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IN REVOLT AGAINST POSITIVISM, THE DISCOVERY OF CULTURE: THE LIANG QICHAO GROUP'S CULTURAL CONSERVATISM IN CHINA AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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In the aftermath of the First World War, cultural conservatism emerged as a noticeable trend in the Chinese intellectual world, representing China's reaction to the bankruptcy of Western scientific modernity. Contrary to the common evaluation of Chinese cultural conservatism as an idea of national modernization, this essay examines how Liang Qichao and his associates Zhang Junmai and Zhang Dongsun formulated their particular version of cultural conservatism out of their interest in restoring universal morality to the postwar world. Engaged with the global revolt against positivism, the philosophers of the Liang group reframed Chinese culture as a local source of universal morality that could contribute to the creation of a new world culture. This essay illuminates how their cultural conservatism historicized the universal as a goal to be realized through conscious human efforts to recover universal morality in concert with diverse local cultures.

KEYWORDS: Conservatism, culture, Liang Qichao, morality, positivism, science, Zhang Dongsun, Zhang Junmai

INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL POLITICS OF ANTIPOSITIVISM

This war has offered an immense spiritual stimulus to human kind. Naturally our view of life will greatly change. Philosophy is reinstated and religion is revived.¹

¹ Liang Qichao, *Ouyou xinying lu* [Impressions from travels in Europe], in *Yinbingshi heji zhi ershisan* [Collected works from the ice-drinker's studio, vol. 23] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936), 20. The war to which Liang referred was the First World War.

While traveling through postwar Europe in 1919, the Chinese thinker Liang Qichao declared that the recent world war represented a turning point in human history. Liang and his associates—notably Zhang Junmai (張君勱 1887–1969) and Zhang Dongsun (張東蓀 1886–1973), who were Liang’s disciples and renowned philosophers themselves—shared the worldwide view that the war had confirmed the bankruptcy of the modern West. They further held that the postwar world was undergoing “social transformation and self-renewal,” opening up new vistas (新局面 *xinjunmian*) of the future.² As seen in the quotation cited above, the reinstatement of philosophy and religion—both of which, they thought, had been suppressed by the nineteenth century’s dominant intellectual paradigm of positivism—marked the newness of the postwar era, signaling a world-historical renaissance of human free will.

In fact, Liang Qichao and the two Zhangs argued that the First World War had resulted largely from a crisis in Western philosophy caused by positivism’s fundamental defects. According to them, positivism, which had reached its culmination with the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, rendered both inner and outer life subservient to “the inevitable laws” of material movement and thus denied “the free will of a human being.”³ Liang criticized this as a virtual surrender of philosophy to “the banner of science.”

Once the human will cannot be free, how can there remain any need to distinguish good from evil? Whatever is good about me is simply what a wheel of “inevitable laws” has pushed me to do, and whatever is evil about me is the same. It is nothing to do with myself. Thus, the question is not how moral standards should change but instead whether morality can exist at all. The greatest crisis in the current intellectual world has arisen from this.⁴

In other words, for Liang and the two Zhangs, it was the disappearance of the question of morality from philosophy, or rather the loss of the free human being as a moral subject, that had caused the tragedy of the war. They welcomed recent developments in Western thought, such as William James’s philosophy of integrity, Henri Bergson’s theory of creative evolution, and Rudolf Eucken’s idea of spiritual life, as part of a beneficial worldwide interest in reviving the issue of morality and overcoming the “mechanistic materialist view of life.” They believed China, as a member of

2 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 18; “Xuanyan” [Declaration], *Jiefang yu gaizao* [Emancipation and reconstruction] 1, no. 1 (September 1, 1919). Zhang Junmai and Zhang Dongsun, called “the two Zhangs” (*er Zhang*) due to their long friendship and collaboration, were representative members of the Research Clique (Yanjiu xi) led by their mentor, Liang Qichao. They first met in Japan in the late 1900s and participated throughout the 1920s in all of Liang’s political and intellectual organizations, such as the Progressive Party (Jinbu dang), the Society for Common Learning (Gongxue she), and the Chinese Lecture Association (Jiangxue she), as well as the Research Clique. This article focuses on the cultural activities of Liang and the two Zhangs during the May Fourth Period (1919–1927) and refers to them collectively as “the Liang group.”

3 Zhang Junmai, “Ouzhou wenhuazhi weiji ji Zhongguo xinwenhuazhi quxiang” [Crisis of European culture and China’s new way], *Dongfang zazhi* [Eastern Miscellany] 19, no. 3 (October 1922): 116–18; Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 11.

4 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 11.

the international community, should embrace these new trends in order to rise in the world.⁵ In this context, they founded a new culture movement (新文化運動 *xin wenhua yundong*) as their contribution to this global effort at moral rehabilitation.⁶

It is of note that, for these Chinese philosophers, joining a world trend did not mean simply following Western thought as an advanced model.⁷ As worldwide disillusionment over the catastrophe of the First World War damaged the claim to hegemony of modern Western civilization, they viewed themselves as sketching out the moral values that could be drawn from Chinese tradition and contributed to a new world culture. In this way, their new culture movement, in lower case, departed from what we now call the New Culture movement, capitalized (1915–1919). While the latter was characterized by faith in the universal model of the European Enlightenment, the Liang group's movement was founded rather on the discovery of local cultures, which were not necessarily subordinated to a European universal.⁸ Zhang Junmai, for example, interpreted Confucius's teaching of sincerity (誠 *cheng*) as analogous to Eucken's philosophy of spiritual life, arguing that both referred to human efforts to reach the best and the highest stage by "subduing one's self and returning to propriety" (克己復禮 *keji fuli*) or through "spiritual struggle."⁹ Rather than putting Confucianism aside as a past glory, Zhang thus breathed new life into it as an aspect of local culture that held value for a moral reconstruction of the world—which was also his view of Eucken's philosophy.

5 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 17–18, 20. Zhang Junmai, who accompanied Liang on the unofficial mission to the Paris Peace Conference, decided to stay in Germany to study philosophy with Rudolf Eucken (1846–1926), whose philosophy of "spiritual life," he believed, offered a vision of morality against the positivism of August Comte (1798–1857) and Darwinism. Zhang Junmai, "Tongxun" [Correspondence], *Gaizao* [Reconstruction] 3, no. 4 (December 15, 1920): 102.

