

## A financial “Golden Rule”

With this issue, *Chinese Cross Currents* [CCC] closes the eighth year of its publication. There is nothing to celebrate in particular, yet it is the right time to express sincere gratitude to all, authors, book reviewers, friendly colleague periodicals—for permissions received to reprint and translate—the translators whose work has permitted this quarterly to reach a larger public, both in China and abroad, the members of the Advisory Board and of course the local team of contributing editors, proof readers, production editors and staff members: without such a large group of collaborators, the generosity of benefactors of the Macau Ricci Institute who particularly support its periodical would not have been duly rewarded in this common effort. The editorial team is glad to offer to all its heartfelt gratitude.

This Fall, major world events present themselves largely disconnected, at least if accepted at face value and according to their newsworthiness. What the media sums up in two words, the “Arabic Spring”, which shook the world with its fiery violence in Tunisia and Egypt, is still smouldering after a long Summer of infighting in Libya and brutal repression in Syria, not to speak of other tense places. The games will probably not be over yet soon, for the dynamics of engaged popular forces stem from deeper sources, sources that historians will later analyse.

Meanwhile, on another front of different turbulences, the world financial crisis lingers on, with its social impact on the job market: what triggered it in the “credit crisis” of the “subprimes” and their banking domino effect, has now reached the credit habit of a good number of states, from the strongest one in America to some smaller ones in Europe. The crisis is the same; it just changed its name, not its nature, to a “debt crisis”. Would it be appropriate to call it also, from top to bottom, a “cultural crisis” through which the “golden rule” of not spending more than one has at hand, state or citizen, has to be revived? Moralists should tell...

Here in China, leaders worry that the “golden rule” would naturally translate itself to not acquire more than one can use, due to the risk of depreciation. Any way one reads it, in state or domestic budgetary policies, the “Golden Rule” that needs to be inserted in many modern constitutions becomes an ethical call to arms in the present turbulences.

These have, for various reasons, slightly obscured in 2011 the centenary of the Xinhai, or the 1911 Chinese Revolution that started with the Wuhan uprising on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1911. Already mentioned in the previous issue of CCC, the 1911 Revolution was certainly in China an epoch making event that waited to resonate progressively into the entire world all during the last century. Some articles in this issue situate the event, not only in relation with Dr. Sun Yat-sen or with other revolutionary movements of the time, but also with the present day rise of China, the roots of which could be traced back to the China trade that anticipated the crisis's that were to follow.

These commemorative contributions should not distract our attention from other continuing debates. One of them is, in China as elsewhere, the present condition of university education, already discussed in some former issues of CCC. In Europe it is already a lingering problem for a few years, related to the standardisation of the whole scheme. In China, also for a few years, voices have dared to speak out some criticism prompted by their anxiety at seeing universities run, not by academics as educators, but by functionaries as administrators who tend to look at universities as enterprises.

Other contributions will happily raise the mind of the reader in this publication with their discussion of the living tradition of Chinese music and the interest shown by various young musicians, individually or in groups, to cultivate this ancient art that deserves larger audiences in China and abroad. Similarly, very rarely can one be led to discover that modern science opens up in the understanding of the universe the door to the spiritual value of scientific knowledge.

Yves Camus

1.

The great American novelist and humorist Mark Twain (1835-1910) is reported to have said: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme." In fact, civil wars, revolutionary uprisings, nation against nation internecine disputes, global conflagrations have been the darkest side of the fabric through which world civilizations of the world have learned to know each other better: by reading history, beyond particularities of these past tragedies, similarities are like the rhymes of humankind's epic poem that mutually resonate and call each other. In the tumultuous months of this year that now gets to a close, the celebration of the centenary of the Xin Hai, or 1911 Chinese Revolution, has to a certain degree been adumbrated. This quarterly is therefore fortunate in this section to place into perspective two scholarly commemorative contributions. In the first, Professor Wei Peh-T'i, of the University of Hong Kong, focuses on Doctor Sun Yat-sen from the Wuchang uprising (10 October 1911) till his election as Provisional President in Nanjing on 2 December 1912, a quite short period of time. The narration gives many details that explain the swiftness of an insurrection that had been carefully planned, as Dr. Paul B. Spooner, from the University of Macau, shows. As if it were in a rearward travelling in time, in his contribution the author explores the activities of Dr. Sun during his trip in Europe (Winter-Spring 1905). Through his many contacts with other world known revolutionaries, Sun Yat-sen had prepared the support of other parties in the socialist context of the Second International. This broadens the geopolitical background of the Wuchang uprising.

