinese mind.

On the other hand, although the French Revolution sought to abolish the old, its system of values, rebellious as it was, still worked according to a Christian logic, by situating itself on a linear scale of time. The revolutionary had a messianic calling. The change-loving French felt the shadow of Jesus enforcing his zeal without even being too much aware of it. In a way, more or less, that was also the option adopted by Mao when he started the cultural revolutionary adventure, aimed at producing an irreversible change. Therefore, at least in this respect, of realising the potential danger of embracing the Western culture, Kang Youwei was right. There was an "apocalyptic" shadow looming over China, the subversive hegemony of western thought over the Chinese mind. However, no matter how, the respect for authority and the obedience to superiors always remained part of the way that the Chinese were educated and it still remains so. The Chinese silence kept about the events that led to the fall of the Iron Curtain is the result of looking through that lens. The Chinese perception on the fall of communism and the Iron Curtain was the same that they had in the case of the French Revolution. While the American tendency still remained that of exporting political ideas like those related to revolution and democracy, and transplanting them on a new soil, actions that managed too subversively topple dictatorships and bring about the downfall of authoritarian regimes, the Chinese were reluctant of taking this example and following it as apart of a plan to become a

similar force in the world. They were afraid and still are that such a meddling in the international order would endanger their domestic stability.

The logic of order in Chinese culture was also noticed by Anton Dumitriu, a reputed scholar of logic and philosophy who tried to understand the reason why Chinese culture managed to preserve herself in a state so similar to the China of the past in comparison with the ever-changing Western world . He maintains that : “The Chinese would integrate into a concrete order of things, which he discovers in the universe, that governs both the microcosmic and macrocosmic life. Instead of forcing himself upon nature, he seeks to adapt, to find his own place and mission in the world, seeking order. Therefore the highest and single principle that presides the entire thought and unfolding of the world is Dao, the principle of order. Starting from the idea of order, the Chinese would find it in all the manifestations of man and nature. The Chinese society and culture, being particular expressions of the same order are therefore immutable and eternally unchanging.” [36]

It is the order that would provide a certainty that the Chinese regimes were and still are so much in need of. The fear that order may crumble comes naturally, since, as Nietzsche would also point, out, gazing into the abyss can be dangerous, the experience being one of mutual absorption. The “abyss” of the modern world was always a threat and it still is in many ways. The Chinese rarely tried to explore it. The Chinese would withdrew in a past that can contain a future development as well. He wouldn’t assume the risk of venturing into a perilous unknown. It is in his nature to vacillate, to hesitate and reconsider. Afraid of that deadly “abyss”, he found clever ways of becoming such a challenge and sucking in all those who would challenge him. This is how the Chinese society and culture managed to survive the Manchus and Mongols. To fall into that gaze was enough to be trapped by the greed of looking and sunk into the abyss he started to be so familiar with. However, as he very well knows, such weapon is always dangerous.

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- [10] Nisbett, Richard E. , *The Geography of Thought*, New York: The Free Press, p.17, 2003. Print.
- [11] Ding, Shan, *You san dai dui lun qi minzu wenhua* 由三代都邑论其民族文化 in *Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo kanji* 历史语言研究所刊集, vol.5, 1935. Print.
- [12] Sima, Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji*, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 127, *Rulin liezhuan di-shiliu* 儒林列傳第十六 [The Biography of Scholars 16], p. 3116, 1959. Print.
- [13] see the poem titled “Snow” in Jerome Ch’ên , *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, London, Oxford University Press, p.340, 1965. Print.
- [14] Sima, Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju , 6, *Qin Shihuang ben shiji di-liu* 秦始皇本世紀第六 [The Genealogy of the First Emperor of Qin 6]: 235, 1959. Print.
- [15] Li, Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, New York, Random House, p.84, 1994. Print.
- [16] Sima, Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji*, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 127, *Rulin liezhuan di-shiliu* 儒林列傳第十六 [The Biography of Scholars 16], p. 3122-3123, 1959. Print. My translation. Original text: 清河王太傅轅固生者，齊人也。以治詩，孝景時為博士。與黃生爭論景帝前。黃生曰：湯武非受命，乃弑也。轅固生曰：不然。夫桀紂虐亂，天下之心皆歸湯武，湯武與天下之心而誅桀紂，桀紂之民不為之使而歸湯武，湯武不得已而立，非受命為何？黃生曰：冠雖敝，必加於首；履雖新，必關於足。何者，上下之分也。今桀紂雖失道，然君上也；湯武雖聖，臣下也。夫主有失行，臣下不能正言匡過以尊天子，反因過而誅之，代立踐南面，非弑而何也？轅固生曰：必若所云，代秦即天子之位，非邪？於是景帝曰：食肉不食馬肝，不為不知味；言學者無言湯武受命，不為愚。遂罷。是後學者莫敢明受命放殺者。