6 The core business of the Liang group's new culture movement included the publication of magazines and newspapers such as *Emancipation and Reconstruction* (*Jiefang yu gaizao*) and *China Times* (*Shishi xinbao*), both of which were under Zhang Dongsun's chief editorship during Liang Qichao's trip to Europe. Besides these periodicals, the group published books, especially translations of Western works, through the Society for Common Learning, and invited well-known foreign scholars, including John Dewey (1859–1952), Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), Hans Driesch (1867–1941), and Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), through the Chinese Lecture Association between 1920 and 1924. The group also ran a university called the China Institute (*Zhongguo gongxue*), hoping to make it an institutional base for the culture movement. Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian, eds., *Liang Qichao nianpu changbian* [Chronological biography of Liang Qichao] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2008), 576–77; Zhang Pengyuan, *Liang Qichao yu Minguo zhengzhi* [Liang Qichao and Republican politics] (Changchun: Jilin chubanshijuan, 2007), 128–52.

7 Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Dominic Sachsenmaier, "Alternative Visions of World Order in the Aftermath of World War I: Global Perspectives on Chinese Approaches," in Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 151–80.

8 In her article on the historical construction of the New Culture movement as a cohesive movement in 1923–1924 through the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda strategy, Ya-pei Kuo also noted that Zhang Dongsun's vision of a new culture movement, one of a variety of new culture movements in China after the First World War, was based on the "sense of global coevality." The Liang group's discovery of cultures, I argue, was possible due to this recognition of "global coevality." Ya-pei Kuo, "The Making of The New Culture Movement: A Discursive History," *Twentieth-Century China* 42, no. 1 (January 2017): 52–71.

9 Zhang Junmai, "Tongxun," 102.

The Liang group's reevaluation of tradition has drawn scholarly attention as part of a trend toward cultural conservatism, characterized by the "traditional" ideas of such intellectuals as Du Yaquan (杜亞泉 1873–1933), Liang Shuming (梁漱溟 1893–1988), Zhang Shizhao (章士釗 1881–1973), and others, presented in opposition to the iconoclasm of New Culture/May Fourth radicals.¹⁰ While the two Zhangs are often better known as the "Third Force" for their lack of affiliation in the 1930s and 1940s with either the Guomindang or the Chinese Communist Party, they and their mentor Liang Qichao are also regarded as cultural conservatives of the 1920s—particularly due to their positive estimation of Chinese cultures.¹¹

This article takes up the matter of the Liang group's cultural conservatism in order to illuminate their concept of culture and how they understood the relationship of culture to the universal as well as to the nation-state. Contrary to established scholarship, which has tended to see Chinese cultural conservatism as derived from nationalism and to confine the meaning of culture to the nation-state, I argue that Liang and the two Zhangs envisioned culture as detached from the political form of the nation-state.¹² Indeed they carried out a "postnationalist cultural politics," as Xiaobing Tang has termed it, by affirming native culture but at the same time questioning the world system of nation-states to "go beyond pride in the nation's past."¹³

10 Since Benjamin Schwartz pronounced modern Chinese conservatism to be largely cultural rather than sociopolitical, the term "cultural conservatism" has been widely used and accepted in the field of Chinese studies. Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Notes on Conservatism," in Charlotte Furth, ed., *The Limits of Change: Essays on Conservative Alternatives in Republican China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 3–21. In opposition to the scholarly tendency that ties Chinese cultural conservatism to "a worldwide post-World War I antimodernization trend" and interprets it as Chinese conservatives' rejection of modernity as foreign, Edmund S. K. Fung has defined modern conservatism in China as "a faith in traditional values that could be revitalized and harnessed to the purposes of modernization." Edmund S. K. Fung, *The Intellectual Foundations of Chinese Modernity: Cultural and Political Thought in the Republican Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62–63. For works that see Chinese cultural conservatism just as part of an antimodernization trend, see Kai Ai [Guy Alitto], *Shijie fanwei neide fanxiandaihua sichao—lun wenhua shoucheng zhuyi* [Worldwide antimodern intellectual trend: on cultural conservatism] (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1991); Zheng Dahua, "Diyici shijiedazhan dui zhanhou (1918–1927) Zhongguo sixiang wenhuade yingxiang" [Impact of the First World War on Chinese culture and thought in the postwar period], in *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo sixiangshi yanjiushi* [Society of Intellectual History, Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences], eds., *Xifang sixiang zai jindai Zhongguo* [Western thought in modern China] (Beijing: Shenhui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2005), 158–203.

11 On the two Zhangs as the Third Force, see Roger B. Jeans, Jr., *Democracy and Socialism in Republican China: The Politics of Zhang Junmai (Carsun Chang), 1906–1941* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Edmund S. K. Fung, "Socialism, Capitalism, and Democracy in Republican China: The Political Thought of Zhang Dongsun," *Modern China*, 28, no. 4 (October 2002): 399–431.

12 Edmund S. K. Fung's approach to Chinese cultural conservatism as "politico-cultural nationalism" points to a "political dynamics" of Chinese conservatism that has been overlooked, due largely to the strong influence of Schwartz's proposition on *cultural* conservatism. However, by accepting Schwartz's argument of "the dominance of the nationalist component" in Chinese conservatism, Fung's studies mistakenly confine the scope of culture only to the nation-state. Schwartz, "Notes on Conservatism," 16. Edmund S. K. Fung, "Nationalism and Modernity: The Politics of Cultural Conservatism in Republican China," *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2009): 777–78; Edmund S. K. Fung, "The Politics of Modern Chinese Conservatism," chap. 3 in *Intellectual Foundations*, esp. 98, 102.

13 Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: The Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 234.

In situating the Liang group's new culture movement within the global context of the "revolt against positivism," I want to emphasize the relationship of this "postnationalist" concept of culture to the universal. H. Stuart Hughes has characterized "general social thought" in 1890s Europe as "a revolt against positivism," an attempt to counterbalance "the whole tendency to discuss human behavior in terms of analogies drawn from natural science."¹⁴ As the concept of Western scientific civilization was subjected to serious reconsideration in the wake of the First World War, the revolt gained particular momentum in the non-Western world. The philosophers of the Liang group recognized native cultures and national differences as a significant local reserve of morality against scientism or positivism—a source for the moral rehabilitation of the postwar world, which they conceived to be a world-historical necessity. In other words, these Chinese philosophers joined European thinkers in a revolt against positivism and proposed a concept of culture as part of their effort to restore universal morality on a global scale.