2.

The importance of information technologies needs not to be underlined: their social impact is well known, not first of all in politics, as certain media would observe, but it reaches also the fields of education and academic research. It has deeply influenced all levels of societal life around the world as much as the invention of various scripts in the early ages of mankind or of the printing techniques at the beginning of modern time, for the advancement of culture, learning and education of the people. This new step forward towards accumulated information is not deprived from the old challenges of what it is to acquire real knowledge. All the more so that these new technologies, by their own global development, affect similarly any society around the world. Focusing on the role universities should play in this process, this section offers two different yet interrelated contributions. In the first, meaningfully entitled "Knowledge is not Shovel", Professor Gesine Schwan, from the Viadrina European University in Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, Germany, discusses the present global trend in the evaluation of universities. The quality of „professional training“ they deliver is scrutinized, deprived from any reference to the quality of the „cultural formation“ they should transmit. But without the ability for „reflective knowledge“, the fruit of such formation, what kind of education is really given to the next generation of leaders? This over emphasis on the „contribution to the economic development of a country“, made by universities around the world, carries with itself a real pitfall as shown in the second contribution by Professor Zhang Ming, from the School of International Studies at Renmin University of China, Beijing. Evaluated as any other enterprise by "productivity" results, universities tend more and more to be run by functionaries and not by their "academe". Hence his complain: "Can China's universities be saved?"

3.

In this section readers are treated to two studies, one on Chinese music and the other on literature, and the effect that contact with the West during more modern times has had on these traditional art forms in one way or another. The article by Dr. Jeff Roberts begins by discussing the musical traditions of China, in a cultural milieu that he describes as "a remarkably stable and fixed system of cultural beliefs". Dr. Roberts is a versatile composer whose interest in experimental music extends to the 古琴 guqin, a favorite of Confucian literati. He begins his overview by contrasting the guqin with the folk instrumental music known as chuida, and then continues a fascinating account that leads to modern times.

The following authors, Wu Zhuoya, Li Jiao, and Wu Aidan, all three active at the Dalian University of Technology, also make use of contrast to provide a sharper understanding of an aspect of modern Chinese literature. Here two short stories are juxtaposed. The first one is by D.H. Lawrence, the great English novelist, who in *The Odor of Chrysanthemums* attaches a fatalistic symbolism to pink chrysanthemums, which become a metaphor for decay. This sad story is then contrasted to one that the authors interpret as a more hopeful one. The latter is the short story by 王安忆 Wang Anyi entitled *Daxuesheng*. Wang Anyi is a leading contemporary Chinese writer of socialist literature from Fujian. An elegant 2008 English translation by M. Berry and S. Chan Egan of her novel, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, has made her known and admired outside China. Both D.H. Lawrence and Wang Anyi experienced the social hardships that they recreate in their stories, although within their own social and historical frame of reference. In the two articles, therefore, modern Chinese music and literature can be seen in a continuing fruitful dialogue with the West.

César Guillen Nuñez

4.