- [17] Jiao, Xun 焦循, edited by Guoxue zhenglishe 國學整理社, *Mengzi zhengyi 孟子正義* in *Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成*, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju,, p.86 , 1954. My Translation. Original text:齊宣王問曰:湯放桀, 武王伐紂, 有諸? 孟子對曰: 於傳有之。曰: 臣弑其君可乎? 曰: 賊仁者謂之賊, 賊義者謂之殘。殘賊之人, 謂之一夫。聞誅一夫紂矣, 未聞弑君也。无父无君。是禽兽也。
- [18] see Wang, Xianqian 王先謙, edited by Guoxue zhenglishe 國學整理社 *Zhuangzi jijie 莊子集解* in *Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成*, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, p.195, 1954. Print.
- [19] Duan Yücai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu 說文解字注*, Shanghai, Shanghai guji chubanshe, p.107, 1988. Print.
- [20] Wang, Xianqian 王先謙, edited by Guoxue zhenglishe 國學整理社 *Zhuangzi jijie 莊子集解* in *Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成*, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, p.197, 1954. Print.
- [21] Graham, Angus Charles, *Disputers of the Tao*, La Salle Illinois, Open Court Publishing House, p.306-307, 1989. Print.
- [22] Liu, Xiaogan 劉笑敢, *Zhuangzi zhexue ji qi yanbian 莊子哲學及其演變*, Beijing, Zhongguo Shehui kexue chubanshe, p.93, 1987. Print.
- [23] Sima Guang 司馬光, edited by Shen Zhihua 沈志华, Zhang Hongru 张宏儒, *Zizhi tongjian 资治通鉴*, Beijing , Gaige chubanshe, p.4189, 1993. Print.
- [24] Dickinson, G. Lowes, *An Essay on the Civilisations of India, China & Japan* , London and Toronto, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., p.57 , 1914. Print.
- [25] Dickinson, G. Lowes, *An Essay on the Civilisations of India, China & Japan* , London and Toronto, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., p.59 , 1914. Print.
- [26] Dickinson, G. Lowes, *An Essay on the Civilisations of India, China & Japan* , London and Toronto, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., p.61 , 1914. Print.
- [27] The interview given to UnHerd and posted on YouTube is an illustration of how he perceives the idea of a monarchy and its relationship with China (Curtis Yarvin: Welcome to the Dark Enlightenment, 9:10). His blogger name contains “Mencius” showing his fondness of Confucian philosophy.
- [28] Kang, Youwei 康有为, *Kang Youwei quanji 康有为全集*, edited by Jiang Yihua and Zhang Ronghua , Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, v.8, p.182, 2007.Print.
- [29] Ibidem.
- [30] Kang, Youwei 康有为, *Kang Youwei quanji 康有为全集*, edited by Jiang Yihua and Zhang Ronghua , Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, v.8, p.199, 2007.Print.
- [31] Kang, Youwei 康有为, *Kang Youwei quanji 康有为全集*, edited by Jiang Yihua and Zhang Ronghua , Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, v.8, p.204, 2007.Print.
- [32] Jiao, Xun 焦循, edited by Guoxue zhenglishe 國學整理社, *Mengzi zhengyi 孟子正義* in *Zhuzi jicheng 諸子集成*, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju,, p.269 , 1954. My Translation. Original text: 無父無君, 是禽獸也。
- [33] Kang, Youwei 康有为, *Kang Youwei quanji 康有为全集*, edited by Jiang Yihua and Zhang Ronghua , Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, v.8, p.203, 2007.Print. My translation. Original text: 是故空言之自由平等无界者, 我不知之。然万国皆有法律, 实无一切听人自由者。若 法人所矜夸以无量血购之平等、自由, 则我国久得之而忘之, 骑牛觅牛, 不知何求也。今 新学师法人言革命、自由者, 请无以其名, 而以其实, 则何不一考法人所得平等、自由之 实物乎? 法人得此, 亦既全国二千五百万人称万岁; 我国人以孔子经义之故, 经秦汉大革 之后, 平等自由已极, 今知之, 应大呼孔子万岁, 应大呼中国人在地球万国先获平等自由 二千岁而已。
- [34] Kang, Youwei 康有为, *Kang Youwei quanji 康有为全集*, edited by Jiang Yihua and Zhang Ronghua , Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, v.8, p.199, 2007.Print. My translation. Original text: 夫晋室之贵族清谈, 则石勒倚啸; 咸阳之宫殿嵯峨, 则项羽焚烧。此王衍所以遭排墙之祸, 而杨广

更先上断头之台也。孟子曰：暴其民甚，则身弑国亡。师旷曰：天岂使一人肆于民上。故首悬太白之旗，组系轺道之旁，革命之变，乃义所在，汤武豹变，应天顺人。刘邦、李世民应运而兴，除暴拯民，君子所与。此吾国故事，最古而最多，不烦远引之于法国者也。若使吾中国而有十万淫暴之诸侯，占国地三分有一专横之僧寺，举中国平民不得任权要之职，而鄙人必先奋笔焦唇而倡自由，攘臂荷戈而诛民贼。革命吾国自有[64]之义，岂待译书之入？先卢骚、福祿特尔而力为之矣。然试问中国有此否乎？

[35] Wang Bi, edited by Guoxue zhenglishe 國學整理社, *Laozi zhu*,老子注in *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成, Beijing, Zhonghua shuju,, p.18, 1954. Print.

[36] Dumitriu, Anton, *Culturi Elevate și Culturi Heracleitice*, București, Cartea Românească, p.29-30, 1987. Print.