The Liang group's cultural conservatism thus took on not only a global character by joining the worldwide revolt against positivism but also a universalist character by holding fast to a deep faith in universal morality. It is this global universal character that separated their conservatism from the nationalist tendencies of contemporary cultural conservatives and allowed them to avoid the traps of historicism and relativism. Situated within this global context of antipositivism, the unusual combination of socialism and conservatism in the Liang group's thought begins to make sense. In what follows, I argue that the Liang group saw socialism as a sign of moral revival and thus presented their alternative interpretation of socialism in explicit opposition to Marxism, which they believed was founded on positivist philosophical grounds.

A UNION OF CONSERVATISM AND SOCIALISM

After the First World War the Chinese intellectual world hummed with vigorous reflections on "Mr. Democracy" and "Mr. Science," the New Culture heroes that represented the construction of a new China following the path of the European Enlightenment. Losing hope in Wilsonian principles of self-determination after the diplomatic failure at the Paris Peace Conference, many Chinese intellectuals radicalized the meaning of Mr. Democracy by presenting "populist" interpretations.¹⁵ Liang Qichao and the two Zhangs did not stray from this May Fourth march toward the people. Advocating an "all citizens' politics" (全民政治 *quanmin zhengzhi*), they supported the expansion

14 H. Stuart Hughes argued that European social thinkers of the 1890s, including Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, Henri Bergson (1859–1941), and others, rejected the positivist faith that they thought had become a kind of "scientific fatalism" and worked to restore "the freely speculating mind to the dignity it had enjoyed a century earlier." H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (New York: Random House, 1958), 37–39.

15 Erez Manela, "Dawn of a New Era: The 'Wilsonian Moment,'" in Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 121–50; Edward X. Gu, "Who Was Mr. Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals, 1915–1922," *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 3 (2001): 589–621.

of democratic politics to include the general populace, in accordance with the May Fourth discovery of society “as the basis for political order.”¹⁶

While most nascent radicals began to call for direct political action during this time, Liang and the two Zhangs continued to see a cultural movement as the best way of realizing “true democracy.” This difference came from the Liang group’s critique of Mr. Science as posing a fundamental challenge to human morality and their consequent theorization of the contemporary pivot in human history as a cultural turn.¹⁷ Defying Mr. Science’s authority to join a global revolt against positivism, the Liang group declared that the crisis of morality apparent across the world was a general problem of culture, one that should not be reduced to a problem of one class or of one nation, on the basis of their observation that “culture has become universalized.”¹⁸

What did they mean by this statement on universalized culture? First, acknowledging the rise of proletarian activism and influence, Liang and the two Zhangs noted that culture had become popularized beyond an aristocratic and bourgeois elite minority. They also believed that culture was in the process of globalizing beyond national boundaries. During their trip to Europe, Liang Qichao and Zhang Junmai met many philosophers and social democrats, and they became convinced that their concern with culture and morality was indeed a global concern, shared by intellectuals across the world.¹⁹ It was in this recognition that culture, both popularized and globalized, had become a genuinely global matter beyond the confines of class and nationality that the Liang group’s own new culture movement originated.

It is important to note that for these philosophers the cultural turn against scientism and toward morality coincided with the turn to socialism. Indeed, they deemed socialism itself to be a social sign of the postwar retrieval of morality, an appropriate complement to antipositivism in the intellectual world. Liang Qichao declared that social revolution was to be the twentieth century’s central characteristic and that no single country would be able to escape it. He took particular note of the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin’s theory of “mutual aid” as the sociological sign of a new era, regarding it as an alternative to the Darwinian theory of “struggle for existence” or the capitalist spirit of free competition.²⁰ Zhang Dongsun, the most serious and radical advocate for socialism in the Liang group, adopted a similar view, interpreting socialism as a conscious effort to

16 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 23–24; Arif Dirlik, *The Origins of Chinese Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 66–67.

17 Chen Duxiu’s understanding of science serves as a good example of positivist concepts of science during this time. On Chinese concepts of science, including Chen’s, see Wang Hui, “The Fate of ‘Mr. Science’ in China: The Concept of Science and Its Application in Modern Chinese Thought,” *positions* 3, no. 1 (1995): 1–68.

18 “Xuanyan.”

19 Their firsthand experience of expanding discursive communities on a global scale included their meetings with German social democrats such as Karl Kautsky (1854–1938), Rudolf Hiferding (1877–1941), and Eduard Bernstein, who shared their visions of a socialism different from the Russian revolutionary model, with journalists from various countries who understood the virtues of Chinese spiritual culture, and with the philosophers Rudolf Eucken and Henri Bergson, whose antipositivist ideas they admired. Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 36; Zhang Junmai, “Xueshu fangfa sang zhi guanjian” [My humble opinion on academic methods], *Gaizao* 4, no. 5 (January 15, 1922): 2.

20 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 17.

restrain the unbridled development of individualism and direct “individual epicureanism” into “social epicureanism” (社會享樂主義 *shehui xiangle zhuyi*).²¹ In other words, they viewed socialism as a conscious endeavor to solve the *moral* problems created under the capitalist system, such as the gap between the rich and the poor or the irreparable disaster of the First World War.