Published in Fall 2011, this issue had to present some contributions commemorating China's Revolution of 1911 through which the country was launched into a new stretch of its already "long march" in history. Yet such a flight back in memory would not be complete or fecund were it not to include also or be accompanied by some recollection of how those past events have been interpreted and variously understood in their own generative dynamics. Historical events, even in their dramatic brutality, are not deprived of their cultural and ideological background. Along this line of thought, this section is made of two diverse presentations. Professor Wei Chuxiong, from the University of Macau, in the first, uses a wide angle lens to offer "A Survey of the Studies on the 1911 Revolution — in China and Abroad". Thanks to this encompassing yet detailed study of an ongoing bibliography, one is helped to realise the slow growth and the undeniable width and depth of what had been initiated then, and on which later generations and numerous personalities of various political affiliations have grafted their own contributions. Among the "Eminent figures involved in the Chinese Democratic Revolution of 1911" is Ma Xiangbo (1840-1939), on whom the second article written by Director Chen Yaowang, from the Shanghai Yousheng Biochemical Technique Research Institute, is focused in this context. Taking occasion of the recent renovation and inauguration in Shanghai of the "Tushan Wan Museum" on the third floor of "the living quarters of the Catholic patriot, Ma Xiangbo", the author gives anecdotes on the various contacts Ma Xiangbo had had before and after the Wuchang uprising with important reformers. Some small details on a large page of history!

5.

Among the hot intellectual debates that continue to make headlines in the world culture of these times, one concerns the mutual challenges posed by scientific inquiry and religious experience or, simply put in two terms, by faith versus reason and reason versus faith. But these are not new challenges: historians of world civilisations tend to identify the beginning of such debates during what Karl Jaspers had called "the axial age" or period (around 800 to 200 years before the common era), when in the civilisations of China, India and the West great thinkers appeared whose rational philosophic thought shook the foundations of religious experiential quest. The contribution of this section, written by Professor François Euvé, from the Jesuit Theology School in Paris, addresses the same debate in the form it took during the European Enlightenment (18<sup>th</sup> century). But he gives it a new dimension as shown by the title: "A Spirituality for Scientists — Historical Overview". The article successively summarizes the scientific contributions of four "pillars" – so to say – of modern science and the inner challenges they imply : the universe of Newton, the evolution of species of Darwin, the unification theory of Einstein, and the cosmic convergence of Teilhard de Chardin. If, scientifically speaking, the dignity of the human person appears to be at the centre of the evolutive universe, then the scientific discourse opens itself to the spiritual meaning of the whole. This fits with what the Christian discourse, basically, is all about.

The rise of China on the world stage is not a matter of debate any longer, yet when did it start? Historians, economists, diplomats, philosophers, educators, Chinese and non Chinese alike, might have various opinions to offer about such an important aspect of world history. As François Jullien in a recent study has suggested: to grow up is to grow old. With time, great love can turn into indifference. And even the most earnest revolution can imperceptibly become its own system of privilege and corruption—just as global warming has slowly modified the climate by degrees. These are examples of the kind of quiet, unseen changes that Jullien examines in *The Silent Transformations*,<sup>1</sup> in which he compares Western and Eastern—specifically Chinese—ways of thinking about time and processes of change. The rise of China can be added as an example in recent history of these “silent transformations” the universe is made of. In a recent workshop (2-3 March 2011) the Macau Ricci Institute invited scholars to debate about the “China Trade’ — Merchants and Artists (1760-1860): New Historical and Cultural Perspectives”. This section offers one of the contributions to the debate, presented by Dr. 白芳 Bai Fang, research fellow at the Guangdong Provincial Museum and entitled “Hot in Europe and America: Export Art Works from the Qing Times. China Arts Exports Trade”. In the second contribution, an observer at the workshop, Richard M. 劉孟達 Liu Mengda, based on his extended banking and finance expertise, presents his reflections on the “silent transformations” effected by this trade. Among the difficult relations of the Chinese Empire with Western powers of that time, the “China Trade” might have lead, beyond the known conflicts, to the present rise of China.

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<sup>1</sup> François Jullien, *The Silent Transformations*, translated by Krysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, University of Chicago Press, August 2011, 168 pp., ISBN: 9781906497873.