From this cultural perspective, the philosophers of the Liang group saw capitalism and socialism as whole civilizations, comprehensive modes of human life, rather than just economic systems or modes of production. Zhang Dongsun theorized that the First World War had marked a world-historical shift to the third civilization of socialism and cosmopolitanism after the first civilization of custom and superstition and the second civilization of capitalism and statism. That is, socialism was “a new civilization,” founded upon principles of mutual aid and cooperation as opposed to the capitalist spirit of freedom and competition. In this regard, Zhang emphasized that socialism meant “an outlook on life and on the world—the most progressive and newest outlook on life and on the world.”²²

Since the philosophers of the Liang group approached socialism as an entirely alternative social system, they believed that the transformation to socialism would necessarily entail a “total reconstruction” of humanity, from personal to communal life (全體生活 *quantu shenghuo*) and from spiritual to material life. According to them, such a total shift could not be achieved overnight, through mere political upheaval. Socialist transformation would be achieved instead by cultivating socialist principles or “socialist morality,” that is, mutual aid, cooperation, self-governance, and communal mores. It is just such a total reconstruction following socialist principles that the Liang group ultimately aimed to achieve through their new culture movement. In this context, Zhang Dongsun referred to the new culture movement as “education in a broad sense.”²³

Such emphasis on mutual aid and education might be explained by the strong influence of anarchism on Chinese society during the May Fourth period, as widely acknowledged in the field of Chinese studies.²⁴ While most Chinese anarchists were vehement critics of Chinese tradition, the philosophers of the Liang group did not see Chinese tradition as incompatible with modern socialist principles. Liang Qichao argued that the spirit of socialism could be found in ancient Chinese thought, which stressed the importance of social welfare in cultivating and maintaining the people’s moral behavior—as seen in Confucius’s maxim that “if there is equality, there will be no poverty and if there is

21 Zhang Dongsun, “Du ‘Dongxi wenhua ji qi zhexue’” [Review of “Eastern and Western Culture and Their Philosophies”], *Shishi xinbao—xuedeng* [China Times supplement—Light of learning], March 19, 1922, 2–3.

22 Zhang Dongsun, “Disanzhong wenming” [The third kind of civilization], *Jiefang yu gaizao* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 1919): 1–3.

23 Zhang Dongsun, “Women weishenme yao jiang shehuizhuyi?” [Why do we need to discuss socialism?], *Jiefang yu gaizao* 1, no. 7 (December 1, 1919): 5, 7. Both Zhangs stressed the importance of cultivating a socialist spirit as an urgent and important method of social transformation. They both diagnosed China’s problems as arising from its backwardness, which kept the country stagnating at the level of the second civilization, held back by “shameless old habits.” Zhang Dongsun, “Disanzhong wenming,” 4–5; Zhang Junmai, “Eluosi suwei’ai liangbang gongheguo xianfa quanwen” [Complete translation of the constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Republic], *Jiefang yu gaizao* 1, no. 6 (November 15, 1919): 42.

24 Dirlik, *Origins of Chinese Communism*, 74–94.

harmony, there will be no scarcity [of population]” (均無貧和無寡 *junwupin hewugua*) and Mencius’s contention that “people will have constant heart when there is constant livelihood” (恒產恒心 *hengchan hengxin*).²⁵ In a speech on his impressions of the European trip delivered at the China Institute (中國公學 *Zhongguo gongxue*), Liang stated that “Chinese social institutions embody to a considerable degree the spirit of mutual aid,” a concept that, he argued, Westerners did not deeply understand.²⁶

This conservative attitude to socialism might be a natural consequence of their cultural approach: now that socialism was seen as a sign of reviving morality after the First World War, it could be combined, without logical conflicts, with Chinese traditions, which were also being reevaluated as a source of morality. Thus socialism and Chinese traditions, together with antipositivist philosophies, could be seen as forming a postwar trinity signaling the restoration of morality as a central aspect of human life. It is through the formation of this trinity that the Liang group’s idea of socialism took on a conservative coloring—conservative in the sense that the group saw the modern ideology of socialism as consistent with Chinese traditional thought. But their cultural conservatism also had a transformative character—transformative in the sense that it shared the socialist goal of fundamentally changing the morally compromised capitalist world.

PHILOSOPHIZING SOCIALISM IN REVOLT AGAINST POSITIVISM

The Liang group’s theorization of socialism in moral terms was opposed to the Marxist brand of socialism, which then constituted an important vein of Chinese radicalism although it was not yet the hegemonic form of socialist discourse. During the early May Fourth period, Chinese Marxists became particularly devoted to a deterministic view of the causal significance of the economic base, rendering Marxist interpretations of socialism divorced from the consideration of human agency. This one-sided emphasis created “a misunderstanding of Marxism as an evolutionist economic determinism.”²⁷ While embracing socialism as a new world trend, the philosophers of the Liang group firmly refused such determinist implications. Instead they intended to revise Marxism to overcome what they saw as its determinist fallacy; in fact this intention constituted an integral part of their revolt against positivism.

The Liang group’s revisionism thus concentrated on refuting Marxist historical materialism, which they saw as grounded in positivist premises about the natural law of material movement. Zhang Dongsun criticized Marxism for mistakenly believing the people’s aspirations or ideals to be determined only by their living conditions: according to Zhang, this problem stemmed from the Marxist preoccupation with the economic base and a consequent failure to perceive the people’s “active” reaction to the environment or the role of “the ideal” (理想 *lixiang*) in leading the whole society in a common struggle to destroy current economic conditions and create new ones. Because Marxism failed to

25 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 32.

26 Ding Wenjiang and Zhao Fengtian, eds., *Liang Qichao nianpu changbian* [Chronological biography of Liang Qichao] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2008), 578–80.

27 Nick Knight, *Marxist Philosophy in China: From Qu Qiubai to Mao Zedong, 1923–1945* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2005), 1–6; Dirlik, *Origins of Chinese Communism*, 108, 115.

grasp the transformative power of the human ideal, Zhang argued, Marxism was “obstructive to social reformation” and therefore needed to be revised to “make social progress.”²⁸

Zhang Junmai also posed a similar critique of historical materialism for its degeneration into determinism and stagism. Contrary to the Marxist conception that “all changes in the world originate in material changes” and occur in “a certain order,” Zhang pointed out that social revolution had happened first in Russia, not in economically developed countries such as England or America, discrediting the materialist and stagist assumptions of Marxism. He argued that the Leninist revolution showed that “the revolution is motivated not by material conditions but by human power [人力 *renli*],” that is, Lenin’s revolutionary will.²⁹ In other words, in opposition to the Marxist explanation of social change as driven solely by material development, the two Zhangs formulated an alternative theory that stressed human will—Zhang Dongsun’s ideal and Zhang Junmai’s human power—as a motivating force of social change. Zhang Dongsun’s bold demand to change the focus of socialism “from materialism [唯物主義 *weiwu zhuyi*] to spiritualism [精神主義 *jingshen zhuyi*]” was in the same vein.³⁰

The Liang group’s revisionism, their idealist reinterpretation of socialism, signified their participation in the Kantian shift in world socialism, which was confluent with a revolt against positivism.³¹ Against the total commitment to positivist ideas that most radicals made at the end of the nineteenth century, revisionist socialists such as Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) challenged the Marxist claim to “scientific” validity, which, they thought, had regressed into a passive economism of “waiting for the contradictions within capitalism to bring the system down.”³² On the Kantian philosophical basis of the replacement of Hegel,³³ revisionists emphasized “morality and ethics as opposed to science and materialism” and stressed “human will and cross-class cooperation rather than irresistible economic forces and inevitable class conflict.”³⁴

The intellectuals of the Liang group joined this Kantian turn in the aftermath of the First World War, as they particularly viewed socialism as part of the trinity—together with antipositivist philosophies and selected Chinese traditions—that constituted the

28 Zhang Dongsun, “Zhidaao jingzheng yu yundong” [Guidance, competition, and movement], *Jiefang yu gaizao* 1, no. 2 (September 15, 1919): 75–76. In this regard, Zhang Dongsun declared that “modern socialism is the end result of countless revisions and endless expansions rather than Marx’s personal theory.” Zhang Dongsun, “Women weishenme yao jiang shehuizhuyi?,” 6.

29 Zhang Junmai, “Shehui suoyou zhi yi yi ji Deguo meikuang shehui suoyoufa cao’an” [The meaning of public ownership and a draft law on public ownership of coal mines in Germany], *Gaizao* 3, no. 11 (July 15, 1921): 13–14.

30 Zhang Dongsun, “Women weishenme yao jiang shehuizhuyi?,” 7.

31 Ted Benton, “Kantianism and Neo-Kantianism,” in Tom Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V. G. Kiernan, and Ralph Miliband, eds., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 280.

32 Sheri Berman, “The Roots and Rationale of Social Democracy,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 20, no. 1 (January 2003): 120.

33 Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 18; Anthony W. Wright, “Social Democracy and Democratic Socialism,” in Roger Eatwell and Anthony Wright, eds., *Contemporary Political Ideologies* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993), 84; Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 8.

34 Berman, “Roots and Rationale of Social Democracy,” 121.

postwar revival of morality. Zhang Dongsun interpreted the “Kantianization of Marxism” (馬克思主義的康德化 *makesizhuyi de kangdehua*) as a necessary conversation between Marxism and idealist philosophy, intended to advance socialism beyond economic theory.³⁵ In other words, the Liang group joined the Kantian turn in order to philosophize (if not exactly Kantianize) socialism, or retheorize it, on the basis of idealist philosophy. As an important part of their revolt against positivism, their philosophy of socialism illuminated the importance of conscious human efforts to achieve socialist transformation through the attainment of a specifically socialist morality. It was indeed on the basis of this integration of morality into the socialist spirit that these cultural conservatives were at the same time socialists—advocates of an idealist and reformist socialism quite distinct from materialist and revolutionary Marxism.

DISCOVERING DIFFERENT CULTURES: GLOBAL, RATHER THAN NATIONALIST

The Liang group’s vision of the cultural turn in the postwar world came along with the recognition that Chinese culture was different from Western culture but not necessarily inferior to it. Zhang Junmai emphasized that the Chinese, who possessed their own cultural and historical resources, should themselves take to the stage in the world theater (劇場 *juchang*) as part of humankind, overcoming their previous passivity.³⁶ Even with this recognition of the contemporary value of Chinese culture, however, the philosophers of the Liang group did not uncritically accept everything Chinese. Both Zhang Junmai and Zhang Dongsun criticized what they saw as “rotten” elements of traditional culture, such as the old Confucian ethics of “three bonds and five relationships” (三綱五常 *sangawuchang*)³⁷ or Confucian rituals (禮教 *lijiao*) that had become empty of any moral significance.³⁸ They both believed that “an injection of foreign blood” such as “the spirit of individual autonomy, political democracy, and the scientific method” would be necessary to cleanse Chinese culture to maintain its vitality.³⁹ In other words, their brand of cultural conservatism selected only Chinese cultural forms that they believed held moral value.

These philosophers took a selective approach to Western culture too: they chose only those aspects of Western culture that could, in their estimation, be considered morally useful. Departing from the previous mode of unquestionably identifying everything Western with the new and the modern, they actually redefined the “new” as a specific reference to recent world trends, that is, antipositivist philosophies and socialism, both of which they conceived as signals of a postwar revival of morality, rather than Western

35 Zhang Dongsun, “Shehuizhuyi yu Zhongguo” [Socialism and China], *Xin sichao* [New trend of thought] 1, no. 1 (n.d.): 1–2.

36 Zhang Junmai, “Xueshu fangfa sang zhi guanjian,” 5.

37 Zhang Junmai, “Xueshu fangfa sang zhi guanjian,” 6.

38 Zhang Dongsun, “You zilide wo dao zizhide wo” [From selfish self to restrained self], *Dongfang zazhi* 23, no. 3 (February 10, 1926), repr. in Ke Rou, ed., *Zhang Dongsun xueshu wenhua suibi* [Zhang Dongsun’s academic and cultural essays] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2000), 305.

39 Zhang Junmai, “Ouzhou wenhuazhi weiji,” 121–22; Zhang Dongsun, “Xifang wenming yu zhongguo” [Western civilization and China], *Dongfang zazhi* 23, no. 14 (1926): 94.

culture in general. From this viewpoint, they criticized Western knowledge imported to China as mostly “old theories of the nineteenth century” and argued that China should instead learn “the virtues of the latest academic theories of the West.”⁴⁰

From this position, which deprived Western civilization of its monopoly on newness and limited its useful novelty to postwar trends, the philosophers of the Liang group historicized culture in order to refute Eurocentric discourses on the meaning of the universal. Zhang Dongsun stressed that “all civilizations have values, but all their values reflect the spirit of the era [時代性 *shidai xing*]”; thus no culture, old or new, Eastern or Western, should be absolutized; a culture should instead always be reevaluated in relation to its context.⁴¹

As the Liang group believed that the spirit of the era after the First World War would restore free human will and retrieve morality, Chinese culture was indeed reevaluated, scoured for moral values consistent with this spirit; thus it no longer lay “outside of history” in a Hegelian sense, as an underdeveloped, uncivilized, *particular* culture. Rather, China could and should participate in constructing a new universal world history. “We believe that Chinese civilization is an extremely valuable part of human heritage,” the Liang group wrote, “So we Chinese are responsible for reorganizing and enhancing our tradition on behalf of our ancestors, and to the world we are responsible for participating and making our contribution.”⁴² In this way, they rejected any idea of particularizing Chinese culture as essentially different from the European universal and incompatible with the European march toward progress.

It was not by chance that these philosophers abandoned the term “civilization” (文明 *wenming*) in favor of the term “culture” (文化 *wenhua*) around this time. During his exile in Japan (1898–1911), Liang Qichao had frequently used *wenming* as the translation of the English word “civilization,” and, following Japanese enlightenment scholars such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉 1835–1901), his usage of *wenming*/civilization connoted progress in contrast to barbarian stagnation.⁴³ In *Impressions from Travels in Europe*, Liang still used the term *wenming*, but, in his abandonment of social Darwinism and statism as a consequence of his critical observations of the First World War, his usage here clearly departed from his previous approval of Western progress. Despite continuing to use *wenming* to describe the coming civilization of socialism, Zhang Dongsun also showed a clear recognition of a difference between *wenming* and *wenhua*: *wenming*/civilization referred to material aspects, while *wenhua*/culture referred to spiritual aspects.⁴⁴ In other words, Zhang recognized that China could now claim a qualitative difference from—but not inferiority to—the West by adopting a cultural standard of spiritual quality.

This concept of culture appeared to be similar to the *Kultur*/culture of German romantic nationalist philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), which gained

40 “Xinxueshe xuanyanshu,” *Jiefang yu gaizao* 1, no. 1 (1919): 73.

41 Zhang Dongsun, “Da Zhang Xingyan jun” [In reply to Mr. Zhang Xingyan], *Shishi xinbao* [China times] (October 12, 1919), repr. in Ke, *Zhang Dongsun xueshu wenhua shuibi*, 92.

42 “Fakanci,” *Gaizao* 3, no. 1 (1920): 7.

43 Yoshihiro Ishikawa, “Jindai zhongguode wenming yu wenhua” [Civilization and culture in modern China], *Nihon Tohogaku* [Japanese studies on the Orient] no. 1 (2007): 325.

44 Zhang Dongsun, “Zhengzhi huaiyilun zhi jiazhi” [The value of the discourse of political skepticism], *Minfeng zazhi* [Folkways magazine], May 15, 1919, 257.

popularity in China around the end of the First World War.⁴⁵ Like the Herderian concept of culture, the Liang group's notion of culture was deployed against the hegemonic notion of a "singular civilization" of the European Enlightenment.⁴⁶ Unlike Herder's concept, however, their idea of culture lacked strong nationalist implications. The Liang group sketched out a very radical view of the relationship among culture, state, and nation. They held that "a reconstruction of the world resides in an overthrow of the argument of the supreme sovereignty of the state. The state is not the supreme organization of humanity, and therefore, regardless of nationality, people should realize their responsibility as members of the world. [We] do not agree with narrow jingoism."⁴⁷ The nation (民族 *minzu*) did not have authority as a self-conscious unit (自覺的單位 *zijuede danwei*) either. In his critique of Liang Shuming's categorization of three world cultures, Zhang Dongsun argued that even the behavior of individuals could not be strictly consistent and a collectivity of individuals, namely a nation, could not be expected to be perfectly integrated.⁴⁸

While their critique of the nation-state system led them to defy its authority, their conviction regarding the global significance of culture encouraged them to further redefine the state as a cultural organ. Liang Qichao believed that "the Chinese state had an enormous responsibility to contribute to a new civilization by nurturing Chinese civilization with the aid of Western civilization and supplementing Western civilization with Chinese civilization."⁴⁹ In this sense, he depoliticized the nation-state, redefining it as a cultivator of the people's cultural capacity rather than an exclusive host of culture, and he argued that the state should enable its people to contribute to all humanity as citizens of the world. It was on the basis of this new definition of the state against the outmoded ideas of both individualism and statism that Liang proposed to construct a cosmopolitan nation (世界主義的國家 *shijie zhuyi de guojia*) in which individuals would be protected from the state but also enabled by the state to develop their innate talents.⁵⁰ This cosmopolitan nation would operate as a kind of medium through which Chinese people would be empowered to participate in constructing a new world culture.

How then did the Liang group imagine a new world culture would be constructed? Since Western civilization no longer stood, for them, as a model for a new world, it is apparent that a new culture could not be achieved simply by replacing *old* Chinese ways with *new* Western ideas. Significantly, it was not via "Easternization" (東方化 *dongfang hua*) either. Against this popular mode of cultural discussion in May Fourth China, represented by Liang Shuming's argument that in the future the whole world would come to be influenced by a revival of Chinese culture,⁵¹ Liang Qichao and the two Zhangs believed

45 Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (2001): 102–3.

46 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 89–90.

47 "Fakanci," 6.

48 Zhang Dongsun, "Du 'Dongxi wenhua ji qi zhexue,'" 2.

49 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 35.

50 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 20–21.

51 Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Wang Hui, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiangde xingqi* [Rise of modern Chinese thought], vol. 2, part 2 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2008), 1314–27.

that a new world culture should be constructed by overcoming the defects of both the West and China and forging a new philosophical foundation of universal morality. In this light, Zhang Junmai stressed that China should strive for “intellectual innovation” through a methodology of “comparative study” that included a critical reception of new foreign theories followed by a dialectical creation of new ideas.⁵²

RENSHENG GUAN IN SEARCH OF MORALITY: GLOBAL UNIVERSAL

Herder’s idea of the “irreducible individuality” of cultures and nations can be characterized as historicism, which calls for “sympathetic identification” with cultures and societies by understanding their own values and principles. Historicism also has implied a “moral and epistemological relativism,” as it asserts the impossibility of truly understanding and judging one culture through the lens of another.⁵³ The Liang group’s appreciation of China’s difference, however, did not lead to a historicist/relativist logic. Their philosophy did not leave different cultures proliferating and making claims based on their incommensurable individuality or unique local/national identity. As we have already examined, these philosophers established a clear standard for evaluating each culture’s moral value—that is, its usefulness in constructing a new moral world culture. Despite their refutation of Eurocentric, essentialist notions of the universal, they did not therefore abandon the universal itself. They instead endeavored to reconstruct the *truly* universal around their new concept of universal morality for the purpose of a moral rehabilitation of the postwar world.

What, then, was universal morality for these philosophers? In other words, what morality did they intend to retrieve from their rebellion against positivism, and on what morality did they base their universalist vision of a new world culture? The Liang group put forward their definition of universal morality when they engaged in the 1923 science-metaphysics debate, during which they called for the development of *rensheng guan* (人生觀), or an outlook on life, in opposition to scientism, the prevalent faith in the omnipotent power of science.⁵⁴ Zhang Junmai, the main disputant from the metaphysics camp, began by defining morality as a human capacity with which human beings could be properly positioned as moral subjects distinguished from animals and plants.⁵⁵ As the only self-conscious beings who struggle to transcend their “conservative tendency” to

52 Zhang Junmai, “Xueshu fangfa sang zhi guanjian,” 3, 5. Liang Qichao and Zhang Dongsun shared the same opinion about the possibility and desirability of the dialectical production of new culture. Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 36; Zhang Dongsun, “Tubian yu qianbian” [Sudden change and gradual change], *Shishi xinbao*, October 1, 1919, repr. in *Zhang Dongsun xueshu wenhua suibi* [Zhang Dongsun’s academic and cultural essays] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2000), 87.

53 Harold Mah, “German Historical Thought in the Age of Herder, Kant, and Hegel,” in Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, eds., *A Companion to Western Historical Thought* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 147–49.

54 D.W.Y. Kwok, *Scientism in Chinese Thought, 1900–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); Charlotte Furth, *Ting Wen-Chiang: Science and China’s New Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

55 Although Zhang Junmai was the main disputant, Liang Qichao and Zhang Dongsun shared his belief that an outlook on life should be constructed separately from science, and they continued their revolt against positivism as part of the “metaphysics” camp in this debate.

adhere to established custom in order to improve their environment, human beings can be emancipated from the mechanical system of nature and develop an outlook on life variously built from different perspectives and diverse opinions. Distinguishable from science, which concerns general rules and principles of cause and effect in the world of nature, *rensheng guan* can be described as subjective, intuitive, synthetic, freely willed, and unique to the individual, and therefore it can never be standardized.⁵⁶

Zhang Junmai further explicated that an outlook on life meant “one’s attitude, which observes, claims, hopes for, demands materials and people outside of the self.” This attitude of self toward nonself is part of a continuous process of reformation through which the self strives to attain the best and the most beautiful, which are not timeless abstractions but variable in different time contexts. Therefore “life never becomes extinct,” and an outlook on life is “always changing, active, free, and creative.”⁵⁷ In the sense that life strives against natural law and is always variable, Zhang theorized—drawing on the antipositivist philosophies of Bergson and Eucken (Zhang’s German adviser)—that an outlook on life was guided by “intuition” (直覺 *zhijue*). The dynamics of an outlook on life were indeed congruent with antipositivism or the “new metaphysics,” which resisted mechanism, intellectualism, and determinism with its alternative stress on change, action, and struggle.⁵⁸

Such a relational definition characterizes an outlook on life significantly as a principle of making relationships, which includes one’s perspectives on family, society, the state, and the human, as well as the natural world. It is also in this relational perspective that an outlook on life could extend itself beyond the personal dimension to place the nation as the self within an international context. When the Liang group discussed the postwar cultural turn, they emphasized that China was in the process of an intellectual change—a change in its outlook on life.⁵⁹ Reflecting the Liang group’s approach to Western and Chinese cultures (which denied objective stages in human progress), Zhang Junmai suggested that “an outlook on life does not have any objective standard” and that the only way to find an outlook on life appropriate to China would be “to return to the self” and not to adopt the outlook of others.⁶⁰

If Zhang Junmai stopped at highlighting the individuality of an outlook on life derived from intuition and expanding it to the national scale to reclaim China’s unique outlook on life, his logic could not help but fall into Herderian historicism/relativism. Instead Zhang defined an outlook on life as a domain of universal morality beyond the individual, unique operations of intuition. Zhang explained that *rensheng guan*, which was

56 Zhang Junmai, “Xuanni zhi shehui gaizao tongzhi yijianshu” [Drafting a letter to comrades devoted to social reconstruction], *Gaizao* 4, no. 3 (November 15, 1921): 1–2; Zhang Junmai, “Rensheng guan” [Outlooks on life], *Qinghua zhoukan*, no. 272 (1923), repr. in *Kexue yu rensheng guan* [Science and outlooks on life] (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2008), 33–35.

57 Zhang Junmai, “Zailun rensheng guan yu kexue bing da Ding Zaijun” [Further discussion of outlooks on life and science, with a reply to Ding Wenjiang], *Chenbao fukan* [Morning news supplement] (1923), repr. in *Kexue yu rensheng guan*, 77–78.

58 Zhang Junmai, “Rensheng guan,” 33; Zhang Junmai, “Zailun rensheng guan,” 97.

59 Liang, *Ouyou xinying lu*, 20; Zhang Dongsun, “Women weishenme yao jiang shehuizhuyi?,” 4–5; Zhang Junmai, “Rensheng guan,” 38.

60 Zhang Junmai, “Rensheng guan,” 36.

not limited by the rules of logic, arose from the commands of conscience (良心之所命 *liangxin zhi suoming*), which he immediately identified both with “what Kant names the categorical imperative” and with Eucken’s “spiritual life.”⁶¹ While, as Charlotte Furth has commented, describing the formal Kantian epistemological faculty as a kind of intuitive knowledge,⁶² Zhang did not explain how these two different concepts—on the one hand, the Kantian principle of morality founded on intellectualism, and, on the other, Bergson’s intuition and Eucken’s spiritual life, which were regarded as part of the postwar trend of antiintellectualism—can both serve simultaneously as the foundations of an outlook on life. Given this seemingly contradictory proposition of outlook on life as both a realm of reason and a realm of intuition, Wang Hui commented that Kant’s categorical imperative occupied a very precarious position in Zhang’s mind since Zhang held that an outlook on life does not need to conform to any objective norm.⁶³

However, Zhang Junmai neither held an outlook on life to be solely a *subjective* matter nor impulsively meandered between Kant and Eucken-Bergson. As he later recollected:

Eucken and Bergson advocated a philosophy of free will, action, and change, and this is what I like. However, [they] only know change but do not know constancy, only know flow but do not know latency, only know action but do not know the wisdom of judging right from wrong.... Although Eucken incessantly studied spiritual life and Bergson, in his later years, wrote a book on the origin of morality, they do not see that both knowledge and morality are a constant element of culture.⁶⁴

That is, Zhang turned to Kant to understand the relationship between theory of knowledge and theory of morality and, ultimately, to search for the origin of morality. By way of introducing two kinds of reason—“pure reason,” which rules causation, and “practical reason,” which relates ethics to free will—Zhang established *rensheng guan* as the domain of practical reason/morality.⁶⁵ By the means of founding his notion of *rensheng guan* on Kantian morality or the absolute moral norm or imperative, Zhang could establish an outlook on life, which he characterized as *unique* to individuals, as also a *unitary* standard making no claims to a purely subjective identity.

It is necessary to note here that Zhang Junmai did not base his concept of morality solely on Kantian philosophy. While returning to Kant in search of morality, Zhang was equally critical of excessive intellectualism for its blind faith in the power of reason, which historically had resulted in the positivist fallacy.⁶⁶ Here Zhang found a possible contribution to be made by Chinese culture—particularly from the study of Song-Ming lixue (宋明理學) and Learning of the Heart and Mind (心性之學 *Xinxing zhi xue*), which

61 Zhang Junmai, “Rensheng guan,” 34; Zhang Junmai, “Zailun rensheng guan,” 78.

62 Furth, *Ting Wen-Chiang*, 110.

63 Wang, *Xiandai Zhongguo sixiangde xingqi*, 1361.

64 Zhang Junmai, “Wozhi zhexue sixiang” [My philosophical thought], in *Zaisheng* [National Renaissance] (Hong Kong: Zaisheng she, 1953), repr. in Cheng Wenxi, ed., *Zhongxiyin zhexue wenji* [Collected writings on Chinese, Western, and Indian philosophy], vol. 1 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1981), 44–45.

65 Zhang Junmai, “Zailun rensheng guan,” 90.

66 Zhang Junmai, “Ouzhou wenhuazhi,” 117–18.

together constituted Song Learning (宋學 Songxue).⁶⁷ While highlighting the necessity of studying Song Learning in order to cultivate an inner life and avoid the harmful effects of material civilization, Zhang suggested that such Neo-Confucian traditions could complement Kantian notions of morality by seeing the mind/heart as an essential constituent of human morality.⁶⁸

In this way, Zhang's definition of morality became distinguished both from the traditional Chinese conception of morality, which emphasized ritual conduct in accordance with a hierarchical vision of society, and from the Kantian conception, which he criticized for its excessive stress on the human intellect. Serving as the foundation for this new morality, Song-Ming lixue was neither simply a source of China's cultural uniqueness (as some conservatives believed) nor Confucian metaphysics, which China would have to overcome to attain modernity (as his opponents in the science camp thought). Instead it was reinterpreted as a way to provide an outlook on life properly balanced between intellect/reason and mind/heart.

CONCLUSION

Engaged with the global critique of positivism, Liang Qichao, Zhang Junmai, and Zhang Dongsun created their own concept of morality, founded on a blend of Kantianism and Confucianism. While reframing Song Learning as a local complement to Kantian morality, they repositioned the national as a local representation of the universal (the universal human capacity) and a local resource of universal morality that could contribute to a new moral world culture. In this way they reconceptualized the universal as needing to be constructed with local resources—Chinese as well as Western culture—and not as a transhistorical value. They thereby refuted the Eurocentric frame of the universal (European Enlightenment) versus the particular (everywhere else, inherently inferior to and incompatible with the Western universal). Instead they proposed a new concept of the universal as a goal to be realized through human efforts to recover universal morality in concert with different local cultures. In doing so, the Liang group turned the framework of universal *versus* particular into one of global *and* local.

Founded on this faith in universal morality, the Liang group's cultural conservatism avoided the trap of cultural relativism and represented the "universal universalism" or "global universalism" that Immanuel Wallerstein has called for: a universalism that

67 Zhang Junmai, "Zailun rensheng guan," 115.

68 Zhang Junmai used the terms Song Learning, Song-Ming lixue, and Learning of the Heart and Mind interchangeably, without attempting to differentiate between Learning of the Way and Learning of the Heart and Mind. Instead he paired the undifferentiated combination of *lixue* and *xinxue* with the School of Idealism (Weixin pai) in the West, which comprised the philosophies of Eucken, Bergson, and Driesch, as well as Kantian idealism. He then contrasted this idealist thought to Han Learning (Hanxue) and the School of Materialism (Weiwu pai), both of which he characterized as based on natural science and philology. That is, for Zhang, an undifferentiated *lixue/xinxue* combination, together with another undifferentiated composite of reason and intuition, seemed like the possible basis of a world tradition useful for "interpretations of life" as well as the "cultivation of an inner mind," in contrast to empiricism/scientism/positivism. Zhang Junmai, "Zailun rensheng guan," 111–13.

“refuses essentialist characterizations of social reality, historicizes both the universal and the particular, reunifies the so-called scientific and humanistic into a single epistemology, and permits us to look with a highly clinical and quite skeptical eye at all justifications for ‘intervention’ by the powerful against the weak.”⁶⁹ As we have observed, the Liang group presented a global universal vision of culture and morality that denied “European universalism” but never abandoned the universal itself. From this standpoint of global universalism, they conceived the new world history not as an inevitable teleology of universal (namely European) reason but rather as a historical project to recover universal morality and rehabilitate the world. They indeed conceived their cultural project to create a new world culture as a morally desirable goal that freely willed human beings should make an effort to reach.

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⁶⁹ Immanuel Wallerstein, *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power* (New York: New Press, 2006), 27, 79.